



Thailand — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[formerly known as Siam]

06/21/1782 Start Autocratic Monarchy: The current Chakri Dynasty was created with the coronation of King Rattanakosin on 06/21/1782. In 1897 Thailand gave all men and women the right to vote in local village elections in the "Local Administrative Act of May 1897" but not nationally.¹ One of King Chulalongkorn's reforms included the implementation of a Western-style law of royal succession. Consequently, in 1910, he was peacefully succeeded by his son Vajiravudh, who ruled as Rama VI.² In contrast to other Southeast Asian states, Thailand was never formally colonized by foreign powers, although substantial territories were relinquished under pressure to Britain and France.³ King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) was the last absolute monarch of Siam.⁴ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this regime period. As per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time. Until 1920, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. From 1921 onwards, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are moderate. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. In this period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties were absent.

06/24/1932 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start (Monarchical) (Non-Electoral) One-Party Autocracy: A coup by the People's Party (Khana Ratsadon) ended the rule of King Prajadhipok and the regime of an autocratic monarchy.⁵ The bloodless transition brought the introduction of the first constitution and the creation of a parliament.⁶ King Prajadhipok remained on the throne and compromised with the People's Party. The inaugural People's Assembly of Siam, comprised solely of appointed representatives, convened for the first time on June 28th. The system operated as a Non-Electoral single-party autocracy. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. In 1933, Pridi Panomyong, then serving as a Minister of State, presented his Draft Economic Plan, also known as the Yellow Cover Dossier, to King Prajadhipok. This dossier outlined socialist approaches to address the nation's myriad financial and economic challenges.⁷ Phraya Manopakorn rallied those who opposed the plan and dissolved his own cabinet to oust Pridi, who had great support within the People's Party. For the given timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties were absent. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

04/01/1933 End (Monarchical) (Non-Electoral) One-Party Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date prime minister Phraya Manopakorn called for the dissolution of the People's Assembly with the support of King Prajadhipok. Under the emergency decree, some parts of the constitution, including the legislature and the judiciary, were suspended.⁸ The leadership of the People's Party fled into exile in May 1933. Even though Phraya Manopakorn subsequently began to implement more

restrictive measures against political opposition, he was unable to consolidate almost unlimited authority. The fact that resistance arose from the political opposition and the military during this brief period suggests that. Members of the People's Party and the military joined forces to have Phraya Manopakorn deposed. This culminated in the coup on 06/20/1933.⁹ Furthermore, King Prajadhipok still maintained a certain amount of influence and continued to exist as institution.¹⁰ The regime therefore represents a borderline case between a personalist autocracy and a non-electoral transitional regime, since on the one hand parliament was dissolved and the constitution suspended, and on the other hand Phraya Manopakorn was unable to consolidate his unlimited claim to authority. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties were absent.

06/20/1933 End (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: On this date, young military officers led by Colonel Phraya Phahon Pholphayuhasena launched a coup against the conservative premiership of Phraya Manopakorn. Pholphayuhasena became the second prime minister of Siam.¹¹ After royalist forces launched a failed counter coup in October, the army was purged and jailed several members of the royal family. The first general elections were held on 11/15/1933 to elect 78 of the 156 members of the House of Representatives, with the other 78 appointed by the King.¹² Universal suffrage for national elections was granted during the first general election in 1933.¹³ After the end of the reign of Prime Minister Pholphayuhasena on 12/16/1938, the regime leadership was initially split between Pridi Banomyong (a civilian) and Plaek Phibunsongkhram (Phibun), a military leader usually referred to as Phibun. The military came to dominate and Phibun became prime minister on 12/16/1938. The new regime engaged in press censorship and repression of political opposition (Reynolds 2005: 1, Baker/Phongpaichit 2014: 104, 115-17, 119-20, 123-24, Casey et al. 2020: 16-17). According to LIED, both executive and legislative elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty. Based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. In this period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties were absent.

