What are the sources of Islamic Militancy in Southern Thailand?

Helen Kelly (10309064)
Table of Contents

What are the Sources of Islamic Militancy in Southern Thailand?

1. Chapter One: Islamic Militancy
   1.1 Defining Islamic Militancy
   1.2 Misuse of terminologies
   1.3 Importance of Examining the Causes of Islamic Militancy
   1.3.2. Root and Outer Causes of Islamic Militancy
   1.4. Academia on the Causes of Islamic Militancy
   1.5. Academia and South East Asian Specifics
   1.6. Islamic Militancy in Thailand
   1.6.2. Terming the Conflict as an Insurgency and Separatist Mass Movement
   1.6.3. History, Background and Context of Thailand’s Muslims
   1.6.4. Previous Militancy in Thailand
   1.6.5. Causes of Islamic Militancy Found in Policy and Subordinate Radical Ideas

2. Chapter Two: Policy as a Cause of Islamic Militancy in Southern Thailand
   2.1. Political Policy
   2.2. Cultural Policy
   2.3. Counter-Terrorism Policy
   2.4. Muslim Views On the Thai Government’s Political, Cultural and Counter-Terrorism Policy
   2.5. Socio-economic and Development Policy
   2.6. Muslim Viewpoints on Socio-economic and Development Policy
   2.7. Recent Developments in Thailand and the Violence

3. Chapter Three: The Influence of Radical Ideas on the Conflict
   3.1. The Existence of Domestically Inspired Radical Ideas in Southern Thailand and Their Alleged Stronghold in Islamic Schools
   3.1.2. Thailand’s Separatist Organizations
   3.1.3. Evidence Supporting the Pre-eminence of Domestic Events on the Formation of Radical Ideas and Thailand’s Separatist Organizations
   3.1.4. Solutions to the Proliferation of Domestically Inspired Radical Ideas
   3.2. Radical Ideas From Abroad Fuelling the Conflict
   3.2.2. Evidence of Radicalisation of the Conflict From Abroad
   3.2.3. Implications of Foreign Influence over Thailand’s Islamic Schools
   3.2.4. Counter-evidence to the Power of Foreign Influence in Driving the Conflict
   3.2.5. Solutions to the Infiltration of Radical Ideas From Abroad
   3.3. Causal Relationship Between Policy and Radical Ideas
   3.4. Conclusion

Word count

Bibliography
1. Chapter One: Islamic Militancy

Today’s events and the portrayal of the constant threat of “terrorism” have made examining violence in Southern Thailand an interesting case of penetrating the rhetoric of terrorism and examining the intricacies of a region characterised by conflict. The role of internationally inspired radical ideas will not be completely discounted but the reality is that they play a subordinate role to local and regional dynamics on the ground though this is often overlooked. Domestic factors can either facilitate or limit exacerbation of a conflict and in the case of Thailand deficient political, cultural, counter-terrorism and socio-economic policy facilitate the growth of radicalism. Examining this case of Muslim minority and non-Muslim majority relations will demonstrate that tension is not inherent and not determined by religious differences but affected by regional dynamics. The need to identify the causes of Islamic militancy is of the utmost importance as it the only course of examination that will result in long term solutions.

1.2. Defining Islamic Militancy

Is an Islamic militant automatically a terrorist? Are militants automatically terrorists if they do not hold Islamic beliefs? Questions such as these are never ending when attempting to define the term Islamic militancy and demonstrate not only the uselessness of such an ambiguous term to explain phenomenon in international politics but its incorrectness in associating militancy and terrorism with one religion and impediment it poses to finding solutions to conflict.
1.2. Misuse of Terminologies

Misuse of the terms Islamic militancy, “terrorism” and fundamentalism are abundant in today’s world where such “loaded words” are effortlessly bandied around by our leaders and citizens. These terms are loaded terms because they assume the cause of violence to be Islam and do not recognise other causes including the existence of legitimate grievances. The use of such terms can have sinister motivations and be used opportunistically by governments to instil fear in order to quiet disapproval and discontent. Violence between Islam and the “West” is not inevitable and Islam does not hold an innate hatred of the West. Islam is characterised by contention and consultation over interpretation of its peaceful central principles. Islam is not a monolithic religion. Looking at the particularities of a conflict and a region are more important in enlightening understandings of the causes of conflict than loaded (and attempting to be all encompassing) but ultimately confining (and merely surface reaching) terms used to describe the conflict.

1.3. Importance of Examining the Causes of Islamic Militancy

Many look upon terrorism as an incomparable act of evil and they deduce from this other worldly categorisation that to examine those that commit these horrendous acts and investigate the factors contributing to the end result is incomprehensible. In *Why Terrorism Works* Dershowitz emphatically states that terrorism will persist as long as it is not unequivocally condemned and he lays culpability in the hands of academics (along with other professions) (Dershowitz, p. 2 & p. 7). Success in finding a solution to a
conflict requires looking outside of limiting frameworks including the incorrect perceptions and beliefs informing the use of the term terrorism. Intricacies of a conflict need to be looked at on the personal, domestic, international, historical, socio-economic and political level rather than being dismissed by the notion of cultural superiority. This needs to be applied when looking at Thailand and Michael Connors stresses the dangers of looking at Thailand as a case study of terrorism rather than looking at the intricacies of Thailand (Connors, p. 157).

1.3.2. Root and Outer Causes of Islamic Militancy
Identifying the root causes of conflict positively affects the longevity of policy aiding the resolution of conflict and vice versa. There are distinctions between root and secondary causes, a hierarchy within these, causes do not exist exclusively and they can overlap and there is certainly no academic agreement on these categorisations. Articles by Jitpiromsri and Srisompob and Panyasak argues that root causes are no longer the most important causes (though they are still root) but that the critical factor of the influence of Islamic militancy is (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 116). Aurel Croissant provides another way of looking at the causes of terrorism. He describes the numerous factors that range in importance, as creating changes in the “enabling environment” (also termed the structural and situational environment). This “enabling environment” can either constrain or allow insurgency to grow (Croissant, p. 21). He believes that the cost-benefit rationale conducted by insurgents has specifically transformed in Thailand due to change in many factors that have resulted in support for increased violence (Croissant, p. 30).
1.4. Academia on the Causes of Islamic Militancy

There has been an array of general causes of Islamic militancy identified by academics. One cause that is constantly reiterated in the literature is United States foreign policy. This includes their indifference to Palestinian suffering in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the war in Iraq and Afghanistan which are considered essential to the success of the WOT (Haynes, p. 21 & p. 23; Haddad, p. 260). Another aspect of US foreign policy generating anger that causes Islamic militancy includes their support for undemocratic regimes. Dictatorships radicalise conservative organizations as they are suppressed and not given political room to operate in (Rahim, p. 225 & p. 212). The WOT has seen the US endorse detention without trial both domestically and abroad. Geopolitics sees the US pursue only policies that have some personal gain. Current US emphasis on military courses of action perpetuates and creates new conditions for militancy. Haddad examines opinions from both Arabs and Christians and little variation between them leads him to conclude that disaffection is caused US foreign policy (Haddad, p. 260). US policy has seen human rights be violated by themselves and many other governments in the name of the WOT.

Liu and Ehrlich demonstrate the rise of literature identifying demographic and socio-economic factors as root causes of terrorism. They specifically mention high population growth and low economic growth (Ehrlich and Liu, p. 187). Islamic militancy can be caused by the failure of the government to fulfil its economic and political obligations as frustrations are rerouted by Islamic militant organizations. It is in a failed or failing state environment that Islam can resurge in people’s life and this can be both state sponsored
and society sponsored and result in Islamic militancy. The existence of longstanding grievances against the state means that its citizens are susceptible to militant ideology. Therefore government courses of action to diminish viewpoints of the aggrieved can stem militancy. It is important to address localised sources of grievances rather than simply linking the conflict to a phenomenon of global terrorism.

Haynes explores the causes of Islamic militancy in East Africa, specifically Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. All of the above causes apply consisting of economic, social and political problems but also regional specifics. Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations are able to exploit circumstances particular to the country (Haynes, p. 1322). In Kenya Muslims have been politically and economically marginalised by their government. There has been a rise in the number of Wahhabi Islamic schools and mosques funded by Saudi Arabian money resulting in imams referring to extra-regional conflicts that were previously not part of the idea environment (Haynes, p. 1329). In Tanzania the island of Zanzibar has not experienced the same rate of economic growth and social development as the mainland. Saudia Arabia has also exerted an influence through education funding and NGO charities. In Uganda certain ethnic groups have been excluded from state power. Ideas are entering the country from abroad and able to link Muslims to an international network due to their sense of being aggrieved (Haynes, p. 1334). Regional specifics are important but as just demonstrated root causes can be common to different areas.

