PART TWO

Deepening Ties, 1945–1975
“Nang Yai” by Kamol Thatsanayachalee, a Thai artist based in Los Angeles, California.

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Peace Proclaimed

Following Japan's surrender on August 14, 1945, the king's regent issued a peace proclamation stating that Thailand's 1942 declaration of war on Britain and the United States was null and void because it was unconstitutional and contrary to the will of the Thai people. On August 21, U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes accepted Thailand's peace proclamation, which stated:

The American government has always believed that the declaration did not represent the will of the Thai people. Accordingly, we disregarded that declaration and have continued to recognize the Thai minister in Washington as the minister of Thailand, although, of course, we did not recognize the Thailand government in Bangkok as it was under Japanese control ... During the past four years we have regarded Thailand not as an enemy, but as a country to be liberated from the enemy. With that liberation now accomplished we look to the resumption by Thailand of its former place in the community of nations as a free, sovereign, and independent country.

Ernest Beverin, the British foreign secretary, expressed a different sentiment:

Our attitude will depend on the way the Siamese meet the requirements of our troops now about to enter their country; the extent to which they undo the wrongs of their predecessors and make restitution for injury, loss and damage caused to the British and Allied interest; and the extent of their contribution to the restoration of peace, good order and economic rehabilitation.

Britain proposed a twenty-one-clause agreement with Thailand that, if implemented, would have meant British control of
important aspects of Thailand’s political, economic, and military affairs. The United States objected to the British draft agreement and protested that, since the draft proposals had been offered in the name of the Allies, they should have had American concurrence. The United States advised Thailand to postpone signing, and wait for further negotiations. Finally, on January 1, 1946, Prime Minister M.R. Seni Pramoj signed the Formal Agreement for the Termination of the State of War between Siam and Great Britain and India. While this treaty caused some burdens to Thailand—including the payment of reparations of one-and-a-half million tons of rice worth about 2,500 million baht—terms were clearly better than those first offered by Britain and opposed by the United States.

Membership in the United Nations was another important step in Thailand’s emergence as a nation committed to the Free World. Here, too, Thailand received U.S. support and advice in negotiations with France and Russia, the two Security Council members who initially opposed Thai participation in the United Nations. As a result of these negotiations, the General Assembly accepted Thailand as a new member of the United Nations on December 15, 1946.

**RELATIONS AFTER WORLD WAR II**

The United States ended World War II as a world power. Inexperienced in Southeast Asian affairs, U.S. policymakers faced a conflict between their sympathy for nationalist movements in Asia and their desire for a united front with Western colonialist nations such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands. Some Americans feared that immediate independence for Europe’s Asian colonies might create a power vacuum that Communists could exploit.

In dealing with Thailand, the lone independent state in the region before the war, the United States faced no risk of a serious break with its European allies. In Washington’s view, Thailand had declared war on the Western powers only because of Japanese coercion, and therefore deserved U.S. assistance. With this in mind, President Harry S. Truman emphasized U.S. support for Thailand in briefing Edwin F. Stanton for his assignment as head of the Bangkok legation in 1946.

U.S. support weakened in late 1947, following a military coup that resulted in the reemergence of Field Marshal Pibulsonggram as prime minister. As a champion of democratic rule, the United States was unhappy to see the postwar civilian government overthrown. Pibul’s wartime collaboration with the Japanese, and the exile of Free Thai movement leader Pridi Panomyong, made Pibul’s
return to power particularly unpalatable to Americans. Nevertheless, difficult economic conditions, corruption, and the mysterious shooting death of King Ananda Mahidol caused many Thais to welcome the change in government. After some delay, the United States extended recognition, realizing that with Communist strength waxing in China, insurgencies flaring in the neighboring colonial states, and a Cold War descending on Europe, Pibul’s regime at least offered some hope of stability.

**The Development of Closer Ties**

Mutual concern about the rise of communism in China played a key role in drawing the United States and the new Thai government closer together. Pibul, worried about the presence of a large Chinese community in Thailand, moved to restrict further immigration. He turned to the West for aid and protection, telling *New York Times* reporter C.L. Sulzberger in May 1950 that he intended to seek an alliance with the Western powers. If attacked, he added, “We will fight to the best of our ability, even if China is behind the aggressors. Our people cannot accept a Communist regime or foreign domination willingly. Under existing conditions the only threat to us would come from the Communists.”

