

Muhammadiyah and Peacebuilding in Southern Thailand: A Civil Society Approach

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Abstract

The research aims at understanding the rationale behind Muhammadiyah's involvement in peacebuilding activities in Southern Thailand, as well as its contribution and the outcomes of its activities. The case study approach is applied in this work to gain better results in achieving the research objectives. The sources of this paper are the interviews of official Muhammadiyah delegates in peacebuilding activities in the region, official documents and policies, public use files, organizational records, and previous research and literature. The data is then analysed from the perspective of Tocqueville's theory of civil society and assessed by the OECD's five criteria of peacebuilding, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The study indicates that the reasons behind Muhammadiyah's involvement are the ideological factor, the reputation of Din Syamsuddin as a global interfaith leader, and a sense of solidarity towards fellow Muslims. Furthermore, the most significant contribution of Muhammadiyah in Southern Thailand is the promotion of moderation through education. Muhammadiyah had granted scholarships to more than a thousand Muslim youths affected by the conflict in the region. The paper concludes that the role of Muhammadiyah in the area is significant and impactful.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami alasan di balik keterlibatan Muhammadiyah dalam kegiatan pembangunan perdamaian di Thailand Selatan, serta kontribusi dan hasil dari kegiatannya. Pendekatan studi kasus diterapkan dalam karya ini untuk mendapatkan hasil yang lebih baik dalam mencapai tujuan penelitian. Sumber makalah ini adalah wawancara dengan delegasi resmi Muhammadiyah dalam kegiatan pembangunan perdamaian di kawasan tersebut, dokumen dan kebijakan resmi, arsip publik, catatan organisasi, serta penelitian dan literatur sebelumnya. Data kemudian dianalisis dari perspektif teori masyarakat sipil Tocqueville dan dinilai berdasarkan lima kriteria pembangunan perdamaian OECD, yaitu relevansi, efektivitas, efisiensi, dampak, dan keberlanjutan. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa alasan di balik keterlibatan Muhammadiyah adalah faktor ideologis, reputasi Din Syamsuddin sebagai pemimpin antaragama global, dan rasa solidaritas terhadap sesama Muslim. Lebih lanjut, kontribusi paling signifikan dari Muhammadiyah di Thailand Selatan adalah promosi moderasi melalui pendidikan. Muhammadiyah telah memberikan beasiswa kepada lebih dari seribu pemuda Muslim yang terdampak konflik di wilayah tersebut. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa peran Muhammadiyah di wilayah tersebut sangat signifikan dan berdampak.

Keywords

Civil Society, Muhammadiyah, Non-State Actor, Peacebuilding, Southern Thailand

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Introduction

The annexation of the Pattani Sultanate by Thailand in 1909 had multidimensional impacts. Culturally, it led to the marginalization of the Malay-Muslim identity in Southern Thailand due to nationalization policies and the imposition of the Thai language as the official

language. These policies also limited access to education and employment opportunities for the Malay community, particularly those residing in Southern Thailand (Yong, 2023). Socioeconomic disparities emerged as a result of inadequate infrastructure and limited job opportunities in the region. Politically, the annexation resulted in the marginalization of Malay-Muslims due to their low representation in the central government. This situation led to widespread dissatisfaction and, more significantly, gave rise to separatist movements among Malay-Muslim groups demanding autonomy and independence. These movements peaked between the 1950s and 1980s, and their influence persists to this day (Saqib et al., 2021).

In this context, it is crucial to analyze the role of both the state and civil society in promoting and maintaining peace in Southern Thailand. Although the current conflict situation has improved compared to previous decades, cultural tensions persist and have the potential to escalate into conflicts that could negatively impact social life in Thailand (Rogozhina, 2021). Therefore, peacebuilding efforts must continue to be pursued, not only by the state but also by civil society organizations. Ultimately, civil society plays a significant role in assisting governments in addressing societal challenges, including conflict resolution and the establishment of a peaceful and harmonious society. In this regard, Barnes (2006) believes that the involvement of non-state actors and CSOs is exceptionally crucial to tackle the deep-rooted conflicts, as he highlights that the role of civil society actors comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local communities and the grassroots in peacebuilding process is far more acceptable, sustainable and durable. Moreover, Lederach (1997) also asserts that the engagement of local communities and well-organized CSOs is the best channel to establish a long-term peaceful and harmonious society.

