



Collaborative Border Management in Thailand and Neighboring Countries: Needs, Challenges and Issues

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study the characteristics of the problem that was an obstacle to the border crossing management along the border checkpoint between Thailand and its neighboring countries. Furthermore; the research aims to study an appropriate approach for the way in which border processing could be managed in the future. This research brings together the key elements of a holistic set of new approaches known as Collaborative Border Management (CBM)², for the analysis of suitable approaches in Thailand. The research was conducted through qualitative data. This required in-depth interviews with the important authorities involved in the border management. The data was collected from the security agencies in the central and regional administration in the border checkpoint of two border areas; Aranyaprathet in SaKaew Province and Sadao in Songkhla Province. The results of this research showed that the main obstacles to the development of land border checkpoint in Thailand consists of five issues which are policy issues, process, people who lack management resources, the database and information technology, and the development of infrastructure in the border areas.

Keywords: Border Crossing Management, Transnational Crime, Collaborative Management, ASEAN.

Introduction

Border crossing management has become increasingly important because the sheer volume of global travel puts border management systems under constant pressure. The total number of international tourist arrivals worldwide surged from 69.3 million in 1960 to 687 million in 2000 (Koslowski, 2011). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that in 2012, there were about 200 million emigrants from all over the world and most of the emigrants migrated through illegitimate crossed-borders

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² Collaborative Border Management (CBM) is the organization and supervision of border agency activities to meet the common challenge of facilitating the movement of legitimate people and goods while maintaining secure borders and meeting national legal requirements.

immigration which is guessed of 20 to 30 million people (The International Organization for Migration Policy Development, IOM 2007, 2008).

Even as international travel has increased exponentially, border management systems especially in land border checkpoint³ areas have been confronted with additional risks associated with these movements. Mass-causality terrorist attacks; rising illegal immigration and human trafficking have exposed weakness in the states' ability to manage their borders effectively. Increased security has slowed the flow of goods and people and increased frustration of businesses and travelers. These disruptions are serious because they threaten to undermine economic opportunities in the border region. As a result, in the last decade there has been a huge government investment to implement new border management frameworks and collaborate across borders to accomplish several competing aims: the facilitation of legitimate travel and trade, the prevention of terrorism and transnational criminality, and reductions in illegal migration flows.

In Thailand, in 2010, in the border area of the north and northeast of Thailand from January – December 2010, a total of 1,379,234 foreigners from Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar entered (Bureau of Migrant Workers, Department of Employment, Thailand). It could be classified into legal and illegal migration. Legal immigration was only 3.14 percent (43,272 people). The proportion of illegal immigrants was 1,335,962 people or 96.86 percent, which was the critical problem of cross-border management (Department of Employment, 2010, p. 18) coupled with this, it is worth mentioning that the measures to prevent the immigration control of Thailand are still not efficient. This is because Thailand has borders with their neighboring countries over a distance of approximately 8,167 kilometers. These frontiers are divided over land crossing Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia over 5,462 kilometers which means that foreigners can travel across border easily. However, after the 9/11 incident in U.S., the issue of security has been back to be the key flow of the policy implementation in each country and has had a great impact considerably on Border Crossing Management. Therefore, building an infrastructure and coordinating policy to cope with huge numbers of people entering and exiting through a multitude of ports of entry is no small challenge in itself.

