

**Security Challenges in Thailand's Southern Border
Provinces : Civil and Security
Forces Perspective**

By

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Certificate of Research Paper

National Defence College. National Defence Studies Institute has approved Brigadier General Amer Mahmud bin Abdul Rahman' s the individual research paper titled “ Security Challenges in Thailand’s Southern Border Provinces : Civil and Security Forces Perspective” as a subject in the field of Strategy, and as part of the study of the College curriculum Class 62 Academic year 2019 – 2020

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Abstract

Title : Security Challenges in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces : Civil and Security Forces Perspective
Field : Strategy
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The true extent of the challenges and difficulties faced by the Thai Security Forces in addressing the security issues in Thailand's Southern Border Province compared to how the civil population views the effectiveness of the security measures implemented has not been clearly described. Incidences of violence continue to present security threats for both security forces and the general public despite years of government efforts and commitments in trying to resolve this issue. In seeking the desired strategic security initiatives, key research questions that need to be answered are; (i) What are the security issues and their root causes to conflict in Southern Thailand? (ii) What are the challenges security forces experience in addressing the security concerns of the general public in Southern Thailand and (iii) What are the security initiatives that can help Security Forces address the security challenges in Southern Thailand.

Findings from this research have shown that security forces have continued to experience challenges in the counterinsurgency campaign due to many intervening variables which are beyond the capacity and capabilities of the security forces themselves to address, as many of the existing grievances which are inherited by past polices and miscalculation made by former governments are very complicated and difficult to resolve as it involves the sensitivities of culture and sovereignty. The combination of both political and economic instability is seen to further aggravate the socio-economic challenges which the Deep South have inherited for decades, creating further sense of neglect and providing the motivation for criminal activities, anti-government sentiments and support for insurgents to occur which eventually leads to violence and civil unrest.

Other than the unsettled grievances from the injustice of the past, trust issues towards security forces and government officials remain prevalent, mainly contributed by cultural differences, language proficiency and level of education that most of the population receive. This finding is significantly important as it reemphasise the importance of building trust and confidence in order to change the population's perception towards the government which is within the capacity and capability of the security forces to accommodate and respond.

On the positive side, research evidence has also shown that the level of incidents and violence have decreased in the last five years, contributed greatly by the stability of the security environment provided by the security forces. Despite the encouraging progress, findings in this research however foresee the conflict will take many years or decades to reach an agreement as addressing of the root cause of the conflict remains an obstacle which have not been resolved. Reasonable to say, counterinsurgency effort by the government must continue and formulation of better strategies is essential to accommodate and anticipate changes that may evolve in the security environment of the future.

Preface

The complexity of the unique security environment in Thailand's Deep South Conflict have motivated me to pursue this research because of my great interest in understanding modern day counterinsurgency operations, which are significantly different from the post-colonial experiences. As security practitioners, knowledge and understanding of what security forces go through when conducting counterinsurgency campaigns is very important as it provides the opportunity to tests the relevancy of security policies and review operating procedures, training and education needed to support and prepare the people who are responsible to implement the security measures. Also, the limited availability of English written research literatures that focusses on challenges that Thailand's security forces experience in modern counterinsurgency operations furthermore adds up in providing me the reason to study this subject, as I personally feel that the knowledge gained from this research would contribute greatly both for my professional development as a military leader and references that can help in future counterinsurgency strategies.



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Contents

	Page
Abstract	i
Preface	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Contents	v
Contents of figures	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Background & Significance to the problem	1
Objectives of the Research	4
Scope of the Research	4
Literature Review	5
Methodology	5
Limitations and /or Delimitation	5
Research Result for Utilisation	6
Definitions & Abbreviations	6
Chapter 2 Related Literature Review	12
Theories of Conflict and Insurgency	12
Counterinsurgency Challenges	13
Conflict Resolution Models	14
Situation in Southern Thailand	17
Literature Review Summary and Conclusion	18
Conceptual Framework	20
Chapter 3 Security Issues in Southern Thailand	22
Introduction	22
Historical Background	23
Cause and factors to conflict	25
Conclusion	33

Content (Continued)

		Page
Chapter 4	Examining Counterinsurgency Effort	34
	Introduction	34
	Examination Method and Resources	35
	Political Transition	38
	Economic Development	45
	Security Measures	60
	Conclusion	71
Chapter 5	Conclusion & Recommendation	73
	Introduction	73
	Security Response & Initiatives	73
	Political Measures	76
	Economic Development Measures	81
	Security Measures	84
	Recommendations	89
	Summary and Conclusion	90
	Research Limitations	95
	Bibliography	96
	Biography	102

Contents of Figures

Figure		Page No
Figure 1-1	Thai crime scene investigators inspect the site of a bomb explosion in Yala, 17 March 2020	1
Figure 2-1	Literature Review Summary	19
Figure 3-1	Southern Thailand's Malay Population	23
Figure 4-1	Localities used in 2017 research	36
Figure 4-2	Localities used in 2013 research	37
Figure 4-3	2019 Thai General Election Results	38
Figure 4-4	Which of these statements best describes your economic situation over the past year? % of respondents	47
Figure 4-5	Education levels of respondents aged 18-35 in the Deep South (% respondents)	48
Figure 4-6	Goal of aid projects: Are they to provide assistance or win support for the government?	52
Figure 4-7	Do those who support this project understand the needs of your community? (by trust in national government actors: international aid presence)	53
Figure 4-8	How often is aid misused or stolen?	55
Figure 4-9	Perceptions of the causes of conflict, comparing non-conflict and conflict areas (% people who ranked their response as high or very high)	58
Figure 4-10	Summary of incidents in Deep Southern Thailand May 2020	60
Figure 4-11	Trust in security actors (Response: somewhat/very much)	61
Figure 4-12	Trust in state institutions (Response: somewhat/very much)	63
Figure 4-13	Trust in local elites (response: somewhat/very much)	63

Figure 4-14	If they do not feel comfortable interacting with government official, why?	65
Figure 4-15	Summary of incidents in Deep Southern Thailand May 2020	67
Figure 4-16	Research Findings of Counterinsurgency Effort	71
Figure 5-1	Research findings from Chapter 4 (Public & Security Forces Perception)	75
Figure 5-2	Political Measures - Response & Recommendations	76
Figure 5-3	Economic Development Measures – Response & Recommendations	81
Figure 5-4	Economic Development Measures – Response & Recommendations	84
Figure 5-5	Research Summary	94

Chapter 1

Introduction

Background and Significance of Problem

The true extent of the challenges and difficulties faced by the Thai Security Forces in addressing the security issues in Thailand's Southern Border Province compared to how the civil population views the effectiveness of the security measures implemented has not been clearly described.

Figure 1-1 Thai crime scene investigators inspect the site of a bomb explosion in Yala, 17 March 2020



Source : Human Rights Watch. Year: 2020

Incidences of violence continue to present security threats for both security forces and the general public despite years of government efforts and commitments in trying to resolve this issue. The recent bombings in Yala on 17 March 2020 at the Southern Border Province Administration Centre (The Associated Press 2020), initiated by a secessionist faction group known as the National Revolutionary Front or *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* are evidence that indicates the need for effective strategic initiatives and solutions to address the matter. These prolonged periods of civil unrest which can be tracked for more than a decade coherently reflect a complex security environment that has not been easy to resolve.

It is important to note that there are more than just secessionist factions that present security concerns in these southern provinces as other issues such as criminal or unlawful activities are inclusive to the list of challenges that are seen likely fuelled by unresolved political, economic, cultural and social factors. One can logically assume that the existence of such environment would definitely present challenges for the security forces to function effectively.

With such assumption it would therefore be reasonable to suggest that a better understanding of what challenges the security forces experience and how the civil population looks at how government in addressing this matter may subsequently lead to identifying strategic security initiatives that can contribute further to improve the existing security environment.

While most research literatures have focussed in identifying root causes in seeking conflict resolutions, limited work have covered specifically in seeking strategic security initiatives for the security forces

particularly in having to confront the unique and challenging environment in Southern Thailand.

It is also important to note that many of the past research literatures looks into collecting data from the general population to identify what they perceive as the source or root cause of conflict (for the purpose of seeking conflict resolution) while research data on the challenges that security forces experience are limited (for the purpose of seeking strategic security initiatives).

Having seen the reasons above, it would therefore be reasonable to suggest that a research on this matter be considered significant, as the information and knowledge obtained would eventually provide the security forces the ability to address these challenges more effectively and contribute further for both national and regional security at the strategic level. Obtaining the strategic security initiatives will be important especially when Thailand geographically shares its southern border with Malaysia, where the existence of any security matters in the southern provinces can have unwanted strategic implications and spill-over effects.

In seeking the desired strategic security initiatives, key research questions that need to be answered are; 1. What are the security issues and their root causes to conflict in Southern Thailand? 2. What are the challenges security forces experience in addressing the security concerns of the general public in Southern Thailand and 3. What are the security initiatives that can help Security Forces address the security challenges in Southern Thailand.

Objectives of the Research

Based on the research questions, the objectives derived are as listed below :

1. Examine the security issues in Thailand's Southern Provinces.
2. Examine the challenges and gaps that security forces experience in addressing the security concerns of the general public in Southern Thailand.
3. Recommend security initiatives and focus that may complement and improve Thailand's Southern Provinces' security environment in the future.

Scope of the Research

The research will focus on the challenges experienced by the Thai Security Forces in addressing insurgencies in Southern Thailand and compare security views from the public's perspective. This is to distinguish what factors are affected in order to improve the future security environment. In line with the research objectives, this research will be organised in the following chapters

1. Chapter 1. Introduction.
2. Chapter 2. Related Literature Review.
3. Chapter 3. Security issues in Southern Thailand.
4. Chapter 4. Examining Counterinsurgency Efforts.
5. Chapter 5. Conclusion

Literature Review

Literature used for this research generally covers on theories, framework and models on matters relating to security issues in Southern Thailand and the nature of the conflict. Detail description will be described in the second chapter of this research.

Methodology

This research will be conducted using a mix method of both qualitative and quantitative approach as the method of choice. Data collection methods will be obtained from :

Secondary Data

1. Books.
2. Journals.
3. Documents.
4. Reports.
5. Websites.
6. Statistical/data analysis from other researchers.

Limitation and/or Delimitation

This research is limited to the data collection method used from the period of October 2019 to August 2020. Most of the secondary data is gained by past research data and research material available online as gaining primary data from security personnel working in the southern province has been difficult due to geographical constraints and having to work from Kuala Lumpur due to COVID-19 travelling restriction during this research period.

Research Results for Utilisation

This research can contribute further to the body of knowledge by providing new information particularly on the challenges of security enforcement from the security forces perspective and updating previous works (Haniff 2005, Patcharakanokkul 2010 & Hassan 2016) which have mostly covered studies on seeking conflict resolution to the violence and civil unrest in Southern Thailand.

Definitions & Abbreviations

BIPP	means Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani meaning known as the National Liberation Front of Patani (NLFP; Malay: Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani, BNPP; also translated as "Patani National Liberation Front" or "National Front for the Liberation of Pattani"; Thai : ขบวนการแนวร่วมปลดแอกแห่งชาติปัตตานี) is a militant Islamic separatist movement based in northern Malaysia and with a history of operations in the South Thailand insurgency.
BRN	means Barisan Revolusi Nasional meaning National Revolutionary Front, is an Islamist Patani independence movement in northern Malaysia and Patani, southern Thailand
Civil	means Connected with the people who live in a country; connected with the state rather than with religion or with the armed forces

Civil unrest means Activities arising from a mass act of civil disobedience (such as a demonstration, riot, or strike) in which the participants become hostile toward authority, and authorities incur difficulties in maintaining public safety and order, over the disorderly Crowd

Counter Insurgency (COIN)

Means Military or political action taken against the activities of guerrillas or revolutionaries.

Economic means Connected with the trade, industry and development of wealth of a country, an area or a society

GMIP means Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani meaning Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement is an Islamic insurgent movement that has carried out violent actions as part of the protracted insurgency in Southern Thailand.

Governance Extension

means Extending the action or manner of governing.

Humanitarian Assistance

means Material and logistic assistance to people who need help

Human Security means The security of people and communities, as opposed to the security of states. Human security recognises that there are several dimensions related to feeling safe, such as freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom from indignity.

Institutional Capacity

	means	Capability of an institution to set and achieve social and economic goals, through knowledge, skills, systems, and institutions.
Insurgency	means	Active revolt or uprising
Measures	means	Plan or course of action taken to achieve a particular purpose.
Military	means	A heavily armed, highly organised force primarily intended for warfare, also known collectively as armed forces. It is typically officially authorized and maintained by a sovereign state, with its members identifiable by their distinct military uniform.
Perspective	means	A particular attitude towards something; a way of thinking about something.
Police	means	The civil force of a national or local government, responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of public order.
PULO	means	The Pattani United Liberation Organisation (Malay: Pertubuhan Pembebasan Bersatu Patani; abbreviated PULO) is a separatist insurgent group in Thailand, calling for an independent Pattani. The PULO, along with others, is currently fighting for the independence of Thailand's Predominantly Malay Muslim South.

Political means Connected with the state, government or public affairs; connected with the different groups working in politics, especially their policies and the competition between them

Political Mobilisation

means Activities that intend to motivate masses of participants to express themselves and to undertake a particular political action.

Population Safety means Security due to demographic factors.

Public Safety means Refers to the welfare and protection of the general public. It is usually expressed as a governmental responsibility. Most states have departments for public safety. The primary goal of the department is prevention and protection of the public from dangers affecting safety such as crimes or disasters.

Resource & Infrastructure Management

means The efficient and effective development of an organization's resources when they are needed. Such resources may include the financial resources, inventory, human skills, production resources, or information technology (IT) and natural resources; is the management of essential operation components, such as policies, processes, equipment, data, human resources, and external contacts, for overall effectiveness.

RKK	means	Runda Kumpulan Kecil meaning is a militant Islamic insurgent group operating in Southern Thailand.
SBPAC	means	Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre
Security	means	The activities involved in protecting a country, building or person against attack, danger, etc.
Security Forces	means	Military, police, rangers & local security volunteers who are responsible for maintaining security in a city, region, etc.
SNC	means	Subnational Conflict
Societal Integration	means	The process during which newcomers or minorities are incorporated into the social structure of the host society. Social integration, together with economic integration and identity integration, are three main dimensions of a newcomers' experiences in the society that is receiving them.
Tambon	means	Sub-District administrative zone
Terrorism	means	The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.

Thailand's Southern Province

means Consist 14 provinces; Chumphon, Suratthani, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, Satun, Trang, Phatthalung, Nakhonsithammarat, Ranong, Phangnga, Krabi and Phuket.

Chapter 2

Related Literature Review

Theories of Conflict and Insurgency

Capturing the theoretical aspects of conflict and insurgency will be fundamental for this research as it would help explain the basis and nature of the security issues in Southern Thailand. Galtung's (1973) work provides a theoretical explanation of how the attitude (or perception) of actors can shape the behaviour of others resulting in either conflict or otherwise. His work is considered important as he also suggest theoretical solutions by shaping attitude and behavioural changes through reasonable actions. His theories however have limitations and may not be able to comprehensively explain the unique and complex security situation in Southern Thailand.

Fall's (1965) work, however, can provide a better explanation why such situation occurs, and uses models which are quite similar to the security environment in Southern Thailand. He explains how the sense of alienation of any population from the central government is likely to motivate anti-government movements. To address these issues, he finds political reform as one way to help legitimate governments to be established which can be accepted by the population, providing equal political, economic and cultural opportunities.

Although Fall's work is dated back in the 1960s, his theories are considered relevant as Metz (2007), also share similar view. He explains that anti-government movements and civil unrest reasonably occurs when

existing gaps between political expectations and opportunities become unacceptable. While his conclusive recommendation of building a legitimate government consistently supports Fall's view, both literatures however does not clearly articulate why counterinsurgencies are difficult to address. Understanding these challenges will be key as it can help explain why the civil unrest in Southern Thailand have been difficult to resolve for many years and has remained unsettled.

Counterinsurgency Challenges

Kress and Szechtman (2008) work explain that one of the main reason counterinsurgencies are challenging to address is because insurgents are difficult to distinguish as they are embedded in the general population and have better situation awareness of the security forces. Since most insurgents grow from the local communities, they know very well whether coercive action can enhance recruitment or hinder it and will not act deliberately against its own interest.

Barno (2006) on a similar context explains that insurgency is difficult to address because security forces often have to operate in an environment where insurgents are being supported by the population. He points out that counterinsurgency operation is a war of intelligence and perception of the people which require a holistic approach to win their hearts and mind. The asymmetric nature of insurgents would normally shape their mode of operation to focus more on exploiting the media, local customs, beliefs and cultural predisposition of the local communities and limit their kinetic operations. Most security forces on the other hand, rely more on the kinetic approach and are forced to operate with limited intelligence as information is difficult to obtain especially when having to

operate in an environment where insurgents are being supported by most of the population.

Often when intelligence and vital information are limited, there are tendencies for security operations that would result in collateral damage among civilians. Worst is when uncontrolled collateral damage occurs from non-discriminatory security operations where this is likely to motivate further the population into supporting anti-government movements. It is always important to note that the main driver for the population support is security, where they are likely to align themselves to whichever side, they feel most secured.

While intelligence is seen critical to security operations, information operation is equally as important and considered most effective when it is supported with diplomatic efforts, economic development and civilian protection. Weerakajom (2020) Kress and Szechtman (2008) and Barno (2006) are consistent with their views that counterinsurgencies cannot be eradicated by force alone as it concurrently requires political and economic reform. These synergized efforts can effectively change the population's perception and shift their support against armed violence and favour nonviolent approaches such as peace dialogues or negotiations.

Conflict Resolution Models

Several conflict resolution models are viewed and considered for this research. Most security experts such as Dixit (2004) and Galtung (1973) would point out that addressing the underlying root cause of conflict is considered fundamental. Inability to either identify or ignore known root causes is seen one of the key factors why some counterinsurgency campaigns continue to be prolonged and unsettled.

According to security strategist Kilcullen (2010), once conflict root causes are understood it is important to strengthen the local government to address the underlying issues and concurrently isolate the insurgents. This effort which he describes as 'Disaggregation' is a conceptual model that is intended to change the population's perception, shift their support for the government and gradually lead towards achieving the desired peace objectives.

