

Religious Discourse and Gender Security in Southern Thailand

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This article describes the complexity of applying human security through the notion of gender equality in southern Thailand where violent conflict has been prevalent for nearly half a century in a Malay-Muslim-dominated society. It explores how the concepts of gender and security have been interpreted in Malay-Muslim leaders' outlooks. To define security more broadly, the article surveys the various notions of peacebuilding dealing with comprehensive human security and any security threat, thus not limited to state of war or physical violence only. In the prolonged armed violence and conflict, like that faced in Thailand's *Deep South*, women's security and their role in peacebuilding emerge as pertinent concerns. The discontinuities within the narratives of women and security highlight a divergence connected to personal-political imaginations of conflict whereby subtle variations in violent conflict can be seen as the products of different policy prescriptions, local cultural norms, and the project outcomes of women groups supported by governmental organizations and national and international donors. Thus, in order to reflect upon how contemporary security notions are framed, gendered security perceptions ought to be considered as they signify the exercise of peacebuilding programs in the local context. Persistent advocacy of gender equality is about cultural change, which eventually becomes a modality for non-violent society.

Keywords: Cultural Change; Deep South of Thailand; Gender Security; Malay-Muslim Women; Peacebuilding;



INTRODUCTION

Members of civil society organizations in Pattani¹, Thailand, have been critical of the government's attempts to generate *peace* as it only translated within the goal of defeating the insurgency. In such peacebuilding scenarios, women, who are not part of the insurgency, are entirely ignored. Nevertheless, studies underscore that violence in the region affects women both directly and indirectly. They have been killed, injured, traumatized, sexually harassed, and have experienced emotional and economic suffering as the conflict persisted (Abuza, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2012; Marddent, 2006). Parallel to the challenge of the implementation process and policy on gender equality and women's empowerment by state and international agencies, especially within the framework of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, this paper shows that there is an

1 In this study, I use both *Patani* and *Pattani*. The former term is chosen to refer to the region, while the latter is used as the name of a province in the south of Thailand.

attempt to promote a bottom-up peacebuilding perspective in conflict ridden areas of South Thailand as women and members of civil society organizations interviewed for this paper described the experiences and knowledge they value.

According to the gendered aspects of the WPS agenda (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011), civil society organizations, especially women's groups, are the main strategic actors to push for the discussion of women's experiences in armed conflict. The WPS agenda addresses three main themes: (1) Women and girls in war and armed conflict demand to be protected from sexual and gender-based violence; (2) Women must have a role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding; (3) Local actors, member states, and the United Nations (UN) system need to adopt a gender perspective in peace operations, negotiations, and agreements. In the region, women's movements are traditional actors or grassroots peace activists, who are critical of military solutions (Deep South Watch, 2014; Tissamana, 2017, pp. 102-115) which have been adopted through a state-centric security approach. Their involvement in the peacebuilding movement has a long history. Several groups of Muslim women in the South have become involved in political reform to ensure peacebuilding after the uprising against the military dictatorship on 14 October 1973 and the massacre of the student movement on 6 October 1976.

This paper accordingly explores the discourses of violence and the peacebuilding perspectives of locals in Thailand's Deep South in order to understand women's participation in peacebuilding and how they position the violence they experience and potential solutions. This paper aims to draw attention to the effort of local peacebuilding amidst the complexity of policy formulations from international gender-sensitive peacebuilding and development programs. The subjects in this study are not only confronted with violent conflict, but they are also tackling discriminatory gender norms within their own culture. Thus, while international agencies need to pay close attention to their perspectives on what is causing violence and how it can be addressed, this paper highlights the degree to which Malay-Muslim women are also trying to work with their own communities to lessen the impact that strict Islamic teaching has on their ability to live in a peaceful society.

This ethnographic study employs a qualitative research framework for data collection and analysis. The method involves extensive fieldwork among women's groups and local communities in the research area – Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces – through participant observation. This method facilitated my immersion in how these women perceive their culture. Sixty-two informants participated in interviews, conversations, and focus group discussions; this includes 5 women who have been the victims of violence, 16 women who tackle sexual and gender-based violence in the Muslim community, 11 male and female religious leaders, 8 government staff, 2 professional peacebuilders, 2 human rights defenders and analysts, 2 scholars, and 16 male and female youth. Before detailing women's efforts and perspective on human security as a means of conflict resolution in the impacted regions, I will first briefly describe the conflict in Thailand's Deep South and then describe the various international agendas as peacebuilding discourses that have been implemented in the regions.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT AND THE TERMINOLOGY PROBLEM

The southern region of Thailand has had a long history of political contestations.

It was once home to the sovereign Kingdom of Patani, which was internationally recognized, for instance, in diplomatic and trade missions to China in the 16th century (Teeuw & Wyatt, 1970, p. 1). Tributary relationship between Thailand, formerly known as Siam, and Patani lasted from the mid-13th century to the late 18th century. According to Aphornsuvan (2007, p.16), Patani leaders enjoyed greater freedom to rule the kingdom during the time when Siamese rulers were preoccupied with other security issues, such as the wars with Burma in the 15th century and Cambodia in the 14th century. During these periods of subordination, whenever the Siamese royal government was weakened, Patani's rulers revolted by refusing to send tribute.

By the mid-17th century, the Siamese Kingdom was in political chaos and later defeated by the neighboring Konbaung dynasty of Burma in 1767. In such a delicate security situation, General Taksin managed to regroup the followers, built a new political center at Thonburi, and was crowned as King of Siam in December 1767. King Rama I later on marked a period of the nation's golden era with strong central government, during which Siam's trade advanced and stability was imposed through military control. In 1785, King Rama I asserted renewed sovereignty over Patani. Siam's troops attacked Patani and destroyed the sultan's palace (Keyes, 2009, pp. 19-42). The tributary system was ended during the reign of King Rama II, who divided Patani into seven Malay principalities, which included Patani, Saiburi, Yala, Yaring, Raman, Ra-ngae, and Nong Chick. Of these, only Nong Chick had a Buddhist ruler. Since the 1900s, the leaders of Siam united the South into the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat – divisions that exist until today.

During the 19th century, with the arrival of the French and British colonial powers, Bangkok, again, tightened its control over Patani. Throughout the century, the political status of the Malay Peninsula sultanates, including Patani, became increasingly squeezed between an expanding British colonial rule and a rapidly modernizing Siam (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2009, pp. 69-70). In 1909, through the Anglo-Siamese Treaty between Siam and Britain, Patani was annexed to be governed directly under Thai hegemony. This resulted in the official incorporation of the southern Patani border into the Thai state.

