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The evolution of the Thai monarchy in the constitutional period, 1932-present

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The American University, 1990
THE EVOLUTION OF THE THAI MONARCHY

IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD, 1932-PRESENT

by

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submitted to the

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ABSTRACT

The 1932 coup put an end to the age-old Thai absolute monarchy. Since then, the Thai political environment has become one where the instruments of control and change have been shifted from the royal elite to the hands of the bureaucrats, and where until the 1970s the monarchy could not exert political power. In theory as well as in practice, the power of the post-1932 monarchs has been carefully circumscribed by constitutional provisions.

The resurgence of the monarchy, on the other hand, can be explained with reference to the unique status of the monarchical institution as the supreme source of legitimacy within the Thai society, the incessant conflict among the new elite groups, and the personality and conducts of King Bhumibol.

A direct consequence of the monarchical resurgence is that the monarchy has become gradually involved in politics. While the King's political involvement in some cases has been the result of his concerns to bring about stability or defuse crisis, it also has caused apprehension that the active
involvement of the monarchy in politics in the long run will tarnish its legitimacy and role as a unifying national symbol. And despite the great success of King Bhumibol, the monarchy could be alienated from its body politic if the King does not simultaneously take into account the political implications and consequences of his political action.
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Needless to say, no one above is responsible for any mistake that might occur in this thesis.
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Monarchy in this country has always been on the move.  

King Bhumibol Adulyadej.  
(National Geographic October 1982,490).

June 24, 1932 was a momentous day of the Siamese Chakri Dynasty. At dawn, a group of mixed military-civilian bureaucrats called the People's Party staged a coup against the royal government of King Prajadhipok, culminating in the overthrow of the age-old absolute monarchy of Siam. Distributed in the same day of the coup to justify its action, the manifesto of the People's Party, which was drafted by Pridi Panomyong, a civilian leader of the coup, denounced the legitimacy of the absolute rule of the Chakri Dynasty and critically attacked King Prajadhipok and his administration. In the manifesto as well as in the memorandum given to the King, the coup promoters demanded that King Prajadhipok become a constitutional monarch. The King, who himself had considered granting a constitution but till then had been prevented from doing so by both foreign and royal advisors, accepted the demand of the coup for the sake of peace and order in the country. Since then, the
Thai political environment has become one where the instruments of control and change have been shifted from the royal elite to the hands of the bureaucrats, where political competition, struggle and conflict until recently have been centered on the bureaucrats, especially the military, and where until the 1970s the monarchy could not exert political power. The King was merely the titular head of state. In theory as well as in practice, the power of the post-1932 monarchs has been carefully circumscribed by constitutional provisions. The traditional concept of the Thai kingship rooted in the Thai religion has been superseded by a new western concept of sovereignty which is held to originate from, and belong to, the people, whose rights are to be protected by a constitution (see Yood 1972).

While the leaders of the 1932 coup justified their actions in terms of bringing democracy to Siam, it could not reject the fact that the root cause was their desire to limit the power of the throne and to gain a bigger share in political power. The problem of who should have what power, and how much, led to the deadlocked conflict between King Prajadhipok and the new elite, resulting in the King's abdication in March 1935. Since then, for almost twenty years, Siam did not have an adult reigning monarch to develop the crown's functions in the new political system. And it took almost thirty years after 1932 before the
conflicting power and interest between the monarchy and the bureaucracy could be solved.

The formal coronation of King Bhumibol in May 1950 marked the first time since his uncle's abdication that the throne had been fully occupied by an adult who could utilize the legitimate power which the monarchy had long possessed. And King Bhumibol did this with great success. Gradually, after every crisis and friction within the bureaucracy, the monarchy became stronger. At present, the institution is the point of convergence for a number of bureaucratic and extra-bureaucratic forces, and King Bhumibol has turned out to be the most influential individual figure in the Thai political system. Thus, in addition to its original role as the protector of Buddhism and Thai culture and tradition, the exalted and influential position of the monarchy enabled it to act as a unifying national symbol, a promoter of the well-being of the Thai people, and as an ultimate mediator in times of national crisis.

Despite its importance, the Thai monarchy has been less subjected to the academic scrutiny than other Thai political institution in the contemporary period. For Thai scholars, this is understandable because an open critique of the monarchy, even an academic one, is taboo in the Thai society and invites charges of lese majeste or being a communist. Without a full understanding of the evolution of the monarchy since 1932, however, we cannot comprehend its
dynamic roles and effects on the socio-political system. This thesis attempts to analyze the evolution of the constitutional monarchy in the Thai political system by way of historical analysis based primarily on documentary research. The thesis will focus principally on the following questions:

First, what were the factors that contributed to the decline and subsequent resurgence of the monarchy in the Thai political system since 1932? As for the monarchical decline, the 1932 coup was a prominent factor. However, it can be argued that the coup was nothing but the consequence of earlier social and political development in Siam, i.e. the Chakri Reformation in King Chulalongkorn's reign, which, ironically, aimed at strengthening the absolute power of the monarchy. To understand the monarchical decline, therefore, it is necessary that we begin by analyzing the development of the socio-political forces unleashed by the Chakri Reformation and the responses of the monarchy. This finally led to the 1932 coup. We shall then trace the eventful years following the 1932 coup up to World War II, during which the country experienced the abdication of King Prajadhipok and the rise of Pibulsongkram. This period contributed much to the further decline of the monarchical power. On the other hand, the survival and, indeed, the resurgence of the monarchy can be explained with reference to the unique status of the monarchical institution within
the Thai society; it is the supreme source of legitimacy. Amidst the incessant conflict among the new elite groups, this particular role turned out to be important. Finally, the personality and conducts of King Bhumibol also helped uplift the position of the monarchy to the point where it was the most revered institution in modern Thai polity. Interestingly, while the decline of the monarchy came with the emergence of the democratic impulse, monarchical resurgence became possible under an authoritarian regime. The monarchical decline and resurgence will be analyzed in Chapter II and Chapter III respectively.

When and how has the monarchy exerted its power and become directly involved in the political process? A direct, and probably inevitable, consequence of the monarchical resurgence is that the monarchy has become gradually involved in politics, whether intentional or not. As it turned out, every significant change in the political process in the reign of King Bhumibol probably had accomplish without the King's consent or acknowledgement. This will be discussed in Chapter IV.

The concluding part will address the question of what is the appropriate and desirable role for the monarchy in the contemporary socio-political setting, and how that role can be effectively maintained. As the monarchy has become active in the affairs of state, the effects or implications of various monarchical roles will have an impact on the
overall position of the monarchy in the polity.

It should be made clear that this thesis is written in the belief that any institution or individual, to be viable and stable, needs to be tolerant of serious appraisals. The author, like other Thai, does not wish to see the monarchy alienated from its body politic. While presenting an analytical study, the author does not at all intend to spoil or defame the monarchical prestige and status.
CHAPTER II

THE POLITICAL DECLINE OF THE MONARCHY

There is no law which specifies the royal power in Siam because it is believed that power is beyond law and that there is no rule, thing, or person which can regulate or prevent it. But in truth any act of the King must be appropriate and just.

King Chulalongkorn (Wilson 1962, 102).

When the present King came to the throne, the people hoped that he would give an equitable administration. Their hopes were unfulfilled. The King was above the law even as his predecessors had been. His relatives and friends, even when without ability, were given the highest government positions. ... The King elevated the royal class and permitted them to oppress the common people. The King ruled unwisely and allowed the country to fall into decay, as the present depression proves. The government of the King, who is above the law, is unable to right these wrongs.

The Manifesto of the People's Party. (Landon 1939, 11).

Long before the 1932 coup occurred, there had been at least two times that the Chakri monarchs had received apparent signs of dissatisfaction with their autocratic rules and calling for the transformation from the absolute monarchy, one in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, and the other in the reign of King Vajiravudh. Although King Chulalongkorn's administrative reform since the mid-1880s had become instrumental in making the monarchy more powerful and helped strengthen its position vis-a-vis the nobility,
from this time onwards a new generation of princes and nobles, especially those who had educated abroad, began to express western political ideas which challenged the position and power, if not the legitimacy, of the autocratic kingship of the Chakri monarchs. In 1885, amidst the Chakri Reformation, a group of western-educated princes and officials abroad submitted a petition to King Chulalongkorn outlining the critical problems facing the country both internally and externally, and suggesting that given the current situation of the country, the absolute monarchy, which depended solely on the caliber of the person of the king, was uncertain, or even dangerous because it could not sufficiently guarantee the well-being of the country. The petition recommended that to help solve these problems a constitutional monarchy be established so that ordinary Siamese people could participate in public affairs, and then "happiness, progress and justice could be equally enjoyed" (Chai-anan 1970, 14-23; see also Chulachakrabongse 1960, 216-263; Sulak 1987, 23-26; and Wyatt 1966, 89-93). In his reply to the petition, King Chulalongkorn rejected the idea of the constitutional monarchy on the ground that there were not enough educated men available to assume such a broad range of executive and legislative responsibilities, and proposed instead that the government reforms should be initiated and directed by the King himself.

While this was the first time in the Thai history
that a political action had been inspired by such western political ideas as constitution and democracy, it still exclusively occurred within the closed circle of the royalty. However, in 1912, just within six months after King Vajiravudh's coronation, a group of lesser army officials attempted to stage a coup to replace the absolute monarchy with a republican government (see Hrien and Netr 1976). Despite its failure, the importance of the 1912 attempted coup lay in the fact that it was unprecedented in Thai history that a move against the person of the King came from outside the elite and was inspired by the western political ideas, rather than being a court intrigue from a would-be usurper. And not only was the person of the King threatened, but it was the survival of the monarchical institution itself.

Clearly, after 1912 the position of the absolute monarchy was on the decline. When the final collapse did come in 1932, it was not therefore a clear and sharp break with the old regime, but merely the following wave of the struggle for political transformation. One salient feature of the 1932 coup was that when the coup occurred, no one, not even the King, try to launch a counterattack to save the absolute monarchy. This implied that even within the circle of the ruling elite in the seventh reign there had been a realization of the anachronism of the absolute kingship as King Prajadhipok himself accepted in the early years of his
The Chakri Reformation

The essence of the Chakri Reformation carried out by King Chulalongkorn at the end of the nineteenth century was to consolidate the power of the monarchy through the transformation of the traditional, decentralized Siamese society into a centralized and unified state under the absolute rule of the King. The key element lay in creating a new, western-styled administration system (see Tej 1977). It is not the intention of this thesis to discuss the Chakri Reformation in detail; what is appropriate here is to point out some implications and effects of the reformation on the development of Thai politics.

Chulalongkorn's four related areas of reform—fiscal, legal, central and provincial administration—necessitated the establishment the modern bureaucracy and the modern army, which, throughout his reign, expanded constantly. The immediate result of the Chakri Reformation was that the monarchy enjoyed absolute power as it never had before. Prior to the Chakri reformation, the royal
financial power was limited by the traditional fiscal system which was so corrupt and inefficient that misappropriation of royal revenues by the regional and local nobles was pervasive (Wales 1965, 224; see also Detchard 1958). In regard to the legal sphere, under the sacred law, i.e. the Thammasat, which applied to most aspects of government, the King was regard primarily as an administrator of the law rather than a legislator (Dhani Nivat 1954, 163). In the area of administration, Siamese Monarchs from the Ayudhyan to the Bangkok periods had to share their power with nobles and other members of the royal family (Chai-anan 1987, 25; and Wyatt 1969, 208-228). In addition, the traditional Siamese state system was arranged according to cosmological principles into three consecutive strata: (i) the capital; (ii) the inner provinces; and (iii) the outer province and semi-autonomous tributary states (Heine-Geldern 1965, 7). Due to poor transportation and communication system, the power of the King and the central government over the provinces tended to decrease at distance. Through the Chakri reformation, the position of the King was transformed from, in Wilson's words, "a mysterious magical being into an exalted and powerful administrative president" (1962, 99). And the King held both the legislative and administrative powers. By replacing the traditional state system with the western-styled, centralized, and functionally specialized administrative system of ministers and provincial officials,
King Chalalongkorn paved the way for Siam to become a modern nation-state under the absolute kingship. Thus, the meaning of the Chakri Reformation should be realized not only in terms of the modernization of the country in response to the threat of western colonialism, but also in terms of the endeavors of the Chakri King to minimize the power of the nobility, and consolidate the power of the absolute rule of the monarchy. However, it is quite paradoxical that the very instrument that made the Chakri monarchs capable of consolidating their power, i.e. the modern bureaucracy and military, at the end turned against their own creator, and demolished the absolute monarchy.

For one thing, the expansion of the bureaucracy and the increase in westernized-educated people resulted in the emergence of a new class, i.e. the civil-military bureaucrats, whose power derived from their control over state apparatuses. This gradually eroded the position of the absolute kingship as aptly pointed out by M.R. Sukhumband Paribatra:

> With western education came western political ideas, and with western political ideas came growing skepticism and rejection of monarchical absolutism. ...By nature, the new bureaucracy was not a subservient and passive tool of the monarchy but an institution of its own right, with its own behavior patterns, esprit de corp, standards of professionalism, and conception of goals, interests and functions, and the growth of its power, as modernization proceeded apace, could not but be a challenge to the survival of the traditional polity. (Sukhumband 1983, 38)

In addition, as implied from the above argument, the Chakri
Reformation unintentionally created the inherent conflict within the structure of the reformed political system. Through King Chulalongkorn's reform, the functions and roles of the royal families expanded and turned out to be more important in both the administration and policy-making processes as the King encouraged princes to study abroad and returned home to take high positions in all new ministries. This policy inevitably led to the conflict with the bureaucrats since the nature of the modern functional bureaucracy was one which laid stress on the merit system as opposed to nepotism and favoritism tied with the royal blood of the absolute monarchical system. The monopolization of offices by the royal elite and its favorites which limited their access to the top positions of the bureaucratic hierarchy, was one of the main source of resentment and opposition of the new bureaucrats against the absolute rule of the Chakri Kings (see Thawee, 1972:57). The new bureaucrats perceived that they had been blocked from participation in the decision-making of national affairs. Their resentment on these accounts could be felt throughout their manifesto as partly quoted at the beginning of this chapter. These dissatisfied bureaucrats formed the counter-elite group that gradually turned against the existing power of the absolute monarchy. Thus, in one sense, the 1932 coup was a manifestation as well as the end product of the power struggle between the two principal classes in the Siamese
society in the early twentieth century, i.e. the royalty and the commoners-turned-civil-military bureaucrats.

No less important, the royal decline was also due to the conducts of the monarchs themselves. The logic of governance under the absolute kingship unavoidably threw the responsibility for maintaining good government to the person of the King. In Thai tradition, the responsibility of the King was even more. As Siddhi Butr-Intr observed:

As the leader, ruler, protector of the people, the king is entrusted with great responsibilities:...he is deemed responsible, directly or indirectly, for all the bad and good things of his subjects. Everything in this country is right if the ruler is righteous: the shortage of rainfall and crops, dangers from famine, pestilence, disease, war, and even from evil spirits that overcome the people_all of these are thought to be caused by the king's fault, and the people would complain and suspect that he does no longer practice his royal virtues and is not righteous in ruling the kingdom. (Siddhi 1973, 152)

Unfortunately, King Chulalongkorn's sons, Vajiravudh and Prajadhipok, who succeeded to the throne respectively were not as able as their father. King Vajiravudh pay little attention to the administration and government affairs, and spent most of his time for the pursuit of his desired and expensive lifestyle (see Anderson 1978, 230; Sukhumband 1983, 42-45; and Vella 1978). His negligence of the duty of providing good government to cope with the forces of change unleashed by the Chakri Reformation had grave effect on the legitimacy of the absolute monarchy of the Chakri monarchs. As King Prajadhipok observed in the first year of his reign:
In the reign which has just ended, thing got much worse. ...The King has become a person liable to be influenced by anybody who could gain the ears of a favorite. Every official is more or less suspected of embezzlement or nepotism. ...What was very regrettable was that the Court was heartily detested and in the later years was on the verges of being ridiculed. (Batson 1974, 15)

To restore confidence of the people in the monarchy, and to find some sort of guarantee for the person of the King, King Prajadhipok established the Supreme Council of State, an advisory body which in practice acted as a working cabinet administering the kingdom. The King's attempt yielded regrettable results. The fact that the King filled all the seats of the Council with senior members of the royal family whose ideas and perceptions were rather conservative not only aggravated resentment of the modern-minded bureaucrats over the royal oligarchy, but also delayed necessary reforms in the political structure to accommodate the interests of the bureaucrats and to cope effectively with challenges from forces of change in the political system and from the deteriorating economy (Batson 1984, 129-153). The prospect of the absolute monarchy was doomed when the worldwide economic depression hit Siam in the early 1930s. The royal policy of retrenchment, no matter how reasonable it was in dealing with the Great Depression, destroyed the government credibility in the eyes of the people, especially the bureaucrats who suffered most from that policy. Their salaries were cut while taxes on salaries increased. The inequitable nature of the taxes
which imposed the burden on the middle-class government officials and employees of western-styled firms while leaving the royalty, the higher nobility, and the Chinese merchant untouched aroused more dissatisfaction against the royal government (Batson 1984, 220-221). Just within two months after the new taxes had been announced, the 1932 coup occurred.