The basis for this model is described in Kilcullen's (2006) earlier work which articulates clearly how 'Disaggregation' can be implemented. It works on strengthening governments so that it can be perceived as legitimate, and it must be seen having control of the three pillars of legitimacy (namely security, political and economic measures) that is focussed on meeting the needs of the people and supported by information operations that would effectively win public support for the government while isolating the insurgents.

Similar to Kilcullen's concept is Mockaitis's (2011) comprehensive strategy which emphasises greatly on prioritising political measures (as the primary effort) while synergising security and economic measures to resolve insurgencies. He points out that failure to devise a political strategy before beginning any campaign is likely to present complications or obstacles to accomplishing counterinsurgency goals. He also observes that in most problematic states, political and economic strategies often operate independently or are loosely connected with the security forces. The disconnection that exists within the government would eventually be exploited by insurgents and gradually making the public lose confidence in these government.

Unique about Mockaitis's (2011) work is his description of how current insurgencies differ from the era of anti-colonial insurgencies (in terms of strategies, policies, operations and tactics). He points out that contemporary insurgencies often coincide with criminal activities where these groups may either join criminal enterprises or become criminal organisations themselves. This reason explains why current counterinsurgency strategies require harmonising with anti-crime efforts. Such approach will be useful for this research as Mockaitis's description to a certain extent can closely relate to the situation in Southern Thailand.

In line with Dixit (2004), Kilcullen (2010) and Mockaitis's (2011) work is Grandia's (2009) '3D' approach in addressing counterinsurgencies which conceptually is implemented through the integration of Defence, Diplomacy and Development. This approach has been adopted by the UK government since the Malayan Emergency led by Sir Gerald Templer in the 1950s. While the term 'Defence, Diplomacy and Development' compared to 'Security, Political and Economy' may have similar meanings, but then again the terms used is carefully selected to have a more softer effect as it would allow the government to be seen as the defender the people, provides development and primarily interact with the population through diplomacy. Within the context of information operations, the tone and language used does matter which is the reason why it would be important for governments to carefully consider how they communicate (both verbally and non-verbally) to the population especially when they intend to seek peaceful solutions in ending violence and civil unrest.

Having viewed the theoretical aspects, challenges and conflict resolution models, the current situation in Southern Thailand is looked at in several context namely the Economic, Political and Security perspective. This to a certain extent would help develop the framework for this research.

Situation in Southern Thailand

Berke, Tweedie and Pracharoen (2013) looks into the strategic perspective of how economic measures can help address one of the many security issues experienced in Southern Thailand. Key findings reveal that most of the violence and civil unrest are caused and intensified by local competition for power and resources. Strengthening governance through the establishment of a decentralised government administration is highlighted to address existing issues in order to manage resources, infrastructures, development and financial assistance efficiently. Their work also suggests that financial aid and support from financial institutions could improve the situation and contribute to the economic development and stability of the affected areas.

With regards to the peace dialogues in Southern Thailand, Wheeler and Chambers's (2019) work describes of the complications that occurs in the peace dialogues. According to them, peace resolutions remains unsettled due to the limited representatives that participate in the dialogues involving elites who are seen incapable to represent many levels of the community. The complex situation in Southern Thailand involves many factions from many levels of society and one of the main challenges they face is their difficulty to agree to who should represent them. The findings suggest that inclusion of representation from all factions from different levels is warranted to ensure the community's concerns and

aspirations are thoroughly understood and addressed. Political reform at the local level is also seen necessary which can improve governance in the affected provinces.

Political reform has been difficult in Southern Thailand. According to Utrasint (2019), poor representation and weak political parties have been one of the main reasons why violence and civil unrest occurs in the provinces. Inability of political parties to focus and address public grievances is seen likely to motivate more violence and lose political support from the constituents. Similar to Mockaiti's (2011) suggestion, reviewing and reforming political organisations will be considered as the primary effort to ensure that both economic and security measures can be implemented effectively.

Looking into the security perspective, Chambers & Waitookiat (2019) provides the description of the role of security forces in Southern Thailand in addressing the insurgency. Key points highlighted from observation have concluded that the harsh security measures implemented without effective economic and political reform have resulted in violence and tension between security officials and local communities. Such conclusion is in line with the position of both Mockaiti (2011) and Kilcullen (2006).

Literature Review Summary and Conclusion

Having reviewed the literatures for this research, the simplified summary is reflected in table 2-1 below.

Figure 2-1 Literature Review Summary

Themes	Author/ Researcher	Theory/Key Points	Perspective	Suggestions/Gaps
Theories of conflict & insurgency	Galtung 1973 <i>Theories of Conflict</i>	Correlate contradiction between attitude (perception) and behaviour of conflicting actors	Academic perspective based on human behavioural & psychological context	-Change behaviours through perception and reasonable actions. -Security Forces Perspective not provided.
	Fall 1965 <i>Theory & Practice of Insurgency and COIN</i>	Alienation of the population to the central government exist	Models foreign intervention issues over local governance	-Build Legitimate government that provide fair Political, Economic, Cultural opportunities. -Security Forces Perspective not provided.
	Metz 2007 <i>Rethinking Insurgency</i>	Gaps between political expectations and opportunities become unacceptable	Models foreign intervention issues over local governance	-Build Legitimate government that provide fair Political, Economic, Cultural opportunities. -Security Forces Perspective not provided.
Counterinsurgency Challenges	Barno 2006 <i>Challenges in Fighting a Counterinsurgency</i>	War of perceptions. Movement based on feelings of political & economical inadequacy and cultural interpretations	Security operations perspective based on global COIN operations	-Build legitimate government that represents the political, economic and cultural aspiration of the population. -Local Security Forces Perspective not provided.
	Kress & Schechtman 2008 <i>Why Defeating Insurgencies is Hard</i>	Insurgents have better situation awareness and advantage because they are part of the general population	Security operations perspective based on global COIN operations	-Build legitimate government that secure population interest. -Security Forces Perspective not provided
	Weerakajorn, 2020 <i>Counterinsurgency in the deep south of Thailand: A continuing failure?</i>	Primary focus on tight security measures without effective political and economic reform will align population support towards insurgents	Local political and diplomatic perspective on COIN Challenges	-Promote political and economic reform. -Local Security Forces Perspective not provided
Conflict Resolution Models	Dixit, M. 2004 <i>Theories of Conflict Resolution: An Analysis</i>	Addressing underlying root source of conflict is key in providing resolution	Strategic Perspective on conflict resolution	-Identify and address root cause of conflict -Security Forces Perspective not provided
	Kilcullen 2010 <i>Countering Global Insurgency</i>	Disaggregation concept by isolating insurgents and strengthening local government	Strategic Perspective on COIN concept	-Enhance peace efforts with integrated security, political and economic measures -Security Forces Perspective not provided
	Kilcullen 2006 <i>3 Pillars of Counterinsurgency</i>	Security, political and economic measures integrated with info strategy critical for effective COIN	Strategic Perspective on COIN concept	-Enhance peace efforts with integrated security, political and economic measures -Security Forces Perspective not provided
	Mockaitis 2011 <i>Resolving Insurgencies</i>	Comprehensive strategy that is led by political measures and synergised together with security and economic measures likely to improve peace situation	Strategic Perspective on COIN concept	-Enhance political measures and synergise with economic and security -Security Forces Perspective not provided
	Grandia 2009 <i>The 3D approach and counterinsurgency</i>	Integration of Defence, Diplomacy & Development vital for peace effort	Academic Perspective on COIN concept	-Build legitimate government that represents the political, economic and cultural aspiration of the population. -Local Security Forces Perspective not provided.
Situation in Southern Thailand	Berke, Tweedie & Pracharoen 2013 <i>The Case of Southern Thailand</i>	Violence exacerbated by local competition for power and resources in complexed environment	Strategic Perspective on economic measures	-Promote Political reform and economic assistance -Local Security Forces Perspective not provided.
	Wheeler & Chambers 2019 <i>The tragedy of Conflict Irresolution; Peace Dialogue in Southernmost Thailand</i>	Conflict Resolution dialogues limited to the elite level without inclusion of middle and grassroots level representation limits the accomplishment of peace process	Strategic Perspective of the Peace Dialogue	-Promote Political Reform -Inclusion of representation from all levels of parties involved in dialogue -Local Security Forces Perspective not provided.
	Utarasint 2019 <i>When violence rises and politicians fall</i>	When public grievances are not represented, eruption of violence further undermines public support for political parties	Strategic Perspective of political measures	-Promote Political Reform -Local Security Forces Perspective not provided.
	Chambers & Waitookiat 2019 <i>The Role of Security Forces in Thailand's Deep South Counter Insurgency</i>	Harsh Security Measures without effective economic and political reform results in violence and tension between security officials and local ethnic communities	Strategic Perspective of Security Forces approach	-Enhance peace efforts with integrated security, political and economic measures -Security Forces Perspective not provided

Source : Author. Year : 2020

Key points derived from literature review for the conceptual framework are as below :

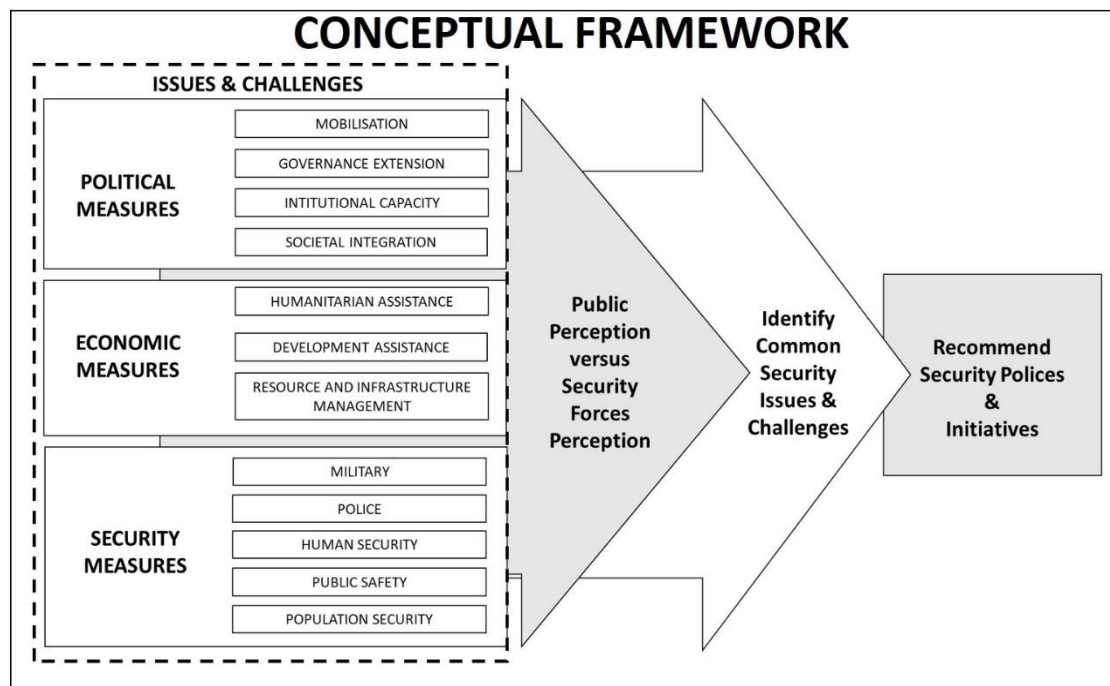
1. Insurgencies and civil unrest are likely to occur when the population perceives their government as illegitimate and incapable to serve population's interests.

2. Political reform is needed to improve administrative governance of managing resources, development and security.

3. Views from the security forces and how the general public see the effectiveness of how the security policies are implemented are not provided. Most literature are commonly limited to the perspective of theorist and strategic security experts. Findings suggest that research on challenges that security forces experience as relevant topic for this paper.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, the framework for this research can be described as illustrated in the diagram below.



This research aims to identify and understand the security factors that both the security forces and the general public view which are in need to be addressed for the purpose of recommending security initiatives that can improve the current security environment in Southern Thailand.

Key security issues as described by security strategist and expert Dr Kilcullen (2010) which are 1. Political Measures, 2. Economic Measures and 3. Security Measures are seen as the three pillars of counterinsurgency. His model will be used to examine the perception of both public and security forces on the effectiveness of the current security measures implemented. This examination is likely to allow the research to identify common issues and capability gaps which would subsequently lead into formulating effective security policies and initiatives that is based on the priorities of the research findings.

Charter 3

Security Issues in Southern Thailand

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to identify factors that have led to the prolonged conflict in Southern Thailand with the intention of understanding the environment that has created challenges for the security forces to implement security measures effectively.

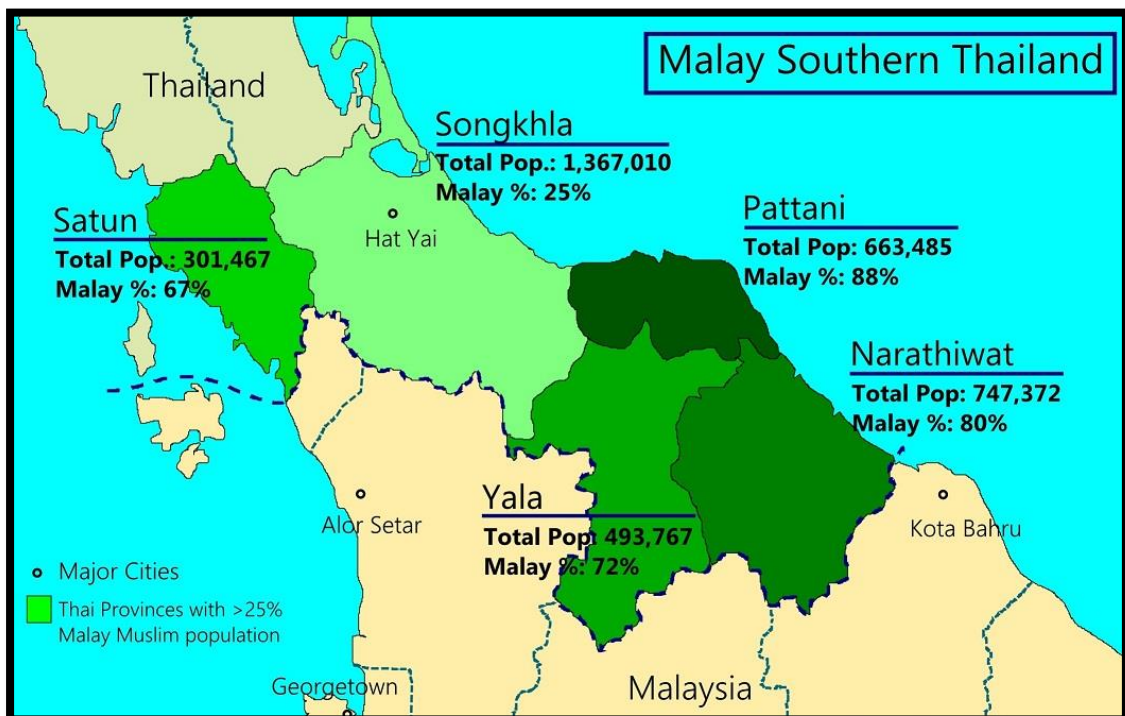
Initial findings suggests that the lack of political will and commitments to support the counterinsurgency effort due to the instability of the Thailand's political climate in the last two decades appear to be the major contributing factor which have limited the necessary attention and assistance to resolve the unsettled issues of the southern region, particularly in establishing an effective political strategy which is considered fundamental to address the grievances and synchronise both security and development effort which have been challenging for the local authorities to implement effectively in a security environment that is known to be complexed and problematic.

In order to explain the factors that have led to the current conflict, this chapter will examine its history, cultural & political grievances, economic and security environment.

Historical Background

Resistance in Thailand's deep south is known to have existed for centuries. The conflict area mainly involves the three southern provinces known as Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and the southernmost of four districts in Buddhist-majority Songkhla province is located at the northern borders of Peninsular Malaysia. The region has a total population of 1.8 million people with more than 75% ethnic Malay Muslims that makes up only 2.9% of Thailand's population (Syed 2018).

Figure 3-1 Southern Thailand's Malay Population



Source : Thailand Business News. Year 2011

The rationality and mindset that is commonly justified by separatist and insurgents originate from its historical context of the Pattani Kingdom Sultanate which was conquered by the Kingdom of Siam in 1875. Formal annexation of these Pattani-Malay states was officially sealed through the Bangkok Treaty (Anglo-Siam Treaty) in 1909 between the Thai and British Government which presently has become part of Thailand's territorial sovereignty (Patcharakanokkul 2010).

As acknowledged officially by the government in 2012, the root cause to the current conflict in the deep south is ingrained towards cultural identity and political grievances which historically is known to have originated from the 1939 government's assimilation policy known as the Rathaniyom or Pan-Thai National Policy (Asia Report 2012). While the main purpose of imposing this policy was intended for social integration and instil nationalism for all its citizens, it had also led to unwanted consequences which was perceived by Southern Thailand's ethnic Malay population as a systematic suppression to the existence of their cultural identity and freedom.

The sensitivities that evoked from this policy and historical grievances would eventually lead to armed resistance where it had resulted to more than 60 recorded insurgent attacks and uprising between 1940 to 1980 (Patcharakanokkul 2010). Despite the insurgencies slowing down in the 1980s it gradually built momentum from the late 1990s and heightened rapidly from 2004 onwards leading to prolonged conflict that has been difficult to resolve until present time.

Cause and factors to conflict

1. Cultural grievances

As acknowledged by the Thai Government, cultural grievances originated from its historical past have been recognised as the root cause for the southern conflict. In general, there is a common perception among many of the ethnic Malay population in the three southern provinces (2.9% of Thailand's population) that their unique cultural and religious identity to a certain extent is being systematically marginalised, and face challenges to survive and coexist together with the larger part of Thai society (Asia Report 2012). Attempts by the central government to socially integrate many of them through its policies and education system have been difficult, as it is also seen to impose limitations to their cultural and religious practices.

While other ethnic minorities in Thailand (which possess their own cultural language or practices) may have integrated well into Thai society, there is reason to suggest that most of them are commonly aligned and religiously orientated to Buddhism, which is central to Thailand's national culture. The ethnic Malays on the other hand, which religiously affiliates and orientates themselves to Malay-Muslim culture and practices, appear to experience challenges in adapting to these differences.

