

THE SOUTHERN THAILAND INSURGENCY: IDEOLOGICAL AND IDENTITY CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The Southern Thailand crisis can be seen from perspective of the insurgency in the southern provinces. The separatist insurgency is centered in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat in Thailand's Muslim-majority south. Ninety-five percent of the population are Muslims. All together, Muslims in the southern region constitute 3.2 million or about 5 percent of the total population in Thailand. About 3500 people have died since the beginning of the insurgency. Many more were detained by the Thailand government and some fled to Malaysia and to other Southeast Asian countries to avoid arrest and detention. This crisis has had significant impact on Southeast Asian security, and, thus, raised a number of questions, such as why the people became insurgents, and what are their objectives. This paper attempts to analyse the factors contributing to this crisis, and aims at drawing some implications for the security issue in Thailand, Southeast Asia, and beyond.

Keywords: Insurgency, South Thailand, identity, ideology, and security

Introduction

In the 13th century, the Kingdom of Siam was a super power in this region. Siam had a huge territory including Burma and Laos in the north and the Malay Peninsula in the south. A few of Malay sultanates including Patani, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, and Perlis were under the Siam's sovereignty. Fixed 'obeisance' had to be sent to the King of Siam every three years as a proof of Siam's sovereignty. People and administration of the state in these territories were governed by the Malay culture, which had religiously been based on Islam and the Malay language. The British Empire forced the King of Siam to make a treaty in 1909 known as the Anglo-Siamese Treaty.² The treaty ceded Siamese sovereignty over Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, and Perlis to the British, while Patani remained under the Siam sovereignty.

Patani was divided into three provinces: Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala in 1933.³ Since the 1909 Treaty was endorsed, people in this *monthon* (province) have assimilated with the Thai culture. They speak Thai, have a Thai name besides a Muslim's name,⁴ and write in Thai better than in Jawi.⁵ In fact, many more 'Thailandisms' were adopted in their daily lives. However, majority of the people in this province still practise the Malay culture and feel that they are Malay Muslims, and have a closer relationship with Malaysia rather than with Thailand. As such, historical romanticism has, to some extent, created a group of separatists a few decades after the 1909 Treaty in Thailand.

At the end of 19th century, many western imperialists came across the continent to get new territory and to realize the 3G's concepts.⁶ British at that time already had supremacy in Penang from Sultan of Kedah and Singapore after the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty. This treaty had vital impacts, especially the boundaries and quest for identity for Southeast Asian people.⁷ Britain and Siam entered into a 'secret treaty' in 1897 consisting of two main ideas: first, to recognise Thai sovereignty over Kelantan and Terengganu; second, Thailand was asked to stay away from doing business with other imperialists such as France, Spain, United States, and Germany.⁸ In 1902, one more treaty was signed between Siam and Britain. But the most important is the 1909 treaty that brought great implications and has continuously been relevant up to the present days. During World War II, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu were taken by Thailand as a benefit from being aligned with the Japanese. After WW II, Britain took the entire country based on the 1909 treaty.⁹

Since the 1930s, various groups have been founded in Southern Thailand with the main purpose of agitating and escaping from the Siam sovereignty. This separatist movement began with the attempt by Tengku Mahmud Mahyuddin in the 1930s, a prominent Patani leader who was the son of the last Raja of Pattani. He allied himself with the British during WW II in the hope that the allies would win, but the British were beaten by the Japanese. Thailand, the only country in Southeast Asia not invaded by any imperial power, imposed much of the Thai culture on Pattani province. Grievances and insurgencies with the desire to have their own state and autonomy dragged on until the 1960s, but become more serious in the 1990s.¹⁰ Groups, such as The Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Koordinasi (BRN-C), Gerakan Mujahideen Patani / Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Patani (GMP/GMIP), The Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK), New PULO and Jemaah Salafi have become the play makers in the Southern Thailand insurgency.¹¹

Why Did They Become Insurgent?

The clash between the separatists and the Thailand government has had many implications for the Southern Thailand people. 1200 southerners were killed in the last eighteen months and thousands more wounded. Many of the victims were police, army, Muslims, Buddhists, and villagers from these three regions. This year, 400 bombings and nearly 400 arson attacks were recorded. There have been over 3500 deaths since January 2004 and more than 4,000 acts of violence.¹² The Tak Bai incident on 25 October 2004, known as one of the most defining events in the ongoing violence, is recognised as a catalyst for the heightening of the insurgency. The question is why did they choose insurgency? From my point of view, there are several factors which led to this incident.

First is the religious factor. Without prejudice we notice that some attacks in this region have a religious influence. Buddhism is the major religion in Thailand with more than 95 percent of population. But for Southern Thailand, Muslims are majority with 1.3 million of the 1.7 million people. Beside the freedom of Islamic teachings, Muslim felt discriminated.¹³ Buddhists sometimes did not feel comfortable with the series of murders from their side. Buddhist monks and Muslim scholars (ustaz) are victimised. It is not clear whether these deaths were caused

by separatists or criminal gangs that took advantage of this incident.¹⁴ Teachers are always being victimised as well as villagers and other innocent people. Twenty four of the dead recorded from 2004 to 2006 were teachers.¹⁵ They are symbols of government. Most of the teachers are Buddhists. Poverty and inability to go to university are factors in the lack of Muslim teachers in Southern Thailand. Separatist groups not only attack Buddhists and civilians but also Muslims. Government statistics show that two-thirds of people being killed are Muslims. Militant groups are thought to be attacking locals who do not share their militant ideas.¹⁶ Insurgents also targeted fellow Muslims suspected of conspiring with a military known for its brutality in dealing with the Islamic militants.