Muhammadiyah, as one of the biggest CSOs in Southeast Asia, also has public awareness of the need to assist peacebuilding efforts in the region. Muhammadiyah is an Islamic-based CSO in Indonesia founded by Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 with the spirit of *amar makruf nahi munkar* (inviting goodness and preventing evil). In humanitarian issues, Muhammadiyah's movement is based on the theology of *Al-Ma'un*, namely the theological paradigm combining individual piety and social piety (Nashir, 2015). The manifestation of social piety is represented by caring for socially and economically disadvantaged people. Due to its principles, Muhammadiyah has more than 10,000 educational institutions, 457 health centres, and 454 social care units (Malik, 2020). In the international context, Muhammadiyah is known as an active campaigner of *Wasatiyyat Islam*, which is based on the principles of moderation (*tawasuth*), fairness (*'adalah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and balance (*tawazun*). The concept aims to promote peace and moderatism as the genuine values of Islam derived from the Qur'an and Hadith (Baidhawiy, 2015).

Due to its ideological forms, values, and principles, Muhammadiyah has been actively involved in many humanitarian activities, whether in the national or the global contexts, through the umbrella of the Muhammadiyah Aid. At the domestic level, Muhammadiyah Aid has contributed to several humanitarian crises, including in Aceh and Nias, Yogyakarta, Palu, and Lombok Island. At the global level, Muhammadiyah Aid has participated in humanitarian activities in the Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, and Palestine (Latief & Nashir, 2020). The involvement in Pattani (one of the southern provinces of Thailand) and Mindanao (or Southern Philippines) are the two notable ones, as in both areas, Muhammadiyah has long-term peacebuilding strategies, one of which is by providing scholarships for Bangsamoro (Mindanao) and Pattani people to study in Muhammadiyah universities in Indonesia (Republika, 2012; Suara Muhammadiyah, 2019). The involvement of Muhammadiyah in Southern Thailand, according to Baidhawiy (2015), is part of its global engagement to promote moderation and peace.

Previously, there are some important studies on the role of civil society and peacebuilding process in Southeast Asia, such as 'Forging Peace in Southeast Asia: Insurgencies, Peace Processes, and Reconciliation' written by Abuza (2016), 'Social Activism in Southeast Asia'

edited by Ford (2013), 'Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way' written by Anthony (2005), 'Islam and Civil Society in Southeast Asia' edited by Bajunid and Nakamura (2001), and 'Islam and Peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific' edited by Osman (2016). Among those books, only the last two contain the role of Muhammadiyah as a civil society organization in Southeast Asia, but unfortunately, without describing its peacebuilding role in Thailand.

In the first-mentioned book, Abuza (2016) reveals and compares the struggles of Indonesia, Philippine, and Thailand in dealing with insurgent groups, namely the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) in Aceh, Indonesia; the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao, the Philippines; and the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), and other Malay militant groups in Southern Thailand. The second book edited by Ford (2013) comprises twelve writings by different contributors on various social activism in seven Southeast Asian countries, those are Indonesia, Philippine, Myanmar, Thailand, East Timor, Cambodia, and Singapore. Overall, the writings conclude that social activism in Southeast Asian countries is very vibrant and innumerable encompassing single-handed cyber-militants, local community groups, as well as national and global NGOs. In the third book, Anthony (2005) examines how ASEAN as a regional organization strategizes their way of dealing with security issues. He provides the historical background of the ASEAN mechanism of conflict management along with its implementation and possible new strategies for the future.

Meanwhile, in the next book, Suaedy (2012) explores challenges and difficulties experienced by Muslim minorities in Southern Philippines and Southern Thailand along with their struggles to defend their civil rights and their political negotiations through separatist movements. Suaedy also describes how civil society in the two countries engages in the peacebuilding process. However, he only addresses the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)'s role in the book without mentioning Muhammadiyah's contribution. Subsequently, in the book edited by Bajunid and Nakamura (2001), twelve Asian activists and scholars discuss the compatibility of Islamic values with civil society and democracy based on the experiences of countries in the Southeast Asia region. The discussion comprises the experiences of two majority Muslim countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia; three minority Muslim countries, specifically Thailand, Philippines, and Singapore; and discourse on modern civil society based on Islamic values. Lastly, the book edited by Osman (2016) compiles the writings of scholars on the role of Islamic institutions in Southeast Asia in propagating inter-communal peace, the challenges of cosmopolitan Muslims in the region, and the issues surrounding the relations between religion, state, and society.

