

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

History is part of human society and it is present in every stage of social development, serving to connect the past with both the present and the future. Obviously, history always reflects events and individuals. Although the current historical fashion, as Duiker (2000: 576) points out, “emphasizes the importance of great underlying social forces in unleashing the major events of our time...the role of the individual can sometimes be paramount”.

The Vietnamese modern history is closely associated with Ho Chi Minh, who is described as “a national hero and outstanding man of culture” and “a preeminent symbol of determination of the whole nation” by the UNESCO. Suffice it to say that Ho Chi Minh has held an ideologically and culturally irreplaceable position in Vietnam. For the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese, not only is Ho a great leader who drove the national liberation cause into victory, which continues the historical flow of an independent Vietnam and opens a new page for the future of the country, he is also seen as a cult icon and a symbol of national identity. For the party, Ho is the symbol of the national unity, and more importantly, the “compass” of the Vietnamese “revolution” and culture.

Vietnam-Thailand relationship has a long history and is multifaceted in both state-to-state and people-to-people interactions. Modern history has witnessed the rise and fall, the warmth and the coldness of bilateral relations between the two countries. Interestingly, the Ho Chi Minh factor seems to have its stamp on every period of the development of bilateral relations between the two countries. Prior to the confrontation period in the context of the Cold War, Thailand was seen as a suitable place to set up revolutionary bases for the national liberation cause launched by Vietnamese nationalists. As early as the middle of the 1920s, Ho Chi Minh realized the importance of Thailand as a place to build up the revolutionary networks for the Vietnamese independence struggle. Spending arguably about 20 months in Siam from 1928-1929 and in 1930, Ho and his associates successfully built up patriotic movements among the Vietnamese.

During his stay in Siam, Ho was an unquestionable supporter of building the friendship between the Vietnamese and the Thais. This therefore became a principle in the life of the Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese) in Thailand. Since the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Ho laid a strong foundation for the friendly and cooperative relations between Vietnam and many countries. He also paid special attention to people-to-people relations between the Vietnamese and other peoples in the world and in the region, including the Thais.

By the late 1940s, the Vietnamese in Thailand had enjoyed support and assistance from the Thai ruling elite, who saw Ho as a nationalist, for their anti-French activities. With the birth of the DRV on 2 September 1945, Ho undoubtedly became the symbol of national independence, solidarity and pride not only to the people in Vietnam but also to the overseas Vietnamese, especially the Viet Kieu in Thailand, who by and large esteemed Ho and significantly made contributions to the national liberation cause up to the early 1970s. Unsurprisingly, Ho's image was employed by the Vietnamese communist party to mobilize the Vietnamese in Thailand for the national liberation cause.

The relationship between Thailand and Vietnam became sour with the coming of the Cold War. The Vietnamese and the Thai now saw their countries standing in two opposite camps. The Thai definitely supported the US and the "Free World" that regarded Ho Chi Minh as one of the "worst types" of Communists. Consequently, the Thai government expressed their concerns about the Viet Kieu in Thailand who remained mostly loyal adherents of Ho Chi Minh, even after he had passed away in 1969.

It was not until after the demise of the Cold War that the bilateral relations between Vietnam and Thailand began to be on good terms. As a result, the Thai elite also changed their perception of Ho to suit the new context. The commemorative house of Ho Chi Minh and the Thai-Vietnamese Friendship Village in Nakhon Phanom, where the Exhibition House on Ho Chi Minh is located, and the site for historical studies of Ho in Udon Thani are good examples of the change. This move has been appreciated by the Vietnamese government, which saw the sites as a symbol of Thai-Vietnamese friendship.

From the background, the role of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam-Thailand relations, especially at the people-to-people level, and the Thai elite's perception of Ho and its impacts on Thailand-Vietnam interactions, seem eminently worthy of study.

1.2. Literature Review

Hitherto, though there have been many academic works on Ho Chi Minh and Thailand-Vietnam relations, the role of Ho Chi Minh and his legacy in shaping Vietnam's Thailand policy as well as in promoting Thai-Vietnamese friendship have been by and large left unexplored. Likewise, the questions on the Thai ruling elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh and its impacts on Thailand-Vietnam relations, though being touched upon in several academic works, have not been discussed thoroughly and systematically.