In Washington, the U.S. Department of State was attempting to develop a new Asian policy. While determined to contain a China believed to be under Soviet control, the United States remained cautious about making any commitment to defend countries on the Asian mainland. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in a speech on January 12, 1950, drew an American defense perimeter encompassing Japan, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Philippines. Of Asian states outside of that line, he said, “It must be clear that no person can guarantee these areas against military attack, a matter..."
From top to bottom: These pre-university students were the first to be granted Fulbright scholarships to study at Bangkok Christian College and Wattana Wittaya Academy in 1952; Orville Freeman, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, visited the Irrigation Department; Orville Freeman visited Thailand in 1961 and met with Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the Prime Minister, and Dr. Thanat Khoman, the Foreign Minister; Amb. Edwin F. Stanton (left) and Conrad Parkman, first Fulbright executive director, host a farewell party for the first Thai Fulbright grantees in 1951.
hardly sensible or necessary within the realm of a practical relationship.” If attacked, it was implied, nations like Thailand would have to respond on their own, seeking backing from the United Nations.

As Acheson spoke, Ambassador-at-Large Philip C. Jessup was on a fact-finding mission in Asia. In February, he met in Bangkok with Ambassador Stanton (the American legation was upgraded to an embassy in March 1947) and other American diplomats assigned to the region. After lengthy discussion, the officials recommended that the United States provide technical and economic assistance to help Asian nations develop, and military aid to enable them to maintain their security against Communist attack or subversion.

In keeping with the first recommendation, a special mission came to study Thailand’s economic needs in April. The mission gave priority to development of agriculture, public health, communications, technical training, and education. On July 1, 1950, the United States and Thailand signed an educational exchange agreement; a technical aid pact followed in September.

The provision of military aid assumed new urgency with the sudden outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. North Korea’s invasion of South Korea shocked many and increased support for Prime Minister Pibulsonggram’s policy of alignment with the West. The Thai leader, who had earlier followed the U.S. lead in recognizing the French-installed Bao Dai government in Vietnam, responded in July by announcing the dispatch of 20,000 tons of rice and 4,000 soldiers to support the United Nations’ war effort in South Korea. The following month, an American military mission arrived in Bangkok to assess Thailand’s defense needs; in October, the United States signed an agreement to provide equipment and training for the Thai army. This assistance amounted to $4.5 million in 1951, $12 million in 1952, and $56 million in 1953.

Under the technical assistance agreement, Thai agriculture received special attention. A key program, headed from 1950 to 1957 by Cornell University agriculturist H.H. Love, led to the creation of a special rice department and training programs in rice breeding. Six best-quality strains were selected after some 200,000 samples from all over the country had been tested. These strains produced 10 percent to 80 percent higher yields; by 1960 they had received sufficient distribution to boost nationwide production by six percent. The production increase reached 15 percent by 1965, when the improved varieties had spread to 30 percent of all fields.
Another successful U.S. aid project introduced new types of fishing nets leading to greatly increased catch. Other agricultural programs sought to provide credit, improve marketing, and encourage soil conservation. In the public health field, American aid backed a malaria eradication campaign, which cut in half the malaria death rate from 1950 to 1954. Another project focused on the improvement of health care services. By 1955, the number of provincial hospitals had increased from twenty to seventy-one, one for each province.

The United States also assisted in the rebuilding of Thailand’s war-damaged railroad system, contributing to the planning and building of three repair shops, providing $1 million worth of materials and parts, and sending more than a hundred Thai railway employees for training in the United States. Between 1955 and 1957, American aid helped in the reconstruction of a rail line from Udorn to Nong Khai. Improvement of Bangkok’s port facility also received American assistance. The United States donated a used dredging vessel, the Manhattan, for use in deepening the Chao Phraya River channel, and sent former New York Port Director Frederick C. Reinecke as an advisor.

A number of U.S.-funded programs focused on developing Thai education. An eight-year contract relationship between Indiana University and Prasarnmitr College of Education, funded by the USAID, led to major advances in Thai teacher education. Under this relationship, thirty Indiana staffers came to Thailand as advisors while 150 Thais went to the United States for advanced studies.

Prasarnmitr’s enrollment ballooned from 130 students in 1954 to 2,500 in 1962. Vocational education in Thailand gained impetus
from a 1956–1960 contract relationship between Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and Bangkok Technical Institute. The University of Hawaii assisted in developing vocational training at the high school level.

Grants from the Fulbright Foundation also encouraged Thai-American educational exchanges. The number of Thais studying in the States started a steady upward climb from hundreds per year in the 1950s to the current level of more than 10,000 per year. Before embarking for U.S. universities, many students polished their English skills at the American University Alumni Language Center and Library, the Bangkok center established by the American government in 1952 in cooperation with the private, bi-national American University Alumni Association (AUAA).

