

CHAPTER 4
THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CAMBODIA
UNDER PRIME MINISTER THAKSIN'S ADMINISTRATION

**I. Thailand's Foreign Policy towards Cambodia from February 2001 to the
anti-Thai violence on 29 January 2003**

1. Thailand's foreign policy announced to the parliament on 26 February 2001

On 26 February 2001, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced the foreign policy of his new government to the parliament as follows:

(1) Conduct foreign policy with an emphasis on pro-active economic diplomacy and other forms of diplomacy with a view to restoring and strengthening Thailand's international relations as well as seeking international cooperation in all fields;

(2) Uphold the principles of security, development and international peace building with a view to enhancing justice under the framework of the United Nations and related international organizations of which Thailand is a member;

(3) Promote a more pro-active role for Thailand in the international community by expanding closer international cooperation and relations between ASEAN member countries and countries in East Asia, South Asia and other regions as well as by acting as a coordinator in pursuing cooperation for peacekeeping and prevention of international conflicts in the region;

(4) Promote, preserve and protect the country's rights and national interests including those of Thailand's private sector, Thai workers and Thai citizens abroad;

(5) Expeditiously restore and strengthen Thailand's relations and developmental cooperation with its neighbors and other Asian countries by pursuing or initiating relations and developmental cooperation in all fields, both bilaterally and

multilaterally, with a view to fostering good understanding in resolving problems and sharing mutual benefits in a constructive, sincere and peaceful manner.¹

2. Exchanges of visits and arrangements of meetings at high level (listed in chronological order)

After Prime Minister Thaksin's assumption of office, there were a number of vital exchanges of visits and arrangements of bilateral meetings that helped lay strong groundwork at policy level for the enhancement of close relations and cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia. The results and agreements reached during the said visits and meetings at high level were crucial and served as frameworks for relevant authorities of the two countries to follow and work out together for the successful implementation. Those visits and meetings which took place from 2001 to the period before the outbreak of the anti-Thai violence in early 2003 are as follows:

2.1 Prime Minister Thaksin's visit to Cambodia (18 - 19 June 2001)

Prime Minister Thaksin officially visited Cambodia at the invitation of Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, from 18 to 19 June 2001. The two Prime Ministers exchanged views on various matters of common concerns and benefits to further consolidate, develop, and expand their relations in every field of cooperation. In addition to the discussion, the two Prime Ministers presided over the signings of (a) The Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation between Cambodia and Thailand which aimed to further promote and strengthen their bilateral relations up to the 21st century and (b) The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Royal Thai Government regarding the Area of their Overlapping Maritime Claims to the Continental Shelf.

Both sides also issued a Joint Communiqué that became one of the most important bases for the strengthening and promotion of the relations and cooperation between the two countries at the later stage. Details of the Joint Communiqué are as follows:

¹ Royal Thai Embassy, Washington D.C., http://www.thaiembdc.org/politics/govtment/policy/54thpolicy/policy_e.html#1 (Accessed December 25, 2006).

(1) The two sides shall continue to develop their relations based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other universally recognized principles of international law, on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence and on the principles set forth in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in the Southeast Asia, especially the principles of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. They further reaffirmed their respect for the principles of non-interference into each other's internal affairs, of non-recourse to the use of force or threat of force, of peaceful settlement of all disputes, and not allowing one's country territory to be used by any political or military force against the other's;

(2) Both sides agreed not to allow their territories to be used by any individual or group in a hostile manner against the other country;²

(3) The two sides shall continue to maintain regular high-level meetings between representatives of the two governments, parliaments, state agencies and military forces to promote both the official and people-to-people contacts between the two countries;

(4) The two sides committed to strengthen cooperation and consultation between Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia and Thailand to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. They also agreed to work closely with each other on bilateral and under the framework of ASEAN basis in the development programs such as the Greater Mekong Sub-region, the less-developed areas along the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) and the ASEAN integration;

² The reason is that Cambodia had problems with the Cambodian Freedom Fighter (CFF) which was founded in late 1998 with not more than 100-armed fighters locating in northeastern Cambodia near the Thai border and funded by the Cambodian - American communities. The CFF's main mission was to topple the Cambodian Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen as it viewed and alleged Hun Sen as originally a part of the Khmer Rouge and installed by neighboring Vietnam as a puppet regime. In 2000, the CFF planed to overthrow the Cambodian Government by having 50 or more of CFF members wearing CFF T-shirts to attack two governmental buildings in Phnom Penh with B-40 rockets, grenades and AK-47 assault rifles, but the operation failed, leaving 8 people dead and 12 wounded. At present, the CFF is inactive as the US Government arrested its leader. More details appear in David Kihara, "Danger and Delusion, the Cambodian Freedom Fighters, One Year after the Attack" *The Cambodia Daily*, September 15-16, 2001.

