

CHAPTER I

Introduction



I. Statement of Problem:

1.1 Rationale

This thesis is to study the Indochina policy of the Chatichai Choonhavan administration (August 1988-February 1991) by focusing on his advocacy of changing Indochina "from battlefield to a market place". Under his premiership, Thailand shifted her hitherto policy toward Indochina from a security-concerns-dominant diplomacy toward a more complex one with intricate official as well as unofficial channels. It is almost apparent that the policy advocacy was a result of changing external and domestic environments: the international environment surrounding the prolonged Cambodia conflict was changing from stalemate between the Phnom Penh regime supported, Vietnam and Soviet Union through the former, and the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea backed by ASEAN and the vast majority of international community; a new administration was legitimized by a democratic political measure of general election of the House of Representatives; and the performance of Thai economy prospered at an amazing speed.

Generally speaking, the studies on the Chatichai administration or the Thailand of given period seem, to my best knowledge, to have been prone to focus on the administration's mismanagement such as political corruptions, discords among cabinet members and other politicians, the instable coalition of ruling parties, etc, in academic and journalistic materials written in English or Japanese. It is reasonable, indeed, to regard the administration and the period as a source of the 1991 coup and the eventual massacre of 1992. And since the extent of the unfortunate events was quite great, the studies on the politics of the period have been occupied by researches of domestic politics. Instead, the number of those on external relations of the kingdom at the given time has been relatively small. In addition, unfortunate is that the number of comprehensive studies about the foreign relations between Thailand and these neighbors or foreign policy of the kingdom toward

them in the given period is not so large in a numerical term and these often are analyzed through the context of ASEAN while that of individual and specific studies is enormous, again at least in the foreign languages.

1.2 Significance

The hypothesis of this work is that Thailand's foreign policy norm towards Indochinese states might be changed by the Chatichai's policy advocacy of turning the peninsula "from a battle field to a marketplace" and this might have invited a paradigm shift in Thai policy toward the neighboring states from a monolithic Cold War style diplomacy to a complex regional power style. To my best knowledge, there are unfortunately only a few comprehensive studies as a form of thesis about the foreign relations or policy of the Chatichai administration toward Indochinese states.¹ Among these, Sunai focuses on the Thai policy on the Cambodian problem by analyzing two institutions, i.e. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the private policy advisory team of the premier, and their conflict on the policy; and finds two significant effects of the policy: 1) the PM's advisory group managed to dominate and guide the direction of Thai foreign policy towards the Cambodian problem over the time, 2) this, however, weakened Thai position among ASEAN and other international arrangements and obstructed the peace negotiation process in these arrangements.² Another thesis by Somchit indicates a hypothesis at first that the adaptation of Thai policy was a result of the change of regimes

¹ Searching with terms "Chatichai" and "policy" on the Thesis and Journal Index Database of Chulalongkorn University Library and Information Network, only three theses (all of them are in Thai) are found: Sunai Phasuk, *Thai Foreign Policy : A Case Study on the Policy Formulation Process of General Chatichai Choonhavan's Government on the Cambodian Problem (4 August 1988 to 23 February 1991)*, 1996; Venika Boonmaklee, *Thai Foreign Policy Towards The Union of Myanmar during Chatichai Choonhavan (1988-1991)*, 1993; Somchit Sassanarukkit, *Thailand's Policy toward the Kampuchean Problem during the Period of the Chatichai Choonhavan Government*, 1991. Nevertheless, there are some articles dealing with individual themes of Thai foreign policy toward the neighbors, for example: Leszek Buszynski, "New Aspirations and Old Constraints in Thailand's Foreign Policy" and "Thailand's Foreign Policy: Management of A Regional Vision", *Asian Survey*, Volume.29, No.11, November 1989, pp. 1057-1072, and Volume.34, No.8, August 1994, pp. 721-737, respectively; Khatharya Um, "Thailand and the Dynamic of Economic and Security Complex in Mainland Southeast Asia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.13, No.3, December 1991, pp.245-270; Surin Maisrikrod, "Thailand's Policy Dilemmas toward Indochina", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.14, No.3, December 1992, pp. 287-300; Marc Innes-Brown and Mark J. Valencia, "Thailand's Resource Diplomacy in Indochina and Myanmar", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 14, No.4, March 1993, pp.332-351.

² Sunai, *op.cit.*, abstract.

from Prem Tinsulanonda to Chatichai, and the author concludes that the adopt resulted from perceptual difference between Prem and Chatichai that Chatichai had his own ideas on how to resolve the Cambodian problem, which was quite different from those of Prem, and he translated these ideas into practice through his own diplomatic skills.³ According to the respective abstracts and references in their theses, both observers seem to have utilized the conceptual models of decision making approach suggested by Graham T. Allison.⁴ Although the approach devised by Allison is quite attractive to anatomize specific policy, it does not necessarily seem useful to attest the hypothesis of this study. This thesis therefore will employ another conceptual framework to examine its proposition. That is the framework of Complex Interdependence devised by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. in their 1978 work, *Power and Interdependence*.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

As mentioned above, the hypothesis of this study is to attest a paradigm shift of Thailand's foreign policy toward the Indochinese states through analysis of the policy of the Chatichai administration. And, this is the first step for the author of the thesis to further his comparative study of foreign relationship between the kingdom and the neighboring countries. As the first step, this thesis is to put the theoretical framework of Complex Interdependence of Keohane and Nye to trial by applying it to the case of Thailand of the concerned period.