American non-military aid to Thailand increased from less than $10 million per year prior to 1953 to approximately $25 million per year during the second half of the decade. In a 1952 message to Congress, President Truman explained that the objective of U.S. assistance to Thailand was to support a friendly government which has unreservedly committed itself to the cause of the Free World in maintaining stability in this country situated not far from China’s Red Army, and bordering on unsettled areas in Indochina and Burma. It is one of the world’s great rice producers and exporters, on whose supply many countries of the free world depend, and it is also a source of critical materials.
THE EMERGENCE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA TREATY ORGANIZATION

In 1950, the United States began assuming a large share of the financial support for the French war effort against Ho Chi Minh’s insurgents in Vietnam. The Dwight D. Eisenhower administration, which came to office in 1953, committed to holding firm against Communism in Asia, joined the Thai government in expressing dismay over French moves toward a negotiated settlement in 1954. President Eisenhower likened the countries of Southeast Asia to a row of dominoes, warning that if one fell, the others would surely fall in turn.

When Ho Chi Minh gained control of the northern portion of Vietnam at the Geneva Conference, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles attempted to rally non-communist states in the area into a defensive alliance. Mindful of the fate of South Korea, a country that his predecessor had left outside the American defense perimeter, Dulles hoped to discourage further Communist attacks by drawing clear lines of allegiance. Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, Italy, France, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States subsequently signed the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty in Manila in September 1954.

At the Manila conference, Thailand pushed hard for a strong treaty. Thai Foreign Minister Prince Wan Waithayakorn, whose Thai title is Krommun Naradhip Bongsprabandh, urged his fellow delegates to set up an organization similar to the North Atlantic...
Treaty Organization, in which members would consider an attack against one as an attack against all. Other nations were unwilling to go that far. This group included the United States, where congressional approval for such an open-ended pledge seemed unlikely. In the end, the participants agreed that in case of attack they would first consult, and then respond in accordance with their national constitutional process.

A particular concern of Thailand was the fate of the three non-communist states of Indochina—Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam—which Bangkok saw as vital buffer zones. The Manila Treaty extended an umbrella of protection over them, allowing for joint intervention if the pact signatories unanimously agreed to act and the threatened state requested assistance.

From this Manila Pact emerged the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), headquartered in Bangkok, with Thai diplomat Pote Sarasin as its first secretary general. In addition to organizing joint military exercises, SEATO also promoted cultural and educational exchange, and established a graduate school of engineering, which evolved into the Asian Institute of Technology.

A CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP
Well-established as a friend and ally of the United States, Prime Minister Pibulsonggram received a warm welcome when he visited America in May 1955. President Eisenhower conferred the Legion of Merit on him in a Washington ceremony, citing Pibul’s effort in supporting the United Nations in Korea and in strengthening Thai defensive forces. At home, however, Pibul’s policy of alignment with the West was coming under increasing criticism. In light of the brief thaw in the Cold War produced by the Geneva Conference, Chinese Foreign Minister Chou En-lai’s conciliatory posture at the Bandung Non-Aligned Conference, and the opening of contacts between American and Chinese officials in Europe, a number of Thais came to the conclusion that a neutralist policy might be more advantageous.

Many observers expected a shift in Thai foreign policy when Army Commander Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat seized power on September 17, 1957. Prime Minister Pibul fled the country and General Phao Sriyanond, the powerful head of the national police force, went into exile. Sarit had criticized the United States while jockeying for position with his two rivals, but once at the helm he made it plain that no change would occur. In early November he told journalist C. L. Sulzberger that he had no intention of letting a neutralist become prime minister, and he denied reports that he had had contact with Peking.
Relations with the United States remained close and the flow of aid continued, particularly in the form of funds for highway and airport construction. A large highway project was begun in 1954 with $13.6 million in U.S. aid. At the time, a dangerous and sometimes impassable 400-kilometer road linked Bangkok with Korat and the rest of Northeast Thailand. Formally completed on July 10, 1958, the “Friendship Highway” shortened the drive from Bangkok to Korat by about 150 kilometers and helped improve communications with the Northeast.

During construction of the American-designed road, some 1,500 Thai workers learned equipment operation, maintenance and repair, welding procedure, and quarry operations. Many Thai highway department personnel and provincial officials received USAID training in modern road and bridge design and construction techniques. Equipment used in the project became the property of the highway department after construction was completed.

The United States assisted in airport development in 1954, as well. Fields at Korat, Thakli, Phitsanuloke, Udorn, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Don Muang received new communications equipment, lighting, and navigational aids. Here, too, USAID trained Thai workers in the operation and maintenance of the new equipment.

Approximately half of American technical aid between 1954 and 1960 was allocated for transportation projects. While the emphasis on building transportation facilities reflected security...
concerns, particularly in the Northeast, the new roads and airports also stimulated economic development, a high priority for the Sarit government.

During this period, the Thai government established the National Economic Development Board, the Board of Investment, tax incentives to encourage foreign investment, and a program for the development of the depressed and strategically vulnerable Northeast. American aid contributed to Thailand's capacity to undertake such planned development on a large scale. In 1956, Public Services of Chicago began advising Thai government financial departments on the establishment of modern budgeting, accounting, fiscal reporting, and auditing systems. An interim system of unified accounting went into operation in 1957, and two years later a new central accounting system was implemented.

