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Re-thinking the Thai-Lao border in International  
Relations: Can anti-geopolitics reveal a human  
dimension?

By

Thanachate Wisaijorn

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts by Research Programme

Durham University

School of Government and International Affairs

March 2015

This thesis is the result of my own work. Material from published and unpublished work of others which is used in this thesis is credited to the author in question in the text.

Thanachate Wisajorn  
30 March 2015

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

This thesis is titled *Re-thinking the Thai-Lao border in International Relations: Can anti-geopolitics reveal a human dimension?* It argues that mainstream International Relations<sup>1</sup> inherited the colonial characteristics of space management from traditional geopolitics. This space management, especially in regards to territorial borders, is important in International Relations. Without territorial borders, it would be difficult to conceptualise the idea of International Relations as a discipline. However, more attention could be given to the contested nature of territorial borders conceptualised in the theory, especially in political realism. In relation to borders, the voices of the elites have been heard but the voices of the peoples along the borders have been ignored. The concept of Westphalian borders is strongly attached to International Relations and peoples' relationships that did not fit the Westphalian norm have often been overlooked. Theorists in disciplines thus very often run the risk being caught up in the territorial trap of Agnew and Corbridge (1995).

The concept of territorial borders presented by International Relations, especially political realism in the 1980s, lacks a human dimension when it is used to analyse international politics. The Thai-Lao border is a good example of incongruence between juridical and cultural maps. The Siam-France Treaty in 1893 that gave France control over the eastern banks of the Mekong River, the international boundary, separated a significant number of Lao people on the two sides of the river (Winichakul, 1994). Since pre-colonial times, North-East Thailand received an exodus of Lao people from the eastern banks of the Mekong and in 1961, it was estimated that ten million Lao people lived in the area and it was considered the largest Lao settlement in the world (Ngaosyvathn & Ngaosyvathn, 1994).

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis follows the normal practice of using 'International Relations' to indicate the academic discipline, whilst 'international relations' identifies the range of political, social and economic activities that is studied.

During the Cold War, this incongruence continued as the superpowers contested with each other. After 1975, when Lao and Hmong people, a group from the highland regions, fled Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) to Thailand, they were labeled in International Relations as refugees. However, Hmong populations had been scattered in Northern Thailand and Lao PDR before the establishment of modern state boundaries. Scott (2009) argued that state-centric literature often overlooks these stateless movements. According to the anthropologists, colonisation was responsible for the plight of the Hmong who either failed to or chose not to establish their own state. They became illegal when their movements cut across state boundaries (Chanthavanich & Pliansri, 2011). Lao and Hmong people on both banks of the Mekong, despite living in two different nation-states, had cultural and kinship ties for centuries but Westphalian territorial border logic made them refugees.

Fieldwork in this area has been conducted by a number of anthropologists, such as Pholsena (2006), Pholsena and Banomyong (2006), High (2009), Leepreecha (2011), Chanthavanich and Pliansri (2011), and Baird (2013), and many issues are left for others to pursue academically, anthropologically, and ethnographically. This thesis does not intend to conduct fieldwork but aims to present a theoretical challenge to the existing border approaches to studying borders and their related issues, such as the movements of peoples in the areas. The strengths and weaknesses of different theoretical frameworks related to border issues are examined, common themes are identified, and issues related to the Thai-Lao border after 1975 that have cultural, juridical, and security implications are analysed.

The thesis uses a number of critical political geographers' interpretations to examine the Thai-Lao border issue of the 1970s. Agnew and Corbridge's concept of territorial trap (1995) is used to analyse territorial borders conceptualised in International Relations at that time. When International Relations theorists discuss the Thai-Lao border, they are caught within the traps of the reification of territorial borders from maps, the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and the myth of a self-contained state. The thesis also discusses the arguments by dissident International Relations theorists that

challenged the conventional interpretation of territorial borders. For example, to escape from the territorial trap, Ruggie (1998) emphasised the historical construction of social structure. Ashley (1987), likewise, was interested in genealogy focusing on the ways in which space was historically defined and the silenced set of historical narratives that differed from the mainstream. Walker (1993) examined the ways in which the inside/outside understanding of borders shaped the military security concepts and economics. To show that International Relations ignored the voices of the peoples along the Thai-Lao border, historical analysis of the shift from indigenous spatial conceptualisation, described as “mandala” (Wolters, 1999, p. 27) and “zomia” (Scott, 2009, p. xi), to Westphalian during the colonial era is presented. Alternatives to state-centric trans-border relations are discussed utilising an anti-geopolitical concept proposed by Routledge (1998) to challenge what has been accepted in mainstream literature.

The Thai-Lao borders were drawn according to Westphalian logic during the time of French influence in Indochina and were passed on to the post-World War Two Lao administration. The European ways of space conceptualisation were similarly presented in International Relations especially in the Cold War. Since 1893, Siam and French Indochina had border conflicts from time to time. From 1954 to 1975, though Laos was an independent state, both Thai and American troops intervened in its domestic affairs. However, after Laos became a communist state, the colonial logic of Westphalian borders was resurrected and border conflicts between the Thai and Lao states occurred regularly. The Thai-Lao border not only separated the two nation-states of Thailand and Lao PDR but also the two ideological worlds of liberal democracy under American influence and communist socialism under that of the Soviet Union. This delineation caused by the logic of Westphalian borders cut across the cultural ties of more than ten million Lao and Hmong peoples along the Mekong and requires examination.

Therefore, this thesis aims to examine the following issues. Firstly, the ways in which geopolitical colonial legacy was presented in International Relations are examined, and International Relations discussion of the Thai-Lao border after 1954 to the present is analysed. Secondly, the thesis examines whether the colonial era geopolitical

representations of the Thai-Lao border remained in International Relations after 1989 and how anti-geopolitics can be used to challenge these representations. Thirdly, the thesis considers how the concept of the territorial trap can be used to criticise the existing literature in International Relations regarding Thai-Lao border issues between 1975 and 1989. How such a critical point of view can be enriched is explored. Lastly, this thesis examines how the human dimension has been neglected in International Relations theory through examining the Thai-Lao border issue from 1975 to the present. It further explores the ways in which Routledge's concept of anti-geopolitics can be used to enrich the discipline.

In grounding these statements, territorial borders conceptualised by International Relations literature and other related disciplines are reviewed and examined in this chapter in a sequence of three connected themes: geopolitics, International Relations, and the territorial trap; criticism from dissident International Relations; and critical political geography with research questions.

### **Geopolitics, International Relations, and the territorial trap**

There is a strong inter-relationship between geopolitics and International Relations. Dodds (2005, p. 1) defined geopolitics as “the study of the state, the border and relations with other states” and Williams (2002, p.737) believed that without territorial borders, International Relations was impossible.

Dodds (2005) identified four important characteristics of traditional geopolitics; stating it was an objective discipline; represented a colonialist perspective of the world; showed the separation of places and peoples; and stood as a set of knowledge for nationalistic advice. These characteristics were passed on to mainstream International Relations, especially in political realism. When the state was essentialised and its borders were perceived as fixed, geopolitics and mainstream International Relations scholars tended to become attached to the “territorial trap” (Agnew, 2009, p. 22).

This section discusses the four geopolitical characteristics in International Relations and shows the inter-relationship of the two disciplines. It illustrates how these characteristics result in the territorial trap. Recognition of the trap challenges the understanding of Westphalian understanding of territorial borders. Borders should not be taken for granted and not treated as static and depoliticised in International Relations.

### *Objective Cartesian mapping*

Geopolitics is expected to be an objective explanation of locations. Spykman (1938, p. 236) said, "...geography does not argue. It simply is." However, this thesis insists that such a claim is not the case. Geopolitics is not objective but is the imposition of space management by the politically superior on the inferior. Specifically, geopolitics served the purposes of European colonisation which, by means of violence, silenced other peoples' voices in that space. For example, Mackinder's spatial details in *The Geographical Pivot of History* facilitated colonisation. Mackinder (1904) said that maps were drawn according to what was naturally given, and his map in *The Natural Seats of Power* gave details of land geography and became very influential in both geopolitics and International Relations.

The spatial conceptualisation proposed by Mackinder was influenced by Cartesian mapping. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like other intellectual disciplines, geography had to become scientific (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Geographical knowledge was divided from what was the ‘out there’ knowledge that needed to be discovered and what was in human’s inner thought. Thus a geographer was the ‘detached subject’ who observed the space outside as ‘viewed objects’ in the most neutral manner (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Therefore, geographical discourse was claimed to be a neutral perspective for universal knowledge. It went hand in hand with the brutality conducted by the Europeans in the colonies. Mackinder stated that by 1904, the world had reached the end of geography, a condition he called the “post-Columbian epoch”, as the world had been completely mapped over the previous 400 years during the “Columbian epoch” (Mackinder in Ó Tuathail, 2005, p. 107-109).

Though Mackinder claimed that geography was an objective science, this could be considered a one-sided truth. The mapping of the globe was contaminated by cultural subjectivity as space outside Europe, with colonial brutality, was to be conquered and Eurocentrically defined (Ó Tuathail, 2005). This situation occurred at the time of Siam’s modernisation when ocularcentrism replaced the ancient spatial conceptualisation of *mandala*, for example. The then Siamese-French Indochina border, which is now the Thai-Lao border, was established by means of violence. The French colonialists introduced the Westphalian form of state, and the Siamese elite accepted it. The border settlement silenced tiny Lao kingdoms along the Mekong that still were attached to the *mandala* system that is discussed in chapter 2. Geopolitics cannot be totally objective because the sense of European superiority was implied in the discipline and this colonial characteristic can be found in mainstream International Relations as well.

In International Relations, objectivity is similarly claimed in classical realism and neo-realism. The classical realist forefather, Morgenthau (1948), mentioned the importance of geopolitical location to the national interest though he did not explicitly claim it to be objective. Morgenthau was aware of the difficulty of making international politics a ‘science’ compared with natural science, caused by the challenge that human behaviour is

more complicated than physical interactions in nature. Unlike natural substances, humans cannot be positioned as fixed objects when studied by other detached groups of people. Morgenthau thus concluded that “politics is not science but arts” (1947, p. 16). However, in terms of space management in international politics, the existence of Westphalian territorial borders was taken for granted by Morgenthau as factual and objective. Morgenthau said that “...in the same way in which in a certain district of the national territory the municipality represents the nation and exercises its authority, each nation of the globe will represent humanity and in its natural boundaries act for it” (1947, p. 82). The concept of objective territorial borders expressed in Morgenthau’s work was a product of Cartesian mapping. However, this thesis contends there are groups of peoples who claim to be nations but cannot establish their Westphalian territorial states, and these non-state actors are downgraded in political realism, if Morgenthau’s insistence on territorial nation-states is applied.

The claim for objectivity is more explicit in neo-realism. Waltz (1979) stated that objectivity was expected in analysis in international politics, when the state was universally seen as a political unit interacting with others in the international system. This Cartesian mapping, with the claim of objectivity, led to the assumption that the state was self-contained, one of the three territorial traps noted by Agnew and Corbridge (1995), in traditional geopolitics and International Relations. Such a state-centric worldview can be noted in the neo-realists’ comparison of the state with a black box or billiard ball (Mearsheimer, 2001) and treatment of the state as a unit (Waltz, 1979). However, the classical realist Herz (1959, p.40) also used the term “impermeable hard-shell” that resembled Mearsheimer’s metaphors.

Indeed, different communities in the territory cannot be completely taken for granted and downgraded as less important than the territorial states in international politics. Commercial, ethnic, religious, and family ties cannot always be contained by territorial borders. Even Waltz (1979) recognised non-state actors’ movements, such as transnational firms, but downgraded them to have less impact on the international system than the state. Westphalian territorial states, accepted as a truth in International Relations,

were but one form of space management that originated in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe and passed on to other parts of the world during the colonial era. The assumption of a state being like a self-contained black box, as a colonial legacy, has been a problem examined in International Relations theory for decades, especially the reliance of state decision-making on the assumption that the outcomes of complex internal processes approximate to rational utility maximisation with the concern for national interest underpins Foreign Policy Analysis as a sub-field of International Relations. The problematic assumption of state being a black box that privileges security and power of the US applied with Laos during the Cold War was criticised by Stevenson (1972) that is discussed in the following chapters.

*Colonial characteristic: White man supremacy*

Geopolitics reflects a European way of looking at the world that helps support colonisation (Ó Tuathail, 1998). This thesis argues that this European perspective needs careful examination. Adopting a philosophy from Greek civilisation that sight is more important than words, maps can be termed ocularcentrism and Cartesian mapping provided the ability to see and tell.

An ocularcentric and Cartesian map offers three visions, the stage of the whole world over which a geopolitical gaze can be applied, a fixed scene for strategic international politics, and a distantiation gaze – the ability to compress time to understand location from a long distance (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Ocularcentrism focuses more on space over time and, after a viewing of a map, one understands how places are located without having to go to the site. Space thus is depoliticised, totalised, de-temporalised, and controlled by humans, as if humans were God (Ó Tuathail, 1996). This led to the belief that the disorganised and chaotic barbarian world could be organised (Ó Tuathail, 1996). This approach was used in the colonisation of lands but there was also the imposition of superior Western culture on them. The depoliticisation and totalisation of space in maps had two characteristics. First, when reified, legitimacy of the state boundaries was established and violence to reconfirm them was justified. Second, violence among the

states as a result of territorial conflicts was seen as normal, and this element was accepted in political realism (Ó Tuathail, 1996). The lack of objectivity regarding maps confirmed the unequal power relationships that existed between the superior Europeans and the inferior non-Europeans.

Ocularcentrism in the Cartesian maps that represented power relations in hierarchical ways are argued by this thesis to be the colonial legacy passed on from geopolitics to International Relations. For instance, Mackinder's map that indicated the Pivot Area, Inner Crescent, and Outer Crescent was portrayed in Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* (1948). The world maps, in addition, that represented a Eurocentric view were included to indicate the location of nation-states, populations, and natural resources. Similarly, maps with the ability to see and tell can still be noted in neo-realism. In Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, for example, there were nine maps that represented states with their Westphalian territorial borders and explanations of how great powers in the past aimed to expand their territory. The map indicating Japan's targets during World War Two clearly provided information to readers of how Japan conducted its imperialistic foreign and military policies at that time, similar to the European powers' colonisation campaigns (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The assumption of unequal relations between different locations is also noted throughout Morgenthau's work. Inside the state, civilisation can be expected, while outside barbaric space was waiting to be tamed. That invited colonisation by the more sophisticated Europeans of other parts of the world. For example, Morgenthau included the map to indicate the "colonial area" presented as if colonisation was presupposed knowledge (1948, p. 283). More explicitly, justification for colonisation can be noticed in Morgenthau's book *In Defense of the National Interest*, as the US President William McKinley justified his country's imperialistic foreign policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by using biblical allusions, saying that the Philippines was annexed by the US because it was guided by God (Morgenthau, 1951). This revealed the sense of superiority that Americans had towards other peoples in the rest of the world. Mearsheimer (2001) similarly justified territorial acquisitions as means to increase national power according

to the reason of state. Imperial and colonial legacy, hence, were implicitly supported and reified.

Westphalian territorial borders as a colonial legacy were thus accepted and taken for granted. This rendered practices in international politics, such as citizenship, immigration, national defences, and diplomacy, possible and normal. However, borders are never static as viewed by mainstream International Relations. What happened was that a significant number of peoples' voices were silenced by the reification of ideas from the map as a territorial trap that resulted from the ideational factors of territorial borders in the map. They became material factors when citizens were expected to defend the national interest during times of conflict.

#### *Separation of peoples and space*

The maps, influenced by colonial ocularcentrism and Cartesian mapping, drawn according to different territorial states in the Westphalian style implied the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of a political unit. Walker (1993, p. 151) proposed the explanation of this dichotomy as the “double canon of Western political thought”, defining the inside space and outside space of the state taken for granted in International Relations. The inside guaranteed justice and order, justifying national defence, military operations, and very often violence, while the outside suggested anarchy. This thesis argues that when Westphalian borders were reified and imposed on colonised areas outside Europe, drawings on maps constituted territorial conflicts that displaced and killed people.

The dichotomous inside/outside understanding of territory was common to classical and neo-realism. Morgenthau (1948) cited international treaties that suggested binary opposition to the inside/outside of the state. Herz (1957) also discussed that the sovereign should be supreme within its delimited territory and should not be interfered with by others. In Waltz's work, this dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside was again noted. In the international system, domestic politics differed from international politics.

The structure in domestic politics was hierarchical and the sovereign power was supreme to give and enforce laws. However, this was impossible in the anarchical international arena (Waltz, 1979).

The Westphalian concept of borders is characterised as decontextualised reification found among the classical and neo-realists. Though Morgenthau (1948) and Herz (1968) discussed history in their writings and their standpoints on borders varied, that history is of the elites in Europe. While the norms of non-intervention and territorial integrity should be observed, their violation was allowed at times in the interests of the nation and international peace and order. For instance, territorial integrity needed to be suspended for Atomic Development Agents to control atomic weapons (Herz 1959; Morgenthau, 1948). Eventually, Morgenthau (1948) and Herz (1968) insisted that Westphalian territorial borders were universally important.

Similarly, the neo-realists, Waltz and Mearsheimer, with less historical and contextual concerns, homogenised the state as a unit that interacted with others in the international system. Waltz offered a systemic explanation with three variables: the ordering principles of the structure, the character of the state, and the distribution of the capabilities among states. First, hierarchic domestic politics differed from anarchic international politics. Second, units in domestic politics were different as they performed different tasks, while international units were undifferentiated (Waltz, 1979). Third, the state as a unit imitated the security strategies of others to survive international anarchy. When states maximised their strength, some became major powers. The number of major powers at one time led to different international systems. A bipolar system was more stable than a multipolar system, while a unipolar system did not last long and rarely occurred. The neo-realists were attached to the territorial trap – the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside -- when they assumed the borders existed as attributes of a Westphalian state as the best form for survival in the anarchic international system.

The assumed binary opposition between domestic and international politics is problematic. For example, even in the colonial era, economic policy in domestic politics

could not be limited within state territory. As the state had then to participate in international economic competition, economic policy of one state resulted in conditions of international trade, such as the mercantile competition among the European powers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). Additionally, the neo-liberal movement of non-state actors, such as business firms that transcended state boundaries in the Cold War and more obviously in the post-Cold War period, reconfirmed the fact that the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside was insufficient in International Relations theory. The anthropologists, Donnan and Wilson, further suggested that state boundaries in some parts of the world, such as Europe in 1960s, changed their function and resulted in blurred national space. Border studies thus at that time focused more on the integration and problems of peoples in the border zones (Donnan & Wilson, 1999). State boundaries became even more porous as they were challenged by what Donnan and Wilson termed “twin threats” (1999, 1). These ‘threats’ were transnationalism from above in the form of supranational organisations and multi-national corporations, and from below in the form of the flows of peoples, such as refugees and illegal immigrants. The latter group, this thesis argues, represented the voices of peoples on the ground – they were included in what Routledge (1998, p.245) called “anti-geopolitics” that is discussed later.

#### *Provision for nationalistic policy advice*

Geopolitics is a set of knowledge for nationalistic advice in international affairs. This thesis argues that geopolitics, somehow, is limited and monopolised by certain groups of people. These elites are what Ó Tuathail described as “intellectuals of statecraft” (1998, p.81). For example, during World War Two, German geopolitical advisors, Karl Haushofer and Friedrich Ratzel, had nationalistic mindsets that served their state interest. Though Haushofer rejected any influence on Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, similar ideas to increase the German living space – *lebensraum* – can be found in it (Haushofer, 1998; Hitler, 1941; Ó Tuathail, 2005). Likewise, Ratzel believed that a larger colonial space meant greater power and *lebensraum* helped justify Hitler’s aggressive foreign policy (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Again, such a characteristic of geopolitics was Eurocentric and not

objective, policy being driven by national interest. Geopolitics was used for purposes of colonisation and its colonial legacy was passed on in the Cold War as a different brand of International Relations.

In the western hemisphere, similarly, the geopolitician Mahan was seen as the innovator for the idea of the Great Fleet's push for territorial and commercial power for US (Ó Tuathail, 1996). It was even argued that the US President Theodore Roosevelt already had that plan for building the fleet in mind to expand the US naval power. Fortunately, Mahan's writing could be used to justify Roosevelt's policy (Ó Tuathail, 1996). Additionally, Mahan was fond of naval maps in the Cartesian style and, as a result, they were used to provide the strategy for the US naval warfare. Thus, it is difficult to deny that the Cartesian maps did not, in the following decades, play a role in International Relations discourse in the US.

International Relations narratives can be linked to state foreign policy in two aspects as a reading source for practitioners and for theorists as practitioners themselves. For example, Le Bow (2003) stated that Morgenthau's book *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* was a great source for policy-makers in international politics. In addition, George Kennan was regarded as both a theorist and practitioner. As a diplomat to Soviet Union, Kennan wrote a famous article in International Relations *The Source of Soviet Conduct* discussing an appropriate foreign policy the US ought to have taken in the 1940s. He said that to defend the US national interest, statesmen must be patient and a containment policy should be conducted. This was because there was no time to exert pressure as the communist doctrine suggested that capitalist society itself would decline eventually. Hence, there was no need to attack capitalist states before the time was ripe (1947).

The colonial characteristic that geopoliticians provide nationalistic policy was passed on to International Relations. The fact that the interpretation of borders was monopolised by the elites and claimed to be objective still remained. It represented a colonialist's perspective of the world with the separation of places and peoples that resulted in the

territorial traps: the myth of the self-contained state, the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and the monopolised interpretation of borders when reified. The geopolitical worldview passed on to International Relations silenced the voices of the peoples, those whose lives were sacrificed due to foreign policy decisions of the elites based on theory.

### **Criticism from dissident International Relations**

John Ruggie, Richard Ashley, and R.B.J. Walker, generally viewed as dissident International Relations scholars, despite their different self-labels as neo-classical constructivists and poststructuralists, provided useful historical awareness that challenged Westphalian territorial borders in mainstream International Relations. However, the common limitation with the three scholars was that they overlooked the colonialists' views of ocularcentric maps as the colonisers' voices that defined the meaning of territorial borders. It was indeed the geopolitical legacy passed on to mainstream International Relations theory they criticised. Stopping at the awareness of the territorial trap was hence insufficient since the colonial legacy had not been unveiled. However, this awareness of the territorial trap and the proposed challenges, this thesis argues, was the springboard for further development of a human dimension in territorial borders. This section thus aims to discuss the criticism of territorial borders in International Relations through Ruggie's analysis of border as social episteme and social empowerment; Walker's criticism of the problematic dichotomous understanding of inside/outside; and Ashley's genealogy of the territorial borders. Together with the awareness of the territorial trap, such discussion of borders within International Relations academia paves the way forward to bringing the human dimension of anti-geopolitics into the discipline.

#### *The territorial border as social episteme and social empowerment*

Ruggie proposed the importance of historical examination of the formulation of territoriality (1998). He emphasised the historical transformation of social structure that rendered the territorial state in the form of "distinct, disjoint, and mutually exclusive" as

it is in International Relations theory today (Ruggie, 1998, p. 172). Ruggie did not treat territorial borders as naturally given and noted two issues that constituted the Westphalian territorial state, “social epistemes” and “social empowerment” (1998, p. 184).

Social epistemes refers to the ways in which the significance of a state are produced, imagined, and reified by a society. Ruggie focused on the shift from feudalism to a modern state in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After the Thirty Years War, in which the Treaty of Westphalia was agreed, the principle of “*cuius regio eius religio*” (the religion of the ruler dictates the religion of the ruled) and “*rex in regno suo est imperator regni sui*” (the king is the emperor of his own realm) were set as social epistemes in Western Europe (Ruggie, 1998, p. 184). Next, the process by which collectivity of a territorial political unit is enforced is coined as social empowerment. This form of modern spatial conceptualisation was a clear-cut separation of political units. However, the transition from feudalism to modern spatialisation took decades. Modern territorial units, different from feudal ones, required a strong and centralised government within its clearly separated space and the use of force was important. The dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside originated from this context. Inside, the state monopolised the legitimate use of force either to maintain peace and order or to collect taxes. Outside, state affairs including military expansion and aggrandizement were expected (Ruggie, 1998).

However, the historical recognition by Ruggie (1998) echoed the European elites and the international structure in international affairs was dominated by intellectuals of statecraft. Thus Ruggie was caught in the same Eurocentric and elitist cage as geopolitics and realist International Relations. When he examined the shift of the spatial form from feudalism to modernity, he only privileged the European historiography. For example, his discussions only included European narratives, such as the Peace of Westphalia, the wars of succession in Spain, Poland, and Austria, and the replacement of mercenaries by national armies in Europe (Ruggie, 1998). Moreover, though Ruggie recognised other forms of territorial states different from the Westphalian form, the sense of European superiority

can be noted. For instance, he described a state which was not territorial to be ruled by a “primitive government,” a territorial state whose territory was not fixed was labeled as that of “tribal Mongols,” and a fixed territorial but non-mutually exclusive state was explained to be backward as those in “feudal Europe” (Ruggie, 1998, p. 178). Hence, the Westphalian state was still implied as the best form though Ruggie recognised other forms of territoriality. The terms ‘tribal’ and ‘feudal’ denote a less developed form of statecraft which is in contrast to the more developed Westphalian one. Ruggie never mentioned pre-colonial territorial borders in Southeast Asia, but the above comments suggested that the Southeast Asian forms of spatial conceptualisation would be regarded as deviant forms of territorial space of the state. For example, mandala borders would possibly be compared with ‘feudal Europe’ as its border conceptualisation was not fixed. Ruggie’s views challenged the mainstream conceptualisation of borders, but how these borders as a colonial legacy silenced the voices of the peoples in non-European spaces is yet to be unveiled.

#### *Criticism of the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside*

Walker examined the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of the state embedded in the theory of International Relations. Walker (1993) said that the concept of sovereignty was important in rendering the imagination of the internal and external space as it is today. To speak of Max Weber’s term, if the state monopolised a legitimate use of force within its delimited territory, three issues needed to be noted. First of all, the space outside was defined as barbaric and inside as orderly. Second, the geographical limit of the state was indicated which led to the imagination of military and diplomatic activities to interact with other sovereign states. Third, Walker’s stance was similar to the argument of this thesis that if the sovereign had the authority to let its subjects live or die, legal and constitutional boundaries should thus be delimited. It was not only that the space of the inside peace and outside violence was imagined but also the temporal issue of progress inside and lack of progress outside (Walker, 1993). To return to Weber’s quote that “the state monopolizes the legitimate use of force of the sovereign state in a delimited territory” (2008, p. 156), when this idea was challenged by other states, it was necessary

to think of military activities that became one of the issues in International Relations (Walker, 1993).

Walker discussed Waltz's theoretical explanation that focused on the structure of international politics in which the Westphalian state was the best form to survive anarchy. He examined the reasons why territorial borders were conceptualised by neo-realists that way. Walker said that historiography hinted at by Waltz in explaining the shift of the sovereignty type and state form was one-sided as it focused on European history. To maximise security, concerning military activities to defend territorial borders, less successful states imitated more successful others. If the weaker states failed to do so, they would have been eliminated. Other non-Europeans who could modernise their states into nation-states would survive colonialism, at least de facto, such as Siam in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Nevertheless, such historiography of sovereignty that resulted in the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside could be criticised as focusing too much on European experiences and one-sided narratives. As this thesis has argued that Westphalian territorial borders are a product of European imaginative geography, Walker (1993) also realised that the assumption of a self-contained state reflected in European Cartesian maps resembled European painting and was contaminated with cultural bias. This cartography was influenced by the idea of Euclidean geometry applied to space that separated peoples in the sense of inviolable territorial states. It was used as an instrument to discover the world by the Europeans in 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, it was criticised as the boundary lines in the maps were too linear and ignored spatial contingency.

#### *Genealogy of the territorial border*

Though Ashley's insights provided sharp criticisms on territorial borders conceptualised in International Relations, he focused too much on criticising mainstream International Relations. If his criticisms move beyond the "realist debates", International Relations could be significantly enriched (Ó Tuathail, 2005, p. 171). This is because to be attached

to criticism on the state backfired as Ashley was caught up with the state-centric paradigm he intended to problematise. Opposition to the mainstream thus ended up being a form of discourse of Eurocentric International Relations (Ó Tuathail, 2005). What was further missing in Ashley's work was the geopolitical awareness that the map influenced by the Western ocularcentrism was used as a tool for colonisation. Nevertheless, Ashley's comments are useful to pave the ways forward to bringing human dimension into International Relations.

Ashley connected geopolitics with genealogy, an approach that questioned the fixed conceptualisation of space using historical analysis with these following characteristics. Indebted to Michel Foucault (1978), Ashley's genealogy did not see historiography as fixed but discontinuous (Ashley, 1987), meaning that the narrative of history was continually interrupted by power struggles. Historiography should not only focus on the centre of the state, such as the capital, but also the marginal area such as the borderlands (see chapter 4). A universal truth of the conceptualisation of space required constant questioning, and the conquest of social space was examined when Ashley's genealogy was applied to a state space. In addition, state borders were problematised and the voices of the peoples on the ground were attended to. This problematisation of the knowledge of territorial borders paved the way to the last characteristic of the examination of the normalisation of the state space. Ashley's genealogy could be used with the conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border, because the historiography of the Thai and Lao states should not be taken as a smooth transition from ancient to a modern Siam in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The process of military clashes between and struggles of Lao kingdoms that occurred along the Mekong when the Siamese-French Indochina boundary was drawn was the origin of the establishment and normalisation of the Thai-Lao border.

