

Thai-US Relations in Terms of Politics and Security: Impact of the 2014 Thai Coup D'État

ความสัมพันธ์ไทย-สหรัฐฯ ด้านการเมืองและความมั่นคง: ผลกระทบของรัฐประหาร ปี ๒๕๕๗

บทความวิจัย

Aiyarat Kosakul*

อัยรัฐ โกษากุล*

Abstract

Thai-US relations in terms of politics and security after the Thai 2014 coup d'état is drawing great attention among international-relations academics and scholars since before the incident occurred in 2014, the two countries had been enjoying their close ties in all dimensions especially in terms of security cooperation. The Thai 2014 coup d'état forced The United States to lower relationship with Thailand due to some domestic restrictions including laws that prevent the U.S. from closely engaging with any country whose leader comes from coup d'état and American values that the U.S. has to protect. Nonetheless, despite those restrictions, the U.S. has still tried to not lower but maintain relationship with Thailand because Thailand is an old ally the U.S. needs to keep in order to compete with China who has been emerging as another world's great power with great influence in Asia-Pacific region. This study aims to investigate and identify the significant problems of the relations between Thailand and the United States following the Thai coup d'état in May 2014, increase understanding of the impact of the identified problems on Thailand particularly in both short and long terms as well as identify factors which have affected relationship between Thailand and the United States after the Thai coup d'état in May 2014. The analysis will be based on relevant theory. The first-hand data will be collected from various

* หลักสูตรศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาการทูตและการต่างประเทศ สถาบันการทูตและการต่างประเทศ มหาวิทยาลัยรังสิต
Master of Arts in Diplomacy and International Studies, Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies, Rangsit University
E-mail: aiyaratk@mfa.go.th

in-depth interviews with Thai high-ranking officers who are au-fait with Thai-US ties. Key informants were critical for the success of this research because they also suggested sources of supporting evidence and initiate the access to such sources. The second-hand data will come from documents and useful sources. This research will also propose some practical and meaningful foreign policies to be implemented by the respective relevant authorities for improved relations between Thailand and the United States.

Keywords: International relations, Thai-US relations, Coup d'état

บทคัดย่อ

ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศไทยและสหรัฐอเมริกา หลังรัฐประหารปี ๒๕๕๗ เป็นเรื่องที่มีความสนใจเป็นอย่างมากเนื่องจากความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสองชาติที่ผ่านมา เป็นไปอย่างแนบแน่นในทุกมิติและทุกด้าน โดยเฉพาะความร่วมมือด้านความมั่นคงระหว่างกัน การเกิดรัฐประหารปี ๒๕๕๗ ในประเทศไทย ทำให้สหรัฐฯ ต้องทบทวนความสัมพันธ์กับประเทศไทยอีกครั้ง เนื่องจากสหรัฐฯ มีกฎระเบียบ รวมถึงค่านิยมบางอย่างที่จำกัดไม่ให้สหรัฐฯ มีปฏิสัมพันธ์อย่างใกล้ชิดกับประเทศที่มีผู้นำที่มาจากการก่อรัฐประหาร อย่างไรก็ตาม แม้ว่าสหรัฐฯ จะมีข้อจำกัดภายในการดำเนินความสัมพันธ์กับประเทศไทย แต่วิวัฒนาการของโลก โดยเฉพาะการที่ประเทศจีนกำลังขึ้นมาเป็นมหาอำนาจที่สำคัญบนเวทีโลก และในภูมิภาคเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียง หรือที่ถูกรเรียกว่า ยุค “Rise of China” ทำให้สหรัฐฯ จำเป็นจะต้องรักษามิตรประเทศในภูมิภาคอย่างประเทศไทยไว้ เพื่อจำกัดอิทธิพลของประเทศจีน โดยบทความนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะอธิบายถึงปัญหาความสัมพันธ์ไทย-สหรัฐฯ ในมิติทางการเมือง