(5) They agreed to work closely with each other to combat crimes along the borders between the two countries as well as transnational crimes, such as drugs trafficking, trafficking in persons, and other illegal activities;

(6) The two sides re-affirmed the importance of bilateral economic relations, in particular, the promotion of investment and trade between the two countries. To reach that end, they agreed to fully utilize the existing mechanisms for bilateral cooperation, especially the Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation, and the Joint Trade Committee;

(7) They agreed further to strengthen cooperation in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fishery, and fishery-related industries and energy; to exchange experiences in the protection of endangered species as well as forests, especially to suppress illegal logging, and of the environment, in particular along the common land and sea borders;

(8) They agreed to strengthen their cooperation to upgrade land routes and develop railway lines between the two countries. They agreed to further encourage their cooperation on tourism in the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation;

(9) The two sides agreed to expand cooperation in public health, to share experiences and to assist each other effectively in the prevention and control of diseases along the borders between the two countries;

(10) The two sides agreed to expand further their cooperation in the fields of education and training, to exchange students at university and post-university levels, and to facilitate arts and cultural exchange between them;

(11) Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to effectively implement the Agreement to Combat against the Illicit Trafficking and Cross Border Smuggling of Moveable Cultural Property and to Restitute it to the Country of Origin and the Agreement on Cooperation for the Return of Stolen or Embezzled Vehicles, both of which were signed on 14 June 2000;

(12) The two sides shall continue to promote favorable conditions required for the protection of security and for the normal life of nationals of one's country living in the other's country;

(13) The two sides agreed to encourage their border provinces to promote cooperation and mutual assistance in all areas of mutual interests;

(14) The two sides reaffirmed their determination to settle as soon as possible the land border demarcation in the spirit of friendship, mutual understanding and the principles of equality and good neighborliness, so as to build a borderline of lasting peace, stability and friendship between them;

(15) The two sides had highly appreciated their efforts and noted their approval and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Area of their Overlapping Maritime Claims to Continental Shelf.³

The said Joint Communiqué apparently laid down basic principles and agenda for the promotion of the relations between Thailand and Cambodia throughout Prime Minister Thaksin's period. The MOU also laid the foundation for new era of cooperation in the exploration of petroleum resources whereas the Framework Agreement aimed at promoting and strengthening further the Thai - Cambodian relations into a new stage of development in the 21st Century. It included cooperation in the infrastructure development, trade and investment, agriculture, industry, tourism and energy.

2.2 Prime Minister Thaksin's working visit to Cambodia (11 October 2001)

Prime Minister Thaksin, accompanied by Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs, paid a working visit to Cambodia on 11 October 2001. During the visit, both of them were granted a royal audience with His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia, at the Royal Palace and Prime Minister Thaksin was awarded the medal "Grand Croix de l'Ordre Royal du Sahamaitrei" while Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai was awarded the medal "Grand Officier de l'Ordre Royal du Sahamaitrei". The Thai Prime Minister also had working lunch with Samdech Hun Sen and discussed ways and means to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries.⁴

³ Division II, Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, October 11, 2001, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=469> (Accessed January 28, 2007).

2.3 The Fourth Meeting of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation in Chiang Mai Province (25 - 26 December 2002)

Thailand hosted the Fourth Meeting of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Commission (JC) on Bilateral Cooperation from 25 to 26 December 2002 in Chiang Mai Province which was co-chaired by Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, and Mr. Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, who also made an official visit to Thailand during the occasion.

Before attending the JC Meeting, Mr. Hor Namhong called on Prime Minister Thaksin and asked the Thai Government to intensify cooperation between the two countries on the boundary demarcation and the joint development in the overlapping maritime claimed area as agreed upon in principle by the two leaders during Prime Minister Thaksin's visit to Cambodia from 18 to 19 June 2001. The Cambodian side also thanked the Thai Government for providing a soft loan to be used for the improvement of the National Road No. 48 linking Koh Kong Province with Sre Amble District which would lead eastwards to Sihanouk Ville via the National Road No. 4 and a grant aid for the construction of four bridges along the National Road No. 48, as well as assistance to develop the National Road No. 67 linking Sa-ngam Pass in Sisaket Province of Thailand with Anlong Veng District in Oddar Meanchay and Siem Reap Provinces of Cambodia.

