

Constitutions, Regimes and Power in Thailand

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Constitutions are both a site of social and political conflict and a means to structure and limit political participation. This article emphasizes the contested nature of constitutions and constitutionalism to explain how and why modes of participation have been affected. It maintains that constitutions are themselves punctuated by struggle over the kinds of participation that are promoted, tolerated, and suppressed. There is good reason for a focus on Thailand and its constitutional struggles over the past decade. Thailand is often said to have had serial coups and serial constitutions. The drafting of the 1997 constitution was a long process, pitting various social groups against each other, but grew out of a broad-based political opposition to military rule. A military coup in September 2006 scrapped the 1997 constitution, and established a highly controlled process to develop a new basic law. The process to develop the new constitution specifically limited participation to the elite and carefully selected representatives of civil society from the middle class.

Key words: coups; constitutions; constitutionalism; Thailand; participation; monarchy; political conservatives; Thaksin Shinawatra

Introduction

Most assessments of the quality of democracy include constitutions and associated ideas regarding the rule of law in their range of indicators. For example, Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino argue that a 'quality' or 'good' democracy provides:

its citizens a high degree of freedom, political equality, and popular control over public policies and policy makers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions . . . Second, a good democracy is one in which its citizens, associations, and communities enjoy extensive liberty and political equality . . . Third, in a good democracy the citizens themselves have the sovereign power to evaluate whether the government provides liberty and equality according to the rule of law . . . Governmental institutions also hold one another accountable before the law and the constitution.¹

Because constitutions in highly authoritarian regimes have little meaning, the rule of law takes on a special significance in the analysis of 'hybrid regimes'. Diamond and Morlino are explicit: "'good" (or in essence, a liberal) democracy has a strong, vigorous, diffuse and self-sustaining rule of law'.² They list an array of features of this rule, including: equality of law enforcement, the primacy of the legal state, the

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minimization of state corruption, competence and responsibility in administration and enforcement of the law, guaranteeing rights and freedoms, an independent judiciary, and the supremacy of the constitution.

This definition, usually associated with a notion of constitutionalism as a system, emphasizing the rule of law, freedom, equality, popular sovereignty, accountability, and the centrality of civil society, owes much to a specifically American conception of liberalism and democracy. The debates on the basic nature of the US constitution, beginning prior to the American Revolution in the 18th century and continuing to include the discussions associated with the Federalists, led to these elements being seen as critical to the basic law.

Today, when the proponents of democratic quality argue for these traits as defining elements of a 'good' democracy, they tend to overlook the ways in which constitutions have been sites of conflict. Indeed, as Don DeBats points out, there were significant debates and conflicts in defining US constitutionalism, not just associated with the American Revolution, but also in the initial constitutional revisions that took place.³ He observes that the 'Federalist revision of liberalism was in the service of a deliberate social conservatism'.⁴ Critical elements of this social conservatism were the emphasis on property-holding as an element of freedom and sovereignty and the emergence of interest-based activism as opposed to a broader democratic involvement of citizens. As the historian Charles Beard observed in 1938, 'the first and prime consideration of any realistic constitutional history is economic: whose property, what property, and what forms of regulation and protection?'⁵

The reason for mentioning this background is not to disagree with the idea that the rule of law is important for democracies, or that constitutions are the source of basic law. I am not about to argue that constitutions are unimportant. Rather, the point is to note that constitutions are not divine interventions in political life. Nor do constitutions and the rule of law guarantee that political participation will be embedded. As already indicated above, even in the US, the development of the constitution was through a contested process. In addition, as historical institutionalists like Andrew MacIntyre might suggest,⁶ a constitution, like all institutions, emerges within a particular historical context and proceeds to constrain and shape political behaviour and outcomes. In essence, what is written in a constitution is essentially an endpoint, but, in the words of Surin Maisrikrod, behind the document 'lies intense political struggle and negotiations, and sometimes even violence – figuratively and literally, sweat and blood – on the part of the people involved'.⁷ Even more than this, as implied by Jayasuriya and Rodan in their opening article in this collection, constitutions are both a *site of social and political conflict* and a means to *structure and limit* political participation.

In a perceptive article, Ran Hirschl notes that the literature on constitutional development and constitutionalism is often functionalist, evolutionary, and utilitarian.⁸ Any general reading of this literature shows that constitutions and constitutionalism are often associated with notions of a 'social contract' and a concept of inclusion. This emphasis on inclusion fails to adequately address how interests and power play out. Indeed, particular social groups and classes are often absent or excluded from constitutional development when the emphasis is often on

individualism (especially in areas such as rights to property) and the idea of a nation as a community. In this article the focus is on Thailand. It will indicate how recent constitutional development has been about contestation over political participation and the shaping of modes of participation. It shows how the dominant political elites have captured these constitutional development processes so that their own political interests may prevail.

Why Thailand?

This article takes seriously the idea that power needs to be at the centre of the analysis of constitutions, constitutional arrangements, and constitutional reform in Southeast Asia. Like all legal innovations, changes to constitutional arrangements have different distributional impacts that inevitably privilege some groups and may work to exclude other groups. To examine the conflicts that shape constitutional arrangements, this account takes Thailand as its case study.⁹

There is good reason for a Thailand focus. The Parliament of Thailand's web page advertises that the 'Constitution is the supreme law concerning the administration of government of the country.'¹⁰ It then asserts that since King Prajadhipok

granted the Constitution for Siam [in] 1932, there have been amendments and promulgations of Constitution[s] in order for them to be compatible with the changing situation . . . of the country. . . . All the constitutions contain the same principle in maintaining the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State exercising the legislative power through the National Assembly, the executive power through the Council of Ministers and the judicial power through the courts. The differences are particularly on the status of the National Assembly and the relations between the legislative power and the executive power in order that the constitution is compatible with the situation of the country in each period.¹¹

This is a highly contested assessment of Thailand's constitutional development since 1932.¹² The emphasis on the role of the monarch and the failure to give credence to the role of 'the people' is instructive. Especially since the bloody coup of 1976, where the palace played a role in supporting the military intervention and in establishing a repressive government, there has been a tremendous effort to remake Thailand's constitutional history in a way that places the monarchy at the centre of the story.¹³

Lost from this monarchist version of constitutional development is any notion of the remarkable struggles that have taken place as Thailand's citizens have waded through successive coups and serial constitutions.¹⁴ Almost all coups and constitutions have been reflective of competition over political power and economic wealth. Thailand's first provisional constitution (3 July 1932) resulted from the overthrow of the absolute monarchy. This document brought the king under the law and strictly limited his prerogatives.¹⁵ This document was a landmark, for the first time opening formal political participation beyond the ranks of nobles and aristocrats and in what was then a remarkable innovation, allowing the masses a role. The interim charter's first words were, 'The supreme power belongs to the people.'¹⁶

