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SOLVING THE CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

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14. ABSTRACT

In 2004 the conflict in southern Thailand (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces) escalated to new levels of violence. The root causes of the conflict come from many linked factors, and the insurgents' main objective is the South's separation from the rest of the country. The conflict's impact is felt on all parts of Thai society, including innocents, and it is a high-priority security issue for Thailand and other Southeast Asia countries. The violence needs to be resolved in the short term, before it escalates into an even more intractable protracted war.
The purpose of this research paper is to suggest ways to resolve the conflict. First, it explains the root historical, political, social, and economic causes of the conflict. Second, it analyzes the responses of the Thai government. Finally, it analyzes alternative resolution strategies: let Pattani secede, establish an autonomous region, or pursue complete integration.
The paper concludes that the latter two approaches, autonomous region and integration, may be practicable, depending upon the circumstances. Good Governance will be the key variable to allow a unified Thai effort to solve the issue in Southern Thailand.

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ABSTRACT

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SOLVING THE CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

Southern Thailand is comprised of 5 border-provinces: Songkhla, Stun, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Most of the population are Malay Muslims and speak Malay or Yawi; however; the Songkhla and Stun provinces have a mix of Thais and Malays and predominantly speak Thai. Previously part of Malaysia, Pattani was annexed to Siam (Thailand) in 1902 and was subsequently divided into the three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Most of the insurgency's violent incidents occur in this region of 3.1 million people.[1]

Separatist violence has occurred in Southern Thailand for decades, but the campaign escalated sharply in 2004.[2] Since then, the situation has continuously impacted security throughout Thailand. Additionally, it has led to the loss of innocents' property and life. This issue is more sensitive, delicate, and complicated, and the conflict has gradually increased over time. It is intertwined with historical, political, security, and economic factors that necessitate a deep and clear understanding of the conflict's root causes.

The paper will examine these root causes, analyze the Thai government's responses, and explore potential alternatives to resolve the problem.

Background

The Southern Thailand insurgency is a primarily separatist campaign of Islamist terrorists which is taking place in the predominantly Malay Pattani region, with violence increasingly spilling over into other provinces. Although separatist violence has occurred for decades in the region, the campaign escalated in 2004.[3]In July 2005 the Prime Minister of Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra, assumed wide-ranging emergency powers to

deal with the insurgency. In September 2006, Army Commander General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin was granted an extraordinary increase in executive powers to combat the unrest.[4] Soon afterwards, on 19 September 2006, General Sonthi and a military junta ousted Thaksin in a coup. Despite reconciliatory gestures from the junta, the insurgency continued and intensified. The death toll, 1,400 at the time of the coup, increased to 2,579 by mid-September 2007.[5] Despite little progress in curbing the violence, the junta declared that security was improving and that peace would come to the region in 2008.[6] There have been 8,442 violent incidents since the insurgency flared in January 2004 through mid-October 2008, resulting in 3,214 deaths and 5,249 injuries.[7]

Causes of the Insurgency

Some claim that the insurgency is based on historic causes including a 200-year "occupation;" the 1960s resettlement of northeastern Thais into the region; and Thai cultural and economic imperialism in Pattani which includes allegations of police brutality, criminal activity, disrespect of Islam, the presence of culturally insensitive businesses such as bars, drug trafficking, and corruption. However, there are counter claims that drug trafficking is one source of insurgent money. Some locals in the area support some kind of independence from Thailand; others clearly do not. A referendum to support the junta-backed constitution was favored by a majority in all three southernmost provinces and passed overwhelmingly in Southern Thailand with 87% of the 3.7 million voters who participated approving it. While some in the insurgent groups support armed conflict, most Southern residents seem to want negotiation and

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compromise and the rule of law to return to the area, along with the ending of human rights abuses on both sides.[8]

Identity of Insurgents

The resurgence in violence by Pattani guerrilla groups began in 2001. The identity of the actors pushing for conflict remains mostly obscure. Many local and regional experts have implicated the region's traditional separatist groups, such as Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani (GMIP), and particularly the BRN-Coordinate (a faction of BRN). Others suggested the violence is being driven by new, more overtly religious networks. Some military reports have suggested that the insurgence occurred under the influence of foreign Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda (AQ) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), but since the Thai insurgens' modus operandi – attacking army depots and schools – is not similar to other the normal AQ/JI approach of attacking Western targets, most view the connections as weak.[9] Some reports suggest that a number of Pattani Muslims have received training at al-Qaida centers in Pakistan, though many experts believe, to the contrary, that the Pattani guerrilla movements have little or nothing to do with global Jihadism. Others have claimed that the insurgents have forged links with groups such as the religious-nationalist Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines and the quasi-secular Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia. At first, the government blamed the attacks on "bandits," and indeed many outside observers believed that local clan, commercial or criminal rivalries did play some part in the violence in the region. In July 2002, after some 14 policemen died in separate attacks over a span of seven months, Thaksin publicly denied the role of religion in the attacks and was quoted as saying he

