

The Power of Friendship: Cal Poly's Contract in Thailand and
Reinterpreting Cold War Agency Through Relationships

A Senior Project

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by Sean Martinez

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Dedication

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On January 4th, 1969, Cal Poly president Robert E. Kennedy traveled over eight thousand miles from San Luis Obispo to set foot in Bangkok, Thailand for approximately eleven days. In the balmy and humid weather, he met with the Director of International Education for Cal Poly, team members stationed at the time on behalf of Cal Poly, the United States Operations Mission to Thailand (USOM), various professors from Thailand, and a litany of other persons, to inspect the progress of a contract between the US Government, the World Bank, and the Royal Thai Government.

From January 1, 1967 to September 31, 1973, Cal Poly sent a team of agricultural experts to Thailand's Bangpra Agricultural College to assist the development and renovation of its agricultural teacher training program under contract AID/fe-308.¹ The contract originated as part of a loan through the World Bank to improve vocational education in Thailand and Cal Poly was contracted through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to execute one facet of this larger World Bank loan.² Over six years, Cal Poly sent a core team of five people (although three were swapped out by 1969) and five consultants to Thailand.³

This essay explores how an organization navigates and executes its goals when surrounded by various other organizations with distinct goals, expectations, and relationships. Cal Poly, despite its close relationship to USAID as a contractor, was not directly influenced by

¹ California Polytechnic State University, *Terminal Report 30 June 1973: Report NO 19 Contract AID/fe-308* (San Luis Obispo, CA: California Polytechnic State University, 1973), iii.

² *Terminal Report*, iii.

³ *Terminal Report*, 74.

US policy making or State Department interests. If anything, Cal Poly was somewhat separated from the Cold War power plays and strategic maneuvering of Washington and rarely engaged with these larger political actors, causing it to be simultaneously a part of and separate from the larger Cold War trends. Because of the various relationships it entertained out of professional obligations and the complex network of patronage and influence it spawned, the Cal Poly administration and the Cal Poly Team in Thailand were able to exercise a level of agency and decision making that challenges the assumption that larger Cold War international politics guided actions regardless of context or situation.

Many historians have argued that development projects and development contracts are inherently situated in the Cold War international political drama between the US and the USSR. Richard Tucker argues that the US viewed development as opportunities for massive social and environmental engineering projects which could not only address poverty throughout the globe but create a stability necessary to stop Communist insurgency and roll back Communist influences in other nations.⁴ Nick Cullather agrees by showing how in the era of *détente*, the USSR and US vied for political allies through development projects in South, Southeast and East Asia.⁵ David Ekbladh continues this argument by stating that these development projects were a

⁴ Richard P. Tucker, "Containing Communism by Impounding Rivers: American Strategic Interests and the Global Spread of High Dams in the Early Cold War," in *Environmental Histories of the Cold War*, eds. J. R. McNeill and Corinna R. Unger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 144.

⁵ Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), 126-127.

Cold War battlefield where the USSR and US fought to display their economic systems in the hope that it would sufficiently persuade the host nation to join them as a political ally or at the very least show their respective economic and political ideologies were best.⁶ This reflects a larger shift in Cold War strategy on the part of the US and USSR known as *détente*, the practice of dealing with regional powers or the major Cold War power directly to avoid immediate military intervention on the local level.⁷

But there is another analysis which runs alongside the US-USSR level of Cold War development projects where historians have argued that these same political projects were used by host nations and local governments to modernize in their own interests. Cullather argues that host nations saw these development projects as opportunities for modernization and methods to increase their prestige or power. For example, amidst American efforts to dam the Mekong Delta for their own anti-Communist endeavors, South Vietnamese leaders during the 1950s found this a convenient opportunity to modernize their localities and drive out rebels.⁸ So while the US and USSR competed with each other for influence across the globe, nations tiptoed around these ideological differences to maximize their own interests, playing off of these two powers to achieve their own goals of modernization or other local political projects.

⁶ David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

⁷ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 194.

⁸ David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press), 154-155.

And to complicate matters further, historians have argued that Cold War development contractors expressed their own desires independent of the US-USSR conflict and host nation ambitions. Following the end of World War II, decolonization brought political instability and risks to various contractors throughout the globe, but they circumvented this by becoming more “portable,” moving out of a single region or nation to servicing areas throughout the globe that shared similar characteristics that they were used to or specialized in (e.g. geography).⁹ This widened scope of contractors met the US government’s interest in dealing with Communism throughout the globe, which led to a rise in funding and the potential for international recognition (which could lead to even more contracts) for completing these government sponsored contracts. This model, although not explicitly stated, reflects the larger assumption that international conflicts and power plays influence the agency of development contractors.

As seen here, historians have not been shy in dealing with the multilayered nature of development contracting during the Cold War. Historians have shown the interests of the contractor nested within the interests of the host nation which is finally nested within the US-USSR conflict. The rhetoric, decisions, and problems of one layer trickle down and shape the behavior of the layers below. Issues faced at the US-USSR level, which are international issues,

⁹ Donna C. Mehos and Suzanne M. Moon, “The Uses of Portability: Circulating Experts in the Technopolitics of Cold War and Decolonization” in *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, ed. Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 45.

shape how host nations make decisions and ultimately shape how contractors behave within these host nations.

But this “nested” model of Cold War decision making is built upon two assumptions which renders it only partially correct. First, it assumes a hierarchy of layers, prioritizing the international and devaluing the local context. Second, this model assumes that the concerns and activities of the “higher” agent will “trickle down” and influence the layers beneath thereby disregarding how related or connected the two agents and their activities are.

In consideration to the first assumption, this implies that the most important feature of any Cold War study is anchored in the larger Cold War competition, an essentialist fallacy which places too much weight in the US-USSR conflict rather than looking at the unique contexts of an event and its localized histories. In response to the second assumption, as I will show later in this paper, various Cold War actors (from universities to scientists) behaved in contradiction to the Cold War political climate.

This paper argues for a revised model of Cold War relationships. Actors within the Cold War do exist in nested relationships but actors are able to navigate this hierarchy of power and therefore avoid being forced into behaving certain ways as a result of influence “trickling down.” Therefore an actor can feel the effects of one relationship (US-USSR, host nation, and its own ambitions), multiple relationships, or perhaps even no relationships. The interplay of these

intersecting arenas is largely contextual but the actor has the ability to choose what relationships it is shaped by. But I also argue that as a result of this agency, actors still bear the blowback of various relationships, priorities, and contractual obligations that shape how the actor behaves and makes decisions.

In context of this senior project, this means that Cal Poly existed in these various relationships together at the exact same time but also was able to excuse itself from these same arenas in moments of strategic retreat and opportunities to advance its own interest. But this does not excuse the reality of Cal Poly still having to deal with the aftershocks of certain relationships its own decision making or activities because Cal Poly existed in these arenas inherently. This new model rejects the orthodox hierarchical model of Cold War influences and proposes a nuanced model that is necessary to understand Cold War contracting.

This project draws upon historical documents from USAID, the US Congress and the Cal Poly Special Collections archive. These documents not only show the unique interplay between Cal Poly and the US-USSR political landscape but also expose how the contract unfolded “on the ground” while in Thailand. The documents and communications between the Cal Poly Team and Cal Poly administration help illustrate the multifaceted reality that Cal Poly was embroiled in by taking this contract.

But there are a number of limitations on this project because of these primary sources.

First, and most notably, is the lack of primary sources from the Royal Thai Government or the Thai professors who hosted the Cal Poly team. This exposes a gaping hole in the research which prevents this project from showing how the Royal Thai Government directly influenced, or failed to influence, Cal Poly's performance of the contract. In addition, because this contract sought to improve the agricultural teacher training program in Thailand, a significant amount of technical data about agriculture was found which this senior project is nowhere near qualified to engage or critique. By not being able to engage with this technical information, this senior project cannot adequately evaluate the assessments or the progress made by the Cal Poly Team. And in a more philosophical sense, this senior project struggles to define and pinpoint "agency" in the Cold War. Examples of what counts as "agency" drawn from the historiography are extremely localized and particular, not easily replicable or transferable into other situations.

Regardless, this senior project is still an important contribution to the Cold War development literature. It argues for a close and nuanced reading of development contractors, calling upon researchers to consider a new analytical model of Cold War influences and a complicated method of understanding relationships and actions. This senior project challenges assumptions about Cold War politics and influences and asks that the reader entertain notions of agency, contradicting relationships, and ambition.

But this paper must step away from Thailand, from Cal Poly, and the Cold War as a whole before proceeding. This paper's methodology originates with a worker's riot in Republican Era China. In *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*, David Strand recounts a riot where rickshaw pullers destroyed streetcars and physically attacked streetcar drivers. Strand bases his analysis of this riot in terms of local city politics which give clues into the symbology of the riot and the motivations for the workers' aggression. Strand argues that there were two types of "politics:" horizontal and vertical. "Horizontal" politics were commonalities and solidarities that associated with class identity whereas "vertical" politics were hierarchical loyalties to various authorities, faction leaders, and political patrons. Both of these relationships were in constant clash with one another in the eyes of the rickshaw puller (and the rest of Beijing's citizens).¹⁰ These axes of power operated to maintain social order and prevent instability while defusing various conflicts that threatened the city's status quo.¹¹ But, despite how poor or uneducated one was, if one knew how to create a political support base out of "horizontal" solidarities and promise the creation of a better future by identifying and ousting certain opponents in the "vertical" hierarchy, one could take control of Beijing's future.¹²

To that effect, this paper follows Strand's theorizing of political organization and power distribution. Rather than simply considering the potency of a vertical hierarchical power

¹⁰ David Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing: People and Politics in the 1920s*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 143.

¹¹ Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, 289.