The revival of the monarchy during the current reign means that is now all but forgotten that the years following the 1932 event have seen unending competition between the royalists who had lost political power and those who overthrew them. The king, the royal family, and the aristocracy wanted political power back, fearing that their huge economic interests were under threat.¹⁷ Arguably, with the possible and partial exceptions of the 1946 and 1997 constitutions, Thailand's coups and the constitutions that follow them have been about *limiting* power and political participation. As McCargo observes, often 'revising a constitution has been a matter of consolidating elite power, diverting dissenting voices'.¹⁸

The 19 September 2006 coup was unquestionably about a struggle for economic and political control. The coup followed escalating street demonstrations against the government led by Thaksin Shinawatra. Within a couple of hours of the coup, the 1997 constitution was scrapped. This document had itself grown out of the 1991 military putsch and the substantial conflict and bloodshed that followed in 1992.¹⁹ The military junta's 2006 interim constitution was drawn up over a few days by lawyer and conservative opponent of the 1997 charter, Meechai Ruchupan.

The remainder of this article examines the drafting of the 1997 constitution and the 2006 coup so as to detail the ways in which constitutions have been about limiting participation.

Thailand's Recent Struggles for Constitutional Reforms

To begin, it is worth noting that most writing about Thailand's constitutions tends to be either comparative or legalistic. Most studies are descriptive, comparing various Thai documents with other constitutions, looking for similarities and differences and attempting to measure Thailand's 'progress'.²⁰ Inevitably, these studies are critical of Thai constitutions for lacking an organic quality and having almost no relevance to daily life. In the words of one such study, Thailand's constitutions are considered 'beautifully written documents, but the principles of these documents have not been implemented'.²¹ Few analysts have examined the interests and conflicts involved in the development of the various charters in order to understand why they are 'beautiful documents' but lack substance.²² The 1997 constitution was meant to be a charter that would end this tradition.

The media often call the 1997 constitution the 'People's Constitution'. As McCargo suggests, this term has two meanings: first, more than two-thirds of the Constitutional Drafting Assembly (CDA) were not drawn from the Bangkok elite, and second, there was considerable public consultation over the articles of the draft document.²³ However, as both McCargo and Connors detect, despite these innovations, the drafting process remained elite-led, with the result being that the 336-article document rejected most of the more progressive and popular proposals.²⁴ Various civil society groups did manage to embed elements of participation in the drafts, but each was eventually diluted before the final version was enacted. In the end, despite pressures for the draft to be approved through a national referendum, the 'People's Constitution' could not be entrusted to 'the people'.²⁵

The Politics of the 1997 Constitution

This analysis does not propose to repeat the observations and analysis of the constitutional drafting process presented in Duncan McCargo's excellent collection, *Reforming Thai Politics*, which includes accounts by major actors in the process,²⁶ but rather to make clear two elements of the constitutional drafting that are important for this article. First, Connors is correct to identify the process as an 'elite project'.²⁷ Second, a conservative element of the elite sought to limit the role of non-elite social groups in defining the rules of future politics.

The conservative forces can be readily identified. Pasuk and Baker delineate Thailand's elite as comprised of what they call 'mandarins' (the most senior civil and military officials), metropolitan business and technocrats, and provincial business. Pasuk and Baker also identify two non-elite groups: 'peasants' (mainly smallholder agricultural producers) and urban workers.²⁸ It is these poor farmers and workers, the majority of the population, who would pose a threat to the conservative elite's political control should their political weight be acknowledged in the electoral system. Thus, constitutional and political reform has been designed to manage, direct, and negate demands made by non-elite forces.

The drafting of the 1997 constitution was a long process that grew out of political opposition to military rule generated by the 1991 coup and the bloody 1992 'Black May Uprising'.²⁹ But the road to the promulgation of the new constitution was long. The military-dominated government overthrown in May 1992, led by General Suchinda Kraprayoon, was a government of the conservative elite. The military's 1991 constitution had been publicly supported and approved by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who urged its acceptance.³⁰ When Suchinda was appointed prime minister, his cabinet included royalists and technocrats close to the palace, such as Meechai Ruchupan as deputy prime minister, Pridiyathorn Devakula as deputy commerce minister, and Tinnapan Nakata, who had served as a minister in the prime minister's office under former Prime Minister (PM) General Prem Tinsulanond (who was the country's unelected PM from 1980 to 1988). Economist Kosit Panpiemras was made secretary-general of the prime minister's office and another economist, Virabongsa Ramangkura, was a policy adviser; both were close to the palace and the Privy Council.³¹ The public's rejection of this government was a shock for the conservatives.

But it was the military that was blamed for the events from the 1991 coup to the May 1992 uprising, and they were sent back to the barracks. The political alliance that came together to oppose the military soon melted away, meaning that politics returned to 'normal' for many in the elite. Provincial business people were content to seek control of party politics, civil bureaucrats were back in their positions, and metropolitan business enjoyed the last days of the economic boom. Constitutional reform was assigned to the National Assembly. It was expected that the government led by Chuan Leekpai that came to power in 1992 would move on a new constitution. However, constitutional reform became caught up in debate and dispute that, under the influence of provincial politicians and a military-dominated senate, meant that fundamental constitutional change was opposed and proposed reforms were diluted.³²

While the conservative elite showed little interest in serious reform, a more liberal element realized that stymieing reform was a risky elite strategy. As some intellectuals, reflecting an urban middle-class perspective, voiced concerns regarding the slow pace of reform, calling for the squabbling, self-interested provincial politicians to be shut out of constitutional reform, the elite's view began to change. Their negative approach was seen as risking their control of the constitutional debates, and some feared that violence would result if reform continued to be opposed. Prawase Wasi, a medical doctor with non-governmental organization (NGO) connections who was also palace-connected, warned the elite that they had to embrace reform and play a critical role in developing the new charter.³³

