

A Necessary Friendship: The Development of Thai-Soviet Relations from the Perspective of the United States, 1945-1963

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to study the bilateral relations between Thailand and the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1963 from the perspective of the United States, as well as its attitude regarding Thai-Soviet relations through its archival materials at the National Archives and Records Administration. The research uses documentary research and the historical method.

The research found that Thai-Soviet relations during this period began with the relatively smooth establishment of relations in 1946, followed by attempts to develop political, economic, and cultural relations that met with mixed results, ending with tension and decline. The United States' attitude towards this relationship also underwent a rapid transformation, from relative indifference to one characterized by close monitoring and the exertion of pressure and interference. While there were fundamental ideological differences between Thailand and the Soviet Union, this did not prevent the two sides from attempting to develop their relations, particularly in the economic sphere. However, these efforts were often undermined by uncoordinated Soviet public information campaigns and intelligence activities.

Keywords: Thailand, Soviet Union, Cold War

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ทางการทูตและการพัฒนาการในช่วงบุกเบิกของความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างราชอาณาจักรไทยและสหภาพสาธารณรัฐสังคมนิยมโซเวียตระหว่าง ค.ศ. 1945-1963 จากมุมมองของรัฐบาลสหรัฐอเมริกา และทัศนคติของรัฐบาลสหรัฐอเมริกาต่อความสัมพันธ์ไทย-โซเวียตผ่านเอกสารของสำนักจดหมายเหตุและบันทึกแห่งชาติ (National Archives and Records Administration) สหรัฐอเมริกา โดยใช้การวิจัยเอกสารและระเบียบวิธีวิจัยทางประวัติศาสตร์ในการวิเคราะห์เอกสาร

งานวิจัยค้นพบว่า ความสัมพันธ์ไทย-โซเวียตในช่วงเวลานี้เริ่มด้วยการสถาปนาความสัมพันธ์เมื่อ ค.ศ. 1946 ซึ่งเป็นไปได้ค่อนข้างราบรื่น ตามด้วยความพยายามในการพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์ในมิติการเมือง

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เศรษฐกิจ และสังคม ซึ่งประสบความสำเร็จจำกัด และจบด้วยความตึงเครียดและการร่นถอย ในส่วนของทัศนคติของสหรัฐอเมริกามีการปรับเปลี่ยนอย่างรวดเร็วจากการไม่ค่อยให้ความสนใจต่อการติดตามอย่างใกล้ชิด และต่อเนื่อง รวมถึงการกดดันและการมีมาตรการก้าวก่าย ถึงแม้ไทยและสหภาพโซเวียตมีความแตกต่างพื้นฐานด้านอุดมการณ์ทางการเมือง แต่ความแตกต่างนี้มิได้เป็นอุปสรรคต่อความพยายามในการพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์ โดยเฉพาะในมิติของเศรษฐกิจ อย่างไรก็ตาม ความพยายามเหล่านี้ส่วนมากจะถูกบั่นทอนด้วยกิจกรรมประชาสัมพันธ์และข่าวกรองซึ่งขาดการประสานงาน

คำสำคัญ: ไทย สหภาพโซเวียต สงครามเย็น

Introduction

The establishment and development of relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or the Soviet Union) was a delicate post-World War II issue. A major policy of Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram's first government (1938-1944) was to develop relations with Axis countries, namely Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Axis countries signed the 1936 Anti-Comintern Pact, opposing communist action worldwide at a time when the Soviet Union was the world's first and only communist nation. Thailand's entry into World War II on the side of the Axis on 25 January 1942 was a declaration of hostility towards the UK and the US, two members of the Allies which included, the Soviet Union, although Thailand never declared war against the Soviets. The defeat of the Axis necessitated adroit diplomacy on Thailand's part to avoid treatment as a defeated country. The French government considered itself to be in a state of war with Thailand (Jayanama, 2008, p. 265), while the British were determined to avenge the annexation of territory in the Malayan Peninsula and Burma. Thailand's key diplomatic strategy to avoid Franco-British retribution was to involve the emergent superpowers, namely the United States and the Soviet Union, both of which shared an interest in preventing the revival of French and British regional roles.

