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International Cooperation Between Thailand and Democratic Kampuchea

Abstract. This article discusses the cooperation between the Kingdom of Thailand and Democratic Kampuchea in the military, political and economic spheres. Contrary to the popular myth that Democratic Kampuchea was an isolationist country, in reality the country was quite open to the world. Thailand became the first country with which Democratic Kampuchea began to cooperate. Cooperation between the two states began in April 1975, immediately after the victory of the Khmer Rouge over the Khmer Blue regime (better known as the previous ruler Lon Nol), and lasted until the final fall of Democratic Kampuchea under the pressure of the Vietnamese troops in 1979. It can be confidently said that the aspirations of the Thais and Khmers in developing relations were sincere. Thailand has sought to improve relations with its neighbours, and in particular with Kampuchea, undertaking various initiatives even during the standoff from October 1976 to October 1977, not to mention agreeing to border revisions or the joint exploitation of resources along the blurred water border. Democratic Kampuchea also took the initiative and went for rapprochement, and this was especially evident at the eighth Asian Olympic Games, when Kampuchea took part in them only for the sake of Thailand. The period of 1979 was the culmination of the development of friendly relations: from a simply friendly country, Kampuchea became an ally of Thailand. True, in the future, after the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, Thailand will begin to rapidly move away from the Khmer Rouge, who have become increasingly associated with the “bloody genocide of their people”. Then, Thailand, which went out into the world and joined the global system, wanted to have a good reputation and for this broke with the Khmer Rouge

Key words: khmers, government, army, war, coup

Introduction

Initially, the Khmer Rouge did not count on good-neighbourly relations with Thailand and were hostile to it. Being the same centuries-old enemy for Cambodia as Vietnam, Thailand was assigned the role of a dangerous enemy in the eyes of the top leaders of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (that is, the Khmer Rouge). There were two reasons for this attitude. Firstly, Thailand, long before the civil war in Cambodia, established itself in Southeast Asia as a malleable puppet of the United States of America (USA), providing them with political and military support in the form of military bases and airfields. Actually, it was from the airfields of Thailand that Cambodia was bombed before and after the conclusion of the Paris Peace Agreements of 1973, and from its airfields the support of the Blue Khmer regime was carried out. The Americans

in their documents generally noted Thailand as the most important ally in the region [1]. Secondly, hundreds of thousands of Khmers, known as Northern Khmers, have lived and still live in Thailand, who live in the territory referred to in Cambodian as Kampuchea-Khangchung – Northern Kampuchea (Fig. 1). This territory was seized by Thailand between the XV-XVIII centuries and it, like Kampuchea-Krom, was claimed by the Khmer Rouge. However, from the very beginning, Thailand went to a meeting: immediately after the end of the civil war, in the border town of Poipet, the local reds offered border trade to the Thais and they agreed, after that Thailand condemned the aggressive actions of the remnants of the Blue Khmer army and the American operation to liberate the cargo ship “Mayaguez”, and then Thailand agreed to a revision at all borders.

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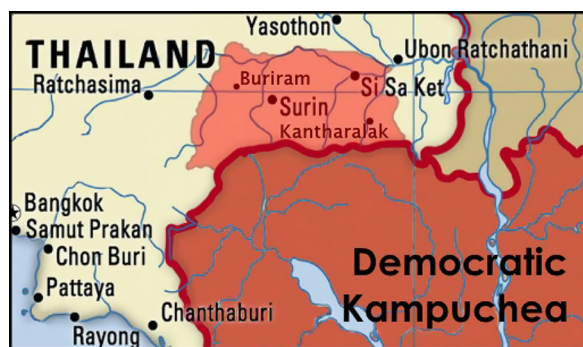


Figure 1. Location of Kampuchea-Khang Cheung – Northern Kampuchea in Thailand

Note: the location of Kampuchea-Khang Cheung – North Kampuchea is highlighted in bright red

One day, on April 25, 1975, local Communist Party functionaries from the then Northwestern Zone, or rather from the border town of Poipet (Fig. 2), sent a delegation of twenty soldiers to the Thai border town of Aranyaprathet, for negotiations on border trade. The delegation stated that the Khmer Rouge would like to open the border as soon as the situation in the country normalizes and added that they want to be friends with Thais [3]. After that, border trade began to develop: goods began to be delivered from Thailand to Kampuchea, mostly gasoline, rice, medicines, salt and clothing, for which the Khmer Rouge paid with American dollars and sometimes even gold products.

Moreover, Thai businessmen provided loans to local representatives of the Communist Party, totaling 20 million baht [4]. However, later the Reds had problems with the Thai authorities due to non-payments on loans [5]. The local communists behaved rather mildly with the Thai local authorities. Perhaps this was a consequence of the remoteness of Phnom Penh and the still weak central government at that time, and perhaps a consequence of some political differences between local and central leaders, as evidenced by the shooting of the secretary of the Northwest Zone Ros Nhim in 1977 on charges of espionage for Thailand.



Figure 2. Map of Cambodia and location of Poipet

Before the war, Poipet was a small town, but even before the war it was known as the city with the largest black market in Cambodia, and most of the smuggled goods passed through it. During the civil war, the town grew and its population reached ten thousand people, everything could be bought and sold in it, and all parties to the conflict

used it: there were both “blue” and “red” merchants in the market. It housed a huge collection of hastily put together shops and huts made of bamboo and iron sheets, in which you could buy, sell and barter rice, canned food, dried fish, vegetables, livestock, weapons, ammunition, gold, silver, clothes, shoes, uniforms, bicycles, cars and much more [6].

