

Organizational Capacity of Transport Agencies in East-West Economic Corridor

P. Uamturapojn and H. Kato

Abstract— Addressing organizational capacity in cross-border transport infrastructure (CBTI) projects is critical to reduce development gap among counterparts and facilitate the structural adaptation. An assortment of bureaucratic hierarchy levels of administration is significantly mixed up with responsibilities, incentives, and benefits between national and regional level. The study deals with the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) project adopted by the Greater Mekong Subregion Program (GMS), by emphasizing different circumstances of organizational capacity in national in-line ministries and coordinated stakeholders among Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam throughout the CBTI implementation. It examines the role of CBTI-related mechanisms towards coordinating organizational capacity approaches, and discusses associated challenges. We found that country-specific organizational arrangements as the National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) are playing the strategic progress of in-between national and regional capacity building in parallel with integrating vertically and horizontally across their bureaucratic frameworks.

Keywords— Cross-border transport infrastructure, East-West Economic Corridor, Regional integration, Organizational capacity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Trends towards regional integration are progressing across infrastructure planning and transportation policy, by influencing throughout public sector and its organizational structure, among variety of administrative levels [1, 2]. One of the central challenges for implementing and integrating regional counterparts is how to produce meaningful mechanisms for promoting the participations of a broad cross-section of actors in resource planning and management decisions [3]. The mechanism of transport agencies' organizations in Asia has been submitted to considerable changes during emerging of regional integration strategies [1], [4]. Multinational transportation infrastructure projects and their backward and forward interlinkages provide an important practice to clarify the relationships among actors and their structural networks. Cross-border transport infrastructure (CBTI) is, therefore, one of fundamental determinants that mixed up with responsibilities, incentives, and benefits [2], [5, 6]. Indeed, its framework challenges national resources, as well as overcome gap between neighboring counterparts, which influences not only absolute, but also comparative, advantages. In a dynamic context, the CBTI itself is

adopted as a regional public goods that moves factors of production within and across countries, thus involving the regional integration attaining harmonized productivity [7, 8]. Significantly, it is expanding to highlight the importance of multi-dimensional environment at integrating decisions among various actors [9]. In practice, a complex interplay of multileveled government agencies is gradually influencing the scope of organizational capacity [10].

Organizational capacity is influenced by variety of factors, including leadership and governance, financial management, technology, program development and human resources, thus its definition is also far from simple or consistent [11, 12]. In a regional setting, the organizational capacity is a combination of two components: national and regional, where requires a systematic organizational arrangement, whether formal or informal [13]. Though in theory, ad hoc organizational coordination and negotiation between governments on a project-to-project basis would work well without a formalized institutional or legal framework, in reality this approach has head high failure rates, significantly raising transaction costs and making such collaborations infeasible [14]. Thus, the organizational capacity development plays a vital role to promote prosperity and stability in participating countries, particularly with regard to mitigating risks of varying strengths and weaknesses of regulatory regimes between regional countries [4], [9, 10].

2. ROLE OF CBTI IN GMS PROGRAM

The GMS program is an economic assistance program initiated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) since 1992 for the purpose of strengthening economic ties and promoting economic cooperation among six countries along the Mekong River Basin: Cambodia, People's

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Fig.1. East-West Economic Corridor in GMS Program.

Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Infrastructure is one of the "three I's," along with incentives and institutions, that are key determinants of overall growth and the magnitude and productivity of capital inflows to liberalizing economies [15]. Consistency with operational practice with the ADB, the definition of CBTI is broad and inclusive as: (i) involve infrastructure facilities that physical and/or coordinated policies infrastructure, and procedures spanning two or more neighboring countries; (ii) national infrastructure projects that have a significant cross border impact, in that their planning and implementation involve cooperation and/or coordination with one or more neighboring governments; and (iii) infrastructure facilities that aim to stimulate amounts of regional trade, or are designed to connect to the network of a neighboring or third country [1], [8], [16]. Physically, connectivity through CBTI development is crucial for enhanced regional integration and economic cooperation [17, 18]. Nonphysically, the CBTI projects are becoming an important role for harmonizing across sectors, organizations, countries in term of depth and breadth of regulatory systems, bureaucratic coordination, and policy making cooperation [9], [19]-[21]. These activities include enhancing availability of adequate standard, a reliable system of legal resource and dispute resolution, an effective competition policy, and the capacity of existing human capital to process exchanges [22, 23]. Main obligations of CBTI implementation are to: (i) adopt the highway network as a coordinated plan for the development of economic corridors; (ii) bring the