Criticising the dichotomous inside/outside of the state conceptualised in political realism, Ashley (1987) said both genealogy and critical geopolitics focused on the relations of space and power. Realists viewed geopolitics as naturally given results from the "double move" within the realist school itself (Ashley, 1987, p. 411). First, realists treated the space inside as a unified and hence self-contained community, and, second, the space

outside was seen as endlessly anarchical. Therefore, communities outside the state were not possible according to realism. This led to the “double effect” which included the assumption of the self-contained state represented by statesmen and the silencing of other peoples’ history of territorial border conceptualisation (Ashley, 1987, p. 413). However, Ashley (1987) also contended that the line to separate the space inside/outside perceived as fixed by realism was problematic, as the voices of other histories were silenced by the unified set of history promoted by statesmen. Consequently, these “rituals of realism discourse” which were about the relations among the states represented by statesmen were practiced and echoed in realism (Ashley, 1987, p. 421). Such discourse was the language reified with and monopolised by the European experience of a sovereign state that privileged the dichotomous inside/outside understanding of space.

Ashley (1988) said that to confirm such dichotomy, the state very often resorted to violence. To be successful, resistance was excluded from domestic politics and different voices were silenced. This imposition by the state, called “double exclusion,” rendered the dichotomy of the inside/outside (Ashley, 1988, p. 256). Also, events in one state impacted on others. When the double exclusion was practiced in one location with one set of rules for justification, it tended to affect other double exclusions. It meant that the assumption that the state was a self-contained black box might not always be the case.

Thus the belief that the state was a unitary actor was a myth (Ashley, 1988). Very often, state interest was contested among different groups of peoples in that very state and was never settled. When those who represented the sovereign reified their imagination, it did not mean that they acted for the common interest. What was included or excluded from the national interest was seldom settled and, if it was, it was settled for one group of people (Ashley, 1988). The interpretation of the elites on behalf of the state about territorial borders was echoed in International Relations, though the meaning of borders was contested among different groups of peoples. This problem confirmed the first territorial trap of borders being interpreted only by some peoples.

Moreover, Ashley (1988) argued that the definition of non-state actors should not be limited to the neo-liberal discourse such as firms and transnational interest groups. He wanted to reach the peoples whose voices were excluded from neo-liberal discourse — peoples with marginalised histories. This thesis argues that the group includes peoples along borders that cannot be ignored. For example, the non-state actors of the borderland cities in the Thai-Lao border that shared pre-colonial historiography such as Ubon Ratchathani of Thailand and Champassak of Lao PDR should be recognised (see chapter 4). This recognition of non-state actors challenges the traditional concept of territorial borders as natural and foundational. To understand non-state actors better, two images, lateral and vertical, were proposed. In the lateral image, a territorial state was seen as weaker compared with non-state actors because it lacked mobility. In the vertical image however, the territorial state was advantaged since the sovereign was supreme in exercising power within its territory (Ashley, 1988). Nevertheless, the lateral and vertical images were both important. However, transnational actors – the non-states – cannot be overlooked and territorial integrity should not be removed as it maintains peace and order. Ashley did not argue that the silenced political interpretation should replace the dominant one as that would end up establishing a hierarchical reversal. Instead, epistemologically speaking, as both lateral and vertical images were equally important, Ashley (1988) tried to reveal the ways in which the privileged vertical territorial state established its account and examined its consequences. This would thus open space for never-ending debates, allowing other silenced lateral transnational to be heard.

In sum, a combination of the ideas of Ruggie, Ashley, and Walker could provide a springboard to a more human dimension in International Relations. This combination would include Ruggie's examination of the historical transformation of social structure and sovereign states in Europe, Ashley's interest in the territorial borders conceptualisation that resulted from the geopolitics of the elites and political realism, and Walker's initial awareness of Eurocentric imaginative geographies. Though Ruggie still wanted to retain important commitments to the claimed reality of social phenomena and the potential for objectivity, this awareness was already an initial stage since it critically examined the materialisation of knowledge of space from the social episteme and social

empowerment. Walker and Ashley shared a Foucauldian approach of post-structuralism which critically questioned the concept of space in political theory. To add to dissident International Relations, ocularcentric maps used to colonise other non-European zones were analysed by Ó Tuathail. Indeed, this is the legacy of traditional geopolitics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that influences territorial borders conceptualised in International Relations nowadays. Colonisation was a process in which one state exploited others and, very often, the colonised peoples were dehumanised by the colonisers. If ocularcentric maps were used to facilitate 19<sup>th</sup> century geopolitics and colonisation, they can be considered as instruments to facilitate dehumanisation in the past. To question the meaning of colonial borders drawn according to ocularcentric maps, what Said called the “European imaginative geographies,” thus involved a human dimension as it questioned the ways in which geopolitical knowledge of space facilitated dehumanisation of the colonised (Said, 1977, p. 54). After the decolonisation period, at the end of World War Two, territorial borders of former colonies that became independent states were drawn according to Westphalian norms influenced by the European imaginative geographies. The reification of territorial borders accepted in mainstream International Relations only represented the geopolitics of the colonisers and the elites in the colonised states and ignored the geopolitics of the peoples on the ground. This requires more careful examination.

### **Critical political geography**

Traditional geopolitics and its legacy in International Relations were countered by critical political geographers (Dodds, 2005). The fact that geopolitics and its legacy silenced the voices of peoples and were monopolised by the intellectuals of statecraft was questioned and criticised by authors such as Agnew, Ó Tuathail, Dalby, Donnan and Wilson, and Routledge. This thesis proposes to take two steps based on Jones (2006) to examine the neglect of the human dimension by International Relations. Firstly, ocularcentrism that facilitated colonisation in the past and significantly influenced International Relations needs to be examined. Secondly, this thesis aims to look for ways in which anti-geopolitics can promote a human dimension by the incorporation of literature from other related disciplines. As the first step, this section outlines Ó Tuathail and Agnew’s re-

conceptualisation of geopolitical discourse during the Cold War and Dalby's arguments that geopolitical characters still influenced space conceptualisation in international political theories in the post-Cold War era. Consideration of Donnan and Wilson's analysis of twin cities along the border and transnationalism from below, and Routledge's proposal for anti-geopolitics as a human dimension follows.

### *Geopolitical space in International Relations*

#### Ó Tuathail and Agnew's re-conceptualisation of geopolitical discourse during the Cold War

Ó Tuathail and Agnew's definition of geopolitics reconfirms the arguments of this thesis that International Relations and geopolitics are interrelated. First, geopolitics is about the foreign policy of the state concerning space such as invasion or military intervention that is also the focus of International Relations. To be critical of the geopolitical discourse resembles Ashley's genealogy that focused on the analysis of problematic territorial borders. Second, Ó Tuathail and Agnew paid particular attention to the words of state practitioners that shaped the knowledge of space and how the words uttered by the US state officials became normalised knowledge. Such rhetoric in state policy, argued Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998), was very important as it was not only words uttered by statesmen but also discourse that shaped the understanding and practice of the geopolitical space in the world. Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998, p. 78) thus realised that geopolitical discourse very often was monopolised by those statesmen defined as "intellectuals of statecraft." Traditional geopolitics, in forms such as the claim for objective knowledge, separation of places and peoples, and Western superiority justifying colonisation, were still reflected in the ways in which these statesmen viewed the world. This thesis argues that such monopolisation of spatial conceptualisation, as it tends to provide nationalistic advice in state affairs indeed silences the voices of a significant number of peoples on the ground, especially when geopolitical imagination is put into practice.

Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998) examined the geopolitical discourse of the US foreign policy during the Cold War and stated a number of reasons for the importance and analysis of the rhetoric of the US statesmen. First, though only the elites defined geopolitics, the political consequences were not confined to them but extended to the whole world. Second, the common sense of the dichotomy between the Selves and Others was formulated by such rhetoric. Ó Tuathail and Agnew categorised the rhetoric into practical and formal. Most practical geopolitical rhetoric was found in the statements of the state practitioners themselves. They gave interviews to the press and acted on behalf of the state. This was different to the words uttered by traditional geopoliticians in the past who gave ideas for state policy that were described by Ó Tuathail and Agnew as formal rhetoric.

Ó Tuathail & Agnew (1998, p. 81) stated the practical rhetoric provided “common sense” that produced the picture of binary opposition across a wide range of social relationships at all scales. For example, during colonial times, the binary opposition was between the civilised and backward. This affected the policy of colonisation of European states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a justification of white man supremacy for European expansion. In the Cold War era, the binary opposition was liberalism-democracy against socialist-communism as found in the US President Harry Truman’s statement in 1947 (Truman, 1998). Liberalism-democracy denoted the world of freedom and, in contrast, socialism-communism denoted the regimes of terror and suppression. For the statesmen in the US Cold War foreign affairs, the Selves represented the American people and the country’s allies, while the Others were the Soviets and its satellite states in the communist camp. This binary opposition rhetoric of the Selves versus Others was produced and reproduced to persuade citizens to agree with certain foreign policies.

Third, such geopolitical rhetoric was also reflected among academia. Cartesian maps with clear-cut lines to separate nation-states, at least, were observed as basic geographical knowledge in international politics. This thesis adopts the analysis of binary opposition of Agnew and Ó Tuathail regarding the Thai-Lao border as the separation line of the two ideological worlds during the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. The criticism of

practical rhetoric uttered by the US statesmen during the Cold War is utilised to support the criticism of territorial borders reflected in academic International Relations (see chapter 4).

Fourth, Ó Tuathail and Agnew's method was necessary at the fundamental level as they critically examined the rhetoric of geopolitics among elites. Examples of the statesmen during the Cold War cited by Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998) were George Kennan and Henry Kissinger. Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998, p. 81) boldly accused them of controlling the American media at that time as they "commanded what should have been written in newspapers and journals" in the 1970s. If that was true, world geopolitics during the Cold War was dominated by only a few people. Therefore, careful examination of the subversion of certain norms such as the territorial integrity of Southeast Asian nation-states is important. A significant number of American soldiers were then sent to die in a war far away from their homes in Southeast Asia, though this action could have been argued as a violation of the territorial borders of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam that further led to suffering, displacement, injury, and death for the locals.

To clarify the fact that the voices of the elites were more recognised, Agnew and Corbridge (1995) suggested the division of world geopolitical order into three periods, the combination of the European Concert and British Domination from 1815 to 1875, the Inter-Imperial Rivalry from 1875 to 1945, and the Cold War Geopolitical Order from 1945 to 1990. This division reconfirmed the continuation of the spatial conceptualisation of the elites. This thesis adds the post-Cold War period from 1989 to the present to confirm the argument that geopolitical characteristics remained. In the Cold War era, the rules of international relations were regulated by the American intellectuals of statecraft (Ó Tuathail, 1996). The world was divided into three categories, the US as the First World, the Soviet Union as the Second World, and both tried to economically, ideologically, and militarily influence the 'less developed' Third World countries – the former colonies. The International Monetary Fund, General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade, and World Bank were accepted as international economic institutions in the capitalist bloc. International norms such as transnational corporations were mediated

under the US influence on its allies. The US also extended its military operations that transcended state boundaries as a military alliance, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed in Europe and the South East Asia Treaty Organization were formed to counter the communist states led by the Soviet Union. According to the transnational norms, economic and military activities transcended Westphalian boundaries. Without the consent of the elites of the American allies in the Third World, the success of economic transnationalism and military intervention by the US was impossible. Meanwhile, the transnationalism of the border peoples was largely left unexplained. This still remains so even after the Cold War.

#### Dalby's analysis of the geopolitical legacy in the post-Cold War era

Dalby's analysis of the geopolitical legacy in the post-Cold War era was an extension of the geopolitical discourse of Ó Tuathail and Agnew discussed in the previous subsection. Critical examination of rhetoric by state officers and scholars during the Cold War could still be utilised in the post-Cold War era as the first step to supporting the voices of the peoples on the ground. During colonial days, the picture of binary opposition of the common sense of geopolitical discourse, as normalised knowledge, was between civilised and barbaric space. During the Cold War, it was between liberalism-democracy and socialism-communism, and in the post-Cold War era, it was between rapid economic space and slow economic space. Similarly, the Thai-Lao border was no longer the line that separated the two ideological worlds of liberalism-democracy and socialist-communism as it did during the Cold War. In International Relations, the Thai-Lao border became the line between the rapidly developing economy of Thailand and the slower one of Lao PDR in the post-Cold War era.

Dalby recognised that "traditional geopolitics elements" still remained in international political theories (1998, p. 309). Dalby's argument was supported by Ó Tuathail's recognition of the situation he called "post-geopolitics" (1997, p. 47). For example, Cartesian maps with clear-cut lines to separate nation-states still remained as basic geographical knowledge in academia especially in International Relations, despite some

changes in international politics. The manual Cartesian map was transformed on to an electronic screen, providing rapid, intensive, and extensive information (Ó Tuathail, 1997). Also, geopolitical discussion was no longer confined to intellectuals of statecraft but extended to mass media and consumers. Moreover, the increase in non-state actors in interstate politics that led to de-territorialisation of political space was apparent. The geopolitics since the end of the Cold War was a combination of the victory of Western democracy and the heyday of transnational liberalism (Dalby, 1998).

Though transnationalism became more prominent in International Relations theory, leading to increased actors in international politics the voice of the elites is more echoed in International Relations theory. For example, globally, the poor's income declined from 2.3 to 1.3% during the past three decades while that of the rich has risen from 70 to 85% (Dalby, 1998). Politically speaking, the poor's geopolitics is still overlooked by the spatial conceptualisation put into practice by the elites who were states officers and later businesspersons. Transnational corporations became more powerful economically in the supposedly borderless world after the end of the Cold War. Dalby (1998) said that 51 of the largest economies were transnational corporations while 49 were states. Mitsubishi produced sales higher than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of some states. This kind of transnational liberalism was taken for granted as "an appropriate organization of power and wealth" in international political theories (Dalby, 1998, p. 307). Though transnational economic arrangements such as the World Trade Organization and North America Free Trade Area were set up, these were criticised as a part of the elites' exploitation of the inferior (Dalby, 1998). On the Thai-Lao border, similar situations occurred as it was expected that the end of the Cold War would bring benefit to more people. This thesis argues that ASEAN Free Trade Agreement projected in 1992 merely echoed the voice of the elite and business sectors of the country members. Only some groups of people benefitted from this economic transnationalism (Rigg, 2005). Those who did not fully benefit from the economic integration were described as "marginal people" (High, 2009, 78). High said that a supposedly borderless world often claimed by policy-makers and International Relations theorists after 1989 was for the rich, and discourse about turning the battlefields into marketplaces was not for the poor.

*Anthropology as anti-geopolitics*

Donnan and Wilson's cultural analysis along the border and transnationalism of peoples on the ground

Donnan and Wilson (1999) argued that culture received the least attention in social science when borders were examined and insisted that it was important for the following reasons. First, diplomatic relations between states were affected by culture. Second, culture in the border areas affected state policy. For example, if the border areas were different from the core of the state, it was expected that the state, in the traditional sense, must attempt to project its nationalism campaign to reconfirm its authority within its delimited space. Third, the process of cultures meeting at borders never finishes as peoples constantly cross every day. Cultural analysis, they argued, should no longer be confined within ethnography but should be extended to political theory (Donnan & Wilson, 1999).

This thesis argues that Donnan and Wilson's analysis of culture along the borders was related to political issues and international politics. The concept of nation, for example, according to Donnan and Wilson (1999) was a common membership of a cultural community. Donnan and Wilson believed that that definition was too idealistic as every nation would have its own state with an independent government and its own territory – self-determination. A nation that failed to establish its state would be regarded as an ethnic minority and tended to be viewed as a threat of the state as they were different from the majority (Donnan & Wilson, 1999). Since a state is by no means self-contained and people in a state, including ethnic minorities, with transnational ties that cut across and challenge territorial borders need to be recognised, such as Mexicans in the US and Mexico (Donnan & Wilson, 1999).

Anthropology contributed to political studies in that its focus on local levels added to the national level in political science (Donnan & Wilson 1999). Intensive studies of

borderlands, including their historiography, helped International Relations escape from the territorial trap instead of focusing on the history of the capitals (Donnan & Wilson, 1999). Such historiography could indeed be an extension of the problematisation of the state boundary found in the work of Walker and Ashley, as it sounds the histories of the marginal areas. In addition, anthropology examines the challenges to state boundaries both from above – supranational structure – and below – ethnography. Donnan and Wilson (1999, p.1) called these “twin threats” to Westphalian territorial borders. The above transnationalism was so-called transnational corporations and international regimes and the below comprised movements of peoples such as refugees, illegal immigrants, and even terrorists. The fact that anthropologists pay less attention to but do not ignore state governments benefits border studies in International Relations. Anthropological analysis along borders is even more appropriate with the growing trend of transnationalism in the post-Cold War era, as non-state actors have been playing significant roles in international politics.

#### Routledge’s human dimension as anti-geopolitics

Routledge categorised the concept of anti-geopolitics into three phases: colonial anti-geopolitics, Cold War anti-geopolitics, and new world order anti-geopolitics. The voices of the elites regarding spatial conceptualisation silenced the peoples on the ground and were echoed in geopolitics during the colonial era and in International Relations in the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras. A number of anti-geopolitics scholars challenged colonial geopolitics by insisting that the voices of the marginalised and colonised, regarding space conceptualisation, needed to be heard more (Dodds, 2005). For example, Fanon (1963) and Said (1977) believed that decolonisation should not be limited to merely the physical removal of the colonisers but also the intellectual aspects such as rules and regulations imposed by them.

The Thai-Lao border is a good example of space where the European imaginative geography of Westphalian borders was imposed during colonial era. Such imposition ignored incongruence between juridical and cultural maps. The Siam-France Treaty in

1893 that gave France control over the eastern banks of the Mekong River, the international boundary, separated a significant number of Lao people on the two sides of the river (Winichakul, 1994). The imposition of European imaginative geography of the Thai-Lao border continued during the Cold War and was reflected in International Relations as the superpowers contested with each other. As a result, a number of International Relations scholars were caught in the territorial trap of Agnew and Corbridge with a heavy geopolitical influence regarding spatial conceptualisation. From 1954 to 1975, despite the acceptance of the Westphalian border, the presence of foreign troops was frequently justified by International Relations. However, after 1975, the Thai-Lao border became the line that separated the two worlds of liberalism-democracy and socialism-communism. Unfortunately, the spatial conceptualisation of the elites was echoed in the theory, while that of peoples on the ground was downgraded. When Lao and Hmong people, a group from the highland regions, fled Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) to Thailand, they were labeled in International Relations as illegal immigrants and refugees (Chanthavanich & Pliansri, 2011). In the post-Cold War era, the Thai-Lao border became a gate rather than a fence in International Relations, but the voices of the elites were still prioritised. The Thai-Lao border as part of a supposedly borderless world often claimed by policy-makers and International Relations scholars after 1989 was for the rich, and discourse about turning the battlefields into marketplaces was not for the poor, said High (2009). In sum, since the colonial days, the voice of the elites' have monopolised spatial conceptualisation in International Relations. This thesis argues that to rethink the Thai-Lao border and to support spatial conceptualisation of the peoples on the ground would enrich the discipline of International Relations. To introduce the human dimension using anti-geopolitics, the following questions are asked in this thesis.

### *Research questions*

1. To what extent has the concept of territorial borders in traditional geopolitics influenced discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975 in International Relations theories?

2. Is geopolitics as a colonial legacy represented in International Relations theories, with particular reference to political realism, on the issue of the Thai-Lao border after 1975? If yes, in what ways?
3. In what ways can Agnew and Corbridge's concept of the territorial trap be used to criticise existing literature in International Relations regarding Thai-Lao border issues after 1975? How can such a critical point of view be enriched further?
4. How has the human dimension been neglected by International Relations regarding the issue of the Thai-Lao border after 1975. In what ways can Routledge's proposal for anti-geopolitics be used to enrich the human concept in the theories?

## **Conclusion**

This thesis proposes to examine the explanation of the Thai-Lao border after 1975 by International Relations. It argues that the juridical map drawn after the Franco-Siamese conflict in 1893 was incongruent with cultural maps since people of Lao ethnicity lived on both sides of the Mekong. After Laos gained independence in the 1950s, there were more than ten million Lao with Thai citizenship. Nevertheless, in the 1960s, the Thai-Lao border was subverted as Thai and the US troops intervened in Lao internal affairs. Very often, International Relations scholars, with particular reference to realism, justified the US intervention in the region. However, after Laos became a communist state in 1975, the reification of the colonial legacy during the French heyday was resurrected. Border conflicts between Thailand and Lao PDR occurred regularly between 1975 and 1989. The Thai-Lao border did not separate only the two states but also the two worlds of different ideologies influenced by the two superpowers at that time, the US on the Thai side and the Soviets in Lao PDR. However, the trans-border movements and lives of the Laos, Hmongs, and other peoples from Lao PDR tended to be downgraded and silenced in International Relations. Even in the post-Cold War era, when economic liberalisation was supposed to introduce a borderless world to the region, the Thai-Lao border has still remained an obstacle for a significant number of marginalised people. This thesis not only examines the Thai-Lao border as a colonial legacy in International Relations but

also proposes that other struggles should be adequately recognised as geopolitics from below. This examination is discussed according to the following plan.

Chapter 2 answers the first and the second research questions. It looks at the extent to which the concept of territorial borders in traditional geopolitics influenced discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975 in International Relations theory. It additionally examines the ways in which geopolitics as a colonial legacy was represented in International Relations theories, with particular reference to political realism, on the issue of the Thai-Lao border after 1975. Chapter 2 argues that the four geopolitical characteristics of self-claim of objectivity, separation of space and peoples, white man supremacy, and provision for nationalistic policy found in Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman were still to be found in Morgenthau, Herz, Mearsheimer, and Waltz. The fact that the four geopolitical characteristics has remained in International Relations over the past sixty years of the political narrative of the Thai-Lao border blinded the theorists and resulted in the theoretical attachment of the territorial traps of Agnew and Corbridge. The first two characteristics led to the myth of the self-contained state and the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside. The third and the fourth led to the trap of reification of territorial borders monopolised by the elites that silenced the voices of peoples on the ground.

In Chapter 3, the third research question is answered. The territorial trap of Agnew and Corbridge is used to criticise the existing literature in International Relations, with particular reference to political realism regarding Thai-Lao border issues from when Laos became Lao PDR in 1975, to the end of the Cold War in 1989. It also examines how such a critical point of view can be further enriched in the post-Cold War era. Chapter 3 argues that the proposal from Agnew and Corbridge that theoretical consideration of historical relations, the broader social and economic structures of a hegemon, and changes in the geopolitical order have already been accepted by International Relations scholars to some extent. Yet, the three solutions were insufficient to erase the territorial trap because history embedded in the theory focused on the centre of the state that presupposed the Westphalian space.

Chapter 4 answers the fourth research question exploring the theoretical neglect of the human dimension when political realists are attached to the territorial trap. It examines the enrichment of the human dimension in International Relations by related disciplines such as history and anthropology. As an extension from the perspective of western supremacy provided by Ó Tuathail's in chapter 2, Orientalism and second order of Orientalism of Said are utilised to examine the spatial conceptualisation embedded in International Relations when the Thai-Lao border is discussed from 1954 to the present days. Geopolitical discourse on the Thai-Lao border in the theory is also analysed. Furthermore, transnationalism of the peoples recognised by historians is examined to pave the way for an anthropological approach. Chapter 4 argues that anthropological discussion of the Thai-Lao border supports the voices of the peoples by the presentation of the history of the borderlands and transnationalism of peoples from below during the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras. Though it was impossible to reject the spatial conceptualisation of the Westphalian state, anthropologists tackled the territorial trap successfully by speaking for the voices of peoples on the ground. Chapter 4 contends that the incorporation of this framework in International Relations leads to the inclusion of the human dimension on the Thai-Lao border in the future. Finally, chapter 5 summarises the common themes of all the chapters to theoretically voice the silenced and marginalised

peoples in the discussion of the Thai-Lao border since 1975. Possibilities for future research and limitations of the thesis are also discussed.

## Chapter 2

### Geopolitical space of the Thai-Lao border in International Relations from 1954 to the present

#### Introduction

This chapter answers the first research question regarding the extent that geopolitical characteristics were passed on and their influence on International Relations discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975. It further answers the second research question in relation to the degree that geopolitics has influenced International Relations, with particular reference to political realism, in the discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1975 to the present day. The four geopolitical characteristics are claims of objectivity, separation of space and peoples, Western superiority and representation of unequal space as justification for colonisation and intervention, and provision of nationalistic advice. The fact that the four geopolitical characteristics have remained in International Relations during the past sixty years of the political narrative of the Thai-Lao border blinds the theorist and results in the theory falling foul of the territorial trap of Agnew and Corbridge. The first two characteristics led to the myth of the self-contained state and the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside. The third and the fourth led to the trap of reification of territorial borders monopolised by the elites that silenced the voices of the peoples on the ground.

To maintain that the Westphalian style borders presupposed in International Relations was one form of spatial conceptualisation, this chapter begins by discussion of the downgrade of the pre-colonial state of the lowlands and non-state space of the highlands in Indochina. The fact that the geopolitical characteristics in International Relations played down the indigenous spatial conceptualisation of the lowland *mandala* described by Wolters (1999) and highland *zomia* described by Scott (2009) reconfirmed the colonial knowledge of space introduced to the peoples along the Thai-Lao border. After World War Two, scholars in International Relations presupposed that a state must be Westphalian, including the former French colonies in Indochina.

After 1954, as the politics that affected the contest for power around the Thai-Lao border changed, the effect of these four characteristics recognised in International Relations varied. For example, from the time of Lao independence after the 1954 Geneva Agreements, the self-claim of objectivity was more common. Cartesian maps, for example, led to the perception of a state as a domino. Communist developments in Indochina were compared with a series of falling dominos by Kissinger (1994). This Domino Theory, caught in the territorial trap of the self-contained state assumption, led to another geopolitical characteristic of Western supremacy that justified the US military intervention. The ocularcentric map with space separated into a number of Westphalian states hinted at the assumption of self-contained states. The separated space of states was similar to the domino metaphor. Cold War rhetoric indicated that to prevent the fall of Vietnam like a domino meant the containment of communism in Southeast Asia. Eisenhower (1990) claimed it was the US duty to prevent the domino from falling. In the 1950s and 1960s, the US and Thailand regularly intervened in Lao domestic affairs to hinder the communist efforts of North Vietnam and China on the eastern banks of the Mekong (Sirikrai, 1979). This thesis argues that the recognition in International Relations of such intervention reflected the presupposed Westphalian form of space. The idea of non-intervention in terms of territorial borders in the Westphalian sense did not totally disappear but, as reflected in International Relations literature, was deviated from until the achievement of political stability in Laos.

In 1975, Lao PDR was established and the spatial concept of the Thai-Lao border in International Relations changed. The border drawn in the Cartesian maps of Thailand and Laos produced by France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was strictly put into practice. The justification for military intervention before 1975 was replaced with the statement that the territorial integrity of Lao PDR and Thailand should be respected (Ngaosyvathn, 1985). However, Viraphol (1985) argued that the border was not well-defined during colonial times. If this was the case, the separation of state space of Thailand and Lao PDR could not be objective since errors regarding territorial sovereignty could be anticipated. Nevertheless, a significant number of displaced peoples who crossed the unclear Thai-

Lao border from Lao PDR were regarded as refugees. They had to be repatriated or resettled in third countries (Viraphol, 1985). Thus, the first and second geopolitical characteristics, claims of objectivity and separation of space and people, were more prominent in this period. The fourth characteristic, the provision of nationalistic advice, was also noted. Though there has been no proof that their comments have been accepted by their states, similar nationalistic claims could be found in the state practitioners discussed in the chapter. For example, Thai scholars cited pre-colonial claims to support Thai nationalism that Laos had been under Thai suzerainty and that the Thai state lost Lao territory to France in 1893, while the Lao diplomat and scholar Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn disagreed, standing for Lao nationalism by presenting a different account of historiography (Ngaosyvathn, 1985; Paribatra 1984; Sirikrai 1979). The comments from these authors reflected the nationalism of their state. However, such claims were examples of anachronistic concepts of space as, before 1893, the territorial perception of *mandala* and *zomia* mentioned above by Wolters (1999) and Scott (2009) did not adhere to the same acquisition of space as emphasised by the Westphalian system.

After the end of the Cold War in 1989, ideological rivalry at global and regional levels diminished but two of the four geopolitical characteristics, claims of objectivity and separation of space and people, were evident in International Relations literature. The use of the ocularcentric maps that provided objective details of the Thai-Lao border remained and were taken for granted, the separation of space and people continued, and the European concept of Westphalian territorial borders still held high priority. For example, in research funded by the Institute of Asian Studies, Theeravit and Semyaem (2002; 100, 130-135) presented four maps to explain the Thai-Lao border conflicts in Rom Klao Village in 1987-88. In addition, Thai and Lao nationalism remained but more toleration was required when border issues were considered (Theeravit & Semyaem, 2002).

Literature discussing Southeast Asian politics from 1954 to the present was found in the format of academic journals, textbooks, and master and PhD theses in International Relations written by Thai and Lao scholars and researchers from outside the region. They were acquired from the international library database network provided by Durham

University with access in the UK and other English-speaking countries where PhD theses from universities in the US at the time indicated above were available. Master theses and texts in indigenous languages such as Thai and Lao in International Relations were collected from the library database provided by Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, and Chiang Mai University in Thailand. Academic texts in International Relations are a major focus in this thesis because they directly respond to the research question concerning the conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border by International Relations theory. Use of a primary source of the rhetoric of state officials is to support a claim of similarity between the conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border of state practitioners and scholars.

The chapter adopts four connected themes to support the presentation of the case that geopolitical characteristics were passed on and have influenced International Relations discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to the present day – the challenges to the Westphalian system of territorial borders by *mandala* (Wolters, 1999) and *zomia* (Scott, 2009), Domino Theory as justification of the US intervention in the area from 1954 to 1975, the resurrection of colonial legacy from 1975 to 1989, and increased tolerance and reduced nationalism from 1989 to the present.

### **Challenges to the Westphalian system of territorial borders by *mandala* and *zomia***

The concept of Westphalian territorial borders was a product of 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Ruggie (1998, p. 184) indicated that after the Westphalia Treaty, the principles of *cuius regio eius religio* (the religion of the ruler dictates the religion of the ruled) and *rex in regno suo est imperator regni sui* (the king is the emperor of his own realm) were set as social norms termed as “social episteme”.