A 1955 program helped create the Institute of Public Administration in cooperation with Thammasat and Indiana Universities. This graduate education project, funded by about $2 million of U.S. assistance over a nine-year period, sent forty-one Thais to the United States for training and brought forty staff members from Indiana University to teach in Bangkok. The IPA later evolved into the National Institute of Development Administration, a graduate school under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of University Affairs.

As part of an effort toward decentralization, the Thai government opened two universities at Khan Kaen and Chiang Mai. The United States provided $5.85 million in funds over a seven-year period to develop the medical faculty at Chiang Mai University. Beginning in 1962, the University of Illinois furnished training assistance to that university and arranged for Thai instructors to go to the United States.

In 1960, Their Majesties King Bhumipol and Queen Sirikit embarked on a goodwill tour of the United States. Highlighted by the king's address to Congress hailing Thai-American relations, the trip was a homecoming of sorts for the American-born king. The royal couple received a warm welcome throughout the United States, highlighted by a ticker tape parade in New York City that drew 750,000 observers. (The text of His Majesty's address to Congress is in appendix 6.)
When John F. Kennedy assumed the American presidency in 1961, he inherited a difficult and deteriorating situation in Laos. Although the Eisenhower Administration had sent large quantities of military aid to build up the Royal Laotian Army and to support the nation's non-Communist political factions, the Lao army showed little capacity to stand up to the Communist forces. Thailand's interest in maintaining a noncommunist buffer in Laos figured strongly in the policymaking equation. Fearing that Communist participation in a coalition government would lead to Communist control, Thailand sought SEATO intervention on behalf of the anti-Communists. However, Britain and France's support of a neutralist government immobilized SEATO and left the Sarit government convinced that American military intervention was the only real alternative to a Communist takeover.

The Kennedy Administration, skeptical about the prospects of any intervention, decided to seek the neutralization of Laos through an international conference. The United States nevertheless found it necessary to threaten military intervention in order to bring the Communist forces to accept a cease-fire. As a symbol of American determination, President Kennedy dispatched a 500-Marine detachment to Udorn in March 1961 and put other Pacific region Marines on alert. A tense four weeks later, the Laotian factions began talks in Geneva.

In an effort to assure Asian leaders that the decision to compromise in Laos did not signal an abandonment of American commitments to allied nations, President Kennedy sent Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson on a tour of the region. In a joint statement that made no direct reference to Laos, the vice president and Marshal Sarit noted that "the United States Government expressed its determination to honor its treaty commitment to support Thailand—its ally and historic friend—in defense against subversion and Communist aggression."

The Laotian conference at Geneva quickly bogged down and, despite the vice president's pledge, Thai spokesmen began to express concern. Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman complained in a July 19 speech that Communist efforts to expand their influence in Southeast Asia were being "greatly facilitated by the apparent lack of interest felt by the West and its unwillingness to assume direct responsibility." He argued that Thailand should rely less on
outside powers and look to its own resources and cooperation with Asian neighbors.

If the Thai government was to continue to cast its lot with the United States, it wanted a stronger assurance of bilateral support. This came in early 1962, after further disagreements between Bangkok and Washington over the American strategy of pushing for a coalition government in Laos. Shortly after a visit to Bangkok by Attorney General Robert Kennedy, the U.S. Department of State invited Foreign Minister Thanat to Washington for a series of discussions with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and President Kennedy. Thanat and Rusk issued a joint statement on March 6, declaring, “The United States regards the preservation and integrity of Thailand as vital to the national interests of the United States and to world peace.” It interpreted the American Manila Pact commitment to meet aggression against Thailand “in accordance with its constitutional processes” as “an individual as well as a collective.” (The joint statement is found in appendix 7.)

Elated by this stronger American support, Marshal Sarit expressed hope in a national radio address that the statement would “stand as a symbol of the close and cordial relations which have long existed between the two countries and further serve to promote better understanding and cooperation between the peoples and governments of Thailand and the United States.” He added, “You will agree with me that it is not so easy to find such a sincere friend who is as concerned about our own well-being as the United States.”

