



Dominic Faulder. *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand.* Singapore: Didier Millet, 2019. xix + 556 pp. Ill. \$37.50, cloth, ISBN 978-981-4385-27-5.

Reviewed by Michael Montesano (ISEAS-Yushof Ishak Institute)

[Preprint] H-Asia (October, 2021)

Commissioned by Bradley C. Davis (Eastern Connecticut State University)

On the morning of June 19, 1991, a colleague of Thanong Pho-an[1] found the Volvo automobile belonging to the prominent fifty-five-year-old labor leader, former senator, promoter of Thailand's Social Security Act of 1990, and diabetic parked, unoccupied, on a sidewalk in front of Wat Prasoet Suttharawat temple on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok. The disappearance of the president of the Labor Congress of Thailand[2] came four months after the Thai military toppled the elected government of Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan. Soon after taking power on February 23, 1991, the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC)[3] junta moved decisively against Thailand's labor movement. Among other restrictions on the rights of Thai workers to organize, it banned unions in the state enterprise sector, long the bedrock of the movement. Thanong opposed the junta's antilabor measures actively and vociferously. At the same time, he understood that opposition to the NPKC was not without risk. Should he not be in touch for three days, he instructed his family, they should report his kidnapping. Should he not be in touch for seven days, they were to assume that he was dead. Thanong's body has never been found.[4]

Thailand's prime minister at the time of the disappearance of Thanong Pho-an was a man by the name of Anand Panyarachun. The NPKC had

installed Anand, then the chairman both of the board of the Saha-Union textile-manufacturing concern and of the Federation of Thai Industries, as premier just days after its putsch. Anand's name had until that time been unfamiliar to most members of the Thai public. However, while he had never before held a cabinet post, Anand was no stranger to government service. Prior to entering the private sector a dozen years before the NPKC coup, he had enjoyed a high-flying, even brilliant, diplomatic career. Having served five years as secretary to long-time foreign minister Thanat Khoman, one of the architects of Thailand's postwar international relations, the Cambridge-educated Anand subsequently served as ambassador to Ottawa (1967-72) and Washington (1972-75) and permanent representative to the United Nations (1972-75, acting 1967-72), before returning to Bangkok as permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1976. He was at that time still in his mid-forties. He would round out his diplomatic career as Thailand's ambassador to Bonn before joining Saha-Union.

The highlight of Anand's years as a diplomat was doubtless his work to help bring about the normalization of Thailand's relations with the People's Republic of China, realized in the aftermath of the fall of Saigon. Initially, this work took the form of quiet conversations with a senior

Chinese diplomat in New York, but it culminated in a pair of momentous mid-1975 trips to Beijing. The first of these trips saw Anand complete negotiations on a joint Thai-Chinese communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations, while the second saw him accompany then Foreign Minister Chatchai to witness the July 1 ceremony in which Thai prime minister Kukrit Pramoj and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai signed the communiqué.

What was in the event the first of Anand's two stints as Thai prime minister, between March 1991 and April 1992, would also prove momentous in the eyes of many observers—both Thai and foreign. This widespread perception and the immense respect that Anand has enjoyed for more than a quarter-century explain the publication of *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand*. And it is testimony both to the integrity of Anand's biographer, Dominic Faulder, and to the heft of this authorized life that Thanong Pho-an and his disappearance merit mention, even if only in passing, in the book. More than a mark of Faulder's honesty and thoroughness, however, the episode is in fact crucial to the story that his book tells.

I. Lasting Acclaim for an Illegal Premiership

Anand Panyarachun assumed the Thai premiership in 1991 under circumstances of naked illegality. The junta that installed him would use his nearly fourteen months in office to design and begin to implement its project for Thailand's future. Pursuit of this project saw the NPKC write a new constitution to shape the country's political order and launch a political party to serve as its vehicle for control of that new order.[5] In the end, the project fell apart under the pressure of massive protests on the streets of Bangkok during May 17-20, 1992, and following the dramatic intervention of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (r. 1946-2016). But was the collapse of the NPKC's project more apparent than real? The May protests, the Thai military's violent attempt to suppress them, and

the royal intervention to halt that violence put paid to the aspiration of the junta's de facto leader, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, to succeed Anand as premier. One man's thwarted personal ambition notwithstanding, Faulder's book nevertheless suggests that the broader project of the NPKC did not meet with abject failure. This reading of *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand* also makes comprehensible Anand's emergence from association with a seeming debacle to enjoy lasting acclaim. Further, if three factors account in the most apparent sense for that acclaim, close scrutiny of those same factors enables understanding of why the NPKC coup of February 1991 may not have been quite the failure that it appeared.

First among these factors were Anand's personal characteristics—characteristics to which Faulder's at least superficially hagiographic volume offers the reader ample exposure. In leading Thai diplomatic missions in North America, for example, Anand proved very good at his job. He was "confident and assertive," a quick study with a "no-nonsense working style," intense during the working day but also "naturally gregarious" in social settings (pp. 102-105). The same period saw him work consciously to develop his skills both in speaking extemporaneously, not least in English, in public settings and in dealing with the press; these skills would serve him very well as the NPKC junta's chosen premier in the early 1990s and as a widely respected public figure in the decades that followed. They became some of his defining traits.

Anand's own character and capabilities notwithstanding, his self-assured manner and the range of opportunities that he enjoyed resulted in some part from his birth into a distinctive segment of elite Thai society. Faulder quotes no less eminent and thoughtful a figure than former foreign minister Tej Bunnag—himself a member of a lineage that effectively ruled Siam in partnership with its monarchs during several decades of the

nineteenth century[6]—on Anand’s origins. Anand “is the youngest son of a very distinguished family and full of self-confidence.... He is a Thai aristocrat—a leading member of the Thai establishment. To understand why he is that self-confident, that cocksure, you would have to do some analysis of the way he was brought up,” Tej told Faulder (p. 142).

