

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

1. Assessment of the Chatichai's Policy

In the following part, the author tries to analyze the Chatichai's Indochina policy at first in line with the three chief suppositions, namely multiple channels, the absence of hierarchy among issues, and minor role of force; and their political processes suggested in the "Complex Interdependence" of Keohane and Nye. Then, he will go into assessing their implication, thus significance, in the grand picture of Thailand's Indochina policy, although admitting the weak point that it needs more expanded time span for a more elaborated assessment.

First of all, given that the phenomena suggested in "Complex Interdependence" of Keohane and Nye are those confirmable in the "advanced societies" with "industrialized, pluralist and Western democracy", one need again to recall the economic and political environments just prior to and during the Chatichai administration, which was between August 1988 and February 1991.

In economic dimension, Thailand stood at the beginning of the unprecedented rapid growth in the late 1980s. This growth was brought by the virtue of two chief factors, internal and external. At the domestic level, the kingdom was finishing adjusting economic structure for export-oriented or export-led growth supported by manufacturing industry, and the industrial sector itself also became mature and sought new frontier for its products to output. This coincided with the external factor. The G-5 reviewed their consensus of the U.S. dollar's role in the world economy, and which eventually contributed to the Japanese yen's appreciation beginning in 1986. To avoid an eventual rise in labor cost in their homes, Japanese and some other Asian firms flooded into Thailand to find the relatively low cost of labor force here so as to sustain the competitiveness of their products in the world market. In addition, all of the Indochinese socialist states were in the middle of transformation of their philosophy of economy from the centrally-command and planned policy to

the one which emphasized market-oriented mechanism by, for example, introducing foreign capital to their soil.

In accordance with the overall growth of economy, private sector, of which some had already engaged in trading with the neighboring states in an "unofficial" fashion, gradually became assertive of liberalized trade at various places such as JPPCC, the House, and on media. However, the reality in the neighboring states, e.g. the Cambodian problem, obstructed official endorsement of liberalized trade, and the government was also hesitant to do it for security concerns. This was institutionalized in the guise of national security by the list of "strategic items" banning trading with the neighbors internally.

In political dimension, the kingdom was in the very middle of transitional period from the "semi-democracy" or managed democracy in which the non-elected premier Prem maintained and manipulated his clout over bureaucratic apparatuses, to the one in which the leader of majority in the House of Representatives, Chatichai, assumed premiership with his cabinet composed of more business-cum-politicians. In addition, the House itself was occupied by business-cum-MPs with the figure of 68% among all of the seats, and which was the highest rate by then in the history of Thai parliament. For these newly emerging phenomena, the new government of Chatichai was more sensitive to public opinion intentionally or unintentionally, particularly of business community. External environment was also changing. This change influenced her stand and policy on the Cambodian problem. Thailand first in the early 1980s tried to resolve the problem and defend herself by mobilizing internal and external resources. Naturally, her military capability to defend the bordering areas was strengthened and other issues were also consolidated with this defense policy, as the case of banning of strategic items explicitly indicated. At the external level, the kingdom tried to resolve the problem chiefly through the persuading or utilizing the superpowers concerned with it. Thai diplomatic leaders (and sometimes premier himself) first fled to Moscow and Beijing. A bit later, the kingdom persuaded other ASEAN members to accept her security concern and it indeed

became top priority of ASEAN's relations with Indochina. She deeply engaged in supporting the Cambodian resistance forces, e.g. she created the CGDK and allowed the forces to use her bordering area as their sanctuary, and virtually allowed China and the U.S. to supply the forces with arms and finance through her territory. In one sense, the kingdom attempted to defend herself in a physical sense by placing the CGDK around the Thai-Cambodian border *vis-à-vis* Vietnamese forces, and supported directly or indirectly the CGDK. Thailand was undoubtedly a litigant party with the conflict. When Chatichai came to office, the situation surrounding the problem was almost on deadlock, but the world was experiencing *rapprochement* among superpowers and major countries also were reviewing their foreign policy at large. These external factors also contributed, often by accidents, to the premier to assert his policy. As the review or reorientation of foreign policy by those powers varied, their reactions to the Thai policy also differed from one another. The U.S. began to pursue the new policy to exclude the Khmer Rouge from the Cambodian political settlement and this accorded with the Thai advisors' perception on the Cambodian faction. Japan was enthusiastically challenging her new diplomatic policy dubbed International Cooperation Initiative and this also coincided with the Chatichai's new policy. Moreover, the separation of politics and economy in foreign relations became a shared philosophy between Japan and Thailand these years. China was losing her interests in supporting the Khmer Rouge in the face of international condemnation of the factions brutal past and the Tiananmen Massacre incurred detrimental effects to her diplomatic maneuvering power. Indochinese states also welcomed the Thai policy as it virtually endorsed what they had claimed in regard to the Cambodian conflict. Only ASEAN members were critical to the Chatichai's initiatives. In sum, almost major powers did not and could not dictate or direct the way of the Thailand's new policy and even some ASEAN members had already lost their justification to sustain the commonly calculated stand on Indochina since they had been in business scene in the region. In any sense, the Chatichai administration was born in the years of turbulent changes in domestic as well as external environments surroundings the kingdom for the first time

