

## CHAPTER II

### IDEAS AND POLICY

Beliefs held by individuals, especially those from the governing groups, help to explain political outcomes. Basically, these ideas, covering worldviews, principled beliefs and causal beliefs, influence policy when the principled or causal beliefs they represent provide road maps that increase actors' clarity about goals or ends-means relationships, when they affect outcomes of strategic situations in which there is no unique equilibrium, and when they become embedded in political institutions. The interaction between Thailand and Vietnam, the significant role of Ho Chi Minh in shaping the DRV's strategies and the role of the Thai ruling elite in determining Thai policy, functioned under this framework. In order to assess the role of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam's Thailand policy as well as the Thai ruling elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh and its impacts on the bilateral relationship, it is, therefore, necessary to give insights into the ideas held by Ho Chi Minh and the contemporary Thai ruling elite.

From the approach, the chapter will begin with analyses of Ho's thought from Goldstein's and Keohane's theoretical model. It will then be followed by discussion of the beliefs held by the Thai ruling elite in three periods, i.e. 1945-1948, 1948-1969, and the post-Cold War period. Given the broad domain of ideas, the study will mostly focus on the ones that have impacts on Thailand-Vietnam interactions.

#### **2.1. Ho Chi Minh's Thought**

The term "Ho Chi Minh Thought" is a Vietnamese domestic product. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist regimes in East Europe and especially the international reverence that the UNESCO brought on Ho in the late 1980s, the party saw the urgent need to reactivate Ho Chi Minh's ideas on creative application of Marxism and Leninism in concrete conditions of Vietnam. Consequently, the 7<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress held in June 1991 formally enshrined Ho Chi Minh thought, which initially refers to whatever Ho Chi Minh said or wrote in his lifetime, ranking it as being of equal significance to Marxism and Leninism to the Vietnamese revolution (Vietnam Communist Party. 1991).

However, no formal definition of "Ho Chi Minh Thought" had been available until it was officially stated nearly ten years later at the 9<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress.

Accordingly, Ho Chi Minh Thought is defined as “a comprehensive and profound set of ideas on critical issues of the Vietnamese revolution; [it is] the result of creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism into concrete conditions in Vietnam; [it] inherit(s) and develop(s) traditional values, absorb the cream of human beings” (Vietnam Communist Party. 2001). The party also reaffirmed that together with Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought is “the compass for every party activity”.

Since 1991, dozens of studies have been dedicated to Ho Chi Minh Thought by Vietnamese senior officials, ideologues and scholars. Though each author tends to come up with his/her own definition of Ho Chi Minh Thought, generally they all agree that Ho’s ideas stem from four external sources, i.e. Vietnamese patriotism, the cultural tradition of Vietnam, Eastern and Western cultural traits, and Marxism-Leninism. However, in this study, Ho Chi Minh Thought will be presented on the basis of Goldstein’s and Keohane’s theory on the relationship between ideas and policy. Accordingly, Ho’s ideas will be analyzed according to three beliefs, i.e. worldviews, principled beliefs and causal beliefs. In order to understand these beliefs, it is necessary to recall the path Ho Chi Minh had gone through to Leninism.

#### *2.1.1. The path to proletarian revolution*

Ho Chi Minh was born on May 19, 1890 with the “milk name” of Nguyen Sinh Cung in Nghe An, a central province of Viet Nam, which was seen as the heart of the anti-French resistance movement. Being the youngest son of Nguyen Sinh Sac, a “Pho Bang” (doctorate degree, 2<sup>nd</sup> rank for the highest court examination) who bore strong patriotic sentiments and definitely supported his contemporaries, of whom the prominent was Phan Boi Chau, in anti-French movements, Nguyen Tat Thanh, the new name of Nguyen Sinh Cung assigned by his father when he entered into adolescence, soon learned Confucius as well as patriotic lessons from his father as well as his father’s acquaintances. He also either witnessed or heard about the suffering and subordinate statuses of his compatriots compared to Europeans under the colonial regime (Duiker. 2000: 24).

Influenced by his father about the need for the younger generation to adapt to the situation and learn from the country’s new master in order to “understand the enemy to defeat him”, Thanh began to study the French language and culture as well as *quoc ngu*, the Romanized Vietnamese language, before he enrolled in the Dong Ba upper-level elementary school in Hue, the then capital city of Vietnam. In 1907 he moved to the

Quoc Hoc (National Academy) and started getting involved, albeit indirectly, in political activities against the imperial court and the French colonialists.

The first direct involvement of Thanh in political actions was in the peasant demonstrations in Hue in May 1908. In one demo he decided to join the crowd to serve as an interpreter for the peasants in their protest to the French authorities. Though this event eventually cost him his dismissal from the National Academy, what he witnessed in the protest, where French troops opened fire on the demonstrators, sharpened his antagonism towards the French. To escape from the French's pursuit after this, he decided to travel southward. "It may be that he had already decided to go abroad in order to find the secret of Western success at its source" (Duiker. 2000: 38). He stopped over in several provinces before going to Saigon in early 1911 and started his "mysterious" journey to various destinations in Asia and Africa (mostly colonies of European powers), Europe (Spain, Portugal, and Britain) and the US.

Throughout his trips, Thanh soon realized that people in any colonies, either in Asia or Africa, shared the same plight under harassment and severe exploitation by either colonialists or imperialists. As for "mother" countries, he witnessed the difficulties of and discrimination towards the labor. Staying several months in the US, where he worked as a laborer and as a domestic servant to a wealthy family, he was strongly moved by the plight of black peoples, even in the country which at the time he had thought was opposed to Western imperialism.

In 1917, Thanh returned to France, which was at that time seen as the "revolutionary center of French and international labor movements"<sup>1</sup>. After nearly eight years in voyage to numerous countries and colonies, probably Thanh was still not clear about which way he could follow to liberate his country. However, what he had experienced and witnessed strongly convinced him that the labor in either "mother" countries or colonies were nothing but oppressed people. After his arrival in France, he soon became involved in agitation among Vietnamese workers, joined "Association of Annamite Patriots" where he acted as the General Secretary, and engaged in labor movements in which he increasingly criticized the colonial regime.

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<sup>1</sup> Paris at war's end was a fascinating place for a young Asian interested in politics. The French capital still had some pretensions of being the political as well as the cultural hub of the western world. Many of the most famous radical figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had lived and operated in Paris, and the brutalities of the recent war had energized their ideological heirs into escalating their verbal attacks on the capitalist system (Duiker. 2000: 56).

On 18 June 1919, on behalf of the Association of Annamite Patriots, Thanh sent an eight-point statement entitled “Demands of the Annamite People” and signed with the name Nguyen Ai Quoc to the Versailles Conference where the leaders of victorious Allied powers gathered to negotiate a peace treaty with the defeated Central Powers and set forth the principles by which to govern international relations in the postwar world. It is worth noting that in the summit the US president Woodrow Wilson issued his well-known Fourteen Points declaration which called, among other things, for self-determination for all peoples. “Woodrow Wilson, in fact, had encountered stiff resistance to his Fourteen Points at Versailles, and was forced to accept compromises to reach a peace agreement, a decision that aroused anger and disappointment throughout the colonial world” (Duiker. 2000: 60). After tireless efforts to ask for a reply from the US and the French authorities regarding his demands but to no avail, Quoc was increasingly convinced that he could not rely on the superpowers or colonizers for his search for national independence and liberation of his oppressed compatriots.

