



Border as a Mode of Governance: An Analysis of Thailand's Immigration Control Regime

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Abstract This article analyzes Thailand's immigration control system through the lens of border governance, conceptualizing the border not as a fixed territorial line but as a mode of governance embedded in legal and administrative processes. Existing studies on Thai immigration control have largely emphasized legal frameworks or national security concerns, offering limited insight into how borders operate as ongoing mechanisms of governance. Employing a qualitative document-based analysis, this study examines immigration laws, subordinate regulations, official policy documents, and relevant academic literature published between 1954 and 2025. The

analysis is guided by three analytical frameworks: border as governance, political technologies, and uneven borders. These frameworks enable an examination of how immigration control operates across multiple temporal stages—before, at, and after border crossing—and through the coordination of multiple state agencies.

The findings show that Thailand's border functions as a flexible and uneven governance regime characterized by administrative discretion, multi-agency coordination, and temporal forms of control rather than solely territorial enforcement. Immigration control operates through visa regimes, legal conditions of stay, and bureaucratic procedures that stratify mobility and produce differentiated legal statuses among migrants and travelers. This article contributes to border studies by extending the concept of border governance beyond Western contexts and highlighting the central role of legal-administrative power in governing mobility.

Introduction

Cross-border movement in modern states is no longer adequately understood as a simple act of territorial entry or exit. Rather, it constitutes a complex political and administrative process through which states organize mobility, define legal membership, and manage perceived risks. Contemporary border studies increasingly emphasize that borders do not operate solely at the geographical margins of the state. Instead, they function as institutionalized mechanisms embedded in laws, administrative procedures, and routine practices of governance that extend across everyday life (Paasi, 1998, pp. 69-71; Walters, 2006, pp. 187-189; Balibar, 2002, pp. 75-78).

In this literature, borders are conceptualized as dynamic and dispersed processes rather than fixed territorial lines. (Walters, 2006) William Walters argues that border control is increasingly exercised through administrative and legal practices that operate across space and time, while *Theorizing Borders* Chris Rumford (Rumford, 2006) and Alison Mountz (Mountz, 2010) highlight the temporal and institutional dispersion of borders beyond physical checkpoints. These perspectives shift analytical attention away from visible enforcement toward the mundane and often invisible mechanisms through which states govern mobility.

However, scholarship on immigration control in Thailand has largely approached borders through legalistic or security-oriented frameworks. Existing studies tend to focus on statutory provisions, state sovereignty, or national security concerns, offering valuable insights into formal legal structures but providing limited analysis of how borders function as ongoing mechanisms of governance in practice (Laungaramsri, 2020). As a result, the immigration system is often examined as a set of rules enforced at border checkpoints rather than as a temporally extended process embedded in administrative routines and multi-agency governance.

Thai scholars have noted that state authority at the borders is neither uniform nor absolute, particularly along land frontiers where economic activities, local communities, and cross-border practices necessitate flexible forms of governance. (Laothamatas, 2016) Anek Laothamatas demonstrates that Thailand's border areas operate as negotiated spaces in which state power must be continuously adapted and recalibrated. While these insights point to the uneven and negotiated nature of border control in Thailand, they have yet to be systematically integrated into broader theoretical debates on border governance and political technologies.

This article fills this gap by examining at Thailand's immigration system as a way to govern, not just as a legal or security tool. It contributes to contemporary border studies by extending the concept of border governance to a non-Western state context and by demonstrating how borders in Thailand operate through legal-administrative processes, executive discretion, and multi-agency coordination across pre-border, at-border, and post-border stages. In doing so, the article highlights the central role of law and administration in

governing mobility and advances border studies beyond its predominant focus on Western cases and technologically driven border regimes.

Objective

To analyze the role of Thailand's immigration system as a mechanism of governance, focusing on its legal and administrative processes.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design with a focus on document-based analysis. The methodology is designed to examine Thailand's immigration system as a mechanism of governance embedded in legal and administrative processes. The research process is divided into two main stages: data collection and data analysis.

1. Data Collection

In this study, data collection focuses on secondary data drawn from documents. These materials were systematically collected between November 2023 and March 2025 and organized into three main groups.

