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ABSTRACT

Name: David D. Oldfield

Department: Political Science

Title: The Restructuring of Thailand's Foreign Policy Towards Laos, 1988-1991

Major: Political Science

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by:

Date:

Clark D. Heber
Dissertation Director

August 4, 1998

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine why, beginning in 1988, Thailand's foreign policy decision-makers restructured the state's foreign policy towards Laos. Between 1975 and 1988, Thai-Lao relations were plagued by border fighting, assistance to anti-government insurgents, and restrictions on trade and the transportation of goods. However, when General Chatichai Choonhavan became Thailand's Prime Minister in August 1988, he announced a policy change of "turning Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace." A comprehensive restructuring of Thai-Lao relations began under General Chatichai, with their relationship quickly shifting to one characterized by peace, extensive government and private-sector cooperation, and greater trade and investment.

The major research question in this study is: What factors led to the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos? Domestic and external variables are considered, such as the influence of businessmen, the Cambodian crisis, and the decline of the Cold War. Also, the dissertation examines how Prime Minister Chatichai took control of foreign policy-making from a previously dominant bureaucracy.

The findings reveal that Thailand's foreign policy change resulted from a combination of external and domestic factors, most notably Prime Minister Chatichai's personal beliefs, the Cambodian crisis, and the response of government leaders in Laos. Based on interviews with Thai officials, a conclusion is made that Thai businessmen were not the impetus for the foreign policy change. Instead, the

decision-makers initiated the restructuring in order to establish peace between Thailand and Laos and within Cambodia.

This dissertation challenges the belief that Chatichai's Indochina policy was driven by business interests, and it demonstrates how Laos played a critical role in his strategy for improving relations with all of Indochina. This study also provides an in-depth analysis of decision-makers' perceptions of domestic and external factors and how these influenced foreign policy-making during the critical transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War international system. Additionally, the findings here provide a greater understanding of what causes leaders to make an abrupt change in foreign policy and how restructuring can be achieved despite resistance from a powerful bureaucracy.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

THE RESTRUCTURING OF THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS LAOS,
1988-1991

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY

DAVID D. OLDFIELD

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Dissertation Director

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DEDICATION

To my parents, whose love and support in innumerable ways made this possible



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

Throughout most of 1975 until 1988, Thailand maintained a stern, albeit relatively non-aggressive, foreign policy towards its Indochinese neighbors due in part to the successful communist revolutions in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.¹ Concerns for their country's security prompted Thailand's leaders to sustain a hard-line, uncompromising foreign policy toward Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia in the hope of preventing further communist intrusions into peninsular Southeast Asia. Fears of an Indochinese federation led by Vietnam were compounded by Thailand's perceived security threat from domestic communist insurgents, particularly the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).

Thai-Lao relations during this thirteen-year period were characterized by the closing of most border crossings, restricted trade and transportation of goods, assistance to rebel groups in both countries, and battles over boundary lines in 1984 and 1988. In the latter half of 1988, however, the hard-line foreign policy towards Laos quickly unraveled. With the ascent of retired General Chatichai Choonhavan to the office of prime minister in August 1988, Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos became much more cooperative than under the previous administration of General

¹ The terms "Indochina" and "Indochinese" refer to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. At times, Cambodia has been officially known as Kampuchea, but the name Cambodia will be used throughout this dissertation, except when using quotes from other sources.

Prem Tinsulanonda. Investment and trade began to flourish, numerous exchanges of government and military officials took place, and the two countries agreed to build the first bridge across the Mekong River. An abrupt change in foreign policy such as this is referred to as "restructuring."

Chatichai's foreign policy reversal had a dramatic impact on mainland Southeast Asia: it moved Thai-Lao relations away from hostility and conflict toward peace and cooperation and effectively ended Thailand's fear of and confrontation with all three communist Indochinese states. The role Chatichai's Laos policy played in ushering in this new era of Thai-Indochinese relations has not been recognized.

Purpose and Propositions

This study seeks to determine why, beginning in 1988, Thailand's foreign policy-makers restructured the state's foreign policy towards the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR). Was the shift due to external factors such as the decline of the Cold War, or was the restructuring the result of domestic influences such as pressure by businessmen? Several variables are explored, and it is plausible that the foreign policy change was the result of a combination of factors.

The major research question for this study is: What factors led to the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos? Based on this question and a thorough literature review of the Chatichai administration, the following propositions are analyzed:

Proposition 1: Thailand's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos resulted from a combination of external and domestic factors.

Proposition 2 (domestic variable): Thai foreign policy-makers restructured the foreign policy towards Laos because of domestic pressures from businessmen for greater trade and investment opportunities.

Proposition 3 (external variable): Thai foreign policy-makers restructured the foreign policy towards Laos in order to foster a settlement for the Cambodian crisis.

These two variables, businessmen and Cambodia, have been posited as the most likely domestic and external variables, respectively, which led to the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. However, to ensure that other potentially relevant variables were not overlooked, ten additional variables were incorporated in the conceptual framework, which is presented in a later section.

This dissertation will also consider how Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan came to wrest control of foreign policy-making (and implement the restructuring) from a previously dominant and resistant bureaucracy. The following proposition is posited:

Proposition 4: Prime Minister Chatichai's experience in the 1970s as Minister of Foreign Affairs provided him with the expertise and knowledge of the foreign policy process to wrest control of policy-making from the previously dominant Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Concept of Foreign Policy Restructuring and Its Significance

In order to understand restructuring, it is necessary to define the term. Defining it, however, is problematic; no consensus exists among scholars on the definition of restructuring or on what actions by decision-makers constitute

restructuring. K.J. Holsti distinguishes foreign policy restructuring from normal foreign policy change.² The latter refers to relatively slow and incremental change, with low linkage among issue areas. The former refers to a change in the "total pattern of ...external relations" with change being quick, intentional, non-incremental, and incorporating a conscious linkage of sectors.³ Thus for Holsti, merely a change in the relations with one country or a change in one issue area does not constitute foreign policy restructuring. Rather, restructuring is a more comprehensive, simultaneous, and across-the-board change.

Thomas Volgy and John Schwarz define foreign policy restructuring as "a major, comprehensive change in the foreign policy orientation of a nation, over a relatively short period of time, as manifested through behavioral changes in a nation's interactions with other actors in international politics."⁴ They emphasize a multidimensional change in behavior, meaning dimensions of behavior which are not normally intertwined begin to co-vary.

In contrast to the aforementioned definitions, Joe Hagan and Jerel Rosati offer a more flexible and broader conceptualization of foreign policy restructuring. They assert that foreign policy restructuring may not always be dramatic, nor is it "necessarily wholesale and may vary relative to specific issue areas or sectors of the

² K.J. Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Neglected Phenomenon in Foreign Policy Theory," in K.J. Holsti et al., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 2.

³ Holsti, 2.

⁴ Thomas J. Volgy and John E. Schwarz, "Foreign Policy Restructuring and the Myriad Webs of Restraint," in Jerel A. Rosati, Joe D. Hagan, and Martin W. Sampson III, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 25.

state's foreign relations."⁵ Under this definition, the range of behavior which constitutes restructuring is much wider than under those presented by Holsti and Volgy and Schwarz. Hagan and Rosati dismiss the need for comprehensive change in a state's behavior in order for there to be restructuring. Thus, merely a change in how a state relates to multinational companies, while all other foreign policy behavior remains the same, would fit Hagan and Rosati's definition of restructuring.

If the definitions of Holsti and Volgy and Schwarz were placed on one end of a spectrum and the definition by Hagan and Rosati placed on the other, it seems reasonable to synthesize the two for a more refined definition. The term "foreign policy restructuring" as it is used in this study is defined as a change in multiple sectors or issue-areas (i.e., at least two, but not necessarily all) with one or more states over a short period of time and equates to a near reversal of the past foreign policy directed at that state (or those states) in terms of the relevant sectors.⁶ This definition eliminates the restrictive aspect of comprehensive change of a state's behavior, but it tightens up the broader version proposed by Hagan and Rosati by requiring change in at least two sectors or issue-areas.

Foreign policy and decision-making have an extensive body of literature, but relatively little has been devoted to foreign policy restructuring. This is surprising considering the profound effects it can have not only on the state reversing its policy

⁵ Joe D. Hagan and Jerel A. Rosati, "Emerging Issues in Research on Foreign Policy Restructuring," in Jerel A. Rosati, Joe D. Hagan, and Martin W. Sampson III, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 267.

⁶ Sectors refers to military, trade, alliance, political relations, etc. Also, for stylistic reasons the words "shift," "reversal," "redirection," and "change" will serve as synonyms for restructuring.

and the intended recipient but also on the international system. Perhaps the most notable foreign policy reversal was Richard Nixon's decision to begin normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China, in effect ending the United States' policy since 1949 of recognizing the government of Taiwan as the legitimate government of China. The decision to restructure American foreign policy altered the conduct of the superpowers after 1972 and had extensive implications for global politics.

Another notable case of foreign policy restructuring was Egypt's reversal to seek peace with Israel in the 1970s. The current peace process between the Israelis and Palestinians is indebted to the radical change in Egypt's foreign policy.

The significance of restructuring is also seen in the Soviet Union's foreign policy changes in the 1980s. By abandoning the post-World War II policies toward Eastern Europe, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev fostered the end of communism in Eastern Europe and the subsequent democratization in much of the region. Had Gorbachev not lifted the Soviet Union's iron grip over Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War may not have proceeded as peacefully and quickly as it did.

Relationships among states are changing rapidly in the post-Cold War era.⁷ Many former enemies have become friends, and allies are often seen as competitors in

⁷ For changes in the international system and the interaction of states, see Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Gregory Raymond, A Multipolar Peace? Great Power Politics in the Twenty-first Century (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Richard Leaver and James L. Richardson, eds., Charting the Post-Cold War Order (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993); Keith Philip Lepor, ed., After the Cold War: Essays on the Emerging World Order (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); James N. Rosenau, Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds., Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

the global economy. Hagan and Rosati assert, "The cumulative effects of foreign policy restructurings, especially among the major powers, will ultimately shape the structures of the emerging international system."⁸

In recognizing the significance of foreign policy restructuring and the implications it can have on global politics, we are left with several vitally important questions about restructuring. Under what conditions does it occur? Are international or domestic factors more influential in promoting foreign policy restructuring? How do leaders overcome opposition to foreign policy change? Answers to these questions may provide insight into how the emerging international system will take shape.

Literature Review of Foreign Policy Decision-Making and Restructuring

Analysts of international relations are confronted with what is known as the "level of analysis problem," and this study is no exception. In most instances, we are forced to make a choice between the international system, the state, or the individual for our perspective.⁹ This dissertation encompasses to some extent all three levels, because each one offers insight and advantages that the other two are deficient in. However, because this study uses a decision-making approach, the emphasis is naturally upon the individuals who made the decision.

⁸ Hagan and Rosati, 277.

⁹ See in particular J. David Singer's classic article "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations," World Politics, Oct. 1961, 77-92; and Arnold Wolfers, "The Actors in International Politics," W.T.R. Fox and A.B. Fox, eds., Theoretical Aspects of International Relations (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), 83-106.

Foreign policy restructuring is one aspect of foreign policy decision-making, and thus it is worthwhile to discuss decision-making before proceeding to the more specific literature on restructuring.

Foreign Policy Decision-Making Literature

Most foreign policy decision-making can be categorized into three broad approaches: rational actor, psychological-perceptual, and bureaucratic-organizational. The crux of rational actor approaches is that decision-makers act rationally and choose from among available alternatives the most value-maximizing course of action. Rational actor models assume that actors are fully aware of the alternatives and their consequences and consciously calculate which one best meets their objective. The realist school of international relations, which became the dominant approach after World War II due to the influential works of E.H. Carr,¹⁰ Raymond Aron,¹¹ and Hans Morgenthau,¹² harnessed the concept of rationality to explain the behavior of states. Realists view the state as a rational, unitary actor. The behavior of all states can be explained by what Morgenthau saw as statesmen pursuing "interest defined as power."¹³ Other aspects of decision-making, such as

¹⁰ E.H. Carr, The Twenty Years' Crisis, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan Press, 1946).

¹¹ Raymond Aron, Peace and War (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966).

¹² Hans J. Morgenthau, Scientific Man vs. Power Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), and Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 4th ed. (New York: Knopf Publishers, 1967).

¹³ Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations, 5-6.

game theory and deterrence theory, also were based on the assumption that actors are rational.¹⁴

Critics of the rational actor approach such as Alexander George contend that the unitary rational actor assumption is too simplistic and thereby ignores many crucial variables in the decision-making process.¹⁵ Rational actor models fail to consider the role of domestic politics in the formulation of foreign policy or the individual actors involved. Other criticisms leveled against these models include the breakdown of rational thinking in situations of high stress (such as crises) and the negative effects of small group dynamics on rational decision-making.¹⁶ Even more damaging to the models is the recognition that humans do not seek or possess perfect

¹⁴ For examples of game theory, see Glenn H. Snyder, "'Prisoner's Dilemma' and 'Chicken' Models in International Politics," International Studies Quarterly, 15:1, 1971, 66-103; Steven J. Brams, Game Theory and Politics (New York: The Free Press, 1975); and James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1990). For discussions and critiques of rationality and deterrence, see Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," World Politics, 41:2, 1989, 143-169; George W. Downs, "The Rational Deterrence Debate," World Politics, 41:2, 1989, 225-238; Alexander George and Richard Smoke, "Deterrence and Foreign Policy," World Politics, 41:2, 1989, 170-182; Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," World Politics, 41:2, 1989, 208-224; and Frank C. Zagare, "Rationality and Deterrence," World Politics, 42:2, 1990, 238-260.

¹⁵ Alexander George, cited in Valerie M. Hudson and Christopher S. Vore, "Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," Mershon International Studies Review, 39, 1995, 228; and Christopher M. Jones, "Reassessing and Transcending Allison: A Governmental Politics Paradigm for the 1990s and Beyond," Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, April 1996.

¹⁶ See Ole R. Holsti, Crisis, Escalation, War (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1970) and Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). Mary Zey has a thorough critique of ten assumptions posited in rational choice theory. See Mary Zey, "Criticisms of Rational Choice Models," in Mary Zey, ed., Decision Making: Alternatives to the Rational Choice Models (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc., 1992), 9-32.

information. Instead of optimizing, they satisfice, meaning they settle for the first acceptable option.

After finding faults in the assumptions of rationality, the cognitive revolution of the 1960s and 1970s challenged many of the ideas of rational actor models.¹⁷ The literature which emerged from the cognitive approaches, known as the psychological-perceptual school, emphasized the perceptions and personalities of leaders, the dynamics of small groups, national and societal characteristics, and the context of decision-making. In sum, attention was placed on the individuals making the decision. One of the earliest applications of psychology to decision-making was Nathan Leites's "operational code," which was used to analyze Soviet leaders and their behavior.¹⁸ Leites and later work by George¹⁹ describe how an operational code influences a leader's actions by providing norms, standards, and guidelines for making a decision. Leaders' beliefs about history and politics also influence the formulation of policy options.

One of the instrumental works in bringing attention to foreign policy decision-making and its decision-makers is by Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin.²⁰ While they should not be considered a part of the psychological-perceptual

¹⁷ Hudson and Vore, 211.

¹⁸ Nathan Leites, The Operational Code of the Politburo (New York: The Rand Corporation, 1951) and A Study of Bolshevism (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1953).

¹⁹ Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," International Studies Quarterly, 13:2, 1969, 190-222.

²⁰ Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, "Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics," in Richard C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and Burton Sapin, eds., Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 14-185.

approach, their study served as a precursor for the subsequent focus on the decision-makers involved in foreign policy-making, in particular the actors' motivations and the context of decision-making.²¹ Snyder and his colleagues argue that state behavior is the basis of international politics but that decision-making is the major determinant of state behavior and therefore should be the focus of our inquiry. In an effort to move away from the abstract conception of the state and the belief that the state takes a life of its own, the authors define the state as its official decision-makers: "State action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state."²²

They then ask why do decision-makers, and subsequently states, behave the way they do? The key to answering this question, they argue, depends greatly on how the decision-makers define their situation and on the settings, both external and domestic, in which they find themselves. Snyder and his colleagues elaborate further by claiming that foreign policy-making is best analyzed as decision-making in an organizational context. This means the decision-makers function as a unit within certain social structures (the state), whereby the decision-makers tend to have defined roles within the organizational context which may influence their views of the situation.²³

Glenn D. Paige utilizes Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin's analytical framework in his empirical case study of the "Korean decision" made by the Truman administration.²⁴

²¹ Singer and Hudson, 250.

²² Snyder et al., 65.

²³ The emphasis Snyder and his colleagues place on organizations is why they are not accurately classified in the psychological-perceptual approach.

²⁴ Glenn D. Paige, The Korean Decision [June 24-30, 1950] (New York: The Free Press, 1968).

Paige interviewed 11 U.S. government officials who were involved in the decision to commit troops to South Korea in the 1950s. He devotes his attention to the internal and external settings at the time of the decision and to the objectives of the decision-makers, rather than focusing on the psychological processes which may have occurred.²⁵

An early contribution which helped provide the foundation for the psychological-perceptual approach was the idea of context in Harold and Margaret Sprouts's "milieu."²⁶ They emphasize the distinction between the psycho-milieu and the operational milieu. The psycho-milieu encompasses the images, perceptions, and ideas of the decision-maker and how he or she responds to environmental conditions. The operational milieu refers to the geographic environment and is also the realm in which decisions are executed. The way in which decision-makers perceive their environment and process the information may not, according to the Sprouts, coincide with the reality of the environmental conditions. No decision-maker perceives everything in the environment, and hence a gap arises between the perception and objective reality, often with the consequence that decision-makers act in response to erroneous perceptions of their milieu.

Numerous works built from these early contributions. As the psychological-perceptual approach developed, it branched off into several subgroupings.²⁷

²⁵ Paige's work has many applications to the study at hand and will be discussed further in other sections.

²⁶ Harold and Margaret Sprout, The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs with Special Reference to International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

²⁷ For an excellent overview of the different approaches to perceptions, see James F. Voss and Ellen Dorsey, "Perceptions and International Relations: An Overview," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy.

Influential studies of the perceptions of decision-makers were conducted by Boulding,²⁸ de Rivera,²⁹ Jervis,³⁰ and Brecher.³¹ Boulding contends that decision-makers do not respond to the "objective" reality but rather to their image of the situation. He defines image as "the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and the universe."³² These images are forged from our past experiences and "messages," and they subsequently become the determinants of our behavior.

De Rivera found that each decision-maker creates his own reality. Although many different meanings and interpretations of the situation are possible, decision-makers usually choose the ones that least disturb their beliefs. As a result, he argues for the need to consider political leaders as independent variables affecting policy.

Jervis takes a different angle into the perceptions question by looking at why decision-makers misperceive in foreign policy situations. Much of it, he argues, derives from the expectations and prior beliefs held by the decision-makers. He notes the possible drastic effects of misreading a situation, such as one involving nuclear deterrence.

(Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 3-30.

²⁸ Kenneth Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 3, 1959, 120-131.

²⁹ Joseph de Rivera, The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968).

³⁰ Robert Jervis, *op. cit.*

³¹ Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972).

³² Boulding, 120-121.

In his study of Israel's foreign policy, Brecher emphasizes the concept of system in foreign policy analysis. Brecher discusses the relationship between the operational (comprising internal and external variables) and psychological environments, but he places greater emphasis on the psychological realm by saying, "...[the] operational environment affects the results or outcomes of decisions directly but influences the choice among policy options, that is, the decisions themselves, only as it is filtered through the images of decision-makers."³³

Other scholars pursued cognitive mapping, small group behavior, or personality studies. Cognitive mapping,³⁴ not unlike operational codes, attempts to chart an individual's beliefs through analyzing spoken or written statements. The map "represents a set of beliefs that are used in the decision process."³⁵ The body of literature on small group dynamics demonstrates that foreign policy decision-making is often a group activity instead of a choice by an individual.³⁶ Studies of small groups reveal both positive and negative effects of groups on decision-making.³⁷ In a

³³ Brecher, 4.

³⁴ See, for example, Robert Axelrod, Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), and Stephen G. Walker and George L. Watson, "The Cognitive Maps of British Leaders, 1938-1939: The Case of Chamberlain-in-Cabinet," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 31-58.

³⁵ Voss and Dorsey, 14.

³⁶ Fritz Gaenslen, "Decision-Making Groups," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 165-194.

³⁷ See, for instance, Irving Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972), and Robert Axelrod, "Results," in Robert Axelrod, ed., Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Map of Political Elites (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 221-250.

positive sense, groups can, but not necessarily always, be more sophisticated than an individual, meaning that most individual decision-makers utilize a simplified image of the complex environment because of time and other constraints. By aggregating individuals into a group, often a sophisticated group emerges,³⁸ one which is presumably more capable of accurately assessing the situation, handling more information, and deliberating various policy options. The downside of small group dynamics is that it can result in poor decision-making. Irving Janis ascribes the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco to a phenomenon he calls "groupthink." Groups often have a "concurrence seeking tendency" in order to maintain group harmony, but the result is that they lose some of their critical thinking ability and fail to accurately appraise the alternative courses of action.

Helen Purkitt's³⁹ recent study on small group decision-making in the Cuban Missile Crisis reveals that, contrary to conventional belief, decision-making during crises is not distinctly different from routine decision-making. She also concludes that small groups function as limited information processors much like individuals do.

Personality studies⁴⁰ sought to delve deeply into the traits and characteristics

³⁸ Axelrod, "Results," 243, and Axelrod, "Projects," in Robert Axelrod, ed., Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Map of Political Elites (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 274.

³⁹ Helen E. Purkitt, "Political Decision Making in Small Groups: The Cuban Missile Crisis Revisited—One More Time," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 219-246.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Betty Glad, "Contributions of Psychobiography," in Jeanne N. Knutson, ed., Handbook of Political Psychology (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973), 296-321; and K.J. Holsti, "From Diversification to Isolation: Burma, 1963-7," in K.J. Holsti, et al., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 105-133. For an overview of personality studies, see David G. Winter, "Personality and Foreign Policy:

of decision-makers to explain foreign policy behavior. Margaret Herrmann⁴¹ analyzed seven personality features: the level of training in world affairs, nationalism, confidence in one's ability to control events, the need for power, the need for affiliation, degree of conceptual complexity, and the amount of distrust for others. She concluded there is a strong correlation between the personality of the decision-makers and the types of policies they pursued. In another study Margaret Herrmann determined that personality variables have strong explanatory power in situations when the decision-maker is a head of government and when the decision is made during a crisis.⁴² In a more recent study, Charles Snare applied three personality frameworks, including Herrmann's, to Muammar Qaddafi of Libya and Anwar Sadat of Egypt in order to test the connection between personality and foreign policy behavior.⁴³ It was an attempt, he asserts, to address a severe weakness with most personality studies, and that is the inability to make a clear linkage between personality and political behavior.⁴⁴

The findings from these studies, along with others, demonstrate that the ways in which decision-makers perceive their environment and process information, their

Historical Overview of Research," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 79-102.

⁴¹ Margaret Herrmann, "Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders," International Studies Quarterly, 24, 1980, 4-46.

⁴² Margaret Herrmann, "Personality and Foreign Policy Decision Making: A Study of 53 Heads of Government," in D.A. Sylvan and S. Chan, eds., Foreign Policy Decision Making (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 25-52.

⁴³ Charles E. Snare, "Applying Personality Theory to Foreign Policy Behavior: Evaluating Three Methods of Assessment," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 103-134.

⁴⁴ Snare, 104.

interaction with others, and their personalities can affect decisions. The conclusion of this wave of psychological-perceptual writings is that individuals affect the outcome of decisions and that the interaction of states is the result of policy choices made by the decision-makers.⁴⁵

These approaches, however, are not without their drawbacks. Unlike the more parsimonious realist school, the psychological-perceptual approaches require considerable information about the individuals involved in the decision and how the policy process unfolded. Much of the required information is typically unavailable to researchers, such as classified documents.⁴⁶ Even more problematic is that the approaches necessitate "going into the head of our subject."⁴⁷ The cognitive approaches have also faced shortcomings in explaining the causal linkages between individuals' or groups' beliefs and foreign policy choice and behavior.⁴⁸ Additionally, as Richard Herrmann points out, cognitive perspectives have failed to integrate into the broader international relations theories.⁴⁹

The third category of foreign policy decision-making literature is referred to as the bureaucratic-organizational approach.⁵⁰ Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin had an early

⁴⁵ Voss and Dorsey, 5.

⁴⁶ Hudson and Vore, 221.

⁴⁷ Richard Herrmann, "The Empirical Challenge of the Cognitive Revolution: A Strategy for Drawing Inferences about Perceptions," International Studies Quarterly, 32:2, 1988, 180.

⁴⁸ Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, "Conclusion: Political Psychology/Foreign Policy, the Cognitive Revolution, and International Relations," in Eric Singer and Valerie Hudson, eds., Political Psychology and Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 261.

⁴⁹ R. Herrmann, 175.

⁵⁰ The emphasis in this section will be on the bureaucratic politics model, although

influence in this field also because of their emphasis on the process and structure of groups in decision-making. Their belief that foreign policy behavior is best seen as organizational behavior set the tone for many subsequent works which formed the core of the organizational process and bureaucratic politics models.⁵¹ The "first wave" of bureaucratic politics theorists, as labeled by one scholar, emphasized a political process approach to foreign policy-making.⁵² Political power was seen to be dispersed, actors' views correlated with their position in government, persuasion and consensus-building were necessary, and the political process affected the outcome of decision-making.⁵³

A second wave of bureaucratic-organizational scholars proposed refinements to the earlier works, and a greater emphasis was placed on policy resulting from

the organizational process model will be discussed briefly. It is referred to here as "bureaucratic-organizational" because, as will be explained later in the section, questions have been raised about a clear distinction between the bureaucratic politics model and the organizational process model.

⁵¹ Hudson and Vore, 213 and 216.

⁵² Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences*, 4, 1973, 467-490. Among the first-wave scholars Art refers to are Warner R. Schilling, "The Politics of National Defense: Fiscal 1950," in Warner R. Schilling, Paul T. Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder, *Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 1-267; and Roger Hilsman, "The Foreign-Policy Consensus: An Interim Report," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 3, 1959, 361-382. In Hilsman's later work, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs: Conceptual Models and Bureaucratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), he distinguishes his political process model from the second wave by its greater emphasis on Congress's role in policy-making and pressures from interest groups and by its focus on the perspectives of decision-makers on international affairs rather than suggesting that the process of policy-making is more important. Hilsman, *The Politics of Policy Making...*, 81. For a recent application of Hilsman's approach, see Jaroslaw Skonieczka, *U.S. Policy Toward Poland, 1956-1980*. Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1995.

⁵³ Art, 468-469.

bureaucratic politics.⁵⁴ The most notable and widely discussed work in this genre is Graham Allison's book on the Cuban Missile Crisis, which illuminates how organizations and processes influence the outcome of policy.⁵⁵ Allison begins by describing the classical model, known as the rational actor model. However, Allison found faults with this model, and while not completely rejecting its utility, he argues other models can at the very least supplement the rational actor model, if not explain government behavior altogether better.

His Model II, organizational process model, presents government behavior as outputs of governmental organizations working within their standard operating procedures (SOPs).⁵⁶ Problems are factored and distributed to the various specialized organizations which have established routines for accomplishing their tasks. Allison uses this model to explain particular Soviet activities in Cuba which served no logical purpose or seemed puzzling from the U.S. point of view. For instance, the organizational process model explains why the Soviets constructed the surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in Cuba the same way they did in the Soviet Union, despite the ease with which U.S. intelligence would be tipped off to the construction of SAM sites.⁵⁷ The lack of camouflage for the missile sites in Cuba is also explained

⁵⁴ For concise summaries of the assumptions and refinements of the second wave, see Jones, 16, and Art, 472-480.

⁵⁵ See Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Harper Collins Publishers, 1971).

⁵⁶ For an alternative view of organizational behavior, see John D. Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). Steinbruner argues that individuals monitor a few select variables and try to keep these within acceptable ranges. He then applies these ideas to organizational theory. Complex problems are factored into simpler components and treated separately by various agencies.

⁵⁷ Allison, 110.

by standard operating procedures of the organization since camouflage was never necessary in the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Another key assumption in the organizational process model is that the government is not a unified actor like the rational actor model assumes. Instead, the government is "a constellation of loosely allied organizations on top of which government leaders sit."⁵⁹ The main thrust of Model II, then, is that state behavior emanates from the routine procedures (or outputs) of various government agencies instead of being a deliberate choice.

Allison's Model III, otherwise known as the bureaucratic politics model or the governmental politics model, views government decisions and actions as unintended political resultants. Instead of looking at state behavior as the outcome of organizational routines, state behavior results from bargaining among the various actors who have sectarian interests. Decisions and actions are not the corollary of a single, rational calculation or regularized procedures, but from "the pulling and hauling that is politics."⁶⁰ Allison writes:

The decisions and actions of governments are intranational political resultants: *resultants* in the sense that what happens is not chosen as a solution to a problem but rather results from compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence; *political* in the sense that the activity from which decisions and actions emerge is best characterized as bargaining along regularized channels among individual members of the government.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Allison, 111.

⁵⁹ Allison, 79-80.

⁶⁰ Allison, 144.

⁶¹ Allison, 162.

Policy-making is seen as a conflictive process in a non-unitary state because each individual and organization involved has particular interests which may be unique to that agency. And in contrast to the rational actor model which assumes that the best course of action has emerged, the outcome in the bureaucratic politics model rests upon the power and skills of the various decision-makers. Decisions and state behavior may in fact simply be a compromise between those individuals and agencies involved in decision-making, rather than being a course of action taken to maximize the state's objectives.

Several other prominent scholars have contributed to the bureaucratic politics approach, particularly I.M. Destler⁶² and Morton Halperin.⁶³ The utility of the overall bureaucratic politics model has been delineated by Jones:⁶⁴

1. Numerous actors can influence decisions and are involved in carrying out decisions.
2. Decision-makers and agencies may disagree over the nature of foreign policy problems.
3. Decision-makers and agencies hold different views, goals, and policy preferences.
4. Policy issues are often spread out among different groups in government.
5. Central coordination is hindered by the president's and Congress's inability to carefully scrutinize all issues.

⁶² I.M. Destler, Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy: The Politics of Organization Reform (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

⁶³ Morton H. Halperin, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1974).

⁶⁴ The following points are borrowed from Jones, 8-9.

6. The power of bureaucracies and interest groups are enhanced due to busy agendas and fragmented political authority.

7. Numerous actors, their particular interests, and dispersed power results in government decisions and behavior arising from political interaction.

In summary, the bureaucratic politics model is believed to present a more accurate description of foreign policy-making and state behavior than other approaches.

Despite the strong explanatory power and insight into foreign policy-making offered by the bureaucratic politics model, Allison and other proponents of bureaucratic approaches have been subject to much criticism and refinements.⁶⁵ Some scholars questioned the internal logic of Allison's models and pointed out that his propositions were not adequately formulated.⁶⁶ Models II and III are seen as lacking any clear distinction between them, while they both are overly complex and therefore lack parsimony.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ For two of the most detailed and thorough critiques of bureaucratic politics, see Robert J. Art, *op. cit.* and Christopher Jones, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ Ole R. Holsti, "Review of Essence of Decision," The Western Political Quarterly, 25:1, 1972, 136-140, and Jonathan Bendor and Thomas H. Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models," American Political Science Review, 86:2, 1992, 301-322. Also related to the models, David A. Welch, in "The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: Retrospect and Prospect," International Security, 17:2, 1992, 112-146, argues that Models II and III are not necessarily as useful or better than the rational actor model.

⁶⁷ Bendor and Hammond, 302-305; Jones, 3. Jones addresses the issue of parsimony by reformulating Model III. He adds the "issue area variable" and posits fewer underlying assumptions. The issue-area variable will in effect create three models to describe politics in a particular issue-area (strategic policy model, structural policy model, and crisis policy model). See Jones, 19-26 and 41-46.

Several criticisms have been aimed at Model III's assumptions about the role of the president in decision-making. Model III, according to critics, underestimates the president's ability to dominate foreign policy decision-making and the degree of deference granted to him.⁶⁸ Rourke suggests the bureaucratic politics model needs to emphasize hierarchy with the president at the top. Other scholars point out that the president does not always have to bargain with other officials, and therefore the bargaining assumption in Model III should be qualified.⁶⁹ Additionally, the president is least likely to allow "slippage" (that is, the failure to implement the decision) in issues he deems to be highly important.⁷⁰

Another set of criticisms focuses on Model III's assumption that decision-makers in different agencies will have divergent interests. Several critics have found this to be untrue. Art notes that decision-makers can have shared values, and therefore government action cannot be always seen as the result of bargaining.⁷¹ This argument led some scholars to conclude that core values shared by decision-makers can be more important in determining policy than the differences between bureaucratic positions.⁷² In his study of the U.S. Navy, Rhodes asserts:

⁶⁸ Art, 479; Francis E. Rourke, "Review of Essence of Decision," Administrative Science Quarterly, 17:3, 1972, 432; and J. Garry Clifford, "Bureaucratic Politics," in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 144.

⁶⁹ Rourke, 432; and Bendor and Hammond, 315.

⁷⁰ Art, 478-479.

⁷¹ Art, 476.

⁷² See Clifford, 141-150; and Edward Rhodes, "Do Bureaucratic Politics Matter?: Some Disconfirming Findings from the Case of the U.S. Navy," World Politics, 47:1, 1994, 1-41.

...even in areas of apparently routine bureaucratic decision making, state behavior must be seen as driven not by parochial, bureaucratic self-interest but by the influence of particular sets of widely shared beliefs.⁷³

Jones presents another angle to the debate by saying on some occasions actors do cooperate and favor the same policy but for entirely different reasons.⁷⁴ Or, as Bendor and Hammond claim, decision-makers may have conflict, but it does not necessarily mean they have different goals. They may agree on the goals, but differ on the best method to achieve those goals.⁷⁵ Furthermore, conflict in the bureaucratic politics model may occur more over concerns for tactics rather than strategy and over the pace of foreign policy rather than its direction.⁷⁶ These qualifications of the bureaucratic struggles assumption raised the question of whether or not the "pulling and hauling" makes any difference.⁷⁷ Rhodes's findings on the U.S. Navy suggests it does not always matter.

Several other criticisms have been levied against the bureaucratic politics model. Studies of Third World states reveal that the model fails to match the behavior of their governments because, as one scholar observes, developing states do not "have enough stability of structure or form in their organisational routines or bargaining processes...."⁷⁸ The bureaucratic politics model may be better at

⁷³ Rhodes, 41.

⁷⁴ Jones, 40.

⁷⁵ Bendor and Hammond, 314.

⁷⁶ Clifford, 150.

⁷⁷ Art, 474.

⁷⁸ Joel S. Migdal, quoted in Christopher Hill, "Theories of Foreign Policy Making for the Developing Countries," in Christopher Clapham, ed., Foreign Policy Making in

explaining debacles instead of continuity,⁷⁹ or it might apply more to routines instead of crisis situations.⁸⁰ Additional arguments have been aimed at how the model overlooks the decision-makers' personalities and backgrounds, the role of Congress and others outside of the executive branch, international variables, and civil society.⁸¹

The lengthy discourse about the bureaucratic politics model was necessary because of the prominent role it has had in analyzing foreign policy decision-making. Also, as will be seen in later chapters, many of the issues discussed in this section are applicable to Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos.

Foreign Policy Restructuring Literature

Foreign policy restructuring requires a decision to be made by the policy-makers, and therefore its body of literature is part of the broader literature on foreign policy decision-making. Many ideas taken from rational choice, bureaucratic politics, cognitive processes, and crisis behavior have been applied to the analysis of restructuring.⁸² Hence, the literature on foreign policy decision-making provides the foundation and context for analyzing foreign policy restructuring.

Developing States: A Comparative Approach (Westmead: Saxon House, 1977), 2.

⁷⁹ Clifford, 145.

⁸⁰ Rourke, 432.

⁸¹ Jones, 18 and 36.

⁸² For the application of rational choice, see Michael D. McGinnis, "Rational Choice and Foreign Policy Change: The Arms and Alignments of Regional Powers," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South

Scholars of restructuring frequently employ an eclectic mix of bureaucratic-organizational and psychological-perceptual ideas to decision-making.⁸³ In other words, structural factors, bureaucratic politics, organizational behavior, and the cognitive processes of decision-makers are often incorporated into a framework or theory of foreign policy restructuring. The reason for these combinations is the importance attributed to delineating the sources of foreign policy change and explicating the policy-making process.

The restructuring literature will be reviewed in terms of those scholars whose primary purpose is to understand barriers to foreign policy change and those who focus more on the sources of foreign policy change.⁸⁴ These are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories, for scholars often must address both concerns. The

Carolina Press, 1994), 65-87. For a study on the roles of bureaucracy and crisis in foreign policy change, see Peter J. Schraeder, "Bureaucratic Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change in U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Africa," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 111-137.

⁸³ In particular, see the frameworks devised by Kjell Goldmann, Change and Stability in Foreign Policy: The Problems and Possibilities of Détente (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Steven F. Greffenius, "Foreign Policy Stabilization and the Camp David Accords: Opportunities and Obstacles to the Institutionalization of Peace," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 203-220; Charles F. Hermann, "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy," International Studies Quarterly, 34, 1990, 3-21; and K.J. Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Neglected Phenomenon in Foreign Policy Theory," in K.J. Holsti, ed., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 1-20.

⁸⁴ For an overview of foreign policy change, see Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, "The Study of Change in Foreign Policy," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 3-21.

literature is being organized this way simply based on the point of departure by the scholars. An additional note is that the policy-making process and the perceptions of decision-makers, in the appropriate cases, will be discussed in the context of the aforementioned categories in order to present a whole picture of each scholar's work.

Kjell Goldmann analyzes foreign policy stabilizers, which he defines as "phenomena tending to inhibit change in foreign policy even when there is pressure for change."⁸⁵ Goldmann explains why, in the face of pressures for change, some foreign policies remain the same while others adapt. Changes in the external environment, negative feedback, and shifts in leadership all have the potential for inducing foreign policy change, but even with one or more of these stimulants foreign policies often display continuity. The reason for foreign policy continuity, according to Goldmann, is the presence of stabilizers such as administrative fragmentation, institutionalization of the policy, and international treaties.⁸⁶

He identifies three general sources of policy change: a change in the environmental conditions (adaptation), the effects of "learning" from feedback, and "residual factors" (sources which are not the result of adaptation or learning). Without stabilizers, these influences can lead to foreign policy change.

Goldmann further argues that policy change is the result of three kinds of changes in ideas. However, he downplays the relevance of individual psychology and instead focuses on organizational thinking, similar to Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin. First, there may be "rethinking by individuals within the policymaking system...."⁸⁷ In

⁸⁵ Goldmann, xv.

⁸⁶ For the complete list of thirteen stabilizers, see Goldmann, 27. They are categorized as administrative, political, cognitive, and international.

⁸⁷ Goldmann, 6.

this instance, the decision-makers remain the same, but they perceive context differently or have a change in values or goals. Second, there may be "a change in the composition of this system,"⁸⁸ whereby new leaders occupy the decision-making apparatus. Third, "a change in the balance of power between the members of the system"⁸⁹ can occur, which entails a different agency or individual with alternative ideas obtaining greater authority in the decision-making process. Hence, these three types of changes in ideas reflect Goldmann's use of cognitive theories and the bureaucratic politics model.

Greffenius builds from Goldmann in his study on foreign policy stabilization and the institutionalization of peace in the Middle East.⁹⁰ Greffenius maintains there was a tension between foreign policy stability and change during the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations between 1977 and early 1979. The framework posited by Goldmann is modified in this case because of his focus on the early stages of institutionalizing peace. Instead of using the thirteen stabilizers delineated by Goldmann, Greffenius employs only six stabilizers in two categories: international stabilizers and psychopolitical and administrative stabilizers.

He concludes that foreign policy stabilization explains the limited settlement reached by the Israelis and Egyptians. The two sides were able to establish peace between themselves, but not extend it to the entire region. Also, stabilizers account for the limited withdrawal of Israel from the disputed territories (as opposed to a complete withdrawal).

⁸⁸ Goldmann, 6.

⁸⁹ Goldmann, 6.

⁹⁰ Greffenius, *op. cit.*

In another study of constraints on foreign policy change, Volgy and Schwarz identify five "webs of restraint."⁹¹ The bureaucratic web is based on the bureaucratic politics and organizational process models, whereby agencies with parochial interests compete with one another, and the rigid operating procedures impose barriers to change. The regime web suggests that the type of regime may determine whether or not foreign policy restructuring occurs under pressures for change. Regimes with complex bureaucracies often pose significant barriers to change, while regimes with a single, dominant leader or a small group of leaders may have fewer impediments to carrying out restructuring. States can also be constrained by the resource web. Foreign policy restructuring might entail extensive costs in terms of resources, and thus states with greater resources are expected to have more potential to change their foreign policies. The global web is similar to the arguments found in neorealism (otherwise known as structural realism). The type of global system, rules, norms, and organizations can either facilitate or restrict a state's ability to restructure its foreign policy. Volgy and Schwarz contend that a bipolar structure inhibits foreign policy change because of the rigidity of the system, but multipolarity enables states to have more flexibility in, for instance, their choice of alliances. Finally, the regional web poses similar constraints. How deeply integrated a state is in the region, the intensity of regional conflict, and the presence of a hegemon in the region all influence a state's ability to restructure its foreign policy.

Volgy and Schwarz demonstrate the significant force these webs of restraint have on the changing orientations of a state's foreign policy. They refer to their earlier

⁹¹ Volgy and Schwarz, *op. cit.*

study which showed that out of 220 opportunities for foreign policy restructuring in Western European states, only 12 cases occurred.⁹²

Martin Sampson takes a narrower approach to analyzing resistance to foreign policy change by focusing on structural forces.⁹³ Structural realists contend that systemic forces and structures determine, and therefore constrain, the foreign policy options of states.⁹⁴ Sampson's study of Libya's foreign policy calls these assumptions into question. Instead of small states restructuring their foreign policies only in response to changes in the global system or structural forces, Sampson argues that small states have much more room to maneuver in their foreign policy choices than structural theorists assume. While not rejecting the restraints imposed by the global system, Sampson explains how Libya was able to exploit "seams" in the global oil structure to ensure its interests were pursued instead of those of the world's most powerful oil companies.

Jerel Rosati argues that foreign policy is typically resistant to change.⁹⁵ Entrenched beliefs and actions of decision-makers and key groups in society along

⁹² Volgy and Schwarz, 37.

⁹³ Martin W. Sampson III, "Exploiting the Seams: External Structure and Libyan Foreign Policy Changes," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 88-110.

⁹⁴ For structural theory and case studies, see Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1979); Bahgat Korany, "The Findings, the Two Asian Giants, and Decision-Making Theory," in Bahgat Korany with contributors, How Foreign Policy Decisions are made in the Third World (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), 166-183; and Jorge I. Domínguez and Juan Lindau, "The Primacy of Politics: Comparing the Foreign Policies of Cuba and Mexico," in Bahgat Korany with contributors, How Foreign Policy Decisions are made in the Third World (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), 113-137.

⁹⁵ Jerel A. Rosati, "Cycles in Foreign Policy Restructuring: The Politics of Continuity and Change in U.S. Foreign Policy," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe

with international constraints account for foreign policy stability. However, changes in the interaction of the state, society, and the environment eventually create contradictions with the status quo, and pressures for foreign policy change emerge. The government's failure to respond to the contradictions, Rosati argues, might lead to a domestic political crisis and the questioning of the government's legitimacy, which in turn can cause foreign policy restructuring.

Rosati agrees with Volgy and Schwarz that significant foreign policy change is rare. Even if it does occur, he contends there will be another period of foreign policy continuity and resistance to new change.

William Dixon and Stephen Gaarder extend the ideas of continuity in foreign policy and its resistance to change in their empirical study of U.S.-Soviet Union relations.⁹⁶ Through a series of statistical tests, Dixon and Gaarder conclude that from 1948 to 1988 America's behavior (in terms of action-reaction dynamics) towards the Soviet Union was essentially unchanged despite differences in personalities and policies of the various presidential administrations. They characterize U.S. foreign policy behavior, then, as persistent and continuous instead of as flux and change.

Turning now to the studies focusing more explicitly on the sources of foreign policy restructuring, Steven Smith⁹⁷ posits four relationships between change and

D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 221-261.

⁹⁶ William J. Dixon and Stephen M. Gaarder, "Explaining Foreign Policy Continuity and Change: U.S. Dyadic Relations with the Soviet Union, 1948-1988," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 185-202.

⁹⁷ S.M. Smith, "Traditionalism, Behaviouralism and Change in Foreign Policy

foreign policy: between foreign policy outputs and change, between foreign policy processes and structures and change, between changes in the importance of components of the foreign policy system and foreign policy outputs, and between changing inputs from the environments (domestic and international) and foreign policy outputs.

The significance of the study is Smith's identification of the four relationships between change and foreign policy. In his Eastonian approach, Smith identifies various points in the foreign policy system where changes in either the domestic environment or the international environment can affect foreign policy behavior. But unlike the psychological-perceptual approaches, which consider how the decision-makers respond to context or the environment, Smith views the state as a "black box." Despite the lack of attention to the decision-makers, these four relationships comprise a typology of changes that can account for a shift in foreign policy.

M.H. Smith also emphasizes the environment as a source of change.⁹⁸ Smith focuses on what he calls the "foreign policy arena" as a source of change and how it affects foreign policy. The foreign policy arena is influenced by national attributes and orientations, the structure of the international system, and demands on the state from other (i.e., external) actors.

Analysis," in Barry Buzan and R.J. Barry Jones, eds., Change and the Study of International Relations: The Evaded Dimension (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 189-208.

⁹⁸ M.H. Smith, "Significant Change and the Foreign Policy Response: Some Analytical and Operational Implications," in Barry Buzan and R.J. Barry Jones, eds., Change and the Study of International Relations: The Evaded Dimension (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 209-224.

Smith then proceeds to describe four factors which determine the significance of change in the foreign policy arena: the mode of change (pace and intensity), costs or benefits of the change, its centrality to national concerns, and potential spillover effects. He concludes that the most significant changes in the foreign policy arena are likely to be those that are sudden and radical, of central concern to national interests, and have implications for multiple issue-areas.

In determining how these changes in the foreign policy arena affect foreign policy behavior, Smith utilizes a mix of rationality, cognitive processes, organizational behavior, and bureaucratic politics approaches as intervening variables. That is, changes in the foreign policy arena influence foreign policy behavior only after they are modified by factors such as idiosyncrasies of the decision-makers, SOPs, and competition among bureaucratic agencies.

In an effort to provide a framework for analyzing foreign policy restructuring, K.J. Holsti and his colleagues examine eight case studies (of six countries), including both industrialized and Third World states.⁹⁹ The framework devised by Holsti contains three sets of variables: independent, intervening, and dependent.¹⁰⁰ The independent variables are the sources of foreign policy restructuring and fall into three categories (with examples given in parentheses): external (military threat, non-military threats); domestic (internal threats, economic conditions, factionalized leaders); and background, historical, and cultural (colonial experience, attitudes

⁹⁹ K.J. Holsti, ed., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).

¹⁰⁰ An illustration and thorough explanation of the framework will be presented in the next section of this chapter. Also, see Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Neglected..." 14.

towards foreigners). Like with M. Smith, Holsti argues these independent variables are processed and modified by intervening variables before affecting foreign policy behavior. The intervening variables consist of decision-makers' perceptions, their personalities, attitudes towards external actors, and the policy-making process. Implicit in Holsti's study is the need to consider the effects of bureaucratic politics, perceptions of decision-makers, and systemic factors.

In the volume's concluding chapter,¹⁰¹ Holsti assesses the significance of the independent variables, based on the eight case studies. For the external variables, non-military threats (for example, fear of cultural pollution) appeared to be more important, or at least occurred more often, than military threats in decisions to restructure foreign policy. In only two cases, Bhutan and China III, did a perceived external military threat lead to restructuring.¹⁰² Among the domestic variables, internal threats such as rebellions and civil wars led to foreign policy restructuring only in Burma and China II. More common factors were domestic economic concerns. For instance, decision-makers in Canada, Chile, Tanzania, and China I all saw the need to restructure their foreign trade and investment patterns.

Charles Hermann¹⁰³ begins his analysis of foreign policy restructuring by distinguishing between two types of foreign policy change: one from a change in regime or government and the other from when a government changes its foreign

¹⁰¹ K.J. Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Comparative Analysis," in K.J. Holsti, ed., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 198-219.

¹⁰² China III refers to the third occasion involving China. There were three instances of China restructuring its foreign policy.

¹⁰³ Charles F. Hermann, *op. cit.*

policy. His focus is on the latter type which he calls "self-correcting change." Hermann also makes a conceptual distinction between minor adjustments or modifications of foreign policy, which he argues are constantly being made, versus the "fundamental redirections" of a government's foreign policy. These latter changes are of concern to him.

Hermann draws from four bodies of decision-making literature: cybernetics, learning, bureaucratic decision-making, and domestic political systems. The relevance of the first three to decision-making has been discussed earlier, but some comments about the domestic political system are worth noting. Unlike several other scholars, Hermann presents clear causal linkages between domestic politics and its effects on foreign policy. He offers three reasons: 1) foreign policy issues can become the center of a political struggle in which opponents may use their foreign policy stance to differentiate themselves from others; 2) changes occur in the attitudes or beliefs of the dominant domestic constituencies; and 3) a realignment occurs of the most important constituencies in a regime, or a revolution takes place.¹⁰⁴

He proceeds to posit four sources of foreign policy change, namely leader driven, bureaucratic advocacy, domestic restructuring, and external shocks. These four "agents of change" are then subject to the decision-making process. The decision-making process is the core of Hermann's analysis of foreign policy change because restructuring, he assumes, occurs through a decision process. Hence, the decision-making process acts as an intervening variable between sources of change and foreign policy change.

¹⁰⁴ Hermann, 7.

The decision-making process is comprised of seven stages but is not linear.¹⁰⁵ Instead, it can have cycles and pauses. The stages are: 1) initial policy expectations; 2) external actor responses and other environmental stimuli; 3) recognition of discrepant information; 4) postulation of a connection between problem and policy; 5) development of alternatives; 6) building an authoritative consensus for new options; and 7) implementation of new measures. Hermann's approach focuses on the decision-makers, and it clearly requires a detailed analysis of their cognitive processes.

In a critique of Goldmann's and Hermann's conceptions of foreign policy change, Walter Carlsnaes offers a fundamentally different approach to studying foreign policy change.¹⁰⁶ Carlsnaes is critical of the modes of inquiry offered by Goldmann and Hermann, arguing that both are inadequate because of their input-output (systems) assumption. The shortcoming of both scholars' approaches is, according to Carlsnaes, that each places individuals as intervening variables between the sources of policy change and the foreign policy output. Instead, Carlsnaes begins with individuals because they think, prefer, and act. He also rejects the notion that policy-makers merely respond to inputs to the policy-making process and replaces this common belief with the assumption that foreign policy change is the result of deliberate decisions made by policy-makers. Other frameworks, he claims, cannot account for foreign policy change resulting from a decision-maker questioning theories and values of an existing policy (perhaps implying rationality).

¹⁰⁵ For greater detail and explanation, see C. Hermann, 14-19.

¹⁰⁶ Walter Carlsnaes, "On Analysing the Dynamics of Foreign Policy Change: A Critique and Reconceptualization," Cooperation and Conflict, 28:1, 1993, 5-30.

In contrast to studies with a broad scope of sources of foreign policy change, other scholars have pursued narrower causes. Joe Hagan addresses the issue of foreign policy restructuring emanating from a change in regime, or in other words, a new set of decision-makers.¹⁰⁷ Because of the focus on regime change, the emphasis is placed on the domestic context. Hagan argues for the need to move away from the restrictive notion that only a foreign policy shift emanating from the same regime, or from revolutionary regime change, should be considered restructuring. A change of power from one political group to another by means of regularly instituted procedures can lead to foreign policy restructuring while still retaining the established political structures.

The key determinants of whether or not a regime change will lead to foreign policy restructuring are the orientations of the new regime towards foreign affairs (if they differ from the previous regime's) and the degree of cohesion among the new decision-makers, which would become critical for implementing a shift in foreign policy. These two determinants emphasize, respectively, the perceptions and values of the decision-makers and the impact of bureaucratic politics.¹⁰⁸

Tong Whan Park, Dae-Won Ko, and Kyu-Ryoon Kim analyze the process of democratization as a source of foreign policy restructuring.¹⁰⁹ In the late 1980s,

¹⁰⁷ Joe D. Hagan, "Domestic Political Regime Change and Foreign Policy Restructuring: A Framework for Comparative Analysis," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 138-163.

¹⁰⁸ Hagan, 147-148, and 152.

¹⁰⁹ Tong Whan Park, Dae-Won Ko, and Kyu-Ryoon Kim, "Democratization and Foreign Policy Change in the East Asian NICs," in Jerel A. Rosati, Martin W. Sampson III, and Joe D. Hagan, eds., Foreign Policy Restructuring: How Governments Respond to Global Changes (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 164-184.

Taiwan and South Korea underwent a transition from bureaucratic authoritarianism to democratization. With the transformation of the domestic political system came a shift in hard-line foreign policies aimed at their respective rivals.

Park and his colleagues present a two-stage framework linking democratization with foreign policy change. In the first stage democratization alters the ideology and values of a state, the state-society relationship, the political structure, and the state's national interests. In the second stage democratization creates changes in the state's capacity to act, foreign policy goals, and the decision-making process. The outcome of these changes is a shift in foreign policy behavior.

The authors argue that under the previous authoritarian regimes in Taiwan and South Korea, security concerns, stability, and economic growth legitimized the hard-line foreign policy toward their respective rivals, China and North Korea. However, the process of democratization led to pressures for foreign policy restructuring. Among the changes fostered by democratization were the advent of democratic values, greater regime accountability, tension between a government's short-term survival and long-term national interests, and a reassessment of the state's foreign policy interests. While the authors attach greater importance to the role of democratization in the foreign policy restructuring, economic development and international systemic change also contributed to the move away from exclusive attention on national security.

Joe Hagan and Jerel Rosati draw several conclusions about foreign policy restructuring based on the studies in their volume and others such as Holsti and Hermann.¹¹⁰ Hagan and Rosati declare that most of the cases in their collection of

¹¹⁰ Hagan and Rosati, 265-279.

essays do not match Holsti's definition of restructuring, whereby there is a sharp, wholesale shift across different sectors of a state's foreign policy. Instead, they conclude that foreign policy restructuring is often more limited than the comprehensive shift assumed by Holsti. Restructuring is often restricted to particular sectors, such as Libya's relations with international oil companies, or only to relations with certain types of states such as South Korea's and Taiwan's "Nordpolitik."

Hagan and Rosati also conclude that despite numerous approaches and theories about restructuring, the studies demonstrate "there is a consensus on the need for multicausal explanations--that foreign policy reflects the complex interplay of governmental, domestic, and international factors."¹¹¹ What they propose, then, are three sets of causal dynamics of foreign policy restructuring. The first set comprises change in the global structures and the state's international position. The second group consists of domestic political realignments, referring to shifts in the balance of power among groups competing for decision-making authority. The third causal dynamic is the policy-making process, which modifies the former two before foreign policy change occurs. Hence, the policy-making process is deemed an intervening variable.

Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov argues that major foreign policy change is not always generated by war or crisis; instead, a peace initiative can also lead to a foreign policy reversal.¹¹² A peace initiative represents a significant change in behavior when "the

¹¹¹ Hagan and Rosati, 270.

¹¹² Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "Peace as a Significant Change in Foreign Policy: The Need for Legitimacy," The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, 12:3, 1990, 13.

stakes are the highest, most central to basic values and interests, and have the potential to spill over into the widest range of associated areas."¹¹³

Because perceptions and beliefs about an enemy are difficult to change, a shift from war to peace is often resisted by decision-makers. Bar-Siman-Tov argues that policy-makers who favor a change to peace must obtain legitimacy for the foreign policy reversal. Otherwise, decision-makers are vulnerable to domestic criticism that they are endangering national security. One means to attain policy legitimacy is to manipulate national symbols, language, metaphors, rituals, and ideology.¹¹⁴

The literature review of decision-making and foreign policy restructuring described the major approaches to studying the subject at hand. Like many of the works reviewed above, this dissertation regards foreign policy restructuring as a decision-making process that is best explained through a multicausal approach for understanding how and why restructuring occurs. This case study of Thailand utilizes the theoretical insights of the various works described above, such as bureaucratic politics, perceptions of leaders, the impact of democratization, and the effects of the international system. The specific application of the theories to Thailand's foreign policy change will be noted in the discussion of the framework and throughout the dissertation.

¹¹³ Bar-Siman-Tov, 13. His views on this point are similar to M.H. Smith's conclusion about significant change referred to earlier in this dissertation.

¹¹⁴ Bar-Siman-Tov, 20-26.

The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized here is derived from K.J. Holsti's study and the framework developed by Hagan and Rosati.¹¹⁵ Figures 1 and 2 illustrate their original frameworks. Both are similar in that the independent variables are grouped into international and domestic factors, the decision-making process is considered an intervening variable, and foreign policy restructuring is the dependent variable. This basic foundation for a framework encompasses the most possibilities for explaining foreign policy change. While it lacks parsimony, it is open-ended in the sense that the researcher can consider all potential factors in the particular case without the framework restricting the researcher's analysis. For instance, it can accommodate systemic factors, bureaucratic politics, and differences in individuals' perceptions, should these be relevant in the case. Their approach also works as a guide by pointing out the potential types of variables and serves as an organizational tool.

However, notable changes have been made in their frameworks due to some weaknesses in them and to make the resulting framework more specific for Thailand's case. The modified framework employed in this study is shown in Figure 3. The frameworks by Hagan and Rosati and Holsti provide a general set of independent

¹¹⁵ For Holsti's discussion of the framework, see K.J. Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Neglected Phenomenon in Foreign Policy Theory," 12-17. For Hagan and Rosati's framework, see "Emerging Issues...," 272.