After the event, Nguyen Ai Quoc was accepted as a fully fledged member of the French Socialist Party (FSP), which had attracted him because the French socialists “had shown their sympathy toward me, toward the struggle of the oppressed peoples” (cited in Duiker. 2000: 62). Also at this time, his ideological bent toward socialism, as Duiker remarks, could be seen “as a natural consequence of his dislike of capitalism and imperialism”. Being a member of the FSP, Quoc gradually actively engaged in the party activities and discussions which provided him with opportunities to denounce the colonial regime and call for help to the colonial peoples, especially for people in his country. Also it is noteworthy that during that time, Quoc was appealed by radical members who supported the Bolshevik revolution and expressed sympathy for the oppressed peoples of the colonial areas. It was, however, Lenin’s famous “Theses on the National and Colonial Questions”, which was presented to the Second Communist International in 1920, that set Nguyen Ai Quoc on a course that transformed him “from a patriot with socialist leanings into a Marxist revolutionary” (Duiker. 2000: 64).

The “Theses” marked a turning point in Nguyen Ai Quoc’s perspective on the way to liberate his country. “There were political terms difficult to understand in this thesis. But by dint of reading it again and again, finally I could grasp the main part of it. What emotion, enthusiasm, clear-sightedness, and confidence it instilled in me! I was overjoyed to tears. Though sitting alone in my room, I shouted aloud as if addressing

large crowds: Dear martyrs, compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation” (cited in Duiker. 2000: 64).

### *2.1.2. Ho Chi Minh's worldview - Leninism*

Ho Chi Minh's worldview was based on Marxism-Leninism. This was a result of Vietnamese traditional political culture, i.e. patriotism in combination with Confucianism, as well as Ho's long journey to find a way to liberate his country from French domination. According to Thayer (1985: 52), Vietnamese ideology arises from aspects of traditional political culture which were carried forward by the “mandarin proletarians”. As the historian Nguyen Khac Vien points out (cited in Thayer. 1985: 53-54), “Marxism was not baffling to Confucians in that it concentrated man's thoughts on political and social problems...Bourgeois individualism, which puts personal interests ahead of those of society, and petty bourgeois anarchism, which allows no social discipline whatsoever, are alien to both Confucianism and Marxism. The Confucian man makes the transition from a traditional society to a socialist one”. Born in a Confucius family, Ho, therefore, tended to be inclined to socialism in essence.

Besides, Ho Chi Minh's patriotism, his aspiration for human emancipation as well as the experience he had gained during his “mysterious” journey had convinced him that the proletarian revolution was the sole way to gain independence and to build a democratic and free society. It is worth noting that Marxism-Leninism did not simply provide the way to carry out social revolution, which was often described as “brutal”, “violent” and “undemocratic” methods by the West, but it is a philosophy that offered a new cosmology and interpretation of human society – “the theory of the evolution of human society as an essentially politico-economic process moving through a series of revolutionary class struggles towards the emancipation of all men from bondage to a few lords and masters” (Warbey. 1972: 34). Undoubtedly, to Ho Chi Minh, socialism and communism were the indispensable steps of human society development – the steps that see “all laboring people would live happily, and from which the exploitation of man by man would be banned”.

### *2.1.2. Principled beliefs*

Ho Chi Minh's Marxist worldview, his experience as well as characteristics which were formed on the background of Vietnamese patriotism, humanism, agrarian culture and Confucianism, drove Ho to unchangeable principles including fundamental

national rights, the causal relationship between national independence and socialism, the power of the people and international solidarity.

In Ho Chi Minh Thought, fundamental national rights occupy an important position. These rights include national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity, and self-determination.

Undoubtedly, national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity were always the uppermost themes in Ho's thoughts. It was national independence that drove Nguyen Tat Thanh to go abroad to find a way to liberate his country. That was also the main motive that led Ho to join the French Socialist Party (FSP). The French socialists "had shown their sympathy toward me, toward the struggle of the oppressed peoples" (Duiker. 2000: 62). In the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the FSP opened on 25 December 1920 in Tour, Nguyen Ai Quoc voted for the approval of the FSP's joining Lenin's Comintern because "The 3<sup>rd</sup> Communist International seriously pays attention to liberation of colonies...and will assist the oppressed peoples to gain freedom and independence" (cited in Lien and Hong. 2005: 82).

With the onset of WWII, Ho Chi Minh pointed out that the uppermost task of the Vietnamese revolution was that of national revolution. The resolution of the 8<sup>th</sup> Executive Central Committee meeting held in May 1941 under the chairman of Ho contended that "at this moment, the interest of a section and of the class must come after the survival of the state and the nation. In this moment, if the national question is not solved, if national independence and freedom for the whole nation are not gained, not only will the whole state and nation remain in slavery, but also even ten of thousand years later the interest of a particular section or class will still not be attained" (cited in Hoe, in The Institute of Ho Chi Minh and Party Leaders. 2006: 9). After the victory at Dien Bien Phu that brought concerned parties to Geneva's table, Ho Chi Minh insisted his unchangeable demand of national unification. "The Vietnamese state is unity; the Vietnamese nation is unity. Rivers can be dried up, mountains can be eroded, but the truth will never change".

While devoted to national interests, Ho also emphasized the principle of national self-determination. Chairing the meeting to unite three Communist parties in Hong Kong in 1930, Ho suggested that the name of the united communist party should be "The Communist Party of Vietnam" because the term "Indochina" was broad and "based on the principle of Lenin's national self determination, the national question is a serious issue, it is impossible to force other nations to join the party, which goes against

Lenin's principles...Therefore, the word 'Vietnam' represents all three regions and does not go against Lenin's principles on national questions" (cited in Lich. 2004: 72-73). Ho's views raised doubt among orthodox Communists about Ho's "identity". As a result, in October 1930, Tran Phu returned from Moscow with the instruction from the Comintern to set up a communist party for Indochina. At a central committee meeting, the party approved the "1930 Platform" written by Tran Phu, who was elected the party's Secretary General, and changed the name of the party from the Vietnamese Communist Party to the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP).

