

THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYA (CPM) IN THAILAND: THE CASE STUDY OF TAI ROM YEN POLICY

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Abstract

During the Cold War era, the communist insurgency was viewed as a critical threat to national security for the Royal Thai Government, especially the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Nevertheless, throughout the period of Communist insurgency in Thailand (1965-1983), the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) also emerged as a Communist movement that challenged the Thai State in the southern region. This article aims to understand the policy and implementation strategy of Thai government to deal with the CPM, even though it was a significantly reduced danger in relation to the Communist uprising in Thailand. The Study found that the “Tai Rom Yen” (Tranquil South) policy was the first step in the political offensive against the communist movement in the south and also a clear demonstration of the implementation of the Order of the Office of the Prime Minister No. 66/2523 (Order No. 66/2523). This policy represented a significant effort to address the violent circumstances in the south, and the Thai government considered that popular support must be central to its anti-communist strategies. As a result, the execution of the policy resulted in garnering public favour, which was crucial for securing the ultimate triumph over the communists and their eventual disbandment.

Keyword: The Royal Thai Government, The Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), Order No. 66/2523, Tai Rom Yen Policy, Cold War

Introduction

Amidst the ideological struggles of the Cold War, Southeast Asia was marked by communist insurgencies that frequently crossed national borders, challenging state-centered approaches to internal security. One such movement was the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), whose armed struggle was primarily directed against the Malaysian state but whose operational bases were long established in southern Thailand. Despite this transnational dimension, Thailand did not confront the CPM primarily through cross-border military action, but instead relied on a domestically oriented political–military strategy known as the Tai Rom Yen policy.

Existing studies of Thai counterinsurgency have focused largely on the suppression of the Communist Party of Thailand and the role of political leadership in reshaping security policy during the late Cold War. More recent study emphasizes the importance of political legitimacy, development, and negotiated settlement in counterinsurgency, yet little attention

has been paid to how such strategies were applied to foreign insurgent movements operating within national territory. The CPM's presence in southern Thailand thus presents an important but underexplored case.

This article asks how and why the Thai government implemented the Tai Rom Yen policy to suppress the CPM in southern Thailand, and what explains its effectiveness in neutralising a transnational communist organisation. It argues that the policy's success stemmed from Thailand's ability to adapt a domestic political-military framework, combining military containment, political accommodation, and socio-economic development to deprive the CPM of both territorial sanctuary and political legitimacy.

By shifting the analytical focus from domestic insurgency to a foreign-based communist movement, this study extends the scope of study in three ways. Firstly, it contributes to comparative counterinsurgency studies by demonstrating how internal security policies can be used against foreign insurgent organisations without cross-border warfare. Secondly, it adds a borderland perspective to Cold War Southeast Asian history by showing how domestic political strategies shaped regional security outcomes. Finally, it offers broader insights into contemporary debates on conflict resolution and deradicalisation, highlighting the effectiveness of political accommodation over military suppression. The article proceeds by outlining the historical background of the CPM, examining the origins of the Tai Rom Yen policy, analysing its implementation toward the CPM, and assessing its broader implications.

Literature Review

From the founding of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) in 1930 until its dissolution and disarmament in 1989, the party engaged in an ideological battle that lasted over 60 years. It started out as a movement of resistance against the imperialism that had seized control of Southeast Asia starting in the late 18th century onwards. The conflict intensified following the Second World War, inflicting significant harm on the Malaysian populace and government, although the CPM did not provide a direct security threat to Thailand.

Based on the previously indicated information, the researcher enquired about the number of publications regarding the CPM, particularly those about Thailand's relations with the CPM. The literature on this topic was surveyed by compiling data from books, articles, research papers, and theses written in both Thai and English. Despite the lack of a primary focus, the sample works were examined since some of the material was helpful in examining problems that impacted the Royal Thai Government's activities against the CPM and the party's growth. For example, *Thailand's Foreign Policy in the 1980s: A Reconsideration* by Chulacheeb Chinwanno (1992). The study revealed that in the first five years (1980-1984), Thailand was faced with the Communist threat and intrusion from Vietnam along the Thai-Cambodian border. Therefore, the design and implementation of Thai foreign policy were based on national security considerations. Later, between 1985 and 1988, Thailand's foreign policy still focused on national security, but added an economic dimension through the "trade diplomacy" principle. In the final phase (1988-1990), the Prime Minister and his advisory group played an important role in determining and implementing the foreign policy, which was different from the plans of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This information is useful for considering the issues regarding Thailand's foreign policy in dealing with the CPM, especially the last phase before the party dissolved.