With the variations of cultural orientation in mind, it is not uncommon for these communities to associate and orientate themselves towards neighbouring states with similar cultural orientation particularly Malaysia and Indonesia. This matter remains a national concern and have continued to present social integration challenges for the Thai government, having to continuously engage with both the Malaysian and Indonesian

government to ensure national integration and regional interests remains intact and not compromised (Syed 2018).

Protecting cultural and religious practices are essentially important for ethnic Malays in Southern Thailand because it involves their faith and beliefs. The existence of Malay religious schools (locally known as 'Pondok') for example, and the preference of people within the population to enrol their children in these schools is a testament of their determination to continue preserving what they consider fundamental to them (Patcharakanokkul 2010). At the same time, it does to a certain extent implies the inadequacies and limitations that may exist in the government mainstream education system and which is not essentially serving their cultural needs. While pursuing alternative education can be seen as a way to protect the interests of their identity, but then again it can also be considered problematic, as it paradoxically present conflicting connotations and challenges to achieve national unity and aspirations.

Key security concerns of pursuing Malay-Muslim education involve the indoctrination of anti-government sentiments and recruitment of insurgents which have occurred in the past at several schools, causing a substantive amount of communal damage between the relationship of the Thai-Buddhist and Malay-Muslims community and further aggravating the impact and sense of ethnic marginalisation. While suggestions to eliminate these schools may appear to provide a solution to this issue, it also may continuously be considered as an attempt by the state to further suppress the cultural needs ethnic Malays as long as the government education system are not effectively able to complement the inadequacies that exists.

The conflict in Southern Thailand may best be explained in the context of ‘Societal Security’ (Buzan 1991), where both the Thai Government and a segment of Southern Thailand’s ethnic Malays are facing challenges to coexist as a ‘nation-state’. While a unified nation-state would be the ultimate desire of the government, it is also important to realise that Thailand is considered a state of many nationalities, and to integrate its society successfully, it would be reasonably imperative to adapt diversified policies (that protects the interests of its many nationalities). The absence of a diversified policy to a certain extent may explain why resistance to the state government have remained in existence as ethnic Malays still consider the policies as biased and irrelevant.

Acknowledgement of the ‘cultural and political grievances’ as the root-cause to the conflict in Southern Thailand by the government however has been important, as it has been recognised as the most vital matter in order to address the conflict effectively as it further stems into other concurrent issues namely; political marginalisation, socio-economic imbalances and security disparities.

2. Political Grievances

The general sentiment of many of the ethnic Malay population in the deep south feels that their voices have not been represented effectively within Bangkok’s centralised government particularly in advocating their grievances and community needs which have considerably contributed to many of the existing issues of security injustices, limited opportunities and unfair distribution of resources.

While security experts would commonly agree that political reform and stability are fundamental and considered the most important factor in addressing counterinsurgencies (Mokaitis 2011) (Counter

Extremism Project 2019), Thailand's political climate has relatively been unstable in the last two decades which is seen to have influenced the rise of insurgencies particularly after 2004. While the 1980s observed promising progress in the declination of insurgent activities, it was during the period of Prime Minister Thaksin's administration (2001-2006) that saw a drastic rise in anti-government and insurgent activities.

Thaksin's power politics and effort to monopolise Thailand's centralised control government by eliminating local political rivalry, removing experienced government officials (linked to political rivalry) and abolishing the counterinsurgency institutions that existed, is seen to have hampered years of government effort to mitigate past conflict in the deep south. The consequences of his administration would eventually lead to the Krue Se Mosque and Tak Bai Tragedy in 2004 which marked the culmination of the insurgency and considered problematic as it has become the basis of the protracted anti-government sentiment and caused grievances that remains embedded among many of the ethnic Malays until present time (Weerakajorn 2020).

Despite attempts by many of the governments after Thaksin's administration era to improve the situation in the deep south, the efforts remain difficult to implement mainly due to Thailand's political instability where most successive political administrations have focussed more on their own political survival. In the last two decades, Thailand witnessed two military coups (2006 and 2014) and two political crises (2008 and 2013) presenting challenges to channel its effort in addressing the southern conflict (Chambers, Jitpiromsri and Waitoolkiat 2019). Although the 2019 general election would considerably legitimise the

democratic government and end the controversial 2014 military coup, it has not been effectively enough to address the counterinsurgency effort.

The recent bombings in Yala on 17 March 2020 at the Southern Border Province Administration Centre (The Associated Press 2020), to a certain extent does indicate that the current elected government have not yet been able to guarantee peace in the southern provinces. As suggested by security experts (Fall 2015) (Ang 2013) (Galtung 1973), successful counterinsurgencies are dependent on strong political will and commitments which would enable to synergise and implement economic and security strategies effectively (Mockaitis 2011). While economic development and security strategies have been formulated to address the southern conflict, the absence of a political strategy is seen as essential and may provide the key solution to improve the situation in the deep south.

The case in Southern Thailand highlights the importance of the state government in supporting key reform efforts to address the core political grievances. Willingness of political actors at the national level to accept changes of how the area is governed will be key to achieve a sustainable end to the conflict as economic and security initiatives alone that is intended to win the ‘hearts and mind’ of the population is unlikely to effectively resolve the dynamics of the conflict (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013).

3. Economic Imbalances

The southern provinces have always been considered one of the poorest and least developed in Thailand as they account for only 5% of the GDP per income of only 50% on the national average (UNDP 2003). Perception of economic deprivation and discrimination is seen as the basis

for anti-government sentiment among the Malay-Muslim population, as agricultural resources from the south that are taken by the central government appear to be channelled for the economic development of other regions, creating a sense of neglect and causing economic disparities to be seen between the south and other parts of the country.

The southern region relies mostly on agriculture and where most of the socio-economic issues correlate commonly to the challenges of traditional agrarian societies. Many of the population are poor and unskilled labour due to limited education and economic opportunities. Past census and reports conducted in 2000 by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2003) have shown that the population in Southern Thailand have a much higher poverty rate compared to other parts of the country where one in three people are living below the national poverty line (25.5% in Pattani, 28.1% in Yala and 35.1% in Narathiwat are impoverished).

Recent updated by the World Bank have indicated that the poverty level has increased to the highest point as the southern region recorded the nation's highest poverty level in 2017 (World Bank 2020). The economic situation presents a security concern as the high unemployment rate is known to have driven many youths into illegal and anti-government activities. While efforts by economic experts have formulated economic development strategies to address the situation, many have been difficult to implement mainly due to the lack of both political and financial support by the central government particularly in the distribution of humanitarian assistance, development assistance, management of resources and infrastructure (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen 2013).

4. Complex Security Environment

The conflict in the Deep South is categorised as a subnational conflict which is multi-dimensional in nature, where the main axis of contestation is between the Thai state and ethnic Malays, while at the local level it involves inter-elite violence (often from the same identity) and inter-communal (ethnic-religious) tension which at times can also link with the main axis of contestation (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013).

The complexity of the security environment revolves on how different levels of conflicts can overlap and affect one another. While the conflict at the main axis can affect both the inter-elite and communal conflicts (when national leaders support key local elites to seize control of political and economic powers from rivals), vice-versa the inter-elite and communal conflicts can also feed the conflict at the main axis (when the forces under the control of local warlords or traditional local leaders are mobilised by the state against insurgents).

Security experts (Mokaitis 2011) (Counter Extremism Project 2019) commonly agree that violence and civil unrest in the southern province are caused and intensified by local competition for power and resources due to the state governments inability to effectively address the root cause of the conflict (cultural and political grievances) which have led the socio-economic environment to deteriorate at the current state (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). Since 2004, the conflict has resulted in almost 7000 deaths, mainly civilians involving both Muslims and Buddhists (Weerakajorn 2020). The absence of a political strategy which experts emphasise is fundamental at the beginning of any counterinsurgency operation has

created complications to synergise both security and economic measures in accomplishing its desired goals (Mokaitis 2011).

The role of the security forces intended to protect the general public has been questionable. Their inability to gather accurate information and intelligence has caused them to operate in an environment that have resulted in unwanted collateral damage involving non-discriminatory operations which has seen to fuel further anti-government sentiments among the population and shifting support towards the insurgents (Chambers and Waitoolkiat 2019). Security forces at times have resorted to harsh approaches due to the difficulty of obtaining accurate information as the insurgents are embedded discreetly and supported by the local population (Kress and Schechtman 2008). Reasonably, the employment of security operations that is not coordinated with the political and economic effort is seen to have produced unwanted results for the counterinsurgency operations.

Efforts to resolve the conflict through peaceful negotiations have also not produced the desired outcomes, hampered by limited representatives that participate involving elites who are seen incapable to represent many levels of the community and groups in the dialogues (Wheeler and Chambers 2019). Leaders who are able to make peace making decisions on the other hand, have avoided meetings with government officials mainly due to fear for their safety. Despite holding brokered peace talks in January 2020, recent bombings in Yala on 17 March 2020 by *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (BRN) insurgents, to some extent have disrupted the peaceful negotiations progress which has continued to create difficulty in reaching a hopeful solution for the conflict (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Conclusion

The conflict in the Deep South is seen to have remained unresolved as the recognised root cause of ‘cultural and political grievances’ have not been addressed successfully by the central government due to the lack of political will and commitments to support the counterinsurgency effort. The instability of the Thailand’s political climate in the last two decades which have seen many successive government’s focused on their political survival, appear to be a major contributing factor which have limited the necessary attention and assistance to resolve the unsettled issues of the southern region. Absence of an effective political strategy is apparent, which is fundamentally needed to address the grievances and synchronise both security and development effort which have created challenges for the local authorities to implement effectively, particularly in a security environment that is known to be complexed and problematic.

Having understood the basis of the conflict and the complexed security environment that present challenges for security forces to implement counterinsurgency measures effectively, the next chapter of this research will attempt to examine the pillars of counterinsurgency operations namely political, security and development measures in order to identify factors and implementation gaps that would enable to re-enhance and improve the existing counterinsurgency effort with the intent of establishing the desired end state, which is a is secured and stable southern region.

Chapter 4

Examining Counterinsurgency Efforts

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to examine the current counterinsurgency efforts with the purpose of identifying existing issues which can assist in formulating solutions and security initiatives to improve the current environment in the Southern Border Provinces.

Findings from this chapter have identified the absence of a political transition and strategy, conflicting political goals and political instability as factors that have limited the government's ability to address political grievances and align both economic and security measures in synergising the counterinsurgency effort. This examination has also shown that current economic measures have not been able to successfully address the socio-economic inequalities of the Malay population in the Deep South is due to their low education level, misspent or misdirected of development resources by existing channels and corruption practices. Gaining the confidence and support of the local community has been difficult as trust, sense of insecurity and perception non-transparency among of government officials have caused discomfort of the Malay population. Security operations continue to face challenges as the complex security environment creates difficulty to distinguish insurgents, attain intelligence and risk uncontrollable civilian casualties, fratricide, physical and mental injuries to innocent civilians which can have a negative impact to the security efforts.

In order to explain the findings above this chapter will examine the three pillars of counterinsurgency namely; (i) political measures, (ii) economic development measures and (iii) security measures.

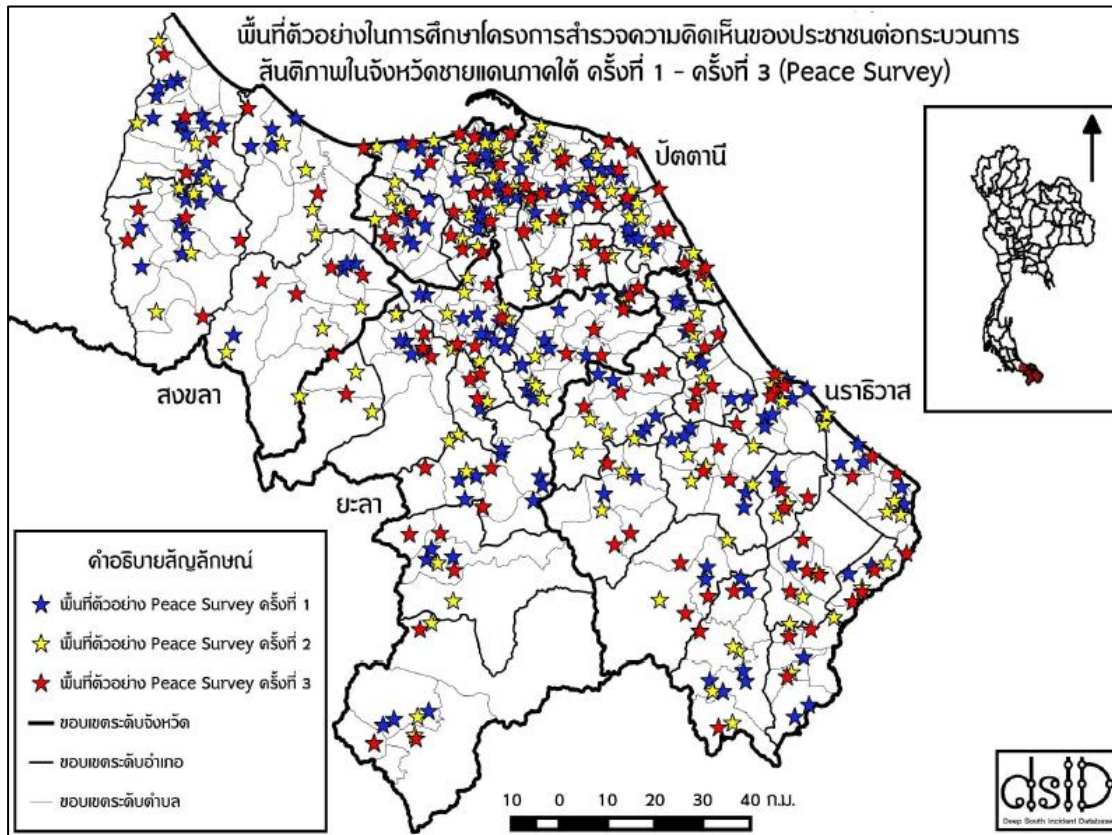
Examination Method and Resources

Examination of the counterinsurgency effort is based Dr Kilcullen's counterinsurgency framework by referring to a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data taken from:

1. Recent resources from books, online documents and websites.
2. Deep South Watch. "Results of the 3rd People's Opinion Survey on the Southern Border Peace Process [PEACE SURVEY]." Deep South Watch. September 25, 2017. <https://deepsouthwatch.org> (accessed July 31, 2020)

Involves 1,608 people, including Thai, Buddhist, Thai, Chinese, Malay and Muslim in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla provinces in Chana Thephathat and Saba Yoi districts, as well as 260 thought leaders.

Figure 4-1 : Localities used in 2017 research

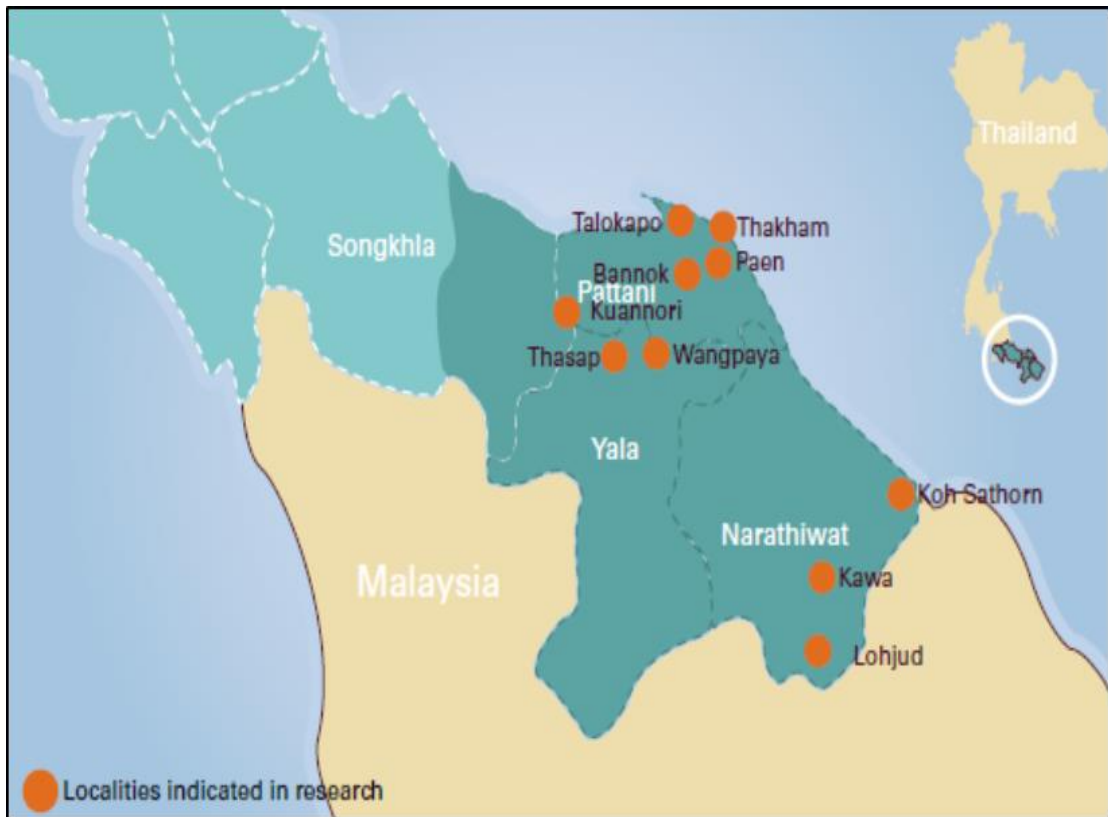


Source : Deep South Watch. "Results of the 3rd People's Opinion Survey on the Southern Border Peace Process Year: 2017"

3. Burke, Adam, Pauline Tweedie, and Ora-on Poocharoen. *The Contested Corners of Asia - The Case of Southern Thailand*. Subnational Conflict and Development Assistance, San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2013.

Involves 1,600 randomly selected respondents in Narathiwat, Pattani, conflict-affected areas of Songkhla, and Yala, as well as a comparator sample of 400 respondents drawn from peaceful areas of Songkhla.

