

UNDERSTANDING TERRITORIAL DISPUTES:  
CASE STUDIES REGARDING THE DISPUTES BETWEEN ECUADOR AND PERU,  
BELIZE AND GUATEMALA, INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA, AND LAOS AND  
THAILAND

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Understanding Territorial Disputes: Case Studies Regarding the Disputes Between Ecuador and Peru, Belize and Guatemala, Indonesia and Malaysia, and Laos and Thailand

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Jana Everett

### **ABSTRACT**

“Of all the social processes, conflict is perhaps the most universal and potentially the most dangerous. A feature of every society and every form of relationship, conflict can be found at all levels of human interaction, from sibling rivalry to genocidal warfare (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004).”

The purpose of conflict management study is to determine how to manage and resolve these destructive events. Due to the pervasiveness of conflict, the stakes for success are extremely high. Failure results in catastrophic results that can plague the world system over time. International actors must become better at resolving disputes.

Resolution is certainly an extremely important aspect to conflict management. Unfortunately, many policy makers have treated resolution as a first step to conflict management. While it is easy to want to work immediately towards resolution, a lack of understanding can undermine efforts. In fact, without an adequate understanding of the history and events that shaped the dispute, how can we sustain resolution? The first step to appropriate conflict management is to thoroughly understand the attitudes that shape the dispute. Additionally, it is important to understand if resolution is even possible. By taking a more thoughtful and balanced approach, resolution will become more realistic and sustainable.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Jana Everett

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**CHAPTER I**  
**INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TERRITORIAL**  
**DISPUTES**

Conflict management is a growing field within political science discourse and may be one of the more applicable subfields. Due to shared borders and history, regional conflicts between states represent a significant portion of issues facing the international community. Jacob Bercovitch and Judith Fretter (2004) documented some 343 regional conflicts between 1945 and 2004. The most prominent catalysts for these conflicts were security (27.7% of all conflicts), territorial (22.7%), and ethnicity (21.9%) (Id). Territorial catalysts represent a significant portion of these conflicts and are, therefore, an important area of study. 66.5% of the conflicts discovered by Bercovitch and Fretter were interstate conflicts. 33.5% of such conflicts were civil conflicts. Not only are territorial conflicts salient, but interstate conflicts represent a majority of the issues that have arisen. This thesis focuses on interstate territorial disputes in order to better understand why they arose, what sustained the dispute, and how the dispute was resolved, if applicable. The most common approaches to examining past conflicts has relied heavily on the theoretical underpinning of realism, which studies the use of force, power, and relative gains. Unfortunately, military force and warfare have only produced a small percentage of clear victors, 15% to be precise, in the disputes highlighted by Bercovitch and Fretter (Id). As such, this approach to managing conflict has not achieved an acceptable level of success. Accordingly, this is an important issue for political scientist to investigate and seek to better understand.

Territorial integrity is a highly salient matter between nation-states. One of the most influential world events that have resulted in increased territorial conflicts has been the Western

export of the nation-state through colonialism. This has certainly been the case in disputes and territorial claims between Ecuador and Peru, Belize and Guatemala, Laos and Thailand, and Indonesia and Malaysia on the Island of Borneo. It is important to explore these case studies with these three different theories to ensure a well rounded analysis. The differences of each case study will help showcase the strengths and weaknesses of each theory and will help in determining if any theory is dominant. All of these disputes evolved due to the presence, influence, and the political vacuum left by colonial powers. The colonial legacies were often defined by porous and undefined borders within previous colonial “economic regions”, which often created instability as post colonial countries became independent and developed into nation-states. These realities created circumstances ripe for diplomatic rifts and military conflict.

### **Background on Territorial Disputes**

Due to the enormous consequences of regional conflicts, conflict management and resolution perspectives must be further explored in order to better predict and address potential disputes in the future. Some of the costs associated with conflict include, but are not limited to, the loss of life, swells of refugee populations, ecological destruction, loss of economic trade between countries, and the continued investment in military capabilities rather than investment in infrastructure or other domestic needs (Id). The sizable amount of resources spent on conflict, can often be spent more productively and without the significant human costs. Bercovitch and Fretter estimate that in the conflicts they reviewed 25-30 millions lives were lost from 1945-2003 (Id). In 2004, the United Nations estimated there were 21 million refugees worldwide (Id). Refugee populations generally create significant costs to any host nation and often result in these groups living on the periphery of society. Additionally, armed conflicts cost state economies vast sums of resources that may be better allocated to domestic or regional projects that possibly

have more positive and long lasting effects (Id). As the global arena grows increasingly smaller and as resources continue to dwindle, territorial disputes may increase, while existing disputes may become more intense as states seek to diversify expanding economies and satisfy the needs of growing populations.

In much of the past research on this topic, there has not been sufficient use of qualitative studies. In the literature reviewed, quantitative approaches dominated the landscape. Due to this void, it is important to take a qualitative case-study approach to the specific conflicts listed above. This approach allows each theory to be applied to a variety of real world circumstances, hopefully resulting in a more thorough understanding of each theory. A better understanding of these disputes may lead to better management and quicker resolution moving forward. This thesis will also use a comparative case study approach to examine the Ecuadorian/Peruvian, Belizean/Guatemalan, Laotian/Thai, and Indonesian/Malay conflicts.

The field of conflict management can be categorized into the following areas: understanding disputes and conflicts; identifying future disputes; prevention; managing active conflicts; immediate or short term resolution; and sustainable resolution. Among the topics just delineated, this thesis will focus solely on understanding territorial disputes. As noted earlier, this includes exploring what caused the dispute, what factors sustained the dispute, and if the dispute was resolved, what events contributed to the resolution. The three most prominent theories in international relations discourse will be applied in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Each theory will be applied to these case studies in order to determine their contributions to this field. The three most prominent theories include realism, liberalism, and constructivism. In doing so, we will be able to examine how practitioners of these theories may approach these cases studies and how they might explain the events that occurred. Due to the

significant consequences involved with these types of disputes, it is vital that political science attains a firm understanding of these circumstances in order to provide solutions and relevant policy recommendations in the future.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review included herein explores many of the important facets of the complicated realm of territorial conflict management. First, the context of conflict management study in the discourse of international relations is presented. Next, the methods of study will be highlighted in order to understand various research approaches. The infusion of theory into the articles highlights trends common to conflict management study, but also to the more general field of international relations. Furthermore, the importance of this discourse will be demonstrated by the various studies conducted in this genre. Additionally, we will review various tools utilized in pursuing conflict resolution. Lastly, gaps in this discourse will be highlighted in order to determine valuable areas of study moving forward.

The articles reviewed highlight two significant events in recent history that have witnessed substantial spikes in conflict during the wake they produced. These include global decolonization and the Cold War (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004). Only one author, Beth A. Simmons (2003), briefly researched territorial disputes in the pre-WWII era. Furthermore, all of the literature reviewed described territory as one of the most salient characteristic of statehood and as a significant indicator of where military confrontations and war might occur (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004; Kocs, 1995; Tir, 2003; Simmons, 2002; Chiozza and Choi, 2003). All the authors included in this review believe that territory defines the very essence of nation-states. Land mass is valuable for both tangible and intangible reasons. Tangible value may be defined by economic resources and commodities, the strategic interests of land, and as ethnic and cultural

similarities and differences often define natural boundaries (Chiozza and Choi, 2003). Intangible aspects of territories may include areas that are significant for religious or historical reasons. Examples include landmarks, religious monuments, or other significant areas that are regarded as sacred or spiritually important. Regardless of how tangible the value may be, territorial disputes have resulted in deleterious impacts on numerous actors on the international stage.

After reviewing the value of territory, it is also important to explore the research design of past works. In most of the articles reviewed, the unit of analysis focused squarely on the state. Only Giacomo Chiozza and Ajin Choi (2003) explored a different unit of analysis, that being the role of state leaders. In doing so, they explored how the psychological approach to decision making of an individual leader may be affected by how recently s/he took office, the length of his or her tenure, and how past experience affects the likelihood for peaceful resolution or military conflict (Chiozza and Choi, 2003). Accordingly, they were able to provide a more detailed analysis of the circumstances, rather than being more limited in focusing squarely on the state as the sole unitary actor.

Quantitative research was the primary method of all material reviewed. The primary difference was that most sought to define correlation between events with different types of statistics and data, while only one article relied on an explanatory perspective. Stephen A. Kocs (1995) sought to demonstrate that contiguous states were far more likely to experience military conflict than non-contiguous states. His statistical findings demonstrated that conflict is 300 times more likely with contiguous states. Beth A. Simmons (2005) focused on third party arbitration and adjudication. Specifically, she examined what circumstances may influence a state to seek third party resolution, thus voluntarily subjugating its sovereignty. She determined that states might utilize third parties when there is significant value for resolution and when

unilateral and bilateral attempts have failed. Jaroslav Tir (2003) focused on the impacts of territorial transfers regarding peaceful outcomes between territorial winners and losers. He found that only 50% of territorial transfers result in peaceful relationships in the long term. Giacomo Chiozza and Ajin Choi (2003) utilized quantitative processes to analyze the decision making of recently elected officials versus tenured ones. They also sought to understand the decision making of leaders who had experience with conflict or military experience. They defined multiple variables including the type of government of challenger nations, balance of military power between disputants, prior military conflicts, the relevance of common security ties, political unification, and the economic value of the land. Such variables were utilized to test how leaders made decisions with different circumstances in play. The result of their study showed that leaders are more likely to pursue peaceful paths for resolution the longer they are in office. Their findings stated that past military experience does not affect decision making regarding either conflict or peace.

The only research that was not restricted to correlational analysis was the work of Jacob Bercovitch and Judith Fretter (2004). This material appeared to be a mix of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. It appears such because, while they did count all conflicts from 1945 – 2003 and did utilize percentages to categorize various types of conflict, their perspective was explanatory and descriptive. Their project provided the best backdrop for understanding this field in general terms, not just focusing on a specific aspect of conflict management in order to determine a causal relationship.

As noted above, there are numerous aspects to conflict management. While all authors mentioned in this review believe strongly that conflict management study is severely neglected, they all highlight the complexities of this field. One of the most significant contradictions found

within the literature involves determining territorial value. As previously mentioned, tangible and non-tangible land value plays a pivotal role in whether countries seek peaceful solutions or conflict. Jaroslav Tir (2003) believes economically valuable lands are a direct determiner of adversarial and violent outcomes. Tir reached this conclusion by defining a variable he labeled “Power-Value Transform” (the “PVT”) and using measures that influence this variable. PVT is utilized as a control to demonstrate a country’s willingness to relinquish territory or seek to reclaim territory based on the country’s perceived value of the land. His causal analysis demonstrates the greater the PVT, the greater the likelihood for future conflict. He reached this conclusion by developing and comparing both ethnic and economic PVT values, with only economic PVTs resulting in a positive coefficient. Beth A. Simmons supported these conclusions. Her research demonstrated that states are far less likely to comply with the results of third party arbitration or adjudication when the land in question contains substantial natural resources. Accordingly, the economic value of land appears to trump non-tangible values.

In their study of conflicts from 1950-1990, Giacomo Chiozza and Ajin Choi (2003), on the other hand, believe that if the disputed land would divide peoples with ethnic ties, relinquishment of such lands is far less likely than lands that contain economic resources. They stated natural resources and economic assets can more easily be divided and managed through partnerships, cooperatives or other arrangements between disputants. According to Chiozza and Choi, intangible value trumps tangible attributes in the specific instances they studied. All authors agree, however, that geostrategic lands, tangible in nature, represent the most salient of issues to any state. As a result, the understanding and use of conflict management tools may be most crucial regarding geostrategic lands.

Conflict management tools were discussed in three of the articles reviewed. Only the material authored by Jacob Bercovitch and Judith Fretter (2004) explored all of the applicable types of tools at the state's disposal. Beth A. Simmons (2002) and Jaroslav Tir (2003), on the other hand, explored the use of specific conflict management tools. The three primary types of conflict management tools include diplomatic, legal, and political methods (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004). Diplomatic methods include traditional diplomacy, bargaining and negotiation, mediation, observer fact-finding missions, peacekeeping, good offices and shuttle diplomacy, and the use of international organizations as a tool to air grievances. Legal methods attempt to establish international norms and laws through the use of arbitration and adjudication. These methods have legally binding results, but are limited in the enforcement of the outcomes. Legal methods are often seen as a tertiary tool once diplomatic channels have failed (Simmons, 2002). Beth A. Simmons (2002) focused exclusively on legal conflict management tools as she sought to determine what would influence a country to temporarily relinquish sovereignty regarding territorial disputes under the guise of resolution. The final broad category of conflict management tools includes political methods (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004). This approach seeks to create and use organizations and institutions to incorporate state cooperation and to settle disputes when they arise. Tir's (2003) research of territorial transfers transcends both diplomatic and political conflict management tools since territorial transfers are often negotiated bilaterally or with the assistance of international institutions. While several authors emphasize the causes of conflict, notably Stephen A. Kocs, Giacomo Chiozza and Ajin Choi, only a few of the authors focused on how to manage territorial disputes. This appears to be an important area that is understudied in conflict management study.

The most glaring deficiency with the articles reviewed is the lack of the qualitative research method. Without discounting the value of quantitative analysis, many of the topics discussed are left void of answers to questions that cannot be gained through ratios, statistical analysis, or algorithmic equations. All of these studies present large amounts of data that are manipulated through quantitative experiments and tests. But, there is no detailed analysis of specific territorial disputes. Examples of disputes are sprinkled throughout these articles, but they are not subjected to in-depth analysis. Accordingly, it appears that a qualitative perspective, specifically one involving case studies, could provide value to this discourse.

The articles explored in this review have provided substantial insights that have been useful in framing the issues surrounding territorial conflict management. Although insightful, more study must take place in order to thoroughly understand territorial disputes and when they are likely to result in conflict. Through this review, it has been demonstrated there are many factors that lead to territorial disputes. Whether the value of the land is tangible or not plays an important role in the parties' willingness to negotiate and resolve disputes. It is certainly clear that territory is a highly salient matter in the realm of conflict management. With the advent of the state, territory provides economic resources, provides geostrategic protection and aids in the development of national identities. The articles reviewed demonstrate there are many unresolved territorial disputes that exist today. This genre has witnessed many mistakes and successes for researchers to utilize moving forward. One would hope that further research will result in a better grasp of the various perspectives at hand, help develop new and possibly more effective approaches, and create new avenues for avoiding the travesties witnessed in the past.

## **Theoretical Perspectives and Framework**

After reviewing much literature, it became clear the field of conflict management is rooted in realism. “Realists interpret international politics as a never-ending struggle among states for power and security, and they regard war as an unavoidable facet of that struggle (Kocs, 1995).” Bercovitch and Fretter (2004) assume the world is anarchic in nature, but demonstrate that most of the conflicts they researched are solved peacefully through channels of diplomacy and international institutions. Beth A. Simmons’ (2002) emphasis is specific to regional and international institutions that engage in legal arbitration and adjudication. In doing so, she focuses on the value of institutions to resolve territorial disputes, which is an attribute of liberalism. Furthermore, she directly challenges realism. “Realist theory does not offer a good explanation for the decision of states to turn to authoritative third parties to render an arbitral award regarding territory (Id).” She surmises that realists believe states utilize third party intervention only for non-substantive issues. Since territorial integrity is vital to defining a state, states should be unwilling to cede control to a third party arbitrator who is able to make legally binding decisions. But, a states willingness to comply with arbitration or adjudicated decisions is not impacted by the military capabilities of a nation. While not all authors agree with realist perspectives, realism is, at a minimum, a reference point throughout all of the literature reviewed.