The next one, regarding the Royal Thai Government's actions on issues in the southern border, was titled *Imagined Land? The State and Southern Violence in Thailand* (2009). This research work attempted to examine basic information and knowledge of the government in terms of national security in the south by focusing on the importance of and obstacles in implementing the policy to alleviate the situation, including the relationship between the people of different cultures in the area who were affected by government policies. It also focused on the violence in the southern part of Thailand. However, one interesting article in this research was "National Security Policies on the Southern Border Provinces, 1974-2003" by Mark Tamthai and Somkiat Boonchoo, which could be a model study on Thailand's security policy with an emphasis on the definition of security on "protecting the land" and "centralising the state power" and policy establishing process and evaluation from the central state. This is an observation on how Thailand implemented the policy towards the CPM.

Whilst Buncha Suma's study titled *The Communist Movement and the Preventive and Suppressive Policies of the Thai Government* (1985) showed the Communist movement and the preventive and suppressive policies of the Royal Thai Government between 1957 and 1980. It is interesting for its conclusion that the Thai Communist movement had been inspired by foreign Communist parties rather than by the people's wishes or faith in Communism. Given this context, the CPT failed to adapt to the pattern of Thai society. As for the Royal Thai Government's preventive and suppressive measures, it was found that problems increased where violence was brought into use. The materials in this research are directly relevant to the research topic, especially the chapter on preventive and suppressive policies of the Thai government.

However, more recent analytical works on Cold War dynamics in Southeast Asia also provide both broad and specific insights into the geopolitics in the region, which focus on the interactions between Thailand, Malaysia, and the broader Southeast Asian context during the Cold War. For example, the article "Legacies of the Cold War in East and Southeast Asia: An Introduction" by Eva Hansson et al. examines how Cold War conflicts and U.S. engagements shaped the region by supporting authoritarian regimes grounded in anti-communism and American-style capitalism. While these historical dynamics do not solely explain contemporary authoritarianism in Asia, the authors argue that current political conditions cannot be fully understood without reference to Cold War legacies. The article situates the contributions by outlining the region's diverse political and economic inheritances from this period and highlights the journal's long-standing commitment to critical, theoretically informed, and empirically grounded scholarship.

Another one titled "The origins of the Cold War in Southeast Asia: Pre-Second World War Siamese cooperation with foreign powers against communism" (2021), is specific the situation in Thailand and reflects that the origins of the Cold War in Southeast Asia are often traced to the post-Second World War period or to Japan's expansion in the 1930s, which hastened the decline of Western colonial power in the region. This article argues, however, that its roots extend back to the 1920s, focusing on Siam (Thailand) as a case study. It shows how early international cooperation against communism and the Thai elite's strategic manipulation of imperial powers advanced domestic political agendas and reinforced elite dominance. The Cold War in Southeast Asia, therefore, was not solely a postwar struggle against communism but was deeply intertwined with earlier processes of decolonisation and nation-building, even in formally uncolonised Thailand.

In sum, while foundational studies provide essential historical context on communism and security policy in Thailand, recent scholarship calls for greater attention to political legitimacy, development-oriented strategies, and the management of transnational insurgent movements. This article builds on both bodies of literature by examining how Thailand applied a domestically developed political–military framework to suppress the CPM, thereby addressing a gap between national counterinsurgency histories and contemporary analytical approaches to conflict resolution.

Methodology

This article is a documentary research work that uses the conventional approach of historical research. The analysis and interpretation of the retrieved data and information from primary and secondary sources will be presented in a chronological order, accompanied by a descriptive analysis. The sources used in this thesis are of different types. The Primary sources that are retrieved from several sources such as the official documents of the Thai State from the National Library and Archives of Thailand, the National Security Strategy reports (the Library of the Thai Parliament), the proceedings of the Cabinet and the Assembly (the Library of the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Thai government), and the operative records of the Thai army (the Library of the Command and General Staff College of Thailand). For the secondary sources, the researcher also used several historical works that mentioned historical information in its historical context, including books, articles in Thai and English newspapers and journals from the library in Malaysia, Bangkok and Songkhla (Thailand), and conference papers from seminars by academics with expertise in Thai-Malaysian relations.

Thai Government Response to Communist Insurgency

The Royal Thai Government's anti-communist policy before 1970 had to keep up with the situation. Previously, the government worked through the Coordinating Committee and the National Security Central, which were agencies aimed at preventing Communist threats and rural development. Alongside these was the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), which was established on 24 December 1965¹ to oversee Communist suppression. Nevertheless, with regard to the Thai-Malaysian cooperation, this area fell under the responsibility of the National Security Central. Later, when the scope of this agency turned to rural development as a defensive policy against Communism,² Thai-Malaysian cooperation in dealing with the CPM was transferred to CSOC in 1969 to improve efficiency.

