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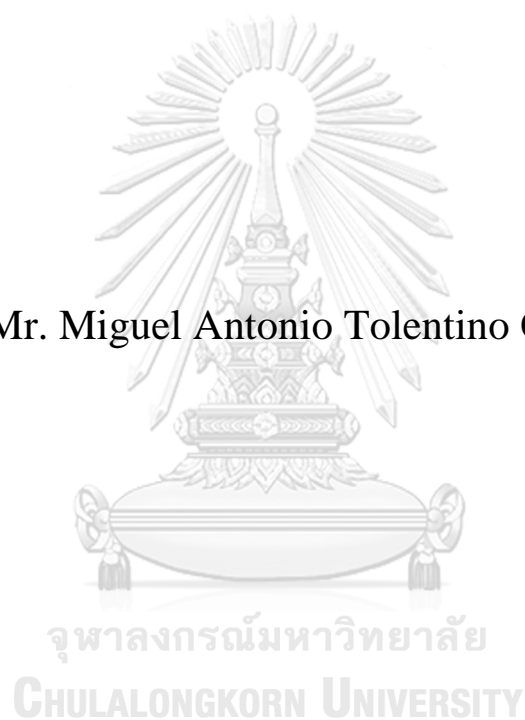
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The Shan State and People in the Thai State's Perception during
the Cold War Period (1948-1988)

Mr. Miguel Antonio Tolentino Cabreros



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Thai Studies
FACULTY OF ARTS
Chulalongkorn University
Academic Year 2022
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Field of Study	Thai Studies
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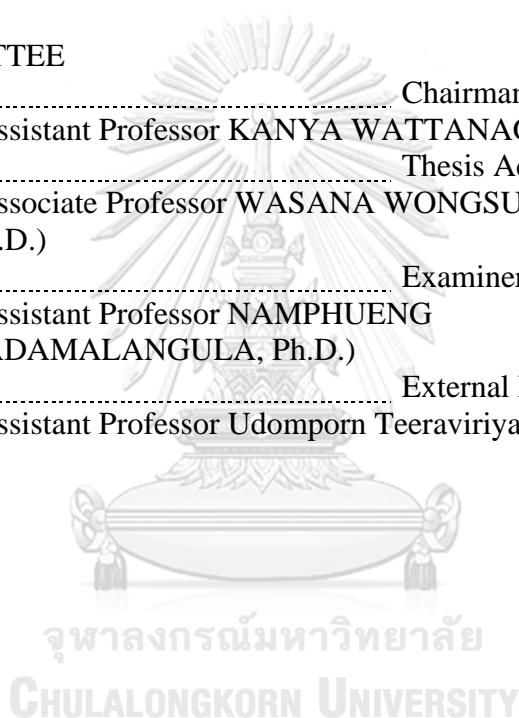
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มิเกล อานโตนิโอ โดเรนติโน กาเบรโรส : รัฐฉานและชาวไทยใหญ่ในการรับรู้ของรัฐไทยในยุคสงครามเย็น
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วาสนา วงศ์สุรวัฒน์

ในยุคสงครามเย็นรัฐชาติไทยสมัยใหม่ได้เปลี่ยนจากชาติที่นิยมโดยพรมแดนมาเป็นรัฐราชาชาตินิยม นับตั้งแต่ยุคที่จอมพล แปลก พิบูลสงครามเป็นนายกรัฐมนตรีในสมัยที่ ๒ จวบจนถึงยุครัฐบาลพลเอก เปรม ติณสูลานนท์ นั้นสถาบันกษัตริย์มีบทบาทในการก่อรูปความเป็นชาติของไทยมากขึ้นอย่างต่อเนื่อง ความเปลี่ยนแปลงดังกล่าวนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงความสำเร็จของชนชั้นนำไทยในการปรับตัวเข้ากับระเบียบโลกยุคสงครามเย็น ในการนี้รัฐไทยได้สถาปนาพรมแดนทางมนทัศน์ซึ่งยึดสถาบันกษัตริย์เป็นศูนย์กลางเพื่อส่งเสริมพรมแดนทางภูมิศาสตร์ที่ค่อนข้างเปราะบางให้เข้มแข็งมั่นคงยิ่งขึ้น รัฐฉานและประชาชนชาวลาน (ไทใหญ่) เป็นกลุ่มที่ท้าทายพรมแดนทั้งสองชนิดนี้ ในยุคสงครามเย็นตอนต้นนั้นดินแดนของรัฐฉานทำหน้าที่เป็นพรมแดนกันชนป้องกันการแพร่กระจายของอุดมการณ์คอมมิวนิสต์จากสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีนมาสู่ไทย หลังจากที่กองทหารจีนคณะชาติ (ก๊กมินตั๋ง) ที่ตกค้างอยู่ได้รับการเคลื่อนย้ายออกจากรัฐฉานแล้ว สถานการณ์กลับถูกต้องด้านรัฐส่วนกลางที่รุนแรงมากขึ้นทำให้นายพล เนวิน นำประเทศเข้าสู่การปกครองแบบเผด็จการทหาร วิกฤตการณ์ทางการเมืองและเศรษฐกิจอันเนื่องมาจากแนวทางสังคมนิยมแบบพม่าของรัฐบาลทหารทำให้นักกลุ่มน้อย เช่น ชาวลาน (ไทใหญ่) ลี้ภัยข้ามพรมแดนไทยเข้ามาและทำหน้าที่เป็นชุมชนกันชนต่อต้านคอมมิวนิสต์ให้ไทยต่อไป ต่อมาในระยะสุดท้ายของสงครามเย็นปัญหาหาเสพติดเริ่มทวีความรุนแรงขึ้นจนกลายเป็นภัยคุกคามยิ่งกว่าภัยคอมมิวนิสต์ รัฐบาลพลเอกเปรมได้ดำเนินการขับไล่ขุนสำเภาเป็นทั้งเจ้าพ่อยาเสพติดและนักชาตินิยมฉานพร้อมด้วยกองกำลังร่วมแห่งรัฐฉานของเขาออกไปจากดินแดนไทยในปี ค.ศ. ๑๙๘๒ (เพียง ๖ ปีหลังจากที่พวกเขาได้สถาปนาฐานที่มั่น ณ บ้านหินแตก จังหวัดเชียงราย) งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้ศึกษาความรู้ของประเทศไทยต่อรัฐฉานและประชาชนชาวลาน (ไทใหญ่) และอิทธิพลของความรู้ที่มีต่อความเปลี่ยนแปลงของรัฐชาติไทยตลอดยุคสงครามเย็น จากการศึกษาพบว่าฉานในความรับรู้ของประเทศไทยที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปนั้นบ่งชี้พัฒนาการสำคัญในเรื่องเล่าเกี่ยวกับความเป็นชาติของไทยและนิยามของภัยคุกคามความมั่นคงของชาติไทยที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปในแต่ละยุคสมัยด้วย



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Miguel Antonio Tolentino Cabrerós : The Shan State and People in the
Thai State's Perception during the Cold War Period (1948-1988). Advisor:
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The Cold War period witnessed the transformation of the modern Thai nation-state from a territorial nation to a royalist nation. From the second premiership of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram to the end of General Prem Tinsulanonda's government, the monarchy's role in shaping the Thai nation was steadily expanding. This transformation signified the Thai elite's successful adaptation of the global Cold War system. Accordingly, the Thai state established an ideological boundary centered in the monarchy in order to reinforce its rather permeable borders. The Shan State and people put both these boundaries to the test. During the early phase of the Cold War, Shan territory served as an anti-communist buffer zone between Thailand and Communist China. After Kuomintang remnants had been evacuated from the Shan State, intensified insurgencies in Burma propelled General Ne Win to bring the country under military rule. The political and economic crises brought about by the junta's Burmese Way to Socialism led minorities like the Shan to flee to the Thai borderlands, where they functioned as a buffer against communism. Finally, during the latter phase of the Cold War, the narcotics issue was beginning to supersede the communist threat. The Prem administration ordered the expulsion of the drug warlord-cum-Shan nationalist Khun Sa and his Shan United Army (SUA) from Thai territory in 1982, six years after their base had been established at Ban Hin Taek in Chiang Rai province. This research studies the Thai state's perception of the Shan State and people and how this reflected the Thai nation-state's transformations throughout the Cold War period. It concludes that the shifts in the Thai state's perception of the Shan indicate significant developments in the Thai national narrative and the identification of threats to the Thai nation.

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Field of Study: Thai Studies

Student's Signature

Academic 2022

Advisor's Signature

Year:

.....

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For the strength to conquer studying abroad in the time of COVID-19, I thank all my loved ones. For being a ray of light, I thank my dearest friends, Helson and Kimberly. For matters non-academic and therefore more valuable, I thank my family.

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Miguel Antonio Tolentino Cabreros

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis studies the Shan in the Thai state's perception during the Cold War. It aims to understand the significance of the Shan state and people to the Thai state's policies and political developments from 1948 to 1988. This time period saw the rise and fall of authoritarian military regimes in Thailand, and the transformation of the Thai nation-state into a royalist nation. These important developments in Thailand overlapped with the undying civil war in Burma, which involved both ethnic and communist insurgents against the central Burmese government. From the mid-1970s onwards, greater efforts were carried out by Thailand to eradicate a common currency through much of the Cold War in Southeast Asia: drugs.

Background

The chosen time period begins with 1948 as this year marks significant changes in both Thailand and Burma. In the year 1948, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram returned to power. Despite having declared war against the allies, his second time around as Prime Minister witnessed the beginning of an improved and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. In the same year, Burma gained independence from Britain. With Burma's status as a newly independent nation came the hope of its ethnic states, like the Shan, to achieve independence and form their own nation-states.¹

¹ This "hope" is enshrined in the Panglong Agreement of 1947, in which ethnic states namely the Shan, Kachin, and Chin were granted the right to secede from the Union of Burma after ten years.

At the turn of the decade, the Kuomintang supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), invaded the Shan state, and controlled the drug trade along the borders between Thailand, Burma, and Laos until the 1960s. Later on, the drug trade in this area also known as the Golden Triangle would be dominated by Khun Sa.² Around the same time, the United States was providing massive economic and military assistance to Thailand with the goal of suppressing communism in the region.

In 1962, General Ne Win initiated a coup in Burma. This was a critical juncture not only for the Burmese but most especially for the ethnic minorities like the Shan also known in Thailand as the Tai Yai. The ethnic groups' right to secession from the Union of Burma was abolished after the military took over in 1962. This led to the eruption of ethnic insurgency around the country.³ General Ne Win's Burmese Way to Socialism, which brought the country to economic ruin, paved the way for a black market to thrive along its borders.

The 1960s to 1970s saw Thailand's increased involvement with the United States in the Vietnam War. At the same time, dissatisfaction with the military government of Thanom Kittikachorn heightened. Another important dimension to Thailand at the time was the increasing influence of the monarchy.

² Khun Sa was of half Shan and half Haw Chinese descent. His given name in Chinese is Chang Chi-fu/Tzang Chee-fu.

³ Thitiwut Boonyawongwiwat. *The Ethno-Narcotic Politics of the Shan People: Fighting with Drugs, Fighting for the Nation on the Thai-Burmese Border* (London: Lexington Books, 2018), 20.

The time period to be studied cuts off in 1988.⁴ From the Western point of view, the international Cold War ended in the beginning of the 1990s, with the reunification of Germany and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In Southeast Asia, where the politics of the drug trade played a significant part in the Cold War, countries like Burma and Thailand were still grappling with the narcotics issue. This thesis thus makes a case for “extending” the Cold War in Thailand.

More importantly, 1988 marks the end of General Prem Tinsulanonda’s premiership. General Prem’s government distinguished itself from earlier military regimes through its less militant approach towards communist insurgents, and its less tolerant attitude towards the narcotics trade in Thailand. In 1982, his second year as Prime Minister, Ban Hin Taek which served as Khun Sa’s main base for six years, was raided by the Thai army. Consequently, Khun Sa was driven out of Thai soil. In addition, General Prem was a palace loyalist, and his government facilitated the dissemination of monarchical nationalism.⁵ The year 1988 also marks a significant event in Burmese history. On 8 August 1988, an uprising in Burma led to the resignation of General Ne Win. While his government was replaced by yet another military junta, the 8888 Uprising signified an end to the Burmese Way to Socialism which had brought the country to ruin and led to the flight of its people.

Cold War Thailand is generally characterized by the increased militarization of the Thai state, alongside generous economic and military assistance from the

⁴ It is generally accepted to end the Cold War in Thailand in the mid-1970s. The end is typically signified by the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam and establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and the People’s Republic of China. See Wasana Wongsurawat, *The Crown and the Capitalists: The ethnic Chinese and the founding of the Thai nation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 180.

⁵ Andreas Sturm, “The King’s Nation: A study of the emergence and development of nation and nationalism in Thailand” (PhD dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2006).

United States, the October incidents in 1973 and 1976, and the resurgence of the monarchy. What has garnered less attention is the significance of the Shan State and people in the narrative of the Cold War in Thailand.

The reasons behind studying the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the Cold War are manifold. First, works on Cold War Thailand in relation to other ethnic groups have generally been about the ethnic Chinese, peoples in French Indochina and the Isan in Thailand. This is unsurprising considering how much attention they received from both Thai and U.S. governments.⁶ Second, when it comes to Northern Thailand during the Cold War, there has been a tendency to hone in on the Kuomintang (KMT) remnants, and to generalize the national security problem as an issue of assimilating or integrating the hill tribes who were perceived to be “wild” people. Finally, the Shan State was the crossroads of ethnic and communist insurgencies, and Thai-U.S. policies to safeguard the “Free World.” In other words, to study the Shan in relation to Thailand during the Cold War is to look into the intersection of ideological warfare, the narcotics trade, and insurgencies, all of which are inextricably linked aspects of the Cold War period in Southeast Asia.

The Shan and Thailand

The Shan people are known locally in Thailand as the Tai Yai. However, Shan is the dominant term used to refer to the Tais of Burma.⁷ The name Shan and Tai Yai can be

⁶ See Rungchai Yensabai, “Competing Narratives in Cold War Thailand: Identity Politics and the Construction of Foreign Others” (PhD dissertation, The University of Leeds, 2019).

⁷ “Shan in both Burmese and English, including in other western languages has a meaning that includes all the Tais, who live outside the Chao Phraya Basin and Laos [and] Siam is the same term as Shan, and Sem in Mon language. It has been used to refer to the Tai without any socio-political barrier,

viewed as pan-Thai identities in that they merge several previous, more localized identities. While the Tai Yai identity used by the Shan in Thailand is an ethnic identity within the Thai state, it is also linked to the Shan identity within the Burmese state.⁸

Considering the variety of Tai groups within the Shan State such as Tai Lue, Tai Khuen and Tai Nuea, this research does not mean to oversimplify Tai identities within the Shan State. Instead, it focuses on the Shan as a political entity. This thesis uses the term Shan as it is more appropriate for the scope and content of the research. Finally, owing to the heterogenous ethnic makeup of the Shan State, this thesis does not equivocate the Shan State with the Shan people.⁹

Prior to 1922, there was no such thing as a singular Shan State.¹⁰ Instead, there were multiple Shan states or principalities, which comprised smaller districts. A Shan principality, also known as *mong* or *mueang* [เมือง] was ruled by a *sawbwa* or *chaofa* [เจ้าฟ้า]. Districts belonging to a principality, on the other hand, were ruled by *myozas*. With this political set-up, the Shan community enjoyed greater autonomy. “From

in general.” See Jit Phumisak, *Etymology of the terms Siam, Thai, Lao and Khmer, and the social characteristics of Ethnonyms*. (Bangkok: Siam Press, 2001) quoted in Jaggapan Cadchumsang, “People at the Rim: A Study of Tai Ethnicity and Nationalism in a Thai Border Village” (PhD thesis, University of Toronto, 2011), 45.

⁸ Maya McLean, *Dress and Tai Yai Identity in Thoed Thai, Northern Thailand*. (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2012).

⁹ In cases that apply to both the Shan State and the Shan people hereafter, the author uses the general term “Shan.”

¹⁰ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *The Shan of Burma: Memoirs of a Shan Exile*. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1987), 78.

1888 to 1897, it was a pervasive practice that the Shan community was granted a relatively autonomous status.”¹¹

On 1 October 1922, the Federated Shan States were formed by merging the Shan States with the Karenni States. Within this system “a centralized budget was established for public works, medical administration, forestry, education, agriculture and the police.”¹² Nevertheless, the *chaofas* were allowed to follow their traditional judiciary system.¹³ It would be much later in 1959 that the *chaofas* of the Shan States would relinquish their feudal power and transfer judicial and administrative power to the Shan State government. In other words, powers devolved eventually from the *chaofas* to Taunggyi.¹⁴

During the Second World War, the territorial Thai nation of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram had renewed interest in Shan territory. Phibun made an alliance with Japan, which proved to be favorable to his expansionist ambitions. Phibun’s irredentism perceived all Tai peoples to be members of one great Thai race. With reluctant support from the Japanese, the Thai government annexed parts of the Shan States of British Burma.¹⁵ Eventually, the conclusion of the Second World War saw the return of Thailand's annexed territories, Mong Pan and Kengtung, to the British.

¹¹ Zhu Xianghui. “The British Ruling Policy on the Shan State (1886-1948).” In *Shan and Beyond* Eds. Montira Rato and Khanidtha Kanthavidchai, (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2011), 127.

¹² Samara Yawngghwe, *Maintaining the Union of Burma: The Role of Ethnic Nationalities in a Shan Perspective* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2013), 92.

¹³ Xianghui, *op. cit.*, 128. See Shan State Act 1888.

¹⁴ See Sai Aung Tun, *History of the Shan State: From its origins to 1962* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2009), 365-371. See also Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 117.

¹⁵ Regarding the Japanese stance on the Thai annexation of Shan territory, See Eiji Murashima, “The Commemorative Character of Thai Historiography: The 1942-43 Thai Military Campaign in the Shan States Depicted as a Story of National Salvation and the Restoration of Thai Independence.” *Modern Asian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2006): 1053-1096.

The Shan State, specifically the trans-Salween Shan states, caught the attention of the Thai and U.S. governments towards the end of the 1940s. With the collapse of the Chinese Nationalist government in 1949, the Shan State proved to be a critical area in the brewing Cold War. In late December 1949 and early January 1950, Kuomintang (KMT) troops began crossing into Burma. By March 1950, around 1,500 KMT troops were occupying territory between Kengtung City and Tachilek.¹⁶

With the KMT's invasion of the Shan State, the narcotics trade would soon gain a foothold in the area and boom in the tri-border area known as the Golden Triangle. Instead of being suppressed, the drug trade was supported by the CIA and the Thai government as it helped fund the KMT remnants, who were part of the pro-democracy bloc. This bloc which consisted of the United States, the Thai military regime, the KMT, and the Lao rightist movement. They cooperated with various tribal groups, such as the Shan and Lahu, in anti-communist operations on the Thai-Burmese border.¹⁷

An important reason why the narcotics trade thrived at the time was the profit it generated for the elite in Thailand. The opium trade in Thailand at the time was controlled by Police-General Phao Sriyanon, the CIA's most favored man in Thailand.¹⁸ When Sarit Thanarat came into power, the Thai government declared and implemented a campaign against drugs with the establishment of the Narcotics Control Board in 1958.¹⁹ However, the exigency of funding ethnic insurgents through the narcotics trade in order to preclude the spread of communism overshadowed the

¹⁶ Alfred W. McCoy, et al., *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 128.

¹⁷ Boonyawongwiwat. *op. cit.*, 45-46.

¹⁸ Donald F. Cooper. *Thailand: Dictatorship or Democracy?* (London: Minerva Press, 1995), 127.

¹⁹ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 46.

aversion to narcotics. It was with the raid of Khun Sa's base at Ban Hin Taek and his consequent expulsion from Thailand in 1982 that the Thai state, under the Prem government, can be said to have finally made up its mind about the narcotics trade.

The Thai state's perception of the Shan State and people during the Cold War is useful in understanding the development of the Thai nation-state insofar as it demonstrates significant changes in Thai nationalism and nation-building from the earlier to the latter part of the Cold War.

The Shan meant something different for the Thai state in each stage of the Cold War. Initially, when remnants of the Kuomintang occupied Shan territory, the Thai state's perception of the Shan focused primarily on the Shan State, which functioned as an anti-communist buffer zone. Later on, when Shan "refugees" and rebel forces moved to the Thai-Burmese borderlands, the focus of the Thai state's perception shifted to the Shan people who were expected to hold off communist expansion. When the hysteria over communism died down, signified by Prime Ministerial Order 66/2523, the Thai state found a new enemy in drugs and those who were involved in the business like the Shan.

As is the case in earlier periods, the nationalist narrative of Cold War Thailand maintained the theme of a nation under threat. Examining the Thai state's perception of the Shan State and people provides a more thorough idea of what constituted this threat and how the Thai nation-state transformed accordingly throughout the Cold War.

Literature review

This thesis draws upon three kinds of works. The first category pertains to works on the transformations of the Thai nation-state. The second category consists of works on Cold War Thailand. Finally, works on the Shan or Tai Yai and the Golden Triangle in relation to the Thai state constitute the third category.

On the transformations of the Thai nation-state

A study of the Thai nation cannot begin without going through *Siam Mapped*.²⁰ In his work, Thongchai Winichakul elucidates how Siam's "geo-body" came to be. He does so by pointing out how the discourse of modern geography and map making displaced the indigenous concept of political space. While there have been disagreements as to why Siam was not completely colonized, Thongchai argues that the knowledge acquisition of modern geography enabled the Siamese court to compete with both Britain and France for territory even if, as the tributary system dictated, no one had exclusive sovereignty over them. The idea was that Burma, Siam, and Vietnam were the supreme overlords of the region; and interspersed between them were smaller polities or vassals that also had their own network of tributaries. Crucial to this system was that tributaries could pledge allegiance to more than one overlord and that sovereignty was shared rather than exclusive.

Siam Mapped concludes that the history of the geo-body has been politicized by the ruling elite to pursue its ends. More specifically, the narratives about Siam's territorial losses and its celebrated provincial reform are said to be based on a

²⁰ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

problematic understanding of how Siam's boundaries came to be. Thongchai further argues that conventional Thai history relies on the suppression or suspension of the ideas of the unbounded realm during the premodern era.²¹ In other words, the conventional narrative assumes the *a priori* existence of Siam's geo-body and by extension, of the Thai nation as well.

Thongchai's work on Siam's geo-body is an essential work in studying the history of the Thai nation-state. *Siam Mapped* has lent itself useful for this thesis in that it provides a comprehensive background of the consolidation of Siam as a modern nation-state. Thongchai's reexamination of the development of Siam's boundaries sheds light on the acquiescence of Siam and its neighbors to the Western understanding of territory, boundaries, and sovereignty. Overall, *Siam Mapped* justifies the contingent nature of the Thai nation-state. It makes it worth asking how modern Thailand continued to negotiate itself with its peripheries.

*The Crown and the Capitalists*²² provides an account of the Thai nation's transformations from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century that places importance on a transnational perspective. Wongsurawat makes a case for the perennial role of the ethnic Chinese in the various stages of the Thai national narrative. More precisely, her work sheds light on the role of the ethnic Chinese community in Thailand as a key contributor to this narrative. Wongsurawat does so by first investigating modern education, print media, and economic policies, through which the Thai nation was negotiating its narrative with the ethnic Chinese in

²¹ Winichakul, *op. cit.*, 149.

²² Wongsurawat, *op. cit.*

Thailand; and reexamining the royalist narrative of King Vajiravudh within the context of the Cold War.

