Assessing Indonesia's Diplomacy on the Regional Conflict Management: Lessons from the South Thailand Conflict Settlement

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Abstract

This article illustrates the problems and the prospects for a comprehensive durable conflict settlement in South Thailand, and how far Indonesia has played its significant role in helping the said conflict settlement process. The fact shows the sources of contemporary conflict in South Thailand derive not only from the internal environmental factors, but also from the external enviromental factors, such as the growing influence of jihadist ideology in the regional and global arena. The conditions lead to the complexity of conflict issue and then attract the attention and concern of the international community. Indonesia has so far taken the lead in addressing conflict in South Thailand through a mediation approach at both the Track One (state actor) and Track Two (non-state actor) levels. The 2008 Bogor peace talks and the conflict mediation measures carried out by Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in this context are a milestone in the course of Indonesia's total diplomacy. Indonesia is challenged to play a more active role in the quest for durable peace in the Southeast Asian region. Lessons learned from the past mediation process are expected to strengthen the Indonesia's diplomacy in supporting the immediate settlement of the South Thailand's conflict.

Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan masalah masalah dan prospek bagi penyelesaian konflik secara komprehensif dan langgeng di Thailand Selatan, dan bagaimana Indonesia memainkan peranannya secara signifikan.Fakta menunjukkan bahwa sumber konflik kontemporer di Thailand Selatan tidak hanya berasal dari faktor lingkup internal semata, namun juga berasal dari faktor lingkup eksternal, seperti perkembangan pengaruh ideologi jihadis di tingkat global dan regional. Faktor-faktor tersebut membawa kepada kompleksitas persoalan konflik di wilayah ini dan selanjutnya mengundang perhatian dan keprihatinan masyarakat internasional, khususnya kalangan negara-negara tetangga Thailand. Sejauh ini Indonesia telah mempelopori upaya menyikapi konflik di Thailand Selatan melalui pendekatan media si baik melalui jalur pemerintah *(track one)* maupun jalur non-pemerintah *(track two)*. Perundingan perdamaian Bogor tahun 2008 dan upaya mediasi konflik yang dilakukan oleh Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah dalam konteks ini merupakan tonggak sejarah dalam perjalanan diplomasi total Indonesia. Indonesia tertantang memainkan peran lebih aktif lagi dalam mendukung terwujud nya perdamaian langgeng di wilayah Asia Tenggara, khususnya di wilayah Thailand Selatan yang dirundung konflik. Pelajaran yang dari proses mediasi di masa lampau diharapkan memperkokoh diplomasi Indonesia mendukung penyelesaian konflik Thailand Selatan.

Key words: *conflict management, Indonesia's diplomacy, the issue of Patani*

Introduction

The twenty first century is a century of a good hope for the future course of the Southern Thailand region currently entering a new dimension of its conflict settlement process. During the period of time the conflict intensity in this region has been attracting the attention of international community circle, either individual sovereign states including ASEAN member countries or international organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). In this regard, they do not stand idle but make constructive efforts to settle the conflict. And even some come up with alternative options, such as the use of the third party's mediation. Indeed, the tension in predominantly Muslim Southern Thailand historically termed Patani, comprising the current provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala, has long been present, but it turned violent in early January 2004 when a group of gunmen launched raids on government offices, stormed an army camp in Narathiwat province and instigated instability. The situation deteriorated dramatically following the case of the indiscriminate attack over the historic Krue-Se mosque on 28 April 2004 by the Thai military and the Tak Bai incident during the holy month of Ramadan on 25 October 2005 which claimed casualties among the Muslim protestors mostly caused by asphyxiation as a result of being smothered by bodies of other detainees. Following the said incidents, the violence in the southern provinces escalated sharply, both in the number of incidents and the brutality of the violence.

The violent tension in the three southern border provinces, namely Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala, has made a profound effect on the morale of local people. Since then it has also been a subject of debate as well as a matter of deep concern particularly among the ASEAN member countries. The majority of the population of Thailand's three southern provinces has more affinities to and shares strong ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural bonds with the Malaysian people across the border. The collision of civilization between the South's Malay Muslims and the Buddhist Thai came to surface in line with the efforts by the government to Thaiize these Muslim Malay population. Under the national integration policy, the government has incessantly been attempting to integrate the South's Muslim populations into a united Thai state. Such a policy was perceived a process of deculturalization that subsequently stimulates armed insurgency by some Muslim Malays in Southern Thailand in the 1960s onwards (Arifi, 2008:6).