Soja (1989) explained that the interpretation of space by the use of the Cartesian maps was dominant after the Westphalia Treaty and this mapping system was used by Europeans to explore the world and colonise different parts of non-European zones (Walker, 1993). Soja (1989) further argued that space was regarded as fixed and little attention was paid to it by social science in Europe, including geopolitics and its process

of colonisation. This spatial conceptualisation in Cartesian maps has been criticised for decades for reflecting the European worldview. Said in his famous work *Orientalism* proposed that the colonialist imaginative geography imposed on other parts of the world should be questioned. When Europeans went to unknown colonised lands, geographic distinction occurred that became their imaginative geography. The European lands were civilised while the non-European lands were barbaric and waited to be tamed (Said, 1977). Indeed, the Westphalian state is one example of Eurocentric imaginative geography, especially when geopolitics was imposed on the colonies.

This section thus presents two ways in which space conceptualisation were used to describe pre-colonial local peoples' ways of life that differ from the approach of the Eurocentric Westphalian system adopted by mainstream International Relations. *Mandala* of the lowlands proposed by Wolters (1999) and *zomia* of the highlands described by Scott (2009) in Southeast Asia challenge the colonial legacy of space conceptualisation experienced by the Thai-Lao border.

#### *Mandala in Southeast Asian lowlands*

The colonial powers and the peoples in non-European areas had different ways of interpreting space in regard to territorial borders. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, the British in India expanded their influence eastward until Southern Burma was conquered and became the British Tenasserim Province and negotiations about border settlements with Siam<sup>2</sup> were planned (Winichakul, 1994). However, these negotiations were difficult because, when speaking about borders, the British meant closed and definite boundaries in which a sovereign established and enforced law. The Siamese saw them as non-definite lines over which subjects of two states could move if they were not hostile to each other. The modern political space as “distinct, disjoint, and mutually exclusive territorial formation” (Ruggie, 1998, p. 172) was hard to imagine in pre-colonial Southeast Asia. Thus, requests for border settlements by the British in India were interpreted as unfriendly by Siam (Winichakul, 1994).

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<sup>2</sup> Siam was the name of Thailand before 1938.

Southeast Asian peoples had their own interpretations of borders in pre-colonial times which differed from those of the Westphalian system. Wolters (1999) used the Sanskrit term *mandala* which referred to the ancient power relations in the region without fixed territorial boundaries. In mandala, the strongest king at the centre acted as a suzerain and expected tributes and respect from the less powerful vassal kings. Regalia, gifts, manpower, and troops were supplied by the vassals to the overlord king. It was very common for less powerful kings to send tributes to more than one suzerain at the same time, as tiny Lao kingdoms did with Siam and Vietnam (Evans, 1999). Tambiah (2013) suggested that the rise and decline of each king's power depended on the merit made and accumulated in previous lives according to Buddhist doctrine.

Modern geography was slowly accepted, as more Siamese elites became accustomed to the idea of Westphalian borders when Britain took control of Burma in 1885 (Winichakul, 1994). In the 1890s, the most widely read geography book among the elites was *Phumisat Sayam* by W.G. Johnson (Winichakul, 1994) and this showed nation-states with Westphalian-style boundaries. Siam was entering a new era as indigenous norms of space were replaced with modern geography (Winichakul, 1994) but the idea of Westphalian borders still confused the Siamese elites and the border peoples in the mountain and jungle areas, as their lives were affected by foreign logic of borders. In the 1890s, Siam faced more colonial expansion from the aggressive French in the East. Though misunderstandings of sovereign power over Cambodia and the territorial borders detailed in the 1863 treaty were solved peacefully, another border issue over the Eastern bank of the Mekong was not settled in the same manner (Winichakul, 1994). By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Siamese elites accepted European thinking regarding border settlements but this acceptance of the European concept of space meant the silencing of the voices of the local peoples. For example, various Lao cities along the Mekong attached to the mandala system were forced to accept modern administrative reform in 1893 from Bangkok. Siam adopted colonial tactics similar to the West resulting in military clashes with the French in 1893 and the 'loss' of vast areas on the Eastern banks of the Mekong to French Indochina (Winichakul, 1994). After the Franco-Siamese conflict, the Siamese-Indochina

border was drawn for the first time and became the colonial legacy of post-colonial Thai-Lao relations.

The juridical and cultural maps of the area were not congruent. After independence, more Lao people lived in Thailand on the West bank of the Mekong than on the Lao side (Ngaosyvathn & Ngaosyvathn, 1994), and cultural and kinship ties still existed across the border. The adoption of the theoretical framework of Westphalian territorial borders requires careful examination. This thesis contends that geopolitics as a colonial legacy in International Relations should be academically addressed because of the unclear territorial borders drawn during the colonial era and the lack of attention given to the voices of the local peoples by authorities.

### *Zomia in Southeast Asian highlands*

This thesis agrees that Winichakul's explanation of the historical background of the Thai-Lao border in colonial times throws light on present International Relations. However, his analysis did not cover the non-state space that existed since the pre-modern era until the Cold War. The reasons that mandala state is always the focus of pre-colonial historiography is because there are more empirical evidences than in the non-state zones. Unfortunately, if peoples from the hill areas as non-state zones, such as the Hmong, are ignored, the history of Southeast Asia only reflects the voices of the elites.

Scott (2009) suggested that pre-colonial states in Southeast Asia paid more attention to the capture of peoples rather than to land acquisition. As most peoples lived in lowland areas because of ease of access to agricultural work, most interest was focused on these areas and the workers were also be used for military purposes in times of war (Scott, 2009). This capture of peoples was a necessary task for statesmen since an increase in manpower indicated an increase in the prosperity of the state. Scott (2009, p. 5) called this process "enclosure movement." As a result, a significant number of peoples fled the pre-colonial mandala states to freedom in the highlands (Scott, 2009). These highland areas, geographically difficult for ancient state agents to access, became what Scott called

non-state zones or *zomia*. Such places occurred in North-Eastern India, Bangladesh, Southern China, Northern Thailand, Lao PDR in the Mekong Valley, Northern and Central Vietnam, and Eastern Cambodia (Scott, 2009), an area the same size as Europe and today containing eighty to hundred million peoples.

The inclusion of these areas and peoples in the analysis of this region is justified since 702 of 1108 kilometres of the Thai-Lao border is made up of highlands, much of it being *zomia* non-state space (Mandech, 2001; United States of America, Office of Geography, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of the State, 1962; Paribatra, 2013; Scott, 2009). To ignore these areas and peoples disregarded the locations of Thai-Lao border conflicts in three villages, Bane Kang, Bane Savang, and Bane May<sup>3</sup>, in 1984, in Rom Klao Village in 1987-1988, and the Wang Tao<sup>4</sup> incident in 2000 (Paribatra, 2013; Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002), and the Hmong<sup>5</sup> political actors whose movements transcended state boundaries as they helped the US fight many battles against the communists. After Laos became a communist state, many Hmong became refugees in Thai territory. In the contemporary context of fixed borders, peoples from *zomia* such as the Hmong still maintain contact with lowlands peoples. Unfortunately, most International Relations after 1989 discussed the roles of peoples from *zomia* mainly as refugees, terrorists, and insurgents, when they crossed the Thai-Lao border (Oldfield, 1998).

### **Domino Theory and Western superiority as justification of US intervention in the area from 1954 to 1975**

*Domino Theory: the geopolitical legacy of ocularcentrism*

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<sup>3</sup> These names have been transliterated by Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn, a Lao political scientist. If they were transliterated by the Thai, they would be Ban Klang, Ban Sawang, and Ban Mai as they were in M.L. Pinitbhand Paribatra's PhD thesis in 2013

<sup>4</sup> This border checkpoint is transliterated by a number of authors as 'Vang Tao'

<sup>5</sup> A number of authors in the 1980s called this group of people as Meo. However, this thesis calls them Hmong as Meo contains a derogatory connotation.

One of the most important discourses that shaped justification for the US intervention in Indochina during the Cold War, resulting from the myth of a self-contained state, is known as the Domino Theory (O’Sullivan, 1998). This thesis argues that the comparison of a state with a domino resulted from the geopolitical legacy of ocularcentric maps that ignored the indigenous spatial conceptualisations of *mandala* and *zomia* in theory and state practices. This discourse can be found in words of the intellectuals of statecraft and International Relations theorists. For instance, former US president Eisenhower said that “the loss of Vietnam, together with Laos” would threaten “not only Thailand but also Burma and Malaya” (1963, p. 333) – the falling domino effect. Eisenhower stated further that Laos was a very important “domino” in Southeast Asia because the Ho Chi Minh Trail that the Viet Minh used as a route to support military operations in South Vietnam was in Lao territory (Kissinger, 1994, p. 641). Two years later, this Domino Theory was still observed by Eisenhower, as he said “the fall of Laos to Communism could mean the subsequent fall – like a tumbling row of dominoes – of its still-free neighbors” (Eisenhower, 1965, p. 607). This theory can be found in the rhetoric of other US presidents. For example, Kennedy said that the US had to contain communism in Southeast Asia and argued that the loss of Laos to communism would put at risk other neighboring states (O’Sullivan 1999; Stevenson, 1970). Additionally, the former US Secretary of the State, Henry Kissinger questioned this domino concept but he still reproduced the domino metaphors on a number of occasions as if he accepted it. For example, the domino discourse appears more than ten times in *Diplomacy*, suggesting that he accepted the theory when discussing correspondence between Truman and Churchill (Kissinger, 1994).

Morgenthau (1965) echoed the statements of state practitioners identifying Vietnam as the first domino to fall under communism. He supported the words of the then Secretary of the State, John Foster Dulles, that North Vietnam was “the first cork of the bottle” (Morgenthau, 1965, p. 33). As a result, justification for the US intervention in the region was often found with the assumption of a state as a self-contained unit in discourse about

the Domino Theory. To contain the communist threat, the US forces needed to be stationed in South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

*Western superiority in classical realism*

The concept of Western superiority on the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975 found in International Relations was not only due to academic acceptance of the use of Cartesian maps in the Westphalian system that led to the myth of a self-contained state compared with a domino but also in the intervention of the West in former Indochinese colonies, a violation of the Western norm of space management itself. The work of the classical realists, Herz and Morgenthau, and a Thai International Relations scholar, M.L. Bansoon Ladavalaya<sup>6</sup>, showed evidence of the geopolitical characteristics of objectivity, separation of space and peoples of Thailand and Laos, Western superiority justifying intervention if not colonisation, and the provision of nationalistic advice to the US. This colonial legacy of geopolitical characteristics theoretically resulted in the territorial traps of the myth of a self-contained state, dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and the reification of territorial borders monopolised by elites.

Justification of the intervention in Cold War politics in Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand can be noted in classical realism. Herz (1959, p. 40), for example, said that state territory was very important and compared it to a “hard-shell” that should be defended. However, with more advanced technology, especially after World War Two, Herz (1959) stated that territorial borders in the Westphalian sense were obsolete. For example, the US border was ‘shifted’ to Indochina to contain the communists. Such a statement, before the establishment of Lao PDR as a communist state in 1975, showed that the US statesmen, and even some members of academia, wanted to defend their imaginative geography in Indochina as right wing groups that supported the Lao monarchy fought with the left wing *Pathet Lao* groups assisted by the communist Vietnamese. Since Thailand provided military airbases for the US to intervene in Laos before 1975, the Thai-Lao border in that

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<sup>6</sup> M.L. is the abbreviation of the Thai royal title of ‘Mom Luang’ referring to great grandchildren of the king

era was academically set aside, meaning the US intervention in Thailand and Laos was justified. The US border may have shifted to Indochina as Herz theoretically contended, though a decade later, his stance changed and he emphasised the importance of state territory in the Westphalian system again (Herz, 1968).

Similarly, the work of Morgenthau showed the geopolitical characteristic of Western superiority. Morgenthau (1965) did not agree with the US military operations in Vietnam which affected the Thai-Lao border in the 1960s but he did not completely reject the US intervention in the region. Morgenthau (1951) said that military tactics alone would not successfully contain the communists as the locals saw it as another phase of colonisation after the French departure. He still viewed communism as a threat and prioritised the US promotion of capitalism and democracy in the region but realised that it had to be done in a different way (Morgenthau, 1965). For example, economic support was stressed but this went hand in hand with military policy (Morgenthau, 1965). On many occasions Morgenthau proposed that the US should have withdrawn its troops from Indochina at the same time as recognising states like Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam as “periphery military containment” (Morgenthau, 1965, p. 64). The sense of Western superiority was strong, as shown by Morgenthau’s description of Ngo Dinh Diem, the President of South Vietnam in the late 1950s, as “an Oriental despotic totalitarian” (Morgenthau, 1965, p. 21). It implied that because Ngo was ‘Oriental’ and ‘totalitarian’, he was assumed to be less rational, and the US should intervene in the region and bring democracy to the people in Indochina to counter communism. Accordingly, both Herz and Morgenthau believed that because the state was compared with a domino, and the dangerous communist domino threatened the non-communist ones, it was possible to subvert the Westphalian system at any time to justify the US military intervention. This geopolitical characteristic of Western superiority was passed on to International Relations.

Justification of the US intervention in Indochina by Herz and Morgenthau resembled suggestions by a Dutch-American geopolitician, Nicholas Spykman, a few decades earlier. Spykman (1938) was influenced by Mackinder’s ideas of Heartland Eurasia and the Rimland and did not agree with isolationist foreign policy. He said that the power of

the Heartland (the Soviet Union and China) could pose a threat to the US and Ó Tuathail (1996) argued that this view influenced International Relations during the Cold War and could have influenced the US foreign policy at that time. Spykman, Herz, and Morgenthau supported the policy of intervention to contain the influence of the Heartland and defend the US interests in Indochina.

In the early 1970s, Stevenson (1972), an expert in the US foreign policy analysis, showed an awareness of the failure of American foreign policy related to Laos in the previous decade. Stevenson (1972) criticised the US intervention, saying that statesmen such as Dulles ignored significant factors regarding Laos. For instance, Stevenson (1972, p. 9) believed the boundary of Laos in the Cartesian maps was “fictitious” due to different tribes and feudal warlords. He was not trapped by either the myth of the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside or the state as a self-contained unit. He recognised the fact that in the 1960s there were more Lao people in Thailand than in Laos itself and that the movements of peoples from the highlands transcended the Lao state boundary.

Stevenson believed that American intervention in Laos was agreed to by some groups of Lao elites and American statecraft intellectuals that overlooked the plight of peoples on the ground. Stevenson’s work was not as recognised as much as that of Morgenthau and Herz but was often quoted by Surachai Sirikrai, an expert on Thai-Lao relations in the 1980s. However, awareness of the territorial trap was not passed on and the assumption of the separation of space and people still remained. Unfortunately, this thesis believes that Stevenson’s theoretical statements about the US intervention in Laos were not as influential as those of more famous classical realists, such as Morgenthau and Herz.

Similarly to classical realism, a Thai International Relations scholar, Ladavalya, accepted all four geopolitical characteristics in his text aimed to teach International Relations students at Chiang Mai University in the 1970s. Presentation of the Cartesian map of Laos with Westphalian-style borders indicated its linear boundary led to the use of the first geopolitical characteristic – objectivity. This led to the second geopolitical assumption of separation of space and peoples, in this case, those of Lao ethnicity on both banks of the Mekong separated by the Westphalian system. It seems that Ladavalya

recognised some degree of contestation of the border as the map indicated the areas occupied by Pathet Lao. However, he concluded that non-intervention and territorial integrity were theoretically expected when Laos became a sovereign state after the 1954 Geneva Agreements (Ladavalya, 1970). Unfortunately, these theoretical expectations were not fully realised. Ladavalya (1970) condemned North Vietnamese military intervention that violated the territorial integrity of Laos, but appeared to accept the US intervention if it was cloaked in the name of a military collective mechanism such as South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), established to contain communism and requested by Laos. The third geopolitical characteristic, Western superiority, was evident in the work of Ladavalya as the Westphalian territorial system was taken for granted and suspension of it was accepted when required by the US.

Ladavalya's negative attitude towards communism and fear that a communist victory in Laos could threaten the Thai-Lao border led to the fourth geopolitical characteristic – the provision of Thai nationalistic advice for foreign policy of the Thai state. His claims about the Thai loss of Laos to France and comments that the International Agreement on Neutrality of Laos after the ceasefire of civil wars in the early 1960s allowed too much authority to the communist Pathet Lao in the coalition government were nationalistic statements (Ladavalya, 1970).

In sum, influential International Relations theorists between the 1950s and the early 1970s were heavily influenced by the geopolitical space conceptualisation when discussions monopolised by the elites' interpretations were held about the Thai-Lao border. This silenced the voices of the peoples on the Siamese-Indochinese border in colonial times that became the Thai-Lao border during the Cold War.

#### *Violence in Cold War Indochina and on the Thai-Lao border*

The independence of Vietnam in 1954 did not bring peace to the region. The Cold War saw the continuation of violence as the US troops in the South and Soviet Union supporting the North Vietnamese tried to replace the French influence after its defeat in

1953 in Dien Bien Phu. To support the unpopular regime in South Vietnam and the military dictatorship in Thailand, the US formed SEATO, condemned by Said (1977) to be a ploy to lure the Third World to join the US, and stationed military forces in the region to counter communism. This intervention was only possible with the consent of the elite groups in the region who welcomed the eventual 500,000 American military personnel (Routledge, 1998).

The non-intervention norm according to Westphalian borders was subverted then as the elites thought it beneficial to the national interest, and the US forces were allowed into Thailand, South Vietnam, and even Laos before 1975, and the Vietnamese into Lao PDR afterwards. The territorial integrity of Laos was not observed as much as after the US withdrawal in 1973. The Thai-Lao border still existed but the US played a significant role in influencing the government policy of Thailand and Laos at that time. In fact, the presence of American and Thai troops in Laos in 1960s had to be confidential. After 1975, the border became not only the territorial border of the two states but also of the two ideological worlds of capitalist democracy and communist socialism. Thai troops could not enter Lao territory anymore while Vietnamese troops were allowed in Lao PDR for security reasons. Strict interpretations of Westphalian borders resulted in a number of conflicts between Thailand and Lao PDR.

Delimitation of the Thai-Lao border was made by the elites that exploited peoples along the border. It affected a significant number of peoples who were killed, injured, and displaced. Despite independence being granted for Cambodia, Laos, South Vietnam, and North Vietnam from the French in the 1950s, peoples there still suffered wars as they had in the First Indochina War with France between the late 1940s and early 1950s.

It is important to recognise the issue of casualties in Indochina during the Cold War, an issue played down by influential International Relations literature published between 1954 and 1975. Stevenson (1972), as a foreign policy analyst, recognised displacements, injuries, and deaths of both Americans and locals but he was not as influential as classical realists such as Herz and Morgenthau. However, there was a greater focus on this issue

after the end of the Cold War. For example, the American neo-realist, Mearsheimer (2003), accepted that 13,000 North Vietnamese soldiers and civilians were killed during the US military intervention. It can be argued that the number of casualties may be higher than that. For example, Hirshman, Preston and Loi (1995) expected that the number was more than 1,000,000 deaths. After the US left Indochina, a significant number of stateless Hmongs who had helped fight against the communists in Laos and Vietnam were massacred (Paribatra, 2013). Two hundred thousand Hmongs were killed by the new communist regimes (Evans, 2002). From 1975 to 1995, 320,856 peoples from Laos, Hmong, and other groups fled to Thai territory (Leepreecha, 2011). These peoples were theoretically silenced and very often state-centrally regarded as refugees since influential International Relations literature followed the territorial trap discussed in the following chapters.

### **The resurrection of the colonial legacy on the Thai-Lao border from 1975 to 1989**

#### *Objectivity and space on the Thai-Lao border*

Between 1954 and 1975, the Westphalian territorial form of state was taken for granted in discussions about the Thai-Lao border. Literature published between 1975 and 1989 examined the historical background and recognised times of border disputes and military intervention. These instances were regarded as deviations to the ideal Westphalian territorial form and it was hoped that the territorial integrity of Laos would be respected when its domestic politics became more stable (Sirikrai, 1979).

Cartesian maps still influenced explanations of the causes of the Thai-Lao border conflicts after the establishment of Lao PDR in 1975. For example, Ruampongpattana (1988, p. 82) used six Cartesian maps of the Thai-Lao border to explain spatial details between 1975 and 1988. Claiming to be more objective, aerial photography of the three border villages of Bane Kang, Bane Savang, and Bane May was used to argue that the disputed areas in 1984 were in Thai territory (Ruampongpattana, 1988). However, Ngaosyvathn (1985) had a different stance claiming that these villages had already been

indicated to be in Lao territory since the colonial era. The two authors had different comments because they were attached to different forms of ‘objectivity.’ The Lao side was still confident in the map drawn during the French heyday, while the Thai cited the newer and technologically more advanced aerial photography. Nevertheless, an error in the Thai-Lao border found in the map could be noted. In that period, a number of texts reported that the Thai-Lao border was 1,750 kilometres in length (United States of America, Office of Geography, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of the State, 1962<sup>7</sup>; Kutranon, 1982; Ruampongpatana, 1988). The fact that the distance indicated was ‘corrected’ to be 1810 among scholars after the delimitation in the late 1990s implies that the objectivity of the map should not be taken for granted.

The acceptance of the concept of Westphalian territory and its reification from the supposedly objective Cartesian maps led scholars in International Relations to be caught in the territorial trap of the myth of the self-contained state. For example, Phuangkasem (1980) adopted the Social Field Theories of Rummel to explore the behaviour and interaction of Thailand and other states in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s. The space of the state was a supposedly self-contained unit, when the theoretical framework was applied. Phuangkasem’s spatial conceptualisation of Thailand and its neighbouring countries in the 1960s and 1970s, including Lao PDR, were like two billiard balls, metaphorically speaking, that hit each other on the table of international politics. Phuangkasem thus took space for granted and contingency was ignored, and went on to predict the behaviour and interaction of the state. When the state was like a unit, it supposedly helped International Relations students and policy-makers provide more objective predictions in international politics, as the relations and behaviour of states could be calculated.

*The assumption of the Thai-Lao border as a separation of space and people*

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<sup>7</sup> The US Department of the State has used mile as the unit of measurement. It indicates that the Thai-Lao border is 1090 miles or 1750 kilometres in length.

The second geopolitical characteristic, the separation of space and people, can be examined in two ways. The first way is to look at texts published after 1975 that analysed the politics of the Thai-Lao border between 1954 and 1975. These include PhD theses of Thais who later became influential professors in International Relations in Thailand, such as Sirikrai and Phuangkasem. Both recognised subversion of the territorial integrity of Laos in the 1950s and 1960s by a number of major powers and its neighbors but both saw these interventions as temporary. Once Laos became politically stable, Sirikrai (1979) believed that the Westphalian system should be recognised and the concept of non-intervention should be more respected.

The second way is to look at the separation of space and people of Thailand and Laos found in texts that discussed the Thai-Lao border after the triumph of Pathet Lao in 1975 followed by the establishment of Lao PDR. The evidence can be used to support how spatial conceptualisation in the theory is similar to the state practice regarding the Thai-Lao border and peoples in the area. For example, the Thai-Lao border became especially meaningful as it not only separated the spaces of two states but also the two worlds of democratic capitalism and socialist communism. Phuangkasem (1984) and Sirikrai (1984) presupposed that the Thai-Lao border as a separation of spaces of the two states must be respected. Sirikrai (1984) advised that Thai officers should be careful with the territory demarcation and not violate Lao territory, though there is no evidence if this was taken into consideration by policy-makers.

The perception that the Thai-Lao border separated the space of the capitalist democracy of the US in Thai territory and the socialist communism of the Soviets in Lao territory was even obvious in Justus M. van der Kroef's article *Southeast Asia: new conflicts and cooperation* (1976). Van der Kroef (1976) said that Thai statesmen at that time were worried that communist Vietnam would use Lao territory as its pathway to invade Thailand. Moreover, David Morrell (1976), as a non-International Relations scholar, even re-asserted this geopolitical characteristic in his article *Political conflict in Thailand*, especially when border conflicts between the two states occurred more regularly and the Thai state tried to normalise its relations with the communist states after the US military

withdrawal in 1975. The supposed separation of space and peoples that resulted in the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside assumption can even be found when the Thai-Lao border was discussed in the historical anthropology work of Gunn (1980).

Peoples who had lived on both sides of the Mekong were also theoretically separated by a boundary of a state that gave them their citizenship. When discussing the peoples who fled Lao PDR after 1975, Phuangkasem used the term 'refugee' that suggested that peoples needed to be separated according to their state. If they crossed the Thai-Lao border, they would be accordingly described. Phuangkasem argued that after their camps were set up in several Northeastern provinces in Thailand, these peoples were regarded as a problem by both the original state and the receiving state. Lao PDR accused Thailand and China of using these peoples, including the Hmong from zomia, as spies that violated Lao territory and demanded that the Thai state "return all Laotian refugees" (Phuangkasem, 1980, p. 176).

The assumed separation of space and people can be noted in the comments by Thai state officials such as Sarasin Virapol and Kajadpai Burutpat. In the late 1970s, a significant number of displaced peoples who fled an aggressive regime in Lao PDR entered Thai territory and were often labeled as refugees because they were not legally accepted as citizens of the Thai state. Viraphol (1985) reported that after March 1975, there were more than 250,000 refugees from Lao PDR in Thai territory. Burutpat (1988), in the late 1980s, argued that the number of refugees from Lao PDR in 1979 may have been as many as 320,000 persons. He further indicated the displaced peoples comprised three groups; the well-to-do middle class Laos who did not want their property to be confiscated by the new communist government, the former right wing militants, and the peoples from the highlands such as the Hmong (Burutpat, 1988). Two solutions were proposed to settle this problem, repatriation or resettlement in a third country (Viraphol, 1985). The state-centric solution, a return to Lao PDR, for peoples such as the Hmong, meant persecution. The voices of the Hmong were completely silenced in Viraphol's work.

In sum, this separation of space and people led to the territorial trap of the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of the state. In practice, it affected the lives of peoples along the Thai-Lao border. In theory, it strengthened the voices of the elites of Thailand and Lao PDR who defined the Thai-Lao border and silenced the voices of the peoples along the Mekong.

*Western superiority and presentation of unequal space as justification for colonisation*

Sirikrai's (1979) analysis of Lao people with Thai citizenship living in North-East Thailand (*Isan*) from the 1940s to the 1960s recognised political connections with Laos. The Isan region is geographically separated from the Bangkok region by the Phetchabun Mountains (Sirikrai, 1979). Between the 1940s and 1960s, transport was difficult and there was little incentive to access Isan, the driest area of the country, creating a geographical and cultural divide between the central administration in Bangkok and the region. The central administration, in the form of a military junta, felt that the communist threat could easily affect the Thai-Lao border (Sirikrai, 1979), and accepted financial support from the US for basic infrastructure in Isan such as roads to provide better access to the area to contain communism (Sirikrai, 1979). Local politicians in Isan were, in addition, closely connected with activists in Laos who later formed the communist Pathet Lao. It was not surprising, after the stationing of the US troops in Isan, that there were numerous attacks on Thai government buildings in the region by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). This thesis argues that the provision of basic transport infrastructure and the suppression of communist insurgents in Isan reconfirmed Thai state authority within its borders.

The analysis by Phuangkasem (1984) of Thai foreign policy regarding Indochinese states revealed another geopolitical characteristic, the unequal presentation of space.

Phuangkasem (1984) regarded Laos as economically less developed in comparison with Thailand and, being a land-locked state, had to rely on Thailand for access to seaports. No longer was there justification for colonisation from 1975 to 1989 but the inequality of space still provided reasons for Western intervention in the 1950s and 1960s, as Laos was

seen as a key area to Southeast Asia (Phuangkasem, 1980). Phuangkasem (1980) further defined different spaces according to traditional geopolitics and explained the great powers' interest in Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and Laos. She saw this area as a "land ridge" providing a route from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, and a source of cheap labor, raw materials, and a means of transporting oil (Phuangkasem, 1980, p. 27). This explanation was similar to Spykman's description of Indochina as strategically important as the route to the continental landmass of Eurasia. Spykman (2008) believed that control of this region meant great power. In short, the geopolitical characteristic of the presentation of unequal space as justification of Western intervention still remained in International Relations.

#### *Thai and Lao nationalism in International Relations*

The fourth geopolitical characteristic, the provision of nationalistic advice, is found in International Relations publications relevant to this time and should be analysed in two ways. Firstly, whether or not International Relations texts were used for policy advice in Thailand and Lao PDR should be examined. Little evidence of this is available, though some authors later became intellectuals in the area of statecraft and their texts criticised foreign policy. For example, M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra<sup>8</sup> analysed the foreign policies of Thailand and its Indochinese neighbors after the US military withdrawal in 1975. Two decades later, Paribatra became Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs under the administration of Prime Minister Chuan Leakpai.

Secondly, evidence of nationalistic feeling can be found in both Thai and Lao authors, citing historical narratives from pre-colonial times to support claims that the territorial integrity of Thailand and Lao PDR should be respected. For example, the view of Paribatra (1984) that Thailand lost Lao territory to France as Laos had been its vassal state since the pre-colonial era was not shared by the Lao author Ngaosyvathn who believed that Laos was invaded by the Thais even before the arrival of the French. This

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<sup>8</sup> M.R. is the abbreviation of the Thai royal title of 'Mom Rajawongse' referring to grandchildren of the king.

