

**PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTHERN THAILAND:  
THE ROLES OF THE SOUTHERN BORDER  
PROVINCES ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER  
(SBPAC)**

**NADIA PAYO**

**UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA**

**2025**

**PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTHERN THAILAND:  
THE ROLES OF THE SOUTHERN BORDER  
PROVINCES ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER  
(SBPAC)**

by

**NADIA PAYO**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**February 2025**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Alhamdulillah, I thank God for granting me the strength, patience, and perseverance to complete this dissertation.

To my dearest family, my beloved husband, and my three wonderful children, you are my greatest inspiration. Your unwavering love and support have been my anchor. To my super mom, your endless encouragement has been my bedrock. To my late father, this achievement is dedicated to you. My heartfelt thanks to my brothers and sisters for their unwavering support. To my father-in-law and sister-in-law, your support in raising my children has been invaluable, allowing me the time and focus to complete my thesis.

I am especially indebted to my esteemed supervisor, Professor Kamarulzaman Askandar. Your unwavering faith in my abilities and your tireless support have been a beacon of light guiding me through this journey. Your wisdom, patience, and invaluable feedback have shaped this dissertation into what it is today. Your belief in me, even when I doubted myself, has made this work possible.

To the participants and contributors of my research, your cooperation has been vital. Your insights have enriched this study. To everyone who supported me, thank you. Your encouragement has made a significant difference.

And finally, I thank myself for the resilience and determination to see this journey through. This dissertation is not just an academic achievement, but a personal triumph.

Thank you all for being part of this journey and for believing in me. This accomplishment belongs to all of us.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>xii</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>xiv</b>
<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>xvi</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b> .....	<b>xvii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>xix</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background .....	3
1.3 Literature Review .....	8
1.3.1 Studies on the Conflict in Southern Thailand.....	11
1.3.2 Studies on the potential for peace in Southern Thailand .....	16
1.3.3 Studies on Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC).....	24
1.4 Statement of Problem.....	28
1.5 Research Questions .....	32
1.6 Research Objectives .....	33
1.7 Research Methodology .....	34
1.7.1 Conceptual Framework Development .....	34
1.7.2 Data Collection .....	36
1.7.2(a) Primary Data Collection .....	36
1.7.2(b) Secondary Data Collection .....	40

1.7.3	Data Analysis.....	42
1.8	Significance of the Study .....	46
1.9	Scope and Limitations of the Study .....	47
1.10	Chapter Outline .....	48
<b>CHAPTER 2 PEACEBUILDING AND INSTITUTIONS: A THEORY TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE PEACE .....</b>		<b>53</b>
2.1	Introduction.....	53
2.2	What is Peace? .....	55
2.3	Concept of Peace.....	58
2.3.1	Negative Peace.....	62
2.3.2	Positive Peace .....	63
2.4	Approach to Peace .....	65
2.4.1	Liberal Peace .....	66
2.4.2	Illiberal Peace .....	68
2.5	Peacebuilding and Peacebuilding Approach.....	70
2.5.1	Conflict Transformation .....	70
2.5.2	Peacebuilding.....	72
2.5.3	Hybrid Peacebuilding .....	74
2.5.4	Peacebuilding's Conceptual framework.....	76
2.5.4(a)	Reconciliation: Re-Building the Relationship.....	79
2.5.4(b)	Structure: Structure in Peacebuilding.....	86
2.5.4(c)	Process: Conflict as a Progression and Peacebuilding as a Process .....	93
2.5.4(d)	Resources: In Order to Facilitate Peace.....	97
2.5.4(e)	Coordination: Connect and United for Peace.....	99
2.6	Institutional Theory.....	100

2.6.1	Evolution of Institutional Theory .....	100
2.6.2	Institutional Isomorphism .....	103
2.6.3	The Three Pillars of Institutions .....	105
2.6.3(a)	Regulative Pillar .....	106
2.6.3(b)	Normative Pillar .....	107
2.6.3(c)	Cultural-Cognitive Pillar .....	108
2.7	Bridging the Chasm: Peace and Government .....	110
2.7.1	Nexus: Government Institution and Peacebuilding .....	112
2.8	Conceptual framework .....	117
2.9	Chapter Summary .....	122
<b>CHAPTER 3 BACKGROUND OF SOUTHERN THAILAND'S CONFLICT.....</b>		<b>125</b>
3.1	Introduction .....	125
3.2	The Conflict in Southern Thailand .....	126
3.3	Actors in the Conflict .....	127
3.4	Content of the Conflict in Southern Thailand .....	132
3.4.1	Statistical Summary of Conflict Incidents .....	132
3.5	Context of the Conflict in Southern Thailand .....	134
3.5.1	Historical Context .....	135
3.5.1(a)	Haji Sulong .....	138
3.5.1(b)	Dusun Nyor Rebellion .....	140
3.5.1(c)	Krue-Se Mosque Incident .....	141
3.5.1(d)	Tak-Bai Incident .....	143
3.5.2	Political Context .....	146
3.5.2(a)	Historical .....	147
3.5.2(b)	The Decade from 2003 to 2013 .....	149

3.5.2(c)	Most Recent: The Decade from 2013 To 2023 .....	151
3.5.3	Economic Context .....	153
3.5.4	Social and Cultural Context.....	157
3.5.4(a)	Education .....	158
3.5.4(b)	Justice and Human Rights .....	159
3.6	Process of Conflict Resolution in Southern Thailand .....	161
3.6.1	Legal Framework, Policies, and Strategies in the Context of the Southern Conflict.....	161
3.6.1(a)	Structural Framework for Conflict Management in the Three Southern Border Provinces .....	163
3.6.1(b)	Implementation of Martial Law (B.E. 2475).....	165
3.6.1(c)	Emergency Decree B.E. 2548 .....	167
3.6.1(d)	Internal Security Act B.E. 2551 .....	169
3.6.1(e)	Peace Dialogue Process .....	171
3.6.2	Budget Expenditures for Solving Problems in Southern Border Provinces .....	173
3.7	Southern Thailand Today.....	176
3.8	Chapter Summary .....	177
<b>CHAPTER 4 SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER (SBPAC) .....</b>		<b>180</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	180
4.2	Introduction of the SBPAC .....	181
4.2.1	Establishment and Dissolution of SBPAC .....	182
4.2.2	The Reinstatement of the SBPAC .....	184
4.3	Vision and Mission of SBPAC .....	188
4.4	Organizational Structure .....	191
4.4.1	Departmental Responsibilities and Activities.....	193

4.4.2	The SBPAC division of work .....	194
4.4.3	Departments Structured Independently and not equivalent to a Division.....	197
4.4.4	Departments with Divisional Equivalence .....	198
4.5	The SBPAC: A Political Perspective .....	199
4.5.1	The SBPAC Under Phanu Uthairat .....	199
4.5.2	The SBPAC under Thawee Sodsong.....	201
4.5.3	The SBPAC under Rear Admiral Somkiat Polprayoon.....	204
4.6	Efficacy and Capacities of SBPAC.....	205
4.6.1	Authority.....	206
4.6.2	Resources .....	207
4.7	Relationship with other Key Institutions .....	212
4.7.1	Coordination with Government Agencies .....	212
4.7.1(a)	The Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) .....	212
4.7.1(b)	The National Reconciliation Commission (NRC).....	215
4.7.1(c)	The Civilian Police Military Task Force (CPM 43).....	216
4.7.2	Engaging Civil Society Organizations.....	218
4.7.3	Collaboration with International Organizations .....	220
4.8	Overview of SBPAC's Organizational Framework .....	225
4.9	Chapter Summary .....	229
<b>CHAPTER 5 THE INITIATIVES OF THE SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER (SBPAC).....</b>		<b>232</b>
5.1	Integrated Initiatives Under the Southern Border Provinces Strategic Plan.....	234
5.1.1	Project Related to Security and Property Protection .....	237
5.1.2	Project related to Justice and Victim Support.....	242

