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Thailand's *Lèse Majesté* Dilemma: Defending the Monarchy versus Silencing Critics and Alienating the Young

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Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn attends a ceremony to commemorate the birthday of his father the late Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej at Sanam Luang in Bangkok on December 5, 2020. Photo: Lillian SUWANRUMPHA, AFP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There were no arrests under Thailand's *lèse majesté* law for nearly the first four years of the reign of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who ascended the Chakri Throne on 1 December 2016.
- However, the escalation of anti-government protests late last year, with their increasing anti-monarchy tone, forced Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha to revive enforcement of the law. Authorities have arrested a growing number of protest leaders and their supporters.
- The crackdown has not deterred these leaders, many of them university students, from pressing on with their demands, including reform of the monarchy.
- Debating the pros and cons of the *lèse majesté* law is unlikely to resolve the dilemma that its application confronts, between defending the monarchy and alienating younger generations of Thais.
- The best way forward is to encourage the Reconciliation Committee set up by the House Speaker to look into all pertinent issues surrounding the *lèse majesté* law.

INTRODUCTION

At the height of intensifying anti-government protests—with their increasing anti-monarchy tone—late last year, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha resorted to an unprecedented response. He declared in an official statement issued on 19 November that the government and its security apparatus would henceforth step up their operations by “enforcing every law and every existing section [in each law] to deal with protesters who are breaking laws and disrespecting rights and freedoms of others; and would duly prosecute all cases in accordance with the justice process which is consistent with international standards. ...”¹

It was immediately understood that the prime minister was warning protesters that they could face arrest under Thailand’s *lèse majesté* law if they defamed the monarchy or insulted King Maha Vajiralongkorn. Since 1976, a guilty verdict under this law, Section 112 of the Criminal Code, has carried a jail term ranging from three to 15 years. Defendants facing trial for *lèse majesté* are sometimes denied bail, and their trials can be held in secret because evidence of their wrongdoings cannot be shown to the public.

Prayut’s warning was enough to force protest leaders to change their plans. They had previously threatened to stage a protest rally in front of the office of the Crown Property Bureau (CPB) on 25 November, to demand transparency on the part of the bureau. Instead, they led their supporters to rally in front of the headquarters of the Siam Commercial Bank, in which the king is the largest shareholder.²

The protest leaders, several of them university students, wanted to draw attention to the current king’s management of royal assets. Under the law on royal assets which came into force on 4 November 2018, the king’s personal wealth, crown properties that used to belong to the monarchy as an institution, and other assets such as land, shophouses, markets, and shares previously held and managed by the CPB, have been merged into royal assets under the explicit ownership of the king. The king now manages royal assets using the CPB merely as an administrative tool.³

For almost four years into the reign of the new king, who ascended the Chakri Throne on 1 December 2016, there were no new *lèse majesté* arrests. General Prayut once disclosed that it was the wish of the king not to invoke the *lèse majesté* law.⁴

However, General Prayut justified the recent *de facto* revival of application of the *lèse majesté* law by citing in his 19 November statement that “the situation [concerning the protests] has not improved, ... and there is a trend towards conflicts, leading to more serious violence ... which could damage the country and its revered institution. ...”⁵

Since the prime minister issued that statement, authorities had arrested at least 55 persons in 41 cases of alleged *lèse majesté* activities as of 25 January, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR).⁶ TLHR data show that there are six persons already convicted and serving jail terms for *lèse majesté* ranging from two years to 35 years.⁷

Among those slapped with the *lèse majesté* charge in recent months are leaders of the United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration. They include Parit “Penguin” Chiwarak, a Thammasat University student who has been named in 15 *lèse majesté* cases; Panusaya

“Roong” Sithijirawattanakul, spokesperson for the United Front, eight cases; Anon Nampa, a human right lawyer, eight cases; and Panupong “Mike” Jadnok, a labour activist, seven cases.⁸

The four expect to face more *lèse majesté* charges, because the latest cases filed against them concern earlier rallies, including the mock mailing of protest letters to the king during a rally near the Grand Palace on 8 November. Since then, the four have led many more protests to demand General Prayut’s resignation, a new constitution, and reform of the monarchy. Some of them are likely to resume staging protest rallies once the COVID-19 pandemic eases and the current public health emergency ends.

