

Analysis of the Influence of Informal Factors toward National Security Policy Implementation Effectiveness in Southernmost Provinces of Thailand: A Study of Non-Government Units

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the informal factors which influenced the effectiveness of the policy implementation toward national security policy concerning maintaining peace and order in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. Important factors are mass media, local intellectual, local politicians, and local civil society organizations (CSOs). The result from this study reveals that apart from the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 (ISOC4) and the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC) which are the main government agencies responsible for devising and implementing policy in the region, non-government units as mentioned above have effects on national security policy implementation effectiveness in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand as well. These units are the insiders who understand the local context and are able to generate the cooperation from diverse sectors as well as local networks.

The contribution of this paper is to provide a clearer information of informal factors influenced effectiveness of national security policy implementation concerning maintaining peace and order in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. The result can be used as a guideline for policy makers and policy implementers to become more aware of the possible pitfalls and constraints in implementing and managing national security policy and create possible opportunities to seek the solutions toward the unrest events in such area.

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Introduction

Since January 2004, violence has plagued the three Muslim dominated southernmost provinces of Thailand. The first of a string of violent acts saw a well-coordinated operation conducted by thirty Muslim militants who assaulted an army camp killing four soldiers and robbing a large cache of weapons in Narathiwat province. As part of the assault, the militants set up numerous booby traps and blocked access to a key road, preventing the Thai authorities from pursuing. Almost simultaneously eighteen schools were set alight and two unoccupied military facilities were also damaged on that night. No any organizations or groups claimed responsibility for these actions but there was

considerable fear that a new phase of Islamic unrest was beginning to brew in the south.

These fears were supported by two further significant acts of violence in 2004. In late April 2004, a group of militants attempted an assault on security force outposts, which led to Thai soldiers storming a mosque believed to be holding key militants. As a result, more than 100 militants were killed by the troops, whilst other militants took shelter in the historical Krue-Se mosque. For the duration of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in October, a protest in front of the Tak Bai Police Station took place leading to the detention of more than 1,000 protestors. Seventy-eight of the protestors died, while being transported to a Thai military camp. The majority died from suffocation, after spending

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more than five hours being smothered by the bodies of other detainees (Jitpiromrsi & McCargo, 2008). These further angered the Muslim resistance movement and have strengthened their resolve against the Thai state in the Deep South. Although there have no incidents on the same scale as the Kru Se and Tak Bai events. According to McCargo (2009b), the Islamic insurgency in the southernmost provinces of Thailand has escalated significantly, both in number and intensity. Consequently, the violent situation in the south has become a significant problem that affects both the lives of local people and the government attempting to develop policies in these southern provinces.

There are a number of militant groups involved in violent acts throughout southern Thailand but there is no any single group has claimed on any responsibility. Security officials in Thailand have a strong suspicion that the Barisan Revolusi Nasional–Koordinasi (BRN-C) through their armed forces the Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK) is responsible for most of these violent incidents. This group is believed to be involved in a number of violent operations including bombings and assassinations (McCargo, 2009a). Security officials believe that insurgents are normally adolescent males with a large number being educated in religious schools in Thailand or outside of the country.

Even though, no particular insurgent groups have illustrated any clear demands, a separation of the three southern provinces from Thai sovereignty to establish an independent Islamic state is believed to be their major goal. This is obviously opposed by the Thai state. Some have suggested that perhaps a less radical option can be found, in that the Thai state grants more autonomy to Muslims in the area. However, observers believe if given self-determination the southern provinces may eventually demand full independence (McCargo, 2010). Many scholars have illustrated several self-government models for the south (Deep South Watch, 2009). However none of these models has been

implemented and is seen by policy makers, and security figures in Bangkok believe that if it is implemented they will become an initial stage in the eventual demand for full independence.