First, the study examines legal documents related to immigration in Thailand. These include immigration laws from the Immigration Act of 1954 to the Immigration Act of 1979, along with related regulations, ministerial notifications, and administrative orders. The documents were collected from official government publications, legal databases, and relevant state agency websites, and are used to trace the development of immigration governance, the scope of administrative discretion, and the role of law in border control.

Second, the study draws on official government documents and policy-related materials from agencies involved in immigration control, such as the Immigration Bureau, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other relevant state agencies. These documents include policy statements, administrative guidelines, official reports, and coordination materials, and are used to understand how immigration control is carried out in practice through multi-agency governance and administrative coordination.

Third, academic literature in both Thai and English is used to provide the theoretical basis for the analysis and to contextualize Thailand's immigration system within broader border governance debates.

The study does not employ primary data collection methods and instead relies on documentary sources to examine institutional practices and governing logics at the state level.

2. Data Analysis

The data analysis is qualitative and interpretive in nature. All collected documents were carefully read, reviewed, and analyzed using a document analysis approach. The analysis is guided by three main conceptual frameworks: borders as governance, borders as political technologies, and uneven borders.

In the first stage of analysis, the documents were examined to identify key themes related to legal frameworks, administrative discretion, and institutional arrangements in Thailand's immigration system. Attention was paid to how borders operate across different temporal stages, including pre-border, at-border, and post-border processes.

In the second stage, the analysis focused on interpreting how legal and administrative mechanisms function as tools of governance. This involved examining how visa regimes, conditions of stay, documentation systems, and multi-agency coordination shape mobility control and produce differentiated legal statuses among travelers and migrants.

Throughout the analysis, documents were treated not merely as descriptive sources but as sites where state power, knowledge, and governing rationalities are produced and institutionalized. The findings were interpreted by linking legal texts, policy documents, and academic literature to demonstrate how Thailand's borders operate as ongoing and uneven processes of governance rather than as fixed territorial boundaries.

This qualitative analytical approach is appropriate for achieving the research objectives, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of governance structures and legal-administrative processes without relying on quantitative measurement. This conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