1.5. Academia and South East Asian Specifics
South East Asian specifics also address the usual culprits of Islamic militancy that have been previously that allow for militant ideas to develop. Grievances arise from exploitation of national resources, human rights abuses, resettlement policies, limited regional autonomy and erosion of land rights (Rahim, p. 214). During the regional economic crisis support for Islamist parties surge which demonstrates many things including the resurgence of Islam in times of state failure. Indonesia’s environment of high unemployment, poverty, crime, corrupt bureaucracy, weak justice system and weak banking system along with pre-existent anti-Western sentiments due to colonialism, CIA involvement in the region and IMF action results in more Indonesians being sympathetic to radicalism (Rahim, p. 215).

Rahim purports that secessionist struggles in the disputed Indonesian Aceh and Philippine’s Mindanao is more pronounced than in other marginalised Muslim communities because it is resource rich and thus underdevelopment is so obvious (Rahim, p. 214). Their struggle is about control of economic resources, localised injustices and political self determination (Rahim, p. 225). Islam believes that the high degree of deprivation and social, economic and political subjugation experienced by the Moros resulted in their partial success in securing regional autonomy whereas Thailand’s lower degree of deprivation has not made their secessionist movement as powerful (note that this was before the recent outbreak of violence) (Islam "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines", pp. 451-452). Rabasa recognises that the causes of conflict in Thailand and the Philippines are
indigenous though the Islamic dimension of separatism is important (Rabasa, p. 47 & p. 57).

1.6. Islamic Militancy in Thailand

When referring to acts of violence this essay will concentrate on the recent upsurge of violence in three events occurring in the three southern provinces of Yala, Songkhla and Pattani: January 4th 2004, 28th of April raids and mosque shoot out and 25th of October due to their large degree of coordination and planning and the large scale of violence employed and obvious time restraints on this essay but still wanting to reach conclusions. It will also be recognised that small scale acts of violence continue to take place throughout Southern Thailand every day and a historical awareness will also be a constant requirement starting from the formation of the Kingdom of Pattani in recognition of the conflict’s longstanding history. Jan 2004 saw simultaneous raids on police and military depots with the targeting of weapons and ammunition stores. On the 28th of April around one hundred ill armed militants conducted raids on security posts. More than one hundred and seven militants were killed across the Muslim provinces and thirty two of these took place in the Krue Se mosque where there was a shoot out between government forces and the militants. Most of the militants were teenagers and held little more than a machete (The Nation). In October protests outside a security office in Takbai resulted in the death of more than eighty unarmed arrested protesters who were loaded into trucks four to seven layers deep of bodies with the main cause of death of asphyxiation. Crisis Group report number 98 provides a useful overview of these events (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad).
1.6.2. Terming the Conflict as an Insurgency and Separatist Mass Movement

As discussed the terms used to categorise conflicts have important implications for which sources are recognised and therefore the solutions. Thailand’s conflict has been termed as an insurgency, jihad, separatist mass movement, ethnic violence and terrorism. This paper chooses to employ the terms insurgency and separatism due to the longstanding history of relations between Thailand and their Malay-Muslim population and the essentially domestic nature of the conflict.

1.6.3. History, Background and Context of Thailand’s Muslims

Literature identifies Thailand’s tumultuous history with its three southern most Malay-Muslim dominated provinces as a reoccurring conflict. But the literature also identifies that for the vast majority of the time relations between the central Buddhist government and the southern provinces have been peaceful. Along with recognition that peace rather than conflict is the norm in Thailand a long term historical perspective encompassing the area before the creation of Thailand and the annexation of the Kingdom of Pattani, demonstrating its cultural and ethnic distinctiveness, serves as a valuable and informative background in examining the conflict and its sources. The independent sultanate of Patani flourished as a semi-autonomous Malay region from 1390 till 1902 when it was annexed by Siam.

Thai Malay-Muslims have far more in common with Malaysia than their Thai counterparts due to their cultural and ethnic links with the people of Northern Malaysia.
They speak the same language and have the same religion. Thai Muslim-Malays and Malays on the Malay border think of themselves as one community due to a common heritage. Clive Christie believes Thai Muslim conceptualisation of a separate identity revolves around a history legacy of the kingdom of Patani, cultural sameness with Malays and Islam (Liow, p. 533). The influence of Islam results in a broader ethnic-cultural link with Patani (Liow, p. 533). Chalk identifies three main pillars comprising Malay separatist identity in Southern Thailand being belief in the Kingdom of Patani, identification with the Malay race and religious orientation based on Islam (Chalk, p. 242). Extensive ties exist linking the identity of Thailand’s Malay-Muslims to their northern counterparts.

Since Pattani’s annexation attempts to assimilate the south have taken place with different severity. The government took various measures to weaken the Islamic identity of the people and assert a mono-ethnic character of the state including the replacement of Islamic shariah and adat laws with Siamese law and administration was further centralised by reorganising the seven provinces intro three and replacing the local rulers with Thai governors (Islam "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines", p. 443). Replacement of local laws destroyed the authority of the uluma (Islam The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia, p. 82). The 1921 Compulsory Primary Education Act was particularly offensive to the south, as it demanded all children to attend state primary schools for four years to master the Thai language rather than their predominant regional language dismissing any role for ulamas (Islamic teachers). Education also included lessons in Buddhist ethics (International
Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 3). The Thai Customs Decree was another attempt to assimilate Thai Muslim-Malays because it prohibited the use of Malay Muslim names and Malay language. A more intense examination of previous policy in southern Thailand as fuelling Islamic militancy will be looked at in the next section.

Ninety five percent of Thailand’s population is Buddhist. According to Peace-Building Command statistics Narathiwats 700 000 population is seventy eight percent Muslim, Pattani’s 620 000 population is seventy seven percent Muslim and Yala’s 450 000 population is sixty two percent Muslim (Inside Thailand Review). So whilst there is a buddhist majority there is a provincial Muslim majority. The percentage of the Muslim population and their location demonstrate strong border connections.

Historical grievances arise from fellow Thai’s and the state’s failure to acknowledge the impact of colonialism and history of mistreatment along with the disrecognition and refusal to embrace the region’s cultural distinctiveness. There have been long standing problems of assimilation and recognition by the government. Clearly the localised and nationalistic aspect of the conflict is very important. This historical awareness of previous pride in independence explains why the situation of Thailand’s Malay-Muslims has been described as one of “internal colonialism” (Croissant, p. 27).

1.6.4. Previous Militancy in Thailand
Government policy failures and successes provide an important point of comparison.
There are numerous militant organizations in Thailand that have risen and fallen in
importance through out the different periods of secessionist struggle. These include
PULO, new PULO, GMIP and BRN-Coordinate. For the most part relations between
Thailand’s Muslims and their Buddhist counterparts have been peaceful and it is only
when culturally disrespectful and excessively harsh policy is pursued that there is a
problem as political and historical grievances arise. Whilst there have been tumultuous
periods in Muslim and Buddhist relations they are far from unpredictable and explosive
but a result of policy.

Under General Phibun assimilation of all Thai Malay-Muslims was the goal and it was
during this time that the previously mentioned Compulsory Primary Education and Thai
Customs Decree were enacted. Islamic schools were closed down, the Malay dialect was
forbidden from being spoken in school and traditional sources of power including
pondoks along with cultural traditions such as the wearing of headdresses were targeted
to achieve assimilation. Phibun’s harsh policy is in stark comparison to General Prem
who took office in 1980. Phibun’s strategy emphasised public participation, economic
development and a broad amnesty being successfully implemented where many gave up
their arms. A new administration system of civil-police-military joint headquarters was
set up to coordinate a shift from confrontation to negotiation (International Crisis Group:
working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 11).
Government also launched a Policy of Attraction of increasing political participation and
economic development projects to decrease sympathy for separatist groups. There was
also an emphasis on understanding the Malay Muslim culture and training was provided in cultural awareness and the local Patani Malay language (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 11).

The New Southern Border Provinces Administration Center monitored performance of officials and held seminars for Malay Muslim leaders to voice their grievances. Prem recognised identity politics and existence of local grievances at play in the conflict and thus the need for political change to undercut support for armed struggle rather than purely military action that actually increases support for militancy.