Government's strategies for the three southernmost provinces of Thailand reflect classical ideas of counter-insurgency for supporting from the local population, based on provision of security, material welfare and effective administration. The Office of the National Security Council (NSC), the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 (ISOC4) and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) are main agencies responsible for devising and implementing policy in the region. The Prime Minister formally leads each of these but in practice exercises little direct oversight. (ICG, 2012). The situation of unrest still progress and tend to be chronicle. Thus, the national security policy implementation effectiveness in southernmost provinces of Thailand is questioned whether which factors affecting the policy implementation effectiveness.

The Objective of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate informal factors which influenced the effectiveness of the policy implementation toward National Security Policy concerning maintaining peace and order in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. Informal factors in this paper referred to a non-government units which are mass media, local academicians, local politicians, and local civil society organizations (CSOs).

Definitions

1) The three southernmost provinces

In this paper, the term of the southernmost provinces referred to three provinces Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

2) *The national security policy in three southernmost provinces of Thailand*

Policy on Administration and Development of Southern Border Provinces, 2012-2014

3) *Informal factors*

Informal factors in this paper referred to non-governmental units which are mass media, local academician, local politicians, and local civil society organizations (CSOs).

Collection of data and evidence

Methodology of the study is guided by a qualitative method. In order to achieve the aims of the study, a qualitative method by in-depth interview was employed as the main instrument. The researcher has decided to use the qualitative approach, the researcher believes that the informal factors which influence on policy implementation effectiveness in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand which is the major issue of the study cannot be definitely explained in isolation due to its complexity in reality. In other words, we could not properly and truly understand the issue, if the study is exclusively designed by separating from the all complex contexts and meaning templates. In order to achieve certain purposes and to improve validity and reliability of data the interview, observation and peer debriefing were employed. The researcher conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with key informants, namely, mass media, local academicians, local politicians, and local civil society organizations (CSOs).

Interview Results

In March 2015, in-depth interview conducted in Pattani with four key informants (Mass media, Local academicians, Local politicians, and Local Civil Society Organizations). The interview started with identifying its

purposes, which were in line with the study's objectives. Once the purposes of the interview were clarified, an interview guide was designed to assist the interviewer during the interview process. It consisted of questions that kept an interviewer on track and helped to maintain consistency across the interviews with the different respondents. All interviewees were formally notified in advance before the interview. After interviews were completed, the information from the interview was classified and analyzed to support of the study's objectives. Results of the in-depth interview were as follows:

1) *Mass media*¹

As a local mass media, not only a role to publicize the accurate information to the people also he is empowering the silent majority to voice for peace by expanding the participation of stakeholders and trying to create a bottom up peace process in the three southernmost provinces. He believes that waiting for external experts to propose the conflict solutions often do not match the local context. He is creating a safe spaces and flexible tools for local citizens are able to voice their opinions and create the bottom-up negotiation process for peaceful resolution without fear of retribution. He initiated a local journalist particularly women and youth to report their own stories and broadcast them in local media in both Thai language and dialect which is first time that newspaper and radio station are available in Yawi dialect.

Moreover, he is creating a variety of mutual supporting mechanisms to provoke dialogue and develop consensus among citizen such as local citizen organizations, soldiers, police officers, and diverse sectors of a local community both Muslim and Buddhist. According to the interview, it shows that mass media is one of the important factors to maintain peace and order in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand, in other words, mass media is a non-government agency

¹ Muhammad-Ayub Pathan, Senior Editor, Deep South Watch, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus

which has positive influence toward national security policy implementation effectiveness.

To him, he has strongly supported the national security policy in southernmost provinces, 2011-2014 which is formulated by National Security Council (NSC).

Although, this policy was not able to terminate the violence in the area, it led the people to have space to share their thoughts. The NSC asked the opinion from many groups of people in the area before NSC made a decision to formulate the policy in line with the needs of local people. It can be seen that this policy was different from previous policies because it came from bottom up not a top down. After the policy has been implemented the atmosphere in the area seemed relieve, many groups of people have much talking on the violence situation. They can be able to talk openly in the public concerning conflicts in the south which he thinks that is one of the outstanding outcomes from this policy apart from peace negotiation.

