Understanding the Leadership Roles of Metropolitan Police Commissioner during 2005 – 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract : The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership styles and techniques of the Bangkok metropolitan police commissioners in dealing with the political unrest, which happened between 2005 and 2012. Furthermore, the study sought to propose a new leadership model for managing political unrest. The study employed content analysis techniques and the data was collected from the in-depth interviews of seven former Bangkok metropolitan police commissioners who had served from 2005 to 2012. Documentary data, in-depth interview transcripts and the experience of the researcher were all triangulated and crosschecked so as to corroborate the findings in order to propose a new leadership model for political unrest management. The results suggest that the techniques in dealing with the political unrest in Thailand such as: (1) controlling a situation before it expands and trying to solve problems in order to bring back the status quo as soon as possible, and (2) following the peace plan processes of the Royal Thai Police, which are focused on negotiating methods, however if the situation worsens, police can force protestors to stay in controlled areas for safety reasons. This study proposes a new leadership model for managing political unrest that consists of seven factors: *i.e.*, social, understanding, negotiation, Thai-ness, humanism, administration, and networking.
Keywords : Leadership, Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

1. INTRODUCTION

The political unrest in Thailand during 2005 to 2012 impacted upon the stability of the country and the Thai government. There were many reasons that can be explained why the political unrest happened during that period. However, this study is focusing on the roles of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in order to deal with the political unrest in Thailand more than finding the answer for the occurring of the political unrest. When considering about the roles of leadership and the roles of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in Thailand, the results of this study has shown that SUNTHAN's model can be very useful to understand the leadership roles of this position and can be used both in the political unrest period and in normal situation. As the World is so small and connected with the hi-speed Internet, any situation that has happened in Bangkok, or anywhere else in Thailand can be spread around the globe within a minute. It is important to understand how to cope and deal with those situations when the priority of concern is Thailand's benefit.

The objective of the research was to present a practical tool for leadership, especially to understand the important roles of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, to cool down the political unrest and to prevent any violent attack or the use of any weapons that will be of harm to the protestors' lives. Leadership theories and data from the qualitative research method were analyzed and the creating of SUNTHAN's model for training and developing leaders in Thailand where the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in varied situations will be asked to gain and use leadership capacities. SUNTHAN's model responds to the

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challenges of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner's roles in complex, unpredictable environments and political unrest context of Thailand.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Several research and concepts about leadership for the 21st century were explored. To understand how leadership roles of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in Thailand can be successfully implemented during the political unrest, it is important to mention some theories that show the capacities to be a key leadership role for an effective leader during the political unrest. The common characteristics of research on leadership traits found that the successful leaders should have intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, tolerance, influence, cooperativeness and sociability (Stogdill, 1948, 1974). Further researchers, such as Mann (1959) said that the important traits and characteristics of a leader are similar to the concepts of Stogdill (1948), but he had added some other factors such as masculinity, adjustment, dominance, extraversion and conservatism. It has been said that the idea of Mann (1959) focused on the strength of leading. This might be more appropriately used in the military roles than in the business roles. For other concepts of leadership, for example, the concept of Lord, DeVader and Alliger (1986) and Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), were similarity with the concept of Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004), which all mentioned about drive, motivation, cognitive ability, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, task knowledge and problem solving. It can be seen that the major roles of leadership are based on the intelligence, self-confidence, determination and sociability.

In Thailand culture, the important roles of leadership are similar to those concepts. However, as Thai people are a collectivism type of culture, it is more important for the leaders to adopt the ideal of cultural dimensions that were proposed by Hofstede (2001) to integrate with their characteristic and the context of Thailand. The widely accepted cultural values of nations, which based on the data collected from 74 countries showed that Thailand is a power distance, a collectivism, a femininity, an uncertainty avoidance and short term orientation.

The results from his research is the key factors to understand the roles of leadership in Thailand. As we Thai people are focusing on those cultural dimensions, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner has to adopt and implement those dimensions into their practice. Hofstede's model has been extensively used in the SUNTHAN's model in order to deal and cope with the political unrest in Thailand during 2005 to 2012 and still be applied to use for preparing to understand the roles of the police officers in the future.

