

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT 1
ANALYSE TWO KEY SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING YOUR ORGANIZATION
AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS

INSURGENCY AND DEMOCRACY: SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING THAI
AUTHORITIES IN THE FUTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Since the “Year of the People” Constitution was put into effect in 1997, Thailand had been considered one of the most stable countries in Southeast Asia (Abuza, 2006). However, recent insurgencies in the southern part of Thailand and the collapse of the Thai democracy in September 2006 have seriously impacted on its national security. This has not only affected internal stability of Thai society, but also its polity. The main purpose of this paper is to assess these two strategic problems which require a great amount of national resources to resolve. It includes analyzing the root cause of the problems, examining how the problems developed, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the policy of the Thai government, and predicting the impact on stability in the future.

ROOT CAUSES OF THE INSURGENCY

Although many scholars view conflict as the manifestation of economic religious, social and political grievances. Clausewitz’s studies reveal that only political grievance is a root cause of conflict (Howard, Paret 1984, p. 605). The root causes of conflict in the southern part of Thailand can be divided into three main causes. These include lack of trust between

Thais and Malay Muslims, the consolidation of the Thai nation state in 1909, and the perceived danger of the Malay Muslim identity.

The first cause of the conflict was the lack of trust between Thai and Malay Muslims. Throughout the Thai history, Malay Muslims have been struggling for their independence from Thai rulers since the Ayuttaya era (Aphornsuvan 2004, p. 1). By 1460, the Malay Peninsula consisting of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satul, Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah, and Perlis had been the vassals of Ayuttaya (Wyatt 1984, p. 86). Whenever Ayuttaya was weak, they fought against it to gain their independence; therefore, both sides have never trusted each other.

The second cause of the conflict was the consolidation of the Thai nation state. In 1909 the Anglo-Thai Treaty forced Bangkok to cede Kelantan, Perak, Kedah and Perlis to imperial Great Britain; nevertheless, the British recognized that Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satul were part of the Siam Kingdom (Marks 1997). To consolidate the Thai nation state, King Rama V appointed Thai officials to replace sultans except Satul. As a result, the Malay Muslims in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat began to fight against the Thai state (Parks 2005, p. 21).

The third cause of the conflict was the perceived danger to the Malay Muslim culture caused by the Thai policy. Firstly, in the early twentieth century King Rama VI indoctrinated “One Thai Nation” policies to strengthen the Thai national identity. Secondly, in 1939 Phibun Songkhram promulgated nationalist assimilation policies to ethnic minorities. These two policies endangered their identity (Liow 2006, p. 26).

THE INSURGENCY DEVELOPMENT

Clausewitz considered conflict is like a living creature (Howard, Paret 1984, p. 149). If an end is not met, it continues developing. Insurgency in the southern part of Thailand has

been the product of conflicts since 1909. Recently, insurgency increased its operation dramatically from 50 attacks in 2001 to 1,000 attacks in 2004 (International Crisis Group 2005, p. 16). At the end of 2007 more than 2,400 people had been killed, with 4,000 people wounded (Melvin 2007, p. 1).

There are two critical reasons which explain the upsurge of the insurgency in 2004. Firstly, from 1981 to 2004 the southern part of Thailand was quite peaceful for 23 years due to General Prem Tinasulanod's pacification policy. This emphasized the participation of Malay Muslims in local politics and economics activity. The violence dropped off significantly. This situation concerned the insurgents. If they did not create uprising once in every generation, young Malay Muslims would forget their history. Although the uprising might fail, at least they had a history for the next generation. Secondly, the uprising might provoke Thai authorities to oppress Malay Muslims. The greater the perceived oppression, the more Malay Muslims supported the idea of insurgency. The greater the support for the insurgency, the more likely it will be to succeed.

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF THAI GOVERNMENT'S POLICY

Recently, Prime Minister Surayud launched a new reconciliation policy in 2006. However, the number of violence-related deaths dramatically increased (International Crisis Group 2007, p. 8). It is trying to assess why violence is increased. It is quite clear that this policy is going to seize strategic public support from the insurgency. The strength of this policy is that it attacks directly against the means of insurgency which are the public supports. To survive, the insurgency had to undermine this policy by increasing its operation to provoke overreaction by the government which in turn will weaken the policy.

The weakness of the policy is that it does not address the root causes of the conflict. If fire is not extinguished, it might flare up whenever an environment is appropriate. To exterminate the insurgency, a long term resolution needs to be addressed to the root causes of the conflict.

IMPACT OF THE INSURGENCY ON THE THAI NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE FUTURE

In the short term, anti-insurgency measures seem to fail because they are overwhelmed by the momentum of violence. To predict the status of the insurgency in the future, we need to understand the nature of it. According to Liow (2006, pp. 49), the aims of the insurgency are political and distinctly local which exclude it from “global jihad”, a way of fighting to eliminate all non-Islamic States and establish a global Islamic rule (Eikmeier 2007, p. 88). His studies disclosed that ‘The mobilization of Islam has taken place within an insular and exclusive ethnic Malay Muslim population’ (Liow 2006, p. 51). The insurgents’ fight is not only limited in its aim, but also in its means. This kind of conflict, if managed properly by peaceful conflict resolution, can doubtless be ended either by negotiation or mediation like the conflicts in Ireland, and Aceh. If the Thai government continues employing a reconciliation policy, the foreseeable future of the conflict is likely to be less violent. Due to the weakness of the policy, the conflict has not ended yet; therefore, the Thai government should take this opportunity to look seriously for a long term solution, and to reform the entire security organization to prevent violence.

