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A PROPOSAL TO ADDRESS THE EMERGING MUSLIM SEPARATIST PROBLEM IN THAILAND

by

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December 2004

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        In the mid 1980s, the Muslim separatist problem was eliminated in southern Thailand when the government took a two-fold approach: first, to empower the military to oversee both the police and civil-service sectors; and later, based on recommendations from the military, to initiate new social and economic policies. This thesis examines, through both an anthropological analysis of the conflict and a theory of counterinsurgency, the re-emergence of the Muslim separatist groups in southern Thailand and provides both short and long term solutions for the Royal Thai government. It offers a background analysis of the historical relationship between the Thai government and Thai Muslims in order to highlight why the former separatist problem occurred in Thailand. Next, the current separatist problem is examined to determine why this issue has reoccurred and possible reasons for the government's underestimation of the situation. This thesis then addresses measures the Thai government may take to preclude a future Muslim separatist insurgency, and offers both an analysis of former measures that were successful and an appraisal of the current conditions conducive to an insurgency. Finally, the conditions necessary for a successful resolution of the Muslim separatist problem are delineated in short term and long term solutions.

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**A PROPOSAL TO ADDRESS THE EMERGING MUSLIM SEPARATIST
PROBLEM IN THAILAND**

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ABSTRACT

On January 4, 2004, four Thai soldiers were killed when approximately 30 armed bandits stormed the army depot in Narathiwat, 750 miles south of Bangkok, stealing a cache of 300 weapons. At the same time, 18 schools in the same area were set on fire in an effort to distract the attention of government officials away from the attack. Based on credible information, The Royal Thai Government has blamed Muslim separatists for the attacks. Previously, In the mid 1980s, the Muslim separatist problem was eliminated in southern Thailand when the government took a two-fold approach: first, to empower the military to oversee both the police and civil-service sectors; and later, based on recommendations from the military, to initiate new social and economic policies. This thesis examines, through both an anthropological analysis of the conflict and a theory of counterinsurgency, the re-emergence of the Muslim separatist groups in southern Thailand and provides both short and long term solutions for the Royal Thai government. It offers a background analysis of the historical relationship between the Thai government and Thai Muslims in order to highlight why the former separatist problem occurred in Thailand. Next, the current separatist problem is examined to determine why this issue has reoccurred and possible reasons for the government's underestimation of the situation. This thesis then addresses measures the Thai government may take to preclude a future Muslim separatist insurgency, and offers both an analysis of former measures that were successful and an appraisal of the current conditions conducive to an insurgency. Finally, the conditions necessary for a successful resolution of the Muslim separatist problem are delineated in short term and long term solutions

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, Muslims are the largest religious minority, with the majority of Muslims living in the southernmost provinces near the Malaysian border. Most Thai Muslims live in peace with Thai Buddhists, but some Muslim groups within the south seek to separate from Thailand and establish an Islamic state. Initially Muslim separatist activity reached its peak in the 1970s and 1980s, and the government successfully defused the secessionist movement by granting greater religious freedom, enacting tough security measures, improving communications, and undertaking development measures. Interaction with the neighboring countries, especially Malaysia, which was providing refuge for some separatists, also helped the resolution process. By the mid 1980s, the government succeeded in eliminating the Muslim separatist problem and bringing peace to the region.

However, the increase in Islamic insurgency felt around the world following September 11th fuelled an upsurge in Southeast Asia that also affected Thailand. Militant Muslims in the south have cited the historical background of their region and their religious differences as the basis for their claims before the international community, including the Muslim world. In addition, however, Muslim separatist groups have used the tactics of terrorism in their fight against perceived symbols of oppression. The targets of this renewed violence have traditionally been Thai government officials and symbols of Bangkok's Thai Buddhist government. In fact, since January 2004, violence and killings have occurred on nearly a daily basis in southern Thailand, with currently over 400 people killed as the result of arson attacks, bombings, and assassinations. Yet it is the nature of the violence in 2004 that has changed. Efforts to incite violence have shifted to urban areas, targeting civilians, Buddhist monks, tourists, and others not associated with the government and security forces. As a consequence, it is now increasingly more difficult for the government to identify those who are behind the violence.

This thesis examines, through both an anthropological analysis of the conflict and a theory of counterinsurgency, the re-emergence of the Muslim separatist groups and

provides short term and long term solutions for the Royal Thai government. It offers background about the historical relationship between the government and Thai Muslims in order to highlight why the former Muslim separatist problem occurred in Thailand. Next, the Muslim separatist problem is examined to determine why this problem is occurring again and determines reasons for the Thai government's underestimation of the situation. This thesis then addresses measures the Thai government may take to preclude a future Muslim separatist insurgency, including an analysis of those measures that were successful in the past and an assessment of which conditions conducive to an insurgency currently exist in Thailand. Finally, the conditions necessary for a successful future Muslim separatist problem in Thailand are delineated in short term and long term solutions.

The information used to support this thesis research was derived from multiple sources. In addition to open source research, a great deal of information was derived from official government and academic documents provided by various Thai institutions. Some of the most insightful information, however, came from September 2004 interviews conducted in Thailand with media representatives, Royal Thai Army officials, and academic professionals from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.

A.   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

South Thailand historically has been a peripheral region contested between the Kingdom of Thailand in the north and various states and empires in the south.

The Thai Kingdom of Sukhothai briefly extended the area under its control southward to Pattani in the 13th century. Apparently, during part of the 14th century, the Kingdom of Pattani included not only the Thai provinces of Satun, Yala, Naratiwat, and Pattani, but additional territory to the north as well; thus the kingdom ranked high in importance among the Malay states. After 1350, the Thais conquered most of the Malay Peninsula. However, the rise of the Malay state of Malacca in the 15th century resulted in the receding of Thai power, and by 1460 the Pattani States were dependencies of Malacca. At this same time Malays from Malacca settled in the Pattani region, displacing the local natives, and also bringing with them Muslim missionaries who converted the

local population. Pattani's preeminence as a center for Muslim scholarship dates from this period, a distinction which characterizes it to this day (Fraser, 1960). The subsequent Islamization of Pattani replaced many elements of the Hindu-Buddhist culture, and the Muslim religious elite came to dominate the Kingdom's sociopolitical system.

By 1511 the Siam Kingdom (Thailand) had regained control of Pattani and signed a treaty with the Portuguese, giving the latter exclusive rights to the lucrative Chinese and Japanese trade conducted at the port of Pattani (Thompson, 1941).

The 16th and early 17th centuries witnessed the continued importance of the town of Pattani as a prominent European trading center. However, Pattani's commercial stature quickly declined after 1622 when both the British and the Dutch abandoned their factories there to promote their competing trading interests elsewhere in Southeast Asia (Fraser, 1966). Hostility between the Thai Kingdom and Pattani occurred in 1636 initially over the refusal of the Pattani queen to pay the annual tribute to the Thai king during the reign of the Thai Kingdom of Ayutthaya. Subsequent rebellions against the Thais occurred in 1786 and 1832. This latter revolt resulted in the devastation of Pattani by Thai military forces and completed Pattani's demise as a regional power (Fraser, 1960).

Until 1901, when the Thai king established a central administration under the Thai Ministry of the Interior, the Kingdom of Pattani, which incorporated most of present-day Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces, possessed a large degree of autonomy, even in external affairs, as a vassal state under the Thai kings (Fraser, 1960). In 1909, the British takeover of the four northern Malay states of Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah, and Palis encouraged further Thai centralization, with taxation, education and, eventually, language being brought under varying degrees of Thai control. Although these moves stirred Malay-Muslim irredentist aspirations, it was not until the turbulent years of the early 1930s that they were fully awoken. Following the military's overthrow of the Thai monarchy in 1932, a modified concept of popular sovereignty emerged which increasingly came to define citizenship not so much in terms of political obedience but on the basis of national unity. Stressing evermore state centralization and the need to rapidly assimilate outlying ethnic groups, the new integrationist push was to have a decisive impact on the local administrative sector in Pattani (Christie, 1996; Forbs, 1989; Leifer,

1996; Pitsuwan, 1985; Stockwell, 1979). For example, the old local government structure, which had allowed some autonomous Malay political representation, was replaced by a simpler and more centralized system, and the three provinces of the Pattani region (Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) were placed under the direct control of the Ministry of the Interior of the Thai government.

During the 1930s, the Thai military regime of Pibul Songkhram initiated a series of policies aimed at the forcible assimilation of Muslims. The wearing of western-style trousers was made compulsory for men, and Muslims were prevented from adopting Muslim names or using the Malay dialect. In addition, shari'ah law (Islamic law) was set aside in favor of the Thai Buddhist laws of marriage and inheritance (Forbes, 1982). These policies generated a great deal of resentment among the Muslim population of Thailand.

By the end of World War II, the government tried to adopt a more conciliatory stance towards Muslims in the South. But centuries of marginalization and suppression at the hands of Thai officials, state intrusions into Muslim civil society, and the absence of Pattanese political participation contributed to mutual antagonism between both sides. This antagonism erupted on April 28, 1948, in a pivotal event known as the Dusun Nyiur incident- a violent clash between Thai police and Pattanese Muslims that left an estimated 1,100 Muslims and 30 policemen killed and set the stage for the rise of more militant Muslim separatist groups (Islam, 1982). In 1959, the first Muslim separatist group, BNPP (Barisan National Pember-Basan Pattani), was founded by Tuanku Abdul Kade, an heir to the ruling chieftain of Pattani Township, who lost influence over the town when King Rama V issued a royal decree to abolish all positions of the ruling chieftains of all towns in the southern border provinces, and armed resistance did not begin until 1960 when Field Marshall Sarit Thannarat ruled Thailand (*Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand*, 2002).

The Muslim separatist groups reached their peak in the 1970s and 1980s, and in the mid 1970s the Thai government successfully defused the secessionist movements through enlightened policies that emphasized political over purely military solutions and included, among other actions, granting greater religious freedom, and development of

the area combined with a psychological campaign. However, by the late 1990s, poverty, crime, and corruption among Thai officials posted in the south helped revive the separatist movement, and some isolated incidents occurred, including the killing of police at checkpoints in Yala and Narathiwat provinces in 2000 and 2001. These incidents were incorrectly handled by the Thai government which transferred all responsibility for security in the region from the Royal Thai Army's 4th Army Region to the Thai police, because the government perceived the incidents as acts of common banditry. However, after September 11th, 2001, and Thailand's support to the US War On Terror, the number of terrorist incidents has risen. The increased movement of Muslim separatist groups was confirmed on 4 January, 2004, when an Army depot in Narathiwat Province was raided by more than 30 armed insurgents, resulting in the death of four Thai soldiers. After this incident, the Thai government began to rethink the problem of renewed Muslim separatism in the south.