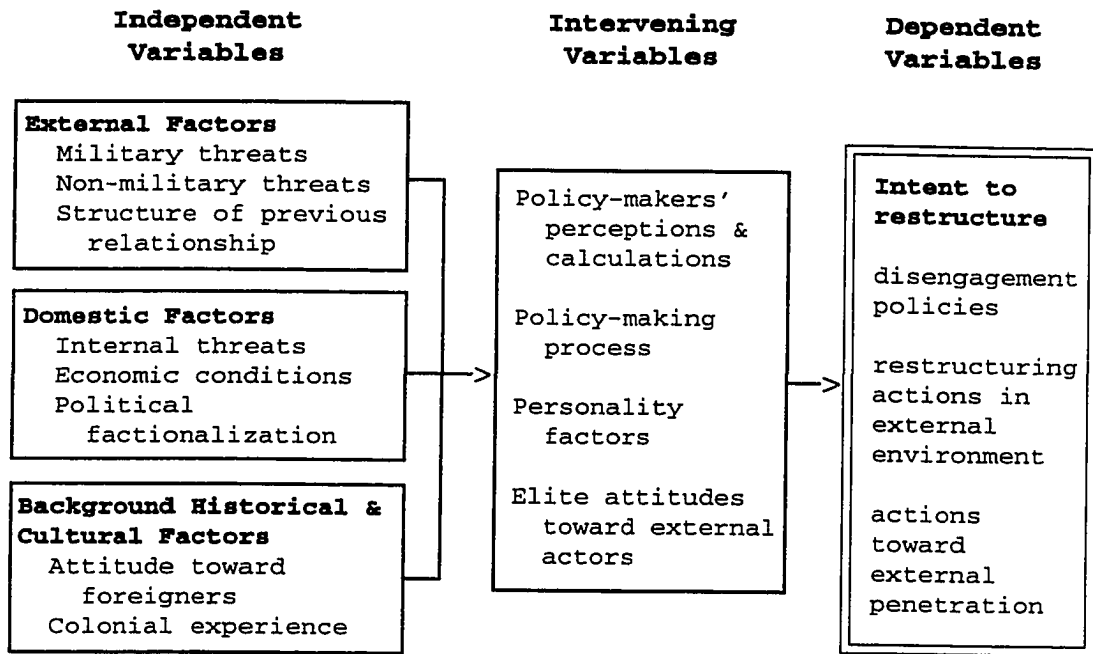


Figure 1. Holsti's Framework for Foreign Policy Restructuring

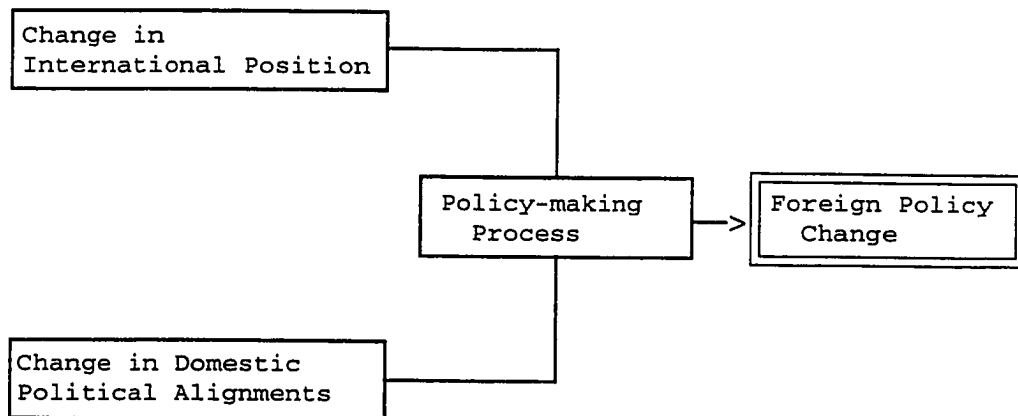


Figure 2. Hagan and Rosati's Framework for Foreign Policy Restructuring.

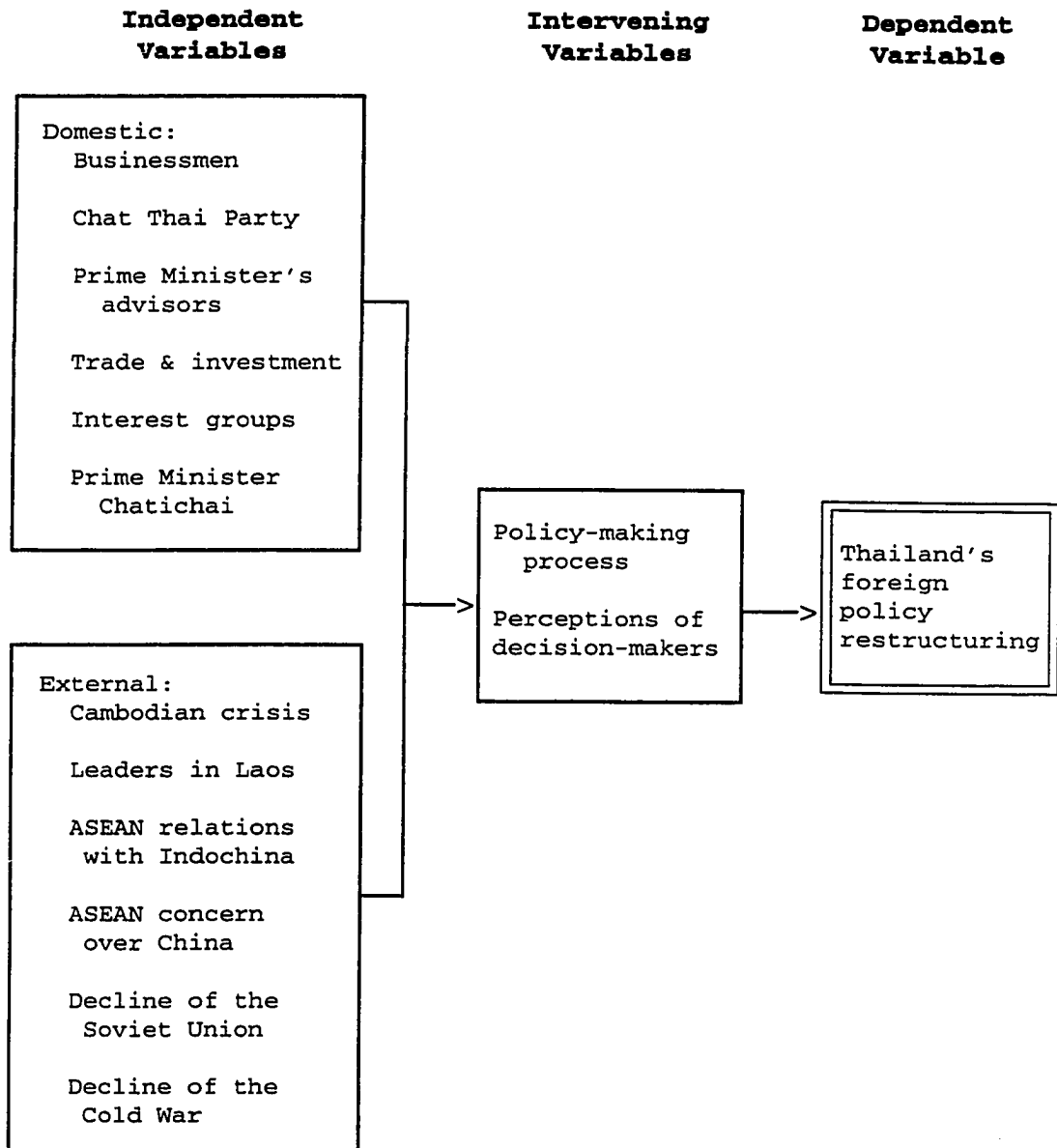


Figure 3. Framework used for Thailand's Foreign Policy Restructuring.

variables, which is useful for formulating specific variables for each case study. After examining the literature on Thailand's foreign policy, Thai domestic politics in the late 1980s, and the regional and global situations during General Chatichai's administration, the researcher identified six potential domestic variables and six potential external factors.¹¹⁶ The domestic variables consisted of the following: influence of businessmen; pressure from the Chat Thai Party; Prime Minister Chatichai's advisors; the need for diversifying trade and investment; interest group pressure; and Prime Minister Chatichai. The external variables consisted of the following: the Cambodian crisis; initiatives by Laos's political leaders; the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) seeking improved relations with Indochina; ASEAN members seeking to counter China's regional influence; the decline of the Soviet Union; and the decline of the Cold War.

The remaining set of independent variables proposed by Holsti, background historical and cultural factors, has been eliminated. History merely places the relationship between Thailand and Laos in the proper context; it should not be seen as a variable. Culture has been disregarded because it was constant in the administration before and during General Chatichai's term. Because Thai and Lao cultures did not change, they cannot be used to explain both hostile relations and rapprochement.

A third modification of Holsti's and Hagan and Rosati's frameworks relates to the intervening variable(s). Holsti's intervening variables could be stated more succinctly by condensing elite attitudes with the perceptions of decision-makers. Personality factors, while perhaps important, are difficult to gauge, and there is no

¹¹⁶ An explanation and justification of each variable will be presented afterward.

established procedure for identifying a causal linkage between them and the policy choice made by decision-makers. Researchers must pursue what is feasible in their studies; personality factors are therefore omitted. Hagan and Rosati list only the policy-making process and leave out an explicit role for the decision-makers. For this study, then, the policy-making process and the perceptions of decision-makers are the intervening variables.

The last modification is that the dependent variable has been simplified from Holsti's multiple behaviors of restructuring to Hagan and Rosati's concise foreign policy change. The dependent variable in this study is Thailand's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos.

This framework does not assume that every independent variable listed was significant in Thailand's foreign policy change; it simply allows all potential influences to be considered.¹¹⁷ At this point it is necessary to explain why these independent and intervening variables were incorporated into the framework.

Independent Variables

Domestic factors

Businessmen. In the late 1980s, the business influence in Thai politics presumably increased greatly.¹¹⁸ The number of businessmen in parliament rose steadily, and

¹¹⁷ During interviews with Thai government officials, each respondent was asked to suggest other relevant variables not included in the framework.

¹¹⁸ Anek Laothamatas, "Business and Politics in Thailand: New Patterns of Influence," Asian Survey, 28:4, 1988, 452.

many political parties were being headed by businessmen. Additionally, businessmen were financing individual politicians, often in different political parties.¹¹⁹

Several claims were made during General Chatichai's administration that powerful businessmen held much influence in the government. For instance, two scholars assert that the interests of businessmen had been promoted under Prime Minister Chatichai, offering as evidence the fact that 27 businessmen were appointed to his first 44-member Cabinet.¹²⁰ A Thai newspaper columnist accused unnamed politicians of being bankrolled by traders who urged them to alter Thailand's policy towards Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.¹²¹

Fueling the speculation of the business influence was General Chatichai's activities in the private sector. In addition to his military and political careers, he was also a successful businessman who held a fortune in textiles.¹²² His association with the business sector was believed to be an opening for the businessmen's influence in government policy.

Chat Thai Party. General Chatichai's political party, Chat Thai, was also accused of allowing business interests to dictate the foreign policy. Many of the top party

¹¹⁹ Laothamatas, 456.

¹²⁰ Sombat Chantornvong and Montri Chenvidyakarn, "Constitutional Rule and the Institutionalization of Leadership and Security in Thailand," in Stephen Chee, ed., Leadership and Security in Southeast Asia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), 169.

¹²¹ "The 'Trade Tricks' Played by Indochina," Bangkok Post, February 12, 1989, 12.

¹²² Laothamatas, 456.

leaders in Chat Thai served in the Cabinet and were concurrently engaged in private business activities. For instance, the chairman of Chat Thai's advisory committee, General Praman Adireksarn, was Interior Minister from 1988-90 and Industry Minister in 1991, but he also controlled numerous textile factories in Thailand. Chat Thai party secretary-general Banharn Silpa-archa served as Industry Minister from 1988-90 and Interior Minister in 1991. He operated a vast business empire worth millions of dollars. The deputy leader of Chat Thai, Pramual Sabhavas, who was Finance Minister and eventually Deputy Prime Minister, owned construction and mill companies.

General Chatichai was harshly criticized by an opposition party leader in October 1988 for the alleged role of Chat Thai members in the foreign policy restructuring:

...looking at this more closely, the announcement that the policy is to turn the battlefield into a field of trade may have some other purpose than simply establishing relations with Indochina. The real reasons probably stem from pressure exerted by businessmen in the Thai Nation Party (Chat Thai), who stand to profit from this policy.¹²³

The Chat Thai variable is distinguished from the businessmen variable by the members' official government status. That is, while Chat Thai and businessmen may have had similar interests in Indochina, the businessmen variable implies that private citizens persuaded the government officials to change the foreign policy. The Chat

¹²³ Foreign Broadcast Information Service, East Asia (hereafter abbreviated as FBIS-EAS) 88-203, October 20, 1988, 57.

Thai variable means that the impetus for the change originated with the party members who were government officials.

Prime Minister's advisors. General Chatichai assembled a committee of advisors, most of whom were academics, including his son, Kraisak Choonhavan. Although they lacked formal government authority (i.e., they technically were not government officials), the prime minister's advisors played a significant role in implementing and, according to some people, formulating the foreign policy restructuring.¹²⁴ A director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) complained, "The premier wants to get things done quickly, but we [Foreign Ministry officials] cannot deliver everything he desires. So the premier turns to his policy advisers who use 'shock therapy' to solve chronic problems."¹²⁵ The magnitude of the advisors' involvement and the role they played will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Trade and investment. Thailand's economy in the 1980s and early 1990s had one of the highest growth rates in the world. During this period, Thailand went from being an attractive market for foreign investors to becoming a major foreign investor. Trade and investment have been distinguished from the businessmen and Chat Thai variables. Whereas the latter two indicate certain groups pressured for a change in policy, the trade and investment variable is defined as the government deciding on its

¹²⁴ Donald E. Weatherbee, "Thailand in 1989: Democracy Ascendant in the Golden Peninsula," Southeast Asian Affairs 1990 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), 339.

¹²⁵ "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation (Bangkok), November 22, 1989, 8.

own to diversify Thailand's trade and investment with other countries, without concern for advancing personal interests.

Trade and investment opportunities were deemed a potentially significant variable in part because Prime Minister Chatichai explicitly used them to justify the foreign policy restructuring (see Chapter 4). On the day he was named prime minister, General Chatichai made the famous announcement of "turning Indochina's battlefields into marketplaces."

A second reason for including this variable is that Holsti's study demonstrated the importance in restructuring of states expanding their trade and investment partners due to heavy dependence on one or a few states.¹²⁶ Thailand's trade in the late 1980s was largely with Western states. In 1988 the United States alone took in approximately 20% of Thailand's exports, while Western European states accounted for over 22%.¹²⁷ In 1989 Thailand exported 21.7% of its goods to the U.S., 19.1% to the European Community and 17% to Japan.¹²⁸

Related to the trade and investment variable, an inquiry was made into whether or not the foreign policy restructuring was due at least in part to an interest in gaining access via Laos to China's Yunnan province. China's economy began to blossom in the late 1980s, but Yunnan was left out of the Chinese government's

¹²⁶ See K.J. Holsti, "From Dependence to Diversification: Canada, 1972-8," in K.J. Holsti, et al., Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), 73-104; and Holsti, "...A Comparative Analysis," 198-219.

¹²⁷ Based on calculations of data from Statistical Yearbook Thailand, nos. 36 and 37 (Bangkok: National Statistical Office, Office of the Prime Minister, 1989 and 1990).

¹²⁸ Thailand in Figures 1995-1996, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Alpha Research Co., Ltd. and Manager Information Services Co., Ltd., 1995), 426 and 432.

"special economic zone" scheme. Despite the central government's neglect, a burgeoning international border market emerged around Yunnan.¹²⁹

Moreover, in 1988 China and Laos improved their relations by exchanging ambassadors and resuming cross-border trade. China also terminated its assistance to anti-government groups in Laos. Proposals for highways in the Yunnan-northern Laos area soon followed.¹³⁰ For these reasons, a possible interest in Yunnan (via Laos) was included in the trade and investment variable.

Interest groups. The formation of interest groups in Thailand was a new phenomenon in the mid-to-late 1980s.¹³¹ Anek points out that interest groups tended to be either chambers of commerce or trade associations. Their lobbying efforts were mainly directed at the executive bodies of the Thai government, but increasing contact was made between interest groups and the legislature.¹³² This variable is distinguished from the businessmen variable by the formal organization and lobbying of interest groups versus the relatively individual and personalistic interactions between the businessmen and politicians.

¹²⁹ See Guangzhi Zhao, The Changing Peripheries in China: A Case Study of the Political and Economic Impacts of the Development of Border Trade in Yunnan Province, Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1996.

¹³⁰ Several transportation projects in the Yunnan-northern Laos region have been underway, as well as plans to link the Thai-Lao Mittraphab Bridge with a major highway leading up to the Laos-China border.

¹³¹ Laothamatas, 455.

¹³² Laothamatas, 457-458.

Prime Minister Chatichai. De Rivera argues that decision-makers should be seen as independent variables. Prime Minister Chatichai was initially considered a variable because before the study was conducted, it was not clear which policy-makers decided to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. In other words, it was not yet determined whether he made the decision himself or if he merely implemented the change in policy. General Chatichai's own personal beliefs, irrespective of the changing environment, could have been the reason behind the restructuring. Or if other officials made the decision, the prominence and power of the office of the prime minister in Thailand could have given him a strong influence over those who made the decision to restructure.

External factors

Cambodian crisis. In December 1978 the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in order to overthrow Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime. The Vietnamese quickly installed a pro-Vietnamese government led by Heng Samrin. Vietnamese troops remained in Cambodian territory, creating a security concern for Thailand.¹³³ With Thailand's historical rival on its doorstep, Cambodia became Thailand's most important external security issue.¹³⁴ Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia exacerbated an

¹³³ In a study on threat perceptions and arms procurement in Thailand, Jeremy Plotnick found that external factors were more important than domestic ones in explaining Thai arms procurement behavior. His study provides some interesting comparisons for this dissertation, which will be discussed in the conclusion. See Jeremy Plotnick, A Case Study: The Translation of Threat Perception into Arms Procurement Policy; Thailand's Reaction to the Vietnamese Invasion of Cambodia, Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1994.

¹³⁴ For the Thai views on Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, see The Kampuchean Problem in Thai Perspective (Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University,

already strained relationship between Thailand and Laos. (Thai-Lao relations had deteriorated after the 1975 communist revolutions in Indochina and because of the Laos-Vietnam alliance in 1977.) One scholar wrote, "...Thailand has sometimes vented its frustrations over Vietnamese violations of its border (as well as shooting incidents along the Thai-Lao frontier), punishing Laos by closing trade or transit across the Mekong."¹³⁵

The Cambodian problem likely served as a "regional web," referring to Volgy and Schwarz's article, which constrained Thai foreign policy change. Possibly the restructuring could not occur until the crisis in Cambodia was resolved or a new set of leaders came into power (like Hagan's argument) with fundamentally different views that the crisis was not a security concern to Thailand.

Leaders in Laos. Hermann and M. Smith note how external actors can have an effect on decision-makers. External actors sometimes produce a stimulus by placing demands or expectations upon decision-makers. The political leaders in Laos were a potential variable because of the fundamental economic changes they made in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The implementation of market economy reforms in Laos and Laos's urgent need for new sources of foreign aid (see the Soviet Union variable below) might have stimulated the Thai decision-makers to restructure the foreign policy. The economic changes in Laos perhaps signaled to Thailand that Laos no longer wanted to be considered an enemy.

1985).

¹³⁵ MacAlister Brown, "Laos: Bottoming Out," Current History, 82:483, April 1983, 156.

ASEAN relations with Indochina. The threat from communism in Indochina had brought the seven ASEAN states closely together in terms of their diplomatic activities in the region. Thailand received unwavering support from its fellow ASEAN members throughout the Cambodian crisis because of Thailand's "front-line" status against communism in Southeast Asia. ASEAN members believed that if Thailand fell to communism, it would present an ominous challenge for their countries as well.

In addition to ASEAN's solidarity in its quest for a solution to the Cambodian crisis, this variable may have been important because Thailand's Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila proclaimed on at least two occasions that ASEAN would remain the cornerstone of Thailand's foreign policy.¹³⁶ Thus, it is important to determine if any influence was exerted by ASEAN on Thailand regarding its foreign policy with Indochina. One possible variable, then, is that ASEAN members desired better relations with Indochina and subsequently persuaded Thailand to restructure its foreign policy.

ASEAN concern over China. The second ASEAN variable deals with China's growing influence in Southeast Asia in the mid-to-late 1980s. The emergence of China as a superpower in the region put it in a position to counter Vietnam's (China's historic enemy in the region) expanded influence in Laos and Cambodia and also "to exert its centuries-old claims to influence in Southeast Asia."¹³⁷

¹³⁶ FBIS-EAS-88-155, August 11, 1988, 57; and FBIS-EAS-89-060, March 30, 1989, 64.

¹³⁷ R. Bates Gill, "China Looks to Thailand: Exporting Arms, Exporting Influence,"

However, Indonesia had objected to Chinese influence in the region because of the 1965 Gestapu coup attempt. Malaysia also feared China because of the ethnic problems between the Malays and Chinese, many of whom were believed to be loyal to China despite living in Malaysia. In the 1980s, Indonesia and Malaysia were concerned about an intensified power rivalry in Southeast Asia due to China's increased role in the region from its arms sales to Thailand and assistance to the rebellious Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.¹³⁸

One analyst suggests there was a possible split in ASEAN over which state posed the greater threat, China or Vietnam, with Indonesia and Malaysia seeing China as the greater threat compared to the other ASEAN members which perceived it to be Vietnam.¹³⁹ Indonesia or Malaysia may have sought to counter China's growing presence in the region by having ASEAN court Laos, Cambodia, and especially Vietnam.

Decline of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had a strong presence in Laos and Vietnam in the 1980s. Laos and Vietnam procured Soviet weapons, the Soviet military stationed troops in Vietnam, and Soviet political advisors were attached to

Asian Survey 31:6, June 1991, 536. Gill believes China's activities in Southeast Asia focused on countering potential threats from states such as Vietnam and a desire to increase Chinese influence through arms exports.

¹³⁸ Yos Santasombat, "Leadership and Security in Modern Thai Politics," in Mohammed Ayoob and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, eds., Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asia Experience (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p.92.

¹³⁹ Khien Theeravit, "The Conflict in Indochina--A Thai Perspective," in Yoshikazu Sakamoto, ed., Asia Militarization and Regional Conflict (Tokyo: The United Nations University, 1988), 131. Also see Michael Antolik, ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), 65-68 and 99.

various Lao and Vietnamese government agencies. Additionally, Laos and Vietnam depended heavily on Soviet economic aid. The Soviets provided an annual aid package of approximately \$2 billion to Vietnam,¹⁴⁰ covering 25-30% of Hanoi's budget.¹⁴¹ Soviet economic aid to Laos from 1975 to 1985 averaged \$40-50 million annually, in addition to upwards of \$100 million annually in military aid.¹⁴²

In the late 1980s, as communism was collapsing in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union became more and more unwilling to provide such immense amounts of aid to Laos and Vietnam.¹⁴³ The Soviet economic crisis forced Moscow to abandon its foreign aid commitments in Indochina when in 1990 the Soviet Union suspended all new economic assistance to Laos and Vietnam. Because Laos had become more dependent by 1988 on the Soviet Union than on Vietnam, the effect on Laos of the Soviet Union's demise was intensified.¹⁴⁴

The Soviet Union's reluctance to continue financing Vietnam's budget exacerbated an already crisis situation with the Vietnamese economy. Economic problems in the late 1980s contributed to Vietnam's decision to withdraw its troops from Cambodia in 1989. Thus, as the Soviet Union's support for Vietnam and Laos

¹⁴⁰ John H. Esterline, "Vietnam in 1987: Steps Toward Rejuvenation," Asian Survey, 28:1, 1988, 91.

¹⁴¹ William S. Turley, "Introduction," in William S. Turley and Mark Selden, eds., Reinventing Vietnamese Socialism (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 8.

¹⁴² Martin Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State: The Making of Modern Laos (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd., 1996), 205.

¹⁴³ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom..., 214.

¹⁴⁴ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom..., 204.

declined in the late 1980s, Indochina's capacity for presenting a threat to Thailand became correspondingly less.

Decline of the Cold War. The importance of the international structure on state behavior was noted earlier by M. Smith, Sampson, Volgy and Schwarz, Dominquez and Lindau, and others. The international structure often constrains states in their behavior, but a changing structure might promote changes in states' foreign policy, or at least present greater opportunities to restructure their foreign policies.

During the Cold War the international system was characterized by bipolarity, in which most states aligned with either the United States or the Soviet Union. The ideological struggle over communism began fading in the late 1980s, especially in response to U.S.-Soviet rapprochement. Domestic reforms (perestroika and glasnost) implemented by Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev facilitated improved relations between the two superpowers.

The bipolar structure of the international system began breaking down in favor of the eventual multipolar structure. The world was no longer perceived merely in terms of communist and non-communist, thereby giving policy-makers more options in their relations with other states. As S. Smith points out, changing international inputs into the foreign policy system can lead to foreign policy change. Or the foreign policy restructuring could be seen in terms of Sampson's argument that states' can exploit "seams" in the international structure. Thus, the external pressures on Thailand's leaders to avoid ties to communist states could have been lifted.

Also in relation to the decline of the Cold War was Thailand's own confrontation with communist insurgents. Up until the mid-1980s, domestic insurgents, particularly the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), had been a major

concern for the Thai government.¹⁴⁵ Many of the insurgents had received support and training from Laos and Vietnam, creating tension between Thailand and its communist neighbors. With the decline of communism worldwide and the reduced fears of communism spreading in the region, the Thai leaders might have felt less threatened by Laos and Vietnam and could therefore attempt to open up relations with them.

Intervening Variables

Several of the studies in the literature review consider the policy-making process and the perceptions of decision-makers as intervening variables. In this stage, the independent variables are transformed by the policy process and the perceptions of individuals. Advocates of the bureaucratic politics approach demonstrate how policies are often the result of political interaction (bargaining and compromise) among different actors and agencies. It is therefore necessary to identify the stances and preferences of those people and agencies involved in decision-making and determine how the policy choice arose. Decisions may also be affected by organizational routines during the policy-making process.

The perceptions of the decision-makers are also intervening variables. While there may be an "objective" reality in the environment, scholars of psychological-perceptual approaches note that independent variables are modified or filtered through the decision-makers' perceptions. Their views of the environment frequently

¹⁴⁵ The domestic insurgency was essentially in control by 1985, and the movement was no longer seen as a significant security threat. See Chapter 2 for greater detail.

differ, depending on their expectations, values, and cognitive processes. Identifying these perceptions is an important component of understanding why decision-makers restructured foreign policy. The task of identifying the leaders' views of the independent variables was accomplished by interviewing several of Thailand's top government officials.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the framework is the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. The independent variables, how they were viewed by the decision-makers, and the outcome of the policy-making process produced a change in Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. (The extent of the changes will be described in Chapter 4.)

Data Collection

The data collection occurred in two phases. The first phase began in January 1995 and lasted until August 1995. Most of the research in this phase was conducted at Northern Illinois University's library and consisted of surveying the literature on foreign policy decision-making and restructuring, gathering information on Thailand's foreign policy-making process, reviewing Thai-Lao history, and analyzing Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos in the 1980s and 1990s. Numerous sources were utilized, including books, journals, newspapers, and government documents from Thailand.

The second phase of data collection commenced in August 1995 and concluded in August 1996. All of the research done in this stage was conducted in Bangkok, Thailand, with a research affiliation at Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS). Additional secondary sources were obtained in the second phase, most of which were obtained from libraries at Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Bangkok Bank, and a limited amount from officials (active and retired) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The major focus of the overseas research was interviewing Thai foreign policy-makers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, the House of Representatives, advisors to Prime Minister Chatichai, academics, and businessmen.¹⁴⁶ The respondents were asked to state their views about the external and domestic variables, why the decision to restructure was made, how the policy-making process functioned, and how the decision to change foreign policy was implemented.¹⁴⁷

Limitations of the Study

A few obstacles during the data collection period could not be overcome, and therefore the limitations of the research should be made clear in the beginning. Not all of the key decision-makers were available for an interview. Repeated attempts to contact former Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan were not successful. Influential officials such as former army commander General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, former

¹⁴⁶ For a complete list of respondents, see Appendix A.

¹⁴⁷ The questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

permanent secretary of the MFA Kasem Kasemsri and former advisor Dr. Surakiat Sathirithai held important government positions at the time of the overseas research and access to them was denied. Former Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila stated that he could not comment on such a sensitive issue as Thai-Lao relations because of his current position as Privy Councilor to His Majesty the King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Despite these omissions, a sufficient number of top-level decision-makers were interviewed for the study.

A second limitation is that many government documents related to this decision are still classified and therefore unavailable to the researcher. Most documents produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Council are kept under a 30-year classified period.¹⁴⁸ These documents could reveal new information about the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy with Laos.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2 describes the historical relationship between Thailand and Laos, from the origins of the Thai and Lao people through the Indochina wars and the communist revolution, until the end of General Prem Tinsulanond's administration in mid-1988.

Chapter 3 discusses the actors and institutions involved in Thailand's foreign policy-making and the policy-making process during Chatichai's administration.

¹⁴⁸ Information given by Mr. Thanis Na Songkhla, Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Komate Kamalanavin, Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Also in Chapter 3 is the analysis of how Prime Minister Chatichai was able to control the foreign policy-making process, despite some initial resistance from the previously dominant Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Chapter 4 details the changes in Thailand's foreign policy under General Chatichai.

The perceptions and motivations of the decision-makers are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 focuses on the Prime Minister and advisors' views of the independent variables, along with discussing their goals for the policy change. Chapter 6 follows the same format for the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, and the military.

The concluding chapter summarizes the findings from this study and assesses the implications of Thailand's foreign policy restructuring for Thai studies, restructuring theory, and decision-making theory. Finally, hypotheses for future research are presented.

Summary

This dissertation analyzes Thailand's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos from 1988 to 1991. The major research question for this study is: What factors led to the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos? A framework consisting of three categories of variables, independent, intervening, and dependent, is used to analyze the policy change. The independent variables are divided into external and domestic factors and were assessed by Thai government officials during interviews. The policy-making process and the perceptions of the decision-makers

act as intervening variables. The dependent variable is the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy.

This dissertation also considers how Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan came to wrest control of foreign policy-making (and implement the restructuring) from a previously dominant and resistant bureaucracy.

The reversal of a state's foreign policy can have profound effects on global politics, as in the cases of American President Nixon's decision to normalize relations with China and Egyptian President Sadat's peace agreement with Israel. Thailand's foreign policy restructuring had important implications for Southeast Asia in that the confrontation between Thailand and the communist Indochinese states came to a close.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF THAILAND-LAOS RELATIONS

In order to understand Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos, it is necessary to discuss the origins of the Thai and Lao peoples, their cultural affinities, and their intertwined history.¹ Particular attention will be given to Thai-Lao relations after the start of the second Indochina War and through General Prem Tinsulanonda's administration, which preceded Prime Minister Chatichai's. This background is necessary for explaining the changes that occurred in Thai-Lao relations under Prime Minister Chatichai.

Despite their common origins and cultural similarities, the Thai and Lao peoples have displayed throughout their history a propensity for conflict with one another. Periods of cooperation and amicability have been few and far between. Typically they have also been of very short duration. The present era of cooperative Thai-Lao relations which began in 1988 under General Chatichai is in stark contrast to the centuries of hostilities and disputes.

¹ The term "Lao" refers to the ethnic lowland people who constitute the dominant group in society. The lowland Lao are part of the broader ethnic group called Lao Loum, made up of lowland and mountain groups who speak T'ai languages. The other two broad ethnic groups are the Lao Theung (Lao of the mountain slopes), who speak Mon-Khmer languages, and the Lao Soung (Lao of the mountain summits), who speak Tibeto-Burman languages. The focus in this dissertation is mainly on the dominant lowland Lao, and therefore this term will be used throughout the study. Additionally, Lao is preferred to the standard English and French term "Laotian," because the people of Laos use the word Lao instead of the colonial term Laotian.

Cultural and Ethnic Bonds Between the Thai and Lao

The Thai and Lao peoples share many similarities due to their common origins. Over the centuries their blood ties, culture, languages, and religion have remained remarkably close. The relationship between them is usually characterized by the Thai as one of elder and younger siblings, with the Thai serving as the "elder" and the Lao considered the "younger" sibling, much to the chagrin of the Lao. The Lao prefer to describe their relationship with the Thai as one of "close neighbors" in order to fend off any connotation of being the inferior younger sibling.²

Approximately 80-90% of the Thai and Lao are Buddhists, following the Theravada branch of the religion. Thai and Lao cultures and festivals are similar in numerous ways, due in great part to Buddhism; thus, many of the same holidays are celebrated, such as Buddhist New Year (Songkran). They share other cultural attributes in terms of their organization of society, their value systems, traditional dance and music, and conceptions of power.

Although there are numerous similarities between the Thai and Lao cultures, they often ridicule each other for various attributes. The Thai perceive the Lao as lazy and unsophisticated and mock some of their eating habits. For instance, Thai frequently refer to Lao in derogatory terms as "eaters of sticky rice and of padek" (pungent shrimp paste).³ The Lao see themselves as spontaneous and pursuing

² Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, Kith and Kin Politics: The Relationship Between Laos and Thailand (Manila, The Philippines: Journal of Contemporary Asia Publishers, 1994), 1.

³ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 17.

enjoyment in life, while they consider the Thai arrogant, impersonal, greedy, and power-seeking.

The Thai and Lao languages belong to the same language family and are somewhat mutually intelligible. Additionally, the Thai and Lao written scripts are derived from the same ancient Indian language, Sanskrit. Thus, many letters in the Thai and Lao alphabets look similar.⁴ However, the modern Lao people tend to understand Thai much more readily than the Thai understand Lao, mainly because Thai television and radio can be received in many parts of Laos. Furthermore, ethnic Lao who live in Thailand usually learn both languages: Lao for informal settings and Thai for more formal situations and school.

Another strong bond between the Thai and Lao is their common ancestry. The most widely held belief is that the modern Thai and Lao are descendants of the T'ai who lived in southern China in what is now Yunnan province.⁵ The term "T'ai" is used to describe a language family which eventually differentiated into numerous ethnic identities. T'ai encompasses the Thai (also known as the Siamese) in Thailand, Lao in Laos, the Shan in northeast Burma, and several hilltribes ranging from northern Vietnam into Thailand and Laos.

As the Han Chinese expanded into southern China before the 8th century A.D., the T'ai people moved south and west. These migrations continued throughout the 8th-13th centuries. In the 9th and 10th centuries, much of what is now Thailand

⁴ The spelling of vowels is quite distinct in the two languages. Also, the Lao language has consolidated the number of consonants to 33, whereas Thai retains 44.

⁵ For a detailed history of the origins of Thai and Lao, see David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), and Martin Stuart-Fox, Laos: Politics, Economics, and Society (London: France Pinter Publishers and Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1986).

and Laos was part of the Khmer Empire, but most T'ai people were probably in areas that were relatively uncontrolled by the large empires surrounding them.⁶ The Mongol invasion of southern China in 1253 prompted more T'ai to move south and west, leading to the formation of T'ai principalities in Chiang Mai, Sukhothai, and Luang Prabang.⁷

As in the past, today many Thai and Lao families have relatives living in the other country, including members of the political elite. The migration of people and fluctuating political control over parts of Thailand and Laos throughout history caused relatives to end up on both sides of the present border.

Surprisingly, the many religious, cultural, linguistic, and kinship ties have not led to amicable relations. Instead, their relationship has been plagued by frequent wars and mutual antagonism.

13th Century-Early 18th Century

In the 13th century the two major kingdoms in Laos and Thailand were Lan Na in the northern region of Thailand, centered in Chiang Mai but extending into northern Laos, and Sukhothai, which occupied much of central Thailand and extended from central Laos down to the Malay peninsula. Much of Sukhothai had been carved out of the Khmer Empire in the 1230s and 1240s and reached its apex in the latter part of the century under King Ramkhamhaeng. The Sukhothai Kingdom established suzerainty over the smaller Lao kingdoms at Luang Prabang and Viang

⁶ Wyatt, Thailand, 18-19.

⁷ Stuart-Fox, Laos, 4.

Chan⁸ and received tribute from other vassal states in Burma and the Malay peninsula.

Sukhothai formed an alliance in 1287 with Lan Na and Phayao, with Phayao wedged between the two more powerful kingdoms in what is now northern Thailand and north-central Laos. The alliance was intended to fend off the Mongols who had attacked Lan Na. After Ramkhamhaeng's death in 1298, the kingdom fell apart in the succeeding decades, with Luang Prabang, Viang Chan, and other Lao principalities gaining their independence.

In the mid-14th century, two new major T'ai kingdoms were established: Ayudhya in central and southern Thailand and Lan Xang, which covered northeast Thailand and central and northern Laos. By this time three kingdoms were competing for dominance of the T'ai world: Ayudhya, Lan Xang, and Lan Na.⁹ Ayudhya expanded rapidly in the 1400s and became more powerful than the relatively isolated Lao kingdoms

Lan Na was frequently at war with its neighbors in the 1400s and early 1500s, including conflicts with Ayudhya and Lan Xang for control over smaller principalities. Its downfall came in the mid-1500s when it was annexed into the Lan Xang Kingdom.

Lan Xang was established in 1353 by Fa Ngum and centered at Luang Prabang. Lan Xang represented the apex of the classical Lao kingdoms and spread to Chiang Mai, parts of northern Cambodia, and much of the Khorat Plateau, also

⁸ Viang Chan is the capital of modern Laos. It is usually seen written in the French colonial style of "Vientiane." The preferred spelling in this study is Viang Chan because it corresponds more closely to how the Lao people pronounce the name.

⁹ Wyatt, Thailand, 74.

known as the Isan region in Thailand's Northeast. The king of Ayudhya sent tribute to Fa Ngum rather than attempt to claim his right over Khorat which had been ruled by Ayudhya's predecessor, Sukhothai.¹⁰ Thus, Lao control over this area in the 14th century, in conjunction with ethnic Lao living in Khorat, formed the crux of Lao irredentism in the 20th century for Thailand's northeast region.¹¹ The rulers of Lan Xang had ties to the royal families of Lan Na and Ayudhya through marriage, which in turn fostered a relative period of peace in the T'ai world from 1371-1416.

In 1512 a Buddha statue known as the Prabang was brought to Luang Prabang from Viang Chan in order to serve as the symbol of a separate identity for the Lao from the rest of the T'ai.¹² The need to foster a distinct Lao identity may also have been initiated to help maintain Lan Xang's independence from Ayudhya's growing power.¹³ A greater distinction between the Thai and Lao continued as Ayudhya increased its international trade and communications.¹⁴ The rulers in Ayudhya subsequently became much more cosmopolitan than those in Lan Na and Lan Xang.

As Ayudhya's power continued to expand, Lan Xang's relations with Ayudhya remained congenial until the late 16th century. The two kingdoms agreed to a Treaty of Friendship in 1560, and to make this alliance manifest and demarcate

¹⁰ Arthur J. Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina (Boulder and London: Westview Press, Inc., 1985), 14.

¹¹ Martin Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations Between the Communist Parties of Thailand and Laos," Asian Survey 19:4, April 1979, 349.

¹² Wyatt, Thailand, 84.

¹³ Wyatt, Thailand, 84.

¹⁴ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 25.

their border, a stone marker was placed on the site which said the two dynasties would live in peace "until the sun and moon fall down to the earth."¹⁵ In the 1560s Ayudhya invoked its alliance with Lan Xang after the Burmese conquered Lan Na, but eventually the Burmese defeated Ayudhya. Lan Xang itself succumbed to the Burmese a few years later in 1574. The final collapse of Lan Xang, and the end of Lao power in the region, came in the early 1700s when the kingdom split into three smaller ones, Luang Prabang, Viang Chan, and Champassak, all of which subsequently became controlled by a restored Ayudhya and the Vietnamese.

18th Century-Early 20th Century

Before Ayudhya's collapse to the Burmese in 1767, Siamese-Lao conflicts were partially contained by the intermarriage of their royal families. After 1767 Siamese-Lao relations became more conflictual, due in part to the lack of new marriage bonds between the dynasties.¹⁶ After Ayudhya's final defeat by the Burmese, a new Siamese kingdom was formed further south in Thonburi. In 1778, the Thonburi troops defeated Viang Chan and deported hundreds of Lao families to the northeast region of Thailand (previously devastated by the Burmese) for the purpose of repopulating the new kingdom. The Siamese under King Taksin also seized the Prabang statue and the highly revered Emerald Buddha. Although the Prabang image

¹⁵ Mayoury and Pheuiphah Ngaosyvathn, 22.

¹⁶ Mayoury and Pheuiphah Ngaosyvathn, 4.

was returned to Laos, the Emerald Buddha remains in Thai hands.¹⁷ This created resentment among the Lao which continues today.

Thonburi forced Viang Chan and the southern Lao kingdom of Champassak under the suzerainty of the Siamese; Luang Prabang, technically still independent, was paying tribute to Siam since their treaty of alliance (1774). The subsequent kings of Viang Chan were typically placed on the throne by the Siamese rulers. In 1782 the capital of Siam was moved to Bangkok in order to make it more secure from Burmese attacks. Siam maintained a policy of divide and rule against the Lao principalities in order to keep them from mounting a challenge,¹⁸ and soon Bangkok controlled all of modern-day Laos.

In 1826-1827 the king of Viang Chan, Chao Anu, led a rebellion against Siam. Siam's 1826 Burney Treaty with Britain indicated to Chao Anu that the Siamese, Viang Chan's suzerain, were vulnerable to Britain's military threat.¹⁹ Therefore, he and his son, the ruler of Champassak, launched an attack on Siam. Siam staved off the attack and took direct control of Viang Chan for the next several decades, leaving Luang Prabang as the only independent Lao kingdom. Siam's King Rama III, rankled by this latest challenge from the Lao, ordered Viang Chan completely destroyed. Virtually all the buildings in Viang Chan were razed, except for the Buddhist monasteries, while Viang Chan's population was forcefully settled in central

¹⁷ The Prabang statue was returned by Taksin in 1782 and now resides in the National Museum in Luang Prabang, while the Emerald Buddha is located at the Grand Palace in Bangkok. These are still the most revered Buddha images for the Thai and Lao people.

¹⁸ Wyatt, Thailand, 158.

¹⁹ David Joel Steinberg, ed., In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History, rev. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 116.

Thailand. Furthermore, King Rama III ordered the deportation of thousands of Lao from the mountain valleys of central and southern Laos to the Khorat Plateau in northeast Siam, where they could be more easily controlled.

This event was important for two reasons. One, it accounts for the large population of Lao (over 10 million today) living in Thailand's Isan region, which in the mid-20th century became the country's greatest internal security concern because of the local communist movement's connections with the Lao and Vietnamese communists. Second, it became the formative event and foundation of the Lao people's modern resentment toward the Thai.²⁰ The Lao see Chao Anu's rebellion as a fight for the liberation of their people from the oppressive Siamese, whereas the Thai look upon the event as a demonstration of the Lao people's ingratitude and opportunism.²¹

By the 1870s the Europeans had secured a foothold in Southeast Asia and began impinging on the Siamese to a greater extent than ever before. Around the turn of the century the Thai were forced to cede a substantial amount of territory to the French and British in order to maintain the kingdom's independence. The French began to show more interest in the Mekong area, especially Laos, under the pretext that it would lead to China's wealthy interior.²² France pressed its claims to Laos in the 1880s based upon the mistaken notion that Vietnam had historically controlled much of Laos, and as Vietnam's "protector," France was therefore entitled to be the

²⁰ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 9.

²¹ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 5.

²² Wyatt, Thailand, 195.

suzerain over Laos.²³ Much of this was in response to King Chulalongkorn's expansion of Siamese control over several smaller principalities, which the French ironically perceived as imperialism and a challenge to France's sovereign rights over Laos.²⁴

A series of attacks on Luang Prabang in the 1870s and 1880s by the Ho, a group of bandits fleeing the Taiping Rebellion in China, provided France the rationale for wresting control of Laos from Siam. The king of Luang Prabang turned to the Siamese for assistance in repelling the Ho. However, when the Ho attacked Luang Prabang again in 1887, the Siamese troops could not defend the kingdom, and the king of Luang Prabang, Un Kham, was saved by the French vice consul. Grateful to the French for saving him, King Un Kham eventually allowed the French to set up a protectorate over Luang Prabang.

King Chulalongkorn was forced to give up concessions in the Lao areas in 1888 and 1889, but the more significant loss of Lao territories came four years later. In 1893 the French laid claim to all of the Lao territories east of the Mekong River, and when the Siamese resisted, the French navy arrived in Bangkok to force the Siamese king to sign a treaty handing over these lands to the French. Included in Siam's renunciation of the east bank territories were Viang Chan and part of the southern kingdom of Champassak. By 1904 the remainder of the southern region was turned over to the French, along with territory to the west of Luang Prabang.

The French and the Siamese finalized Siam's eastern border with a treaty in 1907, and in exchange for the demarcated territory the French promised not to pursue

²³ Wyatt, Thailand, 202.

²⁴ Steinberg, 184.

any more territorial claims against Siam and made concessions on extra territoriality.²⁵ Thus, between 1893 and 1907 the territory of Thailand took its current shape through a series of treaties with the French (along the eastern frontier) and the British (along the western and southern frontiers).²⁶ The legacy of this era, however, is that Thailand considered these territorial changes to have been coerced and therefore the territories rightfully belonged to Thailand. This issue arose periodically throughout the 20th century and became a major dispute between Thailand and Laos.

Apart from the question of to whom the Lao territories rightfully belong, determining the precise boundary between Thailand and Laos eventually caused friction too. The boundary between them was not clearly demarcated in the late 1800s and early 1900s; the treaties signed during this time were ambiguous regarding the boundary lines. As will be seen in a later section, demarcating the boundary became one of the most heated issues between Thailand and Laos and, in fact, was a justification for intense battles in the 1980s.

1930s-1940s

After the loss of the Lao territories to the French early in the century, Siam's involvement with Laos was reduced significantly for the next few decades, until the early 1940s. The only major development in Siam during this period which had an

²⁵ Steinberg, 186.

²⁶ For a thorough account of how Thailand's borders were established, see Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

effect on Laos was the rise of Thai nationalism, first under King Vajiravudh (1910 to 1925) and then with Field Marshal Phibun Songkram, who first served as prime minister from 1938-1944. In the 1930s and 1940s the idea of consolidating all of the T'ai people in Southeast Asia into one state began to gather momentum. The new Thai elite, which in 1932 overthrew the absolute monarchy and transformed it into a constitutional one, attempted to legitimize their regime and gain broader support by making claims to the Indochinese territories ceded to France decades earlier.²⁷ Thus, irredentism became the rallying cry of the new regime. Irredentism and nationalism were manifest in Phibun's decision in 1939 to change the name of the country from Siam to Thailand, meaning "land of the free," referring to all T'ai-speaking people,²⁸ including those outside Thailand's borders. The reason for the change was two-fold: to demonstrate that the country belonged to the Thai and not the ethnic Chinese who dominated the economy and also to accommodate the irredentism of the Phibun government.

Phibun's fostering of Thai nationalism ensured that the losses of territory to the French were brought to the foreground. Thai irredentism with respect to the Lao territories and parts of Cambodia ran high, and Phibun sought to re-acquire them from the French. After negotiations with the French proved fruitless, Phibun decided to take advantage of France's defeat by the Nazis in 1940 by invading the Lao territories and western Cambodia. In 1941 the Japanese intervened between the French and Thai and "mediated" the dispute. France was forced to give up the areas

²⁷ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 59-60.

²⁸ Martin Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State: The Making of Modern Laos (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd., 1996), 15.

it acquired in 1904, namely the right bank of the Mekong and portions of Cambodia. Thailand sought all of Laos, but the Japanese permitted only a much smaller claim, which was made worse by the fact that Thailand was required to compensate the French.²⁹ At the conclusion of World War II, France demanded the return of the Lao and Cambodian areas that Thailand annexed. Thailand reluctantly conceded them in 1947, but only after the French agreed not to veto Thailand's admission to the United Nations.

Irredentism in the 1940s was not confined to the Thai people; Lao irredentism also flared and had its eye on the Isan (Northeast) region of Thailand. During World War II the French stoked Lao nationalism in their efforts against the Japanese and Thai.³⁰ Millions of Lao located across the Mekong River became the focus for a greater Lao state, although Lao irredentism did not appear to be as vigorous or as capable of fulfilling its goals as the Thai version. However, Lao irredentism became more threatening once the Isan separatist movement began in the 1940s. Combined with the spread of communism in the area, the communists in Laos and the Lao of Thailand's Isan region posed a startling threat to the Thai government in the 1950s.

1954-1975

Thai-Lao relations from 1954 to 1975 were dominated by two issues: Thailand's involvement in the second Indochina War, especially Laos's civil war, and

²⁹ Joseph Wright, Jr., The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand (Bangkok: Asia Books Co., Ltd., 1991), 110.

³⁰ Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 348.

the rise of the communist movement in Thailand, in particular in the northeast region. The Indochinese states' independence and other aspects of the Geneva Accords of 1954 did little to settle the instability in the region. Soon after the French formally withdrew from Indochina, the United States stepped in to prevent the establishment of communist regimes in Laos and Vietnam. Despite Laos not being a member of the U.S.-led Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which was established in 1954 and included Thailand, SEATO members unanimously agreed to apply Article IV to Laos, which stated that the members would "act to meet the common danger' in the event of aggression against any one of them."³¹ SEATO's decision meshed with Thailand's foreign policy goal of ensuring "friendly" relations with Laos, meaning that a non-communist, anti-North Vietnam regime would hold power in Viang Chan.³² Accordingly, Thailand threw its support behind the right-wing groups (those that were pro-monarchy and pro-military) in Laos in an effort to counter-balance the growing strength of the Pathet Lao, the communist insurgent movement in Laos.

For Thailand, the strategic importance of Laos was resurrected when the Vietminh³³ invaded Laos in 1953, putting them close to the Thai border, and with the division of Vietnam in 1954 into North Vietnam (controlled by the communists) and South Vietnam. Under French colonialism, Laos had not played its historical role as a buffer between Thailand and Vietnam, but this all changed in 1954.³⁴ Thailand's

³¹ Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 51.

³² Wyatt, Thailand, 287.

³³ The Vietminh was established by Ho Chi Minh early in World War II as a national united front to fight against the Japanese and eventually against the French after their return.

³⁴ R. Sean Randolph, The United States and Thailand: Alliance Dynamics, 1950-1985 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1986), 32.

concern with the possibility of Chinese or Vietnamese subversion, or even an invasion of Thailand through Laos, prompted Thailand to use a "forward strategy" inside Laos to defend its borders.³⁵

The political situation in Laos was complicated in the 1950s and 1960s by three factions vying for power. The neutralists were led by Prince Souvanna Phouma, who served as prime minister much of the time between the 1950s and 1970s, including heading three coalition governments in 1957, 1962, and 1974. Prince Souphanouvong, Souvanna Phouma's younger half-brother, led the communist Pathet Lao which worked in conjunction with the North Vietnamese. The right wing was made up of many of the high-ranking officers from the Royal Lao Army; they received substantial assistance and support from the United States and Thailand because of their anti-communist views.

In an effort to quell the civil war in Laos and pull the Pathet Lao away from Vietnamese influence,³⁶ Souvanna Phouma invited the Pathet Lao into a coalition government in 1957.³⁷ Both Thailand and the U.S. disapproved. For Thailand, a coalition government in Laos which included the communists was inherently unstable and made the government more susceptible to communism.³⁸ In response to the coalition government in Laos, Thailand's military closed off the border with Laos, severely crippling Laos's international trade which went mainly through Thailand.

³⁵ Randolph, 32-33.

³⁶ Stuart Simmonds, "Independence and Political Rivalry in Laos 1945-61," in Saul Rose, ed., Politics in Southern Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), 179.

³⁷ The Pathet Lao's political wing, Neo Lao Hak Sat, which was formed in 1955, served in the coalition government.

³⁸ Randolph, 36.

The U.S. and Thailand quickly undermined the neutralist government in order to drive the Pathet Lao out of government, and after less than eight months the first coalition government collapsed and the civil war resumed.

Souvanna Phouma's government was replaced by a right-wing, anti-communist government led by Phoui Sananikone. Elections, eventually held in 1960, were controlled by the right-wing elements. General Phoumi Nosavan, the Minister of Defense and the cousin of General Sarit Thanarat (Thailand's prime minister at the time) held the actual power in government. General Phoumi received strong backing from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Thailand. This series of events, that is, driving the Pathet Lao out of government and the establishment of a right-wing, military government backed by the U.S., convinced the North Vietnamese that they had to step up their support for the Pathet Lao in order to secure routes along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos and to protect North Vietnam's western border.³⁹

In August 1960, a relatively obscure paratrooper captain named Kong Le staged a coup against the right-wing government because of his conviction that Laos must follow a neutral path to end the civil war.⁴⁰ Kong Le invited Souvanna Phouma to form another government. Prime Minister Sarit proclaimed that if the situation in Laos worsened, Thailand would intervene directly.⁴¹

³⁹ Stuart-Fox, Laos, 25.

⁴⁰ One scholar has classified Kong Le as an "isolationist" as opposed to a neutralist. See Simmonds, 190.

⁴¹ Randolph, 37.

Souvanna Phouma's new government was short-lived, as General Phoumi Nosavan, with help from the CIA and Thailand, took Viang Chan and forced Souvanna Phouma to flee to Cambodia. Prime Minister Sarit had allowed General Phoumi's forces to use Thailand's territory to move into Viang Chan without being attacked by the Pathet Lao, and he also severed Viang Chan's supply lines from northeastern Thailand.⁴² Prince Boun Oum of Champassak was named prime minister, but again it was Phoumi who held the reins of power. By having his cousin control the government of Laos, Prime Minister Sarit was able to maintain a strong Thai presence in Laos through the deployment of Thai troops.

The United States made a significant change in policy regarding Laos shortly after President Kennedy took office. Because the civil war in Laos required greater involvement by the U.S., especially in terms of troops, Kennedy decided to pursue a policy of neutrality for Laos.⁴³ In 1961 a cease-fire was called and the three factions in Laos participated in a conference in Geneva, Switzerland. The Geneva Agreements of 1962 produced a policy of neutrality for Laos, and Souvanna Phouma formed a second coalition government with two ministers each for the Pathet Lao and the rightists and eleven neutralist cabinet members.

The American support for Laos's neutrality greatly disturbed the Thai government. Thailand believed communism was more of a threat than ever and was making advances right to the Thai-Lao border. American support for Souvanna Phouma was the second major setback for the Thai government. Thailand had earlier expressed its disappointment with SEATO's failure to take military action to resolve

⁴² Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 65.

⁴³ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State, 44.

the crisis in Laos after France and Britain rejected Thailand's request for SEATO intervention. The Thai government's feelings of vulnerability to communism caused by SEATO's inaction and American support for neutrality in Laos were rectified by the United States guaranteeing Thailand's defense through the then secret Rusk-Thanat Communiqué of 1962. The communiqué assured Thailand that its defense by the U.S. did not depend on the consent of other SEATO members, thereby effectively setting up a bilateral security guarantee, something Thailand strongly desired.⁴⁴ Additionally, the U.S. stationed thousands of personnel in Thailand, including troops, pilots, and engineers, and increased the amount of military and economic aid given to Thailand.

In the early 1960s, the U.S. and Thailand increased their involvement in the conflicts in Laos and North Vietnam. What began as covert operations by the U.S. and Thailand eventually escalated into acts of war. Thailand's military bases were used in the 1960s for surveillance, covert ground operations, and signal jamming.⁴⁵ More importantly, they were also used to launch many of the U.S. bombing campaigns in Laos and North Vietnam.

The systematic bombing operations by the U.S. began in the mid-1960s with the intent of shutting down part of the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" in Laos. What started out with a modest 20 airstrikes by the U.S. on Laos in 1964 escalated quickly into a massive air campaign. In 1965 the number of American airstrikes on Laos totaled 4,568, over 67,000 strikes in 1968, and over 90,000 airstrikes in 1969.⁴⁶ The number

⁴⁴ Under the Manila Treaty of 1954, all SEATO military operations required unanimous consent of the members.

⁴⁵ Wyatt, Thailand, 288.

⁴⁶ Randolph, 54-55.

of American airstrikes over Laos peaked in 1970 with a staggering 106,872 missions.⁴⁷

The U.S. and Thailand's involvement in Laos expanded to include the training of military personnel on Thai territory for the rightist and centrist groups in Laos. In an attempt to avoid violating the 1962 neutralization of Laos agreements, the U.S. operated a civilian-registered airline, Air America (actually a CIA contract company), to drop supplies throughout Laos and conduct aerial reconnaissance.⁴⁸

Thailand's concern for Laos in the 1960s exceeded that of the U.S. Unlike the U.S., Thailand equated the successful defense of Laos with its own defense.⁴⁹ The Thai military believed it was necessary to intervene in Laos not only in coordination with the Americans but also on their own.⁵⁰ Thai troops were sent into Laos covertly for operations against the Pathet Lao. These troops were classified as "irregular volunteer" fighters; most of them were actual soldiers from the Thai military or border police who had simply "resigned."⁵¹ The Thai irregular forces were organized into Special Guerrilla Units (SGUs) and placed under the command of the Royal Lao Army but were paid through the American CIA. In 1960 the number of Thai troops fighting in Laos totaled approximately 5,000.⁵² In early 1972, 6,800 men were in the

⁴⁷ Randolph, 148.

⁴⁸ Randolph, 45.

⁴⁹ Randolph, 40.

⁵⁰ Wyatt, Thailand, 288.

⁵¹ Randolph, 55.

⁵² Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 67.

SGUs, with another 5,000 in training. By September the number had swelled to over 21,000.⁵³

Thailand's willingness to allow the Americans to use Thai bases for bombing campaigns and covert operations on the ground by the Thai soldiers created strong anti-Thai sentiments among the Pathet Lao.⁵⁴ The Pathet Lao's resentment of Thai involvement in the civil war carried over into the new regime and exacerbated future relations between Thailand and Laos.

The Insurgency

In addition to Thailand's involvement in Laos's civil war, the other significant aspect of Thai-Lao relations from 1954-1975 was the communist insurgency in Thailand, especially in the northeast region; it too became a major source of contention between the two countries. Several communist organizations began operations in Thailand in the 1940s. The four main ones were a poorly organized group of Muslim separatists in southern Thailand, the Indochinese Communist Party (comprised of Vietnamese in Thailand's northeast region), the Chinese Communist Party of Thailand, and most importantly the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT).⁵⁵

Thailand's northeast region (Isan) is the poorest part of the country. It is populated mainly by ethnic Lao who are descendants of the Lao forced to settle

⁵³ Randolph, 150.

⁵⁴ Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 130.

⁵⁵ After 1949, most members of the Chinese Communist Party of Thailand joined the Communist Party of Thailand.

there by King Rama III in the 1820s and 1830s. In the 1960s, over 10 million ethnic Lao inhabited the Isan region. The CPT, which was almost exclusively made up of ethnic Chinese in the 1940s, sought to broaden its support by appealing to the Northeasterners in the 1950s and 1960s. The rapid spread of communism in the Northeast led to allegations by the Thai media that international communism was attempting to sever the northeast region from Thailand and create a "Greater Laos."⁵⁶

The Northeast was the most volatile and potentially threatening region to the Thai government for a number of reasons.⁵⁷ It was considered the most crucial region in terms of security because it contained one third of Thailand's population and territory.⁵⁸ The Isan region lies across the Mekong River from areas which were held by the Pathet Lao. At some points Thailand is merely 70 miles from Vietnam. Thus North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao could easily penetrate Thailand's northeastern region. The ethnic composition of the Isan area also facilitated cooperation between Lao in the Northeast and the Pathet Lao.

However, socio-economic conditions were the most important reasons for the appeal of communism in the Northeast. The Northeast has traditionally been Thailand's most impoverished region. Its soil quality is poor, and alternating periods of flood and drought constantly plague the area, which relies heavily upon

⁵⁶ Thailand: A Country Study, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government, 1989), 229.

