[Working Paper Series: Pandemic Crisis and Democratic Governance in Asia – Part I]

Pandemic Crisis and Democratic Governance in Thailand

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1. Introduction[1]

At the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak spread panic throughout the world and since then, the virus has affected many countries. Thailand was one of the first countries to record a case of a COVID-19 infection outside of China after the outbreak in Wuhan, China. On January 13, 2020, the Thai Health Ministry confirmed the first COVID-19 cases in Thailand, which included two Chinese tourists from Wuhan. Thailand became the hub of the pandemic, prompting various countries to warn their citizens against traveling to Thailand.

In response to COVID-19, the Thai government launched measures to control the rapid increase of new cases. The first measure was the Bangkok lockdown after Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha declared a state of emergency throughout the country. The lockdown period lasted for three months (March to June 2020) in an attempt to minimize transmission rates and reduce the number of new cases. The measures required people to stay at home in order to avoid infection, which resulted in several changes. For instance, people increasingly adopted and utilized digital platforms in their daily life, which was evident through the rapid increase in food delivery. The usage of online shopping, digital entertainment, digital payment, online learning, work-from-home policies, social distancing also increased during this period.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 Situation Management Center was established by the cabinet to provide information and organize emergency measures to protect people from the pandemic[2]. Moreover, laws and regulations were implemented to manage the spread of COVID-19, such as the 14-day state quarantine for people entering the country, COVID-19 checkpoints, and the Thai Cha-na smartphone application to track people. However, methods that were implemented to control the outbreak had significant economic effects. After the lockdown measure, several business sectors were directly affected. Flights were banned from landing in Thailand and the tourism industry, which accounted for 15 percent of Thai GDP, disappeared. As a result, hotels,

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[1] Throughout the year, ADRN members will publish a total of three versions of the Pandemic Crisis and Democratic Governance in Asia Research to include any changes and updates in order to present timely information. The first and second parts will be publicized as a working paper and the third will be publicized as a special report. This working paper is part I of the research project.
[2] Ministry of Public Health, "The setting of Covid 19-Situation Management Center," Drug and Medical Supply Infomation Center, http://dmsic.moph.go.th/index/detail/8064 (accessed December 2 2020).

restaurants, and service sectors were immediately shut down. SMEs were no longer able to operate their businesses, leading to the laying off of a vast number of employees. Millions of people in Bangkok and several other provinces were left unemployed, lacked reserve money, and received no social support, therefore resulting in the return of many citizens to their hometowns.

In response to the immediate economic impact, the government launched a 5000-baht allowance for 14 million people who had been financially affected by COVID-19. In addition, the Bank of Thailand created soft loans for business owners to help SMEs during the outbreak. The term "new normal" describes the new way of living for Thai society. Technology became an essential tool for people to communicate during the pandemic, and changes were made in response to COVID-19.

This paper explores the challenges that Thailand faced amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the responses of the public and private sector, and how COVID-19 changed Thailand's socio-economic landscape. The final section offers policy recommendations to cope with COVID-19. Moreover, trust-building, social safety nets, and law enforcement are also discussed.

2.   Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows: to study the effects of COVID-19 in Thailand and how the government and various sectors have responded to it, to study the impacts and lessons learned from COVID-19 in Thailand, and to propose policy recommendations to address the pandemic.

3.   Methodology

This research first starts with an extensive literature review on democratic governance from articles, books, journals, newspapers, and official documents. Information is collected important statistical data on the COVID-19 pandemic from the official website of the government; the COVID-19 Management Center, the Department of Disease Control, etc. In-depth interviews were also held to gather information from key informants affiliated with public and private sector organizations. Lastly, content analysis was completed by studying the documents in various formats.

4.   Research Questions

This study aims to answer three key research questions. First, what are the challenges that the world and Thailand face amid the pandemic? The second question is what the response of the public and private sectors in Thailand was. The third question aims to answer how COVID-19 changed the overall behavior and foreign policy of the Thai government.

5. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
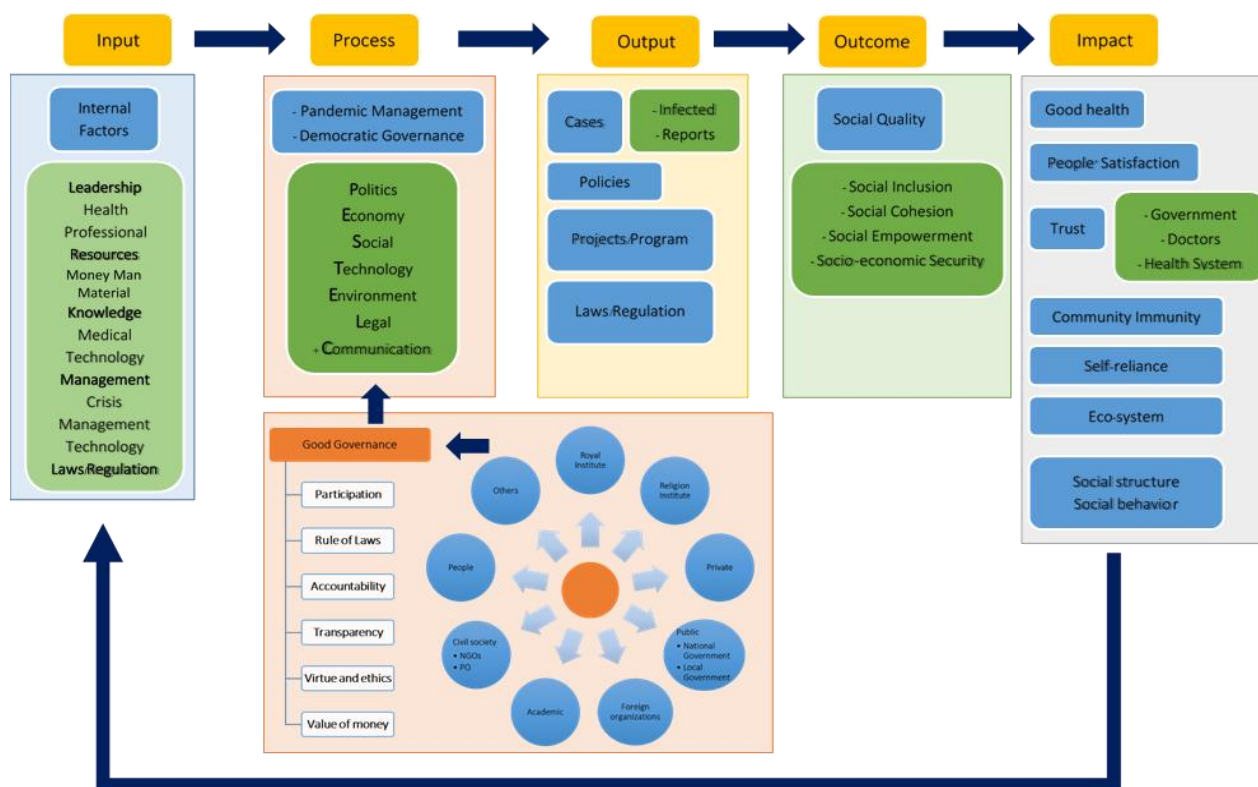
Source: Developed by the authors

6. Literature Review

Concept of Democratic Governance

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) proposed a broad definition of 'democratic governance' as a concept, implementation, and goal of good effective governance.[3] Brinkerhoff offered another explanation that the concept of democratic governance is a combination of characteristics of a political system in which citizens have the right to govern themselves (democratic system) and mechanisms that can be used as tools to manage public affairs and public safety follow rules and procedures (governance).[4] Qian stressed that the democratic process has a positive effect on the quality of governance, as increasing the level of the democratic process will enhance the quality of governance.[5]

Eberlei described the characteristics of governance in a democratic context, in which governments that come to power in a democratic context must be elected through fair and free elections. Additionally, the government in a democratic context requires a well-performing bureaucracy that is able to effectively implement

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[3] United Nations Development Program, *Deeping democracy in a fragmented world*, Human development Report, 2002, New York: United Nations Development Program.

