

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Three years have passed and many lives of officials and civilians have been lost in the deep south, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel as to how the southern problem could be brought to an end. As a person who followed the situation, the apology uttered by Prime Minister Surayud delighted me. But unfortunately, the situation saw little improvement. Perhaps, what was dominated too much in this tragedy was the government effort to end the problem while, as this paper attempted to prove, the role of effective global civil society was comparatively slim.

Elsewhere, social movements seem likely to introduce some change. The efforts of Japanese and South Korean social activists to bring the mental suffering of Korean comfort into global agenda was well documented, especially after this issue was highlighted by media organizations.<sup>64</sup> Even before the arrival of the global human rights agenda, the effort of international voluntary associations to stop state-regulated or legalized prostitution in European countries was a success despite the different time durations. However, the global civil society has been unable to contribute to the betterment on the problem of Thailand's southern violence in the globalized 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Perhaps, the activities of those global nongovernmental organizations are too specific to allow them to be more instrumental to solve various problems. Probably, it is because they primarily focus on human rights rather than other issues.

As I have contended, the activities of global civil society, as of now, are unable to attain achievable results because of the sentiment of otherness. The majority Thai population do not seem to think that those in the south are Thais. They only consider those living in the south as *khaek* who should not be trusted. As discussed, the otherness was constructed by historical differences. The flow of opinion in internet discussion which is a form of public sphere is sadly unable to exercise its influence. The absence of face-to-face interaction, provided by internet, allows net

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<sup>64</sup> Tsutsui, p. 339.

surfers to hide their own identities under various internet accounts and usernames. This is the reason why cybersalon—the internet interaction and discussion which traverses physical borders—cannot mobilize voice of net surfers to create any tangible changes unlike the actual and face-to-face interaction in actual salon which can establish and maintain public sphere standing between state and the public. Besides, general conditions of democratic Thailand can facilitate political activities. Thailand enjoys a high level of political openness because it possesses democratic regime<sup>65</sup>, the presence of nongovernmental organizations and the free inflow and outflow of information.<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, I propose, the media themselves are powerful in playing the role of amplifier of voices which can shake the government. However, the extent of media influence remains unable to help improve the southern situation. It is because the reportage of mass media—local and international alike—is state-centric in the sense that reporters have to play it safe in reporting by relying on official sources all the time in order to collect the information on the mishaps in the south. Time and budget constraints force all local and international news organizations to bank on reports filed by stringers or local freelance reporters. Most of stringers maintain good ties with officials in the area to enable them to easily access information. And some stringers file news reports to more than one agency so what has happened is monopoly of information by local reporters who possess good tie with officials.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Though the military coup ousted elected government on September 19, 2006, the political structure of the kingdom remained unchanged. There were National Legislative Assembly (NLA) to serve as legislative branch and there was a cabinet. At yearend, it is expected that there will be a general election to regain fully-fledge democracy to the country.

<sup>66</sup> Caraway.

<sup>67</sup> Ganjanakhundee, Phone Interview.