So the most active period for separatist movements from early 60s until late 80s was combated by a change in policy paying attention to the lagging socio-economic factors of the region and acting to alleviate them through development policy. Concentration on culturally sensitive, political and socio-economic policy saw marked success for Prem and southern minority and majority relations. Past experience and this quick comparison on leadership and policy has shown that military and security courses of action are not affective in countering militancy, particularly concentrating power in the hands of the security forces (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution, p. 6). It has been demonstrated that political solutions are very effective and with Thailand’s democratic reforms in the late 80s and early 90s local autonomy increased and the conflict continued be contained. PM Chatchai created the Administrative Centre for Administration of Southern Border Provinces and thus followed his earlier counterpart Prem in advancing political representation and
accountability to diminish grievances in the south (Islam The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia, p. 91).

1.6.5. Causes of Islamic Militancy Found in Policy and Subordinate Radical Ideas

There is a combination of policy and radical ideas causing Islamic militancy in southern Thailand with primacy placed on the role of policy. As this quick historical overview has demonstrated policy has a decided impact on the escalation and de-escalation of conflict. Radical ideas are subordinate to the lack of regionally specific policy to gain power through manipulating ground roots grievances.
2. Chapter Two: Policy as a Cause of Islamic Militancy in Southern Thailand

Policies enacted by the Thai Rak Thai party (TRT) led by PM Thaksin from 2001 until October 2006 have resulted in Islamic militancy due to their promotion of inequality and thus grievances. Clear distinctions in equality in comparison to the rest of Thailand and stark displays of disadvantage allows for the legitimate existence of grievances that can than be built on by other ideas or beliefs. Allocating a large amount of blame on these policies enacted also recognises the highest importance of domestic realities on the conflict (rather than any foreign penetration particularly the idea of international ideological influence). Policy has failed to be aware of and sensitive to historical injustices, socio-economic factors and political grievances. In support of this emphasis on policy causing Islamic militancy Aurel Croissant has explicitly recognised a direct link between recent increasing militancy in Thailand and policy failures (and low quality conflict management) (Croissant, p. 21). Croissant describes the “enabling environment” for militancy as multi-faceted but pertinently stresses the role of policy. Exploring the specifics of political, cultural, counter-terrorism and socio-economic development policies will make clear that they have cemented inequality in an already lagging region (even when this has not been the intention). Though militancy here has assumed an Islamic predication this is merely reflective of minority and majority differences rather than anything innately Islamic about the violence employed. Domestic factors form the root causes of the conflict and whilst chapter three examines foreign causes these are still dependent on the existence of the former making obvious there centrality to any solution to the conflict.
2.1. Political Policy

Political grievances relate to the key central government institution in Bangkok and their control over the region. This central control is frequently viewed as imposed due to the lack of communication and consultation between the two diverse cultures and distanced regions. Liow’s article stresses the importance of recognising a distinct Malay ethnic identity along with Chalk (Liow, pp. 533-534; Chalk, p. 242). This recognition needs to be extended into political policy (along with other policy areas) for it to be affective. An example of this quasi-colonial mindset of a distanced force assuming to know what is in the best interest of a distinct people is the Thailand government’s decision under PM Thaksin to create a mass tourism and entertainment trade in Southern Thailand and ensure its expansion through huge amounts of spending. This is in spite of Malay-Muslim culture scorning the tourism industry due to religious duties and therefore holding a cultural preference for the funding of agriculture, fishing and small enterprise industries (Liow, p. 539). This option would not only have been more culturally aware but more economically viable as it is already a pre-existing mass industry. The government has recognised that peaceful ties with the local population requires not only good political policy but demonstrating a recognition of the region’s uniqueness as seen by their government orders for state officials to perform their duties with a good understanding of local religious beliefs and cultures (Inside Thailand Review). Crisis group argues that political grievances are more important than poverty and underdevelopment (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide, p. 33). In fact political grievances can result in the government being held accountable for living
standards. A former member of the now non-functioning National Reconciliation Commission has said the root cause is the failure of officials to treat residents with dignity ("Thai Muslim Youths to Call for Peace").

Political policy is expected to ensure adequate representation, consultation, accommodation and participation of its constituencies. This is even more important when there exists an easily distinguishable minority that can be identified, as is the case of Thailand’s geographically confined southern Malay-Muslims. Political grievances have been exacerbated by changes made to political institutions by PM Thaksin that further challenge the strength of the previously mentioned expectations of political policy. In 2001 Thaksin re-imposed central control over the previously opposition controlled Democrat Party Southern provinces. This widened the gap between local voters and the government and has been identified by Croissant as contributing to an “enabling environment” (Croissant, p. 31). Thaksin has disbanded several key government institutions including the conflict management agency, Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre (SBPAC) and Civil-Police-Military joint command (CPM) that have aided the belief that political administrative development in the South is urgently needed.

The Yala based SBPAC played a crucial role in information gathering and enabled productive analysis of the region (Croissant, p. 33). It also educated the Thai public on the culture of the Southern populations (Liow, p. 535). It had started operating in October 2004 and made sure to evaluate their performance ever three or six months. With its
closure there is no longer a channel for grievances to be voiced and for local Muslim leaders to report problems to (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide, p. 34). Prior to its closure SBPAC reflected the government's emphasis on development and the elimination of social conditions as a solution (Inside Thailand Review). “Its goals are to improve the people’s living conditions, ease their hardship, and help develop the local economy and communities (Inside Thailand Review).” CPM’s closure has resulting in increasing conflict between the already competitive relationship between security and intelligence agencies with power sliding towards the police (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide, p. 34). The government has set up a Committee for peace building in the South and a forty-eight member National Reconciliation Commission (NRC). Goals of the NRC include increasing knowledge amongst the general public and promoting social justice with respect for social and cultural diversity (Inside Thailand Review). They will also look at education, curricula, textbooks, religious and cultural studies and economic and thinking development (Inside Thailand Review). Political policy needs to address existing political grievances. The Thai government needs to make sure that it acts to diminish concerns that the central government is an alien and imposing force with little regional sensitivity and concern.

2.2. Cultural policy

The Thai Constitution grants equal rights to all of its citizens and explicitly recognises the diversity of religious beliefs in Thailand and their equality. But government attempts to integrate their Muslim populations and the varying degree of recognition and respect paid
to religious and cultural differences, have changed throughout history, and resulted in the existence of social grievances and belief of social marginalisation. Southern Thailand is ethnically and culturally distinct and this needs to be recognised and respected in policy for feelings of real and perceived discrimination amongst Thai-Muslims to diminish and for affective communication to take place. Cultural policy is also related to political policy as they can be reflected in each other. As previously discussed the NRC and other political institutions grant varying degrees of importance to the role of religious differences in the conflict. Specific policy enacted under the Thaksin government include special funding for needy Muslims who would otherwise be unable to make the Haj pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime (Inside Thailand Review). At the moment the government is proposing a Jawi language course be offered for government officials from all agencies and other interested persons to facilitate understanding between government officials and locals (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Specific policy needs to be enacted to ensure recognition, respect and the positive contribution of cultural differences to society rather than failing to educate the general public on beliefs, customs and ways of life that are considered distinct from the Thai state.

2.3. Counter-Terrorism Policy

Dire cultural misunderstandings are guiding Thailand’s counter terrorism policy, as seen in much of the rest of the world. Religion rather than local factors are given far too much of a causal role. Military solutions are pursued with favour over other equally important courses of action including political changes. Thaksin has pursued a particularly aggressive counter “terrorism” policy with large reliance on military action. With the
announcement of the emergency decree the military has been granted even more leeway in responding to the conflict. Recently a state of emergency law has been enacted by executive decree to replace martial law. These new measures approved by the Thai government allow for the detention of suspects for seven days, censoring newspapers and the tapping of phone lines (BBC news). The emergency decree includes immunity to security forces in the emergency zone (Ulph "Thailand's Islamist Insurgency on the Brink", p. 3). It also allows for curfews, banning of public gatherings and travel restrictions (Ulph "Thailand's South Deteriorating", p. 4). The government has rejected accusations that this law grants even more power to counter terrorism measures and the military in particular claiming that unlike martial law the Parliament could raise queries and that certain sections must be put up for consideration by a committee before being imposed (Inside Thailand Review). Martial law has only widened the gap between the southern people and the authorities and thus contributed to the insurgency. The number of human rights abuses and injustices committed by the military, police and other instruments of the state have proliferated. All reports of disappearances following random arrests need to be investigated.