DEMOCRATIZATION IN THAILAND

Thailand's democratization can be considered as an interaction between Huntington's waves (1991, pp. 15-25) of democratization and Thai elites. The waves are considered as an external power; while, Thai elites are considered as an internal power. The former are the pushers; while, the latter are the resisters. To understand the nature of the democratization in Thailand, one may need to understand how those two forces interact with each other throughout Thai democratization history.

The first wave (1828-1942) had its roots in the American and French revolutions. The wave impacted on King Rama V in 1880. He had to carry out a transformation of the entire bureaucracy in order to cope with demands from Western forces. Furthermore, the wave was continuing to impact on King Rama VI and VII; for example, first coup attempt led by a group of junior military officers against King Rama VI. Second coup led by Pridi and Colonel Phibun in 1932 was directed against King Rama VII. The coup was successful. Power shifted from the king to a new elite class (Wyatt 1984, pp. 225-226).

The second wave (1943-1973) was promoted by the allied democratization in former axis powers and colonies around the world. Pridi as leader of the pro-allies assumed control of the Thai government at the end of WWII. In January 1946 elections were held according to the 1932 constitution (Neher 1976, p. 12). Thailand was a fully democratic country for only one year; its reversal wave dragged Thailand back under a military regime for 26 years.

Third wave (1974) originated with many drivers: a shift in American foreign policy toward promoting democratization, the Gorbachev transformation in Soviet policy, and demonstration effects as populations saw democracy spreading elsewhere (Green 1999, p. 84). In Thailand, student-led uprisings took place against the military regime on October 14, 1973. The revolt led to civilian leadership in 1974; however, civilian rule lasted only three

years. In 1976, the military took power once again, and the military held power almost continuously until 1988 (Hewison 1997, p. 79). At the 1989 election, Chatchi Chonhawan became the civilian prime minister; however, his government lasted only two years. The military ousted his government in the 1991 coup, but the military regime could not stay long. It was forced to concede democracy back to the people in the “Bloody May” of 1992 (Pathmanand 2001, p. 27). Thailand became a democracy after the crisis, and subsequently, many prime ministers were civilian. With the Peoples’ Constitution of 1997, Thailand was a democracy for almost ten years, until the coup in 2006.

THE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF THAI DEMOCRACY

From 1932 until now, Thai democracy has been disrupted by many military coups. Although Thai democracy seemed to be strong and stable under the 1997 Peoples’ Constitution, the 19th coup of 2006 weakened Thai democracy once again. According to Rich (2007, pp. 11-13), the third wave ‘turned many countries from authoritarian rule to a form of democratic governance.’ It is debatable whether these countries can maintain their democracy. Rich (2007, p. 14) pointed out that consolidation actually will occur with ‘popular attitudinal consensus that allows the system to be maintained even when the crises or downturns are experienced.’ The consolidation involves the transformation of not only the political institutions, but also cultural values (Shin&Wells 2005, p. 89). The weakness of Thai democratization is that it lacks cultural values.

Firstly, Thai democracy lacks the full support of the people. The Thai rural population chooses the government, but the Thai urban population, including the elites, expels it (Ungpakorn 2007, p. 23). Arghiros (2001, p. 243) contends that ‘Thai rural and urban democracies create the conditions for permanent instability which, in turn, increase the risk

that the people will become intolerant of politicians and elections and call for the restoration of authoritarian rule.’ One piece of research done by Shin and Wells (2005, p. 99) confirm that less than two fifths of the Thai people support full democracy.

Secondly, Thai democracy lacks full support from the armed forces. The Thai armed forces tend not to support a democratic government because the military institution is under the power of the king according to Thailand’s Constitution. The king acts as the balancer between the government and the military; however, this kind of system could create unstable democracy if the king cannot maintain the balance between the military and the civilian government. The challenge for the Thai government is how the military mind-set against democracy can be changed.

Thirdly, Thai democracy lacks appreciation of the rule of law. Thai government favors rule by law rather than rule of law. Donnel (2004, p. 32) considers that ‘The rule of law can ensure political rights, civil liberties, and mechanisms of accountability. This in turn maintains the political equality of all citizens and limits abuse of state power, and provides an independent judiciary’. On the other hand, rule by law does not ‘safeguard against the abuse of state power’, and the rule by law also lacks: ‘judicial independence, submission of the executive to the rule of law, and procedural fairness’ (Rich 2007, p. 94). This leads to public grievances which they may result in a coup.

DEMOCRACY CHALLENGES IMPACT ON THE THAI NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE FUTURE

Even though the new Constitution, promulgated in 2007, strengthens individual rights, it does not emphasize democratic values. The Constitution concerns mainly democratic institutions without really focusing on the consensus and democratic values among elites, the

military, and people who are the real decision makers. If the Thai government does not seriously take a look at the problems, Thai democracy will never be secured.

How can Thailand's democracy be developed to the level of consolidation? Firstly, democratic cultural values must be developed and embedded. Secondly, Thai armed forces need to be revolutionized to fully support and strengthen democracy. Thirdly, all democratic institutions must focus on the rule of law. It is expected that the effect of the globalization consisting of the spreading of liberal democracy, free trade, free market, promotion of western values, and interconnection of society and economics will facilitate Thai democracy to improve its quality for democratic consolidation in the future.

CONCLUSION

The two key strategic challenges for the Thai government in the past century are the insurgency and democracy. Both challenges have impacted on Thailand's security from the past up to the present, and they will continue to impact on Thailand's security in the future. It is more likely that the insurgency in the south will subside if the Thai government maintains its reconciliation policy. However, the conflict is not really solved; the Thai government should look seriously for a long term solution, and reform the entire security organization to prevent the probability of violence.

It is still unclear whether Thai democracy could be consolidated. It is more likely that a possible coup might disrupt Thai democratization in the future if democratic values are not internalized by the Thai elites, military, people and the democratic institutions who indeed decide whether the system should be maintained.

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