The Crown and the Capitalists emphasizes a codependent relationship between the Thai ruling elite and the ethnic Chinese entrepreneurial class who had been dominating the Thai economy. For instance, the ethnic Chinese filled the vacuum in the Siamese socioeconomic system as the entrepreneurial class during the premodern period.²³ Later on, leading ethnic Chinese aristocrats who had served the monarchy continued to thrive in King Chulalongkorn's court throughout his reign.²⁴ During the reign of King Vajiravudh, the ethnic Chinese came to be perceived as an internal threat, against which official nationalist ideology was developed. King Rama VI warned against a Siamese economy that depended heavily on the Chinese, and disseminated propaganda encouraging "economic de-sinification." Ultimately, however, throughout the Sixth Reign, "not a single law that could be considered discriminatory to the ethnic Chinese was promulgated."²⁵

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, the ethnic Chinese community in Thailand would prove themselves integral to Thailand's victory in the Second World War. Despite having declared war against the US and Britain, Thailand was spared of the liabilities of defeat. Critical to Thailand's emergence as a victor of the Second World War was Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's endorsement of the Free Thai Movement. His endorsement was not intended for Pridi Banomyong's Free Thai Movement or the nationalist ideals of the People Party's constitutional government. Instead, Chiang Kai-shek was interested in the well-being of the

²³ Wongsurawat, *op. cit.*, 83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

overseas Chinese community in Thailand, which had greatly contributed to the Chinese war effort ever since the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931.²⁶

In relation to this thesis, *The Crown and the Capitalists* provides a model to study the transformations of a nation-state with a transnational perspective. Wongsurawat's work underscores the significance of understanding the history of a nation in terms of how its ideologies, policies, and very existence were negotiated within and across its borders. A particular question in *The Crown and the Capitalists* inspires this research:

How does a nation redefine itself three times within one hundred years while not only maintaining its place among legitimate and credible nations but also managing to survive the severest of political threats, including colonial aggression, two world wars, and nearly half a century of the Cold War?²⁷

This incisive question points to the ability of Siam/Thailand and its ruling elite to establish the right alliance at the right time. More importantly, it suggests that the alliance which has stood the test of time has been with the ethnic Chinese capitalists.

This thesis draws upon the transnational logic of *The Crown and Capitalists* but applies it to the case of the Shan within the context of the Cold War in Thailand. While the Shan may neither be considered an economic powerhouse like the ethnic Chinese in Thailand nor as prominent a presence, they make a case at least in understanding the transformations of the Thai nation-state throughout the Cold War period.

²⁶ Wongsurawat, *op. cit.*, 114.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

Finally, *The King's Nation*²⁸ offers a theoretical foundation for understanding the changes in Thai nationalism throughout the mid-nineteenth century to the post-Cold War period. In his work, Andreas Sturm ascribes a version of Thai nationalism to each critical phase of the modern Thai nation, from King Mongkut's Siam all the way to King Bhumibol's Thailand. In other words, Sturm identifies the kind of Thai nationalism promulgated during a specific regime. He assigns the concepts of *royal nationalism*, *monarchical nationalism*, and *statist nationalism* to characterize each regime's vision of what the Thai nation meant and practices to promulgate its ideologies. The concepts introduced by Sturm shall be explored further in the theoretical framework of this research.

On Cold War Thailand

In this literature review, works on Cold War Thailand are divided into two categories. The first category consists of works which focus on a specific aspect of the Cold War in Thailand. The second category, on the other hand, comprises general works or short histories which provide an idea of the standard narrative about Thailand during the Cold War.

Rungchai Yensabai's dissertation, *Competing Narratives in Cold War Thailand*,²⁹ discusses the competing narratives by the Thai state and by the Thai leftists about the Americans, the ethnic Chinese, and the Isan. Rungchai argues that while both leftists and state sought political legitimacy through their own narratives of the Cold War and reconstruction of the aforementioned groups' identities, both camps

²⁸ Sturm, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Yensabai, *op. cit.*

ultimately reinforced a royalist Thai identity insofar as they both stressed the importance of traditional Thai values and customs, the supremacy of Bangkok, and the superiority of the Thai ethnicity.

In her work, Rungchai utilizes a wide array of materials ranging from fiction in the form of novels and short stories to non-fiction like academic texts and government statements. Rungchai's discussion on the Thai state's narratives about Isan villagers is useful in verifying assumptions of the Thai nationalist narrative about other ethnic identities. More importantly, *Competing Narratives in Cold War Thailand* demonstrates the supremacy of royalism during the Cold War in spite of these "competing narratives."

Other factors contributed to the supremacy of royalism or the resurgence of the monarchy during the Cold War. One such factor was the Border Patrol Police. In *Indigenizing the Cold War*³⁰ Sinae Hyun studies the history of nation-building by the Border Patrol Police of Thailand. Hyun challenges conventional Cold War studies which view new nation-states as passive spectators who were victimized by global superpowers' competition for domination.³¹ Hyun argues that the Thai elites, specifically Phibun, Sarit and King Bhumibol, were not passive recipients of American influence and resources who merely facilitated the achievement of American goals in Southeast Asia. Instead, both the military leaders and the royal family were able to successfully "indigenize" the American Cold War system. This is

³⁰ Sinae Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War: Nation-Building by the Border Patrol Police of Thailand, 1945-1980" (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

to say that the local elite's voluntary collaboration with an international superpower allowed them to preserve their authority and sphere of power.³²

Indigenizing the Cold War's emphasis on the agency and interests of local actors helps in understanding the Cold War in Thailand. It interprets the Cold War in Thailand as more a period of the Thai elite's consolidation of their power base through nation-building as it was an implementation of American policies to fight communism. Its focus on studying the role of the Border Patrol Police in northern Thailand is especially useful in shifting the focus of Cold War Thailand studies away from Isan and Indochina. Hyun's perspective lends itself useful to this research as it provides the framework to understand the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the Cold War.³³

Overall, the above works on Cold War Thailand leave room to explore the perception or narrative of the Thai state about the Shan State and people, Thailand's immediate neighbor to the north. Below are general works on Thai history which help identify the common themes tackled by studies on Cold War Thailand.

The works of Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit,³⁴ and David Wyatt³⁵ provide a narrative of the Cold War in Thailand that either emphasizes American influence in Thailand during the Cold War or understands local events within the context of the American Cold War. In contrast to what Hyun suggests, this

³² Hyun, *op. cit.*, 5.

³³ Hyun's concepts of "indigenization" and "building a human border" shall be discussed further as part of the theoretical framework of this thesis.

³⁴ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009).

³⁵ David Wyatt, *Thailand: A short history* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

downplays the Thai elite's role in the Cold War. Nevertheless, what can be gleaned from these histories is the debate of what the Cold War in Thailand actually meant.

On the Shan vis-a-vis the Thai state

In *The Commemorative Character of Thai Historiography*,³⁶ Eiji Murashima demonstrates the relevance of the Thai state's policies towards the Shan or the Shan State in reexamining the Thai nationalist narrative, particularly during the Second World War.³⁷ This work critiques *Thai Military History in the Greater East Asia War*³⁸ (hereafter *Military History*) and its portrayal of the Thai military as saviors of the nation who fought against Japanese military aggression.

Military History argues that Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram was forced to side with Japan despite having anticipated its defeat in the Second World War. Thus, “the military campaign into Shan states was reluctantly carried out as a gesture of collaboration with the Japanese.”³⁹ Murashima contends that while Japanese coercion seems plausible, it is self-contradictory. He argues that the Shan campaign had nothing to do with feigning collaboration with the Japanese in order to secretly establish contacts with the Chinese in the Shan states or with national salvation. Instead, it was carried out in the name of Phibun's irredentist campaign.⁴⁰ This is “the

³⁶ Murashima, *op. cit.*

³⁷ The Thai army invaded the Shan region in May 1942.

³⁸ Armed Forces Education Department, Supreme Command, Ministry of Defense, *Thai Military History in the Greater East Asia War* [ประวัติศาสตร์การสงครามของไทยในสงครามมหาเอเชียบูรพา] (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 1997).

³⁹ Murashima, *op. cit.*, 1056.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1057.

only argument that can logically explain Thailand's actions during the first half of 1942 which coincides with Thai documents and Japanese primary sources.”⁴¹

Murashima argues that Thailand was *not* coerced by Japan to conduct the Shan campaign, contrary to the narrative of national salvation and restoration of independence found in *Military History*. To corroborate his claim, Murashima points out that Phibun's telegram to Chiang Kai-shek on 22 December 1941, for instance, revealed the former's support of Asian liberation was not something forced on him by Japan. In addition, Phibun's own desire to invade Burma was demonstrated in his insistence to have his troops accompany the Japanese in the invasion of Burma, instead of recruiting a volunteer army of Burmese and Shan. Murashima also cites reports that show Japan's reluctance to allow the recovery of “lost territory.”⁴²

The Commemorative Character of Thai Historiography lends itself useful for the research in that it allows us to understand the place of the Shan within the territorial Thai nation. During the Second World War, the Shans in the federated Shan states, the Karens in the Karreni states of British Burma, and the Mons in Tavoy province in Tenasserim were all deemed by the Thai government as members of the Thai race. This was declared three days before the Phayap Army gave orders to advance into Burma.⁴³ It is therefore plausible to view the Thai state's inclusion of these minorities as a means to justify its expansionism. In this regard, Murashima helps explain the Shan State and people's relationship with Thailand. Specifically,

⁴¹ Murashima, *op.cit.*, 1093.

⁴² See “Matters concerning our attitude and policy implementation toward Thailand” cited in Murashima, *op. cit.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1073.

Murashima allows us to see that when borders were contestable, membership to the Thai nation-state was erratic.

*The Ethno-Narcotic Politics of the Shan People*⁴⁴ discusses how the Shan have had to actively dissociate themselves with the narcotics trade in order to salvage their nationalist struggle. It also tackles the impact of Thailand's campaign against drugs on the ethnic identity of the Shan people in Thailand (the Tai Yai) who still have ties with the Shan in Burma. Boonyawongwiwat covers the Thai state's anti-drug policies up until the contemporary period like the Doi Tung Development Project. *The Ethno-Narcotic Politics of the Shan People* discusses how the Shan people have been perceived by the Thai state from the Cold War period onwards.⁴⁵

Mainly an analysis of the relationship between Shan ethnonationalism and narcotics, and of the reconstruction of Shan identity within the context of the Thai government's war on drugs post-Cold War, *The Ethno-Narcotic Politics of the Shan People* provides a sparse history of the Shan State and people's relations with the Thai state during the Cold War. It leaves room to study and enrich the narrative about the Shan in relation to the Thai state. Nevertheless, the work aids this research insofar as it verifies the popular image of the Shan as an "ethno-narcotic" group.

⁴⁴ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵ In his book, Boonyawongwiwat locates the Shan issue as part of the larger context of the conflict in the Golden Triangle, the tri-border shared by Burma, Laos and Thailand. Regarding the Golden Triangle, this thesis has looked into the works of Alfred McCoy, Bertil Lintner, Ronald Renard, and Donald F. Cooper.

Theoretical framework

As mentioned above, this research draws on the logic of the *Crown and the Capitalists* and applies it to the case of the Shan during the Cold War. By doing so, the research attempts to provide a transnational perspective of the Thai nation-state's transformations throughout the Cold War period. To understand these transformations, this research also draws on some concepts found in *The King's Nation*.

Andreas Sturm puts forward the concepts of **statist nationalism**, **royal nationalism**, and **monarchical nationalism**. This research applies the aforementioned concepts to delineate the developments of the Thai nation-state throughout the Cold War. Interestingly, each of the three nationalisms functioned during the Cold War period at one point or another.

In Sturm's view, statist nationalism is characterized by the Thai state's central role in defining the nation, particularly through handling its socio-economic affairs.⁴⁶ This mode of nationalism was at its height from the 1930s to the 1950s, majority of which Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram was at the helm. These periods saw the significance of the monarchy to the Thai nation downplayed by the state. For instance, the new constitution promulgated in 1952 limited the role of King Bhumibol to a merely symbolic one, consisting mainly of performing religious and traditional ceremonies. This was not the case in the provisional and permanent constitutions of

⁴⁶ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 162.

1947 and 1949 respectively, which afforded the King veto power over legislation and the right to appoint senate members.⁴⁷

By contrast, royal nationalism is nationalism characterized by the monarchy's mere symbolic role and absence of active political power. This means that (military-led) state is in control and appropriates the popularity and symbolic influence of the monarchy. Sturm ascribes royal nationalism to the Sarit regime. A critical feature of Sarit's royal view of the nation was his style of government rooted in Thai culture, social and traditional values together with Buddhist teachings. The monarchy became the palladium of the nation, and old traditions and customs were safeguarded in the face of modernization and development. Nevertheless, Sarit saw himself as a leading partner, not a subordinate, to the palladium of the nation.⁴⁸ The succeeding government of Thanom Kittikachorn assumed this type of nationalism but to no avail.

Finally, monarchical nationalism is where the monarch is both a symbolic figure and "is also the dynamic (sometimes primary) political agent."⁴⁹ In other words, the monarch plays an active part in realizing his own vision of the Thai nation. Sturm argues that this mode of nationalism was exemplified earlier by King Chulalongkorn. Monarchical nationalism would then be revived in the latter part of the twentieth century, when King Bhumibol took a more active role in molding the Thai nation. This shall be explored further in Chapters 3 and 4.

Considering the aforementioned concepts, *The King's Nation* provides the framework to understand what is meant by "narrative." In this thesis, narrative refers

⁴⁷ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 180.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

to the Thai elite's ideology, alongside their practices and policies to propagate their vision of the Thai nation. In Chapter 2, which talks about the early phase of the Cold War period (1948-1963), the Thai nationalist narrative is to be understood as a transition from statist nationalism to royal nationalism. In Chapter 3, which covers the middle phase (1963-1976), the transition from royal nationalism to monarchical nationalism constitutes the narrative. Finally, in Chapter 4, which discusses the latter part of the Cold War period (1976-1988), the Thai nationalist narrative centers on the monarchical nationalism of King Bhumibol.

This thesis also draws on Sinae Hyun's notions of **indigenization** and **building a human border**. Indigenization refers to the process of harnessing international intervention to achieve the local elite's aim of consolidating their power bases.⁵⁰ Hyun posits three premises for understanding this concept. First, she states that the international Cold War system was neither colonial nor hegemonic. While certainly influential, the Cold War system was not imposed like a doctrine upon the local elites. Instead, the local elites had selectively adapted the global system to serve their own social and political dominance. For example, the Thai ruling elite adapted a "discrepant definition of communism." Communism came to represent what was anti-nation, anti-Buddhism and anti-monarchy.⁵¹

The second premise for understanding indigenization is "that the decolonization of the colonial states was still an on-going process during the Cold War." This means that local nation-building concurred with the development of the international Cold War system. Hyun suggests that the interest of global superpowers

⁵⁰ Hyun, *op. cit.*, 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

and local elites converged in the goal to stabilize the aftermath of colonialism and decolonization. This led them to cooperate with each other. Accordingly, Hyun's third premise states that the Cold War system was an opportune condition that essentially supported the local elite's nation-building. It suggests that communism, in theory, "promoted a worldwide beginning with [...] diverse interest groups that were not part of the hegemony imposed by the elite, which bore the potential threats to the global power balance." This helps to understand why the U.S. and Thai elite allies launched their anti-communist campaigns in Thailand and Southeast Asia.⁵²

Building a human border refers to the extension of national loyalty and Thainess, both centered on the monarchy, among the border people. Hyun suggests that the degree of the highland minorities' sense of belonging to the Thai nation could tip the balance between their being a friend or enemy of the state. Their integration or assimilation was carried out in Border Patrol Police schools that taught the Thai language, introduced Thai modernity, propagated the development imperatives of the border people, and ensured border security through the presence of state agents like the Border Patrol Police teacher. In addition, the BPP taught about the superiority and progress of the Thai nation, placing ethnic minorities at the bottom of a vertical order.⁵³

Finally, this research takes into account works on Shan history by ethnic Shan such as *The Shan States and British Annexation* by Sai Mong Mangrai; *History of the Shan State: from its origins to 1962* by Sai Aung Tun; and *Maintaining the Union of*

⁵² Hyun, *op. cit.*, 33.

⁵³ Sinae Hyun, "Building a Human Border: The Thai Border Patrol Police School Project in the Post-Cold War Era," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, no. 2 (2014): 344. See also "Indigenizing the Cold War," Chapter 5.

Burma, 1946-1962: The Role of Ethnic Minorities from a Shan Perspective by Samara Yawnghwe. This research relies largely on the account provided by Chao Tzang Yawnghwe in his memoir *The Shan of Burma: Memoirs of a Shan Exile*.

Objectives

This thesis has three main objectives. By pursuing the objectives below, this research aims to demonstrate the relationship between the Thai state's perception of the Shan and the Thai nation's various transformations throughout the Cold War period.

1. To analyze how the Thai state's perception of the Shan affected the Thai state's policies towards the Shan during the Cold War period.
2. To examine the extent to which the construction of the Thai state's perception of the Shan influenced Thai nationalist narratives.
3. To study the impact of the Thai state's nation-building efforts on the Shan nationalist movement during the Cold War.

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Hypotheses

1. Even though the Shan was perceived as being involved in the narcotics trade during the Cold War, the Thai state tolerated their assumed involvement for the sake of fighting communism.
2. The Thai state's perception of the Shan reaffirmed the assumed superiority of the Thai nation and emphasized the importance of the monarchy in the Cold War Thai nationalist narrative.

3. The shift of the Thai state's perception of the Shan from first being part of the communist threat to becoming a narcotics threat, reflected the shift in the Thai state's policies towards the Shan from the earlier to the latter part of the Cold War.

The first hypothesis is corroborated mainly by the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3, which cover the earlier and middle part of the Cold War. From 1948 to 1963, the Thai tolerated the narcotics trade originating in the Shan State not only because it was a means to assist the remnants of the KMT, but also because the local Thai elite benefited from it economically and politically. From 1963 to 1976, the black market along the Thai-Burmese border brought about by the failure of the Burmese Way to Socialism invited displaced minorities from Burma and ethnic rebel forces to settle in the area. This was welcome to Thai state as their presence along the border area was seen as means to preclude communist expansion.

The second hypothesis is supported by Chapters 3 and 4, which talk about the periods from 1963 to 1976, and 1976 to 1988 respectively. The first period witnessed the resurgence of the monarchy most notably through its collaboration with the Border Patrol Police. Around this time, it can be said that the Thai narrative that stressed the monarchy's importance was amplified by the situation along and across the Thai-Shan border. Moreover, from 1976 to 1988, the Shan people was strongly identified with narcotics by virtue of their association with the notorious drug warlord, Khun Sa. Meanwhile, the Thai state influenced by the monarchical nationalism of King Bhumibol was earnestly working against narcotics.

The third hypothesis is touched on throughout this research, as each chapter discusses the Thai state's perception of and policies towards the Shan and the factors that influenced them during a specific phase of the Cold War. Overall, this thesis interprets the shifts in the Thai state's perception of the Shan State and people as a reflection of the transformations of the Thai nation-state throughout the Cold War period.

Research questions

This research originated in the simple question: how were ethnic minorities integrated into the Thai nation-state? It turns out that both the answer to this question and the question itself are much more complex. What started out as an inquiry into Thai nationalism and the integration or assimilation of ethnic groups within the Thai state has become a study on the transformations of the Thai nation-state during the Cold War. This research derives itself from two general questions. First, how did the Cold War period transform the Thai nation-state? Second, to what extent did the Thai state's perception of the Shan State and people influence these transformations?

Specifically, this thesis addresses three main questions.

1. How did the Thai state's policies towards the Shan contribute to its policies against communism?
2. How did the Thai state's perception of the Shan influence the Thai nationalist narrative during the Cold War?

3. What was the relationship between the shift in the Thai state's perception of the Shan and the shift in its policies from the earlier to the later part of the Cold War?

Methodology

Documentary research was conducted for this thesis. This involved the historical and textual analysis of primary sources such as academic texts, records of events (e.g., memoirs); and government policies of Burma, Thailand, and the United States regarding the communism, insurgency, and the narcotics trade during the Cold War, particularly those appended, quoted or cited in previous studies on Thailand during the Cold War. This thesis also relied on secondary sources such as historical books and theoretical works on the aforementioned topics.

Thesis outline

Each chapter discusses the Thai state's perception of the Shan during a particular phase of the Cold War in Thailand, namely: the early (1948-1963); the middle (1963-1976); and the latter (1976-1988) phases. To support the hypotheses and address the research questions, each chapter looks into the historical and political context of the period in focus and the Thai state's policies towards the Shan at the time. Each chapter contributes an explanation to the hypotheses of this research and an answer to each of the main research questions mentioned above. The discussion of this research proceeds in three chapters followed by the conclusion.

The second chapter of this thesis covers the period from 1948 to 1963. It focuses on demonstrating the factors that influenced the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the earlier part of the Cold War. During this period, internal issues among the politico-military elite in Thailand coincided with the KMT invasion of the Shan State. During this period, the Thai state's perception focused primarily on the Shan State and only secondarily on the Shan people. The Thai state's perception of the Shan State at the time not only derived from the demands of American foreign policy, but from the vested interests of the Thai elite themselves. This chapter argues that the Thai state's perception of the Shan State during this period was no more than a reflection of Thailand's coalescence with the United States in its fight versus communism which in turn provided the Thai elites a system to consolidate their own power base.

The third chapter discusses the period from 1963 to 1976. During this phase, the military regime of General Ne Win brought Burma into an economic collapse which exacerbated the existing conflict between Rangoon and Burma's ethnic minorities, specifically the Shan. The intensification of conflict in the Shan State, along with the economic crisis brought about by the Burmese Way to Socialism, led to the migration of minorities like the Shan to the Thai-Burmese borderlands. Accordingly, the Thai state's perception began to focus mainly on the Shan people. In Thailand, the military regime was losing its grip, whereas the monarchy was making a resurgence through the Border Patrol Police which implemented its counterinsurgency strategy through civic action programs. This chapter argues that the Thai state's tolerance of Shan presence along its border with Burma supplemented the Border Patrol Police's policy of "building a human border" to curb communism.

Finally, the fourth chapter looks into the period from 1976 to 1988. It hones in on how the Thai state's policies towards and perception of the Shan people influenced the Thai nationalist narrative, which revolved around the importance of the monarchy. For six years, the drug warlord-cum-Shan nationalist Khun Sa had been conducting his operations within Thai territory at Ban Hin Taek, until the Prem government raided the area and effectively drove him out of Thai soil in 1982. This was the same government that served as the platform for King Bhumibol's nationalism. This chapter argues that the Thai state's perception of the Shan as an ethno-narcotic group linked with Khun Sa justified the narrative of being under threat. This narrative, in turn, reinforced the importance of the monarchy and the King's vision for the survival of the Thai nation.

This thesis concludes that during the Cold War period (1948 to 1988) the Thai state's perception of and policies towards the Shan shifted its focus from the Shan State to the Shan people. This reflected the unique context of each phase of the Cold War. It became imperative for the Thai state to establish ideological boundaries since its territorial boundaries proved susceptible to infiltration. This shift parallels the shift in the Thai state's perception of the Shan from first being part of the communist threat to becoming a narcotics threat. Ultimately, these developments in the perception of the Shan signified the Thai nation-state's Cold War transformations first from a statist to a royal nation, and finally, from a royal to a monarchical nation.

Significance of the study

This research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the Cold War. In addition, this research provides a foundation for future studies on the historical relationship between the Shan State and people and the Thai nation-state. Even with its limitations, this research adds another perspective in studying the Cold War.



CHAPTER 2: The Thai state's perception of the Shan State (1948-1963)

The period from 1948 to 1963 was an unstable one for both Thailand and the Shan State (and Burma at large). On the Thai side, Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram had returned to power, barely five months after a coup in 1947 was staged by the military. Throughout the duration of this second premiership, Phibun faced the task of stabilizing his tenuous regime and keeping in check the power of his junior officers, Phao Sriyanon and Sarit Thanarat. Having established an alliance with the United States, Phibun was able to strengthen his power base. This, however, came with the price of massively expanding the Thai police force led by Phao whose power and influence became a threat to the Phibun administration and Sarit's army. The second Phibun regime came to an end with a coup staged in 1957 by Sarit Thanarat himself.

Sarit would go on to become the prime minister of Thailand from 1958 to 1963. His regime was arguably the most despotic since the Second World war. He sent both Phibun and Phao into exile. Sarit then abolished the 1952 constitution, dissolved parliament, and banned all political parties. Martial law was declared, and left-wing intellectuals were either silenced or eliminated. In contrast to Phibun, Sarit despised Western political ideas and practices. He believed that they cannot be directly applied to Thai society; instead, they should be adjusted to suit the local context. His regime, nevertheless, enjoyed generous military and economic assistance

from the United States brought about by the escalating situation in Indochina. Also unlike Phibun, Sarit did not attempt to undermine the importance of the monarchy.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, when Burma achieved its independence in 1948, it was faced with the daunting task of uniting its various ethnic states under one nation. Not long after, in October 1949, the Communist Party of China had defeated the Chinese Nationalists, and by the end of that year remnants of the Kuomintang (KMT) began invading Burma's Shan State. The KMT would dominate the Shan State until they were decisively driven out to neighboring Laos and Thailand in 1961. In 1959, the first Shan uprising took place in Tangyan. Not until the KMT issue was resolved, the central Burmese government had its attention divided among the Burma Communist Party, ethnic insurgents, and the KMT. In 1962, the army under the leadership of General Ne Win seized the country. This marked the beginning of Socialist Burma where a nationalized economy led to a thriving black market which brought a new set of issues for both the Thai and Burmese governments.⁵⁵

What influenced the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the earlier part of the Cold War? This chapter discusses the first phase of the Cold War in Thailand and the Shan State. The first phase refers to the period from 1948 to 1963, which as mentioned above, was a period of instability in both Thailand and Burma. This

⁵⁴ Phibun's order to restore 1,239 temples all over the country in 1956 was part of his effort to fashion himself as patron of Buddhism, a role traditionally played by kings. In addition, Phibun changed his image from the "leader" to the "father" of the nation just like King Ramkhamhaeng. See Sturm, *op. cit.*, 180.

