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LESSONS NOT LEARNED: THE REKINDLING OF
THAILAND'S PATTANI PROBLEM

by

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This thesis explores the ongoing Malay-Muslim separatist insurgency in southern Thailand. In particular, it argues that historically-rooted structural factors, to include relative economic deprivation, limited political integration, and struggle for the maintenance of ethnic-religious identity, are at the root of this insurgency. The year 2001 produced two catalysts for the renewal of this insurgency, one internal and one external. The internal catalyst was a newly elected suppressive government regime under the leadership of Prime Minister Thaksin and the Thai Rak Thai Party. The external catalyst was the growing, increasingly radicalized Islamist movement, largely defined through terrorist violence, that expressed itself in the 9/11 attacks. The combination of these has produced rekindled secessionist violence of a previously unknown level in the Thai provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala.

Given the deeply ingrained structural cause of this insurgency, as well as a government administration whose policies and conflict mismanagement continually fuels the violence, the prospect for conflict resolution is not promising. Nonetheless, it remains in the best interests of the United States that this conflict is soon resolved. Should the insurgency continue growing, the situation may reach a point of drastic consequences for Thailand as well as the United States.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

"What experience and history teach is this- that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it." This commentary offered by Georg Hegel in the introduction of his *Philosophy of History* offers a sobering albeit realistic assessment of governments' failure to learn from the past. History is a continuum of lessons not learned. That is why history repeats itself. Thailand's current government under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra is demonstrating that it too has failed to learn the lessons of history. As a result, violence in southernmost Thailand, the former kingdom of Patanni,[1] has once again escalated.

This thesis examines the nature and causes of the rekindled violence in Thailand's southernmost three provinces[2]. The renewed violence actually began in 2001 but reached a previously unknown level in 2004. Indications of events thus far in the first three months of 2005 suggest that this southern unrest has escalated even beyond its 2004 level.[3] If real causes are not soon recognized and admitted to, and genuine solutions not soon applied, the further escalation of violence in southern Thailand could lead to several conclusions, none of which are desirable for either Thailand or the United States.

The worst of these conclusions is that the continued violence will further attract international jihadist elements and southern Thailand will very much become an integral part of the next front of transnational terrorism. This would escalate the intensity of violence manifold, almost certainly requiring external intervention to fight it. Another possibility is that continued violence will lead the Thai government to further enflame the situation through increased use of force to quell this violence. Such an increased use of force, if Thailand's track record says anything, will almost certainly entail avoidance of proper rule of law and a substantial abuse of human rights. So much damage has already been done to Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state, and so much trust between all

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[1] Pattani is the name of the formally independent Muslim kingdom or sultanate, which had been located in modern day southernmost Thailand, as well as a current province in southern Thailand. The English rendition of the Thai spelling is *Pattani*, while the English rendition of the Malay spelling is *Patani*. For the simple sake of uniformity, I use Pattani throughout this thesis, with appropriate meaning understood from context.

[2] Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

[3] For the most recent assessment of the situation, see Anthony Davis, "No end in sight for southern Thailand's escalating insurgency," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (March 01, 2005): posted 17 Feb 2005.

involved parties already lost, that it will take years of damage repair as the situation currently stands. Further inflammation of this damage may very well lead to a point of no return in which Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state are simply beyond repair. A final possible conclusion, though least probable, is that continued violence could lead to a civil war in Thailand's South between Buddhists and Muslims. Such an affair could easily spill over not only into the rest of Thailand, but also into neighboring countries, most notably Malaysia.

It is important to the United States that the Thai government controls this situation before its escalation leads to one of the above scenarios. Militarily, Thailand remains a key player for the United States. A reduction of U.S. forces in South Korea and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Japan may mean that Thailand would become all the more important as a possible regional basing location. With its location and basing potential, it could serve as the United States' southern door into China in the event of a future United States-China conflict.[4] Politically, it is in the United States' best interests, and consistent with U.S. foreign policy, for Thailand to successfully develop into a strong, stable democracy. The current circumstances in the South directly threaten such successful development. In a geographic region that still includes military regimes and communist rulers, Thailand's democracy is of even greater significance. Finally, the global war on terrorism is currently center-stage in the world arena. This is a war that transcends national borders and redefines current understanding of sovereignty. Current U. S. foreign policy calls for the necessity of taking this war to the enemy in order to keep peace at home. This is immensely draining on resources, however, as the United States simply cannot unilaterally do battle everywhere at once. As such, it is essential that Thailand successfully resolve its current southern crisis once and for all.

The recently rekindled conflict in southernmost Thailand received a spark in 2001, the year that saw both the 9/11 horror on the world stage and the election of Thaksin as Thai premier. The escalation onto its current high level began on 4 January 2004 when an estimated more than one hundred insurgents raided an army camp in Narathiwat province and stole over 300 weapons. The situation worsened on the heels of

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[4] For further assessment on the importance of Thailand in future U.S. force posturing, see the March 2005 Naval Postgraduate School thesis written by my colleague, Capt. Bayani C. Dilag, USAF: *Access Issues Associated with U.S. Military Presence in Thailand and the Philippines.*

two heavy-handed reactions by Thai security forces that resulted in unnecessary deaths: the 28 April Krue Se incident and the 25 October Tak Bai incident. Media sources report upwards of six hundred insurgency-related deaths in southern Thailand throughout 2004.[5]

This thesis analyzes the nature of this tremendous violence and its various root causes. As for methodology, it first looks at the historical roots of the insurgency to be found in the history of Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state, including the manifestation of these roots in current demographics. It then examines the heart of the insurgency movement in the second half of last century, ending with an in-depth focus on the current state of the insurgency since 2001. As such, this thesis then determines the causative factors of this insurgency.

The theoretical model for this analysis is founded upon what academia has concluded about the nature of insurgencies based on the theory of revolutionary movements. The underlying premise is that insurgencies emerge from structural maladjustments within a given social system, to include economic and political subsystems. Thus, structural factors that contribute to social, economic and political deprivation are key to understanding the growth of insurgencies. Insurgencies are generally the response of people who are not getting enough of something. This is not simply income, though income is certainly a structural variable, but can include status, educational opportunity, social and political participation, and recognition of unique identity.

The precision of government violence is another variable in insurgencies. The reflective response of governments to insurgency is usually suppression, often added onto existing structural suppression. Studies of past insurgencies in Thailand and Vietnam suggest that governmental application of suppressive security measures in the absence of structural change increases the size of an insurgency. The less focused the government violence, the greater the increase in insurgent violence.

Finally, external support is another important variable in insurgencies. Frustrated people, especially if historically unable to overcome structural maladjustments by themselves, will often turn to outsiders for help. The help insurgents seek will range

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[5] Exact numbers are difficult to ascertain. Different sources report different totals, and not all insurgency related deaths were reported to or by the media. What is certain is there was an average of more than one insurgency-related death in southern Thailand per day in 2004.

from monetary to arms support. This external support often contributed to the further increase in insurgency violence.

The thesis first examines the relationship between the Malay-Muslim community in southern Thailand and the Thai state within a historical context beginning with the Ayuttthaya period. This examination draws several conclusions. Among these is that the conflict in southern Thailand has not historically been primarily about religion. It is an ethnic conflict with politics at its heart, a conflict that does involve some genuine religious differences but sees discontents using religion mainly as a tool towards political ends. Additionally, the separatist movement that started last century is not simply about incorporation of the former kingdom of Pattani into the modern Thai nation-state, but about the nature of this incorporation. The manner in which the Thai government has tried to accomplish this has everything to do with the current crisis.

The next chapter surveys Thailand's Malay-Muslim demography today. It is evident from this survey that the economies of the southernmost provinces still lag behind the majority of Thai provinces. Economic development of the Malay-Muslim provinces took a backseat to that of the other Thai provinces for most of the twentieth century. Political and social integration into the Thai state also ranks behind that of the other Thai provinces. Politically, the southern provinces were often seen as a place to send central bureaucrats and politicians for punishment or because of incompetence. Socially, though Buddhists and Muslims in the southern provinces had lived together peacefully on the most fundamental level of day-to-day living, there has always existed minimal social contact between the two groups. Furthermore, many Thais outside the region, particularly in the governing bureaucracy, always considered the Malay-Muslims to be "other". As is argued in the thesis, this abysmal failure of economic, social, and political incorporation of the southernmost provinces into the Thai state continues to provide fertile ground not only for a separatist movement, but also the furthered activities of radical transnational Islamic entities.

This thesis then looks at the development of insurgency in the South. Starting with the earliest incidents of armed insurgency, it traces the founding, goals, and operations of significant separatist groups until the present. It then attempts to sort out what is and is not known about the current operational status of these groups and any new

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actors in the current turmoil in order to address exactly who is behind the current violence. As such, though the exact picture is still murky, it seems that several separatist groups have a role in this latest violence. It also appears that the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN)-Coordinat and the Gerakan Mujahideem Islam Pattani (GMIP) are among the primary groups involved. As for the current exact role of external groups, especially transnational terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiah (JI) or Al Qaeda, the picture is even less clear. What is known is that there does continue to be foreign funding for the secessionist movement, including money coming from Middle East countries, often crossing the porous Malaysian-Thai border into the southernmost provinces. Hence, given the lack of concrete evidence as to who all the actors are and what their exact roles are, the prospect for conflict resolution is further diminished.

After having examined the history of Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state, the current demography of the Pattani region, and the development of secessionism in the area, this thesis then assesses the core causes of the currently rekindled unrest in southern Thailand. As such, the argument is that the kindling wood for burning was already present in the historical grievances that are still present in the region. The Thai government, in its failed policies towards the region beginning in 2001 and mismanagement of the current unrest, in combination with the spreading global radical Islamist movement, catalyzed by 9/11, provided a dual spark that ignited this kindling wood. The gross mismanagement of the current crisis by the Thai government has continued to add wood to the fire. Parallels to all of Thaksin's failed policies and conflict mismanagement can be found in the history of Thailand's Pattani problem, indicating that at the heart of this crisis is a failure to learn from past mistakes and successes, a failure to learn from history.

What is needed most for conflict resolution is that the Thai government concretely admit the exact nature of the problem and steadfastly decide to take all the necessary steps towards resolution. The solution may lie not in any previously uncharted ideas, but rather in enacting ideas that have already been advanced by others, ideas on which the government previously failed to act. Nonetheless, given the way the current Thai government has aggravated existing historical grievances, the assessment for peace in the short term is not promising, with a greater probability that the situation will continue to

worsen. An external state power, able to guide the Thai government in its conflict management and generation of a strategic policy that addresses the genuine causes of the crisis, may be required to initiate conflict resolution. This has important implications for United States government policy towards this situation. Extreme caution is given that the United States government, in its zeal to combat transnational terrorism driven by an existing radical Islamic element, not make a pact with the devil in overlooking the current Thaksin regime's move away from democratic consolidation and the rule of law, and towards greater authoritarianism, in order to check the spread of transnational terrorism into southern Thailand. As such, the United States government will have to carefully tread between both dangers.

The current Thai government is certainly not the first government to ever fail to learn the lessons of history. However, given the current state of unrest in the Pattani region, along with the existing threat of transnational terrorism knocking on the door, it will be forced to learn its lessons quickly in order to solve the crisis and bring stability to the region. If it does not, the rekindled Pattani problem may completely spread out of control. Should this happen, there will be grave consequences for all.

II.   HISTORY OF MALAY-MUSLIM MINORITY IN THAILAND

Figure 1.   Thailand Today [6]

Available evidence suggests the former kingdom of Pattani, interestingly originally a Buddhist kingdom before later adopting Islam at the start of the Ayutthaya period, emerged from an earlier kingdom named Langkasuka. Srivijaya, the kingdom from which arose the later Malay kingdoms in the Malacca region, exerted control over Langkasuka in the eighth through eleventh centuries. After the decline of Srivijaya in the twelfth century, Langkasuka was again autonomous. Pattani emerged from Langkasuka in the latter half of the fourteenth century; at approximately the same time Sukhotai began exerting its power to the north.[7]

A.   AYUTTHAYA PERIOD, 1569-1767 [8]

The relationship between Islam and the Thai state extends back several centuries. Islam like Buddhism is not indigenous to Thailand. It was trade that first brought Islam to Siam during the Ayutthaya period. The Siamese Ayutthaya kingdom rose to power at the same time Islamic trade was dominant in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Malay states. The economic strength of this trade was in large part responsible for the first major wave of Islamization in Southeast Asia.

At that time, the Siamese political structure can best be described as eclectic and practical. It had already successfully incorporated major elements of Brahmanism from an earlier Mon-Khmer culture with Tai Hinayana Buddhist practices and beliefs. The large numbers of non-Buddhists and non-Tais who maintained influential roles within the political and economic structures further illustrate Ayutthaya's pragmatism and eclecticism. Malays, Persians, Chinese, Indians, Japanese and Portuguese among others could all be found at some level of royal service.[9] A positive aspect of this is that it helped keep Ayutthaya directly linked to the politics and economics of the entire region.

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[7] For a more in-depth elaboration of this early history, see George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southest Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan B. Cowing (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968).

[8] For Thai historical periods, I use the dates given in David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

[9] Omar Farouk Shaeik Ahmad Bajunid, "The Political Integration of the Thai-Islam" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kent at Canterbury, 1980), 110.

One of the most significant events leading into the Ayutthaya period was the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese in 1511.[10] Malacca was until then one of the most important commercial centers of regional trade. Under Portuguese control Malacca lost most of its economic relevance and became primarily a military outpost. This in effect had two important consequences. First, Ayutthaya assumed the role of the region's most significant international trade center. Indian, Chinese, Persian and European goods flowed through Ayutthaya in significant numbers. As various observers noted at the time, Muslims were the most firmly entrenched in the trade streaming through Ayutthaya.[11] Islam immediately found favor in the Ayutthaya royal court.[12] In fact an increase in the role of Muslims in service to the royal court accompanied the increased importance of Ayutthaya. Numerous Muslims assumed influential roles as ministers, merchants, and advisors to successive kings.[13] Second, Malacca's former vassals, among which was Pattani, benefited from the redirecting of trade from Malacca to Ayutthaya. It allowed Pattani itself to economically develop into a robust trade center.

The Islamic population in Ayutthaya grew more heterogeneous than it ever had been. The Muslims present in the kingdom included Persians, Indians, Arabs, Chams, Moors, Acehnese, and Malays. Malays were among the most numerous. All these groups together made the Muslims the largest foreign nationality in Ayutthaya. Several historians maintain the Muslims were the most favored foreign group and were actually the only foreign group offered the direct protection of the king.[14]

The presence of so many ethnicities and religions in the Ayutthaya kingdom, including the preferential status of the Muslims, led to the adoption of a policy of tolerance. The Ayutthaya monarchy recognized the multi-cultural, multi-religious

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[10] Ronald Provencher, "Islam in Malaysia and Thailand," in *The Crescent in the East*, ed. Raphael Israeli (London: Curzon, 1982), 144.

[11] Bajunid, 111.

[12] Yoneo Ishii, "Thai Muslims and the Royal Patronage of Religion," *Law & Society Review* 28, no. 3 (1994): 454-455.

[13] Wyatt, 108. One such example was the well-known Sheikh Ahmad whom the king had appointed as his minister of foreign trade and affairs. Sheik Ahmad's position held great responsibilities, including the collection of import and export duties and the oversight of international shipping. Sheikh Ahmad is but one example of of the numerous Muslims during the Ayutthaya period who were successful in not only securing important positions in trade but also chief political appointments.

[14] Bajunid, 114.

presence in Siamese society and understood its importance to the kingdom. Although Buddhism was the religion of the kingdom, this did not come at the expense of any other religion. There existed no effort to force a certain set of values on everyone.[15]

Islam did eventually fall out of favor in the latter part of the Ayutthaya period, however. The undoing of the significant level of influence and authority Muslims had achieved in the economic and political structures was primarily due to an attempt by foreign Muslim states, such as Persia, at proselytizing the Siamese population, including the Ayutthaya rulers.[16] Though the Ayutthaya monarchy had displayed great openness to peaceful coexistence with the variety of ethnicities and religions, they simply would not tolerate such an attempt at conversion from Buddhism to Islam. The undertaking of conversion efforts was in many ways as much an attempt to further Islamic political power as it was to spread the faith. This Islamic attempt at proselytism resulted in the permanent decline of Muslim influence in the Siamese state, never again to be restored.[17]

What is interesting to note is that the early Muslim attempt to force their particular ideology on the Siamese culture, which though heterogeneous held a very different system of beliefs and practices, is somewhat analogous to the twentieth century Thai attempt to force its notion of Thai-ness on the Malay-Muslim population in southern Thailand. There were of course fundamental differences. In the first instance, external states sought to religiously assimilate a foreign population into the greater pan-Islamic world, while in the latter a state sought to culturally assimilate part of its internal population. Nevertheless, both attempts abandoned any effort at peaceful coexistence in their assimilation efforts. Likewise, both efforts resulted in utter failure that was to reap negative consequences for the attempter of assimilation. As shall be argued later in this thesis, the twentieth century attempt at assimilation by the Thai state is still one of the causes of the violent unrest gripping southernmost Thailand today.

With the fall of Malacca and its own further economic development, Pattani unwillingly became a tributary state to Ayutthaya. Even though it was not long removed from its previous Buddhist identity, Pattani felt no particular allegiance to, indeed no

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[15] Ishii, 454.

[16] Bajunid, 115.

[17] Ibid, 119.

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shared culture with, Ayutthaya. The kingdom strongly resented taking a subordinate role to Ayutthaya, especially given its own status as a growing trade center.[18] This resentment is illustrated by centuries of Pattani rebellion against the Thai state.

The historical importance of the tributary system, a practice that started in the region even before the first wave of Islamization, cannot be overstated. Practically every Southeast Asian state participated in this system. These states were not the unitary, territorially demarcated states that exist today. Political borders were usually unstable and geographic boundaries often overlapped each other.[19] The strength of kingdoms could be measured by the extent to which they gained the tribute status of outlying states. The stronger a state, the wider its suzerainty spread and the more states it brought under tributary status.

This system in essence was one of traditional patronage and protection on the state level. The powerful states gained tribute from weaker states either through coercion or voluntary submission by a tributary ruler hoping to consolidate his own power while being protected from his enemies. Tribute was paid in order to ensure a large degree of autonomy and regime survival. This intent on the part of the state paying tribute, that of independence, was usually upheld by the more powerful state in that it did not interfere in the internal affairs of the tributary state. Some states even paid tribute to several different states at the same time. As power shifted between these early Southeast Asia states, so did tributary relations.[20]

Pattani, seeking to reassert its full autonomy, fought several battles with Ayutthaya in the latter half of the sixteenth century and first few decades of the seventeenth century. Pattani was actually able to periodically reassert its independence during this time. After a massive military campaign launched by Ayutthaya in 1632, with Pattani holding its own ground, the Siamese throne sent representatives to affect a diplomatic solution. At that time, Pattani had just undergone a succession of rulers and

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[18] Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism, and Separatism* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), 174.

[19] For detailed works on the creation and role of Thailand's border, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation.* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994) and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2003).

[20] Bajunid, 142.

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the new one was more focused on trade than war. Thus, peace was established between the two kingdoms, which lasted until the start of the Chakri dynasty.

Two critical lessons should be learned from this early period. First, from the first wave of Islamization in Southeast Asia, there did not exist any conflict between Buddhism and Islam. The Siamese rulers accepted Islam for what it was and allowed it to peacefully coexist with Buddhism. Indeed, in many aspects, Islam found particular favor in the Siamese court. It was not until the Islamic attempt at proselytism that there existed any tension between Islam and Buddhism. This tension was essentially much more political than religious. Second, Pattani as a kingdom had practically always been a tributary state to another power. The resentment at having another state exert power over it thus dates back centuries. However, through the Ayutthaya period, the tributary status of Pattani was one that allowed it to not only keep its own culture in order, but also maintain its own rulers. The states that claimed suzerainty over Pattani never interfered with Pattani's ruling elites. This policy changed at the start of the Bangkok period. As will be seen, this led to even greater resentment by Pattani.

