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Thai Police and Counter Terrorism Cooperation in ASEAN

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Abstract

This main aim of this study is to understand challenges resulting from Thai police's performance with respect to counterterrorism and counterterrorism cooperation between ASEAN and Thai police. Moreover, this study attempts to formulate appropriate guidelines with a view to develop and strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation between Thai police and ASEAN region. For this reason, the present study employs a qualitative research design. The researcher employed in-depth interviews with 50 samples including police officers, scholars, and diplomats. It is revealed that problems of Thai police's operations on counter terrorism were caused by both external and internal factors. One such external factor is the inadequate level of cooperation between regions such as non-sharing of information and mutual respect principles. These are key challenges for counter-terrorism operations of the Thai polices. In terms of internal factors, it is found that Thai police officers lacked knowledge and understanding of counterterrorism and foreign language skills. As a result, the current research recommends that knowledge of counterterrorism be improved, and police officers be urgently trained and taught foreign language communication skills. This study fills several existing theoretical and practical gaps discussed below. Findings from the study provide valuable insight for policymakers in the Thai policing system.

Introduction

Terrorism is a non-traditional security threat that is violent and results in significant damages for the society or public at large (Thongin, 2014). Addressing this problem has challenged various abilities of individual countries in terms of management since terrorism poses a direct threat to national security and state existence. Under the changing context of terrorism after the 9/11 incident, terrorism is not a relevant phenomenon only in America or Europe but also spreads out to various regions throughout the world. Currently, terrorism has seen an increase in Southeast Asia with the ASEAN region now confronting this threat to public peace and welfare. Among other countries, Thailand has experienced a rise in terrorism in today's era of globalization. To overcome this challenge, there is need for a multilateral response by the police because of the inherently multifaceted and transnational nature of terrorism itself. The primary responsibility of the states is to protect their citizens from terrorists. At the same time, there is need of cooperation at the regional as well as global level because of cross-border and cross-regional nature of the threat (Li et al., 2021).

The nature of security as well as the nature of the response to security threats has changed because of terrorism. The capacity of several countries is challenged by different aspects of terrorism especially by foreign terrorists and separatists. Lack of institutional capacity to handle the terrorist threat further complicate the situation in some countries. It bears

to note that the border areas of Thailand have remained the home of persistent insurgency. The most prominent border areas in this regard are situated along the Malaysian border namely Songkhla, Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani. Historically, in case of Thailand, the end of eighteenth century is considered as one of the contentious time for the local Muslim population (Cogan & Mishra, 2021).

The issue of terrorism has become extremely prominent and complex over the last decade. The issue of

terrorism has now been identified as threat for all countries around the world including, the ASEAN countries. The networking of regional as well as global groups have grown due to advancement of social media and internet. It has also led to the issue of radicalization of the population. The major threat of ASEAN countries comes from groups like ISIS from Syria and Iraq and other lone wolf terrorists (HADLEY, 2017).

The Royal Thai Police is a law enforcement agency which engages in counterterrorism. The Royal Thai Police has a duty to manage Thai border and combat all threats that affect national security, including terrorism. Moreover, the Royal Thai Police is responsible to cooperation in counterterrorism with ASEAN nation for maintaining peace and security in Thailand and ASEAN region (Chambers, 2019). However, in the past decade, the operation and performance on terrorism of Thailand have been notably ineffective (Borelli, 2017).

The global terrorist groups namely Hezbollah, Jeemah Islamiyyah (JI) and Al Qaeda have operated from Thailand. These terrorist groups have used Thailand as a transit point for their operations. In the past, the country has been used by these groups to plan attacks on other different countries. Several famous attacks are reported to be planned by these mentioned groups from Bangkok including, the famous 2002 Bali bombing (Gunaratna, 2017).

As mentioned previously, the Royal Thai Police (RTP) is one law-enforcing agency with the duty and responsibility to counter and combat terrorism. Therefore, operation and performance toward counter-terrorism by Thai police are presumed be a factor responsible for the overall inefficiency of the counter-terrorism project in Thailand (Chambers, 2019).