As if to reinforce Prawase's view, mass organizations began to agitate for fundamental political reform. Organized farmers began camping out in Bangkok in their thousands, demanding change. As one of their leaders expressed it, 'We are . . . challenging the political and economic system and demanding more participation for the people.'³⁴ In the countryside, support for political and constitutional reform and enhanced decentralization and participation was strong.³⁵ In the cities, labour activists, still smarting from the military regime's attacks on organized labour after 1991, demanded constitutional protection of basic rights, enhanced social welfare, a new labour relations framework, decentralization, progressive taxation, and electoral laws that did not discriminate against workers. Reflecting the links that many workers maintained in the countryside, union leaders also called for the support of farmers, their livelihoods, and their organizations. More broadly, linking with NGOs and democracy activists, organized labour demanded the promotion of organizations supporting the poor and disadvantaged, greater local democracy, more participation in the judicial system, and enhanced participation and transparency. In essence, labour proposed a shift of power away from the state and the elite.³⁶

These developments were threatening to the elite. Predictably, their initial interventions were wholly reactionary. The king railed against corrupt and ineffective politicians. His allies then looked to measures that would allow the elite to maintain control of politics even if the masses could elect a government. For example, Meechai Ruchupan, then president of the appointed senate, called for an appointed and unelected prime minister.³⁷ A group of businesspeople even sought to have the king appoint his confidante, General Prem, as prime minister.³⁸ The idea was to ensure that the elite could select the prime minister who could also select ministers, without having to be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. When this approach was opposed, liberal elements of the elite, led by two-time appointed premier Anand Panyarachun and the ubiquitous Prawase took hold of the constitutional drafting process. They argued that broader participation be permitted, but that it be carefully managed to prevent its radicalization. They proposed that various independent 'checks and balances' be instituted so that politicians could be controlled. In fact, as Connors shows, these proposals permitted Anand and Prawase to develop a constitutional agenda that satisfied some of the conservative objections to increased participation by convincing reformers, including technocrats, NGOs, and intellectuals that a 'people's agenda' was being maintained.³⁹

This coalition was united by their determination to eliminate 'money politics', check the corruption of parliamentarians and delineate a set of political rights that assuaged middle-class concerns about authoritarianism. As noted above, this amounted to an institutionalization of channels for political participation through voting and elections while ensuring that politicians and the masses were managed and controlled. This approach was criticized for its elitist nature, and as Vatikiotis explained at the time, 'Ultimately . . . the reformers are keener on making cosmetic changes than far-reaching alterations to the political structure.'⁴⁰ Even so, in parliament die-hard opponents associated with provincial bosses, attempted to dilute the proposed changes.⁴¹

For many royalist conservatives, the main concern was to get a charter that would maintain order, stability, and unity.⁴² They even supported a staggeringly reactionary government led by Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, with the king and Prem seeking to maintain his administration in the face of considerable public opposition. But by that time, though, the political landscape was being transformed by the impact of the July 1997 financial and economic meltdown in the country. Even so, Privy Councillor Prem pitched a proposal for an appointed prime minister and a government of 'national unity', only to meet opposition from reformers and a public outcry.⁴³ While some die-hard royalists made a last-ditch call for the new charter to be rejected, claiming it would threaten the monarchy, popular pressure and splits within the military and business forced Chavalit to accept the constitution.⁴⁴ His government soon collapsed and the king also accepted the new charter, but seemed not convinced by it, and royalist conservatives seemed convinced that the 1997 charter would not serve their interests and would eventually need to be changed.⁴⁵

The 1997 constitution was a huge document. Even though many conservatives were not satisfied, the elite nature of the charter was clear. For example, workers and poor farmers were prevented from running for parliament by the requirement that members of parliament hold a university degree. While this provision was vehemently opposed by labour groups, it remained in place. Many of the other issues labour activists considered important had been set aside. In the end, NGO spokesman Saneh Chamarik observed that the charter was 'an investor's constitution', while another labour commentator railed against 'a constitution of the rich, for the rich . . . drafted by groups of privileged intellectuals who can't see the heads of the people, who don't know or pretend not to know where the problems of the people lie'.⁴⁶

A number of activists rejected the conservative and middle-class view that the central political problems facing Thailand's political system were vote-buying and political instability. They stressed that the entire social structure needed reform if there was to be enhanced participation by 'ordinary people'. They argued that only this deep structural reform would keep the military and bureaucrats under control and ensure that politicians did not simply serve the rich.⁴⁷ In the end, however, faced with critical economic issues born of the economic crisis, labour organizations reluctantly supported the new constitution while continuing to oppose provisions that were negative for workers.

The End of the 1997 Constitution

On 19 September 2006, after some nine years under the 1997 constitution, the military overthrew Thaksin's government. Tanks surrounded Government House, with armed troops occupying Bangkok's television and radio stations and staking out a range of intersections and buildings, including parliament. The putsch's leadership immediately revoked the 1997 constitution.

Thaksin was the first premier elected under the provisions of the 1997 constitution. His time in power, from 2001, demonstrated that the warnings and criticisms expressed by activists and noted above were entirely accurate. Thaksin, representative of Thailand's bourgeoisie that had survived the economic crisis, accrued tremendous power to himself and his cabinet. The cabinet looked like a committee for managing the common affairs of the domestic bourgeoisie; it was a government by the rich for the rich. Thaksin was a strong prime minister, at the head of a political party, Thai Rak Thai (TRT) that held large majorities in parliament, and benefited from the constitution's provisions that made the executive strong and independent.⁴⁸

Thaksin had quickly recognized that the 1997 constitution demanded a different kind of politics. Previously, political parties relied on vote-buying and influential local figures to deliver power. TRT hit on a different strategy, one that neither critics nor the conservative elite had recognized in the 1997 charter. While Thaksin and TRT did not entirely reject the previously successful electoral tactics, TRT decided that if it was to rescue domestic capital from the jaws of the ongoing economic crisis, then it had to get votes from the masses. Using surveying and focus groups and supported by a coterie of capable advisers, TRT developed a platform that appealed to poor and especially to rural voters. To do this, TRT introduced schemes that poured government funds into the countryside. This was a radical approach. Thailand's elite, used to ignoring farmers and workers except when they needed to be put in their place or wooed away from communists, was not a natural ally of the poor and dispossessed. However, the economic crisis and a fear that economic stagnation might lead to social conflict convinced the elite that they should accept TRT's new social contract with the potentially unruly masses.⁴⁹ First elected in 2001, emphasizing its pledges to the poor, TRT went on to win a huge re-election victory in early 2005.

