

**STRATEGY
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**THAILAND MILITARY STRATEGY:
THE CHALLENGE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

BY

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Royal Thai Army

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to identify factors that would affect the U.S. Military presence in Thailand and the U.S. security strategy in Southeast Asia for 2020. U.S. policy issues examined include: regional alliance between the United States and Thailand, host nation support, bilateral training program, tensions on the Burmese peninsula, and Thailand's role in Southeast Asia regional humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations. The paper will attempt to develop a strategy for ensuring American interests are maintained and to recommend ways that enhance the role of the security alliance and preserve American regional interests in Southeast Asia.

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PREFACE

Thailand is undergoing a systemic political transition that could lead to a variety of outcomes, from the consolidation of democracy to regression to authoritarianism or disintegration. The stakes are high. With a population of 62 million and a strategic location straddling critical sea-lanes of communication and straits, Thailand is the key to Southeast Asian security. Therefore, Thailand's choices and its evolution will frame the future of Southeast Asia and influence the balance of power in the broader Asia-Pacific region.

Influencing Thailand's transformation is the most critical challenge to U.S. foreign and defense policy in Southeast Asia. This study examines the trends and dynamics that are driving Thailand's transformation, outlines Thailand's possible strategic futures and analyzes their implications for regional stability and U.S. security interests, and identifies options available to the United States to respond to these challenges.

This research was conducted in the Strategy Research Project of the US Army War College. This report should be of value to the national security community and interested members of the general public, especially those concerned with U.S. relations with Thailand and the future of the Asia-Pacific region. It provides the Army War College with independent analyses of policy alternatives affecting the development, employment, combat readiness, and support of current and future U.S. Armed Forces.

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THAILAND MILITARY STRATEGY: THE CHALLENGE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

THAILAND: THE UNITED STATES' CLOSEST ALLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

INTRODUCTION

With the ending of the Cold War in the early 1990s, profound changes in the international system have followed, many of which have important implications for the defense and security of states. Such ending has also had domestic effects on the relationship between the state and civil society. It has brought about the need for countries to review their national strategies. Many countries around the world were swept by the spread of the wave of democratization, which has pulled down the authoritarian governments often ruled by the military. This wave of democratization led to a redefinition of the military's role in politics and society, often leading to a role reduction with the corresponding erosion of their political influence.

The 21st century environment and the wave of globalization have brought relative peace, stability and prosperity to the region, but it also created new challenges to the Royal Thai Armed Forces. Among them are the redefinition of the role of the military, necessarily involving a reduction of the military's role in combat or military operation in wartime, and an increasingly active participation in the military operations other than war (MOOTW) and country development.

While the danger of major military confrontation has greatly lessened the possibility of competition, disputes over resources, borderlines and territorial claims, race, religion and environmental issues have increased. The role of the military inevitably needs to be redefined to suit the era of the Post-Cold War and the ongoing new Millennium. Many armed forces in the region saw a drastic decline of their external defense role, in part due to the weakened internal communist insurgency. New functions have to be found. In other words, they need to redirect their mission. Among the new roles adopted for the military in the new millennium are peace keeping, disaster control and management, and activities associated with national development, often seen only in militaries of developing countries.

The Kingdom of Thailand is the United States' closest strategic ally in Southeast Asia.¹ The principal treaty between the two is the 1966 Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations. The principal security treaties are the 1954 Manila Agreement and the subsequent Thanat-Rusk communiqué of 1962 in which both countries agree to come to the defense of the other in case of attack. The U.S. and Thailand currently conduct more than 20 joint training exercises a year,

including the largest multinational exercise, Cobra Gold, which annually involves 22,000 U.S. and Thai troops.

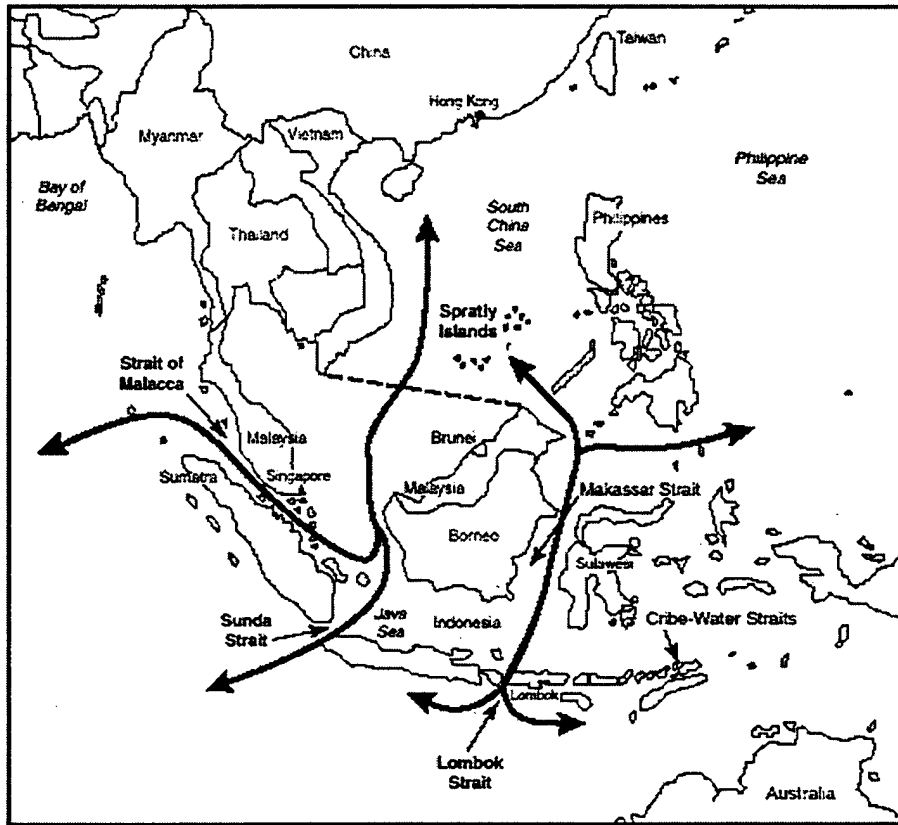


FIGURE 1²: Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

Southeast Asia's importance lies in its strategic location between the Indian and Pacific oceans. First, the region is a gateway for commercial vessels carrying oil and gas from the Middle East to East Asia and facilitates the flow of goods between the Asian and European markets. The prevention of war and the preservation of regional stability in Southeast Asia are two of the United States' primary interests in the region. Warfare in Southeast Asia, particularly naval conflict, could threaten American interests in several ways. A significant conflict would damage U.S. economic interests, threaten merchant shipping, potentially lead to the blockage of key sea lanes or straits, and perhaps ultimately destabilize some of the ASEAN³ nations. Secondly, Southeast Asia is the gateway between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. U.S. Navy (USN) and U.S. Air Force (USAF) forces regularly transit this strategic region en route to the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea from their bases in Japan and the continental

United States (CONUS). American forward defense strategy requires that the U.S. armed forces, especially the navy, have relatively easy and rapid access to Southeast Asia and freedom of movement throughout the region. The vast scope of the Pacific makes it impossible for U.S. forces to respond in a timely fashion to an overseas crisis in Asia or the Persian Gulf without being deployed forward.

