

# Thai Perceptions of China: The 1960s to the 2010s

Pattajit TANGSINMUNKONG

*(During the Cold War,) My mom heard a rumor that I would be appointed as the Ambassador to China. One day, my mom called me and told me. "If the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatches you to China, I want you to resign...I hate communism, I hate China. In China, they killed old people and made fertilizers out of them."*

Anand Panyarachun, (MFA Permanent Secretary during 1975-1977)<sup>1</sup>

*When China emerges because of her size, because of history, some other countries start talking about a China threat. But for Thais, because we are so close by blood, we are naturally more at ease in engaging with China. You would be surprised at how many western delegations came through that used the term "China threat" or "Chinese threat", and my response was always, "Well, what threat?" We didn't see China as a threat. We obviously saw her as a major power and therefore maybe having a lot of influence, but we didn't have this feeling that she would be a threat.*

Abhisit Vejjajiva, (Former Prime Minister, interview on 2015 February 6)<sup>2</sup>

In the context of Sino-Thai Relations, most people from both countries might have heard the saying, "the Chinese and the Thais are one family" (中泰一家親). Today leaders from China and Thailand often emphasize close ties between the two countries. Some scholars have also described Sino-Thai relations as "special relations".<sup>3</sup>

In 2013, China surpassed Japan to become Thailand's biggest trade partner. At this point, the two countries strengthened their exchanges in science, technology, education, culture, law, the military, and so on. Several agreements have been signed, and leaders of both countries frequently visit each other. Princess Sirindhorn has visited China at least 43 times since her first visit in 1981. In 2004, the title "Friendship Ambassador" was conferred to the princess by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC).

However, if we revisit the history of the relations between the two countries during the Cold War, the two countries were hostile for 25 years, before turning into unofficial strategic partners, and then friends.

This presentation considers the changes in Thai perceptions of China between the 1960s and the 2010s. At each stage, how did the Thai leaders, the public opinion, and media portray China? I also attempted to investigate how each perception was formed. In particular, I focus on how the changing international situation and domestic affairs affected the government and public opinion and what kind of logic was used by the government to explain to people when it attempted to change its policy.

The changes are categorized into four periods based on the changes that occurred in the countries' relations: confrontation (1949–1968), adjustment (1968–1978), honeymoon (1978–1989), and friendship (1989–2018).

## 1) CONFRONTATION (1949–1968): A Devil Named China and The Cycle of Hatred

After the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, Thai military and civilian leaders began to view China as a national threat. Chulacheep (2009) identified three reasons. First, Chinese communist ideology was incompatible with the Thai ideology of "Nationhood, Buddhism and Monarchy". Second, China was perceived as an expansionist because it supported North Korea in the Korean War and the Viet Minh in Vietnam. Third, the establishment of Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Region in January 1953 was perceived as the Chinese effort to set up an alternative Thai government<sup>4</sup>.

Under Phibulsongkram's (1948–1957) and Sarit's (1959–1963) military administration, Thailand joined the so-called "free world" and enacted a pro-American and anti-communist policy. Thailand participated in the Korean War and Vietnam War as a U.S. ally in 1950 and 1965, respectively. The Anti-Communist Act was passed in 1952. It joined Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954. In 1959 Sarit passed Revolutionary Decree No. 53, which prohibited trade with the PRC. In 1962, a bilateral communiqué that solidified Thailand's role as a crucial U.S. ally was signed between the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Thai Foreign Minister (FM) Thanat Khoman.

In 1963, Thanom succeeded Sarit as the prime minister (PM) and inherited his anti-communism policy. The Thai-US Special Logistics Agreement (SLAT) was signed the same year. The agreement allowed the U.S. to develop Thailand's transportation system, a deep-water port as a supply base for the air base in the northeast, and to establish communications and intelligence facilities in eastern Thailand<sup>5</sup>. In 1964, the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred. The incident

<sup>1</sup> Anand Panyarachun. (2000). "Pathakatha Phiset" [Special Speech] . Khien Theeravit, Cheah Yan-Chong. (2000). *Khwamsamphan Thai-Chin: Liao Lang Lae Na [Sino-Thai Relations: Past and Prospect]* . Bangkok: Institute of Asia Studies, Chulalongkorn University, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Abhisit Vejjajiva by Benjamin Zawacki on 2015 February 6. Benjamin Zawacki. (2017). *Thailand: Shifting Ground between the US and a Rising China*. London: Zed Books, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Storey, Ian. (2013). "Thailand and China: A Special Relationship", in *ASEAN and the Rise of China: The Search for Security*. London: Routledge, pp. 124-144.

<sup>4</sup> Chulacheep Chinwanno. (2009). "Rising China and Thailand's Policy of Strategic Engagement". National Institute for Defense Studies, *The Rise of China: Responses from Southeast Asia and Japan (NIDS Joint Research Series No.4)*, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> Danny Unger. (1995). "From Domino to Dominant: Thailand's Security Policies in the Twenty-First Century". In Robert S. Ross, *East Asia in transition : toward a new regional order*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.

allowed the U.S. to engage more actively in the Vietnam War. Thailand formally joined Vietnam War as a U.S. ally and allowed the U.S. to construct seven Special Air Warfare Units (USAF) in its territory. The number of U.S. soldiers increased from 4,000 in 1964 to 45,000 in 1968. It was said that about 80% of the USAF air strikes over North Vietnam originated from air bases in Thailand<sup>6</sup>.

In order to convince Thai people of the legitimacy of anti-communist policy and its engagement in Vietnam war, the Thai government adopted the idea of “domino theory” and “forward defense” doctrine. In other words, “if one country in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect. Thus, we will have to go out of our home and fight before the falling domino reaches our beloved country”. To make this theory even more convincing, Communist China and North Vietnam, as Thailand’s major enemies, were depicted as devils awaiting to devour Thailand anytime. The hostility against communist states reached such an extent that when the government recruited voluntary soldiers to fight the war with the South Vietnamese army in 1967, many Buddhist monks also applied<sup>7</sup>.

However, the Thai engagement in the Vietnam war triggered hostility in Beijing. Before 1964, Thailand was viewed as a “victim of U.S. aggression” or as being “used” as the “bridgehead” for the U.S.’s expansion in Southeast Asia<sup>8</sup>. However, from 1964 onward, China labeled Thailand as “the U.S.’s accomplice.” China started to support Thai communist forces openly. Several Beijing-backed communist organizations were established in China, such as the Thailand Independent Movement (1964), Thailand Patriotic Front (1965), and the Thailand Patriotic Youth Organization (1966). These organizations called for overthrowing of Thanom’s “fascist” government, the expulsion of foreign troops, and ending the interference in neighboring countries’ internal affairs.<sup>9</sup> From 1964 to 1967, the *People’s Daily* called the Thanom administration a “Fascistic dictator government” and labeled Thailand as a “New colony of American imperialism.”

The rebellion against the Thai government spread widely in the peasant society. On August 7, 1965, Thailand’s first physical confrontation between communist fighters and Thai security forces occurred in Nabua village, Nakhon Phanom. In December of the same year, the Communist Suppression Operations Command was established to coordinate and command nationwide counter-insurgency operations. The number of clashes between guerrillas and government forces rose from 232 in 1967 to 670 in 1972<sup>10</sup>.

Summarizing, during this period, “the vicious circle of hatred” was formed. Because Thai leaders perceived communism as a threat, they allowed the construction of a U.S. military base in Thailand. The U.S. military base in Thailand was then perceived as hostile to communist states such as China. China then supported communist activities in Thailand to overthrow the latter’s government. This in turn triggered Thailand’s hostility, causing the Thai government to strengthen its efforts to suppress communist guerrillas. Ultimately, it led to armed conflicts in which the lives of many civilians and soldiers were sacrificed.

## **(2) ADJUSTMENT (1968–1978): China as a “Converted Criminal”**

Domestic and international politics experienced a pivotal change in 1968. Domestically, the Thai government drafted a new constitution, and Thailand was transformed into a democratic state. Restriction on freedom of speech was lifted, along with the rise of student movement. Internationally, the anti-war movements began in 1965 in the U.S., and the sentiments mounted in 1968 after the Tet offensive.<sup>11</sup> On March 31 of the same year, President Johnson made a speech that the U.S. would stop bombarding North Vietnam, which marked a shift in the U.S.’s Vietnam policy. In 1969, Nixon became the president. The Nixon Doctrine (1969), Ping-Pong Diplomacy (1971), and Kissinger’s secret trip to Beijing in 1971 shocked the world, including Thailand.