1.2.1. Vietnamese researchers and scholars

In Vietnam, given that Ho Chi Minh is perceived by the party as the symbol of the nation and ideological icon, there have been unsurprisingly abundant studies and writings about Ho, his life, his revolutionary activities, and his thought. Also several academic works have been dedicated to Thailand-Vietnam relations. However, little research has been done as to the role of Ho and his legacy in Thailand-Vietnam relations; nor have there been comprehensive studies on the Thai ruling elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh. Hitherto, related writings can be divided into three categories: (1) narratives; (2) biography; and (3) academic works on Ho Chi Minh thought, the Viet Kieu in Thailand, and Thailand-Vietnam relations.

As for the first genre, stories about Ho Chi Minh's activities in Siam as well as his image among the Viet Kieu were recorded, mostly from memories of the witnesses. Though the narratives may be somewhat exaggerated, these stories more or less provide information about the Thai-Vietnamese relationship through people-to-people interactions. One of the earliest works on Ho's revolutionary activities was recorded by Tran Dan Tien, arguably said to be one of Ho's many pseudonyms, in "Stories of Life and Activities of President Ho Chi Minh", first published in 1948, and in "The Days in Kwang Zhou and Thailand" (1960). Unsurprisingly, Ho's activities in Siam were included in these works. As story tellers recalled, besides training his followers on revolutionary activities, Ho, using the alias Thau Chin, together with his partisans went tirelessly to Vietnamese communities to ignite patriotic sentiment among the Viet Kieu and proposed change in life for the betterment of the community. He also always encouraged the Viet Kieu to respect Siamese laws as well as customs and to build up the friendship with the local people. By and large, his patriotism, his sheer will power as well as his simple way of life helped him to win support and respect from the Viet Kieu.

Ho Chi Minh's stay in Siam was then retold in compiled works by Lien et al (1998) with "Uncle Ho's Activities Abroad", and Tran Ngoc Danh (2004) with "Ho Chi Minh in Thailand", and was mentioned in a historical novel named "The People and the Path" by Son Tung (2006), who recounted the revolutionary life of Mrs. Dang Quynh Anh (alias Madame Nho), a female cousin of Dang Thuc Hua, who followed Hua to Siam in the early 1920s to build up anti-French bases in the country. In "Uncle Ho in Siam" by Nguyen Van Khoan and Nguyen Tien (2005), the authors also collected articles on historical sites associated with Ho which were recently inaugurated in Nakhon Phanom and Udon Thani.

Also Ho Chi Minh's activities in Siam and his image among the Viet Kieu were briefly mentioned in a great deal of works on Ho's biography or on the Viet Kieu in Thailand. Regarding the biography of Ho Chi Minh, some notable works are "Complete Works" written by Ho himself; "President Ho Chi Minh, Biography and Career" by the Party Central Committee's History Studies Bureau (1980); "Ho Chi Minh – Annual Biography" by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's Ideology (1992); "Ho Chi Minh in Historical Periods" by Lien et al (2005).

Another literary mode is historical documents on Viet Kieu's revolutionary activities in Thailand. After the Vietnam War, party members who operated in Thailand during the 1940s-1970s recorded party activities in Thailand, such as "National Salvation Campaign of the Viet Kieu in Thailand (Cuoc Van Dong Cuu Quoc Cua Viet Kieu o Thai Lan)" by Le Manh Trinh (1960), "A Bird's Eye View of National Salvation Movements of the Viet Kieu in Thailand (So Luoc ve Phong Trao Cuu Quoc Cua Viet Kieu o Thai Lan)" by Ngo Tuan (alias Ba Doc, secretary of the cadres committee in Thailand for many years) (1977), a 1976 historical document titled "Tasks, Lines and Direction of the Viet Kieu Revolutionary Organization from 1945-1975 (Nhiem Vu, Duong Loi va Phuong Cham cua To Chuc Cach Mang Viet Kieu tu 1945-1975)", "A Drop in the Ocean (Giot Nuoc)" by Hoang Van Hoan (1988), "Memory of Overseas Vietnamese (Hoi Ky Viet Kieu)" by Le Quoc San (1989), "Viet Kieu in Laos and Thailand with the Motherland (Viet Kieu Lao-Thai Voi Que Huong)" by Tran Dinh Luu (2004). In the admirable literature, Ho's activities in Siam, his popularity among and the esteem he received from the Viet Kieu were related.