According to an interview with General Prapas Charusathien, the then Minister of the Interior, the security situation in the south was different. Originally, the Communists used force as the main tactic in this area through occultism and superstition, distribution of weapons to people, and inciting them to riot against the government to provoke a similarly violent response to calm the situation.³ Subsequently, the Communists changed their approach to infiltration and propagandisation, encouraging the people to feel less connected to the Thai central government and inciting Muslims towards separatism. These methods were new to the South and more difficult to counter, since much of the movement took place underground. The government solved this problem by providing more and better education, managing career development for the unemployed, persuading people to have pride in their localities, and increasing awareness of the government's duties and responsibilities, including Communist suppression. General Prapas also mentioned the cooperation with the Malaysian government,

which had successfully cracked down on the border area, and pointed out that the renewed insurgency in the southern border area was the result of Communist intervention from abroad and not from the support of neighbouring countries.

In 1966, the concept of Civil-Police-Military (C.P.M.) cooperation with people-based targeting emerged more figuratively.⁴ The Thai government established the Psychological Operations Committee, the Provincial Communist Prevention and Suppression Committee, assigning all Provincial governors the power and responsibility to suppress Communism within their provinces,⁵ as well as the Coordinating Committee for the Suppression of Communism in the South. In 1967, the government reviewed its policy, based on the performance of past operations, concluding that: “The severe suppression measures [i.e. Military measures] could not destroy or deter the expansion of Communism. On the contrary, the effects of the government's use of the armed forces had caused many problems”. The government eventually revised its anti-Communist policy to the “1967 Development and Military Measures Plan”. This policy was implemented from the time of Field Marshal Sarit’s Government to the end of Field Marshal Thanom’s Government, with the United States’ assistance. Alongside suppression, the plan aimed to improve living standards in areas vulnerable to Communist infiltration.⁶

The policy reflected the government’s sincerity in rural development and the desire to turn people into allies against the Communists. Various projects enacted under this policy included: 1) Community Development Projects (Ministry of Interior), 2) Accelerated Rural Development Projects (Office of the Prime Minister), 3) Mobile Development Unit Projects (Ministry of Defense), and 4) Public Access Projects (Ministry of Interior).⁷ Despite the high aims of these projects, their actual implementation faced obstacles due to the lack of coordination with the personnel responsible for suppression and development. In addition, the operators were often physically attacked by the Communists, leading to losses and retaliation. These incidents meant that the aim of reducing violence was not achieved. Even so, in 1968, the Royal Thai Government introduced a new policy, requiring government officials to act primarily with political measures or psychological and public relations practices, while armed force should only be used when necessary. In addition to the National Security Central, which had already transferred its suppression responsibilities to the CSOC as aforementioned, the government amended the 1969 Anti-Communist Act on 10 February to further increase the CSOC’s command efficiency.

Thai Government Policy for Communist Suppression: Turning Point

The change in the Thai government’s policy was partly due to a shift in the United States’ policy vis-à-vis Communism, as outlined in the Nixon Doctrine.⁸ According to this policy, the United States would continue to assist in the defense and development of allies and friends, but would not undertake the defense of all free nations. This doctrine meant that each allied nation was in charge of its own security, although in some cases, the United States would extend its nuclear umbrella, upon request. Thus, the doctrine seemed to be seeking a partnership in pursuit of peace with America’s allies, while also lessening the burden on itself.

The Thai state once adopted the amendment of the 1969 Anti-Communist Act, the Communist Prevention and Suppression Guidelines became more targeted, focusing on political measures and avoiding military and operational measures, unless necessary.⁹ In

addition, the Army Area Commander had been appointed as the director of the area's anti-Communist efforts. At that time, the South did not have an Army Area,¹⁰ and so the Commanding General of the 5th Military Circle was appointed as Director of Region 4, consisting of Suratthani, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Trang, Phatthalung, Songkhla, Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Satun Provinces. Some provincial governors were appointed as the director generals of anti-Communist efforts, where their appointments were announced in the Government Gazette in 36 provinces.¹¹

The regime of Field Marshal Thanom and Prapas (1965-1973) also prohibited the dissemination of all forms of political ideology. Consequently, neither the Opposition in the urban areas nor the Communists in the rural areas could legally take ideological actions¹² until the events of 14 October 1973¹³ that led to the collapse of Field Marshal Thanom's Government. During the brief period of so-called "Democratic blossoming" that followed, social movements appeared that promoted the freedom of expression and thought, especially in progressive publications that could now be published openly.¹⁴ About 5,000 intellectuals and university students travelled extensively to spread knowledge about democracy to rural people. This phenomenon occurred at a time of political vacuum, which made the organised scholars, students, and workers a more important force than they had been previously.