The Panyarachun surname numbered among the several thousand that King Vajiravudh (r. 1910-1925) bestowed on members of Siam’s numerous royal lines and on military officers and civil servants staffing the bureaux and ministries of the modern state that his father, King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910), began to build in the 1890s.[7] The first to hold that surname, Anand’s father Sern studied at a British “public school” and at the University of Manchester with royal or government funding before rising to the top of Thailand’s education ministry. He then retired into a career as a prominent newspaper and magazine publisher, and as an investor in banking and insurance concerns. Right down to the family home along Bangkok’s Sathon Road in which Anand grew up and to his royally bestowed surname, Sern typified the higher bureaucratic elite whose members would play dominant roles in the Thai state and in other realms of the national life well into the second half of the twentieth century.[8]

Though that elite was in the first instance a creature of the absolute monarchy, many of its members accommodated themselves quite readily to post-1932 constitutionalist and even dictatorial regimes. In this regard, too, Sern seems to have been typical. Just days after toppling the absolutist order, the People’s Party included him among the seventy appointees to Siam’s first parliament. His appointment as the highest-ranking civil servant in the Ministry of Education followed some ten months later.[9] Further, and as Faulder notes, Sern’s son and Anand’s brother Rak married the daughter of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram—who, though the holder of another

royally bestowed surname,[10] served as the country’s decidedly antiroyalist premier during 1938-44 and 1948-57.

“Sern was a clubbable man.... He enjoyed port and sherry, and making cocktails.... His passions included bridge and Western opera,” Faulder writes (p. 8). Anand grew up in this rarified metropolitan superstratum of the society of a Thailand whose population remained overwhelming on the land and in the provinces.[11] Among his childhood playmates were the Sarasin children, members of one of “Thailand’s most prominent bureaucratic families” (p. 12); the children’s mother was Anand’s first cousin on his mother’s side. During the seven years (1948-55) that Anand spent in the United Kingdom, first at a London public school and then at Cambridge University, he continued to rub elbows with others from the same social group and indeed to participate in excursions and holidays organized by the Thai embassy in what amounted to a program of elite socialization. It is little surprise, then, that toward the end of his time at Cambridge he would court a woman from very much the same set, a great-great-granddaughter of the polygamous King Mongkut (r. 1851-68). Having returned to Bangkok, the two would marry in 1956.

Faulder does not dwell explicitly on Anand’s identity as a member of the bureaucratic class that emerged in Siam in the early decades of the twentieth century, let alone on the historical role of that class. His is not that kind of book. But that identity and the role of that class are fundamental to understanding the second factor in Anand’s enduring positive reputation. If, that is, Anand was “the best prime minister that Thailand never elected” (p. 361), one reason was that his junta-installed government was not “corrupt.” And, if by the end of his first stint in the premiership, the “Thailand [that] Anand handed back was not the one [that] he had started with” (p. 321), this was in no small part because, as Faulder quotes the distinguished economist Ammar Siamwalla remark-

ing, “Anand showed the Thai people—at least the middle classes among the demonstrators in May [1992]—that a clean government was possible” (p. 340).

In assembling that “clean government,” Faulder tells us, Anand “included no professional politicians ... no trade unionists, labourers, factory workers, or farmers. His selection was patrician: an elite, educated, hopefully incorruptible, top-down cabinet.... Anand surrounded himself with people [whom] he knew personally or by reputation” (p. 230). Among the former were his childhood friends and relatives the Sarasin brothers. Ambassador Arsa Sarasin served as foreign minister, while Police General Pow Sarasin became a deputy prime minister with oversight responsibility for ministries like Interior, Defense, and Transportation and Communications. Pow had flamboyantly and rather grotesquely demonstrated his concern with the latter functions in mid-1988, when, as director-general of the national police, he personally faced off with striking railway workers at Bangkok’s main Hualamphong Station.[12] Like Anand, the brothers Sarasin bore a surname bestowed by King Vajiravudh, naturally.[13]

Anand’s cabinet choices also reflected the long-term alliance that members of the Pan-yarachun and Sarasin families’ bureaucratic-elite class had forged with members of the Thai technocracy, including technocrats born to families that did not bear royally bestowed surnames.[14] Thus did the distinguished former Bank of Thailand governor (1975-79) and National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) secretary-general (1974-75, 1980-89) Snoh Unakul become deputy prime minister for economic affairs in March 1991.[15] Serving as ministers of transportation and communications and of finance, respectively, Nukul Prachuabmoh and Suthee Singsaneh joined Dr. Snoh in the cabinet line-up. Nukul had been Snoh’s successor as central bank governor, while Dr. Suthee had held the finance portfolio during the final years of General Prem Tinsulanonda’s

1980-88 premiership. Like Prem himself, Suthee had served in that earlier government without being an elected member of parliament.

To the degree that Anand’s 1991-92 government—boasting “the most technically qualified cabinet in Thailand’s history” (p. 227)—was “clean” and not “corrupt,” this perception was grounded not least in its composition. The perception drew on, and has in fact come subsequently to reinforce, the conviction in certain strata of Thai society that authority is best entrusted to “good people.” The conviction centers on an explicit contrast between those people and what Faulder sweepingly terms “self-seeking politicians” (p. 197)—that is, men and women who may owe their authority to the voters. Observers and students of Thailand often confuse or consider equivalent in meaning the term for “good people”[16] and that for the well-born and well-mannered,[17] and, as the case of Anand himself highlights, this confusion is telling.[18] It serves as a reminder that, as advanced by the well-born or indeed by the technocratic, visions of the “good” are not neutral. Even notionally clean governments may well serve or promote specific interests, as the discussion to follow contends.

The third factor accounting for Anand’s subsequent renown was what his “most technically qualified” 1991-92 government achieved. While Faulder’s book does not pretend to sophistication or rigor in its analysis of economic policy, it does offer a brisk and effective discussion of the program of “liberalization” that the first Anand government successfully prosecuted (294 ff.). Faulder sets the stage for this discussion deftly. He notes Anand’s first encounter with Snoh, Thailand’s future development czar” (p. 48), when in the late 1950s they both served in junior roles at the secretariat of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in Bangkok. Nearly a quarter-century later, Anand would become a trustee of the Thailand Development Research Institute. Snoh, then at the helm of the NESDB, played a leading role in

the creation of the institute. In turn, the institute served as an influential source of technocratic guidance for the Prem government as, during the 1980s, that government charted “Thailand’s transition” (p. 196) to a fast-growing, increasingly industrial economy in which foreign investment played a leading role.