It was not until the Comintern adjusted its policy to deal with the fascist threat in 1939, Ho Chi Minh's thought on the Vietnamese revolution was credited. Returning to Vietnam to direct the revolution in 1941, Ho brought back with him the national issue. At the 8<sup>th</sup> plenum of the Standing Central Committee in May 1941, Ho highlighted the importance of the national liberation revolution, stressing that it was necessary to solve the national question in the framework of each Indochinese country on the basis of the national self-determination right of Indochinese peoples. "The peoples in Indochina on their own account can either organize a democratic republic federal state or stand on their own as individual nation-state...The freedom and independence of these peoples will be recognized and respected" (Ministry of Education and Training. 2006: 116). As for Vietnam, the meeting agreed to establish a Democratic Republic of Vietnam "on the spirit of democracy". Also the "Vietnam Independence League", called "Viet Minh" for short, was set up and operated on the spirit of the "Brief Platform" and "Brief Policy" drafted by Ho in 1930.

After the birth of the DRV, Ho Chi Minh always emphasized the need to respect the national self-determination right. In the first Communiqué on foreign policy of the DRV in October 1945, Ho reaffirmed "With special reference to the peoples of Laos and Khmer, Vietnam bases her relations on the principle of national self-determination" (cited in Nien. 2004: 113). The Conference for cadres to assist Laos and Cambodia on 15 February 1949 set four guidelines for the international work in these countries: (1) Never allow the interest of Vietnam to override what would be best for Laos and Cambodia; (2) Uphold the principle of national self-determination, letting the peoples of Laos and Cambodia decide for themselves; (3) Never apply automatically principles, policies and guidelines of Vietnam to the situation in Laos and Cambodia; and (4) Help Laos and Cambodia to do the job themselves (Nien. 2004: 114). Also Ho reiterated that Vietnamese cadres who were designated to go to a neighboring country for help had to

respect the country's sovereignty, customs and people (Son and Thao, in *The Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 2000: 233).

While in Ho Chi Minh's thought, national independence always came first, it was not the end. To him, national independence was only the first important step to build up a better society where people can live in absolute equality and where exploitation does not exist. Therefore, national independence must be followed by socialism. According to Warbey (1972: 28), Ho could see "no incompatibility between working for national independence and striving for social revolution: inevitably the two aims must intertwine if genuine freedom was the goal". Sharing the view, French historian Pierre Brocheux (2007) describes Ho Chi Minh as a balanced portrait of an astute mind capable of weaving together the stands of nationalism and social revolution into a complex political strategy.

It is worth noting that though Ho Chi Minh expressed his admiration for the ideas for liberty, equality, fraternity, and human rights advocated by the bourgeois revolutions of America and France of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he saw these revolutions as incomplete. Ho remarked, "Though the American revolution has won for the last 150 years, its farmers and workers remain in hardship". Likewise, "The French revolution has been carried out four times but French farmers and workers are still thinking of the possibility to start yet another revolution to get rid of oppression" (cited in Nien. 2004: 53).

Obviously, in Ho's views, national liberation is attached to socialism as the indispensable way for human emancipation. Talking about socialism, Ho remarked, "socialism aims at improving material as well as cultural life of the people and is built up by the people" (cited in Hoe, in *The Institute for Ho Chi Minh and Party Leaders*. 2006: 12). Talking with students at the People's University in 1959, Ho stressed: "To progress to socialism, we must transform the old society into a new one, in which man is no longer exploited by man, a society in which equality will prevail, which means everybody must work and has a right to work. Each will enjoy the fruits of his labor, according to the amount of work he supplies" (cited in Warbey. 1972: 105).

Different from many Comintern's colleagues who extremely put their weight behind class struggle, Ho Chi Minh believed in people's power and made efforts to promote solidarity. His views on people's power stem from Vietnamese tradition of defending and building the nation. Having experienced challenges in dealing with a much more powerful neighbor to the North, i.e. China, who tended to dominate and



assimilate the country, Vietnamese feudal leaders soon learnt the lesson that “the people is the root” to protect, develop and preserve national identity as well as the court; and people’s power gave strength to patriotism. The content of Vietnamese patriotism had been gradually crystallized into a system of values and principles shown in the philosophies of Vietnamese national heroes like Ly Thuong Kiet (11<sup>th</sup> century), Tran Hung Dao (13<sup>th</sup> century), Nguyen Trai (15<sup>th</sup> century) and Nguyen Hue (18<sup>th</sup> century). Inheriting the tradition, Ho Chi Minh always reminded his colleagues that “revolution is the cause of the masses” and “only the force of all people can liberate the country from brutal domination” (cited in Lich. 2004: 69).

As early as 1930s, Ho pointed out that it was the people to decide which forces to lead them to carry out the revolution. “The party should not demand that the people recognize its leadership but should prove itself to be the most self-sacrificing, active and faithful component part of the front. Only through struggle and daily work will the broad masses recognize those who should be their leaders” (cited in Warbey. 1972: 105). Further highlighting the power of the people, Ho once said, “Political power must be of the people, from the people and for the people...Because the great majority of the people are made up of workers and peasants, they must be adequately represented in the organs of power, and especially in the National Assembly and People’s Councils at all levels” (cited in Warbey. 1972: 104).

In order to put into play the power of the people, Ho Chi Minh paid special attention to promotion of solidarity. To him, “solidarity is strength, solidarity is victory” (cited in Nien. 2004: 97). In Ho’s thought, not only did solidarity mean to unite all the possible internal forces, regardless of backgrounds or classes, for the national liberation cause but also to win support of international forces. He reminded diplomats at the 1966 national diplomatic conference that Vietnam’s diplomacy should “rally more people supporting the Vietnamese struggle for national salvation...trying to please everyone, even those at the lowest level. It might not be hundred per cent satisfaction but cannot be hundred per cent disappointment. We must help them and work for the great unity” (cited in Nien. 2004: 96-97).

Moreover, to the Vietnamese president, solidarity did not mean one-way road but also covered responsibility, i.e. the responsibility of the Vietnamese people for the struggle of other peoples around the world, referred to as “international responsibility” by Ho Chi Minh. “We have enjoyed the good of others, we should offer them something good from our part. Do not borrow without paying back” (cited in Nien. 2004: 92).

Unsurprisingly, in the context of the Cold War, the “international responsibility” taken by the DRV to the “struggle” in Laos and Cambodia was interpreted by the Thai government as an act of Communist expansion.

### *2.1. 3. Causal beliefs*

Based on the Marxist worldview and the principled beliefs, Ho Chi Minh put his weight behind strategies to attain the defined goals. Typical among them are the two beliefs on the relationship between principles and tactics, and between friends and foes.

One of prominent beliefs in Ho’s thought is “Sticking to the principle to deal with all changes”. This is a method which originated from the oriental philosophy and was effectively used by Vietnamese ancestors mostly to deal with a much more powerful neighbor to the North in the enduring struggle to safeguard and build the country. The principle in Ho’s thought is national independence, the goal of national liberation and unification, the people’s national democratic revolution and its advancement to socialism. This belief is reflected through Ho’s views on application of Marxism-Leninism and the flexible diplomatic strategies and tactics he employed for the DRV’s foreign affairs.