The speech by President Johnson on March 31 caused panic among Thai leaders. On the next day, an emergency cabinet meeting was held, and the Thai government expressed opposition to the U.S. for the sudden shift in Vietnam policy. The sudden change stirred up feelings of distrust of U.S. among some Thai elites, especially FM Thanat. Such a sudden change in the U.S. policy made him feel that it was dangerous to leave Thailand’s destiny to other countries, and he started to assert that Thailand need to rely on itself. Upon thinking that relying on world powers was no longer effective, Thanat felt the need to strengthen ASEAN and reach out to China. He toned down his criticism of China, and his signals for rapprochement with China became increasingly clearer. In 1969, Thanat established a working group, probing the possibility of establishing relations with China.<sup>12</sup> In May 1971, Thanat expressed an interest in initiating contact and negotiation with China through a third country. On May 14, he called China the “People’s Republic of China” for the first time.

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<sup>6</sup> Narumit Sotsuk. (1981). *Sampanthapaap Thang Kanthut Rawang Thai Kap Satharanarat Prachachon Chin* [The Relations between Thailand and China] . Bangkok: Thai Watthanapanit, pp. 50–51.

<sup>7</sup> “Pu Asa Pai Ka Communist” [People who volunteered to kill communists] . *Siamrath Sapdawichan*, 1967 January 29, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Chao Hsiun-Kai. (1962). “Thailand: Victim of U.S Economic Aggression”. *Peking Review*, 5(31) (1962 August 3), pp. 16-17. *People’s Daily*, March 25, 1961. *People’s Daily*, September 11, 1961.

<sup>9</sup> *People’s Daily*, December 14, 1964. *People’s Daily*, December 15, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> Statistic and Evidence Department, Information Center of Internal Security Operations Command, 1981 March 2, from Buncha Suma. (1985). *Kankhluenwai Khong Phak Communist Kap Nayobai Pongkan Lae Prappram Khong Ratthaban 2500-2523* [The communist movement and the preventive and suppressive policies of the Thai government, (1957-1980)] (Master’s Thesis) . Chulalongkorn University, p.82.

<sup>11</sup> Schreiber, E.M. (1976). “Anti-War Demonstrations and American Public Opinion on the War in Vietnam”. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 27 (2), p. 227.

<sup>12</sup> Siburdee Nopprasert. (2017). “Kan Prap Nayobai Tangprathet Thai (Putthasakkarat 2516-2519)” [The Adjustment of Thai Foreign Policy: 1973-1976] . *Songkomsart*, 47 (2), pp.35-61.

However, this move by Thanat was not approved by all the parties. Regarding China, Thai leaders were divided into two groups: one supported the establishment of diplomatic ties with China, and the other opposed them. The former group mainly consisted of Thanat and some members from the House of Representatives. The latter group consisted of PM Thanom, deputy PM Prapas, Deputy PM Pot, Commerce Minister Bunchana, and Deputy FM Sagna. Regarding Thanat's approach toward China, PM Thanom refused publicly that the cabinet had ever given FM Thanat the right to negotiate with China. In July, 10 members from the former group sent a letter to PM expressing their will to visit China. In August, 60 members asked the PM to lift the ban on the trade with China. However, all the requests were rejected, and "Go slow, wait and see" became the slogan for the PM's China policy.

When China successfully joined the United Nations in November 1971, the arguments about China policy grew into an issue that shook Thailand's domestic politics. On November 17, 1971, PM Thanom cited the need to suppress communist infiltration and staged a coup against his own government. Following this Coup, Thanat was dismissed.

After the coup, Thanom felt the need to adjust his policy according to the change in national politics. Criticism against Beijing in governmental publications was replaced by content that introduced the progress of PRC<sup>13</sup>. A series of informal, semiformal exchanges between Thailand and China were initiated. In September 1972, Thailand's Ping Pong delegations participated in the Asian Table Tennis Union Championship. In October, the Thai commercial mission was invited to the 12<sup>th</sup> Canton Trade Fair. In January 1973, instructions were provided to the Thai ambassador in Washington, Islamabad, Vienna etc. to increase the contact with Chinese representatives.<sup>14</sup>

During this period, China's image was recreated. In a press conference on October 29, 1971, Thanom claimed, "Communism and Red China are different. Red China is not enemy of Thailand, only communism is."<sup>15</sup> The image of China had transformed, as Puangthong (2006) put it, from a "cruel criminal" to a "converted criminal."<sup>16</sup> In brief, the image was one of China as having improved its behavior, which the generous Thailand could accept. China was perceived as having changed its behavior, and not as Thailand as having changed its policy. However, the communist force did not stop its infiltration. In 1972, the Thanom government spent a lot of effort sweeping up communist guerrillas. Therefore, communism continued to be the biggest enemy of the Thai government.

Thanom's military regime was overthrown by the student uprising that occurred during the October 14, 1973, incident. After the incident, under an atmosphere of freedom, Chinese politics and ideology were studied and discussed openly. Thailand entered a "Chinese boom" period. On the top level, the new government continued working on improving the relations between Thailand and China. The 1973 oil crisis compelled Thailand to look toward China for an alternative oil source. China agreed to sell 50,000 tons of diesel fuel to Thailand at "friendship" price. This move of China significantly improved the Chinese image among the Thai public.

In 1974, Revolutionary Decree No. 53, which banned trade with PRC was finally abolished. In 1975, more exchanges were made. The process of establishing diplomatic ties was sped up by the fall of Phnom Penh (April 17) and the fall of Saigon (April 30). After the two events, Thai leaders expressed distrust toward U.S. support and felt the need to establish diplomatic relations with China for security reasons. Apart from the change in regional politics, the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and China could also benefit Thailand's internal security and economy. Regarding internal security, as Chinese leaders always emphasized the principle of separation between state-to-state and party-to-party relations, Thai leaders believed that the formal government-to-government relations would balance party-to-party relations and lead to the reduction of its support to the Communist Party of Thailand. For economic benefit, Thailand expected that the diplomatic ties would be the door to the Chinese market for exporting agricultural products and importing oil and machine. The joint communique between the two countries was finally signed by PM Kukrit and Zhou Enlai on July 1, 1975.

### **(3) HONEYMOON (1978–1989): China as an "Informal Strategic Partner"**

Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978 was an important turning point in Sino-Thai relations. In January 1979, the Beijing-backed Pol Pot regime of the Khmer Rouge was expelled from Cambodia and replaced by the Hanoi-backed Heng Samrin. In the beginning, the Thai PM Kriangsak Chamanan adopted a neutral position. On January 12, 1979, together with the ASEAN FMs, he issued a statement calling for the maintenance of a neutral policy, resolution by peaceful means, and withdrawal of Vietnam troops from Cambodia. In the meantime, he was quite positive about the situation. He reiterated that Vietnam and Thailand had no intention to invade each other and that Thai people should stay calm. On the contrary, China viewed Vietnam's invasion as "an important tool to annex Cambodia and establish 'Indochina Federation'" and "an action to serve the expansion of the Soviet Union into Asia and the Far East."<sup>17</sup> On January 14, 1979, CCP Politburo member Geng Biao, Vice FM Han Nianlong, and several senior members of the People's Liberation Army General Staff had a meeting with PM Kriangsak. During that meeting, Kriangsak agreed to allow the use of Thai territory to supply the Khmer Rouge, to provide transport and transit facilities for Cambodian personnel and material, and to help Khmer Rouge leaders make foreign trips via Thailand<sup>18</sup>. In exchange, General Kriangsak asked China to cease their support for the Communist

<sup>13</sup> Ratiporn Srisomsap (2010) *Chak Phai Kukkam Su Khwampenmit: Kanpraplian Kanrapru Khong Prathet Thai To Chin Nai Ngan Dan Chinsuksa Nai Prathet Thai [From Threat to Amity: A shift of Thailand's Perceptions toward China in Chinese Studies in Thailand]* (Master's Thesis). Chulalongkorn University, pp. 54-55.

<sup>14</sup> Sarasin Viraphol. (1976). *Directions in Thai Foreign Policy*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Prachathippatai*, 1971 October 31.

<sup>16</sup> Puangthong Rungswasdisab Pawakapan. (2006). *Songkhram Vietnam: Songkhram Kap Khwamching Khong "Rattai"* [Vietnam War: War and the Truth of "Thai State"] . Bangkok: Khopfai.

<sup>17</sup> Ie Masaji. (1981). "<Ji Lei Ken Kyu> Chu-Etsu Senso" [ <Case Studies> Sino-Vietnamese War], in *Kobe Gaidai Ronso [The Kobe City University journal]*, 31 (6), pp. 99-109. (in Japanese)

<sup>18</sup> Michael R. Chambers. (2005). "The Chinese and the Thai are Brothers", *Journal of Contemporary China*, 14 (45), p. 614.

Party of Thailand and close its propaganda radio "The Voice of Thai People" (As a result, the material supports were reduced, and the radio was closed down on July 17, 1979).

On February 17, 1979, PRC troops attacked Vietnam which marked the start of the Sino-Vietnamese War. On February 20, the five ASEAN countries, including Thailand, issued a statement of neutrality and called for the related countries to resolve the issue by peaceful means.

