Civil–Military Cooperation in Disaster Relief Operations: A Case Study of the 2004 Sumatra–Andaman Earthquake Disaster Relief Operation in Thailand
ความร่วมมือระหว่างทหารและพลเรือนในปฏิบัติการบรรเทาภัยพิบัติ: กรณีศึกษา เหตุการณ์แผ่นดินไหวในคาบสมุทรสุมาตรา–อันดามัน ปี พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๗ ณ ประเทศไทย

บทความวิจัย

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Abstract

The 2004 Sumatra-Andaman earthquake in the Indian Ocean was one of the deadliest natural disasters in the world recorded history which caused massive impacts on 14 countries including 6 provinces in the southern part of Thailand. The relief operation for this disaster was the biggest multilateral disaster relief operation of all time. Approximately, 35 countries provided more than 30,000 military personnel and munitions for emergency assistances. Moreover, 14 UN specialized agencies, 38 local organizations, and 195 international humanitarian organizations also joined the operation over the 3-month period.

In Thailand, both military and civilian authorities played very important role in the relief mission. The article aims to illustrate the civil-military cooperation at the operational level including the related arguments dealing with civil-military cooperation in disaster relief operation.

The findings of the study reveal the cooperation between military personnel and civilian occurred on the basis of case by case. The chains of command between military and civilian sectors were separated. The relationship between two sectors was quite informal and depended much on personnel connection. Even though no Civil-Military Operation Center (CMOC) was set up, good relationship between them was found. Mutual trust occurred throughout civil-military

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coordination. Different chains of command between civilian and military units were satisfactory when there were good and adequate points of contact. Besides, personal connection as well as official relations, either separately or coordinately, provided strength in many aspects of the operation such as trust and respect, good teamwork, compatibility, unity of effort, quick response, and happiness among aid providers.

Keywords: Disaster relief operation, Civil-military cooperation, 2004 Sumatra-Andaman earthquake in the Indian Ocean

บทคัดย่อ

เหตุการณ์แผ่นดินไหวและคลื่นสึนามิในมหาสมุทรอินเดีย เมื่อปี พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๗ เป็นภัยพิบัติทางธรรมชาติครั้งใหญ่ที่สุดครั้งหนึ่งในประวัติศาสตร์โลก สร้างความสูญเสียแก่ชีวิตและทรัพย์สินของผู้ประสบภัยใน ๑๔ ประเทศ รวมทั้ง ๖ จังหวัด ฝั่งทะเลอันดามันของประเทศไทย ปฏิบัติการบรรเทาภัยพิบัติต่อเหตุการณ์ครั้งนี้ ถือเป็นปฏิบัติการระดับพหุภาคีที่ใหญ่ที่สุดครั้งหนึ่งในประวัติศาสตร์ กำลังทางการทหารจากกว่า ๓๕ ประเทศ จำนวนมากกว่า ๓๐,๐๐๐ นาย พร้อมยุทโธปกรณ์ รวมทั้งบุคลากรจากองค์กรชำนาญการพิเศษแห่งสหประชาชาติ ๑๔ องค์กร องค์กรท้องถิ่น ๓๘ องค์กร และองค์กรเพื่อมนุษยธรรมระหว่างประเทศ ๑๙๕ องค์กร เข้าร่วมในปฏิบัติการบรรเทาภัยพิบัติ เป็นระยะเวลามากกว่า ๓ เดือน

สำหรับปฏิบัติการในประเทศไทย ทั้งกำลังพลทางการทหารและภาคพลเรือนเข้าร่วมให้ความช่วยเหลือแก่ผู้ประสบภัย บทความนี้มีเป้าประสงค์ที่จะศึกษาถึงความร่วมมือระหว่างทหารและพลเรือนในระดับปฏิบัติการ รวมถึงศึกษาข้อโต้เถียงที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความร่วมมือระหว่างทหารและพลเรือนในปฏิบัติการบรรเทาภัยพิบัติ

