



CHAPTER III

Thailand's Foreign Policy with Emphasis on the Relations with Indochinese States after the WW II

1. Relations with Superpowers

If the Thailand's foreign policy after the conclusion of World War II was a security dominant one, it is greatly valuable to trace the history with an emphasis on superpowers of the time. In Thai security context, the pattern of foreign policy of superpowers in the period comparable to that of Thailand were those of the United States in Cold War era in Asia¹, and of the People's Republic of China during the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Thailand's relations with superpowers can be periodized and described as follows.

1945-1950

As many scholars and observers have described, Thai diplomacy was an accumulation of practical calculation, decision and implementation of national interests, rather than of specific ideologies. In the modern times, Thailand aligned with the Imperial Japan at the early stage of World War II primarily for the purpose of maintaining her independence. But when Thais came to realize that Japan would lose the war in the latter phase of the war, she shifted the relations with Japan to that of the Allies. An explanation of the Thais, made just 2 days after the Imperial Japan announced her acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, to the Allies for the modification was "the declaration of

¹ There are some suggestions of distinguishing the relations by depicting certain traits in it, e.g. Wiwat Mungkandi classified it by focusing on paralleled policy features in the two countries: Anti-aggression (1945-54), Anti-communism (1949-69), and Adjustment to realities (1969-1975); Kramol Tongdhamachart, stressing Thai domestic factors, divided it as Democratic Period (August 1945-April '48), Authoritarian (April '48-September '57), Benevolent Absolutism (April '48- September '57), and Return of Democracy (October '73-October '76); Randolph split it as follows, Deepening Commitment (1950-1964), War in Indochina (obscure), Falling Curve (1969-1976), and New Balance (1976-1984); Corrine Phuangkasem did it as Pro-western but Nonaligned (1945-'47), Aligned with the U.S. and strongly anti-Communist ('48-October '73), Nonaligned and equidistant (November '73-September '76), Pro-western and anti-communist (October '76-October '77), and "Balance of power" policy (after 1978). See respectively Wiwat, "Parallel Features in Thai-American Foreign Relations" in Hans H. Indorf ed., *Thai-American Relations in Contemporary Affairs*, Singapore: Executive Publications, 1982; Kramol, "Thai Politics and Bilateral Relations" in Karl D. Jackson and Wiwat eds, *United States-Thailand Relations*, 1986; R. Sean Randolph, *Thailand and United States: Alliance Dynamics, 1945-1986*, Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1986; Corrine, *Thailand's Foreign Relations 1964-1980*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984.

war (against the Allies) on the 25th January 1942, as well as all acts adverse to the United Nations are acts contrary to the will of the Thai people and constitute an infringement of the Constitution and the laws of the land",² and subsequently should be void of reprisals from the Allies.

In response to the letter, United States admired the decision, saying "the action of the Thai Government is a welcome step in American-Thai relations"³ because the U.S. knew that "immediately following the Japanese occupation of Thailand, the Minister of Thailand in Washington organized a Free Thai movement among those Thais who were outside their country when the Japanese blow fell".⁴ On the issue of joining the newly established United Nations, Thailand repealed the anti-communistic legislation, Act Concerning Communism of 1933,⁵ to seek support from the Soviet Union which could cast a veto at the United Nations Security Council.⁶ Though the restoration of the relations with the United Kingdom and France were painful for some Thais, these were accomplished during 1947 in the end. All these were the Thai efforts of readjustment and modification of what she had pursued, whether intentionally or not, during the war time.

The critical event that would lead Thailand to more and more align with the United States was the military coup d'etat of November 1947 in which the military Coup Group of Field Martial Phibun Songkhram, General Pin Choonhavan and General Phao Sriyanonda took power into their

² "Letter from the Minister of Thailand (Seni Pramoj) to the Secretary of State (James F. Byrnes) Containing Text of Proclamation Issued by Regent of Thailand, August 17, 1945" in Raymond Dennett and Robert K. Turner eds, *Documents on American Foreign Relations, Vol.8 (July 1, 1945-December 31, 1945)*, Princeton University Press, 1948, p.824.

³ "Statement by the Secretary of State (John F. Byrnes) Concerning United States Relations with Thailand, August 20, 1945" in *Ibid.*, p.825.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.825.

⁵ This act defined communism as one of the economic theories, rather than a political doctrine, as describing "communism means the economic system or theory, which rests upon the total or partial abolition of the right of private property, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the State". See "Act Concerning Communism, 1933" in Thak Chaloemtiarana ed., *Thai Politics 1932-1957: Extracts and Documents, Volume I*, Social Science Association of Thailand, 1978, pp. 236-237.

⁶ Liang Chi Shad, *Thailand's Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Its Evolution since World War II*, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences Occasional Paper No. 73, Singapore: Nanyang University, 1977, p.5.

hands and thus conducted the foreign policy. At first the U.S. appeared to be unfavorable towards the new regime mainly because of their measure to take power and of revival of Phibun who had cooperated with the Japanese during the war time, but the international situation surrounding the U.S. (little later) made her to reconsider the regime in the light of the new concept in her foreign policy and military strategy in Asia, namely the Containment policy and strategy which was a product of fears shared among the American policy makers who regarded the rapid development in China and the subsequent birth of the People's Republic of China in October 1949 as a threat of communism in the region.

In those days, Phibun as well as his aides were said to be not so much concerned with the "alien" ideology. For instance, when he cracked down on the Chinese communists in 1948 and 1949, the suppression went simultaneously against Kuomintang supporters of the Nanking government of China. Kai-shek asked the U.S. in September 1948 to help it topple Phibun.⁷ Phibun himself was indifferent to the ideology and said in the Parliament: "at present, as you know must know, there is not at all any unrest in Thailand created by admitted communists".⁸ But in the scene outside the kingdom he well understood how to attract foreign attentions, particularly of the U.S. and the U.K., to fortify his power base and well managed to utilize the rapidly changing environment of world politics which seemed favorable to him. In contrast to talking to Thai press, he reiterated his abhorrence of communism and portrayed himself as a staunch anti-communist whenever he talked to foreign press and diplomats.⁹

1950-1960

There might be no debate on the year 1950 as a decisive year for Thailand when the kingdom joined the western camp in the Cold War environment.¹⁰ It was not clear what the decisive

⁷ Daniel Fineman, *A Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947-1958*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, p.75.

⁸ Record of the House of Representatives Ordinary Session, 2491, series 1, session 28/2491, September 23, 1948, pp.3226-3228, translated and quoted in Fineman, *op.cit.*, pp.75-76.

⁹ Fineman, *op.cit.*, p.74

¹⁰ In regard to when the Cold War began in Thailand, most scholars and observers pinpoint the

factor for Phibun to recognize such an unstable and unpopular French-supported regime in Vietnam, the Bao Dai regime.¹¹ It was said that American ambassador Phillip Jessup conferred with Phibun and urged him privately at the end of 1949 to recognize the regime and the Thai government finally followed the American advice on 28 February 1950. But the Thai reluctance of the recognition continued till before the official decision. In the cabinet meeting in November 1949, Phibun accepted the recommendation by Pote Sarasin, Deputy Foreign Minister in which he urged Phibun to withhold any recognition or support because Bao Dai's unpopularity and eventual withdrawal of French forces from Indochina. But Phibun was gradually fascinated with increasing amount of aid and assistance from the U.S. and reconsidered the previous decision by around January 1950. After several cabinet meetings, sometime together with the internal-security-responsible Peace Maintenance Committee and the external-security-responsible National Defense Council members, he announced publicly his recognition of the French-made Vietnamese regime in the following month.¹² It was only Thailand and South Korea among Asian nations which endorsed the regime.

After the recognition of the Bao Dai, Thailand, Phibun more precisely, exhibited pro-Americanism in foreign policy at a stretch within the year. The most imminent factor of further

year 1950 when Thailand recognized the Bao Dai regime of the State of Vietnam and decided to dispatch armed forces to Korean War. On the other hand, for American policymakers, I believe, it must have been June 1948 when a conference of State Department's Far Eastern Affairs officials and leading diplomats from Southeast Asia nations held and made certain direction toward Thailand in line with the Department's misgivings of communist expansion in Asia. This became firm in the early 1949. The American ambassador to Thailand claimed the significance of Southeast Asia including Thailand: "it is not argued that this area is equally as important as Europe, but Communism being a global problem, it appears to us here to be both wise statesmanship and good strategy to take steps now before this area is completely dominated by Communism, to contain this threat and give support and encouragement to such countries as Siam which are not yet seriously infected". See "Memorandum No.35, from Edwin F. Stanton, U.S. Embassy, Bangkok to the Secretary of States, February 10, 1949", quoted in Randolph, *op.cit.*, p.11.

¹¹ Though, a Thai Army goodwill mission had already paid a visit to Saigon as early as September 1948, four months after Phibun assumed his premiership.

¹² Fineman, *op.cit.*, p.110-113. Against the decision, the Deputy Foreign Minister Pote Sarasin resigned afterward. Just two days before the first meeting, Foreign Affairs Ministry's Chief of Western Department, Konthi Suphamongkhon, on February 11, presented an eight-page memorandum to Pote in which he strongly opposed to the recognition because even Americans and Britons supported Bao Dai only for lack of a better alternative, and as "Thailand is a small Asian country and a close neighbor of Vietnam", Thailand would "risk more than the U.S. or England". According to Fineman's interview with Konthi in March 1992, then high-ranking officials including Eastern Department's Chief approved his memorandum in a meeting at MFA. See, *Ibid.*, p.111 in particular.

tightening of the bilateral relations came with the outburst of Korean War in June 1950. In response to the United Nations' request for food, Phibun agreed to deliver rice and suggested that he would send Thai troops if U.N. asked. On the morning of 3 July, even before the U.N. made any request, his cabinet approved in principle of dispatching Thai military forces, and after receiving the U.N. formal request, National Security Council and the cabinet issued the final approval of sending 4,000 ground troops and contributing 40,000 metric tons of rice for Korean relief.¹³ Meanwhile his policy of supporting the U.S. forces in the war drew criticism among civilians again, regardless of their political stances. In the cabinet meeting where he made the decision, some members were definitely opposed to his proposal and majority of press also criticized it with harsh words.¹⁴ These oppositions were, however, steamrolled at last.

With the Phibun's support of the U.S. in Korean War, Thailand and the U.S. showed a series of nimble moves in the year, i.e. both concluded the Fulbright Accord in July under which Thailand could send promising students to universities in U.S.; signed an accord initiating economic and technical aid from U.S. on 19 September, a day before Royal Thai Army was to depart for Korea, and finally concluded a military assistance agreement with U.S. in the following month, with Thai's expectation that most of the assistance provided would go to strengthen the security of its troubled frontier with Indochina.¹⁵

After these consolidations with the U.S., Thailand publicly announced and confirmed in the Phibun's policy speech on 11 December that "Thailand belongs to the camp of freedom and

¹³ Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*, Social Science Association of Thailand and Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University, 1979, pp.284-285. As a result of Phibun's serial appeals of pro-American policy, Thailand could procure a great sum of financial aid as well as material assistance such as weaponry, naval vessels, and fighter planes. See, Randolph, *op.cit.*, pp.13-15; Fineman, *op.cit.*, pp.89-125.

¹⁴ The opposition came from, for example, Khuang Apaiwongse, Thongdi Isarachiwin, MPs respectively, Senator Pridithephaphong Thewakul (Pridi Debyabongse), and newly appointed Foreign Minister Worakan Banacha (albeit, he later followed the Phibun's decision). Fineman, *Ibid.*, p.116-117.

¹⁵ Richard P. Stebbins, *The United States and World Affairs 1950*, Harpers and Brothers, 1951, p.326.

democracy to counter communism for justice and peace of the world".¹⁶ In line with this policy, Thailand became an anti-communist country. In November 1952 the government enacted new Anti-Communist Activities Act, in which "communists" were defined in a crude manner.

Nevertheless, it was a fact that Thailand was highly exposed to communism in continental Southeast Asia and the neighboring governments also had problems with communism. This external environment brought misgivings even to internal politics. In the west and north, Burma was fighting with communists; in the north the Laotian government was struggling with the Pathet Lao; in its northeast and east the U.S. and France faced difficulties in defending their puppet regime in South Vietnam and in defeating the Viet Minh forces; and along the border with Malaya in the Deep South, Malayan and British forces were engaging in suppression of Communist Party of Malaya.¹⁷ Some Thais of Chinese-origin were sympathetic towards the doctrines of Red China and this was, in the eyes of Thai rulers, contributable to overthrowing the government. In the northeast Vietnamese had taken refuge there since the outbreak of the first Indochina War between Vietnamese nationalist or Viet Minh and France and some of them were obviously cooperative with the communist resistance.¹⁸

These severe realities of environment in both internal and external fronts led Thailand, in September 1954, the year the Geneva Agreements on Indochina was formalized, together with other six countries,¹⁹ Concluded the Manila Pact and became member of its subsequent entity, Southeast

¹⁶ Rungrut Sayamanon ed., *Nayobay Rataban Thai B.E.2475-2519*, Monograph Series in Public Administration Editorial Board, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1976, p.124, translated into Japanese and quoted in Kazuhide Kato, *Tai Gendai Seijishi* (Modern History of Thai Politics)[Japanese], Tokyo: Koubundou, 1995, p.139.

¹⁷ Corrine Phuangkasem, *Thailand and SEATO*, Program of Publication and Research in Political Science, Thammasat University, Thai Watana Panich Co., Ltd. 1973, p.13. Communist Party of Malaya claimed its dissolution in December 1989 in Narathiwat after negotiations with Malaysian and Thai authorities.

¹⁸ Corrine, *Ibid.*, p.14. Regarding an attempt of subversion by Chinese communists, Corrine points out: "Thais came to be more serious of the possibility of subversion since Beijing had announced in January 1953, the establishment of a Thai Autonomous People's Government in Yunnan province, southern China, whose primary objective was to guide all Thai-speaking people in Southern China, Laos and Thailand into the struggle against the oppression of western 'imperialism'", p.16.

