DEMOCRATISATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC MONARCHIES:

DRIVERS AND IMPEDIMENTS

A STUDY OF BHUTAN, TONGA, NEPAL AND THAILAND

BY

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Abstract

In the first decade of the 21st century, Bhutan and Tonga enacted reforms which took executive power away from the monarch and placed it the hands of an elected government. Conversely, Thailand and Nepal have faltered in their trajectory towards democracy. Thailand is stuck in a cycle of repression, popular protest, limited democracy, renewed military takeover, and constitutional revision to allow a controlled "democracy." Nepal has broken out of a similar cycle (although without military rule), at the cost of abolishing its monarchy. This thesis looks at factors, including the monarchy's role, which contributed to the different outcomes. The study questions Huntington's theory of the modernising monarch's dilemma (fear that reform would do the monarch out of a job), and suggests that, on the contrary, a democratising monarch is more likely to retain the throne, albeit with reduced power.

This comparative qualitative study is based on research into primary and secondary sources, plus interviews. The thesis found that in Bhutan and Tonga strong leadership of democratisation by Kings Jigme Singye and George V greatly favoured a successful democratic transition. In both Thailand and Nepal, monarchs Bhumibol and Gyanendra resisted a democratic bargain, seeking instead to retain or regain political power, in a context where popular mobilisation and the role of the military were significant in both countries, but with considerable differences. Contrary to Huntington's theory, monarchs in Thailand and Nepal, in seeking to avoid loss of political ascendancy suffered the opposite, although to differing degrees (one monarchy was disestablished while the other first gained ground but ultimately ceded ground to the military, reversing a pattern of monarchical dominance in the partnership). The thesis concluded that, against a historical background of special status for the monarch as symbol of national unity, and even in the face of unpromising structural conditions, monarchs who used their charisma to promote and lead a move to democracy were a critical factor in whether a transition would be successful, while securing the future of the monarchy for their heirs. Conversely, monarchs who formed strategic alliances with elite groups seeking to preserve their ascendancy, including the military, provided an excuse to autocratic groups for resisting democracy and risked either a reversion to (or

retention of) autocratic rule or a transition to a democracy that did not include a place for the monarchy.

Acknowledgements

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Conventions/Abbreviations

Thai names

In accordance with scholarly convention, this thesis refers to Thai individuals and scholars by their first name. The bibliography cites Thai scholars as "First name second name".

List of abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CEC	Constitutional and Electoral Commission [Tonga]
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement [Nepal]
DPFI	Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands [Tonga]
DPM	Democratic Parliamentary Monarchy
EU-EOM	European Union Election Observation Mission
FADTC	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee [New Zealand]
FPP	First-past-the-post
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GON	Government of Nepal
GOT	Government of Tonga
HMAF	His Majesty's Armed Forces [Tonga]
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MMA	Mixed Member Apportionment

NC	Nepali Congress
NCPO	National Council for Peace and Order [Thailand]
NCPR	National Committee for Political and Constitutional Reform [Tonga]
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy [Thailand]
PPP	People's Power Party [Thailand]
PDM	Pro-Democracy Movement [Tonga]
PDRC	People's Democratic Reform Committee [Thailand]
PHAMA	Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Program
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PMO	Prime Minister's Office [Tonga]
RGOB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RNZ	Radio New Zealand
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
STV	Single Transferable Vote
TDS	Tonga Defence Services
TPC	Tripartite Committee of Parliament [Tonga]
TRT	Thai Rak Thai [Thailand]
UDD	United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship [Thailand]
UML	Communist Party of Nepal, Unified Marxist-Leninist

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The future of monarchy is "bleak", if we accept Samuel Huntington's assessment (1968, p. 191) of the survival prospects for traditional monarchies seeking to modernise and reform. As one of the small number of scholars to focus on democratising monarchies in (comparatively) modern times, Huntington argued that a reforming monarch would become a victim of his (or her) own reforms. These would alienate traditional supporters while favouring non-monarchists. Conversely, a monarch who chose to repress reform risked provoking revolution which, again, would bring about the demise of the monarchy.

This was Huntington's contention in 1968. But consider the situation at the start of the twenty-first century. Monarchy as an institution has persisted in various parts of the world. In the Asia-Pacific region, four traditional monarchies (and one monarchy turned republic) which had at some point declared intentions to democratise, were at the end of 2017 at very different stages of democratisation, consolidation, or regression from democracy. Despite their supposedly shared objective and many similarities along the way, Bhutan, Tonga, Thailand and Nepal have diverged markedly.

In Bhutan, in November 2008, a seemingly traditional but in fact revolutionary event took place: the coronation of the fifth king, Jigme Khesar Wangchuck, by his father, the fourth king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. What was unusual was the presence of both kings: Jigme Singye had abdicated in favour of his son two years earlier (December 2006). Before that, Jigme Singye had introduced a series of reforms culminating in democratic elections in 2008. In Tonga, a new king, George Tupou V, declared in September 2006 his intention to champion democratic reforms. Despite challenges along the way, in November 2010 Tonga held elections under a revised constitution which for the first time gave representatives of the people a majority of seats in parliament. The members of parliament elected a prime minister, a new step for Tonga. Previously the prime minister had been appointed by the monarch. These two countries (Bhutan and Tonga) both held second elections (in 2013 and 2014 respectively) in which the opposition leader from the first parliament became the prime minister, although developments in Tonga in late

2017 cloud this picture somewhat. King Tupou VI (who succeeded George V), apparently at the urging of the Speaker of the House, dissolved parliament and called fresh elections one year ahead of schedule. The same leader was re-elected prime minister. While both these countries are still finding their way in their more democratic systems, there has been no suggestion of stepping back from the reforms nor, indeed, of abolition of the monarchies.

Contrast this with the situation in Thailand and Nepal. Thailand in 2016 lost its veteran (commonly described as "revered") monarch, Bhumibol. In the last years of his life, the country had difficulty coping with the political uncertainty such a transition might bring. Thailand reverted to a familiar pattern: two coups (2006 and 2014) put the military in charge. A June 2017 opinion piece in Thai newspaper *The Nation* (Titipol, 2017) suggests that Thailand has regressed to its situation before the revolution of 1932 (which ended the absolute monarchy) - to a non-democratic state. It is however open to question whether, as at 2017, Thailand can be said to have regressed to its pre-1932 state, or to something different. Autocratic power may now be less in the hands of the monarchy and more with the military. The regime from 2014 imposed increasingly repressive measures, and constructed a new constitution aimed at securing on-going military control over (eventual) elected governments. The fact that people voted for this undemocratic constitution in a referendum (August 2016) is not seen by commentators as an endorsement of the military. More likely, many Thais were tired of this dictatorial phase and anxious to move on to much-postponed elections (now promised for early 2019), no matter how "controlled" that process will be. Thailand might be thought to bear some resemblance to Huntington's monarch who relies on the military to repress the people and thereby risks revolution, but Thailand's history from the 1950s onwards is more one of the military and the monarchy relying on each other for legitimacy, with oscillating ascendancy (the military currently being the dominant partner). The likelihood of "revolution" is very much tempered by the rivalry between two strong popular movements with differing aims.

Nepal, in contrast, is in the midst of one of the "most ambitious political experiments in recent times in South Asia" (Jha, 2014, p. xxv). It has experienced both transition to democracy and transformation into a secular federal republic. What sets Nepal apart from the other three countries is its abolition of the monarchy, which lost its

legitimacy in the eyes of the people under the last king, Gyandendra. Before that Nepal had oscillated between monarchical authoritarianism and brief periods of democracy. Its turbulent recent past has included two massive popular movements for democracy and an armed Maoist insurgency. But the abolition of the monarchy was not the result of a Maoist (or any other) revolution. The last monarch had, by reasserting absolute power in 2005, so alienated the mainstream political parties and the Nepali people that a political alliance between the parties and the Maoists, together with an overwhelming people's movement for democracy, brought back parliament, culminating in a decision to abolish the monarchy in 2008. Nepal's democracy has struggled since then, taking years to agree on a constitution, but in late 2017 the country held elections under that 2015 constitution and in 2018 Nepal is embarking on its new federal system. Contrary to Huntington's contention, the attempted (and unsuccessful) Maoist "revolution" arose not during a period of monarchical repression with support of the army, but under the new democratic government of the 1990s. When the king took absolute control and sought to rely on the military to suppress opposition, he inspired a massive peaceful people's movement (not a violent revolution) and lost the support of the military. This, too, does not correspond to Huntington's model.

This thesis argues that, contrary to Huntington's assertion that democratising monarchs put the institution of monarchy at risk, it is, rather, those that dominate political power who risk losing their position altogether, or diluting the monarchy's influence compared to that of other autocrats (such as the military). Conversely, those that lead democratisation or work with key actors to foster democracy, can both preserve their own position as head of state and symbol of national unity, and also support the crafting and embedding of a democratic framework

The intriguing contrasts outlined above spurred my interest in contemporary democratising monarchies. The challenge was to identify a selection of cases against which to investigate the factors that drove or impeded democratisation and consider the validity of Huntington's theory. I sought cases that had a number of similarities, which would help highlight the differences and factors contributing to those differences. The first similarity was a stated commitment to democratisation (no matter what the reality might reveal), whether through a constitution, a declaration by the monarch or government, or other public means. This excluded

entrenched dictatorships such as Brunei. The second similarity was the timeframe. The study concentrates on the contemporary, not the historical, era and sought monarchies that were in the process of moving towards or away from democracy (or remaining static) over the period 2005-2017. The third similarity was location: all the countries selected are located in the Asia-Pacific region. This excluded the Middle Eastern/North African monarchies. A fourth similarity is that they have never been colonised (although all were influenced by the nineteenth century imperial powers. This led to the comparative cohort of Thailand, Bhutan, Tonga and Nepal. Their combination of initial similarities with contrasting outcomes provided the starting point for exploring what differences in their trajectory might account for their differing outcomes.

Against this background, this introduction looks at the research context of the study's topic, notes how a review of the background and literature helped shape the research focus and questions, and concludes with a brief overview of the following chapters.

The research field

The research field on democratisation is vast, but that on monarchies in transition to democracy is comparatively sparse. There is enduring interest amongst scholars in transitions toward, or away from, democracy, and in democratic consolidation. Various scholars have adopted structuralist, agency-based, or integrated theories. Even those who doubt democratic transition can be usefully theorised still seek ways of assessing a country's democratic status, how it got there, and what might eventuate in specific settings. This research tradition (described in greater detail in chapter 2) has, however, paid little attention to traditional monarchies transitioning in the modern era. Many of the earlier studies of democratisation focused on Western Europe in the nineteenth and earlier centuries. Later studies have tended to concentrate on Latin America, and, more recently, on Central and Eastern Europe and on the Arab Spring. They have also looked at some Asian countries (notably the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan, Cambodia and Indonesia). Those which examine developing countries often do so in the context of colonisation and de-colonisation. But do the same conclusions apply to transitions from modern-day traditional monarchies? These might be thought likely to emulate earlier traditional

societies, which democratised in previous eras. But, unlike earlier monarchies, they are part of the "modernised", globalised world. Their transitional paths may therefore differ from those of their predecessors, either because – as survivors – these are the more resilient monarchies or because of the changed international context. Those in this study differ, too, from ex-colonies in having never experienced decolonisation and its associated anti-colonial nationalism. Together, these differences reshape the respective influence of structural and agency factors, so that prospects for democratisation turn critically on leadership from the top or its absence (see Di Palma, 1990, p. 122).

Another difference relates to the question of legitimacy. Persistent international attention to democratisation has contributed to a well-established sense, even among autocracies, that democratic processes convey legitimacy on a government. But for contemporary traditional monarchies, national identity and legitimacy are closely linked to hereditary monarchy, with the monarch and traditional cultures as unifying symbols. This might favour the persistence of autocracy, unless the monarchs come to fear their inherited legitimacy is unstable or unreliable. It can also create a situation of dual legitimacy[1], with attendant risks.

Monarchy thus provides an additional element to be taken into account. The small number of recent comparative studies looking at democratisation prospects in monarchies have mainly focused on North Africa/the Middle East (Herb, 1999; Lawrence, 2014; Stepan, Linz, & Minoves, 2014).

There are many studies of contemporary political developments in individual Asia-Pacific countries, including the monarchies under consideration here. These tend, however, to highlight the uniqueness of the particular country under examination, as in discussion of the possible "Bhutanese exception" (Kinga, 2009, pp. 3,323).[2] Each country may well have unique features but an exclusive focus on single countries forecloses the possibility of drawing causal inferences and gaining insight

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[1] By "dual legitimacy", this thesis means that the special status of the monarchy can give the monarch's decisions and actions a greater or equal legitimacy to those of a democratically elected government: this creates confusion as to where decision-making power lies.
[2] Kinga sees Bhutan as exceptional not just because the transition was almost solely monarch-driven, but also because in his view monarchy is "indispensable to the consolidation and success of Bhutanese democracy" (p.323).

into counterfactual puzzles through a comparative investigation (see King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, pp. 75-114). A comparative approach can also point to potential risks and pitfalls in, for example, the constitutional provisions in the respective monarchies.

The importance of comparative research on monarchical transitions is in some cases noted by country specialists. Paul Handley (2007) calls for more discussion of "how similar (or not) the Thai monarchy is to other monarchies in the world." Federico Ferrara, too, suggests the value of a comparative approach (2015, pp. 266-295), arguing that "placing Thailand in its proper comparative context yields insights not available to those willing to assume its uniqueness." That uniqueness is not so unique if Thailand is analysed in comparison with other Asia-Pacific monarchies. Ferrara notes (p. 267) that claims to Thailand's uniqueness have often been based on its non-colonised state, but that is characteristic of all the countries in this study.

In considering the impact of structural and agency factors on the monarchies' democratisation the thesis draws on the work of several theorists, as described in the following chapter. The main studies on monarchies specifically which provide context for this thesis are those of Huntington (1968), George Tridimas (2014, 2016), Sreeram Chaulia (2008), Serhat Ünaldi (2012) and Juli Minoves-Triquell (2011).

Huntington thought it barely possible for a contemporary (twentieth century) traditional monarchy to both modernise and transform itself into a European-style constitutional monarchy, arguing that "it is …virtually impossible for a modernising monarch….to release his grasp and voluntarily to assume a dignified rather than an efficient rule" (1968, p. 179). The likely outcome of such an attempt, according to Huntington, would be that "unable to transform itself, the monarchial parent is eventually devoured by its modern progeny" (p. 169).

Tridimas (2014), on the other hand, considers it possible for monarchs to retain their ceremonial position while discarding the accompanying political power. Such monarchs promote democracy through what Tridimas (from an economic perspective) presents as a strategic bargain whereby the spoils are shared between the democratic government and the ceremonial monarchy. A second

article by Tridimas (2016) postulates that when a monarch meddles in government, survival of the monarchy is less likely. Minoves-Triquell's survey of European monarchies comes to a similar conclusion (2011, p. 352). From Ünaldi's perspective, the monarch who accepts (or even leads) democratisation has moral authority based on "democratic charisma" rather than a "sacred" or "traditional charisma" (2012, pp 22, 24, 29-30). In a similar vein, this contrast is also inferred by Chaulia (2008), who suggests that a monarchy is more likely both to survive and retain its influence if it has charisma based on religion.

Aim, scope and research questions

Through a comparative focus on this small set of monarchies, this thesis assesses which factors contributed to the different outcomes in the trajectories of Bhutan, Tonga, Thailand and Nepal towards (or away from) democracy. Factors include the historical, international and structural contexts in which the monarchs operated and the role of the monarchs themselves which, as the case of Spain illustrates, can have momentous implications. The principal research question is:

- What factors, including the role of the monarch, account for the different outcomes in the trajectories of Bhutan, Nepal, Tonga and Thailand towards (or away from) democracy?

In this context, the term "role" refers to the behaviour, influence and actions of the individual monarchs, in leading, encouraging or impeding democratisation, including their interaction with other significant players. It also refers to their powers as set out in relevant constitutions and in practice. Connected to this overarching question, the thesis also explores a number of distinct issues, as set out in the following secondary questions:

- How has the approach of the monarch affected prospects for a successful democratic transition?
- What motivates a monarch to support and (in some cases) lead democratisation or, alternatively, impede it?
- What accounts for the decision of a country (as in Nepal) to abolish its monarchy?

- What are the implications of a monarchical succession for democratisation prospects? (Monarchical successions can prove critical junctures either in facilitating or blocking political transitions).
- How has the monarchy's interaction with significant actors impeded or supported democracy?
- What aspects of the ongoing presence of the monarch (including dual sources of legitimacy) create risks for a new democracy?

The last question touches on the influence of monarchs on prospects for consolidation of a new democracy, but this question is not a primary focus of this thesis, which concentrates on the transition period rather than the post-transition phase. The implications for democratic consolidation of having a monarch in place is beyond the scope of this thesis, but would be a valuable area for future research.

The objective of studying these four monarchies (one of them an ex-monarchy) and their recent (2005-2017) steps towards, or away from, democracy, is to examine the extent to which background factors, and the varying roles of the monarchs, contributed to the different outcomes. Were monarchs' actions decisive or incidental? A key focus is on what Ferrara describes as a monarch's "strategic interactions" (Ferrara, 2015, p. 16) with key actors, and on the challenges and risks posed by different institutional frameworks. The main focus is the period since 2005, but significant developments of the 1990s onwards are also taken into account and the earlier historical background is summarised.

Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the relevant literature and how the literature survey helped identify gaps in research. It begins with a brief discussion of the broader framework of democratisation theory and rival schools, before honing in on literature focusing specifically on the monarchy. Literature on each individual country is also examined and critiqued. The research method is described, as well as limitations on the research.

Chapter 3 summarises the background against which the monarchs and other key actors have operated, looking at the historical and international context. Chapter 4

looks at the influence of structural factors, concentrating on economic development, education, inequality, poverty and class relationships.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine the role of the monarch (chapter 5) and the interaction between the monarchy and significant actors - chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 8 compares the crafting (or dismantling) of democratic (or otherwise) constitutional frameworks in the different countries and the risks these pose. This is supplemented by a comparison of the monarchs' constitutional powers (chapter 9). Chapter 10 concludes.

Chapter 2. Literature and Methods

This chapter establishes the scope and specific area of focus for the thesis. It begins by looking at definitions of democracy and explains how "democracy" is understood in this thesis. The next section summarises the main theories on democratisation while the third looks at monarchy-specific literature. Section four examines and critiques relevant country-specific scholarship.

The chapter then turns to the methods used in the study, and outlines some limitations on the research.

2.1 Definitions of democracy

The study of "democratisation", or the process of becoming more democratic, relies on an understanding that a political state - "democracy" - exists and is attainable. Alternatively, "democracy" might be seen as an ideal political system which in its pure form can never be attained, but which an ongoing process of democratic evolution brings closer. Robert Dahl (1971) invented a new term ("polyarchy") to describe a polity with many of the features normally considered to constitute a democracy but not quite approaching the ideal (which Dahl suggests has never been reached in the real world). The two key aspects of a polyarchy are contestation (liberalisation or competition, the right to "oppose") and participation (inclusiveness, the right to choose). A polyarchy would include a high degree of both, whereas different types of more authoritarian regimes might have some degree of participation without contestation, or vice versa. In reality, Dahl's nomenclature ("polyarchy") has not been taken up by many scholars, but his two elements have become part of the typology of "democracy."

An even earlier definition of democracy, sometimes described as "minimalist", is provided by Joseph Schumpeter (1987). In *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, first published in 1942, he argues that democracy is a competitive system amongst politicians for the people's approval to govern (p. 269). He adds that this has to be a *regular* contest.

Juan Linz's (1978) definition puts a strong emphasis on the rights of political participation combined with basic civic freedoms. He describes democracy as the:

> …legal freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives with the concomitant rights to free association, free speech, and other basic freedoms of person; free and nonviolent competition among leaders with periodic validation of their claim to rule; inclusion of all effective political offices in the democratic process; and provision for participation of all members of the political community. (Linz, 1978, p. 5).

Linz sums this up as meaning that people are free to establish political parties, and to hold "free and honest elections at regular intervals." In addition, "any effective political office" is subject to "direct or indirect electoral accountability."

More recently, scholars have suggested that it is best not to attempt to formulate one, all-embracing, definition of democracy but, rather, to accept that there are countless possible definitions depending on one's principal area of focus: electoral freedom, civil and political rights, economic egalitarianism, gender equality, or some other feature(s). Michael Coppedge and colleagues (2011) proposed that different indicators, continually updated, be used for assessing a country's democratic performance according to the "type" of democracy analysed. This would provide a basis both for individual country analysis and for comparative studies.

Coppedge and colleagues then worked on implementing such an initiative, now institutionalised as the V-Dem Institute (V-Dem standing for "Varieties of Democracy").[3] V-Dem gathers data on a large number of indicators and provides tools to analyse performance in relation to different types of democracy, and to compare this with other polities. Unfortunately, as at the end of 2017, data had not yet been coded for Tonga, making the V-Dem dataset inadequate for the comparative purposes of this thesis. A more useful (if less comprehensive) institute for the purposes of this study is Freedom House,[4] which produces an annual survey of civil liberties and political rights across a large range of countries and territories (including Tonga).

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[3] See: https://v-dem.net.
[4] See https://freedomhouse.org/

A recent description of democracy by Daron Acemoglu and colleagues (2015) offers a helpful perspective. Rather than attempting to *define* democracy, it talks about "components of democracy" (Appendix A.1.3, page A.4). For these scholars, the components include "free elections, the use of institutional checks on the executive, inclusive participation and representation (in particular, non-ruling parties are organized and compete for political influence regularly) and to a lesser extent civil rights". Transitions to democracy involve "an improvement of all of these basic components."

The above formulation, plus that of Linz, provide a useful starting point for how the concepts of democracy (and transition) are understood in this thesis. In comparing the "outcomes" (positive or negative) for the four countries as at the end of 2017, the thesis examines in two later chapters (8 and 9) improvements (or otherwise) in the "components" as summarised by Acemoglu et al. Following Linz, it gives civil and political rights equal consideration to the others mentioned. It looks at the presence (or lack) of free elections, inclusive participation and representation, and civil and political rights. In addition, in looking at checks on the executive it includes in chapter 9 specific scrutiny of the powers of the monarch.

2.2 Theories of democratisation

One popular way of categorising democratisation theory is to divide it into two main streams, based on thematic areas - structure and agency (Mahoney, 2003). Both look for patterns or influences that favour certain outcomes. The structural school considers social and economic factors while the agency school examines the actions of individuals and groups.

The structural school

The most persistent argument from the structural school relates to *economic development.* Starting with Seymour Martin Lipset's (1959) modernisation theory, a strong argument has been presented for a correlation between socio-economic development and democracy. Lipset was cautious about whether this represented a *causal link* between economic development and democracy but expressed

greater certainty that economic well-being had a strong role in *sustaining* democracy (p.75).

Ever since, there has been an ongoing debate on the nature of the linkage, including in quantitative research. Quantitative studies by Adam Przeworski and colleagues (2000, 1997) and by Jan Teorell (2010, 2013) both concluded that a causal link between economic development and democratisation cannot be established, but that economic well-being does contribute to the survival of a democracy. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Julian Wucherpfennig and Franziska Deutsch (2009, p. 3), commenting on Przeworski et al.'s conclusions, find this assertion puzzling in the light of the data provided. They argue convincingly that the data do in fact present a "*positive and statistically significant effect*" of economic development on democratisation.

Przeworski et al. also found that democracy was better for economic development than dictatorship, a finding reinforced by Daron Acemoglu et al. (2015, p. 1), who find "evidence that democracy has a significant and robust positive effect on GDP per capita" – around 20% higher in the next 25 years of continuous democracy, and irrespective of the previous level of development.

Przeworski's and Teorell's quantitative studies also looked at the impact of education on democratisation. Neither study was able to separate the potential causal impact of education from that of economic development overall, but Przeworski et al. did find that the level of education has a positive impact on democracy's *survival*.

The changing relationships between social classes (monarchy, landed gentry, peasants, and bourgeois capitalists), against a background of the rise of industrialisation and the decline of the traditional agrarian sector, was seen as the key determinant of political outcomes by Barrington Moore in his monumental study (1966) on the social origins of democracy and dictatorship. Moore investigated why capitalist development had led to democracy in some cases (England, France, United States) but fascism in others (Japan, Germany). Circumstances (including the treatment of peasants) engendering communist revolution were also scrutinised, with particular reference to China (and a glance at Russia). All these countries had passed through some form of revolution,

whether "bourgeois revolution", "revolution from above," or "revolution from below". In all three scenarios the background is change (or otherwise) to the relative situation in rural society of peasants and landed gentry, and how this interacts (or not) with a possible bourgeoisie. The first route involves development of the urban capitalist bourgeoisie but also the dismantling of feudal systems and the transformation from agrarian to industrialised societies (p. 4). Landowners, through developing production for export, begin to share common interests with urban-based capitalists. On the other hand, if there is a weaker bourgeoisie, landowners and other aristocrats will have an interest in preserving their economic base and will turn to autocratic political leaders to help do this (p. 437), thereby engendering fascism, as happened in Japan and Germany. The autocratic governments, who also establish "powerful military machines" (p. 439), then introduce modernisation from above. In the third scenario, there is little or no commercialisation of agriculture and an urban bourgeoisie is largely absent. This situation, where a "huge peasant mass" remains exploited on the land, can lead to peasant revolution resulting in communist dictatorship (p. 420).

Moore's dictum "No bourgeois, no democracy" (p. 418) is one of his most celebrated conclusions. Moore's many followers have sought to explain the theory and apply it to additional countries.

Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens and John Stephens (1992), like Barrington Moore, see class interests as the driving force in promoting democratisation (p. 46). But for them an empowered working class, not the bourgeoisie, is behind democratisation in Europe. (In Latin America, they see the middle classes as having this role).

Carles Boix (2003) theorises that transition to democracy is favoured by a low degree of economic inequality and a high degree of capital mobility. This is because wealthy elites will have less to fear in terms of the "redistributive impact" of democracy if there is already a strong degree of equality; in addition, the risk of capital flight (coming from high capital mobility) means that a democratic government is less likely to impose high taxes. Boix also looked at the impact of the balance of political power between different groups (elites, state, wealthy, poor). Highly relevant in this power play is the balance between relative costs of

repression (by the authoritarian power) and mobilisation (by the people) (p.13). For Boix, in a situation of high inequality and low capital mobility there is a greater chance of political violence (or even civil wars or revolutions) developing out of popular mobilisation.

Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson (2006) take a similar approach to Boix's, seeing democratisation as a trade-off (p.16) between the desire of the "citizens" for redistribution (but also for enduring political power - which democracy's institutions convey) and the elites' fear of revolution. Greater inequality leads to greater *desire* for democracy by the poor but greater *fear* of democracy by the rich (as Boix also asserts). Contrary to Boix, however, Acemoglu and Robinson see a "middling" degree of inequality as the point where democratisation is most likely (pp. 36-37). At this point, the poor are keen on democracy but less keen on revolution, while the rich have less fear of revolution and less desire to repress.

Ben Ansell and David Samuels (2014) disagree with both Boix and Acemoglu and Robinson about the impact of inequality versus equality in the quest for democracy. For them, democratisation results not from the poor seeking redistribution but from the desire of the bourgeoisie, in an industrialising society, for political rights to protect their interests from state predation/expropriation. Citing various historical examples (pp. 4-6), Ansell and Samuels argue that in a developing country, the rise of the middle classes *increases* inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient, which means that inequality does not impede democratisation. In fact it favours it. If the bourgeois have enough influence and strength to agitate on their own, they will prefer "partial democracy", whereas if the struggle for political power involves "the masses" as well, the result is more likely to be "full democracy" (p. 62). Ansell and Samuels distinguish between "land inequality" (landed elites having extreme power over their labourers/tenants), which discourages democracy, and high "income inequality" which, when combined with low land inequality (property more widely spread) favours democratisation (p. 13). Ansell and Samuels note that their theory validates Barrington Moore's assertion that the bourgeoisie determine democracy.

These varied arguments from structuralist theorists demonstrate the complexity of factors which form part of the background to democratisation and which may or

may not have an impact on individual countries' trajectories. In this sense, their arguments merit weighing up against the particular country circumstances to assess their contribution. This is addressed in chapter 4.

The agency school

In contrast to the structuralists' emphasis on economic and social factors, the main argument from the agency school (sometimes described as "transitology") is that key actors, with skills in negotiation and compromise, can (but not always successfully) work together to craft a package of reforms that herald in democracy. This is often preceded by conflict between factions with deeply entrenched and strongly differing positions, according to a foundational article by Dankwart Rustow (1970, pp. 352-355). Rustow describes three phases of democratisation. First, "national unity" is the single essential precondition (p. 350). Next, a "preparatory phase" - conflict between opposing factions (pp. 352-355). Finally, political actors open to compromise must make a deliberate decision to "accept the existence of diversity in unity" and "to institutionalize some crucial aspect of democratic procedure" (pp. 355-357).

This idea of democracy stemming from conflict, followed by the crafting of a compromise, is at the heart of the agency approach taken forward by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Giuseppe Di Palma, among others. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) argue that the transition process is almost always triggered by divisions within the ruling regime, leading "soft-liners" (p.19) to push for agreements with the opposition, which then lead on to political change. The transition might involve negotiated pacts and bargains, popular mobilisation, and a transformation in the role of the armed forces, among other steps.

Di Palma's optimistic essay *To Craft Democracies* (1990) takes up the idea of negotiated pacts, in which actors need to be masters of bargaining and trade-offs, anticipating what others might be prepared to forego in the interests of securing their top priorities. Agreement on political reform should take priority over economic reforms, as, according to Di Palma, "labor" place higher priority on political equality than on immediate welfare reform (p. 97), whereas the "right" want above all to maintain the opportunities a market economy brings them, and are less concerned about the implications of broadening political opportunity. The art of "crafting"

involves being able to lower immediate expectations, while institutionalising the ability to influence future developments. Democracy is not a fixed outcome but is the opening of prospects for change into the future (p. 41).

The agency approach, with its emphasis on leadership, cooperation, and pacts, provides useful elements for consideration of the impact of monarchs (and their interaction with key players) in driving or impeding democratisation, especially when considered in conjunction with theories specifically about monarchies.

Integrated approach

Not all theorists can be stratified as belonging to one or other school. Many, including those studying monarchy specifically, consider themes from both fields, in a so-called integrated approach (Mahoney & Snyder, 1999). Such an approach might involve looking at structural factors as part of the background against which actors then work to effect change. James Mahoney and Richard Snyder cite as an example Huntington's *The Third Wave* (1993), which looks at both "causes" and "causers" of democratisation. Another example of an integrated approach is that of Marian Gallenkamp, writing about Bhutan. Gallenkamp (2012, p. 2) sees Bhutan's transition as a clear case of "agency." This does not mean there are no relevant structural factors, but structure is not determinant, and can be shaped by agency, in a way that can "render the latter's inhibiting factors for democratization irrelevant". Agency (in the form of a good leader), argues Gallenkamp, can "triumph," so that democratisation can take place even in an unlikely (structural) environment.

Smooth road to consolidation?

For Rustow, a decision to institutionalise democracy is followed by a "habituation phase" (1970, p. 358). Living within democracy breeds democrats (rather than democratic values being needed before democracy can be adopted). O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, pp. 7-11) divide transitions into three phases: "liberalization", "democratization" and "socialization." More commonly, bedding in democracy once established is described as "consolidation". Consolidation is variously defined,[5] but

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[5] See for example Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, p. 6); Andreas Schedler (1998, p. 103); Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J Samuel Valenzuela (1992).

is generally regarded as the point at which democratic rules and institutions are in place and are working; all key players abide by them and expect others to do so.

Some scholars, such as Thomas Carothers (2002a), question the way the "transitology" model has come to be seen as a precise prescription – something its originators had not intended.[6] For Carothers, transition is often *not* a linear process through a series of steps from autocracy to democracy, culminating in consolidation of democracy. Carothers cites examples of countries stuck in what he calls a "Gray Zone" (p.9), with some elements of democracy but many undemocratic features. Countries potentially in this zone,[7] in which Carothers (p. 11) included both Nepal and Thailand in the 1990s, might not progress to a more democratic system.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "transition" is used, but is contrasted with "oscillation", to describe a process of moving in and out of autocracy, or dwelling in a grey zone as a hybrid regime (Diamond, 2002), and "regression" (retreat into authoritarian rule).

The scope of this thesis does not include a detailed investigation of prospects for consolidation of democracy. Nevertheless, negative indicators (termed "perverse institutionalization") suggested by Mainwaring, O'Donnell and Valenzuela (1992, pp. 67-68) for assessing consolidation prospects provide a useful benchmark for assessing risks associated with the institutional outcomes in the monarchies (including those of dual legitimacy) – see chapters 8 and 9. The indicators include retention of powers by non-elected bodies (which could include monarchs) and the persistence of a belief that means other than elections can change the government.

International influence?

An additional factor, neither structural nor agency-specific, considered significant by some scholars, concerns *international influences* on democratisation. This thematic area looks at the role of neighbours, influential world powers, regional organisations and the general "diffusion" effect of the worldwide endorsement of

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[6] O'Donnell (2002) insists that he never saw the transition process as necessarily linear. Carothers (2002b) continued the debate, arguing that democracy promoters are often naively optimistic about prospects.
[7] A number of scholars have come up with names for semi-democratic regimes. See for example David Collier and Stephen Levitsky (1997), Larry Diamond (2002) and Jason Brownlee (2010).

democracy as an ideal (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013; Diamond, 2008; Huntington, 1993). Potential international influences on the four countries in this study are examined in the next chapter (see 3.2).

Country size

A sub-set of theory looks at country size as a relevant factor in democratisation. A key theorist in this area, Dag Anckar (Anckar, 2002; Anckar & Anckar, 1995), argues that small states, especially small island states, are more likely than other countries to democratise (and sustain democracy). He bases his comparison on Freedom House data from 1999. Anckar does not carry out his own empirical research on this question but examines existing literature. After controlling for various possible causes, Anckar postulates two overriding reasons:

- Easier communication between leaders and governed, and shared sense of remoteness, giving rise to greater tolerance and understanding.
- "Attitudinal homogeneity" (by which he seems to mean shared values and interests), which favours the development of "open and flexible political processes" through which mutual understanding can flourish; this mutual understanding means that it is easier to foresee (and take account of) "potentially conflicting interests".

Anckar suggests that such a situation would be likely to favour "consensus democracy", which he clearly sees as a positive augury for democratisation.

Dana Ott (2000) concluded, from a survey of theory, a comprehensive quantitative analysis and a comparative case study of two states (The Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago), that "small states are significantly more likely to become and remain democratic than large states, at any level of income" (pp 208-209). Conversely, she also argues that small size can help sustain an autocracy.

Jack Corbett, Wouter Veenendaal and Lhawang Ugyel (2016) argue that the monarch's dilemma, as postulated by Huntington (see 2.3, below), does not apply to small states, specifically because of their small size. Corbett el al. use similar arguments to those of Anckar, but seek to apply them specifically to monarchies, suggesting that because the monarchs are closer to the people, then they will retain their authority and reverence through democratisation.

2.3 Theorising about monarchies

This section surveys the (more limited) literature devoted specifically to monarchical transitions. Little in the theories summarised above looks specifically at monarchies. Lipset (1959, pp. 87-88) suggests (in the European context) that the persistence of the monarchy might reassure conservative elites and thereby help bed in a new democracy. Teorell's quantitative investigation touched on monarchies but concluded (2010, pp. 130,139) that democratisation prospects for monarchies resembled those for one-party regimes. He acknowledged, however, that his sample was small. O'Donnell and Schmitter limit their comments on monarchies to their positive assessment of King Juan Carlos's role during the Spanish (post-Franco) transition (1986, p. 22). Presumably with Juan Carlos in mind, they assert that transition "from above" is possible and if it is carried out by someone able to "dictate the emerging rules of the game" then this might occur without pacts or negotiation (p. 39). This resembles the transition in Bhutan.

A classic study of constitutional parliamentary monarchy is Walter Bagehot's *The English Constitution* (1898). First published in 1867, it is best known for its encapsulation of the limits of the monarch's power: "the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn" (p. 75). Bagehot described England at that time as a "Republic…beneath the folds of a Monarchy" (pp. 49-50), a system which brought benefits, from the pragmatic (freeing the prime minister from protocol duties), to the more strategic (enabling real political change to take place under the illusion of continuity (p. 54)).

Bagehot issues a warning to those nostalgic for royal control over government: such a system paralyses decision-making, since government and parliament are always waiting for the monarch to tell them what to do (pp. 71-72). This is a risk for democratising monarchies today.

Huntington (1968) looks at the challenges facing a traditional monarch who wants to modernise, both politically and economically. Modernisation, he asserts (pp. 72-73), destroys social unity in a traditional society. Political consciousness develops among traditional groups (commoners and peasants), while new emerging groups (entrepreneurs, urban professionals) need to be assimilated into the society (p.

142). Confronted with this, the choice for the monarch is whether to be "modernizing" (accept and indeed lead change) or "traditionalizing" (seek to reverse the process and assert absolute rule). Huntington saw the trend as overwhelmingly "modernizing", motivated by a desire to pre-empt "revolution" (pp.153-155). The reforming monarch then experiences a paradox of legitimacy and risks doing himself[8] out of a job: those who support the reforms might be against the institution of monarchy, while those that are pro-monarchy (conservative) might be against the reforms (pp. 162-164, 168). To avert this fate, the monarchy must (pp. 177-9):

- (a) transform: (i) into a European-style constitutional monarchy (which Huntington (pp. 179-80) sees as almost impossible), or (ii) into rule by an oligarchical elite in the name of the monarch (which is how Huntington (p.179) sees the military in Thailand after 1932);
- (b) coexist (accept combined rule with political parties – as Huntington (pp. 184-185) sees Nepal in 1950-19599); which is unlikely to last (Huntington cites kings taking back absolute power after trying these arrangements – as indeed occurred in Nepal in 1960);

Or

- (c) maintain absolute power through: (i) repression (involving reliance on the army (pp. 189-190)), or (ii) holding back modernisation (almost impossible in the modern world (p.188)).

Huntington concludes that the "future of the existing traditional monarchies is bleak" (pp. 177-191). What can be questioned is his belief that a modern day traditional monarch cannot transform into a parliamentary monarch through his/her own leadership/choice (the path chosen in Bhutan and Tonga). Comparing Huntington's (1968) perspective with the twenty-first century environment, we might counter that it is not modernising or indeed democratising zeal that puts the institution of monarchy at risk, but rather the opposite. It is those that seek to reassert their absolute status (such as King Gyanendra in Nepal) who risk losing their position altogether. This is a key argument of this thesis.

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[8] All monarchs are male in Huntington's parlance.

This thesis is not the only place in which Huntington's views have been questioned. Two scholars of Bhutan have queried the relevance of his views to the Bhutan case. Leo Rose, writing in 1977, was uncertain whether or not Bhutan would prove an exception to Huntington's rule, but thought it likely (1977, pp. 223-224). Thierry Mathou (writing post-transition) argues that Huntington's thesis is not applicable to Bhutan. The king had been the chief agent of change and had demonstrated that "political modernisation is not necessarily fatal to monarchy" (2016, p. 113).

Corbett et al. (2016) argue that the monarch's dilemma, as postulated by Huntington, does not apply to small states, specifically because of their small size. Their examples are Bhutan, Tonga and Liechtenstein. The present thesis, however, questions Huntington's conclusions not only as regards Tonga and Bhutan (where monarchs have led democracy) but also for Thailand and Nepal (where they have impeded it). The argument is not confined to small states alone. Like this thesis, Corbett et al. suggest that one reason the monarchs attract reverence is that the countries were not colonised and the monarchy is seen as protecting the country from colonisation. This, however, is also relevant to both Thailand and Nepal, not just to small monarchies. Similarly, while Corbett et al. note that a monarch as an individual can be more popular than the monarchy, this has also been said of Bhumibol in Thailand, who made a point of being close to the people through his village peregrinations. This thesis argues that even in larger states, the monarch can lead democratisation and avoid Huntington's dilemma.

Another study asks the question: "Why Some Democracies are headed by a Monarch?" (Tridimas, 2014). George Tridimas sees monarchs as having the option of retaining the position while discarding political power. For him, the motivation for any bargain between the monarch and what Tridimas describes as the "liberal" is economic, not political. A compromise, establishing a constitutional monarchy, allows a sharing of the resources (as well as a future-proofing of the end of monarchical political power (pp. 19-20)). This theory bears some resemblance to Di Palma's (1990) vision of a crafted democracy, except that the bargain in this case is overwhelmingly economic, rather than primarily political, as Di Palma had envisaged.

A second article by Tridimas (2016), explores the more political motivations that might see the retention of a monarchy in a democratising state. Like Lipset, he suggests that a monarch might serve as a reassurance (to elites) that extreme policies might not succeed (p. 47); a ceremonial monarch can serve as a symbol of national unity. If, however, a monarch seeks to interfere in government, then survival of the monarchy is less likely (pp. 47, 52, 57).

Like Tridimas, Juli Minoves–Triquell (2011) in his PhD thesis on European parliamentary monarchies is concerned about the "democratic paradox" of why some democracies are headed by monarchs. He concludes that the surviving European monarchies are those which "adapted by giving away their manifest powers or not resisting their erosion". Conversely, those who were "accomplices in bringing about or tolerating authoritarian regimes" did not manage to survive. In addition, a non-partisan monarchy has a better chance of survival (p. 352).

In conclusion Minoves-Triquell points to the European experience as a lesson for authoritarian monarchs in other parts of the world who feel compelled (or seek) to democratise, implying that if they avoid the pitfalls and heed the positive European lessons, they can both democratise and retain their positions (p. 363). Minoves-Triquell specifically contrasts Nepal's monarch's failure to do this, with the (in his view) prudent and timely behaviour of Bhutan's king.

The differing fates of the Nepali and Bhutanese monarchs are examined by Sreeram Chaulia (2008), and set against the prospects for the monarchs of Thailand (and Brunei). Writing several years before the death of King Bhumibol, Chaulia identified five crucial factors enabling monarchies to both survive and retain their influence (pp. 2-3):

- Retention of the loyalty of the military (Nepal's Gyanendra lost this at a crucial juncture; Thailand's Bhumibol retained it);
- "Charisma based on religion" (Gyanendra "squandered" his semi-divine appeal through not behaving in a compassionate way; Bhumibol maintained a compassionate and moral image. Bhutan's kings took over from a theocracy and retain many Buddhist symbols);
- "Existence of a strong political Centre that will neutralise the Left" (Gyanendra "lost the game" when the mainstream parties united with the

Maoists; Bhumibol kept this prospect at bay by "constantly meddling in political parties with the support of the military" and through his earlier "crushing" of communists and "Republicans branded as communists");

- More comfortable level of economic development (Nepal and Bhutan are "extremely poor countries"; Thailand is wealthier and Bhumibol created an image of himself as purveyor of economic well-being);
- Convincing powerful foreign allies that they are indispensable (for example, Thailand in Cold War days).

Chaulia concluded (in 2008) that Thailand was unlikely to move towards greater democracy and that the monarchy was secure. The royal succession has, however, altered the outlook in Thailand, not least because the crown prince does not share the charisma of his father, and because of a shift in the balance of influence between the monarchy and the military (see 7.2).

On the issue of monarchical charisma, Serhart Ünaldi (2012), sets Bhumibol's performance against that of Spain's Juan Carlos. Each gained legitimacy from charisma, but of different types - "democratic charisma" (Juan Carlos) versus "sacred charisma" (Bhumibol) (pp. 22, 24, 29-30). Ünaldi concludes that monarchs can be a positive force for democracy if they stick to a role as "neutral mediators in times of severe crises" and use their "symbolic authority" to become advocates for constitutional democracy. If they are seen as embodying "an old hierarchical order" they can have the opposite effect, and reinforce a non-democratic system (p.30).

The last factor proposed by Chaulia is similar to one of the variables suggested by Alfred Stepan, Juan Linz and Juli Minoves (2014). Their article tackles the ambiguity of the term "constitutional monarchy", which does not distinguish between a democratic constitutional government with a monarch as ceremonial head of state, and a country with a constitution and elected representatives but where the monarch appoints the government and has an acknowledged executive role. Stepan and colleagues propose (p. 36) three categories: "ruling monarchy", "constitutional monarchy" and "democratic parliamentary monarchy" (DPM). In a DPM "*only* the freely elected parliament forms and terminates the government", whereas in a constitutional monarchy "there is a strong element of dual legitimacy" between parliament and the monarch, who "need each other's support" in forming

or ending a government. The third category, ruling monarch, "can often unilaterally form or terminate the government," making this similar to the term "absolute monarch" as generally understood.

Other elements considered in their schema include the rule of law (is the monarch bound by it or not?), what "constitutional constraints" there are on the monarchy, the relative power of parliament compared to that of the monarch, and the autonomy and independence (or otherwise) of the judiciary. The following table summarises the various factors:

Table 1: Comparison of three types of monarchy

	Ruling Monarchy	Constitutional Monarchy	Democratic Parliamentary Monarchy
Formation and termination of government	Done by monarch	Needs support of both monarch and parliament	Parliament forms and terminates government
Rule of law	In many areas monarch not bound by laws	Substantial but not complete rule of law	Monarchy, government and society all subject to rule of law
Constitutional constraints on monarchy	Constraints may not yet be embedded	Monarch must observe many rules	"Reigns but does not rule"
Parliament/monarch relationship	Generally not constrained by parliament	"Extensive power sharing"	Parliament "exercises governing power"
Judiciary and other top positions	Appointments under control of monarch	Normally appointed by "parliamentary government" and are independent of monarch	Monarch cannot appoint or dismiss them unilaterally

Adapted from Stepan, Linz and Minoves's table *Three Ideal Types of Monarchies in Modern Territorial States* (2014, p 37)

While this thesis generally uses the term "constitutional" monarchy in its broader sense (a monarchy with constitutional constraints), and "absolute" to describe an executive monarchy with few if any constitutional constraints, the distinctions made by Stepan and colleagues are examined in chapter 9 as part of an analysis of the constitutional powers of the monarchies under consideration, as at 2017. A difficulty in such analysis is the extent to which the monarchs' powers are sometimes ambiguous, or there is a distinction between constitutional provisions

and actual practice. It may not therefore be possible to escape the ambiguity that Stepan et al. seek to clarify.

Stepan et al. go on to suggest (pp. 38-39) what might encourage (or impede) a transition from one category to another:

- Domestic political pressure for reform;
- Type of monarchical family: a large dynasty dominating key positions in society and government is an impediment;
- Taxes: a monarch in a resource-rich country with no need for taxation is less likely to negotiate power-sharing;[9]
- Ethnic and religious divisions: royals from a dominant minority will resist reform, but a democratic shift that could ease ethnic tensions might be favoured;
- International actors: "powerful foreign allies who are hostile to full democratization" are a disincentive to reform (this last factor echoes Chaulia).

Stepan, Linz and Minoves's particular regional focus is a comparison of the (past) trajectories of the European monarchies with the (potential) prospects for moving to DPMs in the Arab monarchies. Their approach draws on the work of Michael Herb (1999, 2004). Herb's 1999 book looks at the persistence of the Gulf monarchies and how this is reinforced by their operation as dynastic family businesses. His 2004 article seeks to assess prospects for democratisation of Arab monarchies based on the precedent set by European monarchies. He uses the term "parliamentarism" to describe a democratic monarchical system (similar to the DPM concept) and sees barriers to it as: constitutional limitations on parliaments; monarchical action against parliaments and constitutions (monarchs close parliament or refuse to acknowledge its constitutional powers); and insufficiencies in the electoral and political structures (pp. 373-374).

The theories summarised above, and in particular the variables and typology set out by Stepan, Linz and Minoves, combined with Herb's "barriers" and Chaulia's list, contribute useful elements for analysing the role of the monarchs in Bhutan,

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[9] This factor has little relevance for the countries in this thesis, since none of them falls into the "resource rich" category.

Nepal, Thailand and Tonga, both in considering the transition (or oscillation) phase and in looking at risks from the current situation (as at 2017).

This review now turns to the country-specific literature.

2.4 Country-specific literature

The range and scope of literature vary considerably from country to country. For Bhutan and Tonga, a comparatively small group of scholars have dedicated themselves to in depth study of political developments, whereas for Nepal the number is somewhat higher, although issues beyond the scope of this thesis (including conflict resolution) tend to dominate. Thailand is a case apart: especially in recent years, a large number of scholars have grappled with the intricacies and puzzles of Thai politics. Very few of the academics cited have carried out comparative analysis with other monarchies.

The historical events to which many of the scholars below refer are summarised in the following chapter (3).

Bhutan

Main themes covered by scholars of Bhutan's political developments are the leadership role and motivations of the monarch, the nature of the democracy established, and the relevance of the treatment of the Nepalese Bhutanese (Lhotshampas) to the story of Bhutan's democratisation.

There are two main streams of opinion on the monarchy's leadership. The Wangchuck dynasty are generally regarded as benevolent monarchs, devoted to the welfare of their people and leading the country's economic and political modernisation, ahead of any public demand for change. The fourth king is widely seen (Gallenkamp, 2011, 2012; Kinga, 2009) as a visionary who, building on foundations established by his father, executed a carefully worked out plan of progressive reforms, leading to the eventual introduction of democracy in 2008, despite pleas to keep things as they were. This positive view of King Jigme Singye's democratising fervour is generally supported by Kharma Phuntsho (2013). Gallenkamp (2012) describes the fourth king as the agent of change; the

background structural environment was of little relevance, and even many of the normal "agency" features (such as pacts, bargains and negotiations) were absent (pp 15-16). This makes Bhutan's transition unusual, although not unique, as some have claimed (Kinga, 2009, pp. 3, 323; Mathou, 2016).

Mark Turner, Sonam Chuki and Jit Tshering (2011) see Bhutan's democratisation as an example of outstanding leadership. Later, Turner and Tshering adopt a more nuanced view, seeing the driver of Bhutan's democratisation (and the form it took) as an "overarching" desire for stability (2014, pp. 321, 324) and a wish to avoid the pitfalls encountered by other countries in the region. S D Muni (2014, p. 160) credits Bhutan's transition to democracy mainly to the monarchy, for "directing the growth of Bhutanese democracy along desirable lines".

A *negative* view of the monarch's decision to initiate democratic reform sees its origins in the 1990s Lhotshampa protests (see chapters 3 and 6). Several scholars (Bothe, 2012; DeGooyer, 2014; Hutt, 2005a, 2014) either see the protests as persuading the king that democratisation was essential, or consider the treatment of the Lhotshampas delegitimises the king's democratic credentials. DeGooyer (2014, p. 94) asserts that the original "democrats" of Bhutan were the Lhotshampa protesters.

Turner and Tshering (2014, p. 324) infer a link between the removal of the potentially destabilising effect of a different culture and the decision to democratise. They argue that the removal of the Lhotshampas one decade before democratisation began "removed to the refugee camps" the political challenge to stability, and hence prepared the ground for the future stable democratisation.

Others (Gallenkamp, 2011; Mathou, 2016; Phuntsho, 2013) see little connection between the two. They regard the protests and expulsions as a separate, unrelated, ethnic issue, and note that the king's determination to democratise was already in existence before the Lhotshampa crisis. It may have been delayed by those events but ultimately was not side-tracked by them. This is a persuasive argument: it is more credible that the king decided to *pause* his reform programme while the agitation was underway, and then returned to it towards the end of the 1990s when the problem had been exported.

Even those scholars who question the motives of the fourth king in *promoting* change, such as Dhurba Rizal (2015), and/or the quality of the resulting democracy (Bothe, 2011, 2012, 2015) nevertheless acknowledge that the monarch's role was crucial in *bringing about* the change.

Some who question the king's benevolent motives in democratising detect a Machiavellian desire to retain or even increase the powers of the monarchy whilst appearing to cede them, not least so as to put the international community off the track (Bothe, 2011, 2012, 2015; Rizal, 2015). A slightly different view asserts the king sought to repair Bhutan's tarnished reputation after the (according to this view) appalling treatment of the Lhotshampas. Rizal (2015, p. 30) argues that Jigme Singye's actions reflected "a line of thought driven by real politick [sic]…based on a clear assessment of potential trajectories for the monarchy's viability" and was a desperate attempt to preserve the Wangchuck dynasty.

Rizal's limitation is that he views Bhutanese politics, and the monarchy, overwhelmingly from the Lhotshampa perspective, and sees the exiles as the democratic opposition. In addition, Rizal focuses his criticism on the monarchy pre-reform and does not argue convincingly that the monarchy failed to cede power in 2008.

A more careful argument regarding the ceding or otherwise of monarchical power is found in Winnie Bothe's work (2011, 2012, 2015). Like Rizal, Bothe is cynical about the king's motivations. She argues (2015) that the monarchy used constitution-building to reinforce its power. The Westminster model, she suggests, suits this purpose, as it was originally intended to create a balance between monarchy, aristocracy and democracy rather than to promote popular control.[10] In addition, the Westminster model gives rise to considerable ambiguity about the limitations on the monarch's role. Bothe suspects this has relevance for other democratising monarchies' constitutions as well (a point this thesis addresses in chapter 9).

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[10] This may also be why the Westminster model, or a version of it, was so appealing to Tongan King Tupou I.

Tonga

As with Bhutan, only a small number of scholars have consistently followed Tonga's pathway to democracy. Of these, the two who stand out are Ian Campbell and Guy Powles, who have carefully mapped Tonga's historical, political, economic and constitutional development up to the present.

Campbell's work (2008a, 2008b, 2011, 2012, 2015, 2019) looks at the growth of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga and its impact on political development, as well as the role of the kings (Tupou IV and George Tupou V[11]) in impeding or driving democratisation. His meticulously researched book, *Tonga's Way to Democracy* (2011) addresses many of the puzzles about Tonga's transition, including the paradox that it was the king (George V), rather than the pro-democracy activists, who introduced political change. Campbell argues convincingly that the real democratiser of Tonga was George V, working through a reformist cabinet (2011, p. 232). Campbell argues that George V, in making political reform his first priority, was not responding to protests but rather to his own long-held belief that Tonga was "out of step with the times". George V was convinced that a more democratic system would serve a modern economy best (2011, p. 6).

Campbell sees Tonga's political and social system as in many ways more successful in looking after the needs of the population than those of post-colonial Pacific island governments (2004, pp. 344-345). The constitution, he argues, would have been flexible enough to encompass a gradual move to democracy, if Tupou IV had been prepared to act on political reform, instead of refusing to consider any change (2011, pp. 230-231; 2012, p. 211). For Campbell, Tupou IV was in a position to have led a low-stress reform process but instead his intransigence (see for example 2011, p. 84) set Tonga on a more confrontational (and potentially destabilising) pathway.

What then of the pro-democracy movement? Campbell carefully documents the early development of this never-cohesive movement. He makes the point that initially (from the mid to late 1980s), pro-democracy advocates were not seeking an overhaul of the constitution, or even a more democratic system, but rather an

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[11] Hereinafter referred to as George V.

accountable government respecting the constitution (2011, pp. 17, 30-31). Because these calls were ignored, demand for change became stronger. Pro-democracy representatives in parliament began presenting proposals for political reform (2011, p. 36); popular mobilisation became more persistent, especially from the 2005 public sector strike onwards (2011, pp. 153-154). This last point is supported by 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki (2006, p. 4), writing just after the 2006 riots (see 6.2).

Paradoxically, from 2005 onwards, the pro-democracy activists' behaviour delayed, rather than advanced, the reform process (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 231). Campbell notes that by this stage political reform appeared inevitable, particularly with the next generation of royals - Tupouto'a (later George V) and his cousin Prince Tu'ipelehake - behind it (see 2011, p. 150, note 10). By October 2006 things had completely changed, with a new king (George V) and a government committed to reform (2011, p. 161).

Campbell sees Prime Minister Sevele's press statement of 19 October (Sevele, 2006)[12] in response to the National Committee on Political Reform (NCPR) report as a helpful contribution to political dialogue and of commitment to reform, which the pro-democracy activists might have been expected to welcome (I. Campbell, 2008a, p. 102; 2011, pp. 159`-161). However, as we shall see in chapter 6 (6.2), the press statement in some ways conveyed a confusing message. There were grounds for doubt about the extent of negotiability of the government's proposals, which differed from those of the NCPR and had been discussed with the king (perhaps suggesting they were immutable). As Taufe'ulungaki comments, Sevele's statement might have been interpreted as an attempt to slow down the reform process, leading some to feel that "things will never change" (2006, p. 3).

As regards the November 2006 riots (see 6.2), Campbell (2011) comprehensively covers the differing interpretations of Lopeti Senituli (2006), 'Akilisi Pohiva (2007), Taufe'ulungaki (2006), and reports in the *Matangi Tonga* news website.

Powles looks at the constitutional aspects of change, starting with the transformational reforms of Tupou I (1979, 1990) and then the recent reforms

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[12] See 6.2

(2009, 2013). He sees the original reforms as a combination of the Westminster model and traditional Tongan practice. Of particular value is Powles's detailed analysis (2013) of the constitutional and electoral reform process leading up to the 2010 revised constitution. He looks at the democratic innovations of the new system as well as areas where the monarch retains powers, and suggests (pp. 69-72) areas where further clarification or reform would help resolve abiding (or new) ambiguities. These observations are drawn on in chapters 8 and 9 of this thesis, in discussing the nature of the reformed system, the remaining powers of the monarch, and any risks these pose to the new democracy.

