



## Research Article

# THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM – THAILAND DIPLOMATIC RELATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE VIETNAM WAR (1965-1973)

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## ABSTRACT

*This research article shed light on the Republic of Vietnam (the RVN) – Thailand diplomatic relation over the course of the Vietnam War (1965-1973). The author employed historical approach, along with qualitative methods, and stated that the RVN and Thailand put emphasis on the mutual concern about the insurgencies of Communists and closely linked with the US to deter Communism in Southeast Asia. Also, the RVN attempted to approach overseas Vietnamese Thai, performing its duty toward the heart and minds of those groups. Despite the severe war, the RVN initially forged economic links and public diplomacy with Thailand to promote international economic relations in the region.*

**Keywords:** Southeast Asia; The Republic of Vietnam; Thailand; the Cold War; Vietnam War

## 1. Introduction

After World War II, the world sphere was under the influence of a new Cold War, which was considered the US-Soviet Union conflict. In Southeast Asia, national liberation movements occurred to demolish the Japanese-oriented puppet government and claim their national independence. As soon as liberated from the Japanese fascist, Southeast Asia became a new battlefield of recolonization and a new Cold War. In Vietnam, the debacle of the French after the Dien Bien Phu victory of communists marked a terminal stage of the old colony in 1954. However, the significant influence of the US in Southeast Asia to deter the spread of Communism contributed to maintaining the state of Vietnam and turned it into the Republic of Vietnam (the RVN), so-called “South Vietnam.” The RVN, under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem, was widely recognized by several governments in the world, mainly in anti-communism countries. In Southeast Asia, the United States, in collaboration with Southeast Asian countries, made a continued effort to establish a collective defense

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organization to hamper the expansion of Communism. Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) is a piece of typical evidence to prove that Southeast Asia became a new base for the US in Southeast Asia to oppose movements of communism in this region.

The RVN – Thailand tie was considerably influenced by the US, and on the other hand, it is the US involvement in Southeast Asia in a political objective to deter the expansion of Communism in Asia and help build non-communism countries in this region. As for Thailand, the establishment of the RVN – Thailand originated from the concern Thailand toward the expansion of Communism, and this viewpoint is concordant with the US policy in Southeast Asia. Arne Kislenko opined that most Thais wanted to fight communism beyond their borders before it consumed their country and therefore supported American military efforts in the region. In its advocacy of violence, revolution, and atheism, communism represented the antithesis of Thai cultural traditions. Communism threatened not only the country but also the Thai way of life (Kislenko, 2004, p.65). However, it is undeniable that the US also played a decisive role in the Thai economy to promote the export and import value of this country as well as assisted Thailand to construct economic and military well-being in Southeast Asia. Likewise, the global context of the Cold War and the triumph of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (the DRVN) after Dien Bien Phu raised the concern of the US in the notion of Domino theory and urged this country to rely on non-communism parties and forces in Vietnam to build a new country and reject the reunification of Vietnam. Economic aid, political and military advisors, and boots on the ground were implemented during the First Republic of Vietnam, and the direct intervention of the US in 1965 reveals that South Vietnam played a key role in protecting all countries of Southeast Asia from Communism. Accordingly, the financial support, as well as the intervention of the US in South Vietnam's battlefield, helped link this country to close allies of the US and build a stable economy for its development. It is indicated that both the RVN and Thailand were instrumental in collaboration with the US to create a non-communist Southeast Asia and the RVN-Thailand tie is an inevitable outcome of that situation.