THREE DRAMATIC NEW CASES

Three dramatic recent *lèse majesté* cases have attracted considerable attention and reactions from overseas.

The first involves a 16-year-old freshman at a state university. He took part in a “fashion show” on Silom Road in Bangkok on 28 October, in which he appeared in jeans and a crop-top shirt. His clothing and the graffiti on his bare belly made it quite obvious he was parodying someone well-known to protesters and to many other onlookers.

One onlooker, Warisnun Sribowornthanakit, asked the police to arrest the student and the organiser of the “fashion show”. Ms Warisnun is an active royalist known as “Admin Jane” on her pro-monarchy Facebook page.⁹ She capitalised on a loophole in the *lèse majesté* law providing that anyone encountering any incident deemed to be defamation of, an insult to, or a threat against the king, the queen, the heir apparent or the regent, may notify the police; and the police must investigate accordingly.

The student became the youngest person to face a charge of *lèse majesté*. He was summoned for questioning at the Yannawa Police Station on 17 December, along with Chatuporn Sae-Ung, who organised the fashion show event as part of the Free Youth group’s protest rally.

The lawyer for the accused contended that the arrest of his young client contravened Thailand’s obligations, under the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to uphold the best interests of every child (under the age of 18) and to respect the freedom of expression of every child, as well as the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees all individuals’ freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.¹⁰

The student has been released on bail pending a hearing in the Central Juvenile and Family Court.

A spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that “it is extremely disappointing” to see a sudden surge of *lèse majesté* cases, “and – shockingly – now also [a case] against a minor...” The spokesman reiterated the call of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the Thai government to amend the *lèse majesté* law and to bring it into line with Article 19 of the ICCPR on freedom of expression.¹¹

One month later, an even more dramatic *lèse majesté* case hit the headlines. A 65-year-old woman received an initial sentence of 87 years in jail for 29 separate *lèse majesté* violations. This is the longest jail term for *lèse majesté* ever ordered in Thailand. Because the woman

confessed her guilt, however, the court halved the sentence to 43 years and six months. She has now requested her release on bail in order to prepare her appeal.

The woman in question is Anchan Preelert, a senior mid-level retiree from the Revenue Department. She was arrested on 25 January 2015 for posting on YouTube and Facebook under pseudonyms anti-monarchy audio clips of the YouTuber “DJ Banpot” in 2014-15. The military court that initially had jurisdiction over her cases denied bail. After the general election of March 2019, Anchan’s cases were transferred to the Criminal Court, and she was released on bail.

The YouTuber who produced the audio clips in question was also arrested in early 2015. He was sentenced to 10 years in just one case of *lèse majesté*. He confessed, and the jail term was reduced to five years, which he has already finished serving. Ironically, while the original culprit is now free, Anchan is still struggling with her appeal against the verdict of 43½ years’ imprisonment.

Anchan’s predicament has raised questions about the lack of procedural fairness, the unpredictable discretion of law enforcement authorities and the lack of proportionality of punishment. The prosecutor chose to pursue 29 separate charges against Anchan, instead of merging all of them into one *lèse majesté* case. Even though the judge imposed the minimum jail term of three years per charge, the jail term when multiplied 29 times led to the record sentence of 87 years in jail.

Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Regional Director, Yamini Mishra, decried the “shocking case” of Anchan’s sentence as “yet another assault on Thailand’s vanishing space for freedom of expression.” She called for repealing or significantly revising the law, which “gags freedom of expression both on- and offline ...”¹²

Compared with the two cases above, the third recent *lèse majesté* case has more significant political implications, since it involves famous embattled politician Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit as the defendant, and the Prayut administration as the plaintiff.

