

Thailand and Portugal: Shaping a Strategic Future Together

Kriengsak Chareonwongsak *, **Jirattikan Sapeng**

Senior fellow, Harvard University, Chairman of Nation-Building Institute International (NBII) *

ABSTRACT

This article aims to provide a comprehensive reassessment of Thailand–Portugal relations, one of the world’s longest-standing bilateral ties between Asia and Europe. It has three main purposes: (1) to examine the history of Thai–Portuguese cooperation as a foundation for contemporary relations, (2) to analyze the scope and current state of cooperation across economic, technological, cultural, and diplomatic dimensions, and (3) to propose strategic guidelines for deepening cooperation in the 21st century. The study finds that while historical relations have been characterized by mutual respect, cultural exchange, and commercial engagement, current collaboration remains fragmented, ad hoc, and insufficiently institutionalized. Employing qualitative content analysis and strategic partnership theory, the article identifies untapped opportunities in renewable energy, wellness and food economies, and institutional innovation, while also highlighting structural barriers such as connectivity bottlenecks and low trade volume. In response, a forward-looking framework is proposed, structured around three strategic pillars: (1) Green Energy and Technology Collaboration, capitalizing on Portugal’s global leadership in renewable energy and Thailand’s Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economy model; (2) Integration of Economic Niches, combining Portugal’s strengths in food production, wellness, and quality of life with Thailand’s expertise in medical tourism, elderly care, and gastronomy; and (3) Institutionalized Bilateral Governance, establishing mechanisms for continuity, coordination, and evidence-based evaluation. By embedding cooperation within these pillars, the Thailand–Portugal partnership can evolve from symbolic friendship into a dynamic, future-ready alliance. This study contributes new knowledge by positioning the relationship as a potential strategic bridge between Asia and Europe amid geopolitical realignments, technological disruption, and global sustainability challenges.

Keywords: Thailand–Portugal Relations, Strategic Partnership, Asia–Europe Cooperation, Renewable Energy, Wellness Economy