In March 1980, Prem Tinsulanonda became the Thai PM, and he changed the approach to the Indochina problem. According to Prem, the Cambodian issue was no longer an inter-state issue, but a power struggle between superpowers that affected the stability of Southeast Asia. Thailand therefore aligned with ASEAN, China, and three Cambodian anti-government factions<sup>19</sup> to fight with the Heng Samrin government, Vietnam, and the Soviet. Vietnam criticized Thailand for its lack of neutrality and invaded Thai territory at Non Mak Mun in June 1980. This act of Vietnam caused panic among Thai people at all levels, and united Thai people in a way. Needless to say, this enhanced the Thai perception of the Vietnamese as threat to national security. This move of Vietnam brought about a convergence of security interests between Thailand and China.

From 1978 onward, the Thai-Chinese strategic cooperation covered many areas. During 1978-1986, the Thai and Chinese governments signed the trade agreement (1978), Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement (1978), Airline Agreement (1979), Shipping Agreement (1979), and Economic Agreement (1985). The Thai-China Trade Investment Promotion Association was established in 1986. Visits between high-ranking officials of the two countries were increasing significantly in the 1980s. Arms transfer and arms sales was conducted at a "friendship" price. China strongly rebuked Vietnam and many Chinese leaders vowed to support Thailand if its security were ever to be threatened. The most famous quote was by Head of PLA General Staff Department Yang Dezhi during his visit to Thailand in 1983. He said: "If Vietnam dared to make an armed incursion into Thailand, the Chinese army will not stand idle. We will give support to the Thai people to defend their country."<sup>20</sup>

In brief, the relationship between Thailand and China had transformed from one of enmity to so-called "informal strategic partners." However, the relationship between the two countries moved into the next phase when Vietnam withdraw its troops from Cambodia in 1989.

#### **(4) FRIENDSHIP (1989–2018): "Consideration" as Key**

The end of the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict also marked the end of China's role as an "informal strategic partner." However, during the post-Cold War period, Thai-Chinese relations continued to be friendly and close. From 1990s, the cooperation between the two countries expanded to cover more areas. The bilateral trade between Thailand and China tripled in 10 years from 3.8 billion U.S. dollars in 1996 to 20.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2005.

According to the Pew Research Center in 2014, only 17% of the Thais have a negative view of China, while 72% have a positive one.<sup>21</sup>

Here, I would like to propose that, because Thai leaders realized that "China mainly wanted to be recognized and respected as a major power," they attempted to maintain the relationship by having so-called "consideration" toward China and avoiding conflict with it. This can be observed in several events. The following are examples.

While the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict was about to be resolved in 1989, in China, the Tiananmen Square Incident occurred on June 4. The Chinese government received severe criticism from the international community, and the aid from some countries was frozen. However, most Thai leaders refrained from expressing any opinion about the incident and treated the issue as "China's internal affairs".<sup>22</sup>

At the beginning of the 1990s, China began to emerge as a regional power and turned its attention to neighborhood diplomacy, but the South China Sea issue complicated China's relationship with ASEAN. In many ASEAN countries, the sense of a threat from China was strengthening. Regarding the South China Sea issue, Thailand realized that although it was a member of ASEAN, it could not put good relations with China at stake. According to the "Informal Summary of Proceeding at the Thai-Chinese Economic Forum" in March 1995, Thailand's stance can be summed up as an "innocent bystander."

Furthermore, Thai leaders' "consideration" toward China can be seen during Lee Teng-hui's informal visit for private vacation in 1994. This visit is a part of the so-called "vacation diplomacy" to promote Taiwan's international acceptance. For Taiwan, vacation diplomacy is a way of engaging in informal relationships with governments that have no intention of breaking their ties with Beijing.<sup>23</sup>

During his ASEAN visit in 1994, Lee was welcomed by President Suharto when he visited Indonesia, PM Goh Chok Tong and former PM Lee Kuan Yew when visiting Singapore, and PM Mahathir Mohamad when visiting Malaysia. However, when Lee visited Thailand, PM Chuan refrained from meeting Lee but sent Deputy PM Amnuay Viravan for the mission instead. Chuan considered this action as "political manners." This was because Thailand has no diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and the Chinese embassy in Thailand had express disagreement with Lee's visit before. Therefore, as Thailand has a trade

<sup>19</sup> The three factions are 1) National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), led by Prince Norodom Sihanouk; 2) the Khmer People's Liberation Front (KPNLF), led by Son Sann; and 3) the Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK), also known as the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot.

<sup>20</sup> *The Bangkok World*, February 5, 1983, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Pew Research Center. (2014). "Chapter 2: China's Image". <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-2-chinas-image/>> (Retrieved 20189 May 2) <<https://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-2-chinas-image/>>

<sup>22</sup> Department of East Asian Affairs, (Division III), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. (1989). *Khwamsamphan Rawang Prathet Thai Kap Chin Nai Pi 2533 [Thai-China Relations in 1990]*. No.1304-072-302-601-33/06.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Leifer. "Taiwan: A Studied Exercise in Vacation Diplomacy". February 11, 1994, The International Herald Tribune.

relationship with Taiwan, Deputy PM Amunay who was in charge of economics informally hosted President Lee at the Blue Canyon golf course in Phuket instead.<sup>24</sup>

In 1997, the Asian Financial Crisis hit Thailand. Thailand shifted from a dollar-pegged fixed currency policy to a floating exchange system, which resulted in the devaluation of the Baht. The Thai baht lost more than half of its value. In that year, Chinese leaders pledged that China would refrain from devaluating the Yuan and would lend Thailand 1 billion dollars under the IMF recovery scheme. Although China's decision was supported by several strategic reasons, this move by China impressed the Thai elites and media. For example, China was praised as an "unselfish savior" in the English newspaper *Nation* dated June 24, 1998.

After 2000, Thailand was more committed to the One China Policy. The Thaksin government denied granting visa to Taiwanese MPs and Labor Ministers twice in 2002 and 2003. In 2003, Thailand hosted a conference to object to Taiwan's attempt in staging a referendum for independence that 3000 overseas Chinese attended. In 2004, Lu Decheng, a Chinese pro-democracy activist was detained in Thailand. In the same year, the Thai government tried prevent Dalai Lama from entering Thailand. In 2001, the Falun Gong was forced to cancel a planned meeting in Bangkok and its members were barred from entering Thailand in 2003.<sup>25</sup>

In 2013, China surpassed Japan to become Thailand's biggest trade partner. In 2014, a military coup d'état installed a military regime, and Thailand moved politically and ideologically closer to China. In July 2015, Thailand sent about 100 ethnic Uyghur migrants back to China. Because of this, Thailand was condemned by the international society, especially human rights advocacy groups who blamed that they would treat these Uyghurs as "expendable pawns to be sacrificed to big brother China in clear violation of international rights standards." However, Thai officials claimed that they had acted according to relevant international conventions and bilateral cooperation treaties on combating illegal smuggling and immigration."<sup>26</sup>

During 2013-2017, the "zero dollar tours" and ill-mannered Chinese tourists caused negative emotions toward China, but overall national relations between the two countries were not seriously influenced.

## (5) CONCLUSION

Summarizing, Sino-Thai relations have gone through four periods: confrontation, adjustment, honeymoon, and friendship. In these four periods, China was perceived as a "devil," a "converted criminal," an informal strategic partner, and friend respectively. The formation of perception can be seen in two directions: top-down direction, and outward-in direction. The top-down direction can be seen when the Thai government tried to depict China as the devil during the first period, when it attempted to re-create China's image in the second period, or when it attempted to maintain good relations with China by not raising criticisms in the fourth period. The perception change in the outward-in direction can be seen when there was a substantial change in international politics. For example, Thanat changed his attitude toward China when the U.S. changed its Vietnam policy, Thanom changed his China policy when China entered the United Nations, and Prem and the public viewed China as strategic partner when the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict occurred. Additionally, it is difficult to reject that in most cases, consideration for national interest was prioritized, and international politics have a powerful momentum effect on domestic politics. This includes the change in Sino-Thai relations and also its perception of China.

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<sup>24</sup> Ong-ard Dejithirath. (2008). *Bueang Luek Bueang Lang Khwamsamphan Thai-Taiwan Paitai Nayobai Chin Dia* [Relations of Thai-Taiwan under One China Policy: background and Inside Stories] . Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, pp. 216-218.

<sup>25</sup> This paragraph are from Katewadee Kulabkaew. (2009). "Sino-Thai relations during the Thaksin administration (2001-2006)". *Journal of the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 17, pp. 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> Catherine Putz. (June 11, 2015). "Thailand Deports 100 Uyghurs to China", from The Diplomat <<https://thediplomat.com/2015/07/thailand-deports-100-uyghurs-to-china/>> (Retrieve 6 May, 2019)



# Thai Perceptions of China

—The 1960s and the 2010s—

Pattajit TANGSINMUNKONG (Jay)

Waseda University

May 31, 2019

@ Beijing University

# This presentation tries to answer these questions...

- ① How Thai perceptions of China were changed between the 1960s and the 2010s?
- ② Changing Process: What are the factors causing the change?
- ③ How can some aspect of Thai perception of China be relatable to perceptions between Sino-Japanese Relations in the present?