did not "think religion was the cause of the problems down there, because several of the policemen killed were Muslim." Interior Minister Purachai attributed the attacks on the police to the issue of drug control, as the "police are making serious efforts to make arrests over drugs trafficking." In 2002, Thaksin stated, "There's no separatism, no ideological terrorists, just common bandits." By 2004 he had reversed his position, and regarded the insurgency as the local front in the global War on Terrorism. Martial law was instituted in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat in January of 2004. In 2005, Senator Sophon accused the United States of being the mastermind behind bombings in Hat Yai. His accusations were seconded by Perayot, a Democrat MP and professor at Prince of Songkhla University (Pattani campus), though they could provide no convincing evidence to back up their accusation.[10] In 2006, Thai Army Chief Sonthi, himself a Muslim, suggested that former communist insurgents might be playing a role in the unrest. However, this is unlikely in that many former communists were incorporated into the Thai Rak Thai Party and hence would have provided other communists with a voice. Governors of the southern provinces showed some skepticism over his suggestion, but investigated the connection. A striking aspect of the Southern Thailand insurgency is the anonymity of the people behind it and the absence of concrete demands. Thailand had held relatively free elections in February 2005, and no secessionist candidates contested the results in the south. However, requests of cultural and religious freedom and the right to use the Yawi language have been presented numerous times. In July, the chairman of the Narathiwat Islamic Committee was quoted as saying, "The attacks look like they are well-organized, but we do not know what group of people is behind them." Since the 2006 coup that replaced Thaksin,

the Thai government has taken a more conciliatory approach to the insurgency, avoiding excessive use of force and beginning negotiations with known separatist groups. However, violence has escalated. This likely backs the assertion that there are several groups involved in the violence, few of whom have been placated by the government's change of strategy.[11]

Political Factors

The insurgency is probably not caused by the lack of political representation among the Muslim population. By the late1990s,Muslims were holding unprecedentedly senior posts in Thai politics, for example with Wan Muhammad Nor Matha (a Malay Muslim from Yala) serving as Chairman of Parliament from 1996 to 2001 and later Interior Minister during the first Thaksin government. Thaksin's first government (2001–2005) also saw 14 Muslim MPs and several Muslim senators. Muslims dominated provincial legislative assemblies in the border provinces, and several southern municipalities had Muslim mayors. Muslims were able to voice their political grievances more openly and enjoy a much greater degree of religious freedom. However, in the face of growing violence during 2004 and 2005, Muslim politicians and leaders remained silent, thus eroding their political legitimacy and support. This cost them dearly. In the 2005 general election, all but one of the eleven incumbent Muslim MPs who stood for election were voted out of office.[12]

Human Rights Issues

Human Rights Watch cites abuses on both sides. The insurgents have attacked monks collecting alms. School teachers, principals, and students have been killed and

schools torched, presumably because schools represent the Thai government. Government workers have been targeted for assassination. Buddhist villagers have been killed going about their routine work like rubber tapping. According to the Thai Journalists Association, there have been over 500 attacks resulting in more than 300 deaths in the four southern provinces were the insurgents operate in 2008. Meanwhile, Muslims have been beaten, killed, or "disappeared" during police questioning and custody. Human Rights Watch has documented at least 20 such disappearances. Soldiers and police have sometimes been indiscriminate when pursuing suspected insurgents, resulting in civilian collateral damage.[13]

Economic Factors

Poverty and economic problems have been cited as a factor behind the insurgency. However, the performance of the deeply South's economy actually improved markedly in the past few decades. Between 1983 and 2003, the average per capita income of Pattani grew from 9,340 baht to 57,621 baht, while that of Yala and Narathiwat also increased from 14,987 baht and 10,340 baht to 52,737 baht and 38,553 baht, respectively. However, the border provinces did have the lowest average income among all the southern provinces. Household income improved from 2002-2004 by 21.99%, 19.27%, and 21.28% for Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, respectively. For comparison, income growth for all of Thailand in the same period was just 9.4%. The percentage of people living below the poverty line also fell, from 40%, 36%, and 33% in 2000 to 18%, 10%, and 23% in 2004 for Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani, respectively. By 2004, the 3 provinces had 310,000 people living below the poverty line, compared to 610,000 in 2000. However, 45% of all poor Southerners lived in the three border

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provinces.[14] In general, Muslims in the border provinces have lower levels of educational attainment compared to their Buddhist neighbors; 69.80% of the Muslim population in the border provinces have only a primary school education, compared with 49.6% of Buddhists in the same provinces. Only 9.20% of Muslims have completed secondary education (including those who graduated from private Islamic schools), compared to 13.20% of Buddhists. Only 1.70% of the Muslim population have a bachelor's degree, while 9.70% of Buddhists hold undergraduate degrees. However, one must keep in mind that schools are taught in Thai, and there is much resentment and even outright pulling of children out of Thai-run schools. Muslims also had reduced employment opportunities compared to their Buddhist neighbors. Government officials comprised only 2.4% of all working Muslims in the provinces, compared with 19.2% of all working Buddhists. Jobs in the Thai public sector are difficult to obtain for those Muslim students who do not ever fully accept the Thai language or the Thai education system. Insurgent attacks on economic targets are further reducing employment opportunities for both Muslims and Buddhists in the provinces.[15]