In order to understand conflict from a realist perspective, one must first understand the assumptions of this perspective. Realists have established two important characteristics that sculpt their worldview. First, the international arena is a static world of anarchy that is void of any semblance of central governance or perceived order (Reus-Smit, 2009). Second, states, the primary unit of analysis under realism, are rational self-interested entities that seek to ensure

their own survival (Id). Accordingly, states focus on maximizing their relative power, which is generally to the detriment of subservient states. “The relativity of power requires states to be more concerned with relative strength than with absolute advantage (Waltz, 1979).” This approach could lead a state to engaging in conflicts that leave it worse off, as long as the opposing state is left relatively worse off as well. The assumptions and approach of realists have gained much traction over time, especially during the Cold War when conflict abounded.

One of the basic assumptions of realism is that states act in a rational manner. This assumption can become a liability as states do not always appear to be acting rationally. Since realism focuses squarely on the state as the primary actor, this theory struggles to explain domestic influences that are often prevalent in territorial disputes. Due to the assumption of an anarchic world, the realist approach is also relatively weak at explaining social aspects of state relations including long lasting rivalry and friendships between states. This approach views every other state as a threat to its own self interests and is very weary of cooperation and allies of a state. Another flaw of realism is the assumption of perfect information. In order to truly make a rational choice, it is assumed that all information is known and clear. As a result, this often creates credibility issues in the international arena since many actions of state actors are not public and open. Rather states often employ subversive and deceptive tactics to help keep their perceived enemies in balance. Accordingly, how can a state truly behave rationally if it does not know everything about the other various actors that exist on the world stage?

Since liberalism has adopted many of the fundamental principles inherent in neo-realism, this approach falls into many of the same theoretical traps described above. Similarities include the international arena as anarchic and a reliance on states as rational and the primary actors. Differences between these two ideologies emerge due to liberalism’s emphasis on

economic forces and the need for cooperation (Burchill, 2004). As a result, many liberals place great importance on economic markets, trade and resources. These economic resources play heavily on territorial disputes. Another difference between realism and liberalism is states' perceptions of the utility of relative versus absolute gains. In regards to cooperation, liberals believe that states need to cooperate in their pursuit of absolute gains, regardless of any gains of their foes or friends (Keohane, 1988). Since the world arena is premised in anarchy, there are perceived risks associated with cooperation (Id). Institutions, both formal and informal, are vital to initiate and sustain cooperation because they are able to limit risk and ensure that benefits of cooperation outweigh the costs (Id). Examples of formal institutions include international organizations such as the United Nations. Informal institutions are not as structured, but do facilitate cooperation. Institutions are considered highly valuable because they are able to develop and enforce rules that otherwise do not exist in an anarchic world order (Id). Due to the influence of institutions, states often become interdependent and are therefore more aligned with partnership and peace, rather than with adversarial pursuits. Accordingly, liberalists would most likely view conflict as a result of a lack of shared economic integration and a void of formal institutions that could define appropriate behavior for states. They would first seek to work through existing institutions to resolve existing disputes. If no qualified formal institutions existed, liberals would seek to begin development of such organizations. They would state that without the use of this type of cooperation and agreement, conflict in general continues to persist. Finally, they would argue for a strong institutional presence able to oversee the peace and stability that was fomented between disputing states. Since liberalism focuses on institutions and ways to cooperative, it appears more transformative in nature than realism.

A critique of the liberal approach is that this perspective struggles to explain what events resulted in a dispute. Liberalists would attempt to indirectly explain conflict as resulting from a lack of institutionalization. Thus in an anarchic world, conflict naturally occurs due to difference of interests. The only way to prevent such conflict is by establishing the rules to the world order through institutional framework. While this approach is helpful in explaining how states may cooperate, its assumptions limit this theory's ability to explain what shaped a dispute in the first place. Due to its focus on economics, liberalism often ignores many of the other types of events or undercurrents of disputes. While more transformative in nature than realism, a lack of understanding regarding the history and norms that shape conflict is a significant weakness of this theory.

Constructivism is an approach that directly evolved from traditional liberalism. Specifically, Keohane, a founding father of liberalism, describes two types of institutions, formal and informal. Liberal focus has primarily been on formal or specific institutions (Keohane, 1988). Such institutions are organized into institutions that contain binding agreements, rules for participation, and consequences for states that behave improperly (Id). Informal institutions have become the primary unit of analysis for constructivists. Informal institutions include norms, beliefs, ideas, and values. Constructivists believe that norms, beliefs, ideas, and values define the building blocks for how various actors behave on the world stage (Ruggie, 1998). An area where constructivism breaks away from the liberal approach is in regard to the debate between rational and interpretive perspectives. Both realism and liberalism rely solely on rational models and logic to define and understand behavior. Constructivism, on the other hand, assumes that socially acceptable ideas predate and structure the formation of rational preferences by agents. Because preferences are endogenous, the social world needs to be interpreted. This does not

mean that rational choice does not exist, but it is generally thought to be less of an emphasis. In fact, some constructivists believe that it is the understanding of experiences and social patterns that actually explain rational behavior (Checkel, 2001). Ultimately, constructivism seeks to understand the foundation of behaviors that result in realist and liberal assumptions.

Accordingly, constructivism seeks a much deeper understanding of world events.

Constructivism is also the most transformative approach of the three theories discussed in this paper. This approach envisions embarking on the development of a more sustainable world via a more thorough understanding of norms and ideas and subsequent applications.

While constructivism utilizes norms and beliefs to explain world happenings, this approach has struggled to define exactly how to change norms and beliefs (Wendt, 1999). Additionally, due to this approach's reliance on history and past events, it would appear that norms and beliefs take decades to shape or change. Now while there can be significant events that quickly change norms and beliefs, this is rare and often unpredictable as this theoretical perspective relies more on the establishment of norms and beliefs occurring over time. This weakness creates challenges as it relates to disputes and conflict. If a dispute exists, resolution is often time sensitive. It is irresponsible for states to simply wait for norms and beliefs to organically change since the stakes are simply too high. Until constructivism resolves this issue, this approach is severely limited in resolving disputes or conflicts.

### **Methodology**

While it is important to establish a clear theoretical perspective, it is equally important to define a clear research design. Aspects of research design include, but are not limited to the unit of analysis, selection of case studies, methods of collecting data and data analysis. The units of analysis for this research include the actual disputes between these countries. Selection of

adequate and like case studies was important to the validity of this research. Due to the literature reviewed, certain characteristics of the selected disputes defined their relevance. Researchers have demonstrated there have been two major waves of conflict in the past century resulting from colonization and the Cold War era. All of the cases selected are post-colonial states that have dealt with the impacts of their own colonial legacies. In most of the cases studied, conflicts arose immediately after states were granted independence. In all cases, territorial conflicts were a result of conflicting and fluid territorial boundaries often mismanaged or deemed unimportant to the agendas of colonial powers.

Another important criterion for case selection was the geographic nature of the conflicts. Past scholars have demonstrated states are more likely to have conflict if the land is contiguous. Accordingly, it was important to ensure that all cases contained contiguous borders. All of the selected disputes contain land considered part of the home territory of the countries. The Indonesian/Malay conflict could be viewed as the most controversial selection, in light of the criterion described above, as these states are essentially archipelagos. They do, however, share contiguous lands on the Island of Borneo, the third largest island in the world. Encompassing some 287,000 square miles, almost three times the size of Great Britain, and housing three sovereign nation-states, this island is substantial and similar in nature to the other continentally oriented territorial disputes selected for this research.

It also was important to address power-relations between the countries to ensure that disputes were not wholly dominated by the sheer strength of one country. Accordingly, it would have been inappropriate to select countries involved in territorial disputes directly with world powers, especially so if the dispute involved an existing hegemonic power. All of the countries selected were relatively equal from a military standpoint. This was clearly demonstrated in the

Ecuador/Peru conflict that lasted over 150 years. This conflict would not have lasted as long without the balance in power.

In selecting these case studies, it was also important for the underlying causes of these disputes to be similar. The case between Ecuador and Peru is specific to the lack of sovereign territorial access to the Amazon River and the Marañon waterway. Without such access, Ecuador cannot easily access trade or the economic benefits that exist amongst countries from the Eastern portion of South America or by having access to the Atlantic Ocean. Accordingly, this conflict is primarily a resource-based conflict. The Belize/Guatemalan dispute is also centered on resources. Guatemala has made claims to disputed lands in Belize, in some instances to the entire country of Belize, in order to gain increased access to the Atlantic Ocean, which includes mineral deposits and the presence of oil, for economic activities. Unlike the Ecuador/Peru conflict, the Guatemalans claim the lands of Belize are historically and culturally linked to Guatemala. Additionally, Belizean worldview is more Caribbean oriented than it is with Latin American culture. Therefore, the conflict's primary agendas include both economic and cultural disparities that arose from nation-state building and British colonization of these lands. Moreover, both of these conflicts arose in Latin America.

**Table I Latin American Regional Territorial Dispute Case Studies. Dispute types and reasons for the Ecuador/Peru and the Belize/Guatemala disputes.**

	Type of Conflict:	Reason for Conflict:
Ecuador and Peru:	Resource	Access to the Amazon River
Belize and Guatemala:	Resource and Culturally	Access to ancestral lands and the Caribbean Sea

The case studies chosen from Southeast Asia include conflicts between Laos/Thailand and Indonesia/Malaysia. As is the case with the Latin American cases, these conflicts contain

similar characteristics. The territorial dispute between Laos and Thailand involved disputed watershed areas located between the Mae Nam Nan and the Mekong Rivers. The geographic ruggedness of these lands resulted in poorly demarcated borders developed under Colonial rule. Similar to Ecuadoran access to the Amazon River, the watershed represented valuable lands for the economic value associated with access and production. The dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia also included economic resources. Such resources included the minerals, gold and other commodities ready for exploration on Borneo. In addition to the influence of the islands' resources, this dispute also involved cultural realities. Indonesia, on one hand, viewed the Island of Borneo as historically important lands under the control of the Sriwidjaya and Madjapahit Empires (Jones, pp. 19-20). The geographic areas on the northern side of Borneo contained heavy Chinese influences and the population culturally assimilated with Malaysia. Similar to the Guatemalan/Belize dispute, the conflict on Borneo contained economic and cultural influences.

**Table II Southeast Asian Regional Territorial Dispute Case Studies. Dispute types and reasons for the Lao/Thai and the Indonesia/Malaysia disputes.**

	Type of Conflict:	Reason for Conflict:
Lao and Thailand:	Resource	Access to the Mekong River Basin
Indonesia and Malaysia:	Resource and Cultural	Access to Borneo resources and Ethnic Divisions

Lastly, it was important to select disputes that contain different outcomes. In order to appropriately understand varying results, it was important that two of the four cases include disputes that were actually resolved and two which remain unresolved. The Ecuadorian and the Peruvian territorial dispute was resolved, albeit after a 150 period of conflict. Likewise, Indonesia and Malaysia have settled their territorial differences on the island of Borneo. After loss of life and years of tension, Thailand and Laos have failed to officially resolve their

territorial disputes. Guatemala’s claim to Belize, while effectively dormant, has not been resolved either. The difference in outcomes is also an important aspect to understanding disputes in general.

**Table III Regional Territorial Dispute Case Study Summary.**

	Resolved Conflicts:	Unresolved Conflicts:
Resource Based Conflict:	Ecuador and Peru	Laos and Thailand
Resource and Culturally Based Conflict:	Indonesia and Malaysia	Belize and Guatemala

In researching the selected case studies, the primary source of information will be the use of secondary literature describing the events, actors, and various stages of conflict management. Additionally, legal agreements and treaties represent a valuable resource in determining what various agreements described. Many scholars have researched these case studies and their works will be utilized extensively. The role of the researcher will involve objective research and explanations of the many events and characteristics for the disputes. Since the researcher is primarily learning about these disputes through this research, no bias exists regarding the actors involved. One hopes that this will allow for honest exploration of the topics and the ability to rely on the merits of the data collected to better understand the underlying causes and reasons for different outcomes.

The above research design was selected in order to provide detailed insights into specific conflicts that have occurred, that continue today, and for similar conflicts of which we are not yet aware in the international arena. The research design was a result of the findings in the literature reviewed. In approaching a thesis, it is important to ensure such work addresses existing gaps and creates value for political science. Accordingly, this research design seeks to address some of the gaps highlighted in the literature review, which include evoking the

qualitative research method, utilizing similar case studies, and an explanatory approach to the research. The limitations to this style of research are indicative of qualitative research. The resulting thesis will not provide detailed analysis of a broad spectrum of conflicts. While utilizing quantitative statistics, the research conducted will be limited to providing detailed insights about the four conflicts selected. Furthermore, the cases selected have specific characteristics that are difficult to compare to disputes that lack similar characteristics or histories. Conflicts between non-contiguous states, for example, may not resemble the conflicts studied in this paper. While there are limitations to this approach, as is the case with any research, the qualitative approach and overall research design will hopefully provide valuable insights to the study of territorial disputes.



Figure I Map of disputed lands between Ecuador and Peru.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **ECUADORIAN AND PERUVIAN CASE STUDY**

#### **History and Background**

The territorial dispute between Ecuador and Peru is focused on an area that now makes up northern Peru, called the Loreto area in the Condor Mountain range (Bercovitch & Fretter 2004; Simmons, 2005). The disputed border stretches some 883 miles and initially became a source of conflict in 1830 when under Spanish colonial rule Ecuador was annexed from the Greater Colombia (Id). While at one time or another many territorial boundaries have been disputed throughout Latin America, the territorial dispute between Ecuador and Peru has been the most enduring and spanned some 168 years. This conflict has witnessed 34 documented military confrontations over this period (Simmons, 2005). In this region of South America, Spanish colonizers were directly responsible for the territorial ambiguities that provoked this dispute. Under Spanish rule, political authority was granted to three separate bodies: the Viceroy or captain general; the Audiencia, which was the administrator of colonies; and the church (Bowman, 1942; Maier, 1969). The roles and powers of these three separate bodies were not clearly defined (Id). As a result, it was unclear how the different administrations and oversight was geographically divided. Furthermore, due to the terrain of South America and the technologies of the time, access and exact mapping of remote areas, especially within the Amazonian jungle, was extremely difficult, if not impossible (Bowman, 1942).

Spanish lands in Latin America were essentially divided into two administrative areas, the Viceroyalty of New Spain, established in 1535, and the Viceroyalty of Peru, established in 1542 (Id). New Spain spanned what is modern day Mexico and most of Central America. The Viceroyalty of Peru consisted of all of South America, with the exclusion the

Comandancia of Caracas and Portuguese territories, which is primarily modern day Brazil. These two administrative areas were divided into 11 audiencias, with four in New Spain and 7 in Peru. The Audiencia of Quito was initially under the authority of the Viceroy of Peru, but later was integrated into the Viceroyalty of New Granada when this administrative area was created by the King of Spain in 1717 (Maier, 1969). This Viceroyalty was later abolished in 1722, resulting in the Audiencia of Quito falling under the jurisdiction of the Viceroy of Lima, only to change authority in 1739 back to the Viceroyalty of New Granada when this audiencia was re-established (Id). In 1740, the territories of the Viceroyalty of New Granada and Lima were loosely established (Id). These boundaries continued until July 15, 1802, when the Catholic Majesty Charles IV, separated the provinces of Mainas and Quijos from the Viceroyalty of New Granada for what was expressed as “ecclesiastical” purposes that sought to increase Spanish missions in the Upper Amazon Basin (Id). This decision, referenced as the Cedula of 1802, was a pivotal and controversial point in the dispute between Ecuador and Peru. Peru often pointed to the Cedula of 1802 in regard to their claims on disputed lands. Ecuador, on the other hand, claims that the Cedula of 1802 was only specific to the administrator of this area and this cedula did not involve changes to any existing geographic territory. Ecuador’s claim is supported by events that began in 1799. In 1799, a report by the Minister Requena requested the territory and the government be separated. In the 1802 Cedula, the King of Spain only separated the government. To further complicate matters, all of the colonized territories were considered the personal estate of the King of Spain. As a result, the various audiencias regularly contained poorly demarcated boundaries (Bowman, 1942). This complicated matters as these audiencias and Spanish rule began to erode in the early 1800s. To avoid conflict, the doctrine of “Uti Possidetis Juris” or the possessory of the status quo, was established in 1810 (Maier, 1969). This

doctrine allowed the various provinces to align with whichever new republic they chose. As a result, the province of Guayaquil became part of Colombia and Jaen was assumed into Peru.