The main authoritative study of Tonga's nobles (land-holding former chiefs) is by George E Marcus (1980). Marcus describes a "compromise culture", brought about by Tupou I's reforms, which reduced the powers of traditional chiefs over commoners and in some ways replaced their influence with that of the government and the church (pp. 10-11). Like Powles (1979), he sees Queen Salote (who reigned from 1918 to 1965) as having sought to "re-traditionalise" the society and reassert the nobles' role, but considers that Tupou IV (reigned: 1965-2006) saw the nobles as less relevant for his own legitimacy. Sione Latukefu makes a similar point, describing Salote's reign as "essentially conservative" and Tupou IV as "a progressive ruler" putting "merit and efficiency" ahead of "rank and birth" (1967, pp. 160, 162). Marcus notes, though, the nobles' enduring legal rights, enshrined in the constitution (1980, p. 74). Furthermore, as Ian Campbell has pointed out,[13] Tupou IV remained concerned about class and rank: "His non-noble appointments were on the whole people who were *hou'eiki* – from noble families or closely connected, or families of the old pre-1875 nobility who continued as nobles in every sense except the formal one….He was an elitist in the class sense."

Marcus discusses the emergence of a public profile for a "commoner elite" (1980, p. 94) who from the 1970s became more assertive, especially within the church hierarchy. This argument is supported by 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1994), who describes how the decline in the nobles' power originated in the nineteenth century establishment of centralised monarchy, and was exacerbated in the twentieth by commoners' domination of both the public and private sectors (as well as the church).

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[13] Personal communication from Ian Campbell, 22 June 2017

Thailand

Thailand's chequered political history has come under considerable academic scrutiny. This is complicated by Thailand's *lèse majesté* and defamation laws plus other constraints on freedom of expression. Academics and journalists within Thailand are severely limited in what they can write about the royal family, or they risk being either imprisoned or forced to flee the country. For this and other reasons, critical commentary on the *monarchy* was somewhat scarce until Paul Handley's *The King Never Smiles* (2006), an in-depth biography of King Bhumibol, which ventured as never before into assessing the king's role in politics.

Handley (2006, pp. 7-9) depicts Bhumibol as a strong political actor with a distinct anti-democratic inclination. He argues persuasively that, despite his liberal education, Bhumibol was, from the time he became king, schooled by influential royals in the Thai tradition (which mixes Hindu and Buddhist concepts to paint the monarch as the worthiest person in the land). Bhumibol grew to despise politicians (except the military) and to undermine attempts at democratic government. Accordingly, Handley argues, his image as protector of democracy is deeply questionable. In moments of crisis (1973, 1976, 1992) he was not the saviour of democracy but, through prevarication, favoured violence and authoritarianism against democracy advocates, and legitimised (monarchy-endorsed) coups as an acceptable way to change a government.

Before Handley, Thak Chaloemtiarana's 1979 study (second edition 2007b) of the Sarit dictatorship (see 3.1) hinted at Bhumibol's less than democratic inclination. As Thak explained in a 2007 interview, his intention was to "study the Thai military and political authoritarianism" at a time when they had received little attention; his research also threw light on the resurgence of the monarchy, which "was able to build a coalition between itself, the military, senior bureaucrats and some business enterprises," so that the king's "prestige and influence" were unrivalled (Thak, 2007a). The Sarit regime set the tone for reestablishing the monarch as the symbol of the nation, while the military became the monarchy's protector – a mutually supportive symbiotic relationship.

Christine Gray delved into Bhumibol's accumulation of religious merit and political influence in her doctoral thesis (1986). She provides background to how Bhumibol acquired his reputation as a democratic king (see 5.1).

Kevin Hewison's (1997a) early study of the monarchy and democratisation pinpointed considerable political involvement by the king. After summarising the "standard total [royalist] view" of Bhumibol as an architect of democracy (p. 61), Hewison depicted him as a force for conservatism, seeking control, stability and order and fearing change, with an "ambivalence towards constitutionalism" (p. 70). This, Hewison foreshadowed, could prove detrimental to "the dynasty and the institution" (p. 74).

Even before Bhumibol became king, royalists were seeking to reassert monarchical influence. Access to previously unstudied historical material enabled Nattapoll Chaiching (2010) to challenge the assumption that the monarchy had disappeared as a political actor from the 1932 revolution up to the Sarit era (1957 onwards). The royalists made a sustained effort to fight back against the People's Party government. Nattapoll (p.150) considers these early efforts by the monarchy and its supporters a root cause of Thailand's ongoing problems in establishing democracy.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, writing from within Thailand, manages to address sensitive issues, such as the monarchy, albeit in a fairly circumspect manner. In "Thailand since the coup" (2008, pp. 149-150) he refers to what "all Thais fear but dare not say in public" - the question of royal succession, and the challenges for a successor in "matching up" to Bhumibol's "unsurpassed moral authority" and "asymmetrically important position" in a modern country with democratic aspirations.

As we have seen above, Ünaldi (2012) compared Bhumibol's performance with that of Spain's Juan Carlos. Ünaldi was responding to Handley's call (2007) for more comparative discussion on the Thai monarchy related to other monarchies - something which the present thesis addresses.

Thongchai Winichakul (2008, 2014, 2015) argues that Bhumibol's extra-constitutional role, manipulating politics, overtly opposing democracy and publicly displaying a disdainful attitude towards elected politicians, helps explain why Thailand's democratic institutions remain weak. Thongchai describes the

monarchy's political role as "unabated' since the 1950s and "probably superior to" that of other political actors (2008, p 19).

Expressing a minority view, Giles Ungpakorn (2010) sees the monarch as a pawn used by the military and other strong elites to pursue their own (anti-democratic) interests. The general scholarly assessment however is that Bhumibol was very much in control, at least up to 2009 (after which age and illness reduced his involvement).

Duncan McCargo's influential concept of "network monarchy" (2005) explains how the king, via his proxy Prem Tinsulanonda, reached out and controlled multifarious aspects of Thai politics. Andrew McGregor Marshall argues that from about 2009 onwards other palace figures (in addition to the elderly Prem, who remains as Chair of the privy council even under new king Vajiralongkorn) gained influence over the royal network, or networks (2011). In his analysis of US WikiLeaks cables (2011) and in *A Kingdom in Crisis* (2014), Marshall saw the looming succession as the single dominant factor in Thai politics since at least 1997. For him, Bhumibol had become a weak figure and the monarchy was being used by the military and other elites to legitimise their hold on power, so as to have control at the time of the succession.[14]

Marshall considered that Thaksin Shinawatra, exiled former prime minister, had a similar motivation – a desire to reassert power before the succession took place (Marshall, 2014). The Thaksin phenomenon has preoccupied many scholars (Pasuk & Baker, 2009, 2011; McCargo & Ukrist, 2005). Pasuk and Baker trace Thaksin's emergence as a new style of businessman and politician, who campaigned on a policy platform and then kept his promises, securing him (in 2005) the first ever absolute majority and second election victory for a Thai prime minister. However, through his dubious human rights violations, and disdain for institutional controls, Thaksin squandered the opportunity to be a genuine democratiser (Pasuk & Baker, 2009).

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[14] Marshall claimed, without being able to name sources, that he had been told by insiders that the military intended to manipulate the succession so that the crown prince did not become king.

Federico Ferrara (2015, p. 160) argues that, once the king (starting from the end of the Sarit era) became the stronger partner in the monarchy/military alliance, and, in particular, established as the sole voice of the nation (and the "ultimate [political] arbiter") a cult of personality around the military (or other) leaders could not evolve. The cult had to revolve around the king (p. 8). Later this would mean that Bhumibol (and his network) could not tolerate an elected politician, Thaksin, sharing his charisma - and threatening the network's power (pp. 231-234). And so the network saw coups as the only way to defeat Thaksin and his later proxies. In a similar vein, Nicholas Farrelly (2013, pp. 292-293) sees Thailand's institutionalised coup culture as a serious impediment to democracy, and very much a result of the Palace's having condoned coups long after Thailand should have passed the phase of unstable democracy.

Ferrara's stance is not deterministic. Looking back, he challenges assumptions that the democratic aspirations of the 1932 revolutionaries were somehow doomed to fail because the country is not suited to democracy. Instead, he argues, the vision of an egalitarian, constitution-based society was undermined by a royalist backlash coupled with naïveté on the part of the revolutionaries (2015, pp. 86-89, 95-108). Ferrara concluded that Thailand was (at 2015) at a crossroads where the monarchy could either accept the constitutional role the revolutionaries sought to impose in 1932, or else face the prospect of Thailand becoming a republic, since some monarchies that rejected this pathway "were doomed by the obstinacy with which their supporters stood in the way" (p. 295). Somewhat surprisingly, Ferrara sees the long term outlook as positive.

Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian's thorough study of Thailand's many constitutions from 1932 up to 1997 notes that each represented the interests of whoever had managed to seize power (2003, p. 3). All insisted that *their* constitution represented the perfect democracy and yet, Kobkua argues, *none* of the constitutions (before 1997) catered to the rights and freedoms of the people (p. 7). They were all just manipulations to ensure power for a particular group. One way this manifested itself was through the numbers of "appointed" representatives – often in the Senate, and often appointed either by the military or the king. (We can see a resurgence of this phenomenon in the 2007 and 2017 constitutions – see 8.2). Even in 1997 the military still asserted their influence, for example by ensuring the

constitution did not make a military coup a "constitutional offence" (p.19). Kobkua was nevertheless quite optimistic about the 1997 constitution (p. 66).

Curiously, Kobkua combines this academic study with unquestioning praise of Bhumibol himself, calling him (p. 67) "Thailand's beloved great monarch", "their great monarch of the modern age" and other such expressions. She does however acknowledge (p. 145) the difficulty of writing about the reigning monarch.

Thailand's more recent constitutional history is covered by McCargo and colleagues (2017). They argue that the 2016 presentation to the public of a referendum on the latest constitution was the antithesis of participatory democracy. It was difficult for voters to find out what the draft really contained: the summaries publicised were bland and uninformative. In addition, the military used coercion to prevent any critical discussion. McCargo et al. judge the 2017 constitution itself as embedding the power of the military, designed to constrain the powers of elected politicians.

A special edition of The *Journal of Contemporary Asia,* published in 2016 (prior to the death of King Bhumibol), examines the background to the current tumultuous period in Thai politics. Amongst the articles featured, the entrenching of the military since the 2014 coup is the theme of Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitoolkiat's study (2016). This looks at the evolution of the military-monarchy link, concluding that the 2014 coup resulted in a shift in the balance of power, with the military in ascendance.

Chris Baker (2016) signalled Thailand as (at that point) the only country in the world ruled by a coup-installed military government. The 2006 and 2014 coups were, he argues, very different from each other. 2006 was a quick coup to remove the elected government, draft a new constitution, and return fairly speedily to elections, while 2014 was a return to the style of "major" coups not seen for 40 years (p. 389). Veerayooth Kanchoochat (2016) looks at the coups from a different angle, asking why professional groups (university academics, doctors, business associations) called for and supported the 2014 coup. Veerayooth puts this down to self-interest, as these professionals (whom he terms "reign-seekers") pictured for themselves (and indeed were rewarded with) membership of the increasing number of institutions established to oversee the behaviour of politicians.

Academics puzzle over why a country of Thailand's level of economic development has not managed to consolidate democracy. Sidel (2008), from a 2008 perspective, saw the 2006 coup as a temporary setback and thought Thailand's level of development was a positive augury for democratisation, while Ferrara suggests that the country's level of development means democracy cannot be impeded for too many more years (2015, p. 291).

Scholars see the political history of Thailand since the 19th century as a battle between two different traditions (Baker & Pasuk, 2014, pp. 282-284; Ferrara, 2015; C. Gray, 1986). According to Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit (2014, p. 282), the first, established by King Chulalongkorn, is of a strong and absolute state that the traditional elite and royalty rule by right of their history and selfless, professional and civilised nature. The second tradition, in which people's/commoners' well-being is the main responsibility of the state, began with the "commoner intellectuals" of the late nineteenth century and was reinforced by the leaders of the 1932 revolution (Baker & Pasuk, 2014, p. 283). This tradition re-emerged at certain points where democratic values gained dominance (1946, 1974, 1992). For Christine Gray, the conflict between the two took the form of "legitimation battles" which oscillated in the 20th century between the moral authority of royal blood and the democratic values of (initially) the People's Party (1986, pp. 349-352). Baker and Pasuk (2014, p. 284) argue that Thaksin tried to unite both traditions, the strong state and the well-being of the people, but he "overstretched" and was defeated by the effort.

In essence, scholars of Thailand are grappling to establish which combination of factors (often grouped as triangles or as competing networks) accounts for its regressive (de-)democratisation. Very few have examined Thailand's "unique" case in comparative perspective, although, as noted above, Handley (2007) called for it and Ünaldi (2012) has partially addressed it. Ferrara, too, questions Thailand's claimed exceptionalism (2015, pp. 266-295). The present study contributes to addressing this gap.

Nepal

The literature on Nepal reflects the turbulent nature of the country's recent political history. As is the case with Thailand, scholars of Nepal tend to look at a combination of factors (often catalogued as triangles) which, interrelated, either drive or impede Nepal's democratisation. Themes covered include: the political role of the Maoists; the 2001 Royal Massacre; the background to King Gyanendra's imposing absolute power; the *rapprochement* between the Maoists and the mainstream parties; the agreement on an interim constitution; the decision to abolish the monarchy; and the travails of the first and second Constituent Assemblies, including difficulties agreeing on a permanent constitution. There is also a sizeable subset of literature, not considered in this review, on conflict resolution.

There is a strong difference of opinion about the 1990 constitution. Some scholars consider its deficiencies helped foment the Maoist insurgency and the 2005 royal coup; others suggest that these anti-democratic actions were attempts to gain state control and undermine a constitution whose failings, such as they were, could have been corrected through amendments. Other scholars avoid this dichotomy, seeing both sets of factors as significant.

Mara Malagodi (2011, 2013) espouses the view that the 1990 constitution was responsible for subsequent ills. In her analysis, the constitution failed to enable democratic inclusiveness; instead, it preserved the power of the elites and cemented the previous cultural narrative. In a very diverse nation, it emphasised the Shah kings, the Hindu religion and the Nepali language as unifying symbols. Malagodi blames this - in her view - discriminatory constitution for much of the political turmoil that plagued the country, including the Maoist insurgency. Accordingly, the eventual "political accommodation" with the Maoists was dependent on a "radical process of constitutional transformation" (2013, p. 10). Malagodi (p. 10) further argues that King Gyanendra was able to exploit the 1990 constitution to justify a 2005 royal coup, since the emergency and other powers assigned to the monarchy did not devolve to the executive through Westminster-style conventions. In this, Malagodi's analysis resembles Bothe's (2015) on Bhutan.

Surendra Bhandari shares Malagodi's views to a certain extent. Describing the post-1990 period as a "phony democracy," he argues that the 1990 constitution's "failure" led to the push for republicanism (2014, p. 17). Elsewhere in the same book, however, he puts the blame on the kings, both Birendra and Gyanendra, first for having attempted to control the constitution drafting (Birendra), and then for refusing to be bound by the constitution (2014, pp. 45-46). In an earlier article, Bhandari (2012) argues that the abuse of power by the monarchs over 240 years suppressed people's rights and liberties. The kings, accordingly, "planted the seed of their demise" (2012, p. 12). His conclusion is that a "strong democratic government and respect for constitutionalism" would have been the best route for kings seeking to preserve the monarchy (2012, p.13).

Madhav Joshi and T David Mason (2007) suggest that Nepal's democracy in the 1990s had not consolidated and hence was not well-placed to deal with rebellion. In addition, frequent changes of government during the 1990s meant little attention was given to addressing social demands, thereby providing fertile ground for the Maoists' propaganda. Nevertheless, Joshi and Mason place the blame for destroying democracy on the Maoists, whose insurgency gave Gyanendra the excuse to intervene.

Smutri Pattanaik (2002) and Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone and Suman Pradhan (2012, pp. 14-16, 48), similarly consider that the failure of the democratic regime to tackle exclusion and poverty played a role in engendering the Maoist insurgency, although von Einsiedel et al. add that the insurgency itself damaged the fledgling democracy (2012, p. 21).

Kanak Dixit (2011),[15] challenges the view that the 1990 constitution was seriously flawed, seeing it as a landmark acknowledgement of the people's sovereignty. Any flaws could have been corrected through amendment, if the governments had been able to proceed with establishing democracy instead of having to deal with the Maoists (pp. 292-293). Dixit acknowledges that in the 1990s democracy was messy: this was only to be expected for a country whose first democratic experiment had been cut off (in 1960) before having a chance to take root. Both

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[15] The Dixit brothers, Kunda and Kanak, are both well-known journalists and editors in Nepal.

Kanak Dixit (2011) and Kul Chandra Gautam (2016) argue that the Maoists' choice of armed insurgency stemmed not from the 1990 constitution but from a strategy to destroy the young democracy and capture state control, thereby presenting a challenge any new democracy would have found overwhelming.

The history of the Maoist insurgency is covered in depth by Deepak Thapa (2012; 2004), and Aditya Adhikari (2012, 2014). Thapa notes that, ironically, the new political freedom from 1990 enabled the Maoists to plan and organise their insurgency, while the fragility of the new democracy made it vulnerable to internal conflict (2012, pp. 49-50).

Prashant Jha (2012, 2014) has particularly valuable insights into the role of India in the period from 2002 onwards, given his access to many of the key Indian players. He records significant actual and attempted influence by India over the political parties, including after the 2008 elections. Muni (2012), too, looks at India's (changing, and somewhat confusing) role in Nepal's transition, noting India's desire to keep the option of a monarchy in play for as long as possible, and its ongoing effort to marginalise the Maoists' influence even after their 2008 electoral victory.

A puzzle for many scholars is that the parties skilfully agreed a pact to defeat royal autocracy (Kantha, 2015) and came up with an interim constitution (Hall, 2011), but for many years lacked the adroitness to conclude a crucial bargain - a permanent constitution for the new democratic federal republic (K. M. Dixit, 2012). Mahendra Lawoti (2014, pp. 137-139) puts this down to the fact that the "high caste hill Hindus" - the traditional elite who run the main parties, even the Maoists – had not really embraced the vision of an inclusive, federal Nepal (despite ensconcing it in the 2007 interim constitution). He also argues that the Maoists, in government, proved little different from other politicians (equally out to use office to benefit themselves and their cronies), an opinion shared by Adhikari (2014). This is seen by David Gellner (2014) as the likely reason the Maoists did badly in the 2013 Constituent Assembly elections.

Kanak Dixit (2011, 2012) argues that in the first Constituent Assembly the Maoists were in no hurry to agree on a constitution providing for multi-party democracy, nor to compromise in the (contemporaneous) negotiations on the integration of Maoist

cadres into the Nepal Army, which other parties saw as an essential precursor to agreement on the constitution.

As regards the role of the monarchy, there is consensus in the literature that King Gyanendra's power-grabbing was the chief cause of the *rapprochement* between the political parties and the Maoists, which then led to the decision to abolish the monarchy (see 5.1). By 2005, according to Achin Vanaik, Gyanendra was "the most hated king in Nepal's history" (2008, p. 64). A "real contempt" for Gyanendra combined with a "weaker but more general dissatisfaction with the monarchical system" to create opposition to the institution itself. There is some difference of opinion, though, as to whether the disestablishment of the monarchy became inevitable once the Maoists were brought into the mainstream. Kunda Dixit (2010, p. 120) observes that the mainstream parties probably felt they had to agree to abolish the monarchy to appease the Maoists, but if the king had behaved differently he could probably have remained as a ceremonial monarch. But Gyanendra was not prepared to consider such a bargain.

Gautam (2016), like others, blames Gyanendra for the monarchy's demise, noting that the king made several misjudgements, including believing that the international community would support him. Gautam is a firm believer that a monarchy's best chance for survival is for it to embrace democracy: "a functional multi-party democracy – with all its weaknesses – is still the best guarantee for the survival of monarchy as a truly respected institution" (2016, pp. 116-117). This is a view which the reforming monarchs of Bhutan and Tonga doubtless shared.

2.5 Theoretical framework

Drawing on the above outline of the relevant literature, the theoretical framework for this thesis was developed from the relevant factors highlighted by the various theorists both of democratisation and of monarchies specifically, as well as points raised by country-specific scholars. As noted above (2.2), the work of Mahoney (2003), in outlining the elements of the structural and agency approach, led to the decision to survey both structural and agency factors, while Mahoney's related work with Snyder (1999) highlighted the advantages of an integrated approach. Drawing on Mahoney and Snyder's suggestion that such an approach might

involve looking at structural factors as part of the background against which actors work to effect (or for that matter reject) changes, this thesis looks not only at background structural factors but also at significant historical and international factors, before moving on to assess how actors have operated in these environments. The thesis also considers the institutional outcomes of the democratisation process (or its absence) and how these too contribute to, or pose risks for, democracy in the different monarchies.

2.6 Methods

This thesis is a qualitative, comparative study investigating which factors, including the role of the monarch, have contributed to the differing outcomes in the trajectories of Bhutan, Nepal, Tonga and Thailand towards (or away from) democracy. The research concentrates on the period 2005-2017, against the background of each country's historical, international, and structural context. In this sense, the study has elements of an integrated approach as described above (Mahoney & Snyder, 1999), but with an additional strong focus on the monarchy.

On case study methodology I studied John Gerring (2004, 2007, 2012). Gerring notes how a case study can throw light on other cases. The case study method, as he describes it, can look in depth at a single unit with the aim of gaining understanding of a "larger class of similar phenomena" (2004, p. 341). Alternatively, it might be a cross-unit study (which I refer to as a "comparative case study"), consisting in fact (in Gerring's terminology) of a collection of several single unit studies which then throw light on each other. Gerring considers case studies most useful "for forming descriptive inferences, all other things being equal" (2004, p. 346).[16] In his later work (2007), he elaborates on how such inferences might be drawn. Of particular interest to this thesis is his description of the "most similar" and "most different" methods (pp. 28-29, 86-88, 131-40), which are often combined, and both of which are used in this thesis.[17]The "most similar" method looks at cases that differ in outcome but have similar "contributing factors," requiring singling out of the key factors that differ across the cases. The "most

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[16] While also pointing out that all other things are rarely completely equal.
[17] This approach originated in John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logics* (1843).

different" approach looks at situations where the contributing factors appear to be very different but the outcome is the same, and this helps pinpoint where some similarities occur amidst the differences. For example, in this thesis, similarities are examined between popular mobilisation movements in each country (see 6.5) to help isolate particular differences which might account for the differing outcomes (the "most similar" approach). In another example, differences in the degree of public consultation undertaken by the polities highlight those similarities in approach that might have influenced a particular outcome (see 8.1, 8.3). Gerring explains that the case study approach uses elements of the other cases as a counter-factual. An example in this thesis is how developments in Thailand and Nepal are used to identify risks for Bhutan and Tonga (for example, see 7.4).

As regards the *inputs* to a case study approach, Gerring emphasises that these will include written sources, that may be primary or secondary (2007, p. 68). These are likely to be supplemented by field research (which is the approach taken in this thesis – see below). Gerring emphasises the case study approach's usefulness for forming causal inferences. This echoes King, Keohane and Verba (1994), who noted how a comparative qualitative method, involving a counter-factual approach, enables the drawing of causal inferences while at the same time being "cautious in detailing the uncertainty of the inference" (p. 76). They explain that this (counter-factual, comparative) approach enables a scholar (using the other cases as comparative examples) to make inferences about what might have been possible under certain circumstances – as demonstrated by the other cases.

Like Gerring, King, Keohane and Verba (1994, p. 79) note that such a non-systematic (or qualitative) approach is appropriate for situations where we will never know for certain what might have happened in different circumstances, but where we can usefully infer. They also note (p. 82) that qualitative work enables the inclusion of contextual detail and cultural sensitivity. The comparative qualitative approach, they argue, suits a complex debate where many factors are at play, and it enables the inclusion of unexpected events and makes it easier (than in a quantitative approach) to make as assessment of their impact. (An example of this might be the royal family massacre in Nepal and both its unexpected impact on the fate of the monarchy and also the way it highlights a risk common to monarchies: the uncertain timing of succession – see 5.2 and 5.3).

Mahoney (2003) uses the term "comparative historical analysis" to describe a study method whereby unexpected historical events (referred to as "threshold events" – pp. 134, 182) can be taken into account in analysis. Mahoney refers to "causal chains", which resemble a linked sequence in which one event triggers another, which then triggers a next one, and so on. A "threshold event" occurs where something has been gradually building up over a long period of time but then reaches a threshold (like a tipping point) at which a significant development occurs. Several events referred to in this thesis could be described in such terms, although I have chosen to refer to them as "critical junctures" or "historical shaping influences" (see 10.1). Mahoney himself also uses the term "critical juncture" (p.188), and acknowledges that the causal chain approach can cause problems of deciding where to begin.

For this thesis, which concentrates on a limited time frame (2005-2017) the historical approach relates more to the background section than to the main thematic areas.

Zina O'Leary (2014, p. 130) provides a useful description of what a qualitative approach consists of, and its advantages as a research method. The qualitative tradition, she notes, "appreciates subjectivities; accepts multiple perspectives and realities….and does not necessarily shy away from political agendas. It also strongly argues the value of depth over quantity and works at delving into social complexities…." The goal of such research, she adds, is "to gain an intimate understanding of people, places, cultures, and situations through rich engagement …."

O'Leary recommends a qualitative approach that includes seeking access to key informants. She sees value in the use of interviews for data gathering and for appreciating the plurality of factors at play, describing interviews as the best way to gather "rich in-depth qualitative data" (p. 217), and to "explore tangents" to get verbal as well as non-verbal clues. At the same time, she notes, an interview-based approach is sufficiently structured to enable analysis of data. For a study such as this thesis, which includes looking at motivations and influences on the monarchs and others, the interview-based approach was ideal, enabling the gathering of a range of opinions, including from those who were personally acquainted with the

monarchs and other key players. A quantitative approach, seeking to quantify the factors, and assessing the factors numerically, would not have produced such a rich analysis, although some quantitative studies were drawn on for background material and for assessment of outcomes (see, for example, 8.2 and 8.3, where Freedom House assessments are included).

Following the suggestions of the academics cited above, I based analysis in this thesis on material from secondary and primary sources, supplemented by opinions and information gleaned from interviews. In addition to scholarly material, sources include media reports, government and non-governmental (civil society) resources (including speeches, websites and press releases), multilateral reports, constitutions, and parliamentary debates. US diplomatic reporting made public by WikiLeaks proved a useful source of commentary on political developments. Interviews were used to test conclusions from the analysis and contribute depth to the case studies. The interviews were structured to the extent that they followed a standard format (with questions relating to the themes in the theoretical framework), but enabling discussion of further issues depending on the responses to the questions. In each country I sought "key informants" – those who had been at the coalface or had been very close observers.

To develop my list of interviewees, I used a multi-pronged approach familiar to me from decades of diplomatic work. This involves using all one's networking skills to develop an initial network which will then help grow a broader network. To take an example, I describe in more detail below my approach to putting together a group of interviewees in Nepal. Similar approaches were used for the other countries, with a few differences because of the nature of the particular country.

In the case of Nepal, I started by writing to historian John Whelpton, who suggested some readings and people to talk to. I also contacted my New Zealand diplomatic colleagues in Delhi (who are accredited to Nepal), who shared with me their contacts both within Nepal and in Delhi itself – including embassies, think tanks, academics, multilateral agency representatives and NGOs. Because I passed though Singapore on my Asian field research I also talked with the Institute of South Asian Studies there. In Nepal itself, a great help was the New Zealand Honorary Consul, who has a wide range of contacts. She put me in touch with Mikel Dunham

(a journalist, author and blogger) who then linked me with his contacts, including politicians, journalists and the military. I met up with New Zealand's former Honorary Consul, Elizabeth Hawley (now deceased), author of the *Nepal Chronicles* (2015). A Nepali fellow student at Victoria University of Wellington put me in touch with academics, journalists, and others in Kathmandu. When I interviewed this network of people recommended by my various contacts, they in turn recommended further contacts to me, thereby growing the network further.

I sent all the interviewees an outline of my project and I gave them or read to them a consent form according to an Ethics Committee model. In only a very few cases, where I had written comments from them, did I ask their consent to cite them by name. The remainder were anonymous, reflecting the sensitivity of the topic.

Limitations on research

Because my study covers four countries, the costs involved in field research were high, and it was not possible to immerse myself in each country for any length of time. Nevertheless, I was able to visit each at least once (Tonga and Thailand more frequently) and to interview a selection of people in each country.

The range of interviewees varied from country to country. My aim was to interview a selection of actors and commentators including officials, politicians, media, local and international NGOs, diplomats, representatives of multilateral agencies, business, and academics. When I applied for approval from the university's Ethics Committee to conduct this field research, they initially expressed concern at the proposal to conduct such a wide range of interviews in Thailand, given political sensitivities there: they did not wish the research to involve risks for either participants or for me.[18] For this reason, the interviews in Thailand did not include government officials and included only one (ex) politician. I concentrated on interviewing academics, diplomats, NGO representatives and other observers of Thai politics. I did however have the good fortune to be invited to participate in a seminar on Thai political developments organised by the United Nations Office in Bangkok; there I encountered many useful contacts who agreed to be interviewed. In the other countries, there were no such constraints, but in Nepal, the timing of

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[18] Following clarification of my plans, Ethics Committee approval was granted.

my visit meant that political figures were not available (the Nepali Congress party's convention was taking place at the time). In Bhutan, I had access to a full range of political and official figures, who generally all had a similar narrative to relate about Bhutan's democratisation. For a greater variety of views, I also spoke with academics, journalists, NGOs, diplomats and think tanks, both within and outside Bhutan. In Tonga a wide range of contacts were happy to share their views with me. In all countries, the interviews were carried out on the basis of anonymity for the participants. Details of the codification for the interviewees are provided in Appendix 2.

Chapter 3. Historical and International Context

In order to understand the different monarchs' roles and interaction with key players during the transition (or regression) from 2005-2017, it is useful to examine the background against which they were operating, and assess similarities and differences.

This chapter looks at each country's historical and international context. The following chapter examines their structural context.

3.1 Historical context

This section summarises the main historical developments, especially from the nineteenth century onwards, in the four countries.

Bhutan

Bhutan is a small, landlocked Himalayan country situated between China (Tibet) and India. Its population in 2017 was reported as approximately 780,000 and its land area 38,394 square kilometres (National Statistics Bureau, 2017, p. V).

Bhutan's historical links are with Tibet, with which it has ethnic, linguistic and religious ties. A Tibetan exile, Ngawang Namgyel, later known as the *Zhabdrung*, unified the Bhutanese state in the early seventeenth century (Aris, 1994, p. 18), establishing a theocracy, with two leaders under him, one religious and one administrative. Post–Zhabdrung, two potential lines of succession (blood descendants and "incarnations") led to factionalism (Phuntsho, 2013, pp. 294-296).[19] Attempted invasions by Tibet continued throughout this period and beyond (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 271).[20]

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[19] Karma Phuntsho explains how the male line of succession ended as a result of illnesses. The Zhabdrung died suddenly and suitable incarnations had not been identified. A temporary solution was chosen: concealing the Zhabdrung's death for a number of years. In Buddhist tradition, incarnations (reincarnations of the Zhabdrung) would have been expected to provide an alternative line of succession in the absence of blood heirs (Phuntsho, 2013, pp. 295-297).

[20] Main sources for the historical background are: Karma Phuntsho (2013), Michael Aris (1994), Leo Rose (1976), Sonam Kinga (2009) and Omair Ahmad (2013).

The Bhutanese themselves intervened more than once in a neighbouring kingdom (Cooch Behar),[21] which in 1773 brought them into conflict with the British. A first Anglo-Bhutan treaty followed, after which Warren Hastings (Governor of Bengal) sent a diplomatic envoy, George Bogle, into Tibet, travelling via Bhutan (Teltscher, 2006). Following this visit, Bhutan remained on the itinerary of subsequent British emissaries.

By the nineteenth century, Bhutan, in a state of civil war between rival regional governors, had to face British aspirations to take over the management of border areas (known as *duars* – or "doors"). An emerging leader, Jigme Namgyel, gradually asserted more and more power over rivals until he effectively controlled the country. Namgyel's poor treatment of British envoy Ashley Eden in 1864 gave the British an excuse for war (Ahmad, 2013, p. 73), which resulted in the 1865 Sinchu-La Treaty. Through this, Bhutan lost the duars but gained an annual subsidy from the British. Karma Phuntsho argues (2013, p.443) that the British believed these payments would create dependence and give them influence over Bhutan's choice of leaders.

Indeed, British support influenced the political success of Namgyel's son, Ugyen Wangchuck, who became the first king of Bhutan. His personal qualities were also an essential factor in his rise to kingship. Michael Aris (1994, p. 75) notes that he rejected "blunt coercion" early on, instead promoting "harmony and consensus." This, coupled with the implied endorsement of the British imperial power[22] (for whom "kingship" was the familiar governance model), enabled Wangchuck in 1907 to persuade Bhutanese elites to declare him king, through signature of a *genja,* or contract (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 521). Phuntsho concludes (p. 513) that by this time the Bhutanese, exhausted from the civil wars, were ready to embrace the new concept of a hereditary monarch. In a similar vein, Marian Gallenkamp sees the establishment of the monarchy in 1907 as a kind of Hobbesian bargain, whereby the elites and people welcomed the monarch as a means to end the civil wars and divisions in the country (Gallenkamp, 2011, p. 7). Sonam Kinga goes further, arguing that the contract also involved *future obligations* on the part of the king, to

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[21] Now part of India but previously an independent kingdom.
[22] Wangchuck impressed the British through mediating a settlement of their dispute with Tibet (1904).

provide unity and security for the people in return for loyalty (Kinga, 2009, pp. 190-193). Thus, the monarch would reign as long as he and his successors abided by this undertaking, as good and moral kings. A hundred years later the fifth king, Jigme Khesar, was to state, on the launching of Bhutan's new democracy in May 2008: "my father…..and I, hereby return to our People the power that has been vested in our kings by our forefathers one hundred years ago" (cited in Kinga, 2009, pp. 375-377).

King Ugyen's reign concentrated on centralising power around the monarchy. Ugyen took some first steps in modernisation, and formalised his relationship with the British in a 1910 treaty establishing a protectorate.[23] Under this agreement Bhutan agreed to consult Britain on its foreign relations.

Ugyen's son, Jigme Wangchuck (reigned: 1926-1952) saw the hereditary monarchy entrenched, although not without challenges. Among these were efforts by the incarnations of the Zhabdrung to assert power. The monarchs feared that the incarnations' religious legitimacy might lead to a move to reinstate the earlier theocracy. The monarchy therefore made concerted (and sometimes violent) efforts to suppress the influence of the incarnations and to supplant the Zhabdrung in the popular imagination (Kinga, 2009, pp. 205-208; Phuntsho, 2013, pp. 552-556; Rizal, 2015, pp. 94-104). These efforts bore fruit: the monarch's primacy as head of state became firmly embedded (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 557).

The first two kings did not have a formal cabinet as such, nor any representative body such as a parliament. Ugyen had carried over the administrative structure from his time as *Penlop* (regional governor) of Trongsa. He was advised by an appointed state council, made up mainly of *ex officio* positions. A key member of the council was the liaison officer with British India, Ugyen Dorji, who had helped Wangchuck's bid to become king. The liaison position became hereditary for the Dorji family. By the time of the third king it was being referred to as a prime ministership.

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[23] Unlike in Tonga (1900) – see below - this agreement was not imposed on a reluctant king but welcomed, partly out of fear of China's expansionist ambitions (J. C. White, 2006, pp. 28,284).

A key achievement of King Jigme was the negotiation in 1949 of an agreement with newly independent India, replacing the earlier one with the British. It included guidance by India on foreign affairs, returned some land to Bhutan, and established free trade between the two countries. King Jigme also introduced some tax reforms (Ura, 1995).

Bhutan's third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (reigned: 1952-1972), popularly known as the "father of modern Bhutan," took these reforms further. In 1959 he abolished serfdom and slavery. Starting from a very low base, he undertook some infrastructure projects as well as improvements in health and education.

Jigme Dorji is celebrated by many as the *original democratiser* of Bhutan. He began putting together an institutional framework that would underpin a gradual move towards a more democratic system.

In 1953, he established a National Assembly, including representatives of the people, the government and the monastic body. The government representatives were chosen by the king; the people were initially represented by village leaders (hereditary positions until 1963) and later by representatives elected by heads of households.[24] The Assembly operated as an advisory body initially – the king discussed with them his plans and heard their views. Its decisions were not considered binding until 1968. Even then the king could "propose reconsideration on any decision of the Assembly on which he had serious misgivings" (Kinga, 2009, p. 229).

In 1965, Jigme Dorji created an appointed Royal Advisory Council, who advised the king and also participated in the National Assembly. In 1972, a cabinet - appointed by the king with the consent of the National Assembly – was established,[25] although the king remained the head of government (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 568).

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[24] Village leaders were not elected by universal suffrage until 2002.
[25] Kinga (2009, p. 240) puts the date for establishment of the cabinet as 1968.

Other reforms included the National Assembly's enacting a body of laws for the country, including the "Supreme Laws", approved in 1959.[26] This was followed by the development of an independent judiciary.

In a dramatic move, in 1969 the king proposed that the National Assembly hold a vote of confidence in the monarch every three years. With a two thirds majority the Assembly was entitled to remove the king in favour of his successor.

Jigme Dorji would probably have carried his reforms further had it not been for political turmoil in the early 1960s (Rustomji, 1978), including the assassination of the prime minister (the king's brother-in-law) in 1964[27] and the attempted assassination of the king himself in 1965. Scholars of this period[28] dispute whether these events were the result of conservatives' discontent with the king's reforms and the high profile of the prime minister during the king's absences due to illness, or political machinations by a faction supporting the king's Tibetan mistress (with whom he had several children).[29] In any event, these atmospherics served to temper, for a time, any enthusiasm his young son, Jigme Singye, may have felt for advancing his father's reform programme. Inheriting the throne in 1972 at the age of 16, Jigme Singye was cautious and conservative at first. He took over the political reforms of his father (outlined above) and did not expand upon them initially. He even discontinued (but resurrected in 1998) the provision for a National Assembly vote of no confidence in the king.

After some time on the throne, however, Jigme Singye did initiate some significant reforms. These included:

- In 1998: having the National Assembly not just *endorse* the cabinet proposed by the king but *elect* a cabinet from a list longer than the number of positions. At the same time the king relinquished the head of government

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[26] Previously the legal system consisted of a collection of laws put together by religious bodies dating back to the time of the Zhabdrung (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 567).
[27] This was the inherited liaison officer and "prime minister" position held by the Dorji family, mentioned above. The incumbent in 1964 was Jigme Palden Dorji, whose sister was married to the king. The hereditary prime ministership fell into abeyance following Dorji's murder.
[28] A useful summary of the rival interpretations of Rose (1977) and Rustomji (1978) is given by Phuntsho (2013, p.577).
[29] The same woman was accused of involvement in another plot, in 1974, to assassinate the young fourth king and replace him with her son.

role and created a one-year revolving prime minister position amongst cabinet members.

- In 2001: "commanding" the drafting of a constitution and then consulting the whole country on it (2005-6).

- From 2006 onwards: establishment of new democratic institutions and the introduction of political parties and democratic elections (2008).

The king also announced, "surprising and shocking the people" (Gallenkamp, 2011, p. 18), that he would abdicate in favour of his son by 2008. He then stood down in 2006.

The king's role in the democratisation process is examined in more detail in chapter 5 (5.1), while the development of the constitution and the monarch's constitutional powers under the new system are covered in chapters 8 and 9.

Two elections have been held under the new system, in 2008 and 2013 (with a change of government in 2013). The next is taking place in 2018.[30]

In the new democracy, prime ministers play a role similar to that of the kings in the past – up to a certain point. Jigme Thinley, elected in 2008, had already served as prime minister (for two stints of one year each), under the rotational arrangement introduced in 1998. He began his 2008-13 prime ministership with considerable confidence and used his time to promote and lead several initiatives to raise the country's profile internationally. This activism appears to have upset both the king and India, and led to a fall from grace (see 3.2, below).

The prime minister as at the end of 2017, Tshering Tobgay, managed better the conundrum of building a high personal profile (including internationally)[31] while avoiding upsetting the king (or India). Domestically, he was seen as accessible and open. He was described by Aung San Suu Kyi as an exemplary leader "capable,

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[30] The National Council (house of review) election took place in April 2018 and the two-round National Assembly election had its first round in September. The second round was held on 18 October 2018; the governing party was eliminated in the first round. In the second round, the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT) party won the most seats and became the government. The DNT had not previously been in government or opposition; hence the election was seen as a sign of voters' desire for change (Kuensel Editorial, 2018). See chapter 8 for an examination of the electoral system.
[31] Tobgay became famous on social media after presenting an inspiring "TED talk" on Bhutan and climate change (Tobgay, 2016).

intelligent, well educated, energetic and most likable." Tobgay had told her it was the policies of the fourth king that had made it possible for him, "a young man of humble origins," to head the government (Tashi & Mathou, 2016, p. 272).

This historical outline would not be complete without mentioning an issue which has generated considerable international engagement with Bhutan: the departure from Bhutan in the 1990s of up to 100,000 Bhutanese of Nepalese origin, known as Lhotshampas (Southerners),[32] who then became refugees in Nepal.

This crisis grew out of efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s to build a single national identity and to exclude a large number of Lhotshampas (suspected of being illegal immigrants) from citizenship. Lhotshampas had been living mainly in Southern Bhutan for several generations in some cases. Under the third king, in 1958, the Nepalese-origin settlers were given citizenship. In the 1980s, however, the Bhutanese government became concerned at the growing number of recent immigrants, especially in the light of the fate of the neighbouring Sikkim kingdom (annexed by India in 1975).[33]

Stemming from these concerns, the government carried out a census of all Lhotshampas and in some cases sought to rescind their citizenship. Heavy-handed officials enforced provisions requiring them to adopt the symbols (including dress) of the dominant culture (Pradhan, 2012, p. 182; 2016, p. 207). In response, a protest movement developed. The end result was the departure of about 100,000 Lhotshampas into refugee camps in Nepal (Hutt, 2005a, 2014; Phuntsho, 2013). The Bhutanese government's position was that the conflict was caused by illegal immigrants or "anti-nationals", goaded by extremists from outside Bhutan (see Gregson, 2001, pp. 430-431), and that not all in the camps originated in Bhutan.

Eventually, concerned members of the international community,[34] after unsuccessful attempts at persuading both Nepal and Bhutan to take measures to

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[32] Not all Bhutanese refugees like this term, preferring to be called Nepalese-Bhutanese. No political position is intended by the use of the term in this thesis.
[33] Bhutanese believe the local Nepalis in Sikkim, who by the 1970s outnumbered the original Sikkimese, and agitated for democracy, were responsible for the loss of Sikkim's monarchy and sovereignty. Andrew Duff (2015), however, shows that a local Sikkimese politician was one of the strongest agitators against the king, and (perhaps unwittingly) paved the way for the Indian takeover in 1975.
[34] United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom.

address the refugees' plight,[35] resettled most of them (International Organisation for Migration, 2015).

Differing opinions on the extent to which the Lhotshampas' protest movement of the 1990s might have contributed to (or slowed) the democratisation in Bhutan are discussed in chapter 6 (6.1).

Tonga

Tonga is a small Polynesian country of over 170 islands, located in the South Pacific north of New Zealand and south of Samoa, with Fiji a close neighbour to its west. The population has remained static for some time at around 100,000, because of migration to New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

Tonga was settled about 3000 years ago.[36] Before European contact, its main relations were with its neighbours, Fiji and Samoa. The country developed its own governance system based on chieftainships, with one supreme title (the Tu'i Tonga) as overall ruler. While the Tu'i Tonga remained the spiritual ruler, governance later became the responsibility of other chiefs (first the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, and then the Tu'i Kanokupolu).[37] Under those leaders other chiefs oversaw their own estates and clan groups, in a feudal-type system.

By the nineteenth century (mirroring Bhutan), the centralised leadership had weakened as civil war developed between rival chiefs. Into this environment Europeans, especially British, began to arrive. The most influential were the missionaries, seeking to convert Tonga to Christianity and also promoting the familiar European political model of kingship and constitutional government. They built a close relationship with one chief in particular, Taufa'āhau. Through his strong genealogical credentials (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 8), ascendancy in battle and friendship with the missionaries, Taufa'āhau eventually took control of the whole country, proclaiming himself King George Tupou I.

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[35] As can be seen from a steady stream of US cables (Mulford, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; White, 2007).

[36] Main sources for this historical background are Ian Campbell (2011, 2015), Sione Latukefu(1974, 1975a, 1975b), Noel Rutherford (1971, 1977), 'Eseta Fusitu'a (1976; 1977), Elizabeth Wood Ellem (1999) and Guy Powles (1979, 1990, 2013).

[37] This in some ways resembled the division in Bhutan between the spiritual and administrative leadership roles under the Zhabdrung.

Influenced by one missionary, Shirley Baker,[38] in particular, Tupou I introduced a series of "revolutionary" laws (Rutherford, 1977, p. 159) which limited the powers of chiefs. The most significant, the *Emancipation Edict* of 1862, declared everyone free from "serfdom" and "vassalage" (cited in Latukefu, 1975b). Next, in 1875, Tupou I promulgated a constitution. This sought to enshrine Christian concepts of equality and freedom in a system of laws, and to control the powers of the chiefs. It also established rules of succession for the Tupou dynasty, and abolished all but 20 (later 33) chiefly titles, renamed "nobles". Latukefu observes that "it is paradoxical" that the retention of a (reduced) chiefly class with increased powers provided a legal basis for a privileged aristocracy. This was despite the fact that, according to Latukefu, the constitution and Tupou I's earlier laws aimed to set limits on the powers of chiefs. The increased powers for a reduced number of chiefs were part of a necessary bargain between Tupou I and the strongest chiefs (Latukefu, 1975b, pp. 54-55), enabling the king's land reforms, which provided for allotments for all Tongan males over the age of 16 (see 4.2). The implications of this "bargain" for present day relations between the royalty and the nobility, in the context of the transition to democracy, are discussed in chapter 6 (6.2).

The constitution combined features of a nineteenth century Westminster-style constitutional monarchy with elements from Tongan tradition (Powles, 1979, 1990). It included representation by an equal number of "People's Representatives" (initially mainly ex-chiefs) and "Nobles' Representatives" in a parliament which also included a cabinet appointed by the king.

One of the king's aims in promulgating the constitution was to protect Tonga from colonisation by demonstrating that it was a "civilised" nation. This strategy was successful: Tonga was never colonised, although the European powers agreed amongst themselves that it would be in Britain's sphere of influence. Under Tupou I's successor, George Tupou II (reigned: 1893-1918), Tonga (like Bhutan) became a British protectorate (through treaties of 1900 and 1905). Unlike Bhutan, Tonga did not welcome this (much more intrusive) arrangement, which involved interference in domestic administration (especially financial management) as well

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[38] Baker became Tupou I's most influential adviser and was prime minister for a time.

as responsibility for Tonga's external relations (Fusitu'a, 1976; Fusitu'a & Rutherford, 1977).

Tupou II was a weak king whose financial irresponsibility the British sought to temper through this interference. His daughter, Queen Salote Tupou III, was able to reassert control over Tonga's internal affairs during her long reign (1918-1965). A traditionalist, Salote emphasised the distinction between royals, nobles and commoners and revived many rituals, while retaining the semblance of "constitutional monarchy and responsible government" (Powles, 1979, p. 339).[39] She promoted education opportunities for royals and nobles, including the crown prince, the first Tongan to gain a university degree, and filled the cabinet with royal family members (Wood-Ellem, 1999).

Salote's son, Tupou IV (reigned: 1965-2006), was, like Bhutan's third king, a moderniser, promoting education, infrastructure, health and the beginnings of a small business sector. He recognised the value of receiving aid (including scholarships) from neighbouring countries. Emigration, aid and remittances brought in revenue to support growth and the emergence of a bureaucracy. Meanwhile, Tonga's formal protectorate status ended in 1970.

Despite these changes Tupou IV was not prepared to consider political reform. The country continued with a political system that had changed little since 1875. While parliamentary elections were held every three years, Tonga's 100,000 commoners had (by the 1980s) only 9 People's Representatives while the holders of 33 noble titles also had 9.[40] The people, through their representatives, did not participate in government although they were able to question government policies in parliamentary debate. In the 1970s, the first efforts to push for a more democratic system began. Dr Langi Kavaliku, a visionary government minister (and for a time deputy prime minister), argued persistently within cabinet and with the king in privy council to have a more democratic system established, but did not succeed (Bain, 1993, p. 152). Around the same time another intellectual, Professor Futa Helu,

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[39] Salote's revival of traditional ceremony can be compared to a similar development in Thailand under Bhumibol, which re-established an "aura" for the monarchy.
[40] These numbers varied over the years but the nobles and commoners always had an equal number of representatives until the 2010 reforms.

founder of 'Atenisi University, similarly inspired educated young people to start thinking about political change.[41]

Overseas study, plus emigration and temporary work schemes, meant that Tongans became familiar with the democratic systems operating in New Zealand, Australia, the US and elsewhere. From these beginnings a pro-democracy movement began in the late 1980s, originally seeking more accountability from the government. The most high profile young activist was 'Akilisi Pohiva (now prime minister), who has acknowledged Kavaliku as his original inspiration. His initial calls for more government accountability evolved into questioning the undemocratic political system itself. In 1987 Pohiva became a People's Representative in parliament, and has been there ever since. Together with his supporters in the Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM), which was formally established in 1992, he formed a vocal opposition to the traditional system.

The role of the PDM and its interaction with the monarchy are discussed in more detail in chapter 6 (6.2). For it was not only the citizenry who were becoming more conscious of the political stagnation in the country. A younger generation of royals, educated outside Tonga, were quietly thinking about how to modernise the monarchy and make Tonga more democratic. Crown Prince Tupouto'a (later King George V) did not enunciate these ideas publicly while his father was alive but shared his thoughts with close friends. His cousin, Prince Tu'ipelehake, brought them to parliament, proposing a nationwide consultation on political reform, known as the National Committee for Political and Constitutional Reform (NCPR), which got underway in 2006, partly in response to a lengthy public service strike in 2005.

Before this, in late 2004, Tupouto'a had persuaded his (elderly and unwell) father to bring four elected members of parliament (two People's Representatives and two Nobles' Representatives) into the cabinet after the 2005 election – something unprecedented in Tonga. One of these representatives, Dr Feleti (Fred) Sevele, was later appointed prime minister, when the king's younger son (Prince 'Ulukalala

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[41] Futa Helu, a philosopher and polymath, established an independent educational institution, 'Atenisi, to encourage critical thinking.

Lavaka Ata, now King Tupou VI)[42] resigned from the role after the public service strike.

The two processes, pressure for change from the pro-democracy movement, and a willingness on the part of younger royals to consider reform, seemed set to coalesce into a peaceful transition towards democracy, especially when George V became king in September 2006 (as discussed in detail in chapter 5). But things did not run as smoothly as might have been expected.

George V announced in September 2006 that he would give up his business interests, cede his executive powers, and lead the country towards a more democratic system. The mechanics of the transition were put in the hands of Prime Minister Sevele. Unfortunately, this positive start was disrupted almost immediately by riots on 16 November 2006 (see 6.2). As a consequence political reform was delayed, but not halted. A Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC), established in 2009, received submissions and produced recommendations. A modified version of these recommendations was adopted by parliament and related law changes effected, in advance of elections under the new system in November 2010.

Three elections have been held under the new system, in 2010, 2014 and 2017. The first parliament elected a noble, Lord Tu'ivakanō, as prime minister. The outcome apparently disappointed George V, who had hoped to see the first election under the new system come up with a commoner as prime minister,[43] presumably to give additional legitimacy and democratic credentials to the reforms. After the second election a commoner, veteran pro-democracy campaigner, 'Akilisi Pohiva, became prime minister. Both the Tu'ivakanō (2011-2014) and Pohiva (2015-2017) governments were lacklustre and subject to unsuccessful attempts at a vote of no confidence in the prime minister. In August 2017, however, King Tupou VI[44] dissolved parliament and called elections for November 2017 (one year ahead of schedule), apparently on the basis of a number of concerns about the

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[42]In this thesis, Tupou VI will be referred to as Lavaka in the period before he was king.
[43] Speech by Speaker of the House to Festival of Democracy, 'Atenisi University, Nuku'alofa, June 2014.
[44] King George V died in 2012.

government expressed by the Speaker. Such an intervention by the king is constitutional but hardly democratic.[45]

If the intention of this move was to oust the Pohiva government, it was unsuccessful, since Pohiva (who had originally planned to retire at the end of 2018) was re-elected prime minister following the November 2017 elections, which had resulted in a larger cohort of People's Representative positions for his grouping (the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands, DPFI). It remains to be seen whether the king will deploy similar measures over the coming years.

Thailand

Modern Thailand is a fairly recent construct, with origins in a smaller kingdom, based initially around the town of Sukhothai and later Ayutthaya, which was sacked by the Burmese in 1767.[46] A new leader (King Taksin) emerged, but was replaced in turn by a new dynasty, the Chakris, from 1782. Of the early Chakris the most famous was King Chulalongkorn (reigned: 1868-1910), who began a process of modernisation. He removed some practices that fostered inequality and centralised the role of the state at the expense of the feudal nobility, for example by introducing a professional army to replace the old *corvée* system,[47] and a salaried bureaucracy, which brought commoners into the civil service. Chulalongkorn would not take the next step and consider any form of constitutional government, despite suggestions in 1885 from a group of princes that he adopt a constitution and freedoms as a way to counter the imperial threat. Chulalongkorn responded that Thailand was not suited to such western practice, that any limits to his authority would prevent his carrying out proposed reforms and that the very idea of a parliament was contrary to Thai traditions (Ferrara, 2015, pp. 52-53, 56-57; C. Gray, 1986, pp. 243-244). Chulalongkorn continued his father King Mongkut's successful policy of accommodation with the imperial powers. Mongkut had signed the Bowring Treaty with the British in 1855 and similar agreements with other

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[45] For more comment on this move see my blogpost (Bogle, 2017)
[46] For historical material on Thailand, I have drawn on Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit (2014); B J Terwiel (2011); Christine Gray (1986), Paul Handley (2006); Federico Ferrara (2015); Nattapoll Chaiching (2010), Pridi Banomyong (2000); and Thak Chaloemtiarana (2007b).
[47] Under this system, feudal lords could deploy their tenants to carry out tasks for them, including military activity.

powers thereafter. These helped cement Thailand's borders (see Thongchai, 1994) and maintain its independence as a buffer zone between French and British territories.

Chulalongkorn's successor, Vajiravudh (reigned: 1910-25), a weak monarch, defended absolute monarchy and sought to consolidate centralised rule through identifying "Thainess" with loyalty to king, country and religion (Ferrara, 2015, pp. 66-67). This mantra has remained popular with Thai autocrats, but was implicitly questioned by the People's Party "Promoters", a small group of military and intellectuals who led a "revolution" (or coup) in 1932, taking over the government. The Promoters, inspired by democratic notions absorbed while studying in Paris, and in the face of poor governance and disastrous financial management by Vajiravudh's successor Prajadhipok (reigned: 1925-35), sought to disestablish the absolute powers of the monarchy. Their two main leaders (Pridi, an intellectual, and Phibun, a military officer) had planned a gradual build up to full democracy. They began with an assertive declaration (Pridi, 2000, pp. 70-72) demanding that the king be subject to the law and announcing that sovereignty lay with the people. For reasons that are not clear, not long afterwards, they made an "apology" to the king for the coup (C. Gray, 1986, p. 341). Whatever the reason, the Promoters stepped back from their original plans, sought the endorsement of the monarch (rather than testing their legitimacy with the public, for example through elections), appointed a royalist as prime minister, and accepted a royally-amended constitution.

This subservience, according to Ferrara (2015, p. 36), meant that right from the start the revolution failed to open the way to an embedded democracy. Nattapoll (2010), on the other hand, puts the blame squarely on the king and royalists for undermining democratisation from 1932 onwards. Later rewriting of history has attempted to paint Prajadhipok as the founder of the constitutional monarchy (see Baker and Pasuk, 2014, p. 237; Ferrara, 2015, p. 107; Hewison, 1997b, p. 60; Nattapoll, 2010, pp. 150, 172-153). On the contrary, he and his supporters made every effort to unseat the Promoters' leaders, and attempted a counter-coup in 1933, for which many royalists were imprisoned (Nattapoll, 2010, pp. 148,150-151). Prajadhipok went into exile and abdicated in 1935.

The monarchy was effectively absent from 1935 until 1951. The heir to Prajadhipok, Ananda Mahidol (brother of later king Bhumibol) was just a child in 1935. The two brothers were living in Switzerland. Their return to Thailand in June 1946 was meant to see Ananda's coronation. Instead, Ananda was shot, in circumstances which have never been elucidated. His death aided the resurgence of Phibun's power over that of Pridi, which suited both the military and the royalists.[48]

King Bhumibol (reigned: 1946-2016) did not settle in Thailand until 1951. By this point the military (under Phibun) were in firm control of the country, but older palace figures had already begun a campaign to restore royal influence. They used the young king's return to begin gradual reinsertion of monarchical symbols and profile into Thais' perceptions (Handley, 2006, pp. 119-136). They planned to give royal favour to those military who would similarly favour the monarchy. The policy bore fruit after a coup brought army chief Sarit to power in 1957. Sarit saw strategic value in an expanded royal role. He encouraged Bhumibol to get out and about, show the face of the monarchy to the people, and use this as a means of cementing both patriotism and monarchism. Thus began Bhumibol's much-lauded personal involvement in rural development projects. This, and the Sarit regime in general, were also encouraged by the US, who saw them as useful in the fight against communism. An alliance of expediency (king, military dictator, and US assistance) upheld an undemocratic government, dubbed by Sarit "Thai-style democracy", although there was no hint of democracy in it.[49]

In the Sarit era the monarchy and the military were mutually dependent partners. Following Sarit's death in 1963 the monarchical partner became more assertive, and was even prepared to oust a military government in certain circumstances. This happened in 1973, when students organised protests demanding greater public involvement in politics. The violent response from the military led the students to appeal directly to the king, who designated a new prime minister and seemed to give his support to reestablishment of parliament (Baker and Pasuk,

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[48] Phibun, increasingly autocratic from 1939, admired the Japanese and accepted their occupation of the country during WWII. Pridi led the anti-Japanese resistance and seemed set to be a post-war democratic prime minister, but Ananda's death was used by his opponents as an excuse to vilify him. He went into exile in 1947.
[49] This outline of the Sarit era is drawn from Thak's comprehensive study (2007b).