national design standards into conformity with regional classification; and (iii) facilitate the transformation of the transport corridor into a genuine economic corridor [24]. Such frameworks particularly abide by a double track approach: (i) construction of CBTI projects; and (ii) implementation of organizational capacity development. Accordingly, it is essential to examine the organizational capacity throughout their bureaucratic structures among both national and regional level [25]. In 1994, three CBTI projects were designated as road improvement of transport priority projects, consequently adapted to economic corridors concept at the GMS Eighth Ministerial Meeting in 1998 [26], composed of East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC), North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC), and Southern Economic Corridor (SEC). The EWEC extends 1,320 kilometers as a continuous land route to reduce significantly travel time and transport costs between the Andaman Sea in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea as shown in Fig. 1 [27].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Addressing the EWEC, the study aims to examine the organizational capacity on the dimension of integrating transport facilitation throughout the CBTI mechanism. Among various factors coordinated by: 1) growing number of actors and agencies involved in EWEC development process; 2) increasing interrelationship between stakeholders; 3) overlapping roles and responsibilities among actors and counterparts, the CBTI is not only associated with differences in regulatory regimes of national government, but also reflect much boarder differences in regional values, cultures and languages [28, 29]. It is hypothesized herein that the degree of organizational capacity among EWEC countries will be influenced by two levels; national and regional levels. The organizational capacity of transport agencies, for instance, is characterized by intensive interactions between both levels of governance.

A literature review of various strategic and implementation plans [1, 2], [6], [20], [25], [30, 31] was conducted for pinpointing the different roles and responsibilities from different agencies to provide both technical and policy perspectives. The study particularly draws on material documents from two workshops: 1) Regional Workshop on the Draft Strategy and Work Program for Transport and Trade Facilitation in the GMS on 3-4 June 2009; and 2) the GMS Economic Corridors Forum (ECF) on 16-17 September 2009. Both workshops were focused on institutional mechanism for improving integrated transport and trade facilitation policies [32]-[34]. Representatives of governmental bodies from GMS countries took part as well as the private sector and academic scholars. The workshops involved a mixture of plenary session with presentations and short discussions, prior to 1) institutional arrangements promoting policy integration; 2) barriers and bottlenecks; 3) supportive institutional arrangements and their transferability; and 4) dissemination and



Fig. 2. Summarization of organizational capacity approaches.

information. Consequently, semi-structured interviews with national government officials were conducted for overcoming the discussions and validated information [27], [34]. Contacted by emails and conducted visitings with government officials, planners, and policy-makers in Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam on 9-21 September 2009 and during 29 March to 5 April 2010, the interviews were discussed and examined existing transport plans throughout different actors and captured the opinions and assessment of the success and failure of those plans collected with background data on agencies (types of plans and policies) and participants (position in agency and main responsibilities). Accordingly, the interviews were emphasized on the structural framework of organizations, which particularly play a momentous role for implementing and operating overall CBTI's procedures.

Towards analytical frameworks, the study investigates an expanded definition of organizational capacity, particularly identified the functional performances between bureaucratic organizations. The organizational capacity is predominantly classified in four approaches as 1) traditional institutional development approach; 2) governance approach; 3) new institutional economic approach; and 4) capacity development approach, as summarized in Fig. 2 [35, 36].

4. ACTORS IN EWEC DEVELOPMENT

Many analyses of networks and policy communities have previously often focused on the vertical interactions of government organizations. While ways of measuring the extent of the different types of integration are explored [37, 38] as: 1) vertical integration between different levels of government; 2) horizontal or inter-sectoral integration; 3) inter-territorial integration between neighboring authorities with shared interests; and 4) intra-sectoral integration between different sections within one department. The study aims towards analyzing the scope direction of organizational capacity development throughout transport agencies. In the EWEC context, efforts to align organizational capacity through CBTI implementation come at the expense of domestic administration and unilateral liberalization among members [39]. Necessarily, pressure of compatibility is complimented with the involvement of a wider range of actors. Yet, it remains substantial among variety of bureaucratic characteristics in both national inline ministries and coordinated organizations in Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam (alphabetized by name).