¹² Strand, *Rickshaw Beijing*, 19.

structure, Strand suggests that power can also be found in the ability to recognize those who are similar to one's self and one's position. For this paper, I argue that power can be found in how one is located within a hierarchy and how similar/different one is in relation to others.¹³ When these two power relationships are considered, a new model of agency emerges. Agency is no longer the individual struggling against the invisible superiors who are constantly pushing and restraining the individual, agency is redefined as the ability to navigate different power structures at different times for one's interests. Therefore, for this senior project, I take Strand's notions of power relationships and apply them into this particular Cold War context.

Returning to Thailand, a primary question is why Cal Poly was even in Thailand to begin with. In the US's eyes, Cal Poly was a means to promote the US's interests in yet another arena of the US-USSR competition. Cal Poly, like many other contractors from the US, operated through the US Agency for International Development or USAID. Prior to the establishment of USAID, there was a growing concern amongst foreign policy planners that there as an "aid gap" where the USSR was expanding its aid to other countries at a rate and volume which dwarfed the US's efforts.¹⁴ The response to this would be the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 which established USAID as a formal part of the US government.¹⁵ As a result, USAID operated as the

¹³ See Appendix 1 for a visualization of the horizontal and vertical relationships described in this paper

¹⁴ Essex, *Development, Security, and Aid*, 34.

¹⁵ Susan M. Roberts, "Development Capital: USAID and the Rise of Development Contractors," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104 no. 5 (July 2014):1034.

State Department and other US foreign policy makers' means for sponsoring development projects and deploying these contractors into other nations.

Because of the context which USAID emerged out of, USAID would share the same goals and priorities with the State Department and the State Department would influence USAID's decision making. During the Cold War, USAID functioned "as a means of spreading the principles and strategies of capitalist economic growth and combating the aggressive expansion of communism directed from Moscow and Beijing."¹⁶ This "expansion of communism" could be characterized as either as a growth in political influence amongst US allies to military pressure from communist aggressors. For example, USAID summarized its main objective in Thailand: "A communist-supported insurgency threatens Thailand's security. The basic U.S. assistance objective is to improve the Thai capacity for dealing with this threat."¹⁷ These insurgents wielded great influence in Northeast Thailand where they often clashed with Thai police and military and the Communist military presence grew.¹⁸ Thailand's security was closely related to the growing political influence of Communist China and the deteriorating security situation of neighboring Vietnam. Therefore, USAID sought to respond to this threat through development contracts.

¹⁶ Essex, *Development, Security, and Aid*, 38.

¹⁷ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970 East Asia*, (Washington, D.C.: USAID, May 23, 1969): 92.

¹⁸ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 92.

As the security situation in Vietnam grew more and more turbulent, the aid provided to Thailand would be directly related to security. Thailand served an important military function for the US. Far before the contract between Cal Poly and Thailand was underway, Thailand supported the US by providing the U.N. their own soldiers to participate in the Korean War.¹⁹ In the year before Cal Poly entered the Thailand contract, "All US air strikes against Communist forces in Laos originate in Thailand."²⁰ In exchange for this military support, the US often provided financial support to Thailand in order to improve security in Thailand throughout the Cold War. For example, the US Vice President visited Thailand in 1969 to promise the Royal Thai Government aid if guerrilla violence threatened the rural Northeast but also prioritized the economic development of the Northeast.²¹ Senator Sparkman pledged an increase of 7.5 million dollars to Thailand in 1966 which he argued was, "needed to meet problems which have arisen because of expanded subversive activities in the northeast."²² Losing Thailand to Communist Chinese influence or Communist violence which was leaking in from the northeast would greatly change the US's larger political and military defense strategies. As the Vietnam War approached, USAID's development strategies reflected a, "short-term strategic tool for achieving foreign policy objectives as well as a long-term tool for a given country's economic and sociopolitical

¹⁹ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 4117.

²⁰ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 4117.

²¹ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 3721.

²² *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 5: 5543.

development.”²³ This is not to deemphasize the work of USAID but rather to emphasize that USAID’s development strategies had two purposes: first, as a means to improve a nation’s social and economic situation and second, as a means to address serious security matters around the globe.

While USAID personnel may not have thought of improving Thailand’s security as their primary objective, addressing the lack of economic development in the Northeast was still directly related to improving security. For example, “A.I.D. will support a number of projects aimed at increasing the Government’s responsiveness to village needs and promoting economic development in the security-sensitive areas.”²⁴ This meant that there were two methods to improve the security situation in Thailand: increase economic development and expand the Royal Thai Government’s reach into previously inaccessible areas. “For one thing, most of the 10 million peasants who eke out a bare existence from the northeast’s arid plains are ethnically of Lao extraction and feel little or no loyalty to Bangkok.”²⁵ Because of the geographic and ethnic degrees of separation, the Royal Thai Government’s ability to govern effectively over the northeast and their ability to respond to security threats was greatly limited. This was of great concern to the US because according to Senator Fulbright, “the key to all this [development] activity, experts point out, is less what is being done and how it is done. The development

²³ Jamey Essex, *Development, Security, and Aid: Geopolitics and Geoeconomics at the U.S. Agency for International Development* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2013): 45.

²⁴ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 93.

²⁵ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 4117.

schemes, they argue, can be politically fruitless if they fail to bring citizens closer to their government."²⁶ In fiscal year 1967, USAID committed 53.3 million dollars (including loans, technical assistance, supporting assistance, and contingency funds); in fiscal year 1968, USAID committed 46.7 million dollars.²⁷ By fiscal year 1969, USAID committed 35.5 million dollars, was estimated to spend 28 million dollars in fiscal year 1970, and was projected to spend around 34.1 million dollars in fiscal year 1971.²⁸ In total, USAID was investing high capital into Thailand in order to combat the various security problems in its rural areas.

But the insurgent presence in Thailand was a major concern for US foreign policy makers because it was a sign of a larger conflict between the US and USSR. For example, "Thailand's importance to the United States lies in its geographic position in Southeast Asia, its key role in the economic and political development of the region, and its close cooperation with the United States."²⁹ This alliance between the US and Thailand has been especially fruitful considering, "All US air strikes against Communist forces in Laos originate in Thailand."³⁰ Because of Thailand's geographic position, a friendly relationship between the US and Thailand would be significant to the US's strategic efforts to combat Communist aggression and influence abroad. But at the same time, Thailand was viewed as a nation that could be easily influenced by the

²⁶ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 16: 21172. R74

²⁷ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 90.

²⁸ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1971 East Asia*, (Washington, D.C.: USAID, March 30, 1970): 96.

²⁹ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 92.

³⁰ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 4166.

USSR and Communist China. One congressman remarked quite candidly by saying, "Mr Speaker, Thailand understands the domino theory much better than some of us back home..."³¹ Because of Thailand's geographic position, Thailand's history of supporting the US, and Thailand's strategic purpose for the US; the Royal Thai Government was a major target for the USSR and Communist China. Any sort of disruption to Thailand's function as a jumping off point for US operations in Southeast Asia would prevent the US from combating communism as a whole and enable the USSR to increase its influence.

The United States employed Cal Poly through USAID to accomplish its goals of stabilizing Thailand. Although military and police were deployed into Northeast Thailand, the Royal Thai Government and the US recognized the legitimacy of development projects to reduce armed conflict. For example, USAID recognized the growing demand for social services due to a rising population in Thailand but predicted a shortfall in economic growth to meet these new demands.³² These demands, while spread all throughout the country, were particularly acute in the rural Northeast because, "...it's highly centralized government does not yet provide adequate channels for responding to local needs."³³ USAID officials argued that, "Awareness and understanding on the part of Thai government officials of the needs and aspirations of rural people and increased commitment of resources are essential to the solution of Thailand's security

³¹ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 3721.

³² Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 92.

³³ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 93.

problem.”³⁴ By creating programs and projects that distribute attention and resources from the central government to the countryside, USAID hoped that inequalities would be solved and violence would end in order to usher in an era of peace and prosperity. To USAID, Cal Poly was a conduit for the Royal Thai Government to improve security in its poorly neglected borderlands.

Cal Poly internalized this line of reasoning and continued to perpetuate this in the Thailand contract. Right before Cal Poly accepted the Thailand contract, a memo circulated amongst the top of Cal Poly’s university administration. Les Vanoncini, the Director of Extension Services (the department that handled international education), wrote a memo explaining why Cal Poly should take on USAID contracts. Vanoncini wrote “...a free world must be an educated world...” and that universities who take on these contracts are, “...improving the standard of living, increasing literacy, and more important, communicating and transferring ideas to those where communication has always stood as a barrier to the free world.”³⁵ Vanoncini argued that colleges have pools of specialized knowledge and skill and are therefore obligated to “...understand their responsibility in a free world, and that they cannot and must not live within their own little kingdom of interest.”³⁶ In response to this memo, Cal Poly’s president at the time, Robert E. Kennedy, agreed with Vanoncini and said that Cal Poly would actively take part in

³⁴Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 93.

³⁵ Memo from Vanoncini to McPhee, Kennedy, Andrews, and West, 5 June 1965, in “121.3 USAID Folder General” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

³⁶ Memo from Vanoncini to McPhee, Kennedy, Andrews, and West, 5 June 1965, in “121.3 USAID Folder General” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

taking contracts designed for “bringing about peace.”³⁷ It is clear that Cal Poly’s university administration saw the merit of Cal Poly’s role in a larger USAID strategy. While Cal Poly may not have been concerned with politically motivated violence explicitly, they did see improving the quality of life as a legitimate means to ensure stability in a world divided between Washington and Moscow or capitalism and communism.