5.1.2(a)	Justice .....	243
5.1.2(b)	Protection and Promotion of Human Rights .....	247
5.1.2(c)	Reconciliation and Remediation.....	254
5.1.3	Project related to Perception Management of Regional Situation.....	262
5.1.3(a)	National Initiatives for Enhanced Understanding and Collaborative Efforts .....	263
5.1.3(b)	International Initiatives for Fostering Comprehensive Understanding and Collaboration .....	267
5.1.4	Project related to Education, Cultural Development, and Multicultural Strengthening.....	272
5.1.4(a)	Education .....	272
5.1.4(b)	Cultural Initiatives and Ethnographic Engagements.....	275
5.1.5	Project related to Integrated Economic and Health Development.....	286
5.1.5(a)	Strategic Enhancement of Economic Activities .....	287
5.1.5(b)	Agricultural Advancement in Economic Development.....	292
5.1.5(c)	Health Development.....	297
5.1.6	Project related to Government Efficiency and Policy Implementation.....	301
5.1.6(a)	Government Efficiency Enhancement and Policy Driving Group .....	301
5.1.6(b)	Training Programs for Government Officials and Personnel .....	302
5.1.6(c)	Capacity Building in Local Government and Education.....	302
5.1.6(d)	Civil Society Engagement and Network Building .....	303
5.1.6(e)	Innovative Community Support Initiatives .....	304

5.1.7	Project related to Peaceful Conflict Resolution.....	305
5.2	Chapter summary .....	313
<b>CHAPTER 6 AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE'S INITIATIVES..... 315</b>		
6.1	Introduction .....	315
6.2	Assessing SBPAC's Role within a Conceptual Framework.....	317
6.2.1	Reconciliation .....	319
6.2.1(a)	Truth .....	321
6.2.1(b)	Mercy.....	324
6.2.1(c)	Justice .....	327
6.2.1(d)	Peace.....	330
6.2.2	Structure.....	333
6.2.3	Process .....	338
6.2.4	Resources.....	342
6.2.4(a)	Socioeconomic Resources .....	342
6.2.4(b)	Sociocultural Resources .....	346
6.2.5	Coordination .....	349
6.3	Elaborating on SBPAC's Role through Institutional Isomorphism.....	352
6.3.1	Institutional Framework of SBPAC: A Three-Pillar Perspective.....	354
6.3.1(a)	The Regulative Pillar .....	355
6.3.1(b)	The Normative Pillar .....	356
6.3.1(c)	The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar .....	356
6.4	Evaluation of SBPAC's Impact and Achievement in Peacebuilding Endeavors.....	357
6.4.1	Enhanced Collaboration.....	358
6.4.2	Development Projects Initiative .....	359

6.4.3	Community Engagement .....	361
6.4.4	Reduced Number of Violent Incidents .....	363
6.5	Constraints and Challenges Encountered by the SBPAC in Peacebuilding Endeavors .....	365
6.5.1	Security Concerns and Militant Activities.....	365
6.5.2	Fiscal Constraints in Peacebuilding.....	367
6.5.3	Trust Deficit and Peacebuilding .....	368
6.5.4	Institutional Complexities.....	369
6.5.5	Ethnic and Religious Divisions in Southern Thailand:.....	371
6.5.6	Historical Grievances in Southern Thailand.....	373
6.6	Chapter Summary .....	374
<b>CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>		<b>377</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	377
7.1.1	Assessing the Thai Government’s Actions on the Insurgency in Southern Thailand.....	379
7.2	The SBPAC's Role in General .....	382
7.2.1	The SBPAC’s Role: An Institutional Logic Perspective.....	385
7.3	Scenario Analysis: Absence of SBPAC.....	387
7.4	Recommendations for Enhancing the SBPAC's Effectiveness .....	390
7.5	Recommendations for Further Study .....	393
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>		<b>397</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>		

## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 2.1	Institution's Pillar table ..... 110
Table 3.1	Positions, interests, needs, and fears of main actors in the conflict of Southern ThailandSouthern Thailand ..... 130
Table 5.1	Initiatives Under the Southern Border Provinces Strategic Plan ..... 235

## LIST OF FIGURES

		<b>Page</b>
Figure 1.1	The peace process in Southern Thailand.....	20
Figure 1.2	A peacebuilding pyramid in Southern Thailand adapted from Lederach’s pyramid (1997) .....	30
Figure 2.1	Triangle of Violence .....	60
Figure 2.2	Peacebuilding conceptual framework .....	79
Figure 2.3	Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding. ....	87
Figure 2.4	The progression of conflict by Adam Curle (1971) .....	95
Figure 2.5	Conceptual Framework .....	120
Figure 3.1	Comparison of the number of yearly incidents from 2004-2021 .....	133
Figure 3.2	Comparison of the number of yearly casualties from 2004-2021 .....	134
Figure 3.3	Average household income in Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla 2011-2021 .....	155
Figure 3.4	The Structural Framework for Conflict Management in the Three Southern Border Provinces .....	164
Figure 3.5	Budget Expenditure for Solving Problems in Southern Border Provinces (2004-2022).....	173
Figure 4.1	The Organizational Structure of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center, 2014 – 2018" (SBPAC Report, 2019). ....	193
Figure 4.2	SBPAC Structural Organization according to SBPAC announcement dated 12 November 2018.....	196
Figure 4.3	SBPAC Budget Disbursement for the Past 5 Years (2018-2022).....	210
Figure 4.4	Annual SBPAC Budget Expenditure B.E. 2022 (classified according to the overall plan).....	211
Figure 5.1	Average Budget Allocation for Security and Property Protection (2019-2022) .....	238

Figure 5.2	Financial Analysis of Responses to Southern Border Unrest (2013-2022).....	258
Figure 5.3	Malayu Cloth with the 2022 First Place Winner - Pintu Gerbang.....	278
Figure 5.4	SBPAC budget allocation for multicultural society initiatives (2020-2022).....	282
Figure 5.5	Terima KrueSe .....	289
Figure 5.6	Halal Business Budget Allocation .....	292
Figure 5.7	Current Status of Pattani Central Livestock Market (as of November 2023) .....	295
Figure 6.1	Conceptual Framework .....	318
Figure 6.2	The Place Called Reconciliation .....	320
Figure 6.3	Comparative Peacebuilding Frameworks: SBPAC Structure and Lederach's Model .....	334
Figure 6.4	Budget Expenditure for Solving Problems in Southern Border Provinces (2004-2022).....	343
Figure 6.5	SBPAC Budget Disbursement for the Past 5 Years (2018-2022).....	343
Figure 6.6	Institutional Framework of SBPAC: A Three-Pillar Perspective .....	355
Figure 6.7	Impact and Achievements from SBPAC's Initiatives and Activities .....	358