¹⁹ Other members were the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Pakistan. Pakistan later seceded from the SEATO in November 1972 and

Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) on the purpose of counter-communism and economic cooperation in the region, offering Bangkok as the headquarters of the collective defense. For Americans the organization and Thailand's participation in it were quite desirable since the U.S. itself had already weighed so much on Thailand in its policy of containing communist expansion, particularly after the Geneva Agreements which the U.S. regarded as a "major triumph for the Communists" and then the U.S. turned the spotlight "in particular upon Thailand" in their strategy.²⁰

Thailand also expected the SEATO would serve as a firm assurance in both political and military fashions for Thailand's security. Foreign Minister Prince Wan Waithayakorn asserted in his speech at the Manila Conference in September 1954: "while, in the matter of wording, there is a variety of models to choose from, it is the substance that count; and, from this point of view, my Delegation would desire to see a commitment which in substance, is as near as possible to that of NATO". In the Bangkok Conference in February 1955 when the members made arrangements for implementing the provisions of the Pact, he said "the countries which have urgent need of the assistance of our Organization are Laos, Cambodia and Free-Vietnam, and the proximity of Bangkok to them will be helpful in this connection"²¹ Both were the reflections of the Thais who thought that the kingdom should seek a firm and substantial security assurance and that major threat or instability

SEATO itself dissolved in 1977.

²⁰ Edwin F. Stanton, "Spotlight on Thailand", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.33, No.1, October 1954, p.72. Stanton was U.S. ambassador to Thailand between 1947 and 1953. Stanton, in this essay, highly praised Thailand and Phibun for the anti-communist policy and claimed the both sides should firm the course more, by quoting a proverb "the only way to have a friend is to be one". *Ibid.*, p.85. The content of Geneva Agreements was undesirable to the U.S. With the Agreements concluded, the U.S. presumed a worse scenario they should avoid in the future, relating to Thailand: "the extension of Communist control to all of Vietnam might stimulate doubts in Thailand over the wisdom of continuing a Western orientation. Communist control of Laos or Cambodia... would significantly increase Communist subversive capability in Thailand and would almost certain weaken Thai confidence in their Western alignment", and "if the Thai leaders estimated the situation in this way, they would probably be disposed to reject US assistance and too seek some sort of accommodation with the Communists". This estimate was officially circulated to and shared among almost all of chiefs of the executive body of the U.S. then. See "National Intelligence Estimate, Washington, 7 December 1954 (No.438)" in *Foreign Relations of United States 1952-1954*, Vol. XII, East Asia and the Pacific Part 2, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987, pp.741-742.

²¹ "Speech of Prince Wan, The Signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty and the Pacific Charter", p. 37, and "Speech of Prince Wan, The Bangkok Conference of the Manila Pact Powers", p.40, both quoted in Russell H. Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia: 1945-1958*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958, p.271.

against Thailand would originate from or come through the Indochinese area. The benefits the Thais expected came soon, e.g. the economic aid from the U.S. during the fiscal 1954-55 year tripled to US\$ 38.5 million from US\$ 11 million of the previous year.²²

1960-1968²³

The second crucial event for Thailand to seek more effective assurance of security came with the Laotian crisis, which later caused great concern among Thai elites of ineffectiveness of such a multilateral organization for security assurance. This crisis and Thailand's misgivings of the SEATO drove the country to align with the U.S.

The Laotian crisis and its sequent developments were quite complex since each member state claimed their own measures for a solution of the crisis and thus, the organization could not, in the eyes of the Thais, work as effectively to the Thais' satisfaction. The crisis itself came to surface in 1959 when the leftist Pathet Lao supported clandestinely by Viet Minh attacked the Royal Lao Government and the communists seized two southern provinces. Despite the turmoil in the "treaty area", the SEATO members took long time, more than a year, to indicate their collective policy to settle the crisis through political and peaceful means. Over the period, the member states suggested respectively their own ideas and schemes based on their respective national interests. France supported Souvanna Phouma's neutralist government as far as it existed and called for an international conference to negotiate a neutral status of Laos, the United Kingdom proposed a revival of International Control Commission for Laos which had been adjourned since the 1954

²² Corrine, *op.cit.*, p.22.

²³ To the U.S. side, as of May 1961, the significance of Thailand rapidly grew in accordance with the worsening situation in Vietnam. Vice President Johnson sent a recommendation to President Kennedy after his trip to Southeast Asia, India and Pakistan in 1961, in which he claimed "Vietnam and Thailand are the immediate—and most important—troubled spots, critical to the U.S... We must decide whether to help these countries to the best of our ability or throw in the towel in this area and pull back our defenses to San Francisco and a 'Fortress America' concept", "the Thais and our own MAAG estimate probably as much is needed as in Vietnam—about \$50 million of military and economic assistance...I believe we should support such a program" partly because "Sarit", to Johnson's understand, "is more strongly and staunchly pro-Western than many of his people" and then, "if Sarit is to stand firm against neutralism, he must have—soon—concrete evidence to show his people of United States military and economic support". See "#21 Report by Vice President Johnson on His Visit to Asian Countries" in *The Pentagon Papers*, New York Times edition, Bantam Books Inc., 1971, pp129-130

Geneva Agreements as to avoid provoking the communists and both Australia and New Zealand supported the British proposal basically. Pakistan enunciated her will to send a contingent if SEATO decided to intervene. The United States seemed irresolute to decide any effective schemes and pursued a neutral Laos and the Philippines supported the American suggestion.²⁴ These diverse opinions were synonymous for the Thais with ineffectiveness of SEATO and reluctance of other member states to commit themselves to defeat the threat Thailand met. That is to say, the Thais, as an analyst of SEATO claims, "realized that the key decisions were being made outside the SEATO context and had no choice but to accept the convergence of views among the western members of the alliance".²⁵

During the crisis, Thailand, together with the U.S., suddenly began to support the rightist faction of Prince Boon Oum and General Phoumi Nosavan when they created a revolutionary government in Savannakhet in 1960. This was a reflection of Thai elite's perception again foreseeing a future government in Laos being leftist or neutral, it would be in effect hostile to Thailand's national security i.e. such a government would be conciliatory with the PRC, the U.S.S.R. and North Vietnam.²⁶ The Thais, with this threat perception, became more worried when the Boon Oum and Phoumi's government was overthrown in August 1960 by the coup headed by self-styled neutralist Captain Kong Lae. With the deteriorating situation, Thailand became more skeptical of effectiveness and willingness of the SEATO members to stand for Thailand's security and Prime Minister Sarit

²⁴ For full discussions, see Leszek Buszynski, *S.E.A.T.O.: The Failure of An Alliance Strategy*, Singapore University Press, 1983, chapter 3; Corrine, *op.cit.*, pp.28-37. The former is a critical analysis of substance and nature of the SEATO in general while the latter gives positive evaluations on the organization based on what Thailand could gain from it.

²⁵ Buszynski, *Ibid.*, p.77.

²⁶ Beside military and political affairs, Thais perceived their relations with Laos as "kith and kin": PM Sarit, who had a Laotian genealogy and General Poumi his cousin, said "the relations between the kingdoms of Thailand and Laos has a special characteristics that distinguish it from the simple neighborhood...For the peoples are one nation; they have the same language, religion, customs and physique so that there is nothing to distinguish which is Thai and which is Laos. Moreover, the people who have their homes near the border between the two countries have family ties and relatives who live on both banks of the Mekong, and they must come and go all the time. Because of this special situation, everything that happens in the kingdom of Laos cannot but affect Thailand", quoted in Corrine, *op.cit.*, p.30.

Thanarat urged that SEATO should be restructured and altered by members "whose fundamental goal is to safeguard and maintain peace and welfare in Southeast Asia and who are ready to make common sacrifices to build up a bastion against impending danger".²⁷ This was obvious criticism against France and the U.K. in particular.

Thailand's apprehension toward the SEATO and search for an alternative arrangement drove her to seek a tighter bilateral relation with the U.S. which had taken relatively tough line over the left-swinging Laos during the crisis. In March 1962, Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman visited Washington D.C. and began negotiations with his counterpart, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, to architect a reinforced mechanism which would assure Thailand of firm security. The talks between the two, sometimes including U.S. President John F. Kennedy, were then materialized as Rusk-Thanat Joint Statement. The Statement expressed their grave concern with spreading communists and subversion by them in Southeast Asia generally and in Thailand precisely, and declared further mutual alliance of the two states with a peculiar interpretation of the roles of SEATO:

*The Secretary of States assured the Foreign Minister that in the event of such subversion, the U.S. intends to give full effect to its obligations under the (Southeast Asia Collective) Treaty to act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process... (And the obligation of the U.S.) doesn't depend upon the prior agreement of all other parties to the Treaty, since this Treaty obligation is individual as well as collective.*²⁸

The Thai-U.S. relations progressed in all dimensions. Thailand afforded the United States in 1964, under certain agreements which later came to be known publicly as "contingency plan", to

²⁷ *Bangkok Post*, 8 September 1961, quoted in Corrine, *Ibid.*, p.35. Thanat also expressed his resentment towards the inability of SEATO on many occasions. He said "The SEATO council completely ignored that call for help (raised by Thailand) with the result that the Organization which was set up for the purpose of combating communist aggression became meaningless because of its unwillingness to face the problem and discharged its duties". See Thanat, "The Enduring Ties" in Indorf ed., *op.cit.*, p.50.

²⁸ "Reassurance to Thailand: Joint Statement of Secretary of State Rusk and Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, Washington, March 6, 1962" in Richard P. Stebbins ed., *Documents on American Foreign Relations 1962*, Harper and Row, 1963, pp.277-278.

use, construct or improve airfields, military training camps, radio and communications centers, signal sites, weapon depots, and permitted stationing of the U.S. combat forces for facilitating anti-communist operations in Southeast Asia and military actions in Indochinese states.²⁹ In addition to leasing facilities and resources, Thailand itself engaged in the American War, surely with its own calculation and assessment. In 1966, Thailand sent its first troops named "Queen's Cobra Regiment" to Saigon and the number of personnel increased to 12,000 later, and the "Black Panthers" of 11,000 personnel replaced the former in 1969. These troops were alleged to be equipped and financed by the U.S.³⁰

Despite the deepening alignment with the U.S. to counter communism, adverse events followed in Thailand. Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi announced in January 1965 that "a war of national liberation is soon to begin in Thailand", and Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) pressed the button of armed struggles in Nakhon Phanom province in September the same year.³¹ With this outbreak of armed struggle by the CPT, Thailand entered a new stage of combating the communists which was more difficult task for Thai authority. The Thai authority in dealing with the insurgency was at first within the Army and later upgraded to the independent Central Communist Suppression Command in 1967.

1968-1973

This extreme pro-Americanism of Thailand was, interestingly enough, challenged from Americans at first. As many Asian states affected more or less, Thailand was mostly shaken by the

²⁹ The air bases which the U.S. used were located mostly in north and northeast regions: Nakhon Phanom, Udorn, Ubon, Korat, Takhli, Don Muang and U-Tapao. Though Thai governments, irrespective of military or civilian, ostensibly maintained that these airfields were not constructed by the U.S. but just "leased" for latter, the reality in fact was that the U.S. Air Force claimed them undeservedly in their policy papers as "U.S.A.F. Air Fields".

³⁰ Raja Segaran Arumugam et al., "Thailand in the Seventies: Challenges of Stability and Security" in M. Rajaratnam and Lim So Lean ed., *Trends in Thailand*, Singapore University Press, 1973, pp.28-29; Liang, *op.cit.*, p.9.

³¹ Saiyud Kerdphol, *The Struggle for Thailand: Counter-insurgency 1965-1985*, S. Research Center Co., Ltd., 1986, pp.13, 25 and 180. General Saiyud was one of the key figures of the counter-insurgency operations in Thailand and adopted strategy and tasks from the United Kingdom and United States armed forces.

newly emerging U.S. foreign policy on Asia, particularly on Southeast Asia, which later further formalized as official stand of the government as Nixon Doctrine.

In October 1967, U.S. Republican Representative Richard M. Nixon, who later assumed the presidency in 1969, revealed publicly his foreign policy on Asia in which he stressed self-defense of Asian nations through a regional arrangement:

Other nations must recognize that the role of the United States as world policeman is likely to be limited in the future. To ensure that a U.S. response will be forthcoming if needed, machinery must be created that is capable of meeting two conditions: (a) a collective effort by the nations of the region to contain the threats by themselves; and, if that effort fails, (b) a collective request to the United States for assistance.³²

His idea of U.S. disengagement from Southeast Asia began to attract attentions of majority in the U.S. since some Americans had already questioned the heavy involvement in the area quite away from home. With the Tet Offensive of January 1968 the American opinion turned more favorable to the Nixon's insistence. Then incumbent Democrat President Johnson announced in March 1968 that he was reducing the level of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and taking steps toward a negotiated peace settlement with Hanoi.³³ Against these moods in the U.S. the Royal Thai Army's Commander-in-Chief General Prapat Charusathira contended that "the bombing must not be

³² Richard M. Nixon, "Asia after Vietnam", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.46, No.1, October 1967, p.114. Nixon's policy on Asia became more firm and concrete in every facets of the U.S. Asian policy in his presidential tenure: "in cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with our treaty commitments. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense" also that "this principle, first applied to security matters, applies as well to economic development... We will expect countries receiving it (economic assistance) to mobilize themselves and their own resources", then argued that "just as clearly, the way in which we set about to resolve this problem has a major impact on our credibility abroad and our cohesion at home. The same is true in other areas where our military presence remained too large, or our economic burden disproportionate, or our attitude paternalistic". See *United States Foreign Policy for the 1970's, Building for Peace: A Report by President Richard Nixon to the Congress (February 25, 1971)*, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971, pp.8-9.