Pertaining to the Fourth Meeting of the JC, both sides discussed various issues of common interest and reached mutual agreement as follows:

(1) They agreed to sign 3 Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) in the near future, namely MOU on the Cooperation in Agriculture, MOU on the Cooperation in the Employment of Workers, and MOU on the Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking;

(2) The Thai side agreed to provide a grant aid to Cambodia for the construction of 4 bridges along the National Road No. 48 (Koh Kong - Sre Amble) and offered a soft loan to finance the improvement of this road. Thailand also agreed to render assistance to Cambodia for the development of National Road No. 67 (Sa-ngam - Anlong Veng - Siem Reap);

(3) As far as the boundary demarcation was concerned, both sides agreed to conclude the Terms of Reference (TOR) to be used as guidelines for undertaking the joint survey and demarcation works of the land boundary between Thailand and Cambodia and to start the demarcation works of land boundary as soon as possible, in order to bring the lasting peace and friendship to the border areas of the two countries;

(4) Both sides agreed to expedite their cooperation on solving the overlapping maritime claims for the successful settlement of this crucial issue;

(5) They also agreed to intensify their cooperation to maintain peace and security in the border areas, particularly the prevention and suppression of transnational crimes, illegal migration, human trafficking, drugs trafficking, illegal logging and smuggling of logs and wildlife, etc.⁵

2.4 Royal Visit to Cambodia

Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn paid an official visit to Cambodia from 16 to 17 July 2001 to strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries. During the visit, the Princess visited the Royal Palace, Toul Sleng Genocide Museum and Angkor Wat in Siem Reap Province.⁶

2.5 Samdech Hun Sen's visit to Thailand (13 - 15 November 2001)

At the invitation of Prime Minister Thaksin, Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, and his wife Lok Chum Teav Bun Rani, paid an official visit to Thailand from 13 to 15 November 2001. The Cambodian delegation included Mr. Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Sok An, Senior Minister and Minister in charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers.

Samdech Hun Sen held official talks with Prime Minister Thaksin on various issues of common interest, such as cooperation on the development of the National Road No. 48 and the National Road No. 67. Moreover, the two countries shall cooperate to increase the volume of border trade.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, December 25, 2002, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=481> (Accessed January 28, 2007).

⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=459> (Accessed January 25, 2007).

The two prime ministers also presided over the signing ceremony by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both sides of an Agreement on the Exemption of Visas for Holders of Diplomatic Passports between the two governments. Mr. Hor Namhong told the reporters that this was a first step and the two countries would sign other agreements on visa exemptions for holders of official and normal passports in the near future.

Moreover, Samdech Hun Sen was awarded a royal decoration of the “Knight Grand Cordon of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant” while Senior Minister Hor Namhong and Senior Minister Sok An were awarded royal decorations of the “Knight Grand Cross of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant”.⁷

During the visit, Samdech Hun Sen and his wife were granted a royal audience with His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand and Samdech Hun Sen was conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree (Honoris Causa) of Political Science (International Relations) from Ramkhamhaeng University on 15 November 2001.⁸

II. Thailand’s Foreign Policy towards Cambodia from the anti-Thai violence on 29 January 2003 to 19 September 2006

1. Rapprochement and normalization of diplomatic relations after the anti-Thai violence on 29 January 2003

1.1 On 5 March 2003, Lt. Cdr. Itti Ditbanjong RTN., Acting Director-General, Department of Information, in a capacity of deputy spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, gave a press briefing in order to make it clear to the public that Thailand and Cambodia were in a process of normalization of their

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, November 7 and 15, 2001, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/newsdetail.php?contentid=1188> and <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/bulletindetail.php?contentid=1339> (Accessed February 5, 2007).

⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, November 15, 2001, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=456> (Accessed January 28, 2007).

diplomatic relations after the relations were downgraded as a result of the anti-Thai violence of 29 January 2003 in Phnom Penh.⁹

Lt. Cdr. Itti Ditbanjong RTN. said that it was evident that the Thai Government had undertaken various measures to support the process of normalization of the relations by exercising flexibility which was due to the fact that Thailand and Cambodia are neighboring countries that share a common border. Therefore, Thailand had a firm determination to normalize the friendly relations with Cambodia as soon as possible. He further cited that various measures implemented by the Thai Government after the incident of 29 January 2003 reflected its desire to normalize the diplomatic relations with Cambodia on a step-by-step basis by taking into account the mutual interest of the two countries and the well-being of their respective peoples, particularly those living along the Thai - Cambodian border areas. In this regard, the Thai Government decided to take the following measures on the humanitarian basis:

(1) The Cambodians were allowed to travel across the border areas to Thailand to purchase essential daily goods, starting from 8 February 2003;

(2) Trucks were allowed to carry goods from Cambodia to Thailand and, vice versa, trucks could carry goods from Thailand back to Cambodia, starting from 15 February 2003;

(3) The Thai Government appointed Mr. Kosit Chatpaiboon as Chargé d'Affaires to Cambodia and sent back diplomatic officials to Phnom Penh on 10 February 2003;

(4) In response to Samdech Hun Sen's request to the Thai Prime Minister on 23 February 2003 that the Royal Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh should re-new its consular services as soon as possible, the Thai Government had instructed the Royal Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh to resume its consular services starting from 25 February 2003. The Embassy has since issued visas to over 200 Cambodians daily as well as taking special consideration for the request to issue visas to Cambodian officials who need to travel to Thailand to attend conferences, transit and those seeking medical treatment.