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCP	Actor-Content-Context-Process
ACM	Authoritarian Conflict Management
AHRC	Asian Human Rights Commission
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BPP PARU	Border Patrol Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit
BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani
COP	Committee of Problem Solving in the Three Southern Border Provinces
CPM43	Civilian-Police-Military Command-43
CSCC	Centre for the Studies of Conflict and Cultural Diversity in Southern Thailand
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FIDH	International Federation for Human Rights
FORUM-ASIA	Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GMIP	Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
JASAD	Jaringan Mangsa dari Undang-Undang Darurat

JPF	Justice for Peace Foundation
NCPO	National Council for Peace and Order
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	National Reconciliation Commission
NSC	National Security Council
OCPSBP	Operational Center for Peace and Order in the Southern Border Provinces
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PULO	Pattani United Liberation Organization
RKK	Runda Kumpulan Kecil
SBPAC	Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center
SBPPC	Southern Border Provinces Peace-building Command
SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOC	Strategic Committee for the Development of the Southern Border Provinces
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
USD	United States Dollar

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

APPENDIX B LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

APPENDIX C REQUEST FOR INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**PEMBINAAN PERDAMAIAN DI SELATAN THAILAND: PERANAN  
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN WILAYAH SEMPADAN SELATAN (SBPAC)**

**ABSTRAK**

Tesis ini, bertajuk "Pembinaan Perdamaian di Selatan Thailand: Peranan Pusat Pentadbiran Wilayah Sempadan Selatan (SBPAC)," mengkaji sumbangan SBPAC terhadap usaha pembinaan keamanan di kawasan konflik di Selatan Thailand. Kajian ini menjawab soalan-soalan penyelidikan berikut: bagaimana kerajaan Thailand menangani pemberontakan, impak utama dan pencapaian SBPAC sejak ia ditubuhkan semula pada tahun 2006, sumbangan SBPAC kepada pembinaan keamanan, serta kekangan dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh SBPAC dalam mencapai matlamatnya. Objektif utama penyelidikan ini adalah untuk meneroka peranan SBPAC dalam pembinaan keamanan, dengan memberi tumpuan kepada dasar, strategi, dan amalan, serta mengenal pasti peluang dan cabaran bagi intervensi yang berkesan dan mampan. Kajian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif, dengan pendekatan teori dan analisis wacana berdasarkan penyelidikan lapangan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pemegang taruh utama, termasuk pemimpin SBPAC, penjawat awam, cendekiawan, wakil masyarakat sivil, dan pemimpin masyarakat tempatan. Sumber data sekunder termasuk penerbitan kerajaan, laporan SBPAC, dan literatur akademik. Penemuan utama menunjukkan bahawa SBPAC telah memberikan sumbangan yang ketara dalam pembangunan sosio-ekonomi, peningkatan pendidikan, dan penambahbaikan infrastruktur di Selatan Thailand, dengan menangani punca-punca asas konflik. Walau bagaimanapun, SBPAC menghadapi cabaran besar seperti ketidakcekapan birokrasi, sumber yang terhad, dan kekangan politik yang menghalang keberkesanannya. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa walaupun SBPAC telah mencapai

kemajuan yang ketara dalam pembinaan keamanan, pendekatan yang lebih bersepadu dan inklusif adalah diperlukan untuk keamanan yang mampan. Cadangan termasuk meningkatkan penglibatan pemegang taruh, menambah peruntukan sumber, dan mengamalkan strategi yang fleksibel dan khusus kepada konteks. Penyelidikan ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang peranan institusi dalam penyelesaian konflik dan pembinaan keamanan, serta menawarkan pandangan yang berharga untuk pembuat dasar, pengamal, dan cendekiawan.

**PEACEBUILDING IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: THE ROLES OF THE  
SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER (SBPAC)**

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis, entitled "Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand: The Roles of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC)," investigates the contributions of the SBPAC to peacebuilding efforts in the conflict-affected region of Southern Thailand. The study addresses the following research questions: how the Thai government has tackled the insurgency, the major impacts and achievements of the SBPAC since its reinstatement in 2006, the SBPAC's contributions to peacebuilding, and the constraints and challenges faced by the SBPAC in achieving its goals. The primary objective of this research is to explore the role of the SBPAC in peacebuilding, focusing on its policies, strategies, and practices, and to identify opportunities and challenges for effective and sustainable interventions. The study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing discourse theory and analysis based on field research. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including SBPAC leaders, civil servants, scholars, civil society representatives, and local community leaders. Secondary data sources include government publications, SBPAC reports, and academic literature. Key findings reveal that the SBPAC has significantly contributed to socio-economic development, educational advancements, and infrastructural improvements in Southern Thailand, addressing root causes of the conflict. However, the SBPAC faces substantial challenges, including bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited resources, and political constraints, which hinder its effectiveness. The study concludes that while the SBPAC has made notable progress in peacebuilding, a more integrated and inclusive approach is necessary for sustainable

peace. Recommendations include enhancing stakeholder engagement, increasing resource allocation, and adopting flexible, context-specific strategies. This research contributes to the broader understanding of institutional roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, offering valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

*The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre of Thailand (SBPAC)* is a local government agency established in 1981. In the beginning, the idea of the SBPAC was to monitor the work of civilian government agencies and to coordinate with security forces in Thailand's troubled Malay Muslim majority provinces in the south (Wheeler, 2010). The agency was dissolved in 2002. According to Suphalak and Don (2004), Prime Minister Thaksin's real aim in dissolving the SBPAC was to break the influence of the multi-layered Democrat Party political machine that dominated the southern provinces, while Marc (2007) argues that the SBPAC was dissolved due to the high level of internal corruption which Prime Minister Thaksin had failed to investigate and stamp out.

Soon after the closure of this agency, a fresh wave of violent incidents followed in 2004-2005. Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont decided to reinstate the SBPAC in 2006 and announced a new policy for the Southern border provinces. The idea of re-establishing the SBPAC was to respond to the conflict in Southern Thailand. General Sarayud stated in the Policy Statement of the Council of Ministers on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, that the unrest was rooted in the historical injustice done to the local people and the only solution to this issue was a conciliation that would relieve tensions in the area. For this reason, the Thai government determined that the SBPAC should be responsible for all aspects surrounding the problem of the conflict in Southern Thailand and should aim to ensure coordination between government agencies. The essential mission of the SBPAC is, therefore, to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the

implementation of the objectives of national security throughout the southern border area, especially in terms of its sociology, politics, general administration, and economic governance. It was also designed to develop cooperation with neighbouring countries. Later, in 2010, the SBPAC was defined as a specific government agency, directly under the Prime Minister, dedicated to development, conflict resolution, security, peace, and harmony. The critical issue of the south had to be solved in accordance with the royal guidelines “*understand, reach out and develop.*”<sup>1</sup>

The conflict in the southern border provinces is ongoing and finding the right solution to resolving it is proving a great challenge, despite the government’s efforts over a long period of time, especially in terms of treating the southern border provinces of Thailand differently from other regions. Recognition that the southern provinces required specific solutions was reflected in the establishment of the Civilian-Police-Military Command-43 (CPM43)<sup>2</sup> and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) (Chambers, Jitpiromsri, & Waitoolkiat, 2019). Nevertheless, the policies have seen several changes in the past ten years due to the changes of government, general political instability and uncertainty, and various partisan conflicts, all of which have influenced the direction of plans, strategies, and government agencies in the area.