THAILAND GENERAL INFORMATION

Thailand is 514,000 sq. km. in area (*land: 511,770 sq km and water: 2,230 sq km*)⁴, about the size of France or Texas, with a population approaching 62 million (60% of which are below the age of 35 years), a current growth rate of 1% per annum, and a per capital national GDP of about US\$2,520, although in Bangkok it is about US\$8,000. Inflation is low, and the heavy foreign debt of 1997 has been significantly reduced with steady growth in foreign exchange reserves.

Thailand has four geographic regions: the mountainous and forested North, the fertile Central plain, the arid Northeast, and hilly South. Located in the middle of Southeast Asia, Thailand's immediate neighbors are Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Malaysia. Nearby are China, Vietnam, Singapore, and Indonesia. The climate generally is sunny, tropical, and very humid, with a rainy season from June to October.

The kingdom of Thailand was established in the mid-14th century; it was known as Siam until 1939. Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country never to have been taken over by a European or western power. A bloodless revolution in 1932 led to a constitutional monarchy. In alliance with Japan during World War II, Thailand became a US ally following the conflict. The general elements of Thailand national power includes politics, economics, social, military, telecommunication, technology and information.

POLITICS

Since the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Thailand in 1932, the military and the governmental bureaucracy have exercised control over the political arena. During the 1970s to 1980s, a struggle for power between civilian and military elites dominated the scene in Thai politics. When the new and present Constitution signed by King *Bhumiphon* on 11 October 1997, widely known as the constitution of the people, being relatively different from the old ones in terms of its contents and structures, was promulgated in 1997 which resulted in the election in the year 2000, many observers of Thai politics saw it as a sign of a new-found confidence in

political development. *Head of government:* Prime Minister *Thaksin Shinawatra* (since January 2001) Fiscal year: 1 October - 30 September.

ECONOMICS⁵

After enjoying the world's highest growth rate from 1985 to 1995 - averaging almost 9% annually - increased speculative pressure on Thailand's currency in 1997 led to a crisis that uncovered financial sector weaknesses and forced the government to float the baht. Long pegged at 25 to the dollar, the baht reached its lowest point of 56 to the dollar in January 1998 and the economy contracted by 10.2% that same year. Thailand entered a recovery stage in 1999, expanding 4.2% and grew about the same amount in 2000, largely due to strong exports- which increased about 20% in 2000. An ailing financial sector and the slow pace of corporate debt restructuring, combined with a softening of global demand, is likely to slow growth in 2001.

The past exchange rates⁶: baht per US dollar – in 1996 was equal to 25.343 and then in 1997 was 31.364, in 1998 was 41.359 and then moved to 37.814 in 1999. In the year 2000, the Thai bath was 40.112 per US dollar and last year, January 2001, was 43.078. The current exchange rate (Average Selling rates⁷) is US\$1 = Baht 44.24 , Euro 1 = Baht 39.03 and the Japanese currency, Yen 100 = Baht 32.96

Exports: \$68.2 billion (f.o.b., 2000 est.) Exports - commodities: computers and parts, textiles, integrated circuits, rice Exports - partners: US 22%, Japan 14%, Singapore 9%, Hong Kong 5%, Netherlands 4%, Malaysia 4%, UK 4% in 1999. Imports : \$61.8 billion (f.o.b., 2000 est.) Imports - commodities: capital goods, intermediate goods and raw materials, consumer goods, fuels Imports - partners: Japan 26%, US 14%, Singapore 6%, China 5%, Malaysia 5%, Taiwan 5% in 1999.

SOCIAL

The Official language is Thai. Thai Business languages are Thai and English, and in some circles Japanese, several Chinese dialects, *Bahasa Malay* and languages of South Asia. Ethnic groups in Thailand consist of Thai 75%, Chinese 14%, and other 11%. The national religion is Buddhism 95%, Muslim 3.8%, Christianity 0.5%, Hinduism 0.1%, and other 0.6% in 1991.

MILITARY⁸

Military branches: Royal Thai Army (RTA), Royal Thai Navy (RTN) which includes Royal Thai Marine Corps (RTMC), Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF), and Paramilitary Forces. Military

manpower - military age:18 years of age. Military manpower - availability: *males age 15-49*: 17,717,268 (2001 est.) Military manpower - fit for military service: *males age 15-49*: 10,646,818 (2001 est.) Military manpower - reaching military age annually: *males*: 567,659 (2001 est.) Military expenditures - dollar figure:\$1.775 billion (FY00) Military expenditures - percent of GDP:1.4% (FY00)

TELECOMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND INFORMATION

Communications Telephones - main lines in use:5.4 million (1998) Telephones - mobile cellular: 2.3 million (1998) Telephone system: *general assessment*: service to general public adequate, but investment in technological upgrades reduced by recession; bulk of service to government activities provided by multichannel cable and microwave radio relay network *domestic*: microwave radio relay and multichannel cable; domestic satellite system being developed *international*: satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (1 Indian Ocean and 1 Pacific Ocean) Radio broadcast stations: AM 204, FM 334, short wave 6 (1999) Radios:13.96 million (1997) Television broadcast stations:5 (all in Bangkok; plus 131 repeaters) (1997) Televisions:15.19 million (1997) Internet Service Providers (ISPs):15 (2000) Internet users: 1 million (2000)

Transportation Railways: *total*: 3,940 km *narrow gauge*: 3,940 km 1.000-m gauge (99 km double track) Highways: *total*: 64,600 km *paved*: 62,985 km *unpaved*: 1,615 km (1996) Waterways:4,000 km *note*: 3,701 km are navigable throughout the year by boats with drafts up to 0.9 meters; numerous minor waterways serve shallow-draft native craft Pipelines: petroleum products 67 km; natural gas 350 km Ports and harbors: Bangkok, *Laem Chabang*, *Pattani*, *Phuket*, *Sattahip*, *Sri Racha*, *Songkhla* Merchant marine: *total*: 294 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 1,845,972 GRT/2,923,914 DWT *ships by type*: bulk 36, cargo 133, chemical tanker 3, combination bulk 1, container 14, liquefied gas 20, multi-functional large-load carrier 3, passenger 1, petroleum tanker 61, refrigerated cargo 13, roll on/roll off 2, short-sea passenger 2, specialized tanker 5 (2000 est.) Airports:110 (2000 est.) Airports - with paved runways: *total*: 59 *over 3,047 m*: 6 *2,438 to 3,047 m*: 11 *1,524 to 2,437 m*: 21 *914 to 1,523 m*: 17 *under 914 m*: 4 (2000 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: *total*: 51 *1,524 to 2,437 m*: 1 *914 to 1,523 m*: 16 *under 914 m*: 34 (2000 est.) Heliports:2 (2000 est.)

THAILAND NATIONAL INTERESTS

CATEGORY OF INTERESTS.

The national interests of Thailand can be classified as vital, important, and peripheral in accordance with the principles of US strategy. From Chapter V Directive Principles of Fundamental State Policies⁹ in the current Constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand 1997.

a. Vital Interests.

- 1) Protection and upholding the institution of kingship and the independence and integrity of its territories.
- 2) Protection of national democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State and national interests.
- 3) Promotion of the Regional Stability.
- 4) Promotion of Free Trade Market and Multilateral Economic Cooperation.

b. Important Interests.