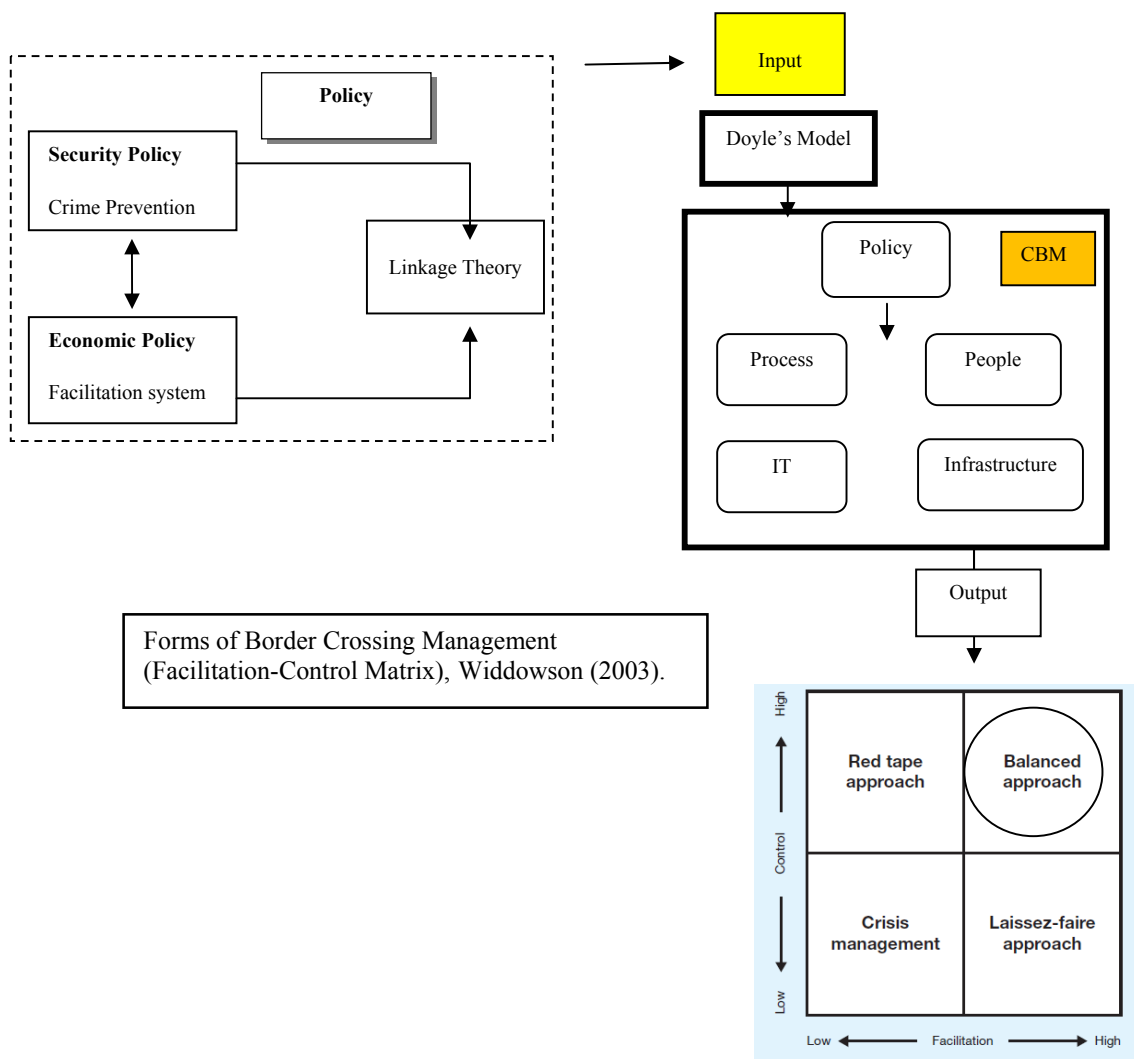
Laissez-faire approach is a form of management that nowadays can be observed from developing countries across the world. Now that the consideration of economic benefits is crucial, the selection of ways to generate free movement of people and goods in the border area is the easiest thing for Border Crossing Management. The border security for crime prevention problem is to be taken into account at a lower level. Additionally, the management is possible after the crime has dropped out of the border area already, but could be arrested in the interior area of the country subsequently. However, collaborative border management (CBM) is and development guideline to become a balance approach because CBM enables border management agencies to work in close collaboration with each other, forming an 'inter-agency approach'. CBM can be achieved under the jurisdiction of a single border management agency. However, the creation of a single agency in itself is not necessarily the only or the best solution. Typically, an overarching governance body is created charged with facilitating the establishment of an overall border management vision and ensuring that all stakeholders are involved and are working

³ A border checkpoint is a place, generally between two countries, where travelers or goods are inspected. Authorization is often required to enter a country through its borders. Access-controlled borders often have a limited number of checkpoints where they can be crossed without legal sanctions.

together to achieve the common vision. Strong political will and commitment and the establishment of an appropriate incentives/disincentives framework to underpin and support progress are essential for the success of CBM (Doyle, 2011).