The failure to reverse the decline of the absolute monarchy was partly due to the weak personality of King Prajadhipok himself. While the country at that time needed a strong leader to lead the country through hardship, the King's personal attributes fell short of the expectancy. M.R. Sukhumband Paribatra summed up his personality as follow:

Though very intelligent, he was perhaps a trifle ordinary in terms of native ability when compared to other Chakris, which made him overly conscious of his own limitations. Furthermore, he was persistently troubled by inner torment concerning himself, his own suitability of high office, and the future of his kingdom. (Sukhumband 1983, 46)

King Prajadhipok did have a liberal mind and wanted to introduce constitutionalism to Siam as he was well aware that the absolute monarchy could not be long maintained. However, his weak personality influenced him to prefer gradual steps of reform to an intensive and drastic change. Before every significant decision was made, he would consult the Council of State, and bow to its resolution. And even if he were convinced that the reform should be quickened,
depended. While the King might intend to use the speech to enlist the sympathy of the officers, it turned out to be the best justification of the overthrow of the absolute monarchy.

The Post Monarchical Decline

In practice, the power and influence of the monarchy was not immediately curtailed after the 1932 coup. During the first year of the constitutional monarchy, the King and the royalist element still exerted substantial political influence. However, the monarchical power began to decline drastically after the chain of events which developed from 1933 onwards, culminating in the abdication of King Prajadhipok in March 1935.

At the beginning, it seemed that the new regime would proceed with goodwill and high hope through the cooperation and compromise between the King and the coup promoters. To a significant extent, the quick success in the abolition of the absolute monarchy was due to the cooperation of the King. The acceptance of King Prajadhipok as a constitutional monarch facilitated a peaceful transformation from the absolute monarchy to the constitutional rule. The cooperation of the King helped reduced the problems of foreign intervention and the recognition of the new government (Charivat 1985, 105-120). Because of the importance of the monarchy on these accounts, the new regime emerged with compromise characteristics. On the part of the
his lacking of self-confidence would have prevented him to impose his will on his royal advisors. One may think that the fate of the Chakri absolute monarchy would have not been as it was if the King had a will to use more of his absolute power to demand and push through reforms.

The King's weak personality was aggravated by his poor health. In the last years of the absolute monarchy, his declining health prevented him from taking charge of the day-to-day administration, and the task was passed to his half-brother, Prince Paribatra. The King, in 1931, left for the United States and Canada to seek medical treatment. When he came back, he seemed to be more pessimistic about the situation of the country, and thought that it was beyond his capacity (see Batson, 1984:148). Worse still, the King admitted his inability in public. In the speech he delivered to an assembly of military officers in February 1932, the King said:

I personally thought that I was born to cut things down. From the beginning I have been cutting and now I am forced to cut down the more and I do not know what the future still holds. ...The present situation is beyond me. ...I myself do not profess to know much about the matter and all I can do is to listen to the opinions of others and choose the best. I never experienced such a hardship; therefore if I have made a mistake I really deserved to be excused by the officials and people of Siam. (Batson 1974, 77-80)

Nothing was wrong with such a statement if the person who delivered it was an ordinary man. But this statement was made by the King, the absolute King who was the principal axis of the society upon which the fate of the whole nation
royal family, only Prince Paribatra was forced to leave the country as he was perceived as the strongman of the old regime. On the part of the coup promoters, they formally apologized to the King for the extreme position expressed in the manifesto. The coup promoters did not assume power at once. They invited Phraya Manopakorn Nitidhada, a conservative royalist, to form a new government, and become the first prime minister of the country and the chairman of the constitutional drafting committee, while only Pridi amongst all the coup promoters was appointed to that committee (Brailey 1986, 53). As the choice of the chairman of the drafting committee implied, the process of drafting the permanent constitution was undertaken in an active consultation with the King. The permanent constitution was proclaimed at the end of 1932.

However, the cooperation between the King and the coup promoters was short-lived. The problem of who should have what power and how much could not be satisfactorily resolved and led to the deadlock conflict between King Prajadhipok and the coup promoters. The fact that both King Prajadhipok and the coup promoters wanted to see democracy in Siam did not automatically warrant that they could find mutually acceptable agreement. As Seksan Prasertkul pointed out, democracy is a relative concept; thus, the most important question to be asked is whose democracy under whose leadership (1982, 62-68). It is by asking such a
question that we can understand the irreconcilable conflict between the monarchy and the People's Party. For King Prajadhipok, although he agreed to accept the limit of his power under a constitution, he wanted the monarchy to have an active and constructive role in the new order especially during the unsettled period of political transition. The King argued, with reasons, that so long as the majority of the people in Siam did not fully understand the democratic political process, and consciously and actively participated in the political system, the King had to have sufficient power to counterbalance the government power in order to prevent "any individual or any group to use [power] in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people" (Batson 1974, 102). One may understand the King's logic better if one realizes that the Chakri Dynasty from the beginning has acted as an institution of enlightened leadership which, in turn, has helped create its foundation of legitimacy (see Wyatt 1966). And the Chakri monarchs for a long time have virtually identified themselves with the kingdom and the people. Thus, according to King Prajadhipok, whatever the democratic regime in Siam was going to be, the monarchy has to have a place, a meaningful place, in it.

The first conflict between the King and the People's Party emerged in early 1933 when Pridi presented his national economic plan (Landon 1939, 18). King Prajadhipok
rejected the plan because he thought it follow the communist system. In his critique, he bluntly concluded:

I do not know whether Stalin copied Laung Pradit [Pridi] or whether Laung Pradit copied Stalin. ...This is the same program which has been used in Russia. If our government adopted it, we would have assisted the Third International to achieve its aim of world communism. ...Siam would have become the second communist state after Russia. (Thawatt 1972, 158)

Pridi's economic plan also provoked opposition from the conservative wing within the government leading by the prime minister, Mano. Pridi withdrew his plan and left the country to calm down the problem. Having the King on his side, Mano took further steps by circulating the King's critique and issuing the first anti-communist act to be used against the return of Pridi. The Mano government also closed the National Assembly and suspended some articles of the constitution (Keyes 1989, 64).

The offensive action and the rising influence of the conservative-royalist faction no doubt caused an increasing sense of insecurity as well as fear of the restoration of the absolute monarchy on the part of the victors of 1932. Pahon and Pibulsongkram, the two leading military members of the People's Party, decided to stage the second coup against the Mano government in June 1933. Pahon became prime minister, and Pibul, as deputy to Pahon, acted as a protector of the new regime which provided him an opportunity to hold a firm grip over the opposition of the new regime. Pridi was recalled home to join the Pahon
government. After that, tension between the government and King Prajadhipok never relaxed, and even deteriorated when the Bowaradej Rebellion occurred. In October 1933, Prince Bowaradej, the former Minister of War of the old regime, led the provincial troops from the Northeast against the government. Accusing the government of encouraging disrespect of the King and fostering communism, the rebels called upon the government to resign and return power to the King (Batson 1984, 247-248). After fierce fighting erupted near the present Don Muang Airport, Bowaradej's forces were crushed by government troops led by Pibul. During the revolt, while many royalists gave moral and financial support to the rebels, the King, who at that time was out of Bangkok, appeared to be neutral and addressed his regret to the public that Thai were killing Thai (Batson, 1984:248). It is interesting to note that two months before the rebellion, the King had written to James Baxter, the financial advisor, commenting that:

> If the Princes were to attempt to lead the Royalist, it would be the end of the monarchy. If the Royalist are to do anything they must find a leader from their own ranks. (Tarling 1976, 25)

The royalist had to wait until the end of the Second World War that they could "find a leader from their own ranks" as the King suggested, about which we will discuss in the next chapter. In similar words, the King gave British officials his opinion about the rebellion in December 1933:

> No movement which had for its apparent object the
It was foredoomed to failure, and for that reason, I was strongly opposed to Prince Bowaradej or any other member of the princely order heading such movement. If Prince Bowaradej had abstained, the forces of the moderate [anti-government] party would certainly have gained the upper hand in Bangkok, and recent history would have been different. (Tarling 1976, 20-21)

The failure of the Bowaradej Rebellion, as Prince Devawongse Varodaya wrote, "has done a lot of harm to the cause of the Princes" (Devawongse to Sayre, 23 February 1934). Some were arrested, while others chose to leave the country. Suspicion, fear and distrust between the King and the conservative-royalist on the one hand and the government and its supporters on the other were abound and put the King in great difficulty. At the end of 1933, the King decided to go to England for his eye operation, despite the government's wish for his remaining in the country and offer to bring doctors to Bangkok. He and his family left the kingdom in the early 1934, and never returned until his death in 1941. The period from 1934 to 1935 was a year of bitter negotiations between King Prajadhipok and the government over various issues concerning the monarchical political power provided by the constitution, which included the power of the King to select and appointed members of the Upper House, the royal right to veto bills of the National Assembly, the royal right to give pardon, the annual royal budget, and the abolition of the Law of Constitutional Protection (Tippawan 1988, 347-387). Despite the King's threat of abdication, and the realization of his high status...
and importance in Siamese polity, the government politely turned down all of the King's proposals. Seeing that he could not anymore deal with the government, King Prajadhipok abdicated on March 2, 1935. In his abdication letter, he left critical remarks on the new regime—the words have since been often quoted and widely known:

I am willing to surrender the powers I formerly exercised to the people as a whole, but I am not willing to turn them over to any individual or any group to use in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people. (Batson 1974, 102)

The abdication of King Prajadhipok drew a curtain over the monarchical roles in the political arena, at least temporarily. Since then, the monarchy ceased to compete with the new elite, and was not again concerned with its constitutional power. The abdication of King Prajadhipok also affected the development of Siamese politics in such a way that it had to proceed without the King who otherwise could act as an upholder of the rule of the game, i.e. the constitution, at the time when there were not extra-bureaucratic forces to counter the power of the government and the bureaucracy.

King Prajadhipok renounced his right to name a successor. The decision regarding the succession of the throne was undertaken by the government and the National Assembly. There were a few princes who, according to the Law of Succession set in the reign of King Vajiravudh, could ascend the throne. With the suggestion of Pridi and some
other members of the National Assembly, the government and the Assembly unanimously selected a ten-year-old prince, Ananda Mahidol, whose late father, Prince of Songkhla, was the most apolitical of all King Chulalongkorn's major sons, to ascend the throne. The choice of the government and the Assembly for the new King reflected their attempt to neutralize the monarchical political power. This can be substantiated by the fact that Prince Paribatra, who, if he had wished, could have succeeded the throne after King Vajiravudh's death, and, therefore, had legitimate right according to the Law of Succession more than any other princes to ascend the throne, was bypassed by the government and the National Assembly because they feared that he would challenge and threaten the power of the new regime—the same reason why they forced him to leave the country right after the success of the 1932 coup.

Because King Ananda was still a minor, the Council of Regency was set up to exercise the royal power according to the constitution. The position of regent was not without difficulty. Several princes declined the invitation of the government to be members of the Council of Regency because they did not want to give any sign of cooperation with the new elite. And it turned out that Prince Anuwatara, the first president of the regency, committed suicide shortly after assuming that position because of the pressure from the accusation of the royalty that he was a "turncoat"
(Sulak 1988, 92). This, among other events, was a good indication of how deep the conflict between the royalty and the new elite was.

The young King Ananda spent all of his time studying and living in Switzerland with his family, and did not return to the kingdom, except only one short period, until 1945. During this period, Pibul, who became prime minister after Pahon's resignation in 1938, carried out various measures to undermine the prestige and power of the monarchy. To begin with, most of the traditional court ceremonies were suspended. The Royal Household, which used to be one of the most important ministries in the days of the absolute monarchy, was deprived by its ministerial status to the Bureau of the Royal Household, directed by the prime minister (Charnvit 1974, 37). Officials employed by the palace were drastically reduced in number. The measures against the monarchy had been intensified after an abortive conspiracy led by Phraya Song Suradej, a military leader of the conservative wing of the People's Party, in January 1939. Before the conspiracy came to be known, Pibul's life had been threatened by several attempts of assassination. It was reported that Phraya Song intend to restore King Prajadhipok or Prince Paribatra to the throne. Among those arrested and sentenced by the special court set by Pibul was Prince Rangsit of Jainad, one of the three surviving sons of King Chulalongkorn. Since Prince Rangsit's mother died
when he was very young, he was brought up by Queen Sawang Wattana, King Ananda's grandmother, and therefore, very close to Prince of Songkhla in brotherly friendship, and was the favorite uncle of King Ananda. Although he had never given the least sign that he was interested in politics, and despite vague, if not fake, evidence, Pibul suspected that he was a go-between between the ex-king and the conspirators (Chulachakrabongse 1960, 327). After a lengthy trial, Prince Rangsit was sentenced to death with some others, but later his sentence was reduced to life imprisonment and demotion to the status of a commoner. The event shocked the whole royalty. It also caused the breaking up of the Queen Grandmother's health. The Princess Mother, on behalf of King Ananda, requested from Switzerland that Prince Rangsit be exiled rather than kept in prison for all of his life, but the request was turned down by the government. It was reported that King Ananda nearly abdicated because of this event (Charivat 1985, 170). Clearly, Pibul wanted to use Prince Rangsit's case to discourage any other princes from thinking of the restoration of the old regime. Pibul took a further step by prohibiting the display in houses and public buildings of any pictures of King Prajadhipok. Moreover, his government sued the ex-King and his Queen for having wrongfully transferred some six million baht of Crown Property abroad. The ex-King lost the case and his property in the country was confisticated (Charnvit 1974, 36-37).
Queen Rambaibarni later explained that by the time the dispute turned into a court wrangle, the compensation document which King Prajadhipok instructed before leaving the country that the fund should be drawn from his private estate of the Sukhodaya Palace to repay for the amount he withdrew from the Crown Property could not be found. The ex-King also proposed returning to fight the case, or staying in India to instruct his defence, but the government refused (Thak 1978, 19-20).

When Pibul successfully eliminated the monarchical power and influence, he carried out various policies as parts of his attempts to establish the foundation of legitimacy of his rule without referring to the monarchy. These policies, regrettably, did not revolve around the ideal of democracy which the People's Party once promised to bring to Siam. Instead, they were based on the idea of nationalism and expansionism. Interestingly, while Pibul claimed that his country would lead the country to a new era and emphasized the break with the past (Thamsook 1978, 235), we can draw close parallels between them and those of the Chakri monarchs. To begin with, while King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn used the abolition of several old Siamese custom as a starting point of their policies to accommodate with the western powers, Pibul came up with a similar argument that one pretext used by the western powers for intervening in a country was the "uncivilized" character of
its people. Thus, Pibul's policy began with a series of Rattha Niyom or cultural mandates to be used as guidelines of what were considered the "civilized" practices for Thai people to follow along their way to national greatness, some of which included wearing western trousers, skirts and hats, buying Thai goods, and eating noodles (Thamsook 1978, 235). Pibul's nationalist policy became more intensified when he carried out an anti-Chinese policy as a rallying point to arouse nationalist sentiment among Thai people. This, again, were similar to the anti-Chinese policy of King Vajiravudh with the exception that the latter's was mainly verbal while Pibul's policy took drastic discriminated action against the Chinese.

To generate the popularity and legitimacy of his regime, Pibul also implemented an expansionist policy against the neighboring countries, which was also paralleled to the policy taken by King Rama I. Before the Pacific War, Pibul, with the mediating assistance of Japan, annexed territories from French Indochina which Siam had lost to the French in the reign of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn. During the Pacific War, Siam, with the help of Japan, also gained some territories from both British Burma and British Malaya. The success in Indochina brought Pibul great popularity. He was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. It was interesting to note that after he became Field Marshal, he want to obtain the baton of King Vajiravudh.
But Pridi objected that this baton was meant for the King only, and not for ordinary people; Pibul should order a new one for himself (Thawee 1972, 74).

The most importance of Pibul's policies during his first premiership might be his decision to join the "Co-prosperity Sphere" with Japan and declare war against the United States and Great Britain. Although within different circumstances, Pibul's decision to enter World War II could be compared with King Vajiravudh's decision to enter World War I. Pibul's legitimacy and regime could have been strengthened and lasted, if, and only if, he had won the war.

At the peak of his power, his confidence in his power over the monarchy was evident through his speech given to a meeting of his cabinet:

Japan has its emperor as a unifying axis. But we do not have anything like that. What we have are Nation, Religion, Monarch and Constitution. However, Nation is but an abstract; Religion cannot provide enough faith; Monarch is just a minor whom you can see only in a picture; Constitution is only a book; ...therefore, I want you all to follow me, the prime minister. (The Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting, No.20/2485, 25 April 1942)

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab was probably unaware that that he described at the beginning of King Prajadhipok's reign that the King received the "deplorable inheritance" would turn out to be a prophecy. Difficulty which the King had to confront were much more than the problems left by his brother__deteriorating state finance or disorder
administration. The more subtle problem with which the King and his royal coteries had to cope throughout his reign was how to safeguard the 150-year old Chakri Dynasty against forces of change in the society, unleashed by the Chakri Reformation while at the same time to find an appropriate way to modify the monarchy to accommodate with such forces. He did his best but failed. For good or ill, the Thai absolute monarchy came to an end, and what supposed to be a democratic regime emerged as a replacement. By the end of the 1930s, thanks to the purge carried out by Pibul, the royalist opposition force had died down. Practically, with the new King out of the country and still be a minor, the monarchy merely existed in form, not in substance. Indeed, as long as the leaders of the 1932 coup were able to remain in power, the monarchy would be powerless and could not develop its strength to be an active political force.
Chapter III
The Monarchical Resurgence

I shall reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej's oath on his coronation.