- 1) Patronization and protection of Buddhism and other religions.
- 2) Promotion of the friendly relations with other countries and adoption of the principle of non-discrimination.
- 3) Sustainment of the national image in the international community.

c. Peripheral Interests.

- 1) Conserving and protecting the destruction of natural resources and the environment.

NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY 2001: THE MILITARY IN TRANSITION.

Policy of the Government of H.E. Prime Minister *Thaksin Shinawatra* delivered to the National Assembly on Monday, 26 February 2001, about the national security¹⁰ can be analyzed and summarized as the following:

- a. Development and encourage public participation in Defense¹¹ system of sufficient capacity for self-defense.
- b. Support regional peacekeeping operations under the framework of the United Nations.
- c. Promote the role of the armed forces in national development, particularly in projects under the royal initiatives and in missions aimed at alleviating poverty.
- d. Assistance in Disaster relief operations.
- e. Improve the command structure and management system of the Defense Ministry

- f. Conserving and protecting the destruction of natural resources and the environment.
- g. Cooperation among the interagency and civilian organizations in seeking concrete solutions to the narcotics problem and in providing treatment for drug addicts.
- h. Encourage the military to join with the public sector in providing for public health, education, and vocational training in order to increase the net income of the troops and their families. Special emphasis is placed on disabled veterans.

MISSION OF THE ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES

In the new "Constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand 1997 ", the mission for the Armed Forces is in the chapter V Directive Principles of Fundamental State Policies, section 72.

The State shall arrange for the maintenance of the armed forces for the protection and upholding of its independence, security of the State, institution of kingship, national interests and the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of the State, and for national development.¹²

SECURITY PLATFORM (1998-2001) AND IN NATIONAL DEFENSE.¹³

- a. To develop and boost national defense so the armed forces reach the optimum size, maintain combat-readiness, and have the capabilities of conducting a sustained and modern warfare.
- b. To utilize a system of concentrating the forces in defense of the country, keeping internal peace and protecting national interests.
- c. To boost the role the armed forces play in helping in national development and in bringing about a united Thai citizenry and in encouraging Thais to participate in, and boost, the armed services role in national defense.
- d. To enter into military cooperation agreement with neighboring countries and maintain close military ties with them (neighbors) at all levels, on a basis of common security that includes denying anti-government groups in the neighboring countries from using Thailand as their base to resist their own governments.
- e. To support and cooperate with the United Nations in its peace keeping operation and with the international agencies and organizations in cracking down on international terrorism.

THE CHANGING MILITARY STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT: GLOBAL AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Globalization has made tremendous effect on the world. It changed the way many people live and the power of nation-states in the world. Most of this phenomenon is depend on the computerized and digitalized communication system, especially the internet network. But there is the dark side of this incident because its capabilities can facilitate the terrorism organization in the future conflicts of the world including the transnational crimes. In the future the population is one of the critical problems which can be the source of tension.

THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The U.S. will maintain a strong technological edge in IT-driven “battlefield awareness” and in precision-guided weaponry in 2015. The U.S. will face three types of threats:¹⁴ asymmetric threats, strategic weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threats, and Regional military threats and the potential challenges in each region.

ASYMMETRIC THREATS

Asymmetric threats in which state and non-state adversaries avoid direct engagements with the U.S. military but devise strategies, tactics, and weapons— some improved by “sidewise” technology—to minimize US strengths and exploit perceived weaknesses.¹⁵ Though the U.S. is the hegemony among the countries of this world today, which no one can build up the conventional forces to compete or threat the United State, and it could be anything which will cause the damage or kill the American and allied people, there still is asymmetric warfare such as suicide terrorism as happened on September 11, 2001. This kind of warfare is very sophisticated and hard to predict and deal with, and it will increase and be more dangerous in the next decade. So it is time for the close coordination and coalition among every country in this world to prevent the transnational terrorism and criminal networks from the beginning of the 21st century.

STRATEGIC WMD THREATS

Strategic WMD threats, including nuclear missile threats, in which (barring significant political or economic changes) Russia, China, most likely North Korea, probably Iran, and possibly Iraq have the capability to strike the U.S., and the potential for unconventional delivery of WMD by both states or non-state actors also will grow.¹⁶

REGIONAL MILITARY THREATS

Regional military threats, the tendency of the conventional war among the developed countries, is low. The world still has small-scale internal upheavals or revolution in each region. The chance of regional interstate wars which stem from religious, ethnic, economic or political disputes will remain at current levels or even increase in number. The potential conflict will arise from rivalries in Asia, and are prioritized as India-Pakistan, China-Taiwan, and among the antagonists in the Middle East which increases the lethality due to the availability of WMD, longer-range missile delivery systems and other technologies. The causes of conflicts will be religious, ethnic, economic or political disputes. The regional organizations will increase the roles in management of such conflicts with the United Nations.¹⁷

CROSS-BORDER CONFLICT

Some nation-states will continue to threaten the territorial sovereignty of others in regions critical to the stability of the world. In Southwest Asia, Iraq continues to pose a threat to its neighbors and to the free flow of oil from the region. In East Asia, North Korea still poses a significant military threat in spite of its dreadful economic and humanitarian conditions, and its recent initial steps toward reconciliation with the outside world. Moreover, sovereignty issues and territorial disputes are still main sources of tension, with the most serious potential consequences in East Asia and South Asia. Although most instances of cross-border conflict may remain small-scale in nature, the chance of escalation or the involvement of neighboring states poses increased risk.

PROLIFERATION OF DANGEROUS MILITARY TECHNOLOGIES

The proliferation of advanced weapons and technologies with military or terrorist uses, including NBC weapons and their means of delivery, will continue despite the best efforts of the international community. These weapons and technologies pose a threat to the U.S. and are a source of instability in regions of critical importance. The continued spread of these weapons and technology would heighten these dangers and increase the number of potential adversaries with significant military capabilities, including smaller states and parties hostile to the U.S.¹⁸

HUMANITARIAN DISASTERS

Failed states, famines, uncontrolled migration, and other natural or man-made disasters will continue to occur, at times affecting U.S. interests and requiring the unique capabilities of

U.S. military forces to provide stability, disaster relief, and other forms of emergency assistance until agencies and organizations can bring their resources to bear.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 will undoubtedly force a re-think of elements of the latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). However, missile defense, despite some views to the contrary, will retain its relevance and some of the proposed cuts in the army and navy, particularly in the area of force-projection capability, may be reversed. U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a remark to students of NDU on 31 Jan 2002. He listed six transformational goals of U.S. defense strategy:¹⁹

- a. Protect the US homeland and our bases overseas.
- b. Project and sustain US military power.
- c. Deny enemies sanctuary.
- d. Protect information networks from attack
- e. Use American information superiority to seamlessly weld the U.S. armed forces together as a joint force.
- f. Maintain unhindered access to space and to protect U.S. space assets.