07/26/1944 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: After the regime leader, Supreme Commander Phibun resigned, Phibun and what had been the military faction of The People's Party gave way to an unelected pro-Allies, predominantly civilian faction led by Pridi Banomyong, who garnered support from a civilian pro-royalist faction and navy officers. The shift in leadership selection moved from high-level army officers before July 1944 to a coalition of civilians and leaders of the Seri Thai, the anti-Japanese partisans. Within this group, Khuang Abhaiwongse emerged as the chosen prime minister on 08/01/1944. His selection was based on his adeptness in dealing with the Japanese, allowing him to shield the growing Seri Thai movement while maintaining a facade of cooperation with the Japanese occupiers.¹⁴ Despite the introduction of some democratic reforms in the 1946 constitution, such as allowing the election of both legislative houses, prohibiting officers from serving in the legislature and government, and legalizing parties, the period from 1944-47 is still considered authoritarian. This is because there was no change in government control following the 1946 election, some opposition leaders faced arrest and harassment, and the constitution imposed suffrage limitations based on education. (Vella 1955: 388-89, Cady 1974: 114, Chaloeontiarana 2007: 16-17, Suwannathat-Pian 1995: 188, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 99-100, Baker/Phongpaichit 2014: 136, 139-41, Casey et al. 2020: 17). According to LIED, only legislative elections were held in 1945, but they were not categorized as multiparty. No executive elections were present. In 1946 multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. For 1944 and 1945, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us

as showing that political liberties are absent. For 1946 and 1947, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties were not really present.

11/08/1947 End (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: The military overthrew rear Admiral and Prime Minister Thamrong in response to series of damaging scandals, high consumer prices, and ongoing corruption in the regime. Khuang ascended to the prime minister position. The coup was led by a group of officers forced into retirement by the previous government ousted the civilian government and returned Phibun to office (Chaloemtiarana 2007: 20-31, Suwannathat-Pian 1995: 164-65, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 100). The parliament was dissolved. A new constitution formally gave the king the right to make laws when parliament was out of session, dismiss cabinet members, and appoint senators, who functioned as the legislature until new elections; these functions were really exercised by the Privy Council controlled by the army (Suwannathat-Pian 1995: 164-65, Chaloemtiarana 2007: 20-32). According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held in 1947. Thereafter, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. In November 1951, military governance was reinforced with additional restrictions. The 1932 constitution was reinstated, the recently elected legislature (inaugurated in January 1948) was disbanded once again, political gatherings were prohibited, and parties were barred from engaging in political activities. A national executive council, composed of nine officers - three from each branch of the military, was established. In accordance with the provisions of the 1932 Constitution, a Senate was appointed, serving as the legislative body until new elections were held for half of the assembly in 1952, with the remaining members being appointed. Notably, 106 out of 123 Senate members were military or police officers (Chaloemtiarana 2007: 51-54, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 100). Based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. Until 1949, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. From 1950 onwards, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties were not really present.

11/29/1951 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: The Coup Group who made up an informal military junta carried out a coup to reduce the influence of civilians in the government. In the absence of the king, the generals suspended the legislature and declared the dissolution of parliament. They reinstated the 1932 constitution and established a provisional government, persuading Phibun to serve as its head. Ultimately, this maneuver allowed the generals to consolidate most of the country's political power. The coup is known as the Silent Coup or Radio Coup.¹⁵ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held in 1951. From 1952 onward, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period. Based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. For the given period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For the period up to 1954, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties are absent. For the remaining years of the regime period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties were not really present.

09/16/1957 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: In response to public and royal outrage over allegedly rigging of the 1957 elections and continued corruption of the Phibun regime, the armed forces led by Sarit launched a coup to oust Phibun. The coup was successful and Sarit took control over the government through his informal junta (Chaloemtiarana 2007: 79-80, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 100-101). In October 1958, Sarit and his allies further narrowed the regime: parties and political gatherings were banned, the constitution abrogated; they created the Revolutionary Council (Khana Pattiwat) to rule. The Revolutionary Council proclaimed an Interim Constitution in January 1959 and also appointed a