All the events since 1932 undoubtedly had left the marked impact, both physical and psychological, on the part of members of the royal family and the royalist element. They had turned into a dormant force for nearly a decade waiting for their time to recover. They knew that Siam would not, or, in fact, could not return to the days of the absolute monarchy. To regain their influence and power they had to play according to the new rule of the game, set by the new bureaucratic elite, be it democratic or authoritarian rule. From his own recollection, King Bhumibol revealed in 1982:

So I came [to the throne], when I was 18 years old. Now 36 years ago, quite a long time. When I came to this function...the palace was crumbling down. It was just after the war, and nobody had taken care much of things. I have to reconstruct. I don't demolish. I put things piece by piece. Slowly. For 36 years. So this reign is perhaps characterized with going step by step. Evolution. (National Geographic Oct.1982,491-492)

The process of the monarchical resurgence went slowly but successfully. Now from the days when "the palace was crumbling down," King Bhumibol has become the longest reigning monarch in Thai history, and, with him, the monarchy has turned out to be the most powerful and beloved institution for Thai people from all walks of life. There
are at least three main factors that account for this evolutionary process of the monarchical resurgence: the age-old legitimacy of the monarchy in Thai polity, the development of Thai politics after the end of World War II, and the personality and conducts of King Bhumibol himself, all of which we will analyzed in this chapter respectively.

The Legitimacy of the Monarchy

Throughout its long history Siam has never been without the monarchy at the top of its social hierarchy. And it is the only traditional political institution that has survived until the present. Being the center of the society, the guiding force of social changes and development, the link with the past, and the crucial basis of Thai political thought and culture, the monarchy has enabled to generate a belief in its legitimacy—gaining acceptance for its power in the eyes of ordinary people who have been governed by it. From the beginning the Thai monarchy has based its foundation of legitimacy on its relationship with the Thai religion. For many centuries, the Thai religion which has interwoven three religious components, i.e. the Theravada Buddhist, the Brahmanic, and the Phii or spirit served as a kind of cultural map, shaping the structure of the society and the worldview of its member, and providing the set of values and meanings by which the Thai live (see Kirsch 1976, 67–89). Thus, it follows logically that, traditionally, the legitimacy of the
Thai monarchy has been inseparable from the threefold amalgam of the Thai religion, through which Siam derived its conception of kingship. Before we discuss the traditional conception of the Thai kingship, it should be noted that particular kings or dynasties might emphasize different aspects and images of kingship or utilize all of them as circumstances warrant.

According to the Ramkamhaeng's inscription and others of its contemporaries, the kings of Sukhodaya were regarded as "father of the people" who provided protection and justice, and the people, in turn, gave him obedience and respect (see Damrong Rajanuphab 1959; and Griswold and na Nagara 1971). As Buddhism had already gained widespread acceptance throughout the kingdom, the paternal characteristic of the Sukhodaya kingship was influenced and reinforced by the Buddhist thought as evidenced in the kingly title "Dhammaraja," adopted by King Lidaya and his successors, which means a king who rules in accordance with the Dhamma or righteousness (Griswold and na Nagara 1973, 154-155). Although the relationship between the traditional conception of the Thai kingship and Buddhism is by no means simple, there is little doubt that the basis of this relationship lies in the Phra Thammasat, the fundamental code of law, strongly influenced by the Buddhist scriptures, which Siam received through its contact with the Mon of Dvaravati, and the Traipumi Phra Ruang, a Buddhist
literature, concerning the Buddhist cosmology, which was composed by King Lidaya (Dhani Nivat 1955, 93-96). The conception of kingship which Siam derived from the Phra Thammasat and Traipumi Phra Ruang was one of a king chosen by the people, and he was called "Mahasammata" or the Great Elected. The influence of this tradition has remained strong even in the Bangkok period. King Mongkut once said:

A person became king only because the people raised him so that he can protect them, externally against foreign invasion and internally against their own tending to take advantage of one another. (Neon 1960, 226)

The Buddhist conception of kingship contends that a king abides steadfast in the ten kingly virtues, constantly upholding the five common precepts and on holy days the set of eight precepts, living in kindness and goodwill to all being. He takes pain to study the Thammasat and to keep the four principles of justice, namely: to assess the right or wrong of service and disservice rendered to him, to uphold the righteous and truthful, to acquire rich through none but just means, and to maintain the prosperity of his state through none but just means. (Dhani Nivat 1955, 94)

In the Thai view, it is because the king rules in accordance with the Dhamma or kingly virtues that he can claim legitimacy as sovereign. Otherwise, his sovereignty can be rejected. It is also believed that any significant change in the society whether good or bad which may appear in the form of natural phenomena or human relations comes from the king's virtues or lack of virtues (Sombat and Chai-anan 1980, 11). The ten kingly virtues include: almsgiving, morality, liberality, rectitude, gentleness, self-restriction, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and non-
obstruction (Dhani Nivat 1955, 95). This idea of Dhamma-based legitimacy has been echoed by the Chakri Kings. To justify his accession to the throne and the dynasty change, King Rama I claimed that he came to restore the prosperity of Buddhism and the purity of the Sangha (the organization of the Buddhist monks) as well as the Buddhist scriptures which had suffered from the Burmese invasion and King Taksin's misconduct during the later years of his reign (Wyatt 1982, 14-27). He and his successors stipulated that the King should be "defender of Buddhism. As "defender of Buddhism," the king give material support to the Sangha, such as the establishment and repair of monastery buildings, the offering of food and clothing to monks, and the donation of land for the monasteries. The King also enters the priesthood for some times. With the royal support, the Sangha functions as maintainer of the Dhamma; and the Dhamma, in turn, provides the King with the righteous norm to rule. The King who rules in conformity with this norm is legitimated as Dhammaraja (Ishii 1986, 153)

The paternal and Buddhist concept of kingship was enriched by the notion of Devaraja or divine kingship when the kingdom of Ayudhya had absorbed the cultural influence from its Khmer neighbor. The concept of Devaraja characterizes the king as an incarnation of the Hindu god, such as Vishnu or Siva, and the king is invested with the responsibility of regulating the progression of the seasons
and the natural powers of fertility and productivity
(Reynolds 1973, 42). While H.G.Q. Wales (1965, 16-17)
contended that the basis for the conception of absolute
kingship of the Ayudhyan period was the combination of the
divine kingship theory and the conception of the king as
Bothisatya, an incipient Buddha, Prince Dhani Nivat
perceived that the notion of the divine kingship in fact
gave outward dignity to such ceremonies as the
coronation and royal obsequies. ...Since the cult of
divinity was Hindu and rather involved, all this had no
significance in Siam beyond outward dignity. (Dhani
Nivat 1955, 101)

Although Prince Dhani Nivat's account seems valid, we cannot
reject that while the Buddhist conception of kingship helps
identify and integrate the monarchy with the people, the
divine kingship conception raises the position of the king
from the father-liked, people-elected ruler to the sacred
entity. Come with the divine kingship is the series of
court etiquettes and royal rites and ceremonies associated
with the Brahmanic tradition that sanctify the person of the
king, e.g. the coronation ceremony, the oath of allegiance
to the king, the special kind of language used for the king
and the royalty in address and reference, the various taboos
concerning the person of the king, and etc. The sanctity of
the king has been still preserved until the present as
stipulated in every constitution that "the person of the
King is sacred and inviolable." Undoubtedly, such inherent
sanctity in itself has an important bearing on the
legitimacy of the monarchical institution.

The conception of the Thai kingship has also been influenced by the indigenous belief of Thai people in the Phii or spirit. As found in the Ramkamhaeng's inscription, the acceptance of Theravada Buddhism did not demolish the belief in the Phii of the people of Sukhodaya. Besides their devotion to Theravada Buddhism, they believed that there was a special relationship between their prosperity and the realm and reverence for Phra Khapoong, characterized by the inscription as "Phii-Thevada" who lived in the nearby mountain (Kirsch 1976, 68). The tradition of Phra Khapoong seems to last to the present as shown in the Phra Siam Devathiraj cult. Phra Siam Devathiraj is a deity image created by the order of King Mongkut; its name literally means the great tutelary god of Siam. Many Thai people believe that this deity has helped the country go through any difficulty and turmoil. Such an indigenous belief influences the conception of the Thai kingship in terms of the king being perceived as the one who possessed a special relationship to the great tutelary deities of the territory whose favor was considered to be essential to the maintenance and prosperity of the kingdom (Reynolds 1973, 41).

As long as the worldview of the Thai people shaped by the religion could be well preserved, the traditional conception of the Thai kingship would go on unchallenged,
and the religion would be sufficient as the only source from which the monarchy derived its legitimacy. But it is impossible to isolate the Thai society from the new ideas and the contact with foreigners outside the region, and then avoid changes. Thus, in order to survive and be relevant to the changing socio-political environment, the monarchy needs to have dynamism to accommodate with the new environment. Fortunately, as implied by its durability, the Thai monarchy has possessed high capability in adjusting itself to cope with changes and challenges; the adjustment of the Chakri monarchs from the beginning is the best illustration. The conception of kingship of the Chakri monarchs departed substantially from that of the Ayudhyan Kings who emphasized the Brahmanic theory of the divine kingship. The shift in the conception did not mean that King Rama I or his successors lost true understanding of the meanings and implications of the Brahmanic tradition and ceremonies. To be sure, the Chakri Kings preserved, and continues to do so, the tradition and ceremonies associated with the Brahmanic conception. But they perceived that the excessive nature of the divine kingship had corrupted the Kings of Ayudhya and to a significant extent contributed to the destruction of the kingdom (Wyatt 1982, 26-27). Due to this belief and the necessity to find the new base of support for the newly established dynasty whose ancestry was not the royalty, King Rama I and his successors appealed to a more egalitarian
principle of Buddhism and the Buddhist conception of kingship.

The adjustment of the Chakri Kings had been carried out more thoroughly in the nineteenth century when Siam was threatened by the western imperialist powers. The contact with and the threat from the west as well as the fact that the society and the worldview of the people had undergone substantial changes inevitably caused the mythology associated with the Thammasat and the conception of the divine kingship gradually lost their legitimating force. In addition, the traditional administrative system and the territorial arrangement which had been organized according to the traditional cosmological worldview became obsolete and ineffectual in dealing with the threat from western imperialism. These altogether necessitated the modification and adjustment on the part of the monarchy; the process began in the reign of King Mongkut. Whether he was aware of the concept of nation or not, his greater emphasis on the common history of the country paved the way for the nation-building process, carried out by his successors. His historical discovery of the Ramkamhaeng's inscription enabled him to proudly confirm that Thai civilization could be traced back at least to the thirteenth century. He revived the Sukhodaya traditions of "king as father" and lodging a petition (see Chapter V) which had been long neglected throughout the Ayudhyan period, and, like his
predecessors, continued to play down the excessive tradition of the divine kingship. King Mongkut also brought the monarchy closer to the people by his frequent trip outside the palace and the capital and his numerous proclamations he issued, showing his concerns to the well-being of the people.

For one thing, the timely shift in the conception of kingship of the Chakri monarchs from the emphasis on the Brahmanic theory of divine kingship to the Buddhist aspect of the righteous and paternalistic king lessened the arrogance and rigidity associating with the Brahmanic tradition, which usually provoked dissatisfaction on the part of the western powers, and, therefore, helped prevent them to use such dissatisfaction as a pretext to take over the country. In addition, had the Chakri Kings placed more emphasis on the theory of divine kingship, it was certain that they would have had no place in the new constitutional regime because the nature of the two traditions were inconsequent with each other. But with the idea of the righteous king and king as father, the Chakri monarchs has been able to act effectively within the new regime as a symbol of virtues of politics, exemplifying the good conduct, to which both the government and the people can follow.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Chakri reformation in the reign of King Chulalongkorn added the
image of "king as a modernizer" to the conception of the Thai kingship. Modern systems of administration, education and communication were initiated and developed throughout his reign. That Chulalongkorn's reform as well as the skillful conduct in foreign policy of his government successfully alleviated the external danger of western occupation not only helped the Chakri Dynasty avoid the tragic fate which its neighbors had to suffered, but also strengthened its own legitimate position as the national heroes who successfully maintained the independence of the country. It also enabled the monarchy to be the guiding force in the nation-building process which became the main concern of King Vajiravudh. To promote Thai nationalism, King Vajiravudh built three distinct foci of Thai civic identity, i.e. Monarchy, Nation and Religion. With this formulation well ingrained in the Thai polity, the monarchy has institutionalized its institution with the nationalist symbols. This fact has a significant political implication in the modern Thai politics, as pointed out by Ben Anderson:

The prevailing [political] rhetoric had typically been conservative, conformist and royalist. It was the left that was always on the defensive, anxious to defend its nationalist credentials against charges of being "Chinese," "Vietnamese," "un-Thai" and "anti-monarchy." (Anderson 1977, 21)

Later, we will see again and again that the anti-monarchy charge as well as the trinity of "Nation, Religion, Monarchy" have been used, with effective results, by the status quo groups against the progressive forces in the
political struggle between them.

The decline of the monarchical power after the 1932 coup did not mean that the legitimacy of the monarchy was weakened. The fact that Siam has never been colonized by the western powers prevent the massive intrusion of western ideas and institutions into the Thai society. At the time when the absolute monarchy was overthrown, the deep-rooted traditional values had still been ingrained in the minds of the masses. Hence, it was very difficult for the People's Party to lay its foundation of legitimacy on such western concepts as constitutionalism and democracy. As Chai-anan (1985, 257) correctly pointed out, the problem faced by the People's Party after the 1932 coup was not the power vacuum, but rather a vacuum in terms of the absence of the legitimate symbol. At the time of its seizure of power, the People's Party proposed six principles, which it intended to materialize and use as its claim to power. The six principles included: freedom and equality of people in politics, law, court, and business; internal peace and order; economic well-being and work for all by means of economic planning; equality of privileges; freedom and liberty not conflicting with the foregoing, and education for all (Vella 1955, 371). However, after Pridi's failure to carried out his economic plan, the six principles, which were set by Pridi himself, lost its strength and no one in the People's Party was serious about implementing them. Later, there
were various policies carried out by Phibul as his attempt to build his own base of legitimacy (see Chapter II), but the nature of his policy did not help much to promote constitutionalism and democracy in Siam, which otherwise could lessen the importance of the monarchical position in the modern Thai polity. Thus, despite the 1932 coup and the abolition of the absolute monarchy, the monarchical legitimacy was, and continues to be, unmatched.

The well-grounded royal legitimacy has created the monarchical resilience and reservoir of popular faith and support which helped revive the monarchy. Through the infusion of such modern concept as nation and modernization to the traditional conception of the Thai kingship, the Thai monarchy has been able to expand its pool of legitimacy beyond the realm of religion and maintain its significance and meaning within the modern context of the Thai society.

Given the place of the monarchy in Thai political culture as the supreme holder of legitimacy, the monarchy from the beginning of the constitutional period has had a political function as the legitimizer of the bureaucratic polity, which was initially signified by the fact that it was King Prajadhipok, rather than the People's Party, who proclaimed the 1932 Constitution. Thus, in modern Thai politics, as observed by M.R. Sukhumband Paribatra:

Royal approval, implicit or explicit, voluntary or induced, is seen to be a sine qua non of success by bureaucrats in the pursuit of their collective or individual goals and accordingly is sought after;
conversely, royal disapprobation, real or assumed, is a usable sanction against activities, condemned as "lese majesty" or "communistic," which may stand in the way of bureaucrats' ambitions and goals or endanger their positions and power. (Sukhumband 1983, 56)

The monarchical function as a source of legitimacy turned out to be important in Thai bureaucratic politics especially after the Second World War when the political struggle among the bureaucrats had been acute, and it was this role as the political legitimizer that principally contributed to the monarchical resurgence. How the Thai politics after the Second World War proceeded and how it affected the monarchy are now our attention.

Postwar Politics

The Thai politics after World War II up until the 1957 coup was one of the most unstable periods of the constitutional regime, during which there were fourteen cabinets, six different prime ministers, three successful coups, five rebellions and four constitutions. Despite its almost disappearance from the political scene, the monarchy, at the end, benefited from the volatile bureaucratic politics of this period as it managed to return to its long-lost influential and meaningful position. In contrast, by 1957 not only had the People's Party shattered, but all of its leading members had fallen from power or voluntarily retired. There were four main events of the postwar politics that underlined the resurgence of the monarchy: the return of the royalist as an active political force; King
Ananda's death and the fall of Pridi; the 1947 coup, resulting in the military ascendancy in the Thai politics; and Sarit's 1957 coup.

The Second World War left dramatic effects on the Thai politics. For one thing, it completely destroyed the fragile unity of the People's Party. From the beginning, the People's Party had proceeded on the basis of having a common enemy, not a common ideology. It was the purpose of overthrowing the absolute monarchy that helped the dissatisfied civilian and military factions to form a coalition named the People's Party. Thus, after that purpose had been achieved, the conflicting ideal and ambitions of its leaders came to emerge, as initially seen in the case of the plot of Phraya Song against Pibul, and vice versa. Then, with the resignation of Pahon from the premier, the remaining major leaders of the People's Party were Pibul and Pridi. Although it was reported that Pibul was jealous of Pridi and Pridi's ideology was significantly different from Pibul's (Thawee 1972, 73-74). Pridi was still in Pibul's cabinet until the outbreak of the Pacific War, and the two leaders seemed tolerant to each other. But the coming of the Second World War to Siam pushed the conflict between Pibul and Pridi to the point of no return. Pridi strongly opposed Pibul's policy to ally with the Japanese and the Axis powers and, later, declare war against the United States and Great Britain. Pibul reshuffled the
cabinet and Pridi was moved to the Council of Regency, the prestigious but non-political position. However, the position of regent gave Pridi the best shield to form an underground resistance movement against the Japanese and the Axis powers, known as the Free Thai Movement or "Seri Thai." Before the War ended, Pridi and other civilian politicians, such as Khuang Abhaiwongse and Thawee Bunyaketu succeeded in manoeuvering the members of the National Assembly to oust Pibul from premiership. And Khuang became prime minister.