As a neighboring country and the world's largest Muslim country, Indonesia has been contributing significantly to the settlement of the Patani conflict through the mechanism of mediation at the levels of both first track diplomacy and second track diplomacy. The diplomatic efforts that have been carried out by Indonesia in this case are legally correct as clearly mandated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution. Such kind of diplomacy is benefited from the experiences of Indonesia in the field of conflict resolution with its long series of negotiations, domestically and regionally, such as the settlement of the domestic conflicts in Poso and Ambon, Aceh peace process, and Moro Peace Talks. All these provide Indonesia's diplomacy with a distinctive leverage to play a role as a bridge builder or a mediator in support of a conflict termination.

To certain extent, Indonesia's role in maintaining world order and peace seems less effective due to certain reasons as clearly reflected in the Patani conflict settlement measures. Despite its complex nature, the Patani conflict settlement, indeed, relies heavily on the good will of the Thai government in this case. However, the prospect for effective Patani conflict settlement is still open; particularly if the approaches to accommodate the interest of the two hostile parties in this context are no longer relying on a *business as usual* (conventional) approach but a *business unusual* (unconventional) one. By the spirit of learning for good things and mistakes, the peace settlement process should also be emphasizing the past experience for a more constructive result in the future.

Theoretical Approaches

In order to analyze how far Indonesia's diplomacy in addressing the question of the long standing South Thailand conflict, there are at least two relevant theories that can be properly used in

this context, namely the theory of conflict management and that of diplomacy (first track, second track and multi-track). Theoretically conflict management is a combination of three relevant elements, namely prevention, containment and termination (Alagappa, 1995:369). Alagappa maintains that c*onflict Prevention* is a part of the conflict management aiming to prevent a situation of conflict from happening or at least to ensure that no violent conflict occurs. In this regard, it provides a valuable contribution to dampening a degree of conflict to a point where no use of force is taken. *Conflict containment* refers to a situation of self restraint in the use of force with the purpose of denying victory to the aggressor as well as simultaneously preventing the spread of conflict, which could enmesh other actors towards the escalation of violence. *Conflict t*ermination is a process to end a conflict by involving two hostile parties for desired conflict settlement and resolution (Mitchell, 1989: 275-277). In essence, the term 'settlement' is slightly different from the term 'resolution'. Settlement refers for a particular condition which leads violent hostilities to an end, while resolution goes much further than that. It aims to eliminate or eradicate the very sources of conflict, and transform the attitude and behavior of the conflicting parties.

Meanwhile, Butler maintains that conflict management is best understood as any attempt, typically involving the third party, in controlling a certain situation of conflict between politically motivated actors at the levels of the state or substate. Conflict management aims to mitigate the damaging impact of the ongoing conflicts. In certain extent, conflict management originates from a concern the part of a third party by containing the conflict's damaging and destabilizing effects to the parties involved (semi-involved or non-involved parties) as well as containing the violent escalation of the conflict per se. Conflict management approaches come up when the prospects for conflict resolution seem dim, while the dynamics of the conflict is marked by the tide of escalation that needs an immediate response. The approaches towards managing a conflict, based on this theory, are divided into four categories, namely threat-based, deterrence-based, adjudicatory, and accommodationists. Threat-based category in-

cludes the use and or threat of force and other tools to compel other parties, and thus it corresponds most clearly with the threat and or use of 'hard' (coercive) power in the pursuit of interest. Deterrence-based category includes the use and or threat of force, and the various instruments of coercive diplomacy to deter other parties. Like the threat-based one, this category also addresses the use of hard power by the parties concerned in struggle of their interest. Adjudicatory category includes legal, extra-legal, and normative institutions and approaches to craft and reach legal settlements with other parties. This category emphasizes the significance of recognition of and an appeal to a system of norms, rights and legalities. Accommodationists category includes traditional and non-traditional diplomatic means to broker agreement with other parties. Thus, it puts an emphasis on the use of soft (persuasive) power in pursuit of any interest. The said approaches carries with its different ramifications and consequences, entails different cost, demands different resources, and may succeed (or fail) under different circumstances (Butler, 2009:13-14).

Along with the aforementioned theory, analyzing the issue of the South Thailand settlement also relies on the diplomacy theory approach certainly. The essence of diplomacy is grouped into four theoretical classifications. *Firstly*, diplomacy is the conduct of relations between sovereign states through the medium of officials based at home or abroad. *Secondly*, diplomacy is an art of using tact and skill in dealing with people. *Thirdly*, diplomacy is an attempt to address a conflict (inter or intra-state conflicts). *Fourthly*, diplomacy is a synonym for foreign policy (Berridge and James, 2003: 69-70).