This border arrangement, which still exists as the current borders of the Thai modern state, has since then been disputed by the local Malay aristocracy who objected to the Thai government's control of the southern region (Bunnag, 1977). Tensions worsened when the Thai central government enacted the National Culture Act in 1939, which contained detailed codes of behavior (Aphornsuvan, 2007, p. 35) intended to 'civilize' Thais by forming a unified national culture for those dwelling within the Thai state's border. With the implementation of the act, the Thai state aimed to spread central Thai cultural traits and Theravada Buddhism throughout the whole country as a policy of assimilation. Consequently, despite the fact that over 70% of the population in the Deep South are Malay Muslims, Patani people were forced to adopt Buddhist culture which had been introduced by Bangkok's Buddhist-centric government (Bajunid, 1992; Scupin, 1998, p. 229). The forced imposition of Thai culture on Malay Muslims led to violent separatist insurgencies in which those who envision themselves to be part of the Patani people fight for independence from Thailand (von Feigenblatt, 2009).

Following the Second World War, violence in the Patani region increased dramatically. The Islamic scholar and the first president of the Provincial Islamic Council of Pattani, Haji Sulong, started the first major independence movement in the 1940s and early 1950s (Aphornsuvan, 2004; Lamey, 2013, p. 3). He called on the Patani people to engage in civil disobedience and a petition campaign. Haji Sulong authored the seven-point demand of Malay Muslims that was presented to a commission of inquiry convened by the central government to investigate the circumstances of the locals at a time of growing Malay-Muslim nationalism and resistance to central government authority in the region.² His arrest and imprisonment in 1948 led to a series of violent eruptions before he was made to disappear by security forces in 1954 (Aphornsuvan, 2007, pp. 52-53; Ockey, 2011, pp. 112-117). Since the 1950s, the tension in the region has been characterized by continuous armed violence, whereby Thai security forces' counter-reaction has alienated the Malay-Muslim community and conversely led some local Muslims to engage in militancy (Dorairajoo, 2009).

In January 2004, the violence in Thailand's Deep South took a new turn when Malay-Muslim insurgents raided a military camp in Narathiwat and drew on an ethno-regionalist narrative to perpetuate a new wave of violent conflict in the south of Thailand (Liow & Pathan, 2010). Their claim to religious justification marks a new form of separatist movement in which religious rhetoric increasingly plays a central role in violent insurgencies' political discourse (McCargo, 2009). The entanglement between religious solidarity and violence becomes even more complex since the collective memory of the military atrocities, particularly of those that took place at Krue Ze Mosque and the following Tak Bai tragedy, against Muslim civilians is well alive among the locals. In April 2004, the military raided Pattani's historic Krue Ze mosque to arrest a group of militant Malay Muslims who were suspected to have attacked the police station. The raid resulted in the death of 32 men, with one civilian victim who happened to be in the mosque. The Tak Bai incident followed when a crowd of 2,000 protestors gathered at the police station in Tak Bai district, Narathiwat, to seek the release of six people arrested on suspicion of having stolen guns from defense volunteers. Police and military forces used fire trucks and live ammunition to control the situation, in the course of which more than 80 Malay men were killed as a result of ill treatment (Harish & Liow, 2007, pp. 161-184). These series of conflicts involving the deaths of Muslim civilians have generated long-lasting traumatic memories among the Malay Muslims in the region until today.³

2 The demands were: (1) The government of Siam should have a person of high rank possessing full power to govern the four provinces of Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satul, and this person should be a Muslim born within one of the provinces and elected by the populace. The person in this position should be retained without being replaced; (2) All of the taxes obtained within the four provinces should be spent only within the provinces; (3) The government should support education in the Malay medium up to the fourth grade in parish schools within the four provinces; (4) 80% of the government officials within the four provinces should be Muslims born within the provinces; (5) The government should use the Malay language within government offices alongside the Siamese language; (6) The government should allow the Islamic Council to establish laws pertaining to the customs and ceremonies of Islam with the agreement of the high official; (7) The government should separate the religious court from the civil court in the four provinces, with full authority to conduct cases (Syukri, 2005, pp. 89-90).

3 Interview with several women and several youths who are members of families of the victims; Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, 12-13 September 2018, 10-12 May 2010, and 24-26 December 2004.

The historical tensions in Thai-Patani relations between the central government and the Deep South and the reluctance to recognize the region as a sovereign state have created a situation of chronic controversy concerning nation-state issues in the region, which Winichakul (1994) calls the “geo-body problem” of the nation. He asserts that the *Melayu Patani*, or the ethnic Malays and the Malay-speaking Muslims, struggle over the notion of “Thai-ness” (*kwaampenthai*) because of the conceptions of Thai chauvinism and geo-body that emerged from a homogenous conception of national culture based on a unitary nation-state (Winichakul, 1994, pp. 3-5).⁴

Such tensions lead to enduring violence since the state relies on military force to secure order. This is evident from how the state has organized the machinery of occupation between the government and the military in these provinces, where the government machinery of the occupying power is divided between the government and military through security agencies and military forces. Accordingly, in assessing the notion of security in the region, the state is applying military terminologies by classifying the conflict as “unrest” and “insurgency” (Buranajaroenkij, 2017, p. 19). “Unrest” is a key term that the government uses to point to the risk it faces in the region along with the region’s social instability. As it creates a division of ‘us-versus-them’, the state’s evocation of the term has been criticized by human rights activists in the region. Women activists have been rejecting the term as it can only be applied in respect to a paternalistic central control policy, and therefore does not address all conflict-affected dimensions, including the comprehensive notion of human security, which locals and women have to endure (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2008; Paulus & Vashakmadze, 2009).

Women and human rights activists contend that the term “unrest” is a simplification of the depicted situation since violence in the region has become more complex and affected larger concerns, including women’s well-being, domestic violence, child marriage, discrimination against widows, and enduring sexual and gender-based violence. Accordingly, beyond the scope of the military’s understanding focused on a binary situation of stability and unrest, “unrest” has significant consequences for those living within it. For example, armed violence as a product of masculinity (Bjarnegård & Melander, 2011) often leads to other forms of violence such as against women and children (Ezard, 2014), and thus any security notion should set its concerns on human security (Tripp, 2013) as the product of a non-violent ecology rather than simply exercising armed or political security.