As the War ended and the People's Party shattered, the political arena, which had used to be dominated by the members of the 1932 coup group, was open for new alliances. One was the military group with Pibul as its accepted leader and based mainly on the army. The second group, centering on Pridi was rooted in parliament and the civil service. The third group, considerably smaller in number, but not in potential, was the traditional royalist. The group was led by Khuang and the Pramoj brother, Seni and Kukrit (Wilson 1962, 180). Undoubtedly right after the War, Pridi, the leader of the Free Thai movement in the country, became the most prominent figure in the Thai politics. From his position as regent, he was able to engineer a smooth political transition from Phibul's autocratic-oriented regime to the hands of the civilians in 1944-1945. With the fall of Phibul, the power of the military group was contended. It appeared that the civilian had the military
under their control for a few years.

The Second World War also gave a chance to the royalist to make a political comeback with the cooperation with Pridi. During the War, the royalist were the spearhead of the Free Thai Movement outside the country. In Washington, Seni, Siam's minister plenipotentiary, overruled Phibul's declaration of war against the United States, and started the Free Thai Movement in the U.S. Washington supported Seni's action and agreed to recognize Siam as an independent country after the War (Ray 1972, 19). In England, Prince Subha Svasti, Queen Rambaibarni's brother, headed the Free Thai Movement under the British 136 Command (Charivat 1985, 326). The movement of the royalist during the War enabled them to gain a political say in postwar politics. The uncertain status of Siam after the War urged Pridi to seek cooperation with Seni whom he perceived as the most appropriate person to negotiate the treaties to liquidate the state of war with the Allied Powers. Thus, it was agreeable among the Thai political leaders that Khuang's government had to be replaced by Seni's, since otherwise, the Allies might have the feeling, however mistaken, that they were to deal with the government which collaborated with Japan during the wartime (Thawee 1972, 108). At the beginning of September 1945, Thawee formed a caretaker government, waiting for Seni who was on the way back home to assume premiership. That Pridi needed to
cooperate with the royalist also came from the fact that he wanted to reconcile the resentment between the new elite of the 1932 coup group and the royalist element in order to develop and strengthen the parliamentary system and minimize the political role and influence of the army and keep it out of politics. To reach such reconciliation and cooperation Pridi complied to the royalist's demand, posed by Prince Subha Svasti during the War, to free all of the political prisoners since the Bowaradej Rebellion, leading to the proclamation of the Amnesty Act of 1945 (Peuy 1972, 34-35). Pridi also initiated the amendment of the 1932 Constitution, and one of his proposals was the abolition of the clause that prohibited high-ranked members of the royal family from participating in politics (Sorasak 1988, 184). In addition, an invitation was sent to King Ananda, then at the age of twenty, to return from his wartime refuge in Switzerland to proclaim the new constitution and assume his crown functions. After the King's return in December 1945, the Council of Regency was terminated, and the King appointed Pridi "Senior Statesman."

However, the cooperation between Pridi and the royalist was short-lived. Despite his goodwill, Pridi could not win the royalist's suspicion of, or even hatred for, his ideological orientation, manifested in the manifesto of the People's Party and his national economic plan, which the royalist perceived as being anti-monarchy. Seni's relation
to Pridi quickly turned sour due to their disagreement in the treaty issue. Pridi wanted the treaty with Great Britain to be signed without delay to ease the pressure from the British, but Seni thought that some of the British demands in the treaty would jeopardize the sovereignty and independence of the country. According to Seni:

Pridi wanted to undermine my position as a national hero. After the treaty was signed, he could make me a scapegoat and pled that Prime minister Seni Pramoj had signed away the right and honor of Thailand. At least, this sort of manoeuvering chimed well with Pridi's temperament, which, I was aware, could not stand anybody whom he suspected to be of superior calibre and greater popularity. (Seni 1972, 165)

With the adult King on the throne, the royalist might think that now the political tide was again running in their favor. Many of the royalist led by Kukrit and some of the recently released political prisoners aimed at using the parliamentary as their base to operate political competition with Pridi's group. They formed a political grouping, named "Koa Na" or the Advance Party, which later was transformed to the "Prajadhipat" or Democrat Party, headed by Khuang and Seni. What pushed Khuang who used to be a member of the People's Party to side with the royalist came mainly from his conflict with Pridi over the amendment of the constitution. Khuang, like King Prajadhipok, wanted to preserved the royal right to appoint members of the Upper House, but Pridi wanted them to be elected by the Lower House. Pridi won, which later gave him a chance to pack the Upper House with his supporters. The conflict between the
two leaders was aggravated after Seni dissolved parliament, following by a general election in the late 1945. Khuang, reelected to parliament, managed to win the Assembly votes, and formed a new cabinet. But he resigned unexpectedly a few months later because he felt that Pridi was frustrated with his victory over Pridi's men, Direk Jayanam, and the Pridi consequently was maneuvering against him from the outside through Pridi's faction in the Assembly. Thus, he gave way to Pridi and became the leader of the opposition party (see Brailey 1986, 117-118).

After Pridi became prime minister, the royalist Democrat vehemently attacked him and his government from every possible angle, such as partisanship, the politicization of the Free Thai Movement, the accusation of communism and republicanism, the government inability to solve economic problems and corruption among Pridi's supporters (see Sorasak 1988, 240-247). Pridi handled the situation aptly, and he could have continued to do so, if one of the most tragic incident in the Thai history had not occurred on June 9, 1946, which would provide the royalist Democrat the most effective tool against Pridi, King Ananda's mysterious death.

Staying in the country for several months, King Ananda won the hearts and respect of the Thai people. His charm, his youth and his genuine concern for his people and country brought the people new hope and enthusiasm. His
relationship with the government went well and it seemed that the bitterness in the past between the new elite and the monarchy was fading away. Suddenly, just about on the eve of the King's projected state visit to the United States, the whole kingdom learned with extreme shock and sorrow that he was died of a mysterious gunshot wound received in his head. This case has still been mysterious partly because a postmortem examination could not be done properly since the wound had been dressed and sewn by the order of the Princess Mother right after the incident, and there was little things, relating to the King's body and its surroundings, preserved for the investigation. Prince Rangsit also refused the postmortem to be operated on the basis of the royal tradition relating to the person of the King (see Kruger 1966). After the discussion between Pridi and high-ranked members of the royal family presided by Prince Rangsit about how to inform the public and at the same time preserve the honor of the King, the government gave an announcement stating that the King had been sick from diarrhea for some days, and in the morning of June 9 he had still been in his bed where he played with a gun, which accidentally shot himself (Suphot 1983, 33-34). This announcement was the beginning of the difficulty for Pridi and his government. The next day after the King's death, doctors and nurses from Sirirat Hospital were called to prepare the King's body for the royal funeral. It appeared
that their opinion about the cause of the King's death, which soon after was revealed to the press, was in conflict with that announced by the government. Pridi hastily set up a commission of enquiry to investigate the King's death, but it was too late to stop rumors which had been rampant throughout Bangkok and other big cities.

Amidst the tragedy, the government and the National Assembly unanimously invited Prince Bhumibol, King Ananda's brother, to ascend the throne. After the royal obsequies, the new King, together with his mother, left for Switzerland to finish his study. Again, the Council of Regency was set up, presided by Prince Rangsit. King Ananda's death not only prolonged the royal inactivity in the conduct of state affairs, but also indirectly affected the development of democracy in Siam. Because of the uncertainty of the cause of King Ananda's death, some members of the Democrats Party seized this opportunity to launch a covert campaign accusing Pridi of regicide (see Thawee, 1972:117). For those who had been dissatisfied with the new elite and suspicious of Pridi for his communistic or republican orientation, the charge confirmed their worst fears. The Democrat move against Pridi shook the foundation of his political dominance and has continued to do much harm to his reputation and credibility. Within two months Pridi resigned amidst the hysterical rumors concerning the King's death, and Luang Thamrong Navasavas, one of his supporters, became prime
minister. But due to government scandals of corruption and mismanagement as well as economic hardship after the War, the credibility and prestige of the Pridi-dominated Thamrong government declined, and the situation was worsened by the attack from the Democrat Party in parliament. It can be said that the manoeuvre of the Democrat Party by using the mystery of King Ananda's death as its rallying point aroused the loyalty to the monarchy and effectively mobilized the conservative forces, especially the army against Pridi and his supporters. In addition, this might be the first time in the constitutional period that the monarchy had been used by one political group as an instrument in its political struggle against the other.

The confusion and disorder of the parliamentary system provided the army, whose influence and prestige has been shorn off after the War, the best pretext to stage a coup, which took place on November 8, 1947. From this time onwards, the parameters of Thai political life have been characterized by the predominance of the military, especially the army. The coup group place Pibul as its leader although he did not directly involve in the conspiracy from the beginning (La-iad 1972, 209-210). The coup in fact was organized by two retired officers: Lt.Gen. Phin Choonhawan and Col. Luang Kat Katsongkhram, with the support from two on duty officers in the army: Col. Phao Sriyanonda, Phin's son-in-law, and Col. Sarit Thanarat.
Again, the monarchy was used as a part of its justification for the seizure of power. The coup group charged that the government could not provide a satisfactory explanation for the King's death, and they came to find out the truth. However, the real motivation of the coup participants seemed to be their desire to restore the prestige and influence of the military, which had been discredited after the War. Pridi fled the country, and Luang Thamrong as well as other Pridi's major supporters went into hiding to avoid arrest. Since then Pridi has never again been able to return to a position of political power. He did try to come back but failed. In February 1949, Pridi, with the support from the navy, staged a coup which came to be known as "the Grand Palace Coup." After its failure, Pridi went into exile, and never returned to the country until his death in 1983.

With Pibul as its leader, the 1947 coup group at the beginning faced the problem of recognition from the international community especially from the United States and Great Britain. This probably explained why the coup group did not seize power immediately after the coup, but instead invited Khuang to form a caretaker government until a new election taking place in January 1948. What made the cooperation between the coup group, whose action could be perceived as a threat to the parliamentary system, and the Democrat Party, whose power was based in parliament, possible lied in the fact that they both had a common enemy,
Pridi. The attempt of Pridi to make a political return drove the 1947 coup group and the royalist to find more assurance that Pridi would have no more political future in Siam. A special committee, headed by Phra Pinitchonkadee, Seni's and Rukrit's brother-in-law, was set to reinvestigate the case of King's Ananda's death. Pridi was charged with regicide; a warrant of arrest was issued. Although Pridi's innocent has gradually been known, the stigma of regicide has hung over his reputation throughout his life. The coup group also pleased the royalist by abrogating the Pridi-initiated 1946 Constitution, and replacing it with an interim constitution which provided the throne more prerogative, e.g. the royal right to veto a bill, the reestablishment of the Privy Council and the royal right to appoint members of the Upper House, which was equal in size to the House of Representative (Yood 1972, 178). On this matter, the coup group might think that such provision would not affect their power much because the King was still out of the country. But the coup group did underestimate the Council of Regency who used the power on behalf of the King. As it turned out, the coup group did not succeed in naming their own followers to the Senate. Prince Rangsit, the president of the Council of Regency, ignored the coup group's list of recommended appointees on the ground that members of the Senate should have good reputation to gain national and international recognition (Chitrtrapat 1980,
150). Instead, he appointed those from among the country's elite which comprised of princes, nobles and wealthy businessmen. As Darling (1965, 185) pointed out, only eight senators were appointed from among the leadership of the 1947 coup. Thus, up to this point, although the bureaucratic elite seemed to give concession to the monarchy in regard to the constitutional power of the monarchy, which used to be the major source of conflict between King Prajadhipok and the 1932 elite, the conflict between the monarchy and the bureaucratic elites in this matter had not been satisfactorily solved.

With the favorable action of Prince Rangsit, the Democrat Party could enjoy the majority in both the Senate and the House of Representative. After the election, Khuang, again, became prime minister. The royalist might know that their political advantage rendered by the "interim" constitution could not be firmly assured. To strengthen their position, they began to work for a "permanent" one. Khuang's government established a forty-member Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution, consisting of members of the National Assembly and elected experts from a number of fields. Expectedly, most members of the Constituent Assembly were either the members of the Democrat Party or the royalist (Koson 1973, 18). However, Khuang's premiership did not last long enough to promulgate the constitution. Less than two months after he formed his
government, Khuang was forced at gunpoint by the coup group to resign. And Pibul resumed premiership. To preserved the international recognition of Pibul's new government, the National Assembly and the Constituent Assembly were still allowed to function. After the royalist completed the "permanent" constitution at the end of 1948, it was promulgated in March 1949. The 1949 Constitution provided for a bicameral assembly with the lower house elected by universal adult franchise, whereas members of the Upper House were appointed by the King upon the counter-signature of the president of his Privy Council, rather than of the prime minister like the previous constitutions. And the members of the Upper House received more power in controlling the government administration and policy. In addition, the King could delay the passage of a bill by refusing to endorse it, and could dismiss any cabinet member or the whole cabinet through a royal decree. This constitution also barred the bureaucrats both civilian and military to take political positions (Kramol 1977, 71). Accordingly, the 1949 Constitution was the constitution that gave power to the monarchy most; its provisions was very similar to what King Prajadhipok had demanded before his abdication. This constitution could be seen as an attempt of the royalist to create a balance among the monarchy, the bureaucrats and parliament. Rather being merely a figurehead, the King was given real power to participate in
the state affairs. Although this constitution lasted only two years, it indeed signified the victory of the royalist in the postwar politics, and marked the beginning of the resurgence of the royal authority.

After taking power, Phibul's government had been challenged by various groups both within and outside the military. Within the military, there were the Manhattan Rebellion, led by the navy and the Military Staff Rebellion (see Thak 1979, Chapter II). In parliament, Pibul's government faced the hostile opposition party, the Democrat. Due to the provision of the 1949 Constitution which barred the bureaucrats to take political positions, and the domination of the Democrat Party in both the Upper and the Lower Houses, Pibul and the 1947 coup group could not effectively control the cabinet and parliament. For several times, the Assembly had voted against or delayed government bills. To strengthen their power, Pibul and the coup group turned to use the same means that brought them to power, a coup d'etat. This time the coup came out in the form of a radio announcement on November 29, 1951. It suspended parliament, abrogated the 1949 Constitution, and replaced it with the 1932 edition, which gave more power to the government in controlling the parliament. And according to the 1932 Constitution, the power of the monarchy was drastically reduced. And this happened at the time when King Bhumibol was returning to the kingdom. It was possible
that the coup group leaders might fear that the 1949 Constitution would provide an opportunity for the King to actively exercise his power through his appointed senators, or might become the instrument of the royalist-oriented senators who would urge him to use his prerogatives in such a way that was against their interest (Darling, 1965, 91-94). That might be in the minds of the coup leaders. But, ironically, what they justified their action in public was that there was an infiltration of the communist into parliament, and this threatened the ideals of "Nation, Religion and Monarchy." Thus, they staged the coup to preserve this ideals. Presented with the fait accompli, King Bhumibol restrained symbolically by asking certain sections of the 1932 Constitution to be amended before the promulgation (Wilson 1962, 114-115).

After the Radio Coup, Pibul's government and the coup group succeeded in monopolizing almost all of the political power. The army under Phin and later under Sarit could hold a firm grip over other military groups. Parliament was dissolved after the coup, replacing by the government-appointed Assembly. However, the political stability did not last long as the inherent conflict and rivalry within the coup group between Sarit who command the army and Phao who controlled the police force came into the surface. Pibul tried to maintain his power by manipulating and balancing off these two factions. He also tried to widen his
base of support outside the coup group by appealing to the democratic ideal, which subsequently led to a general election in February 1957. But because of the dirty election, Pibul's popularity drastically declined, and, at the same time, opposition to Phao's abuse of power was abound. Thus, the balance of power was shifted to Sarit's advantage. Pibul tried desperately to weaken Sarit's position, and when the conflict arose to its zenith in September 1957, Pibul sought the King's approval to oust Sarit from his position of commander-in-chief, but the King rejected (Chalerm 1970, 203). In the same day, Sarit staged a coup d'état, overthrowing Pibul and Phao.

After the 1957 coup, the constitution was temporary suspended, and the coup group appointed Pote Sarasin, the former Thai ambassador to the United States, the prime minister of the caretaker government. A general election was held in December 1957, from which no party won a majority in parliament. Lt. Gen. Thanom Kittikhachorn, a leading member of the 1957 coup group, was chosen to be prime minister in January 1958 in order to be replaced nine months later by Sarit, who staged the second coup. Becoming prime minister, Sarit abrogated the constitution, dissolved parliament, banned political parties and labor unions, declared martial law, arrested several politicians, journalists, writers and labor leader, and imposed strict censorship. In 1959, an interim constitution was

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promulgated, and its article 17 gave the prime minister
dictatorial administration power (Chai-anan 1989, 311-312).
The relationship between King Bhumibol and Sarit as well as
the King's conduct during Sarit's regime, which accounted
for the monarchical resurgence are the matter we will
discussed next.