B.   BANGKOK PERIOD, 1767-1910

In 1785, the Siamese successfully repelled a massive Burmese invasion. Rama I had called upon Pattani to aid in the defense of Bangkok, but Pattani under the reign of Sultan Mohammad refused. Infuriated, the Siamese followed their defeat of the Burmese with an overwhelming attack against Pattani. Thousands of Pattani lives were lost and the Siamese returned to Bangkok with numerous war prisoners.

At this time it was strategically important for the Siamese to ensure control of Pattani. If the Burmese gained control of Pattani, they would have a forward base of operations south of Bangkok, offering manpower, food supplies, and logistics, which would enable them to attack Bangkok from a second direction. Rama I therefore imposed a strictly enforced suzerainty over Pattani. This required the raja to travel to Bangkok every three years and pay tribute with the traditional symbolic trees of gold and silver.

Pattani immediately resisted so the Siamese invaded Pattani again and imposed a new ruler upon it.[21] The new ruler installed in 1785 organized renewed resistance against the Siamese throne, so the Siamese invaded again in 1791 and installed a different ruler.[22] Bangkok this time created a new administrative position for a central Siamese overseer to the Pattani administration. Furthermore, Buddhist Thais were settled in the Pattani state as a means to quell future rebellion.[23]

Nonetheless, Pattani launched an offensive against Bangkok in 1808. At this time Pattani had expelled all Siamese from its territory. Siam once again defeated Pattani. It this time directly appointed a Thai Buddhist to rule Pattani. Rebellion continued to increase. Tired of this non-stop rebellion and having security concerns elsewhere, Bangkok compromised with Pattani in 1817. Siam divided the Pattani kingdom into seven smaller states and reinstated the authority of Malay-appointed rulers.[24]

The relative peace that ensued did not last two decades. On the heels of the 1826 Burney Treaty,[25] the seven Pattani states united to attempt ending Siamese rule. This revolt also failed as the Siamese subdued Pattani a year later. New Bangkok-chosen governors were again appointed to rule each of the seven minor states.

This failed to subdue Pattani. The states of Pattani again took part in a larger rebellion at the end of 1838 and were again repelled by the Siamese in early 1839.

Frustrated with this continued rebellion, Siam under Rama III decided to alter its approach with the Malay region. It again abandoned the policy of ruling the region with Siamese governors and allowed Malay rajas to rule their states. This new policy succeeded in bringing order and stability to the Pattani region and remained that way for most of the remaining century.[26]

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[21] Wyatt, 151.

[22] Ibid, 158.

[23] Bajunid, 142.

[24] Wyatt, 172.

[25] In this treaty, the British not only recognized Siamese rights over Pattani, but also the Malay states of Kelantan, Kedah, and Trengganu. Thus, these Malay states were effectively subject to even more rigid Siamese control.

[26] Wyatt, 173.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, Britain pressured Siam to tighten control over its outlying provinces.[27] This resulted in the most direct rule of Pattani to date. Siam sent commissioners to account for every petty chieftain's court. These commissioners had a say in every move Pattani made. They even took control of Pattani's revenue administration. Outraged, the Pattani states again revolted in 1902. Abdul Kadir, the raja of Pattani, sought British help, though to no avail. The Siamese arrested the raja, effectively putting down the rebellion.[28] In 1906, seeking better administrative control, Siam reorganized the seven states of Pattani into the four provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Saiburi.

The old ruling families of Pattani had become severed from their traditional social context. The old social, economic, and political order was being undercut. Old ruling families were being displaced. They either had their revenues taken away or restricted by new accounting procedures. Old patron-client relations disintegrated. The centuries-old structure of raja rule was shattered.[29] As a result the former ruling elite were among the most disgruntled with Siamese governance.

In March 1909, a treaty between Siam and Britain established the current border between Thailand and Malaysia, giving Thailand what had been the kingdom of Pattani.[30] Under the treaty terms, Siam transferred to Britain its previously held rights of suzerainty over its other Malay states: Kelantan, Kedah, Trengganu, and Perlis.[31] Pattani is the only former Muslim vassal of Siam to be incorporated into the Thai state.[32]

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[27] Fear of Britain expanding its territory of influence was a motivating force for Thai rulers not only at this time, but also immediately following the Second World War.

[28] Bajunid, 213.

[29] Ibid, 214.

[30] Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 77.

[31] Wyatt, 206.

[32] Satun, also formally incorporated into the Thai state in the 1909 treaty, had formerly been a vassal of the Malay state Kedah.

Figure 2.   Thailand-Malaysia Border Since 1909 [33]

Thus, during the Bangkok period, the former Ayutthaya model of indirect control of Pattani was firmly replaced by one of greater control through direct interference in state affairs. This new model often relied on the use of physical force to achieve territorial consolidation. Among the mid-peninsular Malay states, though unrest and revolt were widespread, Pattani always resisted Siamese control the most. Once again, this resistance was for political ends. However, the Pattani elites did use religious sentiment as a major tool to foment this popular resistance to Siamese control.[34]

Traditional Malay-Muslim education was first directly effected during this Bangkok era. Pattani had emerged as the foremost center of Islamic education in the Malay world.[35] During the nineteenth century many students fled Pattani to study in Penang because Siamese authorities, fearing Islamic schools in Pattani were being used to stir revolt, cracked down on these institutions. Many noted Muslim scholars from Pattani also fled to other Malay states. The Thai government made further intrusions into the Malay-Muslim education system throughout the twentieth century, each time resulting in the furthering of Malay-Muslim resentment.

A recurring theme is readily evident throughout this period. Whenever the Siamese government attempted more direct rule of Pattani, heightened rebellious reaction ensued. The times when Siam and Pattani were able to maintain a semblance of peace were when the Siamese government was not directly acting in the affairs, primarily the governance, of Pattani. Nevertheless, the Siamese believed it important to follow a

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[33] Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/.

[34] Bajunid, 148.

[35] Ibid, 150.

policy of greater control of Pattani for the majority of this period; thus, the period was one of almost constant rebellion by Pattani.

A final lesson to be drawn from this time period is that from the outset of Siamese attempts to rule Pattani with Siamese administrators, no attempt was made to understand the culture and society of those being ruled. A government that does not understand the people it is ruling will likely fail. The Thai government continued throughout the twentieth century to send administrators from Bangkok to Pattani who had no understanding of the local culture. This is one of the many historical reasons for resentment, which the Malay-Muslims still harbor towards the Thai government.

C.   RISE OF NATIONALISM, 1910-1957

The Malay-Muslims in the newly annexed region continued to rebel against Siamese rule in a series of uprisings between 1909 until 1932.[36] Several of these uprisings did turn violent, most notably the Pattani Revolt in February and March 1923. Additionally, 1910 began a period of even greater centralization efforts by the Thai government. Rama VI, who ruled for fifteen years beginning in 1910, was largely responsible for this. He was the first ruler to extend a stronger nationalist bent to the modernization efforts of his two predecessors. Greater centralization was at the heart of his nationalist efforts. Having just been officially brought into the Siamese state against their will, fighting to maintain their individual cultural identity, it was only natural that the Malay-Muslims would revolt against greater centralization efforts. It should be noted, however, that Rama VI did not engage in any concerted effort to force a Siamese cultural and religious identity upon the newly annexed Pattani region. An example of this is the Education Act of 1921, which though requiring the teaching of Thai in schools, in practice placed "no bars...on instruction in Thai".[37]

The year 1932 marked the start of a new era in Siamese history. A noted coup that year brought an end to absolute monarchy and ushered in the opportunity for democratic development. Having been reorganized a final time that year into the current

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[36] Christie, 175.

[37] Bajunid, 162.

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provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, the Malay-Muslims hoped this would be an opportunity for greater representation of themselves in their own political, economic, and cultural affairs. However, as the result of the 1932 coup revealed itself, the notion of popular sovereignty did not apply to the Malay-Muslims.[38] The opposite soon became reality as ultra-nationalism accompanied centralization. The existing move towards greater centralization, though begun in earnest under Rama I, now rapidly accelerated. Furthermore, the Siamese state under absolute monarchy had primarily required mere obedience from its subjects. In the new Siamese nation, this previous relationship of state-subject became one of nation-citizen.[39] In the advancement of this new concept, the central Siamese government allowed little room for the coexistence of a Malay-Muslim identity.

Pattani experienced the apex of this ultra-nationalism under the regime of Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram that began in 1938. Gaining power as the result of another military coup, Phibun immediately launched a campaign to eliminate the Malay-Muslim cultural identity for the sake of nationalism. This campaign assaulted the Malay-Muslim identity on all fronts, including the arenas of education, language, dress, and religious practices. At the same time the new regime forced an ultra-nationalist agenda on the Malay-Muslims, it also advanced a program of modernization for which the Pattani people were not prepared. For the next four years starting in 1939, Phibun enacted a series of regulations for Thailand[40] called the Ratthaniyom that affected into law the attack on the Malay-Muslim identity. These laws were a uniform attempt to create a uniform language and social behavior. Rattaniyom 3, passed on 2 August 1939, is but one of many examples of these:

> As the government is of the opinion that the name by which the Thais in
> some part of the country have been called do not correspond to the name
> of the race and the preference of the people so called and also that the
> appellation of the Thai people by dividing them into many groups...is not

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[38] Actually, under strict military rule for much of the twentieth century, the idea of popular sovereignty remained unlived by the Thai society as a whole.

[39] Christie, 176.

[40] In 1939, as an internal as well as external show of ultra-nationalism, the Phibun administration officially changed the name of the country from Siam to Thailand, meaning land of the Thais, thus emphasizing the primacy of a singular cultural identity.

appropriate, for Thailand is one and indivisible, it thereby notifies that the state preference is as follows: 1.) Do not call the Thais in contradiction to the name of the race or the preference of those referred to, and 2.) Use the word 'Thai' for all of the Thais without any of the above-mentioned divisions.[41]

It is evident that this law attacked all who were not ethnically Thai.[42] Note the suggestion that it is the preference of the majority ethnicity that is behind this agenda. As earlier footnoted, popular sovereignty was at best limited during this time. Thus, the reality was that it was Phibun and his cohorts who maintained this preference.

Further laws required the use, and actual veneration, of the Thai language in all facets of society. These were immediately enforced. The practicality of these laws and their immediate enforcement in the Pattani region was ridiculous. The vast majority of Malay-Muslims could not speak any Thai. These laws were a direct affront to the Malay-Muslims. It was one thing to require the use of the Thai language in daily business or administrative reactions. This was bad enough. It was an entirely different matter to require that Thai be used in the homes and the pondoks of the Malay-Muslims.

Phibun, fearing pondoks as havens of rebellious teaching and behavior, especially tried to enforce the use of the Thai language in all pondoks in the South. Done to force Thai cultural assimilation, it had a reverse impact and effectively mobilized pondoks as centers for spreading ideas of pan-Malay nationalism and Islamic revivalism.[43] Malay nationalism had during this period been growing throughout Malaya and Indonesia. The Malay-Muslims had long maintained strong cultural and familial ties with the Malays across their southern border. Phibun's policies caused the Malay-Muslims to further turn towards their Malay brothers and sisters in seeking not merely further understanding, but help in their plight.

The assimilation efforts of the Phibun regime were so severe they even attempted to regulate the daily routines of all Thais. Ratthaniyom 11, dealing strictly with daily activities, was the epitome of these efforts. This regulation stated what all Thais should

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[41] Bajunid, 168.

[42] In actuality, the pervading ultra-nationalism was as much an attempt to eliminate a unique Chinese identity as well as Malay-Muslim identity.

[43] Joseph Liow, "Bangkok's Southern Discomfort: Violence and Response in Southern Thailand," *IDSS Commentaries* 14 (2004): 2.

be doing during each part of the day, how many meals to eat, how many hours to sleep, the proper types of exercise, and how to spend holidays.[44] Such a fascist program only served to further alienate the Malay-Muslims. They viewed this as an unjustified attempt at total cultural subjugation.[45]

Phibun also attacked the traditional institution of Islamic law. In the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, he completely eliminated both the Sharia Court and the Muslim Qadhi. Administration of civil law in accordance with the precepts of Islamic law was an essential religious-cultural feature of the Malay-Muslims. The abolishment of these institutions was a direct affront on Islam as well as the Malay culture. Phibun also revoked the legal traditions of marriage and inheritance. The government forced all Malay-Muslims under Thai civil jurisdiction. Thus, Thai civil courts had full legal control over Islamic matters. Malay-Muslim ire continued to grow.[46]

Phibun's first reign as prime minister ended in 1944. Under Phibun, Thailand had sided with the Japenese during the Second World War, largely to regain territories previously lost to European colonialism, and to further his ultra-nationalist goals. Now that the end of the war was a year away, and the inevitability of an Allied victory increased, the Thai government grew fearful that the British would enact severe repercussions on them for their wartime allegiance. This fear included the possibility of Britain annexing Pattani.

Therefore, the Thai government for the next few years largely reversed the policy course of the Phibun regime. In 1945 the government passed the Patronage of Islam Act. This created several new Islamic entities, to include a royally appointed leader of Islam in Thailand called the Chularajmontri, a National Council for Islamic Affairs, and equivalent provincial-level councils for those areas with a majority population of Muslims. The new government also restored the previously abolished Friday religious holiday. Additionally, the government passed new legislation that allowed the application of Islamic law in the arenas of marriage and inheritance. Though these new policies reversed Phibun's former policy course, the Malay-Muslims doubted the

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[44] Phibun had earlier abolished the Islamic Friday holiday.

[45] Bajunid, 170-171.

[46] Ibid, 177.

sincerity of the Thai government. They were able to see the reversed course for what it was, an artificial attempt at pacification of both the Malay-Muslims and a statement towards the British that Thailand was indeed a good administrator to the Pattani region.[47]

Believing it futile to seek improvement to their repressed conditions from within the Thai government, the end of the Second World War offered the Malay-Muslims a hopeful chance to seek external aid from the British. Several Malay-Muslims had aided the British with their war efforts against the Japanese. They were hoping the British would reward their efforts with recognition of and aid for their plight. Thus, in November 1945, they sent a petition, authored by several of the former elites, to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies.[48] This petition enumerated their many grievances against the Thai government and asked the British to free them from Thai rule.

Many of the grievances expressed in the petition are the same as those being expressed today, more than half a century later. These include lack of serious consideration for the Malay-Muslim culture, extra-judicial killings by police, corruption by Bangkok-appointed administrators, denial of equal higher education opportunities, exclusion from participatory governance in local affairs, discrimination against the religion of Islam, and lack of regional economic development. The fact that these same grievances still exist in the Malay-Muslim community today illustrate the historical failure of the Thai government to seriously address root problems that exist between the Malay-Muslim community and Thai state.

To the further disgruntlement of the Malay-Muslim community, Britain failed to act on its petition and Phibun regained the premiership for almost another full decade starting in April 1948. When word of the probable return of Phibun spread through the Pattani region in early 1948, the people's anger turned violent as upwards of eighty villagers scuffled with Thai police forces at Dusun Nyor in Narathiwat province. Within a couple days the number of villagers involved in this skirmish rose to almost one thousand, many of them armed. It took police numerous reinforcements and a couple more days before they could restore order. By the end, both sides had suffered many

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[47] Christie, 182.

[48] Ibid, 178-179.

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casualties. This incident at Dusun Nyor[49] was the first post-Second World War large-scale revolt by the Malay-Muslims. It marked the beginning of armed insurgency within southern Thailand.[50]

The general situation in the region worsened after this incident. Police retaliation was often brutal. At this time several Malay-Muslims fled over the Malaysia border to gather support for a protracted insurgency against the Thai government. Local agitation continued. In September 1948, Phibun declared a state of emergency in the region. Though the government publicly announced the threat of communist insurgency as the cause of this declaration, the real reason was to initiate a large crackdown on the region through a show of force. Security forces including police and military conducted "exercises" in the region. Phibun believed he could strong-arm the region into submission.

At the same time, the second Phibun regime did appear, on the surface, to combine this show of force with more concessions to the region. He sent a chain of special commissions from Bangkok to hear the grievances of the locals.[51] And indeed some concessions resulted from these, such as the insurance that Malay could be used in school instruction and that Bangkok-appointed administrators to the region would receive proper training in cultural understanding of the Malay-Muslims. Nevertheless, Phibun's end goal was still the cultural assimilation of the region for a nationalist agenda.[52] The ultra-nationalist Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram, in advancing his agenda, had failed to regard the existing cultural, social, or political realities in all areas of the country, particularly the South. The lack of any attempt to truly understand the culture and needs of the Pattani community, a hallmark of the Pattani problem during the onset and rise of the Bangkok period, continued as a hallmark of this nationalist period. Previous attempts of somewhat forced integration became attempts at full-bore assimilation during the nationalist period. Bangkok-appointed administrators earned a widespread local

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[49] This incident is also known as the Mandi Minyak incident.

[50] Bajunid, 186.

[51] The Thai government did the very same in 2004. As will be later highlighted, this would not be required if an organization such as the Southern Border Provincial Administration Center SBPAC) still existed.

[52] Surin Pitsuwan, "Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand" (Ph.D. diss., Thammasat University, 1985), 155-156.

reputation for ineptness and corruption. Police forces, the majority of them originally from outside the Pattani area, earned a reputation for cruelty and extra-judicial killings. The unrest in southern Thailand had risen to a new level. This period marked the start of the armed insurgency that gathered force and structure during the following Sarit regime.

D.   SARIT'S COUP ONWARDS, 1957-2001

Across the southern border, a sense of national unity had been growing in Malaya. National pride in Malay ethnic identity continued to grow and in 1957, all regions in Malaya experienced their first taste of independence from British control, becoming the current-day independent state of Malaysia. As the fate of the Malay-Muslims in the northern Malay states continued to improve, that of the Malay-Muslims in southernmost Thailand continued to worsen. The Malay-Muslims grew in both their bitterness toward the Thai state and desire for their own autonomy. Adding fuel to this was the better economic condition experienced by those in the northern Malay states as contrasted to that of the Malay-Muslims in southern Thailand.

With this as a backdrop for the ongoing Patanni problem, Phibun was removed from office in 1957 as the result of yet another coup. One of the primary leaders of this coup, Sarit Thanarat, took the Thai premiership in 1959. The development and growth of an armed and organized secessionist movement entailing a number of insurgent groups marked his term in office, as well as those during the next couple decades. The particulars of this secessionist movement will be covered in detail in a later chapter. What is important to note about the Sarit regime is the particular policy he adopted towards southernmost Thailand, which led to the organization of one of the region's first secessionist groups.

The Thai government under Sarit initiated a policy that enacted and enforced the strictest regulation of the pondoks to date.[53] He justified this on paper by making the pondoks private institutions that would receive funding, but only at the cost of complete central government oversight by the Ministry of the Interior. This example of yet further intrusion into Malay-Muslim affairs further raised resentment. In response, many

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[53] Ibid, 172, 188.

students sought overseas education, opening them up to previously unknown radical ideologies. Numerous pondoks moved underground. Of the approximately 355 pondoks in the region at this time, 150 protested by temporarily closing down. One pondok in Narathiwat, teachers and students alike, responded by fleeing the local area and initiating armed rebellion against the government. This former pondok community became the first members of the separatist group Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN).

The next couple of decades were marked by continual secessionist violence in the southern provinces. General instability and unrest across the Thai state as a whole during these two decades worsened matters for the Malay-Muslims. There were several more coups resulting in nine changes in premiership over this two-decade period. With a lack of stability in the government, no serious longer-term attempts could be made to right the wrongs in the Pattani region. The succession of shorter-term premiers simply continued the past policies of general repression of the Malay-Muslims. The South continued to be a repository for inept and corrupt Bangkok-appointed officials.

