論 文

Reconciling National Security, Ethnicity and Religion: Institutional Interpretation of Thailand's Southern Insurgency

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Abstract

This article attempts an institutional interpretation of the reconciliation landscape of Thailand. The violent conflict in the southern border provinces ('the Deep South') of Thailand has escalated since 2004. Although the reconciliation process is under way, the situation in the Deep South has not improved. To understand the current situation of reconciliation, it is useful to focus on the institutions dealing with the risks, or how they determine 'risks'. The current dominance of the military in agenda setting determines the way the problem is defined at the national level. At the present moment, democratic institutions cannot form an effective counterbalancing force to this situation. This may be partly attributed to the existing fragmentation among Muslims in society. Impediments to reconciliation lie in the political structure, as well as the oft-expressed issues with history and identity. By examining the reconciliation in Thailand, we can observe the dynamic interaction of people struggling for a more pluralistic society. Creating an open space for diverse interpretations is the most difficult but most essential issue.

Introduction

Terrorist attacks by Islamic insurgency groups have escalated in Muslim-majority areas of southern Thailand since 2004.[1] According to the statistical data of Deep South Watch, one of the most prominent NGOs operating in Southern Thailand, there have been more than 14,128 incidents, resulting in

17,005 casualties (6,097 dead and 10,908 injured by April 2014).[2] During the period from 2004 to 2007, this conflict was the world's most intensive insurgency after Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thailand's southern border provinces (*Changwat Chaidean Paak Tai*) consist of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun.[3] Muslims account for approximately five percent of Thailand's population in Thailand, and 70 per cent of them reside in this area.[4] The area which is affected by the violence consists of the three southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat ('the Deep South'), where the majority of people are Malay-speaking ethnic Malay and their religion is Islam. They are clearly different from the Thai Buddist majority, in terms of language, ethnicity, religion and customs. Thailand's southern conflict has a history of over a century.[5] The Thai government has been dealing with the conflict of the Deep South as a domestic and security problem for a long time. By the late 1990s, however, it was believed that the conflict was on the decline.

The current resurgence of violence seems different from the old separatist movement, which was motivated by ethno-nationalism. It is still unclear which actors are involved and their respective aims. For instance, some people suspect the involvement of international terrorist organizations. Although the Thai government started the reconciliation process since 2005, the situation has not improved.[6] It is a serious potential threat to not only Thailand but also to the broader region of South-East Asia. For, the vulnerability in the area is easily affected by the fluid situation of Muslim world.[7]

Every day in the Deep South, someone is victimized regardless of whether s/he is Buddhist or Muslim, security personnel or civilian. Why has the reconciliation process stalled? This article tries to illustrate the problem of reconciliation between the Thai government and the Deep South from the institutional arrangement dealing with the conflict.

The paper can be divided into four section. The first section provides a background to the conflict in Southern Thailand, and an overview of the conceptual framework of risk management. Following this, I discuss the factors that contribute to military intervention in Thai politics and the bureaucratic institutions in the Deep South. The last two sections probe the question of why democratic institutions cannot provide a counterbalancing force against military rule by focusing on non-military groups such as political parties and religious

institutions in the Deep South. By examining this, I aim to show why the situation in the Deep South stalled, and how the risk management perspective can reconcile the tensions between ethnicity, religion and security.

I Background of Thailand's Southern Conflict

Numerous interpretations have been put forward for understanding the root-causes of the conflict, which can be divided into three broad areas. First, there are arguments focusing on the history and culture of Malay community in the Deep South (History). A second, group focuses on the modern politics of Thailand (National Integration). Finally, the root causes of conflict are attributed to religion (Islamic Revival).