King Bhumibol and the Monarchical Resurgence

The history of the Siamese monarchy tells us that in
the time when the monarchy is weak, the personality and
conduct of the King mean much for maintaining his office and
strengthen his power. In the study of the Siamese kingship
in the seventeenth century, Jeremy Kemp observed:

Weak persons unable to effectively exercise the
authority contained in the status of the monarch were
quickly eliminated. Under the heading of "weak" are
included not only those who were ineffectual at
governing, but those who failed to check the ambition
of their fellow royalty and the mandarins, often by
execution, or who did not use... the principle of
dividie and rule to ensure that no individual noble or
faction obtained necessary power. (Kemp 1964, 43-44)

For a more recent example, during the early years of King
Chulalongkorn's reign when the monarchical power was much
restrained by Somdet Chaophraya Srisuriyawongse and his
noble supporters, the King's affectionate personality which
could draw a great deal of loyalty from a new generation of
nobles, and his prudent conduct in narrowing the power base
of Srisuriyawongse enabled him to consolidate the
monarchical power and successfully carried out the Chakri
Reformation. In the constitutional period, the King's personality and conduct have still been important because the nature and context of the monarchy was uncertain since the 1932 elite tried to limit the monarchical power through various measures, and for a long time there had not been any adult reigning monarch to develop crown functions within the new regime. When King Bhumibol ascended the throne, he had to face with the problem of how to preserve the age-old legitimacy and meaningfulness of the monarchy in the Thai polity, and, at the same time, adjust the monarchy to the new rule of the game and act accordingly.

The formal coronation of King Bhumibol in 1950 meant that it was the first time since 1935 that the throne had been fully occupied by an adult who could utilize the high prestige and the legitimate power which the monarchy had long possessed. And it seemed that no one knew this implication better than Pibul, the last leading member of the People's Party who still remained in power. Like what he had done before, he tried his best to limit the role of the monarchy and keep the vigilant eyes on the King's action. Thus, as David Wilson pointed out:

Whether the political influence of the King will gradually increase or suddenly been cut off as it was in 1935 depends largely upon the discretion of the monarch. (Wilson 1962, 115).

After his return to the kingdom in 1951, King Bhumibol kept a generally low profile for nearly a decade, devoting himself mainly to his family and his hobbies, such
as music and painting. He did try to exert some influence on national affairs, as shown in his intervention in the reestablishment of the 1932 Constitution after the 1951 Coup. But his attempted was carefully impeded by Pibul. The King revealed that during the early years of his reign:

When I'd open my mouth and suggest something, they'd say: "Your Majesty, you don't know anything." So I shut my mouth. They don't want me to speak, so I don't speak. (New York Times Aug. 24, 1989)

The relationship between the King and Pibul was not smooth. The past experience made it difficult to generate trust and cooperation. Moreover, Pibul still tried to upstage the King through his cultural policy. His emphasis on the cultural and religious issues inevitably led to the competition with the King who was the patron of Buddhism and Thai culture. The government financial contribution for the improvement and restoration of a very large number of temples was seen as Pibul's attempt to cast himself as the de facto patron of Buddhism (Thak 1979, 97). This was more obvious during the august occasion of the 25th Centennial Celebration of the Buddhist Era. Pibul did not at all consult the King in planning the event, but left it to his close coteries. When the Celebration took place, he invited U Nu, the Burmese prime minister, to be his guest. The King responded to Pibul's attempt to slight his importance by his absence from many of major ceremonies. In addition, in the later years of his premiership, when Pibul revived the democratic atmosphere, sought reconciliation with Pridi by
proposing to reinvestigate the case of King Ananda's death, and began to consider the potential for Thai relations with Communist China, these action altogether caused suspicion among the royalist and the army. Although Pibul never used the word "republic," and there was no evidence whatever that such a step was planned, the bitter experience the royalist had with Pibul tended to arouse such fear (Morell 1972, 90). All of these factors might predispose the palace to quickly accept Sarit's coup in September 1957.

We do not know exactly how much the King help Sarit in his move against Pibul and Phao except that the King rejected Pibul's request to oust Sarit at the critical moment in September 1957. It is interesting to note that Phao, on board to Switzerland for exile, gave an interview that he was aware of the move of Sarit before, but "nobody can't fight the military and the King" (Associated Press September 17, 1957). On the other hand, to give the King a fair account it should be noted also that when Sarit was asked what the King, in the meeting with him right after the coup, said about the seizure of power, Sarit replied "What should the King say__everything was already finished" (Associated Press Sept. 17, 1957). The role of the King after the coup was more obvious as he issued a royal statement calling on government officials to obey Sarit's orders and appointed him "defender of the capital." Henceforth, Sarit could justify all his action as the royal
command, as shown in an interview with the press on September 17, 1957, in which Sarit stated that "I am defender of the capital and can give orders in accordance with the law because it is the royal command" (Siam Nikorn September 18, 1957). And when Sarit staged the second coup in 1958 with the consent of Thanom's government, the King signed into law a decree granting amnesty to the coup participants. Before, the monarchy might be merely a passive instrument that various political groups might exploit to legitimate their actions, from now on the monarchy has become a working and living institution, and the monarch may have some reservation about when, how and to whom the legitimization will be bestowed.

What emerged after the 1957 coup was an interdependent relationship between the 1957 coup group and the monarchy. While the monarchy legitimized the seizure of power and, later, a wide range of Sarit's policy, the latter gave tremendous uplift for the monarchy. As Thak (1979, 309-325) observed, the problem of the 1957 coup leaders was that its foundation of legitimacy compared with the 1932 coup leaders was rather weak. Whereas the latter could claim their legitimacy in their role in overthrowing the absolute monarchy and their intention to bring democracy to Siam, the former had little historical basis for legitimacy. At the beginning, it was possible for the 1957 coup leaders to base their claim to power solely on the fact that it had
responded to the public demand that the corrupt Pibul regime be replaced; but this could by no means be used as its long-term basis for its authoritarian rule and the suspension of the constitution and free election. Thus, to gain their democracy for the undemocratic regime and strengthen their base of power, Sarit and his followers turned to the ultimate source of legitimacy in the Thai polity—the monarchy. This came out spontaneously and did not cause any ideological conflict in the minds of the 1957 coup leaders because, as Thak observed:

The fact that Sarit, Thanom and Praphat came from a different generation from Pibul, and that they were educated and trained entirely in Thailand made it easier for them to make accommodation with the throne. These leaders were not identified as anti-royalists and had not participated in the overthrow of the monarchy. They were not directly influenced by western liberalism and their political experience was very parochial. The king still had an aura of sacredness and purity to these elite and its relationship with the throne reflected this. (Thak 1979, 310)

The coup group presented King Bhumibol extreme respect and honor, as seen from the revival of traditional royal ceremonies, the change of the National Day from June 24 to the King's birthday on December 5, Sarit's numerous speeches in praise of the King's virtues, and annual military parades of allegiance to the King. In order to support his policy of national development and security, Sarit encouraged the King to travel widely to visit the people throughout the kingdom. Once again, the royal family has become the focus of national attention, and the monarchy
has returned to its meaningful place in the Thai society. In return, the King helped legitimize Sarit's regime and policy both at home and abroad through his elaborate tours to the rural areas and his numerous state visits. On various occasions, The King's speeches echoed and reinforced Sarit's national development policy and indicated the importance of the military role in national administration. Unlike King Prajadhipok who appealed to the ideal of democracy and took much concern to the form of government and the configuration of power between the government and the monarchy, King Bhumibol could accommodate well with the authoritarian rule and took less attention to the matter of how the political power was shared among various groups within the society, provided that the political leaders demonstrated good intention and sincerity (see also Chapter IV).

In the final analysis, the monarchical resurgence was also due to the conduct of King Bhumibol himself. When Sarit reopened the opportunity for the monarchy to play a more meaningful role in national affairs, King Bhumibol and his family have taken great pain to confirm the legitimate position of the monarchy within the modern Thai society by acting both as the upholder of the time-tested good of the past and the leading force of progress and well-being for the Thai people. In other words, King Bhumibol utilizes and integrated both the traditional and modern versions of the
conception of the Thai kingship, and by doing so the legitimacy of the monarchy has been institutionalized on both grounds. Traditionally, the King pursues steadfast the role of the protector of Buddhism and Thai culture. In 1956 the King entered the monkshood and since then has practiced meditation. He regularly visits temples and monks not only as a part of formal ceremonies but as his usual practice during his visits to rural areas. For King Bhumibol, traditions are not dated rituals, but "the good things of the past. ...We take old traditions and reconstruct them to be used in the present time and in the future"("National Geographic" October 1982, 492). Annually, he presented robes to monks at the end of the rainy-season retreat which is known as the "Kathin". He casted a Buddha image for each province in the country to be placed in a prominent position in the provincial capital (Reynolds 1978, 105). The most important of these ceremonies, perhaps, is the cult of the Emerald Buddha, which for Siam symbolizes its Buddhist kingdom. In this ceremony, the King bathes and changes the raiment of the Emerald Buddha three times a year with the change of seasons. With his profound understanding how to make tradition be relevant to the modern context, he can use it to communicate effectively with the people. After the ceremony of the cult of the Emerald Buddha, the King used to take the holy water and sprinkle it on the officials who accompanied him to the temple. But King Bhumibol later
decided that:

The people outside, the ordinary people, would believe the water would bring them goodness, and they would look upon the ceremony as more than as honor. For if you believe the water will do you good, it will do good. The first time, a taximan told his friend that I had given him a holy water. His friend would not believe the King had done that! But I had sprinkled him, and he was happy. The honor—it was nothing. It is the happiness that is important, and that man had the feeling that he was pure and good. (Look June 17, 1967)

In addition, some ceremonies even link the King to the large number of the population. For example, the First Plowing Rite or "Raek Na" has high appeal to farmers throughout the country. From one field research (Esterik 1980, 105), a farmer in U Thong District, Supanburi province commented that the dependable quality of his rice crops over the decades was due to the regularity with which the King performs the "Raek Na." Such a belief also found in Bang Chan, as Hanks (1972, 78) observed that the people of Bang Chan believed that the propitiation of the guardian spirits of the rice fields before plowing begins would be ineffectual without the preceding royal plowing ritual at the capital. "The King . . . addresses higher beings in the hierarchy of gods and angels. With words passed down from on high, the many local guardians are prepared to assist in every valley and backwater."

Through these rituals and ceremonies, the monarchy and its subjects has been interwoven. And it is precisely these ceremonies that continuously give the monarchy the superior status in the society and the ultimate asset after
which each elite group has sought. The King ideally represented the Dhamma or virtues, encouraging both the elite and ordinary people to enlightened actions. He also symbolizes the source of prosperity of the kingdom. With the King in the Dhamma, the well-being of the people is assured. When he was asked whether he found these ceremonies and rituals wearing, King Bhumibol answered:

If I am bored at any time with ceremonies and ritualistic functions, then it is my fault. I want to do the thing that are good for Thailand, to build within the people the will to study and work for Thailand. (Look June 27, 1967)

On the modern part of the Thai conception of kingship, King Bhumibol gives the image of the monarchy as a working institution which dedicates for improving the living condition of the people. His development projects for the hilltribes in the north and for the Muslim in the south also help unite the pluralistic Thai society. His interest in development can be traced back to the early days of his reign when he began many experimental projects within his palace. Today, the royal family spend approximately eight months each year in each of the four royal residences outside Bangkok—at Chiangmai in the North, Sakhon Nakorn in the Northeast, Hua-Hin in the mid-South and Narathiwat in the far-South. Using each of these residences as their base, the King and his family visit remote villages and learn about needs and problems of the people, which results in a large number of royal-initiated development projects,
including such fields as agriculture, health and education. The queen once said, "The task of merely visiting the people as a conventional duty is nonsense. If we cannot participate in helping to alleviate the misery of the people, then we consider it to be a failure as Head of State" (The Soul of Nation 1979). It should be pointed out that his projects will not compete with the on-going governmental development efforts, nor they are substitutes for needed, large-scale government reforms. Rather, they carry a force of example, cutting through red tape and inefficiency inherent in the government agencies. Indeed, the King acts as a catalyst as one court official revealed:

His role as a catalyst not only bring various government departments together..., but cut through bureaucratic red tape and demonstrates to various ministries that they should not work independently of each other. (FEER January 1986)

The King also appeals to the people in the urban areas. For years the King has personally handed out to every graduate of every government university. Through this process, the King has symbolically connected with the future leadership of the country. To the business and wealthy elite, his expansion in conferring decoration and sponsoring marriages or cremations, Thak's words (1979, 30), "in effect performs the function of helping to consolidate a complex of alliances between political, royal, bureaucratic and business families."

All of King Bhumibol's conducts imply that he

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understands very well both the traditional and modern parts
of the conception of the Thai kingship. Endowed with a
restless energy, impeccable sense of duty and, until
recently, durable health, King Bhumibol has revived the
monarchy to the position of being the most revered
institution of Siam. With the expansion of the mass media,
the popularity of the monarchy flourishes. By now the
monarchy has turned out to be the relevant and working
institution, and, ultimately the "soul of the nation."
CHAPTER IV
THE MONARCHY AND POLITICS

[The King's] capacity to influence...depends on his personal qualities. It would be unreasonable to expect that he will be more than an ordinary man. ...These...qualities...if used at the center of affairs can be extremely valuable. ...He has no cause to be a partisan, and there is no tendency for him to be satisfied with the slick slogans that sometimes muster as arguments. ...A king who can keep his head (metaphorically) can do immense good, simply by injecting a little common sense.

Sir Ivor Jennings (1954, 112-113).

By the early 1970s, it was apparent that King Bhumibol had become the most influential figure in Thai politics, and the monarchy had reached its maturity as a political institution within the new political system. A direct, and probably inevitable, consequence of the monarchical resurgence is that the monarchy has become gradually involved in politics. Since the time of Sarit's death, the King's increasing concerns with rural development and his constant contact with rural people throughout the kingdom have taken him to learn more and more about the plight of the people in the rural areas and the vast gap between the demands of the people and the responses of the military government. This might urge the King to have the second thought about the Thanom-Praphat regime. If anything, the cooperation with the authoritarian elite seemed at first necessary to strengthen the monarchical position and power, but, in the long run, the monarchy
permanently identified with the corrupt, military regime certainly paved the way for its own destruction. In the late 1960s, the King began to have public criticism towards the government policy, including such issues as the demand for constitution, the inefficiency of the government in rural development, and the government suppression of the communist-backed tribal guerrilla movement (Morell and Chai-anan 1981, 67-68). It is interesting that the channel he often used to deliver such criticism was through the university students whose dissatisfaction with the military domination in politics began to accumulate. It was during this time that the King and the university students developed close relationship, as shown in the King's increasing participation in and concern with many student activities.

Despite such pressure, in November 1971, Thanom, who two years ago seemed to heed the voice for constitutionalism by allowing the ten-year drafted constitution to be completed leading to a general election, staged a coup d'etat against his own government, and turned the country back to the authoritarian regime. Although the King still acted as the political legitimizer for the military elite, as shown in his letter acknowledging the military move, which Thanom was quick to publicize, he did keep the monarchy at a more distance from the military regime. This time the King did not grant an amnesty act for the coup
group. And when the university students, together with 400,000 people demonstrated against the military regime in October 1973, the King stepped in to defuse the crisis. Amidst the intense confrontation between the government and the demonstrators on October 13, the King gave the student leaders an audience. He called for cooperation for the sake of peace and order in the country and promised the promulgation of a new constitution by October 1974 (Heinze 1974, 499). The student leaders were satisfied. However, due to the confusion of the situation, the clash between the demonstrators and the government forces broke out. The King decided to intervene to prevent greater bloodshed by directing Thanom, Praphat and Thanom's unpopular son, Narong to resign from offices and go into exile. The King appointed Sanya Dhammasakdi, his privy councilor and rector of Thammasat University who gained respect from the students, the new prime minister to restore order and clear the stage for a general election, making the first time since 1932 that the King was able to appoint a man of his own choice to the position of premiership.

The King's successful intervention in the October Uprising in 1973 proved beyond doubt that from being the relatively passive legitimizer of the bureaucratic politics since 1932, in the 1970s and afterwards the monarchy has been able to develop its authority to the extent that it can, and is actually expected to, enter the political arena.
as the final arbiter, intervening at the time of national crisis. Since then, every significant political change has not been likely to accomplish without the King's explicit consent or acknowledgement. This chapter attempts to analyze the monarchical role and involvement in Thai politics. It will begin with the legal framework, set by the constitution, which determines the scope of the King's political rights and roles. Next, to help us gain more understanding about the monarchical involvement in politics after 1973, the King's political standpoint will be examined. Then, another factors that account for the monarchy becoming actively involved in politics will be presented, and, finally, how the monarchy has participated in politics, especially in the later years of King Bhumibol' reign will be discussed.

The Monarchy and the Constitution

To understand the monarchical role in politics, it is appropriate that we should start with examining the constitutional rights and roles of the monarchy because they will provide the legal framework for the King's action. There are various aspects of the royal prerogative according to the constitution, both written and unwritten. Whereas Siam has altogether thirteen constitutions within almost sixty years of its constitutional period, all constitutional changes, with the exception of the 1949 Constitution, generally do not much affect the royal prerogative. The
current constitution (the 1978 version, see the Government Gazette Vol.95:1978, part 146) as well as its precedence stipulate that the King "shall be enthroned in a position of revered worship and shall not be violated," and "no person shall expose the King to any sort of accusation or action." The King selects and appoints qualified persons at his pleasure, one to be president of the Privy Council and not more than fourteen privy councilors to form the Privy Council, rendering advice to the King on all matters pertaining to the royal functions. To ensure that the King is above politics, these members of the Privy Council cannot hold other public offices, belong to any political party, or manifest active sympathy for any political organization. Although it is not pertinent to the constitutional provisions, it is useful to note here that there are still three other agencies associated with the monarchy. The Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary and the Bureau of the Royal Household are two agencies taking care of organizing ceremonial functions, making royal announcement, setting the royal schedules, and administering the finance and logistics of the royal palace. While the government provides annual financial contribution to the royal family, the main financial source of the monarchy comes from the Crown Property Bureau, one of the wealthiest institution of the country, which today hold stakes in about forty companies, spanning a wide spectrum of business
activities (see FEER June 30, 1988, 60-63).