The purpose of this research is two folded. It aims to study the characteristics of problems in border checkpoint areas between Thailand and Neighboring Countries. Besides that it focuses on study the new conceptual framework (CBM) on Border Crossing Management system in Thailand and to give policy recommendations to improve Border Crossing Management in the future.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Methodology

Interviewees and study area

The primary data compiled in this research was drawn from interview guidelines which is using CBM concept. In this research the data from interviewees were collected by means of in-depth Interview from central and regional agencies with a total of 24 interviewees between September 2011 and February 2012 on face-to-face meetings. Each interview was digitally recorded. Criteria for the selection of areas for data collection are as follows:

- **Central administration Interviewees:** The Selection criteria are relevant agencies based on security and Economic Policy. The interviewees were asked to give an idea on Border Management Policy

Central Administration
-Office of the National Security Council -Department of Border Affairs, Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters - Foreign Affairs Division, Ministry of Interior. -Office of Civil Registration, Department of Provincial Administration - Department of Provincial Administration - Department of Customs -Immigration Bureau, Royal Thai Police -Department of Public Works and Town and Country, Ministry of Interior

- **Regional administration Interviewees:** focus on the units tasked with policy implementation by the selection of 2 Border Checkpoint areas (Figure 2). The interviewees in the area were interviewed (1 person per agency). The comparative case studies have been selected as research pattern with the use of sample groups in different areas to study the same problem.

Data Analysis

The data analysis proceeded as follows: Firstly, the researchers read and reread the data in their entirety to refresh their impressions and understandings of the overall narratives generated by the interviews. Next, the researchers went through each question and carefully read the text answers given by 24 interviewees and then hand coded each response according to emergent themes. Coding categories were developed after the narratives were read and were based on the responses provided by interviewees. The data was then summarized. Following this, the data was organized into tables regarding questions that asked respondents for views on border checkpoint performance and effectiveness.

Figure 2: The selected areas

Border Checkpoint	duration	Volume (vehicles per day)		
		Trucks	Passenger car and bus	
Aranyaprathet border checkpoint SraKaew Province	07.00 am.- 08.00 pm.	193	1,539	12.90 million (35,839 person per day)
Sadao border Checkpoint Songkhla Province	05.00 am.- 11.00.pm.	954	1,163	3.75 million (10,418 person per day)

1. Aranyaprathet Border Checkpoint, District, SraKaew Province	2. Sadao Border Checkpoint, Sadao District, Songkhla Province
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governor of SraKaew Province - Sheriff of Aranyaprathet district - Chief of Office of Governor - Customs House, Aranyaprathet - Aranyaprathet Immigration Checkpoint - Industrial Council - Municipality <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><u>The Selection Criteria</u> Aranyaprathet Border Checkpoint is the highest ranking Statistic of Passenger Entry-Exist point in Thailand.</p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governor of Songkhla Province - Sheriff of Sadao district - Chief of Office of Governor - Sadao Customs House - Office of Thai – Malaysia Border Coordination, Division of 4th Army Area - Sadao Immigration Checkpoint - Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) - Industrial Council - Municipality <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><u>The Selection Criteria</u> Sadao Border Checkpoint is the highest ranking of border trade in Thailand.</p> </div>

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are based on the above interview data. According to the in-depth interviews with agencies involved in Border Checkpoint areas and the facts, data, and suggestions, it appears that there was a problem regarding the situation and the description of the severity level of the crime prevention problem in the area of border checkpoint. This effect is due to the fact of the free flow of movement. The border checkpoint is the gatekeeper, which helps facilitate the trade, and helps suppress and prevent undetected crime and penetrates into the country through the screening process by relevant agencies such as Immigration, Customs and the Security Agency in the border checkpoint area. Border checkpoint has had a long history of being the channel trade. However, the image that extracted from the field trip in the area of border crossing today

cannot be used to describe the image seen twenty to thirty years ago. Looking back retrospectively, the restrictions on the border crossing can be seen in the border region, especially the neighboring countries in the area of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, except Malaysia. The ideology was different. Trade and communication were difficult and with limitations. But in the current state, these countries have been adapted to the new era of being a free trade area without taking political doctrine and ideology to be involved in people-to-people visit, trade contacts and building mutual relations.