However, after the war, on April 24, 1975, the population of the city was evacuated to the countryside, under the pretext of a hypothetical attack by the Thai army on the city. The infrastructure of the city, most likely, remained untouched, and local functionaries decided the next day to resume old contacts with Thai merchants. It was an unofficial (or rather the same contraband) trade that the Thai government, and probably Kampuchea, turned a blind eye to, since local border guards on both sides did not interfere with border trade. In the future, a division of the Ministry of Commerce of Democratic Kampuchea will be created, which will be responsible for trade with Thailand – the Khmer Rouge themselves called it the “Poipet Gate” [7].

The Beginning of Relations and Cooperation Between Countries

Relations between the two countries were improving in parallel with tensions on the Cambodian-Thai border. At this time, the first military clashes took place on the Cambodian-Thai land and water borders: in early May, on the southwestern border, Red troops attacked the territory of two Thai coastal provinces of Trat and Chantaburi, and in the Gulf of Thailand, meanwhile, Red boats attacked Thai cargo and fishing ships that sailed in the Gulf [3]. Accusing Thailand of occupying a number of border territories during the civil war, the Red troops launched offensive operations on the territory of Thailand. Apparently, the Reds did not achieve much success, since there are no reports that the Reds staged anything on Thai territory. With the maritime space, everything was more complicated – the Reds officially declared that Thai fishing and cargo ships violated the maritime borders of Kampuchea and for this they were “detained”, but in fact they were captured. Thailand negotiated the release of sailors and fishermen, but many fishermen were still shot [8-11]. Notably, most likely these clashes were the initiative of local Communist Party functionaries from the South-western Zone, since at the same time, in the north-west, local functionaries invited Thai officials to the celebrations for the liberation of Poipet, held from 7 to 9 May 1975 [4].

Anyway, despite the border clashes, with the support of China [12], relations between Thailand and the Khmer Rouge developed very well, since on April 18, the then Prime Minister of Thailand, Kikrit Pramot, put forward an initiative to recognize the Khmer Rouge government and in the same month Thailand became the first country to recognise their government [13]. At the end of October, after a delegation led by the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kampuchea, Ieng Sary, paid a five-day visit to Thailand, diplomatic relations were finally established between the two countries. The meeting of officials of Cambodia and Thailand in Bangkok ended with the release of a joint communique in which the parties promised to exchange ambassadors, create joint communication groups at the border and committed to mutual respect for the borders. The delegation also stated the need to start official trade between the two countries, since Cambodia is facing a shortage of food. The liaison teams were located in the border provinces along the entire Thai-Cambodian border and were engaged in maintaining contacts between the two sides at the local level.

Their responsibilities included resolving local problems and conflicts at the border, such as fighting, problems with refugees and “illegal immigrants”, and negotiations on trade and other things. After that, official trade began between Bangkok and Phnom Penh: by supplying the same rice, Kampuchea also began to buy sugar, refined oil and salt. The latter was the largest amount, since Thailand was to become the main supplier of salt – the Reds wanted to buy ten thousand tons of salt every month [3], for their fish processing enterprises [8]. The profit for the purchase of salt was planned to be earned on the supply of wood and smoked fish to Thailand.

After the meeting in Poipet of the Foreign Ministers of Thailand and Cambodia – Chatichai Choonhavan and Ieng Sary, respectively, on November 17, a joint Liaison Committee on border issues was established, which was supposed to review the existing border. This was extremely relevant, since there was no demarcation of the border at that time – Thailand did not agree with the border defined back in 1907 between France and Siam, and the territories along the entire Northern Kampuchea-Thailand border remained disputed. Despite the fact that at the end of 1975, the activities of this committee were actually frozen indefinitely (the committee only managed to place border signs in some disputed areas), the consent to the creation of such a committee was a significant step on the part of Thailand. Thanks to this step, relations between the two countries will rapidly improve and eventually become friendly. By the way, Vietnam, on the contrary, refused any border revisions and thereby laid the foundation for enmity between the two countries, although similar initiatives were also taken by local Communist Party functionaries in the Eastern Zone. By the end of the year, the issue of returning refugees back to Cambodia began to be discussed, about 22 thousand of whom had gathered in Thailand by that time, and in early 1976 Thailand began to catch refugees who had fled from Kampuchea and return them back [3; 4; 8].