[4] Derick Brinkerhoff, "Democratic Governance and Sectoral Policy Reform: Tracing Linkages and Exploring Synergies," *World Development* 28, no. 4 (2000): 601-615.

[5] Qian Liu, "From Democratic Theory to Democratic Governance Theory: Implications to the Political Development of the Macao SAR," *Academic Journal of One Country, Two Systems*, no. 2 (2012): 182-196.

government policies.[6] The previous studies offer a reason as to why and how democratic governance is related to the creation of social order and social security. Since democratic governance is considered to be an approach that combines the state and capitalist that has been achieved in order to generate social order, to provide space for different interests of the public, and to manage transitions and conflicts in society.[7] This type of relationship between democratic governance and social order requires space for different interests of citizens and other issues which support the UNDP's definition of democratic governance and human rights. Democratic governance is represented as the fulfillment of all human rights in many aspects, such as civil, political, cultural, and social rights. The process of democratic governance and institutions can protect the rights of all citizens, the distribution of power, and the enhancement of public accountability all of which are the primary factors to enhance human rights.[8]

Sojo described the three dimensions of democratic governance: 1) Strengthening, which refers to the support of the rule of law concept and accountability of the government sector to citizens; 2) Institutionalization which refers to political implementations and practices, and also the structures of the political system that affect different interests and solve conflicts; and 3) Social Performance, which refers to economic and social performance as a consequence of political dialogue and the economic system.[9]

7. Phenomena and Challenges with the COVID-19 Pandemic

7.1 COVID-19 Cases in Thailand

The coronavirus was first confirmed in Thailand on January 13, 2020. The number of cases remained low, with approximately 40 cases reported by the end of February. However, on March 6, confirmed cases rose to over one hundred per day in which a cluster of infection was found to have started at the Lumpini Muay, a Thai boxing stadium. The Public Health Department subsequently proposed three COVID-19 models intending to raise public awareness. These models presented the worst-case scenarios in which the virus is uncontrollable, as well as the case that the virus could be controlled.

Traveling was banned at the provincial and sub-district levels. Furthermore, a nationwide curfew was in place from 10 p.m. until 4 a.m. The measures became strict, as mask-wearing and temperature checkpoints became mandatory. Due to public awareness and government policies, no new domestic cases were recorded between mid-May and October. In October, foreign tourists entered Thailand for the first time and despite undergoing the mandatory 14-day state quarantine new COVID-19 cases arose. A French tourist was found to have developed a fever 17 days after arriving in Thailand. In response, the government extended the Coronavirus Emergency Decree for the eighth time. However, at least 10 cases were detected from illegal migrants from Tachileik who crossed the Myanmar-Thai border into Mae Sai district. Those who had been in close contact with

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[6] W. Eberlei, "Democratic Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Ghana Journal of Development Studies* (GJDS) 8, no. 1 (2011): 15-32.

[7] Françoise Barten, René Perez Montiel, Eduardo Espinoza & Carlos Morales, "Democratic governance -fairytale or real perspective? Lessons from Central America," *Environment and Urbanization* 14, no. 1 (April 2002): 129 -144.

[8] United Nation Development Program, *Democratic Governance Reader - A reference for UNDP practitioners*, (New York: UNDP, 2009).

[9] Virginia Guzmán, "Democratic governance and gender possible linkage," in *The Economic Commission for Latin America* (Chile, Santiago: Women and Development Unit, 2004).

the immigrants were required to undergo quarantine.

Thailand was faced with a new wave of the pandemic until mid-December which resulted from an outbreak that occurred in Samut Sakhon Province, the center of Thailand's fishing industry. Migrant workers from Myanmar were suspected to have been a major source of the second outbreak. Over 1,300 cases in 27 provinces were reportedly traced back to the fish market. A few days later, a new cluster emerged in Rayong Province, which was linked to a gambling den that involved illegal business.