In this regard, the results revealed that the volume of people and goods in the border checkpoint increases and the data corresponding with empirical evidence have revealed that arrests transnational crime increases together with the entry of illegal migration labors into the country. This is also shown by the results from interviewees such as Immigration Bureau, Customs, District Chiefs, and other security agencies in the area. However, the standpoint of the agencies in the area express an opinion on the seriousness level of the crime problem along the border which is a large scale transnational crime, such as illegal immigration, problem of drug trafficking, contraband smuggling are all typical of transnational crime organizations which contribute to a more and more increase in the severity of the problem. So, it is urgently required to develop and find new approaches for blocking / filtering unwanted items as well as to develop the model to facilitate in the area of border checkpoint.

It can be concluded that Border Crossing Management consists of actors with different characteristics from the past. Traditionally, the government sector played a main role in Border Crossing Management. However, with the changing situation of border crossing, together with the framework of international economic cooperation are determinant for the domestic policy of border crossing to generate free movement of people and products. These results in that fact that the actors with the role in the government sector especially security agencies turn into playing the role of agencies involved in the economy and private agencies related in the area. The relevant example is the occurrence of the agreement of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) which has been established to enhance the competitiveness of ASEAN as important production base to supply products to the world market. The said agreement has resulted in the occurrence of free movement of goods and services as well as the movement of labors who are important factors of economic growth. With the performance of the border checkpoint management of Thailand and neighboring countries that are not prepared for screening with adequate efficiency for the increase in travels, contacts in the border areas, as a result, it is difficult to control illegal traffic as well as illegal drugs and the entry and exit of people, resulting in the fact that the issue of control or facilitation for travel across the border has become a contentious issue.

1. Policy

The basis of assumption of this study is that security agencies are often the barrier to facilitating trade and travel across the border because they are often worried about the security at the border areas such as human smuggling, illegal drugs that must be done in accordance with the regulations of the agencies to control and prevent unwanted things from entry and exist in the border checkpoint areas. The interview with private agencies found out that security agencies are the barrier to trade and facilitating border crossing. That is different from the opinion from security agencies that they are not the barriers to facilitating border crossing. This is because nowadays the border crossing management is

focusing on facilitating the people. In addition, many regulations have been adjusted to facilitate. If there is excessively rigorous monitoring and screening, this will cause the delay in border crossing. The people in the areas may not be satisfied and may appeal.

Both sides have agreed that the development of Border Crossing Management system is an important matter that the country should have a clear policy in terms of balance approach between the economic and security policy, clear policy matters, organizational management and developing the management resources to be more favorable for work performance. Notably, important issues of policy implementation about border crossing in Thailand are in accordance with the Linkage Theory of James N. Rosenau. His theory explains that the definition of current foreign policy must involve more relevant factors to support the decision-making. Moreover, there are often inconsistencies of views between the agencies from central administration that are usually based on Law-oriented factors, the authority of the organization, government policy, and international cooperation while operating units in the areas are close to the suffering of people and perform duties by using the resources available. It can be concluded that for border crossing Management system of Thailand in accordance with the concept of David Widdowson (2003) and Stephen Hollowa, the case of Thailand has the characteristic of a laissez-faire approach rather than security control. That means with the screening efficiency that it is still insufficient for example the verification of documents for border crossing, the efficiency of control and the prevention of entry of unwanted illegal is ineffective. The method of “*Sleeping with one eye*” is used to facilitate the people in the area of border crossing to be able to continue the operation.