Recently, several studies regarding Ho's stay in Siam have been undertaken, albeit on a small scale. From March 2000-March 2002, a group of six scholars from the Ho Chi Minh Museum in Hanoi carried out research on Ho's activities in Siam. The

research, titled “Researching, Discovering and Collecting Relics of President Ho Chi Minh’s Stay in Thailand”, points out that there has evidence of Ho’s presence in over twenty places in nine provinces in Thailand. The museum also published two pamphlets (2004) about Ho’s stay in Nakhon Phanom and the Thai-Vietnamese Friendship Village in the province. Besides, Ho’s activities in Thailand were also studied by Prof. Nghiem Dinh Vy, who addressed the issue in the Conference on “Twenty-Five Years of Thai-Vietnamese Relationship” organized by the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University in 2001. The paper briefly mentioned the reason Ho chose Siam as a place for Vietnamese revolutionary movements as well as Ho’s activities in the country.

Also Ho Chi Minh’s activities in Siam and his image among the Viet Kieu are touched upon in an admirable study on the Viet Kieu in Thailand undertaken by the Thai Institute for Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University (Researcher Thanyathip Sripana) in cooperation with the Vietnamese Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (Researcher Trinh Dieu Thin). The research study, titled “Viet Kieu in Thailand in Thailand-Vietnam Relationship”, was published in Thailand in 2005 and in Vietnam in 2006.

Besides studies on Ho Chi Minh’s nationalist activities in Siam, there have been some works investigating Ho’s stay in the country from the approach to his international communist activities. In their book, “Ho Chi Minh – the International Revolution Fighter (Ho Chi Minh – Chien Si Cach Mang Quoc Te)”, Phan Ngoc Lien and Trinh Vuong Hong (2005) point out that besides building up a revolutionary network among the Viet Kieu, Ho Chi Minh also took responsibility for Comintern’s missions, to a certain extent, in Southeast Asia.

As for Ho Chi Minh’s role and his legacy in shaping Vietnam’s Thailand policy, as well as the Thai elite’s perception of Ho, these issues have been by and large left unexplored. In her thesis, titled “Relationship between Vietnam and Thailand from 1945 to 1954”, Nguyen Hong Dung (1998) somewhat touched upon the issue of Ho’s role in Thailand-Vietnam relations. Other studies tend to focus on Ho Chi Minh’s legacy in Vietnamese diplomacy in general.

However, recent studies on Ho Chi Minh’s Thought on diplomacy and the application by the party more or less provide with preliminary findings for examining the role of Ho Chi Minh in formulating Hanoi’s Thailand policy. Some commendable works can be mentioned such as “President Ho Chi Minh with Foreign Affairs (Chu Tich Ho Chi Minh voi Cong Tac Doi Ngoai)” by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(1990), “Vietnamese Diplomacy in the Ho Chi Minh Epoch (Ngoai Giao Viet Nam Trong Thoi Dai Ho Chi Minh)” by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000), “Vietnam’s External Relations in the Renovation Era (Doi Ngoai Viet Nam Trong Thoi Ky Doi Moi)” by the Central Committee for Culture and Ideology (2005), “Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy and the Application of the Party in the Renovation Era (Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh ve Doi Ngoai va Su Van Dung Cua Dang Trong Thoi Ky Doi Moi)” by Dinh Xuan Ly (2005), and “Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy (Tu Tuong Ho Chi Minh ve Ngoai Giao)” by Vu Duong Huan (2005).

1.2.2. Thai and foreign researchers and scholars

As for Thai as well as other foreign authors, apparently the focus of their studies is on the Viet Kieu and Thailand-Vietnam relations. During the Cold War, especially the Vietnam War, given the security concerns of the Vietnamese refugees as well as communist operations in Thailand, Thai researchers as well as foreign scholars were encouraged to do abundant research and writing on the Vietnamese refugees. From the ideological point of view, these works can be divided in two groups. The first group consists of writings done by anti-communist authors, including Americans and military-affiliated Thais. The other group consists of works by authors who were moderate and/or were less affected by the Cold War ideological confrontation.

As for the first group, by and large the Vietnamese, described as loyalists of Ho Chi Minh and the DRV, were pictured as “communists”, “trouble makers”, and threats to the Thai national security. Notable among the genre are “The Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand: A Case Study in Decision-Making” by Chan Ansuchote (1960), “The Vietnamese in Thailand – A Historical Perspective” by Peter Pole (1970), “Vietnamese Refugees and the National Security” by Wichan Champiri (1972, MA Thesis).