In regard to the constitutional power of the King, section 3 of the Constitution indicates that "the sovereign power is derived from the Thai people. The King as head of the state shall exercise such power through the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers and the Courts in accordance with the provision of this Constitution." In all of the King functions as stipulated by the Constitution, the one of primary importance, perhaps, is to appoint a prime minister. Section 146 provides that the King appoints, with the countersignature of the president of the National Assembly, one prime minister and not more than forty-four ministers to form a cabinet, administering the state's affairs. The prime minister does not need to be a member of the House of Representatives, and the Constitution does not provide any qualification for the person of the prime minister. It seems that this may provide an opportunity for the King to appoint the person he deems appropriate to be prime minister. But as a matter of fact it has been a tradition that the King will appoint the person suggested by the president of the National Assembly. And before the President of the National Assembly can nominate a name to the King, he usually sound out who gains the most support from elected members of each party. When asked whether he is a kingmaker in choosing the prime ministers, the King replied:
In the constitution it is written that the king appoints the prime minister. This is a system in which, perhaps, the experience of the king can be of use in looking for people who would be suitable for prime minister. The president of parliament will come and have a consultation, but the king may have more power because the people have faith in their king. 

...If there is a rule I go by the rule. But if there is no rule then my opinion would be heard. (Leader April-June 1982)

The matter of when "there is no rule" is virtually subject to an interpretation. There were two times that the King selected and appointed his fellows to be prime minister, one is Sanya Dhammasakdi after the 1973 Uprising and the other is Thanin Kraivixien after the 1976 Coup. In the case of Sanya, it was clear enough that the political condition at that time had fallen into the situation that the people had totally denounced the legitimacy of the Thanom-Praphat government to rule the country. Thus, the King's intervention was justified on the ground that it had responded to the people's demand. Unlike the case of Sanya, the appointment of Thanin came after the Thammasat Massacre and the military coup which overthrowing the people-elected civilian government headed by Seni Pramoj. Thus, the King's intervention in this case was more controversial than his action in 1973.

On the part of the National Assembly, the King, according to the current constitution, appoints members of the Senate as nominated by prime minister. This issue used to be the source of conflict between the palace and the government. As mentioned earlier, King Prajadhipok wanted
to have the right to select members of the Senate, but the government did not comply to his demand; this issue was one of his reasons for abdication. The 1949 royalist Constitution did provide this right to the King. Unfortunately, it was short-lived. But that was not the last attempt of the royalist. When Kukrit headed the National Assembly in 1974 which was responsible for drafting a constitution after the Thanom-Praphat regime had been overthrown, there was the attempt to give this right to the King again by providing in the constitution that the King appointed senators with the countersignature of the president of the Privy Council. However, King Bhumibol objected this provision, which he apparently viewed as too great a linkage between the monarchy and politics. Thus, when the constitution was finally promulgated, it provided that the King appointed senators with the countersignature of the president of parliament. Since then, this issue has settled and never caused a problem between the palace and the government. At present, M.L. Thaweesan Ladawalya, the King's principal private secretary, revealed that the list of recommended appointees presented by the government will contain the exact number of persons as needed by the constitution (Thaweesan 1986).

There is an interesting case about the King's prerogative pertaining to the National Assembly. After the October Uprising in 1973, Sanya's government promised to
give a new constitution within six months. According to the old constitution (the 1972 version), the National Assembly whose all member were appointed by military leaders was in the position to draft a new constitution. However, as the military leaders were overthrown, the legitimacy of the old National Assembly was drastically declined; many of its members voluntarily resigned. The King intervened by creating the National Convention on December 10, 1973 to devise a new Assembly. The National Convention was composed of 2436 members, personally selected and appointed by the King. Their sole responsibility was to elect among them 299 members of a new National Assembly which would review and approve the draft constitution and act as a legislative body until national elections based on the new constitution would be held (Morell and Chai-anan 1975, 578). The members of the Convention included a large proportion of local leaders, predominantly from rural areas, with whom the King had contact during his rural visits. It might be arguable whether the King had power to establish the National Convention. Being aware of this problem, Sanya's government announced that the appointment of members of the National Assembly was within the King's prerogative; and the method he used depended on his will (Siam Rath December 16, 1973). In this case we can said that his innovative mechanism to create the National Assembly was quite fair. He did not directly appoint members of the Assembly but used the
The King also has the right to restrain a bill. In this case the King may refuse his consent to a bill and either returns it to the National Assembly or does not return it within ninety days. If it happens so the Assembly must redeliberate such bill. If the Assembly resolves to reaffirm the bill with the votes of not less than two-thirds of the total number of members of both Houses, the prime minister has to present such bill to the King for signature once again. If the King does not sign and return the bill within thirty days, the prime minister shall cause the bill to be promulgated as an act in the Government Gazette as if the King had signed it. For more than 40 years of his reign, King Bhumibol has never directly use this right. Usually if he does not agree with a bill, he will send an informal comment to the president of the National Assembly. Then, the Assembly will reconsider that bill before presenting him for signature (Tongthong 1986, 149).

The King's prerogatives under the constitution do not appear only in written documents, but also as conventions and custom. It is customary that the King has the right to be informed and the right to be consulted. Also, he has the right to warn and the right to encourage the government (Tongthong, 1986:88). Although Siam does not have the tradition that the prime minister has to meet the King every week or that cabinet minutes has to be sent to the King, the
contact between the King and the government in the reign of King Bhumibol goes smoothly. Every time the prime minister asks for consultation with the King, the King usually grants him an audience (Thaweesan 1986). The number of the cabinet audiences may imply the relationship between the King and the government. During the Pibul government, the government rarely sought for the consultation with the King; in 1956, for example, there was only once. During the Thanom government, as he had to depend more on the throne for maintaining his power, the number of the government's meetings with the King was significantly increased (see Thak 1978, 54). In the case that when the King wants to recommend the government, his principal private secretary will deliver such recommendations to the government. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn also revealed that the King may request the prime minister to see him at any time when he deems necessary (Maha Chakri Sirindhorn 1986). Besides such formal meeting with the King, there are other opportunities that the prime minister and ministers can ask for the King's suggestions or provide him information, such as during the royal trips to rural areas or royal ceremonies.

In addition, it is customary that any Thai people who get into problems or receive injustice from government agencies can lodge petition with the King. This tradition can be traced back to the time of King Ramkhamhaeng of
Sukhodaya. During that period, a bell was hung in front of the palace for people who were in trouble to ring, signalling that they wanted to lodge a petition. This custom was revived in the reign of King Mongkut, which has continued up to the present. Practically, the people can lodge petitions anytime they meet the King or send their petitions to the palace. In the constitutional period, after receiving a petition, the King will pass the matter to the relevant authorities for an explanation or assistance. Petitions are frequently submitted to the King these days, ranging from asking for a royal pardon to borrowing money (Siam Rath Weekly June 12-18, 1988, 8). They are normally screened by the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary and dropped if considered to be without substance.

During the last years of the Thanom-Praphat regime when the press was censored, King Bhumibol confirmed this tradition by speaking on behalf of the suppressed public opinion. In one of his speeches, he cited a foreign observer who had written that having an elected parliament would continue an ancient Siamese tradition whereby the ordinary people can petition the King to redress their grievances (quoted in Bradley and others 1978). In another speech, he said: "So I say to the generals, for them to understand, that we have this tradition of petitioning the government, and that they must learn to listen to the people" (quoted in Morell and Chai-anan 1981, 69).
In the mid-1988, there was an interesting case of lodging petition which had a significant political implication. Within a month after Prime Minister Prem dissolved parliament at the end of April 1988, a group of 99 academics and prominent public figures, including such well-known persons as Chai-anan Samudavanija, M.R. Sukhumband Paribatra and Doctor Praves Vasi...the group later known as the Group of 99, signed a petition to the King expressing concern over what they claimed to be a lack of neutrality by Prem as head of the caretaker government. This petition came after a month-long political confusion, which was believed by many people that it had been created for the military to use as a pretext to stage a coup. It began with the speech of Gen. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, commander-in-chief of the army, who was reported to say that "I would like to know whether there is any force which can stop the military from staging a coup." (Mathichon Weekly May 22, 1988, 28). Following his speech, a group of people who called themselves the "Revolutionary Council" immediately held a meeting at a hotel near the Grand Palace to echo his statement. Moreover, a few labor unions whose leaders had close ties to the military leaders threatened to have a general strike. At the same time, the top military leaders who controlled major strategic Commands marched again and again to see Prem at his residence and pledged him whole-hearted support.
Against this background, the Group of 99 presented its petition to the King at the end of May through the Office of His Majesty's Principal private Secretary, expressing opposition to any military coup. The text of the petition partly read:

Political confusion and the decline of the political faith in the parliamentary democratic system is increasing with each moment. Divisions and disunity have occurred among the military, civil servants and the people because the political leader who is caretaker head of the government has not been truly neutral, but manoeuvred to lean on the principal institution of the country, especially the monarchy and the high-ranked members of the royal family. ...[He] allowed the military forces of the country, which exist to protect and develop the country, to be used as a show of force to support personal political status. ...We do not agree with changes outside of the legitimate rules, especially coup d'etat. ...We hope very much that Your Majesty might caution the head of the government to adopt true neutrality, refraining from citing any institution to further his own political post. (Siam Rath Weekly June 5, 1988, 6)

After receiving the petition, the King sent it to the government for an explanation, concerning the allegations. The event ended with Prem's pledge of neutrality. It is worth noting that after the election Prem declined the request of the political parties to lead a new government and retired from politics.

At the end, it might be interesting to point out what King Bhumibol perceives a constitutional monarch should be:

...[A] constitutional monarch is first a symbol of the country and if that constitutional monarch is successful he must become a living symbol of the country. He must change with the country but, at the same time, he must keep the spirit of the country. It's like being a representative of our embodiment, or the soul of the country. That means that all the people who compose...
the country have different characters, but the common character of people must be embodied by the king. *(Leader* April-June 1982)

While the constitutional power of the King seems to be much less than that used to belong to the monarchy before the constitutional period, the highly respected position of the monarchy in the reign of King Bhumibol enabled him to exert a great deal of influence in national affairs. Constitutionally, he is above politics and must maintain bipartisanship. But as his influence rises and his participation in the national affairs increases, it is inevitable that in a rather subtle way he has been gradually involved in politics. His action for many times have conveyed some political implications. Whatever he say or does may be seen as a gesture of his preference, which in many cases turns out to be decisive in the political struggle in that those who gain the King's sign of favor can get the upper hand over the others. Thus, in each critical political situation the King's standpoint is of importance. Without understanding this, we cannot comprehend the monarchical involvement in politics especially after 1973.

**The Monarchical Standpoint**

One may conclude that King Bhumibol's intervention in the 1973 Uprising was an appreciable and constructive role the monarchy could play in politics as it put an end to the bloodshed and helped to bring about the transition from the military rule to the parliamentary system. However, as
Morell and Chai-anan (1981, 69) pointed out, "those who believe that this meant that the royal institution had shifted its support away from the military to the people, and more particularly, to the student who had led the people's uprising were to discover that they had been sadly mistaken." For those who hold a more cynical view, they even contended that in the course of the 1973 Uprising the King at the beginning still sided with the military elite, and he lied the student leaders who requested an audience with him that Thanom and Praphat had already agreed to install a constitution and called upon them to call off the demonstration. But when this failed to convinced the more radical students and the clash occurred, the King "was left with little choice but to end the bloodshed by requesting that the two marshals leave the country, at least for the time." (Mallet 1973, 81 and 99). Indeed, in the aftermath of the 1973 Uprising what seemed to be the King's progressive political role and attitude as appeared during the later years of the Thanom-Praphat regime turned out to be far more conservative than that most of the liberal used to impress, but it is unfair not to give him his due credit in the course of the 1973 Uprising. It might be true that the King did not wholeheartedly support all of what the student had done during the 1973 Uprising. But we should not forget that the King himself had criticized the military leaders for some times before 1973. And the corruption, favoritism
and nepotism, and the ineffectiveness inherent in the military regime were so real and apparent that the need to overthrow it became a popular demand joining by a large number of people to the extent that was unprecedented in the Thai history. Thus, it is more accurate to view the King's intervention in the 1973 Uprising as an attempt to restore law and order of the person being the unifying symbol of the nation, who preferred the peaceful and evolutionary course of change. And it was this same standpoint that influenced his action in the face of the turbulent politics after the Thanom-Praphat regime had been overthrown. One might think that the King's standpoint in 1976 departed from what he used to be in 1973 as he shifted his support from the progressive forces led by the students to the military and conservative forces. In fact, the King did not change; he was ready to do anything that he thought it will bring stability and order to the country. Those who do not realize this monarchical standpoint cannot appreciate or even have sympathy with what seemed to be his reactionary role in the course of events that led to the Thammasat Massacre and the 1976 Coup.

After the Thanom-Praphat regime was overthrown, Siam had a crisis of authority. The military who had continuously ruled the country for almost three decades suffered a political setback. The civilian coalition governments were so overwhelmed by factional and party
competition that they proved to be weak and ineffective in dealing with a large number of problems and demands posed by pressure groups both from the left and the right. The extrabureaucratic forces led by the students, workers and farmers, which for so long had been under the military firm grip, spontaneously put forward their claims and grievances. Hundreds of strikes and demonstrations became daily phenomena; street violence was rampant. As their frustration against the system increased, the nature of the demands of the activist students and the mobilized workers and farmers changed from the legalistic and symbolic one, i.e. the constitution, to the more aggressive demands for drastic and fundamental change of the system in toto, ranging from the issue of Thai sovereignty to the redistribution of wealth for the rural and urban poor and the redressing of all socio-political injustices and inequality inherent in the existing system (see Prudhisan, 1987). The method they used to pursue their demands through the mobilization of the mass on the accelerated level exhausted the capacity of the parliamentary government which was still little institutionalized to bring about effective governance and fill the power-vacuum left by the military after the 1973 Uprising. Inevitably, the deleterious result were social unrest and intense social confrontation between the status quo groups and the progressive movement. Against these background of highly political conflict, the role of
the monarchy once again became decisive. When it was clear that the King was on their side, the rightist movement, namely the Red Guar, the Village Scout and the Nawaphon, became more aggressive and militant especially from the mid-1975 until the October coup in 1976. The factor that drove the King, who in principle should be above politics and uphold bipartisanship, to take sides and explicitly involved in the political conflict in the 1973-1976 period was his fundamental disagreement with the orientation and methods of the progressive forces led by the activist student.

Before we proceed our discussion, it should be made clear that some students are reformist, and few are radical and revolutionary. This was also true in the case of the workers and farmers. But the point here is that although we cannot cast all of the progressive forces as those who advocated radical changes since there was differentiation among them, to the King and the general public who for a long time had experienced stability and order in the society and were influenced by the rightist propaganda at that time the "image" of the student-worker-farmer activism convinced them that those in the progressive forces were radical agitators who wanted uprooted changes and the chief instigators of the existing disorder and turmoil.

To King Bhumibol, his model of change can be characterized as a peaceful and evolutionary process. Before 1973, he often encouraged the students to follow this
path of change rather than turned to the radical course. In September 1971 the King spoke at Chulalongkorn University after the annual musical concert, in which he and his family regularly participated. Answering a question from the president of the Chulalongkorn Students' Union about the steps the government would take to investigate alleged corruption at the university, the King:

asked students of Chulalongkorn University to drop their plan to stage demonstrations in support of their demand that the prime minister expedite investigation into alleged corruption in their university administration. ...His Majesty suggested that students representatives have talks with the prime minister on that matter. (Bangkok Post Sept. 21, 1971)

In a similar session at Kasetsart University,

His Majesty the King...urged university students and the Press to resort to constructive methods in achieving their aims. ...His Majesty spoke to students after the President of the Student Union...walked up to His Majesty to present a petition asking for re-enrollment of [his predecessor], who was dismissed from the university on charge of violating regulations. His Majesty urged students to use reason and discreet methods to carry out their initiatives. (Nation, Nov. 14, 1971)

King Bhumibol always contends that in order to make progress it is necessary to build up from the existing foundation. A few months after the Thammasat Massacre, the King gave a speech to students of that university, which can be viewed as the expression of his disagreement with the earlier student movement which, by its endeavor to mobilize the rural mass and its incessant demonstrations, posed a serious threat to the existing system, resulting in polarization and conflict within the society. The King
said:

At present there is a belief among some people that in order to create desired progress it is necessary to abandon present ideas or abolish existing projects. ...Old things should not be abolished but corrected in order to create newer and more progressive things. ...Whatever is there originally is an important factor for the proper advancement of progress. If the foundation of progress is completely destroyed there can be no stepping stone. (The Royal Blue Book 1987,40)

In contrast, the view that was prevailing among the student movement in the 1973-1976 period was at the other extreme. For example, consider the view of Seksan Prasertkul, one of the students leaders,

...Deterioration of Thai society was due to political under-development. The military, police and the civil service became the strongest organizations in the country while the majority of the people had not been organized into a group. ...The foundations for deterioration are still there. It was wrong to think that eviction of the trio was enough. The existing social and political system will continue to produce evil persons at any high rate. It is unavoidable that the whole structure from the mass base right up to the government must be changed. A change in individual is not enough. (Bangkok Post November 3, 1973)

While the activist students believe that we cannot expect good persons from the bad system, the King seemed to conclude that the structure of the bureaucracy or the form of the government is not as important as the benevolence of those who are in charge of or operate it. And what we need is to recruit good persons as many as possible to hold public offices and impede the bad ones from positions of political power. According to him, the good person are those who have honesty, unity, goodwill, good intention and circumspection (see Kanok 1989, Chapter 5).
At the time when the students became involved more and more in numerous political campaigns rather than being confined to their academic activities, the King from time to time during the 1973-76 period had spoken for the responsibility of one's own duty as his implicit critique to the student political activities. In 1976, for example, he said:

Whatever one's duty is one must first of all do it well. Secondly, in performing his duty he must not impede the implementation of other duties. Thirdly, in view of the diversity of required talents it is necessary that one must cooperate with others. (The Royal Blue Book 1987, 160)

The King's opinion on this account might well reflect the feeling of the civilian and military officials as well as the general public who increasingly disagreed with or were weary of the students' continuing role as a political pressure group (see Morell and Chai-anan 1981, 167-169).