Thai chauvinism emerged again during World War Two when Thailand tried to annex parts of Lao territory while France was busy fighting against Nazi Germany in Europe (Ngaosyvathn, 1985). As an intellectual of statecraft, Burutpat (1988) not only repeated the traditional chauvinism regarding the territorial loss of Thailand to France in 1893 but also accused the Pathet Lao Party of planning to annex the then sixteen North-East provinces of Thailand, where a significant number of Thai-Lao people live, on the same mandala grounds. Though this accusation has never been proved, this thesis insists that claims to territory based on historical accounts from the pre-colonial era were anachronistic as, under mandala, territorial borders were not absolute. Such claims were simply made to arouse nationalistic feeling. However, this Thai and Lao nationalism was absent, it must be noted, in other academic texts by western authors though they still insisted that Thai and Lao territorial integrity should be respected (Gunn 1980; Morrell 1976; Van der Kroef, 1976).

### **Increased tolerance and reduced nationalism from 1989 to the present**

Chatichai Choonhavan was elected as the 17<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Thailand in 1988 and launched a very influential policy aimed at turning the battlefields of Indochina into thriving marketplaces. Therefore, this thesis considers 1989 (the year of the fall of the Berlin Wall) as the end of the Cold War and as the starting point to examine concepts of the Thai-Lao border by International Relations literature in the most recent period.

There have been no major border conflicts between the national armies of the two states since the 1990s, but border issues have occurred on occasions. In 2000, a group of Thai-Lao citizens accused of being in an anti-Lao government movement attacked an official building on the Lao side and quickly returned to Ubon Ratchathani, part of Thai territory, via the Chong Mek-Wang Tao border checkpoint. Twenty eight persons were arrested by Thai police. This incident was recognised as reasonably serious by International Relations scholars in Thailand because the Lao government regarded it as a major obstacle to developing Thai-Lao economic relations, though no military clashes were reported (Theeravit & Semyaem, 2002).

*Objectivity and space on the Thai-Lao border*

The faith in the objectivity of the ocularcentric maps still remained in master theses in International Relations submitted to Chulalongkorn University after 1989. For example, Daomas Imsomeranrach (1992) presented the ocularcentric map in her thesis *Bureaucratic politics in Thai foreign relations: A case study of Thai-Lao disputes over the three villages* to objectively explain the border conflicts in 1984. Chan-orn Bongsebandhu-phubhakdi (2000) similarly presented the map to indicate “the loss of Thai territory to France” in the colonial era in her thesis *Land border settlement between Thailand and Laos*. Though it could be argued that such a claim was anachronistic, the belief in the objectivity of the map to support one’s argument about the Thai-Lao border was still present. A map of Thai and Lao territory was furthermore found in *Thirty years of the Friendship Bridge: The reflection of Laotian-Thai relations, 1965-1995* by a Lao author Bouavone Soukklasaeng (2006).

In research funded by the Institute of Asian Studies, Theeravit and Semyaem (2002; p. 100, p. 130-135) presented four maps to explain the Thai-Lao border conflicts in Rom Klao Village in 1987-88. Nevertheless, doubts about ocularcentric maps were noticed in the early 1990s, and the inaccuracy of the maps drawn during colonial times was blamed for conflicts in the 1980s. For example, it was stated that the military clash in Rom Klao Village resulted from interpretations of different maps. Lao PDR used the L708 version of the map claiming that the village was under its sovereignty. This version, however, was seen as outdated and full of errors by the Thai government who used another version, L7017, arguing that the three villages were in Thai territory. The military clash resulted in 479 deaths (Mandech, 2001). Such an incident questions the objectivity of the maps. Thailand and Lao PDR, nevertheless, attempted to fix this problem (Ngaosyvathn & Ngaosyvathn, 1994).

Re-examination of the Thai-Lao border conflicts in the past, such as in the three villages in 1984 and the Rom Klao Village between 1987 and 1988, revealed two assumptions

regarding border issues among academia; that states must still follow the Westphalian idea of territory, and that ocularcentrism provided the most objective truth regarding space in international politics. Accordingly, the territorial trap of an assumed self-contained state never disappeared from the theory, even in the new millennium.

*The assumption of the Thai-Lao border as a separation of space and people*

Similar to the first geopolitical characteristic, the second has remained in the literature since 1954. It was assumed by all texts that the Thai-Lao boundary line separated the territorial spaces of two sovereign states, and separation of space and people was noted when border disputes were discussed, especially when territorial integrity was threatened. Jiwalai (1994, iv) indicated in her PhD thesis submitted to the University of Hawaii that the border conflicts in the three villages in 1984 and in Rom Klao Village in 1987-1988 were “the lowest point of Thai-Lao relations since 1975.” This quotation suggested the separation of space and people because it only reflected the relations between state officials of Thailand and Lao PDR. It is doubtful that the clashes in Rom Klao Village occurred because of illegal logging by Thai businesspersons who crossed the border to fell trees in Lao territory. It was suggested that problems arose as local military officers from Thailand and Lao PDR were unable to agree about division of the profits of the tree-felling. The incident then developed into a state-level problem (Stuart-Fox, 1997).

Since 1989, this characteristic has been less prominent and very often subverted by transnational trade and co-operation between the two states, other Southeast Asian states, and even Western ones (Ngaosyvathn & Ngaosyvathn, 1994). Construction of roads and bridges that cut across the Thai-Lao border was promoted for multilateral corporations under the Great Mekong Sub-region (GMS) for the first time in 1993 (Sirikrai, 2003). Also, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) proposed to solve conflicts in the past that undermined the security of Thailand and Lao PDR, including the “Thai-Lao border” and “Lao refugees” (Amer, 1999, p. 1042). The use of such phrases meant that the geopolitical assumption of the separation of space and people still remained and was taken for granted, even though the regional institution with a mechanism called

“constructive engagement” was proposed to deal with political conflicts (Amer, 1999, p. 1031).

In the new millennium, the issue of groups of people who did not have a territorial state also existed. For example, the trans-state movements of the Hmong were always perceived as problems that undermined the security of the Thai-Lao border by experts in Thai-Lao relations, such as Sirikrai (2007). Similarly, younger scholars such as M.L. Pinitbhand Paribatra<sup>9</sup> (2013) in his PhD thesis, persisted that the lack of this territorial state meant that the Hmong can only be refugees and/or displaced people in the theory. Without their own state, the movements of the Hmong were not recognised internationally and theoretically. Very often, they were defined as “insurgents” if they were involved with insurgency in Lao PDR (Oldfield, 1998, p. 174). Paribatra (2013) said that the displaced Hmong in Thai territory were linked with the insurgents in Lao PDR in the 2000s that worsened state relations. After resettlement schemes programmed to accommodate the Hmong by Thailand and the US in 2003 and 2009, Thailand had better relations with Lao PDR (Paribatra, 2013).

In 2000, at the time of the Wang Tao incident, discourse about territorial integrity was resurrected at the state level as the government of Lao PDR treated the issue as an obstruction to good relations with Thailand, even though there was no military clash (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). Despite these researchers’ efforts to be “stateless” (Theeravit & Semyea, 2002, p. 2), wording used in their study indicated that they adhered to the second geopolitical characteristic that separation of space and people cannot be avoided, while at the same time they recognised the cultural and ethnic ties of Lao peoples in North-East Thailand and Lao PDR. For example, the separation of peoples and space as a geopolitical legacy was reproduced by the use of a question such as “How do Lao people perceive Thai people?” and a response such as “People from this side and that side” was provided (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002, p. 2). In conclusion, scholars in International Relations were still attached to the territorial trap of dichotomous

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<sup>9</sup> M.L. Pinitbhand Paribatra is M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra’s son.

understanding of inside/outside, despite efforts to escape. This thesis argues that the effort to play down the separation of space in the Thai-Lao border resulted from the triumph of economic liberalisation after the end of the Cold War. The Thai-Lao border was no longer the ideological fence that divided the zones of capitalist democracy supported by the US and socialist communism supported by the Soviet Union anymore.

*Western superiority and presentation of unequal space justifying colonisation*

Western superiority regarding the knowledge of space management on the Thai-Lao border can be noted in International Relations after 1989. For example, Paribatra (2013) still explained the development of the Thai-Lao borders that have been reified by four colonial treaties between Siam and France. Though he recognised that border conflicts, very often, resulted from the inaccuracy of the ocularcentric maps drawn during the French heydays, the problems were argued to be merely technical. European imaginative geography of Westphalian states was still prioritised as the Thai-Lao Joint Boundary Commission was set up in 1996 to solve the inaccuracy that resulted from the colonial treaties. In 2012, 96% of the Thai-Lao border delimitation was completed (Paribatra, 2013).

In the post-Cold War era, military conflicts on the Thai-Lao border reduced and International Relations literature focused on two aspects of economic opportunity. The first focus was on the valuable natural resources of Lao PDR, especially its potential to export electricity (Ngaosyvathn & Ngaosyvathn, 1994). Its natural resources and increased openness to foreign investment provided great opportunities for transnational business compared to North-East Thailand. Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994) reported that 40% of the area of Laos was still covered by jungle. The second focus was the transport infrastructure planned to connect the two banks of the Mekong. The Thai-Lao border gained a new meaning as a bridge rather than as a fence in the Cold War. Still, Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994), in the early 1990s, used negative terms like “exploitation” to describe their suspicious interpretation that foreigners may take advantage of porous borders. In short, the third characteristic of presentation of unequal

space still remained, even after 1989.

It became clear that the interpretation of the Thai-Lao territorial border, echoed in International Relations, was no longer monopolised by military juntas but expanded to include businesspersons and citizens along the border. The end of the Cold War marked the victory of neo-liberalism and democracy and the voices of the peoples who benefited from transnational liberalism became more prominent in the theory. The territorial trap of the reification of the border from the maps by a group of elites was still there but the group wishing to turn battlefields in marketplaces became larger. However, peoples without a state, such as the Hmong, have not had a chance to academically present their border interpretation.

#### *Thai and Lao nationalism in International Relations*

Despite a decline in nationalism in post-Cold War International Relations, Lao nationalism and suspicion of Thai foreign policy was still evident in the work of Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994). For instance, the fact that former Lao rightists were still actively crossing the Thai-Lao border to conduct military operations in Lao PDR in the early 1990s was raised to question the sincerity of the economic liberalism policy launched by Thai Prime Minister Choonhavan (Ngaosyvathn & Ngaosyvathn, 1994). These authors not only emphasised Lao nationalism but also the separation of space and people, as the violation of territorial integrity of Lao PDR was not expected. Thus, the first, second and fourth characteristics of geopolitics can be noted.

Chinnawat Mandech (2001), a Thai military officer, presented a history of the national Lao version in his master thesis in International Relations at Chulalongkorn University. Ironically, the work of Mandech was more open and different to that of scholars educated in the West, such as Ladavalya, Sirikrai, Phuangkasem, and Paribatra, as it did not simply present the one-sided and nationalistic account that Thailand gave Lao territory to France. Mandech (2001) presented the Lao historiography account that Thailand should have been blamed for allowing French Indochina to annex the East bank of the Mekong to

guarantee the independence of Bangkok. This annexation resulted in the abrupt separation of Lao people who lived in both banks of the Mekong. One would not have expected a Thai military officer to make comments like this if the thesis had been written between 1975 and 1989 when the ideological rivalry and Thai nationalism were strong. Although this interpretation of the Thai-Lao border revealed a toleration of different versions of history, the voices of the elites continued to be heard and those of the peoples along the border were typically downgraded. For example, Mandech (2001) still concluded that Thailand should not have supported the transnational movements of the Hmong because it worsened Thai-Lao relations.

Theeravit and Semyeam (2002) explored Lao peoples' views of Thailand's use of a number of events, such as the border conflicts in the three villages in 1984, Rom Klao Village in 1987 and 1988, and the Wang Tao incident in 2000. The outcome of the research, most importantly, was that not only the voices of the elites were echoed but also those of the peoples that daily crossed the Thai-Lao border were heard. Evidence of Lao nationalism was shown by the general tone of the respondents' answers. Lao responses indicated that the Lao people did not agree with Thai historical narratives that Lao territory used to belong to Thailand (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). However, at the end, the researchers suggested that toleration in Thai-Lao relations should be promoted (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). This trend of toleration was observed at a more junior level, in addition. For example, Polvichien Pookongchi (2003) examined how the Wang Tao incident affected Thai-Lao relations in his master thesis at Chiang Mai University. Adopting the concept of 'perception and misperception' by Robert Jervis, Pookongchi made a recommendation that the Thai media should have been more careful in reporting the events as Lao people were able to watch television program from Thailand. Thai nationalistic historiography on Thai-Lao relations should have been promoted less in both in the media and school texts so that peoples along the Mekong were able to live peacefully (Pookongchi, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter answered the first and the second research questions exploring the extent to which the colonial legacy of geopolitics remained in International Relations in relation to the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to the present. It divided the sixty years since the Lao state became independent into three phases, from 1954 to 1975 when the Royal Lao Government was in power, from 1975 to 1989 when Lao PDR was established and the Thai-Lao border separated the two ideological worlds of capitalist democracy and socialist communism, and from 1989 to the present when the Cold War was over.

The chapter maintained that all four characteristics of geopolitics – objectivity based on the use of ocularcentric maps, the separation of space and people, Western superiority and the presentation of unequal space justifying intervention if not colonisation, and the provision of nationalistic advice – were passed on to International Relations regarding Thai-Lao border issues. Each of the characteristics was theoretically presented to different extents depending on global politics in the region at the particular time under discussion. For example, in the first period, the Domino Theory as a result of the myth of the self-contained state from Cartesian maps was dominant in theory and in the minds of intellectuals of statecraft. Western superiority and the unequal presentation of space justifying intervention were evident as a result. States in Indochina had not yet achieved the full form of territorial state and Western intervention was needed.

Thus, in classical realist texts by Morgenthau and Herz, the justification for the US intervention in Vietnam, which affected the Thai-Lao border, was presented. The colonial legacy of Westphalian borders was still in existence but had to be subverted because the containment of communism in the region was more urgent. Even the Thai scholar Ladavalva reconfirmed this opinion that intervention in Laos by the US should have taken place to contain communism. Though Stevenson, an expert in foreign policy analysis, disagreed with the US policy at the time indicated, he was not as famous as Herz and Morgenthau. Between 1975 and 1989, after the US military withdrawal, the Thai-Lao border became again meaningful and theoretical justification for violations of it reduced. Nationalism on both sides of the border was used to support territorial integrity by Thai and Lao authors. After the end of the Cold War, the characteristic of unequal

space was promoted more. The separation of space of the Thai-Lao border recognised the development of neo-liberal transnational interaction and the importance of the abundant natural resources and raw materials in Lao PDR. Nationalism was reduced but some events occurred that aroused nationalistic feelings, such as the Wang Tao incident in 2000. Academia promoted more tolerance but still groups without states who had played significant roles in the Thai-Lao border, such as the Hmong, remained as refugees and displaced peoples (Paribatra, 2013).

The fact that the four geopolitical characteristics have remained in International Relations for the last sixty years of the political narrative of the Thai-Lao border blinded the theorist and resulted in the theoretical attachment of the territorial trap. The first two characteristics of objectivity and separation of space and people constantly remained in the discipline and led to the myth of the self-contained state and the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside. The representation of unequal space justifying Western colonisation or intervention and the provision of nationalistic advice for the state policy led to the trap of reification of territorial borders monopolised by the elites that silenced the voices of the peoples on the ground. Agnew and Corbridge (1995) proposed ways to avoid the traps, and this thesis discusses them in regard to the Thai-Lao border in the following chapter.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The inescapable territorial trap in International Relations: The Thai-Lao border from 1954 to the present**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter answers the third research question of the thesis that addresses the use of the concept of the territorial trap (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995) to criticise existing literature in International Relations, with particular reference to political realism, regarding Thai-Lao border issues from when Laos became Lao PDR in 1975 to the present. To support the analysis of this period, the territorial trap in literature from 1954 to 1975, from 1975 to 1989, and from 1989 (the end of the Cold War) to the present day is examined. The chapter argues that International Relations scholars, influenced by the geopolitical legacy, have been subjected to the territorial trap for the past 60 years.

Despite International Relations' literature often not being aware of the trap, the solutions to escape from it as proposed by Agnew and Corbridge – the historical awareness of the states involved, broader social and economic structure of a hegemon, and changes in geopolitical order – were taken into theoretical consideration by a number of scholars. However, the traps of the myth of a self-contained state, dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and the reification of borders monopolised by the elites remained. This was because, as discussed in the previous chapters, the geopolitical characteristics of self-claim for objectivity, separation of space and peoples, representation of unequal space with Western superiority justifying intervention, and provision for nationalistic advice to the state still remained in the discipline. This thesis argues that the solutions proposed by Agnew and Corbridge were insufficient to theoretically escape from the territorial trap. Discussions of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to the present day showed the lack of success of International Relations scholars to avoid the trap.

The 60 years of the independent Lao state are divided into three phases to show that recognition of the territorial trap proposed by Agnew and Corbridge was already achieved by International Relations theorists without the awareness of the work of these two researchers. Each phase had unique characteristics that resulted in distinctive spatial conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border. For example, the first phase was from 1954 to 1975 when a number of major powers, such as France, the US, the Soviet Union, China, and neighbouring countries such as North Vietnam and Thailand, intervened in Laos. In this phase, the Domino Theory was very influential as a justification for the US superiority and intervention in Indochina (Kissinger, 1994; Ó Tuathail, 1998; Stevenson, 1972). This Domino Theory justified the US intervention in Indochina in academic texts because, according to Herz, the Westphalian-based territorial border logic gave way to the structure of global politics at that time as the US extended its influence to Southeast Asia, including Thailand and Laos (Herz, 1959). The second phase was between 1975 and 1989 when Laos became the communist state known as Lao PDR and the US withdrew from Indochina. In this phase, the Thai-Lao border gained a new meaning as it became not only the border between the states of Thailand and Lao PDR but also the boundary between the two ideological worlds of democratic capitalism and communist socialism. The third phase commenced at the end of the Cold War with the triumph of democratic capitalism. The Thai-Lao border was again re-interpreted by neo-liberal transnationalism very often justified in International Relations. In the three periods, the myth of a self-contained state, the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and the reification of the map monopolised by certain groups of people remained in theory, although the degrees varied according to global political changes that affected local issues. Ways to escape from the trap were inadequate because the concept of space imposed by the Westphalian idea of state was embedded in the three solutions mentioned above and taken for granted. This concept was subverted at the command of the elites. The voices of the non-elites regarding this spatial conceptualisation was ignored and insufficiently considered in the theory. The human dimension was neglected.

This thesis argues that Agnew and Corbridge's proposal to escape from the territorial trap is a good springboard to achieve a more human dimension in border issues in

International Relations that can be enriched by the incorporation of critical perspectives from other political geographers briefly introduced in chapter 1. These perspectives included the re-conceptualisation of geopolitics during the Cold War that focused on the geopolitical rhetoric by the US (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1998) applied to Thai and Lao statecraft intellectuals, the analysis of the geopolitical legacy in the post-Cold War period that analysed the colonial legacy of ocularcentric territorial borders (Dalby, 1998), the anthropological approach of cultural analysis of borderlands and transnational nature of peoples on the ground (Donnan & Wilson, 1999), and anti-geopolitics that stated that the voices of the peoples on the ground could be used to analyse the 60 years of the Thai-Lao border (Routledge, 1998).

This chapter presents four connected themes to support the argument that the solutions including the awareness of historical background, broader social and economic structure of a hegemon, and changes in geopolitical order proposed by Agnew and Corbridge are insufficient. These themes are the setting aside of the Westphalian border concept in the theory from 1954 to 1975, the Thai-Lao border as an ideological boundary from 1975 to 1989, the triumph of economic liberalisation and the Thai-Lao border from 1989 to the present, and the enrichment of the solutions to the territorial trap by the incorporation of the perspectives of critical political geographers.

### **The setting aside of the Westphalian concept in the theory from 1954 to 1975**

Scholars in International Relations, especially in political realism, were influenced by traditional geopolitics and trapped in their approaches to the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975 by the spatial conceptualisation of their assumptions of a self-contained state, dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and reification of borders from maps. Agnew and Corbridge's proposed solutions to the trap included consideration of historical relations among the states involved, broader social and economic structures, and changes in geopolitical order, but this thesis argues that International Relations to a certain extent already took these into theoretical consideration without awareness of the

work of Agnew and Corbridge. The proposals were still insufficient as, despite the theoretical consideration, they failed to escape.

*Historical relations among the states involved in the analysis of Thai-Lao border*

Agnew and Corbridge (1995, p. 100) stated that “The historical relations among the territorial states...” could not be overlooked if the territorial trap was to be avoided. This argument may be countered by the claim that when Herz, the classical realist, wrote about territorial borders, he also paid attention to history.

The work of Herz was important as he said that because of the new technology of weapons after World War Two, the Westphalian hard-shell territory should be theoretically extended from one single state to include others across Europe that covered allies in the democratic and capitalist camps led by the US (Herz, 1959). To contain communism led by the Soviets, he even said that the US territory could be theoretically shifted to Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam (Herz, 1959). However, Herz did not totally reject the importance of traditional Westphalian-based states since this concept provided the basic structure of international politics. Without Westphalian states, the international structure, such as different camps led by the US and the Soviet Union, was impossible.

Nevertheless, when the history of territorial borders was discussed, Herz (1959) cited the European experience of Westphalian borders. In discussions of the development of territorial borders from feudal states to Westphalian states, European thinkers from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were mentioned. Leibniz, for instance, was cited as he distinguished the roles of sovereigns as supreme rulers of territorial states with complete control of their subjects (Herz, 1957). Clausewitz was cited to support the argument that that if a state wanted to force another state to do something, then territory needed be conquered first (Herz, 1959). Pufendorf was mentioned to indicate that safety was guaranteed in the international system of territorial sovereigns and smaller states hoped to be safe within their impermeable Westphalian borders (Herz, 1959). Thus, the historical

narrative of Herz was a European perspective that privileged the spatial conceptualisation of the European and the author adopted it to discuss the foreign policy of the US during the Cold War. The importance of Westphalian-based territory was imposed on Indochina, including the Thai-Lao border, and this allowed no voices of the peoples in Indochina to be heard regarding spatial conceptualisation at the times indicated.

The Thai version of historical narrative was paid attention to by indigenous International Relations scholars but the idea of Herz that the Thai-Lao border should be set aside in the late 1950s was still echoed, though the justification was not always the same. While Herz implied that the Thai-Lao border had to give way to the US and Thai military operations to contain communism, the Thai version indicated that Lao territory had belonged to Bangkok polity since the pre-colonial era. For example, historical accounts recognised by Ladavalya regarding the issue of the Thai-Lao border showed signs of Thai nationalism. The clichéd discourse of territorial losses on the Eastern bank of the Mekong to France in 1893 was repeated all over again (Ladavalya, 1970). This was the claim attached to the pre-colonial spatial conceptualisation that represented the voice of the Court of Bangkok for its suzerainty over Laos which was anachronistic because Westphalian logic had not been accepted in these areas before the establishment of modern state boundaries in 1893. As the east bank of the Mekong territory was not *de jure* possessed by either Siam or France, it could not be lost according to international law unless the claim was based on the replaced mandala norms. In addition, at the time when the US policy began to support the coalition in Laos (which legally included the communist Pathet Lao in the government in the early 1960s) Ladavalya (1970) strongly objected to the change in the policy. He emphasised the meaning of territorial integrity that the Thai border needed to be defended, in the same Westphalian style that Herz described as “a hard-shell” (Ladavalya, 1970, p. 182).

This thesis contends that the territorial trap remained evident, despite attention paid to historiography by Herz (1959) and Ladavalya (1970). Cited historical narratives used by these two authors to support their theories were dominated by spatial conceptualisation based on the concept of Westphalian borders (Herz, 1959; Ladavalya, 1970), interpreted

from the state-centric paradigm monopolised by the elites that originated in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe and the Bangkok elite in the colonial era. This approach silenced the pre-colonial Indochinese peoples' history of the spatial concepts of *mandala* described by Wolters (1999) and *zomia* described by Scott (2009). Even when *mandala* was heeded by Ladavalya, it was to benefit the Thai nationalist claim that Lao territory belonged to Thailand. Meanwhile, *zomia* was totally absent, though the Hmong from the highlands took part in regional politics. Spatial conceptualisation in theory never echoed the historical accounts of peoples on the ground. This argument does not suggest that the Hmong never wanted or will never want their Westphalian state, but their way of life of movements along the highlands, a non-Westphalian spatial conceptualisation, was hardly mentioned in International Relations. Texts by Herz and Ladavalya were aimed to present the voices of statesmen to solve the state's problems, including the border. For instance, in the *Rise and Demise of the Territorial State*, the intellectuals of statecraft and students in International Relations were Herz's target audience (Herz, 1957). Similarly, these voices of the elites, such as statesmen and diplomats, on spatial conceptualisation dominated Ladavalya's text regarding the Thai-Lao border (Ladavalya, 1970).

#### *Broader social and economic structures*

The economic and social influences of world hegemony that transcended state boundaries require examination. Consideration of the 1945-1989 Cold War demanded more than a focus on the military capabilities of a hegemony that forced other states beyond their territorial boundaries (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). To compete with the Soviet Union, the US promoted neo-liberal institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Bank (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). The number of non-state actors from the US, its allies, and transnational corporations with overseas branches rose significantly from 1945 to 1962 (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). However, those in less economically successful states who participated in transnationalism were the elites and the voices of peoples along the territorial borders were excluded.

Literature in International Relations from 1954 to 1975 was aware of the broader social and economic structures. Though the international economic institutions and transnational corporations mentioned were rarely found in the literature, with particular reference to political realism, the role of an economic hegemon, such as the US, that financially supported its allies in Indochina was recognised. For example, Morgenthau (1965) said that he did not agree with the US military intervention in Indochina but other economic means were used to encourage South Vietnamese statesmen and citizens. To contain communism, economic intervention was proposed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 to show the Vietnamese the benefits of the capitalist system compared to socialism. This meant that strict observation of the territorial integrity of South Vietnam was played down.

Morgenthau (1965) did not always fall prey to the territorial trap of the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside of South Vietnam when he justified economic support. However, suggestions of military intervention in South Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand when 'necessary' indicated the trap of the myth of the self-contained state. Morgenthau (1965) saw North Vietnam as the first domino that had fallen to communism and, if others followed, all the Southeast Asian states would become communist. Consideration of the broader economic structure of capitalism helped Morgenthau escape from the territorial trap of inside/outside dichotomy but he was still caught by the myth of the self-contained state.

Stevenson (1972), an American foreign policy analyst, stated that the American efforts to replace the influence of France, as a former hegemon, were an attempt to court Laos. The economic structure of the US affected not only Laos but also Thailand as a significant number of aid programmes were provided to both countries. For example, from 1962 to 1972, the US spent \$945 million to support the Lao economy and military (Stevenson, 1972). American economic and military support of Thailand provided a pathway to Laos. A number of transport construction projects were financially supported near the Thai-Lao border (Stevenson, 1972). This recognition of such economic relations under the

hegemonic influence of the US helped escape from the territorial trap to a certain extent but the kind of economic trans-state ties discussed were monopolised by and benefitted the elites, not the 95% of Lao people who were farmers. Media, such as the Wall Street Journal, questioned the transparency of the budget distribution and Lao officials were accused of corruption (Stevenson, 1972). Stevenson was aware that trans-state economic ties and interpretations of the Thai-Lao border were monopolised by American, Thai, and Lao elites, and changes in the geopolitical order were also in their hands.

### *Changes in the geopolitical order*

Agnew and Corbridge (1995) suggested that the world geopolitical order was divided into three periods, the combination of the European Concert and British Domination from 1815 to 1875, the Inter-Imperial Rivalry from 1875 to 1945, and the Cold War Geopolitical Order from 1945 to 1989. Understanding of Westphalian borders was challenged depending on the interpretation of borders according to geopolitical presentation and discourse (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). The political elites, under a particular geopolitical order, monopolised the meaning of geopolitics and hence borders. In the Cold War Geopolitical Order, the rules of international relations were regulated by the US elites (Ó Tuathail, 1996). The US, as the first world, and the Soviet Union, as the second, both tried to economically, ideologically, and militarily influence the less developed third world countries – the former colonies. The US also extended its military operations that transcended state boundaries as military alliances, and NATO was formed in Europe to counter the Eastern European communist states led by the Soviet Union. Without the consent of the elites in the Third World countries, the success of military alliances in the forms of collective security mechanisms was impossible.

Herz (1959) paid attention to changes in the geopolitical order and his proposal for international structure was based on the existence of territorial states. To guarantee safety to the group, the collective security mechanism was to defend the territorial integrity of the members (Herz, 1957). However, Herz's meaning of territory as the basis of the structure changed according to the condition of world politics and its geopolitical order.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the US deployed their troops to defend the territorial integrity of the satellite states in their bloc. To oppose the communist-socialism bloc led by the Soviet Union, Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was cited that this protection shifted from a single unit to others in the same capitalist-democracy bloc. The Westphalian hard-shell territory of the US thus was expected to extend across Europe (Herz, 1959). In Southeast Asia, Herz (1959) said that the US border could theoretically be shifted to Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam.

The idea of the US shifting its border to Indochina was explained further. With the awareness of the Cold War geopolitical order, Herz (1975) recognised that the *raison d'être* of North and South Vietnam was the product of the Cold War mentality. He said that while partition occurred in a number of states, such as Ireland and India, the states that emerged afterwards were not titled as North and South Ireland, or West and East India, unlike, Vietnam, Korea, and Germany that became North and South Vietnam, North and South Korea, and East and West Germany. The common phenomenon was that they all were divided by the “Iron Curtain” (Herz, 1975, p. 957) which suggested a line that separated the ideological worlds. This Iron Curtain suggested the awareness of Herz of the geopolitical order of the Cold War to specify which parts belonged to socialism-communism and liberalism-democracy. North and South Vietnam were products of the “bipolar world” (Herz, 1975, p. 958). The divide was “less result of the policies than the world power relations” after World War Two (Herz, 1975, p. 958) when the Domino Theory emerged. American state practitioners used the Domino Theory as a justification to intervene in South Vietnam to contain communism in the North. For example, Eisenhower said that “the loss of Vietnam, together with Laos” would threaten “not only Thailand but also Burma and Malaya” (1963, p. 333). This supposed loss was compared to falling dominos. In sum, though the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam had to give way to American influence in Herz’s work in the late 1950s, a decade later the territorial border was revisited (Herz, 1968). This dichotomous understanding of inside/outside of South Vietnam resulted further in the myth of a self-contained state that was found in the spatial perception of the former American president, Eisenhower. Hence, the territorial trap remained.