But this analysis implies that Cal Poly’s rationale and decision making were in the end, guided by larger political developments. It should be noted that Cal Poly did not finance the Thailand contract, they were specifically chosen by USAID to undertake this project.³⁸ Initiating a contract would take away valuable personnel which are inherently necessary for a college to operate. Furthermore, other universities earnestly believed in improving the world and saw it either in their obligation to use USAID to facilitate this personal mission or saw USAID as the most reasonable patron to support them. From this perspective, Cal Poly served at the whims of USAID’s financial patronage and USAID’s political and strategic priorities (which were in of themselves the State Department’s priorities). And yet, this analysis is only partially true.

While it would seem that Cal Poly was influenced primarily by concerns over Cold War political trends in the international arena, Cal Poly’s decision making actually influenced by a number of other forces which were closer and more directly felt. This can be seen in the

³⁷ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Vanoncini, 7 March 1966, in “121.3 USAID Folder General” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

³⁸ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 106.

language of the contract language Cal Poly established with USAID. For example, “The objective of this project is to assist the Thai Government in its five-year program to strengthen and expand vocational education and teacher training.”³⁹ It is no understatement to say that there are a wide number of agencies in operation. These include the Royal Thai Government, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, USAID, the Thai Ministry of Education’s Department of Vocational Education, Cal Poly’s contract team, Cal Poly’s target campus Bangpra Agricultural College, Oklahoma State’s contract team, and Oklahoma State’s target campus Thewes Technical College in Bangkok; a grand total of seven agencies explicitly named in the contract.⁴⁰

One way to disentangle these relationships is to ask what organizations Cal Poly would have seen as a horizontal relationship or a vertical relationship. Strand argues that vertical relationships are hierarchical in nature, meaning the individual serves another out of obligation and to satisfy the individual’s interests. In Cal Poly’s eyes, these vertical relationships would start at the top with the US State Department, then USAID, then Cal Poly itself, then Cal Poly’s contracting team. Vertical relationships are inherently characterized by one’s position on the hierarchy, which gives one access to power, privilege, and (what this study concerns itself most with) agency. The primary assumption is that the more agents that are higher in position and

³⁹ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 106.

⁴⁰ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 106.

power, more restrictions and obligations exist because there is less freedom to act without relying upon the obligations that are set from above. Following that assumption, the only way to have greater agency is to have more subordinate agents.

In addition to vertical relationships, horizontal relationships should also be considered to disentangle Cal Poly's relationships. Horizontal relationships are characterized by the potential for similarity with other agents. While Strand characterizes the potential for horizontal relationships as based on ethnic similarity, class similarity, or similarity based on political ideology; this study will modify Strand's definition to include similarities in obligation, similarities in project, or similarities in function performed. The Cal Poly Team would have had horizontal relationships with the Bangpra Agricultural College professors and the Oklahoma State Team (the second contractor listed in the USAID contract) whereas the Cal Poly administration would have had horizontal relationships with the Bangpra Agricultural College administration, Oklahoma State administration, and (as argued later) USOM/Thailand.⁴¹ The assumption here is that similarity and difference guide how an individual interacts and maintains relationships with another individual.

Even without considering the implications of vertical and horizontal relationships, one has to imagine that agency was inherently restricted because of the wide variety of relationships Cal Poly had to entertain. But on the contrary, this paper will show that these relationships did

⁴¹ See Appendix 2 for an updated version of the horizontal relationships argued for

not coalesce to limit agency inherently. In fact, thanks to the many relationships Cal Poly had, this opened up opportunities to exercise decision making and agency in spite of or in accordance to the desires of their higher ups and partner organizations.

Even without turning to the potential power of vertical and horizontal relationships, Cal Poly was able to express agency despite prevailing assumptions about how the Cold War influenced agency. On the eve of the Thailand contract, Kennedy was preparing to secure more contracts for Cal Poly, an act that would be unnecessary if contracts were only initiated at the federal level. For example, Kennedy wrote to someone in USAID expressing his concern that Vietnam will need assistance.⁴² In addition, President Kennedy sent a telegram to a colleague in the American Embassy of Kuala Lumpur to explain that his overseas contacts were interested in agricultural and engineering development through education in Asia, Indonesia, and Malaysia.⁴³ Even before accepting the Thailand contract in 1967, Kennedy admitted to Vanoncini that Cal Poly would have a great future in “assisting underdeveloped nations.”⁴⁴ Kennedy actively participated in planning Cal Poly’s involvement internationally and identified key areas where Cal Poly could provide support to USAID and the target host country.

⁴² Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Robert Gordon, 17 February 1973, in “121.3 USAID Folder General” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁴³ Telegram from Robert E. Kennedy to Edward J. Slevin, 2 February 1973, in “121.3 USAID Folder General” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁴⁴ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Les Vanoncini, 7 March 1966, in “121.3 USAID Folder General” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

By doing so, Cal Poly could benefit greatly from Kennedy's planning and connection building. Before the Thailand contract began, it was agreed by the Cal Poly administration that Cal Poly would only take contracts that would improve the host nation, improve Cal Poly's teaching capacities, and provide an opportunity to implement education abroad or give Cal Poly experience training or supervising others throughout the contract.⁴⁵ To Kennedy, and Cal Poly as a whole, contracts were rare opportunities to improve its faculty and staff as educators with little to no cost to Cal Poly. The experiences afforded to Cal Poly professors by these USAID contracts had the potential to be laboratories and workshops for deployed personnel. Cal Poly personnel could develop new skills and practice their current ones in order to be better educators back home. The only loss would be the temporary absence of professors or staff at Cal Poly, but the experience gained abroad, perfecting their teaching methods and encountering new situations, would be indispensable. Cal Poly had agency in identifying potential contracts and negotiating for contracts with the federal government in order to maximize the potential benefits for Cal Poly's professors and personnel.

One could argue that by placing Cal Poly in a vertical relationship, this reveals that Cal Poly's agency was infringed upon by its superiors and their obligations and decision making. One such example of limitation of agency can be seen in an exchange of letters from August

⁴⁵ Administrative Bulletin, 22 February 1967, in "121.3 USAID Folder General" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

1968 to September 1968. On August 28th, the Chief of Party for the Cal Poly Team in Thailand, Warren Smith, received a letter from the US ambassador to Thailand, Leonard S. Unger, saying that clearance has been granted for Kennedy and Cal Poly's Director of International Education, Howard West, to visit Thailand for an inspection trip.⁴⁶ What ensued could only be described as "backpedaling." Smith sent a letter to West saying that he had no control over Ambassador Unger naming West as part of the inspection trip and blamed someone in USOM/Thailand who put down West in order to send a telegram (as a telegram listing no specific names was unacceptable and could not be sent according to Smith).⁴⁷ Smith implored West to explain the situation to Kennedy and emphasize to him that neither he nor USOM/Thailand was trying to influence who Kennedy would ultimately select to accompany him in the inspection trip.⁴⁸ And as this unfolded, William M. Williams, Chief of the Education Division in the Office of Technical Service East Asia Bureau for USAID, wrote to Bhongs-Sakdi Varasundharosoth, Director General of the Vocational Education Department in the Royal Thai Government's Ministry of Education, telling him that the inspection trip to Thailand would most likely involve Kennedy and Howard West.

⁴⁶ Letter from Ambassador Unger to Warren T. Smith, 28 August 1968, in "121.3 - AID Thailand Inspection Trip" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁴⁷ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Howard West, 29 August 1968, in "121.3 - AID Thailand Inspection Trip" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁴⁸ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Howard West, 29 August 1968, in "121.3 - AID Thailand Inspection Trip" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

What makes this event so remarkable is that it clearly represents how vertical relationships can negatively influence agency. Someone at the very top of the political hierarchy, the State Department's very own ambassador to Thailand, made a decision on who can participate in this inspection trip. By doing so, all of the other agents beneath the State Department (USAID, USOM/Thailand, Cal Poly, and Cal Poly Team) had to comply. Failure to do so would be disastrous since it could jeopardize support in the present contract and end any faith in Cal Poly as a contractor in the future. So without any input from Cal Poly or its team members, the decision was made and given to the Ministry of Education, essentially sealing the deal. Cal Poly was in no place to contest this decision as a client of USAID, a contractor for the Royal Thai Government, and a piece in the State Department's larger political strategy. Even though West directly wrote to Kennedy, asking him to name someone to accompany him two weeks after Unger's letter, the decision was, for all intents and purposes, already made.⁴⁹

The reality is that vertical relationships inherently restrict agency. By their very nature, agents who are positioned towards the top in the hierarchy will act in ways that will undercut the agency of those below. For example, Cal Poly was not the only university in the Thailand contract. West wrote Kennedy that if the other university named in the contract (Oklahoma State) visited Thailand to perform its own inspection trip, USOM/Thailand would have to adapt

⁴⁹ Letter from Howard West to Robert E. Kennedy, 17 September 1968, in "121.3 - AID Thailand Inspection Trip" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

Kennedy's trip in order to accommodate Oklahoma State's inspector.⁵⁰ Again, Cal Poly was in no position to question or contest the decision because USOM/Thailand worked directly underneath USAID. Even though it would benefit Cal Poly to protest and try to acquire a schedule that would benefit its own inspection trip, therefore pushing Oklahoma State aside in importance, Cal Poly would create conflict with USOM/Thailand, USAID, and the State Department. Vertical relationships clearly articulate the restrictions placed on agency by showing how relationships contribute or take away from one's ability to act and make decisions.

Another example of the limitations of agency was when Cal Poly was asked to take on a project with the Thai Military. The Cal Poly Team was asked by the Director General of Vocational Education under the Ministry of Education, Bhongs-Sakdi Varasundharosoth, to "Develop a program to give a short course of Vo. Ag. instruction to 30K army draftees. (per year)."⁵¹ In a document presented to the US Congress that outlined the terms and scope of each contract in fiscal year 1970 for East and Southeast Asia, one of USAID's goals for the Cal Poly contract was to, "strengthen and expand vocational education..."⁵² This contractual language served as the framework which the Ministry of Education could create a vertical relationship with Cal Poly and assert that Cal Poly was its subordinate.⁵³ USAID created the expectation that

⁵⁰ Letter from Howard West to Robert E. Kennedy, 15 October 1968, in "121.3 - AID Thailand Inspection Trip" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁵¹ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 21 September 1968, in "121.3 AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁵² Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 106.