First, explanation of the historical grievances highlights the unique history of the Malay community in the Deep South.[8] The fundamental root-cause of the conflict is the full scale annexation of the area, which was once an autonomous sultanate kingdom named 'Patani'[9], into the kingdom of Siam (later Thailand) in 1909. In the course of modern history, Thailand has been pursuing nation building through Buddhism-oriented and ethno-centric notions of national identity, which has marginalized the ethnic Malay and Muslim sub-groups. Second, explaining the issue through modern Thai politics highlights the integration policies of Thailand and grievances of Malay Muslim people.[10] As such, issues on inequality in access to education, employment in the public sector and economic development lie at the root of the conflict. Third, contrary to those explanations emphasizing ethno-national, cultural and economic grievance, the explanation that focuses on religion emphasizes the growing influence of Islamist ideology on the conflict. Some analysts highlight the rise of violent Jihadist ideology in Thailand.[11]

Scholars are emphasizing many diverse forces behind the violence, such as ethnic identity, crime syndicates, social and economic deprivation, power struggles among politicians, rivalry between the military and police, or weak intelligence. There is one point, however, on which all observers have agreed. That is, the conflict escalated dramatically since the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-2006) implemented his hard line policy toward Malay Muslims in the Deep South.

Thaksin won a majority of seats in the parliament and formed a single-

party cabinet for the first time in the political history of Thailand. In foreign policy, Thailand, a long standing ally of the United States, cooperated with the US-led 'War on Terror' and sent troops to Iraq. In domestic policy, Thaksin implemented various new policies to change the established political system and stimulatethe Thai economy. The most notorious policy was the 'War on Drugs' implemented in 2003, which attempted to eliminate drugs and the criminal underworld. Thaksin's 'War on Drugs' caused some 3,000 extrajudicial killings nationwide, including in the Deep South (Human Rights Watch 2004).

His attitude toward the problem of the Deep South was very clear. According to the former Prime Minister, the violence was not motivated by separatist or religious sentiments, but rather criminal activities caused by bandits and criminals. There were some important institutional changes during this time. In 2002, he dismantled the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) and Civil-Police-Military Task Force 43 (CPM 43), which have long been dealing with the governance and intelligence in the Deep South. This caused a power vacuum and the dysfunction of the existing governing system, which contributed to the resurgence of violence in the following year.

The year 2004 was a turning point. On 28 April, lightly armed young Muslims attacked police and military officials and barricaded themselves into Krue Se Mosque, Pattani's historical landmark, and the military shot at them. 107 Muslim and five security officials were killed in this conflict (Krue Se Mosque incident) [12]. On 25 October, Police fired at citizens who were demonstrating against the unjustified arrest of six Muslims. While being transferred to the army camp five hours from the demonstration site, 78 people died because of suffocation (Tak Bai incident). The government officials in charge who were involved in these incidents were not properly tried. The Thaksin government's harsh response to the Muslim populace in the Deep South caused ineradicable anger and sorrow among Muslims.

On 19 September 2006 Thaksin was ousted by a military coup because of his alleged power abuse and lèse-majesté. He indeed achieved many reforms and contributed to economic growth, but at the same time many people, especially the urban middle class, and people in the south were fed up with his heavy-handed policy, nepotism and pork barrelling targeting labourers and farmers in the rural areas. After he was ousted from the centre of the political stage, Thailand embraced two serious cleavages within the nation. One is the conflict

between the groups who support Thaksin and those who oppose him, and the other is the conflict between Bangkok and the Deep South. Since the end of 2013, the political conflict between these groups has escalated, eventually leading to the military coup on 15 May, 2014. This political turmoil in Bangkok indeed casts a shadow over the situation in the Deep South.

The removal of Thaksin did not improve the situation. Undoubtedly, reconciliation with Muslim people, or the Deep South, is one of the most serious challenges facing the Thai government. Seeking a more comprehensive understanding of history, while narrowing the social and economic inequalities is an essential part of the reconciliation process. However, grievance-based interpretations fail to explain the current escalation of violence in the south, 'at a time when rubber prices were high, when Malay Muslims were better off than ever before and when identity issues were nothing new'.[13] In addition to this, though there is an obvious impact of Islamist ideology on southern conflict, there is no concrete evidence of the involvement of international terrorist organizations.[14] Even if the discourse of insurgency groups seem influenced by Islamist ideology, the conflict is limited to these areas at this moment. It is also undeniable that if the reconciliation process will not work, then there may be increasing influence from international terrorist organizations.However, it is difficult to explain the current resurgence by focusing on Islamist ideology.

