CHAPTER-II

A Historical Retrospective of Thai - United States Relations

Official and non-official relations between American and Thailand rest on a long and cordial basis. The first treaty negotiated between the United States and Thailand was made in 1833 by Thai King, Phra Nang Klao (Rama III), and Edmund Roberts, a diplomatic envoy sent to Southeast Asia by President Andrew Jackson. For over a century American Protestant missionaries entered Thailand in a small numbers and initial reforms in education, medicine and technology. At the beginning of the 1920s King Chula Longkorn employed advisers from the Harvard Law school to assist Kingdom in abolishing extrateritoriality and other unequal treaty restrictions.

Between the two World Wars the United States government began to play an increasing role in the contacts between the two countries. With the beginning of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, the United States replaced Great
Britain as a major foreign influence in Thailand. The policy of containing communist aggression led the American government to undertake a rapidly expanding role in the relations between the two countries.¹

After the end of the Second World War, Thailand became the foremost American ally in the region. It was the United States that quickly accepted the Thai nullification of

1. The American interests in Thailand after the Second World War had been three folds:
   (i) **Geography**: Thailand comprises a strategic area in the center of mainland Southeast Asia. To American policy makers, Thailand appeared as an oasis of stability in a region of turmoil. The geographic importance had been increased in the struggle against external aggression which Thailand was a crucial base in the defense of the entire region.
   (ii) **People**: The Thai people comprise the largest population of any state on the mainland Southeast Asia. They can be trained for the advancement and defense of their own country, and they can be trained by outside hostile power for the overthrow their government as well.
   (iii) **Resources**: Thailand was the World's leading rice exporter. Other important products were rubber, tin, teak, meat and Kapok. A modest lightened medium industrials base was being developed and almost every year more manufactured good were produced locally, over one hundred American firms, subsidiaries, or affiliates operate in the Kingdom, including several large banks and oil companies.

the state of war and prevented punitive action against Thailand by Great Britain. Thereafter, the United States provided technical and economic as well as military assistance to Thailand. A statement by Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, issued on August 20, 1945 stated that: “the American government had always believed that the declaration of war of Thailand against the United States during the Second World War did not represent the will of Thai people.”


The Second World War threatened the new political arrangement. Faced with Japanese invasion, the government of army leader Pibun Songkhram precipitously joined the Axis power effort. When Japan’s ultimate defeat became assured, the previously decide parliament in 1944 removed Pibun and replaced him by a widely respected civilian, Khuang Aphaiwong. As the war suddenly ended, before any fighting had taken place within Thailand, the government passed into the hands of the Free Thai Movements (FTM) that had opposed Japan, the Thai underground led by Pridi, and a group of Thais who had been in Western Countries at the time of the Japanese invasion. The Pride supporter quickly dominated Thai.


which contributed substantially to the allies cause.\(^3\) This statement of policy concluded by asserting that the United States regarded Thailand not as an enemy, and that it looked to the resumption by Thailand of its former place in the community of nations as a free, sovereign, and independent country. This declaration clearly put the British and other Allied powers on notice that the United States would opposed any effort to deprive Thailand of its independent.\(^4\)

By this period Thailand was facing several problems. Its transportation systems were destroyed, economy

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3. Ibid.

The United States recognized the Free Thai Movement (FTM), which emerged as an underground organization, working in league with the United States Office of Strategic Services (OSS). This organization aimed at ousting the Japanese and overthrowing the dictatorial regime in Thailand. Members of the FTM were trained mostly in the United States. The FTM established contacts with United States forces and assisted them in fighting against Japan. Thus the United States and FTM co-operated with each other for common objective. This co-operation, ultimately, led to the foundations of a durable friendship between the two countries.


declined. It was only the United States adopted a most friendly attitude toward Thailand. In January 1946, it reestablished diplomatic relation with Thailand. And above all, the United States supported Thai leaders in the difficult task of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and facilitated Thailand’s admission into the United Nations.5

It was American that helped rehabilitate Thailand’s economy in the hopes of turning the country into Southeast Asian ally, that would counter balance Indo-China. Beginning in 1946 the United States paid a higher price for Thailand rubber. In 1946-1947 United States granted Thailand a large loan to enable Thailand to purchase railroad and reconstructed transportation system. American diplomacy made no secret of its desire to establish a firm order in Thailand and the circumstances favoured this line.6

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5. Ganganath Jha, n.3, p.36.

