Background: The timeliness and importance of this research is evidenced by the accelerated pace of prerogative reforms over the past decade and a half. The British government's ability to take part in the Iraq War without consulting Parliament sparked a series of constitutional reforms aiming to 'tame' the prerogative (UK 2003-2004). These reform efforts were primarily driven by parliamentary committees. The committees took aim at a number of prerogatives, including the treaty power, war powers, and the powers of the prime minister (Bartlett and Everett 2017; Hazell 2010). Under Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the British executive was nominally supportive of these efforts. Brown's government published a Green Paper examining the scope of existent prerogatives, what reforms might be worth pursuing, and how they might be enacted (UK 2007). Despite voicing its support of reform, however, the Brown government was cautious about these initiatives and no significant progress was made during his time as prime minister. Reform efforts accelerated under the coalition government of David Cameron's Conservatives and Nicholas Clegg's Liberal Democrats. As part of the coalition agreement between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, Cameron agreed to advance prerogative reform, notably surrounding the power to dissolve Parliament. Understandably, Clegg worried that the prime minister might call an election to secure a majority government for the Conservatives. He was therefore determined to prevent that possibility. The result was the *Fixed-Term Parliaments Act 2011*, which

prerogative reform to this literature will further contribute to our understanding of the Westminster system and how the states that share this governing tradition relate and differ.

are able to turn the agenda away from reform toward reconsideration. Bringing this element of institutional change into Mahoney and Thelen's framework, i.e. moments of reverse institutional change by status quo defenders, will build upon their theory and have applications beyond this particular project.

Methodology

The methodology underpinning this research is a series of structured, focused comparisons of 'most similar' cases (Bennett and George 2005). These cases will be analysed and compared qualitatively, using interpretive process tracing (Vennesson 2008), and the research will rely on two types of data: primary documents and semi-structured interviews. The set number of cases and our experience collecting this type of data will ensure that the project is feasible.

Case selection: In their seminal comparative study of the Westminster system, Rhodes et al. (2011) limit their discussion to the United Kingdom and the former 'Dominions' of the British Empire who still adhere to system of government recognized as Westminster: Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This is also the approach taken by Galligan and Brenton (2015) in their comparative study of constitutional conventions. By contrast, Twomey's recent study of the head of state function in the Westminster system takes an expansive view, including the Commonwealth realms and former realms and colonies whose systems of government retain elements of the British parliamentary tradition (2018). Comparative studies of the Westminster system, moreover, can include Canadian provinces and territories, as well as the Australian states. This research will follow Rhodes et al. (2011) and Galligan and Brenton (2015) in focusing on the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the federal-level of government in Canada and Australia. The criteria for this selection are three-fold. First, these four cases have had the widest degree of prerogative authority compared with sub-state governments and smaller realms. Second, as the largest and oldest of the Westminster states, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are more amenable to a 'most similar' focused comparison. Third, limiting the research to these four cases allows for more in-depth analysis of prerogative reforms within and across them. Increasing the number of cases would force an undesirable trade-off between the richness of the case studies and feasibility of the project.

Focusing on four categories of prerogatives further structures the comparison. Concentrating on four sets of prerogatives will allow the research to compare reform efforts within each state and across them, as well as address critical powers (treaty powers, military deployments, judicial appointments, and parliamentary dissolution) that have been at the centre of debates about prerogative reform and executive-legislative-

Data: Primary documents produced since the late 1960s will be a first source of data for this research. These will include party platforms, parliamentary debates, transcripts and reports from parliamentary committees, legislation and executive orders-in-council, and court factums and rulings. These primary documents will then be read through the prism of interpretive process tracing and the theory of gradual institutional change to analyse the sequence of events that led to calls for reform, effort to reform, which strategies of institutional change were pursued and why, and whether reform efforts achieved their objectives or were ultimately blocked by those defending the status quo. These primary documents will be complemented and enhanced by semi-structured interviews with actors who were involved with prerogative reform, either as parliamentarians, advocates, former judges, or officials within government. Conducting these interviews will allow us to get a fuller sense of how reforms unfolded, particularly in terms of when the push for reform began, what obstacles reformers faced, how officials responded and reacted, and why certain compromises or choices were made in terms of reform strategies or solutions. These interviews will therefore fill important gaps found in the primary documentation and ensure that