II Conceptual Framework

This article focuses on political institutions of Thailand by employing ideas from the studies of risk management. The uniqueness of Thailand's reconciliation efforts lies in the fact that the conflict is ongoing, unlike the reconciliation in South Africa or East Timor (Timor Leste) where the reconciliation process started after the conflict. To understand the current situation, it is useful to focus on how the institutions deal with the risks, or how they determine risks.

Risk is a concept related to unpredictability and uncertainty of the future. 'Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity' is a leading research work in the social science field dealing with the concept of risk.[15] In his book, Ulrich Beck pointed out two categories of risk. One is risk related to environment and life caused by environmental destruction and pollution. The other is risk related to social and personal connection caused by individualism and political transformation. Risk

is an important concept which reflects the modern society.

　　Risk management is the term often used in the business or intelligence field. There are various attempts to define the concept of risk to clarify the target of 'risk management', but the definition has yet to be established. For instance, we can see an attempt to understand by distinguishing risk from crisis, hazard and peril[16], an attempt to define risk as something more close to safety management in the corporate activities and crisis as a sudden and grand-scale disaster which needs to be addressed by the government.[17] In sum, risk management processes serve to prevent or minimize the effects from crises and ensure the resilience of the systems and organizations, such as corporations, communities, nation-states, and international relations.

　　Since the conflict is ongoing in the case of Thailand, the reconciliation process can be considered as part of the risk management process. As risk management is the process to prevent or minimize the effect from the crisis, the current situation of reconciliation is observable from the arrangement of institutions concerning the conflict.

　　The economic historian Douglass North defines institution as 'the rules of the game in society' or 'the humanly devised constraints that shape human action'.[18] An institution is a 'script that names the actors, their respective behavioural repertoires (or strategies), the sequence in which the actors choose from them, the information they possess when they make their selections, and the outcome resulting from the combination of actor choices'. There can be formal and informal institutions in theory, but this article focuses on the formal institutions such as laws, the military and religious institutions, elections and political parties.[19]

　　By focusing on the institutions that determine the risks in society, the way problems are defined in one country can become clearer. In the case of Thailand, the military dominates agenda setting and the risk management process. Unification of the processes for determining risks might save decision making costs. However, this unification also increases the vulnerability of the system itself. This is because when the information and choices are limited or biased, the outcome is adversely affected.

　　The unique political structure of Thailand,which I discuss below in part three, legitimizes the military to intervene in the political sphere. After the coup in 2006, this mechanism has been strengthened by the institutional

arrangement, excessive use of Marshal Law, Emergency Decree, and especially by the renewed Internal Security Act of 2008. The main actor here, the military, considers variety of actions or opinions on the political situation are noise for the order and unity of the nation. They even tend to think the discussion of the decentralization or democracy by the people are the risks. The military and politicians, which are technically separate entities to serve Thai society in different ways, now define the risks in Thai society together. This makes Thai society vulnerable to the discussions of plurality.

Securing the diversification of risk identifying institutions is the foundation for future reconciliation. This is deeply related to the question of democracy in the case of Thailand. This article considers that lack of diversity in the risk identification process is a structural hindrance to reconciliation. Simultaneously, the fragmented nature of Muslim society is also a substantial hindrance to reconciliation. The next part illustrates Thailand's unique political institutions which give power to non-civilian actors, namely the security forces.

III Who Defines "Problems" in Thailand?

Thailand is a country in which over 30 coups and coup attempts have taken place since the 1932 constitutional revolution that ended the absolute monarchy. The latest military coup occurred in 2014, followed by a constitutional amendment and political reform by the military-led government.

In Thailand, the security forces, as well as two other political institutions exist beyond the control of elected civilians. One is the monarchy, and the other is the Privy Council. The influence of the monarchy is ubiquitous politically, economically, and culturally throughout the country. The role of the Privy Council is also noteworthy in terms of its close ties to the monarchy that enables the Privy Council to be an institution competing with the cabinet and parliament.[20] The Privy Council, which consists of royally appointed members from various backgrounds such as the military, the judiciary and the academic world, has been considered as the king's spokespersons.