THE REGIONAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT: US POLICY IN ASIA-PACIFIC²⁰

U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, with a population of 500 million and vast natural resources²¹, is largely the legacy of two half-century-ago wars: World War II and the Korean War. As a result of these wars, the U.S. established and has maintained substantial forces in South Korea and Japan (see Table 1: US Forces in the Pacific – Part One). Throughout the Cold War, these forces helped deter not only North Korean but also Soviet aggression in Northeast Asia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, these forces continue to serve as a deterrent to North Korean aggression. However, the regional security paradigm is changing. Although predictions of the imminent demise of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have proven to be exaggerations, the country's long-term viability remains questionable, and a fundamental change in the security equation on the Korean Peninsula is likely to occur within the next decade. Meanwhile, Chinese military capabilities are steadily increasing, with no sign that Beijing intends to give up its authoritarian system of government or its threats to use force against Taiwan under certain circumstances. In South Asia, both India and Pakistan have tested nuclear weapons, raising the specter of nuclear war on the subcontinent.

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC RIM²²

The purpose of the U.S. Armed Forces is to protect and advance U.S. national interests and, if deterrence fails, to decisively defeat threats to those interests. The U.S. has interests, responsibilities, and commitments that span the world. As a global power with an open society, the U.S. is affected by trends, events, and influences that originate from beyond its borders. The development of the defense posture should take into account the following enduring national interests:²³

a. Ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action, including: U.S. sovereignty, territorial integrity, and freedom, Safety of U.S. citizens at home and abroad, and Protection of critical U.S. infrastructure.

b. Honoring international commitments, including: Security and well-being of allies and friends, Precluding hostile domination of critical areas, particularly Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East and Southwest Asia, and Peace and stability in the Western Hemisphere

c. Contributing to economic well-being, including: Vitality and productivity of the global economy, Security of international sea, air, and space, and information lines of communication, and Access to key markets and strategic resources.

The United States Defense Objectives seek a stable and economically prosperous East Asia that embraces democracy and market economics. Central to achieving this goal are the United States' strong alliance relationships within the region, especially with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia. In addition, continued engagement with China is critical to promoting regional stability and encouraging it to act as a responsible member of the international community. The U.S. desires a peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict resulting in a non-nuclear, democratic, reconciled, and ultimately reunified peninsula, as well as the peaceful resolution of the region's other disputes, including that between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. Successful counters to terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, and NBC weapons and delivery systems are also major U.S. goals for the region. Finally, the U.S. continues to experience success in its efforts to recover remains of Americans still unaccounted for from past conflicts in East Asia and the Pacific Rim, including World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

The U.S. is committed to maintaining significant and highly capable forces in East Asia and the Pacific Rim. This allows the U.S. to play a key role as regional balancer and security guarantor to Allies. The U.S. will continue a forward presence policy, in cooperation with its Allies, that reflects its interests in the region. Today, roughly half of the U.S. forces in the region are stationed in Japan, and close to 40 percent are stationed in the ROK. The United States will

seek to continue and build upon bilateral and multilateral exercises with key states in the region, including Japan, the ROK, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Singapore.

The continued strengthening of U.S. security dialogues and confidence-building measures with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through the ASEAN Regional Forum is one of many ways the U.S. is working to enhance political, military, and economic ties with Allies and friends in Southeast Asia.²⁴

The Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies is a key U.S. initiative that promotes mutual understanding and cooperation by providing an academic forum for military and civilian decision makers from the U.S. and Asia to exchange ideas and explore regional security challenges.

Stability in South Asia, another United States Defense Objective, also depends on improved relations between India and Pakistan and restraint on the part of both countries in their military confrontation, particularly with respect to their missile and NBC weapons policies and practices. Developing successful counters to terrorism is also a major objective for the region.

US POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: U.S. INTERESTS²⁵

To secure its fundamental interests of maintaining the territorial, political, and social integrity of the U.S., ensuring the lives and safety of its people, and promoting the prosperity of the Nation and its people, the U.S. pursues a number of specific goals. These include

- a. Preventing the emergence of a hostile power capable of threatening these fundamental interests.
- b. Deterring aggression against U.S. friends and allies.
- c. Promoting the growth of democracy throughout the world.
- d. Ensuring U.S. economic access to important markets, commodities, and trading partners.
- e. Preventing the spread of dangerous military technologies.²⁶

The more certain the U.S. is of the friendliness of a nation, the more willing it is to accept the possession of significant military capabilities by that nation.

The U.S. has formal military alliances with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. The U.S. has a more ambiguous security commitment to Taiwan, as embodied in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. The U.S. has a security relationship with Singapore that includes a small, permanent military presence there, which brings with it an implied interest in Singapore's security. America also enjoys friendly relations with a number of other countries

in the region and would not like to see their sovereignty or independence threatened by a country hostile to the U.S.

Democratization is an ongoing trend in the Asia-Pacific region; South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines have enjoyed democratic transitions in the last 15 years, and other states also are taking steps in the direction of democracy. Many countries still are not fully democratic, however, and some, such as China, Vietnam, and Myanmar, remain authoritarian dictatorships. The continuations of the democratic systems in those states that are already democracies, and the democratization of those that are not, particularly China, are important U.S. interests in the region. Fortunately, two of the three states with the potential to become major military powers--Japan and India--already are full-fledged democracies.

The U.S., therefore, has a strong interest in preventing the further spread or development of nuclear, biological, chemical, and missile technology in the Asia-Pacific region.

The most prominent of several possible developments that could threaten U.S. regional interests remains conflict on the Korean Peninsula.²⁷ The possibility that North Korea could launch an attack on South Korea remains real, if apparently remote.

The possibility of a Chinese attack on Taiwan is of increasing concern. Although Beijing seems to have come to terms temporarily with the Taiwanese election of a president from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, China has not given up its claim to the island and continues to assert its right to use force to recover it. Considering current Chinese military capabilities, which are unlikely to change significantly in the immediate future, any attempt to invade the island almost certainly would fail. Nonetheless, evidence indicates that Beijing hopes to force a resolution of the Taiwan issue by the year 2005 or so. If attempts at peaceful persuasion fail, some form of coercion using air and missile attacks or a naval blockade would be more likely than an outright invasion.

An Indonesian collapse would be disadvantageous to U.S. interests in the region. In addition to the humanitarian disaster it would represent, there also would be a danger of sectarian conflict spreading to other countries in the region (primarily the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia), massive refugee flows, and increased piracy and disruptions of commerce in this sub-region.