⁵⁷ Much of the following discussion of the conditions in the Northeast is drawn from General Saiyud Kerdphol, The Struggle for Thailand: Counter-Insurgency 1965-1985 (Bangkok: S. Research Center Co., Ltd., 1986), 26.

⁵⁸ R. Sean Randolph and W. Scott Thompson, Thai Insurgency: Contemporary Developments, The Washington Papers 9:81, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, Inc., 1981), 17.

agriculture. Other complaints by the Northerners included neglect by the central government, limited irrigation, and few and poorly equipped medical and educational facilities. These factors combined to markedly increase communism's appeal in the Northeast and make the area the launching point for the armed insurgency.⁵⁹

From 1961 until 1965, during the first phase of serious activity, the CPT concentrated on organizing activities, recruiting and training, and the development of insurgent camps.⁶⁰ The CPT also developed its foreign ties and aid relations during this time. Many of its cadres in the Northeast were subsequently trained in Laos, North Vietnam, and even China. Camps were set up in Pathet Lao-controlled areas, and supplies, arms, and munitions, especially from China, were channeled through Laos to the Isan region. North Vietnam was also involved in these activities, including infiltrating Thailand's Northeast in the early 1960s to appeal for support from Vietnamese refugees who had fled to Thailand in 1954.

Foreign assistance proved vitally important for the CPT. However, because of the evolving Sino-Soviet split, the CPT had virtually no relations with the Soviet Union. After 1964, the CPT aligned with the Chinese in their feud with the Soviets over revisionism and pursued a Maoist-style insurgency.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Randolph and Thompson, 18. Eventually the insurgency spread to all parts of Thailand, but with minimal linkage among the communist groups. Most of the activity occurred in the northeastern and northern parts of the country, probably because of the ease with which external assistance could penetrate those areas. The South, on the other hand, was much more remote and independent in its insurgent activities.

⁶⁰ M. Ladd Thomas, "Communist Insurgency in Thailand: Factors Contributing to its Decline," Asian Affairs, An American Review 13:1, Spring 1986, 17.

⁶¹ Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 339.

Possibly at the behest of China, the CPT began its armed struggle for the overthrow of the Thai government in 1965. This marked the beginning of the second phase of the CPT's activities in Thailand.⁶² During this phase, the CPT employed Mao Ze-dong's strategy of encircling the towns by a peasant armed revolution from the countryside. However, their efforts met with only limited success. The CPT carried out assassinations of government officials, village headmen, and teachers, as well as direct confrontations with the Thai military. Over 217 armed clashes occurred between the Thai military and the CPT in 1966; a year later the number of incidents rose to 370.⁶³ However, the CPT was still too weak to overthrow the Thai government.

Thus, for the Thai government in the 1960s and early 1970s, the communist threat was both internal and external. The indigenous communist movement escalated and spread throughout the country, while the civil wars in Laos and Vietnam raged on. Thailand could not afford to neglect the situation in Laos and concentrate solely on its own communist problems because a communist victory in Laos represented a double-edged threat: it could destabilize the northeast region via the "domino effect," and it might lead to a foreign communist invasion.⁶⁴

Instability in Thailand was increased by the resurgence of Lao irredentism. By 1971 the Pathet Lao advocated dismembering Thailand into four components: Isan, Lan Na (in the north), Siam (central Thailand), and Pattani (southern Thailand).⁶⁵

⁶² Thomas, 17.

⁶³ Kerdphol, 27.

⁶⁴ Thailand: A Country Study, 40.

⁶⁵ Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", footnote 48, 349.

Martin Stuart-Fox attributes the Pathet Lao's decision to exploit Lao irredentism in the early 1970s to three factors.⁶⁶ First, he asserts that the Pathet Lao needed to broaden their support among the lowland Lao. Most of their support had come from the various tribal minority groups with whom the Pathet Lao had much more contact. Second, allegations of Vietnamese control of the Pathet Lao brought into question their nationalism and independence. To many Lao, they appeared no better than the rightists who sold out to the Americans and the Thai. Third, fostering pan-Lao irredentism in Thailand demonstrated the Pathet Lao's nationalism and reinforced their claim that they were fighting for Lao independence. In the early 1970s, the Pathet Lao recounted at their meetings the various historical atrocities committed by the Thai and called for an unceasing effort to unify all the Lao people, specifically those in Thailand's Isan region.⁶⁷

The Final Attempt at Neutrality in Laos

From a Thai perspective, the situation in Laos deteriorated significantly in the early 1970s. One final attempt at a coalition government in Laos was made in 1974 with Souvanna Phouma as prime minister and the Pathet Lao's Prince Souphanouvong appointed as the chairman of a National Political Consultative Council. Ironically, the third coalition government may have failed because it

⁶⁶ Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 351.

⁶⁷ However, after 1975 the Pathet Lao modified their stance in regard to this issue of unifying all Lao people. The altered vision after 1975 was that any attempt to incorporate the ethnic Lao in Thailand's Northeast into Laos must be the initiative of the Northeasterners themselves. See Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 132, and Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 350.

attempted neutrality without any neutralists, except for Souvanna Phouma. Most of the former neutralists, including Kong Le, had chosen sides in the 1960s, and there were few left by 1974. The Pathet Lao and the rightists each had eight ministers in the government; the neutralists had merely one.

Like the two previous coalition governments, the third did not last long. In May 1975, five right-wing ministers who sensed the impending victory of the Pathet Lao fled to Thailand along with several generals of the Royal Lao Army. The government managed to persist for a few more months, but by November 1975 the coalition government was in shambles. Thailand responded by closing the border between Thailand and Laos two weeks before the Pathet Lao took over. Souvanna Phouma resigned as Prime Minister and turned over power to the Pathet Lao, while King Savang Vatthana abdicated the throne. The following month, after the Pathet Lao officially took power, the 600-year-old monarchy was abolished.

1975-August 1988

The Pathet Lao victory in Laos significantly altered Thai-Lao government-to-government relations, leading to perhaps the worst relations between the two countries in their history. To fully understand this period after the Pathet Lao victory and before General Chatichai became prime minister in August 1988, it is necessary to review the most significant issues affecting Thai-Lao relations in that period: a) the continued insurgency; b) Lao refugees; c) Laos' "special relationship" with Vietnam; d) Laos's connection with the Cambodian crisis; e) Thai-Lao border wars; and f) Thai-Lao trade. These six issues were major sources of tension and, at

times, hostilities between Thailand and Laos. Before addressing these issues, a few points regarding the communist victories in Indochina are necessary.

Following the April victories of the communists in South Vietnam and Cambodia, the Thai government realized that a hostile policy towards the communist regimes might not be in the best interest of the country. Thus Thailand attempted to distance itself from the United States and tried to pursue more amicable relations with the communist world. (In the previous year, the Pathet Lao and North Vietnam said that the presence of U.S. troops in Thailand was the major obstacle to improving Thai-Lao relations.)⁶⁸ But the collapse of the Royal Lao Government in late 1975 proved to be particularly difficult for the Thai to accept:

Although communist victories in Vietnam and Kampuchea may have been viewed as inevitable, the events in Laos were not. The abdication of the Lao King in favour of the Revolutionary Council sent a spasm of fear through the Thai ruling circles [and] created a wave of hysteria from Thai reactionaries and massive propaganda about the 'threat' this event posed to Thailand.⁶⁹

Instability in Laos and military confrontations between Thailand and Laos along the Mekong River in November 1975 resulted in Thailand closing the border. By closing the border, which had been Laos's historical link to the rest of the world, Thailand cut off food, oil, and other vital goods from Laos.⁷⁰ Although the border was technically reopened in January 1976 when Thailand recognized the communist government in Laos, in reality it remained closed until July 1976.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Randolph, 175-176.

⁶⁹ Marian Mallet quoted in Wright, 234-235.

⁷⁰ Thailand: A Country Study, 217.

⁷¹ Facts and Data on Lao-Thai Relations in the Past Ten Years (1975-85) (Viang Chan: K.P.L. News Agency, 1985), 20.

In the mid-to-late 1970s, Thailand's foreign policy toward Laos vacillated between brief attempts at accommodation and stern anti-communist policies. In 1979, Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan signed a joint communiqué with Lao Premier Kaysone Phomvihane which was intended to reduce conflict and misunderstanding between the two countries. Despite some improvements in Thai-Lao relations under General Kriangsak, several shooting incidents occurred along the border and other problems continued as well.

The Continued Insurgency

In 1975, Thailand's entire eastern border became the front line in the struggle against communism. The threat from the Indochinese states was even more prominent due to the communist victories and the persistence of Thailand's own communist insurgency in the Northeast.⁷² Severe repression of the Thai leftists by Prime Minister Thanin Kraivichien's staunchly anti-communist government in 1976 increased the CPT's membership and armed collaborators as students, intellectuals, and leftist politicians fled to the jungles to escape arrest.

The CPT appeared stronger than ever, not only because of the increase in recruitment but also because the end of the wars in Laos and Vietnam had made available nearly unlimited weaponry for the CPT. Sanctuaries and camps in Laos and Cambodia, available in greater numbers after 1975, enabled the CPT to send

⁷² Despite the obvious social and economic conditions in the region which proved to be appealing to communism and separatism, the Thai government blamed Vietnam and Laos for the problems in the Northeast. See Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 348-349.

more recruits for training (by the Vietnamese and Lao) and provided refuge from the Thai military.⁷³ The end of the war in Laos also enabled the CPT to establish headquarters in Laos for the CPT United Front, to set up schools and hospitals, and to provide a transmission site for radio broadcasts (emanating from Yunnan, China) denouncing the Thai government.

In addition to supplying bases, training, and refuge for Thai communists, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP, the name adopted by the Pathet Lao after their victory) cadres infiltrated Thailand's northeast region by appearing as local Thai citizens.⁷⁴ For its part, China continued to channel its propaganda, financial resources, weapons, and supplies to the CPT via Laos, although Chinese efforts were mainly confined to the northern part of Thailand.⁷⁵

The cooperation among the various communist parties in Asia, however, gradually began to erode after 1976 as the Sino-Soviet dispute intensified. The LPRP abandoned its neutrality in the rift and began to side with Moscow. The CPT identified to a greater extent with China, and these party differences eventually spilled over into CPT-LPRP relations as the two became polarized. At one point, the CPT condemned what it considered to be Soviet revisionism and referred to the Soviets as "social imperialists."⁷⁶ This split eventually led to a pro-Vietnamese (and

⁷³ Thomas, 19.

⁷⁴ Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 347.

⁷⁵ According to Martin Stuart-Fox, the Northeast received most of its support from Vietnam via Laos, while the North was influenced more by China, although the assistance still came via Laos. See Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 346.

⁷⁶ Stuart-Fox, "Factors Influencing Relations...", 339.

hence pro-Soviet) faction breaking away from the CPT in 1979 and forming the Pak Mai (New Party), which aligned closely with Laos and Vietnam.

The divergence between the CPT and the Lao-Vietnamese alliance was readily seen in late 1976. Vietnam and Laos offered Lao troops to the CPT to help liberate Thailand. The CPT's unwillingness to accept the Lao troops brought strong criticism from Viang Chan and Hanoi; soon after, Laos began shutting off most of its assistance to the CPT.⁷⁷

Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 caused even greater damage to communist solidarity in Southeast Asia. The two communist groups in Cambodia, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge and Heng Samrin's newly installed regime (January 1979) had different foreign backers. China provided extensive support for the Khmer Rouge, while Heng Samrin relied on the Vietnamese, China's traditional rival in Southeast Asia. The LPRP and the CPT inevitably became involved in this rivalry, with the LPRP siding with Vietnam and the CPT with China. Laos' support for Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia led to the expulsion of pro-Chinese members of the CPT from Lao territory and the termination of supply routes to Thailand.⁷⁸ Thus, 1979 began the death knell of the CPT.

The demise of the communist insurgency in Thailand in the 1980s can be attributed to a combination of foreign and domestic factors.⁷⁹ In addition to the declining support from Laos and Vietnam, China also turned its back on the CPT

⁷⁷ Sarasin Viraphol, "Reflections on Thai-Lao Relations," *Asian Survey*, 25:12, December 1985, 1272.

⁷⁸ Randolph and Thompson, 62-63.

⁷⁹ For two thorough accounts of the CPT's demise, see Thomas *op. cit.* and Kerdphol *op. cit.*

when it realized that Thailand was essential for its policy of helping the Khmer Rouge against Heng Samrin's Vietnamese-backed government. Thailand became the conduit for virtually all Chinese assistance to the Khmer Rouge because most of Pol Pot's insurgents were located along the Thai-Cambodian border, even periodically taking up sanctuary inside Thai territory. From Beijing's view, intervention was necessary to stave off Vietnam's hegemony over Indochina, which, if completed, was believed to be part of the Soviet Union's "encirclement of China."

On the domestic front, the CPT had to deal with dissent among its members and an improved strategy by the Thai government. Many of the urban recruits who were brought in after 1976 were distrusted by the CPT leaders. Other CPT members aired their complaints about inequality, a lack of progress, and the strategy being implemented. The CPT's cohesion had begun to erode. Additionally, the government's new counter-insurgency strategy gradually weakened the CPT. The strategy included smaller combat units, more practical development projects, amnesty for communist defectors, and a greater emphasis on handling the insurgency through political rather than military means.⁸⁰ By the end of 1985, only about 700 armed CPT insurgents remained of the 14,000 in 1978.⁸¹ Although the insurgency had essentially ended by the mid-1980s, the fear of its resumption persisted for several years,⁸² primarily because of the continued assistance to the remaining Thai communists by Laos.

⁸⁰ Thomas, 21-22.

⁸¹ Thomas, 17.

⁸² Thailand: A Country Study, 228.

Lao Refugees

A different security concern for Thailand after 1975 was the massive influx of Lao refugees into Thailand. From 1975 until 1986, 323,244 refugees (lowland Lao and the hilltribes) fled to Thailand,⁸³ representing a population decline in Laos of approximately 10%.

As the communist government attempted to consolidate power throughout Laos in the mid-1970s, internal security was a top priority for the new regime. Numerous opponents of the communist government were sent to "re-education camps," often for an indefinite period of time. These detention camps were characterized by harsh labor, small rations, and separation from one's family.⁸⁴ The communist government's paranoia about security led to increased political repression and arrests of suspected "enemies" of the state. The repression exacerbated fear and uncertainty, which in turn led to an increase in the flow of refugees to Thailand.⁸⁵ Other factors causing the exodus were chronic food shortages, floods and droughts, and the mismanagement of the collective agriculture system.⁸⁶

⁸³ Amara Pongsapit and Noppawan Chongwattana, "The Refugee Situation in Thailand," in Supang Chantavanich and E. Bruce Reynolds, eds., Indochinese Refugees: Asylum and Resettlement (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1988), 13. Lowland Lao comprised 202,579 of the refugees, while the number of hilltribe refugees was 120,665.

⁸⁴ U.S. Committee for Refugees, Refugees from Laos: in Harm's Way (American Council for Nationalities Service, July 1986), 5.

⁸⁵ Stuart-Fox, Laos, 36.

⁸⁶ U.S. Committee for Refugees, 6.

Many of those who fled Laos from 1975-1978 left because their previous involvement with the Royal Lao Government or their ties to the United States implicated them as enemies of the state and could lead to their placement in re-education camps. From 1975 until 1978, nearly 97,000 lowland Lao fled the country. The Lao who worked for the former government and decided to flee tended to be the educated and skilled people. Between 1975 and 1985 Laos lost an estimated 90% of its trained and educated people.⁸⁷

As for the hilltribes, in 1975 alone nearly 45,000 people fled to Thailand, mainly because of their military involvement with the CIA. The hilltribes had provided members for the CIA's "secret army" and therefore had good reason to believe the communist government would retaliate. In addition to fighting against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese, the hilltribes, particularly the Hmong, helped to guide airstrikes for U.S. bombers and rescued downed American pilots.

Thailand became so overwhelmed with refugees that in September 1977 the government temporarily closed the Thai-Lao border.⁸⁸ After 1979 the composition of the refugees changed slightly, with more of the refugees being family members of those in re-education camps, ethnic Chinese or Vietnamese, and middle and lower-level civil servants who had retained for a while the positions they held with the previous government.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State, 177.

⁸⁸ Thailand: A First Asylum Country for Indochinese Refugees (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1988), 40. This action did little to stop the flow of refugees, however.

⁸⁹ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State, 168.

Most of the Lao and hilltribe refugees who fled between 1980 and 1985 left more for economic reasons than political, but Thailand continued its policy of accepting everyone as a political refugee.⁹⁰ However, in an effort to stem the flow of refugees in mid-1981, Thailand implemented a policy of "humane deterrence," whereby refugees were placed in austere camps and not allowed to resettle in third countries.⁹¹ The number of arrivals declined dramatically in 1982 (from 20,733 in 1981 to 5,019 in 1982), which prompted Thailand to change its deterrence policy and allow some resettlement in third countries. However, a huge surge in Lao and hilltribe refugees in 1984 and 1985 led to another policy change by the Thai government to reduce the flow of refugees. In January 1985 Thailand began turning away those people who attempted to cross the border. Later that year the Thai government began a screening process for Lao and hilltribe refugees to determine if they were indeed political refugees. Most of the arrivals were declared economic refugees and therefore illegal immigrants. Some were subsequently repatriated to Laos, and the flow of refugees declined steadily.

The refugee issue adversely affected Thai-Lao relations from 1975 until the late 1980s mainly because Laos was unhappy that Thailand allowed Lao insurgents to take up refuge near the border.⁹² Several poorly organized and relatively weak anti-communist groups comprised of Lao exiles and refugees were formed soon after the Pathet Lao victory and operated out of Thailand. Some of these groups carried out sabotage and other insurgent activities with the help of local Thai officials and

⁹⁰ Stuart-Fox, Laos, 194.

⁹¹ U.S. Committee for Refugees, 7.

⁹² Thailand: A First Asylum Country for Indochinese Refugees, 36.

military commanders, but apparently this was done without Thailand's central government playing any direct role.⁹³ A significant percentage of the insurgents consisted of members of the Hmong hilltribe who were a part of the CIA's secret army during the Second Indochina War and had become refugees soon after the Pathet Lao victory.

The overcrowded refugee camps provided a convenient pool of potential recruits and training camps for insurgents infiltrating Laos.⁹⁴ The Thai government made little or no effort to contain the activities of these insurgents who crossed the border to carry out attacks in Laos and returned to the camps in Thailand afterwards for a safehaven. Because of the lack of restraint on the insurgents and the direct involvement of some local Thai officials, Laos accused Thailand of attempting to destabilize Laos and overthrow its communist government.

Thailand's security concern was compounded by the fact that spies from Laos infiltrated Thailand by posing as refugees.⁹⁵ In one instance, Laos reportedly deployed "hunter killers" into refugee camps to assassinate dissident Lao leaders.⁹⁶

Repatriation was seen as the best solution to the overwhelming number of refugees, and therefore in 1979 Thailand and Laos reached an agreement to handle illegal Lao immigrants and cooperate on voluntary repatriation.⁹⁷ The process did

⁹³ Stuart-Fox, Laos, 194. It is likely, though, that the Thai government could have put a stop to the practice.

⁹⁴ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State, 168.

⁹⁵ Pongsapit and Chongwattana, 39 and 57.

⁹⁶ Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Asia and Pacific (FBIS-APA) 84-121, June 21, 1984, J2.

⁹⁷ Forced repatriation had begun, however, by General Kriangsak in June 1979, although the policy was quickly abandoned after U.N. appeals and offers by third

not go smoothly, as Laos caused numerous delays throughout the early to mid-1980s. Much to the ire of Thailand, the delays contradicted Laos' stated policy of welcoming back all Lao who were not connected to the insurgent movement. From 1975 to early 1986, only 1.1% of all the lowland Lao refugees in Thailand and 0.6% of the hilltribe Lao were repatriated to Laos.⁹⁸

The infiltration of spies, the high costs and logistical problems of hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees, and the lack of cooperation from Laos all exacerbated the problems in Thai-Lao relations. The refugees also created problems for Thailand in trying to get commitments from the U.N. and third countries for funding the camps and resettling refugees.

Laos' Special Relationship with Vietnam

For Thailand in the 1970s and 1980s, the most threatening attribute of Laos was its association with Vietnam, known as the "special relationship." Historically, Thailand and Vietnam have been rivals for influence and control over peninsular Southeast Asia, and often Laos and Cambodia were the pawns in their rivalry. Hence, Thai-Lao relations must be looked at not only bilaterally but also in a regional context. According to Sarasin Viraphol:

The relative strategic positions of these two countries [Thailand and Laos] of disproportionate population sizes have invariably drawn their bilateral relationship into the larger considerations of regional power rivalry.⁹⁹

countries to settle more refugees. See Thailand: A First Asylum Country for Indochinese Refugees, 45-47.

⁹⁸ Pongsapit and Chongwattana, 14.

⁹⁹ Viraphol, 1263.

Even without the numerous bilateral issues plaguing Thai-Lao relations after 1975, Laos's alignment with Vietnam assured that Thai-Lao relations would be strained because of the historic rivalry. Laos had cast its lot with Vietnam and could not be neutral in any Thai-Vietnamese disputes.

The shared origins of the communist parties in Laos and Vietnam and their close cooperation during the Indochina Wars facilitated the alliance formed after both parties took power. The "special relationship" between Laos and Vietnam, however, was not formally established until the Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship in 1977. The treaty codified what had already been practice, and that was to allow Vietnam to be involved in virtually every aspect of Laos's affairs. The treaty legitimized the role that Vietnam came to play in Laos, including the deployment of Vietnamese troops. Much of the need for the alliance was attributed to Thailand's confrontational behavior towards Laos. According to the joint communiqué announcing the 1977 treaty:

...the Thailand administration has carried out a hostile policy toward Vietnam and Laos: fostering emigrated Lao reactionaries, interfering in Laos' internal affairs and violating Laos' territory, exerting economic pressures upon Laos, carrying out a policy of repression and terror against Vietnamese residents.¹⁰⁰

Vietnam's extensive involvement with and influence over Laos led to Thailand's claim that the main cause of Thai-Lao tensions was the Vietnamese influence, including Laos's policy towards Thailand.¹⁰¹ Thailand strongly opposed Laos' solidarity with Vietnam and eventually with the Heng Samrin government of

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 130-131.

¹⁰¹ Viraphol, 1264.

Cambodia. Moreover, Thailand argued that Laos allowed issues outside of their bilateral realm to negatively affect their relations (such as the Cambodian crisis).¹⁰²

As discussed earlier, Vietnam assisted the Thai insurgents in the Northeast in a number of ways, including arms, training, and supplies; therefore, the Vietnamese were an indirect threat to Thailand. What made Vietnam a much greater threat than Laos to Thailand was Vietnam's massive military, which reached over one million men in 1980. Vietnam posed a direct threat to Thailand's security even earlier when allegations surfaced regarding Vietnam's plan to invade Thailand's Northeast in early 1977. A former Pathet Lao officer who defected to Thailand made these allegations, which were not without some substantiation: in May 1976 the Vietnamese reportedly mobilized 60,000-70,000 troops along the Mekong River for the planned invasion, which was subsequently canceled.¹⁰³

The number of Vietnamese troops deployed in Laos was estimated at 40,000-60,000 by 1979, although many of them were based in the northern region of Laos to protect the country from Chinese incursions and therefore not aimed at Thailand. An additional reason for the placement of Vietnamese troops was the Hmong resistance to the communist government. Many of the Hmong who did not flee as refugees stayed in Laos (or operated between Thailand and Laos) to participate in the continuing insurgency. Laos's inability to eliminate the Hmong rebels became another justification for the Vietnamese troops in Laos. Regardless of their intent, the

¹⁰² Viraphol, 1265.

¹⁰³ Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 116.

presence of Vietnamese forces in Laos proved to be a destabilizing element in Thai-Lao relations.¹⁰⁴

The Vietnamese troop deployment was not the only aspect of Vietnamese penetration in Laos which disturbed Thailand. Vietnamese party cadres were attached to virtually every Lao government ministry, although one major exception was foreign affairs.¹⁰⁵ Over 6,000 Vietnamese advisors were assigned to government offices in Laos. The result was that Thailand perceived Laos to be a puppet of Vietnam and both countries posed a military threat to Thailand. From the Lao perspective, Thailand was seen as collaborating with China to destabilize and possibly overthrow the governments of Laos and Cambodia¹⁰⁶ because of their association with Vietnam. Thailand and China maintained support for Lao dissident groups as long as Laos kept its close relationship with Vietnam, but one side effect of this policy was that it justified the presence of Vietnamese troops in Laos.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ FBIS-EAS-88-234, December 6, 1988, 51.

¹⁰⁵ While no Vietnamese advisors were officially attached to the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the degree of autonomy that Laos had is questionable. Laos maintained diplomatic relations with some countries, such as the United States, which Vietnam did not. This can be perceived as Lao autonomy in foreign affairs, but it can also be seen as benefiting Vietnam in that Laos might act as a surrogate and indirect channel for Vietnam to maintain relations with these countries.

¹⁰⁶ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State, 209.

¹⁰⁷ Khien Theeravit, "The Conflict in Indochina--A Thai Perspective," in Yoshikazu Sakamoto, ed., Asia Militarization and Regional Conflict (Tokyo: The United Nations University, 1988), 128-129.

Laos's Connection with the Cambodian Crisis

Laos's association with Vietnam damaged Thai-Lao relations even further in December 1978 when Vietnam invaded Cambodia. Vietnam then proceeded to oust the Khmer Rouge government and established a pro-Vietnamese government in January 1979. After Pol Pot was driven from power, he and his forces took up refuge in western Cambodia along the Thai border. Thousands of Vietnamese troops remained in Cambodia even though their goal had been achieved. For the Thai government this situation was unacceptable and highly dangerous. Vietnam's propensity to use force for achieving its goals became the major source of friction between the Indochinese states and Thailand and its fellow ASEAN members.¹⁰⁸

Laos quickly recognized the Heng Samrin government, thus demonstrating its solidarity with Vietnam. Some of the Vietnamese troops which invaded Cambodia had previously been stationed in southern Laos,¹⁰⁹ but Laos was not involved in the decision to overthrow Pol Pot. Despite not having an active role in the invasion, Thailand implicated Laos because of its alliance with and support for Vietnam. During the Prem administration (1980-1988), the prime minister said that "Laos constituted part of the Cambodian problem," leading two scholars to conclude that "...the Lao insurgents operating from Thailand would [thus] receive the full support of the Thai government...."¹¹⁰ Thailand's punishment of Laos by restricting the flow of goods (see the later section on trade) also hurt Vietnam.

¹⁰⁸ Viraphol, 1263.

¹⁰⁹ Dommen, Laos: Keystone of Indochina, 129.

¹¹⁰ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 71.

To fully understand why the Cambodian crisis hurt Thai-Lao relations, it is necessary to describe the conflict in detail. Cambodia was the primary foreign policy issue for the Thai government, but it also was Southeast Asia's most divisive and critical issue. Cambodia became in the 1980s what Laos had been in the 1960s: the battleground for power rivalries in Southeast Asia. Thailand's interest in Cambodia was to ensure that an independent, non-hostile government existed next door, but also to keep Vietnamese-style communism away from its borders. The Thai government perceived that Vietnam intended to not merely drive out the Khmer Rouge from power, but to establish complete dominance over Cambodia.¹¹¹

Thailand claimed that the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia affected it in several ways, and therefore Thailand's political involvement in the dispute was legitimate. First, Thailand asserted that the invasion violated the United Nations Charter and international law, which meant that it was a concern to all members of the U.N. The use of force against a weaker state, according to Thailand, should not be ignored for fear of Vietnam's action setting a precedent for the future.¹¹² Second, the presence of approximately 180,000 Vietnamese troops in Cambodia threatened Thailand's sovereignty and territorial integrity, particularly when they crossed into Thai territory while pursuing Khmer Rouge rebels who sought refuge across the border.¹¹³ The traditional buffer zone between Thailand and Vietnam was erased with Vietnamese troops in Laos and Cambodia, and the Thai military was

¹¹¹ Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1985), 9.

¹¹² Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict, 3.

¹¹³ Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict, 3.

exceedingly concerned about Vietnam going beyond Thailand's "natural defense perimeter," which is a mountain range dividing Vietnam from the rest of the peninsula.¹¹⁴

Third, Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs believed that Vietnam intended to establish an Indochinese federation which would include Thailand's northeastern provinces.¹¹⁵ At one point Vietnam's Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong, explained to the French that Thailand's northeastern provinces rightfully belonged to Laos,¹¹⁶ which naturally heightened Thai concerns about a Vietnamese invasion. Vietnamese reassurances to the contrary¹¹⁷ did little to quell the fear in Thailand that an invasion could be forthcoming. Fourth, the large influx of Cambodian refugees compounded the already burdensome level of refugees from Laos. Therefore, Thailand sought a stable environment in Cambodia to prevent the inflow of refugees.

The Khmer Rouge held numerous towns near the Thai-Cambodian border and continued their fighting from there. This location proved to be a convenient sanctuary from Vietnamese and Heng Samrin troops. However, Vietnamese troops often pursued the Khmer Rouge into Thai territory, leading to skirmishes with the Thai

¹¹⁴ Steinberg, 390.

¹¹⁵ The idea for an Indochinese federation first began in 1939 at the Indochinese Communist Party's Central Committee plenum. The Central Committee called for the establishment of a federal Indochinese government. After the ICP split up into separate national parties, the idea for an Indochinese federation was no longer formally pursued. This did not, however, put an end to rumors that the idea was still alive in the 1970s. For the Thai government's perspective on the issue, see The Kampuchean Problem in Thai Perspective: Positions and Viewpoints held by Foreign Ministry Officials and Thai Academics (Bangkok: Indochina Studies Program, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1985), 27-29.

¹¹⁶ Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict, 28.

¹¹⁷ Thailand: A Country Study, 236.

military. Vietnamese troops also sought to eliminate infiltration routes along the border, which meant occupying parts of Thailand.¹¹⁸ Additionally, the Vietnamese hoped to intimidate the Thai military and weaken the government's uncompromising position towards Cambodia.¹¹⁹ Thailand responded with counterattacks to secure its eastern frontier, and some generals even advocated offensives against Vietnamese bases along the Cambodian border.¹²⁰ These incidents between the Thai and Vietnamese militaries reinforced Bangkok's belief that the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia constituted a direct threat to the sovereignty of Thailand.

Thailand's perceived threat from Vietnam provided the impetus for an informal alliance with China. For China, Vietnam's occupation and control of Cambodia meant that its traditional rival in the region had spread its influence even further, and because Vietnam was aligned with the Soviet Union¹²¹, Beijing saw the Soviets advancing their alleged "encirclement of China." China launched an attack in February 1979 against Vietnam in response to Hanoi's overthrow of Pol Pot, but Chinese troops were withdrawn completely by mid-March.

Having failed to achieve its intended goal of "teaching Vietnam a lesson," China realized that its best chance for returning the Khmer Rouge to power was through cooperation with Thailand. Logistics alone dictated Beijing's strategy in the

¹¹⁸ Thailand: A Country Study, 236.

¹¹⁹ Surachai Sirikrai, "Thai Perceptions of China and Japan," Contemporary Southeast Asia, 12:3, December 1990, 253.

¹²⁰ Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict, 41.

¹²¹ Vietnam and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in November 1978, leading many to believe that the Soviet Union was at least aware of Hanoi's plans to invade Cambodia the following month.

sense that if the Chinese wanted to assist Pol Pot's forces, virtually all of the aid would have to flow through Thailand, since both Laos and Cambodia were under Vietnamese influence. After determining that the fate of the Khmer Rouge was far more important than assisting Thailand's communist movement, the Chinese dropped their support for the CPT and cooperated with Bangkok in attempts at removing the Vietnamese from Cambodia.

The foreign entanglements in Cambodia were further complicated by the relationship between Laos and China. Laos had moved to the Soviet side of the Sino-Soviet divide, but the Lao-Chinese relationship was not significantly harmed by Laos's alliance with Vietnam in 1977. Before China attacked Vietnam in February-March 1979, Laos attempted to retain at least a minimal level of neutrality.¹²² After China used Lao territory to launch its foray against Vietnam their relations deteriorated rapidly. In March 1979 Laos abandoned its soft stance toward China and began making stern anti-Chinese statements.¹²³

The Lao government condemned the informal Thai-Chinese alliance which assisted the Khmer Rouge rebels and sought to destabilize the Vietnamese-backed government in Cambodia. Laos claimed that Thailand's involvement with China only caused greater suffering for the Cambodian people.¹²⁴ Additionally, the Lao government leveled accusations that Thailand and China were colluding to help anti-

¹²² Having such a colossal neighbor to the north probably left Laos with little choice but to avoid antagonizing China. And because Laos had little chance of preventing Chinese troops from using Lao territory to attack Vietnam as in 1979, it is no surprise that Laos sought to prevent hostilities with China.

¹²³ Stuart-Fox, *Laos*, 186-187.

¹²⁴ Viraphol, 1265-1266.

communist insurgents infiltrate Laos in an attempt to undermine the Lao regime. The so-called "Lanna Division" of China's army deployed along the Sino-Lao border consisted of Lao refugees who were recruited and trained by Thailand and China and sent to infiltrate Laos.¹²⁵

Thailand received diplomatic support from its fellow ASEAN members, although some ASEAN states expressed their concern over the growing influence of China in the region through its close cooperation with Thailand. Initially Indonesia and Malaysia indicated that they could tolerate a Vietnamese presence in Cambodia on the condition that some troops were withdrawn and a broader government was established.¹²⁶ The differences between the ASEAN states were reconciled in June 1980 when Vietnamese troops crossed into Thai territory;¹²⁷ thereafter the ASEAN states followed Thailand's lead in the Cambodian dispute because of its "front-line status," meaning Thailand was the most threatened state due to Vietnamese troops on its borders. The other ASEAN members realized the importance of solidarity with Thailand if they wanted to keep the front line from moving towards them. Hence, they reached a consensus and demanded the complete withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and the self-determination of the Cambodian people.¹²⁸ One scholar described the outcome of Thailand's coalition-building as ASEAN providing

¹²⁵ See Viraphol, 1273, and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, "Thai-Lao Relations: A Lao View," Asian Survey, 25:12, December 1985, 1246.

¹²⁶ Thailand: A Country Study, 219.

¹²⁷ Thailand: A Country Study, 219.

¹²⁸ Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict, 24.

political support to the Khmer resistance groups while China supplied them militarily.¹²⁹

Contrary to China, ASEAN, and the Khmer resistance groups who viewed the Cambodian crisis as an international conflict caused by Vietnam's invasion, Vietnam maintained that the problem was merely a civil war.¹³⁰ Vietnam argued that its troops would remain in Cambodia until two conditions were met: 1) the Khmer Rouge were eliminated and not allowed to return to power, and 2) China must no longer present a threat to Vietnam through its influence in Cambodia.¹³¹

Vietnam developed a close relationship with the Soviet Union throughout the Cambodian crisis in order to counter-balance China's involvement. One month prior to the December 1978 invasion Moscow and Hanoi signed a Treaty of Friendship, which gave the Vietnamese the confidence to carry out the invasion in the event that China retaliated. The Soviet Union's interests in Cambodia were two-fold. First, the Pol Pot regime was seen as a Chinese surrogate.¹³² The Soviet embassy was attacked in 1975 when the Khmer Rouge took over, and Pol Pot severed diplomatic relations between the two. Second, the Soviet leaders assumed the conflict would cause Beijing to divert some of its troops away from the heavily armed Sino-Soviet border towards the south.¹³³ The Thai government feared that the Soviets' support

¹²⁹ Theeravit, 122.

¹³⁰ Pierre Lizee, "The Evolution of Great Power Involvement in Cambodia," in David Wurfel and Bruce Burton, eds., Southeast Asia in the New World Order: The Political Economy of a Dynamic Region (Houndsmill, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996), 225.

¹³¹ Thailand's Policy Towards the Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict, 20 and 64.

¹³² Theeravit, 126.

¹³³ Theeravit, 127.

for Vietnam would result in both countries rekindling ties with the CPT in retaliation for Chinese assistance being funneled to the Khmer Rouge through Thailand's eastern region.¹³⁴

The historical rivalries and alliances involved in the Cambodian situation inevitably affected Thai-Lao relations. In every aspect of the crisis Thailand and Laos fell on opposing sides. Laos adhered closely to Vietnam's stance on Cambodia and sought to incorporate the Cambodian issue into Thai-Lao bilateral relations, while Thailand aligned itself with China and the Khmer resistance groups, and intended to avoid discussing the Cambodian crisis in the context of Thai-Lao relations.¹³⁵

Considering the priority status given to the Cambodian crisis by the Thai government, it is not surprising that Thailand retaliated against Laos over its support for Vietnam's actions in Cambodia. Thailand unilaterally closed the border at various times in the 1970s and 1980s, and incidents involving armed conflict between the two countries were a common occurrence. The seemingly endless stalemate in Cambodia presented an insurmountable barrier to improved Thai-Lao relations despite proclamations from both countries that more amicable relations were desired. The Cambodian situation was still deadlocked during the Prem administration, and it was not until after General Chatichai became prime minister that the crisis showed signs of being resolved.

¹³⁴ Yos Santasombat, "Leadership and Security in Modern Thai Politics," in Mohammed Ayoob and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, eds., Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asia Experience (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), 92.

¹³⁵ Viraphol, 1266.

Thai-Lao Border Wars

Thailand and Laos share a 1,090 mile (1,754 kilometer) border, much of it defined by the Mekong River. The boundary was established by a series a treaties between the 1860s and the early 1900s. Their common border has been in dispute throughout the 20th century, but it became especially contentious in the 1970s and 1980s, including two fiercely fought border battles in 1984 and 1988. As discussed earlier, Thailand believes that it was wrongly deprived of Thai territories in Laos and Cambodia by the French, so in the 1940s Thailand capitalized on France's weakened position and took by force several areas which it had conceded in the 1904 and 1907 Franco-Siamese treaties.

After the irredentism claims by Prime Minister Phibul's government in the 1940s, the Thai-Lao border usually was not a top priority despite several undemarcated points along the border. Thailand's interest in demarcating the border during the 1960s and 1970s increased as Thailand's influence in Laos declined.¹³⁶ For instance, there were no calls by Thailand for a redemarcation when the pro-Thai General Phoumi Nosavan government was in power, but Thailand's demands for settling the issue were more frequent when the neutralist Souvanna Phouma governments held power.¹³⁷ Border incidents occurred during the neutralist periods, but the border issue did not become a major concern to Bangkok until 1975 when the communist government in Laos periodically used the border dispute for propaganda

¹³⁶ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 68.

¹³⁷ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 68.

reasons to arouse anti-Thai sentiments.¹³⁸ Among the explanations given by Thailand for the sudden politicization of the border by Laos was that the Lao government sought to distract its citizens from the country's domestic problems (particularly the economic difficulties).¹³⁹

Numerous minor incidents occurred along the border in the 1970s. Often these were precipitated by the narrowing of the Mekong River during the dry season, which obscured each country's navigational rights. In 1979 the two countries established the Thai-Lao Border Committee at the Viang Chan (Laos) and Nong Khai (Thailand) provincial level to regulate joint activities between the Thai and Lao people who lived across the river from each other. The committee sought to promote mutual understanding between the local authorities in Thailand and Laos, but it was unable to prevent disputes from arising over islands, sand bars, navigation rights, and shooting incidents.

The border dispute reached a crisis level in 1984 with the "Three Villages Incident." In June 1984 Thailand's military took control of Ban Mai, Ban Savang, and Ban Kang, collectively known as the "three villages," following some skirmishes with Lao security forces. Thailand quickly declared that these three villages were a part of Thailand, setting off a complicated struggle for rights to the villages. By all accounts the area, containing between 1,000-1,200 people, had not been fully administered by either country before the ensuing border battle, nor did it appear to have any strategic value before 1984.

¹³⁸ Viraphol, 1267.

¹³⁹ Viraphol, 1267.

Different versions of how the situation developed into a crisis have been offered, but what appears to have prompted Thailand's sudden interest in the area was that the three villages were alleged to be a base area for anti-Thai CPT activities. A Thai construction crew was building a strategic road which was supposed to pass through the three villages and connect with another Thai village. The Thai Third Army Region reported that Lao troops seized the three villages in April 1984 to stop construction of the road.¹⁴⁰ In May Thai troops went into the area and were attacked by Lao forces; the following month Thai troops returned and drove out the Lao military.¹⁴¹ Several days of fighting between the militaries ensued, including exchanges of mortars and heavy artillery. Because the Thai attack on the three villages occurred two days after Thai Army Commander-in-Chief General Arthit Kamlang-ek visited China, Laos believed it was part of the Sino-Thai collusion against Laos.¹⁴² Moreover, the Lao government declared that the aggression demonstrated Thailand's expansionist plans.¹⁴³

The three villages lie in a mountainous area with a very complex topography which makes defining the border problematic. Laos claims the three villages are located in its Sayaboury Province, while Thailand asserts that they belong to its province of Uttaradit. The main question in regard to the border demarcation is the watershed between the Chao Phraya River system and the Mekong River. Both

¹⁴⁰ FBIS-Asia and Pacific (FBIS-APA) 84-103, May 25, 1984, J1.

¹⁴¹ Hai Xia, "Viet Nam Behind Border Dispute," Beijing Review, 27:41, October 8, 1984, 15.

¹⁴² Ngaosyvathn, "Thai-Lao Relations: A Lao View," 1245.

¹⁴³ Facts and Data on Lao-Thai Relations in the Past Ten Years (1975-85), 36.

countries agree that the watershed forms the boundary, but where exactly the watershed lies is the center of the controversy.

A British and French treaty in 1896 said the Mekong River basin belonged to the French territories of Laos, and the Chao Phraya River basin belonged to Siam. The Houei River originates in Laos and flows through the three villages and eventually into the Mekong. A second river, the Houei Phoune, flows through a Thai village and connects with the Chao Phraya River. These two basins form the watershed, but it is difficult to define the watershed due to the seasonal flow of the rivers in the area.

Negotiations for a settlement proved fruitless, as they could not agree on which maps to use, at what level the talks should be held, and how to proceed in determining the boundary. Moreover, each side accused the other of moving border markers during the negotiations. The Lao government did not want to negotiate the fate of the three villages, insisting they belonged to Laos and that the pre-1984 border be restored,¹⁴⁴ which meant the villages would not be demilitarized (of Lao troops). The Lao government also rejected the formation of a joint border commission to survey and demarcate the border. Laos believed such a commission would set a dangerous precedent and could lead to demands for redefining the entire border established from 1904 to 1907.¹⁴⁵ A third demand was that the issue be handled at the national level. Finally, Thailand was asked to admit its mistake, withdraw all of

¹⁴⁴ Arthur J. Dommen, "Laos in 1984: The Year of the Thai Border," Asian Survey, 25:1, January 1985, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Ngaosyvathn, "Thai-Lao Relations: A Lao View," 1258.

its forces from the area, and pay compensation for the damages to lives and property.¹⁴⁶

Thailand opposed all the conditions set forth by Viang Chan. Instead, it sought a mutual withdrawal from the three villages and the creation of a joint technical commission to survey and demarcate the border. Thailand required that the border dispute be resolved on a technical basis for fear of Laos turning the issue into a political one.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Thailand wanted the border problem settled at the local level instead of the national level that Laos demanded.

The maps used during the negotiations produced additional disagreement. Laos came armed with its 1907 Franco-Siamese Treaty map and also referred to a map from 1891 given by King Chulalongkorn to the king of Laos. The Thai delegation referred to a 1978 map which they claim offered a larger scale view, used aerial photography for better accuracy than the early 20th-century map, and showed the three villages on the Chao Phraya River side of the watershed. However, the Thai map was produced by the U.S. Army and had not included either Thailand or Laos in drawing it up.¹⁴⁸

Even though Thailand withdrew its forces in October, both sides lacked good faith during the various negotiations. The Lao delegation became frustrated with what it perceived as an official Thai delegation sitting at the talks while the real

¹⁴⁶ Viraphol, 1268-1269.

¹⁴⁷ Viraphol, 1269.

¹⁴⁸ According to Laos, the U.S. Army map presented by Thailand has a disclaimer on it which says the map has no legal value for the border. See Ngaosyvathn, "Thai-Lao Relations: A Lao View," 1244.

authority behind the scenes was the Thai military.¹⁴⁹ At one point the Lao delegation claimed their Thai counterparts recommended that Laos approach General Arthit first in the hope of reaching a settlement.¹⁵⁰ A Lao press report criticized Thailand's handling of the three villages negotiations by saying:

The announced troop withdrawal did not mean that Thailand sincerely wants to resolve the problem through peaceful means and that it wants to be a good friend of Laos. The announcement was intended to deceive other people. If it really wants to peacefully resolve the problem, why did it not do so while the Lao delegation was in Bangkok to attend two rounds of talks with Thailand? It is clear that Thailand is not sincere.¹⁵¹

Laos was criticized for sending troops into the three villages after Thailand withdrew its forces in October.¹⁵² Laos allegedly used the negotiations to hurt Thailand's standing in the international community, to destabilize the Thai government, and to create disunity in Thai society.¹⁵³ According to one reporter, the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs "accused [Viang Chan] of interfering in Thai internal affairs, creating divisions between the Thai Government and people, and maintaining an atmosphere which has not been conducive to re-establishing friendship between the two countries."¹⁵⁴ After the bilateral talks failed, Laos submitted the dispute to

¹⁴⁹ Ngaosyvathn, "Thai-Lao Relations: A Lao View," 1258.

¹⁵⁰ Ngaosyvathn, "Thai-Lao Relations: A Lao View," 1257.

¹⁵¹ FBIS-Asia and Pacific (FBIS-APA) 84-213, November 1, 1984, I2.

¹⁵² Fighting occurred sporadically in the three villages area even through 1985, consisting mainly of mortar and rocket exchanges. Just prior to the withdrawal of Thai troops from the three villages in October 1984, the Thai army was put on alert for full-scale war. See Rodney Tasker, "Tension on the Border," Far Eastern Economic Review, August 15, 1985, 28; and Hai Xia, 15.

¹⁵³ Viraphol, 1268.

¹⁵⁴ Tasker, 28.

the United Nations Security Council. Not coincidentally, according to Bangkok, this was concomitant with Thailand's quest for a seat on the Security Council.¹⁵⁵ Laos attempted to block Thailand's entry into the Security Council, but the Council saw the move as a Vietnamese initiative and went ahead with granting the seat to Thailand.¹⁵⁶

Thailand also condemned Vietnam for its alleged role in the border dispute. Vietnam was blamed for escalating the dispute into fighting and for being the source of the allegations that the border incident was a Chinese plot.¹⁵⁷ Additionally, it was clear to the Thai government that Vietnam hoped to distract attention away from the Cambodian crisis by having Laos raise the border issue at the U.N. and attempt to prevent Thailand from gaining a seat on the Security Council. A statement issued by the Thai government said, "Vietnam and its client states [Laos and Cambodia] are determined to do everything they can to destroy Thailand's good reputation and to de-emphasize the importance of the Kampuchean problem."¹⁵⁸ A solution to the three villages problem proved to be elusive, and it continues to be so at the time of this writing.

Not long after the three villages crisis had subsided, an even more violent border battle occurred. Thailand and Laos fought from December 1987 until February 1988 over an 80 square kilometer area between Laos' Sayaboury Province and Thailand's Phitsanuloke Province. The battle over the disputed area, simply

¹⁵⁵ Dommen, "Laos in 1984," 119.

¹⁵⁶ Viraphol, 1269.

¹⁵⁷ Hai Xia, 15.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Tasker, 28.

known as Ban (Village) Rom Klao, began with Thai artillery bombardments and air strikes against Lao troops, and in the end the numbers of casualties and wounded were high on both sides: 103 Thai soldiers killed, 802 wounded; 340 Lao troops killed, 257 wounded.¹⁵⁹ Within the first few weeks of fighting, Laos claimed that the Thai military fired chemical weapons on December 27.¹⁶⁰ These reports, however, were denied by the Thai government and have never been substantiated.

The origins of the dispute over Ban Rom Klao are still murky. Some accounts say that the battle occurred due to illegal teak logging by a Thai logging company.¹⁶¹ Allegedly the company stopped bribing a local Lao militia and instead paid Thai paramilitary units. Laos moved in to halt the logging, which prompted Thailand's Third Army Region to intervene on behalf of the loggers.¹⁶² Laos's version is that Thailand's Third Army Region Commander, General Siri Thiwapan, initiated the fighting because of his association with a timber trader in Uttaradit Province. Laos maintained that he guaranteed a 100 million baht profit to a Thai logging company and therefore needed to occupy Ban Rom Klao for its timber.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Martin Stuart-Fox, "Laos in 1988: In Pursuit of New Directions," Asian Survey, 29:1, 1989, 84.

¹⁶⁰ FBIS-EAS-87-249, December 29, 1987, 36.

¹⁶¹ In an interview the researcher had with General Siri Thiwapan, who was the commander of the 3rd Army Region at the time of the battle, General Siri denied that there were any logging companies involved at the time. He asserted that Laos sent two battalions to attack Ban Rom Klao and that this was not the first time that fighting occurred over the area. Personal interview. Bangkok, Thailand, June 6, 1996.

¹⁶² Stuart-Fox, "Laos in 1988," 83-84.

¹⁶³ FBIS-EAS-87-247, December 24, 1987, 18.

In addition to the logging scandal, other reasons for the border fighting in 1987-1988 have been offered. Thailand claimed that Lao aggression occurred because a group of Hmong who fought on behalf of Thailand and the U.S. during the Second Indochina War settled in the Ban Rom Klao area. They were regarded by Laos as being anti-communist.¹⁶⁴ Thailand also argued that Vietnam had ulterior motives for instigating the dispute: it planned to occupy Thailand's northeastern provinces, Hanoi did not want amicable Thai-Lao relations, and Hanoi sought to divert attention away from Cambodia.¹⁶⁵ Another possible factor behind the violence was that Thailand's military sought to prevent a reduction of its budget. The parliament threatened to cut military spending in light of the early stages of a Vietnamese troop withdrawal from Laos towards the end of 1987.¹⁶⁶

The controversy over Ban Rom Klao, like the three villages conflict, derives from differing interpretations of the 1907 Franco-Siamese Treaty. The argument is over which tributary of the Heuang River forms the boundary.

Tensions ran high during the border conflict, and press reports in both countries were very critical of the other. For instance, a radio broadcast on February 4, 1988, by Thailand's National Security Council condescendingly spoke about the Lao and Ban Rom Klao by saying, "The Lao are worth nothing and suppose that we gave them Ban Rom Klao...and say two jars of padak (pungent shrimp paste). They really would not know how to deal with them."¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, a cease-fire was

¹⁶⁴ FBIS-EAS-87-247, December 24, 1987, 23.

¹⁶⁵ FBIS-EAS-87-247, December 24, 1987, 23.

¹⁶⁶ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 76-77.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 17.

arranged on February 19, 1988, by Laos's military commander General Sisavat Keobounphan and Thailand's Army Commander-in-Chief General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, but only after two secret visits to Laos by Thailand's former prime minister General Kriangsak Chomanan paved the way for a truce.

When both sides reached a cease-fire, they withdrew their forces three kilometers from the area. General Chaovalit said, "In the future, force will not be used to settle differences. I affirm to the Thai people the results of this meeting [about the truce] lay the basis for a changing of face, a new building of Thai and Laotian history."¹⁶⁸ After the cease-fire, the negotiations failed to reach an agreement. Laos proposed developing Ban Rom Klao jointly by both militaries and resolving only the dispute over that village. Thailand, however, sought to address the entire Thai-Lao border.

The end of the border fighting in 1988 should not be seen as a turning point in Thai-Lao relations. While they renounced military solutions to settle their differences regarding the border, no other significant changes in their relations occurred. The secretary-general of Thailand's National Security Council at the time, Suwit Suttanukul, said in an interview that the Ban Rom Klao incident was not a turning point and that the situation had no significant meaning.¹⁶⁹ General Siri, who commanded the Third Army during the fighting and was involved in the peace process, acknowledged that Thai-Lao relations did not improve before General Chatichai became prime minister.¹⁷⁰ General Siri's point was confirmed by former

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 77.

¹⁶⁹ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁷⁰ General Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

acting Foreign Minister (under General Kriangsak) Wong Pholykorn, who made secret trips with Kriangsak to Laos in order to prepare the 1988 cease-fire agreement.¹⁷¹

Thai-Lao Trade

Because Laos is landlocked, it has relied heavily on Thailand for the import and export of goods. The tensions that arose between the two countries after the communist takeover of Laos in 1975 often led Thailand to close the border unilaterally or constrict the number of openings. These periodic border closings, while only temporary, crippled an already fragile Lao economy, caused severe shortages of consumer goods, and created numerous hardships for the Lao people.¹⁷² Thailand justified the border closings because of the occasional shelling of Thai territory by Laos and the numerous armed confrontations which occurred between the two countries' militaries and police. Thailand also cited the frequent attacks on Thai patrol boats along the Mekong River as a reason for closing the border.¹⁷³ Laos attempted to invoke international law by claiming that while the border was closed, Thailand was violating the Barcelona Convention of 1921 for the transit of goods of a landlocked state.

¹⁷¹ Wong Pholykorn. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok. Mr. Wong emphasized the importance of General Kriangsak's role in the late 1970s in setting the groundwork for future improvements in Thai-Lao relations. Mr. Wong himself was instrumental in the efforts with Laos through his work as the permanent secretary of the Foreign Ministry and later as acting foreign minister. Their plans came to a halt, however, because of Kriangsak's resignation in early 1980.

¹⁷² Stuart-Fox, Laos, 190.

¹⁷³ Viraphol, 1271.

When General Prem became prime minister after General Kriangsak in 1980, the border problems became more intense and frequent. A shooting incident along the frontier led to the closing of the border in July 1980. Thailand argued that Vietnam had a hand in the incident. However, Laos retorted that the closing of the border was simply part of the Thai-Chinese collusion to weaken Indochina.¹⁷⁴ The periodic border closures by General Prem's government shut off most trade between Thailand and Laos.

Thailand incurred the wrath of Laos in other ways related to the border and trade. Beginning in 1956 a state enterprise called the Thailand Express Transport Organization (ETO) operated as the sole carrier of goods going between Thailand and Laos. This monopoly was estimated to have driven up the cost of shipping goods from Bangkok to Viang Chan four-fold compared to what it would have cost from other carriers.¹⁷⁵ Laos made frequent requests to Thailand to reduce the high transport costs of ETO but to no avail. The tax rate on Lao products to and through Thailand ranged from 40% to 80%; moreover, bribes needed to be paid to Thai police and customs officials to get goods through.

Numerous other restrictions applied by Thailand to Lao exports similarly hampered the flow of goods. The cumulative effect of these policies, when combined with periodic border closings, was that the amount of Laos's imports and exports that passed through Thailand dropped drastically from 1980 to 1984. In 1980, 63% of Laos's exports and 81% of its imports transited through Thailand, but in 1984

¹⁷⁴ Stuart-Fox, Laos, 192.

¹⁷⁵ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 34.

only 7% and 26%, respectively, passed through the kingdom.¹⁷⁶ The significance of this decline for Laos was that it forced Laos to find alternative routes for its imports and exports. Those routes (mainly through Vietnam) were typically less developed and convenient, and more expensive, thereby placing greater burdens on an already weak economy and poorly developed transportation infrastructure.

Among the most controversial aspects of the border and trade dispute was the promulgation of a list of 273 "strategic goods" which were prohibited by the Thai government from being exported to Laos (special permits were required). The ban was imposed in 1975 for security reasons. The Thai government thought that Laos should not have these items because they enhanced Laos's military capabilities. Among the items restricted were radar and communications equipment, various chemicals, medical supplies, and construction materials, but seemingly trivial articles were included, such as sugar, seasoning powder, blankets, thread, and needles (the latter two were banned because they could be used to make uniforms for soldiers).

The people of Laos were not the only ones adversely affected by the trade restrictions and border closings. Many of the traditional border trading centers bore the brunt of the Thai government's policy, which created a severe downturn in sales for many Thai traders along the border. In 1986, Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila and the head of the National Security Council, Prasong Soonsiri, visited some of the border centers and were asked by the local authorities to alter the trade policy with Laos.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade: An Aggiornamento Through Trial-and-Error," in Ng Chee Yuen and Chandran Jeshurun, eds., Southeast Asian Affairs 1990 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), 165.

¹⁷⁷ Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...", 172.

In the 1980s Thai-Lao trade occurred only through specially appointed agents and small-scale "private" traders and often through as few as two border points.¹⁷⁸ The result was that Thailand's exports to Laos in 1984-1985 were down 65% from the previous few years. Bilateral trade did increase, however, in 1986 and 1987 because of economic decentralization measures undertaken by the Lao government and its 1987 foreign investment code.¹⁷⁹ An additional factor producing increased Thai-Lao trade was Thailand's reduction in 1987 of the number of restricted strategic goods from 273 to 61.

The improvement in trade conditions from 1986 to 1987 led to an increase in Thailand's exports to Laos from \$31.4 million in 1986 to \$41.2 million in 1987; imports from Laos were \$1.3 million in 1986 and rose to \$6.09 million in 1987.¹⁸⁰ Thus, essentially the only segment of Thai-Lao relations that began to show significant improvement before General Chatichai became prime minister was trade relations, but even this sector improved much more during Chatichai's tenure than under Prem's, as will be shown in Chapter 4.

¹⁷⁸ Viraphol, 1274-1275.

¹⁷⁹ Among the features of the investment code were permission for 100% foreign-owned enterprises or joint ventures and guarantees against nationalization. However, foreign investors were still wary of Laos until the constitution was promulgated in 1991, which gave greater guarantees for such investments.

¹⁸⁰ Calculated from Statistical Yearbook Thailand no.36, 1989, 251. Other sources offer slightly different levels of imports and exports. For instance, one source records Thailand's imports from Laos in 1987 as \$5.3 million and Thailand's exports to Laos as \$34.2 million (Jeerawat Krongkaew, "Thailand Seizing Key Role in Unlocking Laos," The Nation, Jan. 12, 1989). Ironically, both sources cite the Customs Department of Thailand as the original source. The incongruity can most likely be explained by the fact that statistics are often revised by the government as more information is made available. The writer is grateful to Ms. Songsri Rojanasuwana, who handles all the economic and trade data at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, for offering this explanation for the discrepancies.

Summary

Despite the common origins and numerous cultural, ethnic, religious, and language similarities between the Thai and Lao peoples, relations between the two have for centuries often been rancorous, and at times outright hostile. Many of their conflicts and tensions are rooted in the ancient rivalries between the Thai and Lao kingdoms which battled for control of people and territory. Historical events such as the "theft" of the revered Emerald Buddha by the Thai, the sacking of Viang Chan in the early 1800s, and the forced deportation of many Lao from their homes to settlements in northeastern Thailand remained embedded in the minds of many Lao and contributed to the animosity felt towards the Thai government.

