

Precipitating Causal Factors And Solutions For The Conflicts For Southern Border Provinces Of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to objectively assess the primary Precipitating Causal Factors and Solutions for Thailand Southern Border Provinces Conflicts. The documentary study was used in the study. To obtain accurate statistical findings of the occurrences, causalities, injuries, and deaths, quantitative data analysis methods were also applied. The study's findings demonstrated that conflicts and unrest in Thailand's southern border regions might be linked to the history of Islam's introduction to the area, indicating that while other Bs, particularly the 3rd B (Benefits) and 4th B (Bureaucrat) were additional causes to accelerate or intensify the disputes, the combination of the 1st B (Background) and 2nd B (Beliefs) were primary causal factors rooting and accelerating the unrest.

Keywords: Thailand Southern Border Provinces Conflicts, Precipitating Causal Factors and Solutions, 4th Bs, Royal Kingdom of Thailand.

Introduction

There have been several injuries and fatalities as a result of the unrest and conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces, which has attracted a lot of attention in an effort to identify the primary causes, triggers, and aggravating aspects of the violence. In retrospect, there were many causes for the tensions, conflicts, and unrests that resulted in the violence. These factors led to ideas and presumptions that attempted to explain the conflict situation. Each idea and premise have its own logical justifications and bases. The origins and primary causes of conflicts have been the subject of several theories and hypotheses from both within and beyond the

region, although these interpretations and illustrations are drab and murky.

Many attacks occurred after the Civil-Police-Military Joint Command 43 (CPM43) and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC) were dissolved on April 30, 2002, according to some, who also claimed that the current unrest, which began two years after the aforementioned dissolution, was a direct result of those attacks. Others countered that the violence had been escalating since 1991-2002 and that the collapse of the CPM 43 and SBPAC was just a result of it, since there had been incidences involving shootings of both police and civilians as well as the burning of schools, police stations, and railroad stations. Some claimed that drug usage and illiteracy were the key causes, while others maintained that money gain was one of the main causes. The importance of the study is increased by the necessity to amend my previous hypothesis of the three Bs, which I published a few years ago.

The study's primary goal is to conduct an analytical search for the primary causes and reasons driving the ongoing disputes that are producing disturbance in Thailand's southern border provinces (Yala, Pattani, and Naratiwat), as well as four districts of Songkhla (Thepa, Chana, Sabayoiy and Nathawi). The documentary study and in-depth interview were both qualitative research methods used in the study. To obtain accurate statistical findings of the occurrence, causalities, injuries, and deaths, quantitative data analysis technics were also employed.

The study's findings indicated that more than a century had passed since tensions, disputes, and instability first appeared in Thailand's southern border provinces, three other southern border provinces, and four Songkhla districts. The level of violence varied from era to era, but the 1970s saw exceptionally high levels of bloodshed due to the power of the insurgency movement. Conflict frequency and intensity varied according to how much the government tried to impose undesirable policies or alien norms on the region. Bitter conflicts and a worsening of the situation in Thailand's southern border provinces were caused by the ultra-nationalistic policy of the government of Prime Minister Phibun Songkram from 1938 to 1944, which was followed by the assimilation program (Narongraksakhet, 2008, 46). Conflicts worsened in 1957, especially after General Sarit Thanarat's military coup exacerbated the assimilation policy that gave rise to numerous forms of resistance (Funston, 2006, 79). In order to manage and dilute the Muslim population of the region and to encourage greater assimilation, the National Economic Development Board (NEDB) also tried to increase the Buddhist

population of the region during the 1960s through schemes of encouraging migration into southern border provinces of Thailand. To Duncan (2008:4), the pluralism in this region was partly a matter of accident and partly a matter of design. Numerous studies also revealed that one of the primary causes of the violence had been erroneous policies that had been pushed on Muslims in the area.

After an unexpected attack on an army base in the province of Naratiwat on January 4, 2004, insurgents took 413 weapons and afterwards started the unrest that steadily worsened into the current disputes and violence. There were 15,374 events between 2004 and 2015, with the biggest number being in 2007 and 2,475 incidents following. There were 2,078 instances in 2005 and 1,934 incidents in 2006, respectively. Since then, there has been a significant decline in incidents, especially during the COVID 19 epidemic. There were just 188 incidents in 2020. The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC, 2021) reported that from 2004 to March 2021, there were 5,776 deaths and 12,128 injuries. The Strategies Studies Center, National Defense Studies (Isranews, 2021) reported that from 2004 to 2013, ten years of incidents, there were 8,540 incidents, 9,965 injuries, and 5,352 deaths, dividing into 499 soldiers, 312 polices, 187 educational staff, 399 insurgents, 3,574 civilians, and the rest were on the other side, according to data provided by Deep South Watch, there were 6,543 fatalities and 11,919 injuries over a 12-year period (2004–2015).