Furthermore, there is no research of Thai police's counter-terrorism performance in Thailand and counterterrorism under ASEAN cooperation. According to the importance of the afore-defined problem, the researcher, has an interest in studying the model of counter-terrorism cooperation in ASEAN and Thai Royal Police's operation on counterterrorism under ASEAN framework cooperation and seeking solutions to problem caused by Thai police's performance on counterterrorism as well as the problem caused by counter-terrorism cooperation between ASEAN and Thai police. This is done so that the researcher can suggest a model of counterterrorism cooperation of Thai police under the ASEAN framework cooperation to be more effective.

Literature Review

ASEAN Countries

ASEAN countries are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations which is a regional group. This group was formed to promote security, political and economic cooperation among the member countries. ASEAN countries include Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Laos, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Brunei. The ASEAN organization is an informal and diverse organization. Two of its basic operating principles are the principle of decision making by consent of all countries, and the principle of non-interference of countries in the internal affairs of other countries. Because of this kind of style of working, the ASEAN countries have found themselves in a deadlock situation on a number of important regional issues ([Lim & Nissapatorn, 2017](#)).

Conceptualizing Terrorism

One of the major issues for the academics and policymakers is to define the phenomenon of terrorism. For some authors, it is not important to understand the problem of terrorism in terms of definition. However, there is a strong need of defining the term from the point of view of academics and policymakers especially after the unprecedented level of media and community attention on the issue post 9/11. To this end [Mahmood and Masum \(2014\)](#) propose three basic assumptions to characterise the definition of terrorism. First, no combatants and non-civilian should be the victim of terrorism, terrorism is best defined as political violence and there is nothing that can be defined as act of violence. On this basis, researchers have defined terrorism as a group phenomenon. Group and organizational dynamics are observed as critical conditions for radicalization that is violent along with features that separate political terrorism from lunatic killers ([Mahmood & Masum, 2014](#)).

It is important to understand that terrorism is a key threat to security and peace. Moreover, it also undermines the economic, political, and social structure of the country due to which regional and global security issues are also a concern. In this global fight against terrorism, Thailand has often taken very serious actions to mitigate the threat of terrorism. The Thai law enforcement institutes have successfully controlled terrorism through international cooperation, strengthening regional cooperation, capacity building, and national level development. The law enforcement agencies of Thailand have taken concrete steps to strengthen its apparatus of domestic counter terrorism along with strengthening national capacity to disrupt, deter and detect terrorist threats. These forces have taken undertaken measures to facilitate information sharing and counter terrorism cooperation at the international and regional level ([Hamin, Othman, Omar, & Selamat, 2016](#)).

Terrorism in ASEAN Countries

Political parties and their political agenda play an important role in determining the success of national counter terrorism efforts. These activities also play an important role in combatting dissidents and creating national harmony. As a result, there is need to take actions and initiatives that aim to create harmony within the country. In this situation, ASEAN countries have played a key role in the development and implementation of policies and laws related to counter terrorism by exercising the competence of their institutions with a view to addressing this shared interest in regional security (Tan & Nasu, 2016).

History of Terrorism in Thailand

Researchers have pointed out how terrorism is the root cause of several problems including loss of properties, loss of life and causing injury. It also distracts the tourist confidence to travel within the country (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009). The roots of Terrorism in Thailand lie well before the war of Iraq in 2003 when the Prime Minister of Thailand showed disinterest towards the Iraq War in 2003. In the beginning, his main reason was that he did not want to go against the Muslims who were living in the Southern parts of Thailand. Later, Prime Minister of Thailand reversed his decision and decided to provide full support to US in Iraq war. Before the Iraq war, the prime Minister of Thailand always denied the presence of any terrorists in Thailand. Later, International media claimed the presence of few terrorist groups in Thailand. In this situation, Thai Prime minister remained quiet on the subject. Whereas, in late 2003, Thai military and government confessed as to the presence of a few military groups or networks in Thailand. It was also found that they may have stayed there for regrouping as well (Fareed, Meo, Zulfiqar, Shahzad, & Wang, 2018).

According to researchers, Thailand was basically perceived as a secure as well as politically stable country before the bloodshed in three provinces Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani. Because of this incident, image of Thailand was spoiled. Several terrorist activities were conducted in the Southern provinces of Thailand. Researchers have observed a few irregular events at Bangkok as well, but all these were put in limelight as well Control Risks Group. More than 200 people have lost their lives since 2004 in Thailand. Most of these people belong to the southern provinces of Thailand. All these developments have affected the economy of Thailand. On the other hand, quality of life and the living standard of Thai people have also been affected. It is because terrorism is not only a threat to the international tourists who visit Thailand but also affects the country's economy as well (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009).