TRT's leaders also recognized that the populist and nationalist rhetoric that gained it victory in 2001 would not maintain a political consensus over the long term. Through his own background and through relatives, Thaksin had excellent connections in the military and police, and he utilized these for his government's benefit. As TRT strengthened its political control, Thaksin attacked critics, neutered the independent agencies created by the 1997 constitution, controlled significant sections of the media and managed news, organized mergers with smaller political parties, and strengthened state security agencies. When criticized, Thaksin was ruthless in his counter-attacks, targeting especially NGOs, journalists, and intellectuals.⁵⁰

Thaksin and TRT with mass appeal and a 'winner-take-all' political strategy neutralized opponents. Confident TRT leaders treated the opposition parties and parliament with disdain. The government became increasingly repressive and there were

claims of corruption, nepotism, and conflicts of interest. TRT became so powerful that arrogance set in and resulted in some reprehensible actions. About 2,000 extrajudicial killings in an anti-drugs campaign and the government's ham-fisted efforts to control southern separatism showed that the tycoons' government had no concern for democracy or human rights.⁵¹ Despite this, Bangkok's business leaders generally remained firm Thaksin supporters, appreciating his political style. Always contingent democrats, these capitalists showed little concern for human-rights abuses. It was Thaksin's economic policies that mattered and he delivered significant growth and maintained investor confidence.⁵²

With the parliamentary opposition rendered powerless and much of the media controlled, self-censored or cowed, it was no surprise that a movement to oust Thaksin was initiated by disgruntled former Thaksin supporters. Some of these new opponents claimed to have 'seen the light', recognizing that Thaksin was (now) bad for the country; others seemed to have had their egos bruised by Thaksin. Most significant amongst these new enemies was fellow tycoon, Sondhi Limthongkul, whose media empire collapsed under huge debts during the Asian crisis. He was rescued during Thaksin's administration but fell out with Thaksin in late 2004, and moved into opposition mode in September 2005 when his talk show was stopped from broadcasting.⁵³ To the surprise of many, Sondhi seemed able to stand up to the government. He did not complain about business disputes with Thaksin, but about authoritarianism, conflicts of interest, and corruption.

Most strikingly, Sondhi became an avowed monarchist, declaring that his opposition to Thaksin was to protect the monarchy. Sondhi was influenced by a book by renegade TRT member Pramuan Rujanaseri on royal powers, where it was asserted that the status of the monarchy was superior to the constitution.⁵⁴ Sondhi recognized the potential power of this argument in opposing Thaksin. Even so, linking the king to political squabbles was a potentially precarious political strategy. On the one hand, Sondhi was claiming the moral high ground, but on the other, the palace's rhetoric has always been that the king is not directly involved in politics. Even though this is an ideological manipulation of reality, it is the king who decides the terms of his political interventions. Sondhi also knew that the palace and many in the royalist elite were unhappy with Thaksin.⁵⁵ They were also perturbed by the outcomes of the 1997 constitution.

The event that tipped the political balance in favour of Sondhi's anti-Thaksin movement and catapulted it from a weekly ginger group into a popular protest movement was the January 2006 sale of Thaksin's Shin Corporation to Singapore's government-linked Temasek. The deal was worth US\$1.88 billion but no tax was paid. The result was considerable middle-class moral outrage.

In February 2006, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) was formed. PAD demonstrations brought thousands onto the streets. These rallies were well organized and theatrical in their presentation. Sondhi launched a range of attacks on Thaksin, many of them accusing Thaksin of usurping the king's role and being disrespectful of the throne. Many of the accusations could never be verified and some were fabrications. In a clear break from earlier pro-democracy movements, PAD strongly asserted

that the king was the moral and political centre of the country and repeatedly called for the monarch to throw Thaksin out and appoint his own prime minister.⁵⁶

When Thaksin, feeling the pressure, called a snap election for April 2006, PAD and the opposition parties boycotted the elections. Thaksin had out-manoeuvred his opponents for a moment, but there were allegations of serious electoral fraud during the election. The king declared the election undemocratic and called on the judiciary to sort out the 'mess'.⁵⁷ Barely following constitutional provisions, the judiciary heeded the monarch's advice and annulled the election, with a new poll scheduled for October 2006; the 19 September coup short-circuited this process.

From the time of the king's declaration on the election, the centre of the opposition moved from PAD to the pinnacle of the conservative and royalist elite.⁵⁸ The octogenarian president of the Privy Council, General Prem, took over as leader of the anti-Thaksin movement. Thaksin responded in July, accusing a 'highly influential' person 'outside the constitution' of attempting to 'overthrow the government, rules and laws, the constitution and democracy'. Thaksin was referring to Prem or the king.⁵⁹ It became clear that the palace and the conservative elite wanted Thaksin out, as Prem dusted off his army uniform and launched a series of highly publicized speeches criticizing Thaksin. Supported by other Privy Councillors, including General Surayudh Chulanont, a range of other royalists, and former and serving military leaders, Prem visited a number of military units, demanding that officers be loyal to the king.⁶⁰ His involvement signalled that the palace saw the struggle as being against Thaksin, but that the key issue for it was the role and powers of the monarchy. Thaksin's parliamentary supremacy challenged the palace's political position and there were strenuous efforts to show that he was a threat to the monarchy. Numerous *lèse majesté* charges were levelled at the prime minister, and Sondhi made claims that Thaksin and other TRT leaders had plotted the overthrow of the monarchy.⁶¹

In power, Thaksin had tried to gain control of the military and the police by promoting favourites into leadership positions. He knew that the military was a potential threat to his government, especially as Prem maintained a network of supporters in the armed forces.⁶² Taking up Prem's call, some generals began to openly campaign against Thaksin, with one announcing that he would fight for the king against Thaksin.⁶³

Prem, who had never faced an election, was cheered by anti-Thaksin activists who claimed to be democrats fighting an authoritarian Thaksin. Suriyasai Katasila of the Campaign for Popular Democracy had already donned a yellow shirt, signifying his loyalty to the king, and met with groups of aristocrats opposed to Thaksin.⁶⁴ Even so, Thaksin held on, hoping to get to the election proposed for October 2006, where it was likely that TRT could win.