In 1823, Colombia and Peru signed the Mosquera-Galdeano Treaty, which codified “*uti possidetis juris*” in regards to these emerging countries. From 1822 to 1829, both Colombia and Peru embarked on independence movements, which resulted in their emancipation from Spanish rule. During the course of independence, these two countries engaged in a border dispute, which resulted in a full-scale war in 1829. Colombia was victorious in this war and the Treaty of Guayaquil was signed. The Treaty of Guayaquil established a border commission to address the demarcation of the border (Maier, 1969; Elbow, 1996). While both Colombia and Peru proposed differing borders for resolution, Colombia ultimately accepted Peru’s proposal to draw a border along the Tumbes-Chinchipec-Maranon Line. This agreement was approved by the Peruvian Congress on October 16, 1829. Ecuador has historically opposed the legal foundation of the Treaty of Guayaquil based on three premises. First, Ecuador believes the treaty was not enforceable as it only established a border commission and did not define exact boundaries (Id). Secondly, in 1830, Colombia was divided into 3 republics, consisting of Venezuela, New Granada (now modern day Colombia), and Ecuador (Id). As a result, one of the primary parties, to this treaty, Colombia, was essentially abolished shortly after signing the treaty. Lastly, Ecuador believed that the Treaty of Guayaquil was superseded by the Treaty of July 12, 1832 between Ecuador and Peru (Id). The Treaty of July 12, 1832 provided a “*status quo*” understanding of the boundaries between these two countries, while a definitive settlement was reached. While the Treaty of July 12, 1832 was signed by both Ecuador and Peru, no definitive border was established for the next 8 years. As a result, in 1840 both countries renewed their claims. In 1853, the Peruvians set up a political and military government in Loreto (Maynas)

under the guise of the Cedula of 1802 (Maier, 1969). Ecuador objected through a declaration of its congress in Quito on November 26, 1853. While both countries protested, the issue became dormant until 1857, when Ecuador attempted to deal with foreign debt issues by attempting to sell some of the disputed area to British bondholders. Peru immediately objected and the sale of the land was cancelled. Due to this attempted sale of disputed land by Ecuador, tensions rose and on October 26, 1858, Peru responded with a full naval blockade along the entire coast of Ecuador (Maier, 1969). This blockade initiated a war that lasted until January 25, 1860, when the Treaty of Mapacincue was signed (Id). This treaty was ratified by Peruvian President Castillo and Ecuadorian General Franco. The Peruvian Congress rejected this treaty, as did their counterparts in Ecuador. Ecuadorian General Franco was soon removed from his position due to the strong opposition to the treaty.

Subsequently, for 26 years this dispute was dormant until the Conference of Espinosa-Bonifaz occurred in 1887. This conference established that both countries sought to resolve their dispute by enlisting the King of Spain as the arbitrator. Even though both countries had agreed to have the King of Spain resolve the dispute, Ecuador and Peru continued to pursue bi-lateral resolution by agreeing to and signing the Garcia-Herrera Treaty in May, 1890 (Id). In this treaty, Peru was to receive Tumbes, Jaen, and the parts of the Maynas where Peru had a presence. Ecuador was to receive the zones of the Maynas, which included Macas, Quijos, and the northern strip of frontier along the Colombian border. The treaty was ratified by Peru, but with noted reservations. Ecuador insisted on ratification without exception and withdrew its own ratification due to Peru's tepid acceptance. Due to this failed treaty, the dispute stayed on course for the King of Spain to resolve it. In 1904, Ecuador and Peru pursued Spanish arbitration. In 1908, the King of Spain sent Menendez Pidal to South America. He presented his findings, to

the King on January 22, 1908. They significantly favored Peru. In 1909, the findings were leaked to Ecuador, which became aware that the impending outcome was unlikely to be in their favor. As a result, Ecuador backed out of the arbitration. Such a decision almost led to immediate warfare.

From 1910 to 1924, there were no further attempts to resolve the dispute. In 1924, however, both countries asked for direct negotiations to be held by the United States pursuant to the Ponce-Castro Oyanguren Protocol (Bowman, 1942). Negotiations began in Lima in 1929. They were soon derailed by domestic tensions and strife in Ecuador. In 1933, Peru proposed a resumption of the negotiations. Negotiations occurred for over 2 years with no resolution and finally were abandoned in October of 1938. The end of the negotiations was followed by small scale fighting in the disputed areas. On July 15, 1942, the skirmishes mounted to a full scale, but undeclared, war (Elbow, 1996). Ecuador was no match for Peru and was easily beaten (Id). As a result, at a conference in Rio de Janeiro on January 29, 1942, Ecuador and Peru signed the Protocol of Peace, Friendship, and Boundaries between Ecuador and Peru, often referred to as the Rio Protocol (Simmons, 1999). The Rio Protocol was not only an agreement that ended the military conflict, but also provided a framework that would hopefully lead to sustained resolution. The agreement contained the following six provisions:

1. Peru was to withdraw its military within 15 days;
2. Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and the United States agreed to send military observers to oversee the withdrawal of Peruvian forces and agreed to stay involved in this dispute until it was resolved;
3. These four countries signed on as guarantors;
4. It granted Ecuador navigation rights to the Amazon from the northern tributaries;
5. Technical experts were to be responsible for demarcating the border; and

6. Ecuador and Peru agreed to submit the Rio Protocol to their respective congresses for approval within thirty days of signing the agreement.

Close to 95% of the shared border between Ecuador and Peru was demarcated in 1942 (Simmons, 1999; Bell 1987). A small and less accessible portion of this border became the only area in dispute. Eventually, due to the work of Brazil, the countries resolved this matter as well, at least until 1946. In 1946, the territorial dispute was resurrected due to new aerial photography by U.S. aerial photographers that displayed a Cenepa River watershed that was far more extensive than either party had realized (Id). Ecuador quickly challenged the validity of the Rio Protocol on two bases. First, the Rio Protocol was not valid because they signed this agreement under duress. Specifically, Ecuador stated that they experienced undue pressure from the United States to resolve this dispute (Elbow, 1996). Furthermore, Peru had not fully ceased military action and had threatened to capture Guayaquil if Ecuador refused to sign the agreement (Id). Second, Ecuador claimed the Rio Protocol was null and void since it was based on an incorrect understanding regarding the topography of the area (Id). Rendering the Rio Protocol null and void became a national rallying point in Ecuador, so much so that in 1953, Ecuadorian President Emilio Murillo Ordonez announced the Rio Protocol as unenforceable.

Shortly thereafter, Peru began to mass troops in the disputed areas. This resulted in violent conflicts from June 1977 to January of 1978, in January of 1981 and in January of 1984. It appeared in 1988, that resolution was possible. Ecuador's President Borja sought to resolve the dispute. Borja and his Peruvian counterpart, Alan Garcia, exchanged visits to their respective countries. Ecuadorians cheered these exchanges and held hope that a face-saving compromise might be possible (Elbow, 1996). However, the progress made between Borja and Garcia was soon challenged as each country ushered in new leadership in the early 1990s. When new

Ecuadorian president Sixto Duran Ballen took office in 1992, newly elected Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori attended the inauguration, renewing hope of an eventual solution.

Unfortunately, in 1994 and 1995, Ballen faced significant economic issues domestically, which diverted his attention away from resolution. And, in order to increase his chances of winning a Presidential election, Fujimori hardened his position on this dispute in 1995 (Elbow, 1996).

Unfortunately, any hopes for resolution eroded when in January of 1995, fighting between these countries reignited. With military bases only 50 meters from each other, conflict was inevitable. The conflict in January of 1995 was the most violent and serious since the conflict in 1942. With an average cost of 10 million U.S. dollars per day for each country, the conflict became deleterious and unsustainable for both economies. Ecuador lost an estimated 50-100 military personnel and Peru lost close to 100 within the first two weeks of the fighting (Id). Additionally, Indian communities were heavily impacted as their farms were invaded by military units, which resulted in loss of crops and livestock. Peru and Ecuador signed the Montevideo Declaration on February 28<sup>th</sup> and later signed the Itamaraty Peace Declaration that provided supervision by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the U.S. These agreements ended the month long conflict. Tensions between these two countries ebbed and flowed over the next several years, but without any significant events. Eventually, on October 25, 1998, the Mission of Military Observers Ecuador-Peru (the “MOMEPE”) was established, implemented, and, ultimately, it managed the withdrawal of forces in the area and the demilitarization of the region (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004). Subsequently, the conflict was finally ended through the signing of a peace treaty. In this treaty, Peru was awarded the disputed area, while Ecuador was granted access through commercial and maritime use rights to the Amazon River (Id).



**Figure II Ecuadorian and Peruvian join in a display of cooperation.**

## Case Study Analysis

Realists would initiate their explanation of the various conflicts between these two states primarily as an opportunity for Ecuador, the claimant, to maximize its utility as a state. In maximizing utility, Ecuador needed to increase its material capabilities and, thus, increase its relative power in relation to Peru. In order to increase Ecuador's material capabilities, it was necessary to gain control and access to the Cenepa River watershed and the Amazon in general. This was primarily due to the rubber boom, timber, the discovery of oil, and the ability to access the other parts of South America and the Atlantic Ocean. In doing so, Ecuador would be able to increase its material capabilities through increased economic resources. This would help to build Ecuador's military should future conflicts with any other nation-states, specifically Peru, arise in the future. Geo-politically speaking, this would be an extremely rational approach for Ecuador since this may be the most efficient way to increase its capabilities and thus guarantee its survival. Ultimately, it is a rational approach since Ecuador would not need to conquer an entire country in order to gain access to these valuable resources. Rather, Ecuador only needed to gain enough land, about 20 square kilometers, to provide Ecuadoran access to the Amazonian basin. In regard to the final settlement, realists would argue that the final agreement between Ecuador and Peru was in the best interests of Ecuador, since it provided for an outcome that allowed Ecuadoran access to the Amazonian river basin, providing substantial relative gains that should have been their primary goal from the beginning.

The strengths to the realist argument present a straightforward explanation of the events. This is one of realisms greatest strengths. It is easy to catalog the significant power difference between Peru and Ecuador. Over history Peru maintained significance dominance over the much weaker Ecuador (Maier, 1969; Simmons, 2005). When referring to a 1995 confrontation

Simmons states: “by most accounts, the Ecuadoran military had dealt a tactical blow to Peruvian forces, in sharp contrast to their engagements in 1941 and 1981. It is widely recognized, however, that the long-term balance of forces is and will remain in Peru’s favor (Id).”

Militarily, economically, and in virtually every facet, Peru was superior. Accordingly, this power structure created a need for Ecuador to increase its capabilities in relation to Peru.

Would Ecuador be doing itself any favors in the long term if it merely accepted this relationship? Was Ecuador supposed to be satisfied with being the inferior neighbor? Realism’s approach is able to explain the reasons behind Ecuador’s actions. Furthermore, this theory, through relative gains, is able to demonstrate how Ecuador acted in a rational manner to defend and improve its own self interests. This realist approach is also very convincing because the power relationship and access to Amazonian resources provides for an extremely tangible and easy to understand explanation. One of the basic tenants of realism is that nation-states act in a rational manner. Alternatively, some may interpret Ecuador’s actions as irrational. Due to the size and might of the Peruvian military, pursuing a conflict with this country can also be easily interpreted as nonsensical. This was demonstrated in military conflicts in 1941 and smaller scale skirmishes throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The realist approach is also squarely focused on the state as the primary and sole actor. Because of this, this theory does not explore or seek to explain domestic influences that escalated violence or helped resolve the matter. “In the decade following the 1941 war, public opinion in Ecuador was staunchly anti-Peruvian and highly supportive of a confrontational approach to territorial issues (Simmons, 2005).” This opinion was present through the 1960s as Ecuadorian President Galo Plaza used public sentiments to win popularity and staying power for his government (Id). Additionally, in 1995, just three years before these countries reached a final settlement, 58% of Peruvians and 79% of Ecuadorans were amenable

to resolving this long-standing territorial dispute with mutual concessions (Id). This demonstrates that public opinion supported resolution more so than it had at any time in the past. A final weakness to the realist explanation is that this approach is unable to explain the long lasting rivalry between these states. Realists prefer to live in the present and speculate about future instability due to the inherent nature of our chaotic and anarchic world. As a result, realists are unable to theoretically explore enduring foes and friendships or any relational matters that exist between countries over time. In the case of Ecuador and Peru, this territorial conflict lasted 168 years. The continued state of animosity is unexplainable through neo-realist lenses. Moreover, realists would be unable to explain how populous animosity evolved into a conciliatory approach. Although realisms straightforward and easy to understand approach is appealing, there are significant weaknesses to this approach that must be considered.

Liberals, unlike realists, would not focus on military might and maximizing relative power. Liberalisms' explanation of the conflict between Ecuador and Peru would view it as resulting from a lack of shared economic integration and resulting from a lack of institutional strength that would otherwise define how states should behave. They would first seek to work through existing regional institutions that might resolve this matter. In South America, examples may include the Mecosur, the Andean Community of Nations or the Organization of American States. If no qualified formal institutions existed, liberals would seek the development of such organizations. Furthermore, liberals would highlight the economic forces at play. Access to the Amazon represented significant economic resources for Ecuador. Accordingly, Ecuador sought rational absolute gains by pursuing this dispute. The risk of pursuing this would have clearly been worth the risks involved. Liberals would also highlight the cooperation among guarantor states that helped facilitate the Rio Protocol (Simmons, 1999). They would point to

this agreement as an initial step and would encourage continued cooperation. Since Ecuador failed to comply with the agreement, they would argue that there was inadequate institutionalism in order to enforce the rules of the agreement. A sign of weak institutions is that they are unable to enforce the rules they have defined. “Nevertheless, because of differences between the parties have continued to remain almost 50 years later the guarantors find themselves still trying to ensure faithful execution of that Protocol (Palmer, 1997).” Accordingly, only with more time, experience, and participation would an institution be strong enough to manage this conflict. An example of this strengthened institutionalism is the multilateral mediation process that eventually resolved this dispute in 1998 (Herz, 2003). Furthermore, liberals would champion the eventual success of the military observer mission in Ecuador and Peru (the “MOMEPE”), which managed the withdrawal of forces and the demilitarization of the area. They believe that without the use of this type of cooperation and agreement, this conflict would have continued to persist. Finally, they would argue for the continued development of strong institutions as a means to oversee the peace and stability that was ultimately fomented between Ecuador and Peru. In the end, the liberal perspective would most likely argue that regional cooperation through the guarantor states resulted in the resolution of this conflict.