³³ In relations with this U.S. disengagement and Thailand's adjustment to new realities, there are some interesting opinions among Thai academics. For examples, Wiwat Mungkandhi describes the year between 1968 and 1973 as "lost years", claiming "for Thailand, adjustment to the winding down of the War from the Nixon Doctrine to the Paris Peace Agreement was a matter of too little and too late. These were lost years for Thailand in terms of adjustment"; See Wiwat, *op.cit.*, p.134.

suspended but increased".³⁴ Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn expressed his concern of a reducing U.S. presence in Asia, by commenting on American domestic politics that "if Robert Kennedy", a liberal candidate for the presidential election, "is elected, there could be a radical change in U.S. foreign policy which would mean the abandonment of Southeast Asia by America".³⁵

Facing a looming U.S. pullout from Southeast Asia, Thailand, as many other Asian states did similarly, made serial efforts to convince the U.S. again while the U.S. declared their commitments to safeguarding Thailand. With skepticism toward the U.S. gradually swelling in Bangkok, PM Thanom paid an official visit to Washington D.C., in May 1968, two month after the Johnson's statement of downsizing the bombing over North Vietnam and peaceful settlement of the war, and made the president pledge to the U.S. commitments to defending Thailand under treaties and protocols such as Rusk-Thanat Joint Agreement and SEATO protocols. The joint communiqué issued by the two leaders stated that "the president re-emphasized the determination of the U.S. to stand by its treaty commitments to Thailand and its other allies in Asia."³⁶

These affirmations by the U.S. were, however, no more than ostensible in any sense and the American "isolationism" became more apparent as time went on. Since Thailand was the key of the U.S. Asian strategy, these currents hit directly Thailand and the bilateral relations put in jeopardy, particularly at the U.S. Congress. In the Senate Subcommittee on United States Security Arrangements and Commitments Abroad, the existence of "secret agreements", then known as Taksin Plan, and other similar ones between the U.S. and Thailand made public and these documents were reviewed in camera by the senators after all upon their strong demands in November 1969.³⁷

³⁴ *Far Eastern Economic Review* (referred to as *FEER* hereafter), 12 June 1968.

³⁵ *Bangkok Post*, 2 April 1968, quoted in Randolph, *op.cit.*, p.131. Since Richard Nixon had paid several visits to Bangkok before, he was regarded as being friendly to Thailand. When Nixon was elected in November 1968, Thanom reportedly was satisfied with the outcome and seemed somewhat optimistic: "news of his (Nixon's) election has given us confidence, since we knew that he (would) not abandon Asia". Randolph, *Ibid.*, p.131.

³⁶ Quoted in Frank C. Darling, "Thailand: De-escalation and Uncertainty", *Asian Survey*, February 1966, p117.

³⁷ Randolph, *op.cit.*, p.135. The main target of Thai criticism was Senator James W. Fulbright since he was quite critical of the American overcommitment abroad. Against these moves in the U.S.,

The relations with Indochinese states in this period was quite turmoil too: The Cambodian government headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown by a coup led by the U.S.-backed General Lon Nol and Prince Siri Matak and the Thai government recognized the new regime in May 1970. The Lon Nol regime requested Thailand to dispatch combat troops to assist them and Thai armed forces in majority and some civilian bureaucrats supported the request. Thanat noted in July 1970 at the place of SEATO's annual meeting in Manila that the Cambodian crisis was the third crisis the SEATO faced, after the Laos and Vietnam crises. Thailand discarded a decision to send troops after all, but instead provided assistance in the form of border patrols along the frontier, troop training, air support and military supplies.³⁸

In the face of irreversible current in the U.S. foreign policy, Thailand began her own path of trials. FM Thanat floated a balloon to watch a Chinese reaction in February 1969 for a future establishment of diplomatic relations with Thailand, saying that "Thailand is not anti-communist and anti-Chinese we are prepared to sit down and talk—and have meaningful discussion—with Peking to

Thailand's criticism against the U.S. became harsher: FM Thanat bristled more and more, attacking the U.S., for example: "the U.S. has tried to raise doubts in our minds and it has succeeded. It has succeeded in raising doubts in its own mind", quoted in Darling, *op.cit.*, p.115. Yet, ambivalent and suspicion toward the U.S. was already spreading among the Thais. A newsmagazine reported the mood of Foreign Affairs Ministry as of the end of 1967, which was immediate after the Nixon's essay appeared in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine: "at the Thai Foreign Ministry...the mood is faintly reminiscent of Saigon during the days of Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu as officials gratuitously lecture American visitors on the dangers of dissent in the US. Implicit in these lectures is the warning that opponents of the Vietnam conflict in the Congress, universities and press are, if not actually communist agents or dupes, at least giving "moral support" to the Chinese and their North Vietnamese "satellites", as one high-ranking Thai official described the enemy". See more detail in *FEER*, 24/30 December 1967.

³⁸ Corrine, *op.cit.*, pp.43-44. The ousted Sihanouk furiously attacked the U.S. and Thailand, as saying "without waiting for the end of hostilities, Washington diplomacy has been very active in creating 'Phnom Penh-Saigon-Bangkok-Vientiane Axis'" and "the pro-United States axis will vanish the moment Washington government stops supporting it with dollars, guns and bombs. But the common anti-imperialist front of the Khmer, Vietnamese, Laotian, Chinese and Korean peoples will survive it whatever happens..." See Sihanouk, "The Future of Cambodia", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.49, No.1, October 1970, pp.4-5. Thai-Cambodian relation after the latter's independence with full sovereignty endorsed by the Geneva Accords of 1954 was twists and turns. The bilateral relations came to be quite enmity since late 1950s over the dominium of Khmer style temple Khao Phra Viharn on the Thai-Cambodian border and the allegation by Cambodian side that Thai troops on a war footing and large amount of military equipment were being concentrated on the border. This deterioration resulted in diplomatic breaking off in October 1961 between two. Thailand regarded the reiterated Khmer nationalism by Sihanouk as being hostile against the Thais. Full description of these by Thai side is available in MFA (Thailand), *Facts About the Relations between Thailand and Cambodia*, November 1961 and *Relations between Thailand and Cambodia*, n.d., probably circa 1960.

establish peaceful co-existence" and, though Thailand commonly was described as anti-communist, he replied "this is not a correct assessment. We are not in principle or as a matter of rule anti-communist or anti-Chinese".³⁹ He simultaneously revealed that the Thai diplomats in Geneva had been instructed informally to contact with Chinese counterparts there to probe possibilities of a dialogue with the PRC.⁴⁰ The two countries, according to a report, began secret contacts by facilitation of France by October 1971 and advanced to the point where the PRC was preparing to open talks leading to the establishing a formal state-to-state relations with Thailand understanding that the U.S. forces would leave Thailand with the settlement of the Vietnam War; and in turn, the PRC was to pledge a policy of noninterference in Thailand's insurgency problem, consistent with the Five Principles of Coexistence.⁴¹

The reality of U.S. pullback was irrefutable in anyone's eyes and Thais came to accept it. PM Thanom indicated, on 25 March 1969 for the first time, "Thailand will conduct an independent foreign policy to preserve the interest of the country and Thai people,"⁴² and in line with this policy clearance, Thailand and the U.S. began in August 1969 to negotiate on a gradual withdrawal of U.S. military troops and agreed to do it of 6,000 personnel at the first stage by 1 July 1970.⁴³ At the same

³⁹ "Thanat Khoman's Statement at a Press Conference in Tokyo, 26 February 1969" in R. K. Jain ed, *China and Thailand: 1949-1983*, New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1984, p.155.

⁴⁰ M.L. Bhansoon Ladavalya, *Thailand's Foreign policy under the Kukrit Pramoj: A Study in Decision-making*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Political Science, Northern Illinois University, August 1980, pp271-272.

⁴¹ Ross Terrill, "Reports and Comment-Thailand", *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1972, pp.10-14, quoted in Randolph, *op.cit.*, pp141-142.

⁴² Quoted in Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Thailand Can Be More Outward-looking", *The Nation*, 14 September 1988. In fact, Thanom implied certain flexibility in his foreign policy more earlier in September 1968, as saying "Thailand must be prepared to help herself as much as she can, as the country that has influence in the area is going out", *Siam Rath*, 10 September 1968, translated and quoted in Likhit Dhiravegin, "Thailand's Foreign Policy Determinations", *The Journal of Social Science*, October 1974, p.57. This reviewing was derived not only from the external factor, i.e. the U.S. withdrawal from Southeast Asia, but also from domestic pressure of which some social groups like student organizations urged a more independent policy in terms of relations with the U.S. Especially after the promulgation of the 1968 Constitution and Political Party Act in the same year, students and politicians came to be assertive on government's policies.

⁴³ FM Thanat made his idea clear in public of requiring the U.S. troop withdrawal as early as September 1968. A Bangkok press reported "Thanat, in a speech at Kasetsart University, said that if the U.S. pulls out from Vietnam, he will ask the U.S. to withdraw her troops from Thailand", *Siam Rath*, 9 September 1968, translated and quoted in Likhit, *Ibid.*, p.57.

time, in regard to rapprochement with the PRC, the PM cautioned that the Thailand's trial to have contacts with the Chinese should be based on the supposition that the PRC would first change its aggressive policy toward Thailand.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the trials were basically reactive and defensive, and then got into contradiction to the traditional policy to align with the U.S. When President Nixon visited Beijing in July 1971, the relevant determining the Thai-Chinese relations began undoubtedly to tumble with the President's action. For the purpose of consolidating the dispersed policies and cementing his power base, Thanom again resorted to a coup in November 1971 and deleted the name of Thanat from the new National Executive Council. The Thanom's maneuver only brought the kingdom into more confusion in retrieve.

1973-1978

These split and confusion in regard to foreign policy within the Thanom's government came to be consolidated somewhat when the new administrations after the Student Revolution of October 1973. The Revolution, originally triggered with the arrest of eleven students who appealed for a permanent constitution and the protest by fellow students against the arrest, led to the birth of interim parliamentary-coalition civilian administration of Sanya Dhammasakti in October 1973. This political revolution, with a nationalism tint, allowed covert demands of some quarters of Thai society to surface, e.g. an overall withdrawal of the U.S. troops, a more balanced and independent foreign policy. With Kukrit Pramoj's government formed in March 1975, these demands came to realization in more rapid and radical manners, and accelerated with the fact that communist forces assumed power in bordering states in the spring of the year. In a policy speech, Kukrit explicitly accepted the reality of dramatic change in the regional and claimed his omni-directional foreign policy:

This government will promote peaceful co-existence and will be friendly to all countries having good intensions towards Thailand. It will uphold the principle of equality and the differences in political ideologies. To establish a balance among the big powers, this government will establish diplomatic relations with People's Republic of China and will ask for the withdrawal of foreign

⁴⁴ M.L. Bhansoon, *op.cit.*, p.273.

*troops within one year through friendly negotiations. It will strengthen relations with neighboring countries and foster the work of ASEAN. It will try to establish contact with North Vietnam...*⁴⁵

This statement became crystallized in a short period. Thailand again, being more enthusiastically this time, declared their demand in April 1975 of further withdrawal of U.S. forces. This anti-Americanism in the society was radicalized by the Mayaguez incident of May 1975 when the American merchant ship with 39 crews was captured by Cambodian navy in the Gulf of Thailand. The U.S. immediately sent 1,000 marines from Okinawa to Thailand to conduct rescue and retaliation operations against Khmer Rouge regime in Phnom Penh without acknowledging the Thai civilian administration of using Thai military bases. This U.S. action caused harsh criticisms among Thais that the U.S. discriminated the sovereignty of Thailand and looked the kingdom down. As a reaction to the American action, Kukrit government sent a memorandum to the U.S. on 7 May, stating its intentions to review all the existing bilateral agreements.⁴⁶ Stirred with the incident, the Thai government pushed through the withdrawal claim while suggesting if the U.S. would accept seven principles, the U.S. forces would be allowed to remain. The negotiations on the principle between the two sides continued but failed after all and the U.S. personnel, except some military advisors, departed from Thailand by 20 March 1976.⁴⁷ In addition, partly due to the American

⁴⁵ Policy statement of PM M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, *Bangkok Post*, 18 March 1975. Kukrit himself expressed his skepticism of further U.S. commitments to safeguarding Thailand's national security: "How can you tie the destiny of a country to the American electoral system? If America had a Napoleon, I would be at his feet today. I must accept a fact about the U.S. which does not provide constant help, nor a steady policy, in regard to its own allies...It depends too much on Congress, and everything deepens on the next election. You don't know what's going to happen next", *New Straight Times* (Malaysia), 29 June 1975, quoted in Liang, *op.cit.*, footnote no.23, p.29.

⁴⁶ On details of the Mayaguez incident, see for example, *FEER*, 23 and 30 May 1975; Sarasin Viraphol, *Directions in Thai Foreign Policy*, Occasional Paper No.40, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1976, p.30. According to Sarasin, the Foreign Affairs Ministry senior official, the bureaucracy also was churned by the rapid developments in those days: "even within the government itself, there has been a division—between the progressives who wish to see a new relationship with Washington and those who see virtue in the old arrangement. There is an increasing number of individuals opting for the proposal to retain American advisors who would be in a position to dispense of technical knowledge to the Thais....(but) The official government position, that is, one publicly taken by M.R. Kukrit himself..." See Sarasin, *op.cit.*, p.32.