Diplomacy which is an essentially political activity and, well resourced and skilful, and a major ingredient of power, functions as a channel of communication of sovereign countries in pursuit of its objectives of their foreign policies. In this sense, its function is clearly reflected particularly in the communication process between officials designed to promote foreign policy either by formal agreement or tacit adjustment; and also in the discrete activities such as gathering information, clarifying intentions, and engendering goodwill (Berridge, 2005: 1). In its recent development,

diplomacy is no longer a monopoly of a state as the sole actor (track one). Diplomacy which is carried out by the non-state actor (track two) in this regard is quite common as well, the so-called citizen diplomacy. In certain cases, first track and second track diplomacy may be in partnership with each other, called a twin-track diplomacy (Berridge and James, 2005:260).

The role of diplomacy as a channel of effective communication between the conflicting parties is so important, although in certain cases it involves the third parties with its intermediary function (a twin track) to work with the disputants to resolve the conflict or transform it to make it less destructive. The third parties in this regard could come from the official or formal intermediaries circle, professional mediators, arbitrators, judges, as well as the non governmental circle such as religious institutions, academics, former government officials, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and thin tank. In some cases, however, governments or government officials can act as informal intermediaries when they facilitate discussions among non-officials-private citizens or groups of individuals-from conflicting parties (Chigas, 2003:1).

In addition to the term track one, track two and twin-track diplomacy as mentioned earlier, the term 'track three diplomacy' is also known particularly among the diplomatic practitioners. This kind of diplomacy deals with the mechanism of the unofficial interventions at the grass root level. It involves unofficial third parties working with people from all walks of life and sectors of their society to find ways to promote peace in settings of violent conflict. It aims to build or rebuild broken relationships across the lines of division among ordinary citizens in communities in a range of sectors. The conduct of the track three diplomacy is based on the premise that peace is most likely to be built from the bottom up as well as from the top down particularly at the grass-root level that is potentially a microcosm of the larger conflict (Chigas, 2003: 4).

Methodology

This research paper uses a particular methodological approach in supporting the arguments on the issue concerned. It relies heavily on the data collection mostly obtained from the library research database and other supporting materials such as text books and periodicals, such as journals, magazines and newspapers.

This paper employs a descriptive method of analysis in elucidating a data-based analytical argument with the special emphasis on the role of Indonesia's diplomacy in carrying out an intermediary mission in South Thailand conflict settlement. More specifically, understanding the third party's role, in this case Indonesia's diplomacy role, in mediating the unceasing intra-state conflict in South Thailand also uses a specific tool of analysis with its relevant conflict variables-based issue identification.

The time frame of the discussion in this paper is deliberately concentrating on the South Thailand conflict settlement process that began in the year 2004 onwards. The choice of the year 2004 onwards as the time frame of the study is simply based on the fact that the year 2004 onwards eyes the growing role of Indonesia's diplomacy in addressing security challenges in the southern territory of Thailand following the repressive policy adopted by the Thai government aiming to keep the local situation calm and conducive as well as remain under control.

The Question of Patani

Patani, a term used to refer a region in Southern Thailand, is located along the border with Malaysia. The annexation by Thailand in 1902 the Patani includes the present provincial areas of Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani which are mainly populated by Muslim Malays. Historically, the annexation of Patani by the Reign of Siam in 1902 was subsequently followed by using this area as a buffer zone against the British Malaya. The annexation was strengthened in 1909 by an Anglo-Siamese treaty that drew border lines between Patani and the Malay states of Kelantan, Perak, Kedah and Perlis. Under the Siamese reign, the assimilation policy began to introduce. The introduction of the assimilation policy or Pan Thai policy was a milestone towards demolishing the traditional local structures and opportunities which then incited strong resistance by the local people (Valsesia, 2007: 2).

Take the case of the 1921 Compulsory Primary Education Act which obliged all children to enter public primary school. Apart from the centralization policy, the Act was perceived by the local Muslim leaders a part of hidden agenda to transform local cultural and religious values into Thai values as well as to supplant the *Pondoks* which were often branded a breading ground of Islamic revivalism and the Patani Muslim Malay resistance.or Islamic boarding schools. Such a thing was perceived by the local Muslim Malays a degrading or destruction of their cultural and religious identity. In addition, sending children in Thai public schools with their secular teaching model would remove their religious grounding and the religious leaders, including the *Tok Gurus* would lose their influential control over the community (Li, 2008: 1). Until the introduction of the 1944 Patronage of Islam Act, the other negative profound impact of the Pan Thai policy on the life of the local people was also reflected by very few opportunities in almost all areas of social life faced by the local Muslim Malays. During this period of time, to some extent the Siam ruler discriminated against the South's Muslim minority as clearly reflected in the policy of banning them to serve as public servants, prohibiting them to wear a traditional Muslim Malay clothes, and encouraging them to use Thai names.