On 19 January, Thanathorn gave a 30-minute Facebook live talk under the rather provocative title “วัคซีนพระราชทาน: ใครได้ – ใครเสีย?” or “Royally bestowed vaccine: Who gains – who loses?”. During the talk, he raised questions about a possible “conflict of interest”, about delays and about a lack of transparency in the government’s procurement of COVID-19 vaccines.

Thanathorn demanded disclosure of all vaccine procurement contracts. The government has signed one contract with pharmaceutical firm Astra Zeneca, which has developed a vaccine against the coronavirus in collaboration with Oxford University, to purchase 26 million doses of the firm’s vaccine. It will supply lots of its vaccine to Thailand starting in early February, coming from its facility in Italy. Under a second contract, between AstraZeneca and Siam Bioscience,¹³ the vaccine will in time be produced in Thailand. Siam Bioscience is a Thai pharmaceutical firm wholly own by the king. Under this second contract, the latter firm will produce the AstraZeneca vaccine for distribution in Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia. Yet another contract is between Siam Bioscience and the government, which has reportedly provided that firm with 1,449 million baht in funding to boost its vaccine production capacity.¹⁴

Thanathorn asked why Siam Bioscience, without any open bidding for the contract, had been chosen to produce the AstraZeneca vaccine in Thailand. He pointed out in one of his presentation slides that the Thai firm would receive technology transfer from the pharmaceutical giant; that it would gain world-wide renown as a producer of the vaccine; that it would gain from selling 200 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine per year, with annual revenue at 18 billion baht ; and that it would benefit from 1,449 million baht in government subsidies.

In another slide used during his Facebook live talk, Thanathorn contended that the government carelessly bet on the AstraZeneca vaccine, but could secure just a small supply of it, enough for only 21.5 per cent of the Thai population. Further, he argued that the Prayut government had been slow in approaching other vaccine developers, and that it therefore had less bargaining power with AstraZeneca. Consequently, the Thai people would continue to live in fear, and the Thai economy would remain stagnant until the AstraZeneca vaccine arrived in June.

Thanathorn concluded his talk with more provocative questions. What if the AstraZeneca vaccine is ineffective? What if large numbers of Thais have serious allergic reactions to the vaccine? Will General Prayut accept responsibility if vaccine production by Siam Bioscience is delayed? And if things go wrong, will people fault Siam Bioscience, which is wholly owned by the king?

THE GOVERNMENT STRIKES BACK

The reaction from the Prayut administration was swift. On the following day, General Prayut sent three senior officials to file a *lèse majesté* complaint against Thanathorn at the Technology Crime Suppression Division . The officials also accused Thanathorn of spreading falsehoods through social media, a violation of the Computer Crime Act of 2017 — punishable by a jail term of up to five years, or a fine of up to 100,000 baht, or a combination of imprisonment and fine.

The government officials identified 11 parts of Thanathorn’s talk that they claimed defamed the king, as well as false information on the vaccine deals. “The false information could mislead the people”, said Putthipong Punnakan, the Minister of Digital Economy and Society.¹⁵

Thanathorn was apparently taken aback by the forceful reaction of the government., and on 21 January, he held a press conference to elaborate his views further, still contending that it was General Prayut who exposed the king to public doubt by praising the king for giving permission for Siam Bioscience to participate in the vaccine deals under mysterious circumstances.¹⁶

Thanathorn accused the prime minister of using the *lèse majesté* law to try to silence him. He added that, since the government was spending taxpayers’ money to procure the vaccine, it must face public scrutiny and all parties concerned must be held accountable.¹⁷

Senior officials and the CEO of the Siam Cement Group, all of whom took part in the vaccine negotiations put forth the following clarifications.

- The government chooses the AstraZeneca vaccine because the company is willing to transfer its vaccine technology to a Thai partner.
- The AstraZeneca vaccine does not require ultra-cold storage.