⁴⁷ "Government Announcement on Withdrawal of U.S. Military Personnel from Thailand, 20 March 1976" in *The Withdrawal of U.S. Military Personnel from Thailand*, issued by Dept. of Information, MFA (Thailand), pp.61-62. The seven principles given by Foreign Minister Chatichai Choonhavan to U.S. Ambassador Charles Whitehouse on 4 February 1976 was 1) All places and officials of the U.S. under the projects of cooperation (proposed by the US) should come under the authority of the

“isolationism” and policy shift, the bilateral assistance and aid guaranteed by official and unofficial agreements between the two countries, albeit almost all of which were from the U.S. to Thailand, also officially finished in this year. The then Foreign Minister Major General Chatichai Choonhavan dared to comment abruptly the downsizing relations with the U.S.: “if you look at the percentage of military assistance (from the U.S.) given us, it’s very little, almost nothing in comparison with what America has given to neighboring countries... We’ll recognize any legal government of Cambodia. We don’t care if it’s socialist or not”, and asked about the domino theory, “it never had substance”.⁴⁸

Another “de-Americanization” was the Thailand’s consent to the demise of SEATO. The PM visited Manila in July 1975, a few weeks after his visit to Beijing to normalize the relations with China, and talked with the Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos about a future of the collective defense organization. The both leaders agreed to “phase out” the existence of the organization while retaining the Manila Pact. The reason for the decision was “the changing environment” in Indochina.⁴⁹ The Thais then officially affirmed the termination of the SEATO at its Ministerial

Thai courts, except for specific cases to be agreed upon by the Governments of Thailand and the U.S., 2) The above-mentioned places and officials must not do anything that constitutes a threat or interference in the sovereignty of other countries, 3) In order to attain the objectives and mutual benefits of this cooperation, the Thai Government must receive regular reports of the operations including information and findings resulting from the projects, 4) During operations of the projects of cooperation, American officials have to train Thai officials to take them over efficiently and as rapidly as possible, 5) The number of Americans assigned to permitted projects should not exceed the number set by the Thai Government, 6) The American officials are to receive only the same privileges as other foreign technicians, 7) Any agreement on future cooperation will expire after two years but may be renewable if considered appropriate or may be abrogated on advance notice by either side. See more in *FEER*, “We Don’t Want Stay Where We Are Not Wanted”, Vol. 92, No. 14, 2 Apr 1976.

⁴⁸ “American Troops Will Be Out”, interview with *Asiaweek*, 14 April 1976. In regard to the domino theory, Americans also abandoned the strategic concept those days: Richard Holbrooke, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs of the Jimmy Carter’s administration, asserted later that the events in Asia had disapproved the domino theory. See the address of Holbrooke in Honolulu, Hawaii on June 16, 1978 in U.S. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1977-1980*, p.681. The *Newsweek* article reported the number of U.S. servicemen in Thailand at the time as 25,000. In the face of these civilian-led moves, fervent opposition and pressure came from military side on the withdrawal issue in particular. For example, Army Commander-in-Chief General Boochai Bamrungpong, even after the Supreme Command agreed to the policy, warned that a coup could take place before the scheduled April 4 election and violence could break out on March 20, the deadline set by the government for the total withdrawal of all U.S. forces. See *FEER*, 27 February 1976, p.21.

⁴⁹ Buszynski, *op.cit.*, pp.207-208; Justus M. van der Kroef, *The Lives of SEATO*, Occasional Paper No.45, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, December 1976, p1. Though the official affirmation of terminating SEATO, some Thai leaders, probably including some part of Kukrit himself, seemed to have a desire to restructure the entity to a more economic development and cooperation oriented one at the time.

Council in September 1975. Nevertheless, Thailand did not want to repeal the Manila Pact itself which assured the member states of security cooperation. In this respect, what the kingdom wished at the time was a removal of the visible American presence from Thailand.

In exploration and/or tightening of diplomatic relations with the communist states in Asia, namely People's Republic of China (PRC), Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Democratic Kampuchea (DK), the civilian government was prompt to recognize or reaffirm them. Though the problem whether or not to recognize the PRC has been existent in Thai political scene since the former's establishment in October 1949, it was after around 1969 when it came to the surface as a political issue in an actual manner. This became substantially an imminent policy issue in the civilian government as Kukrit publicly announced his willingness to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC. In fact, Thailand had already paved a path, but a cautious one, of reconciliation with the PRC even before the open politics era. A table tennis team accompanied with Prasit Kanjanawat, the deputy chief of the Directorate of Finance, Economic Affairs and Industry of the Thanom's National Executive Council and a close friend of Field Marshall Prapat Charunsatien, as an "advisor" for the team participated in the Asian Table Tennis Union Championship in September 1972 and Prasit held talks with PRC's Premier Zhou En-lai. This was followed up in October 1972 by a Thai commercial mission to the Canton Trade Fair in October same year at China's invitation. In 1973 instructions were given out to Thai ambassadors in cities where PRC's representatives were existent to increase contacts with them and the Thais consequently succeeded in conducting talks in Stockholm, Teheran, Tokyo, Washington D.C., Canberra, Brussels, Madrid, Karachi and Hague.⁵⁰ In Bangkok, the National Assembly abolished the decree instituted by Sarit in

On which side, the Filipino or the Thai, suggested the dissolution first, Buszynski supplied a press report of the day of the PM's departure for Manila in which the PM said the immediate dissolution of SEATO was not anticipated and the future role of the alliance was to be enlarged, and Buszynski concluded: "it was a Filipino initiative to move for the termination" since the Philippines had seen the militaristic facet of the organization as an obstacle in her adjustment of foreign policy and Thailand followed the Pilipino perception.

⁵⁰ Sarasin, *op.cit.*, pp.19-20; M.L. Bhansoon *op.cit.*, , pp.281-282. However, the

1958 of banning trade with China. Riding on these gradual developments and pressured by leftists and some neutralists, Kukrit paid an official visit to Beijing in the late June 1975 and finally established the diplomatic relations with the PRC on 1 July 1975.

The most important in this rapprochement, for the Thais, was the matter of Chinese influence (both verbal and material) to local communist insurgents. The Thais were indicated to follow the two track policy of the PRC, i.e. while the PRC would continue party-to-party relations, it would also explore government-to-government one. The Thais accepted this leaving the issue of Communist Party of Thailand almost untouched and the clause in the Joint Communiqué was seemingly a compromised one in a sense:

*4. The two governments agreed that all foreign aggression and subversion and all attempts by any country to control any other country or to interfere in its internal affairs are impermissible and are to be condemned.*⁵¹

The Relations with the DK was also conciliatory in principle but not as sharper as with Chinese due chiefly to the exclusiveness of Phnom Penh. After ousting the nationalist Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the coup of March 1970, the coup leader Lon Nol took a grip on the power of Phnom Penh. But this rightist regime lasted only a few years as the similarly nationalist communist,

military-dominant National Security Council was opposed to any hastening rapprochement with the PRC. The Council argued in its recommendation of December 1972 that 1) despite Beijing's public announcements of noninterference in other countries' internal affairs, the contrary was true in practice; 2) the current state of Thailand's internal stability was already problematic without facing further possible complications arising from legalized trade and other contacts with China; 3) formal contact with Beijing would only lead to open collaboration with local insurgents and aggravate the sensitivity of the hardcore Overseas Chinese whose allegiance to Thailand remained dubious. See Sarasin, *Ibid.*, pp.20-22.

⁵¹ "Joint Communiqué of July 1, 1975 between Thailand and China on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" in *News Bulletin*, No.08/1975(July-August 1975), Department of Information, MFA (Thailand). Interestingly enough, although successive Thai governments reiterated fear and threats of the PRC and its connection and support for the CPT for a long time, there are some comments which deny such things. For example, Pranee Saipiroon says "despite of the reported statement by Chen Yi of 1965 urging the beginning of a liberation war in Thailand, as well as other forms of verbal and written denunciation at the height of Thailand's embroilment in Vietnam War, Thai military regimes couldn't concretely prove any substantial Chinese support for the local communist insurgents to overthrow the Bangkok regime". Sarasin also comments paradoxically that "in retrospect, the perceived Chinese threat to Thai security was more apparent than real" and introduces an almost similar analysis to that of Pranee. See Pranee, *ASEAN Governments' Attitude towards Regional Security 1975-1979*, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1982, p.55; Sarasin, *op. cit.*, p19.

Khmer Rouge, gradually emerged and they finally controlled Phnom Penh in April 1975. Thai government, even of civilian prime ministers, was cautious of the new regime because the communists were, for Thais, scarcely different from Sihanouk on the point of Khmer nationalism. Nevertheless, in November 1975, Deputy Premier for Foreign Affairs Ieng Sary visited Bangkok on the invitation of Thai government, now of Seni Pramoj, and negotiated of normalization of bilateral contacts, and this was finally materialized in the Joint Communiqué of 31 October 1975 which assured coexistence, as stating "the differences in the political, economic and social systems of Thailand and Kampuchea do not constitute an obstacle for peaceful coexistence and amity".⁵²

Kukrit's government furthered the relations with the LPDR as well. Though the transformation of the government by leftist force in Vientiane in December 1975 was not so much radical as Phnom Penh and Saigon experienced, its abolition of the monarchy quite dismayed the Thais. More concern the Thais had was infiltration of Vietnamese elements through the leftist-captured land into Thailand because the number of Thais of Lao origin at the moment was threefold of the Lao living in the LPDK, and these Lao-Thais were mostly in Northeast region which used to be under a Laotian domain in past centuries⁵³ and was the most focal point in Thailand for its security affairs, i.e. the crucially sensitive and susceptible to communism for its economically underdeveloped. In spite of these concerns, Thailand maintained diplomatic relations with LPDR.

These quasi-distant, omni-directional and reciprocal foreign policies of civilian administrations however came to an end with the October 1976 incident through which military again gripped the power structure. Thanin Kraivixien, a civilian PM appointed by the coup group, appeared as being a staunch anti-communist to the extent that many observers feared of possible

⁵² "Joint Communiqué of October 31, 1975 between Thailand and Cambodia on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" in Information Dept., MFA (Thailand), *Foreign Affairs Bulletin 15 (October-December 1975)*, pp. 5-6. With the establishing diplomatic relations, Thailand and Cambodian established liaison offices at Poipet and Aranyaprathet, but a vaguely planned next meeting of foreign ministers of both side wasn't fulfilled and no further substantial progress was seen in a few years to come.

⁵³ In regard to the northeast Thailand, Vietnamese FM Pham Van Dong made an ominous description of the region, still in 1981, as "the sixteen provinces of Laos currently under Thai administration". *FEER*, 12, June 1981.

open conflicts with Indochinese states and he suggested to his ASEAN partners in the 2nd ASEAN Summit in August 1977 in Kuala Lumpur to create an anti-communist military alliance, which only to fail.⁵⁴ Contrarily, outlook of international and regional politics had already changed so greatly that his initiatives hardly could see any success. In addition, some military groups including those who were in the suppression of October 1976 came to alienate him. Then he was ousted in the coup of October 1977 by Gen. Kriangsak Chamanand after all and Thailand again adjusted its policy in accordance with the current of then international and regional politics.

1978-1988

Over the years of the premiership of Gen. Kriangsak Chamanand, Thailand again navigated foreign policy of diverse and reconciliatory one. But the kingdom came later to face *realpolitik* in an imminent sense more than ever before on her front when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and installed their puppet regime of Heng Samrin in Phnom Penh.

Kriangsak rewove and furthered the relations with communist states, particularly Vietnam and China. Indeed Kriangsak issued separate letters, right after the coup, to heads of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, inviting them to Bangkok.⁵⁵ The Thai government invited Vietnamese Premier Phan Van Dong in September 1978 and succeeded, though ostensibly in retrospect, in persuading him to declare that Vietnam "support no activity if it is harmful to Thailand" and "respect Thailand's

⁵⁴ Montri Chenvidyakarn "One Year of Civilian Authoritarian Rule in Thailand: The Rise and Fall of the Thanin Government" in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1978*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1978, p.280-281; Kavi Chongkittavorn, *op.cit.*. It seemed impossible then for Thanin to establish such an anti-communist league because Malaysia, the Philippines had already made diplomatic relations with the PRC.

⁵⁵ Khien Theeravit, "Thailand: An Overview of Politics and Foreign Relations", *Southeast Asian Affairs 1979*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1979, p.305. Indeed, Kriangsak was reported to have prepared to reorient Thailand's foreign policy even before the coup of October 1977: The Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, where he was Supreme Commander, issued an official press release on 5 October 1977, two weeks before the coup, which urged Thailand and Cambodia to seek negotiations in resolving the repeated border clashes. Thailand and Vietnam already engaged in serial behind-the-scene contacts for normalization even before the coup, without Thanin's knowledge, between Thai ambassador Seth Herabat and his counterpart Dinh Nho Liem in Vientiane after then Foreign Minister Upadit Pachariyangkul and Vietnamese officials had met at the United Nations in New York. See Khien, *Ibid.*, p.305 for the border issues and *Asiaweek*, 16 December 1977, pp.12-13, for the retrieval of relations with Vietnam.

independence and freedom".⁵⁶ With regard to the Khmer Rouge regime of Cambodia, Foreign Minister Upadit Pachariyangkun traveled to Phnom Penh in February 1978 and Cambodian Deputy Premier in charge of foreign affair Ieng Sary came to Bangkok in July same year. In January 1979 Kriangsak held talks with Laotian Premier Kaysorn Phomviharn in Vientiane and reaffirmed their relations regardless of ideological and political differences, and Kaysorn paid a return visit in April of the year.⁵⁷

Kriangsak was more enthusiastic about rapprochement with the PRC. In April 1978 he paid a visit to Beijing and talked with Premier Hua Guo-feng and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. During the visit, he was told by Deng: "we agreed on the fact that the problem exists. But we also agreed it contains no obstacle to friendly relations. If we wish to be friends, we must speak the truth to each other...Eventually, the question of relations between the two communist parties is an obstacle to furthering our relations. But this doesn't mean they cannot develop".⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Asiaweek*, 22 September 1978, p.22. The report said it was Pham Van Dong who offered the remark to Kriangsak and the Thai premier sitting to Dong's right at press conference, the report described: "whipped out a black pen and took the words down" and crowed "he said it for the first time!, he has not said anything to this effect before anywhere in the world". During the talks, the two sides agreed that Thailand would repatriate two Vietnamese soldiers captured in 1972 in hostile actions in Udorn Air Base while Vietnam would free 30 Thai fishermen and two trawling crafts caught in Vietnamese water.