และด้านความมั่นคงหลังการเกิดรัฐประหารในปี ๒๕๕๗ ในประเทศไทย ผลกระทบต่อความสัมพันธ์ที่เกิดขึ้นทั้งในระยะสั้นและระยะยาว ปัจจัยที่เป็นอุปสรรคในการพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์ของทั้งสองชาติ โดยที่จะใช้ทฤษฎีที่เกี่ยวข้อง ข้อมูลอ้างอิงจากแหล่งความรู้ต่าง ๆ รวมถึงบทวิเคราะห์จากบทสัมภาษณ์ของเจ้าหน้าที่รัฐระดับสูง ๓ ท่าน ที่มีความเข้าใจและมีบทบาทในการดำเนินความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศไทยและสหรัฐอเมริกาโดยตรง ในการวิเคราะห์รูปแบบการพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์ของไทยและสหรัฐฯ เพื่อให้ผู้อ่านสามารถเข้าใจบทวิเคราะห์ได้ดียิ่งขึ้น รวมถึงจะมีบทสรุปภาพรวมและข้อเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายสำหรับเจ้าหน้าที่ของรัฐที่เกี่ยวข้อง เพื่ออานำไปใช้ประโยชน์ในการพัฒนาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างไทย-สหรัฐฯ ต่อไป

1. Introduction

Thailand and the United States established relations in 1818 and signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1833, formalizing diplomatic relations. The two countries have enjoyed their cordial relations since then. The two countries had become a state party of decommissioned Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, and fought unitedly against all threats in many battle fields to ensure peace and stable security, such as, the Vietnam War and the Korean War. In March 1962 Thailand signed a joint communiqué with the U.S. in which the U.S. promised Thailand support and defense against potential Communist aggression. Despite being only an informal protocol, it was celebrated in Thailand as a bilateral pact of the two countries, dubbed the “Rusk-Thanat” Agreement. During the

Cold War, Thailand and the United States had many security cooperations to fight against Chinese communist. In 2003, the Former President George W Bush declared Thailand as its Major non-NATO ally (MNNA). Partnership between the two allies is beyond a bilateral relations, covering areas of public health, trade, science and technology, wildlife trafficking, education, cultural exchange, law enforcement, and security cooperation in particular (U.S. Department of States, 2017). It is noted that the U.S. is Thailand's closest allies in security mean as it has consistently rendered military support, like training, combat equipment, and intelligence sharing, to name a few in order to ensure defense capacity since 1950. The two allies has enjoyed their close relationship.

In addition, history told that the relationship between Thailand and the United States has been strong although they have experienced many Thai coup d'état, including the 2006 coup d'état which deposed the elected caretaker government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Nonetheless, the cordial relations between the two allies faced significant challenge-sonce again when General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Commander of the Royal Thai Army (RTA) at that time staged a coup, on 22 May 2014, against Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, the caretaker government of Thailand. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) later was formed to govern the country under Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha administration.

The aforementioned development in Thailand considerably drew attention of international community not only the United States but also other powers including China and Russia. The United States, the most outstanding champion of democracy, who has a rule declaring that the US must avoid those countries with a government not coming from election, and who has Thailand as its oldest ally in Asia-Pacific had negative reaction immediately. It felt disappointed, criticized the move and repeatedly expressed its wish for the Junta to return the power to the people (Marciel, 2014). Those reaction by the U.S. made long-lasting cordial relationship between the two countries soured and prompted the US to decide lower engagement with Thailand particularly in terms of politics and security (Marciel, 2014). Thai-U.S. relationship was worse but in reality, the U.S. still maintained relationship with its ally because the U.S.' interest in Asia-Pacific region heavily relied on its friend.

2. Thai-U.S. Relations After the Coup

2.1 The United States under Barack Obama's administration

In the first period of post-coup in 2014, when the U.S. had Honorable Mr. Barack Obama as its President, the findings of this study shows that the relations between Thailand and the United States seemed soured. But in reality, the U.S. still maintained relationship with Thailand. There were many indicators and incidents to support the idea.

After the Thai coup d'état took place in 2014, the U.S. Government immediately reiterated its principled opposition to military intervention. The Former Secretary of States Kerry took deliberate action by delivering an official statement on May 22, 2014, saying sternly he and his government were disappointed by the military coup and asked for immediate restoration of civilian rules, a return to democracy, and full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly. He further emphasized that his country understood Thais frustration with their long-lasting political turmoil, but also emphasized that coups would not solve these problems and they are a step backwards.