The 1970's were a decade of particularly great turbulence throughout the whole country. The southernmost provinces were no exception to this. As masses of demonstrators displayed their discontent for the government in the streets of Bangkok, masses of Malay-Muslims demonstrated their own discontent. In November 1975, approximately 40,000 Malay-Muslims protested in the streets over the alleged extra-judicial killing of five villagers by security forces. In Pattani the next month, unidentified individuals threw a bomb into a crowd of Muslim protestors, killing eleven and wounding forty-four. Later that same month, probably in retaliation for the Pattani bombing, two bombs were placed at Bangkok's central airport and one exploded, killing four bystanders. Immediately following, two bombs exploded at Hat Yai's train station, injuring several.[54]

The unrest in the South manifested itself on 22 September 1977 in a direct attempt at the lives Thailand's monarchy, King Bhumibol and his wife Queen Sirikit. While on an official visit in Yala, two homemade bombs exploded in close proximity to the royal

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[54] Peter Chalk, "Militant Islamic Separatism in Southern Thailand," in *Islam in Asia:Changing Political Realities*, ed. Jason F. Isaacson and Colin Rubenstein (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 1062.

family. They barely escaped injury, though five people were killed and forty-seven others injured. Four Malay-Muslims were arrested and charged with this attack.[55] This insurgent attack was one of the sparks for the subsequent coup of national leadership.[56]

It was not until General Prem Tinsulanonda became prime minister in March 1980 that the government enacted any serious attempts to bring order to the reigning chaos. One of his most important contributions in this regard was his founding of the Southern Border Provincial Administration Center (SBPAC). Established in 1981, one of its primary functions was the education of the Thai public on Malay-Muslim culture.[57] It also served as a key advisory body to the central government. The center was extremely successful in this capacity because it provided for a working interface between Bangkok and local provincial administrators.[58] Much of the communications, which had broken down during previous decades, were thus restored. Prem based this organization in Yala province, showing the Malay-Muslims that this was not simply another Bangkok-centered initiative that would be unable to ascertain the needs and voices of the locals.

Prem also, in an unprecedented move, offered amnesty to the separatists who continued to stir rebellion in the region. He was successful in getting a large number of these secessionists to put down their arms. He also at this time transferred control of the Pattani problem from the Defense Ministry to the Interior Ministry. The Interior Ministry already had oversight of the Southern Borders Provincial Administration Center. This move made the bold statement that he would deal with the Pattani region not as a matter of security, but as one of development.

The 1990's were a decade of relative peace in the southernmost provinces. Many of Prime Minister Prem's initiatives in the previous decade had proven effective. The government had also successfully squashed the insurgent activities of both the Communist Party of Thailand and the members of the Communist Party of Malaysia who were operating inside its borders. This seemed to further decrease the momentum gained

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[55] These four later admitted they were members of PULO.

[56] Chalk, 1063.

[57] Liow, 2.

[58]Aurel Croissant, "Unrest in South Thailand. Contours, Causes and Consequences Since 2001," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, no. 1 (forthcoming 2005).

by separatist groups during the preceding few decades. In the country at large, a new wave of democratic advancement was sweeping over the population. The 1997 constitution was a crowning achievement of that time. Perhaps the Malay-Muslims believed that this time, they actually would have a representative voice in the government. By the turn of the century, many analysts assessed that the newly found peace in the southernmost provinces was there to stay. As it is, two key events in 2001 sparked this dormant unrest and on 4 January 2004, the violence had exploded yet again.

In general summation, the history of Malay-Muslims in Thailand has been one of ruler and ruled, with the pattern of rule advancing from tributary oversight to interference to assimilation to semi-accommodation. The Malay-Muslims always wanted to maintain their own language, center their children's education around Islamic education, traditionally manifested in the pondoks, and perhaps most importantly keep their legal and religious autonomy.[59] It has been a continual battle against the Thai state to accomplish this. The Thai government, in its attempts to incorporate the Pattani area into the larger Thai state, has consistently followed policies that failed to take into proper consideration the uniqueness, needs, and value of the Malay-Muslims. As a result, resentment has festered in the Pattani region for quiet some time. This resentment gave way to rebellion, which gave way to armed insurgency.

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[59] Surin, 10.

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III.   THAILAND'S MALAY-MUSLIM DEMOGRAPHY TODAY

The last chapter examined the history of Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state. The unique Islamic identity of the Malay-Muslim population played a role in these relations, whether it was religious difference used by former Pattani elites to stir rebellion or used by the Thai government to focus cultural assimilation efforts. Political identity has arguably exerted as large if not a larger influence in the Pattani problem. Past Thai political leaders have followed an ultra-nationalist agenda that sought to assimilate the Malay-Muslims by attacking elements of their cultural identity, including language and pondok education. The Malay-Muslim population has rigidly rallied around their unique ethnic-religious identity. Economically, Pattani was once a wealthy trade center. Throughout almost a century of direct Thai rule, however, the central government neglected the economic development of the southernmost provinces, while the economic well being of the northern Malaysian provinces increased relative to these southern Thai provinces. Thus, the history of Malay-Muslims towards the Thai state has largely been defined by the government's assimilation attempts and the way these attempts were made, as well as neglect of the southernmost provinces, which in turn has caused severe resentment of the government.

This thesis argues that these historic grievances still largely exist and that this fact has largely contributed to the rekindled insurgency. In order to illustrate this, this chapter paints a picture of the three southernmost provinces today. In so doing, the various demographic elements of this picture are analyzed, to include religion, society, economy, education, and politics. As such, this current picture shows large-scale economic underdevelopment in which between a quarter and a third of the Malay-Muslim population in the southernmost provinces lives below the poverty line. These Malay-Muslims still hold firm to their ethnic-religious identity. Though participatory in the national political process, they do not relate well to the current ruling administration, as indicated by the recent election voting data. Education for many is still centered on the traditional pondoks, an institution that the Thai government is once again attempting to bring under complete state control. As such, this picture shows that not much has changed within the southernmost provinces over the past century.

A.   RELIGION AND SOCIETY

The total population of the three southernmost Thai provinces, which geographically lie the furthest distance from the capital of Bangkok, is approximately 1.76 million[60]: about 690,000 in Narathiwat, 618, 000 in Pattani and 451,000 in Yala.[61] Malay-Muslims account for 1.3 million, or three-quarters, of this total population, and are thus the overwhelming ethnic-religious group in this region.   The Malay-Muslims in these three provinces account for just over forty percent of the total Islamic population of 3.2 million in Thailand.[62]   With the addition of the large Malay-Muslim populations in the neighboring two provinces of Satun and Songkhla, well over half the Muslims in Thailand are located in the South.   This southern region of Thailand totals fourteen provinces: Nakhon Si Thammarat, Krabi, Phangnga, Phuket, Surat Thani, Ranong, Chumphon, Trang, Phatthalung, Songkhla, Satun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.[63]
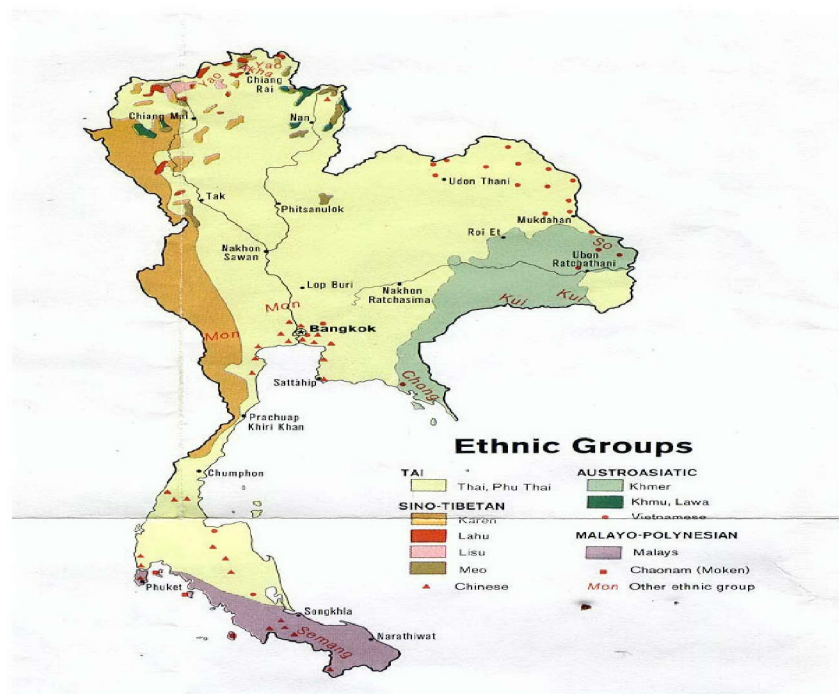
Figure 3.   Malay-Muslim Population in Thailand [64]

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[60] *Thailand in Figures, 8th Edition, 2002-2003.* Alpha Research Co., Ltd., 2003.

[61] Ibid. These figures are current as of the December 2001 population census.

[62] Abuza, 76. Muslims in Thailand total just less than five percent of the total national population.

[63] *Thailand in Figures.*

[64] Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/.

The three southernmost provinces are relatively small in physical size compared to those found in North and Northeast Thailand. Pattani is the smallest of the three, measuring 1940.9 square kilometers. With a population density of 319 people per square kilometer, Pattani is the ninth densest province of seventy-six. Narathiwat and Yala are considerably larger, measuring 4475.4 square kilometers and 4521.1 square kilometers respectively. This gives them a population density of 154 and 100 people per square kilometer.[65]

These provinces have a woefully inadequate number of medical personnel and facilities. This may be an indicator of the lack of robust higher educational opportunities in the region that limits locals from attaining such professional positions. It may also be an indicator of the region's inability to recruit such professionals from elsewhere in the country. In Narathiwat, the number of physicians totals seventy-one, dentists fifteen, hospitals fourteen, and patient beds 666. Thus, there is one doctor for every 9460 people and one dentist for every 44,777 people. Pattani totals seventy-four physicians, twenty dentists, thirteen hospitals, and 725 patient beds. This averages one doctor per 8220 people and one dentist per 30,414 people. In Yala, the number of physicians is eighty-nine, dentists twenty-seven, hospitals nine, and patient beds 1122. There is thus one doctor for every 4900 people and one dentist for every 16,152 people.[66] Considering the already insufficient number of medical personnel in the region, the fact that the 2004 violence forced many doctors to flee the area could have drastic consequences on the health and welfare of the southern population.

Since 1932, every constitution of Thailand has to some degree affirmed the principle of freedom of conscience. Nonetheless, until the 1997 constitution, Buddhism as the religion of ninety-five percent of the Thai populace was the official state religion. Thailand's current constitution upholds the equal status of all religions within the Thai state. Given the efforts towards democratic consolidation at the time it was written, this could indicate that the writers of the 1997 constitution, though maintaining the extreme importance of Buddhism to Thailand, understood that a single state religion is contradictory to democratic principles. The king, though mandated by law and tradition

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid. These figures are current as of the December 1999 census.

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to be Buddhist, also maintains the role of upholder and protector of all religions. Acting in this capacity, since the 1970's, he and the royal family have taken regular trips to the southernmost provinces, even founding a palace in Narathiwat.

Based on political significance as well as numbers, Islam is arguably the second most important religion in Thailand. Thailand, like the rest of Southeast Asia, is home to predominantly secular Muslims.[67] As such, the ideology of these Muslims should not be confused with the more radical variants populating many Middle East countries.[68] Ninety-nine percent of Thailand's Muslims are Sunni.[69] There are approximately 2000 mosques in Thailand, over half of which are in the three southernmost provinces. Narathiwat has roughly 434 mosques, Pattani 421, and Yala 199.[70]

The majority of Malay-Muslims continue to inhabit the rural areas as they have traditionally done. Thais of Buddhist or Chinese affiliation primarily inhabit the urban areas. Malay-Muslims have traditionally kept to themselves. Several reasons account for this. Among these are the norms of the religious traditions that hinder social interaction, such as specific eating requirements, presence of particular animals, and visibility of religious icons. The Malay-Muslims also keep to themselves as a means to continue the centrality of the Malay-Muslim identity.

Nevertheless, even given the lack of vibrant social interaction, living together in the same area requires all groups to relate to each other on a fundamental level. On this level all segments of society had traditionally coexisted peacefully.[71] With the elevation of violence and increased range in human targets exhibited over the past few years, however, this situation has changed. Many of the local non-Malay-Muslims, while concurring they have traditionally lived together with the Malay-Muslims without any problems, admit that they now fear their Malay-Muslim neighbors. This fear is largely

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[67] Abuza, 3.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Joseph Liow, "The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (2004): 533.

[70] *Thailand in Figures*, and Abuza, 80.

[71] This refers specifically to separatist violence as opposed to violence committed by insurgents, criminals, and general malcontents. Separatist violence has traditionally targeted people in occupations that are symbolic of the Thai state, such as security officials, with few exceptions. However, these exceptions have increased throughout 2004, ranging from Buddhist monks to schoolchildren.

caused by a lack of trust, which in turn has been caused by a simple lack of knowledge of exactly who has been behind the current unrest. Many of the non-Malay-Muslims point to the year 2001 as the year when they first sensed a change in communal relationships.[72]

Language is another factor that has hindered not only local social interaction, but also state relations with the Malay-Muslims. As suggested in the last chapter, language has been a major point of contention between the state and the local populace as forced usage of the Thai language had been a means of the state in its attempt at assimilation. Malay-Muslims have traditionally spoken a Malay dialect called Yawi. To this day the vast majority, even the small percentage who know Thai, speak Yawi. Maintaining their usage of Yawi in everyday life is an important way for them to maintain their cultural identity. Thai for them remains simply a language necessary for official state communications.

Language is one area in which the government should take a lesson from the Thai-Chinese community in the region. The relations between the Thai-Chinese and the Malay-Muslims have always been particularly good. This is largely because the Thai-Chinese are actually proficient in Yawi, having made the effort to learn it to successfully conduct business with the majority populace.[73]

The Malay-Muslim population continues to maintain familial, social, and cultural ties with their Malay counterparts across the southern border. In fact the practice of intermarriage between Malay-Muslims and Malays across the border is still common. This is a clear indication that the Malay-Muslim identity in southern Thailand remains extremely strong and of great importance. It is also an indication that past integrationist efforts by the Thai government have largely failed.

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[72] This information was collected in interviews conducted by the author while conducting thesis field research in the three southernmost provinces in the summer of 2004. This fear was visibly evident, particularly in the urban areas. Many Buddhists commented that, though they could not offer concrete evidence as to why, they knew as of a few years ago that there would be growing tensions between the Buddhist and Malay-Muslim populations. As one example, a university student related how his mom, sensing this change of communal relations and intuiting that only worse would follow, relocated her family from the Betong area to Hat Yai in 2002.

[73] Bajunid, 45-46.

B.   ECONOMY

The economies of the southernmost provinces have always been among the poorest. This embitters the Malay-Muslims for a few reasons. First, they perceive that the Thai state has done little to develop the region, while concerting its efforts and finances in the other regions of Thailand. Not only do they see the Thai state as having neglected the southern region, but also having outright plundered the region of its natural resource wealth, with financial benefits going back to Bangkok rather than remaining in the area. Second, the Malay-Muslims look across their southern border and see that their ethnic kin are considerably more economically sound. Historical records indicate the British, after gaining suzerainty over its colonial Malay states, did more to further the economic condition of them than Siam did with its Malay states. Finally, they still remember the apex of their former kingdom's glory several centuries ago when the economy was robust and wealth abounded.[74] Such memories have not vanished from their cultural awareness.

The southernmost provinces, being largely rural, have relied on agriculture as their economic mainstay. With Pattani and Narathiwat having ready access to the Gulf of Thailand, fishing has also been of great importance. The most important crop, by far, are rubber trees. Rubber plantations abound throughout the region. The average rubber tree yields one-half kilogram of rubber sap. One kilogram of rubber sap earns forty-three baht. Thus, it takes the yield of two rubber trees to earn the equivalent of one U.S. dollar. This is a dismal return.[75]

Two major problems have plagued the region's rubber production. Domestically, the quality of the rubber trees has been poor, thus affecting their yield. Internationally, as artificial rubber has become more important in the world market, the demand for natural rubber has substantially decreased. The fishing industry has also had its woes. The locals can only afford relatively smaller fishing vessels. In the past few decades, an increase of larger commercial fishing vessels from Bangkok and elsewhere have come

74 Kevin Hewison, "Thailand's Malay-Muslims: The Deep South" Inside Asia 9 (July-August 1986): 31.

75 These figures were gathered by the author in visiting several rubber plantations in the southern provinces while conducting thesis field research during summer 2004. In calculating U.S. equivalency, the exchange rate of 40 baht to the U.S. dollar is used.

into their area of the Gulf of Thailand and depleted the area of its fish. The Malay-Muslims with their smaller fishing boats have simply been unable to compete with the larger vessels.

Measured in terms of gross provincial product (GPP), the economic well being of the provinces is poor. At the turn of this century, as of December 1999, Narathiwat had a gross provincial product of 19,098 million baht. This resulted in a 1.1 percent real gross provincial product growth and a 29,069 baht gross provincial product per capita. Pattani by far had the highest gross provincial product of the three with 31,229 million baht. This yielded a gross provincial product per capita of 50,862 baht. Nevertheless, this was considerably down from the previous year, affecting a real gross provincial product growth of -4.0 percent. Yala experienced a gross provincial product of 16, 204 million baht. This yielded a gross provincial product per capita of 39, 523 baht. This too was considerably down from the previous year, resulting in a real gross provincial product growth of –3.7 percent.[76]

Many are the Malay-Muslims are living below the poverty line. The statistics are telling in this regard. As of the 2000 census, 25.5 percent of the people in Pattani, 28.1 percent of those in Yala, and 35.1 percent of the people in Narathiwat are impoverished. This is an average of almost one in every three people in the southernmost provinces living below the poverty line. The poverty incidence percentage for the southern region as a whole is 11 percent while that of the entire country is 14.2 percent. Thus, the Malay-Muslims have a much higher poverty rate than that of the kingdom as a whole and the rest of their southern region in particular.[77]

Neither unemployment nor underemployment, though a factor, can account for this high level of poverty. The unemployment rates for Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat are 2.4, 1.4, and 3.4 respectively. This averages 2.4, which is 0.2 points lower than the

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[76] *Thailand in Figures.*

[77] United Nations Development Program (UNDP). "Thailand Human Development Report 2003," (Bangkok: UNDP, 2003). The three southernmost provinces are also among a handful of provinces that have the lowest official minimum wage in Thailand. The minimum wage there is less than 140 baht per day. This is not an hourly minimum wage as in the United States, but the daily minimum wage. Furthermore, the workday is not defined as an eight-hour day as in many western countries, but as the entire twenty-four hour period. To better put this into perspective, this is less than $3.50 over a three U.S. workday period. It is true that the standard of living in southern Thailand is quite lower than that of the United States, but nevertheless it is easy to see how the locals might have difficulty staying above the poverty line.

country as an entirety. The underemployment rates are 3.1, 1.4, and 2.5 respectively. This averages 2.3, which equals that of the entire country.

Income level is the telling number of the extremely high poverty incidence in these three provinces. Their average household income is 9065 baht per month. This is considerably lower than that of the southern region as a whole, 11,012 baht per month, as well as that of the whole kingdom, 11,988 baht per month. The three provinces' per capita current income also lags behind the rest of the southern region and that of the entire kingdom. The average per capita current income 2158 baht per month, compared to 2957 baht per month for the southern region and 3462 baht per month for all of Thailand. In 1980, the per capita income of this region was 23 percent lower than the whole kingdom.[78] These numbers suggest that over the past couple decades, the economy of the southernmost provinces relative to that of the whole nation has not at all improved.