Besides, the RVN-Thailand relation represents a clash of national interests in the context of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. The government of Thailand was very obdurate to share this national interest with the US, so it actively forged close relationships with other countries in SEATO, and the diplomatic relation between the RVN and Thailand is an archetype of a close ally to help the US protect Southeast Asia from communists. First, Thailand is always a non-communist country; the government of Thailand had to perform its duty to the Communists movement suppress. Also, the aid of the US played a decisive role in boosting Thailand's economy, and the position of Thailand in international relations could be improved as well as bolster the strategic presence of Thailand in the region despite a moderate change after the US troop withdrawal (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

1971). As for the RVN, this state, under the reign of Ngo Dinh Diem, refused to befriend communist-oriented countries while enthusiastically forging relations with Americanism countries as well as third-world countries. Thailand is one of the important country, which helped the RVN fulfill its objectives to oppose North Vietnam and elevate its role as a SEATO ally (Tran, 2015, p.22). The consistent foreign policy of the RVN is continually stated in the Second Republic of Vietnam. This state opined that the RVN intended to protect its sovereignty and bolster the relationship with its allies to hamper the attack of Communists. Not only its allies, but it would expand its diplomatic relations with other countries in South America, Africa, and other parts of Asia (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1968, p.1).

However, there is a modicum of scholarly attention to this relation. Otherwise, there are only some sporadic articles that scrutinize the US- Thailand relationship. Meanwhile, a revisit on diplomatic relations of the RVN is expected to fill a void in researching Vietnamese history and clear all political prejudices toward this state. As a result, this article intends to bridge the gap in the RVN – Thailand relationship throughout the Vietnam War. Thereby, this article attempts to draw from a considerable volume of recently declassified material from Former the RVN archives as well as from an array of secondary sources regarding the Vietnam War to examine the endeavor of the RVN's diplomacy to defend their country from the Communists' operations and bilateral cooperation between the RVN and Thailand for a mutual interest in the security of Southeast Asia. Also, the author viewed the RVN as a character in international relations to locate its role in the context of Cold War international relations in Southeast Asia.

## 2. Research methods

This paper relied on the principles of Realism in international relations. Realism suggests that all leaders, no matter what their political persuasion, recognize this as they attempt to manage their state's affairs to survive in a competitive environment (Antunes, & Camisao, 2018). Foreign policies can be considered an important factor that is instrumental in deciding to gain national interests in a complex context of international relations. In this case study, the RVN and Thailand are characters in the context of the Cold War and the US foreign policy in Southeast Asia. As a result, South Vietnam and Thai leaders benefited from the US involvement to conduct their specific strategies as well as set up closer relations together to oppose the expansion of Communism in Southeast Asia.

This research paper employs histological approach, which attempts to systematically recapture the people, events, and ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present (Lune, & Berg, 2017, p.307). The primary source collected at the archives of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, include:

PTTII- No.1812, *Hồ sơ về tình hình an ninh chính trị kinh tế và chính sách đối ngoại Thái*

*Lan (1969-1971)* [Profile about political and security situation and foreign policies of Thailand from 1969 to 1971];

- PTTII-No.1976, *Hồ sơ về tình hình bang giao Việt-Thái (1964-1973)*, [Profile about The RVN-Thailand from 1964 to 1973];

- PTTgII- No.20887, *Hồ sơ về tình hình chính trị và chính sách đối ngoại Thái Lan 1965- 1974* [Profile about political and security situation and foreign policies of Thailand from 1965 to 1974];

- PTTgII- No.20987, *Hồ sơ bang giao Việt-Thái 1969-1975* [Profile about the RVN-Thailand from 1969 to 1975];

- PTTgII- No.20527, *Hồ sơ bang giao Việt-Thái 1964-1969* [Profile about the RVN-Thailand from 1964 to 1969].

The author read and evaluated the authenticity and accuracy of source materials and systematized them to have a general vision of the RVN – Thailand diplomatic relations. Besides, quantitative methods are instrumental in tackling the research objectives. Particularly, the approach of secondary research helped the author collect a wide range of secondary documents and data. The textual analysis contributed to accentuating historical events, and the thematic approach to shape new terms and definitions played a significant role in this study.