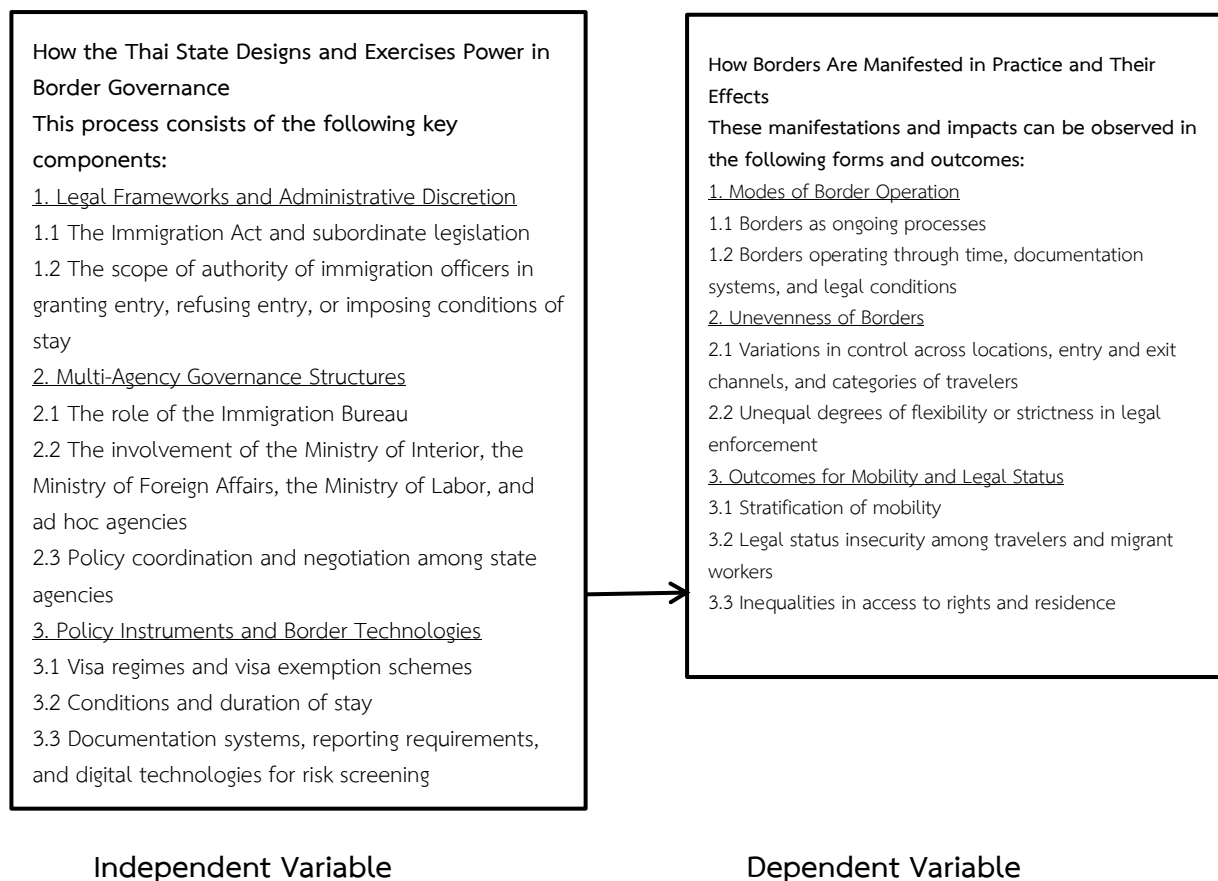


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

Results

The analysis of legal documents, official government materials, and academic literature on Thailand's immigration system, conducted within the border governance framework, reveals a set of analytical findings that systematically reflect how borders operate as mechanisms of governance in the Thai state. These findings show that borders are not just lines on a map; they are ongoing institutional processes that work through law, discretionary authority, and complex systems of governance. In total, six distinct patterns of border operation are identified.

1. Thailand's Immigration System Operates as a Temporally Continuous Process of Governance.

The first finding indicates that Thailand's immigration system does not function as a discrete or momentary event at border crossing points, nor is it confined to the brief period when travelers encounter state officials. Rather, it operates as a temporally continuous process of governance that extends along the entire trajectory of mobility, encompassing the pre-travel, transit, and post-travel phases of entry into the state's territory (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191; Rumford, 2006, pp. 155–160).

Thailand's regulation of cross-border entry and exit begins at the pre-border stage through visa requirements, the classification of travel categories, permitted durations of stay, and advance screening processes conducted by embassies or relevant authorities. These mechanisms determine in advance who is allowed to enter the country, under what conditions, and with what legal status, even before movement actually takes place (Walters, 2006, pp. 188–189).

When travelers arrive at border checkpoints (at the border), immigration control does not merely involve document verification or passport stamping. Rather, it is a site where administrative discretion is exercised in interpreting travel conditions, permitted stay, and risks that have been assessed in advance by the state. Decisions made at border checkpoints therefore form part of a continuous process of governance extending from the pre-border stage, rather than constituting an independent or isolated procedure (Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191).

Importantly, Thailand's border governance process does not end once travelers pass through border checkpoints and enter state territory. It continues in the post-border stage through conditions of stay, reporting requirements, status renewals, visa category changes, and oversight by multiple state agencies. These mechanisms ensure that the legal status of residents is continuously monitored, reviewed, and reassessed throughout the duration of their stay in the country (Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64; Rumford, 2006, pp. 155–160).

Based on these findings, Thailand's borders cannot be understood as fixed lines or checkpoints that end at a specific moment in time. Rather, they operate as governing processes that permeate the everyday lives of residents through laws, regulations, and administrative procedures that subject mobility and residence within state territory to

continuous oversight. Borders thus take the form of temporally extended processes rather than discrete events, highlighting that Thailand's regulation of cross-border movement is embedded within an ongoing structure of governance that unfolds continuously in the daily lives of travelers and residents alike (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191).