Regarding the specific research on the peacebuilding role of Muhammadiyah in Thailand, it was revealed and discussed in two journal articles, although very limited. In the article 'Local Dynamics and Global Engagements of the Islamic Modernist Movement in Contemporary Indonesia: The Case of Muhammadiyah (2000-2020)', Latief and Nashir (2020) describes briefly on the Muhammadiyah involvement in the peacebuilding efforts in Philippines, Thailand, Nepal, and Bangladesh as part of its international exposure on humanity. In their works, Latief and Nashir highlight that the awareness of Muhammadiyah activists to contextualize their ideological stands to the international arena has increased. The second article is 'The Muhammadiyah's Promotion of Moderation' written by Baidhawiy (2015) that explains Muhammadiyah engagements in Southern Philippines and Southern Thailand as part of its promotion of moderate values. According to Baidhawiy, Muhammadiyah propagates Islamic moderatism through three areas: political, economic, and cultural domains.

However, the two above articles do not present the specific role of Muhammadiyah's involvement in the peacebuilding process in Southern Thailand. The articles only describe the overall trends of the Muhammadiyah movement in the local and global contexts without analysing the rationales, practical contributions, and outcomes of Muhammadiyah's involvement in Southern Thailand. Nevertheless, there are two papers in the Indonesian language discussing

the specific topic, namely 'Peran Muhammadiyah dalam Mengatasi Konflik di Thailand Selatan' (The Role of Muhammadiyah in Conflict Resolution in Southern Thailand) written by Muhammad Zaki Mubarak (2019) and 'Upaya Muhammadiyah dalam *Peacebuilding* Melalui Pendidikan di Thailand Selatan' (Muhammadiyah's Efforts in Peacebuilding Through Education in Southern Thailand). The works, however, are undergraduate student papers with limited theoretical analysis. Therefore, more detailed and focused work is needed regarding the role of Muhammadiyah in the peacebuilding process in Southern Thailand.

Theoretical Framework

Civil society is both a historical and contemporary concept. On the one hand, according to Edwards (2011), the notion of civil society has been recognized since classical Greece, meaning that civil society is a historical concept. On the other hand, after the rise and fall, civil society became more prominent in the twenty-first century, and since then, it has gained the centre of attention among intellectuals, activists, and even political leaders, meaning that civil society is also a contemporary concept. Among other modern theorists, John Locke is considered the first to conceptualize the idea of civil society. According to Jensen (2011), in explaining the origin of the civil society concept, it is impossible to neglect the Lockean concept. By citing John Dunn, Jensen asserts that compared to other civil society theorists, the Lockean concept of civil society is more influential and superior. Regarding the notion, Locke highlights the importance of what he calls 'the natural liberty of man.' Specifically, Locke writes, "The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule" (Locke, 1967, p. 283). This principle also correlates to the necessity of arbitrary power and sole authority that separates from the state.

Subsequently, Charles Montesquieu also developed the idea of the separation of powers between political society and civil society. Political society focuses on the vertical relationship between citizens and the authority, while civil society covers the horizontal interaction among citizens (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). However, unlike Locke, who sharply distinguishes the two spheres, Montesquieu attempts to balance the connection between government and society through the concept of intermediary powers (*corps intermédiaire*) (Neumann, 1949). Meanwhile, Alexander de Tocqueville describes civil society as a guardian of individual rights to protect from authoritarianism and the majority's tyranny. To enhance civil society's capacity, Tocqueville underlines the essence of voluntary activities by the people locally, regionally, and nationally, as it will eventually result in the proliferation of civic virtues (Kaplan, 2005). Other important civil society theorists are Antonio Gramsci and Jürgen Habermas. Gramsci, with a Marxist perspective, perceives civil society as a counter-hegemony actor to market and the state (Gramsci, 1996), while Habermas identifies civil society as a mediator for marginalized communities to articulate their interests (Regilme, 2018).