The awareness of changes in the geopolitical order was noted in the work of Ladavalya. The 1950s was a time of transition. France tried to re-assert its power over Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos while the new superpowers, the Soviet Union and the US, were not yet fully active in the region. Ladavalya (1970) mentioned that before 1954, Laos was still under the supervision of France, meaning that Lao territorial integrity was not recognised by the colonialist French but that integrity was expected when Laos became fully independent.

The ways in which space was “practiced, read and written by the elites” (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 47) under the Cold War Geopolitical Order are worth examination. The US and Soviet conflicts extended into Southeast Asia and affected the borders in the region as both tried to persuade third world states to conform to their political and economic norms. In the democratic and capitalist bloc, the US exerted its influence by military and capital (Ruggie, 1986). The interpretation of territorial borders, especially the Thai-Lao border, varied. Sometimes, when statesmen thought it in the national interests, foreign troops from the same ideological bloc were allowed within the territory. Ladavalya (1970) recognised that to contain the communists from North Vietnam, the US forces would de jure be stationed in Thailand and Laos under the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). However, Stevenson (1972) showed that when the US foreign policy in Laos changed, the interpretation of the Thai-Lao border changed too. For example, in the civil war in Laos between 1960 and 1962, the Lao right wing hoped that SEATO military operations would be launched and function more effectively as communist Laos grew more influential (Stevenson, 1972). This occurred because the US under the Kennedy administration in the 1960s was less aggressive than that of Eisenhower in the late 1950s (Stevenson, 1972). A Lao coalition government, which included the three factions of right wing, neutral, and left wing, was supported by the US but, to avoid “the violation of the territorial integrity of Laos,” covert operations by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) together with Thai mercenaries in Laos were noted without any SEATO authorisation (Stevenson, 1972, p. 187). Stevenson also pointed out that SEATO military intervention needed consensus and objections by the US, France, and the UK meant that military intervention in civil wars in Laos was impossible. The Lao territorial border was sacrosanct and no military intervention was to be allowed. The territorial trap was again revealed.

### **Nationalism in International Relations: The Thai-Lao border as an ideological boundary between 1975 and 1989**

*Historical relations among the states involved in the analysis of the Thai-Lao border*

As discussed in the previous chapter, historical accounts of issues regarding the Thai-Lao border from 1975 to 1989 not only reproduced the established spatial knowledge of a state being Eurocentrically Westphalian but also mixed anachronistic accounts of mandala with it. Thai authors cited the historical accounts in defence of Thai territory, arguing that Laos used to belong to Thailand, and Lao authors disagreed. Very often, Thai authors claim that Lao territory used to belong to the Thai state based on the pre-colonial fact that Vientiane was the vassal state to Bangkok, on the mandala grounds. As a result, the feeling that the present Lao territory should belong to Thailand could be strongly sensed. However, non-Thai authors rarely cited historical narratives to support nationalism but only the fact that the territorial integrity be observed. The historical backgrounds of Thailand and Laos were taken into theoretical consideration but International Relations scholars could not escape the territorial trap, especially the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of the state.

Doctoral theses by Sirikrai and Phuangkasem reflected the ex-post facto claim that the Thai state had owned the territory of Laos. Sirikrai (1979) did not take history for granted, as he recognised the predated interactions of Lao peoples on both banks of the Mekong that became the modern boundary in 1893 after the Franco-Siamese conflicts. In pre-colonial days, the Vietnamese were viewed by Bangkok as a threat of invasion from the eastern bank of the Mekong. After the arrival of the French, the Vietnamese were colonised and France instead became the threat to Bangkok. The historical narrative echoed the mainstream education campaign during the time of state building in Thailand as Sirikrai (1979) cited Prince Damrong, famous for his nationalistic texts. This thesis argues that such a narrative suggested that pre-colonial rivalry existed when Vietnam was influential in Lao PDR and, despite recognising the historical element, Sirikrai still revealed an attachment to the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of the Thai state. Sirikrai's awareness of the porous border of the Mekong which peoples crossed everyday was not sufficient to escape from the trap.

Similar nationalistic historiography can be observed in other authors' texts, such as Paribatra (1984) who restated that the perception of Vietnam as a threat to Siam in pre-colonial days was resurrected during the Cold War. This was due to Vietnamese influence on the east bank of the Mekong, perceived to belong to Thailand but lost to France in 1893. Again, though the historical narrative was recognised, the territorial trap was revealed as Paribatra (1984) said that Vietnam could have violated the territorial integrity of the Thai state on the Mekong border.

Such historical accounts of Thai nationalism were countered by Ngaosyvathn. In the analysis of Thai-Lao border conflicts in three villages, Bane Kang, Bane Savang, and Bane May, in 1984, Ngaosyvathn (1985) stated that King Chulalongkorn of Siam handed map no. 200 to the King of Luang Prabang which indicated that Bane May belonged to the latter in 1891, making Thai claims that the disputed areas were in Thai territory unacceptable. Ngaosyvathn (1985) claimed that Thais had regularly invaded Laos since pre-colonial times and argued that the conflicts in the three villages were a continuation of pan-Thaism that failed during World War Two. This revealed that Thai nationalism and Lao nationalism were trapped in the myth of the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside.

Phuangkasem (1980) did not ignore history in discussions of the Thai-Lao border but was still exposed to the territorial trap of the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside of the state. For example, domestic politics affected the foreign policy of Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s when the military juntas pursued hawkish policies towards communist Indochinese states (Phuangkasem, 1980). Significantly influenced by neo-realism, Phuangkasem (1980) recognised the fact that before 1975, there were more people with Lao ethnicity in North-Eastern Thailand than in the Lao state itself. Phuangkasem (1980) took history into theoretical consideration and considered the border as a colonial legacy of Western origin that caused conflicts in Southeast Asia during the Cold War. This historical recognition was not enough to say whether internal or external factors had more impact on Thailand foreign policy at that time but awareness of the border as a colonial legacy was mentioned. Still, it was not seriously taken into theoretical consideration

because her research question regarding the foreign policy of the Thai state led in a different direction. As a result, the territorial trap remained throughout the work of Phuangkasem.

*Broader social and economic structures*

Agnew and Corbridge commented that “since 1789 only about sixty out of over 200 years can be associated with ‘a definitive’ hegemon: 1845-75 with Britain, and 1945-73, with the United States” (1995, p. 103). International Relations literature on the Thai-Lao border from 1975 to 1989 rarely indicated the social and economic structures of a hegemon. Sirikrai (1979) examined the US and Thai intervention in the Lao civil wars in the early 1960s and mentioned economic issues but the dichotomous nature of the inside/outside trap still prevailed.

Sirikrai (1979) said that before the civil wars in Laos broke out between 1960 and 1962, the US had played a significant role in financially supporting the Royal Lao Government. Influenced by Stevenson (1972), Sirikrai reported that the US financial support to Laos was “the highest per capita aid anywhere in the world” until US assumed full control over the government in Vientiane (1979, p. 72). Large sums of money were spent on funding the national army of Laos in the 1950s (Sirikrai, 1979) and there was US financial and military support to the Hmong from highland Laos. As the primary source, Sirikrai was aware of broader economic structure of global politics that affected Thai and Lao government at that time. He was aware that a large sum of money was spent on supporting the Thai government. This financial support was so significant that sometimes the Thai junta had to yield to the US policy in Laos, despite disagreeing with it (Sirikrai, 1979). Still, Sirikrai could not escape from the territorial trap of the self-contained state assumption and border reification monopolised by the elite.

Other evidence of economic activity at more local levels in the 1970s and 1980s was presented in International Relations literature. Viraphol (1985) argued that as a land-locked state, Lao PDR relied on Thailand to provide a route to the sea. Consequently,

goods needed to be transported via Thailand to and from Lao PDR and the Thai-Lao border became the gateway of economic interdependence. Lao people thus had to rely on Thailand despite ideological differences. Phuangkasem (1984) recognised the economic ties of the two states and stated that at times of conflict, closing the Thai-Lao border was one tactic that Thailand used to gain the upper hand. For example, Thailand closed its border after its naval units were ambushed in the Mekong in 1975 (Kutranon, 1982). Burutpat (1988), who served as a technocrat to the Thai state regarding foreign policy during the Cold War, confirmed that whenever the Thai border was closed, Lao PDR's foreign policy towards Thailand was expected to be less aggressive. Kutranon (1982), however, stated that the foreign policy of Lao PDR towards Thailand was often still aggressive, even when borders were closed, as there were other sea ports available, especially in Vietnam. Examination of these incidents revealed attachment to the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, though this very attachment sometimes gave way to economic interdependence. Kutranon, Phuangkasem, Viraphol, and Burutpat were still trapped by the assumption that the state was a self-contained unit when they accepted that borders could be closed and movement across them was not allowed.

The fact that economic activities transcended the Thai-Lao border was not only recognised in transport matters but also peoples' status. Burutpat (1988) and Ruampongpattana (1988) shared the assumption that a significant number of displaced peoples fled Lao PDR because of economic reasons. Burutpat categorised these displaced peoples from the communist regime into three groups. One group fled because they were middle class who favored capitalism and were afraid that their property may be confiscated. The other two groups were right wing militants and highland peoples who were supported by the US (Burutpat, 1988). The number of refugees in 1979 was 126,357 and the total number was 320,000 (Burutapat, 1988). Ruampongpattana said that the sudden change of a regime from one financially supported by the US to a communist one resulted in economic bankruptcy for many people. During the two decades of independence, the US spent more than 4,610 million US dollars to pay the salaries of Lao civil servants but in 1975 financial aid finished and salaries paid to state officers

decreased ten times (Ruampongpattana, 1988). This resulted in a significant number of people fleeing to Thai territory.

### *Changes in the geopolitical order*

Among neo-realists, Waltz's discussion on the international structures of bipolarity between the US and the Soviet Union showed that he was concerned with the issue of geopolitical order. His bipolarity lasted between 1945 and 1989. However, the bipolar structure of the two superpowers only represented the voices of the elites. Evidence of privileged political elites' voices can be noted in the words of Waltz regarding the damage caused by US in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War, stating "... America's failure in Vietnam was tolerable because neither success nor failure mattered much in the international system" (1979, p. 191). The term 'tolerable' was used in reference to hundreds of thousands of lives lost due to the US military operations in the Southeast Asian states. Waltz focused on international structure and the theoretical explanation only reflected the voices of the US statecraft intellectuals following the bipolar structure and ignored the voices of the Indochinese border peoples. The territorial trap of the assumption of a self-contained state and the reification of the border monopolised by the elite continued.

Sirikrai (1979) focused on two aspects of global politics that affected the locals, especially along the Thai-Lao border but he was still caught in the territorial trap of self-contained state assumption and border reification monopolised by the elite. First, as a development from statements made by Stevenson in 1975, the bilateral relations between Thailand and the US and Laos and the US should be noted. Thailand and the right wing faction in Laos had to follow the US policy to counter the communists. The US military operations were overt in Thailand and covert in Laos at first. In Thailand from 1962 to 1969, 50,000 US forces were stationed in North-Eastern Thailand and the US planes flew from there to drop 75,000 tons of bombs (Sirikrai, 1979). Joint ground military co-operation in Laos between Thailand and the US was secret but later declassified. Second, the geopolitical order imposed by the US came in the form of the multilateral mechanism

of SEATO but the organisation could not authorise military intervention. The US favored a neutral government in Laos but this was not liked by the Thai junta. As shown by the Rusk-Thanat Joint Communiqué, the US persuaded Thailand to agree by assuring US defence of Thai territory in the case of invasion by communists (Sirikrai, 1979).

Viraphol (1985) suggested that after 1954, the geopolitical order dominated by the US ensured that both Thailand and the US played a significant role in Laos and the Thai-Lao border was not a problem. However, after the US left and Lao PDR was established in 1975, the Thai-Lao border became the space of confluence of two geopolitical orders, the capitalist democracy led by the US on the Thai side and socialist communism led by the Soviets in Lao PDR. However, socialist communism in the 1970s could not be viewed as monolithic. The Sino-Soviet conflict, another geopolitical change within the socialist communist camp, was an example recognised by Viraphol (1985) and Paribatra (1984). Herz (1975, p. 964) called this situation the structure of global politics with “two superpowers and a half,” the Soviet Union versus the US, with China as an important variable, and global politics after 1975 was not simply friction between two ideological camps. Thailand, normally, would be supposed to belong to the US camp but, after the US withdrawal in 1975, Thai statesmen chose to run a campaign of normalisation with China, despite different ideologies. A Sino-Thai alliance made sense to exploit the conflicts in the socialist communism camp to counter a seemingly unified Indochina of Vietnam and Lao PDR supervised by the Soviets. China was perceived by Lao and Vietnamese statesmen as working with Thailand to undermine Lao territorial integrity. The case of the three villages of Bane Kang, Bane Savang, and Bane May was an example of the Sino-Thai alliance viewed as a threat by Vientiane (Viraphol, 1985). Paribatra (1984) even made a policy recommendation that the Thai state might urge Beijing to support the trans-state movement of the Hmong, supported by the US before 1975, to counter Hanoi. The Thai-Lao border between 1975 and 1989 needed to be carefully analysed as it did not separate the democratic capitalist world from that of communist socialism as a whole, just the bloc led by the Soviet Union.

Though Viraphol, and Paribatra were aware of this geopolitical order change within the socialist communist bloc, they could not escape from the trap of the state as a self-contained unit and the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside. This was because Paribatra (1984) still perceived the threat at the Thai-Cambodian and Thai-Lao borders where Vietnam's military influence was prominent. Thailand was thus described as "a frontline state" (Paribatra, 1984, p. 30) in the democratic capitalist bloc, as it borders Lao PDR and Kampuchea<sup>10</sup> under the socialist-communist sphere of Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Also, Viraphol raised the case of displaced peoples who fled the communist regime after 1975 as "security problems" (1985, p. 1273). This perception revealed the geopolitical characteristic that expected separation of peoples that should be attached to a single territorial state. If that group failed to belong to one territorial state, they became a threat to others. The solutions proposed by Viraphol (1985) that the peoples be repatriated and persuaded to join resettlement schemes further reinforced the attachment of separation of space and people aforementioned.

### **The triumph of economic liberalisation over the Thai-Lao border in International Relations from 1989 to the present day**

#### *Historical relations among the states involved in the analysis of Thai-Lao border*

Similar to the two earlier phases, historical narratives featured in International Relations literature published after the end of the Cold War in 1989. The sense of nationalism embedded in historiography was still evident in the early 1990s. Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994) discussed common pre-colonial, cultural, and ethnic issues involving the two nation-states but there was a strong sense of Lao nationalism. Very often, Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn rebutted Thai historiography that claimed to be superior to Laos, saying that "historically, the Siamese positioned their kingdom at the center of the world" and looked down upon other peoples, especially Lao (1994, p. 2). Prince Damrong, the historian cited by Sirikrai (1979), was also accused by Ngaosyvathn

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<sup>10</sup> Kampuchea was the name used under Pol Pot's regime. The country was renamed as Cambodia after the 1991 Peace Agreements.

and Ngaosyvathn as his Thai traditional version of history was full of half-truths, such as Thailand's victimisation by France when the eastern bank of the Mekong was annexed to French Indochina. According to Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994), Prince Damrong overlooked the fact that various tiny Lao kingdoms on both banks of the Mekong had been invaded by Bangkok in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. When King Chulalongkorn of Thailand expressed a sense of belonging among Thai and Lao people and said that they should unite against France, Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994, p. 10) disagreed, saying "Lao had been a nation and a state" long before the arrival of France. Nevertheless, this thesis maintains that the claim of a modern nation and state existing before Westphalian borders were established in 1893 is anachronistic. Any author who makes such claims simply reproduces nationalistic discourse for his/her own state. Thus, the territorial trap of the Cold War conflict remained with Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn.

Though less intensive nationalism was evident in Thai historical accounts, the same clichéd narratives were still reproduced. Jiwalai (1994, p. 29) maintained that Thai and Lao people were from "the same stock" and thus shared a cultural affinity, but the territorial trap never disappeared. This was because the historiography retold took the Westphalian state for granted and that this territory form should have been universally accepted. Indeed, this modern Westphalian territory was accepted by the Court of Siam in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Winichakul, 1994).

Interviews of Lao people about their perceptions of Thailand by Theeravit and Semyeam (2002) revealed feelings of Lao nationalism. The interviewees tended to disagree with mainstream Thai historiography, arguing that Thailand invaded Laos even before colonial times, and pointed out that Thailand provided space for the US air bases to provide easy access to the bombing of Lao territory (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002).

In a PhD thesis by a non-indigenous author, David Oldfield, submitted to Northern Illinois University, neither Thai nor Lao nationalism was noted, but the expectation of respect for territorial integrity was sensed. Oldfield devoted one chapter to historical

narratives of the two states as background to what happened before discussion of post-Cold War Thai-Lao politics, but the territorial trap was not erased. This was because Oldfield, heavily influenced by Stuart-Fox and Dommen, two experts on Lao history, wrote the chapter from the state-centric point of view. For example, Oldfield said that Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea affected Thai-Lao relations in that Thailand saw the Vietnamese presence in Kampuchea as a threat to its border. Lao PDR was blamed for its support for Vietnam. Hence, the then Prime Minister, Tinnasulanonda, was quoted as saying that the Thai state would support right wing militants in Lao PDR and block trade transport as "punishment of Laos" (Oldfield, 1998, p. 101). Therefore, this chapter did not help escape from the territorial trap. The elites who reified the border and myth of self-contained state were still recognised by the author.

*Broader social and economic structures*

In 1989, the Thai Prime Minister Choonhavan announced his policy of turning the battlefields of Indochina into marketplaces and there was a new interpretation of the Thai-Lao border by International Relations theorists. However, there were still suspicions. Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994) looked for a hidden agenda as the same issues, such as Thai military activity and Lao right wing movements in the provinces bordering Lao PDR, were noted. Another suspicion was that, because the Thai-Lao border was perceived as a bridge rather than a fence by Thai and Lao state practitioners, Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn considered the exploitation of rich natural resources in Lao PDR by transnational corporations. In addition, the territorial trap remained, though the Thai-Lao border was described as 'a bridge', because the Westphalian state was still presupposed. It was impossible 'to bridge' the two states, without the imagination of separated two pieces of land. Similarly, the Thai Theeravit and Semyeam (2002), and Paribatra (2013), explained that the economic integration proposed by the former Thai prime minister was to legalise illegal activities by Thai businessmen in Lao PDR, such as logging. Hence, even Thai scholars were aware of doubts that the slogan of 'turning the battlefields to marketplaces' might only benefit certain classes of the Thai-Lao elites at that time.

This thesis argues that, even though Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn were aware of the introduction of post-Cold War transnational movements, as the economic structure of the world changed, they continued to be trapped by the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside and the myth of the self-contained state of Lao PDR. That they doubted the motivation of any external exploiters flooding into Lao PDR under the new economic structure reconfirmed this chapter's argument. Theeravit and Semyeam (2002) and Paribatra (2013) did a better job in recognising that the economic liberalisation rhetoric represented the voices of the elites and ignored peoples on the ground. Though Paribatra was not able to completely escape from the trap, awareness of it was the first step to introduce the human dimension to the discipline that is yet to be developed.

Sirikrai also recognised the broader economic trend at the end of the Cold War, as the triumph of neo-liberalism became more obvious. To facilitate multilateral co-operation and the mechanism of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) supported by World Bank and Asian Development Bank, Sirikrai indicated that transport should be constructed to connect all the states through which the Mekong flowed. Of course, the Thai-Lao border became the highway of neo-liberal transnationalism (Sirikrai, 2003). The Mekong was perceived as a corridor rather than a fence. Paribatra (2013, p. 132) said that since Thailand was viewed as "the center of the regional development," schemes of supranational aid to states in Indochina were planned and named as ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

The argument by Amer (1999) that mutual economic achievement brought about the security of the region – the objective of ASEAN since 1967 – was further evidence that economic structure at the regional level affected the conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border after the Cold War in 1989. Amer said that it was difficult to separate economics, politics, and security as they were interrelated. To achieve the goal of security, the non-communist members of ASEAN had to expand the membership to include Lao PDR. Security and political stability were expected to be achieved by means of economic cooperation of ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA). Thailand, the former frontline to

communism during the Cold War, was the major trade partner of Lao PDR in the 1990s (Amer, 1999).

Businesspersons in private sectors were encouraged to expand their trade and investment in Lao PDR because of its rich natural resources. Sirikrai (2007) said that the Thai and Lao governments planned to construct roads and bridges to connect the two states and Paribatra (2013) discussed a multilateral plan that played down the Westphalian border of Thailand and Lao PDR, but the language used by the two scholars still re-confirmed the separated territorial units. The plan to connect Thailand and Lao PDR reflected the voices of the states, businesspersons, and the triumph of economic liberalisation, and these were echoed in International Relations literature. For example, Jiwalai's doctoral thesis, devoting one chapter to global economic concerns, said that the border reification after 1989 was extended from the military and bureaucrats to "middle class" that comprised "business interests, academicians, and non-governmental organizations" (Jiwalai, 1994, p. 245). Especially, businesspersons were not limited to those in Bangkok but also in the provinces along the Thai-Lao border such as Ubon Ratchathani, Mukdahane, Nakhon Panom and Nong Khai. Jiwalai said that in the future foreign policy should be "more democratic and more responsive to the interests of the majority of the population" (Jiwalai, 1994, p. 251). This thesis expected that this 'more democratic and more responsive' analysis would include the voices of the peoples of the margin (see chapter 4) as observations of peoples living along the border showed that they crossed, cross, and will continue to cross the border everyday. Establishment of stricter and firmer check-points and more bureaucratic rituals to cross the border were new to the local people in the post-Cold War era but became part of their daily lives. International Relations literature very often recognised this from a state-centric point of view.

### *Changes in the geopolitical order*

The triumph of the neo-liberal economy in global politics affected the geopolitics of the Thai-Lao border but despite examination by a number of International Relations scholars, the territorial trap never disappeared. This thesis considers the geopolitical order in two

ways, firstly through literature related to Thai-Lao border issues between 1975 and 1989 published after the end of the Cold War, and secondly via a scrutiny of Thai-Lao border issues from 1989 to the present day.

The territorial trap still remains, though it is less intense than in the Cold War era. Jiwalai (1994) stated that Thailand's foreign policy could be compared with the bamboo that bends with the wind, implying that the changes in geopolitical order were taken into theoretical consideration. This was especially true as Thai foreign policy was pro-American when the US troops were stationed in Thai territory to wage war with the communists in Laos and Vietnam during the Cold War. When the US troops were withdrawn in 1975, Thailand's foreign policy changed as it normalised with the communist states in Indochina.

Paribatra (2013, p. 55) referred to the geopolitical order as "macro variable," and still the dichotomous inside/outside reappeared. He was aware that before the 1970s, Thailand's foreign policy followed the direction of the US. Between the 1970s and 1980s, however, there was a shift to China and Indochinese states due to changes in the geopolitical order. He further explained that as the US under the Nixon administration changed its policy in dealing with communism in Southeast Asia; the US only provided material support to its allies (Paribatra, 2013). The territorial trap thus remained since Paribatra showed the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside by stating that, as Thailand's policy shifted from pro-American to omni-directional in an attempt to normalise relations with Lao PDR, mutual respect had to be observed so that the territorial integrity was not violated.

Similarly, Amer (1999) recognised the impacts of the changes in geopolitical order at the global level. Even before 1989, there was an attempt by ASEAN, led by Thailand, to establish good relations with communist states. States outside ASEAN could be included in the supranational body of conflict management on the condition that their inclusion must have been approved by members. In the 1976 Bali Treaty, for example, attended by the ASEAN members, the mechanism of conflict settlement was open to non-members involved in the conflicts. ASEAN included communist states such as Lao PDR and

Vietnam, as the supranational body aimed to achieve the settlement of disputes among states with “mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations” and “effective co-operation among themselves” (Amer, 1999, p. 1034). The myth of self-contained states was evident. Discussions about the inclusion of Lao PDR involved Thailand since it had the longest border with that nation-state. The territorial trap of dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside continued in Amer’s analysis of ASEAN even at the end of the Cold War when Lao PDR became an ASEAN member in 1997, though Amer saw changes in global politics in the region.

From 1989 to the present, as the ideological clashes of democratic liberalism and communist socialism were over, the old conflicts on the Thai-Lao border needed to be settled to co-exist peacefully. At a multilateral level, the international mechanism that served the Cold War purposes of communist containment, such as SEATO, no longer existed. Views of ASEAN as a possible threat by Indochinese states were reinterpreted and the organisation was accepted by them. Lao PDR changed its policy and accepted more contact with other states regardless of ideological differences (Sirikrai, 2003). Though ASEAN transcended state boundaries, the “norm of non-intervention” as the justification of Lao statesmen for Lao PDR to enter ASEAN revealed the territorial trap (Sirikrai, 2003, p. 290). Even when the norm of non-intervention was replaced with the new idea of constructive engagement, under which ASEAN members helped one another regardless of territorial borders, the territorial integrity according to Westphalian logic was still retained by the Indochina states (Sirikrai, 2007). The idea of “flexible engagement” was also proposed by the Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan, in the 1990s, to replace the attachment of non-intervention. Pitsuwan said that “... perhaps it is time that ASEAN’s cherished principle of non-intervention is modified to allow ASEAN to play a constructive role in preventing or resolving domestic issues with regional implications.” However, this idea was not welcomed by Hanoi (Pitsuwan in Tan, 2005, p. 376). This thesis expects that the stance of Lao PDR must be similar to that of Vietnam.

New kinds of threats to state security were recognised by Paribatra, such as “illegal migration, illegal activities, illicit drug, intrusion of small armed groups, crime and terrorism” (Paribatra, 2013, p. 100). Any group moving beyond its borders was theoretically defined as a threat. For example, displaced Hmong had to be handled by a bilateral mechanism involving Thailand and Lao PDR, and this was theoretically recognised as a normal activity to maintain peace and order between the two states. Five thousand Hmong were reported to join the repatriation and resettlement campaign as the refugee camp in Thailand was closed down in 2009 (Paribatra, 2013).

### **Enrichment of solutions to the territorial trap by the incorporation of the perspectives of critical political geographers**

Though similar ways out of the territorial trap were noted in a number of International Relations theorists, problems still remained. This was because, first of all, the spatial conceptualisation of a territorial border in the history, social and economic structures, and changing geopolitical order were state-centric and the voices of peoples on the ground regarding their version of history were excluded. Second, the state-centric spatial conceptualisation was taken for granted as fixed and of a Westphalian territorial form. To avoid the territorial trap, this thesis proposes that a number of approaches be applied to the Thai-Lao border. These approaches include the geopolitical discourse analysis by Ó Tuathail and Agnew, the examination of the remaining traditional geopolitics in International Relations by Dalby, the cultural analysis of the borderlands and transnationalism of peoples on the ground by Donnan and Wilson, and the anti-geopolitics by Routledge. This allows the silenced voices of the peoples theoretically missing since 1954 to be heard more easily. In addition, this eclectic approach suggests that spatial conceptualisation should not be theoretically limited to only the Westphalian style of territorial borders but should include other forms, such as *mandala* described by Wolters (1999) and *zomia* described by Scott (2009).

Inspired by the framework used by Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998), the rhetoric that shaped the understanding of the Thai-Lao border needs to be critically examined, as it is

not only words uttered by state practitioners echoed by theorists in International Relations but also the possible understanding of state practitioners. While Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998, p. 81), examined the geopolitical discourse of US foreign policy during the Cold War by American “intellectuals of statecraft”, this thesis has added, in the previous chapters and will add an examination of the intellectuals of statecraft of American allies, such as Thai and Lao statesmen, especially from the right-wing faction. The rhetoric of statesmen is compared and contrasted with the Thai-Lao border conceptualised by scholars in International Relations.

In International Relations literature from 1954 to 1975, only the voices of intellectuals of statecraft of the US, the military junta and diplomats of the Thai state, and the leaders of political factions in Laos were heard (Jiwalai, 1994; Stevenson, 1972). They thus monopolised the interpretation of space and the Thai-Lao border was interpreted according to national interest at that time. It was doubtful that the interpretation of the Thai-Lao border was to their benefit (Stevenson, 1972). For example, during the civil wars in Laos, though President Kennedy officially stated that he was against the policy of ‘overt intervention’ in Laos, covert military operation with the assistance of CIA continued (Oldfield, 1998). The Lao right wing and Thai military junta were not pleased with Kennedy’s policy. The reluctance of the US to intervene militarily in Laos meant more influence of communism that threatened the influence of the right wing on the Lao government and the Thai-Lao border (Sirikrai, 1979). Between 1975 and 1989, the voices of the same group of elites remained in the literature. However, more voices from academia and technocrats from Thailand, Lao PDR, and other western countries were heard (Burutpat, 1988; Paribatra, 1984; Viraphol 1985). After 1989, the voices that spoke for the benefit of transnational corporation were included (Sirikrai, 2007). This was as a result of the triumph of neo-liberalism in global politics that could not be ignored by International Relations. After 2000, even citizens who lived along the border took part in research conducted about the region (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). Though more peoples with views of the Thai-Lao border were included in International Relations, the rhetoric echoed in the text was state-centric and the Westphalian form of territorial borders was still prioritised.