Historical Considerations

Pattani has long been an important area due to economic access of economics by Indian and European merchants. There were many natural resources such as wood, tin, silk and ivory. During the Ayutthaya kingdom, in 1902, Pattani's inclusion in Thailand was reinforced by an formal Anglo-Siamese agreement between Siam (Thailand) and Malaysia that drew a border between Pattani and Malaysia. Later, Pattani was divided into three provinces, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Siam let Pattani develop independent political, economic and cultural structures. The sultan of Pattani was

required to send gold and silver to the Thai king as symbols of loyalty and troops when requested during war. Although Pattani was a colony, it wanted to be independent. When Thai control was weak, Pattani would fight against the government and cut off ties. Almost all of the people in the 3 provinces are Muslims and speak Malay, rather than Thai. Thailand has tried to accept the three provinces completely as a member of the country, policies began to inflame separatist emotion engendered the sense that the Islamic culture was under attack. Muslim children in Pattani attended religious boarding schools (Ponohs), which were a source of resistance. In 1921, the Compulsory Primary Education Act required that all children must go to state primary schools for four years to learn Thai language. This made the Muslims feel that the Thai government was attempting to turn Muslim Malays into Thais.

During the late 1930s, the rise to power of Field Marshall Plaek Phibulsongkram (Prime Minister from 1938 to 1944 and from 1948 to 1957) and the promotion of his ultra-nationalist pan-Thai agenda led to another round of confrontation between Bangkok and the Malay Muslims.[16] After World War II, in August 1945, Kelantan, Kedah, Trengganu and Perlis rejoined Malaysia, while Pattani remained with Thailand. The Muslim leadership's hope for a return of these territories was unrealized, and some Thai Muslims moved to northern Malaysia or Saudi Arabia. The Thai government tried to include Muslims in national politics and attempted to establish amity between Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims. Thai Muslims established an Islamic council for self-rule with seven demands, but it was not acceptable to the Thai government.

Before the UN came to oversee the accession of Pattani, the Thai government allowed Muslims some form of self-rule; however, Muslims sometimes broke the rules of

the understanding by boycotting meetings and elections. Over 60 armed groups were operating in the south by the late 1960s; some were political, some criminal, and some a combination. The first group, Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP) was established in 1959 and called for full independence. It supported Muslim children learning Malay and encouraged Pattani Malays to apply for Malaysian citizenship, which made it easier to operate on both sides of the border. In the 1960s and 1970s, the second group, Barisan Revolution National (BRN) maintained close relationships with the communist parties of Malaysia and Thailand, whose goal was to destabilize the shared border area. This cooperation alienated some of the BRN's more conservative supporters in Malaysia and the Middle East. The BRN's efforts to span socialism, Islamism, and nationalism made it particularly vulnerable to factional splits.

The third armed group, Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), emerged in 1968 and became the largest and most effective of the separatist movements during the two decades. PULO was committed to raising education levels and political consciousness in the south. Many of its fighters were also foreign-trained; the PULO ran training programs for its members, and PULO also had a training camp in Syria, along the Lebanese border. The BRN's top military commander received military and explosives training in the Middle East. For most of the twentieth century, relations between Bangkok and the 3 southern provinces became more serious. Today there is in fact an increase in daily bombing and killing. The increase of violence is attributed strictly to the religion of Islam in three southern Thailand provinces.[17]

<u>Relevant Literature Review</u>

Separatism. Separatism refers to the advocacy of cultural, ethnic, tribal, religious, racial or gender separation from the larger group, often with demands for greater political autonomy and even for full political secession and the formation of a new state. Depending on their political situation and views, groups may refer to their organizing as independence, self-determination, partition or decolonization movements instead of, or in addition to, automatic, separatist or secession movements. While some critics may equate separatism and religious, racial, or sexual segregation, separatists argue that separation by choice is not the same as government enforced segregation and serves useful purposes.

<u>Motivations for Separatism</u>

Groups may have one or more motivations for separation, including:

- emotional resentment of rival communities

- protection from ethnic cleansing and genocide

- justified resistance by victims of oppression, including denigration of their language, culture or religion

- the economic and political dominance of one group that does not share power and privilege in an egalitarian fashion

- preservation of threatened religious, language or other cultural tradition

- continuing fragmentation as more and more states break up.[18]

<u>Governmental Responses</u>

How far separatist demands will go toward full independence, and whether groups pursue constitutional and nonviolent or armed violence, depend on a variety of

economic, political and social factors, including movement leadership and the government's response. Governments may respond in a number of ways, some of which are mutually exclusive. These may have little effect, satisfy separatist demands or even increase them.

- accede to separatist demands
- improve the circumstances of disadvantaged minorities, be they religious, linguistic, territorial, economic or political
- allow minorities to win in political disputes about which they feel strongly, through parliamentary voting, referendum, etc.

Types of Separatist Groups

Separatist groups practice a form of identity politics - "political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups." Such groups believe attempts at integration with dominant groups compromise their identity and ability to pursue greater self-determination. However, economic and political factors usually are critical in creating strong separatist movements from less active identity movements.