⁵⁵ The Burmese Way to Socialism provided ethnic insurgents along the Thai-Burmese border opportunities to build an economic base through the black-market trade. See Donald M. Seekins, *The Disorder in Order: The Army-State in Burma since 1962* (Bangkok: White Louts Press, 2002), 72. The new "set of problems" I refer to are the ethnic insurgents and their involvement in the narcotics trade along the border which the Thai government decided to tolerate as part of their plan to create a buffer zone. See Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 40-41.

chapter shows that during this period, the Thai state's perception of the Shan was focused on the Shan State's geopolitical importance as a buffer frontier.⁵⁶ In addition, KMT activities in the Shan State proved to be politically and economically lucrative for the Thai elite as the situation not only required the massive influx of American military and economic assistance, but also allowed the narcotics trade to boom.⁵⁷ Ultimately, the Thai state's perception of the Shan State during this period was no more than a reflection of Thailand's coalescence with the United States in its fight versus communism.

This chapter proceeds in two parts. First, this chapter discusses the political instability in the Shan State mainly brought about by the presence of the Kuomintang remnants. Second, this chapter discusses the rise of the Thai military in politics. This section explains the competition for power among the notorious triumvirate comprising Phibun, Phao and Sarit, specifically how each of them had harnessed U.S. policies and aid to consolidate their respective power base. This chapter concludes that the Thai state's perception of the Shan was largely derived from the U.S. strategy of transforming this part of Burmese territory into an anti-communist buffer frontier, and that this strategy engendered the opium trade boom. This shape the Thai state's perception of the Shan in the decades to come.

⁵⁶ During the early phase of the Cold War (1948-1963), the Thai state was concerned primarily about the Shan State and only secondarily on the people because territorial borders remained unstable. Donald F. Cooper writes that the presence of KMT remnants in Burma signified hope for Thailand's (Phibun in particular) own expansionism into the eastern Shan States which it acquired briefly during the Second World War. Conversely, the KMT themselves represented a problem for the Thai government since they were "a wandering army, acting without respect for territorial boundaries, even where such boundaries were known." See Cooper, *op. cit.*, 125-126.

⁵⁷ McCoy, *op. cit.*, 137-138.

Political instability in the Shan State⁵⁸

This section discusses the situation in the Shan State, following the independence of Burma and the defeat of the Chinese Nationalists to the Chinese Communist Party. It seeks to elaborate on the consequences of the presence of Kuomintang (KMT) remnants in the Shan State for the instability in Burma, as well as for U.S. and Thai policy in the region.

With the collapse of the Chinese Nationalist government in 1949, the Shan State became the rendezvous point of Kuomintang remnants. In late December 1949 and early January 1950, Chinese Nationalist troops began crossing into Burma. KMT troops first settled in Tachilek, but the Burmese Army later regained control of this town on the 21st of July. The KMT then decided to move to Mong Hsat, a town forty miles from Tachilek and fifteen from the Thai border. By March 1950, around 1,500 were occupying territory between Kentung City and Tachilek.⁵⁹

Mong Hsat was an important center for Nationalist China. It was no bigger than a village, but its land was fertile with a large area for rice cultivation. The area provided parachute dropping zones and could be used as training grounds. It had access to the Thai border, hence access to supplies. Despite the Burma army's attempts at ousting the KMT force from Mong Hsat in February, March, November and December 1951, as well as in late 1952, Mong Hsat proved to be in a good defensive position and remained the headquarters of the KMT for over four years.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ In this chapter, "Shan State" refers mainly to the trans-Salween Shan states where remnants of the Kuomintang established their bases after fleeing Yunnan.

⁵⁹ McCoy, *op. cit.*, 128. Cooper, *op. cit.*, 116.

⁶⁰ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 117.

The KMT forces comprised the 8th army commanded by General Li Mi; the 26th army commanded by Liu Kuo Chwan; and the 93rd division commanded by Major-General Ma Chaw Yi. In order to hire new recruits from both sides of the Mekong, General Li Mi used the Kokang ruling house as his local recruiting agent.⁶¹ He sent agents to the northern borders of Burma where they recruited Yunnanese refugees to train and arm them in Kengtung. General Li Mi also tried to persuade the Shan *chaofas* to join their cause but he was rejected. The Shans considered it too risky a commitment to join the “free world.” Li Mi was thus unable to consolidate the KMT presence in the Shan states and consequently was unable to establish bases in Yunnan.⁶²

Propagating the seeds of rebellion

The presence of the KMT in the Shan State deepened the preexisting conflict within Burma. Not only did the KMT forces draw the attention of the Burma Army away from the communist and ethnic insurgents, but they also empowered rebel forces mainly by supplying them with arms. The disunity and chaos in Burma, exacerbated by the invasion of the KMT, eventually brought about a military takeover in 1962.

From the beginning of independence, the central government was under armed challenge.⁶³ It is first important to note that prior to the entry of KMT troops from Yunnan into the Shan State, Burma had just gained independence a year earlier and it

⁶¹ Cooper, *op.cit.*, 116.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶³ Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1999), 27.

had already been dealing with internal threats. When Burma gained independence in 1948, the government's top priority was the maintenance of public order.⁶⁴ Insurgencies in the country stemmed from two factors. The first cause of was the conflict between the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and the Burma Communist Party (BCP). The second cause were insurgencies brought about by ethnic conflict.⁶⁵

One year after independence the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) rebelled against the government. Because of the lucrative trade in teak and other commodities, along with the fact that they constituted a large population base, the Karen rebels tested the government severely.⁶⁶ In addition to the Karen, other ethnic groups had also been rebellious towards the government in the early phases of Burmese independence. The Mon and the Arakan were among these ethnic groups. The Shan, on the other hand, initially had a more amicable relationship with the central government. When the civil war broke out, they rallied behind U Nu's AFPFL government.⁶⁷ The Shan nationalist movement commenced in the mid-1950s. Ryoko Kaise states that this was triggered by the invasion of the KMT and the increased presence of the Burma army in the Shan State.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ronald Renard, *The Burmese Connection: Illegal Drugs and the Making of the Golden Triangle* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 45.

⁶⁵ Ryoko Kaise. "Tai Yai migration in the Thai-Burma border area: the settlement and assimilation process, 1962-1997" (MA thesis. Chulalongkorn University, 1999), 21.

⁶⁶ Renard, *op. cit.*, 46.

⁶⁷ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 112.

⁶⁸ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 22.

In his memoir, Chao Tzang Yawngghwe⁶⁹ credits the Shan and Frontier leaders' foresight in not joining rebel forces, as Shan support for the rebels would have led the AFPFL to call in British or American support. Worse, it would have resulted in the split of the country as in Korea. In addition to the unwanted presence of Britain or America, there were three other factors behind the Shan princes' neutrality. First, they had a cordial relationship with the U Nu government. As mentioned above, the Shan (along with the Kachin and Chin) leaders assisted U Nu's government against rebel armies like the KMT.⁷⁰ Second, the 1948 Constitution provided the non-Burmese some say in internal administration and affairs. Lastly, the conservative and traditional nature of the Shan *chaofas* made them disdain rebellion and revolution.⁷¹ Neutrality appeared to be the best option for the Shan.

The Shan princes wanted nothing to do with the KMT rebels, but neither did they desire the victory of communists in Burma. While the *chaofa* were sympathetic to the Karen, they knew that the victory of the homegrown rebels would mean the victory of the communists, specifically the White Flag of Thakin Than Tun. Having both kith and kin in China, the Shan and Kachin were privy to life under communism through tales of communist barbarities shared by Shan and Kachin refugees.⁷² It is also worth noting that around this time the Shan, along with Kachin and Chin, were still holding on to the promise of the Panglong Agreement of 1947 which granted them the right to secession ten years after Burmese independence. The Shan's neutrality could be attributed more so to this agreement with Burma.

⁶⁹ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe is the son of the first President of the Union of Burma, Sao Shwe Thaik. He served as commander of the 1st Military Region of the Shan State Army.

⁷⁰ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 105.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, the central Burmese government had its attention split among the Karen rebels, the communists and the KMT. To cope with the KMT, 25,000 forces were sent north. 20,000 were left to face insurgencies. Judging by these numbers alone, it appears that Burma thought it more urgent to deal with the KMT than with local insurgents. In late 1951, the KMT started colluding with the Karen National Defense Organization and sold them weapons. By mid-1952, a loose alliance was formed between the KMT and the KNDO. KMT presence in Burma led the government to spend approximately 40% of its revenue on internal security. Robert Taylor writes that because of this the Burmese government had to delay its ambitious economic programs.⁷³

When units from the Burma Army were sent to the Shan State, they were met with resentment. The Shan government and people saw this move by the central government as another foreign occupation no better than the KMT. While the KMT were exploitative, they hardly brutalized villagers “nor did they go out of their way to despise things Shan.”⁷⁴ Burmese soldiers, on the other hand, were harsh towards the locals. Examples of their “indiscipline” were not only limited to rape or looting. It involved mass pillage and plunder, wanton killings, forcing whole villages into coolie service, and using coolies as human shields and human mine detectors.⁷⁵ Their brutality gave rise to anti-Burmese sentiments among locals.

⁷³ Robert Taylor, *Foreign and Domestic Consequences of the KMT in Burma* (Ithaca: Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1973), 19-20.

⁷⁴ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 112.

⁷⁵ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe cautions that these descriptions are difficult to verify, and should thus be taken only as a “presentation of what the Shan and other non-Burmese believe to be true.” See *The Shan of Burma*, 112-113.

When the KMT issue cooled down in 1954 after the first KMT evacuation which commenced at the end of 1953, the Burmese became more preoccupied with the secession rights of the Shan and the Karenni. The Burma Army perceived such things as autonomy, state rights, federalism, etc. as utter rubbish. The army was convinced that the Shan would secede from the Union of Burma, and that other ethnic states would follow suit.⁷⁶ In order to preclude this, it became imperative to destroy the image of the Shan *chaofas*.

Propaganda was thus circulated, portraying the princes as “despotic, indolent, exploitative, disloyal, and feudal reactionaries who plotted with KMT opium warlords, SEATO agents, Thai pimps, American war-mongers, and British neo-colonists to destroy the Union.”⁷⁷ In addition, with the profusion of firearms in the Shan State, it became imperative for the Burmese military to disarm the Shan population. The military’s first columns were dispatched in 1956 with the overall goal of suppressing a possible Shan uprising. This meant disarming perceived rebels, seeking out hidden arms caches, and terrorizing the Shan.

In 1959, the Tangyan rebellion took place in the Northern Shan State. This ignited the flames of rebellion, and everywhere small armed groups sprang up. Yawnghwe argues that the cause for this uprising was the “heavy handed action” of the army and the Shan government’s inability to protect the local inhabitants. From this episode, the Shan government and leaders reckoned that there needed to be a more equitable balance of power between the Burmese and non-Burmese.⁷⁸ This was

⁷⁶ Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, *op. cit.*, 113.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

the birth of the Federal Movement, which aimed to restructure the Union of Burma along the lines of federalism in the U.S.

Yawnghwe stresses that the federal movement was never intended to be sinister or seditious. Rather than being a plot by the *chaofas* to remove the Shan State from the Union as alleged by the Burmese, the movement was an act within the legal and constitutional framework that aimed to preclude a civil war and defuse the armed rebellion.⁷⁹ The military was nevertheless too convinced of its theory that Burma was going to be dismembered, and it took power in 1962. Following the 1962 coup, General Ne Win tried to establish a security cordon around major cities in Burma. In 1963, he came up with the *Pya Lei Pya* (Four Cuts) counterinsurgency strategy aimed at cutting the food, funds, intelligence and recruits that were flowing from supporters of the insurgents to the rebels in the field.⁸⁰

There are various explanations behind General Ne Win's coup. For one, Chao Tzang holds that the military lost faith in the U Nu government's failure to either implement the constitutional reforms proposed by the Shan or reach a compromise.⁸¹ Robert Taylor adds that Ne Win feared that U Nu would give in to Shan and Karen demands, which would lead to the disintegration of the Union; but the motivations behind the coup were concern over the abuse by the wealthy in Burma's parliament and fears that the country would fall apart as had Laos and Vietnam.⁸² It is also not unreasonable to believe that Ne Win's usurpation of power was driven purely by the hunger for it. Renard cites the general Burman mistrust for and misunderstanding of

⁷⁹ Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, *op. cit.*, 119.

⁸⁰ Renard, *op. cit.*, 48.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 46. Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, *op. cit.*, 118-121.

⁸² Renard, *op. cit.*, 46-47.

ethnic minorities of the country, as well as the establishment of the Burma Socialist Program Party, outlawed political opposition and nationalized the economy, to support the megalomania thesis.

Overall, the intervention or invasion of the KMT in the Shan State had two main domestic consequences. First, the presence of the KMT brought about the greater role of the Burmese military in “nation-building.” Units from the Burma Army were sent to the Shan State to deal with the KMT. As mentioned above, this was not well-received by Shan and other locals. In addition, the KMT intervention in the Shan State empowered ethnic insurgents, most notably the Karen and the Shan. The KMT increased the quantity of weapons available to anti-government forces such as the KNDO. Later on, a military caretaker government was established in 1958. This would be followed by a total military takeover after General Ne Win’s 1962 Coup, after which Burma would be forced to rely on an active black market to survive.

Surely, the domestic situation in the Shan State had significant ramifications on Burma’s international affairs, particularly with China, the United States, and Thailand. Not least of the international concerns brought about by the presence of the KMT in Burmese territory were the perceived possibility of Burma becoming an international warzone, and the opium trade boom which would persist for decades to come.

International complications

The neutralist foreign policy of Burma at the time can be attributed to the civil war that erupted on the advent of its independence. At the time, prior to the arrival of the KMT, the government was essentially faced with two insurgencies. On one hand, there were the Communists alongside the People's Volunteer Organization, which was the paramilitary arm of the ruling Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. On the other hand, there was the Karen National Defense Organization. Interestingly, the former favored an alliance with the Soviet Union; whereas the latter wanted closer ties with the West, including the United States.⁸³ It was therefore most prudent for the central Burmese government to not align itself with either foreign power which rebel forces appeared to identify with.

Apart from the domestic consequences mentioned above, the invasion of the KMT into the Shan State also had implications on Burma's foreign relations, specifically with Communist China. Burma was keen on driving out the KMT remnants not only because it exacerbated the preexisting civil war, but also because there was a concern that Burma would become a battlefield.⁸⁴ More precisely, Burma feared that the U.S.-Nationalist China alliance would wage war against China through Burmese territory.

When the Nationalist Chinese government "lost China" in 1949, the Truman administration was convinced that the flow of communism into Southeast Asia had to be prevented. In the final years of the Truman administration, there was tension among policy makers. On one end of the spectrum, there were those, like General

⁸³ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

Douglas MacArthur and General Claire Chennault, who wanted to wage war with China or at least create a second front in Yunnan to take pressure off Korea. On the other end, there were those, like President Truman along with the State Department, who preferred to limit the presumed spread of communism in Asia.⁸⁵ Ultimately, the latter was preferred.

Whereas Truman and the Department of State saw the KMT as a useful force to block Chinese communist aggression into Southeast Asia, the CIA wanted to harass the Chinese government into Burma. It was hoped that doing so would force Burma to turn to the West. In 1950, the CIA began regrouping remnants of the Kuomintang army in the Shan State for a “projected invasion” of southern China.⁸⁶

The Truman administration was concerned “that Burma might be the hole in the anti-Communist dike.” It considered the possibility that Mao would carry out his communist expansion through Burma, across Thailand, and “attack Indochina from the rear.” The solution was to arm KMT remnants in Burma and use them to transform the Sino-Burmese borderlands into an impenetrable barrier.⁸⁷ In other words, the Shan State—specifically the trans-Salween Shan states—would function as a buffer zone against a possible communist invasion of Mainland Southeast Asia. Direct assistance to the KMT was done covertly.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Taylor, *op.cit.*, 40.

⁸⁶ Major-General Chatichai Choonhavan believed that “the concept of Yunnan as a springboard for the invasion of China by KMT forces was totally unrealistic—a pipedream. From a practical consideration, the attempts were pathetic, even though Li Mi himself was a fine soldier.” Quoted in Cooper, *op. cit.*, 122.

⁸⁷ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 129.

⁸⁸ Some CIA activities in Burma helped transform the Shan State into the largest opium-growing region in the world. See McCoy, *op. cit.*, 126.

The first signs of direct CIA aid to the KMT appeared in early 1951, when Burmese intelligence officers reported unmarked C-46 and C-47 transport aircraft were making at least five parachute drops a week to KMT forces in Mong Hsat. Through this the KMT underwent vigorous expansion and reorganization.⁸⁹ Between 1951 and 1952, the CIA sponsored three abortive invasions of Yunnan. In addition, it supported a full-scale invasion of eastern Burma. In late 1952, thousands of KMT mercenaries crossed the Salween River but they would only be driven back by the Burmese in March 1953. In the same month, the Burmese government announced that it was going to the UN to charge the Chinese Nationalist government and by implication America, with unprovoked aggression.⁹⁰

The KMT intervention was also assisted by Thailand, which served as the logistics base and supply route to the Shan State. Thailand's involvement allowed the Karen and other rebels to receive arms and other supplies. These rebels were exchanging rubber and wolfram in exchange for weapons. In May 1951, Burma protested the running of guns into Burma through Thailand. The flow of arms from Thailand into Burma persisted despite the former's denial in front of the United Nations in January 1952.⁹¹ In fact, the United States, together with Thailand, would remain insistent in denying their involvement with the KMT. However, the actual situation pointed to the contrary.

⁸⁹ McCoy, *op. cit.*, 129.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 132. Cooper, *op. cit.*, 124.

⁹¹ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 33.

U Myint Thein's statement in the 1953 UN debate concerning the KMT intervention, suggests the credulity of Taiwanese, and by extension, Thai and U.S. support for the KMT:

The question naturally arises—where have these new arms come from? How is it possible for an original force of 1,500 comparatively lightly armed men to grow in the space of less than three years into a force of 12,000 well-armed men? Obviously, this could not happen in the hinterland of Burma unless some outside power were furnishing the inspiration, leadership, direction and equipment. Even if we had no other evidence, by the process of elimination we would inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the outside power was Formosa. How all this material was transported into Burma is something we do not wish to delve into too deeply since the material is already in. Obviously, all of it could not have been brought in by aircraft although we know that planes have been used for some time.⁹²

The statement only hints at Thai support for the KMT in order to not antagonize Thailand and to get its cooperation in removing the KMT from Burma.

Bringing the matter to the UN's attention was also Burma's way of convincing Communist China of its efforts to end the nationalist threat. Early in the KMT intervention, China stated that it would not tolerate Burma's harboring of anti-communist troops on her border.⁹³ Nevertheless, it made more sense for China to let Burma itself deal with the KMT because of two reasons. First, China thought it better for Burma to be neutral than pro-West. Second, China was still occupied with "internal reconstruction" following the Second World War and the Communist Revolution.⁹⁴

The UN convention in 1953 eventually led to the first KMT evacuation, initiated by the United States. In March, the evacuation of some of the 12,000 troops

⁹² *Kuomintang Aggression*, 41. Cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*, 35.

⁹³ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 29.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 30.

in Burma was initiated. The withdrawal occurred in three phases. The first phase began on the 7th of November and continued to December 1953. The following phase was conducted during the second half of February 1954. Finally, the third phase took place during the first week of May that same year.⁹⁵ It is worth noting that by the end of all three phases, about half of the troops remained in Burma.

Following the first of two KMT evacuations, Burma and Thailand tried to improve relations with one another. In late November 1954, five border crossings were reopened. In 1955 the Burmese increased their military efforts against the KMT while the Thai border police strengthened their border security operations.⁹⁶ In 1957, both countries ratified a treaty of friendship. Despite their more amicable relations, Burma remained suspicious of Thailand because.⁹⁷ It was apparent that Thailand did not have Burma's best interest at heart. For example, in February 1956 when the Burmese government sought Thai cooperation to suppress the smuggling of American arms to the KMT, nothing was done. In addition, when Communist China made an incursion in the Burmese Wa State, Phibun accused the CPR of aggression and suggested military action against China *if* the UN requested it.⁹⁸ Clearly, this was not in favor of Burma's neutralist foreign policy.

After the first evacuation of the KMT from Burma, it appeared that by the late 1950's, the KMT was no longer an issue. However, when the United States became interested once more in using the KMT in Laos, the KMT returned to the spotlight. The fighting in Laos between the Pathet Lao and the U.S.-backed right-wing forces in

⁹⁵ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 49.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 56. See *New York Times*, 3 July 1954 and 22 June 1955.

⁹⁷ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁹⁸ Johnstone, *Burma's Foreign Policy: A Study in Neutralism*, 67. Cited in Taylor, *op. cit.*, 57.

1960 increased Kuomintang military activity later that year in both Burma and Laos.⁹⁹ In early March 1961, the KMT began returning to Burma and the Thai government reported that all KMT troops had left Thailand. Rangoon once again protested the continued supply of U.S. arms to the KMT through Nationalist China. Eventually, the new Kennedy administration responded by informing Taiwan that it opposed the continued presence of the KMT in Burma and Laos, and that it would assist in their removal. Within two weeks of U.S. response, Sarit Thanarat announced that the KMT will be evacuated from Chiang Mai beginning March 17.¹⁰⁰ During this second evacuation, around 4,000 KMT's were reportedly removed.

The presence of the KMT in the Shan State from 1950-1961 plagued newly independent Burma. When the Shan State turned into the KMT's base for "a projected invasion of China," Burma found itself juggling the problem of national disunity and international security. Burma was unable to effectively deal with its pressing domestic issues like the civil war because it had to deal with the KMT intervention which was jeopardizing Sino-Burmese relations. Another significant consequence brought about the KMT intervention in Burma was the takeoff of opium trafficking.

Long before General Li Mi and his army arrived in Burma, the opium trade thrived in the Shan State where it was the only cash grown by ethnic minorities known collectively as hill tribes. Seventy percent of Burma's exports went to Thailand, with the remainder being shipped overseas from Rangoon. Burma's ethnic Chinese population dominated opium marketing. By the time Chinese Nationalist soldiers arrived in Burma in 1950, there was already an established Shan opium trade,

⁹⁹ Taylor, *op. cit.*, 57.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

with many armed groups successfully transporting opium without outside help. The KMT remnants, however, were more numerous better armed than that the indigenous armed groups and they quickly gained control of major caravan routes.¹⁰¹

The rise of the military triumvirate

When a clique grows enough to make a bid for national power, it is inevitably forced to confront another military faction. Such confrontations account for nearly all the coups and counter-coups that have determined the course of Thai politics ever since the military reduced the king to figurehead status in 1932.¹⁰²

Thailand's alliance with the United States, beginning with the second Phibun government, resulted in the military's unbridled strength and excessive influence over Thai politics throughout the Cold War period. This, however, does not mean that the United States was entirely responsible for the despotic rule that would continue even after Phibun's second regime. The Thai elites themselves were highly conscious of the gains of cooperating with the U.S. "Indigenous elites," as Sinae Hyun argues, "found their way to selectively adapt external interventions."¹⁰³ The Thai elites during the Cold War, for instance, were not passive recipients of foreign aid from the United States. Rather, they too were stakeholders, actively seeking to consolidate their respective power base.

¹⁰¹ Richard M. Gibson, *The Secret Army: Chiang Kai-Shek and the Drug Warlords of the Golden Triangle* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 106-107.

¹⁰² McCoy, *op. cit.*, 136.

¹⁰³ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 17.