Vehicle ownership is often a physical sign of economic well being in developed and developing societies. The number of cars owned by residents of the provinces is considerably low, whereas, paralleling much of the rest of Thailand, motorcycle ownership is a lot more common. Residents of Narathiwat own a total of 7732 cars and 259,823 motorcycles. This yields one car per eighty-nine people and one motorcycle per three people. Thirty-four motorcycles are seen for every one car. Residents of Yala own a total of 8838 cars and 175,318 motorcycles. This yields one car per fifty-one people and one motorcycle per three people. Twenty motorcycles are seen for every car. Pattani residents own a total of 7808 cars and 125,781 motorcycles. This yields one car per seventy-nine people and one motorcycle per five people. Sixteen motorcycles are seen for every car. Given these numbers against the background of general economic well-being, it is understandable why motorcycles are the vehicles of choice used to carry out insurgent assassin attacks as well as bombings. Expect this trend to continue.

Other indicators of modernization further show that the southernmost provinces rank behind the rest of Thailand and the southern region. Kingdom-wide, 71.5 percent of residences have a refrigerator. This number diminishes to 69.3 percent in Yala, 57.6 percent in Narathiwat, and 54 percent in Pattani. These percentages are even well below

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[78] Hewison, 31.

that of the South as a whole, in which 73.9 percent of dwellings have refrigerators. Additionally, 83.7 percent of dwellings in the South have a gas or electric stove. The southernmost provinces rank below this: 74.7 percent of dwellings in Yala, 70.7 percent in Pattani, and 68.8 percent in Narathiwat have a gas or electric stove.[79]

This thesis earlier stated that the economic well being of the southernmost Thai provinces has historically been worse than that of the northern Malaysia provinces, and that this has always been a source of resentment among Thailand's Malay-Muslims. Current statistics show there is still a great economic disparity between the two. A comparison of the poverty incidence rates of the three northern Malaysian provinces that share the border with the Pattani region, those being Kedah, Perak, and Kelantan, clearly illustrates this. The poverty incidence rate for Kedah is 10 percent, 8 percent for Perak, and 12 percent for Kelantan.[80] Thus, the average poverty rate of 10 percent for these three provinces is considerably lower than that of 30 percent for the southernmost Thai region. The Malay-Muslims of Thailand readily see and feel this 20 percent poverty difference.
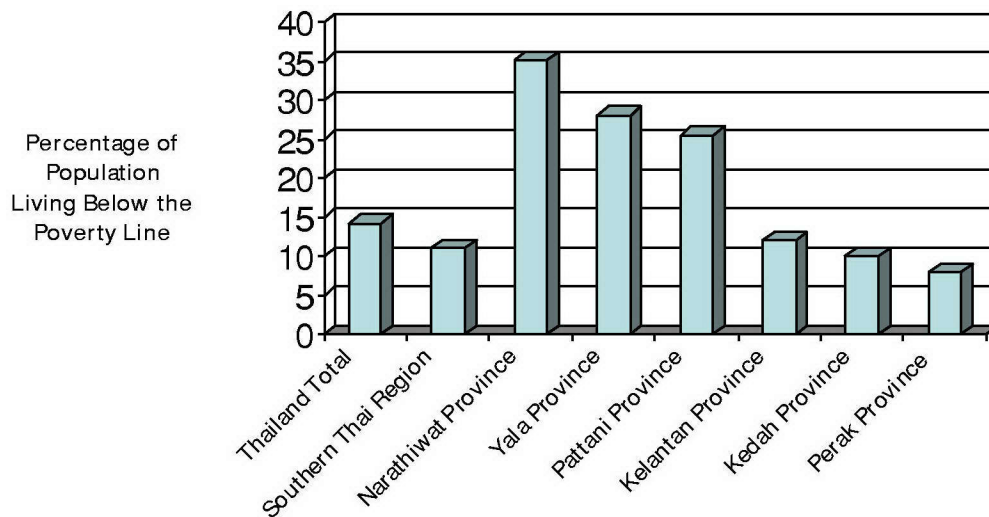
Figure 4.   Comparison of Poverty Incidence Rates in 2000 [81]

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[79] UNDP, 2003.

[80] United Nations Development Plan (UNDP). "Malaysia Human Development Progress and Challenges Report 2004" (Kuala Lumpur: UNDP, 2004).

[81] Source: United Nations Development Plan.

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Urbanization is also a sign of socio-economic development. The vast majority of the Malay-Muslims continue to live in rural areas as they have for the past century. This accounts for the continued prominence of agriculture. On the Malaysia side of the border however, the last three decades has seen a dramatic population shift of over 20 percent to urban areas. Thus, currently 40 percent of Kedah, 35 percent of Kelantan, and 60 percent of Perak inhabitants live in urban areas. This has translated to a decreased dependence on agriculture. For example, in the most rural of these three provinces, Kelantan, only 30 percent of the population is currently employed in agriculture and fishing.

Figure 5.   Northern Malaysia Provinces [82]

Throughout the last century, many Malay-Muslims seasonally crossed the border for work.[83] This is understandable given the better economic conditions across the border. With today's remaining economic disparity, many Malay-Muslims continue to find work across the border. Such a practice reinforces the strong relationship between the Malay-Muslims of the two nations. It also puts Thailand's Malay-Muslims in contact with those more radical insurgents who find it easier to operate, or at least find accommodation and plan operations, on the south side of the border.

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[82] Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas, www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/.

[83] Bajunid, 50.

C. EDUCATION

As earlier mentioned, Pattani was a primary center for Islamic education up until the early twentieth century. Muslim students from throughout Southeast Asia would seek education in the Pattani pondoks before traveling abroad, often to Islamic institutes of higher education in the Arab world, such as the Grand Mosque in Mecca, for further education. Many Malay-Muslims from Pattani were reputable teachers in these Islamic institutions abroad. Pattani tok gurus[84] were noted for translating religious teachings from Arabic into Yawi. The Southeast Asian Islamic community greatly respected the Pattani pondoks for their sound adherence to the principles of Islam.

Pattani's status as a regional center for Islamic education changed as other regional centers of Islamic education developed around the world. The quality of religious education in pondoks in the southernmost provinces still commands a good deal of respect from the local community. Many locals, however, now send their children across the border for religious as well as secular Malay education. Though some Malay-Muslim parents have traditionally sent their children across the border for education,[85] direct government intrusions into the southern pondoks have largely forced this.

In pondok schools, instruction is conducted in Malay and Arabic. The emphasis is on learning Islam more than a secular curriculum. Nonetheless, in the twentieth century, many Malay-Muslim pondoks did integrate secular and vocational subjects into the overall curriculum. Religious lessons entail the students pray, memorize the Koran, and listen to exegesis and commentaries provided by the tok guru. There is no performance-based assessment system in these schools. This is a primary reason the Thai government has refused to accredit these pondoks.[86]

Pondoks remain one of the most central symbols of the Malay-Muslim culture. Scholars continue to note how this Islamic system of education, centered on the pondoks, has successfully nurtured the Malay-Muslim consciousness in southern Thailand.[87] The

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[84] These are principals or teachers in pondoks who have been on Haj in Mecca.

[85] Bajunid, 50.

[86] Liow, Security Situation, 1.

[87] Joseph Liow, "The Pondok School of Southern Thailand: Bastion of Islamic Education or Hotbed of Militancy?" *IDSS Commentaries* 32 (2004): 1.

Thai government has always understood the central importance of pondoks within the Malay-Muslim community. To eliminate the traditional role of pondoks is the same as eliminating the traditional culture in the minds of Thailand's Malay-Muslims. This is why twentieth century attempts by the Thai government, particularly under Phibun and Sarit, to transform the pondoks met with such widespread local opposition. The local community responded to Thaksin's threats last year to more directly control the pondoks with equally rigorous opposition.

Given the long-standing symbolic as well as educational importance of pondoks, it is widely assumed that most Malay-Muslims today insist their children attend traditional pondoks rather than state schools. Recent research conducted by Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani province indicates that 64 percent of Malay-Muslims want their children to have a comprehensive general education while at the same time balancing this with religious instruction.[88] The emphasis here is that the majority of locals do not want secular education at the expense of religious education, but in addition to it. They realize the importance of secular education to in improving their economic lot. They want their children to be on par with the rest of the country.

Much of the past conflict over pondoks centers on how and why the Thai government attempted secularization. It is one thing for the government to register the pondoks in order to standardize the secular curriculum and provide federal funds. There are currently 500 pondoks in southern Thailand, approximately 200 of which are unregistered with the Thai government. It is another thing altogether for the government to register the pondoks as part of a larger assimilation scheme that would eliminate the region's unique cultural identity. The local Malay-Muslims can perceive the real intent behind the government's actions.

Whether local children attend pondoks or secular schools in either the southern provinces or across the border, it is still common practice for many to attend institutes of higher education overseas. The Malay-Muslim community has long complained that it is especially difficult for these students to find employment upon returning to the local area. As such, many begin their own pondoks as a means to earn a living. The difficulty of finding employment for these individuals is a genuine complaint. One of the primary

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[88] Ibid.

reasons why this difficulty exists is that the Thai Ministry of Education gives academic recognition to only a few foreign Islamic universities.[89]

Secular education standards in the southernmost provinces are currently on par with the rest of the nation. The average score for quality of education in lower secondary schools throughout the nation is 45.5, compared to 43.1 for the southern region, 48.6 for Pattani, 42.1 for Yala, and 39.8 for Narathiwat. As for quality of education in upper secondary schools, the score stands at 36.4 for the entire kingdom, 35.7 for the southern region, 40.1 for Pattani, 39.1 for Yala, and 32.4 for Narathiwat. This indicates the quality of education is actually as good if not better in Pattani and Yala than the whole of the region or nation. The quality of education in Narathiwat, however, is lagging behind the other two southernmost provinces.[90]

There is a discrepancy in the number of those who have not had any formal education. While this number is 5.5 percent for the whole kingdom and 7.7 percent for the southern region, it is 17.5 percent for Pattani, 14.1 percent for Yala, and 20.1 percent for Narathiwat. These larger numbers, however, reflect the older generations. The mean years of schooling for those who have attended school, reflecting the current generation of Malay-Muslim children, is within one year of that for the entire country. The national average is 7.3 years of school attendance; while in Pattani it is 6.3 years, 6.9 years in Yala, and in Narathiwat 5.9 years.[91]

Student to teacher and student to classroom ratios in the three provinces are also comparable to the rest of Thailand.[92] Narathiwat has a total of 136,027 students and 6030 teachers. This yields a ratio of twenty-three students per teacher, with twenty-nine students per classroom. Pattani totals 118, 673 students and 5268 teachers, which yields twenty-three students per teacher and twenty-nine students per classroom. Yala has a total of 91,774 students and 4117 teachers. This gives it twenty-two students per teacher and twenty-nine students per classroom.[93]

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[89] Abuza, 80.

[90] UNDP 2003. These numbers are current as of 1997. The higher the number, the better the quality of education.

[91] UNDP 2003. These numbers are current as of 2001.

[92] These figures are exclusive of universities and pondoks.

[93] UNDP 2003. These numbers are current as of 2000.

The year 2004 highlighted continual threats of danger to teachers and students in the southernmost provinces. As a result, the school went though several periods of temporary closures as an attempt to protect these students and teachers. Holiday periods were also extended. The fear created by the continual threat of danger has forced some teachers to resign and move elsewhere, with many more threatening the same. Thus, the insurgent violence has had a direct impact on education in the South. Torching schools has certainly had an immediate economic impact. However, forcing a reduction in school days as well as teachers in the area has negative long-term as well as short-term ramifications.

D.   POLITICS

For most of the past century, the southern provinces were Bangkok's dumping ground for inept and corrupt government officials. The central government intentionally sent many of these bureaucrats there as a means of punishment.[94] These bureaucrats certainly did not act in the best interests of the locals whom they were supposed to represent. For one, Bangkok always had its own political agenda for the region that was built without a sufficient understanding or regard for the Malay-Muslims. Additionally, Malay-Muslims were woefully missing from this body of bureaucrats. The majority of civil servants in the provinces continue to be non-Muslim-Malay[95]. Representation by non-Malay-Muslims from outside the local region who were corrupt and inept, and enforced an external agenda, was always a source of contention for the region.

Experiencing decades of this government practice, the Malay-Muslims simply avoided these bureaucrats as best they could. These bureaucrats had proven over time that they were not in the region for the interests of the locals. As such communications between the southernmost provinces and the central government simply broke. It did the locals no good to attempt to communicate their needs and fears when closed ears continually met them. This history of broken communications is having its effect in the

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[94] Hewison, 32.

[95] "The Call of Allah in Southern Thailand," *Human Rights in Thailand Report* 12, no. 3 (July 1987-April 1988): 14.

current crisis. Thaksin sent a succession of envoys to the southernmost provinces in 2004 to hear the problems of the locals. Yet these envoys were met with distrust and indifference. The pervading fear in the region is certainly one cause of this local reaction. However, the government's record of putting forth a facade of concern for the locals' need, when it really did not care, is still felt by the locals. As will be analyzed in a later chapter, Thaksin has added to this during 2004 in sending several representatives to the area to listen to the locals and formulate a plan for crisis resolution, and yet failing to enact any of the recommendations gathered from this process.

Given the long held resentment towards the Thai state, combined with higher poverty rates and lower general education attainment, one might readily assume the political participation of Malay-Muslims in national politics would be low. Such an assumption could not be more blatantly wrong. The parliamentary elections of 1992 marked the first time the three southernmost provinces were represented in national parliament by all Muslim MPs. These election results led to greater participation by the Malay-Muslims in the political process.[96] Recent studies show that the Malay-Muslim dominated provinces exhibit an even higher level of political participation than some Buddhist-dominated provinces.[97] This high level of political participation is accompanied by a high level of political attentiveness, meaning both interest in the elections and knowledge of issues, candidates, and parties.[98]

The recent 2005 parliamentary election supports this research. Voter turnout in the southernmost provinces shows no significant deviation from that of the entire kingdom. 75.1 percent of registered voters nationwide voted in the parliamentary election. As a region, 77 percent of registered voters in the South voted. Individually, 73.2 percent of eligible voters in Narathiwat, 74.3 percent in Pattani, and 75.9 percent cast votes.[99]

Likewise, research indicates no significant difference between Buddhists and Malay-Muslims in political efficacy, defined as the belief that citizens operating within a

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[96] For a recent case study on the voting behavior of Malay-Muslims, see Robert B. Albritton, "Electoral participation by southern Thai Buddhists and Muslims," *South East Asia Research* 4, no. 2 (September 1996).

[97] Ibid., 130.

[98] Ibid., 128.

[99] The National Election Commission of Thailand, published on The Nation Election Homepage 2005.

democratic society are politically effective.[100] This suggests Malay-Muslims have not abandoned the formal Thai political process as a means to possibly achieving their ends. Hope can be drawn from this that a political end to the current violence is still possible.

Party affiliation in southern Thailand is of particular interest. The South had long been the stronghold of the Democrat Party.[101] Research suggests that the Buddhists and Thai-speaking Muslims in this region will vote strictly along Democrat Party lines. The Malay-Muslims, however, while generally backing the Democrat Party, will split their vote to ensure voting for a Malay-Muslim who they think will best represent their interests. This too was illustrated in the recent 2005 parliamentary election. The voters in Narathiwat elected one of only two MPs in the South who were not Democrat.[102]

The fact that, in the South, Thai-speaking Muslims tend to vote more in harmony with the Buddhists than the Malay-Muslims is intriguing. This may suggest that culture, with language as defining attribute, is a greater cleavage than religion in the southernmost provinces. This is extremely difficult to determine in the case of the Muslim-Malays since ethnic and religious identity are so interwoven. Academics have long considered the two inseparable within the Malay-Muslim community. Nonetheless, it might be argued that a greater affinity towards ethnic identify could explain why more radical Islamic ideologies have historically failed to spread throughout this community.

Thus, it is readily evident when examining the current demographics of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat that many of the Malay-Muslims' historical sources of grievance still exist. The area still has a woefully underdeveloped economy, especially in comparison to the entire country as well as the northern provinces of Malaysia. The government continues its ongoing administrative assault on the status and traditional role of pondoks, pushing the advancement of secular education much to the cost of rather than the mutual accompaniment to secular education. The local bureaucracy remains out of tune with the local communities. The central government continues to suggest through its actions that it neither truly cares for the region as it should or that it just does not yet

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[100] Albritton, 143.

[101] This party is also known as Prachatipat.

[102] This was a Muslim candidate in the Chart Thai Party. The other non-Democrat MP was elected in Phang Nga province, which put a Thai Rak Thai candidate in office. The author of this thesis assesses this deviation in Phang Nga was a result of sound, successful tsunami relief efforts in Phang Nga prior to the election by the ruling Thai Rak Thai party.

clearly see the true picture. Many of the grievances felt throughout the last century are still present in the twenty-first century because the government keeps committing the same mistakes. The Thai government has continually failed to learn from the past.

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IV.   ISLAMIC INSURGENCY IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

Separatist or autonomist movements, complete with organized groups to advance their causes, have existed since the end of World War II.[103] Besides that in southernmost Thailand, other noted separatist movements in Southeast Asian history include those of the Moro in the Philippines, the Acehnese in Indonesia, and the Shan, Karen, and Rohinga in Burma. The key dates in the start of the separatist movement in Thailand are 26-28 April 1948, the period of the Dusun Nyor Rebellion.[104] The first organized group striving for separatism was the Barisan National Pember-Basan Pattani in 1959.

Various organizations have been part of this insurgency movement within Thailand in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Each group arose around aspiring elite individuals like traditional leaders and students. Each strove to legitimize its own elite status within its community. This resulted in factional disunity and weakness in the movement as a whole.[105] Such disunity among groups has been one of the fundamental reasons for the movement's lack of success.

"The cost of historical ignorance and amnesia on the origins of separatism in the South is to prolong and tacitly approve of a poor and subjective study of modern Thai political history."[106] The first chapter of this thesis examined the current Pattani problem within the historical context of Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state. The next chapter illumined how these historical grievances are still present in the region's demography today. This chapter now focuses on the specifics of the insurgent groups that formed as a Malay-Muslim response to the Thai state. Moving from an analysis of these groups when they first formed, to include support, objectives, and modes of

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[103] In this thesis, I use the terms separatist, autonomist, and secessionist interchangeably. Various groups at different times have sought varying degrees of independence: autonomy within the Thai state, complete independence from the Thai state but confederation with Malaysia, and a separate state independent from all. Thus, I make free use of all three terms to name these insurgent groups.

[104]Thanet Aphornsuvan, "Origins of Malay Muslim 'Separatism' in Southern Thailand," *Asia Research Institute (ARI) Working Paper Series*, no. 32 (October 2004): 10. This incident serves as an excellent example of writers of history having different perspectives. The Thai state officially refers to this incident as the Dusun Nyor Rebbellion, while the Malay-Muslims call it The War of Dusun Nyor. Calling it a war gives the incident a context of two distinct states in conflict. Calling it a rebellion gives it a context of a conflict involving a subordinate group within a state against that state.

[105] Ibid., 5.

[106] Ibid, 2.

operation, the details of the current violence will then be assessed in an attempt to determine the causes of this renewed insurgency.

A. EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Though 1948 is accepted as the landmark date for the start of southern Thailand's secessionist movement, the first organized group with a platform of violent rebellion did not appear until 1959. If one decision more than any other by the Thai government can be said to have forced the hand of secessionists to organize into violent groups, it was Prime Minister Sarit's attempt to enforce direct state control over the pondoks. This marked the start of the existence of organized secessionist groups.