However, Thailand had never established diplomatic relations with the Soviets. Prior to the 1917 Russian Revolutions and the subsequent establishment of the Soviet Union on 30 December 1922, Siam and the Russian Empire had cordial relations, through the friendly personal relations between their royal and imperial families. The fall of the Romanov Dynasty in 1917 and their violent demise in 1918 led to a radical change in the once cordial relationship. King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910-1925) never established relations with either the Russian Republic or the Soviet Union. Subsequent governments continued this policy and even passed anti-communist legislation, notably in 1927 and 1933.

While these laws, together with Thailand's alignment with the Axis, reflected the kingdom's outward anti-communist policy, they did not prevent an attempt to establish relations with the Soviet Union in 1941. Diplomatic notes were exchanged agreeing to the establishment of relations, but the terms were never consummated (Shirk, 1969, p. 685). From the Thai side, the post-war effort to establish relations could be seen as a revival of this earlier attempt. However, the Soviets did not view it similarly, as the establishment of relations was raised as a condition for Soviet agreement to Thailand's membership in the United Nations (U.N.) (Jayanama, 2008, p. 301). A significant Thai foreign policy objective was to regain its place in the global community through admission into the U.N., which could only be achieved by the consent of all five permanent members of the Security Council, namely: the United States, Great Britain, France, China,² and the Soviet Union (Stowe, 1991, p. 362). Thailand was eventually admitted in December 1946.

The United States played a key role in this process, which extended to supporting Thailand's post-World War II development and encouraging Thailand's alignment with the United States throughout the Cold War. This outcome was not inevitable. In fact, there were constant attempts to establish backchannels to the "enemy". For example, Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram's second government (1948-1957) tried to establish a backchannel to the People's Republic of China in 1956, despite the public condemnations of both Chinese regional influence and the spread of communism (Phathanothai, 1994). Similarly, Thailand made attempts to develop relations with the Soviet Union. The success of this attempt would have had a great impact on the course of the Cold War in Southeast Asia.

Thus, post-World War II Thailand became a competitive arena between the United States and the Soviet Union. This research aims to examine the dynamics of Thai-Soviet relations in the context of this period from the United States' perspective.

Research Objectives

1. To study Thai-Soviet relations between 1945 and 1963 from the United States' perspective.
2. To identify the attitude of the United States Government vis-à-vis Thai-Soviet relations.

Literature Review

There has been little recent work in western scholarship regarding Thai-Soviet relations. Recent works tend to focus on the post-Soviet period, while historical works concentrate on

² The Chinese seat on the United Nations Security Council was held by the Republic of China until their withdrawal in 1971 when the People's Republic of China was recognized in their place.

developments in the late stage of the Cold War. Sarasin Viraphol's (1985) work is one such example, focusing on the Soviet role in the Cambodian-Vietnamese War (1978-1989). This account mentions the establishment of Thai-Soviet diplomatic relations, acknowledging the necessity of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviets in exchange for U.N. membership and also arguing that the Soviet threat during the 1950s and 1960s was not a concern, as it was distant and remote (Viraphol, 1985, p. 61).

A near contemporaneous work that does cover this research's period of interest is Paul Shirk's (1969) study of Thai-Soviet relations. Shirk also claims that Thailand's main motivation for establishing these relations was to regain its position in the international community, adding that Soviet support for Thailand's claim over Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem Reap formed a basis for friendly understanding (Shirk, 1969, p. 687). However, he argues that Soviet motivations were more obscure. Although espionage was a potential concern, the embassy's staff, numbering around 59, was far too few to be effective (Shirk, 1969, p. 688). Commerce was also a potential area for expansion due to the Soviet demand for raw materials, but trade volumes never reached this potential (Shirk, 1969, pp. 688-689).

While Koldunova and Rangsimaporn (2012) focused on later developments in Thai-Russian relations in the post-Cold War period, they noted Thailand's status as the first non-communist nation in Southeast Asia to establish relations with the Soviet Union (Koldunova & Rangsimaporn, 2012, pp. 162-163), which remains true whether 1941 or 1946 is used as the date for the establishment of relations. They also noted that Soviet criticisms of Thai-American military cooperation were a major source of tension and that from the Thai perspective, China was perceived as the greater threat (Koldunova & Rangsimaporn, 2012, p. 163).