In terms of conflict management and peacebuilding, civil society plays a vital role, one of which is rebuilding social capital in the aftermath of conflicts and violence, given the fact that conflicts commonly destroy several aspects of society, such as social interaction and mutual trust among citizens (Stiefel, 2001). In this regard, Johan Galtung encourages different approaches to peace, which are peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding (Galtung, 1976). Before the conflict, peacekeeping emphasises improving security to avoid or diminish conflict and violence, while during the conflict, it focuses on controlling the situation through sanction and prohibition. Peacemaking efforts are mostly implemented during the conflict by resolution methods, including dialogue, mediation, and diplomacy. Meanwhile, peacebuilding is the process of preventing conflict and maintaining peace, which could be applied before and after conflict. Before a conflict, peacebuilding focuses on developing harmonious community relations through anti-discrimination manners and educating people on the importance of tolerance, dialogue,

cooperation, and enhancing peaceful situations. After a conflict, peacebuilding underlines the necessity of rebuilding mutual understanding beyond social bonds (Galtung, 1976).

To connect the concept of civil society and peacebuilding, it is important to explain the four different schools of thought in peacebuilding theories and afterward analyse the role of civil society in peacebuilding practice. The four schools of thought are the conflict management school, the conflict resolution school, the complementary school, and the conflict transformation school (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009). The method of conflict management school is to overcome conflicts and violence through diverse diplomatic endeavours. The approach of the conflict resolution school is to resolve the fundamental roots of conflict and reconstruct damaged relations between the rivalries. The complementary school concentrates on the interrelation of reciprocity of dispute management and resolution parties. The fourth school is the conflict transformation school, which focuses on transforming deep-rooted tensions and conflicts into nonviolent ones based on a distinctive interpretation of peacebuilding. Among the four schools, the conflict management approach is more suitable to analyse the role of Muhammadiyah in Southern Thailand because they use the track two diplomacy in the peacebuilding process.

Methods

Case study research will be applied in this work to gain better results in answering the research questions. The goal of this method is “to design good case studies and to collect, present, and analyse data fairly” (Yin, 1984, p. 1). In the case study method, Yin describes six sources of evidence, namely documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts. Among the sources, I will use three of them: documentation, archival records, and interviews. The documentation includes Muhammadiyah's official documents and policies on the topic, as well as scholars' and researchers' writing on Muhammadiyah in peacebuilding and other authoritative sources. The archival records comprise public use files and organizational records. The public-use files will be beneficial to gather the data and information on the improvement of peace and conflict in Southern Thailand, while the organizational records will be useful to affirm the practical contribution of Muhammadiyah.

Furthermore, the interviews will be conducted with some selected participants; those are the national leaders of Muhammadiyah, the delegates, negotiators, and or official units in Muhammadiyah who are responsible for the peacebuilding mission. Specifically, I will interview three Muhammadiyah leaders and delegates. First, the top leader of Muhammadiyah Central Board in the period 2010-2015 and 2015-2020, who is especially responsible for international relations and cooperation, namely Sudibyo Markus. The second and third are two peacebuilding delegates of Muhammadiyah in Southern Thailand, Wachid Ridwan and Alpha Amirrachman. I selected the three interviewees because they are the policymakers in Muhammadiyah regarding the peacebuilding activities in Southeast Asia. All the interviews will be conducted and recorded via an audio or video-conferencing platform. In this regard, semi-structured interviews will be employed to gather information from participants. Semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured and unstructured interviews, meaning that the outline of interviews will be prepared in advance, but the researcher might ask other questions based on the progress of the dialogue (Leavy, 2014).

After gathering the data, I will be relying on theoretical propositions to analyse the rationales, contributions, and outcomes of Muhammadiyah's involvement in the peacebuilding process in Southern Thailand. In this regard, Yin describes, “One strategy is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to your case study. The original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions and a review of the literature. The propositions would have shaped your data collection plan and therefore would have yielded analytic priorities” (Yin, 1984, p. 216).

Therefore, Tocqueville's theory of civil society will be applied as a tool of analysis, and OECD's five criteria of peacebuilding will be used to measure the extent of Muhammadiyah's involvement in the region.