All of the forces highlighted by the liberal perspective were present in this dispute. Economics played an important role in Ecuador’s desire for access to the Amazon. “The livestock industry is important, and charcoal, fruits, vegetables and gold are also exported (Bowman, 1942).” This did create incentive and reason for Ecuador’s desire to include these lands within its territory. Another viable aspect to the liberal explanation is the use of formal and informal institutions over time. Various levels and types of institutions existed prior to Spain leaving South America. The various audiencias and how they were managed established the

framework for this dispute. These audiencias had overlapping borders between different administrative and economic zones. In fact, the failure of Spain to clearly demarcate the borders opened the possibility for this conflict. One cannot deny the role of colonial, regional, and international institutions in this conflict. While in various forms and including a variety of participants, they were present and were actively involved in shaping this issue. As such, the economic and institutional influences to this conflict are explained easily via liberalism.

The first critique of the liberal approach to explaining this territorial dispute is that this perspective is simply unable to identify the reasons conflict occurred. Liberals would attempt to indirectly explain this conflict as resulting from a lack of institutionalism. While this may be helpful in explaining how states may cooperate or resolve the dispute, it is void of any real account of why conflict this existed in the first place. Additionally, throughout the 168 years of conflict, there were systemic institutional failures along the way. Cooperative states and agreements were made but were unable to be enforced. Such failures included the adoption of “uti possidetis juris”, the Treaty of Bogata in 1810, the Mosquera-Galdeano Treaty, the Treaty of Giron, and the numerous other failed treaties and agreements (Maeir, 1969). In fact, the Rio Protocol occurred at a time when populous sentiments in Ecuador created an environment for non-compliance. Neo-liberalism would further be unable to explain why such sentiments existed or how they were important. As a result, neo-liberalism fails to adequately explain this territorial dispute. Rather, neo-liberalism appears to look past the undercurrents of conflict and appears too focused on forging ahead with institutional cooperation and interdependence.

A constructivist would first look to the annexation of Ecuador through Spanish colonial policy in 1830. A constructivist could argue that the arbitrary borders created through colonial policy removed access to lands used and envisioned by Ecuadorans. Furthermore, after

achieving Ecuadoran independence, the country could then concentrate time, energy and general efforts to lands that were perceived to have been taken from Ecuadorans. “Massive public demonstrations erupted in favor of this position to regain sovereign access to the Amazon (Simmons, 2005).” Such sentiments shaped public opinions and norms regarding the importance of these lands and the feeling that such lands had been taken from Ecuador, further fomenting the rivalry between these two states. This was a factor in Ecuador’s mission to take back these lands at all costs, even though they were clearly outmatched over the years. It would also help to explain why Ecuador continued to irrationally engage in military confrontations, thirty-four in total, with a country that had a substantial military advantage and won every conflict. Populous norms and beliefs could also explain the continued adversarial relationship with Peru and the eventual reversal of the Rio Protocol in 1946. “In the decade following the 1941 war, public opinion in Ecuador was staunchly anti-Peruvian and highly supportive of a confrontational approach to territorial issues (Id).”

Understanding norms and beliefs can also explain why this confrontation eventually ended. First, the success of Ecuador in the conflicts of the 1990s may have changed the Peruvian perspective on continued warfare. While Peru remained dominant, Ecuador had proven that it could inflict serious injury and that it may be a force to be reckoned with moving forward (Id). While this most certainly affected Peruvian perspectives, it also affected Ecuadoran leadership. “This may have provided a window of opportunity for Ecuador’s leaders to make principled rather than coerced concessions...the respectable military showing in 1995 gave them an opportunity to make the concession with their dignity intact (Id).” It appears the 1995 war may have also changed Ecuadoran public opinion regarding resolving this confrontation, at least more so than in years past. As noted earlier in this paper, in 1995 public support for resolution was at

an all time high (71%) (Id). Leadership capitalized on this and, for the first time, began speaking openly about conciliation. Ecuadoran President Bucaram stated, “Bullets cost the same as Books, a rifle costs the same as a school, and a war tank costs the same as a university...the concept of a nation is increasingly defined by the citizen’s power of determination and attitudes (Id).” The change in perspectives within both of these countries created a path for resolution.

One of the primary shortcomings of the constructivist perspective is that it struggles to pinpoint what event(s) or happening shaped public opinion. Was the populous tired of this struggle after 168 years? Was the change in beliefs generational? Was it indeed the 1995 war that influenced stakeholders? Was it the fact that Ecuador had an impressive showing at the 1995 war that allowed public opinion to change? While constructivists are able to study and demonstrate that public opinion did indeed change, it can only explain causation of change through logical assumptions. It may very well be that no one event changed public opinion so drastically and that it was a series of influences over time that gradually forced perspectives to change. This is the certainly the weakest component of a constructivist explanation.



Figure III Map of Guatemala and Belize.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **BELIZEAN AND GUATEMALA CASE STUDY**

#### **History and Background**

The first settlers of the lands that now encompass Belize, an area consisting of 8,860 square miles, were English loggers and their slaves, primarily from the British colony of Jamaica (Bell, 1987). They arrived in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Id). At this point in time, Spain had colonized all of what is now Mexico, Central America, and much of South America. Spain's conquest of Guatemala occurred in 1524 (Young and Young, 1988). Spain, however, never maintained a colonial presence in modern day Belize (Id). Rather, in 1670, Spain granted logging concessions to English timber cutters in the Treaty of Madrid (Bell et al, 1987). While concessions were only granted in northern Belize, English settlers expanded south to take advantage of the vast resources of mahogany (Bell et al, 1987). Over the next 130 years, however, Spain asserted sovereignty over the area of Belize and regularly attacked loggers that were violating their concessions (Id). Eventually, tensions between the English settlers and Spain led to the Battle of St. George's Cay on September 10, 1798 (Id). In this battle, a small boat fleet of settlers defeated a Spanish naval flotilla (Id). Shortly after this battle, in 1821, all of the Spanish colonies had achieved independence, leaving Spain with no physical presence in the Americas (Gorina-Ysern, 2000).

In 1828, Britain claimed Belize based on conquest, use, and custom. In 1835, Britain asked Spain to formally cede Belize and, thus, recognize British sovereignty over these lands (Id). Spain was silent on the issue. Due to Spain's lack of response, the British government looked to resolve this issue with newly independent Guatemala, which along with other Latin American countries had claimed successor and inheritance rights regarding all

Spanish property and land (Bell et al, 1987). Such claims led both Mexico and Guatemala to claim Belizean lands, claims that Britain rejected (Id). With hopes to resolve this dispute, the British government began to consult with regional actors. In 1850, the United States recognized Belize. This emboldened Britain to seek resolution with Guatemala and Mexico. In 1859, the British and Guatemalan governments signed a treaty that contained seven articles (Young and Young, 1988). The first six articles demarcated the boundaries of Belize (Id). The seventh article required that a road be mutually built from Guatemala City to the Caribbean Sea (Id). Guatemala viewed the seventh article as compensation for abandoning its rights to Belizean lands. Moreover, Guatemala assumed that the British government was responsible for building the road. Due to the language in the seventh article that stated a road would be “mutually built”, there was disagreement between the two countries over which country was ultimately responsible. This disagreement resulted in a convention in 1863 to resolve the matter (Id). Unfortunately, at this time, Guatemala was engaged in a civil war and was unable to ratify the 1863 convention treaty (Id). Due to Guatemala’s failure to ratify the treaty, Britain claimed they were released from any obligation possibly created by the seventh article of the 1859 treaty (Id). The disagreement regarding the seventh article continued into the 1930s. However, Mexico renounced all claims to Belizean territory in 1893 (Bell et al, 1988). While Mexican recognition was an important victory for the British government, Guatemala’s position on Belizean territory became more fervent with time. In 1945, Guatemala claimed the Treaty of 1859 had not been fulfilled and that it now had the right to take back lands given to the British government for compensation outlined in the contentious seventh article. Furthermore, Guatemala adopted a new constitution that, in Article 1, stated: “any efforts taken towards obtaining Belize reinstatement to the Republic are of national interest (Young and Young, 1987).” The British

government flatly refused these claims and encouraged Guatemala to take their territorial claim to the International Court of Justice (Bell et al, 1988).

At this point, Britain had been in control of Belizean lands for 150 years and was unwilling to entertain secession of any lands. Britain further ratcheted up this issue when they granted the British Honduras the right to self-government on January 1, 1964 (Id). Guatemala followed this action by breaking all diplomatic ties with the British government. In 1965, however, both Guatemala and the British government asked for the United States to mediate the dispute (Id). Bethuel M. Webster became the mediator of this dispute and, in 1968, proposed a solution, known as the Webster Proposal, (Id). This proposal suggested the following: cooperation between Belize and Guatemala; independence for Belize from British rule; Belize would be responsible for internal affairs; the proposal granted vast powers to a “Joint Authority” between Belize and Guatemala; it placed Belize defense, foreign affairs, and placed the economy under the control of Guatemala after Belizean independence; Belize was to accept a customs union with Guatemala to allow Guatemalan access to the Caribbean Sea; and, lastly, Guatemala would sponsor Belize’s applications to join the Central American Community and the Inter-American Community (Young and Young, 1988). While this proposal would have established greater independence for Belize by way of sovereignty of internal affairs, Guatemala was to assume control of the Belizean defense, foreign affairs, and economy. Since this proposal granted Belize limited sovereignty, it was rejected by Belizean leadership (Bell et al, 1988). Britain agreed and refused this proposal as well. Guatemala, on the other hand, supported the proposal and was willing to end the dispute based on the proposed conditions. Unable to resolve the dispute with U.S. mediation efforts, tensions in this region began to rise.

In 1971, Guatemala began building its military presence along the border (Id). Britain responded by reinforcing troops and, in 1977, held military exercises in the region (Id). By the mid-seventies, the United Nations (the “U.N.”) began weighing in on the conflict. On December 5, 1978, the United Nations (the “U.N.”) passed a resolution that granted Belizean people the right to self-determination, protection of Belizean territory, called on all states to recognize Belize, and requested resolution between the British and Guatemalan governments (Id). In fact, the U.N. passed several more resolutions. Initially, the resolutions were not supported by mainland Latin American countries; however, the support for Belizean independence grew with each passing resolution (Id). Essentially, in the 1970s, the U.N. was utilized to garner almost unanimous support for Belizean independence throughout Latin America.

The closest this dispute ever was to resolution came in 1981, when these countries put together a sixteen-point agreement. The leadership of Belize, Britain, and Guatemala accepted this agreement. In summary, the agreement required all negotiating states to recognize Belize as an independent state, established economic cooperation regarding access to the Caribbean Sea and oil pipelines, and provided Guatemalan access to and the use of Belizean ports in the Caribbean (Id). The Belizean opposition, however, adamantly opposed the agreement because they thought that it infringed on Belize sovereignty. In fact, the opposition was able to mount enough support to reverse Belize’s initial position of conciliation (Id). As a result, the agreement failed and the dispute continued.

In response to this latest round of failed attempts to resolve the dispute, Britain announced that Belize would be granted full independence on September 21, 1981 (Id). On September 25, 1981, Belize was accepted into the United Nations, with Mexico sponsoring the Belizean application (Id). Talks between Belize and Guatemala continued over the next several

decades. In 1995, tensions escalated over a poorly demarcated border when Belizean troops entered Guatemalan territory. Troops mobilized on both sides of the border, but nothing besides minor skirmishes took place (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004). In 2000, Belize and Guatemala signed an agreement to enhance confidence-building measures. This agreement was temporary and did not address territorial claims from either country. To date, this dispute has not been resolved and, while no military action is imminent, it still represents an unresolved territorial dispute that has led to regional friction and a lack of economic cooperation between these two countries. This dispute will be further exacerbated with the discovery of oil close to the disputed border (Reynolds, 2011). As the world becomes smaller and resources become more valuable, settling disputes similar to the Belize/Guatemala conflict become increasingly important and, at the same time, more challenging.



**Figure IV** Belizean and Guatemalan leaders meet.

## Case Study Analysis

From a realist perspective, it is clear why Guatemala would lay claim to the entirety or to parts of Belize. Including Belizean territory within Guatemala could significantly increase its power, influence, and military capabilities in the region. The vast timber resources throughout Belize along with increased access to the Atlantic Ocean provides the rationale for Guatemala's claim. Unfortunately for this perspective, however, was the presence and reality of British protection over Belizean lands. While British protection existed, the amount of personnel that was able to hold the Guatemalans at bay was rather insignificant. Generally speaking, the British would have five hundred to a thousand military personnel in Belize. Occasionally, they would move an aircraft carrier into the region for extra security. Not only does this demonstrate the deterrence of a small military presence, but it also negated Guatemala's military strength in the region.

Realism is easily able to explain some dynamics that led Guatemala to lay claim over Belizean lands. It was the more powerful British military, however, that presented Guatemala from acquiring these lands. "At the request of the Belize government, it had been agreed that a British garrison would remain in the country "for an appropriate period" to assist with external defense and with the training of the Belize Defense Force (Payne, 1990)." The power structure in this dispute was clear, present, and obvious. Although outmatched by the British, Guatemala has the advantage of proximity to the disputed lands. The British government's interest may wane overtime and due to possible costs associated with protecting these lands, there may be opportunities for Guatemala in the future. With a powerful and adversarial northern neighbor in Mexico, Guatemala had ample incentive to become stronger and more powerful in this region. It

is clear to see how Guatemala may have viewed Belize as an opportunity to increase its relative gains in comparison to Mexico.

What realism also fails to account for in this dispute, are the domestic undercurrents that existed. In the case of Guatemala, there was much internal strife including, a civil war that occurred from the 1960's to the 1980's. While realism views the international arena as being in a constant state of anarchy, this approach fails to recognize the chaos that can exist within a state's boundaries, as was the case during Guatemala's multi-decade civil war. Additionally, this civil war severely limited Guatemala's ability to threaten Belize. As a result, realism's absolute focus on states as the primary actor severely limits this perspective's ability to take into consideration domestic currents. The oscillation of the Guatemalan approach to Belizean lands can be witnessed in the types of claims Guatemala made on Belize. At various junctures, Guatemala claimed all of Belize, the Southern half of Belize, and, lastly, the most southern portion of Belize. Different claims demonstrate the volatility of domestic views on this issue. With different Guatemalan leaders or domestic environments came vast shifts in their claims. Realism, as an approach, is not structured to explore domestic influences that clearly changed the landscape of this territorial dispute.

Liberalism emphasizes the economic realities between these two countries. This approach highlights the vast resources and economic incentives present in Belizean lands. Not only is Belize rich in resources, but acquisition of this land would also significantly increase access to the Atlantic Ocean. The economic incentives for Guatemala cannot be denied and certainly present plausible rationale for Guatemala's pursuit of this dispute. Liberals may also utilize the lack of institutions to explain this conflict. Because Belize and Guatemala were culturally divided, institutions were more necessary to bridge any gaps and since no substantial

institutional framework existed, hostilities were allowed to fester and ultimately encouraged this dispute. Liberals would focus on the benefits of cooperation between these countries.

Institutions would be able to facilitate growth and create benefits for both countries. This transformative view, however, did not materialize and became impossible due to the reaction of Belize regarding Guatemalan claims on its territory. In fact, the Guatemalan claims made economic cooperation less of a reality due to the sensitive nature of attacking a state's territorial presence and existence, as was the case in this territorial dispute. Due to Guatemalan claims, Belize had, for a vast majority of the conflict, no desire to aid Guatemala economically or in other manner.

