

Thai Diplomacy in the Rules-Based World Order and Balance of Powers after the Cold War Era

Assistant Professor Dr. Suraphol Srivithaya
Siam University, Thailand

iamsuraphol@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper is a part of the research on “Thai Diplomacy in the Changing New World Order and Balance of Powers in Southeast Asia”. The study applied qualitative research by a documentary research method. All document data and information were collected from various books, papers, and research reports, as well as media information, documents of Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international organizations. Various collected data and information were studied by content analysis, critical analysis and logical analysis. The research results found that, since the end of cold war and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the new world order was shifted from the bipolar balance of powers between the United States and the Soviet Union into the unipolar new world order under the American hegemony for decades. The rise of China as a new rival superpower of the United States together with China and Russia alliance has transformed the unipolar to the multipolar new world order. The “**Thai bamboo diplomacy**” and foreign policy have to be muddling through and readjusted with this strong wind of change. Thailand has its national instinct and ability to detect any direction of changing wind in order that the Thai bamboo diplomacy can be flexible enough to bend before the wind and bend with the wind for keeping a balancing act in a new ruled-based world order and balance of powers for the restoration of the world peace and security under the United Nations Charter and international law.

Keywords: Thai Diplomacy, Rules-Based World Order, Balance of Powers, Cold War Era

INTRODUCTION

On 2 June 2022, US President Biden published in the New York Times titled ‘How the US is willing to help Ukraine’ in which he declared that Russia’s action in Ukraine ‘could mark the end of the rules-based international order and open the door to aggression elsewhere, with catastrophic consequences the world over’ (Biden, 2022). Other Western leaders have likewise invoked the ‘rules-based world order’ to criticize non-Western states, especially Russia and China, for their international rule of law misconduct, but such references have been inconsistent with international law. An illustration of this is provided by the Declaration issued by the Heads of State at the conclusion of the 2022 Madrid Summit of NATO which stated that ‘we adhere to international law and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We are committed to upholding the rules-based international order’. The European Union leaders have an ambivalent attitude towards the rules-based world order, while they are prepared to go along with the United States and insisted that international relations are governed by international law. This was made clear in a statement issued by the



European Union and its Members States in the General Assembly of the United Nations when Russia-Ukraine war started on February 2022 (Popan, 2021).

In its invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has violated fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, ranging from the unlawful use of force and the violation of the territorial integrity of another sovereign state to brutal violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. These violations of international law are best judged by an international legal order accepted and understood by all nations of the world rather than by an amorphous regime advocated by one of parties to the conflict. The statement issued by the European Union condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a violation of Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, a crime of aggression under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and a violation of peremptory norms of international law (Popan, 2021) carries more weight than US President Biden's assertion that the invasion violates the rules-based world order (Biden, 2022). A final reason for discarding the rules-based world order as a means for judging the behaviour of states is that it is an unnecessary and harmful obstacle to attempts to agree on international law as a universal order governing all states when it comes to the application of international law but they seldom threaten the universality of international law.

The U.S., the NATO and the E.U. have different notable foreign policy from Russia and China vis-à-vis the ruled-based world order. While the Western countries concentrates democratic governance, human rights, environmentalism, and globalization, Russia and China emphasize the sovereign equality of states, non-intervention in the internal affairs of states, the settlement of disputes by mechanism to which states have consented, the immunity of states and their officials, and the condemnation of double standards in the treatment of states. This Sino-Russian approach to international law was spelled out in 2016 in the Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of International Law (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016). The West's adherence to a rules-based world order and international law undermines efforts to agree upon a universal system of international law premised on the same fundamental rules, principles and values. The world order founded on the UN Charter as it has evolved since the end of the 2nd World War is a sounder recipe for peace and security than the discriminatory rules-based world order. As a result, the balance of power and geostrategic competition played by Russia-China alliance in Indo-Pacific region is currently a reflection for the rise of China's power as a new hegemonic actor in the broader regional order in Southeast Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of world order today is whether the rapid shifts in the global balance of powers make war between rising and dominant powers very likely. The master narrative of the past seventy-two years has revolved around the idea of a U.S.-led post-World World II liberal hegemonic world order with three key characteristics: (1) maintain global international order; (2) provide public goods in the key areas of security, economy, and finance; and (3) maintain a gravitational normative pull, generating a large enough following to sustain the U.S. world leadership (Sørensen, 2016). The challenges of the rule-based world order in transition are compounded by the interconnected complexity of world today's global issues, heightened by rapid technological advancement by digital revolution, all of which makes all countries and international organization's governance harder consensus. While the idea of world community with shared destiny is perhaps now invoked more often than at any point in the past, there is no mutually agreed set of rules of international law and principles of diplomacy for how world



