



An Overview of Politics and Government in Thailand

Thailand's government structure has undergone gradual evolution in response to the changing environment. Despite the preservation of the kingdom's monarchical system, established over 700 years ago, Thailand have become one of Asia's strongest democracies in a relatively short period of time. It has a check-and-balance system similar to that of any Western democracy, with a Prime Minister as the head of government.

From Absolute Monarchy to Parliamentary Democracy

The first Thai state, the Kingdom of Sukhothai (1257-1378), adopted a paternalistic form of government. The King, while enjoying absolute power, personally paid close attention to his subjects' well-being. However, Sukhothai was a fragmented city-state and the lack of a centralised government led to its fall in the late 1300's. Its decline coincided with the rise of the increasingly powerful Ayutthaya Kingdom to the South. During the Ayutthaya period, the power of the monarch rose, as Ayutthaya inherited a Khmer system of government based upon the Hindu concept of divine kingship. Under the reign of King Borommatrailokkanat (1448-1488), Ayutthaya's political administration underwent a major reform. The sakdina, a feudal system which allowed almost everyone in the kingdom to hold land based on their rank, satisfying both nobles and commoners, and lasted until the 19th century. Moreover, the civil and military

administrations were separated and the government was centralised, making Ayutthaya one of Southeast Asia's strongest and richest empires for three centuries.

The capital was moved to Bangkok in 1782, marking the beginning of the Rattanakosin period, which saw the continuation of the Ayutthaya system of government. Thus, for over three centuries, Thailand's political administration was by and large carried out without drastic reform.

Nevertheless, by mid 1800's, the threat of imperialism became a major issue. King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), seeing the need for political reform, decentralised the government. He carried out a major reorganisation of the central and local administrations, which formed the basis of the present system. The central government was further divided into a number of departments and the local administration was led by an appointed governor of each province. His administrative reform and rapid modernisation proved successful both in maintaining the country's independence through the turbulent years of colonial threat and in providing a foundation for a modern system of government.

King Chulalongkorn's successors, King Vajiravudh and King Prajadhipok, had a great interest in parliamentary democracy. However, some intellectuals, educated abroad, called for an immediate democratic transition. On 24 June 1932, they staged a bloodless coup, demanding an establishment of a constitutional monarchy. To avoid bloodshed, King Prajadhipok agreed to the abolition of absolute monarchy for the sake of his people, transferring power to a constitution-based system of government. On 10 December 1932, Thailand's first constitution was signed.



King Prajadhipok signs The Constitution of the Siam Kingdom 1932 on December 10, 1932

The **politics of Thailand** are currently conducted within the framework of a constitutional democratic monarchy, whereby the Prime Minister is the head of government and a hereditary monarch is head of state. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislative branches.

Thai kingdoms and late Kingdom of Siam were under the absolute rule of the kings. However, after the 'democratic revolution' in 1932, the country officially became under a constitutional democratic monarchy with a prime minister as the head of government. The first written constitution was issued. Since then Thailand has had seventeen charters and constitutions, reflecting the high degree of political instability and frequency of military coups faced by the nation. After successful coups, military regimes abrogated existing constitutions and promulgated interim ones.

The Thai Check-and-Balance System

The monarch is the head of the armed forces and the upholder of every religion. Every constitution provides that the monarch is sacred and inviolable. His sovereign power emanates from the people, and as head of state, he exercises his legislative power through parliament, executive power through the cabinet, and judicial power through the courts. The monarch is empowered with the right to be consulted, the right to encourage and the right to warn the government when it appears not to administer the state affairs for the good of the people.

Thailand's legislative branch is bicameral. The 500 members of the House of Representatives (MPs) are elected popularly. Four hundred are district MPs, directly elected in each constituency and each representing approximately 150,000 people. The remaining hundred are party-list MPs, who are elected indirectly by the percentage of vote the party receives.

Originally, members of the Senate (the Upper House) were appointed by the King on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. But, under the 1997 promulgated Constitution, Thailand's senators were directly elected for the first time on 2 March 2000, although the

Constitution requires all senatorial candidates to be an independent with no party affiliations. Any Thai citizens over 18 years of age are eligible to vote in the election of both houses.

The executive branch is headed the Prime Minister, who, since the amendment of the 1992 constitution, must be an MP. The cabinet is responsible for the administration of fourteen ministries, and the Office of the Prime Minister. Each ministry is headed by a politically appointed minister, and in most cases, at least one deputy minister. The Prime Minister is assisted by Deputy Prime Ministers as well as a number of ministers holding the portfolio of "Minister to the Prime Minister's Office." The constitution of 1997 limits the number of cabinet members to 36.

The Government

Smaller cabinet committees have been set up to help screen proposals from the various ministries before submission to the full cabinet. This process enables the government to ensure that no incompatible policies are made. The committees may also be assigned by the Prime Minister to thoroughly examine the merits of each project or policy for the cabinet so that the latter will not have to go into such details before deciding on proposals, thus streamlining its work.

The Office of the Prime Minister is a central body, which in itself ranks as a ministry, whose responsibility is largely concerned with formulating national policy. Some of its primary subdivisions are the Budget Bureau, the National Security Council, the Juridical Council, the National Economic and Social Development Board, the Board of Investment, the Civil Service Commission and several other organisations vital to the formulation of national policy.

The fourteen ministries are divided on a functional basis. After the financial crisis, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives have assumed an increasingly important role in the Thai Government. At the same time, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice are in charge of maintaining peace and security in the country. In addition, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of University Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Transport and Communications are concerned with improving infrastructure and

human capital in Thailand. Finally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, equivalent to the US Department of State, is responsible for strengthening relations between Thailand and the outside world.

The head of career civil servants in each ministry is the Permanent Secretary, who has administrative control over all the departments of the ministry, each of which is headed by a director-general, also a career civil servant.

Thailand and Democracy after 1932

Thailand had been a kingdom under absolute monarchy for over seven centuries before 1932.

At the beginning of the colonial era, western powers pressured the country to evolve along republican, parliamentary and revolutionary lines having their roots in French revolution and the fall of the Russian tsar. Despite the efforts of several kings, Thailand had insufficient time to educate its population in preparation for western political, industrial and economic changes, albeit female vote was granted since the first general election.

Since becoming a constitutional democratic monarchy in 1932, despite of the western-style democratic structure, for most of the time, the country has been ruled by military governments. Political freedom, freedom of speech and basic human rights were strongly compromised in the first three quarters of the twentieth century.

Due to the pressure from outside situation, The Vietnam War, the politics of the kingdom became even more tensed. The military government with support of the US step up its control over the country's politics while the intellectuals and socialist students strongly opposed the junta.

Student-led uprisings in October 1973 led to a new vision of liberating the country from military government. The media received more freedom to criticize politicians and governments, while revolutionary and socialist movements became more apparent. However, right-wing military and conservative politicians like Samak Sundaravej reversed the reforms in a massacre.

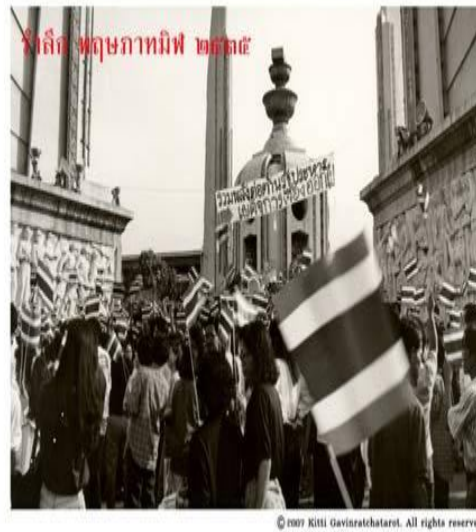
At the end of the Indochina War, investment by foreign businesses helped alleviate poor infrastructure and social problems. The middle classes constituted only ten per cent of the sixty

million population; they enjoyed wealth and increasing freedom, leaving the majority poor in the rural areas and slums. Society had become more materialistic.

Corruption and bribery in all sectors have been on the rise. Most politicians were elected because of vote-buying and achieved a return on their investments by selling themselves to pass biased resolutions or corrupt budget bills. To win an election, an MP would pay around five hundred baht (10-20 USD) per person, totaling 10 to 30 million baht for a single election.

The system of rule fluctuated between unstable civilian governments and interludes of military takeover. During democratic periods, the middle-class in the cities ignored the poor in the rural areas. The media accepted bribes. To corrupt bureaucrats and politicians became well accepted business practice. The military would take over as a measure of ultima ratio.