This section discusses the rise of the military in Thai politics. It shows that Phibun, Phao, and Sarit were all trying to gain the United States' favor in order to gain ascendancy in Thai politics. This section discusses the ways in which the above military men capitalized on their alliance with the United States for personal gain and political clout. All three used anti-communism as a means to elicit support from the United States. Discussing the triumvirate's appropriation of America's crusade against communism illuminates the Thai state's perception of the Shan States during the earlier part of the Cold War.

Pro-American Phibun

The immediate years that followed the return of Plaek Phibunsongkhram as the premier of Thailand witnessed two events that accelerated the United States' policies to support the kingdom as an anti-communist bastion. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party emerged victorious over the Chinese Nationalists. Remnants of the Kuomintang fled Yunnan to neighboring Burma, where they established a base in Mong Hsat in Shan State near the Thai-Burmese border. In 1950, the Korean War broke out. This turned America's communist nightmare into a reality. The United States' war against communism was imaginary and invisible until the early 1950s. It was the Chinese army's entry into the Korean peninsula that confirmed the American fear of communist expansion.¹⁰⁴ As Sinae Hyun writes: "the bipolarized Cold War

¹⁰⁴ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 70.

world did not come to reside in the minds of Americans or other nations until they witnessed the actual breakup of Korea in 1950.”¹⁰⁵

Pledging to assist U.N. forces in Korea, and recognizing the Bao Dai regime in South Vietnam, solidified Phibun’s new pro-West stance.¹⁰⁶ Five days into the Korean War, Thailand sent four tons of rice. Later on, it also offered to send ground forces composed of 4,000 soldiers upon the request of the U.N. Secretary-General on the 14th of July that same year.¹⁰⁷ Post-war military and conservative leaders initially did not share the same fear of communism in Asia as the Americans did.¹⁰⁸ Even so, anti-communism provided the perfect pretext to consolidate power, as well as the funds to accomplish this end. In the case of Phibun, anti-communism proved to be useful in three respects. First, it provided the image of an external threat which encouraged support for his government. Second, anti-communism opened the door for the influx of enormous amounts of foreign aid from the U.S. Lastly, anti-communism became a formidable weapon for Phibun in the fight against his political enemies.¹⁰⁹

Consistent with his political turn-around, Phibun also tried to establish himself as protector of the monarchy. For instance, in order to demonstrate his concern over the monarchy’s welfare, Phibun ordered an exhaustive inquiry into the death of King Ananda Mahidol.¹¹⁰ Contrary to his political principles in his first time as premier,

¹⁰⁵ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 76.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Lobe, *United States National Security Policy and Aid to the Thailand Police* (Denver: University of Denver, 1977), 19.

¹⁰⁷ See Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs website:
<https://www.mpva.go.kr/english/contents.do?key=1325>

¹⁰⁸ Thanet Aphornsuvan, “The United States and the Coming of the Coup of 1947 in Siam” *Journal of the Siam Society*, 75 (1987): 189.

¹⁰⁹ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 177.

¹¹⁰ BJ Terwiel, *Field Marshal Plaek Phibun Songkhram* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 24.

Phibun realized the significance—albeit symbolic—of the monarchy. “In contrast to his pre-war aversion to Buddhism and the monarchy, these two institutions were now highlighted as central in the fight against communism, and Thainess was equated with anti-communism and modernization.”¹¹¹ Pressure from his political opponents and the rise of nationalist sentiments outside the ruling elite led Phibun to see the instrumental value of the monarchy to maintain his position. Unfortunately, owing to his poor relationship with the Chakri family, Phibun was unable to greatly benefit from the monarchy.¹¹²

On September 8, 1950 the Phibun administration and the United States signed the *Thai-American Economic and Technical Agreement*, which came into full force in October of that year. The American government distributed approximately eight million U.S. dollars’ worth of aid by the end of 1950. The U.S. also encouraged World Bank grants to Thailand, and the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development promised to finance aid totaling 250,000 - 400,000 U.S. dollars for the development programs of Thailand. Moreover, on October 17, 1950 both governments ratified the *Military Assistance Agreement*.¹¹³ Thailand would receive military assistance amounting to 4.5 million U.S. dollars in 1951.¹¹⁴ From 1951 to 1957, Thailand received 149 million US dollars in economic aid and 222 million US dollars in military aid.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 177.

¹¹² Ibid., 178.

¹¹³ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 75.

¹¹⁴ United States Overseas Loans and Grant report cited in Surachart Bamrungsuk, “United States Foreign Policy and Thai Military Rule, 1947-1977” (MA thesis. Cornell University, 1985), 57.

¹¹⁵ Wyatt, *op. cit.*, 272.

According to Hyun, the nature of U.S. foreign aid to Thailand from 1950 were as follows. First, it served as a contribution to governmental stability to leaders who possessed “enough organized strength to stave off collapse.” Second, economic and military aid were to support anti-communist politics and political strongmen who could create conditions that would facilitate the implementation of U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia. In addition, economic and military aid were thought to be the perfect cover for the supply of arms and manpower to the Thai armed forces in their anti-communist campaigns and assistance to local allies in Southeast Asia.¹¹⁶

Phibun’s strong support for American anti-communist foreign policies was aimed at winning more economic and military aid, which would allow him to win over various military factions. “Considering his weakened power in the second administration, bringing lucrative economic-military aid as well as political support from the U.S. could help legitimate Phibun’s power against newly rising military competitors.”¹¹⁷ All the ways by which Phibun appropriated anti-communism were intertwined. Given the political insecurity caused by the growing power of rival cliques within the military, it was useful for Phibun to have a greater enemy from the outside to which attention can be diverted. More importantly, America’s need for a stable ally against the Red Scare brought in millions of dollars into Thailand. This in turn provided the Phibun regime the means to appease the vultures flying above his head. The massive development of the Thai police illustrates how the power between Sarit’s army and Phao’s police was balanced.

¹¹⁶ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 107-108.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 102.

The expansion of the Thai police force during the second Phibun administration can be attributed to both internal and external politics. Phibun's original plan was to expand the police force in order to balance Kat Katsongkhram's influence in the army, and the navy's influence in politics. He planned to make the police superior to those groups. General Phao, who used to be Phibun's *aide-de-camp*, was transferred from the army to the Police Department.¹¹⁸ Lady La-iaad Phibunsongkhram, on the other hand, writes in her memoir that Phao's police served the purpose of "keeping the police on a par with the army in strength so as to ensure the balance of power" since Field Marshal Phibun was "no doubt interested in keeping an approximate balance of power between his two younger colleagues."¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, the expansion of the police led to the organization of new divisions like: a Special Mounted Police Force, a Special Mechanized Unit, a Police Tank Division, a Speedboat Division, a Mobile Division, and a Police Air Division.¹²⁰

Externally, the socio-political conditions along Thailand's borders at the time necessitated the expansion of a paramilitary force. Firstly, the 1941 peace treaty between Thailand and France prevented *military* activities in the border areas. Setting up a military force along the Mekong River or Thailand's border regions in the north, northeast and east would be considered an apparent violation of the treaty.¹²¹ More importantly, in 1951, "there grew more evident signs of aggravating regional security in border areas of northeastern and northern Thailand." The clash between Viet Minh forces and the French colonial government extended to Cambodia and Laos.

¹¹⁸ Bamrungsuk, *op.cit.*, 58.

¹¹⁹ Jayanta K. Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), 212.

¹²⁰ Bamrungsuk, *op. cit.*, 59.

¹²¹ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 116-117.

Meanwhile, KMT forces had stationed themselves on the Burmese side of the border area, opposite Fang district in Chiang Mai.

Owing to the “political emergencies” in 1950, the United States acknowledged the need to develop a paramilitary force in Thailand.¹²² According to Donald Cooper, “Washington needed a paramilitary force that could defend the Thai borders and be uninhibited when it came to trespassing into neighboring Shan States, Laos, Vietnam, or Cambodia.”¹²³ In addition, prolonged tension between the Karen and the Burmese government plus the increased flow of southern Chinese immigrants led both Thailand and the U.S. to place attention on the presence of highland minorities along Thailand’s northern borders. With the help of a U.S. advisory group, the Thai government hastily organized a gendarmerie-type police unit called the Territorial Defense Police [*tamruat raksa dindaen*] under the command of the Office of the Inspector-General of the Thai National Police Department (TNPd) in 1951.¹²⁴ In the same year, the U.S. began to send aid to the Thai police.



Phao’s police and the CIA

The Thai government had already begun its own program to train its police in border patrol tactics and to map infiltration routes in the Northeast and the South, in early 1951, prior to the beginning of U.S. police aid. A special relationship began when the “Anti-Communist Committee,” organized by the Thai military clique in 1950,

¹²² Thomas Lobe describes 1950 as a year of political emergencies for the United States. The Kuomintang had lost China to the Communist Party. The French were struggling to control Indochina. Finally, the Korean War broke out halfway through 1950. See Lobe, *op. cit.*, 19.

¹²³ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 135.

¹²⁴ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 117.

negotiated with the CIA to assist a paramilitary force. The National Security Council recommended that a paramilitary force have both defensive and offensive capabilities, which would operate in small units, parachute behind enemy lines, commit sabotage, and engage in espionage and surveillance.¹²⁵ To this end, the CIA established the Overseas Southeast Asia Supply Company, also known as Sea Supply, in Miami.

The collaboration between the CIA, through Sea Supply, and the Thai police force led to the creation of the elite corps which consisted of two separate paramilitary units: the Police Aerial Reconnaissance Unit (PARU), and the Border Patrol Police (BPP). Officially, both units originate in the formation of the Territorial Defense Police, the prototype of the BPP. However, as Hyun points out, most historians trace the foundation of the BPP to the organization of the Border Defense Police of Northeastern Region [*tamruat raksa chaidan phak isan*] on May 6, 1953. On the other hand, PARU designates its founding date on April 27, 1954 when King Bhumibol visited the opening ceremony of PARU's Naresuan Camp in Hua Hin.¹²⁶

Sea Supply served as the means to provide the Thai government, through General Phao, with the equipment and training for the new police units. Sea Supply was manned mostly by military or retired military men. Retired American military men served as instructors in the program. They were experts in intelligence, parachuting, communication, vehicle maintenance, and small-unit warfare. This overt training came with covert delivery of arms intended for the new paramilitary police units. The deliveries comprised firearms, mortars, anti-tank weapons, grenades,

¹²⁵ Bamrungsuk, *op. cit.*, 60.

¹²⁶ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 92.

parachutes, and medical equipment.¹²⁷ The CIA gave 35 million U.S. dollars to the Sea Supply for the program. Phao was then selected by the CIA to head the mission.¹²⁸

In the eyes of the U.S. and the CIA, Phao was a reliable communist hunter. In addition, Phao was regarded by U.S. specialists as Phibun's successor, and his police force was thought to be more flexible than Sarit's army. Further boosting the power of Phao and his police was the replacement of Edward Stanton by William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan as the American ambassador to Thailand in 1951. Thomas Lobe describes the relationship between Donovan and Phao as direct and personal.¹²⁹ Having founded the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—the forerunner of the CIA—in the Second World War, Donovan had no qualms about CIA activities.¹³⁰ He believed that CIA operations were the best means to fight communism.¹³¹ More importantly, he firmly supported arming the police and increasing Phao's power. Through assistance from the CIA, Phao's police became the largest division of the Thai armed forces by mid-1951.¹³²

Phao Sriyanon's position in Thai society was greatly enhanced by his marriage to Khunying Udomlak, the eldest daughter of General Phin Choonhavan. His rapid rise to power, however, began with the November 1947 coup when he was installed first unofficially as head of political police activity and later appointed as deputy

¹²⁷ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 136. Lobe, *op. cit.*, 20/23.

¹²⁸ Bamrungsuk, *op. cit.*, 60.

¹²⁹ Lobe, *op. cit.*, 24.

¹³⁰ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 137.

¹³¹ Bamrungsuk, *op. cit.*, 60.

¹³² Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 108.

police chief.¹³³ Apart from being head of the police, Phao was an able businessman. With Phao at the helm, the Soi Rajakru clan's commercial empire was able to expand until it covered banking, insurance, gold, jute, sugar, maritime and fishing, marble, timber and livestock.¹³⁴ Apart from this, Phao was able to accumulate wealth through illegal activities like protecting prostitution, gambling, and opium smuggling.¹³⁵ The last of which was the most controversial.

The fortune that opium trafficking promised made it a highly contested “industry” between the Phao and Sarit cliques. It was so lucrative that in 1948 Thailand abandoned an anti-opium campaign which sought to end opium smoking by 1953. Its economic significance had the potential to tip the balance of power between the two. Eventually, Phao gained the upper hand in the underground struggle for the opium trade. Given the clandestine nature of the “opium war” between Phao and Sarit it is difficult to determine the details of how the former gained the advantage. However, Alfred McCoy points out that the CIA's role here cannot be underestimated.¹³⁶ Phao's alliance with the CIA and by extension with the KMT allowed him to build a virtual monopoly on Burmese opium exports. By 1955 Phao's National Police Force had become the largest opium-trafficking syndicate in Thailand.¹³⁷

Alfred McCoy describes the role of Phao's police in opium trafficking. Police border guards escorted KMT caravans from the Thai-Burmese border to police warehouses in Chiang Mai. From there, police guards brought the smuggled opium to

¹³³ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 128.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 130-131.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 133. Lobe, *op. cit.*, 19-20.

¹³⁶ McCoy, *op. cit.*, 138.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 140.

Bangkok by train or police aircraft. Afterwards, the opium was loaded onto civilian coastal vessels escorted by the maritime police to mid-ocean rendezvous where ships were bound for Singapore or Hong Kong. Such was the case if the opium was destined for export. On the other hand, if the opium was allocated for the government Opium Monopoly, police border patrols would stage elaborate shoot-outs with the KMT smugglers near the Thai-Burmese frontier. During this performance, “the KMT guerillas would drop the opium and flee, while the police heroes brought the opium to Bangkok and collected a reward worth one-eighth the retail value. The opium subsequently disappeared.”¹³⁸

His accumulation of wealth, together with support from the CIA, allowed Phao to consolidate power to the extent that it began to trouble Phibun and Sarit. At its peak, Phao’s police force had about 43,000 men, a number which could stand against the army.¹³⁹ Phao demonstrated his excessive use of force and violence to suppress crime as well as to eliminate his personal and political enemies. Phao did not shy away from killing suspects even before any crime had been committed. Both the police’s method of violently suppressing crime as well as the political murders they carried out were well known. However, official investigations were impossible because these crimes were committed by the police themselves.¹⁴⁰

As Phao’s power was increasing rapidly, Sarit feared that Phao would gain predominance in politics. Phibun’s “experiment” with democracy culminating in the 1957 elections backfired when he and Phao were found to have cheated their way to

¹³⁸ McCoy, *op.cit.*, 140.

¹³⁹ Thak Chaloemtiarana, *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2007), 58.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

victory. It was obvious that the government party cheated in the election through vote-buying, intimidation, and stuffing ballot boxes. Student demonstrations provided an opportunity for Sarit to argue that the political climate necessitated an army takeover.

Sarit's takeover

Sarit started his political career in 1951, when he became Deputy Minister of Defense. He took over the army's position on June 24, 1954, after Phin retired. In his 1954 trip to Washington, DC, Sarit was able to negotiate for more military aid for the armed forces.¹⁴¹ The Thai government's decision to send troops to Korea helped bring about the modernization of the Thai army. The size of the army was greatly increased, and many new regiments and battalions were formed. Institutions were also improved in order to help train military officers along more modern lines. In 1952, a large number of army officers were sent to the United States for training.¹⁴² As Phin was more interested in getting rich than developing the army, Sarit was able to mold the army in ways he found appropriate.

For instance, Sarit saw to it that his supporters—General Thanom, General Praphat, and General Kris—held key positions in the powerful First Division, stationed in Bangkok. The army's reorganization in 1952 brought unit commands in Bangkok under the control of the First Army, which was under Sarit's direct command. Apart from maneuvering within the army, Sarit explored other ways to support his clique within the army. In 1951, Sarit assumed control over the Lottery Bureau. A year later,

¹⁴¹ Chaloemtiarana, *op. cit.*, 63

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 64

he secured a seat in the governing board of the Veterans' Organization.¹⁴³ Not to be outdone by Phao, Sarit was also part of the boards of directors of at least twenty-two private corporations and government-controlled enterprises.

Sarit's hold on the military situation over Bangkok and the central plains can be traced back to when he was made commander of the infantry controlling Bangkok, and then when he was promoted to major-general in January 1948, and then appointed as commander of the 1st Division the following month. His suppression of 1948 officers' counter-plot and then Pridi's palace rebellion was rewarded with his promotion to commander of the 1st army on 1 January 1950, while "wisely" retaining command of the 1st division in Bangkok. In 1951, he became deputy commander-in-chief of the Army, again wisely retaining his other posts. Sarit then sought to Americanize the Thai Army and fashioned the Chulachomklao Academy syllabus after West Point training.¹⁴⁴

When Phibun's government "won" the 1957 elections, Sarit made his move to seize the government. Sarit and his clique resigned from the cabinet. His clique then resigned from the senate. Afterwards, the army made an ultimatum demanding the resignation of Phao, and later of Phibun's government. Phin and Phao threatened to arrest Sarit and his clique. In response, Sarit deployed his men to strategic points in Bangkok on September 16, 1957. The army surrounded the police headquarters in Bangkok and declared martial law. Eventually, Plaek fled to Cambodia and then to

¹⁴³ Chaloemtiarana, *op. cit.*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 176.

Japan. Meanwhile, Phao surrendered to Sarit and was forced into exile in Switzerland.¹⁴⁵

It was important that Sarit's coup received "recognition" from the monarch, King Bhumibol.

Owing to the fact that the government of Field Marshal Phibun has been unable to govern with the trust of the people, to wit, that it has been unable to maintain peace and order, the military led by Field Marshal Sarit has assumed the duties of Special Military Administrator for Bangkok. We ask that people remain peaceful and that all government servants follow the instructions of Field Marshal Sarit.¹⁴⁶

Sarit installed Phote Sarasin as temporary prime minister who was untainted by the previous regime.

Sarit's party, *Sahaphum*, won more seats than the Democrats which had 39 in the election set up by Phote on December 15, 1957. However, his party's 44 seats were overshadowed by the 59 gained by independent members. To fix this electoral issue, Sarit sponsored the National Socialist Party, with himself as the head Thanom and Sukich as deputies and Praphas as secretary to include both Sahaphum and Seri Manangkasila MPs. Phote resigned, and on 1 January 1958 General Thanom became Sarit's protege minister.¹⁴⁷ Thanom was then troubled by Praphas' police. Sarit then returned to Thailand in October 1958 to preempt any move by the latter. On 20 October, Thanom and his government resigned, and on the evening of the same day Sarit's 'revolution' began.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Bamrungsuk, *op. cit.*, 65.

¹⁴⁶ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 178.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

Meanwhile, Sarit intended to keep a greater distance from America than had Phibun when approached by Ambassador Bishop who was offering help. Sarit knew he needed American aid, financially and militarily. He wanted no strings attached

Sarit's usurpation of power was not unwelcome to the United States. According to the U.S. State Department, the October 1958 Coup was not a coup by 'an orderly attempt by the present ruling group to solidify its position.' When martial law was declared in Thailand, parliament was annulled, the constitution was discarded, political parties were banned and hundreds of politicians, journalists, intellectuals and activists were arrested, the U.S. "cheered" and granted 20 million US dollars in economic aid. In parallel to economic aid, U.S. military aid quadrupled over the 1960s and peaked in 1972 at a staggering 123 million US dollars.¹⁴⁹ Sarit's consolidation of power and crackdown on dissent made the U.S. more confident about Thailand as a base.¹⁵⁰

Sarit likened ruling the nation to being the head of the family. Sarit fashioned his leadership style as *phokhun* [พ่อขุน] which was modeled on the style of government during the Sukhothai period. As a father figure, he had to keep the Thai people—his children—happy. To his acts of kindness and compassion, he reduced train fares, school fees and the price of electricity.¹⁵¹ At the same time, he banned what were perceived to be negative influences on Thai values. Not surprisingly, he found

¹⁴⁹ Baker, *op. cit.*, 147-148.

¹⁵⁰ Wasana Wongsurawat proposes that Sarit believed the U.S. would accept his coup partly because Phibun was engaged in underground diplomacy with the PRC since the latter half of 1955 and some Members of Parliament belonging to Phao's clique were also heavily involved in this underground diplomacy. See Wasana Wongsurawat, "Chinese-ness and the Cold War in Thailand: From the Focal Point of the Red Scare to a Strategic Ally of the Military Government," in *Chineseness and the Cold War: Contested Cultures and Diasporas in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong*, eds. Jeremy Taylor and Lanjun Xu (New York: Routledge, 2021).

¹⁵¹ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 187.

democracy as unfit for Thai society. Sarit believed that his leadership style was appropriate for Thailand since it was rooted in Thai values and Buddhist teachings.

Notwithstanding the influx of Western ideas like development and democracy, Sarit insisted on promoting Thai values. So as to not alarm the Americans, and so as to continue enjoying the economic and military assistance, Sarit branded his authoritarian leadership as Thai style democracy. In addition, development [การพัฒนา] was framed in such a way that emphasized the superiority of Thai traditions and beliefs over economic and material progress.¹⁵²

In line with his emphasis on traditional values, Sarit highlighted the importance of the monarchy to the Thai nation. “Therefore, the name of His Majesty is the most sacred thing for the Thai nation; it serves as a unifier of the Thai people, inseparable by any means.”¹⁵³ With this, Sarit claimed his government to be “revolutionary” in that it would fully protect the King and would do everything to keep the King and the royal family on high pedestal.¹⁵⁴ However, an important thing to note is that this was not a one-sided gain for the monarchy. In fact, Sarit was relentless with his leadership position and was unwilling to assume a role inferior to the monarchy. Instead, he saw himself as the monarchy’s partner in nation-building.

¹⁵² Yensabai, *op. cit.*, 53-61.

¹⁵³ Suchit Bunbongkam, “Political Power of Thai Military Leaders: A Comparative Study of Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkram and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat” *Social Science Review* (1977) quoted in Sturm, *op. cit.*, 188.

¹⁵⁴ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 188.

Analysis

What was the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the period in focus? What were the factors that influenced its perception? This section draws the connection between the political instability in the Shan State and the tumultuous politics in Thailand. Specifically, it looks into the implications of the KMT occupation of the Shan State for Thailand's domestic politics, which in turn shaped the Thai state's perception of the Shan from 1948 to 1963. This section shows that during the early phase of the Cold War, the Thai state's perception of the Shan centered on the Shan State, which functioned as an anti-communist buffer zone. As the ensuing discussion shall show, this perception derives from the period's historical context during which the policy to support KMT remnants in Burma was imperative.

The discussion above has shown that when Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram returned to power Thai politics was divisive. Even when the civilian faction was quieted down, factions within the military—specifically Phao/Phin's *Soi Rajakru* and Sarit's *Sisao Deves*—were the ones vying for political ascendancy. Phibun's second premiership was thus unstable. An alliance with the U.S. however allowed Phibun to keep both Phao and Sarit at bay.

Meanwhile, the situation in the Shan State in Burma received attention from the United States. The Chinese Nationalists had lost the civil war and fled to the Shan State from Yunnan. KMT remnants in the Shan State had established themselves as a political force that troubled Rangoon. Burma was concerned that the continued KMT occupation in the Shan State would jeopardize its relations with China. From 1951 to 1953, the Kuomintang troops received support from the CIA with the intention of

limiting the expansion of Communist China's influence, and at best, provoking China from the south in order to help alleviate the situation in the Korean peninsula. The KMT remnants would remain a nuisance to Burma until they (most of them) were effectively evacuated in 1961 with the assistance of the Thai government.

Support for the KMT remnants required the cooperation of Thailand, specifically Police General Phao Sriyanon who was admired for his hardline anti-communist approach. With the assistance of the CIA, the Thai police expanded dramatically. In addition, The Phao, KMT, CIA trifecta brought about a boom in the opium trade. By 1955, Phao and his police became the largest opium-trafficking syndicate in Thailand. The profit Phao was able to generate from the opium trade and his other business ventures was more than enough to finance his political ambitions. However, things would take a turn for the worse when he and Phibun would be implicated in the crooked 1957 elections.

Sarit Thanarat thus found himself in the perfect situation to seize power. In September 1957, Sarit staged a coup. However, he only came to power after another coup in October 1958. his consolidation of power and crackdown on dissent made the U.S. more confident about Thailand as a base. Not unlike, Phibun and Phao sarit enjoyed the immensity of aid that was pouring in from the U.S. Although this was due to the escalating situation in Indochina, Sarit's competition with Phibun and Phao most especially began at the time when the Shan State was a priority.