Lao PDR

With recognition of the obstacle of the land-locked location, together with the GMS program, the Government of Lao PDR has introduced a land-linked strategy as a tool to overcome and perceive the regional integration opportunity [40]. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) is directly responsible for the development of national roads in the whole country, concurred with the national land-linked strategy by the Department of Roads [41]. In November 2007, the was reorganized from the Ministry MPWT of Communication, Transport, Post, and Construction (MCTPC), which was lack of clarification of roles and responsibilities of civil servants [40]. Although the government policy framework basically adapted for fostering decentralization, several impediments persist, including lack of coordination at the decision making levels; the centralization of the early 1990s, which led to dominance by the center in policy making and budget allocation; the absence of transparent conflict resolution



Table 1. Organizational charts of main actors in the EWEC development

channels; and the hindrances to efficient service delivery created by numerous bureaucratic layers [42]. In order to construct and implement the CBTI projects respecting the EWEC plan, beside budget, the MPWT has essentially developed number of cooperation with international agencies for technical assistances. An essential challenge associated with the CBTI projects is to balance bureaucratic powers and coordinate organizational mechanisms [40], [42, 43].

Thailand

The Department of Highways (DOH) under the Ministry of Transport (MOT) is entirely responsible for interurban roads and highways, including the CBTI projects. The DOH is the executing agency, assisted by a number of offices within and outside the Department, facilitating the conduct of the GMS highway expansion projects [30], [44]. Besides, planning and implementation in the CBTI projects are particularly shifting towards improving standards throughout GMS agreements. Within key performances, the DOH's organizations whose respective mandates concerning the CBTI implementation are structured with functional lines, whereas their works typically cross functional boundaries [25], [45]. Two initiatives are critical for improving efficiency and enhancing CBTI delivery: 1) rationalizing functions and streamlining organizations both within and between departments; and 2) reducing the scope of central government intervention in the provincial performance [43, 44].

Viet Nam

Transport infrastructure in Viet Nam is predominantly financed, built and operated by the public sector, either directly through the government or by quasi-independent state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The administration of the road sector is complex with different agencies responsible for financing and implementation and others for investment and maintenance [46]. For the CBTI projects, investment finance is approved by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the implementation is the responsibility of the Project Management Unit of the Ministry of Transport (MOT), and maintenance is undertaken by the Viet Nam Roads Authority (VRA) with funds channeled through the Ministry of Finance (MOF) [47]. The implementation process is particularly dependent on the capabilities of the MOT throughout departments as shown in Table 1.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY OF TRANSPORT AGENCIES

Regarding to the EWEC implementation, the CBTI projects are amalgamation with capacity and capability among the MPWT, DOH and MOT, who are centralized to national governments, with coupling responsibilities between national and regional frameworks. Their organizations are regularly addressed and affected by the GMS structure, focused on motivation of country members to concentrate on the provision of seamless [1], [6]. Indeed, essential transport network organizational capacity remains lack of accountability and results in gap between counterparts. Accordingly, the National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) are initiated for playing a crucial role on mandate for interministerial coordination as standing committees to ensure that: (i) there will be substantive and regular participation by all relevant ministries and agencies; and (ii) concerns of various affected interest groups are adequately addressed [32]. Liaisons with monitoring and evaluation of the CBTI implementation, the NTFCs are involved with the private sector in proactively consolidating the agreements into strategic growth plan.



Table 2. Proposal of organiztional arrangements in the EWEC development

Therefore, they particularly replicate among line ministries and agencies to incorporate the CBTI implementation and agreements into the national legal and regulatory framework, while crossing functions among administrative boundaries.

Lao PDR

The Lao PDR National Transport Committee (NTC), created in 2002, acts as the NTFC for the purposes of cross-border transport agreement, which is a non-standing committee headed by the Minister of MPWT. Membership of the NTC includes: (i) Deputy Minister of Ministry of Industry and Commerce; (ii) Deputy Minister of Ministry of Finance; (iii) Director of Immigration Bureau; (iv) Director General of Quarantine Bureau; and (v) Director General of Foreign Affairs Bureau. Private sector representatives from the Lao International Freight Forwarders' Association, the Passenger Transport Association, and insurance companies are included. The NTC has four working groups on customs, transport, immigration, and quarantine [27], [48].

Thailand

The Thailand's NTFC is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, which is also a non-standing committee. Membership is generally composed of senior officials at the Director General or Secretary General level. The NTFCs meet on an ad hoc basis with secretariat arrangements, consisting one staff member from the International Affairs Bureau of the MOT and one from Department of Land Transport [27], [32].

Viet Nam

The Viet Nam's NTFC, created in 2001, is chaired by the Vice Minister of MOT. The membership extends to

following ministries and agencies: (i) Transport (including the Viet Nam Road Administration); (ii) Finance (Customs); (iii) Planning and Investment; (iv) Agriculture and Rural Development; (v) Health; (vi) Foreign Affairs (Immigration); (vii) Public Security (Border Control); and (vii) the Viet Nam Automobile Transport Association as private sector association representing some 700 trucking companies [5], [27], [32].