Thailand is a country with the king as head of the state, and the territory is indivisible. In the Thai context, requesting autonomy let alone separatism are lèse-majesté and must not happen. Regional autonomy or decentralization policies have occasionally been discussed since 1990s by the government, but

the regional autonomy is achieved only in two major cities, Bangkok and Pattaya. In the other areas, the governors are not elected by the people; rather they are appointed by the Ministry of Interior. Although the influence of the king is decreasing at this moment, there is still a tendency among the people to refrain from discussing the question of autonomy.

Since the end of the Cold War, Thailand's National Security Policies have changed to non-traditional security areas, such as terrorism, human trafficking, money laundering, and illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries. In the name of internal security maintenance, the military tried to secure its role in Thai politics and attempted to intervene in various policy areas.

The Objectives of National Security Policy 2007-2011 reflect the various risks Thailand is facing.[21] Thailand's security concerns are multi-faced and multi-layered, varying from domestic politics to international politics; individual psychological issues to national unity; from natural resources to science and technology.

According to the successive constitutions and laws concerning security, the Prime Minister and civilian powers are empowered to make decisions. However, since Thailand started its full-scale democratization process from 1992, three to seven ex-military/police personnel have consistently joined the cabinet.[22] The influence of the Privy Council also allows the military to constantly affect the agenda setting of the government, especially regarding the issue of national security.

Two major policy tools to cope with the nationwide political unrest and the southern conflict are the imposition of Martial Law, and the enactment of the Royal Decree on Administration under the State of Emergency B.E.2548 (2005 Emergency Decree). Martial Law allows the military to take control of governance. By this law, the military is able to detain suspected separatists or terrorists for seven days. In addition to this, Emergency Decree allows 30 days of detention. Government can detain the suspect for at most 37 days in order to collect information.

In addition to this, the most notable legal foundation of the Royal Thai Army's power is the 2008 Internal Security Act (ISA).[23] The role of the ISA was not very significant before the violence of 2004. The new ISA of 2008 was, in fact, passed by the military junta of Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont with support from the office of National Security Council. The ISA stipulated the

establishment of a special governmental agency called the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), the most important mission of which is to maintain the country's internal security.

The status of the ISOC is ambiguous. The main task of the ISOC is to monitor, examine and assess potential threats to internal security and report those to the Council of Ministers for further action [Section 7(1)]. In section 3, 'Internal security operation' is defined as maintaining public order or national security, the measures to preserve, control, solve and restore the state of normalcy. This means that the ISOC is not just active temporarily in abnormal situations, but also acts as a monitoring institution in normal situations.

According to the ISA, the Prime Minister is the director of the ISOC, and units inside the ISOC are directed by the cabinet. It appears that the organization is under civilian control. However, the deputy director is the army chief, and the army chief of staff serves as the secretary [Section5]. The director delegates his/ her authority to the deputy director, or a regional ISOC director [Section8]. In fact, the secretary is empowered to take responsibility for the ISOC's direction and activities.[24] Ultimately, in addition to the operational level, policy planning and implementing, which are the key areas of internal administration of ISOC, the Thai army has succeeded in extending its power over civilian leaders.

ISOC appears under civilian control, maintaining the Prime Minister as director and enabling civilian ministers to serve for the institution. In reality, with the activation of the ISA and through the operational structure of ISOC, the military now has power in identifying threats, and if they wish they can take action when an emergency occurs. The following section examines the governing institutions operating in the Deep South to demonstrate that persistent changes in the bureaucratic institutions contribute to military intervention.

IV Bureaucracy in the South: Persistent Changes on the Surface

The southern border provinces are still under Emergency Decree and Martial Law.[25] The institutional settings mentioned above contribute to a military's influence on the issue regarding the Deep South. We can see this from the response of the government in the wake of the violence in 2004. The military considered the problem as separatism with the need to be supressed by

military forces, not by the legal procedure. Thousands of soldiers were deployed, and a new military division was established. Secret agents were dispatched, resulting in the arrest of many people.[26] The power of the military in political decision-making has maintained and in some ways, overrules that of elected government officials.