societies should be organized and relate to one another in international relations. Thailand and other ASEAN member's states have to face with difficult consensus on rule-based world order. The term of a "rules-based world order" is increasingly referred to in speeches within many international forums as well as declared from national political tribunes, foreign policy and diplomacy. The initial question is whether this notion is of purely political nature since it is not used in the UN Charter or in other international conventions. This term is not also relied upon by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or by the UN International Law Commission (ILC) (Vylegzhanin, 2021). With the popularization of such a political discourse, the frequent usage of this term by many great powers, not only of Western countries, especially the US and the EU, but also of China and Russia, can affect the UN Charter and international law. Therefore, the rules-based world order confronts significant challenges, but it is not unraveling-at least, not yet. Climate change is the biggest wild card in trying to predict the future of world society. If the world's major powers, especially the US, EU, China and Russia, cooperate with each other to combat climate change, then other threats to the rules-based world order should be manageable, if the UN and its major powers fail to address the climate crisis by 2040 or 2050 (Sloss, 2022). Due to the attractive wording the concept gets widespread in international conference, but lacking a common understanding of its content, every country might put a different meaning into the concept and the legal meaning of the term rules-based world order.

Although the above questions about the legal meaning of the term "rules-based world order" have arisen only in recent years mainly in the context of the anti-Russian rhetoric of Western politicians, the term has been used much earlier at different levels in a wide variety of topics. The question of inconsistent perceptions of this term is another reflection of a more general problem of weakening or strengthening the universal legally binding international order. One of the appropriate interpretive versions of this concept might be that "rules-based order" means first and foremost the world order which is based on norms of international law (which are mandatory as well known), and on applicable non-binding international rules containing a normative element, such as international rules provided in the documents of intergovernmental organizations and conferences, interstate political arrangements, and other mutually accepted rules, formed in the contemporary practice of international relations (Vylegzhanin, 2021). This legal interpretation allows bringing the concept in line with modern international law and the practice of diplomacy. However, it is necessary to respect the distinction between the norms of international law, which are binding, and other rules, which do not create State's obligations under the UN Charter and international law.

The rules-based world order concept may have a negative impact on the existing international legal order insofar as it "washes out" the established legitimate procedures of international law-making, thus rejecting traditional international values of legal stability and diminishing the role of international law. Such scenario would not only multiply legal uncertainty and even unreasonable expectations among the participants of the international processes, but also might lead to undermining the fundamentals of modern international law based on the UN Charter. The latter in its turn will inevitably lead to the global legal instability and will dramatically increase the risks of World War III. At the moment, the frequent abuse of the term "rules-based world order" by the representatives of the NATO countries in support of their politically motivated statements, agreed upon only among them, impedes achievement of accepted understanding of the concept at the universal level, that might be consistent with international law (Vylegzhanin, 2021). Therefore, the concept of the rules-based world order is founded on diplomatic relationships between states and through international institutions and UN Charter frameworks, with shared rules and agreements on behaviour of their member's states. Three

functions of the rules-based world order are to manage stable relations of great powers; to maintain prosperity of world systems; and defend democracy and spread freedom.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative research by using a documentary research method based on the review literature's frameworks of the rules-based world order and balance of powers after the post-cold war periods. All documentary data was collected from related research reports, academic books and papers, as well as official documents and information of Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations and other international organizations. All collected documentary data were studied by content analysis, critical analysis and logical analysis throughout the data triangulation process in order to achieve comprehensive research results and discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research found that Thai diplomacy has to face with the new challenges of the rules-based world order and balance of powers after the post-cold war periods. How can Thailand adapt its classic style of Thai diplomacy to the new challenges of the rules-based world order and the balance of powers in the Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asian Region? To answer this research question, the researcher analyses documentary data of research results in 3 aspects as follows:

1. The evolution of the characteristics of Thai diplomacy and foreign policy;
2. The challenge of the rules-based world order and balance of powers; and
3. The role of Thai diplomacy in the challenges of rules-based world order.