- The AstraZeneca vaccine is less costly than other vaccines, selling at only about US\$3 per dose.
- AstraZeneca – not the government – chose Siam Bioscience to produce the vaccine in Thailand. One of its reasons was that Siam Bioscience operates on a business model of no-profit and no-loss, as does AstraZeneca.
- Siam Bioscience has equipment which is compatible with AstraZeneca’s vaccine production technique and thus can readily receive the transfer of technology needed for production of the coronavirus vaccine.
- Siam Bioscience will repay its government subsidies with vaccines purchased from AstraZeneca.
- AstraZeneca will ship 150,000 doses of the vaccine to Thailand in early February.
- The government’s goal for 2021 is to secure enough vaccines for 50 per cent of the Thai population and does not include children and juveniles under 18 in the vaccination roll-out starting on 14 February since the young are less vulnerable to the coronavirus.¹⁸

Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has dismissed Thanathorn’s demand for the disclosure of all the vaccine contracts, saying that they concerned business entities whose privacy and product secrets could not be violated at will. He considered Thanathorn’s move on social media an ill-intentioned attempt to mislead the public into misunderstanding the King.¹⁹ Anutin also clarified that the government has been trying to secure more vaccines from different sources, including 2 million doses from China’s Sinovac.

On 31 January, the Criminal Court ordered Thanathorn to remove the recording of the live talk in question from the Progressive Movement’s website and Youtube page.²⁰ However, Thanathorn won a reprieve on 8 February, after the Criminal Court cancelled its earlier order that he delete the recording from all social media platforms on the ground that what Thanathorn said had nothing to undermine national security.²¹

PROS AND CONS OF THE *LÈSE MAJESTÉ* LAW

Proponents of Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code insist that the *lèse majesté* law is necessary to protect the monarchy from unfair attacks. Defaming the monarchy and insulting the king threaten national security, because the king is the head of state and head of the Thai armed forces.

Section 6 of the Constitution of 2017 stipulates that “The king shall be enthroned in a position of revered worship and shall not be violated. No person shall expose the king to any sort of accusation or action.”²² Moreover, Section 50 of the charter stipulates that the duties of the Thai people include protecting and upholding the nation, religions, the king and the democratic regime of government with the king as the head of state. And in Section 52, duties of the state include protecting and upholding the institution of kingship.

On the other hand, critics of the *lèse majesté* law have long called for its abolition, saying that it is ineffective, obsolete, and not consistent with Thailand’s international commitments to uphold human rights and civil and political rights. Many deplore the haphazard off-and-on enforcement of the *lèse majesté* law; the lack of proportionality in punishments for the crime; the secret trials of many accused of *lèse majesté*; and difficulties in securing bail for defendants in major *lèse majesté* cases. They have suggested that a better way to protect the monarchy and

uphold the dignity of the king would be to introduce substantive reforms to ensure that the king reigns benevolently above politics and stays out of business.²³

TOWARDS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION?

House Speaker Chuan Leekpai has set up a committee to look into ways and means of bringing about national reconciliation in Thailand.²⁴ Regrettably, all opposition parties and protest leaders have boycotted it.

In the first meeting of the committee on 18 January, Thoedpong Chaiyanan, a veteran Democrat Party member of parliament, was elected unopposed to chair it.²⁵ Ideally, the committee will look into all pertinent issues concerning the *lèse majesté* law, explore the possibility of scrapping Section 112, or at least revising it to make it consistent with Thailand's international commitments on human rights, and civil and political rights.

Abolishing or revising the *lèse majesté* law requires strong support from both the House of Representatives and the Senate. However, such support is non-existent among parties in the ruling coalition, and in the Senate.

The committee can propose a general amnesty to let all protest leaders facing *lèse majesté* charges off the hook, which in turn would motivate these people to discuss with the committee their demands on reforming the monarchy.²⁶

Protest leaders maintain that a truly democratic constitutional monarchy would make it unnecessary for Thailand to keep its *lèse majesté* law on the books. Hence they are also demanding a new and genuinely democratic constitution to replace the existing 2017 Constitution that was designed by the military regime led by General Prayut which seized power in the May 2014 coup.