The “refugee problem” was also acutely noted in research done by the US army and several Thai institutions, such as in “US Army Handbook for Thailand” by George L. Haris et al (1963), “Insurgency and Counter Insurgency in Northeast Thailand” by the 7th PSYOP Group (1967), “The Vietnamese” by the Thai Center for Research in Social Systems (1970). The 7th PSYOP Group, in particular, remarks “A portrait of Ho Chi Minh...is frequently to be seen on the walls of Vietnamese homes in the northeast...It now appears that local Vietnamese are actively aiding the Thai subversives, giving them food and medicines, and also ideological advice”. “The

Vietnamese” also briefly mentions Ho Chi Minh’s stay and the revolutionary organization set up by him in Siam.

Adopting a different approach, moderate scholars emphasized the national liberation cause of the Vietnamese under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. In “The Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand: Minority Manipulation in Counterinsurgency”, E. Thadeus Flood (1977) argues that the Vietnamese refugees in Thailand were “scapegoats” of anti-communist policy employed by the Thai ruling elite under the patron of the US. He also recounts anti-French activities of Vietnamese nationalists, including Phan Boi Chau, Dang Thuc Hua, and Ho Chi Minh in Siam. Using more space to briefly describe Ho Chi Minh’s activities in the country, the author points out that Ho was an unquestionable supporter of building up the friendship between the Thai and the Vietnamese.

The same comment on Ho Chi Minh’s stay in Siam and his popularity among the Viet Kieu was made in three other admirable publications, i.e. “Ho Chi Minh and the Struggle for an Independent Vietnam” by William Warbey (1972), “Ho Chi Minh” by William Duiker (2000), “Comrade Ho Chi Minh” by Yevgeny Kobelev (2005, in Vietnamese), and “Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolutions, 1885-1954” by Christopher E. Goscha (1999). Notably, Goscha shortly discussed the change of the Thai ruling elite’s perception of Ho Chi Minh during 1945-1954. Accordingly, after Phibun returned to power in 1947, Ho, having been seen as a nationalist by Seri Thai leaders, was perceived as a communist who was able to pose acute threat to the Thai national security.

Additionally, Ho Chi Minh’s activities in Siam and his legacy in shaping Vietnamese foreign policies have been also touched upon in several recent works on Thailand-Vietnam relations by Thai scholars. Thanyathip Sripana in her paper “New Thinking of Vietnamese Foreign Policy towards Thailand after 1986” prepared for a conference on Thailand-Vietnam relations organized by Chulalongkorn University in 2001, examined the turning point of Vietnamese foreign policy towards Thailand, the change of the thinking of Vietnamese foreign policy and the change in Vietnamese attitude towards Thailand from antagonism and rivalry to friendship and cooperation. She points out that Vietnam’s neighborliness policy is based on Ho Chi Minh thought of “Sell the remote relatives, buy the neighbors”. Addressing at the same conference, Khien Theeravit discussed the development of Thai-Vietnamese political relations. He

also briefed Ho Chi Minh's stay in Siam and contended that "Dr Pridi had become acquaintance with Ho Chi Minh when they were in France".

Regarding the Thai ruling elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh, the issue can be somewhat extracted from several works on Thai history and politics. Pasuk Phongpaichit and Christ Baker (1995) in "Thailand: Economy and Politics" mentions the assistance Pridi extended to Ho's Viet Minh and other Indochinese anti-French movements. They also point out that under Phibun's 2nd government, Ho's image was exploited by Phibun's faction to suppress Pridi's Seri Thai as in the case of Tieng Sirikhan. In another commendable book published in 2005 under the title "A History of Thailand", the two authors argued that the recognition of the "puppet" Bao Dai government by the Phibun administration was made under strong US pressure.

Recently, several works have been done on the historical site in Nakhon Phanom. On the one hand, the Thai-Vietnamese Friendship Village that houses the Exhibition on Ho Chi Minh is seen as a symbol of friendly relations between Thailand and Vietnam, as noted in Thanyathip Sripana and Trinh Dieu Thin (2006) in "Viet Kieu in Thailand in Thai-Vietnamese Relationship" (in Vietnamese). On the other hand, the historical site is likely to raise certain problems in Thai-Vietnamese relations given the sensitiveness of the issue. In his paper prepared for a conference on Thailand-Vietnam relations in Hanoi in 2006, Artha Nantachukra points out that "endless criticisms" of the project of establishment of the friendship village have arisen. On top of them was the question on "the rationale to esteem Ho Chi Minh" in Thailand. He also expressed concern over the proper "use" of Ho's image to bolster bilateral relations between the two countries since "The success of the Thai-Vietnamese Friendship Village in Nakhon Phanom has motivated the ethnic Vietnamese Thai in other provinces such as Sakon Nakhon, Udon Thani and Nong Khai to appeal for the same model". This, in the author's opinion, can cause counter-productive effect of such the project.

