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**ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND:
THE ANOMALY OF SATUN**

by

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June 2012

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ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: THE ANOMALY OF SATUN

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ABSTRACT

This research uses a historical comparative analysis to investigate the differences between two specific Muslim-majority regions of Thailand: the province of Satun, along the western coast of southern Thailand, and provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Songkhla, which border the Malaysian state of Kelantan and the Gulf of Thailand.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BNPP	National Patani Liberation Front
BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasional
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CMP-43	Civilian Military Police Task Force 43
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
GAMPAR	Greater Pattani Malayu Association
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMIP	Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani
MMP	Muslim-majority provinces
PLAT	People's Liberation Army of Thailand
PM	Prime Minister
PPM	Pattani People's Movement
PULO	Pattani United Liberation Organization
RTA	Royal Thai Army
RTP	Royal Thai Police
SBPAC	Southern Border Provinces Administration Center
SLOCs	Sea lines of communication
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device

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hours, and late nights discussing the nuances of ethnicity, politics, and the history of Thailand with me, a process in which I gained a much deeper understanding and appreciation for this part of the world. Her constant encouragement and good humor to keep moving through that “last 500 feet to the summit” gave me hope that perhaps there was, in fact, a light at the end of the tunnel. Mr. Michael Stevens provided me with numerous leads and loans for academic sources and tomes along with helping me to enjoy some exquisite Thai cuisine at several working lunches. His experience in the Thai language and extensive field research throughout the southern provinces of Thailand gave me a valuable window of insight into the culture that exists in this region.

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I. ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: THE ANOMALY OF SATUN

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Major Research Question

Thailand's southern provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and Songkhla (which in the course of this paper will be referred to collectively as the "Patani region"¹) have suffered from a long record of unrest, violence, and strife that seems to have no end in sight.² This low-intensity conflict historically revolves around the societal cleavages that exist between the greater Buddhist majority within the country and the smaller populations of Thai Muslims of Malay descent who live along the Thai-Malaysian border.³ The trajectory of this violence also rose dramatically during 2004–2006, when Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra adopted a much harsher approach towards the region. However, by declaring martial law in the region, deploying additional military and police forces to "keep the peace," and suspending constitutional rights via an "emergency

¹ Historically, the name "Patani" is frequently used to describe the Islamic Sultante of Patani that existed in Southern Thailand from 1516–1902. Conversely, the name "Pattani" is usually used in a more modern context to refer to the Thai province of Pattani that first fell under Thai administrative control in 1909. The term "Patani" is highly charged with ethnic and political meaning for a large number of Muslims in southern Thailand because it harkens back to previous eras of independence, power, and eminence that the Patani Sultante possessed before it was subjected to Siamese assimilation and control. In this paper I will use the term "Patani region" to designate the collective geographic area contained within the provinces of Songkhla, Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani. This particular geographic area has been the central pillar of several movements in southern Thailand to create an autonomous or independent Islamic state on a number of different occasions.

² Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago: Islam And Politics In Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense Intelligence College, March 2007), 75.

³ In the context of this paper, I will refer to various Muslim populations by their geographic location in order to reduce the confusion associated with distinguishing different Muslim groups from each other. For example, "Kelantan Muslims" are Malay Muslims from Malaysia who live in the state of Kelantan. The "Pattani Muslims" are Muslims from the Thai province of Pattani who predominantly speak a Malay dialect known as "Jawi" and maintain very close cultural ties and similarities to the Kelantan Muslims who live to the south of the Thai-Malaysian border. The Satun Muslims (or "Sam Sams") are Muslims from the Thai province of Satun who predominantly speak the predominant Thai national language. These geographic and ethnic differences have been critical in the formation of cultural identities and the resulting history of violence in southern Thailand over the past several hundred years. Referring to communities of people by their region and religion, i.e., Pattani Muslim, is for convenience. Unless otherwise stressed, it does not imply that Islam is a politically salient identity at that time or that grievances are necessarily about religion at a point in time. When Islam is an important factor, that point will be made directly.

decree,” he exacerbated tensions between Bangkok and Patani.⁴ After Thaksin was removed by a military coup in 2006, many observers hoped that new initiatives for reform and reconciliation could take place. Unfortunately, violence in the region has continued unabated and the Thai government still struggles to peacefully resolve this situation. Although the violence has not returned to the same levels as 2004–2006, it remains a serious problem. As of 2012, it is estimated that the southern Thailand insurgency has inflicted over 5,700 deaths and roughly 12,000 injured within Muslim and Buddhist communities alike over the course of the last seven years.⁵

In the midst of these troubles, the Thai province of Satun stands out as a curious anomaly. Despite possessing many similarities to the other Muslim communities in the region, this single area has not had any serious outbreaks of religious or ethnic violence. Researchers who have investigated this region frequently report that Satun’s diverse ethnic and religious communities do not experience the same levels of distrust and violence that are found in the Patani region. In a larger sense, this same trend for nonviolence between the local populations in Satun also extends to Satun’s interactions with the Thai government. Compared to the other provinces of southern Thailand, Satun’s relationship with Bangkok lacks the distinct undertones of confrontation, separatism, and frustration that is common in Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and Songkhla.⁶ What has caused this divergent outcome in Satun? Is it a result of long standing historical or geographical factors that are unique and nontransferable? Are there particular aspects of the cultural identity found within the province of Satun that have led its citizens to denounce violence and accordingly refuse to let these conflicts take root in their communities? Did it fail to arise because Satun did not suffer from the same biased government policies, political mismanagement, and skewed center-periphery relations

⁴ Sunai Phasuk, “Emergency Decree Creates Climate of Fear in Southern Thailand,” *Thailand Monitor*, Feb 8, 2006, http://www.thaiworld.org/en/thailand_monitor/answer.php?question_id=266.

⁵ Srisompob Jitpiromsri, “The Obvious Trend of Violence’s Intensification in the Deep South Over 7 Years.” *DeepSouthWatch*, April 5, 2011, <http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/1603>.

⁶ Philip Golingai, “Satun, Thailand’s Tamed South.” *The Star*, August 1, 2009, <http://philipgolingai.blogspot.com/2009/08/satun-thailands-tamed-south.html>.

that existed between Patani and Bangkok? Or has this condition simply developed due to decisions that local individuals are making in terms of rational choices and possible economic incentives?

This thesis will investigate some of the explanations for the lack of conflict within Satun, compare them against the larger body of research that has been conducted on the more restive areas of southern Thailand, and attempt to draw some conclusions as to why this Muslim-majority province has not experienced the same levels of violence that have been endemic in other predominantly Muslim provinces. This comparison is intriguing because while many researchers have focused exclusively on describing and explaining the ongoing violence within Patani, very few analysts have conducted inquiries about Satun and attempted to explain why there is a pronounced absence of strife in this particular area. By conducting this inquiry we may be able to gain additional insight on the nature of the conflict in southern Thailand, and why the inhabitants of Satun and the Patani region have pursued such dramatically different courses of action over the years.

2. Importance

This issue has profound impacts on both the citizens of Thailand, as well as the Thai government that is charged with maintaining order and safety within the country. For the inhabitants of southern Thailand, at its most primal level, this concern is tied to having safe communities for local citizens and families to live in. For many of these southern communities, it is impossible for people to go about their daily activities such as attend school or pursue their livelihoods, without the fear of being bombed or shot in some sort of random attack. In a larger sense, this significance is also about the potential for larger conflicts to develop between different ethnic or religious groups. Satun is quite interesting in this regard due to the lack of friction between local Muslim and Buddhist communities. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Narathiwat, Yala, Patani, and Songkhala, and several authors have commented on the nascent Buddhist “militarization” within these particular provinces.⁷ This is an alarming trend, as it may add an additional

⁷ Michael Jerryson, *Buddhist Warfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 189.

religious dimension to the conflict within southern Thailand. In doing so, it could begin to expand this problem from an ethno-separatist issue that has been directed against the Thai government to a wider problem that could either increasingly define the conflict as a “Buddhist-Muslim” struggle, or possibly even attract the attention and involvement of external Jihadi influences from abroad.

From a macro perspective, the absence or presence of conflict within the country has widespread implications for the Thai government as well. First, there is the simple desire to maintain civil order and the rule of law within the country. This stability may be threatened however if the local citizenry has a strong sense that a schism exists between what they should be entitled to and what the state actually provides for them. This frustration can build up to levels where people will attempt to find some sort of alternative method to resolve this conflict they are experiencing in their lives.⁸ They may try to use the existing political and judicial systems in an attempt to gain some measure of redress. If this is not possible, they may decide to “exit,” or commit to a strategy in which their social group flees the area entirely. They might simply stop participating in the national system, or worst of all, an aggrieved population may also engage in acts of violence against targets that they perceive as being the cause of their suffering. In southern Thailand, this targeting process frequently appears to have been directed against agencies of the government: military units, police forces, government officials and offices, schools, teachers, and Buddhist temples for example. Innocent citizens often get caught up in this conflict as well if they are seen as being on an “opposing” side.⁹ If we compare these frightening conditions found in Patani to Satun, we can see that there are much closer ties between the central government and the provincial leaders in the latter region. This cooperative relationship in Satun has proven to be extremely productive within various initiatives such as political participation, conflict resolution, and economic development to include upgrading port facilities and supporting tourism.

⁸ Theda Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia & China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9.

⁹ Neil J. Melvin, “Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency,” *SIPRI Policy Paper No. 20*, September 2007, 26–27.

Having a peacefully integrated Buddhist–Muslim community also reduces the need for a constant presence of police and military forces to enforce local law and order. Achieving peace in Patani would allow the Thai government to allocate its national resources to other areas, such as the conflict along the Thailand-Cambodia border or thwarting drug-trafficking and arms smuggling. The scale and scope of this drain on Thailand’s national resources is substantial: in the wake of ongoing security concerns in the south the Thai government has dedicated in excess of 60,000 military personnel and police officers throughout Narathiwat, Yala, Patani, and Songkhala to deal with the ongoing violence.¹⁰ This fact is a dramatic counterpoint to the case of Satun, where visitors often note the conspicuous absence of roadblocks, military checkpoints, and armed government patrols.

Uncontrolled conflict within Thailand can also affect how other external countries and individuals see the Thai nation and decide to interact with it. For example, tourism alone in Thailand represents up to 7.9 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The spread of violence and instability could create a situation in which the larger global community may begin to view the country as a dangerous and risky place to conduct business or visit.¹¹ On a political or international relations level, this problem can have direct impacts on Thailand’s relationships with neighboring Muslim countries such as Malaysia or Indonesia. This exact type of scenario played out in 2005 when 131 refugees from southern Thailand fled to Malaysia seeking asylum after they felt that their lives were in danger if they remained in Patani.¹² As a result of this incident, the Malaysian government broke away from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) “noninterference” norms and refused to return the refugees to the Thai government. Malaysia also publicly questioned Thailand’s treatment of its ethnic

¹⁰ International Crisis Group. “Stalemate in Southern Thailand,” *Asia Briefing*, no. 113, November 3, 2010, 1.

¹¹ Jon Fernquest, “Income generated by Thailand’s tourism sector to be measured in greater detail,” *The Bangkok Post*, August 27, 2010, “http://www.readbangkokpost.com/easybusinessnews/hotels_restaurants_and_tourism/income_generated_by_thailands.php.”

¹² Peter Hourdequin, “Malaysia’s 2005–2006 refugee stand-off with Thailand: a security culture analysis,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 8, no. 2 (2007): 176–177.

minorities in the south and appealed to the United Nation's High Council on Refugees to intervene in the situation within southern Thailand, all of which caused the international community to view the Thai government in an extremely negative light.

3. Problems and Hypotheses

This paper proposes three main hypotheses as to why Satun has evolved over the years into a predominantly nonviolent province compared to the other southern provinces that have not:

1. Satun displays unique history and cultural components that have fostered a much different local ethnic identity and corresponding relationship to the Thai government than what is found in the Patani provinces. Satun was actually part of a different and less powerful Muslim Sultanate known as Kedah, rather than the more robust Patani Sultanate, that was the predecessor of the modern day provinces of the other southern Malay Muslim communities. Due to this divergent history, the Patani Muslims have maintained a different cultural identity as Malay Muslims and maintain a much greater sense of loss at the hands of the Thai government than the Muslims in Satun.
2. Because the Satun region assimilated more easily to the Thai government's institutional objectives (such as embracing nationalism and secular education), it did not garner the harsh repression and enforcement measures that were utilized in Patani. Conversely, the Thai government has failed to appreciate the differences between Satun and Patani noted in hypothesis (1). As a result, the Thai government's policies of subjugation and assimilation in the Patani region have been perceived by the Malay Muslims as a policy of cultural annihilation.
3. Due to the influences of a divergent ethnic identity and a different reaction to the government institutions noted in hypotheses (1) and (2), the inhabitants of Satun did not develop extensive lists of grievances against the Thai government. As a result, Satun's residents had no incentive to utilize violence against Bangkok and, in fact, the residents of Satun have specifically rejected the use of violence because of the negative effects such a choice would cause on their individual and communal lives.

The first hypothesis is focused on several formative cultural factors, such as history, language, and religion. An examination of these elements will allow us to see how they have caused a much different ethnic identity to develop in Satun when

compared to the ethnic identity that has been formed in Narathiwat, Yala, Patani, and Songkhla. The immense power of these cultural identities, and how they can propel groups to pursue different courses of action (such as violence) in response to external pressures, has been examined in a number of different social identity theories. There is little doubt that these cultural factors have provided a strong foundation for shaping the conditions we find in Satun today; however, culture alone cannot completely explain this phenomenon and there are most likely other factors at work here as well.

The second hypothesis proposes that the core of existing historical and cultural conditions within these two regions were subsequently greatly influenced by the interactions they have had with various institutions and policies that were implemented by the Thai government. Factors, such as the implementation of national education programs, center-periphery relationships, political representation, and the activities of domestic security forces, have been critical in either reducing or aggravating the potential for violence in southern Thailand. In many regards, these policies from Bangkok were viewed as less coercive and intrusive by the population in Satun than they were by the other southern provinces so Satun had a much lower amount of public discontent and grievances that were directed against the Thai government.

The third hypothesis is based on rational choice theories. Rational choice states that many individual actors will make decisions based on the relative utility gained from these calculations and resulting decisions. In both Satun and Patani, rational choice revolves around the utility of violence as a means to achieve collective goals. Unlike the Muslims in Patani, the Muslims of Satun have not pursued violence against the government due to a lack of widespread grievances and the belief that violence would only bring more problems than the potential benefits this course of action might provide. Despite a common religious linkage between the two regions, Satun sees the option of joining in a larger Muslim resistance with their Malay neighbors as having no inherent value or benefits that can be realized. Rather, this type of choice would only bring destruction and suffering into the communities of Satun much like they have in Patani. By comparison, in the Patani region, many observers believe that violence has become

viewed as a rationally calculated choice by local Muslim nationalist or insurgent groups, such as Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP), or the United Front for the Independence of Pattani (Bersatu). Due to the fact that the standard methods of conflict resolution, these groups have attempted (such as political participation, legal redress, nonviolent protest, or social exit) have frequently proven to be ineffective, or even put them at greater risk of being targeted by either government forces or other opposing insurgent and militant groups in the region, violence has become the “tool of last resort” to bring attention to their grievances.

4. Literature Review

The importance of cultural differences as a potential cause of ethnic violence has been widely discussed in many books, articles, and research papers. One of the most renowned contributions was made by Samuel Huntington in his work “The Clash of Civilizations.”¹³ This particular piece was extremely controversial when it was published in 1993, and it still has a certain degree of relevance today due to the fact that it describes the deep rooted impacts of cultural dichotomy, particularly religious divisions, in fomenting conflict. In the case of southern Thailand, some observers have theorized that Islamic extremism or Jihadism may be one of the primary causes of the violence that is taking place in the region. In many regards, it appears that Huntington’s theories are invalidated in the particular case of Satun, due to the mixed communities of Muslims and Buddhists who live in close proximity, yet do not engage in violent behavior towards each other. Huntington has also been heavily criticized by other observers, such as Edward W. Said, who felt that Huntington’s theories were oversimplified, neglected the finer details and nuances of human interactions, and that this one dimensional analysis of social interactions (i.e., declaring that religion is the only independent variable that

¹³ Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3, (1993): 25.

matters) did not consider other factors that could contribute to social friction, such as language, politics, grievances, or the absence of viable dispute resolution methods.¹⁴

Another theoretical viewpoint on the impacts of culture and religion on southern Thailand has been described by Surin Pitsuwan, a widely respected Thai academic, author, and politician, who is currently serving as the 12th Secretary General of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In his view, the role of Islam within the country has been marginalized and eclipsed in many regards by the larger cosmology of the Buddhist majority government. Particularly during the period of intensive “nation building” from 1902–1957, the Thai government aggressively promoted the beliefs of “Buddhism,” “King,” and “Nation,” and anyone who did not subscribe to these same values was not considered part of the larger group of legitimate Thai citizens. Instead, the Patani Muslims who did not subscribe to these new norms were frequently viewed with both suspicion and disdain, and even identified or labeled as a potential threat (e.g., “separatists”) to the survival of the new national construct. For the Patani region, this forced cultural identity being imposed by the Thai government threatened its inhabitants with the distinct possibility of cultural extinction. This threat became a focal point for dissent and resistance in Patani, as it amounted to a request for the Muslims in these provinces to give up the cultural identity and beliefs that they had practiced for generations, a sacrifice that they were not prepared to make. As a result, Pitsuwan claims that the Thai government’s attempts at “...national integration is synonymous with cultural disintegration from the perspective of many Malay Muslims.”¹⁵ In many regards, this threat of “cultural disintegration” has sparked deeply rooted reactions of fear and resistance and has led Patani Muslims to pursue a wide range of reactions to alleviate these concerns, including violence.

The role of nationalism in creating a strong central identity and the potential for intra-group conflict can also be seen in various works by authors, such as Benedict

¹⁴ Edward W. Said, “The Clash of Ignorance,” *The Nation*, October 22, 2001, <http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance?page=0.2>.

¹⁵ Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay nationalism: a case study of Malay-Muslims of southern Thailand* (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1985), 8.

Anderson and Craig Reynolds. Anderson explores many of the cultural explanations that revolve around values and beliefs, such as the concept of “imagined communities.” By examining how societies develop these notional constructs, Anderson feels that it is possible to describe why these types of behaviors can be so powerful in mobilizing populations to adhere to, and enforce, a singular concept of “being.”¹⁶ The “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier” for example, is cited by Anderson as an example of how a society can imprint ideas and values upon the larger group even when the idea itself is not based on any concrete reality. This adherence to a national identity can also intertwine with religion or modes of social communication or symbols in order to satisfy the desire for a cohesive, strong state.

Many times, a mythology (such as the concept of the “Unknown Soldier”) that is built up by the national leadership can often cause an increasing importance to be placed upon language or written documents to reinforce these beliefs and collective identity.¹⁷ Anderson’s claim in this regard is particularly intriguing because Thailand followed this exact same strategic process in building a national identity by implementing standardized languages, political administration systems, and cultural narratives designed by Bangkok in order to bind the country together against several perceived external threats.

Another more recent and holistic use of cultural analysis in order to explain and understand violence, especially in the realm of counter insurgency and conflict management, has been utilized by the United States military after combat operations in theaters, such as Afghanistan and Iraq since 2003. One example of this trend toward a deeper understanding of culture is a DoD publication entitled “Operational Culture for the Warfighter” written by Barak A. Salmoni and Paula Holmes-Eber. This document expands the modern day importance of this field of study and how it relates to the challenges it can create during the planning process for military operations. Instead of simply defining culture as a struggle between competing ideologies or ethnicities,

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 50.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

Salmoni and Holmes-Eber organize their framework into five interlocking “dimensions” that include the physical environment, economic considerations, social structures, political organization, and belief systems.¹⁸ Although this framework for cultural analysis overlaps several of the theoretical models used in this paper, it is another evolutionary step forward from Huntington’s work in recognizing the fact that culture consists or more than just a conflict between religions. Instead, cultural identity is a collective, subjective, and intricate construct that is linked to a myriad of human activities. The manifestation of these constructs revolves around the values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes that a society maintains within each of these five dimensions. This identity can also change over time and be defined much differently between various groups or geographic locations.¹⁹

In Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian’s 2008 article entitled “National Identity, the Sam-Sams of Satun, and the Thai Malay Muslims,” the author provides an excellent narrative of the historical development and demographics of Satun that over the years have created a unique cultural identity within this particular province, particularly in regards to linguistics. Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian argues that language has been one of the critical factors in how the Satun Muslims have been differentiated from the Patani Muslims by many different political leaders, ethnographers, researchers, and visitors to the two different regions. In fact, the name or label applied to the Muslims in Satun (“Sam-Sams”) was a truncation of the label “Siam Islam.” This name was frequently used by Thai leaders and neighboring communities to categorize the religious convictions and ethnic identity of the inhabitants of Satun as Muslims who spoke Thai in order to differentiate them from either the Thai speaking Buddhists or the Patani Muslims who spoke an entirely different dialect altogether.²⁰

In a similar fashion, Thomas Parks also discussed the impact of cultural influences within Satun in a 2009 article he wrote for *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. This

¹⁸ Barak Salmomi and Paula Holmes-Eber, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), 51.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁰ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, “National Identity, the Sam-Sams of Satun, and the Thai Malay Muslims.” In *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano et al. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), 159.

particular article makes a convincing argument that in addition to the cultural influences of language, history, and religion, these cultural explanations are intertwined with several institutional elements in order to explain why Satun has remained peaceful for so many years. According to Parks, some examples of these institutional elements at work in Satun is the fact that the Thai government allowed Satun to maintain a higher degree of political autonomy, especially during the critical years of 1902–1934, than what was allowed in Patani. The Thai government also did not employ an extensive and aggressive military presence in the province of Satun to repress local citizens, which helped to prevent grievances from developing in the region.²¹ As many researchers have noted in case studies of other countries, once popular grievances begin to “snowball” and reach a certain critical mass, they can be easily used as a catalyst for social mobilization and the use of violence in a quest for justice or a resolution of these problems. These specific interactions mentioned by Parks are just a few aspects of how the Thai government has maintained a much less repressive or intrusive presence in Satun than they did in the Patani region. This “soft” approach also facilitated positive working relationships between the Thai government located in Bangkok and Satun and allowed the “national narrative” to take root much more easily in this area.