2. Process

The Characteristic process of Border Checkpoint is a *grey zone* due to the overlapping missions of the agencies in the same area. Agencies involved in the economic policy such as the Ministry of Commerce, private agencies in the area, Department of Foreign Trade are all responsible for facilitating trade in the border checkpoint while security agencies such as customs, Immigration, Border Patrol Police, Army and provincial office are mission with checking and screening illegal things. In case of the requirement to check anything illegal, the agencies with responsibility for checking are numerous. The examples are the case of drugs smuggling, contraband smuggling, Customs, Immigration, the Border Patrol Police, the army is all agencies that can detect. As a result, the power to perform duties of agencies is unclear, leading to the lack of unity. There is no coordination between the agencies involved, as they should. Thus, border checkpoint management cannot be carried out to be effective.

To solve the problems of border crossing, it requires the involvement and association of many sectors that must work together to share information to help diagnose the problems. Connected to this, border crossing management needs to move away from traditional management with the emphasis on the regulations, patterns, command and control with the structure of strict regulations towards the management of inter –agency cooperation with flexibility and adaptability.

The interviewees’ data have revealed that from the past until now, a variety of agencies that have overseen border checkpoint management has caused confusion in operations, thus affecting checking and screening people crossing the border as well. Moreover, dealing with immigration in the country is not a characteristic of ‘complete’. Such separate actions brought important events in the case of the terrorist act of 11 September 2001 in

the United States of America. It revealed that security agencies received information on terrorism from all organizations, but there was a lack of know-how to share information between relevant agencies. Today, the government of the United States of America has developed new forms of organizations by establishing new agencies and dissolved some agencies focusing on security in all border areas under one single unit structure.

Border crossing management of Thailand with its neighboring countries still has perspective of internal management of the country as a main pillar. This means the emphasis is still placed on the internal development and management of the country rather than creating common development policy with neighboring countries. In addition, there is the lack of a main host for managing and developing standard of border crossing between countries as one single measure. There is no key host for negotiating to develop rules and regulations on border crossing with neighboring countries. Various agencies are involved in border crossing mission in Thailand; therefore, it is uncertain which agencies should play a role in being key host in decision-making and integration. Furthermore, the development of border crossing system of neighboring countries operates with difficulty as most of them have still not prepared for development whether in terms of personnel, law, operational structure and information technology system. In addition, Thailand is still lacking the knowledge of border crossing management of neighboring countries. In many cases, Thailand has new forms of border crossing management policy such as the development of 24-hour border crossing system, the linkage of database between neighboring countries, the development of a single visa system and the development of single window. However, they cannot be operational as neighboring countries of Thailand are not ready to be the same standard.

3. People

There is a shortage of resources management such as tools, materials, personnel, budget, and technology. Screening people crossing the border with inadequate materials leads to the case of flexibility for allow people to enter in the border checkpoint. The arrests related to crime often happen in the inner areas in the manner of “*Release before Arrest later*” due to a large number of people and products entry and exit the border checkpoint areas between Thailand and neighboring countries each day. In case of excessive monitoring and screening, the operators may appeal as some categories of products may be damaged such as fruits and vegetables. In the case of individuals and tourists being kept on waiting longtime, they may make a complaint. As a result, Thailand’s image as a tourist destination might get damaged. Therefore, the best option is that if it is not possible to check, the people should be allowed to enter the country first. Currently, the free of movement of people and goods and the efficiency in screening will be reduced. Officers in border areas need to work hard and the human resources capacity is still not enough for operations. On the basis of the field trip to interview the security agencies in the areas of border checkpoints, our interviews found out that if Thailand is open for free flow of movement of people and goods in accordance with different frameworks of economic cooperation. The government’s policy should be development in various forms to enhance the efficiency in border crossing, the operating units in most areas agree with the government policy. Besides that, adequate resources for management need to be implemented to support the officers working at the border areas.

4. Information Technology

The interviewees indicated that problems about the development of database and information technology of operating units tasked with screening people entry and exist in border checkpoint areas are associated with the lack of necessary database, materials and equipment to improve the screening efficiency. It may be said that the surveillance system of people entering and leaving the country still relies on human resources as a main pillar in monitoring and screening. There is no technology used in the areas of border crossing of Thailand at all such as E-scanning system and an E-passport system. This will affect considerably the areas of border checkpoint with a large volume of people and goods passing entry-exit each day such as the Sadao Border checkpoint and the Aranyaprathet Border checkpoint. The interviewees revealed that most relevant agencies are of the opinion that the Immigration Bureau is the agency most required to develop effective technology for monitoring, screening in the area of border checkpoint. Currently, there are different regulations, to verify the individual's information for border crossing because different agencies develop their own screening and monitoring systems for border crossing. So, the problems arise when there is the need for coordination in terms of information with different agencies. Thus, there is problem of coordination for information between agencies in Thailand. There is no systematic exchange of information between them.