Every time a coup was staged, some scapegoats or excuses were always found to justify it. Eventually, the ensuing junta government would have return political rights to the people. As a result, there have been 18 coups and resultant 18 constitutions in the history of Thai politics.



The Black May uprising, in 1992, lead to more reform when promulgating the 1997 constitution - "The People's Constitution" - aiming to create checks and balance of powers between strengthened government, separately elected senators and anti-corruption institutes. Administrative courts, Constitutional Courts and election-control committee were established to strengthen the checks and balance of politics.

The 2007 constitution, following Thaksin's ouster, was particularly designed to be tighter in its control of corruptions and conflicts of interests while decreasing the authority of the government.

Politics of Constitutions

All of Thailand's charters and constitutions have recognized an undivided kingdom with the constitutional monarchy, but with widely differing balances of power between the branches of government. Most of them have stipulated parliamentary systems, however, several of them also called for dictatorships, e.g., the 1957 Charter. Both unicameral and bicameral parliaments have been used, and members of parliament have been both elected and appointed. The direct powers of the monarch have also varied considerably.

Thailand's 'popular Constitution', called the "People's Constitution" was successfully promulgated in 1997 after the 1993 Bloody May. Publicly, constitutional devices have often charged as the root of political turmoil. The 1997 Constitution was considered a landmark in terms of the degree of public participation involved in its drafting as well as the democratic nature of its articles. It stipulated a bicameral legislature, both houses of which are elected. Many civil rights were explicitly acknowledged, and measures were established to increase the stability of elected governments.

However, following an army-led coup on 19 September 2006, the 1997 Constitution was abrogated. The junta ruled the country by martial law and executive decree for weeks, until it promulgated an interim constitution on 2006-10-01. The Interim Constitution allowed the junta to appoint a Prime Minister, legislature, and drafting committee for a permanent constitution. Human rights were broadly acknowledged, but media censorship as well as bans against assembly and political activities were not repealed. In 2007 the new constitution was eventually issued, said 'junta-support constitution'.

The King of Thailand has little direct power under the constitution but is a symbol of national identity and unity. King Bhumibol — who has been on the throne since 1946 — commands

enormous popular respect and moral authority, which he has used on occasion to attempt to resolve political crises that have threatened national stability.

The Armed Forces

The King is the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Armed Forces and the cabinet is the instrument through which national security policies are formulated. The Defence Ministry coordinates the administration of the Armed Forces, which are divided into three branches: the Royal Thai Army (RTA), the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) and the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF). Thai soldiers are composed of professional career soldiers and conscripts. Every Thai male between the age twenty-one and twenty-five is subject to two years of military service.

Thailand's fighting forces are governed by the Supreme Command Headquarters, which is staffed by leaders of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Organised into divisions and combat regiments, the Royal Thai Army is divided into four army regions, covering Bangkok and the Central Plains, the Northeast, the North and the South. Thailand's naval fleet, based at Sattahip, southeast of Bangkok, is small but well-trained. It includes the Marine Corps, modelled on the American pattern, which is skilled in both amphibious and jungle operations. The Royal Thai Air Force, on the other hand, has its main base at Don Muang airport in Bangkok and large air fields and facilities in the North and Northeast.

Recent Political Developments

On 6 January 2001, the first general election under the 1997 Constitution--the so-called people's constitution--was held. The Thais, proud of their democracy, participated actively in the election, as represented by the relatively high voter turnout of 69.95 percent. The Thai Rak Thai Party, established in 1999 by Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, police officer turned business tycoon, received a landslide victory, winning a total of 248 seats. On 9 February 2001, Dr. Thaksin was appointed by His Majesty the King as Thailand's 23rd Prime Minister. He leads a coalition government comprised of his Thai Rak Thai Party, the Chart Thai Party and the New Aspiration Party, making it one of Thailand's strongest democratically-elected government ever.

Recent political history



Black May (1992)

Black May (Thai: พฤษภาคมมีฟ้า *phruetsapha thamin*) is a common name for the 17-20 May 1992 popular protest in Bangkok against the government of General Suchinda Kraprayoon and the bloody military crackdown that followed. Up to 200,000 people demonstrated in central Bangkok at the height of the protests. The military crackdown resulted in 52 officially confirmed deaths, many disappearances, hundreds of injuries, and over 3,500 arrests. Many of those arrested were tortured.

On February 23, 1991, Army Commander Suchinda Kraprayoon overthrew the government of Chatichai Choonhavan. The coup-makers, who called themselves the National Peace-Keeping Council (NPKC), appointed Anand Panyarachun as Prime Minister. Anand's interim government promulgated a new constitution and scheduled parliamentary elections for March 22, 1992.

A government coalition with 55% of the lower house was formed, which appointed General Suchinda as Prime Minister. Massive public protests immediately followed. On May 9, Suchinda

responded by saying that he would support a constitutional amendment making individuals who had not been elected to Parliament ineligible for the Premiership. Tensions dissipated.

Popular protests

The truce was short-lived. On May 17, 1992 the two leading government parties announced that, while they supported the constitutional amendment, they also favoured transitional clauses that would permit Suchinda to serve as prime minister for the term of the Parliament. As it became clear that the government parties would not honour their word, plans went ahead for the Sunday 17 May strike

May 17

Obviously concerned about the people's mounting anger, the Interior Minister ordered provincial governors to prevent people from travelling to Bangkok to join the rally.^[2] Suchinda threatened to sack the Governor of Bangkok for allegedly assisting the anti-government rallies of the previous week, while the army hastily arranged a competing "Anti-Drought Musical Festival" to be held at the Army Auditorium.^[3] In addition, radio stations were banned from playing records of several popular singers who had voiced their support for the demonstrators.^[4]

Nevertheless, the rally was the biggest since the downfall of the Thanom regime in 1973. At its peak, 200,000 people filled Sanam Luang, overflowing on to the encircling streets.^{[2][5]} At about 8:30pm, Chamlong Srimuang and Dr. San Hatthirat led the protesters on a 2-kilometre march to Government House, to demand Suchinda's resignation.^[6] As they reached the intersection of Rachadamnoen and Rachadamnoen Nok Avenues, they were halted at Phan Fa Bridge, which had been barricaded with razor wire by the police. At 11:00pm a group of demonstrators attempted to break through the barricade, but were repulsed by water cannon from four fire trucks blocking the way. The protesters then tried to commandeer one of the fire trucks, and were clubbed by riot police armed with batons. Stones and Molotov cocktails were soon flying.^{[2][7]} Chamlong used a loudspeaker to exhort the marchers not to attack the police, but his words were lost in the unrest. In this initial clash, about 100 protesters and 21 police were injured.^[2]

May 18

By midnight two fire engines had been set alight, and things were spiralling out of control. Some 700 troops had been called in and the fighting fanned out from Phan Fa Bridge. At 0:30am Suchinda declared a state of emergency, making gatherings of more than ten people illegal. The government urged people to go home, but already hospitals in the area were receiving the wounded, including four with gunshot wounds who died later that night.^[2] Chamlong remained near Phan Fa Bridge and the nearby Democracy Monument. Around 4:00am, soldiers threatened the nearly 40,000 protesters by firing M16 rifles. An hour and a half later, they began firing again. By the morning, the army moved more troops in, and crowds grew even larger at other sections of the city.

Early on the afternoon of 18 May, Suchinda publicly accused Chamlong of fomenting violence and defended the government's use of force. Shortly later, troops, firing continuously in the air, moved in on the crowd surrounding Chamlong. The troops handcuffed and arrested Chamlong.

The crowds did not disperse, and the violence escalated. After government troops had secured the area around Phan Fa Bridge and the Democracy Monument, protests shifted to Ramkhamhaeng University across the city. By the evening of 19 May, some fifty thousand people had gathered there.

Royal intervention

Early on the morning of 20 May, Princess Sirindhorn addressed the country on television, calling for a stop to the unrest. Her appeal was rebroadcast throughout the day. In the evening, her brother, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, broadcast a similar public appeal. Then at 9:30 pm, a television broadcast of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Suchinda, and Chamlong was shown, in which the King demanded that the two put an end to their confrontation and work together through parliamentary processes. Following the broadcast, Suchinda released Chamlong and announced an amnesty for protesters. He also agreed to support an amendment requiring the prime minister to be elected. Chamlong asked the demonstrators to disperse, which they did. On 24 May 1992, Suchinda resigned as Prime Minister of Thailand.

Transition to Democracy after 1932

Following the 1932 revolution which imposed constitutional limits on the monarchy, Thai politics were dominated for a half century by a military and bureaucratic elite, in collaboration with a dozen or so oligarchs commonly known as *persons of influence*. Changes of government were effected primarily by means of a long series of mostly bloodless coups.