A richer vein of scholarly materials is available in Thai-language sources. The general themes of these works are divided between those that focus solely on the Tsarist period (1863-1917), the Soviet period (1917-1991), and the post-Cold War period (1991-present day). However, some works span this entire period. Poonkham's (2558) survey of Thai-Soviet literature is one example. According to Phoonkham, the existing literature converged on the argument that the establishment of Thai-Soviet relations was necessitated by the requirement for U.N. membership, but also cited Shirk's evidence of earlier attempts to establish relations in 1941 (Phoonkham, 2558, pp. 56-58). Phoonkham noted an agreement among the literature that fundamental ideological differences formed a key obstacle to the development of relations (Phoonkham, 2558, p. 60), but also argued that Thailand had more room to maneuver, where the "Soviet card" was often used to extract concessions from the United

States (Phoonkham, 2558, p. 64). According to Phoonkham, the decisive event that placed Thai-Soviet relations in deep freeze was Thailand's involvement in Vietnam during Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn's administration (1963-1973) (Phoonkham, 2558, p. 66).

Treewisessorn (2562), using Russian sources, argued that ideological differences alone were insufficient to account for the freeze in Thai-Soviet relations (Treewisessorn, 2562, p. 46) and chronicled attempts by both sides to develop their relations (Treewisessorn, 2562, pp. 39-41). Treewisessorn categorized obstacles to the relations into internal factors in Southeast Asia, including the development of closer Soviet-Vietnamese relations and internal factors in the Soviet Union (Treewisessorn, 2562, pp. 42-43).

These accounts cover aspects of the Thai-Soviet relationship from a bilateral perspective. Other key players, such as the United States and China are mentioned in passing. For example, Shirk and others did not consider the role of the United States in interfering with or blocking Soviet initiatives. This research, therefore, aims to fill in some of this gap.

Research Methodology

The research uses documentary research and draws on declassified materials from the National Archives and Records Administration at College Park, Maryland, the United States. The research used documents from Research Groups 59 (Department of State), 84 (Embassies and Consulates), 218 (Joint Chiefs of Staff), and 263 (Central Intelligence Agency). The materials can thus represent the official American foreign policy viewpoint.

The scope of the research is limited to 1945-1963 due to two reasons. Firstly, the period marks the beginning of Thai-Soviet relations and ends at a watershed year for all three countries: the end of Field Marshal Sarit's administration, President John F. Kennedy's assassination, and Nikita Khrushchev's decline. The subsequent changes in leadership led to policy changes that differed from earlier ambiguities. Secondly, the United States' declassified records for RG 84 end at around 1953, while those in RG 59 contain materials for the 1950s and the early 1960s but is poor for the 1970s. As such, the currently available materials are most representative of the United States' perspective from the 1940s up to the mid-1960s.

Research Results

The research found that the United States came to closely monitor developments in Thai-Soviet relations. American interest was focused on the outcome of exchanges of visits, economic relations, public information, and propaganda activities, as well as intelligence activities. There is also evidence that the United States conducted interference activities on Thai-Soviet

relations. Although both sides attempted to forge closer relations, which agrees with the findings of Treewisessorn (1962), these attempts failed. Paradoxically, a decisive factor in this failure was Soviet action.

Establishment of Relations

The documents show that the United States was aware of Thailand's attempt to establish relations with the Soviet Union in 1941, despite its clandestine nature. It notes that while there was an agreement for the establishment of diplomatic relations, it was not implemented (Yost, 1946), which corresponds with Shirk's research (Shirk, 1969, p. 685). The effort to establish relations between the two countries was thus a continuation of earlier attempts. At this time, the United States was not overly concerned with these developments, viewing it as a bilateral issue (Byrnes, 1946a).

Initially, the Soviet Union insisted that the Thai Government issue a statement repealing anti-communist legislation and condemning past governments' anti-communist policies. Although it appeared that the Soviets were about to succeed (Byrnes, 1946b), Prince Vanna Vaidhayakara (Wan Waithayakon), the lead negotiator on the Thai side and future Minister of Foreign Affairs (1952-1958), was able to negotiate for just the exchange of notes with similar content (Byrnes, 1947). The successful establishment of diplomatic relations was a key condition for the Soviet Union's consent to Thai U.N. membership (Stanton, 1946b). The Thai Government acted in close consultation with the United States and sought American opinion on establishing relations with an emerging rival (Yost, 1946). At the same time, although the central governments on both sides had reached an agreement, Soviet agencies appeared to be unaware of the development, with even the Soviet U.N. Permanent Representative initially blocking Thailand's membership even though all conditions had already been fulfilled (Vincent, 1946).