A report from the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC)⁵ shows a staggering number of women who were victimized in unarmed conflict conditions from 2004 to 2017, with 513 killed and 1,704 injured as a result of shootings or bombings (Buranajaroenkij, 2019, pp. 67- 80). The National Human Rights

4 To add to the complexity, the Patani region remains, until today, a poor region with substantially less economic development than other parts of Thailand’s South (Bank of Thailand, 2006; World Bank, 2019).

5 SBPAC was established in 1981 to monitor the work of civilian government agencies, implement policy, train and discipline the officials posted to the region, and coordinate with security forces in Thailand’s Deep South. These include the Office of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). SBPAC, NSC, and ISOC, which are responsible for devising and implementing policy in the region, are led formally by the Prime Minister. In practice, however, the Prime Minister exercises little direct oversight (International Crisis Group, 2012).

Commission of Thailand (2018) reports that in some rape cases, the victims were even forced to marry the perpetrators of sexual assault as mediation process to settle the suit. At the same time, since separatists have mainstreamed religious discourse into everyday life, religious conservatism has dominated the region, and a recent report from the Southern Women Network Overcoming Violence (2018) shows that the stories and numbers of violent incidents against women have largely gone unreported due to stigma and social pressure, although the number of incidents of domestic violence is annually increasing in the Muslim community.

Because of perceived cultural norms, less particular concern has addressed gender-based violence. Studies on and programs for women in conflict situations in this region tend to have a limited focus on the quantitative and visible involvement of women in peacebuilding as part of grassroots training and programming by foreign actors as well as actors from Thailand's central region (Asia Foundation, 2012; Buranajaroenkij, 2017, 2019; UNDP, 2016; UN Women, 2012, 2018). Programs for civil society and communities in this region leave religious and socially sensitive issues to the religious leaders' accountabilities; although in many cases the religious scholars are indeed sensitive to gender issues. Therefore, when issues of gender-based violence are addressed, the state and civil society actors associate them primarily with the predominant culture of the Muslim community and religious interpretation, which, they contend, marginalized women.

Public outcry for Muslim religious authorities to address such issues has nevertheless met a dead end. Such approaches fail because, on the one hand, they fail to account for the complexities of violence that women in this area face as part of the ongoing conflict, while on the other hand they offer simplistic solutions to how the violence could be addressed by disentangling it from the larger conflict situation and connecting it to gender as well as values of a conservative Muslim society.

SEVERAL OPERATING GLOBAL PEACEBUILDING DISCOURSES

It was not only once or twice during my field research (2004-2007, 2009-2010, and 2014-2019) in Thailand's Deep South that the locals expressed their complaints about the top-down approach that characterizes policies meant to address the conflict, particularly the martial law order and the 2005 emergency (International Commission of Jurists, 2010). At this time, the locals had recognized the prolonged violent situation as an armed conflict was the outcome of *utsahakam kwam munkong* (security industry). Because of the top down, security-based machinery of the state, people in Patani criticized that the cost of the violent conflict had emerged as a profitable benefit for several sectors, especially the Thai belligerents and the aristocracies on both sides. Moreover, many local people felt they were living within *utsahakam kwam munkong*, whereby their voices were being marginalized and they were being victimized as 'others' in the wake of conflict. The feeling of otherness is prominent among Malay Muslims who constitute a non-Buddhist minority as well as among those who embrace a non-Thai culture.

"The others" is used among the Malay Muslims to define their own identity in relation to others. In this regard, they are referring to the dominant Thai social, cultural, and other kinds of identity constructions. To note, since 2004 there has also

been a nostalgic revival of Thai nationalism, which includes propaganda songs and cultural performances to show that the state still plays a decisive role in the policy of assimilation (Jory, 2007, pp. 129-146). Such a sense of otherness, when entangled with such expressions of a sense of belonging and nationalism, could hinder local participation in the peacebuilding project. The structural othering could also be seen in the dispute of regional naming. While the state addresses the region as ‘Pattani’, the insurgency movement uses ‘Pattani’ to describe the narrative of its origins and individuality, and to show how it is not dependent on a center in Bangkok. According to Satha-Anand (1992, pp. 1-38), the term “Pattani” actually best reflects a specific political and cultural territory. The state’s deliberate word selection is, however, also not without a reason. It shows the historical control of the central government since it has been using the term ‘Pattani’ as a unit of administration since 1906 (Chonlaworn, 2014, pp. 527-546). Such disagreement shows how the state disregards the agency of local Malay Patani people in constructing their own identity. Panjor (2015) argues that, beyond its administrative function, region naming is a form of state’s centralistic control of local political identity that defies or contains local political aspirations. Consequently, the term has political and cultural connotations.

Among local women, the problem of identity is also related to how their “women-ness” is defined through various global discourses. There are currently four discourses of peacebuilding that accommodate women’s participation in the process: the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and its Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Among these discourses, the WPS agenda has become today’s main source and tool to advanced women’s participation in the peacebuilding process in Thailand’s Deep South. The WPS was initiated as part of the UNSCR 1325 on 31 October 2000 (Chinkin, 1994, pp. 326-341). As a UN-based resolution, WPS is a global normative order on security discourse. UNSCR 1325 and WPS impose a global political agenda on policy support for gender equality. On the global level, its mainstreaming centers on four pillars, namely (1) women’s participation in conflict resolution and peace processes; (2) gender mainstreaming in conflict-prevention initiatives; (3) the protection of women’s rights and bodies in times of peace and war; and (4) relief and recovery, especially for survivors of sexual violence. At the national level, UNSCR 1325 provides guidelines to governments and non-governmental actors that outline their responsibilities in order to comply with the WPS agenda (George, 2016, pp. 376-377). The UN believes, as supported by a study by Krause, Krause, & Bränfors, 2018, that when women participate in peace negotiations, there will be an increase in the durability and the quality of peace.

Research on the WPS has invigorated the agenda extensively, such as issues on policy prescription and redefinition of the idea of peace, conflict, gender, and security. These studies investigate how the implementation of peace resolutions could relate to certain gender norms. For example, Goldstein (2001) discusses how the gendering of war has been constructed, emphasizing the degree to which men have been socialized with hierarchies, such as in the armies, more extensively than women in wartime. Thus, men are trained with hierarchical power through wars, while women actively oppose war. Several studies, however, criticize the WPS agenda for

its simplicity. Ní Aoláin (2016, pp. 275-292) highlights the applicability of the WPS agenda in an era of a new pattern of war in which security strategies have focused specifically on counterterrorism and extremism, where women are only marginal actors and their voices of peacebuilding play a role only in marginal spaces. Jauhola's work (2016) contributes to the marginalized subjects of women, peace, and security by exploring the ways in which the WPS is predicated on the construct of the 'good woman'. The realities of war and conflict in the Global South also deliver a further criticism to the UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda. Basu (2016, pp. 362-374) criticizes the implementation of both, contending that UN's discourses on peacebuilding and conflict resolution have been primarily developed based on values of the Global North. Thus, she calls for the contributions of the Global South to be brought into consideration in both the implementation and non-implementation of the WPS resolutions. By doing so, she argues that the UNSCR 1325 needs to invite actors from the Global South to also write the implementation guidance document as follow-up resolutions and to further broaden the discourse on women, peace, and security.