After the lengthy civil wars in Indochina and the communist victories, the relationship between Thailand and Laos took a turn for the worse. Several contentious issues between Thailand and Laos arose between 1975 and 1988, including two fierce border confrontations in 1984 and 1988. Other unresolved issues during the 1970s and 1980s, such as refugees, insurgent activities, the Cambodian crisis, and border closings, strained Thai-Lao relations even further and made rapprochement extremely difficult. Thai-Lao relations were not entirely hostile before General Chatichai's administration, but on the whole they were antagonistic and both countries perceived the other as a potential threat to regime stability. In sum, Thailand's policy continuity towards Laos after 1975 until mid-1988 was due in great part to the perceptions by most Thai leaders that Laos and Vietnam constituted a threat to Thailand.

The trade issue improved slightly in Prem's later years as prime minister, but the strategic goods embargo still remained. Additionally, the Prem administration

oversaw the conduct of the fiercest fighting in modern history between Thailand and Laos in its final few months in office. To claim that there had been a rapprochement in Thai-Lao relations during Prem's government would be erroneous. It was not until Chatichai became prime minister that Thailand and Laos were able to resolve or set aside many disputes and begin the period of relative peace and cooperation which lasts to this day.

CHAPTER 3

THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY-MAKING: INSTITUTIONS, ACTORS, AND PROCESS

The two intervening variables in the framework for this study are the policy-making process and the perceptions of the decision-makers. This chapter focuses on Thailand's foreign policy-making process during General Chatichai's administration. (The other intervening variable, decision-makers' perceptions, is found in Chapters 5 and 6.) The background of each institution is presented along with a description of its role in foreign policy. Comparisons are made between the policy-making processes during Prem's government and Chatichai's to show the differences in how foreign policy was formulated. Much of the analysis draws from the bureaucratic politics literature referred to in the opening chapter. Also, the key individuals in these institutions are identified and their roles described.

The emphasis in this chapter is on institutions and the policy-making process rather than the details of Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy, which are presented in Chapter 4. It is important to understand the policy process and how decisions were made before discussing the actual policy because certain aspects of the foreign policy are best understood with the proper background to the policy-making process. However, it is occasionally necessary to provide brief examples of the Indochina foreign policy to demonstrate how the policy-making process functioned.

The second part of this chapter addresses one of the main research questions of the dissertation: How did Prime Minister Chatichai succeed in taking control of foreign policy matters from the previously dominant Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

The Prime Minister

Despite the lack of specific powers mentioned in the constitution, the Prime Minister in Thailand has the most power in the political system.¹ The preeminence of the Prime Minister derives from the prestige and influence attributed to the post and from the Prime Minister heading the Office of the Prime Minister, which handles budgeting, economic planning, civil service administration, national security, and other functions.² The position grants him the greatest authority in foreign policy-making (but no mention of foreign policy is made in the constitution). Nevertheless, the power of the Prime Minister is also a function of his support base and personality.³

The Prime Minister is the head of government, which entitles him to assemble the cabinet and dismiss any minister. However, when a coalition of political parties forms a government, often a "formula" based on the number of seats held by each party is used to allocate ministerial portfolios.

¹ The 1978 Constitution was in effect during General Chatichai's administration.

² Suchit Bunbongkarn, "Political Institutions and Processes," in Somsakdi Xuto, ed., Government and Politics of Thailand (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), 60-61.

³ Bunbongkarn, 60.

Although the Prime Minister is supposed to be "first among equals" in the cabinet, he has traditionally been the dominant member of the cabinet. One contributing factor to the Prime Minister's strength is that he possesses "discretionary decision-making power" which does not require cabinet approval.⁴ He is therefore often able to impose his will on the cabinet.

Other factors contribute to the Prime Minister's ascendancy in foreign policy formulation. Nine out of seventeen men who served as Thailand's Prime Minister from 1932 until 1990 were active or retired military officers, in particular army commanders-in-chief. Being the head of the army often enables the Prime Minister to dictate policy because the military has for long been Thailand's most organized and powerful institution.⁵

The Prime Minister's predominance further derives from the executive agencies under his direct control, such as the National Security Council (NSC) and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). These two bodies assist the Prime Minister in devising foreign policy. The Prime Minister is also the chief executive for the whole bureaucracy.

Two additional characteristics of the Prime Minister relevant to an understanding of his power are that 1) he is the chief legislator⁶ and 2) Thailand's chief diplomat. The former grants him the authority to initiate policies, while the

⁴ John Funston, "The Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thailand: Some Preliminary Observations," Contemporary Southeast Asia, 9:3, December 1987, 236.

⁵ Clark D. Neher and Ross Marlay, Democracy and Development in Southeast Asia: The Winds of Change (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 29.

⁶ Bunbongkarn, 61.

latter accords him the right to communicate with other states and to send and receive government representatives.

The ability of an individual to influence decisions is partly a function of what Allison calls "bargaining advantages," referring to the formal authority a decision-maker has and his or her control over resources and information.⁷ Clearly Thailand's Prime Minister has numerous bargaining advantages in the policy-making process. But in line with critics of the bureaucratic politics model, the Prime Minister's inherent preponderance of power means he (like the U.S. president) does not always have to bargain with others,⁸ and he can dominate cabinet meetings and decisions.⁹

Significant powers and resources are available to the Prime Minister for foreign policy-making, but whether or not the Prime Minister exercises his authority depends at least partly on the character and nature of the particular individual holding the office. Previous Thai prime ministers such as General Sarit Thanarat (1959-1963), General Thanom Kittikachorn (1963-1973), and General Kriangsak Chomanand (1977-1980) took advantage of the powers allotted to them to dominate the foreign policy-making process. However, Prime Minister Chatichai's predecessor, Prem Tinsulanonda, delegated his foreign policy authority to his foreign minister¹⁰ and maintained a relatively "hands off" approach to foreign affairs. Sarit, Thanom,

⁷ Allison, 168-169.

⁸ See Rourke, 432, and Bendor and Hammond, 315.

⁹ Bunbongkarn, 61.

¹⁰ "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation, November 22, 1989, 8; and Funston, 238.

Kriangsak, and Prem were all prime ministers under military-dominated governments, but Prem's style of foreign policy-making was different from the others.

Before becoming prime minister, General Chatichai served in Thailand's military and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His military career began in the 1940s after graduating from Chulachomkhalao Military Academy, and it included tours in the Korean and Indochinese Wars. General Chatichai's service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) began in the late 1950s, and his assignments included serving as Thailand's ambassador to Argentina, Switzerland, Turkey, Austria, Yugoslavia, the Holy See, and the U.N. His most important posts in the Foreign Ministry, however, were as Deputy Foreign Minister (1973-1974) and as Foreign Minister (1974-1976), providing him with significant experience in foreign affairs. Having been the head of the Foreign Ministry, General Chatichai also had intricate knowledge of how the MFA operated, which became important in his move to supplant the Foreign Ministry in the policy process (see below and Chapter 4).

It was therefore not surprising that, unlike General Prem who was a novice in foreign affairs, Prime Minister Chatichai decided to exercise his authority in the formulation of foreign policy. This was clearly demonstrated in his foreign policy towards Indochina.

The Cabinet

The cabinet, or Council of Ministers, is Thailand's top political decision-making body. According to the 1978 Constitution, the Council of Ministers is responsible for the administration of state affairs. It approves all policies, including

those in foreign affairs.¹¹ Among its other responsibilities is the coordination of the various ministries. Historically, Thailand's cabinets have been dominated by military officers. However, under the civilian regime of Chatichai, the military held few posts. Out of 45 members in Prime Minister Chatichai's first cabinet, only eight were military officers.

The cabinet is composed of the several ministers and deputy ministers, and it functions as the executive in Thailand. The number of cabinet members varies, depending on how many individuals hold more than one ministerial post and how many deputy ministers are appointed. For instance, Prime Minister Chatichai was also the Minister of Defense. Because of its relatively large size and the norm of working by consensus, the cabinet can easily become bogged down due to the number of policies requiring each member's scrutiny. Cabinet members tend to defer to other ministers on matters not specifically handled by their own ministry, which often enables ministers to get their favorite proposals through the cabinet.¹²

In the formulation of foreign policy, however, the cabinet as a whole tends not to play an instrumental role.¹³ Moreover, cabinet members frequently heed the bureaucracy's advice on policy matters, due to its specialized knowledge.¹⁴ This was evident during Prem's administration, when foreign policy was not formulated by the whole cabinet nor by the prime minister. Instead, the foreign minister and the MFA

¹¹ Bhansoon Ladavalaya, Thailand's Foreign Policy Under Kukrit Pramoj: A Study in Decision-Making. Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1980, 26.

¹² Funston, 235.

¹³ Funston, 235.

¹⁴ Bunbongkarn, 62.

were given a free hand in setting Thailand's foreign policy (even free from direct involvement by the prime minister). The cabinet was merely informed about foreign policy decisions¹⁵ and did not take the opportunity to debate their merits.

Under General Chatichai, the cabinet played no role in the initial decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy. Prime Minister Chatichai made the decision without any consultation with the cabinet (see Chapter 4). The cabinet was involved only after the change began. Once the decision to shift Thailand's foreign policy was made, cooperation from the cabinet was necessary to implement the components of the new policy.

Advisors to the Prime Minister

The Prime Minister can appoint personal advisors to assist in policy areas as he deems necessary. Prime Minister Chatichai's appointment of an advisory committee was not unique in this respect. General Prem organized a team of advisors, most of whom came from Thailand's National Institute of Development Administration. However, the level of involvement of General Chatichai's advisors in foreign affairs was unprecedented in Thailand's modern history.

Each advisor chose what to advise Prime Minister Chatichai on, depending on the individual's interests.¹⁶ Several advisors were particularly interested in foreign affairs and extremely critical of Thailand's previous hard-line policy towards

¹⁵ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

Indochina: M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra,¹⁷ an academic from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok; Kraisaak Choonhavan, the prime minister's son and an economist; Pansak Vinyaratn (chairman of the advisory committee); Surakiart Sathirithai, an academic; and Chuanchai Ajanat, an economist from Chulalongkorn University. Another notable advisor was Borwornsak Uwanoo, a law professor from Chulalongkorn University. Borwornsak focused on domestic affairs but also served as the prime minister's deputy secretary-general.

Mr. Pansak described their role as advisors: "Based on our information and analyses, we help articulate what the premier wants to do in foreign policy. We don't have an [sic] direct role in policy implementation."¹⁸ Mr. Pansak and Mr. Kraisaak said foreign policy decisions came down from Prime Minister Chatichai. According to Mr. Pansak, "We [the advisors] discuss ideas in a 'cross fertilization' process. Then the premier crystallizes [sic] our ideas and issues directives."¹⁹ Dr. Borwornsak added that the advisors' actions were guided by requests from ministries and government agencies and that their work was performed with General Chatichai's approval.²⁰

General Chatichai's advisors played a prominent role in foreign policy throughout his administration. Among their activities were initiating rapprochement with Laos, developing relations with Hun Sen's government in Cambodia, and

¹⁷ M.R. stands for Mom Rajwong, which means the son of a Mom Chao. Mom Chao refers to the son of a prince or grandson of a king.

¹⁸ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," The Nation, November 23, 1989, 10.

¹⁹ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

²⁰ "PM's Advisers to Keep Low Profile to Avoid Rifts," Bangkok Post, March 22, 1989, 3.

requesting China to terminate its assistance to anti-government groups in Laos and Cambodia.²¹ In fact, they were so active in foreign policy matters that friction arose between them and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over who should handle foreign policy. The dispute between the advisors and the MFA reflected the bureaucratic politics model assumption that power is dispersed in the system and actors seek to protect what they perceive as their "turf." (See details of the dispute in Chapter 4.)

Why were the advisors given many of the duties of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Prime Minister Chatichai expected that the MFA would be reluctant to initiate and implement his foreign policy restructuring.²² Because he believed he had no state apparatus willing to implement the policy change, the prime minister turned to his advisors,²³ who were willing to make immediate changes in Thailand's foreign policy towards Indochina.²⁴ Mr. Sukhumbhand believed their role was to goad the Ministry of Foreign Affairs into a lenient posture regarding Laos and the rest of Indochina and to initiate the "groundbreaking" work,²⁵ such as going abroad to meet with Indochinese government officials. According to Mr. Pansak, the advisors performed the early stages of implementation at the order of Prime Minister Chatichai.²⁶

²¹ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

²² Borwornsak Uwanno and Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interviews, April 9, 1996, and May 6, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

²³ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁴ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁵ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁶ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

Technically, his advisors should not have implemented the policy change because they lacked the legal authority to do so,²⁷ since the MFA is responsible for conducting foreign policy. The advisors also lacked the needed personnel and resources to carry out the restructuring on a daily basis.²⁸ Therefore, after initiating many of the changes and handling some of the implementation, the advisors then turned matters over to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁹

One of the advantages of using his advisors instead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to initiate the changes with Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was the informal approach of the advisors (meaning they were not formal government officials).³⁰ Dr. Borwornsak believed this method was more appropriate because of the previous suspicions between the governments of Thailand and Indochina (extending back into the 1960s). The Indochinese states regarded Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as entrenched in its hard-line policy and unwilling to bend on issues affecting their mutual relations. The advisors, who were known to be strong critics of the MFA, effectively demonstrated Prime Minister Chatichai's intentions. Mr. Pansak said that the Indochinese leaders trusted them more than Thailand's diplomats, and that they had greater credibility since they were sent directly by the prime minister.³¹ Furthermore, he noted that their credibility was enhanced by the fact that some of the

²⁷ Kraisaak Choonhavan and Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interviews, May 6, 1996, and April 18, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

²⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interviews, April 18, 1996, and June 21, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

²⁹ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁰ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

³¹ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

advisors were "ex-Lefties,"³² meaning some of them had harbored socialist or Marxist ideas in the past.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for handling relations with other states. Its primary duties are to advise the Prime Minister and cabinet on formulating foreign policy, to implement Thailand's foreign policy, to promote and maintain good relations with other states, to participate in regional and international organizations, and to promote Thailand's interests abroad.³³

The Foreign Ministry is organized into nine departments: 1) Secretariat to the Prime Minister, 2) Office of the Permanent Secretary, 3) Political Affairs, 4) Protocol, 5) Economic Affairs, 6) Treaties and Legal Affairs, 7) Information, 8) International Organizations, and 9) ASEAN Affairs. Of these departments, Political Affairs, primarily through its Policy and Planning Division, is usually the most involved in formulating foreign policy.³⁴

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is elitist, with a large proportion of its members coming from the aristocracy and other privileged backgrounds.³⁵ A few

³² Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

³³ Official Listings Thailand 1991 (Bangkok: Tawanna Holdings Ltd., 1991), 4-186. See also Gordon H. Allison and Auratai Smarond, Thailand's Government (Bangkok: Siam Security Brokers Co., Ltd., 1972), 18.

³⁴ Funston, 230. Funston's article is perhaps the most comprehensive article in English about the Foreign Ministry.

³⁵ Funston, 232-233.

Thai families have held sway over the MFA for several generations. The lofty social status of officials in the MFA is a prominent reason why its officials tended to be conservative and anti-communist throughout the Cold War.³⁶

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has traditionally had little outside intervention in the duties assigned to it.³⁷ However, it often lacks the highest authority in formulating and implementing foreign policy. This has been true particularly under military regimes, when it frequently defers to the military leaders or recognizes the limits set forth by them.³⁸

The Foreign Ministry's influence and control over foreign policy has varied greatly since the 1960s. In the 1960s until the early 1970s (when the military was in power), the MFA played virtually no role in formulating foreign policy; rather, its job was merely to implement various aspects of Thailand's foreign policy.³⁹ The power of the Foreign Ministry was greatest under the democratic regime from 1973 until 1976, especially when General Chatichai was foreign minister under Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj (1975-1976).⁴⁰ However, when the military returned to power in 1976, the MFA was bypassed again. In the early 1980s until 1988, the MFA increased its role in foreign policy-making under Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila.⁴¹

³⁶ Funston, 233.

³⁷ Funston, 235.

³⁸ Ladavalya, 25, 27, and 33.

³⁹ Funston, 233 and 239.

⁴⁰ Ladavalya, 35; and Funston, 236.

⁴¹ Funston, 239.

The upsurge in the MFA's control over foreign policy until 1988 derived from two factors. First, because of Foreign Minister Siddhi's close connections with the military, the Foreign Ministry, and the National Security Council (NSC), he was able to coordinate their activities and reduce competition. Siddhi was a former Air Chief Marshal (ACM) in the air force and also served as the secretary-general for the NSC before becoming foreign minister in 1980. His allegiance to the military, NSC, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitated an end to the rivalry and separation of the military and MFA in foreign policy-making.⁴² Foreign Minister Siddhi established numerous committees composed of the MFA, the military, NSC, and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), which helped to coordinate Thailand's foreign policy.

The second factor in the MFA's control over foreign policy-making in the 1980s was that ACM Siddhi was a former classmate (from high school through military school) of Prime Minister Prem. Their close friendship and the trust bestowed upon him by General Prem enabled Siddhi to enhance the Foreign Ministry's authority in policy-making.⁴³

The preeminence in foreign policy-making enjoyed by the MFA under Prem's administration ended immediately upon General Chatichai's selection as prime minister in August 1988. Despite Siddhi continuing as foreign minister during Chatichai's administration, the MFA was often bypassed by the advisors and the prime minister.⁴⁴ The prominent role played by Prime Minister Chatichai and his

⁴² Funston, 238.

⁴³ Funston, 238.

⁴⁴ Several respondents made the point that the MFA was frequently bypassed in the policy-making process during Chatichai's administration: Pansak Vinyaratn, Surapong Jayanama, Surachai Sirikrai, and Chulacheeb Chinwanno.

advisors undermined the MFA's influence over foreign policy. Additionally, General Chatichai chose not to coordinate the two camps, that is, the MFA on one hand and himself and his advisors on the other.⁴⁵ Unlike General Prem, who was a novice in foreign affairs, Chatichai's previous experience as foreign minister and his reliance upon advisors for information and analysis allowed him to conduct much of Thailand's foreign policy independently of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁶ Siddhi no longer had a free hand in conducting foreign policy. In addition to his dismay over a reduced role in policy formulation, Foreign Minister Siddhi was also unhappy that three of his harshest critics became advisors to Prime Minister Chatichai.⁴⁷

John Funston asserts that "the amount of policy influence exercised by the MFA has depended largely on its relationship with the Prime Minister and the military."⁴⁸ This was indeed the case with the Foreign Ministry under ACM Siddhi. His close relationship with General Prem and the military enabled the MFA to dominate foreign policy-making from 1980 to 1988, but when General Chatichai became prime minister, Siddhi's weak ties to Chatichai and his commitment to the old policy towards Indochina contributed to the decline in the MFA's control over foreign policy.

⁴⁵ Chulacheeb Chinwanno and Surachai Sirikrai. Personal interviews, April 1, 1996, and March 27, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

⁴⁶ Donald E. Weatherbee, "Thailand in 1989: Democracy Ascendant in the Golden Peninsula," *Southeast Asian Affairs 1990* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), 348.

⁴⁷ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴⁸ Funston, 235.

Siddhi resigned as foreign minister in 1990 and was replaced by the commerce minister, Dr. Subin Pinkayan. According to Dr. Subin, Prime Minister Chatichai believed that Siddhi had been in his post too long (ten years) and had been slow to implement Chatichai's initiatives.⁴⁹ The replacement of Siddhi with Subin, who favored the prime minister's Indochina policy,⁵⁰ demonstrates one of the criticisms of the second wave of bureaucratic politics scholars, and that is the President (in this case Prime Minister) can dominate the bureaucracy by selecting people he wants for key posts.⁵¹

Ministry of Defense and the Military

The Ministry of Defense is in charge of the overall defense of the country. Additionally, it coordinates with Thailand's other government institutions in national security matters.⁵² Within the Ministry of Defense are the Supreme Command Headquarters and the three branches of the Thai military (army, navy, and air force).

The Supreme Command Headquarters, led by the Supreme Commander, is the "nerve center of the military command structure."⁵³ Its main responsibility is to coordinate the branches of the armed forces, but other activities include operating

⁴⁹ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁰ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵¹ Clifford, 144.

⁵² Ladavalya, 36.

⁵³ Ladavalya, 38.

training and research institutes, intelligence gathering,⁵⁴ and community development.⁵⁵

Theoretically, the Supreme Command Headquarters and the Supreme Commander control the three branches of the military; however, in reality the army and its commander-in-chief have traditionally exercised the most influence in Thailand's military.⁵⁶

Since the 1930s, Thailand's military, in particular the army, has been extremely active in foreign policy, which is viewed by the military as a security issue.⁵⁷ Frequently it has been in complete charge of formulating and implementing foreign policy.⁵⁸ The military's influence in foreign policy derives in part from the Prime Minister often being an active or retired military officer.⁵⁹ Military-dominated regimes have controlled Thailand for approximately 80 percent of the time since 1932.⁶⁰ Furthermore, threats from communism both domestically and from Indochina helped justify the military's authority in foreign policy from the 1950s until the 1980s.⁶¹

⁵⁴ Allison and Auratai, 10.

⁵⁵ Bunbongkarn, 57.

⁵⁶ Bunbongkarn, 56.

⁵⁷ Funston, 236.

⁵⁸ See Suchit Bunbongkarn, *op cit.*, for a description of the military's involvement in Thai politics.

⁵⁹ Funston, 236.

⁶⁰ Neher and Marlay, 29.

⁶¹ R.S. Sassheen, "Thai Armed Forces: Modernization to Meet New Challenges," Asian Defense Journal, December 1988, 18.

The combination of military rule, Vietnam's threat to Thailand, and the instability in Cambodia meant that national security was the top priority in foreign policy-making during the 1970s and 1980s.⁶² For this reason, the Foreign Ministry was often excluded from policy formulation or relegated to a secondary role, although foreign policy issues not of concern to the military, such as ASEAN affairs, continued to be handled by the MFA.⁶³

Prime Minister Chatichai served concurrently as the Minister of Defense. The army commander-in-chief was General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, who was also the acting Supreme Commander. General Chaovalit retired from the military in early 1990 and became the deputy defense minister. General Sunthorn Kongsompong replaced Chaovalit as Supreme Commander, while General Suchinda Kraprayoon took over as army commander-in-chief.

During the Chatichai administration, the military's role in foreign policy-making, and in domestic politics in general, declined compared to the military-dominated governments in the 1970s and early 1980s. Rather than having a direct role in the policy-making process, the military had to rely upon lobbying and maneuvering.⁶⁴ Prime Minister Chatichai invited the military to send a senior officer to the cabinet meetings,⁶⁵ but this was merely for keeping the military informed about

⁶² Leszek Buszynski, "Thailand's Foreign Policy: Management of a Regional Vision," Asian Survey 34:8, August 1994, 721.

⁶³ Funston, 236.

⁶⁴ Yos Santasombat, "Leadership and Security in Modern Thai Politics," in Mohammed Ayoob and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, eds., Leadership Perceptions and National Security: The Southeast Asia Experience (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), 86.

⁶⁵ Sassheen, 30.

the government's policies. Despite protests from some members of parliament,⁶⁶ Prime Minister Chatichai defended the inclusion of Army Commander General Chaovalit in the meetings by saying the military was a part of his government.⁶⁷

The military's reduced role in policy-making was demonstrated in the military's concentration on national development. According to Surin Pitsuwan, a member of parliament at the time, the military attempted to maintain its role in domestic affairs by concentrating on national development.⁶⁸ Under General Chaovalit, an ardent supporter of Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring,⁶⁹ the military adopted a similar platform to Chatichai's "battlefields into marketplace" policy called Suwannabhumi, or "Golden Peninsula." The military's Suwannabhumi idea aimed at fostering economic ties with Indochina and Burma in order to facilitate development in the region.

The military's support for the policy change enabled Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors to carry out their goals for Indochina. Kraissak Choonhavan concluded that Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors were fortunate that they "did not have the military on [their] jugular" when it came to initiating the foreign policy change.⁷⁰ The military's acceptance of the restructuring was also important because of the Foreign Ministry's initial reluctance to implement the new policy.⁷¹

⁶⁶ FBIS-EAS-88-164, August 24, 1988, 51.

⁶⁷ FBIS-EAS-88-164, August 24, 1988, 51.

⁶⁸ Surin Pitsuwan, "Suwannabhumi--a 'Manifest Destiny'," Bangkok Post, March 22, 1989, 4.

⁶⁹ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁰ Kraissak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷¹ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

The military directed many of the negotiations with Laos over the disputed border. For instance, Thailand's military conducted most of the talks with Laos concerning Ban Rom Klao.

National Security Council

The National Security Council (NSC) was created in 1959 under the National Security Act, although a similar institution called the Council for Defense of the Kingdom existed from 1910 until 1959. The NSC makes recommendations to the cabinet on foreign and domestic national security matters. Information is processed and analyzed by the NSC, and then recommendations are made to the Prime Minister and his cabinet. The NSC also acts as a coordinating body for national security policy through its involvement with several government ministries.⁷²

The NSC, however, is not a policy-making agency.⁷³ Instead, it is a forum for debate and discussing options concerning national security.⁷⁴ Hence, the NSC functions much like an "inner cabinet" for the government.⁷⁵

The National Security Council is under the authority of the Office of the Prime Minister, and therefore the Prime Minister serves as its chairman. Other members of the NSC are the most relevant ministers (Defense, Foreign Affairs, Interior, etc.), the

⁷² Amara Raksataya, Institutions and Processes for Policy Development in Thailand (Kuala Lumpur: Asian Centre for Development Administration, 1975), 36.

⁷³ Ladavalya, 52.

⁷⁴ Ladavalya, 29.

⁷⁵ Raksataya, 36.

commanders of the three branches of the military, the Supreme Commander, the Secretary-General of the NSC (appointed by the Prime Minister) and his deputies, and others as determined by the Prime Minister.

The Secretary-General heads the Office of the National Security Council, but he also sits in meetings of the cabinet.⁷⁶ The Office of the NSC focuses on four main areas of security: internal, external, military, and economic and social.⁷⁷ Additionally, committees may be established from time to time to examine particular questions of national security. According to Kachadpai Buruspatana, deputy secretary-general of the NSC during Chatichai's administration, the NSC has at least ten standing committees comprised of officials from various agencies.⁷⁸ For instance, a special committee of the NSC was set up during the Chatichai administration to review whether or not the strategic goods list aimed at Laos should be continued.

The influence of the NSC and the extent of its involvement in foreign policy formulation depend on the Prime Minister and how he chooses to use it.⁷⁹ In the 1970s, when the NSC was dominated by military and intelligence personnel, it was deeply involved in decision-making.⁸⁰ The NSC's influence began to wane in the 1980s as the agency became more "civilianized" during the Prem years⁸¹ and as the MFA came to dominate foreign policy-making.

⁷⁶ Raksasataya, 36.

⁷⁷ Raksasataya, 36.

⁷⁸ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁹ Ladavalya, 30.

⁸⁰ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 70.

⁸¹ Funston, 239.

Under Prime Minister Chatichai, the Secretary-General of the NSC was Suwit Suttanukul, who was originally appointed by General Prem in 1986. Mr. Suwit said that the NSC was partially involved in foreign policy formulation but that the MFA undertook the actual implementation.⁸² He explained that the NSC's participation in policy-making consisted of receiving proposals from the NSC staff, using the NSC to debate policy options, and making recommendations to the cabinet. However, the NSC was not involved in the initial decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards the Indochinese states. Mr. Suwit maintained that General Chatichai was responsible for the Indochina initiative, along with some input from his advisors.⁸³

One of the significant contributions by the NSC under Prime Minister Chatichai, according to Mr. Suwit, was its efforts to reconcile the MFA and the prime minister's advisors, who were occasionally at odds over the handling of foreign policy.⁸⁴ Mr. Suwit and his office attempted to forge compromise and consensus among the government ministries involved in foreign affairs.⁸⁵ Additionally, officials from the NSC participated in committees led by the Foreign Ministry and the military for negotiations with Laos concerning the Thai-Lao border.⁸⁶

⁸² Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸³ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁴ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁵ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁶ Suwit Suttanukul and Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interviews, July 10, 1996, and June 12, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

Commerce Ministry

The Ministry of Commerce is responsible for Thailand's foreign trade, internal trade, registration of businesses, and promoting exports. The Ministry of Commerce contains seven main departments and offices: Office of the Permanent Secretary, Foreign Trade, Internal Trade, Commercial Registration, Export Promotion, Business Economics, and the Insurance Office.

Because of the emphasis on national security from the 1960s through 1988, the Commerce Ministry did not play much of a role in foreign policy before General Chatichai's term. In fact, officially sanctioned trade between Thailand and the Indochinese countries ceased from the 1970s until the Chatichai administration. Moreover, government credit for private businesses and government-to-government trade with Indochina were prohibited.

The Commerce Ministry was not involved in the foreign policy-making process for the decision to restructure relations with Indochina. According to Dr. Subin Pinkayan, Commerce Minister from 1988 until mid-1990, Prime Minister Chatichai handed down the directives and the Commerce Ministry implemented them.⁸⁷ Commerce Minister Subin concurred with Chatichai's Indochina initiative⁸⁸ and promptly accomplished the prime minister's objective for increased trade with Laos. (This may have been an important factor in why he replaced ACM Siddhi as foreign minister later in the administration.) The cooperation of the Commerce Ministry was

⁸⁷ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁸ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

imperative for the success of the restructuring, not only for negotiating trade agreements but for executing them as well.

Other Institutions

At various times in the past other institutions have been involved either directly or indirectly in the foreign policy-making process, depending on the type of regime and the domestic and external situations. For instance, during the domestic communist insurgency, the Ministry of Interior participated in foreign policy-making. However, the institutions and individuals described above were the most prominent actors in Thailand's foreign policy-making process during the Chatichai administration, leading to the exclusion of other institutions.

The Ministry of Interior, traditionally one of the most powerful governmental institutions in Thailand, participated minimally in the foreign policy-making process from 1988-1991. The Interior Ministry participated in foreign policy-making from the 1960s through the 1980s because of its responsibility for maintaining internal security, peace, and order within Thailand's borders⁸⁹ and due to its control over the police force. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, the Interior Ministry was all but excluded from the foreign policy process, restricted to only a marginal role in maintaining the remaining Lao refugee centers and directing the border police. The negotiations between Thailand and Laos over refugees, the border, and security matters were handled by the prime minister's advisors, the military, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which left little or no role for the Interior Ministry in foreign policy.

⁸⁹ Ladavalya, 39.

The National Intelligence Agency (NIA) periodically contributed to foreign policy in the past, particularly during the communist insurgency. Due to the decline of security concerns during Chatichai's administration, however, the NIA was inconsequential in foreign policy-making.

Before the early 1990s, Thailand's parliament, the National Assembly, also exercised little authority in foreign policy-making, especially during military-led governments. Parliament's role in policy-making was confined to domestic policies.⁹⁰ Even in democratically elected civilian governments, such as General Chatichai's, the National Assembly has rarely served as a forum for debating or formulating foreign policy. The 1978 Constitution did not provide any specific role for the National Assembly in foreign policy.

Parliamentary committees dealing with foreign affairs do exist, such as the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, but during Chatichai's administration the Committee on Foreign Affairs merely affirmed what the prime minister was doing or made non-binding recommendations for conducting relations with Indochina.⁹¹ Part of parliament's impotence is due to the nature of Thailand's political parties, which are weak, faction-ridden, and dependent upon one or a few popular individuals.⁹² Very little party cohesion exists, as candidates usually win seats on their own

⁹⁰ Neher and Marlay, 33.

⁹¹ See the Committee on Foreign Affairs affirmation of Chatichai's policy in Tan Lian Choo, "Boost Ties w/ Laos First: Thai Panel," The Straits Times, September 22, 1988, 10; and FBIS-EAS-88-185, September 23, 1988, 37.

⁹² See Bunbongkarn, 68-71.

merits.⁹³ Furthermore, politicians in Thailand are prone to switching parties, often in successive elections.

Additionally, groups outside of the bureaucracy, such as the media, interest groups, and chambers of commerce, have traditionally not participated in foreign policy formulation.⁹⁴ They lacked influence during the Chatichai administration as well. This point is discussed further below and in Chapters 5 and 6.

Factors Enabling Prime Minister Chatichai to Dominate Foreign Policy-Making

The description of the institutions and actors involved in the foreign policy-making process during the Chatichai administration reveals that the prime minister, along with his advisors, dominated the foreign policy-making process. Institutions such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, and parliament were relegated to a minor role in foreign policy formulation or bypassed altogether in the decision to restructure Thailand's relations with the Indochinese states. The details of the restructuring in Chapter 4 will make this point even more evident.

Having explored the institutions involved in formulating foreign policy and how the process actually functioned while Chatichai was prime minister, a question logically arises: how was General Chatichai able to take control of foreign policy-making from a previously dominant Foreign Ministry, especially when it initially opposed certain aspects of his new policy? This question was posed to the interviewees in this study, most of whom were involved (in varying degrees) in the

⁹³ Bunbongkarn, 70.

⁹⁴ Neher and Marlay, 29.

foreign policy-making process during the restructuring. Their responses have been grouped into four factors: Chatichai's experience in foreign affairs, the prime minister's powers, democratization, and public proclamation (language).

The first factor enabling Prime Minister Chatichai to wrest control over foreign policy away from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was his previous experience in the MFA itself.⁹⁵ Earlier it was noted that scholars of psychological-perceptual approaches call attention to the decision-makers themselves. A decision-maker's background and personality can explain his or her behavior and choices. The problem of identifying a causal linkage between personality and behavior was discussed in Chapter 1, but identifying a decision-maker's background and the relation to foreign policy behavior is a more manageable task.

Unlike his predecessor General Prem, General Chatichai was well versed in foreign affairs. Chatichai's extensive experience as ambassador, deputy foreign minister, and foreign minister during previous governments provided him with intimate knowledge of the people in the MFA and how the MFA operates (i.e., both its formal and informal procedures). This experience and knowledge gave General Chatichai enormous confidence in his own ability.⁹⁶ Margaret Herrmann identified confidence in one's ability to control events as an important explanation of foreign policy behavior (see Chapter 1).

⁹⁵ This point was emphasized by several respondents: Kraisak Choonhavan, Subin Pinkayan, Suwit Suttanukul, Kachadpai Buruspatana, Pansak Vinyaratn, Surapong Jayanama, and Chulacheeb Chinwanno.

⁹⁶ Pansak Vinyaratn and Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interviews, June 21, 1996, and June 12, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

Knowing all the "ins and outs" of the Foreign Ministry likely gave Prime Minister Chatichai insight into how he could bypass the MFA and its entrenched ways of dealing with the Indochinese states. Prime Minister Chatichai's reliance on his advisors also reflects his anticipation of the MFA's resistance to immediately restructuring Thailand's foreign policy and the difficulties of overcoming an organization's long-standing routines. Some of the opposition from the Foreign Ministry prompted General Chatichai and his advisors to "take to the forefront in foreign affairs,"⁹⁷ which was made possible in part by Chatichai's background.

A second factor in General Chatichai's dominance in foreign policy-making was the powers granted to the Prime Minister. Thailand's extensive history of military authoritarianism centralized power in the hands of the Prime Minister. Prime ministers, who were often army commanders taking political control after a coup d'état, have frequently been able to ignore the cabinet and parliament (if one existed) in policy-making, especially during the Sarit and Thanom regimes. According to Mr. Sukhumbhand, this legacy of military rule, whereby the Prime Minister wields significant authority, carried over into Chatichai's democratic regime and helped him to bypass the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the Indochina initiative.⁹⁸

For instance, Prime Minister Chatichai formed an advisory committee, although he was not unique in deciding to assemble a group of advisors. No formal institution of an advisory team exists in the Thai governmental structure; it was merely the choice of the prime minister to form one, who would be included, and

⁹⁷ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

what functions it would perform. Other members of the government had no say in the appointment of the advisors or control over their actions. The advisors conducted talks in several issues between Thailand and Laos, despite the advisors not being official government representatives. Instead of using officials from the MFA early in the administration, Prime Minister Chatichai "secretly" dispatched some of his advisors to Laos (see Chapter 4). He also sent advisors to Vietnam without the consent of the MFA, ignoring government requirements stipulating that any Thai citizen going to Vietnam must receive clearance from the Foreign Ministry.⁹⁹ All of this was done over the protests of the MFA, which was powerless to prevent the prime minister from exercising his authority.

Another example is that General Chatichai invited a foreign government leader to be his guest, even though Thailand's Foreign Ministry was unwilling to recognize that foreign leader and refused to have direct contact with him or his representatives. The particular example, which will be explained further in the next chapter, is when Prime Minister Chatichai extended an invitation to Hun Sen of Cambodia to visit Thailand. Moreover, he assigned his advisors instead of the MFA to handle the negotiations with Hun Sen and his representatives.

The examples of sending the advisors abroad against government regulations, having them conduct foreign relations, and inviting Hun Sen to Thailand display Bendor and Hammond's argument that the head of government does not always have to bargain with other officials, as assumed in the bureaucratic politics model. General Chatichai simply took actions without consulting the other institutions or seeking their approval.

⁹⁹ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

Another power that General Chatichai had at his disposal relates to Clifford's argument that the U.S. President can dominate the bureaucracy by selecting people for key posts. Prime Minister Chatichai replaced Foreign Minister Siddhi with Dr. Subin, who was supportive of the foreign policy restructuring. Despite some opposition from the MFA, all the "pulling and hauling" did not make a difference, an issue which is raised by Robert Art.¹⁰⁰ Prime Minister Chatichai overcame bureaucratic politics by replacing the head of the MFA.

Thus, the Prime Minister's powers, if exploited properly, facilitate domination in foreign policy matters. Recalling Kjell Goldmann's argument found in Chapter 1, a policy shift can emanate from a change in the balance of power among decision-makers. When one decision-maker or agency acquires a preponderance of power, a policy shift conforming to that individual's or agency's goals is likely to occur.

However, exercising these powers depends on the individual's willingness to do so. The Prime Minister's powers make it possible to control foreign policy-making only if the individual has the desire to dominate, meaning personality and background are likely important complements for this factor to be instrumental. Although General Prem possessed at least the same formal power as prime minister as General Chatichai, he allocated his authority in foreign policy-making to Siddhi Savetsila and the MFA. Hence, the MFA formulated Thailand's foreign policy from 1980 until mid-1988. In contrast, Prime Minister Chatichai determined he wanted to command Thailand's foreign policy, and therefore he chose to utilize the powers inherent in his post.

¹⁰⁰ Art, 474.

A third factor helping Prime Minister Chatichai control the foreign policy process was Thailand's greater democratization in 1988. Park, Ko, and Kim maintain that democratization paves the way for foreign policy change by altering a state's interests, its ideology and values, and state-society relations (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, democratization transforms the state's capacity, the decision-making process, and the foreign policy goals. Before proceeding with the argument that greater democratization was a factor in General Chatichai's ability to control foreign policy-making, it is necessary to demonstrate that indeed democratization altered Thailand's values and state-society relations.

Since the transformation of Thailand in 1932 from an absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, democracy has been used primarily to provide the ruling groups with symbolic legitimacy,¹⁰¹ rather than allow full participation of the Thai citizens in government. Occasionally, though, democracy has been implemented in Thailand and had meaning.¹⁰² In 1973, at the peak of the student-led democracy movement in Thailand, Thai citizens acquired new values such as politicians being accountable to the public and active participation of citizens in politics.¹⁰³ Also during the democratic interlude from 1973 to 1976, the bureaucracy was forced to

¹⁰¹ Neher and Marlay, 29.

¹⁰² The definition and meaning of true democracy is a subject of debate and beyond the purpose of this dissertation. What is meant by saying democracy in Thailand has had true meaning at times is that the political system was occasionally opened up before the 1990s to greater civilian participation through voting in competitive elections, civilians receiving government offices, and having the government change through elections.

¹⁰³ Neher and Marlay, 31-32.

abandon its usual practice of pursuing self-interests and instead make compromises with the public.¹⁰⁴

After military dominance in the political system returned from 1976 until mid-1988, the transition back to greater democracy represented by Chatichai's government brought with it a change in values and state-society relations similar to the ones in 1973. The effects of democratization were most evident in the time between the military's overthrow of Chatichai in February 1991 and the 1992 "Black May" uprising against the military government. The lack of external threats to Thailand meant the military had no legitimate reason for interfering in politics.¹⁰⁵ Many Thai citizens had already adopted democratic values and were upset that the military ruled Thailand while much of the world was undergoing greater democratization.¹⁰⁶ The military felt compelled to name a civilian as Prime Minister for the initial caretaker government,¹⁰⁷ but after it was replaced by General Suchinda, who appointed himself Prime Minister, Thai demonstrators took to the streets to protest.

The 1992 civilian uprising against the military junta restored democracy in Thailand, albeit at the cost of dozens of lives. A constitutional amendment was subsequently passed that required the Prime Minister to be an elected member of parliament.

The series of events following Chatichai's overthrow demonstrates that democratization had a transforming effect on the values of Thai citizens and the

¹⁰⁴ Neher and Marlay, 31.

¹⁰⁵ Neher and Marlay, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Neher and Marlay, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Neher and Marlay, 34.

state-society relationship. Taking this point about democratization a step further, democracy, by means of popular elections, provided General Chatichai the legitimacy and mandate needed to dominate and overhaul Thailand's foreign policy.¹⁰⁸ General Prem was an unelected prime minister from 1980 until 1988, and while a parliament did function, the military and bureaucracy dominated the political system. Chatichai became the first democratically elected member of parliament to serve as prime minister since the mid-1970s. Also, his administration was the first one since that time in which the military was subordinate to a civilian-led government (until the coup in 1991).¹⁰⁹

Former Commerce and Foreign Minister Subin explained how Chatichai's different rise to power (compared to Prem) helped him control foreign policy-making:

General Prem got into office as a bureaucrat, but General Chatichai got into office as a politician. Politicians and bureaucrats have a different approach. The bureaucrat believes in the [existing] system...But the politician has his agenda of what he would like to do when he gets into office...He [Chatichai] believed that [decisions] should come from the people elected.¹¹⁰

Acquiring legitimacy can be a powerful tool in controlling the policy process. Bar-Siman-Tov argues that legitimacy makes a policy less vulnerable to domestic pressures and constraints, particularly in policies which are controversial or have uncertain implications.¹¹¹ Chatichai's legitimacy, based on the democratic political

¹⁰⁸ Surachai Sirikrai and Khien Theeravit. Personal interviews, March 27, 1996, and February 16, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁹ Neher and Marlay, 32.

¹¹⁰ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹¹ Bar-Siman-Tov, 17-19.

values prevailing at the time, plausibly could have placed tentative groups such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a difficult position: either acquiesce to Chatichai or risk undermining democracy in Thailand by defying a prime minister with electoral legitimacy.

The transition to greater democratization enhanced General Chatichai's ability to dominate the foreign policy-making process in another way too. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, democracy had not yet fully taken root in Thailand, although its values were becoming widespread. Surapong Jayanama of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that the democratic transition represented by Chatichai's government was a windfall for him in that civil society still had no input into foreign policy.¹¹² Ordinary Thai citizens had virtually no leverage over policy-makers aside from voting; political parties typically failed to articulate the public's interests;¹¹³ and interest groups were relatively new and weak. Therefore, Prime Minister Chatichai had the best of both worlds: being democratically elected for legitimacy while having vast power from Thailand's authoritarian days.

A final factor facilitating Chatichai's dominance in the policy-making process was the public proclamation he made on the day he was officially named prime minister by King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The new prime minister proclaimed his intention to transform Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace (see Chapter 4). This "battlefields into a marketplace" phrase succinctly expressed General Chatichai's policy plans to the other government officials and the public.

¹¹² Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹³ Neher and Marlay, 38.

The use of language can be an effective method for obtaining legitimacy and for winning the compliance of groups whose support is necessary.¹¹⁴ Bar-Siman-Tov describes what one scholar has called "hortatory language."¹¹⁵ Hortatory language utilizes "higher-order symbols such as national interests, national security, justice, democracy, and freedom," which are then used to convey "awareness that the public has an important stake and role in crucial political decisions."¹¹⁶ The purpose is to persuade society that the policy should be accepted and to enhance the legitimacy of the decision-makers while undermining opponents of the policy change.¹¹⁷ According to Mr. Kraissak, this was the intention of Chatichai's "battlefields into marketplace" phrase: to persuade the public and the government that they had an important stake in the policy change and stood to benefit from it.¹¹⁸ Thus, the phrase "battlefields into marketplace" did not mean that the goal of the policy change was economic benefits; instead it was used to justify the shift and fend off security concerns lingering from the previous relationship with Laos.

The effectiveness of Prime Minister Chatichai's public announcement in helping him control the policy-making process would appear to rely greatly on the democratic legitimacy factor discussed above. Without democratic legitimacy, hortatory language might not have had an impact in Chatichai's case because it is supposed to secure the necessary support to overcome potential opposition to a

¹¹⁴ Bar-Siman-Tov, 21-22.

¹¹⁵ See Bar-Siman-Tov, 22.

¹¹⁶ Bar-Siman-Tov, 22.

¹¹⁷ Bar-Siman-Tov, 22-23.

¹¹⁸ Kraissak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

policy change. Because General Chatichai was an elected prime minister and announced publicly that a policy change was going to occur, he obtained significant leverage over the MFA in the policy-making process, and the Foreign Ministry had little choice but to accept the decision.¹¹⁹ By immediately telling the Thai citizens, government officials, and the whole world what he intended to do, Chatichai had quickly seized the momentum in the foreign policy-making process.

The impact of General Chatichai's declared policy change can be likened to U.S. President Richard Nixon's "shock" when he announced his intention to normalize relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and begin the process of recognizing the PRC as the official government of China instead of Taiwan.¹²⁰ The Chatichai and Nixon decisions were non-incremental, meaning that they were not slowly evolving changes in policy but instead represented abrupt reversals in the previous policies. Furthermore, many people in the U.S. government were not briefed in advance or consulted by Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. Nixon's shift in policy towards China sent the rest of the world scurrying to adjust to the changes, and even the opponents in the U.S. government were unable to block the changes begun by Nixon. General Chatichai also neglected to inform others about his intentions, and Thailand's neighbors scrambled to find out what he meant by the announcement (see Chapter 4).

¹¹⁹ Surachai Sirikrai. Personal interview, March 27, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²⁰ Surachai Sirikrai. Personal interview, March 27, 1996, Bangkok.

Summary

The foreign policy-making process is one of two intervening variables in this study. The main institutions involved in Thailand's foreign policy-making during the Chatichai administration were the prime minister himself, his advisors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, and the Thai military. Despite the involvement of several institutions, Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors controlled the policy-making process for the Indochina initiative. Their dominance was in contrast to the policy process during the Prem years, in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a free hand in foreign policy-making from Prime Minister Prem. By asserting control over the policy-making process, Prime Minister Chatichai and the advisors came into conflict with the Foreign Ministry over who should formulate foreign policy and what the policy towards the Indochinese states should be.

The battle for control of policy-making between the MFA and Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors demonstrates several assumptions of the bureaucratic politics model. However, various criticisms of the bureaucratic politics model from Chapter 1 are also revealed, such as the power to appoint people to key posts and the prime minister's ability to avoid bargaining and negotiation with other actors in foreign policy-making.

Power in the policy-making process shifted from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors. Four factors enabling the prime minister to dominate foreign policy-making have been identified: General Chatichai's previous experience in foreign affairs, the powers inherent in Thailand's Prime Minister, democratization, and public proclamation (language).

Analyzing Thailand's foreign policy process provides the context for describing General Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos. The following chapter details the changes in foreign policy from 1988 to 1991 and the interaction among the actors in the policy-making process.

CHAPTER 4

PRIME MINISTER CHATICHAI'S LAOS POLICY

The relationship between Thailand and Laos underwent significant change during Chatichai's administration, which lasted from August 1988 until February 1991.¹ The distrust and hostility that had characterized Thai-Lao relations, especially since 1975, were quickly replaced with extensive cooperation on several issues (e.g., refugees, Cambodia, the border), greater trust, increased government-to-government contact, and enhanced economic interaction. This chapter describes Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos and the changes in Thai-Lao relations during his tenure. The purpose here is primarily descriptive rather than analyzing the motivations for the restructuring, which will be done in Chapters 5 and 6.

Thai-Lao relations were comprehensively altered by Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring. His Laos foreign policy matched the definition of restructuring put forth in Chapter 1, whereby changes occur in multiple

¹ Prime Minister Chatichai was overthrown by the military in a coup d'état on February 23, 1991. The coup leaders, namely General Sunthorn and General Suchinda, cited as justification for the coup the pervasive government corruption, parliamentary dictatorship, intimidation of the military by politicians, and alleged assassination plots involving one of General Chatichai's close associates. However, analysts say the real reasons were rivalries in the military and disputes between the top brass and government over controlling the military. The coup leaders were particularly upset with Prime Minister Chatichai appointing one of their rivals as the deputy defense minister. See Suchit Bunbongkarn, "Thailand in 1991: Coping with Military Guardianship," *Asian Survey*, 32:2, 1992, 131-133; and Neher and Marlay, 34.

sectors over a short period of time, equaling a near reversal of the past foreign policy. After explaining his announcement of changing Thailand's foreign policy and the early controversy, eight components of Thai-Lao relations from 1988-1991 will be described in order to demonstrate the significant changes that occurred. These are: 1) the insurgencies in Thailand and Laos, 2) Lao refugees, 3) Vietnamese troops' withdrawal from Laos, 4) the Cambodian situation, 5) Thai-Lao border issues, 6) military cooperation, 7) social and technical cooperation, and 8) bilateral trade and investment.

Chatichai's "Shock": From Battlefields to Marketplace

In July 1988, national elections were held in Thailand for the House of Representatives. The Chat Thai Party, led by General Chatichai Choonhavan, won the largest bloc of seats (87 out of 357) and formed a coalition with five other parties.² General Chatichai announced that he was not willing to be prime minister, despite his party having the largest number of seats, arguing that he was not ready for the post. Instead, he supported General Prem for another term as prime minister, even though General Prem was not an elected member of parliament.³

General Prem stunned many people by declining the coalition's nomination and announcing his retirement from politics. Student demonstrations against him

² The coalition government which formed in July-August 1988 was comprised of the following parties, with their respective number of seats: Chat Thai (87), Social Action (54), Democrat (48), Rassadorn (21), United Democracy (5), and Muanchon (5).

³ Under Thailand's constitution at that time, a non-elected person was eligible to serve as prime minister.

and intense criticism from the opposition parties during the previous parliament led to his resignation. Furthermore, General Prem reasoned that it was time for an elected member of parliament to serve as the Prime Minister to help promote democracy.⁴

The coalition then turned to General Chatichai to form a government. After days of negotiations for allocating cabinet portfolios and an attempt by opposition parties to nominate Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila (head of the Social Action Party), General Chatichai accepted the post, thus becoming the first elected member of parliament to serve as prime minister since 1976.

On the day he was officially appointed Prime Minister by King Bhumibhol, August 4, 1988, General Chatichai shocked Southeast Asia with his soon-to-be famous statement encapsulating his administration's foreign policy shift. Prime Minister Chatichai announced, "...there will be an adjustment in our policies towards our neighbouring countries. We want Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as our trade markets, and not as a battlefield."⁵ This "battlefields into marketplace" slogan became the foundation of General Chatichai's Indochina policy and the launching point for rapidly reversing Thailand's hard-line stance towards them.

A few comments concerning Prime Minister Chatichai's Indochina statement are necessary. Despite assertions from some Thai academics and officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the "battlefields into marketplace" idea was the initiative of Chatichai's advisors, the idea and slogan for transforming relations with

⁴ "Prem Calls it Quits," Bangkok Post, July 28, 1988, 1 and 3; and FBIS-EAS-88-145, July 28, 1988, 70.

⁵ FBIS-EAS-88-150, August 4, 1988, 48.

Indochina originated with General Chatichai. Two of his advisors, Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Borwornsak Uwanno, stressed this point during personal interviews.⁶ The fact that General Chatichai did not expect to become prime minister after the elections would seem to confirm this. Even after the coalition decided on him, his nomination was not certain for several days until an agreement on the allocation of cabinet posts was reached. Prime Minister Chatichai's advisory team had not yet been assembled on the night he received the royal appointment as Prime Minister.⁷ Therefore, the "battlefields into marketplace" idea is not likely to have originated with the advisors.

A second point regarding the statement is that it applied to Indochina as a whole, not merely to Laos. However, Laos is singled out in this study for three reasons. First, Thailand's relationship with Laos improved much faster compared to Thailand's relationships with Vietnam and Cambodia during the same period. Second, as will be explained further in Chapter 5, it was part of the strategy of General Chatichai and his advisors to seek rapprochement with Laos first in order to induce change in the rest of Indochina. Third, the importance of Thai-Lao rapprochement for all of Indochina has been overlooked by scholars and analysts. As will be seen throughout the dissertation, improved Thai-Lao relations developed

⁶ Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interviews, April 18, 1996, and April 9, 1996, respectively, Bangkok. On the opposing view, Surachai Sirikrai, professor of political science at Thammasat University, asserted that the "battlefields to marketplace" slogan was devised by the prime minister's advisors. Personal interview, March 27, 1996, Bangkok. Noppadol Kunnavibulaya and Surapong Jayanama of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also claimed the battlefield into marketplace idea came from the prime minister's advisors. Personal interviews, June 4, 1996, and August 16, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

⁷ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

trust among Thailand and the Indochinese states which facilitated the end of the Cambodian crisis. Additionally, improved Thai-Lao relations helped promote an emphasis on social and economic development and the market economy reforms begun by Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. According to William Worner, "The determination of Laos to pursue its development strategy can best be measured by the rapid improvement in Lao-Thai relations over the year [1988]."⁸

Early Stages of the Policy Change

The prime minister's Indochina proclamation caused a great deal of commotion in Thailand's foreign policy establishment because it caught everyone, including officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by surprise. Speculation of a rift between General Chatichai and Foreign Minister Siddhi began a few days after Chatichai's August 4th announcement, when Foreign Minister Siddhi said that the Cambodian problem must be resolved before Thailand engages in open and free trade with Indochina. He explained that he was not challenging the prime minister's battlefields to marketplace policy but insisted that Vietnamese troops be withdrawn from Cambodia, peace restored, and a superpower agreement on the reconstruction of Cambodia be reached prior to developing trade ties.⁹

In a speech before the National Assembly on August 25, 1988, Foreign Minister Siddhi clarified his reservations about the prime minister's Indochina policy

⁸ William Worner, "Economic Reform and Structural Change in Laos," Southeast Asian Affairs 1989 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), 204.

⁹ "Siddhi: Peace Needed Before Indochina Trade," Bangkok Post, August 10, 1988, 2.

by saying, "It only depends on the timing—when are we going to do it."¹⁰ Clearly there were differences between the prime minister and foreign minister, but this initial dispute reflects the refinements and critiques of bureaucratic politics rather than the assumptions by the second-wave scholars of bureaucratic politics. For instance, Foreign Minister Siddhi disagreed with Prime Minister Chatichai about the tactics and pace of change rather than the overall direction, which is an argument made by Clifford and Bendor and Hammond.¹¹

To reduce some of the confusion over Thailand's foreign policy after General Chatichai's "shock," the prime minister and Foreign Minister Siddhi conducted behind-the-scenes talks to reach an understanding.¹² The result of the bargaining was that General Chatichai qualified his Indochina statement, saying that Thailand will not normalize trade ties with Vietnam until all Vietnamese troops are withdrawn from Cambodia (but Laos was not mentioned); for his part, the foreign minister reportedly agreed to transfer some critics of General Chatichai's Indochina policy from the Foreign Ministry's Department of Information.¹³

This compromise did little to quell speculation that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its minister were strongly opposed to General Chatichai's foreign policy initiatives.¹⁴ Prime Minister Chatichai and Foreign Minister Siddhi were continually

¹⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-170, September 1, 1988, 54. For the issue of timing, see also "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation, November 22, 1989, 8.

¹¹ Clifford, 150; and Bendor and Hammond, 314.

¹² "Chatichai, Siddhi Reach Accord on Indochina," The Straits Times, September 6, 1988, 8.

¹³ "Chatichai, Siddhi Reach Accord on Indochina," The Straits Times, September 6, 1988, 8.

¹⁴ See, for instance, FBIS-EAS-88-223, November 23, 1988, 52; "Siddhi Denies Rift

on the defensive, trying to downplay apparent differences between them over the new Indochina policy. Most of the speculation about their rift can be summarized in three concerns of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the prominent role of the prime minister's advisory team in foreign affairs (and the consequent reduction in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' role), the pace of foreign policy change, and how the new policy would affect a settlement in Cambodia.

In a series of interviews with Thai government officials, General Chatichai's advisors, Thai military officers, and Thai academics, these three concerns of the MFA became apparent. The specific breakdown of how many respondents identified each one is as follows: a) opposition to the advisors' interference/actions in foreign affairs: 7 (5 government and military officials, 2 advisors); b) opposition to the pace of foreign policy change: 4 (2 government officials, 2 academics); c) opposed changing strategy for Cambodia: 4 (1 government official, 2 advisors, 1 academic).¹⁵

Prime Minister Chatichai denied that there were any problems between him and his foreign minister. Chatichai explained that he was not attempting to reduce the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but as prime minister it was his duty to

w/ Chatichai," The Nation, October 15, 1989, 2; "Premier Told to Clearly Define I'china Policy," The Nation, October 16, 1989, 2; and "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation, November 22, 1989, 8.

¹⁵ Other concerns of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mentioned by the respondents include a desire to continue isolating Vietnam (1 academic, 1 Member of Parliament); one advisor said the MFA merely resented foreign policy decisions going to the prime minister; and three respondents said there was opposition but did not specify any particular reason (1 advisor, 1 Member of Parliament, 1 academic). Two government officials said there was no opposition at all by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some of the respondents identified more than one reason for the MFA's objections. Interestingly, only one respondent (an academic) said there was opposition to improving relations with Laos.

oversee all policies.¹⁶ One of the prime minister's advisors, Sukhumbhand Paribatra, explained that General Chatichai decided to play a more active role in foreign policy compared to his predecessor, General Prem, and that General Prem's lack of oversight in foreign policy was merely an exception to Thailand's normal foreign policy-making process.¹⁷

Much to the chagrin of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Chatichai's active involvement in foreign policy paved the way for a significant role to be played by his personal advisors. In typical bureaucratic politics fashion, officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who were used to having a free hand under Prime Minister Prem, felt that their "turf" was being encroached upon by the prime minister and his advisors, which led to much of the dispute over the conduct of foreign affairs.

Additionally, the greater involvement of the prime minister and his advisors in foreign affairs caused some confusion over the role of other agencies in the restructuring. During a government seminar about the transition of Indochina from a battlefield to a marketplace, several agencies complained about the lack of clear guidelines for implementing the prime minister's policy.¹⁸ Agencies explained that each of them was defining and interpreting the policy change on its own. Additionally, they believed that the overall policy was nebulous due to conflict between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the prime minister's advisors.

¹⁶ FBIS-EAS-88-226, November 23, 1988, 52.

¹⁷ FBIS-EAS-88-226, November 23, 1988, 51.

¹⁸ "Premier Told to Clearly Define I'china Policy," The Nation, October 16, 1989, 2.