Though Ho Chi Minh based his worldview on Marxism-Leninism, the ideology provided Ho with ideas and methodology rather than doctrinaire beliefs. According to Lacouture (1968: 225), “It is not Marxist-Leninist phraseology that Ho uses in conversation but the idiosyncratic language of the League of Human Rights and of a kind of social-laicism which he picked up from his left-wing associates in Paris”. The indigenous empiricist always stressed the need to creatively apply Marxism-Leninism into concrete conditions of Vietnam revolution. In a report to the Comintern in 1924, Ho remarked, “...the class struggle in the East is not like that in the West. Marx based his theory on the certain philosophy of history, but what is the history? [it is] European history. What is Europe? It is not the whole humans...Marx unfortunately did not have chance to study the situation in the East. If we, therefore, study Eastern nations, we are free to supplement the ‘historical background’ to theory of Marxism” (cited in Giap, in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2000: 125). When he became the president of the DRV, Ho reiterated that “more than once, comrade Lenin repeated that a revolutionary theory is not a dogma but a compass for revolutionary activities, not rigid but full of creativeness” (cited in Nien. 2004: 86). He also reminded party members to promote “independent thinking and freedom of thought in Vietnam” (2004: 86).

During the second time in the Soviet Union from 1933 to 1938, Ho did not agree with the Comintern, which prioritized class struggle, over the way to carry out revolution. This was reflected in the “Brief Platform” and “Brief Policy” Ho drafted for the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1930; in Ho’s policy on mobilizing revolutionary forces for the national liberation revolution through the Viet Minh; and in his thoughts on building socialism in the North later on. Giving advices to ICP leaders who were studying in Moscow, Ho highlighted the characteristics of the Vietnam revolution which required the party to have proper methods, policies, and slogans. He pinpointed the need to draw people from all walks of life, patriotic forces including national intellectuals, bourgeoisie and landlords who were inclined to bear anti-imperialism sentiment, into a mass front against fascism and colonialism (Lich. 2004: 77).

During the resistance, due to the unpredictable turns of the revolution, Ho Chi Minh’s guidelines and policies were basically based on thorough consideration of the national situation, the situation and policy of the main adversaries as well as trends of the time. Ho once reminded his colleagues, “Our invariable goals are peace, unification, independence. We must stand firm on principles; but we apply flexible tactics. [if we] propose too high demands, the enemy cannot accept” (cited in Huan. 2005: 206). During 1945-1946 when the DRV’s fate was in a precarious situation in the face of 15000 strong Chinese Nationalist troops with the policy of “annihilating Communists, arresting Ho”, the slogan was “Chinese-Vietnamese Amity”. During negotiations with France on the Preliminary Agreement of 6 March 1946, it was a “free” Vietnam which was “independent, united within the French Union”. In October 1949, answering a Thai newspaper on the issue of neutrality, Ho said, “Vietnam will cooperate with all countries that are willing to sincerely cooperate on an equal footing with Vietnam. It is possible to be neutral despite the pressures of two world powers, as is the case with Switzerland” (cited in Nien. 2004: 185-186).

Differentiating friends and foes is another main theme in Ho Chi Minh’s thought. Based on Marxism-Leninism worldview as well as experience that Ho had gone through, undoubtedly he saw imperialism, colonialism, exploiting and oppressive forces as enemies against socialism, democratic, progressive, peace-loving forces, laboring people, and national liberation movements. In his words, “The Vietnamese nation is a member of the great family of the oppressed peoples rising for independence” (cited in Huan. 2005: 219). Before the US directly intervened in the Indochinese war, Ho’s policy was to set up friendly relations with the US to appeal for

support for the Vietnamese resistance. Since middle 1954, Ho saw the US as the main enemy of peace and of people in the world as well as of the Vietnamese revolution. As a result, he advocated setting up a mass front against the US. “Whoever unfriendly with the US can be in a united front with us, albeit temporarily” (cited in Huan. 2005: 212).

However, the Vietnamese president never considered a whole nation or population with its rulers. His approach was to try to neutralize and isolate the main enemies while convincing the people of those countries to take sides with the Vietnamese people – the concept of maximizing friends, minimizing foes. He considered progressive and peace-loving peoples as friends and fighters on the same front against “warlike” forces. In the interview given to the French reporter Daniel Huinebelle on 5 May 1964, he said: “the French people have a strong tradition of supporting the liberation war of the Vietnamese people. Today, they again showed their sympathy and support for the just cause of the South Vietnamese people and the struggle for peace and unification of Vietnam on the basis of the Geneva Agreement. The Vietnamese people are grateful for that sentiment” (cited in Nien. 2004: 175).

Adopting the same approach to the American people, Ho emphasized, “We have no disputes with the American people. We want to live in peace and enjoy friendship with the American people...In the past we differentiate between the French colonialists and the French people who loved peace, and today we can see difference between the American people who honor their tradition of liberty and the American interventionists and militarists in Washington...We want to have friendly and brotherly relations with the American people. We respect the American people, the talented people who made great contribution to science and protested against the aggressive war in South Vietnam” (cited in Nien. 2004: 175-176).

In order to maximize friends, Ho always paid attention to creating a broad front to support the national liberation cause. Domestically, he aimed at uniting people from all strata. In the appeal to the Vietnamese people in the wake of the Geneva Conference, Ho said, “I ardently appeal to all people who sincerely love the country, regardless ethnics, beliefs, political opinions, and whatever side they have sided with. Let’s sincerely cooperate for the sake of the nation, of the people, fulfilling the goal of peace, unification, independence, democracy for the country (Ho Chi Minh. 1987a: 4).

In external relations, the Vietnamese president attached importance to winning the heart and mind of the international community through diplomacy. From 1946-1954, Ho saw the need to use diplomacy to support the resistance. The focus of foreign

affairs during the period was to raise the awareness of the international public about the DRV and its resistance against the French. Efforts were made to affirm the sole legal status of the DRV as the official representative of the Vietnamese people. During 1954-1967, Ho supported political and diplomatic struggles to find a peaceful solution for the national unification cause. From 1964 to 1967, he conveyed his proposals to a peaceful negotiation to the then UN Secretary General U Thant in 1964, to Professor Giorgio La Pira, former mayor of Florence, and William Warbey, member of British parliament, in 1965, to several heads of state, including Queen Elizabeth II in February 1966, and again to U Thant and other intermediaries in autumn, winter and spring of 1966-67 (Warbey. 1972: 226).

One of the main diplomatic strategies to maximize friends initiated by Ho Chi Minh was people's diplomacy. In Ho's words, "We have two important areas: internal affairs and foreign affairs...[which] is not only an area of concern for embassies and consulates-general as professional offices but also for such organized activities as foreign trade, culture, youth, women and trade union agencies, all of which are equally responsible for diplomacy" (Nien. 204: 138). According to the former Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien, "People's diplomacy has many dynamic and creative activities. It contributed to the mobilization of the world public opinion, highlighting the goodwill of Vietnam and exposing the false peace of the aggressors" (2004: 138). In 1929, when living in Siam, Nguyen Ai Quoc advocated "Thai-Viet friendship". As a result, people's diplomacy sub-committees, as Nien points out (2004: 139), were set up from the grassroots level and overseas Vietnamese in Thailand could gain support from the Thai people for their patriotic activities.