1. The Evolution of the Characteristics of Thai diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Having avoided direct Western colonization, Thailand provides a unique model for the study of international relations conducted by small-medium states. Unlike other Southeast Asian countries, where European colonizers ran foreign relations, Thailand (Siam) improvised and developed an independent form of foreign policy from its interactions with Western powers and Asian neighbours (Reid, 2015). Thailand has exercised pragmatic options throughout its long diplomatic history. Today, Thailand has established asymmetrical relationships with the US (formal), China (informal), and Japan (informal) (Busbarat, 2016). It has also formed symmetrical and formal relationships with regional organizations, such as the European Union (EU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and various partnerships of Mekong sub-regional organizations. These tendencies is a propensity of Thai diplomacy and foreign policy for what are often realistically described as seeming alliances of interest and convenience. Some academics have characterized this style of Thai diplomacy as “bamboo diplomacy”, which bends with the wind and bends before the wind, yet never snaps (Chinvano, 2021). Therefore, Thailand always follows the pragmatic primary goals of Thai diplomacy and foreign policy in order to maximize its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, while keeping external interferences of any great powers to a minimum.

During the post-Cold War period, Thailand has strived to play a central role in rules-based regional order and supply chains in Southeast Asia, and to promote itself as providing an attractive strategic location between US-China competitions. The Thai government agreed to a nearly 900-kilometre, Chinese-backed, North-South rail network connecting Kunming in the North to Singapore, crossing over Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia along the way. This high profile and expensive high-speed rail project is believed to be a critical part of China's Belt

and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southeast Asia and at the heart of China's infrastructure goals for the region. In terms of trade, China, Japan, and the US consistently ranked among the top three trading partners with Thailand between 2009 and 2019. Interestingly, China was Thailand's largest export partner for seven years, while the US held that position for four years. Thailand also enjoyed a trade surplus with the US and consistently suffered a trade deficit with China (Ashley and Shipper, 2022). As for security aspect, Thailand continues to maintain a formal defense treaty with the US. In 2003, the US elevated Thailand's status as a major non-NATO ally (MNNA). However, with a cooling in its formal relations with the US following the 2014 coup d'état, Thai leaders have leveraged their informal security ties with China to expand military cooperation by purchasing Chinese military equipment and inviting the People's Liberation Army to join bilateral military exercises (Ashley and Shipper, 2022).

Another evidence of Thai bamboo diplomacy to alliances during the post-Cold War period is found in its pragmatic multiple partnerships and multidirectional leveraging of all four major governance institutions for the Mekong River. Thailand actively participates in the China-backed Lancang Mekong Cooperation (LMC), the US-backed Mekong-US Partnership, the Japan-backed Greater Mekong Subregion-Japan Partnership, and the regional Mekong River Commission (MRC). Thailand's participation in and leadership of these partnerships enables it to leverage all parties to maintain Thai sovereignty and to promote its prosperity. Since 2014, Thailand has been satisfied with cultivating its positive international image as a "bridgemaker" (Ashley and Shipper, 2022). By this historical evolution, Thai diplomacy and its foreign policy have been characterized as "**Thai bamboo diplomacy**", due to its flexibility in balancing act, not just bends with the wind but bends before the wind. In other words, Thai diplomacy is always pro-active and not reactive. Thai foreign policy has to bend where the wind is blowing in order to keep safe and survive in a dangerous difficult world (Chinvano, 2021). As a result, Thai bamboo diplomacy has always been very pragmatic, very practical, and very realistic in swaying with the wind. In order to response the balance of powers between the great powers, Thai leaders and their diplomats should have their ability and intuition to detect the direction of the wind in order to manage the art of Thai bamboo diplomacy in muddling through successfully the balance of powers among the great powers in Southeast Asia and Indo-Pacific region.

2. The Challenge of the Rules-Based World Order and Balance of Powers

The new rules-based world order established by the victorious allies after the World War II has been remarkably established the enduring rules of the UN Charter and international law. The framework of liberal democracy rules, embodied in the network of the United Nations, enforced by the most powerful nations: United States, Soviet Union and China, have caused the conflicts and proved resilient enough to guide the world into a new balance of powers. After the end of cold war and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the hegemony of US global leadership and the power expansion of China, has opened the space for other countries to pursue a "might is right" strategy to their own foreign policy priorities. Russia annexed Crimea in violation of commitments to the Budapest Memorandum, has intervened directly in the armed conflict in Ukraine, and has laid out a doctrine that brazenly demands recognition of a Russian sphere of influence around its neighbourhood. The expansion of Chinese leadership is taking steps to turn its contested claims over islands in the South China and East China seas into a fait accompli (Chatham House, 2015). Regional powers in Southeast Asia and Indo-Pacific region are taking the preservation of their security into their own hands. The question arises, therefore, whether the post-World War II institutions and rule-based new