The life of this movement appeared to have been short. Several key decisions made by Prime Minister Prem, as well as bilateral cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand in the 1980's, largely eliminated both states' security concerns of insurgents in the border provinces. By the end of the decade, the Thai government estimated that there were only 300-500 Malay-Muslim secessionists left in Thailand.[107] Furthermore, in 1993, the Thai government offered general amnesty to the remaining separatists and approximately half of them laid down their arms. As of the turn of this century, it was estimated that the number of secessionists remaining in southern Thailand numbered only 150-200.[108]

Nonetheless, insurgencies do not die easily. Although traditional secessionist groups like Pattani United Liberation Organization and Barison Revolusi Nasional seem to have effectively been reduced in the 1980's and 1990's, several smaller, more radical groups emerged in the 1990's.[109] These include the New Pattani United Liberation Organization and the Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani. The first major arson attack on schools in southern Thailand took place in 1993. This practice, restarted in 2002, was widespread throughout 2004.[110] After having waned for a period of time, organized

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[107] Abuza, 78.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] S.P. Harish, "Conflict in Southern Thailand: Removing Education from the Security Agenda," *IDSS Commentaries* 33, (2004): 1.

insurgent groups now seem to be more active than ever. Thus, the world is witnessing an unprecedented level of violence in southernmost Thailand.

What follows is an examination of the main insurgent groups as they developed. It is important to note that the Western literature on the exact details of these groups is small and extremely conflicting. All the primary scholars and analysts on these groups disagree with each other in one detail or another, whether it is the founding date, group's objectives, or recent activity. As such it is extremely difficulty to separate the truths from the errors. These facts are very suggestive for the current conflict. First, they suggest that not enough quality study of these groups has been conducted in the past. Second, they suggest that a large degree of confusion and general lack of understanding and awareness by outsiders has accompanied the secessionist insurgency from its historical outset. Having such a shallow, conflicting basis of understanding on the history of these groups, it is no wonder that the current picture of which groups are responsible for which acts in the most recent violence remains so murky.

1.   The Barisan Nasional Pemberbasan Pattani (BNPP)

In 1959, a Malay-Muslim named Tengku Abdul Jalal founded this organization, also called the Patani National Liberation Front. It drew its support from the traditional elites, both aristocrats and religious.[111] Malay-Muslim students in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan also provided substantial support.[112] The objective of the organization was neither mere autonomy within the Thai state nor integration of the Pattani region with Malaysia. It sought complete independence from Thailand in order to establish its own Islamic state, dar-al-Islam. To achieve this, BNPP's strategy centered on armed guerilla warfare against Thai security forces. Its operations were at maximum frequency during the 1960's when it was involved in numerous violence clashes.[113]

[111] Syed Serajul Islam, "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 5 (May 1998): 446.

[112] Peter Chalk, "Militant Islamic Separatism in Southern Thailand," in *Islam in Asia: Changing Political Realities*, ed. Jason F. Isaacson and Colin Rubenstein (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 182.

[113] Syed Serajul Islam, "The Liberation Movement of the Muslims in Patani Raya of Thailand," *Asian*

By 1990, the group had changed its objective to conform to the larger global struggle launched by separatists around the world. At that point, it changed its name to Barisan Islam Pemberbasan Pattani (BIPP), also called the Pattani Islam Liberation Front. Note the new emphasis on Islam in its new name to correspond to the global Islamist movement. By end of the 1990's, it had ceased all activity in Thailand. It then restarted operations in Thailand in 2002 after attending a meeting of eight Malay-Muslim separatist groups conducted in northern Malaysia in the earlier part of that year. Headquartered in northern Malaysia, U.S. government analysts believe BNPP again started participating in attacks on Thai security forces during 2002.[114] Little is currently known about the BIPP's exact relation to the increased violence of 2004.

2. The Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN)

Abdul Karim Hassan, also known as Ustaz Karim, and Mapiyoh Sadala, founded this group on 13 March 1960. The group is also called the National Revolutionary Front. Ustaz became the organizational leader and Sadala was the group's field commander.[115] Ideological differences and conflicts of interest forced the group to later subdivide into three factions: the BRN Congress, the BRN Coordinate, and the BRN Ulema. The BRN Congress, originally led by Rosa Burako, is primarily responsible for the group's military-like operations. The BRN Coordinate focused on political agitation and urban sabotage. Many analysts believed it completely ceased operations by 2000.[116] The BRN Ulema emphasized political and religious work. It had the strongest following of the three among the area's religious leaders. Some analysts at the United States Pacific Military Command (USPACOM) believe the BRN Congress is the one faction of BRN that has remained active into the current violence.[117]

Profile 28, no. 5 (October 2000): 404.

[114] Virtual Information Center, "Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," (Honolulu: USPACOM, 2002), 10.

[115] Andrew D. W. Forbes, "Thailand's Muslim Minorities: Assimilation, Secession, or Coexistence?" *Asian Survey* 22, no. 11 (November 1982): 1063.

[116] Virtual Information Center, 10.

[117] Ibid.

This group, originally having very close ties to the Communist Party of Malaya (CMP), was fundamentally opposed to the BNPP in its core ideology. Whereas the BNPP sought an autonomous state independent from Thailand as well as Malaysia, the BRN fielded pan-Malay religious-nationalist aspirations. As such, it desired a state independent from Thailand but federated with Malaysia. BRN had a two-part plan to accomplish this. First, it would force the complete secession of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, and resurrect the once great sovereign Malay-Muslim state of Pattani. Second, it would then incorporate itself into a greater Malay-Muslim state, governed by a single leader, and adhering to socialist principles. This ideology was centered on three core principles: Malay nationalism, anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism, and Islamic socialism.[118]

Support for this group primarily came from the pondoks. As such, the group was locally based and supported. Unlike the BNPP, it lacked overseas support. It also lacked the support of the traditional elite. Additionally, its left-wing socialist ideology failed to gain momentum with the mostly conservative leanings of the Malay-Muslim population. When the appeal of socialism declined during the latter stages of the Cold War, so too did the support for the BRN. These weaknesses tremendously dampened the effectiveness of the organization.[119]

Even so, because it did have such clearly defined objectives and a strong operational status, the group conducted numerous armed attacks on state authorities that neither went unnoticed by the media nor the Thai central government. By 1980, individual cells of the BRN had proven their ability to conduct operations throughout southern Thailand as well as Bangkok.[120] They tended to focus their operations along the Thai-Malay frontier in Songkhla and Yala.[121] As a result of these operations, the Thai government considered the group a serious threat to state security and stability.

The BRN as a whole became overshadowed by the operations of the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) and New PULO. As previously mentioned,

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[118] Chalk, 170. This Islamic socialism emphasized the promotion of a just, prosperous society sanctioned by Allah.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Forbes, 1063.

members of the BRN Congress faction were known to engage in occasional acts of violence through 2002. The group as a whole, however, is believed to have transformed into more of a local crime organization. It mainly engages in fear-extortion practices against businesses in southernmost Thailand that it views as exploitive of or contradictory to the interests of the Malay-Muslim population.[122]

This group is an excellent example of one of the fundamental problems with sorting out the current violence, which will be discussed in depth shortly. This problem is that of distinguishing secessionist violence from criminal violence from jihadist violence, and determining whether people with truly secessionist interests, radical Islamist interests, crime syndicate interests, or personal interests, are sponsoring those actually committing the violence. The BRN exemplifies a group in which violent acts are committed for both secessionist and criminal reasons.

3.   The Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO)

This group, founded on 22 March 1968, is the most known of the separatist groups and is often synonymous with Thailand's secessionist problem. There exists disagreement in who the precise founder was. Analysts at USPACOM published the founder as Tuanko Biyo Kodoniyo.[123] Many other scholars, including Peter Chalk, maintain the founder was Kabir Abdul Rahman, an Islamic scholar who had become disillusioned with what he perceived to be ineffectual and limited Malay-Muslim opposition towards the Thai state.[124] Rahman had previously been a member of BNPP.[125] Regardless of who founded the organization, PULO gathered support from younger, more militant Malay-Muslims. Many of these had studied overseas and while doing so were influenced by radical strains of Islam.

PULO advertises its ideology to be based on UBANGTAPEKEMA, an acronym incorporating religion, race, nationalism, homeland, and humanitarianism. The group

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[122] Chalk, 171.

[123] Virtual Information Center, 10.

[124] Chalk, 171.

[125] Islam, Liberation Movement, 404.

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saw the attainment of this objective as longer-term. Thus, PULO has supported a continually improved education in the southernmost provinces centered on traditional religious education. Additionally, the group has always understood the importance of continually nourishing the political consciousness and national aspirations of the local Malay-Muslims.

The group views one of the most important ends to it violence as increased international awareness of the Malay-Muslim plight in southern Thailand. The organization has a specific armed wing, called the Pattani United Liberation Army (PULA), which carries out its violent actions towards this ends. Such actions have included bombings as well as arson attacks. During the Cold War, the group was believed responsible for the majority of violence against the Thai state.[126] This violence included occasional bomb attacks in Bangkok.

PULO has enjoyed substantial international support, particularly from the Middle East, as well as from co-religionists in Malaysia. Syria and Libya were particularly strong financial contributors to the organization.[127] The Malaysian Islamic opposition party, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), which is still extremely influential in the northern provinces of Malaysia, especially Kelantan, has always been very closely allied to PULO. This staunch external support helped legitimize PULO in the greater Muslim world. PULO operatives have been able to train overseas in the Middle East and effectively use northern Malaysia as a safe haven.[128]

After the general decline in the number of southern insurgents by 1993, some analysts believe PULO enjoyed a surge in recruitment. As of 2002, PULO was believed to have had 350 core members.[129] Many attribute the fact that PULO currently has a larger, more solid core of members than all the other insurgency groups because of its close ties to the larger Islamist movement. Several have suggested that radical elements in northern Malaysia have successfully facilitated the trans-shipment of arms from Cambodia that end up in southern Thailand. Although such an allegation has never been

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[126] Chalk, 171.

[127] Forbes, 1063.

[128] Chalk, 172.

[129] Ibid.

proven, it suggests the possible existence of a larger Southeast Asian insurgent ring also involving radicals in Mindanao and Aceh.[130]

PULO has in the past demonstrated the ability to coordinate several operations in a shorter period of time, similar to some of the better-coordinated attacks in 2004. For example, in 1993, in less than one month, it successfully committed: arson attacks on thirty-four schools in the southernmost three provinces, an ambush of a military unit in Yala, an attack againt a train in Narathiwat, and a grenade attack on a Buddhist temple, also in Narathiwat.

Thai government officials, as well as United States officials, suspected PULO had international links to other state-sponsored terrorist groups throughout much of the 1990's. In 1994, Thai security officials accused PULO as having been part of the attempted Iranian-sponsored Hizbollah truck bombing of the Israeli embassy in Bangkok. Specifically, intelligence officials claimed PULO aided with the local logistics of the operation. In 1995, Thai police officials reported that PULO was facilitating the entry of state-based terrorists into Thailand. Though there remains a lack of concrete evidence linking PULO to non-Southeast Asian extremists, the United States has kept a watch on this possibility for some time.[131]

Cross-border relations between Thailand and Malaysia in confronting the common border security situation took a substantial turn for the better in 1998. Thai security forces arrested several key leaders of PULO. Most notable was the arrest of Hayi Sama-ae Thanam, then leader of PULA. This crackdown seemingly quieted PULO for the next few years.

As such, many commentators on the current violence in southernmost Thailand have dismissed PULO as having an important role in it. Such a ready dismissal is unwise. Even with important leaders of the movement arrested in 1998, and the group having ceased operations for the following few years, several facts cannot be easily dismissed. First, if PULO did have 350 core members in 2002, these members did not simply disappear. Second, PULO was known to have strong support from the Middle East. This support assuredly did not simply disappear. Third, and perhaps the most

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[130] Ibid.

[131] Chalk, 173.

important point missed by current analysts, the violence of 2004, with several examples of excellent planning and coordination, matches the profile of PULO.

4. The New Pattani United Liberation Organization (New PULO)

Arrong Mooreng and Hayi Abdul Rohman established this group in 1995 as a dissident faction of PULO. Its goal is self-autonomy, but achieved through less dramatic albeit more consistent means. As such, it conducted regular small-scale bombings, incendiary attacks, and shootings on a regular basis for the three-year period beginning in 1995. This violence served to continually harass local administrative and security forces. Schools, a symbol of Thai oppression given the government's historical assimilation attempts of the pondoks, were a target of choice for this New PULO.[132]

The group's operations were primarily confined to Narathiwat and Yala provinces. Haji Da-oh Thanam led the operational wing, called the Armed Force Council. This wing was further subdivided into three groups: the Maso Dayeh Group, responsible for Yala's Betong district, the Sali Ta-loh Bueyor Group, responsible for Narathiwat's Janae and Sri Sakhon districts, and the Ma-ae Tohpien Group, responsible for all remaining districts in Yala and Narathiwat. Thanam proved to be an effective leader.[133]

Thai security officials reported during this period that New PULO hired young drug addicts to conduct the majority of their attacks. New PULO could hire these youth for a relatively low price. Furthermore, such youth were readily available. Using youth for its attacks allowed New PULO to conserve its own limited human resources. It also makes sense from an organizational internal security perspective; should one of the youth be captured, he will have no real knowledge of the group as he is simply a thug-for-hire.[134]

The crackdown in 1998 that silenced PULO also effectively diminished New PULO's operations. For the next few years the group was not associated with any

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[132] Chalk, 174.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Chalk, 175.

attacks. Thai security officials also managed to arrest key leaders of this organization, to include Haji Da-oh Thanam, leader of the group's field operations, and Rohman Bazo, the group's chairman. As with PULO, however, New PULO should not be so easily dismissed in considerations of the current violence. In particular, the hiring of young drug addicts to conduct attacks throughout 2004 certainly fits the profile of New PULO. The Tak Bai incident at the end of April 2004 serves as an excellent example of this.

5.   The Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP)

This group, also known as the Patani Islamic Mujahideen Movement, first appeared in southern Thailand in 1995. Not as much is definitively known about this group. It is a descendant of the former Mujahideen Pattani Movement (BNP), a very small militant front established in 1985. This is an urban group consisting of several former Afghan fighters.[135] Joseph Liow suggests the group shares similar separatist goals to the earlier groups.[136] USPACOM analysts from the Virtual Information Center consider the group a bandit outfit that conducts acts of terror in an attempt to impress established groups that it too "aspires to become separatists".[137]

It should worry analysts that so little is known about this group. Anthony Davis recently assessed that this group is playing a significant role in the current violence.[138] Thai security officials throughout 2004 mentioned the group often. Since it was not established until later than the other groups, and it started in such a low-key fashion while Thai authorities were focusing their efforts on disbanding PULO and New PULO, it is possible GMIP was able to grow in numbers and support without Thai authorities knowing.

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[135] Croissant, 6.

[136] Joseph Liow, "The Security Situation in Southern Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Domestic and International Dimensions," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, (2004): 537.

[137] Virtual Information Center, 12.

[138] Davis, 3.

6.   The United Front for the Independence of Pattani (Bersatu)

This group is also known as the Barisan Kemerdekaan Pattani and Solidarity. In 1987, core members of BIPP, BRN, PULO, and NEW PULO conducted a joint meeting, called "the gathering of the fighters for Pattani", to discuss the viability and smartness of conducting joint operations, thereby unifying the effort of previously non-associated groups. These individuals agreed to establish the "Payong Organization" and unify its efforts in established an Islamic state free from Thai rule. The name of this organization was changed in 1991 to its current one, most commonly referred to as Bersatu.[139]

Members working these joint attacks against the Thai state followed a particular mode of operations. They deployed in small insurgent bands to conduct guerilla activities primarily in the rural areas. They had no permanent bases, always moving from one location to another. These insurgents avoided armed clashes with Thai security forces. The fighting they conducted was truly guerilla in nature in that it was quick, avoiding protracted encounters. In response to bouts of government suppression, they responded with attacks against public facilities. Attempting to create a schism between the Muslim and Buddhist communities in the southernmost provinces was also a common operating objective.[140]

Bersatu is most known, however, for a joint operation in 1997 called "Falling Leaves". This operation was an attempt to refocus national as well as international attention on the plight of the Malay-Muslims. The targets of the operation included the usual symbols of the Thai state: government administrators, security forces, state workers, and teachers. The mode of violence covered the spectrum of bombs, grenades, drive-by shootings, and incendiary attacks. Between August 1997 and January 1998, the campaign included at least thirty-three attacks, which resulted in a total of nine deaths and several dozen injured. This particular operation was the gravest increase in violence associated with the separatist movement since the early 1980's. This operation led to the

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[139] Virtual Information Center, 13.

[140] Virtual Information Center, 11.

coordinated combined crackdown by both Thailand and Malaysia in 1998, seemingly silencing the separatist movement.[141]

B.   CURRENT SITUATION

At this point, a brief discussion of the general nature of the current separatist insurgency is in order. More specifically, this insurgency should be examined against the growing international phenomenon of terrorism. Are the Malay-Muslim separatists in fact terrorists? Or are the separatists in fact guerrilla war-fighters? Does the fact that they are or are not terrorists influence any relations they may have with transnational terrorist groups?

In order to address these questions, a few definitions must be established. Terrorism can be defined as:

> ...an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby- in contrast to assassination- the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative of symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence- based communications processes between terrorist (organizations), (imperiled) victims, and main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought.[142]

A primary focus of this definition is the target of the violent action. The "direct targets of violence are not the main targets". Rather, the direct targets of terrorism are usually state symbols and political opponents, while the main targets are governments and the public at large.[143] These targets ordinarily, according to the rules of land warfare,

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[141] Chalk, 176.

[142] Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 16, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 780. This definition was actually formulated by Alex Schmid, "Political Terrorism," (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988).

[143] Alex P. Schmid, "Frameworks for Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 16, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 206.

are protected by immunity from deliberate attack.[144] In examining the current Malay-Muslim insurgency, the number of state symbolic or general public targets increased throughout 2004 and continues to rise throughout 2005. While security forces are still the preponderance of targets, insurgent violence is certainly not limited to them. This suggests that the separatist insurgency is growing into more of a terrorist movement.

Paradoxically, even though the insurgency trend is towards terrorism, at heart it remains a guerrilla movement. Scholar David Rapoport defines guerrilla warfare as "a special kind of military activity, in which hit-and-disappear tactics to disperse the enemy's military forces were employed to wear down and gradually defeat the enemy".[145] In contrast to terrorism, such violence is internationally recognized as legal as long as it adheres to the internationally accepted rules of warfare.[146] The secessionist movement still primarily targets police and military officials using hit-and-disappear tactics. It can be questioned, however, whether the intended impact of such violence is the physical attrition of the enemy, which tactically defines guerrilla warfare, of psychological coercion, which belongs to the realm of terrorism.[147]

Thus, it is difficult to define whether the Malay-Muslim insurgency is a guerrilla movement or a terrorist movement. Given that its primary targets and tactics remain those of guerrilla warfare, it can perhaps best be defined as a guerrilla movement, though one that is currently, and more frequently, using terrorism as a means of its violent political struggle for a sovereign Malay-Muslim state. The increased terrorist nature of this movement could be suggestive of a few possibilities. The increased number of terrorist attacks could signal increased support from terrorist organizations such as Jemaah Islamiah. This could also signify the willingness of separatists to move the violence to another level in its attempt at goal attainment. The increased terrorist attacks could also signify an attempt by separatist insurgents to draw the further interest and involvement of established terrorist groups towards its cause. A combination of any of these could also be a possibility.

[144] Ibid., 204.

[145] David Rapoport, "The Politics of Atrocity," in Y. Alexander and S.M. Finger (eds), *Terrorism: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (New York: John Jay Press, 1977): 47, quoted in Schmid, 205.

[146] These internationally accepted rules of warfare are codified in the Hague Regulations and the Geneva Conventions. At the heart of these is the protection of noncombatants and innocents.

[147] Schmid, 206.