### **3. Results and Discussions**

#### **3.1. The RVN – Thailand political-security cooperation**

The RVN – Thailand tie was strongly influenced by the US foreign policies in Southeast Asia. Globally, the establishment of several military allies shows that the US was determined to eliminate Communism in the world. This was a serious threat to the US and Thailand during the period of the Cold War. The strength of Communists in Southeast Asia made the US-Thailand ally move up the ladder, and Thailand was considered a key member of SEATO, which was instrumental in keeping regional security. As for Thailand, the Vietnam War can be seen a rewarding opportunity for Thailand to boost its economy because the US allocated a huge investment into Thailand to encourage this country to be involved in Vietnam. According to statistics, the amount of aid kept at a modest \$7 million for military aid in 1950 and significantly increased in the following years and gained to \$292 million annually in 1968 (Butwell, 1969, p.339). However, the foreign policies of Thailand witnessed a swift change as soon as Nixon held his presidency and intended to massively withdraw the US troop from the RVN. Nixon put stress on a future of low visibility military posture in Southeast Asia and made Thailand ponder upon a future after the end of the Vietnam War. However, Thailand was supposed to remain neutral attitude toward this situation. While supporting the US to maintain the Vietnam War in another way, Thailand concurrently started profoundly connecting with other countries in Southeast Asia to make

Southeast Asia stable in the post-Vietnam War (Butwell, 1969, p.341).

Thailand is a well-known country that skillfully avoided assimilation of colonists thanks to national solidarity, yet this country faced new strong concerns about its security. The expansion of Communism in the Northeast, linking Pathet Laos, North Vietnamese Communists, and Chinese Communists, directly put a huge strain on Thailand's politics and made this country become a Communism country. The US would not let Communists grow their influence in Southeast Asia effortlessly. The US had an intention of breaking the neutral viewpoint of Thailand by bolstering its strategic presence in Thailand. Americans were also fully aware of Thailand's middle-of-the-road long-range point of view to self-guard itself in a turmoil sphere of security. In this case, Thailand and the RVN play a critical role in deterring the expansionist scheme of Beijing and Hanoi and shielding the Free World in the rest of Southeast Asia.

The involvement of Thailand in the RVN's war initially originated from the increasingly aggressive actions of Vietnamese Communists in northeast Thailand even though the RVN – Thailand officially forged bilateral relations after the visit of King Bhumibol Adulyadej to Saigon in December 1959 (Tran, 2020, p.250). According to a report dispatched to Central Executive Committee on March 10, 1966, Communists trained military skills for the young people and expanded guerrilla actions in northeast Thailand. This communist group surreptitiously acted and raised a fund to support their propaganda and the National Liberation Front of the RVN (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1968, p.7). It is estimated that there were approximately 3,000 Communists, and more than 100 Communists were Vietnamese Thai people. As a result, the Thai government officially decided to send a 5,000-soldier troop to the RVN in July 1968, and another 5,000-soldier troop would come to this country in the second half of the year 1967 (PTTgII- No.20887, p.30). It is conspicuous that the optimal solution of the Thai government is increasing military actions for the RVN once Communists and other opposing elements create an unstable situation for the national security of Thailand. It not only helped Thailand vanquish the Communists in Southeast Asia and improve the role of Thailand in regional affairs but also posed a threat to domestic Communists. On May 5, 1966, Thailand proclaimed that the RVN was a close neighboring country of Thailand. The fate of the RVN was under the serious threat of Communist force. South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand's sent troops to South Vietnam. Under no circumstance does the risk of the RVN's security also directly or indirectly pose a menacing threat to Thailand's security. (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.13)

On January 15, 1967, the royal government of Thailand recruited conscripts and voluntary soldiers for an anti-communism mission in the RVN. On 15 May 1967, some divisions of Queen's Cobra included 2295 soldiers coming to Vietnam under the leadership of Colonel Yuthasak and Narong Kittikachorn. In January 1968, Thailand's Prime Minister

concurrently function Minister of Defense Thanom Kittikachorn visited the RVN and Thai military units in this country. When returning to Thailand, Yuthasak proposed increasing the military force in the RVN from a corps to a division of 120000 soldiers. The Thai Assembly accepted this requirement Hac Ba Division was promptly established and became a goodwill division on the RVN's battlefields (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1968, p.1).