Under the national Internal Security Operation Commission, in which bureaucrats employed by the military outnumber civilians, the Regional Army is allowed to establish regional and provincial branches [Section11, 13]. This Regional Security Operation Command (RSOC) parallels Thailand's four army regions. A Regional Army Commander becomes the director of each subdivision. The director exercises 'command over government officials, employees … and takes responsibility for implementation of the work of RSOC'.[27]

Beginning in 1981, the governance of the Deep South has been operated through the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) and Civil-Police-Military Task Force 43 (CPM 43). Prem Tinsulanonda established SBPAC in 1981 (The Order of the Office of the Prime Minister8/2524) to cope withthe development in the area, and to establish collaboration among government agencies. CPM 43, which was established by National Security Council, was responsible for the security operation. Both came under control of the Fourth Army. This institutional setting led to a decrease in government officials' abuse of power and human rights violation. Violent insurgency activity also decreased as a result of increased mutual communication between the government and the people.

Thaksin challenged the established governing system created by Prem, a long standing chairman of the Privy Council until now, and famous for being a close confidant of the present king. In 2002, Thaksin Shinawatra abolished SBPAC and CPM43, and the authority of security operation in the Deep South was transferred to the police (The Order of the Office of the Prime Minister123/2545). The function of the CPM 43 was transferred to the Fourth Army and ISOC Region 4, and SBPAC to the Ministry of Interior. These changes in the institutional setting created a power vacuum within the government and weakened their power to respond properly to any real or perceived threats to national security. This created opportunities for an increase in insurgent activities. Following the escalation of violence in 2004, the structure of security operations in the southern provinces came under the supervision of Southern

Border Provinces Peace Building Command (SBPPC) (The Order of the Office of the Prime Minister 68 and 69/2547). Subsequently, Thaksin established the Committee on Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Policy, and the SBPPC was placed under the Fourth Army. Here again the military was given control of civilian activities.

Under the junta of Surayud Chulanont (2006-2008), institutions concerning the Deep South were thrown into disarray. The re-establishment of the SBPAC (Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center) replaced SBPPC, and came under the supervision of ISOC The Order of the Office of the Prime Minister 206/2549). Surayud's government also made SBPAC and CPM 43 permanent institutions (The Order of the Office of the Prime Minister 229/2550). When Abhisit Vijjajiva came into power in 2009, he tried to lessen the military's influence and establish a new ministry to distribute power to the local elite. However, political turmoil in Bangkok did not allow it. "Institutional reforms" were as a matter of fact, balancing the existing power, which is very different from decentralization.

Overall, persistent changes in the operations and management of the institutions has hindered effective policy making and implementation until now. This has contributed to dysfunction in the cooperation among related government institutions that existed under previous SBPAC. The government is not able to collect reliable first-hand information from the area anymore. Disorder in the operational level is also pervasive, and human rights violations by the security forces are often reported.[28]

Since the escalation of the conflict, the security forces composed of military, police, paramilitary and armed civilians/defence volunteers, which are supervised by different ministry or department, have been increasingly mobilized to cope with the problem of the Deep South.[29] According to Isra News Agency, the number of military personnel amounts to 23,704, police:16,918, paramilitary: 25,000, and militias: 84,768.[30] Overall, approximately 160,000 security forces are active. Taking into the consideration the fact that the total population in the area is near two million, the major strategy for bringing about peace is apparently the use of military force.

We can see how the problem is coloured by the military's point of view. This is due to the unique political structure of Thailand with the supreme power of the monarchy and the Privy Council, which are not subject to politics or laws.

The military considers itself a loyal defender of the monarchy, which is of the utmost importance for the nation. Thus, the institution legitimizes its intervention into the political sphere. Thailand has long been pursuing national integration under the influence of the king. Although the present king is very old and losing his influence on politics and populace, the king still has ultimate power and is highly respected by the population. This begs the questions, how does democracy work in Thailand? The next section examines other institutions concerned with Thai Muslims, namely political parties and regional religious institutions.