To sum up, there has had little academic literature dealing directly, comprehensively and systematically with the topic. The study, therefore, will hopefully contribute to our academic knowledge as well as provide further understanding about Thailand-Vietnam interactions.

1.3. Theoretical framework

"Theory is necessary and unavoidable when it comes to explain and attempting to foresee the future of international relations" (Viotti and Kauppi. 1998: 3). Hitherto

several schools of international relations have been formed and developed to explain relations among states, such as realism, pluralism/liberalism, and globalism. While realism advocates the dominance of high politics and state as the dominant actor, pluralism believes in politics of interdependence and transnational relations. Different from both the realist and the pluralist images, globalists assume that the starting point of analysis for international relations is the global context within which states and other entities interact (Viotti and Kaupii. 1998: 9). Notably, these theories tend to take rationalist models as their starting points.

Vietnam-Thailand relations are within the domain of international relations. However, adopting none of these common theories, the researcher saw the rationale for employing another theory, albeit less common, to explain the interaction between Thailand and Vietnam, particularly the role of Ho Chi Minh in the DRV's Thailand policy as well as the Thai elite perceptions of Ho Chi Minh – The relationship between ideas, i.e. theories, conceptual models, worldviews, principled beliefs and the like, and policy. It is important to note that the emphasis on the role of ideas does not mean to overlook practical factors, rather to highlight the impacts of the ruling elite's beliefs in making policies in particular contexts or the interplay between ideas and interests¹.

The relationship between ideas and policy has been, as Campbell points out (2002: 21), the subject of many studies, especially since the 1990s. As early as 1946, Max Weber remarked that ideas have profound effects on the course of events, serving like switchmen who direct interest-based action down one track or another (cited in Campbell. 2002: 21). Even some rational choice theorists, such as Knight and North (1997), Levi (1997), North (1990), Ostrom (1990), have, as Campbell contends (2002: 21), conceded that ideas matter. According to Rosati (1988: 474), the collective image of an administration is dependent upon the belief systems of the policy makers, i.e. the head of state and his closest advisors, who have a disproportionate share of the influence within the foreign policy process.

This study will adopt the theory about the role of ideas in formulating policy proposed by Goldstein and Keohane (1993), which has been supported by many other theorists. According to Goldstein and Keohane (1993), though variation in policy across countries, or over time, is by and large accounted for by changes in factors other than ideas, “ideas matter for policy”. In other words, “By ordering the world, ideas may

¹ According to Mowle (2003: 571), realist and liberal theories can be viewed as distinct “ideal” worldviews

shape agendas, which can profoundly shape outcomes” (1993: 12). There are three causal pathways through which ideas hold the potential of influencing policy outcomes. First, ideas serve as road map when individuals need to determine their own preferences or understand the causal relationship between their goals and alternative political strategies by which to reach those goals. Secondly, ideas affect strategic interactions, helping or hindering joint efforts to attain more efficient outcomes. Here policy varies because of the choice of some ideas rather than others. Lastly, ideas embedded in institutions specify policy in the absence of innovation. Once ideas become embedded in rules and norms, in other words, once they become institutionalized, they constrain public policy.

The term “ideas” particularly refers to particular beliefs, i.e. worldviews, principled beliefs and causal beliefs. Worldviews, as Goldstein and Keohane point out (1993: 8), are ideas which define the universe of possibilities for action. The concept of worldviews cover views about cosmology and ontology as well as about ethics, which are embedded in the symbolism of a culture and deeply affect modes of thought and discourse. In international relations, *a worldview includes images of other actors in the world or the international system, causal beliefs about how they interact with one another, and prescriptions about appropriate courses of action* (Mowle. 2003, also see Rosati. 1988). This definition will be applied as the main concept for worldview mentioned in the study. As Campbell (2002: 22) points out, worldviews of policy makers constrain the range of policy choices they are likely to consider when formulating economic, welfare, national security and other public interests.