As a consequence, an approximate 3.5 million U.S. dollars of unobligated Foreign Military Financing (FMF) assistance and 1.3 million U.S. dollars of International Military Education and Training Programme (IMET) to be delivered to the Kingdom were suspended, announced on May 28, 2014 by Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State. In addition, in response to military takeover, the U.S. had continued to cancel naval exercise CARAT (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training), the U.S. Government-sponsored firearms training programme for the Royal Thai Police as well as the U.S. Government-sponsored study trip for senior Royal Thai Police. Apart from this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Annual Report 2014 stated that there

was no any record of official or high-level visit between Thailand and the United States during the year. A Visit to Thailand by the U.S. Pacific fleet commander Admiral Harry Harris was cancelled in June 2014.

Nonetheless, not long after the coup incident took place in year 2014, the Obama administration began to signal positive signs in order to revive relationship with Thailand. There were some high ranking visits or meetings between the two countries after temporary suspension. According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand (2015), on 26 January 2015, announced that the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Mr. Daniel Russel called on H.E. General Tanasak Patimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand at that time. The candid and constructive discussion between the two sides was underscored by their reaffirmation to strengthen forward-looking cooperation between Thailand and the U.S. In addition, on 16 December 2015, Mr. Daniel Russel led the U.S. delegation to attend the 5th U.S.–Thai Strategic Dialogue in Bangkok as well as to pay a courtesy call on the Thai Prime Minister at the Government House and Mr. Don Pramudwinai, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The full range of the political, security, and economic cooperation were discussed. All of these important events marked significant step to improve strained relations after the 2014 coup (Parameswaran, 2015).

Apart from these, in 2016 there were three visits of General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand, to the United States at the invitation of the President Obama despite being criticized by human rights groups (Ehrlich, 2016). First, the ASEAN-U.S. Special Leaders' Summit in California, focused on political, economic and security cooperation between ASEAN member states and the U.S. Second, Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), aimed to strengthen protection of nuclear material and facilities against actions by terrorists (Carlson, 2016). Third, the Leaders' Summit on Refugees which discussed assistance for displaced persons in order to solve global concerns caused by massive refugees. These were within the multilateral framework but the U.S. could have decided not to invite Thailand to those meetings. Additionally, a diplomat at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in charge of the U.S. affairs told that there has been no formal statement on political situation in Thailand since the second-half of the year 2016.

One military officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, reiterated that military relation between the two regimes remained close in his view as he could observe a number of military engagements. The Pentagon sent troops to take part in Cobra Gold military exercise in 2015 and 2016. Thailand allowed the Pentagon's 7th Fleet to use its military facilities near the Gulf of Thailand and Phuket island on December 30, 2015 after patrolling the South China sea. Moreover,

when Thailand hosted ASEAN Exercise 16-3 in September 2016, The U.S. Pacific Command, Army and Air Forces had no reluctance to join the multinational exercise. The military officer told that he had great opportunity to be part of the 22nd iteration of Exercise Tiger 16 in Nakhon Ratchasima last year, he experienced good collaboration among 1,850 members from Thailand, Singapore and the U.S. In addition, U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Thailand showed some another information disclosing existing close collaboration with host country, Thailand. It revealed that the Pentagon sent U.S. Special Forces team to render their know-how and combat experience to various Thai agencies at the Baker Torch BT 16-2914 training 2015.

2.2 The United States under Donald Trump's administration

Not long after Mr. Donald Trump took presidential role, the relationship between Thailand and the U.S. has been increasingly better. Early this year, President Trump obviously embraced more military reengagement with Thailand by dispatching the highest-ranking American military official, Admiral Harry Harris to join the Cobra Gold 2017, this largest multilateral military exercise in Asia co-hosted by Thailand and the U.S. Many foreign affairs analysts have believed that it was great and unprecedented move made by newly elected President, showing hospitality to the ruling junta government (Klaas, 2017).