Economic transitions eventually lose momentum. They approach the limits that political, institutional, and structural conditions impose—unless, that is, it proves possible meaningfully to alter those conditions. Faulder’s attention to the long-standing relationship between Anand and Snoh highlights the need to see continuities between the economic policy regime and goals of the Prem years and those of 1991-92. The 1988-91 Chatchai government—led by the first Thai premier to serve as an elected member of parliament since the Thammasat University massacre of October 6, 1976, heading a government supported by a coalition of Faulder’s “self-seeking politicians”—marginalized Snoh and his technocratic peers. But the program of liberalization that, under Snoh’s guidance, the first Anand government undertook gave new momentum to the “transition” of the Prem years. Its achievements in the realm of economic policy focused on reducing “protectionism” and enhancing “competitiveness.” In concrete terms, those achievements included easing capital flows into and out of Thailand, permitting foreign banks to open branches in the country more easily, cutting both corporate and income taxes, introducing a value-added tax, simplifying tariffs, and deregulating oil prices.

Demonstrating to some Thais the possibility of “clean government” may have represented, as Ammar told Faulder, the most significant change that Anand had wrought by the end of his first premiership in April 1992. In the long run, however, these “liberalizing” measures proved at least equally consequential. They both brought “globalization” to Thailand and prefigured the additional

structural changes that the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis would force upon the country.

To try to disentangle the three aspects of that premiership that won Anand such acclaim—his personal attributes, the absence of corruption, and achievements in the realm of economic policy—is a mistaken impulse. They are inextricably integrated: a “good person” led other “good people” in reshaping Thailand’s economy in the interest of those who saw in themselves the qualities of “good people.”[19] Of course, and even though that person considered his government “democratic in essence” (p. 481), neither he nor his cabinet had any sort of electoral mandate. The premier and his government owed their powers to the barrel of a gun.

Referring to the decision taken by the officers who composed the NPKC junta to install Anand as prime minister, Faulder writes, “whether any of them ... realised that a second, invisible coup had just taken place right under their noses is a matter for conjecture” (p. 226). It’s pretty to think so, Jake Barnes would have said.[20] But is it convincing?

II. A Shared Project

Suchinda Kraprayoon may not have been a Cantab, but he was no fool. Nor, while Faulder would minimize Suchinda’s contact with Anand Panyarachun before March 1991, was the general exactly tapping a stranger to serve as premier after the NPKC junta’s seizure of power. As a lieutenant colonel, Suchinda had served as a military attaché in Washington during Anand’s ambassadorship there. He had certainly had the chance to take the measure of a man who, in his postdiplomatic second career, had become a pillar of Thailand’s metropolitan business sector. In the era of rapid economic growth, the orientation, norms, and interests of that sector appeared to diverge more and more from those of the provincial politicians in whose support the Chatchai Choonhavan government was grounded. Those same tensions between capital and provinces, which explain so

much in Thailand's modern history, also increasingly led to a congruence of interests between metropolitan financial, commercial, and industrial concerns and the country's "business-savvy military" (p. 211). The latter may indeed deserve its outsize reputation for corruption, and Faulder is at pains to draw a sharp distinction between Anand and his ministers on the one hand and the men in uniform to whom they owed their jobs on the other. He notes that the junta held but a single meeting with Anand's cabinet, otherwise relying on Suchinda to serve as custodian of its relationship with the government that it had installed. At the same time, Faulder acknowledges the pronounced "business-minded[ness]" (p. 216) of the members of Chulachomkhalo Military Academy Class Five who formed the nucleus of the NPKC and whom Suchinda had served as long-time leader. That business-mindedness had surely forged in those officers and in the interests represented by Anand and his ministers a shared dissatisfaction with the Chatchai government. It also suggests that the junta knew what it was doing in placing Anand in the premiership, innocent ideas about a "second coup" to the contrary.

For these same reasons, the NPKC junta was unlikely to encounter resistance to its rapid moves against organized labor from its client-*cum*-partner Anand. Faulder notes Saha-Union's reputation for hostility to unions, rooted in its "essentially paternalistic and distrustful" approach (p. 203), in the 1980s. This approach was very much aligned with Anand's own views on organized labor in Thailand. He regarded unions in the state enterprise sector, the historic foundation of the Thai labor movement and in no small part creatures of an era of import substitution, as "not unions in the right sense of the word" (p. 204). Their record of "being politicised by the government, the politicians and the military" (p. 205) tainted Thai trade unionism more broadly, Anand told his biographer. Anand thus drew an implicit comparison with labor movements in other settings, which may have emerged organically rather than on the initi-

ative of governments. The degree to which Anand's long residence in Britain and North America, and the chance to observe the accepted political role of organized labor in those settings, informed his views is impossible to know.

What some prominent Thai social critics saw as Anand's hard-edged enmity toward organized labor, Faulder regards as a posture of "more skepticism than hostility" (p. 205). But members of his 1991-92 cabinet had views on labor that were decidedly stronger than mere skepticism. As one prominent and influential minister, speaking of both the NPKC junta and the technocrats and businesspeople in that cabinet, later put it, "I think everybody agreed.... They were sick and tired of the unions. The problem is still around now, but a lot less than when Anand took over" (p. 281). Faulder notes that the Chatchai years had been relatively good for Thai labor and for the labor movement. Measures taken during those years, like the introduction of social security, certainly posed no significant threat to the economic status quo that the country's metropolitan business interests were, like some of its soldiers, determined to defend. Nevertheless, mere defense of the status quo was not the objective, for Thailand was on the move. Its economy must be "liberalized."