Since gambling dens are illegal, those who were found to be infected with COVID-19 were unwilling to reveal their true whereabouts to officers, thus leading to a rapid, nationwide outbreak. Almost 50 provinces have reported infected patients during this period. With this situation, local authorities set up lockdown measures in high-risk areas. The Ministry of Education then ordered all Bangkok schools and universities to close.

Figure 2. Number of COVID-19 Cases and Measures in Thailand,

January 22, 2020 - January 13, 2021.
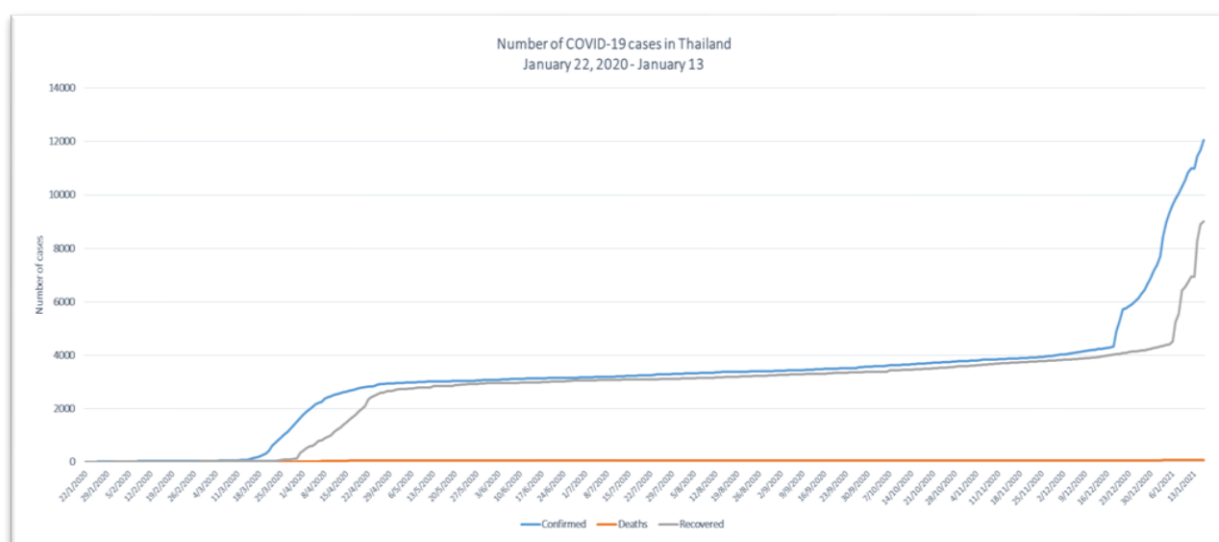
Source: Developed from Github, "Covid-19 data in Thailand," Our World in Data. [10]

7.2 Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand, various factors influenced the ability of Thai citizens to cope with the pandemic. Thailand's previously existing resources are just one factor that aided the containment of the virus. Prior to the outbreak, Thailand had established a healthcare system with a decentralized health budget, plentiful medical instruments and hospitals, and employed medical staff to work in local hospitals around Thailand. In 2002, Thailand successfully introduced a free health care system with the 'thirty baht healthcare' which enabled 48 million Thais to be able to access healthcare service for a fee of just 30 baht (less than 1 dollar) when visiting a hospital. The progressive development of Thailand's healthcare services also created over 1 million health volunteers working in 72,000 villages around the country. As a result, due to Thailand's pre-existing good medical health system, Thailand was able to successfully control the pandemic. However, factors

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[10] Github. "Covid-19 data in Thailand," In *Our World in Data*. https://github.com/owid/covid-19-data/tree/master/public/data (Accessed January 18, 2021).

that hindered the containment process were also found.