B.   MUSLIMS IN THAILAND

Figure 1.   Majority Muslim provinces in Southern Thailand
(From Gearing, 2001)

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In Thailand, Thai Muslims are the largest minority group. They make up approximately 6 million people, or 4% of the total population which is predominantly Buddhist. Four-fifths of Muslims are concentrated in the Provinces of Satun, Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala at the southern end of Thailand. Most of these provinces were part of the old Sultanate of Pattani, a previously autonomous region, annexed by Thailand in 1902. The majority of Thai Muslims are ethnic Malay and actually call themselves "Thai Malays," with Thai, Chinese and Pakistani Muslims constituting the remainder of the southern inhabitants. The location of the Muslim populations in the south is further divided by these ethnic sub-groups. For example, ethnic Malays live in the coastal and the rural areas, ethnic Pakistanis immigrants live in the urban centers, ethnic Thai live in the rural areas of the central region, and Chinese Muslims live in the far north. The majority of the Muslims in Thailand are Sunnis, and the remainders are Shiite. Ethnic Malays, which are the second largest minority group in Thailand, have had the greatest influence of all Thai Muslims because geographical factors and cultural affinities of Islam have promoted a strong Malay identification with neighboring Malaysia, and the Thai government has granted a number of cultural, linguistic, and religious concessions (Department of the Army, 1970). In geographical terms, Fraser (1960) mentions that Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces, which are separated from Songkhla Province by an uninhabited jungle that extends as much as 50 miles, and the greater geographical accessibility between Narathiwat and the bordering Malay state of Kelantan, foster easier contact with Malaysia than Thailand. The people in these four provinces speak two languages: Thai and Jawi. Roux (1998) mentions, that Jawi is a Malay dialect which reflects the language of the sultanate of Pattani. The Pattani dialect is similar in vocabulary, morphology, and phonology to that of the bordering Malay state of Kelantan. Some Malays of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat are not interested in the national Thai language of Thailand because they think that this language is the language of Buddhism.

The economic activities of Thai Muslims are divided between fishing in the coastal regions and agricultural work on the rice and rubber plantations in the hinterland. Fishing in the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand is the primary occupation, and the season operates from December until the end of March. At the close of the fishing

season, working the coconut lands near the coastal areas becomes the predominate activity, followed by working rubber plantations (Fraser, 1966).

The education of a Muslim child in the south is provided in two forms. First, the child receives a formal education from the Thai government in primary and secondary school. Second, he or she receives an informal education about the Muslim religion from local Malay religious leaders.

Education in the Thai school system is free and compulsory for a period of seven years. The Ministry of Education in Bangkok determines educational policies and the school curriculum, although the implementation of various guidelines is in the hands of Thai provincial and district officials. Primary schools are available in most of the Malay coastal villages, but are less frequent in the more sparsely settled interior regions of South Thailand. Secondary schools have been established for the most part only in the larger towns (Fraser, 1960).

Each child's religious instruction commences at the age of six or seven and takes place in a *Pondok*, a family-run Islamic school, which offers a traditional religious education (Suhrke, 1977). Religious instruction is conducted early in the morning between seven and nine, and is resumed from three to five in the afternoon after the children are released from the local school. The focus of this religious teaching is the learning of the entire Koran. The teaching method usually consists of the reading of a passage by the Iman, an Islamic priest, which is then followed by a recitation of the passage by the children. At the end of 1½ or two years of religious instruction, the child is examined on his knowledge of the Koran. If he succeeds in passing this test, he has completed the required minimum religious education (Fraser, 1960). Because of the focus of the religious school system, young Muslims are not always provided a strong preparation for successful employment in the wider Thai society, and therefore they often attend traditional Islamic schools in Muslim countries in order to continue studying at the university level.

Thai Muslims fall under the Thai political system and the jurisdiction of the Thai government by virtue of their Thai citizenship. Within the hierarchy of the Thai political

structure, authority originates with the Thai central government, passes through the province or *Changwat* level to the district or *Amphur* level, and finally is received at the *Tambon,* which is the next smallest administrative unit below the district level. In addition, within the Tambon, there are subunits called *Muban*, meaning "village." Officials working at the province and district level are selected by the central government, but the head of the Muban or villages are selected by the villagers and are approved by Thai district officers (Fraser, 1966). Many of the Thai Buddhists sent to administer the southern border provinces are unenthusiastic about being posted to an alien society so far from Bangkok, and their dissatisfaction sometimes contributes to the heightened tension (McCargo, 2004). Because of their dissatisfaction, these officials may mistreat the Muslims, and, consequently, many Muslim villagers have chosen to cut off all contact with Thai officials, especially the Thai Police. In the past, the Muslims used parliamentary means to express their resentment, but these efforts proved ineffective, so some have now shifted from reliance on legal parliamentary means to a growing tendency towards violence (Pitsuwan, 1987).This violence began with the establishment of new Muslim separatist organizations.

In Thailand, the south generally has a reputation for lawlessness and banditry including "common banditry; sea piracy, theft and robbery by small gangs; and large-scale crimes committed by more than ten (and sometimes over a hundred) gang members (Thomas, 1975). This behavior has emerged from the uncertain nature of the life of southern Muslims. McCargo (2004) argues that " a man's life in the South was more raw, closer to the edge; surviving could require a robust masculinity, a readiness to fight, to defend oneself, and if necessary even to steal from others" (p. 10). Because of this tendency toward lawlessness, it is difficult to distinguish between the normal banditry and political violence.

Although the life of the Muslims in the south of Thailand is better than in the past, resentment still exists in the region because of the different political administrations, some of which have not paid attention to the problems of Thai Muslim life. Because of this, a sense of social discrimination still exists in the minds of Thai Muslims.

C. MUSLIM SEPARATISM IN THAILAND

Muslim separatist groups in the south of Thailand were established in 1960 during the rule of Field Marshall Satit Thannarat. Under his instruction, Islamic schools (*Pondok*) were brought under the control of the Minister of the Interior. Pondok that were openly critical of the regime were closed down. Protesters loyal to the *Pondok* fled to the jungle, and later organized Muslim separatist groups. They have been motivated by different ideological perspectives, but all have been motivated by the common desire to carve out an independent Muslim state with Pattani as the center (Isaacson & Rubenstein, 2002). Militant separatist movements have operated in the region by using violent action in pursuit their objectives. Guerrilla warfare and terrorist tactics such as ambushes, assassinations, kidnapping, extortion, sabotage, and bomb attacks have been used to undermine the Thai government. The main targets of violent actions have been the symbols of the Thai state that are considered to pose the greatest threat to Malay-Muslim culture and identity. These targets have included, most particularly, schools, teachers, local government officials and administrators, and Buddhist settlers (Christie, 1996). Despite the Thai government's success in eliminating separatist threats in the mid 1980s, a renewed militant Islamic threat has emerged since the September 11th terrorist attacks in the US along with the Thai government's support for the US War on Terror.

Today, the Muslim separatist organizations in southern Thailand have changed. The splinter groups have united, mainly for purposes of resource acquisition, procurement of external support from international radical Muslim organizations, and the development of a more diverse support constituency in the south under the banner name of Bersatu (see Figure 2). The exact number of Muslim insurgents, and whether or not they are involved simultaneously with several separatist groups, is unknown. Generally, support for each of the following groups is draws from the southern provinces of Thailand and the adjacent provinces of Malaysia. However, international support is drawn from Muslim communities around the world, with primary resources originating in the Middle East.
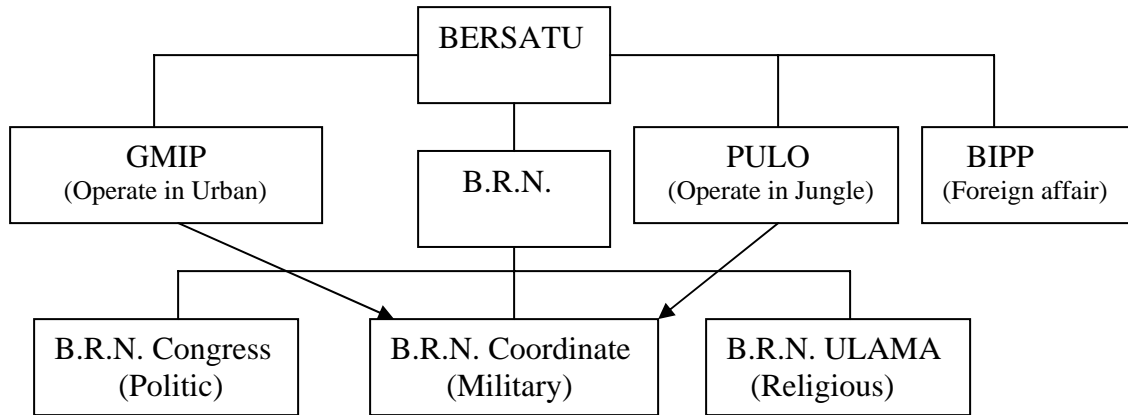
Figure 2.   Militant Islamic Organizational Structure Today
(From *Inside the Muslim Separatist Problem in the South*, 2004, p.60).

The US Pacific Command's Virtual Information Center (VIC) in Hawaii has provided the majority of the information below regarding the various militant splinter groups that exist in southern Thailand today. Except for information specifically cited from other sources, the VIC is the primary source of data on these groups.

1.   The Barisan National Pember-Basan Pattani (BNPP)

This organization was founded in 1947 by the former sultan's family. The BNPP aims to establish an independent and sovereign Islamic state of Pattani through a multi-pronged effort in the political, psychological, diplomatic, and military spheres (Isaacson & Rubenstein, 2002). It is the oldest Muslim separatist organization in Thailand. The organization was created when the Malayan political group KUMPRA and a terrorist group led by Tenggu Yala Machae combined. The first leader of the BNPP was Tanggu Mamud Mahi Yiddin (Intranon, 2003).

By 1990, the name of the movement was changed to the BIPP to conform to the struggle launched by separatist Muslims throughout the world. The organization ceased its activity in Thailand until 2002. It is believed to have been involved in some attacks during the most recent spate of violence. BNPP members also participated in the 2002 meeting of the eight Thai Muslim separatist groups held in Northern Malaysia. The

BNPP is headquartered in northern Malaysia and participates in Malaysian state level politics (*Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand*, 2002).

2.   The Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN)

The BRN was found on 13 March 1960 by two progressive core leaders. Due to a conflict of interest and ideological differences, the front later split into three factions. The first one, the BRN Coordinate, has not been active in Thailand recently. However, the group is reportedly carrying out political activity in Malaysia. The second faction is the BRN Congress chaired by Rosa Burako. This faction has mainly been conducting military affairs. The third faction is the BRN Uram. It was previously headed by the late Hajji Abdul Karim. This faction has emphasized political and religious work. Among the three factions, the BRN Congress headed by Rosa Burako is regarded as the most active group. It has consolidated all of the armed units of the front, and this faction is militarily active, carrying out political and military activities consistently in the south border provinces. The BRN Congress' main headquarters are located in Malaysia (*Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand*, 2002).

The ideology of the BRN, opposed to the Barisan Nasional Pember-Basan Pattani (BNPP), retains strong ties to the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). The BRN harbored avowedly pan-Malay religious-nationalist aspirations which were essentially based on three main principles: Anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism; Islamic socialism aimed at the promotion of a just and prosperous society sanctioned by God; and Malay nationalism defined in terms of the oneness of God and humanitarianism (Isaacson & Rubenstein, 2002).