After the end of the military dictatorship in 1973, the new government renamed the CSOC as the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC),¹⁵ by the Order of the Office of Prime Minister No. 140/2517 issued on 7 June 1974. CSOC at the provincial level was also changed to the ISOC, and national coordination was provided for under the 1952 Anti-Communist Act and the Amendment of the 1969 Anti-Communist Act. ISOC worked to intercept the Communist movement and adjusted its operating style to suit the situation and its expansion. However, the defense and suppression of ISOC personnel sometimes had a negative effect. For example, an event that made the headlines in 1975 was the case of government officials overreacting in their anti-Communist crackdown in Phatthalung Province.

As a result, innocent people were killed; their bodies were stuffed in red barrels and burnt with petrol, in a practice nicknamed "Burned in a red tank".¹⁶ The incident greatly affected the government's image and its anti-Communist operations, to the extent that some members of the House of Representatives, such as Chamni Sakdiset and Arkom Suwannop, proposed the dissolution of the agency.¹⁷ The Student Center of Thailand also proposed the repeal of the Anti-Communist law due to ISOC's extreme brutality.¹⁸ These cases reflected that ISOC operations, especially those involving military personnel, were not very successful. ISOC's image was further tarnished over budgetary issues and other incidents of extreme brutality. Most importantly, the supervisors in the relevant departments did not agree to the aforementioned policies and actions.¹⁹

In the late 1970s, the overall security policy of Thailand changed from its previous focus on relations with the United States to strengthening relationships with neighbours, including Communist countries, particularly China. The most significant development was the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the Royal Thai Government and the People's Republic of China in 1975. Yet, due to the continuing expansion of Communism, suspicions remained regarding the long-term intentions of Communist countries. These suspicions led reactionary governments, such as that of Thanin Kraivichien (1976-1977) to cleave to the "Bound to the United States and anti-Communism"²⁰ in light of the expansion of

Communism in Indochina that also threatened Thailand.

Indeed, Prime Minister Thanin revived the severe restrictions on Communism. His government amended the 1969 Anti-Communist Act again. The military courts were given jurisdiction to consider and adjudicate cases.²¹ The Office of the Prime Minister also issued a new announcement defining 35 infiltrated provinces, areas where the public were forbidden to enter or live, and establishing measures to control the possession and distribution of rice, food, drugs, and consumer goods. The control measures were aimed at curtailing supplies to Communist insurgents in the designated zones.²²

The Communist Suppression in Thailand After 1980: The Alternative Approach

In 1980, prior to the communist's dissolution, General Prem Tinsulanonda's Government undertook new peaceful measures aimed at decisively ending the Communist threat. This new approach was outlined in the Order of the Office of the Prime Minister No. 66/2523 or Policy 66/23. The policy was pioneering in its approach to combat Communism, where insurgents were to be treated as misguided people. The "Politics Leading the Military" tactic was used to create understanding with people in the CPT's target areas and to encourage them to support the government. They were also encouraged to cooperate via concrete economic and social development projects, including improving access to education and public healthcare. The first stage of the plan was to end the Communist revolutionary war, which would be followed by overcoming the Communists.²³

In the case of the CPM, it appeared that the Thai government implemented the same policy used against the CPT. General Prem recognized the seriousness of the Communist threat, as well as the inability of violent suppression to tackle it in a sustainable manner. Utilising the pure military approach was also liable to cost much blood and treasure. As seen from the British and Malaysian experience, while its Communist suppression efforts that had begun since 1948 were ultimately successful, they had spent many times the Thai budget to achieve this result. The first State of Emergency between 1948 and 1960 expended around USD 90 million per year, according to a 1953 statistic. Furthermore, on average, 18 police officers and soldiers had to be employed to crackdown on one CPM member (Hanrahan 1971, pp. 130-131), while more than 4,000 civilians lost their lives.²⁴ Malaysia also provided a clear demonstration that military action alone could not defeat the CPM and that political action could also provide a viable solution. General Prem learnt these lessons during his tenure as the Commander of the 2nd Army Area, where his experimental approach to the local CPT chapter had succeeded.

The new concept of communist suppression in Thailand was developed and proven in practice in the 2nd Army Area during Lieutenant General Prem Tinsulanonda's tenure as its commander during the mid-1970s, with the introduction of Orders No. 110/2512 and No. 37/14 that were the starting point for the political measures to be implemented within the communist dominated areas in the Northeast region due to their proximity to the Indochinese communist states. The effectiveness of the approach was demonstrated by the surrender of communist party members to the 2nd Army Area and their subsequent participation in a number of Thai Nation Development Projects.²⁵

The success of the 2nd Army Area in tackling communism made other army areas pay attention and implement similar guidelines in their work. This effort to nationalise the 2nd Army

Area's approach was further reinforced when General Prem became the prime minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army in 1980. The approach pioneered by the 2nd Army Region became national policy through the declaration of the Struggle to Defeat Communist Policy, Order No. 66/2523, which was the first time the government began to have a clear approach to dealing with communism. This approach differed from the previous measures through its in-depth analysis of the related issues and admission that past government policies lacked a coherent strategy to solve the communist problem and had been overly reliant on military force. Furthermore, Order No. 66/2523 was different in that it provided a comprehensive strategy that encompassed the political, economic, and social dimensions. Resolving the communist problem required a coordinated military and political strategy, which also meant tackling issues regarding the abuse of power, dark influences, and dictatorship. The successful resolution of these issues and the improvement of the democratic regime would undermine the conditions facilitating the communist movement's political offensive and lead to its failure.