In 1976, relations continued to improve. In mid-June, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand Bhichai Rattakul and his delegation made a secret trip across the border to the then North-Western Zone, to the territory of the modern province of Banteay Meanchey, where he met with Ieng Sary to discuss numerous issues, including the exchange of ambassadors, international trade, border demarcation, and in particular, the release of Thai fishermen, some of whom were shot by the Reds long before [3]. In the same month, a summit took place on the Kampuchea-Thailand border, after which a trade agreement was concluded in July [4]. After the conclusion of the contract, the flow of goods increased: now flour, potatoes, carrots, soybeans, peanuts, lettuce, cabbage and lettuce seeds, clothing, raincoats, knives, axes, sickles, charcoal, penicillin, quinine, vitamins, petroleum products, sulfuric acid began to be transported from Thailand to Kampuchea, mechanical equipment, machine parts and oils, paints, fabrics, nylon bags and other goods. In turn, Kampuchea supplied rice and rubber, including various types of wood and various fish [8]. Goods from Thailand went directly to Phnom Penh, dozens of trains and heavy trucks. In September 1976, Thai Foreign Minister Bhichai Rattakul discussed with the Government of Democratic Kampuchea

the prospect of extraditing several high-ranking officials of the Lon Nol (Blue Khmer) regime to Kampuchea, in particular the former governor of Battambang and General Sek Sam Iet, whose militants were actively fighting against the Reds and from time to time entered the territory of Kampuchea [3]. A year earlier, in December 1975, the Thai authorities had already expelled several Blue Khmer leaders from their country to Western Europe (including the former Prime Minister of the Khmer Republic In Tam), and the extradition of the remaining high-ranking officials was only a matter of time [8]. But in October 1976, a coup d'état took place in Thailand.

Reasons for Sudden Confrontation

The coup began with unrest caused by the internal split in the country at that time. The unrest began with the arrival in Thailand on September 19, 1976 of former Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn, who ruled by authoritarian methods from 1958 to 1973. His reign was marked by extreme nationalist and anti-communist policies, mass corruption and suppression of democratic freedoms, as well as the enormous influence of the military – Tan himself was a field marshal, he held a number of military government posts and in general, his rule is usually characterized as a military dictatorship. During the Uprising on October 14, raised by activists, workers and students, the Thanom regime was overthrown, after which a turning point occurred in the history of Thailand – traditionally and rather even historically, the military who held power lost it from that moment, and all their subsequent attempts to regain power will be unsuccessful and subsequent military regimes will not exist for a long time. The return of Thanom Kittikachorn caused mass protests, the largest of which was a rally of left-wing students of Thammasat University. The rally continued until October 6, when the police and far-right activists with militants, with the support of the government, did not arrive at the scene and dispersed it. The crackdown turned into a massacre, in which approximately 7 thousand people participated in total, and as a result of which about 100 protesters were lynched, shot or burned [14].

In the evening of the same day, the far-right militants, with the support of the police, went to the government residence and demanded the resignation of the incumbent Prime Minister Seni Pramoj, after which, taking advantage of the situation, the military, led by Admiral Sangad Chaloryu, took power into their own hands and proclaimed the creation of the “National Council for Administrative Reform”. Two days later, the military junta appointed Supreme Court judge and ultraconservative Thanin Kraivichien as head of government. It is worth noting that the Thai population in the majority did not resist or even supported the coup, fearing civil war and the “red threat”, which manifested itself in strengthening the underground Communist Party of Thailand and the entire communist Indochina. The new regime returned to the old policy of pro-Americanism and anti-communism, which dramatically affected relations between Thailand and Democratic Kampuchea.

The new Thai military government immediately began to exert aggressive pressure on Kampuchea. Despite the fact that Thai officials often complained that the Cambodian

authorities did not go to the meeting, the Thai government itself preferred to act from a position of strength. So, in January 1977, the Thai government imposed a ban on official visits to socialist countries and, in particular, to the countries of Indochina [3], and in February of the same year actually imposed an embargo against Kampuchea [8]. Democratic Kampuchea really did not go to the meeting and ignored Thai appeals, and this was a typical policy of the Kampuchea leadership – they also behaved towards the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and other countries that were considered hostile [5]. However, the attitude of the communist leadership of Kampuchea to the Thai military government can be traced in a memorandum set out in the memorandum of the directory of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Democratic Kampuchea, written on February 4, 1977, in which the Ministry's employees were reminded of the “Thai essence”: *“An extremely sad past, for which the fascist government of Thailand, a lackey the American imperialists are responsible for participating in the destructive aggressive war of the American imperialists against the nation and people of Kampuchea. At that time, the reactionary government of Thailand, headed by Thanom-Prapas, handed over Thailand to the American imperialists to create many important military bases for their air, naval and ground forces. Troops, planes of all kinds and the most modern weapons were assembled there, which were used to destroy Kampuchea and exterminate its people”* [5].

Already in early November 1976, fighting resumed between Thai and Kampuchea troops on the border [3]. If from April 1975 to October 1976, an estimated several dozen clashes took place on the Thai-Kampuchea border, then after that, during the period from October 1976 to October 1977, when the military regime of Thanin Kraivichien was overthrown, more than four hundred clashes took place on the border, which were much larger and in which sometimes took part up to six or eight hundred soldiers on both sides. Most of the clashes before the coup took place not with the Thai army, but with former soldiers of the army of the Khmer Republic (Blue Khmer). Now, all the clashes took place with the Thai military or with peasant “self-defense” detachments armed by them. The Thai military government, in addition to interrupting diplomatic relations and trade, also took a number of other actions that increased the discord between the two countries. So, Thailand has actually closed the borders with Kampuchea: by the end of 1975, the land border between the two countries became open and accessible for ordinary Thais and Khmer to cross, but since the beginning of 1977, additional troops were sent to the border and border patrols were strengthened to block all land communication [4]. The fleet was also strengthened in the border waters of the Gulf of Thailand, which regularly violated the border and clashed with Kampuchea ships: the first clash between the Revolutionary Naval Forces of Kampuchea and the Royal Thai Navy occurred on February 22, 1976, when six Thai ships invaded the waters of Kampuchea and opened fire on Khmer patrol boats, sinking one of them [15; 16].