3.   The Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO)

This group is synonymous with the Thai separatist terrorist movement and is the largest and most active. However, at its peak it possessed no more than 300 "soldiers". PULO was set up on 22 March 1968 by Tuanku Biyo Kodoniyo, who has been serving as its chairman ever since. The objective of this organization is to separate the five southern provinces of Yala, Songkhla, Pattani, Narathiwatm, and Satun from Thailand in order to

establish an independent Muslim Malay state or sultanate. During the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the PULO conducted minor attacks on Thai political symbols in the southern region. In 1980 the PULO began to conduct serious operations. For example, PULO operatives carried out four bomb attacks in Bangkok resulting in 47 people being injured. By late 1992, the organization had split into two factions. The first faction was headed by Dr. A-rong Muleng, while the second one was led by Hayihadi Mindosali. The first faction set up the PULO Leadership Council with a dagger crossing a sword as its logo. The name of its armed unit is called the "Caddan Army". The second faction, also headed by Hajji Sama-ae Thanam, has set up the PULO Army Command Council or MPTP (expansion unknown) to give support to Tuanku Abdul Kade, the founder of the terrorist movement. The logo of the movement is an eagle, and the name of its army is Abudaban ("Pattani United Liberation Organisation [sic]," 2002).

In 1995, rifts emerged among the core leader of the new PULO movement. As a result, Dr. A-rong Muleng decided to separate his group from the movement and set up a new organization called "PULO 88" or the Abu Jihad PULO, while the other group, led by Hajji Habeng Abdul Rohman, named its armed unit the "Caddan Army". In the meantime, the old PULO still retains its status quo with Tuanku Biyo Kodoniyo as its leader. After some leaders of both the old and new PULO movements were arrested in early 1998, confusion immediately occurred with this organization. As a result, morale sank and some members, who lost faith in the group, gave themselves up to the Thai government. However, the two factions have tried to patch up their differences and to strengthen mutual cooperation. At present, it is reported that the two factions have dispatched their armed units to carry out joint military and political operations in some areas of the three southern border provinces. Command headquarters of the two factions are located in Malaysia (*Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand*, 2002).

4.   **The Mujahideen Pattani Movement (BNP)**

This front was established in 1985 with the goal of carrying out the struggle to liberate the southern border provinces. Front elements were commonly known as Mujahideen Pattani members. The front's goal was to consolidate the many resistance

organizations into a single entity. It has placed an emphasis on conducting personnel training and political work. Its main headquarters is located in Malaysia. Most of their core leaders are elements that have split from the BIPP. However, the front's performance has not been particularly successful. Its current political activity is confined to Malaysia only (*Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand*, 2002).

5.   The United Front for the Independence of Pattani (Bersatu)

The United Front for Independence of Pattani or "Bersatu" was formed with the aspiration of unifying all splinter terrorist groups together. On 31 August 1989, core leaders of all terrorist movement groups, namely the BIPP, the BRN Congress, the BNP, and the new PULO, held a joint meeting called "the gathering of the fighters for Pattani". The members at this meeting agreed to set up the "Payong Organization" to unify all the movements and to carry the struggle in a unified direction in order to avoid confusion in soliciting and accepting financial donations from foreign countries. In 1991, the name of the organization was changed to "The United Front for the Independence of Pattani" or "Bersatu" as it is called today. These groups have employed the tactic of deploying small armed bands to carry out guerrilla activities in the jungles. They set up no permanent bases on Thai soil. Instead, they are on the move all the time and avoid engaging in armed clashes with Thai government authorities. If a brief clash should occur, the terrorists see to it that they withdraw from the scene of the fighting immediately. Fighting must not be protracted. If an opportunity arises, they will resort to an ambush tactic or launch a surprise attack on government authorities and positions. They choose to retaliate against government suppression drives by conducting sabotage activities against public facilities in town or on the plain. The terrorists have carried out both political and military activities. They have conducted propaganda campaigns by distorting facts to mobilize and convince the masses, especially Thai Muslims in the southern border provinces and in foreign countries, that the Thai Government oppresses the Muslim population. Additionally, they aspire to internationalize the issue and secure foreign intervention. They have set up conditions and demands that are unacceptable to and cannot be met by the government. They have tried to seek funds and assistance from other Islamic countries and have sought funds through extortion in order to carry out the struggle. They

have tried to disrupt the government's education program by attacking schools; harming and threatening the life and property of school teachers; coercing parents to stop sending their children to Thai schools; terrorizing and harming those who cooperate with the government authorities; and creating influence by harming state authorities, planting bombs at public premises, and committing arson against public buildings (*Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand*, 2002).

6.   The New Pattani United Liberation Organization (New PULO)

New PULO emerged as a dissident faction of the original PULO in 1995. Established by Ar-rong Moo-reng and Hayi Abdul Rohman Bazo (who, up until 1998, acted as the Chairman of New PULO's political/Kasdan wing), the groups has pursued the goal of Pattani self-autonomy through less dramatic but more consistent actions than its parent organization. To this end, the focus has been on carrying out minor attacks, such as small-scale bomb, incendiary, and shooting attacks that are intended to constantly harass and pester police, local authorities, and other symbols of Thai socio-political suppression, particularly schools. In common with PULO, it is alleged that the group's ability to carry out these assaults has been considerably availed by passive Malaysian support, not the least because its leaders are believed to have had the benefit of operating out of secure safe havens in the Malaysian jungles of the Kalantan state. Following improved border relations between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur since 1998, a number of New PULO's leading figures have already been arrested in a series of combined Thai-Malaysian operations, including Haji Da-ho Thanam, the group's military leader, and Rohman Bazo, the group's chairman (Isaacson & Rubenstein, 2002).

7.   Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP- Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement)

Unlike other separatist organizations in southern Thailand, the GMIP has been influenced by members educated in the Middle East. The GMIP has been the faction most influenced by events in Afghanistan and by the spread of radial Islam. During the

1980s and 1990s, thousands of Muslim volunteers traveled to Pakistan and Afghanistan to study Islam and receive military training. A small numbers of Thai nationals returned after studying in Madrassas in Pakistan and at other locations in the Middle East in 2001/2002. During 2002, the GMIP, along with the BRN, was identified in a leaflet distributed in parts of southern Thailand as offering cash rewards for the murder of police officers. The leaflets were found in the Ra-ngae district and promised 100,000 Baht (US $2,440) for the death of each policeman. With respect to this organization, Thai authorities remain extremely concerned that the GMIP could provide Al-Qaeda with help similar to that provided to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines. In August 2002, Malaysian security forces arrested three people from a list of twenty most wanted separatists from a prestigious hotel in Kuala Lumpur often used by the GMIP as a meeting place, but the GMIP's chief of operations, Naseh Saning, who was also in the hotel, managed to escape. Now, suspicions remain that the group is linked with Al-Qaeda and other Southeast Asian radical Islamist groups to include the Abu Syyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines, Laskar Jihad in Indonesia, and Jemaah Islamiya (JI). Since Wae Ka Raeh, a GMIP member who underwent training at Al-Qaeda facilities, it seems likely that the GMIP has had some contact with Al-Qaeda and its allied groups ("Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP-Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement," 2002).

D.   CONCLUSION

Today, the exact organization and structure of the militant groups in the south is not known. When incidents involving violence occur, it is difficult for Thai authorities to know exactly which group is responsible for the incidents. The time required for Thai authorities to investigate and analyze the incidents that occur is problematic in determining actual responsibility. Additionally, a large number of the members of these organizations have dual nationalities, Thai and Malaysian. This fact has made it difficult for Thai authorities to not only pursue suspected militants, but also to investigate the true nature of the violence.

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II.   ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

Separatist problems in the south of Thailand are centered in the region's Muslim community, with its distinct culture, traditions, history and language. The separatist militants that operate in the south essentially want to break free from the predominantly Buddhist Thailand and form a separate Islamic state. The issue is inherently complicated because it originates from many causes. However there are two main sets of factors, internal and external, that complicate the problem.

A.   INTERNAL FACTORS

1.   Ethnic, Cultural and Religious Problems

Beginning in the 1930s, successive Thai Military regimes, which received power from the Thai Monarchy, tried to modify the concept of popular sovereignty and instill a common national unity. Because of this drive toward Thai nationalism, the government implemented "Assimilation Policies" in order to unify the separate cultures into one Thai community. Muslims were strongly affected by the assimilation policies. For example, Muslims in the South were forbidden to dress in the Malay sarong, to use the Malay language and Malay or Arabic names. In addition, Sharia law (Islamic law) which governed matters of Muslim marriage and land inheritance was forcibly replaced by Thai law (Forbes, 1989). These programs tried to create a unified Thai nation by promoting Thai as the national language and Buddhism as the state religion. According to Isaacson & Rubenstein (2002),

> Several keys changes were introduced. The old local government structure, which had, at least, allowed some autonomous Malay political representation, was replaced by a simpler and more centralized system. Three provincial units were carved from the original Pattani region – Pattani Yala, and Narathiwat – all of which were placed under direct control of the Ministry of the Interior. In 1939 a modernization program was also initiated to eliminate "backward" Islamic customs and dialects and enforce uniformity in language and social behavior. Western cultural and customary habits were stressed, the Muslim Friday holiday was banned and steps were taken to phase out, altogether, the use of the Islamic law. (p. 166)

Because of these programs, Thai Muslims were forced to change their language, customs, and societal standards which had been in place since the Pattani Sultinate. These changes under the assimilation policy generated a great deal of resentment among the Muslim population of Thailand. As a result of this friction, a predominant Thai Muslim leader, Hiji Sulong, tried to negotiate with the Thai government by submitting a seven-point list of demands. Within the list was the call for an end of the assimilation policy. The Thai government responded by arresting Sulong and charging him with treason (Kamel, 2004). Following this incident, Muslim separatism began to spread through the Thai Muslim communities in the south. The movement was believed to be necessary among Muslims in order to protect their cultural and religious beliefs. Muslim resentment towards the government's assimilation policies turned from localized resistance to broad support for the Muslim separatist groups, such as the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO). Since the 1960s, Muslim separatist groups have operated in the southern Thai provinces, although the assimilation policies of the past no longer exist, and today Muslim separatists continue to use the history of the policy to claim legitimacy in the fight against the government. Don Pathan, an American citizen born to Thai Muslim parents who writes for The Nation newspaper (an English language newspaper in Thailand) has observed,

> The Thai government has tried to use the Nation/ State religion/ Monarch as one entity, but the nation, supposedly secular, is really Buddhist. It alienates the Muslims. Identity of Muslims is very important. Muslim identity and religion is one thing. When the government affects one part, it affects the whole thing. The south is very bitter. Everyone knows the history of Ayutaya, Chiang Mai, etc. But no one knows the history of the Kingdom of Pattani. The government needs to acknowledge that Muslims have a strong history of their own. The southerners don't have a problem with Thailand, but they want to be acknowledged (2004).