⁵³ See Appendix 3 for a visualization of this newly established vertical relationship

Cal Poly, as a contractor, would serve in a way that would achieve a certain objective. If the Ministry of Education and the Department of Vocational Education could prove that a certain project fit this contractual goal, then Cal Poly would be obligated to take on this extra project. In this sense, the Ministry of Education sought to use a vertical relationship with the Cal Poly Team in order to expand the scope of their work to include projects not explicitly named in the contract objectives.

But Cal Poly did not find this project to be particularly useful or satisfactory to their primary objectives. For example, chief-of-party Warren Smith wrote to Kennedy, "We gave them what assistance we could and told them we would be happy to act in an advisory capacity but I did not think that Cal Poly would be interested in taking anything like this over as an additional contract. My personal feelings is that we should not get mixed up working with the military as I think they would be difficult to work with."⁵⁴ In addition he wrote, "Many of these projects that he (the director of the mission) has asked us to help with are outside the scope of our contract and we must be careful that we do not steal too much time from our primary responsibility; that of building a strong teacher training college at Bangpra."⁵⁵ Smith's concern is that these side projects would distract the Cal Poly Team from their main goal set by USAID and that taking on the projects would mean entering a potentially contentious and complex

⁵⁴ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 21 September 1968, in "121.3 AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁵⁵ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 21 September 1968, in "121.3 AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

relationship with the Thai military. But it seemed that Cal Poly was trapped because of the language of the USAID contract that would qualify this extra project as necessary to fulfill the larger goal of improving Thailand's vocational education system.

But this raises the question, were all vertical relationships liabilities? In another instance, Cal Poly was able to transform these vertical relationships into useful social currency. Kennedy often boasted that Cal Poly had “one of the largest and best agriculture schools in the Nation.”⁵⁶ Professors at Cal Poly agreed with Kennedy's sentiment arguing that, in terms of international education, “No other campus, and Washington agrees, can do anywhere near the job we do in the total development of this foreign student.”⁵⁷ As a result, Cal Poly projected this attitude into any and all contexts, especially host countries such as Thailand. For example, Kennedy tried to persuade the director of Bangpra Agricultural College to attend a conference at Cal Poly because it would demonstrate how Cal Poly worked with the CA State Department of Education and the Bureau of Agricultural Education in “in serving as a center for the pre-service and in-service training of the agriculture teachers” (to which Kennedy would succeed).⁵⁸ This would undoubtedly be valuable to a growing agricultural college that sought to improve its curriculum while developing itself as the headquarters and conduit between the Ministry of Education and

⁵⁶ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 21 September 1968, in “121.3 AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁵⁷ Letter from Willard Pederson to Les Vanoncini, 1 January 1968, in “Untitled” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box “Vanoncini,” California Polytechnic State University.

⁵⁸ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth, 21 January 1971, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

other vocational schools.⁵⁹ As a result, those in Thailand would accept Cal Poly's expertise in order to improve their own programs, perpetuating Cal Poly's assertion that they are indeed one of the best agricultural programs in the nation. This would undoubtedly be heard of and seen by others, especially those that oversee Cal Poly's work. For example, William M. Williams of USAID wrote to Kennedy, "And second, Cal Poly's own historical commitment to agricultural education has made it possible for you to field men produced in your own institution and able to transmit the philosophy and practice to the Thai based on a sound philosophy and rich experience."⁶⁰ He not only recognized Cal Poly's excellence but also encouraged its continued development of excellence.

This gave Cal Poly the approval to continue saying that they were indeed "the best" by their superiors. The vertical relationship operated as an echo chamber for Kennedy's assertions, which in this instance became true. Not only did Cal Poly prove that they excelled in agricultural education, they were able to convince others that they excelled, encouraged others to act in a way that they wanted them to act, have proof of their excellence, and the affirmation of their excellence from their superior. Cal Poly was able to leverage its history and its skill during a moment of obligation and was able to create a rapport of respect and admiration from a superior. This roundabout behavior is indeed proof of Cal Poly's agency. Its networks and obligations

⁵⁹ *Terminal Report*, 65.

⁶⁰ Letter from William M. Williams to Robert E. Kennedy, 21 January 1971, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

turned into an opportunity to promote Cal Poly abroad and amongst its domestic patrons, becoming useful social currency.

Agency to Cal Poly had to satisfy one of its many interests and needs and in this case it was attracting more students. For example, one publication by Cal Poly openly admitted that Cal Poly students could participate in a number of international programs, including the Thailand project, supported by its graduate programs.⁶¹ By having such a unique opportunity, Cal Poly could offer not only an education that was superior (an assertion supported by many as shown earlier) but an education that could be incredibly international. Cal Poly's expressed agency to satisfy its own needs, both within the contract and beyond it. Even within the close confines of a vertical relationship, agency could still be expressed.

Of course, this type of maneuvering is not unheard of in the history of the Cold War university. For example Stanford engineering professor Frederick Terman believed that "not doing classified research would have restricted Stanford's financial resources, impaired its ability to compete on the cutting edge of technology, and infringed on the academic freedom of faculty and staff, by preventing them from pursuing certain kinds of electronic problems."⁶² As historian of Stuart Leslie would argue, "As Terman explained it to the university administration, what the Navy had in mind was a program that would translate Stanford's basic electronics research into

⁶¹ California Polytechnic State University, *Fact Sheet on Cal Poly Overseas* (San Luis Obispo, CA: California Polytechnic State University, Date Unknown).

⁶² Stuart Leslie, *The Cold War and American Science: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex at MIT and Stanford*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 61.

practical military hardware...Terman also warned that unless Stanford acted quickly, the Navy would take its business elsewhere.”⁶³ The Cold War university was defined by massive amounts of capital from the Department of Defense. For example, “MIT alone was awarded \$117 million in R&D contracts, Caltech \$83 million, and Harvard and Columbia about \$30 million each.”⁶⁴ By using the DoD’s need for new applied research, Terman was able to capitalize upon this to his and Stanford’s advantage. Terman positioned himself and Stanford in a larger political hierarchy, a vertical relationship, of national priorities and research interests in order to improve his department’s prestige and reputation. Just as Stanford did, Cal Poly positioned itself in larger political and strategic hierarchies to earn the patronage of the US and to achieve its own interests. This could not be possible without a significant degree of agency, and as shown earlier, agency could only be achieved through manipulating and carefully using the vertical relationships one had.

Turning away from the vertical, this paper will move to consider the historical potential of the horizontal relationship. As argued before, these relationships become useful maps to understand and discern moments of agency. These horizontal relationships are vastly different from vertical ones in which they consider potential agency in light of similarity and difference. These similarities and differences are situated in terms of objectives being worked towards,

⁶³ Leslie, *The Cold War and American Science*, 60.

⁶⁴ Leslie, *The Cold War and American Science*, 6.

expertise, relationships to a superior, ect. While not nearly as obvious as the vertical relationship, actors situated in horizontal relationships are still very present.

But first, horizontal relationships need to be identified before further analysis can be explored. If horizontal relationships are based upon similarities and differences, one has to identify when and where these similarities and differences are articulated and employed. Contracts, unsurprisingly, are useful for identifying actors that operate at a similar organizational level, work under a common supervisor or administrative entity, or have similar goals to accomplish. For example, the objectives outlined by the Thailand contract had to be, “mutually acceptable to the [Royal Thai Government’s] Ministry of Education and USOM. Such a work program was developed through the cooperation of these two agencies, working with Bangpra Agricultural College, and the Cal Poly Team members.”⁶⁵ The Cal Poly Team and Bangpra Agricultural College would look to USOM and the Ministry of Education for their goals and objectives to accomplish, therefore connecting Cal Poly Team and Bangpra in order to accomplish the larger goals set out by USAID. At the beginning of the contract, Chief of Party Smith wrote, “Whatever progress we have made is a direct result of the excellent support we have received from the campus, USOM and LIVE [the World Bank’s Loan for Improving Vocational Education] Office.”⁶⁶ This shows a link between Cal Poly’s administration,

⁶⁵ *Terminal Report*, 7.

⁶⁶ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 24 February 1968, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

USOM/Thailand and the LIVE office as all equal contributors to the success of Cal Poly Team in Thailand, implying that Cal Poly Team saw these three actors on equal importance and role with one another in the contract. This is further supported by an audit which reported, "The purpose of the audit was to determine if CSPC (California State Polytechnic College) has complied with the provisions set forth in the contract and if U.S. dollar and local currency payments made by USOM/Thailand were proper."⁶⁷ Cal Poly Team's activities were directly funded by USOM/Thailand which supports the possibility that Cal Poly Team relied upon USOM (thereby placing USOM/Thailand above Cal Poly in a hierarchy of power and influence). Even Kennedy recognized the importance of USOM's presence in the Thailand contract as they, "were most helpful and available whenever needed."⁶⁸ The financial responsibility of the Cal Poly Team fell to USOM/Thailand which implies that USOM/Thailand was not only organizationally superior to Cal Poly Team but simply different in terms of objectives, roles, and responsibilities.⁶⁹

But this hierarchy between Cal Poly Team and USOM/Thailand was even in question.

