

Thai perception of China during the thanom administration (1963-73): Focusing on the logic of "hostilities" and "rapprochement"

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Abstrak

This paper examines changes in the Thai perception of China during the Thanom administration (1963–73), when Thailand turned from “hostilities” to “rapprochement” toward China. The paper attempts to clarify the changing perceptions, their causes, and the logic used by the government in attempting the policy shift. The decade under study is categorized into three periods: (1) confrontation (1963–68), (2) adjustment (1968–71), and (3) rapprochement (1971–73). During the confrontation period, the demonization of China, the deification of the United States, domino theory, and forward defense doctrine were adopted to justify Thailand’s participation in the Vietnam War. During the adjustment period, opinion toward China was divided into two groups: Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, students, and some intellectuals encouraged rapprochement with China, while other military-related officials opposed it. During the rapprochement period, under international pressure, Thanom’s military administration felt the urge to approach China. China was then dichotomized from the image of Communism and recreated into a “converted criminal.” The image changes during each period were not only the result of domestic and international conditions but also helped facilitate the government’s policy shifts.