Pathan's comments clarify the issue regarding the resentment that still exists in the south today. Many of the Thai Muslims want nothing more than recognition of their history and culture.

2.   Social, Economic and Political Problems

Because of the distinct culture, traditions, language, and religious aspects of their community, Thai Muslims in southern Thailand often feel that they have been discriminated against by the Thai government, although they are not legally restricted from practicing their religion. In addition, the Thai government in the past has not paid attention to developing the economy and infrastructure in the southern provinces to the same degree as in other areas. According to Billy (2004),

> The underdeveloped nature of southern Thailand relative to the rest of the country has contributed greatly to Muslim feeling of deprivation and marginalization. In fact, Muslim provinces account for only 1.5% of Thailand's gross domestic product. The south has virtually no industry, the infrastructure is abysmal and tourism is underdeveloped despite extensive natural beauty. (p. 4)

This reality supports the strong feeling among Thai Muslims that they are discriminated against by their Buddhist countrymen. Moreover, the administrative officials in the south, of which the majorities are Thai Buddhists, have fundamental problems in understanding the Muslim culture and the language. These problems result in communication failures between Buddhist officials and Muslim locals. Recently, Dr. Surachart from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok said in an interview that Thai officials in the south have failed to understand basic Muslim cultural intricacies such as not using dogs to search Muslim houses, walking into mosques with shoes on, and searching Muslim women with male security personnel (2004). On the other hand, Thai officials also have a history of corruption, arbitrary repression, and often brutal internal security measures which has fostered a general sense of social dissatisfaction, antagonism, frustration and alienation. Because of this misadministration and the sense of antagonism towards Muslims, the Islamic community erupted during a violent incident on April 28, 1948. In this pivotal event know as the Dusun Nyiur incident – a violent clash between Thai police and Pattanese Muslims – an estimated 1,100 Muslims and 30 policemen were killed (Billy, 2004). After this incident, the clashes between Thai officials and Muslims increased and contributed to the creation and rise of more militant Muslim separatist groups.

Regarding southern politics, Thai Muslims in the south have not had the same opportunities to participate in the political process because of a general lack of education. McCargo (2004) mentions that, "Although the government was in theory keen to increase the number of Muslims in the bureaucracy, in practice numerous obstacles ranging from educational attainment to demands for social conformity have limited such recruitment, especially to the higher grades" (p. 7). Political alienation of the very community that is being governed in the south has only added to the frictions that exist.

Another factor that has contributed to the conflict between the Thai government and Thai Muslims in the south is the government's support for the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Bures (2004) mentions that "Thailand's active role in the US-led war on terrorism has further estranged those in the south who see the global conflict as a war on Muslims"(p. 3). For the most part, Thai Muslims in the south of Thailand disagree with the government's role, but a formal system is not in place for Muslims to voice their opinions. Brown (2003) writes that, "Fortunately, most Thai Muslims are peaceful. Those opposed to America's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan have expressed their opposition lawfully with demonstrations and a call for a boycott of American goods" (p. 1). In addition, Dr. Panitan of Chulalongkorn University noted in an interview, "Southern Muslims hear conspiracy theories that the CIA and US Special Forces are inciting the violence in the south so that the US War on Terror can be brought to Thailand" (2004, September 14). Regardless of the validity of such claims, the fact that they exist in conjunction with the Thai government's open support for the US War on Terror in the Middle East has contributed to the south's violence.

B.   EXTERNAL FACTORS

While internal factors within Thailand's borders have had a considerable effect on the southern insurgency, external factors have fueled the fire of militancy as well. The way that southern Muslims think and act is affected by the forces of international Islamic Fundamentalism, as well as by the actions of international terrorist organizations. Young Muslims in the south have proven to be especially impressionable to the external world situation. As a whole, however, the entire Muslim community in the Thai south interprets

the situation in the world today, including the US War on Terror and Thailand's support of it, as a conflict waged against Muslims. External factors such as these have generated resentment among southern Thai Muslims who oppose what is perceived to be an attack on Islam.

1. International Islamic Fundamentalism

After the attack on January 4th, 2004, many analysts speculated that the Muslim separatists were receiving some support from international terrorist groups. Retired General Kiti Rattanachaya, the former southern army commander and national security advisor, traced the genesis of terrorism in Thailand to the Soviet-Afghan war when many Thais and other Southeast Asian Muslim youth went to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Mujahideen (Wannabovorn, 2004). Unfortunately, the exact number of Thais who participated in such action is unknown because of the absence of a comprehensive immigration system. When the war was over and the Muslim youth returned home, they formed their own organizations such as the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Indonesia, the Kampulan Mujahideen in Malaysia (KMM), and the Mujahideen Pattani in Thailand. The Thai government initially did not accept the speculation that such groups existed, but as the years following the Soviet-Afghan war progressed, evidence corroborated among governments proved otherwise. Similarly, most Southeast Asian nations also chose to deny such activities for fear of jeopardizing tourism, economic investment from abroad, etc. Nevertheless, according to Jane's Intelligence Review (2003), a new Muslim Separatist group, the Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (GMIP) and founded by young Afghanistan veterans, appeared in Thailand and sought to re-energize a separatist struggle with jihadi ideology. As a result, radical Muslims now appear to have gravitated to the Middle Eastern Wahhabist brand of Islam, a very strict and narrow interpretation of Islam that Osama Bin Laden himself follows. Misinformation from the Wahabbis has often portrayed Mulims as an oppressed people engaged in a unified struggle against a common enemy.

In addition, many of Thailand's Muslim communities have a tradition by which their young men and women travel overseas to study in Middle East in countries such as

Egypt, Saudi Arabia. After graduating from schools in the Middle East, these Muslims come back home to teach in the Islamic schools in Thailand. Amy Kazmin, a writer from the Financial Times (2004), reports that "Muslim intellectuals are now admitting that some Islamic schools harbour [sic] religious teachers who – inspired by their own studies in the Middle East and developments in the Islamic world – may be preaching radical interpretations of Islamic law, sanctifying violence against Thai authorities" (p. 2). This type of activity perpetuates Islamic fundamentalism in the Thai Muslim communities.

The Thai government has traditionally ignored the system of institutionalized Islamic schooling in Southern Thailand. The government in the past has viewed these schools primarily as religious venues and, therefore, has not been interested in regulating such institutions. These *pondok* (private Islamic boarding schools that are primarily financed by donations from the local populations) perform a key role in providing religious instruction and also in deepening the community's understanding of Islam. The *pondok* provide basic Islamic courses in Malay and Arabic, the curricula of which are difficult for the Thai government to control because all official actions in Thailand are conducted in the Thai language. This difference in language is a weak point of Thai governance which the Islamic teachers who have returned from the Middle East exploit in order to place the Wahhabi doctrine into the schools' curriculums. Schools that preach the Wahhabi doctrine often receive funding from Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries as well. According to Davis (2003),

> Undoubtedly the most prominent, if controversial, figure in Thai Wahhabi circles is Dr Ismail Lutfi Japakiya, an internationally recognized scholar and rector of the Yala Islamic College. Lutfi, who studied in Saudi Arabia, has served as an important conduit for Saudi funding, and the new campus of the Yala Islamic College. (p. 4)

The result is that these schools exist as conduits for the Islamic fundamentalist recruiting and training of young Muslims.

As a result of the Wahhabi doctrine and teachings, the goal of some southern Muslims has shifted from one of separatism to a stronger, more violent strategy of jihadist ambition aimed at killing infidels and non-believers. This goal has been evidenced by the violent incidents which now are focused not only on the government

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officials, but also civilians, monks, normal school teachers, and some moderate Muslims who support the government. Radical fundamentalists in the south now conduct the same type of terrorist operations as the religious terrorist groups in the Middle East. These include tactics such as car bombings, suicide attacks, assassinations, and so on. On April 28, 2004, young Muslim separatists (18-20 years old) armed with guns, knives, and machetes attacked government forces at seven points around the southern provinces. Many were heard shouting in Malay, "The time to liberate has come," and "There are no other gods. We will die for our god" ("Rebels die in bloodbath," 2004). On this day, 107 Muslim separatists were killed, including 32 separatists who were killed in the Kru Se Mosque, which they used as headquarters. After searching the separatists' houses, officials found a 34 page jihadist manual, titled *Ber Jihad Di Pattani* (The Holy Struggle for Pattani), which distorted over 60 points from the Koran to mislead militants into making sacrifices for the separatist cause (Nanuam, 2004). The information within this manual confirms that Islamic fundamentalism is one of the causes of the renewal of Muslim Separatism in Thailand.

2. International Terrorist Organizations

Following the Thai/CIA arrest of Hambali, the JI's Operations Chief and alleged mastermind behind the 2003 Bali bombings, Thai officials speculate that other transnational terrorist groups are also operating in Thailand. Along with such speculation is the belief that the southern violence that exists today is potentially supported by organizations such as JI. Considering the sophistication and systematic approach to the January 4 and April 28, 2004 attacks in the south, the possibility of international influences is not unrealistic.

a. *Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)*

Jemaah Islamiyah is a Southeast Asian terrorist network which plotted in secrecy through the late 1990s, following the stated goal of creating an idealized Islamic fundamentalist state comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the southern Philippines, and southern Thailand. In October 2002, the United States Government designated Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. JI is an extremist

group linked to Al-Qaeda and other regional terrorist groups, and has cells operating throughout Southeast Asia. JI has demonstrated its capability to carry out transnational attacks in locations where Westerners congregate. For example, JI was responsible for the Bali bombing on October12, 2002, which killed nearly 200 and wounded 300 others. The Bali plot was apparently the final outcome of a meeting in early 2002 in Thailand which was able to occur as the result of a weak Thai central authority, lax or corrupt law enforcement, and open borders which allowed JI operatives to enter the country ("Jemaah Islamiya," 2004).

In the violent Muslim separatist attack on April 28, 2004, seven of the dead Islamic insurgents were from countries other than Thailand, and one had the letters JI stitched onto his jacket (Bradley, 2004). This evidence convinced the Thai government that international terrorist organizations potentially support the Muslim separatists in the south.

b.   Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is multi-national, with members from numerous countries, and possesses a worldwide presence. Senior leaders in the organization are also senior leaders in other terrorist organizations, including those designated by the Department of State as foreign terrorist organizations. Al-Qaeda seeks a global radicalization of existing Islamic groups and the creation of radical Islamic groups where none exist. Al-Qaeda's current goal is to establish a pan-Islamic Caliphate throughout the world by working with allied Islamic extremist groups to overthrow regimes it deems "non-Islamic" and expelling Westerners and non-Muslim from Muslim countries. After the removal of the Taliban from power in late 2001, Al-Qaeda has dispersed into small groups across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East ("Al-Qaida," 2004).