2014, p. 186). And yet the upcoming era saw the development of right-wing vigilante groups which, apparently with the (albeit tacit) support of the royal family, were involved in a 1976 massacre of students protesting at Thammasat University (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, p. 194). The aftermath was a return of the military to power.

The 1980s have been described as a decade of "managed democracy" (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, p. 239), with some democratic features, such as elections, which were "regular, albeit not truly free" (Kurlantzick, 2013, p. 157). King Bhumibol supported General Prem Tinsulanonda as unelected prime minister through the 1980s, even against an attempted coup. The king's patronage of Prem extended to appointing him to his privy council in 1988, which he has chaired since 1998. In this role Prem has master-minded the "network monarchy" (McCargo, 2005) which enables the palace to reach out and control multifarious aspects of Thai politics and life.

The hope of a more enduring transition to democracy in Thailand grew out of developments in the 1990s. A coup against a civilian government in late 1991, followed by elections but appointment of a non-elected military leader as prime minister, led to protests in 1992, and a large scale violent response by the military. Bhumibol (several days into the violence) publicly reprimanded the military and opposition leaders. At the time, this was thought to signal the end of the military in Thai politics. Together with the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, it spurred the drafting of a more democratic constitution and paved the way for the victory of a new type of prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, in 2001.

Thaksin had created a new political party, Thai Rak Thai (TRT), with a globalisation-focused economic approach and a collection of social policies that appealed to the rural community. TRT won an absolute majority in the 2005 elections, the first time a prime minister had been re-elected and the first absolute majority in Thai politics. At the same time, Thaksin's government was responsible for some human rights violations, most egregiously his "war on drugs" - where more than 2500 died in three months. Thaksin also mishandled the Muslim insurgency in the South, worsening an already serious situation. Finally, he was accused of

corruption and cronyism, using his office to favour his own and his associates' business interests.

Members of the Bangkok middle class and elites, dismayed at Thaksin's two electoral victories, began disruptive protests in the streets, calling themselves the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), or "Yellow Shirts", in an effort to persuade either the king or the army to unseat the government. In response, Thaksin called elections in April 2006, which were boycotted by the opposition. Finally, the army acted, with a coup in September, launching Thailand back into "the familiar whirl of coups, elections and constitutions" (Thitinan, 2008, p. 143).

Apart from watering down the 1997 constitution with a less democratic 2007 version, the 2006 military regime made few policy innovations. They called elections in December 2007, where the highest number of seats (although not a majority) were won by a TRT proxy, the People's Power Party (PPP). This in turn was dissolved by the judiciary.[50] Judicial moves against members of the PPP government were accompanied by renewed (and escalated) PAD protests in 2008. Once the court dissolved the PPP government, a new coalition government was installed, headed by Abhisit Veijajiva of the (erstwhile opposition) Democrat Party. Members of the military and the privy council had persuaded some smaller parties to switch allegiance, in what became known as a "silent coup" (Chambers and Napisa, 2016, p. 434).

As a counter to the Yellow Shirts, Thaksin-supporting "Red Shirts" (the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, or UDD), held demonstrations opposing the Abhisit government. These protests met with violent repression by the armed forces, especially in May 2010.

When elections were finally called by Abhisit in July 2011, the Thaksinite party Pheu Thai, under Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra, won an absolute majority of seats. Yingluck was attentive to the military (Farrelly, 2014, p. 306), but made errors of judgement in two areas: pushing self-serving amnesty legislation (which would have enabled Thaksin to return to Thailand); and an economically-damaging

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[50] Intervention by the king in 2006, seeking judicial interference in politics (see 5.1), set a precedent for a series of "judicial coups," where the judiciary intervened to declare a party's, or a prime minister's, actions unconstitutional, thereby leading to Thaksin-oriented parties being disbanded.

subsidy for rice farmers. The familiar pattern of judicial coups, boycotting of snap elections, street protests - by the PAD's successor, the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), and finally a military coup, proceeded. Coup-leader Prayuth Chan-ocha declared himself prime minister and set about attempting to "bring back happiness to Thailand" (McCargo, 2015; Ockey, 2017). A repressive provision (Article 44) of the 2014 interim constitution, granting the junta comprehensive powers to operate outside the law in the interests of "national security," has been invoked on several occasions. In addition, a harsh *lèse majesté* law has brought about more and more imprisonments for "insulting" the king - or even the king's dog (The Economist, 2015).[51] Opponents of the government are detained for short periods of "attitude adjustment" or "re-education".

Having initially promised to put together a new constitution and hold elections by October 2015, the regime finally came up with a draft and held a referendum to legitimise it in August 2016. The constitution was promulgated by new king Vajiralongkorn in April 2017 (after he had made some amendments of his own.) It enables the military to retain a controlling role over Thailand's politics even once elections are restored and allows the possibility of a non-elected prime minister. The death of King Bhumibol in October 2016 provided an excuse for delays in holding elections, but they continue to be postponed. As at early 2018, the date for elections in said to be February 2019. Public protests have begun demanding elections and an end to military rule, but the outlook is for an ongoing strong influence of the military over whatever government might emerge from eventual elections.

Nepal

Before the 18th century the area now known as Nepal consisted of a large number of small states, many with their own kings.[52] The area of the current capital, the Kathmandu Valley, alone consisted of three kingdoms. In 1769, Nepal was "united"

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[51] Under the *lèse majesté* law, discussed in detail in an article (1995) and subsequent book (2010) by David Streckfuss, someone can be imprisoned for anything from three to fifteen years for insulting the royal family.

[52] Historical background on Nepal has been sourced from John Whelpton (2005); Prashant Jha (2012); Aditya Adhikari (2012, 2014); Deepak Thapa (2012; 2004); and Jonathan Gregson (2002).

by Prithvi Narayan Shah, of the kingdom of Gorkha, who first conquered the Kathmandu Valley and then extended his rule out to surrounding areas. At its peak, the Shah Empire was one third larger than Nepal's current size. Its territorial ambitions were checked by the British in the Anglo-Nepali war (1814-15). Through the Treaty of Sagauli (1816) the Nepalis relinquished a third of their territory and accepted the presence of a British "Resident" in Kathmandu.

From 1846, following a turbulent period of palace massacres and plots, the kings became, for over 100 years (1846-1951), virtual prisoners of the Rana family, who established themselves as hereditary prime ministers, ruling over a feudal, centralised state. The Ranas had the support of the British, whom they aided militarily (through Gorkha soldiers) in conflicts with Indian independence-seekers and in World War 1. A 1923 treaty making it clear that Nepal was completely independent was partly in response to wartime assistance (Whelpton, 2005, p. 64).

The independence of India inspired a drive for democracy, including a brief armed struggle against the Rana dictatorship. As in Thailand, this initial pressure for democracy came not from popular mobilisation but from a group of educated commoners who had been exposed to democratic ideals abroad. These activists were the founders of Nepal's still dominant political party, the Nepali Congress (NC). In 1950 then king Tribhuvan fled to India; in 1951 he and the reformers made a pact with the Ranas, brokered by India, to share government of Nepal and to establish a Constituent Assembly. The king later reneged on this. Having secured the restoration of monarchical authority, the monarchs (Tribhuvan died in 1955 and his son Mahendra took over) were in no hurry to facilitate democracy. Parliamentary elections were not held until 1959 (with B P Koirala elected prime minister).[53] Mahendra's tolerance of democracy was short-lived. He had commissioned the drafting of a constitution in 1959 (by British expert Sir Ivor Jennings), designed to give ample powers, including overall sovereignty, to the Crown (Malagodi, 2013, p. 85; 2014, pp. 5-8). In 1960, using his emergency

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[53] Koirala was the outstanding democratic figure in this early period. The fact that he was ousted and imprisoned by Mahendra in 1960 (and later spent many years in exile) is one of the lost opportunities of Nepal's democratic transition. The Koirala family have remained prominent in the NC.

powers from that constitution, Mahendra took over the government, outlawed political parties and imprisoned politicians.[54]

Mahendra then put together another constitution. This 1962 constitution established what he called a "party-less panchayat system," with several tiers of *panchayats* (governing councils) of which only the village level had any popular representation. Political parties were outlawed and sovereignty and executive powers were vested in the king. Mahendra's reign was also the start of modernisation (development of education, infrastructure, and some growth of a small professional urban middle class).

Mahendra's vision was of a united Hindu state with one dominant religion and one language, despite the country's enormous diversity. King Birendra (reigned: 1972-2001) continued with the *panchayat* system but it began to be challenged, as educated Nepalis were becoming more politically aware (see 4.1). Birendra tested the system's legitimacy in a referendum of 1979 (widely believed to have been rigged). This endorsed a revised party-less system rather than multi-party democracy. Over the following decade, however, urban Nepalis and politicians seeking a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy organised protests and civil disobedience, culminating in a massive people's protest movement (called *Jan Andolan*) in 1990. This coincided with the "Third Wave" democratisations in Europe and elsewhere (Huntington, 1993). India meanwhile, whether in support of the people's aspirations, or because it was angry at Birendra's decision to buy arms from China, imposed a trade embargo in 1989 that was not lifted until democracy was established in 1990.

In April 1990, after negotiations with the political parties, Birendra agreed to establish a parliamentary democracy under a new constitution. Even then, the Constituent Assembly promised in 1951 was not established. Instead, a constitution was put together by a drafting committee, including representatives of the parties. The draft left some powers with the king, including to dissolve parliament, command the army, and declare a state of emergency. Nevertheless

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[54]India had initially supported opposition to Mahendra's move and introduced an unofficial economic blockade against Mahendra from September 1962 but abandoned this once the India/China conflict began in October 1962 (S. Sharma, 2010, p. 92; Whelpton, 2005, p. 99).

Birendra attempted unsuccessfully to undermine this draft by presenting his own alternative (with greater emphasis on the monarch's role). When this was leaked to the media he abandoned the attempt.

From 1990 to 2002 Nepal had many different governments as coalitions changed and parties split and re-formed, while civil society enjoyed new liberties. Meanwhile, a Maoist political party decided from February 1996 to abandon electoral politics for a Mao-style "People's War"' in the countryside. Governments initially did not take the insurgency seriously and attempted to counter it through police action. In any event they were constrained in what they could do, as the army was under the direct control of Birendra, who declined to deploy the military against the Maoists.[55]

In the midst of this turmoil, Nepal was shaken by the 2001 massacre of Birendra and most of the rest of the royal family by Crown Prince Dipendra (who then shot himself) – apparently because his parents had refused to let him marry the woman of his choice (Gregson, 2002, pp. 158-177; Hawley, 2015, pp. 1159-1161). One of the few surviving royals, Birendra's brother Gyanendra, became king.

Meanwhile, Maoist attacks (plus unsuccessful attempts at negotiation and short-lived ceasefires) continued, with the army deployed from November 2001, under a state of emergency.

Gyanendra showed no respect for democratic government. In 2002, he fired the prime minister and appointed the executive himself. A royal coup followed in 2005, where he took on absolute power. This united the Maoists and the mainstream parties, who, in the "12 Point Understanding" of November 2005 (brokered by India), agreed to work together to restore parliamentary democracy and to end autocratic monarchy (Seven Political Parties and Maoists, 2005).[56] Through this historic pact the Maoists committed to abandoning the revolutionary path in return for their long-cherished dream of a Constituent Assembly.

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[55] It is of course uncertain whether deploying the army earlier would have helped end the conflict.

[56] India's role ensured there was no specific mention of a republic in the Understanding (Jha, 2014). India at that point hoped to preserve the monarchy, although eventually accepted Gyanendra had to go – see 3.2.

A second people's movement in April 2006 overwhelmingly supported a return to democracy, forcing Gyanendra to agree, first, to restore cabinet and then, when that was not considered sufficient, to reinstate parliament. But it was too late for the monarchy. The interim government and parliament decided that the first task of the Constituent Assembly would be to vote on abolishing the monarchy.

The Maoists had participated in putting together an interim constitution in 2007 and a reformed, inclusive, electoral system for the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, but it was a surprise when they won the largest number of seats (229 out of 601). Their first prime ministership was to last only until 2009 (although they again held the prime minister role in 2011). The constant wrangling between the parties for control of the Assembly, and a lack of confidence amongst some politicians about the intentions of the Maoists, meant that progress with constitution drafting was negligible. A key issue of contention was the type of federation Nepal would become. The interim constitution had prescribed that Nepal be an inclusive federation, partly in response to a 2007 uprising by the Madhesis (from the Tarai, the Southern Plains area). But agreement on a division of the country into provinces, and how divisions would be decided, proved an elusive goal (Lawoti, 2014, pp. 137-139).

The deadline for completion of a constitution was extended several times, until in 2012 the supreme court refused further extensions. When last minute attempts to agree on sticking points failed, the then prime minister called elections for a second Constituent Assembly, held in November 2013, with an interim government under the Chief Justice in charge until then.

In the 2013 elections (Gellner, 2014), the Maoists suffered a considerable loss of support, reflecting voters' unfulfilled expectations. The mainstream parties, the Nepali Congress (NC) and the UML (Communist Party of Nepal, Unified Marxist-Leninist),[57] were able to form a coalition government under a deal whereby the NC would provide a prime minister until a constitution was agreed, at which point the UML would take over the role.

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[57] The UML is "communist" in name, but social democrat in orientation.

This comfortable arrangement did not stay the course. In the wake of the destructive April 2015 earthquakes, politicians became determined to finally reach agreement on a constitution, which was passed by around 85% of the Assembly in September 2015. Of 598 members, 507 voted in favour, 25 against, and 66 abstained (Phuyal, 2015). And yet some Madhesi groups in the south were dissatisfied with the constitution and began protests, including blocking transport routes. India, in support of the protesters, began an economic blockade, which did not end until the government (by then under a UML prime minister) agreed to introduce some amendments to the constitution. The UML/NC power-sharing arrangement was subsequently replaced by an unlikely coalition between the NC and the Maoists. In late 2017, long-postponed local body polls were held, followed by provincial and central government elections. In a development that "even the cleverest analyst could not have predicted" (Nepali Times, 2017), for these elections the UML and the Maoists agreed on a pact, foreshadowing a possible formal merger of the two parties in due course.

The election outcomes at the end of 2017 showed victory for this so-called Left Alliance, with the UML gaining the highest number of seats overall (but not an absolute majority), the NC the next highest, and the Maoists the third. A coalition government between the UML and the Maoists took office in early 2018, with the proposed merger in the offing[58]. Whether this portends a more stable era for Nepali politics remains to be seen.

3.2 Democratic neighbourhood?

As noted in chapter 2, a potentially relevant background factor in democratisation is a country's international relationships, especially the democratic (or otherwise) nature of its immediate neighbourhood (see for example Grugel, 1999; Huntington, 1993). This section examines the influence of the varying neighbourhoods and other significant international relationships.

While all four countries in this thesis are located in the Asia-Pacific region, only two (Bhutan and Nepal) share an immediate neighbourhood. Both are members of the

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[58] The merger was formally announced in May 2018 (G. Sharma, 2018).

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). They have a close and sometimes tricky relationship with India. Both, because of their landlocked, mountainous location, were able to pursue a policy of relative isolation up to the middle of the twentieth century (opening up after India's independence). Thailand, in South East Asia, and Tonga, in the South Pacific, are members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), respectively. All four countries have, to differing degrees, an evolving relationship with China.

Bhutan: no longer India's minnow?

Bhutan's historical northward orientation has for political reasons switched in the past 150 years to a southward focus concentrated on its relationship with India. Isolationism in the first half of the twentieth century was gradually relinquished following Indian Prime Minister Nehru's official visit to Bhutan in 1958 and, especially, in the light of Tibet's takeover by China (from 1950 onwards) and the India/China war of 1962.

As well as inspiring greater engagement with the outside world, it seems likely that the Chinese takeover of Tibet and the China/India war were among the factors that led the third king, Jigme Dorji, to begin thinking about democratisation (moving the country towards the Indian rather than the Chinese model). At the same time a wariness about India's own intentions, especially following its 1975 takeover of Sikkim, may have led Bhutan to seek a broader international network which explicitly recognised it as a sovereign state (Ahmad, 2013, p. 149; Fischer & Tashi, 2009, pp. 248-252). Bhutan joined the Colombo Plan in 1962, then the International Postal Union (1969), and finally the United Nations (1971).

Bhutan's 1949 treaty with India was updated in 2007, replacing the requirement for Bhutan's foreign policy to be guided by India with a mutual obligation to "cooperate closely" on "issues related to their national interests" and not "allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other" (RGOB, 2007). This was seen as moving Bhutan out of "Delhi's shadow" (BBC, 2007), although in some circles Bhutan is still seen as little more than a protectorate of India (see for example Liu Zongyi (2013), writing in *The Global Times*). *The Economist* (2011) has referred to Bhutan as one of India's "minnows".

Neither India nor any other country appears to have overtly urged Bhutan to move to a more democratic system,[59] although India's financial assistance fuelled the modernisation efforts which the third and fourth kings saw as necessary steps towards evolving public participation in government. Bothe, however, argues (2015, p. 5) that scholars have failed to take note of India's "invisible" influence. She highlights India's increasing its aid by 50% "at the initiation of the constitutional process" and agreeing to change the relationship through the 2007 treaty renegotiation, which she sees as a reward for democratisation. Certainly, India encouraged the drafting of a constitution and provided an adviser to the constitution drafting committee, which would have given it some influence on the shape of the polity. But recognising and assisting a transition once declared by the king is not the same as pushing for such a transition in advance.

Nor did the "democratic" South Asian neighbourhood provide positive examples and encouragement: the somewhat messy nature of democracies in its region worried many Bhutanese once the king announced his plan to democratise.[60] The regional body, SAARC, concentrates on economic, infrastructure and integration questions, and enables consultation among, for example, judiciaries and parliaments of the various member states. Unlike the Commonwealth or the PIF, it does not act as a forum for promotion of democracy amongst its members.

One institution supportive of Bhutan's democratisation has been the European Union, including through sending an observer team to the 2008 elections (EU-EOM, 2008). In addition, the EU has increased its aid to Bhutan (and Nepal) for the period 2014-2020, taking note of both countries' efforts "to fight poverty and implement constitutional reforms" (European Commission, 2014). But again, this was assistance once Bhutan's king had made his own decision to democratise, rather than an attempt to persuade him to take such a step.

In the democratic era, many observers and commentators[61] believe that India attempted (somewhat clumsily) to influence the 2013 Bhutan election, because of displeasure at the Thinley government's tentative opening up to China.[62] India

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[59] Interviewee BAJ6
[60] Interviewee BAJ6.
[61] Interviewees BAJ38, BO1, BP3, BAJ7. See also Dorji (2013).
[62] India has denied this (interviewee BD4).

regards Bhutan as a key buffer state, vital to its security,[63] and is, accordingly, sensitive about any Bhutan/China contact. In recognition of India's sensitivity, Bhutan has to date avoided establishing formal diplomatic relations with any permanent member of the UN Security Council (thereby keeping its distance from China without singling it out). Bhutan's relations with China had been minimal and with "unresolved border issues" (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 576).[64]

In June 2012 then Prime Minister Thinley and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao had a "pull-aside" meeting in the margins of the Rio+20 Summit. The main offence to India may have been a failure to consult Delhi before making this overture.[65] This in turn might have been the reason for India's temporarily cutting its (large) subsidies on kerosene and cooking gas exports to Bhutan (Turner & Tshering, 2014, pp. 330-331) just before the final round of the 2013 elections in an attempt to influence voters against the Prime Minister's party (see also Elliott, 2015). Elliott notes that the India-Bhutan relationship has been restored under Prime Minister Tobgay "though one hears criticism in Thimphu of the way that India used its professed friendship".

The last comment is significant: India may have tried to influence the elections but the Bhutanese had their own reasons for seeking a change of government, and presumably would have voted that way in any event, whereas now some feel considerable resentment towards India.[66]

In sum, despite Bhutan's location in a nominally democratic neighbourhood, with its closest partner the world's largest democracy, the region was not a promoter of its democratisation. The kings have led the country to democracy *in spite of* their people's misgivings about democracy in neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, Bhutan's pragmatic choice years ago of India, rather than China, as its paramount relationship, has meant that, once the monarchs did decide to democratise, the

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[63] Interviewee BAJ9.
[64] The border issues came to the fore again in 2017 during the Doklam events, in which China began building a road in territory disputed with Bhutan, and Indian and Chinese troops confronted each other for 72 days before withdrawing (Lamsang, 2017; Malhotra, 2017).
[65]Interviewee BD5. Thinley may also have upset the king: sensitive foreign policy relationships are regarded as the monarch's purview.
[66] India's far more direct efforts (in 2015) to influence Nepal's politics have had a similar outcome.

Indian democratic model was there as a guide. It is unlikely this would have happened if the Chinese relationship had been favoured over the Indian.

Tonga: a regional exception?

Tonga's regional environment is more actively supportive of democratic values than is the case for the other countries in this study. Its major aid donors and close neighbours Australia and New Zealand provided consistent support for political reform from the time Tonga announced its decision in 2005 to launch the National Committee for Political and Constitutional Reform (NCPR). Before that, neighbours were hesitant about appearing to "interfere". The PIF, of which Tonga is a member, upholds democratic processes and institutions in its Biketawa Declaration (PIF, 2000). In addition, Tonga has been a member since 1970 of the Commonwealth, which espouses democratic principles in its Harare (CHOGM, 1991) and Millbrook (CHOGM, 1995) declarations. Tonga joined the United Nations in 1999.

From around 2000 onwards, Australia and New Zealand had made it clear (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 104) that should the Tongan government embark on *political* reform, they would provide support; in the absence of any response to these offers, they channelled their assistance into *structural* (mainly public sector) reforms. In this period, overt promotion of democratic reform was not welcomed by Tongan authorities, but interviewees[67] noted the accumulating influence of years of exposure to Australia's and New Zealand's democracies. Those countries also encouraged human rights-focused NGOs within Tonga, as well as assisting the judiciary (through contributing to judges' salaries) over a number of years. Jonathan Osborne (2014, pp. 50-75), who has studied the role of development partners in Tonga's democratisation, argues that this engagement with NGOs, including the pro-democracy movement (PDM), contributed to the growth of democratic aspirations in Tonga.

Certainly the PDM was in contact, formally and informally, with New Zealand, Australia, and institutions such as the Commonwealth, especially from 2002 onwards. This coincided with a more critical approach in New Zealand media, government and parliament from 2002-2005, partly in response to attempts by the

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[67] TPS4, TAJ3, TB5.

Tongan government to hobble the media, which among other things inspired the New Zealand parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee (FADTC) to undertake an inquiry into New Zealand/Tonga relations. The PDM made written approaches to the Commonwealth (Vea, Senituli, & Pohiva, 2003) and in 2004 the seven People's Representatives (including Sevele) aligned with the movement made a submission to the FADTC inquiry - INQ/TONGA/15W (see FADTC, 2005). This submission was supportive of foreign countries' interest in and concerns about basic rights and freedoms and called on the New Zealand parliament to "encourage and where necessary pressure" Tonga to bring about political reforms.

At the same time as this contact between the PDM and foreign governments and parliaments, a member of the royal family, Prince Tu'ipelehake, had emerged as a champion of political reform, as we have seen in the historical outline above (3.1). Tu'ipelehake engaged in frequent liaison with New Zealand, Australian and UK diplomats,[68] and also wrote formally to Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer stating that Tonga needed both political and economic reform together, as they would "complement each other." He argued that "with the encouragement from the Australian government and the governments in the Commonwealth, the Tongan government may be persuaded to implement the necessary political reforms" (Matangitonga, 2004).

Although Tonga's government under Prime Minister Lavaka (now King Tupou VI) had taken offence at the New Zealand FADTC inquiry, and opposed any foreign interest in Tonga's politics, the FADTC report once released received little publicity in the kingdom.[69] The report (FADTC, 2005, p. 6) included a recommendation that the New Zealand government "work alongside the Tongan Government in a supportive role to facilitate change towards representative democracy by supporting the Tongan judiciary, Legislative Assembly, and public service" (in essence, endorsing the government's existing policy of supporting institutional strengthening and being open to helping the Tongan government introduce democracy once it made the decision to do so). As we have seen, one outcome

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[68] Interviewee TD7.
[69] The timing of its release (August 2005) coincided with the public service strike in Tonga.

from the 2005 public service strike was the Tongan government's agreeing to Tu'ipelehake's proposal for a national consultative process on political reform (the NCPR), providing an opening for New Zealand and Australia to enter a new phase of publicly applauding and supporting the country's own decision to democratise. Australia and New Zealand also helped fund the subsequent Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC).

Inter-parliamentary contact was encouraged in the lead up to the 2010 elections, including through a visit to Tonga by a group of New Zealand parliamentarians in August 2010, to share their experiences of parliamentary democracy with MPs and candidates (Matangitonga, 2010). At Tonga's invitation, New Zealand and Australia provided observers at the 2010 elections, who reported that the elections were "well-conducted and extremely transparent", allowing for voting to be "free and secret" (Davis & Hayes, 2010).

The PIF, as noted above, advocates democratic government in the region through its Biketawa Declaration. This was the context for the suspension of the Bainimarama regime from the PIF on 1 May 2009, for failing to "return Fiji to democratic governance in an acceptable time frame" (ABC, 2009). The precedent of the Forum's expulsion of the Bainimarama regime might act as a brake on any potential future effort by Tonga to step back from its democratic reforms, but other regional and multilateral bodies would also play a part in encouraging ongoing commitment, following on from their interest in Tonga's transition.[70]

Tonga's international environment has encouraged, rather than impeded, its transition to democracy, although Tonga has always proudly insisted on doing things on its own terms and following its own timetable. International partners were aware that apparent criticism of Tonga's approach could be counter-productive and, accordingly, public international advocacy for democratic reform was somewhat muted until Tonga itself indicated its determination to change. Two-way interaction between those advocating democracy through two streams (the PDM and Tu'ipelehake) of contact with the international community contributed to

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[70] Institutions that supported the development of good governance and/or democratic institutions in Tonga include the ADB, the World Bank, the IMF, the UNDP, the Commonwealth and the European Union.

regional awareness of developments in Tonga, especially in the period from 2003 onwards. The turning point for foreign involvement in the democratisation process was the launching of the NCPR, which then enabled partner governments to provide practical assistance to Tonga's own reform initiatives.

Thailand: difficult neighbourhood

The ASEAN grouping in general is not a shining light of democratic government; nor has it enunciated aspirations to that effect, being a region of diverse political systems, and having an operating principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of members. Accordingly, Thailand has felt little or no pressure from its neighbours to conform to a democratic ideal.[71] In addition, further afield, China is for some Thais replacing the US as a desirable model of government and is becoming an ever more important economic partner (Ehrlich, 2016; Storey, 2015).[72]

Nevertheless, Thailand still seeks a strong and supportive relationship with the US, harking back nostalgically to the Cold War era, the most significant geopolitical influence on Thailand's political development. This brought the US in as a key partner providing legitimacy for both military dictatorships and the monarchy, in the interests of warding off communism (Handley, 2006, pp. 184, 194). The king was regarded as a particularly useful tool in this crusade.[73]

In the pre-Trump era, following the 2014 coup, the regime had been deeply upset at the criticisms it received from the US of its human rights situation and absence of democracy.[74] Other partners, including Canada, the EU and New Zealand introduced measures indicating that their relationships were not "business-as-usual."[75] One motivation for the 2016 referendum on the new constitution was undoubtedly to deflect international criticism.[76] Both the EU and the US made

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[71] Interviewee ThA5.
[72] In a June 2018 interview with *Time*, Prayuth stated that China was the "No 1 partner of Thailand" (C. Campbell, 2018).
[73] Interviewees ThA1, ThA6.
[74] Interviewee ThD5.
[75] Interviewees ThD6, ThD9, ThD7.
[76] Interviewee ThD10.

statements after the referendum urging Thailand to hold elections and return to civilian-led rule as soon as possible (Bangkok Post, 2016b).

At the end of 2017 the EU announced a normalisation of its relationship with Thailand, in the light of the (at that time) promise of elections by October 2018 (Reuters, 2017a).[77] Under President Trump, the US's realignment of its priorities in the region does not seem to include concern over the return of democracy to Thailand. In October 2017 Trump received Prayuth as an official guest (White House, 2017). As news website *Khaosod English* comments: "we can't rely on the United States to support democracy in Thailand when democracy and human rights get in the way of America's national interests and geopolitics" (Pravit, 2017b).

Thailand is probably too important an economic partner (and not the worst case of autocracy in its region) to inspire a sustained international campaign to press it to return to democracy – but it has taken the minimal steps (through its referendum and election promise) to attempt to return to more favoured status with countries that matter most to it.

Nepal: a yam between two boulders[78]

Like Bhutan, Nepal has had to weigh up its foreign relationships based on its landlocked, mountainous location between India and China. India has been a constant and influential presence at critical junctures in Nepal's path to democracy (Bhandari, 2012). Yet the relationship is particularly tricky (Chaturvedy & Malone, 2012). A 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship provides for close links and privileges including an open border. Each country thinks the treaty works more to the benefit of the other. India's main objective in the relationship is security (like Bhutan, Nepal is a useful buffer state); Nepal's is to avoid assimilation and to secure economic development and a role in the region.

We have seen how India was an influential player in Nepal's democratisation in 1951 and 1989 although it failed to persist in pushing for restored democracy in 1962, as its own national priorities were elsewhere. Later, India played a significant role in the events of 2005-6 which led to the restoration of democracy (Jha, 2014).

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[77] Later, this changed to March 2019.
[78] A term first coined by Prithvi Shah (The Economist, 2012).

Nevertheless, Muni (2012, p. 317) argues that India's approach has not always been rational. It certainly has not been consistent. India's attitude towards the monarchy and the Maoists fluctuated over the period 2005-2006. India influenced the November 2005 12-Point Understanding, to keep out any mention of a republic. Later, in the face of the second *Jan Andolan* (people's movement), India was cautious (Jha, 2012, p. 336). It initially supported Gyanendra's first proclamation (which did not include restoring parliament); this bruised India's democratic reputation with the political parties (Muni, 2012, p. 318). India quickly switched tack and supported the ongoing protests by refusing Gyanendra's request to provide assistance to the army, even sending a special envoy to dissuade the king from military intervention. The same envoy reinforced this message with the army chief (Jha, 2014, pp. 103-104).

India's most recent "clumsy and unsubtle"[79] intervention, its blockade in late 2015 in support of Madhesi protests against the new constitution, threw Nepal into disarray. Kanak Dixit (2016), calls the blockade the **"most damaging episode in the relationship between the Indian republic and modern Nepal."** Given Indian Prime Minister Modi's Hindu nationalism, Dixit puts this down to a desire to see Nepal return to being a Hindu state, but others[80] find this argument unconvincing, in the light of Modi's earlier efforts to improve the relationship.

In response to the blockade the then Nepali government attempted to negotiate with India (and did agree to make some amendments to the constitution (Bhattarai & Kazmin, 2015)), but also played the "China card", signing a number of agreements and deepening engagement with China.[81] Until recently, the Nepal-China relationship had been fairly limited, with China's main concern being potential political action by Tibetan refugees resident in Nepal. In the past few years, however, China's economic involvement in Nepal has deepened considerably (Kazmin, 2015).

After Gyanendra's 2005 coup, other international partners turned against the king. Together with India, the US and the UK introduced a freeze on military aid.

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[79] Interviewee NA5.
[80] Interviewees ND5, ND2, NA5.
[81] In times of tension in the India relationship, Nepal tends to increase its political engagement with China, a practice known as "playing the China card".

Gyanendra himself then tried to play the "China card" against India, by purchasing ammunition from China, which further angered India (Adhikari, 2014, pp. 177-178).

As with Bhutan, Nepal is a member of SAARC, a regional body which provides an opportunity for coordination and cooperation but is not an active advocate for democracy.

In sum, the influence of India has undoubtedly affected Nepal's transition to democracy, but not always in a consistent fashion, making it difficult for Nepali politicians to count on a particular Indian approach.

3.3 Comparative discussion

This investigation of the background situation in the four countries reveals a number of similarities and differences.

All were monarchies up to 2008, at which point one (Nepal) abolished its monarchy. They have never been colonised (although all have been influenced by the colonial powers active in their regions). Bhutan and Tonga both became British protectorates; Nepal's independence involved considerable interference by imperial Britain; Thailand maintained independence in the nineteenth century as a buffer zone between French Indochina and the British colonies in Burma and Malaya. The shape and extent of the modern Thai state were partly a response to this colonialism (Thongchai, 1994). In Tonga and Bhutan, states that had been torn apart by civil war were reunited and established as kingdoms, partly as a result of British influence. Nepal, on the other hand, was united by Prithvi Shah before its encounter with the British (which limited the size of the country).

Each country experienced a transformational or revolutionary event or series of changes in the late nineteenth or early to mid-twentieth century. In Tonga and Bhutan strong unifying leaders emerged from a period of civil war and established hereditary monarchies. In Tonga Tupou I accompanied this with a series of reforms culminating in the 1875 constitution, which established some basic rights for all Tongans, reduced the powers of chiefs and gave a semblance of a Westminster framework. Ugyen Wangchuck gained agreement of the elites to declare Bhutan a kingship in 1907. In Thailand, in 1932, a group of military and intellectuals staged

a coup, which abolished absolute monarchy but maintained a "constitutional" monarch. In Nepal, in 1951, brokered by India, an alliance of exiled King Tribhuvan and the fledgling Nepali Congress party overcame the dominance of the Rana prime ministerial dynasty, and agreed to establish a three-sided coalition and to set up a Constituent Assembly (which, however, did not eventuate).

Hence we can see that in two countries, Bhutan and Tonga, the initial transformational change was led by the monarch, whereas in the other two the change was imposed on the monarch either through a coup (Thailand) or through an enforced agreement (Nepal).

Each state has at some point declared a commitment to moving towards democracy, often enshrined in a constitution. In Tonga, the statement of commitment to democratic reform was made by King George V shortly after he ascended the throne in September 2006. Tonga has had only one constitution, updated but unchanged in substance until the 2010 reforms, which transferred most of the king's powers to an elected prime minister and cabinet. Bhutan's king in 2001 "commanded" the drafting of a constitution, as a first step towards democratic elections in 2008. Thailand has had innumerable constitutions, the most democratic of which was the 1997 version, drawn up during a lull in military rule. The pattern has been for a military government, installed by a coup, to produce a new constitution. Nepal's monarchy never kept to the 1951 undertaking to set up a Constituent Assembly; constitutions were drafted with input from the monarch, until the decision to abolish the monarchy. The most recent encapsulation of a commitment to democracy is the 2015 constitution.

Thailand is unique amongst the group for the involvement of the military in the polity, the prevalence of military coups and the symbiotic relationship between the monarchy and the military. Nepal, on the other hand, is the only one of the four to have experienced more than one royal coup against an elected government and, of course, is the only one to have abolished its monarchy.

The role of the monarchs has varied (sometimes within the same country at different times) from active, committed leadership of democratisation, to ambivalence or actively opposing democratic progress and undermining constitutional norms and institutions. Bhutan's fourth king (Jigme Singye

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Wangchuck) led his country's peaceful transition to democracy, which the Bhutanese had not sought. Tonga's Tupou IV resisted calls for political reform, but his son, George V, was committed to democratising the country. In Nepal and Thailand the monarchy's role has been either ambivalent or downright negative towards democratisation.

Popular mobilisation has taken different forms in the four countries. Bhutan has experienced little or no mobilisation in favour of democracy, although it did go through protests and repressive responses related to ethnic tensions. Nepal suffered ten years of violent civil war, and has a history of mass peoples' movements spurring change. Thailand, too, has seen peoples' protests for democracy (often greeted with repression) and more recently disruptive protests by groups with diverging visions of the country's future and government. Tonga was shocked by riots in 2006 which broke with its tradition of generally peaceful and even deferential protest. Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand have all experienced ethnic tensions, whereas Tonga is a largely homogeneous society. A historical timeline for the four countries can be found in Appendix 1.

Chapter 4. Structural context

Structural factors played a role in setting the background against which the monarchs and other actors interacted in the period under consideration in this study (2005-2017). As discussed in chapter 2, economic development and modernisation, in particular, have been widely asserted (since Lipset, 1959) to have a positive influence on, or at least prepare the ground for, democratisation. In some cases this is seen almost as a prerequisite, in others (for example Przeworski & Limongi, 1997, p. 177), it is depicted as potentially a strong influence on key actors: relevant, but not deterministic. In addition, quantitative and empirical findings suggest that economic development *reinforces* democracy once established, contributing to prospects for consolidation (see for example Przeworski et al., 2000; Teorell, 2010, 2013). Democracy has also been shown to *promote* economic development (Acemoglu et al., 2015). Socio-economic factors, such as inequality and class relationships (including the role of traditional elites), are also considered to have a role in favouring or impeding democratisation, including through their influence on key actors (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Ansell & Samuels, 2014; Boix, 2003; Moore, 1966; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992).

This chapter looks at the structural profile of the four countries, examining differences and similarities in the potential influence of these factors. Following a brief summary of each country's situation, the chapter examines the following structural features: modernisation (including education and economic development); and poverty, inequality and class relationships.

Bhutan is classified by the United Nations as a Least Developed Country and by the World Bank as a lower middle income economy. Its population of 780,000 is not ethnically homogeneous. There are three main ethnic groups: Ngalong in the west, Sharchop in the east (these two often known collectively as Drukpas), and Lhotshampa – Nepalese-origin Bhutanese – in the South (Chuki, 2015, p. 2), with over twenty languages (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 51).The main religion is Buddhism, while most of the Lhotshampa community are Hindu. The country's main engines of growth are hydropower and tourism.

Tonga, classified by the World Bank as an upper middle income country, is an ethnically homogeneous society where the entire population of around 100,000 speaks the same language (Tongan) and a large majority observe an introduced religion (Christianity in various forms). This sets Tonga apart from the other countries in this study, which all have a degree of ethnic diversity, and where traditional religions predominate. Tonga has a high dependence on aid and remittances.

Thailand's population of 68 million is predominantly Buddhist, with a Muslim minority living in the Southern provinces bordering Malaysia, the scene of an ongoing insurgency. Thailand's economy is dominated by services (CIA, 2017) and it is a manufacturing hub, but 40% of the population are still engaged in agriculture (Kurlantzick, 2013, p. 166). The country experienced impressive economic growth in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1980s onwards (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, p. 201; Sidel, 2008), slowed by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. In 2011 Thailand was upgraded by the World Bank to upper middle income status. It is currently regarded as being stuck in the "middle-income trap" (Veerayooth, 2018).

Nepal is the most ethnically diverse of the four countries. A land-locked mountain kingdom like Bhutan, it has around 27 million people with an estimated 123 languages and about 125 ethnic and caste groups (Bhandari, 2014, p. 77; Lawoti, 2014, p. 131). The population is generally described as falling into three main ethnic categories, although the terms used to describe these have changed over time (Gellner, 2016, p. 26). Like Tonga, Nepal is heavily dependent on remittances (Adhikari, 2014, p. 256; Sapkota, 2013), with a large proportion of its young people living abroad. It is the largest aid recipient (as percentage of GDP) in South Asia (Shakya, 2012, p. 118). Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, a least-developed country in UN classification, and categorised as low income by the World Bank. Despite its enormous, under-exploited, hydropower potential, it is unlikely to reach lower-middle-income status before 2030 (World Bank, 2017a).

4.1 Modernisation (economic development, education)

Modernisation as envisaged by Lipset (1959) includes the growth of education, urbanisation, infrastructure, and economic development. This section will examine modernisation in the four countries and its potential relationship to democratisation.

Bhutan

In the case of Bhutan, scholars (Gallenkamp, 2012; Kinga, 2016; Mathou, 2016) argue that modernisation has had little impact on the democratisation of the country, and that other structural factors such as the changing balance between classes (see below), or growing industrialisation (Kinga, 2009, pp. 5-6), have little relevance.

For Gallenkamp (2012, p. 11 onwards), Bhutan is not advanced enough in its economic and social development to fit the modernisation paradigm, although it has certainly made considerable progress over the past decades. Bhutan's democratisation was preceded by, at first, gradual modernisation (under the third king, Jigme Dorji's reign, 1952-1972), followed by acceleration during the fourth king's reign (1972-2006). Even the first and second kings had seen the need for socioeconomic development, but had scarce resources to realise such a dream (Pradhan, 2012; J. C. White, 2006, pp. 165-166, 283). The third monarch's strong friendship with Nehru provided a supportive mentor and development partner for his efforts to modernise the country (Gallenkamp, 2011, p. 9), which he saw as an essential preparation for political reform (Kinga, 2009, pp. 221-226; Phuntsho, 2013). Jigme Dorji introduced institutional reforms and abolished serfdom, slavery, and "in kind" taxation (building on tax reforms by the second king). Starting from a very low base, Jigme Dorji also undertook some infrastructure projects as well as improvements in health and education.

The fourth king's reign saw rapid economic development (detailed in Tashi & Maxwell, 2016). Most significant was the 1973 launching (with Indian assistance) of hydropower, which has become the chief growth engine for Bhutan. The other dominant industry is tourism, by 2006 Bhutan's highest source of hard currency (Tashi & Maxwell, 2016, pp. 128-130). GDP per capita in current US$ was $331 in

1980, $558 in 1990, $1247 in 2005 and $2773 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a). There is as yet only a very small business class in Bhutan. The hydropower sector does not create many jobs, but has transformed the country economically. The ready market in India and the plentiful water resources of Bhutan make this an ongoing prospect for a healthy economy, although not without some problems, as the 2012 "rupee crisis" showed. There was a shortage of rupees as a result of hydropower investment and imports for hydro plants, plus a credit crunch caused by banks' excessive lending for housing (Ethirajan, 2013).

The World Bank (2016) contrasts Bhutan's primary education completion rate in 1979 (9.86%) with those in 2006 (76%), 2009 (90.2%) and 2014 (97.2%). Tashi and Maxwell (2016, p. 131) cite (p.131) a "prodigious" expansion of education, especially from the 1990s: in "a little over five decades, the number of schools has grown from eleven to 659" and the number of students from 400 to 172,222. Earlier, the country's first public schools had been established by King Ugyen in 1912-13 (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 529).[82] Jigme Dorji, with financial assistance from India, was able to secularise education and establish a string of schools from 1959 onwards. Phuntsho (2013, p. 588) describes 2013 primary school enrolment as almost 100%.

Despite some challenges ahead, Bhutan has been described as a "development success story" with a "bright" outlook and a good record in achieving its Millennium Development Goals (World Bank, 2016). Challenges include its comparatively high youth unemployment rate, risks of overheating the economy (from the rapid growth of hydropower), strong dependence on fluctuations in the Indian economy, and tourism's dependence on regional developments.

The third and fourth kings' promotion of modernisation and especially health, education and infrastructure meant that, for the Bhutanese, the "benefits of development…were attributed to the king" (Turner, 2014, pp. 12-13). This enhanced the monarchy's legitimacy. Turner argues that this, in turn, was one reason why the Bhutanese people, while not themselves seeking or wanting democracy, accepted the fourth king's plan to democratise the country. The monarch used his accrued legitimacy to persuade his people, "not so much

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[82] Before this, any education was carried out by the monkhood.

because of any attachment to the new arrangements but more because of their adherence to the wishes of the king". Turner comments that this was an "unusual if not a unique occurrence" in the world. Rather than the modernisation itself, it was the king's leadership of modernisation that led people to accept (though not push for) democratisation. This is a valid argument which illustrates the uniqueness of Bhutan's situation and the significance of the role of the monarch (discussed further in 5.1).

Tonga

In Tonga, too, a monarch (Tupou IV, who reigned 1965-2006) was, like Jigme Dorji of Bhutan, a transformational moderniser. He recognised the need to develop the country, to receive aid from neighbouring countries and to push education, not just for nobles but for every Tongan. Tupou IV began to introduce his policies as crown prince when he was Minister of Education from 1942 and Prime Minister from 1949. His policies resulted in extraordinary progress in infrastructure, health and education, plus the beginnings of a small business sector.

In addition to Tupou IV's modernisation, a specific programme of donor-supported structural reforms took off from 2002 onwards under Prime Minister Lavaka's government and continued under the Sevele government (2006-2010). These economic and public sector reforms helped prepare the ground for later political reforms (see 3.2) by developing an institutional structure based on best practice and the rule of law.[83]

Have the political reforms had a discernible impact on Tonga's economy? A 2016 report from the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2016b) specifically highlights the (ongoing) economic and political reform programme as contributing to Tonga's resilience and its recovery from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), while also noting challenges ahead. Tonga's economy has been, and remains, highly dependent on migration (with associated remittances), aid, and bureaucracy, conforming to the MIRAB model.[84] The bureaucracy remain the main money-earners within Tonga.

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[83] Interviewee TLS11.
[84] The MIRAB - Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy - concept describes the economic dynamic of certain South Pacific microstates with a strong dependency on aid and remittances and where the bureaucracy is the dominant cash employer

Before the GFC, remittances regularly contributed over 30% of GDP (for example, 36.15% in 2002 and 33.64% in 2007), according to World Bank data. These then fell to 18.6% in 2011 but had recovered to 26.8% in 2015 (20% in 2016) (World Bank, 2017b). Its dependence on overseas sources of income means Tonga is particularly vulnerable to shocks in the global economy. It is also highly susceptible to natural disasters, such as cyclones, and to domestic shocks. Attempts to develop an engine of growth are hampered by the disadvantages of Tonga's small size, location, lack of resources and small population, but some areas of opportunity exist. GDP per capita was US$572 in 1980, $1193 in 1990, $2594 in 2005, and $3748 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a).

Tupou IV's emphasis on education for all resulted in the growth of an educated cohort of commoners, some of whom eventually became part of the pro-democracy movement (described in 6.2). Most Tongan interlocutors stressed education as a key driver in the development of awareness of democratic values. Those who worked under Tupou IV[85] recall that he wanted to bring the population to a sufficient degree of education to enable commoners to take on political responsibilities; in fact, he recognised these qualities in the educated commoners he appointed to his cabinet. But from having brought about a transformation in the education level and political awareness of the people, including through encouraging a serious discussion in the 1970s of the constitution,[86] he was not prepared to take the next step.

According to a former Tongan Minister,[87] the turning point was reached when educated commoners realised they were just as good as, and often intellectually superior to, the nobles who lorded it over them. He saw this as a direct result of Tupou IV's determination to prioritise education. Tupou IV recognised that a small developing country needed to use all the talent it could muster if it was to prosper in the modern world. This, plus the exposure of Tongans to other countries' values

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(Bertram & Watters, 1985). Tonga shares many characteristics with the microstates described.

[85] Interviewees TPS4, TP10.

[86] Tupou IV was instrumental in arranging the publication of Latukefu's 1975 history of the Tongan constitution, which generated discussion on constitutional and democratic ideas.

[87] Interviewee TP12.

as a result of scholarships and migration, set the scene for the country's democratisation, albeit with considerable delay. In this sense, therefore, structural change in Tonga had an influence in laying the groundwork for democratisation, not least in giving commoners an awareness of their value to society.

The ADB's stress on the reform programme's having assisted Tonga's recovery recalls the structuralists' argument about the positive relationship between democratic reform and economic development: democracy will boost economic prospects while economic development favours the survival of a new democracy. Together with the enduring theory that economic development and modernisation help prepare the ground for democratic transition, this argument featured strongly in George V's motivations for democratising the country, as we shall see in chapter 5 (5.1). George V was particularly concerned that political reform should keep pace with economic reforms if the country was to progress.

Thailand

In the context of Przeworski' s work (see for example Przeworski, 2004; Przeworski et al., 2000; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997) on the relationship between democracy and development, Ferrara (2015, p. 25) comments that "Thailand's income per capita is now fast approaching a level beyond which there are no examples of authoritarian reversals." Przeworski (2004, p. 9) finds that no democracy with per capita GDP above US$6055 has collapsed. Conversely, Thailand's level of development in 1932 was low for a country trying to democratise, and "while its failure was not unavoidable" its "democratic potential' faded within a very short period (Ferrara, 2015, p. 25), being replaced by a pattern of oscillation in and out of democracy.

Thailand's modernisation began under King Chulalongkorn (reigned 1868-1910), as described in chapter 3 (3.1). Growing out of Chulalongkorn's reforms came the emergence of a small cohort of "commoner intellectuals" in the late 19th century and, later, the leaders of the 1932 revolution (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, pp. 283-284).

The country's economic transformation took off in the last quarter of the 20th century, based on foundations set in the Sarit era, as argued by Veerayooth (2018)

and, with different emphasis, by Baker and Pasuk (pp. 199-233).[88] Baker and Pasuk describe how from the 1970s onwards, Thailand saw rapid urbanisation, enormous increases in GDP, increasing Japanese investment, and the growth of export-oriented manufacturing – all of which favoured urban Bangkok, and led to the rise of an entrepreneurial class, including Thaksin. From 1984 industry took over from agriculture as the chief contributor to GDP, and to exports from 1986. Veerayooth (2018, p. 6) notes that the military-monarchy reconciliation under Sarit (and its supportive relationship with Sino-Thai conglomerates) set the scene for a future economic dominance by "conglomerated, family-owned business groups" (p. 10), especially in the banking area.

The 1997 Asian financial crisis put a brake on Thailand's rapid growth. By late 1996 foreign investors had begun to withdraw and international speculators attacked the Thai currency, the baht (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, pp. 257-259). In 1998 the economy, which had experienced an average of 7% growth over the past 40 years, shrank by 11% (Baker and Pasuk, p. 258).

The Asian financial crisis opened the gate to constitutional change (see chapter 8). It also reinforced King Bhumibol's promotion of his philosophy of "sufficiency economy", first aired in 1994 (Baker and Pasuk, p. 214) – an assertion that rural people in particular should be self–reliant, be happy with subsistence and not aspire to improve their economic situation. A speech by the king in December 1997 added an anti-globalisation sentiment to this philosophy (Baker and Pasuk, p. 260).

Veerayooth (2018) argues that since the 1997 crisis, Thai governments, building on the legacy of the Sarit era, have proven incapable of combining political stability with economic vigour. He suggests that post-1997 military governments have engendered political stability but economic sluggishness, while democratic governments have pursued economic growth and inclusion (including policies addressing poverty) but have suffered from political instability. Veerayooth does not imply a necessary causal relationship between these factors but rather sees them as one potential outcome of the priorities chosen since the Sarit era,

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[88] Baker and Pasuk write of the "American era" and stress the contribution made by US assistance, whereas Veerayooth puts the emphasis on the Sarit regime's imprint on the economy, especially through setting the scene for an ongoing relationship between the military, monarchy, and Sino-Thai conglomerates.

particularly related to the combined interests of the military, monarchy and conglomerates.

While not all would accept the stark dichotomy delineated by Veerayooth, there is a widespread view that Thailand's political uncertainty and recurrent bouts of dictatorship have adversely affected its economic growth (see for example Associated Press, 2016b). *The Economist* (2017) blames the military directly: "In a remarkable feat of blindness, the soldiers still seem to believe….coups they have launched since the 1930s amount to a notable defence of the kingdom – and not the single biggest cause of its malaise." Interviewees[89] suggested that some Thais who favoured military government yearned to have a liberal economy combined with ongoing authoritarian government (the China model). The interviewees nevertheless considered this prospect highly unlikely in a country such as Thailand which, unlike China, had known democratic government - "they can't put the genie back in the bottle."

There was some recovery in Thailand's economy in 2016-2017, which is forecast to continue, although with some vulnerability (IMF, 2017; World Bank, 2017e). Tourism, for example, continues to grow, but at a slower rate. This may be because of Thailand's political instability and some instances of terrorist bombings in the country (Financial Times, 2016). Thailand's per capita GDP was US \$682 in 1980, \$1508 in 1990, \$2893 in 2005 and \$5910 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a).

As in Bhutan, education in Thailand was originally in the hands of monks. King Chulalongkorn built on this to develop a centralised system, and by the mid-1920s 40 percent of children were attending primary schools. Special schools were established to "educate the high-born". During the People's Party era, there was increased investment in education, while during the "American era" scholarships to the US became available in growing numbers. In 1975, primary education was widespread but only six percent of the population (1 million people) had secondary education - let alone tertiary - whereas by the end of the century this was ten times as many (10 million). From the 1970s onwards, the economic boom led to a growth in higher education, attended by the children of the growing "business families." A considerable number of new tertiary institutions (both private and public) sprung

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[89] ThA3 and ThA4.

up from the mid-1980s (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, pp. 66, 96, 122, 150, 205, 207, 221-222).

Despite these advances, interviewees[90] commented that for a country of Thailand's level of wealth, the standard of education remains extremely poor. They argued that Thailand should have developed by now a more equitable education system that would bring skills to its people, enabling them to aspire to productive positions in society. Instead, the system promoted xenophobia, deference, obedience and idolisation of the monarch. Rural people in particular were very poorly educated. Neither the monarch nor the military government had given priority to improving the education system.

Thailand's PISA[91] scores bear out this damning assessment of its education system. Its rankings are slipping (from 51st to 64th in reading; 50th to 55th in mathematics; and 50th to 54th in science). In addition, students in small, rural schools receive particularly poor quality education, contributing to inequality, according to World Bank education specialists writing in *The Nation* (Lars & Dilaka Lathapipat, 2017).

This section has surveyed the remarkable economic and social transformation of Thailand since the nineteenth century. Despite this, the country has not fulfilled its development potential. Nor has it achieved a stable democracy, contrary to what modernisation theory might lead us to expect.

Nepal

According to Panday (2012, pp. 82-83) Nepal is trapped in a "failed development paradigm," resulting from a "systemic" failure to recognise the value of the country's diversity combined with a lack of accountability, a poor political culture, and a "climate of impunity."

Scholars of Nepal argue that modernisation has not really taken off there. The first attempt to shift towards democracy (1950) was pre-modernisation, as David Gellner and Krishna Hachhethu comment (2010, p. 132). They note that Nepal at

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[90] ThD4, ThD8.
[91] The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) evaluates and ranks educational achievement of 15 year olds across a range of countries.

the time was "highly feudal…with a subsistence agricultural economy," with very low literacy (5%) and minimal infrastructure or industry. They suggest that these very "conditions of economic and social backwardness" facilitated King Mahendra's undermining of the democratic experiment. Mahendra himself (reigned: 1955-1972) was a modernising king. He introduced structural reforms, such as abolishing caste discrimination. His attempted land reforms were, however, undermined by landlords. An expansion of infrastructure, education and health development proceeded through his reign and that of Birendra (1972-2001). These in turn "produced a critical mass of educated middle-class and urbanised Nepalis", such that by the late 1980s literacy was about 39% and there had been considerable expansion of roads and communication links (Hachhethu & Gellner, 2010, p. 134). On the other hand, Mahendra did little to tackle basic structural inequalities and impediments to growth.

Shakya argues that even in the aftermath of the 1990 "euphoria round the restoration of democracy" the attitude of the private sector (who were protectionist and wary of competition and "preferred to hoard rather than compete") contributed to the failure of the democratic governments to enact economic reforms. After King Gyanendra's royal coup of 2005, things did not improve, as he too "failed miserably in managing the economy," while the politicians in the Constituent Assembly also failed to use "the post-war period to harness the economic potential of the country." Instead, "political elites continued working for their personal benefit" (Shakya, 2012, p. 115).

Other scholars note that the democratic resurgence of the 1990s did spur some economic reforms, leading to a brief period of rapid growth. The 7.6% growth rate in 1993-4 was unprecedented in Nepal (see Gautam, 2016, pp. 252-255). Despite this, Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Its GDP per capita was US$130 in 1980, $193 in 1990, $317 in 2005, and $729 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a). Like Tonga, Nepal is highly dependent on foreign aid (Shakya, 2012, p. 118) and remittances, although the latter have been a more recent phenomenon for Nepal. In 2002, remittances made up only 2% of GDP; by 2005 the figure was 14.9%, by 2007 16.7%, thereafter rising steadily to 31.3% in 2016. This has contributed to a reduction in poverty but has had negative impacts on social

cohesion.[92] Various dangers are also faced by young Nepalis doing manual labour in the Gulf, Malaysia and elsewhere (K. Dixit, 2016b).

Nepal's economic potential stems from hydropower and tourism, which, together with agriculture, are the main economic activities. As yet only about 2% of its hydropower potential has been exploited.[93] Tourism was badly affected by the 2015 earthquake; agriculture is mainly subsistence-oriented although there are some limited exports. The informal sector dominates, especially in agriculture. There is little entrepreneurship or innovation, and businesses concentrate on building and exploiting relationships with those in power, rather than innovating (Shakya, 2012, pp. 118-119, 124-126). As one interviewee put it, "everyone is after resource extraction and not creating value".[94] The country is also, to a certain extent, still recovering from the extortion, destruction and violence of the 10 years of Maoist insurgency.

