



## ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN POLITICAL PROCESSES IN THE GULF OF THAILAND REGION

A'zamov Sobirxo'ja Sobitxon o'g'li

MSc Student of the Faculty of Diplomatic and Consular Service at the Diplomatic Academy Under the University of World Economy and Diplomacy

### Abstract:

This scientific article provides a comprehensive analysis of foreign political processes in the Gulf of Thailand region, focusing on the evolving dynamics, key actors, and the geopolitical implications of these processes. The study employs a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating political science, international relations, and regional studies to offer insights into the complex interactions shaping the political landscape of this strategically significant area.

**Keywords:** The Gulf of Thailand, World War II, Indochina wars, Cambodian-Vietnamese war, Sino-Vietnamese war, French Indochina, Geneva Conference, northern Vietnam, southern Vietnam, British Empire, Thucydides Trap, The Belt and Road Initiative, Foreign Direct Investment.

### INTRODUCTION

The Gulf of Thailand, situated in Southeast Asia, consists of 4 countries including Kingdom of Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Kingdom of Cambodia. Total area of the region 1 355 905 square km, population is more than 220 million people, while nominal GDP of the region reached \$1.4 trillion. The majority of the Gulf coastline belonging to Thailand has a tropical climate dominated by the monsoons. This region holds strategic importance due to its role as a major shipping route, economic hub, and a nexus for regional trade. The Gulf of Thailand region is not only a hub for economic activities but also a stage for territorial disputes among neighboring nations. Maritime boundaries, resource-rich areas, and territorial waters are contested, fueling tensions and exacerbating the potential for conflict.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### Political system of the region during the Cold War

After World War II, almost all of the Gulf of Thailand states were part of colonies one or another western empire except Kingdom of Thailand. 1945-1991 period there occurred different regional and domestic conflicts including first and second





Indochina wars, Cambodian-Vietnamese war, Sino-Vietnamese war. These conflicts played important role on shaping political system of the Gulf countries.

Until 21 July 1954 Vietnam was a part of French Indochina. According to the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference Vietnam declared its independence from France but divided into two independent countries along 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, northern Vietnam – Democratic Republic of Vietnam, southern Vietnam – State of Vietnam, which brought catastrophic consequences afterwards. The North came under communist control, while the South remained under non-communist leadership. Indeed, this led next Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, that took place in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from November 1, 1955, until the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. It was a complex and protracted war that involved the communist government of North Vietnam, supported by the Soviet Union and China, against the non-communist government of South Vietnam, supported by the United States and other anti-communist allies. The conflict came to an end when North Vietnamese forces captured Saigon, leading to the reunification of Vietnam under communist control.

Throughout the era of Western imperialism in Asia, Kingdom of Thailand remained the only nation in the region to avoid colonization by foreign powers, although it was often forced to make territorial, trade and legal concessions in unequal treaties.

Malaysia traces its roots back to the Malay kingdoms, which, starting in the 18th century, fell under the influence of the British Empire, including the British Straits Settlements protectorate. Independence was attained by the country on August 31, 1957. Subsequently, on September 16, 1963, the independent state of Malaya merged with the British crown colonies of North Borneo, Sarawak, and Singapore to form Malaysia. However, in August 1965, Singapore was ousted from the federation and emerged as a distinct, sovereign nation.

During the 15th century, Cambodia underwent a weakening of its influence, eventually becoming a French protectorate in 1863. Following a phase of Japanese occupation in the Second World War 1941-1945, Cambodia achieved independence in 1953.

Years of border firefights and eventual open warfare between Vietnam and Cambodia came to a head in 1978, when 150,000 Vietnamese troops occupied Cambodia. Although the invasion run the communist, official regime from power, it sparked international outrage and penal action throughout the resulting 10-year Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. This conflict, spanning from 1977-1991, has fired international debate and is known as the Vietnam-Cambodia War.





## **Navigating the Thucydides Trap**

To comprehend the dynamics of the Thucydides Trap in the Gulf of Thailand, it is essential to understand the historical backdrop of the region. The Gulf of Thailand has been a crucial maritime crossroads, connecting the South China Sea to the Andaman Sea and beyond. The geopolitical significance of this region has intensified due to the economic and strategic interests of major powers, making it a potential hotspot for tensions.