- Religious groups and sects believe they should interact primarily with co-religionists.
- Ethnic separatism is based more on cultural and linguistic differences than religious or racial differences, which also may exist.
- Racial: Some groups seek to separate from others along racialist lines. They oppose inter-marriage with other races and seek separate schools,

> businesses, churches and other institutions or even separate societies,
> territories and governments.[19]

Jihadist Beliefs

In early medieval times, Jihad meant a struggle for spreading Islam around the world. It was the struggle to defeat non-Muslims and establish the leader by Islamic law; a pan-Islamic leader ("Caliph") could declare a Jihad. Modern Islamic states are independent, however, and there is no Caliph today. In this power vacuum, radical groups such as al Qaeda or Hamas have declared Jihad; some say they are wrong and manipulate the Koran to their own benefit. In Southeast Asia some Islamic groups mistakenly believe that if they make Jihad with non-Muslims during fighting, they are invisible and adversaries cannot see or shoot them. In general, the actual meaning of Jihad is to combat the self, combat for spreading Islam, and combat with bad Islam.[20]

Radical Islamists

The philosopher Ibn Taymiyya said that Muslim leaders who don't follow the Koran are apostates, and pure Islam should negate them by militant Jihad. In 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood was established in Egypt. They had an anti-government view because the West had supported their government. They wanted to expel Western culture which had quickly spread through the Middle East. They viewed Western culture as bad because it respected only modernization; they saw Western culture as a selfish and money-loving culture. The Muslim Brotherhood also opposes any Muslim leader who is supported by the USA. The Muslim Brotherhood Muslims to kill Western people and their interests throughout the world. Al- Qaeda, led by Bin laden, follows this approach and believes he must fight with everybody who does not honor Islam.

Islamists want to fight for Allah and believe if they die by fighting they will be honored and rewarded in heaven.[21]

Summary of Other Ideas Relevant to Southern Thailand

- Jerry Z. Muller, Professor of History at the Catholic University of America, believes that people of varying ethnic origins can live in relative peace, within two or three generations of immigration, as their ethnic identities are attenuated by cultural assimilation and intermarriage.[22]

- James Habyarimana, an Assistant Professor of Public Policy at Georgetown Institute, and Macartan Humpreys, Daniel Poster, and Jerry Weinstein, exchanged views over ethnic nationalism's causes, its relationship to modernization and the state, and the merits of partition as a solution to its virulence.[23]

- Duncan McCargo, Leeds University Thailand expert, found that the Southern Thai conflict is a war over legitimacy: For significant numbers of Pattani Malays, Thai rule over their region has long lacked legitimacy; over the past century, rebellious leaders and militant groups have attempted to fuel uprisings against Thai rule, and rebels have been aided and abetted by the inept repression to which Bangkok has regularly resorted.[24] Southern militants thrive because the Thai state lacks sufficient legitimacy: to defeat them, that legitimacy must first be established.[25]

- John Virgoe, a Southeast Asia project director at the International Crisis Group, believed that the root causes of the conflict ultimately lie in the Malay Muslims' rejection of attempts to assimilate them into the predominantly-Buddhist Thai

state. Moreover, there are worrying signs of foreign jihadist groups taking an interest in the situation, something that could seriously complicate what until now has been a homegrown separatist insurgency.[26]

- Neil J. Melvin, a British expert on Conflict Studies at the University of Kent's Department of Politics and International Relations, located at Brussels School of International Studies, said that "Broadly, the distinct interpretations of the contemporary conflict have been put forward: those focusing on historical grievances; the role of the violent Islamism; and the role of modern Thai politics and the "global war on terror".[27] The governance of Thailand's Muslim community also needs to be reconsidered. With the interpretation of Islam being contested in the country, Thailand lacks a credible and institutionalized religious authority that can command wide support in the South. The institution of the *chularajamontri* (see chapter 3) lacks broadbased legitimacy among the Malay Muslims, putting it in a weak position to resist the radicalization being promoted by Salafist groups.[28]

- Chaiwat Satha-anand, Dean of Political Science at Bangkok's Thammasat University said that "The problem has become so militarized that the political option is non-existent, the Democrats need to identify the situation as a political problem that requires a political solution."[29]

- Wan Mohammad Nor Matha, a Yala native and one of Thailand's most prominent Muslim politicians who has in the past served as speaker of parliament and Interior minister, says the problem is rooted in participation. "The main point is that people must be involved and participate to solve the problem, not only the

government," he said in an interview. "The government must trust the people and the people trust the government."[30]

- Human Development Report 2005, an occasional paper noted that, "The broad coincidence of cultural, ethnic or religious differences with severe economic, political or social inequalities, it is urged, can be a significant causal factor for violent conflict."[31]

- The Royal Thai Army (RTA) Manual, directorate of operations' paper stated that the causes of the conflict come from political history, the political and economical conflict inside the area, social injustice, and the global Muslim trend.[32] The way to solve this issue is to apply King Bhumibhol's idea "Khaojai (understand), Khaotoong (access), and Pattana (develop)"[33] by focusing on integration and implementation of principles and the experiences of variety of participants.

Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency *is not just thinking man's warfare—it is the graduate level of war.*

—Special Forces Officer in Iraq, 2005

Insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN) are complex subsets of warfare. Globalization, technological advancement, urbanization, and extremists who conduct suicide attacks for their cause have certainly influenced contemporary conflict; however, warfare in the 21st century retains many of the characteristics it has exhibited since ancient times. Warfare remains a violent clash of interests between organized groups characterized by the use of force. Achieving victory still depends on a group's ability to mobilize support for its political interests (often religiously or ethnically based) and to

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generate enough violence to achieve political consequences. Means to achieve these goals are not limited to conventional forces employed by nation-states.[34]

Stability Operations

Stability operations may complement and reinforce offensive, defensive,and support operations, or they may be the decisive operation. They may takeplace before, during, and after offensive, defensive, and support operations.During hostilities, stability operations help keep armed conflict from spreading while assisting and encouraging committed partners. They seek to secure the support of civil populations in unstable areas. Forces engaged in a stability operation may have to conduct offensive and defensive operations to defend themselves or destroy forces seeking to challenge the stability mission. Following hostilities, forces may conduct stability operations to provide a secure environment for civil authorities as they work to achieve reconciliation, rebuild lost infrastructure, and resume vital services.

Purposes

Some of the many purposes for which Army forces are employed to conduct stability operations are to:

- Protect national interests, life and property, peace and deter aggression, sustainable and responsive institutions, freedom from oppression, subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency
- Satisfy treaty obligations or enforce agreements and policies.
- Reassure allies, friendly governments, and agencies.
- Maintain or restore order and prevent, deter, or respond to terrorism.
- Reduce the threat of arms and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to regional security.[35]
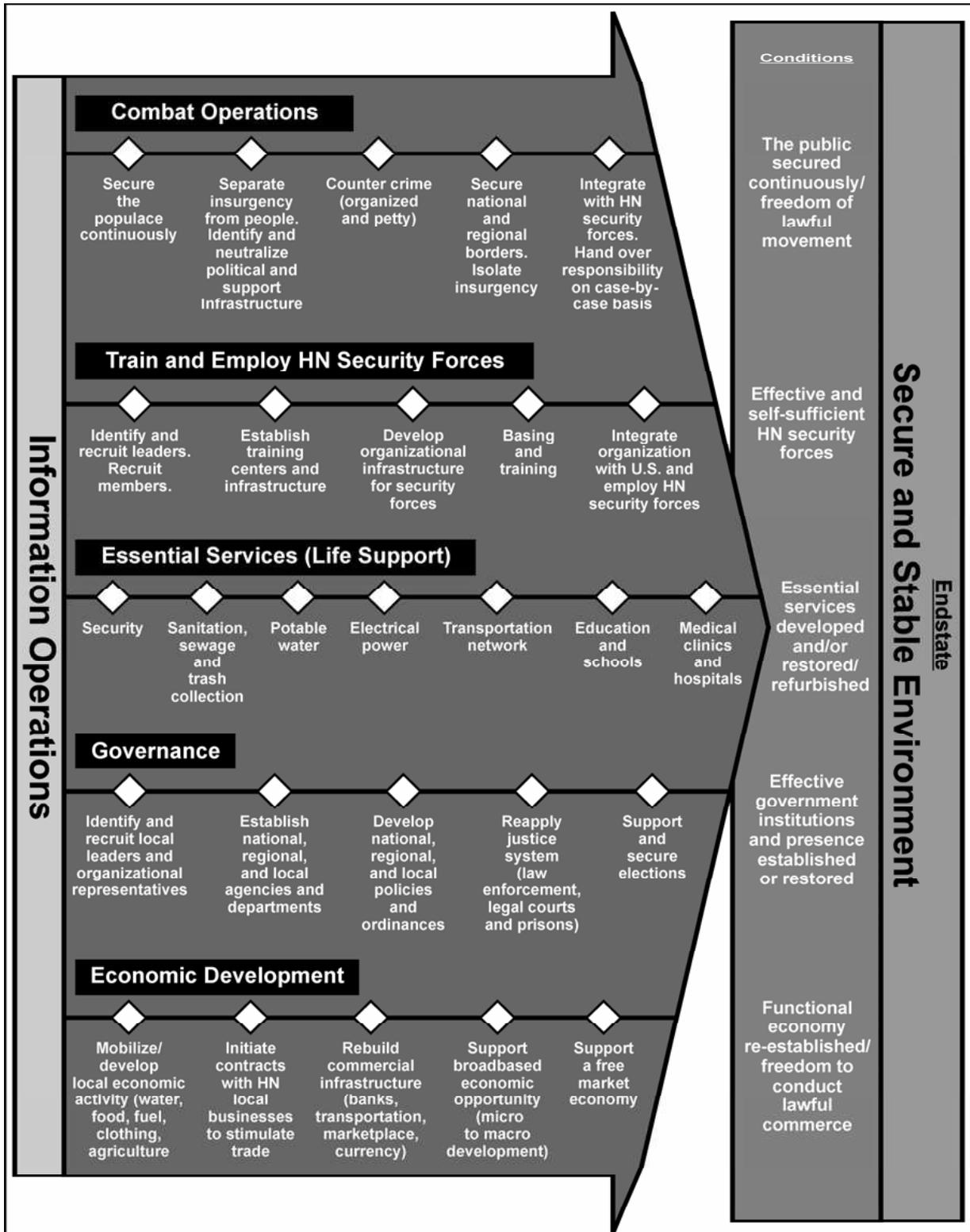
Figure 1: Source: FM3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, page 5-5[36]

<u>Analysis</u>

The following analytical framework from the US Army doctrine in Counterinsurgency (FM 3-24) can shed fruitful insight regarding the insurgency in Southern Thailand. Key to its implementation is the effective pursuit of the mutually-supporting "lines of operation" portrayed in the diagram above.