Figure 4-2 : Localities used in the research

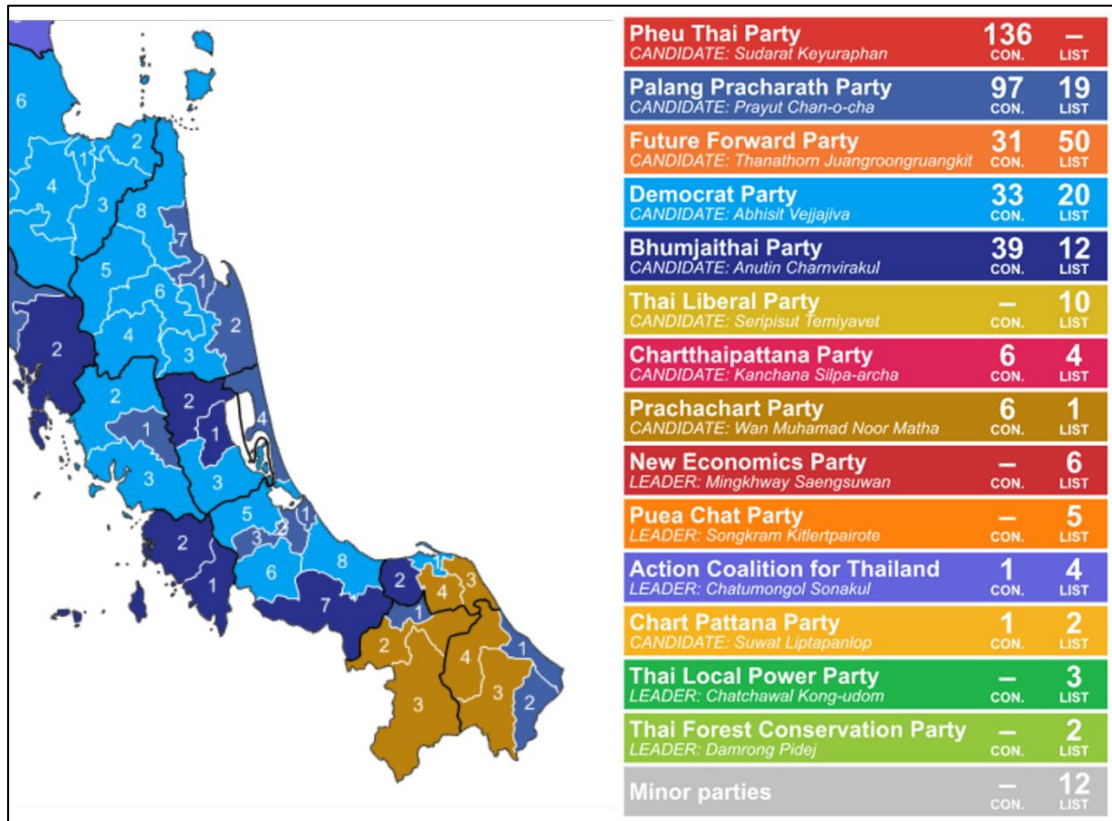


Source: The Asia Foundation Year : 2013

Political Transition

Public Perception on Political Measures

Figure 4-3 : 2019 Thai General Election Results



Source : Erinthecute @ <https://commons.wikimedia.org> Year : 2019

Thailand's General Election in 2019 has been a positive reflection of the government's continue observation of its national constitution and democratic practices. As reported by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the success of the election has been constructive in raising its 'Democracy Index 2019' ratings of 1.69 points (of 10.0) from the previous year (The Economist 2020). In the Southern Provinces, the election has been significantly important from the public's perspective as it has allowed the

local population of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala to exercise their freedom and voting rights to elect their representatives in government.

Election results from the three Southern Provinces have shown that the majority of electoral voted for the governments opposition coalition (7 out of 11 seats) consisting Prachachart Party (led by Wan Muhammad Noor Matha) winning six seats and Democrat Party (led by Abhisit Vejjajiva) winning 1 seat. The ruling coalition government on the other hand, only managed to secure four seats with Palang Pracharath Party (led by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha) winning three and Bhumjaithai Party (led by Anutin Charnvirakul) winning one.

In the public perspective, majority support to the political opposition reflects their continuous desire to see political reform which has never took place in past governments. This is considered fundamental particularly to address past political grievances which has been identified as the root cause of the conflict, and Prachachart Party appears to provide their hope of seeing positive changes. Key contributing factor that may have led in winning public support may be due to the composition of political leaders which consist members from the defunct Wadah political faction which had close ties with both former premier Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra.

The most promising attempt by the government to propose decentralising and provide certain level of autonomy to the three southern provinces was initiated by Yingluck's administration however such proposal did not materialise as her term ended with the military coup led by Prayut Chan-o-cha which strongly opposed these initiatives. Providing autonomy was seen to present unwanted risks which could potentially

motivate separatists toward declaring independence and causing the disintegration of the Thai State (Black Peak Group 2019)

Another contributing factor that may have influenced public support for the Prachachart Party is the anti-junta sentiment and public rejection towards the constitution amendments from the 2016 referendum, formed under military rule (The Nation 2018). Even though past performance of the formerly Wadah Political faction (Chambers and Waitollkiat 2020) have not been effective enough to make significant changes, their alignment of public interests from the majority with their political agendas under a newly formed political party may appear to have concealed many of the past errors linked to Thaksin's administration which witnessed the Krue Se Mosque and Tak Bai Tragedy in 2004.

The potential for political transition in the Deep South appears unlikely. Even with the electoral majority supporting the opposition government, little changes are expected particularly in addressing political grievances and cause of conflict. In the past, political oppositions in Thailand's Deep South have had limited success in establishing any political transition, particularly in seeking a decentralised government and local autonomy. This is not to say that the government has never considered any reform, but then again disapproval from the highly centralised government appear to have a much greater influence and authority to oppose such motion.

There have been attempts from the government to respond to the local grievances in response to the sensitivities related to the Krue Se Mosque and Tak Bai tragedy, which was the establishment of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) in 2005. Reports issued by NRC in 2006 proposed policy and procedural recommendations which

included; addressing socio-economic grievances; considering introduction of elements of Sharia law in the region; devolving authorities and responsibilities of local communities, providing means for local people to manage and control resources; creating community council of elders (Shura); strengthening the justice system and dealing properly with abuses by local authorities and security forces; establishing Pattani-Malay (Yawi) as the region's working language; establishing an unarmed peacekeeping force and establishing a Peaceful Strategic Administrative Centre for Southern Border Provinces (ACHR 2006) (UNDP 2010). This proposal however was not taken up totally by the central government as several recommendations was seen to have unwanted implications to the integration of both Thai state and society.

Prayut's succession as the prime minister in the 2019's general election is expected to maintain both his position and policies. Similarly, public and separatist's perspective towards the military backed government is likely to remain the same if no changes are observed. Survey conducted in 2017 have shown that most respondents did not see any significant changes under his administration (Deep South Watch 2017). What the government needs to be aware of from the survey conducted is that seeking an independent state to end the conflict is not what most respondents desire. Most important for them is to have a government that is able to serve the needs of the people, preferably a unique decentralised governing administration of the area that is still under Thai Law.

If status quo is maintained, the hope of addressing political grievances will continue to be difficult as such situation is problematic because it would potentially delay the peace talks and prolong the southern conflict which is an undesired outcome. Having observed the

current situation, it would be reasonable to suggest that policy reviews and new political strategies by the current government are needed to see progress in addressing the root cause of conflict, as security and development initiatives alone will not be sufficient enough for the counterinsurgency efforts. Legitimacy and public acceptance of the current government will depend highly on its political strategies and direction.

Security Forces Perspective on Political Measures

From the security forces perspective, the 2019 general election is viewed as a critical event and most important factor that would determine the outcome of the counterinsurgency efforts in the Deep South. Majority support to the opposition coalition shown does provide indication that the most locals are continuing their pursue for changes through political effort as past governments have not successfully addressed issues needed to end the insurgency. In theory, insurgencies reflect government systems that are dysfunctional and to address the existing issues require clear political direction to coordinate all government effort (Barno 2006). Reasonably, political issues require political solutions however the formulation of clear political direction has been difficult to accomplish, not only in the Deep South but also Thailand as a whole.

Security forces in Thailand often have to respond to political crisis at both national and local levels as it known to trigger violence and civil unrest. In response to these crises, security forces particularly the military functions to restore and maintain public order. Since 1932, Thailand has recorded a total of twelve military coups (Tsang 2014) mainly due to unstable political institutions that are often in conflict with one another, harming both national security and interests (Belkin and Schofer 2003). Significantly, the political instability in Thailand for last two decades

have seen two military coups (2006 and 2014) and two political crises (2008 and 2013) disrupting the counterinsurgency efforts in the southern provinces (Chambers, Jitpiromsri and Waitoolkiat 2019). Absence of political commitments and attention needed to address the southern conflict have been mainly due to their primary focus on their own political survival during these crises.

Resolving the conflict through the ongoing peace dialogue have been difficult. While the dialogue known as Majilis Syura Patani (Patani Consultative Council or MARA Patani) which consist three PULO factions; (i) Barisan Islam Perberbasan Patani (BIPP), (ii) Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate (BRN) and (iii) the Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Patani (GMIP) has been important for the government's counterinsurgency efforts since 2013, it however continues to face obstacles in seeking the solutions due to several issues. The greatest obstacle known to the peace process is the conflicting political views itself between the Thai government and insurgent group BRN. While the government have been firm with its position that separation of the provinces is not an option, BRN on the other hand has no other political goal beyond calling for independence. BRN's lack of compromise is viewed problematic as its political view will only prolong the conflict as it is likely to motivate continuous violence and civil unrest.

Disagreement and different views from both within and opposite sides of the dialogue also have been observed. Recent inclusion of BRN insurgent representatives into the MARA Pattani peace dialogues has raised doubt as its members lack decision making abilities on behalf of the insurgent group whom have no control of the fighters in the frontline. From the security forces perspective, BRN's extreme secrecy of

its able leaders who do not attend these dialogues often lead to indecisive or disagreements of dialogue outcomes. In response to this situation, reports by political analysts have shown that the government officials have attempted to adopt a parallel approach of concurrently meeting with BRN and MARA Pattani separately (Mariyam and Lee 2020). Separate talks with BRN insurgent are considered vital as they form the armed resistance that is confronting the security forces in the southern provinces. The separation of the talks however receives opposing views from the Deep South Watch think tank group, as they view it as demoting the MARA Pattani peace dialogue.

The peace dialogue also appears to divide the security forces with two separate views. While there are those who consider the dialogues primarily important in finding a peaceful resolution, there are also those who view that achieving peace through security deterrence have greater priority in controlling the security environment. Reports have shown that between 2014 to 2019 two agreements made in the MARA Pattani dialogues were turned down by the Thai delegation under the National Council Peace and Order (Crisis Group 2020). Many officials view that signing these agreements would legitimise the insurgents and consider them as legal parity with the Thai Government. They mainly oppose these dialogues as they see it as a separatist tool which potentially could increase their influence and control over the southern provinces.

In general, most security officials view that the Thai political strategy is premised on the idea of maintaining status quo and not based on a win-win concept. Like most governments, territorial integrity and integration of societies are matters of national interests that cannot be compromised. As reported by security analysts, reluctance of government

to accept negotiation agreements suggests that the dialogues may appear to serve two strategic purposes (Crisis Group 2020). The first is to provide opportunity to gather information and intelligence on the Pattani liberation movements and BRN insurgents. The second purpose is to buy time for counterinsurgency measures and important to portray that the state is actively seeking for peaceful resolution of the conflict. This strategy is seen carefully formulated as it also prevents potential interference and condemnation from the international community.

With Prime Minister Prayut maintaining his premiership in government, security forces are also likely to continue adopting existing policies however, reviewing the governments approach is needed as the majority's support to the opposition coalition in the recent election indicates their continuous desire for change. Unless the current government is able to respond to the needs of the local population and win their support with a more reasonable and sensible approach, its legitimacy and acceptance by the people will continually be in question.

Economic Development

Public Perspective on Economic Measures

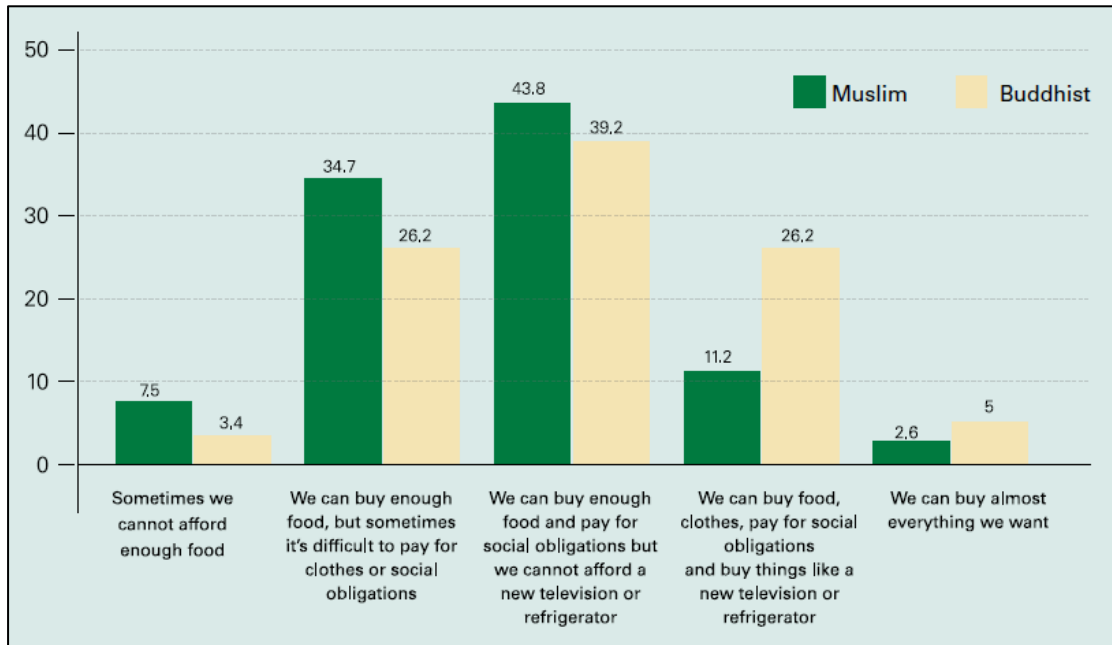
The economic and development disparities seen, is one of the several aspects of a wider context of injustice and marginalisation that the Malay population experience. Government development initiatives however have not successfully changed long term perceptions of inequality and injustice due to several challenges and problems.

Economic indicators are not consistent with the government efforts. Press release by the Bank of Thailand on the Southern Region Economic Conditions for the year 2019 have shown an overall decline in

economic activities when compared to 2018 (Bank of Thailand 2020). High level of household debts and the slow-down of private investment were observed primarily due to the effects of the global economy's decline in foreign demand which have not help in reducing the annual unemployment rate of 1.5%. Between 2015 to the end of 2019, the unemployment rate increased from 1.1% to 1.5%.

In 2017, the conflict affected Deep South recorded the highest poverty rate in Thailand (World Bank 2020). Reports from the World Bank also shows that the poverty rate in Thailand in general increased from 7.2% to 9.8% and the absolute number of people living in poverty rose from 4.85 million to more than 6.7 million. Increase of poverty rate is worrisome as it can potentially raises the risks of anti-government sentiments and illegal activities among the affected population particularly when the unemployment rate of the southern region recorded its highest of 1.7% in that year (Bank of Thailand 2020).

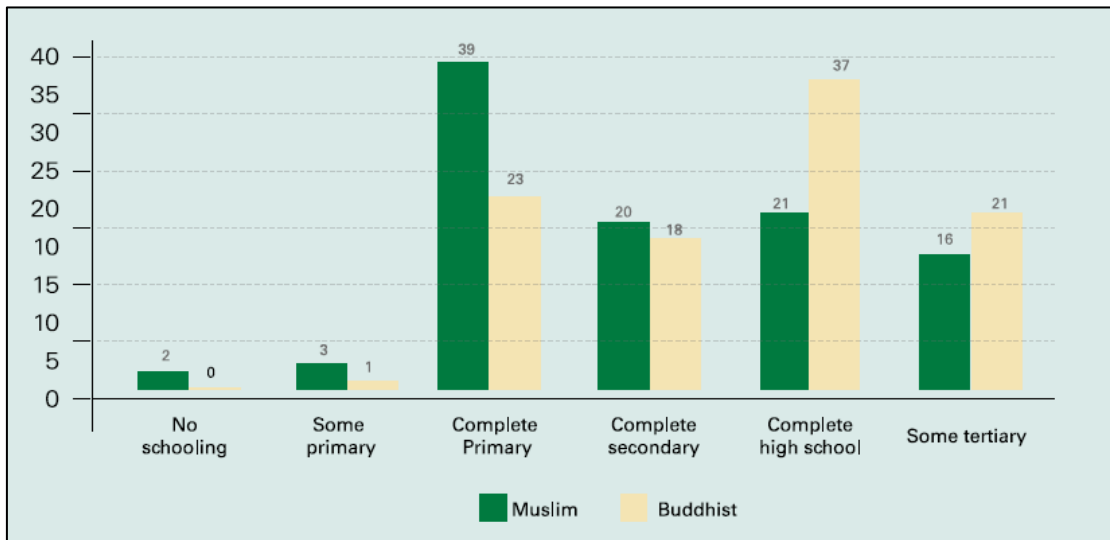
Figure 4-4 : Which of these statements best describes your economic situation over the past year? % of respondents



Source : Asia Foundation Year : 2012

Economic inequalities between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhist in the southern provinces remained apparent in 2012 (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). Survey result as illustrated in figure 4-4 above confirmed income gap between Muslims and Buddhists existed. Over twice as many Muslims compared to Buddhists have shown that they were sometimes unable to purchase food, while in contrast twice as many Buddhists compared to Muslims informed that they were able to afford necessities and durable goods.

Figure 4-5 : Education levels of respondents aged 18-35 in the Deep South (% respondents)



Source : Asia Foundation Year: 2013

One of the main factors seen to have contributed to the social and economic inequalities that the Malays experience is their incomplete level of education which limits their opportunities to secure better income jobs. Survey in 2012 (see figure 4-5) have shown that most Muslim respondents only completed primary education while comparatively more Buddhists have completed high school and received tertiary education (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013).