In 2005 the government was forced to abandon plans to cut off funding for those villages deemed “insurgent friendly” (Pinyorat). The plan was deemed unfair but demonstrates how far the government is willing to go in the name of counter “terrorism” (as these villages are already poor) and the partiality that this entails that fuels anti-government sentiment. 358 of the three provinces 1580 villages have been classified by the army as “red zones” or sympathetic to insurgents though the exact meaning of this is not certain
and the impact on these villages varies (Pinyorat). Thaksin had voiced concern over these “red zone” villages near Malaysia that could be using development money to buy weapons but his statement was intelligently and quickly withdrawn (Pinyorat). Such statements contain rather than contribute to any peace due to a lack of evidence and notable application to only Thai Malay-Muslim provinces that is viewed as unfair targeting by the majority who are not involved in the violence. Whilst the Thaksin government has recognised that a military solution is not the only solution it has granted too much accountability for the conflict to religious extremists and its pursuance of a military solution negatively affects other more affective policy. Thaksin’s emphasis on a military solution is seen in a large amount of the budget being allocated to fund the army regiment rather than making needed political changes such as including the participation of local Muslim leaders to win back public support and more affective counter-terrorism policy such as building intelligence networks with local people.

2.4. Muslim Views On the Thai Government’s Political, Cultural and Counter-Terrorism Policy

Grievances exist in regard to Muslim dissatisfaction with and belief that cultural, counter-terrorism and political policy are neglectful of their needs and interests. There is a perception of cultural discrimination through linguistic and religious discrimination in policy. There are political concerns in regards to the majority of national wealth and government revenues being concentrated in the hands of the central government rather than local government and grants being redistributed unequally to big cities (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). There have been
increased attempts for Thai Malay-Muslims to gain refugee status when fleeing to Malaysia. This rests on the belief that the Thai government is inadequately providing for them and actively discriminating against them. Malaysian and Thai relations have been disturbed by Thai Malay-Muslims seeking refugee status particularly when 131 Thai Muslims seeking refuge in Malaysia were allowed to be interviewed by UN refugee officials (Ganjanakhundee). Whilst the government funded 8.5 million baht for repairs to the Kru-Ze mosque following the 28th of April violence the government’s appointment of soldiers to do the repairs was culturally insensitive (Tan-Mullins, p. 147). Perceptions need to be challenged and changed through pro-active policy through cultural sensitivity to the region. Note that on the 1st of October 2005 Thailand had its first ever Muslim Army Commander General Sonthi Boonyaratglin a good step towards diminishing legitimate Muslim beliefs of government inducing hardship.

2.5. Socio-Economic and Development Policy
Socio-economic conditions are a crucial factor in determining whether militant organizations will receive support and thrive and whether individuals will be susceptible to their rhetoric and perform terrorist acts. This is due to a strong correlation being found between low socio-economic conditions and the existence of grievances. Ehrlich and Liu have most thoroughly researched this correlation between conditions of adverse socio-economic factors generating terrorist acts. They provide evidence linking high population growth generating an age structure of excessive youth (males producing considerable more problems) with high unemployment levels that provide optimum conditions for producing terrorists (Ehrlich and Liu, p. 187). It should come as no surprise that socio-
economic conditions including low educational levels, income, inequality, dim economic prospects, limited employment opportunities and poverty have a direct affect on forming sentiments and/or aggravating and cementing existing sentiments that are in confrontation with the state or particular groups. Socio-economic conditions resulting in the marked failure of the state to achieve minimum living standards for the majority of their citizens provide an environment due to amplified grievances where citizens are open to the use of violence to achieve a particular ends or change. Note that it is also widely acknowledged that socio-economic conditions alone do not ensure breeding terrorists but they do provide an environment conducive to the aspirations of terrorists.

Thailand’s three southern provinces display marked differences in their socio-economic conditions in comparison to the rest of the more prosperous country. These three provinces as a whole comprise the most disadvantaged region and separately their unfavourable socio-economic environment is the most marked in comparison to their counterparts. Education levels are low and there are very few Muslims represented in Thailand’s bureaucracy. Socio-economic conditions as a root cause of the violence is recognised by the Thai government as they have attempted to take steps to address discontent by improving social and economic conditions (Rabasa, p. 56). Rabasa’s article stresses the domestic situation including relative underdevelopment as the most important factors resulting in violence (Rabasa, p. 47). Note that domestic factors also include political grievances and historical treatment (all which Rabasa identifies).
PM Thaksin has explicitly recognized the role of socio-economic policy in solving the Southern conflict: "First, we are concentrating on providing economic and social services to the South to an extent greater than ever before in order to right the wrongs that have been apparent for a long time in this region" and "that the southern region had often been neglected in the past, in the course of the country’s development (Inside Thailand Review)." Sugunnasil along with statistics used by Srisompob and Panyasak propose that though the three provinces lag behind the rest of the South economically they are not especially poor by the standards of Thailand as a whole though the latter academics conclude differently (Wattana, p. 122). Sugunnasil’s conclusion lacks support in light of the abundance of evidence that clearly demonstrates inequality. The average monthly household income in Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala fell far short from the national average. These statistics were specifically 1,756, 2,279, 2,439 and 3,913 baht respectively (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide, p. 33). Southern Thailand is underdeveloped relative to other parts of Thailand (Rabasa, p. 56). It is experiencing both absolute and relative economic deprivation (Croissant, p. 27). Southern Thailand holds the title of host to the least developed provinces and the income gap between the south and the rest of the country continues to widen (Croissant, pp. 27-29; Wattana, p. 122). Such figures support Southern perceptions that they are being economically marginalised and make hardship a reality. The economy of the south has always lagged far behind the rest of the country (Abuza, p. 79). Despite economic growth from 1960 to 1997 this regional imbalance has deepened and the region has continued to fair comparatively poorly (Croissant, p. 27; Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 103). These three border provinces are poorer than other Southern provinces (Srisompob and
Poverty results in a low quality of living standards and highly visible social disparity (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 102). Inadequate funding contributes to inequality. In Southern Thailand funding is not being allocated to the same level as the rest of Thailand. The economic plight of these provinces requires much more than equal funding than Thailand’s other provinces and that is not happening. Socio-economic development programs are lacking in number and funding. A substantial proportion of employment is uncertain and in unsafe industries. The Ministry of Public Health has implemented several employment generating projects (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Recent and current government action has not adequately targeted socio-economic problems.

But socio-economic conditions still fall far short of the desires of the Southern Muslim population and their rights to equality. Participation in local business is minimal (Chalk, p. 246). There are very little bureaucratic positions held by Muslims. Very few Muslims are able to make educational achievements and thus Muslims are underrepresented in Thailand’s educational attainment. Specifically teenage males, whom are the section of society already identified as prone to crime and violence, aren’t provided with an education or valuable skills to translate into success in an already extremely limited employment setting. The government has made a focus on providing educational opportunities. Under Thaksin new Islamic universities and institutions of education in cooperation with leading academic institutions such as Cairo university have been established (Inside Thailand Review). He has also provided subsidies for pondok schools and integrated the Islamic study curriculum with that of basic education recognising a
role for Islam in Southern education (Inside Thailand Review). Two community colleges have been established in light of their shortage and in accordance with Islamic principles (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). The Education Ministry encourages schools to teach Islam, Malay and the region’s history and the government is now promoting Islamic studies in state primary schools (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Research and development is being undertaken on the issue of introducing teaching both Thai and Jawi in the educational system (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Whilst government rhetoric has been careful not to aggravate existing grievances and there has been no explicit threat to close pondok schools this pertinent issue in regards to ideological indoctrination will be taken up further in the next chapter. Government initiatives in education and training include vocational training and conducting research on obtaining sustainable development to address the needs of locals (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Government provision of health care, education and welfare continue to be inadequately supplied despite government attempts to change this including such the funding of occupation training. Whilst government programs of socio-economic growth and development have improved service and public sectors this has not translated into jobs or substantially improved standards of living (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 105).

Statistics from the National Statistic Office in Thailand on population and households of the Southern region and the whole kingdom comparatively demonstrate socio-economic inequality. Statistics for the Southern region on households with sanitation, safe drinking water, cooking with gas or electricity, television and radios are lower (National Statistical Office Thailand "Key Indicators of the Population and Households, Population and Housing Census 1990 and 2000, Southern Region"; National Statistical Office Thailand
"Key Indicators of the Population and Households, Population and Housing Census 1990 and 2000, Whole Kingdom").