The study's findings indicated that the primary factors causing and accelerating the conflicts and unrests in Thailand's southern border provinces, Patani, Yala, Naratiwat, and some areas of Songkhla provinces, were the reflection and consequence of the combination of two Bs, namely, the 1st B (background) and the 2nd B (beliefs), which was referred to in this study as the Combination of Two Bs Theory and indicated that conflicts and unrests were generated from The combination of 2Bs hypothesis is described in more detail below.:

1st B (Background)

The history of Thailand's southern border provinces would connect to the introduction of Islam to this area. In the past, the southern border provinces of Thailand were a part of Langkasuka, an early Malay settlement that was established in the first century. According to the Liang Dynasty Records, Langkasuka existed around 80 and 100 AC. Most experts on the history of the Malay Peninsula believed that Langkasuka was located on the eastern side of the Malay Peninsula between Songkhla and Kelantan except for the Merum Bangsa tale which said Langkasuka was located on the

western side of the Malay Peninsula (Abdul Halim Bashah, 1994). Langkasuka was an important trading port for Asian sailors, particularly when mariners began to sail directly across the Gulf of Siam to the Malay Peninsula. (Abdulrazak and Ahmad Fathi, 2018, 151)

Langkasuka was first exposed to Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, in that order. The majority of Langkasuka society's elites were Buddhists, Brahmins, and Hindus. In the fifteenth century, Islam arrived in this region. Although most experts believe that the local Langkasuka population converted to Islam in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, there are some sources that contend that this occurred three hundred years earlier, before the Langkasuka court embraced Islam and proclaimed the kingdom an Islamic state in 1457. (Abdul Rahman, 2007; Teeuw, 1970; Mohd. Zamri, 1993). Subsequently, Patani became well-renowned around the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the kingdom of Langkasuka gradually vanished after its last king converted to Islam. It was replaced by the kingdom of Patani, which went on to become a significant commercial hub and trading station for localized trade with Siam and other Malay ports as well as trade with China (Abdulrazak and Ahmad Fathi, 2018, 152).

After a protracted period of independence and having its own traditions and beliefs, Pattani was eventually captured by Siam. In the past, Patani was governed in three different ways: 1) under the rule of the King of Sri Wangsa, 2) under the rule of the King of Kelantan, and 3) as the Seven Territories Governance, Monthon, and provinces, respectively.

The administration of Patani during the sovereignty of the King of Sri Wangsa began in 1500 and was overseen by Sultan Ismail Shah Sillulah fi 'alam (1500-1530). It ended in 1686, during the reign of Raja Kuning (1635-1686).

There being no direct descendant of the Sri Wangsa Dynasty to rule the kingdom of Patani following the reign of Raja Kuning, the last monarch from Sri Wangsa Patani, so the king from Kelantan was asked to do so. Raja Bakal (1688–1690), the first monarch from the Kelantan Chronicle, died in or around 1729 and followed by the reign of Raja Along Yunus (1726-1729). After the Raja Along Nus Patani had been under elites and scholars for around 40 years then Sultan Muhammad was asked to be the sultan and he was regarded as the last sultan of Patani. Then Siam took control of Patani Darussalam after Langkasuka had long maintained its independence from it. Conflicts between Patani and Siam have continued unabated ever since. When Siam vanquished the Patani during the Chakri Dynasty

or Krung Ratanakosin, it was included into Siam's domain, and the vast Patani was later divided into seven provinces and territories, respectively. Following that, there were numerous attempts to achieve independence, the first of which was led by Tengku Lamidin and lasted for three years. The second attempt was headed by Datok Pengkalan and lasted for two years, but neither effort was successful. Patani's governing system was modified in 1902. The Anglo-Siam Treaty of 1909 reaffirmed the new structure of the arrangement, which saw the king of Siam designate the rulers of Patani. The rivalry between Patani and the Bangkok government started in 1902 and occasionally got worse. (Funston, 2006, 78). After Patani lost its independence, it was partitioned into seven territories: Pattani, controlled by Tuan Sulong; Nongcik, controlled by Tuan Nik; Yaring/Jering, controlled by Nai Phai; Sai Buri, controlled by Nik Deh; Jalor, controlled by Tuan Jalor; and Rangae, controlled by Tuan Nik Dah. (Tengku Ismail Tengku Chik and Tengku Arifin Tengku Chik, 2011, 86; Ibrahim Syukri, 1985, 61–62) Despite being divided into seven territories, each one had a Raja, or ruler, whose appointment required Siam approval as a sign of loyalty to the Bangkok king.