Under the Patronage of Islam Act in 1944, the then Prime Minister PridiPhanomyong attempted to win the heart of the Muslim Malay community by placing the Muslim leaders in the state structures as advisors to the King of Siam on the Patani and Islamic matters. The policy to embrace the local Muslim Malays was, in fact, less effective since it failed to curb the establishment of Muslim resistance movements such as the Patani People's Movement (PPM) which was established by Haji Sulong in the second part of the 1940s. The PPM struggled for the political and cultural rights of the Patani society including the implementation of Islamic law in the said southern provinces by organizing numerous demonstrations. Until the 1970s the situation in southern Thai provinces became more strained along with more violent actions staged by the local Muslim Malays movements and the military counterblow launched by the Thai authorities.

The PremTinasulanond's rise to power in 1980 brought a more promising atmosphere particularly for the already conflicting area of Patani. With his new strategy called "*Thai Rom Yen*" (peace in the south), the Prem Tinasulanond administration encouraged the participation of the south's Muslim Malay society among other things in political life. In addition, PremTinasulanond also showed them a lot of attention by the economic development of the southern Thai provinces program and the granting of broad amnesty to those being charged with subversive activities against the legitimate government. The other valuable contribution of the Prem Tinasulanond administration to bring peace in the Patani area included the establishment of Civil-Police-Military Taskforce 43 (CPM 43) and Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC). Until the 1997 financial crisis era the PremTinasulanond's policy led the situation in the southern provinces to be more conducive, among other things, marked by the dramatic decrease of the local conflict intensity. The situation changed dramatically soon after ThaksinShinawatra was elected as Thailand's Prime Minister in 2001. Apart from his controversial decision to dismantle the important institutions like CPM 43 and SBPAC, Thaksin Shinawatra downgraded the status level of the local conflict from the status level of separatism oriented conflict to that of non separatism oriented conflict. The latter refers to a mere homeland security threat caused by other reasons such as banditry and incident deliberately created by the unscrupulous local politicians (Valsesia, 2007: 2-4).

Indeed, the grievances among the South's Malay Muslims that have given rise to the conflict are entirely local. The ongoing security instability in Southern Thailand, in large part, is related to the historically-rooted structural factors. The questions of education, employment in the public service, relative economic deprivation, limited political integration, and struggle for the maintenance of ethnic-religious identity have so far been perceived as the main source of the contemporary violence. These factors have also been leading the Patani Muslim Malays to the so long marginalized, impoverished and brutalized situation. The introduction of secular policies by the Thai government in the southern region as a part of a half century

assimilationist policy package and the growing influence of violent Jihadist ideology in the region and around the world have certainly some effect in this case (Melvin, 2007: 3).

The fact shows that some Patani Malays are known to have fought in Afghanistan, that some have been trained overseas in Jihadist guerilla warfare, and that people in the region have links with Islamist movements elsewhere in the world. To some extent, the source of the violence in the southern Thai provinces might be an identity crisis among the locals resulting from the obliteration of Patani Malay identity over the last century, the resistance against the Pan Thai policy, and socio-political discrimination and oppression, which leads to the inability to find acceptance in the Thailand's socio-political mainstream, as well as the presence of radical Islamic values to fill the void, particularly among the young men. Empirically deculturalization contributes significantly to the turn to extremism or radicalism among some young Muslim. Such as phenomenon, albeit caused by different factors, may be partly responsible for the radicalism in Southern Thailand (Jory, 2006: 43).

During his time in office, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai Party created a populist program-based extensive support network throughout the country, including in the Deep South, and staged a frontal assault on the legitimacy of the palace. In addition of the internal rivalry, Thaksin Shinawatra's governmental policies and conflict mismanagement had also fuelled the violence particularly in the deep South. Repressive state actions to curb the violence were not so effective at all, and conversely it led to moral legitimacy for a violent struggle among the South's Malay Muslim militants and radicalized Islamist movements McCargo, 2009: 9-12). All these made the Thaksin Shinawatra administration lose control of the situation, particularly along with the growing split between Thaksin Shinawatra and the military in 2006 about how to prosecute the ongoing violent struggle in southern Thailand Melvin, *op.cit.*: 2). This culminated in a military coup staged by royalist officers led by the first Muslim army commander-in-chief General Sonthi-Boonyaratkalin on 19 September 2006 (McCargo, *op.cit.*: 8). General SonthiBoonyaratkalin and his military colleagues were widely seen as having a better understanding and experience of the Southern Thai provinces than Thaksin Shinawatra and appear to favor a softer approach to the crisis that Thaksin Shinawatra who was often criticized both at home and abroad for his tough approach to fighting the insurgents (*BBC News*: 2006).