The conflict in Southern Thailand requires cooperation from all stakeholders in order to be effective. This does not necessarily require a transformation of government institutions or the investment of greater authority but, rather, a fundamental change in the structure of the plans, strategies and policies that are

---

<sup>1</sup> For more discussion, please see History of SBPAC. Available at <https://www.sbpac.go.th/?p=3927>

<sup>2</sup> CPM-43 and SBPAC were dissolved in 2002. Only the SBPAC has been reinstated - in 2006. For more discussion, see History of SBPAC (Thai language) [https://www.sbpac.go.th/?page\\_id=6568](https://www.sbpac.go.th/?page_id=6568)

implemented. A closer relationship between state and local citizens needs to be built in order to create a peaceful environment in the deep south. The SBPAC is one of the instruments for the Thai government to find a way to solve a conflict and spread peace in Southern Thailand.

This study seeks to address the deficiency of the peacebuilding process by looking at it through the lens of an institutional approach. The SBPAC has been chosen in order to study the role, capacity, context, and behavior of an institution's efforts towards building peace and how successfully, or not, it has connected the state with the people. The study aims to examine the peacebuilding process and the performance of the SBPAC in its role as a government agency building peace in Southern Thailand. An evaluation of the peacebuilding process, especially the strengthening of the relationship between state and citizens, as a means of building sustainable peace in the southern border area will be conducted in this study.

## **1.2 Background**

According to Wyatt (2003), the conflict in Southern Thailand began when the *Patani Darussalam*<sup>3</sup> was ruled by Siam. Patani Darussalam came under Siam rule briefly during the Sukhothai period. There were several rebellions within Pattani<sup>4</sup> against Thai rule. Later, during the colonial period, Siam (known today as Thailand) expanded its control over the region and, in 1909, Great Britain and Siam signed the

---

<sup>3</sup> *Patani Darussalam*, *Patani Kingdom* or *Sultanate of Patani* is the name of a historical region in the northern part of the Malay peninsula.

<sup>4</sup> "Patani" is a term often used to refer to the broader cultural and historical region in southern Thailand with a significant Malay-Muslim population. It encompasses multiple provinces, including Pattani. "Pattani," on the other hand, specifically refers to a province within the Patani region. It is one of the southern Thai provinces marked by historical, ethnic, and religious complexities, contributing to conflicts and peacebuilding challenges.

The *Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909*<sup>5</sup>, determined Thailand's southern border provinces: Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and the four districts of Songkhla which were placed officially under Siam's authority, while the lower half of Patani Darussalam was ruled by the British and later formed the northern part of Malaysia (Klein, 1969).

In 1903, the first uprisings against Siam occurred, when the government increased administrative control over the southern provinces. The reason for this uprising was the hatred of the locals towards the Siam government (Phitsuwan, 1985). In 1932, the Siamese revolution completed Thailand's transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. However, the central government in Bangkok remained content to maintain authority and control over the southern border provinces without making sufficient efforts to integrate with local people in the south. As a result, native Malay Muslims in the area held on to their separate religious, ethnic, and linguistic identities and lost their position in the provincial administration to Thai Buddhists from outside the region (Shurke, 1970).

As stated earlier, the historically rebellious southern region has seen uprisings against the Thai state ever since it became part of Thailand. The oppressive policies triggered a popular uprising in 1948 (Syukri, 2005) and resistance has continued over decades, albeit gradually weakening (Che Man, 1990). Local public hatred towards the Thai Government grew when the government, under Field Marshall Por Phibulsongkram, removed local laws and discriminated against the use of the Pattani Malay language. This coincided with the emergence of Malay nationalism in Southeast Asia and contributed to the emergence of a separatist movement in the deep south of

---

<sup>5</sup> Treaty between the United Kingdom and Siam. July 9 1909 available at <http://images.library.wisc.edu/FRUS/EFacs/1909/reference/frus.frus1909.i0040.pdf>

Thailand. In 1955, under the rule of Field Marshall Por Phibulsongkram, Haji Sulong<sup>6</sup>, a prominent religious leader, disappeared (Thompson & Adloff, 1955). The unexplained disappearance of Haji Sulong became one of the main reasons for the rise in insurgent activities. The uprising continued throughout the 1970s and led to a demand for change in the southern conflict with separatist groups carrying out a series of bombings, arson attacks, and gunfire targeting the Thai Government. This increased opposition to the Thai government in the southern border region coincided with increased cultural tensions and ethnic violence in Malaysia (Roff, 1995).

Later, in 2002, Prime Minister Thaksin stated that *“There’s no separatism, no ideological terrorists, just common bandits”*.<sup>7</sup> After that statement, the situation became more serious and attacks intensified. In January 2004, unidentified gunmen attacked the military army camp in Narathiwat, killing four and making off with a significant cache of weapons. More violence followed in April 2004 when attacks were launched on a dozen checkpoints throughout Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, including a symbolic storming of the Kru-Se Mosque.<sup>8</sup> Many of the supporters were only armed with sticks or knives, and the security agencies killed 105 people. In October of the same year, a demonstration outside the Tak-Bai<sup>9</sup> police station in Narathiwat got out of hand and left seven supporters killed at the site, with another 78 dying from suffocation during transport to an army camp in Pattani (Senate, 2005). The security agencies were seen to be mishandling the original outbreaks of violence

---

<sup>6</sup> Haji Sulong was a notable figure in understanding the Muslim insurgency of southern Thailand. Labelled as a reformist and a separatist, he sought greater recognition of the Jawi community in Patani.

<sup>7</sup> Thai districts impose martial law. BBC News. 3 November 2005. Archived from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4402748.stm> Retrieved 14 September 2021.

<sup>8</sup> More discussion in detail on Krue-Se Mosque incident in Chapter 3

<sup>9</sup> More discussion in detail on Tak-Bai incident in Chapter 3

and contributing to its substantial growth (Senate, 2005). Immediately after those tragedies, martial law was instituted in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, despite requests for cultural and religious freedom and the right to use the *Jawi* language, which were proposed as means of putting an end to the violence.

Later, the situation became more extreme. In 2005, a militant affray led to the death of two marines, beaten to death by a group of Tanyong Limo villagers, Narathiwat. In the insurgence, one person was killed, four were injured, and one died at the hospital. The two marines were quick to inspect the scene and villagers took them to be the gunmen as they had guns in their cars, and they were beaten to death. The government condemned the assassination of the two marines and pledged to arrest the murderers. Several villagers were later arrested. The violence in Tanyong Limo is another reflection of the distrust between state officials and villagers.<sup>10</sup> Locals fear the officials as they might harm villagers while militants hide in the village. Less than a month after the Tanyong Limo incident, a monk and two temple boys were brutally killed at Wat Promprasit in Pattani.<sup>11</sup> This attack further soured relations between Buddhists and Muslims.

Although there had long been unrest in these southern provinces, violence really only began to break out significantly in 2001, which escalated sharply in 2004-2005, and has continued ever since. The two-year period of 2004-2005 was years of sharp violence that destroyed many lives and much property, causing pain for both the authorities and the villagers. Southern residents mourned the death of family members.