Militants in Thailand have strongly aligned themselves with regional separatist groups; MILF of Philippines and GAM from Indonesia.¹⁷ These groups have shared their vision to build an Islamic Kingdom in Southeast Asia consisting of Malaysia, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, Singapore, and Indonesia. The failure of the bombing operations on the Israeli Embassy in Bangkok in March 2004 has provided a linkage between Southern separatists and al-Qaeda. General Surayud Chulanont¹⁸ admitted that the military intelligence was monitoring a 'small number' of Bin Laden operatives operating in Thailand.¹⁹ Al-Qaeda is reported to have shifted their base of training and financial operations from Middle East to Southeast Asia after the September 11 tragedy. The war in Afghanistan and Iraq became the turning point for *al-Qaedaism* to spread all over the world and Southeast Asia is one of the convenient sanctuaries for them. The idea of the *al-Qaedaism* and radicalism is easy to spread all over the world because any movement and separatist group always seeks a 'catalyst' such as insurgency in their struggle.²⁰

Besides that, many of the Muslim radicals had been trained in Afghanistan and Libya during the Afghan-Russian war in 1980s. Muslim students from Southern Thailand were sent to Middle East for enhancement of their knowledge about Islam. They may have been influenced by ideas of radicalism, and most of them involved in the Afghan war as Mujahidin. Many of them were disbursed and returned to their home country after the war with radical ideology. These Mujahidin later re-grouped and become separatists and trainers for the 'young separatists'. However, some of these militants were detained because of their linkage either with al-Qaeda and JI.²¹

Drug Trafficking / Criminal Groups

Thailand has lenient laws on arms and weapons. People can get arms relatively easy in Thailand, especially in the Southern Province. In several cases, Malaysians, especially criminal groups, also use the lack of enforcement in Southern Thailand to buy arms such as machine guns, pistols, bombs, rifles, and automatic pistols. Thailand is known as a country awash with weapons with some armies and militants involved in black market weapons trading which has played a key role in transporting surplus Chinese weapons to the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia.²² The Tamil Tigers (LTTE) rebel groups had an office in Thailand for many years just to purchase weapons for their insurgents. The breakdown of law and order and incipient corruption has led to a loss of control over state arsenals in Thailand. As proven, in 2002, there were discoveries of weapons in bulk numbers such as M-60s, M-16s, AK-47s and many more. They have been exported to Aceh,

the Philippines, and Myanmar. These matters provided an opportunity for civilians to have their own arms and later create criminal groups or insurgents. Drug smugglers take advantage of insurgency in Southern Thailand to expand their businesses. Associate Prof. Dr. Kamarulzaman Askandar from the Centre of Research and Education for Peace, Malaysia Science University said, drug traffickers use this incident to make a convenient market for drugs. Thailand became important for drugs traffickers because 75 percent of drugs produced each year in the Golden Triangle passes all over the world through Thailand.²³

Poverty and 'Dualism'

Poverty and hunger are major factors that bring people to inhuman acts and denial of God. Poverty leads people to struggle for their lives; they are involved in crimes, rebellions, demonstrations, killings, and many evil acts. Countries with higher poverty rates such as many African states and other undeveloped countries are mostly facing instability in economic, political and social areas. Southern provinces which are Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani are recognised as the poorest province in Thailand. Southern Thailand always lagged far behind the rest of the country. With poverty rates of 45.6 percent, Narathiwat is known as the poorest district in Thailand. Second poorest district is Yala with 37.9 percent.²⁴ The question is why has Southern Thai become the poorest province in Thailand? Is it the lack of economic infrastructure or neglect by the central government? Narathiwat-based human rights lawyer, Peerawat Praweenamai said, "the government didn't look after the local people here, they just sent officers from Bangkok who did things for their own benefits, not that of the locals."²⁵ These people felt the government neglected them and intentionally did that. It awoke anger and grievances among them. This situation makes it easier for militant groups to exploit them. People will be involved in militancy and make rebellion to get equality in economic distribution and to avoid hunger.²⁶

Separatism

The separatist movement in Southern Thailand is recognised as a major factor in what has happened today. Besides Hmong, the hill-tribes on the border with Myanmar that also requested for their own country, separatists in Southern Thailand have big impacts in creating instability.²⁷ Separatist groups calling for the emergence of Islamic state emerged in 1970s. However, the movement of separatism of Pattani from the Kingdom of Pattani appeared in 1890s. The Sultan of Pattani that lost his sovereignty and power to Thailand. But, this movement was not supported by any groups from either the army, Thai administration or the British in Malaya. Grievances were legitimate as Pattani was put under King of Thailand sovereignty and felt left out of the Buddhist Thai nation.²⁸

The first separatist group founded in Southern Thailand, was the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) in 1968. A new separatist group that opposed the nationalist agenda of PULO was founded in 1984 named Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (Patani National Liberation Front, BNPP). Other separatist groups were founded later such as Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani

(GMIP), The Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK), Barisan Revolusi Nasional Koordinasi (BRN-C), New PULO and Jemaah Salafi.²⁹ Separatists struggle for an independent Islamic state, the rights to implement the Islamic pillars, and to get full autonomy in these three provinces. Hundreds of bombings and arson attacks have occurred since 2001. In January 2004, unidentified gunmen raided an army ammunition depot in Narathiwat province in the early morning, and made off with over 100 rifles and other ammunitions. After that, a series of attacks, killings, explosions, robberies, and other criminal acts appeared every day. People have felt fear to go out from house, and go to work. The main incident that forced insurgency in this province is the Tak Bai incident. It happened in October 2004, and the Kerisik Mosque incident followed a month later. The insurgency continued, with a bomb attack in Songkhla on April 3, 2005, and major attacks being launched on the provincial capital of Yala in July. In response, Prime Minister Thaksin Sinawatra issued a decree giving himself sweeping powers to direct military operations, suspend civil liberties, and censor the press.³⁰

Two major incidents that created grievances in Muslim's Southern Thailand are Tak Bai and Kerisik Mosque tragedy. Hence, lots of Muslim have been kidnapped and killed by unknown parties since this conflict occurred. At least 78 Muslims were recorded dead in the October 2004 Tak Bai incident.³¹ The incident began after police detained six Muslim men accused of having supplied weapons to insurgents. Hundreds of people gathered in front of Tak Bai Police station and made demonstration to demand their release. The army was called, and then tear gas and water cannons were used and followed with shooting to the demonstrators. Seven people were killed and hundreds arrested. They were thrown into the army trucks with their hands were ties behind their backs. With six dead stacked in the trucks and a long way to the army camp, 78 people died. This incident sparked widespread protests across the south, and indeed across Thailand. The second factor is about the series of killings and kidnappings by the authorities. The Locals believe that the army and police were the play makers of the death of *Ustazs* and Muslim leaders.³² They also believe dozens of *ustaz* and Islamic scholars were kidnapped by the army. Local Muslims complained about the security forces treatment of them as enemies in many occasions, '*shooting first and asking question later.*'³³ Currently 20,000 soldiers are serving in these provinces and most of them are from other provinces. The locals felt that the outsider army are not familiar with their culture and custom, as well as they are having bad impression on Southerners.³⁴

Evaluation: Effects and Implications

The Southern Thailand incident had a big impact in the political movement in Thailand. People have discussed the incident from various perspectives. The Thailand Prime Minister and province governors have frequently changed their perspectives but the issues remain. Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Non Aligned Movement (NAM), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as the United Nations (UN) forced the government of Thailand to resolve the crisis. The government of Thailand responded sending thousands of troops into the Southern province, and forming the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC). They also sent the government representatives to visit and meet the locals. Thailand government also held hearing in the district court to all accused in such incidents.

However, insurgency in this province continues with the series of attacks and a bombing occurring from time to time.³⁵

Thai Muslims who live in the core area of the crisis, have significantly been affected. Muslims are majority in Southern Thai but they become minority in Thailand overall. Muslim has strong ties and good relationship with Thais and Buddhists historically. It was proof by harmonious and prosperity life and economic ties within Muslim and Buddhist since century ago. Muslim adopted the Thais value in their daily life such as speak in Thai, writing in Thai, send their children to Thai school, mingle with Thais in daily life and many more. Buddhists accepted Muslims as part of their community and have had an interaction with them a long time ago. In January 2001, all the good relationship and good ties between them damaged. Each other become suspicious with what they are doing. Separatist and insurgent broke down all the good things. Buddhist saw Muslim as extremist and political fringe. It's become bad when many of the killed people were Buddhist either civilian, monk, government servants or villagers. Muslims also fear and felt they become victimized by the police and army; furthermore most of the police and army are Buddhists. Surprisingly, 2/3 of the killed was Muslims despite Muslims were looked as an extremist and become 'savage' in their acts. For a long term, these good ties will become disaster and other problem may appear. More crisis and violence predicted in this province. Muslim and Buddhist may be fighting and make revenge between them. Connection among security forces and Muslim were bad especially most of army and police are Buddhist and coming from other provinces.³⁶

Islam has been recognized as religion that brings peace and prosperity. Islam needs its followers doing noble in their life and not act terrorism. But what happened in Southern Thailand and all over the world was gave bad reputation either to Muslim or Islam itself. Separatist are known as Muslims, wear Islamic cloth and Islamic symbol but at the same time they do kinds of terrorist act. They fought with security forces and villager who do not share their vision. Violent, arson attacks and killings in Southern Thailand are related to Muslim. Muslims have conflicts with all civilization in the world as in India among Muslim and Hindu, China among Muslim and Buddhist, Balkan, Sudan and Moluccas among Muslim and Christian and now Thailand among Muslim and Buddhist. This supported hypothesis by Caroll Quigley in his book *The Evolution of Civilization*, "Islam will collide with all civilization" as he draws in the expansion of civilization.³⁷