Similarly, the RVN and Thailand organized a caucus on June 12, 1968, at Vietnam Consulate in Thailand. In this meeting, the Thai Prime Minister claimed that this country did not agree with a Lao-liked solution for Vietnam. Also, Thailand would like to attempt to show its peaceful goodwill in the Vietnam War and suggest the RVN accelerate administrative reform to bolster the power of the Executive and take advantage of ASPAC Conference to reclaim the solidarity of Southeast Asia countries in the resistant war opposing the expansion of communists (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1968, p.2). On July 31, 1968, Nguyen Van Thieu showed deep gratitude to the Thai Government when he knew that it had sent a troop to the RVN to help this country defend against the stemming communist encroachments in Vietnam (Office of the Thailand Prime Minister, 1968). This action demonstrates that both the Thai and the RVN government tied their relationship based on articles of the Manila Declaration of 1966 and the Republic of Vietnam's determination to preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity free from the intervention of the communists in Southeast Asia.

In 1970, Thailand's Foreign Minister clarified that Thailand's government raised its concern about national security on the Laos-Thailand borderline due to the current situation of Cambodia and Laos. Communists intended to form revolutionary bases along the T-junction borders and increased the tension in North Cambodian, Southern Laos, and Siemriep (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p.22). According to Thanom Kittikachorn, these bases posed a menace to the national security of Thailand as well as his cabinet was concerned about Vietnamese communities in Northeast Thailand and proposed an evacuation plan for all Vietnamese people there. While the situation of the RVN was much better than in the past, the expenditure of the Thai government was quite considerable during the Vietnam War in case this country continued to assist the RVN to oppose local communists. As a result, the appearance of the Thai Army in the RVN was not pressing. However, Thailand opined that it was necessary for the Thai government kept a regular force in the RVN to implement a scheme of gradual military withdrawal. On September 12, 1970, Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reached a temporary decision to maintain a definite force in Thailand to protect the RVN from the actions of Communists along the borderline of Cambodia as well as their recovery after the 1968 Offensive (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p.1). Similarly, Thailand leaders showed their adamant attitude toward a political solution for the RVN. Thanat Khoman argued that from a free world point

of view, the coalition is the result of free and fair elections internationally supervised; however, Communists never accepted such a coalition. The stop coalition government is a matter regarding the RVN people, and they would accept a genuine coalition instead of a coalition imposed by Communists (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.1). There is no denying that Thailand troops withdrew from the RVN, yet the Thai government still kept its consistent viewpoint to shield its alliance from the spread of Communists and accepted a peaceful solution once the Vietnam election was fairly conducted by all Vietnamese people.

One more reason, Thailand was searching for a neutralized opinion to defend its security by pursuing a dovish policy toward Communist countries. Thailand leaders understood that the involvement of Thailand in South Korea, the RVN, and Cambodia triggered a rising tension among Communists, mostly; the appearance of Thailand troops in the RVN and Cambodia was prophesied as an unbeneficial case for Thailand's security when Vietnamese Communists and Cambodian Communists increased their countermeasures in Thai's territory. Externally, the decline of the US troop led to a cut in US aid to Thailand. This is the reason why Thailand had to seek new allies to implement its further objectives. Unofficial actions of the Thai in its policies toward China, the Soviet Union, and North Vietnam veil that this country would like to maintain a power-balance policy to guard national security. The foreign policy of Thailand unintentionally opposed the alliance of communist countries, including the Soviet Union and Chinese Communists. Particularly, Deputy Minister Sagna Kitika-chorn proclaimed on December 21, 1970, that Thailand confronted and battled any opponents, notwithstanding communists or non-communist. However, Thailand did not struggle with any theories in case those doctrines did not negatively influence the consistent foreign policies of Thailand (The RVN Embassy in Thailand, 1970, p. 1). To typify the policies, Thailand signed an economic agreement with the Soviet Union this year, and this country had not conducted any malicious actions toward the Chinese. It is indicated that some Thai leaders intentionally neglected their anti-communism objective in their own country and the region of Southeast Asia. Thailand continuously followed a Western-preferred foreign policy, but it flexibly concentrated on its national interests. However, Thai leaders' double-entendre proclamations were likely to negatively affect its anti-communism battle in its territory.