The optimism for a possible resolution to the conflict in the southern region in the post-Thaksin Shinawatra era was beyond expectation. The violence in this area has significantly escalated marked by the increasing number of casualties and the brutality of the intensified attacks by the local militants. Any new approaches taken by the Thai authorities to end conflict in the deep South is still unsettled until this moment, and conversely the nature of conflict has been growing more pressing from time to time (Melvin, *op.cit.*: 2-3). Such a fact is certainly a challenge to the neighboring states, including Indonesia to play a pro-active role and grasp every opportunity towards a new conciliatory approach-based conflict settlement in Southern Thailand.

Indonesia's 'Peace Maker' Role

In accordance with the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, it clearly mentions that "*Subsequent thereto, to form a government of the state of Indonesia which shall protect all the people of Indonesia and their entire native land, and in order to improve the public welfare, to advance the intellectual life of the people and to contribute to the establishment of a world order based on freedom, abiding peace and social justice.*" To implement this Constitution mandate, Indonesia implements an independent and active foreign policy in pursuit of its national interest at the regional and global intercourses. Based on this kind of basic principles, Indonesia's independent and active foreign policy is not a neutral and passive in character. However, Indonesia remains committed to consistently voice and participate actively in maintaining world order.

As a regional power in the Southeast Asian region and the current chairman of ASEAN, Indonesia is certainly on the right position to take the lead in addressing common challenges being faced by the countries in the region through the

regional conflict management framework which includes, among other things, the conflict mediation mechanism. In the case of conflict settlement process in Southern Thailand, for example, Indonesia had so far attempted to play an active role in addressing an incessant conflict situation in the region not only at the multilateral level such as ASEAN and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), but also at the bilateral level through the mechanism of mediation approaches. In this regard, the mediation role played by Indonesia included Track One-based mediation and Track Two-based mediation. On the Track One mediation basis, Indonesia participated actively in sponsoring peace talks process between the hostile actors of the Patani conflict in Bogor, while the Track Two mediation basis was clearly reflected, at the Thai government's request, by the involvement of the two prominent Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, to help bridge the communication gap between the Centre and the South towards an immediate conflict settlement in the Southern Thai provinces.

On the Track One level, in September 2008 Indonesia mediated peace talks between the Thai government and representatives of the Muslim community in Southern Thailand, although it did not end in any result. The talks that took place in Bogor Presidential Palace and included the then Vice President JusufKalla and Indonesian Ambassador to Thailand M. Hatta concluded with the commitment to end years of conflict that had claims many casualties at both sides. In principle the two sides agreed that the settlement should be conducted peacefully through dialogue forum and should be in line with the Constitution of Thailand. During the talks, the Thai government sent five negotiators, headed by General Khwanchart-Klahan, the Supreme Commander of the Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command (SBPPC) which oversees the country's southern provinces. The country's southern Malay Muslims were represented by leaders of the Pattani Malay Consultative Congress (PMCC), an umbrella organization of insurgent groups in Southern Thailand. Demands by Thai Muslims include, among other things, the introduction of Islamic law and making ethnic Pattani Malay (Yawi) a working language in the region, as well as the improvement of the local economy and education system. Previous negotiations, including that sponsored by the Malaysian government, failed to halt violence within the three provinces, because of a lack of trust between the parties, as well as the Thai government's failure to identify which groups or individuals it should talk to. The Bogor peace talks should be continued by another second round of negotiations on 1 November 2010 at the same place, but it failed to realize for certain reasons (*The Jakarta Post*, 2008: 1) .

Indeed, the Government of Thailand did not recognize the legitimacy of the Bogor peace talks. As officially stated by the Thai Foreign Ministry's spokesperson TharitCharungvat on 22 September 2010, the Government of Thailand strongly denied the charges against its involvement in the said peace talks. Thailand notified that she did not ask Indonesia to serve as a mediator for the Patani conflict settlement as well (*Kompas*, 2008: 15). In other words, the Thai government refused to be associated with the negotiations which were sponsored by the then Vice President Jusuf Kalla, who is credited with helping end three decades of separatist violence in Aceh in 2005.

Such a fact is a test case as well as a challenge to Indonesia to play a more active role in the efforts to maintain regional security and stability. Indonesia has incessantly kept her commitment to play an active role in supporting any regional peace process, including the peace process in the Southern Thai provinces. Therefore, Indonesia welcomes any Thai government's request for assistance, but insisted she would not make any pre-emptive interference. Moreover, Indonesia had past experience in playing a successful role as a third-party facilitator between Manila and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) forum in the early 1990s. The said peace talks aimed to find solutions to conflicts in the Southern Philippines. Until today, Indonesia has also been taking part actively in helping implement the 1996 Peace Agreement under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (Sukma, 2010: 3).