Thailand experienced leadership challenges with both administrative and health professionals in responding to the best scientific evidence. As leadership and health management skills are crucial, politicians needed to but failed to, step back and seek the opinion of health professionals. Although Thailand has made significant progress regarding its healthcare system and health knowledge, COVID-19 was a new, highly transmissible virus with no available vaccine. Thailand, therefore, lacked knowledge about the virus, and thus, the COVID-19 management center could only offer basic advice. For example, doctors encouraged people to wash their hands, wear face masks when going outside, and maintain social distance. However, an issue in crisis management occurred as Thailand experienced shortages of medical supplies such as face masks, alcohol, and medical equipment at the beginning of the outbreak. The shortage of medical supplies could be said to have led to the issue of hoarding medical supplies which introduced various laws and regulations to punish people who broke the law, including a law on posting and sharing fake news on social media.

8.   Responses from Organizations

To cope with COVID -19, Thailand has applied democratic governance and pandemic management. These mechanisms have been used with good governance principles, such as the principle of participation, rule of law, accountability, transparency, virtue, ethics, and the value of money. Responsible governance was engaged by various institutions, such as the royal institute, religious institutions, the private sector, the public sector, national and local governments, foreign organizations, civil society including both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs), academics, and others.

8.1 Responses of the Public Sector

8.1.1 Political Measures

The outbreak of COVID-19 has challenged the health system. It has created a new communication phenomenon in Thailand as politicians took a step back to allow health professionals to report CSSA messages. To control the virus, the government decentralized and distributed power to local governments and also listened to the advice of health professionals. Consequently, governors, local authorities, community leaders, and health volunteers were involved in monitoring the situation and reporting the new cases to local authorities and provincial governors.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 Situation Management Center was set up at the Government House in Bangkok, to integrate and deal with the spread of COVID-19.[11] This center was responsible for cooperating with provincial governors, the Bangkok governor, and public authorities to monitor and prevent the spread of COVID-19 through law enforcement, integration, and information management.[12] The center was also responsible for providing updates on the state of COVID-19 in Thailand to the public.

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[11] Praphorn Praphornkul, "Government establishes COVID-19 Management Center", *National News Bureau of Thailand*, https://thainews.prd.go.th/en/news/detail/TCATG200305094731235 (accessed November 30, 2020).
[12] "COVID-19 Situation Management Center duties," *COVID-19 Situation Management Center*, http://www.moicovid.com/%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%B3 (accessed December 1 2020).

8.1.2 Economic Measures

After the lockdown measure, millions of workers and business owners were affected by COVID-19. Many sectors and companies reduced the number of working days, overtime wages, and the number of employees. To reduce the economic impact, the government provided a 5000 baht allowance for three months (April - June 2020) for the unemployed and vulnerable groups who had been severely affected by COVID-19.[13]

Work-from-home (WFH) policies emerged as a response but resulted in the high consumption of extra electricity and water. The Metropolitan Electricity Authority, the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority, and the Ministry of Energy decided to cut their electricity and water charges per government policies and to help reduce the cost of living for citizens.[14]

"Poutang" is the government measure to provide financial aid to the people. It allowed individuals to purchase food and products for half price at restaurants and grocery stores that joined the campaign or it can be used to make hotel reservations at a 40 percent discounted price. The government provided the people who registered in Poutang application 3,000 baht during the first round and 3,500 baht in the second round. The stores that were allowed to join this campaign were businesses that were affected by the pandemic.

8.1.3 Social Measures

To control the COVID-19 outbreak, it was crucial that the public take responsibility for themselves and society. "Rice for fish exchanges" is an example of a cooperative program between network partner organizations. These institutions coordinated with each other. These organizations not only offer social aid to the public but also, provided space for ethnic groups to explore cultural capital in the ethnic community to provide opportunities to ethnic groups to use their potential and wisdom[15] to cope with the pandemic situation.