Thailand as a place for this incident cannot escape from the worse impacts. Various effects come across after the insurgency become serious and come with 'new breath' in January 2004. Impacts occurred in politic, economy and social. Southeast Asia was hit by economic crisis in 1998. Exploited in foreign exchange and speculators has believed as cause for the crisis. Southeast Asia country including Thailand and Malaysia almost bankrupted with the crisis. Thailand has a million dollars aid from International monetary Fund (IMF) to recover from crisis. Vital industry in Thailand's economy is tourism. Average ten million tourist visit Thailand every year. Insurgent and separatist used bombs and arson attacks as their *modus operandi*. Almost all of the attacks has targeted to hotels and bars or night clubs that have a lot tourist. In the latest incident, six bombs were blown up near the Hat Nyai hotel, bars and shopping complex. Four people died including one Canadian. This is one example from the hundreds bombings in Southern Thailand. The impact is, tourist refuse to visit Southern Thailand and some of them cancelled

their booking before. The growth of Thailand's economy disturbed and locals will gain the effects. Nimit Chaichirathikul, President of the Tourism Association in Songkhla said, the numbers of tourists decline every time bomb blast here."³⁸ Somchart Pimthanapoonporn, President Hotel industry in Hat Nyai also said "*we going to die*", his reaction when answer question by reporter after that incident.³⁹ Locals depend on the tourist to gain wage and run their business. When tourist refuse to come because of the fear and feel threatened, locals do not have customer and haven't got money. They may be enticed with criminal and drug trafficking ring to get money. Furthermore, Malaysian are among the widen contributor in economic circle in Southern Thailand, everyday, thousands Malaysian and Thais making business worth almost USD3 million. This kind of attacks surely affects the border business-chain and may stop future connection between Malays and Thais. All this gave bad impact on the local's economy and Thailand's particularly.

The second impact is about politics, every Prime Minister in Thailand faces this problem. But the way they deal with Southern Thailand issue is important. September 20, 2006, a coup occurred in Thailand. It was the first coup attempt in fifteen years in a country where they used to be a commonplace. There were seventeen coups between 1932 and 1991. In the latest coup, the government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was overthrown. Thaksin had been under growing pressure to step down over alleged corruption and abuses of power, but remained very popular in the countryside. Thaksin is assumed to be responsible on the Southern Thai insurgency. The way Thaksin handled this crisis was spread anger all over the country especially the Tak Bai incident. Muslims in Southern Thailand show their vendettas and grievances on the 2005 election. Thai Rak Thai, Thaksin's and ruling party in Thailand before coup won 399 parliament seats from 500 seats in the election, the only party in Thailand's history win more than 70 percent parliament seats. But, Muslims in Southern Thai showed their anger with has voted opposition. All 12 parliament seats in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat were won by opposition as result of grievances and unfairly treat by government.

The 2005 election results is not the end, it become catalyst for insurgent and rebellion on the government. Thaksin after 2005 election announced, he will destroy and detain all separatist and militant Muslim in Southern thailand. He also forces all the *madrassa* (school) and *Pondok* (boarding school) to be closed because it becomes militant focal point. Several *ustaz* and *ulama* were detained by security forces accused on teaching and gave militant training especially to separatist's members.⁴⁰ A number of scholars kidnapped and gone without trace has increased. Muslims believed, security forces with direction from central government responsible with what has happening. The result is, insurgent and separatist become stronger and they have reason to act violence in Southern Thailand. Muslims supported group of separatist and insurgent as the way to show their anger and grievances.

Social impact is one of the bad effects from the insurgency and rebellion. Every nation with this kind of crisis had social impacts such as hunger, unemployment, disease, illiterate, and many more. Southerners also met these consequences. Muslim still living in poverty and without any satisfied job. Most of them are rubber tapper and farmers. Lot of them went across the Malaysian border's state such as Kelantan, Kedah, and Perlis to get job and earn better wages. They have nothing to do at their own place.

Moreover, several Muslims have physical handicaps and disabilities because of being injured and wounded. They have made a wrong decision especially teenagers that joined insurgency. Those who were involved in insurgency and rebellion cannot change their lives after being enticed with this and they got lifelong disabilities. Muslims refused to send their children to the school run by government with the reason that schools were run by Buddhists and they fear their children will be influenced by Buddhists and later deviate from Islam.

Lack of money among southerners also contributed to this problem. They decided not to send their children to the school or university. However, some of them preferred their children to go to Middle East such as Libya or Syria and Yemen to further their study about Islam. Lots of scholarships were offered to the Muslims in Southern Thailand to pursue their study in the Middle East. The Kingdom of Saudi itself has offered more than twenty scholarships to the Southerners. However, the worse thing is, at the same time they learned about radicalism while studying in the Middle East, especially radical ideology that was influenced by Islamic reformists from Egypt and Iran.⁴¹ Muslims from Southern Thailand also involved in the Afghan war and was brought back the militant ideology.

Regional Consequences

The incident in Southern Thai has impacts on regional countries especially bordering countries like Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. Malaysia, as the country located just beside the Golok River in Kelantan side and Kelam Cave in Perlis, was awashed by refugees from Southern Thailand. Malaysian government recorded, a number of southerners come across the borders seeking refugee status. Thousands southerners fled to Malaysia were recorded as either trying to get a job or escape from the crisis. Dr. Wanmahadee Wandaud, the Senator in Narathiwat province said, more than 20,000 Muslims Thailand who escaped to Malaysia were either involved with work or staying illegally.⁴² On 24 February 2006, 130 Thais were reported to have come across to Kelantan seeking for refugee status. Thailand has requested to Malaysia to send them back to Thailand because most of them had been involved with militant activities or insurgency. Malaysia's Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, announced that he will send his Deputy Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak to Bangkok to be briefed about the incident and to solve the refugee problem. He stressed that those wanted by the Thailand authorities will be turned away. This has clearly showed that Malaysian government has no intention to support making Malaysia a sanctuary for people fleeing from the incident area.