The rapid pace of the Indochina foreign policy change also stimulated considerable controversy. One reporter labeled the reversal as General Chatichai's "blitzkrieg diplomacy," claiming that the change was too fast and caught people, including those in Thailand's government, unprepared.¹⁹ However, many officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who were opposed to the pace of change towards the Indochinese states were not necessarily opposed to the idea of improving relations with Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia.²⁰

Another source of friction between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on one side and Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors on the other was how the new Indochina policy might affect the MFA's dealings with Cambodia. In November 1989 Foreign Minister Siddhi again expressed his concern about the timing of General Chatichai's Indochina announcement, saying that it could harm Thailand's handling of the Cambodian situation if relations with Vietnam were improved before a settlement was reached.²¹

Officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were ambivalent about the restructuring because they believed that the MFA had been making progress in the Cambodian conflict the past few years by its hard-line policy towards Vietnam.²²

¹⁹ FBIS-EAS-89-029, February 14, 1989, 48. See also Thai MP Prasop Butsarakham's criticisms of the pace of policy change in FBIS-EAS-88-245, December 21, 1988, 68.

²⁰ This point was mentioned in four personal interviews conducted by the writer: Suwit Suttanukul, former Secretary-General of Thailand's National Security Council, July 10, 1996, Bangkok; Dr. Subin Pinkayan, former Commerce Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, July 12, 1996, Bangkok; Dr. Khien Theeravit, February 16, 1996, Bangkok; Dr. Surachai Sirikrai, March 27, 1996, Bangkok.

²¹ "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation, November 22, 1989, 8.

²² This point was mentioned in four personal interviews conducted by the writer: Sukhumbhand Paribatra, April 18, 1996, Bangkok; Kraisaak Choonhavan, May 6, 1996, Bangkok; Noppadol Kunnavibulaya, August 16, 1996, Bangkok; and Prasop

Some officials condemned Prime Minister Chatichai's Indochina policy, lambasting it as an "empty slogan," "business-oriented diplomacy," and "showmanship diplomacy designed to produce instant results while ignoring historical developments and basic principles of prudent diplomacy."²³ Some senior Foreign Ministry officials were placed under close scrutiny for criticizing the prime minister and his advisors, especially regarding Cambodia, and disciplinary probes were launched against them.²⁴

Although there was some initial resistance to the "battlefields to marketplace" policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ultimately joined Chatichai, his advisors, the National Security Council, and the military in implementing a restructuring of foreign policy towards the Indochinese states. The bureaucratic conflict occurred over the pace of the restructuring and the tactics, rather than the overall direction of the foreign policy. Furthermore, the disputes between Chatichai and the MFA demonstrate Bendor and Hammond's point that conflict between decision-makers does not always mean that they have different goals; they may differ only on how to achieve those goals.²⁵

Butsarakham, Member of Parliament, August 1, 1996, Bangkok.

²³ "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation, November 22, 1989, 8.

²⁴ "Turmoil in the Twilight Zone," The Nation, November 21, 1989, 10.

²⁵ Bendor and Hammond, 314.

Chatichai's First Visit to Laos

In order to demonstrate that his Indochina proclamation was not mere rhetoric, Prime Minister Chatichai went to Laos in November 1988 to meet with Laos's Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane. Much of the groundwork for the meeting between the heads of government was laid by two of General Chatichai's personal advisors, Sukhumbhand Paribatra and Chuanchai Ajanant, who went on what Mr. Sukhumbhand called a "secret mission" to Laos.²⁶

At the conclusion of General Chatichai's meeting with Prime Minister Kaysone, the two leaders released a joint communiqué summarizing their agreements. Their discussions had resulted in an accord on eight points:²⁷ 1) Thailand would help develop Laos's communications network, electricity generation, and agricultural sector, along with promoting joint investment for goods which Laos can aptly export; 2) Thailand and Laos would appoint government-level Thai-Lao cooperation committees; 3) Thai-Lao and Lao-Thai Friendship Associations were to be established; 4) the two governments would cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) on settling the issue of the nearly 90,000 Lao refugees remaining in Thai camps; 5) military attaches were to be exchanged; 6) a joint Thai-Lao border committee would be appointed; 7) Thailand and Laos would cooperate to help resolve the Cambodian problem; and 8) Prime Ministers Chatichai

²⁶ Mr. Sukhumbhand said it was "secret" in the sense that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not informed in advance. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁷ See FBIS-EAS-88-228, November 28, 1988, 48.

and Kaysone agreed in principle to the construction of the first bridge across the Mekong River.

The agreement for the bridge was especially important for making the new relationship between Thailand and Laos manifest. Sukhumbhand Paribatra described its significance as follows:

...we approached the Lao side with the idea of building the bridge across the Mekong. The idea was not new of course, but the prime minister thought it was worth pursuing once more because it would symbolize both a new era of relationship between the two of us and also at the same time it would symbolize our past relationship: it would reflect our recognition that the two countries share a common culture, common past, a common civilization. It would be a perfect symbol. And it would be a working symbol also because it would be functionally valuable in terms of promoting trade and investment between the two countries and the people to people contact.²⁸

Some in the Thai media hailed Prime Minister Chatichai's visit to Laos as a success, saying that his visit would foster better relations between Thailand and Laos by establishing regular contact with each other, something which had been lacking since the 1970s.²⁹ Also, the media reported that the visit would break the cycle of stalemates and mutual recriminations.³⁰

General Chatichai's first visit to Laos demonstrated the commitment of his government to a new era of Thai-Lao relations. As the first Thai prime minister to visit Laos since 1979, and making the visit so soon into his term, Prime Minister

²⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok. The Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, which was financed by Australia, opened in 1994.

²⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-229, November 29, 1988, 50.

³⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-229, November 29, 1988, 50.

Chatichai showed the urgency which he placed on the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy with Laos.

Changes in Thai-Lao Relations Under Chatichai

Prime Minister Chatichai's first visit to Laos provided momentum for Thai-Lao rapprochement. Thai-Lao relations underwent comprehensive changes soon after his meeting with Prime Minister Kaysone. Thailand and Laos reached agreements on several issues which were previously sources of dispute and hostilities. It is to the specific changes in Thai-Lao relations that we now turn.

The Insurgencies

The domestic communist insurgency in Thailand reached its climax long before General Chatichai became prime minister, and it was no longer a major threat to the kingdom by the mid-1980s. However, most of the remaining Thai insurgents were still operating out of Laos. In Laos itself, Hmong and other rebel groups continued their raids and sabotage, often from Thai territory, against the Lao government in the late 1980s, but, as in the Thai case, these were becoming less frequent.

During the negotiations over Ban Rom Klao prior to the Chatichai administration, each government accused the other of continuing to assist the respective insurgents. Three months into Chatichai's term, the Thai government

expressed its displeasure at Laos's alleged help to the few CPT remnants still in Laos.³¹

However, by 1989 Thailand and Laos were making efforts to stop their respective insurgents, and the two governments stated their belief that neither was helping the insurgents.³² Cooperation between Thailand and Laos in the insurgent problem had never been closer. According to two Lao scholars, during General Chatichai's administration, Thailand and Laos cooperated seriously in security matters for the first time.³³ The remaining members of the Pak Mai communist movement began returning home after the Lao government had stopped assisting the rebels and told them to return to Thailand.³⁴ Pak Mai and other communists concluded that improved Thai-Lao relations had rendered continuing the struggle useless.³⁵

In 1990, Thailand and Laos enhanced their counter-insurgency cooperation by suppressing illegal cross-border activities through the establishment of the Joint Thai-

³¹ FBIS-EAS-88-229, November 29, 1988, 51. The CPT was estimated to have approximately 200-250 members. See FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 56. Other communist insurgent groups operated out of Laos in late 1988, notably Pak Mai and the pro-Soviet Thai People Democratic Movement. See Asian Defence Journal, November 1988, 108.

³² Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 91.

³³ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 117.

³⁴ "Thai Insurgents Based in Laos Heading Home," The Nation, April 26, 1989, 4.

³⁵ "Thai Insurgents Based in Laos Heading Home," The Nation, April 26, 1989, 4. Pak Mai was estimated to have approximately 150 members in Laos. The following year, only 50-60 members remained. See FBIS-EAS-89-172, September 7, 1989, 43, and Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 92, for the respective figures.

Lao Task Force. The task force was created to eliminate the operations of Thai communists based in Laos and Lao right-wing rebels based in Thailand.³⁶

General Sunthorn, the Supreme Commander in 1990, tried to reduce the Lao government's concern over the insurgents operating out of Thailand by saying they should be seen as ordinary bandits, and therefore not too much importance should be placed on the issue.³⁷ The rebels, most of whom were led by Vang Pao, a former general in the American CIA's secret army during the civil war in Laos, were merely interested in protecting their influence along the border.³⁸

Lao Refugees

The crisis of Lao refugees had begun to diminish in the mid-1980s when the flow of refugees began to subside. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the number of refugees declined because Thailand declared most of them economic refugees and refused to admit them. Improvements in Laos's economy also reduced the flow of refugees. However, during Prime Minister Chatichai's first year in office, 80,000-90,000 Lao refugees still remained in camps in Thailand. Refugees continued to be a problem because Laos saw the refugee camps as harboring right-wing insurgents. Furthermore, Thailand still had to provide basic needs for the Lao refugees until they were relocated. Laos had stated its willingness to accept voluntary returnees since the

³⁶ "Joint Thai-Lao Team Set Up Against Illegal Activities," Bangkok Post, August 18, 1990, 2.

³⁷ FBIS-EAS-90-129, July 5, 1990, 52.

³⁸ FBIS-EAS-90-132, July 10, 1990, 53-54.

Prem administration, but a complicated and time-consuming verification process by the Lao government had resulted in only about 3,500 refugees returning to Laos from 1980-1988.³⁹ (Bear in mind that over 300,000 Lao refugees had fled to Thailand between 1975 and the late 1980s.)

In early 1989 Thailand's Deputy Foreign Minister Prapas Limpabhandu went to Laos where the Thai and Lao governments committed to settle refugee repatriation as soon as possible.⁴⁰ Laos agreed to take back up to 150 refugees per month.⁴¹ In cooperation with the UNHCR, the "Home Sweet Home" project was started, under the terms of which voluntary returnees received food and agricultural tools to re-settle in Laos.⁴² The return of Lao refugees was facilitated by Laos agreeing to streamline its repatriation process by cutting down on the required paperwork. In 1989 alone, up to 1,700 Lao refugees voluntarily returned to Laos, with the main reason for the success being better relations between Thailand and Laos.⁴³ The average number of returnees to Laos for 1989 was nearly 142 per month, compared to 1980-1988 which averaged only 36 per month.

³⁹ FBIS-EAS-89-048, March 14, 1989, 53.

⁴⁰ FBIS-EAS-89-027, February 10, 1989, 51.

⁴¹ By August 1989, Laos had raised the number of refugees it would accept to 300 returnees per month. FBIS-EAS-90-015, January 23, 1990, 45.

⁴² FBIS-EAS-89-048, March 14, 1989, 53.

⁴³ "1,000 Refugees Back to Laos," The Nation, November 21, 1989, 2. The Nation reported that over 1,000 refugees were sent back to Laos, while another source says that according to the UNHCR, 1,700 refugees were returned. For the latter number, see Mayoury and Pheuiphanh, 96. A third estimate was 1,529 refugees. See FBIS-EAS-89-244, December 21, 1989, 57.

Vietnamese Troop Withdrawal from Laos

Laos's close relationship with Vietnam had been a source of concern for the Thai government for decades, especially because of the presence of Vietnamese troops in Laos. With Vietnamese troops stationed in Laos and Cambodia since the 1970s, Thailand's eastern frontier had been seen as vulnerable to a surprise Vietnamese attack.⁴⁴ Moreover, Thailand had frequently accused Vietnamese forces of being involved in the border clashes between Thailand and Laos. By late 1988, however, this significant source of tension between Thailand and Laos was removed when Laos announced that all Vietnamese troops had been withdrawn from Lao territory.⁴⁵

The Vietnamese forces were initially stationed in Laos for three reasons: 1) to help put down internal dissent in Laos; 2) to deter a hostile and possibly expansionist Thailand;⁴⁶ and 3) most importantly, to deter Chinese incursions into Vietnam via Laos. The Vietnamese troops were withdrawn as a concession to China in order to continue improving Lao-Chinese relations.⁴⁷ (Laos and China had

⁴⁴ Plotnick, 163-164.

⁴⁵ There was some early skepticism, though, among Thai government officials as to whether all Vietnamese troops had in fact been withdrawn. See, for instance, FBIS-EAS-88-226, November 23, 1988, 37.

⁴⁶ Martin Stuart-Fox, "Lao Foreign Policy," in David Wurfel and Bruce Burton, eds., The Political Economy of Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 283.

⁴⁷ Stuart-Fox, Buddhist Kingdom, Marxist State, 201. Another reason for the withdrawal not stated by Vietnam or Laos was certainly the economic problems preoccupying Vietnam. Vietnam could not afford to maintain troops in Laos and Cambodia due to its increasingly burdensome economic crisis.

decided to exchange ambassadors in June 1988.) The improvement in Lao-Chinese relations meant that Vietnamese soldiers were no longer needed in the northern region, and even Lao officials declared that the Vietnamese troops were unwelcome.⁴⁸

Although the move to withdraw Vietnamese troops from Laos was primarily intended to foster better relations with Beijing, it also had an impact on Thai-Lao relations. One editorial in the Bangkok newspaper The Nation said:

If it [the Vietnamese troop withdrawal] is true, and we are inclined to believe so, it is an important milestone marking the relaxation of tensions between Thailand and Laos. The presence of Vietnamese troops in Laos, estimated at from 20,000 to 50,000, had been a serious destabilizing element in the Thai-Lao relations.⁴⁹

Thailand's security concerns were reduced dramatically with the removal of Vietnamese troops from Laos because Hanoi's forces were now only in Cambodia to fight the Khmer Rouge.

Unconfirmed reports persisted alleging some Vietnamese soldiers were still based in Laos.⁵⁰ The Lao ambassador to Thailand in 1989, Khamphan Simmalavong, sought to assuage Thai skepticism by saying that the idea of Vietnam's quest to build an Indochina federation was now dead.⁵¹

⁴⁸ "Laos Edging Away from Its Vietnamese Brother," Asian Defence Journal, June 1989, 118.

⁴⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-234, December 6, 1988, 51.

⁵⁰ These claims were never proven, and any Vietnamese seen in Laos were probably from the minority population of Vietnamese, many of whom have lived in Laos for decades.

⁵¹ "Hanoi's Troops on the Decrease," Asian Defence Journal, May 1989, 119.

The withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Laos in 1988 did not entirely eliminate the problem Vietnam caused for Thai-Lao relations because the "special relationship" between Vietnam and Laos remained intact and provided other avenues for Vietnamese influence over Laos.⁵² Perhaps even more important was the unresolved issue of Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, which seemingly had done more damage to Thai-Lao relations than any other issue.

During the late 1980s there was a growing separation of Laos's and Vietnam's economic interests. Between 1975 and 1985 Vietnam was estimated to have given Laos \$133.4 million.⁵³ Vietnam and Laos had embarked on reforms in the mid-1980s to rescue their ailing economies; for Vietnam this meant lessening its economic assistance to Laos. Without Vietnamese aid, Laos began to look to Thailand and other non-communist states for trade and economic aid.⁵⁴ Under Prime Minister Chatichai, Thailand was willing to fill Laos's need for greater trade, investment, and assistance, which will be explained in greater detail in a later section. The point here is that as Laos's relationship with Thailand improved, Laos altered its ties with Vietnam,⁵⁵ which in turn reinforced better Thai-Lao relations.

⁵² Worner, 206-207. Cooperation could occur locally, among provinces, economically, and between the communist parties.

⁵³ Joseph J. Zasloff, "Vietnam and Laos: Master and Apprentice," in Joseph J. Zasloff, ed., *Postwar Indochina: Old Enemies and New Allies* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, 1988), 54.

⁵⁴ "Laos Edging Away from Its Vietnamese Brother," *Asian Defence Journal*, June 1989, 118.

⁵⁵ "Laos Edging Away from Its Vietnamese Brother," 118.

The Cambodian Situation

Since 1978, when Vietnam first invaded Cambodia, Thailand and its ASEAN allies had demanded that Vietnam withdraw all of its troops from Cambodia and allow free and fair elections for a new Cambodian government. ASEAN insisted that a Vietnamese withdrawal must occur first, and then international assistance to the Khmer Rouge would cease. Vietnam agreed to elections, but only on the condition that the Khmer Rouge be excluded from participation and that the elections not be under the supervision of the U.N.,⁵⁶ which Vietnam opposed because of the U.N.'s recognition of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea's (CGDK) "government-in-exile" and its refusal to guarantee that the Khmer Rouge would not return to power if Vietnam withdrew its troops.⁵⁷ Laos concurred with Vietnam and Hun Sen's government in their opposition to a revival of the Khmer Rouge.⁵⁸ The Indochinese states, therefore, insisted that the Vietnamese withdrawal occur simultaneously with the end of international assistance to the Khmer Rouge.⁵⁹

Vietnam had begun a partial withdrawal of its troops from Cambodia in November 1987, although a political settlement was still not at hand. During Prime Minister Chatichai's first few months in office, Hanoi announced that an additional

⁵⁶ Theeravit, 133.

⁵⁷ Asian Defence Journal, July 1988, 85. The CGDK was formed in 1982, consisting of the three opposition factions in Cambodia: Prince Sihanouk, Son Sann, and the Khmer Rouge. The CGDK had held the U.N. seat for Cambodia from 1982 until 1990.

⁵⁸ For Laos' stand on Cambodia, see FBIS-EAS-89-147, August 2, 1989, 48; and FBIS-EAS-89-218, November 14, 1989, 42.

⁵⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 42.

50,000 troops would be removed from Cambodia and that a complete withdrawal would be accomplished by the end of 1990. Surprisingly, Vietnam removed the last of its troops in Cambodia ahead of schedule, completing the withdrawal by September 1989. As in the case of Vietnam's troop withdrawal from Laos, reports circulated that not all of Hanoi's forces had actually left Cambodia.⁶⁰

Even before the complete Vietnamese troop withdrawal, Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors had been actively seeking a solution to the Cambodian dispute. In their opinion a new approach was needed for a political settlement. In front of the Foreign Press Correspondents' Club in Bangkok, Prime Minister Chatichai stated that he intended to invite Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen to Bangkok for talks.⁶¹ Thus, in January 1989, only five months into office, he invited Hun Sen for an "informal visit" to discuss the Cambodian dispute.

Neither Foreign Minister Siddhi, Thailand's fellow ASEAN members, nor China were consulted before General Chatichai made his intentions known. The move contradicted Thailand's existing policy of not recognizing the Hun Sen government, and because of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' insistence of not having

⁶⁰ Zara Dian, "The Vietnamese Military Withdrawal," Asian Defence Journal, November 1989, 5. Another report referring to the continuing presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia is found in "Thailand Says Vietnamese Troops Still in Cambodia," Asian Defence Journal, November 1989, 94-95.

⁶¹ According to Sukhumbhand Paribatra, the prime minister misheard a question and responded that Hun Sen would be welcome as a personal guest. The following morning, the advisors had an emergency meeting to handle the "crisis" of the invitation, but the prime minister simply said to go ahead with what he had stated. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok. Another advisor, Kraisak Choonhavan, however, said that the prime minister merely responded to a reporter's question about Hun Sen being welcome in Bangkok. After saying yes, he would be welcome in Bangkok, General Chatichai answered the question "When?" by saying, "Probably next month." Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

contact with Hun Sen, the prime minister's advisors dealt with him and his representatives.⁶² Laos was used as a secret meeting place between the advisors and Hun Sen's representatives to prepare for the visit.⁶³ Following Hun Sen's visit in January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to recognize his government as one of the factions vying for power in Cambodia.⁶⁴ Once again, Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors overcame bureaucratic resistance to their objectives.

Disputes between General Chatichai and the MFA continued when the prime minister and his advisors advocated an alternative approach to dealing with Cambodia. The goal of reaching a peaceful settlement in Cambodia was the same for both groups, but Chatichai and the MFA quarreled about the best means to achieve it. Under the Prem administration, Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had pursued a comprehensive solution to the Cambodian factions' disputes (without negotiating directly with Hun Sen), but no agreement was reached. Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors, however, proposed a step-by-step approach to the Cambodian conflict. Unlike the previous government, Prime Minister Chatichai did not see the need to carry out all components of the Paris agreement at the same time. He supported having a cease-fire first and was also willing to exclude the Khmer Rouge (if necessary) from an interim government in Cambodia.⁶⁵

⁶² Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶³ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁴ "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," The Nation, November 22, 1989, 8. In addition to the informal discussions arranged by the prime minister's advisors, other talks between the Cambodian factions were being held elsewhere. For instance, the second round of the Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) occurred in February 1989 (the first round having been in July 1988), and the Paris International Conference on Cambodia took place July-August 1989.

⁶⁵ FBIS-EAS-89-214, November 7, 1989, 58.

Other components of the prime minister's proposal were the following.⁶⁶ First, he wanted informal dialogue with all four Cambodian factions in order to avert full-scale war and overcome the deadlock from the 1989 Paris meeting. Second, General Chatichai insisted on international verification of the departure of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. Third, General Chatichai supported the idea of a four-party coalition government under Prince Sihanouk. And finally, the prime minister sought "to set up an international control mechanism to stop the civil war in Cambodia"⁶⁷ and to handle the transition period to a new government. This proposal would hopefully break the stalemate in Cambodia which persisted at the time.

Prime Minister Chatichai's stance on Cambodia upset the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ASEAN, China, and some Western states. After his meeting with Deng Xiao Ping in China, Beijing acquiesced and gave its support for him to pursue a step-by-step approach for Cambodia, as long as a comprehensive settlement was sought simultaneously.⁶⁸ Indonesia and other states vehemently opposed General Chatichai's approach and the abandonment of Thailand's hard-line stance,⁶⁹ but to no avail. The advisors persisted in their meetings with the Cambodian factions, working separately from the talks run by France and Indonesia.

⁶⁶ The first three are mentioned by Thailand's U.N. ambassador Nitya Pibulsonggram's speech before the U.N. See "From Optimism to Disappointment," The Nation, November 25, 1989, 8.

⁶⁷ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," The Nation, November 24, 1989, 8.

⁶⁸ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

⁶⁹ "Jakarta Rejects Thai Peace Proposal," The Nation, November 24, 1989, 1; and Surachai Sirikrai, "Thai Perceptions of China and Japan," Contemporary Southeast Asia 12:3, December 1990, 257-258.

In addition to using Laos as a meeting place, Prime Minister Chatichai's Cambodian strategy was relevant for Thai-Lao relations in another way. Laos' strong support for Thailand's new approach to settling the Cambodian problem helped to improve Thailand's relations with Laos and the other Indochinese states. The Lao government encouraged Chatichai's dialogue with Hun Sen, arguing that dialogue was better than confrontation.⁷⁰ Laos also agreed with Prime Minister Chatichai's proposal for a cease-fire and the termination of foreign military assistance in Cambodia as the first step toward a peace settlement.⁷¹ Additionally, Lao Prime Minister Kaysone announced his backing for Chatichai's proposal to establish an international control mechanism for verifying the Vietnamese troop withdrawal and voiced his overall support for Thailand's peace initiatives for Cambodia.⁷²

Laos expressed its appreciation for Prime Minister Chatichai's efforts at a meeting between their foreign ministers in November in 1990. Foreign Minister Phoun Sipaseut of Laos said:

Another issue worthy of attention is the creation of an atmosphere of peace, stability, and cooperation in the region. In this regard, Thailand is among those who have contributed to the efforts to settle the Cambodian problem, efforts which will help reduce the sufferings of the Cambodian people.⁷³

⁷⁰ FBIS-EAS-89-208, October 30, 1989, 43.

⁷¹ FBIS-EAS-89-208, October 30, 1989, 43.

⁷² FBIS-EAS-89-215, November 8, 1989, 38.

⁷³ FBIS-EAS-90-224, November 20, 1990, 48.

Laos's endorsement of Thailand's approach to Cambodia enabled the two countries to overcome one of the most divisive problems affecting their relations since 1978.

In 1990 the prime minister's advisors arranged a meeting between Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk in Bangkok to sign a joint communiqué for establishing a Supreme National Council in Cambodia and implementing a cease-fire. The document was to be re-signed by the various Cambodian factions in Japan at the Tokyo Accords in June, but only Sihanouk and Hun Sen participated. The Khmer Rouge refused to sign the agreement in Tokyo, claiming that it was different from the one signed by Hun Sen and Sihanouk in Bangkok.⁷⁴ Despite the Khmer Rouge's refusal to sign, General Chatichai was pleased with the Tokyo pact because at least Hun Sen and Sihanouk signed, and Sihanouk represented the opposition coalition.⁷⁵ Thus, progress, however little, had been made towards a settlement. China and the ASEAN states were not so satisfied and criticized the Tokyo accord and the advisors' actions.⁷⁶ For China and ASEAN, any agreement without the Khmer Rouge's participation was doomed to failure.

A final settlement for Cambodia was not reached during General Chatichai's administration.⁷⁷ However, the situation had improved enough under him to where

⁷⁴ Pichai Cheunsuksawadi, Nattaya Chetchotiros, and Supapohn Kanwerayotin, "PM's Indochina Policy," Bangkok Post, August 16, 1990, 6.

⁷⁵ "PM Hails Signing of Khmer Cease-Fire Pact," Bangkok Post, June 7, 1990, 10.

⁷⁶ Cheunsuksawadi, Chetchotiros, and Kanwerayotin, 6.

⁷⁷ In October 1991, eight months after General Chatichai had been overthrown in a military coup d'état, the Paris Conference for Cambodia was reconvened. At the October meeting, an agreement was reached by 19 countries to establish a U.N. role in Cambodia for an election. An election would be held for a constituent assembly which would write a constitution and then become a legislative assembly. In November 1991, the first of 16,000 U.N. troops arrived in Cambodia to monitor the cease-fire, disarm the warring factions, and eventually run the elections, an operation

Cambodia and Vietnam were no longer seen as a threat to Thailand's national security. General Chatichai's initiative produced, according to Kraisak Choonhavan, "incremental gains" and brought about a "conceptual breakthrough" by allowing Thailand to see beyond the security and defense aspects of Cambodia.⁷⁸ Moreover, the informal discussions with the Cambodian factions appeared to have made progress toward a settlement. Perhaps the most important outcome was that the Indochinese states concurred with Prime Minister Chatichai's approach for peace.

Border Issues

The border dispute over Ban Rom Klao was still unsettled when General Chatichai became prime minister because the previous rounds of negotiations had failed to find any common ground. Prior to General Chatichai's administration, Thailand had rejected calls for a new set of talks, due to Laos's refusal to participate in a joint border committee for demarcating the border.⁷⁹ Laos requested another meeting to settle the border dispute soon after General Chatichai made his foreign policy restructuring announcement in August 1988. The new request was likely made

known as the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The U.N. also served as the civil administration in Cambodia for the transitional period. Elections were held in May 1993, but the Khmer Rouge refused to participate. Sihanouk eventually became King Sihanouk and head of state, while his son Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen formed a coalition government and were named co-premiers. The U.N. troops left in November.

⁷⁸ Chuensuksawadi, Chetchotiros, and Kanwerayotin, 6.

⁷⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-176, September 12, 1988, 65.

because Laos perceived the new Thai government to be more open to negotiation and compromise than Prem's government.

Laos proposed during the talks that Ban Rom Klao be developed jointly by Thailand and Laos, which demonstrated Laos's receptivity to Thailand's foreign policy reversal. Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected the idea, saying it was not possible because such a proposal would entail altering Thailand's border. In contrast, Thailand's military, which had been playing the lead role in negotiating Ban Rom Klao since the cease-fire in February 1988, agreed to the joint development idea. The military argued that the area on both sides of the border was for the Hmong hilltribe, and not for Thai or Lao people to settle in.⁸⁰ The Thai military's acceptance of Laos's proposal for joint development was in stark contrast to their rejection of the same idea during the Prem administration.

The Thai and Lao militaries markedly increased their cooperation on border issues during Chatichai's administration. Instrumental in this reconciliation were Thailand's Army Commander-in-Chief and acting Supreme Commander General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh and Laos's army chief General Sisavat Keobounphan, both of whom were ardent supporters of Thai-Lao rapprochement. The two military leaders served as chairmen for the Thai-Lao Policy Implementation Committee, which was established to resolve the Ban Rom Klao dispute and discuss economic matters, reducing smuggling, and suppressing Lao exiles operating out of Thailand.⁸¹

⁸⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-208, October 27, 1988, 61. However, the joint development proposal was never implemented.

⁸¹ For reports of the committee's activities, see FBIS-EAS-89-007, January 11, 1989, 50; FBIS-EAS-89-068, April 11, 1989, 49; and FBIS-EAS-89-129, July 7, 1989, 74.

Laos finally accepted a Thai-Lao joint technical committee during Prime Minister Chatichai's visit to Laos in November 1988. The following month, members were appointed to the new board, which was headed by the deputy foreign minister from each state. The first meeting was held in December at Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the committee agreed to study the legal aspects of the border dispute and survey the area in question.

In April and May 1989 a subcommittee conducted a field and aerial survey of Ban Rom Klao in a technical manner to avoid politicizing the issue. This marked a major departure from previous attempts. Both sides also agreed to use only the 1907 Franco-Siamese treaty for determining the border, which was an important reversal from the Prem administration's insistence on using a U.S.-made map.⁸²

In other border matters, Thailand and Laos diffused a recurring cause of border clashes in the past by agreeing to have joint patrols along the Mekong River. These began in January 1989.⁸³ In 1990, Deputy Defense Minister Chaovalit and General Sisavat of Laos agreed to form a unit to prevent smuggling and the flow of narcotics and pledged to cooperate in fishing and tourism on the Mekong. One newspaper praised the ideas by saying: "The joint patrols would represent the 'first concrete effort' by the two Southeast Asia neighbours to avoid a recurrence of border

⁸² While the agreement to use the 1907 treaty was a significant achievement, Thailand and Laos differed over various points of the treaty, mainly due to ambiguity in the writing. FBIS-EAS-89-101, May 26, 1989, 53.

As of February 1998, the border at Ban Rom Klao has still not been demarcated, but the two states have set up various joint committees which meet several times a year. In April 1997 a joint military survey team agreed to begin demarcating 730 kilometers of the border, but they decided to leave the "three villages" and Ban Rom Klao out of the border survey for the time being. See Bangkok Post, internet edition, April 14, 1997, at <http://www.bangkokpost.net>.

⁸³ FBIS-EAS-89-011, January 18, 1989, 50.

conflicts on the river border."⁸⁴ Cooperation in this area represented another commitment by the governments in Thailand and Laos to prevent any potential rupture to the process of reconciliation.

Military Cooperation Between Thailand and Laos

The military played an instrumental role in Thailand's foreign policy restructuring by doing much of the bureaucratic work for improving Thai-Lao relations,⁸⁵ such as handling discussions about the border, fishing and tourism, and economic cooperation. Frequent meetings by the heads of the Thai and Lao militaries, General Chaovalit and General Sisavat, helped to create a firm foundation for cooperation early in the Chatichai administration.

Earlier in the year, the Thai and Lao militaries renounced the use of force in their disputes and pledged greater cooperation. To help attain these ends, General Sisavat went to Thailand in October 1988 for a three-day visit, mainly to discuss Ban Rom Klao. Soon afterwards, General Chaovalit returned the visit by going to Laos for additional talks to increase cooperation between the two militaries. During General Chaovalit's visit to Viang Chan, a preliminary agreement was reached to restore military attaches, which had been severed since the Pathet Lao took power in 1975.⁸⁶ To ensure instant communication and to help defuse any potential crises, a

⁸⁴ "Thailand and Laos Agree on Joint Mekong Patrols: Report," Straits Times, May 23, 1990, 15.

⁸⁵ Weatherbee, 352.

⁸⁶ FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 40.

hotline was established between Laos's Ministry of Defense and Thailand's Supreme Command Headquarters.⁸⁷

Also during General Chaovalit's October visit, the Thai and Lao militaries expressed their intent to revive the 1979 joint communiqué (signed by former Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak and Lao Prime Minister Kaysone). This provided that Thailand and Laos would respect each other's sovereignty, would not interfere in each other's domestic affairs, renounced the use of force to solve disputes, would not allow intervention by any third state with intentions to invade Thailand or Laos, and fostered cooperation in economic and cultural matters.

In November 1988, General Sisavat returned to Thailand once again to meet with General Chaovalit. The two military chiefs prepared a joint press release stating that Thailand and Laos would broaden their cooperation in economics, trade, communications, and tourism and negotiate the border dispute.⁸⁸ The Thai and Lao militaries sought to ensure peace along their border by expanding cooperation in sectors usually not involving the military. Additionally, the inclusion of economic and social cooperation were likely part of fulfilling the Thai military's *Suwannabhum* (Golden Peninsula) concept.

For instance, the Thai military agreed to provide its Lao counterpart assistance for agricultural and forestry projects.⁸⁹ The Thai military's rural development projects, such as the "New Hope Project" and "Green Isan," provided them with the experience in rural development which could be used to assist the Lao

⁸⁷ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 117.

⁸⁸ Worner, 205.

⁸⁹ FBIS-EAS-89-056, March 24, 1989, 67.

military.⁹⁰ Additionally, in April 1989, General Chaovalit went to Laos with an 80-person (civilian and military) delegation. The Thai and Lao representatives were divided into seven subcommittees: legal affairs, academic and public health, agriculture and rural development, communications, energy and industry, investment, and tourism.⁹¹ The expanded involvement of the Thai and Lao militaries in fields such as patrolling borders, communications, economics, and tourism would make going to war all the more unlikely because it would involve terminating activities which they had mutual interests in continuing.

General Chaovalit's cordial relations with the Lao military served Thai interests. In a January 1989 meeting with General Sisavat, General Chaovalit requested that Laos ease its ban on timber exports (started in December 1988) to help meet Thailand's timber demand.⁹² Thailand had responded to the flash floods of November 1988 by banning all logging on January 17, 1989. It was probably no coincidence that General Chaovalit made his request for Laos to lift its ban on timber exports just prior to Thailand's domestic ban on logging. Within three months of the request, the Lao government loosened the ban and permitted the export of logs cut from previously "planned cutting areas."⁹³

⁹⁰ General Chaovalit was a strong advocate of the military's role in rural development and increasing people's standard of living. He maintained that the constitution required the military to support national development in Thailand. See FBIS-EAS-89-054, March 22, 1989, 65.

⁹¹ FBIS-EAS-89-068, April 11, 1989, 49.

⁹² FBIS-EAS-89-010, January 17, 1989, 64.

⁹³ Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...," 177.

The close ties between the two militaries continued even after General Chaovalit retired from the military. His successor as Supreme Commander, General Sunthorn Khongsomphong (in April 1990), became the co-chairman of the Policy Implementation Committee. In his first visit to Laos in July, General Sunthorn expressed his desire to continue strengthening ties between Laos and Thailand, promote cooperation and friendship, and defend peace in the region.⁹⁴

The level of military cooperation between Thailand and Laos during Prime Minister Chatichai's administration was unprecedented. Both sides demonstrated their intentions to make armed conflict virtually unthinkable in the future by establishing extensive interlinkage between their militaries in numerous sectors, especially ones not normally involving the military, and having extensive contact to prevent problems arising from a lack of communication.

As noted earlier, General Chaovalit was a strong supporter of Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring. The Thai military's activities in improving Thai-Lao relations matched the prime minister's desire to increase cooperation, prevent fighting, and enhance economic ties. While negotiations for the border had begun before General Chatichai's term, the increased cooperation between the two militaries and the extension of their activities into areas normally considered outside the military realm did not commence until after Prime Minister Chatichai initiated his Indochina policy. It would seem, then, that the Thai military leaders followed the broad guidelines of Chatichai's Laos policy. However, not being able to interview General Chaovalit or the other top military leaders in Thailand makes it unclear if the

⁹⁴ FBIS-EAS-90-129, July 5, 1990, 52.

Thai military relied on Prime Minister Chatichai (who was also Defense Minister) for directives or if they took the initiative for Thai-Lao military cooperation on their own.

Social and Technical Cooperation

Prime Minister Chatichai sought to further strengthen relations with Laos by establishing friendship associations and promoting exchanges in the social and technical areas. During General Chatichai's visit to Laos in November 1988, he and Prime Minister Kaysone decided to create friendship associations. Both countries eventually established their respective associations, known in Laos as the Lao-Thai Friendship Association (created in November 1988) and in Thailand as the Thai-Lao Friendship Association (formed in March 1989). The purpose of the friendship associations, according to Prime Minister Chatichai, was to serve as a link for exchanges in social, economic, and technical fields, along with fostering a deeper mutual understanding.⁹⁵ The Friendship Associations were not restricted to the national level, nor were they intended solely for the governments. Both countries formed the associations at the national and local levels, enabling private Thai and Lao citizens to participate. The first meeting between the two associations occurred in November 1989.

In the area of education, Prime Minister Chatichai recognized Laos's need for higher education and offered to help fill this important aspect of social development. This, he reasoned, would in turn help improve Thai-Lao relations.⁹⁶ He announced

⁹⁵ FBIS-EAS-89-033, February 21, 1989, 64.

⁹⁶ Pimporn Tantayanusorn, "Lao Students Soon to Study at Khon Kaen Univ.," The Nation, April 10, 1989, 1.

in early 1989 that Khon Kaen University (in the Northeast) would be the site for Thai-Lao educational cooperation, in which Lao students would attend the university for training in fields such as agriculture.

In 1989, Thailand gave 50 scholarships to Lao students and officials. The following year, the government gave 200 scholarships for agriculture, soil conservation, water management, and related fields. Foreign Minister Subin signed an agreement with Lao Foreign Minister Phoun Sipaseut to grant over 7 million baht (\$280,000) to Lao officials and students for science and technology programs in 1990-1991. Much of the funding was for scholarships in agriculture and public health.⁹⁷

Medicine and public health were also emphasized in Thailand's assistance to Laos. Laos requested help from Thailand for public hygiene, blood programs, pharmaceutical services, and emergency medical treatment. To facilitate the assistance, Thailand and Laos formed the Thai-Lao Medical and Public Health Cooperation Project. Other programs in the health and medicine field included Lao medical personnel receiving training in Bangkok.

The development of social and technical cooperation between Thailand and Laos demonstrates the comprehensiveness of Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring. It was not restricted to formal government channels. Instead, multiple sectors of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos were reversed from the previous government's policy. The changes in social and technical issue-areas aimed at fulfilling vital needs in Laos, which in turn would likely substantiate the goodwill of the Chatichai administration.

⁹⁷ FBIS-EAS-90-224, November 20, 1990, 50.

Bilateral Trade and Investment

Prime Minister Chatichai's slogan of turning Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace demonstrated the significance he attributed to increasing trade and investment between Thailand and its Indochinese neighbors. The idea of increasing trade with Indochina received a great deal of support both within the government and in the private sector, although there were still some in government and parliament who opposed establishing formal trade ties with Indochina. Among those who opposed trade relations with the Indochinese states was Foreign Minister Siddhi. His reason for delaying trade ties was his belief that it would hinder Thailand's efforts at removing the Vietnamese from Cambodia. Various political party members, including Chat Thai and Social Action Party members, and members of parliament also opposed opening up trade relations with Indochina because they had "informal" monopolies in blackmarket trade along the borders with Laos and Cambodia.⁹⁸

The House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee endorsed the prime minister's initiative for establishing formal trade links with Indochina, and in November 1988 its spokesman, Surin Pitsuwan, said that the policy to initiate trade and economic relations with Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was "modern, timely and supportive of the cause of world peace."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Confidential interview. Bangkok, 1996.

⁹⁹ Tan Lian Choo, "Boost ties w/ Laos first...," 10. Interestingly, among the committee's advisors were former Prime Minister General Kriangsak and former Deputy Foreign Minister and ex-ambassador to Laos Wong Pholnikorn, both of whom had been ardent supporters of improving Thai-Lao relations since the 1970s.

However, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs also recommended that Thailand expand economic relations with Laos before developing ties with Vietnam and Cambodia, citing the cultural similarities between Thailand and Laos as the major reason for its recommendation.¹⁰⁰ Mr. Surin said on behalf of the committee: "We should separate Laos from the group of Indochinese countries and promote trade with the landlocked neighbour on a bilateral basis."¹⁰¹ He also explained, "We should make clear that the Thai-Laos situation would be a special case, and separate from Indochina as a whole."¹⁰² Soon afterwards, the committee recommended that the Chatichai government open all 17 border points with Laos to implement the new trade policy since at the time (September 1988) only three points were open.¹⁰³ Gradually most of the border points were opened for trade.

To maintain momentum gained from Prime Minister Chatichai's visit to Laos in November 1988, Commerce Minister Subin Pinkayan made a follow-up visit to Laos in January 1989 for talks on bilateral trade and investment. A trade memorandum was signed, which included: 1) an agreement to use the Thai currency (the baht) for Thai-Lao trade to avoid exchange rate problems with the U.S. dollar,¹⁰⁴ 2) proposals for cooperation in the banking and monetary sector, and 3) Laos's decision to revise the ban on timber exports.

¹⁰⁰ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 90; Tan Lian Choo, "Boost ties w/ Laos first...," 10; and Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...," 168.

¹⁰¹ Tan Lian Choo, "Boost ties w/ Laos first...," 10.

¹⁰² FBIS-EAS-88-185, September 23, 1988, 37.

¹⁰³ Tan Lian Choo, "Thai, Laos Military Chiefs Still Seeking Solution to Border Conflict," The Straits Times, October 1, 1988, 11.

¹⁰⁴ In April 1989, Prime Minister Chatichai announced that Thailand would begin allowing the free circulation of the baht in Indochina so that it could be used as the

During this trip, Laos made a number of requests, such as asking Thailand to lower the number of banned items on the strategic goods list, reduce transportation costs on goods to and from Laos, cut tariffs on imports from Laos, and terminate the transportation monopoly held by Thailand's state-owned Express Transport Organization (ETO).¹⁰⁵

A few weeks before Commerce Minister Subin went to Laos, Chatichai's cabinet approved a recommendation from the National Security Council that the number of items banned from export be reduced from 61 to 29. Among the items taken off the list of banned strategic goods were heavy machinery and engines, tractors and bulldozers, cranes, motorboats, bicycles, steel and aluminum construction materials, asphalt, gunny bags, and medicine. Some of the items that remained on the list were combat equipment, chemicals usable in heroin manufacturing, telecommunications equipment, planes, helicopters and their parts, and navigation equipment.¹⁰⁶ The cabinet also decided to open two more border crossing points.

Foreign Minister Siddhi said that Thailand would consider eliminating the remaining 29 items on the strategic goods list if Thai-Lao relations continued to improve.¹⁰⁷ A committee was formed with representatives from different government agencies to discuss the strategic goods list; the committee eventually

common currency for trade in the region. The Thai baht is readily accepted in Laos, and consumers in Laos can conduct transactions in either the U.S. dollar, Lao kip, or Thai baht. The U.S. dollar is still widely used, though.

¹⁰⁵ FBIS-EAS-89-011, January 18, 1989, 48.

¹⁰⁶ FBIS-EAS-88-245, December 21, 1988, 67.

¹⁰⁷ FBIS-EAS-88-247, December 23, 1988, 59.

recommended that the complete list be abolished.¹⁰⁸ Finally, in December 1989, the cabinet completely lifted the 14-year-old ban on the export of strategic goods. The Thai government explained that the export ban on those goods was no longer necessary due to the changing regional situation.¹⁰⁹

The decision to eliminate the ban was not endorsed by all government agencies, however. While the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Industry were in favor of ending the ban, the Ministry of Defense and the Express Transport Organization wanted to maintain it.¹¹⁰ Slow to adapt to the changing situation, the Thai military still feared that some of the items could be used for military purposes and therefore posed a potential security problem. Likewise, the state-owned ETO wanted to maintain its established routine of monopolizing the flow of goods between Thailand and Laos. The termination of the strategic goods list meant the ETO's continuation was in doubt because one of its primary purposes had been to ensure control over sensitive goods in Thai-Lao trade. After settling the conflicting interests, the National Security Council recommended lifting the ban to the cabinet.¹¹¹ By eliminating the strategic goods list, the Chatichai government had removed one more source of contention between Thailand and Laos.

¹⁰⁸ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁹ "Strategic Goods Can Now Be Sold to Laos," Asian Defence Journal, January 1990, 90.

¹¹⁰ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹¹ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

The level of total Thai-Lao trade during Chatichai's administration generally increased, but it dropped slightly in 1990 before increasing the following year. Table 1 shows the amount of Thai-Lao trade from 1988 to 1991.

Table 1: Thai-Lao Trade 1988-1991 (in millions of baht).¹¹²

	1988	1989	1990	1991
Thailand exports to Laos	1,298	1,639	1,683	1,959
Thailand imports from Laos	568	1,286	1,134	1,201
Total Thai-Lao trade	1,866	2,925	2,817	3,160

Sources: Bank of Thailand, Rayngansetakij Raydeun (Monthly Economic Bulletin), July 1995; and Statistical Yearbook Thailand, nos. 37 and 38, 1990 and 1991.

Table 1 shows a large jump in total Thai-Lao trade from 1988 to 1989 (the latter year represents Prime Minister Chatichai's first full year in office). Among the factors contributing to the rise in Thai-Lao trade were the changes in foreign trade made by the Thai government in 1988 and 1989. One change was that all 17 provincial governors in the Northeast were authorized to approve trade requests by merchants, compared to the previous policy of allowing only two governors to have this power.¹¹³ A second factor was the Commerce Ministry's relaxation of some of

¹¹² Throughout 1988-1991, U.S.\$1 equaled approximately 25 baht.

¹¹³ FBIS-EAS-88-172, September 6, 1988, 53. Also, several other restrictions on Thai-Lao trade from the previous administration were still in place, such as having

the regulations restricting Thai-Lao trade, including extending trading licenses from one to two years.¹¹⁴ Third, as mentioned earlier, Thailand opened additional cross-river checkpoints during 1989.¹¹⁵

The slight decline in total Thai-Lao trade in 1990 can be at least partly explained by the fact that the Lao government felt overwhelmed by Thai businessmen coming into Laos. One reporter for the Bangkok newspaper The Nation wrote, "...with all the Thai businesses moving in, Laos could end up as another province of Thailand."¹¹⁶ Another report a few months later said, "Unscrupulous traders from the Thai side who were bent on exploiting the Laotians had muddled the atmosphere, which prompted a current slowdown in trade."¹¹⁷

Prime Minister Chatichai was aware of some of the exploitation which had occurred. He responded by saying:

I often reminded Thai businessmen going into these neighbouring countries that they should not take undue advantage of their counterparts, who have already suffered from wars. When we trade with Indochina, we should not aim at reaping too much profit. We have to think about mutual reliance, sharing of profits equitably, selling merchandise of good quality; these are the keys to the opening of markets in Indochina.¹¹⁸

Thai companies which intended to trade with Laos register with the Foreign Trade Department and limiting each company's trade with Laos to only 20,000 baht per day.

¹¹⁴ Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...", 169-170.

¹¹⁵ Ng Shui Meng, "Laos: Taking the Pragmatic Road," Southeast Asian Affairs 1990 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), 160.

¹¹⁶ The Nation, April 9, 1989, cited in Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 37.

¹¹⁷ The Nation, September 1, 1989, cited in Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 38.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 36.

Yet the prime minister also defended his policy of turning Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace by arguing that it had helped Thailand's economy and increased Indochina's development. He added, "In the past we gave importance to trading partners far away, but now we know we should trade with our neighbours."¹¹⁹

In an effort to contain the influx of Thai businessmen, the Lao government imposed new restrictions on Lao businessmen dealing directly with Thai counterparts and increased import and export tariffs.¹²⁰ The import tariff was raised to as high as 70% of the product's value.¹²¹ Additionally, the Lao government established quotas in May 1990 for imports and exports with Thailand.¹²² A final reason for the slight decline in trade in 1990 was the uncertainty Thai businessmen felt towards Laos's tax policies.¹²³ After seeing the tax rates increase several times since August 1989, Thai businessmen began to slow down their involvement with Laos. By December 1990, Lao taxes on imports of consumer products and exports of timber (from Laos) had increased by 150%.¹²⁴

Despite the small decrease in trade in 1990, Thailand had become far and away Laos's dominant trading partner. Imports from Thailand accounted for 42.8%

¹¹⁹ "PM Defends Liberal Role on Indochina," The Nation, April 11, 1989, 1.

¹²⁰ Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 39.

¹²¹ FBIS-EAS-89-170, September 5, 1989, 65.

¹²² FBIS-EAS-90-239, December 12, 1990, 51.

¹²³ "Uncertainty Over Tax Mars Trade with Laos," The Nation, December 7, 1990, n.p.

¹²⁴ "Uncertainty Over Tax Mars Trade with Laos," The Nation, December 7, 1990, n.p.

of Laos's total imports by 1991, with the second largest amount coming from Japan, only 18% of the total.¹²⁵ As for Laos's exports, Thailand took in an overwhelming 52.2% of the total, with Vietnam a distant second at 10.6%.¹²⁶ Hence, it is not surprising that Laos had begun to feel overtaken by its Thai neighbor.¹²⁷

If the threat of trade dependence was developing, due to Laos's heavy reliance on Thailand, the reverse was certainly not true; Thailand's trade with Laos only accounted for a fraction of a percentage of its overall trade. Table 2 shows the percentages of Thailand's total trade which consisted of imports from and exports to Laos in 1988-1991. The low amount of Thailand's trade with Laos should not be surprising considering that Laos is one of the poorest countries in the world and has one of the smallest economies. With a population of 4 million and a GDP in 1989 of \$773 million,¹²⁸ Laos could hardly become a major trade partner of Thailand. Moreover, Lao people have low purchasing power and consume few "modern goods."¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Doing Business in the Greater Mekong Subregion, Office of the Board of Investment, Office of the Prime Minister (Bangkok: Royal Thai Government, 1995), 38.

¹²⁶ Doing Business in the Greater Mekong Subregion, Office of the Board of Investment, Office of the Prime Minister, (Bangkok: Royal Thai Government, 1995), 38.

¹²⁷ Even in mid-1989, a Lao radio broadcast criticized Chatichai's Laos policy, claiming Thailand was attempting to destroy Laos through economics. However, Lao Prime Minister Kaysone maintained his support for Thailand's policy and said the radio broadcast was not the Lao government's position. See FBIS-EAS-89-133, July 13, 1989, 48-49; and FBIS-EAS-89-136, July 18, 1989, 56.

¹²⁸ United Nations, Statistical Yearbook, 40th issue. (New York: United Nations, 1995), 161.

¹²⁹ Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...," 169.

Table 2: Percentage of Thailand's Total Trade Consisting of Imports from and Exports to Laos, 1988-1991.

	1988	1989	1990	1991
Thailand's exports to Laos	0.3	0.3	0.28	0.27
Thailand's imports from Laos	0.1	0.19	0.13	0.13

Sources: Bank of Thailand, Rayngansetakij Raydeun (Monthly Economic Bulletin), July 1995; and Statistical Yearbook Thailand, nos. 36, 37, and 38, 1989, 1990, and 1991.

Laos was not even in the top 20 trade partners for Thailand in 1989 nor were Cambodia and Vietnam.¹³⁰ Table 3 shows the percentages of Thailand's total trade which consisted of imports from and exports to Cambodia and Vietnam in 1988-1991. Even with the assumption that Thai-Lao trade would need several years to develop, through 1994 the three Indochinese states still had not become one of Thailand's top 20 trade partners.¹³¹ The trade data calls into question the critics' claims that Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring was motivated by business interests and trade with the Indochinese states. If the intention were merely to exploit business opportunities in Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, then why was there not a corresponding surge with Indochina in Thailand's overall trade?

¹³⁰ See Thailand in Figures 1995-1996, 3rd ed. (Bangkok: Alpha Research Co., Ltd. and Manager Information Services Co., Ltd., 1995), 426-427.

¹³¹ See Thailand in Figures 1995-1996, 426-427.

Table 3: Percentage of Thailand's Total Trade Consisting of Imports from and Exports to Cambodia and Vietnam, 1988-1991.

	1988	1989	1990	1991
Thailand's exports to Cambodia	0.003	0.00038	0.0037	0.016
Thailand's exports to Vietnam	0.029	0.08	0.008	0.078
Thailand's imports from Cambodia	0.000019	0.013	0.035	0.03
Thailand's imports from Vietnam	0.045	0.17	0.28	0.3

Sources: Bank of Thailand, Quarterly Bulletin, 33:4, December 1993; and Bank of Thailand, Rayngansetakij Raydeun (Monthly Economic Bulletin), July 1995.

While General Chatichai was in office, Thailand also came to dominate foreign investment in Laos. Laos promulgated its liberal foreign investment code in 1988, which included allowing 100% foreign-owned ventures. One of the countries that Laos tried to entice with its liberal foreign investment code was Thailand.¹³² The Lao government's courting of Thai businessmen fit well into General Chatichai's plans. He said his government adopted a policy of investing heavily in Laos because of Laos's potential.¹³³ The Lao government explicitly invited Thai businessmen to

¹³² Worner, 197.

¹³³ "Thais to Promote Baht for Trade with Indochina," The Straits Times, April 15, 1989, 12.

invest and said it would facilitate their projects.¹³⁴ In 1990, the two countries signed an agreement which promoted and protected each other's investments.

Since 1988, Thailand has been (and continues to be at the time of this writing) Laos's largest foreign investor in terms of the number of projects and the amount of money. By early 1989, Thailand held approximately 60% of all of Laos's foreign investment.¹³⁵ The Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry declared that 65 Thai investment projects were approved between 1988 and 1991.¹³⁶ Estimates of the monetary value of Thai investments in Lao between 1988 and 1992 ranged from \$138 million to \$160 million.¹³⁷

Much of Laos's appeal for Thai investors was its raw material potential, especially minerals, gems, iron, and timber. Other incentives included cheap labor, the high export quotas which Laos has been granted by the industrialized states, presumed access to the rest of Indochina, and the fact that Laos promoted small-size investment compared to Vietnam, which sought large-scale projects.¹³⁸ Small to medium-sized ventures were much more appropriate to many Thai investors at the time.

¹³⁴ FBIS-EAS-88-202, October 19, 1988, 46.

¹³⁵ FBIS-EAS-89-056, March 24, 1989, 67.

¹³⁶ Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Membership Directory 1994-95 (Viang Chan, 1995), 64.

¹³⁷ See FBIS-EAS-92-236, December 8, 1992, 38; and FBIS-EAS-93-114, June 16, 1993, 50. Only aggregate data for 1988-1992 were found, which is why 1992 is included in these estimates.

¹³⁸ For these and other incentives, see FBIS-EAS-89-054, March 22, 1989, 62; "BBL: Thailand Must Invest Overseas," Bangkok Post, April 29, 1992, 18; and "Indochina 'Ideal' for Small-Scale Investment," Bangkok Post, May 1, 1993, 22.

Just like with trade, however, an overwhelming percentage of Laos's foreign investment came from Thailand, but it was only a small amount of Thailand's total investment abroad. Neither Laos nor the other Indochinese states became one of the top targets of Thai investment abroad. Hong Kong, the U.S., Singapore, and China remained the favorite places for Thai investors.¹³⁹

Summary and Conclusion

After announcing the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy towards Indochina, Prime Minister Chatichai had to overcome some initial resistance, mainly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bureaucratic-organizational models assume that various agencies have parochial interests, standardized procedures, and seek to protect their roles in policy-making. This was evident when the MFA, the Express Transport Organization, and the Ministry of Defense opposed various aspects of Prime Minister Chatichai's Laos policy. Through various means posited in Chapter 3, such as appointing officials to key posts and using his advisors for initiating the changes, Prime Minister Chatichai thwarted the attempts to obstruct the foreign policy restructuring.

Once the rapprochement gained momentum from the first meeting between Chatichai and Kaysone in November 1988, other actors began implementing the prime minister's policy. The military expanded its role in Thai-Lao relations by handling issues normally outside of the military's responsibility, such as discussions on economic matters, agricultural assistance, and tourism. The Commerce Ministry

¹³⁹ See the various issues of Annual Economic Report, Bank of Thailand, for the top targets of Thai investment.

signed various trade agreements and investment memorandums with Laos to foster better trade relations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs slowly came around and began fulfilling its role. Citizens were also encouraged to participate in the rapprochement through their involvement in the newly established Thai-Lao Friendship Associations.

General Chatichai's Laos policy consisted of rapid changes in multiple issue-areas: insurgencies, Lao refugees, Vietnamese troops, the Cambodian crisis, the Thai-Lao border, military cooperation, social and technical matters, and trade and investment. The multiple sectors demonstrates that the "battlefields into marketplace" policy was far more than just developing greater economic ties with Indochina. In fact, while Thailand accounted for most of Laos's foreign trade and investment, it was relatively insignificant as a proportion of Thailand's overall foreign trade and investment abroad.

Having described the changes that occurred in Thai-Lao relations during Chatichai's administration, an obvious question arises: Why was Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos restructured in 1988-1991? The perceptions and motivations of the decision-makers will be addressed in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 5

GOALS AND VIEWS OF PRIME MINISTER CHATICHAI AND HIS ADVISORS

Introduction

This chapter and Chapter 6 focus on the goals and perceptions of Thailand's foreign policy decision-makers from 1988 to 1991. The perceptions of decision-makers constitute the second intervening variable in the framework (the policy-making process was the other). Before proceeding, however, it must be noted that there is a debate in the foreign policy restructuring literature about whether or not restructuring is intentional. Volgy and Schwarz advocate ignoring the intentions of decision-makers because they may be unaware that they are restructuring. Foreign policy change might not be deliberate, or the decision-makers could be forced into restructuring.¹ Hagan and Rosati make similar assertions by claiming policy-making dynamics may "push" leaders into restructuring.² Implicit in this argument is that perceptions and cognitive processes may not always be important compared to the push-factor of external events.

Taking up the opposing view, Holsti asserts that restructuring is intentional behavior and entails a conscious linkage of sectors.³ Carlsnaes also advocates this

¹ Volgy and Schwarz, 25.

² Hagan and Rosati, 273.

³ K.J. Holsti, "Restructuring Foreign Policy: A Neglected Phenomenon...", 2.

view, claiming that national and international circumstances do not make decisions, only decision-makers do. Thus, he focuses exclusively on the intentional or "purposive nature of foreign policy."⁴ Hermann agrees with Holsti and Carlsnaes by saying foreign policy is a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program.⁵ Their arguments suggest that perceptions and cognitive processes are the key to understanding restructuring and that decision-makers seek to affect their environment rather than only be affected by it.

Both sides of the argument make valid points and can claim empirical evidence supports their arguments. Therefore, neither argument should be disregarded. Instead, a determination should be made in each case as to whether or not the restructuring was an intentional decision. Thailand's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos certainly was a conscious decision by the leaders. In this case, Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors had a particular goal in mind which differed from the previous set of policy-makers and required a change in the Laos policy. It is imperative, therefore, to identify the decision-makers' goals and the factors which influenced them.

The bulk of the information here is derived from interviews conducted with the Thai decision-makers, but in cases where a top official was unavailable for an interview, public statements from him and responses from other relevant officials were used.⁶ The interview questions (see Appendix B) were structured to determine

⁴ Carlsnaes, 19.

⁵ C. Hermann, 5.