Faulder writes that opposition to liberalization of the power sector on the part of the union representing workers at the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand—widely known as EGAT—made it "a primary target in the NPKC's knock-down of state unions" (p. 352). Beyond that sector, a broader program of liberalization of the Thai economy was of course also the overriding objective of the government that the junta installed following its putsch. Not only was the substance of the government's liberalizing program a matter of real consequence, but the question of who in the Thai social order might merit a voice in framing such program was also very much at issue. The junta moved with speed and ruthlessness against organized labor—without "a peep from Anand," in

the words of one eminent expert on labor relations in Thailand (p. 281). Explaining both that move and the apparent murder of Thanong requires reference to sociopolitical as well as economic considerations. It may demand understanding of established systems of status and hierarchy in the Thai order, and of the threat—both to those systems and to the parties to whom they permitted influence—that more equitable labor relations would pose. In this regard, it is notable that Faulder’s discussion of Thanong’s disappearance does not capture Anand’s reaction to or recollection of the sinister event.

III. Whence the Thai Workforce?

Labor relations in the Thailand of the era of rapid economic growth were—like so many aspects of government, politics, and cultural and social life in the country—largely a function of the relationship between the country’s great primate city and its vast hinterlands.[21] Anand Panyarachun and Thanong Pho-an were both born in Bangkok—the latter in Yannawa, just a few kilometers from the future prime minister’s childhood home in Bangrak. But, by the time that Anand left government service for the private sector in the late 1970s, the manpower on which a firm like Saha-Union depended in the operation of its factories was no longer drawn from the old Chinese working class of such quarters of the capital. Rather, it was overwhelmingly of provincial rather than metropolitan origin. The exploitation of underutilized land had been the basis of the vent-for-surplus growth that Thailand experienced from the 1860s well into the 1960s. In the decades that followed, however, the country’s strikingly similar growth model was grounded in the mobilization of previously underemployed labor—labor from the countryside rather than land in that same countryside.[22]

Anand apparently formed his view of such labor early. On returning from Cambridge, he was able to fulfill his military-service obligation though a week spent as a private on the air base at

Don Mueang, just north of Bangkok. That experience put him in the company, he would tell Faulder, of “country boys—you had to teach them how to turn right and left” (p. 48). Offered decades later, this recollection sheds light on Anand’s understanding of provincial Thailand, and on the significance that he attached to the Thai provinces in forming his understanding of his country. Tellingly, having to cede effective responsibility for the Ministry of Interior, which oversaw all sub-national administration, in his 1991-92 cabinet to a member of the NPKC junta does not appear to have put Anand out. His priorities clearly lay elsewhere. Indeed, he confirmed to Faulder that, before becoming prime minister, he had never set foot in Isan, Northeast Thailand. But how to understand the Thai economic growth story of the decades since 1980 without putting people whose origins lay in that region and the consequences for their lives of national economic policy regimes at the center of that story?

IV. Political “Reform,” Economic Crisis

In early June 1992, in the wake of the bloody and chaotic events of May and less than two months after the end of his first stint as Thai prime minister in April, Anand Panyarachun found himself recalled to the post. His mandate was to organize elections whose outcome would conform to new constitutional provisions requiring that the head of government be an elected member of parliament. This dramatic and surprising turn of events confounded expectations that a rather obscure retired air force officer, elected to parliament in March as a candidate of the former junta’s political vehicle, would become premier. The relief and indeed widespread approval that greeted Anand’s return testified to the respect and trust that he had earned since March of the previous year. While offering a detailed account of the maneuvering that led to Anand’s reappointment, Faulder confesses that much remains “opaque” (p. 337). He certainly does not dispel the conclusion of many contemporary observers that the

palace had intervened to secure that reappointment.

The elections of September 1992, Thailand's second national polls in half a year, saw Democrat Party leader Chuan Leekpai assume the premiership at the head of a coalition government. A broad consensus viewed this outcome as a positive indicator of the consolidation of parliamentary rule in Thailand. In narrowly political terms, it was possible to see the NPKC coup and Anand's two stints in the premiership as a blip that did little to throw Thailand off a trajectory dating not just to the Prem years but in fact to the 1969-71 period.[23] Its roots in electoral authoritarianism notwithstanding, that trajectory appeared to lead in the direction of democratic government by fractious multiparty coalitions—under the leadership of premiers who faced the voters, under the influence of political bosses dependent on provincial electorates, and, perhaps, under the overall supervision of unelected elements of the Thai elite.[24] At the time, this trajectory looked like “democratization.” In the event, however, it did not long survive the turn of the twenty-first century; Thaksin Shinawatra's assumption of the premiership following the parliamentary elections of 2001 and retention of that office following polls in 2005, along with the bitter divisions that would by 2006 rend the Thai political and social orders, proved far more than a blip. Understanding that turn of events without reference to two developments of the half-decade following Chuan's succession to the premiership is impossible. Each of these developments bears directly on how history must view Anand.

The first development was the drafting and promulgation of Thailand's “reformist” 1997 constitution.[25] In a clear reflection of the stature that Anand's premierships had secured him among elements of the Thai political order favoring “reform,” he served as chairman of the twenty-five-member committee that actually wrote the new charter on behalf of a larger Consti-

tution Drafting Assembly. In describing this service, Faulder casts the former prime minister in the role of mere “facilitator” (p. 378). He assigns to Anand neither credit nor responsibility for the constitution's staggeringly impractical, and ultimately failed, attempt to divorce elections to the senate from party politics.[26] He is similarly silent on Anand's role in the introduction of constitutional provisions creating such “independent bodies” as the Election Commission or the Constitutional Court, each of which has functioned in the course of the past decade and a half as a tool by means of which conservative interests have constricted Thailand's democratic space.

In fact, Anand's service as chairman of the drafting committee for the 1997 Thai constitution did not prove his only foray into political reformism in the decades following his premierships. In 2005-6, appointed by Prime Minister Thaksin, he chaired a commission tasked with proposing approaches to “reconciliation” in the Malay-Muslim-majority provinces of Thailand's Deep South, the site of intensified violence since early 2004. Faulder valuably calls attention to a third, now almost forgotten, undertaking, too. In June 2010, the Abhisit Vejjajiva government created a National Reform Commission[27] with Anand as its chairman.