Constituent Assembly to write a new one and act as interim legislature. Of 220 members, 102 were army officers, 26 navy, 24 air force, 18 police, and 50 were bureaucrats (Chaloemtiarana 2007: 79-80, 96, 186-87, Bienen/Morell 1974: 11, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 100-101). By 10/20/1958 Sarit believed democracy had failed to restrain politicians and solve the country's economic problems. He launched a second coup to bring back traditional Thai benevolent despotism. On 12/09/1963 prime minister Sarit Thanarat was succeeded by Thanom Kittikachorn.¹⁶ On 06/20/1968 a new constitution was promulgated, despite resistance from Thanom. Although democratic on the surface, the 1968 constitution legitimized Thanom's military-dominated regime. Against the principles of parliamentary democracy, members of the house were prohibited from serving in the cabinet. Furthermore, the senate wielded the authority to postpone any legislation for up to a year, with the senate president also serving as the president of parliament. King Bhumibol endorsed Thanom's predominantly military slate of senate nominees. The new constitution legitimized all legislation previously enacted by the regime, including the repressive Anticommunist Act used to suppress dissent.¹⁷ In accordance with LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For the given timeframe, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties were not really present.

02/10/1969 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Electoral (Military) Autocracy: On this date, elections were held and resulted in Thanom and his aligned parties receiving a majority of votes and thus the majority in the House of Representatives.¹⁸ While the military kept the dominant role in the political process, this period is coded as an electoral autocracy because there were elections. Based on our observations, only executive elections which were not classified as multiparty were held during this period, which contradicts the observations of LIED. The elections are classified as not competitive by LIED. Moreover, these elections are labeled with no cleanliness by V-Dem's CEI. The overall conditions score not really free and fair elections (V-Dem EF&FI). According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. According to Polity5, in 1969 and 1970, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. In 1971, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties were not really present.

11/17/1971 End (Monarchical) Electoral (Military) Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: Thanom and the military dissolved the constitution and legislature in a self-coup, consolidating all powers under the National Executive Council. The coup was initiated to counter the perceived threat of communist infiltration, yet opposition to the regime persisted (Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 262, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 100-101). The ruling United Thai People's Party was dissolved. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. As classified by FH for 1972, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. According to FH, for 1973, a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties were not really present. In 1972, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

10/14/1973 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: Military rule under Thanom collapsed after student protests and widespread calls for democracy and a new constitution (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 294). Army Commander-in-Chief General Kris refused more violent action against the demonstrators and the king supported a transition to democracy. The king appointed Sanya Dharmasakti, the rector of Thammasat University as prime minister of a transitional government (Lansford 2015). Transitory provisions were applied such as the creation of a National Forum consisting of 2,347 people and a new constitution was promulgated in 1975 (Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 269).¹⁹ In accordance with LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. From 1974 to 1975, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. Per FH's evaluation for 1973, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. According to FH, for 1974, the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. For 1973, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. For the rest of the assessed regime period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous status of political liberties.

01/26/1975 End (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date general elections under universal suffrage were held.²⁰ The Democratic Party formed a minority government, which, however, lost a vote of no confidence in the House of Representatives on 03/06/1975. As a result, Kukrit Pramoj of the Social Action Party became prime minister. Several sources indicate that the elections were free and fair (Bienen/Morell 1974: 11, Elliott 1978: 135, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 101).²¹ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. For this year the elections score competitiveness (LIED). However, these elections receive a not really score for cleanliness according to V-Dem's CEI. The overall election conditions are classified as somewhat free and fair by V-Dem's EF&FI. According to FH, for 1975, the country is rated as free with a score of 5, which we interpret as rather free in our framework. Moreover, political liberties were absent according to LIED. According to our interpretation of V-Dem's PCLI, political liberties were not really present in this period. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. Additionally, the LDI scores are classified with not really, not indicating a hybrid regime. Based on our very mixed information, we classify the regime during this period as an electoral hybrid regime. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints in 1975. In 1976, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time.