⁵⁷ The communiqués issued by Thailand and these countries affirmed, in similar terminology, of non-interference to domestic affairs of each other. For example, the one released after the Thai-Lao talks of above-mentioned January 1979 says "non-interference in each other's internal affairs and refraining from carrying out subversive acts against each other directly or indirectly... (and) from allowing other parties to use one's territory as a base for intervention, threat or aggressive acts against other countries in whatever form". See full text in Information Dept., MFA (Thailand), *News Bulletin No.05/1979(April-May)*, p.2. During his return visit to Bangkok, the Laotian PM Kaysone was reported to have pledged to Kriangsak that LPDR would prevent anti-Thai government insurgents from using areas along their common border as their sanctuaries. Quoted from *The Southeast Asia Record 1* (March 29-April 5, 1979) p.12, in Makata Ma, *Consequences of the Vietnam War on Thai Foreign Policy*, unpublished theses, Dept. of Political Science, California State University, Long Beach, August 1980, p.49.

⁵⁸ *Asiaweek*, 10 November 1978, p.33. It seems that the PRC was, though reiterating the fundamental principles promised with the Thais in 1976, reviewing their traditional policy of supporting the local communist movement in Thailand in the face of the developing U.S.S.R.-Vietnamese alliance. For Thailand at this stage, the primary concern with the PRC was the linkage between the internal communist insurgency and the PRC's support for it. That is to say the weight of Thai foreign policy toward the PRC derived more or less from domestic issue. Indeed, Kriangsak tried at the very beginning regarding the Vietnamese invasion, he declined any radical shift of the balance of superpowers by making exertion, during his visits to Washington in February and Moscow in March 1979, that Thailand would stand in neutral to any powers. In regard to the PRC also, he responded to the PRC's statement that the country would support Thailand in the event of Vietnamese aggression that Thailand wouldn't accept any military aid from China even at such an occasion and wouldn't be pushed by any state into the

However, the situation changed completely when the SVR invaded Cambodia in December 1978 and installed the Heng Samrin regime in the following January 1979, which sooner accommodated with the Vietnamese.⁵⁹ This invasion determined Thailand's foreign policy afterward until the SRV would withdraw its troops from Cambodia in the very late 1980s and the political settlement by all factions of Cambodia would be endorsed by international community in 1992.

The first Thai effort against the Vietnamese expansionism was Kriangsak's visit to Moscow since the Thais had regarded the Soviets as one of the pillars to support (both materially and spiritually) the Vietnamese invasion. Kriangsak fled to Moscow in March 1979 to seek some desirable crux to resolve the problem and claimed "seriously concern over the situation that has developed in Indochina", simultaneously emphasizing Thailand's policy as being "strict neutrality", which meant that Thailand would not allow itself to be swayed to anyone's side in any conflict. Hence, he denied that Thai territory was being used to transport arms or material to the Chinese-backed forces of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, as charged by Hanoi and the new regime in Phnom Penh.⁶⁰ Despite his eagerness to obtain some positive replies from the Soviets, the latter only gave general and ambiguous agendas like that Moscow fully supported Vietnam and all countries in Southeast Asia could enjoy stable relations, and that Hanoi "comes out actively for developing peaceful and friendly ties" with its neighbors.⁶¹ In fact, a year later, the Vietnam staged several incursions into Thai territories along the Thai-Cambodian border in Northeast and the Thais came to realize that the Soviets hardly had firm controls over Vietnam.

In this connection, the PRC came to surface in Thailand's security context. Though the two

Cambodian conflict. For more detail, see Tawanchai N. Xoomsai, *China's Role in Thai-Vietnamese Tensions*, Working Paper No.47, The University of Toronto-York University Joint Centre on Modern East Asia, 1987, p12.

⁵⁹ The bilateral relations between Kampuchea and Vietnam deteriorated in the middle of the 1970s due partially to border dispute and the former announced unilaterally on 31 December 1977 of severance of relations with the latter.

⁶⁰ *FEER*, 6 April 1979

⁶¹ *Ibid.* Before the blatant seizure of Phnom Penh, Vietnam and the U.S.S.R. signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in Moscow on 3 November 1978.

countries established their diplomatic relations in 1976, it was more or less superficial and Thai misgivings about continuous support from the PRC to CPT still substantially remained in some corners, particularly the military authorities. But the imminent crisis in the bordering state, i.e. the Vietnamese invasion, urged even these China-suspicious authorities to take some firm actions together with the PRC, as a mighty counter balancer and thus a safeguard for Thailand. In other words, more deteriorated the relations with the SRV became with a series of incursions from Cambodian side to bordering areas of Thailand, more certain the Thai-Chinese ties became, particularly in the field of military and security.

China also had its own calculations in tightening relations with Thailand and became more assertive of their anti-Vietnamese stand implicating it with Thailand's security context. The Chinese as early as January 1979, within a month of the Vietnamese seizure of Phnom Penh, analyzed the situation and cleared their further stand to commit to Thailand. Geng Biao, a member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, assessed its implications in Thai-Chinese relations:

In my opinion, the Thai communist will play a very important role in the work to support Cambodia in the future. Therefore we are ready to persuade them not to show different views (from those of the CCP) against the Thai government... Of course, we do not mean that they should put down their weapons and line up in front of the buildings of government offices in Bangkok for registration. However, they may at least reduce their direct conflict with the Thai government. By doing so, we may on the one hand help the Thai communists to preserve their strength and on the other hand urge Kriangsak Chamanand to make up his mind to join us in supporting Cambodia.⁶²

⁶² "Report of Geng Biao, Politburo member and Secretary-general of the Military Commission on the situation in the Indochinese Peninsula, 16 January 1979 (Extract)" in Jain, *op.cit.*, pp.234-238. Similarly Deng Xiaoping was reported in the report that he told Thai Deputy Premier Sunthorn Hongladarom in January 1979, while on his visit to Beijing, to tell Kriangsak: "the PRC wishes that the Thai government will permit China to send material aid to Cambodia via Thailand. As regards this request, the Thai government still has not expressed its opinion. The Thais of course have their own problem for they are unwilling to get into conflict with Vietnam... However... the relationship between Cambodia and Thailand or between Cambodia and Southeast Asia is one of mutual dependence. If one falls, the other will be in danger. Therefore, it is impossible for Thailand to stay aloof". Given this assessment, the PRC allegedly asked for Thailand 1) to cooperate more effectively with China in order to resist the expansion of the U.S.S.R and Vietnam, 2) to give continuous support to the Government of Democratic Kampuchea (GDK) and recognize its legal status, and refuse the current Heng Samrin regime of Phnom Penh to take

In retrospect, the Thai-Sino relations, in the security field particularly, developed as the Biao's report implied: the PRC reiterated their will to protect Thailand from aggressive behavior by the SRV in line with this calculation on one hand, and Thailand regarded the former as a key deterrence against the Vietnamese on the other. This convergence of national interests of both countries upgraded as long as Vietnamese exerted their influence and might over Cambodia and the nature of Thai-Chinese relations transformed to what some described *de facto* alliance. Indeed the interaction between them rapidly increased and it brought the Thai side in their domestic scene with a desirable environment to stifle the internal insurgencies which was synonymous almost with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).⁶³ Foreign Minister ACM Siddhi Savetsila praised the PRC in May 1980 saying "it is heartening to note that China shares with Thailand and ASEAN the concern for peace and stability not only in Southeast Asia but also the world at large" and "Thailand believes that China can play a very constructive role in this regard and we welcome China's declared objective of creating a peaceful international environment in which China can fully mobilize her own strength for internal development purposes". He went on to appreciate the bilateral relations: "Thailand and China have enjoyed a most fruitful relationship based on the mutuality of interests.

over the diplomatic institutions in Thailand and allow the GDK to set up an office, either open, semi-open or even secret, at the Thai border, 3) to continuously provide political asylum to the people, government and military cadres of the GDK who are suffering from persecution, and grant them the right to go to China or other places through Thailand. See Jain, *Ibid.*, p.234.

⁶³ Sukhumbhand Paribatra analyses that a sort of informal deal between Thailand and the PRC was confirmed sometime before June 1979 when Chinese-backed Committee for Coordinating Patriotic and Democratic Forces began condemning Vietnam. He suggests that in exchange of the Chinese demands cited above in the footnote No.62, the PRC promised the Thai government to end its support for the CPT. Tawanchai also suggests that such a deal was existent in "sometime in 1979" and introduces Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang's promise of February 1981 to the Thai government that China wouldn't allow relations between Chinese Communist Party and the CPT to impede relations between the two states. See Sukhumbhand, *From Enmity to Alignment: Thailand's Evolving Relations with China*, ISIS Paper No.1, Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1987, pp.12-18; Tawanchai, *op.cit.*, pp10-11. That the communist insurgency problem after the "deal" turned in Thai context to be a domestic issue in name and in reality that Thai government could sweep it only in its capacity. As the facts in the 1980s showed, the CPT afterward declined drastically by the government's initiative, known as Prime Minister's Order 66/2523 of PM General Prem Tinsulanonda for example, which stressed "political offensive" over the CPT in the operation.

The last few years have witnessed and ever-increasing co-operation in various fields...⁶⁴ If taking the "deal" between the two sides into consideration, what the Foreign Minister wanted to stress might lay in the latter part of his speech in front of his Chinese counterpart.

This alignment became tighter and clearer especially when Cambodian refugees in Thai territory repatriated home in June 1980. Hanoi and Phnom Penh regarded it in reverse as a mean of Thai (and probably Chinese) intrigues to infiltrate Khmer Rouge soldiers into Cambodia and Vietnamese forces made incursions to Thai soil. Afterward was just the involution of the bilateral relations between Thailand and the PRC based on their common convergence of security interests. It simultaneously shattered a moderate stand existent in some corner in Thailand to take the Vietnamese suggestion, i.e. making a de-militarized zone along the Thai-Cambodian border.⁶⁵

The extent of the *de facto* alliance was quite visible to anyone as it reached to the extent that two countries revealed their military operations and exercises to each other and that those Thais who once used to be seen as hardliners against the PRC visited Beijing: Chinese PM Zhao Ziyang presented a check of 10.32 million Baht to PM Prem Tinsulanonda for Indochina refugees and Thais affected in January 1981; the Supreme Commander of the RTA General Saiyud Kerdphol, the architect of counter-insurgency, visited China in August 1983; the PRC officers were allowed to attend Thai-U.S. military exercise, the Cobra Gold, since 1984; the Secretary General of the Thailand's National Security Council Prasong Soonsiri made his visitation in July 1985, at Chinese invitation, the Chinese People's Liberation Army's artillery positioning on the Chinese-Vietnamese border and given a demonstration of live shelling into Vietnam; and in return, the People's

⁶⁴ "Siddhi Savetsila's speech at the banquet given in honor of Foreign Minister Huang Hua, 8 May 1980 (Extract)" in Jain, *op.cit.*, p.259.

⁶⁵ *FEER*, 8/14 August 1980. From the Thai view point, the Vietnamese behaviors around these years were nothing more than serial betrayals. General Kriangsak explained to Sukhumbhand in February 1987 that the Premier tried to make some sort of understanding between him and Pham Van Dong concerning how far Vietnamese forces should go. First he tried, he said to Sukhumbhand, to make the forces stop at the Mekong's left bank but failed. Then he suggested a compromise of stopping the forces at a line 30 kilometers from the Thai border but only to fail again. At last he gained the promise that the Vietnamese wouldn't cross the border. As a matter of fact, this was broken unilaterally by the Vietnamese. See the endnote No.30 in Sukhumbhand, *op.cit.*, p.57.

Liberation Army (PLA)'s Chief of Staff Yang Dezhi was taken to inspect the Ninth Infantry Division of the RTA in January 1987.⁶⁶ The number of official and semi-official visits of Thais to the PRC drastically jumped from just 61 in 1979 up to 722 in 1985 which included high-rank officers of the RTA.

The United States also appealed her stand to support Thailand vis-à-vis the Vietnamese threat. At the place of ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 28 June 1980, the Secretary of State Edmund S. Muskie declared that "we stand behind the independence, security, and territorial integrity of Thailand. That support is based on our historical friendship and our conviction that a secure Thailand is a force for regional peace and cohesion" and thus "we intend to step up our assistance to Thailand".⁶⁷ This statement was followed immediately by the announcement of airlifting small arms and artillery such as M-16 rifles, 106mm recoilless rifles, 105mm Howitzers and thirty five M48 tanks.⁶⁸ Since 1982, the Thai-American joint military exercise denominated Cobra Gold carried out annually and its substance gradually extended.

The U.S strengthened her stand more on the issue after Ronald W. Reagan assumed his presidency in 1981. U.S. Foreign Military Sales, Military Assistance Program, International Military Education and Training, and Official Development Assistance to Thailand were all drastically

⁶⁶ Tawanchai, *op.cit.*, p.19; Sukhumbhand, *op.cit.*, p.32. The precise list of official and semi-official visits between Thailand and China during 1972-1983 period is available in Jain, *op.cit.*, pp.383-391. In addition, Thailand received thirty six 130mm artillery from the PRC in 1985, which made the first case among ASEAN members to accept such military assistance from the PRC. In 1987, the RTA decided to purchase Chinese-made weaponry, including T-6- II tanks, armoured personal carriers, anti-aircraft guns, and 130mm ammunitions at a "friendly price". More fuller discussions are available, for example, in Chulacheeb Chinwanno, "Future Direction of Thailand-China Relations: Agenda for the 1990s" and "Khien Theeravit, "China and Southeast Asia in the Changing International Environment" in *Prospects for Thailand-China Relations: Papers and Proceedings of the Second Joint Seminar of International Studies Center (Thailand) and Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs*, Institute of Foreign Affairs, MFA (Thailand), June 1992, p.24 and p.65 respectively.

⁶⁷ "Statement of Secretary of State Before the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, June 28, 1980" in U.S. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents 1977-1980*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980, pp.696-697.