However, the United States changed its position of non-interference following the successful establishment of Thai-Soviet diplomatic relations and initiated policies to interdict developments in Thai-Soviet bilateral relations. This change was due to the expanding influence of the Soviet Union in eastern Europe, the declaration of the Truman Doctrine on 12 March 1947, the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the subsequent deterioration of American-Soviet relations.

Exchanges of Visits

Exchanges of visits were, and continue to be, an important tool in developing bilateral relations. These visits allow both sides to ascertain facts on the ground, forge personal relations between officials working in the same area, evaluate each other's potential, and find common areas of cooperation for mutual benefit. Thus, the initial situation in Thai-Soviet relations lent itself to exchanges of visits.

In this regard, the Soviet Union was keen to invite Thai officials to visit the Soviet Union or one of its satellite states in Eastern Europe. Invitations were extended to civilian and military officials, as well as students directly or through organizations, such as the U.N., in particular the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE)³ (Donovan, 1954; Seligmann, 1963), based in Bangkok, or the International Labor Organization (ILO) (Puhan, 1963b). For the most part, the Thai side turned down the invitations, except for left-leaning journalists and writers, notably Kulap Saipradit, whose wife was an employee of the Soviet Mission (Shirk, 1969, p. 690). The United States closely monitored these visits, such as those made by Praphat Wattanasan, the Mayor of Bangkok, to celebrate the 800th Anniversary of Moscow (Stanton, 1947d; 1947e).

Although the Thai side avoided visits to the Soviet Union, the Soviets made more frequent visits. Often these visits had specific objectives, such as canvassing for votes in the U.N. or concluding agreements on trade and cultural exchanges. The first such delegation arrived in 1964 and met with great success. However, other visits were postponed or cancelled, such as the planned visit of the Bolshoi Ballet in 1963. This visit was canceled after the Soviet state media attacked Thailand's role in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), indicating the lack of coordination in the Soviet effort to charm foreign countries.

Economic Relations

The Soviet Union established a branch of Export Hleb in Bangkok in 1949 to oversee bilateral trade. The United States monitored the activities of this company's employees and those of the Soviet Commercial Attaché. In 1950, the United States was concerned with an expansion in the number of personnel, attempts to negotiate trade exchanges in rice (Stone, 1950), the itineraries of embassy personnel to other parts of the country (Stanton, 1951), and increased Soviet imports, which were mainly radios, bicycles, and bicycle tires (Turner, 1951c). The Americans were equally wary of Thais who were willing to trade with the Soviets. The

³ Currently the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

documents show that the activities of Ms. Manida Wong were of particular interest,⁴ as she appeared to be politically and economically influential. Ms. Wong's trade network spanned Thailand, Eastern Europe, China, and the United States (Campbell, 1952; Stanton, 1949c; 1950a). Aware of being monitored, Ms. Wong requested an appointment with the United States Embassy, clarifying that while she had been previously involved in trade with Skoda, the unprofitability of the business forced a withdrawal in 1950. Similar experiments with Eastern European countries also ended in failure, leading her to turn to Western European countries and the United States instead (Smith, 1951).

Furthermore, the United States also planned measures to prevent Thai-Soviet trade, fearing that the Soviets may secure a monopoly on vital commodities or that the Thais would rely too much on the Soviet markets (Stanton, 1949a). The United States was particularly concerned with the rubber and tin supply, to the extent that they had contingencies to buy up all the Thai rubber destined for the Soviet Union (Lovett, 1948). Ultimately, Thai traders channeled most of their commodity exports to the West, complying with international obligations regarding the export of rice and tin (Office of Intelligence Research, 1948). Furthermore, the Thai Government subsequently imposed barriers against trade with communist countries (Stanton, 1950a) and participated in economic boycotts (Parsons, 1954; Stanton, 1951).