However, he complained about the policy implementers who did not understand specific context of the area. The three southernmost provinces are special areas, where the majority of people are Muslims, thus, the national security staff in the areas no matter civilians or military must possess not only technical knowledge and skills but also understanding of the local culture in order to be successful in the implementation and in the improvement of security as a whole. Also, political instability is one of the factors that affect implementation effectiveness, when the cabinet has been changed the authority of policy implementation in the area has been changed as well, it would lead to the inconsecutive operation.

2) *Local academician*²

According to the interviewee mentioned that in March 2012, the government has approved a new national security policy toward the three southernmost provinces of Thailand drafted and arranged by the

National Security Council (NSC) which so-called 'Policy on Administration and Development of Southern Border Provinces, 2012-2014'.

Since the National Security Policy on Southern Border Provinces from 1999 to 2003 was over for almost 9 years, the political chaos and violence have ruined the security policy and undermined legitimacy of the state. Out of 9 objectives of the policy, the keywords are clearly present in objective 8 and 9. It states that the policy attempts to create the appropriate circumstances, which are conducive to dialogues in order to find the way out of conflicts and ensure the concerned persons' and stakeholders' participation in the peace building processes. At the same time, it aims to make systematic, integrated, efficient, participatory, and well-informed administration and development of Southern border provinces. It may be a wishful thinking for the civilian government and the NSC to rearrange the security policy about the South through this new policy without the consent of the military.

As the role of local academician, he has done many researches on the issues of conflict in the southernmost provinces in order to find out more about the root cause of problems for finding the solutions. He agreed with conflict solutions through peaceful means which the NSC and SBPAC are creating the circumstances so-called 'opening space,' the first time this jargon is clearly defined in the national security policy. Moreover, he has joined the 'Insider Peace-builders Platform' (IPP) which the researcher had a chance to be an observer of IPP workshop in Pattani while collecting the data for this study. Participants in the IPP are representatives from diverse sectors who can spread ideas of peaceful solutions to their organizations.

To sum up, the message is clear that the national security policy on southernmost provinces from 2011 to 2014 which drafted and arranged by the NSC attempts to maintain peace and order through

² Assistant Professor Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Ph.D, Director of Center for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD), Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus

stakeholders' participation. Hence, the non-government units are one of the keys to support government agencies in order to attain goal of the policy. Government agencies could not reach or win the of local people, thus, it is better to have the units in the middle between government and local people to link and make more understanding between them.

3) *Local Politician*³

He mentioned that the national security policy 2011-2014 which is formulated by National Security Council (NSC) is a decent policy due to the policy formation is from the participation of many sectors. Moreover, this policy has led to the dialogue among the groups who have different attitude. Anyway, the stage of policy implementation seems not to be reached the policy goal. According to him, political stability is the major factor affecting policy implementation effectiveness. He has informed about his story when he was a member of parliament, he could not be a real representative of the people who voted for him because he must follow the party policy, hence, he formed Wadah group which is a collaboration of a group of Muslim politicians, Islamic interest groups and Muslim intellectuals in order to let them have a way of communication and to build political negotiate power.

Also, he mentioned to his father (Haji Sulong) who was Pattani's leading politician. His father was accused of involvement in separatist violence in southernmost provinces and he was taken by police, and then apparently extrajudicial killing. He said that he himself was seen negatively by the authority and never been let off of the circle of being charged of complicity in Southern unrest whether directly or indirectly. He suggested once the government always look at the others who have different attitude as the opponents, it would lead the authority to suppress or arrest them. Then, it might turn to be the violence at the end.

Since the National Security Council (NSC) operated national security policy 2011-2014, it led to a way for having a peace dialogue. In order to solve the problem, supporting from every part of society is needed no matter public or private.