Interviewees opined that the education system in Nepal was "terrible" and weak at all levels. Primary schooling was particularly abysmal but secondary not much better.[95] Nevertheless, the enormous growth in education from the 1950s to the 1990s clearly had an impact on the development of aspirations for democracy. As Whelpton (2005, p. 83) reports, the Ranas had opposed education as they feared it would lead to opposition to their rule. The first democratic experiment (1950s) was inspired by Nepali political activists who were temporarily in India for education, and were exposed to India's own democracy after its independence.

The growth of a small educated professional class from the 1980s onwards was one of the factors driving the 1990 people's movement, leading to the second democratic experiment. There were fewer than 2000 students in secondary or tertiary education in 1950, but over half a million by 1989-90. The literacy rate had increased from 5 % in 1953-4 to 40% by 1991. In addition, from the 1960s, many

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[92] Interviewees NJ1 and ND6.

[93] Interviewees (NB1, NJ1, ND1) put this down to distrust in India as an investor but also noted that Nepalese government practices discourage investment in general (see also Shakya, 2012, p. 119). One Norwegian firm contemplating investment in hydropower withdrew because of "bureaucratic hurdles" and the "fragile political situation" (Associated Press, 2016a).

[94] ND1.

[95] NA6, NB1.

aid donors were providing scholarships for study abroad (Whelpton, 2005, pp. 137, 134). The standard of education remained poor, especially in government schools. The middle class sent their children to private schools and the wealthy send them out of the country to study in India. This surge in education had little impact in the countryside, nor on disadvantaged castes and ethnic groups; issues which became targets of the Maoist insurgency in the 1990s.

This survey of modernisation in Nepal has confirmed that Nepal is the least developed of the four countries, not least because entrepreneurship and investment are discouraged. Education is the one area which can be pinpointed as having had an impact on democratisation in the country, with educated citizens having led the push for democracy on all three occasions.

4.2 Inequality, poverty, and class relationships

As discussed in chapter 2, some theorists see a link between democratisation and conflict between social classes. Some social classes are expected to advocate for change (to address their own particular concerns) while others oppose change, in line with their conservative interests. Poverty and inequality on the one hand, and traditional or acquired privilege on the other, spur these opposing positions. The influence of different actors in pursuing these divergent interests (and their interaction with the monarchs) is discussed in chapters 6 and 7; this section looks at how these underlying structural factors set the scene for such interaction.

Bhutan

In Bhutan, poverty is steadily decreasing. The Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2014) praises Bhutan's "remarkable…poverty reduction". The number of poor approximately halved between 2007 and 2012. Currently 12% of the population lives below the national poverty line, compared to 31.7% in 2003 (ADB, 2016a, 2016c). In terms of the World Bank's poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 per day (those living on US$1.90 or less per day), the figure was 8% in 2007 and 2.2% in 2012 (World Bank, 2018b). The two high-earning industries (tourism and hydropower), combined with government expenditure on socioeconomic development, have underpinned this poverty reduction.

Despite evidence of poverty reduction, interviewees considered that inequality was growing, as the result of the development of the private sector.[96] Inequality manifests itself in a continuing urban/rural poverty gap, with 98% of the poor in rural areas. Growth in inequality (except for a small percentage change from 2007 to 2012) is not, however, apparent in the World Bank's Gini coefficient[97] for Bhutan. This was 46.8 in 2003, 38.1 in 2007, and 38.8 in 2012 (World Bank, 2018b).

Reducing inequality has been a focus of successive kings. The fourth king had "from the age of eighteen" (Tashi & Maxwell, 2016, p. 126) included overcoming inequality as a specific goal of development. The third king's earlier reforms were directed partly at ensuring that no Bhutanese would be landless. The monarch has (and still exercises) the prerogative to make land grants (of state land) to the landless, bringing people to more fertile land from the more isolated areas and resettling villages.[98] On the other hand, the government's ceiling of 25 acres per household (imposed about thirty years ago) has constrained the more progressive farmers, and many are leaving farming (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 44).

There are other signs too of improving social wellbeing. The UNDP's Human Development Report (2016a) records that between 1990 and 2015, Bhutan's life expectancy at birth increased by 17.4 years (from 52.5 to 69.9), and expected years of schooling by 7.1 years. Bhutan's Human Development Index Value for 2015 was 0.607 (up from 0.569 in 2010) - in the medium human development category - and its position was 132 out of 188 countries and territories.

Looking at class-based arguments, Gallenkamp (2012, p. 14) regards the Barrington Moore school (Moore, 1966; Skocpol, 1973) and similar arguments (for example Rueschemeyer et al., 1992) as irrelevant to Bhutan. He sees such theories as relating to a bygone era when the key dynamic was the industrialisation of the bourgeoisie.[99] Others echo this view. Tashi Wangchuk (2004) argues that because Bhutan never had a hereditary ruling elite (apart from the creation of the monarchy in 1907), a "consequential aristocracy" did not form. Furthermore, "the

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[96] Interviewees BPS4, BCS3.
[97] 0 indicates perfect equality and 100 perfect inequality.
[98] Interviewee BAJ6.
[99] Moore himself (1966, p. xiii) did not extend his theory beyond the countries he studied and, in particular, asserted that it did not cover small countries.

vast majority of people privately owned their land, in contradistinction to a feudal system" (p 839). He draws the conclusion that, since village people mainly owned their own private land, and there was no feudal aristocracy, there was a history of self-reliance whereby the country's democratic transitions were "greatly fostered."[100] (George Bogle, too, visiting Bhutan in 1774, remarked on the egalitarian nature of the society at that time (Teltscher, 2006, p. 76)).

Karma Ura (1994, p. 25), on the other hand, indicates that there was indeed a (small) aristocracy in traditional Bhutan. Up to the mid twentieth century, a "medieval culture" prevailed – a "customary, self-subsistence economy" with very little trade (except for essentials such as salt). The main preoccupation (and the main area of state intervention) outside subsistence was to support the Buddhist monastic order and a militia to protect the country from outside incursions (mainly from Tibet). For these, the state extracted hefty in-kind taxation and contributions of labour for tasks such as bridge-building. Ura (p. 29) describes the top level of this medieval society as a "handful of aristocratic families" (with religious credentials too) who employed both serfs and servants. Below them were "eminent but tax-paying families" and then a "mass of tax-paying ordinary households". A small administrative coterie collected and redistributed taxes. The series of reforms initiated by the third king (see 3.1) led to a fairly rapid movement away from this system.

Hence, while in the middle of the century most Bhutanese were farmers, nowadays, as a result of education and development, there is a growing class of bureaucrats, professionals and businesspeople (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 49). One feature of this is the dominance of the public service by educated professionals, who studied abroad under the scholarship programmes encouraged by the third and fourth kings. Previously, such positions had been held by members of the royal family and their appointees. This new professional class became the main policy-makers of the country and were the pool from which ministers were chosen by the king, prior to the reforms.

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[100] Since Wangchuk was writing before the changes of 2008, he was referring to the transition process already underway (including the drafting of the constitution) and also the democratisation of local government elections from 2002.

The development of the small, professional civil service "class" did not lead to pressure for democratisation. On the contrary, this group were content with the system which gave them a pathway to seniority and influence with the monarch. To a certain extent, this accords with Ansell and Samuels' (2014) view that the professional middle class are unlikely to be the ones pushing for *inclusive* democracy, unless it suits their interests to align with a "working class." In the case of Bhutan, the civil servants were not seeking any political change at all (since they were comfortable where they were) and, in any event, there was no working class to align with (should they have so wished). The majority of the population (still mainly small farmers) were not seeking democracy either.

This situation supports Gallenkamp's (2012) argument that structuralist theories have little relevance for analysis of Bhutan's transition to democracy, given that there was little or no popular pressure for change.

Tonga

Up to date poverty and inequality figures are not readily available for Tonga. As the Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025 (TSDFII) (GOT, 2015, pp. 30-31) explains, poverty data are only collected every five to ten years. Furthermore, the framework's authors note that the information they convey (16.2% poverty in 2001 and 22.5% in 2009), which suggested poverty *increased* between 2001 and 2009, may be misleading. 2009 was right in the middle of the GFC and so may have figured as a temporary downward spike. Data on inequality are also limited, but the TSDFII sees "sufficient indications of significant income inequality" especially between the capital city and the outer islands (p. 31). The World Bank's Gini coefficient was 37.84 in 2001 and 37.5 in 2009. The Bank's assessment of the poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 per day (see Bhutan section, above) was 2.8% in 2001 and 1.1% in 2009. (World Bank, 2018c)**.**

On the UNDP's Human Development Index Tonga has consistently scored well (over a period of many years) in comparison with its Pacific Island neighbours. The country is in the high human development category. Its 2015 HDI value is 0.721, and its position 101 out of 188. Life expectancy at birth is 73 years (up by 3.4 years from 1990); and expected years of schooling increased by 0.6 years from 1990 (from 13.7 to 14.3) (UNDP, 2016b).

There has been little scholarly consideration of class issues in Tonga's democratisation, but a debate took place some years ago as to whether a "middle class" was developing (Benguigui, 1989, 2011; James, 2003). While Georges Benguigui and Kerry James both perceived a growing assertiveness amongst certain professional groups, James did not see a potentially politically activist "middle class" in the Western sociological sense, whereas Benguigui detected definite manifestations of classical class divisions.

Tonga is the only one of the four countries which retains constitutional privileges for a traditional elite (in addition to the monarchy itself) – the former chiefs chosen by Tupou I to be estate-holders, called nobles. The political interests of the nobles in the transition process, and their interaction with the monarchy, are discussed in chapter 6 (6.2). This section looks at their economic and traditional roles, including in relation to land ownership.

The land system was introduced by Tupou I to prevent landlessness. Under his reforms, land ownership would be divided between the monarch, the estate-holders (nobles) and the government. In addition, all males over 16 would be provided (from land belonging to the nobles or government) with both a town plot and a "tax allotment" (farm plot) for a nominal lease. These would then be hereditary (passing down to the oldest son). No land would be sold (although long-term leasing is possible) (Latukefu, 1975b, pp. 57-58). This system, revolutionary in its day, has led to problems for investors and others, since they are unable to provide collateral for personal and business loans (IMF, 2016, p. 11). In some cases, nobles have been reluctant to assign tax allotments, despite their legal obligation to do so (Powles, 2013, pp. 66-67). Nobles clearly have a financial interest in leasing out land at market rates to private interests (and to the government) rather than ceding it for allotments. The system is also inequitable as it excludes women from land ownership. Reforming it is something that successive governments have shied away from, despite recommendations from two Royal Commissions, most recently in 2012.[101] Nobles hold tight to their land privileges and in 2010 attempted (unsuccessfully) to pre-empt the Royal Land Commission

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[101] See Powles (2013, pp 64-68) for more detail.

report (2012) and gain even greater control over land administration (Brown Pulu, 2014, pp. 119-122; Powles, 2013, p. 66).

In addition to their political and economic privileges, Tonga's nobles have traditional roles, described by (current and former) Speaker of the House, Lord Fakafanua, as:

> A Nobles' Representative always serves the holistic interest of the nation. He officially serves both the interest of his constituents as active traditional leaders and the interest of people living on his estates. Tongan 'Nobles' are not the equivalent of British 'Nobles', beyond the land, they also maintain a close relationship with their 'kainga'. The role of a Tongan titleholder is to lead as head of a very large and extended family or 'kainga'. As the chief of villages and head of families, it is also the interest of the Nobles' Representative to serve and represent the interest of his 'kainga' inside parliament.[102]

The nobles' privileges can be categorised as those they receive by law and those they either receive or claim for customary reasons, as summarised in the following table:

Table 2: Nobles' privileges

Law	Custom
Special reserved seats in parliament (9 out of 26) giving them disproportionate influence over political decisions.	"*Fatongia*" – a once obligatory provision of food, goods, and services by commoners on their estate, still practiced today (even though supposedly outlawed by Tupou I in the 1862 Edict of Emancipation).[103]
Hereditary land holdings from which they are required to provide commoners with "allotments".	

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[102] Personal communication, Lord Fakafanua, 17 April 2017.
[103] Sometimes nobles will impose these obligations on villagers instead of charging them the very small rent the law requires for their allotments (Maude & Sevele, 1987, p. 125).

Law	Custom
(In addition, substantial leases for lands they rent out to private businesses, the government, or individuals).	
Annual allowance, simply for being a noble.	Respect and deference on account of their rank.

As we shall see in chapter 6 (6.2), the holders of the 33 noble titles have political influence. Their concerns were taken into account in the reform process, even though their proportionate strength in parliament was reduced. They retain their economic privileges and would very probably oppose implementation of the (reformist) recommendations of the Royal Land Commission report (which have not come before parliament).

Kersti Harder Kennedy (2012, p. 330) contends that there will be no solution to the nobles' (dominant) role in politics and hence, in her view, to the prospect of renewed violent protest, until there is a solution to land issues, since the lack of a private ownership system means commoners remain forever uncertain about their land, and resentful of the nobles' privileges.

Thailand

Kurlantzick (2013, p. 176) argues that the main failing of Thailand's leaders during the country's rapid economic growth (from the 1970s up to mid-1990s) was to not tackle inequality and poverty in the country. And yet poverty (measured using the national poverty rate) fell from 67% in 1986 to 10% in 2014 (IMF, 2017). The World Bank's assessment based on the international poverty rate of US $1.90 per day shows poverty levels as extremely low (0.1% in 2012) (World Bank, 2017d). Thailand's per capita GDP trebled from 2005 to 2016: it stood at US $682 in 1980, $1893 in 2005 and $5910 in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a). The UNDP's Human Development Report (2016d) places Thailand in the high human development category, with a position at 87 out of 188 countries and a 2015 HDI value of 0.740. From 1990 to 2015, life expectancy increased by 4.3 years from 70.3 to 74.6; and

expected years of schooling by 5.2 from 8.4 to 13.6. These indicators all suggest striking increases in economic prosperity and improvement in social wellbeing.

Nevertheless, there is persistent structural inequality, favouring the already privileged elite networks (Pasuk, 2016; Pasuk and Baker, 2015). Bangkok is in a privileged position relative to the rest of the country. The Bangkok region receives three-quarters of all public expenditure despite having only 17% of the population (The Economist, 2016). In addition, the royal family controls vast wealth, especially through the Crown Property Bureau (Porphant, 2015), with assets potentially worth around US $53 billion (Joehnk, 2015).

This dynamic has not prevented elite networks from admitting new players to Thailand's "flexible oligarchy" when it suits them (Pasuk and Baker, 2015, pp. 19-22). The composition of the "wealth elite" has changed dramatically in the past century. (Pasuk, 2016, p. 413). At first, it comprised the (rural) landed aristocracy; after WWII corporate wealth (in the hands of Sino-Thai banks and conglomerates) dominated and from the 1980s onwards new conglomerates emerged, plus entrepreneurs and investors.

Sidel (2008) recounts the growth of the Sino-Thai capitalist class (as well as their influence on politics) from the 1980s onwards, likening them to Barrington Moore's (1966) influential bourgeoisie. Sidel (somewhat optimistically) regards Thailand as being in an ongoing process of democratisation, albeit a "fitful" one (p. 130), and even mistakenly saw the country as having achieved "consolidation" in 1997. He sees the Sino-Thai capitalists as able to control politicians (including through funding them or withdrawing such support), and hence to promote democracy. He considers that by the 1980s businesspeople had replaced the military as the dominant force in Thai politics. Thaksin's emergence was seen as a manifestation of this trend, which Sidel thought the 2006 military coup might interrupt only temporarily. A more recent study (Veerayooth, 2018) sees the Sino-Thai businesspeople – or at least some of them - as part of the establishment upholding the current military rule.

Earlier, Christine Gray (1986) argued that the monarch had deliberately given patronage to the Sino-Thai capitalist class, in order to secure their donations to his various charities, and hence enhance "merit" for the monarchy.[104]

Sidel's analysis sees Moore's (1966) work as applicable to the rise in the political strength of the Sino-Thai business class in Thailand from the 1980s. In addition to his theory that the presence of a strong bourgeoisie was essential for democracy to develop, Moore also depicted two alternative paths to modernisation which did not involve a strong bourgeoisie and did not lead to democracy, but rather to fascist or communist dictatorship (see 2.2). The second pathway, to fascism, involved a weak bourgeoisie and a land-owner class who sought autocratic leaders to preserve their interests, often involving a strong role for the military. The autocratic governments then led modernisation from above. This scenario bears some resemblance to the situation in Thailand in the Sarit era (1957-63), as described in chapter 3 (3.1). Sarit's government preceded the rise of the capitalist bourgeoisie (described by Sidel) and was an example of a military-run dictatorship introducing considerable infrastructure (and other) development. Moore's fascist scenario does not fit so well with the more recent situation in Thailand, where a strong bourgeoisie is already in place and has oscillated in its support for democratic or military governments, depending on where its perceived interests lie.

Kurlantzick (2013, p. 163) reports that in the earlier period (of absolute monarchy) the country was run on a strict caste-like system (*sakdina)*. Kurlantzick argues that the Buddhist notion of karma meant people were thought to be in the positions they deserved (because of previous lives) and the poor had an obligation to accept their fate and obey. He notes that many members of Thai elites (royalty, monkhood, military) encouraged this hierarchical "deference" (and continue to expect it). Kurlantzick sees this as the reason that budget surpluses during Thailand's economic boom were not used to address social inequalities, but rather to reinforce the hierarchical power structure. Ferrara (2015, p. 22) observes that the privileged elites believe the working class and provincial peoples should be disenfranchised,

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[104] Gray's thesis explains how the monarchy gained religious "merit" by attracting funds from businesses that could be channelled into Buddhist temples and ceremonies and into charities. Wealth is an indicator of religious and moral superiority in this scenario.

or at least that their vote should count less than that of Bangkokians, while the urban middle class have oscillated between supporting this objective and supporting democracy.

One group from whom the elites expected such deference was the peasantry. And yet, as Andrew Walker (2012) reports, Thailand's peasants have in recent times become assertive and politically aware, and tend to operate as small businesses. They are now more concerned about their relative inequality than the poverty and exploitation which plagued them in the 1950s and earlier (when their main concern was subsistence). Hewison (2014), drawing attention to Thailand's persistent economic inequality, argues that it has only recently (since the 2006 coup) become a political issue, as self-interested elites sought to repress the political representation of newly politicised groups (including the rural community). As Baker and Pasuk (2014, p. 221) comment of the new assertiveness of the Thaksin-supporting rural sector: "This combination of rising incomes, rising aspirations, growing resentment of inequalities, and rising expectations of government would transform Thai politics in the early 21st century". The rivalry between groups with vastly different visions of Thailand's political future, and the influence of Thaksin, are discussed in chapter 6 (6.3).

Pasuk (2016) provides some insights on the nature of inequality in Thailand and its relationship to Thailand's regression from democracy, in the light of Acemoglu and associates' work (for example, Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006). In particular, she finds Thailand a good fit with their argument that high inequality impedes the emergence and the consolidation of democracy, although this is weighed against the costs of resisting the masses' pressure (Pasuk, 2016, pp. 405-406).

Pasuk finds that Thailand became much less equal from the 1960s to 1990s (its period of high growth) for four reasons – first, government repressed labour and favoured capital; second, growth was centred on Bangkok; third, globalisation meant some salaries and profits moved to global levels and this led to a boom in urban property values; and fourth, from the mid-1970s falls in world agricultural prices adversely affected rural incomes. From the 1990s onwards, things changed. Thailand's Gini coefficient has been improving (showing a reduction in inequality) although this varies from sector to sector (p. 408). The World Bank's Gini

coefficient figures for Thailand are 45.3 in 1990, 41.9 in 2002, 41.8 in 2006 and 37.8 in 2013 (World Bank, 2017d).

In conclusion, Pasuk comments that in a climate where inequality is declining but is still high (especially in some areas), Thailand's wealthy are anti-democracy, partly out of fear of increased taxation to finance redistribution. She sees this as aligning well with Acemoglu and Robinson's (2006) theory.

The 1997 financial crisis led Thailand to seek loans from the IMF and elsewhere and resulted in the initial implementation of an austerity package. The package did not deter foreign investors and lenders from withdrawing their capital. The value of the baht against the US dollar reduced to less than half and then recovered to two thirds. Some banks and businesses collapsed altogether. New businesspeople involved in services emerged, including Thaksin. The IMF abandoned its austerity programme in mid-1998 and the then government began a stimulus programme, which was taken up and enlarged under Thaksin's government from 2001 (Baker & Pasuk, 2014, pp. 258-259). Thaksin had campaigned both on pro-growth economic policies and on improved welfare for the poor (especially the rural poor, whom he sought to empower to develop small businesses). Initially he had strong support from both business and the rural poor. Later, business support fell off, partly because of Thaksin's apparent favouring of his family enterprises and partly because the traditional conglomerates in particular, who benefitted from the old system, opposed Thaksin's (and later Yingluck's) redistributive policies. Many such conglomerates were allegedly financially supporting the Yellow Shirt PDRC who protested against Yingluck's government (Veerayooth, 2018, pp. 15, 17). The Thaksin phenomenon and the role of the Yellow and Red Shirts are examined in chapter 6 (6.3).

In the light of Boix's argument that the wealthy will be more strongly opposed to democracy in a climate of high inequality and low capital mobility, it is worth considering whether those businesspeople who chose to support the 2006 and 2014 coups were concerned about constraints on capital flight. A report from the ADB Institute (Sangsubhan, 2008) looks at policies on capital flows in Thailand from 1997 up to 2007. Although its main focus is on capital *inflows*, the report also touches on outflows. It notes the rapid capital flight by foreign investors and

depreciation of the baht following the 1997 crisis. The report observes (p.16) that "most capital controls employed by Thailand are imposed on non-residents with the intention of reducing speculative attacks." As far as Thai residents are concerned, measures controlling Thais' ability to invest and make purchases abroad had been "gradually lifted since the second half of 2003" (p.15). This suggests that the Thaksinites' policies on capital mobility were not the driving force for business opposition to his government, although the Bank of Thailand under the military regime has continued to relax the rules on capital outflows, allowing even greater sums to be invested abroad, as news reports indicate (see for example Somruedi, 2018).

A clear picture emerges from this survey of Thailand's socio-economic structures, of a system that favours the entrenched elites (notwithstanding the fact that new members have managed to join such elites). This, combined with a growing awareness in the rural sector of their unequal position, has contributed to the current division between groups seeking a return to representative democracy and those supporting on-going military control (or at least a role in oversight) of the polity. Combined with political factors (discussed in later chapters) and battles for influence between different key players (including the monarchy), these divergent visions of the country's future make a strong contribution to Thailand's current malaise.

Nepal

Poverty, inequality and class relationships in Nepal are characterised by three main features: the failure of the economy to take off (as described above); discrimination against caste and ethnic groups; and land issues.

Despite its relative poverty, Nepal did experience "significant development gains" from 1951 to 2001 and was one of the ten most improved countries in terms of its position in the Human Development Index (although it is still in the bottom 20%) (von Einsiedel et al., 2012, pp. 7-9). Nevertheless, von Einsiedel et al. report that although poverty has been decreasing over the past fifty years, the benefits of development have accrued mainly to urban areas. Rural poverty in 1995-6 (at 43.27%) was almost double the level of urban poverty, while by 2004 the ratio had increased to 3.6 to 1. Devendra Panday (2012, p. 88) observes that, surprisingly,

poverty *declined* from 1996-2004, despite this being the period of the Maoist conflict, but this was mainly due to remittances. The UNDP's Human Development Report (2016c) puts Nepal in the medium human development category, with a 2015 HDI value of 0.558 and a position of 144 out of 188 countries. From 1990 to 2015, life expectancy at birth increased by 15.7 years (from 54.3 to 70), and expected years of schooling by 4.7 years from 7.5 to 12.2.

World Bank figures put poverty levels (using the international poverty line of US $1.90 per day) at 46.1% in 2003 and 15% in 2010, with the Gini coefficient varying from 35.2 in 1995, to 43.2 in 2003 and 32.8 in 2010 (World Bank, 2017c). Nepal is described by von Einsiedel et al. (2012, pp. 2-10, 16) as being one of the worst in the world for "horizontal inequality" (inequality between groups, rather than individuals). This includes inequality between regions and between castes.

Poverty eradication became a goal in the late 1980s under King Birendra, with World Bank assistance, but there was little success. On the contrary, the development benefitted local elites the most, despite the considerable foreign aid received (Whelpton, 2005, pp. 127-129).

Whelpton (2005, p.130) argues that one reason for continuing poverty was that the agricultural sector had little incentive to produce more, including because of the land tenure system.

Shakya (2012, pp. 116-118) describes how, in a practice started by the Shah dynasty, all the successive Nepali elites have exploited the land system for "political purposes." The initial system was a combination of *jagir* - giving land to state servants in lieu of salary – and *birta* – renting or giving land to "those favoured by the ruling elite." These lands were not handed down or inherited, and so did not establish a hereditary land-owning class. Peasants had to get access to land from landlords in return for payments (sometimes in kind). Landlords also demanded taxes (Joshi & Mason, 2007). The elites used their landholdings for political power and influence rather than for building productivity or exports. According to Shakya (p. 123), the Maoists argued that the "feudal lords were parasitic" - even though Nepal had many resources, these were simply exploited parasitically. Whelpton (2005, p. 141) comments that in the 1950s and 1960s, many peasants, particularly

in the Tarai (the plains area bordering India), were paying up to 80% of their earnings in rent.

King Mahendra attempted to introduce land reforms in 1964 (aimed at enabling peasants to claim land) but for various reasons this resulted in very little redistribution and in some cases placed more power and land in the hands of the landlords (Joshi & Mason, 2007, pp. 404-405; Whelpton, 2005, pp. 141-142).[105]

Joshi and Mason (2007) argue that these land issues inclined (some) peasants towards supporting the Maoist insurgency after the restoration of democracy in the 1990s. They suggest peasants were not able to benefit from the democratic bargain: they were obliged to vote for their landlords' parties in elections in 1992 and 1994 because of "clientelist dependency" (p.395), whereas the insurgency removed the landlords from the picture. A similar point is made by Smutri Pattanaik (2002) and by von Einsiedel et al. (2012, pp. 14-16, 48), who point to the failure of the democratic regime to tackle exclusion and poverty. The Maoists, on the contrary, took direct action to address these problems - burning peasants' debt notices from banks, taking over land from landlords, attacking police stations and, eventually, stealing weapons from police and army (Vanaik, 2008, p. 3). Through these actions, as well as more violent acts and extortion, they secured the deferential allegiance peasants had previously given their landlords (Whelpton, 2005, p. 206). Interviewees commented that the Maoists used the peasants as "shields" against the army and the police. Being threatened by both the army and the Maoists, the peasants had to choose one side or the other, and tended to choose the Maoists, who actually took up residence in the villages, and hence could threaten them day and night.[106]

The Maoists also portrayed themselves as the champions of ethnic minorities and those castes subject to discrimination. As noted above, Nepal has a large number of different ethnic and caste groups. Even though caste-based discrimination officially ended in 1963, in fact it has persisted, as can be seen by the share of professional positions held by people of high caste (D. Thapa, 2012, p. 44). Despite

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[105] Peasants are still attempting to gain land rights, according to *Reuters* (Chandran, 2016).
[106] Interviewee NA7. See also M. Thapa (2013a, 2013b)

the aspirational 2015 constitution which proclaims equality for all, hierarchical distinctions remain strong in Nepal.

Lawoti (2014, p. 132) - writing before the adoption of the 2015 constitution - sees the exclusion of so many groups as a more severe problem even than poverty in Nepal. While reforms (especially the 2007 interim constitution) had given more voice to the various ethnic/indigenous groups as well as the Madhesi people in the Terai, power remained in the hands of the "hill Hindus" who are "upper caste" and dominant in politics. This includes the Maoist politicians who, according to Lawoti, behaved cynically by espousing the cause of "identity-based federalism" when they wanted to "mobilize the masses during the armed rebellion" but reverted to their caste interests (as the Maoist leaders too are high caste hill Hindu), "[o]nce democracy made such an arrangement a real possibility".

At first glance, Nepal's story might seem to be one of a peasant uprising against rapacious landlords in order to fight for democracy. In some ways, therefore, the Maoists were seeking to trigger the kind of "peasant revolution" envisaged by Barrington Moore (as his third possible pathway towards modernisation in the modern world) – see chapter 2 (2.2). For Moore, in a situation where landlords remained dependent on rents rather than on production (as was the case in Nepal), and where the bourgeoisie was insignificant, a peasant revolution leading to a communist dictatorship was a possibility (p. 477). The Maoists may have seen themselves in the role of the "discontented intellectuals" that Moore sees as leading the peasants in their revolution (p. 480). In reality, the situation is far more complicated. As outlined above, the Maoist insurgency began by supporting the peasants against landlords, but proceeded to kidnappings, extortion and violence against citizens (as well as against the police and later the army). The Maoists' adoption of the cause of the ethnic minorities, according to Lawoti, turned out to be a cynical ploy to gain their support. The Maoists were seeking state control, not democracy, and were even prepared to do a deal with the autocratic king, Gyanendra (see 6.4). The full story of Nepal's troubled transition to democracy involves a combination of factors, as discussed in subsequent chapters.

4.3 Country Size

This thesis has not involved empirical study of the question of the influence of country size on democratisation. This section considers, in the light of the theorists cited in 2.2, whether small size might have favoured democratisation in the two smaller monarchies in this study (Bhutan and Tonga).

The theories cited suggested that small size might make democratisation easier, as such societies would have closer connections and shared values. Corbett et al. (2016) consider that small size brings the monarch closer to the people. While this argument may have some relevance to the case studies presented by Corbett et al. (Bhutan, Tonga and Liechtenstein) and hence is of interest to this thesis, its extrapolation to small state monarchies overall is questionable, since many of the surviving small state monarchies do not have a resident monarch, but rather a distant one (Queen Elizabeth II, who is the monarch for at least five Caribbean small states and at least two in the Pacific).

Another point worth considering is whether the monarch in a small country might have fewer constraints (in the form of powerful elites) and hence a freer hand to either lead or impede democratic change.

In the case of Bhutan, Turner et al. (2011, pp. 198-199) question the relevance of size in its democratisation, stating: "It is the overall context that is important in explaining democratization and not simply whether Bhutan is small". Undoubtedly, once the monarchs had decided to democratise, they were able to act despite the public's misgivings (as we shall see in Chapters 5, 6 and 8) and did not have to contend with powerful elite groups, having already taken steps, over the years, to neutralise the political influence of the monkhood, for example (see 3.1).

As regards Tonga, the undoubted cohesion of the society (compared to all the other countries under consideration here) could equally be seen as a force for conservatism as a force for change. In Tonga, one of the worst fates that can befall an individual is to be ostracised, and enormous efforts are made to avert this fate. As section 3.1 and Chapter 5 discuss, Tupou IV of Tonga was able to resist calls for change, despite a growing popular movement for democratisation. It was not until the monarchy itself embraced the need for change that this was able to

proceed. Leadership from the top was needed for democracy to be introduced in Tonga. This thesis (Chapter 5) argues that this could also have been the case in Thailand under Bhuminbol, if Bhumibol had chosen to support the case for democracy. The country may have experienced a smoother trajectory with a different approach from the monarch. These questions of the monarch's role in relation to democratic transition are examined further in Chapter 5.

4.4 Comparative discussion

This section will compare the findings for each country in the light of the arguments put forward by theorists, in order to assess the impact of structural factors on the background against which democratisation progressed (or regressed) in each country.

Modernisation, economic development and education

In terms of modernisation and economic development, the findings presented here result in varied conclusions about the impact of such development on the process of democratisation.

As a starting point, it is useful to compare the growth in per capita GDP in each country, and the UNDP human development indicators. Other data (such as Gini coefficient) are not so readily comparable, partly because in some cases they are not available for the same years for the different countries.

Table 3: Comparison of GDP per capita (current US$)

	1980	1990	2005	2016
Bhutan	331	558	1247	2773
Tonga	572	1195	2594	3748
Thailand	682	1508	2893	5910
Nepal	130	193	317	729

Source: World Bank (2018a). The World Bank explains that "GDP per capita is gross domestic product divided by midyear population...Data are in current U.S. dollars."

Table 4: Human Development Report

	Value 2015	Position out of 188 2015	Life expectancy		Expected years schooling	
			1990	2015	1990	2015
Bhutan	0.607	132	52.5	69.9	5.4	12.5
Tonga	0.721	101	69.6	73.0	13.7	14.3
Thailand	0.740	87	70.3	74.6	8.4	13.6
Nepal	0.558	144	54.3	70.0	7.5	12.2

Source: UNDP (2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d)

The development levels and trajectory of the four countries are not analogous, although they do reflect some similarities. Each country had been through an initial monarch-led modernisation, but at different times and to vastly differing extents. The earliest was Chulalongkorn's modernisation in Thailand in the nineteenth century. In Bhutan, Tonga, and Nepal, kings Jigme Dorji, Tupou IV, and Mahendra initiated a development spurt (from a very low base).

While all four are developing countries, their level of development differs significantly, as can be seen from their GDP per capita figures and the UNDP Human Development Index. Thailand is the most developed, with a globalised market economy and a GDP per capita of $5910 (close to the level at which no democracy has collapsed – see Przeworski (2004, p. 9)).[107] While in some development indicators Tonga approaches Thailand, its profile is in many ways similar to that of the much poorer Nepal. Both are heavily dependent on aid and remittances and have developed no real engine of growth. Bhutan has also been an aid recipient, and is currently less developed than Tonga but more so than Nepal, with a positive outlook. Its successful development of its hydro-electricity gives it an edge over Nepal - albeit with some challenges.

Bhutan, Tonga, and Nepal have not been through a classic "industrialisation" phase (on the European model) and none fits well with the class-based models set

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[107] Przeworski's figure is of course an empirical finding, not a theoretical one, and hence is revisable on the basis of new evidence. Thailand's proximity to this level accordingly may not be of critical significance compared to the combination of other factors affecting its democratisation.

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out by Moore (1966), Rueschemeyer et al (1992) and others. The only country which has been through a process of industrialisation is Thailand. Through its pattern of oscillation between democracy and dictatorship, the anti-democratic nature of its latest constitution, and doubts as to when even that limited constitution will be enacted, Thailand has repeatedly confounded any expectation that its development status would lead it into a democratic future. Veerayooth's (2018) argument that Thailand's economic growth is impeded by its political oscillation is broadly supported by the findings in this chapter.

For the other countries, it is too early to assess whether their economies are developing at a pace, and have prospects to continue to do so, to activate the positive cycle whereby a growing economy sustains a fledgling democracy and a fledgling democracy sustains a growing economy. For Bhutan and Tonga, a democratic system has only been in place since 2008 and 2010, respectively. Nepal's most recent period of parliamentary democracy began in 2008, but its fully fledged new system (including the federal arrangements) as set out in the 2015 constitution has only emerged following the 2017 elections. This makes it difficult to assess whether the pattern (as suspected by Lipset (1959) and supported by Przeworski and colleagues (1997, 2000, 2004) and Teorell (2010, 2013)) of economic development favouring the retention of democracy will prove relevant.[108] To date, this looks like a potential pathway for Bhutan. Similarly, Acemoglu et al.'s (2015) assertion that democracy itself favours economic development cannot be confirmed based on the short periods of democracy experienced by these countries.

Lipset (1959, pp. 71, 75, 78) included education as one of the factors in modernisation that, in combination with economic development, helped establish an environment favourable to democracy. Teorell (2010, 2013) could not establish education as a separate causal factor from the data, whereas Przeworski et al. (2000) found level of education to have a correlation with a democracy's survival, but could not isolate it as a cause. Despite this uncertainty, the findings in this chapter suggest a role for education in driving democratisation. In Thailand and Nepal, the initial acts of a small educated minority (albeit educated abroad) were

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[108] These issues could usefully be included in a future study of prospects for consolidation of democracy in Tonga and Bhutan.

determinant in the original push for political change, while later growth in education fostered either a broader call for democracy (as in Nepal's people's movements) or rival protest movements for or against democracy in Thailand (as is examined in chapter 6 – 6.3 and 6.4). Chapter 6 (6.2) also discusses the growth of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga, which is widely attributed to the surge in education in that country under Tupou IV's reign. Bhutan is the one country where education (which took off only fairly recently) does not appear to have engendered any agitation for democracy but its rapid recent growth may make a positive input to sustaining democracy, as envisaged by Lipset (1959). A significant factor, discussed in chapter 5, is the impact that the monarchs' own education had on their openness to democratisation.

Education is accordingly the modernisation factor which seems most likely to build a familiarity with and a leaning towards democracy amongst a country's population, although where the education system itself supports deference to autocratic authority (as in Thailand), this may be less the case. A correlation between economic development and democratisation is more nuanced in these countries and it cannot simply be assumed that the more developed the country, the more open its people and authorities will be towards democratisation. Other factors come into play, including those discussed in the following section.

Inequality, poverty, and class relationships

While all four countries have been steadily reducing their levels of poverty, they remain at very different points, as the World Bank's poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 per day (those living on US$1.90 or less per day) indicates. As noted above, the latest figure for Bhutan (2012) puts this at 2.2%, for Tonga (2009) it was 1.1%, for Thailand (2012) 0.1% (practically zero) and for Nepal (2010) 15% - showing poverty to be a far greater problem for Nepal than for any of the others, which is also indicated by its far lower GDP per capita.

But as the discussion of the individual countries indicates, a greater concern for the poorer communities is inequality. This stems, as we have seen, from stark urban/rural differences, from a concentration of wealth and services in the capital city (in all countries), from the isolation of out-lying regions (especially in Bhutan and Nepal) and from structural inequality and traditional discrimination against

certain castes, regions or classes (especially in Thailand and Nepal, but also in Tonga in the case of the constitutional privileges for the nobles). Being at the mercy of predacious landlords has been (and continues to be) a particularly serious problem in Nepal. The World Bank's Gini coefficients provide some indication of the relative inequality in the different countries (and suggest that the four are currently fairly comparable in this area), but do not go into the differing types of inequality that country specialist scholars have identified in the cases of Thailand and Nepal (Pasuk, 2016; Pasuk and Baker, 2015; von Einsiedel et al., 2012).

The impacts on democratisation of poverty and inequality are seen in differing ways by different theorists (see chapter 2). In the case of Bhutan, it is difficult to align developments in that country with any of the structural theories. This is because the theories are about what drives or impedes democracy, but do not take into account a situation like Bhutan's, where there is no pro-democracy movement at all. This thesis therefore supports the comments of Gallenkamp (2012) in relation to the (lack of) relevance of many scholars' arguments to the Bhutan case.

This is not to downplay Turner's insight (2014, pp. 12-13) that Bhutan's social and economic development, being led by the monarchs, enhanced the legitimacy of the monarch's choice of political system (democracy), and therefore made it acceptable to the people, even though they had not sought it.

For the other countries, elements of some theories are worth scrutinising, although none is an exact fit. Boix's distinction between low economic inequality (if combined with high capital mobility) as favouring transition to democracy and high inequality (with low capital mobility) as making a country prone to political violence (developing out of popular mobilisation) bears some resemblance to the situation in Nepal during the Maoist insurgency. On the other hand, this interpretation would depend on seeing the violent Maoist conflict as a manifestation of pro-democracy "popular mobilisation", whereas this thesis argues that the Maoist insurgency was anti-democracy and that it was the two (peaceful) people's movements that pushed for democracy in Nepal (see 6.4). The first (1990) people's mobilisation was led not by the Maoists but by the urban professional middle classes, while the second (in 2006) was a combination of all the forces (by then) calling for an end to

autocratic monarchy, including rural as well as urban protesters, and by this point supported by the Maoists as well (this too is discussed in 6.4).

The second (2006) public mobilisation in Nepal comes closer to the situation described by Ansell and Samuels where the rising middle classes (in an industrialising society) seek political representation to protect their rights from state predation and unite with the working class (or, in Nepal's case, the peasants) to push for democracy. It is doubtful, though, whether Nepal is in fact "industrialising". Furthermore, in accordance with Ansell and Samuels' theory, Nepal's high land inequality would have meant a pro-democracy mobilisation would be unlikely to be successful. As we shall see in later chapters, there were many other factors at work which led to the eventual uniting of varied sectors of Nepal's politics and society in the 2006 push for democracy. It has not simply been a class struggle.

In Thailand, poverty has decreased markedly but inequality is an ongoing concern of the increasingly politically assertive rural farmers. Both the wealthy and many educated middle class representatives have sought to impede the full participation of their rural compatriots in governing Thailand, to the extent of supporting military coups and the suppression of democracy. Pasuk's (2016) identification of these anti-democratic elites with Acemoglu and Robinson's (2006) assertion that the wealthy (especially in a climate of inequality) fear their fellow citizens' desire for greater equality and political representation rings true. It does not however cover the complexity of factors at work (not least the military/monarchy relationship) in impeding the return of democracy to Thailand.

Tonga's nobles share some features of the "wealthy" as envisaged by Acemoglu and Robinson since they, too, feared ceding their (economic, traditional and political) privileges if a more democratic system was introduced. But such an assertion is a simplification of Tonga's democratisation process, since it does not take account of the relationship between the monarchy and the nobles, and the role played by the monarch in persuading the nobles to accept the reforms (as is examined in 6.2). In addition, arguments relating solely to the distribution of the spoils are of limited relevance when examining a small, non-industrial, resource-poor, aid-dependent society on the MIRAB model.

In none of these countries has there been classic working class agitation as described by Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) in their study of democratisation in Europe. In Nepal and Thailand the main concerns about inequality have come from the rural population and those living in under-privileged regions outside the capital plus, in the case of Nepal, from castes subject to discrimination. In Thailand, membership of privileged classes over the past century has been fluid. We have seen how a new elite of Sino-Thai capitalists was formed and took its place amongst the wealthy. The middle classes have oscillated between supporting and opposing democracy. Educated commoners and their counterparts in the military had been among those who carried out the 1932 revolution but now such groups are mainly in the royalist camp, as Ferrara observes (2015, pp. xiii-xiv). The so-called peasants in the north have developed into small business farmers with political awareness; they are no longer the passive exploited under-dogs of the past. King Bhumibol attempted to counter the politicisation of the peasantry with his "sufficiency economy." But the newly assertive farmers were ripe for a politician who would represent their interests. Meanwhile, the country is still an uneven playing field where networks and patronage shape the political economy (Pasuk and Baker, 2015).

Tonga has not experienced a "class struggle" in the sense it is generally understood, as the debate between James (2003) and Benguigui (1989, 2011) illustrates. Rather, it has seen the emergence of a small class of educated professionals, mainly employed in the public sector, who transcend the traditional hierarchical structure and have sought to be treated as of equal worth to the nobles.

This comparative study of the impact of structural factors in impeding or driving democratisation has shown that some elements from structuralists' theories can help understand developments in the four countries, although in general the findings of the country specialists provide greater insights into the complexities of a particular polity. Through examining both areas of scholarship, this chapter has identified two main structural factors at play in the democratisation (or regression) of Tonga, Thailand, and Nepal (with lesser significance in the special case of Bhutan). They are the impact of education, in fostering the development of an educated professional class, and the impact of growing awareness of inequality, even in an environment where poverty is declining. These factors contribute both

to a desire for democracy and a fear of democracy, depending on the various actors involved, including, for these countries, the monarchy.

The limitation of the structural theories for this study is that they do not take account of the role of the monarch, encouraging, leading, accepting or resisting democratisation and using the monarchy's legitimacy to influence key players to whatever position the monarch favours. As Przeworski (1997, p. 158) comments, democracy "is or is not established by political actors pursuing their goals", and in these countries the monarch is a key political actor. To consider the significance of the monarch's role and influence, and the monarchy's interaction with other players, we must turn to the next chapters.

Chapter 5. Monarchy and Democracy

The previous chapters investigated historical, international and structural factors setting the background against which various actors influenced progress towards or away from democracy. This chapter looks at the leadership role of individual monarchs.

In emphasising key actors' roles in democratisation, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) brought the issue of leadership to the fore. They wrote that the "talents of specific individuals" can be determinant of outcomes (1986, p. 5). Referring specifically to the role of a monarch (Juan Carlos of Spain) they stress his "essential" role in "providing a central focus which consistently supported the transition and was accepted by almost all as being above party, faction, and particular interests" (p.22).

As Abraham F Lowenthal (1986) observes, in his foreword to O'Donnell and Schmitter's *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions from Uncertain Democracies* (1986): "They [O'Donnell and Schmitter] illustrate the vital significance of political leadership and judgment, of the role of single individuals in complex historical processes."

Reviewing the same book, Nancy Bermeo (1990, p. 361) comments that O'Donnell and Schmitter explicitly emphasise the behaviour of "individual decision-makers" as significant factors in a transition, to the extent that "Individual heroics" can be the key "catalyst" for democratisation. Given this, Bermeo suggests, it is worthwhile scrutinising closely such individuals' actions (p. 362).

Giuseppe Di Palma, too, stresses the importance of individual actions. In particular, he argues, if structural conditions might make a transition more problematic, then "the importance of human action…should not be underestimated." Likewise, Ünaldi (2012, p. 8), referring specifically to monarchs, argues that as lead actors they play a crucial role in democratisation, especially if "they hold huge reserve powers, as kings in transforming societies do" (see 9.2 for a discussion on monarchs' reserve powers).

This emphasis on leadership has long been a key theme in public policy-oriented discourse, as exemplified by James MacGregor Burns' influential book *Leadership (*1978*)*. It has considerable significance for this thesis. Turner and colleagues (2011) find leadership highly relevant to the case of Bhutan. Burns's book is a key reference for their discussion of the "transformational leadership" of King Jigme Singye. They comment (2011, pp. 185, 199-201) that "transformational leadership [is] an element which is occasionally granted explanatory power but much more often ignored or cast in a minor role in conventional explanations of democratization".

Both the presence and the absence of such leadership can affect a country's democratisation prospects, as highlighted in this comment by Paul Handley (2016) about Thailand's King Bhumibol:

> King Bhumibol did not set out to build a representative democracy or promote the rule of law. For him, parliaments were impermanent, disposable. He may have been born in America and raised in Europe, but democracy was never his goal for Thailand. Restoring the traditional influence of the monarchy was.

Similarly, Surendra Bhandari (2012, p. 12) describes the role of successive kings of Nepal in impeding democratisation:

> The saga of the constitutional development of Nepal is a case of systemic conflict between peoples' aspirations for democracy and kings' ambitions for unlimited power. During 240 years of monarchic rule, the rulers suppressed free will, took away liberties, denied democracy, impeded development, fostered poverty, and sustained injustice.

The dual role of monarchs makes their leadership particularly significant for the polity. These roles are: (1) as a (generally) revered national symbol and (2) as a significant political figure with either a direct or indirect role in leading, monitoring or guiding the performance of politicians. This chapter concentrates on the role of the individual monarchs as leaders in driving, supporting, or impeding democratisation. The following chapters will consider the influence on democratisation of their interaction and power play with other key actors.

Let us first take a step back and consider what the monarchy means to the various countries. Because Bhutan, Tonga, Thailand and Nepal had never been colonised, the monarchs, rather than any nationalistic anti-colonial heroes, became the

symbols of their country's independence. In Tonga and Thailand, in particular, the monarchy is celebrated for having saved the country from the imperial powers. In Bhutan (and to a certain extent Nepal)[109] the monarchy's strategic relationship with the British and later with independent India helped allay fears about China's ambitions. In Tonga, the monarchy was seen as the protector of the people against the excesses of the chiefs, and a last bastion against abusive behaviour by the government. In Thailand, a famous stone inscription, possibly (although this is disputed)[110] from the 13th century kingdom of Sukhothai, states that there was a gong outside the royal palace that people could sound whenever they had a grievance they wanted the king to address (Dhani, 2012). In more recent times, Bhumibol's perambulations around the country (Vasit, 2006) were seen as showing enduring concern for the people, while governments came and went. Bhutan's monarchs carry out similar village-based "royal projects". In Nepal, the monarchy was for years a symbol of unity for a very diverse country. (This later became a negative point – with the monarchy seen as trying to impose one vision of nationhood, which excluded many citizens). The monarchs' prerogative to issue pardons (in all countries) and their role in receiving petitions also served to enhance their image of benevolence in comparison to governments.

In contrast to the (generally) positive role of the monarchy as symbol of the nation is the risk of "hyper-royalism". This term is applied by Thongchai (2014, pp. 89-92) to Thailand from the 1970s onwards. Risks include: "[H]yperbole…becomes normative; eulogies become truths", hagiography is encouraged, and there is a boom in "[O]ld and invented royal ceremonies". Thai hyper-royalism, adds Thongchai, also "breeds anti-monarchy" (Thongchai, 2014, pp. 90-92). Dhurba Rizal (2015, p. 268), applies the term to Bhutan, asserting that "it has proliferated everywhere, in politics, media and other social units." Nevertheless, if a monarch, as in Bhutan, uses his charisma to promote democracy (see Ünaldi, 2012), then strong enthusiasm for the monarch can be a positive factor. A risk inherent in vesting political power in the monarchy, as Jigme Singye of Bhutan recognised, is reliance on the particular monarch no matter what the personal qualities of that individual.

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[109] The Nepali case is complicated by the role of the Ranas (see 3.1).
[110] See Baker and Pasuk (2014, pp. 7, 285) and Terwiel (2011, p. 15).

In Bhutan and Tonga the monarchy (under kings Jigme Singye and George V) played a key role in leading democratisation. In contrast, it can be argued that the monarchs of Thailand (see Nattapoll 2010, p. 173) and Nepal (see Bhandari, 2012) never embraced democracy. A contrary view sees King Bhumibol of Thailand as an advocate for democracy and protector of the people, at least at times of crisis. In Nepal the kings had always resisted the constraints of constitutional monarchy (Jha, 2014, pp. 3-4), with the possible exception of Birendra after 1990. Birendra, probably because of the tragedy of his death, is fondly remembered as a constitutional monarch from 1990, and considered by some to have always quietly favoured democracy but been persuaded to be authoritarian by others.[111] Gyanendra, in contrast, is never depicted as supporting democracy (except in his own proclamations). The persistence of the Nepali monarchs' autocratic tendencies stemmed from three factors: their supposed godly origin; their constitutional prerogatives; and their "command of the Army" (Bhandari, 2012, p. 12). Their unwillingness to accept elected leaders is blamed for overturning Nepal's first and second attempts at democracy (Bhandari, 2014; K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 86), while the third attempt forestalled any further such interference by dis-establishing the monarchy.

To study the validity of these arguments and with an eye to the secondary questions, this chapter assesses: the role (and achievements) of the monarchs in promoting or impeding democracy; what motivated or influenced them; and the influence of monarchical *succession* on transition. For Nepal, we shall also look at the abolition of the monarchy. Examination of individual countries is followed by a comparative discussion. The chapter puts particular emphasis on Kings Jigme Singye (Bhutan), George V (Tonga), Bhumibol (Thailand) and Gyanendra (Nepal).

In looking at the role, influences and potential motivations of the monarchs, this thesis does not seek to delve into their deepest motivations but rather to explore opinions about what influenced the monarchs, based on comments by scholars, interviewers of the monarchs, interviewees who knew them, and other available material including the monarchs' own statements. Bermeo (1990) considers motivation important, urging study on not just 'how' but also "why" leaders

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[111] Interviewee NB1.

"succeed in projecting democracy as a preferable alternative." More attention, she states, needs to be given to 'how those values and decisions themselves are shaped" (1990, pp. 369, 373). It is in this context that the monarchs' roles are examined here. Additional influences on them are analysed in other chapters.

5.1 Monarchs' role

This section examines how the monarchs' actions affected prospects for a successful (or otherwise) democratic transition, and looks at possible motivations and influences that shaped these roles.

Bhutan: "the people are more important than the king"[112]

More than the other countries under consideration, Bhutan presents a picture of a transition to democracy led, planned, and protected by the monarch, with no popular clamour for reform. Kinga (2009, p. 3) sees this as the "Bhutanese exception" where the fourth king, "literally persuaded the people to accept democracy while popular perception and mood were against it."[113] Monarchical leadership not only introduced democracy but ensured the process was smooth (Gallenkamp, 2012; Mathou, 2016; Turner et al., 2011). Thierry Mathou adds (2016, p. 99) that this took place at a time when Bhutanese lacked "political consciousness," despite what was going on elsewhere in South Asia (such as Nepal's "people's movement" in the early 1990s). Phuntsho (2013, p. 570) calls this "a unique case of change with the King passing down the power to people" at a time when the real power in the second half of the twentieth century was still with the monarch. According to Mathou, the king became the "sole vector of political transformation," gradually introducing people to democracy: first, in the 1980s, through decentralisation to local government, and later through the introduction, from 1998 onwards, of increasingly democratic reforms (Mathou, 2016, pp. 100-101).

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[112] Statement by King Jigme Singye to constitution drafting committee in December 2002 (K. Dorji, 2002).
[113] Interviewees confirmed this point: BP4, BPS7, BB1, BAJ9, BPS4, BD4, BPS2, and BO1.

We have seen (in 3.1) how the third king, Jigme Dorji, apparently envisaged a gradual move towards a democratic system, to future-proof both the monarchy and the stability of the country (Phuntsho, 2013, p. 570). His initiative was stalled by his early death in 1972. Was the fourth king, from the time of his coronation (in 1974), already committed to democratisation? Some see his speech at the coronation (reproduced in Tashi & Mathou, 2016, p. 91) as indicative of his democratic leanings. This may be because it states that the government and people need to "work together" for the benefit of the country.[114] In reality, his interviews and statements suggest that at this point the young king felt hesitant about political reform. Bothe asserts (2011, p. 68) that he had come under the influence of the more conservative politicians. This is not surprising. The new king was very young and, as he told his former schoolmate Jonathan Gregson in 1996, was uncertain of his role as a monarch, wanting time to settle in and work out his programme (Gregson, 2001, p. 366).

By the 1980s, however, Jigme Singye was already talking about democracy. In April 1984, a visiting United Nations delegation, reporting on an audience with him, noted: "Bhutan very democratic…King has been pushing democratisation" (reproduced in Mathou, 2016, p. 106). John Elliot, who interviewed him in 1987, later reported that the king was seeking to open up Bhutan "both to the outside world and to democracy" (2015). By the time of a 1992 interview with Barbara Crossette (1996, p. 42), Jigme Singye made his subsequently much-repeated observation that in a monarchy "if you have a good king, he can do a lot of good. And if you don't have a very good king, then he can do a lot of harm. The flaw with monarchy is that too much depends on one individual, and in Bhutan we cannot hope that for all time to come we will have a wise and good king." By 1996 he had begun giving this message to students, telling them the future of Bhutan needed to be under the control of the people (Gregson, 2001, p. 369). The king's focus on the risk of a potential bad monarch reflects Bagehot's (1898, pp. 71-72, 88) warnings about a poor king (see 5.2, below). Contacts noted that Jigme Singye, whose education had been interrupted by the early death of his father, had continued

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[114] Interviewee BAJ11.

educating himself, including through readings of political philosophers and writings about democracy.[115]

In the mid-1990s Jigme Singye, according to Crossette (1996, p. 42) still had some doubts about how democracy would work in Bhutan. Although he stated to Crossette his belief that final decisions should be with the Bhutanese people, he worried that democracy only worked in a highly developed, well-educated and politically aware society. Nevertheless the king had told a long-time acquaintance in about 1990[116] that he had made a decision to bring Bhutan towards a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, in a step-by-step process.

By 1998, Jigme Singye had made his decision to hand over running the government to cabinet (Gregson, 2001, pp. 453-454). He was already contemplating the next steps. He told Gregson that he had never wanted to be king, adding that his initial priorities had been to develop infrastructure and to "strengthen Bhutan's status as a sovereign and independent country." After twenty six years in the job, he wanted to show that he was sincere in stating the people should decide the future. He was also clear that the monarch should be accountable. Asked why he insisted on reintroducing the ability for the National Assembly to pass a vote of no confidence in the king, which could force him to abdicate, he replied that this was essential – both the king and the politicians should be accountable, if delegation of power was to be meaningful.

The king's next step was to "command" the drafting of a constitution. Speaking to the constitution drafting committee in December 2002, he stated:

> I have always made it clear that the people are more important than the King. We cannot leave the future of the country in the hands of one person. These are not mere words. The Constitution will be the fulfilment of our country's destiny being placed in the hands of our people. (K. Dorji, 2002).

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[115] Interviewee BD5. Jigme Sigme was educated in England for some years, followed by private tuition in Bhutan from a British tutor. See also Gregson (2001).
[116] Interviewee BD5.

Paradoxically, the deferential nature of the country (Muni, 2014) meant that democracy could not be introduced in a "democratic" fashion – hence the irony of democracy being imposed by monarchical decree (Turner et al., 2011).

In articles on the making of the constitution (2012, 2013), Sonam Tobgye (former Chief Justice of Bhutan and Chair of the Constitution Drafting Committee) and Thrimchi Lyonpo (the current Chief Justice) explain the background to the process. On 4 September 2001 the king declared that the moment was ripe for introducing democracy, as the country was enjoying "unprecedented peace and stability" (Tobgye & Thrimchi, 2013). Jigme Singye kept a close watch on the successive drafts produced by the committee. According to Tobgye,[117] the king did not prescribe what the constitution should contain, apart from providing a fairly comprehensive list of the sections and principles to include, plus documents that should be consulted (Tobgye, 2015, pp . . . 20-21). Nevertheless, he carefully scrutinised the committee's drafts, checking them word by word (Tobgye & Thrimchi, 2013).