During the height of the COVID-19 outbreak, civil society played an important role in helping people in local communities, such as local health volunteers. Thai civil society groups and other organizations arranged food packages for people who have been affected by COVID-19. Thai civil society sought to ameliorate the pandemic-triggered hunger crisis and launched the "Too Pan Sook", or "Pantries of Sharing" project in early May 2020. These pantries aim to share food with people who have no money and are stocked with non-perishable food.[16]

8.1.4 Technological Measures

The Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) developed the "Thai Chana" and "Mor-Chana" applications for stores and restaurants to track people during the pandemic. Participating actors receive QR codes from the application and customers used their smartphones to scan codes to check-in before entering a store and

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[13] Rao Mai Thing Kan, "Matakarn Yeawya 5000 baht [5000-baht allowance Measurement]", https://www.xn--12cl1ck0bl6hdu9iyb9bp.com/ (accessed November 25, 2000).
[14] Bangkok Post,"In the time of COVID-19." *Bangkok Post*, https://www.bangkokpost.com/life/social-and-lifestyle/1906730/in-the-time-of-covid-19 (accessed November 30 2020).
[15] Bangkokbiznews, "Khao Laek Pla Thang Rot Nai Wikrit COVID-19 Khong Klum Chattiphan [Rice for fish exchanges: How the ethnicity survive in COVID-19 crisis]," *Bangkokbiznews,* https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/detail/877566 (accessed April 24 2020).
[16] Suthida Chang, "Thailand's Community Pantries: Cooking up a future for the Thai Civil Society?," *Shape-SEA* https://shapesea.com/op-ed/COVID-19/thailands-community-pantries-cooking-up-a-future-for-the-thai-civil-society/ (accessed December 3 2020).

check-out before leaving.[17] However, this method requires cooperation from individuals as it is not convenient to use their smartphones to scan codes whenever they go outside.

8.1.5 Legal Measures and Regulation

The government sought to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by enforcing a mandatory 14-day quarantine for people entering Thailand from foreign countries. In addition to the quarantine measures, the Prime Minister declared a state emergency on March 26, 2020, to prevent a mass outbreak of COVID-19.[18] As of current, the decree has been extended for the eighth time and is due to finish at the end of February.

8.1.6 Communication Measures

Students in Bangkok and many provinces have been required to stay at home to reduce risks, precipitating the need for online education to ensure social distancing measures are respected. Nonetheless, the measures advantage students with access to technological devices such as computers, smartphones, and the internet. Meanwhile, poor students, particularly those living in remote areas, rarely have access to online education. Additionally, as people were required to quarantine themselves at home or observe social distancing, people have made great use of social networks and online communication instead of face-to-face communication.

8.1.7 Health Care Measures

To control the spread of COVID-19, the government launched lockdown measures in Bangkok and several provinces between March and mid-June 2020. During the Bangkok lockdown, people were encouraged to stay at home and avoid going outside. To limit opportunities for viral transmission, the government declared a national curfew between 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. which limited residents from going leaving their homes.

In Thailand, the government and the COVID-19 management center encouraged voluntary action by the public to protect themselves from dangerous behavior and stay away from the high-risk areas. Furthermore, people were instructed to wear face masks at all times when going outside and to limit face-to-face communication with other people. COVID-19 checkpoints were also placed everywhere for people to check in.

8.2 Responses of the Private Sector
8.2.1 Provide the Medical Equipment

Many private companies donate money and support medical equipment, for example, Charoen Pokphand Group (CP) has built a surgical mask factory through cooperation from a team in China to transport two machines to install at the factory. It took a total of 5 weeks with a budget of 100 million baht, aiming to produce 3 million masks per month, GULF Energy Development Public Co. (GULF), Thai Beverage, and Central Group

8.2.2 Hotel Adaptation to the Pandemic

The tourism industry, especially hotel businesses, has been heavily impacted by COVID-19. Therefore, hotels