Supara Janchitfah also described a large number of these institutional factors (such as economic development, educational systems, and the provision for regional security) in her book entitled *Violence in the Mist: Reporting on the Presence of Pain in Southern Thailand*. In this work, she has described how the government’s role in managing local schools, natural resource allocation, and municipal and state law enforcement activities is critical in mitigating the spread of alienation, frustration, and anger that can lead to violence.²² Supara’s arguments are closely linked to theories about centralism as a political structure of management and control. Centralism holds that the government will concentrate its power in a core region and then radiate agencies of

²¹ Thomas I. Parks, “Maintaining Peace in a Neighbourhood Torn by Separatism: The Case of Satun Province in Southern Thailand” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20, no. 1 (2009): 196–197.

²² Supara Janchitfah, *Violence in the Mist: Reporting on the Presence of Pain in Southern Thailand* (Bangkok, Thailand: Kobfai Publishing Project, 2004), 54.

control out towards the edges of the state. In this fashion, the dynamics of center-periphery relations are created in various areas such as elected leadership, economics, or the urban-rural divide. For example, in Thailand, the centrally located metropolitan capital of Bangkok often selects politicians and government officials from the capital region and then sends them out to the more rural hinterlands of the country to execute their duties. Although this extends the control of the center, it can also create a schism between the central representatives and the local populations that see this appointment process as both overly invasive and causing local political decisions to be directly controlled by “outsiders.”

Joseph Liow has focused on the importance of certain institutional factors in shaping the violence in southern Thailand as well. Much of his research revolves around the establishment of educational systems in Thailand and the various differences between state-sponsored schools and local Muslim pondoks that have become serious points of contention between Patani Muslim communities and the central government. As Liow points out, the Thai government has repeatedly attempted to mandate both curriculum and language training that were seen by the government as critical to building a national concept of being “Thai” and creating a homogeneous society of like-minded individuals. Two other critical components of this assimilation process has been adhering to common religious beliefs and displaying an unwavering loyalty to the Thai monarchy. Buddhism is practiced by more than 80 percent of Thai citizens, and for many years was actually mandated as the official religion within the country. It was not until the drafting of the 1997 constitution that this official status of Buddhism as a national religion was revised and a larger degree of religious freedom was allowed within Thailand.²³ Unwavering respect for the monarchy was another aspect of this indoctrination as well; an act as simple as saying anything negative about the king or marring an image of him could result in a lese majesty conviction and a possible confinement of three to fifteen years in prison. Unfortunately, these efforts by the national government to impose common

²³ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, “National Identity, the Sam-Sams of Satun, and the Thai Malay Muslims.” In *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano et al. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), 155.

educational, religious, or allegiance to Thailand's monarchy were seen by local Muslim leaders in Patani as failing to provide the elements of morality and religious fundamentalism within education that were seen as essential in developing young Patani children into proper Muslim adults. This struggle between the government and local leaders over educational institutions became yet another flashpoint for grievances to fester over the years. This contentious environment has caused many separatist and insurgent organizations to make attempts at exploiting these educational institutions as an effective means of recruiting people into their cause and advocating violence to defend their beliefs.²⁴

Duncan McCargo is perhaps one of the most prolific authors within this field of study, and he has investigated a number of possible causes for this conflict. In particular, McCargo has focused on the issue of governance and institutional frameworks, such as widespread abuses by Royal Thai Police or the forced nationalist agendas of assimilation, that have caused segments of Thailand's population to see the Thai government as seriously lacking any semblance of legitimate authority. He is quick to argue against singular explanations, and in a particularly scathing article from 2008, McCargo describes his contention that the common perception of the southern conflict in Thailand as "a coherent and expansionist radical regional Islamist movement is deeply flawed."²⁵ Due to the opaque nature of this conflict and its participants, McCargo points out that there have been a number of different explanations fielded at various times and venues, but nothing has ever proven to be concrete or positively identified to date.²⁶ In *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand* (2008), McCargo provides a veritable laundry list of potential explanations for the violence in southern Thailand:

²⁴ Joseph Liow, *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand: Tradition & Transformation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 34.

²⁵ Duncan McCargo, "What's Really Happening In Southern Thailand?" (paper presented at ISEAS Regional Forum, January 8, 2008).

²⁶ Duncan McCargo, *Tearing Apart The Land: Islam and Legitimacy In Southern Thailand* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 6.

1. It has been caused by rampant criminal activity and drug dealers;
2. Violence resulted from grievances over economic deprivation or societal marginalization;
3. The conflict was driven by a persistent toxic political environment and ineffective leadership;
4. Strife resulted from the increased presence of external Jihadist influences within Thailand, such as JI or ASF operatives that are attempting to expand their Islamic front;
5. Fighting increased dramatically in recent years due to particularly gross government mismanagement of the situation in southern Thailand during the years of 2004–2006;
6. Recent violence is possibly linked to a resurgence of various separatist activities that were originally prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s.

Although many of these arguments are compelling, McCargo opines they may not be helping us to gain an entirely accurate picture of the situation. In his opinion, one of the most critical components of this issue is that of governance and legitimacy.²⁷ Without this most basic component of civil society, in which a recognized contract between the governed and the governing has been established and agreed upon by all parties, the hopes of achieving a lasting peace in this conflict are extremely low. This theme is a common one and has several linkages back to arguments made by other researchers about the role of the national government in creating conditions that can either reduce the conflict or perhaps aggravate it.

The last analytical framework that will be used to examine Satun's peaceful propensities falls under the umbrella of Rational Choice. Authors such as Mancur Olson, Peter Chalk, or Anthony Davis have argued that although cultural and structural arguments carry a great deal of weight within this discussion, we cannot ignore the propensity of human beings to often engage in activities or decisions that will benefit them in the long run.

²⁷ Duncan McCargo, *Tearing Apart The Land: Islam and Legitimacy In Southern Thailand* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), 183.

Mancur Olson wrote many of his observations, articles, and books several decades ago but these documents still have many important theories that are applicable to the conflict in southern Thailand and elsewhere. In *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (1971), Olson comments on the relative effectiveness of large and small groups, and how smaller groups are often much more tightly knit in terms of reaching a consensus on goals and beliefs.²⁸ In addition to comparing the actions and effectiveness of large groups and small groups, Olson also emphasizes the importance that people place on gaining prestige, respect, friendship, or other social and psychological motivations. It seems that the separatist narrative is closely linked to this type of logic in that groups such as BRN or PULO hope to regain a sense of the glory and prestige that the Patani sultanate once enjoyed. Unified by purpose and intent, it seems that this type of model Olson purposes could also be used to explain why the residents of Satun have explicitly denounced the use of violence, as well as why the Patani separatist groups, such as BRN or PULO, have allegedly continued to reject any alliances with larger outside groups, such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or Abu Sayyaf (ASF) despite the possible benefits this cooperation might bring. There appears to be an intense motivation on the part of the Patani insurgent groups to “keep it local” and avoid being co-opted by larger organizations.

Peter Chalk is another researcher who has touched upon the possible impacts of rational choice motivation in the utilization of violence. In one particular interview, Chalk had conducted for his article “The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment,” (2009) a former PULO commander commented on the decision making process that was driving the violence within the country in both years past and the current era saying:

I fought for years in the jungle against the Thai state. I am still very much a[n Ethnic Malay Muslim] nationalist and still dream of a free Patani Darulsalam. I will never hesitate to take up arms to fight again. But not

²⁸ Mancur Olson, *The Logic Of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 53–65.

like this, not the way this generation is conducting it. It seems like they are just killing for killing's sake- creating fear to increase their power and control our people.²⁹

This statement is intriguing in many regards because it provides rational choice motivations from this respondent for both the reasoning behind enlisting in historic separatist struggles (to gain independence), as well as what the possible motivations may be for the new generations of insurgents that are operating within Patani (the pursuit of power and local prestige).

Anthony Davis pursues the impetus of rational choice decision making from a more economic perspective, particularly in regards to the influence of smuggling or black market economies. In his article from 2005, Davis argues that the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) along the western coasts of Thailand are major avenues for weapons and narcotics smuggling into other various conflict regions such as Aceh or Mindanao.³⁰ As a result of this economic flow, there are possibly elements of the local government, security organizations, and business interests that may be keeping the local security situation in Satun under control in order to avoid the presence of Thai national military or law enforcement elements that might stifle these illicit avenues of income. Another possible extension of economically based rational choice theories is that legitimate sources of economic incentives such as tourism or infrastructure monies received from the central government may be a consideration for leaders and communities in Satun to avoid violence and instability.

5. Methods and Sources

The question of Satun's peaceful nature in comparison to Patani will be conducted throughout this thesis as a comparative case study. By examining the various differences between Satun and Patani, we can begin to see the divergent patterns that exist between these two areas which may have aggravated the proliferation of violence in some areas

²⁹ Peter Chalk, Angel Rabasa, William Rosenau, and Leanne Piggott. *The Evolving Terrorist Threat To Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 22.

³⁰ Anthony Davis, "Satun Escapes The Grip of Thai Violence That is Blighting South," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (2005): 4.

and prevented it in others. My inquiry relates most directly to the study of history and sociology, although there is a certain degree of overlap in this approach with the fields of ethnic conflict studies and political science as well. There are both advantages and disadvantages to pursuing this type of methodology. Mill's method of difference and the use of small N case studies offer us a simple theoretical framework to identify the likely cause of dissimilar outcomes in apparently similar cases. Unfortunately, as Arend Lijphart points out, this type of approach carries some degree of risk.³¹ For example, there are many variables to be examined, but only a small number of cases to do so with. It is also important to realize that this type of methodology will not provide a probabilistic explanation, but can only help us to reach more deterministic conclusions about what may be causing this phenomenon. With this being said, there are still some benefits available to researchers using this type of approach as the comparison of intra-area conflict can "...be of great value since certain political processes will be compared between units within the area against a common background of similar trait configuration."³²

Most of the information for this thesis has been obtained from secondary sources, including books, scholarly journals, research articles, and magazines. The Internet also provided an excellent resource to access information found in newspapers such as the *The Nation* or *The Bangkok Post*. These types of publication have frequently published current information on events such as insurgent attacks, political dialogue or debate, and civil-military relations which can provide extremely relevant insights into this problem as well as documenting past events that have taken place within the Thai government and in the restive southern provinces.

6. Thesis Overview

This thesis is organized into six sections: An introduction, four main chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction a quick overview of the region is provided, framing the

³¹ Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *The American Political Science Review*, 65, no. 3 (1971): 685.

³² *Ibid.*, 688.

nature and magnitude of the problem, and then a more specific question is presented to the reader. Specifically, I will determine why the province of Satun has remained peaceful compared to the neighboring Muslim provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Patani, and Songkhala, which have been wracked by assassinations, bombings, arson attacks, and other terrorist activities over the past several years. In addition, the introduction will be utilized to provide a brief overview of the main schools of thought for explaining conflict proposed in this thesis, specifically cultural, institutional, or rational choice models.

Chapters II and III consist of historical narratives that will examine Satun and Patani's evolution from roughly 700 CE to the current day. By exploring the divergent trajectories of these two regions using a historical comparison, we can clearly begin to see some of the similarities that exist between these two areas as well as their pronounced differences. This story of political development and power consolidation from a macro (national) and micro (regional) perspective will also help to illustrate that the periods of violence and peace in southern Thailand have often followed a sine wave pattern of elevated levels of violence during some periods and record lows in others.

Chapters IV and V will explore the different additional influences for Satun's quiescent nature and Patani's persistent violence using the three types of explanations outlined in the introduction (cultural, institutional, and rational choice). Each of these categories are extremely broad in terms of the independent variables that could be discussed, so I have narrowed each category down to a few critical elements that are most pertinent to this discussion. In regards to culture, I investigate certain long-standing influences in both regions, such as language, and religion. Although the vast majority of explanations for the violence in southern Thailand are institutional in nature, it was important to narrow the field of these possible institutional factors down to some of the more frequently cited causes. Some of the more common explanations within this particular category have included education, center-periphery relations, political representation, and the use or actions of domestic security forces. Lastly, these chapters (IV and V) will also examine the potential impact of rational choice models for both of these provinces. For example, it appears that economic considerations may directly

contribute to Satun's continued pursuit of peaceful coexistence with the Thai government. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that in a cost-benefit analysis, the residents of Satun see no benefit in resorting to violence against the Thai government, even if it is framed in a "legitimate" mantle of jihad that is supposed to be in defense of fellow Muslims. In Patani, violence has been selected as a defensive measure to protect valuable cultural practices, but also as a means of projecting power and gaining attention to some of the grievances that are taking place within the region.

In the conclusion, an analysis and summary of the comparisons between these two regions will be drawn in order to identify the reasons for the lack of violence in Satun.

In an article written in 2008, Jack Levy discusses the capacities and liabilities of case studies much like the one proposed here.³³ It is extremely challenging to address this specific topic with so many potential independent variables that could be taken into consideration. However, I believe that if we use the formation of an ethnic identity as our core independent variable, we can see how this particular element in both Satun and Patani has interacted with various institutions that followed it in order to cause several rational choice decisions to be made by the populations in each region. This particular arrangement of topics was chosen because it allows the thesis to approach this subject from two logical lines of analysis. First, it provides a standardized template of characteristics that can be used as a "yardstick" to compare the two different regions. Second, by conducting a side-by-side analysis, it allows us to contrast the differences between these two regions more dramatically.

B. SATUN'S DEMOGRAPHICS AND HISTORY

The southern province of Satun can be easily identified on a map of Thailand's southern provinces (Figure 1) and it shares many inherent similarities to the other local provinces that surround it, such as Narathiwat, Patanni, Yala, and Songkhla.³⁴ First and

³³ Jack Levy, "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25 (2008): 1–18.

³⁴ "International Crisis Group. "Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution" *Asia Report*, no. 105, 2005, Appendix B.

foremost, the populations of Satun, Narathiwat, Patanni, and Yala are all predominantly of the Muslim faith. In 1960, census data from these regions show that the estimated Muslim population in Satun is roughly 83 percent, Narathiwat, 78 percent, Patanni, 78 percent, Yala 61 percent and Songkhla at approximately 19 percent.³⁵ Although Songkhla has typically contained a lower number of Muslims than the other province, it still shares many close historical and commercial links to Satun, Narathiwat, Patanni, and Yala. Some forty years later, the 2000 national census showed that although Satun's Muslim population had declined by roughly 15 percentage points (68 percent) all of the Muslim populations in the other provinces had risen slightly- Narathiwat had increased to 82 percent, Patanni 81 percent, Yala 69 percent, and Songkhla at 23 percent.³⁶ Despite the changes in these demographics, it is clear that the trend for many of Thailand's Muslims to be concentrated in these regions continues into the 21st century. In a country where 94 percent of the population practices the Buddhist faith and speaks Thai, the presence of large, consolidated pockets of Muslim communities within Thailand is an interesting divergence to explore, especially in regard to the potential for ethnic conflict.³⁷

Second, Satun has a shared history with its neighbors in that it was part of an autonomous region for several centuries prior coming under the direct control of the Thai government. In the case of the modern day provinces of Narathiwat, Patanni, Yala, and Songkhla, these areas were part of a powerful collective sultanate known as Patani, while Satun fell under a different independent Sultanate called Kedah during Thailand's early historical annals from approximately 1136 to 1821 CE.³⁸

³⁵ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "The Historical Development of Thai-Speaking Muslim Communities in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia." In *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, ed. Andrew Turton (Surrey UK: Curzon Press, 2000), 176. Although these statistics are somewhat dated (1960 Bangkok population census), they still represent a consistent historical fact: these regions have been, and continue to be, populated by a majority of the Muslims within the country.

³⁶ "Population & Housing Census," National Statistical Office of Thailand, Economic and Social Statistics Bureau, 2000. http://web.nso.go.th/pop2000/pop_e2000.htm.

³⁷ "United Nations Thailand Country Monograph," March 2012. <http://www.un.or.th/thailand/population.html>.

³⁸ All of the historical dates and time references in this thesis will be based on the "Current Era" or Christian calendar. The year 1136 is the frequently cited date when King Phra Ong Mahawangsa converted to Islam and established Kedah as a Muslim Sultanate.

Lastly, there is the impact of geography itself. This attribute is enduring and unchangeable in many regards and can have direct impacts on the sociological and political developments of various regions due to the effects geography can cause such as accessibility into the region, proximity to centers of power, and availability of resources. The location of Satun in relation to other countries and social groups, as well as the presence of natural barriers between Satun and external agencies, has also played a critical role in the absence of conflict in this region. A map of Thailand for example (Figure 2) shows the immense distance between Satun and Bangkok as well as the distinct separation between Satun and other MMP areas along the Thai-Malaysian border.³⁹ In the case of Satun itself, the province is bounded by a ring of rough, mountainous terrain, and several observers have theorized that its geography has prevented the ease of movement between Malaysia and southern Thailand and reduced the number of cross-border linkages between Satun and Perlis.⁴⁰ This natural barrier was also one of the reasons that the current border between Satun and Perlis exists as it does: Siamese and British cartographers and politicians used these formations as a convenient “marker” to identify the administrative limits between the two countries in 1909. Another critical aspect of Satun’s geography is the distance that exists between the province and centers of political power, such as Alor Setar or Bangkok. Especially before the advent of modern means of transportation and travel was strictly conducted by foot or animals, it often took several days or even weeks to make the journey between these locations. As a result, it was difficult for leaders in the Kedah Sultanate or the Siamese government to easily apply direct control to these subsidiary or peripheral areas. Contemporary access methods such as roadways or airports are a fairly recent development and to this day, the geography around Satun prevents a large majority of people from easily moving north/south via overland routes. A border crossing at Wang Prachan was constructed in 1984, and prior to this development, the only other means for quickly moving between

³⁹ Thailand Administrative Divisions,” January 10, 2012. World of Maps website, http://www.worldofmaps.net/uploads/pics/karte_thailand.jpg.

⁴⁰ Thomas I. Parks, “Maintaining Peace in a Neighbourhood Torn by Separatism: The Case of Satun Province in Southern Thailand” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20, no. 1 (2009): 193.

these two locations was by maritime vessels going to the ports of Tammalang or Chebilang. In addition to physical aspect of geographic barriers between Satun and other neighboring regions, there are also the administrative or political boundaries that isolate this region as well. For example, the province of Songkhla to the east and south of Satun effectively interposes a broad band of Thai Buddhist territory between Satun and Patani.⁴¹ One might think that this presence of Thai Buddhists would create conflict between Satun and Songkhla, but in reality, these two provinces have historically maintained congenial relations and conducted extensive commercial trade between them.



Figure 1. Five Southernmost Provinces of Thailand

⁴¹ Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities Of The Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 80.



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Figure 2. Administrative Provinces of Thailand.

It was only fairly recently, during 1909, that these Muslim-majority provinces (MMP) were permanently incorporated into Thailand as a whole. Some of these communities were able to undertake this transformation and assimilation process much more easily than others, but the question remains as to why some regions were able to conduct this process more easily. Lastly, as with other peripheral regions of Thailand, such as the north and the northeast, these southern MMPs had to contend with the imposition of national political and social institutions that were aggressively promoted by the Thai government. In an attempt to create a unified nationalistic identity throughout the southern regions, and indeed throughout Thailand itself, Thai leaders relied on enforcing mandated standards for what it meant to be “Thai” via the practice of various social behaviors, such as language, religion, and education. Unfortunately, this aspect of ethnic assimilation by the central government also contained the potential seeds of conflict and rebellion.

Recently, the Thai government has implemented cordon and search operations since 2007 in an attempt to control the violence in the south and although these measures have reduced the overall numbers of insurgent attacks, the incidents that did occur were marked by much higher levels of brutality (such as beheadings or burnings) and the use of more powerful vehicular borne explosive devices within densely populated urban targets.⁴² This well-documented chaos and violence in the Patani region makes Satun an intriguing province to study because Satun has not suffered from the same waves of insurgency and terrorism that has plagued Narathiwat, Patanni, Yala, and Songkhla. This is not due to a lack of effort on the part of Islamic extremists in the region. On many different occasions and in a number of documents, Satun has been included in the Patani rubric of Islamic autonomy and independence, despite the fact that it was never historically a part of these neighboring provinces. For example, the GAMPAR (Gabungan Melayu Pattani Raya, or “The Association of Malays of Greater Pattani”) manifesto of 1948 published a letter of intent that stated a desire to:

⁴² International Crisis Group, “Southern Thailand: Moving Towards Political Solutions?” *Asia Report*, no. 181, December 2009, 4.

... unite the four provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun as a Malay Islamic state and liberate its residents from oppression and exploitation; establish a state appropriate to Islamic traditions and practices to meet the demands of the Malay-Muslims; and to improve the status and quality of life of the Malay-Muslims in the areas of humanity, justice, freedom and education without delay.⁴³

These types of sentiments were mirrored in later years by other more militant when groups such as the Patani United Liberation Organization (or PULO, which was established in 1968) declared that:

... the secession of the majority Malay-Muslim regions of southern Thailand, and the establishment of an independent Malay-Muslim state in their place. This state would be comprised of the provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala, and Satun, along with several majority Malay-Muslim districts of adjacent Songkhla province.⁴⁴

In addition to published and public statements, there have been several reports that insurgent groups have attempted to establish themselves in Satun in order to recruit the province's Muslim population into the larger struggle against the Thai government in Narathiwat, Patanni, Yala, and Songkhla. Interestingly, these attempts at recruitment and expanding the scope of rebellion into Satun were consistently rebuffed and quickly reported to Satun's provincial authorities by local citizens. Because of this active "neighborhood watch" activity in Satun, the local police were able to return these insurgent emissaries back to the "deep south" and quickly dampen insurgent efforts before they became problematic.⁴⁵ This particular interaction is just one of several reasons why violence and rebellion have not had the ability to gain a foothold in Satun.

What other factors have contributed to this divergent outcome to take place in Satun? There are three main schools of thought for explaining the absence of ethnic or

⁴³ International Crisis Group. "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," *Asia Report*, no. 98, 2005, 6.

⁴⁴ "Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism," February 17, 2012, <http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-World-Insurgency-and-Terrorism/Patani-United-Liberation-Organisation-PULO-Thailand.html>.