During that period also, Thailand was facing the potential danger from the local communist insurrection and from the Vietnamese minority, living in Northeast Thailand. Coupled with the emergence of Communist China in 1949, the United States alarmed and decided to do something that halted the advance of communism in the region. As a result, the United States Ambassador, Phillip C. Jessup visited Bangkok for three days conference. He conferred with Marshall Pibun Songkram, Thai Prime Minister, and sought his support in the battle against communism. Shortly after his returning to the United States, President Harry S. Truman

7. The Northeast was populated mostly by Moas and North Vietnamese. It was the poorest region in the country and had always been neglected by the center. There were nearly 40,000 North Vietnamese living in the Northeast whose loyalty had always been suspected. Many of them were alleged to continue to own allegiance to Hanoi. Most of the inhabitants were of Laotian extraction. Culturally there appears to exist a great deal of co-ordination between the Pathet Laos forces and the insurgents of North Thailand. The geography of the area greatly helps these insurrections. At some places, the Mekhong river is so narrow that people could easily skip one side to the other.

approved a grant of military aid to Thailand. Two months later the economic assistance also was extended to Thailand through the economic co-operation administration.\(^8\)

On February 28, 1950, Marshal Pibun Songkram decided to recognize the government of Bao Dai in South Vietnam as an earnest of Thailand’s solidarity with the Western powers. He also supported the French-sponsored governments in Laos and Cambodia and ordered closure of Vietminh headquarters in Bangkok. In June 1950, when there was a conflict between North Korea and South Korea, Thailand supported the latter along with the Western powers, Thailand sent four thousand ground troops to fight as integral part of the United Nations forces in Korea when the United Nations decided upon a military intervention in order to end that conflagration.\(^9\) Since then, the former dictator

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\(^8\) Ganganath, Jha, n. 3, p. 37.

\(^9\) Ibid.
was treated with great respect by the United States in the tension of the Cold War.¹⁰

It was the Korean war that turned point for both the United States and Thailand, in so far as the military defence of Southeast Asia was concerned. Until that time American in the area was largely economic and cultural. After June 1950, the military implications of Communist China's ambitions in Asia made the United States military and economic assistants to Thailand of vital importance to both countries.¹¹

On September 19, 1950, the United States signed an Economic and Technical Assistance Agreement with Thailand. Under this agreement, the United States established a mission in Thailand called the United States Operation Mission (USOM). To work in close cooperation with the USOM, Thailand created a Department known as Department of Technical and Economic Co-operation

¹⁰. Ibid., p. 38
¹¹. Ibid.
stressed the importance of basic projects. The economic aid made available under this agreement consist of grants for the financing of technical assistance, training abroad and rural developments projects.  

On October 17, 1950, a Military Assistance Agreement was signed. Under this agreement the United States agreed to provide weapons and equipments to Thailand and to give military training to Thai officers. After signing, Edwin F. Stanton, the head of American team said that:

"This agreement follows the request by the Government of Thailand for American arms and equipments to strengthen Thailand's forces with a view to enabling them to better defend Thailand and Thailand's people from any aggression which may threaten the peace and tranquility of this country. The agreement contains no provisions for military, naval or air bases, The Governments of Thailand has not offered such bases, nor the

12. Among the first projects sponsored by the USOM were schemed for the eradication of Malaria, for the installation of village wells, and for the dredging of the Chao Phraya River to provide a deep water channel to the port of Bangkok. Technical and economic assistance made available through the USOM totaled up to approximately $ 440.1 million for the period from September 1950 to June 1965.