world order can survive these challenges to the hegemony of US global leadership and the expansion of China-Russia influences around the world. Since the end of the cold war and the Soviet Union collapsed, the rules-based world order was shifted from a bipolar balance of powers between the United States and the Soviet Union to a unipolar new world order under the US hegemony for many decades. The emerging of China as a new rival superpower of the United States together with China and Russia alliance has transformed the unipolar to the multipolar new world order.

The US Indo-Pacific strategy was trying to contain and counterbalance the expansion of the Chinese New Silk Road or Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). The US-NATO Western alliance are confronting with Russia in the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. How can we build up a rules-based world order for world peace under the UN Charter and international law? The answer to this question is that the new world order was mostly depended on the transformation of multipolar balance of powers between the US, China and Russia in the Post-Cold War era. Therefore, the rules-based world order may have a negative impact on the existing international legal order under the UN Charter and international law insofar as it washes out the established legitimate procedures of international law-making, thus rejecting traditional global values of legal stability and diminishing the role of international law in diplomacy. Such scenario would not only multiply legal uncertainty and even unreasonable expectations among the participants of the international processes, but also might lead to undermining the very fundamentals of modern international law based on the UN Charter. The latter in its turn will inevitably lead to the global legal instability and will dramatically increase the risks of World War III (Magomedova and others, 2021). The frequent abuse of the rules-based world order by Russia and NATO countries in support of their politically motivated statements impedes achievement of accepted understanding of the rules-based world order, which might be consistent with the UN Charter and international law.

The rise of new non-Western great powers: China and India is more likely to see an evolution than a degradation of the current rules-based world order that many great powers beyond the US invested in current world institutions. Great powers are transgressors of the UN Charter and international law, and some who are seen as revisionist are strongly supportive of norms, such as territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign States. While welcoming continued US leadership, foreign policy makers should not see continued hegemony of US dominance as indispensable for order and justice in world affairs (Raymond, 2017). While the ASEAN Community advocates the need for a rules-based regional order, there are different visions of the rules-based regional order within or beyond the existing legal framework of the UN Charter and international law. The success to the development of a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region depends on the regional states can find a common ground to negotiate between the US, China and Russia through the shifting balance of powers. It remains to be seen whether ASEAN diplomacy can reconcile the variety of sentiments and policy preferences at the national levels to synergize the ASEAN regional order with rules-based world order. ASEAN diplomacy will need to be effectively put into practice to filter out the negative excesses of competition between China's New Silk Road or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and US's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Thus, the **Thai bamboo diplomacy** and its foreign policy have to be muddling through and readjusted with this strong wind of change. Thailand has its national instinct and ability to detect any direction of changing wind in order that the Thai diplomacy can be flexible enough to bend before the wind and with the wind for keeping a balancing act in a ruled-

based new world order and balance of powers for the restoration of the world peace and security under the UN Charter and international law.

3. The Role of Thai Diplomacy in the Challenges of Rules-Based World Order

The global security and geopolitical challenges nowadays are witnessing significant rivalry between the US's Indo-Pacific Strategy and China's New Silk Road or Belt and Road initiatives (BRI). The US, Japan, India and Australia attended the Summit meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) in March 12, 2021. The QUAD Summit has been driven by the rise of China's power and security threat it poses to rules-based world order. Despite there is no direct reference to China in the QUAD's first-ever joint statement, the summit outcomes are related to COVID-19 vaccine production, facilitating cooperation over emerging technologies, and mitigating climate change. Post-summit statements, which stressed the humanitarian origins of their collaboration in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, set out the group's uniting principles - democracy, a rules-based order, and a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific - and emphasized its role as a "force for global good". These provide the broad framework within which the QUAD will operate with the aim of shaping new world order in an age of transition from the US "unipolar" world to one in which China is seeking a decisive role (Kutty and Basrur, 2021). Despite doubts about the possibility of deeply institutionalized collaborations among the QUAD countries, the meeting indicated that the four powers are willing to cooperate on pressing issues of common concern, such as the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and the global impact of climate change, in addition to traditional security challenges. According to the joint statement issued at the close of the meeting, the four nations pledged to "redouble our commitment to the QUAD engagement" (Dermawan, 2021). Rather it is not perhaps an "Asian NATO", the QUAD is designed as a loose-network of like-minded partners aiming at a broader purpose.