In the leadership study areas there are many schools of leadership, which offer a different approach of concepts. Apart from the trait approach, which had been mentioned earlier, there are other approaches, such as skills approach, which focused on technical, human and conceptual skills. The researchers from this school includes Bass (1990), Katz (1955), Mumford and Connelly (1991), and Yammarino, (2000). The concepts of the skill approach is playing the big roles on the leader skills, so to have the problem-solving skills, social judgment skills and knowledge in addressing the organizational problems. The weakness of this approach in Thailand is that the qualifications of the skills approach seems to extend beyond the roles of leaders. A certain situation, such as the political unrest need more than the leader skills to cool down the problem.

When considering the way leaders act, the style approach is becoming the popular concept of leadership. Northouse (2013) Silahtaroglu & Vardarlier (2016) explains that the style approach leadership is composed of two general kinds of behaviours, which are task behaviours and relationship behaviours. While the task behaviours focus on achieving the objectives, the other is relationship behaviours, which focuses on the emotion and willingness of the followers. The style approach emphasizes on the combination of leaders' behaviours to encourage the followers in their efforts to reach the organizations' objectives. The researchers who are interested in the style approach, such as Blake and McCanse (1991), Blake and Mouton (1964, 1978, 1985), Bowers and Seashore (1966), Cartwright and Zander (1960), Kahn (1956), Katz and Kahn (1951), Likert (1961, 1967), Misumi (1985), Stogdill's (1948, 1963, 1974) and Yukl (1994)

believe that the successful leaders should have the appropriate combination of the two factors in order to maintain the relationship and reach the goals.

In this study the major leadership approach, which had been used to interpret the data, could be called contingency theories. The concept of contingency theory is a leader – match theory (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974, 1984), which means in the different situations, there needs to be a different performance of leaders. The concept of contingency theory is focusing on the styles and situations of the leaders (Fiedler, 1964, 1967, 1993, 1995; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Peters, Harthe & Pohlman, 1985; Strube & Garcia, 1981). Then in the political unrest situation in Thailand, it tried to match leaders to effectively cool down the problem and situations. The interviews with the former Metropolitan Police Commissioners who were working during the political unrest between 2005 and 2012 showed that there were different styles used by the Metropolitan Police Commissioners who worked in different contexts of political unrest. It cannot be assumed which styles are good or better than the others, however it can provide the understanding of the leadership roles of those leaders who were in these situations.

3.   METHODOLOGY

The three qualitative methods were used. Firstly, an in-depth interview with the eight former Metropolitan Police Commissioners who were sitting in that position during 2005 to 2012. Secondly, a content analysis of the newspapers and the political journal which had reported on the political unrest in that period. Finally, a review with the researcher, who was one of the former Metropolitan Police Commissioners, who also having the direct experience of working in that time and understand the reality and background of those political conflicts. The initial framework was synthesized from the researcher's expert knowledge and lived experiences over five decades of participant observation, reflective practice, and leader training in the police department. The transcripts of in-depth interview with those eight former Metropolitan Police Commissioners had been sent to them to review and discuss the results of the interpretation with the researcher several times. The final data from the major three sources: in-depth interview and interview transcripts; content analysis from newspaper and political journal that were related; and triangulation with researcher's knowledge and lived experience, had all been concluded into themes. Separated with the similarity and differences in data, and evaluated by the participants and researcher's supervisor before constructing the SUNTHAN's model for leadership and testing again with all the data.

4.   FINDINGS / RESULTS

The leadership theories and other relevance research in this area have offered similar results to this study. The understanding of cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2001) and the contingency leadership theories have played important roles for this finding. The political unrest in Thailand has been continually happening for several decades, however during 2005 to 2012 had shown a big impacted and created a bad image for the country. As the former Metropolitan Police Commissioner and as the Thai citizen, the political unrest is a major threat for the feeling and wellbeing of Thailand. The findings of this study showed that SUNTHAN's model can cool down the situation, which will be acted by the Metropolitan Police Commissioners and the policemen all over the country and other people who have the power to control the situation and keep everyone safe. Figure 1 shows the SUNTHAN's model and how each factor is related together.

SUNTHAN's model can be explained as follows : "S" can be explained in three aspects of social. Firstly, it can be identified as the social which is connected to the society and the way it is organized. The Metropolitan Police Commissioners should be able to connect with every stakeholder, not only the protestors but also the leaders of the military groups and the powerful leader of Thai culture by understanding their feeling and what they want from these situations.