Thai aviation also participated in the border war between Thailand and Kampuchea, which bombed the camps of the Communist Party of Thailand located on the

territory of Kampuchea [8]. In many ways, the reason for such activity of this border war was inaccurate borders: the lack of a clear demarcation of borders made a big contribution and military units of both countries could fight for the same piece of territory for a very long time. One of the most striking examples of the scale of clashes on the border are the two worst incidents of all time. The first such incident occurred on the night of January 28, 1977, when about 300 Cambodian soldiers carried out a three-way attack on the Thai villages of Ban Nong Do, Ban Klong Ho and Ban Noi Parai, in Sa Kaeu Province, Aranyaprathet district. Twenty-one Thai villagers, including women and children, were killed in the attack. In the village of Ban Nong Do, all the houses were set on fire. When Thailand sent a protest note to the Kampuchea Government, it replied that those villages were on the territory of Kampuchea, implying that they could do whatever they wanted there. The second incident occurred in August in the same province, in the Tafrai district: soldiers attacked the villages of Ban Sanlo Changane, Ban Sangay and Ban Kasange, twenty-nine Thai peasants were killed during the attack, and according to eyewitnesses, Cambodian soldiers looted houses [3]. Over time, all the attacks of the Kampuchean soldiers began to be accompanied by looting, which was caused by an unusual move of the Kampuchean commanders – they deliberately relaxed discipline in their ranks and allowed their soldiers to rob. Thus, they increased the ferocity of their fighters.

Basically, they robbed food, livestock, and jewelry that could be exchanged at underground markets that were located all over the country. However, it was not only the Cambodian soldiers who attacked the Thais: in the last days of January 1977, Thai soldiers attacked the Khmers, and with the loss of thirty dead Thais, inflicted losses of four hundred Khmers on the Kampucheans. This incident was so impressive that Vietnam made an official statement that it would defend Kampuchea from “Thai armed provocations” [6]. Kampuchea increased the concentration of troops on the Thai border, despite the fact that most of the troops of the Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea had to concentrate on the eastern border with Vietnam, and strengthened its naval presence in the Gulf of Thailand. Thanks to Chinese support, which was expressed in the provision, in particular, of weapons and military specialists, the Khmer Rouge managed to create an impressive defense strip and deter Thai aggression. In 1976 alone, China delivered one thousand tons of military equipment, ammunition, communications equipment and others to Kampuchea [7], and in the meantime, Chinese specialists were reorganizing the army and repairing military facilities. At one of these, at a renovated naval base in the city of Koh Kong, trawlers and other fishing vessels were converted into various patrol boats, and about twenty vessels were converted there in total [15; 16]. The Thai military leadership had nothing to answer with except arming Thai peasants at the border, thereby creating a kind of “self-defense units” with minimal military training, but this was probably not enough [3].

In many ways, the Thai far-right military government went to a confrontation with Kampuchea because of fear of the theory of the “Domino Effect”, which consisted

in the fact that after the victory of the communist movements in Indochina, communism would spread further, and thus conquer the whole of Asia. And it is worth pointing out that the Thais had reasons for fear: firstly, Thailand actually found itself in a red environment – Kampuchea with the Khmer Rouge was located to the southeast, Laos with Pathet Lao to the east, Burma with Lanzin to the west; secondly, in Thailand itself since the mid-1960s The Communist Party of Thailand conducted underground guerrilla activities, which was also supported by Kampuchea, Vietnam, China and a number of other countries. In particular, Kampuchea allowed the Communist Party of Thailand to place on its territory twelve bases and training centers for its fighters, which included various special schools: military-political, medical, intelligence, sabotage. For example, the women's school “The Eighth of March” taught its students to create bombs and mines from improvised materials [8]. After the October 6 coup in Thailand, the military junta began repressions against the radical left student movement, after which five thousand students fled to the territories controlled by the Communist Party to join them [13]. The Khmer Rouge created a school for them “On the Sixth of October”, where they were trained in various disciplines [4]. In December 1977, a secret agreement was concluded between the Khmer and Thai Communists, which provided for the creation of mixed Kampuchea-Thai detachments for operations in the northeastern part of Thailand, as well as, in case of a particularly good moment, a possible invasion of Kampuchea into Thailand to support the Communist Party of Thailand [8].

The agreement was concluded between the Secretary of the Northwest Zone Ros Nhim and representatives of the Northeast Committee of the Communist Party of Thailand. The Northeast Committee of the Communist Party of Thailand was distinguished by the fact that it was located on the territory of Kampuchea-Khang Cheung and mainly consisted of local Khmer-Khang Cheung. Also, almost all the Communist Party guerrilla units in the northeast of Thailand consisted of local Khmers. With the support of the Khmer Rouge, the Northeast Committee became a de facto autonomous structure, which even took its own separate name for itself – “Angka Siam”, which translates from Khmer as “Organization of Siam”. The Khmer Rouge had such a great influence on the Northeast Committee that it caused concern not only to the Thai far-right military government, but also to the Communist Party of Thailand itself, which led to restrictive measures against Angka Siam by the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of Thailand in mid-1978 [8]. However, this did not significantly shake the position of the Communist Party itself – at that time it controlled almost one tenth of the country's territory and their positions would only be shaken when China stopped supporting them in 1979 [6]. Northeast Thailand as a whole differs from the rest of Thailand in that there is a much larger non-Thai population, primarily Khmers, followed by Laotians, Vietnamese and various tribal nationalities – in the 70s they collectively formed a significant counterweight to the local Thai population. The Khmer population of Thailand was located in addition to the southern part of the Northeastern region of Thailand – Kampuchea-Khang Cheung, also in the central part of the northeast and in the eastern

part of the eastern region of Thailand (Fig. 3). It is estimated that in total, at the time of January 1975, about 400 thousand

Khmers lived in Thailand, 95% of whom lived in the east and northeast.