5. Infrastructure

The researcher has done fieldwork to observe the current problems in the border checkpoint areas: Sadao Border Checkpoint, Songkhla Province from 23 – 29 September 2011 and Aranyaprathet Border checkpoint, SraKaew Province from 1-5 February 2012. It has been found that the problems of infrastructure development in the area of border crossing comprise 2 points: 1. the lack of standardized public utilities management system; 2. The problem of congestion. The study has found that border checkpoint between Thailand and neighboring countries that currently exists lacks international standard. It also show that the management system for integrated services (One Stop Service) with main agencies of Customs, Immigration and Animals and Plants Quarantine working in the same place. The fact that each border checkpoint lacks the same standard is the obstacle to the development of trade and facility across the border. Furthermore, as the areas of border checkpoint are mostly located in the national parks, national forests or wildlife sanctuaries, the implementation of land use to extend the transportation ways or construct various buildings at different locations for facilitation encounters regulatory problems about application for using the areas to develop border checkpoint. Concerning the problem of congestion, the fieldwork conducted to interview with agencies in the areas of Sadao Border checkpoint, Songkhla Province and Aranyaprathet Border checkpoint, Srakaew Province has found the problems of delay and traffic congestion in the area of products and people inspection due to large volume of trade, tourists, trucks, and private cars with the trend of rising steadily. But the service area is limited and not enough, causing traffic congestion with restrictions in the provided service. From the data of all interviewees the most important problems were delays in border crossing to Malaysia, congestion, and the poor traffic routes which are not enough for the increased quantity of cars, especially when people travel in and out of the country in a large number.

Need to Implement Collaborative Border Management System (CBM): Challenges and Issues

1. Policy Framework

CBM is a guideline concept to improve border crossing management. The development of the Border Crossing Management system of Thailand should have the characteristic of integration in all aspects including the integration of organizational agencies, CBM are usually best situated to develop integrated procedures for the processing of goods at points of entry. Border and immigration police focus primarily on the processing of people at those points of entry as well as the regulation of both people and goods attempting to cross borders illegally between those points of entry. Thus, the emphasis of CBM is placed within the customs process itself. The two types of CBM require a clear delineation of responsibilities for goods (customs) and passenger processing (immigration). While these responsibilities require different operations, (for e.g. goods classification, carrier and goods inspection, revenue collection, and transaction verification for customs, versus visa verification, health, and anti-smuggling for immigration), resources management, linkage of database between agencies, having the same standard of law without overlapping. However, such development requires the determination of a concrete approach for the development with the policy-oriented support from the government; the evolution of training and the use of technology have enhanced border integration and increasingly allowing border officers to perform both functions. In most cases, a country will integrate its own processes before it initiates efforts to integrate with a neighbor or trade agreement partner. Before embarking on the organizational change necessary to develop CBM, there must be political support from the highest levels. In most countries, that means a mandate from the Prime Minister or a similar official with authority over the relevant agencies.