China's ascent as a regional and global power has reshaped the geopolitical landscape in the Gulf of Thailand. As China extends its influence through ambitious infrastructure projects (The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), economic partnerships, and military assertiveness, it inevitably comes into contact with established powers in the region, such as the United States and its allies. This power shift creates a classic Thucydides Trap scenario, where the rising power seeks to secure its interests and challenge the existing order.

Indochina wars, Cambodian-Vietnamese war, Sino-Vietnamese war and other minor, major conflicts occurred and have been occurring up to now. The Thucydides Trap amplifies these disputes, as the rising power seeks to assert its claims and the established power aims to maintain its influence and control. But, the intricate web of economic interdependence in the Gulf of Thailand region further complicates the Thucydides Trap dynamic. As nations engage in trade, investment, and infrastructure projects, they become entwined economically. However, this interdependence can also lead to security dilemmas, where one nation's pursuit of economic interests is perceived as a threat by others, escalating tensions and contributing to the Thucydides Trap narrative.

## **Economic Boom and Cooperation**

From the beginning of the 1980s The Gulf of Thailand region has witnessed a remarkable economic boom, becoming a hotspot for development, investment, and growth. This essay explores the factors that have contributed to this economic upswing, examines the key sectors driving growth, and assesses the implications of the boom for the nations within the Gulf of Thailand.

There are many different factors driving economic boom. They are Strategic Location, Trade and Connectivity, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Diversification of Economies. Key factors the economic growth are tourism and hospitality, manufacturing and industry, energy and natural resources, technology and innovation.





In the late 1980s, Thailand was on its way to joining the tigers like Taiwan and South Korea. Thailand had the world's fastest-growing economy for about a decade in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The growth rate was 8 percent between 1985 and 1995, peaking at 13.6 percent in 1988. There was a recession in the early 1990s. Severe flooding in November 1995 slowed the economy. The Thai economy was fueled by cheap labor and light industry such as computer manufacturing and assembly. There was no shortage of construction jobs. Thailand became a leading exporter of rice and Southeast Asia's largest producer of cars (from Japanese-owned plants).

In the primary sector Malaysia's range of products was increased from the 1960s by a rapid increase in the export of hardwood timber, mostly in the form of (unprocessed) saw-logs. The markets were mainly in East Asia and Australasia. Here the largely untapped resources of Sabah and Sarawak came to the fore, but the rapid rate of exploitation led by the late twentieth century to damaging effects on both the environment (extensive deforestation, soil-loss, silting, changed weather patterns), and the traditional hunter-gatherer way of life of forest-dwellers (decrease in wild-life, fish, etc.). Other development projects such as the building of dams for hydroelectric power also had adverse consequences in all these respects (Amarjit Kaur, 1998; Drabble, 2000; Hong, 1987).

Since the late 1980s, its communist government has overseen a transition from a controlled economy to a more open and capitalist model. In turn, its proximity to China and vast young, cheap and well-educated workforce has attracted manufacturers.

Though "Made in Vietnam" was initially synonymous with apparel such as Nike shoes, it is now increasingly associated with higher-end electronics such as Apple's AirPods. Businesses have grasped the opportunity to diversify their supply chains, as rising labour costs and political risks erode China's relative advantage as a business destination.

Over \$20bn in FDI flowed in last year mainly from Japan, Singapore, and China. The US share of imports from Vietnam has also risen almost 2 percentage points since US-China trade tensions began to flare in 2018.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As we can see upwards there wasn't a year without conflicts in the region during the cold war period. But we can't say the role of diplomacy there equals zero.

Diplomacy has failed many times, and it has succeeded many times, in its peace-preserving task. It has failed sometimes because nobody wanted it to succeed. When





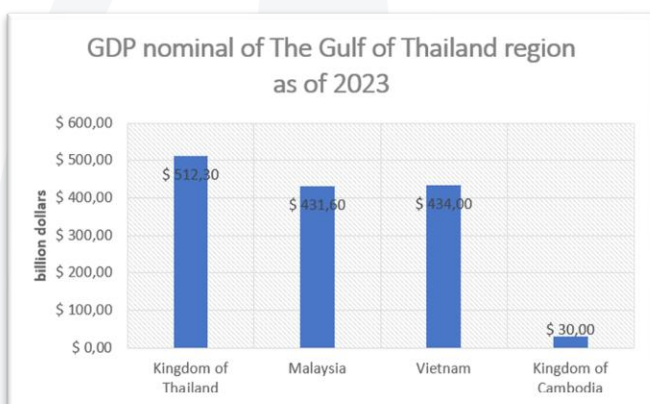


war was normal activity of kings, the task of diplomacy was not to prevent it but to bring it about at the most propitious moment.