2. Laws and Subordinate Legislation as Key Mechanisms Enabling Border Flexibility.

The second finding indicates that Thailand's borders are not primarily driven by physical enforcement or surveillance at border checkpoints. Instead, they are sustained and made adaptable through laws and subordinate legislation as central mechanisms of governance. An analysis of legal and official documents shows that core immigration laws function as broad frameworks of authority, while the specification of detailed rules, conditions, and exceptions governing cross-border entry and exit is largely delegated to subordinate legislation, regulations, and administrative orders issued by the executive branch (Foucault, 2007, pp. 108–110; Valverde, 2011, pp. 17–21).

The role of subordinate legislation enables the state to flexibly adjust the intensity of mobility control without the need to amend or enact new primary laws. As a result, border governance processes can respond rapidly to specific situations, urgent policy priorities, or shifting political and economic contexts. This flexibility allows for measures such as the relaxation of entry requirements for certain groups, the introduction of additional documentation requirements, or the expansion of administrative discretion in case-by-case decision-making (Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191).

Such flexibility indicates that Thailand's borders do not operate as fixed or rigid rules but rather as legal structures that can be tightened or relaxed in accordance with policy priorities and state risk assessments at particular moments in time. Laws and subordinate legislation thus function as technologies of governance that create space for the executive to exercise discretion in managing mobility, while maintaining legitimacy within the existing legal framework (Foucault, 2007, pp. 108–110; Valverde, 2011, pp. 20–23).

In this sense, Thailand's borders are not reproduced solely through the use of force or physical barriers. Rather, they are sustained through ongoing legal and administrative processes. Subordinate legislation and administrative orders function as mechanisms that render borders flexible, adaptable, and embedded within everyday practices of governance, rather than appearing only in visible form at border checkpoints. Borders are therefore not rigid lines but legal structures that are continuously made mobile and adjustable within the framework of state authority (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191).

3. Border Governance in Thailand Operates through a Multi-Agency Governance Structure.

The third key finding indicates that immigration governance in Thailand is not exercised exclusively by a single authority. Instead, it emerges from a multi-agency governance structure in which different agencies possess distinct powers, mandates, and operational logics. The

regulation of cross-border entry and exit is the result of coordination, negotiation, and the prioritization of policy objectives among various state agencies operating in different areas (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83; Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64).

At the institutional level, security agencies are primarily responsible for assessing risks and threats to state sovereignty and public order, while economic and labor agencies approach mobility as an economic resource and a source of labor. Foreign affairs agencies, in turn, play a key role in shaping interstate relations, negotiating agreements, and implementing visa policies at the international level. These differing institutional logics mean that decisions on cross-border entry and exit cannot be explained solely in terms of security or legal considerations. Rather, they must be understood as the outcome of policy negotiations among multiple state actors (Ong, 2006, pp. 80–83).

Such a multi-agency governance structure renders Thailand's borders institutionally dispersed. The regulation of mobility is carried out through a wide range of processes and instruments, including visa regimes, residence authorization, labor regulation, and ad hoc measures implemented during exceptional situations. As a result, borders do not appear as a single checkpoint but are dispersed across different agencies, legal frameworks, and administrative procedures (Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64; Walters, 2006, pp. 187–189).

However, despite the institutional dispersion of border governance, ultimate decision-making authority remains concentrated within the executive as the central locus of governing power. This centralization enables the state to maintain policy coherence and to rapidly recalibrate border governance in response to political pressures, economic conditions, or emergency situations (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–80).

Based on this finding, Thailand's borders can be understood as simultaneously dispersed and centralized. They are dispersed at the level of institutional practice, yet centralized at the level of policy decision-making authority. This configuration reflects that border governance in Thailand is not a uniform system but an ongoing process of governance that relies on managing differences, coordinating interests, and the continuous exercise of executive discretion (Ong, 2006, pp. 81–83; Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191).

4. Thailand's Borders Operate Unevenly across Space and Travel Channels

The fourth finding shows that Thailand's borders do not function uniformly across the entire territory. Instead, they exhibit systematic unevenness across geographic locations, entry and exit channels, and categories of travelers. An analysis of legal documents, official materials, and policy frameworks indicates that the intensity of control is not applied in a standardized manner but is adjusted in response to the specific contexts of particular locations and forms of mobility (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83; Paasi, 1998, pp. 69–74).