Figure 3. Kampuchea-Khang Cheung – Northern Kampuchea, mid-1970s

Note: Kampuchea-Khang Cheung – Northern Kampuchea is highlighted in dark red; the rest of the Khmer territories are highlighted with a red stripe

In total, the military government of Thanin Kraivichien only aggravated the situation in Thailand, bringing the country to a cliff and turning the threat of civil war into a real scenario. Moreover, it created the risk of war with Kampuchea and turned the possibility of war with Vietnam into a reality. Instead of containing the “red threat”, Thailand received paramilitary Kampuchea and Vietnamese troops on the border with Laos, which in June 1977 allowed Vietnam to keep its troops on Lao territory [17]; the repressive policy of the government led to the strengthening and strengthening of the positions of the

Communist Party of Thailand. The Communist Party became so strong that it could afford to attack the inviolable persons of the royal family. So, two attacks were committed – an unsuccessful attack on the king, and a successful attack on the queen’s secretary with a fatal outcome [3]. By the mid-1970s, multi-faceted insurgency movements had become part of the life of the Thai kingdom. The rule of the ultra-right government of Tanin caused great discontent among Thais, including among other military. During Tanin’s reign, there were two attempts to overthrow his regime: the first occurred in March 1977, led by General

Chalard Hiranyasiri, but the attempt was unsuccessful and on Thanin's orders, Chalard Hiranyasiri was executed; the second occurred in October 1977, when on the 20th a faction of officers in the Armed Forces, called the "Young Turks" together with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, General Kriangsak Chamanan, with the support of Sangad Chaloyu, a successful coup was carried out, and the ultra-right government was overthrown. Kriangsak Chamanan became prime minister, far-right officers were replaced by officers of the left-wing Young Turks faction, and the leader of the last coup, Admiral Sangad Chaloyu, did not receive a single post in the government.

Resumption of Cooperation and New Development of Relations Between the Countries

The Kampuchea government still had distrust of the already new Thai junta. So, on the night of November 1-2, 1977, Red soldiers crossed the border and attacked several Thai villages in Sa Kaeu, in mid-December, more than two hundred soldiers of the combined forces of the Khmer Rouge and Angka Siam attacked two Thai border villages in the same province, and at the end of January 1978, two villages were attacked in the same province and an outpost in the Sangha district of Surin province. However, despite this, already in January 1978, contacts between Thailand and Kampuchea resumed. During the reign of Thanin, Kriangsak Chamanan put forward initiatives to normalise relations with Kampuchea and at the same time with Laos, offering to provide them with humanitarian assistance [3]. Shortly after the coup, the Thai Foreign Ministry announced a new policy to improve relations with the countries of Indochina. Back on October 12, 1977, Thai Foreign Minister Upadit Pachariyangkun held a meeting at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York with Ieng Sary, during which both ministers agreed to end the confrontation and establish cooperation "for the sake of peace in Indochina" [8]. A few days after the coup, the Democratic Kampuchea government issued a cautious and conciliatory statement about "a cordial meeting between Thai Foreign Minister Upadit and Ieng Sary in New York on October 12." Two weeks later, in early November, the capital's radio station Radio Phnom Penh sent a message to Bangkok that it wanted to hold talks to resolve border disputes, and despite the attacks a few days before, Bangkok reciprocated [3].

Most likely, the Khmer Rouge was pushed to these actions not so much by the desire to normalise relations, but by the border war with Vietnam that had lasted for ten months and the need to enlist support and secure the rear. Anyway, once again with the support of China, relations between the two countries began to normalise. By the way, Thailand has also improved relations with Laos and Vietnam. Immediately after the coup, the new Prime Minister of Thailand, Kriangsak, sought rapprochement with the countries of Indochina. Back in the same New York, on October 12, 1977, Upadit held talks with Vietnamese representatives – with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam Nguyen Duy Trinh about establishing friendly relations, and there about establishing friendly relations with the Deputy Prime Minister of Laos

Phun Sipaseut. Continuing the planned course, on December 2 of the same year, Thailand and Vietnam issued a joint communique in which both countries expressed their desire for immediate normalisation of relations [3]. Vietnam saw great prospects in developing friendly relations with Thailand, hoping to benefit from the country's further recovery from the Vietnam War and enlist Thailand's support in the confrontation with Democratic Kampuchea and China, which began on its own initiative when it carried out an attack on Kampuchea in December 1977 [6]. In 1978, Thailand signed a number of trade agreements and a transit agreement with Laos. In September of the same year, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong visited Thailand and assured the Thai leadership during the negotiations that Vietnam would not support the communist uprising if it happened [13]. Shortly before that, Vietnam had stopped supporting the Communist Party of Thailand, so the Thai leadership had reason to trust the Vietnamese.