Beginning with a brief experiment in democracy during the mid-1970s, civilian democratic political institutions slowly gained greater authority, culminating in 1988 when Chatichai Choonhavan — leader of the Chart Thai Party (Thai Nation Party) — assumed office as the country's first democratically elected prime minister in more than a decade. Three years later, yet another bloodless coup ended his term.

Shortly afterward, the royally appointed Anand Panyarachun, a businessman and former diplomat, headed a largely civilian interim government and promised to hold elections in the near future. However, following inconclusive elections, former army commander Suchinda Kraprayoon was appointed prime minister. This reacted to the appointment by demanding an end to military influence in government. Demonstrations were violently suppressed by the military; in May 1992. According to eyewitness reports of action near the Democracy Monument in Bangkok, soldiers may have killed seven hundred and fifty protesters after only two days of protests.

Domestic and international reaction to the violence forced Suchinda to resign, and the nation once again turned to Anand Panyarachun, who was appointed interim prime minister until new elections in September 1992. In those elections, political parties that had opposed the military in May 1992 won by a narrow majority, and Chuan Leekpai, a leader of the Democrat Party, became prime minister at the head of a five-party coalition. Following the defection of a coalition partner, Chuan dissolved Parliament in May 1995, and the Chart Thai Party won the largest number of parliamentary seats in the subsequent election. Party leader Banharn Silpa-archa became Prime Minister but held the office for only little more than a year. Following elections held in November 1996, Chavalit Youngchaiyudh formed a coalition government and became Prime Minister. The onset of the Asian financial crisis caused a loss of confidence in the Chavalit government and forced him to hand over power to Chuan Leekpai in November 1997. Chuan formed a coalition government based on the themes of economic crisis management and institution of political

reforms mandated by Thailand's 1997 constitution. It collapsed just days before its term was scheduled to end

2005–2006 Thai political crisis

The **2005–2006 Thai political crisis** was a period in which series of events occurred that ended the political career of Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand. It resulted in the overthrow of the Thai Rak Thai government in the Thailand coup, the exile of Thaksin, the ascension to power of the Council for National Security led by Sonthi Boonratkalin, and the establishment of the junta government led by Surayud Chulanont, a favorite of privy councillor and senior statesman Prem Tinsulanonda.

The crisis and resulting coup and post-coup military government called into question issues of media freedom, the role of the constitution in breaking a political deadlock, and the existence of political stability in Thailand. It also reflected long-term and significant disparity between urban and rural political orientation and abuses of power and conflict of interest of a democratically elected leader that have long plagued the Thai political landscape. These issues contributed to the crisis and culminated in the coup d'état of September 2006.

Sondhi Limthongkul, a media mogul who had previously been a staunch supporter of Thaksin, played a major role in the crisis through the establishment of the anti-Thaksin People's Alliance for Democracy. The PAD aligned itself with several state-enterprise unions (who were against Thaksin's privatization plans for state enterprises), supporters of the controversial monk Luang Ta Maha Bua (who opposed the Thaksin government's appointment of Somdet Phra Buddhacharya as acting Supreme Patriarch in place of the critically ill Somdet Phra Yanasangworn), prominent socialites and members of the Thai royal family (who claimed that Thaksin frequently insulted King Bhumibol Adulyadej), various factions in the Thai military (who claimed that Thaksin promoted only those who were loyal to him), and various civic groups (who criticized Thaksin for not paying taxes during the sale of Shin Corporation to Temasek Holdings, although the capital

gains from the transaction were legally exempt from taxation). The movement was highly controversial.

Secret planning for the coup that later overthrew the elected government started in approximately February 2006. That same month, Thaksin dissolved Parliament and called a general legislative election for the House of Representatives in April 2006. Most major opposition parties boycotted the election. After the elections, King Bhumibol requested that the courts resolve the crisis. Soon afterwards, the Constitutional Court invalidated the elections based on the positioning of voting booths, and the Criminal Court later jailed members of the Election Commission that did not obey the Court's request to resign. New elections were scheduled for 15 October 2006. This time, the Opposition announced it was contesting the election, and numerous newly founded parties actively campaigned. The election was cancelled after a military coup on 19 September 2006, while Thaksin was in New York to attend a United Nations summit. Thaksin has since been in exile. The PAD dissolved itself 2 days after the coup after announcing that their goal had been accomplished, but since then (February 2008) has vowed to resume protests should pro-Thaksin practices and policies of the Samak government become evident.

2006 Thai coup d'état

The **2006 Thailand coup d'état** took place on Tuesday 19 September 2006, when the Royal Thai Army staged a coup d'état against the elected government of caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The coup d'état, which was Thailand's first non-constitutional change of government in fifteen years, followed a year-long political crisis involving Thaksin, his allies and political opponents and occurred less than a month before nation-wide House elections were originally scheduled to be held. It has been widely reported in Thailand and elsewhere that General Prem Tinsulanonda, Chairman of the Privy Council was the mastermind of the Coup. The military cancelled the upcoming elections, abrogated the Constitution, dissolved Parliament, banned protests and all political activities, suppressed and censored the media, declared martial law, and arrested Cabinet members.

The new rulers, led by general Sonthi Boonyaratglin and organised in a Council for Democratic Reform (CDR), issued a pronunciamiento on 21 September setting out their reasons for taking power and giving a commitment to restore democratic government within one year.^[1] However, the CDR also announced that after elections and the establishment of a democratic government,

the council would be transformed into a permanent Council of National Security whose future role in Thai politics was not explained.^[2] The CNS later drafted an interim charter and appointed retired General Surayud Chulanont as Premier. Martial law was lifted in 41 of Thailand's 76 provinces on 26 January 2007 but remained in place in another 35 provinces.^[3] Until early 2008, the military and their special investigation team comprising of political opponents of Thaksin Shinawatra could not find any evidence supporting the corruption accusation. There was only one case that can be charged against Thaksin and his wife in Court. That was a purchase of government land by bidding method which the military claimed to be violation of laws because Thaksin Shinawatra was a prime minister. Such law prohibits any spouse of government officer to do business with the government office which such officer is working for. Many in Thai legal profession found the charge to be groundless. Elections were held on 23 December 2007, after a military-appointed tribunal outlawed the Thai Rak Thai party of Thaksin Shinawatra and banned TRT executives from contesting in elections for 5 years.

2008-2009 Thai political crisis



The People's Alliance for Democracy laid siege to and occupied the Government House from August to December of 2008.

The **2008–2009 Thai political crisis** is an ongoing conflict in Thailand between the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the People's Power Party (PPP) governments of Prime Ministers Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat and later between the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) and the Democrat Party government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. It is a continuation of the 2005–2006 Thai political crisis, wherein the PAD protested against the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party government of Prime Minister Thaksin

Shinawatra. The PAD's followers usually dress in yellow, called 'the yellow shirts', the royal color of King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The UDD's followers dress in red, widely called 'the red shirts', known as the supporters of the deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

The PPP won the December 2007 general election, PPP vowed to amend the 2007 constitution they called 'dictatorial constitution', prompting the PAD to reform itself after suspending its movement after the 2006 coup. PAD began resisting the constitutional amendment plan of PPP. The PAD blamed that the amendment aiming at revoking Thaksin's legal charges and PPP high members from the election- fraud charge. Samak government finally suspended its amendment plan, yet the PAD vowed to continue their protest, calling for Samak Sundaravej's resignation, noting that during his election campaign, he had declared himself a nominee of Thaksin. The tension escalated when the PAD seized Government House.

Samak was finally removed in September after the Constitutional Court found him guilty of being hired and paid by a cooking TV program after he became the prime minister. PPP deputy leader Somchai Wongsawat, vice president of PPP, was elected by the members of parliament and became the new prime minister. This change prompting a further escalation of PAD protests. The protests led to violent clashes between police, the PAD, and anti-PAD protesters blocking the parliament's gates. Consequently, a PAD supporter was killed due to a faulty tear gas grenade, while a member of the PAD security forces was killed when his car bomb exploded prematurely.

The PAD escalated their protests by seizing the government's temporary offices at Don Muang Airport, and the seizure of Suvarnabhumi Airport after the arrest of Chamlong Srimuang, one of its leaders. The sieges ended in December due to the verdict of the Constitutional Court, dissolving the PPP, banning its executive board from political office because of the guilty of election-fraud. Prime minister Somchai automaticall ended his rule.

It is said, despite the controversial sources, that The Army then urged many PPP MPs, to defect to the Democrat Party and support Abhisit Vejjajiva as the new Premier. After days of negotiation, Abhisit Vejjajiva, leader of the Democrat Party, was voted eventually by the majority of the members of parliament.