⁹ Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release, March 5, 2003.

1.2 The diplomatic relations of the two countries were finally restored and brought on track shortly after the meeting between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Cambodia on 11 April 2003 in Siem Reap Province and they mutually agreed to restore the relations to the ambassadorial level in April 2003 after the Songkran festival as a present for the peoples of the two countries on the occasion of their traditional New Year. The main reason the Thai Government agreed to resume its diplomatic relations with Cambodia was that the Cambodian Government had fully observed the conditions requested by the Thai side which were stipulated in the Aide Memoire dated 30 January 2003, the gist of which is as follows:

(1) Efforts by the Cambodian Government to explain truth to the Cambodian public in order to restore and promote mutual understanding between peoples of the two countries had been substantively carried out. The Cambodian leaders conceded on various occasions that the ineffectiveness to control the situation had resulted in the outbreak of the violence;

(2) The Cambodian Government on 17 March 2003 had unconditionally paid the compensation for the damages incurred on the Royal Thai Embassy and its officials with full amount of 5,923,633.70 USD or equivalent to 251,754,432.40 baht. Moreover, there was progress in the process of compensation to be paid to the Thai nationals whose properties had been destroyed or damaged from the riot;

(3) The Cambodian side had rendered full cooperation in the investigation and prosecution process against the perpetrators involved in the incident.¹⁰

1.3 The Thai and Cambodian Governments issued a Joint Statement between the two governments on the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries at the ambassadorial level after a bilateral discussion between Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Mr. Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia on 11 April 2003 in Siem Reap Province, as follows:

(1) Both sides took note of the implementation of various agreements made during the discussion between Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai and Mr. Sok An, Senior Minister in charge of Council of the Ministers of Cambodia, on 21 March 2003. Such

¹⁰ Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Press Releases, March 25, 2003 and April 11, 2003,

agreements included the resumption of various activities in the border areas, the normalization of border crossing of the two peoples, and the promotion of people-to-people contacts, in particular through the establishment of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Committee for the Promotion of Cultural Cooperation;

(2) Both sides expressed commitment to provide full protection for the safety of diplomatic staff, visiting officials, and the private sector in their respective countries;

(3) In view of those positive developments and to enable the commencement of a new chapter of the Thai - Cambodian cordial relations at the auspicious traditional New Year of Songkran Festival, both sides therefore agreed that their respective ambassadors would resume their duties as soon as possible.¹¹

1.4 Following both sides' effort, Cambodian Ambassador Ung Sean returned and resumed his office in Bangkok on 13 April 2003 while Thai Ambassador Chatchawed Chartsuwan went back to Phnom Penh and retook his office on 24 April 2003.¹² After that, Thailand and Cambodia had exerted their efforts to remedy and develop their cooperation and relations at all levels and through various frameworks. This matter would be further discussed in the latter part of this thesis. Moreover, the bilateral relations between the two countries had been vigorously strengthened when the Thai Rak Thai Party won another general election in early 2005 and could form the single-party government amidst the political protest and turbulence.

2. Thailand's foreign policy announced to the parliament on 23 March 2005

On 23 March 2005, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, in his second term of office, announced foreign and international economic policies of his new government to the parliament that it still attaches great importance to the enhancement of relations and cooperation with neighbors as follows:

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, April 11, 2003, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=525> (Accessed January 29, 2007).

¹² Seth Mydans, "Cambodia: Neighbors Reconcile," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2003, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=980DE7D8173DF936A15757C0A9659C8B63&n=Top%2FReference%2FTimes%20Topics%2FSubjects%2FF%2FForeign%20Ser vice> (Accessed February 5, 2007).

(1) The Government must conduct foreign and international economic policies that will protect Thailand's national interests. In the meantime, partners must be sought and international cooperation must be built, at both the level of neighboring countries and the region, to develop together and prevent problems that may affect Thailand;

(2) The Government shall conduct a pro-active foreign policy based on the principle of equal treatment, and aims to promote and expand friendship and cooperation with foreign countries, in political, security, economic, social and cultural aspects, with foreign affairs as a key instrument in enhancing the Government's economic and social development policies;

(3) The Government shall continue to build and strengthen the good understanding and cooperation with neighboring countries, and further expand cooperation at the levels of government, the private sector and the public, in particular, the economic cooperation with neighboring countries under the Ayeyawady - Chao Phraya - Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and other sub-regional frameworks in the areas of trade, investment, agriculture, industry, linkage of land-sea-air transportation networks, tourism and human resource development;

(4) The Government shall cooperate with ASEAN member countries to expedite the realization of the ASEAN Community and promote the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) as a forum for enhancing confidence and relations among the countries of Asia, as well as an important foundation towards the establishment of an Asian Community;

(5) The Government shall further develop and expand cooperation on an equal basis and in strategic partnership with countries and key groupings of countries based on mutual benefit, and shall promote greater recognition of and confidence in Thailand on the part of foreign countries.

