



# **The Ideal Man: The Tragedy of Jim Thompson and the American Way of War**

*Joshua Kurlantzick*

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**The Ideal Man: The Tragedy of Jim Thompson and the American Way of War** Joshua Kurlantzick  
**How the West's greatest spy in Asia tried to stop the new American way of war—and the steep price he paid for failing**

Jim Thompson landed in Thailand at the end of World War II, a former American society dilettante who became an Asian legend as a spy and silk magnate with access to Thai worlds outsiders never saw. As the Cold War reached Thailand, America had a choice: Should it, as Thompson believed, help other nations build democracies from their traditional cultures or, as his ex-OSS friend Willis Bird argued, remake the world through deception and self-serving alliances? In a story rich with insights and intrigue, this book explores a key Cold War episode that is still playing out today.

- Highlights a pivotal moment in Cold War history that set a course for American foreign policy that is still being followed today
- Explores the dynamics that put Thailand at the center of the Cold War and the fighting in neighboring Laos that escalated from sideshow to the largest covert operation America had ever engaged in
- Draws on personal recollections and includes atmospheric details that bring the people, events—and the Thailand of the time—to life
- Written by a journalist with extensive experience in Asian affairs who has spent years investigating every aspect of this story, including Thompson's tragic disappearance



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