However, the foreign policy of Thailand quickly shifted due to the changes in the US's foreign policy. The release of Nixon's theory pushed Thailand into a precarious position. Frank (1972) argued that the decline of American aid and military expense had created an urgent requirement for a tighter budget and new sources of income, not the generous and reckless spending of government funds for "pork barrel" projects throughout the kingdom (Darling, 1972, p. 264). The withdrawal of the US troop in Southeast Asia indicates that the

US, however, maintained its power and influence in this region, yet it became less attractive compared to previous periods. While the US seriously faced a rising movement in its home, the long involvement of the US in Southeast Asia defamed itself and squandered a lot of time and financial support of the US. On account of this event, Thailand had no reason; on the other hand, it was time for Thailand troops to leave for their country and vindicated that the RVN's security experienced temporary stability. Also, Darling (1972) buttressed this opinion that Thailand sought another objective and partner for long-term cooperation. It means Thailand needed to return home as soon as it could and take several significant steps to mitigate the fears of the regime in Thailand through economic ties with Communist China and Japan (Darling, 1972, p. 266). As a result, the RVN – Thailand underwent a frigid relationship after the Thai troops no longer occupied military bases and declined their presence in the RVN.

### ***3.2. An issue of the Vietnamese diaspora in Thailand***

Vietnamese diaspora in Thailand can be seen shared national interest between the RVN and Thailand. As for the RVN, the presence of the Vietnamese communities in Thailand was considered under the influence of Communists. The majority of the Vietnamese diaspora came from North Vietnam, and it was a rewarding opportunity for the RVN to implicate those groups to support and oppose the actions of Vietnamese Communists in all regions of Thailand. Meanwhile, the seeming proliferation of Communists' insurgencies embarrassed the Thailand government's effort to build a healthy peace for the country. There are two regions of Thailand where Communists built their support: southern land and northeastern land. Darling (1972) supposed that the insurgency in the depressed northeastern provinces has been active since the 1950s and created an intense fear in the central government in Bangkok (Darling, 1972, p. 264). The clash of national interests rested on long and cordial basic diplomatic relations between the RVN and Thailand.

The actions of Communists in northeast Thailand concerned the Thai government in the 1960s. While the RVN was a non-communist state, the Thai could easily ally with the RVN to expel all potential opponents out of its demarcation. The RVN would cooperate with Thai security officials to vanquish the headquarter of Vietnamese Communists in Thailand. Simultaneously, the RVN would like to seduce these people through a turncoat plan and offer them a profession when coming back to the RVN. Meanwhile, the RVN government solicited Thailand to allow the Vietnamese diaspora to naturalize as soon as Thai government experienced a declining concern about Communists in its country (The RVN'S Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p. 3). The RVN intended to win the support of the Vietnamese diaspora in Thailand because northeast Thailand was a place where some Vietnamese revolutionary activists built a force for their national movements from the 1920s to the August Revolution. As a result, the support of the Vietnamese diaspora plays a vital role in



strengthening the RVN-Thai alliance in the context of Anti-Communism and protecting the regional security of Southeast Asia.