The Bogor meeting was arranged following a visit by the then Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej to Jakarta early 2008. After his visit,

the Thai cabinet agreed in June to study the peace process in Indonesia's once-rebellious Aceh province as a model for resolving the conflict in southern Thailand. As notified by Presidential Spokesman Dino Patti Djalal, President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono assigned the then Vice President JusufKalla to mediate the peace talks soon after the President met delegations of both sides. With regard to the Aceh peace formula, It might be difficult for the Thai government to use the Aceh lesson as a model, since both have some differences in certain extent. The differences rest on some high-principled things, such as the legitimacy of the representative of the South's Malay Muslims, including those representing the insurgent groups. In the case of the Ace peace talks, for instance, the Indonesian government knew that the leaders of the Free Aceh Movement with whom it was dealing were in daily contact with the rebel commanders in the field (*Associated Press*, 2008).

If accurately observed, Thailand seems somewhat reluctant to accept any kind of mediation as frequently offered by the third party including by ASEAN member countries in resolving the conflict in South Thailand. The attitude of Thailand in this case is totally different if compared to the Philippines and Indonesia which are so open to any kind of assistance in the conflict settlement framework. Indonesia has so far been attempting to coax the Thai government into receiving the presence of the third party in helping mediate the conflicting parties in the Southern Thai provinces, particularly the offer coming from ASEAN member countries circle. The efforts made by Indonesia and ASEAN in this case have so far failed to get a positive response from the Thai government. The attitude of Thailand that remains in firm position to opposing to any kind of foreign intervention in its domestic affairs could be affected by her historical pride as a sovereign nation that had never been occupied by any foreign country (Wirajuda: 2010).

As Ambassador IsornPocmontri of the Thai Foreign Ministry mentioned clearly that the Patani issue is a domestic problem and the move towards internationalizing this issue is beyond the policy or official position adopted by the Thai government. Thailand considers that things would get more complicated if a foreign intervention was present. Nevertheless, the government of Thailand as Prime Minister AbhisitVejjajiva mentioned that Thai government much appreciated all constructive measures taken by the neighboring countries, including Indonesia, in the efforts to bring peace in the already conflicting area of Southern Thailand. It is fully aware that the situation anywhere in the region with violence, including in the Southern Thailand, has a negative profound impact on the stability of the whole region and ASEAN as well (The Jakarta *Post*, 2010: 9)**.**

On the Track Two level, the settlement of the Patani conflict had so far been involving non state actor circle as well, such as Malaysia's Mahathir Muhamad Peace Foundation and Indonesia's Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Lessons learned from the Mahathir Muhamad's mediation process clearly showed that the three rounds of peace talks between senior Thai military officers and exiled leaders of the older insurgency groups brokered including PULO on the Malaysian island Langkawi during 2005, in fact, fully depended on the situation on the ground and on the good will of the Thai government. Indeed, the talks resulted in some constructive commitments such as a joint peace and development plan for the South that rejected the idea of independence (or even autonomy) but called for an amnesty for exiled leaders, the restoration of the SBPAC and the introduction of the Malay language in schools. This initiative, however, had minimal impact on the ground due to the exiled leaders' little influence over the new generation of insurgents and the Thai government's attitude that ignored the recommendations made during the talks (Storey, 2007:2).

It is understandable that the measures towards opening a productive dialogue with the Patani insurgents for the South's durable peace is impeded by some crucial factors, such as the structure of the insurgency (Melvin, 2007: 38). Unlike the Aceh insurgency group 'Free Aceh Movement' or 'Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM)' whose organizational structure is clear and command line-based, there is no such clear and command line-based organizational structure of South Thailand's insurgent group which represents the interest of the diverse range of the local insurgent factions. It

remains a real challenge to determining who is legitimately representing and voicing the common interest of the South's insurgent groups during the negotiations as happened during the 2008 Bogor peace talks.

In the context of the role played by Indonesian CSOs, NU and Muhammadiyah, in mediating conflict in the southern Thai provinces, it yielded a relatively concrete thing and paved the way for both hostile sides to build up mutual trust and mutual understanding between them. Although their Patani missions were no more than a just moral obligation, the presence of NU and Muhammadiyah with its Malay Muslim approaches is so important, particularly in bridging the differences and cleavages between the Center and the South towards an effective national reconciliation as well as improving the already conflicting situation in the southern region (*NU Online*, 2008). Moreover, the southern conflicts result from misunderstanding and suspicion and have nothing to do with religion. Only a certain group of people with bad intentions use religion as a political tool and distorted Islamic teachings.