The threat posed by China in Southeast Asia is not only at political and military strategy but also economic and technology one. As evidenced by its proactive pursuit of territorial claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, it is also economic and technological expansion in Asia-Pacific region. China is a pivotal player in global supply chains, most visible today in its major role as a major investor of surplus capital globally through the Belt and Road Initiative and rapidly rising technological power. It is this broader aspect of world order that the QUAD summit aims to address, as is clear from two of the joint statement's specifics, which focus on the establishment of working groups on vaccine development and critical new technologies. Both these efforts seek to constrain China's central position in the world system, but also to develop inclusively the new rules-based world order. The third working group being set up is on climate change, an area in which China is a cooperative player and not a competitor with the QUAD member's states, and thus downplays the notion that the QUAD is simply an instrument of containment (Kutty and Basrur, 2021). With these three initiatives are designed to create an environment that encourages China to be a positive player and persuades other states in the Southeast Asia and Indo-Pacific region to shed their hesitancy toward the QUAD strategy for building a ruled-based regional order in the South China Sea, Southeast Asia and Indo-Pacific region.

Despite focused on non-military initiatives, the QUAD strategy by no means downplays the military cooperation. Its members have established the basis for regular defense cooperation through naval exercises, and the sharing of intelligence and military logistics. Adding further heft to previous bilateral efforts, the trilateral India-US-Japan Malabar naval exercises expanded to include Australia last year. The four states have consolidated their military

responses by building a set of nested strategic partnerships: linking their bilateral relationships with the India-Japan-US, India-Australia-Japan, and US-Japan-Australia trilateral. The QUAD strategy is a logical extension of this network and has the potential to build a “QUAD Plus” arrangement involving Canada, France (scheduled to join in a five-nation military exercise), and perhaps New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Kutty and Basrur, 2021). The QUAD is only a strategic grouping that seeks to enlist the support and cooperation of ASEAN and others countries in both military and non-military actions. The “QUAD Plus” idea bases on the framework of elasticity for other states who may want to link to and unlink themselves from specific QUAD initiatives as deemed useful. But China has long viewed the QUAD grouping as an American-led attempt to contain and counter its global rise of power, and the grouping’s consolidation could well heighten further the tensions between the two superpowers.

Southeast Asia is one of regions in which Sino-American rivalry is most critical for ASEAN. The South China Sea remains an ongoing crucial hot sport, in which the US Navy is frequently challenging China’s expansive “nine-dash line” claim over the vital waterway with frequent Freedom of Navigation Operations. The US has become actively involved in these territorial disputes by directly challenging the legality of China’s claims (Dermawan, 2021). The four QUAD powers have taken their interests in the South China Sea disputes to promote a free and open rules-based regional order to advance security and counter China’s threats in Southeast Asian Region. In brief, ASEAN and the four Indo-Pacific powers: US, Japan, India and Australia are yet to form a unified stand on Indo-Pacific Strategy of regional security order mechanism while keeping the connectivity of ASEAN centrality mechanism intact. The QUAD strategic diplomacy seeks to create a platform for mutual development in the Indo-Pacific region and engage with like-minded nations in the quest for a rules-based regional order that promotes respect for sovereignty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, free and fair trade system. ASEAN and QUAD countries can be an Indo-Pacific partnership to play a constructive role in building a ruled-based regional order in Southeast Asia region.