TABLE 1: US FORCES IN THE PACIFIC – PART ONE²⁸

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>
<u>Pacific Command (PACOM) Headquartered at Hawaii</u>				
<u>Hawaii</u>	15,500	4,500	19,500	7,000
	USARPAC	PACAF	US PACFleet	HQ Pacific
	1 Lt. Inf. Div	1 Wing	HQ for	
	(2 Lt. Inf. Bde)	2 C-135B	22 SSN	
		15 F-15A/B	3 GC	
		4 C-130H	4 DDG	
		8 KC-135R	2 FFG	
			4 Supt/Misc	
<u>Japan</u>	1,800	13,550	5,200	21,000
	1 Corps Hq.	1 AF HQ (5th)	HQ 7 th Fleet	1 MEF
	Support Units	102 Combat Aircraft	Yokosuka	
		54 F-15CD	1 CV	
		36 F-16	6 Surface Combatants	
		4 C-21A	3 Submarines	
		2 E-3A	4 Amphibious ships	
		16 C-130E/H	1 MCM Squadron	
		15 KC-135		
		4 HC-130N/P		
		4 MC-130E		
		3 C-9		
		8 HH-60		
<u>South Korea</u>	27,250	8,660	-	-
	1 Army HQ	90 Combat Aircraft		
	1 Inf. Division	3/72 F-16		
	(2 Bde/6 Bn)	1/6-A-10/12 OA-10		
	2 SP Arty Bn	1/5 MH-53		
	1 MLRS Bn.			
	1 AD Bn.			
<u>Alaska</u>	6,600	9,450	-	-
	1Lt. Inf. Bde	1 AF HQ/5 Sqn.		
		2/36 F-15C/D		
		1/18 F-15E		
		1/18 F-16C/D		
		1/6A-10, 6 OA-10		
		10 C-130 H		
		2 E-3B		
		3 C-12		
		8 KC-135R		

TABLE 2: US FORCES IN THE PACIFIC – PART TWO²⁹

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>
<u>Australia</u>	-	260	40	-
			Commo facility	
			2 SEWS stations	
			1 SIGINT station	
<u>Singapore</u>	-	40	100	-
		Supt Sqn.	Log. Facilities	
<u>Guam</u>	40	1,850	1,850	-
	-	1 Hq (13 th AF)	MPS-3 w/ equip for	
			1 MEB eqpt.	
			4 MPS ships	
			Air station, commo	
			& support	
<u>Diego Garcia</u>	-	-	650	-
			MPS-2 w/	
			5 MPS ships	
			for 1 MEB	
			air station,	
			support facilities.	
<u>San Diego</u>	-	-	3 rd Fleet HQ	1 MEF
<u>US Pacific Fleet at Sea</u>	-	-	132,000 men	

Headquarters

Pearl Harbor

Main Bases:

Pearl Harbor, San Diego, Bangor and Everett

3rd Fleet (HQ San Diego) Covers Eastern and Central Pacific, Aleutian Islands, Bering Sea, etc.

Forces typically include 3 Carrier Battle Groups, 4 URGs, amphibious group.

7th Fleet (HQ Yokosuka, Japan) Covers Western Pacific, Japan, Philippines, ANZUS, and Indian Ocean.

Forces typically include 2 Carrier Battle Group, 1 URGs, 1 amphibious readiness group/MEU (embarked), 2 MCM.

	<u>Submarines</u>	<u>Principal Surface Combatants</u>		<u>Amphibious Ships</u>	
SSBN	8	Carriers CVN/CV	5	LCC	1
SSGN	-	Cruisers	13	LHA	3
SSN	30	Guided Missile Destroyers	13	LPH	3
		Destroyers	11	LPD	6
		Guided Missile Frigates	16	LSD	8
				LST	1

Aircraft: 363 tactical, 203 helicopter, 77 P-3, 162 other³⁰

The U.S. has major air and naval facilities at Guam (see Table 2: US Forces in the Pacific – Part Two), but they are underutilized and have fallen into disrepair, and the facilities at Diego Garcia are limited. Both islands occupy strategically similar locations within their respective regions, being at least several hundred miles from the Asian mainland. This location limits the ability of tactical aircraft to operate from bases there but has the advantage of being out of range of most missiles possessed by countries in the region. Thus, long-range aircraft and naval forces could operate out of bases on these islands in relative safety. Guam has the advantage of being roughly equidistant between Northeast Asia, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, while Diego Garcia is the only U.S. military facility in South Asia (although the U.S. does have access to some facilities in the Arabian Gulf).

MILITARY POWERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Conflicts of all kinds are still there and intensifying day by day: including the problems of a racial and religious conflict, demand for independence, territorial ownership claims, and international terrorism. Thailand has to strengthen its armed forces to be used as a political bargaining power and to protect national interests. For that reason, Thai Armed Forces have been in the process of modernization to produce the best possible defense of the country by having the capability to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. Moreover, drugs, transnational crimes, illegal immigrants and the destruction of natural resources are currently acute problems affecting national security. All these have made the Thai Armed Forces inevitably readjust its roles and missions accordingly to tackle these issues.

Southeast Asian states have begun to strengthen their own military capabilities, with their focus largely on expanding their air and naval capabilities. This focus reflects the maritime nature of the ASEAN states, which all have long coastlines and large Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) to protect; the absence of land-based threats; and the conviction that the long-term potential threat to regional security is posed by the naval and air forces of powers from outside Southeast Asia.

FIGURE 2: Southeast Asian Defense Spending 2000-2001³¹

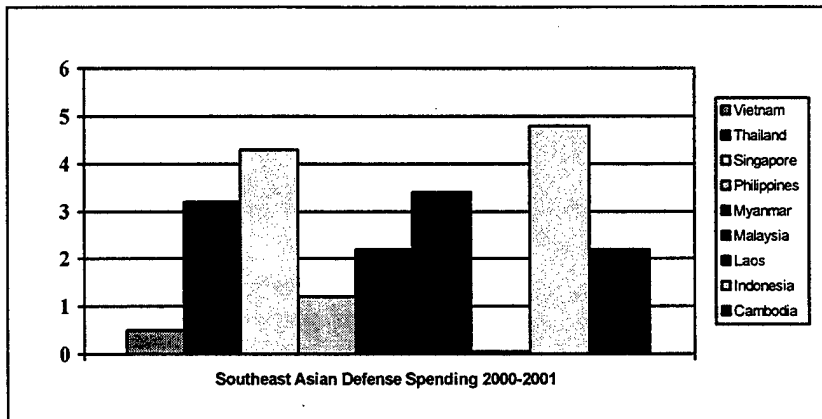


TABLE 3: Southeast Asian Fixed and Rotary Wing Combat Aircraft: 2000-2001³²

	<u>Fixed Wing</u>			<u>Helicopter</u>		
	Army	Navy	Air Force	Army	Navy	Air Force
Vietnam	-	-	189	-	-	26
Thailand	-	67	153	4	5	-
Singapore	-	-	136	-	-	20
Philippines	-	-	47	-	-	97
Myanmar	-	-	83	-	-	29
Malaysia	-	-	84	-	17	-
Laos	-	-	14	-	-	-
Indonesia	-	-	108	-	18	-
Cambodia	-	-	24	-	-	-

TABLE 4: Southeast Asian Naval Combat Ships in 2000-2001³³

(Number in Active Service)

	SSNs	Sub	Carriers	DD	FF	Missile PT	Other PT	Mine	Amp	TOTAL
Vietnam	-	2	-	-	6	12	30	10	6	66
Thailand	-	-	1	-	14	6	82	7	9	119
Singapore	-	1	-	-	-	6	12	4	6	29
Philippines	-	-	-	-	1	-	60	-	9	70
Myanmar	-	-	-	-	-	-	68	-	-	68
Malaysia	-	-	-	-	4	8	33	4	2	51
Laos	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	-	-	16
Indonesia	-	2	-	-	17	4	32	12	26	93
Cambodia	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4

Note: Sub = Submarines , DD = Destroyers, FF = Frigates, PT = Patrol, Amph = Amphibious