According to the RVN, new Vietnamese people in Thailand have different political attitudes toward the Vietnam War. They came from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which underwent the first Indochina War from 1946 to 1954. After the Geneva Accords in 1954, some Vietnamese people had a tendency toward the RVN and an intention of establishing a separate group to support the RVN. In 1955, the embassy of the RVN in Thailand organized Vietnamese teaching classes in pharmacies for Vietnamese ex-pats. Then, this office opened five branches in Sakol Nakorn, Nakorn Phanom, That Phanom, Mukdaham, and Ubol (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p.10). These activities timely assisted the Vietnamese to appease their soul in fear of unstable security, and they became registered Vietnamese Thai people via functional offices of Thailand. The RVN was partially successful in educating ideologies to support the RVN and oppose the domination of Communists. After the termination of the repatriation program of North Vietnam in 1965, the RVN government released an official dispatch to take advantage of this situation in winning the heart of Vietnamese ex-pats. The government opined that increasing the number of staff and promoting psychological war was crucial to demolish the Communist base and closely cooperated with the Thai government to eliminate Communists (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p.11). The expansion of the RVN-based Vietnamese ex-pat community not only helped the RVN create its prestige in this community, but it contributed to expanding the influenced areas of the RVN in neighboring countries, at least avoiding Laotian and Cambodian Communists developing in this region.

Historically, the RVN reached a consensus via an agreement with Thailand concerning Vietnamese ex-pat repatriation with a detailed plan on September 18, 1967. The content of this agreement regulated the bilateral responsibility of Vietnamese Thai ex-pats, and the Thai government assisted the Vietnamese community in Thailand to return to their country and subsidized 3,000 baht for every Vietnamese family (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.6). This action of Thai indicates that it was necessary to tackle the issue of the Vietnamese community as a priority because the inconsistent attitude of this community toward Communists posed a threat to the security of Northeast Thailand. In the Vietnamese community, there are a majority of people who had a proclivity toward Communists, while the others would like to linger in Thailand for their careers. As a result, the RVN faced difficulties in receiving Communist-based people to return to the RVN on account of laying a risk to the RVN's security. On September 30, 1969, the RVN government reluctantly accepted 99 Communists to enter the country, and then the government only received volunteer ex-pats for repatriation to shun any menace to national security. It was not until 1970 that the number of Vietnamese people there was estimated at 7,0000 people (The

RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p.3). The increasing number of the Vietnamese diaspora in common with the complex situation of Communists' actions in Northeast Thailand urged the two governments to seek a reasonable solution to protect their national security.

Likewise, to express national attention to Vietnamese communities in Thailand, the RVN assigned a four-people medical team to Thailand to take care of the community health of the Vietnamese in Northeast Thailand (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.7). Then, the RVN Ambassador paid a visit to Vietnamese ex-pats in Udorn, Nongkhai, Sakonnakorn, Nakhonphanom, Ubol, and districts of Thabor, Thatphanom, Mukdaharn, Amnachareo in Northeast Thailand from January 4 to January 10, 1971. The delegate of the Ambassador met local authorities and made a speech to commanding officers of Thai to express the honest gratitude of the RVN to indigenous people to help the Vietnamese diaspora in Thailand (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970, p.1). This warm visit of the RVN's Ambassador potentially ties the Vietnam-Thailand in a level of Ambassador. Also, it contributed to raising a cognition of the role of Vietnamese communities in Thailand. They were descendants of the Vietnamese who left their country in the course of the Nguyen dynasty. Some people lived in Laos but came across the river to resettle in Thailand to avoid Vietnamese Communists and Lao Pathet. While North Vietnam had a frigid welcome to the Vietnamese repatriation, the RVN government considered this issue exceptionally pressing, and it aimed at winning their heart as well as soliciting the Thai government to nationalize them. Besides, the RVN issued a visa program for this community and constructed a long-term plan to maintain representative offices in northeast provinces of Thailand and gradually upgrade these headquarters to the Consulate of the RVN in Thailand. The eventual target of this plan was the prevention of Communism close to Thailand-Laos and Thailand- Cambodia borderlines.