⁴⁵ Anthony Davis, "Satun Escapes The Grip of Thai Violence That is Blighting South," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (2005): 4.

religious violence in this particular region. The first possible explanation that some researchers advocate is that cultural factors, such as history, language, and religious practices have been instrumental in shaping the consistent trends of nonviolence that are found in Satun. The second explanation is that structural or institutional influences are the cause of this phenomenon, especially with respect to various grievances local populations have suffered at the hands of the Thai government. The third explanation for the lack of violence in Satun is that rational choice factors are at work in this situation. The vast majority of the population in Satun has decided that there is little benefit to engage in violence against the government because of the negative results such a course of action would create. In particular, the use of violence would result in increased numbers of government troops and national police being brought into Satun, and the repressive security measures that would be used to restore order would undoubtedly cause immense suffering in the area. This is a specific outcome and condition that the inhabitants of Satun have chosen to avoid.

This thesis posits that the current nonviolent conditions in Satun have been shaped by its unique history and cooperative relationship with the Thai government. In particular, the ethnic identity of the region has proven to be much more malleable and adaptive than the Patani provinces. This flexibility has subsequently encouraged a more peaceful response to the Thai government's nationalist agenda that was strictly enforced within the country from 1909 to 1945 and has been present within the country to varying degrees ever since the early 20th century.⁴⁶ This foundation of Satun's ethnic identity has subsequently been strongly reinforced by institutional factors implemented by the Thai government such as public education and the use of Thai as a national language. Because of these cultural and institutional influences, the subsequent decision to employ violence either in Satun or in assisting Satun's neighboring provinces of Narathiwat, Patanni,

⁴⁶ Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago: Islam And Politics In Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense Intelligence College, 2007), 62–65.

Yala, and Songkhla to conduct insurgent operations against the government was seemingly an easy one to make on the part of Satun's Muslim population: it just simply was not worth it.

1. Satun's Historical Record

Although it can be argued that a wide variety of factors can contribute to the formation of a cultural identity, in the scope of this paper, I will focus on three main independent variables: history, language, and religion. These three particular components all represent parts of a strong evolutionary influence that has created a much different ethnic or cultural identity to develop in Satun than what we find in other MMPs within Thailand. As a result, violence and insurgency have not been able to find a suitable environment to easily take root in this region.

a. *Early Satun History Prior to 1200 CE*

The modern day province of Satun has an extensive documented history that stretches back for over 2,000 years. The course of this narrative is critical to illustrating how different Satun's cultural identity is from Narathiwat, Patanni, Yala, or Songkhla. Before Satun existed as either a district of the Malay state of Kedah, or as a province of Thailand, it was actually a part of a Hindu kingdom founded by Maharaja Derbar Raja of Geron around the 7th century CE. The Maharaja Derbar Raja, who was also known by the name Bandar Abbas, was a Persian ruler who fled his homeland after being defeated in battle. During his journey, he was blown off course by a storm and landed in the southern Isthmus of Thailand in the vicinity of Kedah's modern day capital of Alor Setar.⁴⁷ The local population of Malay Hindus is believed to have found Bandar Abbas to be an intelligent and honorable leader and he was soon appointed as the Rajah

⁴⁷ This early history is mentioned in several different sources, to include the *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* (also referred to as *The Kedah Annals*), but the stories of Maharaja Derbar Raja remains a topic of great dispute and debate. What is more commonly accepted is the formation of the Islamic Sultanate of Kedah in approximately the 12th century and its subsequent interactions with the Siamese state from the Sukhothai Era forward.

of the Hindu-Malay kingdom of Kedah. This represents one of the oldest Hindu-Malay kingdoms recorded on the Thai-Malaysian peninsula along with the kingdom of Langkasuka that preceded it.

Four centuries later, the 9th Hindu Rajah of Kedah (Dubar Rajah II) or “Phra Ong Mahawangsa” as he was known by the Siamese, converted to Islam after this religion was introduced to the area by Muslim traders and converts from today’s modern state of Aceh.⁴⁸ Phra Ong Mahawangsa ruled the sultanate of Kedah in what is now southern Thailand and the northern sector of the Malay peninsula from roughly 1136 to 1179. Satun, which was referred to as “Mambang Segara,” or “Mukin Setul” in the Malay language, existed under this umbrella of control for many years; however, it was on the northernmost periphery of the Kedah sultanate and was often removed from the center of politics and power maintained by Kedah in the capital of Alor Setar. This factor of distance and center-periphery relationships would play heavily in the formation of Satun’s cultural identity in the years to follow. The relationship between Satun and Kedah was amicably maintained for several centuries, although in 1238 Kedah and its subsidiaries began to have more interaction with the Siamese empires to the north, such as the Sukothai and Ayutthaya dynasties that were expanding and gaining power within the region.

b. The Ayutthaya Dynasty, 1351–1767

Although the fairly short lived Sukhothai Empire (1238–1448) is often cited as the starting point for Muslim interactions in Siamese and Thai politics, it was not until the Ayutthaya Dynasty that Muslims, along with many other ethnic and religious groups, began to rise to positions of power and prestige within Siam due to the inclusive and cosmopolitan nature of this kingdom.⁴⁹ One reason for this trend was the growth of regional trading centers, such as Java, Sumatra, Malacca, the western coast of Thailand

⁴⁸ Maziar Mozaffari-Falarti, “Kedah’s Islamic conversion stories or gateways to its pre-Islamic past,” (paper presented at the 2nd Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asia Studies, Singapore, 26–27 July 2007).

⁴⁹ Omar Farouk Bajunid, “The Muslims in Thailand: A Review,” *Southeast Asian Studies*, 37, no. 2 (1999): 217.

(e.g., Satun), and Burma, all of which had important roles as shipping entrepôts; trading posts for materials, such as tin, teak, spices, silk, or precious metals; and waypoints for maritime traffic heading west to India or east toward China.⁵⁰ This interaction also corresponded with the spread of Islam through the Malay Archipelago and the presence of many different cultures that actively participated within the Ayutthaya court, such as Indians, Persians, Portuguese, Chinese, and Malays. For example, one Muslim of west Asian origin served under King Prasat Thong from 1629 to 1656 as a royal advisor and minister in charge of foreign trade, import-export duties, and international shipping.⁵¹

As Thanat Aphornsuvan points out in an article from 2003, the Muslims who enjoyed these relationships within the Ayutthaya court were frequently Shiite Muslims from Arab and Persian backgrounds who were able to easily assimilate into the noble classes of the Siamese monarchs through intermarriage and political service. This lay in stark contrast to the Muslims of the Satun and Patani regions who adhered to the Sunni lineage of religious beliefs and frequently pursued their livelihoods in agriculture, a difference that stratified and differentiated the patterns of Islamization within Thailand during this period.⁵² Specifically, the professions or trades that these groups performed in the society also determined the level of access they would have to political power and involvement in the royal court. Another aspect of Ayutthaya's relatively benign relationship with the southern Malay regions was the tradition of the *Bunga Mas Dan Perak*, which began approximately in the 14th century. The *Bunga Mas* or "golden and silver flowers" consisted of various expensive gifts sent to the Siamese kings: several small trees made of precious metals, as well as four spears with gilded shafts, a kris encrusted with gems, a spittoon, a box, an arrangement of betel leaves, and two rings. These gifts were a regular tribute sent every three years to the King of Siam from vassal

⁵⁰ Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2007), 50.

⁵¹ Omar Farouk Bajunid, "The Muslims in Thailand: A Review," *Southeast Asian Studies*, 37, no. 2 (1999): 218.

⁵² Thanet Aphornsuvan, "History and Politics of the Muslims in Thailand." *Cornell University South East Asia Program Post-Secondary Teaching Materials*. December 2, 2003, 9, <http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/system/files/MuslimThailand.pdf>.

states in the Malay peninsula, specifically Kedah, Pattani, Kelantan, and Terengganu. In return, the King of Siam sent the southern sultanates gifts of equal value to reciprocate. From the perspective of the southern Malays, this practice was conducted as a symbol of friendship. For the Siamese, *bunga mas* was seen as an indicator of their suzerainty over their distant territories. Although these groups interpreted this relationship slightly differently, all of these political conditions under the Ayutthaya leadership represented a trend toward indirect control, multi-culturalism, and benign relations that allowed local regions like Satun to have a great deal of local autonomy and freedom. Due to the growing pressure of several different internal and external influences within Southeast Asia, however, this relationship was about to shift dramatically.

c. The Chakri Dynasty and the Bangkok Period, 1767–1902

As the Ayutthaya Kingdom went into decline and defeat at the hands of the Burmese, it was replaced by the Chakri Dynasty, which had different priorities and ways of handling domestic politics than its predecessors. One of the immediate concerns of the Chakri leaders was protecting Thai territory against the pressures of territorial encroachment from local Southeast Asian competitors, such as Burma, Cambodia, or Laos, as well as defending against larger threats posed by expanding imperial power, such as the British and French. Siam began to use various elements of national power, specifically diplomacy and the military, to achieve its goals, which centered on a consolidation of territorial control and survival. Siamese leaders also decided to pursue a strategy of political assimilation throughout the country using physical force and direct intervention in many of the Malay states and surrounding territories.⁵³

Although Satun remained under the political control of Kedah for many years and had been granted a great deal of autonomy during the Ayutthaya Era by leaders in both the Kedah sultanate and the Siamese government, this soon began to change. In 1813, Satun fell under the administration of Siamese governors sent from Nakhon Si Thammarat, which helped to extend the control from the center of the Siamese

⁵³ Omar Farouk Bajunid, "The Muslims in Thailand: A Review," *Southeast Asian Studies*, 37, no. 2 (1999): 221.

government to the edges of the country by sending “trusted agents” to oversee local affairs. Even worse, in 1821, Siamese forces launched a coordinated attack against the sultanate of Kedah, moving ground forces overland from the north and east and also bringing several heavily armed ships into the Kedah port of Kuala Kedah.⁵⁴ This sudden aggression forced Kedah’s sultan Ahmad Taju’din to flee to Penang, but in an interesting turn of events, this military attack did not bring about the control of the region that King Rama III had originally hoped. Instead, thousands of citizens fled Kedah for the safety of Penang in the wake of the Siamese invasion, prompting Rama III to declare:

In the case of Kedah, three-quarters of the inhabitants have gone over into British territory and we have only been able to hold on to a quarter of the population. And a lot of these have been brought up here as captives, so there aren’t many left...If we abandoned Kedah, we would be losing a considerable source of revenue and the British would pick it up and annex it; we cannot treat the matter lightly.⁵⁵

Although the Siamese government had expelled the leaders of Kedah via military force, Rama III was forced to actually reinstate them in 1842 in order to bring the local populations back into the area and re-stabilize the region.⁵⁶

The situation in Satun was quite similar to what was seen in Kedah. Although Siam had gained direct military control of the province, several of the Muslim leaders in Satun were left in place to continue running local government organizations. Many observers have commented on the paradox that took place within Satun during this time period in that here was a region in which the Siamese government allowed local leaders to ultimately remain in place and it actually had far less future outbreaks of violence and rebellion when compared to the more rebellious Patani region where local populations were forced to assimilate to new policies and ousted leaders were not permitted to return to the area.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Maziar Mozaffari-Falarti, “Kedah: The Foundations and Durability of Malay Kingship,” *Humanities Research Program* (Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 2009), 23.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁷ Thomas I. Parks, “Maintaining Peace in a Neighbourhood Torn by Separatism: The Case of Satun Province in Southern Thailand” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20, no. 1 (2009): 199.

Following the Siamese attacks on Kedah and its assimilation into the Chakri territories during 1821, King Rama III soon signed the Burney Accord (also known as the Treaty of Amity and Commerce) with Britain in 1826. This document stated that Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu would remain exclusively Thai provinces while Penang and Province Wellesley would belong to the British. In addition, Thailand agreed not to interfere with British trade being conducted in Kelantan and Terengganu. This trend toward Siamese militarism and expansion was directed against many regional neighbors, not just the southern Malay states. In 1827, the Lao capital of Vientiane was sacked and the Laotian King Chao Anouvong found himself imprisoned in an iron cage in the Siamese capital. The Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh was also burned to the ground and a Chakri proxy was installed to do the bidding of the Siamese leadership. Forced population movements were instituted and massive numbers of people were essentially kidnapped from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and the southern Malay regions in order to repopulate areas of Siam that had been decimated during the wars with Burma. In 1833, King Rama III dispatched a Siamese army from Bangkok into western Cambodia telling them to:

... turn Cambodia into a forest, only the land, the mountains, the rivers, and the canals are to be left. You are to carry off the Khmer families to be resettled in Thai territory, do not leave any behind. It would be good to treat Cambodia as we did Vientiane.⁵⁸

King Chulalongkorn, also known as King Rama V, ruled Siam from 1868–1910 and is one of the most widely respected monarchs and civic reformers in the country's history. He is not only credited with developing a wide range of national management mechanisms that took Thailand down a path of modernization, but his reforms frequently were also designed to allow the center of Bangkok to extend political and social control out to the peripheries of the country. Chulalongkorn adopted many of these policies after studying western methods of governance that included the Napoleonic

⁵⁸ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 29.

code and British colonial districts he observed in India.⁵⁹ Some of the initiatives Chulalongkorn implemented included fairly progressive ideas for the time such as the abolition of gambling, the corvee, and slavery. He also instituted a reform of the courts, created salaried bureaucracies, organized standing police forces and army units, and improved upon the country's agriculture and educational capabilities.

This movement to create a more powerful national government was extended again in 1897 via the Local Administration Act when King Chulalongkorn's half-brother, Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, established the *thesaphiban* or "control over territory" system. The *thesaphiban* model organized the country into subdivisions known as *monthons*, as well as provinces (*changwat*), districts (*amphoe*), and communes (*tambon*).⁶⁰ This particular event caused Satun to officially become incorporated as part of the *Monthon Saiburi* (Southern Division) and marked another turning point in which Satun and the Kedah sultante was increasingly absorbed into the growing national control being established by the Siamese government. Lastly, Chulalongkorn also began to reinforce the inculcation of certain values and beliefs throughout Siam, specifically the promotion of concepts such as *chart* (the nation), *satsana* (religion), and *phra mahakasat* (the monarchy), which were designed to unify the diverse ethnic population within Siam into a single ethnic identity.⁶¹ These three concepts would prove to be cornerstones of the future development of nationalism and "Thaification" that would dominate the country and its inhabitants in the 20th century and also prove to be the genesis for increasing amounts of conflict and violence.

⁵⁹ Yoneo Ishii, "Thai Muslims and the Royal Patronage of Religion," *Law & Society Review, Law and Society in Southeast Asia*, 28, no. 3 (1994): 457.

⁶⁰ *Monthons* or "divisions" in Thailand correspond roughly to the geographic organization method we use in the United States. For example, in America a collective of various states make up a larger regional area such as "The West Coast," "The Northeast," or "The South." Thai Provinces, districts, and communes are roughly equivalent in size and organization to our states, counties, and cities in the U.S.

⁶¹ Panitan Wattanayagorn, "Thailand: The Elite's Shifting Conceptions of Security," *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 418–420.

d. Nationalism and the Modern Era 1902–Present

In 1902, the Siamese government took additional steps to increase its control of the southern regions. One of the methods that King Chulalongkorn used to do this was to formally incorporate the Patani region into Siam and divide this area into three separate provinces, namely Patanni, Narathiwat, and Yala.⁶² The Siamese government replaced the local leadership in Patani and replaced them with officials from Bangkok who only spoke Thai and reported directly to the government leaders in the capital. This same sort of consolidation and control was instituted in religion and the monarchy as well. The Sangha Act of 1902, for example, organized the Buddhist underpinnings of the government by structuring all of the *Wat* (temples) and monks in the country in a hierarchal chain all the way from the king and the supreme patriarch down to individual monks throughout Siam, which reinforced the linkage between the government and Buddhism as the dominant religion within the country. The monarchy was designated as an all-powerful “brain” that was charged with making decisions for the good of the country, as Chulalongkorn described it:

The king rules absolutely at his own royal desire. There is nothing greater than this. The king has absolute power as 1) ruler over the realm and refuge for the people; 2) the source of justice; 3) the source of rank and status; 4) commander of the armed forces who relieves the people’s suffering by waging war or conducting friendly relations with other countries. The king does no wrong. There is no power that can judge or punish him.⁶³

Due to increasing conflicts with Britain over the border demarcation between southern Siam and northern Malaysia, the Siamese government made an arrangement with the United Kingdom to split the *Monthon Saiburi*, to include Satun, between the two states as part of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. In this particular arrangement, Siam returned the areas of Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu to Britain and in return Siam gained control of the Patani region of Narathiwat, Patanni,

⁶² International Crisis Group. “Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad,” *Asia Report*, no. 98, 2005, 2.

⁶³ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 71.

Yala, and Songkhla. While most of Kedah was ceded to Britain, Satun was awarded to Siam because the vast majority of its population was identified as being Siamese and having widely practiced socio-cultural traits that tied the province more closely to the capital located in Bangkok than Kedah's center of power in Alor Setar. During this period of upheaval and change, Satun was still able to keep a degree of local autonomy that was not seen or practiced in the Patani region, a factor that helped to largely reduce grievances and the potential for rebellion to occur in Satun during the years following 1909.

Nineteen hundred and thirty-two marked a dramatic change for the entire country and Siamese government when a bloodless coup initiated by the *Khana Ratsadon* (People's Party) under the leadership of Pridi Banomyong succeeded in converting Siam into a constitutional monarchy. As a result of this revolution, King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) was forced into allowing the Siamese people to implement a new national constitution, which effectively ended centuries of rule by an absolute monarchy. The *monthon* system was abolished in 1933, and Satun province became a first-level subdivision of Thailand at the end of that year. A similar reorganization was conducted with the Patani region, resulting in the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun being established with the territorial boundaries that they still have today.⁶⁴ Although these developments would seem to indicate an evolutionary movement toward a nation that would allow greater political participation and social multiculturalism, Siam in fact drifted toward "ultranationalist" right wing policies under the leadership of Phibun Songkhram from 1938 to 1944.

The policies implemented during Phibun's control of the country were even more restrictive than anything that had been organized or executed previously under the Chakri Dynasty. Phibun's cultural mandates, called the *Ratthaniyom*, tried to eliminate long standing ethnic differences within the country in order to standardize and reinforce what it meant to be "Thai." The *Ratthaniyom* effectively banned the Malay

⁶⁴ James Ockey, "Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand." In *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano et al. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), 126.

language from being used in government offices, required Muslims to have Thai names if they wanted to seek government employment, prohibited traditional Muslim attire from being worn in public, and attempted to enforce nationalist curriculum within Thai schools.⁶⁵ Phibun also officially renamed the country from “Siam” to “Thailand” (“land of the Thais”) which represented yet another attempt to move away from a multi-cultural Siamese identity that had previously existed throughout the country to a new and more homogenized Thai identity.

These policies were inflammatory for some of Thailand’s Muslim populations, and it appeared to many of these minority groups throughout the country that they were increasingly faced with two options: either submit to the central government’s directives by forsaking their language, culture, and religion or attempt to resist these pressures. Ergo, these series of events represented a major turning point in the country. Historically, this is where we see increasing levels of Islamic separatism, resistance groups, and independence movements began to develop and garner a large amount of local support in the Patani region. Satun, however, had cultivated an amicable relationship with Bangkok in many regards over the years and did not have the same reactions to these developments that Patani did. Although there was a slight degree of nonviolent protest in Satun during 1921 due to the Siamese government’s introduction of the Compulsory Primary Education Act, the local leaders of the province were able to resolve this disagreement with leaders in Bangkok without resorting to violence. In many respects, most Thai citizens in Satun viewed the measures that were implemented within their province by the Thai government as a mark of progress and welcomed them accordingly.

Another important development in the late 1940s was the emergence of various organizations that pursued agendas centered on the mobilization of the Patani

⁶⁵ At this point in Thailand’s history, only about one third of the total Siamese population actually spoke the central Thai language. There were a myriad of dialects and languages in use at the time and they frequently demonstrated ties to local geographic communities. For example, the Northeast States of Thailand (*Monthon Isaan*) maintained many linguistic similarities to their nearby Laotian counterparts, much like Southern Thailand (*Monthon Saiburi*) exhibited a large amount of congruence to the Malay language located to the south. As a result, many ethnic communities in Thailand were faced with having to comply with the new assimilation policies enforced by the Thai government.

population for political representation and cultural recognition. One such group was the Patani People's Movement (PPM), which was founded by Haji Sulong in 1947. The PPM provided a vehicle in which like-minded individuals could begin to engage in dialogue with the Thai government and attempt to gain concessions that would protect the unique cultural qualities of the Patani Muslims. Another similar organization was the *Gabungam Melayu Pattani Raya* ("Greater Pattani Malayu Association" or GAMPAR), which first organized in Malaya and then began to spread its influence and social contacts across the border to Patani. PPM and GAMPAR represented a changing dynamic in Thailand's political landscape during the late 1940s and early 1950s where large scale social mobilization would become increasingly common to get both national and international visibility on grievance issues and provide a degree of collective bargaining power against the Thai government. Interestingly, there was a pronounced dearth of such groups developing in Satun due to the fact that the region had already managed to gain a certain degree of political representation as early as 1900 and this was a trend that continued for several decades afterward. One example of this increased amount of political engagement in Satun can be noted by the election results of 1946 in which Satun was the only MMP in the south to elect a Muslim representative, Jae Abdulla Langputeh, to the Thai parliament.⁶⁶

Despite the increasing mobilization of several segments of Thailand's Muslim populations, many of the uncultural mindsets about authoritarian styles of governance and national identity that were developed within the country during the 1940s continued unabated during the 1950s. One aspect of this continuation was the fact that Phibun, and his law enforcement cohorts in the Royal Thai Police (RTP), such as Phao Siyanon, maintained a solid grip on power until 1957 when Phibun was removed from power in a coup initiated by Sarit Thanarat who largely controlled the Royal Thai Army (RTA).⁶⁷ After Phibun's removal, Sarit (who had appointed himself as the prime

⁶⁶ James Ockey, "Elections and Political Integration in the Lower South of Thailand." In *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano et al. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), 132.