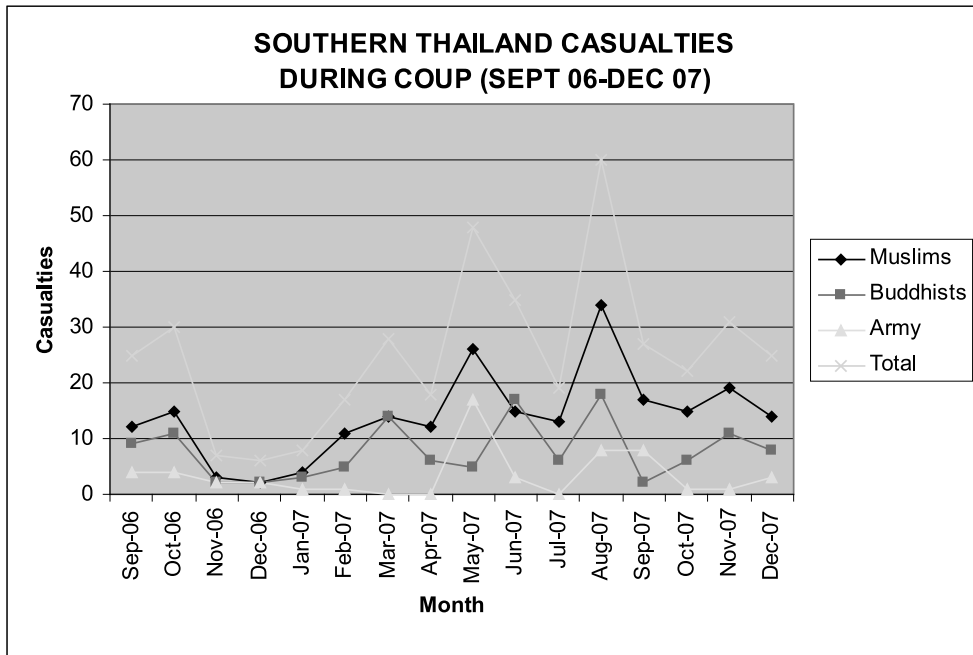
Furthermore, the increasing violence in the border of Malaysia-Thailand has led to rising tensions between the two countries. On 21 November 2006, former Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad was in Thailand for talks about the insurgency in the Muslim Southern Thailand. These events have proved that Malaysia has taken an initiative to make harmony and peaceful in this area. In annual Malaysia-Thailand General Border Council meetings in 2004 participated by Deputy Prime Ministers from both countries, discussions about collaboration to solve the border problems and about refugees were held. Both sides were happy with the result and Malaysia agreed to send all the refugees back to Thailand. In a social context, Malaysia will face many problems especially instability on the

Malaysia-Thailand border. The crime rates increased and the locals were not satisfied with what has happened lately. A lot of money has been spent to settle this problem, whereas that amount of money can be use for developing and demolished poverty. Government's burden became harder especially to take care of Thais in the refugee camps.

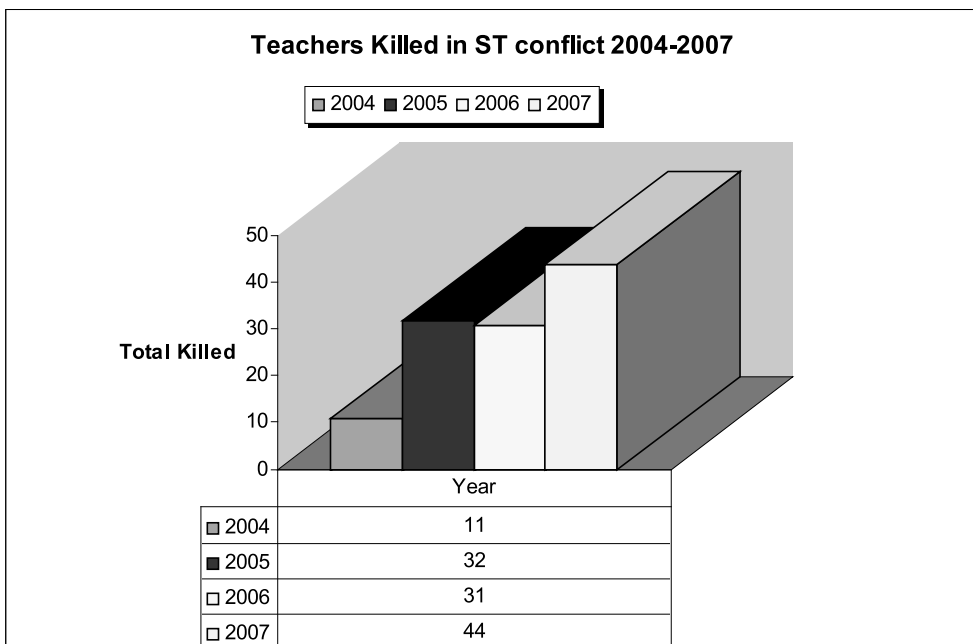
Indonesia has had a lot of activist groups in their country. Lack of enforcement and sympathy from security forces are among the causes of militancy growth in Indonesia. These groups have strong ties with the Southeast Asia activist groups which are operating in the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Borneo. Jemaah Islamiah (JI) orchestrated in Indonesia was recognized as part of International Islamic Front (IIF).⁴³ JI was proved have a strong tie with the al-Qaeda operation in Southeast Asia. The linkage between separatist groups such as PULO, GMIP, Jemaah Salafi, BRN-C and RKK after plotting terrorist attacks in several embassies including United States, Britain, Israel, Australia and Singapore in Bangkok, was foiled by security forces in October 2003.⁴⁴ Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM), the group that struggled for Aceh's independence and autonomy and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) also struggling for independence and autonomy in Southern Philippines, has aligned with PULO. They shared their vision and strive for an Islamic state and in future they aim to create an Islamic caliphate in this region.