The RVN's officials respected the assistance of Thailand concerning overseas Vietnamese communities, so they decided to invite key Thai officials to pay a visit to the RVN in the middle of the year 1971 to deepen mutual understanding in stabilizing the regional security in Northeast Thailand and sharing a mutual vision in destroying communist bases in this region, where Vietnamese and Thai communists increased their influences (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1971, p.1). This action indicates that the RVN had an objective of making a greater degree of bilateral cooperation with Thailand to restrain the rise of communists and gave the Thai people a hand to protect national security as shared interests in the war in Southeast Asia. It was not until the middle of 1971 that the RVN Ambassador Diep Quan Hong invited Phayome Bahurat, Boonserm Ayuwathana- The II Corps Chief of Staff visit the Republic of Vietnam in June 1971. From 6 June to 8 June 1971, the Ministry has already instructed the Royal Thai Embassy in Saigon to arrange for the

proposed study tour with the Vietnamese authorities concerned (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1971, p.3). In this connection, the Ministry would be deeply grateful if the Embassy could lend its good offices in bringing the proposed visit of the National Defence College of Thailand to the knowledge of the authorities concerned in Vietnam so that necessary assistance and facilities many kindly be accorded to them.

**Table 1.** *Statistics of overseas Vietnamese in Thailand in 1970*

(The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1970)

Thailand provinces	Registered overseas Vietnamese	Unregistered overseas Vietnamese
Khabor	183	4,650
Nong Khai	336	3,060
Udorn	373	4,810
Thare	175	4,880
Nalorn Phanom	237	4,165
That Phanom	166	966
Maladaham	314	3,290
Ubol	386	2,823
Prachinburi	60	594
Bangkok	697	1,045
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>30,283</b>

Table 1 illustrates the number of Vietnamese people residing in Thailand, and the number of unregistered overseas Vietnamese people is considerably more than registered overseas Vietnamese people. This is a central concern of the RVN because Communists seized a large area and attempted to implicate those groups. Otherwise, they registered that those groups were incapable of a stable life in Thailand. As a result, the RVN, in collaboration with the Thai government, took measures to stabilize overseas Vietnamese communities and created a wave of support for the RVN in the Vietnam War.

### **3.3. *An initial tie between bilateral economic relations and public diplomacy***

Despite not the centrality of the bilateral relationship, Thailand sent a considerable amount of economic aid to the RVN. In August 1966, Thailand agreed to sell tons of rice for the RVN in very comfortable conditions at the 1966 Manila Summit (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.14). This action illustrates that Thailand also stayed focused on helping the RVN build agricultural economy well-being. The development of the RVN's economy was expected to create an even development toward SEATO members in an attempt to construct a solid rear for a prolonged war against Communists. Besides, the primary imported Thai goods of the RVN were rice, corns, cement, sugar, pie, and car accessories. The documents unveil that number of imported Thai rice for The RVN gained 25,000 tons in 1965 and four times as many as that (100,000 tons of rice) in 1967. The

support of Thailand plays a decisive role in assisting the RVN to remain a stable market and protecting food security in the RVN in the context of the brutal war.

Besides, the value of foreign trade of the RVN toward Thailand showed an increase from 1964-to 1965.

**Table 2. Foreign trade between the RVN and Thailand**

(The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.9)  <i>Year</i>	<b>Import</b>		<b>Export</b>	
	<i>Quantity (tons)</i>	<i>Values (1000%)</i>	<i>Quantity (tons)</i>	<i>Values (1000%)</i>
1964	72,937.6	141,388	721.1	4,181
1965	89,096.9	142,829	21,885	1,557

Table 2 shows that the number of imported and exported between the RVN and Thailand increased. Unfortunately, the number of other years were ill-documents, so the author was unable to conclude the RVN- Thailand economic ties, yet it assumed that the number of values would increase in the subsequent years because Thailand was always determined to make a great stride for the RVN’s economy.