From a constructivist perspective, it is easy to discern Guatemala's claim on this territory. Their claim is directly linked to their experience and identity that evolved from Spanish occupation in 1524 (Young and Young, 1988, pg. 10). The people and territory of Guatemala were subjected to colonial overtures for close to three hundred years. As Guatemala gained independence in 1821, their identity and the shared experience with other newly independent states in the region began to blossom. Accordingly, their identity was shaped by the experiences associated with a post-colonized Spanish colony that had struggled and fought for independence. This experience resulted in their eventual claim to Belize. Since the Spanish had historically viewed Belizean lands as their own, Guatemala naturally viewed Belize as their territory as well. The struggle for independence created an entitlement perspective on the part of the Guatemalans. From Guatemala's perspective this territory was stolen by British timber workers who essentially commandeered this land. These timber workers brought in Jamaican slaves who populated this region. Such a perspective led them to believe that whatever the Spanish had abandoned was theirs due to their subjection and defeat of colonialism. This Guatemalan identity was not unique

to the region. In fact, it was experienced in many countries throughout Latin America. Specifically, Mexico shared this same identity and, thus, initially claimed Belizean territory as well (Bell et al 1987, pg. 398).

The British government had a much different experience and perspective regarding Belize. From the British perspective, Spain initially had sovereignty and ownership over these lands. The lack of Spanish presence, however, created an avenue for English settlers to move into this area to exploit the logging resources that existed. The lack of Spanish interest in this area allowed British settlers to have free reign in this area for close to 130 years, allowing them to expand their settlements to areas outside the territory authorized for logging use by the Spanish government. Eventually tensions increased and led to the Battle of the St. George's Cays. This marked the entrenchment of the English settlers, but also demonstrated a lack of interest by the Spanish government. The Spanish government could have sent reinforcements and, most likely, could have easily crushed the under matched British settlers. However, they continued to show disinterest in this region as they had done for over a century. Due to this battle, the British government essentially believed that Spain had been defeated and these lands now belonged to them.

Moreover, the shared experiences of the British and Spanish government created a view that Belizean lands were only a matter for the two colonizing countries and, therefore, did not involve the inhabitants of the Spanish colonies. As a result, when Guatemala gained independence in 1821, the British government did not believe the Guatemalans or the Mexicans had any natural or legal rights to lands of the Spanish government. In 1828, Britain claimed Belize under the auspices of conquest, long-term use, and custom (Young and Young 1988, pg. 10). Regarding their to their claim to Belize under the guise of custom, this was due to the

experiences involving English settlement of these lands for close to two hundred years before Guatemala gained independence. As a result, Britain had developed strong norms that led them to believe Belizean territory belonged to them.

Similar in nature to the British perspective, the experience of the Belizean people and leadership was that of a British colony. Furthermore, the majority of the inhabitants of these lands were slaves that had been brought in from Jamaica, another British colony. Accordingly, many of the Belizean people identified themselves more with Caribbean nations than with Latin American heritage and culture. Belize had also become accustomed to British law, standards, and protection from Guatemalan aggression. As a colonized territory, the Belizean peoples were influenced by British identities and perspective from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century until 1981 when they finally gained independence.

The struggle for independence also shaped the Belizean perspective. From their perspective, they were never colonized by Spain. Rather, in their struggle for independence, Spain was wholly out of the equation. For the Belizean peoples, independence was directly linked to the British government. But, when they did achieve independence, there was still present the Guatemalan claim to their lands. The experience of this aggression shaped Belizean norms. In fact, in 1968, Belize sought and gained acceptance into the Caribbean Area Free Trade Association (the “CARIFTA”). Further, in 1978, after British interest appeared to be waning, Belize sought security agreements with the United States, the Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Accordingly, the Guatemalan claim to Belizean lands shaped norms and beliefs of the Belizean peoples that led them to align with what they viewed as more similar countries from a shared history, cultural, and identity perspective.

Additionally, by the time Belize achieved independence, it had cultivated norms and

beliefs based in self-determination. The Belizean peoples did not struggle in their quest for independence to simply be colonized by Guatemala. Belize, after being accepted into the United Nations, pushed for and was successful in passing resolutions that recognized their independence, sovereignty, and right to self-determination.



Figure V Map of Laos and Thailand

## CHAPTER IV

### LAOTIAN AND THAI CASE STUDY

#### History and Background

The history of what is now called South East Asia was, until colonialist overtures, defined by empires and kingdoms (Battersby, 1999). Borders were porous, ill defined, and were considered pliable. In this sparsely populated region, control of manpower and allegiance from vassal provinces vastly outweighed any emphasis placed on specific territorial delimitation and control (Id). As a result, power among kings was consolidated at the various capital cities, resulting in weaker controls farther away from kingdom centers. Only with the advent of colonialism and the European export of the nation-state did concepts such as political space and territorial sovereignty begin to take root in South East Asia. Such a philosophical shift in regard to territory created tensions and disputes between new states in this region. This pattern is certainly true in the territorial dispute between Laos and Thailand.

Up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, relations between the kingdoms of Laos and Thailand (called Siam until 1939) were relatively friendly (Ngaosyvathn, 1985). Good relations were codified when Thai and Lao kings together built the That Si Song Hak stupa in 1555 (Id). This stupa symbolized affection and good relations between the two capitals of Si Sat Ta Nak (the ancient name of Vientiane) and Si Ayuthaya, the capital of Thailand at the time. These friendly relations witnessed a shift when King Taksin was crowned King of Thailand in 1768. King Taksin unleashed Thai military might on Laos. By 1791, the three provinces of Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Champassak, were under Thai control (Id). In doing so, he took valuable religious Laotian artifacts, including the Emerald Buddha, and enslaved the Laotian people to build his palaces and cities. Between 1826 and 1828, Thai armies worked to crush Laotian independence

movements that were heading for the capital of Thailand. Thailand put down this rebellion and dominated Laos until Laos was ceded to France in 1893 (Bell et al, 1987). This included Lao populated territory East of the Mekong, which included islands within the river, and essentially consolidating French control of South East Asia. Thailand and France signed a series of treaties and conventions in 1902, 1904, and 1907 (Id). These agreements extended the French border to the West of the Mekong River to include the Sayaboury province.

In 1939, Siam changed the country's name to Thailand and embarked on a policy of Panthaism that sought to reassert Siamese historical dominance over the region (Ngaosyvathn, 1985). Under the leadership of Phibul Songkram, Thailand sought to regroup all the various sectors of the Thai race, which included the Lao, the Shans of Burma, ten million people in Asam in the southeastern state of India, and several million ethnic Thai in the Sipsong Phanna autonomous region in China (Id). Panthaism was codified in the Tokyo Franco-Siamese Treaty of May 9, 1941 when France, under pressure from Japan, ceded to Bangkok two Lao provinces on the right bank of the Mekong and three Cambodian provinces (Id). This expansion of Thai territory was temporary and after being defeated in WWII, Bangkok was required, under the Washington Franco-Siamese Settlement Agreement of November 17, 1946, to return to Laos and Cambodia the territories ceded to Thailand in the 1941 treaty (Id). Although Thailand returned these lands, they did not end their territorial claims. Territorial boundaries for Thailand were to be decided in a Franco-Siamese Conciliation Commission, set up in 1947, (Id). Thailand sought to reclaim all of Laos and parts of Cambodia, which would have expanded Thai territory all the way to Vietnam (Id). This commission held meetings in Washington D.C. from May 5 through June 26 of 1947 and ultimately rejected all Thai territorial claims (Id). As a result, Thailand's future policy attempted to convince and coerce Laos to revise the agreements.

Thailand utilized the border and their economic superiority as influential tools. In doing so, Thailand enacted embargos on Laos's products, engaged in military skirmishes along the Mekong River, unilaterally closed the Thai-Laos border, and trained elite forces for subversive operations within Lao territory (Id).

The 1960s and 1970s in South East Asia is characterized by movements for independence, warfare, and internal strife (Bell et al, 1987). Internal Cold War related interests, between the countries in this region were on the forefront (Bell et al, 1987; Conboy, 1992). Both Thailand, by way of the Communist Party of Thailand (the "CPT"), and Laos, through the Pathet Lao, focused primarily on internal philosophical challenges that eventually pushed Laos towards communism and Thailand away from communist influence (Bell et al, 1987).

Relations between these countries were further strained by insurgent movements in their respective countries that supported their worldviews (Conboy, 1992). Furthermore, after the communist Pathet Lao gained control of Laos in 1975, Thailand witnessed an influx of anti-Pathet Lao immigrants, often settling and living in the border region (Bell et al, 1987). As a result, there were regular clashes along the Mekong and accusations by Laos that Thailand was harboring its enemies. Eventually, in December of 1975, Thailand closed the border with Laos and banned all Laos's exports and imports (Battersby, 1999). This led to a severe food shortage in Laos and to supplies having to be flown in from Vietnam (Id).

In October of 1976 because of a military coup, a staunchly anti-communist regime under Thanin Kraivichien came to power in Thailand, which continued the economic blockade of Laos (Id). In April of 1977, Thailand attacked three Laotian islands in the Mekong; Sang Khi, Con Tam, and Singsou (Battersby, 1999; Ngaosyvathn, 1985). In 1977, Thailand changed leadership again with General Kriangsak Chamanan as the Prime Minister. General Kriangsak Chamanan

lifted the economic blockade on Laos and sought to improve relations between the two countries.

In March of 1978, Lao Minister of Foreign Affairs Phoune Sipaseuth visited Bangkok (Battersby, 1999). Both governments appeared on a path of conciliation as they sought peaceful co-existence and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. While border incidents immediately decreased, in December of 1978, a significant skirmish occurred on the Mekong. This event resulted in deaths of a number of Thai and Lao military personnel, along with the sinking of several military boats. As a result, General Chamanan visited Vientiane Laos from January 4 through the 6<sup>th</sup> of 1979. This visit was reciprocated by a visit from Kaysone Phomvihane, the General Secretary of the ruling the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, in April of 1979. Both Thai and Laos's leadership reaffirmed their desires for peace, friendship, and mutual benefit regarding their countries and the Mekong River specifically (Id). In August of 1979, Thai and Lao signed an agreement that resulted in the following: a signed memorandum of understanding, measures to limit terrorist use of the border region, a border committee, reduction of the amount of armed border patrols along the Mekong, and the opening of an official passage between the two countries along the Mekong.

However, due to yet another change in Thai leadership, with the succession of General Chamanan with General Prem Tinsulanond in March of 1980, Thai and Lao relations reverted to increased tensions and skirmishes (Bell et al, 1987). On June 15, 1980, Lao troops fired on a Thai patrol boat that was operating on the Lao side of the Mekong (Id). This resulted in the death of a Thai naval officer and, once again, led to the closing of border for most of July, resulting in a food shortage in Vientiane. On January 20, 1981, Thai troops fired on a Lao civilian boat on the Mekong, which killed one crewmember. On January 27, 1981, another Lao boat was attacked, killing two of its crew. As tensions rose, several more clashes took place

towards the end of January and during the first few weeks of February. Such clashes were followed by several ministerial visits in 1981 and 1982, which helped to de-escalate tension along the border (Bell et al, 1987). Although relations were improving, there were two shooting incidents each in October and November of 1981, and in April and June of 1982. The June 1982 incident was the most severe as it appears that Lao troops fired on a Thai village and shelled a Thai patrol boat near the Lao island of Don Sangkhi (Id).

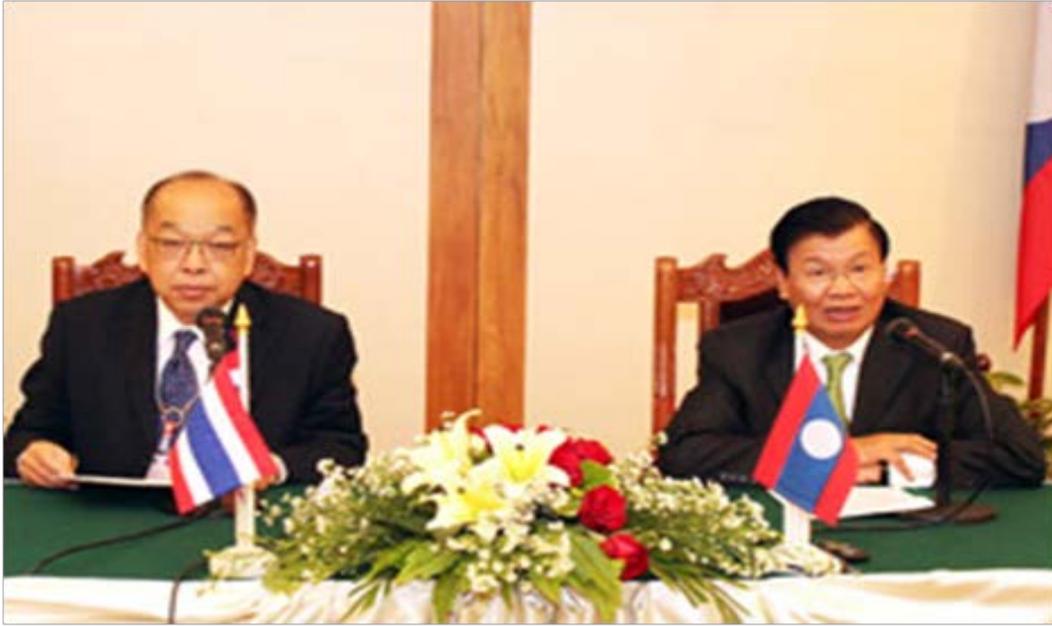
The most significant conflict, however, began to occur in March of 1984. This dispute was in regard to controversial Lao sovereignty over three villages, Ban Mai, Ban Klang, and Ban Sawang that are on the border of the Western Lao province of Sayaboury, and close to the northern Thai province of Uttaradit (Bervovitch and Fretter, 2004; Ngaosyvathn, 1985, Bell et All, 1987, Battersby, 1999). These villages cover approximately 19 square kilometers and include some 1,800 Laotians. Tensions rose in this border region as Thailand began to build a controversial road that Lao claimed crossed into its territory. As a result, Lao troops moved into the three villages in April of 1984 (Bell et al, 1987). Thailand alleged that Lao troops had crossed into Thai territory in an attempt to disrupt construction of the road. On April 15 and in May of 1984, Lao and Thai forces clashed. Thai leadership denounced the clashes as acts of aggression by Laos. On June 6, 1984, Thai military forces took control of the three villages. This event led to diplomatic warfare with both countries accusing the other of links to internal opposition groups and competing states in the region, with Thailand claiming Vietnamese involvement and Laos claiming Chinese influence. Lao delegations visited Bangkok from June 21-24 and August 7-15, 1984 (Ngaosyvathn, 1985). No agreement was reached on the disputed villages and Thailand continued to control these villages as it had since June 6, 1984. Each country presented maps that supported their claims to the three villages. Laos used maps traced

back to Franco-Siamese treaties signed in 1902, 1904, and 1907. Laos also cited a ruling of the International Court of Justice, specific to Cambodian claims of the Preah Vihear temple, stating that the 1907 Franco-Siamese border treaty was valid and enforceable. Thailand, on the other hand, produced a 1978 map that was produced through United States aerial photographs and claimed that this map demarcated the three villages as part of Thailand. On June 15, Thailand ended the talks because Laos had refused to agree to a joint technical team to visit the disputed area in order to determine the border. From the Lao perspective, historical agreements had already placed the three villages in Lao territory and the matter should not be subject to re-evaluation. In September of 1984, Lao troops shot and killed two Thai border police officers and a mechanic in the disputed area. At first, Thailand threatened to lodge a complaint with the U.N., but consequently announced on October 2 the withdrawal of Thai troops from the disputed three villages. By October 15, the withdrawal was complete, albeit Thailand still controlled strategically high ground in disputed lands (Bell et al, 1987). Laos sought to resolve this matter by seeking compensation for the loss of human and material losses from the villagers. It also wanted to address the missing villagers that were captured by Thai soldiers, and asked for talks. Thailand refused stating the withdrawal of troops was sufficient.