Thai Police

The Royal police of Thailand represent the Thailand national police force. Royal Thai Police is known as RTP. In terms of training, skills, culture, concept, and tradition RTP is recognized as the fourth best armed force. It is because their training is almost like the army and the police officers must get the training from the army training center of Thailand before they can join the Thai police cadet academy. The region of Southeast Asia is highly vulnerable to terrorism and Thailand is situated in this region of the world ([Haanstad, 2013](#)). To show this commitment, RTP has taken several highly effective steps. They have launched collaborative terrorism training programs to prevent terrorism in the region. The aim of this training program is to raise awareness and provide training regarding terrorist prevention programs and measures which can be improved by coordinated application and collaborative synergy through international best practices for law enforcement personnel and relevant security personnel. Moreover, for the success of counter terrorism efforts in Thailand, it is key for stakeholders and governments to be on the same page so they can effectively respond to the situation of terrorism ([Lynch, 2018](#)).

Counter Terrorism Cooperation In ASEAN

ASEAN nations have evolved their response to tackle the situation of terrorism. Before the terrorist attacks of 9/11, terrorist activities were considered under the category of transnational crime. Under this act, the terrorism was considered as the criminal act

ASEAN applied various mechanisms to counterterrorism in the region with both laws and international cooperation. Firstly, ASEAN Convention on ([Tan & Nasu, 2016](#)) Counter Terrorism –ACCT lays down the foundation of a cooperation framework among each other on effectively countering various type of terrorism-induced problems such as prevention of terrorism, sharing intelligence among each other for forewarning, prevention and determent of terrorists or financial support from using territories of member states, development of capability and preparedness in handling terrorism using chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear materials and internet, and other types of non-traditional terrorism, as well as the determination of guidelines to treat offenders of terrorism case based on mutual respect principles for sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and non-interfering each other's affairs. Moreover, there is also the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together 2025 whereby member countries are required to develop and implement an action plan in order to strengthen ASEAN's capability to effectively and promptly solve non-traditional security problems ([Feldes, 2021](#)). Strengthening of ASEAN's capability in solving non-traditional security problems identified in the action plan has issues when it comes to counter-terrorism which are, to strengthen cooperation in order to solve and counter transnational crime, to constantly strengthen cooperation to successfully implement counter-terrorism strategies, to strengthen cooperation to counter cybercrime, and to strengthen cooperation in terms of border management to intercept the flow of terrorists and criminals ([Chunlasiriwong & Bamrungsuk, 2018](#)).

Furthermore, ASEAN Chiefs of National Police–ASEANAPOL has the objective to enhance police professionalism and strengthen cooperation at the regional level and promote sustainable companionship among police officers of member countries. ASEANAPOL serves as a mechanism to coordinate and communicate to maintain the relationship among members and try to enhance cooperation at the regional level for combating transnational crime (ASEANPOL, n.d.). In the ASEANAPOL 39 in Hanoi, member countries discussed ways to promote regional cooperation to prevent and combat crimes and also determine the direction for cooperation among regional constabularies, and between constabularies of ASEAN member countries and ASEANAPOL's partners (Rodionov, 2020). In addition, ASEAN also establishes bilateral cooperation with various organizations, countries, and unions (Secretariat, 2009). Even though there are laws and regional cooperation for counter-terrorism in ASEAN, it is found that the nature of counter-terrorism laws that have been being adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations until recently are “weak” (Nasu & Tan, 2017). Besides, cooperation on counter-terrorism among member states is not effective enough due to the respect of the principle of non-interference between states, and it is considered a domestic issue (Borelli, 2017).

Royal Thai Police’s Guidelines of Counterterrorism

There are agencies under the Royal Thai Police with duties and responsibilities regarding counter-terrorism to support missions assigned by the government (Police (2009) as follows:

Agencies involving the determination of strategies and plans of counter-terrorism have duties and responsibilities regarding the study, analysis, determination, and formulation of the overall action plans regarding issues of unrest, border, intelligence, protest, maintenance of order in elections, counter-terrorism, transnational criminals and illegal immigration, and annual action plan to be consistent with national policy and strategy, and coordinating with the Internal Security Operations Command, National Security Center, Office of the National Security Council, and National Intelligence Agency (Security, Institutions, & Rights, 2014).