According to Keohane and Nye, there could be three characteristic phenomena in international relations under the condition of Complex Interdependence: 1) multiple channels (or an increase of the number of channels) between actors without regard to their nationalities, 2) absence of hierarchy among issues (or collapse of a consolidated issue hierarchy with military might on the top of it), and 3) minor role of military force. With these main characteristics, the academics contend that there would be distinctive political phenomena of which 1) goals of foreign policy of a nation

³ Somchit, *op.cit.*, abstract.

⁴ American political scientist who has been known for his remarkable work on policy analysis *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971.

would vary by issue areas because as military force is devalued, then militarily and economically strong states will find it more difficult to use their overall dominance to control some outcomes of which they are weak; 2) due to the lack of clear hierarchy among issues, the politics of formation and control of agendas would be more important because the agendas would be affected by international and domestic problems created by economic growth and increasingly sensitive interdependence among the actors; and 3) with the increase of multiple channels by the actors both of governments and non-governments without regard to their nationalities and of their influence to domestic politics, which Keohane and Nye dub "transnational and transgovernmental relations", substance of national interest of a state would be defined differently on different issue basis.⁵ These components of Complex Interdependence are findings of Keohane and Nye after they have followed their path to create additional to or replaceable models with those of realist models which often emphasize a politics of power struggle among nations in the international arena.

More interesting is the fact that it was the late 1970s, during which the U.S. floundered about forging a new grand design of foreign policy, when Keohane and Nye set forth the Complex Interdependence. This historical element consciously embedded in the framework also seems applicable to the case of Thailand's foreign policy towards the neighboring states during the given period when one tries to judge whether the Thai diplomacy transformed from a monolithic and rigid Cold War style to another one.

2. Methodology

This thesis is primarily and chiefly based on documents research. With regard to theories and models for analysis, it heavily relies on the framework suggested by Keohane and Nye, as mentioned above. As the framework apparently stands on International Political Economy which addresses interaction and interface between politics and economy, the thesis will touch briefly on the

⁵ Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, second edition, HarperCollins Publishers, 1989, ch.2 (pp.23-37)

field set forth by the early 1990s. The restriction of date is mainly because that theoretical frameworks, models and approaches relating to interdependence after the period seem to have flown out at a burst to the level at which theories treat so-called globalization and the author of this study doesn't believe there was certain phenomenon of globalization in the relations between Thailand and the neighbors at the period concerned.

Empirical events cited in the following chapters are from newspapers, news magazines and journals written in English or Japanese sometimes. These materials are: *Bangkok Post*, *The Nation* (*Nation Review*), *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Asiaweek*, *Time*, *Asahi Shimbun* and others. In addition to these, the thesis refers to governmental policy papers, publications, periodicals of Thailand, Indochinese states, ASEAN, Japan and others as well. When materials in Japanese are used, they are translated into English in the author's capacity, and the original sources are cited in the footnote column together with English translation. In addition, some interviews of those who concerned with the policy by the author are quoted as one of the information sources but these will be basically regarded as sort of secondary source so as to avoid retroactive wisdoms of interviewees about what they engaged in during the given period.

There is unfortunately a considerable amount of limitations in this thesis. The most obvious is that the author lacks his command of Thai language, and this compels him to heavily rely on materials written or spoken in English or Japanese. Second is that he has not conduct any field research in Indochinese states although the thesis aims at analyzing "international" relations between the kingdom and these neighboring states. This would be his job in the future.

3. Structure

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter suggests rationale, significance, objectives of the study and methodology and structure of the work. The second presents first an analysis of models and approaches of International Political Economy, and then goes on to the components of "Complex Interdependence" of Keohane and Nye. The following three chapters are

studies of empirical events. The third chapter traces Thailand's foreign relations between the end of World War II and the last years of the administration of Premier Prem Tinsulanonda in order to describe patterns of foreign policies and actual practices of the kingdom, with emphasis on her relations with the United States, Indochinese states and the People's Republic of China. The chapter touches on Southeast Asian regionalism as well. The fourth chapter describes the state of Thai economy up until the year of Chatichai's assumption of premiership, the relation between government and business community in Thailand, and the state of Indochinese economies. All of these are of the 1980s. The fifth chapter is an empirical analysis of the "from battlefield to marketplace" policy of the premier. The chapter in the first part describes Chatichai's Indochinese policy in comparison with that of previous administration of Prem, then will trace events relating to the policy, e.g. the Chatichai's visit to Laos and the Invitation of Hun Sen of People's Republic of Kampuchea. In the concluding chapter, the author will assess significance of the policy in line with the framework of Keohane and Nye and judge the hypothesis.