Result and Discussion

Conflict and Peace in Southern Thailand

The modernization of Thailand (previously Siam) that occurred in the early 1900s had a significant impact on the status and identity of Pattani Malay in the country. The two kings of Siam, Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) and Vajiravudh (1910-1926), were the founders of Thai modernization inspired by Western-style nationalism (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2014). Chulalongkorn introduced and implemented a nation-state model by annexing the Malay Peninsula or Greater Pattani, formerly owned by the Sultanate of Pattani, to be a part of the Kingdom of Siam, under the pretext of nationalism. Furthermore, Vajiravudh, who was born and lived for a long time in Europe, especially England, strengthened the concept of the nation-state, especially patriotism, by forming a paramilitary group to tighten the boundaries of the territory of the Kingdom of Siam (Vella, 1978). The Siamese coup d'état of 1932 had raised Pattani Malay's expectation to determine their fate. At the time, the perpetrators of the coup established the People's Party and invited Pattani Muslim leaders in Southern Thailand to be allied with the party in the next general election. Even though Pattani Malay only had one representation in the parliament, at last, they still actively participated in the general election in 1937 and successfully got three representations. According to Aphonsuwan (2004), from the beginning of the constitutional monarchy era in 1937 until the 1937 general election, the state-Pattani Malay relations were relatively conducive and harmonious.

However, in the leadership of Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram (1938-1944), the Pattani Malay felt marginalized as Phibun applied chauvinistic nationalism in his era. Reynolds (2004) even describes Phibun's period as Thai nationalism in the fascist era. At the time, Phibun issued a forced assimilation policy by homogenizing all cultures and traditions, including prohibiting the use of the Malay language in public areas and traditional dresses such as sarong (scabbard). Subsequently, the culmination of the policy was when, in 1939, the government changed the country's name from the Kingdom of Siam to Thailand and proposed the predicate 'Thai Muslim' as a substitute for the term 'Malay Pattani' (Jory, 2007). The government even issued a policy on the abolition of religious courts that eventually triggered protests and resistance from Muslim communities in the Southern region. Therefore, Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir, a Muslim leader, founded the Pattani People's Movement (PPM) that demanded independence (Man, 2007). However, in 1944, the quest for independence ceased as Phibun failed to maintain his position and was replaced by a more cooperative prime minister, Khuang Aphaiwong.

In his era, Khuang accommodated the Malay Muslims by initiating the Patronage of Islam Act in 1945, containing regulations on the recognition and acceptance of Islamic tradition in Thailand. The government also formed the Office for Islamic Affairs based in Bangkok to serve the needs of Muslim communities, repealed the ban on the use of Islamic dresses and the Malay language in public places, and re-established the position of Chularajmontri or Shaikh al-Islam and appointed him as King's advisor on Islamic affairs (Yusuf, 2010). As part of the agreement, representatives of the Southern Thai communities led by Haji Sulong were also allowed to submit demands as drafts for further dialogue with the government. The draft comprises seven demands on the authority of Greater Pattani region, the minimum percentage of servants in four Malay local governments, the recognition of Malay and Siamese as official languages, Malay culture in educational curricula, Islamic courts in specific regions, revenue sharing, and the status of Provincial Islamic Council (Tsukamoto, 2020). Interestingly, none of the demands on independence were previously requested by PPM. Unfortunately, before the

demands were formally agreed upon and passed, there was a coup in 1947, and Phibun returned to his position as Prime Minister.

Similar to his previous tenure, Phibun reimplemented a policy of assimilation and homogenization in a repressive way. He aborted all seven demands of Muslim communities, refused to negotiate with them, and implemented martial law. Consequently, Chularajmontri fled to Kelantan while Haji Sulong mobilized people to contest the government's policies on Islamic traditions and Malay cultures, which led to him being arrested and imprisoned in 1948 (Suaedy, 2012). Therefore, several Malay leaders in Thailand also fled to Malaysia and founded the Association of Malays of Greater or Gabongan Melayu Patani Raya (GAMPAR), who demanded the majority of Muslim provinces in Malaysian borders to join the Malayan Islamic State and petitioned the UN. Phibun responded to the rebellion with more oppressive actions that peaked in the Dusun-nyor tragedy in 1948, namely the massacre of the Muslim people who were conducting religious ceremonies in Dusun-nyor as the place was suspected of being the centre of a mutiny plan (Chaiwat, 2007). The incident left more than 100 civilians killed, and several police officers were injured. Moreover, the government also ran several operations to attack Malay Muslim areas on the excuse of combatting the bandits and communists. In 1952, Haji Sulong was released from prison, but in 1954 he disappeared. According to Suaedy (2012), based on his interview with a separatist activist currently living in Malaysia, in that year, Haji Sulong was kidnapped by the secret police, killed, and his body thrown into the river by helicopter. Finally, his repressive way of leadership and his reluctance to engage in dialogue made it difficult for Phibun to build a strong government organization, so he suffered another coup in 1958 and was replaced by Sarit Thanarat.