จากการศึกษาพบว่า ความร่วมมือระหว่างทหารและพลเรือนที่เกิดขึ้นบนพื้นฐานเฉพาะกรณีเป็นกรณี ๆ ไป สายบังคับบัญชาระหว่างทั้งสองภาคส่วนแยกออกจากกัน ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างกันค่อนข้างเป็นไปในทิศทางที่ไม่เป็นทางการ และขึ้นอยู่กับความสัมพันธ์ส่วนบุคคล แม้ว่าจะไม่ได้มีการจัดตั้งศูนย์ปฏิบัติการร่วม (CMOC) แต่ความร่วมมือเป็นไปด้วยดี ความเชื่อใจเกิดขึ้นตลอดการปฏิบัติงาน การแยกสายบังคับบัญชาไม่เป็นอุปสรรคต่อการทำงาน ในกรณีที่มีผู้ประสานงานที่ดีและเพียงพอ นอกจากนั้นยังพบว่าความสัมพันธ์ส่วนบุคคล รวมถึงความสัมพันธ์แบบเป็นทางการ นำมาซึ่งจุดแข็งหลายประการ เช่น ความไว้ใจและความเคารพระหว่างกัน การทำงานเป็นทีมที่ดี การเข้ากันได้นำไปสู่ความมีเอกภาพ การตอบสนองต่อเหตุการณ์ที่รวดเร็ว และความสุขระหว่างการทำงานของผู้ให้ความช่วยเหลือ

คำสำคัญ: ปฏิบัติการบรรเทาภัยพิบัติ, ความร่วมมือระหว่างทหารและพลเรือน, เหตุการณ์แผ่นดินไหวในมหาสมุทรอินเดีย พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๗

I. Introduction: Changes in international environment & the concept of Military Operation Other Than War (MOOTW)

Security paradigm has significantly changed after the Cold War ended. While traditional security which is the security over state territory still firmly sustains its status, the non-traditional security has become increasingly more important especially in international affairs. Scholars in the security studies field have divided the non-traditional threats in several different ways. However, according to Divya Srikanth, the rise of non-state actors, impact of intra-state conflicts, degeneration of the environment, sweeping demographic changes and the cyber-warfare arena have replaced inter-state wars which have been the main threats to national security in the 21st century (Srikanth, 2014). As the threats to human well-being, the emerging of non-traditional threats corresponds directly to the principle of humanitarianism. Whenever a great number of human lives are seriously affected and become terribly insecure, relief operations are necessary.

Due to the changes in international affairs stated above, the military have adjusted its role. The range of military operations has been widening from the combat operations in both war and conflict circumstances to those non-combat ones in both conflict and peacetime environment as shown in Table 1.
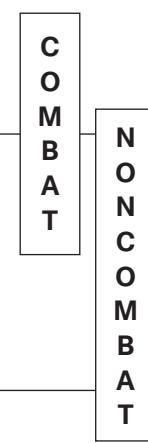
STATES OF THE ENVIRONMENT	GOAL	MILITARY OPERATIONS			EXAMPLES
WAR	Fight and Win	WAR	C O M B A T	N O N C O M B A T	• Large-scale combat • operation s... • Attack • Defend
CONFLICT	Deter War and Resolve Conflict	OTHER THAN WAR			• Strikes anf raids • Peacemaking • Support to insurgency • Antiterrorism • Peacekeeping • NEO
PEACETIME	Promote Peace	OTHER THAN WAR			• Counterdrug • Disaster relief • Civil Support • Peace building • Nation assistance

Table: The range of military operation

Source: Range of Military Operations (Army, 1993)

MOOTW involve international anti-crime effort, disaster relief, social affairs, national development, environmental conservation, national productivity, and international cooperation. New emerging roles of the military in this new era, therefore, are as follows:

1) To develop and master the technology in handling the arsenal and management of the armed forces;

2) To adjust the size of the armed forces and to increase their potentiality;

3) To perform the new role of MOOTW emphasizing national development and social affairs.

(Punluekdej, 2009).

According to the Joint Pub 3-07, the Joint Doctrine for MOOTW, there are six fundamental principles of MOOTW: 1) Objective [direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective], 2) Unity of effort [seek unity of effort in every operation], 3) Security [never permit hostile factions to acquire a military, political, or informational advantage], 4) Restraint [apply appropriate military capability prudently], 5) Perseverance [prepare for the measured, protracted application of military capability in support of strategic aims], and 6) Legitimacy [committed forces must sustain the legitimacy of the operation and of the host government] (Staff, 1995).

While the first three of these principles derived from the principles of war, the remaining three are MOOTW-specific. Many MOOTW may be conducted on short notice and last for a relatively short period of time. The joint doctrine further indicates the crucial points the authorities-in-charge need to consider for MOOTW planning. These points consist of unit integrity, intelligence and information gathering, command and control (C2), public affairs, civil Affairs (CA), logistics, commanders, and success. The last point, success, will be found in professional, skilled, trained, educated, and disciplined soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen (Staff, 1995).