In response to the challenges of rules-based world order, the Thai government has to adjust its diplomacy and foreign policy of General Prayuth Chan-o-Cha that was closer relations with China than the US and the EU, who sanctioned the coup d’état in 22 May 2014. Nowadays, it was appropriate time for the newly elected government to adjust Thai bamboo diplomacy to restore balancing equidistant closer relations with the US, the EU and China. After 2023 general election and the MOU broken down of 8 opposition parties’ coalition government between Move Forward Party and Pheu Thai Party, the latter shifted to form a new elected government with 11 Prayuth government parties. Without being labeled as an autocratic regime, the diplomatic posture of the incoming government under Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin will be more vigorous and build on existing progress and achievements. Even though the government’s official policy has yet to be announced, it is not difficult to outline some of the salient features of Pheu Thai-led foreign policy practices. For major areas are top priorities – maintaining strategic autonomy with great powers, empowering ASEAN in all dimensions, advocating multilateral political and economic negotiations, and ensuring a rules-based regional order. These four pillars will enable Thailand to respond gradual and rapid shifts in geo-economic, geo-strategic, and geo-political imperatives. A high level Pheu Thai Party insider has described it as hybrid diplomacy, borrowing the concept of hybrid warfare. Admittedly, the outgoing Prayut government has been working hard to boost the country’s profile and economic security through multilateral engagements, but its efficacy has not been as successful as expected. The autocratic imprint continues to haunt and undermine the outgoing government’s positive track record (Chongkittavorn, 2023). The new

elected government will restore Thai bamboo diplomacy towards the great powers, especially the US, the EU, China, ASEAN plus three (China, Japan, South Korea), and India. As opposition party, the Move Forward Party (MFP), which won the most seats in Thailand's General Election on 14 May 2023, has unveiled its foreign policy vision, aimed at developing greater international cooperation, promoting human rights and addressing regional challenges. With a commitment to a more open and inclusive foreign policy, the party is looking to strengthen Thailand's role on the global stage and contribute positively to regional and global affairs. As head of the MFP, Pita Limjaroenrat formulated their foreign policy as **“Revive, Rebalance, and Recalibrate” (3Rs)**. Under the MFP leadership, Thailand's foreign policy agenda will reflect an unprecedented move from traditional approaches to active diplomacy, cooperation and the promotion of shared values. Firstly, Thailand's **“Revive”** foreign policy will no longer be one of quiet diplomacy. Under his leadership, the foreign policy will have an active impact on international matters. Secondly, with **“Rebalance”**, a middle power can also lead in “rule-based diplomacy,” and Thailand is ready to lead the region under his governance. Finally, **“Recalibrate”** will see foreign policy in the light of how Thailand can mutually benefit with other countries and international organisations around the world (ThaiPBS WORLD, 2023). As young and progressive leader, Pita believes that Thailand should play proactive role in promoting human rights, rules-based world order, and maintaining close cooperation with ASEAN. He sees Thailand as middle power that can help shape the new world order. Most importantly, Thailand's voice must be heard, vowing not to follow the brand of quiet diplomacy that has been the standard practice for decades (Chongkittavorn, 2023). In unveiling this foreign policy vision, the MFP redefines Thailand's role on the global stage, fostering closer ties with international partners and contributing to global peace, stability and sustainable development. The party signifies a departure from the country's diplomatic tradition and signals its commitment to a more forward-thinking diplomacy, after decades of seeming inactivity world (ThaiPBS WORLD, 2023). Consequently, the MPF foreign policy will restore more proactive Thai bamboo diplomacy in promoting the rules-based world order and balance of powers among the great powers after the post-cold war era.

After the disband of the Future Forward Party (FFP) by the Constitutional Court, the Move Forward Party (MFP), as the FFP successor, is committed all FFP foreign policy to restoring Thailand's credibility through international forums through by laying foundation for strong domestic democratic regime, compliance with international regulations, creating a balancing act with superpower nations to protect Thailand's interests and promote Thailand's role as a guardian of democracy, human rights, tolerance to diversity, promotion of gender equality and elimination of discrimination based on religions and faiths. To achieve those goals, the MFP will strengthen cooperation among the ASEAN community in vertical and horizontal aspects, covering the three pillars of political and security community, economic community and civil society and cultural community, along with pushing ASEAN mechanism as a channel to mediate conflicts in the region and promote human rights, allowing ASEAN to be an important instrument in which Thailand and other member nations can carry out their roles under international standards. The MFP is also committed to human rights as a principle in diplomacy and relationship building foreign countries, including promotion of rights and liberty (Future Forward Party, 2019). In economic sphere, the MFP will push for a fair policy in negotiating trades and investment, with mutual interests in mind. The party supports formal and informal bilateral negotiations to broaden free trade policies. The MPF supports membership in key cooperation pacts in the region, with regards to benefits Thailand will receive in term of trades, investment, and balance of power with all superpowers. The party

also supports signing and ratifying international treaties that will bring political, economic and social institutions of Thailand to meet international standards. In cultural domain, the MFP will utilize Thailand's cultural force to build her soft power in international levels in order to increase economic opportunities and political roles. The MFP will end the practice of allowing domestic political disputes to dictate foreign affairs, especially the use of nationalist ideologies to stir hatred against other nations and use of diplomatic means to eradicate political enemies.