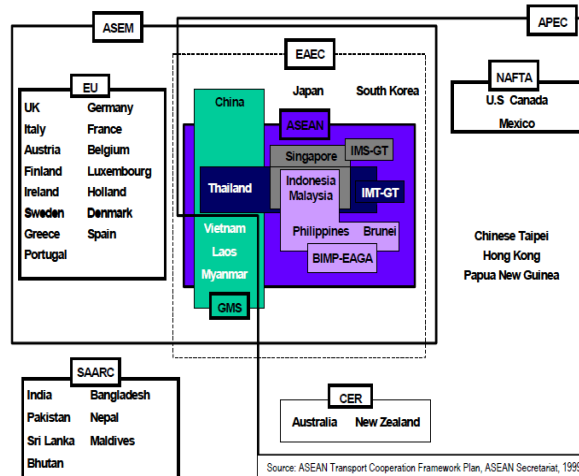
2. Organizational Framework

Most of the interviewees expressed their opinion that in the long term, it is recommended to undertake the organizational restructuring of different agencies in order to reduce the single border agency, in same line with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which is an agency on departmental level of the United States of America. The agency will have a new organizational structure by combing offices concerned with the border under the same department and will be responsible for all border checkpoints. This is a phenomenon that has occurred in many countries in the nature of Integrated Theory to render Border Crossing Management of such countries more effective. Another possibility might be to enter into an agreement that will reduce regulations that overlap each other by establishing the agency for coordination as a single agency in particular. This agency might be affiliated with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior or the Prime Minister's Office. Moreover, the agency should be able to link all information about border crossing management. The interview has revealed that the informants expressed diverse opinions about the agency that should perform main duty in linking database. Such agency may be under the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc.

3. Resources Management Framework

The development of a system for verifying the document identifying the people crossing the border and the development of database for border crossing are regarded as “the key to improve border crossing Management by taking advantage of various electronic systems”. The interviewees disclosed consistent data in the development of technology to link database in and between neighboring countries of Thailand are crucial for the development of efficiency in Border Crossing Management. This should be a first priority. In the next stage, Thailand may have to revise the database and the whole technology used in all agencies of the country to improve the performance of database of border checkpoint across the country to be in the same direction or to be developed as single system. In the initial stage, the Thai government could conduct the research focusing on the information reviewed in separate parts from different agencies. The research will lead to the development of database for border management of Thailand. As an example we can refer to the case studies of countries in the European Union that illustrate the border crossing system that makes use of the database of each country including information on security, law enforcement. These databases can be linked between all EU member countries, consisting of countries, agencies related to law enforcement on screening people and goods crossing the border. It is possible to access to data, which are stored at the central database in accordance with Schengen Agreement. In addition, each country must comply with the standards and regulations related to immigration with the same pattern totaling 15 countries. Additionally, the central database of the European Union can access the database of all countries to update the information.

Figure 3:
The framework of economic cooperation that needs the linkage of database



Source: (Schengen Information System II, European Union. Retrieved from http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/other/l33183_en.htm.)

Therefore, on the part of the international database, the interviewees provided data that Thailand should develop the standards and consistent operating systems at international level in the field of information technology, document related to border crossing, relevant regulations and operating hours of border checkpoint. In the cases of Thailand and neighboring countries, it is recommended to begin to work collaboratively and improve

the readiness of neighboring countries which lack the readiness whether in terms of human resources, expertise on the operation and information technology system. In this connection, Thailand may be in a position to provide assistance and central database with the same system of all ASEAN countries that may be created in the future.

Conclusion

The development of a Collaborative Border Management Model can be applied to current situations and challenges, such as management problems amidst the political and government form of each country that is different. However, the concept of CBM can be managed to achieve the objectives of linkage and integrating resources-related factors and management amidst such difference. It can be said that the development of border crossing between Thailand and neighboring countries must have the characteristics of Integrated Border Management (IBM) or may be called Collaborative Border Management (CBM) in the near future in the same line with Smart Border of the United States - Mexico border and the integration form of border crossing of the European Union under the Schengen Agreement. However, to ensure that such implementation will be effective, it is required to revise the mission of all agencies related to border crossing in Thailand as well as to study the border crossing management system and organizational structure of management agencies in neighboring countries along the Thai border. Currently, there is no research and lack of knowledge in these matters. The author hope that the findings of this study may lead to either the development of agreement in the bilateral framework (Bilateral Agreement) or the development of agreement which is a single standard of all ASEAN countries (Framework for ASEAN Cross Border Management).

Acknowledgement and Ethics Statement

The author would like to thank Mr. Sam Derbali for the editorial corrections. This research has been approved by the research Committee on ethics of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Mahidol University, and the certified user data, interviews are kept confidential and it will not be disclosed to the public and the name or address of the interviewees will not be displayed.

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