The reformist impulses that led to the 1997 constitution resulted from the bloodshed on the streets of Bangkok in May 1992 and from the concern that the crisis of that month pointed to deep flaws in the political order. Similarly, renewed violence in South Thailand stimulated belated awareness in Bangkok of structural problems affecting the region and led to the creation of the commission that Anand chaired, in an effort to address that violence and those problems. In turn, violence and loss of life on the Thai capital's streets in May 2010,[28] along with the widespread belief that grave social and political problems had precipitated that crisis, led to the establishment of both the reform commission that the

Abhisit government appointed and a complementary reform assembly. The pattern is clear. Not least under the influence of former royal physician Prawase Wasi, Thai elites resort to such Hail Mary passes as means of addressing—or, in the end, failing to address—crises too violent or traumatic to ignore. And Anand, whose acquired fondness for American professional football Faulder notes, has served repeatedly as the go-to quarterback.

Anand's 2010-11 commission produced a three-hundred-page report. While Faulder discusses the thinking on the need for administrative devolution that the former premier took to the eight months of semi-weekly meeting that resulted in the report, he neglects to address the report's vision for the country or any resonance between that vision and the project that Anand and his government had pursued during 1991-92. Perhaps this neglect is in some part due to the absence of a translation of the report, which Faulder notes; he does not seem to have brought literacy in Thai to his work on this book. Clearly, however, the National Reform Commission report merits more attention from scholars of Thailand than it has received, as an important index of elite political thought. In that regard, Faulder's reminder of Anand's role in the drafting of that report is gratifying.

A second development of the 1992-97 years was none other than the continued wildfire growth of the Thai economy; future efforts to put Anand's premiership into historical perspective must also address the nature and consequences of that development. Initially, continued growth appeared to confirm the success of Anand's first government in restoring the momentum of Thailand's economic transformation. By mid-1997, however, the capital-market liberalization begun under Anand six years earlier had resulted in Bangkok's becoming ground zero in the devastating and destabilizing Asian Financial Crisis. Reasonably, Faulder argues that the measures that Anand and his cabinet introduced did not make the crisis in-

evitable. The governments of the intervening years, along with the Bank of Thailand, certainly had every opportunity to curb the reckless assumption of often short-term, dollar-denominated debt on the part of private-sector concerns. Faulder is, however, myopic in contending that "liberalisation in 1991 did not create the circumstances for the crash of 1997" (p. 390). In the broadest sense, those circumstances are precisely what economic and financial liberalization, representing an ideological orientation as much as a set of practical measures, did in fact create. Errors in the implementation of and response to liberalization are, in this sense, mere details.

In the years after Anand's departure from the premiership, an economically liberalizing Thailand became both more interesting and more welcoming to large foreign firms. In this changing environment, Anand took on roles recalling those of the compradors of the past. He served, Faulder notes, General Electric (GE) in a range of advisory posts between 1992 and 2006, IBM as a member of its Asia-Pacific Board from 1992 to 2000, Unocal as member of a similar board from 1995 to 2005, and the American International Group (AIG) as a member of its international advisory board from 1993 to 2011. In 1998, as Thailand struggled to recover from the punishing results of the financial crisis and foreign capital moved into sectors that had previously seen relatively little or no participation on the part of non-Thai actors, Anand began a five-year stint as a member of the Asia-Pacific advisory board of the infamous Carlyle Group. During that time, the influential and supremely networked "private equity" colossus appears to have found no investment in Thailand to which it was willing to commit money, however.

V. Putting Thai Inequality and Precarity into Perspective

In the run-up to the elections of March 1992, which would at least formally end the NPKC junta's control of Thailand, media personality Suthichai Yoon hosted a television program featur-

ing the leaders of parties contesting the polls. He asked his guests how they would grade the Anand government. Representing the Solidarity Party[29] was one of post-1945 Thailand's most visionary figures, Boonchu Rojanastien, who had served as Kukrit's finance minister, Prem's early "economic czar," and president of the Bangkok Bank.[30] At this point in the twilight of his political career, Boonchu responded tartly to Suthichai's question by saying that the Anand government deserved full marks, as it had served the NKPC so well.

It was easy at the time to take this comment as mere provocation on the part of a rather ornery old man—so great was the perceived contrast between the outgoing prime minister and his distinguished ministers, on the one hand, and the men with guns who had seized state power the year before, on the other. Careful consideration of Dominic Faulder's authorized biography of Anand Panyarachun suggests, however, that such a judgement would have been rash. Boonchu—in the past both a patron of progressive writers and publications and the driving force behind the reform of rural credit in Thailand—may well have been onto something.

The Anand government and the NPKC shared a common posture toward organized labor. That posture served both metropolitan business and a certain vision of the Thai economy. Faulder repeatedly describes his subject as an "economic liberal" (pp. 208, 272, 382). While his is not a book that engages with ideas, this characterization of its protagonist and the accompanying perspective on Thailand's political economy raise questions that historians inclined toward such engagement will doubtless pursue with profit. How to understand the path toward economic liberalism, or even "neo-liberalism," charted by well-born members of the Thai bureaucratic elite to which the reigns of Chulalongkorn and Vajiravudh gave rise? Neither their choice of that path nor, indeed, the survival of the segment of Thai society that they embodied was, after all, a foregone conclusion.

When and how, then, did members of this segment of society come to identify their interests with that creed? What does that process of identification reveal about that elite's experience of and contact with the wider world? Why did an embrace of political liberalism, let alone egalitarianism, not accompany their embrace of economic liberalism, if that latter really is what members of that elite were embracing?[31]

Faulder's book opens up a second set of important questions, also bearing on the recent social and economic history of Thailand. Since the turn of the present century, alarming economic inequality has figured among the country's most widely recognized or defining characteristics.[32] The work of the geographer Jonathan Rigg has demonstrated that a corollary of this inequality has been the stubborn persistence of millions of—strictly speaking, "inefficient"—agricultural smallholdings. Rooting that persistence in the "precarity of nonfarm work,"[33] Rigg offers an analysis pointing to a crisis in livelihoods, extending far beyond the rural sector. For too many in the Thai workforce, employment in the sectors of the economy that long since supplanted agriculture in importance is both insecure and inadequately compensated. Patterns of labor absorption into those sectors have fostered the emergence of a dual economy in Thailand. What Rigg calls "multisited households,"[34] their members facing choices far more difficult than whether "to turn right or left," have therefore made the rational decision to retain their ties to the land. They retain those ties even while working for concerns that are today's successors to the Saha-Unions of the 1980s and 1990s. Insecurity in the contemporary Thai economy is not merely a function of its large and widely noted informal sector. Rather, it also reflects the importance of "informal-like working practices in the formal sector." [35]

A recent World Bank study suggested that, even before the coronavirus pandemic, precarity had come to accompany inequality as a character-

istic of the lives of many in the Thai workforce. [36] The study avoided the use of the former term in its analysis of poverty. However, while treading carefully in making its point, it noted the need to make the Thai labor market function in a more equitable manner.[37] Rigg shares this conclusion, though he does not eschew mention of precarity. Rather, he contends, “To understand the nature and roots of precarity, we need to look at processes of industrialization; labor market regulation; and even more broadly, globalization.”[38]

Understanding the “globalization” of the Thai economy requires attention to that economy’s addiction to cheap labor, and course to its “liberalization.” Similarly, understanding the country’s labor markets requires attention to the repression of its unions, and beyond that to the nowise predestined absence of what the gifted political economy scholar Bank Ngamarunchot terms “developmental labor” from post-1960 Thai growth story.[39] Just as the “liberalizing” policies of Anand’s premiership did not make the collapse of the Thai financial sector in 1997 inevitable, neither can one argue that those same policies and the repression of labor in the era of Anand’s sponsor-*cum*-partner the NPKC in themselves account for Thailand’s current inequality and precarity. But surely the developments of that era are part of the story.[40]

Referring to Anand’s view of and approach to organized labor, the late Kraisak Choonhavan remarked to Faulder, “I don’t think this will even figure in history” (p. 204). One hopes that students of Thailand’s economic and social history will prove Prime Minister Chatchai’s son and sometime advisor wrong. How best to understand, those students must ask, Anand’s 1991-92 premiership in the longer history of Thai labor relations? What ideological and material orientations informed the Anand government’s approach to unions and workers? Why does resistance to its approach seem to have been ineffective? To what degree did the labor policies and the achievements of the Anand government influence the regulation of

labor markets that is now in such pressing need for reform? And, finally, what was the long-run impact of that government in producing the fundamental and dispiriting social and economic distortions to which Jonathan Rigg’s work calls attention?

VI. Din Daeng-Huai Khwang and the Possibility of a Liberal Political Order

Among the parties to contest Thailand’s March 2019 parliamentary elections, the first after a May 2014 coup put yet another junta in power in Bangkok, was the newly established Future Forward Party.[41] Electrifying a certain segment of the Thai electorate with its strident criticism of both the political role of the military and the economic power of large business concerns, the new party’s platform demonstrated an unabashed and refreshing politically liberal orientation. In its maiden outing at the polls, Future Forward won the third-largest number of seats in the lower house of parliament and joined the opposition to a government whose core party, Phalang Pracharat, [42] not only served as the outgoing junta’s electoral vehicle but also enjoyed the financial support of Thailand most powerful business concerns.[43]

Thailand’s Constitutional Court dissolved the Future Forward Party in February 2020. In the elections of the year before, its candidate in the historically working-class Bangkok district of Din Daeng-Huai Khwang was Adison Pho-an, Thanong’s Pho-an’s son.[44]

Notes

[1]. That is, ทนง โปธิ์อ่าน, which Faulder renders as “Tanong Po-arn,” 283.

[2]. That is, สภาองค์การลูกจ้างสภาแรงงานแห่งประเทศไทย.

[3]. That is, คณะรักษาความสงบเรียบร้อยแห่งชาติ.

[4]. See Wasana Lamdee, “ทนง โปรีอ่าน ผู้นำแรงงานผู้ท้าทายเผด็จการ” [Thanong Pho-an, the labor leader who challenged dictatorship], *นักสื่อสารแรงงาน*, June 19, 2016, <https://voicelabour.org/ทนง-โปรีอ่าน-ผู้นำแรงงาน/>; Progressive Movement, “29 ปี บังคับสูญหาย ‘ทนง โปรีอ่าน’” [29 years since the forced disappearance of Thanong Pho-an], คณะก้าวหน้า Facebook page, June 18, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/ThailandProgressiveMovement/posts/200547178248219/>; Thawip Kanchanawong, “ย้อนอดีต 25 ปี ทนง โปรีอ่าน นักต่อสู้เพื่อสิทธิแรงงาน” [Looking back 25 years, Thanong Pho-an, fighter for labor rights], *มูลนิธิอารมณพงศ์พงษ์*, July 20, 2016, <https://aromfoundation.org/2016/ย้อนอดีต-25-ปี-ทนง-โปรีอ่าน/>; and Yiamyut Sutthichaya, “อดีต โปรีอ่าน: จากลูกผู้นำแรงงานถูกอุ้มหายยุค ‘บิ๊กจ๊อด’ ถึงฝันในสนามการเมือง” [Adison Pho-an: from son of labor leader disappeared in the time of ‘Big George’ to dreams on the field of politics], *ประชาไท*, March 13, 2019, <https://prachatai.com/journal/2019/03/81483>. A book-length treatment of Thanong and his case is Bandit Thanachaisethawut, ed., *ทนงโปรีอ่าน 10 ปีแห่งการสูญหาย* [Thanong Pho-an: 10 years since his disappearance] (Bangkok: Arom Phongpha-ngan Foundation, 2001).

[5]. For a recent discussion of the newest such “junta party” to emerge in Thailand, see Paul Chambers, “Thailand’s Elected Junta: The Pluralistic Poverty of *Phalang Pracharat*,” *ISEAS Perspective* 2021/29, March 12, 2021, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/ISEAS-Perspective-2021-29.pdf>.

[6]. See David K. Wyatt, “Family Politics in Nineteenth Century Thailand,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 9, no. 2 (September 1968): 208-28; and Edward Van Roy, “Bangkok’s Bunnag Lineage from Feudalism to Constitutionalism: Unraveling a Genealogical Gordian Knot,” *Journal of the Siam Society* 108, no. 2 (2020): 17-46.

[7]. In an early example of the numerous errors in his book, Faulder (p. 2) dates King Vajiravudh’s bestowal of the Panyarachun surname to 1911, two years before the Surname Act of 1913. In fact the king bestowed the name in July 1913; อักษรานุกรมนามสกุลพระราชทาน ใน พระบาทสมเด็จพระมงกุฎเกล้าเจ้าอยู่หัว [Directory of royally bestowed surnames in the reign of King Vajiravudh], fourth printing (Bangkok: King Vajiravudh Memorial Foundation, 1992), 153. Other errors in the volume include rendering Si Phraya Road (ถนนสี่พระยา) as “Sri Phraya Road” (p. 15); glossing *kamnan* (กำนัน) as “village headman” (pp. 61, 309); mischaracterizing the import of the United States 1973 War Powers Act (p. 115); referring to Dr. James Schlesinger as secretary of state, a position that he never held (p. 116); and labeling OPEC the “Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries” (p. 121). Further, Faulder is not incorrect to allude to the support that the “Young Turks” faction of the Thai military offered for General Kriangsak Chomanand’s appointment as premier in 1977. But his failure to note that the faction was also instrumental in ousting Kriangsak from the post and replacing him with General Prem Tinsulanonda three years later risks creating a grave misunderstanding of the latter officer’s accession to the premiership (p. 196). Likewise, Chin Sophonpanich was not “the founder” of the Bangkok Bank (p. 202); the common way to refer to Triam Udom Sueksa School (โรงเรียนเตรียมอุดมศึกษา) is “Triam Udom” rather than “Tri Udom” (p. 220); NAFTA is the acronym for “North American Free Trade Agreement,” not “North American Free Trade Area” (p. 268); Thai government departments have directors-general and not directors (p. 277); the current Indian prime minister is called Narendra Modi and not Rajendra Modi (p. 297); there is no such position in Washington as “undersecretary of state of the treasury” (p. 391); and the august American institution that Faulder identifies as the “Council for Foreign Rela-

tions” is in fact the Council on Foreign Relations (p. 496).

[8]. See Waruni Osottharom, “การศึกษาในสังคมไทย พ.ศ. 2411-2475 [Education in Thai society, 1868-1932]” (MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1980); Hans-Dieter Evers, *Higher Civil Servants in Thailand: Social Mobility, Overseas Education, and Attitudes towards Their Own Cultural Tradition* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Arnold-Bergstraesser-Institut für Kulturwissenschaftliche Forschung, 1964); Hans-Dieter Evers, “The Formation of a Social Class Structure: Urbanization, Bureaucratization and Social Mobility in Thailand,” *American Sociological Review* 31, no. 4 (August 1966): 480-88; and Fred W. Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966).

[9]. ที่ระลึกในงานพระราชทานเพลิงศพพระยาปรีชาอนุศาสน์ (เสริญ ปันยานชุน) [Cremation volume for Sern Panyarachun] (Bangkok: Thinwo Printing House, 1974), 8-9.

[10]. Khittasanga (ชิตตะสังคะ); see อักษรานุกรมนามสกุลพระราชทาน, 29.

[11]. For an exhaustive, if rather tendentious and perhaps mistargeted, study of Anand’s embeddedness in this segment of Thai society, see Yoshinori Nishizaki, “Birds of a feather: Anand Panyarachun, elite families and network monarchy in Thailand,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 51, nos. 1-2 (June 2020): 197–242. Nishizaki contends that ties of marriage and family—and resultant loyalties and patterns of self-interest—accounted not only for such accommodation as Sern displayed but also for bureaucratic elites’ “deliberately” leaving what could have been a “true revolution” in 1932 “unfinished”; Nishizaki, “Birds of a feather,” 5-6. This speculative argument, with its inordinate emphasis on family ties

and unsupported attribution of motivation, is unhelpful in its reductionism and in shifting focus from such factors as the evolution of Siam’s bureaucratic state in the first third of the twentieth century and the substantive politics of the period following June 24, 1932.

[12]. See Michael J. Montesano, “No Place for Old Vision in New Thai Era,” *Straits Times*, July 10, 2010.

[13]. อักษรานุกรมนามสกุลพระราชทาน, 302.

[14]. On the origins and rise of the Thai technocracy, see Laurence D. Stifel, “Technocrats and Modernization in Thailand,” *Asian Survey* 16, no. 12 (December 1976): 1184-96.

[15]. For Snoh’s memoirs, see Snoh Unakul, *อัตชีวประวัติและงานของเสนาะอนุสกุล* [Autobiography and work of Snoh Unakul] (Bangkok: Thailand Development Research Institute, 2009), available in English as *Life and Work of Snoh Unakul*, trans. Bhanupol Horayangura (Bangkok: Thailand Development Research Institute, 2013), https://tdri.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Prof.Sanoh_1-final.pdf.

[16]. That is, *khon di* (คนดี).

[17]. That is, *phu di* (ผู้ดี).

[18]. On the notion of the *phu di* and its significance, see Patrick Jory, *A History of Manners and Civility in Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[19]. For insight into members of this segment of Thai society whose members identified with “good people,” into their fortunes since the era of

the Prem and Anand premierships, and into their sociopolitical thought, see Thorn Pitidol and Chan-on Techasunthornwat, “The Rise of the Thai Upper Middle Class and Its Turn against Democracy,” in *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand*, ed. Michael J. Montesano, Terence Chong, and Mark Heng (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2019), 25-57.