An increase in terrorist targets and tactics by separatist insurgents would definitely demonstrate to established terrorist groups the willingness to receive their aid. Likewise, transnational terrorist groups are more than willing to globally expand wherever they can. Thus, if the increased terrorist nature of the growing separatist violence does not already signal the entry of established transnational terrorist groups, it certainly increases the possibility thereof. This is even more reason that the current insurgency must be resolved before it increases even further.

Many analysts had assessed that as of 1999, the insurgency movement had finally been defeated. The few years of silence from southern Thailand seemed to support this assessment. Then, in April 2001, separatists bombed the Hat Yai train station in Songkhla province and a Yala hotel. Sporadic violence continued throughout the rest of the year. Starting 24 December 2001, which interestingly is Christmas Eve in the Christian world, insurgents began a sustained campaign against security forces. Within the first seven months, nineteen policemen were killed and another seven seriously injured. Three civilians were also killed, with another three wounded. Insurgents seized fifty-four rifles, numerous shotguns and handguns, and approximately 4000 rounds of ammunition from these attacks.[148] By the summer of 2002, analysts could safely say that southernmost Thailand's insurgency issue had once again emerged. Not only had it again emerged, but by the end of 2004, it had reached an unprecedented level.

Examining more closely the first seven months of this new campaign of violence, the one pattern that stands out is that police forces were the targets. Civilian casualties were largely the result of collateral damage rather than having specifically been targeted. All of the attacks on the police forces occurred either while they were at their police boxes or main stations. Additionally, shootings were the method of attack in all cases but two: on 12 March 2002 grenades were thrown at a target, and on 6 May 2002 rocket-propelled grenades were used. Thus, these attacks demonstrated a consistency in targets. Such consistency suggests that these violent acts were not merely random, but rather planned.

Targets and attack methods then expanded in July 2002. On 2 July, a police senior sergeant major was ambushed while returning home. Insurgents used bomb-

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[148] Virtual Information Center, 21.

strapped motorcycles in attacking two district offices on 3 July. On 8 July, bombs were detonated on a train car in Yala. Then on 10 July, insurgents attacked a policeman in Narathiwat while he was guarding schoolteachers. Thus, after a half year of strictly targeting policemen in their offices or boxes, primarily with rifle and small arms fire, the insurgency widened to include mobile police ambushes and increased bombings. Throughout the rest of the 2002 and 2003, the insurgency continued to expand its target list as well as means and method of attack. By 2004, targets included policemen, soldiers, government officials, village headsmen, state workers, local laborers, monks, teachers, and school children. Means of attack included shootings, stabbings, slashings, grenades, bombs, and incendiary. Methods of attack included raids, ambushes, pre-planted bombings, and direct confrontation. The insurgency in 2004 reached a previously unknown level in all regards: frequency of attacks, severity, target choice, means, and methods.

The ruling Thaksin government refused to admit that this renewed insurgency was directly related to the region's historical secessionist movement until 2004. On 21 July 2002, after the Thai government realized that the South's insurgency had indeed been renewed, Minister Wan Muhamad Nor Matha emphasized conflicts of interests among local authorities as a main cause of the violence.[149] This came only one day after Prime Minister Thaksin publicly declared that drugs were the primary cause of the violence.[150] Thaksin then continued throughout 2003 blaming the violence on local bandits. This early example of ranking government officials contradicting one another and attributing blame for the violence to a whole slew of causes continued throughout 2004. The fact that government officials have continually contradicted one another's story, and laid blame to various causes, suggests the Thai government has not had a clear grasp of the situation.

As earlier stated, the insurgency in southernmost Thailand exploded in 2004. On 4 January, upwards of one hundred armed insurgents raided the Thai Army depot in Narathiwat. They seized well over 300 weapons in the raid, including assault rifles, pistols, machine guns, and ammunition. Four soldiers were killed in the attack. The Thai

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[149] Bangkok Post, 22 July 2002.

[150] Bangkok Post, 21 July 2002.

government suspected the insurgents had inside help in the planning and conduct of this raid, but nothing has been proven.[151] Additionally, no individual or group claimed responsibility for the attack. Immediately following the raid, eighteen schools were simultaneously torched around the province. Thai authorities believe the primary purpose for these particular school burnings was to provide a distraction to aid the insurgents' getaway from the army depot.[152] As a response to this attack, the Thai government placed the three southernmost provinces under martial law.
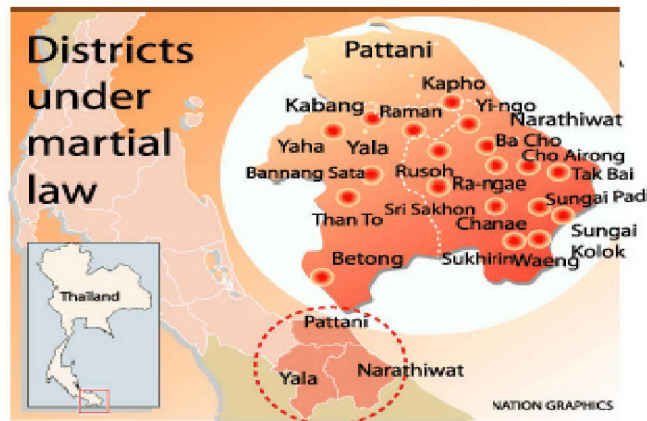
Figure 6.   Southern Thai Districts Under Martial Law in 2004 [153]

This particular attack, which harbingered the elevated level of insurgency activity in 2004, is telling in several regards. First, the attack demonstrated a high degree of planning and coordination that hadn't been seen in years. Rogues simply did not decide last minute to raid an army installation. The insurgents knew that at that time there was minimum manning at the camp, they knew the best way to ingress and egress the installation, and they knew where the arms were stored once they were inside. Additionally, they had transportation waiting for not only their escape, but to transport the large number of stolen arms. They then conducted simultaneous diversionary arson attacks to aid their escape. Second, the attack had to be conducted by a larger number of individuals to account for all those who raided the camp as well as those who torched the

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[151] The Nation, 5 January 2004.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Source: The Nation, 7 January 2004.

schools. Though many may reasonably have been insurgents for hire, at least a core group of those that led the camp raid had to be trained, core insurgents. Third, no group or individual claimed the raid. It was common for insurgent groups during the last several decades to claim responsibility for their attacks. This could signify purposeful intent on the part of the insurgents to confuse security officials.

The unprecedented frequency and severity of attacks during 2004, resulting in over 600 deaths and nearly as many injuries, targeted a variety of individuals, from security forces to rubber plantation workers. Perhaps the most disturbing attacks for the local Buddhist community, however, occurred on 24 January 2004 when three monks were killed, including a thirteen-year old novice, with one monk decapitated. With the intensity of these attacks, the government's lack of control over the situation, and the imposition of martial law, fear throughout the southernmost provinces also elevated to a previously unknown level.[154]

This pervading fear is a particularly troubling problem of the current insurgency. Fear has bred uncertainty, and uncertainty has caused complete distrust. Though the Buddhists and the Malay-Muslims living together there have never socialized that much, they at least trusted one another. Now the Buddhists and the Malay-Muslims do not trust each other. Additionally, with the imposition of martial law, the Malay-Muslims do not trust the security forces, and the security forces do not trust the Malay-Muslims.[155] The uncertainty of not knowing who exactly is behind these insurgent attacks, as well as not knowing who, what, or where the next target will be, has tremendously impacted community relations.

Heavy-handedness by security forces has further enflamed the situation and added to the general atmosphere of mistrust. Two incidents in particular illustrate this. On 28 April, security forces clashed with over a hundred militants throughout Pattani, Yala, and

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[154] I readily perceived this fear throughout the inhabitants of Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala during the two weeks of August and September 2004 that I spent in the region. Interviews with locals, as well as with Dr.

Wattana Sugunnasil at Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani, confirmed how widespread and deep this fear was.

[155] A distrust of security forces, particularly police, has long existed among the Malay-Muslims. The fact that these troops are a symbol of what the Malay-Muslims consider a repressive state largely accounts for this historical distrust. Additionally, a long, documented history of extra-judicial abductions and killings by local policemen already existed.

Narathiwat. The majority of these militants were teenagers, most of whom were armed with little more than machetes. In all, security forces killed 107 insurgents, while losing five of their own. This incident accounted for the largest single-day death toll caused by internal conflict in Thailand's modern history.[156] The heart of this day's tragedy occurred at Krue Se mosque in Pattani, an extremely historically significant mosque for the Malay-Muslim community. Thirty-two insurgents took refuge in this mosque after having attacked a nearby police post. Security forces surrounded the mosque and ordered the insurgents to come out of the mosque and surrender. When they did not, a group of commandoes attempted to penetrate the mosque, at which time one was killed. Security forces then changed tactics and leveled the mosque with vehicle-mounted, automatic machine-gun fire.[157] Ranking officer on scene General Pallop Pinmanee, Deputy Director of Internal Security Operation Command, apparently against the instructions of Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit, ordered the assault. Commenting on the day's events, Prime Minister Thaksin praised the actions of security forces, suggesting that the youth who were killed were worthless drug addicts.[158]

It is true that these militants had initiated the day's attacks. However, confronting machete-wielding youth with automatic gunfire seemed excessive to the local Malay-Muslim community. The Malay-Muslim community had already lost their trust in security forces. With this latest excessive use of force by security personnel, mostly police units, what little trust had been remaining was completely destroyed. Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit did remove General Pallop from duty in the South the next day and reassigned him to Bangkok for disobedience. Yet, at the same time, Chavalit praised Pallop's actions, calling him "Thailand's General McArthur".[159]

The second incident occurred on 25 October 2004. That day, over 2000 Malay-Muslims, primarily teenagers and young adults, amassed outside the police station at Tak

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[156] The Nation, 29 April 2004. Thailand's next largest single-day death toll was seventy-two on 14 October 1973 when security forces clashed with largely student demonstrators on and around Rajadamnoen Avenue in Bangkok.

[157] I visited this mosque in summer 2004 shortly after reconstruction began. The mosque truly was completely leveled. In interviewing locals, they confirmed that security forces also fired M-79 rounds and rocket-propelled grenades.

[158] Bangkok Post, 29 April 2004.

[159] The Nation, 29 April 2004.

Bai in Narathiwat to demand the release of six suspects detained on charges of stealing arms from community defense forces. By mid-afternoon, police forces dispersed the crowd with water cannons and tear gas. Over 300 protestors were arrested. Nine demonstrators were killed in the clash. The arrested protestors were allegedly horizontally stacked in the back of army trucks and, after waiting in the trucks for six hours, driven a few hours more to Pattani for processing. Upon arrival and removal of the prisoners in Pattani, seventy-eight had suffocated-to-death, and one more died shortly thereafter.[160] This incident marked the second highest single-day death toll from internal strife in Thailand's modern history, second only to the 28 April 2004 incident. Prime Minister Thaksin immediately praised his security forces. Commenting on the suffocations, he suggested the cause of death could be attributed to Ramadan, which Muslims were then observing, since the detainees had apparently already been in a weakened physical state from fasting.[161]

Once again, the Malay-Muslims perceived Thai security forces as brutal, heavy-handed agents of a repressive state. Excessive force and lack of concern for the Malay-Muslim detainees resulted in scores of unnecessary deaths. Once again, the central government praised the actions of its security forces. Furthermore, this time instead of blaming drugs, Thaksin associated blame with a major Muslim holiday. While the locals saw this physical incident as an attack against the people, they viewed Thaksin's words as a direct assault against Islam. By this time, all trust of Thai authority in the southernmost provinces was completely shattered. The Malay-Muslim community was outraged. It could easily have used Thaksin's words, especially when calculating into the equation the pattern of brutality against the locals, as justification for a jihad against the Thai state.[162]

In addition to these major incidents of perceived excessive force and brutality, claims of extra-judicial kidnappings and killings were rampant throughout 2004. On 18 March, Minister of Parliament Tharin Jaisamut of Satun claimed over a hundred residents

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[160] Bangkok Post, 27 October 2004.

[161] Ibid.

[162] To this date, I am unaware of any reporting that indicates the locals have called for a jihad against the Thai state. Nonetheless, Muslims elsewhere, albeit in more radical communities, have used less in justifying the call to jihad. The main point here is that Thaksin's words strengthened a religious justification for the ongoing insurgency.

of the three southernmost provinces had disappeared over the previous few preceding months.[163] Ahmad Somboon Bualuang, an academic at Prince of Songkhla University in Pattani, confirmed the spate of illegal abductions in talks with civic groups on 24 March.[164] Though illegal abductions are difficult to track and tally, many analysts suggest that several hundred locals were missing by the end of 2004.

The abduction and murder of well-known Muslim defense attorney Somchai Neelahphaijit, chairman of the Muslim Lawyers Association, brought the reality of these abductions to the forefront of media attention. First reported missing from Bangkok on 12 March, after media scrutiny finally forced Bangkok police officials to launch a rigorous investigation, the lawyer was later discovered murdered. Rogue policemen, apparently upset that Somchai was defending Muslim insurgents in the South, were found guilty of ambushing and killing him. Before his abduction, Somchai had publicly accused police officials of brutalizing five suspects arrested in relation to the 4 January army post raid. His allegations included mock hangings, severe beatings, urination in the mouth, defecation on the face, and electric shock to the genitals. After examining the bodies of these detainees, Dr. Pradit Chroenthaithavee of the National Human Rights Commission confirmed that these individuals had indeed been subjected to beatings and genital electric shock.

In a situation in which there is a high level of violence, fear, and lost trust by all parties, the possibility that individuals will attempt to take the law into their own hands is a realistic possibility. It appears this may be the case in the ongoing southern unrest. Undisclosed sources in Thailand's Department of Defense suggest several members of the security forces operating in southern Thailand, frustrated with the growing insurgency, have donned civilian clothing when off-duty and committed unauthorized abductions of Malay-Muslims suspected involved in the insurgent activities.[165] If this is true, suggesting Thailand's security apparatus does not have full control of its forces,

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[163] The Nation, 20 March 2004.

[164] The Nation, 25 March 2004.

[165]The author obtained such information from various interviews with higher-ranking Thai security officials, including in-country interviews during a November 2004 research trip to Thailand. To protect these sources, their names and all further details will remain undisclosed.

then a new and extremely frightening dimension has been added to the existing violent situation. The situation in the South could be on the brink of complete anarchy.

Bounties have also had a role in the current insurgency. On 21 November 2004, PULO placed bounties, ranging from $600 to $2300, on the governors, deputy governors, police captains, all police with ranks of major or higher, and district chiefs of the five southernmost provinces. This followed shortly after the Thai government posted its own bounties, ranging from $12,600 to $126,550, on forty-six Malay-Muslims linked to insurgent activities.[166] To date, money has not been a successful motivating factor in the capture of wanted insurgents.

If the intensity of violence during 2004 was not bad enough, it has worsened thus far in 2005. Compared to the first part of 2004, in which there were a total of thirty-six bombings[167] and many more shootings and stabbings, the rate of insurgent attacks has dramatically risen. Several attacks now occur practically every day. 29 December 2004 seems the day the level of insurgency increased yet another notch. Insurgents attempted five assassinations on that day alone: a policeman shot and killed in Narathiwat, a teacher shot and wounded in Narathiwat, a news agent shot and killed, a civil defense volunteer shot and wounded in Pattani, and a retired teacher slashed and wounded in Pattani. That same day, insurgents conducted coordinated small-arms raids on several police posts throughout Narathiwat. Insurgents also ambushed an armored car in Narathiwat.[168] This is an example of a typical day now in southernmost Thailand.

In response to the elevated level of insurgency, the Thai government continues sending more security forces into the region. The number of military forces alone in the three southernmost provinces now number approximately 20,000. This equates to eighteen full battalions of troops. The government also plans to establish a new infantry division comprising an additional 12,000 troops. In addition to military forces, Bangkok has also reinforced the police force, which now totals over 10,000.[169] This saturation of security forces, which totals over 42,000, means that more than two in every one hundred

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[166] Global Issues Report, 29 Nov 2004.

[167] Sabrina Chua, "Insurgency in Southern Thailand: What the bombings portend," *IDSS Commentaries* 40, (2004): 2.

[168] Davis, 4.

[169] Davis, 5.

people in the southern three provinces are security personnel. This is a significant number of security forces, yet throwing more security forces has failed to restore peace and order. Instead, the insurgency has grown.

In addition to the general number of and intensity in attacks, several recent attacks suggest an increase in sophistication of tactics used. An elevated usage of improvised explosive devices triggered by mobile phones has been coupled with small arms fire on the target. An example of such tactics occurred on 10 February 2005. An improvised explosive device stopped an army vehicle, after which a firefight with insurgents ensued. Later that day, an explosion overturned a police vehicle and waiting insurgents fired upon the policemen.[170] Whether these insurgents devised such tactics themselves, or external forces have provided them with the training, is one of the most important questions this new tactic raises.

The current security situation in the South is as chaotic as ever. Violence continues to increase. The Thai government continues to lack a clear understanding of who exactly is at the root of the current crisis. Elements of the current violence match the profiles of several past separatist groups. Youth have primarily been used to conduct the attacks. This could suggest widespread support from within the pondoks, from which the BRN traditionally drew its support. Of course Thai officials have claimed the majority of these youth are drug addicts. New PULO was known to have widely used drug addicts to conduct its attacks in order to conserve manpower. The level of coordination of several of the 2004 attacks had previously been a key trait of PULO. PULO is also estimated to have had over 300 core members still as of 2002. If these members had not been part of the original resurgence of violence in 2002 and 2003, then the increased strength of the insurgency in 2004 would certainly have served as an invitation for them to once again get involved. GMIP largely escaped the 1998 government purge of separatists. This certainly would have placed them in a prime position to lead the new insurgency starting in 2001. Bersatu had been formed to unify efforts and increase efficiency. The current level of violence certainly is indicative of a more unified, efficient effort. It should also not be forgotten that Thai government officials suspected in 2002 that BIPP was once again active. Thus, the current indicators can be read as pointing to any of the past

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[170] Davis, 4-5.

separatist groups. Thai intelligence believes that GMIP and BRN-Coordinate are two of the primary groups involved in the current insurgency. The greatest probability is that several of the past separatist groups are somehow involved. It is Thai intelligence's responsibility to sort out just who is related how. So far, they have largely failed at this task.[171]

One aspect of the situation that adds even greater confusion is that there may be one or more entities somehow involved in this violence. At various times, government officials have blamed various entities for the renewed violence. The fact is that historically, all these entities have had a role in southern Thailand. For various reasons, the region has long been considered a haven for criminal activity, to include drug movement and arms trade. Feuding local politicians, as suggested by government officials in 2002, have also historically caused turmoil for their own political gains. Furthermore, the long-lasting rivalry between police and military officials has always particularly displayed itself in the South. Thus, not only does Thai intelligence need to sort out the players among the separatist groups, but also between other groups that have traditionally caused trouble. Though it seems that separatist groups are most responsible for the preponderance of violence, these other entities probably have a role in the crisis as well. To all this must be added the possible involvement of outside terrorist groups and newly formed groups operating in the South.

What is for certain is that the insurgency that was thought to be dead in 1999 is now very alive and well. Most analysts are now assessing there will be no near-term end to the violence, with the insurgency lasting another three years.[172] Even this assessment might be too optimistic as the Thai government seems a long ways away from having a handle on the situation. Once again, as suggested in the introduction, there are several possibilities for the future of this insurgency. The South could easily become fertile ground for the global jihadist movement. The current situation is ripe for an increase in radical Islamist influence. The violence could boil over into a civil war. Likewise, the insurgency could keep increasing until it hits a point of irreparable damage with the Thai

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[171] As will be discussed next chapter, Thaksin is largely to blame for Thai intelligence officials losing a clear picture on the southern provinces.

[172] Davis, 1.

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state, if that point has not already been reached. One way or another, the future for bringing this insurgency under control is not the least bit bright.