The four Monthon were then replaced by a provincial administrative system that divided them into three provinces, namely: Pattani, Yala, and Naratiwat up till the present; however, Satun had its own unique historical tie to Kedah State of Malaysia. Patani appeared to be a contemporary state under Siam's control but was weak under the rule of the seven regions.

Since Patani had been a sovereign nation with its own dynasty for generations, Siam decided to annex it. To regain its independence or at least autonomy, the feeling, efforts, and fights for its prior status as an independent state have been stirring. The ensuing events led to the founding of the following movements and organizations. 1). PMAI (Pakatan Mempertahankan Agama Islam/ Collaboration for the Defending Islam) founded during the period of Tengku Abdul Kadir. 2). GEMPAR (Gabungan Melayu Patani Raya/ the Organization of Great Malay Patani) by Tengku Mahmood Mahyiddin in March 1948, while another source pinpointed it to March 1947. Persatuan Semangat Patani (Association of Patani's Spirit) by Haji Sulong bin Abdulkadir around 1944. Since then, a sentiment of independence struggle to free the inhabitants of the province from Siamese rule has arisen. This is what led to the formation of liberation fronts. For instance, 1). BNPP (Barisan National Pembibasan Patani/ The National Front for Patani Independence) founded in 1959. After the death of its leader (Tengku Jalal) in the early 1980s its name was changed to BIPP

(Barisan Islam Pembibasan Patani/The Islamic Liberation Front of Patani) and this organization was split up into organizations, namely, BRN, PULO, GMP and so forth. 2). BRN (Barisan Rivalusi Nasional Patani) which was established on March 1; but another source stated on March 3, 1960/2503 B.E., founded by Indonesian educated Patani students led by Ustaz Abdulkarim Hassan with its aim was the establishment of a Patani Republic emphasizing on political organization rather than guerrilla warfare but later on this organization turned to a military warfare that struggled for Patani independence (Cheman, 1995:242). 3). PULO (Patani United Liberation Organization which shared the same objective with BRN, is another movement established in January while others said in March 1968/2511B.E. by Tuanku Bira Kotanilo, a political science graduate from the Aligar University, India and Arong Muleng from Lund University, Sweden (Tengku Ismail and Tengku Arifin, 2011:148). 4. GMIP. (Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani) was established in 1985/2538 B.E. by Chegu Mae Kute and 5. BERSATU (The United Front for the Independence of Pattani) founded on 31 August 1989/2532 B.E. whose first leader was Mahyuddin Ahmad. This body aimed at unifying all splinter insurgent movements, namely PULO, BRN. BNPP, and Mujahidin Patani (Coylin and Supalux, 2004). 6. MARA Patani (Majlis Shura Patani) officiated on 27 August 2015/2558 B.E. led by Awang Jaba from BRN. All of the aforementioned insurgent movements are engaged in conflict with the Thai government. They revolt against the Siamese whenever the chance presented itself in order to reestablish Patani's sovereignty. This behavior occasionally occurs, and it is one of the main drivers of the current political upheaval in southern Thailand.

2nd B (Beliefs)

Beliefs become the second main factor regarded as the root of the conflict and sometime accelerates and intensifies the violence in the region. Majority of the people in the southern border provinces of Thailand are Muslim who are different religiously and culturally from that of the majority people of Thailand who are Siam Buddhist. Besides that, Muslims in the region speak Malay language while Siamese are using Thai language. Obviously, the mentioned differences had triggered and resulted in different beliefs of the people in the region. The introduction of Islam to the area, which may be summed up into two narratives—namely, that Islam arrived to the local population around the 12th century and, as previously mentioned, to the royal family in the 15th century—can be linked to these discrepancies. People in the area initially learnt fundamental beliefs and behaviors like believing in one God, praying, fasting, paying Zakat, and abstaining from eating pork, but