PPP members and its supporters, UDD then rejected the rise of Abhisit and began their huge protest in April 2009 against the Abhisit government. The Government's House was under siege

again as well as the blockade of main roads, intersections and hospitals's entrances in downtown Bangkok.

The protest also took place in Pattaya, the site of the planned Fourth East Asia Summit. After clashes with security forces and supporters of the governments called 'the blue- shirts, the protests stormed the hotel, disrupting the Fourth East Asia Summit in Pattaya. State of emergency was then declared in Pattaya while protests in Bangkok became more violent. The next day the government arrested the leaders of Pattaya protest, causing unrest at the Supreme Court and the Interior Ministry, where prime minister Abhisit was declaring the State of Emergency in Bangkok area. The protesters finally stormed the ministry, 'hunting' the premier and ministers. The premier's secretary and several guards were injured. Situation became more intensified in the evening after the government called the military forces to secure the capital. The militart forces began dispersing the protests in main roads. Violent clashes, burning buses and wheels were seen in downtown. Clashes between the red-shirts and the 'Bangkokians' took place in many areas as the red-shirts tried to storm their homes, burning wheels, blocking the railway. At least two people, the Bangkokian, were shot dead in downtown. Eventually, on April 14, the leaders of the red-shirts decided to end their protest at the Government House.

The PAD, composed of media activists, social activists, academics and leaders of worker's unions, is opposed to what it calls the "Thaksin system"; Thaksin' domination of independent supervisory institutions. It began the mass protest against Thaksin Shinawatra from 2005 to 2006. In 2008, the PAD accused that Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat are proxies for Thaksin. Samak had announced that he was Thaksin's nominee during his election campaign, Somchai is Thaksin's brother-in-law, and several new Pua Thai Party members are former TRT members. The PAD is opposed to all attempts to reform the constitution in ways that would allow politicians banned from political office to re-enter politics, and to revoke the charges against Thaksin. The PAD has also called for "New Politics", 'new age of politics, free from the corrupt politicians'. In May 2009, the PAD found its political party' The New Politics Party'. One of the PAD's major aims is to oppose what it considers as an anti-monarchy movement, said, working within Thaksin's supporters. That is why the PAD uses the colour of yellow, the Rama IX's symbolic colour of his birthday, Monday, as its brand.

The UDD is the group, mainly social activists, scholars and Thaksin's supporters, opposing the 2006 coup deposing Thaksin Shinawatra. As it believes that the coup was supported by powerful

persons, 'elites' or 'noble', targeting Prem Tinasulanonda, the Chief of the royal Privy Council. The UDD calls to topple the *amatayathipatai* (government run by traditional elites or noble). In April 2009 protest, its aims were the immediate resignation of the prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and members of the Privy Council Prem Tinsulanonda and Surayud Chulanont as well as fresh elections. It also demanded that charges be brought against the PAD for the 2008 airport seizures and unrest. Several members of Parliament in Pua Thai Party are publicly the supporters of UDD, as well as Thaksin Shinawatra himself.

Monarchy of Thailand

The **Monarchy of Thailand** (also referred to as the **King of Thailand**) (Thai: พระมหากษัตริย์ไทย) refers to the constitutional monarchy and monarch of the Kingdom of Thailand (formerly Siam). The King of Thailand is the head of state and head the ruling Royal House of Chakri. As a constitutional monarch the powers of the king is limited to a symbolic figurehead, however the institution elicits huge amount of respect and reverence from the Thai people.^[1]

The current monarch of Thailand is King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who's regnal name is Rama IX. The king has reigned since the 9 June 1946, making him the world's longest reigning monarch and the world's longest serving head of state. Most of the king's powers are exercised by his elected government in accordance with the constitution of the day. The king still retains many powers such as: being head of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, the prerogative of royal assent and the power of pardon.

Despite the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the king is traditionally revered and inviolable according to the Constitutions. The king and his royal family have no legal right. His majesty and his family are then protected by the criminal law in a legal concept known in the West as, against any threat, physical violation and defamation.

The king is assisted in his work and duties by the Private Secretary to the King of Thailand and the Privy Council of Thailand, and in consult with the head of the cabinet, the prime minister. Due to the Constitution, since 1932, the king is no longer the origin of all laws in the kingdom. The creation and issue of the laws usually belong to the legislative, the parliament. The king approves the laws according to the prime minister.

After the Revolution in 1932, royal household finances derived from previous reigns are handled by the Bureau of the Royal Household and the Crown Property Bureau. The heir apparent to the Thai monarchy is the Crown Prince of Thailand, Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn. The succession to the throne is governed by the 1924 Palace Law of Succession, promulgated by King Vajiravudh. The rule of succession is male agnatic primogeniture, where only males are accepted and inheritance is between male lines, from father to son. However the last two Constitutions of Thailand included provisions to permit for the amendment of the Palace Law to allow females to succeed. This seemed unlikely with the birth of Prince Dipangkorn Rasmijoti in 2005.

The Thai monarchy has been in continuous existence since the existence of Thai Kingdoms back two hundred years. The institution reached its current constitutional form in 1932 after a revolution, which ended the absolute monarchy. The monarchy's official residence is the Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand. However the present King spends most of his time at the Chitralada Palace (also in Bangkok) and the Klai Kangwon Villa in Hua Hin.

Origin

The current concept of Thai kingship has evolved through 800 years of absolute rule. The first King of a unified Thailand was the founder of the Kingdom of Sukhothai: King Sri Indraditya in 1238. The idea of this early Kingship was based on two grand concepts based from Hinduism (which the Thais inherited from its previous rulers the Khmers) and Theravada Buddhist beliefs. The first concept is based on the Vedic-Hindu caste of: “Kshatriya” (Thai: กษัตริย์), or warrior-ruler, in which the King derives his powers from military might. The second is based on the Theravada Buddhist concept of “Dhammaraja” (Thai: ธรรมราชา), Buddhism having been introduced to Thailand somewhere around the sixth century A.D. The idea of the Dhammaraja (or Kingship under Dharma), is that the King should rule his people in accordance with Dharma and the teachings of the Buddha.

These ideas were briefly replaced in 1279, when King Ramkhamhaeng came to the throne. Ramkhamhaeng departed from the Khmer tradition and created instead a concept of “paternal rule” (Thai: พ่อปกครองลูก), in which the King governs his people as a father would govern his children. This idea is reinforced in the title of the King, as he is still known today, *Pho Khun Ramkhamhaeng* (Thai: พ่อขุนรามคำแหง) (“Pho” is Thai for Father). However this lasted only

briefly, by the end of the Kingdom the two old concepts had returned as symbolized by the change in the style of the Kings; “Pho” was changed to “Phya” or Lord.

Kings of Ayutthaya

The Kingdom of Sukhothai was eventually supplanted by the Kingdom of Ayutthaya, which was founded in 1351 by King Ramathibodhi I. During the Ayutthayan period the idea of Kingship changed. Due to ancient khmer tradition in the region, Hindu concept of kingship was applied for the status of the leader. Brahmins took charge in the royal coronation. The king was believed to be the reincarnation of Hindu gods. Ayutthaya historical documents show the official titles of the kings in great variation; Indra, Shiva and Vishnu, or Rama. Seemingly, Rama was the most popular, as Ramathibodhi. However, Buddhist influence was also evident as many times the king's title and 'unofficial' name related to Bodhisattava, Dhamma Raja, or King of Dharma, and the 'sprout of Buddha'. The two former concepts were re-established, with a new third concept taking a more serious hold. This new concept was the concept of “Dhevaraja” (Thai: เทวราชา) (or Divine-King), which was an ideal borrowed from Hinduism and especially the Brahmins. This concept centered on the idea that the King was an incarnation (Avatar) of the god Vishnu and that he was a Bodhisattva (enlightened one), therefore basing his power on his religious power, moral power and purity of blood.

As he was said to be the reincarnation of god, divine duties were expected and practiced. Protecting the people from unrest and annihilating the insurgents were his responsibility. Many times, the king personally led the armed forces to defend his capital when enemy invaded. However, from times to times, Ayutthaya kings also showed his charisma according the ancient Indian concept of Cakravartin or Chakkrabhatirat, Raja of Rajas. He might lead forces to wage wars to subjugate neighboring kingdoms or city-states.