The organizational capacity development throughout the NTFCs adaptation is consolidated to achieve in the fundamental reform of administrative procedures. It plays as a key support to overcome diversity of bureaucratic organizational capacity, which the ADB carried out a diagnostic assessment on the national institutional arrangements for benchmarking the CBTI mechanism [49]. Addition to transform the EWEC into a productive economic corridor, the NTFCs are shifted the practical initiative for generating combination of transportation and trade facilitation (TTF) [33]. Proposed the modified organizational arrangements arising from the ADB consultation is shown in Table 2. To strengthen the organizational capacity, while recognizing on a country-by-country basis, the NTFCs are considered as: (i) standing committees meeting at formally regular intervals in plenary sessions with an established agenda rather than an ad hoc arrangement; (ii) high-level representatives from all ministries; (iii) a coordination mechanism; (iv) a strengthened secretariat; (v) involvement of local authorities and agencies at the border; and (vi) greater involvement of private sectors. In address concerns of overlapping mandates, the NTFCs directly responded to enhance interagency are coordination both among different levels of government and among different agencies.



Fig. 3. Organizational capacity development of the NTFCs coordination.

6. ANALYSIS

Differences between countries in the quality of CBTI implementation help to explain differences in each actor's organizational capacity. The successful implementation of CBTI projects are particularly required a change in the attitude of transport agencies involved in the facilitation process because it has to be accompanied by the restructuring of existing organizations. These changes entail NTFC's challenges as new mechanisms to strengthen organizational capacity among control agencies and related ministries. While negotiation of far-reaching bilateral and/or multilateral agreements is progressively adopted, the NTFCs play as intermediated coordinators towards allocating limited organizational capacity between relevant counterparts. organizational framework of the NTFCs The encompasses public and private stakeholders, as well as operates in-between national- and regional-level organizations as shown in Fig. 3. Therefore, the NTFCs are being pursued by both bilateral and multilateral frameworks throughout: (i) GMS member countries' own initiatives; and (ii) the initiatives of regional infrastructure cooperation programs. However, the GMS strategic frameworks as well as country strategies continue to depend on the national bureaucratic organizations. They are titled toward addressing national constraints rather than developing regional arrangements [43].

Towards the traditional institutional development approach, the NTFCs are particularly in public sector standing as a core bureaucratic structure and incentives. Furthermore, they are expected on multilateral participation between in-line ministries to handle operational CBTI projects throughout the process of developing the Strategic Framework for Action on Trade Facilitation and Investment (SFA-TFI), with the linkages of border management, customs, and quarantine [5]. As shown in Fig. 3, the NTFCs remain at the heart of the process of CBTI cooperation, which are intermediately positioned between national and regional level. Yet, they are heavily dependent on the beneficiary participation among ministries. Attention to greater private participation in public affairs, the NTFCs are creatively acted in governance approach, differently structured and determined on a country-by-country basis regarding their own incentive structures. Regarding the new institutional economics approach, the NTFCs are strategically performed to meet various bureaucratic objectives, particular to economic benefits and social security. Being pursued through bureaucratic structured frameworks, the major challenges of NTFCs are: 1) assignments between local counterparts with provincial organizations; 2) qualified communication channels between representatives; 3) establishment of regional standards; and 4) compatible timeline of project implementation. Intended throughout different standardized capacities, the degree of managerial accountability among the DOH, MPWT, and MOT are particularly influenced towards strengthen the organizational capacity across stakeholders. Where responsibility of project implementation and operation has been vertically decentralized, the varying strengths and weakness of the NTFCs between countries are horizontally significant. Both frameworks for implementing CBTI projects and modifying responsibilities of national bureaucratic agencies, shared common principles, are to be worked in parallel. In recognition of these strong links between NTFCs, the improvement of organizational capacity throughout horizontal integration is helping to achieve the CBTI's sustainable development goals.

7. CONCLUSION

Being challenging by regional integration dynamics, the EWEC is represented through various interrelated elements, particular to the organizational capacity. Hence, interests and priorities of national and regional stakeholders throughout CBTI projects set the stage for organizational capacity development trends, which stimulated the efforts to improve coordination among both vertical and horizontal bureaucratic frameworks. The formation of NTFCs illustrates the progress of coordination in-between national and regional task forces, providing horizontal compatibility in initiated regional cross-border cooperation.

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