⁶⁷ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 148.

minister, supreme commander, head of the army, director of the police, and minister of development), was increasingly concerned with the rising threat of communism and Chinese nationalism in surrounding countries as well as within Thailand itself. The United States, which had emerged as a new patron and ally of Thailand in the developing cold war, also helped reinforce this course of action in order to maintain a strong security posture within Thailand and cultivate a relationship between the two nations which could prove useful in future regional conflicts. As a result, the impetus for maintaining a rigid homogenous society and collective national identity that emerged during Phibun's years in power was maintained to a large degree due to concerns about maintaining the stability of the national security environment in the face of both internal and external perceived threats.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the situation became much more convoluted within Thailand, as there was a veritable explosion of new political and religious groups that began to demand a wide range of concessions from the Thai government. The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was just one of these emerging internal threats that had expanded its political agenda within the country and soon formed military units, such as the People's Liberation Army of Thailand (PLAT), to assist in achieving their goals. The CPT and PLAT began to initiate a low intensity conflict against the Thai government by 1965 and based this offensive along the rural peripheries of the country with the majority of these skirmishes occurring along the Thai borders with Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia and Burma.

In a similar fashion, this period also saw numerous Islamic separatist and nationalist groups begin to develop inside Thailand as well. Although early Patani social activist organizations such as the PPM and GAMPAR had essentially disintegrated in the early 1950s, they were the small seeds from which these new elements emerged. These new groups demonstrated more militant overtones and were increasingly prepared to organize armed resistance against the Thai government in order to achieve their goals. Some of these emerging actors included groups, such as the National Patani Liberation Front (BNPP, est. 1959), National Revolutionary Front ("Barisan Revolusi Nasional" or

BRN, est. 1960), and the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO, est. 1968).⁶⁸ Despite the differences in ideologies and strategies that these groups maintained, they all began to aggressively organize themselves to conduct military operations against the Thai government and it became evident that the issue of governance and Muslim grievances in Patani was not going to simply go away. Although Sarit died in 1963, his successors, Thanom Kittikhachon and Praphat Charusathian, continued their efforts to combat these Patani separatist groups as one would in a military campaign, by using soldiers, guns, and copious amounts of force.

In addition to the increasing activism of political, ethnic, and religious organizations, additional pressure began to be applied to the Thai government from various student groups as well. Universities are always hotbeds of new ideas, social debate, and the energy of young reformers who would like to change the status quo. Accordingly, many Patani Muslims began to align themselves with various pro-democracy student movements that were increasingly frustrated with the fact that increased access to educational opportunities apparently did not always equate to increased political representation or social power. This cauldron of discontent boiled over in 1976 when elements of the RTA and RTP (in particular the Red Guard, Border Patrol Police and Village Scouts) violently suppressed students at Thammasat University, killing 43 people and arresting over 8,000 more.⁶⁹

In the midst of this social and political turmoil, General Prem Tinsulanond, a former Thai military officer from Songkhla province, took office as the Prime Minister in 1980. He soon engaged in sweeping reforms that emphasized persuasive policies of integration rather than assimilation or suppression. Prem began to develop innovative new institutions to deal with the problem in the south, as well as attempting to encourage public participation in the political process to address some of the social turmoil that had occurred within the country during the 1970s. He also

⁶⁸ International Crisis Group. "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," *Asia Report*, no. 98, 2005, 6.

⁶⁹ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 194.

supported economic development throughout Thailand and offered amnesty to many insurgent and separatist leaders. By incentivizing activity such as surrendering to local authorities or renouncing the use of violence, PM Prem was able to garner a great deal of participation in these pacification efforts from both local communities as well as opposition or insurgent groups. Prem's initiatives also marked a substantial movement away from previous government mandates of unwavering nationalism, patriotism, and uncultural state-building to a more moderate form of socio-cultural pluralism and developing ties between Thailand and its citizens as a "whole" polity. These measures were quite effective, and under his leadership the conflict between Patani and Bangkok was dramatically reduced.

The democratic and institutional reforms instituted by Prem and the leaders who followed him during the 1980s and 1990s were soon completely reversed following the election of a controversial new Prime Minister named Thaksin Shinawatra in 2001.⁷⁰ Thaksin Shinawatra served as the appointed Prime Minister (PM) of Thailand from 2001 to 2006. Running on a populist platform, Thaksin declared himself "a man of the people" and promised to provide a national healthcare plan, debt assistance for farmers, and extensive development funds for rural areas.⁷¹ Although his words sounded promising, his actions were controversial and considered by some to be very detrimental to the country as a whole, particularly to the Patani Muslims. In particular, there was an immense surge in the levels of violence and insurgent activity in southern Thailand over the course of the five years Thaksin was in office. Although levels of violence have dropped somewhat since Thaksin's ouster in 2006, the damage he inflicted on Bangkok-Patani relations was substantial and enduring. He misjudged the nature of the people and problems within Thailand, failed to support effective provincial institutions and

⁷⁰ During 1988 to 2001, a series of progressive reforms and mediation initiatives brought about genuine elements of democratic reform, an increased sense of civil society, and an intensified social and public debate about who the "Thai" people were. This dialogue generally agreed that this identity should be a more inclusive, multi-cultural model that harkened back to the cosmopolitan societies of earlier Thai or Siamese dynasties.

⁷¹ Duncan McCargo, "Thaksin And The Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South." In *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, ed. Duncan McCargo, (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007), 38.

governance, and ultimately implemented abusive and deadly domestic policies that only reignited and inflamed the problems of violent conflict.

Despite this roller coaster of social and political development within Thailand during the latter half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the story of Satun during these sixty years is essentially a nonstarter: Its Muslim inhabitants maintained a generally peaceful and quiet environment throughout the province by promoting congenial relations with both the Thai government and other local Thai and Chinese ethnic groups.

In short, Satun's history is rife with multi-cultural influences and dramatic political and economic changes at both a regional and national level.⁷² Alongside these developments, Satun was historically on the outer edges of government control, not only when it fell under the auspices of the Kedah sultanate, but also much later when it was politically assimilated by the Thai government in 1909. This regular turnover in regimes, governments, nationalisms, and, administrative institutions challenged the inhabitants of Satun to define not only how they saw themselves, but also how they would view their relationship with the central government. In large part, there was a consistent trend of flexibility and acceptance on the part of Satun when major changes occurred. The sense of outrage and loss when regional autonomy was threatened did not resonate in Satun like it did in Patani. This less contentious dynamic allowed Satun to assimilate into the larger Thai national narrative with a minimum of resistance and violence, a fact that was radically different from what took place in Patani. The historic foundations for building ethnic identities and center-periphery relationships in Satun and Patani would prove to be critical in determining how the Thai government and these Muslim minority groups would interact in the years to come.

⁷² In the space of roughly 1,500 years, Satun had gone through multiple changes in both institutions and regimes. It had originally fallen under the Kedah Sultanate, was absorbed by the Ayutthaya Dynasty, gained a degree of freedom in 1767, and then subsequently assimilated by the Chakri, Monarchy. During the 20th century, Satun experienced a major social revolution within the country, an installation of a constitutional monarchy, was subjected to Phibun's harsh cultural mandates and fascism, and then moved forward to democratic reform. What is important to remember in this long list of developments is that the region of Satun remained stable for the most part over the course of these years and did not have severe, reoccurring problems with rebellion and violence like the Patani region did during the same time period.

C. PATANI'S DEMOGRAPHICS AND HISTORY

The southern provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Songkhla have many demographic similarities to Satun. First, there is the aspect of their predominant religious characteristics. Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani are all populated by a Muslim majority which maintains many social and linguistic similarities to Malay Muslims who are located in the Malaysian state of Kelantan. Songkhla also has a large number of Muslims living within the province (23 percent as of the year 2000) and although this population is much lower than what is found in Yala, Narathiwat, or Pattani, it is still much higher than the Muslim concentrations found in other regions of the country. Bangkok, for example, is roughly 4 percent Muslim and many provinces within the northeast region of Isaan, such as Nakhon Ratchasima or Chaiyaphum, have a Muslim population of less than 0.1 percent.⁷³

Another close similarity between Satun and Patani can be found within their economic sectors. Southern Thailand relies heavily on agricultural production and natural resource commodities such as rubber, timber, and fisheries, however this type of livelihood does not have the same sort of economic returns associated with it that manufacturing or trade does. A good example of this divergence in provincial economies can be demonstrated by Songkhla, which has developed into a robust commercial and industrial center. Songkhla boasts a Gross Provincial Product (GPP) that is roughly four times as high as its southern neighbors and an average per capita income that is two times higher than Yala, Narathiwat, or Pattani.⁷⁴ Although it appears that this aspect of economic inequality and poverty could be a possible contributing factor for the violence in Patani, some researchers have pointed out that the GPP and average per capita incomes in Yala, Narathiwat, or Pattani have actually risen substantially from 1983 to 2003.⁷⁵

⁷³ "Population & Housing Census," National Statistical Office of Thailand, Economic and Social Statistics Bureau, 2000. http://web.nso.go.th/pop2000/pop_e2000.htm.

⁷⁴ Srisompob Jitpiromsri and Panyasak Sobhonvasu, "Unpacking Thailand's Southern Conflict: The Poverty of Structural Explanations." In *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, edited by Duncan McCargo (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007), 97.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 96.

Much like Satun, geography has also played a role in how Patani has been able to effectively align itself with other national actors and influenced the trajectory of violence within the region. In Satun, this geographic influence was seen as a condition of relative inaccessibility and separation which contributed to an endstate of isolation and tranquility. In the Patani region, its close proximity to several politically active regions of Malaysia combined with a flat, porous border has contributed to a much different outcome. Instead of reinforcing a sense of peace, Patani's geography has actually helped fuel political mobilization and sheltered insurgents who might plan or conduct attacks and then use the border as a convenient escape route. The relative proximity to the center of power is another influence as well: All of these particular Muslim areas are on the southernmost tip of the country and in this respect are extremely far away from the locus of the capital region. Almost as important as the distance from Bangkok, is the short distance between Patani and neighboring Islamic states in Malaysia such as Kelantan. Patani and Kelantan both share a very porous border area and this has allowed many trans-national relationships and ties to develop in terms of families, businesses, employment, and trade moving between them.

Border areas frequently prove to be problematic for national governments to manage and this region of southern Thailand has experienced a similar phenomenon. One example of the efforts that the national leaders of Thailand and Malaysia implemented to police this area is demonstrated by their extensive cooperation during the 1960s and 1970s in order to control the cross-border movement of Communist insurgents from the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and the Communist Party of Malaysia (CPM) who used this "grey area" between the two nations to plan future operations and find refuge from Thai government counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. There have also been similar initiatives for Thai-Malaysian government cooperation in more recent years to reduce smuggling and the movement of Islamic insurgents across the border as well.

This issue is extremely sensitive for the Malaysian government however as many Malaysians, especially the communities living in Kelantan, feel that the Thai government has been extremely abusive and heavy handed with the Patani Muslims who live to the

north of the border. This particular aspect of the Thai-Malaysian border also underscores the long-standing familial and political ties Patani has maintained with the neighboring Malaysian state of Kelantan. Kelantan was the same area where Tengku Abdul Kadir took refuge after he was forced out of Patani by the Siamese authorities in 1915.

1. Patani's Historical Record

On 31 March 2012, a series of vehicle borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) were detonated in the cities of Yala (Yala province), Hat Yai (Songkhla Province), and Mae Lan (Pattani province). Local authorities from these regions commented on the cold and calculated characteristics of these attacks due to the presence of large numbers of civilians in the vicinity when the bombs exploded and the fact that several of these cities are prominent hubs of tourism and commerce in southern Thailand.⁷⁶ Many analysts have described these particular attacks as some of the most destructive terrorist events the region has experienced in recent years, but they are by no means isolated incidents. As Anthony Davis and John Cole noted in a recent article for *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor*, the violence in southern Thailand has been a long-standing problem within the country for many years and it demonstrates a number of puzzling qualities that researchers and government officers alike are still trying to decipher.⁷⁷

The opaque nature of this problem makes it difficult to determine certain facts, such as why this violence has been confined strictly to the southern provinces and who the primary actors are that frequently decide to execute these attacks. Davis and Cole have described this particular situation in the southern provinces as one of three substantial "...domestic security threats..." that threatens to seriously undermine the stability and authority of the Thai government on a national level. Furthermore, these

⁷⁶ "Bombs In Southern Thailand Kill 14, Injure 340," April 1, 2012, http://www.salon.com/writer/sumeth_panpetch/, Sumeth Panpetch, *Salon*.

⁷⁷ "Thailand's Terrorism Nexus," March 29, 2012, http://www4.janes.com/subscribe/jtism/doc_view.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/mags/jtism/history/jtism2012/jtism5647.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTSM&QueryText=, Anthony Davis and John Cole, *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Monitor*.

authors attribute these attacks to the actions and ideals of “Malay-Muslim separatists committed to the creation of an independent state of Pattani.”

So how did these Muslim separatist movements come to exist in southern Thailand? Why have their members framed their relationship with the Thai government so differently than the Muslims in Satun? What do they hope to accomplish by creating an “independent state of Pattani?” And what are the evolutionary developments that have prompted Muslims in Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, or Songkhla to lobby for political autonomy and the formation of a separate Islamic state? I believe that in order for us to better understand the influences that are driving this conflict and answer these three particular questions, we must examine the pathways of Thailand’s development over several centuries and see how the roots of this conflict have been shaped from an ethnic, historical, and political perspective. By closely examining the conditions in the Patani area through these particular lenses, we can see that this violence is the direct result of several cultural, institutional, and rational choice paradigms that exist within both southern Thailand and the country as a whole.

The creation of a coherent cultural identity often develops as a confluence of different factors, such as history, language, or religion. For example, the development of nationalism as a type of cultural self-reference is frequently cited as a process in which these types of beliefs are cultivated and promulgated by referencing or creating shared experiences. In this regard, history, language, and religion can be leveraged to define a group as a unified political whole and reinforce concepts about who actually “belongs” within the community and “others” who are viewed as outsiders or strangers. Although there is not an exact or hard science about how and when this process of “identity building” ultimately takes place in various countries around the world, many experts agree that “...Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”⁷⁸ The same thing could be said for ethnic identities as well, in that these types of identifications are often *created* by groups of

⁷⁸Benedict Anderson, . *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2006), 6.

people in order to bind them together, and the various underlying commonalities that groups of people share are helpful in achieving this goal. For example, as Benedict Anderson points out in his book *Imagined Communities*, different types of religious communities, such as the Christians, Buddhists, or Muslims, have been able to forge this type of shared identity through the use of a “sacred language and written script,” despite being widely separated in a geographic sense.⁷⁹

Taking this concept one step further, Anderson points out that if we examine the Islamic *Ummah* (“community” or “nation”), in which a massive network of disparate Muslim groups exists and can be characterized as stretching all the way from the Sulu Archipelago to Morocco, it is possible to see how this concept of shared traits binds them together: Even if two dissimilar individuals from this *Ummah* (such as a Malaysian Muslim from the state of Kelantan and a Uyghur Muslim from Xinjiang, China) were to meet in London, despite the immense gulf between their spoken languages, geographic origins, or regional cultures, they theoretically would still be able to communicate and appreciate one another through shared symbols or the common bonds they had developed, such as the possession of a Koran or possibly an understanding of written Arabic. This same type of identity evolution has occurred in Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani to a great extent: Commonly shared cultural bonds and values based on their “Malayness” have kept this ethnic community bound together over the years despite an ongoing conflict between this “Patani” identity and strong external pressures from the Thai national government to enforce a national “Thai” identity. By examining Patani’s history, we can get a better sense of the immense pride, strong cultural ties, and deep seated desire for self-determination that all remain prevalent among some groups in the region, even several hundred years after their creation.

a. Early Patani History Prior to 1200 CE

Most of the early history of the Patani region can be gleaned from journals and reports maintained by Chinese merchants and Buddhist monks, such as I Tsing, who

⁷⁹ Benedict Anderson, . *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso Books, 2006), 12–13.

were traveling through Southeast Asia (SEA) in order to pursue commerce or learn about the various neighboring kingdoms that existed outside of Chinese territories. As early as 500 CE records from the Liang Dynasty mention the Kingdom of Langkasuka (200–1400 CE), which was primarily Hindu-Malay in terms of its ethnicity and religious beliefs, and predominantly occupied the regions of southern Thailand that would later be established as the Patani Sultanate during the 15th century. Along with Old Kedah (which contained the province of Satun), Langkasuka is frequently recognized as one of the oldest kingdoms on the Malay Peninsula. Although it was a hub for ocean going trade moving through the Gulf of Thailand, and became economically powerful in the region during the period from 600 to 700 CE, it would ultimately be eclipsed by other Southeast Asian kingdoms and lose a great deal of its power in the region during the 14th century.

Part of Langkasukas' dissolution was tied to the fact that toward the end of the late 7th century, it had fallen under the control of a powerful Hindu-Buddhist thalassocratic empire called Srivijaya (500- 1300 CE). Srivijaya was centered around the capital of Palembang on the island of Sumatra and had gradually expanded its control throughout the maritime regions of the Malacca and Sunda straits, the Java Sea, and the Gulf of Thailand. In addition to the shifts in political control within Southeast Asia, this increased amount of maritime traffic around Indonesia in the 10th and 11th century also brought increased contact with Arab sailors, Muslim traders and explorers, as well as naval forces from Islamic countries that had become prolific in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters.⁸⁰ These foreign visitors brought their religious beliefs with them into the region, and there are several documented cases in which local SEA leaders requested Islamic teachers to visit their kingdoms and share their beliefs. In short order, small Islamic communities began to sprout up throughout regions of SEA such as Aceh and Pasai, thereby helping this religion to spread to new groups of converts and territories. Although concrete evidence from this period is sparse, it is believed that much like Satun and Kedah on the western side of the Malay Peninsula, the process of Islamic conversion and Muslim communities developing in the Patani region may have seen some embryonic

⁸⁰ Jean Gelman Taylor, *Indonesia: People and Histories* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press), 72.

beginnings during this time as well. This oceanic monopoly on maritime choke points and sea-going trade made Srivijaya wealthy and powerful for a number of centuries, but it began to fall into decline toward 1370 CE. As Srivijaya began to lose its control over local maritime commerce, the Patani region, which still fell under the auspices of the Langkasuka authorities, experienced a growing economic benefit from trade across the Malay Peninsula and along the coastal regions.⁸¹ Its capital (also called Patani) was strategically placed at the mouth of a large river that facilitated rice production and the ability of sea vessels to make port calls, but was still remote enough to discourage widespread encroachment by western powers in subsequent years.

b. *The Ayutthaya Dynasty, 1351–1767*

In 1457, the raja of Langkasuka converted to Islam and this conversion was extended by default to the Patani region as well.⁸² Although Patani may have “officially” converted to Islam several hundred years after Satun and Kedah, these beliefs became deeply rooted in the region quickly and were closely bound to the Malay language and ethnic identity that already existed in the region. In the midst of this religious conversion, the Malay Sultanate of Patani also became increasingly well entrenched as a maritime entrepot in the Gulf of Thailand and surrounding waters following the Portuguese capture of Malacca in 1511. As a result, Patani continued to conduct business during this period and subsequent decades not only with Chinese merchants, but with Portuguese, Japanese, Dutch, and English traders as well. Foreign companies such as the United East India Company and the English East India Company began to set up trading posts and warehouses within the Patani Sultanate between 1603 and 1612 in order to gain access to the wares of Chinese merchants who frequented the markets of Patani. This increased economic growth provided the sultans of Patani with

⁸¹ Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago: Islam And Politics In Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense Intelligence College, March 2007), 59.

⁸² W. K. Che Man, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 34.

the means to support and expand their regional power, a fact that helped contribute to their sense of prestige and majesty, not only to themselves, but also to the foreign visitors who came into contact with Patani.

Along with the fiscal benefits of this expanded trade flow from 1500–1700, the Patani Sultanate also became well known as a “Cradle of Islam” throughout Southeast Asia during these years.⁸³ Much like the region of Aceh in northwestern Sumatra, Patani had developed a widely respected reputation on the Malay Peninsula for having an extensive network of religious schools, hosting highly educated Islamic teachers who had studied in the Middle East and producing well respected Islamic scholars itself. This particular era of the Patani Sultanate from 1584 to 1750 is frequently referred to as the “Golden Age” of its history. During this period, several widely respected female Muslim rulers such as Ratu Hijau (“The Green Queen”), Ratu Biru (“The Blue Queen”), Ratu Ungu (“The Purple Queen”) and Ratu Kuning (“The Yellow Queen”) maintained a cosmopolitan court of highly trained officials and leaders. These individuals helped to develop the Patani Sultanate’s economic and military capabilities to much higher levels than they had been in previous years. Patani also aligned itself with other like-minded allies, such as Pehang and the Sultanate of Johor, which helped to further solidify Patani’s identity as an Islamic Sultanate, as well as providing a larger degree of collective political and military power as well. These economic, religious, and political events represented the first stirring of a developing separate ethnic identity within Patani that would grow stronger as the years passed.

During the same two same centuries that Patani was pursuing ascendancy to regional power, the Ayutthaya Dynasty had extended considerable amounts of political control throughout the isthmus and shaped it into a single unified state with a “hub and spoke” administrative model. Ayutthaya existed as the central “hub” of control and projected power out to the many peripheral vassal states under its dominion. This process provided for a fairly moderate self-governing system in which the vassal states and

⁸³ Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago: Islam And Politics In Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense Intelligence College, March 2007), 60.

tributary areas owed allegiance to the king of Ayutthaya but central control of the periphery remained limited. Subservience to Ayutthaya was frequently demonstrated by paying the tribute of *bunga mas* every three years or providing people for the practice of corvee and military service. However, the vassal states maintained a great deal of autonomy in their own day-to-day activities.

Much like other SEA dynasties that preceded it, Ayutthaya was soon facing new challenges that threatened its potential survival. The Toungoo Dynasty in Burma, for example, was becoming a much larger regional threat from a military perspective and in short order Ayutthaya was faced with a deepening crisis in Siamese-Burmese relations. In 1569, Toungoo military forces united with Siamese rebels to attack the capital of Ayutthaya and drag the Siamese royal family off into captivity in Burma. In their place, the Burmese installed a Siamese provincial governor by the name of Dhammaraja as a political figurehead from 1569–1590. Siamese independence was ultimately restored by King Naresuan the Great from 1590 to 1605 when he managed to organize an effective rebellion against the Burmese and by 1600 had actually managed to drive the foreign invaders from Siam.⁸⁴ Although Naresuan managed to re-unify the Ayutthaya Kingdom by 1590, the 21-year gap of central authority had left Patani in a state of virtual autonomy for over two decades. This relative independence and Patani's own growing strength would contribute to additional power struggles between the two actors in later years. Consequently, the historical record shows rebellion and conflict between Ayutthaya and Patani became more frequent in the late 1600s, as evidenced by the military expeditions the Siamese King Prasit Thong sent against Patani in 1673 and 1680.⁸⁵

As Ayutthaya recovered from its brutal struggles with the Burmese in the late 1500s and early 1600s, several new developments began to occur within Siam itself.