The fourth king and his son, the crown prince (now king) were fully involved in 2005 public consultations on the constitution, throughout Bhutan. According to an interviewee who was present at the consultations, the king used this as an opportunity to explain his decision that democracy would be best for the country, and to respond to people's anxieties. Concerns raised by the public were mainly about the very fact of democracy, plus the provisions for retirement of the king and for a public referendum to remove an unsuitable king.[118]

The above outline appears to support Jigme Singye's reputation as a monarch wanting the best for his country and concluding that absolute monarchy was not it. But, as we have seen in 2.4, this interpretation is not unquestioned. Was the king, as some have suggested (DeGooyer, 2014; Hutt, 2005a), responding to the Lhotshampa protests by democratising the country? Chapter 2 argued that this seemed unlikely. Was he, rather, seeking stability above all, so that once the Lhotshampa protesters had left the country he became more confident in his plans? (Turner & Tshering, 2014, p. 324). This view is supported by Jigme Singye's

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[117] Personal communication from Justice Sonam Tobgye, 22/08/2016.
[118] Interviewee BPS4. (See chapters 8 and 9 for constitutional provisions).

September 2001 statement, cited above, that the country's peace and stability meant the time was right to introduce democracy.[119] As we have seen, the king had been talking about democracy from the 1980s, but several scholars argue that the Lhotshampa protests led him to pause the process, and return to it once the country was more stable (see for example Gallenkamp, 2011; Mathou, 2016; Phuntsho, 2013).

A number of arguments have been put forward by scholars and commentators seeking to explain what Bermeo (1990, pp. 369, 373) calls the "how and why" of the king's decision to promote democracy as the "preferable alternative."

An argument that the king was worried about meeting the fate of the king of Nepal (where in 2008 the monarchy was abolished), while plausible on the face of it, does not fit the chronology[120] and, according to Gallenkamp (2012, p. 16), "simply makes no sense." Nevertheless, the example of Nepal at an *earlier* period (the 1990s) may indeed have had some impact on the king. One observer from outside Bhutan[121] considered Jigme Singye a pragmatist. In this view, the king had not wanted to democratise from Day 1, but the situation in Nepal in the 1990s persuaded him that the refusal of the Nepalese monarchy (before 1990) to shed power had led to a risk of its being pushed aside. But when (according to this view) the Lhotshampas' protest was apparently hijacked by pro-democracy advocates from abroad, the king had been dissuaded from pursuing his plans. In the 2000s, when he could look at democracy on its own terms, not coloured by the Lhotshampa issue, he became open to it again. This view is similar to that of Turner and Tshering (2014, p. 324) who argue that the decision to democratise happened once the potential disruption of the Lhotshampa dispute was removed (see 2.4). As O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 4) observe, the role of actors in a transition is not static, but will vary in response to changing circumstances. Furthermore, reformers in a regime will sense that the best time for a smooth transition is when things are going well – the country is not in crisis and the economy is sound. If liberalising begins in such an environment, this is good for the legitimacy of the liberalising regime, maximising "their chances for exercising

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[119] Interviewee BPS4 made the same point.
[120] The reforms in Bhutan began well before 2008.
[121] Interviewee BD3.

close and enduring control over the transition" (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 16-17). A "regime-confident, self-initiated scenario" (p 21) enables the incumbents to have more control over the pace and scope of the transition. This scenario, which played out in Bhutan, had the additional advantage (for the monarch) of securing the position for the monarch's family down through the generations.

Did neighbours and other international partners put pressure on the king to democratise? One Bhutanese interviewee, who has followed developments closely, argued that the decision was the king's alone, without foreign pressure, but that the king would have kept the international community in mind, recognising that democratisation would improve the country's international image and would motivate more countries to become development partners.[122] This could have been because, by the 1980s, as Di Palma (1990, pp. 17-18) argues, democracy had acquired a "special association with the idea of social progress," and come to be seen as its precursor (as opposed to an earlier conception that such progress was the *cause* of democracy).[123]

In any event, the king was not completely isolated. He was in regular contact with Indian leaders, who, as Bothe (2015, p. 5) suggests (see 3.2), might have had an "invisible influence" or, at least, made it clear that they would welcome Bhutan's moving to democracy. Monarchs also talked to each other. Interviewees in both Tonga and Thailand commented that the regular meetings between the world's monarchs gave the kings the opportunity to talk about their plans and to influence each other to some extent.[124] Both the fourth and fifth Bhutanese kings had occasional talks with King George V of Tonga about their respective democratisation processes.[125]

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 25) argue that another motivation for democratic reformers is concern about their legacy – a desire to become heroes of history. Citing Albert Hirschman, O'Donnell and Schmitter, comment that "passions, even virtuous ones, can be as important as interests." Such "passions" can include

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[122] Interviewee BAJ6. See 3.2 for additional discussion of international factors.
[123] The different arguments about the link between democracy and economic development are discussed in 4.1.
[124] Interviewees TD2, TLS6, TPS4, ThD2.
[125] Conversation with King George V, 2009.

"concern for future reputation" which "can be as powerful a motive as the desire for immediate satisfaction." This could well have been one of the drivers for Jigme Singye as well as for George V of Tonga (see below).

Based on the arguments presented here, it appears that one of Jigme Singye's chief concerns was to protect the country from the risk of an unsuitable monarch assuming power at some point, by transitioning out of a situation in which the monarch had absolute control. One interviewee assessed that Jigme Singye believed the stability, long-term sovereignty and well-being of Bhutan required democracy, and saw that with economic development the governing of a country needed to be done by a team and not just by the king.[126] In this sense, the interviewee saw the king as "noble" but also "pragmatic", and attentive to the future of his own family as hereditary monarchs.[127] Rizal (2015, pp. 29-31) is convinced that Jigme Singye decision to bring about political change (and to abdicate in favour of his son) was to "maintain at least a minimum of monarchical elements in Bhutan's future political system in order to guarantee the survival of the Wangchuck dynasty". In other words, the king saw the establishment of a (democratic) constitution as a way of securing the future of the monarchy and his own family as monarchs. This may be, as Bothe argues (2011, 2012, 2015), because the institutionalisation of the monarchy in some ways gave it greater control over the country.

Another influential factor, as several interviewees argued, might have been a desire to take the initiative and lead reform from the top, rather than wait for some future grassroots revolution.[128] Such a strategic approach aligns well with the concept of the "monarch's bargain" as described by Tridimas (2014, 2016) (see 2.3). In such a bargain, a monarch assesses that it is best to give up political power in order to retain (for oneself and one's heirs) the ceremonial and status aspects (plus the financial benefits) of being head of state, rather than risk losing all.

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[126] Interviewee BAJ6.
[127] Interviewee BAJ6.
[128]: BD6, BB1, BCS3, BAJ3, BAJ5.

Tonga: a tryst with history

On 26 September 2006, Tonga's Royal Palace announced that the new king, George Tupou V, would:

> … hasten appropriate changes to the system of government in response to the democratic wishes of the people…had felt for a long time that Tonga's political system was not evolving quickly enough and that it should keep pace with the broadening of the economy… regards the monarchy as an agent of change…[believes] the Constitution does not have to be fundamentally changed for representative democratic government to be introduced speedily…(Fielakepa, 2006)

In addition, the statement confirmed that Tupou IV's appointment to cabinet of four elected representatives had been at his son's suggestion. And, importantly, George V now saw himself bound by precedent to exercise his authority on prime ministerial advice, including in appointing ministers.

Two weeks after becoming king, George V was already announcing his democratising intentions. These moves had been carefully planned, as evidenced by a conversation between the king and acting Prime Minister, Dr Viliami Tangi (now Lord Tangi),[129] the evening of Tupou IV's passing. Tangi[130] was summoned to the crown prince's residence at 2 am, where the new king, after informing him that Tupou IV had passed away, explained that he wanted to spell out from Day One his intentions. He would discontinue his business ventures from that day; and a political reform programme would begin straightaway.

Campbell sees the king's September announcement (together with a subsequent government statement of 19 October), as "taking the NCPR reforms further, and adopting a Westminster model." Thus "the new king conceded at a stroke [almost] everything that reformists had been saying for fifteen years that they wanted" (2011, p. 160).

Nevertheless, it was to be two years before pro-democracy activists were ready to declare publicly their trust in the king's commitment to democracy (see 6.2). How did this distrust of the monarchy develop? One factor was concern about the royal

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[129] In December 2010 the king appointed a small number of life peers, including Tangi and Sevele (RNZ, 2011).
[130] Personal communication, Lord Tangi, 16 December 2016.

family's involvement in business and the perception that this gave them unfair advantages. In addition, before becoming king, George V was known for his bluntness and for making disparaging comments about others. In addition, George V's plans for democratisation came as a surprise to all except his close friends and associates. As explained in an email message from George V to Ian Campbell in 2010, one reason he was not prepared to discuss openly his plans when his father was alive was fear of repressive measures being put in place against reformers, which the crown prince feared he himself (as a member of the government in the early 1990s) might be required to enforce (George V, 2010b).[131]

As we have seen (4.1), Tupou IV was a moderniser. But he resisted all petitions to introduce political reform until the end of his reign (and then only at his son's initiative as regent). Interviewees suggested he did not think Tonga's commoners were educated enough to take on the task of running the country, and he prioritised education in order to prepare them (see 4.1).[132] The moment at which he would accept them as being ready never came. As Campbell (2011, p. 84) observes, in all his public political statements Tupou IV "made it clear there would be no changes however much the optimists among the progressives might have thought they saw signs of mellowing." This approach – holding back reforms because people were not considered ready – corresponds to a scenario described by O'Donnell and Schmitter, in which autocratic leaders refrain from giving their citizens the right to hold their rulers to account because they believe the "immature" must be "tutored" before they can exercise "full citizen responsibilities" (1986, p. 10). This attitude impedes democratisation.

Another argument put forward by Tupou IV, in interviews in 1990 (*Matangi Tonga magazine* cited by Campbell (2011, p. 34)) and 2002 (Raffaele, 2002) was that democracy could lead to coups (as in Fiji) and that political opposition would bring about governmental paralysis. He insisted that since the monarchs were protectors of the people, there was no need for parliament to carry out that role. In reality, belief in the monarch as the people's protector had begun to falter under Tupou IV, as petition followed protest and respectful pathways to enlist the support of the king

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[131] I am grateful to Ian Campbell for sharing this correspondence with me.
[132] Interviewees TP10, TP12, TAJ3.

against the non-accountable government led nowhere. The monarch had become an impediment to reform (I. Campbell, 2011).

It says something about how little Tonga's democracy had advanced under Tupou IV that Lopeti Senituli (2004) saw the king's agreement to bring some parliamentarians into cabinet as the "ultimate gift" and a monumental step forward. The agent of this was not, evidently, Tupou IV himself, but his son.

George V, as Crown Prince Tupouto'a,[133] had been quietly talking about potential democratic reforms with close friends for a long time, especially with Feleti Sevele. Tupouto'a had encouraged Sevele, then a member of the Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM), to stand for parliament in 1999 (Sevele, 2009a). Another longstanding friend, Neil Underhill (2012), described George V as "very committed" to his planned "political reform process" before he became king.

Reform might have begun earlier if Tupou IV, who reportedly asked Tupouto'a to become prime minister, had been flexible enough to accept his son's conditions (to be allowed to choose his own ministers).[134] His father refused, and instead his youngest son, Lavaka, became prime minister in early 2000. If Tupouto'a had become prime minister and been able to put his own team (presumably including Sevele) into cabinet at that stage and to begin introducing reforms at a gradual pace, which he initially preferred,[135] the later conflicts might have been avoided. The pattern then would have been closer to that of Bhutan.

Although Tupouto'a was circumspect about his political opinions in public he shared his views (at least in part) with his cousin Prince Tu'ipelehake. The two supported each other: for example, when Tu'ipelehake in 2004 presented a motion in parliament for the formation of a national committee on political reform, it was "strongly resisted by [his] fellow Nobles' Representatives, and it passed the house

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[133] A title held by the crown prince.
[134] Interviewee TB6.
[135] He was understood to prefer political reforms to be brought in through "convention" rather than constitutional amendment (interviewee TP3). He told author Kenneth Bain (1993, p. 101), in the early 1990s: "I would like to see politico-constitutional change initiated within my father's lifetime. I would then preside over its performance".

narrowly only after it became known that the crown prince wanted it" (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 130).

As noted above, by the time his father died in September 2006 George V was ready to declare the programme he had in mind. He provided the essential monarchical leadership (nothing else would persuade the nobles to cooperate) but he planned to leave day to day management of the reform process to his chosen prime minister, Sevele.[136] George V, who knew Sevele well, had confidence in him to push through a programme of reforms.[137]

George V's commitment to democratic change was confirmed by the fact that he did not abandon his reforming intentions following the riots of November 2006 (see 6.2). As a *New Zealand Herald* editorial (2012) observed: "Some less enlightened rulers would have reacted harshly, thereby placing the future of the monarchy in doubt" – an interesting comment with its suggestion that a repressive monarchical response might have put the institution itself at risk. One diplomatic observer[138] commented that the government (especially Sevele) was at that point (immediately post-riots) hostile to proceeding with the reform programme, but the king insisted on it.

At the closing of parliament on 23 November 2006, George V stressed that political reform would continue, stating that the differences between the competing visions of reform were "not irreconcilable," and could be "resolved through dialogue". All had the same ultimate aim: "a more democratic form of parliament and government but appropriate for Tonga." The king called for more dialogue, so as to reach a consensus for presentation to the next session of parliament, together with a "timeframe for implementation" - showing clearly his intention for a reform timetable to be set and adhered to (George V, 2006).

Nevertheless, both the king's 26 September announcement (cited above) of his commitment to timely democratic reform and his 23 November speech failed to register with the Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM) - and the international media.

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[136] Interviewee TD7. Following the public service strike of 2005, Tupouto'a was instrumental in persuading his brother (then PM) Lavaka to resign in early 2006, to be replaced by Sevele.
[137] Interviewee TP12.
[138] Interviewee TD7.

It took a similar statement (GOT, 2008) on 28 July 2008, on the eve of his coronation, to bring his intentions into the limelight (internationally as well as locally). This reiterated points made in his September 2006 statement: that he was voluntarily ceding most of his powers and would act on the advice of the prime minister. It mentioned for the first time a date (2010) by which elections would be held under a new system "giving the majority voice in Parliament to the people." The explicit timetable may have engendered greater confidence in his commitment.

Given his role as the prime mover in spurring constitutional reform, the king might have been expected to be heavily involved in the reform and consultation process itself (as was the case in Bhutan). Instead, he stood back. Apart from his statements of September 2006 and July 2008, his main public contributions were his speeches at openings and closings of parliament.

George V nevertheless had his own preferences for the key elements of the new political system. Initially, as foreshadowed in a 2005 exchange of correspondence with Clive Edwards[139] in the *Matangi Tonga* letters column, he apparently envisaged a gradual process of replacing appointed members of cabinet with elected representatives:

> It would come as a big surprise to me if any more appointments, other than that of the Prime Minister, shall be made directly by the King. In time, as Ministers voluntarily retire or resign…I suspect that Grace and Favour[140] appointed ministers from the ranks of the elected representative should replace them. (Matangitonga, 2005).

At that point it seems he had a preference for changes that could become accepted practice via convention, rather than constitutional reform.[141] Later his position evolved. The US Embassy assessed that this was because the public service strike of 2005 gave him a greater sense of urgency.[142] According to US diplomatic reporting, George V commented in March 2006 to US Ambassador Larry Dinger that democratic reform needed to happen quickly and that he had presented to his

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[139] Edwards is a veteran Tongan politician who has espoused many different positions during his long career, gaining a reputation as a turncoat.
[140] "Grace and favour" ministers were those appointed at the king's pleasure, a confusing concept when talking about elected representatives becoming ministers.
[141] Interviewee TP3.
[142] Interviewee TP12 also made this point.

(seriously ill) father a proposal for a fully elected parliament and a prime minister selected by the king from within parliament. He apparently intended to proceed with this reform irrespective of the findings by the NCPR (Dinger, 2006a).

By the time of a BBC interview in 2008 George V was publicly stating that the shape of the new system would be largely "up to Parliament" (George V, 2008). Nevertheless, he fed into government, both formally through the privy council[143] and informally in private discussion (especially with Sevele and Deputy Prime Minister Tangi) ideas on what he wanted included.[144] Several of these appear in the final package: for example, an electoral system based on single-member constituencies[145] was his preference; his too was the idea that the prime minister should be appointed by the parliament, not by the king, and that the prime minister (not the king) should choose the (up to four) ministers from outside parliament.

George V did not think the 2010 reforms marked the end of the road, telling Bruce Hill of Radio Australia (George V, 2010c) that if future parliaments saw a need to refine these changes, then they would do so.

Written material and comments by interviewees[146] give an idea of what influenced George V to democratise the country. This analysis is necessarily limited, as George V was an enigmatic individual whose opinions were difficult to discern, and were sometimes cloaked in humour or mockery.[147] His 2010 Radio Australia interview provides some insights:

> … it's… an attempt to take the principles of that [19th century] constitution and apply them in 21st century idiom which of course has to be democracy….I've always wanted to do this for the country…political life has to travel at the same speed, at the same level as the development of our economic life…..my education has generally been a liberal European education… without a European education, with a solely Tongan education, I don't believe I would have been able to make these changes…We've given it our best shot…it's not an unchangeable thing…our constitution should be kept

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[143] At that time the privy council was made up of the king and cabinet.
[144] Interviewees TP11, TP12.
[145] Interviewee TP11.
[146] TPS1, TP1, TAJ3, TLS3, TCS2, TLS5, TPS4.
[147] Interviewee TLS6.

alive with minor changes and adjustments to suit life as the country progresses. (George V, 2010c).

We can see from this the strong influence of his own "European" education. Without this he does not think he could have introduced the reforms. As he observes, his education abroad made him couch his vision in the European enlightenment framework. In this, he resembles the democratising leaders described by Di Palma as believing that authoritarianism was all very well in its time, but who consider it a "thing of the past" that has "lost relevance" in the modern age (1990, p. 147).

Unlike his father Tupou IV, who asserted that Tongans were not ready for political change, George V expressed the view that Tonga had reached a level of economic development which would not only provide a sound basis for political reform but which also *required* such reform if the economy were not to stagnate. Political and economic change had to advance together.[148]

This again recalls the modern reformer as envisaged by Di Palma (1990, p. 18), who sees reform as closely linked to social progress. George V's afore-mentioned debate (Matangitonga, 2005) with Clive Edwards in *Matangi Tonga* included the following: "[t]he new reforms [appointing four members of parliament to cabinet] represent the appropriate political change demanded by Tonga's social changes which are themselves the product of economic progress." He explained in his 2008 BBC interview that he believed democracy would enable power to be "exercised not so much because of inherited privilege but because of merit" (George V, 2008).

By 2008, George V was commenting that he was in a hurry to see the reforms, and was impatient with the politicians, who, he felt, were not implementing the reforms fast enough. [149] Interviewees commented on his desire to ensure his legacy as a reforming monarch,[150] and his concerns about his health (see also Herald Editorial,

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[148] Interviewee TPS4.
[149] Conversation with George V, 2008. See also Dinger (2008), who reports "King George V continues to tell us he wants politicians to move faster."
[150] TB5, TB4.

2012). As O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 25) remark, "concerns for future reputation" can be a powerful driver for a reformer.

In an address to the nation on the eve of the first election under the new system (November 2010), George V cast Tonga's transition as a transformational historical event, by invoking the language of Nehru on the eve of India's independence:

> In the year 1875, the King and his Nobles made a tryst with their God to govern the people according to the Constitution and the standards of civilisation of the day… But the world has undergone great changes in the past 135 years …. It is an opportune time therefore to change the way we are ruled …I shall grant my Executive Powers to the Cabinet and the Parliament and in future the Sovereign shall act only on the advice of His Prime Minister… the 25th of November will be the greatest and most historic day for our Kingdom. You will choose your representatives to the Parliament and thus the first elected Government in our country's long history. (George V, 2010a).[151]

Like Jigme Singye of Bhutan, George V appears to have chosen to accept the "monarch's bargain" as envisaged by Tridimas. Many interviewees who knew him remarked on how he relished the position of king but was tired of having responsibility for the governance of the country.[152] His own comment on the burden of office, made in an interview with *The Independent* in January 2010, was that his father "was born and died in captivity." He too was "born in captivity" but the reforms would bring "liberation for me as well" (Taylor, 2010).

There is a contrary view, that the king was not committed to reform but was reacting either to the persistent pressure by the pro-democracy movement over a number of years or specifically to the riots of November 2006. A refinement of the position acknowledges that the king had already declared his democratic intentions at the time of the riots, but that fear of future riots made sure that the monarchy did not slide back into its previous position (under Tupou IV).[153]

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[151] This bears a distinct resemblance to Nehru's historic speech on the occasion of India's independence, which begins: "Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge…"(Nehru, 1947).
[152] For example, interviewees TD7, TLS6, TCS2.
[153] Interviewee TAJ1.

This point of view suggests that George V was no more of a democrat than his father, but felt compelled by the protest movement to introduce democracy. One reason for this opinion might be his reticence, while crown prince, about his intentions, as well as the rather disdainful attitude he expressed towards some members of the PDM (although, as we have seen, he respected Sevele).

In fact, as described in this section, George V had long since decided to lead the democratisation of the country, and announced it publicly in September 2006. Rather than inspiring George V's reforming zeal, it is more likely that the protest movement affected how he saw the process evolving. As we have seen above, he originally envisaged a gradual development of new (democratic) conventions but later favoured a speedier approach. George V himself (in an unsigned paper published by *Matangi Tonga* and reiterated in his afore-mentioned email correspondence with Campbell) described the PDM as useful in providing the initial expression of "dissatisfaction" which helped persuade the "conservatives" of the need for change (George V, 2010b; Matangitonga, 2012).

The conservatives include the nobility, who needed persuasion by the king to accept political reform. There was an interrelationship between the monarchy, the pro-democracy activists, and the nobility, in the reform process. The exact nature of that relationship and how the three parties influenced each other is considered in the following chapter.

Thailand: liberal education fails to produce democratic king

In April 2017 a plaque commemorating Thailand's 1932 revolution was quietly removed from a location near the royal palace and replaced with one celebrating royalty, in what critics saw as the latest attempt to deny the legacy of the "Promoters" (Peel, 2017b). This represents a continuation of efforts underway ever since 1932 to depict the real democratiser in Thailand as the monarchy, not the people or the politicians.

There is a persistent myth that King Bhumibol was the guardian of democracy. The myth is accompanied by a (more justifiable) vision of the king as a man of the people who tramped around the countryside helping out poor villagers with generous "royal projects" (Vasit, 2006).

The belief in Bhumibol as a champion of democracy was prevalent, including in the media, until about 2006, as can be seen in the excerpts published by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand (D. D. Gray & Faulder, 2010; see also Puangthong, 2015).[154] Bhumibol himself stated in a 1967 interview: "I am really an elected king. If the people do not want me, they can throw me out" (D. D. Gray & Faulder, 2010, p. 59). Since 2006, however, the predominant scholarly view[155] has been that the king's "carefully crafted image" as protector of democracy was far from the truth (Handley, 2006, p. ix, x). This shifting interpretation may have resulted from the clear palace involvement in the 2006 coup, as Farrelly (2016) argues, as well as the publication of Handley's biography (2006) – see 2.4.

From the start of his long reign (1946-2016), Bhumibol followed the royalists' urging to recapture the monarchy's political power and prerogatives and to revive royal rituals (C. Gray, 1986; Marshall, 2011, p. 39). Later he came to believe that these were his by right of his religious and moral superiority (Handley, 2006, p. 178), but to begin with he was mainly acting as the tool of senior princes.[156]

Nattapoll reveals that Bhumibol was informed in advance of a planned 1947 coup against Pridi and expressed his support for it. That coup brought a temporary surge in royal influence, through a redrafted constitution that restored some of the monarchy's assets and privileges (Nattapoll, 2010, pp. 167-169). Sarit's 1957 coup, almost certainly aided by the royals (CIA, 1957), continued the process of restoring the monarchy's prestige (Thak, 2007b). As we shall see in chapter 7 (7.1), the balance of power between king and military gradually moved in the king's favour from then on, with his ascendancy firmly established after his 1973 activism (see 3.1).

Based on his public statements, it seems that Bhumibol experienced a "democratic interlude" in the late 1960s (Handley, 2006, p. 194). He had persuaded the then

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[154] Denis D Gray and Dominic Faulder edited a collection of international media articles featuring King Bhumibol from 1946-2008.
[155] For example Ferrara (2015), Handley (2006), Marshall (2014), Nattapoll (2010), Thongchai (2008, 2014).
[156] These included Prince Dhani, a privy councillor and early tutor of Bhumibol, whose influential 1946 speech described Thai kings as benign and good, exercising wise judgement on behalf of the people's welfare (Dhani, 2012). A king "succeeds to the Throne theoretically by election", ensuring moral governance, with no need for a constitution (p.25).

military rulers to introduce a new constitution and to hold elections in 1969. Both Handley (2006, p. 194) and Ferrara (2015, pp. 160-161) suggest this stemmed from a desire to improve Thailand's image abroad, as the US had expressed concerns. Christine Gray's analysis of Bhumibol's speeches in that period demonstrates how he initially encouraged democratic thinking but soon qualified this and by June 1973 was referring to "wrong principles from abroad" (C. Gray, 1986, pp. 549, 553, 686-709).

In the light of these ambiguities, scholars question the intentions behind Bhumibol's role in the 1973 crisis (Ferrara, 2015, pp. 168-170; Handley, 2006, pp. 204, 212; Marshall, 2014, pp. 84-86). The king invited protesting students into his palace, and promised them a democratic constitution within 12 months. Some students, dissatisfied with this vague prospect, continued their protest; at this point the police and army shot into the crowd, resulting in at least 70 deaths. It was only after this that the king intervened to force the then military dictators to leave the country (Handley, 2006, pp. 210-213) (see 3.1).

This represented a new beginning for the monarchy by giving the king a profile as a democrat (Thongchai, 2008, pp. 20-21). It enhanced his own power. It enabled him to appoint a prime minister of his choice, the first time since 1932 that the monarch had made such an appointment. Referring to the common misconception that the king was above politics, Thongchai argues that (from 1973 onwards) Bhumibol was only "above" politics in the sense that he was the supreme political authority on top of everyone else, overseeing them, but not standing outside (2008, pp 19-21). This was ironic: 1973 was popularly seen as marking him as a *democratic* king whereas in reality, as Thongchai asserts, it marked his ascendancy as a *controlling* king. As Ünaldi (2012, p. 11) argues, "[r]oyalist historiography places the king at the centre of democratic development, glossing over the achievements of the Thai people in their pursuit of freedom and participation and reinterpreting the popular uprisings of 1973 and 1992 to present the monarch as the saviour of liberalism."

The king's embrace of democracy (such as it was) did not endure for long. By February 1974, Bhumibol was reportedly telling the military he would support using force against protesting students (CIA, 1974). Speeches to students in 1974

discouraged them from "free thinking" (C. Gray, 1986, p. 717); by 1976 fear of communism (and the fate of the Laotian royal family)[157] were a factor in his abandoning any remaining democratic leanings (Kobkua, 2003, pp. 171-174). Whereas in the late 1960s he had paid heed to US urgings to appear less dictatorial, by 1976 the renewed Cold War was a more persuasive driver.

This may have been behind the king's doing nothing to halt the brutal massacre of students in October 1976 (see 3.1). As one interviewee commented, Bhumibol was by then "as absolute as can be without being absolute" and it was clear that no government could survive without his endorsement.[158] Furthermore he tended, from 1976 onwards, to prefer military-led governments, seeing military plus king as the best combination rather than elected parliaments (Handley, 2006, p. 8). The military-monarchy relationship is analysed in chapter 7.

Throughout his reign, there were instances of the king's asserting that "Western constitutionalism" was a threat to Thai unity and order (Ferrara, 2015, p. 269). Nevertheless, he gained renewed democratic credentials from his intervention in 1992, in which he publicly chided both the military and protest leaders (see 3.1). And yet he waited several days before acting. Handley comments that by 1992 Bhumibol was at the "peak of his popularity", well placed to ensure sound constitutional monarchy was embedded in Thailand, but he chose not to do so. Instead, he "continued to favor alliances between the palace and the military over electoral democracy. He backed the generals whenever they obstructed efforts to modernize the Constitution or strengthen the rule of law, which happened again and again" (Handley, 2016).

Closer to the present, the king intervened in April 2006 against Thaksin's government through his now famous speech to judges, where he essentially told them to sack the government by declaring the recent election illegal:

> You have the right to say what's appropriate or not…But as far as I am concerned, a one party election is not normal. The one candidate situation is undemocratic. Do your

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[157] The king and queen of Laos were arrested by the communist Pathet Lao in 1975 and are believed to have eventually died in a prison camp.
[158] Interviewee ThA1.

best. You, not the government, have to resign if you cannot do the best of your duty. (The Nation, 2006).

The judges followed the king's advice – or instruction. As Thitinan Pongsudhirak commented to the *Washington Post* of 28 May 2006 "if the judges don't annul the election, they'd be going against the king's wishes, and that's unthinkable in Thailand" (D. D. Gray & Faulder, 2010, p. 112).

Surprisingly, the king's approach to the judges was at the time seen by many as democratic. It was reportedly praised as "probably an encouraging sign for democracy" (although "a strange way to jump start democracy") by scholar David Streckfuss (see *Agence France Presse* of 7 May 2006, in D.D. Gray and Faulder, 2010, p. 110). Streckfuss has elsewhere (1995, 2010) written critically of Thailand's *lèse majesté* law. Former prime minister Anand Panyarachun saw the intervention as demonstrating that the king would always intervene in support of democracy – "when there is a real imminent threat to democratic rule, then he would use his reserve power to show the way" (D. D. Gray & Faulder, 2010, p. 113). The king's intervention was in fact a subtle version of "royal coup." It was followed soon afterwards by an anti-Thaksin message to military recruits by the head of the king's privy council, General Prem Tinsulanonda:

> …in horse racing, horse owners hire jockeys to ride the horses. The jockeys do not own the horses. They just ride them. A government is like a jockey. It supervises soldiers, but the real owners are the country and the King. (Sutichai, 2006).

The Palace's role in supporting the subsequent (September 2006) military takeover was evident in Bhumibol's summoning the post-coup leader (Sonthi) to his palace the evening of the coup. Sonthi afterwards told the US embassy the king "was relaxed and happy, smiling throughout" (Boyce, 2006).

Bhumibol's hand in opposing democratic governance was again apparent in a later message to judges, calling on the courts to take action against the successor Thaksinite government, elected in 2007 (McCargo, 2014, pp. 428-429). The privy council (representing Palace views) were involved in the "silent coup" of 2008, whereby Abhisit became prime minister (see 3.1).

If Bhumibol's direct interventions in politics diminished from 2009 onwards (when he was affected by illness), the use of the monarchy as an excuse for undemocratic actions continued. An example of this was the constitutional court's decision against amending the 2007 constitution to restore an all-elected Senate (see 8.2). And the PCRD (Yellow Shirts) asserted that their effort to depose Yingluck's government was their duty under Article 70 of the constitution - to "protect Democracy with the King as Head of State".

This examination of the role of King Bhumibol in impeding democratisation provides pointers towards what influenced him. From his own statements, and from the literature, we can infer that a key driver was a desire to protect order, control and unity from "threats", including that of "Western constitutionalism" (Ferrara, 2015, p. 269). He is reported as having told a Burmese delegation in 2008 that "the examples of some Western powers stood witness to the fact that too much democracy was not good" (cited in Ünaldi, 2012, p. 27). His default setting was the authoritarian (military) regime but a parliamentary one was useful from time to time to keep the military orderly (Hewison & Kengkij, 2010). According to comments from an interviewee, Bhumibol was convinced that monarchy was the best and proper form of government for Thailand.[159]

Bhumibol's opinion of his proper role can be seen in his own composition, *The Story of Tongdaeng* (2002), a touching tale of a stray dog (adopted by Bhumibol) who knows how to behave in a suitably deferential way towards the king. Bhumibol believed in his own religious and moral superiority (C. Gray, 1986). In Ünaldi's terms (2012, p. 30), he saw himself in the context of the "old hierarchical order" – of which he was the top. He saw the monarch, not a political leader, as the rightful custodian of the hearts and minds of the people (Ünaldi, 2012, p. 11). He (or at least his Palace acolytes) may have also been conscious of the desirability of maintaining control over the considerable wealth of the Crown Property Bureau (see Joehnk, 2015; Porphant, 2015), accompanied by a belief that the combination of wealth and political power should only be for the monarch and not a political leader (Hewison and Kengkij, 2010, p. 194).

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[159] Comment by interviewee ThB2, who was part of a group audience with the king in April 2008.

Despite his liberal education in Switzerland, Bhumibol - who had never expected to become king and was not "groomed" for kingship – was manipulated by the royalists when still a young man, such that "over six decades, Thai monarchists successfully established royal hegemony" (Ünaldi, 2012, pp. 9, 26). Ünaldi (p.29) argues that monarchs' choices are influenced by "their personal histories, their educations, their values, the intellect and morals of the monarchs as individuals, and… by their mentors and courtly advisers" – the last, perhaps, particularly important in the case of such a young king as Bhumibol when he first ascended the throne.

Especially from 1973 onwards, Bhumibol was well-placed to drive, should he have so chosen, the type of transition "from above" envisaged by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 39), where an authoritarian leader has "sufficient cohesion and resources to dictate the emerging rules of the game". Instead, as Thongchai (2008, p. 11) argues, the monarchy and monarchists "undermined electoral democracy", regarding themselves as being in a "superior realm" to politicians.

As Ünaldi's (2012, p. 30) comparative study between Bhumibol and Spain's Juan Carlos argues, if Bhumibol had deployed "democratic charisma" instead of relying on "traditional charisma", he could have been a positive force for democracy, using his "symbolic authority" to become an advocate for constitutional democracy. Instead, he took a different path. Bhumibol's record shows a distinct aversion to democratic governments and a preference for autocratic ones, especially those led by the military – something explored further in chapter 7 (7.1).

Nepal: accidental monarch, seeking absolute power, does himself out of a job

Nepal's story is one of monarchs resisting democracy, apart from brief exceptions where they acquiesced (twice in response to massive public demonstrations) to democratic rule. This section concentrates on the last king, Gyanendra, but first touches briefly on his predecessor Birendra.

Birendra (reign: 1972-2001), who had been educated abroad (Eton and Harvard), was supposedly more liberal than his father (S. Sharma, 2010, pp. 93-94), but weak and not able to oppose his wife, his brothers, and "the Palace" (K. Dixit, 2010,

p. 113; Jha, 2014).[160] If so, their influence was decisive, as Birendra made no attempt to democratise until the 1990 people's movement (see 3.1). Even then he did so reluctantly, allegedly having been urged by his brother Gyanendra to "stand firm" against the protesters (Whelpton, 2005, p. 215).

Next, Birendra tried to control the constitution drafting process (Bhandari, 2012, p. 8; Malagodi, 2013, pp. 109, 126, 172; Whelpton, 2005, p. 116) – see 3.1. From then on (post-1990), according to some commentators, he stuck closely to the limitations of his role (K. Dixit, 2010, p. 115; Gregson, 2001, pp. 176, 179, 306; S. Sharma, 2010, p. 94). Others argue that he continued to involve himself in politics (Bhandari, 2012, p. 8), including through increasingly frequent meetings with politicians, sending them warnings and advice (Hutt, 2004, p. 8).[161]

Gyanendra, who became king after the 2001 royal family massacre (see 3.1), had not been groomed for the monarchy the way Birendra was, nor did he have the same liberal education.[162] He started out as a hands-on monarch, planning from the start a much stronger role for the monarchy. He even reportedly told one of his staff that the Palace should "project itself as a highly democratic institution while secretly carrying out its strategy" (Adhikari, 2014, p. 65).

Gyanendra started to prepare the ground for a takeover of the polity from 2001, by criticising the politicians (and undermining their authority), emulating his father Mahendra (K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 122). He went on to sack the elected prime minister in October 2002 and appoint his own government (Adhikari, 2014, p. 67), citing Article 27 of the constitution as giving him the power to take control "to preserve nationalism, national unity and sovereignty" and to maintain "peace and order in the country" (GON, 2002).

Following this, in a "creeping coup" (K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. xii), Gyanendra effectively began dismantling the constitution (Bhandari, 2014, p. 46), culminating in a royal coup in February 2005 (see 3.1) in which he personally took over executive power,

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[160] Interviewee NB1 made the same point.
[161] Birendra may have seen this as consistent with the constitutional monarch's rights as described by Bagehot (1898, p. 75): to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn.
[162] Interviewee NP1.

asserting that he was acting in the interests of the people against politicians who had fomented "confusion and disorder":

> Nepal's independence, national unity and sovereignty are best safeguarded by the intimate relationship between the king and people. An institution of monarchy ever devoted to the country…is the glorious history of the kingdom of Nepal, its present and also its future. (GON, 2005).

This was a strategically foolish move. Gyanendra misjudged the public mood. He thought that because the government had not performed well he would get support for seizing power. But the population were alienated by the repressive measures in the immediate aftermath of the coup: telephone and internet connections were cut off, politicians and civil society activists were imprisoned, and most of the constitution abrogated (Adhikari, 2014, pp. 171-172). Few Nepalis trusted Gyanendra's assertion that he would restore democratic government as soon as he had solved the Maoist problem and returned stability to Nepal (Adhikari, 2014, pp. 175-177). Gyanendra appeared to believe the military could rout the Maoists (under a state of emergency), censorship would silence opponents, and that by playing the "terrorist card" he would continue to have support from the US, India and the UK (Gautam, 2016, pp. 79-81). On the contrary, the coup lost him international support and united the mainstream political parties with the Maoists in a determination to end "autocratic monarchy,"[163] a determination supported by the massive public mobilisation of April 2006.

The ultimate result of the king's power-grabbing was the abolition of the monarchy. Gyanendra was not very adroit. As one interviewee commented, he was not even ready to meet the people half way – to retain status but not political power.[164] In other words, like his father Mahendra, he was not prepared to accept the reforming monarch's "bargain" (Tridimas, 2014, 2016). His Vice Chair (during his absolute rule) stated that in Nepal monarchy and democracy were incompatible (Bhandari, 2014, p. 48). In reality Gyanendra's own actions (and those of his predecessors) made the two incompatible. Hutt (2005b, pp. 112-114) foreshadowed this in 2005, when he noted that trust between monarchy and democratic politicians had

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[163] See the 12-point Understanding between the Seven Political Parties and the Maoists (2005).
[164] Interviewee NA6.

reached such a low level that it seemed increasingly unlikely Nepal would be able to agree on a political system that included both monarch and democracy. It was starting to look as if it had to be the one or the other.

In a sense Gyanendra was disadvantaged from the start because of the tragedy that brought him to the throne. Some interviewees suggested this event spelt doom for the monarchy.[165] It was a tremendous shock to the Nepalis, who found it inconceivable that a Hindu man would kill his own father (Hawley, 2015, pp. 1159-1165).[166] The massacre undermined monarchy as an institution. Whether people believed a conspiracy theory (that Gyanendra and his son Paras orchestrated the massacre)[167] or the official report (that the crown prince was responsible), the monarchy's image suffered (S. Sharma, 2010, pp. 99-100). Compounding this was the fact that Paras, who had been accused of running over (and killing) a popular singer, was not seen as a desirable future king. The Shah monarchy lost its moral authority (Hutt, 2014, pp. 430-432).[168]

Nevertheless, Gyanendra may still have had a chance to save the monarchy if he had been prepared to accept a ceremonial role, and consider democratic monarchy. This, rather than a republic, was the aim of the 2006 People's Movement.[169] If Gyanendra had apologised to the people he could have stayed (K. Dixit, 2010, p. 120). Public opinion surveys indicate that while Gyanendra's rule was losing its appeal there was still some support for the concept of monarchy itself (Hutt, 2014, p. 433; S. Sharma, 2010, pp. 96-97). Sharma reports a longitudinal poll which found that in 2004 81% supported some form of monarchy; by September 2006 this was 53%; by 2007 45% and in January 2008 49%. Gyanendra himself received extremely low ratings as a political leader (2.8 out of

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[165] NA7 and NJ2.

[166] Elizabeth Hawley, an expatriate journalist, prepared almost daily briefing notes on political developments in Nepal over the period 1988 to 2007, which have been compiled in a publication *The Nepal Scene: Chronicles of Elizabeth Hawley 1988-2007* (2015).

[167] Paras was present at the dinner hosted by his cousin the crown prince. He was not injured but, rather, according to his own account and those of witnesses, sought to persuade his cousin to stop shooting. Gyanendra was out of town.

[168] Hutt (2014, pp. 437-440) specifically contrasts this with the situation in Bhutan, where the monarchs have secured themselves "at least a medium term future", in Hutt's opinion, by combining "pre-emptive ruthlessness" (towards the Lhotshampas) and "sensitive political foresight" in sponsoring democratisation.

[169] Interviewee NJ6.

10). Hutt, citing Hacchhethu et al. (2008) reports that in 2008 59% of their sample favoured a republic while in 2004 only 15% of interviewees had done so.

G P Koirala (of the Nepali Congress party), prime minister in 2006/7, would have preferred a constitutional monarchy and floated several ideas, such as appointing the king's grandson as a "baby king," but Gyanendra would not agree (K. M. Dixit, 2011, pp. 97, 138-139; Nepali Times, 2015). Abolition of the monarchy had also become something of a *quid pro quo* for the peace deal with the Maoists, but even then the monarchy might have been saved if Gyanendra had accepted Koirala's proposals (K. Dixit, 2010, p. 120; K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 140). In the end even Koirala went along with a republic once no other options seemed possible.

The Maoists give themselves credit for ending the monarchy, as can be seen from interviews with their leader, Prachanda (K. Dixit, 2016a; Dunham, 2016b). This thesis, however, supports the scholarly consensus that the proximate cause of the abolition was the monarch's own hubris in imposing absolute power. That said, other factors (such as the royal family massacre, and the Maoist insurgency) clearly contributed to the environment which enabled such developments.

King Gyanendra's push to gain and then retain autocratic power fits O'Donnell and Schmitter's model (1986, p. 10) of the autocrat who considers the citizenry too "immature" to be given the right to hold their rulers to account. He displayed a strong belief that royal rule was superior to democracy, reflecting his admiration for his father Mahendra's *panchayat* era.[170] He despised politicians and considered them incompetent (Gautam, 2016, p. 115),[171] believing that only he (with the army) could defeat the Maoist insurgency. He followed the traditional Nepali belief in kings as semi-divine,[172] and thus the rightful rulers of the land (Malagodi, 2013, pp. 13, 65). He did not have the liberal education that his brother Birendra received, not having been considered a prospect for the monarchy.

In sum, this section supports the argument that successive kings' absolutist inclinations and, in particular, Gyanendra's autocratic actions, inspired politicians and the public to cooperate in a drive for a return to democracy and, eventually,

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[170] Interviewees NJ2, NA7.
[171] Interviewees NJ1, Nj2 and NJ5 made similar points.
[172] Interviewee NA6.

the abolition of the monarchy. A more detailed examination of the role of public mobilisation in driving these outcomes can be found in chapter 6.

5.2 Succession: uneasy lies the head that wears a crown

The chapter now turns to the question of monarchical succession, as a potential influence in supporting or impeding democratisation. A monarchical succession can have an impact, positive or negative, on democratic transition. Its timing is not usually planned – except in the recent case of Bhutan. Succession thus provides an uncertainty peculiar to monarchies. Bagehot (1898, pp. 71-72) emphasised the uncertainty about the quality of the successor monarch. He argued that royal or hereditary dynasties could not be relied on to display genius; on the contrary they suffered from "early acquired feebleness," with no certainty of producing a wise individual. He regarded a good monarch as "almost invaluable" but noted that a bad king could be very bad indeed (1898, p. 88). (As we have seen above, the Bhutanese fourth king shared this view).

In Bhutan King Jigme Singye took the surprise out of succession by pre-empting it – declaring, in 2005, at the age of 52, that he would abdicate in favour of his son Jigme Khesar (who took over in December 2006, with his Coronation in 2008). Jigme Singye also insisted on a constitutional provision for the monarch to abdicate at age 65.

Why would Jigme Singye, having brought the country to democracy, not remain to lead Bhutan into the new era, rather than giving his son the challenge of operating in a new political system with new players? Most scholars consider Jigme Singye recognised the public would never accept a stepping-back of the monarch if he were still on the throne. The king himself considered that his ongoing presence could compromise the people's adjustment to democracy (Mathou, 2016, p. 99). He felt that a new king was needed for the people to accept a change in the role of the monarchy. Furthermore, Jigme Singye told Yoshiro Imaeda (2016, p. 310) in March 2007 that he had done what he set out to achieve, seeing the country as in a "honeymoon period" which was for "the new king to enjoy." A contrary view, presented by Rizal (2015, pp. 29-30) is that the king gave up power reluctantly, while Bothe (2011, pp. 462-463) argues that he gave up the throne to ensure the

continuity of the Wangchuck monarchy – so that, in a confusing time of change, the "*disorder* of the constitution is replaced by a *sense of order* represented by the *continuity* of the Wangchuck dynasty" (my emphasis). The abdication seems, rather, in combination with the constitution, to have been designed to *enable change* through *nudging a shift* in people's attitudes to the monarch's role.

Tonga's case contrasts sharply with that of Bhutan. In Tonga, George V (as Tupouto'a) did not persuade his father to begin democratic reforms except towards the end of his reign. In this case, the monarchical succession, or rather the absence of it, held back reform for years and may have contributed to conflict when the time came.

The prospect of the *next* succession also influenced the reform process. There had been some fear (especially since the death of Tupou IV's second son, Ma'atu, in February 2004) that Tupou IV might outlive the crown prince, leading to anxieties amongst pro-democracy advocates that Lavaka would then become king and continue his father's autocratic policies.[173] There was a definite view that if Lavaka (later Tupou VI) had been king at the time, the reforms would not have happened.[174] One interviewee[175] commented that George V himself had some doubts about the leadership qualities of his successor. In addition, his 2008 BBC interview (see above) indicated that he, like Jigme Singye of Bhutan, considered that the accident of heredity should not decide who would exercise political power in the country (George V, 2008).

Thailand and Nepal both illustrate the uncertainty caused by succession, as expressed by Bagehot. In Thailand, during Bhumibol's lifetime, there was consistent concern about the qualities of the crown prince, now King Vajiralongkorn (Handley, 2006, p. 301). There are even suggestions that Bhumibol in the 1980s was considering abdicating in favour of Vajiralongkorn (Handley, 2006, p. 315), but

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[173] Interviewee TD7.
[174] Interviewee TLS5. In his earlier roles, Lavaka was not in favour of democratic reform. As prime minister, asked in an interview in May 2002 (Fonua, 2002b) why the government had just presented an economic reform programme but not a political one, he replied that Tonga already had its own type of democracy and that economic development was more important.
[175] Interviewee TD7.

in the end decided against it. It seems likely this was because of some unstatesmanlike behaviour by his son around that time (Handley, 2006, p. 321).

Bhumibol's death engendered recollections of the long-standing disquiet amongst Thais about Vajiralongkorn. *The Guardian* (2016) recalled the distaste for the crown prince expressed by privy council members and politicians to the US Embassy in 2010. The BBC's profile (2016) on Vajiralongkorn seriously offended the Thai authorities, perhaps because it included a blunt summary of concerns about his suitability. Given his erratic, violent behaviour (Manthorpe, 2014) and his unpredictability, Vajiralongkorn as crown prince was both hated and feared.[176]

One of the motivations for the 2014 coup was the military's determination to be in control at the time of the succession. There were even rumours that factions of the military and of the privy council were plotting to ensure Vajiralongkorn did not ascend the throne. Marshall (2016) saw Vajiralongkorn's apparent reluctance to be declared king immediately as evidence of this plot. Others regard the delay as a smart move enabling Vajiralongkorn to assess the situation and choose the most politically suitable timing.[177] Prayuth simply announced that the king wished to wait for an "appropriate time" to succeed (Bangkok Post, 2016a).

In Nepal the situation was even more unstable. The perennial challenge to monarchies – the uncertainty of the calibre of the heir – was exemplified in extreme form by Crown Prince Dipendra's murdering almost his entire family, and subsequent worries about the qualities of Gyanendra and his son, Paras. A monarch (Birendra) who had accepted (albeit unwillingly) the constraints of constitutional monarchy was replaced by one (Gyanendra) who soon asserted autocratic rule. The heir (Paras) was seen as an even worse prospect. As noted above, these factors had a strong impact on the decision to abolish the monarchy.

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[176] Interviewees ThD8, ThD2.
[177] Interviewee ThA5.

5.3 Comparative discussion

The above analysis depicts a clear divide between Bhutan and Tonga, on the one hand, and Thailand and Nepal on the other, as regards the role of the monarchs in driving or impeding democratisation.

The analysis shows how in both Bhutan and Tonga, when it came to making a decision to democratise the polity, the actions of the king himself (Jigme Singye in Bhutan and George V in Tonga) were crucial. In both cases the monarch decided that a democratic system was best for the country and used his authority to ensure that change took place. In Bhutan, this built on initial steps taken by Jigme Singye's father, while in Tonga George V's father (Tupou IV) resisted calls for reform. As we shall see in the next chapter, in Tonga there had been a pro-democracy movement since the late 1980s, seeking a more democratic system. In Bhutan, on the other hand, the population in general were hesitant about the idea of the monarch stepping back from active political involvement, and democracy was, paradoxically, introduced by decree (Turner et al., 2011). In Tonga King George V was able, once he had declared his intentions, to delegate the consultation and implementation process (to a certain extent) to others, and thereby remain one step removed from the detail of the reforms, corresponding to O'Donnell and Schmitter's (1986, p. 22) description of a reforming monarch.

A significant difference between the kings of Bhutan and Tonga is that while Jigme Singye was young on taking the throne, and did not introduce reforms straightaway, George V was a mature individual by the time he became king, and in a hurry to get change underway. Unlike Jigme Singye, he had not had the option of introducing democracy *before* much of a social movement for change had emerged. The Bhutanese monarchy was able to anticipate demand for change and to take action *before* such demand developed, without, however, losing their status (albeit with reduced power) as head of state. By relinquishing power, the monarch was able to secure the durability of the monarchy. Jigme Singye, as well as George V, can be said to have embraced the democratising monarch's bargain as described by Tridimas (2014). Rather than suffering a weakening of the monarchy as postulated by Huntington (1968), Jigme Singye and George V acquired a profile

as democrats, exhibiting a degree of the democratic charisma ascribed by Ünaldi (2012) to King Juan Carlos of Spain. They both undoubtedly saw their leadership of democratisation as their legacy (see O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, p. 25) as well as a way of securing the future of the monarchy for their heirs.

The experience of Thailand and Nepal was radically different from that of Tonga and Bhutan. Thailand's Bhumibol, except for his apparent democratic interlude in the late 1960s, was far from being the champion of democracy that some believed. He was not *above* politics but rather a key political actor, supporting if not spearheading interventions against democratic governments time and again. As we shall see in chapter 7, this included a mutually supportive relationship with the military. Gyanendra in Nepal took things even further, through his creeping coup from 2002 onwards, leading to taking power into his own hands in 2005. This did not help the monarchy. The consensus of commentators is that Gyanendra's own actions were the prime cause of the institution's abolition. There are suggestions by some scholars (for example Ferrara, 2015, p. 295) that a similar fate could await Thailand's monarchy (now under Bhumibol's successor) if it does not accept a democratic role. At the very least, as chapter 7 argues, the monarchy risks losing its influence relative to the military.

Curiously, when it comes to considering motivations, these were in some respects similar for the democratising and the democracy-impeding monarchs. A key objective of all the monarchs was the preservation of the monarchy, and yet this inspired quite different behaviour. Bhumibol and Gyanendra, who apparently believed that the monarch as decision-maker was morally, and for religious reasons, superior to elected politicians, undermined governments elected by the people. Jigme Singye and George V, who did not necessarily believe that hereditary monarchy would always produce a competent leader, sought to introduce a more democratic system. At the same time they apparently saw this as the best way to retain their family's hold on the position of monarch. Jigme Singye recognised that codifying the monarch's role in a constitution would protect both the hereditary monarchy and the sovereignty of the country, while George V believed that for a modern economy to thrive a democratic environment was required. Bhumibol placed a high priority on order and control, as did Gyanendra. Their (negative) attitude towards elected politicians and paternalistic attitude

towards their citizens constituted an impediment to democratisation (see O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, p. 10).

The risks of monarchical succession also had an impact on the monarchs, but in different ways. For George V doubts about the democratic commitment of his successor (coupled with his own ill health) contributed to his sense of urgency to introduce reforms. Jigme Singye also seemingly did not want to leave it to his successor to introduce democracy, and, more importantly, saw the risks of unbridled hereditary monarchical power into the future and so sought to curb this. He went further, through his own abdication, and by cementing both a retirement age for monarchs and the people's power to "fire" a monarch. The dubious moral calibre of Gyanendra's son was one reason behind people's loss of confidence in the monarchy. Bhumibol's doubts about the qualities of his own son may have changed his mind about a plan to abdicate in his son's favour in the 1980s. The questionable character of the new king adds to uncertainties about Thailand's political future.

The above comparative analysis of the monarchs' approach to democracy counters Huntington's (1968) contention that a democratising monarch risks precipitating the demise of the monarchy. In the four countries subject to this analysis it is, rather, the monarchies that seek to impede democratisation that appear most likely to put the monarchy at risk – demonstrably so in the case of Nepal.

And yet the monarchs have not operated in isolation. In the next two chapters, discussion focuses on the monarch's interaction with other agents (such as popular mobilisation and the military) to assess their impact on the countries' democratisation.

Chapter 6. Monarchy and Significant Actors 1: Popular Mobilisation

The previous chapter analysed the role of the individual monarchs in favouring or impeding democratisation and the significance of those actions for the outcomes in each country. But in at least some cases the interrelationship between the monarchy and key actors has contributed to those outcomes. Differing groups have sought to influence the monarchy or use their relationship with it to advance their own interests whether in favour of, or opposed to, a more democratic system.

Adopting the concept of a triangle of influence, which is popular with scholars of Thailand and Nepal in particular, the next two chapters look at the interaction of the monarchies with popular mobilisation and with the military, addressing the secondary research question:

- How has the monarchy's interaction with significant actors impeded or supported democracy?

This chapter considers popular mobilisation, while chapter 7 examines the military/monarchy relationship.

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) saw an assertive civil society and popular mobilisation as potentially key drivers in a transition away from authoritarian rule. The emergence of such assertiveness sometimes came when the authoritarian regime began to relax its repressive controls, and when key individuals began "testing the boundaries of behaviour initially imposed by the incumbent regime" (p. 49). These individual gestures can lead to the development of a community of interest which can lead to politicisation and anger. Sometimes the various groups of civil society act together in a popular "upsurge" (pp. 54-56), resulting in a "euphoric moment when a vast majority of the population feel bound together on equal terms". This united state does not last (p. 55) and can result in disappointed expectations, but it serves a role in "pushing the transition further than it would otherwise have gone" (p. 56). Di Palma (1990, pp. 39-40), too, describes a transition as a time when "coalitions of dissent" take place, between groups that

would not otherwise have much in common (apart from wanting an end to the old regime).

Some elements of these theorists' observations may be relevant to the particular circumstances of the countries under consideration. This chapter looks at the role of popular mobilisation in each country, concentrating on the pro-democracy movement (PDM) in Tonga; the impact of pro-democracy protests in Thailand plus the opposing Yellow and Red Shirts activists; and the 1990 and 2006 mass movements in Nepal. It also touches on specific questions relevant to a particular monarchy. These include, in the case of Bhutan, whether any (pro or anti-democracy) popular movement can be said to have existed at all; in Tonga, the role of the nobles as a (generally) opposing force to the pro-democracy movement; in Thailand, the Thaksin phenomenon; and in Nepal, the role of the Maoists.

6.1 Bhutan

Bhutan's prime minister, Tshering Tobgay is renowned for his inspiring "TED talk" on Bhutan and climate change. In this he stated that the Bhutanese people had not wanted democracy: "We didn't ask for it, we didn't demand it, and we certainly didn't fight for it. Instead, our king imposed democracy on us by insisting that he include it in the constitution" (Tobgay, 2016). This reflects the prevailing Bhutanese narrative depicting an absence of actors in favour of democracy and a wholly monarch-led transition. When Gallenkamp (2012) calls Bhutan's transition a "triumph of agency over structure", he is referring to monarchical agency.

In these circumstances, is it even possible to talk about key actors whose interaction with the monarchy fostered democratisation (or for that matter impeded it)? No pro-democracy faction emerged in the National Assembly or cabinet. There were no popular struggles and mass protests, except for those by the Lhotshampas in the 1990s. As observed in chapter 2 (2.4), some commentators see the Lhotshampa protesters as early advocates of democracy (for example DeGooyer, 2014, p. 94). And yet the Lhotshampas' primary focus was on their rights as a minority culture. The general view within Bhutan is that the Lhotshampa protest movement was hijacked by (non-Bhutanese) activists from outside the country who

then added additional themes (such as a call for democracy) to their demands (Pradhan, 2012, p. 167; 2016, p. 208).

This thesis argues (see 5.1) that whether or not the Lhotshampas were advocating democracy, it is more likely that their protest movement delayed, rather than precipitated, the fourth king's decision to introduce reform.

The Lhotshampa movement may have had have some influence on the content of the constitution. Pradhan suggests that the anti-discrimination and human rights provisions in the constitution were intended by the king to ensure that such discrimination did not arise again (2012, p. 181; 2016, p. 209). If so, this would be a way of acknowledging (but never stating openly) that mistakes had been made. According to one observer, successive Bhutanese governments have never accepted any responsibility for the refugee crisis, perhaps because they fear this would be seen as going against the king.[178]

Aside from the Lhotshampa protests, there was very little organised civil society activity in advance of political change. Civil society organisations tended to be established by royals and were (and are) targeted at addressing social problems. Rizal (2015, pp. 226-228) describes civil society as very weak and "co-opted by royals".