From a spatial perspective, air borders, land borders, and borderland areas are governed according to distinct logics. Air borders are typically regulated through documentation systems, advance screening technologies, and standardized procedures that

prioritize speed and legal certainty. In contrast, land borders, particularly along Thailand's borders with neighboring countries, require more flexible forms of management, allow greater room for discretion, and must take into account economic, social, and everyday livelihood relations within border communities (Paasi, 1998, pp. 72–74; Laothamatas, 2016).

Moreover, the unevenness of borders is clearly evident across travel channels and categories of travelers. Tourists, investors, or professionals from certain countries may encounter relatively smooth and relaxed procedures, while migrant workers, refugees, or travelers from areas assessed by the state as high risk are subject to more stringent screening processes. These differences indicate that Thailand's borders operate through a stratification of mobility rather than the uniform application of a single set of rules to all travelers (Ong, 2006, pp. 81–83; Amooore, 2013, pp. 49–52). This unevenness is not accidental or the result of administrative inefficiency. Rather, it constitutes a structural feature of border governance in the Thai context, where the state must manage diverse territorial conditions, border economies, interstate relations, and varying security pressures. Adjusting the intensity of control across different locations and travel channels thus serves as a mechanism through which the state simultaneously maintains security, flexibility, and administrative capacity in governing mobility (Amooore, 2013, pp. 50–52).

Based on this finding, Thailand's borders cannot be understood as uniform or fixed structures. Rather, they must be viewed as processes of governance that are continuously differentiated and recalibrated across locations, travel channels, and target groups. Border unevenness is therefore an integral component of contemporary border governance logic, rather than a flaw to be corrected (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83; Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191).

5. Visa and Documentation Systems Function to Stratify Mobility

The fifth finding demonstrates that Thailand's visa and travel documentation systems do not merely serve as mechanisms for opening or closing the border. Rather, they function to systematically stratify the mobility of travelers by defining legal status, conditions of entry and exit, permitted duration of stay, and the scope of activities allowed within state territory. The visa system thus operates as a key instrument for categorizing and hierarchizing travelers into different groups, rather than making a simple binary decision of allowing or denying entry (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83).

The classification of visa types, conditions of stay, and activity restrictions means that different groups of travelers encounter the border in distinct ways. Some travelers are able to access state territory with relative ease, enjoy longer periods of stay, and exercise greater freedom of movement within the country. Others, by contrast, face more stringent constraints, including shorter permitted stays, reporting requirements, status renewals, or continuous re-screening. These differences indicate that Thailand's borders do not operate through total exclusion but through differentiated status-based distinctions and graduated forms of control (Ong, 2006, pp. 80–83; Amooore, 2013, pp. 49–52).

In this sense, visa and documentation systems are not merely technical tools or administrative procedures. Rather, they function as technologies of governance that enable the state to regulate mobility in a detailed and flexible manner. By stratifying mobility through documentation, the state can facilitate certain forms of movement while simultaneously restricting or controlling others, without resorting to the complete closure of borders (Amoore, 2013, pp. 50–52).

The outcome of this process is that Thailand's borders operate through selection and ranking rather than through blanket exclusion. Travelers do not encounter the border as a single uniform barrier but as a differentiated set of conditions, restrictions, and expectations shaped by the legal statuses assigned in advance through visa and documentation systems. Borders thus manifest through documentation, time limits, and administrative obligations rather than through walls or physical checkpoints (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191).

Based on this finding, Thailand's visa and documentation systems can be understood as key mechanisms through which borders operate as ongoing processes of selection and stratification in the everyday lives of travelers and residents. In this sense, borders are not absolute dividing lines but governance structures that differentially determine levels of access to state territory and membership (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83; Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191).

6. Border Control through Time and Technology Produces Legal Status Insecurity

The sixth finding indicates that contemporary border governance in Thailand does not rely solely on spatial control or decisions made at border checkpoints. Instead, it operates through temporal conditions, documentation systems, and the use of digital technologies to continuously screen, monitor, and assess the status of travelers and residents. These mechanisms extend border control into everyday life, even after individuals have been granted entry into the country (Amoore, 2013, pp. 49–52; Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64).