For example, "The U.S. Government provided nearly 3 million dollars worth of advisory assistance through the services of four USOM direct hire vocational education specialists...a five man contract team of agriculture specialists from California State Polytechnic University...and a

⁶⁷ Letter and Audit from Francis M. Harrison to Rey M. Hill, 1 July 1971, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁶⁸ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Granville S. Hammond, 27 April 1973, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁶⁹ See Appendix 2 for a visualization of this horizontal relationship

seven man team of trade and industrial specialists from Oklahoma State University...The technical advisors services were provided in all technical courses taught in the LIVE Project schools (underlined in original).⁷⁰ While USOM/Thailand financed the Cal Poly Team, in the US Government's eyes, both of these actors were technically receiving funds from the same source and same initiative to do the same work. USOM/Thailand and the Cal Poly administration were allotted funding to achieve the same objectives under the same contract for the same foreign policy goals which USAID outlined. Furthermore, in terms of personnel operating in the field, USOM/Thailand functioned in the same way that Cal Poly administration did. For example, USOM/Thailand's support was so responsive to Cal Poly Team's needs that, "personnel went out of their way to assist with almost any request."⁷¹ The Cal Poly Team was able to use USOM/Thailand in a way that gave them administrative and personnel support (a relationship similar to the Cal Poly Team-Cal Poly administration one) and the Cal Poly administration was able to rely upon USOM/Thailand to operate in a way that would support the Cal Poly Team. If one took the US Government's position, the Cal Poly administration would have been on the same level of responsibility and importance as USOM whereas if one took USOM's position, Cal Poly would have been on a lower level of importance. Depending on what

⁷⁰ United States Operations Mission to Thailand, *Summary of Royal Thai Government and United States Operations Mission Cooperative Efforts in Development of Vocational Education 1953 - 1973*, (Washington, D.C.: USOM, November 27, 1973): 8.

⁷¹ *Terminal Report*, 63.

perspective one takes, horizontal relationships can take on different tones, characteristics, and meanings.

While these horizontal relationships can be useful for asserting similarities, horizontal relationships can also be sources of conflict over similarities. When Cal Poly took the contract, Cal Poly Team was sent to work directly with Bangpra Agricultural College's professors to improve the college and the vocational agricultural program in Thailand as a whole.⁷² This clearly establishes that Cal Poly Team would work with Bangpra as its equal in trying to achieve the goals of the contract, a horizontal relationship built upon similarity in roles performed and objective.

But this would unfortunately be the source of tension between the Cal Poly Team and the faculty at Bangpra. Since Cal Poly Team's main objective was to improve Bangpra Agricultural College, they would perform most of their work there and live on its campus grounds.⁷³ The houses the Cal Poly Team members lived in were not only maintained by the teachers at Bangpra but also the students attending Bangpra.⁷⁴ This not only became a source of embarrassment for the Cal Poly Team, since it was embarrassing to ask a fellow teacher to fix the plumbing, but it

⁷² *Terminal Report*, 7.

⁷³ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁷⁴ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

also became a source of frustration for the professors at Bangpra since they saw it as a distraction for the students and their studies.⁷⁵

This clearly illustrates that any type of conflict, especially conflicts between individuals over personal matters, can endanger the progress and success of a contract. For example, the University of Kentucky had a contract with USAID to help improve the University of Indonesia's agricultural program: Institut Pertanian, Bogor (also known as the IPB) from 1957 to 1966.⁷⁶ One author wrote, "The agent-client model might be applied to the Kenteam [the University of Kentucky Team]-IPB, but it is not really a good fit...to think of the IPB-Kenteam relationship as 'bilateral' is to structure it with an American side an Indonesian side, but there was never such a simple bifurcation as this...Differences of understanding and viewpoint are usually present among the members of any staff, and they may become more varied as the institution grows in size. Defenders of status and proponents of change align themselves not only by nationality but by various postures of intellect and culture as well."⁷⁷ As the author illustrated, there are a number of ways that individuals could identify and relate to one another. "Between the American and Indonesian groups, therefore, there was always a potential failure in understanding."⁷⁸ This would have major repercussions because "Kenteam was often uncertain of

⁷⁵ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁷⁶ Howard Beers, *An American Experience in Indonesia: The University of Kentucky Affiliation with the Agricultural University at Bogor* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1971): xiii-ix.

⁷⁷ Beers, *An American Experience in Indonesia*, 31.

⁷⁸ Beers, *An American Experience in Indonesia*, 33.

what IPB needed, and IPB staff members were uncertain of what Kenteam members would approve."⁷⁹ Because the criterion for similarity and difference were constantly shifting and often unspoken, these horizontal relationships which positioned one individual or organization on the same field as another had the potential to jeopardize the progress of a contract.

Another example involving Michigan State University and its activities during the Vietnam War explicitly showed how horizontal relationships could negatively impact the progress of a contract. From 1955 to 1960, Michigan State University was involved with improving the police structure and providing police equipment to the Diem regime.⁸⁰ Despite hiring advisers directly from Michigan law enforcement historian John Ernst observed, "Philosophical and cultural differences between America and Vietnam made lecturing over law enforcement procedures useless."⁸¹ Just because one had a similarity over profession or career, that did not immediately remove significant differences which could hinder the progress of relaying and delivering information.

By viewing Cold War development through horizontal relationships, interactions and conflicts become much larger and more animated. These instances and episodes become sites of multilayered discourse rather than petty arguments. Historians are able to see identities, ideas, and personal histories come to the surface and see them as these individuals saw them, important

⁷⁹ Beers, *An American Experience in Indonesia*, 34.

⁸⁰ John Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance: Michigan State University and the Vietnam War* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press: 1998): 63-64.

⁸¹ Ernst, *Forging a Fateful Alliance*, 65.

and worth fighting for or fighting because of. Conflicts then become symbolic sites where unspoken values and identities are in contest over varying levels of agency and (most of all) who gets to define “success.”

In order to resolve this conflict, the Cal Poly Team took matters into their own hands. The Cal Poly Team invested over \$9,000 “...in the out-lying grounds area exclusive of the immediate yard areas. This investment has been borne equally by each of the team members of the team including short term specialists who resided at Bangpra.”⁸² In fact the Cal Poly team, “decided to assume these functions themselves as a means of maintaining good relations with the College family community.”⁸³ This act was well received by those at Bangpra and the students found this as an additional opportunity to learn from the Cal Poly Team.⁸⁴ By improving the properties on their own funds and their own time, Cal Poly Team was able to remove the source of tension which plagued the Bangpra-Cal Poly Team relationship and further integrate Cal Poly Team into the life of Bangpra Agricultural College through extracurricular activities.

What this reveals about horizontal relationships is the nature and impact of subordination. In the context of horizontal relationships, subordination means the implied devaluing or demotion of an actor who is in equal role, status, or function. Subordination begins as the

⁸² Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁸³ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁸⁴ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

assertion that an actor is less than one's self where those assertions operate as both implied and explicit statements or actions. It is difficult to expect what subordination looks like, since the instances are varied and situational, but subordination can still be identified by its effects.

The conflict over maintaining these houses can be viewed through this concept of subordination. To the Bangpra professors, the Cal Poly Team was equal to them in rank and function. The Cal Poly Team and the Bangpra professors were both teachers in their own contexts, they both worked in agriculture, and they both had the goal of improving Bangpra Agricultural College so it could make better agricultural teachers. From the perspective of the Bangpra professors, the members of the Cal Poly Team were their partners and equals.

But this view of equality was threatened by the Bangpra professors and students having to serve and work for the Cal Poly Team in a non-contractual sense. The Bangpra professors and students at Bangpra had to fix the houses the Cal Poly Team members lived in whenever asked, take time out of their schedules to maintain them regularly, and perform other manual labor on the landscape surrounding the houses.⁸⁵ Not only was it an affront to the Bangpra professors' qualifications as educated members of society and technical experts in their own contexts, it was labor that was uncontested and uncompensated for. In fact, this labor seemed to be normal as Smith wrote that the renovations occurred without administrative pressure, implying that the

⁸⁵ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

administration (whomever they be) were content with the idea of Bangpra professors maintaining these houses.⁸⁶ Through the lens of horizontal similarity, the Bangpra professors saw the Cal Poly Team as their equals but this was then invalidated by the labor they were forced to perform for the Cal Poly Team. This led to conflict and tension between the two and threatened the progress of the achieving the contract goals. Without a notion of similarity between the Cal Poly Team and the Bangpra professors, this conflict would not have occurred at all.

Even though the housing problem posed a danger to the contract's success and progress through the damaging of relationships, it was resolved when the source of subordination was relieved. Therefore it is safe to assume that actions which reinforce similarity and equality help build horizontal relationships and maintain the health of a project. This idea of reinforcing similarity can be seen in the actions of the Cal Poly Team wives. For example, members of the Cal Poly Team were allowed to bring their wives and children while abroad in Thailand.⁸⁷ These wives informally participated in the contract and the dealings outside the contract in a way that did "not conveniently fit into the framework of this Terminal Evaluation or Final Report..."⁸⁸ One such contribution from the wives included, "assuming a full instructional load in English

⁸⁶ Letter from Warren T. Smith, Date Unknown, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁸⁷ California Polytechnic State University, *Fact Sheet on Cal Poly Overseas* (San Luis Obispo, CA: California Polytechnic State University, Date Unknown).

⁸⁸ *Terminal Report*, 61.

classes to giving individual English lessons to instructors preparing to go overseas...assisting in cataloging in the library to conducting a weekly farang - Thai kindergarten class.”⁸⁹

While the Cal Poly Team made significant technical contributions to Bangpra Agricultural College and agricultural education throughout Thailand, their activities contributed to (in the lifespan of the contract) a long term goal that did not immediately bear fruit. According to Cal Poly, “The technical agriculture college curriculum, revised in 1972, represents a major departure from the past.”⁹⁰ Particularly, for Bangpra, it would take from 1968 to 1972 to begin implementing workshops on curriculum and making lesson plans for teacher training programs.⁹¹ The process of creating a stronger teacher training program at Bangpra and reforming agriculture vocational education in Thailand was, unsurprisingly, a long one. It would be easy to become disillusioned or unaware of the minute changes that were taking place, changes that could take years to see the full impact.