CONCLUSION

Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit seems to have barked up the wrong tree in criticising Thailand's contracts with AstraZeneca. His information was incomplete. Punishing him for spreading the fake news would have been sufficient, but charging him with *lèse majesté* was obviously overkill. It gave credence to his claim that the government was trying to silence him.

Flaws in the enforcement of the *lèse majesté* law were also glaring in the long sentence given 65-year-old retiree Anchan Preelert and in the lengthy court proceedings since her arrest in January 2015.

Similarly, charging a 16-year-old for *lèse majesté* is unlikely to change, let alone improve, the negative attitude held by many Thai youths towards the monarchy and the king.

Several protest leaders have already been arrested numerous times for alleged violations of the *lèse majesté* law. But most of them seem unperturbed by the prospect of facing lengthy court proceedings and possibly long jail terms. Their defiance is a worrisome trend for the government, to say the least.

In the face of these concerns, the Reconciliation Committee set up by the House Speaker offers a glimmer of hope, if it tackles pertinent issues surrounding the *lèse majesté* law with goodwill and sincere determination to create national reconciliation. That will be its challenge.

¹ “แถลงการณ์นายกรัฐมนตรี 19 พฤศจิกายน 2563” [Statement of the Prime Minister, 19 November 2020], Government House website (www.thaigov.go.th/news/contents/details/36935, accessed 24 January 2021).

² According to the Stock Exchange of Thailand, King Maha Vajiralongkorn holds 793,832,359 shares in the Siam Commercial Bank, or about 23.38 per cent the total. The stocks were worth nearly 74 billion baht as of 26 January 2021. (www.set.or.th/companyholder.do?symbol=scb, accessed 26 January 2021). The king is also the largest shareholder in the Siam Cement Public Company, owning 403,647,840 shares or about 33.64 per cent of this Thai blue-chip conglomerate. The stock was worth nearly 160 billion baht as of 26 January 2021 (www.set.or.th/companyholder.do?symbol=scc, accessed 26 January 2021).

³ For a comparison between the old law of 1948 and the new law of 2018, see “เทียบ กม. จัดระเบียบทรัพย์สินพระมหากษัตริย์ 2491 และ 2561” [Comparing the laws of 1948 and 2018 on regulating royal assets], Thai PBS News, 29 November 2020 (www.news.thaipbs.or.th/content/298757, accessed 26 January 2021). One major difference is that the king’s assets are now taxable.

⁴ “นายกฯ เผย ‘ในหลวง’ ทรงมีพระเมตตาได้รับสั่งไม่ให้ใช้ ม. 112” [The Prime Minister discloses that “the King” is kind and has asked him not to use the Section 112], Thai PBS News, 15 June 2020 (www.news.thaipbs.or.th/content/293636, accessed 26 January 2021).

⁵ “แถลงการณ์นายกรัฐมนตรี 19 พฤศจิกายน 2563”, *op cit.*

⁶ “สถิติผู้ถูกดำเนินคดีมาตรา 112 ‘หมิ่นประมาทกษัตริย์’ ปี 2563 – 64” [Statistics of defendants under Section 112 on “insulting the King” in 2020-21] (www.tlhr2014.com/archives/23983, accessed 26 January 2021).

⁷ Details on these six convicts are available on the Facebook page of the Thai Lawyers for Human Rights Center, 23 January 2021 (www.facebook.com/lawyercenter2014, accessed 26 January 2021).

⁸ “สถิติผู้ถูกดำเนินคดีมาตรา 112 ‘หมิ่นประมาทกษัตริย์’ ปี 2563 – 64”, *op cit.* Their requests for bail rejected, Parit and Anon were sent to a prison for temporary detention on 9 February while they awaited trial.

⁹ “เพจเชียร์ลงแจ้งแล้ว รับแจ้งจับเด็ก 16 ในความผิด ม.112” [Pro-Prayut page admits asking the police to arrest the 16-year-old juvenile for Section 112 offence], *Thai Rath*, 14 December 2020 (www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/1994201, accessed 20 January 2021).

¹⁰ Thailand’s accession to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights entered into force on 26 April 1992 and 29 January 1997 respectively.