V.   REASONS FOR CURRENT PROBLEM

This thesis now arrives at a more in-depth examination of the causes of Thailand's Pattani problem. It began with a historical study of the relationship between Malay-Muslims and the Thai state. This study sheds light on the fact that the original source of tensions was political.[173] Attempts at assimilating the Malay-Muslim culture, particularly during Phibun's rule before and after the Second World War, have resulted in deep resentment. A survey of the area's current demographics portrays an economically impoverished region, still largely tied to the pondoks for education, which strives to maintain its cultural-religious uniqueness. An exploration of armed insurgency illustrates the founding of several separatist groups that, though having different specific objectives and means of achieving those objectives, ultimately strove for a breakaway from the Thai state. With one exception, Bersatu, their lack of unity in effort contributed to their lack of success. By 1999, analysts and scholars alike largely believed Thailand's Pattani problem was effectively eliminated. Now, however, southern Thailand's armed insurgency has reemerged with unprecedented vigor. The government still has an unclear picture of which entities have what exact role in this latest violence.[174]

Having laid this groundwork, an equation of the underlying causes to the current outbreak is in order. This equation is that a three-fold causal mechanism has ignited the Pattani problem anew. The first is historical grievances. The Thai government has failed to solve many of them.[175] As such, they have continued to fester over time.[176] This is consistent with the theoretical argument that insurgencies grow out of structural causes. In the case of Thailand's current insurgency, these structural causes include relative economic deprivation, lack of political participation, and ethnic identity maintenance. These structural causes causal factors have not only historically been present, but persist today.

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[173] Islam, Islamic Independence Movements, 452.

[174] Evidence of this is not only the increased insurgent activity, but also the continued admission by the administration that it still lacks a clear picture. Prime Minister Thaksin said it best himself when he publicly stated: "I'm dazed and confused." The Nation, 2 April 2004.

[175] Croissant (forthcoming).

[176] Ibid.

This allows fertile ground for the continued reemergence of insurgency should some factor serve as a catalyst. In Thailand's case, two such catalysts emerged in 2001. The first, an internal spark, is the reign of Prime Minister Thaksin who was elected in 2001. Thaksin's administration soon made many policy decisions that opened the door afresh to insurgency. Once the insurgency had restarted, it has continually compounded the problem with poor conflict management.[177] As noted in the introduction, suppression is a common reflexive response by governments towards insurgencies. The Thaksin administration is certainly an example of this. The government's clampdown on pondoks serves as an example of further structural suppression. The declaration of martial law and the continued increase in total security forces illustrates military suppression of the insurgency. The Thai government has increased its use of force as it has perceived the insurgency to worsen, and as a result the insurgency violence has increased. The imprecision of the Thai use of force has also resulted in an increase in violence. Examples of the Thai's imprecise use of violence include regular intrusions into the pondoks, perceived random arrests and extrajudicial acts, the Krue Se incident, and the Tak Bai incident.

Concurrently, a second catalyst, an external spark, further ignited the insurgency. This was the international Islamist movement. After the 9/11 attack in 2001, there was an international swelling of courage and belief in success among Muslims worldwide, especially those fighting for autonomy.[178] More radical variants of Islam had crept into Thailand over the previous couple decades.[179] The successful 9/11 attacks, inspiring Thailand's separatists to once again take up the cause of independence, gave a voice to these more radical elements in southern Thailand as well. Additionally, as noted in insurgent theory, frustrated people often turn to outsiders for help. The exact working relationship between Thailand's traditional separatists, the more radical Islamic elements, regional terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiah, and the extreme transnational terrorist

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[177] Ibid.

[178] Mark Manyin, ed., "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 5 October 2004): 1.

[179] Bruce Vaugh, "Islam in South and Southeast Asia," (Library of Congress, Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 5 October 2004): 3-4.

group Al Qaeda, remains largely unknown.[180] However, theory suggests the likelihood of some degree of external participation in the insurgency. As a significant step towards resolving this current crisis, Thai intelligence must establish the exact relationship between all involved parties.

A.   HISTORICAL FACTORS

Several historical factors continue to loom large in Thailand's current crisis. These factors cover the spectrum of economics, politics, education, and culture. This thesis has already examined the historical origins of these factors as well as their continued existence. This section briefly further explains why these factors are indeed a cause to the Pattani problem.

No single historical factor alone, whether economic underdevelopment, political neglect, or attempted cultural assimilation, is by itself a cause of the current insurgency. However, the cumulative effect of all these factors is indeed a cause. This cumulative effect is an environment in which the people feel wholly suppressed, denied who they are, and denied what they once had and want to again be. Placed in a context where nearby there is an environment they more closely identify with, that being Malaysia, and a larger international environment that calls them to challenge their current conditions, that being the larger Islamist movement, and gives them the hope that by continually fighting they will achieve their goal of autonomy, that being the jihadist movement, it is no wonder that insurgency has ensued.

As such, it was a grave mistake to think in 1999 that the separatist insurgency had disappeared.[181] None of these core historical grievances had been resolved, and thus there was no real basis for such as assessment. Just because there was a period of time with little violence does not mean the insurgency had disappeared. Insurgencies, as all movements, proceed through periods of increased as well as periods of decreased

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[180] Liow, Security Situation, 537-538.

[181] Davis, 1.

momentum.[182] Factor in a current political atmosphere that gives renewed rise to this environment and Thailand's rekindled Pattani problem was inevitable.

The former kingdom of Pattani, though once considered great in wealth and prosperity, was a conquered nation. The Thai government, long demanding tribute from Pattani, officially incorporated it into the Thai state in 1909. In so doing, the government often used a forced assimilation strategy in its attempt to incorporate this ethnic-religious minority into the larger Tai-Buddhist population. Such a strategy would have, at least in the perception of the Malay-Muslims, weakened if not altogether destroyed the unique ethnic-religious identity of this populace. The Malay-Muslims have a strong consciousness of their ethnic-religious identity, as well as pride therein, and refuse to allow this to disappear.

Economic underdevelopment persists in the Pattani region.[183] The Malay-Muslims see their fellow Malays enjoying better economic conditions. They see other areas of Thailand as more developed than their region. Furthermore, their collective memory recalls the former days of their economic glory. They yearn for better, can visibly see that something better exists elsewhere around them, and are motivated to break away and gain that better economic situation themselves.

Politically, they feel they have always been perceived as "other" by the state, and they see themselves as other. Being viewed as other by the state equates to being considered inferior by the state. As such, the state dismisses their importance to the state, resulting in political neglect as well as economic neglect. This perception by the Thai Muslims causes them to solidify their own political identity independent of the Thai state.[184]

Until these historical factors are eliminated, the chance for continued or renewed insurgency always exists. A catalyst must have something to which it can provide a spark. In this case, that something is the sum of these historical factors. Take this away and regardless of the spark, there will be nothing to catch fire. The Thai state has failed to eliminate these historical factors, and thus allowed two sparks to ignite the insurgency.

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[182] For an indepth discussion of this within a Thailand-specific context, see "Thailand: insurgency projection to the year 2000," *Asian Defence Journal* (January-February 1978).

[183] Croissant (forthcoming).

[184] Liow, Security Situation, 534.

The current government under Thai Rak Thai leader Thaksin Shinawatra continues to be an internal spark. The 9/11 attack, as a climactic moment in the Islamist as well as jihadist movements, provided an internal catalyst. These are now examined.

B. THAKSIN ADMINISTRATION FAILURE

Early in Thaksin's first term, he introduced one of his initial projects for the South. He called it his "Governors as CEOs Program" and enacted it in six southern provinces, including the southernmost ones. This gave the provincial governors and their staffs the power to act more independently of central bureaucracy and manage their provinces as individual business companies. This independence from most central control included eliminating much of the traditional oversight from the Ministry of the Interior. The lack of Interior Ministry oversight demanded of this new program was one of the main reasons Thaksin decided in April 2002 to eliminate the Southern Border Provincial Administration Center (SBPAC) that had previously been established by Prime Minister Prem and placed under the control of the Interior Ministry.[185] Thaksin also decided to remove responsibility for security in the South from the military and give it entirely to the Thai police. This eliminated the Civilian Police Military Task Force 43, under the control of The Internal Suppression Operations Command Headquarters in Yala. Such decisions represent a failure to comprehend the region's unique culture and religion.[186]

The Southern Border Provincial Administration Center had been assigned overall responsibility for the five southern provinces with substantial Islamic populations: Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Satun, and Songkhla. It was placed above the level of provincial governors so it could have oversight of them as well. Prem established this center to provide coordination and support to Thailand's counterinsurgency efforts in the 1980's.[187] It proved itself extremely effective against the separatist insurgency as well as the communist insurgency. It also succeeded in reducing the criminal activity in the

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[185] Virtual Information Center, 15.

[186] Croissant (forthcoming).

[187] Liow, Security Situation, 535.

region. This organization was the first centrally established government organization that was effective in countering the Pattani problem. It was equally working as well when it was disbanded in 2002 as when it was originally founded.[188]

This administrative body succeeded for several reasons. For one, it was established at a level above the provincial government officials. Thus, it was able to hold these administrators accountable for their actions. Second, it was headquartered in the actual region it was serving. This gave the locals ready access to it. The Malay-Muslims actually had somewhere they could go to express their grievances. Third, the center really did listen to the complaints of the locals.[189] Whether they voiced concerns of corruption, ineptness of certain officials, or local conditions, the center did what it could to rectify the situation. For example, if the center investigated complaints of corruption concerning a government or military official, and proved the allegations true, it had the authority, which it often used, to transfer that official within twenty-four hours.[190] Fourth, the center was additionally able to do this because the Interior Minister, under the oversight of the Prime Minister, ensured that only capable officials were assigned to this organization. These officials represented several agencies throughout the government and Defense Ministry. Prem understood what a problem the insurgency was, and assigned the best he had to address the situation. Finally, the center was well connected with the area's intelligence architecture. It had good relations with the intelligence agencies operating in the South and they exchanged valuable information between one another. This also aided the center in making the best decisions possible.[191]

The Civilian Police Military Task Force 43 was the one interagency task force, previously established to directly confront Thailand's insurgency problem in the 1970's and 1980's, that was still functioning when Thaksin took office in 2001. This entity had also highly proven itself in effectively countering the separatist movement as well as communist movement. It brought together the Border Patrol Police, Thahaan Phran civilian mercenaries, also called Rangers, and the Thai military. Unifying these organizations allowed the task force to develop a fairly robust intelligence picture in the

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[188] The Nation, 10 January 2004.

[189] Ibid.

[190] Virtual Information Center, 16.

[191] Virtual Information Center, 15-16.

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South. As such, it succeeded in tracking the various secessionist group and generally knew which terrorist group was responsible for a given act of violence, as well as how criminal activities were related. Not only was the task force effective in its intelligence network, but it also succeeded in ensuring the unified focus and cooperation of all the various players in southern Thailand's security apparatus.[192]

The Malay-Muslims knew this military-led task force as a, for the most part, fair and respecting organization. Much of this was as a result of the Thai Army.[193] The Malay-Muslims traditionally harbored much greater disrespect for the police forces than they did military forces.[194] The Thai police have a long history of brutality and neglect towards the Malay-Muslims. The task force thus served not only as a unifying force for the various security forces in the region and an intelligence apparatus, but also helped to improve community relations as well. Thus, Task Force 43 and the Southern Border Provincial Administration Center had proven itself effective in improving Malay-Muslim relations with the government and providing a crucial intelligence picture of insurgent as well as criminal groups.

Little more than a year after taking office, Thaksin eliminated these proven organizations in one fell swoop in April 2002. He evidently wrongly believed that either he could do better or that the agencies were no longer needed. Believing that the Thai Police could oversee the South better than the Thai Army could not have been more wrong. As a result, new insurgent activity developed unknown to the Thai state and went unchecked. The government had lost its eyes and ears in the South. It also significantly dampened local community relations with the state. These fateful policy decisions

[192] Virtual Information Center, 16.

[193] Virtual Information Center, 13-17. After several years of failure in combating the communist insurgency, the Thai Army decided it must change tactics. It had been using the counterinsurgency tactics that the U.S. employed in Vietnam, which included large-scale military employment and firepower. The Thai Army concluded that given its unique circumstances, it should switch from traditional military large force tactics to a tactic emphasizing a political solution centered on community relations and development. The government under Prem listened to these findings and admitted that economic, political, and social injustice drove the communist insurgency. He thus had the military engage in rural development, which mobilized the local masses in support of this. This mass movement created grassroots support for the government's efforts, thereby largely diminishing the communist insurgency. Seeing the effectiveness of this new tactic, the Fourth Army in the South then adopted it to countering the separatist movement. It fairly successfully did this through the Civilian Police Military Task Force 43. The climax of this was the amnesty offered to separatists. The Thai military took those who turned themselves in allocated them land to farm. Military officials during this time conducted themselves with dignity and respect for the local Malay-Muslims. This helped build stronger relation between the two groups.

[194] The Nation, 12 January 2004.

almost three years ago have now set back the government's ability to counter the current insurgency by many more years.[195] Thaksin, in completely abandoning what had worked and was still necessary, proved that he had not learned the lessons of history.

The administration continued to compound these original poor decisions with further bad judgment. As such, it has completely mismanaged the growing crisis. This can first be seen in its failure throughout 2002 and 2003 to admit to the problem. More than fifty government officials were killed in the South in the couple years prior to 2004, yet it insisted criminal gangs were to blame. It was not until 2004 that the administration publicly confessed that Thailand was again confronting separatist activity. Its failure to see the insurgency for what it is caused a delay in confronting the problem. When Thaksin's administration did finally confront the problem, it once again demonstrated lack of understanding and continues to manage the situation poorly.

An examination of the early part of 2004, following the 4 January raid on the Narathiwat depot, illustrates this point. Immediately following the incident, Thaksin publicly declared the attack as an act of common bandits. He then continued to express his anger with the lack of intelligence coordination between the police and army that failed to prevent this attack before it occurred.[196] This problem in intelligence, however, can directly be tied to his 2002 decisions. The next day, after shifting blame for the attack from bandits to separatists, he deployed 3000 army troops and declared martial law in the southernmost provinces. Thus, he immediately overreacted to the raid. In deciding to use a large-scale military force deployment to confront the situation, he failed to heed the lessons of the Thai Army and Prime Minister Prem in the 1980's. It had already been well demonstrated decades ago that confronting a separatist insurgency with military force was not the answer. Evidently his cabinet also falsely believed that the military was the answer, for less than a week after the imposition of martial law, Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit claimed the security situation was fully under control.[197] Four days later, he admitted that much of the Malay-Muslim resentment that still existed was the

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[195] Liow, Security Situation, 532.

[196] The Nation, 5 January 2004.

[197] Bangkok Post, 10 January 2004.

result of past decades of heavy-handed actions by security personnel.[198] Yet the government should have realized that the imposition of martial law would create the opportunity for an increase on heavy-handedness and thus the furthering of existing resentment.

On 21 January 2004, Thaksin's administration renewed attacks against southern Thailand's pondoks. It declared a government ban against the opening of any new pondoks. It later declared that any pondok that did not properly display the Thai flag would be charged with treason,[199] thus conjuring memories of Phibun's ultra-nationalist regime. The Deputy Education Minister further raised memories of past government's cultural assimilation efforts when she declared that all pondok graduates would be required to "speak standard Thai properly".[200] Once again, the Thai government demonstrated it had failed to learn that historical attempts at assimilation and attacks on the traditional pondoks were still major sources of bitterness in the local population.

Days later, the administration again downplayed the separatist nature of the insurgency by emphasizing a small number of separatists, saying there were no more than 200 in the region.[201] By the end of this month, attacks conducted by this supposedly small force of insurgents had already created so much fear, teachers in the area, concerned for their safety, refused to teach. The administration's initial solution, amazingly, was to propose soldiers replace teachers in the classrooms.[202]

A month after the Narathiwat raid, the situation had further deteriorated. Then Defense Minister Thanarak Isarangura claimed security forces needed to get tougher and should engage in retaliatory killing, saying: "I believe the situation will calm down if we can avenge (police deaths) in the same manner". [203] Knowing this belief existed at an early stage, it would be no surprise if security forces are indeed donning civilian clothing and conducting personal attacks against suspected Malay-Muslim insurgents. This

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[198] The Nation, 14 January 2004. Once again, this should primarily be attributed to police forces over military forces.

[199] The Nation, 17 February 2004.

[200] The Nation, 21 January 2004.

[201] The Nation, 25 January 2004.

[202] Bangkok Post, 30 January 2004.

[203] The Nation, 4 February 2004.

sentiment by the defense minister, as well as the numerous documented incidents of heavy-handed actions by the security forces, raises the question of exactly how closely the rule of law is being followed in battling the insurgency.

In addition to martial law as Thaksin's solution, he then first proposed on 12 February a more strategic solution of throwing money at the problem.[204] It has already been illustrated that southernmost Thailand is in need of economic development. Thus, the initial proposal of investing 22.1 billion baht into the area sounds like good policy. Indeed economic development will help counter the insurgency, but only if it is sincere and in the best interests of the locals. Also, it must be recognized that economic development is and must be a longer-term solution. As Thaksin continued refining his economic plan, he did so under central guidance. The Thai government needs to first have a deep understanding of what the people of the South want and need before it initiates an economic development plan. Otherwise the Malay-Muslims, as they currently do, will simply perceive Thaksin's economic development plan as yet another insincere attempt by the central government to suppress discontent for the short term.

On 21 February, Thaksin dropped two more verbal bombshells. First, he claimed that all the killings since 4 January had merely been an attempt to sidetrack the ongoing government probe of the Narathiwat depot raid. Once again the prime minister demonstrated a complete failure in understanding the nature of the situation. Then, that same day, he completely snubbed the South in suggesting he would visit the region more often if it would vote for his Thai Rak Thai Party in the 2005 election.[205] This thesis has already highlighted the historical tendency by the Thai state to neglect the region in the larger political picture. Malay-Muslims viewed these remarks as the acting Thai leader saying he really did not care about them.[206] This perception only hurts the administration's effort of reestablishing trust between all involved parties.

After two months of making no progress in restoring peace to southern Thailand, Thaksin replaced his Defense Minister and Interior Minister.[207] He replaced the region's

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[204] Bangkok Post, 12 February 2004.

[205] The Nation, 21 February 2004.

[206] This sentiment was verified in interviews I conducted with several Malay-Muslims in the region during my research in summer 2004.

[207] Bangkok Post, 10 March 2004.

army and police commanders ten days later.[208] Thus started a pattern of firing and replacing top-level officials, tasked to confront the ever-growing insurgency, which continued throughout 2004. This way of managing the conflict suggests two problems. First, continually changing top-level officials eliminates consistency in addressing the problem. Additionally, new officials fighting for job security will naturally seek short-term solutions that seemingly achieve immediate results at the cost of all necessary long-term strategies. Second, this management tactic suggests that Thaksin might be misplacing blame for the growth of the insurgency. Instead of blaming all those around him, Thaksin would be better served to identify the real reasons the insurgency is not being controlled. Thus, he should accept a large degree of blame himself.

Almost three months after the 4 January raid, the government admitted that intelligence had not made any progress in sorting the situation.[209] One year later, intelligence has still failed to make much progress in successfully analyzing the situation. Intelligence officials do not have a handle on which separatist groups are active in which ways, or exactly how criminal gangs or transnational terrorists tie into the equation. As earlier stated, blame in large part for this must be placed on he current administration. In disassembling the community and intelligence apparatuses present until 2002, it successfully eliminated all awareness for a couple years of what exactly was happening in the region. Thaksin himself finally declared he was "dazed and confused" about the whole southern situation.[210] The next day he reported that he was creating a new southern task force similar to the one he had earlier disbanded.

On 5 April 2004, Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon Chaisang proposed a new seven-point plan to address the insurgency. He formulated the plan after having spent the previous few weeks in the southernmost provinces visiting with locals, to include Islamic clergy, scholars, and teachers, and gaining their input.[211] He directly turned their feedback into the seven-point plan, which included lifting martial law and offering amnesty to the separatists. Even Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit fully supported the

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[208] The Nation, 20 March 2004.