Therefore, the work that the wives did at Bangpra helped integrate these outsider contractors in an immediate and clearly tangible manner. The terminal report remarked that “The participation of the team wives was a major contribution to the success of the project.”⁹² Without these women taking time to interact with students, teach classes, help the professors one on one, or participate with Thai youth, it would be easy to stereotype these women into having no

⁸⁹ *Terminal Report*, 62.

⁹⁰ *Terminal Report*, 29.

⁹¹ *Terminal Report*, 12-14.

⁹² *Terminal Report*, 62.

interest in contributing to the community around them. Added to the disdain by the Bangpra professors, it would contribute to the larger image of the Cal Poly Team as leeches to Bangpra college that did not provide any tangible results to the community. By offering to work in a way that is outside the scope of the contract, the wives offered themselves as useful participants for Bangpra's educational culture. For the Cal Poly Team wives, "The results of this association made the team feel they were a part of the college, rather than guests using the school's facilities."⁹³ By doing so, these women were able to assert the Cal Poly Team as an essential part of Bangpra Agricultural College, establish their presence as necessary, and stave off the image of these technical advisors from subordinators to essential pieces of the educational experience at Bangpra. The Cal Poly Team had a horizontal relationships with the Bangpra professors because they were working with them, not without them, to achieve one of the major goals of the contract: to improve Bangpra Agricultural College's curriculum.⁹⁴ This helped heal the horizontal relationship, a relationship that was necessary for cooperation and codependence in achieving the goals of the contract.

Just as horizontal relationships have the potential to expose tensions amongst actors and harm the progress of a contract, these same relationships have the potential to exploit tensions and work to one's favor and achieve one's goals. On January 1st, 1971, President Robert E.

⁹³ *Terminal Report*, 62.

⁹⁴ *Terminal Report*, 7,12..

Kennedy invited Dr. Suraphol Sanguansri, Director of Bangpra Agricultural College, to the CA Agricultural Teachers Association Conference and Skills Week; two events which served as a gathering of agricultural educators of all levels, members from the Bureau of Agriculture Education, and members of the California State Education Department at Cal Poly.⁹⁵ Dr. Sanguansri accepted the invitation although, "since approval must come from several authorities, my [Dr. Sanguansri] acceptance of your invitation must, temporarily, be tentative."⁹⁶ This bureaucratic roadblock would naturally be a damper to anyone's outlook but Dr. Sanguansri remained positive because he saw the invitation as something he could leverage to gain the Royal Thai Government's approval.

The solution rested upon the assertion of Cal Poly's expertise of agricultural education and the linkage between Cal Poly and Bangpra. For example, Dr. Sanguansri remarked that he would be allowed to go because the "inspiration and stimulation, such a visit would lend to my country's agricultural development."⁹⁷ Dr. Sanguansri's position as director of Bangpra Agricultural College not only gave him the right to claim what would positively contribute to Bangpra's development but it also gives him the credibility to claim what would positively contribute to Thailand's agricultural production overall. By not just framing the conference in a

⁹⁵ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth, 21 January 1971, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁹⁶ Letter from Suraphol Sanguansri to Robert E. Kennedy, 14 February 1972, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁹⁷ Letter from Suraphol Sanguansri to Robert E. Kennedy, 14 February 1972, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

personal level but also in the terms of nation building, President Kennedy's invitation became an important piece to achieving the larger goal of Thailand's agricultural development.

This act of framing was in fact an intentional one. President Kennedy brought up the invitation for Dr. Sanguansri in a letter to Bhong-Sakdi Varasandharosoth, the Director General of the Vocational Education Department under the Thai Ministry of Education.⁹⁸ This seemingly innocuous mention set the stage in favor of President Kennedy's appeal. The play was successful and the Ministry of Education approved Dr. Sanguansri's attendance at the conference.⁹⁹ Director General Varasandharosoth wrote back to Kennedy, "I am sure that after participating in the Conference, Dr. Suraphol will return with many new concepts and procedures that will be useful in the Thai Agricultural Education Program."¹⁰⁰ Varasandharosoth saw the potential for Dr. Sanguansri's attendance in terms of developing Thailand's national agricultural system and achieving a long term vision of improving Thailand beyond the goals outlined by the contract. Especially since President Kennedy expressed interest in reimbursing Dr. Sanguansri's round trip airfare, there was no reason to decline the offer.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth, 21 January 1971, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

⁹⁹ Letter from Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth to Robert E. Kennedy, 16 February 1972, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth to Robert E. Kennedy, 16 February 1972, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth, 21 January 1971, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

In a more nuanced view, President Kennedy was able to utilize a horizontal relationship to get Director Varasandharosoth's approval. Again, horizontal relationships are built upon notions of similarity. As shown earlier, Cal Poly was able to project itself as a leader in agricultural education amongst its peers and superiors in Thailand. By creating a positive image through the echo chamber of a vertical relationship with USAID, Cal Poly was able to circumvent what preconceived notions (positive or negative) others had of Cal Poly to begin with. Then, by asserting the similarity between Cal Poly and Bangpra Agricultural College, the Cal Poly administration could use this reputation to persuade others to act in Cal Poly's favor. Cal Poly's technical expertise was so readily accepted by those in Thailand to the point that, as Smith described, "...they [the Cal Poly team] have made a very good impression everywhere we have gone. In fact we are just a little embarrassed because everyone is so high on Cal Poly that they think we are the authorities on all their problems."¹⁰² Cal Poly's power rested on its expertise but this power only went as far as to those who recognized its expertise. By appealing to Bangpra as a site of agricultural education, Cal Poly was able to create a connection as a fellow university that specialized in agricultural education. Here, horizontal relationships built on similarity enabled the expansion of power and influence but required the assertion and acceptance of said expertise. The horizontal relationship provided the necessary pathway for Cal

¹⁰² Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 21 September 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

Poly to export its echo chamber of validation and expertise into other contexts, proactively spreading its reputation to its advantage.

But once the assertion was accepted, horizontal relationships acted as conduits for even more power and influence. As the contract came to a close, President Kennedy entertained ideas of continuing Cal Poly's presence in Thailand. For example, Kennedy responded to Director General Varasandharosoth, "During the week we explored in considerable detail the ideas we discussed concerning the continued relationship of Cal Poly and Thailand. Everyone concerned thought a continued relationship appropriate and pledged to support the concept."¹⁰³ In addition, "Members of our organizations [Cal Poly Team] are looking forward to a continued productive relationship. You [Dr. Sanguansri] and Warren Smith will want to continue to explore these possibilities."¹⁰⁴ And finally, a scholarship for Thai teachers pursuing their master's degree in agricultural education was established, "as an expression of confidence in the vocational agriculture program of Thailand."¹⁰⁵ All of this would support Cal Poly's commitment to agricultural education and Cal Poly's prestige abroad and domestically. By using Thailand as a jumping off point for other potential endeavors shown above, Cal Poly was able to create a window for increasing its influence in another nation's educational and agricultural system and

¹⁰³ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Bhongs-Sakdi Varasandharosoth, 27 April 1973, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Robert E. Kennedy to Suraphol Sanguansri, 27 April 1973, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹⁰⁵ *Terminal Report*, 64.

attach another success (and future successful ventures) onto its reputation as an expert in agricultural education, generating greater support and interest from those in the US (whether they be prospective students, interested faculty, or commissioners from USAID).

As shown here, the potential for vertical and horizontal relationships provide a unique look into the world of the Cold War. Vertical relationships enable historians to see agency situated in hierarchies and power dimensions while horizontal relationships enable historians to imagine agency amongst similarities and differences. But these relationships are not nearly as clearly defined as one would imagine. The reality is that these two axes of relationships exist in a three dimensional space where both vertical and horizontal relationships are integrated and intertwined with one another. Where a horizontal relationship exists, a vertical relationship exists within and around it at the same time. Therefore, agents simultaneously have relationships with others that incorporate elements of similarity and hierarchy. Within this realization, understanding agency becomes even more complex, demanding a more nuanced reading into how the Cal Poly Team carried out its duties while in Thailand. Agency therefore can only be expressed and understood with both vertical relationships and horizontal relationships in mind. Without these two pieces, the history of agency during the Cold War is an incomplete one.

To see the navigation of the horizontal and vertical relationships to understand agency, we must turn away from the Cal Poly Team for a moment and focus on someone else. In 1968, a

conflict emerged between a team of educators from Oklahoma State (much like the Cal Poly Team), USOM/Thailand, and the Royal Thai Government during the same contract that Cal Poly was under. Essentially, the conflict came down to the fact that, "Their [Oklahoma State Team's] feeling is that they are in a far better position to know what is needed than is USOM/Thailand and the Thai Director General,"(presumably in context of the source) of the Vocational Education Department.¹⁰⁶ This affront to a section of the Royal Thai Government's ability to oversee the development projects that took place within their own nation was set against a backdrop of other affronts to their agency and decision making capacities. These other violations of agency included a variety of development projects from other contractors which did not benefit Thailand directly, development projects which did not appeal to the Royal Thai Government's priorities, personnel who were unqualified for the project at hand, and research projects which did not yield usefulness to Thailand directly despite using valuable resources and personnel from the Royal Thai Government.¹⁰⁷ The Oklahoma State Team's condescending attitude towards the Royal Thai Government was just one violation of agency too much, causing the backlash against the Oklahoma State Team. The Royal Thai Government could not entertain the idea of other contractors using its own nation as other contractors' laboratories or playgrounds.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

But it should be stated that Oklahoma State was not the only contractor which utilized these host nations for other non-development related purposes. For example, Cal Poly would only take international contracts if and only if these contracts posed opportunities to improve Cal Poly professors' abilities to teach effectively and could give these same professors the chance to train or supervise others over the course of the contract.¹⁰⁸ Cal Poly was not taking these contracts out of pure selflessness and altruism. There had to be some kind of incentive involved and, unsurprisingly, these incentives manifested during the Thailand contract. These incentives ranged from the production of better and more experienced professors, the widened appeal of Cal Poly abroad, and (as shown earlier) the increased attractiveness of attending Cal Poly as an undergraduate.