The Southern Thailand incident has become catalyst for the Islamic movement in Indonesia. Before the ceasefire between the Indonesian government and the GAM activists, GAM held trainings and got an arms supply from the Southern Thailand separatists. Several Islamic activists got protection from their allies in Southern Thailand. They escape from a raid in Indonesia and have had sanctuary with their '*brotherhood*' in Southern Thailand.⁴⁵ All these have been assumed as threats to Indonesia security and made the country unsafe. Further more, former Indonesia's president Megawati Sukarnoputri said that Thailand and Indonesia take closer collaboration in combating terrorism, "Indonesia and Thailand are determined to step up cooperation in the fight against terrorism including the exchange of information."⁴⁶

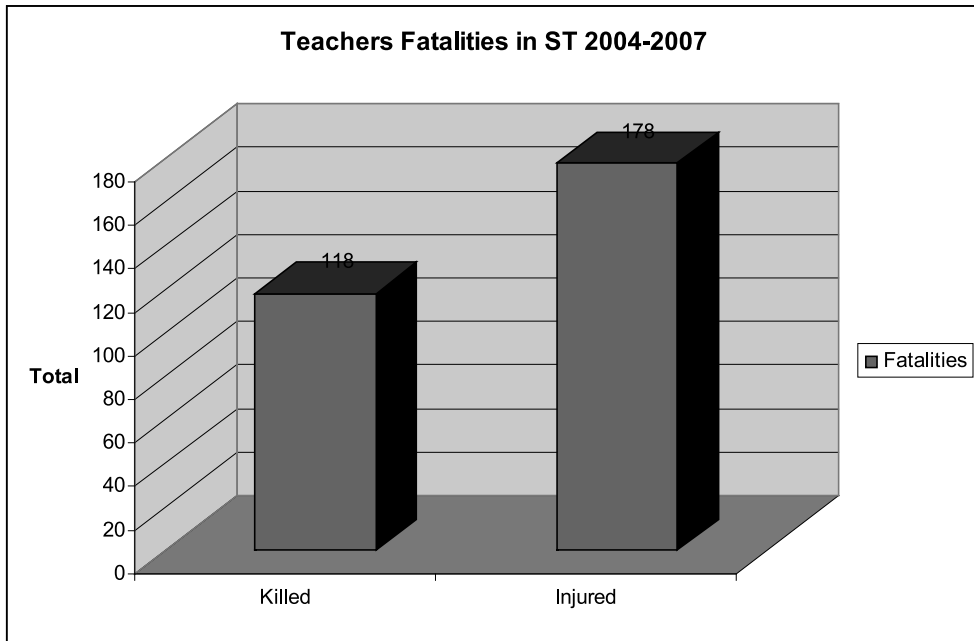
Graph 1: Casualties in Southern Thailand for the duration of coup (September 2006 – December 2007).⁴⁷



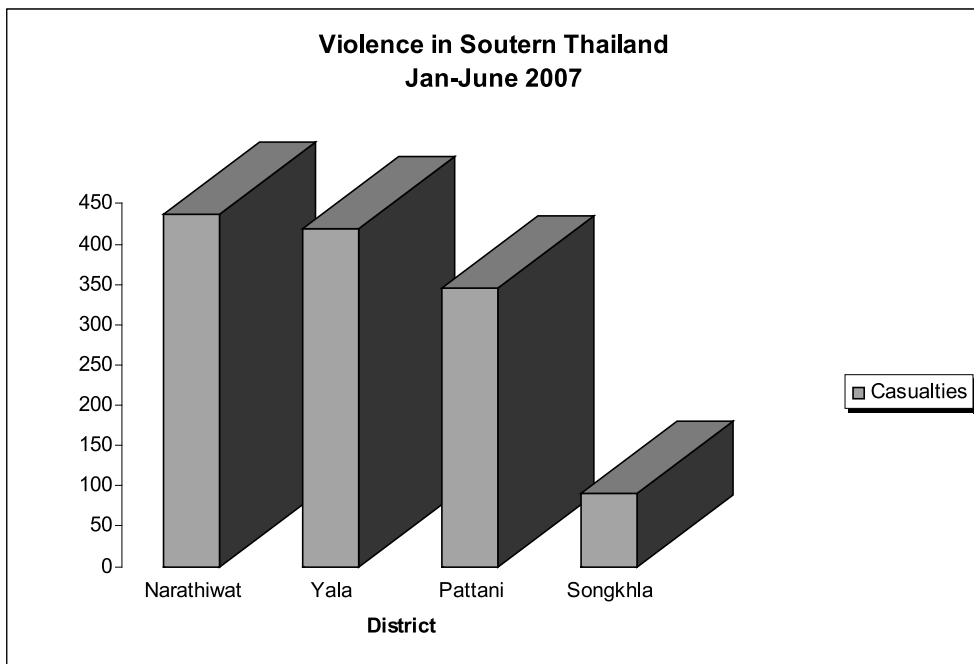
Graph 2: Casualties to the Government Teachers in Southern Thailand.⁴⁸