The Thai government has signed the international agenda, but it does not yet have a National Action Plan (NAP) to steward the UNSCR 1325 implementation. Regardless of such a limitation, there are already some local efforts to incorporate a WPS agenda in the establishment of meetings with grassroots women's organizations. Through various interviews, my interlocutors, who are members of women's NGOs in the conflict areas and civil society leaders, expressed that the steps in the WPS agenda have led to pragmatic actions in their efforts to craft the country's policies on gender and security. On the practical level, to deepen the application of the WPS, the Thai government has relied on women's groups comprised of those whose husbands have been killed or are missing in the region. At the same time, several international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have joined forces with women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Thailand to persuade the government to also advocate the older, already-existing peace discourses to further support the WPS agenda, such as the 1979 CEDAW and the 1995 Beijing UN Women's Conference Platform for Action.⁶

In Thailand, the WPS agenda was adopted in collaboration between the Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and UN Women (Government Prioritizes UN Policy, 2015; UN Women Asia and the Pacific, 2016). Since it was adopted, some women leaders, including those from UN Women, the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT), the SBPAC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, have been pushing for the UNSCR 1325 to be implemented in domestic activities. On the other hand, the practitioners, international observers, diplomats, and activists that I have interviewed, all view that unlike the UNSCR 1325, the WPS actually offers strategies on the prevention of violence and protection issues that are already effective for peacebuilders to apply in the field. Thus, the WPS has been proven to be able to be used as the core tool of peace processes while helping the state to better advance international humanitarian law and Thailand's Internal Security Act (ISA). For example,

6 See, True's (2016) discussion paper on women's inclusion in the peace process. The Foundation for Women has provided training and training manuals to educate women in conflict areas to understand and apply CEDAW and UNSCR on WPS to advance gender equality since 2008 (Sakrobanek, 2008).

government and international actors, especially the ASEAN commission and key stakeholders, can restore people's confidence in peacebuilding by undertaking concrete steps, such as annual budgeting programs to support women's forums that are likely to result in increased confidence among key groups to agree upon action points and ways in accelerating the implementation of WPS agenda.

These practical engagements, apart from the absence of a NAP, have turned women and their organizations into recognized actors whose agency has an impact on building a stronger comprehensive set of peacebuilding implementation steps. For example, the Thai government has implemented conflict resolution by establishing security goals based on a national political blueprint strategy, in which it has initiated a program of monetary compensation and rehabilitation processes as one of the initial steps in the peacebuilding process. Beyond financial means, such steps are symbolically pivotal since they raise the issue of recognition, whereby the impact the conflict has had on women is taken into consideration. To date, most women who are conflict-related victims have been compensated by the government (International Crisis Group, 2012).

The local Malay-Muslim women, who were direct victims, have also taken a greater role as peacemakers by becoming leaders of local women's groups. Their agency is being recognized by the state and INGOs. For example, they have travelled more frequently from their villages to the cities to attend workshops and meetings and to participate in dialogue forums. They have taken on leading roles in conflict prevention and peacemaking, although, again, Thailand does not have a national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325.⁷

This is where complications emerge. Women leaders in the networks of civil societies in Thailand's Deep South understand this global agenda as an imposed, top-down agenda through which the state is attempting to implement a certain standard on women groups. Some civil society members in Pattani province also believe, however, that the ISA, although it has adopted some notions of an international legal framework, is often used to empower executive authority and security forces, which undermine the rights of citizens. At the same time, the government has actually attempted to avoid any internationalization of the conflict in the Deep South of Thailand, which explains the absence of a NAP. As the Thai government has classified the conflict as unrest in the context of riot and insurgency, it primarily centers the WPS agenda only in a larger discourse of national security. The state tends to recognize conflict situations in the region as internal disturbances and tensions; in this discourse, violence is explained as isolated, sporadic acts, and a matter of domestic politics (Lamey, 2013). When the state developed a plan to address security, a woman human rights defender, Angkhana Neelapajit, criticized the government and local leaders' handling of the situation in the region without a gender dimension.⁸ She expressed that the state should close the gap between commitment and action in the form of non-violence policies. Such policies to security, however, will consequently withdraw any abundant presence of armed forces in the region. Angkhana further noted that the lack of

7 See also, Peace Women (2018). Additionally, while Thailand's NAP includes WPS implementation frameworks, Thailand has not established actions to be implemented in cooperation with civil society. The Thai military government, on the other hand, establishes its own security goals based on the 20-year national political blueprint strategy (The National Blueprint Strategy, 2018).

8 Interview, Nakhon Si Thammarat, 8 August 2018, and Pattani, 6 December 2019.

political will to actually implement a change through a NAP supporting the UNSCR 1325 remains a key issue to advance the goals of the peace process.

On the other hand, according to group discussions I attended in October 2018 on state agencies' monitoring of the WPS, UNSCR 1325 is currently not being upheld by the central government as it has implemented another new security policy for the region that does not accommodate the non-violence values of UNSCR 1325. Women officials from both the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWAFD) under Thailand's Ministry of Social Development and Human Security and SBPAC representatives admitted the lapse. Such discrepancy between policy and action arises because UNSCR 1325 is a legally binding resolution for UN Charter signatory states (Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy, 2010, pp. 36-37) and is not an organic product of all involved actors.