<u>Combat Operations</u>

The purpose of combat operations is: the public is secured continuously and has freedom of lawful movement. The primary tasks are to secure the populace continuously; separate the insurgency from people; identify and neutralize the insurgents' political and support infrastructure; counter crime (organized and petty); secure national and regional borders; isolate the insurgency; and integrate with local security forces and hand over responsibility on a case-by-case basis. From the beginning of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration to the current government many thousands of security forces were committed to the counterinsurgency. The military has recently claimed success through "surge" tactics, which since mid-2007 have entailed the deployment of an additional 20,000 security personnel to bolster the 30,000 already stationed in the restive region.[37] The number should be more than enough to conduct operations against so few insurgents. The problem is the source of the troops; they came from various units such as army, navy, air force, police, and civilian. Their operations are not synchronized and have different standards and direction. Additionally, weak intelligence operation is detracts from operational effectiveness. Another issue of particular significance is the often counter-productive role of the Thai military. Human Rights Watch stated in its March report that

human-rights violations by the Thai Army had increased since the sweeps began.[38] For many in the south, the Thai security services and their actions in the region remain one of the main sources of grievance.[39] Consequently, violence continued throughout the period and proved impossible to prevent.

<u>Train and Employ Local Security Forces (Host Nation (HN) Security Forces)</u>

Since this situation occurs within Thailand, the Host Nation Security Forces referred to in FM 3-24 may be replaced by "Local Security Forces (LSF)." The purpose of this line of operation is to develop and maintain effective and self-sufficient LSF. The primary tasks are to identify and recruit leaders and recruit members; establish training centers and infrastructure; develop organizational infrastructure, basing and training; and integrate organization with the government; and employ local security forces. LSF have been trained and recruited, but most of them come from other parts of the country; they do not understand the mission nor proper methods to conduct stability operations. Often lacking the discipline of army regulars, the "rangers" in particular have been criticized by local Muslim leaders and human-rights groups for heavy-handed tactics and human rights abuses, particularly in controversial operations that have cordoned off villagers, searched houses and taken away suspected militants for interrogation.[40] Most of these forces are used for combat operations because they were copied from the old organization during the communist insurgency and have not evolved. Most LSF leaders come from political appointment and have questionable personal capability; additionally, most of the members come from other parts of Thailand because the local people are afraid of revenge by the insurgents. There are training centers and infrastructure in Southern Thailand, but they are inadequate and need standardized guidelines for

training and doctrine, as well as quality control. They emphasize combat operations but overlook other vital elements such as humanitarian operations, civil affairs, psychological operations, and information operations. It would be helpful to employ LSF with COIN force advisers; however, qualified advisers are in short supply throughout the Thai Army.

Essential Services

The purpose of this Line of Operation is to ensure that essential services are developed, restored, or refurbished. The primary tasks are the provision of: security; sanitation; sewage and trash collection; potable water; electrical power; transportation net works; education and schools; and medical clinics and hospitals. In Southern Thailand, most of these essential services are basically the same as in other parts of Thailand; only educational systems such as schools and colleges are completely different from the other parts. The flawed education system leads to deficiencies in the other services. Political, social, and economic tensions—some linked with the Thaksin government's drive for economic liberation—are certainly present, as witnessed by the fact that officials, monks, and teachers as well as government security forces have been among the targets of attacks.[41] Due to the violence, the number of authorities has been reduced as many have been killed and some have had to return to their home towns. One significant improvement would be to employ more personnel from the local populace to work in the region.

Good Governance

The purpose of governance: Effective government institutions and presence established or restored. The main task are Identify and recruit local leaders and

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organizational representatives, Establish local regional, and national agencies and departments, Develop initial concept for governance, reapply justice system, (law enforcement, legal courts, and prisons), and support and secure elections. There were a little improvement but it needs time to make it stable. The main point was Malay Muslims in southern Thailand need their own rule. They were not accepted Thai government to rule them. They need the legitimacy from Thai government. There is considerable evidence, particularly from human rights groups, that the Thai military and police have been involved in violence against local Muslims.[42]

PULO Deputy President Lukman B. Lima charged that Bangkok "illegally incorporated" the far south into Thailand 100 years ago and now ruled it with "colonial" repression while "committing crimes against humanity in the area."[43]

Economic Development

The purpose of economic development is to reestablish a functional economy and restore freedom to conduct lawful commerce. The primary tasks are: mobilize and develop local economic activity (manufacturing, services, agriculture); initiate contracts with local business to stimulate trade; rebuild commercial infrastructure (banks, transportation, markets, currency); support broad-based economic opportunity (micro to macro development); and support a free market economy. Throughout the period of struggle few economic projects have commenced within the region. Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala are among the 20 poorest of the 76 provinces of Thailand and have some of the highest rates of poverty in the country. The incidence of extreme poverty is concentrated in a few districts.[44] Only during Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont's administration were attempts made to initiate significant projects, but these were not

accomplished before his term ended. Additionally, the recent political crisis in Bangkok has diverted attention from this effort.