Graph 3: Teachers Fatalities in Southern Thailand Conflict.⁴⁹



Graph 3: Violence Recorded in Southern Thailand Provinces.⁵⁰



Conclusion

The Southern Thailand issues have changed the politic and economic movements in Southeast Asia. Every country should make an effort to solve this problem. But the reality is this incident is becoming dangerous and worse. The impacts are not just on the Thailand government itself but have also affected all the nations in this region. Among the initiatives taken by The Thailand government are: (1) on March 2005, former Thailand Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun was appointed as chairman of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC), tasked with overseeing that peace is brought back to the South. Anand frequently criticized the handling of the Southern unrest, and in particular the State of Emergency Decree.⁵¹ Anand submitted the NRC's recommendations on the 5th June 2006. Among them were to conduct full and transparent enquiries into the 78 deaths on 28 April 2004 that have yet to be investigated, in particular the nineteen alleged extra-judicial executions at Saba Yoi; (2) trial of the four generals implicated in the Krue Se and Tak Bai incidents in April and October 2004 and named by the investigative commissions. Those responsible should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, not merely subjected to disciplinary actions such as transfers; (3) establish a special commission to investigate the rash of disappearances in the southern provinces, many of which are suspected to be the result of kidnappings by state officials, with particular attention to the case of Somchai Neelaphaijit; (4) re-examine army and police rules of engagement in the south to better ensure human rights protection; (5) end the unofficial policy of sending corrupt and errant officials to the southern provinces as a punishment post, thoroughly screen officials being transferred from other regions, and provide them with adequate cultural awareness training; (6) hire, where possible, local Malay Muslims in the local administration and security forces, and reinforce the recent commendable initiative of the Southern Border Provinces Peace-Building Command (SBPPBC) to take on an additional 30,000 locals by providing training to help elevate Malay Muslims to senior positions; (7) reinstate some form of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) to coordinate policy and monitor its implementation, with a civilian head mandated to remove corrupt or abusive officials; (8) make a serious commitment to identifying, understanding, and creating the mechanisms for addressing political grievances, perhaps initially by broadening and deepening the consultative processes of the National Reconciliation Commission; (9) Introducing Islamic law and making ethnic Pattani-Malay (Yawi) as a working language in the region; (10) establishing an unarmed peacekeeping force and establishing a Peaceful Strategic Administrative Centre for Southern Border Provinces.⁵²

Nothing of the Anand's recommendations was implemented. Thaksin was replaced by General Surayud in 2006, then in early 2008 Samak Sundarej took over the country, but the Southern Thailand problems have not settled down. All the recommendations were not implemented, either because of the King did not agree or just thrown away by Thaksin's government. The coup in Thailand on 20th September 2006, brought hopes to Southerners, Muslims, Buddhists and countries in Southeast Asia. Many perspectives and reactions from all over the world focussed on the coup.⁵³ Thailand's newly elected House of Representatives or Lower House on 28 of January 2008 voted People Power Party (PPP) leader Samak Sundaravej as the country's new Prime Minister. The hopes are the new government elected will put full commitment and give full concentration to tackle Southern

Thailand problem. ASEAN and Thailand's neighbour countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar and Singapore eager to see good movement and positive initiatives to be taken by the new government especially to promote peaceful and harmonious life in Southern Thailand and Southeast Asia.⁵⁴

It is crucial for the Thailand government to recognize that the root cause of insurgency often lies in the domestic sphere. A variety of issues such as unbalanced socioeconomy, political misinterpretation, and religious diversity should be dealt with fairly and practically so that there is tiny or no ground for terrorist elements to latch on to. It is important for new government to take an active interest to help to create a security network as well as provide aid and expertise to resolve the domestic problems plaguing Southerners. Thailand government should also re-examine its security and counter insurgency policy implemented in Southern region since decades ago. It all kind of these issues not take in account, and then it can expect more attacks in the future.

Endnotes

¹ Mohd Mizan is PhD student in school of Government, Victoria University of Wellington, doing research about Southeast Asia conflict with focussing in regional terrorism.

² Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 2nd Edition (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).

³ Ibid.

⁴ A Muslim in Thailand was forced to put the Thai name in their formal business and registration card. Beside that, having Thai name will help them to get job and enter government service easier because lot of the top government officer in the southern province are Buddhist and have a great patriotism in Thai name and language.

⁵ Jawi is a writing that created by Malay in Southeast Asia that created from Arabic and have some additional Malay letters.

⁶ 3G concepts are Gold, Glory and Gospel was influenced Western Colonial in the Imperialism era.

⁷ Jim Veitch, "The Search for Identity in Muslim Southeast Asia: The Colonial Context for the rise of Terrorism," Paper presented at Colloquium on Religion and Identity held at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand from 15th – 16th September 2004.

⁸ Interview with respondent Al on the 28 December 2007 at Kampung Baru Kota Mengkuang, Kedah. The respondent was shot by Southern Thailand Insurgents in 2005. Warded in Pattani Hospital with injury in his eyes and legs.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Phone Interview with Che Man, W. A. K. from Wellington, New Zealand to Petaling Jaya on the 30 January 2008. Dr Wan Kadir Che Man is the official leader of the BERSATU (The United Front for the Independence of Pattani) or "Bersatu" (Malay for "United"). Bersatu was formed with the idea of unifying resources so foreign sources of support could be refused. More significantly, this demonstrated the effectiveness of the Thai government's success in combating separatist groups. Bersatu claims 60-80 fighter trained in SW Asia.

