Civil-Political Dialogue in Public Policies for the 3 Provinces Affected by Unrest in Southern Thailand

Nualta Apakupakul[1*] Rangsan Apakupakul[2] Sirirat Kosalwat[3] Yaowanee Charoonsak[3]

[1]Epidemiology Unit, Faculty of Medicine, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand

[2]Faculty of Agriculture, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand

[3]Faculty of Medicine, Prince of Songkla University, Songkhla, Thailand

*E-mail of the corresponding author: nualta.a@psu.ac.th

Abstract

The 3 southern border provinces (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) in Thailand are great multicultural areas. After Thailand endured a serious insurgency in 2001, the Thai government, NGOs and social groups came together to find a solution to the problems. This research aimed to develop a civil policy by a multicultural partnership in the 3 provinces with unrest. We started with 1) a rapid situation assessment and data were collected from secondary data, mapping the problems and focus group discussions, 2) dialogues with the religious leaders, social groups, and other partnerships such as members of parliament, 3) development of a civil policy for the 3 provinces with unrest. There were groups of 6 policies: 1) Reconstruction of management by establishment of a ministry for the 3 border provinces, 2) Reconstruction of the justice system, 3) Educational reform, 4) Reconstruction of the economy, 5) Social, cultural and tradition revolution, and 6) Health policy. All 6 policies were revised by academicians, philosophers, religious leaders, villagers, and other partnerships. After the 6 policies were revised, they were sent to the House of Representatives for the process of acceptance. The dialogues and civil politics were two of the ways out to solve the problems in the 3 southern border provinces because we can include all the partnerships and participants who were directly involved with the problems. The impact of this project was shown by a decrease in the number of violent cases because the 6 policies came from the people in those areas. We found that dialogue and civil policy could be extended to the other violent areas.

Keywords: dialogue, civil political, civil society violence, multicultural, RSA(Rapid Situation Assessment)

1. Introduction

Thailand has a history of being a peaceful country, but since 2001 Thailand has endured a serious insurgency problem in three of its southern provinces. The Thai government, NGOs, Human Rights Watch and other civil societies have worked together to find a way out. This began by focusing on the terms of "conflict", "management", "civil society" and civil politics. "Civil society" includes a wide range of organizations from NGOs, academicians, villagers, philosophers, religious leaders, and business leaders. Beyond the factors internal to civil society, an accounting must be taken of the context in which civil society is operating in order to better understand its influence (Foley & Edwards 1996;Vatanasapt 2008).

The provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat in southern Thailand have witnessed a sharp spike in violence in the past few years. The unrest is threatening to tarnish Prime Minister Thaksin's period in office (Vatanasapt 2008).The contemporary literature as well as the media tends to portray the strife as one between Buddhists and Muslims. This is markedly different from many studies which place less importance on religion and treat the discord as one between Thais and Malays and try to explain the transformation from a primarily "ethnic" strife to a predominantly "religious" conflict. It argues that despite the rise of the religious factor in the discord, it is flawed to treat the violence in southern Thailand as entirely between Buddhists and Muslims. It further contends that the ethnic Thai-Malay divide is still deeply entrenched in the insurgency.

Five percent of Thais are Muslim and the majority of the Muslins in Thailand are Sunnis and a small number consider themselves Jihad, especially in the 3 border provinces. The 3 border provinces are Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat and all of them use their mother tongue. It seems there is still a lacking in our understanding of Islam and Muslims and reliable and comprehensive data on them. The economy in this area is dependent mainly upon fishing, rice, fruit production, tin mining and rubber harvesting with some cross-border trading, both legal and illegal. The principal social intervention is in education. Traditional education is given in the so-called Pondok or "Pawno" (hut) schools. The Pondok schools are also offered a subsidy if they teach Thai and some of these schools also offer a secondary education but with an emphasis on religious studies.

2. Purpose of study

- To evaluate and follow up the model of civil policies for public policies for the three border provinces in southern Thailand.

- To push forward the public policies to solve the critical problems in these three provinces in southern Thailand.