The Thai government has unceasingly tried to win the heart of the south's Malay Muslims. During the ThaksinShinawatra administration, for example, some fundamental policies were taken by the Thai government to accommodate the interest of the locals, among other things, by establishing an Islamic Bank, setting up new Islamic universities and educational institutions in cooperation with leading academic institutions such as Cairo University, allocating the Hajj pilgrimage's special funds for needy Muslim Thais, and boosting the South's development growth with purpose of raising the standard of living of Muslim Thais. In addition, the Thai government also empowered the 48 member National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) for helping ease southern problems in order to create reconciliation and bring peace in the area (*Inside Thailand Review*, 2008:1-3).

Such policies, however, were not too effective to curb the insurgency in the deep South as reflected by the ongoing escalation of dissension and the growing distrust and dissatisfaction with the Center in this area. Thus, open warfare between the Center and the South detonated by the failed national integration due to the incompatibil-

ity of the two languages-cultures (Buddhist Thai and Muslim Malay) will never cease to threaten the life of the Muslim people in the southern region as well as national integrity, economic stability and national security (Walker, 2005:115-116).

Learning from the aforementioned Indonesia's *Track One* and *Track Two* experiences, it is clear that an effective mediation process should address common issues faced by both hostile parties in this country such as the ethno-national grievance rather than any sensitive issues that become their concern. Such sensitive issues, such as a demand for wide-range autonomy in the three southern border provinces and the internationalization of the Patani issue, will make the talks fail to make much headway. Thus, a logical option for placing the South's Malay Muslims in the Thai socio-cultural mainstream really makes sense instead of the struggle for greater autonomy that risks strong rejection from the Thai government. With no such conflict resolution, the southern region will be always torn by distrust and durable peace remains a distant prospect.

With regard to the conflict settlement measure in Southern Thailand, Indonesia has broader chance to continue playing more proactive in seeking a peaceful solution between the Thai government and the South's Malay Muslim community, particularly through a mechanism of the *Track Two*-based conflict mediation approach. In this context, conflict mediation as played by non-state actors like NU and Muhammadiyah is a suggested model to adopt since it proved acceptable to both sides, the Center and the South. In such a situation, the role of the government is still crucial although it is behind the scenes. This is because an effective mediation performed by the non-state actors, including from the CSO circle like NU and Muhammadiyah, has need of the government's full support to make the said mediation process possible.

Tool of Analysis

In order to ascertain the question of Patani in a broader perspective, there are some tools of analysis to rely on, among other things, the Causal Loop Diagram (CLD). As a part of the systems thinking, the use of CLD aims to understand the

conflict determinant variables and the causal relationship between the variables. Of these variables, the prime variables, the so called 'leverage', are easily known. As a 'leverage variable', it constitutes a principal variable of a particular issue to deal with. The yardstick in identifying the 'leverage' variables relies on the weight of each variable based on the number of loop and the length of loop. The more the number of loop and its length of loop a variable owns, the more significant the variable will be (*Kajian Paradigma Modul 1 A-2*, 2010: 91-102).

In the case of Southern Thailand's conflict, it is identified a number of variables having a profound impact on the future course of the conflict settlement per se. These include Pan-Thai policy, Thai educational system, job opportunity, socio-economic injustice, Thai 'extractive' authorities, Patani's public distrust, Patani Muslim clerics' influence, Islamic radicalism, Islamic fanatisicm, deculturalization, religious tolerance, Patani's diaspora influence, socio-cultural discrimination, and homeland security. All these, to some extent, are considered relevant variables to the escalation of conflict in the Southern Thailand in the past few decades.

Based on the CLD-based analysis as described above, it shows that the Pan-Thai policy, popularly called 'a assimilationist policy', is a principal leverage with the 56 loops, then followed by the variable of Patani's public distrust with 40 loops on the second principal leverage. It means that the measures toward resolving conflict in Southern Thailand is highly recommended to address and put an emphasis on at least the two principal variables. With special emphasis on the said principal variables, it makes the conflict mediation process carried out by the third party, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, more effective. The role of the third party in this regard is vitally important, particularly in its position as a bridge builder in order to find a common ground for negotiations between the Center and the South towards a truly national reconciliation and durable peace on the Southern Thai provinces.