Secondly, it can be identified as the connection between the position as the Metropolitan Police Commissioners and the society. The Metropolitan Police Commissioners need to understand their roles

and responsibilities towards the Thai's society. What are the job descriptions of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner? In the political unrest situation, the Metropolitan Police Commissioners must take actions to protect the lives of Thai people as the priority. It does not matter who is right and who is wrong because the most important things are for the Thai people to be safe and there be no further violent or damaged to the country.
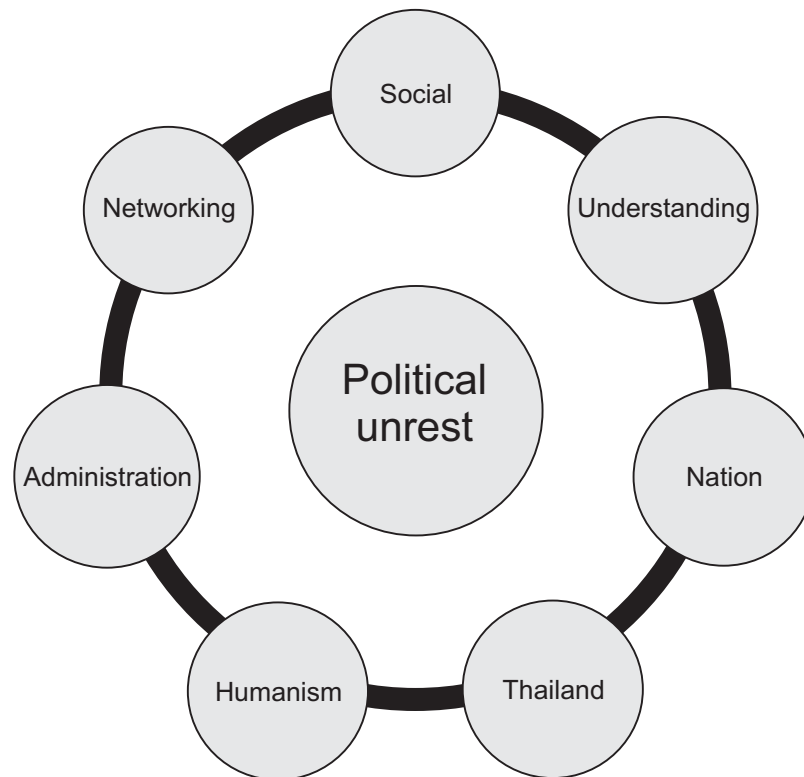

Figure 1: SUNTHAN's model during the political unrest

Finally, it can be identified as the leadership skills, especially on human skill (Bass, 1990; Katz, 1955; Mumford & Connelly, 1991; Yammarino, 2000; Rijal, 2016). It is important for the Metropolitan Police Commissioners to connect with people in the society by using human skill to share their idea and discuss every question, including negotiate in every situation. During the crisis and violent circumstance, the Metropolitan Police Commissioners have to act as the front gate to cool down the emotion and feeling of the protestors. If the Metropolitan Police Commissioners have a good human skill, it is a big advantage for the meeting with any stakeholders and for the negotiation. Then it is required to learn and practice human skill and maintain relationship with others as the key factors for the successful leadership roles.

"U" refers to understanding. To be the Metropolitan Police Commissioners, they have to understand every situation not only during the political crisis, but at all times. It has been assumed that all of the Metropolitan Police Commissioners must understand the environment around them. There are two kinds of environments. Firstly, the internal environments, such as the police department organizational structure, including the conflict between the subordinators or the policies of the police department. Secondly, the external environments, for example the conflict between the protestors or the outsiders and the others, the Thai culture or behaviour and the third party who might have hidden issues on this conflict. It might need a lot of experience and knowledge to understand both internal and external environments, but it can be the critical factors for the Metropolitan Police Commissioners to maintain their position and solve the problems if they do not really understand what is going on during the political unrest.

"N" can be explained as a negotiator. During the political crisis, the Metropolitan Police Commissioners have to maintain the roles of a protector for the Thai people and try to compromise between the different conflict groups. It is the major skill of leadership who can negotiate different groups to understand and

keep fighting in peace. It is not always successful but it is accepted that it must be done by the Metropolitan Police Commissioners in every political unrest. The image of the police department is as the protector for the Thai people and for the protestors no matter which sides they had supported and stand the belief that the police department has been standing by the Thai people for many years. This needs to be maintained in that way, especially during the crisis. Negotiation is the critical method to support the leadership roles and image. It can be said that the negotiation technique is the important skill for the leader in every situation and when considering about the political unrest, it can be seen that all of the Metropolitan Police Commissioners have to be able to use the negotiation technique to support the country in an effective way.