In late January 1978, Uppadit visited Phnom Penh, where he discussed with the Kampuchea government the possibility of ending border clashes, and prospects for the development of political and trade relations, including: issues of the exchange of ambassadors, the opening of a fish market on one of the coastal islands and the opening of a checkpoint on the border [4]. During the negotiations, Upadit personally met with the Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, Pol Pot's, and in particular, gave him a letter from Kriangsak with assurances of Thailand's desire to establish friendly relations with Democratic Kampuchea [8]. Immediately after the negotiations, the Thai government announced a plan to open the entire border with Kampuchea and Laos, to resume cross-border trade and the flow of goods they need [3]. The recent clashes on the Kampuchea-Thailand border were blamed on an unspecified "third force", as Upadit stated at the talks: "We deeply regret that a misunderstanding caused by a third party took place and caused a number of actions during the last period" [18]. Despite the ongoing clashes throughout 1978, although not comparable to the clashes before that, relations continued to improve. In July 1978, Ieng Sary paid another friendly visit to Thailand, during which, in Bangkok, the Foreign Minister of Kampuchea was granted an audience with the then King of Thailand Bhumibol Adulyadej and Crown Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The visit ended with the signing of agreements in Bangkok [8], which provided for the final opening of embassies, the further development of trade and further visits of trade delegations, the establishment of cooperation in scientific and technical fields, the introduction of direct telegraphic communication between Bangkok and Phnom Penh.

In addition, an agreement was also signed on the joint exploitation of resources along the entire disputed water border between the Thai and Kampuchea maritime economic zones in the Gulf of Thailand. Most likely, in the future, a joint Thai-Kampuchea economic zone would be created to exploit resources along the entire maritime border, as was done with the maritime border of Thailand and Malaysia in June 1979. An agreement was also signed on the opening of passenger airlines between Bangkok and Phnom Penh, and the opening, most likely, of a separate tourist airline between Bangkok and Siem Reap. For the

latter, the Kampuchea government conducted separate negotiations with Thai private travel companies, and in November allowed one of the Thai travel companies to organise one-day tourist visits to Angkor Wat by tourists [19]. By the way, tourism was of great importance in the plans of the Khmer Rouge in general, as was written in the “Party four-year plan for the construction of socialism in all spheres” and subsequent documents. The pinnacle of good-neighborly relations between the two countries was the participation of the sports delegation of Democratic Kampuchea in the opening of the eighth Asian Olympic Games, held on the eve of the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea – from December 9 to December 20, 1978 in Bangkok. According to the Kampuchea newsletter for November-December 1978, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea – “Democratic Kampuchea News Bulletin”, the Kampuchea delegation arrived in Bangkok on December 6 and stayed there until December 13, after which it left the game for unknown reasons.

Most likely, Kampuchea took part in the Games only for the sake of further development of good-neighborly relations with Thailand, since Kampuchea had never been eager to participate in various Asian events and organisations before. Thus, Kampuchea openly refused the offer to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) when this issue was raised at the talks of the Foreign Ministers of Malaysia and Kampuchea in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, in March 1977 [5]. Cambodia actually left the Asian Games Federation in the mid-1960s and a number of other sports organizations, such as the Southeast Asian Games Federation, and did not participate in the subsequent 1966 Games, citing political considerations. Cambodia briefly resumed its membership in sports federations during the Khmer Republic, but left them again in 1975. Kampuchea's participation in the 1978 Asian Olympic Games was the first such event for the Khmer Rouge, and they continued to participate in them in the future. So, for example, Cambodia returned to the Southeast Asian Games Federation after the occupation of Cambodia by the Vietnamese army in 1983, in the form of a Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and continued to be a member of it until leaving it in 1989 [20].

Thailand and the Khmer Rouge are the Ultimate Allies

At the end of 1978, on December 25, the Vietnamese People's Army, with the forces of 12 divisions, numbering 200 thousand people, invaded Democratic Kampuchea. They were opposed by units of the Revolutionary Army of Kampuchea, totaling about 80 thousand soldiers. Despite the total size of the army of 200-250 thousand, the army at that time was engaged in suppressing the internal resistance of various anti-Coup movements, including the pro-Vietnamese “United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea”, created with the support of the Vietnamese government from the pro-Vietnamese Khmer Communists. Unable to stop the Vietnamese offensive, on January 7, 1979, Vietnamese troops entered Phnom Penh, left without a fight, the next day the People's Republic of Kampuchea was proclaimed the Salvation Front (in fact, the front and the newly formed government were subordinate to the

Vietnamese command), and on January 12, the last stronghold of the integral resistance of the Vietnamese army, the Kampong Chnang Air base, fell. After that, the Vietnamese-Kampuchea front collapsed, and the Vietnamese army began a rapid advance to the west – on January 14, the advanced Vietnamese units entered Siem Reap, which was engulfed by the anti-Polish uprising, and on January 20, Vietnamese troops reached the border. As a result, the Kampuchea government and the 50,000 remnants of the Kampuchea army were pressed against the Thai border, and Vietnamese troops now stood along the entire eastern border of Thailand [3].