⁶ The researcher had limited information in terms of government documents from the time period, most of which have a lengthy classified restriction, and with the inability to acquire interviews with a few key decision-makers, such as General Chatichai and Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila. Hopefully scholars in the future will be able to gain

each decision-maker's goals for the change in Laos policy and to assess the significance, if any, of the proposed external and domestic variables.

Similar to Paige's work on the Korean decision, this study is limited to the goals and perceptions which are explicitly stated by the respondents.⁷ As tempting as it may be to infer subtle meanings and ulterior motives, this would be an unfair and unsubstantiated account of the decision-makers' goals and perceptions. Richard Herrmann acknowledges the problem of "going into the head of our subject" for studies focusing on the cognitive processes of decision-makers.⁸ Scholars who pursue cognitive mapping rely on spoken and written statements to discern leaders' beliefs, or their "known beliefs."⁹ The accounts of the Chatichai administration by many journalists and scholars frequently rely on mere speculation and rumors, without providing any substantiating evidence. The purpose of this study is to delineate the actual perceptions of the decision-makers. However, when the views of the respondents clearly contradict the events from 1988 to 1991, the differences will be noted.

Five categories of decision-makers are analyzed in Chapters 5 and 6, representing the key foreign policy institutions at the time: the Prime Minister, the advisors, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, and the military. The goals and perceptions of Thailand's decision-makers are grouped

access to the relevant documentation and secure interviews with those decision-makers not included here.

⁷ See Paige, 6.

⁸ R. Herrmann, 180.

⁹ See Voss and Dorsey, 14; and Axelrod, "Results," 239.

according to the institution they occupied. This does not necessarily imply that their goals or perceptions were similar to other decision-makers in that category or that their views differed from decision-makers in another institution. Jones notes in his critique of the bureaucratic politics model that actors can cooperate and favor the same policy for different reasons.¹⁰ For some decision-makers the goal may have been the same but their perceptions of variables differed. Also, as seen in Chapter 3, decision-makers are often in conflict with one another, but it may be over the tactics and pace rather than the goal.

In some cases, decision-makers' goals varied slightly, but they held similar perceptions of variables. These differences in goals and perceptions reflect Allison's explanation for why decision-makers' perceptions and interests tend to vary in the bureaucratic politics model. Allison writes, "Some national security objectives are widely accepted...But, in most cases, reasonable men can disagree about how American national security interests will be affected by a specific issue. Thus other interests as well affect an individual's stand on an issue of national security or foreign policy."¹¹

Richard Snyder, in his introduction to Glenn Paige's study on the Korean war, offered additional explanations for the differences found among decision-makers. Most notable are: 1) policy-makers have different facts; 2) different conclusions are drawn from the same facts; 3) the values of decision-makers tend to vary; and 4) decision-makers have different roles or different perceptions of the same roles.¹²

¹⁰ Jones, 40.

¹¹ Allison, 167.

¹² Paige, xxiii.

A brief review of the variables considered in this study is helpful. To reiterate, a variable's inclusion does not necessarily imply it was relevant in the decision; these were all considered to be potential variables. Independent variables were divided into six domestic and six external categories. In sum, the independent variables considered in the framework were as follows (also see Figure 3 in Chapter 1):

Potential domestic variables

1. Businessmen. Several claims have been made that wealthy businessmen carried a lot of clout with the Chatichai government.¹³ Powerful businessmen were believed to have well-established linkages with members of the government, including the prime minister. Prasong Soonsiri, a former Secretary-General of the National Security Council under General Prem, claimed that certain politicians and political parties were bankrolled by businessmen who desired greater access to the markets in Indochina.¹⁴ Prasong wrote in the Thai newspaper Matichon:

Politicians who are traders often think like traders. Politicians who are bankrolled by traders will be pushed by the traders to do this and that for them. The Laotians, Khmers and Vietnamese know which of our parties are supported by traders. When they (Indochinese) want anything, they will use the traders who are sponsors of political parties to put pressure for changes.¹⁵

¹³ See Michael Haas, Raschada Jiwalai, and Yasumasa Kuroda, "Democratic Foreign Policy Decisionmaking: Comparing Japan and Thailand," The Journal of East Asian Affairs, 255-256; Chantornvong and Chenvidyakarn, 169; FBIS-EAS-88-203, October 20, 1988, 57; and FBIS-EAS-89-029, February 14, 1989, 50.

¹⁴ FBIS-EAS-89-029, February 14, 1989, 50.

¹⁵ "The 'Trade Tricks' Played by Indochina," Bangkok Post, February 12, 1989, 12.

One scholar even asserted that business elites provided the initiative in foreign trade matters.¹⁶ Therefore, it is necessary to explore whether or not businessmen exerted influence on the Chatichai government and served as the impetus for the change in policy.

2. Chat Thai Party. A second possible domestic variable is members of Prime Minister Chatichai's political party, the Chat Thai Party. This variable is distinguished from the businessmen by the fact that Chat Thai members were a part of the government (versus businessmen who were private citizens). Some top party leaders in Chat Thai served as cabinet members and simultaneously operated businesses worth millions of dollars, namely General Praman Adireksarn, Banharn Silpa-archa, and Pramual Sabhavasuu. The Chat Thai members might have utilized their government authority to exploit business opportunities in Laos and the rest of Indochina. According to one news source, "most of the goods needed by the Indochina countries are goods with which members of the Thai Nation Party (Chat Thai) are involved."¹⁷ Thus, the foreign policy change may have been initiated at the request of Chatichai's fellow party members in order to serve their own economic interests.

3. Advisors. Initially the advisors were seen as a potential independent variable because of allegations that they conceived the "battlefields to marketplace" idea instead of General Chatichai. Although the advisors were deemed in Chapter 4 to be

¹⁶ Santasombat, "Leadership and Security...", 99.

¹⁷ FBIS-EAS-88-203, October 20, 1988, 57.

implementors rather than initiators of the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos (and therefore should no longer be considered a potential variable in the restructuring), they remain in the analysis in order to express the views of respondents who believed the advisors made the decision.

4. Trade and investment. The slogan of transforming Indochina's "battlefields into marketplaces" encapsulated Prime Minister Chatichai's desire to expand economic relations with Indochina. In the 1980s, Thailand's rapidly growing economy generated much wealth, some of which could be used to invest in other countries such as Laos and Vietnam. Also, by expanding into Indochina, Thailand could reduce its heavy reliance on the United States, Japan, and Western Europe as the major trade partners. This potential variable is differentiated from the pressure of businessmen and Chat Thai Party members who lobbied for a change in policy out of personal interests; instead, it reflects the government's decision (on its own) to diversify Thailand's trade partners and seek new investment opportunities for the economic security of the entire country.

Also included in this category is an assessment of whether or not the decision-makers envisaged gaining greater access to southern China's economy (for investment and/or resources) by way of Laos. Respondents were asked if Thailand's government intended to foster better relations with Laos to facilitate land access to southern China.

5. Interest groups. Interest groups were in their infancy in the late 1980s when it came to having an impact on government policies. Nonetheless, respondents were asked if

interest groups had any influence on the government's decision to restructure its foreign policy.

6. Prime Minister Chatichai. De Rivera argues that political leaders can be viewed as independent variables affecting policy.¹⁸ For this reason, the most prominent actor in the policy-making process, Prime Minister Chatichai, is included. If he held personal beliefs that a change in policy was necessary, irrespective of the changing environment, then these could have been a reason for the restructuring.

7. Other factors. Respondents were asked to offer additional factors not mentioned.

Potential external variables

1. Cambodian crisis. Resolving the Cambodian crisis had been a top priority of the Thai government since Vietnam's invasion in 1978. In the years prior to General Chatichai's term, Thailand implicated Laos in the Cambodian situation because of its association with Vietnam and the support Laos gave to the Vietnamese occupation.

The restructuring could have been motivated by the desire to resolve the situation in Cambodia through a different approach to relations with Indochina than the one used by Chatichai's predecessors. Prime Minister Chatichai's rapprochement with Laos may have facilitated a settlement in Cambodia, either by luring Laos away from Vietnam, and thereby weakening the political alliance, or by using Thailand's newly established amicable relations with Laos to demonstrate Bangkok's desire for a

¹⁸ de Rivera, 432.

peaceful settlement to problems with its neighbors. In other words, demonstrate to the Vietnamese that Thailand was no longer the enemy in the Cambodian dispute. (For years Thailand had assisted the Khmer Rouge in its struggle against Hun Sen's Vietnamese-backed government.) A third possibility is that, by resolving hostilities and conflict with Laos, Thailand's government could have devoted greater attention and resources to settling the Cambodian crisis.

2. Leadership in Laos. The communist government had embarked upon market reforms for the Lao economy in the 1980s and also saw its major sources of economic aid, Vietnam and the Soviet Union, cut off new funding by the later part of the decade. The interviews probed whether or not the leaders in Laos initiated reconciliation with Thailand in order to attract investment and economic assistance. If this were the case, then it would suggest that the Thai decision-makers did not change their motives; they merely made an adjustment in policy. Alternatively, if the Lao leaders did not initiate the overtures, did their reaction to General Chatichai's announcement of the policy change have any effect on Thailand's willingness to implement the restructuring?

3. ASEAN relations with Indochina. The importance Thailand has traditionally attributed to ASEAN in its foreign affairs, particularly when dealing with the threat of communism from Indochina, requires an investigation into whether or not ASEAN exhorted Thailand into rapprochement with Indochina. ASEAN states, having been actively involved in discussions over Cambodia, might have sought a new approach to dealing with the crisis through improved bilateral relations between Thailand, the "front-line state" in the crisis, and the Indochinese states.

4. ASEAN concern over China. A second potential ASEAN factor is concern over China's increased influence in the region. China emerged in the late 1980s as the most likely superpower to establish hegemony in Southeast Asia through its contacts with Thailand and in combination with the withdrawals from the region of the United States in the 1970s and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Beijing had become a major arms supplier to Thailand and also channeled its assistance to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia via Thailand. Indonesia and Malaysia's fears of an increased Chinese presence could have been alleviated by developing closer ties with China's regional rival, Vietnam, and its allies.

5. Decline of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had been the key foreign backer of Vietnam and Laos since Indochina's communist victories. The Soviet Union provided much of Laos's and Vietnam's economic and military aid. However, as the Soviet economic crisis became more apparent in the late 1980s, and the need to cut back its foreign commitments became inevitable, Soviet influence in the region declined rapidly. With the Soviet Union reeling from its economic problems, Vietnam and Laos appeared less threatening to Thailand, possibly opening opportunities for rapprochement. Also, like many states at that time, Laos and Vietnam may have begun looking for new international links with states outside the Soviet bloc.

6. Decline of the Cold War. The threat of communism around the globe was quickly fading in the late 1980s. The bipolar international system began capitulating to a more complex structure, one which afforded new options for relations with the reforming communist states. It is likely that the Thai decision-makers no longer perceived Laos and Vietnam as threats to their security because communism was

receding throughout the world. Without the traditional security threat felt by Thailand since the 1960s, decision-makers could initiate new relations with Indochina.

7. Other factors: Once again, respondents were asked to offer additional factors not included in the framework.

Goals and Views of Prime Minister Chatichai

Attempts to interview General Chatichai were unsuccessful, and therefore his goals and perceptions must be reconstructed from public statements made by him and accounts from those who worked with him.

General Chatichai's primary goal for restructuring Thailand's foreign policy with Indochina was to bring about peace in the region. He reiterated this desire throughout the first few months of his administration. Soon after taking office, Prime Minister Chatichai explained his foreign policy before the National Assembly:

It will promote peace and the peaceful coexistence of all countries on the basis of respect for national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, equality, justice, non-interference in one another's internal affairs, and resolution of international conflicts through peaceful means...The government will improve economic and political relations, especially in expanding material trade and promoting good understanding and friendship with neighboring countries to coexist peacefully and in harmony in a way that benefits our mutual interests.¹⁹

During his first visit to Laos in November 1988, he explained his intentions to the Lao leaders by saying:

¹⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-166, August 26, 1988, 42.

The reason I have declared to turn Indochina from a battlefield to a marketplace is that I hope to create a new atmosphere of cooperation and mutual assistance, which will facilitate the efforts to solve various problems and restore permanent peace in our Southeast Asian region.²⁰

Once again in December 1988, while outlining the priorities of his administration, General Chatichai spoke of the importance of fostering peace in the region.

First of all, we must work more resolutely for closer and more constructive relationships with our ideologically different neighbours. This is to ensure that the fabric of peace in this region is strengthened and that our neighbors can be allowed to participate fully in the process of regional economic development, from which all can benefit.²¹

The means to attain these goals, he explained, were by linking Indochina with the rest of Southeast Asia through investment, trade, and modern communications.²²

The linkage with Indochina was important for General Chatichai's reconceptualization of what national security entails. As a result of the changing structure of the international system, whereby military threats were seen as declining while economic matters became more paramount, Chatichai accentuated the economic dimension of national security.²³ General Chatichai was certainly ahead of the "curve" with his view that economics would eventually supplant traditional security matters as a state's primary concern in the post-Cold War era. He warned

²⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-227, November 25, 1988, 49.

²¹ FBIS-EAS-88-247, December 23, 1988, 56.

²² FBIS-EAS-88-247, December 23, 1988, 56.

²³ Chantornvong and Chenvidyakarn, 169; and Sirikrai, 257.

of what he saw as Thailand's impending economic conflict with the United States and the European Community.²⁴ Thailand's Western Cold War allies were quickly becoming its economic competitors. Greater unity in Southeast Asia had to be attained, General Chatichai stressed, because of the intensification of economic blocks throughout the world. He stated, "Regional cooperation is not a luxury, but a matter of necessity to ensure Southeast Asia's well-being and progress."²⁵

Despite his prediction of imminent economic conflict with the West, Prime Minister Chatichai also thought the U.S. could assist Thailand in its goals of fostering peace and prosperity in the region. In a personal memorandum to U.S. President George Bush, Chatichai wrote:

The Indochinese countries and Burma are opening up, and a combination of Thailand's geographical advantages and U.S. technological know-how would be an irrepressible one in taking advantage of the evolving situation in these countries and, more importantly, in strengthening the fabric of peace and prosperity in this region.²⁶

Several officials interviewed confirmed the prime minister's goal of peace in the region. According to Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin, General Chatichai believed the only way to coexist with Thailand's Indochinese neighbors was to have peace and improve relations with them. Mr. Arsa maintained that Chatichai had held these beliefs long before becoming prime minister. Mr. Arsa said when they worked together in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1970s, General Chatichai promoted the idea of peaceful coexistence with Indochina. Mr. Arsa explained, "He was part

²⁴ FBIS-EAS-88-247, December 23, 1988, 56.

²⁵ FBIS-EAS-88-247, December 23, 1988, 56.

²⁶ Pitsuwan, 4.

of the group of people who believed the only way to coexist with our neighbors is to bring peace and to improve relations. I was the secretary to Chatichai when he was deputy foreign minister. So I knew even before the advisors came back from study."²⁷

Borwornsak Uwanoo, an advisor to Chatichai, concurred with Mr. Arsa's conclusion. Dr. Borwornsak claimed that Prime Minister Chatichai advocated establishing better relations with Indochina when he served as Minister of Industry during the Prem administration.²⁸ Thus General Chatichai's views about Indochina were consistent throughout the 1980s.

According to two of Prime Minister Chatichai's advisors, Kraisaak Choonhavan and Dr. Borwornsak, the specific disputes that Chatichai was addressing with his goal of peace in the region were the recurring fighting between Thailand and Laos and the ongoing war in Cambodia.²⁹ The most recent bout of significant fighting between Thailand and Laos ended in February 1988, before General Chatichai took office. The severity of the fighting at Ban Rom Klao, Mr. Kraisaak explained, prompted Chatichai to indicate to Laos that he wanted to end all hostilities between the two states. Regarding Cambodia, the prime minister declared immediately upon taking office that the Cambodian "problem must be solved quickly...."³⁰

²⁷ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok. The last part of this statement, "I knew even before the advisors came back from study," further discredits those who claim the idea for rapprochement was conceived by Chatichai's advisors.

²⁸ Borwornsak Uwanoo. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁹ Borwornsak Uwanoo and Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interviews, April 9, 1996, and May 6, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

³⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-151, August 5, 1988, 45.

If the goal was to foster peace throughout the region, a question arises as to why Chatichai chose to concentrate more on developing relations with Laos early in the administration than he did with Cambodia and Vietnam. Cambodia was clearly the major crisis in the region at the time, and Vietnam was the most powerful of the Indochinese states. Why, then, did Prime Minister Chatichai visit Laos three months into office but never made visits to meet with leaders in Hanoi or Phnom Penh?

Three major reasons justify Chatichai's early emphasis on developing relations with Laos. First was the problem of the disputed Thai-Lao border.³¹ The border war in 1988 showed that, from the Thai perspective, Laos still presented an immediate threat, albeit a minor one, to Thai territory. Thailand's forces had not had significant levels of fighting with Cambodian or Vietnamese troops; only minor incursions along the Cambodian-Thai border occurred, which usually stemmed from Vietnamese/Cambodian troops pursuing Khmer Rouge forces across the border.

A second reason was that General Chatichai's Indochina initiative was well received by the government leaders in Laos, which will be detailed below. Two Lao analysts wrote, "Chatichai indicated he would favor the Lao because the Lao were the first to favorably welcome his initiative."³²

A third reason had to do with the nature of the problems between Thailand and Laos. Sukhumbhand Paribatra, an advisor to Chatichai, explained the prime minister's views this way:

³¹ According to Borwornsak Uwanno, the border problems led Chatichai to put an emphasis on Laos. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

³² Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 89.

The case of Laos presented both a very clear opportunity and a very immediate challenge. Therefore, I think this is why he chose to address the question of Laos first. It was an immediate challenge in the sense that six months before he took office we were engaged in a very big border war with Laos. The relations between the two countries were improved somewhat...but I think the relationship remained very uncertain. So it was a very clear and immediate challenge to try to improve the relations with Laos.

It was also a very clear opportunity in two ways: one way was that unlike the Cambodian problem, our problem with Laos was straightly bilateral. Therefore we had a free hand in addressing the problem without having to see what the ASEAN countries or the international community would do or say...It was also a clear opportunity in another way in that Thai and Lao peoples have always been very close, and once we could conceptually differentiate Laos from Vietnam, there was no obstacle for us to come together, or at least to try to improve relations. In the past we did not conceptually differentiate between Laos and Vietnam; therefore, we did not treat Laos on her own merit.³³

For Prime Minister Chatichai, then, a combination of seeking to end border conflicts, the receptiveness of Laos's leaders to his foreign policy initiative, and the opportunity to resolve immediate problems bilaterally prompted him to focus more on Laos than on Cambodia or Vietnam early in his administration.

Domestic variables

1. Businessmen. In addition to his political and military careers, General Chatichai was also a successful businessman, making his vast fortune in the textile industry. His widespread connections with other wealthy businessmen were well known. This led to speculation that they held influence over his decision to shift Thailand's foreign policy based on the belief that they would benefit from new business opportunities in Indochina.

³³ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

Chatichai's son and advisor, Kraisak Choonhavan, recalled that a few businessmen requested Prime Minister Chatichai write "recommendation letters" on their behalf. They hoped such a letter would give them the aura of having support from the prime minister³⁴ and thereby facilitate their business pursuits with the Indochinese states. However, Chatichai did not facilitate anyone's investment in Indochina, according to Mr. Kraisak. Instead, the businessmen went ahead on their own, and some in fact eventually turned against the prime minister and his advisors.³⁵

Businessmen were not a decisive factor in bringing about the change in policy. Sukhumbhand Paribatra stressed that businessmen could not pressure General Chatichai, despite the fact that he had extensive exchanges with them. Rather than serving as a cause of change, Mr. Sukhumbhand explained, businessmen only provided Chatichai with a constituency to support his policy.³⁶ General Chatichai's foreign policy goals of peace and prosperity in the region, then, merely coincided with many of the interests of Thai businessmen, such as access to natural resources and markets in Indochina.³⁷

2. Chat Thai Party. None of the respondents working closely with Prime Minister Chatichai confirmed the importance of his fellow party members in Chat Thai. Likewise, there were no indications in the public statements in Thailand newspapers

³⁴ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁵ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁶ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁷ Weatherbee, 349.

that the Chat Thai Party contributed to the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy. At best their influence as a variable is inconclusive, but it would seem that Chat Thai had little or no role in the decision to shift policy. Because Thai political parties rarely have a cohesive party platform, and General Chatichai did not campaign during the elections in 1988 with the intention to promote relations with Indochina, it is unlikely that the Chat Thai Party was influential in the decision.

3. Advisors. No statements by General Chatichai were found in Bangkok newspapers which revealed that his decision was influenced by his advisors. Information about his relationship with the advisors came through the advisors themselves. Chapter 4 concluded that the advisors did not initiate the idea.

4. Trade and investment. Trade and investment with Indochina were clearly important for General Chatichai. Borwornsak Uwanno emphasized that Chatichai believed commercial and economic ties with Indochina would help bring peace to the region, which was the ultimate goal of his foreign policy.³⁸ Thus, rather than an end in itself, trade and investment were a means to attain the goal of peace.

Throughout his administration, Prime Minister Chatichai argued that an economic approach towards Indochina was necessary to make the Thai people aware of the benefits of economics, trade, and investment. By convincing government officials and especially the public that a policy change could bring them economic benefits, General Chatichai secured political acceptance for his policy change.³⁹ This

³⁸ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁹ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

reflects Bar-Siman-Tov's argument that decision-makers who pursue a policy change of peace must persuade the broader public that it contributes to their advancement.⁴⁰

However, Bar-Siman-Tov adds that decision-makers must also persuade the public that a policy change of peace is consistent with basic national values and that it will not jeopardize the state's security.⁴¹ In order to subdue national security arguments against his Indochina policy, Prime Minister Chatichai sought to show that the country's interests now lie in economics, not in the traditional sense of national security. Chatichai's redefinition of national security, whereby the emphasis was placed on economic security, had an important effect on how people viewed his foreign policy change. The economic approach of Chatichai's policy restructuring, however, was mistakenly interpreted as originating from his friends who sought investments in Indochina.⁴²

Certainly Thailand stood to gain from developing economic relations with Laos and the rest of Indochina, and General Chatichai was aware of this. He feared a slow-down in the world economy and a rise in protectionism; therefore, he believed regional trade should be increased to compensate for these problems in the global economy.⁴³ Thailand's traditional markets had been the United States and Western Europe, so General Chatichai sought to concentrate more on the regional market.⁴⁴ According to his advisor Pansak Vinyaratn, Chatichai did not want poor states

⁴⁰ Bar-Siman-Tov, 18.

⁴¹ Bar-Siman-Tov, 17-18.

⁴² Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴³ Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...", 170.

⁴⁴ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

surrounding Thailand because if they became more prosperous, they could absorb Thai goods.⁴⁵ Prime Minister Chatichai considered Thailand to be an export country and urged traders to seek new markets in the neighboring countries.⁴⁶

According to Surachai Sirikrai, a political scientist at Thammasat University in Bangkok, in addition to its role as a source of new markets, General Chatichai also viewed Indochina as a resource supplier for the Thai economy.⁴⁷ In particular, Laos has plenty of natural resources, such as timber, coal, iron, gems, and manganese. However, Chatichai's advisor Sukhumbhand Paribatra emphasized that the prime minister did not want raw materials from Indochina being taken out and processed in Thailand. In fact, General Chatichai stressed peaceful co-existence and the sharing of profits with the Indochinese states because, he said, "these are important keys for Thailand to live in peace and prosperity."⁴⁸ What happened, Mr. Sukhumbhand claimed, was that the prime minister did not exert sufficient control over the economic interaction between Thailand and Indochina,⁴⁹ which allowed some exploitation of Laos's natural resources.

In 1989, General Chatichai announced that his government had adopted a policy of investing heavily in Laos because of its potential,⁵⁰ presumably referring to

⁴⁵ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴⁶ "PM Wants," Asian Defence Journal, May 1989, 118.

⁴⁷ Sirikrai, 257.

⁴⁸ "PM Wants," 118.

⁴⁹ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁰ "Thais to Promote Baht for Trade with Indochina," The Straits Times, April 15, 1989, 12.

the economic reforms undertaken by the Lao government, the country's natural resources, and the stability which prevailed inside the country. Prime Minister Chatichai went on to say that if the situation in Cambodia improved, Thailand would expand there too.⁵¹

Rumors about General Chatichai's personal business interests in Laos are unsubstantiated. While it is possible that the prime minister's textile business (one of the few industries that Laos is well suited for) could have benefited if he shifted some production over to Laos, no evidence has surfaced which could verify this. All the advisors interviewed denied that Prime Minister Chatichai had personal business interests in Laos. Suwit Suttanukul, Secretary-General of the National Security Council, concurred with the advisors by saying the policy change was not for General Chatichai's personal gain.⁵² The deputy secretary-general for the National Security Council at the time, Kachadpai Buruspatana, also disregarded the rumors about Chatichai's personal business interests.⁵³ One respondent, General Siri Thiwapan, former commander of the Third Army Region along the northern border with Laos, speculated that the prime minister may have been looking for investment projects, but he offered no evidence.⁵⁴

Prime Minister Chatichai's view of improving relations with Laos in order to gain greater access to investment opportunities in southern China, namely Yunnan, cannot be ascertained. Some evidence suggests that this may indeed have been a

⁵¹ "Thais to Promote Baht...," 12.

⁵² Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵³ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁴ General Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

reason for the shift in policy (see below), but all other respondents claimed this was not a factor at the time. No public statements by the prime minister concerning this subject were found. However, some discussion about his relations with the Chinese government is pertinent.

General Chatichai played an instrumental role in establishing diplomatic relations between Thailand and China in the 1970s, when he served as deputy foreign minister and later as foreign minister.⁵⁵ After establishing Thailand's formal diplomatic relations with China in 1975, General Chatichai maintained business contacts with Chinese exporters⁵⁶ and also led investment groups to China for several years before becoming Prime Minister.⁵⁷ According to one media report in October 1988, General Chatichai sought to strengthen trade cooperation with China by having the Chinese construct an airport on Hainan Island, build more facilities to expedite investment, and enact revised procedures for sending back remittances.⁵⁸ During General Chatichai's visit to China the following month, talks between Chatichai and Chinese premier Li Peng were to focus on cooperation in high-technology industries and investment. A press report stated that Li Peng would likely ask for greater Thai investment in "special-economic zones" in China, while Chatichai would ask for more access to China's markets.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," 8, and Charles McGregor, "China, Vietnam, and the Cambodian Conflict: Beijing's End Game Strategy," Asian Survey 30:3, March 1990, 266-283.

⁵⁶ FBIS-EAS-89-050, March 16, 1989, 67.

⁵⁷ Chulacheeb Chinwanno. Personal interview, April 1, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁸ FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 52.

⁵⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-221, November 16, 1988, 50-51.

Kraisak Choonhavan asserted that gaining access to southern China via Laos was in fact his father's intention. He explained by saying:

That was in the grand scheme of Chatichai. The bridge he envisioned would extend the routes. In fact, this is what he explained to the Laotians, that he envisioned a road and railroad link all the way from Bangkok to Viang Chan; from Viang Chan to Luang Prabang (Laos); from Luang Prabang to Kunming (in Yunnan, China).⁶⁰

Mr. Kraisak recalled that his father did not "test" the idea of using Laos to link Thailand with Yunnan because it was an enormous undertaking at the time. However, he added General Chatichai thought that if the Cambodian issue was resolved quickly, then the Thailand-Laos-Yunnan connection could be launched.⁶¹

Another respondent, Prasop Butsarakham, a former opposition member of parliament with the Social Action Party, confirmed Mr. Kraisak's claims about the prime minister. Mr. Prasop maintained that General Chatichai sought to construct an international airport in Thailand's northern province of Chiang Rai, which borders Laos and is close to southern China. The purpose of this proposal, Mr. Prasop noted, was to develop the "quadrangle idea" of creating a special economic zone among northern Thailand, Laos, southern China, and Burma.⁶²

Contrary to these claims that General Chatichai was interested in using Laos as a conduit to southern China, all other respondents rejected the proposition. Mr. Sukhumbhand responded to the proposition by saying General Chatichai never said anything to him about using Laos to gain greater access to investment opportunities

⁶⁰ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶¹ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶² Prasop Butsarakham. Personal interview, August 1, 1996, Bangkok.

in China.⁶³ Another advisor, Borwornsak Uwanno, concurred that the prime minister did not mention southern China as a reason for his policy shift. He concluded that General Chatichai only looked at China after the policy change with Laos occurred, not before.⁶⁴ In the interview, Dr. Borwornsak explained that China, at the time of the policy change, was actually a disincentive:

In fact, the China factor, as I heard in talks between Chatichai and the advisors, was a negative factor. It had to be taken into consideration whether China would agree or not, whether China had any interest in opposing this or not, and whether China would be angry if we went too fast. But I didn't hear [Chatichai] talk about Yunnan directly. Now he is talking about this. But at the time I don't think so.⁶⁵

Subin Pinkayan, who began the administration as the commerce minister, claimed General Chatichai never said anything to him about improving relations with Laos to get access to China. As with Dr. Borwornsak, Dr. Subin said that Chatichai began to look at Yunnan for potential investment opportunities for Thailand only after peace was established in Indochina.⁶⁶

Other respondents who disagreed with the proposition of Prime Minister Chatichai using Laos to get to southern China include General Siri Thiwapan and Professor Surachai Sirikrai. General Siri explained that Chatichai had been looking at China for over twenty years as a potential site for Thai investment, but there was no intention by the prime minister to use Laos for that purpose.⁶⁷ Dr. Surachai believed

⁶³ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁴ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁵ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁶ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁷ General Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

that Thai investment in China around 1988 had nothing to do with General Chatichai and his circle of business friends. Instead, Dr. Surachai argued, the major investor in China at that time was the Charoen Pokphand Group, a huge conglomerate with numerous and wide-ranging investment projects in China.⁶⁸ An additional reason he rejected the proposition to link with southern China is that General Chatichai and the other decision-makers were well aware that Laos has one of the poorest communications systems in the world, and therefore it would be too difficult to link Thailand with southern China via Laos.

5. Interest groups. None of the respondents interviewed believed that General Chatichai was influenced by interest groups or advocated their causes. Additionally, a search through Bangkok newspapers did not reveal any statements made by the prime minister regarding interest groups and foreign policy.

6. Prime Minister Chatichai. A first-hand account of his personal beliefs could not be attained.

7. Other factors. Respondents offered additional views about Prime Minister Chatichai's reasons for restructuring Thailand's foreign policy. Kraisaak Choonhavan recalled one of his father's private statements when he first came into power. According to Mr. Kraisaak, Chatichai said:

We are going to have a lot of difficulty governing this country. We are governing a country that lived under dictatorship for a long time. There are a lot of

⁶⁸ Surachai Sirikrai. Personal interview, March 27, 1996, Bangkok.

internal problems, a lot of social problems that probably cannot be rectified in a matter of two or four years. But what we need is a foreign policy success.⁶⁹

This statement reveals that it was important to secure a major success early in the administration. Because the domestic problems at that time seemed more difficult to resolve, he opted to devote his attention to fulfilling foreign policy goals.

Surapong Jayanama from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered a complementary explanation for General Chatichai's concern for a successful administration. He maintained that Chatichai would pursue a particular policy if it would boost his domestic image.⁷⁰

Another factor offered was the prime minister's concern for the northeastern part of Thailand. Borwornsak Uwanno noted that General Chatichai wanted greater development in the Northeast because it was the poorest region in Thailand. Chatichai believed that the "battlefields into marketplace" policy would benefit the Northeast economically through its border contacts with Indochina.⁷¹ Increased trade with Indochina would presumably lead to greater development in the Northeast. A report in The Nation said that part of Prime Minister Chatichai's proposal for the new policy was to turn the Northeast into a trade, industrial, and tourism center for Indochina.⁷²

⁶⁹ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁰ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷¹ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷² Cited in Ngaosyvathn, "Lao-Thai Trade...", 172.

A final variable offered by Dr. Borwornsak was that General Chatichai sought to initiate policies that would lead the world, or least not follow the superpowers.⁷³ He explained by likening the Indochina decision to Thailand's recognition of the People's Republic of China in the 1970s, before the United States and other major powers opened formal diplomatic channels with Beijing. General Chatichai, who was the foreign minister at the time of the recognition, believed that if Thailand established formal relations with China before the United States and Western Europe, it would be more meaningful to the two states compared to recognizing China after the U.S. had done so.⁷⁴ The latter path would indicate to other states that Thailand merely followed the United States' lead in foreign affairs and lacked autonomy.

Surapong Jayanama of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed that General Chatichai was, in Mr. Surapong's words, a "maverick type" of person.⁷⁵ He explained that it is in Chatichai's personality to take risks but that the prime minister also had good common sense.

⁷³ Dr. Borwornsak was probably referring to Chatichai's 1989 discussion with a group of Thai Muslims. The prime minister explained to the group that he would avoid following the policies of the superpowers because Thailand had a broader view and approach to foreign policy. See FBIS-EAS-89-088, May 9, 1989, 66.

⁷⁴ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁵ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

External factors

1. Cambodian crisis. As mentioned in the goals section, Prime Minister Chatichai desired a quick end to the civil war in Cambodia.⁷⁶ He believed a change in policy was necessary because people were tired of war, and it was time to start developing Cambodia.⁷⁷ The prime minister implored, "Let's stop the war [in Cambodia] and do business so that the people in the region can have a better life."⁷⁸ A second reason for General Chatichai's interest in resolving the Cambodian crisis was that peace in Cambodia was necessary for regional economic development. He declared, "Once the Kampuchean conflict is resolved, the Asia-Pacific region will be the most dynamic region in the world and investments will pour in."⁷⁹

Also among the reasons for his concern about Cambodia was the impact the fighting had on Thailand. Prime Minister Chatichai exclaimed he wanted "to set up an international control mechanism to stop the civil war in Cambodia, in which Thai border villagers [had] been maimed and killed by stray shells and mines day after day."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Kraisak Choonhavan and Chulacheeb Chinwanno. Personal interviews, May 6, 1996, and April 1, 1996, respectively, Bangkok. Also, see FBIS-EAS-88-151, August 5, 1988, 45-46.

⁷⁷ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁸ "PM: Khmer Mission Fulfilled," The Nation, November 25, 1989, 2.

⁷⁹ "PM Wants," 118.

⁸⁰ "Instant Orgasm...," 8.

Early in his administration General Chatichai became frustrated with the stalled negotiations among the warring factions in Cambodia.⁸¹ This prompted him to take an approach forsaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: invite Hun Sen to Bangkok for discussions. A report in the Thai newspaper Matichon interpreted his views by stating, "Gen. Chatichai believes that because the dialogue conducted with the three Cambodian factions for 10 years has achieved nothing, the fourth party [Hun Sen] must now be listened to."⁸² Prime Minister Chatichai justified the dialogue with Hun Sen by saying, "...Thailand must seek to promote any chance for the Cambodian factions to resume talks because Thai border villagers are suffering from the continued war inside Cambodia."⁸³ Additionally, he felt vindicated by the progress achieved in the negotiations once Hun Sen's faction was included. Chatichai asserted that the talks were deadlocked until his government began speaking with Hun Sen.⁸⁴

2. Leaders in Laos. Chapter 1 considered that the government leaders in Laos could have conceivably initiated the rapprochement with Thailand due to their need for new sources of foreign assistance. Chapter 3 concluded that Thailand in fact began the rapprochement rather than Laos, and thus the Lao leaders were not influential in that sense. However, the leaders in Laos were important in the restructuring not by initiating the change, but rather by being receptive to Prime Minister Chatichai's

⁸¹ Pitsuwan, 4.

⁸² FBIS-EAS-89-041, March 3, 1989, 62.

⁸³ "PM: Khmer Mission Fulfilled," 2.

⁸⁴ FBIS-EAS-89-025, February 8, 1989, 51.

foreign policy shift.⁸⁵ Charles Hermann claims that an external actor's response can have an effect in the decision-making process of restructuring.⁸⁶

In a statement regarding the future of Thai-Lao relations once the bridge across the Mekong River was completed, General Chatichai predicted, "We will then be able to fully engage in trade and investment with Laos as the people and government there have warmly welcomed our approaches."⁸⁷ For Chatichai, then, the positive reception to his initiative by the leaders in Viang Chan was important. Without a favorable response from Laos, General Chatichai may not have implemented the foreign policy restructuring.

3. ASEAN relations with Indochina. Based on interviews and other accounts, ASEAN was not an important factor in Prime Minister Chatichai's decision to improve relations with Indochina. According to Borwornsak Uwanno, General Chatichai forced ASEAN to change its stance toward Indochina⁸⁸ in response to Thailand's lead. There was virtually no opportunity for Chatichai to consult ASEAN members before he made his policy change announcement because he had just been appointed Prime Minister prior to the Indochina proclamation.

Throughout his administration Chatichai broke with the established procedure of consulting ASEAN in matters involving Indochina. One newspaper report claimed that Chatichai appeared indifferent to what ASEAN states thought about his

⁸⁵ See Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 89.

⁸⁶ Hermann, 15.

⁸⁷ "Thais to Promote Baht...", 12.

⁸⁸ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

Indochina policy.⁸⁹ According to Donald Weatherbee, the prime minister de-emphasized ASEAN's importance in Thailand's foreign affairs because 1) the Chatichai government held different perceptions from previous Thai administrations, 2) control over policy-making had shifted away from the bureaucracy, and 3) Thailand no longer felt dependent on ASEAN consensus for its "front-line" status in dealing with Indochina.⁹⁰ Chatichai said that being the front-line state meant that Thailand should utilize any means necessary, even new initiatives, to resolve problems in Indochina.⁹¹

4. ASEAN concern over China. The above argument of ASEAN not factoring into General Chatichai's assessment can also be applied to the variable of ASEAN's concern for China's increased presence in the region. ASEAN was not consulted ahead of the decision to restructure, and thus this external variable is deemed insignificant in Chatichai's view.

5. Decline of the Soviet Union. None of the respondents had any insights into Chatichai's views of the Soviet Union and how its decline may have affected his decision to seek rapprochement with Laos. Likewise, a search through Bangkok newspapers failed to reveal any statements linking his views of the Soviet Union with his decision regarding Laos.

⁸⁹ FBIS-EAS-89-053, March 21, 1989, 50.

⁹⁰ Weatherbee, 357.

⁹¹ FBIS-EAS-89-053, March 21, 1989, 50.

6. Decline of the Cold War. The changing international system in the late 1980s and early 1990s appears significant in General Chatichai's decision to improve relations with communist Indochina. It is difficult, however, to determine from his statements if the changing international system was a justification for his policy or a cause of it.

During his first visit to Laos in November 1988, Prime Minister Chatichai expounded on how the decline of the Cold War was affecting Thai-Lao relations. He proclaimed:

Now the international situation has changed toward the direction that discourages conflicts and promotes international cooperation. Therefore, I believe the two of us can create new Thai-Lao relations to open the era of cooperation and genuine peaceful coexistence.⁹²

On another occasion, this time before the Foreign Press Correspondents' Club of Thailand in December 1988, General Chatichai expressed his views of the changing international system and the emerging global trends:

The first of these [trends] is the fast and irreversible growth of interdependence in the international system...[A]ll nations of this world are increasingly interdependent in their fates--interdependent in their security and in their well-being.

...[P]olitics, I believe, will take second place to economics. To be sure, politics will continue to be of crucial importance, especially where a nation's security from external military threats is at stake. But, as I see it, leaderships of all nations are likely to shift their attention more and more towards economics--towards economic well-being as the guarantee of long-term security.

I believe that conflict and tension in politics among nations will continue to diminish. Growing interdependence, together with the overriding concern with economics, is helping to bring about rapprochement and détente in almost all adversary relationships. Everywhere, from Washington, D.C. and Moscow to Beijing and Vientiane, there has been and continues to be evidence of nations' greater readiness to reach out to their rivals and foes, to talk and deal, to exchange and cooperate with those whose ideologies and interests conflict with their own.

⁹² FBIS-EAS-88-227, November 25, 1988, 49.

And lastly, I believe that all the trends I have discussed combine to create a situation where the lines dividing friends and adversaries are no longer self-evident or clear-cut...Diplomacy has become the art and science of management of peace, of managing relationships with *both friends and* adversaries across all issue-areas, to ensure that one's interests are protected and enhanced.⁹³

The end of the Cold War was an important factor in General Chatichai's perceptions of Thailand's former enemies, namely Laos and Vietnam. His statements about the international system clearly demonstrate his belief in taking advantage of the changing world order to seek rapprochement with Indochina. However, it is unclear if the changing international system influenced Prime Minister Chatichai's decision to restructure or if it was used to justify his departure from Thailand's old policy.

This point brings up the debate about whether foreign policy is simply decision-makers reacting to the external environment or if they seek to alter it. Scholars such as Volgy and Schwarz⁹⁴ and Sampson,⁹⁵ who analyze systemic structures and foreign policy change, emphasize external factors which induce restructuring. In contrast, Carlsnaes⁹⁶ rejects the assumption that decision-makers merely respond to inputs; instead, they can attempt to alter the environment with their foreign policy change. Regardless of its role, either as an important variable or as legitimizing Thailand's policy change, the decline of the Cold War was closely intertwined with Chatichai's decision.

⁹³ For the full text of the speech, see FBIS-EAS-88-247, December 23, 1988, 54-57.

⁹⁴ Volgy and Schwarz, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ Sampson, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Carlsnaes, *op. cit.*

Goals and Views of the Advisors

General Chatichai's advisors held many of the same goals as the prime minister. According to Sukhumbhand Paribatra, the advisors and Chatichai perceived the regional and global situations similarly, and very little had to be said to one another regarding policy.⁹⁷ The only question needed to be discussed between them, he explained, was how their approach would be done, not what the goals were. This was not a case of a prime minister surrounding himself with sycophants, for the advisors had been some of the harshest critics (during the Prem administration) of Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila's hard-line stance towards the Indochinese states.

One of the most important goals for the advisors, Pansak Vinyaratn stressed, was that they wanted to expunge Southeast Asia's image as a land of eternal conflict.⁹⁸ The Indochinese wars and numerous insurgencies in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia contributed to the peninsula's incessant state of conflict and war, which seemingly would not have ended without a significant commitment to peace by the regional powers such as Thailand. Thus, by making overtures to Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, the advisors hoped to effectuate a new era of peace and prosperity in the region.

Decades of conflict between Thailand and its Indochinese neighbors meant that years of distrust had to be overcome first and then, Mr. Pansak explained, trade would be able to take its own course.⁹⁹ As for overcoming the distrust between

⁹⁷ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹⁸ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹⁹ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

Thailand and Indochina, Mr. Pansak believed that because some of the advisors were among the harshest critics of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' previous hard-line policy towards Indochina, and some (namely Mr. Pansak and Mr. Kraisak) were "ex-Lefties," the government leaders in Indochina would be more receptive to them. Consequently, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia would more likely believe in the sincerity of Thailand's rapprochement. The trade component of the policy intended to engender peace in the region and make it last, rather than solely bring economic benefits to Thailand.¹⁰⁰

In particular with Laos, Mr. Sukhumbhand maintained that normalizing relations through enhanced trade interaction would help Thailand and Laos overcome their decades worth of conflict, especially the 1988 border conflict at Ban Rom Klao. He said, "Normalcy is a great healer of wound."¹⁰¹ For Mr. Sukhumbhand it was also imperative to revitalize the importance of Thai-Lao relations. He believed Thailand had neglected Laos in the years prior to General Chatichai's administration because previous Thai governments did not think Laos was important to them.¹⁰²

Another goal of the advisors was advanced by Borwornsak Uwanno, who said the previous security-led policy was unrealistic and no longer appropriate for the region.¹⁰³ One objective of the restructuring, then, was to set a new course in Thailand's foreign policy, one which would be conducive to the changing world and

¹⁰⁰ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰¹ FBIS-EAS-88-164, August 24, 1988, 56.

¹⁰² FBIS-EAS-88-164, August 24, 1988, 56.

¹⁰³ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

regional scenes. This shift in policy de-emphasized the traditional military aspects of security, and instead fostered greater cooperation, especially economic, between Thailand and Indochina.

An altogether different goal for the restructuring concerned how the policy change might give Thailand greater leverage in negotiations with the United States. Kraisaak Choonhavan suggested that the new regional initiative would attract Washington's attention, thereby altering the course of their bilateral trade negotiations.¹⁰⁴ His reasoning was that the regional policy change towards Indochina would "act like trumpets" to Washington and bring more attention to and convey greater importance for Thailand. Mr. Kraisaak also concluded that the U.S. needed Thailand in its eventual rapprochement with the Vietnamese, just like when the U.S. needed Thailand to confront them in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰⁵

Why did the advisors place so much emphasis on Laos early in the administration? Laos was critical to the advisors' strategy for improving relations with all of Indochina. The advisors believed it was possible to improve relations with all three Indochinese states, but Laos was targeted to be the forerunner for Thailand's future relationship with all three.¹⁰⁶ Mr. Sukhumbhand recalled why the advisors gave Laos top priority in the rapprochement: "The main objective was to use our improved relations with Laos as a signpost for our future relationship with

¹⁰⁴ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok. Among the major issues in the negotiations with the United States at that time were patent and copyright disagreements. The advisors were resisting U.S. pressure to abide by and enforce copyrights and intellectual property rights. See "PM's Advisers to Keep Low Profile to Avoid Rifts," 3.

¹⁰⁵ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁶ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

Cambodia and Vietnam."¹⁰⁷ He further noted that if they were successful with Laos, presumably they could be successful with Cambodia and Vietnam as well. Moreover, added Mr. Pansak, Thailand could not change its policy effectively without Laos.¹⁰⁸

In Mr. Kraissak's view, it was important to emphasize relations with Laos early in the administration because if peace were to be restored in Cambodia, Thailand needed Laos' support when it came to dealing with Vietnam and Cambodia.¹⁰⁹ The advisors needed to ensure that Laos would agree with Prime Minister Chatichai's new approach for handling the Cambodian crisis, which meant the overtures to Laos had to be successful. The advisors utilized their improved relations with Laos by having Laos host several secret meetings between the advisors and Hun Sen's representatives.

Mr. Pansak shared a similar view about Laos's connection with the Cambodian situation. He maintained that if Thailand intended to improve relations with Cambodia, it had to also change relations with Laos and Vietnam.¹¹⁰

Another reason why the advisors gave Laos priority early in the administration, according to Mr. Kraissak, was that they perceived Laos to be easier to approach than Vietnam. He said one of the key indicators that Laos would not resist their overtures was that during the fighting at Ban Rom Klao, Laos continued to

¹⁰⁷ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁸ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁹ Kraissak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹⁰ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

sell its hydroelectricity to Thailand.¹¹¹ Therefore, the advisors began the Indochina initiative with Laos.

A final motive for emphasizing relations with Laos was that Laos came to represent the first step towards fulfilling General Chatichai's "battlefields into marketplace" idea.¹¹² Based on Mr. Sukhumbhand's belief about Laos serving as a signpost for Thailand's relations with Indochina and Mr. Kraisak's perception that Laos would be easier to approach than the others, it made sense to develop commercial ties with Laos first. Moreover, making Laos the first step in the policy corresponded to Mr. Sukhumbhand's ambition of revitalizing the importance of Thai-Lao relations.

Domestic variables

1. Businessmen. The advisors who were interviewed rejected the idea that business associates of Prime Minister Chatichai inspired the foreign policy change. Mr. Kraisak insisted that the prevailing belief of businessmen pressuring Chatichai is merely a presumption which has no truth to it.¹¹³ He argued that businessmen did not exert influence over the prime minister. Mr. Sukhumbhand shared Mr. Kraisak's perception of the businessmen. He acknowledged that General Chatichai had many exchanges of views with businessmen before he became prime minister, but they were not a decisive factor in bringing about the shift in policy.

¹¹¹ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹² Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹³ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

General Chatichai had been opposed to the previous Thai administrations' policy towards Indochina since the 1970s. Chatichai was not indecisive about how to deal with Indochina, insisted Mr. Sukhumbhand; he had long believed the orthodoxy espoused by Siddhi Savetsila was wrong.¹¹⁴ Due to these prior beliefs, Mr. Sukhumbhand concluded that the businessmen could not exert significant pressure. The only significance of the business community for Chatichai's Indochina initiative was that it gave him a constituency to support his policy.¹¹⁵

While some businessmen had desired improving relations with Laos before General Chatichai became prime minister, Mr. Sukhumbhand asserted that the pressure was extremely mild because no businessman wanted to be labeled a traitor by putting his personal economic interests before the security interests of the country.¹¹⁶ One must bear in mind the perceived threat of communism by the Thai government throughout the 1980s. As a result, Mr. Sukhumbhand reasoned, there was a virtual consensus among government officials (before Chatichai's administration) in the orthodoxy of the previous foreign policy and that it should be preserved at all costs. Thus, businessmen would have had a disincentive to express their economic desires regarding Indochina.

Mr. Sukhumbhand also pointed out that Prime Minister Chatichai's business associates began economic activity in Laos long after the policy change had occurred. The question arises, then, if they were intensely interested in Laos for investment and trade, why did they wait so long after the policy change?

¹¹⁴ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹⁵ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹⁶ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

Borwornsak Uwanno offered another reason why he rejected the allegations of businessmen influence over the prime minister. Businessmen could not pressure General Chatichai, Dr. Borwornsak explained, because implementing the policy would take considerable time, and no elected government in Thailand had ever lasted the full four-year term.¹¹⁷ By assuming the Chatichai government would not last the whole term, businessmen could not rely on the government fulfilling the "battlefields into marketplace policy." Moreover, there would be no guarantee that their investments in Indochina would be protected in the event of a downturn in relations between Laos and a successor government to Chatichai's in Thailand.

2. Chat Thai Party. All four of the advisors interviewed stated that General Chatichai's political party, Chat Thai, was not influential in the decision to restructure. Various reasons were offered. According to Mr. Kraissak, Chat Thai Party members were only interested in large investment projects, not the small to medium-size opportunities mainly available in Indochina at the time.¹¹⁸ Vietnam promoted large-scale foreign investment, while Laos and Cambodia sought smaller investment projects, which were better suited for Thai investors.¹¹⁹

Mr. Pansak's explanation for the lack of influence by Chat Thai Party members was that they strongly distrusted the Vietnamese government.¹²⁰ Several of

¹¹⁷ Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok. In fact, up to the 1991 coup, Chatichai's government was the longest serving civilian administration ever in Thailand.

¹¹⁸ Kraissak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹¹⁹ "Indochina 'Ideal' for Small-Scale Investment," Bangkok Post, May 1, 1993, 22.

¹²⁰ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

the party members retained the disdain and distrust of the Vietnamese felt by many Thai people, implying Chat Thai members did not seek large amounts of investment in any of the three Indochinese states because of the close relationship Laos and Cambodia had with Vietnam.

A third interpretation of the insignificance of Chat Thai had to do with the alleged illegal monopolies some Chat Thai members had in border trade with Laos and Cambodia. Select politicians from Chat Thai were believed to operate illegal trade rings along the borders with Laos and Cambodia in order to circumvent the trade ban on strategic goods.¹²¹ Clearly these politicians benefited from the restrictions, and the advisor(s) who asserted these claims maintained that the illegal monopolies were a reason against Chat Thai seeking to improve relations and open up Laos and Cambodia to freer trade.

3. Advisors. The advisors denied they were responsible for instilling into General Chatichai the idea of improving relations with Laos. In response to the question of the advisors initiating the idea, Dr. Borwornsak replied, "On the contrary. It was him [Chatichai] who initiated the idea, and the advisors followed through and made it concretized."¹²²

¹²¹ Confidential interview(s), 1996, Bangkok. One of the advisors noted that Chat Thai Party members were not the only ones involved in the illegal trade monopolies. MPs from another coalition party, local military and police commanders, and private traders were all involved.

¹²² Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

Mr. Sukhumbhand also asserted that the prime minister decided to improve relations with Laos even before the advisory team was assembled. He said, "We may have suggested a few things, but mainly concerning how to go about it."¹²³

4. Trade and investment. The advisors differed among themselves about the importance of trade and investment. From Dr. Borwornsak's perspective, trade and investment were highly significant reasons for the policy shift.¹²⁴ Thailand needed to diversify its trade partners and markets and therefore turned to Indochina. He said General Chatichai frequently talked about how Thailand's traditional marketplaces had been the United States and Europe and that it was time to concentrate on exporting Thailand's goods to Indochina, Burma, and ASEAN states. Furthermore, Dr. Borwornsak believed only commercial and economic ties could bring peace to the region.

The other advisors' views diverged from Dr. Borwornsak's. They downplayed trade and investment's importance, especially the notion that the policy change derived from what some have labeled as "business-oriented diplomacy." Mr. Kraisaak declared to the media in 1989, "This isn't business-oriented diplomacy...Rather it is our moral commitment to help end the conflict and bloodshed in Cambodia."¹²⁵ In the same press report he also rejected the idea that the Indochina initiative was based on Thailand acquiring "NIC-status" so quickly, meaning Thailand's economic

¹²³ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²⁴ Borwornsak Uwanoo. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²⁵ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

boom enabled them to exploit economic opportunities in neighboring countries. He said:

Actually the premier always considers Thailand a developing country, and this is why he would like Thailand to develop better ties with all neighboring countries so that poor Thai border villagers and small or medium-size traders, who don't have access to U.S. or E.C. markets, can benefit from cross-border trade.¹²⁶

Instead of trade and investment opportunities being motivations for the policy shift, Mr. Kraisaak explained during an interview how the advisors used trade data to overcome opposition by some members of the National Security Council to rapprochement with Indochina. At an NSC meeting two months into Chatichai's term, some members of the NSC suggested there was no reason to improve Thai-Indochinese relations because their trade was so insignificant. The advisors gathered International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank figures to show that, although the level of trade was relatively small, it had been gradually increasing over the past few years. After showing these data to the NSC, the dissenting members were willing to accept Prime Minister Chatichai's initiatives.¹²⁷

Mr. Sukhumbhand disregarded the trade and investment variable as well by saying, "I don't think there was any general feeling that Indochina would be a goldmine."¹²⁸ Certainly there was natural resources potential, but the small markets of Laos and Cambodia, along with the low levels of communications and education, led most of the advisors to conclude that Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam were not

¹²⁶ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

¹²⁷ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

going to be significant economic partners or provide the bountiful opportunities anticipated by businessmen and the media.

Mr. Pansak responded with an additional explanation. He claimed the advisors were well aware that the Vietnamese government would not allow Thailand to exploit them and their human and natural resources.¹²⁹ Instead of a rapid influx of Thai economic activity into Indochina, he expected that the level of trade and investment would only incrementally improve after the policy change.

The advisors had different views about the proposition of Thailand seeking to gain access to economic opportunities in southern China via Laos. Three of the advisors interviewed, Sukhumbhand, Pansak, and Borwornsak, firmly stated that there was no stratagem to utilize improved relations with Laos to penetrate southern China. Mr. Sukhumbhand claimed their vision for Thai-Indochinese relations was merely dyadic and did not involve southern China. He also commented that none of the advisors had foreseen a role for Laos in linking Thailand with southern China. Furthermore, Mr. Sukhumbhand stated that General Chatichai never mentioned a connection between the overtures to Laos and Thailand's economic interests in China.¹³⁰ One of the reasons for the lack of foresight into this matter, he noted, was that Thailand had more important problems to solve, namely the Cambodian crisis and various issues with Laos (such as border security). He also explained how Chatichai and the advisors did not have adequate time or staff to consider this potential linkage with China.

¹²⁹ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

¹³⁰ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

Additionally, in a media report three weeks after General Chatichai became prime minister, Mr. Sukhumbhand was cited as saying he felt uncomfortable with close Thai-Chinese ties. He said Thailand should be more firm when dealing with China over the Cambodian crisis (instead of seeking Beijing's approval all the time) because it was more of an immediate threat to Thailand than it was to China.¹³¹ Therefore, he reasoned, Thailand should be more flexible in the handling of Cambodia if it were necessary. It is unlikely that the advisors would risk the wrath of China with their new approach to Cambodia if Thailand's underlying interests were to gain economic opportunities to southern China.

Dr. Borwornsak said he was unaware of any interest of the Chatichai government involving southern China and the foreign policy shift towards Laos. In fact, he emphasized, China was a negative factor for Thailand's Indochina initiatives because the advisors had to consider whether or not China would be upset if Thailand went too fast with the foreign policy changes.¹³² As with Mr. Sukhumbhand, Dr. Borwornsak maintained he never heard any discussion during the administration about Yunnan and the restructuring towards Laos.

From Mr. Pansak's perspective, Laos was not used as a pathway to southern China for Thai business interests in 1988, although he acknowledged it is relevant nowadays.¹³³ However, Mr. Pansak claimed the prime minister warned the advisors about possible economic problems in Yunnan which might lead to a flood of economic refugees. Most of the investment in China at the time, Mr. Pansak explained, was in

¹³¹ FBIS-EAS-88-164, August 24, 1988, 58.

¹³² Borwornsak Uwanoo. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

¹³³ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

the eastern part of the country, while Yunnan, despite its resources, was being neglected. Thai investment in Yunnan increased after General Chatichai's Indochina policy change, in part because Yunnan had useful resources and in exchange could use Thailand as a port for exporting Yunnan's goods.¹³⁴ Hence, the Thai investment in Yunnan which occurred in the years after the policy change was an unrelated consequence of the restructuring, but not a reason for it.

The only advisor who supported the proposition about a linkage between Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos and southern China was Mr. Kraidak. He said:

That was in the grand scheme of Chatichai. The bridge he envisioned would extend the routes. In fact, this is what he explained to the [Lao government] eventually, that he envisioned a road and railroad link all the way from Bangkok to Viang Chan; from Viang Chan to Luang Prabang (in northwestern Laos); from Luang Prabang to Kunming (in Yunnan)...So yes, of course, this has always been in our minds.¹³⁵

When asked why Dr. Borwornsak and Mr. Sukhumbhand denied foreseeing the restructuring as a means to gain greater access to southern China, Mr. Kraidak explained that the idea of economic opportunities in Yunnan came after 1988 for most people, but for his father it was already apparent. Mr. Kraidak also added that Pansak had indeed foreseen the potential for linking Thailand with Yunnan, and eventually he initiated talks with the Japanese regarding a feasibility study for the project.

¹³⁴ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

¹³⁵ Kraidak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

General Chatichai never pursued the idea, according to Mr. Kraisak, because he realized that the plan to link Thailand, Laos, and Yunnan was an enormous undertaking. Once the Cambodian problem was settled, then the plans for linkage with Yunnan could be launched.¹³⁶

Because of the premature ending of the Chatichai government in 1991, it is impossible to determine whether or not a linkage to Yunnan via Laos would have been pursued later in the administration.¹³⁷ However, Mr. Kraisak acknowledged that the Chinese government was upset with Prime Minister Chatichai's rapprochement towards Indochina, saying Thailand was changing its policy too quickly.

The third part of the trade and investment variable dealt with personal economic interests in Laos. Mr. Sukhumbhand maintained that neither General Chatichai nor his advisors had any business ties with Laos or Vietnam at the time of the restructuring, and therefore he rejected this as a reason for the foreign policy change.¹³⁸ He also added that he was not aware of any government officials who had business interests in Laos, even after the policy shift. Dr. Borwornsak and Mr. Kraisak supported Mr. Sukhumbhand's view that no individual stood to gain economically from improved relations with Laos.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹³⁷ In April 1992, the Asian Development Bank approved funding for a highway to be built linking the forthcoming Mittraphab Bridge with the Laos highway system and China's southern region. See "Paving the Way for Thai Projects Across the Borders," The Nation, April 30, 1992, B4.