In performing MOOTW, as in the case of disaster relief operation, implementation might come before the actual understanding of the whole operation. That is why leadership is the most important factor. The commander-in-charge must possess the ability to cope with the deteriorating situation at hand and give command as soon as possible. Disaster relief operations and other operations in humanitarian assistance as well as peacekeeping operations require different types of skills other than combat skills. The commander of the rescue unit, therefore, is expected to acquire a different 'mindset' other than the one relating to fighting skills (Punluekdej, 2009).

Nowaday, the armed forces have provided the active role in disaster relief operation according

to the irpotentialities. The cooperation between military personnel and civilians, then, becomes the controversial issue throughout the humanitarian community.

II. Literature review

As mentioned above, military's participation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operation has been increasing. Many scholars pointed out that such operation is also the common part of military life. For national military personnel, it is the primary mission for domestic disaster relief. Recently, some military personnel even play more important role in strategic planning for humanitarian assistance at the national level. (Arcala Hall, 2009; Bartko, 2012; Fischer, 26 July 2011; Madiwale & Virk, 2011; Shabab, Ali, Iqbal, & Awan, 2015; Thapa, 2016; Weeks, 2007; Wheeler & Harmer, 2006).

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is traditionally a civilian-domain operation. Thus, when military share their expertise to the mission, civil-military relations becomes the most contro versial issue in the field. According to the literature reviewed, two groups of arguments can be summarized.

The first group emphasizes the difficulties, dilemma and several issues which could occur among civilian and military actors. Most scholars in this group are always concerned with different

priorities, structure, working method and cultures which can lead to the misunderstanding and confusion including the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, and impartiality [the politicization of aid]. In addition, other concerns for humanitarian arena are the issue of division of labour [overlapping in the tasks], questioning of the leadership of the operation, appropriateness, (Anderson, 1994; Cottey & Bikin-Kita, 2006; Diskett & Randall, 2001; Fischer, 26 July 2011; Gourlay, 2000; Harkin, 2005; Hofmann & Hudson, 2009; Hsieh, 2010; Joyce, 2006; Madiwale & Virk, 2011; Thapa, 2016), little joint planning and training between civilian and military, and the issue of civilian control (Arcala Hall, 2009; Telford & Cosgrave, March 2007). For some relief and development organizations, the use of term 'humanitarian' in relation to military action is opposed (Irish, 2007).

On the contrary, the other group argues that humanitarian community has inclined to accept military during disaster and is willing to make use of military expertise (Barry & Jefferys, 2002; Diskett & Randall, 2001; Harkin, 2005; Heaslip & Barber, 2014; Hofmann & Hudson, 2009). Although at a philosophical level, both are uncomfortable to coordinate with each other but, in the field, they are often effectively cooperate (Heaslip & Barber, 2014). Military involvement is generally favorable. Humanitarian

organizations as well as the public have fewer doubts about the role of the military in providing immediate relief. Therefore, military's role is seen as the crucial guarantor of human security (Malešič, 2015; Williams). In term of the cost effectiveness matter, it is difficult to claim that the use of military assets was always more expensive than civilian equivalents if we considered the use as part of necessary trainings (Harkin, 2005). Therefore, humanitarian relief should be the core task of the armed forces, especially when civilian sectors are overwhelmed by the large-scale disaster. Military operation is a rationale choice (Fischer, 26 July 2011; Malešič, 2015). Some studies raise the necessity of unified assistance operation as the mechanism of effective civilian-military responses (Margolin, Oct 2005; McCartney, October Supplement 2006; Moroney, Pezard, Miller, Engstrom, & Doll, 2013; Shaw, 2013).

Neither the first group nor the second refuse such military's participation in the relief operation but both look into the question about "how best to utilize the resources and infrastructure of the military and when to do so" (Anderson, 1994; Barry & Jefferys, 2002; Gourlay, 2000).

III. Civil-military cooperation in the 2004 Sumatra-Andaman Earthquake Disaster Relief Operation in Thailand

In Thailand, military forces usually participate in the rescue operations in time of natural disasters and accidents. The Thai military, similarly to the military organizations in many developing countries, has the manpower, equipment, command system and communications equipment to deal with such crises (Kumpoopong).