¹¹ “Press briefing notes on Thailand”, 18 December 2020 (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26621&LangID=E>, accessed on 26 January 2021). Article 19 of the ICCPR concerns respect for freedom of expression.

¹² “Thailand: 87-year prison sentence handed in harshest *lèse majesté* conviction”, Amnesty International Asia-Pacific Regional Office, 19 January 2021 (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/01/thailand-87-prison-sentence-lese-majeste>, accessed 26 January 2021).

¹³ Siam Bioscience Company was established in 2009 as an initiative of the late King Bhumibol to pursue Thailand's self-sufficiency in pharmaceutical production. See www.siambioscience.com (accessed 28 January 2021).

¹⁴ A recording of Thanathorn's talk appears at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oq7KPO5TBc8 (accessed 20 January 2021). The 42-year-old business tycoon turned politician is already facing a number of other criminal charges after setting up the Future Forward Party three years ago. One of these charges arose from his lending 191.2 million bath to the party to ease its cash flow problems. The Constitutional Court found the loan unlawful and in February 2020 dissolved Thanathorn's party, which was then the third largest party in parliament, with 80 MPs in the 500-member House of Representatives.

¹⁵ “พุทธิพงษ์ รมว. ดีเอส แจ้งความ เอาผิด ธนาธร คดี 112” [DES Minister Putthipong files police complaint accusing Thanathorn of violating Section 112], *Prachachat*, 20 January 2021 (www.prachachat.net/politics/news-597843, accessed 21 January 2021). DES is the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, which is directly in charge of enforcing the 2017 law against computer-related crime.

¹⁶ “นายกฯ เป็นประธานพิธีลงนามสัญญาจัดหาวัคซีนโควิด-19 โดยการจองล่วงหน้า มั่นใจไทยมีวัคซีนใช้ในปี 64 เผยพระมหากษัตริย์คุณ ร.10 พระราชทานให้ บจก สยามไบโอไซเอนซ์รับถ่ายทอดเทคโนโลยีการผลิต” [Prime Minister presides over contract signing ceremony to procure COVID-19 vaccine by advance reservation, confident that Thailand will have the vaccine in 2021, and discloses the kindness of the king in permitting Siam Bioscience Company to receive the transfer of vaccine production technology], Government House website, 27 November 2020 (www.thaigov.go.th/news/contents/details/37101, accessed 28 January 2021).

¹⁷ A recording of Thanathorn's press conference of 21 January 2021 appears at www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvAxiPEgS3U (accessed 21 January 2021).

¹⁸ “สธ. แจงยับยั้งที่มาตรการจัดซื้อวัคซีนโควิด ยันไร้ผลประโยชน์แฝง โต้เสียงวิจารณ์” [Ministry of Public Health clarifies in detail to counter criticism, no hidden interest in the procurement of COVID vaccines], *Infoquest*, 19 January 2021 (www.infoquest.co.th/2021/60416, accessed 23 January 2021), and “9 ความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับการจัดหา / จัดการ วัคซีนโควิด-19 ที่สังคมไทยควรรู้ โดย ศ. นพ. ยง ภู่วรวรรณ” [Nine points concerning the procurement / management of COVID-19 vaccines that Thai society should know, by Professor Dr Yong Poovorawan], *Manager Online*, 19 January 2021 (www.mgonline.com/qol/detail/964000005409, accessed 24 January 2021). Dr Yong is head of the Virology Section, Faculty of Medicine, Chulalongkorn University. The disclosure by Roongrote Rangsiyopash, CEO of the Siam Cement Group, on 1 December 2020 during a dinner talk organised by the alumni association of Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Engineering was shown during the Inside Thailand TV programme on 25 January 2021 (www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOoiWMPWhKo, accessed 26 January 2021). The Siam Cement Group's CEO took part in the confidential negotiations among Oxford University, AstraZeneca, the Thai government, and Siam Bioscience in arranging the vaccine deals; “ดีเดย์! 14 ก. พ. ฉีดวัคซีนโควิด-19 ล็อตแรกบุคลากรแพทย์ ลงทะเบียนผ่านไลน์ ‘หมอพร้อม’ ” [D-Day! 14 February injection of COVID-19 vaccine, first lot for health personnel, registration for the vaccination via Line “Doctors Ready”], *Manager*, 25 January 2021 (www.mgonline.com/qol/detail/964000007644, accessed 26 January 2021).