¹³⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹³⁹ Borwornsak Uwanno and Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interviews, April 9, 1996, and May 6, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

5. Interest groups. From the advisors' perspectives, interest groups were not relevant in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy.

6. Prime Minister Chatichai. Mr. Sukhumbhand believed the prime minister's personal beliefs were highly significant in the decision.¹⁴⁰ He said General Chatichai's views about Indochina differed from other government officials who favored the hard-line policy. Chatichai's views were consistent throughout the 1980s, even before he became the prime minister. Mr. Sukhumbhand said, "[Chatichai] believed even though the structure of the relationship may be conflictual, that does not mean that one cannot initiate certain processes which would improve the relations between Thailand...and the Indochinese countries..."¹⁴¹

Dr. Borwornsak also thought General Chatichai's personal beliefs were important in the decision. He said the prime minister was the first person to predict the globalization trend, and therefore Chatichai proposed the policy change before others.¹⁴²

According to Mr. Pansak, Prime Minister Chatichai did not want poor states around Thailand.¹⁴³ With economic development, the surrounding states would be more stable and could also absorb excess Thai goods.

¹⁴⁰ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁴¹ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁴² Borwornsak Uwanno. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁴³ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

7. Other. Dr. Borwornsak and Mr. Sukhumbhand noted the important role played by Army Commander-in-Chief General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh. Although they did not consider him to be a variable per se, they said his role in the overtures to the Indochinese states was instrumental in terms of the support he gave to Prime Minister Chatichai, and without him the process of rapprochement may not have gone as smoothly as it did.¹⁴⁴ General Chaovalit's personal ties to the government and military leaders in Indochina proved to be an asset. However, Mr. Sukhumbhand explained that one stimulus of the military's support for improved relations with Laos in 1988 was the military's desire to obfuscate their failure in the border war at Ban Rom Klao.

External variables

1. Cambodian crisis. All four advisors interviewed agreed on the importance of Cambodia as a variable in the Indochina initiative. Mr. Kraisaak and Dr. Borwornsak confirmed there was a strong desire for achieving progress for a settlement in Cambodia.¹⁴⁵ The relevance of this desire to Thailand's relations with Laos was that all three Indochinese states were closely interlinked politically and economically. Dr. Borwornsak and Mr. Pansak expressed this perception of interlinkages among Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, Thailand's relations with Laos served as

¹⁴⁴ Borwornsak Uwanoo and Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interviews, April 9, 1996, and April 18, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

¹⁴⁵ Kraisaak Choonhavan and Borwornsak Uwanoo. Personal interviews, May 6, 1996, and April 9, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

¹⁴⁶ Borwornsak Uwanoo and Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interviews, April 9, 1996, and June 21, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

what Mr. Sukhumbhand called a "signpost" for Thailand's future relations with Cambodia and Vietnam.

Settling Cambodia was a major concern for the advisors, and they believed garnering support from Laos for the new approach to Cambodia was vital to the peace process. Why were the advisors so intent on ending the conflict in Cambodia as soon as possible? Mr. Pansak explained to the media, "Cambodia is not just about Cambodia...it's about us...We cannot let Cambodia hang around our neck like an albatross indefinitely--and neither can ASEAN--in this rapidly changing world."¹⁴⁷ In his view, foreign troops in Cambodia posed a threat to Thailand's security.¹⁴⁸ In another press interview, Mr. Pansak argued, "We cannot let Cambodia dictate our destiny. We must do something to deal with it and cope with the new situation."¹⁴⁹ In an interview for this study, Mr. Pansak said they expected the war in Cambodia to end soon (at the time in 1988), and so they sought to "limit the negative aspects of the transition to the end of the war."¹⁵⁰

Mr. Kraisak stressed that Cambodia was the key to Chatichai's post-Cold War policy, but it could not be accomplished without Laos' support. He personally kept the Lao government officials abreast of what he called their "hidden objectives" regarding Cambodia, in order to mitigate any suspicions Laos might feel about

¹⁴⁷ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

¹⁴⁸ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

¹⁴⁹ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

¹⁵⁰ Pansak Uwanno. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

Thailand's intentions toward Cambodia.¹⁵¹ By hidden objectives, Mr. Kraisak meant a peace agreement between Hun Sen and Sihanouk which excluded the Khmer Rouge.

In Mr. Pansak's view, Thailand's previous support for the three-faction CGDK was seen negatively by other countries as support for the Khmer Rouge,¹⁵² who are accused of being responsible for the deaths of 1-2 million Cambodians between 1975 and 1978. The advisors' encouragement of a new approach to the Cambodian issue included direct involvement of Hun Sen in talks handled by the advisors and a willingness to exclude the Khmer Rouge from a provisional government.¹⁵³

The advisors favored implementing the peace settlement in a step-by-step manner, instead of the comprehensive settlement advocated by the international community and Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Pansak's argument for rejecting a comprehensive settlement was that Cambodia was not a single-issue problem, and hence it could not be dealt with in a comprehensive manner.¹⁵⁴ He candidly said such a settlement was like trying for an "instant orgasm," which ignored the realities in Cambodia and the rest of the world.¹⁵⁵ The advisors accepted in principle the components of the Paris peace conference; they merely differed with the international community on how to implement them.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁵² "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

¹⁵³ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

¹⁵⁴ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

¹⁵⁵ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

¹⁵⁶ Kraisak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

2. Leaders in Laos. The government leaders in Laos were deemed to be a significant variable by three of the advisors interviewed. Mr. Sukhumbhand claimed the Lao leaders were receptive to cordial relations with Thailand, even before General Chatichai became prime minister, since otherwise it would be "suicidal" for them to perpetuate hostile terms with Thailand.¹⁵⁷ He said the Prem government simply failed to recognize the Lao leaders' predisposition to amicable relations. The one time the Lao leaders were not open to better relations with Thailand, Mr. Sukhumbhand explained, was in the immediate aftermath of the fighting at Ban Rom Klao (before Chatichai became prime minister). The Lao government became more hard-line after the fighting than before because "they had just won their spurs in a war with their big brother."¹⁵⁸ After Chatichai became prime minister and recognized the Lao government's predisposition over the long term, the Lao leaders' openness to better Thai-Lao relations (in terms of them responding favorably to General Chatichai's overtures) became an important factor in the restructuring.¹⁵⁹

Mr. Kraissak agreed with the importance of the Lao leaders' response to Chatichai's overtures. He said the advisors realized the Lao government would be receptive to their policy change, based on their assessment of Laos's behavior during the battle at Ban Rom Klao. Mr. Kraissak recalled:

One very important issue was that Laos continued to sell electricity [to Thailand], even during the Ban Rom Klao conflict. They did not once cut off the

¹⁵⁷ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁵⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁵⁹ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

electricity, which is surprising. So that was one indication to us...that the Laotians would not resist our rapprochement.¹⁶⁰

Mr. Kraisaak offered other reasons why the Lao leaders were receptive to the advisors. One reason was that the Lao government sought unimpeded access to Thailand's deep sea port. Additionally, he claimed the three Indochinese states were still concerned about a possible Chinese invasion through Laos into Vietnam, like the one in 1979. Third, the instability and changes in the Soviet Union disturbed the Indochinese leaders,¹⁶¹ causing them to seek better relations with Thailand.

Mr. Kraisaak maintained that the Lao leaders, in particular Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane, raised economic issues during General Chatichai's first visit to Laos. During their meeting, Kaysone suggested Laos's natural resources could be potential investments for the Thai.¹⁶²

Mr. Pansak concurred with Sukhumbhand and Kraisaak's assessment of the importance of the Lao leaders' receptiveness to the policy shift. He claimed that Thailand's policy change could not have occurred without a concomitant change in Laos's policy towards Thailand.¹⁶³

Contrary to the other advisors, Dr. Borwornsak believed the Lao leaders were not a significant variable in the restructuring. His reasoning was that it was Prime Minister Chatichai who initiated the change in Thai-Lao relations, not the Lao government. His response is not necessarily contradictory to the other advisors'

¹⁶⁰ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶¹ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶² Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶³ Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

views because he was merely reiterating the fact that General Chatichai began the initiatives and not the Lao leaders, which was not disputed by the other advisors. Whereas the other advisors took the question a step further by discussing the importance of the Lao government's receptivity to the change in policy, Dr. Borwornsak simply looked at who was responsible for initiating the change.

3. ASEAN relations with Indochina. The advisors were unanimous in their rejection of ASEAN as an influential variable in the restructuring. In fact, Mr. Kraisaak and Mr. Pansak said the ASEAN states opposed Thailand's moves to improve relations with Indochina.¹⁶⁴ According to Mr. Kraisaak, Indonesia in particular proved to be more of an obstacle than supporter of Thailand's new policy. The Indonesians feared Thailand would upstage them as the leading member of ASEAN and as host to the Cambodian negotiations.¹⁶⁵

Dr. Borwornsak flatly rejected the contention that other ASEAN states may have pushed Thailand for improved relations with Laos. In response to the question, he replied, "As far as I know no ASEAN country would change the policy. It was Chatichai who made them change."¹⁶⁶ Moreover, he argued, Singapore already had discreet commercial relations with Indochina at the time, even though Singapore was officially opposed to trading with them.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Kraisaak Choonhavan and Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interviews, May 6, 1996, and June 21, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

¹⁶⁵ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶⁶ Borwornsak Uwanoo. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶⁷ Singapore's discreet trade relations with Laos was confirmed by Dr. Surachai Sirikrai of Thammasat University. Dr. Surachai believed part of the reason for Thailand ending the strategic goods list was that Singapore provided Laos with the

Mr. Sukhumbhand explained that ASEAN's lack of influence in the restructuring derived from Prime Minister Chatichai's failure to consult ASEAN in advance of the policy shift.¹⁶⁸ ASEAN could not be considered a relevant variable because the prime minister never proposed the plan before announcing the change. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the "battlefields into marketplace" idea caught everyone by surprise, including ASEAN. Mr. Sukhumbhand diverged slightly from some of the other advisors' views regarding ASEAN's opposition to the restructuring. In his view, ASEAN willingly accepted the change in policy with Laos. He explained, "It was all right in the case of Laos because it was mainly a bilateral affair. But it [the policy change] was more of a problem when the invitation to Mr. Hun Sen was involved."¹⁶⁹

4. ASEAN concern over China. The advisors also rejected the second ASEAN variable for many of the same reasons. Mr. Sukhumbhand added he always recognized Indonesia's intention to counter China's influence in the region by improving relations with Vietnam, but he maintained that this scenario did not factor into the decision.¹⁷⁰

5. Decline of the Soviet Union. The advisors had varying opinions on the relation between the Soviet Union's decline and Thailand's shift in foreign policy. Dr. Borwornsak believed the Soviet Union's diminished role in Laos and Vietnam at the

banned items. Personal interview, March 27, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶⁸ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁶⁹ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁷⁰ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

time was the most important factor in ensuring that the new Indochina policy could be successfully implemented.¹⁷¹ Mr. Pansak acknowledged the importance of the Soviet Union's decreased aid to Laos and Vietnam but qualified the statement by saying it was highly important in the context of a combination with another external factor: China terminating assistance to the Khmer Rouge.¹⁷²

Mr. Kraisaak noted that the gradual disintegration of the Soviet Union was not yet apparent when the foreign policy change was made. More important than the Soviet Union's decline, he argued, were Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika and the disturbing effect these had on Laos and Vietnam.¹⁷³ However, rather than having a direct impact on the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Indochina, perestroika and glasnost merely provided justification that Thailand's old, hard-line policy had to be revised.

Mr. Kraisaak further commented that the Soviet government supported Thailand's new policy, but he did not consider this to be a significant factor because of the economic difficulties the Soviets were facing. The Soviet embassy in Bangkok attached one of its staff members to Kraisaak in order to keep Moscow informed about Thailand's Indochina plans, but he did not play an active role in discussing policy with the advisors.

In Mr. Sukhumbhand's opinion, the decline of the Soviet Union was not influential in Thailand's rapprochement with Laos. Interestingly, however, he believed it was relevant to Thailand's relations with Vietnam. Mr. Sukhumbhand

¹⁷¹ Borwornsak Uwanoo. Personal interview, April 9, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁷² Pansak Vinyaratn. Personal interview, June 21, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁷³ Kraisaak Choonhavan. Personal interview, May 6, 1996, Bangkok.

said the advisors perceived the Soviets' reduced role in Vietnam as presenting a clear opportunity to improve relations with the Vietnamese.¹⁷⁴ This statement appears consistent with his earlier one in which Mr. Sukhumbhand described how during the Chatichai administration a conceptual distinction was made between Laos and Vietnam. (This had not been done by the Prem administration.) While the Soviet Union's diminished assistance to and involvement in Vietnam affected Sukhumbhand's views of Vietnam, this was not true in the case of Laos.

6. Decline of the Cold War. The decline of the Cold War received disparate responses from the advisors. Dr. Borwornsak believed it was highly significant in facilitating better relations between Thailand and Laos, although he did not elaborate as to how.

In interviews with journalists, Mr. Pansak thoroughly discussed his impressions of the decline of the Cold War and the changing international system in the late 1980s. In a 1989 interview, he claimed the ideological struggle in Southeast Asia and throughout the world was over. Capitalism, he asserted, proved to be more efficient than central planning, and the ideology of Thailand's neighbors no longer concerned them.¹⁷⁵ Based on an interview with Mr. Pansak, another journalist described Pansak's view of the changing world as follows:

The core issue behind the fighting on Mainland Southeast Asia during the past four decades since World War II was the ideological struggle between the "diffused capital management" system and the "centralized capital management" system, or the so-called communist system. The core issue has

¹⁷⁴ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁷⁵ "Instant Orgasm vs. Graceful Exit," 8.

disintegrated. There is no longer any dispute that the "diffused capital management" (the capitalist system) is more efficient, economically speaking.¹⁷⁶

Mr. Pansak perceived the world to be in transition in the late 1980s. Among the changes he noted were Sino-Soviet normalization, the speed of improved U.S.-Soviet relations (despite their disputes over Afghanistan and Cambodia), and increased economic interaction between China and its long-time rival in Southeast Asia, Vietnam. Furthermore, he argued in 1989 that because Cambodia no longer presented an obstacle to improved relations between China and Vietnam, China and the Soviet Union, and the U.S. and the Soviet Union, it should not constrain Thailand's adjustments to the changing international system.¹⁷⁷ The thawing of the Cold War and the dramatic transformations in world politics were, according to Mr. Pansak, reasons for Thailand's "battlefields to marketplace" policy.¹⁷⁸

In August 1988 Mr. Sukhumbhand made a statement similar to Pansak's about no longer needing to worry about communism. He said Thailand did not have to fear communism because of Thailand's more dynamic system. This statement arose out of a perceived need to dispel fears in Thailand that Laos might re-establish ties with the Communist Party of Thailand.¹⁷⁹ Aside from this commonality, though, Mr. Sukhumbhand held different views from Mr. Pansak about the decline of the Cold War and its connection with Thailand's policy shift. Although Mr. Sukhumbhand conceded that the changing international system in the late 1980s

¹⁷⁶ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

¹⁷⁷ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

¹⁷⁸ "Adjusting to Global Restructuring," 10.

¹⁷⁹ See FBIS-EAS-88-164, August 24, 1988, 57.

could be seen as a cause or reason for the restructuring, he stressed it was actually a justification for General Chatichai's plans. He said:

The changed international environment was used as a justification rather than a reason. In a way it was a reason. Yes, the world had changed; we must change too. But we had always wanted a change [with Laos], and therefore the changed international environment was used as a justification rather than anything else.¹⁸⁰

He also downplayed the effect of the transforming international system by emphasizing the new mode of thinking by the advisors and the prime minister, compared to the previous decision-makers. Mr. Sukhumbhand said, "Once the conceptual distinction between Laos and Vietnam was made, our relationship with Laos could be perceived in a way that was divorced from our involvement in the Cold War altogether."¹⁸¹ He referred to how Thailand's previous administrations had treated Laos as an adjunct of their problems with Vietnam, and when Thailand had conflicts with Vietnam, it "turned the screws on Laos." Thus for Mr. Sukhumbhand, the continuation of the Cold War would have made no difference in their decision to improve relations with Laos because the advisors and General Chatichai had a completely different way of looking at Laos. However, the fact that they felt free to divorce regional dynamics from the Cold War was new for Thailand.

7. Other. As mentioned earlier, an additional factor offered by Mr. Pansak was the end of China's assistance to the Khmer Rouge. This became important in conjunction with the decline of Soviet assistance to Laos and Vietnam. With less outside

¹⁸⁰ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁸¹ Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Personal interview, April 18, 1996, Bangkok.

interference from two of the superpowers, presumably Thailand could approach the Indochinese states more freely.

Summary

General Chatichai and his advisors had similar goals for the restructuring. The primary purpose of the Indochina initiative was to establish peace throughout the region, both between Thailand and Laos and within Cambodia. One of the means to attain this goal was through developing trade relations between Thailand and Indochina. Both General Chatichai and his advisors believed peace could be facilitated by Thailand and Indochina realizing their mutual interests and therefore cooperate in trade matters. Rather than serving as an end in themselves, trade relations and investment would be a means to achieve the goal of peace in the region.

Some of the advisors offered additional goals. Dr. Borwornsak expressed his view of the need to set a new course in foreign policy, one which would be more appropriate to the current situation in the region by de-emphasizing traditional security concerns. Mr. Kraissak added that their Indochina policy might hopefully give Thailand more leverage in trade negotiations with the United States.

General Chatichai and his advisors placed greater emphasis on relations with Laos than with Cambodia and Vietnam early in the administration for slightly different reasons. General Chatichai gave Laos greater attention because their problems were essentially bilateral, and the recent border fighting was an immediate concern. Additionally, the prime minister felt his Indochina initiative would be better received by the Lao government, and therefore rapprochement could proceed rapidly.

Chatichai's advisors agreed with his assessment that the Lao government was easier to approach than Vietnam or Cambodia, based on Laos's willingness to sell electricity to Thailand even during the heavy fighting at Ban Rom Klao. A second reason why the advisors emphasized Laos early in the administration was that the improved relations with Laos would demonstrate Thailand's intentions of rapprochement and help pave the way for better relations with Vietnam and Cambodia. Other reasons related to the Cambodian issue, whereby the advisors wanted Laos' support for Thailand's new approach to Cambodia and also to have Laos host several "secret" meetings between the advisors and Hun Sen's government. Finally, Laos was seen as the first step towards fulfilling the "battlefields into marketplace" policy.

As for their assessments of each variable, there was a consensus among Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors that the following variables were irrelevant in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos: businessmen, the Chat Thai Party, interest groups, and ASEAN. Other variables received mixed views or their relevance could not be determined.

Trade and investment in Laos were significant for Prime Minister Chatichai, but only as a secondary reason for the purpose of achieving peace in the region. Trade and investment gave the public some tangible benefit and therefore legitimized his policy. Only one advisor, Dr. Borwornsak, believed trade and investment were influential, while the others said these were not a factor or at best only used to achieve the primary goal of peace. The idea of establishing a linkage with China via Laos also received varied opinions. The connection is inconclusive for General Chatichai because while all others claimed he never mentioned the idea, Mr. Kraissak asserted that this was in Chatichai's grand scheme. The advisors split along the

same lines, whereby all but Mr. Kraisak responded that there was no plan to gain access to southern China via Laos. Perhaps being his son meant that General Chatichai divulged more about his intentions to Mr. Kraisak than to anyone else.

All four advisors concurred on the importance of Cambodia to the restructuring, saying they wanted to bring about an end to the conflict. Laos played an important role for the advisors in their handling of Cambodia. Cambodia was clearly a priority for General Chatichai, but it is uncertain whether he intended to use rapprochement with Laos as a means to make progress in Cambodia.

Prime Minister Chatichai and three of his advisors believed the Lao leaders were a significant variable in terms of their acceptance of the initiatives but added they (Lao leaders) were not the initiators. Dr. Borwornsak rejected the Lao leaders as a relevant variable, but he was referring only to the question about Laos initiating the overtures.

General Chatichai's views of the decline of the Soviet Union are uncertain. The advisors were again split, with Dr. Borwornsak saying the Soviet decline was extremely important while Mr. Kraisak and Mr. Sukhumbhand responded no.

Finally, the decline of the Cold War as a variable was deemed undetermined for Chatichai. However, from the statements he made it appears the changing international system served at least as a justification for the foreign policy shift but may have in fact been a cause of it. Among the advisors, Dr. Borwornsak and Mr. Pansak stressed the influence the decline of the Cold War had on the decision to restructure, but Mr. Sukhumbhand denied it was a variable. Instead, he maintained, the changing international system merely justified the restructuring. Table 4 presents a summary of Prime Minister Chatichai's and his advisors' views of the variables.

Table 4: The Importance of Variables in the Foreign Policy Restructuring: The Views of General Chatichai and His Advisors.

Variable	General Chatichai	Advisors
businessmen	no	no: all
Chat Thai	no	no: all
trade and investment	yes (secondarily)	no: K,P,S yes: B
trade & investment in China	undetermined	no: B,P,S yes: K
interest groups	no	no: all
Prime Minister Chatichai	undetermined	yes: S,P,B
Cambodia	yes	yes: all
leaders in Laos	yes	no: B yes: K,P,S
ASEAN relations with Indochina	no	no: all
ASEAN concern over China	no	no: all

(continued on following page)

Table 4 (continued)

Variable	General Chatichai	Advisors
Soviet Union	unknown	no: K,S yes: B,P
Cold War	undetermined	no: S yes: B,P

Note: For the advisors, B=Borwornsak Uwanno, K=Kraisak Choonhavan, P=Pansak Vinyaratn, and S=Sukhumbhand Paribatra.

When an advisor's assessment of a particular variable was inconclusive or not stated, he was not included in the table for that variable.

CHAPTER 6

GOALS AND VIEWS OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, AND THE MILITARY

The previous chapter examined the foreign policy goals and assessments of each variable from the perspectives of the prime minister and his advisors. This chapter continues that format by analyzing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, and the military. The goals of the decision-makers are presented at the beginning of each institution, followed by the decision-makers' views of the independent variables.

Goals and Views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Despite some initial resistance to General Chatichai's Indochina initiatives, officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had some of the same goals in mind for the new foreign policy as the prime minister and his advisors. One of the common goals was the establishment of peace and prosperity in the region,¹ both in terms of Thailand's relations with Laos and the crisis in Cambodia.

¹ Arsa Sarasin, Surapong Jayanama, and Subin Pinkayan. Personal interviews, June 12, 1996; June 4, 1996; and July 12, 1996, respectively, Bangkok. Arsa Sarasin became the foreign minister after the 1991 coup d'état. Surapong Jayanama, who, at the time of this writing is the Director-General of the Department of Information in the MFA, was Deputy Director-General of the Department of Information during part of General Chatichai's premiership.

When Subin Pinkayan became the foreign minister in August 1990, one of his goals was to have Thailand and Laos live in peace and mutual trust. This was part of his "multidirectional" approach, which emphasized expanded economic, cultural, and technological ties with Thailand's neighbors.² While in Laos in 1990, Foreign Minister Subin said that improved Thai-Lao relations would "result in turning the Mekong River into a river of peace and close attachment between the peoples of the two countries."³

Athit Urairat, who served briefly as the foreign minister from December 1990 until the coup in February 1991, pronounced a similar desire. He asked rhetorically, "How could Thailand be really at peace if our neighbours are not?"⁴ Soon after becoming foreign minister, Mr. Athit proclaimed he would continue General Chatichai's "battlefields into marketplace" policy, but more emphasis than before would be placed on economic and social reforms to foster democracy in Indochina.⁵

According to Arsa Sarasin, a former close colleague of General Chatichai in the MFA and the foreign minister after the 1991 coup d'état, the fighting in 1988 at Ban Rom Klao led to the belief that there had been enough conflict already between Thailand and Laos; it was time for the two states to coexist peacefully.⁶ The fighting had not produced any gains for either side, and the Thai-Lao border disputes were clearly not being resolved by military means. Instead, Thailand needed to "mend

² FBIS-EAS-91-058, March 26, 1991, 62.

³ FBIS-EAS-90-224, November 20, 1990, 49.

⁴ FBIS-EAS-90-243, December 18, 1990, 46.

⁵ FBIS-EAS-90-249, December 27, 1990, 52-53.

⁶ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

fences" with its neighbors, especially Laos, because peace and stability in the region were in Thailand's interest.⁷ He argued it is better to deal with wealthier states than with poor ones, and that was why peace, stability, and prosperity in the region were in Thailand's interest.

Surapong Jayanama, who was Deputy Director-General of the MFA's Department of Information during Chatichai's administration, had a slightly different response than Mr. Arsa. Mr. Surapong maintained that the MFA had always recognized the need for peace and stability in the region.⁸

The goal of establishing peace in the region also included Cambodia. Fighting in Cambodia had been raging since 1978, and it had periodically spilled over into Thailand's territory. Additionally, thousands of Cambodian refugees inside Thailand could not be returned until a peace settlement was reached.⁹ Foreign Minister Subin explained Thailand's desire for peace in the whole region by stating, "Indochina had to be changed. People were fed up with the war. It is time to stop fighting and develop the country."¹⁰

Officials in the Foreign Ministry claimed they wanted peace in the region just like the prime minister and advisors, but it appears that they believed in a different approach early in the Chatichai administration to attain the goal. The MFA's actions, as described in Chapters 3 and 4, indicate the Foreign Ministry officials believed in maintaining the established hard-line policy towards Indochina.

⁷ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹ "From Optimism to Disappointment," 8.

¹⁰ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

However, the MFA seems to have undergone a change in organizational thinking by 1990 when Siddhi Savetsila was replaced as foreign minister. The subsequent foreign ministers, Dr. Subin and Mr. Athit (and even Mr. Arsa after the 1991 coup), clearly favored the approach pursued by Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors.

Foreign Minister Siddhi did not seem to envision the foreign policy restructuring bringing about peace in Indochina, although peace was one of his priorities. Foreign Minister Siddhi, who initially resisted Chatichai's foreign policy change, sought an end to the crisis in Cambodia before relations with Indochina were improved, especially the development of trade relations.¹¹ This indicates that Siddhi did not see foreign policy restructuring as a means to establish peace in the region.

One of Foreign Minister Siddhi's main concerns was eliminating the threat to Thailand posed by the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. Siddhi had been one of the architects of Thailand's hard-line stance towards Indochina, and he was adamant about not improving relations until Vietnamese troops were pulled back from Cambodia. After the Vietnamese withdrew their forces in 1989, Foreign Minister Siddhi declared that he would take a lower profile in the Cambodian dispute now that the main goal of eliminating the threat to Thailand had been achieved.¹² A peace settlement remained elusive at the time, but his interest in the Cambodian crisis had diminished. This appears to have been the beginning in the MFA's new organizational thinking about Indochina.

¹¹ FBIS-EAS-88-155, August 11, 1988, 57. Also see "Siddhi: Peace Needed Before Indochina Trade," 2; and FBIS-EAS-88-223, November 18, 1988, 48.

¹² "Opposition MP Urges Siddhi to Resign," The Nation, November 21, 1989, 2.

Another goal for some officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to resolve Thailand's security dilemma which arose from the Thai-Lao border disputes. Noppadol Kunnavibulaya, formerly with the Southeast Asia division in the MFA and currently the director of the MFA's East Asia division, said Thailand needed to develop close, friendly relations with Laos because the key to Thailand's security is its long border with Laos.¹³ This is evident from the numerous disputes between the two countries involving border fighting, conflicts over navigation rights, refugees, and the cross-border movements of insurgents.

Foreign Minister Siddhi sought to solve border problems with Laos through improved relations but doubted Thailand's ability to come to terms with Laos. He said before the National Assembly: "It is still difficult for both Thailand and Laos to settle the border dispute as both are involved in other disputes concerning Cambodia. I think our problems with Laos are related to the problem in Cambodia."¹⁴

A final goal stated by one official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to have Thailand assert influence in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Thailand's ambassador to the U.N., Nitya Pibulsonggram, said economic changes in Eastern Europe could occur similarly in Indochina. Thailand's role, he reasoned, could be to serve as a "springboard" for economic and possibly political changes in the region.¹⁵ Nitya's interest in inducing political changes in the region melded with Foreign

¹³ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁴ FBIS-EAS-88-170, September 1, 1988, 54.

¹⁵ Suthichai Yoon, "Envoy: Thailand Should 'Look East'," The Nation, November 26, 1989, 1. By "political changes," presumably he meant greater democratization in Indochina, but it is not clear from the text of his speech what he meant.

Minister Athit's goal of a greater emphasis on economic and social reforms for democracy in Indochina.

Domestic variables

1. Businessmen. Two former foreign ministers, Subin Pinkayan and Arsa Sarasin, flatly rejected the notion that businessmen pressured Prime Minister Chatichai to change foreign policy.¹⁶ General Chatichai was a successful businessman himself and obviously had extensive contacts in the business community, but this does not necessarily mean that the restructuring came from pressure by the business community. Dr. Subin said, "There is no doubt that General Chatichai knows many businessmen in Thailand. And they are his friends, no doubt. But I believe that no one could put pressure on him."¹⁷ Mr. Surapong also concluded that the businessmen were not a factor in the decision.

In contrast, Noppadol Kunnavibulaya said businessmen were highly relevant in the decision to alter Thailand's foreign policy.¹⁸ However, he did not elaborate or offer any conclusive evidence explaining their influence.

2. Chat Thai Party. All MFA respondents interviewed disregarded General Chatichai's fellow party members from the Chat Thai Party. Arsa Sarasin explained

¹⁶ Subin Pinkayan and Arsa Sarasin. Personal interviews, July 12, 1996, and June 12, 1996, respectively, Bangkok.

¹⁷ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁸ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

that their lack of influence was because economic factors were not the motivation for the foreign policy change.¹⁹

3. Advisors. Although it was determined in an earlier chapter that Prime Minister Chatichai's advisors did not devise the idea for restructuring, the views of other decision-makers towards the advisors are presented. Mr. Surapong believed the advisors played a crucial role in the restructuring. He maintained that the advisors had economic motivations in mind for Laos and the other Indochinese states. Specifically, they wanted Thailand to become an export economy, which would make the country more competitive in the region and enable Thailand to catch up with Singapore's and Taiwan's economies.²⁰ Expanding into Indochina became a means to achieve this, Mr. Surapong noted, because Indochina matched Thailand's economic needs (i.e., to provide resources and cheap production costs). Mr. Surapong credited the advisors for having what he thought was an economic vision ahead of their time.

Mr. Noppadol agreed with Surapong about the influence of Chatichai's advisors. He concluded the advisors devised the idea of the policy shift rather than the prime minister.²¹ Foreign Minister Subin attributed the impetus for the policy change to General Chatichai, but he believed the advisors may have been partially involved in the idea to improve relations with Laos.

Of the MFA officials interviewed, only Arsa Sarasin rejected the relevance of the advisors in the decision to change course. Mr. Arsa responded to the question of

¹⁹ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁰ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

²¹ Noppadol Kunnawibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

whether or not the advisors persuaded Prime Minister Chatichai to change policy by saying:

The advisors would like to be involved in policy, and one question was whether there had been differences between the roles of the foreign office and the thinking of the advisors. My answer to that is no. They had the same objective, they felt the same way...Whether they [the advisors] made any difference, in terms of action maybe, but in terms of thinking no.²²

4. Trade and investment. Early in the administration Foreign Minister Siddhi favored limiting Thailand's economic trade with Indochina until the Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia.²³ Foreign Minister Siddhi recognized the economic potential in Indochina, but he determined that the present conditions precluded the Indochinese states from achieving their potential. He concluded:

In general, the three Indochinese states with their rich natural resources, ample supply of cheap labor and potentially large market for commodities and household items...offer many opportunities in trade, joint ventures and investments...The possibilities are there, but so are the immediate problems--a short supply of ready cash and capital for investment and a lack of adequate infrastructure.²⁴

Furthermore, according to the Thai newspaper Matichon, the Foreign Ministry opposed separating political and military policies from trade and economic relations with Indochina,²⁵ a stance which reflected Foreign Minister Siddhi's views.²⁶ Thus,

²² Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

²³ See FBIS-EAS-88-170, September 1, 1988, 54; and FBIS-EAS-88-172, September 6, 1988, 54.

²⁴ FBIS-EAS-89-101, May 26 1989, 52.

²⁵ FBIS-EAS-88-198, October 13, 1988, 60.

²⁶ See "Siddhi: Peace Needed Before Indochina Trade," 2; and "Rivalry, Rift and Resentment," 8.

for Siddhi, trade and investment were not motivating factors in the restructuring.

Foreign Minister Subin steadfastly denied trade and investment opportunities in Laos were factors in restructuring Thailand's foreign policy. Dr. Subin refuted the notion that Laos and the other Indochinese states were appealing markets at the time.²⁷ He cited the fact that Laos had only 4 million people in the late 1980s, and they had very little purchasing power. Dr. Subin also said that as Commerce Minister, he led a private-sector group to Laos for trade and investment purposes, but there were only a few small opportunities. Furthermore, all three Indochinese countries had not fully opened their economies by 1988. Many restrictions from the old socialist policies remained intact.

Foreign Minister Arsa also disregarded the relevance of economic motives for the change in policy. He emphasized that the immediate aim of the restructuring was to foster peace and stability in the region, not to benefit Thailand economically.²⁸ In the long run, Mr. Arsa maintained, economic benefits may ensue, but they were not influential reasons for shifting the policy in 1988. As with Dr. Subin, Mr. Arsa acknowledged that Laos's labor force was far too small to serve as an incentive.

Deputy Foreign Minister Prapas Limpabhandhu favored pursuing economic ties with Laos.²⁹ Thus, Prime Minister Chatichai assigned him to handle international economic issues on behalf of the MFA. This demonstrates once again

²⁷ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁸ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

²⁹ "Turmoil in the Twilight Zone," 10.

how the power of the prime minister to appoint officials to key posts or handle important tasks can overcome bureaucratic opposition.

In a television interview in October 1988, Mr. Prapas was asked if there were any objections to trading with Laos due to national security concerns. He responded by saying, "I do not think so, because several agencies have assured that the security problem along the Lao border has been minimal as bilateral contacts have increased."³⁰ However, it is not clear whether or not trade and investment in Laos were, in Prapas's view, reasons for the foreign policy change. But unlike many officials in the MFA, early in the Chatichai administration he believed that security issues were no longer an obstacle to Thai-Lao rapprochement.

Two other MFA officials interviewed argued that economic factors were important in the decision to restructure. Thailand's economic growth throughout the 1980s expanded rapidly, and Thailand was considered one of the emerging newly industrialized countries (NICs). Surapong Jayanama argued that Thailand was in a position to invest in the region and intended to shift some of its production base outside the country. Among the advantages of producing in Laos are its cheap labor and relatively high export quotas. He explained that as Thailand became an investor in other countries, it would symbolize Thailand's achievement of NIC status.³¹ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya also argued that trade and investment were important influences. However, he qualified their significance by saying General Chatichai

³⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-198, October 13, 1988, 59-60.

³¹ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

simply continued what Prem had started, with respect to expanding trade and investment in Indochina.³²

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs respondents rejected the proposition that decision-makers sought to gain access to southern China's economy by means of better relations with Laos. The idea of developing the "quadrangle" (Burma, Laos, Yunnan [China], and northern Thailand), according to Mr. Surapong, did not come about until a few years after the restructuring occurred.³³ Mr. Noppadol claimed that the permanent secretary in the next administration was one of the first people to conceive of the quadrangle development idea.³⁴

According to Dr. Subin, most Thai investors in 1988 sought opportunities in the coastal areas which had port facilities, not in land-locked Yunnan province;³⁵ therefore, developing relations with Laos in order to facilitate interaction with Yunnan was not a priority or a reason for the restructuring with Laos. Focusing on areas in China with ports indicates Laos was not seen by Thailand as a "land bridge" to Yunnan. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Subin noted that as Commerce Minister and a supporter of Chatichai's policy, the prime minister never mentioned an interest in using Laos for Thai-Chinese economic activity.³⁶

When asked if any politicians or bureaucrats stood to gain personally from a change in policy with Laos, either through business interests or political popularity,

³² Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

³³ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁴ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁵ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁶ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

the MFA respondents did not see any relationship between personal gains and the restructuring. Mr. Surapong believed that politicians in the Northeast stood to benefit from the change, and General Chatichai would boost his image as a strong leader, but these were not causal factors in the change of policy.³⁷

Unlike Mr. Surapong, Foreign Minister Arsa replied that no individual stood to gain economically from a shift in policy; instead, the country as a whole would benefit from a more peaceful and prosperous region.³⁸ While this could be interpreted as political rhetoric, if one considers the "backwardness" of Laos's economy it is a plausible explanation. Laos has a small, uneducated labor force, poor infrastructure, low purchasing power, and no access to the seas for exporting goods. Certainly more appealing markets could be found. Foreign Minister Subin concurred with Mr. Arsa. He doubted anyone, whether the prime minister, his advisors, or cabinet members, had any business interests which would have been facilitated by improved relations with Laos.³⁹

5. Interest groups. None of the respondents found interest groups relevant in the decision to shift foreign policy. Mr. Surapong stressed that pressure groups and civil society had no influence in foreign affairs at the time.⁴⁰

³⁷ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁸ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

³⁹ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴⁰ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok. Mr. Surapong further explained that nowadays foreign policy is more difficult to conduct than in the late 1980s because of the need for support from Parliament, the media, and civil society.

6. Prime Minister Chatichai. Arsa Sarasin noted the importance of Prime Minister Chatichai's personal beliefs. He said General Chatichai was among those who believed the only way for Thailand to coexist with its communist neighbors is to bring about peaceful relations.⁴¹ Commenting on General Chatichai's personality, Mr. Arsa described the prime minister as a man with flair who would make statements to attract attention.

Surapong Jayanama, as noted earlier, characterized General Chatichai as a maverick who took risks. However, he did not state if this influenced the prime minister's Laos policy.

Noppadol Kunnawibulaya asserted General Chatichai's beliefs were not critical in the decision to restructure.⁴² Wong Pholykorn, a retired MFA official who played an important role in helping Thailand and Laos reach a cease-fire at Ban Rom Klao, claimed Chatichai saw no alternative to rapprochement for ending the hostilities between the two states.⁴³

External variables

1. Cambodian crisis. The officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the importance of the Cambodian situation to the foreign policy restructuring. However, the views of the MFA on this variable diverged significantly from those of the advisors. The former tended to see the Cambodian developments as a justification

⁴¹ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴² Noppadol Kunnawibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴³ Wong Pholykorn. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

for improving relations with Laos, which is in stark contrast to the advisors who wanted to use improved relations with Laos to make progress in the Cambodian dispute. This difference in perspective likely derives from the MFA's insistence early in the Chatichai administration that better relations with Indochina could come only after a settlement was reached in Cambodia. It was essentially a difference in cause and effect: the MFA wanted a settlement in Cambodia before improved relations could be promoted, while the advisors wanted rapprochement to bring about a settlement in Cambodia.

Noppadol Kunnavibulaya said changing Thailand's relations with Laos and the rest of Indochina was possible because the peace process in Cambodia was progressing at the time.⁴⁴ Similarly, Surapong Jayanama concluded that Thai-Lao relations could not improve until after the 1989 Paris Peace Agreement for Cambodia.⁴⁵ Before this agreement, he explained, Thai-Lao relations could not be separated from the Cambodian dispute because Indochina was treated as a whole by the Thai government through 1988. Foreign Minister Subin also noted that the changes in Cambodia made Thailand more willing to end the hard-line policy towards all of Indochina.⁴⁶

Foreign Minister Siddhi insisted early in the Chatichai administration that the Cambodian problem must be resolved before Thailand could have open and free trade with Indochina, indicating that for him the restructuring was not for improving

⁴⁴ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴⁵ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

⁴⁶ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

the situation in Cambodia.⁴⁷ When analyzed in combination with the responses given by MFA officials above, clearly the MFA did not intend to use improved relations with Laos as a way to resolve the Cambodian crisis. For them, a settlement in Cambodia had to come first, and then improved relations could follow. Their concurrence on this highly significant issue reflects organizational thinking as described by Allison and Snyder and his colleagues. The Cambodian crisis was the Foreign Ministry's most important issue, and for years the MFA officials believed the hard-line policy was necessary to achieve results.

When Arsa Sarasin became foreign minister after the overthrow of Chatichai in 1991, he pursued the same objective as General Chatichai and his advisors regarding Cambodia.⁴⁸ Mr. Arsa maintained the relationship with Hun Sen, which was begun by Chatichai's advisors, but placed more emphasis on Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge, whom he deemed critical for a peace agreement. Once again, the MFA's new behavior indicates that a change occurred in the MFA's institutional thinking. Unlike Prime Minister Chatichai's advisors, Mr. Arsa disagreed with the intention to separate Laos from Vietnam and Cambodia and use improved relations between Thailand and Laos to achieve progress in the Cambodian dispute. Foreign Minister Arsa argued that Laos was still under Vietnam's domination and could not be separated. Thus, the new organizational thinking may have been only a partial change or had not fully developed yet.

⁴⁷ For Siddhi's statements about not having open trade with Indochina until the Cambodia problem is resolved, see "Siddhi: Peace Needed Before Indochina Trade," 2; and FBIS-EAS-88-170, September 1, 1988, 54.

⁴⁸ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

It is important to note that the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy came long before progress in the Cambodian crisis. The MFA delayed giving its support to Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy change. The Foreign Ministry appears to have accepted the restructuring in 1989, which is when the Paris Peace Agreements were signed. The delay in the MFA's acceptance of the restructuring supports the earlier point that the Foreign Ministry wanted progress with Cambodia before improving relations with Indochina.

2. Leaders in Laos. The MFA officials interviewed agreed with the conclusion made in previous chapters that the government leaders in Laos did not initiate rapprochement between Thailand and Laos. Similar to the views of General Chatichai and his advisors, MFA officials believed the Lao leaders were instrumental in another way, and that was in their acceptance of Chatichai's overtures. Mr. Noppadol believed that the Lao leaders had previously mistrusted Thailand, but during Chatichai's administration they were willing to accept Thailand's initiatives for peace and cooperation.⁴⁹ According to Mr. Arsa, the Lao leaders, especially General Sisavat Keobounphan and Foreign Minister Phoun Sipaseuth, welcomed improving Thai-Lao relations, which he claimed turned out to be an important factor in the process.⁵⁰ Had they not been willing to foster a conducive atmosphere for improved Thai-Lao relations, or if they had rejected the changes proposed by Thailand, the restructuring would likely have failed.

⁴⁹ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁰ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

Foreign Minister Subin speculated that part of the reason for Laos's openness to Thailand's policy change may have been to acquire a new source of foreign aid.⁵¹ Economic aid from the Soviet Union and Vietnam declined in the late 1980s, and as Laos made further reforms towards a market economy, Thailand and its newly found prosperity could have filled that void.⁵²

An added explanation for the Lao leaders' acceptance of Thailand's initiatives was their quest for peace. According to Mr. Arsa, both sides realized their border fighting was a no-win situation. He further noted, "The governments viewed that it was the right moment, and the only alternative to this [fighting] was to come and talk to one another."⁵³

Mr. Surapong disregarded the importance of Laos's receptivity. He argued that Laos always followed Vietnam's lead and was compelled to change its policies after the Soviet Union collapsed and a peace agreement was reached in Cambodia.⁵⁴

3. ASEAN relations with Indochina. All of the MFA respondents agreed ASEAN did not exert any pressure on Thailand to improve relations with Indochina. Mr. Surapong expounded by saying Indonesia had sought to play a major political role in Southeast Asia but always deferred to Thailand when Indochina was involved.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵² An attempt was made to interview Lao government officials, but it was unsuccessful. Some of the key officials had passed away in the early 1990s, and others were unavailable for interviews.

⁵³ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁴ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁵ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

Likewise, he added, the other ASEAN states continued to follow Thailand's lead in dealing with Indochina.

4. ASEAN concern over China. ASEAN states, particularly Indonesia, were concerned about China's growing role in the region, with much of the disquietude stemming from China's weapons sales to Thailand and assistance to the Khmer Rouge in the 1980s. As stated above, however, the ASEAN states were not a factor in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos.

5. Decline of the Soviet Union. The relevance of the decline of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s to the decision to shift foreign policy was contested among members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As the Soviet Union's influence in Southeast Asia began to wane, and its support for Vietnam and Laos declined, Foreign Minister Siddhi was encouraged by Moscow's posturing for a peaceful settlement in Cambodia. In response to the Soviet Union's quest for a peaceful solution and its assurance in 1988 that Vietnam would withdraw 50,000 troops from Cambodia, Siddhi told Thailand's National Assembly, "All this has created a new atmosphere, and with such an improvement in the political atmosphere, we have to adjust our policy in response to it."⁵⁶

A Foreign Ministry source reported that Thailand's policy-makers believed modifications in foreign policy were appropriate due to the political and economic changes in the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ Whereas earlier Thailand feared the Soviet Union's

⁵⁶ FBIS-EAS-88-170, September 1, 1988, 54.

⁵⁷ "Chatichai Pledges War on Poverty," Bangkok Post, August 7, 1988, 1.

expanding influence in Southeast Asia and its funding for Vietnam's troops in Cambodia, the new climate influenced Thailand's decision-makers to no longer see the Soviet Union as a threat.

MFA officials Surapong and Noppadol acknowledged the effect of the Soviet Union's decline on the restructuring. Mr. Surapong claimed the downfall of the Soviet Union was the "key event," without which Thai-Lao relations would not have improved.⁵⁸ It was significant, he said, because it meant Laos lost an important patron. He added that Laos and Vietnam were caught off guard by the changes in Soviet and Eastern European communism, and both countries realized good relations with Thailand were necessary for their survival. In Mr. Noppadol's view, one of the primary reasons for the restructuring was better relations between Thailand and the Soviet Union.⁵⁹ The improved atmosphere led some Thai policy-makers to believe that confrontation in the region was ending.

The decline of the Soviet Union was not seen by all MFA respondents as a reason for restructuring Thailand's foreign policy. For Foreign Minister Subin, the weakening of the Soviet Union was not relevant in the decision and had no effect on the policy.⁶⁰ Arsa Sarasin elaborated on this point by saying Thailand's policy towards Indochina did not change as a result of the Soviet Union, but the Indochinese states altered their policies toward Thailand because of the collapse of their

⁵⁸ Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

⁵⁹ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁰ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

relationship with Moscow.⁶¹ Moreover, he explained, the communists were no longer perceived as a threat to Thailand.

6. Decline of the Cold War. Similar arguments about the relevance of the Soviet Union were applied to the decline of the Cold War. Mr. Surapong believed the winding down of the global conflict over communism was extremely influential in the decision to seek rapprochement with Laos and the rest of Indochina.⁶²

Dr. Subin disagreed, saying that the declining threat of communism and global tensions was not significant.⁶³ Arsa Sarasin shared Dr. Subin's view about the ending of the Cold War, claiming it was unimportant to Thailand's foreign policy change. The greatest threat to Thailand from communism, Mr. Arsa argued, was the domestic insurgency rather than any external challenges. Once China terminated support for the CPT around 1980, effectively ending its chances for overthrowing the Thai government, communism was no longer as threatening to Thailand as before. Mr. Arsa stated: "The internal threat gradually declined because the Chinese were the big supporters of the insurgency in Thailand. And this [movement] did not yield to Vietnam or Soviet Union influence."⁶⁴

Finally, Mr. Noppadol was ambivalent about the Cold War variable. In one comment he maintained that the positive atmosphere created by the end of the Cold War provided an important reason for altering Thailand's foreign policy towards

⁶¹ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶² Surapong Jayanama. Personal interview, June 4, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶³ Subin Pinkayan. Personal interview, July 12, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁴ Arsa Sarasin. Personal interview, June 12, 1996, Bangkok.

Laos, but later in the interview he thought the decline of the Cold War affected Laos's behavior more than Thailand's.⁶⁵ In either case, he believed the ending of the Cold War was an important factor in improving Thai-Lao relations. The only difference would be which state it affected more.

Goals and Views of the National Security Council

The two top ranking officials in the National Security Council (NSC) shared similar goals with the other decision-makers for Thailand's new Laos policy. For Suwit Suttanukul, Secretary-General of the NSC from 1986-1991, the decision to improve relations with Indochina resulted from the desire for peace to be restored in mainland Southeast Asia.⁶⁶ This was to be accomplished by having the states in the region begin cooperation with one another. Achieving the goal of peace, he recalled, would benefit all the people in the region, not only the Thai. However, Mr. Suwit did anticipate Thailand would benefit from expanded commercial relations with Indochina.

The deputy secretary-general at the time, Kachadpai Buruspatana, also stated that the goal of the new foreign policy was peace and cooperation. He said, "We have to walk together to reach peace and stability in this region."⁶⁷ He believed it was time to stop fighting and begin various facets of cooperation, including economic. When asked if the NSC advocated enhanced trade relations with Laos in

⁶⁵ Noppadol Kunnavibulaya. Personal interview, August 16, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁶ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁷ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

the late 1980s-early 1990s, he responded by saying trade relations would promote peace in the region.

Domestic variables

1. Businessmen. Mr. Suwit was uncertain about the influence businessmen had in the restructuring. He confirmed Prime Minister Chatichai had a wide range of connections throughout Thai society, including businessmen, and therefore he believed they could have had some relevance in the decision.⁶⁸ However, he conceded that Mr. Kraisak and the other advisors may be correct in their assessment that the business community had no direct influence on the policy change, but he could not completely reject a possible linkage because of General Chatichai's extensive contacts.

Mr. Kachadpai agreed with the advisors, maintaining that the businessmen did not exert any pressure on the government for increased economic opportunities in Indochina.⁶⁹ He argued that businessmen can conduct their activities even when there is conflict among states. He may have been referring to the illegal border trade in the 1980s and that the "trade" could have continued without a foreign policy restructuring.

2. Chat Thai Party. Mr. Suwit believed the Chat Thai Party had no role in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy. The party members, he claimed, did not have sufficient influence over General Chatichai, who maintained firm control

⁶⁸ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁶⁹ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

over them.⁷⁰ Furthermore, he asserted that Chatichai's advisors ensured that the Chat Thai members would not exert any influence over policy, although he did not elaborate on how this was done. As for Mr. Kachadpai, he said he did not have any knowledge about whether or not Chat Thai Party members played any role in the policy change.

3. Advisors. Both Mr. Suwit and Mr. Kachadpai believed the influence of Prime Minister Chatichai's advisors was highly important. Secretary-General Suwit claimed the advisors tried to "sell" the idea of improving relations with Laos to the prime minister.⁷¹ Mr. Kachadpai concurred with Suwit's assessment by saying he thought the advisors were very active in making proposals to Chatichai for the policy change.⁷²

4. Trade and investment. Both NSC respondents said that the need to diversify trade and investment was an important variable in the Indochina policy. According to Mr. Kachadpai, the expanded economic relations with Indochina were intended to help Thailand reduce its large proportion of trade with the United States and Europe.⁷³ Mr. Suwit claimed diversifying trade and investment was somewhat important in the government's decision, although not the key factor in the overall initiative. Improving economic relations with Laos was a priority for the government, he said, but mainly

⁷⁰ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷¹ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷² Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷³ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

for two purposes other than diversifying trade partners: responding to changes in the international situation and preparing for the future dealings with the Indochinese states.⁷⁴

In response to the idea of gaining greater access to southern China via Laos, Mr. Suwit insisted there was no connection between Thailand's overtures towards Laos and the investment opportunities in southern China. China was an attractive market for Thai investors, he admitted, but whether Thailand's relations with Laos were cordial or confrontational had no effect on investment in China.⁷⁵

Mr. Kachadpai concurred with Suwit's analysis. He maintained that the Thai government and investors had no interest in utilizing better relations with Laos for greater economic opportunities in southern China. Even without Laos, he added, Thailand could have good relations and access to China.⁷⁶ When asked to respond to Mr. Kraissak's assertion that General Chatichai envisioned the linkage between Thailand, Laos, and Yunnan all along, Mr. Kachadpai discounted the claim.

Both Mr. Suwit and Mr. Kachadpai rejected the allegations that the prime minister, his advisors, or other government officials had any personal economic interests in Laos. Mr. Kachadpai stated there is no evidence to support the idea that some individuals in the government stood to benefit economically. Additionally, he said it is not true that Chatichai or any others benefited because improved relations

⁷⁴ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁵ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁶ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

with Laos gave more benefits to Laos than to Thailand.⁷⁷ He referred to the sizable amount of grants and assistance Laos received from the Thai government.

Mr. Suwit held views similar to Arsa Sarasin's. He believed no one in the Chatichai administration stood to gain business privileges in Laos.⁷⁸ Instead, he claimed, the rapprochement with Laos was good for the country as a whole.

5. Interest groups. Both NSC respondents deemed interest groups irrelevant in the Thai government's decision to shift its policy with Laos.

6. Prime Minister Chatichai. Secretary-General Suwit believed Prime Minister Chatichai's personal beliefs were very important in that he envisioned the region as a peaceful area where all states could progress together.⁷⁹ Mr. Kachadpai said he was not sure if General Chatichai's personal beliefs influenced the decision to restructure.⁸⁰

7. Other domestic variables. Mr. Suwit suggested one other possible domestic variable for the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy. According to him, several university academics favored rapprochement with Laos. Mr. Suwit believed their ideas may have influenced some of the decision-makers.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁸ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁷⁹ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁰ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸¹ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

External variables

1. Cambodian crisis. When asked if improving relations with Laos would facilitate progress on the Cambodian problem, Mr. Suwit answered by saying the Cambodian variable was somewhat significant. He agreed that Laos played a role in helping settle the Cambodian dispute and also concurred with Sukhumbhand Paribatra that it would be easier to work with Laos first and then make progress on Cambodia by utilizing better Thai-Lao relations.⁸² In his view, it was necessary to show Vietnam and Laos that Thailand was not an enemy.

Mr. Kachadpai did not believe the desire for progress in the Cambodian situation was connected with the government's decision to improve relations with Laos. When asked if the Thai leaders intended to use improved relations with Laos as a way of making gains in the stalemated Cambodian discussions, he asserted there was no tactic of breaking Laos away from Vietnam and Cambodia in order to achieve a settlement.⁸³

2. Leaders in Laos. Mr. Suwit and Mr. Kachadpai agreed on the importance of Laos's leaders as a variable in Thailand's restructuring. They were not suggesting that Laos initiated reconciliation, but Laos did turn to Thailand for assistance, especially in economic matters. Mr. Suwit stressed the importance of receiving a positive response from Laos. He claimed the Thai government carefully monitored the reaction of

⁸² Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸³ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

Laos's leaders, including their government radio broadcasts.⁸⁴ If positive feedback from the Lao government was not forthcoming, Suwit added, the Indochina initiative would have been far more difficult, perhaps even unsuccessful. As a result of Laos's willingness to improve relations with Thailand, the secretary-general provided Lao officials with technical assistance from Thai educational institutions, particularly in the field of agriculture.⁸⁵

Mr. Kachadpai emphasized a different aspect of the Lao leaders as a variable in Thailand's policy change. He said an important factor was the Lao government's market-style economic reforms. He recalled that Laos wanted to establish economic linkages and procure assistance from Thailand.⁸⁶ These changes in Laos helped enable Thai-Lao rapprochement to proceed smoothly.

3. ASEAN relations with Indochina. As with the other categories of respondents, the NSC officials did not consider ASEAN to have been an instrumental factor in the decision to restructure foreign policy. Mr. Suwit believed Malaysia and Singapore desired better relations with the Indochinese states in order to extract commercial benefits, but he felt this was not a significant influence in Thailand's decision.⁸⁷

In Mr. Kachadpai's view, ASEAN shared Thailand's hope for a peaceful atmosphere in Southeast Asia and supported Thailand's Indochina initiatives.

⁸⁴ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁵ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁶ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁷ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

However, he stressed, ASEAN did not exert any pressure on Thailand to shift its policy.⁸⁸

4. ASEAN concern over China. When asked if Indonesia or other ASEAN states pressured Thailand to improve relations with Indochina to offset the growing Chinese influence in the region, Mr. Kachadpai replied that the ASEAN states could not pressure the Thai officials; they have their own ideas.⁸⁹

5. Decline of the Soviet Union. The two NSC officials interviewed differed slightly in their assessments of the impact of the Soviet Union's decline. In Secretary-General Suwit's opinion, the Soviet Union's decreased influence in Laos and Vietnam had at best only minor influence in the foreign policy decision with Laos.⁹⁰

Mr. Kachadpai believed the Soviet Union's diminishing role in Indochina was one of the key reasons for improved relations with Vietnam, but he doubted that it served as a major factor in the changes between Thailand and Laos.⁹¹ In the 1970s and 1980s, he explained, Thailand feared the Soviet threat, which came indirectly from its relationship with Vietnam. Once the Soviets began withdrawing troops and advisors and curtailing economic assistance to Laos and Vietnam the Vietnamese were no longer seen as a threat. In addition to the Soviet decline, the Vietnamese altered their policies in the region as well, causing the Thai government to reassess its

⁸⁸ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁸⁹ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹⁰ Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹¹ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

views of Vietnam. Mr. Kachadpai claimed the change in Thailand's perceptions of Vietnam was an important factor in improving relations with Hanoi.

6. Decline of the Cold War. Mr. Suwit believed the transformation of the international system in the late 1980s had a significant effect on the restructuring of Thai policy towards Laos. He explained that at the time of the policy, the NSC believed the following:

...there must be some change in dealing with Laos because of the fact that there were some international changes, changes in the threat of communism, and also to prepare for the future dealings with [the Indochinese states].⁹²

Secretary-General Suwit also noted the importance of communism's diminishing appeal within Thailand. The domestic communist insurgency had attenuated drastically, and he no longer thought Thailand was threatened internationally or domestically by communism.

Mr. Kachadpai agreed with the secretary-general's views on how the transforming international system had some effect on Thailand's decision-makers. He said the international system had changed greatly, which provided a reason for the restructuring. But he also noted that a concomitant change in policies by Laos, making for more favorable relations between the two states, became an accompanying reason for reversing the policy with Laos.⁹³ Thus for Mr. Kachadpai, the end of the Cold War may have meant little without a simultaneous change in Laos's policies.

⁹² Suwit Suttanukul. Personal interview, July 10, 1996, Bangkok.

⁹³ Kachadpai Buruspatana. Personal interview, June 13, 1996, Bangkok.

In a second facet of the Cold War variable, Mr. Kachadpai disagreed with Mr. Suwit on the effects of the Cold War's decline on Thailand's communist movement. The domestic threat had been solved long before the end of the Cold War became apparent, he claimed, and thus the Communist Party of Thailand was no longer a concern in 1988.

Goals and Views of the Military

Before proceeding with the military's goals and views, it is important to point out that this section was the most difficult to obtain information. The top leaders of the Thai military during General Chatichai's administration were considered "off limits" for interviews, despite the author's work with the Strategic Research Institute of the Supreme Command Headquarters.