doing the Hajj was only learned for knowledge purposes rather than for actual performance. Learning Islamic Knowledge was undertaken at the house of the learned men or Musalla (place for the prayer) and no educational institution was founded at that time, except houses of the learnt. After the royal families were converted to Islam the palace had become another place for learning Islam then pondok was founded. The first pondok was the Pondok Kresek founded by Sheikh Safi al-Din al-Abbas al-Yamani around 1400 AD. (Ismail bin Ishaq, 2008, 73). Pondok Kuala Bekah, located at Kuala Bekah, the harbor city trespassed by Kuala Bekah River and located near to Kota Neelum Palace of ancient Kresek City, was founded in AD 1600 by a son of Sheikh Uthman who came from Yemen (H.J. Wan Mohd. Shaghir Abdullah, 1990, 23). Pondok Senor was another traditional learning institute set up around AD 1600 by the Penglima Fakhri Lebai Wan Musa at the Senor sub-district, Pattani and later on around 1817 Pondok Bendang Daya at Yarang Sub district, Pattani Province was set up (Abdul Razak and Ahmad Fathi, 2018:174). Islam was gradually introduced to the area through these new educational and religious institutions, replacing some of the people's traditional cultures and practices, such as ceremonies, social interactions, and living arrangements. The Palawa-based Malay language was also replaced by the Jawi-based script, and Islamic religious practice was widely spread. The Islamization of Patani resulted in the development of a new sense of identity and many ideas that served to identify the Patani Muslims from the non-Muslims.

Subsequently, the Patani nationalist sentiment was progressively established and confirmed, as Duncan (2008: 4) noted, Malay Muslims in Thailand, notably in three southern districts of that country, are proud of an identity they saw as highly distinctive, as Malays, as Muslims, and as inhabitants of Patani, a former kingdom and hub of Islamic study and culture. Additionally, there was a tendency for the aforementioned cultures to diverge in ways that divided individuals into "Nayu (Melayu) and Siyae (Siam)" groups, each of which felt superior to the other. Furthermore, one of the issues the Malays encountered was that the provincial government officials had little to no understanding of Islam and its practices, which prevented them from gaining the support of the majority of Muslims. With less support from the residents of the southern border provinces, the provincial government was appointed through the Bangkok central government. Furthermore, the majority of Muslims in this area communicate and speak in the Malay or Melayu vernacular, which sets them apart from people in other parts of Thailand in terms of ethnicity, religion, language,

custom, tradition, and culture. However, certain residents of Chana, Nathawi, Sabayoi, and Tepha may speak a form of dialectal Thai in their daily lives. Melayu signifies more than just a language for communication to Muslims in the southern border provinces; it also suggests that the speaker is a Muslim. Because the Islamic culture serves as the foundation for the lifestyle or behaviors of the Muslims, the term "Muslim" is sometimes used synonymously with "Melayu" in the southern border provinces. As a result, maintaining the Melayu identity has become extremely important to their way of life in the region. Islam and Malay culture are related because Islam helps to define the identity of Malay-Muslims.

Previously, some Malay Muslims in the area did not speak Thai or were only marginally proficient in it, and those who did occasionally disliked the language. Sometimes The State officials and the ethnic Malay Muslims have difficulty communicating effectively because of this situation. Malay language has two benefits for the Malay-Muslims in the southern provinces. It serves as the primary medium of exchange between families, the local community, and their Malaysian brothers who live across the border. It is also the language of instruction for Islam, particularly in pondoks. In pondoks, most religious texts are written in Malay utilizing the Jawi and Arabic alphabets. The Malay language is an integral component of both the Malay-Muslim culture and religion. Because of how strongly Malay-Muslims still feel about this, the terms "Islamic language" and "Malay language" are sometimes used interchangeably. Malay Muslims feel compelled to preserve their language because of the connection between their faith and their native tongue. Most people in the area appear to feel and think that the national security concerns that could help to escalate the current conflict are related to the Malays language that are spoken in the area. There is a wide separation between the people and the government officials in this region because of the different beliefs held by the locals and the authorities. Lack of knowledge of the local people's beliefs, traditions, customs, nationalities, and faiths can lead to a variety of issues about to spring to accelerate and cause the conflict and unrest.

3rd B (Benefits)

There were unquestionably numerous advantages in Thailand's southern border provinces, and at times it is thought that the unequal distribution of these advantages to groups was the root of many conflicts and unrests in the area (Narongraksakhet, 2008). This idea does not, however, imply that those who benefit from wars and unrest are also those who start them because numerous groups—such as businesspeople, politicians, sloppy civil workers,

and international organizations—have benefited politically due to conflicts and disturbances.

