

# **From Bhumibol to Vajiralongkorn: Neo-Royalism and the Future of Thai Monarchy**

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The speaker reinvestigates the concept of neo-royalism, in the specific context of the twilight of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's period, to forecast the future of the royal institution. The primary objective is to employ such concept to assess the position of the king-in-waiting and consequently to imagine the place of the Thai monarch in a new political environment. The main argument is that the concept of neo-royalism, based on the unsurpassed qualities of Bhumibol, relentlessly promoted by royalists, is a dangerous entrapment for the next king, and indeed, for the monarchical institution and its entire network. Moreover, the undemocratic nature of the royal power has increasingly become incompatible with, or even antithetical to, the changing political landscape of Thailand. This situation engenders a dilemma for the next king. Vajiralongkorn could either insist on consolidating his political power despite his obvious deficits in the required qualities—and thus provoke failure as well as possible rejection from the public and even some conservative royalists—or to undergo major reforms of the monarchy, placing it strictly within the border of the constitution to save his throne. The recent political initiatives of Vajiralongkorn during the political crisis of 2013-2014 suggest he might be interested in political activism despite his limited political capital and personal capabilities.

**Tuesday, December 1**

**7:00 P.M.**

**Room 211, Linsy-Chittendon, 63 High Street**