On April 30, 2017, at 21.30 hrs., there was a historic moment, announced by Deputy Spokesman of the Government House. The U.S. President made good effort by making direct conversation to Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-o-cha in order to underscore his country's strong commitment to relations with Thailand and Asian region. The two leaders agreed that close and constructive ties between Bangkok and Washington are vital to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The President further praised General Prayuth's great contribution to the Thai people and invited the Thai Premier to officially visit his White House (Raksaseri, 2017). Some source said this may be due to the U.S. values long standing relations with Thailand as he believes that Thailand could play important role in dealing with North Korea's nuclear threat and assertiveness of the Chinese in South China sea (Chiacu and Lange, 2017)

At ministerial level, it is reported that the Thai Foreign Minister was invited by the U.S. Secretary of States for bilateral meeting on 4 May 2017 during the Special ASEAN-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Washington D.C. The two ministers both ensured unbreakable relations and will explore greater opportunities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2017). Some academics wrote that Thailand would experience less difficulty in fostering relations with its ally, this is mainly due to some attachment or understanding of Secretary. Mr. Rex Tillerson

toward Thailand. The newly appointed Secretary of States worked in Nakhon Ratchasima for Exxon from 1995-1998, as a President of Esso Exploration and Production, he praised for Thai culture and hospitality ("Rex Tillerson's Nomination to Diplomatic Role Sparks Alarm...and Praise," 2016).

3. Factors affecting relationship between Thailand and the United States after the 2014 Thai coup d'état

3.1 The U.S. Foreign Assistance Acts

It is crucial to say to that the U.S.' Foreign Assistance Acts is one of the key factors souring an already cordial ties between Thailand and the United States especially in terms of security cooperation. The U.S. Secretary John Kerry issued a Statement on 23 May 2014, announcing that his country is bound to comply with the U.S. 'Foreign Assistance Acts 1961. The Acts stipulates that the States is not allowed to contribute foreign aids to countries not coming from democratic election. As a result, there were suspensions of approximately 3.5 million US dollars in unspent and unobligated Foreign Military Financing (FMF) among others. However, according to conversation with the Director of North America Division, Department of American and South Pacific Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Director said that the U.S. Foreign Assistance Acts has insignificant impact on relations between Thailand and the U.S. He said that the Acts reduced only small amount of

foreign assistance aids, roughly 5% of the total. Major security cooperations such as Cobra Gold, CARAT, Cope Tiger exercises remained continued. Moreover, Dr. Panitan Wattanayagorn¹ told the BBC THAI on 2 May 2017 that in reality, the two allies never downgraded relationship with each other, there are some limitations but have no harms to the relations. Interestingly, the U.S. implemented less effective measures in response to the Thai latest coup than the past (Klaas, 2017).

3.2 American Values

The United States leaders clearly attach a great importance to freedom, human rights and democracy principles. They believed that those principles are not only American Values but also Universal Values as it helps to advance their own national interest and secure global peace. As a result, American Values have long been central components of U.S. foreign policy (Saunders, 2017)

Many foreign affairs academics have believed that American Values is a key factor behind the U.S. relations and its friend. This is because of U.S. top policy maker at the White House has attached to different degree of American Values. Government of Thailand experienced cooperative but strained ties with the U.S. before Trump assuming presidential duty,

mostly due to human rights and democratic rules concerns expressed by the Former President Obama. Prime Minister Prayuth was never invited to the White House. The current President Trump made a phone call to Prime Minister Prayuth who overthrown his elected predecessor in a 2014 coup (Holmes, 2017). On 30 April 2017, it was reported that President Trump not only called the President of the Philippines who was criticized by human rights advocates over his war on drug at home, but also called the Prime Minister of Thailand, to ensure close cooperation and strong commitment in Asian region (Chiacu and Lange, 2017). Interestingly, many commentators have argued that the U.S. Foreign Policy approach is now shifting. During attending the Special ASEAN-U.S. Foreign Minister's meeting in Washington D.C., the Secretary of States spoke to media outlet that his country cannot always placing tough conditions on its foreign relations to accept American value (Associate Press, 2017). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand posted on website on 4 May 2014, stating that during the said meeting the Secretary of States met privately with its Foreign Minister, both parties expressed willingness to enhance ties in all dimensions. The U.S. under Trump administration certainly ignores American values for the sake of his national interests.