V The Questions of Representation: Parties, Factions, and Democracy

The emergence of Chatichai Choonhavan in 1988, the first elected prime minister in 12 years, marked the beginning of the era of political pluralism, and democratization.[31] Democratization led to an increase in the number of political parties, and more political participation of the people. To understand the political dynamics of southern Thailand, we must look at the Democrat Party and *Wadah* faction.

Den Tohmeena, a Malay Muslim intellectual, formed the *Wadah* group in 1986 aiming for reflecting Muslims' voice in national politics.[32] The *Wadah* group made great progress in the Thai political arena by forming a coalition with the Khwam Wan Mai Party (New Aspiration Party) lead by General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh. After the New Aspiration Party was absorbed into Thai Rak Thai Party lead by Thaksin Shinawatra, the *Wadah* group made great progress in national politics, gaining ministerial posts. Since its foundation in 1986, five to six *Wadah* members have been elected by cooperating with a different political party every time. Despite being a small faction, *Wadah* members obtained important positions such as the President of National Assembly, the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Transportation and Communication and so on. Wan Muhammad Nor Mata from the *Wadah* group served as the first Muslim President of the National Assembly and as deputy prime minister. The *Wadah* group is successful in lobbying on issues concerning Muslims, such as the development of infrastructure in the south, support for Thai pilgrims on the annual *haji*, right for Thai Muslim women to wear the *hijab*, and the Islamic Bank.

On the other hand, Southern Thailand has traditionally been a Democrat Party stronghold. The Democrat Party was successful in networking vote collecting systems under the strong leadership of Chuan Leekpai who is from upper Southern Thailand, Trang.[33] By organizing local network, *phuak* (band, group), *hua khanaen* (vote canvassers) they could construct a rigid voting bloc. With the tendency of strong attachment to its friend or family in the South, Incumbency Advantage was stronger than the other areas in Thailand.

The Democrat Party is also an important actor in the reconciliation process between government (pro-Thaksin) and anti-government (anti-Thaksin) groups. The Democrat Party was established in 1947 and gained power especially after the 1990s in Bangkok and southern Thailand. They have been considered as a party for southerners, and they also identified themselves as such. They have also deeply influenced the governance in the Deep South since CPM43 and SBPAC was established in 1981.

However, the Deep South is more politically divided. According to the result of the 2007 national election, five out of the twelve MPs from the southern border provinces belong to the Democrat Party (The Election Commission of Thailand). Among the seven MPs, three persons belong to the *Wadah* group, who have joined *Puea Pandin* Party (Motherland Party). During the Thaksin administration, the *Wadah* group could not do anything to prevent the human rights violation by Thaksin. Facing the escalation of violence, they again were unsuccessful in calming down the situation. They eventually lost the support from the people in the Deep South. In the 2011 general election, the Democrat Party maintained 11 of 12 seats in the southern border provinces. However, the vote-count shows another story. Democrats got less than 50 per cent of the popular vote in many of the constituencies in the southern border provinces.

An important subcontext to the conflict is a deep-rooted historical antagonism between the lower and upper south.[34] There are indeed salient differences between Thai-speaking Muslims of south-western Thailand, who have long standing relationships with southern Thai-speaking Buddhists. 'Malay Muslims in the lower South resented the way in which Bangkok had subcontracted the administrative tasks to natives of other Southern provinces, and tends to prefer to deal directly with Bangkok rather than through the unreliable mediation of upper southerners'. The upper South is truly the electoral heartland of the Democrat Party. The Democrats are much weaker in

the three border provinces, dominated by the *Wadah* group from 1986-2005. In fact, the Democrat Party has never given a single ministerial position to any Malay Muslims.

In the course of democratization, the *Wadah* group has been successful in reflecting the demands of Muslims in national politics. However, by entering the political arena, the *Wadah* group has become no more than a small interest group of no significance. The Democrat Party continues to be a party for 'upper' southerners, but fails to represent southern Thailand itself, contrary to its self-proclaimed characteristics. Rivalry between the Democrat and the Deep South legitimize the military to intervene the governance in the Deep South. For, politician could not or cannot do anything.