The King as a semi-divine figure then became an object of worship and veneration for his people. From then on the monarchy was largely removed from the people, although they continued their absolute rule. Living in palaces designed after Mount Meru (Home of the gods in Hinduism). The Kings turned themselves into a “Chakravartin” or literally from Sanskrit "whose wheels are moving", where the Kings became an absolute and universal lord of his realm. The Kings demanded that the universe must revolve around them, expressing their powers through

elaborate rituals and ceremonies. For four centuries these Kings ruled Ayutthaya, presiding over some of the greatest period of cultural, economic and military growth in Thai History.

The Kings of Ayutthaya; especially King Trailokanat created many institutions to support their rule such as bureaucracy and a system of so-called *Sakna* or *Sakdina*, usually translated as feudalism, and the creation of “Rachasap” (a special language reserved exclusively when addressing the King or talking about the King). The King’s power was absolute and sovereign: as the “Lord of the Land” (Phra Chao Phaendin). The King was also the chief administrator, chief legislator and chief judge. Therefore laws, orders, verdict and punishment theoretically originated from the king. All of this came to an end in 1767 when a Burmese Army under the Alaungpaya Dynasty invaded and sacked the city of Ayutthaya. Yet Ayutthaya kingship seems to be the model for later period's kings, the Chakri Dynasty.

Chakri Kings



King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke or Rama I, founder of the Chakri Dynasty.

After a brief interlude filled first by civil war then the short-lived Thonburi Kingdom under King Taksin. In 1782 a new Kingdom was established by King Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke (or Rama I) when he moved the capital from Thonburi to Bangkok. King Rama I also founded the House of Chakri, the current ruling house of Thailand.

During the Rattanakosin Period the Chakri Kings tried to continue the concepts of Ayutthaya Kingship once again emphasizing the connection between the sovereign and his subjects. On the

other hand they continued to not relinquish any authority of the throne. During this period (King Rama II, Rama III and Rama IV) tried to create the first semblance of a modern government, creating ministries and appointing chief ministers to help with the running of the government. Rama IV was significantly interested in the western knowledge.

When King Chulalongkorn (or Rama V) ascended the throne as King of Siam in 1868. Due to pressure of old generation dignitaries and high officials, he decided to embrace many European and Western ideas. Under the tougher pressure from western imperialists, old tributaries kingdoms of Siam such as Laos and Cambodia were under French control. Rama V then began close contact with the western powers, Siam could avoid being colonized.

King Chulalongkorn; himself educated by Westerners, was intent on reforming the monarchy along Western lines. First he abolished the practice of kneeling and crawling in front of the monarch and repealed many laws concerning the relationship between the monarch and his people. Instead he created a monarchy based on western lines of an 'enlightened ruler'; absolute but enlightened. However he continued to preserve many ancient aspects and rituals of the old kingship, including his religious and feudal powers. His son King Vajiravudh (or Rama VI) (succeeded in 1910) continued his father's zeal for reform and brought the monarchy into the 20th century. He was succeeded by his brother King Prajadhipok (or Rama VII) in 1925.

Change

In June 1932, a group of foreign educated students and military men called "the Promoters" carried out a bloodless coup, or so-called the Revolution, seizing power and demanded that King Prajadhipok, grant the people of Siam a constitution. The King agreed and in December 1932 the people were granted a charter, ending almost exactly 150 years of absolute Chakri rule. From then on the role of the monarch was relegated to that of a symbolic head of state. Yet his majesty is traditionally revered and inviolable according to the Constitutions. The king has no longer power in issuing laws and orders.

In 1935 King Pradhipok abdicated the throne, following disagreements with the increasingly controversial government. Rama VII lived in asylum in the United Kingdom until his death. The King was replaced by his young nephew Ananda Mahidol (or Rama VIII). The new king was only 10 years old and was living abroad in Switzerland at the time while a leader of the 1932

Revolution was his regent. Thai monarchy was under severe threat during the World War II. The authoritarian government led by Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkram tried to control the monarchy, and the young monarch. After the agreement allowing the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces to settle in the kingdom, royal relatives and some leading political figures played an important anti-japanese role in the Free Thai Movement or Serithai.

After the Rama VIII's mysterious death in 1946 his brother, Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej (or Rama IX), aged 19 years old, became the new monarch, Rama IX.

Prime Minister of Thailand

The **Prime Minister of Thailand** (Thai: นายกรัฐมนตรีแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย, Na-Yok Ratha Montri Haeng Ratcha Anachak Thai) is the head of government of Thailand. The Prime Minister is also the chairman of the Cabinet of Thailand. The post has been in existence since the Revolution of 1932, when the country became a constitutional monarchy. The current incumbent is Abhisit Vejjajiva, leader of the Democrat Party, since 17 December 2008.

The office of the "President of the People's Committee" (ประธานคณะกรรมการราษฎร), later changed to "Prime Minister of Siam" (นายกรัฐมนตรี), was first created in the Temporary Constitution of 1932. The office was modeled after the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, as Siam became a parliamentary democracy in 1932 after a bloodless revolution. However the idea of a separate head of government in Thailand is not new.

Prior to 1932 Thailand was ruled by absolute monarchs, who acted as both the head of state and the government. However during the middle and latter reigns of the Chakri Dynasty several individuals were perceived to hold a post equivalent to a head of government. During the reign of King Mongkut: Somdej Chao Phraya Si Suriyawongse, had a very significant role in an otherwise absolutist system. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab took over this role. In fact the office most considered the precursor of that of the Prime Minister was the ancient office of Samuha Na Yok (สมุหนายก), which was ran by an Akra Maha Senabodi (อัครมหาเสนาบดี) or Chief Minister in charge of civilian affairs.

The first Prime Minister of Siam was Phraya Manopakorn Nititada a civil servant and lawyer. The title of the office changed from "Prime Minister of Siam" to "Prime Minister of Thailand" in

1945 and then permanently with the renaming of Siam to Thailand in 1949. For most of its existence the office has been occupied by Army leaders; fifteen out of twenty-seven. Beginning with the country's second Prime Minister: Phot Phahonyothin, who ousted his predecessor in a coup in 1933. The longest serving Prime Minister was Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsonggram at 14 years, 11 months and 18 days. The shortest was Tawee Boonyaket at only just 18 days.^[2] Nine were removed by coups d'état, two were disqualified by court order, and eleven resigned from office. The youngest ever to occupy office was M.R. Seni Pramoj at 40 years old. Every Prime Minister since Phraya Manopakorn Nititada has been Buddhist

Appointment



House of Representatives

The **Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand** must be a member of the House of Representatives of Thailand. Therefore the qualifications for the office is the same as the qualifications for the House.

To be appointed the nominee for the office must have the support of one-fifth of the members of the House of Representatives. Then after a simple-majority vote in the House, a resolution will be passed and submitted to the King of Thailand, who will then make a formal appointment by giving his royal assent to the resolution. This must be done within thirty days of the beginning of the first session of the House of Representatives after an election. If no candidate can be found within this time then it is the duty of the President of the National Assembly of Thailand to submit the name he considers most worthy for the King to formalize.

The nominee and eventual Prime Minister is always the leader of the largest political party in the lower house

House of Representatives of Thailand

The **House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand** (Thai: สภาผู้แทนราษฎร: Saphaputhan Ratsadon) is the lower house of the National Assembly of Thailand, the legislative branch of the Thai Government. The system of government of Thailand is that of a Constitutional Monarchy and a Parliamentary Democracy. The system of the Thai legislative branch was modelled after the Westminster system. The House of Representatives has 480 Members: 400 Members are democratically elected through single constituency elections, while the other 80 are appointed accordingly through proportional representation. The roles and powers of the House of Representatives have been enshrined in the Constitution of 2007.

The House of Representatives was established after the Revolution of 1932, when the Khana Ratsadon (the "People's Party"), overthrew the absolute monarchy and replaced it with the present system of constitutional monarchy. When King Prajadhipok signed the Temporary Constitution of 1932, he established the first legislative assembly in Thailand, however, it was an entirely royally-appointed chamber. The first session of the **People's Assembly** was held on June 28, 1932, in the Ananda Samakhom Throne Hall. From then on, the House existed in various forms until the present form in 2007:

- 1946- The 1946 constitution established a fully elected House of Representatives.
- 1952- Establishment of the unicameral National Assembly with 123 members.
- 1959- The House was banned by Sarit Dhanarajata.
- 1968- The House was re-established with 219 members.
- 1972- The House was banned by Thanom Kittikachorn.
- 1974- Establishment of the House of Representatives.
- 1976- Establishment of a unicameral National Assembly with 360 royally-appointed members.
- 1978- Return of an elected House with 301 members.
- 1991- Establishment of a unicameral National Assembly with 292 appointed members.
- 1997- Establishment of a 500 member House of Representatives, 400 directly elected with 100 elected through proportional representation.