The political contest among the triumvirate coincided with the instability in Burma after its independence and the United States' need to stabilize Southeast Asia following the defeat of Nationalist China. The tumultuous situation in Thailand

during the early years of the Cold War has made the accommodation of American interests a top priority. It appears that the Thai elite was more concerned with consolidating their respective power bases than understanding how communism posed a threat to national security.

Through the indigenization framework of Hyun, it can be argued that Thailand's actions towards the KMT in the Shan State was more of a demonstration of its commitment to the United States than to its own ideologies. In other words, the Thai elite adopted the American Cold War system in order to serve their vested interests. Indeed, Phao and his police were critical in reinforcing the Shan State as a buffer frontier against communism's southward expansion from China. However, their involvement in the CIA-backed KMT operations in Burma resulted in the transformation of the Shan State into a center of opium production and of the Thai police into the largest opium-trafficking syndicate in Thailand at the time.

The Thai state's perception of the Shan State during this period was no more than a reflection of Thailand's coalescence with the United States in its fight versus communism. To earn the favor of the United States, Thailand knew that it had to demonstrate its commitment to anti-communism. Various aid agreements with the United States benefited Phibun, Phao and Sarit. While it was Sarit who had the last laugh, it was Phao who was most instrumental in supporting the KMT in Burma and, accordingly, was the greatest beneficiary of the U.S.-CIA during the early phase of the Cold War.

CHAPTER 3: The Thai state's perception of the Shan people (1963-1976)

From 1963 to 1976, old and new concerns beset both Thailand and the Shan State. In Thailand, the late Sarit Thanarat's authoritarian regime was continued by his junior officers, Thanom Kittikachorn and Praphas Charusathien, as Premier and Deputy Prime Minister respectively. The politico-military elite continued to benefit from its alliance with the United States. As the U.S. grew more deeply involved in the Vietnam War, Thailand became home to tens of thousands of American military personnel. An emergent, more politically conscious Thai middle class responded negatively to Thailand's involvement in the war. A constitution was ratified in 1968, and elections were held in 1969 which resulted in the continuation of Thanom's premiership. However, in 1971 Thanom staged a coup against his own government and brought the country to military rule. Ultimately, the military regime's desperate hold on to power led to its downfall. On 14 October 1973, a popular uprising demanding a constitution sealed the fate of Thanom's military regime.

In the meantime, the monarchy was consolidating its political power. This was done especially through the royal family's involvement with the civic action programs of the Border Patrol Police. Northern Thailand became a concern of national security during the Thai Counterinsurgency Era because it is home to the largest number of highland minorities in the country, which meant differing cultural, political and economic backgrounds.¹⁵⁵ The royal family's increasing involvement in civic action

¹⁵⁵ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 230.

projects boosted its popularity and helped build the image of the monarch as a modern nation-builder.

Meanwhile, a socialist Burma under the dictatorship of General Ne Win was still grappling with the issue of national solidarity. After the coup in 1962, the Revolutionary Council made “The Burmese Way to Socialism” the state ideology.¹⁵⁶ General Ne Win then established the Burma Socialist Program Party, with himself as the Chairman. Shan resistance soon mushroomed. In 1968, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) made a resurgence through Chinese support. It launched an offensive along the Northeastern Shan state’s border with Yunnan and established the Northeastern Command of the CPB, which was led by an ethnic Kachin. The growing unrest in the Shan State led to the creation of the *Ka Kwe Ye* (KKY), a program that employed local militia to fight insurgents in exchange for access to the black market and opium smuggling.

Against this background in the Shan State was the influx of local people from Burma, such as the Shan or Tai Yai, into Thailand. Until the late 1970s, Thailand had had a history of leniency towards immigrants from neighboring countries. At least it did not, have policies that resisted or drive out these immigrants.¹⁵⁷ The displaced Shan, alongside other displaced groups from Burma that settled Northern Thailand, fell into either of the two categories: insurgents and ordinary people. The former’s presence along the Thai-Burmese border was tolerated because they served as a buffer

¹⁵⁶ The Burmese Way to Socialism was said to be a hodgepodge of nationalism, Buddhism and Marxism. See David Steinburg, *Burma/Myanmar: What everyone needs to know*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁷ Khajatphai Burutphat, *Minority Groups in Thailand and National Security [Chon Klum Noi Nai Thai Kab Khwam Man Khong Khong Chart]* (Bangkok: Samnak Phim Phrae Phithaya, 1983), 254-255.

against the spread of communism.¹⁵⁸ At this point, the Thai state's perception of the Shan shifted from the Shan State to the Shan people as an anti-communist buffer.

How did the Thai state's policies towards the Shan affect its policies against communism? This chapter argues the Thai state's policies towards the displaced Shan along its border with Burma contributed to its attempt at curbing communism. Tolerance for the presence along the border areas supplemented the government's counterinsurgency strategy which began focusing on internal security. This was demonstrated by development projects of the military government, as well as the civic action programs of the Border Patrol Police, in cooperation with the royal family, which sought to "build a human border."¹⁵⁹ These policies, in turn, showed that the Thai state's perception of the Shan people as an anti-communist buffer.

To elaborate, this chapter first locates the political situation in the Shan State within the context of Socialist Burma. This part explains the factors behind the intensification of insurgencies within the Shan State, the expansion of the narcotics trade, and the displacement of ethnic minorities like the Shan. Drawing on the works of Andreas Sturm and Sinae Hyun, the second part discusses the Thai Counterinsurgency Era. It focuses on the resurgence of the monarchy and the twilight of Thanom's military regime. This discussion aims to show that Border Patrol Police's civic action programs provided a channel for the royal family to play a more active role in nation-building. Finally, this chapter concludes the Thai state's policies towards the Shan supplemented its counterinsurgency strategy.

¹⁵⁸ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 32.

¹⁵⁹ As mentioned in the first chapter, "building a human border" refers to the extension of national loyalty and Thainess among the border people. See p. 20.

Socialist Burma

Apart from the rationale behind the March 1962 Coup discussed in the previous chapter, the Revolutionary Council that assumed power in Burma needed a theoretical basis for the continuation of their power.¹⁶⁰ The leftist-oriented military government adopted an ideology known as the “Burmese Way to Socialism.” This system consists of three elements: extreme nationalism, Marxism and Buddhism.¹⁶¹ In July that same year, General Ne Win established the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) as a vehicle toward reform. The BSPP controlled all mass and professional organizations and essentially prevented the development of any civil society advocacy groups beyond those associated with religion, especially Buddhism.¹⁶²

After April of 1962, it published three documents; *The Burmese Way to Socialism*, *The Constitution of the Burma Socialist Programme Party*, and *The System of Correlation of Man and His Environment*. These documents laid out basic policies of the government, and outlined two important directions which Burma had sought for since independence: nationalism and socialism. Towards this direction, the government “Burmanized” the economy by expelling foreign enterprises, nationalizing private business, minimizing foreign aid and loans, and cutting foreign investments. Two specific issues were said to have influenced this. The first issue to expel the Chinese and Indian capitalists who had dominated Burma’s economy for a long time. The second was to remain neutral in the Cold War.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Maung Maung Gyi, “Negative Neutralism for Group Survival” In *Military Rule in Burma since 1962: a Kaleidoscope of Views*, ed. F.K. Lehman (Hong Kong: Maruzen Asia, 1981), 13.

¹⁶¹ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 26.

¹⁶² David Steinberg, *op. cit.*, 66.

¹⁶³ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 24.

Under these policies, experienced economic technocrats and Chinese and Indian businessmen were replaced by inexperienced militants. This led to much confusion and disorder in Burma's economy.¹⁶⁴ In addition, the Socialist Economy Protection Law of 1963, and the Socialist Economy Protection Law of 1964 which demonetized 50- and 100-kyat notes and made private trade and business illegal, brought about an economic collapse throughout the country. Thus, an economic vacuum was added to the socio-political vacuum in the Shan State. This benefited neither the military regime nor the Shan nationalists.¹⁶⁵

The Burma Socialist Program Party's agricultural policy had the greatest impact on ordinary people since 70% of the population were farmers, and agriculture was the single largest contributor to the country's GDP. Unlike socialist regimes in other parts of Asia, the military regime did not establish communes or state-owned farms. In addition, there was little or no incentive on the part of the farmers to increase production. The quality of exports also suffered because the best rice was diverted to the black market, on which most Burmese came to depend. Both the regime and its opponent benefited from the black market. On one hand, high-ranking military officers managing the People's Stores and other state enterprises enriched themselves by selling materials they requisitioned at official low prices. On the other hand, ethnic and communist insurgents participated in this underground economy by smuggling Burmese raw materials like opium.¹⁶⁶

Simply put, Burma in the 1960s was an economic failure. Basic commodities for daily life were hardly available because of the low productivity of national

¹⁶⁴ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 25.

¹⁶⁵ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 122.

¹⁶⁶ Seekins, *op. cit.*, 64-65.

factories. The few goods that were available were either expensive or of poor quality. Rice was insufficient to feed entire families while other food products were expensive. The little money that people held could be invalidated any time. Finally, jobs were scarce because of the stagnant economy.¹⁶⁷ Soon enough people in Burma grew dissatisfied with the government and many of them left Burma for neighboring countries to find better opportunities. However, as the succeeding discussion shall show, the Socialist Burma's failure had more to do with politics than economics.

Intensification of insurgencies

The Revolutionary Council achieved control over most of the Burman territory by the mid-1960s. However, its reach into ethnic minority regions was limited. In these areas, ethnic and communist insurgents operated their own sub-political systems and sub-economies in conflict with the Rangoon government. Foreign countries, especially the People's Republic of China, had greater influence in some of these areas than did the regime itself.¹⁶⁸ Shan resistance was gaining traction. Meanwhile, the Burma Communist Party made a resurgence along the Shan-Yunnan border.

Shan resistance from the 1960s comprised various rebel armies. Some of which, like the Shan State Independence Army (SSIA), the Shan National United Front (SNUF), the Shan State Army/Shan State Progress Party (SSA/SSPP), and the Shan National Independence Army (SNIA) have their origins in *Noom Suk Harn*

¹⁶⁷ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 26.

¹⁶⁸ Seekins, *op. cit.*, 69.

(“Young Brave Warriors”).¹⁶⁹ This group was set up on 21 May 1958, and were joined by university students from Rangoon. It was *Noom Sook Harn*, led by Bo Maung and Chao Kyaw Tun, that participated in the first Shan rebellion at Tangyan.¹⁷⁰ This discussion focuses on the SSA/SSPP as it was “fighting almost alone” since the other major Shan army at the time—the *Shan United Revolutionary Army*—was busy consolidating its position on the Thai border with the help of the Chinese merchant-warlord army of General Li (and the ex-KMT 3rd Army).¹⁷¹ Apart from “bearing the brunt of Burma Army offensives,”¹⁷² the Shan State Army also had to confront the resurgent Communist Party of Burma.

The Shan State Army was set up on 25 March 1964. Its strongholds were in central and northern Shan state. A political wing, the Shan State Progress Party, was set up on 16 August 1971. During its heyday in the 1970s, armed strength was 5,000 to 6,000 men.¹⁷³ In his memoir, Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, commander of the 1st Military Region of the SSA, writes that since the SSA/SSPP did not control the Thai-Shan border and the trade routes, this “vanguard Shan resistance organization” did not have the resources to bring about the unification of all Shan armies. Instead, it was those armies, such as the SURA which had close association with the Chinese commercial complex of Southeast Asia that were superior in resources to the

¹⁶⁹ Some Shan rebel armies established in the 1970s, like the Shan State Revolutionary Army and the Shan United Army had strong connections with (Nationalist) Chinese. For a list of rebel armies and anti-government groups in Burma, see Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and insurgency since 1948* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999), 480-495.

¹⁷⁰ Lintner, *op. cit.*, 185. Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 116.

¹⁷¹ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op.cit.*, 131.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁷³ Lintner, *op. cit.*, 492.

SSA/SSPP. This situation ruled out the unification of Shan armies under single leadership.¹⁷⁴

In the first few hours of the year 1968, the Communist Party of Burma launched an offensive in the Shan State, establishing the CPB's Northeastern Command (NEC). They were commanded by Naw Seng.¹⁷⁵ This insurgency was supported by China, which sought the "revolutionary overthrow" of the Ne Win regime. The NEC became the proxy for China's war against Ne Win. Even after ties between Rangoon and Beijing were normalized, China's support for the insurgency was justified with the convenient fiction that it represented "fraternal party ties" between the CPB and the Chinese Communist Party, distinct from relations between governments.¹⁷⁶

With Chinese military supplies at their disposal, the CPB's Northeastern Command was able to seize control of much of the trans-Salween region adjoining Yunnan province by the early 1970s. This faction of the largely Burman-led CPB built roads, extending its "liberated zones" and was able to gain influence in ethnic politics. By the mid-1970s, the CPB claimed to have "liberated" over 500,000 ethnic minority villagers in the NEC under its party organization. The price for this was an atrocious humanitarian emergency. The Tatmadaw claimed to have killed over 500 communist troops that were using "human tidal wave tactics" in the 1970 battle at Mongsi alone. On the other hand, between 1968 to 1973, CPB commanders estimated

¹⁷⁴ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 123-124.

¹⁷⁵ Naw Seng was a Kachin known for his role the anti-Japanese resistance. In 1948, he fought against the Communist Party of Burma in the Irrawaddy delta region. He later defected to the Karen rebels in 1949. The following year he retreated to China's Guizhou province where he was in exile until 1968. See Bertil Linter, *Burma in Revolt*, 512; and Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 212-213.

¹⁷⁶ Seekins, *op. cit.*, 81.

to have killed or wounded over 11,000 government troops. Strikingly, there are no records of civilian casualties.¹⁷⁷

Ka Kwe Ye and the narcotics boom

The upsurge of communist military activities in the Shan State led to many casualties in the Burma Army. There was thus a need to win the support of the local populace and to neutralize the Shan rebels. Instead of negotiating with the locals, Rangoon opted for a “non-political, and somewhat solution.” This was the *Ka Kwe Ye* (KKY), literally “defense.”¹⁷⁸

The KKY policy sought to raise local defense auxiliaries to fight both communist and other insurgents. This strategy was implemented in 1963, following a mini-rebellion in Kokang, Northern Shan State. The plan was to rally as many local warlords as possible, mostly non-political brigands and private army commanders, behind the Burma Army in exchange for the right to use all government-controlled roads and towns in Shan State for opium smuggling. By permitting the channels to trade opium, the Ne Win government hoped that the KKY would be self-supporting. His government was also hoping to undermine the financial basis of the rebels in Shan State who depended on opium tax to maintain their troops.¹⁷⁹ The KKY militia would basically be permitted to engage in cross-border trade with Thailand and Laos. Rebel bands were also promised this lucrative opportunity if they surrendered.¹⁸⁰ Since

¹⁷⁷ Martin Smith, *State of Strife: The Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict in Burma* (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, 2007), 34.

¹⁷⁸ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 127.

¹⁷⁹ Lintner, *op.cit.*, 231.

¹⁸⁰ Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, 127.

Burma was being kept afloat by a thriving black market, the policy could not come at a better time.

True to Rangoon's intentions, the KKY program came to undermine the politicized rebels. For instance, owing to the profitability of the program, many units of the SSA defected. A greater consequence of the KKY, Chao Tzang writes, was the "much greater damage caused to humanity as a whole." In time, KKY units, like the Kokang KKY and Loi Maw KKY, increased contacts with the Chinese who controlled trade and had access to the international narcotics markets. This eventually led to an opium and heroin boom from 1968 to 1973.¹⁸¹ The aforementioned KKY units would eventually set up rebel armies under the Shan banner. Most notorious of these was the army that emerged from the Loi Maw KKY—the Shan United Army. This shall be explored in the next chapter.

*Displacement of ethnic minorities*¹⁸²

As mentioned above, Burma's "socialist" policies resulted in an economic crisis throughout the country. This exacerbated the "socio-political vacuum" that beset the Shan State.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, fights between the Burmese Army and various insurgency groups occurred everywhere in the Shan State, from the jungles and farmlands to the villages of ordinary people. Everywhere the Burmese army and insurgents were

¹⁸¹ Chao Tzang Yawnghe, *op. cit.*, 128-129.

¹⁸² Since Thailand is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the term "refugee" does not apply to those "seeking refuge" in Thailand. In Thai, the appropriate term is *phu phlat thin* [ผู้พลัดถิ่น], literally "displaced person(s)." Accordingly, Shan or Tai Yai who have fled to Thailand are considered *phu phlat thin sanchart phama* [ผู้พลัดถิ่นสัญชาติพม่า], which translates to "displaced persons with Burmese nationality." See Khajatphai Burutphat, *op. cit.*

¹⁸³ The 1962 Coup brought about a socio-political vacuum in the Shan State since it crushed the reform movement, plus terrorized and removed the traditional leaders and politicians from the scene for four to six years. See Chao Tzang Yawnghe, *op. cit.*, 122.

stationed, ordinary villagers became victims of soldiers. Economically, conscription to the Burmese Army lead to diminished labor supply, while all the fighting brought destruction to paddy fields.¹⁸⁴ These difficult situations caused locals like the Shan or Tai Yai to leave for Thailand.

The reasons for evacuation into Thailand were manifold. Burutphat categorizes these reasons as either push or pull factors. Both economic and political problems constitute the push factors. As mentioned, the BSPP's move to close the country and nationalize the economy resulted in a crisis, and almost all goods had to be imported from Thailand. By 1974, the Burmese economy experienced a 10% inflation rate.¹⁸⁵ In addition, ethnic rebellion and the consequent problems with safety and security pushed emigrants into Thailand. Ordinary villagers were met with suspicion by the Burmese Army who believed that they too were against the government.¹⁸⁶

On the other hand, pull factors consisted of Thailand's reputation or the displaced persons' (hereafter *phu phlat thin*) perception of Thailand. Thai people had had a reputation of being compassionate and hospitable as suggested by the migration of Mon, Chinese and Yuan as early as the Thonburi period. In addition, jobs were more available in Thailand than in Burma. Despite receiving lower wages than Thai people, *phu phlat thin* from Burma gladly took low-paying jobs as the quality of life in their country was much worse. Finally, Thailand had a history of lenient policies towards *phu phlat thin*. At least it was perceived that Thailand did not have policies

¹⁸⁴ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 31.

¹⁸⁵ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 253.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 254.

that resisted or drove out “immigrants.” This would all change following the evacuation of hundreds of thousands from Indochina into Thailand in 1975.¹⁸⁷

From the 1960s, most of the Tai Yai displaced from the Shan State went to adjoining Northern Thailand, specifically in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son where they had ethnic, cultural, trading, and migration connections.¹⁸⁸ The displaced Tai Yai fell into either of the two categories of *phu phlat thin* from Burma: ordinary villagers, or rebel forces (those associated with ethnic insurgency). Each type was perceived to cause different kinds of problems. Those classified as ordinary villagers were perceived to be competitors for labor, land and resources. They were also considered extra burden for authorities. Finally, they were considered to be security problems as their residence along the border could facilitate the infiltration of criminals and insurgents. This in turn would put Thai nationals living in the same area at risk.¹⁸⁹

Meanwhile, those affiliated with rebel forces brought with them mainly socio-political problems. First, rebel forces had been able to assemble in areas inaccessible to authorities. In these areas, armed camps and tower gates were built. This was considered a violation of Thai sovereignty. Second, the presence of these insurgents in border areas caused a state of unrest. Competition among rebel forces over the drug trade, as well as their conflict with the Burmese military, disrupted the lives of Thai people along the border.¹⁹⁰ Third, the presence of ethnic rebel forces along the border caused a strain in Thailand’s relationship with Burma. Since the flight of ethnic rebels

¹⁸⁷ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 254-255.

¹⁸⁸ Kaise, *op. cit.*, 31.

¹⁸⁹ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 256-257.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 257-258.

into Thailand had been happening so frequently, the Burmese government began to suspect the Thai government of connivance with these insurgents.¹⁹¹ This suspicion was not unfounded as:

The Thai policy encouraging rebel groups to settle along its border with Burma goes back to the rule of Phibun Songkhram (1947-57) and Sarit Thanarat (1958-63). They had hoped that in exchange for the freedom of movement and access to logistic support from Thailand, these groups could provide protection against communist infiltration in the area.¹⁹²

In other words, despite being perceived as a problem, ethnic rebel forces contributed to the Thai state's anti-communist strategy. However, they also brought with them the problem of the narcotics trade.

It would not be until 1978 that the Thai government would come up with a policy that would effectively drive out rebel forces and improve relations with Burma. It can be said that prior to this, the Thai state had held a lenient policy towards *phu phlat thin* from Burma along its borders, providing aid to "ordinary" *phu phlat thin* on the basis of human rights.¹⁹³

The ensuing discussion looks into the political developments in Thailand during the period between 1963 to 1976. The aim is to locate the Thai state's perception of and policy towards the Shan within the context of a burgeoning royalist Thai nation, during the Thai Counterinsurgency Era, which became an arena for political ascendancy between the military and the monarchy.

¹⁹¹ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 258.

¹⁹² Bertil Lintner, "The Shan and the Shan State in Burma," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, March: 433. Quoted in Kaise, *op. cit.*, 33.

¹⁹³ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 259.

Thai Counterinsurgency Era¹⁹⁴

The Cold War period in Southeast Asia was an era preoccupied with the stabilization of newly formed nation-states.¹⁹⁵ Having a colonial encounter unlike its Southeast Asian neighbors did not exempt Thailand from this issue during the Cold War. That it had to cede some of its “recovered” territories following the Second World War already suggests that the integrity of the territorial Thai nation was at stake. More importantly, the Thai ruling elite needed to justify their right to rule, since they did not “automatically possess political legitimacy.” Incidentally, insurgency provided the test for the established authority’s capacity to rule and cope with opposition.¹⁹⁶ Thus, counterinsurgency can be understood as a means for the ruling class to consolidate its authority.

To understand the transition of the modern Thai nation-state from a statist, territorial nation to a monarchical one, it is imperative to view the period from 1963 to 1976 as a large part of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era.¹⁹⁷ When does this era begin, and what does it signify? What distinguishes it as a unique period in the history of Cold War Thailand? This section addresses these questions.

In order to provide a clearer picture of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era it is necessary to first discuss the dynamics of counterinsurgency, specifically its relationship with modernization, which was an integral part of Cold War nation building. According to Sinae Hyun, modernization was, and still is, a nation-building

¹⁹⁴ This period became an arena for political ascendancy between the military and the monarchy. Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 217.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 141.

¹⁹⁷ Sinae Hyun posits 1980, with the issuance of Order 66/2523, as the end of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era. See Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 36.

ideology. At the same time, modernization theories provided the central ideological background of anti-communist counterinsurgency strategies during the Cold War. Modernization and counterinsurgency have a symbiotic relationship insofar as they share the same goal, which is the “stabilization of the nation to preserve the hierarchical state order.” The slogans of national unity and progress or development thus became integral to the local elite’s nation-building programs, rationalized by American modernization and counterinsurgency.¹⁹⁸

The beginning of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era is commonly traced back to 7 August 1965, better known as Gun-Firing Day [*wan siang puen taek*] during which members of the Communist Party of Thailand clashed with the police in Nakhon Phanom, a province in the northeast. This has been generally assumed as the first Thai communist attack against the government, although numerous skirmishes between the government and local insurgents occurred prior to 1965.¹⁹⁹ However, the Border Patrol Police and the CIA Public Safety Division (CIA-PSD) had already begun expanding counterinsurgency programs in 1962, and so did Sarit in the same year with his military’s counterinsurgency programs. Thus, Sinae Hyun argues that the actual beginning of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era was in 1962.²⁰⁰ Considering the larger historical and political context which shall be explained below, locating the beginning of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era in 1962 appears more cogent.