Moreover as the person who act as the unifying symbol of the nation, the King usually speaks for unity and harmony of the people. According to him, what should come uppermost in the minds of the Thai people is the nation; and it is the spirit of harmony and mutual sympathy that the continued existence of nationhood depends on (The Royal Blue Book 1987, 165).

The contradiction between the King's standpoint and that of the progressive movement led by the students was further aggravated by the diffusion of the Marxist ideology among the students and the progressive forces. Thus,
whether they were aware of it or not, their movement was perceived as having the anti-monarchical inclination. By 1975, the activist students had lost their faith in the western-type democratic system as a promising route to achieve social reform they felt to be imperative for Thai society. Instead, influenced by Maoist ideology, they wanted to carry out a true cultural revolution (Chai-anan and Suchit 1985, 89). They denounced the value of classical Thai literature as remnants of the feudalistic society, and turned to the more radical literature. One indication was the admiration for and the popularity of Jit Bhumisak's Chomna Sakdina Thai (The Real Face of Thai Saktina) among university students. Jit's book, which had been banned for many years, was published and widely circulated. It is the Marxist interpretation of Thai history up until the nineteenth century, which tries to demystify the historical centrality and legitimacy of the monarchy by interpreting the social structure of pre-western imperialist Siam in terms of the struggle between two majors classes—the ruling land-lord class headed by the Phrachao Phandin (Lord of Land or king) and the class of those exploited consisted of all those who had no right to land (Reynolds and Lysa 1983, 84).

Amidst this thriving leftist ideology and literature came the fall of Indochina to the communists and the collapse of the monarchy in Laos at the end of 1975. Thus, for King Bhumibol and those who identified with the status quo, the
threat of communism to the monarchy and the country in general was real and imminent.

The King's conservative standpoint has also been reinforced by the influence of Queen Sirikit, who, as M.R. Kukrit Pramoj noted, "enjoys de facto status [of reigning queen] never before equalled in Thai history" (Asiaweek April 3, 1982). Like King Bhumibol, the queen had watched the government struggle to overcome the communist movement and insurgencies for more than two decades. This as well as her conservative background explained her staunch anti-communist view. By the time, the queen had become a strongly opinionated person and a popular national figure in her own right, as much a focus of national attention as the King himself (Sukhumband 1983, 64). The turbulent years of open politics during the 1973-1976 period, the spread of communism among university students, and her concern for the prospect of the monarchy and her son seemed to persuaded the queen to be active in the political arena. The student movement after the 1973 Uprising led her to conclude bluntly that "there are some in the universities who think the monarchy is obsolete" (Associated Press May 22, 1979). It is believed that it was the queen who initiated the monarchical move in the case of Thanom's return and determine the choice of the obsequious and ultra-rightist Thanin, and she and her close coteries such as Samak Sundaravej and Utan Snidwongse caused the influence of the
King's moderate advisors including Kukrit and Police Major General Wasit Dejkunjara back down (Morell and Chai-anan 1981, 272). In addition, her domination in the palace and her influence to her son could be realized through the choice of the Crown Prince's consort, Princess Somsavali, the queen's niece and Vajiralongkorn's first cousin. With the increase of her influence in the palace and her determination to be the guiding hands behind the monarchical move in politics, one cannot overlook the role of Queen Sirikit in the observation of the political involvement of the monarchy. However, it should be noted that as her health has declined recently, she is now much less active in politics than she used to be in the past decade.

It should be clear by now what the monarchical standpoint was in regard to the course of politics after the 1973 Uprising. Experiencing the ineffectiveness of the democratic parliamentary system, the social unrest, the penetration of the communist into the country, the King, who has always advocates security and stability, law and order, identified the monarchy with the conservative and the bureaucrats, especially the military whom he perceived to be the potential and reliable forces to restore order and stability to the country.

**In the Political Whirl**

By the 1970s, the two major factors that since 1935 had been constraints of the monarchy to involve in politics,
namely the attempt of the bureaucratic elite of the 1932 coup group to limit the political role of the monarchy and the absence of an adult reigning monarch to develop crown functions within the new regime, had shattered away. With King Bhumibol on the throne and the monarchical resurgence, the political influence of the monarchy has substantially increased. Since the fall of Pibul in 1957, the new political leaders have looked to the monarchy for providing legitimacy to their governance. In addition, since Sarit's death, the military who for more than two decades had dominated the Thai politics has begun to lose its unity and break up into various factions. There has been no prominent military figure who can command high loyalty from all military groups, and no single military faction has been strong enough to impose its dominance. As factionalism and rivalry among the military factions have increased, the monarchy has been induced more and more to involve in politics as the holder of the balance among each faction; one's move against the others cannot be accomplish without the explicit consent of the King. This point will be elaborated further below.

Apparently, the monarchy's direct involvement in politics after 1973 was its cooperation with the military and the rightist to restore stability and order to the country, which subsequently led to the Thammasat Massacre and the military coup in October 1976.
Determining to restore stability and order, the King after 1973 attempted to mobilize the conservative extrabureaucratic support. In the earlier years of his reign, as mentioned in Chapter II, the King had appealed to the extrabureaucratic forces through various techniques including the distribution of official decorations, the sponsoring of weddings and cremations for the wealthy families and his personal contact with the people outside the bureaucratic realm. The purpose of this earlier attempt was to expand the royal pool of support and loyalty, and therefore had little immediate political purpose. But this was different from the rightist mobilization of the mass under the royal patronage or using the ideals of "Nation Religion, and Monarchy" as the rallying point after the 1973 Uprising which had the purpose of forming the right-wing campaign directed against the progressive forces of the students, workers and farmers. The right-wing movement with which the monarchy most identified was the Look Sua Chao Ban or Village Scouts. The movement was established in 1971 by the Border Patrol Police (BPP) and the Ministry of Interior as a paramilitary, anti-communist rural security organization. Having the very close relationship with the palace, the BPP succeeded in persuading the King and the Queen to bestow the royal patronage to the Village Scouts in 1973. It was estimated that by mid-1978 2.5 million men and women of all ages and from all social status, both rural and
urban had participated in its training program which stressed on anti-communist and nationalism. Scout leadership was recruited by the BPP and the Ministry of Interior from the well-to-do and the middle-aged, provincial officials, rural leaders and urban nouveau riches (Natee 1977). The palace gave the special attention to the activities of the Village Scouts. Regularly, as Morell and Chai-anan (1981, 224) observed, "the King presents new Village Scouts with neck scarves, badges, and national flags, and members of the royal family mixed freely with the Scouts, dancing the traditional Ramwong and singing Scout's songs." In this way the Village Scouts became identified as a royalist rather than a government movement. And the activist element of the Village Scouts which closely linked with the BPP assumed an offensive action against the progressive movement.

For other right-wing militant movements, i.e. the Red Guars and the Nawaphon, they rallied around the monarchical nationalist symbols of "Nation, Religion and Monarchy," enabling them to convince many Thai people that the student-labor-farmer movement was indeed the instigator of national instability and disorder and deeply influenced by communism, therefore threatened the principal institutions of the country (see Anderson 1978, 19-20). The Red Guars which was directed by officers of the Communist Suppression Operation Command (later renamed Internal Security
Operations Command—ISOC) was composed of ex-mercenaries, school dropouts, unemployed youth and some vocational school students. It was used as the "shock troops" of the right-wing offensive and their violent actions against university students and demonstrators were protected by the police and the ISOC. The King's visit to the Red Guar training site in 1976, showing a sign of his support, was given the prominent coverage to boost its popularity in the public. For the Nawaphon, it was an organization operating through the provincial bureaucratic and business communities. Its name, Nawaphon, can be literally translated as "new force" or "ninth power", a symbolic reference to King Bhumibol who is the ninth of the House of Chakri. Its membership was mainly composed of rural ultra-conservatives who were alarmed by the mobilized farmers such as rural civilian bureaucrats, large landowners and wealthy businessmen. Among its prominent members was Thanin Kraivixien, a judge who later was appointed by the King to be premier after the 1976 coup. Like the Red Guars', its ruthless activities against the popular movement were sanctioned by the military and the police. The movement appealed to the public for a commitment to "Nation, Religion and Monarchy. Kittiwuddho Bhikkhu, a charismatic monks and one of the leaders of the Nawaphon, once gave the sermon that killing the communist was not sinful but meritorious because communist were bestial types and agents of the Devil who threaten the Nation, Religion
and Monarchy (Keyes 1989, 95). This undoubtedly gave the ideological rationale for the rightist militant actions against the alleged communist, i.e. students, workers and farmers. That nothing was done to either criticize to use of the monarchy as a rallying point for violent action of these right-wing group against the progressive movement or to prohibit them from such practices could be seen as the royal tacit support for the force of the right.

The most manifest sign of the King's support given to the military and the rightist was his approval for Thanom's return in September 1976. Ordained as a Buddhist novice in a Thai temple in Singapore, Thanom gave the reason for his entering into the country that he wanted to become a monk in order to make merit for his gravely ill father. Right after his arrival, he was taken directly to Wat Bawaranivece, a primary important royal monastery whose abbot (now the Supreme Patriarch of the Sangha) has close ties to the palace. The King and the queen, and subsequently the crown prince after his return from Australia at the end of September 1976, went to Wat Bawaranivece to "pay respect to Bhikkhu Thanom. Thanom revealed later that it was the King who encourage him to return. This account was confirmed by Samak Sundaravej, Minister of Interior in the Thanin government and a close coterie to the queen, when he claimed that the King had asked him personally to accompany Thanom from Singapore to Bangkok, which he had done (Bradley and
At the end of September, the student launched a massive but nonviolent demonstration demanding for Thanom's departure. In this issue, the Seni coalition government was bitterly split. While the liberal faction of the Democrat Party supported the students' demand, the right-wing led by Samak with the support of the Thai Nation Party forcefully opposed the government to evict Thanom by claiming that the King had approved for Thanom's return. To solve the conflict, the liberal Democrats attempted to oust their right-wing counterparts and the Thai Nation Party from the coalition government by seeking the cooperation from the Social Action Party. The new coalition government was set without Samak and the Thai Nation Party, but it collapsed from the beginning because of the King's disapproval. Up until this time the situation had been deteriorated moving towards the military coup. What the military was waiting for was just a pretext for its action. This came following the students' play during their demonstration at Thammasat University. The play showed a mock hanging to dramatize the death of the two activists who had been recently killed by the police during their distribution of anti-Thanom posters in Nakorn Pathom Province. Unfortunately, it turned out that the photograph of the mock hanging published in a rightist newspaper in the next day illustrated that the makeup applied to one of the actors left him with the
resemblance to Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn. The rightist movement were quick to charge the students of lese majeste, and before dawn of October 6 the BPP troops together with the Village Scouts and the Red Guars were mobilized and gathered at the Pramain Ground in front of Thammasat University, preparing to launch the attack. It has been unclear until the present that who ordered the mobilization of the BPP troops and the right-wing group, or they spontaneously came together as the emotional response to the alleged lese majeste action of the students. But what was certain was that

The campus was stormed by a wave of nearly 4,000 special units of the Border Patrol Police and the Metropolitan Police. ...In the wake of the Police attack, the Krating Daeng [Red Guars] and Village Scouts entered the campus and engaged in a macabre orgy of violence, looting the bodies of the dead, burning alive the wounded, and screaming with joy over their "victory." More than a hundred were killed at Thammasat, many more were seriously wounded, and 3,000 were arrested in a single bloodiest event in the recent Thai history. (Mallet 1978, 90)

The major faction of the military seized this opportunity to stage a coup with the consent of the King. Thanin Kraivixien, a former judge, was selected by the palace to be the new prime minister. In his 1977 New Year speech to the public, the King referred to the October coup as "manifestation of what the people clearly wanted. ... Such a manifestation leads us to our mutual understanding and help us to construct what we desire and surmount all obstacle that might arise" (Bangkok Post January 1, 1977).
Compared with his role in the 1973 Uprising, the King's role in the course of the October coup in 1976 was more controversial. His action came out of his desire to stabilize change and keep the political development in the "right way." To those who have less sympathy with the monarchy, the role of the King in 1976 was not only conservative but also reactionary and retrogressive. And the latter could be confirmed by the palace backing of the Thanin government to carry out the ultra-rightist policy, including the purge of several senior civil bureaucrats, strict censorship, the suppression of all student-worker-farmer organizations, the arrest of a large number of people on the charge of being a "threat to society." the prohibition of teaching all kinds of political thought, offensive measures against "communist suspects," in the rural areas, and the fanatical policy towards communist neighbors. In addition, receiving the royal favor, Thanin as well as Samak acted independently from the military and even embarked on an anti-corruption campaign in the military. As a result of his ultra-rightist policy, there was no doubt that Thanin and his government after only a few month in power had alienated not only the military-civilian bureaucrats, but also those outside the bureaucratic circle and the international community.

Within months, the military began to exert overt pressure against the Thanin government. The spearhead of
the attack came from the "Young Turks," a group of middle-ranked army officers whose key figures are graduates of Class 7 of the Thai Military Academy (see Chai-anan, 1982). In mid 1977, the Young Turks began to put pressure on their senior officers to force Thanin out of office. Then, in the National Administrative Reform Assembly, the appointed assembly set by the 1976 coup group to replace parliament, the Thanin government was critically attacked on the charge of corruption in the purchase of multi-million dollar telephone equipment. The Young Turks supported this attack and backed no-confidence votes against the government (Mallet 1978, 96-97). But as the King stood firmly behind Thanin and the government managed to draw support from the navy and the air force, the attempt of the army officers to oust Thanin and his companions through the manoeuvre in the Assembly was unsuccessful. Ironically, the dissidents turned to use the old tactics that usually had been used against the leftist, the anti-monarchical charge. In September 1977, a bomb exploded a few yards from where the King and the queen were joining the ceremony with the Village Scouts. Shortly after that, another incident occurred in which two drunken police officers accidentally ride their motorcycle into the royal motorcade. The dissidents were quick to charge the government for "neglecting to provide adequate protection for the crown" (Siam Rath October 6, 1977). Earlier, Kukrit Pramoj also...
voiced the same concern when he argued in his newspaper *Siam Rath* (February 16, 1977) that Crown Prince should not be scheduled to visit sensitive areas dominated by the communist insurgencies. And as the Crown Prince's convoy had been fired on in Petchaboon province in early February, he demanded to know that who was responsible. By October 1977, it was agreeable among all the military leaders that Thanin had to be ousted. Before the army launched a coup, the Young Turks handed an ultimatum demanding for the resignation of seven cabinet ministers. The senior officers backed the move because they, as one observer put, "cannot afford to be on the wrong side of the battalion commanders who control the troops" (*FEER* November 4, 1977). The government rejected and the coup began without seeking the approval from the King first (Kershaw 1978, 259). Thanin tried in vain to counter the coup and gave in on October 19 after the entire military leaders asked for his resignation, and the King refused to give him an audience. The next day the Thanin government collapsed. That the King did not step in to rescue the Thanin government clearly came from the fact that it was too dangerous to confront with the military and that the Thanin government was very unpopular both internally and externally. However, the King continued to show sympathy for Thanin by wearing civilian dress on occasion when military uniform would have been prescribed. And shortly after the coup, Thanin was appointed the King's
One implication from the case of Thanin is that the palace has stepped down to play the political game of the bureaucratic politics. That is to say we have seen the royal attempts to develop the patronage network within the government and the bureaucracy (see Sukhumband 1983, 65). This has occurred at the same time as the bureaucracy especially the military has lacked unity. Before the 1976 coup occurred, the military power was divided among three major groups: the late's Krit's faction led by Kriengsak Chomanand, Serm Na Nagara and Kamol Dejatungka; the Chalard-Vitoon faction closely linked with the Thai Nation Party under Pramarn Adireksarn; and the Praphat-Yot contingents. The Kriengsak faction preempt other groups to seize power by staging a coup d'etat in the wake of the brutality at Thammasat University, and seeking the King's approval. To have the King's support to its faction, the 1976 coup group provide the opportunity for the King to choose his own man to be prime minister, which came out to be Thanin. Through his own fellow the King could create the patronage network within the government. Many close co-eries of the palace, such as Samak, were chosen to join the cabinet. In addition, the throne was also committed its credibility and institution to protect its client. And this attempt led the monarchy, for the first time since Sarit's regime, to have tension, if not conflict, with some factions of the
military. This kind of royal patronage was by no means unique. It occurred again in the case of Prem.