Another important strategy was that of international solidarity. The goal of solidarity and international cooperation was to rally outside forces, lobby for international consent, support and assistance, and enhance the self-reliance capability in order to change the balance of power in favor of the revolution. In his work *Political Basics* written in 1953, Ho said: "Internationalism means establishing solidarity with friendly countries and other peoples to preserve world peace and fight against imperialist policies of aggression and war" (cited in Nien. 2004: 93). After the Geneva Conference, the Vietnamese president made a statement on 22 July 1954, announcing that "We further our friendship with Laos and Cambodia. We consolidate our great friendship with the Soviet Union, China and other friendly countries. We further the

solidarity with the French people, Asian peoples and world-wide peoples to safeguard peace” (Ho Chi Minh. 1987a: 4).

In Ho Chi Minh’s thought, to carry out solidarity, the Vietnamese people have responsibility for the struggle of other peoples around the world. “It is necessary to help each other to fight against common enemies; help friends is to help yourself” (cited in Huan. 2005: 220). Particularly, Ho paid special attention to promoting solidarity among Indochinese peoples on the ground that they shared the same fate under French colonialism and then American intervention. In the opening speech in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress in September 1960, Ho said: “In the common struggle to safeguard peace and national independence in Indochina, the Vietnamese people resolutely support the brave struggle of the Lao people against the US imperialism, driving Laos into the road of national reconciliation, independence, unification, and peaceful neutrality. We sincerely wish the friendship between Vietnam and neighboring countries, first and foremost with Laos and Cambodia, will be developed” (The Ho Chi Minh Museum. 2005: 64).

In brief, these beliefs help to understand Ho’s and the party’s pragmatic and flexible policies during his presidential tenure which made many, even Moscow leaders, confused about Ho Chi Minh’s “true color”. In relations with Thailand in the context of the Cold War, though standing on the opposite side, Ho and the DRV promoted “Thai-Vietnamese friendship”. However, given the Cold War ideological confrontation, the DRV’s policies, particularly those concerning the DRV’s moves in Laos and Cambodia, considerably worried the Thai military government about Communist threat.

## **2.2. The Thai ruling elite and their beliefs**

“Elite” is usually distinguished from the mass on three aspects: wealth, status and power. According to a sociological dictionary, “Those who, by virtue of their wealth, charisma, position or positions within an organization or group of organizations, have the capacity to be key forces in local or national projects, depending on their status as either local or national elites” (cited in Likhit. 1975). From this vantage point, Likhit (1975: 1) defines elites as “small groups of people in a society who control most of the wealth, whose social statuses are on the top stratum and who either directly or indirectly influence the decision making processes which affect members of society”. Hitherto, Thai politics has been by and large dominated by elites.

Though the Thai government adopted very pragmatic and flexible foreign policies – known as “Bamboo Diplomacy”, the policy making process was more or less

affected by the beliefs of the governing elite. In order to determine the Thai ruling elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh as well as Thailand's policy, it is indispensable to examine the Thai ruling elite in three periods: 1945-1948, 1948-1969, and the current period. Particularly, the questions of who they were/are and what beliefs they had/have will be discussed.

### *2.2.1. Background of the Post-1932 Thai elites*

According to Sorasak (2005), since the 1932 coup, Thai politics became the play ground of four elite groups, i.e. the royal family, the aristocracy, the new elite and the Isan leaders. While the first three groups were of Bangkok elite, the last one was provincial. These elite groups were separated by a combination of status, wealth, political experience and ideology.

"The royal family and the aristocracy were extremely wealthy, trained in the military and owned lots of land. They were of highest status and the wealthiest of the parliament members" (Sorasak. 2005: 583).

"The new elite came primarily from the lower ranks of the bureaucracy. They had access to large amounts of resources and became important and prominent in government and in politics due to their participation in the successful coup" (2005: 178)

"The Isan leaders ranked highest in terms of access to the Assembly. But its inherent access to legitimacy, status, authority, coercion and information were all decidedly minimal...As Laotians, they lived in the kingdom's peripheries, thereby having connections with neither the royal family, nor the aristocracy, nor the military leaders, nor the successful coup members. The Isan leaders were prominent in the new regime because of the elections in the parliamentary politics, which centered on the three Bangkok elite groups that paralleled and combined with mutual antipathies between the central and the province politicians" (2005: 208).

Within the four elite groups, there emerged three schools of thought, i.e. the traditional school represented mostly by the royal family and the aristocracy, the neo-traditional school led by Phibun and his military faction, and the progressive school embodied by Pridi led civilian faction and Isan leaders.

"The traditional school was distinguished from the progressive and neo-traditional schools by its traditional ideas to deal with both the democratic system and national development and security concerns. Its main idea was status quo, and it wanted to retain power for the traditional elite" (2005: 335). The school, as Sorasak points out,

was similar in many respects to King Rama V times: an intense central state, vigilant of unorthodox ideas, and a strong chief executive. “Its traditional security issues since the turn of the century had been still defined broadly to include communist threat, stability, and linking with the Great Powers of the West” and “Its national policy focused mainly on the armed modernization and the capital as the central interests and developments. Economically, it did not accept a certain form of socialization of the country’s wealth. Politically, it did not accept a certain principle of democratic government” (2005: 336). Its core beliefs emphasized respect for the king, country, and religion.

The neo traditional school made up mostly of military men. It was also based on Bangkok people, particularly educated groups, Chinese businessmen, and many members of parliament (MPs) from the old traditional and Chinese family backgrounds who wanted to join the government. The school was distinguished from the other two by its “neo traditional ideas to deal with national policies both political and socio-economic developments: the 1932 constitution, the national developments focusing on armed modernization, and the promotion of militarism and nationalism” (2005: 368). Its agenda was reflected through three aspects. Firstly, the neo traditional was Great Powers oriented, as reflected in the cases of Phibun’s affiliation with the Japanese in WWII and Thailand-US alliance during the Cold War. Secondly, its national development model focused on the modernization of the armed forces and Bangkok as the central interests. At the same time, it sought to build new economic bases for the military-bureaucracy through state enterprises and private companies under government sponsors. Thirdly, it retained strongly centralized state and a strong executive power, but run by the military men rather than by the royal family or the aristocracy. Unsurprisingly, the school wanted to keep political power under the military-bureaucracy’s domination away from the parliamentary politics.

The progressive school stood out by its progressive ideas to deal with national policies both political and socio-economic developments. Different from the other two, the progressive advocated free elections, strong parliamentary control, and more economic benefits for the voters. As Sorasak pointed out, the school’s fundamental character was neither liberalism nor communism, but socialism “consisting of all manner of socialists, social democrats and agrarian reformists” (2005: 357).