⁸⁴ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11.

⁸⁵ Davisakd Puaksom, "Patani Historiography in Contention." In *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, eds. Michael J. Montesano et al. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), 75.

The Ayutthaya monarchy began to take on a god-like, ritualistic, and absolute quality that referenced ancient link to the Khmer kingdoms of old, particularly the powerful Angkor Era that existed from 900–1300 CE. It also capitalized on trade, taxes, mercenaries, and various types of assistance from foreign visitors such as the Portuguese, Dutch, French, Chinese, Persians, British, and Indians to rebuild its power and grandeur to new heights, causing the French to proclaim that “In the Indies there is no state that is more monarchical than Siam.”⁸⁶

Buddhism also became much more prominent in Siamese culture during the late 1600s, and in short order many older Hindu beliefs of the royal court were soon melded with the Buddhist *Sangha* in a new symbiotic relationship of mutual support.⁸⁷ The aristocratic rulers of Ayutthaya, such as King Borommakot (r. 1733–1758), increasingly protected and sponsored the *Sangha*. The Buddhist monkhood, in turn, provided legitimacy for the monarchy through the promotion of institutions such as the *thotsaphit ratchatham* (“10 laws of royal conduct”). These events deeply shaped the character and import of the monarchy and Buddhism within the country and would resurface again in future years to ultimately have long-lasting impacts on the formation of a national identity within Thailand during the early 20th century. This focus on the monarchy and Buddhism as two critical parts of Thai nationalism would set the stage for additional conflicts between the central government and Patani in the years ahead.

Despite these evolutions in the monarchy and the religious character of Siam, the Ayutthaya Dynasty also underwent one final cycle of decline during the late 1700s, when the long-standing conflict between the Konbaung Dynasty of Burma and

⁸⁶ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14.

⁸⁷ A similar evolutionary development in which the monarchy bonded with religious institutions was also seen in Cambodia and Burma as well.

Ayutthaya flared up once again.⁸⁸ Despite entreaties from Ayutthaya for peace, Burma sent three immense armies from Ava against the Siamese in order to annihilate the capital of its neighbor. The massive fortifications and large numbers of defensive cannons the Siamese had built up during the previous decades were slowly reduced to rubble during a multi-year siege that finally breached the walls of Ayutthaya in 1767. This event inflicted a serious blow to the Ayutthaya Kingdom and effectively ended its control of Siam. Anything of value was quickly looted and carried off, the remaining Siamese population who had not escaped the Burmese onslaught or been killed outright were taken back to Ava as captives, and most remaining Siamese buildings, temples, or chronicles of Ayutthaya were burned and leveled to the ground until all that remained of the once powerful kingdom was “heaps of ruins and ashes.”⁸⁹

c. Chakri Dynasty and the Bangkok Period, 1767–1902

As noted in our examination of Satun and Kedah, the peripheral regions of the country experienced a brief respite from central control between the collapse of Ayutthaya and the establishment of the short-lived Sukothai and more permanent Chakri dynasties. A similar development took place in Patani as well during the aftermath of Ayutthaya’s collapse in 1767. The elite leadership in Patani was quick to declare independence for the region following the defeat of Ayutthaya and there was a belief that the sultanate could regain the autonomy it had enjoyed during 1500 to 1700 CE. Unfortunately for Patani, there was a gradual resurgence of power in the Siamese kingdom when new Siamese leaders such as Phaya Taksin, Mahasura Singhanat, and Thong Duang managed to reestablish a new Siamese capital at Bangkok. As this city grew in size and reputation, and the Burmese threat diminished, people began to filter

⁸⁸ At this early point in Burma’s history from 1752 to 1885, the dominant kingdom that controlled the territory northwest of Ayutthaya was known as the Konbaung Dynasty. During 1765 to 1783, the Konbaung Dynasty had established its capital in a large city known as Ava, which had historical links to previous Burmese kingdoms and dynasties. This ongoing power struggle between Ayutthaya and Konbaung had resulted in a number of wars and this particular event in 1767 is frequently referred to as the “War of the Second Fall of Ayutthaya.”

⁸⁹ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

back into the region. By 1782, a new dynasty had been established when Thong Duang (who was now known as Phraphutthayotfa Chulalok) was placed on the throne and crowned as King Yofa (Rama I). This event marked the formal establishment of the Chakri Dynasty and this monarchy would maintain power throughout the country for close to 150 years. Although the Patani sultanate maintained relations with the Chakri dynasty and provided the *bunga mas* like other regional tributary states, this relationship became increasingly contentious between Bangkok and Patani during this period. As early as 1776, Patani had begun to refuse to contribute troops to the Siamese kingdom's defense and rebellions against the Chakri leadership had started to foment. This movement toward autonomy and independence was marked by the Patani Sultan's attempt to rally support around its own commonly shared identities and bonds. For example, the Malay Sultanate of Patani Darul Makrif attempted to create a type of proto-nationalism that would reinforce the concept of Patani as an autonomous political entity during the late 1700s using new types of symbols and concepts as illustrated by Figure 3. This particular image is the flag of *Negara Patani Raya* or the "Greater Patani State" that was designed and used during the late 17th and early 18th century.⁹⁰ The crest on the left side of the flag was the symbol of the Patani kingdom itself, which evoked memories of Patani grandeur and power that existed during the 15th to 17th centuries. The development of ideas and concepts such as this illustrates how the sultans of the Patani region were beginning to define their identity and local control in a variety of different ways that were consistent with the rise of nationalism in other areas of the world during this time period. Not only were they drawing upon several hundred years of long-standing Malay ethnicity, shared Islamic religion, and local geography of the region, but now they were also beginning to characterize Patani as a political entity as well. In 1782, the Chakri Dynasty began to assert its control over the center and peripheries of Siam, and this growing consolidation of power and expansion by the Chakri kingdom brought it into greater points of friction with the developing nation-state of Patani.

⁹⁰ James Minahan, *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups Around the World*, Vol. 3 L-R (Westport CT: Greenwood Publishing Inc., 2002), 1500.



Figure 3. Flag of the Greater Patani State, circa 18th century

By 1785, although the local leadership in Patani increasingly tried to establish an independent identity that was autonomous from Chakri Dynasty control, the Siamese kings were taking additional steps to consolidate their grip over the southern territories. In Bangkok, King Rama I (r. 1782–1809) declared that the Patani Sultanate, along with Kedah, Kelantan, and Trengganu, was no longer just a tributary part of the Siamese empire, but was in fact a subordinate region of the Siamese Kingdom. Accordingly, King Rama I took steps to establish that the subservient relationship of Patani was well understood. Some of the tactics Rama I used included sending military expeditions to the region, posting officials in positions of authority within Patani, and then ultimately deposing the raja of Patani, Sultan Muhammad, during 1785 in order to install Raja Tengku Lamadin as a new ruler who Bangkok felt would obey its commands. Siamese intervention in Patani's internal politics in 1785 is particularly poignant in the opinion of many researchers because it marked the first time that Siam had directly controlled the appointment of Patani's sultanate leadership.⁹¹ Despite Bangkok's efforts, however, Raja Tengku subsequently attempted to conspire with Vietnam to attack the

⁹¹ Thanet Aphornsuwan, "History and Politics of the Muslims in Thailand." *Cornell University South East Asia Program Post-Secondary Teaching Materials*. December 2, 2003, 13, <http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/system/files/MuslimThailand.pdf>.

Chakri center of power in Bangkok which led to another series of rebellions and Siamese suppression during 1789–1791. Again, the Chakri Dynasty replaced the leadership in Patani by appointing Tengku's successor, Dato Pengkalan, as their proxy in 1808, but Dato also defied the Siamese leadership by attempting to encourage armed resistance within Patani. Interestingly, these appointees were both local Malay Muslims, but this fact still did not suppress Patani's inclinations towards rebellion. In later years, Bangkok would install Thai-Buddhist leadership in the region, but the conflict between the two actors still continued.

Frustrated by this constant cycle of revolution and suppression, King Rama II (r. 1809–1824) divided Patani into seven smaller provinces, or *muang*, during 1816 in an attempt to effectively quell any future rebellions. This action created the provinces of Saiburi, Pattani, Nongchik, Yala, Yarang, Ra-ngae, and Rahman, several of which still exist today, albeit with different administrative or provincial borders. This action was designed to “divide and conquer” the restive south by establishing administrative units that were easier to control, facilitated tax collection, and could also have the local sultans of these new *muang* (who were appointed by Bangkok) be directly supervised by the Buddhist leadership located in nearby Ligor (Nakhon Si Thammarat). Paradoxically, the more Bangkok tried to control Patani, the more vehement the resistance in the area became. There was another series of tax protests and revolts that occurred in 1832 and 1838. The Siamese government reacted to these provocations with particular savagery, and the violent suppression of Patani in 1838 quickly reduced the once powerful sultanate into a dramatically impoverished area, a condition which has persisted throughout much of the region even into the 21st century.⁹²

The next 64 years were fairly quiet in Patani as the Siamese government was more focused on defending against external threats, such as the one it experienced during the Cambodian crisis of 1840, or its negotiations with British and American

⁹² Max L. Gross, *A Muslim Archipelago: Islam And Politics In Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense Intelligence College, 2007), 61.

diplomatic envoys who were demanding legal and economic concessions from Siam.⁹³ The net result of these events was that Siam maintained a less intrusive presence in the Patani area from 1838 to 1902 because it had larger concerns elsewhere and overall resistance in Patani at the time was slight. However, as nationalism became a stronger force in the country and Patani recovered, conflict would develop again between these two actors.

d. Nationalism and the Modern Era, 1902–Present

From 1901–1902, the relationship between Patani and Bangkok began to deteriorate when the Chakri Dynasty again attempted to expand and consolidate its control over Siam’s southern peripheral borders. This increased presence and push for control in Patani was largely due to the Chakri Dynasty’s growing concerns over British expansion in Malaysia. In order to counter this potential threat, King Chulalongkorn steadily implemented the methods of administrative control (*monthon thesaphiban*) recommended and designed by Prince Damrong. The *monthon thesaphiban* soon took the southern region away from its historical precedents of indirect and limited administrative control and established a much more direct and pervasive form of control from Bangkok.⁹⁴ Another major grievance that the Patani elites voiced during 1902 was the new restrictions put upon Sharia Law and Islamic courts. In an attempt to consolidate the legal procedures in the southern provinces (and make them subject to the control and oversight of Siamese authorities), local religious courts now fell under the supervision and control of the provincial governors-general who had been appointed to control the administrative matters of southern Thailand. Many Patani Islamic leaders were outraged that a secular public official was now the final arbiter in what was seen as a judiciary function that needed to be conducted by local *Qadis* (Muslim judges). This restructuring of internal power and control within Patani was strongly resented by many local leaders, such as Raja Tengku Abdul Kadir (Phraya Pattani V), because their power was usurped.

⁹³ Norman G. Owen, ed., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 97.

⁹⁴ Nantawan Haemindra, “The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand (Part One)” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7, no. 2 (1976): 197–225.

During that same year, Tengku Abdul Kadir led a series of revolts against the Siamese government. The Siamese government subsequently imprisoned Kadir for two years and then only released him after he signed a pledge that he would abstain from any involvement in local politics in the future.

In 1906 and 1909, two other critical events took place that would inextricably define the long-term relationships between the Patani Muslims and the Siamese government: First, in 1906, there was a restructuring of the “area of the seven provinces” back into four consolidated regions: Yala, Pattani, Saiburi, and Narathiwat. Following the reorganization of the former Malay provinces into four new regions, the task of running these areas fell under the recently created office of the Ministry of the Interior or *Mahathai*. This new method of controlling local politics via centralized, modern bureaucracies strongly reinforced the concepts of civil service, office appointments, local supervision, and direct control in Patani by the Thai government and Thai Buddhists. Second, in 1909, the Siamese government signed the Anglo-Thai treaty with Britain in which Siam gave up the provinces of Kelantan, Perak, Kedah, and Perlis to Britain, but managed to maintain control of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun. Both of these changes saw to it that Siam’s control over the Patani region was officially recognized by external powers and demarcated on a map accordingly. These administrative changes also allowed Bangkok to extract taxes more easily and extend their administrative control over the periphery more effectively. However, they also caused a great deal of resentment and discontent amongst local Malay elites who were being co-opted and stripped of their power.

The general angst among the elites of Patani caused by the dramatic changes of 1906 and 1909 reached a boiling point by 1922 when these initiatives also began to negatively affect the general population of Patani as well. Frustrated by the religious restrictions imposed by the Siamese leadership, increasing taxes, and exorbitant land rents, many groups of local villagers refused to interact with local Siamese officials or pay their taxes. The Patani Malays also began to form various liberation movements to unify their efforts and mobilize additional local people to their cause. Tengku Abdul

Kadir (who was now living in Kelantan) was a key player in organizing this growing voice of protest, providing advice and assistance to political allies and community leaders who were still located in Patani. Kadir was not alone in these efforts to provide influence, support and experience. Several other prominent Malay Muslim leaders and politicians from Patani, such as Haji Sulong, Chaem Prongyong (Haji Samsuddin), and Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin (Kadir's son) would continue to fight for the political representation and ethno-religious autonomy of the Patani Malay-Muslims in the decades to follow.

The next phase of sweeping changes came to Patani following the 1932 revolution and the dissolution of the absolute monarchy maintained by the Chakri Dynasty. The new constitutional monarchy that was established in the country gave Patani elites hope that this development might allow the Patani Malay Muslims a greater opportunity to participate in national politics and self-representation. For instance, Muslims were now allowed to sit on the national parliament whereas before this period the Chakri Dynasty was comprised and administered primarily by Thai-Buddhist nobility. The *monthon thesaphiban* system was also abolished.⁹⁵ Although these small concessions looked promising, they were quickly overshadowed by the hyper-nationalist policies of Phibun Songkhram from 1939–1945 that many Patani Muslims saw as a direct threat to their ethnic identity and way of life. Phibun deeply admired what he saw as strong, national governments that developed during this period in Germany, Italy, and Japan. In many regards, Phibun tried to emulate these countries and mold Thailand into a nation using a similar model. Accordingly, Phibun instituted a myriad of mandates that enforced standards of behavior and beliefs that often directly conflicted with the long standing religious and linguistic identities that had developed in the Patani region.

The outbreak of World War II aggravated cleavages between Bangkok and Patani even further. Phibun ultimately decided to collaborate with the Japanese Imperial military government because he believed this Asian neighbor was a superb example of a strong, independent nation that could openly defy the western nations that had pressured

⁹⁵ Neil J. Melvin, "Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency," *SIPRI Policy Paper No. 20*, September 2007, 13.

Thailand in previous years. The residents of Patani, on the other hand, reached out to ally themselves with the British and oppose both Phibun's government and the Japanese incursions into Siam. Many Patani leaders, such as Prince Tun Mahmud Mahyuddin, seized the opportunity to pursue a strategy of mutual military cooperation and assistance with the British in the struggle against the Japanese due to the opportunities this course of action presented: It cemented the long-standing connections local Patani leaders had with Malaya to the south, and most importantly to the Kelantan Muslims across the border because of the many social, economic, and religious bonds they shared. Additionally, by aligning themselves with the allied forces during World War II, the elites of Patani hoped to counter Phibun's intrusive cultural policies that had aggrieved them since 1939. There was also the hope that the British would support notions for Patani to be either recognized as an autonomous and independent region or even possibly grant Patani accession into Malaya after the war had ended.⁹⁶

During the aftermath of World War II, many Southeast Asian nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia had a growing sense of national identity and aspirations for self-determination. In many regards, southern Thailand was no different from its neighbors. Patani began to see the growth of various civic organizations that frequently provided a collective voice for the regional inhabitants of Patani to gain increased representation and recognition within the country. The Patani Malay Muslims also hoped that the British would remember the allegiance that had been in place during the war and support the provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani in their ongoing appeals with the Thai government for autonomy or independence.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, due to the reliance that Britain had on Thai rice imports to support the populace of Malaya and an increasing desire to combat the growing threat of communism, the British government felt that it was unwise to confront the Thai national leadership on the issue of Patani nationalism,

⁹⁶ The British Empire had ruled Malaya for a number of years but did not actually interfere with the local elite structure while doing so. Instead, Britain allowed the Malayan Sultanates to remain in place as political proxies to extend British control and power. This degree of "non-interference" in everyday life that the Malayan Sultanates and local populations maintained ultimately looked extremely attractive to the religious and political elites from Patani.

⁹⁷ Zachary Abuza, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Insurgency in Southern Thailand* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), 14.

despite promises made by English colonial leaders during the war. As a result, the Patani Muslim's requests for external assistance did not actually bring about any changes in their relationship with the Thai government, political status, or recognition of their ethno-religious identity.

In 1947, a popular and well-educated Islamic leader named Haji Sulong established another organization called to facilitate the political activism of the Patani Malay Muslims. Much like GAMPAR, the formation of PPM represented a new type of social mobilization in the region that could generate larger amounts of political power, increase international recognition of the Patani plight, and potentially compel the Thai government to come to the negotiation table for an equitable solution to this dispute. Despite the fact that the Thai government had outlawed the PPM and there were intense personal risks to being associated with this organization, Haji Sulong saw it as a personal obligation to his fellow Patani Muslims to represent their collective communities in the struggle for self-rule, linguistic and cultural rights, as well as the restoration of Sharia law. To this same end, Sulong published his "seven points" petition in April of 1947 and sent this document to national leaders in Bangkok, an act that soon resulted in his arrest and imprisonment for charges of treason and conspiracy against the Thai government.⁹⁸ This increased call for representation and equal rights on the part of Patani was soon further complicated by a military coup in Bangkok that took place in November of that same year. During this coup, the republican government of Pridi Banomyong was overturned and Phibun regained power within Thailand along with his military cohorts,

⁹⁸ Haji Sulong's list of demands from the Thai government was centered primarily on gaining a greater degree of political representation and access. A quick summary of his points were that the Thai government should 1.) Permit a single elected official born in the southern region to govern Patani, 2.) Ensure that eighty percent of local civil servants in Patani were actually Muslim, 3.) Allow both Malay and Thai be recognized as national languages, 4.) Ensure Malay would be used as a primary language in the schools, 5.) Establish separate Muslim courts with independent judges, 6.) Make sure that taxes and revenues generated in Patani were actually put to use within the region rather than being extracted to Bangkok, and 7.) Establish a Muslim board to supervise all Islamic affairs in cooperation with the elected official identified in the first point.

an event that sparked a great deal of fear in the Patani communities that they were returning to the dark days of 1939 all over again.⁹⁹

Perhaps it should be of little surprise that the ongoing struggle between the Thai national government and the Patani people over their rights and grievances, combined with the unexpected return of an intensely disliked and controversial leader, and marked by increased social mobilization on the part of the Patani Muslims, would quickly result in the worst rebellion and conflict the country had seen since the early part of the 1900s.

In one particularly violent event, an uprising took place in Dusun Nyor during 1948, when roughly 1,000 Patani Malay Muslims took up arms against Thai national police forces, with a large number of casualties inflicted on both sides.¹⁰⁰ The events at Dusun Nyor represented the first time that widespread violence and resistance had broken out in southern Thailand following World War II, and some observers feel that this specific incident fueled the subsequent separatist and insurgent movements that erupted within Thailand's southern provinces in following years. In the wake of this violence, a petition was sent to the United Nations with over 250,000 signatures from the Malay Muslim inhabitants of southern Thailand calling for the region's accession to the New Federation of Malaya. The Thai government however, felt that to give in to this initiative would cause many of the other ethnic groups within Thailand (such as the Mon, Khmer, Lao, Chinese, and Hmong) to call for autonomy as well. Much like the "domino theory," the Thai government believed that the country might disintegrate if one restive region was allowed to secede. Instead, Thai government officials dug in for a long and hard fight to maintain their unicultural policies and centralized rule of these peripheral regions.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 142.

¹⁰⁰ Chaiwat Satha-Anand, "The Silence of the Bullet Monument: Violence and 'Truth' Management, Dusun-nyor 1948, and Kru-Ze 2004." In *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*, ed. Duncan McCargo (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007) , 17.

¹⁰¹ Nantawan Haemindra, "The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand (Part One)" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7, no. 2 (1976): 197–225.

This decision to force an ethnic assimilation policy upon Patani and avoid negotiation or compromise has largely followed the trajectory of the Thai government's domestic politics well into the 21st century. Although the conflict between Patani and Bangkok has had cycles of both increased and decreased violence, the root issues have never really gone away. The different concepts of political rule and ethnic identity maintained by these two groups led them into several hundred years of prolonged conflict, a fact that became increasingly pronounced as the Thai national government attempted to force the assimilation issue via even more intrusive and violent methods.

D. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR PEACE IN SATUN

1. Satun's Cultural Influences for Nonviolence

Now that we have previously discussed some of the major historical influences that contributed to the absence of violence within Satun and the presence of violence in Patani, it is important that we review some of the contributing factors that have deeply shaped the development of Satun as a Muslim Minority Province (MMP) and helped to define its relationship with the Thai government. In particular, linguistic and religious influences have been important in maintaining some of the constructive linkages that exist between Bangkok and Satun.

a. Language

One of the lynchpins of the Thai government's assimilation process during 1921 to 1945 was the standardization of language throughout the country. In Satun, this process was more easily accepted than in Patani due to the fact that the people in Satun demonstrated an ethnic and cultural identity that was more adaptable than what was found in Patani. The residents of Satun, known as the Sam Sams, were investigated by a number of different visitors and researchers in the early 1800s. Many of these observers elucidated on the linguistic habits of the Sam Sams and what their potential origins might be: Were they in fact Malays who had adopted the trappings of Siamese culture? Or were they Siamese who converted to Islam? In 1826, Captain Henry Burney observed the cultural traits of the Sam Sams and then wrote in his journal that:

There is not a respectable and well-informed native of the Qedah [Kedah] who will attempt to deny that *previous to the introduction of Mahometanism* [sic] his country was exclusively inhabited by the Siamese race who were worshippers of Boodh [Buddha] or some other Hindoo Deity.”¹⁰²

Although many may argue that this “chicken and egg” type of argument is pointless and impossible to answer, it in fact has important implications about how this community developed its particular cultural identity and whether it might gravitate more easily toward a connection with either Siamese or Malayan political governance structures or national narratives. In 1821, a Scottish diplomat and colonial administrator named John Crawfurd declared that the Sam Sams were “...people of the Siamese race who have adopted the Mohammedan religion, and who speak a language which is a mixed jargon of the two peoples.”¹⁰³

In 1900, the blended cultural aspects of the Sam Sams was further documented by Prince Damrong Rajahubnab, a royal leader and scholar who is frequently credited as the father of Thai nationalism, the national education system, provincial administration methods, and the national health system.¹⁰⁴ Damrong noted during his travels through Satun that the Sam Sams used a particular Malay dialect known as *bahasa ibunda*, which is composed of an older southern Thai language that had a wide variety of Malay words embedded within it. He theorized that these people were essentially Siamese from an ethnic perspective but had adopted Islamic practices while still maintaining many of their Thai socio-cultural practices to include several linguistic patterns. These observations would seem to indicate that there were already Siamese cultural roots in Satun that existed before the local populations began to worship Islam and utilize parts of the Malay language. This evolutionary path seems to have contributed to a pervasive attitude in Satun in which its inhabitants were more likely to accept Thai as an official language than the Malay communities in Patani who spoke Jawi.