When the disaster occurred in the early morning of December 26, 2004, the Prime Minister put his deputy in charge of the entire relief operation in Southern Thailand. Reporting directly to him were the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Social Affairs, Health as well as the Thai military. The Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs handled the diplomatic community while the Ministry of Interior coordinated the national efforts. The Ministry of Social Affairs focused on housing reconstruction (Province, 2005). The government declined foreign financial assistance but was appreciative of expertise and equipment especially forensics expertise (Studies, 2006).

For the search and rescue mission, the Department of Prevention and Relief of Public Disaster, Ministry of Interior, requested the immediate presence of government personnel, military, police, charity foundations and provincial sections. The Royal Thai Army, the Royal Thai Navy, the Royal Thai Air Force, the Royal Thai Police department, the Red Cross, the Pean

Peung (Pa) Yam Yak Foundation, the Royal Rachapropanukroh Foundation and private volunteer foundations sent their personnel and equipments for immediate help to disaster victims. The Water Transportation and Merchant Marine Department, attached to the Ministry of Transport, the Kusoltam Foundation of Phuket, the Ruam Jai Ku Pai Foundation, Narenthorn Andaman Call Center, the Royal Thai Navy and the flight section of the police and marine police searched for the survivors and corpses (Province, 2005).

The Ministry of Defense deployed a significant amount of resources in aircraft, ships, engineer equipment and troops to assist the civilian disaster relief efforts. Search and rescue came under the direct control of the military. The military's participation in relief operation can be divided into two phases: emergency phase and rehabilitation phase. The former phase included search and rescue mission, logistic support, medical aid, evacuation, infra-structure support, relief center establishment, satellite communication provision, assistance to foreign tourist, corpse collection, and donatives management. The latter phase included the construction of temporary houses and permanent houses for the victims (Studies, 2006).

The cooperation between military person-nel and civilian occurred on the basis of case by case. There was no civil-military operation center (CMOC) and the chains of command between the military and civilian sectors were separated. Among the six affected provinces in the southern part of Thailand, the main headquarter was estab-lished at the city hall of Phuket province where the Deputy Prime Minister who was also Minister of Interior was the incident commander. At Phang-nga province, the most affected area, another Deputy Prime Minister who was also Minister of Natural Resources and Environment was in charge. For the remain ingaffected pro-vinces, namely, Krabi, Ranong, Satun, and Trang, the provincial governors acted as the incident commanders of their own provinces. On the military side, all three branches of armed forces--the Army (RTA), the Navy (RTN), and the Air Force (RTAF), also had their own chains of commands. Only some military units sent their points of contact to join the civilian headquarters at the city halls of all provinces. The relationship between the two sectors was quite informal and depended much on personnel connection.

Diagram 1 shows the overall picture of the involved actors provided relief assistance to the disaster victims

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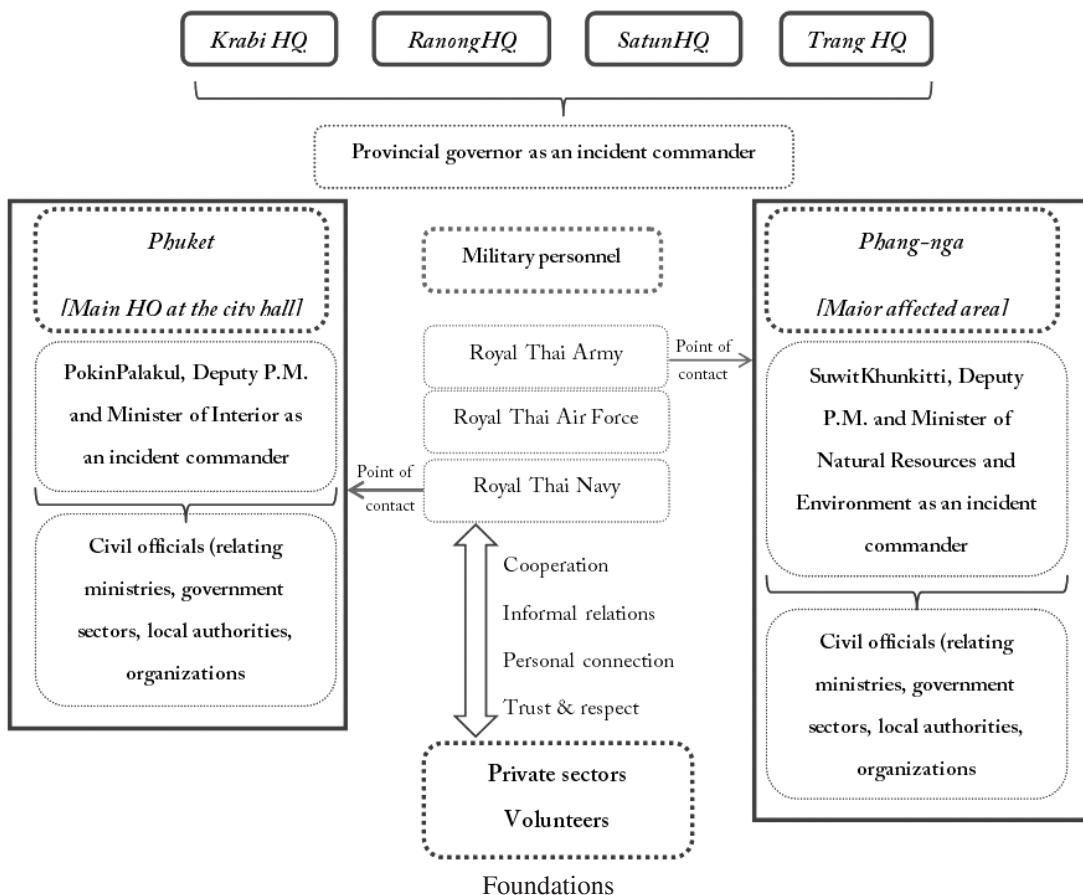
Diagram: Overall picture of the entire operation in the affected areas