International coordinating agencies have duties and responsibilities in cooperating and coordinating to strengthen relations in foreign affairs of the Royal Thai Police and the Secretariat of Interpol, member countries, embassies, and consulates of various countries, coordinating and supporting transnational crime prevention and suppression, international criminal cooperation, coordinating the investigation of suspect’s information, arriving and departing the kingdom, information of cases and information transmission according to Interpol, control and management of intelligence, and coordinating intelligence regarding situations, individuals or groups of individuals who pose a threat to the national (Wright, 2011).

Agencies of prevention and suppression have duties and responsibilities in preventing sabotage and terrorism using explosives, combating international terrorism, combating terrorism in cities by land, water, and

air operations, gathering information and intelligence operation involving terrorism, supporting forces, participating in training with International Centre for Counterterrorism and performing duties with International Centre for Counterterrorism when having international terrorism incident. Agencies of investigation and intelligence have vested authorities and responsibilities in a criminal case investigation. These authorities and responsibilities overlap across multiple areas by investigating and suppressing various types of crimes such as the investigation and suppression of transnational terrorism. In addition, there are authorities and responsibilities regarding the investigation of information, control and management of international terrorism intelligence, planning and gathering of intelligence, analysis and interpretation of intelligence, processing and evaluation of intelligence situation, production of international terrorism intelligence, and investigation of movements of organizations and terrorists who support terrorism through document forgery and illegal immigration, financial and cyber terrorism, terrorism of trafficking and terrorism using explosive, human trafficking and trend of threats affecting national security (Fischer, 2018).

Relevant Theories

Situation Approach

The Situation Approach has the same perspective towards crime and terrorism. In other words, what happens is considered coherence of acts that a doer also has his own reasons. From the start to the end of the occurrence of terrorism, there are a lot of options and decision-making causing this act. This theory can be applied to understand why and how these incidents occur. This is situational and behavioural analysis in environmental perspectives such as selection of target, selection of method, and so on. The concept of selecting target or location used to commit terrorism, Clarke and Newman (2006) gathered traits of the target that are attractive to terrorists by using the abbreviation "EVIL DONE", including:

- Exposed: target in a public place; for example, in the incident in 2011, Lone Wolf shot people camping on the island of Utøya, Norway.
- Vital: target with necessities such as electricity supply, transportation, and communication that are necessary to the community.
- Ironic: target that is a symbol and valued for the opponent such as Taj mahal attack in 2008 or Eiffel Tower bomb threat in 2014.
- Legitimate: a target with people supporting or agreeing with a terrorist group in such an attack such as the World Trade Center attack
- Destructible: target that can be destroyed such as the destruction of the World Trade Center, where there were attempts to destroy by using trucks with explosions. However, it was not successful and then became a target again in the 9/11 incident.

- Occupied: a target with many people. Nowadays, terrorists need a large number of deaths. Thus, a target that is crowded with people, such as the subway, is commonly chosen by a terrorist.
- Near: a target chosen by terrorists to attack is often residential areas or hiding places.
- Easy: a target that is easy to access such as Murrah Federal Office Building.

This was the target of the car bomb in 1995 because the building is on the main roadside and has no security check.

Cooperation Concept

[Johnson and Johnson \(2018\)](#) endorse a concept of cooperation whereby members in an organization are required to be cooperative in various activities and this is considered an exercise in developing members' ability to always think, decide, plan and work by themselves. This will be acts to promote and ensure mutual development in the organization. Besides, the following principles are required for more effective performance including 1) self-help 2) allowing the team to get involved 3) democracy. Furthermore, research by [Thepkraiwin \(2011\)](#) has also put forth elements and indicators of cooperation.

The findings revealed that cooperation leading to implementation towards the achievement of a goal requires 5 essential indicators: 1) effort to be cooperative 2) effective and respectful communication 3) seeking and supporting team opinions and being aware of others' duties 4) setting up goals and prioritizing with others and 5) following-up in one's own promise.