---

<sup>10</sup> For more discussion on the incident: Three held for Thai marine deaths. BBC news <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4278704.stm> retrieved 14 September 2021

<sup>11</sup> Two monks killed at Narathiwat temple. Bangkok Post English. 19 January 2019. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1614082/three-monks-killed-at-narathiwat-temple> retrieved 14 September 2021

Officials had to leave their families behind and risk their lives working in the restless south. As a result, the villagers and the authorities were distrustful of one another.

To date, September 2023, the violent insurgency in Thailand's southern border region has seen over 20,000 incidents claiming over 7,000 lives and more than 13,000 cases of serious injury.<sup>12</sup> Most of the deaths occurred in the course of a nonstop stream of attacks using light weapons with a small number of victims in each attack. There have also been some isolated coordinated acts of violence, including bombings and gunfire. According to Col. Patcharawat (2009), some locals in the area support some kind of independence from Thailand, while others do not. While some insurgent groups support armed conflict, most southern residents seem to want negotiation and compromise and the rule of law to return, along with an end to human rights abuses on both sides.

Frequently categorized in western media as just violent enough to cause concern, but peaceful enough to not warrant an extreme response, international coverage of the conflict in Southern Thailand has been muted. In Thailand as well, the conflict remains a perpetual middle-level priority for the government, overshadowed by the more existential threat of anti-government student protests and regional security concerns like the coup in Myanmar, which has led to a flood of refugees into Thailand<sup>13</sup>. Certainly, the violence in Southern Thailand has not ended, but it remains

---

<sup>12</sup> Incidents in the Southern Border Provinces from March 2004 until April 2021. Deep South Watch Database. <https://deepsouthwatch.org/sites/default/files/blogs/attachment/20210430-datasheet-mar-th.pdf> retrieved 14 September 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Ryan Ashley and Moez Hayat, "Making the 'Network Monarchy' Work in Thailand's Deep South," *The Diplomat*, August 12, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/making-the-network-monarchy-work-in-thailands-deep-south/>.

at an acceptable level for all stakeholders, enabling them to allow the conflict to continue and focus on other political imperatives.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

A substantial body of scholarly work exists concerning the conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces. This literature encompasses a wide spectrum of topics, including the historical context and the influence of Islam in the conflict, as well as the societal ramifications resulting from factors such as poverty, violence, and deficient governance. However, the academic focus on the peace process in Southern Thailand remains underdeveloped, particularly in terms of evaluating the role of key institutions such as the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC).

Globally, the concept of a "peace process" is widely understood as a structured and diplomatic sequence of negotiations, dialogues, and accords aimed at resolving conflicts, mitigating violence, and fostering sustainable peace (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). These processes emphasize collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organizations, and civil society actors, to address the underlying causes of conflict and establish conditions for peaceful coexistence (Avruch, 1993). In global contexts such as Colombia, Northern Ireland, Aceh, and Mindanao, peace processes have been tailored to the specific cultural, social, and political dimensions of the conflicts, integrating governance reforms, community engagement, and transitional justice mechanisms. These cases highlight the necessity of adapting peace frameworks to local realities, providing insights relevant to understanding the SBPAC's role in Southern Thailand.

Regionally, Southeast Asia has witnessed several notable peacebuilding efforts, including Aceh in Indonesia and Mindanao in the Philippines. In Aceh, the Helsinki Agreement emphasized autonomy, disarmament, and reintegration, while in Mindanao, the Bangsamoro Organic Law provided a framework for political and cultural self-governance. These cases underscore the significance of inclusive governance, addressing socioeconomic grievances, and empowering local actors. Although this study does not explicitly compare Southern Thailand to these cases, they serve as valuable examples of how peacebuilding processes can address complex issues of identity, governance, and inequality, offering lessons that can inform the SBPAC's approach.

In Southern Thailand, the conflict literature frequently focuses on historical grievances, political marginalization, and socioeconomic disparities. Scholars such as Aphornsuvan (2007) and Storey (2008) argue that the conflict is deeply rooted in the annexation of the Patani Kingdom and the central government's suppression of Malay Muslim identity through political exclusion and cultural assimilation. Additional studies highlight the role of socioeconomic grievances, such as poverty, unequal access to education and employment, and a lack of meaningful representation in governance (Tan-Mullins, 2009). Furthermore, human rights violations and governance failures, including extrajudicial killings and the misuse of security laws, have exacerbated distrust and resentment toward state institutions (Seiff, 2016).

The SBPAC, as a critical institution in this context, has been underexplored in academic literature. Existing studies, such as Wheeler (2010) and Kaewsom (2015), provide insights into the SBPAC's origin as a counterinsurgency mechanism designed to win "hearts and minds" through better governance and socioeconomic development.

However, these studies also reveal several challenges, including its limited authority, lack of autonomy, and difficulties in addressing the specific needs of local communities. The SBPAC's attempts to integrate Islamic education into the national curriculum and promote economic development have often been criticized for their top-down approach, which has failed to effectively engage local communities. Furthermore, concerns about corruption and inefficiency have further undermined the agency's legitimacy (Kaewsom, 2015).

In comparison to global and regional examples such as Colombia, Northern Ireland, Aceh, and Mindanao, where peace processes have been tailored to address specific grievances and local conditions, the SBPAC's approach lacks a comprehensive and localized framework. There is a need for greater alignment between its policies and the sociopolitical realities of Southern Thailand, as well as more robust mechanisms to address local grievances and foster trust. This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on the SBPAC's role in the peace process, critically analyzing its governance framework, initiatives, and interactions with local stakeholders. It seeks to evaluate the SBPAC's effectiveness in fostering trust, reducing grievances, and contributing to sustainable peace in Southern Thailand. Therefore, in this study, the literature review will be divided into three sections as follows:

- 1.3.1 Studies on the Conflict in Southern Thailand
- 1.3.2 Studies on the Potential for Peace in Southern Thailand
- 1.3.3 Studies on the Southern Border Province Administrative Centre (SBPAC)

### 1.3.1 Studies on the Conflict in Southern Thailand

In the article *Rebellion in Southern Thailand: Contending Histories*, Thanet Aphornsuvan (2007) provides a multi-layered theoretical explanation of the root causes of the ongoing political conflict between Malay Muslims in Southern Thailand and the Thai government in Bangkok. Violence reduction in Southern Thailand is a principal goal of the government whose pursuit is peace. Stability is based upon reconciliation and economic development. Aphornsuvan's study shows how difficult it will be for such an exclusive approach to work because:

*the Muslim separatist conflict is sustained by the belief that the continued efforts of Bangkok to consolidate its control over the socioeconomic and cultural affairs of the Muslim community will lead to the erosion of Muslims' cultural and religious way of life and the disappearance of their identity. Hence, the conflict is not socioeconomic but mainly "ethnic, religious and nationalist". (Aphornsuvan, T. 2007, p.x)*

Ian Storey (2008) argues, in the article *Southern Discomfort: Separatist Conflict in the Kingdom of Thailand*, that the political violence in Southern Thailand is rooted in the annexation of the Patani Kingdom by Siam. Storey's study explores the failure of the Thai state since then to force Malay Muslims to cast off their ethnic identity and become Thai Muslims. The conflict is essentially about the failure of nation-building. Separatist sentiment, present from the very beginning, has been fuelled since 2000 by the Thai government's lack of investment in the south, its maladministration, poor governance, and the political marginalization of its people. Storey also argues that Prime Minister Thaksin (2001-2006) stoked these latent public tensions by disassembling the administrative structure in the south and allowing the police free reign to settle problems. Thai government responses under Thaksin have been deeply damaging and have served only to separate Malay Muslims further and inflame separatist sentiment. Prime Minister Surayud (2006-2008) initially adopted a

more conciliatory approach, recognizing the need to address past injustices, improve governance, and socio-economic situations. However, he then became distracted and preoccupied with national politics.