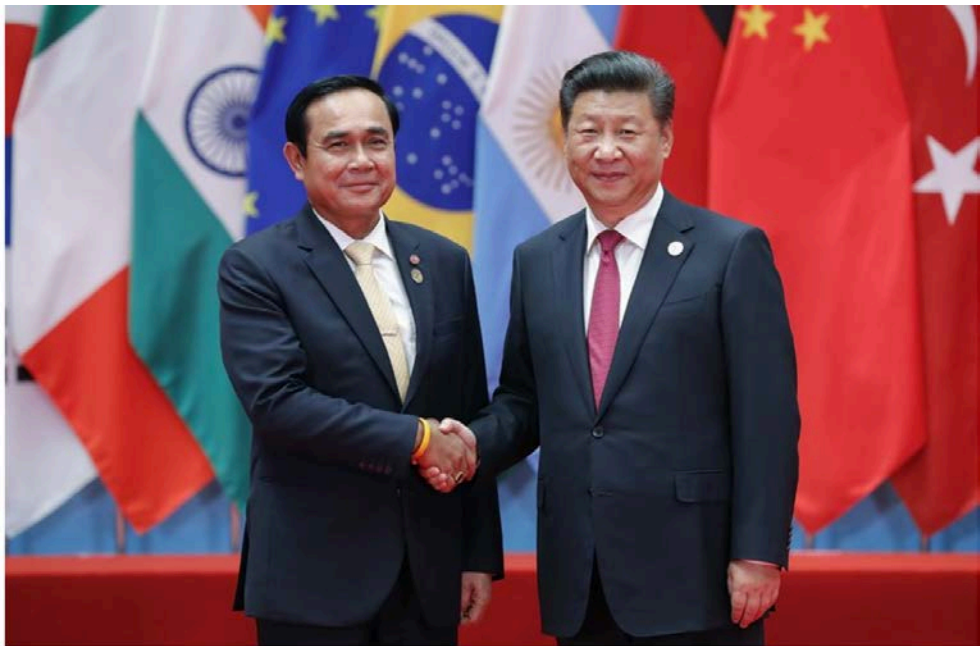
What are **Perceptions**?





# “Special Relations” between Thailand and China

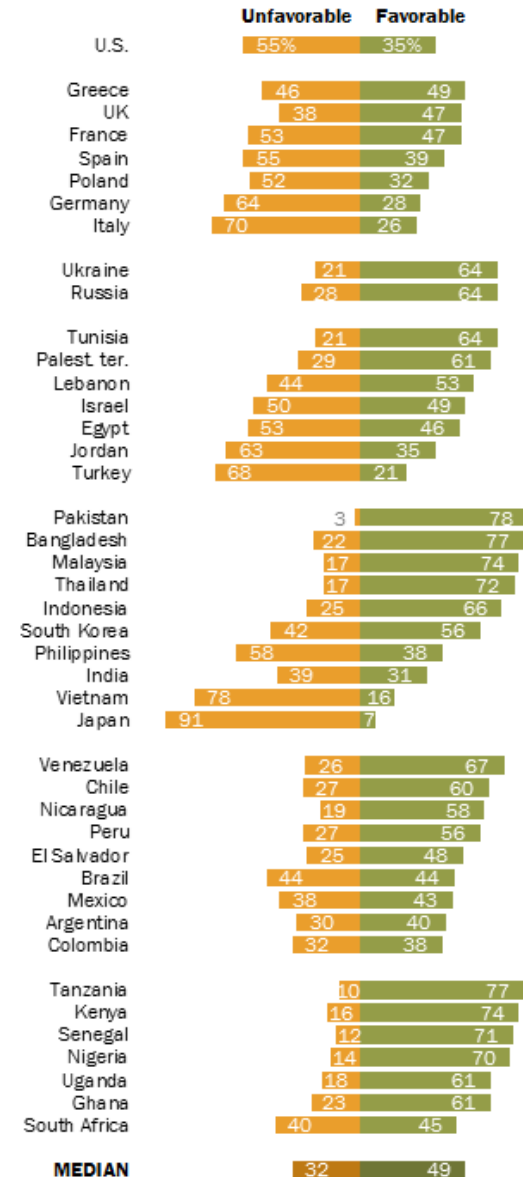
- “the Chinese and the Thais are one family” (中泰一家親)
- the two countries strengthened their exchanges in science, technology, education, culture, law, the military, and so on.
- Princess Sirindhorn has visited China at least 43 times since her first visit in 1981.
- In 2004, the title “Friendship Ambassador” was conferred to the princess by CPAFFC (对外友好协会)
- In 2013, China surpassed Japan to become Thailand’s biggest trade partner.
- No large-scale anti-Chinese movement during post-war period



 New best friends: Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha (left) and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the 2016 G-20 summit in Hangzhou, China.

## Ratings for China Generally Favorable

*Views of China*



Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey, Q15b.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## Thailand and China Threat Theory

According to the Pew Research Center in 2014, only 17% of the Thais have a negative view of China, while 72% have a positive one.

# Thailand and China Opportunity Theory

*When China emerges because of her size, because of history, some other countries start talking about a China threat. But for Thais, because we are so close by blood, we are naturally more at ease in engaging with China. You would be surprised at how many western delegations came through that used the term “China threat” or “Chinese threat”, and my response was always, “Well, what threat?” We didn't see China as a threat. We obviously saw her as a major power and therefore maybe having a lot of influence, but we didn't have this feeling that she would be a threat*

Abhisit Vejjajiva, Former Prime Minister, Interviewed on February 6, 2015, in Benjamin Zawacki. (2017). *Thailand: Shifting Ground between the US and a Rising China*. London: Zed Books, p. 194.



*The majority of Thai leaders perceived the rise of China as an opportunity for economic cooperation. They believed that economic growth in China should be encouraged not only because it created valuable trade and investment opportunities but also because it kept China stable and facilitated its integration into the regional community and the world, giving China a stake in the international status quo.*

*Thai leaders also recognized that China is destined to be a major military power and could upset the regional balance of power. This did not mean that China would pose a threat or come into conflict with countries in Southeast Asia. The feeling instead was that China mainly wanted to be recognized and respected as a major power. Also, Thai policymakers saw China behaving as a status quo power that was playing a constructive role in Asia as well as in the world. Thus, Thai policymakers did not subscribe to the view that the rise of a great power like China would cause conflict within the international system.*

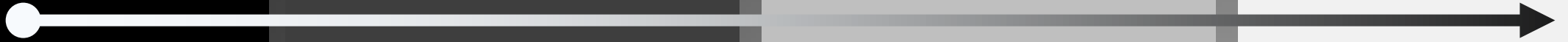
Chulacheep Chinwanno. (2009). “Rising China and Thailand’s Policy of Strategic Engagement”. National Institute for Defense Studies, *The Rise of China: Responses from Southeast Asia and Japan (NIDS Joint Research Series No.4)*, p. 98



# Sino-Thai Relations from 1960s to 2010s



From 1960s to 2010s: 4 Periods, 4 Perceptions



Period 1

Period 2

Period 3

Period 4

**CONFRONTATION**  
(1949~1968)

**ADJUSTMENT**  
(1968~1978)

**HONEYMOON**  
(1978~1989)

**FRIENDSHIP**  
(1989~)

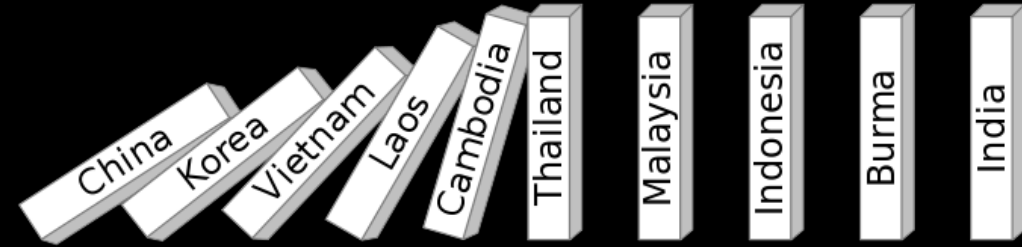
- 1945 WW2 ended
- 1948 Pibul as PM → enacted a pro-American, anti-communist policy
- 1949 PRC was established → the start of hostility
- 1950 Joined Korean War As U.S. Ally
  - 1952 The Anti-Communist Act
  - 1954 Joined Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)
  - 1962 Thanat-Rusk bilateral communiqué
- 1964 The Gulf of Tonkin incident → U.S. engage more actively in the Vietnam War.
- Thailand formally joined Vietnam War as a U.S. ally
  - Construction of 7 U.S. Air bases in Thai territory,
  - 45,000 U.S. Soldiers in Thailand in 1968
  - 80% of the air strikes over North Vietnam originated from air bases in Thailand





# To Legitimize Anti-Communist Policy

- ① “domino theory”
- ② “forward defense” doctrine.