In Thailand, government officials had evidence of the presence of several Al-Qaeda members, Khallad bin Attash, Khalid al-Mihdhar, and Nawaf al-Hazmi, in January 2000. Malaysian and US intelligence agencies tracked these men through communications intercepts and alerted Thai authorities of their travel to the Kingdom. Thai intelligence received the information on a weekend, and by the time the information

was processed and the seriousness of the situation realized, the men had disappeared into Bangkok. Thai authorities put the men's names on the travel watch list, but all three left the country unnoticed. It was not until weeks after the men's departures, sometime in February 2000, that Thai intelligence notified anyone of the departures, and at the time they only notified the Malaysians and not the US intelligence authorities. It was later discovered that the only reason the Thais mentioned the departures to the Malaysian authorities was because Malaysia had asked Thailand for several weeks for the whereabouts of the missing terrorists.

Later intelligence revealed that Khallad had proceeded to Karachi on January 20. He would go on to mastermind the USS Cole attack in Yemen that killed 17 US servicemen. Nawaf and Khalid left Bangkok on January 15, on a United Airlines Flight to Los Angeles. Once in the US, Nawaf and Khalid traveled across the country and met with members of another AQ cell, identified as the "Hamburg" cell, which was later found to be instrumental in the 9/11 attacks on the US (John, 2004). Evidence such as this suggests that Al-Qaeda can easily contact other cells that may exist in Thailand.

C.   ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

Information gathered from the Thai National Security Council in the book *Inside the Muslim Separatist Problem in the South,*. which was printed by the Thailand Ministry of the Interior in 2004, shows that Muslim separatist organizations in southern Thailand have a distinct and well-organized strategy for revolution. They expand their organization by the same seven-step process that Communist revolutionaries in Thailand used several decades ago. In the Islamic fundamentalist model, the focus is religious motivation, rather than the Communists' political and economic motivations. In a related note, it is worth stating that the ideology of southern Muslim militants has slowly changed from one of liberating Pattani from Siam (Thailand) to liberating Muslims from the infidels (Pathan, 2004).

1.   The Seven Step Strategy of Islamic Revolution in Southern Thailand
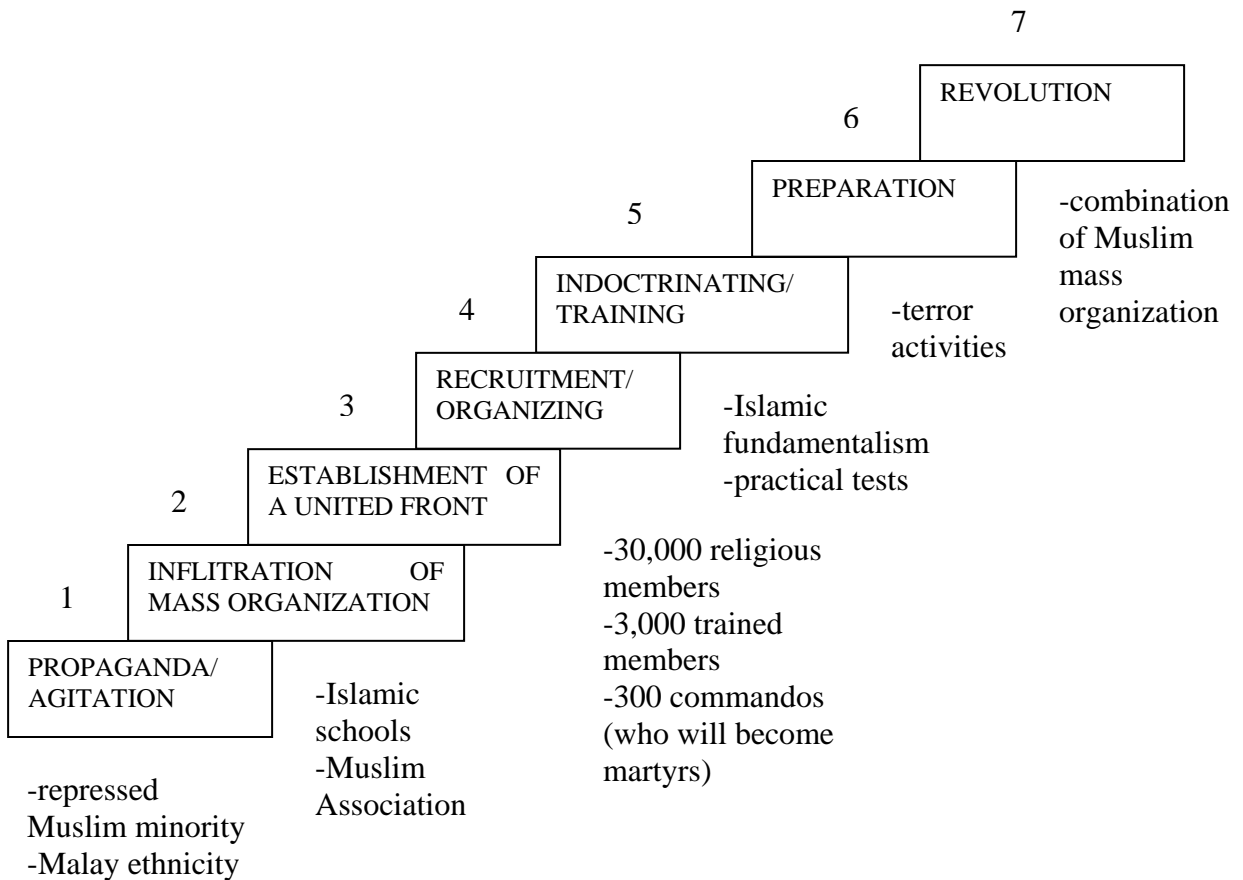

Figure 3.   Seven steps of Islamic revolution
(From *Inside the Muslim Separatist Problem in the South, 2004*, p.58).

In the seven steps of Islamic revolution (see Figure 1), the first step involves Muslim separatists and their propagandistic attempt to persuade the Muslim community to take action against the Thai government. This propaganda is primarily aimed at young Muslims and is reinforced with claims of mistreatment and injustice on the part of Thai government officials. This strategy is formulated within the context of Muslim religious motivation – the driving force for young Muslims to join the militant organizations. In the second step of the process, fundamentalists infiltrate mass organizations, such as Muslim religious associations and Islamic schools, in order to establish a presence and eventually a constituency base, thus leading to a "United Front" the goal of step three. In

the fourth step, fundamentalists recruit additional Muslims through the infiltrated mass organizations. The ultimate goal, which is partially achieved at this time, is to have a total of 30,000 religious members, 3,000 members for "normal" missions, and 300 members who conduct the most extreme, violent commando-type actions that promise the reward of martyrdom. In the fifth step, key leaders indoctrinate the recruited population with Islamic fundamentalism and tactical training in the use of guerrilla tactics, including terrorism. In this fifth step, members are given the ultimate test by being required to conduct an actual operation in support of the organization's goals. During the sixth step of the process, members are deployed for harassment operations against symbols of the government such as government officials, tourists, and Buddhist monks who are seen as infidels. These terror tactics are used to discredit the Thai government in the eyes of impressionable Muslims in the south, as well as to gain support and resources from members of the international community who have similar fundamentalist's ideologies. In the seventh and final step, the extremist leaders employ Muslim militants to fight the jihad, similar to the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan, in order to establish a pure Islamic state (*Inside the Muslim Separatist Problem in the South*, 2004).

2.   Training

Muslim separatist leaders often motivate recruits by communicating cases of Thai government oppression against Muslims throughout history. Mixed with ideological propaganda, the militant leadership demonstrates the need for a jihadist revolution to protect the institution of Islam. Recruited members of militant organizations in the south learn that it is the duty of Muslims to strive for a separate, Islamic state. Muslim separatist leaders maintain secrecy in their operations by using both religion and a personal oath taken upon the Koran as the basis for the recruits to maintain secrecy.

Intelligence based on the information from confiscated books taken from a BRN member in the south revealed that Muslim separatists recruit and train young Muslims through a networked pyramid-like organizational structure, similar to a direct-sale business. Each cell in the network has five to seven members, and each cell only knows the members within that cell. This process was revealed during the interview of a

journalist, Pathan, who knows Postah Soh (real name Ishmael Rayalong), one of the key leaders behind the violence in the south. Pathan (2004) mentions that Soh has recruited otherwise "good kids" for four years from different provinces to perform violent acts and continues to organize people into 4 – 5 man cells.

Each cell is trained in secret locations, one of which exists in each province of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani. When young Muslims are selected for the secret location training, they must first go to a rally point and meet a guide who will take them to the training site. The training typically occurs continuously between 8:00 pm and 5: 00 am the next morning. During training, young Muslims do not know the instructors who use fake names and are disguised with black uniforms and face masks. The training is divided into three levels. First, recruits are trained in physical fitness in preparation for tactical training. Second, they are trained in guerrilla tactics, including weapons training. Rubber plantations are often the training grounds for such instruction. Finally, recruits are deployed on a real-world commando operation as the culminating step in the training. The duration of such training is unspecified and recruits continue training until they have the capability to succeed in real-world operations (*Inside the Muslim Separatist Problem in the South*, 2004).

3. Operations

After training is complete, the newly trained militants await orders to report to a specified rally point when leaders require operations to be conducted. At the rally point, the militants are issued their weapons. They then conduct the specified operations on the target(s), return the weapons, and separate from each other in order to remain undetected by government officials. What is most interesting is that when meet at rally points to conduct operations, they do not know who the other people in the group are until they meet. Sometimes, militants do not even know that members of their own hometowns are part of the extremist organization until seeing them at the rally points (*Inside the Muslim Separatist Problem in the South*, 2004). Pathan, (2004, September 16) a journalist with the *Nation* (the English newspaper in Thailand), mentions that an assassin who killed a police officer on July 22, 2004 did not find out the target until the week of the

assassination from a driver who was from the same village; neither knew that the other was part of the organization. This information confirms the way of Muslim separatists operate. They simply join together and conduct the operation. This process was demonstrated in the other violent incidents of April 28, 2004, in which young Muslims assembled in the designated mosque and then proceeded to simultaneously attack government outposts in three separate provinces.