VI Politicization of Islam: Communal Division

The increased political participation also raises critical issues of religious-political and socio-cultural concern for Thailand's Buddhist majority and Muslim minority.[35] The official leader of Muslims in Thailand is *Chularajmontri* or *Shaikh Al-Islam* (Thailand's royally-appointed Islamic leader). The role of the *Chularajmontri* is to represent Thai Muslims at the national level, to foster inter-religious communication, to publish religious literature, to provide notarial services, to issue *fatwa* (religious rulings), regulate the administration of the registered mosques and distribute subsidies and grants to the mosques and similar activities.[36] However, the *Chularajmontri* have little authority over Muslims generally.

People select imams, and among imams the members of Provincial Islamic Committee (*majelis*) are elected. Provincial Islamic Committees are linked with a Central Islamic Committee. Provincial Islamic Committee co-opt the members of Central Islamic Committee, and also propose a suitable person for *Chularajmontri*. The legal power of the Provincial Committee is limited and it deals mainly with overseeing imams, mosque committees, and arbitration relating to family law and inheritance.

In 1997, *Wadah* politicians led by Den Tohmeena introduced an electoral system to make provincial councils authorize the democratic process. This new Islamic Organizations Administration Act eventually led to the national level politicians and military intervening in local issues.

Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat had a thirty-member Islamic council, with electorates of between three hundred and six hundred imams per province. On 24 November 2005, the second ever Islamic Council elections were held. The increased violence in the South generated considerable interest. The military, Ministry of Interior, and the political parties all became involved in supporting a particular outcome.[37] National level politicians, especially from the *Wadah* group, and religious authorities had been discredited in southern border provinces in the course of the election.

Introduction of the electoral system at the local level contributes to fragmentation of communities in another way. This is related to the pervasive increase in the number of mosques. Communities became fragmented because a single village contains multiple mosques that represent different schools of Islam.[38] Rivalry between traditionalists and reformists has decades of history. In 1930s, young local scholars who studied in Mecca or the Middle East returned to Thailand, and tried to reform the traditional ways of practicing Islam. Many cases can be understood in this context. Young men who studied abroad built new mosques. However, there are cases of imams who contested elected imams to build new mosques.[39]

The politicization of leading Islamic figures in the three provinces, along with the extensive use of money and other incentives to buy and extract votes from individual imams, detracts from the leadership of religious authorities and contributes to the fragmentation of communities in Malay Muslim society. Local religious leaders are losing their authority in Thailand.

It is important to bear in mind that this phenomenon is pervasive in the rest of the Islamic world as well. Increased globalization and major technology expansion in the IT field are potentially contributing to this fragmentation in the practice of Islam. Nowadays, Muslims are easily able to access information related to other Muslims in the world through online media or Social Network Service. They are even able to choose preferred religious teachers by themselves on the Internet. Muslims in the Deep South are not living in a closed society.

During the democratization period in 1990s, people failed to form concrete and sustainable representative institutionsto reflect their voice on the national level. Leading politicians in the Deep South were not able to act as representatives of the people in the national political arena. Institutional reform during this period, including the introduction of an electoral system to the Islamic Council,

consequently exposed the local people to national politics. In addition to this, the increasing influence of globalization eventually contributed to the fragmentation within the democratic institutions.

By the end of 1990s, the government considered the problems in the Deep South were successfully ended by their conciliatory approach. This was, however, not actually followed by the empowerment of the political rights of Muslim people as mentioned above. In the wake of violence in the new millennium, the government, through the military's influence, has misinterpreted the problem as criminal activities that threatened national security rather than ethno-religious grievances.