Storey (2008) argues that not all the blame should be placed on the Thai government. He also explores the peace agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, and the agreement between the Philippines government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. These cases serve as potential frameworks for considering autonomy as a viable solution in Southern Thailand. Storey argues in his 2008 study that many scholars of the south privately admit that some form of political autonomy or decentralization will be necessary to appease the separatist sentiment in the southern border provinces, but that few scholars are prepared to promote autonomy in public, given the Thai elite's opposition to any kind of meaningful decentralization.<sup>14</sup> Storey believes that until the issue of provincial autonomy for the entire kingdom is addressed, the political violence in the south will continue.

An alternative view is proposed by May Tan-Mullins (2009) who argues, in his article *Armed Conflict and Resolutions in Southern Thailand*, that the insurgency in Southern Thailand has been mainly dominated by narratives of political science and terrorism. Tan-Mullins argues that behavioral distinctions between the south and the rest of Thailand are displayed in a kind of southern regionalism, a feeling of dislike for the central Thai government and its representatives, alongside a pride in the local dialect, culture, and history further fuelled by national policies. Tan-Mullins identifies

---

<sup>14</sup> For more discussion on this, see Jon Ungphakorn, "Only Autonomy Can Resolve Southern Conflict", Bangkok Post, November 7, 2007.

the socioeconomic grievances and exclusions that have occurred in the area. Governmental developmental projects have tended to benefit Thai (Buddhist) and Chinese residents over the Malays, widening the economic gap and further alienating the Malay community (International Crisis Group 2005). As a result, the Malay Muslims in the south feel disregarded in many contexts, in terms of equality of economic and educational opportunities and employment in the government sector, especially in the southernmost provinces, which are among the poorest in Thailand. These grievances are peppered with larger questions of identity, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Some argue that the suppression of such expression laid the ground for violent rebellion (McCargo 2007). In many instances, the Malays were concerned about the injustices and human rights abuses by the central authority, as illustrated by the Kru Se and Tak Bai incidents, in which nearly 200 Muslims died. No officials have been prosecuted for their actions in these incidents (International Crisis Group, 2008).

Duncan McCargo (2007) is another scholar who, in *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, has examined the root cause of the conflict and presents a theoretical perspective that could complement the government's approach. McCargo proposes the interesting possibility of the monarchy's involvement in the southern conflict and that the reasons for the violence lie in understanding Thailand's and the southern region's political and social context. According to McCargo, Thaksin aimed to move network monarchy governance<sup>15</sup> into a more centralized form of political control headed by the Prime Minister himself. Significantly, the political management of the south since the early 1980s has been centered on a governance network. The

---

<sup>15</sup> The concept of "network monarchy governance" developed by Duncan McCargo defines the Thai monarchy's influence within a web of connections involving the military, bureaucracy, business, and political sectors. This strategy emphasizes informal relationships and the monarchy's role beyond its constitutional powers, thereby influencing the dynamics of Thai governance.

violence in the south is a highly sensitive and complex aspect of the country, its ethnic and religious mix, the profitable trade in smuggled goods, and the rooted interests of the military. Therefore, this conflict can be viewed as the main battlefield in Thaksin's effort to wrest control of Thailand. Following the overthrow of Thaksin by a royalist coup in 2006, it was expected by numerous professional observers, including many academics, that the situation in the south would improve. The royalist regime installed after the coup made much of this expectation, with the newly appointed Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont making a highly publicized apology to the local Muslim community for the previous government's mishandling of the conflict. In fact, the conflict strengthened following the coup, with the number of violent incidents, deaths, and injuries increasing significantly. McCargo (2009) also elaborates that the state has mismanaged the situation in the south, explaining the historical, cultural, and political reasons for policy mismanagement and assessing how the military remained oblivious to the sensitivities of locals in the provinces largely because of the inefficiencies of the National Reconciliation Council, despite its budget. McCargo (2007, 2009) has suggested that the fractured nation cannot simply be repaired through reconciliation. The government structures should be reorganized to allow better local participation, as well as the formation of a ministry dedicated to the affairs of the southern provinces.

Parinya Nualpian (2016) supports the views of McCargo (2009) about state mismanagement. In *Asymmetry of power relations between Thai government and Malay Muslims and its impacts on the conflict in Southern Thailand, 2004-2013*, Nualpian analyses the state's mismanagement and reveals the extreme asymmetry of power relations in the Thai government, and the weakness and deprivation of Malay Muslims that has contributed to the intensity of the conflict in the region. Nualpian states that the insurgency is a result of the Malay Muslims' militant reaction in

resistance to what they considered to be state violence against the very existence of their people. Finally, Nualpian argues that the central government's effort to manage the conflict was ineffective.

On the other hand, Anders Engvall and Magnus Andersson (2014), examining the policies put in place by the Thai state for conflict resolution, maintain that the government has pursued an inclusive policy towards religious minorities. However, policies regarding language are extremely conservative. In Thailand, the Thai language is the only accepted language used to communicate with government officials and this leaves the southern Malay-speaking population feeling largely separate. Economic disadvantage is another issue that adds to the sense of exclusion, as this region is the poorest in the country and less developed than even the Thai Buddhist provinces in the north. The central government in Bangkok has been largely ineffective in handling the violence in the south.

Seiff (2016), in the article *We Have No Freedom: Losing Hearts and Minds in Thailand's Deep South*, maintains that one of the biggest challenges in south Thailand lies in the statistics for victims of torture, ill-treatment, and extrajudicial killings committed by security forces under the enforcement of security laws between 2007 to 2018, which show that the enforcement of security laws is the main cause of human rights violations in Southern Thailand. As a result, more than 500 local people have been the victims of human rights violations committed by security forces under the security laws. The enforcement of security laws such as Martial Law 1914, the Emergency Decree 2005, and the Internal Security Act of 2008 are believed to be the main causes of human rights violations of civilians in Southern Thailand.

According to Seiff (2016), in the period 2007 to 2018, no one from the security forces has been punished for committing torture or carrying out judicial killing under criminal law. It is therefore not surprising that Malay Muslims have a sense of distrust in the judicial system, and this has led some to act adversely. Furthermore, relatives of the victims have lost faith in the security forces after seeing their allegations being ignored (Seiff, 2016).