The difference between Oklahoma State being chastised by the Royal Thai Government and Cal Poly escaping chastisement is how direct a threat these subversive acts were to the Royal Thai Government's agency. Before going further, it should be noted that the Cal Poly Team was equal in importance and rank to the Oklahoma State Team and the Ministry of Education in order to achieve the contract goals according to the USAID contract. For example, the Director-General of the Thai Ministry of Education provided an office for chief-of-party Warren Smith, establishing a direct link between Cal Poly Team and the Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁹ The

¹⁰⁸ Administrative Bulletin, 22 February 1967, in "121.3 - USAID Folder General" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Harold Wilson, 26 June 1967, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

Cal Poly Team was tasked with assisting and therefore collaborating with the Ministry of Education to develop and improve the agriculture teaching training program.¹¹⁰ This cooperative relationship was cemented in the exact language of the contract as the Cal Poly Team, like the Oklahoma State Team, were, “presently working with officials of the Department of Vocational Education.”¹¹¹ The Cal Poly Team, and more importantly the Oklahoma State Team, were collaborators with the Royal Thai Government’s Ministry of Education. In this, the Cal Poly Team was in the language of the contract, the Vocational Education Department’s partner and equal.

But in contrast to the Oklahoma State Team, the Cal Poly Team sacrificed this “equality” of agency and power by capitulating to the decision making powers of the Royal Thai Government. For example, USAID recognized that the “fundamental responsibility” to respond to the problems which threatened Thailand’s growth and stability, “belongs to the Thai.”¹¹² This contractual basis for putting the Royal Thai Government at the center of the contract’s execution was echoed as a letter from the Chief of the Education Division in USAID’s Office of Technical Service East Asia Bureau, “the success of the project can be attributed to two factors. In the first place the whole concept [of the project goals] was originally Thai, and they are therefore

¹¹⁰ California Polytechnic State University, *Fact Sheet on Cal Poly Overseas* (San Luis Obispo, CA: California Polytechnic State University, Date Unknown).

¹¹¹ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 111.

¹¹² Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 92.

genuinely interested."¹¹³ As there were two contested readings of the contract, one which put the ultimate responsibility on the Ministry of Education to achieve the goals of the contract and one that gave equal responsibility to the contractors (Cal Poly Team and Oklahoma State Team) and the Vocational, Cal Poly chose the reading which supported Thailand's sovereignty. For example, chief-of-party Smith wrote, "One of the reasons that we have been so successful here [in Thailand] is because...we treat the Thai Vocational Education officials as our bosses. They appreciate it and we have enjoyed the relationship."¹¹⁴ By forfeiting their right to work with the Vocational Education Department as equals, the Cal Poly Team diplomatically avoided criticism from their "new found superiors" by cloaking their own activities as essential to satisfying the needs of the Thai.¹¹⁵ By claiming their obedience, the Cal Poly Team was able to assert their loyalty to the contract goals, which were in essence the Ministry of Education's goals, and pledge their utmost efforts to achieving them.

By claiming the Thai government's desires as their own, Cal Poly Team's act of capitulation gave them the necessary credibility to exercise their own interests of improving their own teaching abilities for their own professors and building prestige. Capitulation is the act of creating a new vertical relationship with another actor, a vertical relationship that could not have

¹¹³ Letter from William M. Williams to Robert E. Kennedy, 15 April 1970, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹¹⁴ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix 3 for a visualization of the vertical relationships argued for

previously existed due to the nature of the existing hierarchy or because similarities are too strong. The Cal Poly Team took the sharing of responsibilities between themselves and the Vocational Education Department that was afforded to them by USAID and carefully rejected it by capitulating to the Thai. As a result, they gained the trust of the Royal Thai Government, in turn giving them the credibility to do what was best in their own interests, and avoid the harsh criticism that the Oklahoma Team faced. A horizontal relationship was transformed into a vertical relationship, opening up new levels of agency for the Cal Poly Team.

But unfortunately for the Oklahoma State Team, there was a significant amount of fallout from this particular incident. Chief-of-party Warren Smith wrote, “[US]AID/DC are sick and tired of the whole mess and feel that USOM/Thai and the Director General [from the Vocational Education Department in the Ministry of Education] are being far too critical of AID/DC efforts to get a contract wrapped up.”¹¹⁶ This reveals two critical pieces of information. First, there was a clear division over priorities and effectiveness from those who were “on the ground” and those who were not. As Smith reveals, this conflict originated over Oklahoma State’s decision to send personnel that the Vocational Education Department did not agree with and demanded that the personnel be sent home.¹¹⁷ USOM/Thailand and Director General Varasundharosoth were clearly concerned about their own levels of decision making, Oklahoma State Team’s activities, and the

¹¹⁶ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

level of trust they had with Oklahoma State's university administration throughout the course of this contract. On the other hand, AID/DC was more concerned about having the contract completed, even at the expense of an imbalanced power relationship.

But the second piece of information that is even more alarming is that the contract, at least on Oklahoma State's side, was already underway. The costs of bringing the Oklahoma State Team to Thailand, paying their wages, and other expenditures related to the contract may have been all for naught. This disagreement over decision making was fraught with risk and precarious to the point where Oklahoma State was considering the possibility of withdrawing from the Thailand contract.¹¹⁸ According to Chief-of-Party Warren Smith, the Royal Thai Government would have to contract another team, most likely from another country.¹¹⁹ Smith made the prediction that a development contractor from Germany would probably take over what Oklahoma State failed to complete.¹²⁰ This raised a significant number of problems for the US in a larger strategic view.

First, the US would be unable to effectively work in Thailand to satisfy its larger security goals. Smith admitted that, "USAID would be unable to participate in what Congress sees as an

¹¹⁸ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹²⁰ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

ideal program...”¹²¹ This ideal program was to, “assist the newly-formed Thai Agricultural Extension Division” and funding, “the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) organization, primarily with advisory services...and with commodities...”¹²² This was done not just to improve the agricultural system in Thailand but also satisfy larger problems, primarily the worsening security situation in the rural Northeast. USAID sought to use the Cal Poly and Oklahoma State contract to address the Royal Thai Government’s inability to address the rural Northeast and promote economic growth.¹²³

If this expansion into the rural countryside were possible, then Thailand could continue to address poverty and as a result stem violence against civilians. The Royal Thai Government directly saw the linkage between poverty and violence and the US supported this goal. Failing to expand the Royal Thai Government’s influence into the rural Northeast, therefore preventing any economic support into the region, would compromise the security interests of the US.

Even within the Cal Poly side of the Thailand contract, the interests of expanding the influence of the Royal Thai Government and addressing poverty in the rural northeast were clear. Cal Poly’s terminal report stated, “Stress was placed on the training of skills as well as theory in order to supply Thailand with competent agriculturalists...so vital to the growth and development

¹²¹ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 13 April 1968, in “121.3 - AID - Thailand” Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

¹²² Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 93-94.

¹²³ Agency for International Development, *Program and Project Data: Presentation to the Congress - FY 1970*, 93.

of Thailand.”¹²⁴ Even more so, “A six year observation study made by the Cal Poly Team members show that well over 60% of all graduates of vocational agriculture schools (average per school) take agriculture oriented positions. Most of these positions are outside of Bangkok.”¹²⁵

The Cal Poly Team’s major goal, to improve the agriculture teacher training program for the Ministry of Education throughout Thailand, had direct effects on Thailand. Improving these teacher training programs would improve the quality and effectiveness of future employees in the agricultural workforce, most of whom would end up going outside the capital of Thailand. These workers would therefore improve the agricultural systems in their own localities, contribute to a more economically stable locality, and decrease poverty. The end result would be a more prosperous Thai society, a society that would be less influenced by neighboring violence, and a society that would be closer to the Royal Thai Government thanks to the success of the better trained agricultural workforce. Improving the agricultural education system was a way to expand the influence, power, and responsiveness of the Royal Thai Government in an unstable/neglected area without using military occupation.

The second problem, from the US strategic security view, would be that if Oklahoma State backed out of their contract, Thailand would have larger military and foreign relations implications for the US. Oklahoma State, like many other contractors, were utilized in US

¹²⁴ *Terminal Report*, 25.

¹²⁵ *Terminal Report*, vii.

foreign policy strategies as a means to extend US influence and shape global security. As shown earlier, the US-Thailand relationship provided the US with the ability to launch airstrikes out of Thailand against communist aggressors from Laos.¹²⁶ The security of Thailand directly correlated to the continuation and future success of these US strategic military airstrikes.

Therefore, the fallout of Oklahoma State backing out of the contract would have serious implications for the US-Thai foreign policy strategy. The contract would be unable to completed, the Royal Thai Government would be unable to extend its influence in a hotly contested area, poverty and violence would continue to exist in the northeast, and Thailand would be more susceptible to Communist Chinese influence. The agency expressed by Oklahoma State and the Oklahoma State Team had incredible repercussions for the US, thereby shaping and potentially jeopardizing US foreign relations strategies. While it would be an overstatement to say that if Oklahoma State failed to complete the contract then the US-Thailand relationship would be in jeopardy, Oklahoma State's work would still have major implications as it directly shaped the economic development of the Thai people and therefore disrupted the poverty which enabled (in US foreign policy makers' eyes) communist anti-government sentiment to grow. The success of Oklahoma State could directly shape the prevalence of communist ideology throughout Thailand and number of communist guerrillas in Thailand. Oklahoma State, by expressing agency and challenging the relationships necessary to achieve the goals of the contract, exposed the threat of

¹²⁶ *Cong. Rec.*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 112, pt. 3: 4117.