The Order No. 66/2523 was a turning point that brought about peace within the country, while military scholars view the policy as a triumph of strategic wisdom following a long-armed conflict. At the same time, the implementation of Order No. 66/2523 led to a weakening of the centralised state, which had been the trend since the 1932 Revolution. Successive Thai governments could no longer rely on the pretext of the communist threat to blunt the growth of the people's political aspirations. Subsequently, the government came under more protests and attacks from the mass media, which could act more freely than previously. Thus, the success of Order No. 66/2523 propelled Thai politics into a new "post-Communist" period, where the people's power was freed from the restrictions of the communist discourse and opened the way for Thai democracy to move forward after more than half a century.

Overcoming the CPM Under the "Tai Rom Yen" Policy and its Operations

The "Tai Rom Yen" (tranquil south) Policy began in 1981 following the announcement of the Order of the 4th Army Area No. 751/2524 and the Order of ISOC 4th Area No. 448/2524, which were the first steps in the political offensive against the communist movement in the south. It was also a clear demonstration of the implementation of Order No. 66/2523, since Lieutenant General Harn Leelanon, the Commander of the 4th Army Area at the time, had also been a key player in the drafting of Order No. 66/2523. The main themes of the Tai Rom Yen Policy were: 1) Ensuring the safety of life and property of Thai people of all races and religions from all forms of terrorists; 2) Making border areas safer and strengthening the relationship between Thailand and Malaysia; 3) The elimination of dictatorship, dark influence, and illegal power to promote democratic governance; and 4) Building good relations between administrative officials and the people. These themes point to an understanding of the problems of local injustice and abuses of power and their links to the growth of various terrorist groups, the Thai-Malaysian border relationship, as well as the relationship between government officials and the people, including the problem of illegal influence that existed in the south. Thus, this policy focused on the conditions that allowed the communists to be on the political offensive.²⁶

Effective and peaceful problem-solving was carried out through five aspects: 1) Building legitimacy to build trust among the people and entice them to cooperate with government officials; 2) Creating social pressure through public relations, psychological operations, and development for villagers and students in remote areas; 3) Establishing

“Santinimit” Unit”²⁷ which acted as a village’s political section, by providing political knowledge in accordance with democratic principles and support the establishment of a village committee for people to practice self-governance; 4) Political training, where the 4th Army Region instilled a democratic political ideology in their target groups, namely: civil servants, local leadership groups, religious leaders, and business group; 5) People’s mobilization, including the establishment of the Thai National Defense Volunteers and the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Programme, with the goal of undermining communist influence and encouraging people to stop support for terrorist activities, by promoting local governance at the village level to make people aware of their civil rights and public responsibilities. For the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Programmes, ISOC focused on gaining victory over the communists through adherence to the idea of using political measures to lead military measures. This objective was to be achieved through securing the rural settlements in all aspects, which prevented communist expansion and infiltration from the jungle.²⁸

At the same time, the measures prevented the villagers from rendering support to communist groups through the implementation of the following policies: 1) Identify settlements to bring under the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Programme by selecting villages for defence and those that would come under the Thai National Defense Volunteers Project. 2) Initiate rural development projects in the target settlements, which consist of development projects, agricultural services, and social services, such as education, public health, and industry. These services were to be administered and implemented in an integrated manner. 3) Build the villagers’ capacity in resisting infiltration and subversion through training in security, self-defence, and national ideology. 4) Promote the democratic regime under the constitutional monarchy and raise the people’s awareness and understanding of self-governance at the village level and their responsibilities in the village’s administration under the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Administration Act 1979. 5) Establish a new administrative system for the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Programme, adhering to the principle of reliability and unity that will encourage responsibility in the planning and use of the budget for projects. 6) Improve the security system in the villages to be in accordance with the deployment and usage of local manpower at the provincial, district, and sub-district levels to provide adequate and timely security.²⁹

The objectives of the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Programme were to (1) Establish economic, social, and administrative security in rural and remote villages that were most vulnerable to communist infiltration; (2) Develop public awareness, responsibility, and cooperation in the administration of the villages, as well as in the village’s activities; and (3) Build unity among the public to come together to resist communist infiltration, while relying on minimum state support.³⁰