Conclusion

Conflict in Southern Thailand is relatively complex in nature, encompassing almost all kinds of issues including the most sensitive one dealing with religious practices. The obstacles to seeking a peaceful solution over the conflict in Southern Thailand, among other things, are caused by the stubborn attitude of both sides. They have so far been stuck on their basic principles and position on the issue concerned. For the Thai government, for example, it takes the stance that the question of Patani is a domestic problem of Thailand, although it fails lucidly to analyze situation on the ground and follow an appropriate strategy to tackle the unceasing conflict situation in the south-
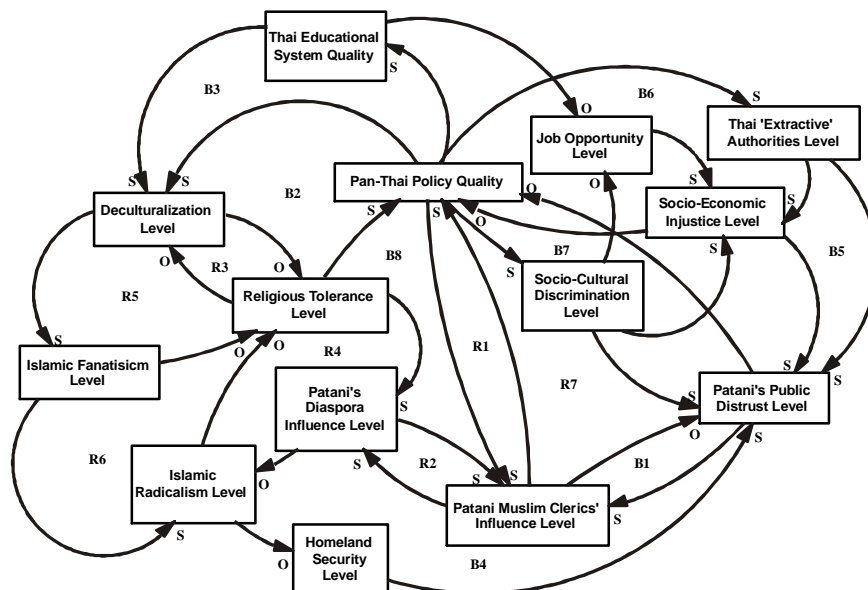

Figure 1. Causal Loop Diagram (CLD): The Patani Conflict Determinant Variables

ern region. The Thai authorities that lack understanding of the roots of the problems and Thai Muslims' ways of life have increasingly aggravated the already conflicting situation. This leads subsequently to the growing concern among the international community particularly the Muslim world and neighboring countries.

As a neighboring country and the largest Muslim nation in the world, Indonesia has contributed significantly to the conflict settlement in Southern Thailand. Such a contribution is reflected in the active participation of Indonesia in supporting a peaceful solution in Southern Thailand through the Track One and Track Two-based mediation mechanisms. Indonesia's contribution evidently mirrored in the Bogor peace talks and the conflict mediation performed by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah is a fact. However, all these measures seem less effective and need further action that is more appropriate, including by the involvement of the third party-sponsored mediation, in addressing the questions on the ground.

In the efforts to supporting the effective conflict resolution in Southern Thailand, the conflict resolution formula should be focusing the strategic issues as clearly formulated in the five sound policy recommendations as follows.

(1) Indonesia, as a 'big brother' country in the region, should play a more active role in the effort to consistently help maintain peace and order in the region, including the measures towards a comprehensive conflict settlement in Southern Thailand; (2) Indonesia is highly recommended to rely on the Track Two (non-state actors) mechanism to fill the void caused by the absence of the mediation at the Government-to-Government level (Track One) and avoid the impression that Indonesia is interfering with Thailand's domestic issue. The role of the Indonesian government is to empower and support the non-state actors, in this regard NU and Muhammadiyah, in order to continue their peace agenda to help end conflict in Southern Thailand through the mediation mechanism; (3) Indonesia should come up with more constructive options for creating durable peace in the southern Thailand by accommodating the interest of both sides, the Center and the South. The quest for an effective conflict settlement in the Southern Thailand should also address the principal issues that lie at the root of conflict, such as the issues of Pan-Thai policy and Patani's public distrust; (4) Indonesia should emphasize a national integration-based settlement approach in dealing with the South Thailand issue. Such an approach is a more rational option rather than the *Autonomy-for-the South Peace* option since it brings the local Malay Muslims to the Thai socio-cultural mainstream, so that they are no longer perceiving 'strangers' in their own native homeland; (5) Indonesia should ensure that the national integration concept adopted by the Thai government to address the South Thailand issue should also integrate the Islamic boarding schools' curriculum into the accredited national educational system. The curriculum compatibility between the public schools and private Islamic schools in Indonesia, including those run by the *Pondok Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) circle, is an appropriate model to introduce in Southern Thailand.

Acknowledgments

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