¹¹ Interview with M. A. Arshad at Ba Gan Koey, Sathun, Thailand on 06 December 2007.

- ¹² Kate McGeown, "Fighting Thailand's Insurgents," in *BBC News-Asia Pacific Violence*, 09 August 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4775623.stm>
- ¹³ *Ibid.*; It has been confirmed in the Phone Interview with Che Man, W. A. K.
- ¹⁴ The group of Muslim that respected by other Muslim because of their knowledge and clandestine in Islamic teachings.
- ¹⁵ Simon Montlake, "Learning to Live With Thai Violence."
- ¹⁶ Kate McGeown, "Violence and Vendettas in Thai South," in *BBC News-Asia Pacific Violence*, 06 August 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5255054.stm>
- ¹⁷ Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (USA: Lynne Rienner, 2003), p.136.
- ¹⁸ Was the Prime Minister of Thailand and head of Thailand's Interim Government. He was a former Thai military officer, Army Commander, Supreme Commander, and Privy Councilor to King Bhumibol Adulyadej.
- ¹⁹ John McBeth, "The Danger Within," in *Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)*. September 22-23.
- ²⁰ Interview with the respondent A2 at Sadao on the 05 December 2007. The respondent is one of the respected Ustaz in Southern region, Danok, Thailand.
- ²¹ Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, p.172.
- ²² Interview with Arshad, M. A at Ba Gan Koey. Sathun, Thailand on the 06 December 2007.
- ²³ Richard Clutterbuck, *Terrorism in an Unstable World* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 96.
- ²⁴ Supara Janchitfah, "Southern Muslims Plead for Understanding," in *Bangkok Post*, September 30 2001.
- ²⁵ Kate McGeown, "Search for Justice in South Thai," *BBC News-Asia Pacific Violence*, 08 August 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5255054.stm>
- ²⁶ Phone Interview with Che Man, W. A. K.
- ²⁷ Teena Amrit Gill, "Thai Hilltribes Battling Discrimination," in *Asia Times Online*, September 1, 2001.
- ²⁸ Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, p. 79.
- ²⁹ Zachary Abuza, *A Breakdown of Southern Thailand's Insurgent Groups* (Global Terrorism Analysis: The Jamestown Foundation).
- ³⁰ Interview with the Respondent A3. at Yala Town. Yala, on the 05 December 2007
- ³¹ Interview with Arshad, M. A. at Ba Gan Koey. Sathun, Thailand, on the 06 December 2007.
- ³² Interview with the respondent A3.
- ³³ Interview with the Respondent A2, at Al-Amin Islamic Madrasah in Sadao Town, Southern Thailand, on 05 December 2007
- ³⁴ Phone Interview with Che Man, W. A. K.
- ³⁵ Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/30/content_7526850.htm
- ³⁶ Interview with the respondent A2.

- ³⁷ Carroll Quigley, *The Evolution of Civilizations : An Introduction to Historical Analysis* (Indiapolis: Liberty Press, 1979).
- ³⁸ "Four Killed in Thai Bomb Blast," in *BBC News-Asia Pacific Violence*, 17 September 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5353648.stm>
- ³⁹ "Bom: Pelancong mulai Tinggalkan Hat Nyai" (Bomb: Tourist Leave Hat Nyai), *Utusan Malaysia*, 17 September 2006, <http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/archive.asp>
- ⁴⁰ Madrassa and pondok are traditional centre for taching and learning about Islam which is led by ulama or ustaz. Lot of madrassa and pondok throughout southern Thailand.
- ⁴¹ David Capitanchik, *Terrorism in Islam, in Terrorism, ideology & Revolution: The Original of modern Political Violence* (Great Britain: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd., 1986), p.128.
- ⁴² "20,000 Rakyat Thai Lari ke Malaysia," (20,000 Thais Escape to Malaysia), *Utusan Malaysia*, 13 September 2006.
- ⁴³ The International Islamic Front (IIF) provides the second strand of militancy worked under the umbrella of al-Qaeda.
- ⁴⁴ B. Raman, "Thailand and International Islamic Front in South," *Asia Analysis Group (SAAG)* article dated September 01, 2004.
- ⁴⁵ Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, p.171.
- ⁴⁶ Goliath Knowledge, Indonesia, Thailand Reiterate Closer Antiterrorism Cooperation, August 29, 2003. Full article from <http://goliath.ecnext.com/comsite5/bin/pdinventory.pl>
- ⁴⁷ M. M. Aslam, *Southern Thailand Insurgency* (Wellington: The Intelligence and Security Research Programme, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington, 2008). p.7.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.8.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.19.
- ⁵² "Southern Thailand Insurgency: Not Jihad," *International Crisis Group*, May 18, 2005, at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3436&l=1>
- ⁵³ Retrieved from http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-01/28/content_7511078.htm
- ⁵⁴ J. A. Veitch, Mohd Mizan & Charlotte Boyer, "The Insurgency in Southern Thailand: A Quest for Identity and Security," *Intelligence, and Security Studies Research Unit, School of Government*. 2007, p. 7