[20]. See Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Scribner, 1954 [1926]), 250.

[21]. Today, of course, the hinterlands on which Bangkok draws for manpower include not just the Thai provinces but also Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and even Vietnam and—in some sectors—the Philippines.

[22]. See Gregg Huff, “Growth and Development in Southeast Asia since 1870,” in *The New Cambridge Economic History of the Modern World*, ed. Stephen Broadberry and Kyoji Fukao (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 176-212. On generalizing the vent-for-surplus model beyond land and primary exports to include labor and the export of industrial goods, see Gustav Ranis, “Comment” on Hla Myint, “Neoclassical Development Analysis: Its Strengths and Limitations,” in *Pioneers in Development, Second Series*, ed. Gerald M. Meier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 144-50, 146. I thank Professor Huff for calling my former teacher Ranis’s observation to my attention.

[23]. On that latter period, see David Morell, “Power and Parliament in Thailand: The Futile Challenge, 1968–1971” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1974).

[24]. For an influential theory on elite management of this political order, see Duncan Mc-

Cargo, “Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand,” *Pacific Review* 18, no. 4 (January 2006): 499-519. Uncharacteristically—in a book that largely unfolds with no reference to serious scholarship on Thailand—but also revealingly, Faulder offers a sputtering and uncomprehending critique of McCargo’s argument. He also cites Anand’s nativist dismissiveness toward that argument (pp. 488-89).

[25]. On the reformism of the era, see Duncan McCargo, “Alternative Meanings of Political Reform in Contemporary Thailand,” *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 13 (1998): 5-30, and also Duncan McCargo, ed., *Reforming Thai Politics* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2002).

[26]. For an important and innovative examination of the path followed by Thailand’s elected senate since 1997, see Yoshinori Nishizaki, “Ironic political reforms: elected senators, party-list MPs, and family rule in Thailand,” *Critical Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (June 2019): 210-31.

[27]. That is, คณะกรรมการปฏิรูปประเทศ.

[28]. See Michael J. Montesano, Pavin Chachavalpongpun, and Aekapol Chongvilaivan, eds., *Bangkok May 2010: Perspectives on a Divided Thailand* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012).

[29]. That is, พรรคเอกภาพ.

[30]. For a brief biography in English, see Michael J. Montesano, “Bunchu Rotchanasathian,” in *Southeast Asian Personalities of Chinese Descent: A Biographical Dictionary, Volume 1*, ed. Leo Suryadinata (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2012), 45-48.

[31]. Recent years have in fact seen increasing interest in political liberalism and its history among students of Thailand, and of Southeast Asia more generally. See, for example, Tomas Larsson, “In Search of Liberalism: Ideological Traditions, Translations and Troubles in Thailand,” *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 32, no. 3 (2017): 531-61; Michael K. Connors, “Towards a History of Conservative Liberalism after the 1932 Siamese Revolution: An Ideological Analysis,” *Asian Studies Review* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2021.1973366>; and Lisandro E. Claudio, *Liberalism and the Postcolony: Thinking the State in 20th-Century Philippines* (Singapore and Loyola Heights, Quezon City: NUS Press and Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2017).

[32]. See Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Unequal Thailand: Aspects of Income, Wealth and Power* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016).

[33]. Jonathan Rigg, *More Than Rural: Textures of Thailand’s Agrarian Transformation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2019), 216.

[34]. *Ibid.*, 60.

[35]. *Ibid.*, 187; italics in original.

[36]. See Michael J. Montesano, “Thailand: Time to Acknowledge Precarity?,” *ISEAS Perspective* 119/2020, October 19, 2020, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS-Perspective-2020-119.pdf>. The World Bank report is Wang Shiyao, Birgit Hansl, Peter Kjaer Milne, Salman Zaidi, and Judy Yang, *Taking the Pulse of Poverty and Inequality in Thailand* (Washington: World Bank Group, 2020), <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/614661586924075867/pdf/Taking-the-Pulse-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-Thailand.pdf>.

[37]. Wang et al., *Taking the Pulse*, 64.

[38]. Rigg, *More Than Rural*, 190.

[39]. On the concept, see Bank Ngamarunchot, “Developmental Labor: The Transformative Roles of Labor in Economic Catch-Up” (PhD diss., National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies [GRIPS], Tokyo, 2021).

[40]. Thorn’s and Chanon’s “The Rise of the Thai Upper Middle Class” treats this story’s winners rigorously and vividly.

[41]. That is, พรรคอนาคตใหม่. On the party’s short life, see Duncan McCargo and Anyarat Chattharakul, *Future Forward: The Rise and Fall of a Thai Political Party* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2020).

[42]. That is, พรรคพลังประชารัฐ.

[43]. Shawn W. Crispin, “Thailand’s ‘five families’ prop and imperil Prayut,” *Asia Times*, December 13, 2019, asiatimes.com/2019/12/thailands-five-families-prop-and-imperil-prayut/.

[44]. Yiamyut, “อดีตร โพลีอ่าน.” In an exceedingly close race, contested by no fewer than 33 candidates, Adison finished third with 25,484 votes, trailing the Phuea Thai Party candidate’s 27,897 votes and the Phalang Pracharat Party candidate’s 27,667. The fourth-place Democrat Party candidate won 18,711 votes; Election Commission of Thailand, “รายชื่อผู้สมัครรับเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. แบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง ที่ได้รับคะแนนสูงสุด รายจังหวัด (อย่างไม่เป็นทางการ)” [List of constituency candidates for parliament according to votes won, by province (unofficial)],” March 28, 2019, https://www.ect.go.th/ewt/ewt/ect_th/download/article/article_20190328165029.pdf.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-asia>

Citation: Michael Montesano. Review of Faulder, Dominic. *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand*. H-Asia, H-Net Reviews. October, 2021.

URL: <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56748>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.