After the Phibun's era, Malay Muslim communities still experienced many pressures from the governments. As a result, in the next decades, several separatist organizations were born, such as National Liberation Front of Pattani (Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani/BNPP) in 1959, National Revolutionary Front (Barisan Revolusi Nasional/BRN) in 1963, the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) in 1968, the United Front for the Independence of Pattani (Bersatu) in 1991, and the Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement (Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani/GMIP) in 1995 (Askew, 2012). BNPP then converted to the Islamic Liberation Front of Pattani (Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani/BIPP) in 1986, and PULO was disunited due to the establishment of a splinter organization, namely New PULO, in 1995. Among the movements, PULO, led by Kabir Abdul Rahman, was recognized as the most popular one as it lasted longer and had more supporters at the grassroots.

Apart from the emergence of the insurgent organizations, in the 1980s and 1990s, a series of mass and student movements occurred protesting against the repressive style of the Thailand government and demanding democratization and demilitarization. The culmination of the movement was the amendment of the Thailand constitution in 1997, which allows civilians to be a top leader or prime minister in the country (Suaedy, 2012). Eventually, in 2001, Thaksin Shinawatra was appointed as the first civilian prime minister in the history of Thailand. Thaksin then successfully enhanced Thailand's economic competitiveness and technological advancements (Looney, 2004), but during 2003-2004, he failed to tackle a series of conflicts and violence that claimed many lives. In 2003, several battles happened in Thailand-Malaysia borders and reached a peak in 2004 (Jitpiromsri et al., 2018). On 4 January 2004, rebels attacked an Army camp in Narathiwat, one of the Southern provinces of Thailand, murdered four soldiers, and confiscated nearly 350 weapons. On 28 April 2004, after seven hours of clashing with Thai military forces, 32 suspected guerrillas hiding in the Krue Se Mosque were massacred by the soldiers. On the same day, the other ten hostilities also happened at several police and military posts, which resulted in 108 fatalities. Then, on 25 October 2004, 78 people died from suffocation at an army base after being arrested for a demonstration in the border town of Tak Bai. After numerous 2003-2004 incidents, in March 2005, Thaksin established the National

Reconciliation Commission (NRC) to resolve disputes between the government and rebels in the South (McCargo, 2010). However, on 19 September 2006, Thaksin was removed forcibly from his position as prime minister in a coup d'état.

After the fall of Thaksin, the next prime minister, Surayud Chulanont, apologized publicly to the Malay Muslim communities and offered economic stimulus programs for the provinces in Southern Thailand. However, until the following years, numerous rebellions continued. Moreover, during that decade, the death toll from the insurgencies reached its peak. Deep South Watch (DSW) of the Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani (Bangkok Post, 2016) revealed that during 2004-2015, a series of rebellions caused 15,374 casualties, precisely 6,543 dead victims and 11,919 injured people. In 2012, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, facilitated by Malaysia, established a dialogue forum with BRN, the most active insurgent group at the time. The dialogue and negotiations then continued progressively for the next two years, until finally stalled in 2014 as a military coup overthrew Yingluck (McDermott, 2014). Furthermore, since 2014, Thailand has been led by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, a former Royal Thai Army general officer. At the beginning of his leadership, in 2014, Prayut implemented a repressive policy by imposing a military junta in the Southern regions. However, in 2015, the Thai military junta agreed to negotiate with the six Malay-Muslim organizations under the auspices of the Mara Pattani, including some BRN members. Until 2019, the negotiation remained, but it faced at least two main obstacles that hindered the dialogue process (Jitpiromsri et al., 2018). Firstly, the peace talks conducted by the junta were based more on play-safe policy than sincerity and the desire to achieve mutual peace. Secondly, the insurgent groups frequently deal with disagreement, which complicates them in making collective decisions.