The progressives consisted of two groups, i.e. the Pridi civilian faction and the Isan leaders. Prominent among the Isan leaders were Tiang Sirikhan, a farmer from Sakhon Nakhon, and Thongin Phuriphat, from Ubon. When the Isan leaders entered into



the parliament, they began to voice their political, economic and social rights equally with Bangkok people and to oppose military governments' policies. Unsurprisingly, they quickly allied with the Pridi-led civilian faction to achieve their goals through the parliamentary system.

The ideas the Isan leaders formed stemmed from the neglected status of the northeast – a history of economic backwardness and governmental neglect. In the absolute monarchy rule, the court paid little attention to the region. Officials out of favor with top government leaders in the capital were often transferred to the Northeast; many of them regarded themselves as “exiled”. The morale of government administrators in that locality, therefore, tended to be low (Smith et al. 1968: 255). Culturally, the Isan people shared ethnic and linguistic affinity with the adjoining Laotians and they tended to react to their status by developing a strong minority consciousness – a feeling that they were being ignored because they were Lao and that the Thai who ruled in distant Bangkok were biased against them (Smith et al. 1968: 305).

While the traditional was regressive and the progressive was innovative, the neo traditional school was adaptive. Since it was a derivative from the traditional, neo-traditional main ideology was more conservative and closer to the old school. The only significant difference between them was the issue of whether the monarch or the military would be the center of the new political system. Meanwhile, the only common desire of the progressive and the neo traditional was a constitutional system that reduced the royal power to an absolute minimum.

From the background, Thai politics from the 1930s to 1950s was, as Sorasak points out, by and large characterized by two major conflicts, i.e. the conflict between the military and democratic forces, and the confrontation between the royal family and aristocracy alliance versus Pridi-Isan leaders. Each of these forces “had its own ideology, ideas and agenda regarding democracy. The ideological conflicts reflected not only how to proceed toward the goal of a truly democratic system without the military’s interference, but also how to make agreements on the new role of the three important institutions, the king, the assembly, and the military-bureaucracy” (Sorasak. 2005: 383).

#### *2.2.2. 1945 – 1948: The era of the progressive Seri Thai*

The post WWII saw the rise of the Seri Thai which was a temporary alliance among the four Thai elite groups, i.e. the royal family, the aristocracy, the new elite and

the local elite led by the Isan leaders, in opposition to the military regime led by Phibun and to Japanese occupation. After Phibun stepped down, the progressive quickly gained power through parliamentary system. This force was typically represented by two parties associated with Pridi, i.e. the Cooperative party and the Constitutional Front party.

The Cooperative party (Sahacheep), led by the Isan leaders under Thongin, was a socialist party which advocated radical policies, such as Pridi's economic plan of 1933, and aimed at developing and benefiting the country's populace. From a national perspective, the Cooperative, as Sorasak (2005: 478) contends, was a majority party which laid some of the foundations for the wave of progressive activities that flooded the country in the postwar politics.

The Constitutional Front party, led by Rear-Admiral Luang Thamrong Nawasawat, consisted mostly of the members of Pridi's Seri Thai civilian faction and several Thammasat University professors, who came from middle-class families in Bangkok and in central areas. While the Cooperative party advocated a more socialist approach to developing the economy, the Constitutional Front party favored a liberal policy.

The background revealed that the progressive's worldview was less monarchy-as well as less Western-oriented. Their principled beliefs were more people orientated, favoring democratic parliamentary rule. "The school wanted to abandon the traditional way of national developments focusing on Bangkok and armed forces and the old security concerns against communist ideas and activities. It strove to develop the country further towards a full democracy. Instead of seeking the monarchy and militarism-nationalism, the school sought to provide a democratic basis as the national ideology to state stability and to shift the contest of political power from the military domination to parliamentary politics" (Sorasak. 2005: 355).

The worldview and principled beliefs helped to form the progressive's causal beliefs. Domestically, they looked to free elections and relied on the parliamentary system to voice their thought and realize their goals; and they restricted the involvement of the military in politics by laws. Externally, given that the leaders of the school, as Sorasak argues (2005: 355), capitalized on the pro-regional national movement sentiments, communists or not, against both the Japanese and Western camps, the progressive was "neither Western oriented nor Eastern oriented but rather Southeast Asian oriented school". This helps to explain the sympathy that the Seri Thai

government felt towards nationalist movements in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indochina. Accordingly, Pridi and the Isan leaders supported the formation of the Southeast Asian League in 1947. According to Pasuk and Baker (2005: 141), in Pridi's vision, Thailand could play a special role as an agent and exemplar in the creation of a new post-colonial, democratic Southeast Asia.

### *2.2.3. 1948-1969: The military rule*

The rise of the progressive posed an acute threat to the interests of the royalists, the aristocracy and the military. While the traditional elites concerned about their privileges, especially the access to land, in the face of radical policies promoted by Pridi's and the Isan leaders, the military saw their leadership role threatened by the democratic parliamentary system. As a result, the traditional elites turned their support to the military to oust Pridi's force. In November 1947, the military stage a coup to bring Phibun back to power. Since then up to the 1980s, Thai politics was by and large dominated by the military and the military-royalist alliance. Ideologically, the predominant school during this period was neo-traditional. However, though they shared the same worldview, the ruling elites in the Phibun's and post-Phibun eras had both similar and different principled and causal beliefs

The neo traditional school was typically represented by the military. Training in the ideas of honor, hierarchical command, and devotion to the king, the military assumed the nature of state and society similar in many respects to the royalists and the aristocracy. The only significant difference between them, as Sorasak (2005) points out, was the issue who, the monarch or the military, would be as the center of the new political system. Accordingly, this school advocated a Constitutional monarchy and accepted democracy only in its form with the military as the protector of the Constitution and the Assembly. Moreover, in the context of the Cold War, the ruling leaders, being part of the capitalist class, believed in the power of the West and saw benefits from siding with the "Free World" in deterring Communism.

In the late 1950s, the military elite broadened the concept of national security to include development. According to Prudhisana (1992: 51-52), "development" under military rule was not "politics" in the sense of competition for power but was "administration" involving planning, stability, growth, bureaucratic efficiency. Unsurprisingly, development was associated with foreign assistance and protection and anti-Communism. As Panitan (in Alagappa. 1998: 422) observes, to help carry out

development tasks, various bureaucratic institutions and military agencies were established. “Among the key organizations were the National Security Council, the Central Security Operation Command of the Supreme Commander’s Office...the Internal Security Operation Command, the Capital Security Command...Some of these agencies, such as the ISOC, were directly responsible for defense-oriented mass organization programs including the National Defense Volunteers, the Volunteer Development and Self-Defense Villages, and the Military Reservists for National Security”.

Also the military-royalists promoted the notion of “Thai-ness”, i.e. proper Thai language, new national dress, a new official new year’s day, and new legislation to protect Thai society. “Among these measures were a series of ‘anticommunist’ orders and legislations such as the Communist Act of 1932, the Anticommunist Activities Acts of 1952, 1969 and 1979...A person deemed not to be ‘Thai’ can easily be prosecuted as a communist traitor” (Panitan, in Alagappa. 1998: 421).