⁶⁸ Randolph, *op.cit.*, p.222. The U.S. under the presidency of Jimmy Carter (1977-1981) was eager to normalize the diplomatic relations with Vietnam at its initial years, but after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the country discarded the earlier hope and came to align with ASEAN in terms of the Cambodian issue.

increased. The total sum of these rose from US\$62.76 in 1980 to US\$132.8 in 1984.⁶⁹ Needless to say, Thailand enjoyed this opportunity: the two countries made a purchase contract in 1985 of twelve F16 fighter-bombers from the U.S. to Thailand,⁷⁰ carried out the joint military exercise denominated Cobra Gold since 1982, agreed in January 1987 to install Thai-American Joint Reserve Stockpile in Thailand as a “deterrent against external aggression” within five years.⁷¹

Interestingly enough is that despite these reiterated U.S. supports to Thailand, the U.S. seemed to be reluctant to provide no more physical and direct assistances than these.⁷² Though U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz frequently asserted that his country was in support of Thailand, the assistance was arranged chiefly through ASEAN mechanisms in regard to the Cambodian problem, hence it was not until the 1986 U.S. fiscal year that the country provided direct assistance to Khmer resistance forces,⁷³ that is again to say that the support for the resistance remained moral and diplomatic ones in basic and the Americans didn't venture themselves in the “Indochina problem”, maintaining the bottom line that the problem should be handled firstly by ASEAN. This prudence of the U.S. was, needless to say, a result both of the nightmare in the war in Indochina and of the U.S.-China détente after the Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 and the diplomatic normalization in 1979 which brought about crust change of superpower influence over Asia.

⁶⁹ Randolph, *op.cit.*, p.224-225.

⁷⁰ *FEER*, 30 may 1985. The report said that the purchase was made for possible future border violations by the Vietnamese who were soon to be available to Soviet-made MiG23 Flogger.

⁷¹ *FEER*, 22 January 1987.

⁷² Against the seemingly limited U.S. support, FM Siddhi brought up, presumably intentionally, the phraseology of Cold War again, yet with a new flavor, in his conversations with the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam: “Thailand's boundary has become the frontier of the Free World in this part of the globe...Just as Pakistan is a main barrier of the Free World against the communist control of the strategic Persian Gulf, Thailand is the stronghold against the future advance of what Vietnam has euphemistically called ‘Socialism's Outpost in Southeast Asia’”, *Nation Review*, 26 February, 1984. It was reported that the U.S. in fact was worried of possible consequences of Thailand's hardliner policy toward Vietnam and its implications, and the relations between the FM and then U.S. Ambassador John G. Dean was being deteriorated. *FEER*, 8 August 1985.

⁷³ The military and economic assistances worth of US\$5 million were granted to the resistances through Thailand. Despite the relatively small amount, the American opinion was quite cautious of such involvement in regard to Indochina. See for instance, Collin Campbell, “Cambodian Issue Again Flares in U.S.”, *New York Times*, 29 April 1985.

2. Regionalism in Thai Foreign Policy

While our task at the present Conference is to unite our strength to maintain international peace and stability in this area, we should have in mind that the strength we are to unite is not only military strength but also the moral strength of freedom and self-determination and the material strength of economic and social well-beings.⁷⁴

This part of speech given by Foreign Minister Prince Wan Waithayakon at the Manila Conference in September 1954 is interesting enough to know how Thais have perceived and understood "security". While continuing to seek mighty superpowers to safeguard the nation from external and internal menaces, Thailand have simultaneously explored to seek additional mechanisms for the higher goal for a long time since the end of the World War II, that is to say a regional cooperation with neighboring states. And during the process of developing regional cooperation, Thailand almost always played crucial roles.

2.1 Assistance for Independent Asians (Southeast Asian League)

Just after the WW II, though Thailand was believed to have an idea of "Pan-Southeast Asian Union" composed of Cambodia, Laos, Burma and Thailand⁷⁵, the first concrete and substantial effort for a regional collaboration might be the creation of the Southeast Asia League. Some 60 persons from Thailand and five other Southeast Asian independence movement groups met in Bangkok on 8 September 1947 to launch the League and elected a central committee headed by Tiang Sirikhan, a Thai parliament member and former interior minister, Tran Van Giàu of the Viet Minh as vice president, Prince Souvanouvong of the Lao Issara as general secretary and Manoj Wuthathit as assistant secretary.⁷⁶ Though the league has some Thais of official positions in the

⁷⁴ "Speech of Prince Wan Waithayakon, the Signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty and the Pacific Charter", p.36. Quoted in Russell H. Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia: 1945-1958*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958, p.231.

⁷⁵ Paul Sithi-Amunuai, "Prospect for Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia", a paper delivered at the American University, Washington D.C., 8 January 1970, p.21

⁷⁶ The fives were representatives from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaya. Among the participants were Prince Norodom Sihanouk (Cambodia), Prince Souvannaphouma (Laos), Oswia Marmo (Indonesia), M. H. Koek (Malay). From Thai side, Thawin Udom, senator and manager of the government-owned Thai Industrial Development Company, and Sukit Nimmanhemmin, also Senator. See Bruce Reynolds, "Thailand and the Southeast Asian League", a paper presented at the International

government, it was an unofficial organization, with some speculation that it was a supporting organ for Ho Chi Minh in his Indochinese liberation struggle.⁷⁷

This attempt of regional cooperation however collapsed just two months later in face of Thailand's domestic political conflicts between Phibun Songkhram and Pridi Panomyon, which resulted in the coup by the former's group in November 1947. It can be said in sum that the Thailand's participation in the League was not so much a rigid foreign policy endorsed by the whole government, as an individual effort of those who were sympathetic to nationalistic liberation movements of neighboring countries, blended with Thais' antipathy against France who raised again a colonialist claim of territorial domain which she had lost to Thailand during the wartime.⁷⁸ That is to say that the SAL was born in the context of what Wiwat Mungkandhi describes "anti-aggression" stand of Thailand's foreign policy of the days⁷⁹ and this was a reflection of the fact that only Thailand was the country which had maintained independence through the colonial era and the leaders of independence movements in Southeast Asia regarded the kingdom as their sanctuary.

2.2 Cooperation under the Pressure of Cold War (SEATO)

In line with the Phibun Songkhram's stand to take side with the western camp in the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Thailand reiterated its posture and support of "Free World".

Conference on Thai Studies, 22-24 August 1984, Bangkok, pp.10-11.

⁷⁷ Tian Srikhan was one of the representatives of Thai delegation, headed by Prince Wan Waithayakon, to the Conciliation Committee in which Thailand and France held negotiations over the demarcation dispute between them. Beside the anti-colonialism orientation, the League aimed at promoting some form of cultural exchange and economic coordination as well, and then these would lead to a future Southeast Asian Federation. See Withaya Sucharithanarugse, *Conceptualization and Implementation of Thai Foreign Policy in the Modern Period: A Study of Thailand and Regionalism in Southeast Asia*, unpublished MA thesis, Dept. of Political Science, Northern Illinois University, June 1970, pp.55-56. According to Reynolds, who quoted the explanation made by Pridi himself, though made 27 years after the creation of SAL, the main objective of the League was enhancement of "security of small members vis-à-vis China and India". See Pridi, "Southeast Asia's Association of Nation", *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 1974, briefly summarized and cited in Reynolds, *Ibid.*, p.2 and p16.

⁷⁸ During the negotiations at Reconciliation Committee in 1947, France suggested a federation of Thailand, Laos and Cambodia "with Bangkok as its center, to promote economic marketing, communication, Mekong irrigation projects, and other programs such as loans". Pridi showed his interest in this French suggestion at very early stage, but when he found it a French tactics to evade the territorial dispute he dismissed it. See Reynolds, *Ibid.*, pp.6-9.

⁷⁹ Wiwat, "Parallel Features in Thai-American Foreign Relations", Hans H. Indorf ed., *Thai-American Relations in Contemporary Affairs*, Singapore: Executive Publications, 1982, pp.131-137.

When the French faced defeat at Dien Bien Phu by the Viet Minh and the sequential Geneva Agreements on the statehood of Indochina saw the final conclusion in 1954, Thailand reacted favorably to the idea of collective defense raised by the U.S. which regarded the Agreement as a virtual triumph of the communist forces. However, what Thailand sought through this defense arrangement was not security assurance in a military sense but also economic, social and cultural bonds with its members for strengthening of national resilience against domestic and external threats.

Thailand was enthusiastic of expanding the SEATO to become an organization of wider cooperation from its inception in 1945. The speech of Prince Wan of September 1954 at the Manila Conference, quoted above, was one of the undeniable evidences of it. As early as 1956, Thai representative for SEATO suggested at its Karachi meeting of Ministerial Conference the appointment of an officer in charge of economic affairs in the Secretariat. At the Ministerial meeting in Wellington in April 1959, the Thai delegation together with Asian members, Pakistan and the Philippines, again raised their desire to emphasize economic and social cooperation in the organization.⁸⁰ The Thai rationale for the demand was their understanding that the threat to the nation, namely communist insurgency and subversion would be incubated in poverty and its subsequent social instability and this was the linkage point of external and internal threats for Thailand in effect. The Ministerial meeting of 1959 decided to place more emphasis on such civil activities.⁸¹

Contrary to the failure to form a strong arrangement among members toward the Laotian crisis around 1960, SEATO was greatly beneficial for Thailand in strengthening her economic, social and cultural improvements in the years. As located in the most focal geographical point in the

⁸⁰ Corrine Phuangkasem, *Thailand and SEATO*, Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Co.,LTD., 1973, p60.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.60. Corrine explains that one of the background of the SEATO's deriving to add civil affairs was the 1959 death of the U.S Secretary of State John F. Dulles who preferred to have SEATO as a military alliance.

SEATO's defense strategy against communist expansion, Thailand could enjoy various programs under the arrangement through the collective defense organization, ranging from joint military exercises with other members, counter-insurgency operations with the knowledge of the U.S. forces, to cultural activities including exchanges of scholars and experts. For example, the U.S. agreed with Thailand to offer financial assistance to the launching Cholera Research Project and to establish the SEATO Graduate School of Engineering in those years; France provided experts to assist in the restoration of the Phimai ruins in northeast; community development planning and leader training under the initiative of the Thai-SEATO Regional Community Development Technical Assistance Center in Ubon Ratchathani; anthropological and then policy scientific research of hill tribes in the North; post-graduate scholarship to Thai students to study in Pakistan and the Philippines; bilingual training (Thai and Malay) for the teachers of southern provinces, and etc.⁸²

Thus, "Thailand's rights in SEATO seemed to be larger than its duties, and Thailand can be said to be the greatest beneficiary" of the organization.⁸³ But it was the cooperation under the framework as well as pressure of the Cold War environment and then the kingdom couldn't avoid the label as the sortie base of the U.S.

2.3 Thailand's Good Offices in the Indigenous Cooperation (ASA)

In a sense of pure and indigenous regional cooperation for Southeast Asia, Association of Southeast Asia (ASA)⁸⁴ was the first substantial experiment. Malaya and the Philippines had accumulated respectively their versions of regional collaboration which later crystallized as the concept of the future ASA when Malayan PM Tunku Abdul Raman and Filipino President Carlos Polestico Garcia met in Manila in January 1959. The Malayan premier circulated the architectural design of such a regional cooperation plan. Thai FM Thanat, who had already considered his own

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.47-68.; Justus M. van der Kfoef, *The Lives of SEATO*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, December 1976, p.23.

⁸³ Corrine, *op.cit.*, p.23.

⁸⁴ ASA was born in July 1961 with the membership of the Federation of Malaya, the Republic of the Philippines and Thailand.

version of regional cooperation, reacted quickly to the premier's plan in a quite good favor.⁸⁵ In July 1959, Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its own suggestion in a Preliminary Working Paper of Cooperation in Southeast Asia, delivered to the countries in the region except North Vietnam, in which the MFA claimed:

*It has been proposed by some countries (Philippines and Malaya) that the scope of the organization should be limited to the economic and cultural fields. However, in view of recent developments in the regions, it is felt that such a scope would be too limited and unnecessarily so. Therefore, it is submitted that SEACOR should be allowed to take up and consider any concrete and practical problem affecting the Southeast Asian region or some of its members, regardless of whether such problem is political, economic, or otherwise.*⁸⁶

In addition to the desire of widening up the scope of cooperation in a new entity, the Thais envisioned an identity of "Southeast Asian-ness", irrespective of political systems among the nations in the region. According to Gordon, a paper of Thai MFA expressed such regional identity in an organization as early as 1959, which insisted:

*the cooperation will be practical in the sense that the South-East Asian meeting to be convened shall not deal with conflicts of ideologies and the so-called East-West issues, except as passing reference...Such meeting shall concentrate its attention and efforts mainly on matters which affects directly the region as a whole or some countries of the region, and no questions whose solutions will directly benefit the regional or some of its members.*⁸⁷

This effort for the cooperation seemed consistent with PM Sarit Thanarat's new approach

⁸⁵ Bernard K. Gordon, *Toward Disengagement in Asia: A Strategy for American Foreign Policy*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969, p.23.

⁸⁶ MFA (Thailand), "Preliminary Working Paper on Cooperation in South-East Asia", Bangkok, 1959, mimeo, quoted in Bernard K. Gordon, *The Dimensions of Conflict in Southeast Asia*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966, pp.167-168. Gordon notes that Thai Foreign Ministry then wanted to call the group "Southeast Asia Community Organization," thus SEACOR. High attentions should be paid to this Paper in the sense that it implies that Thanat had a strong appetite of political, and presumably security cooperation as well as the explicitly suggested economic and cultural cooperation, of the nations in the area from the beginning, although he and some other diplomatic officialdom ostensibly declined such security intentions.