(6) In the area of multilateral cooperation, the Government shall abide by its obligations under the United Nations Charter, international law, cooperation frameworks to which Thailand belongs, and Thailand's international commitments. The Government shall step up Thailand's role in the United Nations, international organizations, regional organizations and international networks to promote and

support peace; security; democratization; international development cooperation in economic, social, technical and human security aspects; humanitarian assistance, in particular post-conflict rehabilitation; counter-terrorism cooperation, and the development of Thailand into a center for international conferences and activities;

(7) The Government shall encourage Thai nationals to play key roles in the United Nations and other international organizations, and Thailand to play a leading role in the setting of important international rules and regulations and in the reform of the United Nations, as well as in addressing globally-recognized transnational issues, in particular narcotics, HIV/AIDS, epidemics, disasters, natural resources, the environment, poverty eradication and sustainable development;

(8) In the area of international economic relations, the Government shall continue to pursue a pro-active international economic policy, in conjunction with domestic economic policy, particularly economic restructuring, so that international cooperation may be used to develop and enhance the potential of people at every level in preparation for the economic restructuring as well as develop Thailand's potential to play a leading role in regional economic development;

(9) The Government shall continue to negotiate free trade agreements with various countries for the greatest good of the country, to increase the competitiveness of Thai entrepreneurs and to pursue proactive marketing policies in both existing and new markets, so that Thai goods and services are widely known and recognized by foreign consumers;

(10) The Government shall encourage Thai representatives to play constructive leading roles in international trade and economic negotiations, particularly under the multilateral framework, to enhance the bargaining power and safeguard the overall interests of the country, as well as expand economic cooperation with various countries to promote access to natural resources, raw materials, science and technology, and new knowledge from abroad to increase the country's economic competitiveness in international trade fora;

(11) The Government shall continue to pursue diplomacy for the people, by encouraging the participation of people from all walks of life in foreign affairs, supporting the role of Thai communities abroad in protecting and promoting the national interest; to protect the rights and interests of the country, the Thai private

sector, workers, and communities abroad; and to further improve the system for integrated administration of Thai Government's offices overseas.¹³

3. Exchanges of visits of high-level officials (listed in chronological order)

The exchanges of visits and arrangements of high-level meetings between Thailand and Cambodia after the anti-Thai violence in January 2003 helped restore mutual understanding and close cooperation between the two countries. Apart from the Joint Cabinet Retreat between Thailand and Cambodia which was held in Siem Reap and Ubon Ratchathani Provinces from 31 May to 1 June 2003, a number of meetings were held between both sides, such as the Meeting on Regional Border Committees (RBCs) between relevant Thai - Cambodian military regions on the regular basis, the meetings at senior official and ministerial levels on the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Employment of Workers, the meeting of the Thai - Cambodian Committee on the Joint Development of Preah Vihear Temple on 25 March 2004 in Bangkok, the first and second meetings of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Committee on the Promotion of Cultural Cooperation in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap in 2004 and in Nakhon Ratchasima and Buriram Provinces in 2005 respectively, the third meeting of the Border Peace Keeping Committee (BPKC) in June 2004 in Bangkok, the meetings at senior official and ministerial levels on the Implementation of Memorandum of Understanding on the Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking in 2004 - 2006, etc.¹⁴ Important meetings and exchanges of visits at high level between the two countries between early 2003 to late 2006 are as follows:

3.1 Joint Cabinet Retreat between Thailand and Cambodia (31 May - 1 June 2003)

The anti-Thai violence on 29 January 2003 caused strong effect on the relations and cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia. Various unresolved issues

¹³ Royal Thai Embassy, Washington D.C., "Policy Statement of the Thai Government to the Parliament on 23 March 2005," http://www.thaiembdc.org/politics/govtment/policy/55thpolicy/pt-5_e.html (Accessed December 25, 2006).