The colonial legacy of geopolitics remained in International Relations theory. The approach of Dalby (1998) to the Thai-Lao border questioned traditional geopolitics elements, even though International Relations had paid more attention to transnationalism since the end of the Cold War. The year 1989 marked the victory of democracy and economic liberalisation that transcended state boundaries. However, the transnationalism recognised in International Relations included only the voices of some people who benefited from neo-liberal economy. The territorial border conceptualisation of Thailand and Lao PDR expanded from the intellectuals of statecraft during the Cold War to businesspersons in private sectors (Paribatra, 2013). This thesis agrees with Dalby's suggestion that transnational economic arrangements, such as the World Trade Organization and North America Free Trade Area, were set up as a part of the elites' exploitation of subaltern peoples (Dalby, 1998), and argues that ASEAN Free Trade Agreement merely echoed the voice of the elite and business sectors of the country members. Though the Thai-Lao border was perceived as a bridge rather than fence, the voices of the peoples were not fully taken into consideration. Transnationalism included in International Relations was that of the rich while the peoples on the ground played little or no role (see chapter 4). This resulted in the theoretical definition of the peoples who cross the border that did not conform to Westphalian logic in a state-centric manner as refugees, displaced persons, illegal immigrants, and terrorists. Dalby's suggestion represented the starting point for the addition of the human dimension to the discipline.

The application to the Thai-Lao border of the transnationalism of the peoples and cultural analysis in the borderlands of Donnan and Wilson (1999) would result in the enrichment of the proposed solutions that paves the way for the examination of the human dimension to International Relations. This thesis proposes an anthropological approach to escape from the territorial trap; Donnan and Wilson's proposal was very useful as transnationalism of the peoples allowed theoretical space for the everyday dynamics at the border. It meant the addition of peoples on the ground at the border to the state relations monopolised by the statesmen and diplomats prominent during the Cold War and the business people in private sectors after 1989. Challenges emerged to fixed state

territorial borders termed as “twin threats” (Donnan & Wilson, 1999, p. 1) from above and below. From above, transnationalism was dominated by multinational corporations’ movements that cut across state boundaries, and from below, there were threatening movements of peoples termed by state-centric terminology as “illegal immigrants, terrorists and displaced persons” (Donnan & Wilson, 1999, p. 1).

High (2009) said millions of peoples along the Mekong were of Lao ethnicity and had family ties across the region before the establishment of Westphalian state borders in 1893 after the Franco-Siamese conflicts. High said that they crossed the Thai-Lao border everyday and thus violated the territorial integrity. Additionally, Scott (2009) suggested that political theorists should pay attention to marginalised peoples in the highland zones. The inclusion of these peoples challenged the imaginative geography of the West that remained after the end of the Cold War as the Thai-Lao border contained *zomia* non-state space and, according to the ocularcentric map in International Relations, 702 of 1108 kilometres of the Thai-Lao land border is highland terrain (Mandech, 2001; Scott, 2009). Technically speaking, the Thai-Lao border exists but it is not always enforced in the area indicated. Although the movements of Lao and Hmong along the Mekong and the fact that the Thai-Lao border is porous were no longer ignored by the existing literature in International Relations, state-centric terms, such as refugees, were still used to describe them.

This thesis argues that the state-centric spatial conceptualisation of Westphalian borders is a colonial legacy. Terms that describe peoples that do not conform to the modern state form, such as illegal immigrants and refugees, are products of colonial times that are now theoretically accepted and supported by the elites. The concept of the anti-geopolitics of Routledge (1998) is an appropriate approach to examine the colonial legacy that has remained on the Thai-Lao border and the silenced voices of the peoples in International Relations. To follow the approach of anti-geopolitics critically questions the European imaginative geography, especially the territorial border in the Westphalian form and the Cartesian maps embedded in the historical accounts, economic and social structures, and the geopolitical order changes in International Relations. First of all, an examination of

historiography without asking whose history is being told is insufficient. The privileged status in historiography of the form of state space that has always been supposed to be Westphalian is also analysed. Also, there needs to be questions about the economic structure of a hegemon that reinforced the Westphalian norm and subverted it to benefit transnationalism, as the subversion benefited certain groups and excluded others. Thirdly, the geopolitical order changes should also be scrutinised to discover which groups of peoples monopolised the meanings of the changes in spatial conceptualisation and whose voices were more theoretically echoed. For example, questions are required of parties who lost and who gained from the changes in meaning on the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975, 1975 to 1989, and 1989 to the present.

Nevertheless, both dominant European imaginative geography and the less dominant ones are important. It must be stressed that this thesis does not argue that the absence of spatial conceptualisation in Southeast Asia of mandala and zomia should replace the Westphalian-based one as that would result in the establishment of a hierarchical reversal. To reveal how the colonial legacy of Westphalian territory was established in International Relations and to look for equal presentation of other voices of peoples are the main objectives of this thesis. Historiography thus must be questioned about its representation of state-centric spatial conceptualisation. Anthropology also needs to be incorporated into International Relations so that other forms of spatial conceptualisation are heeded. For example, the discussions of transnational movements by Appadurai (1996) and Tangseefa (2007) were less state-centric and the voices of the peoples were more expressed. Appadurai (1996, p. 33) coined the term “ethnoscape” to describe the transnational movements of peoples away from their homes, such as Indian workers in the US, and Tangseefa described the plights of the Karens displaced because of the civil wars in Burma in the late 1990s. This thesis also recognises the nuanced motives of peoples’ movements that cut across state boundaries. The transnational framework of the scholars mentioned ranged from the ordinary diaspora. In Appadurai’s work, transnational peoples were those who worked in different nation-states voluntarily. In Tangseefa’s work, transnational peoples were those displaced peoples whose lives were threatened and forced to leave their homelands. Such considerations open opportunities

for debate to allow other silenced concepts of space to be theoretically heard that are discussed more in the following chapter in application to the Thai-Lao border after the Cold War.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter answered the third research question of the thesis that focused on the use of the concept of the territorial trap proposed by Agnew and Corbridge to criticise the existing literature in International Relations, with particular reference to political realism, regarding Thai-Lao border issues from when Laos became Lao PDR in 1975 to the end of the Cold War in 1989. To consider how the territorial trap in International Relations varied, International Relation literature was examined from 1954 to 1989 when the US and the Soviet Union competed ideologically in the region, and from 1989 to the present when economic liberalisation penetrated the communist states in Indochina. This examination was used to support the argument that the reification of the map monopolised by the elites, the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside, and the myth of the self-contained state never disappeared. This was because the geopolitical characteristics of self-claim for objectivity, separation of space and peoples, Western superiority justifying intervention, and provision for nationalistic advice to the state remained in the discipline during the past sixty years. Even theoretical consideration of historical relations, the broader social and economic structures of a hegemon, and changes in geopolitical order by a number of theorists did not erase the territorial trap.

This chapter sought solutions to enrich the ways out of the territorial trap proposed by Agnew and Corbridge to include a human dimension in theoretical discussions of the Thai-Lao border. It proposed that Ó Tuathail and Agnew's (1998) re-conceptualisation of geopolitics during the Cold War be taken into account to counter the monopoly of the border by the elites. Dalby's analysis of geopolitical legacy in the post-Cold War (1998) was proposed to be applied to the Thai-Lao border. This chapter argued that the Thai-Lao border was a colonial legacy of geopolitics that is still alive, even in the post-Cold War era. This resulted in the theoretical definition of the peoples who crossed the border who

did not conform to the Westphalian logic in a state-centric manner as refugees and terrorists. This contrasted with the transnational movements of those who belonged to the world neo-liberalism, such as businesspersons. Although the meaning of borders incorporated more voices of peoples, those on the ground are still missing.

This chapter proposed that an anthropological point of view provided a useful approach to border studies and should be included in International Relations. This allows an escape from the territorial trap and an inclusion of a human dimension in theoretical considerations. The anti-geopolitics concept of Routledge (1998) should be used to question the fact that historiography, the economic and social structures, and the geopolitical order of the Thai-Lao border have always been perceived according to the imaginative geography of the Europeans – Westphalian borders on Cartesian maps. It is thus the task of the following chapter to incorporate the analysis of more historical and anthropological literature into the Thai-Lao border discussion.

## Chapter 4

### **Challenges from historiography and anthropology to International Relations: Anti-geopolitics and a human dimension**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter answers the fourth research question of the thesis about the need to introduce a human dimension to the discipline to cope with the territorial trap in International Relations. It argues that overcoming the colonial legacy of spatial conceptualisation of geopolitics passed on to International Relations requires an approach from the anti-geopolitics of Routledge (1998).

Two steps similar to ideas of Jones (2006) are proposed to examine the neglect of the human dimension by International Relations regarding the Thai-Lao border after 1975. The first involves an analysis of anti-geopolitics scholars such as Said, Ó Tuathail, Agnew, Wilson and Donnan and Routledge in regard to spatial conceptualisation of the area. Said (1977) suggested that the colonial bias among academia should be examined critically as the European imaginative geography of Westphalian territorial borders was taken for granted and the voices of the peoples on the ground had been downgraded since 1954. Four sets of ideas from anti-geopolitics are used to criticise the conceptualisation by International Relations and historiography of the Thai-Lao border. Firstly, ocularcentrism that facilitated colonisation and influenced International Relations significantly needs to be more deeply examined as an extension of chapter 2.

Ó Tuathail's criticism of the geopolitical characteristics of white man supremacy, justification of colonisation in the past, and intervention of superpowers during the Cold War, is supported by Said's Orientalism. This Orientalism includes the white man superiority, the perception of a monolithic threat to the West, and the prioritised benefit of superpowers, especially the US. Orientalism was prominent especially between 1954 and 1975 when foreign intervention was academically justified. Though Laos became an independent state in 1954, the importance of the Thai-Lao border was not as emphasised as it was after 1975. Secondly, Orientalism became the second order when indigenous intellectuals of statecraft and scholars echoed it. For example, a number of Thai scholars reproduced the US discourse of anti-communism during the Cold War and this showed when the Thai-Lao border was conceptualised. This second order of Orientalism was especially evident when the Thai-Lao border was academically reified, especially by Thai scholars, as the line to separate the two ideological worlds of socialism-communism and liberalism-democracy. Thirdly, the geopolitical discourse analysis of Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998) is used to examine important metaphors that were significantly influenced by the elites and theoretically constituted changes in the meaning of the Thai-Lao border as a result of the second order of Orientalism. The metaphors and discourse, such as the Domino Theory, Thailand as a frontline state of the non-communist world, border closures, the territorial loss of Thailand, the Mekong as a river of friendship, and the changing of the battlefields to marketplaces, revealed the prioritised voices of the elites. Fourthly, the narrative of the silenced in the borderlands and transnationalism from below (Routledge, 1998; Wilson & Donnan, 1999) to provide space for geopolitics of the

peoples on the Thai-Lao border is discussed. Transnationalism from below, in history, in the area was comprised of Lao and Thai peoples along the border, the displaced peoples from Laos after 1975 who were attached to the previous regime, and the Hmong and others who did not have their own Westphalian state but had played a significant role since 1954. The post-geopolitics of Ó Tuathail (1997) is additionally used to examine the Thai-Lao border, showing that, despite more advanced telecommunication technology, more fluid political actors, and the de-territorialisation of political space resulting in changes to geopolitics in the post-Cold War era, the voices of the elites have still been theoretically prioritised. These four criticisms support and facilitate the projection of the voices of the marginalised peoples as anti-geopolitics in the next step.

The second step is to look for ways in which anti-geopolitics can promote a human dimension by the incorporation of literature from other related disciplines. Territorial borders in the Westphalian form influenced by geopolitics are still privileged and the centre of focus in traditional historiography. Consequently, historians have been caught in the territorial trap, similar to International Relations theorists. This section then presents the history of the borderlands and non-state space in anthropology that presents the voices of the peoples on the ground. It argues that Westphalian-based borders are not the only means of spatial conceptualisation in international politics. Various forms of spatial conceptualisation, such as twin cities along the Thai-Lao border in pre-colonial mandala times, are discussed as alternatives to a focus on the centres of Bangkok and Vientiane. The relations of state space and non-state space, such as the roles played by displaced peoples from lowland and highland Laos during the Cold War and post-Cold

War eras, are considered, and the ways in which the transnational movements of the peoples on the ground during the same periods in anthropology have bypassed, subverted, and avoided the border are presented. The chapter also examines transnationalism from below in historiography despite it being state-centric, and a more people-centric form in anthropology. Transnationalism in economic liberalisation was expected to benefit the peoples of the two states but only the elite few benefitted from it, and border crossings of marginalised peoples on the ground were poorly facilitated. The anthropologists' analyses of problems of human trafficking and illegal migrants from the peoples' points of view satisfactorily tackle the territorial trap. The voices of the peoples are not rejected, while those of the state are still theoretically presented, an unavoidable but also desirable situation.

This chapter outlines two connected themes to present the neglect of the human dimension by International Relations and overcomes it from historiography and anthropology perspectives. These themes are anti-geopolitics as a challenge to European imaginative geography of the Thai-Lao border in International Relations and historiography from 1954 to the present, and the human dimension in anthropology as anti-geopolitics.

**Anti-geopolitics as a challenge to European imaginative geography of the Thai-Lao border in International Relations and historiography**

Historiography from 1954 to 2014 is embedded with a Westphalian spatial

conceptualisation. Ashley's attack on realist International Relations was critical of this as state-centric historical accounts merely re-confirmed the territorial trap of the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside. Ashley called this trap "double effects" of "ritual of realism" in International Relations (1987, p. 421). That very trap theoretically led to other traps, such as the myth of the self-contained state and reification of the map monopolised by the elites. Thus historians have similar problems regarding these traps as mainstream International Relations scholars.

Spatial conceptualisation should be open to different voices so this section weaves four sets of criticism shared by anti-geopolitics scholars. The Orientalism of Said (1977) is used to criticise geopolitics that facilitated colonisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that in turn influenced the US after World War Two and its legacy in the discussion of the Thai-Lao border in International Relations and historiography. This Orientalism, called the second order of Orientalism by Said, influenced indigenous scholars and state practitioners. Next, the discourse analysis of Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998) follows to criticise the academic metaphors and rhetoric concerning the Thai-Lao border. Then, the post-Cold War geopolitics of Ó Tuathail (1997) that includes the transnationalism from below of Wilson and Donnan (1999) and the narrative of the silenced of Said (1998) and Routledge (1998) are discussed.

### *Orientalism on the Thai-Lao border*

The first characteristic of Orientalism used to examine the Thai-Lao border is the white man superiority. As an extension of the analysis in chapter 2, this western supremacy was

often found in International Relations, especially political realism, when the peoples of Indochina were perceived as less developed, less rational, and less human. For example, Ngo Dinh Diem, the President of South Vietnam in the late 1950s was described as “an Oriental despotic totalitarian” (Morgenthau, 1965, p. 21). Even the Indochinese elites were viewed as less rational because they were oriental. Another example was the dehumanising statement that “we could deprive the Viet Cong by herding peasants into strategic hamlets” (Morgenthau, 1965, p. 15). The word ‘herding’ had connotations of cattle and suggested the sense of ‘we’ being superior to the ‘Viet Cong.’ If one follows Said’s critique, Morgenthau’s bias was influenced by Orientalism that originated in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century passed on to the US educational institutions after World War Two. This feeling justified the US intervention, even though Morgenthau (1965) said he was against the military tactic of communist containment.

Second, monolithic communism perceived by the US statesmen was recognised in International Relations. For instance, Morgenthau (1965) warned the US president not to view communism as monolithic but the US intellectuals of statecraft in the 1950s who advised the president were inclined to view global communists as one single unit, despite Chinese and Soviet communists being different (Rystad, 1990). Morgenthau’s warning can be supported by Kissinger’s remarks. As the state officer himself, Kissinger (2011) blamed Eisenhower and Dulles for viewing communist in monolithic entity. The 1947 Truman Doctrine and Dulles’ position in 1954 to oppose communism were successfully implemented in Europe but not in Southeast Asia (Morgenthau, 1965; Kissinger, 2011) because the threat in Europe from the Soviet was mainly military. The threat in Southeast Asia, from China, however, was not only military but also political. China had significantly influenced Southeast Asia for centuries. It was therefore difficult for the US to contain China simply using the mechanism of SEATO with its troops in Thailand and South Vietnam (Morgenthau, 1965). Morgenthau suggested that the US intellectuals of statecraft be aware of difference among communist states that were satellites of the Soviet Union. This awareness would help the US win the hearts and minds of some moderate/smaller communist states and to compete with the Soviet Union and China (Morgenthau, 1965).

Third, American national interest was prioritised and the failure to contain communism in Indochina was regarded as a threat to the US. Morgenthau said that the US foreign policy should be to contain communism and “territorial loss to communism” was unacceptable (1965, p. 33). In line with Herz (1959), Morgenthau’s words can be interpreted as if Southeast Asian states were already under the US sphere. Thus Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam needed to be defended, as these states were “periphery military containment” (Morgenthau, 1965, p. 77). Nevertheless, it is worth asking if containment of communism in Indochina really benefitted the US. Ó Tuathail and Agnew (1998) questioned if world geopolitics during the Cold War was dominated by a few people. Those few were the intellectuals of statecraft such as Kennan and Kissinger who dominated American foreign policy. A significant number of American soldiers were then sent to die in Southeast Asia, and it was not only the voices of the peoples in Indochina that were silenced, but the American subalterns were also muted.

Among non-Thai and non-Lao historians, Orientalism is not as strong as in International Relations scholars, especially those in political realism. The sense of monolithic others and concern for the superpowers’ benefits, both the US and the Soviet Union, can hardly be found. For example, though Kissinger (2011), similar to Morgenthau (1965), criticised the Eisenhower administration for viewing the Soviet and Chinese communists as monolithic, similar criticisms, ironically, could be applied to Kissinger himself. Dommen (1985) criticised Kissinger’s perception of monolithic communism that he viewed the Soviets and Vietnamese as one single unit. Moscow could not always control Hanoi’s policy and Kissinger hoped that his diplomatic skills in lobbying the Soviet and Indochinese statesmen in the 1973 Vientiane Agreement would guarantee a neutral Laos after the withdrawal of US troops. However, Hanoi was more ambitious than just having Laos as a neutral state. What happened in 1975 could be called the second order of Orientalism, because Vietnamese and Lao elites applied spatial conceptualisation of Westphalian territory with their states. Laos became Lao PDR after the US withdrawal while Vietnamese troops remained in Lao territory.

Historians were aware of the fact that the US personnel working in Laos during the Cold War were imbued with the idea of western supremacy. For example, in reference to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), whose work was to support refugees in terms of medical and basic needs, Stuart-Fox said that the organisation treated “ the Lao much as the French had done, as incompetent, lazy and childlike” (1997, p. 154). Whether Stuart-Fox’s accusation was true or not is hard to prove, but it was a sign that Western historians critically questioned the colonial bias that remained in the 1960s.

Stuart-Fox further recognised that peoples on the ground had to suffer, though Laos was not “directly involved” in the Vietnam War (1997, p. 135). The US intervention was possibly a result of American and Lao elites’ decision, and peoples had to bear the consequence. Stuart-Fox (1997) said that 30,000 were killed, injured, and displaced and casualties were 200,000 in total. Historical accounts were neutrally reported but the tone was sympathetic to the plight of the Hmong, marking the beginning of an awareness of the human dimension in historiography that could be incorporated into International Relations.

However, when it came to the issue of spatial management, Westphalian borders are frequently presupposed when some historians tell history. They were aware that before the arrival of France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century *mandala* was a more prominent form of spatial conceptualisation in the region (Evans, 2002). Indeed, maps in the Cartesian style were still used to support the fact that the space presented was objective, as found in the work of Le Bar and Suddard (1960, p. 27-37), Dommen (1985, p.vii), and Evans (2002, vii, p. 230). Ocularcentrism was additionally anachronistically employed by Stuart-Fox to explain the pre-colonial space in Indochina. The Lan Xang kingdom – the ancient state of Laos – covered the area of the North-East Thailand nowadays (1997, p. 17). Even though Stuart-Fox neutrally explained history, this ocularcentric map implying the imagination of Lao national space in the past was capable of igniting Lao nationalism. There is no evidence that this kind of map was used by the policy-makers of Lao PDR during the Cold War. However, the information in the map used by Stuart-Fox was in

accord with the accusation by Burutpat (1988) that the Lao government planned to annex North-East Thailand in the early 1980s. This map could be exploited as a second order of Orientalism, similar to the French map drawn in 1907 used by Lao PDR, and American aerial maps drawn in 1978 used by Thailand to ‘objectively claim sovereignty’ over disputed areas of Rom Klao Village in 1987.

*The second order of Orientalism*

The second order of Orientalism was found in what Said called “intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States” (1977, p. 322). This happened among the policy-makers in Thailand, Laos, and South Vietnam in the 1950s. For example, the US had its chosen men, such as General Phoumi Nosavan, to promote an anti-communism campaign in Laos (Stuart-Fox, 1997). The Thai scholar Ladavalya was also a good example of this characteristic among academia, though he was not educated in the US but Canada. Ladavalya (1970) spoke the language of communism containment similar to the US Secretary of State in the 1950s. Ladavalya even maintained the conservative characteristic of anti-communism in the time of Dulles as he disagreed with the change in the US foreign policy in the early 1960s. He was against the stance of the Kennedy administration that favored a coalition government in Laos that allowed space for a communist faction, fearing that it would later threaten Thailand (Ladavalya, 1970).

Similarly, spatial conceptualisation in historiography reflected the voices of the elites, especially when it was sponsored by the Thai and Lao states. As a result, the second order of Orientalism was very strong, and was supported by Winichakul’s account of critical historiography (Winichakul, 1994). For example, he criticised mainstream historians who took territorial borders for granted. Firstly, the ocularcentric map was used as a tactic to boost Thai nationalism and repeated by both historians and International Relations scholars. To assume that Siam lost territories to France meant that Thailand de jure had possessed Lao territory before colonisation. This logic cannot be applied as the Westphalian borders were established by the time France explored the Mekong. The discourse of lost territories can be found in the works of Thai historians such as Tej

Bunnag, Kachorn Sukhabhanij and Rong Sayamanonda (Winichakul, 1994), and was passed on from the work of Prince Damrong, the father of Thai historiography (Damrong in Sirikrai, 1979), and Luang Vichit, the pioneer of Thai chauvinism during World War Two (Winichakul, 1994). They took for granted the shift from mandala spatial conceptualisation to Westphalian and hence were trapped in the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of the Thai state. Secondly, the accounts of the 1893 boundary drawing were told by the authors mentioned as if Thailand was the only party exploited by the French colonialists. In those narratives, Siam was a lamb and France was painted as a wolf. However, the tiny kingdoms along the Mekong viewed France as a wolf and “Siam as a lesser wolf” (Winichakul, 1994, p. 148). This view in Thai historiography was not accepted by the Lao Ngaosyvathn (1985). Winichakul (1994) argued that the success of administrative reform was told as a process of emancipation of Siam that silenced other tiny kingdoms. This can be further investigated as it was not only those other tiny kingdoms that were silenced but also other peoples from the highland non-state spaces called by Scott as *zomia* (2009) who never had a chance to present their spatial conceptualisation in historiography and International Relations.

The transition of the historical focus from lowland Lao to other highland peoples happened in Lao historiography in 1975. The version dominated by Lao ethnicity during the Royal Lao Government between 1954 and 1975 was replaced with the Marxist-Leninist version after 1975 that allowed more space for peoples from the highlands (Pholsena, 2006). The former version was influenced by traditional Lao historians, such as Maha Sila Viravong (1964), and was similar to Thai traditional historiography that emphasised the common movement of Thai-Lao ethnicity southward from China. Undoubtedly, Lao greatness in the past was more emphasised than in the Thai version. Nevertheless, such historiography speaks for the voices of the lowland Lao that completely silenced those from the highlands. The Marxist-Leninist version of historiography after 1975, on the other hand, emphasised more ‘national space’ of Lao PDR. Its promotion of equality in line with Marxist-Leninist doctrine included other groups of ethnic minorities (Pholsena, 2006). This thesis argues that even though the Marxist historiography included the voices of peoples from highlands, the prioritised

form of 'national space' was still the Westphalia one promoted by the elites from the Pathet Lao Party. Such historiography said that between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries the Mon-Khmer lived in the area that is Lao PDR today. Lao from the north then moved in and lived with the Mon-Khmers. Others ethnic groups followed afterwards. In the present day, the peoples from different groups of Lao, Hmong, Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burman, and Yao are citizens of Lao PDR and co-exist in the state of Laos (Ministry of Information and Culture 1996 in Pholsena). This was in line with the geopolitical characteristic of separation of peoples and space of Westphalia. No matter what ethnicity one was, once a Lao citizen, one should be loyal to the state. The loyalty to the state was in line with the loyalty to the national space of the Westphalian state. The logic of this national space repeats the traditional geopolitical characteristics of separation of space and people. It was the second order of Orientalism, as the elites from the party reified the form of space in Marxist-Leninist doctrine to promote equality among citizens.

#### *Geopolitics discourse on the Thai-Lao border*

There were a number of metaphors that described the Thai-Lao border, producing feelings of 'Selves versus Others' or 'Goods versus Bads.' The most important metaphor found in International Relations literature is the domino metaphor, caught within the territorial trap of self-contained state myth, common in the 1960s and 1970s when the US intervened in the region. The historian Arthur J. Dommen (1985) also employed the domino metaphor to explain the US intervention in Indochina. The state perceived as a domino led to another important metaphor that suggested the territorial trap of dichotomous understanding of inside/outside when Thailand was described as "the frontline state" (Paribatra, 1984, p. 30). Stuart-Fox's historiography (1997) did not use this term but he explained that after the withdrawal of the US troops, Thailand directly faced Indochina under Vietnam's hegemony. The ASEAN bloc, together with Thailand, strongly disagreed with Vietnam's military presence, under the Soviet supervision, in Lao PDR and Kampuchea. This metaphor hinted that Thailand might be the next domino to fall after the fall of Laos to communism. If anything bad originated from the communist states, the Thai state would be the first to bear the consequences. Indeed, Thailand faced

displaced peoples from Indochina and border clashes with Lao PDR from time to time. The metaphor 'frontline' gave a clear picture that presented the voice of liberalism-democracy that detested socialism-communism. Such rhetoric only represented the voices of the elites but affected a significant number of the marginalised peoples. To defend the 'frontline' of the non-communist world, Thailand's territorial integrity was important and revealed the territorial trap.

Cultural discourse can be similarly found as a number of scholars, especially from Thailand, stated that Laos used to be Thai territory but was lost to France in 1893. This loss to foreigners in the colonial days was enough and more losses to the communists were intolerable. Hence, the present territorial integrity of the Thai state had to be preserved. Chapter 2 indicated that this discourse was very influential in Thai society and was examined in the section on the second order of Orientalism. For example, Burutpat (1988) not only repeated the traditional chauvinism regarding the territorial loss of Thailand to France in 1893 but also accused the Lao government after 1975 of planning to annex the then sixteen North-East provinces of Thailand, where a significant number of Thai-Lao people lived. This discourse was totally rejected by Ngaosyvathn (1985) who represented the voice of Lao ethnicity, accusing Thai traditional historiography of being a half-truth. Furthermore, discourse about border closures was often found when military clashes occurred (Ngaosyvathn, 1985). These closures suggested a more liberal land versus a totalitarian land, hence more civilised against barbaric, because of Lao PDR being a land-locked state needing a sea-route for transport (Viraphol, 1985). It was often contested among academia that if the Thai-Lao border was closed, the Thai state would gain the upper hand at the negotiating table (Burutapat, 1988; Kutranon, 1982). Again, the decision to close the Thai-Lao border relied on the elites of the two states (Stuart-Fox, 1997). Such decisions affected not only the economic ties of the peoples along the Thai-Lao border (Ngaosyvathan & Ngaosyvathan, 1994) but also displaced peoples in the zone. This thesis argues that some people benefitted from the border closures. For example, closed borders provided a safe haven for displaced peoples who stayed on the Thai side waiting to cross to conduct military operations in Lao territory. Also, when the transportation of 393 strategic goods to Lao PDR, including medicines and fuel, was

banned by the Thai state, some people may have sold banned goods at high prices on the black market. This did not pressure statesmen who decided foreign policy but the marginalised peoples faced continued economic hardship.

During times of less tension, the discourse of the Mekong as the river of friendship arose. The policy of normalisation with Lao PDR after the appointment of moderate right-wing Thai Prime Minister Kriengsak Chomanan led to the 1979 Kaysone-Kriengsak Joint Communiqué. The Mekong, which comprises 1108 kilometres of the Thai-Lao border, was proposed to be the river of friendship (Jiwalai, 1994). The discourse was agreed between the statesmen of the two states for two reasons (Stuart-Fox, 1997). The first was the resettlement in third countries of a number of former right wing Lao militants which eliminated the Lao right-wing from Thai territory and the CPT from Lao territory was no longer supported by the Lao government (Jiwalai, 1994). The second was a more benign policy of the Thai state towards communism (Stuart-Fox, 1997). Such discourse, in International Relations and historiography, still repeated the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside when each state's internal affairs needed be respected, downgrading the voices of the marginalised.

In the late 1980s, the Cold War discourse ended as the intellectuals of statecraft of the Thai state no longer viewed communists from Indochina as a threat. The discourse of “turning the battlefields into marketplaces” commonly reflected in International Relations marked the end of the Cold War. Instead of being perceived as a fence during the Cold War, the Thai-Lao border became the gateway to communist Indochina (Sirikrai, 2007, p. 359). This thesis argues that such discourse, despite the doubts of Stuart-Fox (1997) and Kislenko (2002) about benefits to the logging businesses of certain elite classes, introduced the new geopolitics seen as the triumph of economic liberalism.

*Transnational from below during the Cold War and the post-Cold War era*

Historians recognised transnationalism of the peoples along the Thai-Lao border during the Cold War. However, the territorial trap still remained because there was too much

focus on the history of the centre of the state (Donnan & Wilson, 1999). Similar to International Relations literature, the transnational movements of history were state-centrally categorised into two groups, political and economic.