Conservative royalists could not permit this, and the coup was the outcome. There was to be no election until the possibility of another Thaksin victory was eliminated. The usual spin from Thailand is that the king is 'above politics'. This time, however, as already noted above, the palace's footprints litter the trail to the coup. Within hours of the coup, the king officially approved the coup, giving the coup-makers a number of audiences. The publicizing of these meetings was a means to deflate opposition to the coup within Thailand and to manufacture a better international press for the

putsch. At the same time, the soldiers who conducted the coup wrapped themselves in yellow to show who they supported. Even so, the military issued statements declaring the king and his advisers had no role in the coup and did not sanction it.⁶⁵ To ensure that this line was maintained, the coup-makers directed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to act against foreign journalists who commented adversely on the role of the monarchy in the coup and blocked websites that commented on this role.⁶⁶

Thaksin challenged the palace. That story will not be recounted here other than to note that Thaksin's control of government challenged royal businesses because special deals for those close to Thaksin and TRT supporters threatened the status of the Crown Property Bureau's special business status and its business interests. The main competition was political. As already noted, the palace maintains a large network of supporters built up over the king's sixth decade on the throne, much of it based in the bureaucracy and military. Thaksin was well aware of this and saw the potential political challenge involved. A number of his advisers were a part of the government overthrown by a coup in 1991. They realized that one failure of then Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan was his inability to establish control over the military and bureaucracy; he tried and failed. On coming to power, Thaksin moved quickly to shake-up these same organizations, seeking to promote those who would support him. This brought the government into conflict with the palace's network, maintained by Prem, Surayudh, and the Privy Council.⁶⁷

In a series of speeches beginning in 2001, the king made it clear that he disliked the brash and arrogant Thaksin.⁶⁸ As the political stand-off with Sondhi, PAD, and Prem developed, the increasingly strident criticisms of Prem, Thaksin's failure to heed the palace's warnings, and his apparent willingness to challenge the palace's authority caused considerable anxiety amongst palace supporters. More significant was the competition between Thaksin and the palace for the control of the hearts and minds of the Thai masses. In developing the ideological position of the king, a central component has been the portrayal of him as a champion of the poor, associating him with a myriad of rural development projects.⁶⁹ These projects often began as a way to wean the peasantry away from the influence of the Communist Party of Thailand. The king has promoted what he called the 'sufficiency economy' as a development alternative that argued that the poor should make do with their lot. This populist, 'back to the roots', argument was highly conservative, but attractive to many NGOs and intellectuals who opposed capitalist development.⁷⁰

Thaksin, the modern, Porsche-driving, and impatient entrepreneur, offered a different approach to the same constituency. Far from urging a return to the farm and being content with rural self-sufficiency, Thaksin's policies emphasized 'getting ahead', producing for the market and entrepreneurialism. Strikingly, the TRT also established elements of a social welfare system. The government poured money into these schemes, which became immensely popular. Social welfare was an especially significant challenge for the palace as it portrayed itself as the saviour of poor peasants, based on notions of self-sufficiency and charity. Thaksin had to appeal to the poor as this was where his party got its votes. Clearly, the palace was uncomfortable with Thaksin's approach and his great appeal to what they saw as their constituency.

Arguably, the coup derived from this elite clash: the representative of the modern bourgeoisie versus the royalist conservatives. It is clear that the palace, implacably opposed to Thaksin, had worked to destabilize the government, and that the royalists feared another TRT election victory could close the window of opportunity that had been created for bringing the government down. Opinion polls had shown that Thaksin and TRT continued to have strong support, especially in rural areas and amongst the urban poor, and the royalist elite was not about to risk another TRT victory.

Another Constitution

The 19 September putsch has turned the political clock back a long way. In staging the coup, the military leaders justified their illegal action by reference to Thaksin's corruption, his polarization of politics, his neutering of the independent institutions under the 1997 constitution, and the threat he posed to the monarchy.⁷¹

In these events, the role of the monarchy has moved to centre-stage. Less than 12 hours prior to the coup, in a rambling interview revealing his deep conservatism, ethnocentrism and opposition to democratic government, Prem called for 'Thai-style democracy':

My country is about 800 years old, and we run the country as a kingdom. We will never be a republic or be without the king. So that is the trick – the only thing that induces the people together [sic]. So as long as we have the king, the monarchy – this very, very good king we have right now, we will go ahead – either slowly or rapidly – but we will be united. So if you have a united country and the people united you have few problems to undo.⁷²

The coup, supported by the royalist elite, was welcomed by many as a way to be rid of the authoritarian Thaksin regime. Indeed, the coup initially restored the military's pride and political role that was so damaged in 1992. At the same time, the coup was an opportunity for the conservatives and royalists who had opposed some of the provisions of the 1997 constitution to initiate a revision of the rules of politics. The outcome for Thailand's political system and political participation is, for the moment, deeply conservative and repressive. Just as the coup was approved by the king, so the military-appointed government was led by Privy counsellor and palace favourite Surayud. Indeed, as Shawn Crispin reported, 'for all intents and purposes ... King Bhumibol Adulyadej has, through his army proxies, taken absolute control of the kingdom'.⁷³

The endeavour to engineer a conservative transformation of Thailand's politics has been significant. Prime Minister Surayud announced that the king's 'sufficiency economy' was to be the government's lead economic policy. This policy is meant to mark out the new government as different from that of Thaksin and the TRT. This approach, while sometimes attributed to King Bhumibol in the 1970s, owes most to his post-1997 proposals that Thais overcome the economic crisis by 'combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence ... to cope ... with critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socioeconomic, environmental,

and cultural changes occurring as a result of globalisation'.⁷⁴ This approach, drawing on Buddhist ideas about moderation, challenged the TRT's capitalist approach to economic development that emphasized the promotion of entrepreneurialism. While the 'sufficiency economy' approach is little more than a series of moral imperatives and demands that the poor make do with limited resources, the point of promoting the approach is to identify an anti-Thaksin economic approach.

The Surayud government is dominated by military men and royalists; a number of its members and advisers were involved with the military-dominated government led by General Suchinda in 1992. The appointed national assembly is drawn from a narrow and Bangkok-based elite. There are virtually no representatives of workers, farmers or political parties. The interim 2006 constitution handed all power in the determination of a new and permanent constitution to the military.⁷⁵

If the coup is considered the conservative elite's reaction to some of the outcomes of the 1997 constitution, then the democratic outlook for Thailand is bleak for all but these conservatives. In supporting the overthrow of the Thaksin government, the middle class threw its lot in with the military and the royalist conservatives. Their view was that the people who voted for and supported Thaksin and TRT were ignorant, bewildered, bought off or coerced. Each of these positions permits arguments that the poor, the dispossessed, the working class, and rural people are not ready for democracy or may act against the interests of a full democratic transition in Thailand.⁷⁶ For some, the poor and dispossessed do not even deserve a vote until they can use it 'responsibly' and eschew vote-buying. Thaksin's opponent Sondhi asserts,

This is the heart of the problem. When you look at a situation, don't just look at Thaksin as a champion of the poor. I can be the champion of the poor if I start giving them the money, because they lack a complete understanding of what politics are all about ... Because people in the northeast, no matter who comes in, who goes out, who comes in again, they will only do exactly what you want them to do as long as you pay them.⁷⁷

More ominously, Sondhi sees a class war, where the poorest people receive the taxes paid by the middle class in exchange for votes.⁷⁸

The hierarchical institutions that dominated Thai politics prior to 1997 are being positioned to do so again in a process that seems set to roll back even the limited reforms achieved in 1997. That is, the monarchy will probably be more powerful, and the military and bureaucracy will have many of their prerogatives and much of their power returned, and the Bangkok-centred elite will dominate limited debates about political and social rights.

