

NYTimes

APR 10 1975

SHIFTS EXPECTED IN THAI POLICIES

Bangkok's Next Diplomatic
Moves Closely Watched
by Asian Nations

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Special to The New York Times

BANGKOK, Thailand, April 9—Current developments in Cambodia and South Vietnam can only accelerate shifts in Thailand's foreign policy, according to experienced diplomatic observers here.

Many Asian nations keep a close watch on the diplomatic stance of Thailand, a constitutional monarchy that has been astute in sensing the tide of regional events and adapting her policies accordingly. At the height of the United States' involvement in Vietnam, Thailand was for many years one of its staunchest allies.

In recent days Thailand's foreign minister, Chatichai Choonhavan, re-invited top-level Chinese trade officials to visit this country despite Chinese support of a Communist insurgency in northeast Thailand. He originally invited the officials last month, the foreign minister explained, but he invited them again this week to make sure they understood this country's eagerness to have them.

Initial diplomatic exchanges, while hardly amicable, also have begun with North Vietnam. North Korea has made some soundings here. Relations with the Soviet Union have improved. And in recent months Thailand has established diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Mongolia.

The Thai Government has also has been in touch with both sides in the Cambodian conflict, offering to serve as the third party in peace negotiations in Bangkok. Some time ago the Government here all but closed its embassy in Phnom Penh and said it would recognize whatever government came to power there.

It also sought to have all 25,000 United States troops, mostly airmen, withdrawn from here within one year, and ordered that American airlifts to Cambodia from bases in Thailand cease carrying ammunition and war supplies other than foods and medicines.

There are conflicting reports on whether the United States has honored that request and whether Thai officials will enforce it.

But the situation is all a far cry from the militant Thai foreign policy that not so long ago provided, among other things, air bases for B-52 bombings in Vietnam and so-called Thai "volunteers," Thai soldiers trained by the United States, paid by the United States and sent by the United States to fight against Communist forces in neighboring Laos.

"The Thais are definitely trying to break away from the extreme pro-American stance of past years," said one observer here. "You could see it coming in the last couple years, but it's gained momentum just recently."

Part of the reason is the continuing deterioration of the Phnom Penh Government's position, and the sudden decline of the military situation of Saigon.

Some see this as a historical continuation of Thailand's diplomatic tightrope act, which began many decades ago. Through adept kings and a keen ability to shift and compromise during the 19th century, Thailand alone in this area of the world did not become a colony of some European power.

Others here, however, see Thailand's new policies in stronger terms. "There is a very genuine feeling," said one diplomat, "that the United States has no further role to play in this part of the world—and that Asian solidarity is more important for the future."