“*The Government sought to change the net contribution of the three southernmost provinces to the country’s GDP in such a way that would be commensurate with proportion of their potential richness. It could only do so if it resolved the disparities of education, skills, and economic opportunities that they face in comparison with the rest of the country* (Inside Thailand Review).” It is well known that the South is rich in rubber plantations and other natural resources but that its citizens do not reap the benefits and at least rhetorically the government is acting to change this. PM Thaksin “*said that the Government had tried to address the question of security concurrently on two different levels – economic and social* (Inside Thailand Review).” “*The royal words ‘understanding, accessibility, and development,’ must be upheld in tackling problems in the deep South with local participation in development especially in terms of education and employment* (Inside Thailand Review).” Thus there are positive signs that policy is being affected by local realities.

Criticism has been directed at the government’s persistence that the tourism industry be developed due to a lack of local support. Liow specifically recommends that economic development policies be changed to focus on modernising the agriculture, fishing and small enterprise industries rather than the current emphasis on entertainment and tourism and increased funding and support for Pondok education (Liow, p. 539). Royal speeches have particularly identified that local development must take into consideration an
economy that is in accordance with local culture (Inside Thailand Review). Economic and socio-economic development policy needs to be culturally aware. Bangkok has injected over 12 million baht into southern development projects over last three years (Inside Thailand Review). The government has sought to stimulate the industrial sector through a drive that would improve the livelihoods of the local people. The government has instructed the Ministry of Industry to explore more kaolin sources in Narathiwat (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Kaolin is a major resource and is used for ceramics and in the construction industries. Government has also provided training for local residents to operate industries. Whilst money has been put into Pattani’s natural resources and rubber plantations substandard infrastructure inadequate supplies of land and capital and overall industrial development have hampered the region (Chalk, p. 246). A point of interest is that Cabinet has approved a budget of 500 million bath to develop infrastructure to facilitate the halal food industry to international standards (Thai Embassy in Washington DC).

2.6. Muslim Viewpoints on Socio-Economic and Development Policy

Negativity directed towards the Thai government rests on the varying degree of severity interpreted of policy and its disaccord with Muslims interests. Beliefs and feelings of unfair treatment persist and whilst some of these are little more than perceived much of this negativity is based on real policies reflected in a substantial number of Thai Malay-Muslims feeling aggrieved. Thai Muslims are aware of their relative inequality compared to the rest of Thailand and the role that policy has played in creating and continuing this inequality. There is widespread ground root frustration, disenchantment and even
resentment amongst Thai-Muslims directed towards the Thai government. This unrest allows for militant ideas to gain a foothold in society. Southern disaffection with the TRT Party was reflected and loudly voiced at the recent February 6 election where they failed to win a single southern seat in deference to the Democrat Party (Ulph "Thailand's Election Results Bring Discouraging News for the South"). This backlash at the election booths demonstrated that Thailand’s Southern Muslims hold little confidence in the ability of their central government to adequately provide for them or take into account their interests.

For some Thai-Muslims there is a belief that they are identified as different by the government and treated differently because of this (Tan-Mullins, p. 146). The Thai government has actively opposed such accusations of religious and cultural discrimination but the net effect of socio-economic policy provides fuel for previously mentioned beliefs of economic exploitation and subordination. Muslim grievances are also widespread about unequal access to education and employment as another form of state discrimination. There exists a lack of education and employment opportunities resulting in many Thai-Muslims viewing serious unemployment, underemployment and the need for seasonal migration into Malaysia as very real realities (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 105). Development policies pursued by Thaksin have been perceived as not in local interests and thus lack local support. Local leaders have claimed they are not consulted in what development projects are to be pursued and many Muslims have objected to some projects on the grounds of being culturally insensitive. International Crisis Group Report No. 98 refers to two news articles that capture this disapproving
sentiment entitled “Development spend-up a ‘waste’ of money” and “Appeasing the South: Let us plan our own future” (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide, p. 33). A government survey confined to the four majority Muslim provinces in June 2004 found that the main developmental concerns are further development in the agricultural area such as soil improvement and crop diversification, with an overwhelming seventy percent of the total 152 742 surveyed ranking this their highest priority (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). Other concerns include nine percent wanting financial support and debt eradication, seven percent wanting greater educational opportunities and scholarship and others wanting better infrastructure, better access to public health care and increasing security and safety for locals. Whilst there has always been movement of Thai-Muslims into Malaysia and from Malay-Muslims into Thailand there has been an increased movement of Thai Muslims into Malaysia since the beginning of the conflict due to escalating Muslim fears of not only state discrimination limiting opportunities and limiting living standards but outright state violence. Grievances against the central government have been long standing and views of discrimination in employment, education and economic management continue to exist (Ulph "Violence in Southern Thailand").

2.7. Recent Developments in Thailand and the Violence

Violence has continued to date unabated and it is likely to continue. Bombings in the South are taking place every day and include the bombings on the seventeenth of September and as recent as the twenty second of October. It remains unclear how Thailand’s recent military coup will affect the situation in the south. Previously
democratic changes have lessened the incidence of violence but this has been short lived.
There are positive signs in a new approach that would be more affective than any taken
by former PM Thaksin’s who was known for his cultural insensitivity and hard line
attitude. New premier General Surayud Chulanont’s first public speech paid heed to
finding a solution to the southern situation such prompt attention is a positive sign. The
BBC’s assessment of the coup on the south has been positive. They believe locals to be
very optimistic about the new leaders and a quelling of the violence (McGeown). A
dramatic policy change includes a willingness to communicate with insurgent groups
(McGeown). Coup leaders have a better understanding and experience of the south with
General Sonthi, a Muslim himself, leading the way (McGeown). Leaders are more likely
to consider reports from the NRC including a recent one suggesting the formation of a
new regional body to mediate the conflict, adoption of the Malay dialect Yawi as an
official second language and the implementation of Sharia law (McGeown). They have
also started to rebuild other peace building bodies that were dissolved under PM Thaksin.
Whether the affect of the new leadership is positive or negative it is sure to be dramatic
and contributes to an overall assessment that policy has a major impact on the existence
of Islamic militancy. Local unrest does not explain every case of violence in Southern
Thailand as there is a role for radical ideas but it is the major and root cause and deserves
the intense examination it has been paid here and that the Thai government will hopefully
start to pay. The role of international radical ideas will be dealt with in the next chapter.
3. Chapter Three: The Influence of Radical Ideas on the Conflict

The degree to which radical ideas are fostering or even causing instability is debatable. It has been the topic of much contention subject to little evidence. Radical ideas arise out of response to government policy and also from foreign influence. Whilst radical ideas exist in Thailand (as elsewhere in the world) it is Thailand’s domestic environment, involving the previously discussed culturally and regionally insensitive policies causing inequality, that has determined that radical ideas have gained some sway over Thai Malay-Muslims. Grievances are a requirement for the adoption of radical ideas and as anger already exists in Thailand due to state policies religious radicalism is able to gain hold through manipulating these grievances into support for them. Consequently countering terrorism requires acting to reform (security, economic, political and cultural) policy in order to contain the ability of radical ideas finding sympathy.

3.1. The Existence of Domestically Inspired Radical Ideas in Southern Thailand and Their Alleged Stronghold in Islamic Schools

Radical ideas can either originate from within a country or infiltrate a country externally. Pondok (private Islamic education schools) and their boarding counterparts ponohs provide an alternative to a secular government funded education in southern Thailand. At these schools instruction comes from tok guru (head teacher) or ustadzes (teachers). It is wildly presumed, by the Thai government and media sources and other influential sources, that radical ideas have a resonating presence in Islamic schools. But the presence of radical ideas in pondoks is not as widespread as first suggested by popular discourse.
Whilst radical ideas exist and pose an extreme danger in being absorbed by Thai Malay-Muslim students government action targeting the limited propagation of religious ideas cannot by itself be a solution as other causes of militancy are having a greater effect.

3.1.2. Thailand’s Separatist Organizations

Separatist organizations in southern Thailand have existed since the annexation of the kingdom of Pattani by Siam in the early twentieth century. They have formed at different times of Thailand’s history and experienced a different existence. Their goals range from forming a Muslim state to the simple recognition of Thai-Muslim rights. Their motivations are just as diverse and include nationalistic and secular inspiration. Historical, operational and motivational diversity of these organizations demonstrates their distinctive character and nature that cannot be initially captured by their categorisation as separatist organizations.

PULO (Patani United Liberation Organization) was created in 1968 in order to forcibly separate the Malay Muslim provinces through the use of arms and it became the main organization for channelling Thailand’s Malay-Muslim discontent. Since its creation PULO has been recognised as more ethno-nationalist than Islamist in character (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. i). PULO’s ideology is based on religion, nationalism and homeland and a long term strategy of preparing for the goal of secession (Chalk "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh", p. 243). Importantly this correct characterisation demonstrates that since its
formation the largest and most effective of Thailand’s separatist organizations has never been primarily religiously motivated. PULO comprises its armed wing PULA and a youth wing known as Patani National Youth Movement (PANYOM). PANYOM focuses on propaganda campaigns to gain international recognition for their cause of an independent state (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 15). New PULO emerged in 1995 and is far more concentrated on insurgent activities with the same aim of creating independent state than its earlier counterpart. The three separate sabotage wings of New PULO each have a specific geographic area and insurgent activities come under the overall direction of a supreme Armed Force Council that coordinates, directs and exerts controls over these wings (Chalk "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh", p. 244). The lack of influence of radical ideas expressed by New PULO is demonstrated by this organizations reliance on young drug addicts to carry out many of its planned attacks (Chalk "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh", p. 244). Both PULO and New PULO have targeted what they perceive to be symbols of Buddhist repression. There has been no coordination between these two organizations until mid 1997 which saw a temporary unification under the name Bersatu. BRN (Barisan Revolusi Nasional) is the other organization formed at around the same time as PULO. Both considered the Thai government to be an internal colonial power at the time of their formation and therefore compromise was unacceptable leaving the only viable option of independence through armed struggle (Islam "The Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines", p. 447). PULO and BRN, the two strongholds of Malay-
Muslim separatism in the early part of the second half of the twentieth century, have been influenced by their immediate environment more than any ideology and have changed with their surroundings.

All separatist organization’s operations have become severely limited due to greater border cooperation with Malaysia and greater sensitivity from the governing in addressing grievances that in turn reduce popular support for these organizations (Holt, p.4). PULO’s hardcore membership is still estimated to be in the hundreds though Thai officials partially claim this figure to be closer to a thousand (Holt, p. 4). Therefore grievances still exist particularly from feelings arising from ethnic discrimination and Thai Malay-Muslims right to self determination failing to be recognised by the government. But weakening of organizations with armed struggle given up in the early nineties saw PULO and BRN splinter and more violent strains emerged rather than the cause of separatism fade away. Now PULO is comparatively non active in relation to several smaller and more radical groups that have emerged that include New PULO and others will now be the topic of discussion.

BRN-C (faction of Barisan Revolusi Nasional) is the largest, strongest and best organised of Thailand’s separatist organizations operating today (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 15). They focus on political organization and recruit from Islamic schools. BRN-C comprises a large youth wing named Pemuda that is currently undergoing a recruitment drive. GMIP (Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani or Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement) was
established in 1995 by Afghanistan war veterans and are committed to an independent Islamic state. GMIP appears to be more closely tied to an international Islamist agenda than BRN or New PULO and perhaps this reflects its comparatively young age (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 13). So clearly these organizations differ in their degree of purporting to radical ideas (and some arguably do not deserve this description). The suggestion that Thailand’s groups are becoming more radicalised applies to the newly formed organizations that are now playing a larger role in southern Thailand’s violent landscape rather than the old actors. Abuza believes GMIP and BRN-C are now the most important of Thailand’s groups and that Jemaah Salafi and New PULO have developed into important fringe groups (Abuza "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who Is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand", p. 5). GMIP and BRN-C are now more important than their ethno-nationalist predecessors (Abuza "Alternate Futures for Thailand's Insurgency ", p. 6).

Now that the main groups have been briefly outlined it is time to look at their role in the recent violence and other important questions. Note that no organization has taken responsibility for the attacks, nor have they publicly stated their goals or platform or list of demands making an evaluation hard. Officials believe Thailand’s domestic organizations are coordinating their activities. Obviously some attacks have been coordinated to coincide at the same time, such as April twenty eighth, but there is no evidence demonstrating that these groups have given up their autonomy for a higher power. In 1997 this did temporarily take place with the formation of Bersatu but this
unification in the face of dwindling support to present a united and consensual front was short lived (Liow, p. 537). In 1999 another temporary unification took place by activists from all political fronts (including the separatist organizations) coming together under the organization titled Council of the Muslim People of Pattani (Islam The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia, p. 88). This was inspired by the Moro’s success and to put pressure on the Thai government. But an overall assessment of these organizations reveals their autonomy and sequence of causation beginning with their domestic context.

3.1.3. Evidence Supporting The Pre-eminence of Domestic Events on the Formation of Radical Ideas and Thailand’s Separatist Organizations

Separatist organizations are driven by developments in their immediate surroundings and southern Thailand has social, economic and politics problems and also endemic crime. Southern Thailand faces a huge hurdle of overcoming its rampant crime and corruption problem. Southern Thailand has been recognised as one of the crime centres of South East Asia due to its porous border with Malaysia and official corruption resulting in the provinces not being enforced and unmanageable. The three southern provinces have been described as mini-fiefdoms controlled by local elites with their militias (Connors, p. 157). There is a thriving and extremely lucrative black market and border trade on stolen goods, persons, oil, weapons and drugs. The region is also plagued by dealings of money laundering and passport and identity card forgery. The opinion of informed local commentators is that the recent intensity of the insurgency is due to competitive crime groups and the development of indigenous separatist groups (Chalk "The Indigenous Nature of the Thai Insurgency", p. 7).
An analysis of events placing a large emphasis on the domestic environment of Thailand is agreed with by Chalk in his argument that localised and nationalistic aspects of the conflict are stronger than the commonly identified and portrayed religious elements (Chalk "The Indigenous Nature of the Thai Insurgency", p. 7). Holt identifies three factors of local unrest, extremism instigated by outside forces and violence stemming from criminal interests and official corruption (Holt, p. 4). An investigation orchestrated by Deputy Prime Minister Piumsombun concluded that the violence was twenty five percent locally instigated, twenty five percent externally inspired and fifty percent criminally orientated (Holt, p. 5). Assessments placing large emphasis on the role of crime in the violence is also felt by several political and security analysts who believe the attacks have more to do with criminal interests than either localised or imported Islamic radicalism (role of the latter to be discussed following this) (Holt, p. 5). General Sirichai Thanyasiri, commander of a task force to improve security, voiced that their intelligence reports demonstrate that violence does not involve foreign elements rather it is linked to drug smugglers and local and national politicians (Pinyorat). The vast extent and awareness of corruption is reflected in the theory that the violence was staged in order for the influx of security funds that would be siphoned off by corrupt local administrators and the security apparatus (Holt, p. 5). Official corruption is again suggested in accusations that the Wahah faction within the TRT party have been accused of having links with separatist organizations (Connors, p. 159).
The Thai government’s initial response to the violence was to attribute it solely to the activities of local criminals (BBC news "Thailand's Restive South"). It has only been with the continuation of violence that the Thai government has been forced to conceded that separatist organizations are operating and employing militancy though this was downplayed (BBC news "Thailand Wakes up to Southern Threat"). Now the operation of separatist militant organizations is stressed by the government at the expense of discussing Thailand’s domestic realities. Thailand’s tumultuous domestic environment of rampant crime and political competition shed more light on explaining the situation today than foreign radical influence. Whilst the Thai government has recognised the role of criminality in the south in the conflict though to though the amount of attribution has been changing.

3.1.4. Solutions to the Proliferation of Domestically Inspired Radical Ideas

The Thai government has recognised the need to empower the voice of its Muslim moderates to weaken the presence of radicalism but chapter two has demonstrated that much policy has not been reflective of this and inadequate to date.