The military leadership, renamed the Council for National Security (CNS), is the group that has managed the constitution-drafting process. It has veto power over the form of the new constitution. While the anti-Thaksin movement and coup restored much of the military's prestige, it now faces a struggle to both administer the country for a year while managing the development of a new and conservative

constitution. Opposition to its control has increased, much as it did in 1991–1992. The CNS has set about entrenching its rule and privileges. Generals have been put back in charge of state enterprises; in the past, these enterprises were a source of wealth and political influence for the military. Border regions have been handed back to the military to administer; in the past, these regions were a source of wealth acquired from a range of illegal activities and of political influence for the military.⁷⁹ Additionally, the military's hand-picked assembly increased the military's 2007 budget by some 50 per cent, with almost no debate.⁸⁰ In addition, the military has purged the public service and has embedded military officers in significant positions in provincial administration.⁸¹

The position of the monarchy has been noted above. The military's relationship with the monarchy goes back to the 1950s and has been strengthened through constant linkages between the palace and military leaders.⁸² When Prem was premier, the position of the monarchy was vigorously promoted, and a number of former military leaders are now the core of the Privy Council, personally selected by the king. As Prem explained, 'we consider that we belong to the king. The armed forces [belong to the king]. That's what we take oath [on] and have to profess – that we have to belong to the king'.⁸³ During the constitution-drafting process, the push will be to further embed the monarch's prerogatives and powers. This is not unexpected, as the king and his advisers have worked for a re-establishment of royal power since Bhumibol took the throne.⁸⁴

The bureaucracy, which Thaksin had attempted to reorganize and shake up, principally for his own advantage, is being populated by conservatives associated with the military and the palace. Decentralization has been rolled back in the name of maintaining the independence of the civil service. Of course, the bureaucracy has never been independent. Rather, the military regime and its conservative supporters hope to insulate the bureaucracy from political leaders, parliamentary control, and scrutiny.

The outcome is that the 'masses' are to have their rights limited in ways that are designed to control them. In the immediate aftermath of the coup, the military worked to control the movement and political activities of people in the countryside and in Bangkok's slums and factory areas.⁸⁵ However, the conservatives will not have it all their own way.

In a flashback to the debates of 1997, there has been the emergence of opposition to the proposed constitution. Drawing together a range of public intellectuals, political parties, and NGOs, those who oppose the conservative elite's desire to roll back Thailand's democracy have called for the new constitution to include provisions for free basic and quality education for all, land reform, community rights, the right to belong to a union, the right of citizens to promulgate laws, and the right to local self-administration. Somkiat Tangnamo, the rector of Thammasat University, told protestors that: 'In the past, all constitutions were drafted by the elite and addressed only certain classes in society rather than society as a whole.'⁸⁶ This new constitution is no different, and has limited participation in its drafting as a means to ensure that the charter will legally limit the political role of the poor and dispossessed.

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NOTES

1. Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, 'The Quality of Democracy', Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Stanford Institute on International Studies, No. 20, 21 September 2004, pp. 4–5.
2. *Ibid.* pp. 8–9.
3. Don DeBats, 'Liberal-Democratic Theory in America', in Norman Winthrop (ed.) *Liberal Democratic Theory and Its Critics* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 49–82.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 57–8.
5. Surin Maisirikrod, 'Changing Forms of Democracy in the Era of World War II and the Cold War', *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (1972), pp. 640–69.
6. Andrew MacIntyre, *The Power of Institutions. Political Architecture and Governance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1–2.
7. Surin Maisirikrod, 'Changing Forms of Democracy in Asia? Some Observations on the Thai and Philippine Constitutions', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1999), pp. 355–73, pp. 358–9.
8. Ran Hirschl, 'The Political Origins of the New Constitutionalism', *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* Vol. 11, No. 1 (2004), pp. 71–108, pp. 73–84.
9. At the same time, a strikingly similar case could be drawn for recent constitutional debate in the Philippines. For details, see Surin (note 7); Paul D. Hutchcroft and Joel Rocamora, 'Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origins and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines', *Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (2003), pp. 259–92; Steven Rogers, 'Philippine Politics and the Rule of Law', *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 15, No. 4 (2004), pp. 111–25; and Ben Reid, 'The Philippine Democratic Uprising and the Contradictions of Neoliberalism: EDSA II', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 5 (2001), pp. 777–93.
10. Parliament of Thailand, 'Constitutions of the Kingdom of Thailand', website of the Parliament of Thailand, available at <http://www.parliament.go.th/files/library/b05.htm> (accessed 3 December 2006).
11. *Ibid.*
12. See the special issue, '75 pi lang 2475 kan doenthang phua klap pai thi doem?' ['75 Years After 1932: On the Path Back to the Beginning?'], *Fa Diew Kan [Same Sky]* Vol. 5, No. 1 (2007).
13. See Paul M. Handley, *The King Never Smiles. A Biography of Thailand's Bhumibol Adulyadej* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006). Revealingly, another webpage for Thailand's Parliament lists what it says are 14 other interesting webpages. The first four are all related to the monarchy, including the Chakri dynasty's principle site, while the constitution is listed sixth, available at <http://www.parliament.go.th/files/other/eint-1.htm>. At the time of accessing the site in mid-December 2006, most of these links were broken.
14. Popular studies note that Thailand has had 16 constitutions and is writing another in 2006–2007. However, according to Kobkua, there have been 27 constitutions in total, including the 16 'provisional or permanent [sic]' versions; see Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Kings, Country and Constitutions. Thailand's Political Development, 1932–2000* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 30. This means that by mid-2007, Thailand had experienced 28 'permanent', provisional, and interim constitutions, with yet another being arranged for promulgation late in 2007.
15. See Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *Pridi by Pridi* (Chiangmai: Silkworm Books, 2000), pp. 73–9.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
17. See Baker and Pasuk (note 15), pp. 183–8; Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kanpattiwat sayam ph.s. 2475 [The Revolution in Siam 1932]* (Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Project Foundation, 1992). Also see Thongchai Winichakul, 'Kham mai phon prachathipatai baep lang 14 tula prachathipatai baep sai sat khong aphichon kap rattaphrahan 19 kanyayon 2549' [Failing to Get Beyond Democracy After 14 October [1973]: Aristocratic "Clean-Democracy"], in Thanapol Eawsakul (ed.) *Rathaphrahan 19 Kanya: Rathaphrahan puea rabop prachathipatai mi pramakasat song pen pramuk [The 19 September Coup: A Coup for the Democracy with the Monarch as Head of State System]* (Bangkok: Fa Dico Kan, 2007), pp. 30–57.