In terms of the two main agencies who implement the policy he admired the prior secretary general of Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC); Police Colonel Tawee Sodsong had a major role in develop Southern Border Provinces. He agreed with Police Colonel Tawee Sodsong's way of working, namely, he tried to create the participatory process among many groups of people by means of talking. He arranged the open house meeting, which many groups were invited to join such as community leaders, religious leaders, activists, academicians, politicians. This kind of meeting allowed them to have space to share their ideas and opinions. Unfortunately, Thailand has political instability, hence, the person who is in charge in this matter has been changed so often. Especially, after a coup d'etat in May 2014 the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) is less important role than the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 (ISOC4). To sum up, he suggested that participation among many groups of people and supporting from them are significant to reach the effectiveness of the national security policy in order to maintain peace and order in the three southernmost provinces.

4) *Local Civil Society Organization*⁴

With Romuelah Saeyeh's opinion, she does not think the violence events are getting better. It's still ongoing since 2004 until now. Indeed, she is interested in national security policy implementation in the three southernmost provinces because of the case of her husband.

³ Den Tohmeena, Former Member of Parliament (Pattani province) 8 Terms and Former Senator of Pattani (Elected)

⁴ Romuelah Saeyeh, Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (Pattani Office), Mahidol University

Her husband has been sentenced to 12 years in prison by Supreme Court for security case. She said that the evidences in this case are too weak to judge her husband in jail, hence, she disagreed with such verdict and that's the reason why she always keep an eye on national security policy implementation.

In terms of the policies concerning to maintain peace and order in the three southernmost provinces are improper due to the policies formulator divided people in this area into two groups, namely, state and terrorists but overlook the people who have been affected from the events. Those people feel distrustful, insecure and unsafe. The policies formulator should concern more about the people in the area and the policies implementers should understand the context of the specific area. She has mentioned about the outcomes of the national security policy in the three southernmost provinces implementation in the last 3 years during 2011-2014 are the establishment of civil society organization (CSOs), for instance, woman and youth networks play more important role. Civil society organizations help people who have been affected from the violence event by means of moral support, mental remedy.

Moreover, civil society organizations created the activities only for the victims but also for other groups. Civil society organization networks are in the middle between government and people in order to open the public space to let people to participate and share their opinions. She believes that the cooperation from every sector whether public, private and civil society organization networks, also, strong intention and sincerity are major factors affecting effectiveness of national security policy implementation in the three southernmost provinces. In contrast, the political instability and unconformity of implementation would lead to ineffectiveness of national security policy implementation in the three southernmost provinces.

According to her thought, the two agencies

which are Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) and the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 (ISOC4) the first one is seemed to be less important role after the coup d'état in 2014 and the second one seems to be more powerful. In the area has more soldier and patrol but she does not feel secure or safe at all. Finally, she concluded that the national security policy implementation concerning to maintain peace and order in the three southernmost provinces is still ineffective no matter how hard the government have tried as long as the local people overlooked. She agreed that the collaboration among the civil society organization, local mass media, local politicians, and local academicians can be able to support national security policy implementation effectiveness in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand.

Conclusion

The findings from the qualitative approach reveals that the key informants in this study referred to mass media, local academicians, local politicians, and local civil society organizations network agreed that a new national security policy toward the three southernmost provinces of Thailand which drafted and arranged by the National Security Council (NSC) so-called 'Policy on Administration and Development of Southern Border Provinces, 2012-2014 had developed its new policy dimension to support more participatory process for the first time. However, it has mentioned about the standstill implementing process by the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 (ISOC4) and the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC), even if, the functions of the formal agencies are clear, the strategies in order to reach the policy implementation effectiveness are needed. This study found that all of the key informant have high level of interest in the policy. In addition, it can be clearly seen that not only ISOC4 and SBPAC or the other government units but from this

study explored that the support from mass media, local academicians, local politicians, and local civil society organizations also had effect on national security policy implementation effectiveness in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. They are the insiders who understand the local context and able to generate the cooperation from diverse sectors and local networks. Hence, public consultation from diverse public sectors shall be held in policy implementation, moreover, people's need and conformity with the people way of lives, religions, culture, identity, race, and history of local areas cannot be overlooked.

Romuelah Saeyeh, Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (Pattani Office), Mahidol University, March 23, 2015.

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