CONCLUSION

The current challenges to Thai diplomacy and foreign policy in general are that Thailand is in a changing rules-based world order and balance of powers nowadays, where it must deal with the rivalry of power between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region. This is the great challenge to Thai diplomacy, how to handle the relationship between these two superpowers of the Indo-Pacific region. Apart from the challenge of the China-US confrontation, there are also variable challenges that Thai bamboo diplomacy must face to bend with the wind toward the EU, India, Japan and South Korea in balancing Thai relations between the US and China. Back in the 20th century, people often said the 21st century would be the Pacific century. Nowadays, there is a wind of change in world balance of powers in the Indo-Pacific century. Therefore, India has become a rising regional power in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. There are opportunities of Thailand and ASEAN Community to strengthen our relations with India because, in the contemporary geo-strategic regional setting, perhaps there has been too much emphasis on China and not enough interest in India. It is very unfortunate that India did not join in the recent signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), an ASEAN-led free trade agreement by ASEAN plus 6 dialogue partners (China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and India) that Thailand places these ties on most important track to formalization. There are a lot of opportunities for Thai bamboo diplomacy as a balancing act to play an important role for a rules-based world order. At the end of the cold war, there are the challenges of Thai relations with great powers in the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific region, which is always the real challenge of Thai diplomacy and foreign policy: how to deal with the new rules-based world order in the changing balance of powers.

REFERENCES

- Ashley, Ryan and Shipper, Apichai W. (2022). "The Art of Thai Diplomacy: Parables of Alliance". *Pacific Affairs*: Volume 95, No. 2 June 2022.
- Biden, J.R. Jr. (2022). "How the US is Willing to Help Ukraine". *New York Times*, International Edition, 2 June 2022, 1, at 11.
- Busbarat, Pongphisoot. (2016) "Bamboo Swirling in the Wind: Thailand's Foreign Policy Imbalance between China and the United States". *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38, no. 2 (2016): 233-257.
- Chatham House. (2015). *Challenges to the Rules-Based International Order*. Retrieved from <https://www.chathamhouse.org> > default > files
- Chinvano, Anuson, Edited. (2021). *Thai Diplomacy in Conversation with Tej Bunnag*. Bangkok, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.
- Chongkittavorn, Kavi. (2023). "Which way Pheu Thai-led diplomacy?". In Bangkok Post, 29 August 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com> > opinion.



- _____. (2023). “Imagining Thai diplomacy under MFP”. In *Bangkok Post*, 30 May 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.bangkokpost.com> › opinion.
- Dermawan, Rifki. (2021). “Is the Quad’s Revival a Threat to ASEAN?” in *The Diplomat*, March, 2021. Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com> › 2021/03 › is-the-quads-reviv...
- Future Forward Party. (2019). *Foreign Affairs Policy*. In futureforwardparty.org. Retrieved from <https://en.futureforwardparty.org> › forei...
- Kutty, Sumitha Narayanan and Basrur, Rajesh. (2021). “The Quad What It Is – And What It Is Not”, in *The Diplomat*. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu> › The Quad_....
- Magomedova, Olga S and others. (2021). *The Term “Rules-based International Order” in International Legal Discourses*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353147789>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016). *The Declaration of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the Promotion of International Law, 25 June 2016*. Retrieved from www.fmprc.gov.cn>201608.
- Popan, S. (2021). Statement on behalf of the EU and its Member States at the 76th Session of the General Assembly Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, 3 November 2021. Retrieved from www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-%E2%80%93-united-nations-6th-committee-report-special-committee-un_en?s=63.
- Raymond, Greg. (2017). *Fragile and Fracturing or Evolving and Adaptive? Prospects for the Rules-Based Global Order*. Retrieved from <http://bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/files> ›
- Reid, Anthony. (2015). *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Sloss, David L. (Ed.). (2022). *Is the International Legal Order Unraveling?*. Oxford, Oxford Academic Books.
- Sørensen, Georg. (2016), *Rethinking the New World Order*. London: Palgrave, 264 pp.
- Vylegzhanin, Alexander N. (2021). “The Term Rules-based International Order in International Legal Discourses”. *Moscow Journal of International Law*, July 2021.