Apart from WPS, these women activists also have implemented several other related resolutions, which address matters on the individual level or in the private sphere (Kirby & Shepherd, 2016, pp. 249-254). In 2015, for example, the international community endorsed another normative framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, commonly known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This global instrument formally recognizes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a distinct development goal. The SDGs number 5 and 16 (further, SDG 5 and SDG 16)⁹ in particular aim at achieving gender equality and empowering of all women and girls, including a call to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, to eliminate harmful practices, to value domestic work, and to ensure women's political and economic participation as well as sexual and reproductive health respectively (Lee & Pollitzer, 2016). I attended several small women peacebuilding forums on the overlapping forms of gender justice and protection mechanisms for women's rights (in Pattani, Narathiwat, and Bangkok in March, August, and December 2018). The present local and international scholars, INGO professionals, Thai, and Malay-Muslim women's rights activists and a national human rights commissioner, who have been working on women's right protection with civil society and women groups in the Deep South of Thailand, criticized the government's policy tool as being incapable of achieving the state's goal of a gender-based justice arrangement. The problem is that, although the state has ratified the agreement, the current government has attempted to merely uphold their accountability to the SDGs by crafting a 20-year governmental strategic plan rather than implementing all mechanisms to enact a gender-inclusive security policy, particularly those outlined in UNSCR 1325.

Dealing with two discourses, the UNSCR 1325 and the SDGs, the Thai government, through its representative state agencies like the OWAFD and the Sub-Committee on Women, Peace and Security, has discussed in various international forums in Bangkok, which I attended, to consolidate the efforts of integrating these global gender perspectives through learning from local women's best-practices. Members of the civil society network who work on peacebuilding issues with several organizations have, hence, attempted to create another space and provide the resources to push for larger engagement of Muslim women's group.

⁹ SDG 5 aims at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, while SDG 16 promotes peaceful and sustainable societies for sustainable development; access to justice for all; and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

One of the greatest challenges to craft a NAP and for supporting the consolidation of women's activism is, however, the synchronicity between elements of the state themselves. My interlocutors stated that such a problem persists because the state is unwilling to accommodate the resolution into a NAP.¹⁰ As previously mentioned, the representation of the state in the Deep South has been divided into civilian government, on the one hand, and military control, on the other hand. Such unwillingness seems to be rooted in a complex set of interrelated issues, particularly in terms of the permanent State of Emergency under martial law (e.g., Jitpiromrsi & McCargo, 2008; The Asian Human Rights Commission, 2009).

Thus, while the civilian government actively supports a discourse on the consolidation of efforts, the military government does not prioritize citizen protection or any from-below initiatives due to the martial law in the Deep South that was imposed following the 2014 military coup.¹¹ Moreover, reports from international organizations contend that the military government, the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), is failing to promote human rights in general (Human Rights Watch, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2016). This situation shows how different understandings of the notion of security could lead to a deadlock. Such a deadlock can become a potential blowback to any peacebuilding effort since it prolongs the status quo on security (see also, Liow, 2006; von Feigenblatt, 2011).

Responding to such an incoherent plan, and to strengthen the implementation of UNSCR 1325, SDG 5, and SDG 16, women's groups have demanded that the Thai government deconstruct the notion of security – as part of a larger notion of non-violent society – and go beyond its current focus on state security (Thailand Universal Periodic Review, 2017; Universal Periodic Review Info, 2017). The goal is that, by incorporating grassroots women's voices on security, which could be directly applied within the community, the Thai government could effectively implement the WPS resolution. Such efforts have been fruitful since several national forums commenced in 2015 and 2016, organized in Bangkok and Songkhla, respectively. In these initiatives, along with scholars and state officers of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, a large number of women from different networks were invited, including the leaders from Islamic communities, such as the Peace Agenda of Women (PAOW), a network of 23 women's organizations. Through these forums, the Thai government also aims to endow grassroots women with a basic knowledge of SCR 1325 (Government Prioritizes UN Policy, 2015). Apart from the bureaucratic complexity, this development on various international discourses on WPS that are currently taking place in the Deep South show that there is a national recognition of the added value that women can bring to peace implementation in partnership with the UN and state agencies, even though women do not understand all the technical matters in relation to a dominant strategic plan for SCR 1325.¹²

10 The Thai government announced the finalization of the National Action Plan (NAP) for Women, Peace and Security. However, no timeline or budget has specifically been allocated to the NAP (Peace Women, 2018).

11 Thailand's recent general election results in May 2019 entail that the NCPO continues to maintain their power over an elected parliament since the military coup in 2014 (McCargo, 2019, pp. 153-222).

12 Interviews with two scholars from the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, who attended the forum as observers, Pattani, 10 December 2016.

PEACEBUILDING FROM BELOW: SALAFI DISCOURSE AND WOMEN'S CONSOLIDATION

To tackle the bureaucratic complexities and the limitation of the state's notion of security, women's rights activists, practitioners, and academics aim to broaden the security framework for women in the Deep South. They have sought to conceptualize more holistic notions of peacekeeping, particularly notions that members of grassroots organizations could acknowledge and practice. A leader of the Southern Women Network Overcoming Violence, Rosidah Pusu, has complained to SBPAC that the government needs to work on female violence in order to gain larger support from the local community. In this call for a broader framework of security that goes beyond ending the insurgency, Malay-Muslim women have found themselves actively involved in civil society activities as representatives of sensitive and women's issues. Local Muslim women have consolidated the peacebuilding effort through the Council of Muslim Women's Organization Cooperation for Peace (CMCP) – a network of 21 Muslim women's organizations which was established in 2011.¹³ As more local – and specifically women – actors have become involved in the peacebuilding process, my research indicates that a new notion of security has gained a foothold in the region, this is peace which draws on the Islamic traditional framework.

Applying the theological approach of Salafism, CMCP aims to apply a purified belief and practices to strengthen a peaceful society in Patani region. It holds a *multaqa Muslimah* (Muslim women congress) as an annual activity. CMCP claims that for peacebuilding goals to succeed in the region, a campaign for structural reform is necessary to secure women's presence in the peacebuilding process and to generate social recognition of women's roles in the traditional Islamic patriarchal society. They do not dismiss religious discourse in this matter. Instead, they attempt to find an alternative path to build peace in society by using their professional platform as religious intellectuals. Hamidah Adae, the group's leader and one of my main interlocutors, has played a significant role as an advisor for the network of the Southern Muslim Women's Association (SMWA). Hamidah became deeply involved with the women's network after her retirement from the College of Islamic Studies of Prince of Songkhla University in 2011. She often delivers speeches and shares her religious knowledge of Islamic peace concepts with students and villagers.