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III. APPLYING THE MYSTIC DIAMOND THEORY

The Thai Mystic Diamond Model (see Figure 2) was created by modifying the Mystic Diamond Counterinsurgency Model created by Dr. Gordon H. McCormick of the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA (2003). The purpose of the model represented here is to provide a general understanding of the problem of insurgency that exists in southern Thailand today. This model is very important in understanding the strategy necessary to eliminate the insurgency in the south. From this model, practical solutions by which the Thai government can counter the Muslim separatists are gained.
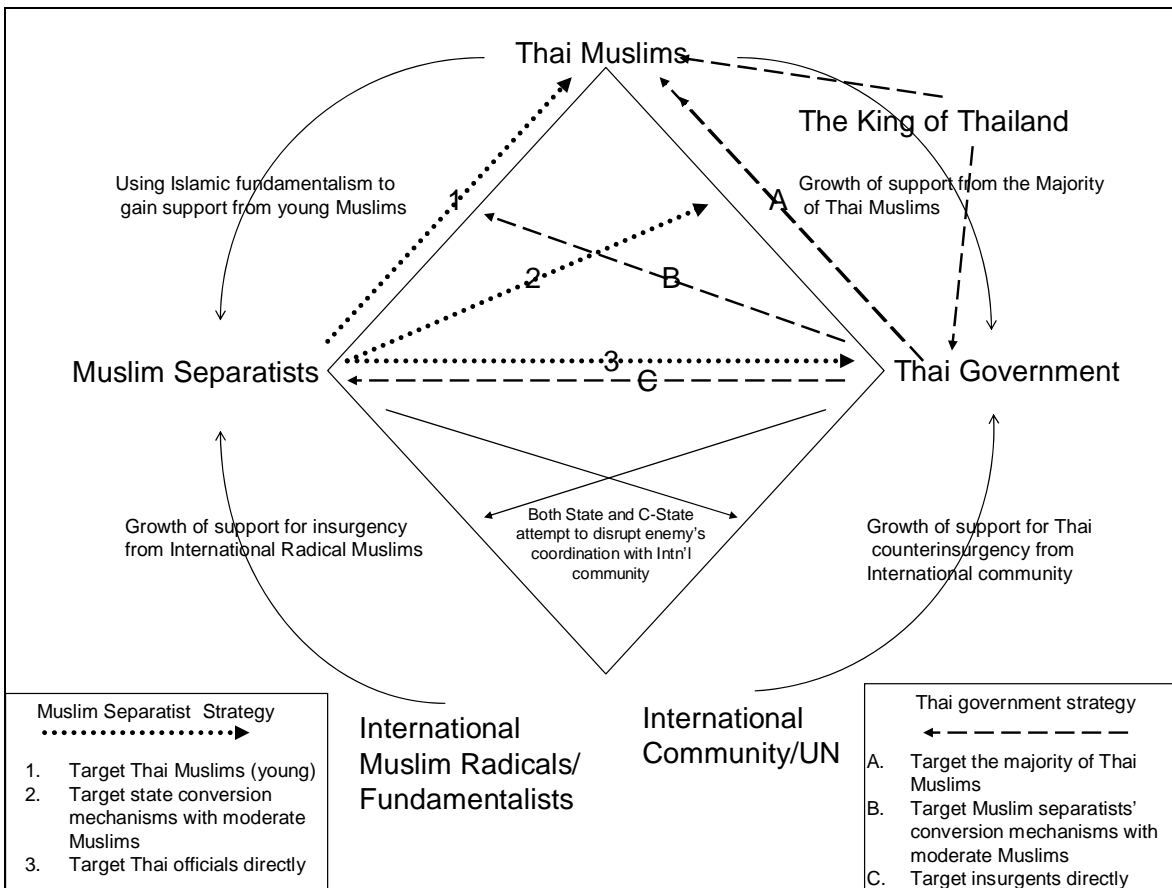

Figure 4.   Thai Mystic Diamond Model.
(After the Mystic Diamond Theory by Dr. Gordon H. McCormick)

In the model, the Thai government, Thai Muslims, Muslim Separatists, International Radical Muslim, the UN and International Community, and The King of Thailand are depicted as the major contributors to the model.

A.   THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT

The Royal Thai government administers the nation state in which the Muslim insurgency/separatism exists. The government is a constitutional monarchy consisting of parliament as the legislative body with the King of Thailand having ultimate veto power. The government of Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, prior to which it was an absolute monarchy.

B.   THAI MUSLIMS

The Thai Muslim community is the target of Muslim separatists for recruiting, organizing, and supervising. The majority of Thai Muslims are moderates who don't want to separate from Thailand. In reality the southern Muslims only want equal justice, equality, and their Muslim identity to be recognized within the predominantly Buddhist country. Most do not want to use violent means to fight the Thai government but prefer a peaceful means to negotiate with the Thai government.

C.   THE KING OF THAILAND

The King of Thailand has influence over the Royal Thai Government. Although the government is predominantly ruled by the Prime Minister, the King has considerable power over all aspects of Thai government and politics. The King can influence decisions within the government, and has the power to veto decisions, elections, etc., if he feels that the people of Thailand are not being fairly represented. In the case of the Thai Muslims, the King is an important link between the people and the government in Bangkok because Thai citizens know and respect the King, and they feel comfortable talking to him. The King receives support from the Royal Armed Forces, and he has the power to influence their actions. While not a political figure, the King has both ultimate veto power and extraordinary influence over the nation's government. Additionally, it

should be noted that moderate Muslims in Thailand respect and accept the King of Thailand and the royal family as their own royal family. The King and the Royal Family are important participants in all Muslim ceremonies in the Kingdom. Simply put, when the King of Thailand speaks, everyone stops and listens.

D.   THE MUSLIM SEPARATISTS

Muslim separatists are those fundamentalists who try to mobilize the young Muslims of the south into taking up arms and conducting an insurgency. The separatists want to separate from the predominantly Buddhist Thailand. The separatists essentially want to create a separate Muslim state which unifies both faith and governance. They think the Islamic *ummah* (community) should be a puritanical Islamic society where the state is charged with the enforcement of *Shariah* (divine) law. These fundamentalists first try to encourage young Muslims to join the radical organizations; then they indoctrinate, train, and mobilize the recruits to fight the government. The situation that allows for the growth of such separatism stems from economic and social underdevelopment in the south, a repressed minority, Islamic fundamentalist propaganda, and international influences. These areas of concern have energized the violent incidents in the south.

E.   INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

International organizations support both sides of the conflict (the separatists' and the Thai government's). Radical Muslim organizations around the world, many of which come from the Middle East and promote Islamic fundamentalism, give support to Muslim separatists in Thailand through financial contributions , training, and other resources. International organizations that are connected with the rest of the free world, including the US and other UN members, support the Thai government and assist when possible. As a result, both sides of the conflict have separate mechanisms in place for gaining and influencing international support from sympathetic organizations and countries.

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F. CONNECTIONS THAT EXIST WITHIN THE THAI COUNTERINSURGENCY MODEL

In the model, Muslim separatists exist as a counter state actor who wants to separate from the Thai nation state. The Muslim separatists gain support from the Muslim community by indoctrinating young Muslims in Islamic schools into Islamic fundamentalism. Today, young Muslims are inspired by religious motivations, ideas of going to heaven through jihad, and fundamentalist propaganda that distorts Islam. They receive support in the form of finances, logistics, and training from international radical Muslim organizations which share the same ideology.

Muslim separatists try to discredit the Thai government and increase their influence through a three-pronged strategy. First , they target young, moderate Muslims. They do this by taking advantage of the new Islamic conflicts that exist around the world today to influence curriculum in schools and ultimately affect political goals. Second, the Muslim fundamentalists affect the mechanism between the Muslim community and the government. They do this by exploiting the mistreatment by the Thai government in the past, and the wrong policies which were used by the Thai government to oppress the Muslim minority. Third, they target the government mechanism directly by conducting operations directly against Thai government officials and symbols of the government such as Thai schools and police stations.

The Thai government is a nation state actor who tries to conduct counterinsurgency. The Thai government receives support from the international community in gaining legitimacy for its fight against the Muslim separatists. The Thai government must use the proper methods in conducting operations in order to gain support from the international community. The government also has three strategic ways in which it conducts counterinsurgency. First, the government attempts to win the popular support of the moderate Muslims by reducing the cultural, economic, and social gaps between Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims. It does this through development programs which aim to lessen the economic gap that exists between Muslims and the rest of the country. Second, the government seeks to cut the connection between the Muslim separatists and the young Muslims who are easily recruited by them. Finally, the

government conducts military operations directly against the leaders of the Muslim separatist organizations in order to destroy the core of each organization. The moderate Muslim community is the most important actor, and the one whom the Muslim separatists and the Thai government both want to control in order to reach their respective goals.

But another important actor in the model who has influence in Thailand is the King. He has influence within the Thai government and Thai Muslim community. He can coordinate with both sides. On the government side, the King can give guidance and recommendations to the Thai government on conducting counterinsurgency in the Muslim community through peaceful means. In the Muslim community, the King can talk with the leaders of Thai Muslims to understand the real problems within the Thai Muslim community, many of which these Muslims do not feel confident discussing with political members of the Thai government. The King can be an influential mediator for both sides since he is the central figure of all Thai people.

In order to gather support from the radical international community, Muslim separatists have increased their militant movement to attract attention from outside Thailand. This strategy has resulted in the killing of government officials, monks, and innocent civilians. The burning of official buildings and the bombing government of facilities are also now common. The Thai government, on the other hand, also tries to coordinate with neighboring countries, such as Malaysia, in tracking Muslim separatists when they cross the border. In addition, the Thai government attempts to get support from international organizations and countries in order to receive intelligence from friendly nations and the UN. In reciprocation for such intelligence, the Thai government attempts to uphold human rights standards and to maintain favorable status with the international community. While Muslim extremists talk with the UN about human rights abuses by the Thai government, the Thai government likewise works with international organizations to maintain their support by way of adhering to human rights standards.

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IV. COMMUNIST COUNTERINSURGENCY CASE STUDY FROM THE MID-1980S

A review of the past counterinsurgency in Thailand provides some useful insight into an effective current strategy for success. In the counterinsurgency efforts of the mid-1980s, a primary lesson learned was that a military-only approach to targeting communist militants did not work. Instead, political and social activities on the part of the government also were used to address the key concerns of communist militants. In that regard, seeking and receiving participation from the local populations throughout Thailand in helping to resolve the problem was seen by the government as critical component for success. These basic tenets formed the basis for important lessons learned after an initial stage of military-only action that was not effective in quelling the violence. However, today military action is again being applied as the primary strategy aimed at eliminating the southern violence, and while fighting communists and fighting separatists may be different in several ways, including the most basic and fundamental area of ideology, the lessons that were successful in the past can still be applied today.

A. THE ORIGINS OF THAI INSURGENCY

The insurgent movement in Thailand in the mid-1980s contained both Communist-inspiration and Communist motivation. Communism in Thailand dates back to the 1920s, when Chinese and Vietnamese party representatives first made contact with their respective national communities in the Thai Kingdom. From that early date, communism in Thailand found its principal support within these ethnic minorities, rather than among the Thai themselves. The first formal Communist party in Thailand was founded in 1933 and called the Chinese Communist Party of Thailand (CCPT). That the CCPT was explicitly labeled Chinese indicates the narrow ethnic base of the early Communist movement, as well as one of the principal reasons for the CCPT's lack of appeal to the vast majority of Thai, who viewed the local Chinese as an alien presence. Despite, the difficulties for communism in penetrating Thai society because of the Thai's proud history, their belief in Theravada Buddhism, and the sacrificed King, all of which fostered the unity of Thailand, the second local Communist party, the Communist Party

of Thailand (CPT), was founded in 1942 out of the instability of political and socioeconomic problems (Randolph & Thompson, 1981). In addition, Randolph & Thompson (1981) mention that in the 1950s, the Malaysian Communist Party, which was defeated by the British, sought sanctuary with minorities in the far south, and established the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) which then coordinated with the CPT. But the expansion of the CPT was slowed by the Thai Government's enactment of the anti-communist law, which passed the congress in 1933, and permitted the arrest those who coordinated with the communist. In addition, the Thai people at that time viewed communism as something alien. However, in 1961, the CPT took steps to lay the groundwork for an open insurgency by declaring an armed struggle strategy, which was the proper strategy for a revolution in Thailand, at the Third Congress of the CPT (Randolph & Thompson, 1981).