THAILAND NATIONAL ISSUES OF 21ST CENTURY

POLITICS

The 1997 Constitution aims to create a more stable social and political system with higher levels of accountability and transparency. After the January 2001 elections, the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party³⁴ formed a three-party coalition led by Prime Minister *Thaksin Shinawatra*. The Thai Rak Thai has effective command of 324 seats of 500 Lower House seats, protecting the administration from any vote of no confidence. The new Government has yet to chart its long-term policy agenda. The Economist magazine predicted that he will become increasingly autocratic.³⁵ However, in December 2001, King *Bhumibol* used his birthday address to deliver a thinly-veiled rebuke to the prime minister. Double standards and a failure to listen to criticism, he said, had brought the country to disaster.³⁶ This incident reflects the image of the current situation in the political arena, which will be playing increasingly important role in Thailand security strategy. The Government is also committed to tackling the serious problems of corruption that exist in both public and private sectors.³⁷

ECONOMICS

Thailand was no longer in crisis, although she had not completed the recovery and restructuring process. Thailand had reversed the negative GDP growth of the two preceding years and realized positive economic growth. Her current accounts were in surplus, foreign exchange reserves increased, and foreign direct investment resumed modestly in Thailand. Recovery from the crisis will clearly take several years. Thailand needs fundamental reform of her banking and corporate governance systems. These structural changes are far more difficult and socially disruptive than cutting budget deficits, money growth and overvalued exchange rates, the central responses to most previous crises. Even the most committed reformers in Thailand, are only beginning to make real progress and will be hard pressed to sustain political support for the needed changes in their domestic societies and power structures.

SOCIAL

NARCOTICS

The narcotics problem has spread throughout the Thai community, especially into schools. A large number of youths, the future of the country, have been drawn into the vicious circle, as seen by the statistics of methamphetamine arrests. During January and February

2001, about 15 million methamphetamine tablets had been seized by the Thai authorities. Therefore, there is a need for cooperation from all concerned, in both the public and private sectors, to address the problem.

ILLEGAL BURMESE MIGRANTS

The next social issue is the presence of illegal Burmese workers and migrants. Currently over 100,000 refugees are seeking safety inside Thai territory, along with 47,000 displaced persons of various ethnic backgrounds, 110,000 illegal immigrants, about 3,000 Burmese students in exile and 50,000 illegal immigrants from other countries.³⁸

EDUCATION

Thailand has largely met basic human needs. While improvements in the quality of life have been broad based, Thailand lags in some areas, particularly in educational attainments.³⁹ The increase in poverty was distributed unevenly throughout the country, affecting mostly rural areas, especially the northeast, north, south, and central regions.

MILITARY: THE NEW MILITARY MISSIONS IN THE DAWN OF THE 21ST CENTURY

ANTI-DRUG TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS

Today, a narcotic is an issue with serious impacts on national security. Southeast Asia is the world's leading region for poppy cultivation and heroin production, particularly within the Golden Triangle, the point along the Mekong River where Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand meet, produces the greatest amount of opium and refined heroin.⁴⁰ The illicit drug trade has a direct impact on domestic security and social stability in Thailand. So, the Thai authorities now face a great challenge in meeting the immediate and serious threat to national security posed by a flood of illicit narcotics from neighboring countries. The largest single producer of heroin is Myanmar, which accounts for nearly 65 percent of the estimated world opium poppy cultivation and 60 percent of potential opium gum production, enough to make 250 metric tons of refined heroins.⁴¹

Laos produces about 200 metric tons of opium gum, enough for 20 tons of refined heroin. Because of a long and successful anti-drug campaign, Thailand produces very little heroin; but its excellent transport, financial, and communication systems are used by drug traffickers. Southern China is a key route for Southeast Asian heroin destined for ports along its

east coast, where the drug trade encounters shipping bound for the U.S. and other markets in the West.

Tension along Thailand's northern border with Myanmar has been building over the past two years. The main cause has been a flood of narcotics produced in Myanmar by the United Wa State Army (UWSA) a 20,000- strong insurgent group that since 1989 has held a ceasefire pact with the Myanmar military regime. Since the mid-1990s, UWSA has diversified its narcotics interests from heroin into lucrative methamphetamine trafficking. Production of methamphetamine tablets intended primarily for the Thai market has risen rapidly from around 200 million tablets in 1999 to an estimate of some 600 million this year. Since last year, the cross-border drugs flow has been defined by the Thai Armed Forces and government as the nation's foremost security threat.⁴² The Royal Thai Army Chief of Staff said that the army is more confident with its anti-drug operations after obtaining new drug detecting equipment from the U.S. for use to detect drug smuggling along the border.⁴³

PROTECT SOVEREIGNTY: BORDER CONFLICTS

The fighting among various ethnic groups on Myanmar's borders, much of it connected to illegal drug trafficking, has spilled into Thailand. Communal violence not only causes suffering and slows the political, social and economic development of countries in the region; violence also fosters terrorism, causes refugees to migrate, and creates humanitarian disasters that spill across national borders.

Burmese troops have moved into the strongholds of these minorities causing tension along the Thai-Burmese border which some places are in the boundary between Thai and Myanmar. Currently, Thailand has to spend close to Bt5 million a day to secure the border. Apart from Doi Lang, the demarcation line No. 16 at Ban Nong Uk, Hill 491 and Lam Island, Kan Island and Khee Nok Island are considered problem areas.⁴⁴

TERRORISM

Southeast Asia is not a major center of terrorist activity, and terrorist activity has in fact declined over the years. In the period 1984 to 1996, for instance, Southeast Asia had a total of 186 international terrorist incidents compared to 2,073 attacks in Western Europe, 1,621 attacks in Latin America, 1,392 attacks in West Asia, and 362 attacks in Africa.⁴⁵

The two principal militant Islamic groups in southern Thailand are the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) and the New PULO, a dissident faction that broke away from PULO in 1995. The various militant groups have close links with their ethnic kin in the northern

Malaysian state of *Kelantan*—an Islamic stronghold and the only Malaysian state governed by the PAS—and reportedly operated in the early 1990s with tacit support from *Kelantan's* PAS government. In 1997, however, the Malaysian government sanctioned a crackdown on Thai separatists in northern Malaysia, depriving them of sanctuary and support. Since then, separatist activity in southern Thailand has declined. Although these groups do not pose an immediate threat, Bangkok is concerned about the demonstration effect of Islamic insurgencies elsewhere in the region and is keeping a watchful eye on their southern provinces.⁴⁶

In the U.S. perspective of this issue, defense and internal security resources and capabilities in Southeast Asia are exceedingly low. This affects their ability to counter terrorism. Many Southeast Asian nations need to dramatically increase their military and security budgets and enhance military and security capabilities on land, on sea, and in the air. Countries in the region should modernize and build with full transparency.⁴⁷ The critical problem is on the limited budget in defense arena in Southeast Asian nations as a result of the economic crisis in 1997.

Thailand Prime Minister, Mr. *Thaksin*, speaking after a special meeting of the National Security Council, reaffirmed Thailand's stance to help in the fight against international terrorism following the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington.