Throughout centuries, the area has been a nexus of maritime trade routes and a meeting point for diverse cultures. Colonial legacies, such as the influence of European powers in the 19th and 20th centuries, have left lasting imprints on the region's geopolitical landscape. Additionally, the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War era has shaped alliances and animosities among the nations surrounding the Gulf.

The economic boom in the Gulf of Thailand region stands as a testament to the transformative power of strategic planning, investment, and diversification. As nations in the region continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities that come with rapid economic growth, it is imperative to maintain a balance that ensures sustainability, inclusivity, and regional cooperation. The Gulf of Thailand's economic ascendancy not only benefits the nations within its shores but also contributes to the broader narrative of Southeast Asia as a dynamic and thriving economic powerhouse.

## CONCLUSION



The region, with its rich historical tapestry and complex geopolitical dynamics, stands at a pivotal juncture. The evolving power dynamics among China, Russian Federation, the United States, and regional players shape the trajectory of the region's future. As nations navigate the challenges of territorial disputes, economic interdependence, and military posturing,

strategic diplomacy and collaborative efforts are crucial for maintaining stability and preventing the escalation of tensions into conflicts with far-reaching consequences for Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

## REFERENCES

1. Thucydides. (1956) History of the Peloponnesian War. Oxford World's classic.
2. Hans J. Morgenthau (1948) Politics among nations. Struggle for power and peace. New York Alfred Knopf.
3. Henry Kissinger (1994) Diplomacy. Simon & Schuster.
4. Lafasov (2009) Jahon tarixi. O'qituvchi.





5. Костюнина Г.М. Азиатско-тихоокеанская экономическая интеграция / Г.М. Костюнина; МГИМО(У) МИД России. – Москва 2019. 365 с.
6. Костюнина Г.М. Интеграция в Азиатско-Тихоокеанском регионе: монография / Г.М. Костюнина
7. Россия – АТР: горизонты энергетического сотрудничества (в экспертных оценках) / [Э.Р. Абдулин и др. ; отв. ред. Л.С. Рубан] ; Ин-т энергет. исслед. РАН [и др.]. – 2-е изд. – Москва : Academia, 2013. – 281 с.
8. Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke (2005) "Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium" .
9. Robert D. Kaplan (2010) "Asia's Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End of a Stable Pacific".
10. Nuchkoom Smith, Nucharee; Smith, Robert Brian (1 October 2019). "Has Thailand learnt any Lessons from the Bowring Treaty and the Treaty of Amity?"

#### **Journals and web resources**

1. The international institute for strategic studies (2023) ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL SECURITY ASSESSMENT.
2. Konrad Adenauer center. Issue 03 2023.
3. [https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Thailand/sub5\\_8g/entry-3310.html](https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Thailand/sub5_8g/entry-3310.html)
4. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/economic-history-of-malaysia/>
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/fa1db5ce-8f65-4b28-ab6d-b78730f98195>
6. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/vietnam/>
7. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/malaysia/>
8. <https://flot.com/publications/books/shelf/safety/6.htm>
9. <https://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/sofia-melyaeva/dva-mira-razdelennye-severnaya-i-yuzhnaya-koreya-nerazreshennaya-ugroz/>
10. <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/pereosmyslyaya-region/>
11. [https://www.dvfu.ru/news/fefu-news/eksperty\\_dvfu\\_rossii\\_i\\_atr\\_obsudili\\_problemy\\_kolonializma\\_v\\_obrazovatelnoy\\_sfere\\_/](https://www.dvfu.ru/news/fefu-news/eksperty_dvfu_rossii_i_atr_obsudili_problemy_kolonializma_v_obrazovatelnoy_sfere_/)
12. <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/amerikano-kitajskoe-atr/>
13. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/01/07/climate-change-challenges-asia-pacific-security/>
14. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/06/asia-pacific-region-the-new-ground-zero-cybercrime/>