3.2. Radical Ideas From Abroad Fuelling the Conflict

Ambiguities are a reality for any analysis with the exact proponents of such violence being unknown but the best attempts will be made as reflected by Thailand’s army chief’s statement that the army still do not know who they are fighting ("Thailand Still Baffled by Insurgency"). Pre September 11 and before the escalation in violence Thailand’s separatist organizations were not identified as terrorist or Islamic militants motivated by
religion nor as a grave threat to the Thai “way of life” or international stability. The problem in southern Thailand is now viewed as part of a global Islamic terrorism problem with the war in Iraq providing international Islamic inspiration for militants. Radical jihadist ideas from abroad are purported to have intensified the conflict to an unparalleled level. Is the suggestion that Thailand has become South East Asia’s operational and logistical head for transnational Islamic terrorism and composing a regional “arc of instability” reflective of the reality on the ground or does it lack a factual basis? The answer lies in addressing how Muslims perceive the conflict and whether this is primarily in religious terms and this is certainly not the case for the majority of Thai Malay-Muslims.

International influence includes the supposed links between Thailand’s separatist organizations and international terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyaah (JI) whose religious aspirations have transformed the essential character of the conflict. In the past PULO, GMIP and BRN have been linked to Islamic organizations including JI and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) (BBC news "Thailand's Restive South"). For the newer insurgents who have been bought up in a different environment religion is now far more important than separatism. Stephen Ulph stresses the danger of the extreme religious elements intensifying the conflict and believes that the conflict will heighten as a result (Ulph, p. 4). Now the conflicts conceptualisation by its perpetrators as a large scale and even regional jihad have made the ends dramatically higher and changed the means allowed to the targeting of civilians and “unbelievers” in mass attacks. The conflict has taken on a new ideological component for its proponents where
it is viewed as one of the many jihads to take liberate Muslims worldwide. This view was captured in the text Berjihad di Patani found in the Krue-Ze mosque though who wrote it and the level of permeation of its ideas into society is contended (Wattana, pp. 119-144).

There are accusations that Thailand’s south is serving as a training and staging base for international jihadi terrorists (Perrin). These come from a member of Kumpulan Mijahideen Malaysia a group with established links to JI and al Qaeda (Perrin). There are both for and against arguments that Southern Thailand has become a terrorist base but little evidence to support for the argument. It is mainly hardliners in the military who believe al Qaeda exercised influence over insurgents. The Thai government has laid much of the blame for the conflict on international terrorist groups though this is incorrect (Ganjakhundee). Resurgence of separatist organizations is due to a new political context where the meaning and practices of jihad have been politicised and new motives that have increased the desire for change and cannot be solely attributed to the influence of international terrorists alone. Literature that stresses international influence mitigates the influence of Thailand’s government and socio-economic conditions. International events particularly the Iraq war are stressed rather than previously discussed domestic factors including Thailand’s history.

3.2.2. Evidence of Radicalisation of the Conflict From Abroad

Whilst there have been some deductions on the composition and leadership of each of these groups these are certainly not facts. Their role in the three days of violence is even more conjectural. The main argument for Thailand’s Islamic militant groups gaining links
with international Islamic militant groups is that the sophistication in planning requires coordination between organizations and the skills and tools required for the acts of violence themselves is evidence of outside assistance (Holt, p. 4). Bombings have spread to outside of separatist provinces with consequences for Western and international interests (Chalk "The Indigenous Nature of the Thai Insurgency", p. 6). Both the boldness and range of attacks has expanded with bombs becoming more lethal and larger (Chalk "The Indigenous Nature of the Thai Insurgency", p. 6). Local militants have received technological assistance but this should not be automatically translated into direct involvement by international terrorist organizations (Ganjakhundee).

Victims of violence have become ordinary people rather than members of the security services and other state apparatus whom comprised the traditional targets of the insurgency (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 97). These former targets were chosen as they were perceived to represent Thai political and cultural dominance. Leading targets are now employees or lower class workers of public and private organizations, village headmen and assistant headmen who are labelled ‘Un-Islamic (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 98). Public installations and infrastructure are also targeted. Since the beginning of the conflict terrorist type tactics of indiscriminate violence against civilian and non combatant targets have becoming increasingly prominent (Wattana, p. 121). Innocent civilians and soft targets are now legitimate game. The most frequently employed tactics are now assassinations and shootings followed by bombings and arson attacks (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 99). The numbers of assassinations and arson attacks have increased. Most of the attacks occurred along urban and suburban roads and thus civilians
who are considered necessary collateral damage (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 110).

Previously attacks were only defensive whereas now attacks are offensive and extremely brutal. This all signifies a changing of tactics, weapons and targets. Abuza says Thai officials have told him that social links with JI are there but they are unable to detect anything more than passive support (Abuza "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who Is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand", p. 5). Clearly violence has escalated and radical ideas have played a role but these are not simply foreign imposed ideas but dependant on domestic developments.

More marked departures are seen by Muslim on Muslim violence comprising the fastest growing category of violence in the south (McCargo, p. 7). Fellow Muslims are now legitimately targeted. There have been well coordinated attacks on police posts. The three days of violence described in the first chapter demonstrate a marked increase in sophistication particularly synchronised raids conducted by masked gunmen on different villages and a departure from simple and sporadic extortions and kidnappings for money. Liow asserts that there is a consensus amongst analysts and observers that the level of sophistication that went into the attacks would have been beyond the operational capacity of local groups and was likely to have profited from external support (Liow, p. 538). There are accusations that there exists umbrella organizations coordinating local separatist groups in conjunction with sources of external support (Liow, p. 538). Abuza believes there is limited coordination between organizations and that centres have little command, control or resources to offer their cells (Abuza "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who Is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand", p. 5). Cell structure is
compartmentalised and autonomous from leadership (Abuza "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who Is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand", p. 5). Therefore coordination cannot be characterising these organizations let alone coordination demanded by an international terrorist organization.

Evidence commonly pointed to in support of international jihadist influence is the manual found on the body of an April 28 2004 participant entitled Berjihad di Patani. Other evidence commonly pointed to is the capture of JI’s operational chief and senior member of al Qaeda Hambali and three JI members being captured in Thailand in June and August 2003 (Liow, p. 537). Al Qaeda is known to be looking to establish links in South East Asia and their operatives have in the past used Thailand as a base of operations (Chalk "Militant Islamic Extremism in Southeast Asia", p. 52). There are rumours that the planning meeting for the Bali attack in October 2002 took place in Thailand (Liow, p. 537). PULO and New PULO are known to have retained operational and logistical bases in Kelantan where they are exposed to radical ideas (Chalk "Militant Islamic Extremism in Southeast Asia", p. 23). New PULO counts several foreign trained explosive experts among its membership including Marudee Piya trained in Libya in 1985 (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 15). Seven of those involved in the April 28th violence have been identified as third country nationals demonstrating foreign influence (Holt, p. 5). It is reported that JI contacts in Southern Thailand have been present for twenty years (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 38). It is also claimed that PULO and New PULO receive funding and political support
from Malaysian Party Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in Kelantan (Chalk "Separatism and
Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh", p. 244).
GMIP reportedly has close relations with the Malaysian militant organization Kumpulan
Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM) (Abuza "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who Is Behind the
Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand", p. 5). Zachary Abuza argues that there is a
direct link between GMIP and other Thai organizations and JI as seen by their attendance
of three meetings help by JI between 1999 and 2000 to broaden JI’s networks
(Ganjakhundee). Some Thai Militants have worked for Acehnese rebels and MILF
(Chalk "Militant Islamic Extremism in Southeast Asia", p. 52).

The impact of Thailand’s separatist organizations interactions with outside groups is that
their leaders are now essentially predating the conflict as a religious duty. Language
used by the new generation of insurgents is increasingly focussed on religion (The
Nation). Many violent actors see themselves as holy warriors. This includes the
utilisation of concepts such as shahid (martyrdom) and munafik (betrayers). Albritton
believes the core motivations of those in separatist organizations have changed from
political independence and the establishment of an independent kingdom to purely radical
ideology (Albritton, p. 168). Leaders of the more radical organizations, namely BRN-C
and GMIP, are younger than Thailand’s earlier organizations and also importantly differ
in having received training in the Middle East (Abuza "Alternate Futures for Thailand's
Insurgency ", p. 6). The radicalisation of the conflict is seen in the perpetrators readiness
to die (Dorairajoo, p. 468). This was seen in the 28th of April violence were perpetrators
were young, poorly armed, deeply religious and willing to die. The extent to which
radical Islamic ideas have permeated Thai Muslim society is certainly not mainstream and inroads made by domestic and international Islamic militant organizations due to the proliferation of these ideas is at the moment contained.