B.   THE WAY OF REVOLUTION

The insurgents received support from China and Vietnam, both of which claimed that this support was used to punish Thailand for its cooperation with the United States. In 1962, a Northeast Region jungle headquarters was established to direct the planned insurgency and a Farmer Liberation Association was formed in the Northeast to support the jungle guerrillas (Marks, 1996). In addition, the clandestine radio stations, the Voice of the People of Thailand (VPT) and Radio Peking, broadcast propaganda for the revolution to the Thai people. The clandestine radio stations used both the ethnic divisions, and regional and local inequities to demonstrate the wrongs of the government administration. In addition, citing the growth of US activities, such as the development of American air bases in Thailand, these radio stations also spread anti-Americanism propaganda as a theme to the rural areas which didn't want foreigners using their land (Randolph & Thompson, 1981). These forms of propagandas from the radio stations were applied to the rural areas to support the plan which focused on encircling towns near the countryside and using urban activities such as strikes, demonstrations, and parliamentary action in a supportive role. The most seriously targeted regions were the far south, the north, and the northeast of Thailand because these regions contained such ethnic minorities as the Meo, Mong, and Karen in the north, and Thai Muslims in the south, in

addition to the inequality of life apparent in the northeast region (Randolph & Thompson, 1981). The insurgency began with the establishment of the base areas which served as the rear line and strategic bases in these regions. The insurgents then created guerrilla zones around the base areas to expand their influence until they had encircled the cities, and finally supplanted the local government in all aspects of administration. Miniature states in effect, these base areas were usually established only after extensive political indoctrination of the local populace had been achieved. At the same time, in the urban activities, the CPT attempted to establish legal mass organizations and infiltrate such existing organizations. For example, the CPT infiltrated the Socialist party of Thailand, the National Student Center of Thailand, and the Labor Union responsible for establishing a Coordinating Committee for the Patriotic (composed of students, farmers, and labors) to oppose the government in its administration and its support of the US. In early 1979, the CPT units were able to be active in 35 of the country's 71 provinces and had approximately 12, 000 guerrillas (Randolph & Thompson, 1981).

C.   THE RESPONSE OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT

The Thai government responded to the communist insurgency by establishing the Communist Suppression Operation Command (CSOC) which was led by the Royal Thai Army in December 1965, and charged with coordinating the various government agencies (Marks, 1996). The CSOC made a Thai Counterinsurgency Doctrine called the "CPM (Civil- Police-Military)" (Tanham, 1974, p. 89). Tanham (1974) mentions that this doctrine authorized the coordinated application of all resources to the insurgency problem including a mix of civil, police, and purely military measures. The essential tasks of this doctrine were militarily to create security in the areas, to control by police the population and resources, and to eliminate by civil service units the reasons for any grievance originating from the social or economic inequalities. Following this doctrine, the CSOC divided Thailand into four regions which were under the command of the Army Region commander (Tanham, 1974). In each CSOC, the CPM Task Force had to conduct the operation. In the civilian section, their objectives were to facilitate communication between the government and the rural population, to improve the peasants' economic status, and to help develop leadership in local government. They used the rural

development programs from the Thai government and some support from the United States' Agency for International Development (AID) to improve the infrastructure and apply the Self-Help method to the local situations for long term development and improvement (Tanham, 1974). In the police sector, the objectives were to control the population in the area, to find information to support the military, and to secure the resources in the areas. The police increased the police stations in the districts and provided police patrol projects in the villages in order to provide a presence in as much of the country as possible, especially in the areas threatened by the insurgency. In addition, the Border Patrol Police, a paramilitary force, was used to work closely with the villagers, especially the hill tribesmen, to gain the loyalty and develop useful sources of information about the activities of the communists (Tanham, 1974). In the military sector, the objectives were to destroy the guerillas in the base areas, to disturb the guerrillas in the guerrilla zone, and to provide the security in the area. The Royal Thai Army played a key role in this counterinsurgency effort by giving to the First Army in Bangkok authority in the Central and Western areas, to The Second Army authority in the Northeast, to the Third Army authority in the North, and to the Forth Army authority in the South. The Army region commander also was the CSOC region commander as well. Each Army region, which was supported by a Special Forces battalion, had a counterinsurgency training camp and the basic counterinsurgency course was from nine to twelve weeks for the company-size unit (Tanham, 1974). In addition, Tanham (1974) mentions that the Royal Thai Army tried to isolate the guerrilla forces from the population by establishing a village protection unit or the joint security team, which was composed of two policemen and ten or more volunteers in the villages surrounding the target areas. The teams received approximately one month of training from the Royal Thai Army. Their missions were to protect the villagers from attack by guerrillas and to prevent guerrillas from gaining food and supplies from the villages. In each of the target areas, there was usually also an army unit, commonly a platoon but sometimes a company, and a control headquarters located in the most tactically suitable village. The control headquarters was in communication with higher headquarters and the joint security team in the villages. The army unit was a strike force that could be used to

support the joint security teams in case of danger, or to attack the guerrillas when they were located (Tanham, 1974). These teams relieved the army of the responsibility for securing the areas.

In addition, the Thai government by the National Security Command (NSC) also had the Mobile Development Unit (MDU) which combined the efforts of the military and civilian agencies to provide a government presence in the rural areas, and the government radio stations, such as Radio Station 909 in Sakon Nakhon, conducted psychological operations on the role of the government (Tanham, 1974). In the South, Tanham (1974) mention that the CTO problem was reduced by establishing a Regional Border Committee Organization (RBCO) which was composed of Thai and Malaysian officials in 1965. The RBOC carried out the day-to-day coordination of the joint operations between Malaysian police and Thai Border Police Patrol. In addition, the Thai and Malaysian nations had a strategic agreement regarding the hot pursuit and the use of Malaysian police in Thailand.

D.   THE ROLE OF THE KING IN THE THAI COMMUNIST COUNTERINSURGENCY STRATEGY

The Thai King has been and is commonly viewed as the head of the nation, the preeminent political institution in the nation, and the focus point for national unity. Because of a constitutional monarchy, all Thai governments since 1932, civilian or military, have required the approval of the monarch to establish their political legitimacy, and his legal status has been recorded in every Thai constitution (Marks, 1996). Past kings played an important role in the establishment and the safeguarding of the nation's independence, particularly during the period of Western colonialism. As a result, the King continues to be an object of extraordinary popular reverence and also has had the influence of the Thai government.

The current Thai King, Bhumiphol Adulyadoj, has reigned for more than fifty years and has enjoyed extraordinary popularity among the Thai people, particularly those in rural areas because he has dedicated himself to improving the quality of life for the Thai people life through the implementation of Royal Projects. These projects have been and are supported by the Thai government agencies. Noting the importance of both the

King and these projects with respect to the former counterinsurgency, Marks (1996) mentions that, "the King, in particular, was instrumental in encouraging those who sought to replace armed suppression with political action" (p. 64). As a result of his efforts, the King's recommendations still carry influence for both sides in the struggle today, and carry the possibility that the Thai government and insurgents may cease the armed struggle and accept the peaceful solutions previously implemented to resolve the communist problem.

E.   CONCLUSION

The case study of communist counterinsurgency, while different than the strategy necessary to fight the Islamic militant movement today, provides useful guidance and examples which can be transferred to the new problem. It should not be forgotten, thbough, that the problems behind he communist insurgency were political, social, and economic, while the problems behind the insurgency today are motivated by religion and ideology. As a result, the Thai government must realize that identical strategies will not solve the problem today as they did against the communists in the past.

V.   THE SOLUTION

The Thai counterinsurgency solution model presented here involves strategic guidance to eliminate the problems of the south. The organizations and units that support this guidance with tactical and operational missions must ensure that such missions support the overall government strategy discussed here. The details of the specific missions that sub-units and organizations perform must be determined by those sub-organizations on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, the government must acknowledge that the most important point in all of the models is always to gain the support of the population. The below models provide two solutions, one short term (five years or less), and one long term (more than five years).

A.   THE SHORT TERM SOLUTION

In the short term solution, the Thai government should focus on the young Muslim who is the most influential point of the model. The young Muslim is easily persuaded by Muslim separatists and should likewise be the focal point of Thai government strategies in the short term.
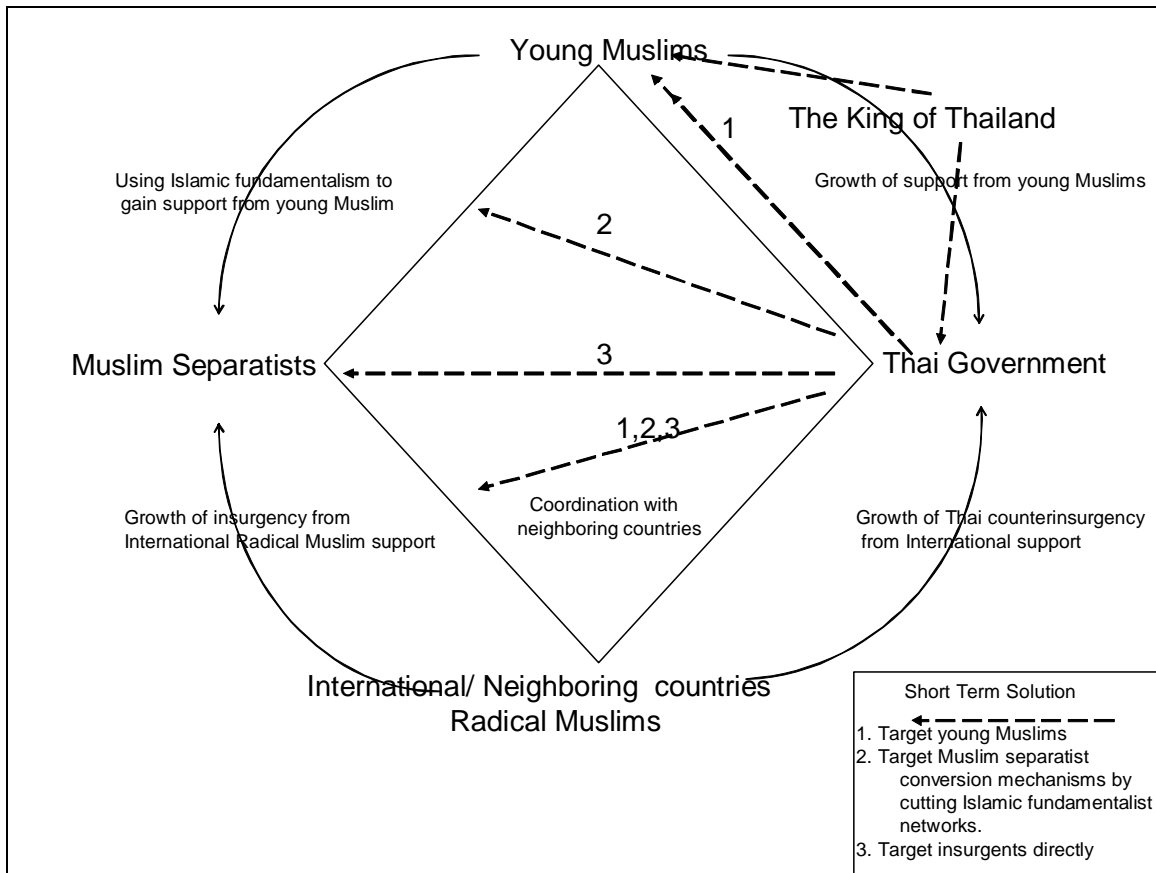
Figure 5.   Short Term Solution Model.
(After the Mystic Diamond Model by Dr. Gordon H. McCormick)

In order to affect the Muslim community in the short term, the government must focus on the young Muslims. This is done by providing such youths the same opportunities available to young Thai Buddhists. Such a strategy would include providing better educational opportunities, recognizing the Muslim education that these young people have already received, providing training in practical job skills, and offering amnesty to those youths who agree to cooperate with the government. Also, the Muslim community and its families need to focus on the Muslim teenager and provide stronger, guiding advice to such youths when they study Islam. In addition, using moderate Muslim leaders to properly teach Islam to the Muslim youth of the south is critical to developing a moderate population.