[209] The Nation, 25 March 2005.

[210] The Nation, 2 April 2004

[211] I obtained a copy of the memorandum from these discussions. As such, I can concretely confirm the truly collaborative effort that went into this plan.

plan. This was a very viable plan that concretely accounted for the Malay-Muslim grievances, admitted the genuine causes of the Pattani plan, and would have implemented short and long-term measures to restore peace. Nevertheless, Thaksin disapproved the plan two days later after Police Chief General Sunthorn Saikan expressed serious reservations.[212] Chaturon then correctly warned that the insurgency would only worsen. In disapproving this plan, the Thaksin administration once again demonstrated gross conflict mismanagement. It failed to even attempt the most comprehensive, viable plan that had been offered to-date for conflict resolution, and because his police chief, probably the most questionable ranking member present, had reservations.

The administration's inept handling of the crisis continued throughout 2004 and continues today. As a result, the insurgency has continually worsened. Martial law has continued increased resentment in the Malay-Muslim community.[213] If the crisis is to be resolved, Thaksin's administration must start managing the crisis much better than he has.

Many observers assess Thaksin has been attempting to mold a political order parallel to that of Singapore or Malaysia in which a single dominant political party leads a supposedly democratic state with heavy-handed tactics.[214] Thaksin has been iron-fisted in security matters since the start of his first administration. Over 2500 people died in his war on drugs in 2003. Many human rights organizations accused security officials of widespread human rights violations. Nonetheless, Thaksin has gained more domestic support than opposition as a result of these efforts.[215] However, he must realize that this supposed mandate of the people does not offer the solution to the Pattani problem. His heavy-handed tactics will only further worsen the insurgency.

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[212] Bangkok Post, 8 April 2004.

[213]Liow, Bangkok's Southern DiscontentDiscontent, 2.

[214] John D. Ciorciari, "Thaksin's Chance for Regional Leadership?" *IDSS Commentaries* 05, (2004): 1-3.

[215] Ibid.

C.   ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND THE 9/11 FACTOR

Islam in Southeast Asia is generally more moderate than in may other Islamic regions, such as the Middle East. Several reasons account for this moderation. For one, traders brought Islam to Southeast Asia. This occurred well before the kingdom of Ayutthaya rose in power. By contrast, Islam spread through much of South Asia and the Middle East by military conquest. Thus, Islam in Southeast Asia lacked a core militancy. Another factor contributing to this moderation is that Islam, particularly in Indonesia, "was overlaid on animist, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions...which are said to give it a more syncretic aspect".[216] Islam is Southeast Asia is also more politically diverse than in other regions, particularly the Middle East.

Asia as a whole has been experiencing an Islamic revival over the past few decades. Several factors are responsible for this. Internally, globalization and Westernization are largely responsible. Accompanying these factors are those of rapid industrialization and urbanization. The effects of globalization and Westernization, though not yet tremendous, are certainly apparent in southern Thailand. The Malay-Muslims particularly view the prime minister as a Western-educated, global-CEO style politician who has demonstrated a propensity towards globalization and Westernization in his policies. They perceive the current building of a natural gas pipeline across the South, which could actually aid the economic development of the region, as an example of having these forces thrust upon them. Externally, historical factors include the influences of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the revolution in Iran in 1979, the continued Kashmir conflict, and the Afghan war against the Soviets. The most recent external influences are the export of Saudi-backed Wahabi Islamic fundamentalism, the 9/11 attack, and the current U.S.-led conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.[217]

Islamic fundamentalism has grown throughout Southeast Asia since the 1970's.[218] The grievances of the minority radical Muslims in Southeast Asia are predominantly local in nature. Nonetheless, there has been a sizeable growth in both

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[216] Vaughn, 2.

[217] Ibid.

[218] Abuza, 4.

radical Islamists and their transnational activities.[219] Today there exists an "attitudinal dynamic that is leading some Southeast Asian Muslims to look upon the extremism embodied in groups such as the Jemaah Islamiah and Al-Qaeda as a legitimate and acceptable political stance".[220] The Muslims in southernmost Thailand are no exception to this.

Strong ties between transnational terrorists and local secessionists have never existed in Thailand before the turn of the century.[221] Whether ties have strengthened since the turn of the century is still questionable. Transnational terrorist operatives have certainly passed through Thailand and even taken up periodic residency there. As reported in 2002, Omar al-Faruq, who had been one of the senior Al Qaeda leaders in Southeast Asia, confessed that Jemaah Islamiah had been trying to establish links with Muslim militants everywhere in region, including Thailand.[222] Southern Thailand remains ripe with sympathy for Jemaah Islamiah. In early 2002, most of the Jemaah Islamiah fugitives from Malaysia and Singapore fled to southern Thailand. Thus, there is certainly a support network there.[223] In August 2003, Thai authorities arrested noted transnational Jemaah Islamiah terrorist operator Hambali in Ayutthaya. Arifin Ali, another Jemaah Islamiah leader, was also arrested in Thailand. Of all the secessionists groups in southernmost Thailand, analysts most suspect GMIP to have ties to Jemaah Islamiah and Al Qaeda.[224] Additionally, the Thai Defense Ministry attested that in the first three-quarters of 2004 alone, foreign Muslim organizations transferred over 100 million baht into the hands of Malay-Muslim insurgents to fund violence.[225] Thus, the evidence that there is strong external support for the current insurgency is overwhelming.

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[219] Ibid.

[220] David Wright-Neville, "Dangerous Dynamics: Activists, Militants and Terrorists in Southeast Asia," *The Pacific Review* 17, no. 1 (March 2004): 29.

[221] Abuza, 171.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid., 172.

[224] Ibid., 171. Of all the separatist groups established in southernmost Thailand, GMIP remains the most interesting. Founded in 1995, it largely escaped the Thai security purge in 1998. As late as 2003, Abuza commented that is was a small, poorly funded group. Yet top analysts such as Davis currently suspect GMIP as playing a central role in the latest violence. Thus, the question is: how did GMIP move from obscurity to central actor in the current insurgency? The answer could very well be through ongoing support from either Jemaah Islamiah or Al Qaeda.

[225] Chua, 2.

After 9/11, then Thai supreme commander, General Surayad Chulanont, stated that the Thai government was aware that "countries in the Middle East provide training, education, and financial support for fundamentalist groups in the south". Then secretary general of the Thai National Security Council, Gen Vinai Pattiyakul, admitted some southern Muslim radicals were trained in Afghanistan and Libya. Against this backdrop of growing Islamic fundamentalism throughout Southeast Asia and external support from radical Muslims to include links with transnational terrorists, the 9/11 attack must be examined as a key catalyst to increased violence in southern Thailand.

Empirical data offers evidence that the number of terrorist incidents in Southeast Asia, and Thailand in particular, significantly rose in the three years following the 9/11 attack over the three years preceding the 9/11 attack. A comparison can be made between with the three Southeast Asian countries that have the highest level of terrorist activity: Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. In the three years between 11 September 1998 and 11 September 2001, there were a total of 168 reported terrorist incidents, broken down as: seventy-nine in Indonesia, seventy-nine in the Philippines, and ten in Thailand. In the three years after the 9/11 attack, between 11 September 2001 and 11 September 2004, there were 284 reported terrorist incidents, broken down as: one hundred six in Indonesia, eighty-seven in the Philippines, and ninety-one in Thailand.[226]

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[226] Data is taken from the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Terrorism Knowledge Base, located at www.tkb.org. Site last accessed 1 March 2005.
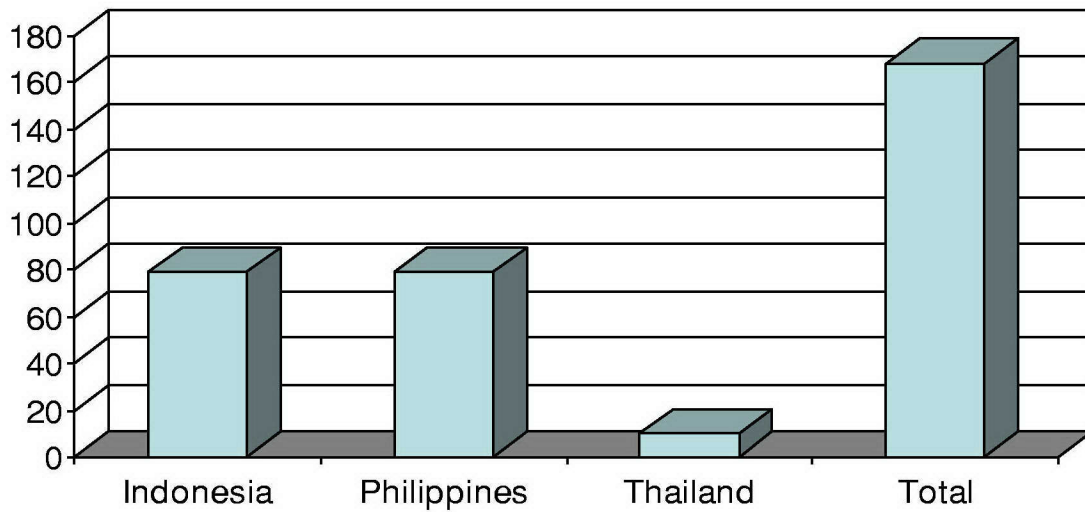
Figure 7.   Number of Terrorist Incidents: 11 September 1998 – 11 September 2001 [227]
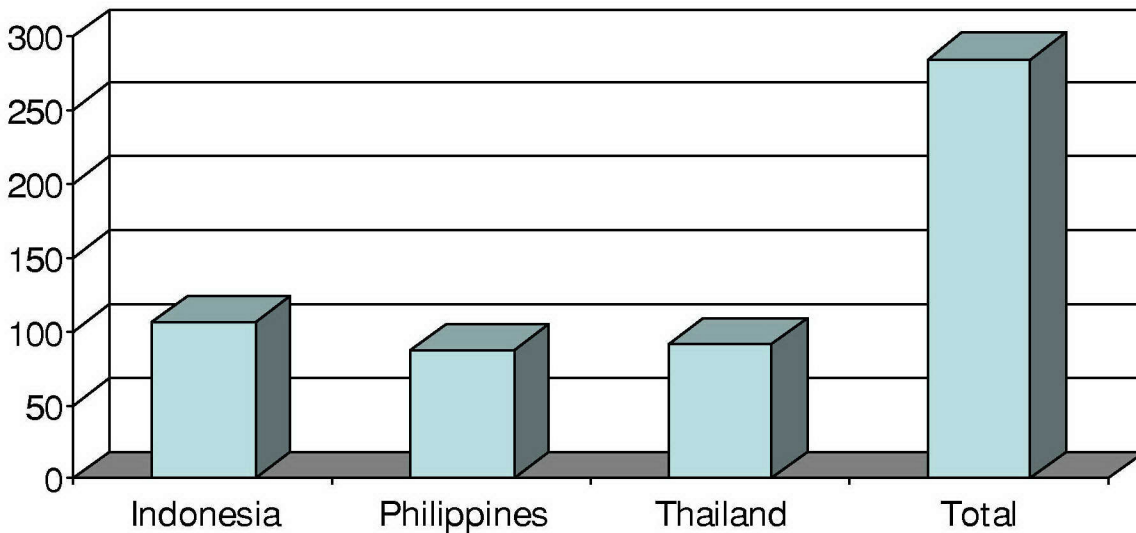

Figure 8.   Number of Terrorist Incidents: 11 September 2001 – 11 September 2004 [228]

A closer assessment of these numbers shows a total of 116 more terrorist incidents after 9/11, which is an increase in terrorist activity of 69 percent. Though the number of terrorist incidents increased in all three countries, the greatest increase was in

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[227] Source: MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, www.tkb.org.

[228] Source: MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, www.tkb.org.

Thailand. The rate of terrorist activity in Thailand increased by 810 percent. This is a phenomenal increase in terrorist activity after 9/11.

An even closer analysis of these terrorist incidents reveals even more worrisome data. Eliminating Thailand, the country with by far the most substantial increase in terrorist incidents,[229] from the equation and simply studying Indonesia and the Philippines, one readily sees that the increased frequency of terrorist incidents has been accompanied by an increase in severity. The terrorist incidents in the three years preceding 9/11 resulted in 1188 injuries. Those in the three years after yielded 1804 incidents. Thus, a 22 percent increase in terrorist rate produced a 51 percent increase in severity as measured by total injuries.

Another measure of severity besides injuries is total deaths. When measured by deaths, the increase in severity accompanying the increased frequency of terrorist incidents is even more dramatic. Once again focusing on Indonesia and the Philippines, the three years preceding 9/11 resulted in 204 deaths, compared to 660 deaths in the three years after. This increase of 456 deaths is a 224 percent increase in fatalities.

These numbers are extremely suggestive. First, they suggest that the 9/11 attack sparked an increase in number of terrorist incidents in Southeast Asia. This is particularly true in Thailand. Second, they suggest that the 9/11 attack ignited an increase in the severity of terrorist attacks throughout Southeast Asia. This severity in Thailand alone increased as the year 2004 proceeded, and has increased yet again in 2005 as compared to the previous year.[230]

Thus, empirical data illustrates a correlation between the 9/11 attack and the growing insurgency throughout Southeast Asia, and in particular Thailand. The 9/11 attack emboldened Malay-Muslim militants in their efforts against the Thai state. It also served as a model for the effectiveness of an attack of greater severity, measured in injuries and deaths. The insurgents have mirrored this model of severity in increasing the severity of their own attacks. Though this empirical evidence alone does not prove that the 9/11 attack was a catalyst for the current insurgency in southern Thailand, the

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[229] The author had done this so the data is not skewed by the particularly drastic increased terrorist incident rate in Thailand.

[230] This is seen in the daily media reporting from Thailand.

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correlation suggested by this evidence suggests a strong likelihood that the 9/11 attack was indeed a catalyst.

The fundamental condition for this rekindled insurgency was always present. The year 2001 saw two events ignite this condition: a new state government and a victory for the fundamental Islamists. Now what awaits to be seen is the direction in which this insurgency moves. As the more time goes by in which the insurgency is not somehow controlled, which can only be done by resolving the core historical grievances, the greater the chance that it will become part of today's greatest threat to United States security, that of the transnational terror movement. Academic Joseph Liow perhaps stated this most eloquently: "…it is the very existence of residual grievances within the Malay-Muslim community that will determine whether or not international Islamic terrorist networks can establish a foothold in Thailand, and not vice versa." [231]

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[231] Liow, Security Situation, 532.

VI.   CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on the ongoing secessionist insurgency in southern Thailand. It has examined the historical Malay-Muslim relations with the Thai state, current demographics of the southernmost provinces in which the insurgency is ongoing, and the nature of the secessionist insurgency. These topics were analyzed in order to draw a conclusion as to what the causes of the insurgency are. Founded on the theoretical basis that insurgencies emerge from structural maladjustments, and that level of government suppression and external support are two important variables in providing increased momentum to insurgencies, the thesis establishes an equation for the onset and escalation of Thailand's southern insurgency. As such, this thesis maintains that the root cause of this insurgency in the continued existence of structural factors that have historically been the source of Malay-Muslim grievances with the Thai state. These structural factors include relative economic deprivation, lack of political participation, and the struggle for ethnic identity maintenance. Two factors catalyzed this root cause in 2001. The first was the emergence of a new government administration. This administration through certain early policy decisions not only allowed the insurgency to once again emerge, but its mismanagement of the current crisis has also increased the size and severity of the insurgency. Additionally, the growing influence of a more radical Islam, clearly seen by the southern insurgents in the 9/11 attack, has strengthened both the will and arguably the ability of the current insurgency. Thus, structural factors, responsive government suppression, and external support are three important variables in understanding Thailand's current insurgency.

If the Thai government really wants to resolve this current crisis, it can. However, given the nature of insurgencies and the damage to conflict resolution that has already been done, this will take several years as a minimum. The government must be willing to admit the real causes of the insurgency. Eliminating the core element at the heart of this insurgency will remove the kindling that future sparks could ignite. As such, it must be willing to induce genuine structural changes that address the Malay-Muslims' historical grievances, and such structural changes do not happen quickly.

As a start, efforts should be taken to improve the southernmost provinces' economic situation. Careful consideration must be given to exactly how the money will be used. The development of the fishing, agriculture, and small business industries should be a focus of any financial development package. Economic development must be oriented towards the needs and particularities of the Malay-Muslim population.

Rather than bringing pondoks under greater central control, the Thai government should encourage the further Malay-Muslim development of the unique pondok system by lending it state support, not state control. Provision of infrastructure needs like electricity, as well as educational needs like computers, are examples of such positive support. A change in government perception is key to this. The government should not see the whole pondok system as a source of insurgency. The reality is that only a small minority of pondoks is believed by analysts to be fomenting insurgent activity. Furthermore, the government should consider giving greater authority to a local government Muslim organization to oversee the needs and development of these pondoks, including curriculum standards. As an additional measure, the government should institute programs that will keep Muslim students in Thailand for higher education. Increasing the opportunities for Malay-Muslim youth will aid conflict resolution.

In the meantime, the Thai government can take steps to eliminate the two catalytic factors in this crisis. It should end martial law and severely draw down the number of troops in the southernmost provinces. Martial law with increased troop presence has only served to worsen the insurgency. The security focus should be two-fold. First, the Thai security apparatus must drastically improve its intelligence picture of the situation. This is necessary to address which entities have what exact role in this insurgency. It is also necessary to reduce foreign support, including funding, of the insurgency. Until this is accomplished, the potential for continued near-term re-ignition of the problem is always present. Second, it must take immediate steps in reestablishing already severely lost trust with the Malay-Muslim community. This is immediately needed within the context of local police forces. The Malay-Muslims have long known policemen in the southernmost provinces for their corruption, heavy-handedness, and extra-judicial actions. A complete overhaul of the local police system is necessary for progress. As community relations

with the security forces improves, so too will the intelligence picture improve. Likewise, a clearer intelligence picture can aid community relations.

These suggestions are just a beginning towards conflict resolution. The Thai government will need to engage in a collaborative effort in formulating both a short and long-term plan for conflict resolution. Thailand has many capable individuals that can aid this process. The government should not exclude anyone from this collaborative effort. As for ideas of what is required for resolution, it should not be necessary to devise new ideas. Many sound ideas have already been advanced, such as those by Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon April 2004. Likewise, the Thai administration should revisit its own history to see what lessons should have been learned. For example, the reign of premier Prem in the 1980's included many positive achievements towards conflict resolution. General Prem has already established himself a wise councilor in state affairs, and as such currently serves as the president of King Bhumibol's privy councilors. The current administration should consider what role he could have in conflict resolution.

Given all the available potential for conflict resolution that the Thai government has readily available, the outlook nonetheless remains pessimistic. The structural changes required to overcome the insurgency would probably require a deep reshaping of the structure of rule, including greater decentralization and limited regional autonomy. History offers little evidence of bureaucratized states like Thailand reshaping themselves in such a manner. Regardless of a genuine need for restructure, institutional interests in favor of the status quo tend to run deep. Furthermore, the current Thaksin administration has consistently displayed a penchant towards greater centralized bureaucratic control throughout Thai society. The probability of a complete reversal by this administration is minimal. While structural change must come from within the Thai government, external pressure may need to come from outside the Thai government to initiate internal reform.

For the reasons earlier given, it remains important for the United States that this insurgency is resolved. As such, the United States might have to assume the role of an external power that induces the Thai government to begin structural change. A warning should be echoed here, however. The United States, in its effort to destroy terrorist groups, must be careful not to further undermine democracy in Thailand by increasingly entrenching what appears to be a growing authoritarian regime in return for cooperation

in the its against terror. This would only serve to further nourish the social and political conditions that give rise to terrorism in the first place.

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