From the theoretical approach, it can be said that though Thailand-Vietnam relations fluctuated following changes of the world and regional contexts, ideas of the leading groups – for Vietnam, prominently it was Ho Chi Minh’s thought, for Thailand, ruling elite’s beliefs – played a significant role in formulating one country’s policy towards another. Politically, during the Cold War, worldviews can be divided into capitalism and socialism as different ideologies² in a sound zero-sum confrontation. While the Thai based their worldview on capitalism in form of a constitutional

² According to Thayer (in Turley. 1985: 50), the term ideology was first coined by the French philosopher Destutt de Trach at the beginning of the 19th century, it referred to the “science of ideas”. In 1927, with the publication of Karl Marx’s *The German Ideology*, the term ideology was used to deride the notion that ideas were autonomous or that ideas had the power to shape and/or determine reality. As a result of the diffusion of Marx’s view, ideology came to take on the meaning of “the manner of thinking characteristic of a class or an individually”.

monarchy, the Vietnamese in the Ho Chi Minh epoch saw socialism as the sole path to gain independence and to build up a “democratic” society “without human exploitation”. Moreover, it is important to note that in Thailand the monarchy and Buddhism, precisely Theravada Buddhism, had become institutionalized due to their traditional values embedded in the society as well as success in protection of national independence and development of the country. According to Rock (in Khan and Sundaram. 2000: 183), political legitimacy in Thailand “rested on an aura of sacredness surrounding the monarchy, an elitist, hierarchical social structure in which superiors and subordinates were interlinked in a set of reciprocal, but unequal, relations, and the pervasiveness of Buddhism”.

It is worth noting that capitalism is a system whereby the capitalist class controls the means of accumulation and capital is invested in the production process with aim of realizing further capital accumulation. Therefore, the concept of an absolute monarchy or military dictator in Thailand, as Ungpakorn argues (2003: 10), was also part of the capitalist class. According to Ungpakorn (2003, 2007), the transformation of the Thai political and economic system from pre-capitalism characterized by the Sakdina system to capitalism took place in the reign of King Chulalongkorn³. Like constitutional monarchs exist in many European capitalist countries, the Thai monarchy functions as “a modern figure-head to serve the interests of the capitalist class” (Ungpakorn. 2007: 61).

Unsurprisingly, Thai traditional values were redefined and utilized to serve the interests of the capitalist class. According to Panitan (in Alagappa. 1998: 419-20), it was King Vajiravudh who openly brought the concepts of nation and religion together with the institution of kingship. He formally advocated three core values to be preserved for Siam, which have been still predominant in modern Thailand today, i.e. the Thai nation, the Buddhist religion, and the Thai monarchy.

Meanwhile in Vietnam, the tradition of defending and building the country, which was always challenged by a powerful neighbor to the North, helped to make

³ According to Ungpakorn (2007: 56-58), before the 1870s the dominant economic and political system in the central and northern region can be best described as the Sakdina system. This was a loose political entity based on clusters of powerful cities. In the system, control of surplus production, over and above self-sufficient levels, was based in forced labor and the extraction of tribute. However, the increasing penetration of capitalism and the world market into the region had already increased the importance of money and trade, in the early Bangkok period, especially with the 1855 Bowring Treaty. Rama V’s revolution was to create a centralized and unified nation-state under the rule of Thailand’s first absolute monarchy in order to serve the interests of the ruler of Bangkok in an emerging capitalist “Thai” nation.

patriotism had one of the most striking features of the Vietnamese people. “Patriotism, and inward-looking, kinship-oriented concept with sentiment connotations, reflects the attachment of a people...An expression of the continuity of the eternal community, Vietnamese patriotism harks back to the nation’s physical and cultural heritage and urges fulfillment of an obligation to the community – the protection of patrimony and defense of compatriots” (Huynh Kim Khanh, cited in Thayer, in Turley. 1985: 52-53). It was patriotism that led Ho to Leninism and it was the same factor that Ho put into play to gather the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese people for the national liberation cause led by the Vietnamese communist party. “Our people have a profound patriotism. It is our precious asset. In the past as it is today, any time the Fatherland faces aggression, that spirit swirls up into an extremely strong and giant wave, overcoming all the dangers and difficulties and drowning all aggressors and traitors alike” (Ho Chi Minh, cited in Nien. 2004: 36).

Another important aspect of worldviews is sovereignty. To the Vietnamese, prior to 1975, sovereignty was definitely attached to national independence and unification. To the Thais, before 1954 sovereignty had much to do with territorial conflicts with the French⁴. According to Nuechterlein (1965: 138), until 1893 Siam considered Laos part of greater Siam and viewed it, along with the Western Cambodian provinces, as buffer zones between the Siamese kingdom and the Vietnamese kingdom. With the onset of the Cold War, the Domino theory worried the Thai elite about the expansion of Communism from Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia. Accordingly, almost every move of the DRV in these two countries was seen as threat to Thai sovereignty in particular and to Thai national security in general.