The three villages conflict was followed by diplomatic visits by each country in 1985. Most of these visits sought to address the three villages' conflict, but they all ended in disagreement (Id). Furthermore, on August 10, 1985, a skirmish resulted in the death of a Thai border police officer. On July 14, 1986, Thai officials announced that approximately 40 Lao soldiers had crossed into Thai territory and had launched an attack on a makeshift encampment of Lao immigrants, killing 35 and wounding many more (Id). After these incidents, the leaders of both countries once again sought reconciliation. On September 24, 1986, Laos presented a

memorandum to the Thai ambassador stating that both countries should appoint high-level working groups in preparation of future ministerial talks (Id). In November of the same year, both countries agreed to stop the propaganda-laden attacks against each country. Ministerial visits began again in March of 1987. Despite these visits, border skirmishes continued and by 1988, the skirmishes threatened to devolve into all out war, due to the use of air assaults and heavy machinery (Bercovitch and Fretter, 2004). However, negotiations held in February of 1988 resulted in a cease-fire and the conflict was over by December. In all, over 700 military personnel died on both sides. In the battles that occurred in 1987 and 1988, Laos's troops held the advantage from a territorial perspective and inflicted humiliating defeats on Thai troops (Conboy, 1992).

Relations between the countries improved after a coup d'état in Bangkok in 1991. They remained calm until violence again erupted in 2000. While relations between these countries have continually improved, including economic trade and political cooperation, this matter is still unresolved.



**Figure VI Lao and Thailand leaders meet.**

### **Case Study Analysis**

Territorial claims and military actions from Thailand regarding Laos could make sense from a realist perspective. The Mekong River Basin represents vast resources for any government that controls this area. Thailand was one of the more powerful states in the region, certainly more powerful than Laos at the time. According to realist principles, Thailand should pursue its own relative gains in the region in order to counter balance the uncertainties that exist in this region, especially with the growing presence and influence of China and Vietnam. As a result, it would be extremely rational to seek relative gains by way of territorial expansion to ensure Thai self-interests are fulfilled. Why didn't Thailand simply take any land it wanted at the time? Why would Thailand seek only to aggressively pursue the three villages? Why wouldn't Thailand seek to control all of the Mekong River that it could in the region? Thailand had dominated the Lao people for hundreds of years. Why wouldn't they simply embark on the same strategy that had worked for them in the past? With the ease at which Thailand was able to take Lao territory, realists would view this as a rational strategy. Thailand certainly pursued

territory they determined was in question when they took control over the tree villages of Ban Mai, Ban Klang, and Ban Sawang. Ultimately, however, the lands gained in this pursuit were insignificant and Thailand only held them for approximately seven months.

Thailand did invade Laos for a variety of reasons. First, the Lao government was supported by Vietnam and China as friendly communist countries. These countries shared and supported the communist ideology. Realism would not account for this type of support from other states as they see each state as representing only its self-interests in this anarchic world. This is a significant weakness of the realist argument as it discounts realities that shape behavior and action. Furthermore, while Thailand was militarily dominant, this does not always lead to a clear military victory. Due to the mountainous and tough terrain, winners of a protracted war in this region are not determined by how many bombs a country may have, as was clearly evident in other struggles in the region including Vietnam. There are numerous other determiners that factor into warfare in this region. Secondly, the Lao had demonstrated resolve and persistence. After being colonized by the Thai, subsequently by the French, and then waging a civil war that witnessed the communist Pathet Lao take control, the Lao populous and government was not about to become subservient to Thai overtures.

A liberal perspective would highlight the vast resources offered by the Mekong River as a centerpiece for this dispute. The Mekong provides a natural setting for economic benefits to both countries. Not only is this river the lifeline for many communities along it, it provides a natural transit system for local communities seeking to sell or trade their goods to Laotian or Thai populations. With Lao being one of the poorest states in the region, there were great advantages in Lao communities having access to Thai markets. As seen with other case studies, liberalism is an approach that seeks to establish and entrench cooperation. This approach is

unable to explore the underlying causes for why conflict occurred in the first place. While an economic approach to growth and cooperation is transformative in nature, it does not address the conflict itself. In this case, Thailand's economic might was used as a weapon against Lao in an effort to punish Lao communities and the government in regards to this dispute. It is unreasonable to believe that countries that are in a state of militarized conflict would seek harmony with each other through cooperative measures that would bolster each side. In these states of high tension, cooperation becomes a decreasing option. Accordingly, gaps are present in the liberal explanation.

In reviewing this conflict, one must certainly understand the history and experiences that have shaped this region. It would be absurd to attempt to understand this conflict without exploring the recent history. This is why constructivism is becoming one of the more influential approaches in the international arena. One cannot discount the fact that Thailand colonized Lao territory for over a hundred years, enslaving the Laotian population to build its cities, monuments, and historical treasures. Discounting this history appears irresponsible. Thai colonization was followed by French colonialism in the early 1900's, only to be reverted back to Thai control during World War II. After the defeat of Thailand in this war, France tried to regain control, but was rebuffed by Pathet Lao pursuits of independence from the French and Lao royalty. The Pathet Lao struggled for 30 years to gain independence, which came in 1975. This history directly shaped and molded the norms and beliefs of Laos during this conflict. As a largely agrarian and poor country, Laos shifted towards communism following the end of WWII due to the presence and persistence of the Pathet Lao. The territorial conflict with Thailand represented yet another attack on Lao sovereignty, freedom, and integrity. The battle for Lao independence quickly became an ideological war in the Cold War era. Since the Laotian

populace had suffered for hundreds of years under Thai and French rule, the norms and values shaped from this history created a populace and government that was willing to sacrifice for their independence and territorial rights granted by statehood.

From the Thai perspective, the history in the region appears to have shaped the idea that they had a right to any Laotian territories they sought. Siam ruled much of this region for hundreds of years. This created a right to ownership that Thailand has exerted whenever possible, as was the case during WWII. As soon as an opportunity presented itself, the Thai government took back what was thought to have been taken away by the more powerful French. Thailand simply pursued its interest in this region due to a history of exploitation and gains made in this territory. Why should today be any different than it was hundreds of years ago? This became part of Panthaism that was initiated in the early 1940s. Under the guise of reunited the Thai culture, Thailand embarked on reclaiming territories they felt were wrongfully taken from them. This theme did not end when Thailand was forced to give up Laotian territory after WWII. In fact, the territorial dispute between Thailand and Laos was a direct result of this Thai belief.

While military might and economic forces were certainly present in the Lao/Thai territorial dispute, the history and shared experiences that shaped this conflict appear to be more enduring. The three villages taken over by Thailand were not geostrategic and did not, unto themselves, contain significant economic resources. The small and unimportant geographic area that encompasses these villages does not lend itself to addressing relative or absolute gains, as emphasized by realism and liberalism. Rather this act appears to be based on a Thai norm that they are able to take and treat Laos as they wish. This specific conflict appears more ideological in nature than its geographic importance. Moreover, it is important to note the hundreds of years

of experiences that shaped Thailand's approach towards Laos. They had successfully dominated Laos and viewed them as subservient. Failing to take these realities into account, as is the case with the realist and liberal perspectives, leads to insufficient and unrealistic understanding of this dispute.

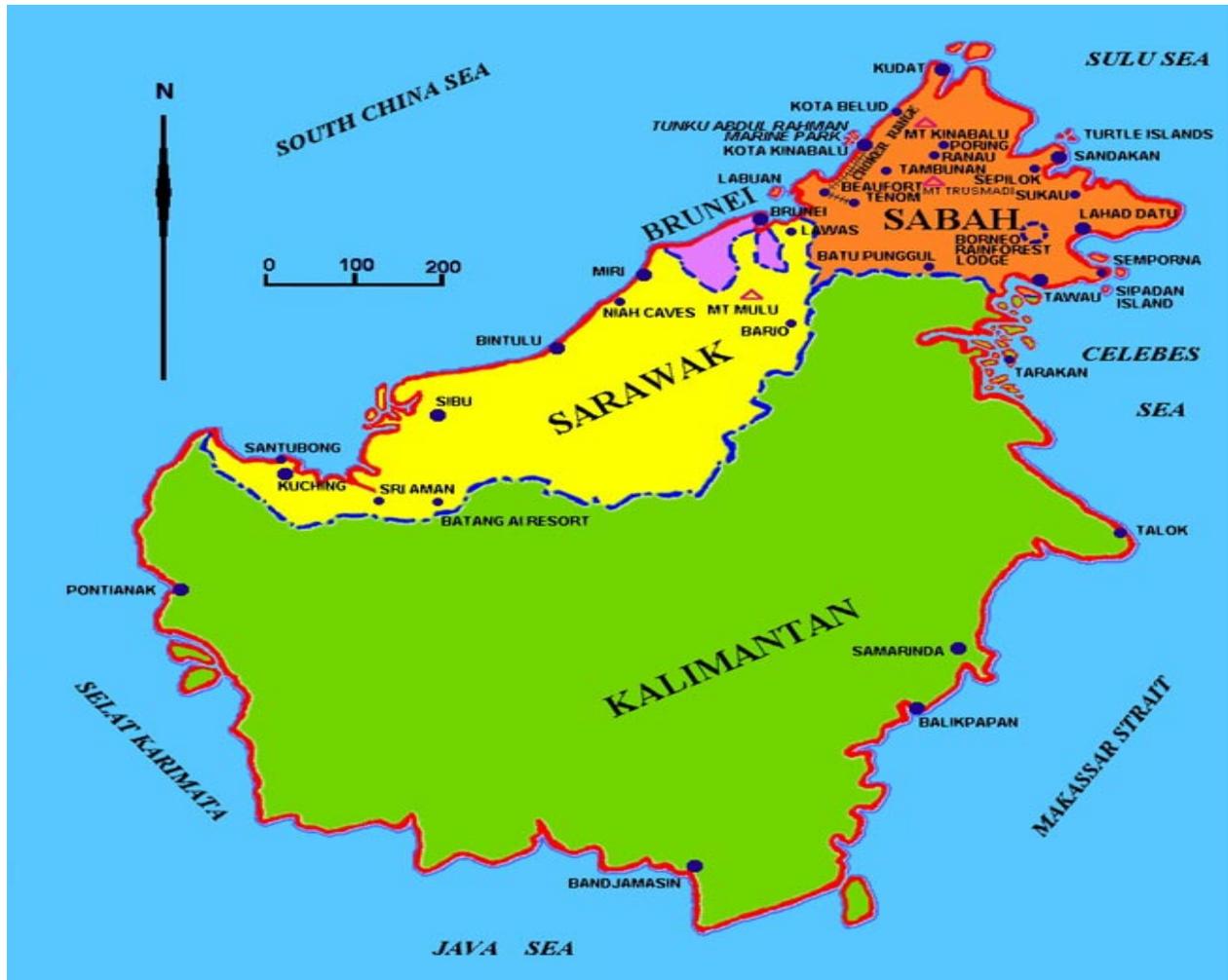


Figure VII Map of Borneo

## **CHAPTER V**

### **INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN CASE STUDY**

#### **History and Background**

The confrontation over the shared border between Indonesia and Malaysia on the island of Borneo began with the creation of Malaysia as its own free and independent state (van der Kroef, 1963). On September 16, 1963, Malaysia was created out of what were previous British colonies, Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei, and Sabah (Jones, 1980). The consolidation of these British colonies resulted in a country of some 330,252 square km consisting of two landmasses (Salleh, Razali, Jusoff, 2009). The first land mass is referred to as West Malaysia, which was previously called Malaya and the second, East Malaysia, is located on the Island of Borneo. East Malaysia entails what was at dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia. The combination of these territories was thought to be important by the British for several reasons. First, communist inroads were being made in Singapore and this threatened Western control of the straits of Malacca. (Jones, 1980; Leifer, 1966). The British thought that by including Singapore into the Malaysian federation, it would address this ideological shift. Second, Malaya, which had gained independence in 1957, was economically weak. The addition of these new lands would boost resources and provide for a larger economic base to compete internationally (Id). Finally, cultural concerns were thought to be mitigated by the creation of Malaysia. If only Singapore would have been added to Malaya, then Malaysia would have essentially become a Chinese state, which was greatly opposed by ethnic Malays (Butwell, 1964). Only by adding the territories on Borneo, Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei, did the cultural make-up work for Malays and the British Crown. By adding lands on Borneo, Malaysia became 48% Malay, 36% Chinese, 9% Indian or Pakistani, and 7% aboriginal (Jones, 1980). With

Communist China in the backyard of both Indonesia and Malaysia, avoiding a Chinese state was paramount to British geo-political concerns and cultural concerns on the part of ethnic Malays (Jones, pg. 265).

Discussions regarding a merger of these British territories began in 1961. Both British and Malay leadership viewed it necessary to understand the perspectives of the people located on Borneo. On August 1, 1962, it was decided between British and Malaya leadership that Malaysia would be formed on August 31, 1963 (Jones, 1980). This measure was endorsed by the Malaysian Parliament on August 15, 1962, by the Legislative Council of Sabah on September 12, 1962, by the Council Negri of Sarawak on September 26, 1962, and by 63% of the voters in Singapore (Id).

When discussion regarding Malaysia was initially presented to Indonesian leadership, they did not object as long as the territories had agreed to join Malaysia. While Indonesian leadership voiced no objections, a powerful communist party within Indonesia, the PKI, ardently opposed the formation and billed such an event as a neo-colonial attempt to suppress the peoples of these territories (Jones, 266; van der Kroef, 1963). This affected the leadership in the country and led to a cautious approach by Indonesia. Indonesia became leery for two reasons. First, they had hoped to extend their influence in the region by establishing an increased role in Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei. Secondly, Indonesia was concerned that a strong Malaysia might result in a cultural magnet for the ethnically related Sumatra (van der Kroef, 1963).

Even though Indonesia appeared unsure of this new arrangement called Malaysia, everything else seemed to be on track for it to occur. However, on December 8, 1962, a revolt broke out in Brunei lead by Azahari, who at the time was the President of Brunei's People's Party (Jones, 1980). Azhari had previously fought alongside Sukarno in Indonesia's quest for

independence. He attempted to form an independent state, the Unitary State of Kalimantan, and proclaimed himself as the President of that country. Indonesia's PKI immediately announced their support for the revolt. Two days later, Sukarno followed suit. It appeared that the Brunei revolt allowed Sukarno the opportunity to renounce his previous tacit acceptance of Malaysia (Jones, 1980). Brunei, mostly due to its vast oil resources, was too valuable to the British to allow this revolt to occur. Accordingly, the revolt was put down several days later. This was an important event from the Indonesian perspective because it supported its suspicions of neocolonialism (Id). This was a message that Indonesian leaders could use to rally their populace in opposition to Malaysia.

On January 20, 1963, Foreign Minister Subandrio, after returning from Peking China where he received support for the Brunei revolt, declared Indonesia's formal opposition and initiated a policy of confrontation (van der Kroef, 1963). Subandrio stated that due to the shared border between Indonesia and Malaysia, Indonesia could not remain passive. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the President of Malaya, denounced these statements as a declaration of cold war. The statements were ratcheted up when Sukarno countered by stating that a military conflict might be unavoidable if Malaysia was to be created. Sukarno stated, "We do not want to have neo-colonialism in our vicinity. We consider Malaysia an encirclement of the Indonesian Republic (Jones, 1980)." Furthermore, Sukarno began to openly support the people of Borneo and raised the rallying cry of self-determination.