⁸⁷ See the footnote in Gordon, *Toward Disengagement...*, p.98. This paper is probably as same one as quoted in the footnote no.86.

to his foreign policy. It was believed that, while maintaining the pro-Americanism, he brought back Thanat, then ambassador to Washington D.C., to Bangkok in 1959 so as to give an additional fresh impression in Thailand's foreign relations. Thanat's appointment as foreign minister represented a "new look" in Thai diplomacy which "sought to bring Thai foreign policy more into accord to with the views of other Asian nations and to avoid the charges made by some neutralist nations that Thailand was a satellite of the U.S."⁸⁸

In this regard, one should notice that although Thailand in effect heavily relied on the U.S. in defending the kingdom against external threats, the country had been enthusiastic to minimize effects of such an external superpower to her own diplomatic capacity. Though it was not until the late 1960s that his warnings against the Thailand's overcommitment to the U.S. in her diplomacy came to surface, FM Thanat had been quite cautious about dominance of outside superpowers over the kingdom as well as the region from the very beginning of his tenure. Interesting enough is the fact that he began negotiations, or suggestions at least, with his U.S. counterparts of a future withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the kingdom as early as 1961,⁸⁹ and the year was coincided with the creation of the ASA. Indeed, Thanat described the presence of the U.S. forces in the kingdom as an "exception":

*Our present policy continues our policy of enhancing the freedom and independence of Thailand. We have accepted an exception to this by authorizing foreign troops to be stationed in Thailand because of the necessity brought about by threats from neighboring Marxist countries. Otherwise we would not have agreed to foreign powers stationing their forces here.*⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Donald Nuechterline, *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965, p.134.

⁸⁹ Thanat Khoman, "American Military Withdrawal from Thailand", *Southeast Asian Affairs 1976*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p.395.

⁹⁰ Interview of Thanat given to *Asia Magazine*, 4 January 1970, p.12. Thanat said in the interview that "certain quarters in the United States—political quarters as well as mass media" misinterpreted "the true nature, the true reasons and the true purpose" of the U.S. presence in Thailand and they misled the American public:

They have given the misimpression to the American public and the world that the American forces now in Thailand are there to repel Communist attacks against Thailand. This is completely false. Not a single American soldier has been engaged in fighting Communists in

When a secret agreement between Thailand and U.S. on the use of Thai military bases by the latter was revealed in the U.S. Senate in 1969, he was acknowledged with the fact that the military regimes of Thanom had conducted (in around 1965) the significant diplomacy without knowledge of the Foreign Ministry, thus Thanat himself. He later criticized such initiatives behind the door only by some powerful figures, and warned that these sorts of behind-the-door diplomacy would "affect to a major or minor degree the sovereignty and independence of action of host". In his eyes, the Thai-U.S. relations at the time seemed to be unfair and unhealthy one between sovereign countries, and the security-dominant bilateral relations brought undesirable political effects into the kingdom:

It may also interfere directly or indirectly with the latter's domestic affairs and politics and, therefore cause friction. Above all, it creates adverse social, moral, psychological and even human problems...This is what Thailand has been experiencing and we have not reached the end of it yet.⁹¹

When withdrawal of the U.S from Thailand as well as Indochina came to be more obvious after the President-designated Richard Nixon had revealed his idea of "Asian defense by Asians" and "Vietnamization" of the American War in Vietnam, Thanat made it more clear to improve and enhance the regional cooperation in political and economic matters, instead of conventional military cooperation among the nations in the region.⁹²

Thailand. The American forces are here to repel Communist aggression in Vietnam.

Although it is believed to be after the very late 1960s when he openly urged a pull out of the U.S. military forces from Thailand and some observers speculated his urge of the U.S. forces withdrawal was for Thailand's normalization with PRC in the near future, it may be reasonable to see, for his serial claims and urges of regionalism, that he placed his pivots on cooperation among nations in Southeast Asia, rather than on patronage of superpowers, even in her security affairs.

⁹¹ Thanat, "American Military ...", p.395.

⁹² Thanat suggested an idea of "Pax Asiana" in October 1969 in his speech in Honolulu, Hawaii. The "Pax Asiana", according to him, would consist of 1) realization of a minimum standard of economic and social development, 2) establishment of a cohesive Southeast Asia in the first instance and thereafter a meaningful cooperation among the countries of the Asian and Pacific region, 3) a Pan-Asia and Pacific peaceful and perhaps cooperative coexistence among the countries of the area irrespective of ideologies or political systems, and 4) a tacit or explicit agreement among larger powers to refrain from

Nevertheless, though Thanat himself had pursued self-reliance of national security by Thais themselves (and Southeast Asians), the political and military environments surrounding the kingdom in the 1960s and the early 1970s were unfortunately too severe and harsh for the kingdom to materialize what he urged Southeast Asian regionalism or "Pax Asiana".

Though the ASA was quite active at the initial years in projecting cooperation in the fields of trade, communications, and exchange of scholars and experts, tourism and so on, it came to a total deadlock as the confrontation between Malaya and the Philippines broke out in April 1963 over the territorial dispute of Sabah. Indonesia also involved in the dispute from her own viewpoint to crush the Malayan idea of consolidating the country including North Borneo, which was then called "Konfrontasi".⁹³

This period of difficulties, in retrospect, turned to be incubation for Thailand to be dubbed a good conciliator or mediator of the region later. Thanat enthusiastically continued to communicate them and set places for them to split the differences. One survey on this process says that Thanat held or attended in six meetings of ministerial level, out of twelve, on the reconciliation among the three countries as a mediator.⁹⁴ PM Thanom himself also visited Malaysia in May 1966 and encouraged the Malaysians to take a conciliatory attitude toward Indonesia. After these Thai labors

interfering or intervening in the internal affairs of smaller nations with a view to upsetting the present precarious international balance. Thanat, *Prospects of a New Pax Asiana*, East-West Center, October 1969, p.7. One should be noticed that these components would later materialize as international accords in Southeast Asia such as ASEAN Concord and ZOPFAN.

⁹³ The territorial dispute over Sabah first appeared in the presidential election campaign in the Philippines in 1961 as President Diosdado Macapagal appealed territorial integrity of the country in a nationalistic fashion and Pilipino press kindled it. Between Indonesia and Malaya, Indonesian President Sukarno harshly attacked the Malayan idea consolidating North Borneo, Brunei, Sarawak, Singapore into Malaya to form a Federation of Malaysia, and the bilateral relations got into severance after the latter's announcement of creation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 including Sabah of Borneo. But these two figures faded out from leadership of their respective countries in the years to come: Macapagal lost his presidency in the 1965 election to Ferdinand Marcos who was opposed to the Macapagal's territorial claim of Sabah; and Sukarno was disgraced in the September 30th incident of the same year by his rivals including Suharto who allegedly had reviewed the konfrontasi vis-à-vis Malaysia. See a full description of the dispute in J.A. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: the Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute 1963-1966*, London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

⁹⁴ Susumu Yamakage, "The Formation of ASEAN: National Intensives to Regional Cooperation [in Japanese]", *Tounan Ajia Kenkyuu* (Journal of Southeast Asian Studies) Vol. 19, No.2, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Kyoto, 1981, pp. 22-227.

to pacify parties involved, Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik and Malaysian counterpart Tunk Abdul Razak met at Thanat's residence in Bangkok in late May and early June 1966 and both reached the accommodation.⁹⁵ This development led to revival of the ASA's Foreign Ministerial Meeting in August 1966 in Bangkok under the leadership of Thanat for the first time since the last one in April 1963, in which the three members adopted thirty three projects and agreed to set up a development fund with \$5 million.⁹⁶

The most important and embracing is that Thailand, as a mediator in effect, was quite enthusiastic in establishing channels between the members of ASA, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the Philippines during the conflict resolution process and this led the kingdom to a crucial player in the formation of ASEAN in 1967.

2.4 Political Asset for Thailand's National Security (ASEAN)

Some leading diplomats in the region had already elaborated a framework for a more firm regional cooperation in their own fashion since May 1966 and Thailand offered a place for a preliminary conference in August 1967. As a result of these serial meetings, Thailand together with four nations succeeded in endorsing the Bangkok Accord of August 8, 1967 on the Establishment of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).⁹⁷ ASEAN expressed in the accord their emphasis on economic, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative cooperation and carefully

⁹⁵ Thanat's memoir in Reminiscences section of *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 10, No. 2, September 1988, pp. 211-222. Thanat says in the essay that when the final agreement on the dispute was reached, presumably in the early June, 1966 among Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, and these parties offered a banquet to him for his good office of conciliation, "I was seated at Adam Malik's side... (and) took that occasion to broach the idea of forming a new organization for regional cooperation to replace the defunct ASA. Malik unhesitatingly agreed but asked me for time to normalize Indonesia's relations with Malaysia... Then and there, the seed for the creation of ASEAN born".

⁹⁶ Withaya, *op.cit.*, pp.74-75.

⁹⁷ Withaya, *op.cit.*, pp.80-81. Thanat was zealous in those years in calling for a wider regional cooperation. He appealed such cooperation even at the seemingly anti-communist Asian and Pacific council in June 1966: "We are not necessarily anti-communist, not for that matter, anti-Chinese, anti-Russian, anti-North Korea, or anti-North Vietnam... If we are against anything, we admittedly are opposed to aggression as well as totalitarianism. Indeed some of these people may have threatened my country with war and destruction, we know that they actually live in dire predicament, suffering from want and penury as well as from oppression... If possible, we would even like them to join us in constructive efforts to build a more decent and a happier world...". Dept. of Information, MFA (Thailand), *Collected Statements of Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, Vol.2 (October 1965-October 1966)*, p.12.

kept off military affairs, i.e. though it mentioned the existence of “foreign bases” which was a reference to the U.S. military bases in the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, it clearly stated that the bases were “temporary and remained only with the expressed concurrence of the countries concerned and are not intended to be used directly or indirectly to subvert the national independence and freedom of states in the area”.⁹⁸

This clause was a reflection of the shared perceptions among the members about the reality in the region then: the looming defeat of U.S. in Vietnam and her disengagement from the region, and then a necessity for preparation in dealing with the would-be communist regimes in Indochina. This assessment by the members was attested as being accurate later. U.S. President Lyndon Johnson decided in March 1969 to restrict the extent of bombing over North Vietnam in an attempt to initiate peace talks in Paris and President-designate Richard Nixon declared his policy on Asia in the 1969 presidential campaign that the U.S. would pullback from Asia.

Interesting enough is that the ASEAN, which was inactive generally in practice, attained substantiality in the face of invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam in 1978. After a two-day discussion in March 1980, Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn and Indonesian President Suharto agreed on what would trigger ASEAN’s future stand on the problem. The agreement generically dubbed “Kuantan Principle” was relatively simple: 1) Vietnam free from either Soviet influence and China’s grip, 2) a broader-based government in Phnom Penh, 3) an end to ASEAN support of the Khmer Rouge government and 4) a partial withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Thai-Cambodian border.⁹⁹ For the Thais, however, it could be interpreted that Indonesia and Malaysia conceded some Vietnamese interest in Cambodia if Vietnam wouldn’t incline to the two communist giants. Hence, this principle was against the security concern of Thailand who came face to face with the imminent

⁹⁸ “ASEAN Bangkok Accord of August 8, 1967 on Establishment of ASEAN”, available on the web site of the ASEAN Secretariat at <http://www.aseansec.org/1212htm>

⁹⁹ *FEER*, a/10 April 1980; Larry A. Niksche, “Thailand in 1980: Confrontation with Vietnam and the Fall of Kriangsak”, *Asian Survey*, Vol.21, No.2, February 1981, pp.223-231.

threat of Vietnam. Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila and his aides suddenly went to Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur to urge them to dismiss it. This Thai action was surely based on her national interest as the "frontline state" and the Indonesians and Malaysians discarded the principle by October 1980.¹⁰⁰ Since then, the ASEAN tailored its basic policy toward Vietnam to that of Thailand in effect.

The apparent turning point in regard to the Vietnamese invasion came with the Chinese Foreign Minister Zhao Ziyang's visit to Bangkok in late January and early February 1981. In the meeting with PM Prem Tinsulanonda and FM Siddhi Savetsila, the Chinese reportedly suggested a reshaping of the Khmer resistance forces with a leadership of non-communists, state head Prince Norodom Sihanouk or Son Sann, the ex-premier of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, abandoning Pol Pot and his power holders whom the PRC had for long supported as the sole substantial might against Vietnam. Zhao then dared to say, at least on the surface, that if Vietnamese invaded Thailand, "we shall resolutely stand on the side of Thailand and support the Thai people's struggle against aggression".¹⁰¹

On the course of the Chinese suggestion, Thailand, along with Singapore in particular, maneuvered to create such a regime comprised of less-Pol Pot tint and finally succeeded in having the Khmer factions to form a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) in June 1982 in support of ASEAN members.¹⁰² On this occasion Siddhi, warned Vietnam to accept the "peace plan", suggested at the International Conference on Kampuchea in New York and endorsed at the United Nations General Assembly the previous year, because the FM said the plan had taken

¹⁰⁰ *FEER*, 10/16 October 1980, An Indonesian policy maker was reported to say that the Kuantan Principle was calculated on misplaced concern on Thai internal stability, which meant the Prem Tinsulanonda's government was something like an interim government after the Kriangsak's government, and the Indonesian admitted that this was the wrong prospect of them.

¹⁰¹ *FEER*, Vol.111, No.7, 6/12 February 1981, p.8; Jain ed., *op.cit.*, p.311

¹⁰² At a press conference, Prince Sihanouk revealed that China had pledged to supply a more military aid once the Coalition Government formed. See Press Release, "The Signing Ceremony of Declaration of the Formation of Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, Kuala Lumpur, 22 June 1982", No.262/2525, Dept. of Information, MFA (Thailand), p.2.

account of Vietnamese legitimate interest in terms of its won security, saying "we in the ASEAN countries have been trying to help them (the Vietnamese) out of the quagmire they have found themselves in".¹⁰³ With the establishment of CGDK, Thailand in capacity of ASEAN endeavored to mobilize international community to legitimize the resistance government and to silence Vietnam and its puppet regime in Phnom Penh.