The imposition of time-limited stays, reporting requirements, status renewals, and visa category changes means that the legal status of residents is not permanently secure but must be continuously reviewed and reassessed. When combined with the use of databases, digital technologies, and inter-agency data sharing, border governance can be carried out in a detailed, subtle, and prolonged manner without the need for the visible presence of officials or the overt use of physical force (Amoore, 2013, pp. 50–52; Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191).

The outcome of this process is that many travelers and residents live under conditions of legal status insecurity. Even when individuals are lawfully admitted into the country, their status remains fragile and contingent upon compliance with conditions that can change at any time. This insecurity does not stem from direct legal violations but arises from governance structures that tie legal status to time, documentation, and continuous monitoring systems (Mountz, 2010, pp. 62–64).

In this sense, Thailand's border control does not diminish state power in the way one might expect from border opening or the liberalization of mobility. Instead, it transforms that

power into forms that are more dispersed, subtle, and prolonged. Control is no longer expressed primarily through the visible denial of entry but is exercised through ongoing processes of monitoring, assessment, and repeated decision-making that unfold in the everyday lives of residents (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191).

Based on this finding, Thailand's borders can be understood as mechanisms of governance that operate through time and technology rather than through space alone. Legal status insecurity is therefore not a side effect of the system but a structural outcome of contemporary border governance, one that enables state power to persist and be continuously recalibrated even in contexts where mobility appears increasingly open (Amoore, 2013, pp. 49–52; Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83).

Discussion and Conclusion

This article examines at Thailand's immigration system as a way the state governs movement, not merely as a system that controls people at the border. Based on the analysis of laws, official documents, and academic studies, the findings show that borders in Thailand are not fixed lines on a map. Instead, they operate as ongoing processes that operate through law, administration, and government decision-making.

Overall, the findings show that border control in Thailand does not end when individuals enter the country. Instead, it continues over time. Border governance starts before entry, continues at the point of entry, and remains active after entry through visa conditions, reporting duties, and status renewals. This supports the idea in border studies that borders are spread across time and everyday administrative practices, not limited to physical border checkpoints (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191; Rumford, 2006, pp. 155–160). In Thailand, borders are part of daily life for many travelers and migrants.

The study also shows that law plays a key role in making Thailand's border system flexible. Rather than changing primary legislation, the state uses subordinate regulations and executive decisions to adjust how mobility is controlled. This allows the government to respond quickly to political, economic, or security concerns. This finding supports Foucault's view of law as a tool of governance (Foucault, 2007, pp. 108–110) and is consistent with Walters' argument that modern border control often works through routine administrative processes rather than visible force (Walters, 2006, pp. 189–191). The Thai case shows that strong border control does not always depend on advanced technology or physical barriers, especially in non-Western contexts.

Another important finding is that border governance in Thailand involves many state agencies. Immigration control is shaped by cooperation among security agencies, labor authorities, foreign affairs offices, and administrative bodies. Each agency has its own goals and responsibilities. This reflects Ong's idea of graduated sovereignty, where different forms of authority overlap in governing mobility (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83). At the same time, final decisions

are still made by the executive. This creates a system where border control is spread across institutions but remains centralized in terms of power. This helps the state balance security concerns, economic needs, and international relations.

The findings also show that Thailand's borders do not operate uniformly everywhere or for everyone. Control is different at airports, land borders, and border areas, and it also differs between categories of travelers. This unevenness is not a mistake but a normal part of how borders work. Control is adjusted based on location, economic importance, and political priorities. This supports Paasi's view that borders are socially and spatially uneven processes (Paasi, 1998, pp. 69–74) and Ong's argument that mobility is structured in layers (Ong, 2006, pp. 81–83). In Thailand, uneven border control is a strategy, not a failure.

Visa and documentation systems are key tools of border governance. Instead of simply allowing or denying entry, the state sorts people into different legal categories, each with different rights and conditions. This means borders work by ranking and selecting people rather than fully excluding them. This finding fits with Ong's idea of graduated sovereignty (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83) and Amoore's discussion of risk-based sorting (Amoore, 2013, pp. 49–52). In this way, Thailand's borders stay officially open while still tightly controlling who can stay, for how long, and under what conditions.