¹⁴ Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

combined with influential factors transcended from the past had aggravated the situation of the relations between the two countries. To restore relations and promote better condition and atmosphere to normal level, Thailand and Cambodia therefore agreed to co-host the Joint Cabinet Retreat from 31 May to 1 June 2003 in Siem Reap and Ubon Ratchathani Provinces. The main objective of the meeting was to lay solid groundwork for the continuation and enhancement of their relations and cooperation in all fields in the aftermath of the anti-Thai violence on 29 January 2003. The said meeting was also regarded as the historical event marking a symbol of full diplomatic normalization between the two countries.¹⁵ The meeting achieved more than twenty matters covering five core areas of cooperation as follows:

3.1.1 Security matters i.e. the opening of three additional international points of entry at the Thai - Cambodian border (namely Sa-ngam - Anlong Veng in Srisaket and Oddar Meanchay Provinces, Ban Phakkard - Prum in Chanthaburi Province and Pailin City, Ban Laem - Duang in Chantaburi and Battambang Provinces), the extension of working hours of all 6 international points of entry (from 07.00 to 20.00 hours), and the permission for border pass holders of both countries to travel deep into another province next to the border province on trial basis by allowing the Thai holders of a border pass living in Sa Kaeo Province to travel to Siem Reap Province bypassing Banteay Meanchey Province and, vice versa, the Cambodian holders of border pass living in Banteay Meanchey Province to travel to Prachinburi province bypassing Sa Kaeo Province and the promotion of regular meetings between relevant authorities of both sides such as the Ministers of Interior, Governors of border Provinces, Police Commander-in-Chief with a view to maintaining and promoting peace, stability and mutual understanding in the border areas;

3.1.2 Economic matters i.e. the promotion of account trade, the assistance from Thailand in the development and reconstruction of two National Roads linking Thailand with Cambodia, namely the National Road No. 48 (Koh Kong - Sre Amble District) together with the construction of 4 bridges along this road and the National Road No. 67 (Sa-ngam (in Srisaket Province) - Anlong Veng - Siem Reap);

¹⁵ Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Press Releases, April 23 and May 2, 2003.

3.1.3 Educational / cultural / tourism matters i.e. the establishment of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Committee on the Development of Preah Vihear Temple, Cooperation on the promotion of tourism under the theme of “Two Kingdoms One Destination” and cooperation under the framework of the Emerald Triangle between Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR, etc.;

3.1.4 Social development / worker / healthcare matters i.e. the encouragement for the effective implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in the Employment of Workers and the Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking signed on 31 May 2003, and the strengthening of healthcare cooperation in the border areas, particularly the prevention of communicable diseases, etc.;

3.1.5 Scientific / technological / environmental matters i.e. the transfer of technology know-how in various fields, the provision of technical training programs and the promotion of better environmental management in the border areas;

3.1.6 Five Memoranda of Understanding, one agreement and one joint ministerial statement, were signed to serve as vital frameworks for the promotion of closer cooperation and mutual understanding between authorities concerned of the two countries, namely (1) MOU on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women; (2) MOU on Cooperation in Agriculture; (3) MOU on Cooperation in Education; (4) MOU on Cooperation in the Development of the National Roads No. 48 and No. 67; (5) MOU on the Cooperation in Employment of Workers; (6) Agreement on Technical Cooperation on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures; (7) Joint Ministerial Statement on the Concept Paper on Thailand - Cambodia Border Points of Entry: Ways towards New Order, Effective Border Management and Greater Bilateral Cooperation. ¹⁶

¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, May 31 2003, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=507> (Accessed January 29, 2007) and Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.

3.2 Meeting between Prime Minister Thaksin and Samdech Hun Sen at the sideline of the Summit Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Strategy (ECS) held in Bagan (11 - 12 November 2003)

At the said meeting, the Thai - Cambodian Prime Ministers mutually agreed upon the frameworks of cooperation on the facilitation of border crossing and energy cooperation between the two countries as follows:

3.2.1 Facilitation on border crossing to be effective on 11 November 2003 as follows:

(1) The official opening of 3 new international points of entry between two countries, namely (a) Ban Pakkard (Pong Namron District, Chanthaburi Province) - Prum (Pailin); (b) Ban Laem (Pong Namron District, Chanthaburi Province) - Daung (Kamrieng, Battambang Province); (c) Sa-ngam (Phu Sing District, Sisaket Province) - Choam, Anlong Veng (Oddar Meanchey Province).¹⁷

(2) The extension of daily opening hours of all international points of entry between the two countries from 07.00 - 17.00 hours to 07.00 - 20.00 hours;

(3) On a trial basis, the two countries agreed that their respective nationals, who live in Banteay Meanchey and Sa Kaeo Provinces and hold valid border pass for crossing the Thai - Cambodian border at Klong Leuk - Poi Pet international point of entry, are permitted to travel in both Sa Kaeo and Prachinburi Provinces of Thailand (for the Cambodians) and vice versa in both Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap Provinces of Cambodia (for the Thais) with stay permit up to 7 days;

3.2.2 The two prime ministers witnessed the signing of a Joint Statement on 12 November 2003 between Mr. Prommin Lersuridej, Minister of Energy of Thailand and Mr. Suy Sem, Minister of Industry, Mines and Energy of Cambodia. The Joint Statement was served as a foundation for their cooperation in the energy field;