### **1.3.2 Studies on the potential for peace in Southern Thailand**

A review of the literature about the conflict in south Thailand has found many studies that explore the solution to the conflict including the potential for peace. One of these articles is called *An Analysis of the Role of Civil Society in Building Peace in Ethno-religious Conflict: A Case Study of the Three Southernmost Provinces of Thailand*. In this article, Kayanee Boonputh (2015) explores the framework of the peace process in Thailand and demonstrates that the Thai state has put great effort into increasing the number of military personnel and police in the conflict area to stop the violence as soon as it breaks out. However, in her work she argues that while this could be considered a peacekeeping strategy, the positioning of security forces cannot, in itself, prevent the outbreak violence in these provinces and has only achieved a negative peace.

Another strategy used in the region has been a peacemaking strategy that includes political activities. An official peace dialogue between the Thai state and an insurgent group held early in 2013 was a good start for the peacemaking strategy. However, the 2014 coup d'état led by the Royal Thai Army affected the peace dialogue. Under the new regime, a different approach to the peace talks was. Key persons in the peace talks were replaced by a new designation from Internal Security

Operations Command (ISOC). While the civil society sector has helped contribute to peacemaking by observing and monitoring, its role was very limited and negative attitudes among local people still remain in the community. Boonpuh (2015) suggests that peacekeeping and peacemaking strategies could be used together with peacebuilding, which would help to keep the balance of socioeconomic structures, prevent violence, and create a sustainable, positive peace. In Thailand's case, Boonpuh (2015) suggests that civil society can be the main actor in peacebuilding.

Another study, *The role of civil society in peacebuilding in Southern Thailand* by Kayanee Boonpunth and Mark G. Rolls (2016), explicitly explored the role of civil society and found that the civil society sector plays various useful roles in attempting to create peace in the south. Evidence shows that relationships between people involved in the conflict are improving and people from different cultures nowadays have more interaction when compared to the past decade. Civil society networks, government authorities, and local people have cooperated more on conflict resolution matters. More alternatives for creating peace in this region have been initiated, and forbidden issues in the past, like autonomy, can today be widely discussed. This is precisely because civil society groups have created a good atmosphere for informal negotiations. However, civil society's role currently still remains limited as civil society actors cannot have an influence on, or lead to a change in, the Thai government's policies. Together with other actors, the civil society sector can be a part of attempts to reduce the violence and play an even more useful role in building lasting, positive peace in southernmost Thailand when the violence eventually stops.

Chambers, Jitpiromsri and Waitoolkiat (2018) explore the potential of peace in Southern Thailand in *Special Issue: Quagmire of Violence in Thailand's Southern Borderlands*. This study argues that any future peace in Southern Thailand will depend

upon the level of seriousness of both insurgents and the Thai government. The government will have to offer amnesties. Economic encouragements such as more employment opportunities and increased development projects for the South will have to be implemented. At the same time, the Thai military must moderate its policies in south Thailand and allow elected politicians in the region to influence public policy. The same article suggests that Malay Muslims need to be encouraged to be more involved in politics at the national level of Thai politics to increase connections between Muslims and Buddhists in Thai politics. Meanwhile, political parties must increase the quotas for Malay Muslim candidates to be included in the upper rungs of political party lists during elections. Importantly, the mindset of Thai government policy makers needs to change from looking for a military solution to finding a peaceful solution. The judicial system in Southern Thailand must be restored to consider the realities of Malay Muslims living in a Thai Buddhist country. Education in the region must allow for the free expression of education in Islamic schools. Implementation of these reforms must be organized and applied over a long period to increase levels of trust among the locals. The paper argues that such reforms, especially increased autonomy in the region, will enhance legal rights and educational freedom for Malay Muslims, and these will be the beginning and the key to securing peace in Southern Thailand.

Similarly, Jitpiromsri and Kaewnuy (2018), in *Conflict Transformation and Public Opinion in Thailand's Deep South During the Period from 2015 to 2017*, identify positive aspects of a peace process in Southern Thailand despite many disruptions and challenges that the government has encountered. The findings of the study reveal the concepts of conflict transformation in terms of comprehensive, complex, and nonlinear processes. Jitpiromsri and Kaewnuy also explore the people's

attitudes to the situation, including peace processes, and identify dynamic social forces that could be powerful drivers of peaceful resolution. Although it is relevant to the conflict transformation approach, continued violence has also affected attitudes and public discourse. The changes in confidence could signify either the success or failure of peacebuilding in the region. The expectations of the peace processes must be regularly evaluated to achieve sustainable peace in the long term. Interestingly, the decreasing approval rating of the junta-led government observed in the Peace Survey in 2016 has been associated with the result of the constitutional referendum, in which the Muslim majority in the restive deep south voted to reject Thailand's twentieth draft constitution.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, peace surveys of people in Southern Thailand could reflect prevalent popular attitudes towards the legitimacy of both Southern Thailand's policy and the administration in the region.

Jitpiromsri (2019), writing independently, has described the character of the peace process as it has unfolded in Southern Thailand.<sup>17</sup> The peacebuilding process consists of a space in which several elements are pushing each other to be able to keep moving. The process emphasizes the importance of 'interaction' and of discourse to bring about the transformation of conflict through ideas and thoughts, at the same time as creating a space called *common ground* for various social forces, both inside and outside the southern border provinces. This is a well-established process for peacebuilding.

---

<sup>16</sup> Muslim majority Deep South rejects junta's legitimacy in referendum. Prachatai English. 9 Aug 2016. Achieved from <https://prachatai.com/english/node/6457> retrieved 14 September 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Srisompob Jitpiromsri (2019). กระบวนการสันติภาพปาตานีในบริบทอาเซียน PPP : Pa(t)tani Peace Process in ASEAN Context. Can be retrieve at [http://k4ds.psu.ac.th/k4ds\\_search/pdf/books/1212.pdf](http://k4ds.psu.ac.th/k4ds_search/pdf/books/1212.pdf)

The image shown in Figure 1.1 below illustrates the concept and elements that drive it. The three circles on the left, called producing objects, represent the knowledge network, the media network sector, and a group of civil society networks. They might be drifting in different directions, but these three bands are attached to each other. Then there is a group of discourse processes where there are 3 large elements that should lead to the solution: a special form of local administration (autonomy process), issues of the peace talk process, and issues of justice. The shows the peace process in Southern Thailand (Jitpiomsri, 2019).

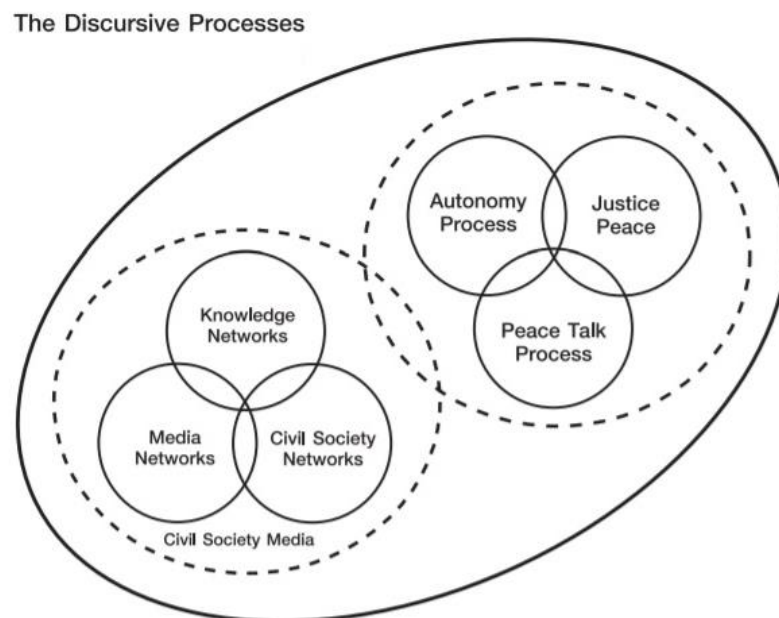


Figure 1.1 A peace process in Southern Thailand<sup>18</sup>

Jitpiomsri (2019) established the discursive peace process by incorporating all parties and portraying how they have interacted, believing that this path will lead to resolving the dispute if all parties cooperate well. While, Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat (2020) takes a different view and concludes, in a study called