since the 1970s. The kingdom was obviously in the second "open politics" at the domestic level, and was in the middle of a fluidly changing international politics since the major powers also challenging to adjust the new reality of the last phase of Cold War.

Nevertheless, Thailand's Indochina policy still sustained its norm prescribed by highly military-conscious strategic sense. It was, following the Keohane and Nye, undoubtedly the principal realist assumption of diplomacy of a state, i.e. "military security will be the dominant goal of states....Nonmilitary problems will not subordinated to military ones; they will be studied for their politico-military implications".

Multiple Channels

The "Complex Interdependence" points out explicitly that with more economic growth of a country, more contacts will occur in her external relations and this entails that more people join the existing channels and/or new channels they would create by themselves. Just prior to and during the Chatichai's years, this phenomenon was actually happening in Thailand. Indeed, there were several facts as early as during the Prem years which eventually contributed to the Chatichai's initiative later. The contacts between private sectors between Thai businessmen and their Indochinese counterparts, the urges of liberalized or softened trade with Indochina at the House Committees of Foreign Affairs and Commerce, the demand asked by merchants, particularly by Northeastern provinces, etc. These were reflections of which Thailand in those years were gradually attaining economic power and the private business community was seeking new frontiers to foster their profits through trading, export in this case especially to the nearest Indochinese market. However, these did not necessarily realize in the face of "politics-before-trade" strategy.

After Chatichai officially and openly endorsed the contacts (most of them were business-related), these came to see normality in the relations between the kingdom and her neighbors. Chatichai himself also met the Laotian leadership and that of the unrecognized regime in

Phnom Penh in pursuit of his Indochina policy and he utilized his private advisors to implement it. The advisers also used their own "unofficial" channels to reach these leaderships. This manner basically continued to the end of the administration as long as Indochina was concerned. Additionally, with the general endorsement by the new policy itself, various apparatus of the government as well as private sectors rode on the tide, as described at the last part of the previous chapter. They included business persons, military personnel, and religious groups. Hence, the exchange between the kingdom and the neighbors in these years saw a significant magnitude and extent.

Absence of Hierarchy among Issues

The emergence of the Chatichai administration triggered off the collapse of the hitherto hierarchy of Thailand's Indochinese policy. First of all, the collapse began from above, by his policy itself. Economy preceded politics. During its process, the restrained or somehow controlled voices of fostering commercial business with Indochina were given a great deal of credentials and legitimacy, and accordingly they were incorporated into the official foreign policy of the state. In addition, the state politics at the given period was in the middle of certain evolution from "semi-democracy" or "managed-democracy" to fuller democracy.

More precisely speaking, in political dimension, the Chatichai administration virtually discarded the almost decade-long policy of Thailand, namely supporting only the CGDK while regarding the PRK and Vietnam as one identity and avoiding direct contacts with the latter. His administration acknowledged the existence of the PRK as the *de facto* government of Cambodia and tried to give the regime certain credibility in the process of political settlement of the Cambodian problem in the years to come, while sustaining the support to the CGDK. Behind this move, there was a shared perception within the premier's camp that the PRK controlled vast area of that country in effect and had a good administrative capability, unlike the CGDK. This was almost a reverse of

the hitherto official stand and policy of the kingdom, thus caused harsh criticism and controversies in some corner of Thai society.

In the economic dimension, the kingdom was undoubtedly determined to foster the relations with the neighbors. For this objective, the Chatichai administration began to remove obstacles lying between them, i.e. the government decided to scrap the list of strategic items and to establish trade offices in Vietnam and Cambodia. Moreover, the Thai government declared her will to circulate the *baht* as a hard currency in the regional trade in continental Southeast Asia. In line with this, the private sector, the banking sector in particular, also expanded their businesses into Indochina in the form of joint ventures. All things contributed to collapse of the hierarchy of "politics-before trade" of the preceding governments, and it gradually became difficult to see consolidated policy toward Indochina as more people came to be assertive of their various interests. Naturally, this caused some unfavorable phenomena as well.