Since the group emerged, a more religious model, based on the Islamic culture of peace and non-violence, has gained prominence. As a *halaqah*, an Islamic study circle, the group differs from those sponsored by the state or international NGOs. CMCP's members gather in houses or university meeting rooms in which they establish their own space. Hamidah and other group leaders, such as Maraim 'kak Yae' Samoh¹⁴, act as the consultant of each *halaqah*. Through group intervention specifically targeted at healing the mental wounds of conflict through the adoption of a spiritual approach, they personally coach the members in dealing with their trauma. This spiritual approach as a healing method is important since women in conflict

13 Their local cleric is Dr. Ismail Lutfi Chapakiya, the rector of Fatoni University, who published a book to promote peacebuilding from a religious perspective entitled *Islam Sassanha Haeng Santiphap (Islam the Religion of Peace)* (2011).

14 Maraim 'kak Yae' Samoh is active in the Social Action Party (*Phak Kit Sangkhom*) since 1976.

areas revealed that many people have been drawn into the insurgency, neither for the liberation of the region nor for religious reasons, but in a quest for personal revenge after their family members were arrested, tortured, and stereotyped as murderous Malays by security forces.

Accordingly, alongside the political steps towards conflict resolution— such as the WPS agenda and UNSCR 1325 – as operable methods to overcome political grievance, the spiritual narrative of peacebuilding should also be recognized as an effective approach in the peacebuilding process. It provides a normative justification for peace that could change the actors' worldview. The *halaqah* group applies the pedagogy of persuasion to establish a peaceful space for women, students, and lecturers. This approach also aims at the attainment of inner peace. In their *halaqah*, participants assert the importance of reciting the Qur'anic verses regarding inner and outer peace (chapter 60, verse 7) and non-violence (chapter 4, verse 29). They also repeatedly brought the historical example of ethical and strategic acts of non-violence, such as the Treaty of Hudabiyya, which is seen to exemplify concessions on the part of the Prophet in order to secure peace.¹⁵ Seventeen CMCP members also attribute the act of non-violence to the avoidance of confrontation and quest for a peaceful co-existence by referencing the time when the Prophet Muhammad sent Muslims to the Christian King in Ethiopia to seek asylum from persecution by the Meccans.¹⁶

While the ethical subjects and the Prophet's exemplary decisions are taken as ideological references, members of CMCP also undergo a transitional phase through different dimensions by reflecting on their own lives and traumatic narratives. For example, they have to learn the notion of peace within the context of *sulh*, or peaceful resolution, in oneself. They refer to *sulh* in Ibn Qayyim's interpretation, in which the term appears as the key concept of peace and reconciliation and the opposite of conflict and war.¹⁷ In this notion of reconciliation, CMCP members also mention the idea of patience (*sabr*) as a tool for succeeding in finding inner peace and for supporting conflict transformation processes, where the internal struggle with oneself as the 'greater jihad' is important as the main narrative of self-transformation. These applications of Islamic narratives of peace are crucial, according to my interlocutor, to end the personal and emotional impulse of revenge.

As one of the pressing issues to be addressed in peacebuilding is to break down the entanglement between the various conceptualizations of peacebuilding and reconciliation to practical implementation, CMCP also urges their members to be actively involved in promoting women's participation in peacebuilding in cooperation with other grassroots women and the state. This includes urging their members to take membership in women's organizations that can play an important role in maintaining the social and political fabric of their communities, such as the above-mentioned Southern Women Network Overcoming Violence and Peace Agenda of Women

15 A peace treaty was signed between the Muslims of Medinah and the Quraysh tribe as the Mecca opposition in 628. The treaty came about as the Quraysh did not grant Muslims access to the holy site in Mecca. In order to make peace and decrease tensions between the two cities, the treaty enabled the Muslim community to perform their pilgrimage the following years (Armstrong, 2007, pp. 175-181).

16 Interview with two women scholars in Pattani, 8 December 2018.

17 Ibn Qayyim employs the salafi hermeneutic and follows Ibn Taymiyya's exegesis on different issues (Moustafa, 2017, pp. 1-43).

(PAOW). PAOW was established by local women leaders with the assistance of both national and international donors and has gathered different groups from the Chinese and Malay ethnic communities. As an interethnic and interreligious organization, PAOW has a significant role as the link between current peace negotiations and the current women's peace network.

One of PAOW's achievements, as my interviews with its leaders reveal, was the implementation of safety zones in 2005, which were agreed upon by the Thai military government and the *Mara Patani* (*Majlis Syura Patani*, the Patani Consultative Council), a coalition of several Patani Malay separatist groups.¹⁸ Today, POAW's concept of safety zone is still the most referenced strategy on the issue of women's participation in peace processes from the Thai government, the Mara Patani, local human rights activists, and groups of academics (Peace Survey, 2019). Buranajaroenkij's (2017, p. 12) study finds that PAOW has been influential in the conflict area in promoting the idea of resistance against violence while urging women to take a social role as "peace-makers". The PAOW advocates that those who have limited access to justice should increase women's public representation by mobilizing women in the public arena. It was able to deliver tangible results and increase women's representation at the peace negotiation table. In my observation, today, PAOW has become the most preferable representative of actors in civil society to advocate women's involvement in peacebuilding, particularly as a middleperson who can invite various conflicting parties to a dialog forum. Because of its effective civil society organization and strategic integration of women into public affairs, various parties in the conflict area consider members of PAOW as influential actors in the peacebuilding process.

Regardless of its success, PAOW is facing numerous challenges. Abdulsomad's (2017) study on women's participation in the Pattani peace process finds that one of the obstacles to PAOW's gender-inclusive participation is a lack of political literacy. Thus, she argues, the meaningful participation of women at the negotiating table, which is one of the most fundamental components of the WPS agenda, is largely unattainable. To this, my interlocutors responded that cultural gender practices have caused the difficulties to attain political literacy. My PAOW interlocutors explained that political knowledge and skills in politics are still largely men's domain. At the same time, meaningful participation in the ceasefire negotiation is often still regarded as the sphere of (male) security actors.¹⁹ It is understood as the responsibility of men from different parties on the battlefield.

18 In 2013, the first formal peace talk was initiated by Yingluck Shinawatra's government. It acknowledged the need for a political solution to the conflict. Dialog parties involved only the Thai government and the most powerful separatist group, *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (BRN, National Revolutionary Front). The second round in 2015 was followed by the military. This time, talks were held with Mara Patani as a new actor but without BRN at the table (Pathan, 2019). Scholars argue that talks that do not include the BRN are meaningless because the people who are able to control the fighters are not at the negotiating table. The BRN refuses to join the peace talks unless some conditions are fulfilled. These include the release of political prisoners, amnesty for the BRN delegation, and an impartial international third party to mediate the talks (International Crisis Group, 2016). The government has been avoiding the internationalization of the conflict which could lead to foreign involvement (McDermott, 2013).