Three important changes took place during the Thai Counterinsurgency Era. First, the focus of counterinsurgency campaigns shifted along the United States’ deeper involvement in the Vietnam War. If in the 1950s, the U.S. and Thailand were

¹⁹⁸ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 135.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 209.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 210.

more concerned about the subduing expansion of communist China's influence, hence the support given to the KMT remnants occupying parts of Thailand's frontier with China, the Shan State; in the 1960s, the focus moved to Vietnam, Laos, and the northeast of Thailand (Isan). Second, the target population of the U.S. government and Thai military regime's counterinsurgency also shifted. In the 1950s, communism had been regarded as an external threat. However, growing insurgencies in rural areas of Thailand in the 1960s convinced the Thai military and the U.S. that communist insurgencies could originate domestically. In other words, the communist threat was perceived to already be coming from within.²⁰¹

Finally, the U.S. government came to concentrate on military operations against communism and thus concentrated on supporting strong military regimes. During the Eisenhower administration, the U.S. government had followed military approaches to counterinsurgency. When John F. Kennedy came to office, civilian counterinsurgency under the veneer of modernization earned more support. However, following Kennedy's assassination, the government of Lyndon B. Johnson reverted back to military approaches as it grew more and more involved in the Vietnam War.²⁰² As the succeeding discussion shall show, it is the Thai military regime's heavy reliance on U.S. financial and advisory support that thwarted its counterinsurgency and the consolidation of its political power.

By contrast, the Thai royal family rose to dominance throughout the Thai Counterinsurgency Era. Ultimately, nation-building during the Thai Counterinsurgency Era was the process of constructing a royalist Thai nation through

²⁰¹ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 213-214.

²⁰² Ibid., 215-216.

the royal family's indigenization of the American Cold War schemes of modernization and counterinsurgency.²⁰³ The ensuing discussion looks into the decline of military dominance during this period

Twilight of military dominance

As discussed in the previous chapter, politics among the Thai ruling class—particularly among military cliques themselves—reveals another precarious condition of the Thai nation-state during the Cold War. Following the death of Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, Thailand would remain an—and even become a more ardent—ally of the United States. However, military dominance would dwindle, whereas the monarchy would begin to hold sway.

The downfall of Thanom's military government provides the context for understanding the rise of the monarch's role as a modern nation-builder, which is the crux of this chapter. This section discusses the twilight of military dominance. This can be attributed to Thailand's deep involvement with the United States in the Vietnam War or the Second Indochina War, which brought about socio-economic and political transformations in Thai society. In order to understand this better, it is necessary to first point out particular characteristics of the Thanom regime (1963 to 1973).

The Thanom regime was an extension of Sarit's, but with its own distinguishing characteristics. First, from the 1960s to the 1970s, Thailand became increasingly involved with America, specifically in the Vietnam War. More

²⁰³ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 223.

importantly, the state's greater emphasis on development and modernization engendered a more politically conscious citizenry. However, since Thanom hardly changed the political structure left by Sarit, which was based on traditional Thai values, "development" and its socio-political effects on common Thai people would backfire. Moreover, Thanom continued to look to the Revolutionary Council to guide the country to a form of rule which had been described by Sarit as "a Thai way of democracy."²⁰⁴ This twin commitment to development and revolution [*patiwat*] of Sarit—and by extension, Thanom—was "paradoxical" and it led to a structurally weaker or looser Thai society by 1973.²⁰⁵ In other words, the Thanom decade proved the incompatibility of development with the military government's inegalitarian political philosophy. Ultimately, the Thanom regime would be brought to an end by the Student Uprising of October 1973. Below is an outline of this paradox.

Economically, American presence in Thailand helped bring about the growth of various industries like the service sector, tourism and construction. Soon "tens and even hundreds of thousands of Thai became dependent upon American presence for their livelihood." Young men and women went to the city to learn English, work as waiters and waitresses, prostitutes and masseuses, bartenders, tour guides, souvenir shop clerks, etc.²⁰⁶ Meanwhile in the rural areas, efforts to improve education and public health yielded real benefits, while irrigation projects and agricultural extension were implemented and communications were improved. Economic infrastructure was developed in order to support crop diversification and improve the marketing of

²⁰⁴ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 219.

²⁰⁵ Wyatt, *op. cit.*, 281.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 279.

agricultural products.²⁰⁷ However, income inequality among Thailand's farmers was an issue.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the number of the educated middle class drastically rose. The total of primary school graduates almost quadrupled. Meanwhile, the number of those who finished high school grew twelvefold, while the number of college or university graduates increased ninefold. The increase signifies two things. First, the trend shows clearly that the number of educational opportunities grew. Second, it suggests changes in the people's economic and social aspirations.²⁰⁸ Unfortunately, the number of opportunities in the civil service could not keep up with the rising number of Thailand's middle class, while working in the private sector made them more vulnerable to economic fluctuations. David Wyatt points out that the growth of a middle class led to stronger support for political conservatism, which theoretically combats fluctuations or instability. Yet at the same time, the Thai middle class grew more exposed to liberal ideas of the West. Being under authoritarian rule thus became vexing.²⁰⁹

In contrast, rural Thailand, where farmers and workers were both "beneficiaries and victims," experienced a slower rate of development.²¹⁰ It was insurgency and the threat of insurgency that brought government attention to them. Indeed, the roads built or improved made it possible for the integration of rural villages into the national economy, but the military motive behind these infrastructures cannot be ignored. Increased government presence in the rural villages

²⁰⁷ Wyatt, *op. cit.*, 286.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 284-285.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 285.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 286.

heightened dissatisfaction, as villagers became more subject to military and police harassment or bureaucratic corruption. More importantly, the “development” brought in by the government heightened the political consciousness of these rural villagers. They became conscious of how much they fell behind more prosperous regions and city dwellers. The plight of the rural dwellers may have, Wyatt suggests, “served to legitimize student and middle-class commitment to political change.”²¹¹

A significant blow to the Thanom regime and to authoritarian military rule in general was Thanom’s democratic experiment which failed, as with those that preceded it. In 1968, the Thanom government issued a new constitution which had been promised in 1959 during the Sarit regime. It provided for a bicameral legislature comprising an elected lower house and an appointed Senate. Elections were then held in 1969, and it resulted in the government party forming the majority in the lower house, while Thanom continued as prime minister. However, in November 1971, Thanom staged a coup against himself; dissolved Parliament; banned political parties, and again ruled under an interim constitution which brought the military back to dominate the government.

Wyatt states that the reasons behind the coup were complex, but mentions that the government was alarmed by what it perceived as a collapse of national solidarity with the rise of competing political parties. He also mentions as a cause of government concern the growing political activity among the youth, who were against Thailand’s alliance with the United States. In addition, the military rulers of Thailand grew more worried of the implications of the shift in U.S. policy towards China and

²¹¹ Wyatt, *op. cit.*, 286-287.

Vietnam. They feared that American support would dwindle at a time when the situation in Cambodia and Laos was looming over Thailand. At the same time, the Thanom-Praphas regime could not afford to relax control since solidarity within the Thai army appeared to be falling apart and they had yet to find a “successor” who had strong support within the army. By the time Thanom reinstated military control, Thai society as a whole no longer seemed willing to accept a regime that appeared to represent only military interests in the guise of national security and public welfare.²¹²

Ultimately, the students would become the nail in the coffin of the Thanom-Praphas regime. They became a major political force by mid-1973. Student demonstrations began in June over the expulsion of university students for anti-government publications and peaked in October following the arrest of critics disseminating flyers which demanded for a constitution. Demonstrators were in the hundreds of thousands. This included university students, secondary and technical school students, and many young members of the middle class. The battle cry was for the release of the critics and the promulgation of a constitution. This led to violent clashes with the police, which escalated to attacks on police stations and government offices. Thanom, on the other hand, was not able to gather the army support he needed.²¹³ Most importantly, King Bhumibol stepped in and requested Thanom and Praphas to resign and leave the country. After which, the King announced his appointment of Dr. Sanya Dharmasakti as prime minister. This marked the beginning of the monarchy and royalist elite’s political domination.²¹⁴

²¹² Wyatt, *op. cit.*, 287-288.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 288.

²¹⁴ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 35.

For sure, Thanom Kittikachorn was not the only major stakeholder in his administration. General Praphas Charusathien, his deputy prime minister and minister of the interior, was known to have his vested interest in running the government alongside Thanom. It is worth noting that because Thanom inherited “stability” from the Sarit regime, army factions busied themselves with “jockeying for power rather than focusing on national security.”²¹⁵ Discussing this, however, would be a digression from the focus of this chapter, which is to demonstrate the transition from military to monarchical dominance.

Resurgence of the monarchy

To say that the monarchy made a “comeback” to politics during the Cold War deserves careful qualification. First, did the monarchy have an active political role throughout the Cold War? If the king was expected to stay “above politics,” how can he be said to have made a “comeback”? What factors led to the royal family’s greater influence over the Thai nation during the Cold War? Finally, what did the resurgence of the monarchy mean for the function of the modern Thai nation-state?

Andreas Sturm’s concepts of royal nationalism and monarchical nationalism are useful in making sense of the monarchy’s resurgence during the Cold War.²¹⁶ Royal nationalism and monarchical nationalism are based on the distinction between cultural nationalism and political nationalism, as theorized by John Hutchinson. Accordingly, cultural nationalism is an ideology that perceives “the nation in organic terms as a spontaneous order and it operated as a movement of communal self-help,

²¹⁵ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 209.

²¹⁶ Sturm, *op. cit.*

throwing up informal agencies in order to ‘re-create’ the nation from the grass roots [sic] up.” In addition, the nation is viewed “not as a state but as a distinctive historical community, which continuously evolving, embodies a higher synthesis of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern.’”²¹⁷ This means that cultural nationalism is about giving importance to the multifariousness of a nation, not least of which are the diverse cultural traditions within it. A nation, viewed this way, is shaped from below. In contrast, political nationalism places its emphasis on the state. It seeks “a state representative of the nation which will break with tradition and raise the people to the level of the advanced ‘scientific’ cultures.”²¹⁸ In this case, the nation is defined from the top down.

With its emphasis on state dominance, royal nationalism²¹⁹ is categorized as a type of political nationalism. On the other hand, monarchical nationalism is regarded as a kind of cultural nationalism with its emphasis on cultural traditions such as the traditional role of the king.²²⁰ The idea here is that the development of Thai nationalism is to be understood in terms of the lesser or greater role of the monarch (the epitome of tradition) vis-a-vis the state. This is distinct from what Sturm refers to as statist nationalism, in which the state or territorial nation takes precedence over any cultural tradition. As mentioned in the literature review, Sturm attributes statist nationalism to the two Phibun regimes, during which the apex of tradition—the monarchy—was made irrelevant.

²¹⁷ Hutchinson, John. “Cultural Nationalism, Elite Mobility and Nation-building: Communitarian Politics in Modern Ireland” (1987): 497, 486, cited in Sturm, *op. cit.*, 31.

²¹⁸ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 32.

²¹⁹ In this thesis, royal nationalism strictly refers to the concept outlined by Sturm. Royalist nationalism shall be used to refer to the more general idea of that which promotes the monarchy or royal institution.

²²⁰ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 32-33.

Even though the importance of the monarchy was emphasized during the Sarit regime,²²¹ this thesis traces the beginning of the monarchy's resurgence to the Thanom era because the monarchy was beginning to participate more actively in nation-building. By contrast, Sarit's campaign to defend the monarchy can be seen as the beginning of royal nationalism in Thailand.²²² In other words, his glorification of the monarchy, along with his emphasis on traditional Thai values as a whole, was of mere instrumental value to the state. How then did the monarchy make its "comeback"?

The Thanom era witnessed the collapse of royal nationalism, and by extension the (military-led) state. This was due to four factors. First, Sarit's successor(s) did not have the same good relationship with the king as he was increasingly unwilling to cooperate with military dictators. "While the state was still perceived to be in the driver seat, the independence of [King] Bhumibol rose." Second, the state bureaucracy lost the trust of many people. Not only were people facing economic hardship, but they were alienated by rapid modernization and its concomitant institutions and laws, which were imperialistic in nature. Third, Thailand's deep involvement with the United States and the Vietnam War encouraged protests against the government. This led to a new, competing nationalism which sought independence from American influence. Finally, royal nationalism was further weakened by the fact that Thanom lacked a clear vision of the nation.²²³

²²¹ Part of Sarit's efforts to "restore the monarchy" was a World Tour of the royal couple followed by a hero's welcome in January 1961. The royal couple was also encouraged to travel in the countryside. See Sturm, *op. cit.*, 191.

²²² Sturm, *op. cit.*, 186.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 195-197.

As mentioned previously, the students became the nail in the coffin of the Thanom era. Understood within the framework provided by Sturm, the popular uprising of 14 October 1973 marks the transformation of the monarchy's role from a passive to an active one.²²⁴ Therefore, it can be argued that the actual resurgence of the monarchy began when royal nationalism failed. However, Sturm suggests that it was only when the state promoted the king's own vision of the nation that the wheels of monarchical nationalism were set in motion. Accordingly, he posits the year 1980, marked by the premiership of General Prem Tinsulandonda, as the revival of monarchical nationalism.²²⁵ By this time, the military would be the most monarchized it had ever been after the 1932 Revolution.²²⁶ Notwithstanding Sturm's categorization, the royal family had already been exerting tremendous influence over the Thai nation through its partnership with the Border Patrol Police (BPP) during the Thai Counterinsurgency Era.²²⁷

The palace's interest in the BPP came as early as the mid-1950s when Phao Sriyanon was exerting dominant influence over politics and the U.S. was furnishing this police group to become the elite paramilitary force in the region. Hyun writes that it is probable that the civic action programs alongside the U.S.'s modernization project provided the perfect opportunity for the royal couple to win over the Thai

²²⁴ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 199.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

²²⁶ "Monarchization" is the degree to which a regime or institutional behavior is conditioned by an ideology of subservience to royalty. See Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitoolkiat, "The Resilience of Monarchized Military in Thailand" *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 46:3 (2016).

²²⁷ The Border Patrol Police [*tam ruaj tra wen chai daen*] was created by the CIA and functioned as its frontline paramilitary force. Sarit's resentment towards Phao and his police led to the demotion of the BPP to fall under the command of the Provincial Police. By mid-1961, the United States Operations Mission to Thailand began to support the BPP's civic actions. Conflicts between the CIA and USOM, as well as that between USOM and the BPP itself, allowed the royal family to take over the leadership rule that the U.S. had played out. See Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War."

people and strengthen its power base.²²⁸ She adds that the royal couple might have wanted the BPP to fulfill the role that the Wild Tiger Corps [*suea pa*] played for King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) in which the Corps served as a force that safeguarded the monarchical institution against the state institutionalized army. “It could have been the royal family’s desire to reinforce its fragile institution against the fierce power competition among the military generals by having an elite, but seemingly apolitical, force on their side like its predecessor did.”²²⁹ Following this logic, I posit that the royal family’s decision to collaborate with the BPP echoes the earlier rivalry between the army and the police, which Phibun had used to his advantage during his second premiership.

Nevertheless, the BPP’s civic action program had provided a fortuitous opportunity for the royal family to equip its institution with one of the most popular Cold War paradigms: modernization.²³⁰ The following discussion elaborates on these civic action programs. More importantly, the monarchy’s “indigenization” of this foreign paradigm shall be discussed.

Officially, the BPP began its first civic action, named “Development and Aid for Hill Tribe People and People Far from Communication” [*kan songkhro chao pa chao khao lae prachachon klai khamanakhom*] under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior in 1956 during the second Phibun administration. By the Order of the Ministry of Interior 653/2499, the Thai National Police Department assigned the Border Patrol Police to the project.²³¹ With this project, the BPP was primarily tasked

²²⁸ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 199.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

with providing security; advice on sanitation and health; medicine and medicinal treatment; and education. The last of which was the most important because it was a means to prevent people in remote areas from falling into the hands of the enemy. It was believed that if the uneducated were not led to the right path by the Thai government they would be turned against the Thai nation.²³²

In order to carry out their mission effectively, the BPP built schools, border patrol stations, community development centers, and medical clinics in the remote areas.²³³ In 1955, the first Border Information Center was built in Tak province in order to facilitate intelligence activities. The primary task of this center, along with other centers to be built along Thailand's borders, was to teach children the Thai language.²³⁴ This was done in order to facilitate communication with ethnic minorities. According to Hyun, the BPP hoped to achieve three goals in teaching highland minority children. First, it aimed to be able to carry out intelligence-related tasks more effectively by communication with the children in Thai. Second, it hoped to reduce the fear of the BPP's presence in the border areas. Third, it wanted to gain the minority villagers' trust and be able to set up surveillance in their communities. These goals led to the inception of the first official BPP school, which was opened on 7 January 1956 in Chiang Khong.²³⁵

The Border Patrol Police schools represented a concrete step "towards actualizing the vision of a territorially and psychologically consolidated Thailand."²³⁶ Since Thailand's physical boundaries did not guarantee security, the Thai state was

²³² Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 181.

²³³ Ibid., 126.

²³⁴ Hyun, "Building a Human Border," 335.

²³⁵ Ibid., 336.

²³⁶ Ibid., 342.

devoted to demarcating an ideological boundary between what was Thai and un-Thai. Eventually this led to the construction of unequal ethnic relations between the Thais and ethnic minorities. “The BPP taught about the superiority and progress of the Thai nation, placing ethnic minorities at the bottom of a vertical order.”²³⁷ Border Patrol Schools were part of the bigger project of expanding state surveillance among highland minorities in the remote border areas of Thailand, which had four objectives.

The first objective of expanding state surveillance among the highland minorities was to counter communist infiltration and recruit “mountain people.” Second, it was intended to curtail opium cultivation and trade. Third, there was the goal of preserving natural resources. Finally, expanding state surveillance was intended to consolidate and assimilate the border population within the Thai nation-state.²³⁸

It is important to note that the first BPP civic action and the first royal project all began in northern Thailand. The region’s geography, demographics, history and culture were all factors to increase the need to assimilate the border population through counterinsurgency programs.²³⁹ One particular point mentioned by Hyun which is quite significant to this chapter is that the BPP’s counterinsurgency strategy differed from that of the military government with respect to the North.

CT [Communist Terrorists] incidents have largely been in Nan, Chiang Rai, and Tak provinces and have involved armed bands of hill tribesmen attacking RTG [Royal Thai Government] projects and units. *While RTG concern has been mostly with the Northeast because of ethnic Thai involvement in the insurgency, the RTG has possibly been*

²³⁷ Hyun, “Building a Human Border,” 344.

²³⁸ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 187.

²³⁹ Ibid., 227.

more aggressive in the North because of the low involvement of ethnic Thai. The RTG policy in the North has been to bomb and burn the Meo [Hmong] into submission. The results have been to make the Meo insurgents more receptive to communist support and to precipitate a virtual state of war between some Meo tribes and the RTG.²⁴⁰

I argue that this further sullied the reputation of the military government, while simultaneously venerating the monarchy, whose approach to minorities was more inclusive. How did the monarchy exactly come into the nation-building picture?

In the early 1960s, the royal family began to show its interest in the BPP's civic actions. The King donated money to build ten schools, which would eventually be named "King Sponsored Schools [*chao pho luang upatham*]." Likewise, the Queen offered a budget to build two more schools for highland minority children.²⁴¹ Gradually, King Bhumibol refashioned the American modernization scheme with the Thai Buddhist tradition by interpreting the task as an "exercise to make merit." From 1969, programs that had been undertaken by the BPP and USOM for almost a decade were incorporated into the Royal Project [*khongkan annueang ma chak phraratchadamri*].²⁴² This would lead to the most powerful images of King Bhumibol as the "king of development" and "builder of nation." However, the making of a working monarch started well before the beginning of the Royal Project and the actual pioneer who took this initiative was the mother of King Bhumibol.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Hanrahan, *Overview of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 16. Quoted in Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 233-234. (Explanations and emphasis added by Hyun).

²⁴¹ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 268.

²⁴² In 1952, the King launched his first rural development initiatives to build a communal road in Huai Mongkhon. Other pilot projects included temperate zone vegetation projects for the highland minorities, and natural resource preservation in northern Thailand. See Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 201, 203.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 204.

The Princess Mother emerged as the primary royal caretaker of the BPP and civic action program.²⁴⁴ In turn, the BPP's civic actions allowed the Princess Mother's and the King's royal projects for the hill people to come to fruition. For instance, among the Princess Mother's regular gifts during her visits to BPP schools were the national flag, the map of Thailand, a Buddha image and the King's picture. All of which represent the three pillars of the Thai nation. She instructed that installing these symbols in the classroom would teach children to revere and to have loyalty to the Thai nation.²⁴⁵ Through BPP civic actions, the royal family was able to promote the images of monarchy as the benevolent patron of the Thai nation, including the highland minorities. Hyun notes that the BPP's relationship with the monarchy was mutually beneficial.²⁴⁶ Ultimately, the Border Patrol Police's civic action projects on education, sanitation and health, rural development, village security and anti-narcotics campaigns became the main infrastructure of nation-building and augmented the authority and popularity of the royal family.²⁴⁷

In addition to the Border Patrol Police and its civic actions, the Village Scouts²⁴⁸ also played a critical role in propagating royalist nationalism during the 1970s. Besides their role of symbolizing patriotism and loyalty to the pillars of the Thai nation, their involvement in the 6 October 1976 massacre illustrates how influential the royal institution had become by then. Hyun argues that the rapid

²⁴⁴ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 205.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 206.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 207.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 226.

²⁴⁸ The Border Patrol Police founded the Village Scouts in 1971. The Village Scouts is a countrywide organization that the King and Queen of Thailand have sponsored for the general public since 1972 in order to promote national unity. The purpose of the Scouts is to provide a large non-military bulwark against threats to Thai independence and freedom, particularly against communism. "It is artfully designed to make the general population believe its support of the nation is of vital importance, essential to the integrity and survival of Thai political autonomy." See Marjorie A. Muecke, "The Village Scouts of Thailand" *Asian Survey* 20, no. 4 (1980).

expansion of the Village Scout movement and its participation in the October 6 massacre reveal that the Thai elites had successfully indigenized the Cold War system to sustain and justify their continuous power domination.²⁴⁹ What does this exactly mean?

Excessive emphasis on their own concept of “unity” forced the Village Scout members to believe that those who were against them were for disunity. Accordingly, opponents of the Village Scout movement constituted an enemy of the united Thai nation. In this sense, the Village Scouts somehow assumed the role of being a gatekeeper of what qualifies as either a threat or a benefit to the Thai nation. A special instruction regarding the suppression of “wicked people” found in the Village Scout manual in 1976 is illuminating.

First, the manual defined *khon chuea* as the people harmful to society such as “thieves, argumentative persons, bullies, and lazy people” who do not make a living but exploit others instead. The Village Scouts thus had the duty to help them to transform them into better people so that the *khon chuea* would be eliminated from Thai society. It was also emphasized that “the best way to fix the problem is not to use violence but rather treat those *khon chuea* gently to have them feel they are the Thais like us.”²⁵⁰ This is quite ironic considering what actually transpired on 6 October 1976. On the morning of October 6, Village Scouts went *en masse* to Thammasat University as directed by Colonel Utharn Sanitwong and Dr. Uthit Naksawat, carrying

²⁴⁹ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 410.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 398-399.

traditional Thai swords. They were joined by an armed contingent of 4,000 border patrol police, municipal police, and *krathing daeng* in an orgy of violence.²⁵¹

In sum, the above discussion regarding the monarchy's relationship with the Border Patrol Police and the Village Scout shows the available channels for the propagation of monarchical nationalism as early as the 1960s. The period between the end of the Sarit regime and the October 6 massacre saw the monarch taking a more active role in shaping the Thai nation. This was facilitated by infrastructures, like the BPP, which have been established by a military-dominated Thai state. Eventually, the number of royal projects would skyrocket after 1980 and signal the revival of monarchical nationalism.²⁵²

Analysis

What was the Thai state's perception of the Shan people during the period in focus? This chapter posits that during the middle phase of the Cold War, the Shan were perceived by the Thai state as a buffer against communism. However, unlike in the earlier part of the Cold War, it was the Shan *people*, specifically the rebel forces and the ordinary *phu phlat thin* along the Thai-Burmese border, who served as an anti-communist backwater, not the Shan territory itself. This is reflected in the Thai state's policies which worked towards integrating or assimilating border people in the north. How does the above discussion support the first and second hypotheses of this research?

²⁵¹ Muecke, *op. cit.*, 425.

²⁵² Sturm, *op. cit.*, 218.

The first hypothesis states that even though the Shan was perceived as being involved in the narcotics trade during the Cold War, the Thai state tolerated their assumed involvement for the sake of fighting communism. The Thai state's toleration of Shan *phu phlat thin* and rebel forces residing along the Thai-Burmese border area corroborates this hypothesis. The second hypothesis states that the Thai state's perception of the Shan reaffirmed the assumed superiority of the Thai nation and emphasized the importance of the monarchy in the Thai nationalist narrative.