Minor Military Role

This still remains as an open question. It is unfortunate that the description about the Chatichai's policy dose not give a clear judgment in regard to the "minor role of force" and its applicability to the Thai case. This is partly because the notion in the Keohane and Nye itself is not clear cut, thus leaving a room to interpret it in any ways. And the ambiguity becomes larger in the Thai case partly because the significance of the military force in Thai politics is quite large and wide. Nevertheless, it is definitely possible to point out that Thailand came to regard military security affairs relating with Indochina as the one which could be separated from other issues such as economic and cultural affairs. This was, at first, well expressed at least at a cognitive level in his policy statement in which he claimed the battle lines in the old forms no longer existed with allies divided by differences over economics and adversaries reaching out to each other to cooperate for mutual benefits. This cognitive sense materialized in the Thai-Lao relation in particular. Thailand

tried to further her relations with the landlocked neighbor in non-military issue areas despite the territorial dispute between them remained unresolved. In relation to Cambodia and Vietnam, the decline of military role and significance (at both actual and perception levels) in the policy toward the states emerged in the process of Thailand's initiative in the political settlement of the Cambodian problem, particularly in the form of "step-by-step" approach. The approach preceded the ASEAN's idea of comprehensive solution in the point that the Thai approach gave certain legitimacy to the PRK and tried to alienate the Khmer Rouge in the CGDK, thus implicitly sought a coalition of Hun Sen and Sihanouk in a future Cambodian government. That meant the kingdom decided to discard the hitherto *de facto* policy to use the Khmer Rouge as her proxy bulwark vis-à-vis Vietnam.

In addition, the Thai armed forces itself under the leadership of Chawalit refrained from asserting militaristic stance toward the Indochinese states. He enthusiastically engaged in normalizing Thai-Lao relations and in cementing reconciliation among the Khmer factions in the Tokyo Conference for example. Therefore, the military role in the traditional sense (that is a physical might of it) reduced to certain degree during the Chatichai years. Nevertheless, it is again still an open question. Chawalit seemed to be strengthening his political constituency by appealing himself in the field of foreign relations with the neighboring states so that he could succeed premiership from Chatichai in the future. He might have tried to impress himself to general public that he could be the next or a future premier. It might be easier for military elites who aimed at gaining the supreme position of a civilian government to be active in foreign affairs, rather than domestic ones, since the general mood at the time certainly embraced an open and almost fuller democracy for the first time since the mid-1970s. In any sense, what Keohane and Nye asserted the minor role of military force under the Complex Interdependence might be an individual phenomenon, rather than a structural one, in the case of this study.

According to Keohane and Nye, these structural phenomena, namely the multiple channels,

the absent hierarchy in issue areas and the minor military role, would experience peculiar political processes. The academics suggest these will appear in the forms of which 1) linkage of issues would become more difficult and issues would be treated in ad hoc manners, and power relations and allocation would also be accorded to issue areas; 2) agenda setting would be more politicized since more parties, regardless of their nationality sometimes, would come into the process of agenda setting of a state; and 3) with these various parties entering into the agenda setting itself and process, traditional inter-state relations would see transnational and transgovernmental coalitions by issue areas. Following these categories and criterion, the following part will try to analyze the Chatichai's Indochina policy and its implication to the Thai political environment.

Linkage Strategy

Keohane and Nye asserted that "linkage strategy will see more difficulties" and thus "the distribution of power within each issue will become more important" chiefly because of the absence of the hierarchy among issues. More precisely speaking, the difficulties and distribution of power within an issue is a consequence which, under the condition of the absent hierarchy, an apparatus of a government may "pursue its own concerns; and although several agencies may reach compromises on issues that affect them all, they will find that a consistent pattern of policy is difficult to maintain".