Ibid.
Government of the United States ever requested such bases or any specific concession".\textsuperscript{13}

Alliance with the United States - Communist China's strongest enemy - had been the keystone of Thai foreign policy since 1950 formalised in terms of several military economic and cultural agreements and above all by the membership of Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in September 1954, which initiated by the United States\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{13} According to Thanat-Khoman, the former Thai Foreign Minister (1959-72), the Thai-American military agreement of 1950 was the landmark in Thai-United States Relations. It was through this treaty only, not through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) that the United States acquired a full grip over the military aspects of Thailand. In October 1950, Thailand was given a loan of $ 25,400,000 from the World Bank for the reconstruction of railroads, and development of the harbour in Bangkok. It was the first loan to any nation in Southeast Asia. At the end of 1951 the Mutual Security Agency (MSA) replaced the Economic Co-operation Administration (ECA). The MSA launched a vast programme of military, economic and technical assistance. On July 4, 1951, the Independence Day of the United States, the Bank of America saluted the Kingdom of Thailand where independence had become the watchword of the nation. And both nations stood in the forefront of world efforts to promote and defend the democratic way of life.


After becoming member of SEATO, the United States provided more aid to Thailand economically and militarily. In 1959, a
The King of Thailand, Bhumibol Aduldej, expressed his happiness over United States assistance to Thailand in his address to the two Houses of United States Congress in Washington, D.C., on July 29 that:

"The United States was applying the old of conception of family obligations upon the largest scale in giving assistance to foreign countries. The nations of the world were being taught that they were but members of one big family that they had obligations to one another and that they were closely interdependent. It may take a long time to learn this lesson but when it will be truly learnt, the prospect of world peace will be right."\(^{15}\)

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SEATO Graduate School of Engineering (known as the Asian Institute of Technology) was established in Bangkok in response to an increasing demand for highly trained engineers in the developing countries of Southeast Asia. In the same year, the SEATO also sponsored a project known as the Skilled Labour Project to help overcome the shortage of skilled workers. Another project was a military oriented project, known as the Military Technical Training School. The School provided training for technical supervisions, skilled workmen, and instructions of the Royal Thai Army, Navy and Air Force. In 1960, a SEATO Medical Research Laboratory was established to undertake investigations into the principal diseases of Southeast Asia, especially malaria and haemorrhagic fever.

Ganganath Jha, n. 3, pp. 48-49.

Thailand Security and United States Policy

Between 1946 and 1953, when the French began to reassert control over Indo-China, about eighty thousand Vietnamese refugees owing allegiance to the Government of Ho Chi Minh fled across the Mekhong and reached Northeastern Thailand. The Bangkok administration thought that they were supporters of communism and that they were, therefore, a menace from the point of view of the security and integrity of Thailand. As they could not be repatriated, the military rulers of Thailand dealt with them in a ruthless manner.

16. Northeast Thailand was properly considered an area of strategic importance in the conflict in Southeast Asia. This region of 70,000 square miles was a significant base area and even a potential front in Indo-China war. The politics of this region therefore, was a matter of considerable anxiety to the government of Thailand and its allies. Moreover, the unsettled character of the political structure of Laos, erected on the thin crust of the 1962 Geneva Accords, remained a threat to Thailand’s security. One result of United States, based on the 1963 Rusk-Thanat interpretation of Manila Pact, had become closer and more solid. For this reason the Thai governments concerned about the politics of Northeast was shared by the Thai government with the United States government.

On January 31, 1953, the People’s Republic of China established a Thai Autonomous People’s Government in Yunan districts, which Thai called Sibsong Panna, which aimed to smash the American imperialist activities in the region, and to unmasking the corrupt military rulers of Thailand and started a guerrilla war against the military regime in Thailand. In their establishment, the Chinese communist stated that:

"they would learn from the Han Chinese and the example of the Han Chinese cadres to guide the Thai people to help other national minority to implement area autonomy, make concerted efforts to smash the sabotage activities of the American imperialists and special agent of Chiang-Kai-Shek and struggle to strengthen national defence of the fatherland and construct a new Hsi-Shuang Panna area under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, Chairman Mao Tse-tung, and the Central People’s Government."