The work of the program consisted of three facets. First, there was the work to maintain village security, which involved providing training for the villagers in various resistance and self-defence measures, the establishment of an armed village force, as well as a defensive plan that was consistent with the deployment of conventional forces at the provincial, district, and sub-district levels. The second facet was the development and provision of services, which involved vocational and agricultural training, as well as the development and provision of services in the villages. The final facet was the development of the village administration, which involved the selection and establishment of the Voluntary Development and Self-

defense Villages, holding elections for the village committee, and training for the villagers to administer their own village under the provisions of the Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Administration Act 1979, as well as to monitor and oversee the activities of the village committees.³¹

The policy was a departure from the past approaches in dealing with the southern communist problem. In the past, emphasis was placed on defence and military suppression. The new approach utilised political offensive strategies with political objectives that aimed to build the government's legitimacy among the public. However, despite the ostensible unity of command, there were still internal conflicts and a lack of coordination between government agencies. The transfers and relocation of military, police, and civil servants involved in misdemeanours also caused problems.³²

When the 4th Army Area adopted the Tai Rom Yen Policy, it operated in two dimensions, namely the military dimension and the political dimension. In the first dimension, the 4th Army Area hosted the 27th meeting of the Thai-Malaysian Border Committee with Lt. Gen. Harn Leelanon as the Thai chair. During this meeting, the Thai side informed its Malaysian counterpart of the upcoming Tai Rom Yen 11 Operation, which was a massive CPM clearance operation aimed at eliminating the 8th CPM Regiment (Satul, Songkhla, and Pattani provinces), 10th CPM Regiment (Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani provinces) and 12th CPM Regiment (Yala province).³³ The basic principles behind this operation arose from the government's goal of developing the economy of the southern border areas into arable land to improve the people's livelihoods. This goal could be achieved if the CPM's presence could be eliminated.³⁴ The operation also aimed to put pressure on the CPM to be more open to the Tai Rom Yen Policy's second dimension - the political side. If their military position was no longer tenable, the CPM may be more easily persuaded to surrender to the Thai authorities, who were willing to consider granting the CPM citizenship and provide them an opportunity to live a normal life.³⁵

The Battle of Tai Rom Yen 11 Operation began on 1 July 1982 and involved approximately 5,000 active and semi-active military personnel. During the operation, Thai officers were able to seize up to 48 CPM bases. Casualties on the CPM side amounted to 16 killed, 16 arrested, and a further 63 members who surrendered. On the Thai side, 18 officers were killed, while another 118 were injured. This operation was successful in severely undermining the CPM's military base, as well as its capacity to conduct illicit businesses, such as illegal mining and logging. Furthermore, the CPM could no longer provide shelter for members of the CPT. Consequently, the CPM broke into smaller groups and was unable to rally its forces. According to the 4th Army Area's evaluation in 1984, the 8th CPM Regiment only had 73 members remaining, while the 10th CPM Regiment had 480 members, and the 12th CPM Regiment had 540 members.³⁶ Additionally, in 1983, the 4th Army Area also conducted operations against terrorist groups across the south under the Tai Rom Yen 15 Operation. These operations destroyed most CPT and CPM bases, with only temporary camps remaining. Remnants of the groups' armed forces were scattered into small groups of guerrillas, which greatly decreased violence in the south. Subsequently, the 4th Army Area was able to announce the implementation of Order No. 202/2527 instead of the Tai Rom Yen Policy, which placed a greater emphasis on the improvement of the people's livelihood in the south.

Conclusion

Through the Office of the Prime Minister's Order No. 66/2523, the lessons and experiences learnt by the 2nd Army Area in the 1970s were implemented nationally. A similar strategy was utilised by Lieutenant General Harn Leelanon, the former Chief-of-Staff of the 2nd Army Area, when he was appointed Commander of the 4th Army Area, which was in charge of southern Thailand. His modified approach became known as the “Tai Rom Yen” policy, as outlined in the 4th Army Area Order No. 751/2524. A key strategy was to gain victory over the “Enemies of the State” in the south and eliminate their influence. These enemies were not only the communist terrorists, but also included other terrorist groups.

Significant approaches in the achievement of these goals were: (1) Establishing security for the daily living and property of the population, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, and providing state protection from communist intimidation, terrorists, bandits, and other local violent groups; (2) Securing the Thai-Malaysian border area to pave the way for economic development at the provincial and regional levels, while also improving bilateral ties between Thailand and Malaysia; (3) The elimination of influential groups through peaceful means to allow citizens to enjoy their political, economic, and social rights, liberty, and equality under a democratic regime with the monarch as head of state; and (4) Building good relations between state officials and the local population.