On April 9 1963, representatives from Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines gathered in Manila to attempt to resolve the controversy of Northern Borneo (Leifer, 1966). On April 12, 1963, Indonesia launched its first attacks (Jones, 1980). This was designed as a show of force to Britain and Malay so they would better understand the ramifications of the creation of Malaysia.

Another attempt to settle matters occurred in May and June of 1963, when Sukarno invited the Malaya President for talks in Tokyo. Sukarno and Rahman agreed to resolve their differences peacefully and even discussed the creation of a greater Malay confederation to be called Maphilindo (Butwell, 1964). More importantly, Indonesia and the Philippines, both whom had claims to Northern Borneo, agreed to formally welcome the creation of Malaysia as long as the willingness of the Borneo territories to join Malaysia was determined by the United Nations (Jones, 1980). Of course, both the British and Malaya representatives claimed the people of Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei wanted to join Malaysia. All parties agreed to a U.N. administered an “official inquiry” into the opinions and perspectives of affected Borneo populations. All stakeholders, with the exception of Indonesia’s communist PKI party, China, and Vietnam, were elated about this solution as they believed they would be vindicated by the results of the U.N. “official inquiry” (Id). The U.N. inquiry mission began on August 26, 1963 (Id). U.N. teams met with officials, political leaders, and representatives from religious, tribal, ethnic, labor, and business groups. There was, however, some controversy between Britain, Indonesia, and Philippines regarding how many observers from each country should be allowed to participate. Ultimately, Britain allowed eight observers from Indonesia and the Philippines (Id). Additionally, there were other technical squabbles between Britain and Indonesia, which would be used later by Indonesia, regarding the U.N. inquiry into the self-determination of the people in territories of Borneo that were to be included in Malaysia. Furthermore, two (2) days before the results of the inquiry were announced, the Government of Malaysia issued a proclamation that Malaysia would be created regardless of the results. President Tunku had selected September 13 as the inauguration date of Malaysia. The results of the U.N. inquiry, once released on September 14, showed that a majority of people in the disputed Borneo territories did indeed

wish to join Malaysia (Id). U.N. leader of the inquiry, U Thant, stated the following: “I believe that the majority of them have concluded that they wish to bring their independent states to an end and to realize their independence through freely chosen association with other peoples in their region whom they feel ties of ethnic association, heritage, language, religion, culture, economic relationship, and ideals and objectives (Jones, 1980).” This was a tremendous blow to Sukarno. He was unable to maintain his promise of acceptance if these were the results. Rather, Sukarno questioned the validity and quality of the U.N. inquiry. Sukarno then decided to request an additional survey. Subandriyo announced that Indonesia would not recognize Malaysia until another inquiry was completed.

The day before Malaysia was created; Indonesia denounced the formation of the new country as a neocolonialist creation and refused to recognize Malaysia (Id). In fact, Sukarno viewed the British as a threat to Indonesian sovereignty and independence. As a response to the creation of Malaysia, he immediately initiated a policy of confrontation (Konfrontasi) (van der Kroef, 1963). On September 21, 1963, Indonesia established an economic blockade on Malaysia (Jones, 1980). The formation of Malaysia commenced on September 16, 1963 and tensions in the region began to increase. By December of 1963, Indonesia had approximately 10,000 troops along the border (Id). Furthermore, the Indonesian Army began training and arming dissenting groups in the area that also opposed Malaysia (Id). The United States worked to arrange a meeting between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Malaysia and the Philippines both agreed that a precursor to any meeting must include the end of Indonesian military activity in the disputed area. Sukarno agreed and on January 23, 1964, a cease-fire was announced. All parties met in Tokyo on June 18, 1964 (Butwell, 1964). However, this meeting, ended abruptly on June 20 when Sukarno claimed that the U.N. survey was a farce and that Indonesia was under

severe pressure from Britain at the time to agree to the Manila Accords. As a result, Indonesia encouraged and actively participated in guerilla warfare with the new Malaysian state. Sukarno rallied support domestically around his “Crush Malaysia” campaign, but by 1965, such support appeared to be weaning (Jones, 1980). On the other hand, Malaysian leadership benefited from Sukarno’s campaign as this united the population of the newly formed country (Id). Due to the strong perspectives about this conflict, resolution became increasingly more difficult.

Further exacerbating any hope for resolution was Sukarno’s ideological shift towards aligning with the communist regimes of Russia and China (Jones, 1980). He had also aligned himself domestically with the PKI, the strongest communist party in Indonesia (Id). Indonesian relations had deteriorated to the point where the United States had reached an agreement to begin training Malaysian forces and agreed to sell Malaysia \$5,000,000 in military equipment (Id). This was a major blow to Sukarno whose guerilla campaign was ineffective, especially with British troops on the ground and logistical support from the U.S. Given the lack of Indonesian success in this military campaign, it became increasingly clear that resolution was not possible as long as Sukarno was in control.

In 1965, Indonesian moderates began to organize, forming the Badan Pendukung Sukarnoisme (the “BPS”) and exerting their influence. Consisting of Christian and Muslim leaders, the army, newspaper editors and publishers, the goal of the BPS was to rescue the positive traits of Sukarno’s ideology from the perils of communist influences that had been increasing over the past few years (Id). Furthermore, members of the BPS felt that the PKI had no real political opposition domestically. Sukarno, at this time, was also slowing down physically and was preparing to limit his political activity. The BPS gained momentum, but in

December of 1965, Sukarno banned the BPS from political participation. Although banned, the goals and agendas of the BPS would soon resurface.

In September of 1965, a dramatic event occurred that changed the course of Indonesia. On September 30, 1965, an “abortive” coup d’état was initiated by domestic communists and disenchanted army personnel (Id). Their goal was to eliminate top army leadership, change the composition of the Indonesian cabinet, and establish a government that was more pro-communist (Jones, 1980). In doing so, death squads roamed Indonesia seeking to execute leaders, generals, and anyone else identified by the communists as a threat.

By October 1, 1965, coup forces were in control of Radio Indonesia and stated their objectives (Id). They claimed that their actions had prevented a coup d’état that had been planned by military personnel and that their objective was to remove the subversive elements of the armed forces. On October 5, Sukarno was announced to be safe and was under the protection of coup forces. General Suharto, on the other hand, did not acquiesce to the current rebel control of Indonesia. Suharto began to organize all people and groups that were loyal to him. “Within hours he had gathered around him elements of his own division and loyal units of other commands and set out to neutralize the rebels, who had taken over the palace and radio stations (Id).” Suharto planned to try to convince the rebels to surrender. “At 6:00 p.m., Suharto issued an ultimatum to the 454<sup>th</sup> battalion: either they evacuate their positions by 10:00 p.m. or he would blast them out (Id).” As the battalion withdrew, the PKI and their armed bands of thugs were planning an attack. Suharto quickly arrested these potential attackers and by 8:00 p.m., Suharto was in full control of Jakarta. Suharto then began to learn about Sukarno’s whereabouts. It became clear that Sukarno was not a prisoner. In fact, it was determined that he had given his blessing for the coup (Id). The failed coup attempt ended up being the demise of Sukarno and to

the benefit of Suharto. Suharto began to consolidate his own power in Indonesia (van der Kroef, 1966). On October 14, Sukarno announced that Suharto would be the Minister/Commander of the Indonesian Army (Jones, 1980). Additionally, as the Indonesian population began to learn more about the failed coup, public opinion did not favor Sukarno. It became clear that there were two primary powers in control that were vying for full Indonesian control. Suharto enjoyed the support of the army, the navy, and political moderates throughout the country. Sukarno was supported by the PKI and air force leadership (Id). This dual power led to internal strife and a virtual civil war during October. On November 3, about 100,000 Muslim and other anti-communist groups attacked the Chinese consulate. On April 15, the Chinese embassy was stormed and ransacked (Id). In October of 1965, Suharto's government banned the PKI and arrested thousands of its members. This pressure weighed heavily on Sukarno who in November described the communists as "rats that have eaten the big part of the cake and tried to eat the pillars of our house...now let's catch these rats and I will punish them (Id)." Anti-communist demonstrations continued throughout the spring of 1966. Also during this time was a showdown of power between Sukarno and Suharto. Sukarno delivered his last Independence Day speech on August 17, 1966 and claimed to still be running the country. The reality of the circumstances was that Suharto had been granted full power under the authority of the Parliament. Two days before the beginning of the 1966-1967 parliament, Suharto described his three (3)-part plan, which included the following: addressing Indonesia's economic woes, ending the conflict with Malaysia, and increasing cooperation throughout Southeast Asia (Id). Within a week of Suharto's speech, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Razak visited Jakarta and Foreign Minister Adam Malik traveled with a 52 person Indonesian delegation to Kuala Lumpur (Id). At noon on August 11, 1966, after three (3) years of confrontation, the dispute between Indonesia and

Malaysia ended (Salleh, Razali, and Jusoff, 2009). Both countries immediately ceased military action and established diplomatic partnerships and recognition. It was clear that this conflict was resolved swiftly through the change of leadership in Indonesia. Had Suharto not wrestled control away from Sukarno, the conflict would have persisted.



**Figure VIII Indonesian and Malaysian leaders meet.**

## Case Study Analysis

Prior to the legal formation of Malaysia, Sukarno expressed his frustration with this newly created country. Almost immediately, he initiated his policy of Konfrontasi. Included in this approach was military confrontation. Indonesia began training opposition groups on the island of Borneo that were Indonesian leaning in nature. Additionally, Sukarno actively engaged Malaysian and British military along-side the guerilla groups. Furthermore, within weeks of the formation of Malaysia, he initiated an economic blockade. Realists would view these actions as a way to expand Indonesian influence in the region. By taking up the cause of independence for the peoples of Sabah and Sarawak, he would gain influence in the region and might actually increase Indonesian territory if it had been determined that they did not wish to join Malaysia, pursuant to the U.N. study. Unfortunately, however, for Sukarno there was active support of Malaysia by Britain and the United States. Britain fought alongside the Malaysian troops and ultimately changed the balance of this conflict to the benefit of Malaysia. Due to external military and logistical support, Indonesia's military campaign proved fruitless. In fact, when Sukarno agreed to withdraw Indonesian troops from the disputed territory it was speculated that he delayed the withdrawal date because Indonesia had to actually insert troops prior to being able to withdraw them. Indonesia's policy of military confrontation was not successful and ultimately contributed to Indonesia's economic demise.

Realists would explain Sukarno's action as a way to increase his power-base, military capabilities and influence in Southeast Asia. If this pursuit was solely about increasing one's power, why did Sukarno frame this confrontation with overtones of neocolonialism and independence? In fact, Sukarno rallied his domestic support by emphasizing the role of colonialism in the dispute. As a benefactor of Indonesia's armed struggle against the Dutch for

independence, this was a natural rallying cry for Sukarno. He claimed that the formation of Malaysia was merely a clever way for Britain to retain control over its colonial territories. Furthermore, Sukarno believed that Malaysia was itself colonizing other smaller territories that were to be deprived of their independence. In addition to the rallying cry of colonialism, Sukarno drifted more toward communism as his rule extended. As a result, this ideological shift naturally made him more of an enemy of the West and anti-communist states during the Cold War. His allegiance shifted from the United States to Russia and China. How would realists explain these realities? Unfortunately, realists would not put much emphasis on these circumstances. This is one of the primary deficiencies of applying this approach to the Indonesian/Malaysian territorial dispute. The dispute was far more complicated than realism excels at explaining. While gaps due exist, the relevance of power and the use of such power was clearly evident in this dispute.

Liberals, as is the case with the previous case studies, fall into some of the trappings of realism and have significant deficiencies in explaining this conflict. Liberals would focus on economic development of this region. With the use of institutions, Indonesia and Malaysia could learn to cooperate with each other. Institutions are powerful in that they are able to define the rules of the playing field and can facilitate member buy-in. Indonesia and Malaysia would both benefit from a cooperative economic environment. With fledgling economies at the time, this would hopefully prove to be the most rational approach to their differences. While noble in its pursuit, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to engage in cooperative efforts between these countries when one country, in this case Indonesia, has openly declared a policy of confrontation. This policy witnessed active military support and use of Indonesia's economic might as tools against Malaysia. Simply put, due to the actions of Indonesia, these countries

were unable to embark on positive dialogue through institutions. Rather, military resources and desires for defending Malaysia's territory created a tenuous and non-conciliatory atmosphere. As is the case with the other case studies in this report, Liberalism fails miserably in explaining and understanding this conflict.

From a constructivist perspective, Sukarno clearly outlined his beliefs towards the creation of Malaysia. His experiences participating in the guerilla campaign against the Dutch not only shaped his view toward Western Colonialists, but also resulted in his rise to power. The nation and Sukarno's anti-colonialist perspective became stronger as Indonesia fought for independence. The beliefs were so powerful that his policy of confrontation was not one of discretion. Rather, he felt it was his duty to free the disputed territories from the grips of colonialism. He used this approach to garner the domestic support of his like-minded populace.

In addition to freeing the peoples of Sabah and Sarawak, Sukarno felt uncomfortable having a colonial presence in the region. Due to the long Indonesian struggle for independence, the mere presence of colonialism led to inherent skepticism. Sukarno's own experiences created the need for him to respond to the creation of Malaysia with force. Over time, his beliefs became more aligned with communist Russia and China, which resulted in a strain on any Western countries, the United States included.

Indonesia's approach to this conflict ended once Sukarno was essentially removed from power. The domestic coup attempt by Sukarno and his communist supporters gave Suharto and other domestic influences the authority and legitimacy to remove Sukarno from power. The removal of Sukarno was the most significant factor in resolving this dispute. Sukarno and the PKI were in such opposition to Malaysia that nothing else seem to matter. More moderates throughout the country saw the conflict with Malaysia as empty and pointless. For them,

Sukarno's rallying cries against colonialism and the "West" became out of touch with the mainstream. Once Suharto had fully consolidated power, he ended the Indonesian policy of Konfrontasi with Malaysia within a week. Within that very week, the confrontation was over, an agreement had been reached, Indonesia had recognized Malaysia, and full diplomatic ties were established. Once the norms and values of Sukarno were removed, the conflict was over.

This conflict represents a powerful lesson in regard to solving these types of disputes. Indonesia's military might was no match for Malaysia's Western backed military. Economic cooperation was not plausible in the existing state of conflict. The most enduring factor to this resolution was the removal of an authoritarian leader who drove the country down the perilous road of confrontation based solely on his disgust for colonialism and Western influence in the region. Sukarno's beliefs radicalized over time and, in the end, the removal of his beliefs resulted in the resolution of the conflict. This clearly demonstrates how powerful, enduring, and destructive norms and beliefs can be in the international arena and why changing such norms should be the focus of conflict resolution.