¹⁷ Other three existing international points of entry between Thailand and Cambodia are (1) Ban Klong Leuk (Aranyaprathet District, Sa Kaeo Province) - Poi Pet (O'Chrov District, Banteay Meanchey Province), (2) Chong Chorm (Kab Choeng District, Surin Province) - O'Smach (Samrong District, Oddar Meanchey Province), (3) Hat Lek (Khlung Yai District, Trat Province) - Cham Yeam (Mundul Seima District, Koh Kong Province). Other than international points of entry, there are a number of border area points of entry in order to facilitate the border crossing, border trade and exchange of activities (except employment) between Thai and Cambodian nationals living in the border areas by using a border pass issued by their respective designated authorities as travel document.

3.2.3 In addition to 3.2.2, their respective agencies in charge of industrial development, namely the Industrial Estates Authority of Thailand (IEAT) and the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia, held a senior officials meeting in parallel to the ECS Meeting on 10 November 2003. Consequently, both sides agreed on the Terms of Reference (TORs) for a feasibility study of the establishment of Koh Kong industrial estate in Cambodia with technical assistance from Thailand.¹⁸

3.3 Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister of Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to Cambodia (1 April 2005)

Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, successor of Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, paid an official visit to Cambodia on 1 April 2005, his first official visit to Cambodia after assuming office as Foreign Minister of Thailand. The purpose of the visit was to enhance the close relations between Thailand and Cambodia and to reiterate the importance that the Thai Government has always attached to the promotion of close neighborly relations with Cambodia. He was granted an audience with Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, and had an opportunity to pay a courtesy call on Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia and hold bilateral talks with Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia. Achievements of the said visit are as follows:

3.3.1 The two sides agreed to expedite cooperation on the development of land transportation linkages, namely the National Road No. 48 (Koh Kong-Sre Amble) which involves the construction of 4 bridges across the rivers en route as well as the development of the National Road No. 67 (Sa-ngam-Anong Veng-Siem Reap);

3.3.2 Both sides agreed to organize various activities from 2005 to 2006 to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the official establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Cambodia;¹⁹

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release, November 11, 2003, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/cooperationdetail.php?contentid=510> (Accessed January 29, 2007).

¹⁹ To symbolize the increasingly good relations between the two countries, the Thai and Cambodian Governments mutually agreed to organize a number of activities to celebrate and commemorate the 55th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations for a period of one year starting from 19 December 2005 to 19 December 2006.

3.3.3 The two sides agreed to cooperate on tackling the problem of illegal migration. The Thai side agreed to facilitate the Cambodian side in the protection of the Cambodian inmates in Thailand by allowing the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok and Consulate-General in Sa Kaeo Province to render consular assistance and protection to them. The Cambodian side was asked to assist Thailand in the protection of Thai nationals imprisoned in Cambodia. Moreover, the two sides agreed to expedite the signing of the Agreement on the Transfer of Prisoners for the sake of the protection of nationals of the respective country;

3.3.4 The Cambodian side expressed appreciation to the Thai side for granting the AISP (ASEAN Integration Special Preferences) to 310 Cambodian export items;

3.3.5 The Cambodian side asked for Thailand's support for the inscription of Preah Vihear Temple as a World Cultural Heritage Site under the UNESCO. The Thai side expressed its readiness to help develop tourism facilities as well as render assistance and expertise in the restoration of Preah Vihear Temple;

3.3.6 They agreed to expedite the delimitation and joint development in the overlapping continental shelf areas;

3.3.7 The Cambodian side asked for Thailand's assistance regarding the artificial rain-making to alleviate drought situation in Cambodia. The Thai side agreed to bring the matter to the government for consideration;

3.3.8 For multi-lateral matters, Thailand and Cambodia discussed and agreed on the following subjects:

(1) The two sides concurred that the cooperation under the framework of the Emerald Triangle should be further concretized and the meeting at the ministerial level was needed to make their cooperation become more tangible;

(2) The two sides agreed to consolidate their cooperation under the framework of ACMECS, including the implementation of the ACMECS single visa as pilot countries to facilitate tourists from the third countries;

(3) The Cambodian side expressed its full support to Thailand's candidature (Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai) for the post of the UNSG.²⁰

²⁰ Press Release No. 293/2549 dated 4 April 2006, <http://www.mfa.go.th/web/463.php?id=3489&lang=th> (Accessed on 31 January 2007).