3. Design and Methods: This is a qualitative study by PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) and PAR (Participatory Action Research). The subjects were from the 3 provinces affected by the unrest: religious leaders of Islam, leaders of the communities, 4 members of Parliament, 40 village representatives from the villages with unrest, and 4 NGOs from the relief and reconciliation organization. The data were collected by

- Rapid Situation Assessment (RSA)
- Analysis of secondary data from government reports from 2006-2010
- Participation research appraisal: focus group discussion
- Mapping hot spots of areas of unrest in the 3 border provinces
- Review of the local policies of health, education, cultural, socioeconomic, and human rights
- In-depth interviews

4. Context of the 3 provinces affected by the unrest:
The Muslims are a significant minority group in Thailand. They are the largest minority next to the Chinese. Unlike other groups of minorities, the Muslims had their own kingdom in the southernmost area of Thailand from which the history and culture of the people still lives. The history of the Muslims is in the greater Pattani Region, which comprises the four provinces of Satun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. We could divide the Muslim community in Thailand into two broad groups; one is an "assimilated" group and the other is an "unassimilated" group. Assimilated group means the group that displays a high degree of cultural similarity with the ethnic Thai-Buddhism except in the areas of religious practices and customs. This group includes a whole diversity of ethnic groups such as the Muslim Siamese, the Haw Chinese, Arabian and Pathan. The "unassimilated" group is predominantly Malay who live in the southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat where the group still displays a distinct culture of its own, notably in the realm of language and tangible aspects of non-Thai religion and culture such as the Malay language of "Yawee" (local Malay Language), Malay names, Malay folklore, music and attire. An exception to this category are the Muslims in Satun Province, also in southernmost Thailand, who have assimilated into the Thai culture (Bond et al. 1997; Aphornsuvan 2003; Croissant 2007).

5. Results
The action research consisted of 4 steps: 1) a review of papers and literature research, 2) focus group discussions, 3) conclusions and a review of the data by civil society and 4) conclusions which created a Policy for Muslims in Southern Thailand.
We collected the data by literature review and dialogues by inviting the policymakers, academicians, Islamic lawyers, members of 4 parliamentary parties who were elected by the people in the area and the health policy makers and representatives from 40 areas of unrest. From the first draft of policies there were only 5 issues, but after review by civil society of 40 areas of unrest they added the health policy to be the sixth policy. The committee created the strategies for the 6 policies as follows:
5.1. Reconstruction of management in the 3 border provinces by establishing a new ministry for this area
5.1.1Reconstruction of an independent entity which is directly authorized by the Prime Minister.
The job description of these groups included the authorization to
5.1.1.1 make decisions and planning
5.1.1.2 prepare budget plans
5.1.1.3 personnel managing such as positioning, promotions, pension, orientation and post training to understand the people and culture in the 3 provinces
5.1.1.4 cooperating in management such as the ratio of committee members in each area. The committee needs to be accepted by the people in each area
5.1.2 Integrating the ways of Islamic and local administration by the assembly of the population or community council and "Suror Council"
5.2. Reconstruction of the justice system
5..2.1 Establish an independent entity for justice directly authorized by the Prime Minister. The job description of these groups includes authorization to
5.2.1.1 petition for justice in the local language
5.2.1.2 the petition needs to support victims and families affected by the violence
5.2.1.3 integration and cooperation with the government justice system for setting up Islamic
5.2.1.4 justice for family and Islamic laws for inheritance

5.2.2 Setting a laboratory Law Center and Central Institute of Forensic Sciences in the south.

5.3. Educational reform

5.3.1 Multidisciplinary educational system

5.3.2 To excel in the development of general education, religious education, Islamic education, vocational education, private schools, Pondox, curriculums and teachers

5.3.3 Develop a center for the Pondox

5,3.4 To create a curriculum for the Pondox and general education

5.3.5 Educational management for marginal or minority groups, and the disabled and victims of the insurgency in the south

5.3.6 Establish an organization to protect teachers, students and also the education system frombecoming victims of violence

5.3.7 Change the school week in the 3 provinces as Islamic religious studies are on Friday and Saturday. This condition would be a starting point for the acceptance of a multicultural lifestyle.