18. Duncan McCargo, 'Introduction: Understanding Political Reform in Thailand', in Duncan McCargo (ed.), *Reforming Thai Politics* (Copenhagen: NIAS Publishing, 2002), pp. 1–18, p. 3.
19. See Kevin Hewison, 'Of Regimes, State and Pluralities: Thai Politics Enters the 1990s', in Kevin Hewison, Richard Robison, and Garry Rodan (eds) *Southeast Asia in the 1990s: Authoritarianism, Democracy and Capitalism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 159–89.
20. See for example, Wariya S. Chinwanno and Chaichana Inqavata (eds), *US Constitution. Thai Perspectives/ratthamanun saharat . . . thatsana chak muang thai* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1990).
21. Likhit Dhiravegin, 'The Relevance of the US Constitution to Thai Politics', in Wariya S. Chinwanno and Chaichana Inqavata (eds), *US Constitution. Thai Perspectives/ratthamanun saharat . . . thatsana chak muang thai* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1990), pp. 61–8.
22. There are some notable exceptions, including the important works collected in Duncan McCargo's 2002 collection, *Reforming Thai Politics* (Copenhagen: NIAS Publishing, 2002), including chapters by Michael Connors on 'Framing the "People's Constitution"', pp. 37–56 and Kobkua Suwan-nathat-Pian on 'The Monarchy and Constitutional Change Since 1972', pp. 57–72; and their more substantial monographs: Michael K. Connors, *Democracy and National Identity in Thailand* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); and Kobkua (note 14).
23. McCargo (note 18), p. 9.
24. McCargo (note 18); Connors, 'Framing the "People's Constitution"' (note 22).
25. McCargo (note 18), p. 9.
26. See for example, Prawase Wasi, 'An Overview of Political Reform Issues', in Duncan McCargo (ed.) *Reforming Thai Politics* (Copenhagen: NIAS Publishing, 2002), pp. 21–8; Thirayuth Boonmi, 'Good Governance: A Strategy to Restore Thailand', in Duncan McCargo (ed.), *Reforming Thai Politics* (Copenhagen: NIAS Publishing, 2002), pp. 29–36.
27. Connors (note 22), p. 37.
28. Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, 'Power in Transition: Thailand in the 1990s', in Kevin Hewison (ed.) *Political Change in Thailand. Democracy and Participation* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 21–41.
29. See Hewison (note 19), pp. 159–89; Kevin Hewison, 'Political Oppositions and Regime Change in Thailand', in Garry Rodan (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Industrialising Asia* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 72–94. The May 1992 Uprising is usually presented as a 'middle-class revolt'. There is no doubt that this group was strongly represented, but as Paul Handley reports, the crowds included many from the working class, including lower level bureaucrats and teachers, and there were strong shows of working class support for the anti-military actions. More significantly, he reports that when the demonstrations turned to riots and there was shooting, the middle class fled, leaving a much tougher crowd of 30,000 protesters in place. Many of these were students and workers. See Paul Handley, 'Rainbow Coalition: Protesters Came From Many Walks of Life', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 April 1992, p. 11.
30. Handley (note 13), pp. 342–5.
31. Paul Handley, 'Win Some, Lose Some: Suchinda Juggles Cabinet to Preserve Coalition', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 June 1992, p. 17.
32. See Rodney Tasker, 'Disloyal Opposition', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 April 1994, p. 16; Rodney Tasker, 'Anti-Reform Club: Opposition and Senate Defeat Government Bills', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 May 1994, p. 17.
33. Michael Vatikiotis, 'We the People', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 September 1995, p. 21; Michael Vatikiotis, 'Strong Medicine: Activist Doctor Prescribes Constitutional Change', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 October 1995, p. 34.
34. Cited in Michael Vatikiotis, 'People's Putsch', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 September 1997, p. 14.
35. *Ibid.*
36. On the military's attacks on labour in 1991–1992, see Kevin Hewison and Andrew Brown, 'Labour and Unions in an Industrialising Thailand', *Journal of Contemporary Asia* Vol. 24, No. 4 (1994), pp. 483–514. For details of labour's role in developing the 1997 constitution, see Andrew Brown and Kevin Hewison, "'Economics is the Deciding Factor": Labour Politics in Thaksin's Thailand', *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 78, No. 3 (2005), pp. 353–75, pp. 356–8.
37. Michael Vatikiotis, 'Who Needs Democracy?: Some Call For Unelected Prime Minister', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 September 1996, p. 20.
38. Rodney Tasker, 'Hard Times Roll', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 August 1997, p. 27.
39. Connors (note 22).