During the Thai Counterinsurgency Era, the monarchy was consolidating its political influence through the Border Patrol Police.²⁵³ With the monarchy's increasing influence over the national narrative, the BPP schools' promotion of Thainess and loyalty to the Thai nation in order to build a human border can be understood as a promotion of loyalty to the king. On the other hand, the Thai state's perception of the Shan people as a buffer against communism indicated that the Thai nation was under threat. This notion of being under threat only justified the need to inculcate the superiority of Thainess, and loyalty to the monarchy.

As mentioned earlier, the period in focus falls under the Thai Counterinsurgency Era, which spans from 1962 to 1980. This period saw the Thai royal family's successful "indigenization" of the American Cold War system.²⁵⁴ The resurgent monarchy was consolidating its popularity and influence in the North through its engagement with civic action programs and its own royal projects. As Hyun mentions, the royal family's participation in the civic actions of the Border Patrol Police could have been due to their desire to strengthen their own power

²⁵³ For instance, the Princess Mother often gifted BPP schools with symbols of the Thai nation, namely: the national flag, a Buddha image, and most importantly a picture of the king. See p.27.

²⁵⁴ Hyun, "Indigenizing the Cold War," 224.

base.²⁵⁵ In contrast, the pro-American military government was met with increasing dissatisfaction and was ultimately overthrown. With the failure of authoritarian military rule and the growing success of the royal family's projects, the Thai state was beginning to transform into a royalist nation-state.

These developments in Thailand coincided with two important political transformations in Burma. First was the establishment of the military government and its one-party rule under the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP). The second important transformation was the internationalization and intensification of the civil war.²⁵⁶ As mentioned above, the establishment of a military government in Burma and the implementation of its own take on socialism led to an economic collapse in the country. This exacerbated the preexisting conflict between the central Burmese government and its ethnic states. Adding fuel to this fire was the resurgence of the Chinese-backed Community Party of Burma along the Sino-Burmese border.

As discussed above, the dismal situation in Burma led the Shan or Tai Yai (along with other ethnic groups) to flee to the Thai-Burmese borderlands. This, in turn, caused an upsurge of rebel forces and illicit activities along this area, which was met with Thai leniency. Accordingly, the toleration of these “foreigners” along the border supplemented the Thai state's policy—through the Border Patrol Police—of building a human border. Since Thailand's territorial boundaries were porous and meaningless to border people, it became necessary to build a “human border” along

²⁵⁵ Hyun, “Indigenizing the Cold War,” 202.

²⁵⁶ Martin Smith identifies five cycles of conflict in Burma corresponding to five different political eras: “Post-Colonial Failure of the State” (1948 to 1958); “Military Government and the Reshaping of Conflict” (1958 to 1967); “The Internationalization and the Intensification of the Civil War” (1968 to 1975); “National Impasse and State Decline” (1976 to 1988); “Military Government Renewed” (1988 to 2006). See Smith, *State of Strife*, 26-47.

the territorial border.²⁵⁷ As previously mentioned, this was done through the promotion of Thainess and national loyalty.



²⁵⁷ Hyun, “Building a Human Border,” 344.

CHAPTER 4: The Thai state's perception of the Shan people (1976-1988)

In 1976, the drug warlord-cum-Shan nationalist Khun Sa established his base of operations at Ban Hin Taek in Chiang Rai. There he enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with Thai authorities as he provided them with financial and political gains. For one, the presence of Khun Sa and his Shan United Army along the Thai-Burmese border was a tactic of the Thai state to protect the country from communism.²⁵⁸ By 1978, the Thai state had come up with a firmer policy to drive out rebel forces out of the country. This was done mainly to put an end to the Burmese government's suspicions about Thailand's relationship ethnic insurgents and to achieve peace in the borderlands.²⁵⁹

When General Prem Tinsulanonda became premier in 1980, the Thai state opted for a political approach to communist insurgents within the country. Meanwhile, a more stringent policy towards rebel forces along the Thai-Burmese border was followed. This was exemplified by the expulsion of Khun Sa and his forces from Ban Hin Taek. In addition, to these political developments, the Prem government facilitated the "revival of monarchical nationalism." In other words, owing to the perceived lack of a state ideology, Prem helped with the promotion of the King's very own vision of the Thai nation. One of the more notable means of disseminating King Bhumibol's ideas of the Thai nation was the Royal Project, which sought the eradication of opium cultivation among the hill-tribe people.

²⁵⁸ McLean, *op. cit.*, 20.

²⁵⁹ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 259.

How did the Thai state's perception of and policies towards the Shan during this period influence the narrative of the monarchical Thai nation? This chapter argues that the Thai state's perception of the Shan as an ethno-narcotic group linked with Khun Sa justified the narrative of being under threat. This narrative, in turn, reinforced the importance of the monarchy and the King's vision for the survival of the Thai nation.

To elaborate on this argument, this chapter first discusses Khun Sa and his army along the Thai-Burmese border.²⁶⁰ This contextualizes the Thai state's perception of narcotics as a threat to the Thai nation. The second part of this chapter discusses the monarchical nation of the 1980s. This part looks into the Prem government's policies towards the Shan and the ways in which it was able to advance King Bhumibol's vision of the Thai nation. More importantly, this part discusses the King's emphasis on transforming the nation into a self-sufficient community, and the Royal Project which epitomized the dissemination of this monarchical vision of the nation.

This chapter concludes that the Thai state's perception of the Shan, during the period in focus, was reflected in its policy towards them, specifically towards Khun Sa. In this case, the Shan were perceived as a narcotics threat. In turn, this perception justified monarchical nation-building, which was focused on creating a self-sufficient community. Ultimately, Thai nation-building from this period on would lead Khun Sa and the Shan to reconstruct their identity.

²⁶⁰ The popular association of the Shan (Tai Yai in Thailand) with the narcotics trade was largely shaped by their connection with the drug warlord Khun Sa. See McLean, *op. cit.*, 15.

Khun Sa and his army

Khun Sa, born Chang Chi-fu in 1932, hailed from Muang Yai in the northern Shan States.²⁶¹ He was of half-Shan and half-Chinese descent. In the latter part of the 1950s he became part of the evolving local defense force. By 1963, he became head of the Loi Maw *Ka Kwe Ye* and had started trafficking in opium. Again, the KKY or local defense force were groups which comprised a mix of local ethnic groups under the protection of the Burmese state. Each unit worked as a volunteer group to defend the local area from other armed groups, particularly ethnic and communist insurgents. By combating anti-government forces, the KKY gained privileges. For instance, they could use the government's roads and do business without any checkpoints.²⁶²

Eventually, when the brutal Ne Win regime brought the country into an economic collapse, Khun Sa turned against the Burmese government. He terminated his work as leader of the Loi Maw KKY because he did not agree with the Burmese policy of nationalizing businesses.²⁶³ In 1964, he set up the Anti-Socialist Army, which eventually merged into the Shan United Army. He established a reputation of ruthlessness and armed his unit of about eight hundred men by trading opium for guns in Thailand.²⁶⁴ In 1969, Khun Sa began to establish links with the Shan State Army because of their connections in Thailand.²⁶⁵

In 1972, the former KKY group of Khun Sa formed the Shan United Army. By 1974, it had merged with the Anti-Socialist Army which had been established by

²⁶¹ The year in which Khun Sa was born is contested. Some accounts say he was born in 1933, others in 1934. See Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*, and Lintner *op. cit.*

²⁶² Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 80.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁶⁴ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 301.

²⁶⁵ The SSA had connections specifically in Chiang Mai, through the *mahadevi* of Yawngghwe. See Lintner, *op. cit.*, and Chao Tzang Yawngghwe, *op. cit.*

Khun Sa himself a decade earlier. In 1976, Khun Sa established a force of about three thousand men in the village of Ban Hin Taek in Thailand's Chiang Rai province. There he set up a heroin refinery. In the meantime, the village developed rapidly and infrastructure such as a marketplace, a Chinese temple and a Shan pagoda were constructed.²⁶⁶ In addition, from 1964 to 1979, the number of households in Ban Hin Taek rose from six to fifty.²⁶⁷

In 1978, Kriangsak ordered Khun Sa out of Thailand, but to no avail. Despite the 1978 order, the Shan maintained its foothold in Thailand at the village of Ban Hin Taek. The village was superior to the average Thai village. It had running water and electricity and a hundred-bed hospital. It prospered not only through opium smuggling but also from its local control of the movement of jade and minerals. Other revenue came from heroin production in a number of small factories across the nearby border with Burma.²⁶⁸

The Thai government decided to tolerate Khun Sa's presence in Ban Hin Taek because it served as a buffer zone during the Cold War. Having Khun Sa's army (the SUA) along the Thai-Burmese border was a tactic for protecting Thailand from communism. A reflection of the Thai state's tolerant attitude towards this Shan can be found in the SUA's amicable relationship with the Border Patrol Police and other Thai paramilitary forces.²⁶⁹ In addition, tolerance of Khun Sa and his SUA in Ban Hin Taek benefited Thai authorities politically and economically. For example, it was reported that Khun Sa provided Kriangsak Chamanan large sums of money that

²⁶⁶ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 80.

²⁶⁷ McLean, *op. cit.*, 19.

²⁶⁸ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 307.

²⁶⁹ Lintner, *op. cit.*, 302. McLean, *op. cit.*, 20.

assisted him in his political ambitions.²⁷⁰ In addition, Maya McLean suggest that Khun Sa had used “Tai-ness” to appeal to the Thai government. “By showing Tai-ness to the Thai authorities, Khun Sa succeeded in convincing people that the Tai Yai were not an enemy of the people of Thailand, but they were a brother race to the Thai.”²⁷¹

Initially the Prem government had a fairly relaxed attitude towards the Shan provided that they kept their activities outside Thai territory. Prior to 1982, it was more concerned with the expansion of the Burmese communists who were expanding southwards from the Sino-Burmese border. The change in the Prem government’s attitude towards the Shan changed around mid-January 1982 when reports reached the Thai government of an unusually large opium caravan making its way south through the Shan States into Thailand towards Ban Hin Taek.²⁷²

Prime Minister Prem directed an interception of what was reported to be a caravan comprising two hundred mules protected by some three thousand SUA troops and led by Khun Sa himself. The Thai force in charge of this operation, on the other hand, comprised some one thousand Border Patrol Police men supported by ten counterinsurgency planes and ten helicopters. Ban Hin Taek was stormed resulting in the death or arrest of a small number of Shan troops. The Shan army then withdrew the bulk of its troops to a new position about six kilometers away. Notwithstanding the ongoing skirmishes, there surfaced a request for talks with the Thai government

²⁷⁰ McLean, *op. cit.*, 20.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁷² Cooper, *op. cit.*, 307.

with the justification that Khun Sa's activities were being carried out in the name of Shan independence from Rangoon control.²⁷³

As he was half-Chinese, Khun Sa encountered problems among the Shan. There were those who accused him of not being a real Shan because he tended to concentrate on the drug trade rather than fighting for the Shan. In addition, Khun Sa was sometimes identified as a Chinese drug merchant from Yunnan more than a Shan nationalist. Though labeled as the most important drug lord of the Golden Triangle, he attempted to manufacture a more positive image of himself and his army. For example, he began to work against drug businesses with the international community by meeting with various representatives like U.S. congressman, Joseph Neillis.²⁷⁴ Prem Tinsulanonda, however, had the last straw.

The prime minister was livid at the activities in the north and branded Khun Sa as an international criminal, a threat to Thai society through the danger of narcotics, and as an insult to national sovereignty and dignity. The director of Army operations, Major-General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, moved north to coordinate attacks on Khun Sa, whose forces had been fortified by the Shan State Army. Attacks by Thai forces forced the Shan northwards.²⁷⁵

In the meantime, two battalions of Thai troops moved in to convert the village to an Army stronghold. Moreover, a closer control over the movement of opium-related chemicals was implemented. The name of the village was also changed.²⁷⁶ The

²⁷³ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 308.

²⁷⁴ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 81.

²⁷⁵ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 308.

²⁷⁶ Ban Hin Taek was later renamed Ban Thoed Thai [บ้านเทอดไทย] which translates to "village upholding Thai spirits" or "village to honor Thailand." See McLean, *op. cit.*, 21.

battle for Ban Hin Taek was an important stepping stone in the implementation of Prem's policy. Driving out Khun Sa and his army out of Ban Hin Taek was done of the Thai government's own volition. Prem's government had shown that it was no longer willing to tolerate the lax situation in the northern mountains throughout the post-war period. However, the stricter policy did not in itself point to the end of the cross-border trade of opium nor the "demise of Khun Sa."²⁷⁷

Following Khun Sa's removal from Ban Hin Taek, the Shan United Army moved to Doi Lang mountain, which sits on the Thai-Burmese border between Chiang Mai and the Shan State. In the last week of July 1982, a Shan force of about eight hundred men, supported by a number of KMT soldiers, seized the stronghold of the communist-backed Wa National Army on the Burmese side of the mountain. By October, Khun Sa's troops were spotted on the Thai side of the mountain. A small heroin refinery and tax post had been established. Thai border police and troops attacked the area and destroyed the new base.²⁷⁸

In 1983, Khun Sa began to consolidate his representation in the mountains across the border from Mae Hong Son, which had been previously recognized as SSA territory.²⁷⁹ With greater exposure along this portion of the Thai-Shan border, he attempted to establish himself once more as a Shan nationalist primarily concerned with the freedom of the Shan State from oppression at the hands of the Burmans. However, in this respect he still lacked credibility and "was almost universally looked upon as a drug-running adventurer, commanding a well-disciplined, heavily armed

²⁷⁷ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 309.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁷⁹ By attacking the PNO, SSA, and other ethnic forces along the Thai border, Khun Sa built up the 15,000-strong Mong Tai Army (MTA) during the 1980s and, on his own admission, took control of two thirds of the narcotics trade with Thailand. See Smith, *State of Strife*, 36-37.

force.”²⁸⁰ From the Western point of view too, Khun Sa was no freedom fighter. The American Drug Enforcement Agency viewed Khun Sa as a villain, a drug warlord, a criminal, and a Burmese rebel.²⁸¹

From Khun Sa’s point of view, however, he represented the genuine freedom fighter for the Shan people. He argued that he was fighting communism, specifically the Communist Party of Burma. He claimed that the KMT troops were the refiners of Burmese communist opium, and because they were permitted to live in Thailand and could not be attacked, he served as their scapegoat.²⁸² Khun Sa would remain a dominant force along the Thai-Shan border throughout the early 1990s. However, due to international pressure, he eventually surrendered to the Burmese government in 1996. He would proceed to live in Rangoon until his death at the age of 74 in 2007.²⁸³

Given the scope of this thesis, Khun Sa’s case is mainly taken as a narcotics issue for the Thai state more than an example of a genuine Shan nationalist movement. Nevertheless, it is worth looking into his own understanding of Shan nationalism which, arguably, he had used to justify the narcotics trade. The ensuing discussion looks into aspects of Khun Sa’s political thought.

Khun Sa’s political thought

Khun Sa’s justification for revolt stems from the unfinished nation-state of Burma that places Burmans above other ethnic groups. The situation in Burma led to unequal

²⁸⁰ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 310.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 315.

²⁸² Ibid., 316.

²⁸³ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 82.

development among its peoples. For Khun Sa, the Burmans, who formed the majority, could control state functions and use it to oppress ethnic groups. This hierarchical structure was thus perceived as a cause of other problems such as poverty. Accordingly, the only way to resolve this problem was by fighting for independence.²⁸⁴

Independence, moreover, was the price to pay in order to resolve the narcotics problem in the Shan State. An independent Shan state and government was the solution because the Burmese government had not been able to provide economic alternatives to the Shan people. Khun Sa stated that:

To grow an alternative crop, our people need roads to transport their products to markets. But the Burmese do not care to build them. Our oranges, together with other fruits, just rot away. On the other hand, opium needs no roads. The merchants are right there on the doorstep at the entrance to their poppy fields to buy it.²⁸⁵

Khun Sa acknowledged narcotics as an obstacle for Shan independence, yet at the same time, accepted the inevitability of opium cultivation in the Shan State. This suggests that Khun Sa was trying to identify greed, not the opium itself, as the root of the problem.²⁸⁶

Khun Sa understood that for the Shan nationalist movement to gain legitimacy, it needed to be overtly anti-narcotic and this image needed to begin with his own transformation. To further the cause of the Shan nationalist movement, Khun Sa eventually made attempts at erasing his drug lord identity. He projected himself as a nationalist whose enemy was narcotics.

²⁸⁴ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 82.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

I don't grow poppies and I don't deal drugs. I am just my people's servant fighting to win back our lost land. I don't like drugs. I have hated them. For I am well aware of the dangers they pose for human societies. That is why I have offered to help eradicate them; ever since 1977, with a six-year plan. This offer still stands.²⁸⁷

The reconstructed identity of the Shan people and armed groups was facilitated by negotiation with international superpowers like the United States. Addressing the U.S., he was quoted to have said that “the real culprits [of the narcotics problem], the KMT, are well protected by you.” In addition, Khun Sa accused the U.S. of letting minorities like the Shan suffer so as not to offend the governments of independent countries which grew and dealt drugs.²⁸⁸ These claims were consistent with his belief that the structure of the Burmese state was the main problem of the ongoing ethnic conflict, and that Shan independence would lead to the eradication of narcotics. Ultimately, the association between drugs and ethno-nationalism significantly diminished during the post-Cold War era, when Yord Serk became the leader of the Shan nationalist movement.²⁸⁹

The above discussion has shown the dynamics of narcotics and narcotics trade during the Cold War. Using the case of Khun Sa and Shan rebel armies as examples, this section has demonstrated the ethno-nationalist underpinnings of the opium cultivation and the narcotics trade. It was shown that the drug trade provided ethnic insurgents financial support for the campaigns. This was tolerated by the Thai state out of its own political and economic interests. However, amidst an international community that has grown more intolerant of narcotics, Khun Sa had to reconstruct

²⁸⁷ Boonyawongwiwat, *op. cit.*, 85.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

Shan identity that reflected such a stance in order to afford legitimacy to the Shan nationalist movement.

The context of Khun Sa and the “ethno-narcotic politics” along the Thai-Shan border prompts a reconsideration of Thai nation building from the late 1970s which dealt significantly with the eradication of opium cultivation in northern Thailand. What, if any, were the assumptions made by the Thai state when it carried out its nation-building policies?

The monarchical nation

This section focuses on the “monarchical nation” that emerged during the premiership of General Prem Tinsulanonda. The ensuing discussion proceeds in two parts. First, this section characterizes the Thai political context from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. It emphasizes what Andreas Sturm terms as “the revival of monarchical nationalism.” Second, this section looks into the Royal Project as a study of “monarchical nation building.” The aim of this section is to demonstrate the nature of Thai nation-building during the latter part of the Cold War.

The previous chapter discussed the resurgence of the monarchy beginning with the Thai Counterinsurgency Era. It was explained that popular dissatisfaction with the authoritarian military regime, along with the royal family’s participation in the civic action programs of the Border Patrol Police, led the military government to flounder and the monarchy to flourish. However, the actual “revival” of monarchical nationalism, so Sturm suggests, commenced in 1980 with the premiership of palace loyalist Prem Tinsulanonda. What distinguishes the Prem regime from its

predecessors? Why does Sturm associate it with the revival of monarchical nationalism?

As discussed in the previous chapter, *monarchical nationalism* is a type of cultural nationalism in which the monarchy has more active political power. This contrasts with *royal nationalism* in which the monarchy plays a mere symbolic role, which the state uses to further its own interests. By the 1980s, a monarchical nation based on the ideas of King Bhumibol was adapted to fit the system of constitutional monarchy. This monarchical nation had three main dimensions. It was a trans-ethnic community; a self-sufficient community; and a moral community. The monarchical nation saw King Bhumibol's active dissemination of his own views of the nation aided by cultural symbols and traditions.²⁹⁰ These shall be explored below.

The Prem government

The premiership of General Prem Tinsulanonda beginning in 1980 marks two significant changes in Thai politics. First, the government granted amnesty to members of the Communist Party of Thailand through Prime Ministerial Order 66/2523. This signified a shift in the Thai state's policies against communism from a military to a political approach. The amnesty can also be considered an indicator of the Thai state's perception of communist as a threat. Second, the King had fully eclipsed military dominance in Thai politics. This is to say that the Thai nation was being reshaped in accordance to the monarch's own vision.

²⁹⁰ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 207.

With regards to the Shan or Tai Yai (and other *phu phlat thin* from Burma) along the Thai-Burmese border, Prem's government enforced more stringent policies. Most notably, it was during Prem's second year in office that the notorious Khun Sa had been removed from Thai territory. Since Thailand's earlier complacency towards *phu phlat thin* along the Thai-Burmese border was straining relations between the two countries, General Prem visited Burma from 24-26 July 2523 upon the military government's invitation. Three key problems were brought up in his negotiations with the Burmese leader.²⁹¹

The Thai policies towards *phu phlat thin* were as follows. First, the Thai government made it clear that it never supports the activities of insurgency groups or *phu phlat thin* associated with these rebel forces. Second, the Thai government would not grant legal status to ordinary *phu phlat thin*, and any aid to them would be done solely on the basis of human rights and shall not exceed the level of necessity. Third, Thailand would regulate *phu phlat thin* from Burma and prohibit political activity and movement, which may affect both the security of Thailand and Thai-Burmese relations. Finally, it would do its best to protect Thai citizens along the border. In case of violation to Thai sovereignty, the Thai government shall resolve the incident on the local level.²⁹²

Regarding the suppression of rebel forces and narcotics, the most notable policy of the Prem government towards the *phu phlat thin* had to do with the expulsion of Khun Sa and the crackdown of his forces. The Thai government

²⁹¹ The key problems are as follows: problem of suppressing narcotics; the problem of ethnic minorities which arise from conflict; and the problem of peace and order along the Thai-Burmese border. Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 260.

²⁹² Ibid., 261. Kaise, *op. cit.*, 32.

expressed its intention to eliminate drugs, which were dangerous to the people of the nation. The first step was to wipe out large targets that produce and sell narcotics. Doing so would uphold the sanctity of the Thai law and sovereignty of the nation.²⁹³ As mentioned above, Ban Hin Taek was an anomaly because it served as the base of Khun Sa and his Shan United Army *inside* Thai territory.

Even after the expulsion of Khun Sa's forces from Thailand, the government ordered precautionary measures against possible retaliation. In addition, the Thai government continued to deploy voluntary armed forces and the border police in the area. Authorities would then be tasked to develop the area and help victims of the conflict. Volunteers would then report to these authorities about conflict-related incidents. This operation was expected to ensure that Ban Hin Taek and surrounding areas would return to normal.²⁹⁴

Regarding narcotics in particular, an agreement between Thailand and Burma was reached. First, both countries agreed to closely exchange news or information about narcotics through each country's ambassador. Next, Burma was expected to stop the transport of opium from its northern region to produces of narcotics along the Thai-Burmese border. Thailand, on the other hand, was expected to prevent the transport of chemicals needed in heroin to narcotics "factories" along the border. Accordingly, each country was to carry out the elimination of heroin factories in its territory and cooperate in each other's effort to do so. Finally, the two countries agreed on collaborating in the realm of research, through the exchange of knowledge

²⁹³ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 265.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.

and experience of treatment [*kan bam bat raksa*], protection [*kan pong kan*], suppression [*kan prap pram*], and crop replacement [*kan pluk pheut thot thaen*].²⁹⁵

The *phu phlat thin* and insurgents, together with the narcotics production and trade, along the Thai-Burmese border constitute just part of issues that troubled the Thai state at the time. Among these problems, General Prem identified two threats that needed the most urgent response: the Communist Party of Thailand, and a lack of state ideology.

General Prem found the solution in a new generation of soldiers who questioned the role of the military after the events of 1976. These groups were the Young Turks [*khana thahan num*], and the Democratic Soldiers [*thahan prachatipatai*].²⁹⁶ The Young Turks believed that change would only be possible if the state understands the problems of the people and tackles social and economic inequality. Meanwhile, the Democratic Soldiers believed that political extremism, whether it was for communism or fascism, threatened national security. Accordingly, this latter group proposed a democratic revolution [*patiwat prachatipatai*] to rebuild democracy and create a new approach to cultural policy. More importantly, the Democratic Soldiers envisioned an active role for the monarchy.²⁹⁷

Prem followed the ideas of these progressive officers for two reasons. The first reason was his close relationship with them. Second, coming from his own experience as Commander-in-Chief of the Second Army Region in the Isan region (from 1973 to

²⁹⁵ Burutphat, *op. cit.*, 266-267.

²⁹⁶ The Young Turks consisted of mostly experienced frontline commanders stationed in the provinces of Thailand. On the other hand, the Democratic Soldiers consisted mainly of military men in strategic and command positions.