This state of affairs did not suit Thailand at all: Thai politicians were absolutely not ready to put up with the “communist threat” in the form of Vietnamese troops right at the borders, and the Thai army was not at all ready to resist the Vietnamese army. Since the end of World War II, the Royal Thai Army has gradually begun to shift priorities from protecting the country from external aggression to fighting internal insurgents, considering a foreign invasion unlikely. In view of this, the Thai army began to gradually lose its defense capability, and the concentration of troops to fight the rebels with subsequent dispersal throughout the country negated their ability to repel foreign aggression. The invasion of the Vietnamese army into Kampuchea with its subsequent occupation changed the whole situation – along the entire eastern border of Thailand there was a huge Vietnamese group with a total of 190 thousand soldiers (140 thousand in Cambodia [13], and 50 thousand in Laos [17]), supported by troops of the Lao People's Army of about 10 thousand soldiers and formations The People's Republic of Kampuchea, which in the first half of the 80s will reach the number of 30 thousand soldiers [13]. Thailand on the Thai-Kampuchea border, in addition to those already present, was able to oppose only individual units of several divisions, with a total strength of no more than 5-10 thousand soldiers. The Thais tried their best to protect the southeastern border, constantly increasing their troops and trying to supply them with the necessary weapons, but it soon became obvious that it was simply impossible for the Thai army alone to secure the border. Needing a buffer between Thais and Vietnamese as a vital shield, Thailand began to fully support the Khmer Rouge.

The day after the fall of Phnom Penh, on January 8, 1979, Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak and two high-ranking members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China secretly met at the Thai U-Tapao Air Base to develop a policy of Thai-Chinese cooperation in the fight against the Vietnamese threat. At the meeting, a secret agreement was concluded, according to which an operational center for coordinating the activities of Chinese special services in Southeast Asia was created at the former American Takhli airbase. The parties also agreed to provide Chinese military and civilian cargo planes with access to Thai military airfields to supply the Khmer Rouge with weapons, and China also undertook to supply the Thai army with modern weapons and take direct part in the event that Vietnam attacks Thailand [4]. The Chinese supplied the Thais in an unusual way – the Thai army, by prior agreement, appropriated part of the Chinese weapons supplied to the Khmer Rouge, and thus

was regularly supplied by China. In addition to this, in February 1979, Kriangsak went to Washington to enlist the support of the United States in the modernization of the Thai army, to which the United States of America responded favorably [13]. Thus, Thailand enlisted international support, which reduced the fear of the Vietnamese.

Next, on January 21, 1979, Thailand recognized the Government of the Communist Party of Kampuchea as the only legitimate and legitimate government of Kampuchea, thereby publicly announcing the non-recognition of the pro-Vietnamese People's Republic of Kampuchea [8]. Representatives and leaders of the Communist Party received the right of residence and free movement in Thailand, and unhindered departure and return to the country. Then, Thailand allowed the Khmer Rouge to establish their military bases and camps on its territory, and later, on June 27, 1979, the Thai government allocated the territory near the city of Trat for a special zone for the political leadership of the Khmer Rouge. In the future, Bureau 87 will be founded there – the informal headquarters of the Khmer Rouge [4]. In fact, from that moment on, the Khmer Rouge began to be considered by the Thai government as allies: the Kampuchean army was freely located on the territory of Thailand, the de facto Kampuchean government in exile was freely located on its territory, and in addition to everything, Thailand began to promote the recognition and support of the Khmer Rouge. First, Singapore joined Thailand, with which the Khmers had built good relations long before the overthrow, and then all the ASEAN countries, with the exception of two Muslim countries – Malaysia and Indonesia, consistently took their side. The Khmer Rouge pursued a repressive policy towards Muslims and other religious representatives, which even then spoiled relations between the countries, despite the established diplomatic relations [5]. However, thanks to the efforts of Thailand, they formally sided with the Khmer Rouge.

In mid-1979, full-scale military cooperation between the Thai and Kampuchea armies began: the Thai military command began to cooperate with the Khmer military command, Thai officers assisted in training and instructing Khmer fighters, the Thai army began to supply the Khmer with weapons, supplies, and also to build infrastructure [8]. In particular, the Thai military built camps for Cambodian refugees, in which the Khmer Rouge and their allies recruited recruits. The first camps opened in November 1979, and over the next two months, a total of 298 thousand refugees gathered in them, and the Thai military took responsibility for another 149 thousand refugees [13]. There were so many refugees that in June Thailand had to return more than 40 thousand refugees to Cambodia, which attracted the attention of the world community. From that moment on, international organisations and other countries began to assist Thailand in maintaining these camps, and they continued to function until 1993. Thai businessmen also provided support to the Khmer Rouge, together with Chinese ones: the Khmers smuggled various types of wood of different values and precious stones from Kampuchea, in particular sapphires, which were then resold to the international market – one of the largest sapphire deposits in the world was located in the Khmer Rouge-controlled Pailin. The annual income

from the smuggling trade was up to \$100 million [8]. In an effort to provide all possible support to the Khmer Rouge and at the same time strengthen its southeastern border, Thailand began to look for red allies in the face of other Cambodians. Shortly after the forces of the Vietnamese army entered Phnom Penh, the Thai government turned to one of the informal leaders of the Cambodian anti-communist political emigration – Son Sann's [3]. Shortly before the fall of Phnom Penh, on January 5, 1979, Son Sann and his supporters established the "Committee for a Neutral and Peaceful Cambodia". Thailand approached the Committee with a proposal to organise its resistance to the Vietnamese occupation, but assuming that they would have to act together with the Khmer Rouge, they refused Thailand. However, soon, on February 1, 1979, a representative of the Committee, a former general of the Khmer Republic, Dien Del, arrived in Thailand, who began forming the anti-communist "Armed Forces of the National Liberation of the Khmer People" (KPNLAF) – an alternative anti-communist resistance movement to the Vietnamese occupation. In the future, on the basis of the Committee, the "National Front for the Liberation of the Khmer People" "Armed Forces of the National Liberation of the Khmer People" (KPNLF) will be founded, which will actually become the reincarnation of the then dying Blue Khmer movement.