The first week of the operation, or the so-called the 'golden period' which was the first 72 hours when lots of lives should be saved, was the most chaotic time of the relief operation. Many problems and limitations affecting the relief operation emerged in both civilian and military units. However, the relations between military and civilian sector were very good during the crisis time, even though Civil-Military Operation Center (CMOC) was not set up and there was no effective liaisons among all leading agencies.

Mutual trust occurred throughout civil-military coordination. Different chains of command between civilian and military units were satisfactory when there were good and adequate points of contact. Personal connection as well as official relations between civilian actors and military actors, either separately or coordinately, provided strength in many aspects of the operation such as trust and respect, good teamwork, compatibility, unity of effort, quick response, and happiness among aid providers.

The following quotes obtained from in-depth interviews reveal the above mentioned statements.

■ **Mutual trust, respect, and good attitude of civilian actors toward military sector**

From the forensic pathologist who dedicatedly worked to identify the corpses, Porntip Rojanasunan:

*There are **3 models of trust.** 1) Don't trust anyone. Work as you are trained; 2) Trust someone sometimes; and 3) Trust every one. At that time, **I trust every military personnel** whom I worked with. People also love military personnel. We know that military personnel will definitely help us. In fact, what they did was over my expectations. There were so many problems and limitations among the civilian authorities and bureaucracy system. Much confusion occurred. Finally, the medical team from the military sector became my consultants. "Military" is my wishing crystal. They have been trained perfectly. Set the goal, provided assistance, evaluated, solved problems, and suggested the idea. The cooperation was even smoother than that with civilian sector (Rojanasunan, 2016).*

From Public Health Technical Officer, Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Provincial Officer and Local Mass Media personnel:

*Military helped a lot. They are well-trained, have clear chains of command, discipline, unity and equipment. In crisis situation, **it is military whom we think of** (Attaveelarp, 2016; Meungpong, 2016; C. Pakbara, 2016; P. Pakbara, 2016).*

From Phuket Provincial Governor's Officer:

*They, military sectors, have their own strategies which are very clear and applicable. The civil-military cooperation was very good during the crisis time. The 3rd Navy Area Command (NAC3) sent its officer to be a point of contact. We arranged a meeting everyday at the city hall. Royal Thai Army (RTA) and RTAF had their own headquarters. In the rehabilitation phase, RTA's engineering units arrived. They are very proficient in rehabilitation. **I was very impressed** by the Navy. They worked with us from the beginning to the end. They immediately provided assistance to our requests (Thongsirisate, 2016).*

From Advisor to the Minister of Interior:

*Military personnel from the 4th Army Area Command were with me from beginning to end. They were very helpful. Without them, I couldn't have imagined how the relief operation would be. I think relief operation is one of the main tasks of the armies. They have **more potentiality than***

၅၆ Civil–Military Cooperation in Disaster Relief Operations: A Case Study of the 2004 Sumatra–Andaman Earthquake Disaster Relief Operation in Thailand

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the civilian sectors. In case of Thailand, the last resort principle cannot be applied. *We need military assistance* (Mokkhavesa, 2016).