The Rusk-Thanat statement, as well as the arguments of Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Averell Harriman during a March visit to Bangkok, gained Thai backing for the neutralization of Laos. However, the Laotian factions did not agree on a coalition government until after another crisis prompted the United States to move more than five thousand soldiers, airmen, and Marines into Thailand between May and July of 1962.
JOINT INVOLVEMENT IN INDOCHINA

The death of Marshal Sarit in December 1963 and the rise of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn to the position of prime minister brought no change in Thai foreign policy. Bangkok’s doubts about American seriousness in defending Southeast Asia subsided in the mid-1960s, as the United States stepped up its effort to preserve the government of South Vietnam. At the request of the United States, the Thai government opened several of its air bases to American planes and service personnel. The first jets arrived in 1964, and by year’s end, seventy-five U.S. Air Force planes and 6,300 U.S. troops were based on Thai soil. Air strikes against North Vietnam from Thai bases began after a Communist attack on the American barracks in Pleiku, South Vietnam, in February 1965. As the air war intensified, so did the American presence in Thailand, increasing to 600 planes and 45,000 soldiers by 1968.

The oral agreement allowing American use of Thai bases was struck in negotiations between Prime Minister Thanom and American officials. The Thai government retained ultimate control over the facilities, while American Ambassador Graham Martin held authority over U.S. military operations from the bases. Ambassador Martin first publicly acknowledged the existence of the bases in January 1967.

The Vietnam War escalated on the ground as well as in the air, and Thailand responded by sending some 12,000 troops to the war area. The United States contributed about $200 million to support these soldiers, and increase military assistance to Thailand to the unprecedented level.

U.S. Marines from the Seventh Fleet disembark in Klong Toey Port for a joint operations exercise in May 1962.

Thai soldiers fought with U.S. and South Vietnamese troops during the Vietnam War.
of $75 million in 1968. Between 1965 and 1969 the American government also invested some $370 million to upgrade Thai military bases for temporary use by U.S. forces.

Meanwhile, non-military aid jumped to $60 million in 1966. By 1968, the administrative agency for such aid, the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM), had grown to record size, with 511 Americans and 634 Thai employees. (The name USOM was changed to USAID in 1977.) According to a Senate estimate, the American government’s total investment in Thailand totaled $2.2 billion between 1949 and 1969.

A key aspect of American aid in the 1960s was a concentrated effort to help the Thai government combat a Communist insurgency that emerged during the decade. The program emphasized measures to strengthen public security forces and funds for the Thai government’s Accelerated Rural Development Program. Some 55 percent of American technical aid between 1967 and 1972 was allocated to these two purposes, with $59.2 million going to public safety and $58.8 million to community and social development. Other major allocations included $22.4 million for health, $17.9 million for agriculture, and $13.5 million for education.

Specific rural development projects involved efforts to improve water supplies, village communications, livestock production, and health care facilities. Rural cooperative programs received backing, as did campaigns to conserve the soil and to eliminate protein deficiencies in rural diets. A related effort to enhance government services in the countryside led to U.S. funding of a training program for officials of the Interior Ministry.

The 1960s also marked the beginning of a Thai-American cooperative campaign to stem the illicit flow of heroin from the Golden Triangle region to the United States and other Western nations. This continuing campaign has trained and equipped Thai drug suppression authorities, aided drug abuse prevention and treatment programs in Thailand, and supported crop substitution efforts sponsored by His Majesty King Bhumipol.
**Education Involvement**

Throughout the 1960s, the Thai-American relationship flourished through new exchanges concerned primarily with education, training, and joint research. The Peace Corps, American Field Service, the Mitraparb Education Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and many other U.S. organizations first began work in Thailand in the 1960s. (More on these organizations and their ongoing work in Thailand is found in part 3.)

A special link between the capital cities of Thailand and the United States emerged in 1962 with the establishment of a sister-city relationship. The Smithsonian Institution featured a display of Thai art during a December 1962 celebration in Washington, and Bangkok reciprocated with a three-day salute to Washington in July 1963. Bangkok authorities presented a large bronze temple bell for display in the American capital.

For several decades, the small northern village of Ban Chiang in Nong Harn District, has been known as one of the most outstanding archaeological sites in the world, with discoveries there altering our understanding of the history of Asian civilization. The discovery of Ban Chiang’s treasures, as well as the development of prehistoric studies in Thailand, owes much to the contributions of American specialists and research institutions.

Among the first of these was Professor Wilhelm G. Solheim of the University of Hawaii, who came in 1963 with two young graduate students, Chester Gorman and Don Bayard. In cooperation with the Thai Fine Arts Department, they explored potential archaeological sites for possible excavations. Work carried out on a burial ground at Nong Nok Tha in Khon Kaen province in 1965–66 revealed a knowledge of smelting bronze approximately one thousand years before China reached a similar stage of civilization and more than a hundred years before the Harappa culture in India began producing bronze. The pioneering archaeological work undertaken at this and other Northeastern sites revealed a culture far more sophisticated in important respects, such as metallurgy and pottery, than other contemporaneous Asian civilizations.

In July 1966, Stephen Young, son of a former U.S. ambassador to Thailand, visited Ban Chiang. While walking in the village, Young noticed many broken pieces of painted pottery which had been uncovered by a road construction project. He brought some of the pottery shards back to Bangkok, where they attracted the attention of Elizabeth Lyons, an American advisor to the Fine Arts Department.