¹ Dr. Panitan Wattanayagorn, a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University's faculty of political science and security advisor to Thai Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan

3.3 Fierce tensions in Asia-Pacific region

Among main factors driving relations between Thailand and the United States, there are two major controversial incidents which are the South China Sea dispute and North Korea's nuclear threat

The South China Sea territorial disputes

There are six nations claiming over the resource-rich islands in the South China Sea, namely Brunei, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. It is estimated that around 5 trillion worth of goods passing this marine route (Fensom, 2016).

Since the late 1980s, China has come to consider the United States not as a strategic partner but as the chief obstacle to its own strategic ambitions. Hence, it has struggled to lower the U.S.' influence in Asia, to prevent the U.S. from "containing Beijing" and to expand its presence in the South China Sea so that it dominates the region's significant sea-lanes (Bernstein & Munro, 1998).

Former Secretary of State, Ms. Hillary Clinton asserted that the U.S. is one among "Pacific nations". The State is therefore eligible for freedom of navigation in international waters. Nonetheless, some academics believed that the reason behind the U.S. "Rebalancing in Asia" policy is to intentionally contain China's influence in the region. Hence, the U.S. has been seeking "loyal friends" in the region especially its non-

NATO allies like Thailand and the Philippines (Reuter, 2014). According to Mr. Kraisak Choonhavan, a former senator and former Democrat Party deputy leader, "I don't think Obama supports Prayuth but regional tensions require that bilateral U.S.-Thai relations be maintained"

Accordingly, the U.S. thought if it has downgraded relationship with Thailand, one of its treaty allies, after the coup and let it last too long, China would definitely use this opportunity to get closer to Thailand and finally it would lose Thailand to China. Therefore, the U.S. needed to maintain relationship with Thailand.

North Korea threat

North Korea's nuclear threat was another factor that pushed the U.S. to get back to Thailand, its oldest treaty ally in the region. In BBC News Asia on 15 September 2015, Former U.S. President George W Bush labeled North Korea as one of the "axis of evil" in 2002. In recent years, North Korea threatened that it could launch a nuclear attack on the U.S. and its close allies including Japan and Republic of Korea. The latest North Korean missile test in May 2017 spurred President Trump to review the U.S. strategic measures extended to North Korea. President Trump believed that Obama's mechanism namely six-party talks failed to solve the problem. The U.S. finally realized that in order to overcome North Korea, their alliances in the region were needed. That was why President Trump made direct phone calls

to the leaders of Thailand and the Philippines. The President wished nations in the region to place tougher approach such as diplomatic and economic sanction to stop North Korea's nuclear program (Chiacu and Lange, 2017).

According to theory of Realism, the U.S. maintained relationship with Thailand due to its need to enhance its security and survival by asking cooperations from Thailand to solve North Korea's nuclear problem after North Korea threatened to launch a nuclear attack to the U.S.

3.4 American business clans

It can be believed that another factor affecting Thai-U.S relations during Thai military administration is the so called "American influential business clans" like those based in Silicon Valley, they have close ties with the U.S. government. Ms. Arjaree Sriratanaban² has explained that those powerful businessmen have strong bargaining power to form the U.S. economic policy in according with their own interests. The power brokers have donated a large sum of money to local political parties, a 1.18 billion USD was spent to fund the House and 860 million USD was used for the Senate (Drutman, 2015). Interestingly, it is recorded by the American Chamber of Commerce of Thailand that more than one hundred U.S. firms based in Bangkok which

have invested billions of dollars, such as, Exxon Mobiles, General Motors, Google, Microsoft to name a few. On 7 December 2016, the famous media outlet reported that the Thai cabinet approved the U.S. giant corporation Chevron to extend contact to invest in Thailand for another ten year ("Cabinet extended business contact with Chevron," 2016). The U.S. is third largest trading partner with Thailand (U.S. Department of States, 2017). A Thai senior official at MFA said that not so long after the military coup took place, the powerful business clans had met with the senior U.S. officials to ensure that their investments in Thailand would not be affected by any U.S. measure in response to the coup (Domhoff, 2006).