The second category, principled beliefs, consists of normative ideas that specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust (Goldstein and Keohane. 1993: 9). Normative ideas, as Katzenstein (cited in Campbell. 2002: 23) elaborates, comprise “taken-for-granted assumption about values, attitudes, identities,

⁴ The Franco-Thai conflict dated back to the early 1890s when the French, after completely controlling over Indochina, began forcing Rama V to part with his claims over Lao and CPC territories. Following a naval clash at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River in 1893, the Siamese court was obliged to comply with the French territorial demands, marked by the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1893. In 1907, the Siamese had to give in to French claims over the Laotian territories of Luang Phrabang and Pakse, and the Cambodian territories of rice rich provinces of Battambang, Siem Reap and Sisophon. Since then, clashes over territorial disputes had broken out between the Thais and the French, and reached its height in the Franco-Thai territorial war in 1940-1941. Also it is worth noting that the “communism threat” in Indochina by the end of the WWII had been still vague and the Thai had been under no considerable pressures from big powers, except the French, for tough policies towards the Vietnamese. As a result, whenever French power waned, the Siamese increased their aid to Vietnamese anti-colonialists.

and ‘collectively shared expectations’”. Policy makers’ principled beliefs, argues Campbell (2002: 23-24), may affect their position on public policies by helping them decide which policies are the most appropriate. As for the Thai, principled beliefs seem to be strongly attached to the monarchy, Buddhism, and the concept of Thai-ness. According to Withaya (1970: 2), the Thai follows the law of karma or law of cause and effect. “An individual’s present status is a product of his karma (deeds) from his former lives which may be baab (sin) or bun (merit) or both” (1970: 2-3). A person with “Thai” values, as Panitan notes (in Alagappa. 1998: 420), was broadly defined as anyone who “was born in Siam, spoke Thai, and was committed to Buddhism and the Thai monarchy”.

For the majority of the Vietnamese, being under colonial rule, which had proved both cruel and exploitative, was nothing but living a slave life. They, therefore, definitely supported Nguyen Ai Quoc and were united under the banner of the Viet Minh to fight for independence. Also based on an agrarian economy which encouraged the people to live in harmony with nature and influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, the Vietnamese culture, like that of other Asian people, is embedded in humanity and humanism. During the Cold War, though choosing the opposite side to the Thai government, Ho Chi Minh still attached much importance to building up the friendship between the Thai people and the Vietnamese people, particularly the relationship between the local Thai and the Viet Kieu.

Lastly, causal beliefs are “beliefs about cause-effect relationships which derive the authority from the shared consensus of recognized elite” (Goldstein and Keohane. 1993: 10). “Causal beliefs imply strategies for the attainment of goals, themselves valued because of shared principled beliefs, and understandable only within the context of broader worldviews. Changes in the conceptualization of cause-effect relationships take place more frequently and more quickly than do changes in either worldviews or principled beliefs. Thus specific policy shifts can often be traced to such changes” (1993: 10). As for the mechanisms of change, three major factors, as Rosati argues (1988: 477), can be taken into account, i.e. the importance of an individual’s personality as a foundation for his/her beliefs, the impact of external events, and the role of domestic forces. This can be employed to explain the rapprochement between Thailand and Vietnam when the Cold War ended as well as the change in the Thai elite’s perception of Ho Chi Minh in the contemporary context.

1.4. Objectives

The aims of the study are:

- 1) To explore the Thai ruling elite's perceptions of Ho Chi Minh through the period from the end of World War II to the present;
- 2) To assess the impact of these perceptions on Thailand-Vietnam relations during this period; and
- 3) To investigate the role of Ho Chi Minh and his thoughts in shaping Vietnam's Thailand policy.

1.5. Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research method. Research techniques included documentary research and interviews. Moreover, case studies were carried out in Nakhon Phanom and Udon Thani, where the Ho Chi Minh sites are located and where Vietnamese patriotic activities were active, to collect relevant data.

As for documentary research, a review of relevant literatures and documents, both in the Vietnamese and English languages, was conducted. Regarding the Thai ruling elite's perceptions of Ho in particular, newspaper articles, especially those in the *Bangkok World*, *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* (published during 1945-1969 and 1995-2005), were used for analyses.