The Role of Muhammadiyah in Southern Thailand

Following the election of Surayud Chulanont as Prime Minister of Thailand on 1 October 2006 after the collapse of Thaksin Shinawatra the previous month, the Thai government then adopted a more persuasive and cooperative approach to dealing with Malay Muslim communities in Southern Thailand, including providing economic stimulus and reactivating the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) (Poocharoen, 2010). Previously, the SBPAC was dissolved during the Thaksin government. In restructuring the SBPAC, Surayud engaged Muslim Malay figures and subsequently placed them on the advisory council (Wheeler, 2010). Surayud also visited some ASEAN countries to discuss the conflict in Southern Thailand and their potential involvement in the peacebuilding process in the region. On 21 October 2006, Surayud departed to Indonesia and came upon the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Surayud admitted he was inspired by the peace process in Aceh and requested Indonesian Muslim leaders to visit Southern Thailand to share experiences and talk with residents and religious leaders in the region (DetikNews, 2006; Tempo, 2006).

Furthermore, given Din Syamsuddin's reputation as chairman of Muhammadiyah and co-president of the WCRP, in July 2007, he was invited by Surayud and the King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej, to Thailand. In addition to meeting Surayud and Bhumibol, Syamsuddin also visited Southern Thailand and held dialogues with many local figures, including the governors of Southern Thailand, SBPAC administrators, and more than 300 Muslim leaders (Azca et al., 2019). The meetings and discussions culminated in three recommendations, namely delegating Indonesian Muslim leaders to preach in Southern Thailand, revitalizing Islamic education in the region, and empowering the local economy through the establishment of microfinance units (Appendix C, 2020). As a follow-up, 38 Thai delegates, including representatives of the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the SBPAC Advisory Council, returned to visit the headquarters of the Muhammadiyah Central Board in Jakarta in January 2008 (Antara News, 2008).

The series of meetings then ignited the interest of several Muslim leaders in Southern Thailand to establish Muhammadiyah in the region. Finally, 21 initiators of Muhammadiyah Thailand, all of whom are Southern Thai citizens, participated in a nine-day training held by the Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta. Then, on 1 May 2009, Muhammadiyah Thailand, later called Persatuan Muhammadiyah (PM), was established in Southern Thailand. Based on its statutes, PM only covers five provinces, namely, Narathiwat, Satun, Songkhla, Pattani, and Yala (sangpencerah.id, 2013). However, on 18 November 2017, the name was changed to the Organisasi Muhammadiyah Thailand (Muhammadiyah Thai Organization) and was legally recognized by the Thai government (pwmu.co, 2017). After the formation of PM, on 15 May 2009, Muhammadiyah delegated six rectors of Muhammadiyah universities, namely Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD), Muhammadiyah University of Malang (UMM), Muhammadiyah University of Prof Dr Hamka (UHAMKA), Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS), and Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta (UMY) to visit Southern Thailand to explore partnership in the field of education. Afterwards, two days later, on 17 May 2009, Syamsuddin, via WCRP and ACRP, held an interfaith meeting in Pattani attended by Muslim and Buddhist leaders (Kompas, 2009).

Based on several considerations, according to Ridwan (2020), Muhammadiyah eventually decided to build peace in Southern Thailand through education, particularly by providing scholarships for Muslim youth in Southern Thailand to study at Muhammadiyah higher education. In this regard, Muhammadiyah considers education as a strategic way of fostering peace and tolerance (Azca et al., 2019; Latief & Nashir, 2020). During the first five years, 2009-2014, Muhammadiyah scholarships were specifically intended for Muslim students affected by the conflict in Southern Thailand. However, due to the high interest of Thai students to study at Muhammadiyah universities in Indonesia, in the following years, the scholarship selection was opened to Thai students in general. In the first year, namely 2009, Muhammadiyah only provided scholarships to 16 Thai students, but the number continued to increase over the years. In 2010 and 2011, 26 and 63 Thai students, respectively, were awarded Muhammadiyah scholarships. Furthermore, from 2012 onwards, Muhammadiyah universities provided scholarships to around 50 to 100 Thai students annually (Mubarak, 2019). During the Muhammadiyah 47th Congress in Makassar in 2015, Syamsuddin admitted that Muhammadiyah had granted scholarships to 1,419 Thai students (Republika, 2015). Even so, as revealed by Ridwan (2020), the Muhammadiyah Central Board lacks reliable data on the number of students as the memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding the scholarships was handled directly by each university with the SPBAC and the Muslim Education Development Association of Thailand (MEDAT).