International influence cannot only come from terrorist organizations but crime syndicates, this was a previously discussed problem endemic to the region. Foreign criminal syndicates from the Middle East and Saudi Arabia are known to operate in the area (Ramakrishna, p. 147). There is the problem of easy illegal entry into Thailand with officials reporting that up to 220 terrorists including operatives from AQ and JI have passed through Thailand in 2001 and 02 and there may have been many more who would have used forged passports or circumvented immigration controls altogether (Ramakrishna, pp. 216-217). An International Crisis Group Report concedes that if the Thai groups chose to use regional organizations they already have a network in place to facilitate this (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 37). In other words there is the possibility of a broader regional jihad. Islam is being used to incite violence. Dorairajoo asserts that perpetrators are not separatists at all but rather a new group manipulating Islam to gain support from those who have long given up their separatist fight for personal gain (Dorairajoo, p. 465). Chalk describes the situation as one of primordial identity being additionally fuelled by the political influence of Islam (Chalk "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh", p. 242). Religion allows existent organizations to gain a wider network of support both internally and from abroad. Croissant recognises that the enabling political and socio-economic environment
includes the growth of Islamism (Croissant, p. 30). Jitpiromsri proposes that social
grievances serve as necessary conditions but the decisive factors lie in the movements
ideological beliefs (Srisompob and Panyasak, p. 95). Radical ideas are clearly having an
impact and whilst dire domestic conditions are necessary for the conflict to continue
radical ideas are certainly of importance and a decisive factor in the conflict (Srisompob
and Panyasak, p. 110).

3.2.3. Implications of Foreign Influence over Thailand’s Islamic Schools

Foreign influence can also be exerted on pondoks by funding from abroad to encourage
limited interpretations of Islam and the world and ustadzes returning from abroad with
their new politically radical outlook. Some ustadzes have returned from further education
abroad in Muslim countries particularly Saudi Arabia where they are able to develop a
transnational Islamic identity linking them to previously unknown conflicts involving the
persecution of Muslims and new ideas are incorporated into their belief system. Networks
of religious teachers are trained in Middle Eastern madrassahs (schools) (Albritton, p.
168). They are than able to target and infiltrate Islamic schools with the intent to
proliferate these radical ideas through their influential positions (Wattana, p. 135).

Research has made a connection between the twenty eighth of April violence and foreign
trained instigators that are likely to be ustadzes (Dorairajoo, p. 468). There are reports
that money from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Pakistan is funding ponohs,
private colleges and mosques that are willing to deliver extreme Wahhabism and Salafist
teachings (Chalk "The Indigenous Nature of the Thai Insurgency", p. 7). These Middle
Eastern donations and benefactors are increasing purest strains of Islamic teachings
But there is no concrete evidence to prove that foreign and radically motivated funding is having a significant impact on Thailand’s Malay-Muslim society and accusations may be little more than a reflection of Western paranoia with the Wahhabi and Salafi strains of Islam. What is clear is that pondoks due to their accommodating for a large number of alienated Thai Malay-Muslim youth would be a prime target for recruitment by extremist organizations (Croissant, p. 31). Therefore there is the potential for pondoks to become ‘breeding’ grounds for radical Muslims. Attracting Thai Malay-Muslim youth to separatist organizations through religious schools requires pre-existing feelings of historical discrimination, suppression, dispossession and reclaiming Patani Muslim land (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 32). Separatist organizations aim to ideologically indoctrinate youth in pondoks by manipulating a sense of Muslim identity and Islamic consciousness to attract them to their cause.

3.2.4. Counter-evidence to the Power of Foreign Influence in Driving the Conflict

Whilst radical ideas exist the ability of them to permeate across borders is hampered by Thailand’s conflict being primarily driven by realities on the ground since the annexation of Pattani rather than religious differences. When the OIC visited Thailand they importantly reached the conclusion that the conflict was not a religious one (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). The conflict may have taken on a more religious dimension but this does not mean that it is connected to a global jihad movement (Pathan). Rebels have not explicitly tied their cause to a wider Islamic cause (Chalk "The Indigenous Nature of the Thai Insurgency", p. 7). International crisis group report states that whilst
there is an Islamic consciousness and a sense of persecution and solidarity the conflict is not a manifestation of Islamic terrorism as the violence is driven by local issues (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad). Liow describes the circumstances of violence as dynamic and it cannot be purely attributed to a phenomenon of Islamic inspired violence (Liow, p. 544). Whilst resistance is expressed in Islamic language its roots lie in minority and majority relations.

The exact demographic of the new insurgency remains unknown but evidence so far points to the role of domestic separatist organizations in the conflict rather than regional and international organizations. International Crisis Group reports that separatist organizations are responsible because arson attacks against state schools along with the targeting of Buddhists and not Muslims is a classic strategy employed by separatist groups in the 80s (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Southern Thailand: Insurgency Not Jihad, p. 18). Targets preferred by JI and AQ are tourism centres and Western consulates whereas violence has been confined and been comparatively low intensity and low risk (Croissant, p. 26). Evidence of the sophistication of bombings is not proof of outside assistance from terrorist organizations (as discussed assistance can come from political interests, rival gangs, drug rings, etc). Almost all Thai officials believe that the Southern violence is purely a domestic affair (International Crisis Group: working to prevent conflict worldwide Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution, p. 21).
3.2.5. Solutions to the Infiltration of Radical Ideas From Abroad

Positive steps taken by Thailand towards the efficient resolution of the southern conflict have been taken as seen be enhanced regional communication and also pursuing the previously recognised integral component to a solution of facilitating the voice of moderates but on a regional and international arena. Thailand has hosted visits by international imminent Muslim leaders such as Amad Muzati Chairman of Nadhulatul Uluma (Thai Embassy in Washington DC). The Thai government has extended invitations to the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) to visit the south that has been accepted and taken up by a delegation. The Thai government has itself visited a meeting of the OIC. Thailand has attempted to develop ties and engage Islamic and Muslim countries particularly with neighbouring Malaysia.

3.3. Causal Relationship Between Policy and Radical Ideas

There is a clear one-way line of causation starting with inappropriate policy and resulting in the adoption of radical ideas. Whilst both are important their elimination requires acting to change policy reflecting its supreme status amongst the causes. The Thai government has been preoccupied with the Muslim character of the conflict that has wrongly informed policy that the conflict is religiously motivated and further provides for grievances that radical organizations can exploit. The role of Islam in the conflict needs to be companied with their domestic context, as it is these social, economic and political realities that primarily frame the conflict and allow for it to continue. The primary concern of the Thai government should be altering an environment that it is conducive to radicalism. Feelings of deprivation and alienation provide militant groups with a social
context to operate in where Thai Muslim-Malays are neither passive nor actively opposed to their activities (Chalk “Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao, and Aceh”, p. 246). The academic Islam recognises that the historical, political and social context determine the existence of a separatist movement and policy (and the support base of the organization) determine their success (Islam The Politics of Islamic Identity in Southeast Asia, p. 97). All three crucial components identified by Islam have a relationship with each other, as a support base is dependent on grievances that arise from the context surrounding the aggrieved and policy.

3.4. Conclusion

The conflict in southern Thailand is the result of complex, dynamic and interplaying domestic, regional and international environmental factors and ideological motivations. These have to be separated in importance so policy can be properly informed. Hardship caused by the inadequate provision of living standards perpetuated and created by discriminatory and regionally uninformed cultural, counter-terrorism, political and socio-economic policy allows for radical ideas to be absorbed. Radical ideas receive primary local and regional inspiration rather than any international directive as demonstrated by the preponderance of Thailand’s separatist organizations in the violence. The religious dimension of the conflict deserves attention and it is certainly received in our “terrorist” minded world but this is at the expense of local developments and realities that determine whether Thailand’s organizations are provided with the fodder to manipulate Thai Muslim-Malays. So whilst it is important to continue to monitor international terrorist organizations particularly their operations in confined domestic conflicts due to their
dangerous potential to exponentially aggravate the situation through feeding on discontent and sponsoring a sense of worldwide religious persecution, there is also an urgent need to change the conditions that allow for an environment of such beliefs to exist.

Word count- 13 191
Bibliography


---. "Terror Warning: Govt 'Blind to Ji Link'." 2005.


---. "Making Sense of The "Islamic Eril:"


---. "Core Economic Indicators." 2003.


---. "Insurgent: Same Faces, but Motives Have Changed." 2002.


Tan, Andrew. "Southeast Asia as the 'Second Front' in the War against Terrorism: Evaluating the Threat and Responses." Terrorism and political violence 15.2 (2003): 112.