USAID failing to achieve its development strategy goals and its implications for Thailand and US foreign policy makers.

Although very little was said afterwards about the scandal from Cal Poly or the Cal Poly Team, documents published by USAID a year later indicate that the Oklahoma State Team continued to work on the contract alongside the Cal Poly Team. For example, the Project Manager from USOM/Thailand James D. Murray signed off on a review of the Oklahoma State Team and the Cal Poly Team's performance from 1969 to 1971.¹²⁷ Whether Oklahoma State's administration and the Oklahoma State Team gracefully capitulated to the wills of the Vocational Education Department and USOM/Thailand, Oklahoma State was chastised by USAID for interfering with the progress of the contract, or USAID negotiated with the Vocational Education Department and USOM/Thailand is unclear. But, the Oklahoma State Team continued to work with the Cal Poly Team despite the scandal.

In the end, Oklahoma State completed their portion of the contract and whose performance, according to USOM/Thailand Mission Director Rey M. Hill, was "satisfactory."¹²⁸ Mission Director Hill wrote, "Host government participation continues to be unusually high..." and specifically pointed out that Cal Poly Team's Chief of Party Smith accepted a higher

¹²⁷ Agency for International Development, *Project Appraisal Report (PAR) Report U-446 49301944*, (Washington, D.C.: USAID, May 27, 1971): 1.

¹²⁸ Agency for International Development, *Project Appraisal Report (PAR) Report U-446 49301945*, (Washington, D.C.: USAID, June 8, 1972): 1-2.

non-administrative workload in response to a reduction in Cal Poly Team's membership.¹²⁹ As the contract came to a close in 1972, Smith wrote to Kennedy, perhaps wistfully, "Because of the good diplomacy[sic] that you have practiced it is my feeling that we have accomplished much and it is my intention to initiate something whereby you can look at this trip as a beginning of a program rather than a termination (underlined in original)."¹³⁰

As shown, there is a great potential from reexamining and redefining power relationships during the Cold War. Unsurprisingly, this asserts the importance of the US-USSR international conflict in understanding agency. But, as the research has shown, the US-USSR conflict is not the only factor to consider. In fact, there are a multitude of rationales which provide the context for agency such as timing and ambitions.

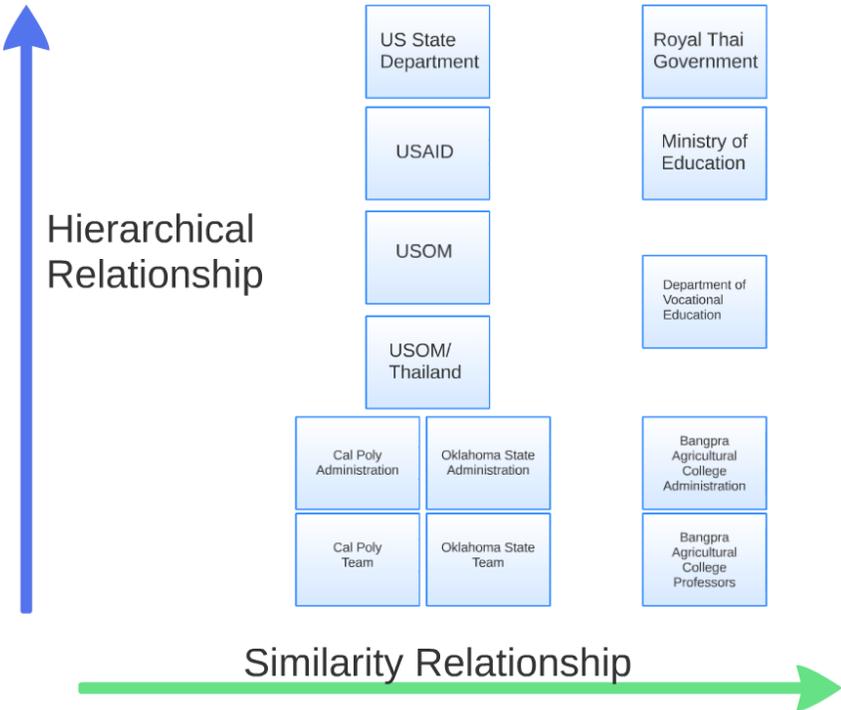
During the Cold War, Cal Poly and the Cal Poly Team were able to exercise a level of agency through a variety of power relationships and therefore satisfy its own goals. In the end, this raises a larger question of what it means to have agency and what perspective is necessary to "see" agency. As shown, if an actor is positioned with the right people at the right time with the right reasons, then there is a potential for agency. This means that the global and local in conjunction with the institutional and individual must to be considered. This paper is a call for a history not of systems but of people making decisions, sometimes against a large political current

¹²⁹ Agency for International Development, *Project Appraisal Report (PAR) Report U-446 49301945*, 2.

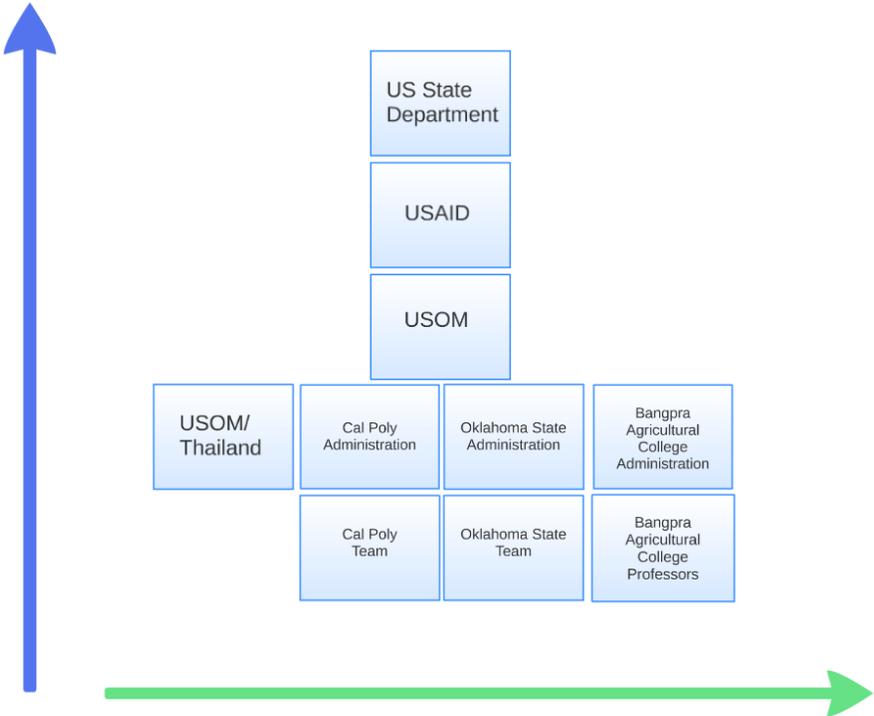
¹³⁰ Letter from Warren T. Smith to Robert E. Kennedy, 2 April 1973, in "121.3 - AID - Thailand" Folder, California Polytechnic State University, Box Kennedy 20 Dexter 6, California Polytechnic State University.

and sometimes with it. If we use the vertical and horizontal relationship to understand agency during the Cold War, it raises the more disruptive question, “Whose Cold War was it?” This means that the Cold War cannot be a history of two nations, two ideological systems, two superpowers fighting for the fate of the world but rather a history of people conveniently under certain umbrellas (one made in the US and one made in the USSR) who are all struggling to make their claim in an uncertain world.

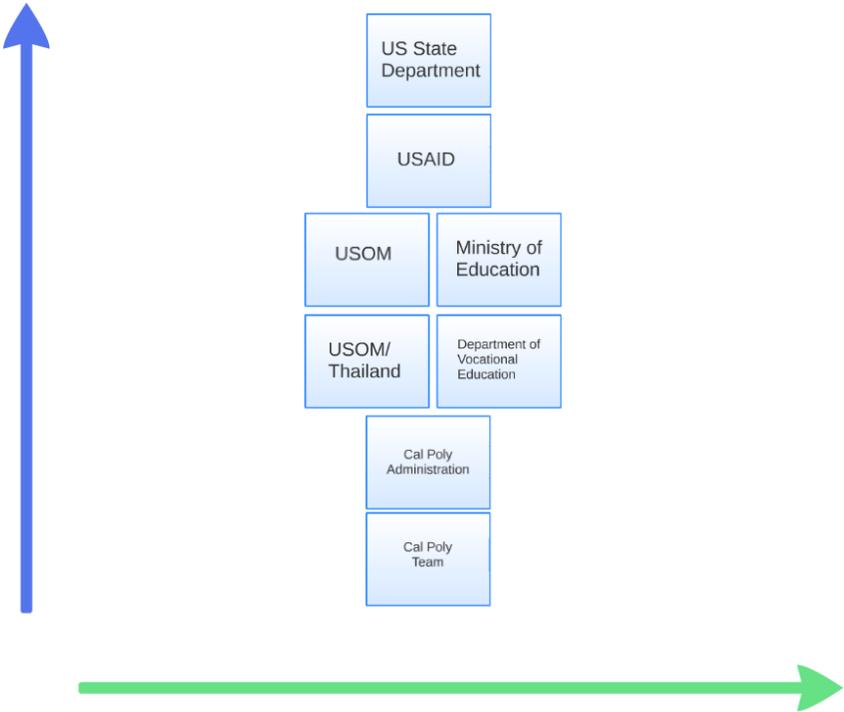
Appendix 1: Horizontal and Vertical Relationships Visualized



Appendix 2: Revised Horizontal Relationships



Appendix 3: Cal Poly's Capitulation



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