3.5 Thai Foreign Policies

Notably, Foreign policy has played an indispensable part in every government's national development agenda. It has helped enable Thailand to reserve national integrity and advance national prosperity as well as continued advancement in dealing with foreign countries. In this regard, it can be argued that national foreign policy governed by the Thai Foreign Ministry at home and abroad is one major factor influencing Thailand-U.S. interaction since General Prayuth seized power in 2014.

² Ms. Arjaree Sriratanaban , The Director of Policy and Planning Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Considering the regional geo-political situation, a “balance of power” is adopted as the topmost important strategy extended to regional powers, like China, Russia as well as the U.S.; the U.S. has a policy of containment and curbing Chinese influence, where as China has a policy of the expansion of its empire toward the South eastern sphere. Miss Pinyada³ said in the interview that as a result of these power struggles in the region, Thailand has been made to discreetly cultivate constructive engagement strategies with these nations that aim at being the greatest nation on earth.

According to theory of Realism, Thailand had to make friends and cooperate with those powers in a bid to strengthen its security because it is only a medium-sized country which has no power compared to those giants.

Since, taking the Office, we can observe that the Premier of Thailand has ensured both the U.S. and China of his readiness for close partnership. Many foreign affairs experts believe that the U.S. realized that it had to challenge China to be the closer friend of Thailand (Chiacu and Lange, 2017). Hence, despite the Thai latest coup d'état, the U.S. cannot afford to lower relationships with Thailand. As a result, the 5th U.S.-Thailand Strategic Dialogue on 16 December 2015 and military engagements

like Cobra Gold and Cope Tiger exercises were never suspended for instance. To conclude, Thailand's diplomacy is a key in contributing to the advancement of the nation's relations with the U.S. amid political and ideological differences.

4. Implications for long-term Thai – U.S. relations

“We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and those interests it is our duty to follow” Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston said in 1848 (Raab, 2011).

It can be argued that in the future the U.S. will definitely need its allies in Asia-Pacific to curb greater China’s influence in the region. Thailand as its treaty ally with strategic location will have a key role in supporting the U.S. in achieving its goal. The Bureau Director of the Office of Policy and Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand believes that the U.S. economy also relies on Thailand since there are American communities in Thailand. The U.S. investors in Thailand enjoy their businesses thanks to preferable Thai commercial laws. In addition, the Director of North America division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand also said that the soured Thai–U.S. ties following the latest coup would be short-lived. It will become greater as

³ Miss Pinyada, First Secretary, Policy and Planning Office, Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.



before whenever Thailand brings back democracy. The U.S.' response to the Thai latest coup was just standard. It was not new. This is the 12th coup detatin the country. And the history showed that every time Thailand had a coup, eventually the U.S. would reachfull reengagement with Thailand in all dimensions once its treaty ally restore its democracy. It is therefore as long as Thailand can increase American national interests in both political and economic dimensions, the relationship between the two countries will be still stable and even better.

5. Recommendations

Having found the development of relationship between Thailand and the United States following the Thai latest coup, there are some recommendations for Thai side in order to maintain cordial ties with the United States in long term.

To begin with, Thai politicians have to get closer to those American elites who involve policy making process in order to create positive attitude on Thailand among them. They could invite those American elites to visit Thailand for cultural trips. If they have better understanding about situations in Thailand, they could know how to deal with Thailand more properly. For example, Mr. Rex Tillerson, Secretary of States, who is familiar with Thailand, has softer measures dealing with Thailand than his predecessor. At this time, Thai leaders have less trusted friends in U.S. government. Most of U.S. elites with good

attitude on Thailand who had fought side by side with Thailand during Vietnam War had been retired and had no power in the U.S. government anymore. Hence, Thailand is required to find new reliable U.S. elites friends.