Additionally, Thailand supported the RVN with several advancements in technology throughout their relationship. For example, Thailand sold 100 tons of rice for the RVN and appealed to some of the RVN’s expert delegates to visit Thailand to study Thailand’s infrastructure, the system of roads, airport, television, and administrative management. In 1968, Thailand aided Vietnam with 40 tins of Kanaf seeds and some rice seeds as well as carp seeds (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.10). At the end of 1968, the RVN’s agriculture approached the IR8 rice seed imported from Thailand thanks to the Thailand Ministry of Agriculture. After the Mau Than event, Thailand continually aided some kinds of medicine to treat cholera and chicken-pox for South Vietnamese people, as well as 995 tons of relief items, 51 tons of sweetened condensed milk with the amount of those packages, was approximately \$38 billion (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p.3).

People-to-people diplomacy, so-called public diplomacy in the modern text, is also a field allowing Thailand to cooperate with the RVN. In particular, the RVN joined an international commercial fair in Bangkok on November 11, 1966. The stall of the RVN attracted a lot of guests and buyers to possess Vietnamese products (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1969, p. 10). Likewise, the RVN continued to participate in the Charity Fair organized by the Thailand Red Cross from January 28 to February 1971. The stall of the RVN displayed a wide range of products such as porcelain elephants, strawberry wine, velvet comedy, and velvet, which appealed to the considerable attention of buyers and visitors (The RVN's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1971, p.71). Although this field was not a central field

of the RVN – Thailand tie, the development of those links contributed to strengthening the power of the RVN and stated that Thailand always went hand in hand with the RVN to protect Southeast Asia from the expansion of Communist. Also, this evidence implied that the RVN always made an effort to avoid financial dependence on US aid. The increase of diplomatic relations of the RVN was instrumental in self-making their well-being and put its solid position in international relations. However, the situation of the war prevented the RVN from long-term cooperation in the economy. The policy of reconstruction in the post-war time did not happen due to the elevation of the war.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To sum up, this study aims to generalize some salient points in the RVN- Thailand ties during the Vietnam War. Based on Realism in international relations along with methods of historical sciences, this paper implies that the establishment of the RVN- Thailand relations in this period represents a clash of national interests in modern international relations, namely, a massive opposition toward the expansion of Communism. The RVN and Thailand were significantly aided by the financial packages of the US to struggle with Communists and build a base of freedom in Southeast Asia. Both the RVN and Thailand were critical factors in the US policy to deter the expansion of Communism in the context of the Cold War. The involvement of Thailand in South Vietnam helped this country banish the fear for its national security, and partially, Thailand was able to build economic and military well-being in Southeast Asia via US aid. Meanwhile, the RVN has one more ally in Southeast Asia to forge a very close relationship to protect itself from the expansion of Communism and initially set international relations with other countries in a common region. The source materials, together with other research regarding this topic, indicate that there are three key fields in this relation. First, the RVN employed the assistance of Thailand to cooperate with other allies, hampered the movements of Communists, and protected regional security. Second, the RVN took great advantage of overseas Vietnamese communities in Thailand to win their heart and mind because those groups were under the influence of Communists. Third, the RVN took the first stage of its international economic relation, and Thailand can be viewed as one of the key partners. Also, some activities of public diplomacy initially began with the participation of the RVN. However, the escalation of the war discouraged the ambitiousness of the RVN. The decline of the US troops led to the withdrawal of Thai troops along with their benefits in the Vietnam War. Further studies must deepen an understanding of a specific field of the RVN – Thailand ties.

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**QUAN HỆ NGOẠI GIAO VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA – THÁI LAN  
TRONG BỐI CẢNH CHIẾN TRANH VIỆT NAM (1965-1973)**

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**Từ khóa:** Đông Nam Á; Việt Nam Cộng hòa; Thái Lan; chiến tranh Lạnh; chiến tranh Việt Nam