¹⁰² Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, “The Historical Development of Thai-Speaking Muslim Communities in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia.” In *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, Andrew Turton, ed. (Surrey UK: Curzon Press, 2000), 163.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

Prior to 1909, it is believed more than 90 percent of Satun's Muslims spoke *bahasa ibunda*.¹⁰⁵ In the wake of their assimilation via the implementation of these types of national language policies, these statistics within Satun changed dramatically during the 20th century. Today, it is estimated that over 99 percent of the residents in Satun speak Thai as a primary language.¹⁰⁶ Although there are some small local areas in Satun where Malay is the predominant dialect, the majority of these groups also speak Thai as a second language. Many authors, such as Thomas Parks and Surin Pitsuwan, have theorized that the ability to communicate with Thai bureaucrats at the local and national level has encouraged and facilitated Satun's participation in both the democratic process and being able to efficiently resolve grievances. Furthermore, many Muslim families in Satun see the ability to speak Thai as an important asset for their children to possess as they grow into adults. By speaking the national language, it allows young people from Satun to get jobs more easily, travel to other regions such as Phuket or Bangkok, and survive more effectively within the larger society. As a result of these developments, it has been noted that Thai speaking Muslim communities are most common in the south-western Thai provinces of Satun, Songkhla, Phang-Nga and Trang, which are somewhat closer to the center of power located in Bangkok rather than the Malay regions to the south. This phenomenon of Thai speaking Muslims is less common in the Patani region where Jawi remains the first language of most Malay Muslims.

b. Religion

Satun existed as a Hindu-Malay kingdom for many years before it adopted Islam as the dominant religion in the region. Residents of Satun appear to be more flexible in their religious practices and allow themselves a certain degree of compromise in how they observe the precepts of Islam. Interestingly, the British administrators of Penang and many northern Malaysian Muslims often viewed the Satun Sam Sams as

¹⁰⁵ Thomas I. Parks, "Maintaining Peace in a Neighbourhood Torn by Separatism: The Case of Satun Province in Southern Thailand" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20, no. 1 (2009): 188.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

prone to excessive criminality and being intolerably lax with their Islamic practices. One extremely unflattering appraisal of the Sam Sam population was documented by J. R. Logan in 1867:

Some generations back, [the Sam Sam] were converted to Mohammedanism, a religion which still sits loosely on them...Many of them are more stupid and ignorant even than the Malays in the same condition of life, and many are knavish, thievish, and addicted to gambling and opium-smoking...There are among them men habitually predatory, and dangerous from their treachery and ferocity. Their cunning, however is without intelligent fore-thought and subtlety of fraud...¹⁰⁷

Logan's observations were mirrored in some aspects by Abdul Rahman in 1930, when Rahman described his interactions with a local Sam Sam man about marrying outside of his faith, which was considered a serious sin in the Islamic faith:

In most cases, the so-called Muslims [that is, the Sam Sam] cared very little and knew nothing about the religion...An incident concerned two young people, the man a Muslim Sam-Sam and the girl, a Thai Buddhist. They were intent on getting married, and the man was prepared to give up his religion for the girl he loved...Then in desperation I asked him to consider the Holy Prophet Mohammad, and what he said shocked me. "Why should I consider Mohammed; he has never been in my kampong to see me, not even once."¹⁰⁸

Although it is easy to characterize the Sam Sams of Satun as being morally bankrupt or sacrilegious, it appears that these behaviors could also be described as highly pragmatic in nature. The environment found within the Kedah border region during this period was extremely unstable after the Siamese invasion in 1821 and banditry and lawlessness became endemic during this juncture. Logan also may have been viewing the situation from a very ethnocentric point of view which was not uncommon among western Europeans during their forays into Southeast Asia. The flexibility in Satun's religious beliefs (to include conversion or intermarriage) is still a fairly common occurrence in this province. An article from 1994 documented the rates of

¹⁰⁷ Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, "The Historical Development of Thai-Speaking Muslim Communities in Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia." In *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, Andrew Turton, ed. (Surrey UK: Curzon Press, 2000), 169.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

Muslim-Buddhist marriages in a village within Satun in which the ratio of Muslims to Buddhists was roughly 50/50 and both groups spoke the same southern Thai dialect. In this particular example, the intermarriage rates were approximately 20 percent, which was substantially higher than other areas such as Kelantan where intermarriage rates were roughly 3 percent.¹⁰⁹ These trends seem to indicate a different approach to the sanctity of religious practices or marriage in Satun, and other field interviews would seem to support this inference as well.

2. Satun's Institutional Influences for Nonviolence

Much like the discussion on culture, the term “institutions” is often defined in different ways depending on the context and focus that is being used to examine it. Does it have to be imposed by a government? Can a society generate its own institutions without having to codify them? Perhaps it could be defined as a contextual influence? Here, I discuss institutions as a function of external influences or shaping devices that are introduced by governments, and therefore are creations that can be implemented as well as dissolved. Given this definition, we will examine Satun's institutions of education, center-periphery relations, political representation, and provision for domestic security forces and discuss how they may have contributed to the current conditions of stability and quiescence that are observed in Satun.

a. Education

There is little doubt that the Thai national agenda for schools and education represents one of the largest grievances voiced within Patani's Malay Muslim provinces. For example, in 1921, the Thai government instituted the Primary Education Act, which mandated that all children must receive four to five years of training in the Thai language.¹¹⁰ Many Malay Muslims were aghast at the prospect of the government telling local communities what they should teach their children. Worse, these policies

¹⁰⁹ Ryoko Nishii, “Social Memory as It Emerges: A Consideration of the Death of a Young Covert on the West Coast in Southern Thailand.” In *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos*, ed. Shigeharu Tanabe et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 232.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

could slowly erase the ties to the Malay culture that were maintained through traditional forums for language and education such as Mosques and *pondoks*. This same conflict broke out again in 1939 when the Phibun regime decided to create a compulsory National Education Program that mandated even greater amounts of educational curriculum with nationalist undertones and further undermined the ability of Muslim *pondoks* to teach their students according to Islamic precepts.

In Satun however, the implementation of state schools with a Thai nationalist curriculum was accepted more easily than in the other southern regions. The Kedah sultanate had not promoted public education within Satun during the years that it controlled this province, let alone built any schools there, so the introduction of state schools was viewed as a welcome change by many residents of Satun. Satun's first public school was actually established in 1910 and was generally perceived in the region as a sign of progress and social development rather than cultural domination. Prior to this institution being provided by the government, the only schools and education available in the region were at Buddhist *Wats*, Mosques or local *pondoks*. Because Satun already had linguistic roots in the Thai language and locally created options were not particularly robust, Satun's residents were more cooperative with the central government's goals during 1939 than the Patani region.

b. Center-periphery Relations

Another factor in the absence of violence within Satun was the decision on the part of local elite leaders to engage with, and participate in, the new systems imposed by the Thai government in order to facilitate effective center-periphery relations. Frequently, this decision was due to intricate personal ties local leaders in Satun had to the center of power located in Bangkok and the inherent benefits such a course of action would bring. It was common for these government officials to be relative "outsiders," in that they were not "sons of Satun soil," but they were frequently recruited from neighboring provinces or other areas that had close historical or social ties to Satun. This included locations such as Kedah, Nakhorn Si Thammarat, or Songkhla. Since these appointed leaders were from the same regional area, they frequently had similar beliefs,

language, experiences, and backgrounds as the local population. This process of appointing suitable delegates made the process more palatable to the citizenry when new regional administrators of Satun were selected.

This tendency can be seen during the late 1800s when Satun's historical line of sultans slowly declined in power and Raja Tengku Abdul Rahman died without an heir. King Chulalongkorn then directed the viceroy of Satun, Tengku Baharuddin bin Ku Meh to take control of the province in 1900.¹¹¹ In many regards, this slow dissolution of the elite lineage in Satun was very different from the changes that were made in Patani. Rahman had no one to pass on his position to, so the Siamese government found an adequate replacement that was also acceptable to the local population. The appointment of a local Muslim leader in Satun who was conversant in both Thai and the local *bahasa ibunda* language, had served for the previous five years in the region as viceroy, and during that time managed to develop numerous relationships with local community leaders ultimately made this transition of power more palatable to the residents of Satun. Because of Tengku Baharuddin's appointment by the king himself, and his continuing cooperation with Bangkok, he was given significant freedom to run the province with a great deal of autonomy. In Patani, by comparison, the Muslim elites were forcibly removed by the Siamese leadership but still maintained a large measure of strong popular support in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat. There were also several younger generations of Muslim elites present in the Patani provinces who were able to continue in their father's stead, such as Abdul Kadir's son, Tengku Mahmud Mahyiddin. This lineage of power and relationships that were found within Patani made it much more difficult for the Siamese government to install new leadership in these particular areas without triggering a certain amount of public discontent.

Tengku Baharuddin's successor in local Satun politics was another Muslim named Tui Bin Abdullah who was appointed as the governor of the province in 1914. Tui Bin Abdullah had been educated in Bangkok, spoke both Thai and Malay, and

¹¹¹ Thomas I. Parks, "Maintaining Peace in a Neighbourhood Torn by Separatism: The Case of Satun Province in Southern Thailand" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20, no. 1 (2009): 195.

had already worked for the king on a number of previous assignments. Because of his connections and background, Tui Bin Abdullah was an acceptable choice for both the citizens of Satun and the government leaders in Bangkok. In addition, these two leaders were instrumental in establishing public schools throughout Satun and encouraging local people to learn the Thai language and agree to the suzerainty of the Thai government.

c. Political Representation

In a similar fashion to the constructive nature of center-periphery relationships between Satun and Bangkok, Satun was also able to engage in the political process in order to gain representation with the central government more easily than the Patani region. By utilizing a pragmatic outlook, aggressive lobbying in defense of their constituents and the use of Thai language in order to participate effectively in the political process, local civic leaders from Satun are frequently remembered for their ability to get development assistance, government concessions, and grievance resolutions to come to fruition. Che Abdullah Langputeh was one such individual who served as a minister of parliament during 1946 to 1968 and later became the Deputy Minister of Education. His legacy in Satun is still remembered today due to his effectiveness at protecting the region from onerous government initiatives and opening the larger political landscape of the country to Muslim participation from Satun.

d. Security Forces and Domestic Order

The English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, commented on the nature of the “social contract” in 1651 by theorizing that people will be willing to submit to political authority, and thereby relinquish some of their individual freedoms, in order to gain the benefits provided by the leadership they acquiesce to. One critical aspect of this contract is the provision to protect the governed population from harm and ensure domestic security is maintained.¹¹² If this basic need is not provided by the government, citizens will often take it upon themselves to protect themselves, their families, and their

¹¹² Paul Lermack, “The Constitution is the Social Contract, so It Must be a Contract...Right? A critique of originalism as interpretive method,” *William Mitchell Law Review* 33, no. 4 (2007): 1410.

communities from any perceived threats they face. The development of professional military and police forces originated during King Chulalongkorn's era of nation building and institutional reform, but how these forces are currently perceived in Satun and Patani are often quite different.

In Satun, security forces maintain a much smaller and less aggressive profile that they do in Patani. In many respects, this reduced number of troop deployments in Satun is due to the fact that the province is not seen as a "threat" to the national objectives of the Thai government. These security units in Satun are not particularly intrusive in their activities and frequently maintain a positive working relationship with the local population, which prevents Satun from developing various grievances that are frequently associated with the road blocks, vehicle searches, armed guards, and military patrols that are commonly observed in Patani. There is also clear and unfettered communication between local security forces in Satun and the population they are assigned to protect that reflects a lack of fear and trepidation about the intent and trustworthiness of these security forces within the province. Both of these groups have a vested interest in keeping the peace and want to prevent the spread of violence within the community. To this same end, local citizens often keep an eye out for any "outsiders" who may try to enter the community with the intent of upsetting this balance and promptly report them to the authorities.¹¹³

In Patani, the local security situation is not as positive or effective as it is in Satun. Royal Thai Army (RTA) and Royal Thai Police (RTP) are deployed throughout the region in immense numbers. Attacks on local citizens with firearms and bombs are frequent and there are allegations that local security forces often operate as black garbed "ninjas" in the middle of the night in order to abduct and interrogate citizens who are suspected of being involved in insurgent activity.¹¹⁴ These events have caused a pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty and terror in local villages and it is of little surprise

¹¹³ Thomas I. Parks, "Maintaining Peace in a Neighbourhood Torn by Separatism: The Case of Satun Province in Southern Thailand" *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20, no. 1 (2009): 187.

¹¹⁴ Supara Janchitfah, *Violence in the Mist: Reporting on the Presence of Pain in Southern Thailand*. (Bangkok, Thailand: Kobfai Publishing Project, 2004), 215.

that Malay Muslim inhabitants of Patani have begun to form local “militias” in order to protect and patrol their communities.¹¹⁵ Tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in the Patani region are on the rise since 2004 and there are allegations that both groups are engaging in tit-for-tat attacks and ambushes against each other. This militarization of the communities in Patani has caused a security dilemma to develop between these religious communities and the situation remains highly unstable, with attacks apparently beginning to increase in magnitude and sophistication.¹¹⁶

3. Satun’s Rational Choice Causes of Nonviolence

The last aspect of Satun’s pursuit of nonviolence is closely linked to different several rational choice arguments. In this particular explanation, there are close ties to our earlier discussion on Hobbe’s theories regarding the symbiotic relationship of the social contract, civil society, and the desire of individuals to protect themselves and their communities from harm. There are also possible undercurrents of personal gain or economic incentives (both licit and illicit) for maintaining the peace in the region. At the heart of both of these possible explanations, however, is a utility-based decision making process in which individuals mentally calculate the gains and costs in a particular course of action. Ultimately, individuals will pursue courses of action that will benefit themselves the most, and these choices have ensured that Satun has been, and will continue to be, a region that does not display the extensive use of violence in a public forum.

a. The Futility of Fighting a Larger Power

When the Siamese Army and Navy invaded Kedah in 1821, it did so with overwhelming force from both ground and naval avenues of approach. This military expedition was extremely disruptive to the lives and professions of many citizens in the

¹¹⁵ Supara Janchitfah, *Violence in the Mist: Reporting on the Presence of Pain in Southern Thailand*. (Bangkok, Thailand: Kobfai Publishing Project, 2004), 153–154.

¹¹⁶ Simon Roughneen, “Muslim Militants in South Thailand Growing Stronger.” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 1, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2012/0401/Muslim-militants-in-south-Thailand-growing-stronger>.

region and most likely caused a certain amount of frustration, anxiety, anger, and fear to the people who lived within Satun, especially after the leadership of Kedah was forced to flee to another country. In response to this development, the citizens of Satun had the choice to either resist this invasion or accept the fact that they were seriously outmatched in terms of martial capability and accept the agenda of regional regime change that was being implemented by the Siamese government. From a utilitarian perspective, it appears that Satun's population took a more pragmatic approach to this issue and decided to cooperate with Siamese officials and military units. This decision brought several different benefits along with it: higher levels of repression were not inflicted on the local people, it also created a favorable impression upon leaders in Bangkok that the residents of Satun were "good citizens" who were being cooperative and compliant, and finally this decision to avoid violent resistance shortened the duration of conflict within the region. Ironically, by pursuing a pragmatic and passive course of action, Satun's population was actually given more freedom to make decisions within the local area and local leadership was later returned to the area in 1842. In many regards, the population of Satun has continued to execute this rational choice decision of not using violence against the Thai government for many of the same reasons that it did in 1821: fighting against a larger and more powerful opponent, especially if you have no deep seated reasons to pursue such a risky course of action, may simply bring about an even greater degree of suffering and destruction.

b. Smuggling and the Black Market

In an article from August of 2005, Anthony Davis described one of the rational choice explanations for the peace in Satun. According to Davis, powerful local leaders and businessmen have a vested interest in continuing to conduct highly profitable black market activities and smuggling operations along the coastline of western Thailand and via overland routes between Satun and Kedah. These illicit activities include smuggling diesel fuel, cattle, cigarettes, liquor, electronics, and endangered animal products into Thailand with the intent of avoiding Thailand's expensive import taxes. There are also indicators of "exports" being shipped out of Thailand in the form of

narcotics and illegal weapons as well.¹¹⁷ In order to continue these illicit activities, it is imperative that Satun remains a quiet and tranquil region where extensive government intervention or the increased presence of security forces is avoided. Although this is an intriguing argument, empirical evidence is extremely hard to come by. Additionally, smuggling occurs in many regions of Thailand, such as the Laotian or Burmese borders as well as between the Patani and Kelantan regions of Malaysia. Due to the opaque nature of this activity, it is difficult to tell how much this particular variable may be influencing the outcome in Satun, but two things remain certain: First, based on seizures and arrests, smuggling is in fact taking place in the region, and second, it is invariably being conducted for utility based purposes (i.e., profits).

c. Legitimate Economic Calculations

Another more plausible rational choice explanation for the peace in Satun is the desire to obtain legitimate monies and funding from national authorities for public investments and development. The Thai government recently announced in early 2012 that it had plans to invest roughly \$2.7 billion dollars in 117 different development projects in Southern Thailand's Andaman Sea coastal provinces of Ranong, Phuket, Krabi, Phang Nga, Trang, and Satun.¹¹⁸ These infrastructure projects are planned to improve quality of life and access issues such as water resources, logistics support, highways, port facilities, tourism, health care, and education. The region of Phuket, just north of Satun, is one of the most profitable tourist destinations within the country, and it is estimated that the economic impact of this industry in Phuket alone represents \$3.2 billion worth of annual revenue to the region. Tourism not only provides jobs to locals from nearby areas like Satun, but is also a valuable commodity to the national government in terms of revenue streams, international image, and encouraging foreign business. From the Thai government's perspective, it will invariably want to invest its

¹¹⁷ Anthony Davis, "Satun Escapes The Grip of Thai Violence That is Blighting South," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (2005): 4.

¹¹⁸ "Thai Cabinet Approves Tourism Plan for Southern Thailand Provinces," March 26, 2012, http://royalthaiembassy.createsend1.com/t/ViewE-mail/r/EF6097CEF3687BC0/A0734A11553DF4D24AB3169DA1FD82E9#toc_item_2, Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, D.C.

budget in stable areas that will show a larger return on investments in local regions. Patani is noticeably absent from this list. For Satun, maintaining a peaceful environment means that these funds and infrastructure projects will continue to be provided, which is an immense economic incentive to keep the peace that carries a great deal of weight in a region that has historically low economic per capita income.

d. Civil Society and the Pursuit of Peace

Lastly, there is the rational choice influence that has been created by the development of a “civil society” within Satun. This term is usually associated with Adam Ferguson who developed the concept in the 18th century, but it has increasingly been used in the 20th century to define behaviors that occur outside of the spheres occupied by government or business.¹¹⁹ In a modern context, civil society has been discussed by a number of authors such as Ashutosh Varshney who investigated why some Hindu-Muslim communities within India maintained cordial relationships while other Hindu-Muslim communities degenerated into sectarian violence and bloodshed. Varshney argues that networks of engagement, in both associational and everyday interactions, are critical to mitigating ethnic tensions and conflicts.¹²⁰ Where these elements were missing, violence was more likely to blossom quickly and spiral out of control. In Satun, this particular concept has manifested itself as either the congenial relationships that have developed between Muslim and Buddhist groups or the mechanisms they have developed to mitigate potential problems before they become worse.

One example of these types of relationships can be found in the story related by Ryoko Nishii about how families in Satun who were faced with differing preferences about religious practices and funeral rites managed to resolve their differences of opinion on a micro level due to the constructive relationships they had cultivated between each other. In one particular event, a 29 year-old man from Satun

¹¹⁹ Adam Ferguson, “An Essay on the History of Civil Society,” 1767, <http://www.constitution.org/af/civil1.htm>.

¹²⁰ Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 9.

named Tak died suddenly one night in his home. Because Tak had converted to Islam, his wife wanted to prepare Tak's body in accordance with Islamic tradition and laws. Tak's family, who were Buddhists, argued that they should perform Buddhist rites for Tak after he died. Ultimately, Tak's family took his body in order to cremate Tak as per the Buddhist practice, an event that greatly upset Tak's wife Da and caused her to seek counsel from the Satun Provincial Islamic Committee, a former Islamic teacher, and her uncle in the province of Pattani.

Although her uncle called the crematorium to make thinly veiled threats asking them if they "dared to cremate the body of a Muslim," her Islamic teacher recommended that she quietly negotiate the matter with Tak's family rather than pursuing the issue in an Islamic court.¹²¹ This conflict had the potential to polarize groups along religious lines and set the stage for future conflicts to occur. Instead, the two communities were able to employ different associational and everyday relationships to come to grips with this loss and avoid the possibility of this event becoming a much larger problem. In the aftermath of Tak's death and his cremation in a Buddhist funerary ceremony, Tak's mother still maintained friendly relations with Da a year later and they observed both Islamic and Buddhist practices of "making merit" for Tak together which indicated a genuine effort to mend the wounds that they had both suffered after his death.