Nevertheless, successive Thai governments still attempted to balance trade relations between the Cold War rivals. For example, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat's government (1959-1963) tried to expedite trade negotiations with the Soviets. The Soviets wanted to retaliate against American aid to Cambodia, while many of the interested Thai companies had influence in government (Puhan, 1963a). Negotiations never progressed due to the attacks against Thailand in the Soviet state media for its involvement in SEATO. The Thais saw the criticism as an unacceptable insult (Young, 1963), and no trade agreement was signed until 1971.

Thai-Soviet trade remained at a low ebb throughout this period. In 1962, Thai exports, mainly rubber and rice, to the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries amounted to only 1.6 percent of exports. Imports from these countries included textiles, glassware, and paper, amounted to 1.48 percent of all imports. The Soviets still tried to boost relations through proposals of exchanges between Thailand and Czechoslovakia, the establishment of a branch of a Polish shipping company, as well as a Soviet Trade Center (Fluker, 1963).

⁴ Ms. Manida Wong had other aliases, namely: Manida Telan and Suni Telan.

Public Information and Propaganda

Public information campaigns formed an important part of the indirect confrontation that characterized the Cold War. As a country located in a strategic area, Thailand was an obvious target for these campaigns. On the American side, the main agency was the United States Information Service (USIS),⁵ while its Soviet rival, the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS), had similar functions. USIS and the Department of State were already assessing the potential of their rival by circulating questionnaires to gather information on Soviet information activities from American embassies across the globe. However, the United States still saw the British Broadcasting Cooperation as their main competitor (Evans, 1949; Stanton, 1949d). Throughout this period, USIS conducted psychological operations to counter Soviet information. Vans that doubled as mobile libraries and outdoor cinemas were mobilized. The program content was geared towards raising awareness of the communist threat and countering Chinese and Soviet propaganda (USIS, 1957). Thus, USIS was an important tool in winning the masses and countering communist information campaigns.

At the same time, the United States closely monitored the activities of its opposition, especially the growth of the Communist Party of Thailand in the wake of the arrival of Sergei Nemchina, the Soviet Minister, in July 1947. Leftist Thai newspapers, especially *Mahachon*, printed editorials and statements that clearly conformed to Soviet positions (Stanton, 1948a). The Soviet Mission also produced and disseminated information and held almost weekly film nights (Hendershot, 1948). These activities dovetailed with those of the Soviet's state news agencies, including TASS and its newspapers, *Izvestia* and *Pravda*. Much of the content emphasized the developments and progress in the Soviet Union and attacks on "imperialist" countries, particularly the United States and Great Britain (Stanton, 1948c).

The Soviet Union focused on information and activities designed to attract youths and college students, especially those based at Thammasat University. The Americans closely monitored student newspapers and student groups who tried to incorporate political agendas into student activities. They were wary of international movements and organizations, such as the International Peace Movement and the International Freedom League (Turner, 1951b), that were popular among certain groups of students, and international events hosted by

⁵ USIS was dissolved on 1 October 1999, and some of its tasks were handed to the Department of State, while independent agencies oversee broadcasting activities, including the Voice of America.

communist countries, such as the World Youth Festival (Acheson, 1951). The United States viewed these organizations as fronts for communist activities and propaganda (Turner, 1951a).

Superpower rivalry also manifested in exhibitions to present consumer products and expand influence. For example, Constitution Day exhibitions were used to present consumer products, such as vehicles and agricultural equipment. In addition, USIS used the occasion to mount a counter-information campaign against the Soviet Union (Donovan, 1953) and actively sought cooperation with other agencies, including the military (Peurifoy, 1955). Subsequently, when the Soviet Union's pavilion won the first prize, the Soviets also tried to take maximum advantage of this development (Parsons, 1953), much to American chagrin.

Although some Soviet activities met with satisfactory results, most of its activities were not so effective. Initially, much of the information was disseminated in English and French, which failed to penetrate most of the population. By 1953, the United States concluded that the Soviet public information was nothing to be concerned about since they were unable to penetrate Thai political and media circles. Like other areas of Thai-Soviet relations, Soviet efforts in this area also lacked coordination. This failure would have a profound effect in the initial stages of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat's government that remained receptive to Soviet overtures (Puhan, 1963c; Tremblay, 1963). It was TASS that torpedoed the efforts of other Soviet agencies to develop closer relations by attacking Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat's government on various issues, leading to the suspension of cooperation altogether.