10/06/1976 End (Monarchical) Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: Far-right paramilitary groups and security forces launched a massacre among left-wing students at Bangkok's Thammasat University. The military intervened to end the bloodshed and restore control. The National Policy Council was established, which was made up of officers. The council suspended the constitution, dissolved the assembly, banned parties, and declared martial law. It appointed a new legislature and civilian cabinet (Elliott 1978: 136, Chaloehtiarana 2007: 234). The council was led by Admiral Sangad Chaloryu. He was succeeded by General Kriangsak Chamanan in 1977 (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 294, Lansford 2015). After a period of State of Emergency, a new constitution was promulgated in 1978 (Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 263, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 101). On 10/20/1977 Admiral Sangad overthrew the prime minister whom he accused of dividing the country and failing to address the economic situation. Sangad's junta remained in power for only a month. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. As classified by FH for 1976 and 1977, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Per FH's evaluation for 1978, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. According to FH, for 1979, the country is partly free

with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

04/22/1979 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Electoral (Military) Autocracy: The 1979 elections led to an unstable government primarily controlled by bureaucrats, sidelining elected politicians. Following Prime Minister General Kriangsak Chomanan's loss of military support, he resigned in 02/1980, paving the way for Defense Minister and army Commander-in-Chief Prem Tinsulanonda (Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 263). Under General Prem's governance, Thailand received another chance for liberalization in 1980.²² He appointed parliamentarians from major political parties to serve in his cabinet. Prem's administration was endorsed through elections in 1983 and 1986, although he had to navigate through two coup attempts in 1981 and 1985 instigated by a faction known as the "young Turk officers." Furthermore, following the 1986 election, there arose public debate regarding the suitability of a non-elected individual assuming the position of prime minister. Despite this, Prem successfully retained his position at that time. However, after the 1988 elections, he stepped down, allowing Chatichai Choonhavan, leader of the Chart Thai Party, to lead a fully elected government (Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 263). The coding of the regime is disputed. GWF, HTW, MCM and AF coded the regime as military, while CGV coded it as civilian. In addition in the qualitative literature, for instance, Croissant classified it as an electoral-authoritarian regime (Croissant 2016: 488). This dataset disagrees with most of the datasets on this regime. According to the coding rules this regime is clearly identified as an electoral autocracy. The regime after 1979 did not come to power by a military coup and Prem was elected as prime minister in semi-competitive elections. Between 1979 and 1982 the elections scored an absence of competitiveness. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since 1983, the elections increased to competitive conditions (LIED). Moreover, V-Dem's CEI underlines no cleanliness from 1979 to 1982. Since 1983 the elections score a not really cleanliness. In addition, the overall conditions are considered as not really free and fair from 1979 to 1982, before they reach out to an ambiguous level until 1987 (V-Dem EF&FI). According to FH, for 1979, the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. As classified by FH for the rest of the assessed regime period, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. For the years 1979 and 1980, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. For the rest of the period under consideration, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating an ambiguous status of political liberties. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. Nevertheless, the classification of the regime is complicated since "a new system of government in which the military shared power with parliament through the mediation of the monarchy"²³ was established. Hence, in addition to the military the monarch played a more than a ceremonial role in politics. Since the military obviously had a dominant rule in the regime, the regime is classified as the subtype on an electoral (military) autocracy.

07/24/1988 End (Monarchical) Electoral (Military) Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Hybrid Regime: In response to political unrest in 1988, Prime Minister Prem dissolved the parliament and announced a general election. The outcome was a triumph for the Thai Nation Party, securing 87 out of the 357 seats.²⁴ This signaled the commencement of a phase characterized by a fully elected and civilian-led government under Chatichai Choonhavan, who had previously resigned his military commission to lead the party (Lansford 2015, Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 294, Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 263). The opposition party secured victory (Lansford 2015, Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 294, Nohlen/Grotz/Hartmann 2001: 263). Based on our observations,

multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. During this period the elections were classified as competitive by LIED. In a comparative perspective this seems to be a misclassification by LIED. V-Dem's CEI indicates a not really level of electoral cleanliness, however, V-Dem's EF&FI declares the election as somewhat free and fair. V-Dem's LDI has a score which we label as not really. According to FH, a score of 6 to 7 for 1988 designates the country as partly free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather free. As per FH's classification for the years 1989 and 1990, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. According to qualitative sources civil liberties and political freedoms were generally respected, although there were limitations on media criticism of the royal family, which did not extend to critique of the government (McColm 1991: 356). According to LIED no political liberties were present for this time. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI points out their ambiguous presence. Based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. Based on the mixed information we classify the regime in this period as an electoral hybrid regime. However, the regime was a borderline case between an electoral hybrid regime and a highly defective electoral democracy.