5.4. Reconstruction of Economics

5.4.1 Management of resources to relieve poverty

5.4.1.1 Revolution Reform of disused land

5.4.1.2 Support the livelihood of the local fishermen

5.4.1.3 Cultivate an area at "BUDO" mountain range, Sungai-padee District

5.4.1.4 Develop skills and abilities to encourage skilled workers inside Thailand and the bordering countries

5.4.2 Encourage Halal food production for the worldwide market \

5.4.3 Develop this area to become a special economic area and promote Thai-Malaysia traditionalProducts

5.5. Social cultural and traditional revolution

5.5.1 Management of social welfare under the Saga system

5.5.2 Develop a learning center for multicultural understanding

5.5.3 Encourage a religious network in communities

5.5.4 Encourage the public media to be more responsible when reporting the problems in that area

5.6. Health policy

5.6.1 Develop a health service system in an Islamic way

All 6 strategies were presented to the Regional Assembly and National Assembly for improvement in terms of National Public Policy. The 6 policies include:

- o Political system: After we examine the results and make it public policy we want to be able to submit them to the 4 parliamentary parties: Democracy, Palungprachachon, Pauepandin and Chatthai. We had hoped that after the election on 13 December 2008, the policies would be pushed through as National Public Policies and strategies made to develop a concrete method.
- o Health assembly process: This method started with an academic review and development of the 5 policies and they were presented to the National Health Assembly Conference on 11-13 December 2008 where they were accepted by the National Health Committee. After this process, all 5 policies from the 3 provinces went into a cabinet meeting.
- o One year after the 6 issues were sent to the Central Government the number of violent events and victims tended to decline although it was not significant (Table 2).

6. Discussion

The several conceptual problems raised by current understandings of political violence, especially as they pertain to actions, motivations, and identities in civil society, in our case can be examined by the process of dialogue between the affected parties. Actions "on the ground" often turn out to be related to local and private conflicts. The disjunction between dynamics at the top and at the bottom undermines prevailing assumptions about civil wars. The problem should be corrected by understanding and acceptance. The Thai government and partnerships have tried to find the best way to decrease the violence, but it seems useless. The time appears ripe for a re-examination of the conflict in that area with a view to a better understanding of its causes and dynamics, thereby helping to identify possible ways to promote peace in the region. However, there is still considerable disagreement among policymakers and analysts about the actual nature of the conflict, its causes and who is involved (Fearon & Laitin 2003). Broadly, distinct interpretations of the contemporary conflict have been put forward: those focusing on the impact of the historical role on modern Thai politics and the "global war on terror". Obviously these interpretations are not mutually exclusive, but analysts disagree over their relative importance (Carment 1993).

This project found that the local people in the 3 provinces with unrest need liberation. Although the participants were from different groups they were homogeneous because most of them were Muslim. We found that some of

local people in these provinces wanted to be independent from the Kingdom of Thailand. However there was another group who did not want to separate from Thailand because they think that we can live together as usual. Many Muslim-Thai and Buddhist–Thai thought that they could not find any place the same as Thailand known as **'a land of smiles'**. Nowadays, 90% of the government officers in the 3 southern border provinces are Muslim, so the Thai government believes that the violence should cool down, because there is no difference in culture and religion. The Thai government presented the educational policies, through which the Muslim–Thai students can gain access to studies, and the schools were extended to level 9 which is free of charge. In terms of health sectors, health providers were concerned about the health of the people in the areas of unrest because the people could not get access to care at the health care centers. The health providers could not provide services for home visits and home health care in remote areas because of the unsafe conditions on the way from the heath care centers to the villages, so there were no benefits from the health promotion program and preventive health care for victims in the areas of unrest. For the students, the Ministry of Public Health had a policy of cooperation with the Pondox schools to improve the health, mental health and the environment. Nevertheless they want to revise some policies because they think that some policies can not get along with their life style. The process of the RSA and dialogue between the local people involved helped them to understand themselves more and accept a multicultural life. The d ialogue process mayhelp to stamp outmass political conflict ; however, the dialogue process needs to be conducted in isolation from routine civil interactionsand personal grievances need to be put aside. The local people want to have their own policies. The civil politics comes from many civil societies and assemblies. The mapping of the hot spot areas gave the partnership a better understanding and focused on the problems.n at risk for civil war are not their ethnic or religious The factors that explain why countries have bee characteristics but rather the conditions that favor insurgency include financially and bureaucratically ,poverty weak states, andlitical instability (Vatanasapt 2008) .This project shows that RSA, dialogue, civil society, and civil politics from the 3 southern border provinces developed in terms of a National Public Policy would decrease violence in this area. The policy of 1) Reconstruction of management in the 3 provinces, 2) Reconstruction of the justice system and 3) Reconstruction of economics, could solve these points directly. For the policy of ethnicity, policies need to complement each ethnic group in regards to religion and educational reform and the desired effect would be a social, cultural, and traditional revolution.