The first group is the network of operation of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) that cut across the Thai-Lao border. Originally, CPT was supported by communism from Beijing, while Pathet Lao was supervised by Hanoi. Undoubtedly, the Sino-Soviet conflicts heavily influenced the transnational role of CPT, especially the plan for Lao irredentism, an ambition of establishing the Lao state that covers the area of Lao PDR and the North-East Thailand. At first, when Sino-Soviet conflicts were not tense, and before the Chinese ‘teaching a lesson’ to Vietnam in 1979<sup>11</sup>, CPT militants were trained in Lao territory and North Vietnam. Military supports were sent from Lao PDR along the Mekong River to Thailand (Stuart-Fox, 1979). The Thai-Lao border was crucial as it was the route along which Vietnam asserted its influence. North-East Thailand was the area in which the communist Laos planned to establish “the greater Lao state” (Stuart-Fox, 1979, p. 348). This plan was supported by Communist ideology pronounced by CPT based on a ‘right of autonomy’ to ‘various nationalities’. The narrative that Lao people in the pre-colonial days were herded to the West bank of the Mekong by the Siamese was cited to support the Lao irredentism and the establishment of the greater Lao state (Stuart-Fox, 1979). Even though Stuart-Fox was aware of the lack of evidence to prove this claim for Lao irredentism, repeating this kind of autonomy implied the presupposition of Westphalian state. Thus historiography as such did not erase the territorial trap. Stuart-Fox recognised the ties between CPT and Pathet Lao Party as transnationalism, but the aim of such transnationalism was to establish their own state. It meant a dismemberment of the Thai state and the annexation of the West bank of Mekong to Lao PDR. Stuart-Fox’s awareness of Lao irredentism confirmed that Burutpat’s claim, mentioned in the previous sections, was also recognised in academia.

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<sup>11</sup> In order to retaliate for Vietnam’s invasion of Kampuchea, China’s major ally in Southeast Asia, in 1979, the then leader of China Deng Xiaoping said “...it may be necessary to teach Vietnam a lesson”. After that Chinese forces invaded Northern Vietnam.

In turn, after 1975, people moving from Lao PDR to Thailand comprised the lowland Lao who served as civil servants in the previous regime and fled to Thai territory waiting re-settlement in third countries. This group followed the military officers who fled earlier, as they could not stand the socialist regime's ideological policy. Some civil servants tried to live under the new regime but they were forced to enter re-education camps that brainwashed people with Marxist-Leninist doctrine, little different to prison. These people formed another wave of displaced peoples that hit Thai territory in the late 1970s (Stuart-Fox, 1997). Dommen (1985) said that military resistance in the 1980s from Thai territory was supported by Thailand and sometimes China which was against Vietnamese troops in Lao PDR. According to Dommen (1985, p. 118), "the most effective" resistance group was the Lao People's National Liberation Front, as they had transnational contacts with Lao in Cambodia and Thailand. There was also political resistance from the Hmong who either stayed in Laos or fled to Thai territory. They remained in contact and fought the Lao government. Even in the late 1980s, the Hmong militants were reported by Stuart-Fox to be actively fighting in the north of Lao PDR. They maintained the transnational ties with displaced Hmong in Thailand though Bangkok later closed two Hmong refugee camps to improve inter-state relations with Vientiane (Stuart-Fox, 1997).

Secondly, transnationalism from below described the farmers who opposed the economic policy of socialism launched by the Lao government in 1978 and escaped to Thai territory (Evans, 2002; Stuart-Fox, 1997). The Thai-Lao border became a space for resistance (Scott, 2009). During times of hardship such as war and food shortages, different classes had different ways of using this space for resistance. While the elites moved to the centre of the state, the peoples on the ground moved to the margins. This occurred when the defeated Chinese Kuo Min Tang fled the Chinese communists to highlands in Southeast Asia (Scott, 2009). In Laos, the farmers likewise fled to the Thai-Lao border where displaced people camps were set up. Stuart-Fox (1997) realised that the farmers did not just flee but, as a protest against the government's plan that required them to hand in agricultural product, killed their animals and destroyed their crops. Such destruction of agricultural production did not help relieve the food shortages in Lao PDR but allowed space for illegal rice imports from Thailand (Stuart-Fox, 1997).

In the post-Cold War era, Ó Tuathail (1997) identified three characteristics of post-Cold war geopolitics, the rapidity, extensiveness, and intensity of communication, more fluid political actors, and de-territorialisation of political space. These three characteristics allowed more space for transnationalism from below as anti-geopolitics. Peoples along the Thai-Lao border played more significant roles in interstate politics and became more theoretically heard because of the following reasons. First, the flow of communication increased because of the development of technology. In the past, the Cartesian map was always manually presented but this ocularcentrism was transformed on to an electronic screen, providing rapid, intensive, and extensive information, especially among the Hmong who lived in the US and Thailand. Also, geopolitical discussion was no longer confined to state officers but extended to mass media and consumers. For example, the Wang Tao incident on the Thai-Lao border in 2000 was aired live by Thai television news reports. Because TV was so ready to report the attack real time, Lao state officers condemned Thai TV for conspiring with the anti-Lao government (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). This use of advanced technology caused deterioration in Thai-Lao relations at that time. The second characteristic of post-Cold War geopolitics was the increased fluidity of the political actors. The dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in more nation-states in Europe and Asia, and global politics became more uncertain compared with Cold War geopolitics. Reductions in what was once the Soviet military, financial, and economic support were reflected in Indochina. Lao PDR turned to ASEAN and Thailand for support, resulting in increased economic activity along the Thai-Lao border (Paribatra, 2013). Despite the increase in trade and investment across the border being welcomed, the trans-state insurgents and refugee movements were still downgraded. Paribatra (2013, p. 100) said these were defined as “transnational threats” to the Thai state in the “new international context.” The third characteristic of post-Cold War geopolitics was the increase in non-state actors in interstate politics that led to de-territorialisation of political space. Ó Tuathail (1997) believed that transnationalism should not be limited to neo-liberals but national resistance. For example, the connections of the Hmong, as an anti-Lao government group, were not only based in Lao PDR but also in Thailand, the US, France, and Australia (Evans, 2002). Their movements cut

across state boundaries as attacks on Lao official places often occurred in between 1999 and 2000 (Pookongchi, 2003). Various bombs in 1999 in Vientiane were blame on the Hmong transnational networks. The Wang Tao incident was an example; other attacks are the insurgency in Northern Lao PDR that Vietnam had to intervene militarily (Pookongchi, 2003). Additionally, the marginalised peoples' movements along the border were still obstructed by the state mechanism in the era of economic liberalisation (High, 2009). This thesis argued that they could be called the transnationalism from below. After 1989, economic relations between Thailand and Lao PDR was expected to blossom. The Thai-Lao border became the line that separated the economically rapid Thailand and the economically slow Lao PDR (Rigg, 2005). Doubts whether economic liberalisation really benefitted marginalised peoples should be academically noted. Border movements of peoples on the ground were downgraded in historiography sponsored by the state, similar to mainstream International Relations, but their voices were heard more in anthropology.

### **Thai-Lao border in anthropology**

Though a less state-centric interpretation is expected in a more people-focused discipline such as anthropology, some anthropologists are still caught within a state-centric framework and risk being caught within the territorial trap. This is true when state policy advice is generated from anthropological research funded by the state. This thesis, however, argues that to totally reject state-centric spatial conceptualisation and replace it with other forms results in being caught in a hierarchical reversal. It means that to be critical of the Westphalian spatial conceptualisation and replace it with other forms would ironically be the repetition of the state-centrism; other forms of spatial conceptualisation would be similar as 'the new prioritised Westphalia space' and this thesis is trying to avoid that. To add the human dimension means to allow more voices of the peoples to be theoretically heard and that is the objective of this thesis. This section thus presents how effectively anthropological literature can deal with the territorial trap resulting from the spatial conceptualisation of the Orientalist geopolitics discussed in the previous sections. It argues that anthropology related to the Thai-Lao border, despite the inability to completely escape from the trap, is anti-geopolitical in itself as the voices of peoples are

heard. This section adds the human dimension from anthropology to International Relations by presenting the historiography of the borderlands and its relations with non-state space, Cold War transnationalism, and post-Cold War transnationalism.

### *Historiography in anthropology*

#### Historiography of the borderlands

When the history of the Thai-Lao border was discussed in anthropology, the territorial trap was dealt with effectively, as found in work by Pholsena and Banomyong (2006). This was because the history of the borderlands, such as the Thai province of Nan and the Lao province of Luang Prabang, were examined, instead of a focus on Bangkok and Vientiane characteristic of mainstream historiography. The two provinces are strategically located on the Mekong, a major common transport route from Southern China to Laos and Siam before the colonial era. The French Indochinese administration however, tried to block this route by setting the Siamese-Indochinese border, but peoples' movements in the area still occurred. The second example of the history of borderlands is that of Thai Mukdahane and Lao Savannakhet (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). This historical account explained that peoples crossed the Mekong as the boundary everyday because of kinship and cultural ties, as Lao-Thai people were the majority of the Mukdahane population. Economic incentives, especially in post-Cold War geopolitics, further added to the cultural affinity that attracted Lao people to cross the border from Savannakhet to Mukdahane, movements that are elaborated more in the following sections.

The history of the borderlands of Ubon Ratchathani and Champassak was further outlined by Ian Baird (2015), a geographer whose research methodology resembles anthropology and anti-geopolitics. Through an examination of the colonial connection of the twin cities, and their relations with the Mon-Khmer peoples from the Boloven Plateau that resisted both Siam and French imaginative geography of Westphalian state in 1893, this thesis argues that Baird (2013) was successful in dealing with the territorial trap. Even

though the geopolitical characteristics such as the Cartesian map that presented the separation of space and peoples and the self-claim for objectivity was found in his work, it did not prioritise the Westphalian national space but presented this space as a form of mandala “city state” of Champassak that covered both banks of the Mekong (Baird, 2013, p. 258). Similarly, High (2009) told the history of the borderlands in Thai Ubon Ratchathani and Lao Champassak. She said that Champassak had different concepts of the border with different ancient states in the pre-colonial era. To the West, the border of Lao Champassak and Bangkok Court was determined by mandala rules. The king of Champassak had hierarchical relations with the king of Bangkok. To the south, the Cambodian community was separated from Champassak by “no-man’s land” (High, 2009, p. 82). High did not mention that it could be described as *zomia* in which the Mon-Khmer lived as interpreted by Scott (2009), as her research question led in other directions. However, her work was developed in the studies of other anthropologists.

Surprisingly, even though High (2009) recognised the borderlands history of Ubon Ratchathani and Champassak, the dichotomous understanding of the inside/outside of the state was revealed as she repeated the discourse of the territorial loss of the Thai state. She said that Champassak used to belong to Siam but was lost to France in 1893. However, this thesis insists that such a claim is *ex-post facto* because, before the 1893 Franco-Siamese Treaty, there was no modern legal border demarcation. This claim of territory loss was rejected by Ngaosyvathn (1985), labeling it as a product of Thai chauvinism in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Winichakul (1994, p. 7) added that because of the lack of criticality in Thai “Orientalism” in historiography that was passed on to Western scholarship, this discourse of territorial loss remained even in the work of a critical anthropologist such as High. This thesis argues that, to apply Said’s term, this second order of Orientalism in Thai traditional historians significantly influenced Western scholars. Similarly, the second order of Orientalism of the Thai state for the claim of territorial loss was reflected in Solomon (1969). No one can be critical all the time, especially with discourse that was repeated for more than one hundred years. Nevertheless, it is a surprise that, while Solomon (1969) recognised the transition from *mandala* to Westphalia and even the non-state zone in the highlands, and while High

(2009) recognised the criticality of the work of Ngaosyvathn and Winichakul, both still repeated such an ex-post facto claim.

#### Non-state space as a space for resistance

Peoples from highlands regularly had contact with peoples from the lowlands. In the meantime, peoples from the lowlands used the highlands as the space for political refuge and resistance (Scott, 2009). Scott called this “political symbiosis” (2009, p. 31). This differed from most International Relations literature that prioritised peoples from state-space. For example, during the Cold War, the Hmong people had contact with lowland peoples and they helped American CIA fight a number of battles with communists. Leepreecha (2011) was aware of the fact that the Hmong had no choice about their involvement in military operations as, despite being stateless, the province of Xieng Khouang where most of them lived was strategically important. Viet Minh from North Vietnam wanted to use the Hmong area as the beginning of the Ho Chi Minh Trail as a highway to transport military and weaponry to attack the Vietnamese pro-American regime in the South. Therefore, the US chose the Hmong in Xieng Khouang to fight against Viet Minh (Leepreecha, 2011). There were attempts by the US to persuade hill peoples in the South such as the Kha to join the anti-communist campaign. However, it was not successful, if compared with the campaign with the Hmong and the Yao in the north, as a number of Kha people, instead, joined Pathet Lao Party to fight with the Royal Lao Government and the covert military operation of the US and Thailand (Gunn, 1990).

A reverse situation occurred in times of hardship such as civil wars and economic depression (Scott, 2009). Marginalised peoples from the lowlands made use of the non-state space as means of resistance from the pre-colonial days to the Cold War era. For example, Rom Klao Village, during the Cold War, was an area once controlled by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) to maintain contact with communist China and Lao PDR from 1968 to 1982 (Theravit & Semyeam, 2002). After the collapse of CPT, due to the policy of national amnesty offered to former communist members, a lot of them settled in Rom Klao Village. At the same time, however, the Hmong fled Lao PDR to the

same area. This made the Lao government more suspicious because the Hmong once helped the US fight against Pathet Lao (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). This was the reason why the mountainous *zomia* of the Thai-Lao border was very sensitive and led to border conflict in the late 1980s.

### *Cold War transnationalism*

This thesis proposes to use the terms separation, marginalisation, assimilation, and integration adopted from Neuliep (2003) to describe the nature of transnationalism from below in Lao PDR during the Cold War. ‘Separation’ as a description of displaced peoples meant that the government in the host state maintains contact with that group in the home state. This is a complicated issue as this situation in the Thai-Lao border context no longer exists. For example, at the peak of the Cold War conflict, the CPT contained a significant number of Lao people with Thai citizenship who called themselves Lao, and Lao PDR was perceived as their host state. Because a number of them were granted amnesty by the Thai state in the early 1980s, this description could not be applied with them. ‘Marginalisation’ was used to describe Lao, Hmong and possibly Yao people who fled Lao PDR after 1975 and stayed in camps in Thailand. A number of anthropologists examined the fact that both groups of peoples who fled Lao PDR were marginalised. For example, the anthropology of High (2009) emphasised the movement of the marginalised during the Cold War. Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvathn (1994, p. 71) said that the Thai state entrenched the dichotomous understanding of the Thai-Lao border after 1975 by presenting it as the line that separated the two ideological worlds. The Thai-state imposed “blockade, embargo, closed frontiers, abusive taxes, unfair transport fees” and 393 items including consumer goods and fuel were not allowed to be legally transported to land-locked Lao PDR. Yet High said that to enforce control over the border meant to connect peoples. The closed border was exploited by right wing militants displaced from Lao PDR, as the Thai territory became their safe haven. At times, they crossed the border to attack the communist government. High termed it as “the movement of the marginal” (High, 2009, p. 28).

Additionally, Leepreecha (2011) said that the involvement and withdrawal of the US forces in Indochina was not the only cause for the Hmong displacement. The Yao from highlands suffered similar situations that they helped the US fight a number of battles against communists, but had to be displaced after the US withdrawal (Gunn, 1990). In 1980s, there were 8,000 Yaos in refugee camps in Thai territory. However, their transnational ties were not obvious if compared with the Hmong. To turn the clock back, colonisation that led to the emergence of modern states in Southeast Asia should also be blamed. Leepreecha argued the displacement resulted from the map in an ocularcentric style in the colonial era. The Cartesian map was drawn so that state space was separated by sovereigns to exercise their power over subjects and it adhered to the rules of watersheds and thalwegs regardless of cultural maps (Leepreecha, 2011). Those cultural maps were the indigenous ways of life such as the lowlands attached to mandala spatial logic and those outside mandala in highlands replaced by the Westphalian form of space after 1893 on the Thai-Lao border. Its length of 1810 kilometres is separated by thalwegs for 1108 kilometers, and watersheds for 702. When peoples crossed the border, they had to ask for permission according to international law, otherwise they were considered as illegal immigrants (Leepreecha, 2011). Afterwards, they were described as refugees. The Hmong who did not have their own state, and some who did were later stripped of their citizenship, were always regarded as illegal immigrants and refugees. Information from United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicated that from 1975 to 1995, there were 320,865 displaced peoples from lowland and highland Lao PDR. The transnationalism of the Hmong can be explained in that they had ties with their Hmong fellows in a number nation-states. For example, Ban Vinai, a village in Thai territory, was one of the base that connected with Hmong in Long Cheng, Lao PDR in 1978 (Gunn, 1990). Moreover, there were other Hmong networks such as in France, the US and Yunnan China. Gunn stressed that attention must be paid to the Yunnan base as it became the support area for the Hmong during the time of the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Vietnamese conflict. As China turned to support the Hmong to undermine the Soviet bloc in Indochina, the Hmong as anti-Lao government was an important factor in the early 1980s. There were then 2.9 million Hmong living within an autonomous area in China perceived as a threat to Lao PDR (Gunn, 1990). In the mean time, in Thailand, Hmong

contributed to the formation of the United Lao National Liberation Front, together with other lowland Laos as an opposition in exile to the communist regime in Vientiane. However, the death of Phoumi Nosavan in 1985 weakened the movement significantly (Gunn, 1990).

When the Hmong people interacted with other state actors during the Cold War, the norm of state was often privileged as they tended to be termed as refugees and terrorists. Even in anthropology, state-centrism was found when Chanthavanich (2011) reported comments from the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs in the 1980s, Siddhi Savetsila, that refugees from Indochina, including the Hmong, were a burden on the Thai state. Because displaced peoples were perceived as a threat (Chanthavanich, 2011), once they crossed the Thai-Lao border, three steps of state practice were taken. First, humane deterrence was applied as displaced peoples were detained, then later forced/requested to return to their supposedly home state. Second, a resettlement program in third countries was offered to the displaced peoples. Thirdly, voluntary repatriation was offered to them. The state, theoretically, did not listen if the place where the peoples had escaped from threatened their lives. As a result, peoples on the ground tended to be completely silenced. Meanwhile, the second and the third methods allowed peoples' voices to be heard as they were able to choose whether they wanted to resettle in a third country or go back to where they were from (Chanthavanich, 2011). This thesis argues that the first method privileged the security of the state that people viewed as illegal immigrants needed to be deported. Statesmen defined the clear-cut line of the two states, Thailand and Lao PDR.

The anthropology of Chanthavanich recorded the voices of the Hmong through interviews. Those who fled Lao PDR after 1975 did not want to go back as to return possibly meant death and/or persecution (Chanthavanich, 2011). Many of them were reluctant to join the resettlement in third countries program. In 1986, though the majority of displaced peoples from Indochina wanted to resettle in third countries, only 47% of the Hmong people wanted to join the programme (Chanthavanich, 2011). They said they wanted to stay as displaced people in the temporary shelter area in Thai territory for

political reasons. Those political reasons were related to the Hmong militants who fought a significant number of battles with the army of Lao PDR in Lao territory in the 1980s and 1990s. In anthropology, the voice of the state is still there while the voices of the peoples, the Hmong, are not ignored. Nevertheless, the mechanism of states, such as Thailand and Lao PDR, as well as the international mechanism of UN, to decide who should be returned to their home state, who is qualified to be granted the status of refugees, and who should join resettlement programmes appeared to be privileged in Chanthavanich's work.

Third, the term 'assimilation' described the Hmong and Lao who fled after 1975 and later joined resettlement programmes to third countries such as the US, New Zealand, France, Australia, and French Guyana (Chanthavanich, 2011). For example, 44,561 Lao fled to France and 225,000 went to the US (Souvannavong, 1999). Souvannavong (1999) explored displaced Lao people who were former civil servants, military officers, and businesspersons, and found that, at first, they did not apply for French citizenship as they expected their exile to be temporary. However, after two decades, most of them were granted French citizenship. Since some still kept their Lao citizenship, the next definition of 'integration' could also be used to describe them. Similarly, integration could be applied to those who have dual citizenship, such as some of the Lao-Thai people who participated in the Wang Tao incident in 2000. These groups, in Thailand, France and the US, maintain transnational contact among themselves (Theeravit & Semyeam, 2002). Their political movements existed, though they did not threaten the stability of Lao PDR. For instance, in 1977, a Lao association existed to help newcomers who had fled Lao PDR to France and wished to maintain a Lao culture there (Souvannavong, 1999). A political objective was also indicated. The association was comprised of civil servants and military officers in the former regime with the hope to overthrow the communist government back home but Lao PDR has still been stable until the present day. Some of these four terms of transnational from below remained even after the Cold War and are discussed in the post-Cold War transnationalism section.

Since colonial times, spatial conceptualisation has been monopolised by the elites and an awareness of this is the first step in tackling the spatial conceptualisation of the peoples that cut across state boundaries. For example, France was the first colonial country that drew the map of Laos, in modern geography style, during its colonial heyday (Leepreecha, 2011). Such a colonial legacy remained in both state practice mainstream International Relations during the Cold War. For the case of displaced Hmong, Leepreecha and Chanthavanich emphasised the voices of peoples on the ground. Both spoke for the voices of the peoples, whether or not they wanted to join the state mechanism of dealing with displaced peoples, such as repatriation and/or resettlement in third countries. High further indicated that the Thai-Lao border as the fence that obstructed the movements of marginalised peoples was common during the Cold War. At the end of the Cold War, more liberal economic developments turned the border into a bridge, improving the hopes of the peoples on the ground to have louder voices. However, for the poor, the border was still a fence but this fact was often played down in International Relations as the elites were the discipline's only focus.

### *Post-Cold War transnationalism*

#### Subversion of the elites in transnational trade on the Thai-Lao border

The 1987 Rom Klao military dispute was thought to have occurred because of the illegal logging financed by Thai businesspersons who asked local Thai military officers for protection while the trees were felled. The logging may have infringed the unclear Thai-Lao border, depending on the version of the map being used. However, the Thai military officers' presence in the area led to border clashes at interstate level (Stuart-Fox, 1997). When such illegal activities were authorised by statesmen, claims of the defence of territorial integrity were made and the use of force was regarded as legitimate by state officers.

The discourse about turning the battlefield into marketplaces was similarly suspected by political science and International Relations scholars like Theeravit and Semyeam (2002),

and Paribatra (2013) if it benefitted illegal logging by the elites. Stuart-Fox (1997) suggested that the border disputes at Rom Klao Village were but one trigger for the Thai prime minister to launch such discourse. The conflict was easily settled after exchanges of gunfire in 1987 and 1988 that resulted in several hundred casualties on both sides by a military officer, General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth, using personal connections, followed by a visit by the Prime Minister Choonhavan to Vientiane a few months later. Again, the voices of the dead and injured were downgraded.

Illegal logging in Lao PDR then became common for Thai businesspersons (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). In the 1940s, 70% of Laos was covered by jungle but this dropped to 40% in 1989 (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). Often, ethnic minorities were blamed for this destruction due to a habit of swidden in the highlands (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). However, peoples from highlands were not the only the parties responsible. Thai businesspersons and Lao authorities should also be blamed for allowing uncontrolled numbers of trees to be felled. The volume of timber allowed by the Lao government to be cut down in 1998-1999 was 714 thousand cubic metres but Pholsena and Banomyong (2006) estimated that the actual volume felled was six times higher.

The distinction between illegal and legal logging in Lao PDR was problematic (Pholsena and Banomyong, 2006). The national government of Lao PDR had no practical policy about the volume of timber to be cut, so Lao military officers were the ones who decided on the volume of trees to be felled and who had the right to cut them. Most of the time, these procedures were conducted arbitrarily. Even the World Bank, Swedish non-government organisations, and the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs was aware of these procedures (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). This thesis argues that, therefore, those who benefitted from legal and illegal inter-state business activities as a result of the Thai-Lao border being perceived as an economic gateway in the post-Cold War era were Thai businesspersons and Lao military officers.

High (2010, p. 156) described this situation in which the Lao elites traded off the natural resources, allowing foreign investment, as a claim for national development termed

“resourcification.” Lao PDR became the target for Thai business sectors because of its natural resources such as timber. Hydro-electricity was also purchased by the Thai state, while different areas in Lao PDR still had to rely on household electricity generators in 1999 (Jerndal & Rigg, 1999). Moreover, human resources from Lao PDR were perceived as cheap labor attractive to Thai business entrepreneurs.

### Movement of the marginalised: A Cold War legacy

Leepreecha (2011) mentioned two post-Cold War features of transnational contact among displaced Hmong and Lao, those who joined resettlement schemes to Western societies and those who were scattered in Thai territory. This thesis argues that these two features of transnationalism such as those who are in the third countries and those in Thai territory are the Cold War legacy. Firstly, ideological conflict was over in global politics but the ideology for the Lao National Liberation Movement, founded during the Cold War, survived this change in geopolitical order in Thailand, the US, and France, inspired by former right wing militants and displaced governors. According to the previous section, their transnational movements should be defined as ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration.’ Financial aid from the Hmong and Laos in Western societies was transferred to support the movement in the Thai and Lao states (Leepreecha, 2011). Secondly, the ‘marginalisation’ of transnationalism should be noted as state policy to deal with people displacements and was not satisfactory in Leepreecha’s opinion. Though the Thai and Lao states agreed to close the refugee camps to tackle the problems of displaced people, a significant number of them refused to join the schemes provided. As refugee camps were closed down in Thai territory, a number of Hmong still remained and went to Tham Krabok Monastery in Saraburi, some 500 kilometres from the Thai-Lao border. Anthropologists recognised that they maintained contact with their relatives in third countries such as the US and France. It can be argued that Sirikrai (2007), an expert in Thai-Lao relations in International Relations, was also aware of this fact. However, Leepreecha supported the voices of the peoples more by taking the historical narrative of the Hmong and their spatial conceptualisation silenced by the Westphalian form during the colonial era and following up with the result of the state policy. He looked whether

the policy implemented was successful in facilitating the resettlement and repatriation scheme or not. This careful analysis that sounds the voice of the displaced Hmong indeed reveals the human dimension.

Leepreecha's awareness of peoples' movements across the Thai-Lao border was able to escape from the territorial trap of dichotomous understanding of inside/outside and self-contained state myth. Although reification of the border monopolised by the elites cannot be totally eliminated, as the state mechanism was present in Leepreecha's research to propose policy to the state, it was merely a facilitator to deal with the flow of the peoples – the displaced Lao and Hmong. Thus, state-centric space was not theoretically eliminated and the voices of the people were not rejected. This may be called a toleration of space interpretation when the peoples along borders needed to use the borders at times for their survival.

#### Movement of the marginalised: Economic migration

A land with more economic opportunities attracts peoples from a land with less. For example, the rapid economic space of Thailand post-1989 attracted a significant number of peoples from Lao PDR. Some searched for jobs, but not all were legally registered. In 2001, the number of illegal migrations from Lao PDR to Thailand was 58,411 (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). Thai entrepreneurs targeted Lao people as cheap labor but Lao workers did not object as they preferred a job that did not pay much to no job in their homeland. Also, some Lao people were motivated by a spirit of adventure rather than economic incentive (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). Young Lao, consumers of Thai TV, accepted the challenge of crossing the border to see life on the other side of the Mekong (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). Because of these two factors – economic and adventure – the daily flow of Lao people between twin cities of borderlands, such as Mukdahane and Savannakhet, was regarded as normal (Pholsena & Banomyong 2006).

Consequently, the problem of human trafficking developed. Many Lao females became prostitutes once they crossed the border (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006) and males were

sold as slaves far away from the border. Pholsena and Banomyong related the case of a Lao boy who crossed the border in Ubon Ratchathani province but had to work fishing in Patani, more than one thousand kilometres away. He received no salary but managed to run away and returned to Lao PDR (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). The human trafficking problem led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2002 to control illegal migrants (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006).

High explained border crossing in the post-Cold War era by demythologising the assumption that the Thai-Lao border was a bridge rather than a fence. She spoke for the voices of the marginalised peoples, arguing that a supposedly borderless world often claimed by policy-makers and International Relations scholars after 1989 was for the rich, and discourse about turning the battlefields into marketplaces was not for the poor (High, 2009). Even the expectation of ASEAN to connect non-communist with communist states only benefitted the elites (High, 2009). Similarly, the Great Mekong Sub-region (GMS) project, mentioned in the previous chapters, that was expected to transform Lao PDR from a land-locked to a land-linked state was suspected of providing increased economic activity in the border regions only for statesmen and businesspersons (Jerndal & Rigg, 1999). Poor peoples still struggled for some benefit and found it hard to cross the border because of immigration laws of the Thai state, especially when the MOU between the Thai and Lao states was signed. Also, more friendly relations between Thailand and Lao PDR reduced the chances of exploitation by former right wing militants to close borders as they did during the Cold War. If they were caught while conducting military operations across the Thai-Lao border, they no longer gained the support of the Thai state. For example, those who took part in the Wang Tao Incident in 2000 were extradited to Lao PDR. In addition, more border checkpoints were constructed along the Thai-Lao border. At the Chong Mek border checkpoint between Ubon Ratchathani and Champassak, for example, peoples used to cross the border freely during the Cold War. Now, there is a formal checkpoint that makes crossing more complicated for peoples to pass through immigration procedures.

## Conclusion

This chapter has answered the fourth research question concerning the neglect of the human dimension by International Relations and historiography on the Thai-Lao border after 1975 and the ways in which Routledge's proposal for anti-geopolitics can be used to enrich the human dimension in the theories. It argues that spatial conceptualisation has been monopolised by the elites. This chapter supports this argument by the application of anti-geopolitics in two steps, by a critical examination of the theoretical privilege of spatial conceptualisation of the Westphalian form, and an investigation of the challenges of other forms of spatial conceptualisation to the established one.