On the other hand, the United States exerted pressure on the ruler of Cambodia during the monarchy – Prince Norodom Sihanouk [3], who did not create his own parties and organisations at that time, but to whom a number of organisations and associations expressed loyalty, the first of which was the militant organisation "Movement for the National Liberation of Kampuchea" (MOLINAKA), part of a more global White Khmer movement. This organisation was one of the first to launch armed resistance to the Vietnamese occupation and expressed pro-monarchist, anti-communist and anti-republican positions, that is, opposed everyone. In the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Pyongyang, on March 21, 1981, Norodom Sihanouk created his own party – the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful Cambodia (FUNSIPEK), which positioned itself as the supreme organisation uniting all pro-monarchical structures. With the support of Thailand, the United States and China, all three movements were united into a single government in exile – the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, which jointly resisted the Vietnamese occupation until the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989, and then will cease to exist after the 1993 constituent elections under the auspices of the UN.

Conclusions

In this research paper, the qualitative growth of relations between Thailand and Democratic Kampuchea was analyzed. From the very beginning, Thailand went to meet the Kampucheans, which laid the foundation for a strong relationship. The Thais were pushed to such a step by the then completely new policy of democracy and openness to other countries for Thailand. Prior to that, Thailand professed a policy of pro-Americanism and dictatorial militarism, which was led by the military, and in general, as time and further recognition of Thai politicians show, it

was an unsuccessful policy. There were many problems in the relations between Kampuchea and Thailand, so Thailand, despite all intentions and efforts, still did not open its embassy in Phnom Penh, and in many ways, the Cambodian leaders were moving closer to Thailand because of the threat from Vietnam. Perhaps if the Vietnamese had also gone to meet the Kampucheans, everything would have turned in the other direction – Vietnam would have become a “comrade” of Kampuchea, and Thailand would have become an enemy. Anyway, despite the obstacles, relations between the two countries have developed very well, and have developed in a positive way.

Of course, it is necessary to say about the role of China in the relations between the two countries: at first, Cambodian and Thai diplomats contacted through the Chinese embassy or crossed paths in Beijing, and China

also did a lot to bring the two countries closer. For example, for the first time Ieng Sary visited Bangkok, arriving on a Chinese plane. And later, after the coup of October 20, 1977, China pushed the Kampucheans to resume and improve relations with Thailand. From the very beginning, trade began to unfold between the two countries, and then cooperation between the two countries will gradually reach the international level, and eventually reach a frankly allied character when the Vietnamese troops occupy the country. However, in the future, after the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, Thailand will begin to rapidly move away from the Khmer Rouge, who have increasingly become associated with the “bloody genocide of their people.” Then, Thailand, which was entering the world and joining the global system, wanted to have a good reputation and broke with the Khmer Rouge for this.

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Міжнародне співробітництво Таїланду та Демократичної Кампучії

Анотація. У цій статті розглядається співпраця Королівства Таїланд та Демократичної Кампучії у військовій, політичній та економічній сферах. Попри поширений міф про те, що Демократична Кампучія була ізоляційною країною, насправді країна була досить відкритою світу. Таїланд став першою країною, з якою Демократична Кампучія почала співпрацювати. Співробітництво між двома державами почалося у квітні 1975 року, відразу після перемоги Червоних кхмерів над режимом Синіх кхмерів (більше відомий під ім'ям попереднього правителя Лон Нола), і тривало аж до остаточного падіння Демократичної Кампучії під напором в'єтнамських військ. Можна впевнено сказати, що прагнення тайців та кхмерів у розвитку відносин були щирими. Таїланд прагнув поліпшити стосунки з сусідами, і зокрема з Кампучією, вживаючи різні ініціативи навіть у часи протистояння з жовтня 1976 по жовтень 1977 року, не кажучи вже про згоду на перегляд кордонів або спільну експлуатацію ресурсів уздовж розмитого водного кордону. Демократична Кампучія також виявляла ініціативи і йшла на зближення, і особливо це виявилось на восьми Азіатських олімпійських іграх, коли Кампучія взяла в них участь лише заради Таїланду. Період 1979 став кульмінацією розвитку дружніх відносин: з просто дружньої країни Кампучія стала союзником Таїланду. Щоправда, надалі, після виведення в'єтнамських військ із Камбоджі, Таїланд почне стрімко віддалятися від Червоних кхмерів, які дедалі більше стали асоціюватись із «кривавим геноцидом свого народу». Тоді Таїланд, який виходив у світ і вливався в глобальну систему, хотів мати гарну репутацію і заради цього порвав із Червоними кхмерами

Ключові слова: кхмери, уряд, армія, війна, переворот