Relevant Research

Previous studies have revealed that globalization changes the image of the world since it affects all aspects of life and society in the world. Moreover, globalization also provides a new dimension to terrorism and criminal activities, and that terrorism and crime are national and international security threats. Globalization is an important factor affecting terrorism and criminal activities. Terrorist groups and criminals, therefore, exploit globalization and expand their activities throughout the world ([Ahmed, 2016](#)). Most terrorist groups that are active and operate in Thailand use Thailand as their hideout and weapon source and to exploit financial freedom and banking for financial support of terrorist groups. These terrorist groups are also involved in other crimes, especially drug trafficking, weapon trafficking, money laundering, and document forgery as basic communication structures and transportation are well developed and frontiers are easy to escape ([Habulan et al., 2018](#)).

The study by [Jayangkula \(2014\)](#) found that even though the government has taken both legal and administrative measures against terrorism to prevent violence as well as protects people from damage, terrorism-related laws of Thailand that are announced as means to prosecute for counter-

terrorism are criticized for ambiguous provisions in various dimensions, especially broad definition of terrorism and the use of universal jurisdiction over terrorism. Therefore, Thailand needs to consider terrorism-related laws soon.

Research Methodology

This research was designed as qualitative research. There were 4 groups of key informants, including 1) 26 police officers at the operational level in the Royal Thai Police selected from agencies involved in terrorism investigation, suppression, and international cooperation 2) 12 police officers at policy level in the Royal Thai Police selected from supervisors with experience in performing duties or formulating policies related to terrorism or coordinating cooperation in ASEAN or formulating counter-terrorism policies 3) 12 scholars and diplomats with experience or research background in counter-terrorism. There were 50 samples in total. Prior to each interview, the researcher explained and clarified issues for key informants and inform them that there would be an audio recording of the interview. If key informants did not consent to be recorded, the researcher would comply with their request. Note-taking and audio recording were the methods used to collect and document the data during the 1-2 hours that the interview lasted. The interview would be repeated about 2 times when it appeared that certain information was inconsistent. When the researcher had collected in-depth information acquired from the interview, the researcher processed and analysed the data by using content analysis and conceptual patterns and subsequently presented the results.

Research Results

Conceptualization of Terrorism

The study found that an important issue that keys informants have consistent opinions on is that the Thai government does not use the word terrorism toward violent situations in the Southern bordering provinces. Moreover, Thailand is also reticent upon various conferences related to terrorism since Thailand has refused the existence of terrorism within the country. According to the respondents

“The Royal Thai Police is able to only join as an observer, not a participant in a conference or seminar. Therefore, expressions appeared in a manner of not getting directly involved. These factors lessen the significance of terrorism”.

When the Thai government considers these unrests as not terrorism, the consequence is that it is unable to implement the foreign cooperation supporting counterterrorism. This is because when it is unrest, various countries consider it as a domestic security issue.

Coherence among Different Anti-Terrorist agencies in ASEAN

The research revealed that the Royal Thai Police is not the main counter-terrorism agency both in policy and operation. Consequently, the role of the Royal Thai Police is to support national security agencies based on assigned duties and responsibilities. According to the respondents “The duties of agencies under the Royal Thai Police that are involved in counter-terrorism are distributed into several parts including the agency that is responsible for determining counter-terrorism policy and strategy, the agency of investigation, and the agency of intelligence. However, each agency works independently and lacks relationships in coordination and sharing of information”. Consequently, systems of counter-terrorism-related operation of the Royal Thai Police are inconsistent and ineffective.

Knowledge and Understanding

Another problem is that Thai police show a lack of knowledge and understanding of counterterrorism. The key informants are appreciative of the fact that today’s terrorism is more complicated than its past manifestations. Practically, terrorism cases nowadays are quite difficult and complicated since terrorists often use advanced technology to conceal their information. Also, most police officers have little knowledge and understanding of terrorism and lack the relevant and updated knowledge and understanding of terrorism operations which they can use to effectively suppress terrorism. Therefore, it is difficult for police officers to seek evidence and prosecute these terrorists. As a result, the police are unable to punish these offenders. “Police officers need to understand and have knowledge of concepts, structures, methods, operations of terrorist groups and various technologies used by terrorists or terrorist groups in order to catch up with them” - Key Informant 9