“if one country in a region came under the influence of communism, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect. Thus, we will have to go out of our home and fight before the falling domino reaches our beloved country”.

## ③ The U.S. as a “Life Savior”



The war in South Vietnam and Laos, and in the border of Thailand Laos and Cambodia has panicked us... **The decision of the big nations, especially United States, to save small countries that became victims of aggression, is a very brave move** and very important to the world situation... **All of us are in debt to the bravery and wisdom of American**

**President Johnson**

Thanat Khoman. (1970) *Potchasan [Collected Speeches]*. Bangkok: Phrae Pitthaya, pp.397-399.

## ④China as a “Devil”



Dangers from the North  
(1951)



Want to Survive?  
Then fight the Communism!!  
(1951)



Communism or Freedom? (1965)



*The communist states, such as China and North Vietnam, infiltrated Thailand to destroy the Thai nation, monarchy, and Buddhism. First, they groundlessly attacked Thailand violently and vulgarly. Then, they infiltrated Thailand via their agents. These agents induced Thai people to hate each other, and talked them into receiving military training from the communist party...they also dispatched people into Thailand and attempted to talk Thai people into killing each other until all the Thai people are gone*

Office of the Prime Minister. (1968). *Bantuek Kanhai Sampat Khong Chompon Thanom Kittikachorn*. [Collections of Interviews by Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn]. Bangkok: Office of the Prime Minister, p.11.



Former PM Anand Panyarachun

*(During the Cold War,) My mom heard a rumor that I would be appointed as the Ambassador to China. One day, my mom called me and told me. “If the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatches you to China, I want you to resign...I hate communism, I hate China. In China, they killed old people and made fertilizers out of them.*

Anand Panyarachun. (2000). “Pathakatha Phiset” [Special Speech]. Khien Theeravit, Cheah Yan-Chong. (2000). *Khwamsamphan Thai-Chin: Liao Lang Lae Na* [Sino-Thai Relations: Past and Prospect]. Bangkok: Institute of Asia Studies, Chulalongkorn University, p.20.

# Chinese Perception of Thailand

“victim of U.S. aggression”  
being “used” as the “bridgehead”  
for the U.S.’s expansion in Southeast Asia

1964 The Gulf of Tonkin incident

“the U.S.’s accomplice”

Thanom administration = “Fascistic dictator government”  
Thailand = “New colony of American imperialism.”

PEKING  
REVIEW

31  
August 3, 1962

S.E. Asian Report

## Thailand

『人民日报』1961年3月25日, p.6.

泰国——美国侵略在东南亚的基地

### 美国正在把泰国变成桥头堡

洪 兹

最近几个月来,美国源源不断地把大批军事物资运往泰国。据报最近运往的不完全的材料,美国在4月至7月这段期间,曾先后供给泰国二十架配有导弹的F4D型喷气式战斗机。八架全天候战斗机,二十架F4D型喷气式战斗机。八架全天候战斗机,二十架F4D型喷气式战斗机。八架全天候战斗机,二十架F4D型喷气式战斗机。

美国正在把泰国变成它在东南亚进行侵略和颠覆活动的军事基地。

据泰国报纸报道,自从有尼施上台以后,美国在军事上控制泰国的活动更加频繁。仅在今年上半年,到泰国进行军事活动的美国重要官员,就有美国副总统约翰逊、美国国务卿腊斯克、美国参议院外交委员会主席尼克森、美国太平洋空军司令阿诺德等。他们到泰国后,除了发出一些战争叫嚣和制造东南亚紧张局势外,还同泰国高级官员商谈关于“东南亚盟约”、泰国两国“军事合作”、“加强泰国国防能力”和策划干涉泰国国内政等问题。

在约翰逊访问泰国以后,曼谷方面就传述美国将增加对泰国的军事援助的消息。泰国总理蓬皮育在6月22日说,美国将给泰国增加五千万美元的军事“援助”,以便泰国扩大它的兵力和增设兵营。为了配合美国执行在东南亚扩大美国军事的所谓“约翰逊计划”,泰国陆军在6月间成立了一个委员会,专门负责向美国军事当局进行联络和处理接受美国军事援助的事项。

据曼谷7月10日透露,美国最近还派遣了一个“军事调查团”到泰国,专门调查泰国海、陆、空三军的装备和作战能力,以便配合未来美国对泰国的特别军事“援助”计划。

谷通往泰国边境的战略公路,使它成为第一等的战略公路。在这以前,美国将一条长达一百二十公里的由曼谷通往曼谷的公路,交给泰国。最近沙立还命令空军、内政部和交通部合作整修泰国首都的战略机场,使这些机场具有现代化的设备。

在美国的督促下,泰国政府最近已下令沙立集团成员和军官部队训练泰国。美国驻曼谷的军事代表团,最近已派出一支由美国军官组成的军事代表团,到泰国训练泰国军官。美国还不断“邀请”泰国的军事人员到美国去参观和接受军事训练。泰国海军司令安南和陆军情报厅长查威曾先后于4月和7月到美国考察,研究美国的军事设施。

在美国的督促和“援助”下,泰国正在加紧修建新的战略公路和机场。3月间沙立下令国防部与交通部等有关部门,迅速修建由曼谷通往泰国边境的战略公路。

国,进行全面的农业、渔业、矿业、卫生、教育以及各项公共建设的活动。其中一个由曼谷飞往曼谷的美国“经济调查团”在6月29日抵曼谷,进行为期六个月的访问。它曾同泰国当局就有关加强泰国经济“援助”问题,同时全面调查了泰国各项“经济建设计划”,以便拟订报告供美国总统制订外交政策时参考。

沙立集团为了取得更多的美援,甚至不惜牺牲国家利益。在制定“发展国家建设计划”时,将泰国在曼谷的港口,交给美国。沙立集团在曼谷的战争和侵略政策以及沙立集团出卖泰国利益搞美国帝国主义战争政策下,泰国正在加紧进行各项军事设施。泰国人民在遭受美国帝国主义和沙立集团的反动统治日益深重和泰国人民的反抗。泰国人民的反美爱国斗争正在迅速发展。

美国帝国主义及其沙立集团的反动统治日益深重和泰国人民的反抗。泰国人民的反美爱国斗争正在迅速发展。

泰国的军事开支共达二十九亿零一百九十万泰铢,占总支出的34%。实际的军事开支往往要占总支出的一半左右。这大大地加深了泰国的财政危机。

在曼谷的机场和训练下,泰国政府最近已下令沙立集团成员和军官部队训练泰国。美国驻曼谷的军事代表团,最近已派出一支由美国军官组成的军事代表团,到泰国训练泰国军官。

## 泰国爱国工人联合会宣告成立 支持泰国爱国阵线推翻他依政府赶走美帝

新华社十九日讯 曼谷消息:泰国爱国工人联合会已经在“五一”国际劳动节宣告成立。

联合会是在五月一日发表宣言说,“我们要保卫自己的权利,我们要同全国人民一起为独立和民主权利而斗争。我们要为推翻他依政府赶走美帝国主义而斗争。只有这样,才是我们泰国工人目前唯一出路。”

文告说,“我们爱国爱民的工人,支持泰国爱国阵线和完全同意它的六项政策。我们认为,现在是我们工人同全国同胞一起为国家贡献力量的时候。因此,在五月一日,我们工人的节日里,我们组织了‘泰国爱国工人联合会’,并以泰国

爱国阵线六项政策为我们的宗旨。”

文告谴责沙立集团在一九五八年十月二十日发动政变以后,立即采取了解散工会、逮捕工人和剥夺工人权利等镇压措施,并采取各种手段破坏工人为争取生活权利而展开的斗争。文告说,沙立——他依政府与外国垄断资本,给它们尤其是给美帝国主义在泰国投资的特权,使不少泰国人开办的工厂倒闭,工人大批失业。而外国垄断资本的工厂却肆无忌惮和最有效地压迫和剥削工人和劳动者。

文告说,更甚者,他依政府继承沙立集团的美国独裁政策,使泰国完全变成美帝国主义的殖民地。尤其是最近

近一个时期,他依政府同美帝国主义相勾结,把泰国变成侵略越南南方和攻击越南北方的陆、空军基地,干涉老挝、柬埔寨和其他邻国内政。推行美帝国主义挑动印度支那战争的计划。

现实生活教育了工人,它使我们清楚地认识到,他依政府是帝国主义执行美国独裁政策的工具,是工人的敌人,也是泰国人民的敌人。

文告最后说,“我们工人的生活状况日益困苦,我们国家正处于生死存亡的关头。除了以上出路外别无其他出路。我们号召全体爱国爱民的工人同志们,在泰国爱国工人联合会的旗帜下团结起来,为坚决实现六项政策而斗争。”

『人民日报』1965年5月20日, p.4.