The real interest in Ban Chiang began in 1967, when shards sent to the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia
were tentatively dated to be six thousand years old.\(^5\) This led in 1973 to a major excavation by the Fine Arts Department in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania Museum, the largest excavation ever made on a prehistoric site in Southeast Asia. Silpakorn and Kasetsart Universities in Thailand, and the University of Hawaii, the University of Washington at Seattle, and the Ford Foundation also participated in the project under the joint Thai-American leadership of Fine Arts Department archaeologist Pisit Charoenwongsa and the late Chester Gorman.

**A Growing American Community**

The postwar years saw a steady increase of the American community in Thailand. The implementation of technical and military aid agreements in particular caused the number of U.S. government employees resident in Thailand to mushroom from twenty in 1946 to nearly two hundred (including family members) in 1952. Among the nongovernmental Americans were some returnees from the prewar missionary community. These included Reverend and Mrs. Paul Eakin and Dr. and Mrs. Edwin Cort, both names long associated with missionary endeavors in the kingdom. Returning in 1946, the Eakins set about reopening two Bangkok missionary schools—Wattana Wittaya Academy and Bangkok Christian College—while the Corts, who brought along seventy cases of much-needed medicine, traveled to Chiang Mai to supervise the operations of the McCormick Hospital.

\(^5\) This dating was later adjusted to four thousand years.
Other Americans, many of them ex-servicemen, saw business opportunities in Thailand. Two of the most famous, Jim Thompson and Alexander McDonald, had served in the OSS. Wartime plans had called for them to parachute into Thailand and link up with the Free Thai underground, but the war ended abruptly and they arrived in Bangkok by more conventional means. Thompson found his calling as marketer of hand-woven Thai silk under a flourishing company that still bears his name. Thompson also gained fame as a collector of Thai art and as a magnanimous host to world travelers before his mysterious disappearance during a 1967 trip to Malaysia. McDonald founded the *Bangkok Post* in 1946.

By 1955, about 120 American women in Bangkok joined together to form what soon became known as the American Women’s Club (AWC). Mrs. John E. Peurifoy, wife of the American ambassador, and American attorney Freda Lyman initiated the group as a center for social and philanthropic activities. During the late 1960s, membership swelled to 1,500 in Bangkok and Udorn Thani, declining after the Vietnam War years to around 400. In addition to contributing to Thai charities, the AWC publishes *Sawaddi*, a quarterly magazine featuring articles related to Thailand and Asia.

A largely American group, the Amateur Community Theatre, was the first international drama society formed in Bangkok in 1959. It later combined with others to form the Bangkok Community Theatre.

The growing American business community claimed approximately sixty representatives by 1956, enough to establish an American Chamber of Commerce. The chamber’s founding members included lawyer Albert Lyman, whose wife had helped form the forerunner of the American Women’s Club the previous year.

**Royal Visits to the United States**

Thirty-three years after his birth in Boston, King Bhumipol made the first of his two return visits to the United States. Accompanied by the queen and their four children, the king departed Thailand on June 14, 1960, for New York; Washington, D.C.; Massachusetts, Tennessee, Colorado, California, and Hawaii. In Washington, the king laid a wreath at Arlington Cemetery and addressed the U.S. Congress on the “mutual goodwill and close cooperation between our two countries.” New York newspapers headlined the city’s ticker tape parade welcome for the royal family and reported on an hour-and-a-half private jam session between the King of Thailand and the “King of Swing,” Benny Goodman.

Boston proved a sentimental journey for His Majesty. While there, he met with the doctor and nurses who had presided at his
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birth in 1927, and visited the Cambridge apartment that was his first home.

The king and queen again visited the United States in 1967. During this trip, His Majesty dedicated a Thai pavilion on the campus of the East–West Center in Honolulu, received an honorary doctorate in law at Williams College in Massachusetts, and paid an official call on President and Mrs. Johnson in Washington, D.C.

**OFFICIAL VISITS**

In keeping with the close friendship between the two nations and their joint effort to prevent the spread of communism in Indochina, many key American officials traveled to Bangkok in the 1960s. Lyndon Johnson had made his first visit to Thailand in 1962 as vice president. In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson became the first American chief executive to visit Thailand while in office.

President and Claudia “Lady Bird” Johnson landed at Utapao airbase, where they were welcomed by Prime Minister Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn. After a night at the official guesthouse in Laem Tan, the presidential party proceeded to Bangkok. The King and Queen greeted the presidential party on October 28 at the Royal Palace and hosted a banquet that night at the Chakri Throne Hall.