Intelligence Activities

Initially, the United States and Thailand were more wary of China than the Soviet Union's intelligence activities. The Thais feared that China feared Chinese military aggression, whereas the Americans were more concerned about the infiltration of the significant overseas Chinese community residing in Thailand (Stanton, 1949b).

Communist activities in Thailand were mainly directed by China, with the Soviet Union playing a supporting role. The United States reported that most of the Soviet's initial efforts ended in failure. For example, it was reported that the Soviets were trying to bribe subdistrict headmen and village headmen for information, but most of these local officials tended to reject the offers or, in case of acceptance, did not comply with Soviet demands (Bushner, 1949). The Americans also attached great significance to college students and labor unions, especially if their members were overseas Chinese. At this time, the Americans also received information from Taipei that the Thai communists were planning to use 1 million US dollars

from the Soviet Mission to incite the overseas Chinese to protest against the Thai Government (Rankin, 1951) and were involved in bribing politicians to support legislation to expel the Chinese from 18 areas, all of which were areas with a heavy Chinese presence to create divisions between the Thai Government, the Thai people, and the overseas Chinese who would inevitably come out in protest against such measures (Rankin, 1951).

During this period, Taipei was an important information source for communist activities among the ethnic Chinese community in Thailand. Of particular interest is a list of suspected communist agents. Most names are those of Chinese descent residing in Thailand. A strange inclusion was that of Karlis A.M. Tennisons, a Latvian Buddhist monk (Vance, 1948). Tennisons was closely monitored, especially his visits to the Rattanakosin and Eagle Hotels, which were seen as gathering places for leftists. Indeed, the Rattanakosin Hotel was used as the temporary office for the Soviet Mission (Stanton, 1948b). Other activities that also caused concern were letters to the *Bangkok Post* and the *Liberty* supporting Soviet positions (Stanton, 1947a; 1947b). The Thai Government initially tried to deport the monk but changed their mind on the arrival of the Soviet Mission in Bangkok in 1947 (Stanton, 1947c).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the American perspective, Thai-Soviet relations during the period 1945 to 1963 began with the relatively smooth establishment of relations in 1946, followed by attempts to develop relations in the political, economic, and social spheres that met with mixed results, ending with tension and decline. American attitude towards this relationship also underwent a rapid transformation, from relative indifference to one characterized by close monitoring and the exertion of pressure and interference.

The evidence of the United States archives agrees with the existing consensus that the aftermath of World War II compelled the Thai Government to strike a “necessary friendship” with the Soviet Union through the establishment of diplomatic relations, exchange of diplomatic representatives, and U.N. membership. Poonkham (2558) and Treewisessorn (2562) argued that differences in Thai and Soviet ideologies did not prevent the development of relations and the American evidence appears to agree with this conclusion. Although the Thai side remained receptive to Soviet overtures, potential areas of cooperation, particularly in the economic and cultural spheres, were never fully exploited.

The Soviets were unable to penetrate Thai society, except for the college students, certain intellectuals, and the overseas Chinese community. Even so, Soviet inroads into the

latter community met a dead-end with the onset of the Sino-Soviet split in 1962. Furthermore, Soviet agencies were unable to coordinate their efforts from the very beginning, as can be seen from the Soviet U.N. Permanent Representative's confusion regarding the change in the official status of Thai-Soviet relations. This inability to coordinate efforts reared its head again during the negotiations of a trade agreement with the initially receptive Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat government, which was sabotaged by the actions of another Soviet state agency. The resulting imbroglio and suspension of cooperation pushed Thailand towards closer cooperation with the United States.

Thus, while the findings concur with the existing consensus in certain areas, it differs in terms of the detail given regarding the impact of Soviet self-sabotage and United States interference, particularly in the economic and social spheres. Furthermore, while Koldunova and Rangsimaporn (2012) may have seen Thailand's involvement in the Vietnam War as the event that marked a clear break in Thai-Soviet relations, arguably this break had occurred earlier during the Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat administration, mainly due to Soviet efforts.

Although these conclusions present a clear picture of the initial stages of Thai-Soviet relations and their development (or lack thereof), this is a narrative mainly from the American perspective. Some documents from this period remain classified. It is therefore recommended that researchers revisit the National Archives and Records Administration at a future date when additional records become declassified to gather additional information that can be used in tandem with findings from archives in Thailand and the Russian Federation.

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