02/23/1991 End (Monarchical) Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: On this date, the military overthrew Choonhavan in a bloodless coup led by Commander General Suchinda Kraprayoon among growing military suspicion of civilian interference in its sphere (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 294, Bhuchongkul 1992: 313, 319, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 101). Parliament was dissolved, the constitution suspended, and martial law declared. A six-man National Peacekeeping Council (NPKC) made up of all top military commanders was established to rule. Sunthorn seated himself at the head of the National Peacekeeping Council. General Suchinda Kraprayoon ordered the arrest of prime minister and Chatchai on charges of corruption and incompetence and assumes the position himself (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 90). According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. In 1991, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI indicates an ambiguous status of political liberties.

05/20/1992 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: The military sought to draft a new constitution with "provisional clauses" guaranteeing military influence over parliament for another four years. This sparked heavy protests. After the military's repressive stance towards the protesters, that led to a high number of casualties, the king himself intervened and removed General Suchinda from office (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 294) and replaced him with a civilian interim prime minister until new elections in September 1992 (King/LoGerfo 1996: 104). Parliament rescinded the provisional clauses that came from the military and in June 1992, the constitution was amended to require the prime minister to be an elected member of parliament (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 101). As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI indicates an ambiguous status of political liberties.

09/13/1992 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy: The interim government oversaw elections in September 1992 (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 63). These elections were won by the Democrat Party, completing the transition to democracy. After the elections in September 1992, a coalition government was formed under Chuan Leekpai, who became Prime Minister. A new constitution was promulgated in 1997 that saw a "democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State" (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 295) for Thailand. The 1997 constitution explicitly protected a wide range of human

rights and civil liberties and strengthened the system of checks and balances.²⁵ Per FH, for 1992, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. Per FH's scoring for 1993 and 1994, the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. As classified by FH for 1995-1997, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. According to FH, for the rest of the regime period under analysis, the country is rated as free with a score of 5, which we interpret as rather free in our framework. According to LIED political liberties were absent, while according to our interpretation of V-Dem's PCLI somewhat political liberties were achieved in the years 1993-2005. For 2006, PCLI indicates an ambiguous status of political liberties. In 02/2006, an assorted extra-parliamentary movement known as the "People's Alliance for Democracy" (PAD, or "Yellow Shirts") surfaced, calling for Thaksin's resignation. (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 295). The judiciary was mostly independent, allegations of corruption persisted, however. While freedom of speech was mostly upheld, there were infringements of the freedom of press (Piano/Puddington/Rosenberg 2006: 718). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. From 1992 to 2005 the elections are classified as competitive by LIED. V-Dem's CEI shows multiple changes in this period. Between 1993 and 1996 the elections are classified as not really clean. The four following years mark a change towards an ambiguous score. In the years 2001 and 2002 the scores increase towards a classification as somewhat clean, but with a quick backslide towards ambiguous levels for the years 2004 and 2005. In addition, V-Dem's EF&FI indicates the overall conditions as somewhat free and fair for the entire period. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. Until 1997, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. From 1998 onwards, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. Considering the LDI for this time the scores indicate the so called not real until 2000. Since 2001, ambiguous outcomes are given.

09/19/2006 End (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: On this date, the military seized the moment for a coup d'état while Thaksin was traveling abroad (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 295). The coup, orchestrated by the Army Commander-in-Chief, involved the military annulling the 1996 constitution, apprehending the cabinet, disbanding parliament, prohibiting political activities, and establishing the Council for Democratic Reform as the governing body.²⁶ (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 101).²⁷ An interim government was installed thereafter by the military junta. The LIED information that multiparty executive and legislative elections were present on 12/31 is in this case false. According to FH's classification for 2006, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Per FH's evaluation for 2007, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. For the period under consideration, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties.