“Terrorism is a crime the world community will have to co-operate to eliminate. Thailand is glad to co-operate with the UN and the US to contain terrorism so that it does not expand and destroy world progress.”⁴⁸

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY ROLE: PEACE OPERATIONS

The Thai Armed Forces have clearly shown its willingness to support the restoration of peace and order in accordance with the mandate of the UN. To enhance such commitment, the Supreme Command Headquarters has established a new division under the supervision of the Directorate of Joint Operations called “the Division of Operations for Peace”⁴⁹ to perform activities pertaining to peacekeeping operations and military operations other than war upon the government mandate. The Thai Armed Forces are moving toward international standards by following governmental policy of joining as a member of the United Nations’ peacekeeping operations.

The significant UN peacekeeping involvement is the dispatch of a contingent to East Timor. As a result of the unrest in East Timor after the people voted in a referendum to seek independence from Indonesia, the UN Security Council authorized a multinational force to maintain peace in East Timor. Thailand received requests to provide troops to take part in this operation. On 5th October 1999, the Cabinet authorized the Ministry of Defense to send a force

of 1,581 personnel, complete with weapons and equipment, to join INTERFET in East Timor.⁵⁰ The latest news is a new troop of 350 Thai soldiers from the 9th Infantry Division, which had experience in monitoring Thai elections, will be sent to East Timor to replace 700 soldiers there for monitoring its general election in mid-April. They will leave for East Timor on February 2002.⁵¹

THE MILITARY TRANSFORMATION ISSUES

Thailand's military doctrine has gradually shifted from an emphasis on small-scale warfare against internal ground threats to a more outward-looking maritime orientation and balanced conventional defense posture. Reflecting this shift, modernization of the Royal Thai air force and navy remains a priority.⁵² As a consequence of the Asian financial crisis, defense expenditures, in Thai baht, fell from b102 billion in 1997 to planned expenditures of b81.0 billion in 1998 and b77.4 billion in 1999. In dollar terms, this represents a decline from \$3.2 billion in 1997 to \$1.8 billion in 1999. According to Thai military sources, in 2000 military expenditures are expected to rebound to b88.6 billion. Despite these setbacks, Thailand has been able to continue some modernization programs.⁵³

However, even before Thailand's current financial crisis, the Thai government had relegated defense programs to a lower priority, as evidenced by the sharp decline in defense spending as a percentage of GDP and total government spending. From 1985 to 1998, defense expenditures as a percent of GDP dropped from 5.0 percent to 1.5 percent.⁵⁴ There are so many transformation issues still pending in the Royal Thai Army and her sister services after the economy crisis 1997. The number of junior officer, company and major ranks, does not meet the standard requirement of TOE because of the incomplete personnel management system. For example, the period of time in the company grade rank, three years in each rank, is not sufficient to learn and perform higher duty. Most of these issues are the personnel and management issues: the concept of the new generation of the middle rank officers, outnumbered in senior colonel rank and above; the promotion system in field grade rank and above is unstable; the chain of command needs to be improving for the future mission; the combat service support branches are not in balance with the combat units, (e.g. the medical service and adjutant general); the Army doctrine, which is more suitable for the Royal Thai Army and oriented to joint and/or combined operations; the improvement in combined arms operations; and the concept and guidance for the new, MOOTW, and how the Army can get the resources without affecting the regular budget.

In many ways the internal environment of the Army and the national military structure is just as complex and demanding as the external environment. It would be impractical to describe all the organizations, systems, and subsystems that exist at the strategic level within and among the Services, international commands, the Joint Staff in the Supreme Command, and the Ministry of Defense.

CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays the world has gradually changed itself into a multi-faceted social structure with political democracy and capitalistic market economy. The trends in Thai society have made the Thai military endeavor to become a more and more professional, scientific and rational organization in efforts to safeguard the national security.

Thailand's primary security concern is border tensions with Myanmar, which, according to Thai analysts, could escalate into armed conflict. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been remarkably successful since its inception in keeping these disputes from developing into conflicts.

IMPLICATION FOR US SECURITY OPTIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA⁵⁵

a. The U.S should seek ways to ensure that it could maintain forces on the peninsula even after the Korean problem is resolved. This could well entail a significant reduction in troop numbers along with their reassignment to less intrusive locations, as well as a skillful public relations campaign to persuade the Korean people of the value of a continued U.S. military presence.⁵⁶ The U.S. also should seek to expand its presence on the territory of its other regional allies, the Philippines⁵⁷ and Thailand. Nonetheless, given the strategic location of the Philippines, particularly relative to the South China Sea, and the continuing U.S. alliance relationship with it, both countries would benefit if America had an increased ability to train with Philippine forces and operate out of Philippine bases. A similar argument applies to Thailand, the only U.S. ally in mainland Southeast Asia. Where possible, comparable arrangements should be made elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia--perhaps India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and even Vietnam.

b. Support the Democratization in Southeast Asia and encourage Japan and Australia to politically pressure the SLORC to end their despotic rule. The Wa and other Burmese narcotics traffickers are supported by the SLORC military junta. Their trafficking routes now encompass areas where other tribal groups have been driven out. It would benefit the counter-narcotics effort to provide humanitarian and other assistance, albeit quietly, to pro-Western tribes such as

the Karens and Karennis. The SLORC is looking to Japan and Australia to be the primary sources of capital investment into their regime in Myanmar. Both governments have been less than assertive in using their leverage to influence the junta. The U.S. should urge Tokyo and Canberra to use all available pressure to encourage the SLORC to: end their despotic rule and support for drug trafficking; release *Aung San Suu Kyi* from confinement; and abide by democratic elections.

c. The U.S. should consider improvement of its facilities on Diego Garcia and Guam for limited ability of tactical aircraft to operate from bases there which are out of range of most missiles possessed by countries in the region. Also the long-range aircraft and naval forces could operate out of bases on these islands in relative safety.

d. Increase the closer military-to-military ties with the Asian armed forces especially at senior levels by education, conferences, and seminars with the International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds for better understanding and relationship.

e. Assist Thai army counter-narcotics forces with improved communications, surveillance equipment and information. Thai 3rd Army Region counter-narcotics forces are hindered by the lack of adequate communications equipment to match the narcotics traffickers. The U.S. government should assist Thai counter-narcotics forces with either excess military equipment or aid to purchase adequate communications gear.

THAILAND MILITARY STRATEGY: THE CHALLENGE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Besides using military force in national defense to maintain national security, the Thai military has made contributions in the modernization process by active participation in social, economic, cultural and political areas. The Thai Armed Forces have used troops in national development, in cooperation with civilian agencies, especially in implementing Royal projects and national security development projects, including the establishment of Defense Ministry Public Relief Center. The military has participated in the rescue operation in time of natural disasters and accidents. The Thai military, similarly to the military organizations in many developing countries, has the manpower, equipment, command system and communications equipment to deal with such crises.