In an interesting turn of events, Ryoko Nishii also interviewed Sit, the new wife of Tak's brother. Sit had converted from Islam to Buddhism when she married and felt that she needed to make her religious choices very clear to both her own family (who were Muslim) as well as her husband's family (who were Buddhists) so that she could avoid "...an incident like that after Tak's death."¹²² Although Tak's death at such a young age was a distinct tragedy, in many ways it served a purpose within the collective

¹²¹ Ryoko Nishii, "Social Memory as It Emerges: A Consideration of the Death of a Young Convert on the West Coast in Southern Thailand." In *Cultural Crisis and Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos*, ed. Shigeharu Tanabe et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 234.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 239.

community by helping to maintain positive Muslim-Buddhist relationships and allowing local people to find compromises that avoided the creation of more contentious situations in the future.

E. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR VIOLENCE IN PATANI

1. Patani's Cultural Influences of Violence

Much like Satun, the cultural influences of language and religion within Patani have contributed to a unique reaction to occur in regards to its relationship with the Thai government. Whereas the Satun Muslims were able to resolve these disagreements over language and religion peaceably, and to a large degree accept the assimilation process, Patani Muslims have not accepted these policies as readily. Their resistance to the Thai government's efforts has quite literally created a situation in which an "irresistible force has met an immovable object." Neither party to this conflict has been willing to compromise or capitulate to such a degree that victory can be claimed by either side. Unfortunately, this stalemate over whose ethnic narrative should be the dominant paradigm has also led to a great number of casualties and deaths over the years, especially in the more recent decades since 1947.

a. Language

Many researchers have commented on the use and proliferation of language as a powerful tool for developing an ethnic identity or unifying national groups. Like other SEA countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, Thai leaders during the early 1900s recognized the importance of standardizing both speech and print throughout the country in order to create a commonly shared identity and standardize the means of communication on a national scale. In Patani, the local dialect of Jawi had been used for centuries, but suddenly this long-standing and fundamental cultural practice was declared unacceptable and contradictory to the linguistic practices that a "true Thai" citizen should be able to demonstrate. One example of how strongly the Thai government opposed the presence or use of any languages other than Thai in the country can be seen in Phibun's "Announcement of the Office of the Prime Minister on State-ism (No. 9)" which directed

the proper and accepted use of the Thai language in a fashion that reflected a true “belonging” to the larger national ethnic group:

As the government deems that the continuity and progress of Thailand depends on the usage of the national language and alphabet as important elements, the Council of Ministers has thereby unanimously voted to proclaim the following to be the state preference:

Thais must respect, show esteem, and venerate the Thai language, and feel honored to speak or to use the Thai language.

Thais must recognize that one of the civic duties of being a good citizen is to study Thai which is the national language, at least until being literate. Secondly, people of Thai nationality must consider as their duty to help, advise, and convince other citizens who do not know the Thai language or are not able to read Thai to become literate in Thai.

Thais must not regard the place of birth, domicile, residence, or local dialects which varies from locality to locality as marks of differences (rift). Everyone must consider that being born as a Thai means that he has Thai blood and speaks the same Thai language. There is no (inherent) conflict in being born in different localities or speaking the Thai language in different dialects.

Given on 24 June, Buddhist Era 2483 [1940].¹²³

Although it may be understandable to some observers that this mandate was attempting to create a larger sense of national identity throughout a heterogeneous population, it completely ignored the possibility that not everyone in the country would be willing to agree with this initiative or actually decide to obey the directive. The linguistic traits that Phibun was attempting to expunge in the Patani region had existed for centuries and were viewed as extremely important to the Patani Muslim’s concept of self-identity and cultural practices.

In addition, language can also help to define other groups, in a similar fashion to how the Muslims of Satun were labeled as “Sam Sams” to reflect the fact that they were Muslims who largely spoke Thai. Unfortunately the labels used in the

¹²³ Thanet Aphornsuvan, “History and Politics of the Muslims in Thailand.” *Cornell University South East Asia Program Post-Secondary Teaching Materials*. December 2, 2003, 36, <http://seap.einaudi.cornell.edu/system/files/MuslimThailand.pdf>.

relationship between the Thai government and the Patani Muslims are sometimes much more pejorative in nature. The name *Khaek* (“visitor” or “dark”), for example, is frequently used to describe the Patani Muslims and although this term is also used to describe foreigners (such as Indians or Arabs), it carries a negative connotation that is insulting to Patani Muslims due to the fact that their ancestors have lived in the region for at least 600 years.¹²⁴ The Patani Muslims, on the other hand, often refer to anyone who is not a Muslim as *Kafir* (“unbeliever” or “infidel”) a label that again underscores and reinforces the fundamental differences between these two groups, a concept that there is a sense of “us” and then there is the inferior category of “them.”

b. Religion

Much like the influences of history and language, religion is another critical factor in the creation of a binding and enduring sense of ethnic identity in southern Thailand. For the national government, the adherence to the practices of Theravada Buddhism was one of the defining elements of what it meant to be “Thai.” This belief had long established roots in the north portion of the country that stretched back to the 13th century and was subsequently strengthened through its ties to the monarchy and later to the national government.¹²⁵ For Patani, Islam had come to fill a similar role in the south, which reflected its closer ties to the Malay culture than the majority Buddhist paradigm. Islamic practices in this region provided authority to local leaders, guided the ethical considerations of their day-to-day activities, and tied the local Patani Muslims to a proud history of Islamic scholarship. This comprehensive and deeply connected relationship between Islam and the Patani cultural identity has been described as one in which “Islam plays a vital role in their way of life as it represents a complete system, embracing not only ethical and religious but also political, social, and economic

¹²⁴ Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 33.

¹²⁵ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.

concerns.”¹²⁶ The developments of the early 20th century (1902–1922) marked a major turning point in Siam where the religious component of ethnic identity on both a regional and national scale would become a key driver of the conflict between the dominant ethnic group in the north and a smaller ethnic group in the south. Surin Pitsuwan describes this particular condition as one in which:

Culturally, the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand belong to the Malay world. Politically, they are part of the Thai nation-state whose state religion is Buddhism. While the state is trying to cultivate a sense of belonging among these people, their traditional ties to their culture tend to keep them apart from the mainstream.¹²⁷

This divide between Buddhism and Islam is more pronounced in the Patani region when compared to Satun. Observers have reported that a sizable number of the Muslim communities in Patani are exclusive in their interactions with other religious groups. Frequently, Patani is characterized as a devout and pious Muslim region. . Some of the indicators of these traits can be noticed in social phenomenon such as the low rates of intermarriages between religious groups (e.g., a Muslim marrying a Buddhist or vice versa), and in the frequency of Muslims attending community events that are held in locations such as Buddhist temples. Often, the Patani Muslims felt that they could safely attend these social events and festivals in the community due to the increasing levels of multiculturalism and democratization that occurred in the 1990s. This trend has been in decline however, most notably after martial law was declared in southern Thailand during 2004.¹²⁸ This development is troubling in many regards because it indicates a drift away from the cultivation of positive associational relationships with other religious groups or individuals and an increasing trend of isolation and distrust,

¹²⁶ Uthai Dulyakasem, “Malay-Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand: Factors Underlying the Political Revolt.” In *Armed Separatism in Southeast Asia*, ed. Lim Joo-Jock et al. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984), 219.

¹²⁷ Surin Pitsuwan, *Islam and Malay nationalism: A Case Study of Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand* (Bangkok: Thammasat University, 1985), 28.

¹²⁸ Michael Jerryson, “Appropriating a Space for Violence: State Buddhism in Southern Thailand,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, no. 1 (2009): 33–57.

2. Patani's Institutional Causes of Violence

In addition to its strong ethnic character and independent identity, Patani also has been subjected to a number of institutional influences within Thailand that have added a great deal of impetus to the potential for violence to occur in the region. Among these institutional factors, elements such as public education, center-periphery relationship between Bangkok and Patani, a lack of political representation, and the actions of government security forces deployed to this region have all been critical in shaping the ongoing “southern problem” in Thailand.

a. Education

The planning and implementation of educational systems is by far one of the most pressing and critical issues for the Patani provinces. The Thai government's initiatives to implement a national curriculum standard with a heavy emphasis on secular education and learning the Thai language has been frequently cited as one of the more salient grievances Patani Muslims voice against the government. As noted earlier in the historical analysis of Patani, the region has a long-standing tradition of Islamic scholarship and learning. Despite the Thai government's initiatives to standardize schools with a country-wide model that reinforces a “Thai” identity, there has been an immense amount of resistance to this effort throughout Patani in order to maintain the presence and independence of local Islamic schools (*Pondoks*) or Mosques as centers of education. These religious schools are viewed as critical institutions by local residents in maintaining the region's unique culture, values, language, and identity. As a result, the Thai government's efforts to control curriculum or co-opt religious leaders has been viewed by some as a direct attack on the Patani Muslim's cultural identity. Currently in Patani there are more than 319 *pondoks*, which is in stark contrast to the two *Pondoks* located in Satun.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand: Tradition & Transformation*. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 55.

There is also a close linkage between the national education system and how it has been used as a vehicle for the implementation of Thai as a national language. Many of the classes in nationally sponsored schools are taught by Thai instructors, using Thai as the conversational language in the classroom, supported by textbooks with Thai script, and teaching a secular curriculum that is developed by the national education ministry in Bangkok. These factors make the potential immersion and education of young Muslim students in the Thai language both frequent and enduring. Frequently, the Thai government incentivizes this process by tying allocations of funding or other types of support to the condition that schools in Patani teach the secular curriculum that helps to reinforce concepts of Thai citizenship, values, and history, a policy that is problematic for Thailand's southern Muslims who want to maintain and pass on their cultural heritage to the younger generations in the region.

b. Center-Periphery Relations

Another aspect of institutional influence that has contributed to increased levels of violence in Patani is the nature of center-periphery relations between Bangkok and the southernmost regions of Thailand. Ever since the national government began to pursue a policy of direct control in the early 20th century, an initiative that removed a large amount of local authority and power from Patani elites, the relationship between the two has become increasingly contentious. This has been clearly demonstrated by the number of rebellions, revolts, and protests in the south against what has been viewed as intrusive and overbearing policy decisions on the part of the government, especially in the realms of language, education, politics, and regional security. Furthermore, this problem is not just about the actual events that have occurred from a historical perspective, but also how the conflict is being interpreted during the 21st century as well.

The Thai national media is one barometer of this seriously dysfunctional relationship. In papers, television programs, and radio broadcasts, there is a tendency to depict the problems in the south from a fairly prejudicial and one-sided perspective. As Sanitsuda Ekachai points out in the article "What's Lacking in the News? Truth," Thai newspapers and television often report on the southern conflict in terms that reinforce the

greater Thai public belief that the problem is entirely about separatism or simply the work of Muslim insurgents.¹³⁰ Because of this skewed portrayal of the issue, it frequently leads the average Thai citizen to support government repression in the south and fosters an opinion that the Muslims in Patani are “less Thai” (which can also be interpreted as “less patriotic”) than the larger majority and therefore deserve whatever travails befall them. Ekachai argues for media coverage that accurately and fairly reports on the issues and problems found in the southern communities and populations of Patani to help create understanding and opportunities for compromise. In many regards, issues such as injustice, lack of economic opportunity, and ethnic discrimination are critical concerns to these fractious areas and it is entirely possible that addressing these base conditions may help address the problem of violence much more effectively rather than just painting the issue with a broad and distorted brush.

c. Political Representation

Another institutional factor that has proven to be problematic for Patani is the lack of locally elected Muslim leaders and the ability of the Patani Muslims to participate in the Thai political process. Often, this attempt to gain political representation was rebuffed by Thai officials and the national leadership would simply install various officials from Bangkok who were frequently seen as either indifferent to the local citizens’ concerns, incompetent, corrupt, or highly abusive. Historically, we can observe some grievous abuses of power and violent attempts to suppress Muslim political leaders on the part of the national government. One example of this latter trend can be seen in the case of Haji Sulong and his attempts to redress southern grievances after he published his “seven points” in 1947. During that year, Haji Sulong drafted a set of political reforms and appeals to the Thai government that requested the southern provinces be granted:

1. The appointment of a single individual with full powers to govern the four provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Setul [Satun] and in particular having authority to dismiss, suspend, or replace all government servants, this individual to be local-born in one of the four provinces and to be elected by the people;

¹³⁰ Sanitsuda Ekachai, “What’s Lacking in the News? Truth” *The Nation*, August 10, 2006.

2. Eighty percent of government servants in the four provinces to be Muslims;
3. Malay and Siamese to be official languages;
4. Malay to be the medium of instruction in the primary schools;
5. Muslim law to be recognized and enforced in a separate Muslim Court other than the civil court where the one time kathi sat as an assessor;
6. All revenue and income derived from the four provinces to be utilized within them;
7. The formation of a Muslim Board having full powers to direct all Muslim affairs under the supreme authority of the head of state mentioned in (1.)¹³¹

Although some of these requests, such as having Malay be the sole language in primary schools could be viewed as ethnically divisive, many of them are centered on being granted a degree of equal rights and justice within Thai legal or economic institutions. Furthermore, although the Thai government viewed these points as “seditious,” the reality is that they were not designed to pursue secession or achieving independence in the south, but in fact were about providing a degree of concessions and compromise for the ethnoreligious identity of the Patani Muslims. Additionally, they were drafted with the goal of gaining a greater level of political representation and participation within the country, qualities that are frequently cited as the hallmarks of an inclusive and democratic society. Haji Sulong was jailed for his efforts and after several years of incarceration was released from Thai custody in 1952.

An even more disturbing aspect in this case is the fact that Haji Sulong disappeared under suspicious circumstances two years later when he was called into the Police Special Branch Office one evening in Songkhla Province. Although it was never proven, there are allegations that Haji Sulong and his oldest son Wan Othan Ahmad were killed that night by Thai police forces. Dark rumors abounded that these killings were

¹³¹ Nantawan Haemindra, “The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand (Part One)” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7, no. 2 (1976): 197–225.

committed under the direction of General Phao Siyanon, and that the two men had been tied to heavy stones and then thrown into the sea behind Nu Island.¹³² In many respects, even though this allegation of outright murder is nearly impossible to prove, the fact remains that Sulong is one of many people who have “disappeared” in southern Thailand, a troubling issue which reflects an atmosphere of political repression and fear that has been seen in several other authoritarian countries like Argentina and Chile. It should therefore be of little surprise that locals are frequently hesitant to openly criticize Thai policies or willing to work towards political solutions through non-violence and engagement.

d. Security Forces and Domestic Order

One of the more prominent failures of the Thai government in attempting to resolve the southern conflict has been in the realm of fielding effective security forces and ensuring domestic order. Ideally, national security forces should consist of trained professionals who are respected by local citizens for their effective provision of security for all citizens, restraint, and adherence to the rule of law. When these representatives of the government fail to meet these obligations, it can often be construed as a breach of the social contract that exists between the government and the population they are charged with protecting. The historical cases of Haji Sulong and Dusun Nyor are just a few early examples of where Thai security forces have shown themselves to have a propensity for undisciplined violence and inflicting large amounts of collateral damage in their attempts to suppress the southern conflict. Even in the modern era of the 21st century, the Royal Thai Army (RTA) and the Royal Thai Police (RTP) have accrued a predominantly negative record for human rights abuses in Patani and two particular events stand out as particularly egregious in this regard—the 2004 Krue-Se Mosque incident and the Tak Bai massacre—both of which have been subsequently used as rallying points for violent resistance.

¹³² Thanet Aphornsuvan, “Origins of Malay Muslim ‘Separatism’ in Southern Thailand” *Asia Research Institute*, Working Paper Series No. 32, October 2004, 48.

In January 2004, a RTA camp in Narathiwat was raided by approximately 100 Malay militants who absconded with over 300 small arms to include machine guns, rocket propelled grenades, and assault rifles. The Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra responded to this event by deploying several thousand additional soldiers and policemen into Patani to enforce martial law and counter what the government now admitted was a growing conflict with a new generation of Muslim separatists.¹³³ Many of the RTA and RTP forces were poorly trained and ill-prepared to operate in the ethnic landscape of southern Thailand, which ultimately produced disastrous results. In April 2004, Thai military forces stormed the Krue-Se Mosque in Pattani province (one of the most holy and revered sites in the region) after 32 armed insurgents barricaded themselves inside of the main Mosque. In the ensuing battle, all 32 insurgents were killed without quarter. Many of the bodies bore signs of torture and summary execution when they were claimed by their relatives for burial. This incident caused widespread distrust and fear in the local community of both RTA and RTP forces and provided Muslim insurgents with superb propaganda material in their future recruiting efforts against the Thai government.¹³⁴ In Malaysia, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic party and other international observers vehemently protested these killings and called for investigations to determine what had taken place at Krue–Se, to which Thaksin replied in just one of several callous statements:

Please don't intervene. Please leave us alone. It is my job and we can cope with this matter. We are trying to explain this to foreigners. But if they do not understand or ignore our explanation, I don't care because we are not begging them for food.¹³⁵

In October 2004, relations between the Thai government and its southern regions deteriorated yet again after a civil disturbance in the town of Tak Bai was violently suppressed by Thai military units. After crowds had formed at Tak Bai to

¹³³ "Southern Violence: Patani Hit, Martial Law Declared," Asian Tribune, January 6, 2004, <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2004/01/06/southern-violence-pattani-hit-martial-law-declared-br>.

¹³⁴ Duncan McCargo, *Tearing Apart The Land: Islam And Legitimacy In Southern Thailand* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 108.

¹³⁵ John Funston, "Malaysia and Thailand's Southern Conflict: Reconciling Security and Ethnicity," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 32, no. 2 (2010): 242.

demonstrate against the government, hundreds of Muslim protestors were arrested, bound, beaten, and then stacked like firewood up to five layers deep in the back of government trucks. By the time these vehicles arrived at the RTA holding facility in Inkhayut several hours later, 78 of the protestors had already suffocated to death. Thaksin's explanation for the deaths was that the protestors must have died "because they were so weak from fasting for Ramadan."¹³⁶ The Tak Bai incident not only drove an even larger wedge between Thailand and the southern communities but also alienated relations with Muslim-majority countries worldwide. Within days of this incident, there were numerous condemnations from the Malaysian Parliament, political parties such as United Malays National Organization (UMNO) as well as the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), and even the former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed commented that the situation was quickly beginning to resemble the unrest in Palestine and perhaps some form of regional autonomy should be considered.¹³⁷ In many respects, the Thai security forces unwittingly helped their opposition by providing a propaganda goldmine: shortly after these incidents occurred, additional fliers and pamphlets were distributed in the region describing the brutality and racism of the government in both of these events and added fuel to the argument that Thai security forces were in the business of killing Muslims with impunity and reckless abandon.

Domestic order has been a huge problem as well, especially in the aftermath of the Narathiwat armory raids, Krue-Se Mosque attack, and Tak Bai demonstrations. One of the methods that the Thai government employed to enforce domestic order was the issuance of an "emergency decree" on 16 July 2005. This decree essentially removed the legal and administrative safeguards that in theory provided protection from human rights violations by government officials, despite the fact that these freedoms were guaranteed by the Thai Constitution of 1997 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Human rights groups were appalled by

¹³⁶ Pavin Chachavalpongpan, *Reinventing Thailand: Thaksin and His Foreign Policy* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010), 186.

¹³⁷ John Funston, "Malaysia and Thailand's Southern Conflict: Reconciling Security and Ethnicity," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 32, no. 2 (2010): 243.

this development as it indicated a more heavy-handed approach to this situation that threatened to aggravate the conflict and gave Thai security forces immense powers that could be easily abused. For example, Thai citizens were now subject to arrest and detention without any charges being levied against them. Many observers feared that this denial of basic constitutional and legal rights could easily lead to increasingly malevolent behavior such as people being tortured to confess their guilt, causing citizens to suddenly “disappear,” or blatantly executing suspects without any legal proceedings or judicial accountability for officials whatsoever. In one particularly prominent case, a southern Thai Muslim lawyer by the name of Somchai Nelapaijit had reported to the National Human Rights Commission that RTP security forces had subjected detainees suspected of insurgent activity to severe beatings, suffocation with water or plastic bags, and electric shocks to their thighs or testicles in order to get them to confess or provide information on other suspects. Chillingly, Somchai disappeared in 2004, shortly after he began to report on the government abuses in southern Thailand and defend survivors in court. To date, his body has never been recovered and no one in the Thai government has been held accountable, despite strong indications that the Thai police were responsible.

3. Patani’s Rational Choice Influences for Violence

Much like the Muslims in Satun, the Muslim populations of Patani have also engaged in rational choice calculations regarding the use of violence. Unlike Satun, however, where violence has been rejected as a tool for dispute resolution, it appears that segments of the Patani Muslim population have decided that many of the other options to resolve their grievances with the Thai government, such as political representation or legal appeals, have invariably failed. As a result, violent resistance has become a frequent expression of the frustration and anger that residents of Patani feel toward Bangkok. This simmering anger has been compounded by the fact that these communities believe they have no other outlets for pursuing recourse to their grievances. Many Muslims in Patani also feel threatened in terms of their cultural survival on a macro or national level and sometimes have begun to view neighboring religious communities as potential adversaries or threats on a local level. This fear and distrust is a compounding problem in

which there are increasingly rare opportunities for constructive interaction between these different groups. With all of these challenges in mind, it should be of little surprise that the propensity for people in Patani to utilize violence as a solution for their grievances is much higher than it is in Satun.

a. The Failure of Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods

Ideally, societies have some type of method to conduct conflict resolution that prevents their citizens from having to ultimately resort to violence to solve their differences. In ancient times, individuals like King Solomon were seen as the ultimate arbiter of disputes and a source of wisdom for finding effective compromises between citizens or groups. There may be the chance of pursuing legal avenues of redress through the courts, judges, and attorneys who are willing to represent an individual's grievances. Political methods of conflict resolution may allow elected leaders in the community to lobby with elements of the national government for solutions to constituents' concerns and issues. Religious leaders are also widely recognized in many societies as symbols of morality and ethics who can help avoid bloodshed by facilitating negotiations as well. The process by which these actors can initiate effective dispute resolution methods can be compared to the pressure relief valve on a steam cooker. When they are present, they can allow points of contention to be mitigated without exploding into disorder. If they are repeatedly undermined or restricted, tensions and pressure in a society can build to a point where violence may result. In many of the examples we have seen in Patani, traditional agents of mediation, such as legal redress, political participation, and religious mediation have frequently been suppressed or eliminated. One particularly telling example of this was the elimination of Civilian Military Police Task Force 43 (CMP-43) and the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center (SBPAC) in 2002.