Nor does there appear to have been any organised public political activity *opposing* political change, although there were quiet attempts to influence the king against his planned reforms.[179] One group worth considering as potentially influential opponents of change were the public servants. Traditionally the royal family had held leadership roles or assigned them to royal retainers (see Ura, 1995) but, in the late twentieth century, educated commoners began to occupy senior positions in the civil service (see 4.2). Development of the professional civil service did not lead to pressure for democratisation. On the contrary, this group were content with the system which gave them a pathway to seniority and influence with the monarch. They would have had little motivation to push for political change. Senior civil servants had been customarily appointed by the king to ministerial positions under the old system (pre-1998) and apparently tried to oppose the king's moves towards

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[178] Interviewee BD6.
[179] Interviewees BLS2, BPS2.

having cabinet elected by the National Assembly and subject to limited tenure (see 3.1).[180] These efforts were not successful in changing the king's plans.

The wider royal family and palace officials, who had been displaced as policy leaders by the ascendancy of the professional civil service, would presumably have been even less willing to see further devolution of political power from the monarch but, again, appear to have had no influence on the king.

As described in chapter 9 (9.2), some members of the constitution drafting committee may have taken the opportunity to express their concerns during the drafting process and managed to secure in the constitution a greater degree of monarchical involvement in the polity than the monarch himself wished. But neither they nor other interest groups expressed overt opposition to the king's plans. The deferential nature of the society meant that the king was indeed able to impose democracy against the will of much of the country, as Tobgay asserted in his TED talk.

6.2 Tonga

In contrast to Bhutan, Tonga from the late 1980s had an active pro-democracy movement. Chapter 5 (5.1) touched on the differing opinions about the influence of the movement on George V's decision to democratise the country. There are two main variants of the argument that the king only carried out reforms because he was compelled to by the actions of the movement. The first is that the long agitation by pro-democracy activists over years gradually wore down the monarchy and made George V see democracy as the only way forward; the second is that the burning down of the Nuku'alofa Central Business District in November 2006 led George V to introduce democracy in order to avoid more violence.

This section argues that there were four different phases of the pro-democracy movement and each interacted in a different way with the monarchy. The section examines those four phases. Finally it looks at the counterpoint to the pro-democracy movement - the conservative influence of Tonga's nobles.

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[180] Interviewee BD5.

Phase 1, the birth of the movement, originally inspired by intellectuals Langi Kavaliku and Futa Helu, has been summarised in chapter 3 (3.1). Starting in the late 1980s, it involved petitions, marches, questioning of government by People's Representatives in parliament, and a Democracy Convention in November 1992. While the formal Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM),[181] established in 1992, was never a totally united or cohesive organisation, it is possible to identify the main founding objectives:

- Bring accountability and integrity to parliament and government
- Increase the proportion of People's Representatives in parliament
- Have all members of parliament elected by the people, with ministers chosen from amongst those elected.[182]

As well as 'Akilisi Pohiva and other young activists and People's Representatives, the movement included forward-thinking church leaders, especially Catholic Bishop Patelesio Finau and Free Wesleyan Reverend Dr 'Amanaki Havea, who spoke out against the lack of political rights of the people.

The movement did not seek abolition of the monarchy but rather a lessening of its involvement in politics; nor did they urge a complete overhaul of the 1875 constitution, but rather respect for the rights and freedoms set out in it, and revision to allow greater political rights. The PDM also expressed concerns about royal involvement in business – some (but not all) of them fairly dubious arrangements resulting from Tupou IV's increasingly ambitious and unrealistic schemes to enrich the kingdom. Tupou IV was also prey to costly proposals from unscrupulous foreigners (see Moala, 2002, pp. 93-134).

Among the rights enunciated in the 1875 constitution that the PDM wanted respected was freedom of the press. In this context a serious error by Tupou IV's government was its repeated attempts to stifle the media, including through altering

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[181] The movement has adopted various names since then, including the Tonga Human Rights and Democracy Movement (THRDM) from 1998, later the Human Rights and Democracy Movement of Tonga (HRDMT), and later still the Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democracy Movement (FIHRDMT). From the 2010 elections Pohiva's group has called itself the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands (DPFI or PTOA). For the purposes of this study the movement in its pre-DPFI days will be referred to as the PDM.

[182] See a 2000 interview with Sevele, then a PDM member and a People's Representative (Fonua, 2000); and a 2002 interview with then PDM member Lopeti Senituli (Fonua, 2002a).

the constitution.[183] Media freedom campaigners and judicial judgements supported the PDM's position against Tupou IV's government's efforts to undermine these basic rights.

As Campbell (2011, p. 127, p. 130) comments, these events united the various pro-democracy elements in their opposition to media repression; they also re-focused attention on the constitution, leading to additional motions in parliament which themselves spurred Prince Tu'ipelehake's initiative to propose a national consultative process on political reform (see 3.1).

This initiative was a manifestation of the **second phase** of the PDM/monarchy relationship. While the PDM's opposition to Tupou IV's inflexibility continued, from around the late 1990s the younger generation of royals (Crown Prince Tupouto'a[184] and his cousin Tu'ipelehake) began (cautiously at first) to develop channels of communication with those favouring political change.

In the case of Tupouto'a, the relationship with the PDM was at a distance, with his friend Feleti Sevele as intermediary. The two had discussed democracy since the 1970s (Sevele, 2009a). Sevele was elected to parliament in 1999. Within the PDM he advocated a measured approach.[185] He carried out much of the intellectual labour of the movement, and was an articulate spokesperson for it, making him a key actor and a potential lynchpin for a democratisation process once George V became king. A significant step towards this was Sevele's appointment as minister in 2005 after the decision to bring four elected representatives into cabinet (see 3.1).

This development signalled the beginning of the **third phase** in the PDM/monarchy relationship. Sevele's entry into government (particularly once the public service strike of 2005 intensified) accentuated the divisions within the PDM. The more moderate members wanted to work with what might be called the "soft-liners" (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, pp. 16, 19, 38) - the more progressive of the old regime - to negotiate a step-by-step reform. The others, impatient with the glacial

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[183] The initial phase of this fiasco is chronicled by Moala (2002) and later government efforts against the media by Campbell (2011, pp. 118-123, 125-127).
[184] Later King George V.
[185] Interviewee TP5.

pace under Tupou IV, came to favour revolutionary change. Ironically, this division intensified just as Tupou IV's reign was coming to an end and the reformer George V was preparing to take over.

As Taufe'ulungaki (2006)[186] argues, the 2005 strike and follow-up activism set a new pattern of more aggressive protest, establishing a template for the 2006 riots. One outcome of the strike, as the strikers moved beyond labour grievances to calls for political reform, was a resurrection of Prince Tu'ipelehake's proposals (originally presented in parliament in 2004) for a national consultation on political reform. The prince was a close confidant of his cousin, Tupouto'a, for whom he in all probability acted as a proxy. Campbell (2019, p. 151) suggests that Tupouto'a was the "strategist" and Tu'ipelehake "the popular 'front man." The establishment of the National Committee for Political and Constitutional Reform (NCPR), chaired by Tu'ipelehake, marked a point where "constitutional change acquired something approaching inevitability" (I. Campbell, 2008b, p. 5). In addition, Tu'ipelehake's personal qualities and status gave him the ability to draw the opposing groups together.[187] Had he and his wife not died tragically in a traffic accident in San Francisco in July 2006, the country might have achieved democracy with less conflict than was in fact the case.

Paradoxically, the relationship between the monarchy and the PDM deteriorated following the death of Tupou IV. This **fourth phase** involved both George V's announced commitment (in September 2006) to democratise (see 5.1) and the descent into violence on 16 November 2006 on the part of some protesters.

How did this come about? While it had seemed possible, with the NCPR process underway, Sevele as prime minister, and George V on the throne from September 2006, that a peaceful "crafting" of democracy could take place, along the lines envisaged by Di Palma (1990), the atmosphere following the presentation of the NCPR report was confused and conflict-ridden. The report itself (NCPR, 2006) was

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[186] 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, a Tongan public servant and academic for many years, was at that time Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific. She participated in the National Committee for Political and Constitutional Reform (NCPR) as well as the Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC). At a later date, she was appointed Minister of Education in the Tu'ivakanō government.
[187] Campbell (2011, p. 158) describes the prince and his wife as "a couple who alone seemed to have been able to form a link between people and government that the people would trust."

vague and unfocused, reflecting the consultation method employed,[188] but it contained some clear recommendations on the future political structure and electoral system. It recommended that:

- Parliament comprise 17 People's Representatives and 9 Nobles' Representatives;
- the prime minister and ministers be chosen from amongst those representatives;

and

- the electoral system be single transferable vote (STV) in multi-member electorates.

The Sevele government proposed the report be considered in detail in early 2007 in a Tripartite Committee of Parliament (TPC), which would have been the first time ever that political reforms had been seriously debated in parliament (Taufe'ulungaki, 2006, p. 3). Nevertheless, some People's Representatives allegedly fed people misinformation (that the government would prevent reform) at public meetings, "urging them to come to the protest ground" to intimidate the House (Senituli, 2006, p. 10).

In this atmosphere, Prime Minister Sevele sought to make a useful contribution to political dialogue, or, depending on one's point of view, to predetermine parliament's response to the NCPR report, through a press statement on 19 October (Sevele, 2006) presenting the government's roadmap for change. This included similar but significantly different reform options from those presented by the NCPR. For example, it proposed parliament comprise nine Nobles' Representatives and 14 People's Representatives (3 fewer than the NCPR recommendation) and that up to one third of the cabinet continue to be appointed by the king. According to Sevele's own comments as reported by the US Embassy, he was seeking to present a compromise between those favouring a complete political overhaul and those who preferred to retain the traditional system. He

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[188] The method was *talanoa* (informal discussion with a fairly open agenda).

described this as one among several proposals that the TPC could consider (Dinger, 2006b).

As noted in chapter 2 (2.4), Campbell considers the prime minister's 19 October statement something the PDM should have welcomed. There were, however, grounds for confusion as to whether the government's proposals would be open to debate. The statement gave the impression the proposals reflected the king's views (and might therefore have been interpreted as a privy council decision – in other words, a policy that was set in stone).[189] This inference can be drawn from a (post-riots) paper by Senituli (Sevele's political adviser and a fellow former PDM member) – reflecting cabinet views.[190] The paper described the NCPR proposals as too radical, especially in "disenfranchisement of His Majesty and the Royal Family" which would lead to "the erosion of their political significance within Tongan society and the implosion of the monarchical system" (Senituli, 2006, p. 9). In this light, Sevele's statement can be seen as an effort to ensure a significant executive role was retained by the king. It was unclear whether these suggestions were intended as an "interim step" or a template for the final reform structure (Dinger, 2006b).

An attempt by Sevele to negotiate a way forward with PDM People's Representatives Pohiva and 'Uliti Uata collapsed when the representatives subsequently reneged on the agreed approach, apparently because Pohiva's executive did not support it (Pohiva, 2007, p. 2; Senituli, 2006, p. 17). On 16 November, a growing number of protesters representing diverse agendas gathered near parliament and, despite a statement by Sevele signed under coercion (that the reformed parliament would include 21 People's Representative seats, and 9 Nobles' seats, in elections in 2008), rioters proceeded to burn and loot the CBD.

Looking back on this tragedy, Sevele's view was that the impatient reformers wanted to be revolutionary heroes and in 2006 "couldn't handle the truth" that the new king and government were going to bring about the long-sought changes (Sevele, 2009a; 2009b, p. 12). In any event, the distrust engendered by the

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[189] Later, in 2007, the king made it clear that he did not support the proposal that he appoint a third of the ministers (interviewee TP11). This may have been an evolution of his views from 2006.
[190] Interviewee TPS2.

coercion, the deliberate attacks by the rioters on the prime minister's (and the royal family's) businesses, the overall destruction of the city, plus the economic burden this placed on the country, served to delay rather than accelerate political reform. Sevele stated in parliament in June 2007 that he had wanted the government and People's Representatives to work together, and this had been his intention ever since he joined government, but "I have been betrayed, and I have been blamed for lying, week after week" (Matangitonga, 2007).[191] The PDM People's Representatives for their part regularly made threats (or "warnings") that a repetition of the riots was possible, which aggravated Sevele's concerns about security and delayed the government's attention to next steps in the reforms (see for example Fonua, 2007).

As noted in chapter 5 (5.1), a contrary view, held by several interviewees,[192] is that threats of a repeat of the riots made the king and the government proceed with reforms. This accompanies a view (expressed in the international media and elsewhere) that it was the riots that persuaded the king to carry out reforms. Kennedy (2012, p. 328), in the context of her study of land issues (see 4.2), sees the riots as the cause of the Tongan government's political reforms: "the government ultimately responded to the violence by increasing the number of commoner representatives." Steven Ratuva, for his part, states (2016, p. 341) that the riots were "a catalyst to speedy change and the king promised wide reforms in political representation, the powers of the monarch and other areas of governance" (ignoring the fact that those changes had been announced in September 2006). As we have seen (chapter 5), George V had been planning for many years to introduce democracy to Tonga.

This thesis assesses that the riots delayed, rather than precipitated, reform. The king's speech to the closing of parliament in November 2006 (George V, 2006), and his ongoing urging to government to continue with the reform programme, rescued the reforms from the delays engendered by the riots (see 5.1). George V himself, in a BBC interview in July 2008, described the riots as a "sorcerer's apprentice" episode - a collective madness where "demagogues" had incited a

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[191] See also US reporting of July 2007 (Dinger, 2007).

[192] For example, interviewees TPS4, TAJ1, TP13.

crowd and then found they could not control it (George V, 2008). Perhaps decades of distrusting government and monarchy had meant that protesters did not trust that a new team had brought change. Or perhaps, as Sevele suggested, they wanted to take the credit themselves for being revolutionaries.

To sum up, in assessing the PDM's influence on and interaction with the monarchy over the transition it is important to differentiate four distinct phases:

(1) Initially, the PDM helped introduce into public debate the issues of accountable government, responsible royalty, and political reform.

(2) In the 1990s and early 2000s these efforts were complemented by other civil society actors (specifically the media), court judgements, and the unspoken support of Tupouto'a (later George V) through his cousin Tu'ipelehake and his friend Sevele. As noted in the previous chapter (5.1), George V himself found the activists useful in persuading conservatives of the need for reform (George V, 2010b).

(3) After Sevele entered government, divisions grew within the PDM, and some in the PDM came to favour revolutionary change. As Chapter 5 also suggests (5.1) their agitation, especially the 2005 public service strike, may have made George V decide that reform was needed speedily and would require more than accumulating changes via convention.

(4) The fourth phase followed the death of Tupou IV. It included George V's declaration of his intention to democratise, and the riots of November 2006. After the riots, there was a backlash from conservative Tongans which put the reform process at risk.[193] It was only the intervention (and determination) of the king that kept the process on the government's agenda (see 5.1).[194]

Noblesse oblige

In Teena Brown Pulu's view (2014, p. 329) "Tonga's trials and tribulations were never about getting full democracy of the Western liberal sort. It was always about power-sharing [between nobles and commoners]."

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[193] Interviewee TB5.
[194] Interviewees TD7, TP7.

Not only did George V keep the government on its toes, he was also responsible for persuading Tonga's nobles to acquiesce to the political reforms. Based on his conception of the founding "covenant" between the monarchy and the nobility (Matangitonga, 2005a), he considered a way had to be found to accommodate nobles' interests, while not allowing them to stymie the reform process. Only the king could do this: paradoxically, the king who sought to *remove himself* from executive leadership had to *assert* such leadership to bring the nobles on board.

We have seen (3.1) how Tupou I sought to control the power of the chiefs but felt the need to retain a special class of privileged "nobles" so as to ensure their support for his reforms and his dynasty. The 1875 constitution included a reference (retained in the reformed constitution) to a "covenant binding on the King and chiefs of this kingdom…for ever" linked specifically to a prohibition on land sales (Article 104 of revised constitution). Present day Tongan royalty and nobility appear to regard the "covenant" or "social contract" between the monarchy and the chiefs as justification for the disproportionate political power of the nobles. This "contract" is referred to obliquely in George V's address to the nation on the eve of the November 2010 elections (which ushered in the new political system), cited in the previous chapter (5.1) (George V, 2010a).

With a few exceptions, the nobles had no interest in political reform.[195] As discussed in chapter 4 (4.2), they sought to protect their political, economic and traditional privileges. They acted as a conservative counterpoint to the efforts of both the PDM and the monarchy (under George V) to bring about change. But part of the 1875 original "bargain" involved their acceptance of the Tupou monarch as *hau* (supreme traditional chief and head of the nobles). Many nobles resented Sevele's role as prime minister and found it difficult to accept that democratisation was the wish of the king.[196] Hence George V's role was crucial in convincing them to participate in the reform consultations. Both the king and Sevele appeared to believe that this would not be possible unless the nobles retained something (albeit

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[195] One Nobles' Representative favourably disposed towards reform nevertheless commented in private that if the People's Representatives' seats were to be increased to 17 then the nobles should similarly have 17 seats (conversation with a Nobles' Representative, 2008).
[196] Interviewee TP5.

lessened) of their political strength.[197] Accordingly, the reformed system, while reducing the nobles' proportionate strength in parliament, still left them with 9 out of 26 seats – making them a powerful bloc who, with a few allies from the People's Representatives, could elect a prime minister and form a government. For the nobles, securing sufficient strength in parliament was one way of ensuring their economic privileges would continue (see 4.2). Since a representative of the nobles was part of the Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC), their interests were represented in that consultative process (see 8.1).

This consideration of the nobles' influence on the monarchy's approach to the transition assesses that both George V and Sevele were (or became) convinced that concessions needed to be made to the nobles. At the same time, as we have seen (5.1), George V saw the agitation by pro-democracy advocates as a useful tool in persuading the nobles of the need for political change. In the end the reforms constitute another type of bargain between the monarchy and the nobility, in which the nobles accepted political reform in return for retention of a still significant degree of status and influence.

6.3 Thailand's battles for control: Red Shirts, Yellow Shirts, Thaksinites, networks

Neither in Thailand (1932) nor Nepal (1951) was the *initial* revolutionary change the result of popular uprisings. These came later: in Thailand, in 1973, 1976 and 1992, plus, from 2005 onwards, the rival Yellow and Red Shirts; in Nepal – see below – in 1990 and 2006.

As we have seen in the previous chapter (5.1), the 20th century Thai pro-democracy up-risings had the perverse effect of strengthening royal influence, while one of the

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[197] Sevele's opinion on the nobles' political role changed since his days in the PDM. In a 2000 interview he stated that there would be no "problems with the people electing the nobles' representatives", as this would make the nobles accountable to the people (Fonua, 2000). Later, he apparently came to believe this would be "morally wrong" and saw concessions to the nobles as part of the country's obligation to them for having ceded considerable power in 1875. More importantly, he notes that it [reform] would have been "very difficult" without the nobles' agreement (Fonua, 2012).

two 21st century protest groups, the Yellow Shirts, has favoured military supremacy and coups, all with the excuse of protecting the monarchy. This section will concentrate on the 21st century movements.

To date, 21st century Thailand has been awash with actors with highly divergent visions of Thailand's political future battling it out for control of the polity (see 3.1). Ferrara (2011) examined the opposing protest movements, the so-called People's Alliance for Democracy (the PAD, or Yellow Shirts – later the People's Democratic Reform Committee - PDRC) and the Thaksinite United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), or Red Shirts. The royalist Yellow Shirts had two separate incarnations. The first, as the PAD, began around 2005 out of concern about Thaksin's growing autocratic tendencies and disregard for the rule of law. As was often the case for those opposing Thai elected governments, their message was framed around the monarchy. Their leader (Sondhi)'s [198] stated aim was to mobilise the monarchy against Thaksin, with the excuse that Thaksin was "usurping" royal prerogatives and the "joint sovereignty" of monarchy and people (Connors, 2008, p. 149).

The skill of this grouping in "manufacturing crises"[199] was one of the causes of the 2006 military coup, although their initial preference was for decisive direct intervention by the king (see for example Thongchai, 2008, p. 12).

The PAD and its second incarnation, the PDRC,[200] worked to bring down successive Thaksinite governments by occupying airports, boycotting elections, occupying Government House, disrupting the economy, encouraging violence against counter-protestors, and generally working to undermine the democratic system. The PDRC (formally established in 2013, under an influential and wealthy leader, Suthep Thaugsuban), was more overtly an attack on democratic values. Its message was that some voters were less equal than others, and "reform" (ie reduction in the democratic rights of voters deemed inferior) was needed before any further elections. It is to this group that the latest constitution panders.

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[198] Sondhi Limthongkul began as an associate of Thaksin's but after a falling-out became a bitter opponent.
[199] Interviewee ThA6.
[200] Initially named "People's Committee for Absolute Democracy with King as Head of State".

Self-interest in gaining or retaining influence as a non-elected elite - dubbed "reign-seeking" by Veerayooth (2016) - was also a motivator for the PDRC. In addition, there is a significant, but not absolute, urban/rural divide between the Yellow and Red Shirts. The Bangkok middle classes, who make up the bulk of the Yellow Shirt supporters, have little connection with the countryside (Baker, 2016, p. 399) - see chapter 4 (4.2).

Thaksin's supporters, the UDD (Red Shirts), who appeared in response to the Yellow Shirts, are mainly rural-based. They engaged in counter-protests, supporting the Thaksinite governments (when these were governing) and protesting against the military and other non-Thaksinite regimes installed via coup, "judicial coup", or "silent coup". Learning from the Yellow Shirts, the Red Shirts occupied areas (including shopping malls) and disrupted events, most notably an ASEAN Summit in April 2009. Both Yellow and Red Shirt protests have involved violence and some deaths, but the most brutal attacks were those by the army against the Red Shirts in the heart of Bangkok in April 2010. Both the army and the monarchy showed support for Yellow Shirts over Red Shirts. The army did little to protect elected governments against Yellow Shirt protests but was quick to act violently against Red Shirts. The monarchy (especially Queen Sirikit and Princess Chulabhorn) made gestures of support for the Yellow Shirts (Pavin, 2014, p. 6), which Ünaldi (2014) argues strengthened anti-royalist sentiment amongst the Red Shirts, although hidden in anonymous graffiti and social media.

The Thaksin phenomenon is new to Thailand. Thaksin was the first politician since the Sarit era to attract resounding personal popularity and bears some resemblance to Sarit in being a popular, but firm, leader. But Sarit, despite his pretence at having established "Thai style democracy," was not an elected democrat (Thak, 2007b). According to Baker, the Thaksin era brought the "emergence of a mass movement which discovered the potential of elective democracy to demand a fairer distribution of power and resources" (2016, p. 397). In this, Thaksin was seen as a threat. Existing elite networks feared losing influence to his own "network Thaksin," given his unprecedented dominance of both politics and the economy (Ukrist, 2016).

Thaksin was also the first Thai politician to work out how to use public policy to build a majority,[201] exemplified by his health care policy whereby he promised (and implemented) a flat 30-baht (approximately US$1) fee for all Thais for doctors' visits. This helps explain how, despite his increasingly autocratic tendencies while prime minister, Thaksin became and remains for his supporters a symbol of democracy. It also explains why he was seen as trying to usurp the monarch's charisma as champion of the people (see the detailed analysis of this in Ünaldi, 2016, pp. 53-85).

Both the Yellow and Red Shirt movements have refrained from open protest under the current military regime, doubtless because, as regards the Yellow Shirts, they have achieved their objectives and, for the Red Shirts, the repressive measures of the military will have prevented protest.[202] These groups are likely to re-emerge once elections are held under the new system and it becomes clear how little power elected governments will have (see 8.2). Given the mutually supportive relationship between Yellow Shirt royalists, monarchy and military, it seems likely that Yellow Shirt protests would re-emerge should a Thaksin-oriented government be elected. Red Shirts might well protest should (as seems likely) any such government's effectiveness be severely hampered by military control.

6.4 Nepal

"A public that can conduct a people's movement like [that]…in April 2006 cannot be regarded as without agency" (K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. xiv).

Unlike the case of Thailand, in Nepal the popular protest movements (*Jan Andolan*) of 1990 and 2006 were key determinants in persuading the monarchs to reinstate democratic systems (Katsiaficas, 2012, pp. 212-213). The 1990 protests resemble the "popular upsurge" described by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1985, pp. 54-56) as a united front across a diverse range of civil society groups. Those protests persuaded King Birendra to accept a role as constitutional monarch and resulted in the reinstatement of parliament and the drafting of a new constitution.

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[201] Interviewee ThD6.
[202] In 2018 a protest movement has sprung up, demanding that there be no further postponement of promised elections.

The 2006 *Jan Andolan* built on people's experiences in 1990 as well as the decade of political freedoms since then. Their awareness of political rights and the state's duties was far more developed than in 1990.[203] The 2006 uprising was more broad-based than in 1990, and represented the culmination of factors which persuaded King Gyanendra to restore democratic parliamentary government, following on from the November 2005 Understanding between the mainstream parties and the Maoists (see 3.1).

The mainstream parties formally announced in February 2006 their alliance with the Maoists and "called on all Nepalis opposed to the autocratic monarchy to unleash a 'storm of protests' across the country" (Adhikari, 2014, p. 181). The Maoists agreed to abandon some of their military activity and support a nationwide strike called for April 2006. This turned into a mass movement of civil disobedience and was supported by a huge range of people and organisations (Adhikari, 2014, p. 199): professionals, civil society activists, workers, and peasants from the countryside. In contrast to 1990, the 2006 mobilisation was not restricted to the urban community.

Over 19 days in April 2006 protesters called, not for a republic, but for an end to dictatorial monarchy (K. Dixit, 2010). They gave the king a strong message that his "half-measure" response of 21 April (proposing to restore a government from political parties but not a parliament) was not acceptable. On 22 April an estimated five million people (out of a population of 30 million) were out on the streets calling for full democracy. Three days later Gyanendra agreed to restore parliament.[204]

George Katsiaficas (2012, p. 244) argues that it was the *uniting* of all the different strands of opposition which made the 2006 *Jan Andolan* so successful. He asserts that it "intimately intertwined the Maoist-led armed struggle in the countryside with vibrant popular mobilizations" and that this unity "gave the Nepalese movement strength and resiliency." Interviewees[205] held the view that it was the will of the people, and not the Maoists, that inspired the *Jan Andolan* which ultimately

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[203] Interviewee NJ1.
[204] There were other influences as well, including the fact that, at the end, the army refused to attack the protesters (very likely because they knew that India would not support them).

[205] NJ6, NA7, TJ4.

persuaded the king to cede power, although it is clear that the Maoists brought in a broader participation than had occurred in 1990.

Until the November 2005 Understanding, the Maoists had not been advocates of democracy. As discussed in earlier chapters (see 3.1 and 4.2), once democracy had been restored in the 1990s, a Maoist faction decided from February 1996 to abandon electoral politics and seek to launch a peasant-led revolution in the countryside, from which they aimed to ultimately encircle the cities (Vanaik, 2008, p. 50), inspired by Mao and by *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru. Initially, the Maoists gained support in some villages by championing peasants against landlords. Later they exerted control through extortion, kidnappings and violence. Among other actions they forced young children to abandon school and join the Maoist army.

Journalist CK Lal (2009) described them as arch manipulators, fooling oppressed people into thinking they were acting in their interests. For example, Maoist leaders purported to champion the cause of minorities and victims of discrimination, but later (when in parliament and in government) reverted to their high caste hill Hindu interests (Lawoti, 2014, p. 132). According to Adhikari, the Maoists with their "People's War" were "swimming against a powerful tide," as the message from the 1990 People's Movement had been that the people wanted parliamentary multi-party democracy, not one-party state capture (2014, pp. x-xi).

Once the army was deployed against the Maoists, the villagers suffered from oppression and killings from both sides. The conflict led to at least 16,000 deaths over a decade.[206] Of interest to this study are suggestions that, among the multiple negotiations attempted during the conflict, the Maoists and the monarchy were engaged in talks aimed at a deal to exclude the democratic political parties from the polity (Adhikari, 2014, pp. 165-166, 168; K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 11; Gautam, 2016, p. 56; Jha, 2014, p. 62; Whelpton, 2005, p. 207). It appears that even during Birendra's reign the Maoists were playing a double game. They were negotiating with the monarchy to offer Birendra the presidency in a republic if he abdicated. Whelpton suggests that Birendra might, at least initially, have seen the insurgents as a good way to get back at the politicians "who had forced him to yield power in

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[206] The conflict has been covered in detail by Adhikari (2014) and Thapa (2012; 2004), among others.

1990" (p.207). Gyanendra, too, seems to have toyed with the idea of a deal with the Maoists. Adhikari (2014, p. 168) suggests the king sent a message to the Maoists in mid-January 2005 offering to share power with them and make Maoist leader Prachanda prime minister (although soon after this Gyanendra decided on a different path, his February 2005 coup). Gautam (2016, p. 56) argues that the Maoists' primary target was liberal multi-party democracy, not the monarchy, and to this end they had been "secretly sending out feelers to King Birendra" and later to Gyanendra.

Rather than being a force for democracy, the Maoists explored every avenue, including a potential deal with the monarchy, for disrupting democratic consolidation. They provided Gyanendra with the excuse to disestablish democracy through his coups (Joshi & Mason, 2007, p. 396). They also contributed to the political parties' difficulties in democratic governance, through the "colossal disruption" they caused the country (K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 89). All this changed after the king's 2005 coup. The Maoists abandoned any idea of a deal with the monarchy (K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 11; Jha, 2014, p. 62) and, as we have seen, signed the historic November 2005 Understanding with the mainstream parties. The 2006 People's Movement then compelled the king to agree to a return to democracy.

Another protest movement worth mentioning was the 2007 Madhesi uprising. The Madhesis in the Terai region of southern Nepal had always felt excluded from King Mahendra's narrative of monarchy and what it meant to be Nepali (Jha, 2014, pp. 164-189). The Maoists, as noted above, had used ethnic issues as a political tool and this empowered the Madhesis to push for their rights and for federalism (p. 179). Hence, when the drafters of the 2007 interim constitution (including the Maoists) did not at first include a reference to federalism, the Madhesis felt betrayed and mounted a series of protests (calling for proportional representation and a federal system to be included in the interim constitution) which met with a violent police response (pp. 185, 188). These protests resulted in more deaths of citizens than the 2006 *Jan Andolan* (K. M. Dixit, 2011, p. 131). Then Prime Minister G P Koirala at first responded by calling for calm but, when protests continued, he on 7 February 2007 announced that the interim constitution would be altered to include changes to the electoral system and a commitment to federalism (Jha, 2014, p. 188). Two agreements, the "22 point" and "8 point" agreements between

the government and the protest movements cemented these commitments (Human Rights Watch, 2015). The protest movements also led to the formation of separate Madhesi political parties, with considerable strength in the 2008 Constituent Assembly (but they had splintered by the time of the 2013 election). According to Nepali journalist Yubaraj Ghimire (2017), some of the former Madhesi protest groups, which had formed the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) outside parliament, were the organisers of the September 2015 protests against the constitution finally approved by the Constituent Assembly (see 8.1).

6.5 Comparative discussion

This chapter has examined how popular mobilisation's influence has differed in the four countries. In only one case, that of Nepal, does the scenario bear a strong resemblance to the notion of a popular upsurge as envisaged by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, pp. 54-56), where a vast range of actors unite in calling for change, and influence a more significant outcome than might otherwise have occurred. Nepal, too, exemplifies the risk identified by Di Palma (1990, p. 40), of challenges for a new democracy if "coalitions of dissent" formed during the transition fail to coalesce into "one coalition of consent for democracy." (Some of these challenges faced by Nepal's Constituent Assembly are examined in 8.1).

In Tonga, the growth of the PDM had some elements of a growing civil society call for change, especially during the 2005 Public Service Strike. The strike, which developed into a call for political change, reinforced for the then crown prince the need for speedy reform. The following year he, as king, became the agent of change. Bhutan was far from the "popular upsurge" model, as there was no popular movement for democracy apart from the (earlier) Lhotshampa protests, which slowed rather than accelerated change.

Thailand's circumstances were the most complex. Civil society's role changed from the earlier upsurge of protest against autocratic governments (1973, 1976 and 1992), to a situation from 2006 onwards, where protests have reflected a conflict between democratic and anti-democratic forces. While Nepal's people, in their 2006 mobilisation, gave a strong (and united) demonstration of their determination to have democracy restored, this was not the case in Thailand. As Prajak (2016,

pp. 468, 482) comments, the Yellow Shirts' animosity towards the Yingluck government made it clear that civil society does not always drive democratisation. Sometimes the opposite is true.

Protecting the monarchy was one of the arguments deployed by Thailand's anti-democracy protesters, but it was not just this mantra that ensured their success in 2014. An additional, significant factor was the constant presence of a military with the same mission waiting in the wings. As O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 21) write "no transition can be forced purely by opponents against a regime which maintains the cohesion, capacity and disposition to apply repression." If the military chooses (and has the power) to resist transition, it will do so. In Nepal, it was partly the military's refusal to assist the monarch against the 2006 *Jan Andolan* that ended absolute monarchical rule. The next chapter examines the relationship between the military and the monarchy in influencing democratisation in Thailand and Nepal (and whether it had any significance in Bhutan and Tonga).

Chapter 7. Monarchy and Significant Actors 2: The Military

The military are cited in the literature as potentially significant actors, generally in impeding democratisation (see for example Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006, p. 253; Chaulia, 2008; Tilly, 1990, p. 200). In the countries under consideration here, the size and role of the military vary enormously. Expenditure on the military, as a percentage of GDP, ranges from 0.9% in Tonga to 1.8% in Thailand, with Bhutan's at 1.0% and Nepal's at 1.6% (NationMaster, 2000-2018).

For this thesis, the interaction between the military and the monarchy is of particular interest. In both Thailand and Nepal the monarch/military relationship has been instrumental in the fate of democracy, although in different ways. In Bhutan and Tonga it has been of lesser significance, but the Thailand and Nepal experiences point to risks to avoid. This chapter accordingly begins with an investigation of the monarchy/military relationship in Thailand, followed by Nepal, and ends with a consideration of potential implications for Bhutan and Tonga.

7.1 Thailand: a coup is not a coup

In Thailand the mutually supportive relationship between the monarchy and the military has been a key impediment to embedding democracy.[207]

In the fruitful symbiotic relationship between the monarchy and the military, cemented by the Cold War, the monarchy gradually gained ascendancy. The king became the basis of legitimacy for this coalition of extra-constitutional powers, valued by the military for his religious and moral supremacy, or "non-coercive power" (C. Gray, 1986, p. 625), working in symbiosis with the military's force.

The military sees its primary duty as being to the king, not the people. This is set out in a 2014 Ministry of Defence policy document, cited by Chambers and Napisa (2016, pp. 427-428), which describes the military's role as to "safeguard and

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[207] Interviewees ThA1, ThA2.

uphold the monarchy institution" ensuring it remains "the most important institution in the nation." This brings power and legitimacy.

Both the military and the monarchy have gained from the authoritarian nature of Thailand, and have accordingly cooperated to keep civilian governments vulnerable (Pavin, 2014, p. 3). Every coup is legitimised on the theme of protecting the monarchy.[208]

The military/monarchy symbiosis was very much alive at the time of the 2006 coup. As Farrelly (2016) observes, the military coup-makers "were obliged to infuse their actions with royal mystique".

The military's mantra from the Sarit era onward has always been one of protecting the monarchy, to which they sometimes add that they aim to "strengthen democracy" (Veerayooth and Hewison, 2016, p. 375). This includes spinning a myth that military coups are democratic. In September 2017 Minister of Defence General Prawit told newly appointed assistant military attachés that Thailand is not a dictatorship but rather a "democracy without elections." He instructed them to spread the message that the 2014 coup was not a coup, but rather "use of power in administering the country through an act of coup only" (Pravit, 2017a).

The last three military interventions (2006 coup, 2008 silent coup, 2014 coup) have "enhanced the military's power" in comparison to that of the monarchy (Chambers and Napisa, 2016, p. 426). These interventions, targeted at Thaksin and Thaksinite governments, also involved another ally, as we have seen in the previous chapter (6.3): anti-Thaksin Yellow Shirt protests, which supposedly created a state of disorder that had to be dealt with. This gave the military "an environment in which the generals could feel secure in making a coup" (Baker, 2016, p. 393).

Rather than just continuing a pattern, the coup of 2014 and the subsequent Prayuth regime are qualitatively different from the 2006 and other Thai coups of recent years. The 2014 coup may have brought the military regime in for the long haul (Baker, 2016; Ockey, 2017), despite assertions that they were preparing the way for (eventual) democratic government. The new elements inspiring the 2014 coup-

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[208] Interviewee ThA6.

leaders, both critical to the military's retaining (or exceeding) the power and privileges it has enjoyed through its relationship with the monarchy, were:

- The (then pending) monarchical succession

and

- The desire to wipe out the influence of Thaksin and his movement for all time.[209]

The up-coming succession was a strong motivator for the military's holding onto power over the transitional period, as they sought to be in control when the new king came to the throne. The succession also gave the military the excuse to address the second concern (eliminating Thaksin's influence for ever). By arguing that at the time of transition from one monarch to another the country needed steady peace and order, the military were able to put together a constitution and associated laws that enable them to vet and oversee any elected government for at least five years and control its policy parameters for up to twenty years (Peel, 2017a) – see 8.2. This has the added effect (or so they must hope) of ensuring no Thaksinite government will be elected.

The military saw Thaksin as a threat, not just to the monarchy (in usurping the monarch's charisma) but also to the military itself. He had attempted to place his own appointees in senior military positions. The military and the monarchy (through privy council head, Prem) collaborated to undermine these attempts and make sure that Palace-approved military leaders prospered (Chambers and Napisa, 2016).

This does not mean that the monarchy (through Prem) and military have identical aims (although they do share the objective of averting any influence of Thaksin over King Vajiralongkorn).[210] The succession has put the spotlight on the rivalry

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[209] In 2006 the military had hoped to oust Thaksin through a few changes to the constitution and exiling him, but victories by Thaksin proxies in all subsequent elections persuaded them that a more drastic rooting out was needed (Baker, 2016).
[210] During Thaksin's prime ministership he provided the then crown prince with considerable financial assistance, but it appears the two have not been in contact in recent years.

between the privy council and the military regime for dominance over the new monarch.

Even though the 2014 coup at first seemed aimed at being in power at the time of succession, it may have become more about holding onto power for its own sake (The Economist, 2016). Even though a constitution has been devised that strongly reduces the power of elected politicians, the military are showing no hurry to hold elections.[211] There are suggestions that Prayuth, having developed a taste for power, might seek to postpone elections even further, or, alternatively, seek the prime ministership himself. News website *Prachatai* (Kornkritch, 2016) suggests Prayuth would be happy to be approached if there were no agreement on a politician for the role (the 2017 constitution permits an outsider to be chosen as prime minister in such circumstances). Shui Yu (2016), on the other hand, thinks it unlikely the military would attempt to put one of its leaders in a role such as prime minister. Rather, it will rely on the instruments it has put in place to cement its hold on power and lessen its reliance on endorsement by a now questionable royal charisma.

With the change of king, the military must see itself with a real chance of becoming the dominant partner in the relationship with the monarchy. Chambers (2016) suggests this has already happened, with Bhumibol's passing.[212] Michael Montesano (2016) comments that the lengthy spell of military dictatorship since the 2014 coup "may be due to the effective collapse of royalism as viable ideology and to the attempt to replace it with a fascinating and obscene experiment in praetorianism." Chambers and Napisa (2016, p. 430) reach a similar conclusion: Thailand is now "a military dictatorship seeking to establish what might be termed a tutelary democracy," in which non-elected bodies have a "veto power" over elected representatives.

Of course, the military will hedge its bets by continuing to appear closely linked to the monarchy, and to use protecting the monarchy as an excuse for anti-democratic action. The military and the new king need each other to survive (C.

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[211] Now (as at October 2018) promised to be held in February 2019.
[212] Furthermore, there is now no "final arbiter" to keep a check on the military's actions: it is difficult to envisage Vajiralongkorn in that role (interviewee ThA6).

Gray, 2016). But the military aims to be in charge of the relationship, a situation not seen in Thailand for over 40 years.

For the military, then, transition is not a route to democracy but to control. As Handley (2016) puts it:

> This [military in charge] is a bleak backdrop for the end of King Bhumibol's reign. He was the model of a great king — modest, earnest and selfless, with his attention focused on the neediest. But he has left Thailand, as well as his heir, in the same situation he inherited all those years ago: in the hands of corrupt and shortsighted generals who rule however they want. And those King Bhumibol cared about the most — the Thai people — must suffer the consequences.

7.2 Nepal

The Nepalese military has no history of a takeover or coup aimed at inserting a military-led government.[213] The army does have a long history of close association with autocratic monarchy, going back to the country's founding by Prithvi Shah. Adhikari (2014, p. 55) describes how for King Mahendra the army was a "crucial tool of power" but he made sure it did not develop its own independent political aims.

The military remained "staunchly loyal" to the monarchy even after 1990 (Adhikari, 2014, p. 55). At the time the 1990 constitution was being drawn up, the then army chief, according to General Rookmangud Katawal (a future army chief), sought to ensure the army would remain under the king and that some of his rights would be retained (Katawal, 2016, p. 229).[214] The provisions in the 1990 constitution were somewhat ambiguous (see 9.1). Articles 118-119 made the king the Supreme Commander of the army. Supposedly, his decisions about mobilising the army would be dependent on the recommendation of the National Security Council, made up of the prime minister, the minister of defence and the army chief. Since

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[213] Interviewee NLS1.
[214] Katawal was army chief from September 2006 to 2009, and a professional soldier for his entire career. He is best known for the unsuccessful attempts by the Maoist-led government to fire him in early 2009, described in detail in his autobiography (2016, pp. 19-60).

the prime minister was often the minister of defence, this was frequently a two-person Council, giving considerable influence to the army chief. In addition, the army continued to regard its duty as to obey the king (Adhikari, 2014, p. 56), not the elected government. Under Birendra, this meant that the king's wish to keep the army out of the Maoist conflict prevailed.

Under Gyanendra, the army was deployed against the Maoists. Adhikari (2014, pp. 70-71) contends that the army and monarchy were working together to enhance each other's power, with no regard for the constitution or democracy. He specifically criticises General Katawal as undemocratic. Katawal, he argues, using a pseudonym (Ajay P Nath), questioned the value of democracy, seemingly favouring "an enlightened despotism" over "chaotic democracy" (Adhikari, 2014, p. 71). Based on the same persona, an International Crisis Group report (2009, p.13) of August 2009 describes Katawal as a "hardened royalist who had never made any secret of his contempt for democratic values. According to Mikel Dunham (2016a), however, in his foreword to Katawal's autobiography, it was incorrect to assume Katawal was against democracy: he declared himself in favour of the constitution and the rule of law, and saw the army's role as protecting them.

In any event the aftermath of the 2005 royal coup led to a change in Katawal's attitude to Gyanendra. Katawal (2016, pp. 332-337) describes how many people initially welcomed the king's coup, thinking it might be a route to restoring peace to the country. Hutt (2005b) notes that if the coup had simply meant giving the army free rein against the Maoists, people might have welcomed it as an attempt to bring peace. Instead, it involved an increased army presence on the city streets, aimed at suppressing civic protest. The monarchy had become increasingly reliant on military support, because of the extreme unpopularity of Gyanendra and his son. Katawal (2016, pp. 332-337) after a short time recognised that the king needed to hand power back to the political parties, as otherwise he risked the future of the monarchy. Katawal tried to get this message to Gyanendra, without success.

By the time of the 2006 *Jan Andolan* it is probable that the only way Gyanendra could have held onto power would have been through military assistance. But by this point the army was running low on arms and India refused to provide more (despite pleading from the king). Whether through democratic conviction or

because of urging from India, the army at this juncture became a force for democracy. Its chief "informed the king that there was nothing the [army] could do to bring the crowds under control" and said he should give in to their demands or risk the existence of the monarchy (Adhikari, 2014, p. 202).[215]

Even after the king had relinquished executive power he attempted, according to Katawal (2016, pp. 353-356), to have the army disrupt the opening day of the interim parliament in May 2006. It seems some army staff received orders from the palace to surround the parliament (in preparation for another royal coup?), but they did not comply. Nor did the king's efforts to interfere end there. Jha's palace sources informed him that even as Gyanendra was leaving the palace in 2008 he thought that the army would rescue him. In reality, the military had by then accepted the new state of affairs and did not want to be "on the wrong side of history" (Jha, 2014, p. 5). At this juncture the military were firmly supporting democracy.

7.3 Bhutan and Tonga

As is the case with Thailand and Nepal, in Bhutan and Tonga the king is designated the Commander in Chief of the army. This is not merely a symbolic role (as in European parliamentary monarchies) but rather a position of potential influence over the military (see 9.1). Does this lead to risks of dual legitimacy in Bhutan and Tonga and, in a worst case scenario, a possibility of a royal coup (as took place in Nepal) or a military takeover (as has happened repeatedly in Thailand)?

In Bhutan, the king's role as Commander in Chief of the army is not generally seen as a concern for the new democracy. Rizal (2015, p. 162), however, comments that the lack of parliamentary authority over the army, plus the absence of a defence ministry, mean that the king has effective control over the military. Furthermore, he sees the two (perhaps with the Thailand example in mind) as in a mutually supportive relationship to ensure each other's continuity.

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[215] Interviewee NJ1 commented that the king ordered the army to open fire on protesters but they refused. One reason may have been a desire (as frequent participants in UN peace-keeping operations) to maintain their international reputation.

This view was not shared by interviewees, who commented that the main purview of the (very small) army is border security and disaster relief.[216] An example of the interaction of the king with the army was the events of 2003. The fourth king personally led the army against separatist insurgents from Assam who had established themselves in the Bhutanese jungle. Jigme Singye had spent years attempting to negotiate with the insurgents but eventually led a small army group (including civilian volunteers) to "flush out" the intruders. This episode, described in detail by Tshering Tashi (Fischer & Tashi, 2009, pp. 134-183; Tashi, 2016, pp. 235-251), is seen as an illustration of both diplomacy and courage, although a more cynical view from Bothe regards it as an example of hyperbolic praise of the king in which "minor operations…are turned into heroic deeds" (2011, pp. 455, 474). For security issues related to its Northern border, Bhutan is dependent on the Indian army, as illustrated by the 2017 Doklam standoff with China (Malhotra, 2017) – see 3.2.

In Tonga, His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF), previously called Tonga Defence Services (TDS), [217] are a modern institution with close links to the defence services of democratic neighbours (New Zealand and Australia). The (unchanged) constitutional role of the monarch as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces might suggest a potential conflict of loyalties for HMAF between the king and the elected government. Countering this concern is the fact that HMAF's governing legislation[218] makes it illegal for it to act against international law on armed conflict (GOT, 1992, p.15, clause 5 (3); and the king cannot make war without the consent of the Legislative Assembly (Constitution, Clause 36).

In one way the king's powers over HMAF have increased since the 2010 reforms. The 1992 Act (Clause 17, p.18) provides for the monarch to establish a Defence Board, with a number of functional and policy responsibilities in relation to the forces. The Board comprises "His Majesty [HM] and the members for the time

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[216] Interviewees BAJ1, BO1, BPS4.
[217] Fonua (2013) reports that when this name-change was debated in parliament, some People's Representatives were strongly opposed, feeling it identified the services too much with the king rather than the people. It is unlikely, however, that this change, an idea originating with George V, represents a power grab by the monarchy. Rather, it reflects George V's desire to emulate the British.
[218] See Tonga Defence Services Act 1992 (GOT, 1992) and its amendment (to account for the name change) (GOT, 2013).

being of the Privy Council" plus any additional members HM might wish to appoint. The privy council used to be made up of the monarch and the cabinet, but, since the reforms, it consists of the king plus any advisers he might choose. Accordingly, this provision would seem to have moved some defence policy decisions to an unelected body, unaccountable to the government.

Does this pose a risk?

The army's role during the 2006 riots provides some reassurance about their adherence to the rule of law. On the day, the Acting Commander contacted the king (George V), who said he would consult the prime minister before deciding on any action.[219] This is confirmed by George V's BBC interview (2008), where he stated "what I did was to authorise the army to come to the aid of the civil power, which is under my powers…The prime minister telephoned me and asked me to exercise those powers, which I was happy to do."

Following this the army acted, as instructed, to help contain the riots.[220] Lopeti Senituli, in a presentation to a conference on *Redefining the role of the military in democratization* in Christchurch in July 2017, commented that the Acting Commander insisted he "would not have obeyed an order or direction from the Government…inconsistent with international law relating to armed combat."[221] This presents some reassurance against the potential risk of army support for any future monarch's attempt to oust an elected government through a royal coup. Senituli in his presentation also suggested that the position of the king as Commander in Chief itself provided protection against the type of army-led coup carried out in neighbouring Fiji. The example of Thailand might however suggest otherwise.

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[219] Interviewee TLS8.

[220] In addition, the Tongan government requested assistance from the Australian and New Zealand armed forces who, for a brief period, helped with some tasks (such as securing the airport). New Zealand's then prime minister, Helen Clark, in agreeing to this assistance, "made it clear that she did not want to see New Zealand forces put in a situation where they would appear to be defending the current Tongan Government against democracy advocates" (McCormick, 2006).

[221] I am grateful to Lopeti Senituli for sharing with me his notes for his presentation entitled "16/11: The role of His Majesty's Armed Forces in constitutional reform in Tonga". In a similar but separate process to my research for this section, Senituli both spoke with HMAF and analysed related documents.

7.4 Comparative discussion

Looking at the four countries from a comparative perspective suggests that the risk of the monarchy calling on the military to suppress democratic government in Bhutan and Tonga is negligible, but not completely absent, given the close constitutional relationship between the monarchy and the military in all four countries. And in both Tonga and Bhutan decision-making on the role of the armed forces does not necessarily involve a requirement for either the monarch or the army to consult the elected government in every circumstance.

But the differences of scale and of context between the military's role in Thailand and Nepal on the one hand and in Tonga and Bhutan on the other are significant. In addition, the Thai and Nepalese situations differ significantly as regards the role of the military in the polity. It would be tempting to cite what distinguishes the Nepalese army from its Thai counterpart as being its active role in fighting the Maoist insurgency. A more telling difference is that the Nepali army has never sought to run the government itself, concentrating more on using its close links with the monarchy to consolidate its influence. Nepal's military has no history of a takeover or coup aimed at inserting a military-led government. Still less has any such situation ever threatened Bhutan or Tonga.

In addition, unlike in Thailand, the Nepalese army eventually came out on the side of democracy rather than autocracy, when confronted with the massive People's Movement of 2006. In this, the influence of its neighbour India was a contributing factor, whereas Thailand's neighbours have not taken a position on its military rule (although some Western countries imposed constraints on their relationships with Thailand following the 2014 coup – see 3.2). In both Bhutan and Tonga, should a military-type intervention in government along the lines of the Thailand example be threatened (and this is not to suggest that such an intervention is likely), then their neighbours could be expected to protest (see 3.2).[222] In Tonga, protection is also provided by the legislation governing the armed forces, as noted above.

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[222] This is especially so in the case of Tonga's neighbourhood. For Bhutan, India could be expected to protest at any (putative) military coup, but other neighbours might not take a position.

Chaulia (2008) argues that retention of the loyalty of the military is a critical factor for the survival of a monarchical regime and royal influence. In Nepal, the monarchy eventually lost the support of the military (together with that of the people) and was not able to survive. In Thailand, the military purports to exist for the purpose of protecting the monarchy and affects an attitude of subservience towards it. This has enabled it to cite protection of the monarchy as the reason for its interventions against elected governments (assisted by the presence of a sizeable popular movement with the same rhetoric). At the same time, the military has in recent years gained ascendancy over the monarchy, while its control over elected governments is set to extend way into the future. This state of affairs is a strong impediment to democracy, disempowering democratic actors in Thailand for years to come.

Chapter 8. Crafting or Dismantling Democracy

This thesis aims to assess what factors, including the monarchs' roles, contributed to the different outcomes reached in the four countries' journeys towards (or away from) democracy.

As part of this analysis it is useful to compare what those outcomes are, as well as the process by which they were developed, and to consider what risks they might pose for a new democracy.

The following two chapters will, accordingly, focus on the process of crafting (or alternatively dismantling) democracy through institutional reform, and the results of those processes. The term "crafting" is adopted from Di Palma's *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (1990). Di Palma argues the importance of "crafting" democracy through negotiation and compromise between key actors. For him, the manner in which this is carried out can determine the quality of the resulting democracy, since it leads to the choice of institutions and rules. He also considered a *timetable* important, to keep the process on track (1990, p. 8). Di Palma's idea of crafting is similar to O'Donnell and Schmitter's (1986, pp. 37-39) emphasis on "pacting" between soft and hardliners during a transition, to come up with a compromise. The idea was also foreshadowed by Rustow, who wrote of the phase in democratisation in which various players develop compromises and agree on institutional arrangements (1970, pp. 355-357).

Di Palma explains (1990, pp. 29-30) that such a process leads to democracy being seen as a useful way of resolving conflicts through rules. If these rules are negotiated and agreed during the transition itself, they will be less likely to be seen as an imposition. Ideally, in Di Palma's vision, extreme factions on both sides would be included in the negotiations, enabling a compromise hewed by a "moderate centre" to emerge (pp. 50-55). All sides would be reassured that under the resulting set of democratic rules no one would lose out "once and for all" – precisely because democracy means they would retain the possibility of a future win (p. 42). Of course, if traditional institutions (such as monarchy or the military) are successful

in retaining a large number of their privileged roles, then the new regime becomes a sort of "hybrid", a "guided democracy of sorts" (p. 51).

In the light of these considerations, the current chapter compares the development/negotiation of constitutional arrangements in the four countries. It goes on to assess a selection of the institutional outcomes against the indicators of democracy highlighted in chapter 2. To reiterate, for the purposes of this thesis these are: free elections, institutional checks on the executive, inclusive participation and representation (as suggested by Acemoglu et al., 2015), as well as civil and political rights (see Juan Linz, 1978). The examination of a selection of constitutional arrangements will be supplemented by reference to the Freedom House ratings for each country as at 2005 and 2017, comparing the evolution of civil and political rights in the different polities.

In considering checks on the executive, and the possible retention of traditional privileges, the following chapter (9) looks specifically at the constitutional powers of the monarch and their implications for democracy, addressing the secondary research question:

- What aspects of the ongoing presence of the monarch (including dual sources of legitimacy) create risks for a new democracy?

8.1 Development of constitutions

The reform process in Bhutan and Tonga has been fairly linear, whereas in Thailand and Nepal it has involved oscillation and regression. In addition, both Thailand and Nepal have gone through several iterations of their constitutions whereas Bhutan never had a constitution before 2008 and Tonga's process involved up-dating and reforming its one constitution of 1875, rather than replacing it with a new document.

In the 1990s, when Nepal and Thailand put together their 1990 (Nepal) and 1997 (Thailand) constitutions, the two countries' processes seemed to converge. Both were seemingly on the path to emerging from the "gray zone" (Carothers, 2002a) into a form of democratic constitutional monarchy. And yet, in the period under study (2005-2017), their processes and outcomes diverged.

Bhutan

Bhutan's fifth king, Jigme Khesar Wangchuck, on the occasion of the formal adoption of the constitution (18 July 2008), described it as the "People's Constitution", because of the thorough (monarch-led) consultation process that had taken place across the country (see 5.1).

Indeed, the development of the Bhutanese constitution had some elements of the pacting described by Di Palma (1990) and O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), but with strong involvement of the monarch(s). As outlined in chapter 5 (5.1), the process began when the king in September 2001 commanded the drafting of a constitution (Tobgye & Thrimchi, 2013).

Guidance the drafting committee received from the king stressed the "immutable principle" that the government would be a democratic constitutional monarchy and that any future changes to the constitution would require a referendum (Tobgye & Thrimchi, 2012, p. 4). The committee studied constitutions from over 100 countries, paying particular attention to 22 - including the then (1997) Thai constitution - and submitted drafts to the king in late 2002, mid-2003, and August 2005.The king also sought detailed comment on the draft from an Indian adviser, Justice Venugopal, who later commented "Here ends the most modern Constitution with maximum fundamental rights" (Tobgye & Thrimchi, 2013).

A wide consultation process followed, including:

- Posting the draft constitution on the internet and inviting comments from all over the world;
- Distributing the draft to every household in Bhutan and to international partners active in Bhutan;
- Meetings by the king (and later his son) with citizens all over the country.

It is difficult to gauge what impact the consultations had on the final content of the constitution.[223] Tobgye and colleague (Tobgye & Thrimchi, 2013) report that they were "inundated" by comments from within and outside Bhutan, all of which they considered carefully. Bothe (2011, pp. 442-443) has criticised the process as not

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[223] Beyond the scope of this thesis would be a detailed study into the 2005 text, the comments received, including those from abroad, and how the two texts differ.

being an informed debate amongst equals, and stressed that there would have been no possibility of a genuine dialogue with the villagers. In reality, the consultation with citizens was more about *explaining the process* to the public, and outlining the reasons behind it, than seeking contributions to the draft. During the consultations, according to Tobgye (2014, p. 32), one of the king's priorities was to encourage the public to elect capable people, seeking to allay their fears about democracy by stressing that the choice of the "best people" was the key to ensuring they would "work for the country and the people". It appears the king was working to build up confidence in the change - to "sell" democracy to the people. This is something that we do not see in any of the other monarchies in this study.

Tonga

In Tonga the 1875 constitution and related institutional framework provided a starting point for freedoms and institutions that were strengthened through the 2010 reforms. Another difference from Bhutan was that, once King George V had made the declaration in principle of relinquishing most of his powers, he was not closely involved in the consultation process.[224] He left it to Prime Minister Sevele's government to manage this and navigate it through parliament.