However, the study also shows that these systems create legal insecurity. Time-limited visas, frequent reporting, and digital monitoring extend border control into everyday life. Even people who are legally in the country may feel uncertain about their status. This supports Amoore's argument that insecurity is built into modern systems of governance (Amoore, 2013, pp. 49–52) and Mountz's observation that border control often happens through long bureaucratic processes rather than clear acts of enforcement (Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64). In Thailand, legal uncertainty is not accidental but part of how mobility is governed over time.

Taken together, these findings show that Thailand's borders work as flexible but powerful systems of governance. Borders are spread across time, laws, institutions, and everyday practices. While borders may appear more open and flexible, state power has not disappeared. Instead, it has become more subtle and more deeply embedded in administrative routines. The Thai case supports existing border governance theories and also adds new insight by showing how legal and administrative discretion plays a central role in a non-Western context (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191; Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83).

This study has limitations. Because it is based mainly on document analysis, it focuses on laws and official structures rather than on the real-life experiences of travelers and migrant workers. As a result, it cannot fully explain how border rules are negotiated or experienced in daily life (Prior, 2003, pp. 2–5).

Future research could use interviews, fieldwork, or ethnographic methods to better understand how people experience border control in practice. Comparative studies with other

Southeast Asian countries could also help explain how different political and institutional settings shape border governance (Rumford, 2006, pp. 155–160).

In conclusion, this article argues that Thailand's immigration system should be understood as a flexible and ongoing system of governance rather than just a security tool. Seeing borders in this way helps explain how mobility is managed in Thailand and also helps expand border studies to better include non-Western cases (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191; Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83).

Suggestion

Based on the analysis of Thailand's immigration system as a mechanism of governance, this article offers recommendations at four levels: the conceptual and theoretical level, the level of institutional design, and the level of future research. These recommendations are not intended to prescribe direct policy solutions. Rather, they aim to highlight analytical implications and directions that warrant further consideration (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191).

1. Conceptual Recommendation: Understanding Borders as Processes of Governance

First, at the conceptual level, this article suggests that studies of borders and immigration in Thailand should move beyond analytical frameworks that view borders merely as instruments of security or law enforcement. Instead, it advocates understanding borders as ongoing processes of governance operating through law, institutions, and administrative routines. This shift in perspective opens up analytical space to examine more subtle and less visible dimensions of state power, such as risk management, the stratification of mobility, and the production of legal status insecurity in everyday life (Walters, 2006, pp. 187–191; Amoore, 2013, pp. 49–52).

2. Institutional Recommendation: Recognizing the Implications of Multi-Agency Governance

Second, at the level of institutional design and operation, the findings of this article underscore the importance of recognizing the implications of multi-agency border governance. While such arrangements may enhance flexibility and efficiency in managing mobility, they can also generate ambiguities in accountability and variations in the exercise of discretion. Viewing borders as dispersed governance structures is therefore crucial for understanding the tensions between border opening and control, as well as between decentralization and the centralization of decision-making authority (Ong, 2006, pp. 78–83; Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64).

3. Socio-Political Recommendation: Recognizing the Inequality Effects of Border Governance

Third, this article suggests that analyses of immigration law and policy should pay greater attention to the inequality effects produced by the operation of borders. The management of mobility through visa regimes, conditions of stay, and digital technologies, while designed to enhance administrative efficiency and control, also systematically stratifies mobility and

generates inequalities in legal status. Recognizing these effects is essential for understanding borders as political instruments, rather than treating them as neutral or purely technical mechanisms (Ong, 2006, pp. 81–83; Amoores, 2013, pp. 49–52).

4. Research Recommendation: Advancing Border Studies in the Thai Context

Finally, at the research level, this article proposes that future studies extend analytical frameworks beyond documents and structural arrangements toward practices and the lived experiences of affected actors. Employing qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, field observations, or ethnographic research would help reveal the everyday dynamics of power negotiation and the operation of borders in practice. In addition, comparative studies between Thailand and other countries in the region would further enhance understanding of border governance patterns across states with differing political and institutional contexts (Mountz, 2010, pp. 61–64; Rumford, 2006, pp. 155–160).

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