3.4 Samdech Hun Sen paid a working visit to Thailand (13 - 14 May 2005)

Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, paid a working visit to Thailand from 13 to 14 May 2005 at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Thailand. His party comprised Mr. Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Mr. Cham Prasidh, Minister of Commerce. On 13 May 2005, the two prime ministers held talks at the Government House, gists of the discussion are as follows:

3.4.1 The Thai Prime Minister expressed thanks to the Cambodian Government and people for the donation in the amount of 10,000 USD for the relief of Tsunami-affected people in Thailand;

3.4.2 Samdech Hun Sen expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the Thai Government for bilateral assistance rendered to Cambodia, particularly the development of National Roads No. 48 and No. 67. In addition, he proposed to have assistance from Thailand for the development of the National Road No. 68 (Chong Chom (in Surin Province) - Kra Lanh - Siem Reap);

3.4.3 The Cambodian side proposed that the two countries should cooperate on various matters such as the construction of a hydro-power plant in Cambodia, delimitation of maritime boundary and joint development in the areas of overlapping continental shelf, joint development of Preah Vihear Temple, opening of new international point of entry and cooperation on migrant workers;

3.4.4 The Thai side was of view that some matters should be taken into account urgently. For the joint development of Preah Vihear Temple, the Thai side requested Cambodia to keep out a number of stalls located at the foot of the Temple to prevent negative impact on the natural environment as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding on the Survey and Demarcation of Land Boundary between two countries. In this matter, the Cambodian side agreed to follow the request and shall cooperate with the Thai side in solving this issue at the earliest.²¹

²¹ Government House of Thailand News No. 05/13-14 dated 13 May 2005, "Talks between Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Cambodia during a Working Visit to Thailand" <http://www.thaigov.go.th/webold/news/press/48/May48/pr13may48-14.htm> (Accessed January 31, 2007).

3.5 The Fifth Meeting of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Commission (JC) on Bilateral Cooperation in Phnom Penh (7 - 9 February 2006)

Following the discussion between Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Thailand and Cambodia on 1 April 2005, the Cambodian Government hosted the Fifth Meeting of Thailand - Cambodia Joint Commission (JC) on Bilateral Cooperation from 7 to 9 February 2006 in Phnom Penh which was co-chaired by Mr. Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, and Dr. Kantathi Suphamongkhon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, who also made official visit to Cambodia during the occasion. He also paid courtesy calls on Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia and Mr. Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers of Cambodia. The JC Meeting is vital mechanism for the promotion of closer cooperation and seeking solutions to bilateral issues in relations between Thailand and Cambodia. Highlights of the achievements of the said meeting are as follows:

3.5.1 Both sides agreed to complete the demarcation works of the Cambodian - Thai boundary as early as possible by 2006 and by 2007 for the delimitation of maritime boundary; to launch ACMECS single visa scheme between Thailand and Cambodia as pilot countries from April 2006 onwards; and to exchange information and delegations for the promotion of mutual understanding;

3.5.2 The Cambodian side expressed appreciation to the Thai Government for giving work permits to the Cambodian workers who have been employed in Thailand as legal workers. (Until 4 February 2006, 14,000 registered Cambodian workers out of 76,000 had obtained their Identity Cards - ID);

3.5.3 The Thai side was asked to expedite a study and production of a master plan for the development of hydropower plant at Stoeung Mnam / Stoeung Me Toeuk River. In this regard, the Cambodian side was requested to accelerate the de-mining in the project areas.²²

²² Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, Press Release dated 7 February 2006, <http://www.mfaic.gov.kh/bulletindetail.php?contentid=1840> (Accessed January 29, 2007).

III. Conclusion

According to the afore-mentioned statements of foreign policy and cooperation at policy level as outcomes of the exchanges of visits and arrangements of high-level meetings, it is not exaggerated to state that the relations between Thailand and Cambodia during the first term of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration had significantly evolved from that of former Thai Governments. Many were of the view that relations between Thailand and Cambodia during Prime Minister Thaksin's administration reached a peak in 2002 when the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Commission (JC) for Bilateral Cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia was held in Thailand, and it played an important role as catalyst to the promotion of deeper relations and wider cooperation between the two countries. On the other hand, trade and investment volumes between the two countries broke records and it was the most peaceful period in the relations between the two countries.

However, by surprise, the Thai - Cambodian relations fell apart as the result of the anti-Thai violence in Phnom Penh on 29 January 2003 during which the Royal Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh was severely destroyed by fire and its properties were looted. Moreover, properties of Thai nationals living in Cambodia were also badly affected by arson, looting and being destroyed. The said incident was beyond expectation of the two governments and became a scar in their diplomatic relations up to the present day. The Thai and Cambodian Governments took this incident as a valuable lesson and exerted their fullest efforts through various means and mechanisms to restore the good feeling, trust, confidence and mutual understanding between people of both sides to normal level. The Joint Cabinet Retreat between the two governments held from 31 May to 1 June 2003 marked the normalcy in the relations between Thailand and Cambodia. Although their efforts bore fruitful results, it was short-lived due to certain limitations based on various factors that this thesis tries to explore in detail in the following chapters.