¹⁹ The Inside Thailand television interview with Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on 22 January 2021 appears at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eebMjff6ZI (accessed 23 January 2021).

²⁰ “ศาลสั่งปิด - ลบโพสต์ ‘ธนาธร’ ไลฟ์วัคซีนพระราชทาน ‘ปิยบุตร แอมมี ทราย’ จ่อคิว” [Court orders closure, deletion of recording of “Thanathorn's” live talk about the royally bestowed vaccine; “Piyabutr, Emmy, Sai” are next], *Manager*, 1 February 2021 (www.mgonline.com/daily/detail/964000009826, accessed 1 February 2021).

²¹ “ศาลยกเลิกคำสั่งระงับคลิปธนารักษ์ไม่เห็นถึงผลกระทบต่อความมั่นคง” [Court cancels order to delete Thanathorn’s clip, saying that there is nothing affecting national security], *Thai rat online*, 8 February 2021 (www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/2028307, accessed 9 February 2021).

²² See the English translation of the Constitution of 2017 at the website of the Office of the Council of State (<https://www.krisdika.go.th/web/office-of-the-council-of-state/constitution>, accessed 27 January 2021).

²³ Piyabutr Saengkanokkul, “ยกเลิก 112 จะเป็นคุณต่อสถาบันพระมหากษัตริย์” [Scrapping Section 112 will benefit the kingship institution], *Thai Post*, 24 January 2021 (www.thaipost.net/main/detail/90771, accessed 25 January 2021). Dr Piyabutr was the secretary-general of the now dissolved Future Forward Party. He and Thanathorn have set up the Progressive Movement, a civil society organisation, to continue mobilising public support for national political reforms, military reform, reform of the monarchy, and decentralisation. Sharp responses to Dr Piyabutr’s arguments came from Dr Warong Dechgitvigrom, leader of the Thai Pakdee group of royalists, in his Facebook posting of 25 January 2021, “ตอบคำถามมาตรา 112 ให้ปิยบุตร” [#Responses to Piyabutr’s questions on Section 112] (www.facebook.com/therealwarong, accessed 26 January 2021).

²⁴ “ชวน” ตั้ง ‘กรรมการสมานฉันท์’ แล้ว นัดถกครั้งแรก 18 มกราคม [“Chuan” sets up “Reconciliation Committee” and calls first meeting on 18 January], *Bangkok Business News*, 11 January 2021 (www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/detail/916726, accessed 28 January 2021).

²⁵ “เทอดพงษ์ ไชยนันท์ นั่งประธานกรรมการปรองดองสมานฉันท์” [Thoedpong Chaiyanan becomes chairman of the Reconciliation Committee], *Prachachat*, 18 January 2021 (www.prachachat.net/politics/news-596490, accessed 28 January 2021).

²⁶ “ต้นฉบับ ประกาศกลุ่มแนวร่วมธรรมศาสตร์และการชุมนุม ฉบับที่ 1 เรียกร้องให้มีการแก้ไขปัญหาวาดด้วยสถาบันฯ 10 ข้อ” [The original text of the declaration No. 1 of the United Front of Thammasat and Demonstration on 10 demands of resolving problems concerning the institution], at the website of *Chon samun* (normal citizens), 11 August 2020 (www.samunton.chonsamun.com/2020/08/11, accessed 28 January 2021). Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul, spokesperson of the United Front, unveiled the list at a protest rally in Thammasat University’s Rangsit Campus on the evening of 10 August 2020 . The first demand calls for removing Section 6 of the 2017 Constitution, concerning the revered and inviolable position of the king; the second calls for abolishing Section 112.

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