²⁹⁷ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 212.

1979), Prem understood the need for a political solution to the problems of the local people. Having recognized that communist infiltration was rooted in the local population, Prem decided that the first step was to win over the Thai people.²⁹⁸ Prem's emphasis on political solutions to the country's problems was best exemplified by Order 66/2523.

Prime Ministerial Order No. 66/2523 detailed a counterinsurgency policy that stressed the priority of political approaches over military actions to suppress the Communist Party of Thailand. It laid down operational guidelines, such as the elimination of social and economic injustices, promotion of political participation, the promotion of democratic institutions and movements, and assurance of political freedom. In short, the order made it clear that building full democracy was the only means to defeat communism.²⁹⁹ Over the next few years following the Order, 26,000 members of the CPT defected and contributed heavily to its dissolution towards the end of the 1980s.³⁰⁰

How did the Prem government facilitate the “revival” of the monarchical nation? Andreas Sturm argues that “the influence of a king in a constitutional monarchy depends very much on the space given by the state and its representatives.” How a monarch envisions a society would be meaningless “unless the leaders of the state allowed him a voice, adopted his ideas and helped to disseminate them within the population.” The government of General Prem afforded King Bhumibol more

²⁹⁸ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 212-213.

²⁹⁹ R.J. May and Viberto Selochan, eds., *The Military and Democracy in Asia and the Pacific* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2004), 53.

³⁰⁰ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 213.

“active political power,” thereby facilitating the full transformation of the Thai nation and Thai nationalism from *royal* to *monarchical*.³⁰¹

King Bhumibol's nation

The Prem administration provided the platform for the development of monarchical nationalism and supported its revival.³⁰² What vision of the Thai nation was it a platform for? Sturm posits four factors that shaped King Bhumibol's world-view and his understanding of the Thai nation and Thai nationalism. First, owing to his upbringing, the King was said to have a down-to-earth attitude and practical orientation, which influenced his understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the monarch.³⁰³ Second, disregard by the ruling elite led by Plaek Phibunsongkhram convinced the young monarch “to carve out a niche for himself.” For King Bhumibol, the monarchy and the people had a symbiotic relationship in the face of a dominant state.³⁰⁴

The third factor proposed by Sturm was the King's own belief in the importance of the monarchy for Thailand. Accordingly, King Bhumibol saw himself as having a central role in nation building as did his predecessors. The King regularly conducted ceremonies to honor his ancestors, thereby connecting his reign to past reigns.³⁰⁵ Lastly, the King believed that traditions were the source of the Thai nation's

³⁰¹ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 211.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁰³ King Bhumibol was interested in science from childhood and enjoyed practical work. In addition, “he was not trained in court matters and had to study for himself court traditions and traditional concepts of kingship.” See Sturm, *op. cit.*, 215.

³⁰⁴ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 215-216.

³⁰⁵ An example of these ceremonies was one held at the beginning of the two-hundredth year anniversary of the Chakri Dynasty. In this ceremony, Buddha statues belonging to the royal ancestors

strength. His idea of traditions, however, did not mean a return to outmoded practices. The King state that “[t]raditional doesn’t mean old-fashioned. Even the most modern people have tradition [...] We take old traditions and reconstruct them to be used in the present time and in the future.”³⁰⁶

In an interview with the BBC in 1980, the King mentioned traditional elements of the king’s duty.

The first thing is security, that is the security of the people, the Thai people have to fight for their freedom, for their independence, so the main thing is to be a good general, and then after that, when the country is more settled is to have law and order, law and administration, and after that we must have enough food to eat, enough facilities, to have a good home, to have shelter. And then we must have the social order and more things of the heart, that means we must be good people, so that we won’t have disorder because people who are good don’t create much trouble. So we must have religion. But the king is the leader of the religion also.³⁰⁷

Sturm considers the above statement as the King’s blueprint for his vision of the Thai nation, given the context of the fight against communism.

A critical feature of King Bhumibol’s monarchical nation was its being a self-sufficient community. The core of this self-sufficient community was the agricultural sector with the farmer as “the backbone of Thailand.” He believed that if this “backbone” were weak, the whole country would suffer. Failure in the agricultural sector would lead to instability, conflict and unhappiness for the people. It was therefore imperative that the livelihood of the rural population be improved.³⁰⁸

were set on a barge-like throne underneath the Royal Nine-tiered Umbrella [*Noppaphadon Mahasawettachat*], and the urns containing the ashes of the eight kings of the Chakri dynasty and of other royalty were placed on the Royal Throne. See Sturm, *op. cit.*, 216.

³⁰⁶ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 217.

³⁰⁷ BBC Written Archives, 5 January 1980, 18. Quoted in Sturm, *op. cit.*, 217-218.

³⁰⁸ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 223.

To create a self-sufficient community, the King did not favor industrial development because it meant an increase in Thailand's dependence on foreign countries. He stated that a large industrial business usually depends on imported materials and technology from abroad to use in production. Instead, Thais must consider relying on what they have in their country. Self-sufficiency would make Thai society less vulnerable to global market developments and stabilize the country.³⁰⁹

In a 1986 speech, the King underscored the compatibility of self-sufficiency with Thai culture:

We should continue to help ourselves with our own strength and our own wealth. For a long time, we Thais have helped create stability and progress in every aspect by our own strength therefore we should continue to help ourselves with our own strength and our own wealth because nowadays Thailand is still full of resources, both natural and human which is very useful for the prosperity and stability of the country.³¹⁰

The emphasis on the local villagers' role in developing the Thai nation can be considered an effective way of integrating an otherwise marginalized population. Sturm argues that King Bhumibol's monarchical nationalism had a political agenda. It sought to stabilize Thai society by making the people happy and prosperous. At this time, it sought to strength Thai society by encouraging the use of "local wisdom" or traditional knowledge.³¹¹ In other words, King Bhumibol's nationalism sought to stabilize and strengthen the Thai nation from the grassroots up.

³⁰⁹ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 224.

³¹⁰ Bhumibol Adulyadej, [Collections of Royal Speeches Given on Several Occassions in 1986] (Bangkok, 2007): 475. Quoted in Sturm, *op. cit.*, 225.

³¹¹ Sturm, *op. cit.*, 255.

The Royal Project

Sturm designates the King's New Year speech on 31 December 1981 as the "official" beginning of the revival of monarchical nationalism (and the monarchical Thai nation). This is because the elements of the speech became the guideline for many government policies and were reflected in many official declarations and speeches. More importantly, he argues that best proof for the revival of monarchical nationalism was the exponential rise of the number of royal projects after 1980.³¹² The succeeding discussion looks into the Royal Project as a cornerstone of the monarchical Thai nation.

While the Prem government proved to be successful against Thai insurgents, it faced the pressure to introduce crop substitution to the hill tribes. By then the Royal Project was already on its second stage, which concentrated on applying its research (conducted from 1969 to around 1978) on highland agriculture and the replacement of opium with cash crops.³¹³ From the mid-1970s onwards, efforts had been made to dissuade hill tribes from opium growing and slash-and-burn cultivation.³¹⁴

King Bhumibol himself refused to penalize the opium-growing hill tribes. Instead, he prioritized persuading them to grow alternative crops which would become more profitable. Numerous projects were launched to support this. The king also acknowledged the limits of his projects, having said that "[a]ll the project can do

³¹² Sturm, *op. cit.*, 218.

³¹³ The history of the Royal Project can be divided into three periods. The first period (1969 to 1978) focused on research on highland agriculture. The second period (1978 to 1985) concentrated on the application of research. The third period (1985 to present [2007]) was dedicated to improving Royal Project operations and management. In sum, the three periods can be labelled as the periods of: "research," "development," and "improvement" respectively. See *The Peach and the Poppy: The Story of Thailand's Royal Project* (Chiang Mai: Highland Research and Development Institute, 2007), 138.

³¹⁴ Cooper, *op. cit.*, 292.

is, not to stop, but to improve the situation.”³¹⁵ As discussed in the previous section on Khun Sa and the Shan, the opium issue was not simple and its eradication required, at the very least, infrastructure that made growing other crops more practicable.

King Bhumibol’s rural visits increased dramatically in 1962. However, it was not until 1968 that King Bhumibol made his first visit to a hill tribe village.³¹⁶ The hostile natural environment as well as the remoteness of these villages explain the “late” visit. In addition, it was considered dangerous for the King to travel in the north as about 35 of the 71 provinces of the Kingdom had been classified as “communist infested” and many of them were located in hill tribe villages. Accordingly, that the King would visit hill tribe people, who were suspicious in the eyes of the government, was met with resistance. Eventually, the King would learn about Doi Pui, a Hmong village just a fifteen-minute walk away from the Phu Ping Palace in Chiang Mai.³¹⁷

The Hmong at Doi Pui, living at high elevation, grew opium. At the same time, some of the Hmong farmers cultivated a local variety of a peach tree, which caught the interest of King Bhumibol. While many Hmong families earned more from growing these peaches than they did from growing poppy, the overall income from poppy was greater than that from the peach on a *rai-to-rai* basis. However, the income from either crop did not differ greatly. This local peach variant came to be identified as “the best candidate for exceeding the income earned from opium.”³¹⁸

³¹⁵ *The Soul of a Nation*; BBC post-production script, written by Leo Aylen, produced by Bridget Winter. Quoted in Cooper, *op. cit.*, 293.

³¹⁶ *The Peach and the Poppy*, 127.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

King Bhumibol also understood the environmental role trees play: preventing erosion and watershed degradation. Thus, the peach tree became more than just a replacement for opium. It became a reflection of the self-sufficient community the King had envisioned for the Thai nation. “The peach tree promised to be the solution to the problem of poverty, environmental degradation and drug-production, all at the same time.” The Royal Project was thus born at Dou Pui.³¹⁹

The Royal Project was founded on three objectives. First, it sought to improve hill-tribe living conditions. Second, it aimed at solving the problem of heroin. Finally, it sought to prevent slash-and-burn cultivation.

Help for the hill-tribes and the Hill-Tribes Development Project has given direct benefits to the tribes by helping them to grow useful crops and enabling them to have a better standard of living. One of the reasons underlying the creation of the project was humanitarianism; the desire that the people living in remote areas should become self-supporting and more prosperous. Another reason, and which has received support from all sides, was to solve the problem of heroin... a further reason which is very important is that, as is well known, the hill-tribes are people who use agricultural methods which, if left unchecked, could bring the country to ruin. In other words, they cut down trees and practice ‘slash-and-burn’ methods which are totally wrong. If we help them, it is tantamount to the country in general having a better standard of living and security.³²⁰

This Royal Address demonstrates the foresight the King had with regards to his Project. He understood that helping the hill-tribes such as the Hmong had rippling effects, not least important of which was environmental.

From around 1977 to 1985, the Royal Project was primarily concerned with the implementation of the results of the project’s research conducted since its inception. With this goal, “development areas” were established. A development area

³¹⁹ *The Peach and the Poppy*, 130.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

comprised a number of villages, as well the surrounding farmland, with a population of about a few hundred to five thousand families. In addition, a “development center,” which provided services to the families in the area, was built. Development centers functioned as a channel to demonstrate new crops and to help coordinate land development or improving water supply. These centers were also tasked with coordinating with different agencies working in the same area, and provided a center for social, health and education workers assigned to the area.³²¹

The above discussion is based upon the official account of the Royal Project Foundation. However, some scholars like Charles Keyes contend that policies towards the hill tribes have been based on misperception. “The policies presumed that most hill peoples were recent illegal immigrants, that they cultivated opium poppies, and had few ties to Thai peoples.”³²² In addition, state officials and developmental workers misunderstood certain cultural practices of the hill tribes. For instance, shifting cultivation was equated with the slash-and-burn techniques which caused deforestation, and so shifting cultivation had to be curtailed. Furthermore, Chayan Vaddhanaphuti argues that the introduction of cash crops resulted in the hill farmers’ reliance on chemical fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides. This then led to soil depletion and water pollution.³²³

The success of the Royal Project lay not only in replacing opium cultivation but in promoting monarchical nationalism. How is the examination of the Royal

³²¹ *The Peach and the Poppy*, 145.

³²² Charles F. Keyes, “Cultural Diversity and National Identity in Thailand”, in *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and Pacific*, edited by Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 197–232. Quoted in Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, “The Thai State and Ethnic Minorities: From Assimilation to Selective Integration” in *Ethnic Conflicts in Southeast Asia*, eds. W. Scott Thompson and Kusuma Snitwongse (Singapore: ISEAS, 2005), 158.

³²³ Vaddhanaphuti, *op. cit.*, 158-159.

Project useful in understanding the Thai State's perception of the Shan? This shall be explored in the final section.

Analysis

What was the Thai state's perception of the Shan people during the latter phase of the Cold War? This chapter argues that the Thai state's perception of the Shan, during the period in focus, was reflected in its policy towards them, specifically towards Khun Sa. In this case, the Shan were perceived as a narcotics threat. In turn, this perception justified monarchical nation-building, which was focused on creating a self-sufficient community. Ultimately, Thai nation-building from this period on would lead Khun Sa and the Shan to reconstruct their identity. The ensuing discussion looks into the Thai state's perception of the Shan within the context of the Thai nation's transformation into a monarchical nation.

As mentioned earlier, the royal projects skyrocketed after 1980, during the Prem regime. Meanwhile, from the mid-1970s until his expulsion from Ban Hin Taek in 1982, Khun Sa used Thai territory as his base of operations. As Thailand, Burma and the international community became more intolerant of narcotics and the narcotics trade, the Thai state would perceive Khun Sa as no more than a criminal.

By the King's own initiatives, as well as through a military regime that was willing to empower the monarchy, the Thai nation transformed into a monarchical nation by the end of the Thai Counterinsurgency Era. This transformation was specifically made possible by the Prem regime's less militant and more political approach to problems afflicting the country, not least of which was the Communist

Party of Thailand. In addition, the Prem regime provided a platform for the dissemination of monarchical nationalism—that is King Bhumibol’s own vision of the Thai nation. As mentioned above, the King’s notion of the Thai nation was one that was trans-ethnic, self-sufficient, and moral.³²⁴ This realization of this vision of the Thai nation, particularly as a self-sufficient community, was best demonstrated by the Royal Project.

The Royal Project aimed at curbing, and eventually eradicating, opium cultivation which was prevalent in hill tribe villages in the north of Thailand. Concomitant to this goal was the aim to improve the lives of these otherwise marginalized peoples who had yet to be integrated into mainstream Thai society. As discussed above, the Royal Project was not only concerned with eliminating the source of drugs itself, but with guaranteeing long-term, sustainable solutions to people living in remote areas. For example, the King realized that apart from its economic and political benefits the replacement of the opium crop with the peach tree also promised benefits to the environment as planting trees helped against soil erosion. Tapping into these remote villages could therefore be seen as a move to promote the monarchical Thai nation.

This research has shown a shift in the Thai state’s policies towards the Shan from the earlier to the latter part of the Cold War. During the period of military dominance (1948 to 1963), the Thai state’s policies were more focused on supporting remnants of the Kuomintang who were occupying the Shan State. The following period, referred to in this thesis as the middle phase of the Cold War, saw a shift in the

³²⁴ Sturm, *op. cit.*

Thai state's policies towards the Shan. At the time, the Thai state tolerated the presence of rebel forces along the Thai-Burmese border in order to sustain its buffer against communism. At the same time, it was providing aid to the ordinary *phu phlat thin*. Finally, from 1978 onwards the Thai state turned about-face and began driving out rebel forces from its borderlands.

Accordingly, the Thai state's perception of the Shan can be derived from these policies. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Thai state's perception of the Shan during the period of the military triumvirate was focused on the Shan State's role as a buffer zone. Moreover, this perception was largely based on the Thailand's adoption of the American policy at the time, which supported KMT remnants occupying the Shan state. In Chapter 3, it was shown that the Thai state's perception of the Shan people along the Thai-Burmese border was that of an anti-communist backwater. This supplemented the policy of building a human border. Finally, the current chapter has shown that due to their association with Khun Sa, the Shan were perceived by the Thai state as an ethno-narcotic group and a threat to the Thai nation.

What then was the relationship between the shift in the Thai state's perception of the Shan with the shift in these policies? The shift of the Thai state's perception of the Shan from first being part of the communist threat to becoming a narcotics threat, reflected the shift in the Thai state's policies towards the Shan from the earlier to the later part of the Cold War. These policies, in turn, reflected the significant transformations of the Thai nation during the Cold War.

CONCLUSION

Each chapter of this thesis has discussed the Thai state's perception of the Shan during a specific period during the Cold War, namely: the earlier (1948 to 1963); the middle (the 1963 to 1976); and the latter (1973 to 1988) parts. It was shown how the Thai state's perception of the Shan shifted from the State to the people, and how the Thai state's understanding of the Shan as a threat changed from the paradigm of communism to narcotics. There were due to the eventual consolidation of territorial boundaries and the need to establish "human borders." The necessity of the latter indicated that albeit definite, territorial boundaries were permeable.

To identify the Thai state's perception of the Shan, each chapter has talked about the historical and political context of the period in focus and the Thai state's policies towards the Shan. Moreover, the main arguments of each chapter have addressed the research objectives and have contributed an explanation to the main hypotheses of this research and an answer to each of the main research questions.

The first research objective was to analyze how the Thai state's perception of the Shan affected the Thai state's policies towards the Shan during the Cold War period. It was found that that the Thai state's perception reflected its policies. In other words, the two remained consistent with each other. Both the Thai state's policies towards and perception of the Shan were influenced by political context at the time. For example, during the earlier part of the Cold War, the Thai state's perception of the Shan State as a buffer frontier reflected its policy of supporting remnants of the Kuomintang who were occupying the Shan State. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Thai state's policy and by extension its perception of the Shan, was influenced by

American involvement in Southeast Asia following the defeat of Nationalist China and the outbreak of the Korean War.

In addition, Chapter 3 has addressed the first research objective by looking into the Thai state's perception of the Shan and other ethnic minorities from Burma along the Thai-Burmese border. It was discussed that the harrowing conditions in Socialist Burma brought about the evacuation of ethnic minorities like the Shan. The Shan, particularly rebel forces, who were permitted to operate along the border area were perceived as a buffer against communism. This was reflected in the Thai state's lenient policy towards them. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this lenient policy towards rebel forces along the border supplemented the Thai state's strategy to build a human border through the Border Patrol Police. It was not until 1978 that the Thai state—in hopes of dispelling the Burmese government's suspicions—decided to drive out rebel forces from the borderlands.

In Chapter 4, the Thai state's perception of the Shan as an ethno-narcotic group reflected its policy of driving out ethnic rebel forces from the borderlands. The most notable case, which was discussed in Chapter 4, was that of Khun Sa. In 1982, General Prem Tinsulanonda ordered the raid of Ban Hin Taek in Chiang Rai where Khun Sa and his forces had been operating for six years. Following the expulsion of Khun Sa, Thai authorities then sought to rehabilitate Ban Hin Taek and the surrounding areas. One of the steps was to rename it to Ban Thoed Thai, which means “uplifting Thais.”

The second research objective was to examine the extent to which the construction of the Thai state's perception of the Shan influenced the Thai nationalist

narratives. It was found that throughout the Cold War period, the Thai state's perception of the Shan reinforced the narrative of being under threat. In turn, the notion of being under threat justified these nationalist narratives. In the earlier part of the Cold War, the Thai state's perception of the Shan State as a buffer frontier signified that there was a threat—the expansion of communism from the north. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this provided the ruling politico-military elite a pretext to consolidate their power bases.

Chapter 3 has shown that the threat of communism was present, and became even more alarming, during the middle part of the Cold War era. Communist insurgencies were mushrooming within Thailand. Meanwhile, the political situation in Burma specifically the Shan State had further deteriorated, leading its people to flee to the borders. During this part of the Cold War, the Thai state's perception of the Shan people as an anti-communist buffer also reinforced the idea of being under threat. Hence, this perception justified the Thai nationalist narrative, which was becoming more fixed on the importance of the monarchy.

Similarly, Chapter 4 has shown that the Thai state's perception of the Shan as an ethno-narcotic group signified a threat to the Thai nation. However, during this part of the Cold War, the threat shifted from communism to drugs. A key indicator of this shift was Prime Ministerial Order 66/2523 which granted amnesty to members of the Communist Party of Thailand and which indicated a more political approach to the suppression of communism. By contrast, the expulsion of Khun Sa from Ban Hin Taek through military means can be understood as reflection of the Thai state's attitude towards narcotics. Accordingly, the narcotics threat fed the Thai nationalist

narrative at the time, which revolved around an active monarch who was trying to build a self-sufficient Thai nation from the grassroots up.

The third objective of this thesis was to study the impact of the Thai state's nation-building efforts on the Shan nationalist movement during the Cold War. It was found that during the earlier and middle phases of the Cold War, the Thai state's efforts to stave off communism required tacit support for the Shan, who were struggling against the Burmese government.

For instance, Chapter 2 has shown that support for KMT remnants in the Shan State opened the door for ethnic insurgent groups to gain access to weapons and the means to fund their respective causes. Moreover, in Chapter 3 it was shown that the Thai state's toleration of *phu phlat thin* and ethnic rebel forces along the Thai-Burmese border was a form of indirect support for their cause. However, this would change during the latter part of the Cold War, when the Thai state refused to tolerate the presence of rebel forces in the border area partly in order to improve relations with neighboring Burma.

This research has made three hypotheses about the Thai state's perception of the Shan state and people during the Cold War. Below is a summary of how these hypotheses have been corroborated in the earlier chapters.

First, **even though the Shan was perceived as being involved in the narcotics trade during the Cold War, the Thai state tolerated their assumed involvement for the sake of fighting communism.** This is corroborated mainly by the discussions in Chapters 2 and 3, which cover the earlier and middle part of the Cold War. From 1948 to 1963, the Thai state tolerated the narcotics trade originating

in the Shan State not only because it provided support to the remnants of the KMT, but also because the local Thai elite, most especially Phao Sriyanon, benefited from it economically and politically. From 1963 to 1976, the black market along the Thai-Burmese border brought about by the failure of the Burmese Way to Socialism invited displaced minorities from Burma and ethnic rebel forces to settle in the area. This was welcome to Thai state as their presence along the border area was seen as means to preclude communist expansion.

Second, this thesis has argued that **the Thai state's perception of the Shan reaffirmed the assumed superiority of the Thai nation and emphasized the importance of the monarchy in the Cold War Thai nationalist narrative.** This hypothesis was corroborated mainly by the discussions in Chapters 3 and 4, which studied the middle and latter parts of the Cold War respectively. From 1963 to 1976, the military regime in Thailand was losing its grip while the monarchy was making a resurgence most notably through its collaboration with the Border Patrol Police. Around this time, it can be said that the Thai national narrative that stressed the monarchy's importance was amplified by the situation along and across the Thai-Shan border. Moreover, from 1976 to 1988, the Shan people was strongly identified with narcotics by virtue of their association with the notorious drug warlord, Khun Sa. Meanwhile, the Thai state under the monarchical nationalism of King Bhumibol was earnestly working against narcotics.

Finally, this thesis has argued that **the shift of the Thai state's perception of the Shan from first being part of the communist threat to becoming a narcotics threat, reflected the shift in the Thai state's policies towards the Shan from the**

earlier to the latter part of the Cold War. The Thai state was mainly concerned with the communist threat during the earlier and middle parts of the Cold War. Thus, its perception of the Shan as a threat was limited within this paradigm. A significant marker of the shift in was the “revival” of the monarchical nation through King Bhumibol’s initiatives like the Royal Project and the loyal cooperation of the Prem government which itself had a less militant approach to nation-building. In Chapter 4, the research has found that the case of Khun Sa and the Thai state’s policies towards him was consistent with the Thai nation’s transformation under the more involved King Bhumibol and the Thai state’s greater focus on fighting drugs.

This thesis concludes that the shifts in the Thai state’s perception of the Shan indicate significant developments in the Thai national narrative and in the identification of the Thai nation’s enemies.

Recommendations

For future research, it would be useful to collect more primary data pertaining to Thailand’s policies towards Burma, the Shan State and the narcotics trade during the Cold War. It would be helpful to explore a wide variety of primary data such as news articles, memoirs or journals. In addition, this study suggests a more comprehensive analysis of the Burmese state, particularly its policies towards Thailand and Cold War superpowers. Finally, this study recommends looking into the Thai state’s policies and nation-building programs that were specifically concerned with the Shan or Tai Yai during the Cold War.

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