『人民日报』1961年9月11日, p.3.

1964年11月1日  
1965年1月1日  
1965年5月1日  
1966年2月15日

The Thailand Independent Movement  
Thailand Patriotic Front  
Thailand Patriotic Laborer Association  
Thailand Patriotic Youth Organization

on a large scale. Military expenditure steadily. According to an official Thai Defence Department, between January 1961 and 1962, military expenditure

On August 7, 1965, in Nabua village, Nakhon Phanom,

## First confrontation between communist fighters and Thai security forces

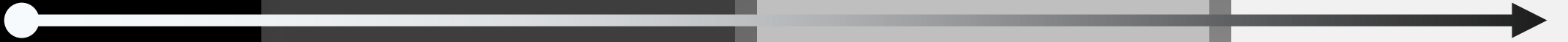
In December 1965, the Communist Suppression Operations Command  
was established

The number of clashes between guerrillas and government forces  
232 in 1967 to 670 in 1972





From 1960s to 2010s: 4 Periods, 4 Perception



Period 1

Period 2

Period 3

Period 4

**CONFRONTATION**  
(1949~1968)

**ADJUSTMENT**  
(1968~1978)

**HONEYMOON**  
(1978~1989)

**FRIENDSHIP**  
(1989~)

DEVIL



1968



a shift in the  
U.S.'s Vietnam  
policy.

## Thai Leader's Opinion toward Establishment of Relations with PRC in Cabinet



### Support

FM Thanat

some members from the House of  
Representatives

### Oppose

PM Thanom

Deputy PM Prapas  
Deputy PM Pot  
Commerce Minister Bunchana  
Deputy FM Sagna



1971 China entered UN → Thanom start to approach China

- 1971 -Criticism against Beijing was toned down
- 1972 -Ping pong Diplomacy Between Thailand and China.  
-Thai delegation Joined the 12<sup>th</sup> Canton Trade Fair
- 1973 -Instructed Thai ambassador in main cities around the world  
to increase the contact with Chinese representatives.



July 1, 1975 The Establishment of diplomatic relations between Thai and  
China (Kukrit's Government)

# How to justify the sudden change in policy?

In a press conference on October 29, 1971,

“Communism and Red China are different. Red China is not enemy of Thailand, only communism is.”  
*Prachathippatai*, 1971 October 31.



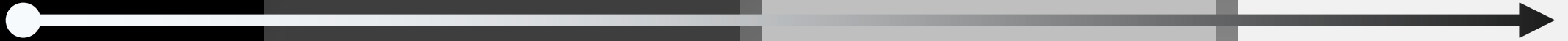
a “converted criminal.”  
Puangthong (2006)

**China**

**Communism**

“criminal”  
“invader”

From 1960s to 2010s: 4 Periods, 4 Perceptions



Period 1

Period 2

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Period 4

**CONFRONTATION**  
(1949~1968)

**ADJUSTMENT**  
(1968~1978)

**HONEYMOON**  
(1978~1989)

**FRIENDSHIP**  
(1989~)

DEVIL

a "converted criminal"



- **December 25, 1978** Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia
    - In January 1979, the Beijing-backed Pol Pot regime of the Khmer Rouge was expelled from Cambodia and replaced by the Hanoi-backed Heng Samrin.
  - **February 17, 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War**
  - **June 23, 1980, Vietnam troop invade Thailand. It conquered 7 villages.**
- China and Thai share common enemy(Vietnam)
- Convergence of national interest
- **Unofficial Strategic Partner**



# Arms transfer and arms sales

|             | Armor/Artillery 装甲・砲   | Missiles<br>ミサイル                               | Naval Vessels<br>艦艇 | Aircraft<br>航空機 |
|-------------|--|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1982年<br>供与 | AK-47、RPG 擲弾発射筒、弾薬な どの小火器供与  |  |                     |                 |
| 1985年<br>供与 | ・ T-59主戦闘戦車24 両<br>・ 130ミリ砲18門<br>・ 37ミリ対空砲<br>・ 85ミリ対戦車砲  |  |                     |                 |
| 1986        |  |  | ・ ロメオ型潜水艦<br>3台     |                 |
| 1987        | ・ T-69-II 主戦闘戦車30両<br>・ 対空高射砲55門<br>・ 装甲兵員輸送車（APC）800両<br>・ RPG 擲弾発射筒3000門<br>・ レーダー誘導シス テム付きの37ミ<br>リ高射砲30基 |  |                     |                 |
| 1988        | ・ 装甲兵員輸送車（APC）360両<br>・ 多連装ロケット弾発射機60?台<br>・ T-69-II 主戦闘戦車23両  | ・ HQ-2B地対空ミサ<br>イル12基<br>・ HY-5携帯対空ミサ<br>イル18基 | 江滬型フリゲート<br>艦4隻     |                 |
| 1989        |  |  | 江滬型フリゲート<br>艦6隻     | F-7航空機3機        |
| 1990        |  | C-801艦対艦ミ サイ<br>ル50基                           |                     |                 |

## Thai-Chinese strategic cooperation


|      |   |
|------|---|
| 1978 | trade agreement<br>Science and technology cooperation agreement   |
| 1979 | Thailand-China Long Term Trade Agreement<br>Thailand-China Airline Agreement<br>Thailand-China Shipping Agreement |
| 1985 | Thailand-China Economic Agreement   |
| 1986 | Establishment of Thai-China Trade Investment Promotion Association  |

| 人物                                 | 期間                                      |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1) 王室                              |   |
| ①シリントーン王女（ラーマ9世の次女）                | 1981年5月、1990年4月、1991年3月                 |
| ②ナラーティワートラーチャナカリン王女（ラーマ8世、ラーマ9世の姉） | 1985年5月、1985年12月、1987年4月                |
| ③ワチラロンコン皇太子                        | 1987年2月、1988年7月                         |
| ④チュラーポーン王女（ラーマ9世の三女）               | 1988年12月                                |
| 2) 政府指導者                           |   |
| ①首相－クリエンサック・チャナマン                  | 1978年3月末～4月初                            |
| ②首相－ブレーム・ティンスラーノン                  | 1980年10月、1982年11月                       |
| ③首相－チャートチャーイ・チュンハワン                | 1988年11月、1989年3月、1989年10月、1990年11月      |
| ④首相－アーナン・パンヤーラチュン                  | 1991年9月                                 |
| ⑤副首相－スントーン・ホンラダーロム                 | 1979年1月、1980年10月                        |
| ⑥副首相兼タイ国軍最高司令官－サム・ナナコーン            | 1981年5月                                 |
| ⑦副首相－ピチャイ・ラッタクン                    | 1984年12月                                |
| ⑧副首相－チャートチャーイ・チュンハワン               | 1986年9月、1987年10月                        |
| ⑨副首相－ポン・サーラシン                      | 1987年6月                                 |
| 副首相－チャワリット・ヨンジャイユット                | 1990年6月                                 |
| ⑩外相－シティ・サウェートシラー                   | 1984年7月、1985年6月、1986年1月、1987年8月、1989年3月 |
| ⑪外相－ワット・パンナヤン                      | 1990年11月                                |
| 3) 国民議会                            |   |
| ①国会議長－ハリン・ホンサクン                    | 1979年10月                                |
| ②国会議長－ジャールブット・ルアンスワン               | 1983年8月                                 |
| ③国会議長－ウグリット・モンコンナーヴィン              | 1985年7月、1988年9月                         |
| ④下院議長－ブンテーン・トーンサワット                | 1980年11月                                |
| ⑤下院議長－ウタイ・ピムチャイチョン                 | 1983年8月                                 |
| 4) 軍部                              |   |
| ①タイ国軍最高司令官のサイユット・クートポン             | 1983年8月                                 |
| ②タイ国軍最高司令官兼陸軍司令官<br>アーティット・カンランエーク | 1984年5月                                 |
| ③最高司令兼陸軍司令官<br>チャワリット・ヨンジャイユット     | 1987年4月、1988年11月                        |
| ④陸軍司令官－スチンダー・クラープラユーン              | 1991年7月                                 |
| ⑤海軍司令官－プラパット・チャンタヴィラット             | 1984年6月                                 |
| ⑥空軍司令官－パニアン・カーンタラット                | 1981年5月                                 |
| ⑦空軍司令－プラパン・テウパテミー                  | 1984年6月                                 |