This section concentrates on the parliamentary and public consultation processes following the National Committee for Political and Constitutional Reform (NCPR) report (NCPR, 2006). A parliamentary tripartite committee (comprising representatives of the people, nobles, and cabinet) debated the NCPR report from July to September 2007. But that report did not provide a framework for the detailed constitutional reform that would be needed. At the initiative of then Attorney General 'Alisi Taumoepeau, an informal meeting of advisers was held in December 2007 to discuss next steps (Powles, 2013, p. 8). This led to the June 2008 *Constitutional and Electoral Commission Bill*, proposing the establishment of a commission to receive submissions and make recommendations on reform. The Nobles' Representatives (unsurprisingly) expressed opposition to the bill and abstained from voting.[225] Disturbingly, three People's Representatives also

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[224] Although he did make his views known in some areas (see 5.1).
[225]The fact that the nobles did not vote *against* the bill reflected their knowledge of the king's support for it (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 187), but they showed their true

abstained, while later "claiming credit for having accomplished a political triumph" (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 187).

Powles (2013, pp. 8-11) has given a detailed account of the membership, mandate and timetable of the Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC), which included representatives of the different groups in parliament. The CEC received submissions from the public and was required to present its recommendations in time for reforms to be completed before elections in November 2010. The group's agreed set of recommendations (CEC, 2009, pp. 111-119) were then put to parliament for decision. Some (but not all) were adopted (Powles, 2013, pp. 15-50). The government had the numbers[226] to ensure that most of parliament's decisions closely resembled the cabinet's preferences as submitted to the CEC (PMO, 2009), although in some cases a compromise was agreed.

Revised legislation to amend the constitution and laws where needed was enacted during 2010, and a Boundary Commission submitted options on how to divide the electoral constituencies. Elections under the new system were held in November 2010.

Thailand

In Thailand we shall look at the development of the 1997, 2007 and 2017 constitutions, with a glance at the 2014 interim constitution. The political history of Thailand has been described as "strewn with discarded constitutions" (Veerayuth and Hewison, 2016, p. 2). Its latest (2017) constitution has been termed a "democratic regression, building on its precursor from 2007 in…rolling back the democratic direction of the 1997 constitution, harking back to earlier versions from 1978 and 1991" (Thitinan, 2016b).

This regression was something that Kobkua (2003) had not foreseen. Kobkua's view that the 1997 constitution (Office of the Council of State, 1997) was Thailand's

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colours during the debate, calling for the nobles to have the same number of seats as the People's Representatives in the new system (Fonua, 2008b). They went so far as to assert the cabinet and People's Representatives had plotted together to put pressure on the royal family (Fonua, 2008a).

[226] It had augmented the number of cabinet members in 2009 by elevating some representatives from parliament to cabinet, after first passing legislation to enable this to occur without accompanying by-elections (I. Campbell, 2011, p. 195).

most democratic is shared by many. Kurlantzick describes it as "progressive and ground-breaking" (2013, p. 158). Nevertheless, the motivations of the drafters of the 1997 constitution are not seen as totally democratic. Eugénie Mérieau (2016) argues that the constitution drafting committee sought to limit the powers of politicians. She sees the strengthening of the role of the judiciary (especially the constitutional court) as the beginning of a process of seeking more control by the "Deep State," partly in order to have an alternative to the royal role as ultimate arbiter in Thai politics. The constitutional court was given wide powers, including to strike down legislation and decrees, to impeach public office holders and to rule on legality of elections and results (this power was further constitutionalised in 2007).

Both Thaksin's government and the king undermined the 1997 constitution, Thaksin by side-lining its new independent institutions (see 6.3) and Bhumibol by endorsing the 2006 coup (see 5.1). The coup enabled the military to discard that constitution and replace it with one giving unelected bodies greater control over the polity. A referendum was held in 2007 to legitimise the new constitution, with a 57% turnout and a 57% vote in favour.

The 2007 constitution enabled the judiciary to impede constitutional reform and overrule elected politicians, but if the aim was to drive Thaksin's followers from the political scene, it was not successful (Veerayooth and Hewison, 2016, p. 373). Accordingly the military had recourse to yet another coup to oust the government in 2014.

Following the 2014 coup, an interim constitution (NCPO, 2014) was imposed, still operational in late 2017.[227] This includes Article 44, which allows the National Council of Peace and Order (NCPO) - the military government - to operate outside the law for reasons of "national security."

The NCPO appointed a constitution drafting committee, whose 2015 draft was apparently too liberal for the junta to approve (McCargo et al., 2017). A more compliant Chair was appointed, who came up with a new draft in March 2016. This was then to be put to the public in a referendum. Even this draft did not quite

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[227] And in 2018.

contain everything the NCPO wanted. The (fully appointed) legislative assembly corrected this oversight by proposing a second referendum question (in addition to approval of the constitution) as to whether the Senate should participate in the choice of the prime minister.

Of a referendum turnout of around 55%, 61.4% voted in favour of the constitution. This is not seen as an endorsement (Peel, 2016). An opinion poll indicated that very few voters had read the draft (The Nation, 2016). The lead-up to the referendum was described by one interviewee as "chilling" and "depressing."[228] There was no open debate. Critics were subject to prosecution using executive orders (Prachatai, 2016). Furthermore, there was extreme uncertainty as to what might happen if the referendum failed. It is possible that some voters wanted to see the door open to an election process, no matter how flawed and restricted that would be. In this interpretation they were not voting for stability but rather for change, however unsatisfactory that change would be.

Nepal

In Nepal, the objective of the political parties after the 1990 *Jan Andolan* was to establish a constitutional monarchy and a multi-party parliament, with civil and political rights and freedoms (Malagodi, 2013, p. 108). The 1990 constitution was put together by a drafting committee, including representatives of the mainstream parties. The most contentious matters facing the drafting committee were issues of equality for the country's diverse groups and how to "bind"' the monarch "constitutionally" (D. Thapa & Sijapati, 2004, p. 34).

After the 2006 *Jan Andolan* and the restoration of parliament, an interim constitution was put together in 2007 by a group of experts, but drafting a new permanent Nepalese constitution in the first Constituent Assembly (2008-2012) was not a straightforward process. Even though Nepal had concluded a plethora of pacts and agreements in its transition towards democracy from 2005 onwards, when it came to agreeing on a permanent constitution, the challenge proved too great for the first assembly.

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[228] Interviewee ThA1.

The second Constituent Assembly also delayed concluding a constitution. In the end, the impetus to reach agreement came from the earthquake of April 2015 (Gautam, 2016, p. 6). A "16 point agreement" amongst the parties in June 2015 committed them to speedy action.

The constitution was finally adopted by a majority of 85% of the Assembly in September 2015. As we have seen in chapters 3 (3.1) and 6 (6.4), this did not please some Madhesis and led to pressure from India (through a blockade) for amendments (some of which were made in January 2016).

The main concerns of the Madhesis were:[229]

1   Citizenship provisions (the constitution discriminated against those born in Nepal of a non-Nepali mother)

2   The provincial boundaries (the constitution established seven provinces but Madhesis were not satisfied with the delineation of these)

3   The constituencies should be based on population, not geographical boundaries (the Madhesis were concerned that small mountain regions were given their own constituencies out of proportion to their population whereas the Terai, with around 50% of the population, had nowhere near 50% of the constituencies)

4   All government units should have groups represented proportional to their percentage of the population

In what one interviewee[230] described as a "face-saving response to India", some initial constitutional amendments (which required a two-thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly) were agreed in early 2016 (see Koirala, 2016). These addressed the third and fourth concerns, by amending Article 42 (Right to Social Justice) to read that "socially backward" groups would "have the right to employment in state structures and public service" on the principle of proportional inclusion (previously, "principle of inclusion"), and by amending Article 84 to state that the Constituency Delimitation Commission would "consider population the first

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[229] As summarised by interviewee NJ4.
[230] NJ4.

priority and geography the second" in establishing constituencies (previously, "geography and population").

Following further negotiations between the major parties and the Madhesi representatives, other amendments were put to the Assembly in August 2017, but failed to secure a two-thirds majority (see B. Ghimire, 2017). The newly elected government in early 2018 undertook to progress them.[231]

The elections at the end of 2017 were the first under the new system.

8.2 Features of the reformed systems

This section examines the "outcomes" of the democratisation (or regression) processes, mainly in terms of constitutional provisions, concentrating on the electoral system, inclusion and participation, and civil and political rights.

Bhutan

The Bhutanese constitution is both modern and traditional. As one of the newest constitutions in the world, it could draw on the most up to date constitutional provisions while avoiding what the drafters saw as the more negative elements of some countries' experience. Some elements were clearly modelled on Nepal's 1990 constitution and Thailand's 1997 constitution.

A key feature of the constitution is the declaration of the people as sovereign (Article 1, 1) and the supreme court as the constitution's guardian (1, 11).[232] There was some desire expressed in the public consultations for the *king* to have this role but a "careful review" concluded that giving this role to the Head of State would conflict with "the constitutional principles and the principle of the Separation of Powers" (Tobgye, 2015, p. 65).

As set out in the constitution, the constraints on political parties (Article 15) are somewhat restrictive. The prerequisites for registering as a political party include

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[231] In August 2018 Prime Minister Oli announced that the government was planning to "amend the constitution to accommodate the legitimate concerns of the Madhes". In addition, legislation to amend the citizenship laws had been put before parliament (Himalayan News Service, 2018).
[232] Although the monarch is its protector.

that the party must embrace Bhutanese values and culture, and must not represent sectorial interests (ethnic, class, or regional-based).[233] These provisions stem from a desire for stability and security rather than democracy. To cite an example of their impact in practice, a party was disqualified by the Electoral Commission from contesting the 2008 election (Sithey & Dorji, 2009, pp. 35-36), partly because it aimed to represent the "down-trodden" and so was not considered sufficiently broad-based and national (Kinga, 2009, pp. 307-308).[234] The US Embassy in New Delhi (White, 2007) observed that the "disqualification speaks little for representational democracy".

A party is also disqualified if it fails to field a candidate in every electorate – no mean feat in Bhutan where constituencies are small, and given the requirement under the Electoral Act (RGOB, 2008) that a candidate be a university graduate, which excludes most members of the community. This provision, favoured by the drafting committee, was supposedly to ensure candidates were well-informed, educated and competent.[235] It was possibly also designed to exclude the experienced and embattled politicians of the former (old style) National Assembly.[236]

Discussions in the drafting committee and the public consultations (Tobgye, 2015) revealed considerable anxiety that political parties, which had never before existed (or been permitted) in Bhutan, would be divisive. The king and his son countered this by arguing that "democracy without a party system would be meaningless and would lack an organized, effective, and responsible body to represent the will of the people" (Tobgye, 2015, p. 255). Tobgye cites Huntington (1968, p. 412) in support of this argument. Huntington considered strong parties essential for political stability in modernising polities.

Bhutan's two round electoral system for the National Assembly is unusual. If more than two parties are registered (which was the case in the 2013 election[237] but not

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[233] The latter is similar to, and was presumably modelled on, a provision in Nepal's 1990 constitution. Nepal has now moved away from such restrictions.
[234] The various parties in exile are of course excluded from establishing local branches that could contest the elections, as they would be seen to represent ethnic interests.
[235] Comment from member of the committee (interviewee BP2).
[236] Comment by interviewee BD5.
[237] And in the 2018 election.

in 2008) a first round of voting will determine which two parties can continue to a second round. Votes are in single member constituencies. The party winning most constituencies in the second round becomes the government, the other the Opposition. According to a member of the drafting committee,[238] this was designed to ensure stability, exclude coalition governments, and reduce the risk of a government's collapse (party-hopping by MPs is also prohibited, but a vote of no confidence in a government is possible). This provision is not universally supported. An interviewee from a party outside the National Assembly commented on how difficult it was to maintain a profile and membership.[239]

Another restrictive aspect of the constitution is the deliberate exclusion of monks from political involvement. Monks participated in the Bhutanese constitutional drafting committee, but under the resulting constitution registered monks[240] cannot stand for parliament or even vote (Arora, 2011). This appears designed to reduce their influence on voters. Bhutan is a strongly religious country and traditionally the monkhood were responsible for imparting values and education, and guiding behaviour. The prohibitions on involvement in politics confine the monk body to the religious sphere.

Bhutan is unusual (but similar to Nepal in its 1990 constitution) in that the king effectively has the status of one of three houses of parliament (Article 10, 1), together with the National Council (Article 11) and the National Assembly (Article 12). The king wanted a bicameral system (Tobgye, 2014, p. 26), to provide checks and balances, but without a hierarchy of "Upper" and "Lower." The National Council, mandated as a house of review, has 25 members, five of them appointed by the king. The rest, who must be politically independent (not members of any party), are elected by the people in Bhutan's twenty districts, known as *Dzongkhags* (one representative per district). The National Assembly has 47

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[238] Interviewee BP2.
[239] Interviewee BP1. For further comment on the constraints on political parties, see Turner and Tshering (2014, pp. 318-323).
[240] Lay monks, known as *gomchens*, were able to vote in the 2008 and 2013 elections, but a 2018 ruling by the Electoral Commission declared that according to the Electoral Act they were not eligible to vote in the 2018 election, and had only voted in past elections because no one objected to the Commission (Subba, 2018).

members, elected by universal suffrage in a two-round process in individual constituencies (see above).

It can be seen that while the majority of members of parliament (20 members of the National Council and all 47 members of the National Assembly) are elected, a small number (five members of the National Council) are appointed. The prime minister must be a member of the National Assembly and a "natural born citizen of Bhutan" (Article 17, 4). Both houses have equal weight when it comes to presenting and passing bills (except for financial bills, which must come from the National Assembly). If a bill fails to pass one house it can be brought into a joint assembly where it must then gain two thirds support (Article 13). (For the king's role in approving bills, see the following chapter).

As regards civil and political rights, the constitution contains (Article 7) a thorough listing of fundamental rights, which aligns well with the relevant UN human rights instruments (Tobgye 2014, p.17 and p.19). The king considered that this list of rights conveyed a vision of a "vibrant democracy" (Tobgye, 2015, p. 140). In the comparative discussion section, below, the Freedom House assessments for the four countries are compared.

Tonga

Tonga's 2010 reforms were not inscribed on a blank slate but, rather, built on the 150 year old constitution, amending its provisions or adding new ones to produce a more democratic polity.[241]

The most important changes are the increased parliamentary representation of the People (up from 9 to 17 seats, while the Nobles' Representatives remain at 9); the election of the prime minister by parliament from among the elected representatives; and the selection by the prime minister of ministers from within parliament (except for up to 4 from outside). The prime minister and ministers had previously been appointed by the king, to serve at his pleasure (although during the transitional period from 2006-2010 Prime Minister Sevele had been able to choose his own ministers). The former privy council was abolished (replaced by a

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[241] See Powles (2013, pp. 15-50) and Campbell (2011, pp. 203-207) for detailed outlines of the changes.

group of advisers with no executive powers), thereby removing the direct presence of the king from the executive (something analysed in more detail in the following chapter). The size of cabinet is limited to less than half that of the House, requiring the prime minister to have supporters within the House as well as cabinet. A vote of no confidence in the prime minister is possible, within certain time limitations.

The 17 People's Representatives now each represent an individual constituency, a change from the former system where the (smaller number of) representatives were elected in multi-member electorates (in the larger island groups) to jointly represent an entire island.[242] The voting method remains first past the post (FPP), contrary to the CEC's recommendation (number 69, p. 118) of single transferable voting (STV) in island blocks.[243] Cabinet (reflecting the king's wishes also) sought a system that they thought least likely to result in the pro-democracy movement (PDM) dominating parliament. The recommendation from the CEC may also have seemed unduly complicated – which is how Jon Fraenkel (2009) assessed it.[244] The PDM, for their part, wanted to go with the CEC's recommendation, thinking it would improve their electoral chances.[245]

In the three elections to date, the system has seen a large number of candidates standing in the individual constituencies, meaning that it has been possible for a candidate to be successful on a fairly small percentage of the vote. This is exacerbated by the fact that Tonga does not have a formal party system – neither the original nor the revised constitution mentions political parties. All candidates register as independents, although in practice some informal party groupings have developed. Most notable of these is the Democratic Party of the Friendly Islands (DPFI or PTOA) which developed out of the PDM. The DPFI is led by 'Akilisi Pohiva. Even before 2010, groups describing themselves as "parties" had contested elections (I. Campbell, 2011, pp. 144, 177). The CEC (2009, p. 74) considered the evolution of a party system "imminent" (para 247). A party system

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[242] Two smaller island electorates had – and have - just one representative each.
[243] This had also been the recommendation of the NCPR.
[244] Fraenkel describes the CEC's recommendation of such a complex system as "the weakest part" of its report.
[245] In the event, the new system did not disadvantage Pohiva's cohort.

could make for a smaller slate, thereby reducing the risk of candidates cancelling each other out.[246]

Interviewees[247] expressed a range of views on the merits of a party system. Those in favour suggest it would reduce "horse-trading" to be elected prime minister, as MPs would vote on party loyalty rather than out of hope of securing a cabinet post. It would also help voters hold an elected candidate to account. The contrary view is that Tonga is too small for political parties, candidates are well known in the small constituencies, so that voters know what they stand for, and a party system could be socially polarising.[248]

A distinct limitation to democracy in Tonga is the persistence of disproportionate political representation for the nobles. Pre-reform, the holders of 33 noble titles (generally held by around 30 individuals) were represented by 9 seats in parliament, an equal number to the People's Representatives (representing 100,000 people). Nobles had also, in the past, occupied most cabinet positions (appointed by the king) although, by the end of Tupou IV's reign, there were more commoners than nobles in cabinet (Sevele, 2009a). During the consultations on reform, the nobles' priority became to preserve political influence (see 6.2). The CEC (2009, pp. 94-96) appeared divided on whether nobles' special reserved seats should continue and, if so, who should elect them (paras 318 to 325). Curiously, the CEC concluded that, despite the strength of contrary arguments for a more democratic system, and the desultory quality of the nobles' submissions to the Commission, nobles should continue to have special reserved seats "at this stage." Post-reform, Nobles' Representatives (elected by fellow nobles and life peers)[249] continue to have nine seats, a reduction in their political strength that nevertheless still gives them considerable heft in parliament.

A number of rights and freedoms, including freedom of the press and equality before the law, appeared in Tonga's 1875 constitution. One of the aims of the pro-

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[246] Interviewee TP14.
[247] TPS1, TAJ3, TPS4, TP6, TP7, TCS4, TP14.
[248] This fear is also held in Bhutan.
[249] To complicate matters, those electing Nobles' Representatives now include the small number of life peers appointed by the monarch, and since the 2018 election those peers have also been able to *stand for election* as Nobles' Representatives (but have declared they will not do so) (Matangitonga, 2017).

democracy movement was to see those constitutional rights observed in practice (see chapter 6). A comparison of Freedom House ratings (below) reflects the progress achieved.

Thailand

Thailand's 1997 constitution (Office of the Council of State, 1997) provided for sovereignty of the people (Section 3), a fully elected Senate (Section 121), and a strengthened executive, balanced through the establishment of a number of independent institutions. In a 500-member House of Representatives, 100 were elected from a party list and the remainder in constituencies (Section 98). The aim was to encourage a stronger two-party system rather than a plethora of minor parties (Baker and Pasuk, 2014, p. 256). As in Bhutan, the 1997 constitution (Clause 106), and subsequent constitutions, prohibit the Buddhist monkhood from voting in elections. In 1997 (see Clause 107) Thailand also had a similar restriction to Bhutan on candidates for election to the House of Representatives, requiring them to have at least a Bachelor's degree or equivalent unless they had previously been a member of parliament. This does not appear in the 2007 or 2017 constitutions, although it remains a requirement for a minister (2007, Section 174).

The 2007 constitution (Office of the Council of State, 2007) weakened the democratic provisions of 1997. Half of the Senate was to be appointed (Section 111) and the constitutional court acquired additional powers, including the ability to dissolve a political party (Section 13).

The undemocratic nature of these powers was evidenced when Yingluck's government attempted in 2013 to amend the constitution to return to a fully elected Senate. The constitutional court rejected this, arguing *inter alia* that it would:

> …considerably impair the principles of check and balance under the bicameral system, as it would allow the political sectors to absolutely overshadow the NA [National Assembly] without any check and balance. This would cast an impact upon the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State…(Constitutional Court of Thailand, 2013).

The 2017 constitution (Office of the Council of State, 2017) aims at weakening and fragmenting political parties, through a complicated electoral system (Section 91)

known as "Mixed Member Apportionment" (Kornkritch, 2016). This is expected to favour medium-sized parties and disadvantage Pheu Thai, whereas the 1997 constitution had enabled strong parties (Hicken, 2016).[250] Unsurprisingly, therefore, Thailand's two main political parties (not just the Thaksinite Pheu Thai but also their rivals, the Democrat Party), condemned the draft constitution (Thitinan, 2016a).

The most significant effect of the constitution will be its ongoing empowerment of the military through giving them strong control and influence over elected governments. This is achieved through:

- A fully appointed Senate of 250 people (picked by the NCPO), with six ex officio positions for the security forces (Section 107, modified by Section 269 in "transitory provisions"). This amounts to a third of the entire parliament, as elected MPs will number 500.
- A provision, resulting from the referendum's "second question," for both houses of parliament to participate in selecting a prime minister (Section 272). This opens the way to a non-elected prime minister, something Thais resisted back in 1992 (see 3.1).

Hicken (2016) cites Wanchai Sornsiri, a member of the (appointed) National Legislative Assembly, as providing an explanation for why the (appointed) Senate should have this power: "Senators can help screen out not-so-good or not-so-intelligent persons. At the same time, they can help support a good prime minister who in the past was usually not elected or toppled by street protests". Hicken adds that the appointed Senate will thus "enjoy unprecedented powers over the elected government", including making sure it implements the "junta's reform agenda".

Many of these powers appear in the 2017 constitution's so-called "transitory provisions" (Sections 262-279), which detail on-going involvement by the NCPO

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[250] According to Allen Hicken(2016), under the MMA Pheu Thai will lose out because they always do better in the party list vote than in the constituencies and this time their proportionate share will come only from the constituencies. The MMA system is a mixed member system but there is no voting for parties, just for candidates, and then the party shares are apportioned according to their combined percentage vote in the constituencies. Hicken argues that this will weaken parties as voters will be led to think about candidates but not parties.

during a period of five years. There will also be a 20 year plan that all elected governments are required to adhere to. Human Rights Watch (quoted by *Reuters*, 2016) regard this as a twenty year hold on power for the military.

Interestingly, the powers the military have crafted for themselves in the 2017 constitution bear some resemblance to those the monarchy claimed in certain re-draftings in the past. For example, changes were made to the 1947 constitution to restore royal influence. These included having the king appoint a whole Senate of the same size as the lower house, and a provision that a government could change a predecessor's policy only if the king approved (Handley, 2006, pp. 88-90). These 1947 provisions, implying that only the king knew what was best for the country, are very similar to what the military are now seeking for themselves. In other words, they are seeking to take over a role previously considered to be that of the king (whether or not stated specifically in a particular constitution).

Nepal

Nepal's 1990 constitution has been blamed by some (for example, Bhandari, 2014, p. 10) for the political instability over the following decade and even, in some cases, seen as responsible for the Maoist insurgency and the king's coup (Malagodi, 2013) – see 2.4. Others see the constitution as having provided a good starting point for democratic government, which was then derailed by the anti-democratic ambitions of the Maoists (K. M. Dixit, 2011; Gautam, 2016). In the constitution, sovereignty was vested in the people (Clause 3). A bicameral parliamentary system was established. Ten members of the 60-member upper house (called the National Assembly) were to be appointed by the king (Clause 46). A concession was made to diversity through recognition of "national languages" (although Nepali remained the "official language") (Clause 6), but not on the question of religion. There was pressure from various groups for the country to become secular, but the counter-pressure from Hindus (including the Palace) proved more persuasive, and the country was designated a "Hindu kingdom" (Clause 4, 1).

Another discriminatory aspect of the constitution was the ban on the formation of political parties based on communal issues (such as religion or ethnicity) – as is the case in Bhutan's constitution. In Nepal, this was completely overhauled in the inclusive 2007 and 2015 constitutions.

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Contrary to the critics' concentration on the constitution's weaknesses, interviewees who were present in Nepal during the early 1990s spoke of the flourishing of civil society and personal freedoms that followed the establishment of the new, democratic system.[251] The constitution itself bears a certain resemblance to that of Bhutan (which would have drawn on it as a model) and the Thai constitution of 1997. While it did contain ambiguities which enabled it to be abused by King Gyanendra, it seems overly harsh to blame it for the Maoist insurgency and the king's coup, as Malagodi (2013) does. If Gyanendra had chosen to embrace democracy then the constitution would not have impeded him. Indeed, it would have enabled him to do so.

The 2007 interim constitution (GON, 2007) ushered in the new republic. The restored parliament had already taken steps at its first meeting in May 2006 to strip Gyanendra of his prerogatives, including his veto power and command of the army (Lohani, 2012, pp. 36-37). The country was declared a secular state. These steps and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the Maoists of November 2006 foreshadowed principles to be included in the interim constitution.[252] The CPA constituted a formal ceasefire in the Maoist conflict and prescribed an end to the existence of two armies (although the related practical arrangements took years to negotiate and were not finalised until 2011). The 2007 interim constitution provided that:

- The king would have no status (not even ceremonial) until the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly voted on whether to abolish the monarchy
- Nepal would be a secular state under a federal system
- Constituent Assembly members would be elected by a Mixed Member Proportional system with additional provisions to make sure that women, indigenous peoples and other under-represented groups would be included.

The 2015 constitution (GON, 2015) is comprehensive and aspirational in its list of rights and freedoms. Gautam (2016, p. 9) regards it as "sub-optimal" because he sees its federal structure as a handicap for Nepal, but he assesses it as very positive for its secular republicanism and inclusiveness. The latter is manifested by

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[251] NA2, NJ6.
[252] The text of the CPA is appended to that constitution (GON, 2007).

proportional representation in all elected bodies, plus requirements for President and Vice President, and Speaker and Deputy Speaker, to be of different genders or communities.

The constitution confirms the removal of the monarchy. A president role is established (elected by the parliament) but the system is parliamentary rather than presidential. It recognises local languages and establishes constitutional commissions to ensure empowerment of deprived sectors and groups. The other innovation of the 2015 constitution is the establishment of a federal system (as promised in the 2007 interim constitution). The new system was implemented following the elections at the end of 2017.

It remains to be seen whether the aspirational nature of the 2015 constitution will prove a burden to future governments through raising unrealistic expectations. But it represents an impressive step forward for Nepal.

8.3 Comparative discussion

This analysis has pointed to differences and some similarities between both the consultation/drafting processes and the outcomes in the four countries in the period 2005-2017.

A common initial step in drafting a new or revised constitution was the appointment of a drafting committee. To varying extents this was the option chosen by Bhutan, Nepal (for its 1990 constitution and 2007 interim constitution) and Thailand.

As regards the arrangements for broad public involvement in crafting the new system, Nepal is the only country that put the drafting of a constitution (that of 2015) in the hands of an elected Constituent Assembly (which doubled as a parliament). Tonga on the other hand decided on two public consultation processes. The first, the NCPR, carried out initial soundings of public opinion on reform while the second, the CEC, sought submissions and had the specific task of preparing recommendations on constitutional and electoral change. The CEC operated within a framework where the decision to move to a more democratic system had already been made: their task was to recommend modalities for achieving this. The actual decisions on reform were made by the parliament (itself constituted under

the old system which mixed some elected representatives with an appointed executive). In Nepal, too, in 1990, 2007 and 2015, constitutions were drafted based on decisions already made to democratise. The same could be said about Bhutan, where the drafting committee had clear instructions from the king as to what the constitution should contain, and that it be democratic.

Tonga began with public consultation (resembling the "crafting" described by Di Palma) and then moved on to decisions on reform by parliament. In Bhutan public consultation followed the initial drafting and, while comprehensive in geographical coverage, was arguably not an informed public debate on political reform. Thailand differs from the other three countries in that its production of two new constitutions (of 2007 and 2017) was designed to limit, not to increase, democracy, especially by constraining the political strength of elected governments. Thailand's military governments actively discouraged public debate and discussion of the drafts but attempted to legitimise the 2017 constitution (as it had done in 2007) through a referendum. The referendum outcome is not seen by scholars as a positive endorsement of the proposed new constitution and its limits on political liberties.

These limitations, enabling considerable military influence over the polity even once elections are held, resemble the "guided democracy of sorts" described by Di Palma (1990, p. 51) as preserving exclusive powers for traditional institutions. One of those limitations is the provision for a military-appointed Senate.

Several of the constitutions examined provide for some unelected representatives in the parliament, generally in an upper house (or house of review). Nepal in 1990 provided for 10 members (out of 60) of the upper house to be appointed by the monarch; Bhutan has a similar provision in its 2008 constitution (five out of 25 members of the National Council appointed by the king).

The Bhutanese king's rationale for the five National Council appointees was that: "we are not sure whether the right person will be elected by the people from each of the twenty *Dzongkhags* [districts]," since the members of the National Council need to be "efficient and knowledgeable" so that they can "see if the ruling party and the opposition party are working in the interest of the country and the people" (Tobgye, 2014, p. 30). There is some similarity here to Tonga's provision in its 2010 revised constitution for up to four ministers to be appointed from outside parliament

– but these are chosen by the prime minister, not the monarch (and the appointed ministers cannot participate in a vote of no confidence). A more telling comparison in the case of Tonga is with the ongoing disproportionately high representation of the nobles, who are appointed by their peers, not the people.

Under Nepal's inclusive, federal, 2015 constitution a 59-member upper house is elected by an electoral college at the State level, apart from 3 members who are appointed by the president on the recommendation of the government. Clearly none of these provisions (in Bhutan, Tonga and Nepal) are on a par with the enormous amount of political control provided for an unelected body (the military) in the Thai 2017 constitution. The additional, stand-out characteristic of the Nepal transition is, of course, the abolition of the monarchy, which has been analysed in chapter 5 (5.1).

An interesting comparison is between the electoral and political party systems chosen by Bhutan and Tonga. How did it come about that two countries going through a similar reform programme at a similar date came up with such different outcomes? Tonga's starting point was its existing constitution and the king's express wish to change it only as much as required. Bhutan was starting from scratch and could design a system which it felt would best maximise stability. Bhutan sought to encourage responsible opposition and wise decision-making, and decided that a two-party system was the best route to this harmony. Bhutan's system is in sharp contrast with the situation in Tonga, where there is no formal provision for parties, although there are political "groupings", and a yearning among some for a more institutionalised party system. For Bhutan the lack of a party system would seem chaotic and unpredictable, whereas for Tongans, with their long experience of independent candidates running for election, the Bhutanese approach (only two parties allowed in parliament, and no independents) would be intolerably controlling.

For an overall assessment of the four countries' progress (or regression) in terms of civil and political rights, we can compare Freedom House findings for the years 2005 and 2017, as summarised in the following chart (in a scale where 1 is the most free and 7 is the least free):

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Table 5: Comparison of Freedom House ratings

	2005		2017	
	Classification	Score	Classification	Score
Bhutan	Not free	5.5	Partly free	3.5
Tonga	Partly free	4	Free	2
Thailand	Free	2.5	Not free	5.5
Nepal	Partly fee	5	Partly free	3.5

In 2005 (before the substantive reforms in Tonga and Bhutan, but also before the regressive coups in Thailand and Nepal) Bhutan, as "not free" was given the lowest score (5.5). Tonga was rated "partly free", scoring 4. Thailand, conversely, was rated "free", scoring 2.5, while Nepal at that point was "partly free," scoring 5. By 2017 the situation was transformed. Bhutan, now "partly free", scored 3.5 overall; Tonga ("free") scored 2; Thailand, scoring 5.5, was rated "not free" while Nepal, with an improved score of 3.5, is still in the "partly free" category. 2017 aggregate scores[253] (not available in 2005) showed Tonga in the lead on 74, Bhutan 55, Nepal 52 and Thailand a low 32 (Freedom House, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d).

These findings indicate that the outcomes in the two countries (Bhutan and Tonga) whose democratisation was monarch-led were (by 2017) more democratic regimes than the two where the monarch had impeded democratisation. The country (Thailand) where this monarchical role was reinforced by its mutually supportive relationship with an autocratic military has ended up the least democratic of all. And the one (Nepal) where the monarch through his own hubris completely alienated the people and politicians has ended up without a monarchy.

To complete the picture of the outcomes in the various countries as at 2017, the next chapter analyses the specific powers of the monarchy in the reformed systems. Obviously this will exclude Nepal at 2017, although the chapter will include a brief glance at the monarch's powers under the 1990 constitution, since these influenced developments in the period under study.

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[253] With 100 as the most free.

Chapter 9. The Monarch's Constitutional Powers

The previous chapter analysed the outcomes of the reform processes in terms of key aspects of democracy: regular free elections, inclusive participation and representation, and civil and political rights. In the case of monarchies there is another significant element to consider: the retention of some powers by the monarch and the risks this dual legitimacy might pose. "Consolidologists" (see 2.2) consider that the continuance of power in the hands of non-elected institutions can pose a risk for the endurance of a new democracy (see for example Mainwaring et al., 1992, pp. 67-68). Di Palma (1990, pp. 51-52) argued that the retention of political privileges for traditional institutions risked weakening the democracy.

Accordingly, in addressing the risks posed for a new democracy by the ongoing presence of the monarch, an examination of the relevant constitutional provisions is pertinent. This is not to ignore the fact that an additional and sometimes more significant risk comes from the powers assumed by the monarch irrespective of the constitution.

The chapter begins with an examination of the constitutional powers of the monarchs under the 2008 Bhutanese constitution, the 2010 Tongan revised constitution, the 1990 constitution in Nepal and the three most recent constitutions in Thailand (1997, 2007 and 2017). This is followed by comparative discussion which looks, first, at provisions related to the special status of the monarchy. The chapter then analyses some of the main ambiguities in the provisions, including those related to the monarch's veto power over legislation, the role of unelected bodies appointed by the monarch, and other issues that pose risks. Next, the chapter analyses the problems posed by powers exercised by monarchs outside the constitution. In conclusion the chapter investigates whether it is useful to compare these powers according to the democratic parliamentary monarchy (DPM) concept proposed by Stepan and colleagues (2014), as described in chapter 2 (2.3).

9.1 Examination of constitutional provisions

Powles (2013, pp. 54-58), in his analysis of Tonga's constitutional reforms, has usefully divided into three categories the monarch's powers under the revised constitution. For ease of comparison, the same categorisation will be used for the other three monarchies (although Tobgye (2015, p. 74), for Bhutan, uses different categories - absolute power, nominal power, residual power and executive power).

Powles's categories[254] are:

1. *Powers exercised at his own discretion without having to seek advice*[255]
2. *Powers exercised after receiving advice, but does not have to heed the advice* (required to listen to advice but not required to follow it unless he sees fit)
3. *Those he must approve, giving the benefit of his status to decisions by lower bodies* (ie ceremonial powers).

Using these categories, the following tables (6-8) compare the main constitutional powers of the monarchs in Bhutan, Tonga, and Thailand and the former monarchs of Nepal. Bhutan, Tonga and Nepal are listed first, followed by the three most recent constitutions of Thailand. In the case of Thailand, almost all the king's constitutional powers are identical from one constitution to the next: where this is the case, the chart will simply list the different section references.

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[254] Summarised from Powles (2013, pp 56-58).
[255] In Bhutan, Tobgye (2015, p. 74) reports that these powers - which he calls "absolute"- received some criticism in the drafting process although, conversely, the drafting committee "was consciously unanimous that certain actions should not be diluted and influenced by anyone".

Table 6: Monarch's powers: Category 1

Exercises at own discretion, without having to seek advice

		Bhutan 2008	Tonga 2010	Nepal 1990
1a	Convokes and dismisses the House of Representatives	Convokes first sitting (Article 10,5); may command extraordinary sitting (Article 10,12) May dismiss after vote of no confidence in government (10,24), otherwise on recommendation of prime minister (see Category 2)	May convoke and dismiss at any time and command new elections, but parliament must meet within a year of dismissal (Clauses 38 and 77)	Summons parliament (Clause 53,1) For dissolution see Category 2
1b	Assents to laws	Bill comes into force on assent (Article 13, 1.) If assent not given, it is referred back to the House for amendment, after which it is resubmitted and assent granted (Articles 13, 10 and 13, 11)	All laws must be signed by king (Clauses 41 and 56); if he refuses assent the parliament cannot discuss the law until its following session (Clause 68)	Bill returned for reconsideration if king refuses assent but if re-presented king must assent (Clauses 69,1, 71, 3-4)
1c	Appoints privy council or similar body	Appoints two of four-member Council (Article 2,14)	Appoints entire privy council (Clause 50)	Appoints "*Raj Parishad*" including some *ex officio* (Clause 34)
1d	Appoints some members of Upper House or similar body[256]	Appoints five of 25-member National Council (Article 11,1(b))	No Upper House	Appoints 10 of 60-member "National Assembly" (Upper House) (Clause 46)
1e	Relationship with parliament	May command referendum if a bill "of national importance" is not passed by parliament (Article 34,2) Member of parliament in own right (Article 10, 1). May command bills be introduced in parliament (Article 2,16 (d))	May address the Legislative Assembly in writing (Clause 40)	Member of parliament in own right (Clause 44); parliament must respond to messages (Clause 54,3)

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[256] Confusingly, the four countries use different English language terms for the houses of parliament. In Bhutan, the house of representatives is known as the National Assembly, while the house of review (similar to an upper house) is the National Council. Tonga's unicameral parliament is known as the Legislative Assembly. In Thailand the two houses of the National Assembly (parliament) are the House of Representatives and the Senate. In Nepal in 1990 the parliament was made up of the House of Representatives and the National Assembly (Upper House).

		Bhutan 2008	Tonga 2010	Nepal 1990
1f	State of emergency	See Category 2	See Category 2	May declare in response to grave crisis and suspend various articles of constitution (Clause 115, 1); must be approved by House within three months.
1g	Supreme command of the armed forces	Article 28,1	Clause 36	Clause 119,1
1h	Succession	If designated heir is unsuitable monarch will "proclaim" another prince or princess (Article 2,3)	Monarch's consent required for marriages of those likely to succeed to throne (Clause 33)	Exclusive right to amend law (Clause 28.2)

Category 1 - Thailand

		Thailand 1997	Thailand 2007	Thailand 2017
1a	Convokes and dismisses the House of Representatives	Convokes (Clauses 161 and 162); can dissolve House, must call election within 60 days (Clause 116)	As in 1997 (Clause 128)	As in 1997 (Clause 103)
1b	Assents to laws	If refuses assent the National Assembly must reconsider bill; if two thirds then vote in favour it will become law (Clause 93)	As in 1997 (Clause 151)	As in 1997 (Clause 146)
1c	Appoints privy council or similar body	Appoints entire council of up to 19 members (Clause 12)	As in 1997 (Clause 12)	As in 1997 (Clause 10)
1d	Appoints some members of Upper House or similar body	Fully elected Senate (Clause 121)	Half of Senate appointed by special committee (Clause 113)	See Category 3
1e	Relationship with parliament	May convoke an extraordinary session if in the interests of the State (Clause 162); may prolong sessions (Clause 160)	As in 1997 (Clauses 128 and 127)	As in 1997 (Clause 122)
1f	State of emergency	See Category 3	See Category 3	See Category 3
1g	Supreme command of the armed forces	Supreme commander (Clause 10)	As in 1997 (Clause 10)	As in 1997 (Clause 8)
1h	Succession	Exclusive prerogative to amend law (Clause 22)	As in 1997 (Clause 22)	As in 1997 (Clause 20)

Table 7: Monarch's powers: Category 2

Exercises after receiving advice, but does not have to heed the advice

		Bhutan 2008	Tonga 2010	Nepal 1990
2a	Dissolution of parliament	May dissolve on recommendation of prime minister (Article 10,24)	See Category 1, above.	May dissolve House on advice of prime minister; must specify election within 6 months (Clause 53,4)
2b	Appointments following nominations from a relevant body	Various, including National Judicial Commission (many *ex officio*) (Article 21,17) which then advises on judges appointments (Article 21,4), Royal Civil Service Commissioners (Article 26,2) , Anti-Corruption Commissioner (Article 27,2), and others	Various appointments made by "King in Council", including Lord Chancellor (Article 83B), judges (Clause 86, 1), Attorney General (Clause 31A)	Various appointments on recommendation of other bodies, including : judges (Clause 87,1), Auditor General (Clause 99,1) Commission for the Investigation of the abuse of authority (Clause 97,1)
2c	State of emergency	May proclaim on written advice of prime minister (Article 33); has to be approved by parliament within 21 days	(Not in constitution but legislation provides for king "in Council" to approve or annul a state of emergency declaration by prime minister)[257]	See Category 1

Note: this scrutiny of the constitutions of the four countries has not revealed any Category 2 provisions in the Thai constitutions.

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[257] See the Public Order (Preservation) Act (GOT, 1969).

Table 8: Monarch's powers: Category 3

Must approve, giving his status to decisions by lower bodies

		Bhutan	Tonga	Nepal
3a	Appoint prime minister selected by parliament	Appoints as prime minister the leader or nominee of the winning party in the second round of elections (Article 17,1)	Appoints prime minister elected by parliament (Clause 50A,1)	Appoints as prime minister leader of party with support of majority of House of Representatives (Clause 36,1)
3b	Various appointments on recommendation of prime minister	See Article 2, 19 k, m, o, p, q for list of appointments made on recommendation of prime minister	Ministers as nominated by prime minister (Clause 51, 2),[258] Governors on advice of prime minister (Clause 54)	Appoints deputy prime minister and ministers recommended by prime minister (Clause 36,3)

Category 3 - Thailand

		Thailand 1997	Thailand 2007	Thailand 2017
3a	Appoint prime minister selected by parliament	Appoints prime minister selected by House of Representatives (Clauses 201, 202)	As in 1997 (Clauses 171-2)	King's role similar to 1997 but "transitory provisions" allow both Houses to select prime minister, potentially from outside the House (Clauses 158-9, 272)
3b	Appointment of Senate	Fully elected (Clause 121)	Half elected, half appointed by special committee (Clause 113)	Under "transitory provisions"(Clause 269) monarch appoints entire Senate on advice of the NCPO
3c	Declare state of emergency	Only if cabinet considers it urgent and must be presented to parliament asap (Clause 218)	As in 1997 (Clause 184)	As in 1997 (Clause 172)

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[258] While Powles sees this as a Category 3 power, developments in early 2018 suggest that the king may have gone beyond this and vetoed the prime minister's proposed choice (of the prime minister himself) as Minister of Defence (interviewee TPS2).

9.2 Comparative discussion

The following discussion looks at provisions related to protecting/enhancing the special status of the monarchy; potential ambiguities in certain provisions especially as regards the relationship with parliament; relationship with the executive; appointments by the monarch; the role of unelected bodies; and the monarch's powers beyond the constitution.

Special status of monarch

In Bhutan the constitutional powers of the monarch are a mixture of detachment and executive involvement and could provide challenges to achieving the fourth king's declared wish to ensure that the fate of the nation is not in the hands of the monarch. Rather than *removing power* from the hands of one individual (the monarch), the constitution in fact provides for a form of *shared* or *joint* sovereignty. The monarch is above the law (Article 2, 15). He is the protector of all religions (Article 3, 1), must be Buddhist and is the supreme leader over religious faith (Article 2, 2).[259]

Article 2, 1 states that the monarch is Head of State and "symbol of unity" of the nation. The article both confirms some ongoing roles of the monarch, and introduces new ones. A key provision is his role to "protect and uphold" the constitution (Article 2, 18). This is differentiated from being the constitution's "guardian" (which is the role of the supreme court) – see chapter 8 (8.2).

The Wangchuck dynasty has supplied itself with symbolism, religious and otherwise. The constitution strengthens and reinforces this. This spiritual endorsement of the king strengthens his charisma based on tradition and religion, something which Chaulia (2008) considers useful for the survival of a monarch (see 2.3).

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[259] Phuntsho (2013, pp. 570-571) notes that in this provision the drafting committee managed to "sacralise" the monarchy as institution, making monarchy "a unified symbol of both secular and spiritual powers, besides preserving most of the privileges and prerogatives the monarchy enjoyed before democratization". He adds that it "was the first time in the history of Bhutan for a civilian ruler to be formally anointed as the embodiment of spiritual authority".

Finally, a blanket clause (Article 2, 16e) gives the monarch power over "matters which are not provided for under this Constitution or other laws." Bothe (2015, p. 11) considers that this theoretically gives the Bhutanese monarch more powers than the United States president. Counter to this is the people's ability to remove the king through a referendum. Article 2 (20-25) enables a possible parliamentary vote of no confidence in the monarch. If passed by three quarters of a joint sitting of parliament, this must then be put to the people in a referendum, who can adopt it by a simple majority. If this eventuates, the king must abdicate in favour of his heir. Reportedly, this provision stemmed from the fourth king's oft-repeated concerns about the unpredictability of future monarchs. He insisted on giving the people what he described as the power to "dethrone the King or Queen through secret voting".[260] This provision might also be aimed at preventing a parliamentary coup, and also discouraging any future moves to establish a republic.

In Tonga (unlike in Bhutan or Thailand) the king is not above the law, although his "person" is described as "sacred" (Clause 41). In addition, he has some protection from being sued "in any court for a debt" – this is not lawful unless it has the cabinet's consent (Clause 50, 1).

In contrast to Bhutan, in Tonga it seems there is no constitutional route whereby (if it were the will of the people) a monarch could be asked to step down or the institution of monarchy called into question. As Powles comments, the provisions relating to the monarch and the limitations on power to amend the constitution "render the Monarchy unassailable by constitutional means" (2013, p. 55). (It should be clarified here that the political reform debate in Tonga has never involved proposals for the disestablishment of the monarchy). Unlike Bhutan, in Tonga there is no mention of the monarch having control over the church,[261] and freedom of religion is included in the Declaration of Rights dating from the 1875 constitution. Furthermore, the king is to reign "on behalf of all his people…without partiality" (Clause 17).

In Thailand's constitutions several provisions contain references to upholding or protecting the monarchy and similar phrases. For example, the Thai monarch "shall

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[260] Fourth king to public consultation in Trashigang (Tobgye, 2014, p. 5).
[261] But the revised constitution retains the nineteenth-century Christian fervour of its predecessor – see for example Clause 6 about the "Sabbath Day".

not be violated"; is accorded "revered worship" and cannot be exposed to "any sort of accusation or action" - 1997 constitution (Clause 8); 2007 constitution (Clause 8); 2017 constitution (Clause 6).

It is seemingly impossible for Thailand to make a decision to abolish the monarchy: "a motion for amendment which has the effect of changing the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State or changing the form of the State shall be prohibited" - 1997 (Clause 313); 2007 (Clause 291); 2017 (clause 255). The "State shall protect and uphold the institution of kingship" - 1997 (Clause 71); 2007 (Clause 77); 2017 (Clause 52). These provisions can create problems for an elected government, as Yingluck's experience with the constitutional court demonstrated (see 8.2).

As in Bhutan, the Thai constitutions give the monarch a role in relation to religions. He must be Buddhist and is the "upholder of religions" (1997 and 2007, Clause 9; 2017 clause 7).[262] Finally, a blanket clause appears to give the monarch the ability to issue a Royal Decree in any field, although this is qualified by the phrase "which is not contrary to the law" – 1997, Clause 221; 2007, Clause 187; 2017, Clause 175.[263]

In Nepal, as Malagodi's (2013) analysis indicates, the 1990 constitution made certain concessions to the king. It retained the status of Nepal as a "Hindu Kingdom" (Clause 4, 1) and kept a reference to monarchical emergency powers, which were invoked by Gyanendra in 2002 and 2005. As in Thailand, the monarch appears to have been above the law: "no question shall be raised in any court about any act performed by His Majesty" (Clause 31). Furthermore, parliament was not permitted to discuss the conduct of the king, queen or "heir apparent" (Clause 56, 1).

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[262] The constitution does not declare any national religion, but the increased emphasis on Buddhism in the 2017 constitution is thought to be one reason for the low level of support for the referendum on the constitution in Thailand's Muslim provinces (Pravit, 2018).

[263] This may resemble the Bhutanese monarch's *kasho* or Royal Command (although this is not spelt out in the Bhutanese constitution). Pre-constitution, the *kasho* was a key element of monarchical rule. Even now it can pre-empt action by the National Assembly (Bothe, 2015, p. 15; Sithey, 2013, pp. 71-72).

Clause 72 gave the king the right to issue an ordinance in urgent circumstances when parliament was not in session, but this would have to be tabled at the next session of parliament and passed by them if it were to remain in effect (and so is not of the same nature as the Thai Royal Decree described above). More ambiguous is Clause 27 (3), cited by Gyanendra to justify his coups, which requires the king to "preserve and protect the Constitution by keeping in view the best interests and welfare of the people of Nepal." This could be open to various interpretations. Another somewhat ambiguous provision is 127, which states that "If any difficulty arises" related to implementation of the constitution, "His Majesty may issue necessary Orders to remove such difficulty" and these will be "laid before Parliament". This too was used by Gyanendra as a justification for his coups. And yet none of these provisions compelled Gyanendra to seize absolute power: that was completely his own decision which, as we have seen, ultimately led to the monarchy's fall (see 5.1).

In both Thailand and Nepal we can see that constitutional provisions either enable, or have been exploited to enable, a degree of monarchical interference in governance or intervention by others (such as the military or the courts) supposedly in the interests of protecting the monarchy. This is partly the result of ambiguity in the constitutions, as discussed below.

Ambiguities

A degree of ambiguity about the monarch's powers is present in all four cases. Venkat Iyer (2016), a reviewer of Tobgye's 2015 book on Bhutan's constitution, refers specifically to the lack of clarity on the extent of the king's power. Iyer notes that in Western parliamentary models some powers supposedly held by the monarch (such as commanding the army) are in practice delegated to the elected government and others (such as rejecting legislation) are never invoked. This is not necessarily the case with newly democratising monarchies whose constitutions are based on the Westminster model. Bothe (2012, 2015), writing about Bhutan, makes a similar point. She observes that sometimes the conventions which have evolved in modern day European democratic monarchies differ from the actual wording of constitutional provisions. Those schooled in Western constitutional law might see it as normal to have certain powers (such as vetoing legislation) vested

in the monarch but in practice devolved to the government. In contrast, in newly democratised monarchies, where these conventions do not exist, it becomes difficult to assess the limits on the monarch's powers. Malagodi (2011), writing about Nepal, presents a similar argument. The issue is also relevant to Tonga, where there is a belief that certain provisions in the constitution, such as the king's right to withhold assent to legislation, are in line with the practice in the UK and other European democratic parliamentary monarchies, without appreciating that in the UK, for example, this right has not been exercised since 1708.

In Bhutan, we have already seen (see 5.1) how in some ways the constitution codifies powers not previously set in law, thereby apparently strengthening the powers of the monarch in some circumstances, and in some cases creating a degree of confusion as to what the exact powers are. The ambiguity of the constitution makes it difficult to judge whether the king is acting in accordance with his constitutional powers, or is overstepping them.

One area where these ambiguities are apparent is in the monarch's relationship with parliament.

Monarch's relationship with parliament

Looking at the tables above, we can see that Tonga's constitution accords the monarch the most power in terms of dismissing parliament and rejecting legislation. While Tonga's monarch can dismiss parliament at any time without having to give reasons,[264] in Bhutan dismissal has to be either following a vote of no confidence or on the recommendation of the prime minister. A similar requirement is found in Nepal's 1990 constitution. In Thailand, the monarch's power to dissolve parliament is similar to that in Tonga. In both cases elections must be called within a defined period, in Tonga one year and in Thailand 60 days. A royal coup (seizure of power by the monarch and refusal to hold elections) would be unconstitutional in Tonga (and Thailand).

As regards the monarch's veto over legislation, in Tonga this power is absolute (no legislation can succeed without the monarch's assent). Compare this with the situation in Bhutan. If the Bhutanese king does not approve a bill, he refers it back

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[264] Tupou VI used this power in August 2017 (see 3.1).

with "amendments or objections;" the bill is then debated in a joint sitting, after which it can become law with a two thirds majority (Article 13). This is rather more complicated than the Tongan system but more democratic, with less risk of paralysing the government. It is possibly based on a similar provision in Nepal's 1990 constitution. In the Thai case, if the monarch refuses assent the National Assembly must reconsider a bill, but if it is then passed by a two thirds majority it must become law. In addition, in the case of Bhutan, there is a specific provision (Article 35) enabling parliament to call for a referendum on a constitutional amendment rejected by the king (although a constitutional amendment first has to be passed by a three quarter majority in parliament).[265] On the other hand Iyer (2016), perhaps concerned about the provision in the Bhutanese constitution for the king to be a member of parliament in his own right, comments that "a further question, I think arises, viz. to what extent can the monarch exercise law-making powers on his own?"

In Tonga, the king's veto is *more* likely to be used under the new system than the previous one, because of the new-style privy council (see below).[266] The veto power has been exercised on several occasions by the current king (Tupou VI), on advice from his privy council (see below), in relation to legislation from both the Tu'ivakanō and Pohiva governments. Ironically, this practice is contrary to what King George V envisaged, as set out in his (unsigned) paper published on news website *Matangi Tonga* in March 2012. The paper states: "in line with the conventions of Constitutional Monarchy [the Sovereign] would withhold assent only where the legislation in question was an affront to the Constitution or an abuse of power eg Parliament attempting to prolong its life beyond 4 years" (Matangitonga, 2012).

A curious provision in both Bhutan and in Nepal's 1990 constitution is making the king a member of parliament in his own right, and, in the case of Bhutan, giving him the power to command that bills be introduced. This gives the monarch a far

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[265] Presumably this could even include an amendment to disestablish the monarchy.
[266] Previously, the privy council consisted of the king and his ministers, whom he had appointed from outside parliament. All executive decisions were taken by this body, which involved the king, and so proposals put by the executive to parliament already had royal approval. In these circumstances it would be unlikely that they would subsequently be vetoed by the monarch.

more active relationship with parliament than is the case in Tonga or Thailand. In addition, in Bhutan (and Nepal in 1990) the monarch also has a role in appointing a proportion of members of the Upper House, something which is not possible in Tonga (given the absence of an Upper House). Tonga's cabinet had wanted the king to have the power to appoint four members of cabinet from outside the Legislative Assembly, as can be seen in both the government's roadmap of October 2006 (Sevele, 2006) – discussed in chapter 6 (6.2) - and in the cabinet's submission to the CEC (PMO, 2009, p. 13). But King George V wanted this power to be exercised by the prime minister, not the monarch, and his preference prevailed.[267]

If there is an equivalent in Tonga to the appointment of members of an Upper House it might be in the still disproportionate representation of the nobles in parliament (see 8.3), given that the nobles have a close relationship with the royal family and have regular meetings with the king in his role as *hau* or traditional leader.

Of course, as we have seen, in both Thailand and Nepal their constitutional protections of parliament were disregarded: in Thailand by the military (with the excuse of protecting the monarchy) and in Nepal by the king himself, meaning that the special status of the monarch (as highlighted at the beginning of this comparative discussion) proved more compelling than any constitutional protections.

Monarch's relationship with the executive

An area of potential ambiguity is the provision in all constitutions for the monarch to appoint the prime minister and ministers, generally as nominated by the parliament (for the prime minister) and by the prime minister (for the ministers). This may be a pure Category 3 power (ie the monarch *must* approve the nominations), as Powles considers to be the case for Tonga, but there is potentially room for doubt as to whether the monarch might at times consider it his prerogative to reject a prime minister's choice of minister.

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[267] Interviewee TP11.

As to the division of power between the monarch and the executive, the language of the constitutions gives some insights. In Bhutan, executive power resides in the cabinet, who set policies and represent the country and are "collectively responsible" to both king and parliament (Article 20, 7). The prime minister is obliged to keep the king informed and give him written material if requested (Article 20, 4). This conforms to the right of the monarch to be "consulted", as prescribed by Bagehot (1898, p. 75). The cabinet advises the king on the performance of his functions including international ones (Article 20, 3) but he can "require" them to reconsider their advice. In practice the balance between the monarchy and the government when it comes to foreign policy has proven to be a sensitive aspect of Bhutan's democracy. The fourth king eschewed grand-standing internationally and his son has a similarly modest profile, but they play a role in overseeing foreign policy. [268]

In Tonga there is a similar uncertainty about the demarcation between the king's and the government's responsibilities for foreign affairs. This is illustrated by the reaction in 2015 when the Pohiva cabinet (in a culmination of a long consultation process including by the previous government) made a decision to sign on to the United Nations convention on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW) – a controversial issue in Tonga. The government's advice to the UN of its intention to accede was subsequently withdrawn after the "King in Council" (based on a contested interpretation of the constitution provided by the king's legal advisors – the "Law Lords") advised the government that decisions to sign on to international conventions were the prerogative of the monarch (see ABC, 2015). The (unchanged) relevant clause in the constitution states that "It shall be lawful for the King to make treaties with Foreign States provided that such treaties shall be in accordance with the laws of the Kingdom" (clause 39). This had not previously been interpreted as meaning that agreement to sign on to multilateral conventions was a prerogative of the king rather than a delegated responsibility of the executive. [269]

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[268] This was confirmed by interviewee BP2. Prime Minister Thinley in 2012 was seen as overstepping the mark – and also upset India, in his overtures to China (see 3.2).
[269] Interviewee TLS3.

Tonga's revised constitution states that the king "reigns the country, but ministers are responsible" (clause 41), and further elaborates that the "executive authority…shall vest in the Cabinet, which shall be collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly for the executive functions of the Government" (clause 51,1), placing executive power squarely in the hands of the cabinet, although this is qualified by clause 51,7 which states that " the term 'executive authority'…excludes all powers vested in the King or the King in Council" whether in the constitution, legislation or "Royal Prerogatives".