The announcement of the “Rom Yen” policy was the state’s political offensive against the local communist movement in the south and was a serious initiative to resolve the violent situation in the south. The policy was based on the idea that the fight against communism was a civil war where victory would go to the side that could gain the population’s confidence. The government saw that popular support must be at the heart of its anti-communist measures. Thus, the implementation of the policy led to the soliciting of popular support, which can be seen in the projects to provide political training, knowledge, and information, psychological operations, as well as efforts to eliminate dark influences in the area. These projects required a myriad of inclusive approaches to achieve their objectives. It was also this variety of approaches that was key to achieving the final victory over the communists and their eventual dissolution

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⁴ Saiyud Kerdpchol and Somchai Rakwijit, *Future of Thailand*, Bangkok: Krungsiam Printing, 1975, p.149.

⁵ Prasert Karnjanapruk, *Developing Guidelines for Fighting Communism*, Thesis of Royal Thai Army War College, Institute of Higher Army Studies, 1972, p. 33.

⁶ Nop Pinsangkaew, *Strategy and Tactics of the Communist Party of Thailand*, Individual Research, The National Defense College, 1977-1978, p. 106.

⁷ The detail of these projects is: 1) Community Development Projects (Ministry of Interior) had the objective of increasing family income by promoting household agricultural and industrial production, improving public welfare, expanding access for education, recreation, and youth sports programs, improving healthcare and sanitation, strengthening Thai culture in village communities, and promoting local self-government. 2) Accelerated Rural Development Projects (Office of the Prime Minister) were aimed at promoting rural development in remote and Communist-infiltrated areas through the offering of career advice, as well as methods to deal with the terrorist threat. The project also aimed to improve understanding and good relations between the government and people and to strengthen local development organizations. The concept was to use development to maintain rural security, and to develop in conjunction with other government agencies to suppress Communism. 3) Mobile Development Unit Projects (Ministry of Defense) focused on raising people's knowledge of the government and its role, assisting rural development projects, helping mobilize rural development in vulnerable areas, surveying areas for future operations, and gathering information about Communist activities. 4) Public Access Projects (Ministry of Interior) were aimed at promoting good relations and understanding between officials and people by training officers to reduce their bureaucratic mind-set, organizing public visits by providing four factor services to people, and creating a sense of security among the people, cited in Accelerated Rural Development Office, "The Counter-Appeal of Government and the Methods of Propagation," in *Seminar on Village Defense and Development*, 15-21 March, 1970, pp. 1-10.

⁸ The Nixon Doctrine, also known as the Guam Doctrine, was outlined during a press conference in Guam on 25 July 1969 by President Richard Nixon and later formalized in his speech on the Vietnamisation of the Vietnam War on 3 November 1969. Retrieved from <http://www.satit.up.ac.th/BBC07/AboutStudent/Document/Hist_ModernWorld/Century20th/pdf/USAPolicy1.pdf>.

⁹ Harn Leelanon, *Speech of General Harn*, 2nd edition, Bangkok: Kasem Printing, 1983, p. 231.

¹⁰ The 4th Army Area was established on 7 February 1975 and was responsible for the entire southern region. The headquarters were located at Wachirawut Military Camp, Pak Phun Sub-district, Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province.

The region also housed the Internal Security Operations Command Region 4 (ISOC, Region 4, at Sirindhorn Military Camp, Khao Tum Sub-district, Yarang District, Pattani Province) which dealt with the unrest in the southern border of Thailand. Retrieved from <<http://www.army4.net/HTML/Army4History.htm>>.

¹¹ *Government Gazette*, Vol. 86 Part 115, 26 December 1969, the Announcement of the Ministry of Interior about “Communist Infiltration Zone,” pp. 6-9.

¹² Han U. Luther, *Peasants and State in Contemporary Thailand: From Regional Revolt to National Revolution*, Hamburg: des Institutes fur Asian-Kunde, 1978, p. 21.

¹³ The 14 October 1973 incident (“October 14 Event” or “Day of Great Sorrow”) was a popular uprising and a watershed event in Thai history. The uprising resulted in the end of the ruling military dictatorship of anti-communist Thanom Kittikachorn and altered the Thai political system. Notably, it highlighted the growing political influence of Thai university students. See more details in R. F. Zimmerman, “Student ‘Revolution’ in Thailand: The End of the Thai Bureaucratic Policy?” *Asian Survey* 14(6), June 1974, pp. 509-529.

¹⁴ *Government Gazette*, Vol. 94 Part 18, 3 March 1977; *Government Gazette*, Vol. 94 Part 97, 6 October 1977.