# Leaders’ Mutual Visit in 1980s

| 人物                     | 期間                           |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) 政府指導者               |                              |
| ①副首相・鄧小平               | 1978年11月                     |
| ②国家主席・李先念              | 1985年3月                      |
| ③国家主席・楊尚昆              | 1991年6月                      |
| ④首相・趙紫陽                | 1981年1月末－2月初                 |
| ⑤首相－李鵬                 | 1988年11月、1990年8月             |
| ⑥副総理－田紀雲               | 1986年10月                     |
| ⑦副総理－万里                | 1987年12月                     |
| ⑧外相・黃華                 | 1981年1月末－2月初                 |
| ⑨外相・呉学謙                | 1983年7月末－8月初、1984年2月、1987年4月 |
| 2) 国民議会                |                              |
| ①全国人民代表大会常務委員会副委員長－鄧穎超 | 1980年2月                      |
| ②全国人民代表大会常務委員会副委員長－葉飛  | 1984年12月                     |
| ③中国全国政治協会副主席－呂正操       | 1986年3月                      |
| ④全国人民代表大会常務委員会副委員長榮毅仁  | 1987年2月                      |
| 4) 軍部                  |                              |
| ①中国人民解放軍参謀長－楊得志        | 1983年1月末―2月初、1987年1月         |
| ②中国人民解放軍参謀長－遲浩田        | 1989年8月                      |
| ③中国国防相－秦基偉             | 1989年1月、1990年3月              |
| ④副総参謀長－王尚栄             | 1979年12月                     |
| ⑤空軍司令官－張延発             | 1981年3月、1984年7月              |
| ⑥海軍司令官－葉飛              | 1982年3月                      |

# From 1960s to 2010s: 4 Periods, 4 Perceptions



Period 1

Period 2

Period 3

Period 4

**CONFRONTATION**  
(1949~1968)

**ADJUSTMENT**  
(1968~1978)

**HONEYMOON**  
(1978~1989)

**FRIENDSHIP**  
(1989~)

DEVIL

a “converted criminal”

Unofficial Strategic  
Partner

## Trade Value Thailand and China (Unit : Million Baht)


| 年    | 輸出      | 輸入      | 総額      | 貿易収支    |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1975 | 391     | 344     | 735     | 47      |
| 1989 | 13,899  | 19,175  | 33,074  | -5,276  |
| 1990 | 6,815   | 28,283  | 35,098  | -21,468 |
| 1991 | 8,555   | 29,327  | 37,882  | -20,772 |
| 1992 | 9,801   | 30,979  | 40,780  | -21,178 |
| 1993 | 13,636  | 27,610  | 41,246  | -13,974 |
| 1994 | 23,336  | 34,897  | 58,233  | -11,561 |
| 1995 | 40,868  | 52,187  | 93,055  | -11,319 |
| 1996 | 47,370  | 49,501  | 96,872  | -2,130  |
| 1997 | 55,497  | 69,466  | 124,963 | -13,969 |
| 1998 | 72,845  | 74,806  | 147,664 | -1,952  |
| 1999 | 70,569  | 94,595  | 165,764 | -24,026 |
| 2000 | 113,278 | 135,700 | 248,978 | -22,421 |

Source: Chulacheep Chinwanno. (2010). *35 Pi Khwamsamphan Thang Kanthut Thai-Chin Putthasakkarat 2518-2553*. Adit Patchuban Anakhot. Bangkok: Openbooks, p.130.

- There are more than 300 exchange projects between 2 countries, and more than 1000 delegations visiting each other every year.
- In 2013, China surpassed Japan to become Thailand's biggest trade partner.
- **Thai leaders realized that “China mainly wanted to be recognized and respected as a major power,” they attempted to maintain the relationship by having so-called “consideration” (配慮//客气) toward China and avoiding conflict with it.**

# Thai Reactions to The Tian'An Men Incident

June 5, 1989, PM Chatchai :



Thailand and China have a very close relationship. I would like to express my condolence for what happened. However, I could not express any opinion as it pertains to China's internal affairs.

Department of East Asian Affairs, (Division III), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. (1989). *Khwamsamphan Rawang Prathet Thai Kap Chin Nai Pi 2533 [Thai-China Relations in 1990]* . No.1304-072-302-601-33/06.

June 5, 1989, FM Sitthi Savetsila

Thailand is concerned about China because we have good relations and we fear that the situation might affect Thailand. We hope that China will solve the problem through peaceful means. We believe that China will be able to solve this problem quickly. For what happened, we will not criticize, but we are worried as a neighboring country. Thailand will not condemn China because this is a matter of China's internal affairs.

Ibid.

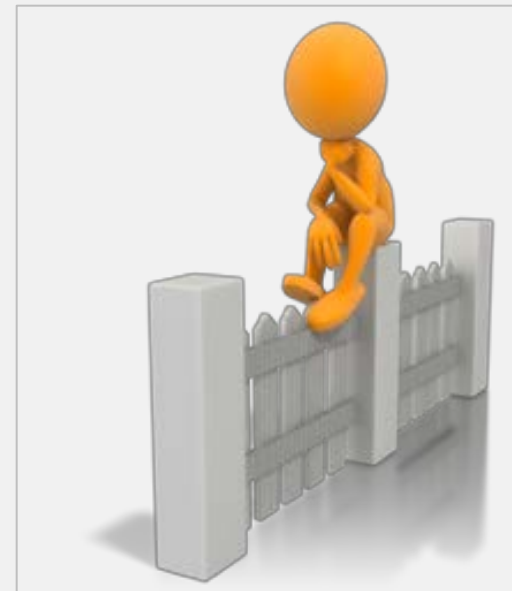


# Thai Stance in South China Sea Issues

- Thailand realized that although it was a member of ASEAN, it could not put good relations with China at stake.

*Thailand, as an “innocent bystander”, is anxious to see the peaceful resolution of the Spratly Islands issue, so that this issue does not dominate relations between China and ASEAN and distract from existing excellent overall relations. The situation may open up opportunities for others to interfere and give rise to an undesirable situation*

Department of East Asian Affairs, (Division III), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. (1995). “Informal Summary of Proceedings at the Thai-Chinese Economic Forum 23-24 March 1995”. *Kan Chaloemchalong Okat Wara Khroprop 20 Pi Khwamsamphan Thai Chin [Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Thai-Chinese Diplomatic Ties]* . No. I1304-072-302-601-3701, p. 3.





# Lee Teng-hui's “vacation diplomacy”

- Lee Teng-hui's visit ASEAN for private vacation in 1994.
- Lee was welcomed by President Suharto when he visited Indonesia, PM Goh Chok Tong and former PM Lee Kuan Yew when visiting Singapore, and PM Mahathir Mohamad when visiting Malaysia. However, when Lee visited Thailand, PM Chuan refrained from meeting Lee but sent Deputy PM Amnuay Viravan for the mission instead.
- Chuan considered this action as “political manners.” This was because Thailand has no diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and the Chinese embassy in Thailand had express disagreement with Lee's visit before.
- Deputy PM Amunay who was in charge of economics informally hosted President Lee at the Blue Canyon golf course in Phuket instead.





# Thaksin government and “Consideration Diplomacy”

- The Thaksin government denied granting visa to Taiwanese MPs and Labor Ministers twice in 2002 and 2003.
- In 2003, Thailand hosted a conference to object to Taiwan’s attempt in staging a referendum for independence that 3000 overseas Chinese attended.
- In 2004, Lu Decheng, a Chinese pro-democracy activist was detained in Thailand.
- In 2001, the Falun Gong was forced to cancel a planned meeting in Bangkok and its members were barred from entering Thailand in 2003
- In 2004, Thai government tried prevent Dalai Lama from entering Thailand.