In his dinner toast at the Chakri Throne Hall, the president noted that his host country could claim a much longer history of freedom and independence than the United States. He then answered critics who accused the United States of imperialism in its relationship with Thailand:

> Considering your own history, I think it is understandable why the people of Thailand should be puzzled by those who suggest that you are being “used” or “dominated” by Americans, or, for that matter anyone else. The truth is that Thailand and the United States are going down the same road together. But we met on the road which leads, ultimately, to peace and independence for all nations. We of America are proud to march beside you, beside you who began that journey long before we did… We know the risks; you and we both run to meet the common dangers. But we act from a conviction of common interest.

The following evening the Johnsons responded with a state dinner at Borompimarn Hall, their resi-
pence while in Bangkok. In his address to Their Majesties, President Johnson drew on Thai-American history. Referring to King Mongkut’s offer to send elephants to President Buchanan, Johnson related that he had

read recently a report which said that the first offer of assistance between Thailand and the United States was in 1950. Well, whoever wrote that report did not know history that well. In fact, the first offer of assistance was made in 1861. It was made by your great King Mongkut to our great president ... [King Mongkut] would provide the elephants, and the United States could provide the transportation.

On the same day, Chulalongkorn University conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Political Science on the President. He used the occasion to note his sponsorship of a bill on international education which had just been passed by the U.S. Congress and which would benefit educational exchanges between America and other countries.

The same year saw the conclusion of a new “Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations” between the two countries, updating a 1937 pact. (See appendix 8 for an excerpt.)
Ambassador Graham Martin and Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman signed the document on May 29, the 110th anniversary of the Townsend Harris Treaty of 1856.

During the 1967 visit of King Bhumipol and Queen Sirikit to Washington, President Johnson took the opportunity to reiterate the closeness of the Thai-American relationship. In welcoming the King and Queen at the White House on June 27, 1967, the president noted:

That our heads of state have met often in recent years, I think is a symbol of the changing times and the changing relationships. Until very recently the United States and Thailand were thought of as the most distant of lands. They were widely separated by both geography and interests. Today we look at it from an entirely different viewpoint ... We are neighbors who share the problems and opportunities of a great, common Pacific frontier.

Live satellite television coverage of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn’s May 1968 visit to Washington underscored both the new technological capacity to shrink distances and the international friendship to which President Johnson alluded. During the Thai leader’s stay in America, the president assured him that “America keeps its commitments” and praised the decision to allow American forces to operate from Thai territory.
Above: King Bhumipol jammed with jazz great Benny Goodman during an evening party at the Rockefeller estate on July 4 and an afternoon session in Goodman’s New York apartment on July 5, 1960.

Left: The king plays a borrowed clarinet in Honolulu with Kenny Alford and his Dixiecats on June 15, 1960 (Courtesy Honolulu Star Bulletin).

Below left: Newspapers throughout the United States cover Their Majesties’ visit in 1960.

Below: New York City greets the king and queen of Thailand with a ticker-tape parade on July 5, 1960. More than 750,000 New Yorkers turned out to extend this warm welcome.
Left: King Bhumipol visited Harvard Medical School where his father studied.

Below: King Bhumipol dedicated a photo of Prince Mahidol to Harvard University.

Above: The king talking with Dr. Stewart Whittemore (far left) and nurses who assisted his birth at Mt. Auburn hospital.

Right: King Bhumipol visits the room in which he was born.
Williams College awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Law to King Bhumipol in June, 1967.

Their Majesties meet singer and movie star Elvis Presley on the set of "G.I. Blues" in Hollywood during their visit in June 1960.

During their second visit to the United States in 1967, King Bhumipol and Queen Sirikit are greeted by President and Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson before proceeding to the reviewing platform at the White House.
Counter clockwise from top: King Bhumipol and Queen Sirikit at a dinner hosted by Save the Children Fund.

King Bhumipol received the Legion of Honor, the highest U.S. award given to non-Americans, from President Eisenhower during a White House dinner honoring Their Majesties on June 28, 1960.

King Bhumipol views part of the collection of the U.S. Library of Congress with library officers on June 29, 1960.

Queen Sirikit and Princess Chulabhorn meet Mstislav Rostropovich, music director of the National Symphony Orchestra, at Washington’s Kennedy Center on November 6, 1981.
Clockwise from left: Lady Bird Johnson accepts a fresh jasmine garland from a performer after a Thai classical performance at the National Theatre.

President Johnson signs into law an American bill on international education, the first time legislation was ever signed outside the United States.

Lady Bird Johnson visits the famed floating market in Thonburi during the 1966 presidential visit to Thailand.
President Johnson receives an Honorary Doctorate in Political Science from Chulalongkorn University.