This phenomenon obviously is detectable in the case of Chatichai's initiative, particularly in his dealing with Cambodian problem at the domestic level. He invited his private advisors into the government circle, in this case to the Government House, not into the MFA, to support his initiative. These advisers had their own perceptions and approaches in their mind in dealing with the Indochinese states, which were substantially different from those of the MFA and FM Siddhi. Indeed as a consequence of it, these two camps sometimes refrained from communicating with each other intentionally or accidentally, and they became antagonistic. Meanwhile the two camps once made a

bargain to soften each other's assertions on the Cambodian issue, the Government House and the MFA (and FM Siddhi himself) sustained their respective stance and method until the end. During the rift between them, the latter finally announced its withdrawal from the policy formation regarding Indochina and new FM Subin who had been in charge of industrial policy replaced Siddhi. That is to say, the two camps pursued respective roles which was sometimes dubbed "two track policy" in the guise of same Indochina policy of Thailand, but it sooner faced deadlock. The power distribution regarding the Indochinese policy both its formation and implementation changed from the hand of the MFA and Siddhi to that of the Government House and the advisory group after all. By when then premier came to urge his idea of "step-by-step" approach, the Government House came to attain its power to conduct Indochina policy while the MFA could hold its legitimacy and capability in other issue areas.

Agenda Setting

Politicization and difficulty in agenda setting in the Chatichai's Indochinese policy was deeply related and implicated by the fact that Thailand was a growing economy and the structure of Indochinese economies were transforming to market-oriented one. Hence, the politicization and difficulty in agenda setting in the Chatichai's policy was quite grand and pervasive. One should mind again here that his policy was primarily highly economy-conscious one, and this very point was different from those of the previous administrations by then as far as Indochina was concerned. In short, he placed priority on economy, politics being subordinate. Chiefly for this, he and his advisors adventured to invite Hun Sen to Bangkok. And private sectors supported his initiative by accompanying him in such occasions as Hun Sen's visit to Bangkok, Chatichai's visit to Laos and etc. It did not remain at economic affairs however. Indeed, as his speeches and the advisers' remarks indicated, their real intention was politics. They aimed at political resettlement of the Cambodian issue through the initial contact in ostensible matters of economy.

As Keohane and Nye did not further to point out the significance of the politicization and difficulty in agenda setting, it remained as an explanation of individual phenomena, rather than an analytical notion. As such, it seems possible to say that throughout the Chatichai's Indochinese policy, the criticism and controversies over his initiatives became more fervent and harsher. The serial conflicts between the Government House and the MFA, the Siddhi's announcement of withdrawal from Indochinese policy and eventual resignation from the MFA, the cross-support to Chatichai over the Hun Sen's visit, the bipartisan support to Chatichai of his Cambodian peace initiatives, and etc. These things would not have occurred if Chatichai had sustained hitherto stand and policy of the former regime.

Transnational and Transgovernmental Relations

In this regard, it must be inevitable to quote again the he criticism made by Siddhi and Deputy PM Pong. Siddhi warned that the Chatichai's initiative was "only his desire, and not exactly the policy of the ruling coalition", therefore "a personal wish must be distinguished from a government policy". And he insisted that government agencies and the private sector must cooperate with one another in implementation of *foreign policy whereas the MFA was responsible for supervising the activities* so that they would proceed along with the same policy direction. Pong urged the advisors should "just think, don't do it" because they were just "advisors, not implementers". These remarks explain well the realist assumption on the role of Foreign Office of a state that foreign policy formation as well as implementation should be conducted only by Foreign Office, or should be coordinated and consolidated by the Office at least. Though, it is another story that Siddhi and Ping identified themselves respectively as being realists or not.

What happened during the Chatichai administration was almost completely on the contrary. The advisors stepped into the diplomatic channel when they took their initiatives, e.g. the secret consultation between the advisors and the Vietnamese and Laotian ambassadors in Bangkok about

the schedule of Hun Sen, the premier of a country which Thailand did not officially recognize; the frequent contacts between the advisors and the diplomats of Japanese MFA during the Chatichai-Kaifu talks and the Tokyo Conference on Cambodia, for example. Even at the domestic level, about one third of MPs of ruling as well as opposition parties expressed their support to Chatichai's policy but at the same time they urged him to decide to cease from supporting the CGDK immediately. Probably the PM did not expect the latter demand. The group of these MPs was led by those who had been advocating liberalized relations between Thailand and the neighboring states and who had been already gaining certain benefits from unofficial trading with Indochinese states. In addition to these rightful moves, there reportedly existed some suspicious network between some Thais and some Indochinese in pursuit of their business interests, albeit they were not completely provable. In any sense, these were, as Keohane and Nye pointed out, actual examples of *transgovernmental coalitions on particular policy questions*, away from knowledge and hand of ministry of foreign affairs. Therefore, it became impossible to affirm that domestic conflicts of a nation stop at her water's edge.