Information Operations (IO)

The main activities in this Line of Operation include of Electronic Warfare (EW); Psychological Operations (PSYOP); Operational Security (OPSEC); Military Deception (MILDEC); and Computer Network Operations (CNO). The larger concept of Strategic Communication also relates to this area. IO applies Sun Tzu's precept "Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."[45] These operations are rarely applied in Southern Thailand, because IO is a new concept for Thai government and Thai Armed Forces. Only PSYOP and OPSEC are practiced to any degree during the counterinsurgency effort. The insurgents, on the other hand, have conducted the IO throughout Muslim countries.

Alternatives

Let Pattani Secede. Secession (derived from the Latin term secessio) is the act of withdrawing from an organization, union, or especially a political entity.[46] There are around 30 countries that have secession movements; Timor Leste (East Timor) is the most recent example. In Southern Thailand, it is the main goal of the insurgents, but it should be the last option for the Thai government because it is not acceptable to most Thais. In case the Thai government cannot solve the conflict, or the situation reaches a critical level beyond the government's capability, it is likely that the case could be handed to an international forum or the United Nations. In any event, the local people should make their decision without any influence from external actors. In Southeast Asia, East Timor is a precedent for this approach.

<u>Advantages:</u>

- Thailand could improve its good image in the international community.

- Secession would save lives, time, and money in the long term.

- Secession would stop any further human rights violations by Thai officials.

<u>Disadvantages:</u>

- Secession would violate the current Thai constitution.

- Most Thai people would not accept secession.

- An independent Pattani would lack fertile land, and the ability to produce economic goods.

- Thailand would lose face in the eyes of the world community.

- Secession would reduce Thailand's national power.

- Thailand would experience the loss of a beautiful culture and region.

- Secession would create demarcation difficulties and territorial disputes.

- It might increase the conflict between Thai Buddhists and Malay Muslims.

- Secession would create a difficult problem of relocating Buddhists or other groups from Muslim territory.

<u>Application:</u>

In case the situation cannot be resolved by the Thai government, Thailand could make a proposal to the United Nations (UN) to settle this issue. Regardless, secession must be an option of last resort, and would require deliberate step-by-step progress under the control of the UN or some other external power. Secession would be a difficult

proposition, and it would be preferable to retain Pattani in Thailand within a new environment.

<u>Autonomous Region/Self-Rule/Decentralization/Special Administrative Zone.</u>

Numerous and differentiated autonomy models exist, including Puerto Rico (USA), Scotland (United Kingdom), the Kurdish region in Iraq, Quebec (Canada), and the Aceh province in Indonesia. Southern Thailand separatists may ultimately accept this option but it would require an effective negotiation process. Many people agree with such proposals as the "multi-colored-flower theory" advanced by General Chavalit Yongchaiyud, the 22nd Prime Minister of Thailand.

There have been several peace initiatives with Pattani insurgents since 2004. Following the 2006 coup Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont made clear his willingness to talk to representatives of the insurgency and sought to shift to a softer line with respect to the security situation in the South.[47] In addition, during the summer of 2007 Defence Minister Boonrawd Somtas conducted an intensive round of meetings in Malaysia designed to promote bilateral cooperation, curtail the southern violence, and prevent it from spilling over into that country. Boonrawd indicated that the Thai authorities were even willing to consider enhancing the autonomy of the southern region: "Even China allows special administrative zones. If that can solve the southern problem, it is worth discussing." At the same time, he cautioned that the idea of secession was "totally…unacceptable."[48] Chalerm Yubumrung, the former Minister of Interior, announced that Special Administrative Zones established in conflict areas in other countries would be studied as possible models for the south. Moreover, Brigadier General Kanid Utitsarn, a US Army War College student in the Class of 2007, agreed

with this option by stating "As a last resort, if the situation does not improve, is to let Pattani become semiautonomous.[49]

Many scholars agree with this option because it is a moderate way to resolve the problem. It requires negotiation between high government officials and insurgent leaders. Sometimes a mediator is necessary in such situations. However, this process requires consensus from the Thai people by a parliamentary vote. In addition, the key factor is the local people in Southern Thailand because they are directly affected by the decision. The people are the center of gravity in an insurgency; they have to express their will by voting or public hearing, without influence from any group or organization, either insurgent or government. Autonomy varies dependent upon the situation and agreement among the delegations. Important obstacles to such a peace process are the structure of the insurgents, the Thai authorities' rejection of the idea of third party mediation, and the role of the Thai military.[50]

Advantages:

- Autonomy would end the violent conflict and save lives, time, and money in the long term.

- Autonomy would be satisfactory to most local leaders and the local people.

- Autonomy would beneficially decentralize authority to the local level.

- Autonomy would reduce political disruption.

Disadvantages:

- Autonomy would require constitution al amendment that would generate resistance from most of the Thai population.