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[17] Thai News Agency, "Thai Chana - Application to Curb COVID-19," *Thai News Agency,* https://tna.mcot.net/tna-428710 (accessed January 7 2021).
[18] "Thailand: State of Emergency Extension Unjustified," *Human Rights Watch*, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/27/thailand-state-emergency-extension-unjustified (accessed November 30, 2020).

altered their services to maintain businesses like offering food delivery services. Some hotels donated their facilities by providing rooms free of charge to medical staff. Some hotels also adapted to become hospitals for COVID-19 infected patients or as isolation or quarantine centers to observe symptoms of COVID-19.[19]

8.3 Responses of Religious Organizations

Religious buildings are places where many people visit in order to participate in religious activities and ceremonies. However, COVID-19 caused alterations of all religious activities. On March 18, the leaders of the major religions in Thailand declared their solidarity to prevent an outbreak of COVID-19.[20]

8.4 Foreign Policies

To combat the pandemic, Thailand has cooperated with neighboring countries. Thailand and China have cooperated in sharing information about COVID-19 to successfully implement policies to prevent the spread of the disease. In addition, both countries agreed on COVID-19 vaccine cooperation to enhance the research, production, and implementation of vaccines.

Multilateral cooperation was also an important agenda of Indonesian foreign policy to combat the virus. All the ASEAN member states agreed to share important information and research related to COVID-19 vaccines so that they could effectively protect, and respond to the pandemic.[21] Moreover, ASEAN countries made a Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). This declaration stressed the need to strengthen public health measures against COVID-19 and protect citizens by giving priority to the well-being of the people.[22]

9. Policy Recommendations

9.1 Management of COVID-19

COVID-19 has affected many sectors in Thailand, and to cope with COVID-19 the government must adopt key mechanisms to manage the situation. Certain crucial mechanisms must be addressed, including democratic governance practice, economic measures, and innovation, and the development of digital technology.

9.1.1 Democratic Governance Practice

The government should prevent widespread outbreaks of COVID-19 by applying democratic governance through

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[19] Lalita Chuensaichon, "Thurakit Rongraem Tham Arai Dai Bang? Chuang Wikrit COVID-19 [What can the 'Hotel' business do? During the COVID-19 crisis]," *Phoenix Property*, https://www.phoenixproperty.co.th/blogs/news/3270 (accessed March 20 2020): Pornpailin Julpant, "Rongraem Plaeng Rang Rapmue COVID Poet Hong Rap Phupuai Kaktua Phaet [Hotel transforming themselves against COVID to open a room for the patients – doctors]," *Bangkokbiznews*, https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/detail/874739 (accessed April 8 2020).

[20] Department of Religious Affaire, "Khumue Kan Patibat Phithi Thang Satsana Khong Taela Satsana Nai Chuang Wela Kan Rabat Khong Rok Tit Chuea COVID-19 [Handbook of Religious practices of each religion during the Outbreak of Coronavirus 2019 (COVID 19)]", https://www.dra.go.th/th/cmsdetail-11-12-2-7031.html (accessed November 25 2020).

[21] Xinhua Thai Service, "ASEAN's Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Thailand Patiyan Phanuek Kamlang Tan COVID-19 [Ministers of Foreign Affairs from ASEAN countries pledged to against COVID-19]", *Xinhua Thai Service*, https://www.xinhuathai.com/high/137844_20200911 (accessed September 11 2020).

[22] ASEAN Association Thailand, "Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)", http://www.asean-thailand.org/asean/view.php?cate=&id=176 (accessed April 14 2020).

the enforcement of laws and regulations to protect citizens from the virus, and by reducing economic and social impacts via government measures. Additionally, the government must be held accountable regarding its role during crisis management. Transparency of the administration during this period is also crucial in order to guarantee the proper application of democratic governance practices and to sustain pandemic measures until the end of the pandemic. Good governance is a fundamental mechanism for all countries to effectively respond to emergencies. The CCSA is an example of good governance practice as it integrated all sectors (provincial and local governments, local health volunteers, mass media, government officers, civil society, and private enterprise) to address the spread of COVID-19 in Thailand.