Several of the top military leaders from 1988 to 1991, such as General Suchinda Kraprayoon and General Sunthorn Kongsompong, staged a coup d'état against the Chatichai government. The following year, a violent student uprising against General Suchinda's government led to the "Black May" incident in which dozens of people were killed and the military government collapsed. Thus, interviews with the former top brass were denied. Also, at the time of the research General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, former Army Commander and Supreme Commander during Chatichai's term, served as the Minister of Defense and was unavailable for an interview. Many of General Chaovalit's statements found in Thailand newspapers are contained here, but his views on numerous issues could not be discerned. The only military officials interviewed were General Siri Thiwapan, former Commander of the Third Army Region (which consists of 16 northern

provinces and conducted the fighting against Laos), and his current Secretary to the Chairman of the MFA Advisory Board, Major-General Vachara Mayalarp.

The Thai military held two predominant goals with regard to Laos. Like many of the other decision-makers, the military desired peaceful co-existence with Laos for the benefit of the region. During his visit to Laos in October 1988, Army Commander Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh made a joint statement with his Lao counterpart General Sisavath Keobounphan in which he declared Thailand and Laos were "looking beyond the Ban Romkloa conflict to try to help bring peace to the region."⁹⁴ General Chaovalit reiterated his quest for regional peace during another visit to Laos in April 1989. He declared: "Our desire is to see countries with different systems co-exist peacefully."⁹⁵ During an interview, General Siri Thiwapan confirmed Chaovalit's statements by saying the military intended to secure "well-being" with Laos.⁹⁶

A second and interrelated military objective was to make the region stronger by means of greater economic and social development. General Siri's responses during the interview concurred with General Chaovalit's statements at the time. In General Siri's view, the military and government wanted Laos to develop economically as Thailand had, and this could be achieved by means of increased commerce with Laos. General Chaovalit was quoted by The Nation as saying, "An improvement in Thai-Lao relations would equally enhance the development of both

⁹⁴ FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 54.

⁹⁵ FBIS-EAS-89-070, April 13, 1989, 55.

⁹⁶ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

countries."⁹⁷ General Chaovalit believed that economic development of the region would enable Southeast Asia to compete economically with other regions.⁹⁸ General Chaovalit also emphasized that Thailand could not afford to get rich while leaving its neighbors in poverty because Thailand could not survive in the long run unless the region grew together.⁹⁹

A few months after Prime Minister Chatichai proclaimed his "battlefields into marketplace" policy, the military responded with a complementary initiative called "Suwannabhum," or Golden Peninsula. The idea, devised by General Chaovalit, was similar to the prime minister's in that it sought to foster regional economic cooperation among Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Burma for the betterment of all the countries involved. According to General Siri, General Chaovalit changed the military's policy to follow the government's.¹⁰⁰ One media report concluded that the military's *Suwannabhum* idea was a direct indicator of the military's support for General Chatichai's Indochina policy.¹⁰¹

An important development in the military's definition of security in the late 1980s and early 1990s consisted of a reconceptualization of national security. The new thinking, spearheaded by General Chaovalit, sought to broaden the concept of national security to include economic, social, and cultural aspects.¹⁰² However, it is

⁹⁷ Cited in Mayoury and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, 3.

⁹⁸ See FBIS-EAS-89-070, April 13, 1989, 55; and FBIS-EAS-89-211, November 2, 1989, 51.

⁹⁹ FBIS-EAS-89-211, November 2, 1989, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰¹ FBIS-EAS-89-154, August 11, 1989, 46.

¹⁰² Chantornvong and Chenvidyakarn, 171.

not clear if the military was following the prime minister's redefinition of security or if the military's version coincidentally matched Chatichai's.

The redefinition of security became evident in the military's emphasis on rural development in Thailand¹⁰³ and economic relations with Laos. The most notable domestic development programs were the Green Isan Development Project and the New Hope program. For its role in fostering economic relations with Laos, General Chaovalit led joint military-business delegations to Laos for discussions with their Lao counterparts. During General Chaovalit's visit to Laos in April 1989, he urged the two states to cooperate on issues regarding the Mekong River, particularly for plans to improve irrigation and fishing.¹⁰⁴

Domestic variables

1. Businessmen. No public statements by General Chaovalit regarding businessmen and foreign policy were found. His views on this variable, therefore, are unknown. General Siri claimed that Thai businessmen pursued government support for their dealings with Laos.¹⁰⁵ Previously, businessmen risked entering the Indochinese markets without government guarantees, funds, or support. General Siri believed pressure by businessmen had some impact on the change in policy; however, he did not elaborate or offer any details of how the businessmen played a role in the policy shift.

¹⁰³ Chantornvong and Chenvidyakarn, 171.

¹⁰⁴ FBIS-EAS-89-070, April 13, 1989, 55-56.

¹⁰⁵ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

2. Chat Thai Party. The military's views towards the Chat Thai Party also are unknown.

3. Advisors. Once again, no statements about the advisors by General Chaovalit or the other top military leaders were found. General Siri was unsure about the advisors' role, saying the policy change could have been the result of both the advisors and General Chatichai.¹⁰⁶

One important point is that the advisors and the military did not have cordial relations. In 1989 Sukhumbhand Paribatra made controversial remarks about the military as he defended the Chatichai government against General Chaovalit's corruption accusations. Mr. Sukhumbhand retorted that General Chaovalit should "clean up his house first."¹⁰⁷ The military protested and eventually forced him to resign as one of Chatichai's advisors.

4. Trade and investment. For General Chaovalit, trade with Laos and the rest of Indochina was important because Indochina could absorb the excess Thai exports.¹⁰⁸ In a television interview regarding Thailand's Indochina policy, General Chaovalit expressed his views:

Trade is part of being friends with each other. I have said several times already that trade with the Indochinese countries is essential because trading solely with free world countries will eventually bring crises...Indochinese markets will help

¹⁰⁶ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹⁰⁷ FBIS-EAS-89-154, August 11, 1989, 44.

¹⁰⁸ See FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 54; and FBIS-EAS-88-231, December 1, 1988, 67.

reduce the crises we face in free-world markets and will help bring about compromise between countries with different political ideologies.¹⁰⁹

The last part of that statement (compromising with different political systems) had been raised earlier by Chaovalit during his visit to Laos in October 1988. He declared, "Opening to socialist markets will lead to compromise in the political field."¹¹⁰ It is apparent that cooperation for the purpose of peace was the main impetus for the military's support for trade with Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. However, General Chaovalit explicitly refuted questions that trade received priority over politics. He explained, "I think that what the prime minister said was more of a strategy--let us forge peace instead of fighting. This is the heart of it. But the remarks led many people to think that the emphasis was being put on trade."¹¹¹ This statement is remarkably similar to Mr. Kraissak's about the prime minister's policy being misinterpreted as economics-driven (see Chapter 5).

As for the possibility of gaining greater access to economic opportunities in southern China via Laos, Generals Siri and Vachara denied it played any role in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos.¹¹² They maintained that Thai investors could go into China without using Laos and that Thailand had been looking at China for investment opportunities long before the change in policy with Laos. Therefore, they concluded, Laos had nothing to do with Thai interests in

¹⁰⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-231, December 1, 1988, 67.

¹¹⁰ FBIS-EAS-88-210, October 31, 1988, 54.

¹¹¹ FBIS-EAS-88-231, December 1, 1988, 66.

¹¹² Siri Thiwapan and Vachara Mayalarp. Personal interviews, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

southern China. Furthermore, Generals Siri and Vachara noted that General Chatichai had been developing economic ties with China since the 1970s (see Chapter 5).

General Chaovalit's interests in China focused on weapons procurement rather than investment. The Thai military had been purchasing weapons from China at "friendship prices" since 1985.¹¹³ The first major wave of arms transfers occurred in 1985, followed by similar waves in 1988 and 1989.¹¹⁴ The surge in Thai procurement of Chinese weapons arose from their opposition to Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. The low prices of arms sold by the Chinese military to Thailand (the arms were practically given away at only 10% of their market value)¹¹⁵ demonstrated that the arms transfers were not economically motivated, but rather stemmed from China's desire for political leverage and strategic concerns.¹¹⁶

For the personal economic interest component of the trade and investment variable, General Siri believed Prime Minister Chatichai did have business interests in Laos. He speculated that the prime minister may indeed have been looking for investment projects in Laos.¹¹⁷ However, he did not mention any specific evidence for his view. General Siri also maintained that in particular the northeastern part of

¹¹³ For Thailand's purchases of Chinese weapons, see Richard A. Bitzinger, Chinese Arms Production and Sales to the Third World (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1991); Gill, 526-539; R.S. Sassheen, 9-31; and Sirikrai, 247-265.

¹¹⁴ Gill, 528-529.

¹¹⁵ Sirikrai, 255.

¹¹⁶ Gill, 529-530.

¹¹⁷ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

Thailand also stood to benefit disproportionately from improved ties with Laos, but other areas of the country would benefit as well.

5. Interests groups: The military's views on interest groups are unknown.

6. Prime Minister Chatichai. The military's views on General Chatichai's personal beliefs also are unknown.

External variables

1. Cambodian crisis. The Thai military was naturally concerned about the situation in Cambodia because of the spillover the crisis was having in Thailand. Thai villagers along the border suffered harm inadvertently during the fighting, and troops from the various Cambodian factions frequently violated Thai territory. For these reasons, General Chaovalit argued that Thailand must be involved in the Cambodian problem. He urged a rapid peace settlement among the warring factions.¹¹⁸ In October 1989, General Chaovalit declared, "We must be firm in our stand. The search for peace is our duty."¹¹⁹ Another reason for Chaovalit's desire to settle the Cambodian problem, which he referred to on one occasion as a "big hole" needing to be filled, was so that Thailand could devote greater attention to regional economic development.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ FBIS-EAS-89-018, January 30, 1989, 62.

¹¹⁹ FBIS-EAS-89-191, October 4, 1989, 54

¹²⁰ FBIS-EAS-89-211, November 2, 1989, 50.

General Sunthorn said the Thai military wanted peace in Cambodia as soon as possible. His reason was that Thai people were suffering from all the fighting.¹²¹

Despite the military's obvious concern with the Cambodian situation, they did not conceive of utilizing better relations with Laos for facilitating a peace settlement in Cambodia, which was the advisors' intent. General Siri stressed that the Cambodian crisis was a problem for Cambodia, and Laos had no ability to play a political role in settling the dispute.¹²²

2. Leaders in Laos. General Siri believed the Lao leaders, in particular General Sisavat Keobounphanh and President Nouhak Phoumsavan, were important in terms of their open-mindedness to the Thai initiatives.¹²³ But even before Chatichai's policy, General Siri noted that Laos had changed greatly after the cease-fire for Ban Rom Klao, most notably with more open trade.

3. ASEAN relations with Indochina. General Siri did not find ASEAN to be an influential variable. His only comment about ASEAN was that it desired to have all of the Southeast Asian states be a part of ASEAN, which dated back to the association's founding in 1967.¹²⁴ No remarks by General Chaovalit or other top military leaders were found.

¹²¹ FBIS-EAS-90-129, July 5, 1990, 54.

¹²² Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²³ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²⁴ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

4. ASEAN concern over China. This variable in the military's perspective is undetermined for lack of information.

5. Decline of the Soviet Union. General Siri deemed the decline of the Soviet influence in Laos to be an important variable. He recalled that before Chatichai's administration, the Soviet Union supported Laos and Vietnam, but soon after General Chatichai took office the Soviets began gradually withdrawing their advisors from Laos.¹²⁵

General Sunthorn Kongsompong, Army Chief of Staff and General Chaovalit's successor as Supreme Commander, realized the economic difficulties of the Soviet Union and the effect they were having on the region. He stated:

The Soviet Union is putting pressure on Vietnam [to withdraw from Cambodia] because, economically speaking, the Soviet Union is in bad shape itself. It is something like a big brother telling his younger brother to speed up the withdrawal plan.¹²⁶

Although General Sunthorn's statement does not indicate if he thought the Soviet decline was a reason for rapprochement with Laos, he clearly concluded that the Soviet Union's problems were having an impact on Indochina.

6. Decline of the Cold War: Thailand's military still perceived a major threat from communism in 1988 and 1989, both internally from the CPT and externally from world-wide communism, despite the dramatic changes occurring in the global system.

¹²⁵ Siri Thiwapan. Personal interview, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

¹²⁶ FBIS-EAS-89-100, May 25, 1989, 48-49.

The persistence of these perceptions likely derived from entrenched organizational behavior since the 1960s. In October 1988, Supreme Commander Chaovalit warned that communism remained a security threat to Thailand and that people should not forget about its danger.¹²⁷ General Chaovalit repeated his admonition a few weeks later during a television interview by saying global communism and the CPT still presented problems to Thailand. He exclaimed, "We have the duty and responsibility of maintaining internal peace and security, and the threat of communism or the Communist Party of Thailand is a major national problem."¹²⁸ His views clearly contradict those of the NSC and MFA. Kachadpai Buruspatana of the NSC and Arsa Sarasin of the MFA argued that the CPT's threat ended in the early to mid-1980s.

General Chaovalit did acknowledge, however, that the decline of the Cold War was having an effect on the region, particularly on Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia. In response to a question regarding Vietnam's occupation and ability to remain in Cambodia, General Chaovalit replied:

It [plans for Vietnam's withdrawal from Cambodia] did not work then because Vietnam had the assistance of a superpower, but now Vietnam can not remain in Cambodia; this is a fact...I told many friends...that there is no cause for concern; even without pressure Vietnam will have to withdraw from Cambodia. The most important cause is the development in superpower relations, particularly between those in the socialist camp--China and the Soviet Union.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Asian Defence Journal, November 1988, 108.

¹²⁸ FBIS-EAS-88-231, December 1, 1988, 65.

¹²⁹ FBIS-EAS-88-231, December 1, 1988, 67-68.

General Sunthorn had concerns similar to General Chaovalit about the CPT and global communism in the late 1980s. He still believed in mid-1989 that the Indochinese states presented a threat to Thailand, although he thought this threat was declining. General Sunthorn said in an interview:

Concerning Thailand, external threats to its security come more from its neighbors in Indochina than from other border sides...[T]here has been a gradual decrease in the degree of external threats since the major communist powers, such as China and the Soviet Union, adopted a new approach in policy, with stress on economic reform, which is more practical. Anyway, we cannot underestimate communist threats so long as we take into account their long-term plans.¹³⁰

These statements by Generals Chaovalit and Sunthorn imply that, while they considered communism to be still a potential danger in the late 1980s, changes among the superpowers had indeed altered the strategic implications in Southeast Asia. But once again no explicit linkage was made between their views of the declining Cold War and the foreign policy restructuring. Chaovalit's and Sunthorn's assessments of the Cold War as a variable in the foreign policy change are therefore unknown.

Generals Siri and Vachara held different beliefs about the declining Cold War and its effect on Thai-Lao relations. They argued that Thailand wanted good relations with Laos all along, and therefore the Cold War or its decline did not have any impact on Thai-Lao relations.¹³¹

¹³⁰ FBIS-EAS-89-100, May 5, 1989, 47.

¹³¹ Siri Thiwapan and Vachara Mayalarp. Personal interviews, June 6, 1996, Bangkok.

Summary

Officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, and the military gave extremely consistent responses and statements about the goals for the foreign policy change with Laos. All agreed the main objective was to secure peace and cooperation in the region. Other, more secondary, goals consisted of resolving Thailand's security dilemmas, asserting influence throughout Indochina, and promoting economic and social development in the region.

The decision-makers in these three institutions agreed that the following variables were not important factors in the decision to restructure: Chat Thai Party, the trade connection between southern China and Laos, interest groups, ASEAN relations with Indochina, and ASEAN concern over China.¹³² The three groups also concurred that the Lao leaders had an effect on the decision to change foreign policy because of their positive response.

The other variables, businessmen, advisors, trade and investment, Prime Minister Chatichai's personal beliefs, the Cambodian crisis, decline of the Soviet Union, and decline of the Cold War, received divergent responses. Table 5 summarizes all the variables as perceived by the MFA, NSC, and the military.

¹³² The military's views about the interest groups variable were undetermined, but the other respondents in the MFA and NSC agreed interest groups were not relevant. The Chat Thai variable was also grouped here for lack of any affirmative response, even though some decision-makers' assessments were unknown.

Table 5: The Importance of Variables in the Foreign Policy Restructuring: The Views of the MFA, NSC, and the Military.

Variable	MFA	NSC	Military
businessmen	no: Sb,A,Sp yes: N	no: K	yes: S
Chat Thai	no: all	no: S	unknown
advisors	no: A yes: Si,N,Sb	yes: both	uncertain: S
trade and investment	no: Si,Sb,A yes:Sp,N	yes: both	yes: C
trade and investment in southern China	no: all	no: both	no: S,V
interest groups	no: all	no: both	unknown
Prime Minister Chatichai	yes: A,S no: N	yes: S	unknown
Cambodia	yes: N,A,Sp,Sb	no: K yes: S	no: S
Leaders in Laos	no: Sp yes: Sb,N,A	yes: both	yes: S

(continued on following page)

Table 5 (continued)

Variable	MFA	NSC	Military
ASEAN relations with Indochina	no: all	no: both	no: S
ASEAN concern over China	no: all	no: both	unknown
Soviet Union	no: Sb,A yes: Si,Sp,N	partial yes: S no: K (yes only for Viet)	yes: S
Cold War	no: Sb,A yes: Sp	yes: both	no: S,V

Note: For the MFA, A=Arsa Sarasin, N=Noppadol Kunnavibulaya, Sb=Subin Pinkayan, Si=Siddhi Savetsila, Sp=Surapong Jayanama.

For the NSC, K=Kachadpai Buruspatana, S=Suwit Suttanukul.

For the military, C=Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh, S=Siri Thiwapan, and V=Vachara Mayalarp.

When an official's assessment of a particular variable was inconclusive or not stated, he was not included in the table for that variable.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation addressed why Chatichai Choonhavan's administration restructured Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. K.J. Holsti's and Joe Hagan and Jerel Rosati's frameworks for analyzing foreign policy restructuring were modified for this case study. The ensuing framework grouped the data into independent variables (both domestic and external), intervening variables (the policy-making process and perceptions of the decision-makers), and the dependent variable, which was the foreign policy restructuring.

The potential independent variables consisted of six domestic factors and six external factors. Several Thai government officials from the Chatichai administration were asked during interviews to assess each variable's significance, if any, in the decision to change Thailand's foreign policy. Respondents also were asked about the policy-making process during the Chatichai administration.

The main research question for this study was: What factors led to the restructuring of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos? Four propositions were offered in Chapter 1. Each of these will be restated, followed by an assessment of the proposition.

Assessment of the Propositions

Proposition 1: Thailand's foreign policy restructuring towards Laos resulted from a combination of external and domestic factors.

Much of the literature on foreign policy, including works by S. Smith, M. Smith, Hagan and Rosati, and Goldmann, notes the importance of considering both domestic and external factors in foreign policy-making. Based on the responses and statements by several of the Thai decision-makers, it can be concluded that the first proposition is well supported. Important factors were found in both the domestic and external realms. Table 6 contains a summary of the number of decision-makers who deemed each variable to be significant or insignificant in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy. The numbers for each variable are only a general indication of the importance of that particular variable. They cannot be used to rank the variables in terms of most significant to least significant because the views of some decision-makers were not known for every variable. Nonetheless, the numbers serve as a reliable indicator of how important each factor was in the decision to restructure.

Prime Minister Chatichai's personal beliefs and trade and investment with Laos were the most frequently mentioned domestic factors in the decision, although there was an equal number of decision-makers who believed trade and investment were not important. This divergence in views is not necessarily problematic. Jones argues that actors' perceptions may differ without there being conflicting goals.¹

¹ Jones, 40.

Table 6: Number of Decision-Makers Deeming a Variable Significant or Insignificant in the Decision to Restructure

Variable	Significant	Insignificant
businessmen	2	9
Chat Thai Party	0	10
advisors	5	3
trade and investment	6	6
trade and investment: China	2	9
personal gains	2	7
interest groups	0	11
Prime Minister Chatichai	10	0
Cambodia	9	1
leaders in Laos	9	2
ASEAN relations with Indochina	0	11
ASEAN concern over China	0	11
Soviet Union	5	5
Cold War	5	4

Thus, for at least six of the decision-makers the desire to improve Thailand's trade and investment opportunities was an important factor in the policy change.

The Cambodian crisis and Laos's leaders were the two external factors most frequently regarded as significant in the decision. The decline of the Soviet Union and the decline of the Cold War also received several confirmations from government officials, but an equivalent number of respondents disregarded their significance.

It can be concluded, then, that domestic and external factors appear equally important in the decision to shift Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. In contrast to Plotnick's study of threat perceptions in which he concluded that external factors were more important in explaining Thai arms procurement policies, external factors do not appear to be more or less influential than domestic factors in the case of General Chatichai's Laos policy.

Proposition 2 (domestic variable): Thai foreign policy-makers restructured the foreign policy towards Laos because of domestic pressures from businessmen for greater trade and investment opportunities.

The second proposition is not supported by the decision-makers' responses. Despite allegations that General Chatichai changed the Laos policy to accommodate his business associates' economic interests, only two respondents support this claim compared to nine rejecting it. Also, no documents verified the allegations.

Skeptics might claim the decision-makers in this study simply did not want to admit openly that business interests guided the Laos policy. While this is a possibility, it seems unlikely because there was a virtual consensus among respondents from various agencies about the lack of influence by businessmen. Bureaucratic competition and disputes have been a pervasive theme throughout this dissertation, and decision-makers opposed to General Chatichai's restructuring could have used evidence of business interests to discredit the prime minister's policy. Yet

even rivals in the policy-making process denied that businessmen held sway over the decision. The two respondents who maintained that the change was made to meet the demands of Chatichai's business associates did not provide any evidence to substantiate their views.

An important point not previously recognized is that there were strong disincentives for businessmen to pressure the government for improved relations with Indochina. In particular, businessmen risked being perceived as traitors if they favored trading with what many people thought of as the "enemy." Also, those businessmen and members of parliament who were involved in blackmarket trade monopolies along the border with Laos and Cambodia had no incentive to give up their lucrative operations.

Perhaps the strongest evidence refuting the alleged business influence is the trade and investment data presented in Chapter 4. The data show that Thailand's trade with Laos comprised a small fraction of one percent of Thailand's total trade. The increase in trade was rather meaningless for Thailand's trade patterns because Laos (and the other Indochinese states) never became one of Thailand's top 20 trade partners, even through 1994. Thailand's major trading partners and targets for investment remained relatively stable between 1988 and 1994: the U.S., Western Europe, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and China. Hence, Thailand's foreign policy restructuring had a greater economic impact on Laos than it did on Thailand. One would expect some noticeable changes in Thailand's top trade partners and investment targets if indeed the goal was to exploit economic opportunities in Indochina.

Moreover, Laos gained more in terms of economic benefits than did Thailand. Laos received a great deal of economic aid and foreign investment to prop up its

weak economy and foster the transition to a market-style economy, while Thailand only gained access to a very small market in which the citizens have extremely meager purchasing power and acquired limited access to natural resources.

The "battlefields into marketplace" policy has been wrongly interpreted as advancing the personal economic interests of Prime Minister Chatichai and his business associates. Instead, the policy change was implemented for the benefit of the whole country by bringing about peace, stability, and greater prosperity in the region. There was a consensus among the decision-makers that the overall goal of the Indochina policy was to establish peace in mainland Southeast Asia, and they realized Thailand's development and prosperity were interdependent with Indochina's. Without an end to the fighting between Thailand and Laos and within Cambodia, these objectives could not be attained. Trade and investment with Laos, therefore, served as a means for fulfilling General Chatichai's goal of peace in the region, but more importantly they were used to legitimize the policy change. (These points will be summarized in a later section.)

Proposition 3 (external variable): Thai foreign policy-makers restructured the foreign policy towards Laos in order to foster a settlement for the Cambodian crisis.

Table 6 shows that nine of the decision-makers believed Cambodia was an important factor in the decision. Prime Minister Chatichai's statements in Chapters 4 and 5 reveal that Cambodia was an integral part of his initiative for Indochina. The advisors' responses strongly support Proposition 3 and demonstrate they made a conscious linkage between the overtures with Laos and settling the Cambodian crisis. The advisors explained that Laos' support was necessary for Chatichai's step-by-step approach to settling the Cambodian dispute (as opposed to the Foreign

Ministry's comprehensive plan) and also that improved relations with Laos would serve as a precursor for better relations with Cambodia and Vietnam.

However, not all the decision-makers who regarded Cambodia as an important variable in the foreign policy decision agreed that rapprochement with Laos was used to facilitate a settlement in Cambodia. For officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, improved relations with Laos could be pursued only after progress was made in the Cambodian problem. Hence, the Laos policy and a settlement in Cambodia were interrelated, but the advisors and the MFA viewed the sequence differently. For the advisors, improved relations with Laos were intended to help resolve the problem in Cambodia; the MFA officials wanted to use a settlement in Cambodia for better Thai-Indochinese relations.

Proposition 4: Prime Minister Chatichai's experience in the 1970s as Minister of Foreign Affairs provided him with the expertise and knowledge of the foreign policy process to wrest control of policy-making from the previously dominant Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The question of how Prime Minister Chatichai took control of the foreign policy-making process was an important one to answer. Robert Art has written that making decisions can be easy for presidents (in Thailand's case, the prime minister); the difficulty is in getting the decision implemented.² Bureaucratic politics models emphasize the struggle among government agencies in foreign policy-making. Agencies opposed to a certain policy can often obstruct its implementation or force a compromise. Without implementation, a decision is rendered virtually meaningless.

² Art, 477.

During Prem's administration the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formulated Thailand's foreign policy, and Prime Minister Prem granted the MFA a free hand in foreign affairs. This pattern of policy-making changed immediately upon General Chatichai becoming Prime Minister. Prime Minister Chatichai's experience and intimate knowledge of the workings of the Foreign Ministry contributed to his ability to overcome an entrenched bureaucracy and its rigid operating procedures. He anticipated the MFA's initial opposition to the Indochina policy and had the foresight to rely upon his advisors to conduct relations with Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

General Chatichai's experience in foreign affairs helps explain how he gained control over the foreign policy-making process, but it was at best only a partial explanation. Three other factors appeared important in enabling the prime minister to wrest control of the foreign policy-making process away from the MFA. Among these additional elements was the power granted to the Prime Minister. Power has been concentrated in the hands of Thailand's prime ministers because of long periods of military rule in which the leading army general typically served in the post.

The legacy of centralized authority carried over into General Chatichai's administration. The prime minister's preponderance of power included the use of the informal advisory committee (which was unaccountable to anyone but Chatichai), the ability to disregard the cabinet, the authority to dispatch his advisors to Indochinese states (regardless of government regulations forbidding travel to Vietnam without clearance from the MFA), and inviting Hun Sen to Thailand even though the MFA refused to recognize his government or negotiate with him.

However, the powers of the Prime Minister were not sufficient by themselves. An individual's willingness to use the powers of the office determines if they are a

factor in dominating foreign policy-making. General Prem had at least the same powers as General Chatichai, but he chose not to exercise his authority in foreign affairs because of his lack of experience. In contrast, General Chatichai's experience in the MFA and his personality likely account for why he asserted himself in foreign policy-making.

Greater democratization in Thailand also contributed to Prime Minister Chatichai's control over foreign policy-making. Park, Ko, and Kim argue democratization can cause foreign policy restructuring by changing political values, the state-society relationship, foreign policy goals, and the decision-making process. Democratic values had become pervasive throughout Thai society in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Being the first democratically elected prime minister since the mid-1970s provided Chatichai with the popular legitimacy and mandate he needed to implement his Indochina policy. Opponents of the policy shift likely acquiesced to Prime Minister Chatichai's restructuring because of his democratic legitimacy, which made his policy change less vulnerable. Otherwise, they might be seen as undermining democracy.

The mix of democratic legitimacy with vestiges of the authoritarian legacy enhanced General Chatichai's ability to control foreign policy-making. Democratic values were becoming widespread in Thailand, and thus Chatichai enjoyed popular legitimacy for overcoming bureaucratic opposition. However, he also retained vast power and advantages from Thailand's authoritarian days. Civil society still had no input into foreign policy, and ordinary citizens had little leverage over policy-makers aside from voting. This combination gave the prime minister the best of both worlds for controlling foreign policy-making.

The final factor contributing to Prime Minister Chatichai's dominance in foreign affairs was his public proclamation about Indochina during his appointment as Prime Minister. Through "hortatory language," a decision-maker can manipulate symbolic language to win acceptance for his policy change. This is achieved by acquiring policy legitimacy, which undermines opponents of restructuring.³ General Chatichai's announcement of turning "Indochina's battlefields into a marketplace" enabled him to gain acceptance for the restructuring and seize momentum in the policy-making process, much like Richard Nixon's stunning declaration that he intended to reverse America's policy towards the People's Republic of China.

The prime minister's phrase intended to convince the public that they stood to benefit from the policy change and therefore should support it. Claiming he had a popular mandate enabled Chatichai to use this as leverage against the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus, the effectiveness of Chatichai's public proclamation depended greatly on the democratic legitimacy he received.

It cannot be determined whether any one of these factors was sufficient by itself to enable Prime Minister Chatichai to dominate the foreign policy-making process. Moreover, it is not possible to discern which of these had a greater impact. Most likely a combination of two or more of these factors triggered the shift in the balance of power in policy-making towards Prime Minister Chatichai. Experience in foreign affairs may require the presence of other factors for it to have an effect on controlling the policy-making process. Hence, Proposition 4 is considered at best only a partial explanation of how General Chatichai took control of foreign policy-making away from the MFA.

³ Bar-Siman-Tov, 22.

Other Findings

1. The goal of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos.

Analysts of the Chatichai administration have failed to discern the primary goal of the Indochina initiative. The prevailing belief has been that Prime Minister Chatichai and his associates pursued personal economic interests in Laos and the rest of Indochina. From the responses given by the interviewees and statements made by other government officials, a conclusion is made that the primary goal of the foreign policy restructuring was to establish peace in the region, both between Thailand and Laos and within Cambodia.

Prime Minister Chatichai, his advisors, officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Council, and military officers concurred that the goal of the restructuring was peace. Skeptics may doubt that this was truly the primary goal for the policy shift with Laos, but Bar-Siman-Tov has found that a major change in foreign policy can be caused by decision-makers seeking to reduce and terminate conflict with an adversary.

This is not to say that the decision-makers did not want to develop Thailand's economy. Certainly economic development was important. Thailand's definition of national security was redefined during the Chatichai administration from traditional military threats to a greater emphasis on economic security. But without instituting peace throughout peninsular Southeast Asia, social and economic development would be hindered.

Furthermore, the public proclamation of turning Indochina from a battlefield into a marketplace does not imply that economic interests were the goal. As argued earlier, this language was used to persuade the Thai public and members of the Thai

government that the policy shift was in the basic interests of Thailand. Peace as a goal needed some tangible reward to garner support against possible claims of threatening national security. Offering a "reward," namely economic development, would help legitimize the reversal of Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos, but the overarching objective was to foster peace in the region.

2. Final assessment of the variables.

Based on Table 6 above, conclusions can be made about the external and domestic variables. Several potential independent variables turned out to be irrelevant in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos. Those were the Chat Thai Party, interest groups, ASEAN relations with Indochina, and ASEAN's concern over China. No respondents referred to any of these variables as significant in the foreign policy decision. Therefore, it can be stated confidently that these factors were not important in the decision.

The businessmen factor received very little support from the respondents (only two), while an overwhelming number of them asserted that businessmen had no influence in the decision. This is an important finding because the Chatichai administration has been characterized as the beginning of big business dominance in Thai politics. However, this study's interviews with many of the top decision-makers at the time contradict the claims of big business influence over foreign policy. Additionally, if businessmen pressured the government for economic opportunities in Indochina, there should have been a dramatic increase in the percentage of Thailand's total trade and investment with Indochina. This did not occur. Hence, a conclusion is made that businessmen were not behind the policy shift.

The idea of using improved Thai-Lao relations for gaining access to southern China appears invalidated, except for the remarks by Kraisak Choonhavan and Prasop Butsarakhm. All other respondents claimed access to Yunnan was not a factor in the decision but that the idea for gaining access to Yunnan via Laos became evident after the policy change occurred.

The respondents agreed that Prime Minister Chatichai's personal beliefs had an important effect on the decision to restructure. His attitudes regarding Laos and the hard-line policy of the MFA remained consistent between the 1970s and 1990s. He believed peace with Laos could be achieved and that Thailand's hard-line policy towards Indochina hindered improved relations. The respondents maintained that he acted on these beliefs once he became the prime minister.

Cambodia was an important factor in the restructuring for nearly all the decision-makers. Its relevance to the Laos policy and the different views of the advisors and the MFA were summarized above under Proposition 3.

Nearly all of the decision-makers asserted that Laos's government leaders were relevant in the decision to restructure. Two sets of beliefs became evident: 1) Laos's market-style economic changes in the 1980s helped Thailand and Laos realize their mutual interests in fostering peace. Also, Laos needed new sources of foreign investment and assistance, which Thailand could provide, and 2) Laos's immediate, positive response to General Chatichai's overtures meant that the policy stood a greater chance at being successfully implemented. A hostile response from Laos likely would have led the Thai decision-makers to scrap plans for rapprochement.

Trade and investment, the decline of the Soviet Union, and the decline of the Cold War received mixed views from the decision-makers. For some officials, one or more of these factors was seen as highly significant in the restructuring, while others

disregarded their impact on the decision. However, this is not problematic. The literature on decision-makers' perceptions states that information is often processed differently by individuals, each decision-maker responds to what he or she believes is the reality of the situation, and actors' motives can differ despite having the same goal. While it is not parsimonious to say that for some officials trade and investment, the Soviet Union, or the Cold War were important factors in the restructuring but for others they were not, this is indeed an accurate description of what happened.

3. Why was Laos emphasized early in the administration by Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors?

Although the policy of changing Indochina's "battlefields into a marketplace" applied to all three Indochinese states, the focus in this study has been on Thailand's relations with Laos. Vietnam and Cambodia have drawn most of the attention of scholars and government officials, but Laos was actually given precedence in General Chatichai's restructuring. The prime minister went to Laos, but not Vietnam or Cambodia, three months into his term. Thailand and Laos concluded agreements in several fields: refugees, trade and investment, education, medical training, border demarcation committees, insurgents, and more. Trade and investment between Thailand and Laos greatly exceeded the levels between Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Prime Minister Chatichai had three reasons for emphasizing Laos early in his administration. First, the border fighting between Thailand and Laos six months before he became Prime Minister had ceased, but no agreement on the border had been reached. The border problem therefore presented an immediate challenge to

reduce hostilities with Laos and build peaceful relations. Second, Thai-Lao problems were considered bilateral, unlike the issues involving Cambodia and Vietnam, which were multilateral. Bilateral problems could be solved more quickly and with fewer complications than multilateral issues. Third, Prime Minister Chatichai believed his Indochina initiative was well received by Laos, making rapprochement more likely to succeed.

For the advisors, four reasons motivated their emphasis on Laos. They perceived Laos to be critical in their strategy to improve relations with all three Indochinese states. The advisors believed Laos would serve as the forerunner for Thailand's future relations with Vietnam and Cambodia and that improved relations with Laos would facilitate normalizing relations with Vietnam and Cambodia. Second, the advisors deemed Laos to be easier to approach with the policy change than Vietnam or Cambodia. Third, the advisors sought Laos' support for a peace settlement in Cambodia. The step-by-step approach for a Cambodian settlement advocated by General Chatichai and his advisors would be given greater leverage if Laos agreed because Laos was an important ally of Vietnam and Cambodia. Fourth, successful rapprochement with Laos was seen as more likely than with Vietnam or Cambodia, and thus improved Thai-Lao relations would represent the first step in fulfilling the "battlefields into marketplace" policy.

The priority General Chatichai and his advisors gave to Laos has been a previously unexplored aspect of the Chatichai administration. The oversight of Laos in analyses of Thailand's Indochina policy distorts our understanding of the policy shift because it neglects to acknowledge the primary role Laos played in Chatichai and his advisors' strategy for dealing with Indochina.

Implications and Points for Further Study

One must avoid universal claims when trying to generalize from case studies such as this. A single case study merely enables a researcher to discuss how well theory in that particular field held up when applied to the case, and it can generate further questions for research. Nonetheless, case studies can be an important step in building theory, and it is useful to discuss the implications for the findings generated here. The wealth of detailed information in a case study provides an empirical basis for testing theory and helps generate new propositions or hypotheses. The implications of this dissertation's findings will be presented in three categories: those related to Thailand studies, those for foreign policy restructuring, and those for foreign policy decision-making.

Implications for Thailand Studies

Thailand's political system had been characterized between the 1960s and 1980s as a "bureaucratic polity" (meaning it was dominated by bureaucrats and the military), but in the last decade the notion has given way to the belief that Thailand's current political system is dominated by wealthy businessmen-turned-politicians. The Chatichai regime can be viewed as the transitional period between bureaucratic/military dominance and business dominance. This characterization derives from allegations that Chatichai's administration was influenced by businessmen. However, this dissertation has shown that businessmen had little if any role in the decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy. This is a major finding which should stimulate rethinking about the Chatichai administration. Rather

than being guided by business interests, Chatichai's Indochina policy must be reinterpreted as intending to establish peace in the region.

So the question arises: When did Thai politics become dominated by business interests? While an answer to this question is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it would seem that the business influence in politics could not have become predominant until 1992. A military-installed caretaker regime controlled the Thai government between February 1991 and May 1992; therefore, the dominance of business interests in politics most likely took place after the May 1992 uprising.

A second implication for Thai studies is the apparent changing importance of domestic and external factors in Thai foreign policy-making. Domestic and external factors are highly relevant in Thailand's foreign policy-making process, but perhaps external factors were more relevant during the Cold War and domestic factors are more influential at present.

Plotnick's study on threat perceptions of Thai decision-makers from 1975-1985 concluded that external factors had a greater effect on the formulation of foreign and defense policies. This dissertation has focused on Thailand's Indochina policy from 1988-1991, years which represent the transition to the post-Cold War era and Thailand's transition to greater democratization. Domestic and external factors appear rather equal in terms of their influence on decision-makers at that time. It would be worth investigating whether or not domestic factors such as interest groups and public opinion are having a greater effect than external factors on foreign policy-making since 1991.

Implications for Foreign Policy Restructuring

One contribution of this study to foreign policy restructuring is the utility of the framework used here for studying and analyzing restructuring (see Chapter 1, Figure 3). Modifications and improvements were made to other scholars' analytical frameworks, and the result is a more refined framework which overcomes the deficiencies in those presented by Holsti and Hagan and Rosati. The specific variables for Thailand's case can be transformed into more general terms, making the framework a useful tool for analyzing other cases of foreign policy restructuring. Figure 4 presents the framework as a starting point for other case studies. Some of the variables in Figure 4 might not be significant factors in other cases of restructuring, but they will at least suggest to researchers a list of potentially relevant variables.

According to Rosati, Sampson, and Hagan, one of the critical questions to be explored in foreign policy restructuring is: "What are the sources of foreign policy change?" One case study cannot provide an answer to this question for all instances of foreign policy restructuring. The relevant factors will depend on the individual case. However, the factors found to be significant in Thailand's case may have relevance to other studies. By transforming the specific variables in Thailand's case into more general terms as suggested above, they can serve as points of departure for other studies. For instance, "interlinkages with a third state" or "personal beliefs of dominant leader(s)" might become the basis for hypotheses in other case studies.

The findings in this dissertation also can be combined with other studies in order to generate theories about which types of variables induce foreign policy restructuring. Holsti concluded that economic vulnerability and non-military threats were the major causes of foreign policy change in the eight cases contained in his

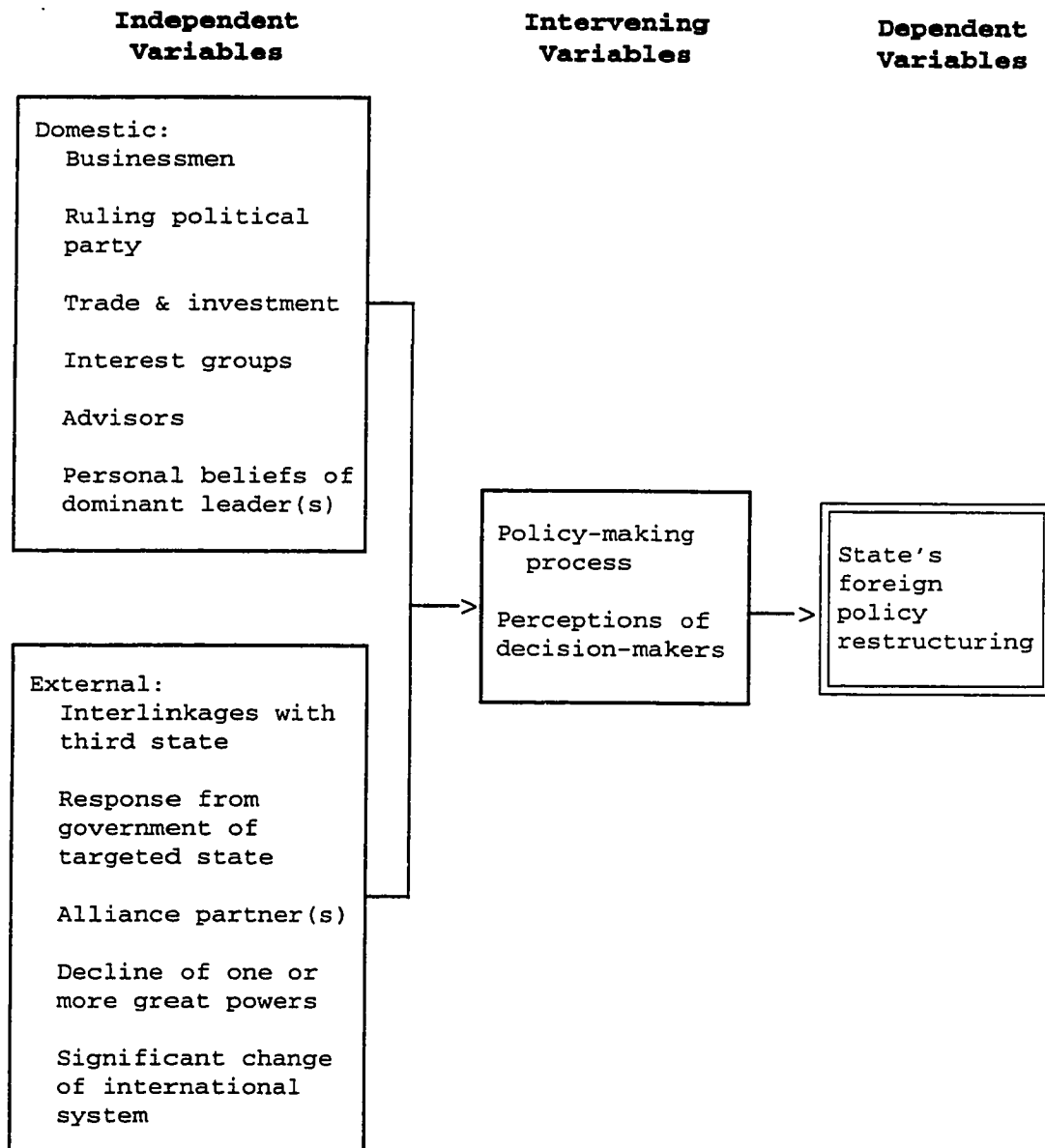


Figure 4. Framework for Other Cases of Foreign Policy Restructuring.

volume. The conclusions here differed from Holsti's, but they can direct scholars to consider these factors in other studies. After accumulating sufficient case studies on foreign policy restructuring (the Eastern European states are a good set), we should be able to posit some patterns and tendencies of variables involved in restructuring.

In addition to determining which factors led the Thai decision-makers to restructure foreign policy, this dissertation has also demonstrated the importance of answering an accompanying question: What factors enabled certain decision-makers to control foreign policy-making and successfully implement the policy change? A major change in a state's foreign policy is likely to encounter resistance from agencies with long-standing routines or those who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Scholars such as Goldmann, Greffenius, and Volgy and Schwarz focus on foreign policy stabilizers, but what factors enable a group of decision-makers to overcome resistance to change?

The analysis of Prime Minister Chatichai's foreign policy restructuring revealed several factors were involved, namely the prime minister's experience in the Foreign Ministry, powers of his post, democratization, and the use of language in a public proclamation. Sufficient attention should be devoted to the factors enabling a restructuring to occur. Under what circumstances do decision-makers successfully implement their policy changes? Under what conditions are their efforts obstructed? The accumulation of empirical data for these questions could help generate basic propositions of how resistance to restructuring is overcome.

Implications for Foreign Policy Decision-Making

General Chatichai's Laos policy is an example of non-crisis decision-making. An overwhelming number of studies conducted on decision-making are devoted to crisis situations and how leaders react during stressful times. Little attention in the field has been directed at how decision-makers function and respond to their environment in non-crisis situations. When one considers that most foreign policy decisions are made during non-crisis situations, the lack of case studies on this topic is puzzling. This study provides detailed information on how leaders perceive their environment and act during "normal" times.

Furthermore, important foreign policy decisions do not arise exclusively during crises. General Chatichai's Indochina policy transformed the security, political and economic climate in peninsular Southeast Asia from one of tension and protracted hostilities to peace and cooperation.

Additionally, Thailand's case reveals how its policy-making process functioned during a non-crisis situation. An assumption of crisis situations is that only a small group of decision-makers are involved and that the bureaucracy is usually bypassed.⁴ Although the decision to restructure Thailand's policy towards Laos occurred in a non-crisis situation, it entailed similar processes. Prime Minister Chatichai failed to consult with his cabinet, the Foreign Ministry, and Thailand's ASEAN partners. He relied on his small group of advisors to initiate the policy change, thereby bypassing the MFA. Thus, policy-making processes in crisis and non-crisis situations are not necessarily distinct.

⁴ Jones, 51. See also Janis, *op. cit.*

Thailand's case also demonstrates the effect of greater democratization on foreign policy-making. The impact of greater democratization on foreign policy is particularly interesting considering the number of countries which have undergone the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Scholars have noted how democracy changes a state's values, its goals, and state-society relations, but they have overlooked how power is exercised during the transition. The findings of this study reveal that a leader's power can actually be enhanced during a transition to greater democratization. General Chatichai acquired democratic legitimacy and could claim a mandate from the people, but at the same time he retained extensive powers from the authoritarian period of Thai politics. The effects of democratization on foreign policy-making could be explored in the former communist states in Eastern Europe, and then comparisons with Thailand's experience could be made. Understanding the policy process during the precarious transition to greater democratization may be vital for helping reformers in authoritarian states overcome hard-line opponents.

Other implications relate to bureaucratic politics models of decision-making. Numerous instances of bureaucratic politics were seen throughout this dissertation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially opposed the prime minister's Indochina policy change, and the MFA resented the prominent role played by General Chatichai and his advisors in foreign policy-making (the classic "turf" battle). Additionally, the Foreign Ministry criticized the prime minister's plan to foster trade relations with the Indochinese states before a settlement was reached in Cambodia. However, Prime Minister Chatichai was able to implement his policy as intended.

General Chatichai's success in controlling foreign policy-making offers empirical evidence validating many of the criticisms and refinements of the bureaucratic politics models. First, the classic bureaucratic politics assumption of

government action as an unintended political resultant is challenged. Thailand's restructuring behavior was precisely what the prime minister and his advisors envisaged: cooperation with Laos in virtually all facets of their bilateral relations, increased trade with Indochina, and a step-by-step approach for a settlement in Cambodia. There was no "slippage" in the policy's implementation.

Second, Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors essentially did not bargain with other actors. The advisors were dispatched to Laos and Vietnam over the objections of the Foreign Ministry (and in violation of national law), Hun Sen was invited to Thailand despite the MFA's refusal to recognize or negotiate with him, and trade relations with Indochina increased before a settlement was achieved in Cambodia. These points demonstrate Bendor and Hammond's argument that the head of government does not necessarily have to bargain with other officials.

Third, bureaucratic politics models have been criticized by Art, Clifford, and others for underestimating the power of the president (in this case, the prime minister). Clifford points out how the president can dominate the bureaucracy by selecting people for key posts. General Chatichai replaced Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila, who resisted many of the changes in policy, with Subin Pinkayan, who favored the restructuring. He appointed Deputy Foreign Minister Prapas Limpabhandu to handle international trade matters for the MFA. Mr. Prapas also favored the foreign policy restructuring and enhanced trade relations with Indochina. Thus, heads of government can overcome bureaucratic opposition by appointing officials who support their policies to key posts.

Other critiques and refinements of the classic bureaucratic politics models have also been demonstrated in Thailand's Laos policy. Thailand's decision-makers concurred on the goal of the restructuring, which was to bring about peace in

Southeast Asia. They also possessed many similar values. Conflict among Thailand's decision-makers over the Indochina policy does not mean they had different goals. Instead, they differed over the means to achieve the goal and the pace of change. The Foreign Ministry opposed Prime Minister Chatichai and his advisors' step-by-step approach to Cambodia, but they all sought to end the civil war. Foreign Minister Siddhi explained early in the administration that he only disagreed with the timing and pace of the policy change with Indochina, not its objectives.

Bureaucratic politics models do have utility in Third World case studies, despite claims that their assumptions are inapplicable.⁵ Many of the assumptions and processes of bureaucratic politics are clearly present in developing states just as in U.S. foreign policy-making. However, the critiques and refinements of the classic bureaucratic politics model appear more relevant in Thailand's case.

Hypotheses for Future Research

The discussion above has pointed out various aspects of Thai studies, foreign policy restructuring, and foreign policy decision-making which are in need of further investigation and comparison with the experiences of other states. To facilitate future research on some of these points, four hypotheses are presented:

Hypothesis 1: External factors had greater influence than domestic variables in Thailand's foreign policy-making from the 1960s until 1988.

⁵ See Hill, 2.

Hypothesis 2: Domestic factors have had greater influence than external variables in Thailand's foreign policy-making since 1992.

Hypothesis 3: As the level of democratization in a regime increases, the more influence domestic variables have in the policy-making process.

Hypothesis 4: Foreign policy restructuring is more likely to be successful during a transition from authoritarianism to a democratic regime than in an established democracy because of the combination of democratic advantages (e.g., legitimacy) and a legacy of authoritarian power.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF THAI RESPONDENTS

All interviews were conducted between February 1996 and August 1996 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Mr. Kachadpai Buruspatana. Deputy Secretary-General of the National Security Council, 1984-1997. Currently Secretary-General of the National Security Council.

Mr. Prasop Butsarakhom. In 1988, Member of Parliament for the Social Action Party representing Udon Thani province. Currently MP for the National Development Party.

Dr. Chulacheeb Chinwanno. Associate Professor of Political Science, Thammasat University.

Mr. Kraisaak Choonhavan. Advisor to Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, 1988-1991. Former lecturer in economics at Thammasat University. Currently Advisor to Mayor of Bangkok Mr. Bichit Rattakul.

Mr. Surapong Jayanama. Deputy Director-General, Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1989. Currently Director-General, Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Noppadol Kunnawibulaya. Officer in both Southeast Asia Division and International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1988. Currently Director of Division 1, Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Major-General Vachara Mayalarp. Secretary to the Chairman of the Advisory Board to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1996.

Mr. Sukhumbhand Paribatra. Advisor to Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, 1988-1989. Currently Member of Parliament for the Democrat Party representing Bangkok, and Deputy Foreign Minister.

Mr. Wong Pholykorn. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Kriangsak administration, 1977-1979.

Dr. Subin Pinkayan. Commerce Minister, 1988-1990, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1990. Currently Senior Advisor, MDX Power Co., Ltd.

Mr. Arsa Sarasin. Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1991-1992. Currently President of Padaeng Industries Plc.

Dr. Surachai Sirikrai. Associate Professor of Political Science, Thammasat University.

Mr. Suwit Suttanukul. Secretary-General of the National Security Council, 1986-1991.

Dr. Khien Theeravit. Professor of International Relations, Chulalongkorn University.

General Siri Thiwapan. Army Commander, 3rd Army Region, Royal Thai Armed Forces. Currently Member of Parliament for the Nam Thai Party from Phitsanuloke province.

Dr. Borwornsak Uwanno. Advisor to Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan and Deputy Secretary General to the Prime Minister, 1988-1991. Currently Dean, Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University.

Mr. Pansak Vinyaratn. Advisor to Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan and Chairman of the Prime Minister's Advisory Committee, 1988-1991. At the time of the interview he served as Editor-in-Chief of the Asia Times newspaper.

Mr. Anuwart Wongwan. Currently Managing Director of Thapawong Co., Ltd. and Siam Tobacco Export Corp.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THAI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

The purpose of this study is to understand why Thailand restructured its foreign policy towards Laos from 1988-1991.

1. What was your official title during your government service from 1988-91?
 2. What were your main foreign policy responsibilities in this position?
 3. Were you involved in determining Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos at any time from 1988 to 1991?
If so, in what ways did you contribute to policy-making?
 4. From 1988-1991, Thailand shifted its foreign policy towards Laos from one of conflict and hostility to one emphasizing cooperation. Which person or group of people in government was most responsible for initiating the shift in foreign policy?
 5. In your opinion, what was the main reason for this foreign policy restructuring?
Were there any secondary reasons for this shift?
If so, what were they?
 6. In terms of their importance in influencing the Chatichai administration's decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos, how would you rate the importance of the following possible factors?
Highly important Somewhat important Not important
- 6.1 Domestic factors:
- a. Businessmen pressured the government for increased economic opportunities.
 - b. Chart Thai party members pressured for a policy change.
 - c. Chatichai's closest advisors instilled in him the ideas of improving relations with Laos.
 - d. The government determined that it needed to diversify trade partners and investment.
 - e. Interest groups pressured for a shift in foreign policy towards Laos because of their desire to gain greater access to economic opportunities.
 - f. Chatichai held personal beliefs that a shift in policy with Laos was necessary.
 - g. Would you add any other domestic factors that had an influence?

6.2 In terms of their importance in influencing the Chatichai administration's decision to restructure Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos, how would you rate the importance of the following possible factors?

Highly important

Somewhat important

Not important

External factors:

- a. A desire to make progress towards a Cambodian settlement.
- b. Leaders in Laos sought to establish better political and economic relations with Thailand due to their need for a new source of foreign aid, trade, and investment.
- c. ASEAN members desired better relations with the Indochinese countries.
- d. ASEAN members, especially Indonesia, wanted to counter China's influence in the region by having better relations with the Indochinese countries.
- e. The decline of Soviet influence in Laos and Vietnam.
- f. The end of the Cold War facilitated better relations between Thailand and Laos.
- g. Would you add any other external factors?

7. China quickly became one of the top 3 investment targets for Thai investors near the end of the Chatichai administration. Was there any relationship between Chatichai's Laos initiative and this surge in investment in China?

Did they seek to gain greater access to China's Yunnan province via Laos?

8.1 Were there any preconditions set by Thai foreign policy-makers for improving Thailand's relations with Laos? (Did certain conditions have to be met before a shift in policy would take place?)

If yes, what were these?

(contingent) 8.2 Were these preconditions satisfactorily achieved before the restructuring occurred?

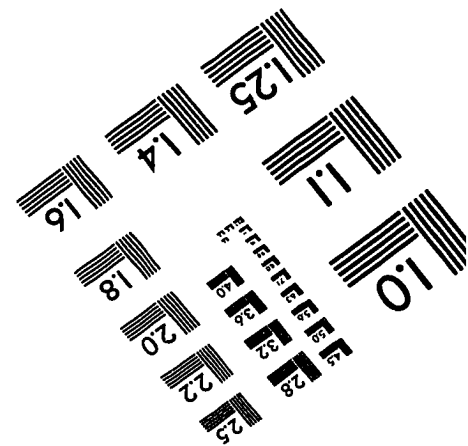
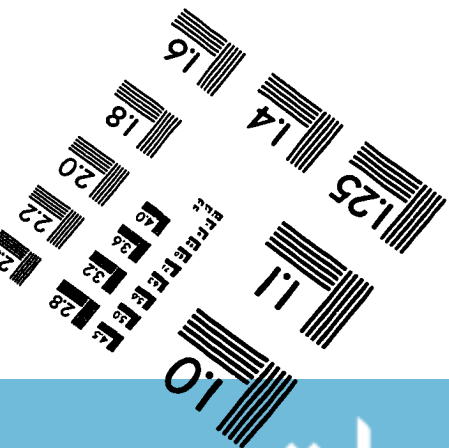
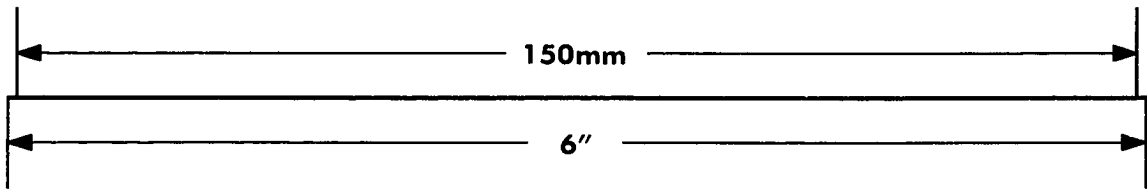
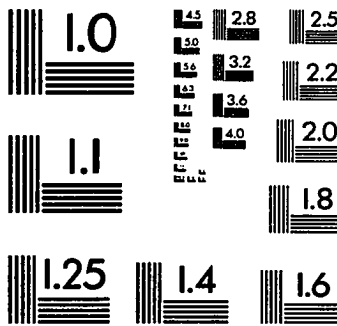
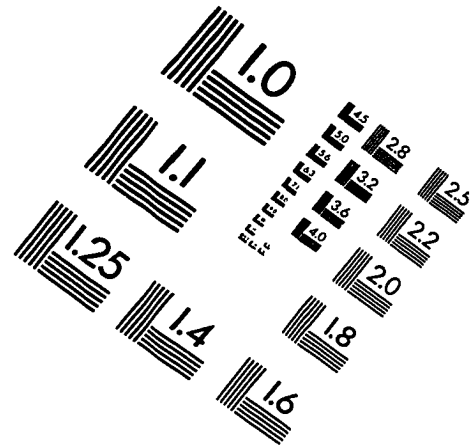
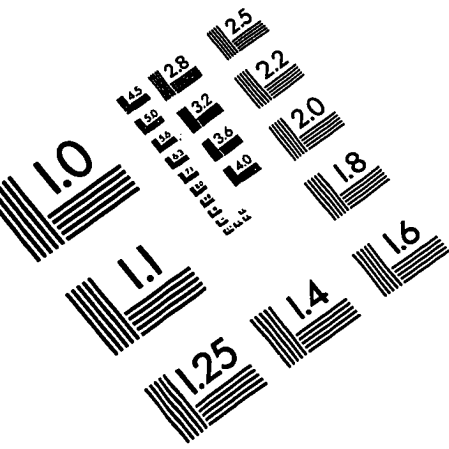
9. Did any of the policy-makers directly involved in the decision to shift Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos stand to gain any economic or political advantages?

If yes, who stood to gain and what benefits/advantages would they receive?

10. Why did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs oppose Chatichai's initiative of improving Thai-Lao relations?

11. Under Prem's administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs essentially controlled foreign policy without interference from the Prime Minister's Office. Under Chatichai, however, this changed dramatically. How did Chatichai and his advisors overcome the opposition from the bureaucracy and change Thailand's foreign policy towards Laos?

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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