Besides the literature review, in-depth interviews were taken as the main source of data. A total of 33 key informants was approached, of whom 20 are ethnic Vietnamese Thais (6 females, 14 males) of over 50 years old, i.e. of "revolutionary generation", 10 scholars (8 Thais, 2 Vietnamese), 3 officials (Chieng Pin's Nayok, a Vietnamese embassy official who takes charge of the overseas Vietnamese affairs, and a former Vietnamese party senior official).

Regarding the case studies in Nakhon Phanom and Udon Thani, the focus of the study was on Ho's role in promoting Thai-Vietnamese friendship at the people-to-people level during 1945-1969 as well as the change of the Thai elite's perception of Ho which is reflected through the historical sites in these provinces.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The topic is large and complex; and it would not be possible in a single study to deal with all aspects of the Ho Chi Minh factor in all historical periods of Thailand-Vietnam relations. The study attempts to focus on the Thai ruling elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh during 1945-1969 and in the post-Cold War context, i.e. since the 1990s,

and its impacts on the bilateral relations. Also Ho Chi Minh's role in Vietnamese-Thai relations during 1945-1969 is assessed.

The written sources used in this study are mainly Vietnamese and English ones, although some sources in Thai are also drawn upon. To some extent, especially with regard to the background of the Thai ruling elite during the 1940s-1960s, as well as socio-political and economic developments in Thailand in the contemporary context, which helped to explain the Thai elite's perception of Ho Chi Minh, this study draws on a doctorate thesis, *The Seri Thai Movement: The First Alliance Against Military Authoritarian in Modern Thai History*, by Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid (2005), and on a book, *The History of Thailand*, by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker (2005). For the concept of Ho Chi Minh Thought and the application of the Vietnamese communist party, the study is based on Dr Dinh Xuan Ly's 2005 book, *Ho Chi Minh Thought on Diplomacy and the Application of the Party in the Renovation Era*. In addition, with reference to the reverence for Ho Chi Minh held by the Viet Kieu, the party's Viet Kieu policy implemented in Thailand as well as Thai-Vietnamese friendship on the people-to-people level, the study draws on the historical documents drafted by Ngo Tuan (1977), who was the secretary of the party cadres committee during the 1960s-1970s, and by Le Manh Trinh (1961), who was a senior official of the ICP in Thailand during the 1940s.

As for some common terms used in the study, the term "Viet Kieu" refers to overseas Vietnamese who migrated to Siam/Thailand prior to the Cold War. At present, given that most of the Viet Kieu have received Thai citizenship, the writer prefers to address them as the ethnic Vietnamese Thais or Viet-Thais.

As for the term "Vietnamese", it only refers to the ethnic "Viet" or "Kinh" who represent the overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese population. Accordingly, other ethnic groups in Vietnam such as Cham or Khmer, some of whom also migrated to Thailand, will not be covered in the study.

At the state-to-state level, the term "Thai-Vietnamese relations" used in the study refers to the relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) during 1945-1969, and between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the post-Cold War context. As for the people-to-people level, the term "relations" covers the relationship between the Thai and the Vietnamese, particularly the Viet Kieu.

1.7. Limitations

The study has several limitations. Firstly, it is the controversial nature of the topic and the paucity of reliable sources concerning Ho's life, activities and his thought. When the Vietnamese sources attempt to present him as a legend, the Western sources analyze his revolutionary ideology mainly from the capitalist worldview. Moreover, the "mysterious" life and revolutionary career of Ho can raise controversy among scholars with regard to Ho's activities in Thailand.

Secondly, in a work like this which was done by a Vietnamese scholar, questions are bound to be raised about objectivity. This is a Vietnamese perspective of the topic; and the perspective becomes colored by personal knowledge, experience and biased tendency towards, in the case of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, and in the case of Thailand, Pridi Banomyong and his legacy. To balance his arguments, the researcher at least tried to use English sources which are either published or available in Thailand.

Thirdly, the study requires a deep and broad knowledge about not only Ho Chi Minh but also Thai history and political developments. Given various approaches have been applied in explaining Thai politics, more time and efforts are needed for the researcher to master his knowledge on the subject.

Fourthly, the language limitation of the researcher in terms of the Thai language definitely limits the access to Thai documents and important informants. Furthermore, limited access to key informants who are senior officials of Thai and Vietnamese governments may affect the objectivity of the research. Last but not least, in light of time constraints, a certain amount of simplification is to be expected in the study.