12/23/2007 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, more or less "[c]ompetitive elections returned the government to civilian rule"²⁸ (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 101). However, a tribunal appointed by the military outlawed the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party of Thaksin Shinawatra and banned TRT executives from contesting in elections for five years.²⁹ On 06/08/2008 The interim government, appointed by the military, dissolved the TRT, imposed bans on Thaksin and several high-ranking officials, and crafted a new constitution. Subsequently, general elections were orchestrated in late 2007. Despite facing an uneven political landscape that disadvantaged the TRT's successor, the People's Power Party (PPP), it managed to secure 48% of the seats. This outcome highlighted Thaksin's sustained popularity among provincial and lower-class voters, enabling the pro-Thaksin faction to establish a coalition government (Croissant/Lorenz 2018: 295-96). Between 2007 and 2010, the country's election scored an absence of competitiveness. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since 2011, the elections were considered

as competitive by LIED. Since 2008, the elections are labeled with an ambiguous cleanliness (V-Dem CEI). Moreover, the overall conditions remain somewhat free and fair up to 2013 (V-Dem EF&FI). According to FH, for the years 2007 to 2010, a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. As per FH, for 2011-2013, the country receives a score of 8, which we interpret as falling into the rather not free category. LIED maintained its absent outcomes regarding the political liberties. V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties from 2007 to 2010. For 2011-2013 PCLI indicates that political liberties were somewhat present. Our interpretation of the PCLI data for 2014 is that political liberties were absent. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 3, between substantial limitations and executive parity or subordination. In 2007, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. In 2008 and from 2012 to 2013, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. For the remaining years, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive. In addition, the LDI shows a so labeled not really score from 2007 to 2011, and in 2013, referring to an autocracy, increasing to an ambiguous level in 2012 which states to a hybrid regime.

05/22/2014 End (Monarchical) Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start (Monarchical) Military Autocracy: On this date, the Royal Thai Armed Forces led by General Prayut Chan-o-cha overthrew the Yingluck cabinet. Six months of political crisis followed.³⁰ The establishment of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) by the military marked the resolution of the persistent political conflict between the military-led regime and democratic forces. This conflict had originated from the 2006 Thai coup d'état, often referred to as the "unfinished coup".³¹ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period. Based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. LIED identifies political liberties as absent for the whole period. For 2014 and 2015, V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent. For 2016, V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not truly present. V-Dem's PCLI for 2017 is again classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent. For 2018, V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. For 2019, V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties. Between 2015 and 2018, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. Just before the elections on 03/24/2019, the Constitutional Court, banned one of the major opposition parties. Irregularities in vote counting and the allocation of mandates further compounded the issues. Consequently, the military government solidified its grip on power.³² Five days later, Prayuth declared an official end to military rule.³³

03/24/2019 End (Monarchical) Military Autocracy/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Autocracy: On this date, the elections, long-awaited but deemed neither free nor fair, took place. The existence of an unelected chamber in parliament was not the sole concern. The elections were widely perceived as an unbalanced contest in which Prayut enjoyed an unfair advantage, given that the 250 members of the appointed Senate were to be chosen by the junta.³⁴ The ban on the Future Forward Party (FFP) by the Constitutional Court in February 2020 marked the next disappointment.³⁵ In the summer and fall of 2020, demonstrations calling for Chan-o-cha's resignation erupted, leading him to declare a state of emergency, enforce gathering bans, and censor the press. The protests, led by student Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul, targeted both the monarchy under Maha Vajiralongkorn and the government. A week later, the Chan-o-cha administration announced the lifting of these measures.³⁶ In August 2022, the opposition initiated legal proceedings in Thailand's Constitutional Court, asserting that Prayut had exceeded the maximum eight-year term in office. The determination of the applicable timeframe for this calculation remains a point of contention—whether it should be measured from

