

**Reinventing Thailand**  
Thaksin and His Foreign Policy



Pavin Chachavalpongpun

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**Keywords**

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**Highlights**

- insightful analysis of Thai foreign policy, which up until now has remained largely unstudied
- written by a former Thai diplomat who provides an “insider’s look” into Thai diplomacy under the controversial Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra
- deftly illustrates Thaksin’s attempt to use traditional “bamboo diplomacy” to bend foreign policy initiatives in favor of business and his own personal ambitions, thus blurring the line between national and private interests

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# Reinventing Thailand

## Thaksin and His Foreign Policy

Pavin Chachavalpongpun

**About the Author**

PAVIN CHACHAVALPONGPUN, a former Thai diplomat, is currently a Fellow in the Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme (RSPS) and Lead Researcher for Political and Strategic Affairs at the ASEAN Studies Centre, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore. Pavin received his PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London in 2002. He is the author of *A Plastic Nation: The Curse of Thainess in Thai-Burmese Relations* (2005).

**What others are saying**

This is a fascinating book. There’s not a dull moment. The author used inside information to write a perceptive study of Thailand’s foreign policy from 2001 up to the present day. On the whole, successfully avoiding theories of international relations, this study is nevertheless not exactly traditional. Its hard look at national and personal ambitions in the global and regional context is more than controversial at times. It is rich in details but never loses sight of the overall picture. This is a valuable instant record of an extremely polarized period of Thai history through an original perspective of the conduct of foreign affairs.

**Tej Bunnag**, *Former Foreign Minister of Thailand*

This book on contemporary Thai foreign policy plugs a gaping hole in Thai studies and its overwhelming focus on politics and political economy. Pavin provides context and takes stock of Thai foreign affairs under Thaksin Shinawatra in an unprecedented fashion in breadth and depth. He deftly locates Thailand’s foreign policy initiatives, implications and consequences in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in the context of overall foreign relations, synthesizing much that transpired under Thaksin with the country’s previous foreign policy inclinations and practices with due regard to relevant theoretical underpinnings. His is an informed and valuable tale of Thailand’s dealings with the outside world throughout and after the Thaksin era that reveals some of the roots of Thailand’s ongoing political catharsis.

**Thitinan Pongsudhirak**, *Chulalongkorn University, Thailand*

For a middle power with a centuries-old diplomatic tradition and a strategic location in mainland Southeast Asia, Thailand’s foreign policy has not attracted the analytical attention it warrants. This work covers the tumultuous years of rule by Thaksin Shinawatra and his immediate successors. Written engagingly by an author who is an academic and a one-time practitioner, it deftly balances the domestic and international influences on policy making. It makes an invaluable contribution to the field.

**John Funston**, *The Australian National University*

*Reinventing Thailand* successfully exposes the confusion that doomed Thaksin Shinawatra’s effort to develop a much-needed post-Cold War foreign policy for his country. His approach to international relations in an era of globalization confused vision with gimmickry, ambition with crudeness, dynamism with greed, national with personal interests, international with domestic politics, dreams of leading international organizations with contempt for those organizations, and the timely democratization of the Thai foreign ministry with its cancerous politicization. Thailand and Southeast Asia continue to live with the consequences of what this stimulating, thoughtful book judges Thaksin’s “botched” foreign policy.

**Michael J. Montesano**, *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*

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