2. Thailand's Indochina Policy Changed or Not?

In the preceding chapter, the thesis analyzed the Indochina policy of the Chatichai administration in descriptive and chronological fashions. During his tenure, new policy makers came into the government and sometimes they implemented the policy by themselves. Moreover, Chatichai's policy itself was the paradigm shift in Thailand's foreign policy toward the neighboring states. Nevertheless, it was not only Chatichai who claimed rather soft approaches toward the socialist states. After the communist forces came to powers in these states after 1975, those such as Kukrit Pramoj, Seni Pramoj and Kriangsak Chamanand for example made efforts to normalize the kingdom's relations with them. But their efforts were sort of clean-up of the unfavorable and unfortunate relations between them plotted under the severe Cold War environment, in one sense.

Therefore, their maneuverings were faced with political issues at first to attain guarantee of national survival for Thailand. The Joint Communiqués and/or Joint Statements made between them by these Thai leaders bore the formula such as “non-aggression”, “non-intervention to internal affairs”, “mutual respect of territorial integrity”. Considering that Thailand had for long been pro-Western or anti-communist forces in Indochina since around 1950 when the kingdom made her stand of pro-Westernness in the world politics, these formula were indispensable as well as essential to formalize diplomatic relations with her former adversaries, indeed. Nevertheless, it is also a fact that the normalization with the communist neighbors in the 1970s later contributed as foundations to further exchange between the kingdom and the neighbors. In this sense, the Chatichai’s new policy was also a product of these Thai leaders’ initial efforts.

However, it was also a fact that the Thailand’s Indochina policy continuously bore what Keohane and Nye described “realist assumption” at least till the end of the Prem administration. In addition, some bureaucrats (not all) in the MFA sustained somewhat “superpower determinism” in the process of policy decision. In this regard, the Thailand’s Indochina policy at the latter period of Prem’s years was still a monolithic Cold War style. This modality however faced grave challenges when Chatichai came to office in August 1988.

Chatichai introduced the almost adverse paradigm of policy toward the neighboring socialist states. It placed priority on economy first. He tried to extend the cooperation which would be cultivated between the kingdom and the neighbors, to politico-military areas. For this objective, he tried to separate politics and economy and succeeded in it to certain extent. More concretely speaking, Thai diplomacy during his tenure pursued her national interest by issue areas. The separation between economic and cultural cooperation and the territorial dispute in her relations with Laos is a representative example. At the same time, his administration (more concretely speaking, he and his private advisers) ventured to architect diplomatic channel with the unrecognized regime in Phnom Penh by inviting, not by going to, its leader Hun Sen. This risky initiative, i.e. the admission

of the existence of the "PRK in and of Cambodia", eventually contributed to progress of the otherwise stagnant political resettlement of the Cambodian problem. Almost all of this and that happened in the Chatichai's diplomacy toward Indochina were deeds, not words.

Indeed, the change (or adjustment or reorientation, if not change) of Indochinese policy was in part a consequence of the ongoing rapprochement between China and Soviet Union and China and Vietnam, and between the United States and Soviet Union at a more larger global state. However, foreign policy change of a state hardly can be explained only by these "external" factors or by "superpower determinism". If such external or superpower determinism dictates foreign policy orientation of seemingly less powerful nations, the Sino-Soviet rapprochement would have brought a significant change into the foreign policy of North Korea. Or the U.S.-Soviet détente and the eventual withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan in the late 1980s would have brought an installment of pro-American government in Kabul since the U.S. continuously supported the Afghan resistance forces. Or the Japanese government would have urged the United State to reduce the number of U.S. armed forces in Japan, for examples. However, these did not actually happen. Important here is that in these cases, there were almost no forces or groups at the domestic level in these countries, albeit there must have been various reasons for that. In other words, foreign policy change of a state hardly occurs without such forces or groups who are well incorporated into government apparatus.

In this regard, the Chatichai administration tried to draw the ongoing changes of the world politics into Thailand by introducing a new government apparatus, which was the private policy advisory board. It is possible to say that the elected premier and his advisors advanced the existing relations with Indochina which was planted by the leaders in the 1970s but highly hard-security-conscious one, to the one which they could more or less negotiate unfavorable issues lying between them not by the way of comprehensive package, but by issues. Accordingly, general public of the kingdom, the private business sector in special, also came to interact with their

Indochinese counterparts directly. This was an apparent involution of norms and modalities in Thailand's perceptual and actual attitude in her diplomatic relations with Indochinese states and peoples. Hence, it is definitely possible to affirm that Thailand departed from the highly security-conscious Cold War style diplomacy and began to step in the more complex interdependent diplomacy in her relations with Indochina in the conjuncture of Chatichai's years.