The second area of emphasis must be to target the mechanisms that connect fundamentalists and the Muslim youth. This targeting may be accomplished first by moderating and regulating the schools that educate the Muslims in the south. Schools that teach fundamentalist and Wahabbi Islam should be regulated by the government with the assistance of moderate Muslim leaders who are respected by their local communities. The teachers in Islamic schools should be required to pass a selection process established by a Muslim Education Committee. In addition, each Muslim village should have volunteers who receive training from the Thai Armed Force and who can then serve as a home guard to monitor the potentially disruptive activities and habits of each village's teenagers, as well as the activities of the stranger who come into the village.

Finally, with intelligence gathered through trust built with the Muslim communities through the programs described above, the Thai government can target the third area, individual Muslim leaders who promote violence and recruit Muslim youths into radical organizations. Furthermore, by developing the south and working with neighboring countries in the region like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, Thailand can gain the support of international agencies, and good relationships with these nations can then lead to shared intelligence, the arrest of suspected radical Muslims, and potentially less violence.

B.   THE LONG TERM SOLUTION

In the long term solution, the Thai government should focus on the majority of Muslims themselves who can prevent the renewal of separatism and insurgency in the future.
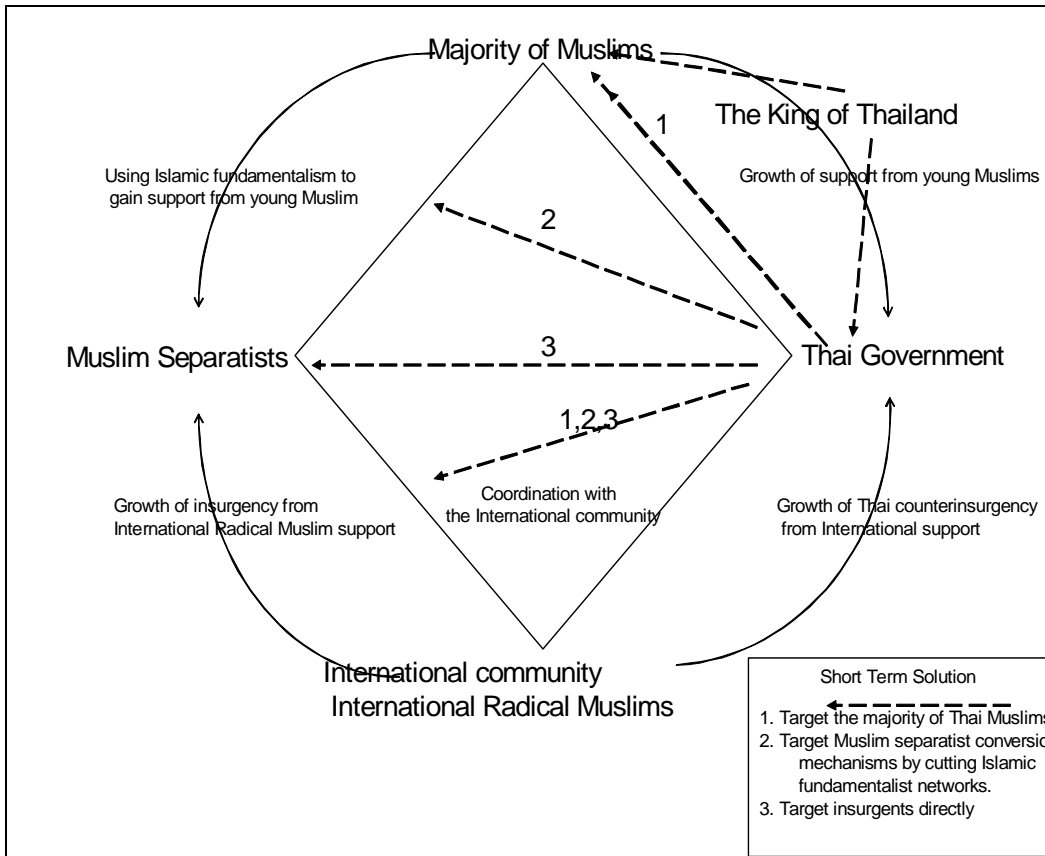
Figure 6.   Long Term Solution Model.
(After the Mystic Diamond Theory by Dr. Gordon H. McCormick)

The first of three long-term strategic policies should target the means by which the Muslim majority can be given ownership in solving the problems of the south. Local security and civil servants should be recruited from the pool of local Muslims who have a stake in the future of the south. As a consequence of including the Muslim communities in the problem, they gain trust in the government. By gaining coordination between the Muslim communities and the government, the local and national administrations will have better control over the actions of the Muslim youth in the south. Additional aspects of government cooperation with the Muslim community of the south should include fostering a sense of identity by which the Muslim communities feel that they are part of Thailand. This can be done by developing the economic prosperity of the southern provinces, making Muslims feel they are politically and economically equal to their Thai Buddhist fellow citizens, and allowing Muslims the freedom they desire to conduct

moderate Muslim religious practices. The combination of these actions will ensure that Thai Muslims do not feel alienated from the rest of Thai society.

The second strategic policy should target the mechanisms and means by which school curriculum and teachers are selected, with the intent of regulating the education. This can be done by creating a government sanctioned Islamic Education Committee that falls under the Thai Ministry of Education. This committee should select and test teachers, register schools, monitor curriculums, and coordinate with the government for financial support to the school system. Such an organization can promote Pattani history in schools in order to provide the Muslims of the south with recognition of their identity within Thai society. In addition, increased government support for Thai Muslim universities will help to mitigate the perception by Muslims that they need to travel to the Middle East for educational purposes. Such an educational commitment by the government would promote a genuine Thai Muslim identity. With government support of such educational reform, the students who graduate from these universities will have both the opportunity and priority to hold predominant positions within the educational and government sectors. Additionally, in the long run this government-sponsored system will inherently create educated Thai Muslims who can assist in developing the south and ending the violence.

The third strategic policy should target and enhance the government's ability to monitor the movement of individual Muslim separatists. This can be done with an improved immigration system to monitor those entering the country from the Middle East. This is achieved through increased cooperation with the international community. Information about Islamic fundamentalists and religious terrorists can be shared through intelligence coordination with the international community. Such cooperation was demonstrated in the 2003 arrest of Hambali in Thailand. His arrest was the result of cooperation by the US, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia, and other regional allies who shared intelligence information.

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VI. CONCLUSION

The renewal of Muslim separatism in the south of Thailand in 2004 is more complicated than the problems that existed in the Kingdom in the 1960s. Muslim separatists today use the memories of oppression and injustices committed in the past to inspire the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism as the future of the Muslim community. At the heart of the impressionable Muslim community is the young Thai Muslim, who today is a common figure involved with the violent actions and killings in the southern provinces. The current world situation in the Middle East reinforces the perception of inequality in the world for Muslims. At the same time, Muslims in southern Thailand are not oblivious to the global uprising that other followers of Islam are participating in around the world for the sake of preserving religious principles. Because of the ideology associated with Islamic fundamentalism, the strategy of Muslim separatists in Thailand has changed from a former reliance on the action of freedom fighters and separatists to the current tactics of terrorism. This situation has proven more difficult to control by than the circumstances surrounding the fight against communism in the past.

In order to fix the problem, the first priority of the Thai government must be to develop a plan that encompasses a unity of strategy, operations, and tactics. Each of these three areas can not be successful unless there is simultaneously a well-connected and coordinated intelligence system in place. As seen in this thesis, the case study of the counterinsurgency in 1980s demonstrates the importance of a unity of policy and management, which in the end created a successful operation and national strategy. In addition, the counterinsurgency in the 1980s provides some guidance for the Thai government's counterinsurgency policies of today as well. First, the government should establish a unified command for the management and balance of civil, police and military activities. Second, a centralized policy and decentralized execution must be applied to all levels of government operations. Third, police, paramilitary, and home guard should be used solely for the purpose of providing local security. Military forces should only be used in a limited role, specifically for small-unit offensive operations. Fourth, it should never be forgotten that the popular support of the people is the most critical component of

any counterinsurgency strategy. With that in mind, local participation in solving the problems of the south, combined with a system of local recruitment of government and security officials, can help mitigate the problems. By using local Muslims and making them feel like they have a say in the situation and the future, the Thai government simultaneously can gain the trust of the Muslim community itself. Additionally, information warfare, psychological operations, and well-coordinated civil-military operations are the instruments that help influence popular support if used properly. Fifth, a well-structured intelligence system is important for analyzing the current situation and the potential future situation. It is, therefore, essential that the Thai government unify the various intelligence units that exist under some umbrella of cooperation. Sixth, development programs in the south should be based primarily on the needs of the local people. Seventh, an important aspect of a solution strategy is for the Thai government to acknowledge that the present problem is a result of ethno-religious conflicts inside the country and Islamic fundamentalist influences from outside the nation's borders. Educating the moderate Muslims of southern Thailand, with special emphasis on the young, is therefore a critical step in helping everyone involved understand the problem in its entirety. An Islamic education committee, falling under and regulated by the Ministry of Education, can help eliminate the distorted teachings being introduced by radical fundamentalists to the youth of the region. Finally, government officials who are Buddhists should be trained in language skills and culture training before working in the south. A simple action such as this can easily help reduce the conflict that exists between Muslims and Buddhist government officials.

The models presented in this thesis, which provide both short and long-term solutions, can be used as a general solution guideline which the Thai government can apply in real, practical terms. A solution strategy, however, will only prove to be truly effective if there is a genuine coordination effort between the Buddhist officials and the Muslim community. Such cooperation and coordination will eliminate cultural and religious conflicts as well as mitigate the perceptions of inferiority, marginalization, inadequacy, and frustration that have created a violent barrier that exists between the Thai government and southern Thai Muslims.

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