<sup>18</sup> Srisompob Jitpiomsri (2019). กระบวนการสันติภาพปาตานีในบริบทอาเซียน PPP : Pa(t)tani Peace Process in ASEAN Context. Can be retrieve at [http://k4ds.psu.ac.th/k4ds\\_search/pdf/books/1212.pdf](http://k4ds.psu.ac.th/k4ds_search/pdf/books/1212.pdf)

*Dialogue without negotiation: Illiberal peacebuilding in Southern Thailand, Conflict, Security & Development*, that the Thai state has employed an illiberal peacebuilding approach, influenced by the counterinsurgency principle, in its management of the armed insurgency in Southern Thailand. The peace process has not succeeded in functioning as a meaningful platform for negotiating a political settlement. Chalermripinyorat believes that the case of Southern Thailand can be categorized as a medium version of illiberal peacebuilding according to the typology set forth. Central government has focused on the control of violence without meaningfully seeking a negotiated settlement. The Thai counterinsurgency principle emphasizes a two-pronged approach of military operations and development. A formalized peace process is not in the government handbook of conflict management, but when one was launched by their political opponents, the military tried to adopt this new tool to serve its illiberal agenda by identifying separatist leaders, co-opting them, and containing the violence. Rungrawee (2020) suggests that, in order to promote peace in Southern Thailand, the legal domain of the Authoritarian Conflict Management (ACM) model<sup>19</sup> will enrich the explanatory power to support peace. Amnesty could be part of a larger transitional justice implemented after a peace agreement is reached without argument. By contrast, authoritarian actors may employ an amnesty without any peace agreement for the purpose of co-option rather than genuine reconciliation.

There are also studies that have explored Thailand's attempts to implement a peace process in comparison with other countries. Panjor and Heemmina (2019) compare the case of Southern Thailand with Mindanao and Colombia in *A peace*

---

<sup>19</sup> 'Authoritarian Conflict Management' (ACM), developed by Lewis et al., involves military suppression and authoritarian practices to counter organized armed rebellion and mass violence. This approach, illustrated by case studies in Russia, Sri Lanka, China, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Turkey, includes a rejection of negotiations, international mediation, and addressing conflict root causes. ACM operates in three domains: discursive, spatial, and economic.

*process perspective in: Peace Process and Transitional Justice: The Comparative Study of Mindanao, Colombia, and Thailand's Deep South.* The study concludes that addressing transitional justice in violent conflicts is not possible without recognition among all stakeholders that they must support positive conditions for transforming conflict into peace. Peace processes should not just be understood in the broad sense of a political resolution leading to linear transition from points A to B, but rather as a sustainable peace process involving the establishment of a fundamental dialogue about what kinds of society people from different communities are willing to work toward. Eventually, transitional justice through transformative mechanisms should be the framework to help us deal with past violence based on restorative approaches. Panjor and Heemmina (2019) explain that, in Southern Thailand, the parties in the ongoing conflict appear to lack the political will to implement a transitional justice mechanism in the peace process. Moreover, there is still reluctance among both the state and insurgents in terms of holistic understanding and integration regarding transitional justice.

Similarly, Jitpiromsri, Haque and Chambers (2021) compare the cases of Southern Thailand and Burma in terms of conflict resolution in *Peacebuilding in Thailand's Deep South and in Myanmar/Burma: the dynamic roles of Muslim minorities in conflict societies* and conclude that the Thai state uses violent coercion and persuasion even though it tends to lean more toward suppression, with the peace process itself intentionally and essentially combining into a grand schematic, hierarchical power of military domination. Peace is a minor part of integrated programs of conflict management called the rectification of problems. It is more likely that peacebuilding in south Thailand involves state-building and illiberal peace, while Burma uses forceful suppression and exclusion to solve the Rohingya problem. The

Burmese military suppressions sent hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fleeing to other places. The situation of Rohingya has become a tragedy of the highest proportions. According to Jitpiromsri, Haque and Chambers (2021), both the cases of Thailand and Burma are considered variants of illiberal peace. Thailand has been more flexible, while Burma is much higher on the scale of state totalitarianism. It is more likely that Thailand could utilize a peace formation process rather than a particular authority using security measures. This could be accomplished if the social space opens up under a more democratic regime than that which currently governs Thailand. In contrast, the genocidal mode of peace in Burma's treatment of the Rohingya makes the Rohingya case gloomy and hopeless. The intention of the Burmese government seems not to have been to find a positive peace for Rohingya, but rather to make them vanish. For Thailand, combining persuasion and force has represented a hybrid variant of illiberal peacebuilding. Burma is more authoritarian and represents illiberal peace building's dark alternative.

The fact that the Thai state and the separatist movements have contrasting views on international involvement shows the importance of international actors in making a difference to this conflict. Thai authorities, particularly the Foreign Ministry and the military, have tried at all costs to prevent the conflict from being internationalized. The Thai state has maintained a tight physical and broad control, at the same time as using an illiberal approach to containing the conflict by keeping this issue as an internal affair. Therefore, Rungrawee (2020) believes that the path to peace in Southern Thailand should be considered within the larger political landscape of Thailand. In the long run, the prospects for more liberal peacebuilding depend significantly upon political change at the national level.

### 1.3.3 Studies on Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC)

Only a few studies focus specifically on the SBPAC, one example being a paper by Matt Wheeler (2010) called *People's Patron or Patronizing the People?: The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre in Perspective*. This study explains that the SBPAC emerged from the Thai government's adaptation and application in the 1970s and 1980s of the "hearts and minds" counterinsurgency theories developed in the 1960s. In its classical formulation, counterinsurgency represents the government's efforts to gain legitimacy in the form of harmonizing the population. However, legitimacy demands a government meet the needs of the people conceived in terms of their security and material welfare. These must be harmonized by the overarching imperative of unity of effort.

The SBPAC represents the Thai government's attempt to fulfil the imperatives of efficient administration and unity of effort across civilian and security agencies. Wheeler (2010) outlined the role of good governance in counterinsurgency — insurgency-threatened governments should become law abiding, administratively strong, and responsive. Government should address distributional, racial, and communal problems and remove corrupt or abusive officials. Moreover, a strong administration must be established, and official staff should be well-trained. The aim is to deny the insurgents, provide services more efficiently, overcome the isolation of narrow communities, and speed the diffusion of national authority and values. Yet the hearts and minds prescription of the SBPAC is based on the questionable assumption that the government and population will be sharing the same goals, and that these will be advanced by greater government capabilities at the grassroots level. It is also consistent with McCargo's (2009) argument that a virtuous administration does not represent a solution to the fundamental problem of legitimacy. While