The security-oriented risk management has not been successful at dealing with the problem given the tense situation in the area has been ongoing for more than 10 years. The ubiquity of the security forces is obvious in the region. This contributes to anxieties and insecurity among the people, which fuels the insurgent activities. At this moment, the government is managing the risks (insurgency, separatist activities) by increasing the number of military force. For the future reconciliation, a mutual approach in the risk management process is important. Participation of the democratic institutions secures the diverse interpretations of the risks themselves,and the withdrawal or reduction of the presence of security forces are the rational actions in terms of mitigating the risk, namely reducing the number of violent movement and victims.

At the same time, reconciliation within local political groups ranging from political party to so-called 'separatist groups' is inevitable. Although it is impossible to eliminate the cleavages, it is possible to try to change the negative cleavages to positive plurality. One possible thing that could derive from institutional interpretation is, to abolish the electoral system in the religious institutions. Keeping distance from politics in order not to be politicized contributes to reducing the cleavages and reconciliation within the democratic groups.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to examine the landscape of reconciliation in Thailand by looking at its unique political institutions. The Internal Security Act allows the military to have power over policy planning and implementation.

The dominance of the military in agenda setting deflects the way the problem is defined at the national level. It is the military that defines the problem of southern border provinces as a security issue, and tries to bring about peace by using military force. As many analysts point out, the conflict in southern border provinces reflects the power struggle playing out in Bangkok.

This could happen partly because of the existing fragmentation within the Muslim society based on the uneven distribution of political resources. As a result of increased representation, a process towards self-sabotage has begun. 'Individuals affected by this process range from the leading Malay Muslim politicians such as … the *Wadah* group to local religious leaders, and even well-intentioned Thai bureaucrats.'[40] At the present moment, democracy cannot form an effective counterbalancing force to this situation. Impediments for reconciliation lie in the political structure, as well as in the oft-expressed issues to do with history, identity, cultural economic disparity.

Examining reconciliation in Thailand, we observe the dynamic interaction of people struggling for a more pluralistic society. How to create an open space for diverse interpretations is the most difficult but most essential issue, especially in terms of risk management.

Muslims in the Deep South also have close ties to fellow Muslims in the world. Thus,the problem of the Deep South is no longer a mere domestic issue. The situation in the Deep South will be more and more affected by the fluidity of the current Islamic world. It is difficult to analyse the problem only from national level politics. Moving forward, a multi-dimensional perspective is required.

Notes

1 International Crises Group, "Thailand: The Evolving Conflict in the South", *Asia Report*, No.241 (Brussels: International Crises Group, 2012), accessed August 11, 2013 http://www.crisisgroup. org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/241-thailand-the-evolving-conflict-in-the-south.pdf, several reports on the Southern Thai conflict accessible at the website www. crisesgroup.org.

2 Deep South Incident Database, (Pattani, Thailand: Deep South Watch, 2012), accessed December 4, 2014, http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/dsid.

3 This is based on the region set by ministry of education. In the context of Thailand southern conflict, Songkhla is often included.

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6　Duncan McCargo, "Thailand's National Reconciliation Commission: a Flawed Response to the Southern Conflict", *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol.22 No.1 (2010), 75-91

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9　The spelling Pattani, which is used officially as the name of province, is based on its description in Thai language. To distinguish historical entity from it, Patani is used.

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Abstract

Reconciling National Security, Ethnicity and Religion: Institutional Interpretation of Thailand's Southern Insurgency

Naomi NISHI

This article attempts an institutional interpretation ofthe reconciliation landscape of Thailand. The violent conflict in the southern border provinces ('the Deep South') of Thailandhas escalated since 2004. Although the reconciliation process is under way, the situation in the Deep South has not improved. To understand the current situation of reconciliation, it is useful to focus on the institutions dealing with the risks, or how they determine 'risks'. The current dominance of the military in agenda setting determines the way the problem is defined at the national level. At the present moment, democratic institutions cannot form an effective counterbalancing force to this situation. This may be partly attributed to the existing fragmentation among Muslims in society. Impediments to reconciliation lie in the political structure, as well as the oft-expressed issues with history and identity. By examining the reconciliation in Thailand, we can observe the dynamic interaction of people struggling for a more pluralistic society. Creating an open space for diverse interpretations is the most difficult but most essential issue.