"T" means Thailand. To become the leader and sit on the key position as the Metropolitan Police Commissioners of Thailand, the first knowledge about the history of Thailand and how Thai people have become as they are today being the most important information for dealing with the political unrest. Thailand politics has been developed since 1932, when Thailand had the first constitution and change the way to manage the country. There are three significant pillars of Thailand and everyone needs to remember and understand including the Metropolitan Police Commissioners. The first pillar is the nation, which means Thai people, the land and the Thai language, which can be called in Thai as "Chat." The second pillar is religion and the majority of individuals' religious beliefs in Thailand are Buddhism, which can also be called in Thai as "Sat-sa-na". The last pillar is the King and the monarchy, which can be called in Thai as "Phra-ma-ha-ke-sat".

The three pillars are the most important identities of Thai people and can be used to motivate or cool down the situation among the protestors. Thailand has been created on those three pillars and the Metropolitan Police Commissioners need to go through those meaning behind the three pillars when encountering the crisis and be able to identify those three pillars with clear vision and concept.

"H" refers to Humanism. The Metropolitan Police Commissioners have to accept that everyone has the right to say and act in the way they want to, as long as those behaviors and activities do not bother other people. The roles of the policemen in Thailand can be seen as the group of government officers who have violent weapons and they can use those weapons either to protect or to hurt the Thai people. It is important to maintain the attitude of humanism and human rights into the police department policies. Because whenever the political conflicts occur in Thailand, the violent attacks always happen among the protestors. It is depended on the decision of the policemen to control the situation by using the humanism concept or using another violent technique. However, the Metropolitan Police Commissioners who are giving them the policy should exercise their power by ensuring that in all the situations, the humanism concept and technique will be the first way to control the situation. In the long term, the humanism idea can successfully control the political unrest better than other technique.

"A" means Administration. Working as a team to solve the problem can be done by a good administration. In every political unrest, the Metropolitan Police Commissioners have to take the role of the leader and build a good team to work together. There is no other ways to be a successful leader in this situation if the Metropolitan Police Commissioners working alone. Being a good administrator and understanding the effective way to manage the situation requires a good leadership skill. Administration can be explained as the style approach of leadership theory. The Metropolitan Police Commissioners have to combine the task behavior and the relationship behavior in order to set up the most appropriate administration system to control and solve the problem.

"N" means Networking. One of the Thai cultures from Hofstede (2001) explains that Thailand is a collectivism society. It means that Thai people are considering themselves as part of the team and maintain networking between different groups to support each other. The relationship of the members who belong to the team is the most important factors to motivate them to obey and follow the leaders. In the critical time such as during the political unrest and a lot of protestors on the streets, having a good networking with many different groups will have more advantages to gain information and understand the situation during the crisis. The benefits of having a good and strong networking with all the stakeholders will help the Metropolitan Police Commissioners to negotiate and seeking for support at the right time and place.

It can be seen that SUNTHAN's model may help to fill the gap and cross the distinction between leadership theories. Especially, when considering the lived experience of each former Metropolitan Police Commissioner who had been provided a good understanding of the situation and knowledge to control the violence for others. Each country has their own cultures and values. It is obvious that Thailand has a unique way to deal with and solve the problems. The simplified SUNTHAN's model may be useful in preparing the new Metropolitan Police Commissioners and strategic initiatives focused on protecting human right (the protestors) and avoiding the violence from occurring during the political unrest in the future.

5.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the leadership roles of the Metropolitan Police Commissioners in Thailand. During the political unrest in 2005 to 2012, there were many violent protests and many Thai people had been killed during that time. It is obvious that SUNTHAN's model can be used as a guideline for the police officers and for the Metropolitan Police Commissioners to practice during the crisis. SUNTHAN's model had been developed from the lived experiences and knowledge of the former Metropolitan Police Commissioners who had been working in those situations. The information from them was very valuable and the researcher had evaluated all the data with other context from the newspapers and political journals before constructing the model. SUNTHAN's model is composed of social, understanding, nation, Thailand, humanism, administration and networking. These seven factors are the most important aspects for the Metropolitan Police Commissioners to implement and consider in order to maintain the peaceful situation of the country as long as they can.

6.   ACKNOWLEDGMENT

7.   REFERENCES

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