Katewadee Kulabkaew. (2009). “Sino-Thai relations during the Thaksin administration (2001-2006)”. *Journal of the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies*, 17, pp. 91 – 92

①Top-Down Process: “man-made perception”

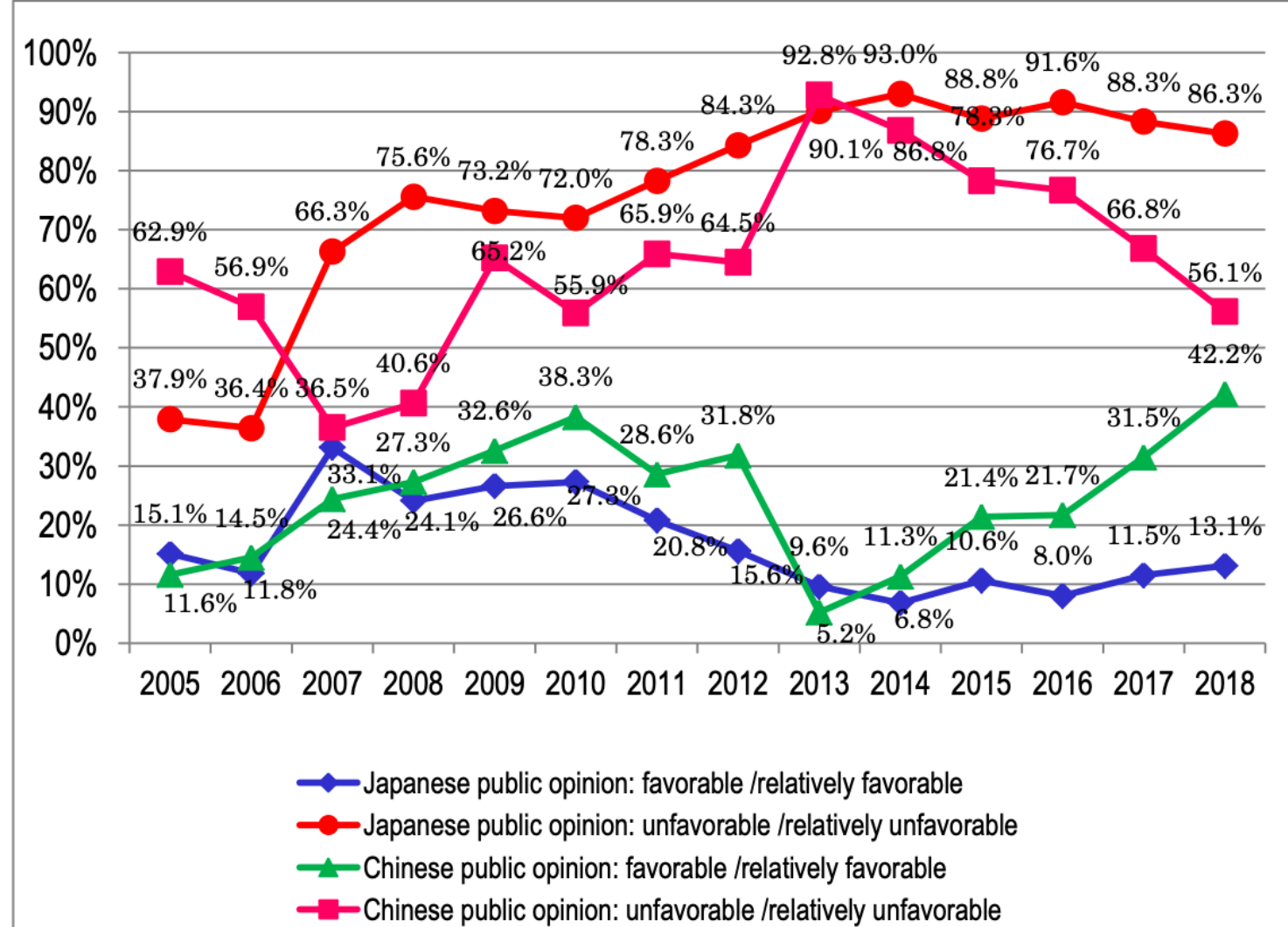
②Outward-in Process (perception caused by International change)

# Summary

|                             | Period 1<br>Confrontation<br>(1949~1968)   | Period 2<br>Adjustment<br>(1968~1978)  | Period 3<br>Honey Moon<br>(1978-1989)   | Period 4<br>Friendship<br>(1989~)   |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Image of China              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Devil</b></li><li>• Biggest Enemy</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UN Member</li><li>• Separated image between China and Communism</li><li>• <b>"Converted criminal"</b></li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Unofficial Strategic Partner</b></li><li>• Enemy of Enemy is Friend</li></ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Friend</b></li></ul>                                   |
| Actions taken by Thai govt. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-Communist, Pro-American Policy</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FM Thanat approach China</li><li>• Other leader's disagreement</li><li>• Coup Detate</li><li>• Military leaders approach China</li><li>• Establishment of diplomatic relations</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen of military ties</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid conflict with China</li></ul>                       |
| International Factor        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cold War</li><li>• Communization of China</li><li>• Korean War</li><li>• Gulf of Tonkin Incident</li><li>• Vietnam War</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The shift in the U.S.'s Vietnam policy</li><li>• China entering UN</li><li>• Communization of Indochina</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vietnam invading Cambodia</li><li>• Arm conflict between Thailand and Vietnam</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rise of China</li><li>• Increase in trade value</li></ul> |
| Domestic Factor             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Long term military administration</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rise of student movement</li><li>• Freedom of Speech</li><li>• Disagreement upon China policy in cabinet</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prem's new Vetnam Policy</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Consideration" of Thai Leaders</li></ul>                 |

Now Let's think about Sino-Japanese Relations

The Genron NPO,  
ANALYSIS PAPER: The  
14th Joint Public Opinion  
Poll between Japan and  
China, Japan- China Public  
Opinion Survey 2018



# #1

①Top-Down Process: “man-made perception”

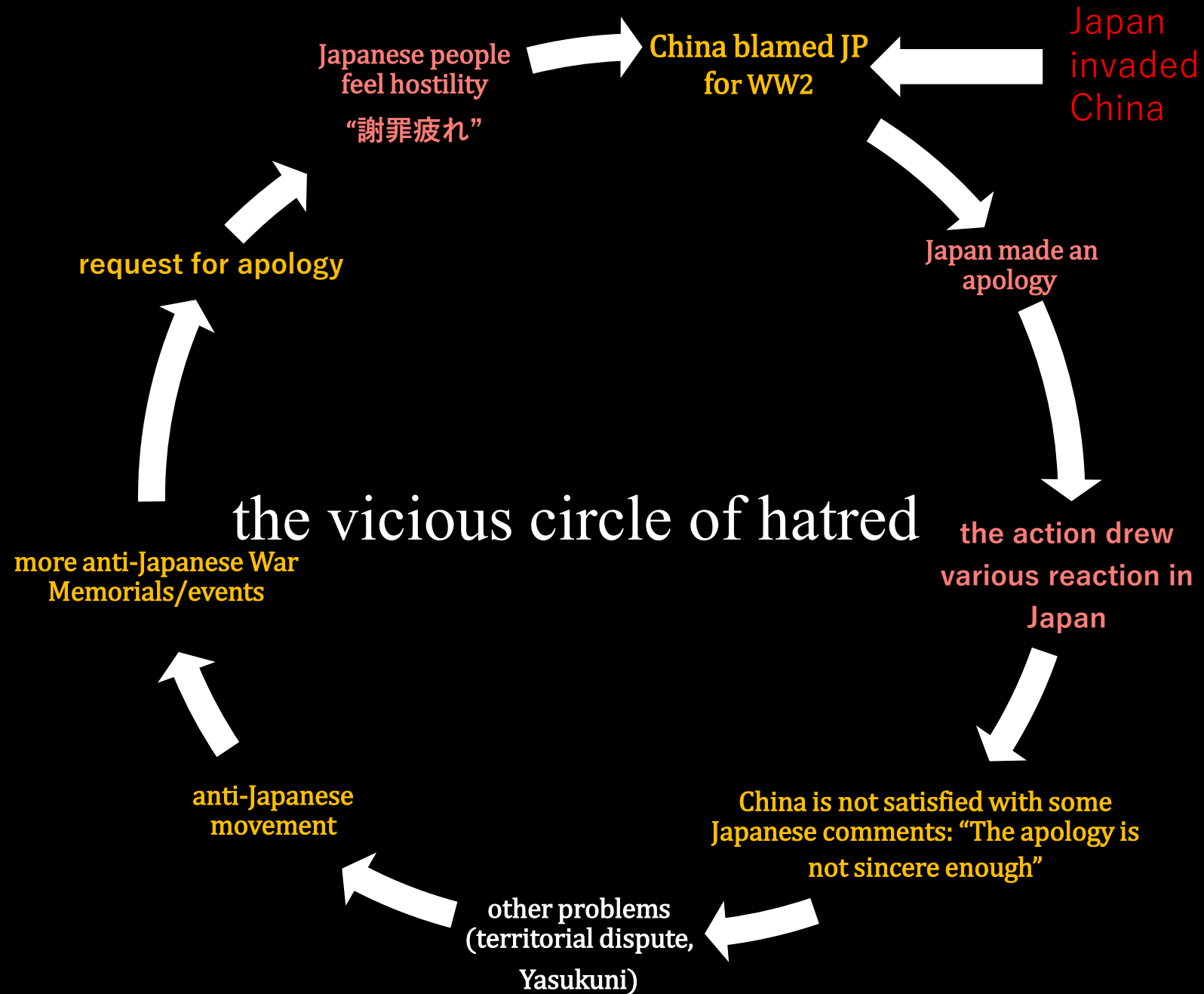
②Outward-in Process (perception caused by International environment)

**Do you think the perception is a “man-made perception”  
or perception caused by International environment?**



# #2

Is the  
“vicious  
circle of  
hatred” is  
forming itself  
between  
**China** and  
**Japan**?



#3

Do you think the so-called “**Consideration Diplomacy**” is necessary or possible to the betterment of Sino-Japanese Relations?



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