¹⁵ The Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) is a Thai military unit responsible for national security issues. It was initially established in 1965 with the assistance of the United States to coordinate nationwide anti-Communist operations. Its predecessors were the Central Security Command (CSC) and the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC). The Army Operations Center (AOC) acts as the command-and-control center and is responsible for the planning, directing, coordinating, and overseeing the Army’s subordinate units and special task forces so as to be in accordance with ISOC’s orders, instructions, and policies. Retrieved from <<https://www.isoc.go.th/about.php>>.

¹⁶ *Chaothai*, 4 February 1975; *Thairat*, 5 February 1975; *Daily Time*, 8 February 1975.

¹⁷ *Daily Time*, 8 February 1975.

¹⁸ *Democracy*, 9 February 1975; Kasem Sirisumpun, “Turning Point,” *Siamrat*, 11 February 1975.

¹⁹ *Thairat*, 23 February 1975.

²⁰ Chaichok Chulasiriwong, ed., *Five Decades of Thailand’s Foreign Affairs: From Conflict to Cooperation*, Bangkok: Prescale Co.Ltd., 1993, pp. 128-135.

²¹ *Government Gazette*, Vol. 93 Part 120, 6 October 1976, Order of the National Administrative Reform Council, pp. 21-22.

²² *Government Gazette*, Vol. 93 Part 130, 17 October 1976, Order of the National Administrative Reform Council, pp. 12-27; *Government Gazette*, Vol. 94 Part 4, 11 January 1977, the Announcement of the Ministry of Interior about “Communist Infiltration Zone,” pp. 106-110.

²³ Nuntawan Yodpijit, *Thailand Cooperation with Malaysia: A Case Study of Solving the Problems of the Communist Party of Malaya (1977-1989)*, Master Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, 2000, pp. 109-110.

²⁴ Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dogs*, translated by Sompoj Wilaichit and Suwit Suwan, Bangkok: Siwaporn, 1973, pp. 420-421.

²⁵ In 1978 the number of Thai Nation Development Projects reached 1,343 projects; ; Phiphat Thongurai, Specific Lecture on Prevention and Suppression of Commander-in-Chief of the 2nd Army Area, Documents for the 1984 Seminar Concluding Work on Civil Affairs of the Royal Thai Army at the Royal Thai Army Club, 6-8 June 1984 (Copy) cited in Nisit Chansomvong, “The Counter Insurgency Strategy of the Royal Thai Army: A Case Study of ‘The Tai Rom Yen’ Policy of the Fourth Army Region,” Master Thesis, Department of Government, Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, 1987, p. 249.

²⁶ Tamthai Dilokvidhayarat, *Communist in Thai Politics*, Master Thesis, Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 2001, p. 124.

²⁷ The Santinimit Unit was an armed paramilitary unit tasked with political operations. It was composed of officers from the military, police, and civil service, alongside civilian volunteers. Their objective was to disrupt communist support in the rural area. They were also capable of conducting psychological operations, information campaigns, and providing training and developmental assistance to the public. The Santinimit Unit of ISOC and ISOC 4th region consisted of 47 officers, whose task was divided between research, public assistance, political activities, psychological operations, and security. The main task of the Santinimit Unit was to destroy the political structure of the communist movement by eliminating the conditions for conflict in the target area by encouraging democratic practices. See more details in the Operations Centre of Royal Thai Army, *Operations Manual of Santinimit Unit*, n.p., n.d., p. 20; the Army 4th Area and ISOC 4th region, *distribution documents for staffs of RTA War College*, n.p., n.d., p. 6.

²⁸ The Operations Centre of Royal Thai Army, *Operations Manual of Santinimit Unit*, n.p., n.d., p. 20; the Army 4th Area and ISOC 4th region, *distribution documents for staffs of RTA War College*, n.p., n.d., p. 6.

²⁹ The Voluntary Development and Self-defense Centre, the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), "The Voluntary Development and Self-defense Villages Programme, 1979," lecture note, n.d., pp. 5-6.

³⁰ Public Relations Division, *Operating Manual of the National Voluntary Development and Self-defense Programme*, Bangkok: Suan Thongthin Press, 1992, pp. 7-8.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Nisit Chansomvong, *The Counter Insurgency Strategy of the Royal Thai Army*, pp. 299 - 301.

³³ Wichai Sumanungkul, *Chinese Malaya Communists and national security*, Thesis, Royal Thai Army War College, 1980, p. 13.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

³⁵ "Tai Rom Yen 11: Why must use the Military Offensive?", *To the Future*, 2, 25-31 July, 1982, p. 31.

³⁶ The 4th Army Region and ISOC, *Tai Rom Yen 15 Tactics: Appendix A*, p. 2, cited in Nisit Chansomvong, *The Counter Insurgency Strategy of the Royal Thai Army*, p. 386.

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