With the fact that the U.S. has American huge community especially those running business in Thailand, Thailand should find a way to further relax commercial law for U.S. companies in order to persuade more American investors to come to Thailand. Thailand Board of Investment and Ministry of Commerce should play a leading role in reviewing and relaxing commercial law for U.S. The U.S. will have to think carefully when they are required to implement punishing measures to Thailand for matters. It is because any unpleasant means would produce direct negative effect on the U.S.' economy.

It is also important for Thailand to implant Thai people's good attitude on the U.S. Some Thai people understood that the U.S. was an enemy for Thailand because of its criticize and negative reactions after the coup because they did not know the fact that the U.S. had some key limitations in dealing with Thailand including the foreign assistance act and American values that they had to respect. But in reality Thai-US relationship is never soured. In the past, Thais' misunderstanding resulted in worse ties between the two countries. They sometime harshly criticized the U.S. in social media. Sometime they forgot that Thailand's independence heavily relied on

the U.S.' assistance. The two allies shared national interest since the past. Those Thai people should understand and respect cordial relations between the two countries and contribute to sustainable good relationship. Thai government could have

campaigns to create better image of the U.S. among Thai people. For example, they could add cherished Thai-US history into Thai education. Teachers would serve as a facilitator to tell children how important the U.S. is.

Bibliography

- Associated Press. (2017). Tillerson meets Southeast Asian nations, but focus is NKorea. *Bangkok Post*. Retrieved May 5, 2017, from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1243626/us-singles-out-thailand-for-talks>
- Bernstein, Richard & Munro, Ross H. (1998). Bernstein and Munro: The coming Conflict with China. *Tulsa Journal of Comparative and International Law*, 5(2), 415.
- Cabinet extended business contact with Chevron. (2016). *Thairath Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.thairath.co.th/content/804661>
- Carlson, John (2016). 2016 NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT-MUCH MORE TO BE DONE. *Australian Institute of International Affairs*. Retrieved from http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian_outlook/2016-nuclear-security-summit-much-more-to-be-done/
- Chiacu, Doina & Lange, Jason. (2017). Trump confers with Asia allies on North Korea nuclear threat. *United News of India*. Retrieved from <http://www.uniindia.com/trump-confers-with-asia-allies-on-north-korea-nuclear-threat/world/news/856880.html>
- Domhoff, G. W. (2006). *Who Rules America?*. New York, the United States of America: McGraw-Hill.
- Drutman, Lee. (2015). How Corporate Lobbyists Conquered American Democracy. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/04/how-corporate-lobbyists-conquered-american-democracy/390822/>
- Fensom, Anthony. (2016). \$5 Trillion Meltdown: What If China Shuts Down the South China Sea?. *The National Interest*. Retrieved from <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/5-trillion-meltdown-what-if-china-shuts-down-the-south-china-16996>
- Klaas, Brian. (2017). Thailand feels the Trump effect. *The Washington Times*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/democracy-post/wp/2017/02/28/thailand-feels-the-trump-effect/?utm_term=.ad1b8d0e53a1
- Marciel, Scot. U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Thailand. (2014). *Thailand: A Democracy at Risk*. Retrieved from <https://th.usembassy.gov/thailand-a-democracy-at-risk/>



- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. (2015). *The U.S. Assistant Secretary of States for East Asian and Pacific Affairs called on Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/media-center/28/53179-The-U.S.-Assistant-Secretary-of-State-for-East-Asi.html>
- Parameswaran, Prashanth. (2015). US Top Asia Diplomat to Visit Thailand, Laos and Japan. *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/us-top-asia-diplomat-travels-to-thailand-laos-and-japan/>
- Raksaseri, Kornchanok. (2017). Trump's call signals closer ties. *Bangkok Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1242010/trumps-call-signals-closer-ties>
- Rex Tillerson's Nomination to Diplomatic Role Sparks Alarm...and Praise (2016). *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/tillersons-new-u-s-diplomatic-role-raises-alarms-and-praise-1481613999>
- Saunders, P. J. (2017). Tillerson Defines 'America First'. *The National Interest*. Retrieved from <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/tillerson-defines-america-first-20552>
- U.S. Department of State. (2017). *U.S. Relations With Thailand* [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2814.htm>