40. Vatikiotis, 'Tilting at Windmills', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 April 1997, p. 14.
41. Tasker (note 38).
42. On the king's views on these political attributes, see Kevin Hewison, 'The Monarchy and Democratization', in Kevin Hewison (ed.), *Political Change in Thailand. Democracy and Participation* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 58–74.
43. Handley (note 13), pp. 410–14.
44. Vatikiotis (note 34).
45. On the 1997 Constitution and the king, see Handley (note 13), pp. 411–12. For a general discussion of the king's responses to democratization, see Hewison (note 42).
46. Reports in *Raengngan porithat*, cited in Brown and Hewison, "'Economics is the Deciding Factor'" (note 36), p. 357.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
48. On Thaksin and his time in power see, Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thaksin* (Chiangmai: Silk-worm Books, 2004); Duncan McCargo and Ukrist Pathamanand, *The Thaksinization of Thailand* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2005).
49. See Kevin Hewison, 'Crafting Thailand's New Social Contract', *The Pacific Review* Vol. 17, No. 4 (2004), pp. 503–22.
50. See Pasuk and Baker (note 48), and McCargo and Ukrist (note 48).
51. On the 'war on drugs', see Human Rights Watch, *Not Enough Graves: The War on Drugs, HIV/AIDS, and Violations of Human Rights* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2004). On human rights, see United States Department of State, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Thailand, 2005', Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 March 2006, available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrprt/2005/61628.htm> (accessed 31 January 2007). On the southern separatism and violence, see Duncan McCargo (ed.), *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2007).
52. The private investment index, which measures economic activity, increased consistently throughout Thaksin's time, rising from 107.7 in 2001 to 173.4 in 2006. See the Bank of Thailand's website, available at <http://www.bot.or.th/bothomepage/databank/EconData/EconFinance/tab71-2.asp>, which includes downloadable historical data (accessed 19 March 2007).
53. *Nation*, 16 September 2005.
54. Pramuan Rujanaseri, *Phraratcha amnat [Royal Power]* (Bangkok: Published by the author, 2005).
55. Handley (note 13), pp. 424–6.
56. *Nation*, 26 March 2006.
57. *Nation*, 27 April 2006.
58. There were no more big street demonstrations. PAD's last rally, a couple of days after the king's pronouncement, was relatively small, and the alliance no longer called for street protests.
59. See Our Correspondent, 'There Wasn't Any Choice', *Asia Sentinel*, 20 September 2006, available at <http://www.asiasentinel.com> (accessed 20 September 2006); and Meechai Ruchapan, 'Khwan raphitchop khong naiyokrachamontri' ['The responsibilities of the prime minister'], 2006, available at <http://www.meechaithailand.com> (accessed 8 July 2006).
60. *Bangkok Post*, 15 July 2006.
61. In May 2006, with no solid evidence produced, Sondhi claimed that the so-called Finland Plot brought former communists and Thaksin together in 1999 to plan the overthrow of the monarchy, establish a one-party state and declare a republic. The plot was set out in a series of articles in Sondhi's newspaper, *Phujatkan*, on 17, 19, 22, 23, and 24 May 2006.
62. See Duncan McCargo, 'Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand', *Pacific Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (2005), pp. 499–519.
63. *Bangkok Post*, 16 August 2006.
64. *Bangkok Post*, 4 July 2006. In Thailand, each day is assigned a colour. The king, born on a Monday, has yellow as his birthday colour.
65. Immediately on taking power, the military declared that neither the king nor his advisers had any role in the coup; see *Asian Wall Street Journal*, 19 September 2006. The military continued to make this point six months after the coup; see *Bangkok Post*, 20 March 2007. Such statements are disingenuous. When the king endorsed the coup, easing 'doubts about the legitimacy of the coup' (see *Nation*, 21 September 2006), he appointed junta leader Sondhi as head of the 'Council for the Administrative Reform of Democracy, with the King as Head of State'. It was reported in the *Bangkok Post*, 21 September 2006, that the 'coup plot was known within a tight circle of people, among them Gen Prem Tinsulanonda, president of the Privy Council, and his close aides at Ban Sisao Theves, Air Force Commander-in-Chief ACM Chalit Pukkasuk and Lt-Gen Anupong Paochinda, commander of the

First Army Region'. This was reinforced by the military security provided at Prem's residence immediately when the coup took place; see *Nation*, 20 September 2006. Soon after the coup, the junta changed its English name, but not its Thai name, 'to prevent misunderstanding in the global community that the putsch had His Majesty the King's blessing'. The 'Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy' dropped 'under Constitutional Monarchy' from its name, arguing that the 'original name was a literal translation from the Thai name which was misleading and had caused confusion. It was falsely suggestive of the role of the King in the intervention [sic]'; quoted in *Bangkok Post*, 27 September 2006.

66. *Nation*, 23 September 2006.
67. McCargo (note 62).
68. See <http://www.kanchanapisek.or.th/speeches/index.en.html> for the king's various speeches reproduced in Thai, accessed 20 March 2007.
69. These projects grew dramatically during the period of Prem's premiership; see Handley (note 13), Ch. 15.
70. Details regarding the monarchy's rural development projects may be found in Handley (note 13). For a sympathetic review of the sufficiency economy idea, see Priyanut Piboolsravut, 'Sufficiency Economy', *ASEAN Economic Bulletin* Vol. 21, No. 1 (2004), pp. 127–34. This work cites some of the work by NGO supporters who have been attracted by its anti-capitalist, culturalist, and Buddhist orientation. For a critique of this kind of economic approach, see Kevin Hewison, 'Resisting Globalization: A Study of Localism in Thailand', *The Pacific Review* Vol. 13, No. 2 (2000), pp. 279–96.
71. Thitinan Pongsudhirak, 'Military Losing Post-Coup Momentum', *Bangkok Post*, 2 November 2006.
72. Interview in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and reproduced at its website: <http://www.feer.com/articles1/2006/0609/free/prem.html> (accessed 6 October 2006).
73. Shawn Crispin, 'Thailand: All the King's Men', *Asia Times Online*, 21 September 2006, available at <http://www.atimes.com> (accessed 23 October 2006).
74. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, cited in 'Sufficiency Economy: Direction of the Ninth National and Economic Development Plan. In Pursuit of His Majesty's Philosophy', *The Chaipattana Foundation Journal*, available at http://www.chaipat.or.th/chaipat/journal/dec00/eng/e_economy.html (accessed 1 February 2007).
75. *The Nation*, 27 September 2006.
76. For an important and revealing study of the clash of ideas and actions between the poor and dispossessed and the largely Bangkok-based middle class, arguing that 'pure democracy' can be dangerous for the elite and middle class, see Anek Laothamathas, *Thaksin-prachaniyom [Thaksin-style Populism]* (Bangkok: Matichon Books, 2007).
77. In an interview with *Asia Media*, 20 November 2006, available at <http://www.asiamedia.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentID=58318> (accessed 23 November 2006).
78. In *Northwest Asian Weekly*, 24 November 2006.
79. Pasuk Phongpaichit, Sangsit Piriyaarangsarn and Nualnoi Treerat, *Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja: Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy* (Chiangmai: Silkworm, 1998).
80. *The Nation*, 8 December 2006.
81. See United Press International, 2 March 2007, available at <http://www.upi.com/SecurityTerrorism/view.php?StoryID=20070302-124119-8486r> (accessed 21 March 2007).
82. See Handley (note 13).
83. Interview in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, and reproduced at its website: <http://www.feer.com/articles1/2006/0609/free/prem.html> (accessed 6 October 2006).
84. See Handley (note 13).
85. *Bangkok Post*, 25 December 2006.
86. Cited in *The Nation*, 11 December 2006. The statement of these positions on the Pridi Banomyong Lawn at Thammasat University is highly symbolic as the university was established by Pridi, who had led the revolt against the absolute monarchy in 1932.

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