Language

Moreover, another important problem for Thai police officer is the lack of knowledge of foreign languages. There are very few police officers who can speak and understand English. Police officers only use English for daily communication which also means they are not proficient enough to request cooperation with foreign countries. “One major difficulty in performing duty between the agency and the Royal Thai police is language. If Thai police officers can fluently communicate in English, it will facilitate coordination and police officers will be able to discuss in more detail” - Key Informant 15

Insufficient Cooperation

Most key informants stated that ASEAN members respect the sovereignty of other member states by not interfering with terrorism information. Generally, member countries in ASEAN do not share terrorism-related information as well as offender information with other members. For example, when Thailand requests other ASEAN member countries for assistance in arresting an offender, the countries that receive such a request may refuse (Limitation on Assistance). Therefore, international cooperation can be insufficient and quite problematic. “In my opinion, when considering ASEAN’s level of community cooperation compared to in European Union, apparently, there are differences in enforcement. In European Union, their member countries must comply with any laws and these laws are enforced upon every member country. Therefore, they must communicate with each other. But in the case of ASEAN, we have the principle of non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. As a result, even though we have an ASEAN Convention on counterterrorism or the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint, it cannot be enforced like laws in the European Union. Therefore, it is unable to effectively ensure information sharing” - Key Informant 4

New Technology

The key informants stated that the Royal Thai Police has developed the immigration system into a system that collects biometric data through fingerprints and facial recognition to develop a database of passengers entering and departing the kingdom. “This is also consistent with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2396 that member states are required to develop the capability to collect, process, and analyse the Passenger Name Record (PNR) to be in accordance with ICAO standards in order to prevent and detect movements of terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters”. However, even if the Royal Thai Police has already developed an immigration system, the key informants stated that it does not fully live up to the ASEAN framework of cooperation.

Education and Training

Due to a limited understanding of terrorism and its prevention, Thai police must be educated and trained on the phenomenon of terrorism, strategies for prevention of terrorism, and foreign languages for communication. Educating and training can help develop the knowledge and skill of Thai police officers to counter the phenomenon of terrorism more effectively. “Police officers cannot arrest terrorists because nowadays, terrorists use advanced technology to conceal their information. If there is knowledge and an understanding of technologies, I think that we can stop terrorists before they commit terrorism or can arrest terrorists in time after they commit terrorism. Also, I think that Thai police officers should be trained

in using foreign languages such as English, French, Chinese, Spanish, and so on” - Key Informant 20

Discussion and Conclusion

The research revealed that Thailand is not directly targeted by terrorists. However, terrorists use Thailand as their hideout for attacking an opponent in Thailand such as an embassy; or staying for waiting to travel to the destination country; or hiding to support terrorism. This is consistent with the Situation Approach that gathering of traits of attractive target to terrorists by using the abbreviation “EVIL DONE, which means” that terrorists often choose targets that are near residential areas or hideouts and easy to access (Clarke & Newman, 2006). Moreover, Thailand is also geographically attractive to terrorists because borders and natural border paths are easy to escape after committing offenses. Such findings are also consistent with the research that most terrorist groups that are active and operational in Thailand use the country as their hideout and weapon source as well as to exploit financial freedom and banking for financial support of terrorist groups (Habulan et al., 2018).

Problems of counterterrorism are divided into external and internal factors. In other words, the external factor is insufficient cooperation from ASEAN member countries on counterterrorism. Internal factors comprise the ambiguous definition of terrorism and performance of Thai police. The research revealed that cooperation between Thai Police and ASEAN member countries on counterterrorism is not effective enough due to the principle of non-interference between states. This is consistent with Kaliluan (2008) whose research also puts forth a particularly wholesome conceptual framework to understand cooperation. Members in an organization are required to be cooperative in various activities and this are considered an exercise in developing member’s capacity to always think, decide, plan, and work by themselves. This will be a way of building mutual development in the organization. Moreover, the following principles are required for more effective performance including 1) self-help 2) allowing the team to get involved 3) democracy. Since cooperation from ASEAN member countries is relatively low due to members respecting one another’s sovereignty, regional cooperation is quite delayed and ineffective (Borelli, 2017). If ASEAN member countries develop a strategic plan of counter-terrorism cooperation to determine the purpose for long-term achievement and member countries are involved in sharing expertise, hope, concerns and jointly developing strategic plans by considering problems and bringing different perspectives, establish cooperation obligation, and also evaluate strength and weakness of every member and explain those elements that affect organization and neighbors (member countries), this will enable counter-terrorism cooperation in ASEAN develop in the same direction and to be more effective (Nasu & Tan, 2017).

