Trade and Industry and second assistant secretary general of the PAP. His rapid rise continued with him become Minister for Health and second Minister for Defense in 1981, becoming Minister of the latter department the following year. The year 1985 saw him culminate his rise when he became Lee Kuan Yew’s heir apparent.

Lee apparently preferred that his successor was Tony Tan but the second generation leaders of the PAP chose Goh at an informal meeting at a private home, with Tan supporting the choice of Goh. In terms of Goh’s achievements in office, the book points to his founding of the highly successful medical care facilities funding agency in Singapore, the Medisave scheme. Other activities included locking up so-called Communists in 1987 and the expulsion of a US diplomat in the following year for interfering in the local election process. For this he received the praise of the Prime Minister who, however, in the same year criticised Goh in his national day address, stating that Goh tried to please too many people while Tan had a more decisive mind. This public criticism obviously wounded Goh but he said nothing about it until in this volume. Tall Order contains at the end of each chapter extracts from the question and answer sessions which Goh had with the author and his associates at The Straits Times.

These provide an insight into how the book came to be written. It is very much Goh’s story of his life and times. He does not give much away as to his real feelings and understanding other than as the leader of the second generation. He has remained aloof from comments about his relationship with his predecessor up to now and while the volume provides some insights, much remains unclear about how and why Goh became Singapore’s second prime minister.

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Dominic Faulder. Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand, Editions Didier Millet, Singapore, 2018. pp. viii + 556. Notes. Illust. Index. Hb $37.50. ISBN 9 7898 1438 5275

This is the splendid, but weighty, authorised biography of Anand Panyarachun, one of Thailand’s most influential figures (and incidentally one of four Oxbridge-educated prime ministers of that country since World War
II). It is often said that the reason why there is so little about Thailand in the British press is because any article would need an explanatory introduction longer than the space allocated for the whole article. That is perhaps why Faulder has wisely set Anand’s life in the context of “the making of modern Thailand”, for that gives him the space to provide the necessary background to explain how the termination of a stellar career in the Thai Diplomatic Service led nonetheless to an equally prominent life as a private citizen, not to mention two appointments as Prime Minister.

The book is based on numerous interviews with those who were present at key moments in Anand’s life. The result is a wealth of detailed facts and opinions. No-one who read the work carefully would need much additional information on the lengthy period it covers, but some of the earlier events occurred a long time ago, and thus may be of rather less concern to those who were not there. Perhaps the more interesting material in the book concerns the economics (and the politics) of the period of Thailand’s rapid growth in the 1980s and early 1990s, which included Anand’s two premierships. Then came the Asian financial crisis, the drafting of a new constitution and the rise and fall of Thaksin. By contrast, the last part of the book is more concerned with the challenges facing modern-day Thailand, the importance of Civil Society and the basic principles which need to be followed by any democratic society.

Anand was born the 11th (of 12) into a family which, though not royal, was comfortably middle class and related to many prominent Thais. More than half his time in education was spent in Britain, first at Dulwich and then at Cambridge. This long period abroad made a lasting impression on him and of course gave him first-class English as well. He entered the traditionally conservative Thai Foreign Service in late 1955. But when Thanat Khoman became Foreign Minister (1959–1971), the young Anand was picked to be his first private secretary. As such, from 1959 to 1964 he was closely involved in the diplomatic negotiations with the Americans as they became increasingly involved in Vietnam and the region more generally. (“Diplomatic” because a significant element in the emerging bilateral relationship with the Americans was conducted by the Thai military.)

The next step in Anand’s by-now flourishing career was a long stint in North America from 1964 to 1975, firstly to the UN, then concurrently as Ambassador to Canada and finally as Ambassador to the USA. This gave him a very different view of Thailand’s ranking in the world. But it also meant that he had a ring-side seat for the increasingly hostile US
domestic reaction to the Vietnam War. He was also the channel used by the Thai Government to promote relations with China after Nixon’s historic trip to Beijing.

In 1975, still only 43, he was recalled to Bangkok to be Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), at a time of great change in the geopolitical situation. The Vietnam War had ended and re-establishing a balance with China was a top priority. The then Thai Prime Minister, MR Kukrit Pramoj, was keen to effect these major adjustments, so too was Anand, who considered that the previous close relationship with the USA based on the needs of the Vietnam War was no longer appropriate. He wanted a more formal country to country relationship, essentially conducted through the MFA. That was not how the Thai military saw things and after the counter-coup of 1976 they suggested that the actions of Anand at the MFA showed that he was a crypto Communist. He was suspended and investigated. In the end these suggestions were found to be baseless and Anand went on to be the Thai ambassador to Germany. But this unhappy affair was followed by his decision to leave the civil service.

He was quickly recruited into Saha Union, already a major Thai conglomerate focused on textiles. But Anand admits that he knew little about business and Faulder notes “at no time in his 24 year career with Saha Union would Anand ever be involved in operations.” His value lay in his contacts in China, ASEAN and the rest. During the 1980s he also broadened his contacts within Thailand, becoming chairman of a number of organisations, most importantly the Thai Development Research Institute (TDRI), which then functioned as a sort of think tank to the Prem governments.

But in a sense his moments of glory came after the coup against Chatchai, and again after the events of 1992, when Anand was twice installed as Prime Minister. As Faulder shows, his appointment was not inevitable, though it might seem that way now. His administrations admirably accomplished a huge amount in a comparatively short period, but his governments, packed with competent ministers, were deliberately time-limited. The elected politicians knew that their day would come again. It did, and the 1997 Asian Financial crisis followed.

In that era, Anand played a key role in the drafting of a new constitution. But one of the results of that constitution was not the desired strong Western-style government, but Thaksin, whose view was that victory
in elections gave him the right to ride rough-shod over any restrictions put forward by those who were “not-elected”. His management style increasingly grated with Anand/ TDRI who were seen as the opposition and ignored.

Paradoxically, although his periods in office stand out as the best examples in Thailand of good and honest administration, there was never any chance that Anand would manage to be an elected Prime Minister with a political party behind him. For while there is no denying his huge appeal to educated Thai, and indeed to foreigners, and while he stands out as the proponent of Civil Society, he should rather be seen as the epitome of a Western-educated technocrat, not as a Thai politician.

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