- 2006- Following the coup, an interim charter was signed establishing a 250 member National Legislative Assembly.
- 2007- Present system established, by referendum under the 2007 Constitution of Thailand



Bangkok's Democracy Monument: a representation of the 1932 Constitution sits on top of two golden offering bowls above a turret.

Constitution of Thailand

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand is the supreme law of the Kingdom of Thailand. Since the change from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional democracy in 1932, Thailand has had 17 charters and constitutions, reflecting the high degree of political instability and frequency of military coups faced by the nation. After successful coups, military regimes abrogated existing constitutions and promulgated new ones.

All of Thailand's charters and constitutions have allowed a constitutional monarchy, but with widely differing balances of power between the branches of government. Most of them have stipulated parliamentary systems, however, several of them also called for dictatorships, e.g., the 1957 Charter. Both unicameral and bicameral parliaments have been used, and members of parliament have been both elected and appointed. The direct powers of the monarch have also varied considerably.

Thailand's current constitution was promulgated in 2007, replacing an interim constitution promulgated in 2006 after an army-led coup. The 2007 Constitution was written by a junta-appointed group of drafters, but was approved by a public referendum. Prior to the referendum, the junta passed a law making it illegal to publicly criticize the draft.^[1] Controversial features in the constitution included an partly-appointed Senate and amnesty for the leaders of the 2006 coup.

The 1997 Constitution, often called the "People's Constitution," was considered a landmark in terms of the degree of public participation involved in its drafting as well as the democratic nature of its articles. It stipulated a bicameral legislature, both houses of which were elected. Many human rights were explicitly acknowledged for the first time, and measures were established to increase the stability of elected governments.

Cabinet of Thailand

| Position | Name | Party |
|--|--|------------|
| <u>Prime Minister</u> | <u>Abhisit Vejjajiva</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Prime Minister</u> | <u>Suthep Thaugsuban</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Prime Minister</u> | <u>Korbsak Sabhavas</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Prime Minister</u> | Major General <u>Sanan Kajornprasart</u> | <u>CTP</u> |
| <u>Minister for Office of the Prime Minister</u> | <u>Satit Wongnongtaey</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister for Office of the Prime Minister</u> | <u>Virachai Virameteekul</u> | <u>DEM</u> |

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|---|----------------------------------|------------|
| <u>Minister of Defence</u> | General <u>Prawit Wongsuwan</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Finance</u> | <u>Korn Chatikavanij</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Finance</u> | <u>Pradit Pataraprasit</u> | <u>RC</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Finance</u> | Dr <u>Pruektichai Damrongrat</u> | <u>PPD</u> |
| <u>Minister of Foreign Affairs</u> | <u>Kasit Piromya</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Tourism and Sports</u> | <u>Chumphol Silpa-archa</u> | <u>CTP</u> |
| <u>Minister for Social Development and Human Security</u> | <u>Witoon Nambutr</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives</u> | <u>Theera Wongsamut</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives</u> | <u>Chartchai Pukkayaporn</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Minister of Transport</u> | <u>Sophon Saram</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Transport</u> | <u>Kuakul Danchaiwijit</u> | <u>CTP</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Transport</u> | <u>Prajak Kaewklahan</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Minister for Natural Resource and Environment</u> | <u>Suwit Khunkitti</u> | <u>SAP</u> |

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|---|---|------------|
| <u>Minister of Information and Communication Technology</u> | First Lieutenant <u>Ranongruk Suwanchawee</u> | <u>PPD</u> |
| <u>Minister for Energy</u> | Dr <u>Wannarat Channukul</u> | <u>RC</u> |
| <u>Minister of Commerce</u> | <u>Pornthiva Nakasai</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Commerce</u> | <u>Alongkorn Pollabutr</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Interior</u> | <u>Chaovarat Chanweerakul</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Interior</u> | <u>Boonjong Wongtrairat</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Interior</u> | <u>Thaworn Senneam</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Justice</u> | <u>Pirapan Salirathavibhaga</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Labour</u> | <u>Phaithoon Kaeothong</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Culture</u> | <u>Teera Slukpetch</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister for Science and Technology</u> | Dr Khunying <u>Kalaya Sophonpanich</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Minister of Education</u> | <u>Jurin Laksanawisit</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Education</u> | <u>Chaiwuti Bannawat</u> | <u>DEM</u> |

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|---|---------------------------------|------------|
| <u>Deputy Minister of Education</u> | <u>Narisara Chawaltanpithak</u> | <u>PPD</u> |
| <u>Minister of Public Health</u> | <u>Witthaya Kaewparadai</u> | <u>DEM</u> |
| <u>Deputy Minister of Public Health</u> | <u>Manite Nop-amornbodi</u> | <u>BJT</u> |
| <u>Minister of Industry</u> | <u>Charnchai Chairungrueng</u> | <u>PPD</u> |

Foreign relations of Thailand

Thailand's foreign policy includes support for ASEAN in the interest of regional stability and emphasis on a close and longstanding security relationship with the United States. The foreign relations of Thailand is handled by the **Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand** and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.








Thailand participates fully in international and regional organizations. It has developed increasingly close ties with other ASEAN members--Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Vietnam--whose foreign and economic ministers hold annual meetings. Regional cooperation is progressing in economic, trade, banking, political, and cultural matters. In 2003, Thailand served as APEC host. Supachai Panitchpakdi, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, currently serves as Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In 2005 Thailand attended the inaugural East Asia Summit.

In recent years, Thailand has taken an increasingly active role on the international stage. When East Timor gained independence from Indonesia, Thailand, for the first time in its history, contributed troops to the international peacekeeping effort. Its troops remain there today as part of a UN peacekeeping force. As part of its effort to increase international ties, Thailand has reached out to such regional organizations as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thailand has contributed troops to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Disputes - international: parts of the border with Laos are indefinite; maritime boundary with Vietnam resolved, August 1997; parts of border with Cambodia are indefinite; maritime boundary with Cambodia not clearly defined; sporadic conflict with Burma over alignment of border.

Illicit drugs: A minor producer of opium, heroin, and marijuana; major illicit transit point for heroin en route to the international drug market from Burma and Laos; eradication efforts have reduced the area of cannabis cultivation and shifted some production to neighboring countries; opium poppy cultivation has been reduced by eradication efforts; also a drug money-laundering center; minor role in amphetamine production for regional consumption; increasing indigenous abuse of methamphetamines and heroin.

Relations by Country

| Country  | Formal Relations Began  | Notes  |
|--|--|--|
|  <u>Australia</u> | <u>1952</u> | See <u>Australia-Thailand relations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thailand is represented through its embassy in <u>Canberra</u> and a <u>consulate general</u> in <u>Sydney</u>. Australia has an embassy in <u>Bangkok</u>. <u>Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement</u> |
|  <u>Bulgaria</u> | <u>1974-04-10</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since <u>1975</u>, Bulgaria has embassy in <u>Bangkok</u>.^[1] Thailand has an honorary consulate in <u>Sofia</u>.^[2] |
|  <u>Canada</u> | | See <u>Canada–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Croatia</u> | <u>1992-09-09</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croatia is represented in Thailand through its embassy in <u>Jakarta (Indonesia)</u> and through an honorary consulate in <u>Bangkok</u>.^[3] Thailand is represented in Croatia through its embassy in |


| | | |
|--|-------------------|--|
| | | <p><u>Budapest (Hungary)</u> and through an honorary consulate in <u>Zagreb</u>.^[4]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration: list of bilateral treaties with Thailand</u> |
|  <u>Denmark</u> | | See <u>Denmark–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Finland</u> | | See <u>Finland–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>France</u> | | See <u>France–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Greece</u> | <u>1958-05-26</u> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Greek Embassy in <u>Bangkok</u> was opened in November 1989. • Thailand has an embassy in <u>Athens</u>.^[5] • <u>Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs about relations with Thailand</u> • <u>Thai deputy premier, UN sec. gen. candidate, meets with premier Karamanlis, FM</u> |
|  <u>Hungary</u> | | See <u>Hungary–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>India</u> | | See <u>India–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Indonesia</u> | | See <u>Indonesia-Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Israel</u> | <u>1954-06-23</u> | <p>See also <u>History of the Jews in Thailand</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since <u>1958</u>, Israel has had an embassy in <u>Bangkok</u>.^[6] • Since <u>1996</u>, Thailand has had an embassy in <u>Tel Aviv</u>.^[7] |
|  <u>Italy</u> | | See <u>Italy–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Japan</u> | | See <u>Japan–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Laos</u> | | See <u>Laos–Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Malaysia</u> | | See <u>Malaysia-Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Romania</u> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romania has an embassy in <u>Bangkok</u> and an honorary consulate in <u>Pattaya</u>.^[8] • Thailand has an embassy in <u>Bucharest</u>.^[9] |
|  <u>Russia</u> | | See <u>Russia–Thailand relations</u> |



| | | |
|--|-------------------|--|
|  <u>South Korea</u> | | See <u>South Korea – Thailand relations</u> |
|  <u>Ukraine</u> | <u>1992-05-06</u> | See <u>Thailand–Ukraine relations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thailand is represented in Ukraine through its embassy in Moscow (Russia).^[10] • Ukraine has an embassy and an honorary consulate in Bangkok.^[11] |
|  <u>United States</u> | | See <u>Thailand – United States relations</u> |