19 The call for safety zones has been adopted by women representatives as a security notion in the Deep South to promote peace. The panel that represents Malay-Muslim separatist leaders in exile had proposed to launch a limited ceasefire in the conflict area to enhance the peaceful resolution (International Crisis Group, 2016).

There is also an inherent stereotype of women's security within certain spaces. For example, groups of women's rights advocates and members of civil society, with whom I have cooperated for advancing gender equality in Muslim dominated areas, express that PAOW's suggested safety zones agreement and the peacebuilding efforts in Patani are actually less gender-sensitive than expected. The safety zone concept with its focus on removing the conflict from certain spaces, such as markets, places of worship, and schools, has not raised gender security in larger public spaces.²⁰ The choices to secure these spaces are based on the common stereotype of where women conduct their activities, and are hardly about ensuring human security in general. With such a lack of comprehensiveness in implementing the WPS agenda, the proposed idea of women as peacemakers continues to position the role of women in the peacebuilding process as supporting an agenda developed by men. PAOW has also been criticized by other women's groups because they have been neglecting other important issues, especially ending torture, extrajudicial killings, and sexual as well as gender-based violence (women's forum in Narathiwat, 24 March 2017).

Furthermore, women leaders in PAOW, such as Soraya Jamjuree and Patimoh Poh-etae-da-o, who are acknowledged by the state and international agencies such as OWAFD and UN Women as representatives of the women's group to become the driving force for women participation in the peace process, have raised two key normative issues in our several interviews. First, mainstreaming Salafi peace discourse is challenging because Salafism has often been blamed for religious fundamentalism that has deepened the conflict. The term Salafi is a sensitive tin in Thailand since it is related to religious fundamentalism and rebellious movements against a secular state; although this is not the case in southern Thailand. Followers and leaders of the Salafi movement, thus, rather prefer to identify themselves as *ahli sunnah wal jammah*.

Salafism as one of the Islamic reformist movements has urged Muslims to return to and strictly follow the sacred sources and to purify Islamic ideas and practices from later innovations (*bid'ah*). Such fundamentalist views have often been assessed as exclusively religious and incompatible with the spirit of democratic dialog. Thailand's Salafi movement, however, has advocated peace for social change through *tarbiyyah* (education) by working within the Thai constitutional framework. In Pattani, Salafi women's groups are highly influenced by the teachings of the well-known traditionalist orthodox religious leader Ismail Lutfi Chapakia who is the founding rector of Fatoni University and an avid promoter of peacebuilding. As a local, he is also the most respected contemporary religious leader of the Saudi style of Salafism in Thailand to provide a religious narrative of peace (Liow, 2011, pp. 29-58; Yahprung, 2014).

Women's activism requires a reconstruction of the practiced norms of women's position in the Islamic society and their roles within the household. Hence, although PAOW was successful in bringing various actors to peace negotiations, it has since

20 I am the main author of a joint CEDAW shadow report entitled "The Situation of the Rights of Malay-Muslim Women in Southern Thailand". It was submitted to the CEDAW committee and written by the PATANI Working Group for Monitoring of International Mechanisms (2017). The working group is mainly comprised of local advocates, members of civil society, academics, human rights activists, and lawyers from a collective of 14 organizations and networks. The report focuses primarily on the issues faced by Muslim women in Thailand's Deep South in general, but also on security issues they face in public spaces.

been prevented, if not excluded, from participating in the formal peace dialog because women in general are not viewed as representatives in the traditionally patriarchal Islamic society.

Due to the tendency of women to be favorable towards the peace project, women's groups have taken on new tasks and responsibilities. They are key partners on the ground to support and advocate peace policies and their related strategies. Accordingly, in this context, WPS should be understood as a part of the peacekeeping process in which the formal participation of women and their representation are highlighted. Women's groups have an important role to play not only in preserving existing social norms but also in changing traditional social roles during a time of conflict. In many forums I have attended, the contention was raised that the enduring conflict has changed traditional roles, and particularly how it has opened new spaces for women to redefine social norms and gender relations. When Malay-Muslim women acquire new social status through new responsibilities, it challenges existing social norms about women's roles in civil society. For example, as their husbands had died because of the armed conflict, many women became the sole recognized caregiver of the family replacing male dominance. Yet, the voices of these women-victims are not united in public affairs because there is an absence of a unifying forum. Accordingly, as a collective, women's groups lack the legitimacy to participate in peacebuilding discussions and are undermined by their male counterparts. This situation hinders their advancement towards increased participation.

Disagreement also emerges between activists. Although both share a common goal on delivering a gender equality narrative to the public, PAOW leaders like Soraya and Patimoh do not share the same strategy and trajectory in advancing the gender discourse. Soraya expressed that Malay-Muslim women are expected to firstly finish household chores and receive permission from their husbands before they leave their homes to engage in public affairs. Thus, she views that women's activism as peacebuilding engagement without completing these requirements could evoke a rupture in tradition.

Patimoh, the director of the women's advocacy group We Peace, by contrast, tends to focus on changing the gender norms in which Soraya operates. Patimoh and her team urge for greater women's participation in the political sphere. Women should not have to ask for permission as they have already earned a seat at the negotiating table. In her argument, household tasks need to be shared with male family members because women are now sharing the role of peace keepers. Patimoh highlights her activities on gender-based violence, women's human rights, and their inclusion in politics. She chooses to adopt the tool of changing social norms rather than playing by them. By working with the government and receiving funds from national and international donors, her group's activities frequently include both men and women. She has been criticized by women in the network and local religious leaders for risking Malay-Muslim women's religiosity as they work in a mixed-sex context. An ideal situation would be if local men could also recognize the importance of their wives' activism. For example, in the case of kak Yae, her candidacy for the Social Action Party right after her graduation from a university in Malaysia was encouraged by her husband and male local Malay politicians (Marddent, 2017, pp. 229-246).

FUTURE CHALLENGE: MAKING GENDER NORMS WORK

Women's groups and Deep South civil society organizations have been studying the peace process in neighboring countries, such as in Mindanao, the Philippines, and in Aceh, Indonesia. They found that the WPS agenda and related tools have been successfully applied and implemented, particularly through NAPs for those areas.²¹ Therefore, women's groups and a few other activists in Patani are trying to apply the models of peace resolution from those two areas as a means to encourage the mainstreaming of gender equality norms as an intermediate step for the peace process.²² The question is then: Which gender norms could be applied – or which are even suitable – in the context of the conflict in Thailand's Deep South?