National plans of action need to be developed in collaboration with all relevant agencies to ensure that governmental and non-governmental agencies agree on priorities and objectives, define one another's responsibilities, and work together on achieving these goals. Plans should include review and reform of legislation and policies, building collections of data and research capacity, strengthening services for victims, and developing and assessing prevention responses (Umbreit et al. 2006).

From the process of dialogue we learned that the relationship between civil society and the government are dynamic and complex, not static. They may vary from sector to sector, from issue to issue, from one level of government to another. As a civil society, even though most of them are Muslim, relationships between individual groups or networks of civil society and government will be as different as the civil society themselves in terms of their missions, activities, approaches, constituencies, values and ideologies (Vatanasapt 2008). The continuum of relationships between civil society and government may range from control and appointments of civil society by government to partnerships (Foley & Edwards 1996; Mishler & Rose 2009). As we all know, violence can have a devastating impact on all the people who are exposed to violence(Yamamoto 1997). The prolonged exposure whether as victims or witnesses to violence can disrupt and lead to social, emotional and cognitive impairment as well as behaviors that cause disease, injury and social problems (Aphornsuvan 2003; Umbreit et al. 2006; Croissant 2007) . Even though the violence in the 3 border provinces directly impacts people's lives in this area, it also creates a ripple-like effect which travels far outside these 3 provinces. This problem is very sensitive and related to national security. People from outside this area often believe that religion is the cause for the violence. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent any outside conflict becoming violent. At this moment dialogue would be useful because we believe that through the nature and process of dialogue we can reduce tension and conflict due to an opportunity for "deep listening" to the reasons for the feelings and suffering of others. From this process we can get new data and find a way out as we conclude the 6 policies, so we can say that dialogue is one effective instrument for problem solving (Umbreit et al. 2006).

After it is sent to the cabinet we must ensure that the plan moves beyond words to action, a specific organization must be mandated to monitor and report periodically on the progress. Our understanding of the magnitude of the problem needs to be improved. Data of human rights, social support and financial costs of violence are important for an understanding of the issues, setting priorities and advocating for a decrease in the violence in the border communities. Although the violence may not decrease immediately, we hope that it would be slow down (Table 1 and 2).

7.Conclusion

These projects show that the process of national policies is very important because it can help push public policies which are established by the cooperation of victims directly affected by the violence. The public policies for the 3 critical provinces should continue and be accepted by the government. These public policies support human rights and civil society.

In this article we want to suggest that recent discussions of the role of religious and civil society arguments in debates about public policy sometimes rest on oversimplified presuppositions. The discussion seems polarized between 2 opposing camps. On one side are those who hold that it is appropriate for citizens to appeal directly to their religious convictions in advocating their position on policy issues (Umbreit et al. 2006; Vatanasapt 2008; Mishler 2009). On the other side are those who hold that the appeal to religious beliefs is always inappropriate in a liberal democratic society. Though many of the participants in this discussion hold views that are considerably more complex than either of these two positions, I think that stating the alternatives this way can help illuminate certain aspects of the debate that I want to call into question. Formulating the matter in this way points to a tendency to assume that the relationship of religion and politics is governed by just two variables: religious convictions on the one hand and recommendations about policy or law on the other. It further suggests that the 6 policies must be pushed through the cabinet for acceptance.

References

Aphornsuvan,T.(2003), History and Policies of the Muslim in Thailand [Online] Available http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/system/files/MuslimThailand.pdf(March 8, 2012)

Bond D, Jenkins J, Taylor C, Schock K.(1997), "Mapping mass political conflict and civil society: Issues and prospects for the automated development of event data", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* **41**(4), 53-79.