The Standard of the Prime Minister of Thailand


List of Heads of Government of the Kingdom of Thailand (1932-Present)




| No. | Name (Life) | Cabinet | Term Start | | Term Ends | | Policy Date | Political Party |
|-----|---|---------|------------------------|---|------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | Date | Reason | Date | Reason | | |
| 1 |  <u>Phraya Manopakorn Nititada</u> (1884-1948) | 1 | 28 June 1932 | House of Representatives Resolution | 10 December 1932 | New "Permanent" Constitution Promulgated | No Formal Policy Declaration | None |
| | | 2 | 10 December 1932 | House of Representatives Resolution | 1 April 1933 | House Dissolution by emergency Royal Decree | 20 December 1932 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| | | 3 | 1 April 1933 | Royal Decree | 21 June 1933 | Removed by: <u>1933 coup d'état</u> | 1 April 1933 | |
| 2 |  <p>General <u>Phot Phahonyothin</u> (1889-1958)</p> | 4 | 21 June 1933 | House of Representatives Resolution | 16 December 1933 | Mandated: 15 November <u>General Election</u> | 26 June 1933 | <u>Khana Ratsadon,</u> <u>Military branch</u> |
| | | 5 | 16 December 1933 | House of Representatives Resolution | 22 September 1934 | Resignation: Parliamentary Disapproval of "Rubber Limitations Act" | 25 December 1933 | |
| | | 6 | 22 September 1934 | House of Representatives Resolution | 9 August 1937 | Resignation: Crown Real- estate scandals | 24 September 1934 | |
| | | 7 | 9 August 1937 | House of Representatives Resolution | 21 December 1937 | Term Ends: 7 November <u>General Election</u> | 11 August 1937 | |
| | | 8 | 21 December 1937 | House of Representatives Resolution | 16 December 1938 | Parliament Dissolution: 12 November <u>General Election</u> | December 23, 1937 | |
| 3 |  | 9 | 16 December 1938 | House of Representatives Resolution | 7 March 1942 | Resignation: Cabinet Reshuffle | 26 December 1938 | <u>Khana Ratsadon,</u> <u>Military</u> |


| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Field Marshal <u>Plaek Pibulsonggram</u> (1897-1964) (1st Term) | 10 | 7 March 1942 | House of Representatives Resolution | 1 August 1944 | Resignation: Parliamentary Disapproval of "Petchaboon Municipality Act" | 16 March 1942 | <u>branch</u> |
| 4 |  Major <u>Khuang Abhaiwongse</u> (1902-1968) (1st Time) | 11 | 1 August 1944 | House of Representatives Resolution | 31 August 1945 | Resignation: <u>Post-War Election</u> | 3 August 1944 | <u>Khana Ratsadon</u> |
| 5 |  <u>Tawee Boonyaket</u> (1904-1971) | 12 | 31 August 1945 | House of Representatives Resolution | 17 September 1945 | Resignation | 1 September 1945 | None |
| 6 |  M.R. <u>Seni Pramoj</u> (1905-1997) (1st Time) | 13 | 17 September 1945 | Regency Council Command | 31 January 1946 | Resignation: conflicts within Cabinet | 19 September 1945 | <u>Free Thai</u> |



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|-----|---|----|--|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| (4) |  Major <u>Khuang Abhaiwongse</u> (1902-1968) (2nd Time) | 14 | 31 January 1946 | House of Representatives Resolution | 24 March 1946 | Resignation: Government Disapproval of Parliamentary Resolution | 7 February 1946 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |
| | | 7 |  Dr. <u>Pridi Banomyong</u> (1900-1983) | 15 | 24 March 1946 | House of Representatives Resolution | 11 June 1946 | Resignation: Constitution of 1946 Declaration |
| 8 |  Rear Admiral <u>Thawal Thamrong Navaswadhi</u> (1901-1988) | 16 | 11 June 1946 | House of Representatives Resolution | 23 August 1946 | Resignation: "Fatigue" | 13 June 1946 | <u>Military</u> |
| (4) |  Rear Admiral <u>Thawal Thamrong Navaswadhi</u> (1901-1988) | 17 | 23 August 1946 | House of Representatives Resolution | 30 May 1947 | Resignation (after 7 days of Parliament Session) | 26 August 1946 | |
| | | 18 | 30 May 1947 | House of Representatives Resolution | 8 November 1947 | Removed by: <u>1947 coup d'état</u> | 5 June 1947 | |
| (4) |  Rear Admiral <u>Thawal Thamrong Navaswadhi</u> (1901-1988) | 19 | 10 November 1947 | Great Cabinet Resolution | 21 February 1948 | Term Ends: 29 January, <u>General Election</u> | 27 November 1947 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |




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|-----|---|----|------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| | Major <u>Khuang Abhaiwongse</u> (1902-1968) (3rd Term) | 20 | 21 February 1948 | House of Representatives Resolution | 8 April 1948 | Resignation: under pressure from <u>Coup Group</u> | 1 March 1948 | |
| (2) |  Field Marshal <u>Plaek Pibulsongkram</u> (1897-1964) (2nd Time) | 21 | 1 March 1948 | House of Representatives Resolution | 25 June 1949 | Dissolution: 5 June <u>General Election</u> | 21 April 1948 | <u>Military & Free Stone Seat Party</u> |
| | | 22 | 25 June 1949 | House of Representatives Resolution | 29 November 1951 | Re-appointed after: <u>1949 coup d'état</u> | 6 July 1949 | |
| | | 23 | 29 November 1951 | Coup d'état Declaration | 6 December 1951 | Dissolution: 26 February <u>General Election</u> | No Formal Policies | |
| | | 24 | 6 December 1951 | House of Representatives Resolution | 24 March 1952 | - | 11 December 1951 | |
| | | 25 | 24 March 1952 | House of Representatives Resolution | 21 March 1957 | Term Ends: 26 February <u>General Election</u> | 3 April 1952 | |
| | | 26 | 21 March 1957 | House of Representatives Resolution | 16 September 1957 | Removed by: <u>1957 coup d'état</u> | 1 April 1957 | |


| Coup Group (Leader: Field Marshal <u>Phin Choonhavan</u>) | | 16 September 1957 | | 21 September 1957 | | <u>Military</u> | | |
|--|--|-------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 9 |  <u>Pote Sarasin</u> (1905-2000) | 27 | 21 September 1957 | House of Representatives Resolution | 1 January 1958 | Dissolution: 15 December <u>General Election</u> | 24 September 1957 | None |
| 10 |  Field Marshal <u>Thanom Kittikachorn</u> (1911-2004) (1st Time) | 28 | 1 January 1958 | House of Representatives Resolution | 20 October 1958 | Resigned after: <u>1958 coup d'état</u> | 9 January 1958 | <u>Military</u> |
| 11 |  Field Marshal <u>Sarit Thanarat</u> (1909-1963) (Acting from 20 October to 10 February 1959) | 29 | 9 February 1959 | House of Representatives Resolution | 8 December 1963 | Died in office | 12 February 1959 | <u>Military</u> |




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|---|---|------------------|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|-----------------|
| (10) |  | 30 | 9 December 1963 | House of Representatives Resolution | 7 March 1969 | Mandated: 10 February <u>General Election</u> | December 19, 1963 | <u>Military</u> |
| | Field Marshal <u>Thanom Kittikachorn</u> (1911-2004) (2nd Time) | 31 | 7 March 1969 | House of Representatives Resolution | 17 November 1971 | Removed then re- appointed himself after: <u>1971 coup d'état</u> | 25 March 1969 | |
| <u>National Executive Council</u> (Leader: Field Marshal <u>Thanom Kittikachorn</u>) | | 18 November 1971 | | 17 December 1972 | | <u>Military</u> | | |
| (10) |  | 32 | 18 December 1972 | House of Representatives Resolution | 14 October 1973 | Resigned after: <u>14 October 1973 Uprising</u> | 22 December 1972 | <u>Military</u> |
| 12 |  | 33 | 14 October 1973 | Royal Command | 22 May 1974 | Resignation: Incomplete Constitution Draft | 25 October 1973 | None |