Although gender relations vary depending on culture and other aspects, it is accepted among theorists that gender is a set of discourses that represent and construct the social meaning of being a woman or a man (Connell, 1990). Gender discourses also affect how men and women are positioned in conflict areas, as configurations of gender security are also operationalized in the local context. Here, the work of Yaliwe Clarke (2013), who has intensively researched a range of civil society organizations in military societies with a state-centric approach to security in the south of Africa, is essential. She develops analytic perspectives around the meaning of gendered security for women, and therefore argues that security should be focused on "collective security" through which women are also ascribed the right to being "secure". She proposes that legislation simply does not change norms; norms would likely change through dialog and learning spaces as well as through arguments and agreements that would encourage the change (Björnberg, 2012). Clarke's (2013, p. 89) perspective on gender and security traces the debates concerning women's situated knowledge and the essential aspect of peaceful femininities.

In conflict areas, she underscores the role of militarized patriarchal gender identities and the place of subservient masculinities and femininities as root causes of war. In her analysis, the ways in which the complex relationship between gendered capitalist processes and militarism has impacted women are particularly important (Clarke, 2013, pp. 88-90). Consequently, security in the feminist security framework has expanded beyond state security to human security. To reconceptualize violence from the perspective of feminist scholarship, violence at home and in war ought to be considered equal violations of human – particularly women's – security. Thus, if we follow Clarke's approach, gender norms in the security narrative of Thailand's Deep South need to be viewed from the two main subject positions of women: (1) as victims of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence; and (2) as agents of change.

This paper has exemplified how local women leaders have attempted to catalyze a security discourse that is akin to what Clarke (2013) identifies as being essential for a gender-sensitive concept of security. In relation to the comprehensive concept of collective human security, women have already proposed extending the scope of the agenda to create peace and stability for individuals and society. They also put

21 Countries that have adopted a NAP in support of UNSCR 1325 are currently on the list of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (2019).

22 Discussion with two human rights analysts and human rights defenders, Bangkok, 6 July and 10 September 2018.

high consideration on the designs offered by the state and the UN while also having attempted to navigate these powerful sets of permissible and reproducible hierarchical ordering policies with pragmatic peacebuilding steps. In this endeavor they have used Salafism as a peacebuilding narrative and have shown how a fundamentalist religious narrative could support a peacebuilding effort in a secular state.

The complexity arises, then, not only from the dimension of participation, but the contestation of norms as they are negotiated with their religious and traditional values as well as the tools the state makes available to them in their attempts to create an alternative setting for peacebuilding. For example, from the critical point of view of women activists in the region, the WPS agenda might be the step needed for including more women from grassroots levels, but the state's implementation of the agenda, specifically its failure to include it in a NAP, fails to be transformative. Thus, women leaders have to navigate both the patriarchal culture and the structural setting of religious society and the state's failure to consider their voices in their policies to address what they term "unrest". They further criticize the state's implementation of the WPS agenda as it does not aim at structural change in the region but supports gender inequality. Thus, women's meaningful participation in peace processes has become stuck or entangled not only within state agendas and global bureaucracy of norms, but also on the ladder of existing local social norms.

To breakdown traditional structures and the militarization of society, local women peacebuilders confront the obstacle of inequalities with socio-cultural spaces that attempt to address the difficulties women face in trying to obtain a seat at the negotiating table. The masculine 'heroes', the Thai military government, and the current opposition party, Mara Patani, have been officially ascribed a peacekeeping role. This is intimately connected to the traditionally gendered norms that promote the power of men over women. Proposals made by women are only seen as symbolic, as women cannot be a part of the formal decision-making process. Moreover, the collective forms of development remain in managing the existing situation of women in conflict areas. Nevertheless, women are busy working on the ground. Their time is occupied not only by taking care of family members but also by running projects and mobilizing women in the communities to get engaged – no matter how limited – in peace forums.

During the ongoing conflict in the southernmost provinces of Thailand, consideration of gender and contextual aspects are fundamental dimensions that all stakeholders should address to reach a gendered solution to both war and peace. In relation to the WPS agenda, it still has a clear aspiration towards deconstructing patriarchal gender orders in favor of equality. Social norms enable gender discrimination, and this, in turn, limits women's abilities to engage in the formal level of peace processes. If significant steps forward are to be made in taking a gender-based approach to the issue of security, the notion of equality and meaningful participation of women in human and social security are crucial matters that need to be addressed in the relationship between gender and security.

CONCLUSION

In order to address gender-sensitivity in peace processes, local women are pushing for a public discourse on women's peace policy, including the UNSCR 1325

and subsequent resolutions²³, the CEDAW, SDG 5, and SDG 16 in particular. They accordingly hope to join negotiations as part of the state's top-down peacebuilding policy and carve out a space for more bottom-up and gender-sensitive peacebuilding processes while also reconceptualizing local norms in order to formally guarantee more gender freedom. The WPS agenda, UNSCR 1325, and its related mechanisms will not be able to deliver greater peacebuilding success if these are only interpreted as a means to fit women into the current peace and security paradigm, rather than as opportunities for assessing and redefining peace and security through a gender perspective.

In Thailand's Deep South, the meaningful participation of women in peace processes has been wedged between the state's top-down agenda and the hierarchy of local social norms that often put women in marginalized positions: on one hand, men's dominant military notion of security and, on the other hand, religious and traditional discourses about the role of women in society. Thus, in order to create a collective notion of security, it is necessary to address the sources of inequality and to identify the decision-making institutions in conflict resolution. Efforts to strengthen women's participation in conflict resolution should go beyond the evaluation of participation rates; they should also recognize their role as agents in delivering both formal and informal peacemaking policies. Accordingly, evaluating women's participation in the peacebuilding process should also pay attention to the implementation of the WPS agenda as well as other related mechanisms, and look at how they are consequently contested. This paper provides examples of how women actors' sense of ownership in the peacebuilding agendas is also diverse. Women belong to different agencies, and this means that they are associated with different groups and networks. Moreover, as the differences between the PAOW, CMCP, Soraya's, and Patimoh's circles show, they have various means and strategies to achieve their conceptualization of peace. There is, therefore, no one-size fits all policy for engaging women in the peacebuilding process. Conflict resolution in Patani is challenging; there are multiple points of view, and when certain policies and local norms are inconsistent in providing a space for women, they place women on a lower step in the hierarchy than men. This is primarily the result of how women are positioned in a specific context, this is the home.



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23 These are resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019) (UN Women, 2019).

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