However, the lead of Thailand in ASEAN policy toward Vietnamese occupation gradually changed to be less effective when four Cambodian factions themselves began to take their own initiatives in 1986 and some ASEAN members, namely Indonesia and Malaysia in particular, rode on the current and exhibited their lead in exploring possible direct contacts between the Hanoi-Phnom Penh and the ASEAN-CGDK lines.

In March 1986, the CGDK suggested their own Eight Point Proposal to settle the prolonged conflict vis-à-vis Vietnam and Phnom Penh after the head of the three resistance groups met in Beijing. The suggestion was quite important in that it was basically devised by the Cambodians themselves.¹⁰⁴ That the resistance forces came into a stage where they gradually eluded external influences, i.e. ASEAN including Thailand and others. In May same year, Thai FM Siddhi and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Co Thach met in persons in Bangkok for the first time in three years in a positive mood, albeit it was somehow ostensible.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Press Release, "Press Statement by ACM. Siddhi Savetsila, Thai Foreign Minister, Concerning the Agreement for the Establishment of Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, Vienna, 25 June 1982", No.275/2525, Dept. of Information, MFA (Thailand), pp.1-2. Before announcing the creation in June 1982, the leaders of the Khmer factions held a meeting in Singapore and signed a declaration to form a coalition government in September 1981. Thailand and Singapore took their own initiatives immediately after the invasion, which was 1979. Some essays of Singaporean diplomats described this joint maneuvering in persuasion of the Pol Pot's group to join a coalition, in Tommy Koh and Chang Li Lin eds., *The Little RED D.T: Reflections by Singapore's Diplomats*, World Science Publishing, 2005.

¹⁰⁴ The proposal called for: 1) negotiations with Hanoi and Phnom Penh on the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia; 2) a ceasefire to allow Vietnam to pullout its forces in two stages; 3) U.N. supervision of the ceasefire and withdrawal; 4) negotiations after the first stage of the pullout to set up a four-party coalition government with Sihanouk as president and Son Sann as prime minister; 5) free elections supervised by the U.N.; 6) restoration of an independent, neutral and nonaligned Cambodia without any foreign troops on its soil; 7) foreign assistance to rebuild the nations and 8) a non-aggression pact with Vietnam. *Asiaweek*, 30 March 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Despite any concrete progress achieved, the meeting was significant in the point that both

In July the following year, Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Vietnam, Mochtar and Thach, achieved an idea that Indonesia would set informal talks among all Cambodian factions on the guise of a "cocktail party" and the country would invite "at a later stage" other concerned countries including Vietnam into the talks.¹⁰⁶ Against the Indonesian initiative, FM Siddhi immediately called the meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers in Bangkok in August in which Thailand and Singapore expressed their grave concern on the Indonesian-Vietnamese agreement and persuaded other ASEAN members that Vietnam should be included in the "cocktail party" immediately the party got under way, not at a later stage and the Eight Point Proposal be the basis of the talks at the party.¹⁰⁷ These claims of Thailand (and Singapore) made the idea of party failed after all.

Away from the capacity of ASEAN, President Sihanouk of the CGDK and Prime Minister Hun Sen of the Phnom Penh's Heng Samrin's regime had a direct talk in Paris in December 1987 and agreed to foster their talks twice more later.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, they didn't make any reference to "foreign invader" in their statement, which was perceptible at the time in one sense that the situation in Cambodia was rather a civil war among Cambodians, and hence there would be narrowing space for external parties to assert their interest in the issue. Regarding this move by the concerned

sides confirmed to settle the conflict in peaceful manner. *Asiaweek*, 4 May 1986.

¹⁰⁶ This "cocktail party" idea was officially included in the Joint Press Statement issued after their talks. The statement said "an understanding was reached that an informal meeting of the two sides of Kampuchea be held on the basis of equal footing without preconditions and with no political labels, to which at a later stage, Indonesia will invite other concerned countries, including Vietnam, to participate", quoted, for example, both in Bilveer Singh, "Southeast Asia in 1987: Hopes and Problems" and Vo Nhan Tri, "Vietnam in 1987: A Wind of 'Renovation'", *Southeast Asian Affairs 1988*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1988, p.14 and P.312 respectively.

¹⁰⁷ Kusuma Snitwongse, "Thailand's Year of Stability: Illusion or Reality", *Ibid.*, pp.283-284. Thai FM, who was the chair of ASEAN Standing Committee at the time, was not consulted prior to the Mochtar-Thach agreement.

¹⁰⁸ Sihanouk and Hun Sen issued a joint statement which said: 1) the conflict in Cambodia must necessarily be solved by a political solution, 2) the Cambodian people themselves must resolve the problem through negotiations among all the parties to the conflict so as to put an end to the war and to reconstruct a peaceful, independent, democratic, sovereign, neutral and nonaligned Cambodia, 3) once an agreement was reached among the parties, an international conference will be convoked to guarantee the agreement, to guarantee the independence of Cambodia and peace and stability in Southeast Asia, 4) the two sides agreed that the two parties would meet again in January (1988) in Fere-en-Tardenois, France and at Sihanouk's palace in Pyongyang, North Korea at a later date. *FEER*, 17 December 1987.

Cambodians themselves, ASEAN countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysian and Singapore this time, expressed their sympathy and the U.S., who had the stance to follow ASEAN's policy, welcomed it. The PRC didn't deny the sequence.¹⁰⁹ In juncture of July 1988, the situation developed to the extent that the four Cambodian groups plus external parties concerned gathered under the Indonesia's initiative in Bogor.¹¹⁰ The environment surrounding the Cambodian problem was apparently changing and developing to the point where Thailand felt difficult in representing her interest straight out.

3. Conclusion (Assessment)

Facing the destabilized environment of post-colonial Southeast Asia following the conclusion of the WW II and the emerging ideological confrontations in neighboring area, Thailand placed high priority on national security and territorial integrity to survive, hence chose to align with the western camp for the purpose, becoming a substantial ally of the U.S. as the Cold War raged in Asia. The political structure of the kingdom itself was also convenient to deal with the threat-pervaded international and national environments, i.e. the armed forces, the Army in particular, occupied the echelon of foreign as well as internal policy formation and implementation. The military primacy was deep-rooted in Thailand's government structure and indeed it did work well under such international environments and continued until the early 1970s when the U.S. reviewed her grand design on Asia.

Looking at it more closely, the reliance on the U.S. in the tenure of Phibun Songkhram was more ore less vague in its contents and sometimes derived from his opportunism on the world affairs. Though he reiterated aloud of the threat of communism on many occasions, he was not concerned with ideology that much in fact. The main theme in his foreign policy was a search for an entity

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* On the meeting, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Igor Rogachov reportedly praised a change in the Chinese position in accepting the Heng Samrin regime as a political force and excluding the return of Pol Pot to power. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ The meeting was referred as Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM). The external parties were Vietnam, Laos, and ASEAN's Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

which would legitimize him in the Thai domestic politics. The foreign relations served him an instrument sometimes in his power struggle against his rivals. But the visible developments of Cold War in Asia required Thailand in 1950 to clear her stand in the world game of politics, e.g. the support of the western camp in the Korean War and the recognition of Bao Dai of Vietnam. With these decisions, Phibun implicated the kingdom with the logic of Cold War in favor of the west. In addition, Thailand indeed needed a mighty guarantor for her security in the deteriorating environment in the neighborhood and this need of security assurance converged with the American foreign policy and strategy which aimed at containing communism.

With the government of Sarit Thanarat, Thailand substantiated her shade of "west" in her foreign policy with a shrewd calculation to fortify her economic and social resiliencies. While utilizing the asset of the relations with the U.S. in enhancing domestic development as much as possible, the kingdom simultaneously endeavored to seek an additional mechanism to reinforce the objective, i.e. security assurance in a wider sense here, by architecting a cooperation framework, namely the ASA. In sum, this two tier foreign policy, the pro-Americanism and regional cooperation, was born in this period and it was inherited to his successor Thanom Kittikachorn, fundamentally.

However, Thailand came to face difficulties in implementing the excessive pro-Americanism in both internal and external fronts as the U.S. began to pullout its physical presence from Southeast Asia in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The kingdom tried to forge a new policy to meet the changing environment in the international relations for several years, particularly in the field of her relations with the PRC. Though it was not only the Thais who could not help adjusting to the new situation, the Thais definitely needed more energy than other peoples to do it since their foreign policy hitherto was deeply implicated with that of the U.S. under the conditions of Cold War.

After several years of trials and errors, Thailand, now under the civilian administrations, pursued a more independent and equidistance foreign relations. In one sense, as Sarasin Viraphol

points out, it was around the “debacle of Indochina in 1975” when Thailand was compelled to face those states directly who the Thais thought had been adversary to the kingdom.¹¹¹ More important was that the Thais, in line with the new stance, required the U.S. military to withdraw from Thai soil and that they gave consent to the demise of SEATO as well. That is to say, the Thais chose to be the without deterrent of superpower on its soil.

The Cambodian invasion by Vietnam and its consequence required Thailand again to seek an effective mechanism to meet the physical threat. In this case, Thailand approached the PRC to compensate the “vacuum” left by the former deterrent, the U.S. Fortunately, Thailand’s security needs converged with those of the PRC’s this time in that both desired to contain Vietnamese expansionism over Indochina, i.e. the Thais needed the mighty PRC, its military power in particular, as the deterrent over Vietnamese while the Chinese understood it in their own strategic context; that is the Sino-Soviet collision, to remove Soviet influence from what they regarded as their neighboring compound by subduing the Vietnamese. The Thai-Sino relations developed rapidly in the field of military and political cooperation to the extent that some described it *de facto* alliance. The U.S. also supported Thailand in the Cambodian issue but its extent was not as much as Chinese, and the former pillar of Thailand’s security partner remained in a secondary place in general.

In the area of regional politics, Thailand succeeded in mobilizing ASEAN members to stand with her in confronting Vietnam at the early stage. The kingdom, as the frontline state, could exert her hardliner stand into ASEAN policy on Vietnam. The kingdom together with ASEAN fellows managed to forge the anti-Vietnamese CGDK in 1982 to sustain international support; and when some of the members “softened” toward the invader seen at such occasions as the Kuantan Principle of 1980 and the Cocktail Party proposal of 1987, the frontline state dashed these moves and the members followed the former.

After the Cambodian factions began to negotiate the issue by their initiatives, the previous

¹¹¹ Sarasin, *op. cit.*.

condition began to change. The change was triggered by the direct contact between Sihanouk, the anti-Vietnamese leader and Hun Sen, the premier of the Vietnamese-backed regime in December 1987. ASEAN members, including the hawkish Singapore this time, gave their favorable sign to the move. The current developed to the JIM in Bogor in July 1988 where all the parties concerned, both internal and external, got around the table and endorsed the Cambodian initiative.

To conclude, the chief and fundamental objective of Thailand's foreign policy after the WWII was her continuous search for security assurance in the basic. In achieving this supreme objective in turbulent environment around the kingdom, the country chose to align with the U.S. and granted the leader of the western camp the rights to station their military forces on Thailand for its operations in Indochina and thus it served at the same time as substantial assurance for the national security of Thailand in both physical and moral terms. Therefore, the foreign policy in the 1950s and 1960s, as some Thai researchers describe, was reactive in its form to that of the U.S. and simplistic in its content being just anti-communist basically, and then it was synonymous almost with the idiosyncrasies of the small ruling military oligarchy on world affairs as they affected Thai national security and survival.¹¹²

During the restructuring in the 1970s, the kingdom maneuvered a more independent policy. In which, the country established the diplomatic relations with the Asian communists such as the PRC, the SRV and the Kampuchea of Khmer Rouge, for example. At the same time, Thailand decided to get out of the fetter of the American foreign policy and military strategy in Asia to some extent by requiring the U.S to withdraw its forces from the Thai soil and consented to the demise of SEATO. Though the process of "de-Americanization" was more or less painful for Thailand, the

¹¹² For example, Chai-anan Samudavanija and Sukhumbhand Paribatra, "In Search of Balance: Prospect for Stability on Thailand in the Post-CPT Era" in Kusuma Snitwongse and Sukhumbhand eds., *Durable Stability in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987, pp. 187-196; Kusuma, "Thai Government Response to Armed Communist and Separatist Movements" in Chandran Jeshurun ed., *Governments and Rebellions in Southeast Asia*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985, pp.247-249; Corinne Phuangkasem, *Thailand's Foreign Relations 1964-1980*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984, pp.3-12.

kingdom could cast her skin of the "solid American ally in Asia" and diversify, though selectively, its foreign relations and options. The diversification of her relations, with the PRC in particular, contributed to her security assurance when and after the SRV invaded Cambodia in 1978. Thailand chose to align with the adversary of Cold War years, the PRC, to oppose the imminent threat posed by the SRV. Under the menace, the phraseology of the ruling military oligarchy was still effective.

Over the years, the kingdom managed to create additional formula to foster national resilience and this followed the form of regional cooperation with the likeminded in her neighborhood. Throughout of the efforts, the Thais played crucial roles and took initiatives in materializing the objective and succeeded in formalizing ASA and then ASEAN. The cooperation with other Asians in political field reached the climax, in Thai context, when the kingdom faced the Vietnamese expansionism over Indochina.

However, utilizing the ASEAN's assets as a Thailand's citadel against Vietnam and its allied regime in Phnom Penh was effective insofar as the Cambodian factions refrained from taking any direct contacts. Similarly, the efficacy of the PRC for Thailand vis-à-vis Vietnam was possible as long as the both communists were in antagonism in the context of Sino-Soviet contestation in Asia. In fact the latter half of 1980s saw moves for reconciliation in the Cambodian issues as well as the regional politics since both were highly correlated, e.g. the increased contacts between the two sides of Cambodians, the unilaterally-announced withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, ASEAN members's assent to the Cambodian moves, and the rapprochement between the PRC and the USSR. Then, as far as the Indochinese states were concerned, the value of security in a military sense in Thai foreign policy was gradually diminishing in the years, and Thailand needed to review, readjust, or continue, her hitherto policy formula on Indochina and General Chatichai Choonhavan assumed his premiership under such conditions.