On occasion, political agendas in the area have used the violence and turbulence to delegitimize or discredit other groups. The opposition party used to occasionally criticize the administration for the circumstance to demonstrate that the government is ineffective and sincere in resolving conflict-related issues. On the other hand, the administration used to use those concerns to attack the opposition for supporting those disputes in an effort to lessen public moral support for the opposition party (Narongraksakhet, 2008, 47). The conflicts in the South have occasionally been linked to disputes between government officials, to the government's secret budget, and occasionally to the intervention of an international organization. While many locals do not understand what is happening, Srisompob (2006:100) summarized the various viewpoints on the causes of the current unrest held by various groups by stating that "ascribed causes range from the act of separatist movement, international terrorist attacks, a resurgence of historical consciousness on the part of local Malay Muslims, the outcomes of the government's mishandling of the southern problems, to long-standing grievances related to poverty, unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, drug abuse, vice, crime and social deprivation. There are also many conspiratorial accounts. The idea that government employees, the military, and the police have in fact planned much of the violence for their own reasons is a variation on these domestic conspiracy theories. The CIA and other foreign intelligence organizations have allegedly been acting as agent provocateurs in the deep South, according to certain people who subscribe to worldwide variants of these conspiracy theories. However, the study showed that the 3rd B was not the main factor causing the unrest but it could make the conflict and unrest more complicated difficult to differentiate between the conflict caused by the combination of the 2Bs or generated from the 3rd B (benefit groups).

4thB (Bureaucracy)

Due to their lack of knowledge about the Muslim locals' cultural sensibilities, some government employees develop prejudices against Muslims. One of the main causes of misunderstanding that could start a conflict in the area is a lack of a sufficient understanding of cultural sensitivity. One glaring example of how some government officials and college lecturers misunderstood the issue of the hijab and treated it as an Arab cultural issue rather than a matter of religious requirements was the demonstration in favor of the hijab (the dress for Muslim women) that Yala Teacher College

students held in February 1988. Muslims believed that the government had violated their rights when it forbade these students from wearing a hijab in class. They believed that this prevented Muslims from fulfilling their religious commitments. That problem sparked a week-long demonstration that took place twice. There may have been disturbance in the neighborhood that would have been very challenging to resolve if their appeal had not been properly and promptly responded. Another event was the introduction of Buddhist images in primary schools in the Satun province in the early 1970s. At the same time, a government official in Narathiwat published an article at the end of the 1980s that insulted Muslims by misrepresenting their culture. A protest against the government almost began as a result of that tragedy. Thankfully, the tension was reduced before it could fully escalate and get out of hand. The conflict frequently became more violent were the consequences of some government officials' adverse behavior and injustice. Another major error occurred on October 25, 2004, when over a hundred people perished while participating in a peaceful protest in Takbai. Even while the 4th B wasn't the main cause of the discontent, it might nonetheless speed up and worsen the current turmoil and violence.

Conclusion

The ongoing conflict and unrest in Thailand's southern border regions are mostly caused and accelerated by the interaction of the 1st B (Background) and 2nd B (Beliefs). When they are different from the bulk of Thai people in terms of religion and culture, the 1st B would give the impression that they are a different nationality, and the 2nd B would confirm it. The study also showed that without the combination of the mentioned factors, namely: the 1st B and 2nd B, such current conflicts and unrest would not arise. Only the 1st B conflict will not be intensified as there is the issue of the 1st B (Background) in other regions of Thailand, for instance in the northern parts of Thailand that had the background of "Lanna Dynasty" and in the Northeastern part there was the issue of "Lanchang Dynasty."

However, because the Siamese people's ideas were founded on Buddhism, there was no problem with diverse beliefs in either area of Thailand. As a result, unrest was avoided. Some people believe that the issue of education is one of the major factors contributing to the conflict, but my argument is that since there are issues with education in every region of Thailand, it begs the question of why there aren't conflicts in other parts of the country. Similarly, issues with drug abuse and illegal business are widespread throughout Thailand, but there aren't conflicts there either. The two variables,

1st B and 2nd B, together with other Bs will be the primary causes of the conflicts and instability in Thailand's southern border regions. Other Bs will act as secondary causes that speed up or exacerbate the conflicts.

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