Their Majesties hosted a state dinner for President and Mrs. Johnson at the Chakri Throne Hall on October 28, 1966.
The 1960s ushered in a decade of rapid growth for the Thai economy, thanks to the economic development program of the Sarit regime, the inflow of American aid and military expenditures, and a healthy world economy. In the agricultural sector, rice production increased from 7.8 million metric tons in 1960 to 13.6 million in 1970. On the industrial side, exports of manufactured goods jumped from a value of 119 million baht in 1960 to 2.3 billion baht ten years later. The gross domestic product grew at an average rate of 7.6 percent per year during the first economic plan (1961–1966), and increased by an average of seven percent per annum during the second plan (1967–1971).

American investment increased greatly during the 1960s as well. During a five-year period, membership in the American Chamber of Commerce grew by over fifty members. Board of Investment figures for the years 1960–1973 indicated that American investment capital amounted to 467 million baht, or 5 percent of the national total. American capital accounted for 23 percent of the total in agricultural and fishing products, 19.5 percent in petroleum and petrochemicals, 17.7 percent in electrical appliances and accessories, and 13.6 percent in rubber and plastic products.

The presence of American military bases, and the arrival of thousands of servicemen from Vietnam on rest and recreation leave, stimulated the development of service and tourism industries in Thailand. The bases provided direct employment for thousands of Thais, while hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs multiplied to provide accommodations and entertainment for the visiting Americans.

ECONOMIC EXPANSION

Above: His Majesty King Bhumipol with President Richard M. Nixon during his state visit in 1969.

Below: Thai Ambassador Bunchana Atthakor and U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk sign a Protocol of Exchange of Instruments of Ratification of the Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations at the Department of State in Washington on May 8, 1966. Seated from left are P.M. Thanom Kittikachorn and Foreign Affairs Minister Thanat Khoman. (Courtesy of Associate Professor Taksina Savananada.)
A Time of Readjustment

The rise of the anti-war movement in the United States and President Johnson's decision not to seek reelection in 1968 signaled that changes were ahead in American foreign policy. Although President Richard M. Nixon came to Bangkok in 1969 to reaffirm the American commitment to Thailand, only a few hours earlier in Guam he had announced a policy of limited involvement that came to be known as the Nixon Doctrine. Under this policy, the United States would send military and economic assistance in future Asian wars, but would expect the nation involved to supply the troops.

President Nixon's 1971 surprise announcement that he would travel to China the following year was a shock to America's Asian allies, including Thailand. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger had stopped for talks in Bangkok during the Asian journey on which he secretly slipped into Peking to arrange the presidential trip.

With the United States withdrawing its troops from Indochina and moving toward the normalization of relations with Peking, Thailand began reexamining its foreign policy options. After the Paris Peace Accords took affect in January 1973, formally ending the Vietnam War, many Thais called for the removal of American forces from Thailand. Former Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman explained:

We accepted foreign forces as a partner in a military alliance, namely SEATO, and we sent troops to Vietnam because we thought it would be beneficial to Thailand, for if Vietnam were to be taken over by hostile forces, they would threaten the well-being of Thailand, too. But since the war in Vietnam has come to an end, at least officially, there are no further reasons for a foreign power to shift its forces from another country to Thailand, and to use our territory for war purposes because that would involve Thailand in a war without its consent, without a decision by the Thai people to become involved, and to become a belligerent. This is the point ... That is why we have objections now. This is not anti-Americanism at all.
The foreign policy reappraisal gained new impetus after a political upheaval in October 1973 swept out the Thanom regime. Shortages of rice and sugar and charges of corruption were among the factors that led to public dissatisfaction and to a student uprising that ushered in a three-year period of civilian rule. These events also led to the first significant wave of anti-American feeling in Thailand.

Opponents of the Thanom regime condemned the United States for its close relations with Thailand’s former leaders and its alleged influence over them. Critics also argued that the American bombing of Indochina from Thai bases had irreparably compromised Thailand’s chances of establishing good relations with its neighbors. Others blamed the American presence in Thailand for rapid social changes that had undermined traditions and moral principles. As the Paris Accords unraveled and the Communists prepared to take over in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, some felt the United States had failed to live up to its commitments and had left Thailand dangerously exposed.

Disillusionment stemming from the Vietnam War was by no means confined to the Thai side, however. In America, opponents of the war lamented the effort while proponents lamented the failure. The loss of lives, dollars, unity, and prestige fired a public desire to withdraw from Southeast Asia and to erase the memory of the tragic losses.

The American attempt to rescue the crewmen of the merchant ship Mayaguez from the Khmer Rouge in May 1975 brought Thai-American relations to a low point, as U.S. Marines and planes used Thai bases without prior consent from the appropriate civilian authorities. Prime Minister M.R. Kukrit Pramoj recalled the Thai ambassador from Washington in protest, and restated a previous request that all American forces leave by 1976. The withdrawal took place, leaving the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group with 203 Americans behind as the principal American military component in Thailand in 1975.