Furthermore, to assess the outcomes of Muhammadiyah's role in the peacebuilding process in Southern Thailand, I will apply the OECD evaluation guidelines, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. First, the role of Muhammadiyah in Southern Thailand is relevant because the people in the region are educationally left behind. Moreover, Muhammadiyah has sufficient resources in the field of education. However, Ridwan (2020) admits that in the peacebuilding process, Thailand does not involve a recognized international organization such as the ICG. However, according to Markus (2020), Muhammadiyah does not participate directly in the peace negotiations between the Thai government and Muslims in Southern Thailand since it respects the internal relations among the parties. Muhammadiyah contributes based on the request of the Thai government and the SPBAC. Second, the role of Muhammadiyah is effective because it has met the needs of Southern Thai citizens and the demands of the Thai government. Moreover, the interest of Thai youths to study at Muhammadiyah universities continues to increase. Unfortunately, Muhammadiyah's contribution did not have a direct impact on reducing tensions and conflicts in Thailand, considering that the number of casualties resulting from the rebellion in Southern Thailand reached its peak,

particularly in the period 2010-2014 (Bangkok Post, 2016), just after Muhammadiyah's involvement.

Third, Muhammadiyah's contribution is efficient because it involves a short period between dialog and implementation. In 2007, Syamsuddin met the Thai government and SPBAC; in 2008, the Thai delegation visited the Muhammadiyah headquarters; then, in 2009, the results of those meetings were implemented through scholarships for Muslim youth in Southern Thailand. In addition, Muhammadiyah has 174 universities in Indonesia (Suara Muhammadiyah, 2018), which accelerated the implementation of the program. Fourth, Muhammadiyah's involvement has a major impact on developing the quality of human resources in Southern Thailand and improving the understanding of citizens in the region on peaceful and moderate Islam. As recognized by the representative of the Commander of the Royal Thai Army, Wichai Chucherd, in dealing with the challenges of Islamic extremism in Thailand, Muhammadiyah's perspective of moderate Islam is very beneficial for Muslims in Southern Thailand (muhammadiyah.or.id, 2020). Fifth, in terms of sustainability, the Muhammadiyah scholarships for Southern Thai citizens have persisted until now. Moreover, the partnership was expanded, in which Muhammadiyah universities have actively delegated their students to participate in community service programs in schools in Southern Thailand since 2013 (Azca et al., 2019; Mubarak, 2019).

Overall, the role of Muhammadiyah in both regions is quite significant and impactful. Nevertheless, based on the Gramscian perspective elaborated by McIlwaine (1998), CSO, like Muhammadiyah, may lose integrity due to its dependency on the international donor or state co-optation. In this sense, Muhammadiyah surely needs adequate financial support to run its peacebuilding activities in Southern Thailand, which may mislead its initial objective from peace-oriented to donor-driven. Duckworth (2016), referring to her research on the role of civil society in the field of peacebuilding, reveals the emergence of so-called 'donor-driven peace,' which manipulates peacebuilding activities purely to get a large financial return. However, based on my research on its role in Southern Thailand, I adhere to the idea that Muhammadiyah has been, to borrow Tocqueville's term, a noble and value-oriented civic association.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that civil society plays a vital role in assisting the state as an intermediary organization between government and society. In the case of Thailand, Muhammadiyah has contributed to the peacebuilding process through international diplomacy and education programs, especially for Muslim minorities in the South. The ideological element is the principal reason behind the role of Muhammadiyah in the region. Ideologically, Muhammadiyah is characterized as an Islamic reformist movement that vigorously advocates the principles of moderation and peace in the domestic and international arenas. The reputation of Din Syamsuddin, chairman of Muhammadiyah from 2005 to 2015, as a global interfaith leader has also strengthened the international role. However, Muhammadiyah's initial engagement in Southern Thailand was due to Syamsuddin's global networks and his vision to internationalize the Muhammadiyah movement. In addition to both reasons, a sense of solidarity towards fellow Muslims also motivates Muhammadiyah to get involved in helping Muslim minorities in the region.

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