This situation remained consistently similar years later in 2017 as survey results have also shown that most respondents from the general public informed that they only completed primary school, while most local community leaders at least graduated from high school. The education limitation of the respondents correlate directly with the type employment as most of them are either farmers or fishermen. Only

twenty percent make it as government officials, general service workers or are in private enterprises (Deep South Watch 2017).

Another factor that is seen contributing to the social and economic inequalities is their limited language skills. Survey respondents in 2017 have shown that the Thai language is rarely used in the Deep South (approximately 25% is used) as they frequently speak Malay within their community (Deep South Watch 2017). Studies have also shown that most Malay parents prefer to send their children to Islamic schools rather than state secondary schools as it both teaches religious and cultural subjects in the Malay language. In the southern provinces private Islamic schools (which were formerly the traditional 'Pondok' schools) receive government financial subsidies and follow a curriculum that allows extensive religious education (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). The limitations of both language skills and education level resulting in low secular standards in Thailand's mainstream education and presenting difficulties to graduate from universities and create opportunities to secure higher income employment.

The language and education limitations of the Malays is not a consequence of neglect by the Thai government. The government has considerably allocated higher budgets to education as well as other sectors. From 2003 to 2008, public expenditure in the conflict area was 38% higher than the national average but then again, the performance has remained low as education has consistently been a key subject of conflict (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). Challenges in the education sector relates to the difficulties of many Malays to conform to mainstream Thai society and values. Traditional

education has been a mainstay of Malay Muslim culture that represents their status in society and continuous effort to preserve cultural identity.

The government have indeed responded with the Malay populations need for policy changes in education, culture and language (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen 2013). Efforts include piloting bilingual education in primary schools and including Yawi signs outside government buildings. Education development initiatives include removing university entrance requirements for local students, building community centres, increase local recruitment into government agencies, providing grants to local NGOs to run income generation and exchange programs. While these policy changes may appear to practically work in the local environment, its exclusion and unacceptance in the national system is however likely to continue face challenges particularly in integrating with the country's mainstream language medium and standards.

Economic development has been one of a key focus in the counterinsurgency effort. Government institutions have frequently attempted to reach out to the Malay community through financial assistance programs and policy adaptations, reflecting its willingness to modify national approaches for positive incremental changes. Financial assistance include support for victims of violence, investment in public services and infrastructure (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013).

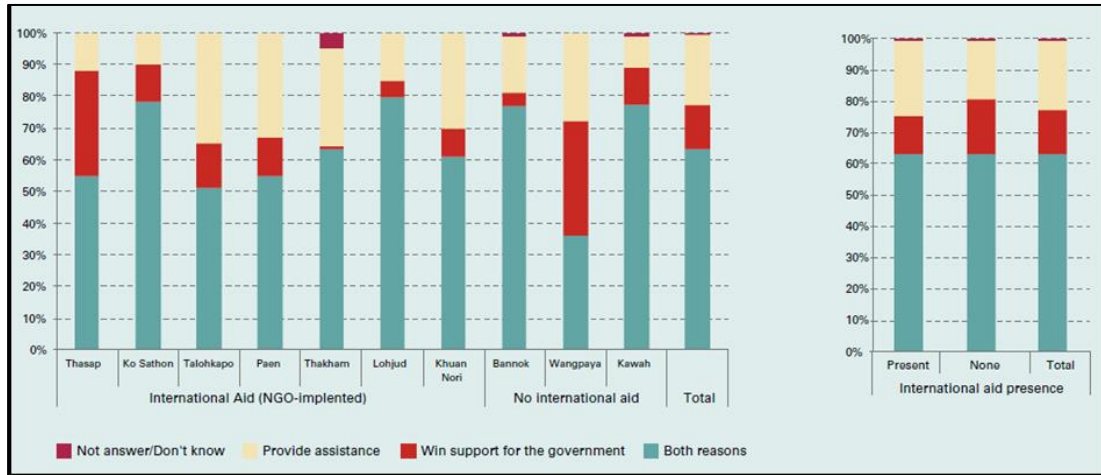
Government effort in allocating budgets and seeking foreign aid is acknowledged. In 2009 for example, the government passed a three-year development budget of THB 76 billion where the initiatives were implemented by both central ministries and SBPAC. Foreign aid to Thailand increased to over USD 3 billion from 2007-2012 through

government borrowings from the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and concession lending from Japan (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013).

Recent reports have also acknowledged that the World Bank for funding projects implemented in 27 communities helping with the peacebuilding effort in the three southern provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala to foster understanding and improve the capacity of civil society to effectively engage with the state (World Bank 2020).

The main purpose of the financial incentives is to win the ‘Hearts and Minds’ of the people by improving economic opportunities. These initiatives bear close resemblance to government approaches in response to the communist insurgency in the 1960-1970s (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). These efforts to a limited extent have helped alleviate some of the local misperception of the state government.

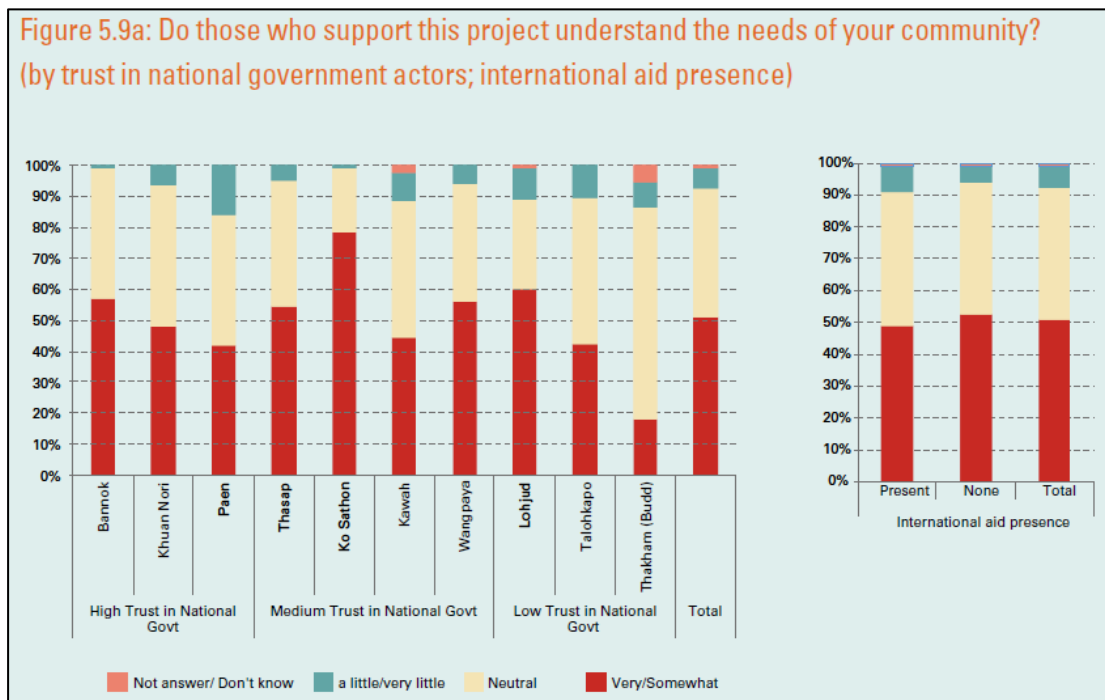
Figure 4- 6 : Goal of aid projects: Are they to provide assistance or win support for the government?



Source: Asia Foundation Year 2013

The government’s effort to provide aid has been productive and acknowledged. The common perception from the survey conducted in 2012 (see figure 4-6 above) has shown that most respondents see the goal of aid projects is both provide assistance and win public support for the government.

Figure 4-7 : Do those who support this project understand the needs of your community? (by trust in national government actors: international aid presence)



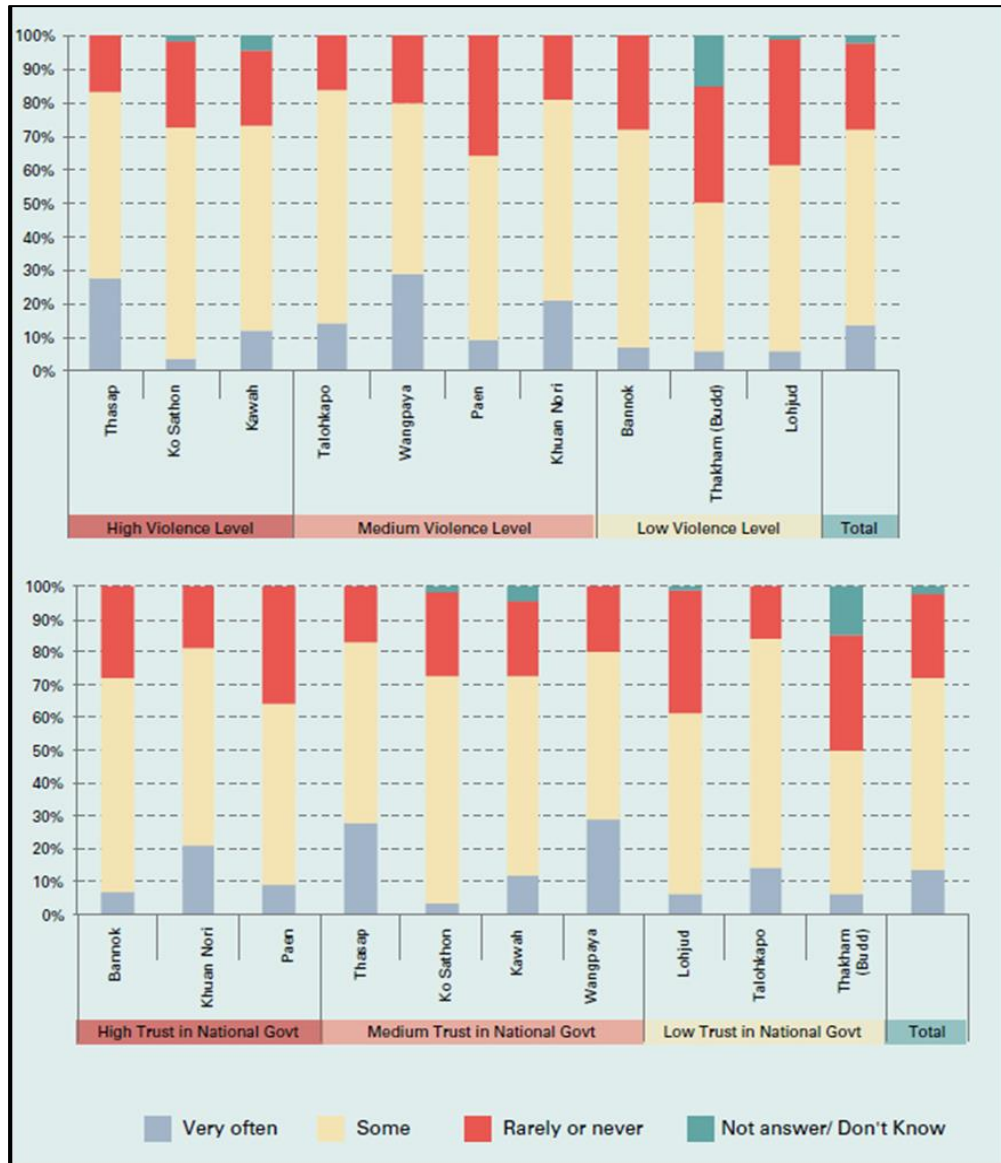
Source: Asia Foundation Year 2013

The government's effort to understand the economic issues and needs of the local community to a certain extent have also been acknowledged by the public. A slight majority of the 2012 survey respondents (see figure 4-7 above) have shown to agree that those working primarily in government projects had some understanding of the issues and needs of the community (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). Respondents from the Buddhist majority district of Thakham however had the lowest number of people who felt the government understood the needs of the community. Survey findings suggest that active engagements between government officials and local community have played an important factor in creating government official's awareness of local

issues and needs. Among the highest government bodies that received the highest score of resolving issues in the southern provinces is the SBPAC, followed by SBU, provincial governors, sheriffs and administrative officials.

Despite the government's effort to recognise issues and provide financial assistance to address the socio-economic challenges of the population in the conflict area, economic indicators shown by the 2019 Bank of Thailand Report and 2020 World Bank Report have specified that the southern provinces have continued to have the highest poverty and unemployment rate (Bank of Thailand 2020) (World Bank 2020). Reasonably these indicators show that there are other factors that are causing the disruption of economic development programs which contributes to the economic inequalities that the population experience.

Figure 4-8 : How often is aid misused or stolen?



Source : Asia Foundation Year, 2013

Many of the resources have been reported to be misspent or misdirected due to the variable approaches of implementing these initiatives. Corruption among government authorities that manage development projects are known to exist. Survey in 2012 have shown in figure 4.8 above

indicate that a strong majority of respondents (71%) are aware and indicate that aid is often or sometimes misused or stolen (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013).

Corrupt practices are not only limited in government bodies as it is also known to even exist at the village levels. Many research interviewees whom are not part of the village's governing body, have explained that it is common for community leaders to distribute resources from government led development programs to family and friends before distribution to the target group (Deep South Watch 2017). Misappropriation of resources and abuse of power at all levels by either government officials and local elites have continued to undermine the government's efforts and is part of the complexed problem associated with the southern conflict.

Another factor that has reversed the desired objectives of the government's development programs is the way the development budgets are channelled through the existing government system which are seen discriminatory and a source of the marginalisation effects (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). Existing development projects that are seen worsening the conflict are those that; (i) build local infrastructure that does not benefit the conflict affected minority population, (ii) service delivery programs that entrench or strengthen discriminatory practices, (iii) reduce ability of local elites and institutions to manage level of violence in the community and (iv) develop local infrastructure projects that leads to attacks on project sites.

Indonesia Malaysia Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) in the 1990s supported by the Asian Development Bank (Satun and Songkhla) is one example which did not see considerations given to locally defined

needs and inequalities experienced by Malay Muslims. Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Board criticised for marginalising the rural majority by favouring large companies that was mostly from non-Malay owned businesses (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). To ensure that the effect of marginalisation and discrimination practices does not take place, transformational changes are needed to enhance the existing government systems.

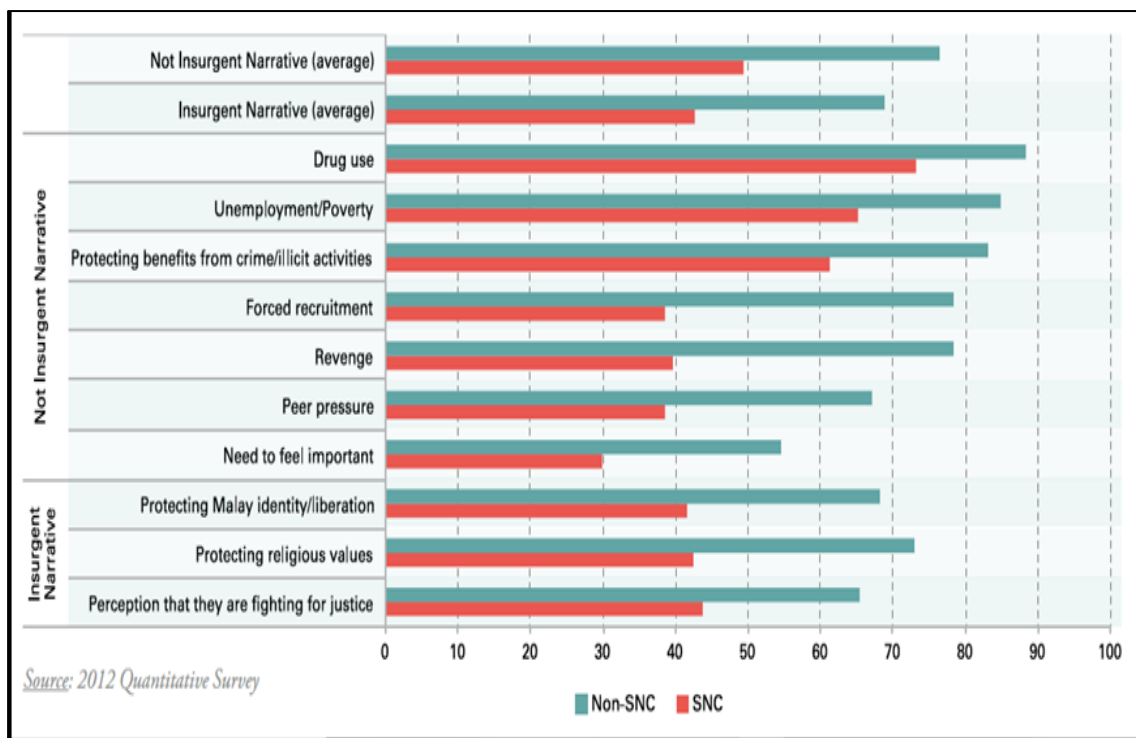
Transformational changes in the government system is however fundamentally a political effort. It is important to realise that it is the local political dynamics that help to shape development programs and not vice versa. Political direction will therefore be key as economic development projects have limited scope and does not on its own be able to resolve the conflict. Reasonable to say, as long as the political grievances are not addressed, implementation of economic development programs are likely to remain challenging.

Security Forces Perspective on Economic Measures

From the security perspective, the recent economic indicators reported by the Bank of Thailand and the World bank presents a continuation of security challenges that have occurred in the conflict areas for decades (Bank of Thailand 2020) (World Bank 2020). The increase of unemployment rate from 1.1% to 1.5% between 2015 to the end of 2019 and recording of the highest poverty in Thailand in 2017 foresees unwanted implications to the conflict area particularly when it has a direct correlation to insurgent and criminal activities.

While economic problems such as unemployment and poverty can motivate civil unrest and criminal activities, the security instability from the armed violence also create fear among investors which consequently aggravates the economic situation further in the conflict area.

Figure 4-9 : Perceptions of the causes of conflict, comparing non-conflict and conflict areas (% people who ranked their response as high or very high)



Source: Asia Foundation Year 2013

Concerns of security forces in relations to the economic impact are consistent with how the public relate to the reasons that is seen causing the conflict in both the non-subnational conflict (non-SNC) and subnational conflict (SNC) area in the southern provinces. Survey in 2012 (figure 4-9 above) have shown that the respondents view the top three causes of conflict in both conflict and non-conflict areas are (i) drug use, (ii)

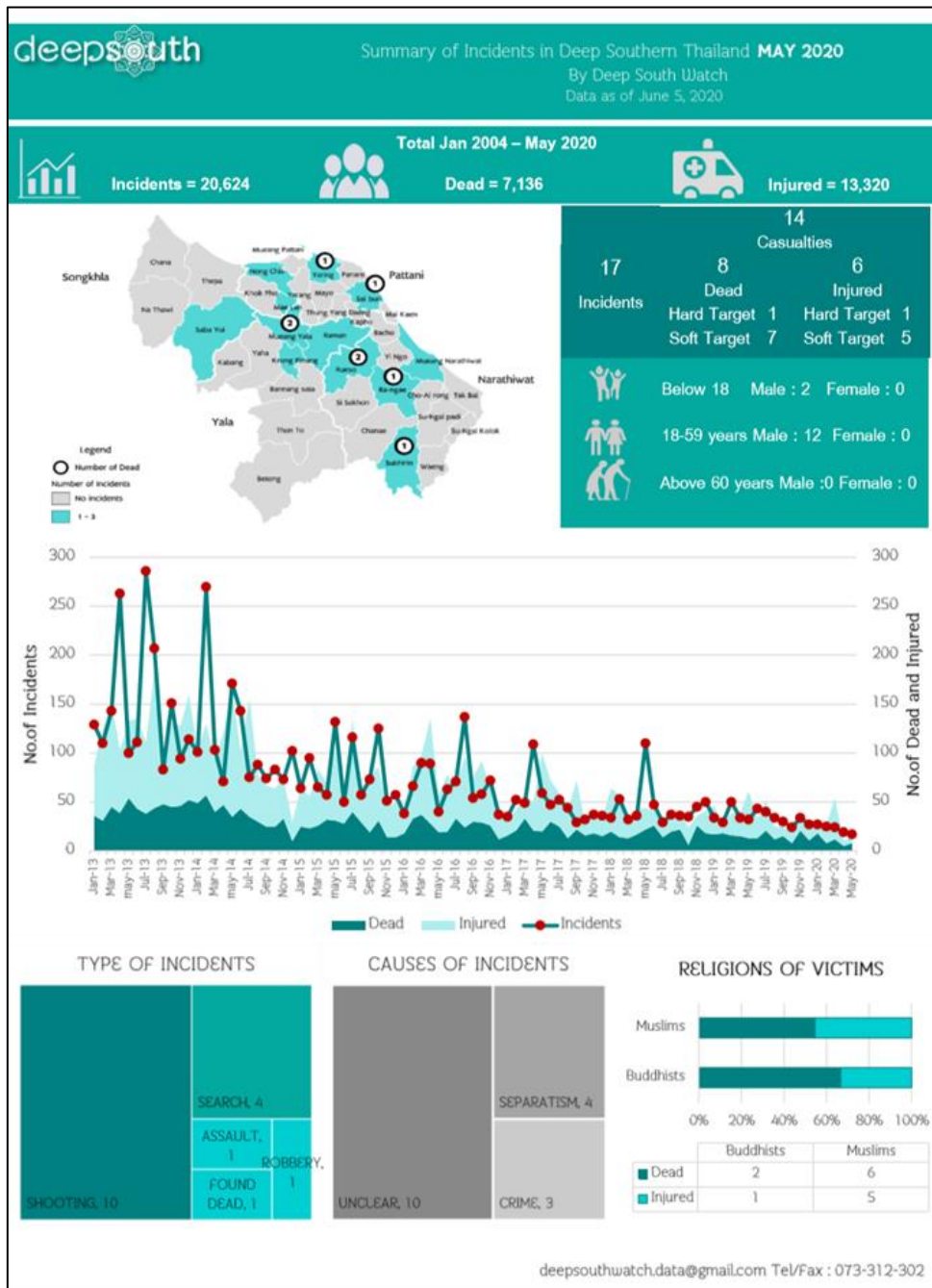
unemployment/poverty and (iii) protecting benefits from crime/illicit activities (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). The consistency in security concerns from a may explain how difficult it has been for the security forces to operate in particularly in an area that has been known to experience economic challenges.

From the security forces perspective, the economic development programs are of significant important and needs to be supported by ensuring the development environment is secured to prevent economic programs in the conflict areas from being disrupted as it can have unwanted implications to the counterinsurgency effort. The prolonged economic challenges that appears never ending in the southern provinces however can have an exhausting and negative effect to the security forces as the development incentives alone have limited effect in addressing the root cause of the insurgency which sensibly requires a political solution.

Security Measures

Public Perspective on Security Measures

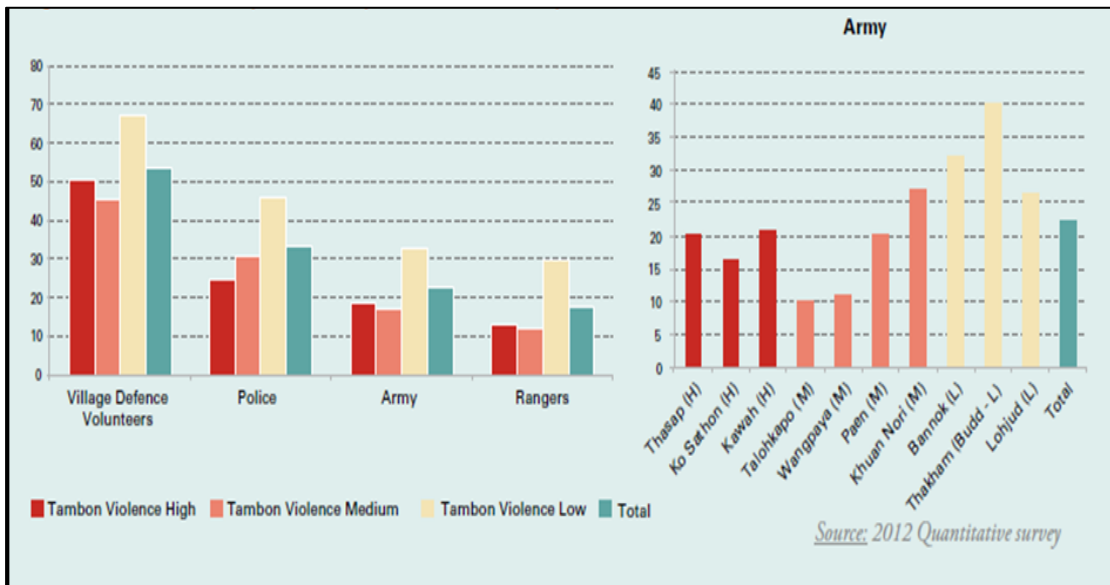
Figure 4-10 : Summary of incidents in Deep Southern Thailand May 2020



Source : Deep South Watch <https://deepsouthwatch.org> Year : 2020

Armed violence and civil unrest incidents continue to occur in the southern provinces. Data as of June 2020 (see figure 4-10 above) shows that since 2004 the conflict have resulted in 7,136 deaths and causing injury to more than 13,000 people (Deep South Watch 2020). The prolonged violence does raise questions whether the government is taking enough measures to ensure that public safety and security are constantly provided.

Figure 4-11 : Trust in security actors (Response: somewhat/very much)



Source: Asia Foundation Year 2013

Trust issues towards the security forces remains an on-going problem among the local population as claims of unaccountable injustices committed by the security forces in the past remains unsettled (Weerakajorn 2020). This is relatively shown in the survey conducted in 2012 (see figure 4-11 above) the army and rangers appear to be less trusted by respondents when compared to village defence volunteers and the police (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, The Case of Southern

Thailand 2013). Reasons why village defence volunteers are trusted more is because most of them are from the same village and speak Malay. Respondents also explain that language ability and different religious faith of many army personnel contribute to the trust issues that they constantly experience.

Security forces in general are trusted more in tambons/districts with lesser violence (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). This result appears to suggest that districts where the level of violence is high, tend to have security forces adopting a more securitised approach when engaging with the local community causing feelings of insecurity, discomfort and anxiousness among the public towards the officers and personnel. Experiences of locals that had to face the harsh measures and interrogations used in the past by the security forces may also have contributed to the trust issues they experience.

The sense of insecurity resulting from the insurgency in the conflict area is not uncommon among the population. Research in 2017 have shown that an average of one in five people (21%) from the respondents have had direct experience and impact from the insurgency either by the deaths of family and close relatives, personal injury, property damage, arrested for search or investigations (Deep South Watch 2017). The sense of insecurity commonly concerns employment, safety of life and both physical and mental health.

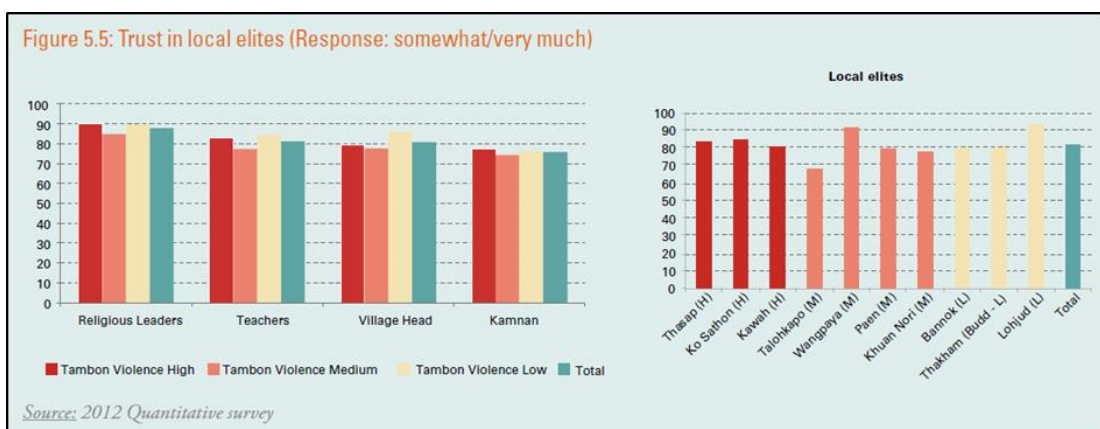
Figure 4-12 : Trust in state institutions (response: somewhat/very much)



Source: Asia Foundation Year 2013

Trust levels towards officials from state institution also differs and it appears to correlate directly to the locality and origin of the official. Survey results in 2012 as shown above (figure 4-12) have shown that tambon (district) leaders are trusted the most when compared to other officials because they are locally elected and not associated or considered being part of the central government.

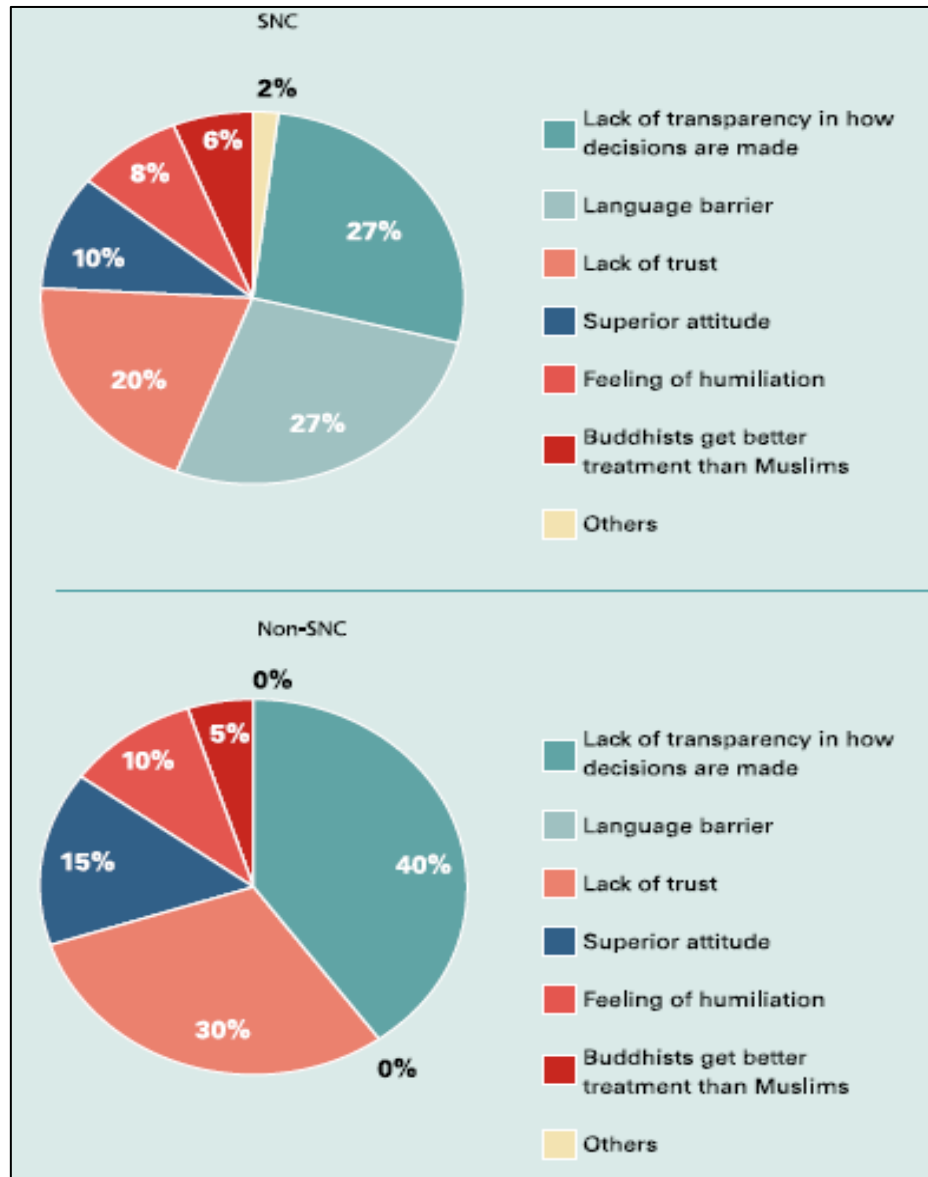
Figure 4-13 : Trust in local elites (response: somewhat/very much)



Source : Asia Foundation Year 2013

Similarly, locality and origins of the official and leaders play an important role in providing a sense of security among the local population which also have a correlation to their ability to control the violence. As illustrated in figure 4.13 above, study has shown that across all tambons, local elites (religious leaders, village heads, tambon leaders) whom are from the same community are trusted much more than state officials (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, *The Case of Southern Thailand* 2013). Villages with stronger leadership also appear to have more ability to control level of violence compared to those where authority is contested by factions. What can be implied from this finding suggests that programs designed to challenge local power structures may risk destabilising the fragile local security arrangements that involves informal negotiations between local elites and armed actors. Reasonable to say that undermining the control of local elites can increase the risk of violence.

Figure 4-14 : If they do not feel comfortable interacting with government official, why?



Source : Asia Foundation Year 2013

Transparency and language skills play an important role in gaining the confidence of local people. In 2012, most locals reported that they feel uncomfortable when interacting with government officials (Burke, Tweedie and Poocharoen, The Case of Southern Thailand 2013). Survey have shown (figure 4-14) that the lack of transparency in how

decisions are made by government officials contributes to the discomfort when locals interacting with them. Specifically, in sub-national conflict (SNC) areas where the majority are Malays, language barrier adds up to the discomfort experienced when interacting with government officials. These findings do suggest that government agencies may need to improve the way they communicate particularly with the Malay population as this would help to eliminate the sense of mistrust, discrimination and social inequalities that is fuelling the anti-government sentiments among them which is crucial to ensure the counterinsurgency objectives are successfully achieved.

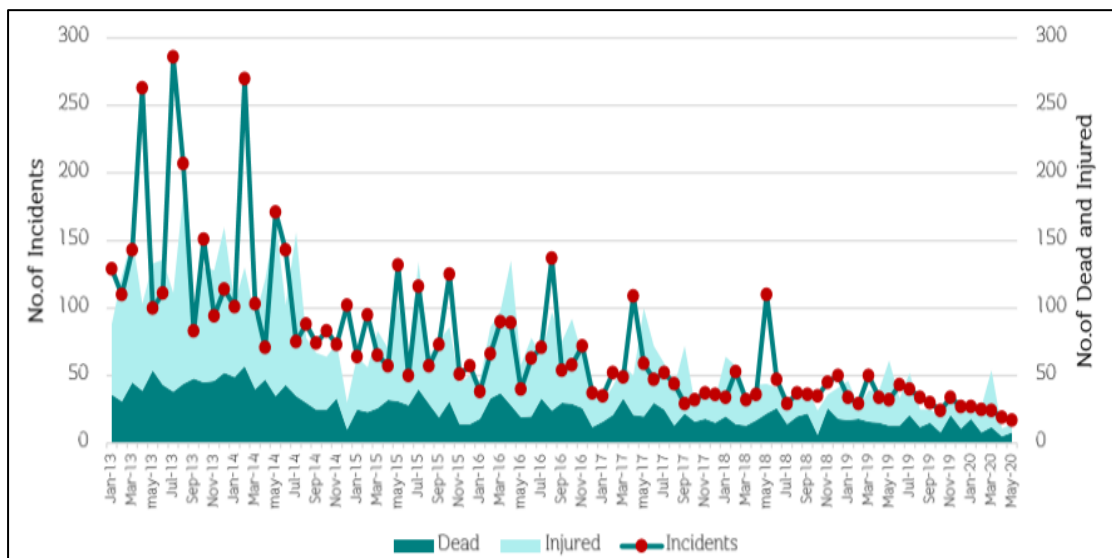
While violence continues to occur in the conflict areas, this research does appear to find that the local population recognise the importance of ending the violence is crucial for peace. Most survey respondents in 2017 agree that better environment in resolving issues together can be created when violence reduce (Deep South Watch 2017). Most would also agree that violence should not be used at all.

The ongoing peace dialogue is seen as the preferred approach in ending the conflict. Most survey respondents are aware of what is discussed in the dialogues and the challenges experienced in the discussions as it is informed and explained carefully in the mainstream media. While many of them do consider the current peace dialogue as dormant (as take a longer time to reach an agreement) and does not stop the violence, most respondents are still hopeful for the peaceful negotiations in finding the solution to end the conflict (Deep South Watch 2017). Response from the survey also appear to suggest that government effort to engage through peace dialogue should continue despite all the known challenges and obstacle that are seen to undermine the negotiating efforts.

Most of the public are not aligned with the insurgent goals and this is significantly important for the success of counterinsurgency efforts. Most respondents agree that the conflict can end without having to become an independent state (Deep South Watch 2017). What is most important for the population is to have a government that is able to serve and understand the needs of the people, preferably a unique decentralised governing administration of the area under Thai Law. Reasonable to say that the findings of the survey do suggest that consideration for a localised semi-autonomous government instead of a fully autonomous government may in fact provide a solution to the conflict.

Security Forces Perspective on Security Measures

Figure 4-15: Summary of incidents in Deep Southern Thailand May 2020



Source : Deep South Watch <https://deepsouthwatch.org> Year : 2020

Security operations and strategies appear to show positive results in its counterinsurgency efforts. Statistics as of May 2020 (see figure 4-15 above) appear to show a steady declination of violence in the conflict areas (Deep South Watch 2017). For several years the security

forces have conducted successful operations mainly in rural areas which have affected insurgent networks in villages. According to reports many insurgent fighters have been either detained or pursued different ways of life (Crisis Group 2020).

The declination in violence does not necessarily mean the end of insurgency as it could also be a temporary pause before another resurgence of violence emerge in the future. As security professionals, security alertness is necessary because the insurgents are known for their willingness to go beyond their normal territorial boundaries in staging armed attacks as far as the state capital which was demonstrated during the 2019 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok (Crisis Group 2020). Security forces in general are also aware that security operations alone cannot totally eliminate the anti-government sentiments of the population as long as the ongoing sense social-inequalities, discrimination and injustice have not been addressed. To end the conflict successfully, other counterinsurgency efforts such as political and economic development measures are needed to work in a synergised way, but this has been difficult to achieve as there are many undermining factors that exist.

Security operations in the Deep South have been challenging due to the complexity of the security environment which involves a multitude level of conflicting actors and interests' groups particularly in an area that has inherited decades of socio-economic problems. The main challenge in any insurgency as explained by security experts is the difficulty of distinguishing insurgents from others because they are both embedded in the general population itself and also have better situation awareness of the security forces.

Contemporary insurgencies often coincide with criminal activities where insurgents may either participate with criminal enterprises, become part of the criminal organisations themselves or engage with rogue members of the security forces in illicit activities and this adds up to the complexities of the counterinsurgency operations (Mokaitis 2011). Interagency coordination and harmonisation with anti-crime strategies particularly between the army and police, has been challenging especially with the changing of so many government administration, interagency institutions and areas of responsibilities occurring during the political crisis in the last two decades.

The complexity of the security environment in Southern Thailand also creates difficulties of attaining information and intelligence on the insurgents. As security experts would explain, intelligence and information operations are crucial for any counterinsurgency operations (Barno 2006). The insurgents, who are embedded within the general population work through small semi-autonomous secret cells and use modern secured communication technology to stage attacks from their communities. Identities as well as the location of the insurgents and leaders are relatively unknown (Weerakajorn 2020).

The insurgent command is complexed, with some identifiable factions, and most operations are planned at the local level. Locally based insurgents also respond to instructions from higher-level leaders and multiple cells which have repeatedly carried out coordinated attacks across the conflict areas (Weerakajorn 2020). With such level secrecy in place, attaining critical information and intelligence through soft approaches appears almost impossible to achieve desired results, which reasonably

may explain why harsh interrogation methods and a highly securitised approach are used for this purpose in the conflict area.

The complexity and challenges of the security environment presents risks of uncontrollable civilian casualties, fratricide, physical and mental injuries to innocent civilians. Such incidents in its security operations which includes interrogations has been the source of many public grievances in Southern Thailand which has not helped in the counterinsurgency effort, as these cases are proven difficult to resolve (Weerakajorn 2020). While the necessity in the use of force in security operations may be warranted, potential human errors, misjudgements and non-adherence to either rules of engagement or standard operating procedures in a hostile environment can occur as it has happened in the past. Ensuring past incidents do not repeat in the future is crucial particularly in regaining the trust and confidence of the conflict affected Malay population.

For security personnel, the presence of large security forces is an operational approach meant to overwhelm and deter potential violence to create a secure environment in the conflict areas. Although the numbers of violence incidents may appear declining as indicated in May 2020 (Deep South Watch 2020), it does not necessarily correspond to a greater sense of security among the population who often feel uncomfortable and intimidated by the heavy presence of security forces particularly whom have different cultural and religious orientation. Survey conducted in 2019 on 1,609 people living in the three southern provinces have indicated that half of them feel that situation have not changed even though with the presence of more security forces as it does not eliminate the insurgents political agendas and the sense of animosity towards the

security forces which can also motivate the regeneration of new insurgents (Weerakajorn 2020).

Conclusion

Figure 4-16 : Research Findings of Counterinsurgency Effort

Counterinsurgency Effort		Research Findings	
		Public Perception	Security Forces Perception
Political Measures	Mobilisation	Democratic Practices Observed. General election 2019. Majority support Opposition Government to see changes.	Election results or political indicators critical to understand local population's position and attitude of towards central government and shape security posture and approach.
	Government Extension	Local Decentralised Government not accepted by Central Government. Political Grievances not successfully addressed. Peace Dialogues remain unsettled.	Conflict of political goals between central government and local elected government indicate prolonged process of achieving resolution.
	Institutional Capacity	Political Institution Unstable. Political crisis commonly occur 2000-2020.	Securitization and military approach to address political crisis seen warranted to secure and stabilise environment.
	Societal Integration	Cultural grievances not successfully addressed. Ethnic Malays experiencing difficulty to integrate into Thai culture.	Unsettled cultural grievances contribute to anti-government sentiment which shape security posture and approach.
Economic/Development Measures	Humanitarian Assistance	Government and international assistance allocated to communities.	Important to ensure government and international assistance is supported by providing a stable and secured environment
	Development Assistance	Education and language limitation of Malays contribute to socio-economic inequalities despite development resources allocated by the government.	Socio-economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment correlate to motivation for illegal activities, anti-government sentiments and support insurgency.
	Resource and Infrastructure Management	COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels.	COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels.
Security Measures	Military	Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges.	Risks of uncontrollable civilian casualties, fratricide, physical and mental injuries to innocent civilians. Increasing presence also risk in raising insecurity and discomfort among population.
	Police	Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges.	Difficulty to distinguish insurgents from local population, attain information and intelligence in complex environment.
	Human Rights & Justice	Injustices of the past remain as unsettled grievances	Injustices of the past difficult to address
	Public Healthcare & Safety	Information not provided in research findings.	Information not provided in research findings.
	Social Security	Communication & Non-Transparency of government official create discomfort and insecurity	Cultural and religious differences presents challenges in effective communication

Source : Author Year : 2020

Findings from this chapter identifies existing issues and challenges in the Southern Thailand Conflict from both public and security forces perspective using Dr Kilcullen three pillars of counterinsurgency framework simplified in the table above (figure 4-16). Having identified the existing issues that is affecting the counterinsurgency effort, the next chapter will attempt to derive and recommend solutions and security initiatives to conclude this research.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendation

Introduction

This chapter will provide the research conclusion. The scope of this chapter are; (i) Security Response, (ii) Recommendations, (iii) Summary & Conclusion and (iv) Research Limitations.

Security Response & Initiatives

The aim of any counterinsurgency campaign is to build confidence of the government while diminishing the credibility of the insurgents. Governments that experience insurgencies require political behaviour modification of political reform, anti-corruption and governance improvement in order to address the grievances that motivated that insurgency.

Counterinsurgency is population centric and how the public perceives of what the government can do and provide is critical for its legitimacy. Common traits that are used to measure legitimacy of a state are; (i) the degree to which it honours and upholds human rights and fundamental freedom, (ii) the degree to which it which it honours and upholds human rights and fundamental freedoms, (iii) the degree to which it responds to the opinions of its citizens, (iv) whether it exercise effective sovereignty, (v) the degree to which it provides reasonable limits on the power of government over individual rights (U.S. Department of State 2009).

For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that while security in counterinsurgency is necessary, it has limitations and cannot defeat insurgency on its own. In principle, security forces are specifically enabling systems for government administration by providing stability and allowing government to work safely with its population, for political reconciliation, economic revival, and external non-government assistance to be effective. In seeking security responses and initiatives from this research (based on both the public and security forces perception), “building confidence in the government” will be fundamentally be the overarching aim and look at what security institutions (as government representatives) can offer and contribute within its limited capacity and scope.

Figure 5-1 : Research findings from Chapter 4 (Public & Security Forces Perception)

Pillars of Counterinsurgency	Counterinsurgency Effort		Research Findings	
			Public Perception	Security Forces Perception
	Political Measures	Mobilisation	Democratic Practices Observed. General election 2019. Majority support Opposition Government to see changes.	Election results or political indicators critical to understand local population's position and attitude of towards central government and shape security posture and approach.
Government Extension		Local Decentralised Government not accepted by Central Government. Political Grievances not successfully addressed. Peace Dialogues remain unsettled.	Conflict of political goals between central government and movement representatives indicate prolonged process of achieving resolution.	
Institutional Capacity		Political Institution Unstable. Political crisis commonly occur 2000-2020.	Securitization and military intervention to address political crisis seen warranted to secure and stabilise environment.	
Societal Integration		Cultural grievances not successfully addressed. Ethnic Malays experiencing difficulty to integrate into Thai culture.	Unsettled cultural grievances contribute to anti-government sentiment which shape security posture and approach.	
Economic/Development Measures	Humanitarian Assistance	Government and international assistance allocated to communities.	Important to ensure government and international assistance is supported by providing a stable and secured environment	
	Development Assistance	Education and language limitation of Malays contribute to socio-economic inequalities despite development resources allocated by the government.	Socio-economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment correlate to motivation for illegal activities, anti-government sentiments and support insurgency.	
	Resource and Infrastructure Management	COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels.	COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels.	
Security Measures	Military	Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges.	Risks of uncontrollable civilian casualties, fratricide, physical and mental injuries to innocent civilians. Increasing presence also risk in raising insecurity and discomfort among population.	
	Police	Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges.	Difficulty to distinguish insurgents from local population, attain information and intelligence in complex environment.	
	Human Rights & Justice	Injustices of the past remain as unsettled grievances	Injustices of the past difficult to address	
	Social Security	Communication & Non-Transparency of government official create discomfort and insecurity	Cultural and religious differences presents challenges in effective communication	
	Public Healthcare & Safety	Information not provided in research findings.	Information not provided in research findings.	

Source : Author Year : 2020

Key research findings of how the public and security forces perceive the counterinsurgency efforts are described in the table above (figure 5-1). Security responses and initiatives needed to re-enhance the counterinsurgency are describe in the sub paragraphs below.

Political Measures

Figure 5-2 Political Measures - Response & Recommendations

Counterinsurgency Effort		Research Findings		Counterinsurgency Response: Build Confidence in Government's Legitimacy	Recommendations: Security Initiatives
		Public Perception	Security Forces Perception		
Political Measures	Mobilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic Practices Observed. General election 2019. Majority support Opposition Government to see changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election results or political indicators critical to understand local population's position and attitude of towards central government and shape security posture and approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect system of government and democratic practices by projecting professional conduct of security institutions that meet the needs of the people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Professional Education and Training in national security institutions at all levels Engage in Peace Dialogues. Provide professional security advice. Engage in outreach programs with general population.
	Government Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Decentralised Government not accepted by Central Government. Political Grievances not successfully addressed. Peace Dialogues remain unsettled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict of political goals between central government and movement representatives indicate prolonged process of achieving resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support political mechanism to help address political differences and grievances. 	
	Institutional Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Institution Unstable. Political crisis commonly occur 2000-2020. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securitization and military intervention to address political crisis seen warranted to secure and stabilise environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain public order to secure and stabilise security environment. Support the strengthening of political institutions to enable national interests are protected and preserved. 	
	Societal Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural grievances not succesfully addressed. Ethnic Malays experiencing difficulty to integrate into Thai culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsettled cultural grievances contribute to anti-government sentiment which shape security posture and approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support mechanism to address cultural grievances and social-integration. Project professional conduct of security institutions that are culturally diverse and non-discriminatory. 	

Source : Author Year : 2020

1. Security responses required to address the issues highlighted in the research findings (see figure 5-2 above) are explained and described in the subsequent paragraphs below :

1.1 Protect system of governance and democratic practices by projecting professional conduct of security institutions that meet the needs of the people.

Security institutions that project professional conduct and upholds its national constitution in preserving its system of governance is likely to build the confidence of the people towards the government. The democratic system of government is the representation of the will and desire of the population. Security institutions play an important role in building confidence of the people by ensuring democratic practices are protected and preserved. The continuation of democracy provides the political means for the government to respond to the opinions of its citizens which can diminish the influence and legitimacy of the insurgents.

1.2 Support political mechanism to help address political differences and grievances.

Security institutions that are seen to support political mechanisms either by participating or providing professional security advice will assist building the population's confidence towards the government and limits the exploitation of grievances by insurgents. The existence of political channels and mechanism either through legislative means or peace dialogues is important as it provides opportunities and avenues for grievances and differences to be highlighted and addressed.

1.3 Maintain public order to secure and stabilise security environment.

Professional conduct of security institutions is important to ensure public order is maintained to enable government's counterinsurgency effort can successfully achieve its goals. Instability caused by political crisis undermines counterinsurgency efforts as conflict at the national level creates political divide that can have a polarisation effect and causing disunity among the population. It is important to reinforce public perception to see security forces as enabling systems for government administration that

provides stability and allow the government to work safely with its population for political reconciliation.

1.4 Support effort to strengthen political institutions to protect and preserve national interests.

Security institutions that are seen to support in strengthening political institutions contributes in the preservation and protection of national interests. It is important to note that political parties or factions that are always in conflict with one another and leads to political crisis is a reflection of weak political institutions that more often have conflicting interests and goals that may not align with or serve national interests. Supporting effort to strengthen weak political institutions through constructive means will assist in building confidence of the population towards a stronger and unified government.

1.5 Support mechanism to address cultural grievances and social integration.

Continuous efforts to support mechanism to address cultural grievances and social integration is key to reinforce public perception of their government's interests in resolving issues that is meaningful to the local population. Opposing these mechanisms is likely to weaken legitimacy of the government and motivate the affected population further to support the insurgents.

1.6 Project professional conduct of security institutions that are culturally diverse and non-discriminatory.

Security forces that project themselves in a manner that are non-discriminatory and adopts cultural diversified practices reflect their commitments for social inclusion and mutual respect of all ethnicity and faith which can help build trust and confidence among the affected

population. This is of significant importance to counter the insurgents or separatists' political goals in gaining public support.

2. Security initiatives recommended to support the counterinsurgency responses are as follows:

2.1 Conduct Professional Education and Training at all levels in national security institutions.

Well educated and trained security forces that review, learn from professional experiences and enhance existing operating procedures are likely to project and display professional conduct and ethics that can build confidence of the population towards the government. Security forces at every level from strategic to tactical level participate in the counterinsurgency campaign. The continuous cycle of officers and personnel from different generations requires both professional education and continuation or currency training to ensure they are proficient and prepared to perform their duties effectively.

2.2 Engage in constructive Peace Dialogues.

Security forces that are committed to engage in peace dialogues builds population confidence in government's effort to seek non-violent solutions in addressing the grievances and issues that have led to the insurgency. Although dialogue process may take decades to achieve desired results, continued engagements are important as research evidence have shown that peaceful means of resolving conflict remain the primary preference among the majority of the population as the means to end the insurgency.

2.3 Provide professional security advice.

Security forces are experts that understand the implication and risks of armed conflict. Professional advice on conflict prevention

and confidence building measures are areas of expertise that can contribute greatly in interagency coordination to synergise the counterinsurgency effort particularly in strengthening political institutions and developing economic strategies. Establishing control in insurgency areas requires not only to defeat of the insurgent's armed combatants, but also their political marginalisation and the provision of economic and governance benefits to the population to reduce the insurgent's influence.

2.4 Engage in community outreach programs with general population.

Security forces that takes effort in engaging with the community to provide assistance reflect their commitments and concern to help address the challenges faced by the affected population. The more frequent engagements are made, the lesser preconceived notion occurs and the sense of alienation or discrimination that is felt by the affected community.

Economic Development Measures

Figure 5-3 : Economic Development Measures – Response & Recommendations

Counterinsurgency Effort		Research Findings		Counterinsurgency Response: Build Confidence in Government's Legitimacy	Recommendations: Security Initiatives
		Public Perception	Security Forces Perception		
Economic/Development Measures	Humanitarian Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government and international assistance allocated to communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important to ensure government and international assistance is supported by providing a stable and secured environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and support humanitarian assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Professional Education and Training in national security institutions at all levels. Engage in community outreach programs with general population. Coordinate with interagency effort to counter corruption & control illegal activities
	Development Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and language limitation of Malays contribute to socio-economic inequalities despite development resources allocated by the government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment correlate to motivation for illegal activities, anti-government sentiments and support insurgency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and support development assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area. 	
	Resource and Infrastructure Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control and deter illegal activities that undermine economic development programs. 	

Source : Author Year : 2020

1. Security responses required to address the issues highlighted in the research findings (see figure 5-3 above) are explained and described in the subsequent paragraphs below :

1.1 Protect and support humanitarian assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area.

Security forces that are seen to protect and support the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance to the conflict affected population consistently can help eliminate the negative perception that insurgents use to win their support. Many of the population in the conflict areas live below the poverty level and are critical in need of assistance

particularly those whom are affected by the violence and experience losses that affect their livelihood and wellbeing. Protecting and supporting these programs is important as it builds population's confidence towards the government.

1.2 Protect and support development assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area.

Security forces that protect and support economic development programs that benefits the population reduces the insurgent's influence as many insurgent and supporters are motivated by economic factors, unemployment and lack of economic opportunity. For decades, the conflict areas in the Deep South have remained one of the poorest communities experiencing high unemployment and socio-economic inequalities. Protecting and supporting the success of these programs particularly in countering corruption and misdirection of development resources meant for the affected population will likely reduce the anti-government sentiments that exist within the people and build confidence in the legitimacy of the state government.

1.3 Control and deter illegal activities that undermine economic development programs.

Security forces that are able to control and deter illegal activities builds confidence in the role of government's institutions to provide a secured and stable environment for economic activities to occur. Illegal activities undermine economic development as it can result in violent crimes and discourage investors from their commitments affecting the livelihood of many who are in need of employment. Providing a secured environment that promotes positive economic growth can motivate insurgents

and their supporters to leave their movements and pursue better economic opportunities and livelihood.

2. Security initiatives recommended to support the counterinsurgency responses are as follows :

2.1 Conduct Professional Education and Training in national security institutions at all levels.

Well educated and trained security forces that review, learn from professional experiences and enhance existing operating procedures are likely to project and display professional conduct and ethics that can build confidence of the population towards the government. Security forces at every level from strategic to tactical level participate in the counterinsurgency campaign. The continuous cycle of officers and personnel from different generations requires both professional education and continuation or currency training to ensure they remain proficient and prepared to perform their duties effectively.

2.2 Engage in community outreach and CSR programs with general population.

Security forces that takes effort in engaging with the community to provide assistance reflect their commitments and concern to help address the challenges faced by the affected population. The more frequent engagements are made, the lesser preconceived notion occurs and the sense of alienation or discrimination that is felt by the affected community.

2.3 Coordinate security effort with government interagency to counter corruption & control illegal activities.

Security forces that actively engage in interagency coordination to counters corruption and illegal activities is more likely to

achieve success in addressing issues that undermine economic development programs that is needed to improve the economic disparities that is motivating the crime and insurgency. The joint and combine effort of inter-agencies in the counterinsurgency campaign builds a strong and unified government that help diminish the control of the insurgency movement.

Security Measures

Figure 5-4 : Economic Development Measures – Response & Recommendations

Counterinsurgency Effort/in	Research Findings		Counterinsurgency Response: Build Confidence in Government's Legitimacy	Recommendations: Security Initiatives	
	Public Perception	Security Forces Perception			
Security Measures	Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risks of uncontrollable civilian casualties, fratricide, physical and mental injuries to innocent civilians. Increasing presence also risk in raising insecurity and discomfort among population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project professional and ethical military conduct in protecting the population from harm and violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Professional Education and Training in national security institutions at all levels. Strengthen cultural, language and effective communication skills. Adhere to Law of Armed Conflict, Rules of engagement, Standard Operating Procedures. Engage in community outreach & CSR programs.
	Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty to distinguish insurgents from local population, attain information and intelligence in complex environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project professional and ethical conduct of police in protecting population from violence in the conflict area. 	
	Human Rights & Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injustices of the past remain as unsettled grievances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injustices of the past difficult to address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen judicial system that serves the needs of the population. 	
	Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication & Non-Transparency of government official create discomfort and insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural and religious differences presents challenges in effective communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve transparency and communication skills of government official and personnel. 	
	Public Healthcare & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not provided in research findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not provided in research findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide quality safety, healthcare and welfare services. 	

Source : Author Year : 2020

1. Security responses required to address the issues highlighted in the research findings (see figure 5-4 above) are explained and described in the subsequent paragraphs below :

1.1 Project professional and ethical military conduct in protecting the population from harm and violence.

Professionalism and ethical military conduct are critical in counterinsurgency operations as it builds trust and confidence of the innocent people who are victimised by the armed conflict. Trust is fragile and easily broken. Once it is lost, it is very difficult to regain. Even in the most critical circumstances, military professionals are bound by ethics to treat others with dignity, respect and demonstrate their character by consistently making right decisions and actions. Military forces whom represent the government, gain trust through their behaviour and mannerism.

1.2 Project professional and ethical conduct of police in protecting population from violence in the conflict area.

Police forces that professionally upholds the law and conduct operations ethically is more likely to receive public support which is critical for the purpose of gaining valuable information and intelligence for the counterinsurgency effort. Studies and empirical evidence have shown that in mature and complex insurgency which is similar to the case in the Deep South, population centric approaches have shown a higher likelihood of success. Positive engagements with the local communities are significantly important as insurgents (who are locals and know the population better) possess greater advantage in the conflict area. Public trust in the police force builds confidence in the government and can lessens the insurgent's influence.

1.3 Strengthen judicial system that serves the needs of the population.

Strong judicial institutions build confidence in the government's ability to honour and uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms fairly. The judicial institution which is a key component of the security effort and considered one of the most important enablers that can defuse past grievances and injustices fuelled by the hatred built from the conflict which have caused many from the population to show support for the insurgency. Weak judicial systems prolong the conflict and also undermines the security forces effort whom have to confront never ending violence caused by unsettled grievances.

1.4 Improve transparency and communication skills of security forces and government officials.

Security forces and government officials who are proficient in cross cultural communication and engagement skills are more likely to reduce the discomfort and build trust with the local population. Cultural variances, religious orientation, different education levels and geographical background contribute to the variation in language and ways the local population communicate and view others which can cause misinterpretations and misunderstandings if not communicated carefully. Effective communication builds confidence of the locals in the government which is significantly important for the counterinsurgency campaign.

1.5 Provide quality safety, healthcare and welfare services.

Government's agencies including military establishment's continuance of providing quality safety, healthcare and welfare services to the population have been known to be one of the most important counterinsurgency instruments of building the government's trust and

confidence. Active engagements by providing services into the population's residential areas in outreach programs can win the 'hearts and minds' of the people.

2. Security initiatives recommended to support the counterinsurgency responses are as follows :

2.1 Conduct Professional Education and Training in national security institutions at all levels.

Well educated and trained security forces that review, learn from professional experiences and enhance existing operating procedures are likely to project professional conduct and ethics that can build confidence of the population towards the government. Security forces at every level from strategic to tactical level participate in the counterinsurgency campaign. The continuous cycle of officers and personnel from different generations requires the continuation of both professional education and currency or competency training to ensure they are proficient and prepared to perform their duties effectively.

2.2 Strengthen cultural, language and effective communication skills.

Security forces and government officials that are proficient in effective communication and cross-cultural skills have more probability of both delivering and receiving accurate information. This is crucial for the counterinsurgency's effort especially in the conduct of information operations which is needed to shape population support for the government.

Security forces are required to keep an open mind and avoid judgemental conclusions particularly in an area that is demographically unique and affected by cultural and religious sensitivities. It is important to note that the local population view their surroundings through the lens

of their culture. A security personnel's perception of a community can be distorted by their preconceived ideas, own past experiences or from others, which is the reason why it is critical to see through the population's lenses that is clear from distortions.

2.3 Adhere to Law of Armed Conflict, Rules of engagement, Standard Operating Procedures.

Laws, rules and procedures are meant to protect both combatants and non-combatants and particularly important in counterinsurgency operations where distinguishing insurgents from the general public in the conflict area is a difficult task. Uncontrolled and non-discriminatory forms of armed violence should not be engaged as it can have a detrimental effect to the counterinsurgency effort by adding grievance and losing government support. Continuous education and training of officers and personnel is needed to remain proficient and competent which subsequently can contribute in building the confidence of both security forces and the population as well.

2.4 Engage in community outreach & CSR programs.

Security forces that takes effort in engaging with the community to provide assistance reflect their commitments and concern to help address the challenges faced by the affected population builds and reinforces trust. The more frequent engagements are made, the lesser preconceived notion occurs and the sense of alienation or discrimination that is felt by the affected community. Winning the 'hearts and minds' of the population is significantly important for the counterinsurgency campaign as this would also marginalise and lessen the influence of the insurgents.

Recommendations

Having described the appropriate security response and initiatives based on the research findings, the simplified recommendations that could help achieve the counterinsurgency aim of building confidence in the government are listed below :

1. Security Response

1.1 Protect system of governance and democratic practices by projecting professional conduct of security institutions that meet the needs of the people

1.2 Support political mechanism to help address political differences and grievances.

1.3 Maintain public order to secure and stabilise security environment.

1.4 Support effort to strengthen political institutions to protect and preserve national interests.

1.5 Support mechanism to address cultural grievances and social integration.

1.6 Project professional conduct of security institutions that are culturally diverse and non-discriminatory.

1.7 Protect and support humanitarian and development assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area.

1.8 Control and deter illegal activities that undermine economic development programs.

1.9 Project professional and ethical military conduct in protecting the population from harm and violence.

1.10 Project professional and ethical conduct of police in protecting population from violence in the conflict area.

1.11 Strengthen judicial system that serves the needs of the population.

1.12 Improve transparency and communication skills of security forces and government officials.

1.13 Provide quality safety, healthcare and welfare services.

2. Security Initiatives

2.1 Conduct Professional Education and Training at all levels in national security institutions.

2.2 Engage in constructive Peace Dialogues.

2.3 Provide professional security advice.

2.4 Coordinate security effort with government interagency to counter corruption & control illegal activities.

2.5 Strengthen cultural, language and effective communication skills.

2.6 Adhere to Law of Armed Conflict, Rules of engagement, Standard Operating Procedures.

2.7 Engage in community outreach and CSR programs with the general population.

Summary and Conclusion

The simplified summary of this research is described in figure 5.5 to illustrate research findings and relate to how security responses and initiatives were formulated which produced the research recommendations using Dr Kilcullen counterinsurgency framework.

Findings from this research have shown that security forces have continued to experience challenges in the counterinsurgency campaign due to many intervening variables which are beyond the capacity and capabilities of the security forces themselves to address, as many of the existing grievances which are inherited by past polices and miscalculation made by former governments that are very complicated and difficult to resolve as it involves the sensitivities of culture and sovereignty.

Instability in the conflict environment have shown to be contributed by a combination of factors. Thailand's political crisis for example which occurred in the last two decades has caused political divide and instability, creating challenges and difficulties for the government to pay attention in addressing the unsettled political grievances in the Deep South as political institutions were busy focussing on their political survival. Evidence have also shown that the occurrence of global economic crisis within the same period of time is viewed to contribute as another factor which correlates directly with the political crisis. The combination of both political and economic instability is seen to further aggravate the socio-economic challenges which the Deep South have inherited for decades, creating further sense of neglect and providing the motivation for criminal activities, anti-government sentiments and support for insurgents to occur which eventually led to violence and civil unrest.

Managing the conflict have been a daunting task for the security forces as the inertia effect resulted from both unsettled political and economic factors created a continuous momentum of never-ending violence which itself presented unwanted risks of collateral damage, uncontrolled casualties and harsh security operations. The consequences

of unwanted risks and damages, which the security forces themselves have difficulty to control, adds up to the advantages of the insurgent's political agenda and protracting the conflict further.

Findings of this research is useful in the sense that it highlights many of the public concerns particularly on how they view the central government and the security forces whose role is to protect and provide them a stable environment to allow them to go on with their livelihood. Other than the unsettled grievances from the injustice of the past, trust issues towards security forces and government officials remain prevalent, mainly contributed by cultural differences, language proficiency and level of education that most of the population receive. This finding is significantly important as it reemphasise the importance of building trust and confidence in order to change the population's perception towards the government which is within the capacity and capability of the security forces to accommodate and respond.

Counterinsurgency campaigns in Thailand is not a new phenomenon and it has occurred decades before the existence of this current conflict. While the recommendations from this research are commonly known and are also in existence in RTARF publications and Thailand's National Strategy 2018-2037, what this research can offer is to reemphasise significant areas of concerns that require continuation attention and responses that can be reinforced into the current counterinsurgency effort in the southern provinces.

On the positive side, research evidence has also shown that the level of incidents and violence have decreased in the last five years, contributed greatly by the stability of the security environment provided

by the security forces. Despite the encouraging progress, findings in this research however foresee the conflict will take many years or decades to reach an agreement as addressing of the root cause of the conflict remains an obstacle which have not been resolved. Reasonable to say, counterinsurgency effort by the government must continue and formulation of better strategies is essential to accommodate and anticipate changes that may evolve in the security environment of the future.

Figure 5.5: Research Summary

Pillars of Counterinsurgency		Counterinsurgency Effort	Research Findings		Counterinsurgency Response:	Recommendations:
			Public Perception	Security Forces Perception	Build Confidence in Government's Legitimacy	Security Initiatives
Political Measures	Mobilisation	Democratic Practices Observed. General election 2019. Majority support Opposition Government to see changes.	Election results or political indicators critical to understand local population's position and attitude of towards central government and shape security posture and approach.	• Protect system of government and democratic practices by projecting professional conduct of security institutions that meet the needs of the people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support political mechanism to help address political differences and grievances. • Maintain public order to secure and stabilise security environment. Support the strengthening of political institutions to enable national interests are protected and preserved. • Support mechanism to address cultural grievances and social-integration. Project professional conduct of security institutions that are culturally diverse and non-discriminatory. • Protect and support humanitarian assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area. • Protect and support development assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area. • Control and deter illegal activities that undermine economic development programs. • Build trust and confidence by projecting professional and ethical military conduct in protecting the population from harm and violence. • Build trust and confidence of population by projecting professional and ethical conduct of police in protecting population from violence in the conflict area. • Build trust and confidence of population by strengthening judicial system that serves the needs of the population. • Build trust and confidence by improving transparency and communication skills of government official and personnel. • Build trust and confidence in government's safety, healthcare and welfare services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Professional Education and Training at all levels in national security institutions. • Engage in constructive Peace Dialogues. • Provide professional security advice. • Coordinate security effort with government interagency to counter corruption & control illegal activities. • Strengthen cultural, language and effective communication skills. • Adhere to Law of Armed Conflict, Rules of engagement, Standard Operating Procedures. • Engage in community outreach and CSR programs with general population.
	Government Extension	Local Decentralised Government not accepted by Central Government. Political Grievances not successfully addressed. Peace Dialogues remain unsettled.	Conflict of political goals between central government and movement representatives indicate prolonged process of achieving resolution.	• Support political mechanism to help address political differences and grievances.		
	Institutional Capacity	Political Institution Unstable. Political crisis commonly occur 2000-2020.	Securitization and military intervention to address political crisis seen warranted to secure and stabilise environment.	• Maintain public order to secure and stabilise security environment. Support the strengthening of political institutions to enable national interests are protected and preserved.		
	Societal Integration	Cultural grievances not successfully addressed. Ethnic Malays experiencing difficulty to integrate into Thai culture.	Unsettled cultural grievances contribute to anti-government sentiment which shape security posture and approach.	• Support mechanism to address cultural grievances and social-integration. Project professional conduct of security institutions that are culturally diverse and non-discriminatory.		
	Humanitarian Assistance	Government and international assistance allocated to communities.	Important to ensure government and international assistance is supported by providing a stable and secured environment	• Protect and support humanitarian assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area.		
	Development Assistance	Education and language limitation of Malays contribute to socio-economic inequalities despite development resources allocated by the government.	Socio-economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment correlate to motivation for illegal activities, anti-government sentiments and support insurgency.	• Protect and support development assistance programs to improve the socio-economic situation in the conflict area.		
	Resource and Infrastructure Management	COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels.	COIN undermined by misappropriation, misdirect of resources and corruption at many levels.	• Control and deter illegal activities that undermine economic development programs.		
	Military	Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges.	Risks of uncontrollable civilian casualties, fratricide, physical and mental injuries to innocent civilians. Increasing presence also risk in raising insecurity and discomfort among population.	• Build trust and confidence by projecting professional and ethical military conduct in protecting the population from harm and violence.		
	Police	Trust and insecurity issues remain among Malay population exist due to (1) past injustices unsettled (2) cultural and religious differences (3) communication challenges.	Difficulty to distinguish insurgents from local population, attain information and intelligence in complex environment.	• Build trust and confidence of population by projecting professional and ethical conduct of police in protecting population from violence in the conflict area.		
	Human Rights & Justice	Injustices of the past remain as unsettled grievances	Injustices of the past difficult to address	• Build trust and confidence of population by strengthening judicial system that serves the needs of the population.		
Social Security	Communication & Non-Transparency of government official create discomfort and insecurity	Cultural and religious differences presents challenges in effective communication	• Build trust and confidence by improving transparency and communication skills of government official and personnel.			
Public Healthcare & Safety	Information not provided in research findings.	Information not provided in research findings.	• Build trust and confidence in government's safety, healthcare and welfare services.			

Source: Author Year 2020

Research Limitations

The result and findings of this research is very much limited to secondary sources that are written in the English language and may not necessary reflect the authenticity needed to obtain better research findings, considering the unique geographical, demographics and language that both security forces and the general public uses in Thailand's southern provinces.

While most research data from secondary sources are used may come from recent years, the absence of primary qualitative and quantitative data especially from security and government officials that have immediate experience in the counterinsurgency campaign would have contributed better in the research findings. The availability of these sources would have been valuable as not many research literatures in the English language have documented the perspective and experience of these officials. Clear understanding of the true challenges of the experiences are critical in finding more effective ways that can help improve the counterinsurgency effort.

2020 has been a challenging year as the global COVID-19 pandemic has restricted and limited my geographical movement particularly in having to conduct this research for many months from my home in Kuala Lumpur. If given the opportunity of time and space, as mentioned earlier, areas that this research could improve would be obtaining the authentic views and experience of security and government officials involved in the campaign, which I see very valuable and can contribute greatly especially in adding up to the collection of international counterinsurgency literatures.

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Biography

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Date of Birth : 10 June 1969

Education Background

- : Master of Social Science (Defence Studies)- National University of Malaysia (2014).
- : Master of Business–University of New South Wales (2009).
- : Diploma in Strategic & Defence Studies–University of Malaya (2007).

Military Education

- : Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College (2014).
- : Joint Forces Staff College-Virginia, USA (2008).
- : Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College (2007).

Military Experience

- : Commanding Officer, No. 3 Fighter Training Centre (2010-2013).
- : Staff Officer 1, Joint & Combined Exercise, Joint Force Headquarters (2015-2017).
- : Staff Officer 2 Fighter Ops, Air Operations Headquarters (2008-2009).
- : Standards Officer / Flight Commander, No. 18 Sqn / No. 1 FTC / No. 12 Sqn (1993-2006).
- : Commander, Tactical Air Control Party, Malaysian Battalion 4, Bosnia (1995-1996).

Previous Position : Commander Butterworth Air Base (2017-2019)