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|-----|---|----|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| | <u>Sanya Thammasak</u> (1907-2002) | 34 | 27 May 1974 | House of Representatives Resolution | 15 February 1975 | Mandated: 26 January <u>General Election</u> | 7 June 1974 | |
| (6) |  M.R. <u>Seni Pramoj</u> (1905-1997) (2nd Time) | 35 | 15 February 1975 | House of Representatives Resolution | 14 March 1975 | Parliament Disapproval of Formal Policy | 6 March 1975 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |
| 13 |  M.R. <u>Kukrit Pramoj</u> (1911-1995) | 36 | 14 March 1975 | House of Representatives Resolution | 20 April 1976 | Dissolution: 4 April <u>General Election</u> | 19 March 1975 | <u>Social Action Party</u> |
| (6) |  M.R. <u>Seni Pramoj</u> (1905-1997) (3rd Time) | 37 | 20 April 1976 | House of Representatives Resolution | 25 September 1976 | Resignation: Controversy of Thanom Kittikachorn's return from exile | 30 April 1976 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |
| | | 38 | 25 September 1976 | House of Representatives Resolution | 6 October 1976 | Removed by: <u>1976 coup d'état</u> | No Formal Policies | |




| <u>Administration Reform Council</u> (Leader: Admiral <u>Sangad Chaloryu</u>) | | 6 October 1976 | | 8 October 1976 | | <u>Military</u> | | |
|--|---|----------------|--|--|------------------|---|-----------------|---|
| 14 |  <u>Thanin Kraivichien</u> (1927-) | 39 | 8 October 1976 | Administration Reform Council Resolution | 20 October 1977 | Removed by: <u>October 1977 coup d'état</u> | 29 October 1976 | <u>Military</u> |
| | | 15 |  General <u>Kriangsak Chomanan</u> (1917-2003) | 40 | 11 November 1977 | Coup d'état Declaration | 12 May 1979 | Dissolution: 22 April <u>General Election</u> |
| 41 | 12 May 1979 | | | House of Representatives Resolution | 3 March 1980 | Resignation: Oil Crisis and Refugee Conflict | 7 June 1979 | |
| 16 |  General <u>Prem Tinsulanond</u> (1920-) | 42 | 3 March 1980 | House of Representatives Resolution | 30 April 1983 | Dissolution: 19 January <u>General Election</u> | 28 March 1980 | <u>Military</u> |
| | | 43 | 30 April 1983 | House of Representatives Resolution | 5 August 1986 | Dissolution: 1 May <u>General Election</u> | 20 May 1983 | |
| | | 44 | 5 August 1986 | House of Representatives | 4 August 1988 | Dissolution: 29 April <u>General</u> | 27 August 1986 | |

| | | | | Resolution | | <u>Election</u> | | |
|--|--|----|------------------|---|------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 17 |  General <u>Chatichai Choonhavan</u> (1922-1998) | 45 | 4 August 1988 | House of Representatives Resolution | 9 December 1990 | Resignation: New Cabinet Formation | 25 August 1988 | <u>Chart Thai Party</u> |
| | | 46 | 9 December 1990 | House of Representatives Resolution | 23 February 1991 | Removed by: <u>1991 coup d'état</u> | 9 January 1991 | |
| <u>National Peace Keeping Council</u> (Leader: General <u>Sunthorn Kongsompong</u>) | | | 24 February 1991 | | 7 March 1991 | | <u>Military</u> | |
| 18 |  <u>Anand Panyarachun</u> (1932-) (1st Time) | 47 | 2 March 1991 | National Peace Keeping Council Resolution | 7 April 1992 | Mandated: 22 March <u>General Election</u> | 4 April 1991 | None |
| 19 |  General <u>Suchinda Kraprayoon</u> (1933-) | 48 | 7 April 1992 | House of Representatives Resolution | 10 June 1992 | Resigned due to: <u>Black May event</u> | 6 May 1992 | <u>Military</u> |

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| |  | | | | | | | |
| | <u>Meechai Ruchuphan</u> (1938-) (Acting) | - | 24 May 1992 | Royal Command | 10 June 1992 | Resignation to make way for: Anand Panyarachun | No Policy Statement | None |
| (18) |  | 49 | 10 June 1992 | House of Representatives Resolution | 23 September 1992 | Dissolution: 22 September <u>General Election</u> | 22 June 1992 | None |
| | <u>Anand Panyarachun</u> (1932-)(2nd Time) | | | | | | | |
| 20 |  | 50 | 23 September 1992 | House of Representatives Resolution | 13 July 1995 | Dissolution: May 19 <u>General Election</u> | 21 October 1992 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |
| | <u>Chuan Leekpai</u> (1938-)(1st Time) | | | | | | | |
| 21 |  | 51 | 13 July 1995 | House of Representatives Resolution | 25 November 1996 | Parliament Dissolution: 27 September <u>General Election</u> | 26 July 1995 | <u>Chart Thai Party</u> |
| | <u>Banharn Silpa-archa</u> (1932-) | | | | | | | |
| 22 |  | 52 | 25 November 1996 | House of Representatives Resolution | 9 November 1997 | Resignation: <u>1997 Asian Financial Crisis</u> | 11 December 1996 | <u>New Aspiration Party</u> |
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| | <p>General <u>Chavalit Yongchaiyudh</u> (1932-)</p> | | | | | | | |
| (20) |  <p><u>Chuan Leekpai</u> (1938-) (2nd Time)</p> | 53 | 9 November 1997 | House of Representatives Resolution | 9 February 2001 | Term Ends: 6 January <u>General Election</u> | 20 November 1997 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |
| 23 |  <p>Police Lieutenant Colonel <u>Thaksin Shinawatra</u>(1949-) (1st Time)</p> | 54 | 9 February 2001 | House of Representatives Resolution | 9 March 2005 | Term Ends: 6 February <u>General Election</u> | 26 February 2001 | <u>Thai Rak Thai Party</u> |
| | | 55 | 9 March 2005 | House of Representatives Resolution | 19 September 2006 | Dissolution after <u>2005-2006 political crisis</u> : 24 February 2006 | March 23, 2005 | |
| |  <p>Police General <u>Chitchai Wannasathit</u> (1946-) (Acting)</p> | - | 5 April 2006 | Royal Command | 23 May 2006 | Resigned after: 2 April <u>General Election</u> | No Policy Statement | <u>Thai Rak Thai Party</u> |

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|--|---|-------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| (23) |  Police Lieutenant Colonel <u>Thaksin Shinawatra</u> (1949-) (2nd Time) | - | 23 May 2006 | House of Representatives Resolution | 19 September 2006 | Removed by: <u>2006 coup d'état</u> | No Policy Statement | <u>Thai Rak Thai Party</u> |
| <u>Council for National Security</u> (Leader: General <u>Sonthi Boonyaratglin</u> , then later Air Chief Marshal <u>Chalit Pookpasuk</u>) | | 19 September 2006 | | 1 October 2007 | | <u>Military</u> | | |
| 24 |  General <u>Surayud Chulanont</u> (1943-) | 56 | 1 October 2007 | Council for National Security Declaration | 6 February 2008 | By virtue of <u>section 298</u> of the <u>Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (2007 Version)</u> | 3 November 2006 | None |
| 25 |  | 57 | 29 January 2008 | House of Representatives Resolution | 8 September 2008 | <u>Constitutional Court</u> ruling | 18 February 2008 | <u>People's Power Party</u> |

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|----|---|----|-------------------------|---|------------------------|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | <u>Samak Sundaravej</u> (1935-) | | | | | | | |
| 26 |  <u>Somchai Wongsawat</u> (1947-) (Acting from 8 to 17 September 2008) | 58 | 18 September 2008 | House of Representatives Resolution | 2 December 2008 | <u>Constitutional Court</u> ruling | 7 October 2008 | <u>People's Power Party</u> |
| |  <u>Chaovarat Chanweerakul</u> (1936-) (Acting) | - | 2 December 2008 | Royal Command | 17 December 2008 | Resigned: with the appointment of Abhisit Vejjajiva | No Policy Statement | <u>People's Power Party</u> |
| 27 |  <u>Abhisit Vejjajiva</u> | 59 | 17 December 2008 | House of Representatives Resolution | - | - | 30 December 2008 | <u>Democrat Party</u> |