The Royal Thai Police is responsible for suppressing and arresting terrorism-related offenders in the Kingdom of Thailand. However, since agencies of counterterrorism under the Royal Thai Police work independently and each agency lacks relationships in coordination and linking of information, systems of counter-terrorism-related operation of the Royal Thai Police are inconsistent and ineffective. This is consistent with a previous study by [Thepkraiwun \(2011\)](#) which understands cooperation in an organization in pursuance of a practical goal requires effort to be cooperative, effective and to have respectful communication, that is, seeking and supporting team opinions, and being aware of others' duties. Cooperation in the organization is essential for developing the organization's capacity to achieve success. If each agency of counterterrorism of the Royal Thai Police communicates, coordinates, and seeks cooperation among agencies, each agency will be able to apply such cooperation to be effective in building sustainable relationships. In addition, using common resources to plan the same pattern of the counter-terrorism action plan will allow the counter-terrorism plan and operation of an organization to be in the same pattern and more effective.

The previous studies indicated that counter-terrorism in Thailand is ineffective because of ambiguous provisions of laws ([Jayangkula, 2014](#)). However, there are additional findings which show that in addition to a legal issue, another problem is also caused by law enforcement officers, including police officers. This research revealed that Thai police officers lack knowledge and understanding of counterterrorism and foreign language skills. Key also informants stated that since modern technology is involved in today's terrorism, the suppression is complicated and difficult. These findings support the research by [Ahmed \(2016\)](#) that globalization is an important factor affecting terrorism and criminal activities since terrorist groups and criminals exploit globalization and expand their activities throughout the world. Terrorist groups exploit modern communication to develop international communication. There are loose clusters of terrorism cells that have spread throughout the world. These clusters can freely commit terrorism and establish cooperation among one another and link synapses via financial support and various weapons. Consequently, the benefits of modern technology facilitate various parts and help terrorist groups perform their operations effectively. They also cause more severe impacts since they can access technology with higher destructive potential than in the past. Nevertheless, it is difficult for officers to investigate ([Watthanapong, 2015](#)). The fact that officers lack foreign language skills may be caused by the lack of self-confidence due to having inadequate English basic knowledge for communication, lacking skills of language usage for communication in the actual situation as well as lacking analytical skills.

In summary, this qualitative research aimed to discover challenges faced in the counter-terrorism operations of Thai police as well as obstacles in the achievement of counter-terrorism cooperation between ASEAN and the Royal Thai police. Also, the study will provide guidelines to develop

counter-terrorism cooperation between Thai police and ASEAN nations to be more effective. The researcher used in-depth interviews with 50 samples including police officers at policy level and operational level, scholars of counterterrorism, and diplomats. The research shows that problems of Thai police's operations on counterterrorism were caused by a combination of external and internal factors. One external factor was the insufficient cooperation between regions such as non-sharing of information and with respect to mutual respect principles. These posed difficulties for counter-terrorism operations of the Thai polices. Regarding internal factors, Thai police officers lacked knowledge and understanding of counterterrorism and foreign language skills.

The current suggests that due to a lack of understanding in counterterrorism and limited foreign language skills, the Royal Thai Police should provide courses and programs to enhance knowledge regarding the nature of terrorism, counterterrorism, and foreign languages for communication to Thai police officers who perform duties of counterterrorism. Moreover, the Royal Thai Police by the Foreign Affairs Division should proactively establish cooperation networks in counterterrorism. The officers who are assigned duties of attending conferences and coordinating with relevant international agencies should be encouraged and facilitated to create a strong cooperation network leading to the effective establishment of an intelligence network and meaningful information-sharing. Moreover, the Royal Thai Police should promote cooperation by jointly improving counter-terrorism programs through various institutions such as Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) or International Law Enforcement Academy of Bangkok (ILEA Bangkok). Especially, ILEA Bangkok which is under the supervision of the Royal Thai Police should play an active role in strengthening cooperation being the center of various knowledge networks and channels. Doing so can help the Royal Thai Police formulate new strategies, techniques, and tactics, and develop training programs of the Royal Police Cadet Academy or other counter-terrorism agencies.

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