## CHAPTER VI

### CASE STUDY REVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to apply the three most prominent theories in the international relations field to these four case studies in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each theory through empirical application. The goal of this research is to see how these theories may be applied to real world events. Insights were gained in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of each theory. In political science in general, scholars often jockey to determine which theory is best. It is not uncommon for a political scientist's career to be linked to one theoretical perspective. The purpose of understanding territorial disputes should be to gain greater insights into the process of resolving these types of conflicts. Furthermore, this research also seeks to determine if a dominant theory exists. The purpose is not to understand which theory can predict future disputes, hot spots for disputes, how to prevent disputes, or which theory is best to resolve disputes in the short and long term. As is often the case with conflict management study, it is easy for students and scholars to jump to resolution before establishing a true understanding. That is why it was important to apply these theories in this manner. The other topics, while vital to conflict management study, are best reserved for future research. We have seen over time how a lack of understanding of the history and circumstances has led to deleterious policy decisions. Often policy makers prescribe actions that clearly demonstrate a lack of understanding or knowledge of the region. These policy prescriptions lead to failure, short term resolutions, and other instances where disastrous consequences are left to be dealt with in another administration or by a future generation. Military action has been utilized in many instances as a solution for resolution. Peru and Ecuador, for instance, engaged in many military confrontations, but they never ended the dispute. The results of similar military

campaigns are suspect at best. One can bomb bridges, infrastructure, and buildings, but there are very few examples where bombs succeeded in eliminating or significantly curtailing an ideology. In fact, what we have seen over the last twenty years is that bombs often coalesce and strengthen support for specific ideologies. Our experiences have demonstrated that a thorough understanding of any international circumstance requires a deep understanding of all that has shaped the current state of events.

How did the various theories perform in their application to these four case studies? The most prominent theory, realism, has dominated U.S. foreign policy since the end of World War II. Due to the Cold-War that emerged from WWII, this approach seemed appropriate and was very attractive to policy makers in a bi-polar world. Background, history, culture, religion, and perspectives were not a primary concern in a world that pitted the United States and capitalism against the U.S.S.R. and its brand of communism. The primary aspect of action and policy in this period was in regard to which ideology a state adopted. As was the case with all theories, realist explanations contained gaps as it was applied to these territorial disputes. One of the primary deficiencies of this theory is that it focuses squarely on the state as the primary actor. In this research, the focus was on territorial disputes between states. Accordingly, one could argue that realism had an advantage in this arena since the state being the primary actor is one of its fundamental assumptions. Unfortunately, though, realism fails to offer, seek, or be interested in what past events and experiences have shaped these states world view. Rather, their dependence on an anarchic world stage fails to stoke an interest in looking into the history that has shaped present day. Realism believes that friends yesterday can become foes today and friendly states tomorrow may be foes the following day. This perspective keeps realism in an unhealthy present state that finds the past useless and the future frightening. Lastly, this theory is insufficient in

being able to explore or apply domestic influences. In many of our case studies, domestic politics and opinion determined if a dispute was resolved. Dismissing the past prevents realism from being able to explain the complicated circumstances that have shaped the four disputes outline in this paper. In regard to the Ecuador/Peru dispute, the history that shaped this matter was vast. This dispute was directly reliant upon geographical colonial ambiguity that left these new states vying for territorial integrity. In the case of Indonesia and Malaysia, the conflict was clearly impacted by Suharto's experience and fight for Indonesian independence. These experiences shaped his approach to Malaysia as just another colonial incursion into this region. In the case of Belize and Guatemala, the Guatemalans were adamant that these lands had been stolen from Spain by the British and were populated by outsiders who were not indigenous to the region. In the case of Thailand and Laos, colonial influence and legacy shaped the lack of clear boundary in the Mekong River Basin. To discount these historical influences does an injustice to those involved. Dismissing hundreds of years of experiences demonstrates a fundamental flaw of realism.

Realism is also focused on power relations between states. Power is supreme in the realist perspective and it is utilized to pursue one's self-interests. While power is present in all of the case studies, how does it help to explain these disputes? Peru, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Thailand were much more powerful militarily and economically than their counterparts, but this power does not explain why the disputed lands were so important and contested for hundreds of years in some cases. Ultimately, power denotes capabilities and capabilities do not provide any adequate reasoning for why the disputes arose, persisted, and provide so much fervor in these disputes. Rather, power and capabilities are more indicative of which state should win a conflict and not why a dispute exists in the first place.

Another vital assumption of realism is its reliance on rational behavior. Realism holds that states act rationally in their pursuit of self-interested goals in the international arena. In these conflicts, there was much irrational behavior. In the case of Indonesia, the country was economically bankrupt as Sukarno waged his war with Malaysia and her Western parents. Rationally speaking, Sukarno was not doing what was arguably in his country's best interest. Rather, his irrational nationalistic perspective drove him to go on the attack in a war that cost his country much economically and politically. Ultimately, this irrational behavior was his downfall and one of the primary reasons he lost power. Due to the military power of Peru, it was not rational for Ecuador to engage in any type of military confrontation with Peru. On the contrary, however, Ecuador did not back down in their pursuit of these disputed lands. They sought conflict with Peru even though they had lost every military confrontation. Similarly, in the Laos/Thailand dispute Laos was outmatched, yet they often acted as the provocateur in this dispute. The same type of irrational behavior was seen in the Belize/Guatemalan dispute. Guatemala's army was immense compared to the capabilities of Belize. The U.K.'s presence was certainly a deterrent, but they often had no more than 1,000 or so military personnel in Belize in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Accordingly, there was much opportunity for Guatemala to seize the tiny country of Belize when the U.K. had much more pressing matters on the world stage, including WWII, Vietnam, and the Korean War. It is doubtful that Belize was a high priority for the U.K. during these wars and in other periods when the cost of defending Belize was outweighed by more pressing matters. Given these facts, in each of these case studies, territorial disputes are not rooted or acted upon by strict rational behavior.

Due the many similarities between realism and liberalism, liberalism shares many of realism's fundamental flaws. These shared assumptions include the state as the primary actor,

an anarchic worldview, and rational behavior and actions. Where liberalism begins to distance itself from realism is in regard to its emphasis on economics and its transformative prescriptions for cooperation. It would be duplicative to explore the failures of liberalism that it shares with realism. Accordingly, its differences on economics and cooperation will be explored.

Liberals view these disputes as resulting from economic pursuits or inequities. Economic characteristics in all four of the case studies are present. Ecuador had much to gain in regard to access to the Amazon River. Borneo offered vast resources that could have greatly benefited Indonesia's struggling economy. Guatemala's access to additional logging lands and increased access to the Atlantic is a compelling economic argument. Lastly, the Mekong River basin is a major economic engine throughout Southeast Asia. Not only does this river provide for livelihoods for those that live along its banks, but it is also a significant economic engine due to transport of goods from the various states that encompass parts of this river or that border it. Economic advantages are certainly present for those disputing borders. Such is the case with any land that exists. Essentially all land acquired, gained or within states' borders inherently offers economic benefits. This is a generic quality to all land. Gaining such attributes can certainly be an aspect to increase desire for acquiring territory, but at what cost? Guatemala greatly dwarfs the size of Belize. Due to its proximity, it already controls and has within its borders resources, logging, etc...similar to what is offered on Belizean lands. Accordingly, does this small country represent sizable economic incentives? It appears not. Another economic factor in this dispute that was highlighted in the research was increased access to the Atlantic. Acquiring Belizean lands would certainly increase access to the Atlantic, but this ocean was already accessible. Do these nominal economic incentives for Guatemala amount to the primary reason for the dispute, or are they "add-ons" to the real reasons for Guatemala's quest for Belize? In the case of the

Mekong River, Laos already has vast access to this river and all of its tributaries. In this conflict, the “three villages” were a primary source for conflict at issue. These villages were small and poor. Did these “three villages” represent such economic gains that Thailand sought their control? In relation to the rest of Thailand’s resources, these “three villages” pale in comparison and are unlikely to represent a compelling economic argument for action. A similar argument can be made for Indonesia on Borneo. The Malaysian section of this island is very small. In fact, Indonesia controlled nearly 75% of this island. The Malaysian territory represented about 23 percent. With such a vast stake Indonesia already had on Borneo, did the 23% represent such significant economic incentive that it warranted this dispute and a military conflict? At this point, Indonesia hadn’t even adequately been able to take advantage of the lands already under its control. The country did not have the capacity to manage, oversee, and profit from these additional lands. With such vast resources at its disposal, it is highly unlikely that economic reasons were the catalyst for this dispute.

Finally, in regard to Ecuador and Peru, it is clear that access to the Amazon River provides economic benefits. This river not only provides access to the rest of South America, but also to the Atlantic Ocean. Does this economic incentive, however, explain how territory in a post Spanish South America was divided up? Such economic incentive certainly is not included in Ecuador’s historical claims on these lands. It certainly doesn’t explain national sentiments that this land was stolen. Such sentiments evoked and stoked emotions for over 160 years until this dispute was settled. Was accessing a primary reason for the dispute when it was initiated in 1821? At this point, the economic advantages of the Amazon were not as realistic as in modern times. Was the national support indicative of this land solely vested in economic benefits? It is doubtful that such emotions, sentiments, and support could have been sustained

over such a long period of time. While economic incentives are woven into the fabric of disputes, it does not appear they are the fundamental reason for these issues.

Another focus for the liberal perspective is a reliance on institutions. It relies heavily on the use of institutions between states to foster a cooperative environment. Liberals utilize varying types of institutions that contain formal agreements and structures to less formal arrangements. This characteristic of liberalism makes it a transformative theory. It seeks to change world views by the using regional and international intuitions to address and bridge issues inherent with what they believe to be an anarchic international society. While admirable indeed, the deployment and use of institutions between states does little to help us understand the case studies utilized in this paper. One could argue the lack of institutions after the Spanish pulled out of South America was a contributor to the many territorial disputes that arose during this period of flux, Ecuador and Peru included. Furthermore, had the Spanish and the colonized regions set up territorial institutions to determine borders and to provide a resource and forum for resolving disputes, this dispute may not have occurred. It is possible that institutions could have aided this transition, but it is also true that this concept was not prevalent in this time period. The concept of the state was new to Western powers. As they colonized lands throughout the world, they were more interested in added to their wealth than exporting the concept of statehood to conquered lands. Furthermore, when colonist left countries, these countries had not developed civil societies that are part of the development of any state. Additionally, are we to assume that the best way to understand these case studies is through a lack of institutions? Does a lack of institutions properly explain why the dispute between Ecuador and Peru existed at all or why it lasted 168 years? This is also the case for our other case studies. Rather, the use of institutions appears to be more of conflict management tool than an avenue of explanation and

understanding. Liberalism's reliance on institutions are better served to other specific topics within the field of conflict management, but their use in developing a keen and true understanding is certainly not one.

Since realism and liberalism contain such significant gaps, is constructivism a better theory? The most important theoretical characteristic of constructivism is its emphasis on norms and beliefs. This approach seeks to understand norms in beliefs and how they have been shaped over time. Inherent within norms and beliefs are all of the life experiences, history, and events that have shaped these views. While certain events can radically change existing perspectives, they are generally shaped over a long period. This allows researchers to include history, wars, political events, relationships and all other influences that have shaped the norms and beliefs. This approach is certainly helpful when reviewing the various these case studies. The approach is able to explore how experiences and events shaped the disputes between these states.

In the dispute between Ecuador and Peru, constructivism's theoretical foundation is able to incorporate all of the historical events that molded this conflict. The manner in which this area was managed by Spanish colonists led to differing views in regard to who should hold these lands. Such beliefs were codified throughout this 168 year conflict. Often, these strong beliefs were used as rallying cries and mobilized citizenry in each country, often being exploited for the benefit of presidential campaigns. Such was also the case in the dispute between Belize and Guatemala. Norms and beliefs were not only demonstrated in elections of elected officials, but also in public outcries that led to policy changes and the reversal of agreements to resolve the dispute. Furthermore, the cultural difference between these two countries, Guatemala identified with Latin America and Belize aligned with the Caribbean, further demonstrated how immersed norms and beliefs were in this dispute. In both of the Latin American case studies, norms and

beliefs shaped over time and through a variety of events, shaped strong views that surpassed any importance of military might and economic advantages offered by the disputed lands.

Constructivism was equally important in understanding the case studies in Southeast Asia. As is the case with the Latin American case studies, constructivism is the only theoretical approach that incorporates the totality of events and history that shaped these disputes.

Sukarno's hatred towards colonialism and his quest for Indonesian independence did not allow him to accept what he viewed as colonial overtures in the creation of Malaysia. Furthermore, he had built strong nationalist tendencies based on past Indonesia empires. These traits of his rule led him down a path of resistance to Malaysia. While outmatched militarily, his refusal to retreat characterizes his perspective and beliefs towards this conflict. The only reason this conflict ended was because a new leader, Suharto, did not share the same norms and beliefs as Sukarno.

Constructivism continues its strong explanatory ability in the Laos and Thailand conflict.

Thailand's historical views towards Laos and historical regional dominance committed this country to a path of confrontation with Laos. Thailand believed strongly that the disputed lands rightly belonged to this country and not to Laos. Furthermore, ideological differences between Thailand and communist Laos led to a distancing of perspectives and strengthened the desire for acquiring these disputed lands, so much so that this dispute is not yet resolved.

It is undeniably true that the perspectives defined by these theories offer different explanations of these cases studies. Realisms use of power is certainly present when these disputes result in armed conflicts. However, having a bigger, faster, and stronger military does not necessarily lead to an adequate understanding of the events. It is also true that liberalist perspectives can be explained in all of these case studies. Economic forces do play a role in all of the disputes highlighted these case studies. Additionally, institutions are also present and have

aided in effectuating change. The United Nations was pivotal in recognizing and legitimizing Belize, and guarantor state of the U.S., Argentina, Chile, and Brazil played a vital role in the Rio Protocol and eventually ending the Ecuador/Peru conflict. The presence of realist and liberal assumptions in these case studies should not come as a surprise. The theoretical underpinnings of these theories are both relevant and important. These theories, however, contain more substantive gaps than their counterpart of constructivism.

Constructivism is the broadest approach and appears to be best able to incorporate more events and experiences that have shaped these disputes. Through the study of norms and beliefs, this approach allows researchers more of a blank canvas that allows them to incorporate history, any world event, or any part of a country's experience that has shaped its world view. As such, one can denote that in regards to explaining these four case studies, constructivism is able to include a wider variety of events than are realism and liberalism. Constructivism can utilize power structures to determine how such influences have shaped public opinion. In regards to economic resources, it is able to demonstrate how important economic resources may heighten a dispute. Is constructivism a perfect theory? Although not perfect, constructivism's primary flaw of not being able to proactively change norms and beliefs is more of a liability when seeking to resolve disputes than when explaining or increasing our understanding of them.

After applying these three theories to the case studies, it is clear that significant gaps exist in all of them. No one theory is able to perfectly explain any of these case studies. All theories have valid viewpoints and significant weaknesses. It is extremely difficult for any theory to be able to address the complexities that exist in these case studies. At first glance, these territorial disputes appear to be between two countries, those who share the border. Upon closer inspection, there are tremendous external influences that complicate this field of study. In

the dispute between Belize and Guatemala, the role of the British government complicates this dispute greatly. Similarly, the role of China, the United States, the Dutch, and Great Britain had significant impacts on the dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia. The vast number of actors involved in these disputes, their varying levels of interest, and the importance of these territories to them provided for complex disputes that are difficult for any one theory to be able to incorporate all events and circumstances into its general assumptions and theoretical foundation. The vast nature of territorial disputes makes it difficult at best for any one theory to explain all of these events from its perspective.

Ultimately, do we live in a world where one theory has to prevail? While many political scientists and policy makers would like us to believe so, this is certainly not the case. In fact the consequences of war trump academic pursuits of establishing a theoretical winner. Theoretical warfare is irresponsible when stakes are so high. Political science has failed to create a flawless theory that explains all aspects of territorial disputes. This discipline, however, has established a wide array of differing points of view. We have the moral responsibility and luxury to incorporate all of these perspectives to increase our understanding. When human life, ecological destruction, and catastrophes are at play, all valid viewpoints at our disposal must be utilized. The stakes are simply too great to do otherwise.

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