However, under Phibun’s leadership, instead of the King, the school adopted “nationalist and constitutional forms to reinforce the new status of the military in politics by adding constitutionalism and its military protection as the new values of the democratic regime” (Sorasak. 2005: 371). According to Sorasak, Phibun, who had studied abroad, was a product of the combination of the traditional and progressive schools. “Phibun melded and balanced tradition with innovation. He and his key men did not just make people [accustomed to] Western ideology and ideas, they also sponsored historical dramas and brought them to people around the country to teach tradition as well as progress” (Sorasak. 2005: 375). At the same time, Phibun “blocked the royalist politicians’ attempt to reinstate royal power through the constitution, and through the 1950s restricted the king’s public duties to the rituals which established the essential specialness of the monarchy” (Pasuk and Baker. 2005: 176).

Phibun’s school of thought established the military regime with strong nationalism and mass support, particularly surrounded by the urban middle class in Bangkok – interpreted by Baechtold (2005) as efforts to create a nation state with its people as its citizens rather than subjects of the King. Also Phibun was interested in promoting a mass membership organization to support the military regime. “He set up a mass membership organization, military youths, the Yuwachon Thahan headed by Prayoon in 1935. Then he pursued a set of highly nationalistic domestic and foreign policies to gain support of mass, particularly urban educated groups” (2005: 378). As a

result, anti-Chinese and anti-Communist sentiments were exploited to manipulate urban masses.

The decline of Phibun saw the rise of “a new military generation” which, as Wyatt observes (1984), was the only generation of modern Thai leaders to have been educated entirely in Thailand. Like Phibun, Sarit and Thanom also favored the idea that was based on militarism. However, ideologically their school of thought was closer to the traditional school and more conservative than Phibun’s. Particularly, Sarit bore great respect for traditional institutions and values. He, as Sorasak points out (2005: 461), seemed to have retained “the most affectionate memories of the last years of the absolute monarchy”.

According to Prudhisan (1992: 6-48), Sarit squarely drew in “the Sukhothai phokun model” in which he assumed the role of the “father of the nation”<sup>2</sup>. In Sarit’s views, the state was a three-tiered system, i.e. state/government, bureaucracy, and people – much as under the traditional Thai absolute monarchy; and the root cause of Thai political instability “lay in the grafting of an alien idea on to the Thai system”, i.e. the parliamentary democracy. As a result, at first Sarit swept away the institutions of democracy – the constitution, the parliament, the political parties, the labor unions and the free press. However, in order to legitimize the leadership of the military, Sarit later backed an interim constitution which gave almost absolute power to the premier<sup>3</sup> and made the legislature entirely an appointed body. During Sarit’s leadership, the military officer elite became somewhat like “a ruling caste, distinguished by its unique dress and rituals, vaunting its own purity, and claiming extensive privileges” (Pasuk and Baker. 2005: 169).

Unlike Phibun who tended to base his regime on strong nationalism and direct mass support, Sarit relied on the monarchy to legitimize his rule. To the generals, the monarchy could serve as a focus of unity, and a force for stability, while remaining subject to their control. While in Phibun’s era, the military was built as nation defender, under Sarit’s rule it was viewed as the “army of the King”. According to Pasuk and Baker (2005: 177), on the eve of both his 1957 and 1958 coups, Sarit visited the King.

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<sup>2</sup> Sarit was concurrently Supreme Commander, Army C-in-C, and Police Director General. The Office of the prime minister was enlarged and reorganized, giving him overall control and direction over economic planning, educational planning, government budgeting, civil service personnel and the universities (Prudhisan. 1992: 47).

<sup>3</sup> Its Article 17 empowered the prime minister to take whatever steps necessary to suppress actions he defined as threatening to national security, the throne or public order (Prudhisan. 1992: 46).

On the day of the 1957 coup, the King named Sarit as “Defender of the Capital”, and Sarit displayed this decree as legitimacy. After the 1958 coup, Sarit’s group declared it “firmly holds that the King and Nation are one and indivisible”. He also annulled Phibun’s Land Act, which the king had opposed, and switched national day from the day of the 1932 revolution to the King’s birthday and encouraged expansion of his royal role. In 1962, Sarit amended the Sangha Act, overthrowing Phibun’s 1944 reform, returning roughly to Chulalongkorn’s 1902 organization of the Sangha, and restoring Mongkut’s Thammayut sect to a privileged position.

Essentially, this period of military rule saw the alliance among the military, the royalists and the aristocracy in dealing with the growing threat from progressive forces, i.e. the Pridi’s civilian faction’s remnants, the democratic student movements, the Isan leaders, and the Communists. Unsurprisingly, in the context of the Cold War the military regime felt responsible for siding with the “Free World” to oppose to Communism. Not only did anti-communism give the military a very good excuse to suppress progressive forces, it also created opportunities for the Thai governing elite to access Western military, economic and technical assistance and at the same time legitimized the leadership of the military as the protector of the monarchy and Buddhism. In the latter respect, the military regime was quite successful in appealing to the populace that were long accustomed to a monarch “who was at once the religious and national symbol of unity, security, benevolence and grace” and that could not “move suddenly to another abstract concept of democratic representation” (Yos, in Ayooob and Chai-anan. 1989: 84). After the Vietnam War until the demise of the Cold War, especially during the period of Vietnam’s involvement in Cambodia, the military continued its image as the defender of the King, religion and the nation against the communist threat.

#### *2.2. 4. 1990s – Thai style democracy*

Modern Thai leadership can be divided into five major power groups, i.e. the monarchy, the military, the technocrats, big business, and the professional politicians. Though the monarchy, the military and the technocrats still hold important positions in Thai politics, the demise of the Cold War, the growing influence of globalization, modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and the grow of mass society gave rise to the latter two elites.

However, due to traditional values, which were apparently attached to the institutionalized monarchy and military and which have rooted in Thai society after a prolonged military rule, it seems to have a compromise between the new and the conservative forces to ensure the interests of the capitalist class rather than a zero-sum conflict. According to Pasuk and Baker (2005: 248), the final outcome of the competition between the new elite and the traditional elite during 1990s was a compromise. “Bureaucratic reform was constantly discussed but never formulated. Similar agreements to share power and profit between bureaucrats and businessman politicians were negotiated down the ladder from nation to locality”.

While the traditional forces had to adapt to political and economic changes, the business elite and the party elite still saw the need to associate with the traditional elites. Whenever an elite faction lost advantage to their rivals in the democratic representative system, they tended to look to the monarchy and the military to uphold their position and gather support. This is apparent as in the case of Prem’s ascendancy during 1980s, of the Democrat’s governments, which saw a close relationship between Chuan Leekpai and the monarchy, and as in the case of the 2006 coup, which witnessed a large number of politicians, scholars, and activists, termed by Ungpakorn (2007) as “neo-liberalists”, who vocally advocated extension of the rule of law, strengthening of the parliament, and bureaucratic reform, looked to the coup as the only way out for the political crisis.