Berman S. (1997), "Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic", *World Politic* **49**(3), 401-429.

Carment, D. (1993), "The international dimensions of ethnic conflict: Concepts, indicators, and theory", *Journal of Peace Research* **30**(2), 137-150.

Croissant, A (2007), "Muslim Insurgency, political Violence, an Democracy in Thailand", *Terrorism and Political Violence* **19**, 1-18.

Fearon J, Laitin D.(2003), "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war", *American Political Science Review* **97**(1), 75-90.

Foley M, Edwards B.(1996), " The paradox of civil society", *Journal of Democracy* **7**, 38-52.

Mishler W, Rose R. (2009), "Trust, distrust and skepticism: popular evaluations of civil and political institutions in post-communist societies", *The Journal of Politics* **59**(2), 418-51.

Umbreit MS, Vos B, Coates RB, Armour MP. (2006), "Victims of severe violence in mediated dialogue with offender: The impact of the first multi-site study in the US", *International Review of Victimology* **13**(1), 27-48.

Vatanasapt V. (2008), "Citizens Dialogue: The Way Out of the Southern Thailand Violence", Songklanakarin *Journal of Social Science & Humanities* **14**(1), 1-15.

Yamamoto E. (1997), "Critical Race Praxis: Race Theory and Political Lawyering Practice in Post-Civil Rights America", *Michigan Law Review* **95**(4), 821-900.

```
                     ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                     │   National and Public Policies  │──────────┐
                     └─────────────────────────────────┘          │
                                     ↑                             │
                     ┌─────────────────────────────────┐          │
                     │    Cabinet and Prime Minister    │          │
                     └─────────────────────────────────┘          │
                                     ↑                             │
                     ┌─────────────────────────────────┐          │
                     │  - National health committee     │          │
                     │  - National health assembly      │          │
                     │  - Members of Parliament         │          │
                     └─────────────────────────────────┘          │
                                     ↑                             │
                     ┌─────────────────────────────────┐          │
                     │  6 public policies:              │          │
                     │  - education                     │          │
                     │  - socioeconomic                 │          │
                     │  - cultural                      │          │
                     │  - justice                       │          │
                     │  - political special areas       │←─────────┘
                     │  - health service system         │
                     └─────────────────────────────────┘
```

- Politics-local and
  central
- cultural: multicultural
- religious
- education
- conflict of nationalism
- health network
- step into the area
- economics
- human right
- National laws and
  Islamic laws