In the spring of 1953, the situation made Thai leaders more feared of communist invasion when the Viet Minh forces moved into Laos and set up a so-called Free Laotian

17. Ganganath Jha, n. 3, p. 41.
18. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
government and then moved into Cambodia in April 1954. At this critical juncture, Thailand appealed for more American military aid to counter the subversion and such assistance was given.\textsuperscript{19}

By this period, it was coincided with the Thai feared of communists aggression, American intended to build the Kingdom into a bastion of the free world in Southeast Asia and to prepare the country for an assault from Communist China. Since then, the United States rapidly expanded economic and military aid to Thailand.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Donald E. Neuchterlein, n. 1, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{20} Frank C. Darling, n. 1, p. 217.

As President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated in February 1953 that:

"his Administration would follow a new positive foreign policy to block any further advance by the communists and bolster the nation's anti-communist allies. A new look would be given to the American military positive, and a new stress would be placed on deterrent military power and collective regional security, appreciating that economic need, military security and political wisdom combined to suggest regional groups of free peoples, within the frame work of the United Nations to help strengthen such special bonds the world over."

Ganganath Jha, n. 3, p. 43.
On April 14, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister, Winston S. Churchill, explaining the seriousness of communist threat in Indo-China and persuading British to form a collective military organization. Meanwhile John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, persuaded Australia, France, Great Britain, and New Zealand to join in a Southeast Asia defence pact. And only three Asian countries agreed to join it namely Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand.

21. He wrote that if Indo-China passed into the hands of communists, the ultimate effect of it on the global strategic position of the United Kingdom and the United States would be disastrous. He proposed the establishment of a new "ad hoc" grouping or coalition composed of nations professing a vital concern in the checking of the communist expansion in the region. He pointed out that in the past they had failed to halt Hirohito, Mussolini and Hitler by not acting in unity and in time and had paid the price for their negligence through many years of stark tragedy and desperate peril.

Ganganath Jha, n.3, pp.43-44.

22. In response to Dulles plan, the Thai Foreign Minister said that the proposed Southeast Asia Defence Pact should be on the pattern of North Atlantic Organization (NATO). He felt that Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam should also be persuaded to join it.

Ibid., p.43.
On September 6, 1954, the conference was held in Manila participated by the representatives of the countries accepted the Dulles plan. On September 8, 1954 the treaty was signed, which known as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to create regional defence organization. The treaty had a preamble, eleven Articles and a Protocol. Articles 2 and 4 constituted the operative part of it. The protocol of the treaty extended its protection upon

23. Ibid., p.43.

Under Article 2, the parties to the treaty agreed, jointly and severally and by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid to maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and to prevent and counter subversive acts both within and without their territorial integrity and political stability. In Article 4, the main political military obligation was contained according to which each member of the bloc undertook, in case of aggression in the area covered by SEATO, to act for overcoming this common danger in accordance with its constitutional procedures. Besides, the participants in the treaty pledged to act jointly in case the “inviolability or integrity of or sovereignty and political independence” of any of them was endangered by the means other than armed attack or it is influenced or threatened by any other factor situation. Thus, support for the United State in Indo-China was one of the major lines of the bloc’s activity in 1964-1973.

Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam even it was repeatedly rejected by Laos and Cambodia.\textsuperscript{24}

With the signing of this treaty, the United States became very close ally of Thailand and help Thailand to develop its infrastructure such as air bases, roads, hospitals and other activities with a view to meet the requirements of the United States forces going to Indo-Chin to war with the communists.\textsuperscript{25} American influence, therefore, was widespread, the Thais were highly appreciative generally of the lavish assistance given by the United States. A few, however, criticised it on the ground that it put too high a premium of armament and neglected to build the national economy so that the result was an economic and political crisis in Thailand. And with the help of the United States, Thailand’s military grew stronger and stronger and threatened the country’s social balance.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 107.

\textsuperscript{25} Ganganath Jha, n.3, p. 47.

\textsuperscript{26} Describing the bad effect of United States aid on Thai Society, some Thai students remarked that support for the previous
When Marshal Sarit came to power on September 17, 1957. He also brought Thailand closer and more deeply concerned with the United States as table 2.1 shows that the United States military assistance to Thailand had gone upward.

Table 2.1: United States Economic and Military assistance to Thailand 1958-1967 (millions of Dollars)

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thai development in the period of Prime Minister Sarit and his immediate heirs took place in the context of an increasingly threatening international situation. The turning point came during the Laos crisis of 1960-1961, in which the military government had led to the decay of democracy in Thailand and American air bases here have tarnished the good image of Thailand as an independent country. They pointed out that Thailand was used as a "laboratory" for testing American instrument of torture, prior to their application in Vietnam, Africa, or even in the United States itself.

Laos right wing forced the Pathet Lao out and installed a government and ultimately led to the civil war which reported that North-Vietnamese supported Pathet Laos. The situation rapidly deteriorated and the Thai became seriously alarmed at the growing strength of Pathet Laos that communism had come to her borders. In March 1961, Thailand requested the SEATO to take action against the Communist Laotian forces but SEATO failed to a unanimous decision on it. So this action did not satisfy Thailand leaders and they felt betrayed when the United States

27. As a result, Sarit demanded the reforms in the structures of SEATO, he proposed, when he felt that Lukewarm support only had been given not the SEATO ideals, that:

"I am ready to support a move to refashion SEATO in such a way as to inject into it a new sense of purposefulness composed of members who completely share the same thoughts and interests, and same hopes and aspirations whose fundamental goal was to be safeguarded and maintain peace and welfare in Southeast Asia and who are ready to make common sacrifices to build up a location against impeding danger."

Ibid., p. 194.

And the Thais, however, realistic enough that they could not manage to expel France and Britain from SEATO They therefore, pressed the United States to offer a unilateral guarantee of Thailand’s security and to replace the rule of unanimity in SEATO’s decision by a majority system.
abandoned the Laos right wing and supported the neutralist Souvanna Phouma whose position at the head of Laos government of national unity was secured by the Geneva Conference on Laos in July 1962.  

The refusal of SEATO led the Thai government to question the "raison d'etre" of the membership of the Western alliance. The Thais wanted the traditional of friendship with all countries. As a result, on May 17, 1961 the United States Vice President, Lyndon B. Johnson visited Bangkok to restore shaken Thai faith in the United States. The Thai-American relations, however, remained strained in the mid 1961, as the Thai was worried about the Laos situation. They opposed such American not intervention that this would be a prelude to the communists take-over of Laos. The Thai leaders felt that the United States was not attaching

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the same importance to the view and interests of Thailand as it was to its European allies.  

In March 1962, the Thai's Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, visited Washington for talk with Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, on the question of the security of Thailand and to assess the danger passed by the Pathet Laos forces which advanced towards Thailand's borders. On March 6, 1962 at the end of the talks, a Thai United State joint statement was published. It clearly stated that:

"The Secretary of State reaffirmed that the United States regards the preservation of the independence and integrity of Thailand as vital to the national interest of the United States. The Foreign Minister and the Secretary of States reviewed the close association of Thailand and the United States in Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty. The Secretary of State assured the Foreign Minister that in the event of such aggression, the United States intends to give full effect to its obligations under the Treaty to act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional process."  

31. This joint statement was well received in Thailand. The significant of this joint statement lies in the modification of members' obligations which, contrary to the explicit provision
Thai - Cambodia relations had been a problem for Thai-American as well as Cambodian-American relations. During the third quarter of 1962, the Thai - United States relations became soured when the United States gave military aid to Cambodia for preventing the North Vietnamese Communist guerrillas from using Cambodian territory for infiltration and subversion in South Vietnam. The Thais, however, felt cheated because of the failure of the United States to consult them before an armed deal with their traditional rival. Who might not use army against Viet Cong, but against Thailand. Thus, Thai leaders, the Minister of Interior, of unanimous agreement for any SEATO action, were now declared to be both individual and collective. The United States declared that she would go ahead, if she wanted to do so, with her actions in the defence of Thailand and elsewhere in the treaty area even if others did not approve. This was what Thailand had been hoping for long time. In their view, as said the Foreign Minister, it gave a new lease of life to the shaky structure of Southeast Asia Collective Defence System.


32. Viet Cong was a term applied to all Vietnamese revolutionaries and members of resistance movement against French colonists and United States aggressors in South Vietnam. In other words, the Viet Mint was called “Viet Cong” by Americans in South.
General Prapas, used this accident to advocate a return to Thailand's traditional neutralism.  

Thailand, however, still an enthusiastic ally of the United States. This because of the common United States - Thai perception of communist threat in the region.


But when India was attacked by People's Republic of China forces in October 1962, the Thais, therefore, concluded that neutralism was not a realistic proposition for Thailand in the existing circumstances, as Thanat put it that:  

"We do not think of neutralism as an answer to our position. Some of our neighbors profess non-alignment and this only in theory. In practice they lean to one side. They are fearful and oppose the side that threatens them."

Lalita Prasad Singh, n.14, p.129.

The presence of a Chinese minority of over five million in a country and the creation of the Thai Autonomous in South China were viewed by the Thais as the sources of future troubles that People's Republic of China might create for Thailand. Thai suspicions had been confirmed ever since the publication in Peking's Daily, on December 14, 1964 and February 5, 1965 of a Thai Communist Party manifesto of the movement for the independence of Thailand and the reported formation of a Patriotic Front of Thailand to expel American imperialist and to overthrow the traitorous and despotic government of Thailand.

Gnaganath Jha, n.3, p.53.

Subversion had been considered to be the main danger. As King Bhumipol warned after the fall of South Vietnam that:
When the situation in Laos became more serious especially, when the Pathet Laos forces occupied the Nam Tha, which border on Burma, China and Laos on May 6, 1962. This made it necessary for Robert Mc Namara, the then United States Secretary of Defence to pay a visit to Thailand to see the situation himself. Mc Namara, then, thought of implementing a single strategic plan to protect Southeast Asia as a region. Hence, on May 16, 1962, twelve United States Super Subre-jet fighters landed at a Thai airfield, it was the first jet fighter landing in Thailand followed by 1,000 marines of the United States Seventh fleet. On May 1, 1962, Sarit, the Thai Prime Minister stated that:

"the entry of the United States troops had become necessary because the circumstances following the fall of Nam Tha constituted a threat of the Kingdom of Thailand."

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"Thailand is now a direct target of an enemy who wants to control our country."


35. Ganganath Jha, n.3, pp. 53-54.
By mid 1964, the situation in Indo-China looked increasingly threatening to Thailand and the United States. The Thais, therefore, agreed to a substantial upgrading of their military - base facilities. From March 1964, United States aircraft were based at Takhli airfield and after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August of that year, additional aircraft were based at Khorat. The American military build up continued up to 1968, and through most of this period and beyond, there were nearly 45,000 United States military personnel stationed in Thailand, with nearly 600 aircrafts, including B-52 bombers based at Utapao.36

Thai American relations had improved rapidly following the deaths of President John F. Kennedy and Marshal Sarit in late 1963, and their replacement by the Lyndon B. Johnson and General Thanom. But Johnson was increasingly concerned to bolster American prestige in Vietnam, while the new regime in Bangkok was less stable than that of Sarit and thus more vulnerable to American

pressure. The Thanom so called secret treaty or contingency plan, agreed in Bangkok in 1964, provided for co-ordination between United States and Thai troops in any number of detail patterns in case of over attack by land, sea or air.\(^{37}\)

The growth in 1960 of anti government and separatist activities, presumably communist-inspired, opened the eyes of Bangkok. A number of economic and social improvement schemes were put into operation and the police and army action against insurgents was intensified and the United States had shown equal interests in the country's problem. Special units of the United States Army had been busy training Thais in counter-insurgency techniques and United States helicopters and crews provided training for the Thai Air Force and transport to Thai army and police units. Several of the largest United States military installations in the Southeast Asia were located in the region. Thai acceptance of this foreign military build-up obviously was

based on the premise that United States would gradually assume, if necessary, the same kind of counter-insurgency commitment as in Vietnam.  

The United States aid programme to Thailand had been closely linked to American involvement in Vietnam and the major part of this programme had been devoted to various form of several development and protection under the heading of counter-insurgency and two third of it had been channelled into the sensitive Northeastern region. The aid programme under Military Assistance Program (MAP) had generally been much larger than economic aid, and disbursements for 1969 were estimated at $75 millions.

By 1968, the United States programme constituted the major portion of foreign aid in Thailand, accounting for about 75 percent of the total assistance that Thailand was receiving from foreign countries, as shown at table 2.2.


Table 2.2: United States aid by field of activity and project (in thousands US dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Project</th>
<th>1964</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1966</th>
<th>1967</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) Security</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Police Administration</td>
<td>2177</td>
<td>6479</td>
<td>14075</td>
<td>20019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil Action</td>
<td>2162</td>
<td>6461</td>
<td>12455</td>
<td>18067</td>
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<tr>
<td>Village Radios</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>1098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Security</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Roads</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(II) Rural Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accelerated Rural Development</td>
<td>7462</td>
<td>8877</td>
<td>20999</td>
<td>22745</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARD training</td>
<td>2442</td>
<td>4331</td>
<td>10326</td>
<td>10733</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile Development Unit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>986</td>
<td>1680</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northeast Agricultural Develop-</td>
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<tr>
<td>ment Programme</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>717</td>
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<td>2306</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Rural Health</td>
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<td>Portable Water Supply</td>
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(VI) Private Enterprise         61 20 409 312
Industrial Development          - 20 79 300
Board of Investment             - - 320 12
Mining                          61 - - -
Housing                         - - 10 -

(VII) Eco Infrastructure        237 1052 2809 1174
Feasibility                     127 404 676 567
Mun and Chee Basin              - 142 678 335
Aeronautical Ground Service     84 128 1455 272
Highway                         26 380 - -
Total                           12488 18639 42982 48309

Nixon Doctrine and Thailand

In the beginning of 1969, Richard M. Nixon became the President of the United States. His views on world affairs were similar to both Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles and Dean Acheson.40

However, President Richard M. Nixon was not free to act as his predecessors like John F. Kennedy, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harry S. Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt had been. It was because he had no majority support in the

40 According to Dulles, the two bloc powers in the Cold War not represented only in terms of military, economic strength and ideological orientation but also in moral terms. He said once that the United States should take-up every military conflict as a moral crusade requiring the unconditional surrender of the enemy. He was convinced that democracy, especially the United States pattern of democracy, was the best form of government and was ready to any kind of risk to save democracy from extinction. For Dean Acheson, he stated that in spite of the death of Stalin, very little had changed in the Soviet Union. The communist purpose of world domination through threat of military showdown was, according to him, unalterable. He tended to regard hard military measures as more significant in the Cold War than soft economic programmes.

Ganganath Jha, n.3, pp.62-63
United State congress. Also, the United States Press was very critical about the involvement of United States troops in Vietnam and in other Indo-China countries. Above all, the Republican Party had charged President Nixon in September 1968 with the task of implementing a programme aimed at bringing peace to Vietnam.\(^{41}\)

At a Press Conference at Guam, the Nixon Doctrine was announced as the guidelines of United States foreign policy with regard to Asian countries he stated that:

"While the United States would of course keep its treaty commitments, it must avoid that kind of policy which would make Asian Countries so dependent upon the United States that it is dragged into conflicts such as the one in Vietnam. The time has come when the United States, in its relations with its Asian friends, should be emphatic on two points: (I) American would keep its treaty commitments for example - with Thailand under SEATO, (ii) as far as the problems of international security and military defence are concerned, except for a threat by a major power involving nuclear weapons, the United State of America had a right to expect that this problem would be increasingly handled, and responsibility for it assumed, by the Asian nations themselves. If the United States just continued on the road of responding requests for assistance, for assuming

\(^{41}\) Ibid.
the primary responsibility for defending their countries when they had international or external problems, they were never going to take care of themselves.”

In regarding Thailand, President Nixon stated on July 1969, that:

“The People of Thailand value their freedom so much for themselves that they are willing to fight for it for others too. That is why Thailand keeps a special meaning for the United Stated Thailand is truly the land of free, and it is this sense of self-reliance, of freedom, of willingness to fight for freedom both at home and abroad, that we wish to develop all over the world as something very proud to be associated with, with our friends from Thailand.”

Although President Richard M. Nixon tried his best to remove the possible misunderstanding about his policy, but it was almost inevitably became a subject of controversy,

42. Ibid., p.64.


43. Ganganath Jha, n. 3, p. 65.
subject of doubt among Thai leaders. Obviously, Thailand wanted to see the United States continue to maintain its forces and play its part in Southeast Asia. In the opinion of Thai leaders the ideas of military alliance among Southeast Asia was a pipe dream because the countries of this area had no military potential, they need their resources for the development. The Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, openly criticised the Nixon Doctrine in August 1969, and pointed out that:

“The first fact that need to be repeated was that the United States of its own free will involve itself in Asia, and particularly in Vietnam. Secondly, the United States asked the Thai-Government to accept American soldiers in Thailand. Among all the Asian people and nations, Thais are the one which accepted and still accepts American soldiers who are in Thailand don’t come here to fight and risk their lives in the defense of Thailand against enemy encroachment. They come to Thailand to prosecute Vietnam war at Thailand’s risk and peril.”


45. Ganganath Jha, n. 3, p. 65.
Seni Pramoj, the founder of the Democratic Party of Thailand also criticised that:

"Thailand joined hands with America and committed itself to the extend of allowing the bases to be set up here. It is adequate reason for retaliation if the North Vietnamese get it into their heads to take action. This has created a dangerous situation for Thailand. Thai commitment to Western Camp made her most vulnerable to communist attacks. In this situation, Thailand should make good relations with the people of East and Northeast Thailand, because they constitute the buffer with China, with which Thailand already wants to have good relations."

Since then Thailand began to think seriously about the relationship with China and Soviet Union, which ultimately led to the agreement, between the United States and Thailand of United States withdrawal on September 30, 1969.

46. Ibid., p. 66.

47. The motivation of the Thai government was probably two fold: Firstly, it was a desire to go on the record as showing more flexibility and preparing to future contingencies and Secondly, it was designed to warn the United States against full withdrawal from the region.

Astri Suhrki, n. 39, p. 432.

48. The experience of alliance with the United States during the Vietnam war and what was seen to be the sudden American decision to withdraw from Indo-China had taught the Thais the
considering the presence of Soviet interest in Southeast Asia, Thanat told American audience in November 1969 that:

“If you avoid a tiger (China) and come to face a crocodile (the Soviet Union), it is not much of change, if we do not have any other alternatives, may be we will have to live with crocodile. This is exactly the international pattern that may emerge if and when the United States has to yield to the pressure of completely withdrawing from this part of the world because we can not claim that our regional grouping is powerful enough. We hope that you will be understanding and that you will discreetly support the efforts of the nations of the area.”

It was the Paris Agreement in January 1973 between the United States and Hanoi impressed upon Thailand the necessity of reviewing its alignments once again. Thai officials visited Hanoi and sought the assistance of some countries for an understanding with Hanoi. One was

dangers of being drawn into a dependent relationship with a single great power that could reinterpret priorities with little regard for Thai susceptibilities.


49. Astri Suhrki, n. 39, p. 432.
expected that Bangkok was seeking assurances from Hanoi that the latter would not actively assist insurgents in Thai Northeast. In return, Thailand would gradually disengage from its military entanglements. On January 16, 1974 Thai Foreign Minister, Charunphan Isarangkun Na Ayuthaya, outlined the basis for the new government’s foreign policy, which aimed at the achievements of a balance of interests in the region. And his most interesting remarks were directed towards the role of the Soviet Union, which was described as being in a strong position to contribute to the stability of the entire region of Southeast Asia. The pace of events was accelerated in early 1975 with the fall of Saigon to the Viet Minh. Thailand, therefore, promptly asked the United States to transfer its military bases and withdraw its military personnel from Thai territory in a year. Within a week SEATO folded its tent and Thailand assured its communist neighbours of good neighbourly relations. Since then the

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51. Leszek Buszynski, n.34, p.1040.
features of Thai-United States relations had been reshaped in accordance with the changes of circumstances and also Thailand became closer associated with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which would since then began playing increasingly significant role in the Southeast Asian region.

52. Lalita Prasad Singh, n.14, p.131.