his initial appointment in 2014, the enactment of the current constitution in 2017, or the 2019 election. While awaiting the court's verdict, Prayut was suspended of his official responsibilities. During this interim period, his former deputy, Prawit Wongsuwan, is overseeing governmental affairs.³⁷ The general elections on 05/14/2023 marked the end of final Prayut's term as prime minister. The elections held were comparatively competitive since the ascent of the military. The oppositional Move Forward Party (MFP) managed to secure a surprising 151 seats, becoming the largest party in the House of Representatives.³⁸ However, the military-appointed senate with 250 members blocked the leading party from forming a government coalition with other opposition parties. Subsequently, the constitutional court suspended the MFP leader and prime ministerial candidate Pita Limjaroenrat from his role in parliament and the pretext of an investigation into if his media holdings violated election rules. On 07/01/2025, Thailand did not experience a regime change. The Constitutional Court suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra, and Deputy Prime Minister Suriya Juangroongruangkit took over as acting head of government.³⁹ While this amounted to a government change under crisis conditions, the constitutional framework, the multiparty system, and electoral legitimacy remained in place. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In addition, LIED classifies the elections as not competitive ever since. V-Dem's CEI affirms no cleanliness levels for Thailand's elections and the overall election conditions are considered as not really free and fair according to V-Dem's EF&FI In August, the more established oppositional party Pheu Thai Party (PTP), which trailed the MFP by ten seats, managed to form a coalition government backed by military-backed parties. PTP candidate Srettha Thavisin was confirmed as prime minister in August. The military retains a firm grip over political proceedings and the senate remains comprised of military-elected members, most still holding office since their first appointment in 2019.⁴⁰ Per FH's evaluations for 2019 and 2023, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. In 2024 the score worsened to 11 which is considered as not free by both FH and our framework. According to FH's classification for the rest of the assessed regime period, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. In addition, regarding the political liberties, they were absent according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties in 2019 and 2023. For the other years political liberties were not really present according to our interpretation of V-Dem's PCLI. In 2019, and from 2021 to 2022, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. In 2020, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. In 2023, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive.

(Monarchical) Electoral Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (LePoer 1987, Croissant 2002, Nelson 2004, Nguyen 2011)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattanakosin_Kingdom_\(1782%E2%80%931932\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattanakosin_Kingdom_(1782%E2%80%931932))

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattanakosin_Kingdom_\(1782%E2%80%931932\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattanakosin_Kingdom_(1782%E2%80%931932))

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattanakosin_Kingdom_\(1782%E2%80%931932\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rattanakosin_Kingdom_(1782%E2%80%931932))

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy_of_Thailand

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siamese_revolution_of_1932

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phraya_Manopakorn_Nitithada

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_1933_Siamese_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phraya_Manopakorn_Nitithada

- ¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prajadhipok>
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phraya_Phahonphonphayahasena
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1933_Siamese_general_election
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pridi_Banomyong
- ¹⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Coup_\(Thailand\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silent_Coup_(Thailand))
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanom_Kittikachorn
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Thailand
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1969_Thai_general_election
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_Thai_popular_uprising
- ²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#Dates_by_country
- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1975_Thai_general_election
- ²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prem_Tinsulanonda
- ²³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Thailand/The-1973-revolution-and-its-aftermath#ref509841>
- ²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1988_Thai_general_election
- ²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_constitution_of_Thailand#Key_features
- ²⁶ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2814.htm>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/5361512.stm>
- ²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Thai_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat
- ²⁸ <http://tinyurl.com/9gsx277>
- ²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Thai_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat
- ³⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_coups_and_coup_attempts_by_country#Thailand
- ³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Thai_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat
- ³² <https://www.rosalux.de/news/id/45343>
- ³³ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayut_Chan-o-cha; https://www.jstor.org/stable/26867618#metadata_info_tab_contents
- ³⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Thai_general_election
- ³⁵ <https://www.rosalux.de/news/id/45343>
- ³⁶ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayut_Chan-o-cha
- ³⁷ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayut_Chan-o-cha
- ³⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/14/world/asia/thailand-election-results.html>
- ³⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Thailand
- ⁴⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/thailand/freedom-world/2024>

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