■ **Mutual trust and respect of military sector toward civilian partners**

From Royal Thai Army Medical teams:

I told Dr.Porntip Rojanasunan that I and my team came here to support. Please give me command. Dr.Porntip was my only one command post. *We respect each other. Very compromised. We talked and shared, divided tasks.* **Everyone was very happy even though the tasks were very tough** (Imwattana, 2016).

At Yan Yao temple, my team and Dr.Porntip's team worked very well together. **Very tired but very happy.** We worked as if we were from the same organization. On the day I had to leave, I didn't want to go back home (Jayarat, 2016).

From Director of Develop Division, Office of Civil affairs, Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters:

The first-week period, corpse management was very confusing. Several foundations collected victims' bodies unsystematically. Some bodies from the same families were separated to the different temples. My team realized that we needed a system. Thus, I talked with foundations' repre-

sentatives and came out with the solutions-foundations wrapped, military collected. After the establishment of RTA forward detachment, the challenge was how to coordinate with the government. For Phang-nga province, Prime Minister assigned Deputy Prime Minister, Suwit Khunkitti, to be the incident commander. **Fortunately, Suwit quite trusted military sector.** At the beginning, everything had to be reported to Suwit in order to obtain his decision. Later on, he stated that for those in Phuket, Phang-nga, Krabi, and Ranong who needed assistances, they could contact RTA forward detachment directly. With other government sectors, we regularly talked to each other in the meetings. **Several problems could also be solved** (Cheekwang, 2016).

■ **Personnel connection brought about the rapid response**

From the forensic pathologist who dedicatedly worked to identify the corpses, Porntip Rojana-sunan:

In crisis, the readiest unit seems to be military. On that day, I knew, from **one of my military friends**, that there would be one flight from Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) airport in the afternoon. I, then, asked my military friend for permission to join the flight. He allowed. No problem.

It would be too late if I waited for my official chain of command (Rojanasunan, 2016).

IV. Conclusion

In Thailand, the military has been one of the most important forms of organization and sources of collective action. Although the Ministry of Interior and its agencies are mainly in charge of the nation's disaster management, Thai military have also been the key providers of aid to the disaster victims. The civilian authorities always make use of military assets both through the official and unofficial channels. In crisis situation, it is not only civilian authorities, but also ordinary people who have trust and positive attitude toward military personnel. This is probably due to the socio-cultural structure of Thai society and the capability of military sector itself. Royal Thai Armed Forces have been conducting MOOTW since ancient timesunder the term "civil affairs." They have been practiced along with other military operations. Since the most important thing for relief operation depends on the rapid deployment of aid, military become the key potential factor of the successful operation. Recognized the strength of military sector [i.e.command and control system, disciplined manpower, rapid deployment ability, adequate munitions], the other aid providers as well as victims tend to believe that they can rely on military assistance. This generates trust, respect and good teamwork among them. When trust exits, compatibility, unity of effort, and happiness on duty happens. All of these elements are the important mixtures of the successful operation.

Considering the two-group arguments on civil-military cooperation mentioned earlier in literature review, this study is in line with the second group that values the military's involvement as the crucial guarantor of human security. The case study proved that, for Thailand, civil-military relations are not the sources of difficulties or limitations in providing assistance in disaster relief operations. The issues of different priorities and cultures or the division of labour are not the obstruction of the operation. Military involvement is generally favorable. Both civilian authorities and disaster victims always welcome the assistance from the military personnel.

However, what needs to be improved is the whole disaster management system which will provide the efficient communication between all involved agencies in the emergency period. More importantly, the mutual trust building between them should be enhanced and maintained. Civil-military cooperation is one of the most essential mechanisms for the effective disaster relief management. The relations between them should not occur only in the crisis time. Among the disaster management circle, the preparedness phase, to some extent, is the most important step. Mutual plan and strategy, regular joint exercises, common communication terminology,

and single related database system are required. The exchange of liaisons between the relevant organizations could develop trust and understanding among them. When the disaster takes place, what needed is the system that permits those who operate in the preparedness phase to be on ground. Finally, in the post-operational phase, all related aid providers should share the recorded lessons learnt for the better relief operation in the future.

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