9.1.2 Economic Measures

The government should provide sufficient social support for vulnerable people, students, informal laborers, migrant workers, and others during the pandemic to aid their basic livelihood and to reduce the social impact until the economic recession eases. Also, measures should be taken to boost the nation's economy by encouraging people to spend. Some measures the government can take to increase spending include increasing public holidays, reducing the cost of living such as electricity, water supply, food, and fuel for one or two years. The government should also control illegal gambling and grey businesses as the second round of COVID-19 outbreak in Thailand was caused by illegal gambling, and strategic measures to control illegal migrant workers in Thailand should be placed by applying strict laws and regulations and providing social support like health care for migrant workers and other necessary social welfare.

9.1.3 Innovation and Development of Digital Technology

The government should open data to the public, increase data accessibility through various sources (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter), and allow the COVID-19 management center to report the situation to the public daily to ensure that the nation is safe from the pandemic. As the pandemic closed schools and universities, digital communication measures should be introduced to provide free internet to students.

9.2 Future Prevention and Public Policy for Post-COVID-19

To reduce the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and to create a strategy to prevent a similar scenario in the future, the following social and economic policies should be considered by the government:

9.2.1 Social Policy Prevention

Sustainable social support or social safety net should be introduced, particularly to aid vulnerable groups. Social security is as necessary as healthcare and includes government subsidies and allowances, social insurance, elderly allowance, and pensions. Public, private, NGOs, civil society, people organizations must also work together to promote sustainable development. Local governments should be able to build new social mechanisms to strengthen social values, improve social partnership, and build communities to increase social immunity to protect themselves from socio-economic uncertainties in rural areas. The government should also implement area-based development to reduce socioeconomic and environmental impacts after COVID-19. To cope with new threats, the

government should strengthen local communities by providing necessary resources and decentralizing power to prepare for worst-case scenarios by adopting a community-management strategy.

Political and economic resources should be decentralized to improve the quality of education, innovation, and technology learning especially, in the rural areas where many children do not have access to good education and school equipment such as online studying.

COVID-19 and other crises should be seen as an opportunity. Due to this pandemic, vaccine diplomatic relations with ASEAN countries were created to support and develop research on healthcare systems, provide medical knowledge to neighboring countries, and develop medical systems and medical services to become a healthcare hub. This pandemic also stressed the importance of and developed digital communication. The government should create self-motivated, lifelong learning via digital communication and social media platforms. Data and digital technologies should be used to cope with socioeconomic problems and improve quality of life like improving and developing data transparency and data management systems. Clear communication between the government and the public during emergencies can also be improved through the development of digital communication.

9.2.2 Economic Policy Prevention

In order to prevent an economic crisis, the government should create a citizen's charter for sustainable development and apply this law in urban and local communities in times of crisis. Preparations are also needed to mitigate social impacts on individuals in such times. Therefore, provincial governors should create an emergency plan to prevent any disruption that could occur and heavily impact the public.

The government should also place greater emphasis on creating social norms by providing fundamental rights to the people. This refers to the accessibility of welfare as a key element to minimize socioeconomic impacts from future threats. The safety net will help reduce negative impacts as individuals will be able to take care of themselves and have access to sufficient resources. Likewise, the grassroots economy should be strengthened by enabling social and economic empowerment among the public. Reviewing and revising education, building community networks and social partnerships, and emphasizing self-reliance should be allowed at the grassroots level. If Thailand can strengthen its economy from the 'inside,' it will be less reliant on external sources for economic growth.

To stabilize food security and support the agricultural sector, improvements and developments should be made on smart farming in urban and rural areas. Through the use of technology, it will be possible to increase the quality of agricultural products and create a more value-added and improved agriculture industry in Thailand. This will not only stabilize price guarantees on agriculture but social protections would be implemented for farmers, agrarians, and laborers because it allows businesses to be more profitable, efficient, safer, and more sustainable. ■

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