Firstly, this chapter argued that the monopolisation of spatial conceptualisation by the elites in the theory was constituted by the colonial legacy of territorial borders in traditional geopolitics. Thus, to back up the claim, Ó Tuathail's criticism of the geopolitical characteristics of white man supremacy, justification of colonisation in the past, and intervention of superpowers during the Cold War was re-examined as an extension of chapter 2. This re-examination was also critical through the consideration of the Orientalism of Said. The silence of the peoples on the Thai-Lao border both in International Relations and historiography from three Orientalism characteristics were discussed highlighting: the perception of being less developed, less rational, and less human; the perception of a monolithic socialism-communism versus liberalism-democracy; and the prioritisation of the national interest of the US as the Cold War hegemon.

Orientalism regarding spatial conceptualisation that always prioritised Westphalian borders was passed on to indigenous intellectuals of statecraft and scholars in International Relations and history. This resulted in the territorial trap as important metaphors and discourses academically found in both disciplines were examined. A number of metaphors, such as Thailand as a frontline state and the potential next domino, were produced by and benefitted the elites. Similarly, the voices of the elites still prevailed in important discourses, such as Lao PDR as Thai territory lost to France in

1893; closures of the Thai-Lao border as a means of punishment to land-locked Lao PDR; and the turning of battlefields into marketplaces at the end of the period. In practice, the peoples along the border tended to be sacrificed and theoretically downgraded. Even after the end of the Cold War, the legacy of geopolitics remained regarding the spatial conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border, despite the advances in technology that enabled more actors to make themselves heard along the Thai-Lao border, and increased de-territorialisation as those actors negated the spatial interpretation of the state. State actors were still prioritised and only those non-state actors who followed the logic of economic liberalisation were theoretically welcomed, while those who did not fit were downgraded and referred to as illegal immigrants, refugees, terrorists, and insurgents. Thus the voices of peoples on the ground as transnationalism from below were marginalised during the past sixty years.

Secondly, this chapter incorporated literature from anthropology that focused on the Thai-Lao border as part of the application of Routledge's anti-geopolitics. Analyses of Orientalism and discourses of academic metaphors unveiled the colonial legacy of mainstream historiography and anthropological analysis enriched the voices of peoples on the ground by the presentation of other forms of spatial conceptualisation. For example, the history of borderlands and their relations with the non-state space of highlands were examined. Furthermore, the state-centric version of transnationalism was the springboard for the chapter to move forward to a more people-centric transnationalism in anthropology regarding the Thai-Lao border. For example, the chapter presented the four terms of Cold War transnationalism, separation, marginalisation, assimilation, and integration of those who fled Lao PDR after 1975. It discussed the subversion of the elites' transnational activities of illegal logging that was argued to be the trigger of the famous discourse of turning the battlefields into marketplaces.

While the Cold War legacy of transnationalism still remains to the present day in the cases of displaced peoples and transnational movements of the Lao and Hmong, new transnational phenomena such as illegal immigrants and human trafficking have emerged.

This chapter argued that anthropology on the Thai-Lao border is indeed anti-geopolitics. Though it has been found impossible to reject the spatial conceptualisation of the state, anthropologists cited in this chapter tackled the territorial trap successfully by speaking for the voices of peoples on the ground. Incorporation of this framework in International Relations will lead to the enrichment of the human dimension on the Thai-Lao border in the future.

## Chapter 5

### Summary, theoretical considerations, possibilities for future research, and limitations

#### Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis titled *Re-thinking the Thai-Lao border in International Relations: Can anti-geopolitics reveal a human dimension?* and summarises the answers to the four research questions posted in chapter 1. It further discusses how the findings could impact theoretical consideration of border issues in International Relations. The traditional geopolitics characteristics of self-claim for objectivity, separation of space and peoples, white man supremacy, and provision of nationalistic policy were passed on to International Relations in discussions about the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to the present day. These four geopolitics characteristics resulted in the territorial trap of the myth of the self-contained state, the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside, and border reification monopolised by the elites. Though the ways to escape from the trap proposed by Agnew and Corbridge, such as historical awareness, broader social and economic structures of a hegemon, and changes in geopolitical order, were taken into theoretical consideration by International Relations to some extent, the territorial trap remained.

This thesis thus proposed that an anti-geopolitics approach consisting of two steps be taken to deal with the territorial trap so that the voices of the peoples on the ground were heard. The first step, as an alternative to the analysis of the geopolitical characteristic of

white man supremacy passed on to International Relations, was an examination of the Orientalism of Said that helped unveil the colonial legacy of spatial management according to the European imaginative geography based on Westphalian concepts. Orientalism that influenced indigenous scholars was also critically examined to determine the importance of discourses and metaphors along the Thai-Lao border in the theoretical reproduction of the territorial trap. Transnationalism recognised in mainstream historiography represented the spatial shift from the pre-colonial to the modern nation state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, it only echoed the voices of the elites and played down those on the ground whose movements cut across state boundaries because the Westphalian spatial conceptualisation was still presupposed. The second step was the presentation of the argument that anthropology on the Thai-Lao border was anti-geopolitics. Three anthropological frameworks, an analysis of historiography along the borderlands, transnationalism from below during the Cold War, and in the post-Cold War era, successfully dealt with the territorial trap. The voices of peoples on the ground were heard and the state was not rejected. This thesis argues that the mainstream historiography of the centre of the state recognised in mainstream International Relations, discussed in chapter 3 cannot be rejected. Also, the three anthropological methods are equally important. The historiography of the borderlands should not be ignored, and at the same time, the personal historical narratives during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era proposed by anthropology are important as these methods support the voices of the peoples. To emphasise only one method and ignore others results in being caught within a hierarchical reversal of the theory that this thesis tries to avoid. To apply the

three approaches thus should effectively bring the human dimension to International Relations.

Additionally, the possible limitations of this thesis are discussed. These include the restricted rhetoric of statesmen regarding the Thai-Lao border compared to academic texts, the number of indigenous texts in International Relations and historiography in the Thai language compared to the absence of such in the Lao language, the small number of primary historiographic sources related to twin cities, and the neglect of a full documentation of peoples' experiences in crossing the border in the Cold War and post-Cold War eras. Attention to these limitations may allow the voices of the peoples on the ground to be heard more, thus addressing a major aim of the thesis to add a human dimension to International Relations in the future. The chapter presents a summary and theoretical reconsiderations, possible directions for future research, and limitations of the thesis.

### **Summary and theoretical reconsiderations**

#### *Summary*

This thesis rethought the conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border in International Relations and proposed that anti-geopolitics was able to reveal a human dimension in the discipline. The spatial conceptualisation of traditional geopolitics which facilitated colonisation in the past influenced mainstream International Relations, especially

political realism. The four geopolitical characteristics of the self-claim for objectivity, separation of space and peoples, white man supremacy, and provision for nationalistic policy found in Mackinder, Mahan, and Spykman were still to be found in Morgenthau, Herz, Mearsheimer, and Waltz. The space management presupposed to be Westphalian-based in the discipline, despite criticism from dissident International Relations scholars such as Ruggie, Walker, and Ashley, remained Eurocentric because European imaginative geography was insufficiently examined. Peoples on the ground whose movements did not conform to the Westphalian presupposition have been downgraded in the theory from the Cold War to the present day.

The Thai-Lao border was a good example of the continuation of colonial legacy regarding spatial conceptualisation in International Relations and raised these questions. Firstly, it questioned the extent to which the concept of territorial borders in traditional geopolitics influenced discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 1975 in International Relations theory.

Secondly, it asked the ways in which geopolitics as a colonial legacy was represented in International Relations theories, with particular reference to political realism, on the issue of the Thai-Lao border after 1975. Chapter 2 answered the first and the second research questions. It found that the four characteristics of traditional geopolitics influenced International Relations in the discussion of the Thai-Lao border differently, depending on the global politics at particular times. For example, between 1954 when Laos gained independence from France and 1975 when it became a communist state, intervention by

Thailand, the US, the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam was common. Therefore, the ocularcentric map constituted the myth of a self-contained state and resulted in the perception of the Domino Theory in both intellectuals of statecraft and scholars. Also, white man supremacy as justification for communist containment was reflected more in this period. Geopolitical analysis representing nationalistic policy of the US was furthermore found among political realists such as Morgenthau, Herz, and Waltz. Similar geopolitical characteristics were found in the works of the Thai scholar Ladavalaya. From 1975 to 1989, the Thai-Lao border became the line that separated the two ideological worlds of socialist-communism and liberalism-democracy. The border drawn on the Cartesian maps of Thailand and Laos produced by France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was strictly put into practice and more theoretically recognised. The fourth characteristic, the provision of nationalistic criticism if not advice for the Thai state, was also evident as Thai scholars cited pre-colonial claims that Laos had been under Thai suzerainty and that the Thai state lost Lao territory to France in 1893. Such claims were examples of anachronistic concepts of space as, before 1893, the peoples then did not emphasise the acquisition of space as the Westphalian system did. The spatial perception lowland peoples could be described by Wolters (1999) as mandala. Those from highlands were described, additionally, by Scott (2009) as zomia. Since 1989, the Thai-Lao border has become the line that separates the space of rapid economic development of Thai territory and the economically slow space of Lao PDR. Even so, this thesis found that geopolitical characteristics were passed on to and influenced International Relations. Though ideological rivalry at global and regional levels diminished, the geopolitical characteristics, claims of objectivity and separation of space and people, were prominent.

The separation of space and power according to the Westphalian norm remained. Some research such as that of Theeravit and Semyeam (2002) suggested that Thai and Lao nationalism was present but more toleration was required when border issues were considered. However, the separation of space in terms of different indications of natural resources was also noted. The Thai-Lao border was no longer the ideological boundary but an economic one. Lao PDR became a space of natural resources that was attractive to businesspersons for investment in such areas as logging and hydro-electric power. The fact that the four geopolitical characteristics have remained in International Relations over the past sixty years of the political narrative of the Thai-Lao border blinded the theorists and resulted in the theoretical attachment of the territorial trap of Agnew and Corbridge. The first two characteristics led to the myth of the self-contained state and the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside. The third and the fourth led to the trap of reification of territorial borders monopolised by the elites that silenced the voices of peoples.

Thirdly, this thesis questioned the ways in which the concept of the territorial trap was used to criticise existing literature in International Relations regarding Thai-Lao border issues after 1975 and how such a critical point of view can be enriched further. Chapter 3 discovered that the concept of the territorial trap was used to criticise the existing literature in International Relations, with particular reference to political realism. However, the proposal from Agnew and Corbridge with the theoretical considerations of historical relations, the broader social and economic structures of a hegemon, and changes in the geopolitical order had already been accepted by International Relations

theorists to some extent -- though the scholars might or might not have been aware that these theoretical considerations were proposed by Agnew and Corbridge. Yet, the three solutions were insufficient to erase the territorial trap because history embedded in the theory focused on the centre of the state that presupposed the Westphalian space. For example, the common historical claim recognised among Thai International Relations scholars, especially from 1975 to 1989, such as Sirikrai (1979) and Phuankasem (1980), was that the Thai state lost territory that belonged to the present state of Laos to France in 1893. The discourse of the Thai state having lost the Lao territory to France was rejected by the Lao International Relations scholar Ngaosyvathn (1985) and criticised by the Thai historian Winichakul (1994) that it not only prioritised the voice of the Bangkok Court but also silenced other tiny kingdoms along the Mekong. International Relations analysis that recognised transnational actors in broader social and economic structures similarly prioritised Westphalian states as major actors. For instance, in 1989, the Thai Prime Minister Choonhavan announced his policy of turning the battlefields of Indochina into marketplaces and there was a new interpretation of the Thai-Lao border by International Relations scholars. To facilitate multilateral co-operation and the mechanism of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) supported by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, Sirikrai indicated that transport infrastructure should be constructed to connect all the states through which the Mekong flows. Of course, the Thai-Lao border became the highway of neo-liberal transnationalism. When the terms 'corridor' and 'fence' were used to describe the Thai-Lao border, the presupposition of the existing borderline, the territorial trap that separated space and people in a Westphalian style, was evident. Moreover, when changes in geopolitics were recognised, only the voices of the

states and businesspersons were heard. While International Relations literature discussed plans to bridge the Thai-Lao border, peoples living along the border crossed the border every day. Establishment of stricter check-points and more bureaucratic rituals to cross the border were new to these people in the post-Cold War era but now have become part of their daily lives. International Relations literature has failed to recognise this. Instead, Chapter 3 proposed that the anti-geopolitics of Ó Tuathail's criticism of white man supremacy of the spatial conceptualisation and Ó Tuathail and Agnew's (1998) re-conceptualisation of geopolitics during the Cold War be taken into account to counter the monopoly of the border by the American, Thai, Lao, and Soviet elites. The analysis of the geopolitical legacy in the post-Cold War by Dalby (1998) and the transnationalism from below of Donnan and Wilson (1999) should also be applied to the Thai-Lao border which was a colonial legacy of geopolitics. These criticisms examined the theoretical definitions of the peoples who crossed the border that did not conform to the Westphalian logic in a state-centric manner, and they were regarded as illegal immigrants, refugees, displaced persons, and terrorists. This contrasted with the transnational movements of those who belonged to the neo-liberal world, such as businesspersons.

Fourthly, to cope with the territorial trap, the human dimension of anti-geopolitics needed to be introduced to the discipline. Thus, two steps based on the ideas of Jones (2006) were proposed to examine the neglect of the human dimension by International Relations regarding the Thai-Lao border after 1975. The first step involved an analysis of anti-geopolitics scholars such as Said, Ó Tuathail, Agnew, Wilson and Donnan, and Routledge in regard to the European imaginative geography of Westphalian territorial

borders taken for granted and the voices of the peoples on the ground downgraded since 1954. Four sets of ideas from anti-geopolitics were used to criticise the conceptualisation by International Relations and historiography of the Thai-Lao border. The common criticisms were the Orientalism of Said as an extension of Ó Tuathail's attack on white man supremacy regarding the Westphalian concept, the second order of Orientalism found in International Relations and historiography, geopolitics discourse analysis in the two disciplines mentioned, and transnationalism from below discussed in historiography. Employing these four themes opened space for the voices of the peoples on the ground. For example, the Orientalism of Said revealed the fact that territorial borders in a Westphalian style presupposed in the two disciplines were embedded with colonial bias of a more rational white man versus less rational Indochinese peoples. The Westphalian form of state was prioritised by all scholars. Even so, the prioritised Westphalian borders needed to give way to the US intervention if communism was to be contained. As found in the work of Morgenthau, and Herz, the national interest of the US was always prioritised compared with the lives of local peoples in Indochina from 1954 to 1975. The interpretation of the human artificial territorial borders in theory not only reflected the fact that borders were not objective, but that subjectivity only presented the voices of statesmen. Secondly, Orientalism became the second order when indigenous intellectuals of statecraft and scholars echoed it. For example, a number of Thai scholars reproduced the discourse of anti-communism of the US during the Cold War and this showed when the Thai-Lao border was conceptualised. This second order of Orientalism was especially evident when the Thai-Lao border was academically reified, especially by Thai scholars, as the line to separate the two ideological worlds of socialism-communism and

liberalism-democracy. Thirdly, the geopolitical discourse analysis of Ó Tuathail and Agnew was used to examine important metaphors that were significantly influenced by the elites and theoretically constituted changes in the meaning of the Thai-Lao border as a result of the second order of Orientalism. The metaphors and discourse, such as the Domino Theory, Thailand as a frontline state of the non-communist world, border closures, the territorial loss of Thailand, the Mekong as a river of friendship, and the changing of the battlefields to marketplaces, revealed the prioritised voices of the elites. Fourthly, the narrative of the silenced in the borderlands and transnationalism from below (Routledge, 1998) to provide space for geopolitics of the peoples on the Thai-Lao border was discussed. The post-geopolitics of Ó Tuathail (1997) was additionally used to examine the Thai-Lao border, showing that, despite more advanced telecommunication technology, more fluid political actors, and the de-territorialisation of political space resulting in changes to geopolitics in the post-Cold War era, the voices of the elites were still theoretically prioritised. The second step is, furthermore, that the incorporation of anthropology discussing the Thai-Lao border supported the voices of the peoples by presenting the history of the borderlands and transnationalism of peoples on the ground during the Cold War and the post-Cold War eras. Though it was impossible to reject the spatial conceptualisation of a Wesphalian state, anthropologists cited in this thesis tackled the territorial trap successfully by speaking for the voices of peoples on the ground. Incorporation of this framework in International Relations will lead to the inclusion of a human dimension on the Thai-Lao border in the future.

#### *Theoretical reconsiderations*

In answering the first and the second research question, the colonial legacy of traditional geopolitics found in the border conceptualisation could be used as an example for other border cases – to what extent can the territorial trap constituted by the four geopolitical characteristics be found in the discussion on other borders in International Relations? For example, as the discussion of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to the present day can be divided into three phases, with different degrees of different territorial traps in each period, it is interesting to explore the occurrence of similar phenomena in relation to other borders in International Relations. A similar example can be found in the work of Gideon Biger (2008) who recognised the Palestinian-Israeli border, in a Westphalian spatial conceptualisation, as a colonial legacy similar to the Thai-Lao border. He examined the politics of space monopolised by the Israeli, British, French, American, Jordanian, and Syrian elites that affected the lives of Palestinians by dividing the analysis into three phases; the outside political delimitation, the “Period of the Gun” – the forced delimitation, and the local bilateral delimitation (Biger, 2008, p. 85). This analysis of the transition in spatial conceptualisation can be a model for other border areas with similar colonial legacy characteristics.

The findings of chapter 3 suggested that the ways out of the territorial trap proposed by Agnew and Corbridge were recognised in International Relations regarding the Thai-Lao border issue. However, their solutions were insufficient and needed further enrichment. The historical narratives, awareness of broader social and economic structures of a hegemon and changes in geopolitical order recognised in the discussion of the Thai-Lao

border in the discipline focused too much on the centre of the state and the privileged voice of the statesmen. Have similar situations occurred in the discussion of other borders? Critical political geographers' points of view, such as the reconceptualisation of geopolitical discourse of the Thai-Lao border, post-Cold War geopolitics, and transnationalism from below, could be used in the examinations of such borders.

Adamson similarly recognised that the fall of the Iron Curtain marked the migration of peoples from former communist states, such as the East Germans to West Germany.

Undoubtedly, the former communist states could be defined as weak states that could not control the flow of people effectively (Adamson, 2006). The Schengen agreement of 1985 and 1999 Amsterdam treaty made it harder, however, for peoples to illegally cross into the European Union (EU). States still had two functions, to decide who should enter and to decide who should be included as members of the host state. What Adamson (2006) recognised in Europe is similar to what High (2009) recognised on the Thai-Lao border – a borderless world is borderless only for the rich, as discussed in chapter 4, and for all other peoples, such a world in the post-Cold War era is a myth. In 1990s, 50% of funds of EU were given to former communist states in Eastern Europe, potential possible EU members, for technology to monitor borders (Adamson, 2006). A similar situation to the Thai-Lao border was the line to separate a rapid economic space and a slow one occurred in Europe. Yet, this thesis maintains that the borderless world is still an assumption in International Relations that needs to be demythologised in other areas.

The answer to the fourth research question stated that anti-geopolitics was necessary to introduce the human dimension to the discipline. The two steps, the critical examination

of the European imaginative geography of the presupposed Westphalian space in historiography and International Relations and the incorporation of anthropology on the border zones used to examine the Thai-Lao border, could be applied to other border areas. For example, it is possible that the Orientalism of spatial conceptualisation, the second order of Orientalism, geopolitical metaphors and discourse analysis, and transnationalism from below in historiography could be used to critique border studies. The historiography of the borderlands, transnationalism from below during the Cold War and post-Cold War era in anthropological approach could then follow. Taking these familiar steps, the voices of the peoples on the ground may be theoretically heard, not only in the Thai-Lao border case but also in others. For example, Donnan and Wilson (1999) completed a study on the US-Mexican border, a popular area for research, that involved the twin cities of the American Laredo and Mexican Nuevo Laredo. Local historiography stated that the twin cities shared an identity (that included a baseball team called 'Tecos') that helped to escape from the territorial trap. Additionally, Anzaldúa (2007) discussed violence on the US-Mexican border. After the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, violence continued to occur as non-Anglo-Americans were arrested, deported from, and killed in former Northern Mexico on land that they had previously regarded as their homes. This model of the analysis of the twin border cities of Donnan and Wilson and the personal historiography of Anzaldúa, similar to the personal historiography of Pholsena (2006) in Lao PDR and the analysis of twin cities in the Thai-Lao border of Baird (2013) as discussed in chapter 4, should be an example of border studies in other areas and be incorporated in International Relations.

This thesis argues that the most effective anti-geopolitical ways of dealing with the conceptualisation of the Thai-Lao border requires historical backgrounds of the borderlands and the voices of the peoples whose movements cut across the border. At the same time, the historiography of the centre of the state should not be ignored because to emphasise only one method and overlook others results in being caught within the hierarchical reversal of the theory that this thesis tries to avoid. Recognition by International Relations of both the states and the peoples will then hopefully be achieved.

### **Possibilities for future research**

Possibilities for future research include an increased focus on non-academic rhetoric, such as that made by practitioners. The analysis of the territorial trap and the anti-geopolitics can be used to criticise American, Thai, and Lao practitioners' perspectives of the Thai-Lao border from 1954 to 2014. Such a focus could question the rhetoric of statesmen and diplomats and the manner in which it constitutes theoretical discussion. For example, there could be investigation of the extent of the territorial traps of dichotomous understanding of inside/outside, the myth of the self-contained state, and border reification. Examination could also be made of the solutions to the territorial trap, such as the awareness of historical backgrounds, broader social and economic structures of a hegemon, and changes in geopolitical order. Future research could enquire about the versions of history embedded in the rhetoric of Thai and Lao statesmen, their perceptions of broader social and economic structures at the global level that affect the region, and their response to changes in geopolitical order. For example, an analysis of Thai

statesmen's interpretations of the change in the US foreign policy from aggressive to more benign towards Lao communism would be valuable. From 1975 to 1989, direct quotes from Thai and Lao statesmen were rare at a time when territorial disputes were common on the Thai-Lao border. Later examples could exist in an examination of state officers' reactions to the triumph of economic liberalisation after 1989 that resulted in changes in the interpretation of the Thai-Lao border echoed in academic texts. Analyses of anti-geopolitics employed in the thesis with academic texts such as Orientalism, the second order of Orientalism, and transnationalism from below could be used to approach the rhetoric uttered by the intellectuals of the states. In this way the primary sources would extend from academic texts to other genres, such as newspapers and official announcements from the states.

This thesis mainly focused on documentary sources and fieldwork is necessary in future research. Historiography in International Relations should not be limited to the Westphalian concept with perspectives from the two capitals, Bangkok and Vientiane, as it has been in the past. The primary sources of the historiography of the borderlands and twin cities along the Thai-Lao border and the personal historiography of transnational peoples promise to add a human dimension to the discipline. As discussed in chapter 4, the historiography of the borderlands and anthropological transnationalism with the model of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo on the US-Mexican border by Donnan and Wilson (1999) were able to help scholars escape from the territorial trap and added a human dimension to International Relations. However, the literature discussed in the thesis could still be enriched. The examination of the borderlands' historiography in chapter 4 covered

only three pairs of twin cities of Thailand and Lao PDR, Nan and Luang Prabang, Mukdahane and Savannakhet, and Ubon Ratchathani and Champassak. The 1810 kilometres of the Thai-Lao border has other twin cities, such as Chiang Rai and Houaixay, Phayao and Xaingabouli, Nong Khai and Vientiane, Buengkarn and Pakxam, and Nakon Phanom and Thakek. Primary sources of historiography in relation to these twin cities require further exploration.

In addition, all anthropological research discussed in the thesis was based on secondary sources and ethnographic fieldwork would strengthen it. This thesis argued that the historiography of the borderlands helped escape from the territorial trap but personal histories, as shown by the works of Baird (2013), High (2009), and Souvannavong (1999), recognised the voices of the peoples who crossed and continue to cross the Thai-Lao border. These voices that project transnational narratives could be regarded as one version of history. Pholsena (2006) explored the personal histories of people from ethnic groups and argued that their versions constituted a national version of Lao historiography, though these histories did not always fit with contextual changes. Histories at all levels, including state to state, borderlands, and personal accounts, should be together taken into theoretical consideration as they shaped each other (Pholsena, 2006). To recognise the voices of the peoples on the ground, Pholsena first presented a change in the national version of historiography. The prioritised lowland Lao versions were replaced by Marxist-Leninist versions in 1975. She then presented the voices of the peoples, saying that the participants from the ethnic minority of Kha were proud of their roles during the Cold War but became marginalised as the Cold War finished. During the

Cold War, the ethnic minorities fulfilled the ideological expectations of Marxist-Leninism and they together with the communist lowland Lao helped fight against the US and the Royal Lao Government. However, at the end of the Cold War, some Lao civil servants with ethnic minority backgrounds were no longer recognised and were unfairly treated when the time of bureaucratic promotions came, compared with the lowland Lao (Pholsena, 2006). While not related to border issues, the work of Pholsena is an example of an approach that is useful in future research of the Thai-Lao border. This thesis argues that such an approach could be applied to investigations of the experiences of transnational Lao and Thai persons whose movements transcended the Thai-Lao border. As discussed in chapter 4, examples exist in the works of Leepreecha (2011) and Chanthavanich (2011) that revealed the plight of the Hmong in camps in Thai territory and Baird (2013) and Souvannavong (1999) that explored the personal histories of elite Lao in exile.

### **Limitations of the thesis**

One possible limitation of the thesis is that the primary sources were academic texts in International Relations, history, and anthropology because the research questions focused on theoretical discussion of the Thai-Lao border. The primary sources from intellectuals of statecraft, such as state officers and diplomats that showed the territorial trap and solutions as proposed by Agnew and Corbridge were recognised but downgraded and hence limited. Improvements to this thesis could be made by supporting evidence by statements by statesmen. However, this limitation can be answered by stating that,

because the four research questions of the thesis concentrated on the theory of International Relations, academic texts were the major focus. If the rhetoric of state practitioners was included, it was to support the content of those academic texts. For example, as chapter 2 discussed white man supremacy used to justify the US intervention in Indochina, both academic texts by Morgenthau, Herz, and Waltz and the rhetoric of state practitioners, such as Kissinger, Eisenhower and Truman, were cited, the latter supporting the former. Very often, Morgenthau and Herz expressed the necessity for the US intervention in Indochina. Similar claims that revealed western supremacy of the US were found in Truman; the US needs to intervene in other parts of the world to contain communism. The discourse of Lao territory being part of the Thai state lost to France in 1893 was also supported by academic texts from International Relations and history and practitioners. Certainly, academic texts should be the focus because they were examined to directly respond to the four research questions. If more statements and rhetoric of statesmen were the focus, the research questions would be framed differently.

Another possible limitation of the thesis is that the theoretical analysis of the Thai-Lao border since Lao independence covers a long period of time of 60 years. As a result, this thesis focused more on the Cold War mentalities in International Relations, with particular reference to political realism. There is limited space for other theoretical frameworks such as neo-institutionalism and constructivism that have been prominent in the post-Cold War era. However, this thesis argued that the Thai-Lao border conceptualised by neo-institutionalism and constructivism was no less different from political realism. The territorial trap of the myth of the self-contained state, dichotomous

understanding of inside/outside, and border reification monopolised by the elites was found in the authors whose approach appeared to be non-realist, such as Amer (1999) and Paribatra (2013), but their spatial conceptualisation was heavily influenced by realism. This was discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

Possible realist explanations were anticipated by the anthropologists Pholsena and Banomyong (2006), nevertheless, regarding the Thai-Lao border when Lao PDR was integrated into ASEAN. The framework of three schools of International Relations, realism, neo-institutionalism and constructivism, was applied and the territorial trap remained in the theory. Pholsena and Banomyong, trying to understand interstate politics from the realist point of view, expected that realists would explain that Lao statesmen wanted to settle Thai-Lao border conflicts from a more equal position at the negotiating table. The Lao Minister of Foreign Affairs in the late 1990s, Somsavat Lengsavad, stated that Lao PDR was treated as an equal partner to the Thai state, different to situations during the Cold War when Lao PDR was not a member of ASEAN. ASEAN integration was desirable for Lao statesmen because it meant that each member country respected the idea of non-intervention (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006). This equal partnership to settle border conflicts with the Thai state led to other economic matters in Lao international affairs. Institutionalism explained that co-operation was hoped for, rather than competition because Lao statesmen were aware that Lao PDR was still economically weak compared to her non-Indochinese neighbours. To be treated as an equal partner in ASEAN was thus expected. Constructivism, moreover, would explain that because of the reduction of the Soviet role after the end of the Cold War, ASEAN integration was

welcome by Lao PDR. Nevertheless, Vietnam was still perceived as her major ally, followed by China, while ASEAN replaced the role played by the Soviet Union (Pholsena & Banomyong, 2006).

This thesis contends that these three schools are caught within the territorial trap. Settlement of the border equally as expected by Lao statesmen, according to realism, repeated the dichotomous understanding of inside/outside as mentioned. Border reification of the elites and the myth of the self-contained state were also noted when constructivism and neo-institutionalists expected co-operation. However, awareness of mainstream theory in International Relations by Pholsena and Banomyong revealed that the role of the state was not ignored. Together with anthropological work, Pholsena and Banomyong's work supported the voices of the peoples on the ground.

In addition, the academic texts explored in this thesis were mainly in English and Thai. Therefore, the territorial border conceptualisation discussed was mainly taken from non-indigenous scholars such as theorists in International Relations and experts in Thai-Lao historiography. In regard to indigenous texts, however, there were more by Thai scholars than by Lao. For example, only the works in English of Ngaosyvathn (1985) and Ngaosyvathn and Ngaosyvath (1994) in International Relations, and Souvannavong (1999), and Pholsena (2006) in anthropology were explored in this thesis. Academic texts in Lao were absent, except for the cited work of Evans (2002) that was translated into Lao. Similarly, the translated work of the forefather of Lao historiography, Maha Sila Viravong (1964), was recognised. The number of Lao texts was few compared with Thai texts, but it was assumed that the territorial trap would be revealed even in Lao texts. This is work for the future.

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