As regards the king's right to be consulted (Bagehot, 1898), the Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC, 2009, p. 37) recommended a regular mechanism for the prime minister to report to the king each week, but this was not implemented. Instead, there is a general requirement in the constitution (clause 50A, 3) for the prime minister to report "regularly and as required" to the king about government matters.

In Nepal, the 1990 Constitution (clause 35, 1) made the king a member of the executive in his own right, together with the council of ministers, but, apart from a few exceptions, executive power had to be exercised on recommendation, advice and consent of the cabinet. The king could also express recommendations, appreciation or admonitions to the cabinet on matters of national importance (43, 2), and the prime minister was required to keep the king informed on government and legislative developments (43, 1).

A particularly problematic distinction in Nepal was between the monarch's and the executive's powers related to control of the army. As we have seen in chapter 7 (7.2), this dual legitimacy created problems for the elected government at the time of the Maoist insurgency, when Birendra did not wish to deploy the army and so the government was not able to do so.

In Thailand, given the frequency of coups and abrogation of constitutions, the constitutional provisions delineating the relationship of the monarch with the executive may be somewhat moot. A significant feature is that the king "appoints and removes" senior officials in both the military and the civil service - 1997 (clause 227), 2007 (clause 193), 2017 (clause 180).

One recent instance of monarchical interference is worth highlighting. King Vajiralongkorn did not approve the 2017 constitution until he had secured alterations to two clauses affecting his interests. The first required the king to choose a regent (endorsed by the National Assembly) if he was going to be absent abroad. Vajiralongkorn, who clearly did not want any constraints on carrying out his role from outside the country, altered this to read "may or may not appoint one person or several persons…as Regent". His other amendment was to a proposed (new) provision giving the constitutional court a role as ultimate arbiter in times of political crisis (a role previously seen as Bhumibol's). This clause may have been an effort by the military (in line with a strategy Mérieau (2016) has analysed) to weaken royal prerogatives (BBC, 2017; McCargo et al., 2017; Parry, 2017; Ruiz & Sasiwan Mokkhasen, 2017). It seems the new monarch detected potential encroachment and sought to curtail it.[270]

Privy council

The constitutions provide for the monarchs to make a number of appointments, sometimes on the recommendation of another body, and sometimes under the king's own authority. For the purposes of this study, we shall concentrate on provisions regarding a privy council (or similar body) to advise the king.

The role of a privy council is variously described, along the lines of this wording from the Thai constitutions, as being to advise "on all matters pertaining to His functions as He may consult" (Thailand; 1997, clause 12), plus other specific duties as set out in the constitution.

This study has not revealed (whether in written material or in interviews) any particular concerns about the role of the privy councils in Bhutan and (formerly) in Nepal. In Bhutan, the four-person privy council consists of two appointees of the monarch, one member appointed by the cabinet and one by the National Council. Their responsibilities are related to the duties and privileges of the royal family, although they can also be directed towards "any other matter as may be

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[270] The new king has also made significant changes in the royal household, giving himself direct control over various institutions (Peel, 2017a); has made six new appointments to the privy council (although Prem remains); and appointed a new Buddhist supreme patriarch (Reuters, 2017c). He also persuaded parliament to give him full control of the Crown Property Bureau (Reuters, 2017b).

commanded" by the monarch (Article 14). In Nepal there was also a balance between the monarch's appointees and others. The *Raj Parishad* consisted of Royal family members designated by the king, and a collection of *ex officio* members mainly from the cabinet and the parliament, plus various constitutional positions. From this group a smaller "Standing Committee" was responsible for most of the council's tasks, which consisted of "recommendations on matters referred to it by HM" and other "functions relating to the Royal Family" specified by the king. As in Thailand (see below), the *Raj Parishad* also had a role in relation to potential appointment of a regent and proclamations in relation to the accession of a new king (Clause 34 of the 1990 constitution).[271]

In Tonga and Thailand, the privy council seems to operate well beyond its specified roles. In Tonga, the revised constitution describes the council as a body appointed by the king "to provide him with advice" (Clause 50, 1), comprising whoever the king chooses to appoint. Thus, the new style "privy council" is no longer an executive, policy-making institution and, unlike its predecessor, does not include ministers.[272] It is an advisory body chosen by the king.[273] And yet the constitution also includes some references, many carried over from the previous system, where the "King in Council" makes decisions. These and some other references to the privy council, argues Powles (2013, pp. 52-53), make it "difficult to interpret the Constitution and legislation wherever they refer to the Privy Council". The risk is that the privy council becomes seen as something approaching an alternate executive or de facto Upper House. The king might seek their opinion in considering whether to assent to legislation, and they might recommend rejecting legislation even when this has already been scrutinised by the government's legal advisers, thereby potentially assigning them a quasi-executive role in questioning

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[271] This must have been a challenge at the time of the royal family massacre.
[272] It is unfortunate that the term "privy council" was retained for the new body.
[273] The cabinet, in its submission to the CEC (PMO, 2009), had suggested that the privy council, although a purely advisory body, include amongst its members the prime minister and some key ministers as well as members chosen by the king. The CEC on the other hand recommended the privy council exclude cabinet members but include a number of *ex officio* members representing traditional and church bodies (2009, p. 36). This suggestion was not favoured by the cabinet. In the end, the decision was made to simply leave it up to the monarch to decide the membership (interviewee TLS3). The Pohiva government however has sought to revisit the idea of including some ministers in the privy council, in order to make it easier to explain government policies to the king (RNZ, 2017).

policy. This might in some cases provide a useful additional check and balance on a novice government during a time of transition, but it can risk handicapping a government's and parliament's legitimate functions. Furthermore, such practice risks being seen to favour the opposition.

Nevertheless, the privy council in Tonga is nowhere near as powerful as its equivalent in Thailand. In addition to being an advisory body, Thailand's privy council also has a specified constitutional role in relation to regency (see for example clause 19 of the 1997 constitution) and to succession. As happened in the case of the succession of King Vajiralongkorn, the President of the privy council can act as Regent pro tempore if for some reason the heir is not ready to take on the role immediately. If the monarch has named a successor (as was the case with Bhumibol) the privy council will submit that name to the cabinet, who then forward it to the National Assembly for approval (clause 22, 1997 and similar clauses in 2007 and 2017). If the monarch has not named a successor the privy council has even more power, as it must submit a name of a successor (clause 23, 1997 and similar clauses in 2007 and 2017).

But the main role of the privy council has been as a political player in its own right and indeed the lynchpin of the "network monarchy" (McCargo, 2005). As we have seen in chapters 5 (5.1) and 7 (7.1), the President of the privy council has played a part (presumably on behalf of and with the agreement of the monarchy) in inciting coups and in chiding elected governments. It has also operated as something of a go-between between the military and the king, especially given that many of the privy councillors are ex-military. These activities of the council are not drawn from the constitution but rather from the monarchy's powers beyond the constitution. We turn to these powers in the next section.

Monarch's powers beyond constitution

The clearest case of a monarch exercising powers that transcended anything in the constitution is Thailand under Bhumibol. Kobkua (2003, pp. 64-67) describes these powers as "personal, non-transferable and thus unpredictable." When exercised, they "[took] precedence over all other legal authority." (The extent of the monarch's involvement in the polity is described in detail in 5.1).

The next example is that of Nepal, where, as we have seen, the 1990 constitution is regarded by some as having enabled the monarchical power grabs of Gyanendra (Malagodi, 2013, pp. 8-10, 178-179). In reality, Gyanendra's coups went beyond anything covered in the constitution. In addition, according to Bhandari, both Birendra and Gyanendra also *abused* constitutional requirements by, for example, delaying assent on bills, thereby undermining ministerial authority (2014, pp. 44-45).

In Bhutan and Tonga, ambiguities in the constitution might open up risks of manipulation by the monarch (or the monarch's advisers). As noted, in Bhutan, the extent of power assigned to the monarchy may be greater than what the fourth king (according to his public statements) desired. It may be correct that, as Bothe (2015) suggests (see 2.4), the Bhutanese constitution reinforced the monarchy for the future, including by codifying many aspects of monarchical power that had not previously been encased in a legal framework. Given the king's close involvement in the constitution drafting process, it could be argued that he used his influence to ensure certain powers of the monarch were protected.[274] There is however some suggestion that the drafting committee (who were presumably quite comfortable with the prevailing political structure) were more conservative than the king would have liked, especially in seeking to preserve a strong role for the monarch. The king told Om Pradhan (2012, p. 144), that he "had no choice but to reject the initial drafts…submitted by the drafting committee as these drafts had been made to please him and safeguard the powers of the monarchy rather than to achieve genuine democracy." One interviewee[275] suggested that those appointed to the drafting committee by the king felt compelled to out-do each other by demonstrating their royalism and their loyalty by trying to protect the monarch's powers.

In Tonga, beyond the ambiguities considered above, an additional risk comes from the balance between the king's traditional role (as head of the royal court, and leader of the nobles) and his newly limited executive powers. Much appears to be

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[274] The situation in Tonga was different: King George Tupou V was not closely involved in the constitution revision as such, perhaps because of his belief that the constitution was fundamentally sound and only needed adjusting, which could be done by experts.
[275] BAJ10.

left to the discretion of the individual monarch as to how the relationship between these roles will affect the development of the new democracy and where legitimacy will be seen to rest.

Constraints on the monarch's powers

The most salient example of constitutional constraints on the monarch's powers, beyond those already noted in this chapter (such as the powers of parliament and the executive) is provided by Bhutan. We have already seen how the people have the power through a referendum to compel an unsuitable king to abdicate. In addition, Bhutan requires its monarchs to abdicate at 65. This was "repeatedly opposed" by the public in consultations (Tobgye, 2015, p. 84) but King Jigme Singye had "personally decided" it should be included, so that the country would have a king fit to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the position.

9.3 Conclusion

The Bhutanese constitution creates checks and balances but it remains unclear where the final power lies. In many ways the king retains more powers than in (for example) Tonga, but this is balanced by parliament's ability to vote out the king altogether (if supported by a referendum),[276] and by the age limit mentioned above.

Lack of clarity about the exact constitutional powers of the monarchs is a feature of all the constitutions analysed. This is compounded in the cases of Nepal and Thailand by the monarchs' having exercised powers well beyond those in the constitutions, thereby impeding democratisation. In a sense this was enabled by the very fact of the existence of a monarchy with its associated special status, suggesting - as Ünaldi (2012) argues - that the reliance by a monarch on "traditional charisma" is the antithesis of "democratic charisma". At the same time, as we have seen elsewhere in this thesis, the exercise of those excessive powers has itself brought risks to the institution of monarchy – in Nepal, contributing to the downfall

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[276] This is in effect giving a power of impeachment to the parliament and therefore imposes a limit on the extent to which the king is above the law, since the debate on the motion would be chaired by the Chief Justice.

of the monarchy, and in Thailand facilitating the increased dominance of the military.

If we look back to the theorists on monarchy featuring in the literature review (2.3), the question arises as to whether the Democratic Parliamentary Monarchy (DPM) framework provides a useful basis for comparing the monarchical role as outlined in the various constitutions (Stepan et al., 2014). Not surprisingly, none of the constitutions uses that particular terminology to describe the country's form of government. Bhutan's constitution (Article 1, 2) describes the polity as a "democratic constitutional monarchy."[277] The form of government in Tonga's revised constitution is termed "Constitutional monarchy under His Majesty….." (clause 30), a change from its earlier description as "a Constitutional government under His Majesty…."(clause 31 in the earlier version (Latukefu, 1975b, p. 124)). Thailand's constitutions (clause 2) describe the government as "a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State". Nepal in 1990 was described as a "multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom" (clause 4).

As regards Thailand and Nepal, the DPM concept is of minimal use, given that the monarchs have not operated within the constraints of the constitutions, such as they are. Furthermore, we need to bear in mind that Thailand is currently (late 2017) a dictatorship, while Nepal is now a republic, and so assessing them against the DPM criteria has little merit. But is the concept useful for comparing the extent of the monarch's powers in Bhutan and Tonga, as well as pinpointing potential risks for those democracies?

The difficulty is the degree of ambiguity. Much depends, not so much on what the constitution prescribes, but on the extent of the royal prerogatives and the degree to which they are, in practice, delegated to the executive. With those limitations in mind, let us draw on our comparative analysis to consider how Tonga and Bhutan approach the DPM profile (see Table 1 in section 2.3).

In some aspects, Bhutan fits the "constitutional" profile and in other ways the DPM. DPM-type features include: the formation and termination of government are in the

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[277] One of its critics has termed it "the royal semi-authoritarian democracy of Bhutan" (Rizal, 2015).

hands of the democratically elected parliament; and, as regards judicial and other appointments, the monarch does not appoint or dismiss them unilaterally (although he has a strong role in their appointments). The relationship with parliament fits into the "constitutional" category as "extensive power-sharing". In not being bound by law, however, the monarch is still in the "ruling" category. In Tonga, the DPM model applies for the rule of law (as the monarch is not above the law). Tonga is in several other areas half-way between the "Constitutional" and the DPM. For example, formation and termination of government are mostly in the hands of parliament, but we have seen from the current king's actions that the monarch might choose to deploy his unfettered power to dissolve parliament. For constitutional constraints on the monarchy, Tonga is again on the borderline between the "constitutional" and "DPM": the monarch is governed by the constitution, and is constrained (in most cases) by a requirement to act on advice and recommendations of the elected government. While the monarch cannot for example draft legislation, and is not considered a member of parliament as in Bhutan, his veto power gives him a degree of control over parliament, meaning Tonga does not fully fit the DPM category for the parliament/monarch relationship. Finally, appointments to the judiciary and other top positions involve considerable input by the monarch and hence do not fit the DPM model.

In both countries, much depends on how the monarch operates in practice, but neither completely fits the DPM model, and nor are the monarch's powers limited to the three rights mentioned by Bagehot (1898, p. 75) – to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn. In Bhutan, ironically (given that the fourth king specifically wanted to exclude this possibility), the constitution leaves quite a lot of leeway for a future "bad king" to take control of the polity and impose his will on the people. The involvement of the monarch in the legislature, his strong role in choosing the Chief Justice, and his ability to both propose and reject legislation, among others, are provisions that might empower a dictatorial monarch to try to reassert authoritarian control. The saving grace is the ability of the parliament (and people) essentially to fire the king, but given the "hyper royalism" (Thongchai, 2014)[278] and deference (Muni, 2014) prevalent in Bhutan, it is hard to envisage such a scenario.

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[278] See chapter 5.

The example of Nepal, though, shows that such decisions by the people are indeed possible, if the king is considered "bad" enough.[279]

In Tonga, similarly, the constitutional reforms include a degree of ambiguity about the extent of a monarch's powers, which brings with it the risk of an authoritarian monarch (or monarchical advisers) seeking to politicise the monarchy and undermine the elected government. Some interviewees[280] saw the role of the king and his advisers as a useful "check and balance" on potential government incompetence and policy decisions that might not have widespread support. This leads to a situation where those who oppose proposed legislation, instead of feeding in their views to the government, convey them directly to the king (through a petition) or in person to members of the privy council.[281] This can undermine democratic parliamentary government.

For the people of Bhutan, similarly, the ongoing involvement of the monarch may bring a sense of security and reassurance, as they get used to the new system. The king, admired as a symbol of unity and stability, is also seen as a last resort, a form of protection in case the democratic politicians get it wrong.[282] But this can cause problems of dual legitimacy, blurring the lines of responsibility and creating confusion as to who is in fact in charge.

Returning to Thailand and Nepal, the 1997 and subsequent Thai constitutions and the 1990 Nepalese constitution contain the customary provisions relating to the monarch's powers (such as assenting to legislation, heading the army) that are seen in constitutional monarchies, with the proviso that, unlike in established democratic parliamentary monarchies, there has not been a process of devolution of monarchical powers to the executive through constitutional conventions. This dual legitimacy poses potential (and actual) risks to an elected government. Furthermore, the ambiguous nature of the constitution became significant when King Gyanendra used some provisions to "justify" his 2002 and 2005 coups. A far

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[279] The situation in Nepal is of course not analogous, as Nepal decided to do away with the monarchy altogether, not just the incumbent, whereas Bhutan's constitution allows for a referendum that would compel the king to step down in favour of his heir.
[280] TP8, TP12, TP14, TLS6.
[281] Interviewee TCS4.
[282] Interviewees BO1, BP4, BAJ11, BCS3, BPS4, BAJ6.

greater barrier in both countries has, however, been the instances of non-elected bodies (including the monarch in Nepal and the military in Thailand) abrogating the constitution and taking over executive rule.

Indeed, Nepal and Thailand provide worst case scenarios of the risks that might confront Bhutan and Tonga, such as a royal coup (dissolving legitimate government and failing to call fresh elections, or setting up an interim government which comes up with a revised, less democratic constitution). These outcomes seem scarcely likely in either Tonga or Bhutan, given (in the case of Tonga) the Tongan people's great regard for the constitution and, in Bhutan, the current king's apparent commitment to his father's vision of a democratic polity.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to assess, through an in-depth comparative focus on Bhutan, Tonga, Nepal and Thailand in the period 2005-2017, which factors, including the role of the monarch, might account for the different outcomes in the countries' trajectories towards or away from democracy.

As at the end of 2017, Bhutan and Tonga are fairly new democracies (or hybrid democracies) where the king's role has diminished and executive power is mainly with elected governments. In Bhutan this change came about in 2008; in Tonga in 2010. Thailand under its new king is an ongoing military dictatorship with entrenched military oversight even over a new constitution that might or might not come into force in 2019. The military has assumed some of the control over the polity that the monarch used to have. Nepal abolished its monarchy in 2008 and (following elections in late 2017) is a newly established democratic federal republic. None of the countries studied matches the situation described by Bagehot in his study of the English Constitution (1898, p. 75) where the monarch is a ceremonial head of state, providing a symbol of national identity and possessing "[t]he right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn." Only two – Bhutan and Tonga - have elements of a democratic parliamentary monarchy as conceptualised by Stepan, Linz and Minoves (2014). Nepal seems unlikely to revert to monarchical rule or some other form of autocracy. In the case of Thailand the future is deeply uncertain, but it is likely to remain in a "gray zone" (see Carothers, 2002a), oscillating between authoritarian rule and a form of guided democracy, with strong military influence in both cases.

10.1 Addressing the research questions

To assess the factors contributing to these outcomes, the thesis addressed the overall research question:

- What factors, including the role of the monarch, account for the different outcomes in the trajectories of Bhutan, Nepal, Tonga and Thailand towards (or away from) democracy?

This overall question was examined in the entirety of the thesis, with different chapters focusing on various factors considered significant by theorists, and addressing particular secondary questions:

- How has the approach of the monarch affected prospects for a successful democratic transition?
- What motivates a monarch to support and (in some cases) lead democratisation or, alternatively, impede it?
- What accounts for the decision of a country (as in Nepal) to abolish its monarchy?
- What are the implications of a monarchical succession for democratisation prospects?
- How has the monarchy's interaction with significant actors impeded or supported democracy?
- What aspects of the ongoing presence of the monarch (including dual sources of legitimacy) create risks for a new democracy?

These questions were examined against a background of relevant literature (chapter 2), historical and international factors (chapter 3) and the structural context of each country (chapter 4). The first four secondary questions were discussed in chapter 5 (and to a certain extent 9), while the fifth was covered in chapters 6 and 7 and the last in chapters 8 and 9.

This chapter first presents the conclusions from the thematic areas covered in the various chapters before moving on to revisit the relevant theoretical literature in the light of these findings. It then offers an assessment of the contribution of the thesis to knowledge about democratising monarchies and shows how it fills a gap in the literature. The chapter then weighs up the combination of factors driving or impeding the democratisation of these monarchies and discusses implications which might be more broadly applicable to the study of transitioning monarchies. Finally the chapter suggests areas for future research.

The survey of the historical and international context (chapter 3) revealed some *historical shaping influences* and some significant *critical junctures* that had an impact on later developments. The historical influences include:

- The avoidance of colonialism, but strong influence of the imperial powers, in some cases including normalising the concept of a centralised monarchy and of state boundaries.
- The impact of the independence of India on both Bhutan and Nepal, although in different ways. It brought both countries out of isolation and nurtured pro-democracy activists from Nepal while assisting modernisation in Bhutan.
- The Cold War and the mutually supportive relationship it engendered between the Thai monarchy, military and US anti-communist interests.

Critical junctures include:

- The Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, which paved the way for the emergence of a new type of politician in Thailand.
- The 2001 royal family massacre in Nepal, which wiped out much of the royal family and weakened faith in the institution of monarchy.
- In all the monarchies, the deaths of monarchs and issues of succession, which create an uncertainty peculiar to monarchies and can either impede or foster democratisation, and can even pose a risk to a monarchy itself. The analysis identified a clear distinction between the attitude towards succession of the democratisation-leading monarchs and the others. Jigme Singye (Bhutan) and George V (Tonga) were both determined to democratise before their successors took over, apparently to ensure that any successor would have a hard time undoing the reforms. Bhumibol (Thailand) possibly worried about the quality of his successor but this did not inspire him to encourage democratisation. The questionable quality of the successors of both Bhumibol and Gyanendra (Nepal) had an impact on the fate of the monarchy. In Nepal, disquiet over Gyanendra's presumed successor contributed to loss of confidence in the monarchy and its eventual abolition. In Thailand the military's determination to be firmly in control at the time of the succession was one reason behind their clinging to power and their presentation of an undemocratic constitution.

In addition to the independence of India and the Cold War, other significant *international relationships and developments* helped shape the background

against which the monarchs operated and made their decisions. These include the growth of the concept of democracy as a global norm, in sharp contrast to the (earlier) environment in which the European democratic parliamentary monarchies developed. The democratising monarchs may have seen autocracy as a thing of the past, acceptable in former times but less so in a changed international context, like the enlightened leaders described by Di Palma who considered that authoritarianism no longer had relevance in contemporary times (1990, p. 147).

Globalisation also had its influence. Democratic (or otherwise) neighbourhoods attached considerable, or conversely negligible, importance to encouraging democracy and good governance. Encouragement from its region was particularly relevant in the case of Tonga, whose Pacific Island neighbours all became democracies of sorts (excepting Fiji) and whose major developed partners (Australia and New Zealand) encouraged and supported its democratic transition. Thailand's region and significant partners put little or no emphasis on democracy. For Nepal and Bhutan the situation was more complex, as the ostensibly democratic South Asian neighbourhood (including the giant, India) presented a mixed picture of democracy.

India itself played an inconsistent role in relation to Nepal and Bhutan, but those countries' choice of India rather than China as their main partner meant the democratic model loomed larger for them than the autocratic one. If China's global outreach had been as strong twenty years ago as it is now, its model (of economic growth coupled with political autocracy) might have been preferred by these monarchies (as it is for some in Thailand today).

The different monarchs also operated in, and made their decisions based on, varying structural contexts, with some similarities and some significant differences, as described in chapter 4. These differences and similarities enable a pinpointing of probable influential factors in the countries' differing trajectories.

The chapter revealed a clear driver of democratisation in all four countries as the growth in education, which, despite differences in quality, in all cases was markedly improved in the second half of the twentieth century. This engendered increased awareness of democratic values. Monarch-led modernisation took place in all four monarchies although at different times and to different extents, with resulting strong

variations in the level of development. As we shall see below, the relationship between economic development and democratisation in these countries does not correspond to the classical pattern postulated by Lipset and supported to a certain extent by Przeworski and colleagues (2000; 1997) and by Teorell (2010, 2013). This is especially so for Thailand, whose level of development would suggest greater prospects for democracy. Clearly a combination of other factors complicates the situation.

A structural factor of significance in all four monarchies is that, as poverty has declined, concern about inequality has increased, and has influenced political actors, although in differing ways. Privileged classes, castes and elites have sought to preserve their advantages, whether through resisting political change or seeking to retain their influence in a changed political environment. In Thailand, many of the wealthy (and of the middle classes) have supported the military's repression of democracy through fear of the impacts of redistribution (as favoured by Thaksin's government). Structural inequalities (including ethnic and caste discrimination) in Nepal were one reason that some communities in the countryside were receptive to the Maoists' anti-democratic revolutionary message, since the Maoists also preached anti-discrimination. This did not stop the Maoists, once a Constituent Assembly was established, from joining other high caste politicians in opposing for years the conclusion of an inclusive constitution (although they agreed to it in the end). In Tonga the nobles pushed to retain their political influence (and thereby protect their economic interests) through their input to the constitutional and electoral reform process. The Bhutan monarchy was the only one of the four which specifically targeted inequality. Its profile as a benevolent monarchy made it easier for the monarch to "sell" democracy to the people, even though they had not asked for it.

This brings us to a major theme of this thesis, the impact of the monarch's role. Aspects of the monarch's approach and influence were analysed in chapters 5 and 9 of the thesis. Chapter 5 looked at the leadership (or otherwise) of the monarchs in the democratisation process, while chapter 9 analysed the constitutional (and other) provisions relating to the powers of the monarch.

Many of the constitutional provisions and the prerogatives of the monarchy stem from the concept of the special status of the monarch. This marks a key difference between democratising monarchies and other autocracies. A belief that the monarchy has (and requires) special status can be a force for democracy (for example, when the monarch uses the people's faith in the monarchy to persuade reluctant democrats to embrace change). Conversely, it can be a risk for democracy, since it leads to a dual legitimacy which makes it difficult to determine where legitimate policy-making lies, even in a supposedly democratic constitution.

One element of monarchical legitimacy is the monarch's position as a symbol of the country's independence, with the monarchy seen as having preserved the country from colonisation. Where there has been no anti-colonial movement, there are no alternative heroes to symbolise the nation. This reverence for the monarchy could favour autocracy (since the monarch may have no incentive to democratise) but the examples in this study reveal two monarchs who used their status to push democracy and two who used it to impede or halt democracy.

In essence, the Thai and Nepalese cases present worst case scenarios of what can happen if the monarch uses the institution's special status to go beyond the constitution and either enforce or enable authoritarian rule. These risks are inherent in the ongoing presence of a monarchy where convention has yet to delineate the limitations of powers. This leads to blurred lines of responsibility and can result in erosion of elected bodies' powers. Blurred lines of responsibility can also survive a democratic transition, as we can see in Tonga where the king retains a "privy council" that exerts de facto powers based on conformity with the past rather than on post-transition constitutional status.

This special status of the monarchs makes their leadership role in transitions particularly significant, as is the question of what influenced them to embark on or resist democratisation. The thesis accordingly examined the role of four monarchs in leading, supporting or impeding democratisation, and considered what might have influenced their choices. One significant finding was that while institutional arrangements (taking account of the monarchy's special status) can facilitate or otherwise a monarch's anti-democratic actions, they are not the primary cause of these actions. The monarch's decisions to support or impede democracy stem from

the choices of the monarch as leader (perhaps persuaded by advisers), not constitutional constraints.

Deploying or relying on the monarchy's special status to assert political power can also bring a risk to the monarchy itself, as the case of Nepal demonstrates. Chapter 5 concluded that King Gyanendra's own hubris was the primary cause of the abolition of the Nepalese monarchy. Gyanendra believed himself morally and religiously superior to elected politicians.

Curiously, despite their different perspectives, there was some similarity in motivation between the different monarchs. In all four cases, monarchs sought to preserve the institution of monarchy for their heirs, but they differed on how best to achieve this. Those distrustful of democracy saw keeping a firm hold on power as their best route to preserving the monarchy; those favouring democracy saw it as a means to better control a potentially unsuitable future monarch and thereby save the monarchy from engendering its own undoing.

While Gyanendra (and Bhumibol) believed that exerting monarchical political power (in association with allies such as the military) was a way of preserving the monarchy, Jigme Singye of Bhutan and George V of Tonga decided that relinquishing political power (but retaining something more than a purely ceremonial role) was the way to secure both the monarchy's future and their own legacy. They used their special status both to assist a successful democratic transition and to future-proof the monarchy.

As Di Palma (1990, p. 122) argues, such leadership from the top is particularly important for a transition in countries where structural conditions are not necessarily positive for democracy (which, based on the level of economic development, was the case for Tonga, Bhutan and Nepal).

Kings Jigme Singye and George V were apparently motivated by their liberal education. The case of Bhumibol suggests, however, that a liberal education does not always imply a democratically-inclined monarch. If a monarch (at a young age) is persuaded by royal advisers that the monarchy is the natural ruler as a result of religious and moral superiority, this might transcend the impact of education. Furthermore, both Bhumibol and Gyanendra placed unity and order above democracy and even constitutional law, and saw the monarchy as the key bulwark

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of the political and social order. Conversely, the monarchs who led democratisation believed that a hereditary monarch could not be relied on for all time to be the best leader for the country. They also saw a modernisation of the political system as essential for continuing economic development in their countries.

Clearly, other factors influenced the monarchs' behaviour in addition to their own inclinations and attitudes. A monarch's decision to lead democratisation (or not) depended also on the monarchy's relationship with key actors and the interrelationships of these different parties in the reform process. These questions were examined in chapters 5 and 6.

Historically, the monarchy had worked to establish its relationship with elite groups and to have the monarchy's special status recognised and acknowledged by those groups, sometimes through some sort of pact or covenant – supposedly putting some obligations on the monarchy as well as the partner. Examples of this are the Bhutanese *genja* establishing the kingship, and the covenant in Tonga between the newly-established Tupou dynasty and the chiefs (which is used by some to justify the nobles' ongoing privileged status). The Bhutanese royalty speak of the 2008 reforms as giving back to the people the power they gave to the king in the *genja,* whereas in Tonga the royals still see the need to accommodate the nobles who gave up power to the king. In Thailand, the symbiotic relationship between the monarchy and the military is another example of such a bargain. There, the monarchy successfully established itself (from the 1960s onwards) as the dominant partner, although that supremacy is now at risk.

From the second half of the twentieth century onwards these historical arrangements between elite groups and the monarchy faced a new challenge in the form of popular pro-democracy movements, in different ways and at different times in the various countries.

George V and Jigme Singye plausibly sought to pre-empt a popular movement for democracy by implementing change in advance of any public clamour for reform. In George V's case, pre-emption was not possible, because of the long reign of his father (who refused to consider reform). Jigme Singye, however, initiated reform in advance of any popular movement. This enabled him to have considerable influence on the shape of the reforms and potentially to control their scope.

In Thailand and Nepal, on the other hand, monarchic reticence about reform was at times accompanied by opposition to popular mobilisation. The occasionally ambivalent but chiefly negative attitude to democratisation of Bhumibol of Thailand and the totally negative approach of Gyanendra of Nepal resulted in a fraught (or incomplete) transition. Bhumibol's attitude and behaviour undermined Thailand's democratic politicians and the development of constitutional government. He was not above politics but rather the key political actor. Gyanendra was dismissive of democratic politicians and sought a return to the old days of autocratic monarchy. His repressive coups brought a halt (for a time) to democratic government. Both monarchs appeared to believe the citizens were not ready for democracy (and perhaps never would be).

The clearest example of popular mobilisation persuading an unwilling monarchy to democratise comes from Nepal's 1990 and 2006 people's movements, especially the latter in which the urban and rural people, the politicians and the Maoists all united to protest against the autocratic monarchy, resembling the popular "upsurge" described by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986). This was persuasive in convincing the monarch to reintroduce democracy (unlike the Maoist insurgency, which was not pro-democracy and had even contemplated a shared autocracy with the monarchy).

In Thailand the pro-democracy people's movements of the 1970s and 1992 strengthened the power of the monarchy, as they built a reputation for the monarch as the ultimate arbiter and, as we have seen in chapter 5 (5.1), fed a myth that the monarch was the people's guardian against autocracy. The rival protest movements of 2006 onwards had a different impact, giving the military an excuse to intervene (but always with the pretext of protecting the monarchy).

In Tonga the situation was complicated. The pro-democracy movement's relationship with the monarchy was not static, but went through four separate phases, detailed in chapter 6. The well-supported public service strike in 2005 may have influenced the then crown prince (later George V) in his approach to reform, leading him towards the idea of speedy constitutional change rather than (his earlier preference for) introducing reforms by convention. But by the time of the November 2006 riots George V had already publicly declared his democratic

intentions. The riots did not deter the king from his determination to reform but did lead to distrust and delays on the part of the government. The determination of the monarch kept reform on track. Interaction between the monarch and conservative elements (especially the nobles) had an impact on the outcomes too – reflecting a compromise that only the monarch could have brokered.

In Bhutan public mobilisation did not play a role in persuading the king to lead democratisation. The only calls for democracy came from the Lhotshampa protesters in the south, whose main concern was the treatment of minorities. These protests probably delayed rather than encouraged progress with the king's democratisation plans, since he preferred to wait until the country was peaceful. Anti-reform groups did not stage protests but expressed their concerns to the king who, apparently, was not moved by them.

The implication of this is that where a monarch has already decided to democratise then popular mobilisation will not deflect him (or her) from that plan, although it might cause delays. It can also help the monarch persuade conservative interests of the need for reform. When a monarch is opposed to reform, conservative groups and anti-reform protesters clearly have a better chance of having their views prevail (as the case of Thailand illustrates). But if the popular movement against monarchical autocracy is strong enough it can persuade an autocratic monarch to cede power (as in Nepal). Much then depends on the role of the military, as chapter 7 investigated.

The monarchy/military relationship was the second significant interaction analysed. The findings were that a mutually supportive relationship between the monarchy and the military can be a key impediment to embedding democracy, as illustrated by Thailand in particular, where military governments (supported by the monarchy) have been a regular feature. The Thai military see their duty as to the king, not the people, and base their legitimacy as autocrats on their role in "protecting" the monarchy.

The close, mutually dependent relationship with the military can also prove a *risk* to the monarchy. In Thailand the current military regime is usurping the monarchy's position as the key partner in the relationship. Nepal has never gone so far as to have a military government but the close relationship between the monarchy and

the military meant that, until 2006, the monarchy could rely on the military's support even when it acted against elected governments. This changed in 2006 when the military refused to support the monarch against the popular mobilisation. This was one among several influences on the monarch to restore parliamentary democracy.

In Tonga and Bhutan the risk of a royal coup in which the military would support a monarch's suppression of democratic government appears negligible for reasons of scale, the legislative constraints on the military (in Tonga) and the influence of the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the fact that the king is formally the Commander in Chief of the armed forces (as in Thailand and previously in Nepal) means that a risk of unconstitutional action supported by the military cannot be discounted entirely.

The monarch's interaction with key actors and the role of those actors was also relevant to the maintenance or development of institutional arrangements that either fostered or impeded democracy, including through ambiguities about legitimacy. Di Palma (1990) suggests that sound institutional arrangements negotiated through an inclusive consultative process could aid a democratic transition and consolidation. To a certain extent, the construction of such institutional frameworks in a monarchy can also help resolve issues of dual legitimacy. Conversely, if the institutional arrangements contain ambiguities about where the power lies, or leave considerable powers in the hands of unelected bodies (such as the monarchy itself, and groups associated with the monarchy), this poses a risk to democratic government. These issues were examined in Chapters 8 and 9.

The study of the constitutional arrangements revealed that in Thailand and in Nepal (under the monarchy), monarchs regularly exercised powers not assigned to them in the constitutions. In Bhutan and Tonga the political reforms left some powers in the hands of kings (and their advisers), and in other cases left this unclear, but elected executives and parliaments have the main responsibility for policy-making and implementation. Where unelected bodies exercised influence over policy this was seen as presenting a potential risk for consolidation of democracy (although this theme was not explored in depth in this thesis).

10.2 Relationship to the literature

This thesis explored factors contributing to democratisation as postulated by a diverse range of theorists, some belonging to the so-called structural or agency schools, some taking an integrated approach, and a small number focused specifically on monarchies.

The findings strongly supported the adoption of an integrated approach. Some theories from the structural school were particularly relevant, while others were relevant to some countries only. Others had little relevance. The emphasis on education in Lipset (1957) and to a certain extent Przeworski and colleagues (2000) is confirmed in all four countries. To varying degrees, educated citizens led the popular demand for democracy or at least political reform. In the particular case of Bhutan, where there was little popular demand for reform, education prepared the ground for acceptance of political change even amongst citizens who had not demanded it. Monarchs' own education had a similar impact in Bhutan and Tonga, as it exposed them to values which, as Tonga's George V stated, meant that in the modern age the pathway chosen "of course has to be democracy" (George V, 2010c).

As regards economic development, conversely, the four countries confound the expectations of Lipset (1959), Acemoglu (Acemoglu et al., 2015; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006), Przeworski et al. (2000) and others who see a close link between democracy and economic development. Thailand, as the only one of the four countries with a globalised and dynamic economy, runs counter to expectations of such a link. Its GDP per capita brings it close to a point where democracy is not expected to fail (Przeworski, 2004). The other countries, with their aid-dependent (and in the case of Nepal and Tonga remittance-dependent) economies and mixed development prospects are now all constitutional democracies with good prospects for endurance.

Structural theories provide useful insights into inequality, poverty, and discrimination as potential conflict points between those seeking more involvement in political decision-making (democracy) and those seeking to retain their economic and other privileges. With the exception of Bhutan, where these divisions are less

relevant to the political developments, the thesis found that growing awareness of inequality amongst deprived groups, classes (or castes), regions, and ethnicities, despite overall reductions in poverty, led to demands for a greater say in politics by those groups. For others, awareness of inequality reinforced a desire to exclude such groups from political ascendancy. The theories of Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), Ansell and Samuels (2014) and Boix (2003) have some relevance here, especially in relation to the political divisions in Thailand and Nepal. None, however, is an exact fit with the particular circumstances of each county, given the complex circumstances and the array of actors involved, including the monarchy.

The theories of Rustow (1970), O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) and Di Palma (1990) encapsulate relevant agency factors in a (successful or impeded) transition to democracy. They emphasise leadership, popular mobilisation and negotiated institutional frameworks. In particular, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) described "popular upsurge", a blossoming of civil society and alliance of different interest groups, which can play a significant role in pushing transition further then otherwise would have happened. This occurred in Nepal in both 1990 and 2006, while in Tonga such an upsurge had an impact at the time of the 2005 public sector strike, giving a greater sense of urgency to the then crown prince (who was already committed to political change). In Thailand a grand alliance of interests in popular mobilisation did not occur in the period under study. Rather, the starkly opposing interests of differing groups confronted each other in search of their own vision of governance.

Also relevant is O'Donnell and Schmitter's contrast between a leader (who could be a monarch) who opposes democratisation out of a belief that the masses are not educated enough for political responsibility and a leader (again this could be a monarch) who leads from the top and thereby is able to a certain extent to control the process and potentially limit its impact. This thesis argues that Jigme Singye of Bhutan and to a lesser extent George V of Tonga were able to exert such control over their countries' democratisation.

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) and Di Palma (1990) emphasise the negative impact on democratisation of those who have both the interest and the strength to impede it. These arguments can be applied in particular to the role of the military

but are also relevant to those groups (such as Tonga's nobles) with traditional privileges reinforced by a relationship with the monarchy. O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) point out that a regime supported by a strong military could repress a transition if the regime so chose. Their study did not examine how interrelationships between such a military, a powerful monarchy, and anti-democratic interest groups might impact on democratisation.

Rustow (1970) and Di Palma's (1990) theories are of particular relevance to the question of how a democratic transition is negotiated or "crafted," and the implications of this for the consolidation of the resulting democracy. Both argue that institutional arrangements should be agreed as a negotiated compromise between all interested parties. Of the four monarchies, Tonga came closest to this type of consultation process stressed by Rustow and Di Palma, and hence to the model of a pacted transition, although the interests of the then (Sevele) government predominated in the final reform package adopted in 2010. Nepal, with its Constituent Assembly, found the negotiation of a permanent constitution extraordinarily challenging (and took eight years to reach agreement). Thailand's constitutional referendums did not constitute an informed public consultation (let alone negotiation), and the process discouraged debate. Bhutan engaged its public in consultation after the constitution was drafted.

As regards theories specifically related to monarchies, this thesis started with Huntington's (1968) assertion that the future of monarchy is bleak because a reforming monarch would lose traditional (conservative) support and gain support only from anti-monarchists, thereby endangering the institution of monarchy itself. Huntington implied that a monarch could not both support reform and also retain the monarchy. If the monarch used repression to preserve the monarchy (through reliance on the army) then, argued Huntington, this would lead to revolution (which would also end the monarchy). Conversely, this thesis has shown that in the Asia-Pacific region those monarchs who led reform managed to both install a more democratic system *and* retain the position of monarch. Those monarchs who resisted reform and relied on the support of the army either:

- (as in Nepal), lost the support of the people (and eventually of the army as well). The monarchy was indeed abolished, but not as the result of a

"revolution" in the form of the Maoist insurgency. Rather, the abolition resulted from a combination of a popular uprising and the uniting of the political forces, including the Maoists, against autocratic monarchy. King Gyanendra resembled Huntington's repressive monarch in the sense that he sought military support to suppress the 2006 *Jan Andolan*, but differs from the model in that he both lost the support of the army and (in the end) peacefully surrendered power when confronted with a united front from the people and politicians.

Or

- (as happened in Thailand), established an unholy alliance with the military which eventually called into question the monarchy's supremacy, while all the time continuing a repressive autocracy. This too does not specifically match any of the scenarios envisaged by Huntington.

Hence, none of the cases in this study conform to Huntington's model. They bear a closer resemblance to Ünaldi's (2012) conception of the contrast between monarchs' traditional or democratic charisma. (Ünaldi argues that a monarch who relies on the hierarchical elements – "traditional charisma" - of the monarchy will encourage authoritarianism, while a monarch exercising "democratic charisma" would use the monarch's symbolic authority to advocate for democratic constitutional reform). The dichotomy was not so stark, however: the democratising monarchs were successful reformers *both* because of their democratic commitment and also, it seems, because of the traditional respect for their position. This enabled them to bring on board – through compromise – the conservative elements. The nature of this outcome is in line with Tridimas's arguments (2014, 2016) about the democratising monarch's bargain, in which the monarch cedes political power in return for retaining the trappings of monarchy (an option not available to other dictators). The implication of these findings is that monarchical leadership of democratisation may not be a necessary condition for the success of a monarchy's transition to democracy (as the case of Nepal's transition to a democratic republic demonstrates) but it may indeed be necessary for a transition that both introduces democracy and retains the monarchy.

Another theoretical concept explored in this thesis is the categorisation put together by Stepan and colleagues (2014), which divided monarchies into ruling, constitutional, and democratic parliamentary (DPM). This conceptual approach was a useful way of pinpointing some of the contrasts between the Bhutanese and Tongan outcomes (neither country fits the DPM profile in all cases), but it was not applicable to Thailand and Nepal. In Thailand, it was difficult to apply because of the lengthy and ongoing suspension of any pretence of democratic parliamentary government. In addition, the government is not officially in the hands of the monarchy but rather the military (which does not seem to fit any of the categories in the schema). In the case of Nepal, which is no longer a monarchy, the schema similarly does not apply.

The literature review identified a scarcity of comparative studies on democratisation in contemporary monarchies, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Some scholars of Thailand had identified this gap and the need to move beyond claims of an individual country's uniqueness or exceptionalism. But these scholars continued to concentrate on single country studies in their own work. There is therefore a tendency in the literature to stress each monarchy's uniqueness rather than identifying causal inferences through comparisons.

This thesis has addressed this gap. It has also contributed to the literature by pointing to the risks inherent in powers assigned to, or assumed by, the monarch even following democratic reform, as well as to ambiguities in some constitutional provisions related to such powers. This then provides food for thought for policy-makers seeking to support newly democratic monarchies.

10.3 Overall conclusion

Weighing up all these factors, we can see that each country's trajectory is the result of a combination of different influences which have favoured or impeded democratisation, not least the role of the individual monarchs. A combination of historical developments, structural factors and the international environment provided the background against which different monarchs and other actors determined what was in their own, the monarchy's, and their country's interests. Monarchy and democracy are not incompatible, even for these newly

democratising monarchies at the beginning of the twenty-first century. But the presence of the monarch does bring its risks and challenges for a transition, not least because anti-democratic forces might seek to use the monarchy as an excuse for containing democracy, whether on the grounds of "protecting" the monarchy or through revering it as a source of superior moral and political wisdom.

These risks are lessened by the leadership of monarchs prepared to surrender political influence and initiate a reform programme. Such monarchs were able to both democratise and retain more than a ceremonial role for the monarchy. Active leadership by the monarch may be a necessary condition for such an outcome (combination of democracy and ceremonial monarchy). The reforming monarch enters into a bargain, whereby the monarchy relinquishes the burden of executive power but retains the benefits of the regal pomp and ceremony. A well-planned, peaceful transition to democracy does not do the monarch out of a job, but rather changes the job. Monarchs remain the symbol of national unity and gain additional prestige (as they must have sought) by establishing their legacy as a democrat.

Amongst the factors that influenced the monarchs to lead democratisation, and hence favoured such an outcome, education stands out. Both the monarch's own education and the emergence of an educated public pushing for reform (as the case of Tonga illustrates) were significant. The historical shift towards legitimising democracy over autocracy also influenced monarchs seeking to establish their legacy (and to ensure the future of the monarchy for their successors). This was enhanced by a country's location in a largely democratic neighbourhood or with significant international partners who encouraged or supported democratic reform. Another significant factor was the preparedness of the reforming monarchs to challenge traditional elites (who typically resisted change) and to accept new institutional frameworks that limited the political power of the monarchy.

Factors which impeded democratisation (and led to outcomes such as regression to dictatorship or ongoing oscillation between democracy and dictatorship) include alliances of interest between the monarchy and traditional or emerging elites – such as the military, the wealthy, and the upper caste groups. These alliances of interest worked to preserve the privileges of those groups and of the monarchy, and resisted extending political power. A strong motivation of this approach was

the privileged groups' fear of economic redistribution which would reduce structural inequalities (from which they benefitted).

These alliances favoured constitutional provisions and extra-constitutional understandings that made the monarchy the ultimate arbiter and left political decisions in the hands of unelected institutions. Successive Thai military governments identified their legitimacy as based on a need to protect the monarchy. In these cases the institution of monarchy itself became an impediment to democratisation. The absence of significant concern or pressure for democracy from international partners favoured these outcomes, as illustrated by the case of Thailand from the Cold War onwards, and the change in Nepal when the monarchy lost the support of international partners (especially India).

While these conclusions apply principally to the case studies conducted, they might well be applicable to other contemporary traditional monarchies with a declared intention to democratise, in accordance with the following outline:

1   If the monarch makes a commitment to democratisation, and/or leads the process, prospects are good that both pro-democracy groups and even reluctant (conservative) sectors will accept and participate in the reform consultations. Should the monarch choose to lead a democratic transition, a "bargain" between the monarch and the citizens is possible, in which the monarch will reign but not rule, an option not available to other autocratic leaders.

2   If the monarch's commitment to democratisation is ambiguous, dismissive, or negative, there are several possible implications:

a   Firstly, where (as in Thailand under Bhumibol) the monarch has control over, or a mutually supporting relationship with the military, and has strong charisma based on religion and/or tradition, then elites (including the military) who seek to restrict democracy (and argue this is in defence of the monarchy) are likely to undermine efforts at establishing a more democratic system. Regional geopolitical factors that de-emphasise the priority of democratisation reinforce this situation.

b   Secondly, in these circumstances, an eventual potential outcome is a weakening of the monarchy's power relative to that of the military. The monarch,

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by insisting on retaining power (and resisting democratisation), can end up relinquishing some of that power to another autocratic body, such as the military. Thailand's case has shown that this is a particular risk during a period of monarchical succession, especially where the personal qualities of the successor are questionable.

c   Thirdly, as the case of Nepal demonstrates, these doubts about the quality of a successor can contribute to the monarchy's losing its moral legitimacy. If combined with excessive regressive fervour, and massive popular protests, this can result in loss of control over the military, and loss of support from foreign partners. In these circumstances abolition of the monarchy is a real possibility.

A monarch is more likely to transition to type (1) from type (2) in some or all of the following circumstances: there is peaceful popular pressure for reform; the dominance of traditional elites is challenged though the development of an educated middle class; where supporting elites become disillusioned and shift their support; and the neighbourhood promotes democratic values.

10.4 Areas for future research

Following on from the above observation, a useful area for future research would be to expand the range of monarchies considered to see whether these conclusions would be broadly applicable to monarchies in transition. Another area of focus would be that originally intended to be included in this study: to assess the new democracies' prospects for consolidation of democracy, in the light of the criteria identified by consolidologists. The implications of the ongoing presence of the monarch for consolidation prospects would be an original area to research.

Appendix 1: Timelines

As foreshadowed in chapter 3, this appendix lists significant historical events in the four countries, beginning with Bhutan and Tonga, and followed by Thailand and Nepal.

Timeline 1: Bhutan and Tonga

Date	Bhutan	Tonga
1831		Taufa' āhau declares himself King George Tupou I.
1875		Tupou I proclaims constitution.
1893		Tupou II becomes king.
1900		Tonga becomes British protectorate.
1905	Ugyen Wangchuck establishes monarchy and becomes king.	Second treaty with British, even more stringent.
1910	Bhutan becomes British protectorate.	
1918		Salote Tupou III becomes Queen.
1926	Jigme becomes second king.	
1949	Agreement signed with India giving India oversight of foreign policy.	
1952	Jigme Dorji becomes third king.	
1953	National Assembly established.	
1959	Slavery and serfdom abolished.	
1964	Prime minister assassinated.	
1965	Royal Advisory Council established. Attempt on king's life.	Tupou IV becomes king.
1970		British protectorate ends. Joins Commonwealth.
1971	Joins UN.	
1972 (or 1968?)	First cabinet established.	
1972	Jigme Singye becomes fourth king.	
1990	After tensions since the late 1980s, protests by Lhotshampas seeking respect for ethnic minorities' rights. Up to 100,000 leave Bhutan for Nepal.	
1992		Pro-Democracy Movement formally established.

Date	Bhutan	Tonga
1998	King relinquishes head of government role and gives National Assembly power to elect cabinet.	
2001	King commands drafting of democratic constitution.	
2003		Government amends constitution to increase control over media.
2005	Public consultations on draft constitution. King announces decision to abdicate.	March: two elected People's Representatives and 2 Nobles' Representative appointed to cabinet. July-August: public sector strike.
2006	Jigme Singye abdicates in December, Jigme Khesar becomes fifth king.	NCPR consultations (on political reform) nationwide and abroad. July: Prince Tu'ipelehake dies. September: Tupou IV dies; George Tupou V becomes king, announces democratic intentions. NCPR reports to parliament and king. October: Prime Minister Sevele issues government's alternative roadmap for reform. November: riots. King's speech to closing of parliament reaffirms commitment to reform.
2007		Parliamentary Tripartite Committee discusses reform options.
2008	Elections held under constitution, formal coronation of new king by his father. Jigme Thinley becomes prime minister.	Act to establish Constitutional and Electoral Commission (CEC); King reiterates his commitment to democratic reform on eve of coronation.
2009		CEC consultations and reports; parliament makes decisions on recommendations.
2010		Constitutional and legislative amendments adopted; elections under new system (November).
2011		Lord Tu'ivakanō elected prime minister.
2012	Prime Minister Thinley's overtures to China upset India.	George V dies March, Tupou VI becomes king. Unsuccessful motion of no confidence in prime minister.
2013	Second elections. Opposition become government. Tshering Tobgay becomes prime minister.	

Date	Bhutan	Tonga
2014		Elections, November.
2015		January: 'Akilisi Pohiva elected prime minister.
2017	Doklam standoff with Chinese.	February: unsuccessful motion of no confidence in prime minister. August: Tupou VI dissolves parliament. November: elections held.
2018	Elections scheduled	January: 'Akilisi Pohiva re-elected prime minister.

Timeline 2: Thailand and Nepal

Year	Thailand	Nepal
1846		Rana family create hereditary prime ministership and take over control of the country, monarchs held as virtual prisoners for almost 100 years.
1932	Small group of intellectuals and military execute bloodless coup to establish constitutional monarchy.	
1935	King Prajadhipok goes into exile and abdicates. Ananda (a young child living in Switzerland) becomes king.	
1946	Ananda (and brother Bhumibol) return to Thailand. Ananda is killed and Bhumibol becomes king. Returns to Switzerland.	
1947	Original "Promoters" and participants in 1932 coup now divided. Pridi ousted in coup by Phibun.	
1950		King Tribhuvan escapes to India and joins forces with anti-Rana reformers to end Rana dominance.
1951	Bhumibol returns to Thailand.	King returns to Nepal; shared government established but not elections.
1955		Tribhuvan dies, Mahendra becomes king.
1957	Coup brings Sarit to power, mutually supportive military/monarchy alliance begins.	
1959		Constitution adopted and elections held, democratic government appointed.
1960		Mahendra ousts democratic government and takes over executive power.
1962		Mahendra introduces new constitution with monarchy in control, partyless "*panchayat*" system established.
1972		Mahendra dies, Birendra becomes king.
1973	Students protesting against military dictators appear to gain support of king, who acquires democratic reputation.	

Year	Thailand	Nepal
1976	Violent response (with tacit support of monarchy) to student demonstrations. Military return to power.	
1980s	General Prem as unelected prime minister supported by king.	
1990		Massive public mobilisation (first *Jan Andolan*) against autocratic monarchy. Birendra agrees to establish parliamentary democracy under new constitution.
1992	Protests against installation of unelected military leader as prime minister. Violent military reaction to protests. King acts after three days, to chide both military leader and protest leader.	
1995		Maoist insurgency begins in countryside.
1997	Asian Financial Crisis. New, democratic constitution approved.	
2001	Thaksin Shinawatra elected prime minister.	Royal family massacre. Birendra and many other royals killed by crown prince, who then kills himself. Gyanendra becomes king.
2002		October: Gyanendra dismisses government and fails to call elections. Appoints own government.
2005	Thaksin's party TRT wins absolute majority in elections.	February: Gyanendra restores absolute monarchy, taking on executive power himself and suspending the constitution. November: Maoists and mainstream political parties sign 12- point Understanding to re-establish parliamentary democracy and end autocratic monarchy.
2006	Protests (by Yellow Shirts) grow against Thaksin's government. April: Thaksin calls elections in April to test legitimacy, but opposition boycott. King urges judges to annul election. Military coup in September.	April, second *Jan Andolan* calls for restoration of democracy. King finally agrees to reinstate parliament. Restored parliament votes to limit king's powers. November: Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between government and Maoists.

Year	Thailand	Nepal
2007	Military government puts together less democratic constitution, which is approved in a referendum. Thaksinite party wins highest number of seats in election.	Interim constitution approved.
2008	Yellow Shirt protests against government escalate. Court dissolves government. Silent coup brings in Abhisit government.	Elections for Constituent Assembly held and lead to Maoist-led government. Assembly abolishes monarchy.
2009-2010	Mass rallies and sit-ins by Red Shirts (pro-Thaksin) against Abhisit government, met by military violence.	
2011	July: elections result in landslide victory for Thaksinite party Pheu Thai. Yingluck Shinawatra becomes prime minister.	
2012		First Constituent Assembly fails to agree on constitution. Interim government set up under Chief Justice.
2013	April: Constitutional court blocks Yingluck's attempt to amend constitution to make it more democratic.	November: elections. NC and UML form a coalition government.
2014	February: Yingluck calls elections which are boycotted by opposition and declared invalid by constitutional court. May: military coup. Prayuth takes charge.	
2015		April: massive destruction from earthquake. September: Assembly agrees on constitution, but India assists through a blockade those who oppose it.
2016	August: new draft constitution approved in a referendum. October: Bhumibol dies, Vajiralongkorn becomes king	
2017	April: Vajiralongkorn amends and then signs new constitution.	End of year: elections held under new constitution.

Appendix 2: Interviewees

As mentioned in chapter 2, interviews were carried out in all four countries. Some were also conducted in third countries (New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and India). In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, they are classified in fairly broad categories. A list of interviewee codes follows.

Bhutan

BP - politicians (members of parliament and ministers, former and current; politicians of other political parties not in parliament*):*

BP1-BP4

BPS - public servants, current and former:

BPS1-BPS8

BCS - civil society (NGOs):

BCS1-BCS3:

BB - businesspeople:

BB1

BLS - law and security, including judges, Attorneys General, lawyers:

BLS1-BLS2

BD - diplomats, including multilateral representatives and consular representatives:

BD1-BD6

BAJ - academics, think tanks, journalists and writers:

BAJ1-13

BO - others not included in the above categories:

BO1

Tonga

TP - politicians (People's Representatives, Nobles' Representatives, former and current; PMs and ministers, former and current):

TP1-TP14

TPS - public servants, current and former. Includes employees of SOEs and also palace staff and parliamentary staff; PMO staff, hospital staff:

TPS1-TPS8

TCS - civil society (NGOs):

TCS1-TCS4

TB - businesspeople:

TB1-TB8

TLS - law and security, including judges, Law Lords, Attorneys General, police, defence, past and present, lawyers:

TLS1-TLS10

TD - diplomats, including multilateral:

TD1-TD9

TAJ - academics, journalists and think tanks:

TAJ1-TAJ8

Thailand

ThP - politicians (former):

ThP1

ThCS - civil society (NGOs):

ThCS1

ThB – businesspeople:

ThB1-ThB2

ThD - diplomats, including multilateral:

ThD1-ThD13

ThA - academics and think tanks:

ThA1-ThA6

ThJ - journalists and writers:

ThJ1

Nepal

NP - political party representatives and staff (former):

NP1

NCS - civil society (NGOs):

NCS1-NCS2

NB – businesspeople:

NB1

NLS - law and security, including military:

NLS1

ND - diplomats, including consular and multilateral:

ND1-ND7

NA -academics and think tanks:

NA2-NA7

NJ - journalists and writers:

NJ1-NJ6

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