- Autonomy would reduce the power and respectability of the monarchy.

- Autonomy would not be fair for other parts of Thailand.

- Autonomy might be detrimental to the well-being of the populace because of local corruption.

- Autonomy might lead to secession.

Application:

This solution could lead to other conflicts elsewhere in Thailand and could jeopardize Thailand's proud history of surmounting every national challenge. Some might perceive that Thailand does not have the wisdom to govern itself, and such a solution could sacrifice national pride. However, the country would be preserved, and perhaps in a stronger form. A bleeding wound would be staunched to save the greater nation. Following are ways how to implement such a proposal:

- Amend the constitution prior to concluding the agreement.

- Political leadership, rather than the military, would craft the solution.

- If negotiations prove difficult, enlist a mediator acceptable to both parties.

- Develop an amnesty program for insurgents.

- Develop negotiable and attainable including acceptance, decentralization, semi-self rule, and finally self-rule or an autonomous region.

- Obtain general agreement first, and work out the details later..

Integration

Most of the Thai people agree with the option of completely integrating Pattani within greater Thailand. King Bhumibhol advanced his "Understand-Access-Develop" approach to solve the conflict. Resolving the conflict needs more unity of effort and

cooperation, enhancement of Information Operations (IOs), and good coordination among all participants (unified action) sustained over a protracted period to achieve success.

Advantages:

- Integration reflects the desire of most of the Thai government and Thai people, and has national support.

- Integration would not require an amendment to the Thai constitution.

- Integration would not deviate from current and past governmental policy.

- Improved counterinsurgency doctrine, strategy, and capability within the security forces (as discussed previously) would enhance prospects for success.

- Integration reflects the consensus of the Thai Nation, Religion, and King.

Disadvantages:

- Integration would require greater commitment and cost more time, lives, and money.

- Integration would risk an expanded Jihad or more conflict between Buddhists and Muslims.

- Integration could increase acts of terrorism throughout the country.

- Integration efforts could ultimately fail, leading to eventual loss of Pattani.

- A protracted effort could result in loss of public support if costs escalate, as occurred during the Vietnam War.

Application:

To resolve the conflict, the military and civilian governmental organizations should be reformed. The following steps are vital to achieve success:

- The government has to assume responsibility for the conflict, not the military.

- Unity of command must be addressed in all levels.

- Both civilian officials and military leaders must be taught the same doctrine, principles, and standards, and should focus on language, social, and culture of Southern Thailand.

- Integration must be addressed to establish real unity.

Recommendations

To the Royal Thai Government:

- Establish legitimacy with the local populace by issuing emphasizing good governance principles focused on justice, human rights, and transparency.

- Establish concrete rule of law inside Southern Thailand and terminate the Assimilation Policy in Southern Thailand.

- Develop a regional educational system by establishing Muslim universities and implement bilingual systems in high school and above.

- Promote economic programs such as a Free Trade Zone between Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia to improve the quality of life in the three provinces, and include other supporting programs. These projects should address the needs of the local people and be managed by local leaders, supported by the government.

- Provide sufficient scholarship for local students and employ officials by quota in the military, police, and civil service both in Thailand, to include training and education in other countries. When they return, monitor and promote them to higher levels, commensurate with their capabilities.

- Ensure that at least half of the personnel in local administration and security forces are local Malay Muslims.

- Empower the governor in three provinces to have the right to deny corrupt officials who attempt to transfer from other organizations

- Conduct joint investment between local people and the Thai government, establish TV and radio stations to promote Muslim culture, and develop the tourism industry in the south.

- If the situation does not improve in a reasonable period (4 years), consider special autonomy or self-rule for the region.

To the Royal Thai Military:

- Military forces should be reduced by at least half and all personnel in this region must be highly qualified. Soldiers should be volunteers and serve in the region for at least 2 years.

- Commanders should come from local organizations.

- Improve training and operations systems, especially with respect to intelligence operations Information Operations (IO).

- Review the military rules of engagement in the South to preserve human rights.

- Employ sound counterinsurgency and stability techniques, with standardized strategy, tactics, and policies among all units.

To the Royal Thai Police

- Police forces should be reduced by at least one third, and should consist of high-quality, well-trained personnel.

- Review police rules of engagement in the South to better ensure human rights protection.

- End the unofficial policy of sending corrupt and errant officials to the Southern provinces as a punishment post.

Conclusion

The conflict in Southern Thailand is vital to Thai security, with both internal and international impact, and Thailand has no more time to waste. There is no single, specific way or successive formula to solve the problem. The conflict needs to be solved deliberately, in the short term, before it mutates into a protracted war that will prove very hard to resolve. An integration policy focusing on legitimacy and unity of effort among the civilian, police, and military participants, applying His Majesty King Bhumibhol's "Understand-Access-Develop" approach, can solve the conflict. If rededicated efforts prove unsuccessful, a special administration zone or autonomous region should be considered. The conflict in Southern Thailand is self-grown, not a foreign jihad, that can be solved by the Thais. However, any constructive assistance from allies, especially the USA, can be accepted. Thais from the entire country must take an active political interest in solving the conflict in Southern Thailand. All Thais can then look forward to seeing a sustainable peace in the south of Thailand.

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