So the Thai Armed Forces have been arranged to coordinate and cooperate with international organizations, military and non-military types, in the strategy to support peace and stability in the region, and with other government agencies in the development of the country for the well-being of the people. The main roles and missions should be:

a. Participate in Counter narcotics Operations as the major assistance to provide training, intelligence for the law enforcement and enhance the capability of counter-drug operations by establishment of effective Information Operations and establish the information and intelligence exchange center among the government interagency and with ally countries in bilingual report through the fast secure modern communication technology network. Increase the counter terrorism mission to prevent the progress of the terrorism network and activity including the transnational crimes network.

b. Improve Interoperability in Armed Forces and Regional Security Coalition Nations. Develop the language skill in not only English language but also the neighboring countries languages. Promote close cooperation with the ASEAN nations for effectiveness of the regional stability and be ready to conduct Peace keeping Operations for humanitarian assistance and stability in the region and support the United Nations.

c. Develop the local relationship along the border with the local authorities or military forces in accordance with the national foreign policy but be prepared for the unavoidable small armed conflicts along the border which orient toward west, northwest, east and south respectively. Increase the activity in the joint and combined exercise with armed forces of ally countries focused on the peace operations and small-scale commitment operations.

d. Participate in Country Development focus on assistance to improve the quality of life in remote area in cooperation with other government and non-government agencies. Plan and participate in Disaster Relief Operations by the development units as the main units in cooperation with the local authorities or non-governmental organizations.

e. Finally, in the long term, the security structure should have to redefine the national security strategy to be more responsive by integration of national power in accordance with the potential future challenges and have enough resources to achieve the national alternatives in case of unpredictable crises. Military transformation and reorganization need to be conducted which focus on the quality of personnel and the quality of life in the military society. The long term transformation needs to reorganize and modernize each factor of national power with the objective to protect the common national interests between Thailand and her closest ally, the United States.

WORD COUNT = 9,990

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²⁴ Ibid, 15.

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²⁶ From the American perspective, in the Asia-Pacific region, only three countries appear to have the potential to rival the military capabilities of the United States in the next 50 years: China, Japan, and India. At present, none of these countries is overtly hostile to U.S. interests--although Japan is the most friendly and China the least--and none of them possesses anything comparable to U.S. military capabilities. The goal for the United States with regard to these three countries, therefore, is twofold: a. Ensuring that they remain friendly to the United States. b. Ensuring that they do not develop military capabilities that could challenge those of the United States.

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²⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Asian Military Balance. A Comparative Summary of Military Expenditures; Manpower; Land, Air, and Naval, Forces; and Arms Sales., February 28, 2000, 11.

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³³ Ibid, 29.

³⁴ The name Thai Rak Thai means "Thais Love Thais".

³⁵ The Economist. The World in 2002. p.92. From the Economist.com, Feb 2, 2002. Thaksin is placing increasing pressure on the coalition partner, the National Aspiration Party (NAP), to merge with the TRT, and is encouraging the opposition party, Chart Pattana, to join the TRT-led coalition. These developments would make effective parliamentary opposition to the government virtually impossible.

³⁶ Economist.com, Thailand In Thaksin's pocket. Jan 31st 2002 from The Economist print edition, 2 February 2002; available from <http://www.economist.co.uk/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=966064>; Internet; accessed 2 Feb 2002.

³⁷ Asian Development Bank. Country Strategy and Program Update (2002-2004): Thailand. July 2001, 4.

³⁸ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) 2001. Challenges To Democratization In Burma Perspectives on multilateral and bilateral responses. Publications Office, International IDEA, SE 103 34 Stockholm, Sweden, p. 124.

³⁹ Asian Development Bank. Country Strategy and Program Update (2002-2004): Thailand. July 2001, 1.

⁴⁰ James C. Kraska, Counterdrug Operations in U.S. Pacific Command, JFQ Autumn/Winter 1997-98, 83.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² In addition, the Royal Thai Army's *Pha Muang* Task Force has been established to assume an aggressive lead role in border narcotics interdiction backed by the Border Patrol Police and civil police force. With training assistance from the USA, a joint anti-narcotics task force composed of three RTA light infantry companies and one Border Patrol Police company is being formed. The task force became operational September 2001 and is likely to liaise closely with US agencies involved in narcotics intelligence.

⁴³ Bangkok Post, Online, General News, 22 January 2002; available from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/22Jan2002_news06.html>; Internet; accessed 22 Jan 2002.

⁴⁴ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) 2001. Challenges To Democratization In Burma Perspectives on multilateral and bilateral responses. Publications Office, International IDEA, SE 103 34 Stockholm, Sweden, p. 124.

⁴⁵ Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Terrorism: Southeast Asia's Response. #01 Jan 04, 2002, Center for Strategic and International Studies; available from <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0201.htm>> accessed Jan, 2002.

⁴⁶ see PULO website at <http://pulo.cjb.net/>.

⁴⁷ Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, Terrorism: Southeast Asia's Response. #01 Jan 04, 2002, Center for Strategic and International Studies; available from <<http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0201.htm>> accessed Jan, 2002.

⁴⁸ Bangkok Post, Online, General News, 17 September 2001; available from <http://scoop.bangkokpost.co.th/bkkpost/2001/september2001/bp20010917/news/17Sep2001_news02.html>; Internet; accessed 17 Jan 2001.

⁴⁹ Thailand National Defense College, by MG Piti Kumppong. New Roles of the Thai Military: Readjusting for the 21st Century. ARF Meeting at National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), Tokyo, Japan. 27-31 Aug 2001. 3-4.

⁵⁰ After the general elections in East Timor, INTERFET was transformed to the UN Transitional Authority in East Timor or UNTAET. In the current, second phase of peace operations in East Timor, the Thai Armed Forces, as requested by the UN, dispatched a force of 925 personnel to participate in the UNTAET.

⁵¹ Bangkok Post, Online, General News, Wednesday 30 January 2002; available from <http://www.bangkokpost.com/News/30Jan2002_news19.html>; Internet; accessed 30 Jan 2002.

⁵² Sokolsky , Richard, Rabasa, Angel, and Neu, C.R.. The Role of Southeast Asia in U.S. Strategy Toward China., 50-51.

⁵³ The Royal Thai navy has 14 frigates, 5 corvettes (many of which are armed with Harpoon antiship missiles), and more than 80 patrol and coastal vessels. Two new classes of frigates will enter the inventory within a few years, and a light aircraft carrier (*Principe de Asturias* type), with a complement of eight Spanish AV-8S Matador (Harrier) and six S-70B Seahawk helicopters, was commissioned in 1997 and will significantly improve the navy's power projection capability, although lack of funds has kept it at a low state of readiness. The Royal Thai air force added 36 F-16s in the mid-1990s, but was forced to shelve plans to acquire eight F-18s. It is also in the process of upgrading its air defense and electronic surveillance capabilities. Acquisition of an airborne early warning system, perhaps the E-2C Hawkeye, has been indefinitely postponed, as was the Thai navy's submarine program.

⁵⁴ Sokolsky , Richard, Rabasa, Angel, and Neu, C.R.. The Role of Southeast Asia in U.S. Strategy Toward China., 50-51.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 255.

⁵⁶ The United States should seek ways to increase its military presence in other countries in South and Southeast Asia. First, In according to the constrained defense budgets and the absence of an unambiguous threat, justifying the expense would be difficult. Secondly, countries in the region are unlikely to allow the United States to establish new permanent bases on their territory.

⁵⁷ In this case, its former colonial relationship with the Philippines, the United States must be sensitive to the delicacy of the issue there and not attempt to acquire greater access than is acceptable to the Philippine people.

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