The background reveals that the Thai modern worldview was characterized by the national ideology which had been still spinning around the concepts of the monarchy, Buddhism and the nation (associated with the concept of Thai-ness), Thai-style democracy<sup>4</sup>, capitalist globalization and new concept of national security<sup>5</sup>. According to Pasuk and Baker (2005: 231), after the violence of October 1976 which revealed “aspirations for liberty, participation, and self-expression”, the National Security Council’s academic advisers concluded that the old triad of “nation, religion, and king” was no longer “stimulating” for a society which had changed so rapidly in the

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<sup>4</sup> That is democracy within the framework of Thai-ness. M R Kukrit Pramoj is an example for such “Thai-style democracy” promoters. According to Saichol (*Bangkok Post*, 9 February 2008), although Kukrit always talked about democracy, rights, freedoms, equality and similar concepts, the meanings of these terms were restricted only to what he wanted Thais to recognize in each situation.

<sup>5</sup> The invented concept of Thai-ness, which was defined to support a hierarchical social structure, is used to serve capitalist interests. However, the model exposed many weaknesses. According to Saichol (*Bangkok Post*, 9 February 2008), under the structure, those in “high social spaces” had a duty to be kind to those in “low social spaces”, to prevent exploitation and oppression in society. But “the expansion of capitalism...turned profit and loss into the basis for social relationships, weakening the ethics of kindness to the point it lost influence.

previous generation. Consequently, the newly promoted touchstone is “nation, religion, monarchy, and the democracy with the King as head of state”. The erection of King Prajadhipok’s statue outside the new parliament building and the establishment of the King Prajadhipok Institute in 1994 undoubtedly mirrored the belief (Pasuk and Baker in Pridi. 2000, Ungpakorn. 2007).

With the collapse of the socialist camp, which brought about a new world order dictated by the West, globalization has soon become the main theme of Thai political and economic discourses. Thai business leaders, as Battersby points out (1999: 482), had “incorporated the language of globalization into an ideology of cooperation that legitimates their involvement in public policy making and sanctions efforts at independent economic diplomacy”. According to Pasuk and Baker (2005: 246-255), after the 1992 incident, the fear that investors and tourists would flee Thailand in 1992 convinced businessmen that the globalized economy could no longer be entrusted to generals with outdated agendas. As a result, the rise of the Democrat Party was partly attributed to the party’s refashioning itself to manage the globalized economy. Also the need to bring politics into line with the globalized economy gave momentum to the approval of the 1997 constitution. However, after the bust, big businessmen promoted the resurrection of the tradition of the strong dictatorial state to manage the threats of both globalization and democratization, contributing to the rise of Thaksin (2005: 257-258).

Moreover, with political and economic changes during the 1980s under the growing force of globalization, the traditional security conceptions, i.e. the need to defend the nation’s independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and status in the international arena, were broadened to include such issues as economic development, civil society, equality, liberty, justice, decentralization, human rights and environmental issues (Panitan, in Alagappa. 1998: 429). According to Panitan (in Alagappa. 1998: 434), in the modern Thai elite’s views, five specific domains of national security stood out, i.e. political security, economic security, social and psychological security, military security, and scientific and technological security. In terms of economic security, during 1990s the elite believed in “looking for new markets, particularly in neighboring countries”. These beliefs undoubtedly left their stamps on Thailand’s neighboring and regional policies during 1990s.



### 2. 3. Conclusion

Vietnamese political discourse has been considerably influenced by Ho Chi Minh and his thought. Based on the Marxist worldview and methodology, Ho believed in the collapse of imperialism and of the transition from capitalism to socialism as the dominant social system in the world. However, different from many of Western Marxist ideologues and Vietnamese colleagues, Ho always prioritized national interests. National interests in his views meant national independence and unification, and socialism as the way to build up a democratic and equal society free from human exploitation. Besides national interests, national independence and socialism, Ho also believed in people's power and solidarity in both international and domestic revolutions.

In order to achieve revolutionary goals, Ho highlighted the need to apply flexible tactics while sticking to principles and to maximize friends while minimizing enemies. This led to pragmatic and flexible policies Ho employed to deal with external as well as internal challenges. Before 1949, Ho's pragmatic approach confused many international and regional actors in relation to the "identity" of the DRV. After the DRV announced its position along with the Communist camp, the DRV's policies, particularly those concerning Laos and Cambodia, obsessed the Thai elite about the threat of Communist expansion.

Thai politics has been significantly dominated by competition for power and wealth among Thai elites. During 1945-1948, the progressive Seri Thai led by Pridi held power through the parliamentary system. From socialist leaning ideology, their principled beliefs were of people orientation, democratic parliamentary rule. Therefore, the progressive believed in a democratic representative structure and relied on the parliamentary system to voice their thought and realize their goals. Also they tended to be Southeast Asian oriented. This helps to explain the sympathy that the Seri Thai government felt towards nationalist movements in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indochina, in the anti-colonial context.

The rise of the progressive Seri Thai, who tended to be less monarchy- and less Western-oriented, posed an acute threat to the status and interests of the royalists, the aristocracy and the military. As a result, these forces allied together to bring Pridi's faction down, opening a long era of military rule. Unsurprisingly, the ruling elite advocated a Constitutional monarchy and accepted democracy only in its form with the military as the protector of the Constitution and the Assembly. At the outset of the Cold

War, the Thai ruling elite saw a bipolar world and decided to align with the West, which supported whatever regimes that went against Communism, and advocated anti-Communist as well as anti-progressive policies. In the face of the North Vietnamese Communists' determination to liberate the South and the DRV's Laos and Cambodia policies, Thailand's anti-Communism policies aimed to protect not only the monarchy and Buddhism but also Thai sovereignty.

The process of modernization and urbanization, the demise of the Cold War, the growing influence of globalization and parliamentary democracy contributed to the rise of the business elite and the party elite. However, while the traditional forces, i.e. the monarchy, the aristocracy and the military, had to adapt to the new political and economic changes, the two rising elites were still more or less attached themselves with traditional values, basically since the values helped to protect the interests of the capitalist class. As a result, while traditional values such as the monarchy, Buddhism, and the nation were still upheld, modern concepts were added such as democracy with "the king as the head of state", globalization, economic security. In the post Cold War context, these beliefs led to changes in the Thai elite's conceptualization of cause-effect relationships, which were reflected in Thailand's regional and neighboring policies.

The above discussion mirrors the general background concerning the role of ideas of elite in shaping state policies. This chapter will serve as the framework to explain interaction between Thailand and Vietnam, especially to assess the role of Ho Chi Minh in shaping the DRV's Thailand policy as well as to determine the Thai ruling elite's perceptions of Ho, particularly in three periods, i.e. 1945-1948, 1949-1969, and the contemporary period. Before going into detail with reference to each period, it is necessary to review the background of the Viet Kieu in Thailand, Ho's stay in Siam as well as his image among the Viet Kieu. This would have significant impacts on the Thai ruling elite's Cold War beliefs and on both the DRV's and the Thai government's policy towards each other.