CMP-43 and SBPAC were two agencies formed in the 1980s by Thailand's Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda (1980–1988) who was a former general in the Thai Army. After his appointment, Prem quickly implemented a wide range of military, political, and economic solutions to reduce the presence and activity of the BRN, PULO, CPT and PLAT during his time in office. Rather than simply pursuing

military campaigns against these opposition groups, PM Prem also engaged in diplomacy, compromise, and institution building in order to reduce the conflict. For example, in 1982 Prem promoted government order 65/2525 which encouraged CPT cadres to defect, offered them amnesty, and gave out economic incentives (such as pensions and an established home in “peace villages” along Thailand’s southern border) to those who surrendered and laid down their arms.¹³⁸ Concurrently, the Prem regime also engaged with China and Malaysia to deny financial backing, logistic support, and border safe havens to the CPT and PLAT which drastically reduced the Communist insurgent’s ability to operate within Thailand.

In addition to these efforts, Prem created several effective institutions to deal with the Patani Muslim separatist issue as well. In 1981, Prem organized the SBPAC, assigned it under the management of the Interior Ministry (rather than placing it under the auspices of the Defense Ministry) and physically located its headquarters in Yala Province. In the years to follow, SBPAC had several critical functions in reducing the insurgency problems in southern Thailand. It helped to educate the Thai politicians and civil servants who were assigned to southern posts on the nuances of Thai Malay Muslim culture. The SBPAC also often served as a conduit for information, communication, and intelligence to be exchanged between Bangkok and the provincial leaders in the south. Perhaps most importantly, SBPAC allowed grievances from the south to be heard and resolved before they grew into more widespread points of contention. In conjunction with the SBPAC, Prem also directed the establishment of the CMP-43. CMP-43 was a joint unit composed of local security forces along with elements of the Royal Thai Army (RTA) that worked directly for the SBPAC in coordinating all security and policing operations in the south. CMP-43 maintained good working relationships with local leaders and citizens and, as a result, CMP-43 was able to gain high quality intelligence and cooperation from the population in order to execute effective follow-on operations. Under Prem’s leadership, the focus was on implementing

¹³⁸ Karl Hack, “The Long March to Peace of the Malayan Communist Party in Southern Thailand.” In *Thai South and Malay North: Ethnic Interactions on a Plural Peninsula*, ed. Michael J. Montesano et al. (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008), 194–195.

indirect counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies, developing effective institutions for justice and participation, and pursuing economic stability within Thailand. This was a dramatic change from the authoritarian enforcement measures seen in previous administrations that overwhelmingly utilized military operations to crack down on dissent. As a result, the 1990s were relatively calm throughout Southern Thailand and many observers quietly theorized that perhaps the days of insurgent violence and bloodshed had become a thing of the past.

After PM Thaksin assumed office in 2001, he decided to disband the SBPAC and CMP-43 during 2002 because he believed that insurgent and separatist violence was no longer a threat within Thailand. This action effectively severed the direct links of command and control between the central government and the local officials and citizens in the south. As a result, intelligence collection efforts were abruptly brought to a halt and the ability to coordinate effective operations in the region disintegrated. Thaksin's elimination of these agencies also removed the established grievance resolution process for Thai citizens in the south. Many Patani Muslims now had no one to whom they could appeal their plight when they had suffered under the leadership of corrupt officials, faced indiscriminate physical abuse at the hands of RTP security forces, or had lost access to vital economic resources required to support their families (such as fishing or agriculture) to "big business" interests from Bangkok.¹³⁹ This void fueled local anger and a sense of abandonment toward the elected political leaders in Bangkok. As a result, violence has become viewed in Patani as a valid option to bring attention to these problems on a local, national, and international scale.

b. Thai Nationalism as a Direct Threat to Patani Muslim Culture

The goals of self-preservation and survival are primordial drives that most creatures, including humans, will frequently fight tooth and nail to achieve. In the case of Patani, the assimilation process that was aggressively promoted by the Thai government at various points in history raised fears of cultural survival. Many of the directives and

¹³⁹ Supara Janchitfah, *Violence In The Mist: Reporting on the Presence of Pain in Southern Thailand* (Bangkok, Thailand: Kobfai Publishing Project, 2004), 37.

policies handed down from the Thai government denied Patani the rights to practice religious law, use their own language, educate their children as they saw fit, and dress in the same traditional garb that they had been wearing for hundreds of years. If Patani accepted these directives from what they viewed as an illegitimate non-Islamic government, it would not only be tantamount to a grievous sin within the culture (to turn away from Islam) but it would also mark a death knell for the practices and beliefs that were critical components to the sustainment of the region's cultural identity, ethnic history, and religious practices. In many regards, this was an unacceptable option, so multiple attempts at political protest and lobbying were made by Patani leaders and social elites. When these efforts at appeals or mediation were rejected by the Thai government, many Patani Muslims began to fear that the assimilation policies would continue to be relentlessly enforced until local Islamic culture was completely eliminated. When faced with the choice of resistance or cultural extinction, some Patani Muslims decided to resist violently as a means to ensure their chances of cultural and political survival.

c. A Possible Security Dilemma Between Buddhists and Muslims

One common theme in international relations and the ethnic conflict literature that is quite applicable to the region of Patani is that of the “security dilemma.”¹⁴⁰ This precept holds that actors in Community A are likely to begin to acquire weapons in order to protect themselves from perceived hostile neighbors in Community B. Once the neighbors in Community B (who may not have actually had any hostile intent in the first place) see the residents of Community A transforming their homes, religious centers, and places of business into fortified compounds and arming themselves, the citizens of Community B begin to also arm themselves in order to defend against Community A. This is the heart of the security dilemma: a rush toward gaining a greater sense of safety that may in fact paradoxically make everyone *less* safe as fear and uncertainty grow, shootings begin to increase, and any hope of maintaining a civil society quickly decay. In Thailand, this type of phenomenon has been documented by a number

¹⁴⁰ Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival*, 35, no. 1 (1993): 27–47.

of different observers and authors and shows the potential cleavages that have developed along religious or political lines. One aspect of this potential security dilemma between communities in southern Thailand is the availability of firearms and how the proliferation of these light weapons may aggravate existing tensions between local communities and the state.¹⁴¹

In particular, the Thai government has provided weapons to local Buddhist communities and elected officials throughout the Patani region via three main avenues, specifically subsidizing gun purchases, relaxing restrictions on firearms ownership, and providing small arms to civilian defense forces.¹⁴² Although these practices are ostensibly described by the Thai government as being conducted to protect local Buddhists from insurgent attackers, it begs the question about how local Muslims interpret these activities: Is it meant to protect the community as a whole? Or does the funneling of these weapons to Buddhist organizations signify a more threatening goal? Considering that her Majesty the Queen has formed an “Iron Lady Unit” (in which female volunteers are paid to carry firearms, patrol local villages, and provide security for schools and Buddhist temples), and the firearms application process within Thailand is one which is notoriously difficult for Muslims to successfully pass, this sectarian development could very easily be viewed as a process of preferential treatment for Buddhists and create a local arms race in which the central government is aggressively supporting Buddhist armament while simultaneously denying this same right to Muslims. In light of this perceived insecurity, it is entirely possible that groups of Patani Muslims will increasingly prepare themselves for acts of violence against neighboring Buddhist enclaves in order to defend against possible predation or attack.

¹⁴¹ Diana Sarosi and Janjira Sombatpoonsiri, “Arming Civilians for Self-defense: The Impact of Firearms Proliferation on the Conflict Dynamics in Southern Thailand,” *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 23, no. 3 (2011): 387–403.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 389.

d. The Breakdown of Civil Society and the “Purging” of Communities

The concept of a “civil society” holds that the nature of the relationships that people develop, in both associational and everyday activities, will influence how they will interact with each other. In societies where these types of relationships are frequent and deep, the occurrence of violence tends to be quite low.¹⁴³ Conversely, in communities where there is a lack of connections between individuals and groups, communication and understanding begin to break down. Instead, distrust, animosity, and intolerance can start to fester and violence tends to increase. Once these perceptions or labels between groups become rampant and groups polarize along ethnic, religious, or political lines, sometimes it is only a matter of having some sort of flashpoint event take place, such as a rumor that a rape has occurred, some sort of small altercation breaks out, or an actual injury or fatality within an ethnic group at the hands of a rival ethnic group takes place. Once one of these triggering events takes place, riots, purges, or “cleansing” can result in fairly short order. Despite the savage Darwinian nature of this analysis, the utility of this type of decision becomes quite apparent when we consider the potential for reducing conflict when a community is created that is more homogenous in terms of ethnic or religious makeup. Once the “other” groups in the area, who may be seen as a source of endemic problems, are driven away there is a belief that peace will be restored.

This disintegration of civil society and the resulting violence this situation may create can actually be seen in a variety of settings and time periods outside of Thailand. For example, in the aftermath of the 1947 British partition of India and Pakistan, communal violence and ethnic cleansing took place with frightening regularity between groups of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, resulting in casualty figures of between 500,000 and 1 million people killed and another 10 million Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh families driven from their homes in massive population transfers. This decay of civil society has also been studied more recently by Ashutosh Varshney when he investigated communal riots that took place throughout India during the 1990s. Varshney observed

¹⁴³ Marc Askew, “Landscapes of Fear, Horizons of Trust: Villagers Dealing with Danger in Thailand’s Insurgent South,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 59–86.

that in small villages or towns where everyday interactions were commonplace violence was frequently minimized. As the communities became larger (towns and cities), it was impossible for all the residents to have direct interactions with everyone else in the municipality and there was a risk of disassociation taking place between communities. As a result, Varshney argues that “associational civic engagement is necessary for peace in interethnic urban settings.”¹⁴⁴

Thailand is no different in many regards. Despite the ethnic and religious differences in Patani, local religious enclaves frequently provided a venue for the entire community, both Muslims and Buddhists alike, to gather together and observe common events such as the King’s birthday or Songkran (Thai New Year). This association has broken down in the 21st century as attacks on local groups of Muslims and Buddhists began to cause an environment of fear, suspicion, and anger.¹⁴⁵ When the opportunity for day-to-day interactions or community forums for communication begins to decrease it causes a corresponding drop in yet another alternative channel for dispute resolution to take place. This sociocultural distance between communities makes it easier in many regards to vilify neighboring ethnic groups, attempt to push the “other” out, and thereby ensure a safe community is established. This entire process may indicate a rational choice process to defend one’s home and family on either side of this conflict by forcing other ethnic groups to move away from the area.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Ashutosh. Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 52.

¹⁴⁵ Duncan McCargo, “Thai Buddhism, Thai Buddhists and the southern conflict,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, no. 1 (2009): 1–10.

¹⁴⁶ Duncan McCargo, “The Politics of Buddhist Identity in Thailand’s Deep South: The Demise of Civil Religion?,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40, no. 1 (2009): 11–32.

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II. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we can see that although Satun shares several similar qualities with its neighbors in the Patani region, such as Islamic beliefs, early political structures (i.e., being part of a sultanate), and historical ties to Malaysia, Satun has also demonstrated a number of distinct factors that have contributed to this particular province eschewing the use of violence against the state. Although many of the influences and factors we have discussed throughout the course of this thesis have helped contribute in totality to the outcome of Satun's nonviolent nature, it appears that three elements are of particular importance to the discussion of this evolutionary process and the final observed outcome of nonviolence. These three primary factors include: 1.) The development of a divergent ethnic identity within Satun, 2.) a lack of regional grievances in Satun about poor governance at the hands of the Thai government, and 3.) a collective decision that was made by the population within Satun about how to interact with the Thai government writ large, specifically that this region generally decided to cooperate with the Thai government because of the many benefits this course of action provided.

One of the most fundamental differences we find in Satun is that the local population in this province has developed a dramatically different ethnic identity as "Sam Sams" compared to what has evolved in Patani. In a macro sense, this has been generated by the historical record in which Satun has always existed as a "periphery" polity or region, first falling under the control of the Sultanate of Kedah, then in subsequent years being brought under the control of the Siamese government. As a result, there was not the same sense of loss and injury felt in Satun like there was in Patani when the Satun Muslims were faced with national policies of assimilation. Another contrast in the ethnic identity between the two regions can be gained by examining them in regards to relative ethnic power or self-identity. This influence can be demonstrated by the fact that Satun did not possess the same sort of widespread prestige and territorial control that the Patani sultanate enjoyed during 1500 to 1700 CE. Satun was never recognized as a powerful independent sultanate or a well-known center of Islamic learning, and this helped to

shape the ethnic identity and historical heritage of Satun to be less pronounced and contentious than what is frequently found in Patani. For example, we do not find a flag being created that represents the resurrection of “the greater state of Satun.” Even the published manifestos which include Satun in this type of political vision (i.e., the creation of an autonomous Patani state) have no resonance with the people in Satun. The absence of strong familial structures or royal lineages in Satun also contributed to the lack of violence as well. Prior to 1900 when the last Raja of Satun died, he was replaced with an alternative leader who was acceptable to both the center and the periphery. In Patani, these historical leaders were still very strong when they were forcibly removed by the Thai government and as a result, the displaced Patani Rajas simply continued their ability to lead the people under their control from alternate locations such as Malaya. Another aspect of this ethnic identity in Satun is that it was very fluid and malleable in nature. This flexibility allowed the Sam Sams to easily adapt and assimilate more readily to the dramatically changing conditions that developed within Thailand from 1902–1957. This is a dramatic comparison to the ethnic nature of Patani, which was more stringent and inflexible in its views of the world around it. On a micro level, we have seen how the use of language was largely a non-issue within Satun. It appears that as early as 1813, when the Siamese government began to extend increased amounts of administrative control over the population of Satun, this region was able to more readily identify themselves as being “Thai” rather than “Malay.” This frame of reference and political orientation towards Bangkok has created a situation in which a long running conflict over competing ethnic narratives has failed to develop in Satun.

For the region of Patani, one of the key components in the ongoing conflict and violence is the long standing historical and ethnic roots that are driving it. It appears that these particular elements are some of the primary causes for the rather exclusive nature of the violence in Patani and has heavily contributed to keeping this conflict as a localized or regional problem within a particular part of the country rather than expanding to other communities. In a larger sense, this violence has also been centered on various aspects of power and control between the center and the periphery. It is understandable in some regards why the Thai government leaders implemented many of the controversial and

provocative initiatives over the years that they did. Thai elites had a primary concern to ensure their own national survival and they were also attempting to create a common frame of ethnic identity for all of the citizens under their stewardship to embrace. Unfortunately, there was a lack of cultural understanding and ability to compromise on the part of Thai leaders when this national agenda for standardizing citizenship was adopted. They did not fully comprehend exactly how contentious these initiatives were for some segments of the population in Patani. The fear and discontent it caused throughout southern Thailand should have been an indicator to the government that trying to implement these changes by force would only make the situation worse. Because the Patani Muslims saw these efforts as a direct threat to the long standing beliefs and ethnic identity that they had maintained for centuries they would never easily acquiesce to abandon these beliefs. When it became clear that in a larger sense there would be no hope for compromise, many residents of Patani felt that violence was the only option that they had left to them.

In addition to Satun having a very different ethnic identity, the Thai government itself has had a direct hand in creating the conditions in Satun by avoiding the use of violent methods of suppression and control that it frequently employed in Patani. By allowing the province of Satun to retain a larger degree of political autonomy and not completely usurping the local elites in Satun like it did in Patani, the Thai government effectively bridged the divide between the population and the larger national government by using local leaders as intermediaries. Satun has also simply not suffered the same numbers of injuries and fatalities that has been inflicted on the population of Patani. Although it is extremely difficult to argue a counterfactual, it is possible that if similar amounts of violence had been inflicted upon Satun, the population there would have begun to experience increased levels of anger and frustration as well, perhaps leading to armed resistance or violence. The use of force in counterinsurgency doctrine is something that needs to be gravely considered and applied very carefully. Many experts in this particular field have described how the use of excessive force can actually be counterproductive in reducing insurgencies or domestic conflicts, declaring that:

The more force you use, the less effective you are. Any use of force produces many effects, not all of which can be foreseen. The more force applied, the greater the chance of collateral damage and mistakes. Enemy propaganda will portray kinetic military activities as brutal. Restrained force also strengthens the rule of law the counterinsurgent is trying to establish.¹⁴⁷

When we look at southern Thailand from a historical perspective, we can see that there is a sine wave of violence in which the problems in Patani have peaked during certain periods such as 1838, 1923, 1948, 1972, and 2004, and that there are other decades where the violence has been noticeably reduced.¹⁴⁸ For example, the years between 1840 and 1900 had a reduced number of revolts, 1941 to 1945 also showed a lull in violence, and during the late-1980s to the early 2000s many of the problems in the south with groups such as the CPT and PULO had become almost nonexistent.¹⁴⁹ If we examine what the Thai government's activities were during these more violent periods, we can quickly ascertain that relations between the Thai government and Patani became problematic during years where Thai government repression and intrusion into the region was high and there were no effective institutions in place, or alternative methods for these grievances to be vetted or resolved. Conversely, during the periods in which government intrusion was minimized and dispute resolution procedures were in place, violence was extremely low.

Lastly, it is evident that some degree of rational choice is at work in Satun. Very early in Satun's history it was recognized that if the Sultante of Kedah could not defend Satun against the incursions of the Siamese army, perhaps a more pragmatic approach of submission and acceptance was in order. Because Satun accepted the larger narratives imposed by the Chakri Dynasty, it quickly appeared to the Siamese leadership that the possibility of Satun posing a potential threat to the new Thai government was minimal

¹⁴⁷ Elliot Cohen, Conrad Crane, Jan Horvath, and Jon Nagl. "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, (2006): 50.

¹⁴⁸ Neil J. Melvin, Neil J. Melvin, "Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency," *SIPRI Policy Paper No. 20*, September 2007, 15.

¹⁴⁹ Zachary Abuza, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Insurgency in Southern Thailand* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), 28.

and additional military invasions or local troop deployments were avoided as a result. There is also an incentive side to this choice as well. On the positive side, the Thai government is willing to invest substantial sums of money in infrastructure and tourism developments in regions that are seen as “good investments.” This fact represents an economic opportunity that local political and community leaders in Satun are no doubt anxious to obtain. From a more negative perspective, the residents of Satun seem to express a desire to avoid the potential impacts of government repression or violence that are so frequently seen in Patani. It appears that these factors, in their totality, have contributed greatly to the peaceful outcome in Satun and it appears that this trend will continue in both the immediate and long term future. Patani, on the other hand, has a number of reasons for choosing violence as a tool for conflict resolution despite the possible negative effects this choice may have had in terms of aggravating the conflict between Patani and the Thai government. One such reason for choosing violence was the regional concerns about the survival of Patani cultural identities. Entreaties to protect this identity were frequently ignored or violently suppressed, and in short order, violence became a way to “fight back” or “defend” against the perceived injustices that were being inflicted on local communities. Security measures imposed by the Thai government in the Patani region since the 1700s have inflicted unnecessary casualties and caused widespread anger against the leaders in Bangkok. And lastly, potential methods that could be used to address these grievances in Patani, even highly successful ones like the establishment of SBPAC and CMP-43 have frequently been either neglected, suppressed, or eliminated altogether. When all of these components are combined, it should be of little surprise that violence soon becomes seen as a viable option to respond to perceived threats.

This relationship between the Thai government and Patani has continued to evolve over the years, and many observers wonder if the undercurrent of this issue is slowly drifting from predominantly ethno-nationalist motivations to more religiously driven ones. I would argue that two main points exist here: First, although the basis for different types of social mobilization may evolve or change over time, the end result is the same in that the conflict has continued unabated. Second, both the concepts of

ethnicity and religion are closely tied into the formation of a cultural identity as we have discussed earlier. As a result, we are still left with the question of how to respond to this conflict on either an ethnic or religious level. Although the Patani Muslims are a minority when compared to the entire country, they are a distinct ethnic majority when viewed from a regional level, which can have the reverse effect on smaller communities of Buddhists in Patani: a fear that local Buddhist enclaves may become eclipsed or persecuted by the majority presence of Muslims. This is a serious concern on a variety of levels and observers fear that there may be future expansion of this problem along these lines. In order to counteract this possibility, advocating tolerance, encouraging interaction between both community leaders and local citizens, and the development of a consociational political environment at both a local and national level will go a long ways towards resolving this issue.¹⁵⁰

Following the ouster of Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006, the new military leadership organized by Sonthi Boonyaratkalin had pledged to reexamine the issues of national governance and ongoing grievances in the south. Despite these conciliatory gestures and public apologies for some of the Thai government's past transgression, the conflict in southern Thailand actually intensified in the following year, and the total number of people killed in the region rose to over 2,579 by September of 2007.¹⁵¹ Some five years later, the Patani region still suffers from a great deal of political neglect and low intensity violence that shows no signs of abating anytime soon. After analyzing the historical trajectory of this conflict and some of its formative influences, we are left with several predictions after examining the problems in southern Thailand: 1) Ethnic conflict will continue to be a pressing issue throughout this particular region in the 21st century as different minority groups seek to protect their identities, human rights, culture, and attempt to participate in national economic and political activities, and 2) If the Thai

¹⁵⁰ Ian Lustick, "Stability in Deeply Divided Societies: Consociationalism Versus Control," *World Politics*, 31, no. 3 (1979), 325–344. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2009992.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

¹⁵¹ Marc Askew and Prayut Sivarawiroj, "Thailand's Counter-insurgency Operations," December 1, 2007, *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, http://www4.janes.com/subscribe/jiaa/doc_view.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/mags/jiaa/history/jiaa2007/jiaa5095.htm@current&Prod_Name=JIAA&QueryText= .

government, and the elites who run it, are not willing to compromise with their constituents in order to create an inclusive political environment, then violence will most likely continue in future years. This failure to provide for an environment of safety and security within the country neglects one of the critical components of governance, and national leaders have an obligation to solve these problems as quickly and effectively as they can if they truly want to bring peace to their communities. In the case of Satun, however, we can see how the development of ethnic identities, when properly managed at the regional and national levels, provides a deeper sense of “ownership” for local communities in terms of their political participation and subsequent interactions with national authorities. Once this constructive relationship is established between these two actors, it can encourage those same citizens to make rational decisions to avoid the use of violence in the short-term horizon and subsequently ensure that this trend continues in the years to come.

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