When Kriengsak was forced to resign in March 1980, Prem, the then commander-in-chief of the army, was selected with the King's blessing, to be the new prime minister. Although Prem was accepted by almost all political parties at that time, his political power-base was not quite strong. Since he did not belong to any political party, his reliable source of power came from his position as the commander-in-chief of the Army. But at the time he became prime minister his retirement from the military post was approaching, and, therefore, would undermine his position as premier. On this issue, the palace felt that Prem should remain in his army position for at least another year in order to stabilize both the army and the government (see Chai-anan and Suchit 1985, 95). The move to extend Prem's tenure was carried out by Maj.Gen. Arthit Kamlang-ek, the First Army Division Commander, who had close relationship with the palace, especially the queen. Arthit collected about one thousand signatures calling's for Prem's extension of tenure and presented it as a petition to the King in August 1980. And Prem's tenure was extended for one more year. However, despite their support to Prem, the Young Turks disagreed with Arthit's move because they perceived that Arthit was "bringing down" the monarchy to involve in politics, and Prem, inevitably, would become a target for criticism
Besides the Young Turks thought that Arthit sought to extend Prem's tenure in order to facilitate his rise to become a top military leaders.

The conflict between the King's men, Prem and Arthit, and the Young Turks occurred again after Prem reshuffled his first cabinet in March 1981. In the new cabinet Prem's friends, Prachuab Sundarangkul and Sudsai Hasdin, were given the portfolios of deputy prime minister and minister attached to the office of the prime minister respectively. This appointment especially in the case of Sudsai, who was the leader of the Red Guars which participated in the Thammasat Massacre, aroused criticism from the public. The Young Turks, too, was frustrated by Prem's choice of Sudsai, and began to exert pressure on Prem to reshuffle his one-week-old cabinet. Realizing the King's concern that the government should not be changed too frequently, Prem did not follow the Young Turks' proposal. In the same month, there was another issue which caused the Young Turks's disaffection towards Prem—Arthit's move for the second extension of Prem's tenure in the army. This led the Young Turks to decide to stage a coup. On March 31, after manoeuvring their troops to Bangkok, the Young Turks met Prem and gave him two alternatives—to lead the coup against his own government or to resign. At the very critical juncture, Arthit, being aware of the Young Turks's move telephoned the palace, informing the Queen about the coup.
As Arthit later revealed:

I...called the palace, asking somebody to inform Her Majesty of the emergency. ...Having reported the details, I requested that General Prem be granted an audience with Their Majesties, since he was otherwise not permitted to leave his residence. ...Her Majesty called General Prem, telling him to have an audience with the King now. At first, the other side did not allow him to go. But finally they gave in, [Prem's] aide-de-camp then brought him out of the gate. [The coup makers] were stunned. (Siam Mai May, 1981, 21-22)

Then, the royal family and Prem headed for Nakornrajasima province in the northeast—a homebase of the Second Army Region which was formerly Prem's base of command and then under Arthit's. With the royal family's presence with the Prem-Arthit faction as well as the queen's radio broadcast expressing concern about "the incident involving some people claiming to be members of a revolutionary party and demonstrating an intention to overthrow the government of His Majesty led by Prime Minister Prem Tinnasulananda" (FBIS, 2 April 1981), the coup failed disgracefully despite a force of 42 combat battalions, one of the largest forces ever mustered in the history of the Thai coup.

One may argue that what the King did in this case came out from his attempt to protect the legitimate government and to end the tradition of using force to change the government. But we can also come up with another argument with equally convincing weight. That is to say the above incident fits well with the pattern of the royal patronage which the King has tried to cultivate within the government
and the bureaucracy to strengthen the position of the monarchy. Never before has the monarchy openly taken sides with one faction against the other. And it was possible that the palace had been dissatisfied with the Young Turk's since the latter's move against Thanin. In addition we cannot overlook the remark given by Samak, who was one of the queen's advisor. He pointed out that they were a danger of Siam following the road of Afghanistan and Ethiopia:

In both cases, traditional bonds between the armed forces and the monarch had been shattered by a succession of coups by junior officers espousing half-baked theories and culminating in the ousting of the kings and installation of Marxist regimes. (FEER June 1981:15)

Besides, the royal patronage could be seen through the quick rising of Arthit after the 1981 abortive coup. Within nineteen months he was promoted from the rank of major general in the position of the deputy commander of the Second Army Region to the rank of a full general occupying the pivotal position of the commander-in-chief of the army.

In addition to acting as a patron of bureaucratic factions, the palace inevitably has to act also as a mediator when the conflict between its own clients arises. The baht devaluation crisis in November 1984 seemed to be the best illustration of the mediating role of the monarch in the conflict between Prem and Arthit.

Arthit was an ambitious man. After his position and his power-base in the Army was secured, he began to
challenge Prem's leadership (see Lysa 1985, 319-333; and Suchit and Kanala 1984). His forceful opposition to the government policy of the bath devaluation was but the most manifestation of a series of such challenges.

On November 12, the government gave a surprise announcement, of which even some cabinet members were not aware, proclaiming the devaluation of the baht by 14.9 percent. Despite the government attempt to alleviate the negative effects of the devaluation on the purchasing power of the people and the economic losses of the business community, the devaluation drew vast objection from the public. The country two largest unions demanded that the government increase the minimum wages nation-wide to offset the impact of the devaluation on the real wages. The opposition Thai Nation Party opposed the devaluation and tried to open a special House session for denouncing the devaluation policy of the government. On November 6, a group of top military leaders, acting with Arthit's approval, signed a letter demanding that the prime minister reshuffle his cabinet to avert the crisis which was likely to emerge from the devaluation. Aside from easing political tension, the military leaders contended that the reshuffle would show Prem's sincerity about solving the problems that had beset the country (Nation November 8, 1984). The next day, Arthit, through the two military-run television stations, sharply criticized the government on the
devaluation policy and threaten to withdraw his support and loyalty from the government:

The reshuffle is the only chance for the government to survive. If the government refuses, then let it be. When chaos and instability reigns, don't call on us [the military] because it will not be our responsibility. ...Those elected people sitting in the government are responsible for the mess. I myself never elected any one of them. (Bangkok Post Nov. 8 1984)

Despite the threat from Arthit, Prem's position was not shaken. It was clear that Prem received the king reassurance and continued support when it was reported that a member of the cabinet carried a personal message from the King, who was at the Northeastern province, to the prime minister in the same day that Arthit appeared on television (Thai Rath Nov. 8, 1984). A week later the confrontation between Arthit and Prem reconciled with the palace acting as the mediator. At the royal sponsored banquet at Sakon Nakorn, in the northeast, where the royal family was in residence, Prem and Arthit had met with each other for the first time after the crisis. Shortly after that, in his birthday speech given to the cabinet and top military-civilian bureaucrats, the King, acting as a mediator, advised that mistakes could occur in any kind of work, but what should be considered was whether such mistakes were worth noisy criticism. The King pointed out that even a slight comment could make issue explosive and said the solution to any problem was not by putting off or postponing action, but to tackle the issue. He concluded that "our
lives are like time which never stop running...[Thus] let bygone be bygone" (Bangkok Post 5 December 1984).

To sum up the monarchical involvement in politics, from the beginning the monarchy has acted as the political legitimizer of the bureaucratic politics, giving approval to the political changes. As its influence and its participation in the national affairs increased it become more difficult in differentiate the political and non-political roles in politics. In her press interview, Queen Sirikit explained the difficulty to draw the line between what was and what was not the political involvement by illustrating that when the Thai muslim in the South petitioned her to encourage the officials to be more sympathetic to them, she had little choice but to do so, even this meant that she was involving in politics. While some actions are difficult to draw the line between being political or non-political, in some cases there are obvious that the monarchy not only "involves", but "plays" the political game, as seen by its attempts to mobilize the extrabureaucratic forces during the 1973-1976 period, to cultivate the royal patronage within the bureaucracy and the government, to protect its clients and to act as a mediator when the conflict between it clients arises. Perhaps, nobody can conclude the matter better than Kukrit. He said:

The King has turned out to be a tremendous force in the country at the present time. Whether we like it or not he is going to take action. Since the king is revered anyway in our country, no matter he does right or
wrong, he is going to become a stabilizing influence on Thai politics if we give him a certain sort of venue in which he can exercise his activities. (Kukrit, 1973)
CHAPTER V
CONCLUDING REMARKS

If they want to write about me in a good way, they should write how I do things that are useful. If they want to criticize me, I don't care, I don't mind. But they might criticize me fairly. Usually the criticism is not fair. Or the praise, even the praise sometimes is not fair.


...Even the best, even the most perfect human, is fallible because fellow human beings insist on making that person fallible. That is the difficulty of anyone who wants to be a leader. ...If you ask me do I have faults? Yes, I do, because even if I become perfect I would have faults. ...The faults are in oneself which everybody has, and also at the same time the faults are in the eyes of others. ... That is why someone who is outstanding will be attacked and if that person if not strong enough to be Superman he will go down.

King Bhumibol (Leader April-June 1982).

The principle of constitutional monarchy always maintains that the King can do no wrong and is above politics. That is to say, most of the executive powers are exercised in the name of the King, but the King himself is unable to exercise or to forbid them. And the government is in the position to give advice in all royal actions concerning state affairs, and all royal commands and decrees have to be countersigned by authoritative persons as provided for in the constitution. Despite this principle, the residual power that the King does possess may be vital to the government, and his crown functions, too, may be vital to the maintenance of order and stability within the society. In regard to this principle, King Bhumibol once
[The principle] says that the king can do no wrong and these words can be quite difficult to understand. Sometimes the king can do no wrong because he adheres strictly to his scope of responsibility. But, on the other hand, it can also be understood that the king can do no wrong because he has love, especially in a country that upholds many traditions. (Leader April-June 1982)

In a country with constitutional monarchy, the importance of the monarchy to the society in general depends on its historical development. In the case of Siam, the monarchy is the vital force of the country. Traditionally, the Thai, influenced by the Buddhist thought, believed that their social order depended solely on the King's virtues or lack of virtues. In the modern period, the Thai image of social order is inseparable from the unity of three symbols: Nation, Religion and Monarchy. The monarchy, which successfully maintained the independence of the nation and has been the supreme patron of Buddhism, stands at the apex of this trinity, symbolizing national sovereignty conjoined with the protection and practice of Buddhism. Without kingship and what it symbolizes, Siam would lose its national identity. Thus, as Koson Srisang aptly concluded, the utmost importance of the monarchy to the Thai society lies in the fact that it is both the source and context of national unity and order and the primary power and authority that moves the Thai order toward national prosperity and the people's happiness, that is, towards destiny and fulfillment. (Koson 1973, 257)

As such, the appropriate and desirable role of the monarch
is to be the living symbol of national unity who guards the spirit of the country and embodies the common character of the Thai people. In this regard, the King helps to unify Thai society, and serves as a major force of national reconciliation in a time of crisis. However, as the monarchy has become stronger after every crisis and friction in bureaucratic politics, it has involved itself more and more in the political realm. While the King's political involvement in some cases has been the result of his concerns to bring about stability or defuse crisis, it also has causes apprehension that the active involvement of the monarchy in politics in the long run will tarnish its legitimacy and role as a unifying national symbol. And despite the great success of King Bhumibol, the monarchy could be alienated from its body politic if the King does not simultaneously take into account the political implications and consequences of his political action. The issues raised below are potential problems that may be detrimental to the legitimate position of the monarchy.

Firstly, the monarchy has acted as a political legitimizer, giving approval to political change resulting from the struggle within the bureaucracy. It was precisely this role that helped the monarchy not only to survive but also to revive after the 1932 coup. However, at present this role can adversely affect the monarchy. Since Sarit led Siam into the era of economic and social development,
the country has become more pluralistic; many new social
groups with their own needs and interests have emerged. No
more can the Thai polity be based narrowly on the interests
and demands of the bureaucratic elites. To protect their
interests, new social groups also want to participate in
politics. Thus, the monarchy has to be careful that its
role as a legitimizer for bureaucratic politics will not
create rigidity in the political system. For example, after
the 1971 coup when Thanom and Praphat turned Thai politics
back to authoritarian rule, the military leaders tried to
"sanctify" this process through royal legitimation. After
the coup, Thanom appeared on television and solemnly opened
a purported letter from the King brought in on a gold tray,
which approved his seizure of power. Afterwards, Thanom
bowed to the King's picture, placed in an ornamental set of
tables, as if he were present in front of the King himself
(Anderson 1978, 24). The military evidently hoped that the
aura of sacredness associated with the monarchy would
suppress the dissatisfaction of those whom the coup excluded
from political participation. Whether the King was aware of
it or not, the monarchy was being identified with the
retrogressive force of the military regime. Later, Dr. Peuy
Ungpakorn, Dean of the Department of Economics, Thammasat
University and formerly Governor of the Bank of Thailand,
sent an open letter to Thanom, warning that autocratic rule
could not solve the country's mounting problems. Moreover,
since channels of political participation were not open, the students would undoubtedly become much more radical. The communication led some to compare the political stands of the King and Dr. Peuy, and to question why the King, who for years had criticized the Thanom-Praphat regime, gave his indirect approval to such regressive action of the military.

Secondly, the King's attempt to stabilize change by identifying the monarchy with the right-wing forces not only yielded regrettable results but also undermined the monarchical role as the unifying symbol of the nation. The immediate result of the monarchical identification with the right-wing groups was the deepening social cleavage that followed the Thammasat Massacre and the 1976 coup. Hundreds of students, labor and farmer leaders, writers and journalists joined the communist forces in the hinterland. The King's backing of the Thanin government made the situation even worse as its ultra-rightist policy had alienated almost all groups in the country. The Communist Party began to launch critical verbal attacks on the monarchy—a practice it had been carefully avoided in the past. In the long run, if the King's open alliance with the conservative forces persists, the monarchy will serve to increase the inflexibility of the political system, rather than being a source of national consensus. In this case, Prince Chakrapongse's memorandum to King Vajiravudh in April 1917 seems relevant and instructive although it deals with a
The situation which had led to the Tsar of Russia having to relinquish the throne was [brought about by himself]. He refused to adapt himself to progressive groups, which had become vociferous, and to make timely concessions to them. One cannot fight progressives. it might be asked why one should not listen to the conservatives also, since they are there; the answer is that the conservatives can never harm the King because it would be against their beliefs. progressives are capable of anything, and therefore one has to consider them more than conservatives. Conflict between the two is normal, but conservatives have never prevailed and containment is only temporary; in the end it will be as desired by progressives. (Chakrapongse, 1917)

Thirdly, the monarchy's attempts to create its own patron-client network by openly identifying with faction in the bureaucracy and trying to promote its clients may well destroy the King's impartiality. Impartiality is a sine qua non for anyone wishing to act as the ultimate mediator in social conflicts, which has been the expected and desirable function of the monarchy since 1932. This not only may cause anxiety among those who believe that the King should be above politics, exemplifying political virtues rather than stepping down to play political games, but also may be perceived as a threat by those who lose in the monarchical patron-client network. (see Sukhumband 1983, 68). A case of the latter was the arrest of two of the Young Turks involved in the 1981 abortive coup in September 1984 on charges of machination to assassinate the queen, Prime Minister Prem and General Arthit. Thanks to the queen's understanding of the sensitivity of the issue, shortly after the arrest she sent the crown prince and one of her ladies-in-waiting to
deliver her message that she did not hold the two Young Turks' action against them. The two were subsequently released (see Soo Anakot, 27 September-3 October 1984:19-20). The petition of the Group of 99 also showed signs of anxiety on this problem, but it chose to address the problem in a rather subtle way by pointing out that Prem was using the monarchy to expand his power base.

Finally, the King's primary concern in the improvement of the living condition of the poor and his nation-wide visits to rural areas give him visibility in the field of rural development. He has attempted to find solutions to myriad of problems confronting the poor, e.g. lack of water, soil erosion, credits, etc. And the government usually pays special attention to his advice, which might later turn into public policy. Problems may arise when, in some controversial policy areas, the government attempts to silence the opposition by claiming that it has the King's support. For instance, the Chatichai government has projects to build dams in Phrae and Nakorn Ratchasima provinces, but both projects have been strongly opposed by environmentalist groups who claimed that the dams will destroy rainforest and rare species of animals. During the public debate on the issue, it was reported that the King urged the government to carry out these projects (see Matichon Weekly, 4 February 1990:5). To avoid problems such as this, it should be understood by all
parties concerned that whenever the King gives advice, it is not an absolute order, as in the period of the absolute monarchy. Rather, the government should take the advice for consideration as it deems appropriate. More important, the government or anyone to whom the King gives advice in private must not reveal its content to the public in order to influence public policy.

It might be argued that since the monarchy is a political institution, it inevitably has to be involved in politics. The issues outlined above are not at odd with this argument. However, if we accept that the appropriate function of the monarchy in contemporary Thai politics is to be a unifying force and a safety valve in times of national crisis, it is imperative to protect and effectively maintain that function. Ironically perhaps, no one has stated this better than King Bhumibol himself:

We keep in the middle, neutral, and in peaceful co-existence with everybody. That is the way of doing it. We are in the middle. We could have been crushed by both sides, but we are impartial. One day it would be very handy to have somebody impartial because if you have in a country only groups or political parties which will have their own interest at heart, what about those who don't have the power...who are just ordinary people who cannot make their view known? They must look up to somebody who is impartial. and if one wants to destroy somebody who is impartial, well, one destroys one's self. That is why one must keep this impartiality and perhaps it is difficult, but it can be done. (BBC: The Soul of Nation, 1979)
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