Areas of unrest

- peaceful means
- dialogue

-Health system
  - physical
  - mental
- socioeconomic
- justice

- villagers
- religious leaders
- academicians
- Parliament
- local
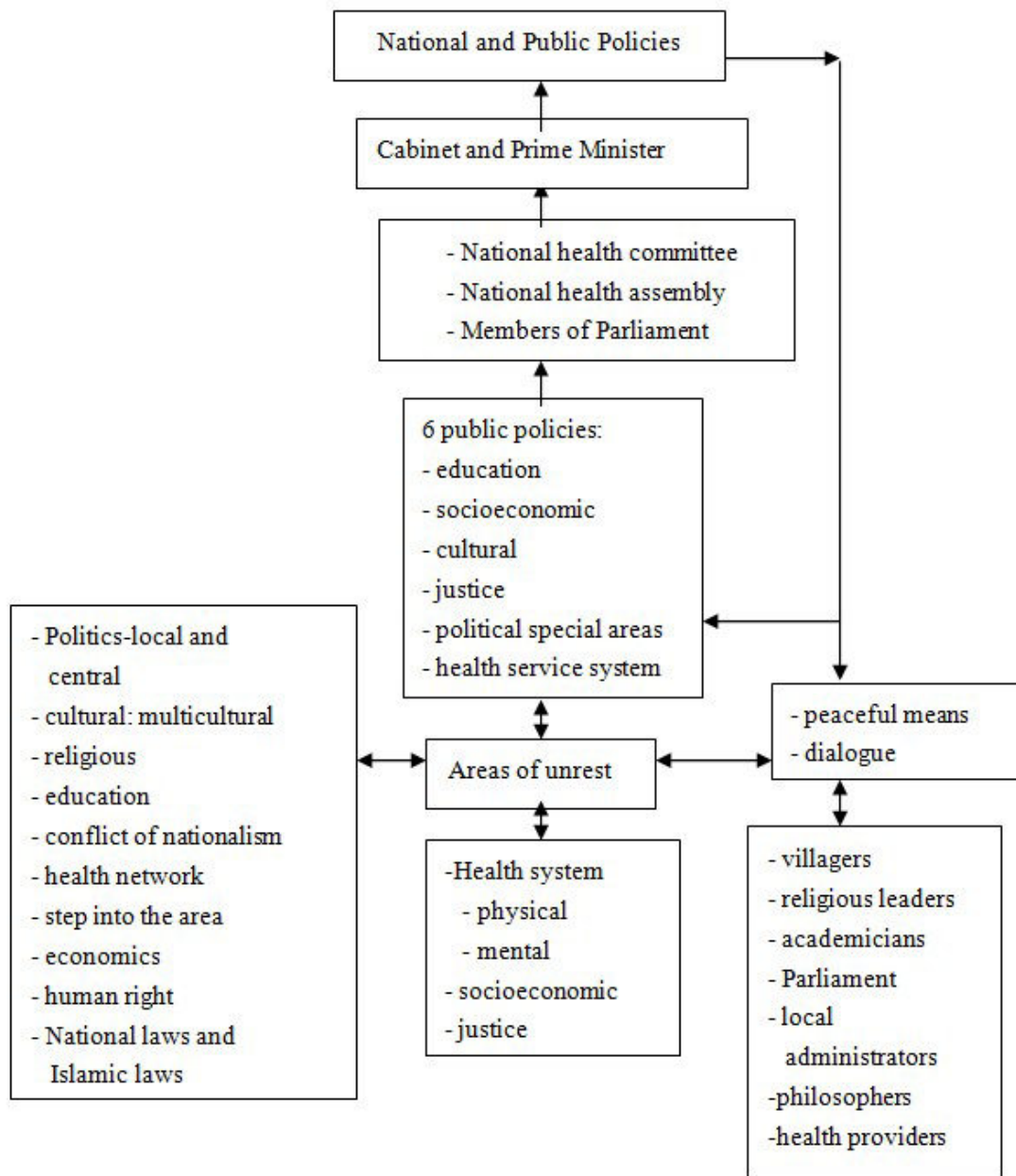 administrators
-philosophers
-health providers

Diagram 1 Model of Civil Politics: Positive impact on public policies due to violence in the border
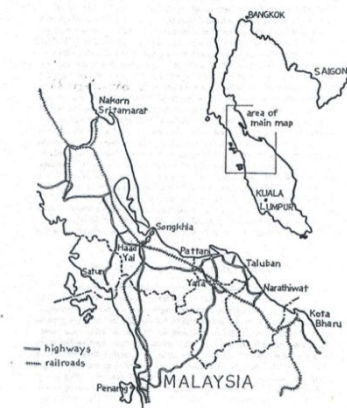provinces in southern Thailand.

Figure 1 Map of the 3 provinces affected by the unrest: Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.
Source: Aphornsuvan,T.(2003), History and Policies of the Muslim in Thailand [Online] Available
http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/system/files/MuslimThailand.pdf(March 8, 2012)

Table 1 Cumulative number of deaths and injured by religion from January 2007 to October 2011.

Data	Religion				Total
	Buddhist	Muslim	Christian	Unidentified	
Death	4,271	2,940	15	567	7793
Injured	665	1,007	3	157	1832

Source: www.deepsouthvis.org

Table 2 Number of violent incidences in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat from January 2004 to October 2011.

Year	Mean per day	Number per year
2004	5.06	1850
2005	6.29	2297
2006	4.97	1815
2007	5.09	1861
2008	2.15	680
2009	1.75	641
2010	1.31	481
2011	1.00	365

Source: www.deepsouthvis.org

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** http://www.iiste.org/Journals/

The IISTE editorial team promises to the review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar