

THE THAI WAY OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to ascertain how Thailand wages counterinsurgency (COIN). Thailand has waged two successful COINs in the past and is currently waging a third on its southern border. The lessons learned from Thailand's COIN campaigns could result in modern irregular warfare techniques valuable not only to Thailand and neighboring countries with similar security problems, but also to countries like the United States and the United Kingdom that are currently reshaping their irregular warfare doctrines in response to the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The first set of COIN lessons comes from Thailand's successful 1965-85 communist COIN. The second set comes from Bangkok's understudied 1980s-90s COIN against southern separatists. The third set comes from Thailand's current war against ethnic Malay separatists and radical Islamic insurgents attempting to secede and form a separate state called "Patani Raya," among other names.

Counterinsurgency is a difficult type of warfare for four reasons: (1) it can take years to succeed; (2) the battle space is poorly defined; (3) insurgents are not easily identifiable; and (4) war typically takes place among a civilian population that the guerrillas depend on for auxiliary support. Successful COINs include not only precise force application operations based on quality intelligence, but also lasting social and economic programs, political empowerment of the disenfranchised, and government acceptance of previously ignored cultural realities.

Background: In 1965, communist insurgents, backed by the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), began waging an insurgency against Thailand in order to overthrow its government and install a Marxist regime. The Thai government struggled, both politically and militarily, to contain the movement for years, but eventually, it prevailed. Its success was based on a combination of effective strategy and coordination, plus well-designed and run security, political, and economic programs, the latter nowadays called the "three pillars of COIN," a phrase developed by David Kilcullen, a modern COIN theorist and practitioner. One of Bangkok's most successful initiatives was the CPM program (civil-military-police), which used a linked chain of local forces, police, and the military to not only provide security for villages, but also economic aid and administrative training to rural peoples. State political programs that undercut communist political programs backed by masterful diplomacy and a constant barrage of rural works helped erode the communist position.

The 1980s-90s COIN against southern separatists followed similar lines. The far South's four border provinces, comprised of 80 percent ethnic Malay Muslims, had been in revolt on and off for decades since Bangkok annexed the area in 1902. Bangkok had waged haphazard COIN campaigns against rebel groups there for decades with mixed results. But after the successful communist COIN was up and running in 1980, Bangkok decided to apply similar ways and means to tackle the southern issue. The government divided its COIN operations into two components: a security component run by a task force called CPM-43, and a political-economic component run by the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center, or SB-PAC. SB-PAC also had a Special Branch investigative capacity. Combined, the 80s-90s southern COIN strategy relied on extensive military intelligence networks to curb violence, civilian administrators to execute local political reforms, and local politicians to apply traditional Malay and Muslim problem solving techniques to keep the peace. These programs worked well against the multitude of southern insurgent groups that conducted sporadic attacks against government and civilian targets while also running organized criminal syndicates. By the end of the 1990s, with a dose of Thailand's famed diplomacy and help from Malaysia's Special Branch, Bangkok defeated the southern separatists.

In January 2004, however, a new separatist movement in southern Thailand emerged – one based on ethnic Malay separatism and radical Islam. It is a well-coordinated movement with effective operational expertise that attacks at a higher tempo than past southern rebel groups. It moreover strikes civilian targets on a regular basis, thereby making it a terrorist group. Overall, it dwarfs past southern movements regarding motivation and scale of violence.

Thai officials think the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* Coordinate, or BRN-C, leads the current rebellion, but there are several other groups that claim to also lead the fight. Members of the insurgency are nearly exclusively ethnic Malays and Muslims. The movement demonstrates radical Islamic tendencies through its propaganda, indoctrination, recruitment, and deeds. It is a *takfiri* group that kills other Muslims who do not share its religious beliefs, so it wrote in its spiritual rebel guidebook, *Fight for the Liberation of Patani*.

BRN-C seeks to separate the four southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla from Thailand in order to establish an Islamic republic. The separatists base their revolt on perceived military, economic, cultural, and religious subjugation going back to the early 1900s. And they have a point. The central government has, at different times in the past, indeed treated southerners with tremendous disdain and sometimes violence – especially those considered insurgents. But Bangkok has also instituted scores of economic and social aid programs in the south – mosque building, college scholarships, and medical aid, for example – so it has not been a continual anti-Muslim “blood fest” as government detractors have painted it. Still the maltreatment, certainly many times less than yesteryear, has provided today's

insurgents with ideological fodder for a steady stream of recruits and supporters. Combined with radical Islam, it has bonded the insurgents to a significant degree.

Statistically, in the 2005-07-time frame, insurgents assassinated 1.09 people a day, detonated 18.8 bombs a month, and staged 12.8 arson attacks a month. In 2005, they conducted 43 raids and 45 ambushes. The militants target security forces, government civilians, and the local population. They have killed fellow Muslims and beheaded numerous Buddhist villagers.

The insurgents' actions have crippled the South's education system, justice system, and commerce, and also have maligned Buddhist-Muslim relations. Overall, the separatists pose a direct threat to Thailand's south and an indirect threat to the rest of the country. Moreover, their radical Islamic overtones have potential regional and global terrorist implications.

The Thai Government spent much of 2004 attempting to ascertain whether the high level of violence was, in fact, an insurgency. To begin with, the government, led by PM Thaksin Shinawatra, was puzzled by the fact that the separatists had not published a manifesto or approached Bangkok with a list of demands. By mid-2004, however, the insurgents had staged a failed, region-wide revolt, and their prolific leaflet and Internet propaganda campaign clearly demonstrated that a rebel movement was afoot. By fall 2005, the separatists had made political demands via the press, all of which centered on secession. By 2006, a coup against PM Thaksin succeeded and the military government that replaced him instituted a new COIN strategy for the south that by 2008 had reduced violence by about 40 percent. Some of the tenets of this new strategy were based on Thailand's past successful COIN strategies. Whether or not the government has concocted a winning strategy for the future, however, remains to be seen.

This paper analyses these COIN campaigns through the COIN Pantheon, a conceptual model the author developed as an analytical tool. It is based on David Kilcullen's three pillars of COIN. The COIN Pantheon has as its base the concept of strategy, and then as the next edifice, coordination. Three pillars of security, politics, and economics rise from these to push against the insurgent edifice. The roof is the at-risk population. By researching the specifics of all these issues for the three COINs discussed here, the Thai way of COIN emerges. Then, by measuring these results against the tenets of COIN theorists David Galula, Sir Robert Thompson, and Kilcullen, the Thai Way of COIN is more clearly illuminated.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: RATIONALE, LITERATURE SURVEY AND METHODS

1. Rationale

The goal of this study is to ascertain how Thailand wages counterinsurgency (COIN). Thailand has waged two successful COINs in the past and is currently waging a third – victory yet assured – on its southern border. The lessons learned from Thailand's campaigns could result in COIN techniques valuable not only to Thailand and neighboring countries with similar security problems, but also to countries like the United States and the United Kingdom that are currently reshaping their irregular warfare doctrines in response to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The U.S. Army and Marine Corps COIN manual, the book that revolutionized U.S. strategy and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, drew lessons from scores of COIN campaigns throughout history, some successful, some not. These include Vietnam, Ireland, Malaysia, Algeria, the Philippines, China, ancient Persia, Lebanon, Spain, and Haiti. It did not cite examples from Thailand's successful COINs, despite their *prima facie* value. One may reasonably assume that this is because so little is in fact known about them. As the Literature Survey will show, few authors, save for American Tom Marks and Thai scholars such as Suchit Bunbongkarn, Chai-Anan Samudavanija, and Kusuma Snitwongse, have analyzed Thai COIN, and even these focused on Thailand's communist rebellion, not the subsequent wars. There is not a study that analyses Thailand's two past and one ongoing COINs for lessons learned. This thesis fills that gap.

This project analyzes Thailand's successful 1965-85 communist COIN, its understudied 1980s-90s COIN against southern separatists, and its current war against ethnic Malay and radical Islamic insurgents attempting to secede and establish *Patani Raya*, a kind of Islamic Republic. The communist COIN engulfed the entire country and nearly toppled the government. China and North Vietnam sponsored the insurgents, and the war occurred at the same time as insurgencies in Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia. The communists succeeded in all cases except Thailand. This was a complicated war. Not only were the insurgents difficult to counter, but also the top tiers of government ignored effective COIN strategies and opted for autocracy and heavy suppression until COIN savvy officers took over in 1977 and instituted reform. Victory ensued.

The 1980s-90s COIN in the far south addressed a longstanding rebellion that had surged with violence on and off since the end of WW II. Bangkok did not apply effective COIN measures to this conflict until 1980, but when it did, the insurgents withered. Intra-government wrangling regarding command and control and budget

issues delayed ending the insurgency sooner, but by 1998, it was done. Lack of follow through, however, dampened the state's military victory and made room for a new crop of rebels but a few years later.

The current war in Thailand's far south, which began in earnest in 2004, is a reconfiguration of the remnants of the 1980s-90s insurgency, this time with radical Islamic tenets to better combat Bangkok's political and economic operations that helped achieve victory in 1998. The new insurgency has dedicated followers that murder civilians wholesale, including fellow Muslims. They are *takfir*, a mentality in league with *al Qaeda*. To date, Bangkok has applied past COIN techniques to the new insurgency, and, along with some new tactics, has experienced some success in decreasing levels of violence and insurgent controlled villages by nearly half.

Even though the current war is unfinished, patterns of Thai COIN are clear. Thailand uses a baseline strategy to coordinate and drive forward its COIN operations, which include a mix of security, politics, and economics. It goes through great lengths to define and infiltrate the insurgents. It strives to treat the population as the object of victory. While Thailand has not always applied these principles flawlessly – indeed, some of its efforts have been rough and even counterproductive – it has, nevertheless won its past COINs. It has experienced some success in its current five-year COIN, a young conflict compared to most insurgencies. Thailand's way of COIN, therefore, is worthy of study, and in many cases, emulation.

2. Literature Review

Thai COIN and Associated Literature

There is no significant literature – and not a single book – describing or analyzing the Thai way of counterinsurgency (COIN) across the wide spectrum of Thailand's COIN campaigns. This is curious, because while Thailand does not have a central COIN doctrine, it does have consistent strategic, operational, and tactical methods it applies to its small wars, and they have been successful. The Thai, however, by their own admission, say they are not the most prolific war historians.

There are several books and monographs that describe individual facets of Thai COIN campaigns written by a handful of Thai and an array of foreigners. These cover Thailand's communist COIN, the southern COIN in the 1980s-90s, and the current war on its southern border. When reading them comparatively, these works help shed light on Thailand's COIN methods.

Tom Marks' *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective*¹ is the most prolific and comprehensive study of Thailand's communist COIN. Making extensive use of document research and interviews with one of Thailand's central COIN figures, General Saiyud Kerdphol, Marks analyzes Thailand's COIN against Maoist revolutionaries through the lens of Theda Skocpol's, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Marks depicts how insurgents built a counter state structure based on social, economic, and political issues. He analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the counter state and then describes how Thailand toppled it. Any Thai COIN study would be remiss without using this text.

General Saiyud Kerdphol's own *The Struggle for Thailand, Counter-Insurgency, 1965-1985*,² discusses Thailand's strategies and tactics in the communist COIN, but not through an analytical framework that reveals COIN lessons learned. Instead, Saiyud's book is a collection of speeches he gave from 1965-85 on Thailand's communist COIN with some analysis and commentary in the conclusion. Technically, it is a primary source. It is an exceptionally valuable book, however, that reveals COIN programs and the processes that fostered them in detail that no other work reveals. Because it is a series of speeches over a 20-year period, it also offers a series of "snapshots" of Thai strategic, operational, and tactical COIN thinking.

George K. Tanham's *Trial In Thailand*³ depicts Thailand's communist COIN up to 1974, the time of the book's writing. Tanham was the main U.S. State Department official tasked with supporting Thailand's COIN at the time. He details communist strategies and tactics and those of the state, but since the war had not concluded, there were few lessons learned. His book, nevertheless, demonstrates how the Thai first aimed to counter the communist rebellion.

Katherine Bowie's *Rituals of National Loyalty*⁴ depicts Thailand's main political-paramilitary program, the Village Scouts, designed counter the communists' mobilization of the people. Bowie provides intricate details on the foundation of this decisive program and how it functioned. Her use of a Marxist model to analyze the Scouts and the war, however, is problematic. By using Marx to analyze a COIN program meant to stifle communist rebels, her final analysis is predetermined. Bowie sees the conflict as the upper classes radicalizing the population – via the Village Scouts – against the masses who simply wanted more freedom via political representation and a soft form of socialism. She does not admit communists, overtly backed by China and North Vietnam, tried to overthrow the government using a strict Maoist model, which entailed mass propaganda,

¹ T. Marks, *Making Revolution; The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in*

² S. Kerdphol, *The Struggle for Thailand: Counterinsurgency 1965-1985*, (Bangkok: S Research Center, Co, Ltd, 1986).

³ G. K. Tanham, *Trial in Thailand*, (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., 1974).

⁴ K. A. Bowie, *Rituals of National Loyalty; An Anthropology of the State and the Village Scout Movement in Thailand*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

countrywide guerrilla warfare, and some terrorism. Even the rebels themselves admit these points.

Curiously, Bowie says the insurgents were not a threat to Thailand. More, she compares the Village Scouts to the Nazis and her bias shines through when she wrote of a Village Scout rally, "...to me, the whole thing seemed noisy and silly"⁵. None of these descriptions are professional anthropological analyses. They are personal political attacks on a government she appears to dislike. In doing so, Bowie scuttles an opportunity to objectively apply her detailed and useful research to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

There are two rare and masterful analyses of Thailand's communist COIN by Thai scholars in English. They are pivotal to understand Thai COIN. The first is Suchit Bunbongkarn's *The Military in Thai Politics, 1981-86*, published in 1986.⁶ The second is *From Armed Suppression to Political Offensive: Attitudinal Transformation of Thai Military Officers Since 1976*, published in 1990 by Chai-Anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse, and Suchit Bunbongkarn.⁷ Suchit's 1986 book discusses the rise of General Prem Tinsulanonda and the complicated political maneuvering by his faction, supporting factions, and opposing ones and their ideas about waging COIN as the war against the communists raged. *From Armed Suppression*, which Suchit helped write, tracks the COIN thinking of the Thai military from the 1960s to 1980. Both books shed light on how Thai officers developed and applied their winning COIN doctrine against the communists. As illuminating as they are, however, these books approach COIN from a strategic level, and they intentionally leave out how Thailand made that strategy operational in the field.

Interestingly, these two books secured their core understanding of Thailand's winning COIN strategy from Kanok Wongtrangan's monograph, "Change and Persistence in Thai Counter-Insurgency Policy," published by Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University in 1983. Kanok appears to be the original Thai-English translator and English language analyst of Thailand's COIN strategy, quite a feat because of the difficult aspects of Thai government language. Being close to the origins of the strategy, time wise, his work is invaluable, his insights penetrating.

There are few accounts of the understudied southern COIN in the 1980s-90s, and none approach it from a COIN point of view. Panomporn Anurugsa's 1984 University of Texas PhD, "Political Integration Policy in Thailand: The Case of the Malay Muslim Minority," discusses the southern border insurgency and the government's political efforts to assuage it. Ornanong Noiwigong's 2001 Northern

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 159.

⁶ S. Bunbongkarn, *The Military in Thai Politics, 1981-86*. (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian studies, 1986).

⁷ C. Samudavanija, K. Snitwongse, and S. Bunbongkarn, *From Armed Suppression to Political Offensive*, (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Aksornsiam Press, 1990).

Illinois University PhD, titled, “Political Integration Policies and Strategies of the Thai Government Toward the Malay-Muslims of Southernmost Thailand (1973-2000),” does the same thing. Yet another doctorate on the far south, Surin Pitsuwan’s “Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand,” (1982) covers nearly identical subject material. This is not to say these works are not useful: without them there would be precious little written about the subject. Nearly all studies of the 1980s-90s COIN and even the current COIN rely on them.

They each discuss the origins of the Thai Malay Muslim insurgency with its beginnings in the post WW II era and its gaining violent momentum in the 1970s. And while they also discuss certain COIN programs, none of them discuss Thai COIN theory and how the government applied it to the far south. Instead, they focus on political and economic integration programs the government used to merge locals into the greater Thai system. But integration was only one facet of COIN. None of these works objectively cover the state’s security programs, referring to them as blundering or overly harsh while providing little detail on military and police structure and operations. While many were blundering, some were effective, and this angle sidelines Thailand’s security programs as unworthy of study. More, none of these doctorates critically analyze the government’s 1980s integrated security-political-economic strategy that ended with a decisive military victory over the insurgents in 1998.

As a result, there is a gap in the research on this particular insurgency. More, there is so little done on this conflict that writers looking to the past for answers on Thailand’s current insurgency continually recycle Panomporn, Ornanong, and Surin. While they hold valuable material, their defects become replicated in the present COIN literature, skewing the picture.

There are scores of supporting works on the 1980s-90s insurgency that are helpful, but they mostly cover insurgent groups. One of the best is in Thai by General Kitti Rattanachaya titled, *Thailand’s Southern Insurgency: Creation of Pattani State*.⁸ Kitti was Fourth Army Commander in the mid-1990s and has first hand knowledge of these groups.

Northern Illinois University’s Ladd M. Thomas wrote prolifically on the insurgents in the 1970s and early 80s in works such as, “Political Violence in the Muslim Provinces of Southern Thailand,” for Singapore’s Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), and “Thai Muslim Separatism in South Thailand,” in *The Muslims of Thailand, Volume 2: Politics of the Malay-Speaking South*, for the Centre for Southeast Asian Studies in Bihar, India.⁹ Ladd’s work was groundbreaking at the

⁸ General K. Rattanachaya, *Thailand’s Southern Insurgency: Creation of Pattani State*, (Bangkok: Sor. Pichit Publication Co Ltd., 1 November 2004).

⁹ M. L. Thomas, “Thai Muslim Separatism in South Thailand,” in A. D. W. Forbes (ed.) *The Muslims of Thailand, Volume 2: Politics of the Malay-Speaking South*, (Bihar, India: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), and *Political Violence in the Muslim*

time; he was perhaps the first to chart insurgent violence during the 1970s and 80s. Wan Kadir Che Man, an insurgent leader from the 1990s, wrote, *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand* in 1990. While helpful in deciphering many aspects of the internal organs of the insurgency and its foreign support network, like other books, Man provides details on the “who” and “how” and “why” of the movement, but little on the COIN aspects of the war.

Several other works address aspects the origins of the 1980s-90s insurgency, but none use it as historical background to the current Thai COIN. These include, but are not limited to, Walailak University’s, *Knowledge and Conflict Resolution: The Crisis of the Border Region of Southern Thailand*, and Chaiwat Satha-Anand’s “Silence of the Bullet Monument,” a chapter in, *Rethinking Thailand’s Southern Violence*.

Ibrahim Syukri’s *History of The Malay Kingdom of Patani*,¹⁰ translated by Conner Baily and John N. Miksic, is a fascinating version of “Patani history” told by a presumed Thai Malay Muslim based in Pasir Putih in Kelantan, Malaysia. Publication date was post WW II. It describes Patani – the old name for Thailand’s border provinces when they were an independent state – as a glorious and rich Islamic kingdom and the cradle of Islam in Southeast Asia. It is not a work of research, however. There are no sources cited, nor are their critical analyses. This does not mean it is wholly inaccurate. The book generally follows regional and Thai historical timelines. For example, it accurately chronicles Burmese-Thai wars and how, in 1563, Burma recruited Patani troops to help sack Ayutthaya. Trouble arises, however, when Syukri narrows his historical vision. For example, he writes only of Patani troops toppling Ayutthaya, making it seem as if Patani alone destroyed the doomed capital (pp. 26).

There are more odd anomalies. The author cites Patani’s heroic seafaring abilities and immense riches but does not quantify them or probe their origins. Instead, he writes generally of agriculture, regional trade, and cannon manufacturing. While all three were economic sectors at the time – there are several Patani cannon at the Thai Ministry of Defense – there is no evidence supporting the author’s case; no proof, for example, Patani ever made more than a few cannon. The book, then, is more lore than anything else. It does, however, provide insight into the current insurgency. Present day rebels use the exact themes in the book to propagandize and indoctrinate the at-risk population. Because this source and others’ limitations, deciphering the 1980s-90s COIN demands copious interviews and news articles from the actual time period of the war.

Provinces of Southern Thailand, Occasional Paper No. 28, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1975).

¹⁰ Ibrahim Syukri, *History of The Malay Kingdom of Patani*, translated by Conner Baily and John N. Miksic, (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1985).

This is not the case with Thailand's current insurgency. There are volumes of articles, monographs, think tank pieces, and books on the subject. However, as with the 1980s-90s war, none of these address the ongoing conflict from a professional COIN perspective.

Duncan McCargo's recently published *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand*, provides insight into insurgent activities and some government efforts to quell them, but it is more a hypercritical attack on Bangkok's policies by an author self-avowedly uninterested in COIN studies.¹¹ Moreover, while some of his information is helpful in revealing insurgent tactics, McCargo's readiness to believe insurgent interviewees who claimed they had no intention of killing anyone as they joined assault teams that killed police and military personnel with machetes and firearms, smacks of naiveté.

Yet another one of McCargo's books, this one a collection of essays written by Thai and foreign scholars on the background of the current insurgency, is *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. It contains excellent historical material demonstrating the social, political, economic, and cultural angst of the far south. It moreover depicts PM Thaksin Shinawatra's policy toward the region as a violent one – not wholly accurate because of his political and diplomatic programs, but overall in keeping with the events of the far south in 2004-05. Unlike his 2008 book, however, the evidence brought together by McCargo suggests in *Rethinking* that organized criminal elements and corrupt politicians were somehow behind the insurgency instead of a movement bent on secession.

The Royal Thai Government has published several works on the insurgency. One was the Krue Se report of 2005.¹² Translated by *The Nation* newspaper, it explains how Thai forces reacted to a mass uprising by insurgents on 28 April 2004 that ended with the Royal Thai Army storming insurgents holed up in Krue Se Mosque in Pattani. A government report on security forces' neglectful actions that resulted in the deaths of more than 70 protestors at Tak Bai police station in October 2004 reveals another blunder, but not government COIN policy.¹³ None of these explain Thai COIN policy, however.

Scores of researchers and pundits have produced a wide array of literature on the current war, among them Dana R. Dillon's, "Insurgency in Thailand: The U.S. Should Support the Government," for the Heritage Foundation. Her paper argues the U.S. should lend COIN support to Thailand, but she does not explain Thai COIN policy. Marc Askew's "Fighting with Ghosts: Confronting Thailand's Enigmatic 'Southern Fire'," a paper he delivered at ISEAS in Singapore in March 2009, is exceptional regarding insurgent tactics, but not government COIN

¹¹ As expressed by McCargo to the author in Washington, DC, at a conference at the East West Center in 2006.

¹² available on <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/specials/takbai/p2.htm>.

¹³ available on <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/specials/takbai/p1.htm>.

strategy and tactics. Askew's plethora of articles on the subject, however, demonstrate his extraordinary value at deciphering the current conflict.¹⁴

The International Crisis Group (ICG), a Brussels-based think tank, published a monograph on 23 October 2007 titled "Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries." It critiqued government local force COIN programs and largely accused them of being brutal, useless, and only adding to the carnage of insurgency. It offered negative stories of Thailand's local forces and suggested they be replaced with Thai soldiers. In saying so, the ICG demonstrated a poor understanding of COIN in general. Local forces are necessary, at the very least, to guide national forces in insurgent territory, and at the most, fight the insurgents as agents of the government at the local level since they know the local "human terrain" – culture, social connections, people, etc. This is common in nearly all COINs, and local forces proved decisive in Thailand's past COINs. Having said this, the monograph provides good historical background of the current COIN and the evolution of some local units.

Ball and Mathieson's *Militia Redux, Or Sor and the Revival of Paramilitarism in Thailand*, fares the same.¹⁵ While they provide good information on the breadth of Thailand's local forces, the authors make little reference to COIN theory and the contribution of local forces. Instead, they criticize local forces as criminal and contributing to insurgency, not quelling them. Such a one-sided book provides little use in COIN analyses, but its historical information on Thailand's COINs, particularly the number of local forces vs. insurgents, is useful.

Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand, edited by Acharya, Chua, and Gunaratna¹⁶ sheds light on the present insurgency by depicting its methods and operations. Particularly helpful is the translation of the insurgent guidebook, "Fight for the Liberation of Pattani," which reveals religious goals and indoctrination methods like no other source. But, as with other books mentioned here, it does not discuss Thai COIN doctrine or strategy.

Perhaps surprisingly, valuable sources on the current COIN are three Thai English dailies: *The Nation*, the *Bangkok Post*, and the Thai News Agency (TNA). Their reporters cover the war on a daily basis, writing not only about the insurgents, but also Bangkok's COIN operations. For example, the *Bangkok Post's* 13 March 2005 "Distrust 'needs urgent solution'," provided insight into how the Thaksin administration and the army began to shape their COIN strategy. PM Thaksin appointed as minister of defense Thammarak Ayudhya, a former intelligence chief

¹⁴ Such as "Conspiracy, Politics, and a Disorderly Border" (2007), "Landscapes of Fear, horizons and Trust (2009), and "Performing Political Identity: The Democratic Party in Southern Thailand (2008).

¹⁵ D. Ball and D. S. Mathieson, *Militia Redux; Or Sor and the Revival of Paramilitarism in Thailand*, (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2007).

¹⁶ A. Acharya, S. Chua, and R. Gunaratna, *Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2006).

under famed communist COIN era General Harn Leenanond. As a result of his former position, Thammarak well understood the insurgent dynamics and COIN of the south. More, many southerners accepted him as a just man. No other book or monograph revealed this valuable information. TNA, in its 24 June 2009 piece, "Cabinet proposes to move border agency to PM's control," reported on PM Abhisit's aim to seize the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center from control of the Ministry of Interior is insightful regarding COIN coordination issues and not found in any other media.

In summary for the above writings, the literature available on Thailand's insurgencies, except for the 80s-90s COIN, is prolific and rich. And even for this COIN there are nuggets of information to be gleaned by comparing well-used sources with elusive press material from the 1990s and person-to-person interviews. Thai COIN literature, however, is replete with unprofessional analyses that speak nothing of COIN – Marks and a handful of Thai authors from the 1980s excluded. Most are content to tackle insurgents or individual programs from individual wars. None look at Thailand's COINs from a comprehensive and professional analytical framework. This is odd, because the Thai government has, for the most part, countered its insurgencies within a specific framework, just short of stated doctrine. Building and applying that framework was never seamless, but it was indeed methodical. This thesis intends to demonstrate how the Thai constructed and fielded their COIN strategies and tactics for three wars, thereby revealing the Thai way of COIN.

Key Classic and Modern COIN Literature and Where Thai COIN Fits Into It

Aside from the comparatively narrow scope of literature that directly address Thai COIN, there is a wide body of work on COIN concepts this PhD fits into. This collection consists of COIN advice from Cold War practitioners who fought in Malaya, Vietnam, the Philippines, Algeria, Kenya, and the like, and calibrated COIN advice from practitioners and observers from recent campaigns such as Iraq and Afghanistan. David Kilcullen, Australian Army officer and Chief Strategist of the U.S. State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, is one of the latter. The U.S. hired him to aid America in redesigning its irregular warfare strategies. He says COIN is divided between classic and modern COIN.

Classic COIN ranges from the end of WW II to the 1980s and is generally characterized by COIN theorists David Galula and Sir Robert Thompson. Their concepts remain to this day the core foundations of nearly every COIN campaign in post WW II history. Even modern COIN, despite being different from classic COIN, is rooted in Galula and Thompson. Broadly, their lessons include politically de-marginalizing the insurgent and physically separating them from the people. It is a broad but set series of concepts ideal for fighting

communist subversives, and rebels building shadow governments, and like revolutionary movements.

Modern COIN theorists recognize classic COIN concepts but add additional notions that address fanatical religious ideologues that do not always harbor self-preservation, state building, and control of territory as key goals as classic insurgents do. Some modern insurgents simply strive to globally mass political allies to ideologically beat their opponents in the international arena. Others aim for an amoebic kind of regional or global state bound together by strict religious beliefs that govern business, social, legal, and military practices while simultaneously rejecting wealth, Western style empire building, modern amenities, and set territories. Here, modern COIN theorists postulate, classic COIN strategies do not always suffice.

But most COIN theorists admit COIN theories are just that – theories. There are basic laws of COIN that should be adhered to, yes, but COIN is a counter to a highly fluid political-economic-social-military security challenge, and the exact strategies, operations, and tactics applied to solve one insurgency will rarely, if ever, be the same for another. Beyond fundamental, baseline practices, then, COIN is a tailored affair. That is why the continual study of insurgency and COIN is vital – because of the dramatic variety of problems and solutions involved. And that is why this study is relevant to the wider body of COIN literature.

Specifically, because Thailand has fought insurgencies in both the Cold War and modern arenas, Thai COIN lessons can add insightful layers to existing COIN literature. The Thai offer examples of strategies and operational concepts in security, political, and economic realms that successfully defeated insurgents, just like many COIN studies of today and yesterday. There are both new and previously proven COIN tenets offered here. The latter will reinforce literature that purports traditional COIN measures. The former will stimulate COIN thinkers with examples of innovative solutions and challenge some traditional theories. Additionally, this study demonstrates how and why the Thai made the COIN decisions they made; many resulted in failure, and success was frequently achieved the hard way – effective command and control of the COIN effort is an obvious one. So this study of Thai COIN also provides glaring examples of what not to do and what to do in COIN – for given situations and scenarios such as Thailand's. They should be helpful to Thailand regarding its current insurgency problems, the US and its allies regarding Afghanistan, and for other countries dealing with asymmetric threats.

Glancing forward toward the conclusions of this study, it is interesting to note Thailand – either by default or design – has both followed classic COIN concepts by, for example, Galula, and ignored those by the same man – all with great success. In its current war, Thailand is indeed using modern COIN techniques, especially with regard to assuaging threats in the international

sector, but, interestingly, it was always taken this approach, even in the Cold War. More, where Thailand has recognized the international ideological fight of its current insurgency, it has been slow to do the same domestically at the village level. So studying Thai COIN is not only valuable to COIN theory writ large, it is also fascinating from a cultural security problem solving point of view.

In order to gauge how this study of Thai COIN fits into this swath of classic and modern COIN theories, a brief survey of these theories is needed. The classic COIN theorists and their books cited here are David Galula (*Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice*), Sir Robert Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency; The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*), Richard Clutterbuck (*The Long, Long War; The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-1960*), and Sir Frank Kitson (*Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping*). These – especially the first two – are the premier COIN “anchor books” that contain the heart of all COIN theory. Clutterbuck differs from the others by delving into operational and some tactical details about how the British waged COIN in Malaya, similar to how David Kilcullen’s most recent book, *Counterinsurgency*, discusses many operational and even some tactical COIN methods used on modern COIN battlefields. Kitson was generally known for bringing COIN lessons from the 1950s into the 1970s, expanding on the intelligence contribution to COIN, and addressing riots and protests.

In the post Vietnam era, there were COIN theory critics that are addressed here, too. There were scores of low intensity conflicts around the globe, and multitudes of authors critiqued U.S. COIN policy and theory plus that of its allies, including the UK. Vietnam had not gone well – the U.S. lost that war – and its involvement in Latin America’s many small wars such as Nicaragua, sponsored by the Soviet Union and its proxies, especially drew fire. These critical authors included Andrew Mack (“Counterinsurgency in the Third World: Theory and Practice,”) and D. Michael Shafer (“The Unlearned Lessons of Counterinsurgency.”)

COIN did not garner much attention in the 1990s, save for a few farsighted thinkers. But it experienced a renewed impetus post 9-11 with the modern COIN theorists and authors who did not refer to themselves as such but simply security and defense thinkers who embraced COIN as one of many solutions to the Global War on Terror, particularly regarding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of these were so fervent in their cause they became known inside Washington, DC, as “COINdinistas,” a play on the 1980s era Soviet and Cuban-backed Nicaraguan revolutionaries, the Sandinistas.

Modern COIN theorists are personified namely by David Kilcullen (“Countering Global Insurgency,” “Counterinsurgency Redux,” “The Development of Indonesian Counterinsurgency Tactics,” and his most recent book, *Counterinsurgency*, which came on the heels of his first, *The Accidental Guerrilla*). Yet another is John Nagl, perhaps the best known “COINdinista”

(*Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam; Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*). Both Kilcullen and Nagl had a major influence on the new U.S. COIN manual that came out in 2006 specifically for the Iraq war (FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*) but certainly intended for wider application, including Afghanistan. Its insightful and Thompson/Kitson-like British counterpart, UK Joint COIN guide (*Security and Stabilization; The Military Contribution*, JP 3-40), is also discussed here.

Aside from these texts, there is a never-ending flood of articles and books that discuss COIN from a multitude of angles, all relevant to this study because of their strategic and operational nature. Authors here include Rupert Smith (*The Utility of Force*), David Ucko (*The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*), the RAND Corporation (*Victory Has a Thousand Fathers; Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*), Heather S. Gregg (“Beyond Population Engagement: Understanding Counterinsurgency”), Octavian Manea (“Counterinsurgency as a Whole of Government Approach: Notes on the British Army Field Manual Weltanschauung; An Interview with Colonel Alexander Alderson”), Bill Ardolino, (“A Counterinsurgency Conundrum in Salaam Bazaar,”) the indispensable Kalev I. Sepp, (“Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,”) Paul Dixon, (“Hearts and Minds? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,”) Jonathan Goodhand and David Hulme, (“From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies: Understanding Conflict and Peace-Building in the New World Disorder,”), and Robert R. Tomes, (“Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare.”)

Published in 1964, David Galula’s *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice*, is a lessons learned book based on the author’s experiences waging COIN against the National Liberation Front (NLF) in Algeria from 1956-58. The war lasted from 1954-62. Galula’s first and exceptionally valuable book, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958*, reads like a COIN diary of his day-to-day activities in separating the population from the NLF. It contributed to the final theories contained in *Counterinsurgency Warfare*. Before briefly exploring Galula, it should be noted that while the French achieved a military and administrative victory over the insurgents, the NLF ultimately succeeded in the ideological sphere by lobbying the United Nations to achieve independence. It should also be noted Algeria has since known little peace. The NLF, its rivals, other insurgent organizations, and the government have bloodied each other there for decades.

Turning to *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, then, Galula asserts there are both conventional and unconventional “laws of warfare” and they “cannot be seriously challenged.”¹⁷ He cites Napoleon’s axioms such as “Victory goes to the largest battalion” as indisputable.¹⁸ He moreover admonishes the counterinsurgent not

¹⁷ D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc. 1964), p. x.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

to attempt to mimic the insurgent – it is a “trap,” he explains, that will lead to defeat.¹⁹

These latter two notations are curious for an astute man who wrote prolifically on the type of warfare that demands more flexibility and adaptation than any other. And Napoleon’s advice falls flat on its face in light of battles such as Chancellorsville, Virginia, 1863, where a force of 60,000 Confederates routed a Union force of 133,000. This type of upset is the crux of insurgency – the “fly vs. the lion,” as Galula so eloquently puts it.²⁰ Regardless of these less than apt precepts, Galula’s overall work offers timeless COIN tenets that can be followed by any counterrevolutionary force, be it military, police, or civilian. It cannot be overstated that Galula was perhaps the first to formalize these concepts in the post WW II world, and they have served as anchor concepts for COIN practitioners worldwide ever since.

Galula asserts there are broad concepts to understand regarding insurgency and COIN. First, he says, the objective is the population because insurgency is a political war.²¹ Galula says insurgencies are protracted and costly, and the insurgent has the advantage of fluidity over the government’s rigidity.²² He moreover asserts ideology is more powerful than physical armaments, and the counterinsurgent must not only size up the physical terrain, but also the political, economic, and cultural aspects of the conflict area in order to comprehend the nexus between the enemy and the people.²³ Galula furthermore stresses the importance of isolating the insurgent from outside political and military support, and COIN forces must have some kind of metric to measure “pacified” areas, such as color coding them red (hostile), pink (semi-hostile), or white (non-hostile).²⁴

Galula is perhaps most famous for his “four laws of COIN” and what he refers to as his “strategy for pacification.” Both serve as the core of his COIN theory. The laws are:²⁵

- 1) “Support of the Population Is as Necessary for the Counterinsurgent as for the Insurgent;
- 2) Support Is Gained Through an Active Minority;
- 3) Support from the Population Is Conditional;

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. x.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 26.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29, 52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-58.

4) Intensity of Efforts and Vastness of Means Are Essential.”

Galula’s strategy of pacification is as follows:²⁶

“In a Selected Area

1. Concentrate enough armed forces to destroy or to expel the main body of armed insurgents;
2. Detach for the area sufficient troops to oppose an insurgent’s comeback in strength, install these troops in the hamlets, villages, and towns where the population lives;
3. Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas;
4. Destroy the local insurgent political organizations;
5. Set up, by means of elections, new provisional local authorities;
6. Test these authorities by assigning them various concrete tasks. Replace the softs and the incompetents, give full support to the active leaders. Organize self-defense units;
7. Group and educate the leaders in a national political movement;
8. Win over or suppress the last insurgent remnants. Order having been re-established in the area, the process.”

Within this process, Galula provides details regarding the how and why of this strategy. He writes troops living amongst a population that shield a people from insurgents allow that population to build up their own protective forces that will, in the long term, keep insurgents out without close government supervision. In doing this, the government has to identify those people who are against the insurgents and embolden them, not just militarily, but politically. This is key, he says. The insurgent must be politically undermined.

Also in this process, says Galula, leaders emerge that are better able manage and benefit the people, and the key turning point is when a village or hamlet, embraced and protected by the government, embraces the COIN ideals of the government and choses sides against the insurgent. The process requires a mix of military, police, and wide array of civil servants, because harnessing the population requires uplifting it from poverty, social strife, a lacking educational environment, and political doldrums.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-64.

All this requires massive coordination and singularity of purpose by a diverse group of government employees, writes Galula. And these personnel must be diverse enough to cross over occupational specialties. Soldiers, for example, must be able to conduct civil affairs, teach, and do social work as well as neutralize the enemy until the conflict zone is safe enough to be stocked with civil servants.²⁸

Galula also provides strategic guidance and command and control advice. He says, for example, “A revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political’...”²⁹ And since COIN is mostly political, the military should be subordinate to civilian control.³⁰ Achieving these ends and the others mentioned here requires the military and civilian assets arrayed against the insurgent to change their mindset from their traditional roles to one of COIN, something Galula calls “adaptation of minds.”³¹ This includes learning from mistakes, he warns, as war theory and war in practice always differ, and mistakes naturally happen.³²

As for security operations – which, says Galula, pave the way for civil affairs and political operations – he advises a combination of mobile strike forces and static occupying forces working in tandem to continually pressure insurgent forces. Propaganda aimed at the both the insurgent and the at-risk population is paramount. That aimed at the insurgent convinces him or her to give up their fight. That aimed at the population is designed to assuage its fears of military action and also to let it know the government is there to protect and uplift them.³³

Published in 1966, Sir Robert Thompson’s *Defeating Communist Insurgency; The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, was born out of the victory over communist insurgents that tried to take over Malaya from 1948-60. Unlike Galula, who wrote from the view of an infantry officer, Thompson – who had served as a British-India “Chindit” Special Forces officer in Burma during WW II

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66, It is critical to realize, however, this axiom does not mean that all COIN programs should be divided on an 80-20 percent scale. In COIN, the classic and modern theorists advise one does what is practical to solve the problems at hand. It just so happens to be that insurgencies have more political complexities than war making complexities. There are scores of political and/or social religious issues behind an insurgent movement. But bombings and assassinations and light infantry attacks are just that. So the complexities of political problem solving will likely be more than the complexities of security problems. The value of providing security, however, will frequently be much higher than 20 percent, and value is where this axiom can be misinterpreted. The Thai put much stock in defeating the military capabilities of insurgents, even when they mustered their wining strategies.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

– waged COIN as Permanent Secretary of Defense in Malaya in the 1950s. The purpose of his book, he writes in the preface, is to explain in layman’s terms how insurgency and COIN function to the average “newsreader” and also to provide a COIN framework for the “professional” who counters irregular warfare. It is not a complete work, he admits, and he purposefully left out the intricacies of operations and military vernacular.

Thompson begins with a tutorial on insurgency, the insurgent situations in Malaya and Vietnam, and then posits his five principles of COIN that state what the government must do to halt subversion:³⁴

1) “...have a clear political aim” – to set up an independent, stable, and prosperous country with “respected institutions”;³⁵

2) “...function according with law” – establish effective and just laws to assuage the insurgency and maintain legitimacy by acting within the law, not outside it;

3) “...have an overall plan” – design a flexible COIN plan that addresses security, political, economic, cultural, timing, and territorial issues that forces insurgents to react to the government; and a proper military-civilian balance is key;

4) “...give priority to defeating political subversion” – the main focus of the government’s efforts should focus on identifying and removing the insurgent political structure from the population; destruction of the enemy’s war making abilities is secondary;

5) “...secure its base areas first.” – the government should establish bases of operation in areas it can hold and work out from those points to wage COIN; this is, in effect, erecting interior lines of communication, which allows for a systematic, section-by-section clearing of guerrillas – what Thompson calls “a steam roller outlook”³⁶ that gives the population a clear view of government progress and power, which then induces it to join the government’s cause.

After listing these principles, Thompson leaps into strategic and operational concepts that enhance his basic premises. First is establishment of the government cause, which essentially frames strategy. And the number of government supporters in the population might be small, so the aim is to co-opt the neutrals. This is done by harnessing three key influences on a population, writes Thompson, which are, “Nationalism and national policies, religion and customs, material well being and progress.”³⁷

³⁴ R. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency; The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, (St. Petersburg, Florida: Hailer Publishing, 2005), pp. 50-58.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Thompson also heralds good governance as pivotal to effective COIN. The government's administrative structure, he asserts, must be efficient and work for the people, such as having a robust and effective education ministry and public school system that provides education people can believe in and prosper from. Government also must be "fair, honest, and dependable" to succeed in COIN. As for COIN administration, it needs to have a war council stocked with military and civilians but run by a civilian who understands COIN, and it needs a director of operations who holds central power – these lessons coming straight from the effectiveness of Sir Gerald Templer who brought order and proficiency to the Malaya COIN effort. Finally, Thompson says respect and cooperation of the people must be earned, not forced. This is quite different from Galula who tells in *Pacification in Algeria* of forcing what he described as unorganized, lackadaisical, and leaderless villages into organized and motivated entities under a central, local leadership.³⁸

Thompson addresses intelligence throughout his book and furthermore gives it a short, standalone chapter. He writes it is impossible to wage effective COIN without good intelligence on the opposition. Intelligence mainly needs to focus on 1) identifying key insurgent agitators, and 2) providing timely information to police and military so said agitators can be captured or killed. The overall goal, he asserts, is "total eradication of the threat."³⁹ More, Thompson says there should just be a single organization processing COIN intelligence, ideally police Special Branch (but linked to other intelligence entities such as that of the army) since it is ideally suited for investigative work and identification of hostile personnel. In these cases, intelligence cooperation and sharing is key.⁴⁰

Next, Thompson addresses information services. These are designed to, 1) entice insurgent surrenders, 2) cause damaging friction within insurgent ranks, and 3) demonstrate a government that is effective, fair but firm, and in control. Careful use of language is important; for insurgent walks-ins, for example, a constructive and noble term should be used in lieu of the defeatist sounding term "surrendering insurgent" and the like. Thompson further describes the role of psychological operations and press relations – persuading vs. informing – and how important it is to couple these concepts with actual deeds and progress.⁴¹

Regarding balance of forces, it depends on terrain, the makeup of the government, and the scope of the guerrilla threat. In Malaya, Thompson says the police were the main counter guerrilla force because the war was a people's war, and the police were closest to the people on a day-to-day basis. The police investigated, identified and captured suspects, and patrolled urban areas. The military fought in remote areas. And the military should be, as Thompson writes,

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-73, 80-81.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68, 90-96.

a “small, elite, highly disciplined, lightly equipped and aggressive” force that is mobile and intertwined with, and again, subordinate to, the civilian leadership.⁴²

The police, however, need paramilitary capabilities, Thompson says. It also needs a home constable force made up of citizens augmenting them to help provide blanket security and to further co-opt the population to the government’s side.⁴³ A local force of government guerrillas conducting counter-guerrilla activities is necessary, too, especially amongst ethnic tribes and the like. But Thompson warns forces and operations of these latter types cannot, by themselves, defeat insurgency.⁴⁴

As for basic operational concepts, Thompson summarizes COIN field operations as, “clear, hold, winning, and won.”⁴⁵ The exact types of operations will vary according to the threat level, population terrain, extent of subversion, political issues, etc., but the general thrust is universal – first clear the area of guerilla military forces, then set up security and civil affairs and political programs to maintain a presence, then expand and improve those programs to win the population, and, when the population turns to the government and rejects the guerrilla, victory is achieved.⁴⁶ More, Thompson writes local forces are ideal for COIN, sometimes better than government forces because of the former’s local knowledge. These forces are essential to the holding phase of COIN – which can be messy as certain stubborn insurgents will need to be rooted out. He describes it as going after a fierce tomcat, the guerrilla, with a fiercer tomcat, the state’s guerrilla.⁴⁷ Looking forward to the conclusion, the Thai describe it as, “getting a gangster to go after a gangster.”

Also addressing the holding aspect of COIN – the most difficult aspect of the operational concepts, Thompson discusses strategic hamlets. Here, Thompson refers to a defense force at the lowest level of organized society – Malay *kampongs* and/or “Chinese villages” in Malaya. The latter were essentially squatter camps on the jungle fringes. The next highest unit of societal organization was the *mukim*, and then above that was the district. In Vietnam, Thompson describes it – from the lowest level to the highest – as hamlet, village, district. In COIN, Thompson asserts, the hamlet/*mukim* level of society needs a professional home guard type force made up of well trained and professionally led locals to hold a subdivision after it has been cleared of main force insurgents. The goal is to protect the population and allow economic and political development.⁴⁸ It moreover allows conditions to isolate guerrillas from

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 103-104.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 111.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 111-115.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-127.

society, which includes population control, censuses, issuance of identity cards, and like measures.⁴⁹

As Galula and Thompson captured COIN *lessons* from wars they waged, Richard Clutterbuck explains in, *The Long, Long War* exactly *how* the British waged COIN in the Malayan Emergency. From 1956-58, he served on the Director of Operations staff in Kuala Lumpur and, like Thompson, helped wage the war against the communists. As an aside, this PhD on the Thai way of COIN fits between Clutterbuck and Thompson/Galula regarding its approach – it is both a “how they did it” and a lessons learned study where the conclusions are linked to a description of actions taken. Thompson wrote the foreword to Clutterbuck’s book, heralding it as “...the first case study of the Emergency in Malaya and how it was won.”⁵⁰ He also says the COIN lessons in it were valuable to other such practitioners, even the United States that was then becoming increasingly embroiled in Vietnam.⁵¹

Clutterbuck divides his book into historical periods – “Part One: The Defensive (1941-51);” “Part Two: Offense (1952-55);” and “Part Three: Victory (1955-60) – And Then What?” Each explains the insurgent situation and the government strategy, operations, and tactics for dealing with it. In doing so, Clutterbuck deftly maneuvers through a labyrinth of security, political, and economic issues while explaining the history of the war and the lessons learned from it. His COIN lessons are in line with Galula’s and Thompson’s, though he explains actual security and political operations in great detail – so much so that Clutterbuck’s book could be used as a supplement to a military’s official COIN field manual. And in fact, The Thai used it, and biographies of Clutterbuck say he served as an advisor to the Thai in the late 1960s, as did several Malaya COIN fighters.⁵² As described later in this text, the Queen Mother gave a copy of *The Long, Long War* to the head of the Border Patrol Police as a guide for COIN. The results speak for themselves.

In summarizing his book, Clutterbuck offers four wide metrics to gage if COIN is working or not. First, he says, local government will be working effectively, honestly, and enforcing “the rule of law.”⁵³ Areas where authorities pretend insurgents are not, are, by default, insurgent. Second, if the size of guerrilla units expands, it is an indicator of their success. If the size decreases, it is an indicator of their lack of progress, and possibly failure. Third, if the people increasingly provide information to COIN forces, it is an indicator of their confidence in the government and good progress. Fourth, if “*genuine* guerrillas”

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁵⁰ R. Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: The Emergency in Malaya, 1948-1960*, (Singapore: Cultured Lotus, 2005), p. ix.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁵² “The Clutterbuck Blog, Richard Lewis Clutterbuck, 1917-1998,” available on <http://clutterbuck.blogspot.com/2005/08/richard-lewis-clutterbuck-1917-1998.html>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

surrender at a steady rate – not passive or suspected guerrilla supporters – then it is also an indicator of success.⁵⁴ Finally, Clutterbuck provides a piece of COIN wisdom not preeminent in other theorists' work: "The way in which the war is won decides how long the peace will last."⁵⁵

Sir General Frank Kitson's *Low Intensity Operations*, published in 1971, brought Thompson and like COIN theorists' lessons into the 1970s but with added insight from the author's personal experiences waging COIN and stability operations in Malaya, Cyprus, and Kenya. Kitson was a decorated infantry officer in these wars with The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own), and he later commanded troops in the Falklands and Northern Ireland. Kitson's stated purpose is to prepare the British Army in the early 1970s to quell subversion and insurgency for the second half of the 1970s. In this regard, his book is akin to an army officer's guide to COIN. He asserts that other armies might also find the lessons useful for identical purposes.⁵⁶ Kitson's book was necessary because, in light of the increase in small wars globally, including Vietnam, the British, Americans, and other nations had forgotten COIN lessons of the past.

Kitson, like other COIN theorists, describes what it takes to be an insurgent; that they have two tasks regardless of what strategy they use, be it Mao, Lenin, or Vo Nguyen Giap: 1) rally the population to their side, and 2) topple the government by force of arms or "unendurable harassment."⁵⁷ Kitson says a broad COIN approach is to categorize the opposition into three parts: 1) the party and/or front organization, 2) the insurgent armed forces, and 3) the people. Paraphrasing Mao's famous axiom, "the population are the water and the insurgents the fish," Kitson says the party is the head of the fish, the armed forces the body, and the people are the water. Separating them takes on many forms – he uses fishing metaphors – such as nets, hooks and lines, or doing "something to the water." But he also says none of this is simple because of the complex nexus between the insurgent and the people.⁵⁸

Like other COIN writers, Kitson describes the importance of rectifying popular grievances, gaining the people's trust, the destruction of the insurgent organization and war making ability, the balance of COIN forces, unity of effort and command and control, and the importance of legitimacy and rule of law – all Galula and Thompson tenets brought forward.⁵⁹ He moreover discusses COIN clear and hold type operations and offers advice on weapons and equipment.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁵⁶ F. Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations; Subversion, Insurgency, Peacekeeping*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pp. ix, vv, 1, 67.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-58.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34, 136-142, Chapter 10.

He dedicates an entire chapter (Chapter 6) and other pages to intelligence, covering subjects such as identifying the opposition; destroying the opposition; development of sources; analysis of tactics, techniques, procedures; identifying key personnel, and getting timely intelligence to direct action assets who can capture and/or kill the enemy.⁶¹ Kitson additionally differentiates himself from other COIN theorists by providing counter civil disturbance advice. He says nonviolence can be divided into 3 types: 1) pickets/street corner meetings, 2) non cooperation such as strikes/boycotts, and 3) non violent intervention such as sit-ins.⁶² Kitson says the army can advise civil powers on riot reduction and defense, plus identifying weak spots.⁶³ More than likely, Kitson was influenced by the IRA infiltrating and co-opting the Bogside riots in 1968 and '69 in Northern Ireland that began the "troubles" – the IRA's terror campaign – that lasted into the 1990s and has flared up yet again in the 2000s.

In a similar chapter, Kitson discusses peacekeeping and how it can be "extremely exacting" for troops, and they must be well disciplined and trained for this task.⁶⁴ Peacekeeping might include things the army is not used to, including conducting or supporting negotiations, which is the best way to prevent bloodshed, he writes. To do so, the military must have good intelligence on problems, local issues, and the current movements of opposing sides.⁶⁵ And while peacekeeping and riot control seems on the surface to have little to do with COIN, in the present war in southern Thailand, there have been insurgent sponsored protests and confrontations where, in many cases, women and children harass and block government forces. In one case, they provided cover for the torture and murder of two Royal Thai Marines.

Andrew Mack, in "Counterinsurgency in the Third World: Theory and Practice," discusses U.S. COIN policy up to the 1970s.⁶⁶ His is a critical analysis based on anti-Vietnam War sentiment popular at the time because of the haywire and self-destructive path of the war. Mack asserts U.S. COIN was historically rooted in protecting colonial or neocolonial interests. He furthermore notes U.S. COIN methods served to counter an irrational obsession with communism and fantasy domino theory. He says the methods used to support COIN were based on torture, "dirty tricks," and manipulation of international treaties.⁶⁷

Using an historical timeline, Mack recounts how U.S. COIN activity increased in the 1960s with the Kennedy Administration's ideas for rapid deployment capabilities, but also that a soft approach developed as an alternative to

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-76, 95-131.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-95.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁶⁶ A. Mack, "Counterinsurgency in the Third World: Theory and Practice," *British Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, October 1975, pp. 226-253, 226.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-27.

bombing and outright war. The U.S., writes Mack, employed sociologists to help develop social, political, and economic methods to prevent insurgencies from happening via extensive research done by the likes of the RAND Corporation and the Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency.⁶⁸ Operation Camelot was one such result, but it failed to produce results in Chile in the 1960s.⁶⁹ Mack finishes his essay by decrying the use of torture in COIN, how it was used extensively by Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, and indicates that it might become a staple of U.S. COIN unless checked by human rights best practices.⁷⁰

Similar to Mack, D. Michael Shafer in 1988 wrote critically of U.S. Cold War COIN strategy in, "The Unlearned Lessons of Counterinsurgency," saying, "...counterinsurgency doctrine obscures rather than illuminates critical distinctions among insurgency-threatened governments and the prospects for aid to them."⁷¹ He moreover says U.S. COIN policy since the 1960s was misguided.⁷² This is in part because, says Shafer, all U.S. security concerns assumed communists would seep into various global conflicts, and corresponding COIN policy, strategies, and methods that targeted communist activities were framed by a particular understanding of communist revolutionary methodology.⁷³ This understanding blinded the U.S. to more critical issues at stake in insurgency situations, he says. "Hearts and minds analysts' assumptions cloud assessment of the three issues areas critical to an outside power contemplating supporting an insurgency-threatened government: the constraints on leverage; intragovernmental limits on reform by the would-be ally; and the nature of relations between government and populace or, conversely, between insurgents and populace."⁷⁴ These three core issues, rather than dogmatic adherence to popular COIN phrases and a boogeyman ideology, should influence COIN strategy, admonishes Shafer.

In 1999, Goodhand and Hulme were ahead of their time in assessing the future of warfare in, "From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies." In it, and similar to Kilcullen years later, they assert complex political emergencies (CPEs) are multiplying at a dramatic rate, and typical approaches in dealing with them – the state-to-state, military-to-military approach – is less than effective. Their aim in this paper offers alternative conflict resolution approaches rooted in political, cultural, economic, and social methods.⁷⁵ For example, Goodhand and Hulme

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-33.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁷¹ D. Michael Shafer, "The Unlearned Lessons of Counterinsurgency," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 103, No. 1, Spring, 1988, p. 57.

⁷² *Ibid.*,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-63.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷⁵ J. Goodhand and D. Hulme, "From Wars to Complex Political Emergencies: Understanding Conflict and Peace-Building in the New World Disorder," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Complex Political Emergencies, February, 1999, p. 13.

say CPEs alter male-female status quo in societies. In Afghanistan, they point out, males have assumed a warrior-like occupational specialty while the women tend to homemaking and village upkeep roles. In Sri Lanka, they say women have been instrumental as combatants for the LTTE. As result, Goodhand and Hulme conclude, is “A gendered analysis of conflict offers increased insights into possible entry points for the ‘smart relief’ that might make the likelihood of peace less distant.”⁷⁶ By doing so, Goodhand and Hulme add innovative problem solving tools to the COIN toolbox. The Thai, in fact, have empowered widows of slain men killed in the insurgency by providing them specialized housing, job training, and jobs via compounds called “widow farms.” In doing so, the Thai not only care for the disadvantaged, they also send a political and cultural message to society that Bangkok does indeed care about disadvantaged Muslims, a political plus in Islamic and Malay culture.

Among the modern COIN theorists, Kilcullen is the most prominent. While he embraces classic COIN theory, he warns modern COIN demands additional methods that meet today’s more sophisticated asymmetric threats. His articles “Countering Global Insurgency,” “Counterinsurgency Redux,” and “Globalisation and the Development of Indonesian Counterinsurgency Tactics,” support his most recent book, *Counterinsurgency*, which was his second behind *The Accidental Guerrilla*.

The avant-garde “Countering Global Insurgency” appeared in the *Journal of Strategic Studies* in 2005, just as the U.S. was reeling from the insurgency in Iraq and secretly looking for alternative methods for stabilizing the country. In it, Kilcullen offers what he calls “a new strategic approach to the Global War on Terrorism.”⁷⁷ He posits since scattered and loosely linked Islamist movements are waging a global insurgency to subject the world to their version of Islam, the classic COIN approach to defeating insurgency in a single country with high levels of civil-military coordination conducting synchronized security, political and economic operations are near impossible on a global scale. His solution is to first analyze movements as complex systems of operations, personalities, activities and other variables and the links between all these variables as “biological systems” and/or insurgent “ecosystems.” Once achieved, this can facilitate a new COIN strategy called “disaggregation.”⁷⁸

Kilcullen says disaggregation is to “return the insurgency’s parent society to its normal mode of interaction, on terms favourable to us.”⁷⁹ He also says to do this, we must understand what “normal” is and see that military operations are not a solution but leverage to allow other operations – economic and political, for example – to decisively address core insurgency drivers. This, he reiterates,

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁷⁷ D. Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 28, Issue 4, 2005, Executive Summary, p. 1-3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Executive Summary, pp. 22-29.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Executive Summary, p. 38.

demands the COIN practitioner achieve an intricate level of understanding of all assets, people, and forces within the insurgent ecosystem. Kilcullen says it further demands “a common strategic understanding” with allies regarding COIN solutions such as constitutional and legal ways and how the inundation of coalition forces in a given area impact a population.⁸⁰ All this, he summarizes, requires a tailored approach to each insurgency.⁸¹

In “Counterinsurgency Redux,” Kilcullen reasserts tenets from “Countering Global Insurgency,” stating classical COIN and modern COIN differ, and because of that, classical COIN approaches are not enough to quell today’s insurgencies. Because insurgency is highly fluid, especially that which is fused with Islamist goals and methods – “resistance insurgency” that seeks simply to disrupt and/or damage the status quo⁸² – Kilcullen argues, “There is no constant set of operational techniques in counterinsurgency...”⁸³

As a result, Kilcullen says new COIN methods need to be added to the traditional COIN arsenal, and that adherence to classical COIN methods need not be so rigid. Kilcullen’s suggestions are:⁸⁴

1. “...the side may win which best mobilizes and energizes its global, regional and local support base – and prevents its adversaries doing likewise;
2. ... the security force ‘area of influence’ may need to include all neighboring countries, and its ‘area of interest’ may need to be global;
3. ... the security force must control a complex ‘conflict ecosystem’ – rather than defeating a single specific insurgent adversary;
4. ...a common diagnosis of the problem, and enablers for collaboration, may matter more than formal unity of effort across multiple agencies;
5. Modern counterinsurgency may be 100% political – comprehensive media coverage making even the most straightforward combat action a ‘political warfare’ engagement;
6. ... ‘victory’ may not be final – ‘permanent containment’ may be needed to prevent defeated insurgents transforming into terrorist groups;
7. ...secret intelligence may matter less than situational awareness based on unclassified but difficult-to-access information.”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Executive Summary, p. 40.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Executive Summary, p. 43.

⁸² D. Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Redux,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* Vol. 48, Issue 4, 2006, p. 4.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

In “Globalisation and the Development of Indonesian Counterinsurgency Tactics,” Kilcullen provides a detailed account of how in the in 1950s, the Indonesian Army co-opted Indonesian villagers – both willing and unwilling – into COIN operations against the Darul Islam (DI) insurgent movement. One of the government’s most successful methods was stationing armed groups of villagers – militias called “a fence of legs”⁸⁵ – ringed around mountains to keep isolated DI at higher elevations until they surrendered or regular military forces engaged and destroyed them. Kilcullen argues while these methods were decisive in the 1950s, today’s media-borne and globalized environment will not politically allow such COIN ways.⁸⁶ This type of analysis segued well with his theories on modern COIN.

The Accidental Guerrilla was Kilcullen’s first book, and it recounted the gist of the theories in his articles against a backdrop of personal experiences waging COIN and/or stability operations as an Australian Army officer in East Timor, globally with the U.S. State Department, and as an advisor to General David Petraeus in Iraq and Afghanistan. Kilcullen wrote *Counterinsurgency* at the behest of the United States Marine Corps that was looking for “how to” type COIN solutions at the ground level – things the venerable new COIN field manual did not address, according to the Marines.⁸⁷ So Kilcullen, following in the footsteps of COIN theorist T. E. Lawrence, developed, “The Twenty-eight Articles,” COIN advice for the trooper on the ground. Still, while these articles are akin to advice given by past COIN theorists such as Galula and Thompson, Kilcullen cautions “..there are no standard templates or universal solutions to counterinsurgency,”⁸⁸ and that while COIN theories and laws abound, “...there is no substitute for studying the environment in detail,”⁸⁹ which, he says, should result in highly tailored solution sets that should remain flexible to meet the fluidity of an insurgent environment.⁹⁰ Not all 28 are necessary to list here as some synch with Thompson and Galula and the like, but some of them are in “soldier speak” and worth mentioning. They include, but are not restricted to:⁹¹

1. “Know your turf;
2. Diagnose the problem;
3. Organize for intelligence;

⁸⁵ D. Kilcullen, “Globalisation and the Development of Indonesian Counterinsurgency Tactics,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 17, Issue 1, 2006, p. 50.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸⁷ D. Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Kindle edition, location 312.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Kindle edition, location 472.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle edition, location 499-538.

4. Organize for inter-agency operations;
6. Find a political/cultural adviser;
9. Have a game plan;
11. Avoid knee jerk responses to first impressions.”

Others are obviously borne of hard earned experience from Iraq and Afghanistan, and still some others coincide directly with Kitson, who wrote from a similar point of view:⁹²

7. “Train the squad leaders – then trust them;
8. Rank is nothing: talent is everything;
18. Remember the global audience;
19. Engage the women, beware the children;
22. Local forces should mirror the enemy, not ourselves;
23. Practice armed civil affairs;
24. Small is beautiful;
25. Fight the enemy’s strategy, not his forces;
26. Build your own solution – only attack the enemy when he gets in the way.”

Aside from Kilcullen, there is the impactful John Nagl who wrote *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam; Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. Nagl’s book describes how two different armies, untrained in COIN, tried to adapt and defeat insurgent movements – the British in Malaya and the Americans in Vietnam. The former, of course, was successful, and the latter was not. The simple reason, says Nagl, was the British Army was an institution designed to learn – this based on its decades of colonial experience and associated political-military-economic actions across a wide gamut of security and defense operations. The U.S. Army, in contrast, was not designed to learn – this based on its tried and true mastery of conventional battlefields, the lessons hard won as they were.⁹³

⁹² *Ibid.*, Kindle edition, location 550-714.

⁹³ J. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam; Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2002), Kindle version, location 52-69.

The British, Nagl explains, also had a unified strategic vision of what they wanted to achieve in Malaya, its soldiers adopted tactical innovations in the field that impacted the war writ large, and they had men with broad experience such as Harold Briggs and Gerald Templer who were ideally suited not only to improvise, adapt, and overcome, but to lead the force, not simply manage it.⁹⁴ In Vietnam, the conventional U.S. Army culture was so strong it failed to realize, despite copious reports from excellent officers in the field, anything beyond the shortsighted strategy of destruction of the enemy's abilities in an effort to force him to political settlement. COIN, as demonstrated by Galula and Thompson – and proven in the field, cites Nagl – is firstly political and then military, the opposite of the American strategy in Vietnam. All the exceptional firepower and military innovations such as helo air assault, C-47 gunships and the like were built upon destruction of the enemy, which, while effective regarding kill ratios, were no substitute for a better strategy, Nagl posits. He further points out U.S. Army leaders, steeped in conventional warfare, had no need to be flexible, and calls in the field for change went unheeded.⁹⁵

Nagl, Kilcullen, and a host of COIN minded experts ranging from direct action specialists to human rights officials had a hand in writing yet another noteworthy COIN volume, the US Army/Marine Corps COIN manual, officially known as FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Launched in 2006 at a major COIN conference in Washington, DC – the author was there as a participating analyst – the manual brings together lessons from Thompson, Galula, scores of teachings from low intensity conflicts through the ages, modern COIN thought, and new planning innovations to help U.S. forces deal with insurgencies. Lessons from lesser-known insurgencies came from El Salvador, and Greece and Uruguay. Interestingly, Thailand was not mentioned in the COIN manual for its successes in this field, yet another reason this doctorate is important to COIN literature.

And while there are chapters in the manual on what insurgency is (Chapter 1), the importance of intelligence (Chapter 3) and how to get it – at least the surface version (there are more in-depth intelligence manuals by the U.S. government) – and, certainly, operations planning and execution (Chapters 4 and 5), there are new issues here, too. The beginning of Chapter 4, for example, discusses “campaign design.” Campaign design describes a process of the deployed force probing the human terrain and the conflict environment and then establishing a “feeler” type strategy and executing associated operations to establish a test strategy and experimental methods to gauge the insurgent situation. Campaign design operations, after being fielded and tested, says the manual, will reveal more about the insurgent situation and environment that will allow more formal definitions of the conflict that will then lead to a more formal strategy and subsequent operations planning. This not only informs troops on the ground on how to plan to quell insurgency, it also forces them to realize

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Kindle edition, location 2,709-2,783.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Kindle edition, location 2,789-2,875.

COIN is indeed a different type of warfare from conventional undertakings because the planning steps are different from what they are used to.⁹⁶

The British also published a COIN manual: *Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40 Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution* (aka, JDP 3-40). The British deftly let the reader know immediately that, via the title, stabilization operations are more than a military endeavor – that the military is contributing to an effort and not necessarily running it, twinges of Ktison and Thompson, for sure. The manual clearly states its purpose is for the military to plan for how to reverse worst-case episodes of instability. The main audience is students and staff of the Command and Staff College and like institutions. A secondary audience is British commanders in COIN arenas such as Afghanistan, so JDP 3-40 is not purely an educational textbook.⁹⁷ It is perhaps more stability operations focused, however, than FM 3-24, with its chapters on Governance and Institutional Capacity Building (Chapter 6), Economic and Infrastructure Development (Chapter 7) and Political and Social Analysis (Chapter 9) – all classic COIN issues, but not called COIN here, possibly for domestic political reasons that decry full on combat type missions.

This is not to say that JPD 3-40 rejects security – clearly it does not. In fact, it states security is the foundation of stabilization. It moreover has pictures and diagrams demonstrating that warfighting is indeed part of stability operations. Good governance, stable politics, and cultural normalcy are impossible without it, so there are chapters and continual references to security and defense issues as well.⁹⁸

There is also a chapter on learning and adapting (Chapter 12) that highlights the fluid environment of the insurgent or like destabilizer – key in effective planning, reacting, and, more importantly, getting ahead of and/or inside the protagonist's decision cycle. The manual provides examples from Afghanistan where an air operations center adapted to command and control realities on the fly. Another example comes from 1942 where Field Marshal The Viscount Slim reorganized his jungle-fighting force to better meet the demands of maneuver warfare upon his anticipated breakout from closed to open terrain in southern Burma.⁹⁹

Aside from these two valuable manuals, there are scores of additionally recently published books, journal articles, and monographs touting COIN. Rupert Smith argues in *The Utility of Force* organized state vs. state warfare “no longer exists” and has been replaced by asymmetric warfare with leaderless movements,

⁹⁶ FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, December 2006).

⁹⁷ *Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution*, Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40, Development and Concepts Doctrine Center, (Swindon, UK: Ministry of Defence, 12 November 2009), p. v.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 1-5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3.

fighting forces with little or no formation, combat that does not gain or lose territory, movements not supported by “industrial warfare,” and the proliferation of global ideology that has no state home.¹⁰⁰ He cites examples of the diminishing classic conventional warfare – the iconic tank battle, for example – as having not occurred in the past 30 years but that “war amongst the people” has increased on a dramatic scale.¹⁰¹ Because of this, Smith asserts the military can no longer simply see security problems and solutions as military, and neither can the civilian leadership (of the United States).¹⁰² Smith suggests a totally new security approach by first asking the key question, “is the conflict purely in the national interest,” and secondly, “can the conflict be won by applying all elements of national power,” including the media, to win over the population that the asymmetric opponent is fighting in.¹⁰³ Adapting to these realities requires a new mindset on behalf of the civilian government and the military, he says.

David Ucko’s *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*, analyzes the U.S. Department of Defense’s transformation from a pre-9-11 conventional warfare mindset to the mentality and force designation needed to fight the Global War on Terror, specifically, the war in Iraq. It looks at three key issues: 1) the U.S. military’s steps to morph itself into a stability operations force, 2) how these changes triggered institutional learning, and 3) what part this institutional learning played in success in Iraq.¹⁰⁴ In answering these questions, Ucko takes the reader through the military’s steep learning curve in Iraq. He discusses how this curve was pushed upward by a combination of soldiers and officers speaking out regarding innovations needed in the field combined with a corps of PhDs and learned people in COIN and stability operations – part of a broader “COIN community” that desired change in the American approach to Iraq and, by default, the U.S. military.¹⁰⁵ Also important here, says Ucko, is the first ever application of FM 3-24, a direct product of the COIN community’s learning curve, to the February 2007 Operation Fardh al-Qanoon. He also discusses the intellectual gravitational pull by COIN expert General David Petraeus who took over all fighting forces in Iraq in 2006.¹⁰⁶

Rand’s collective COIN lessons study that appeared in *Small Wars Journal*, “Victory has a Thousand Fathers; Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency,” offers a “qualitative comparative approach” to assess why COIN campaigns fail

¹⁰⁰ R. Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), Kindle version, location 164, 6,359.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle version, location 164, 6,333.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Kindle version, location 6,359.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Kindle version, location 6,404-5, 6,802.

¹⁰⁴ D. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*, (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2009), p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

and/or succeed.¹⁰⁷ Written in 2010 by Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, and Beth Grill for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the study looks at the “world’s 30 most recent resolved insurgencies” via 76 variables.¹⁰⁸ Some of the broad conclusions are:¹⁰⁹

- “1. Effective COIN practices run in packs;
2. The balance of good versus bad practices perfectly predicts outcomes;
3. Poor beginnings do not necessarily lead to poor ends;
4. Repression wins phases, but usually not cases;
5. Tangible support trumps popular support.”

Within these main issues are illuminating facts; for example, RAND discovered in every single case there was a COIN success – there were 30 in this study – the COIN forces applied a, “strongly positive balance of good COIN versus detrimental factors.”¹¹⁰ And in every COIN loss, it was the opposite. RAND writes, “This is truly remarkable given that we are told again and again that ‘every insurgency is unique’.”¹¹¹

Heather S. Gregg writes in, “Beyond Population Engagement: Understanding Counterinsurgency,” quelling violence, stabilizing an area, and separating the insurgents from the people are commonly known short term COIN goals, but the long term goal of legitimate, highly functional, and effective state institutions are the true benchmarks for COIN victory.¹¹² In order to achieve these, Gregg cites the US Institute of Peace’s “five pillars” of governing stability as key goals to aim for from the out start of an insurgency:¹¹³

- 1) “safe and secure environment;
- 2) rule of law;
- 3) stable democracy;

¹⁰⁷ C. Paul, C. Clarke, and B. Grill, “Victory Has a Thousand Fathers; Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency,” *Small Wars Journal*, RAND Corporation for the U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2010, p. iii.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² H. Gregg, “Beyond Population Engagement: Understanding Counterinsurgency,” *Parameters*, U.S. Army War College, Vol. 39, Issue 3, 22 September 2009, p. 18.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

- 4) sustainable economy;
- 5) social well-being.”

As such she then proceeds to map out core conditions for these; security, governance, etc., and pays close attention to formulating justice institutions that are based on local norms and run effectively to the point they inspire confidence in the people that the government is just.¹¹⁴ As such, Gregg urges COIN planners to focus on final victory and its components as part of short and near term planning so they will more easily transition into long term planning goals. “Without these,” she writes, “stability is unlikely.”¹¹⁵

Octavian Manea interviewed *Colonel Alexander Alderson* for a *Small Wars Journal* article titled, “Counterinsurgency as a Whole of Government Approach: Notes on the British Army Field Manual Weltanschauung; An Interview with Colonel Alexander Alderson.” COL Alderson was the lead writer for the most recent British COIN manual, and he established and directs the British Army Land Forces Stability Operations and Counterinsurgency Center.¹¹⁶ In the article, Manea asked COL Alderson, steeped in both classic and modern COIN via experience and study, about his views of current and past COIN theories and their application in the field.

For example, COL Alexander comments on key COIN issues such as Galula’s 80% political - 20% military formula, saying the military is useful for wide ranging security operations when police are overwhelmed.¹¹⁷ And when asked what is the main purpose of the counter-insurgent, he responds with the penetrating strategic wisdom; “Dealing with the insurgent alone is not going to solve the problem of why the insurgent emerged in the first place.”¹¹⁸ As for classic vs. modern COIN, COL Alexander says his studies of insurgencies the world over indicate many have similar characteristics that classical COIN indeed helps quell.¹¹⁹ He also warns not to let the population-centric strategic axiom dictate the actual strategy for a specific COIN plan, clarifying that, “population-centric COIN places the population as the vital ground, which means that COIN responses need to be centered around and focused on the population.”¹²⁰ This is different from having an entire war strategy revolve around a single tenet or law of COIN.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹⁶ O. Manea, “Counterinsurgency as a Whole of Government Approach: Notes on the British Army Field Manual Weltanschauung; An Interview with Colonel Alexander Alderson,” *Small Wars Journal*, 24 January 2011, p. 9.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. p. 1.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. p. 3.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. p. 6.

Bill Ardolino's, "A Counterinsurgency Conundrum in Salaam Bazaar," in *The Long War Journal* from 2 August 2010, offers, like many other valuable articles from the field, an on-the-ground view of COIN complexities in Afghanistan. In this case, Ardolino writes about the contention surrounding the destruction of an illegal but prosperous Taliban-controlled market, the Salaam Bazaar, in northern Helmand province. Destroying the market was key for U.S. and Afghan forces, and like operations had been successful in other areas, but people entrenched in the Taliban ideology and economy, mainly a poppy and arms-driven one, were against this market's demise. Destroying it did not endear parts of the local population to U.S. forces and the Afghan government.

Ardolino also highlights a key tool for eroding the Taliban's influence over the people at the market – security. A lot of Afghans would have supported the Marine's offers of food, money, and jobs and join the government COIN effort to help displace the market and the Taliban, but they feared the latter's retribution. The main issue here was, despite the presence of the Marines and Afghan security forces, the allies had not enough manpower nor was perceived as loitering on location long enough to protect government supporters. COIN efforts at Salaam Bazaar, then, limped forward halfheartedly into an uncertain future.¹²¹

The prolific Kalev I. Sepp, who also was a significant force in writing FM 3-24, wrote, *Best Practices in Counterinsurgency*, which in 2005 appeared in *Military Review*. In it, he encapsulates a list of what not to do and what to do from 17 insurgencies and 36 like conflicts that were low intensity in nature. It is a highly concentrated list that the author intended to be considered as advice for helping turn Iraq around, and, since successful, is worth listing here.¹²²

Successful COIN campaigns entailed:

1. Emphasis on intelligence
2. Focus on population, their needs, and security
3. Secure areas established, expanded
4. Insurgents isolated from population (population control)
5. Single authority (charismatic/dynamic leader)
6. Effective, pervasive psychological operations (PSYOP) campaigns
7. Amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents

¹²¹ B. Ardolino, "A Counterinsurgency Conundrum in Salaam Bazaar," *The Long War Journal*, 2 August 2010.

¹²² K. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review*, 2005, p. 10.

8. Police in lead; military supporting
9. Police force expanded, diversified
10. Conventional military forces reoriented for counterinsurgency
11. Special Forces, advisers embedded with indigenous forces
12. Insurgent sanctuaries denied.

Unsuccessful COIN campaigns entailed:

1. Primacy of military direction of counterinsurgency
2. Priority to “kill-capture” enemy, not on engaging population
3. Battalion-size operations as the norm
4. Military units concentrated on large bases for protection
5. Special Forces focused on raiding
6. Adviser effort a low priority in personnel assignment
7. Building, training indigenous army in image of U.S. Army
8. Peacetime government processes
9. Open borders, airspace, coastlines

Paul Dixon, in “Hearts and Minds? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” discusses the UK way of COIN, highlighted by British successes in Malaya and the lessons from Sir General Gerald Templer, the lead coordinator and implementer of the Briggs Plan, and originator of the phrase, “hearts and minds.”¹²³ Dixon says early in the article “hearts and minds” is a misnomer and a misused term because the British in Malaya indeed were coercive. For example, under Templer, the British used collective punishment of uncooperative villages, coercive food rationing programs, and daily searches and seizures of thousands of relocated Chinese families in their daily work routines. Nowadays, these would be considered brutal and mass torture-like

¹²³ P. Dixon, “Hearts and Minds? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, Issue 3, June 2009 (Word document version, no correlating page numbers with the original document.)

methods by human rights groups, nongovernment organizations, and the media.¹²⁴ More, Dixon points out that core UK COIN concepts are, in reality:¹²⁵

- 1) political will is the pivotal key;
- 2) hearts and minds come from a) “good government and nation-building, b) psychological operations, and c) the use of ‘minimum force’;
- 3) police supremacy over the military in security issues;
- 4) a central, coordinated effort is essential for martialing all COIN assets forward together under a single strategy.

Hearts and minds, Dixon clarifies, are just parts of British COIN strategy, not its core. Moreover, he describes them as, “Hearts – winning the emotional support of the people,” and “Minds – the people as pursuing their ‘rational self-interest’.”¹²⁶ This does not at all mean coddling the population and bowing to its every whim as some interpret the common phrase to mean.

As Iraq began to shift from a conventional war in 2003 to a guerrilla war in 2004, Robert R. Tomes wrote in a *Parameters* article, “Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare” that “Lessons and insights from past low-intensity wars deserve revisiting. They provide perspective as well as context for what may be a defining period for the American war on terrorism.”¹²⁷ His aim, then, was to bring forward COIN lessons from the past to aid U.S. and Allied planners in Iraq. In doing so, Tomes quoted Roger Trinquier’s *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Martin Van Creveld’s 1991 book, *The Transformation of War*, plus Galula and Kitson. He stressed these were but a few of the COIN philosophers that could help reshape strategy for Iraq.¹²⁸

For example, Tomes quoted Galula’s tenets regarding the need for “tight organization” and concise command and control while repeating a timeless COIN principle with a smattering of his own flare: “The ultimate goal is to separate the fish from the sea, leaving it exposed to the state’s spear.”¹²⁹ He moreover cites Galula’s political adage of insulating the population from political ill will by making “a body politic resistant to infection.”¹³⁰ In the end, Tomes says history can be used as a tool to help shape COIN operations in Iraq, and he wrote this in 2003, just as the insurgency was beginning to take shape and multitudes in the Department of Defense discounted such a phenomenon. To

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ R. Tomes, “Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare,” *Parameters*, 2004, p. 16.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18, 20, 26.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

drive his point home, he quotes what John Lewis Gaddis said about history, that “[it] has a way of introducing humility – a first stage toward gaining detachment – because it suggests the continuity of the problems we confront, and the unoriginality of most of our solutions for them.”¹³¹

This doctorate fits into this wide body of COIN in many ways. First and foremost, like Clutterbuck and Nagl, it drives through the history of a specific insurgent war – in the Thai case, three wars – explaining the background of a conflict, the key issues and personalities involved, and the outcomes. And, like these books, this doctorate reveals how the state defeated the insurgents, and how effective or ineffective it was in doing so. Second, this study compliments works by the likes of Galula, Thompson, and Kitson by bringing to life their COIN lessons. For example, “The Thai Way of COIN” gives military, political, and economic anecdotes of how the Thai physically and politically separated the insurgent “fish” from the popular “water.” It also demonstrates that not all the laws and tenets of these COIN theorists need to be followed dogmatically. The Thai on many occasions ignored the likes of Galula and Thompson and achieved success. By and large, however, the Thai followed these theorists’ core tenets.

Third, This study both rejects and sheds truth on some of the critics of COIN policies mentioned here. Mack’s anti-domino theory is disproven in light of the facts behind the communist war in Thailand – it was indeed a communist conspiracy backed by China, Laos, and North Vietnam, and for certain, Thailand was where the dominos stopped falling. Admittedly, Mack could not have foreseen this in 1975. The dominos were still falling, the communists maneuvering to push more of them over. Shafer’s more fact-based analyses regarding the importance of decoupling dogmatic enemy theory – Mao, Ho Chi Minh, etc. – and instead analyzing limits of government actions such as the constraints on leverage, intragovernmental reform, and the nature of relations between government and/or the insurgents and populace help highlight faults in Thai COIN, specifically regarding intragovernmental limits on reform. Specifically, what Thai COIN planners set out to do was frequently blocked by rival government factions, a continual problem in Bangkok’s national security and even domestic problem solving capabilities. This not only prevented excellent programs from being carried out in the field, it prolonged wars and got people killed. It continues to be a problem to this day.

Fourth, Thai COIN methods touch on many aspects of the modern COIN theorists, “COINdinistas,” and recent COIN writers. While the Thai have not to any great degree adopted Kilcullen’s disaggregation and insurgent ecosystem approach, they well understand the leverage insurgents can muster on the international stage to achieve victory, especially in their own neighborhood – witness East Timor and Aceh. As such, the Thai have dedicated considerable

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-28.

diplomatic resources to keep the Organization of Islamic Conference from outwardly supporting the cause of their current, ongoing insurgency. There are scores of tenets from Kilcullens' "Twenty-eight Articles" the Thai both follow and violate, the latter to their detriment. Also in this vein, Kalev Sepp's best practices serve as an effective quick guide to assess if the Thai are following effective ways and means or not, but such an analysis is beyond this particular study – the author has the COIN Pantheon for the paper's main analysis (explained below, under **Methodology**), and also Galula, Thompson, and Kilcullen as backup analytical filters to help put Thai COIN into context against a wider backdrop of COIN theory.

Additionally, Smith's theory of industrial and conventional war being replaced by asymmetric conflict surely rings true in Thailand. All its wars since the close of WW II, and really past WW I, have been overwhelmingly as Smith describes. Ardolino's article coincides exactly with a problem the Thai have at present regarding the lack of protection for informants and also not providing a permanent physical security barrier between insurgents and villagers afraid to cooperate with the government and/or those who are waiting to see who in the conflict will win.

Overall, every COIN study will touch on security, political, economic, strategic, command and control, population, and enemy issues in some way shape or form. It is unavoidable, because in COIN, all these are interconnected and influence each other like yin and yang. For every push, there is a pull, and vice versa. But in the space of COIN literature writ large, "The Thai Way of COIN" closely parallels the style and approach of Clutterbuck, though Clutterbuck wrote from a first hand perspective. This study was based on literature, current events research, and 38 interviews, mostly with Thai COIN practitioners. One would hope, like the exceptional COIN writers mentioned here, lessons from Thai COIN benefit Thailand and its allies – the U.S. included.

3. Definitions and Methodology

Definitions

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) defines insurgency as: "An organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict."¹³² Insurgents live and operate amongst the people, essentially militarizing swaths of the population to join their underground "army" as secret logisticians, intelligence agents, bomb makers, assassins, and light infantry fighters. They usually do not wear uniforms, and they never field massive standing armies that clash, for example, in the desert as Montgomery and Rommel did in North Africa during WW II.

¹³² *The US Army Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, FM 3-24 and 3-33.5 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 385.

Instead, the insurgent's most important weapon usually is politics – the ability to convince as much of the population as possible the state is invalid and the insurgent cause just. This requires extensive propaganda, indoctrination, and manipulation of the hapless, sometimes, into death. Insurgency is a massive clandestine movement that depends on popular support, as Mao proscribed, forced, tricked, or volunteered.

All insurgencies use subterfuge warfare – hit-and-run raids, ambushes, assassinations, and bombings, for example. Some use subterfuge to drive the state into exhaustion and sue for political settlement. Others use it to buy time and mass a conventional army to battle the state on equal military terms.

The DoD defines COIN as: “Those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”¹³³ COIN is a difficult type of warfare for five reasons: 1) it can take years to succeed with hard-to-define results; 2) the battlespace is poorly defined; 3) insurgents are not easily identifiable; 4) war typically takes place among a civilian population the guerrillas depend on for auxiliary support; and 5) it requires that civilian and military assets coordinate at the strategic, operational, and tactical level. Successful COINs include not only precise force application operations based on quality intelligence, but also lasting social and economic programs, political empowerment of the disenfranchised, and government acceptance of previously ignored cultural realities.

Methodology

As previously inferred, this research uses a model called the COIN Pantheon as a tool to help discern the Thai Way of COIN. It is a subjective and qualitative model based on David Kilcullen's ‘three pillars of COIN’ framework. It is necessary here to discuss Kilcullen's three-pillars model in order to a) explain it, b) discuss its position in relation to other COIN theorists' approaches, and c) describe how it was altered to facilitate the COIN Pantheon employed in this thesis.

As Marshall and Rossman wrote in, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Fifth Edition), “The early work of conceptualizing is the most difficult and intellectually rigorous in the entire process of proposal writing.”¹³⁴ This was true of this PhD. There were scores of analytical models to choose from ranging from the COIN theories of David Galula to Sir Robert Thompson and even the 2006 U.S. Army-Marine Corps COIN manual, FM 3-24. Ultimately, however, Galula seemed too narrow in scope, Thompson too entrenched in “classic COIN,” and FM 3-24

¹³³ *Ibid.*, Glossary-3.

¹³⁴ C. Marshall and G. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research, Fifth Edition*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), Kindle version, location 926.

was too wide in scope. More, these models were French, British, and American – all well and good, but the goal was to ascertain the Thai way of COIN, so a neutral model was needed that would allow to the surface Thai thinking and Thai approaches, if possible. (It should be noted that it became necessary to gauge this COIN against the likes of Galula, Thompson, and Kilcullen later on to help flush out fully Thai COIN methods.)

David Kilcullen’s three-pillars-of-COIN model was inviting because of its simplicity, its combination of classic and modern COIN tenets, and openness that 1) fostered objectivity, and 2) allowed the right information to be examined but not on too wide a forced scale. This seemed a good baseline to begin with regarding choosing the right model; an imperative step of qualitative research fundamentals, say Marshall and Rossman:

As noted earlier, exploring possible designs and strategies for gathering data also enters into this initial process. The researcher must let go of some topics and captivating questions as he fine-tunes and focuses the study to insure its do-ability. Although this entails loss, it bounds the study and protects the researcher from impractical ventures.¹³⁵

Again, Kilcullen’s three pillars of COIN was not exactly what was needed, but it certainly provided the basis. Kilcullen describes his three pillars as “A framework for inter-agency counterinsurgency.”¹³⁶ He also calls it a model. (See appendix 3 for an illustration).

Specifically, since insurgency is a complex mix of political, social, religious, cultural, security, defense, and economic problems, Kilcullen says it needs a likewise response. But since there is no single government agency that meets all these ends, the response must be interagency. And there, Kilcullen suggests, lies the rub. Security, political, and economic agencies are loth to work together because their cultures, personnel, and missions are different. But for COIN, this must change; there must be, as he says, “unity of effort.”¹³⁷ Otherwise, the COIN effort will waddle on, uncoordinated and ineffective with agencies working at cross-purposes. Kilcullen stresses unity of effort goes well beyond simple harmonization:

Each player must understand the others’ strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and objectives, and inter-agency teams must be structured for versatility (the ability to perform a wide variety of tasks)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ D. Kilcullen, “Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency,” remarks delivered at the U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C., 28 September 2006, p. 4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

and agility (the ability to transition rapidly and smoothly between tasks).¹³⁸

The model itself, as described by Kilcullen, consists of: a) a base of information, b) three pillars – security, politics, and economics, and c) a roof of control. It comes from classical COIN theories, and also input from peacekeeping and stability operations. The utilitarian aspect of the model is multifold, says Kilcullen. First, it is a framework, not an operations planning template, to show COIN practitioners where their operations coincide with those of others in a given war. Second, it can help measure COIN progress, or lack thereof. Third, it helps guide teamwork efforts across a wide scale of different types of operations. Fourth, it can be used for stabilization and emergency/disaster response operations as well.¹³⁹

Next, says Kilcullen, is information. It is the foundation of all COIN operations. Far more than just intelligence – which is critical in COIN – information is also about understanding the human terrain of an insurgent arena, facilitating information operations in the form of both public relations and psychological operations, and comprehending local, national, and regional, politics.¹⁴⁰

As for the three pillars, they “develop in parallel and stay in balance, while being firmly based in an effective information campaign”.¹⁴¹ Politics and economics are not necessarily dependent on security first, for example. All three can build up at the same time, but obviously, they also support each other. Security consists of military and police assets and all associated operations protecting and policing the population, and also offensive operations against guerrillas and terrorists. Politics, says Kilcullen, “focuses on mobilizing support,” and concentrates on establishing a polity more legitimate than that of the insurgents.¹⁴² The latter includes expanding political space for the disenfranchised, establishing rule of law, social programs, diplomacy, compromise, etc.¹⁴³ Economics includes immediate relief for the destitute, local anti-poverty programs, and longer-term initiatives such as investment in small, medium, and large enterprises.¹⁴⁴ The end goal of pushing all these forward is control – control of the monopoly of force, law, constitutional legitimacy, and prosperity – not simply stability.¹⁴⁵

Being rooted in classical COIN, Kilcullen’s model uses tenets of COIN theorists Galula and Thompson, and the stability operations utility meshes with Kitson’s

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ D. Kilcullen, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

theories. For example, Galula addresses command and control in Chapter 6, “From Strategy to Tactics,” and writes, “...tasks and responsibilities cannot be neatly divided between the civilian and the soldier...”¹⁴⁶ As noted, Kilcullen’s entire three-pillars model is anchored in addressing this issue.

Galula further explains because of the political supremacy in COIN, the military, while integral to the process, must be subordinate to civilian leadership, which requires specialized training, education, a change in mindset, and a unique war command for all forces involved.¹⁴⁷ Thompson says the same thing, but he goes into greater detail than his counterparts when he describes not just the justification for an interagency approach, but the actual makeup of a war cabinet on pages 81-83 of *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. In comparison, Kilcullen, in his framework, helps illustrate how a war cabinet or like structure might work, and/or how various government entities fit their methods and operations into a COIN campaign.

Where the model employed in this thesis - the COIN Pantheon - differs from Kilcullen’s, is here. The present study required a model to use as an analytical filter to feed critical aspects of COIN into, and then compare across three insurgencies. This is known in intelligence parlance as a “conceptual model.”¹⁴⁸ The basic idea is to break a subject down into logical, manageable pieces – but connected pieces – then analyze the individual components, then analyze how they all fit and work together, and then analyze the greater meaning of it all. Kilcullen’s framework is a model for interagency cooperation. In layman’s terms, the latter is a “how to do it” model, and the COIN Pantheon is a “figure out how they did it” model, but it could be used a, “how we might do it” model, as well as explained below.

The logic behind altering Kilcullen’s model is as follows. The three pillars are essential to understand how to wage COIN and to understand how a COIN campaign took place or is unfolding; Kilcullen himself says his framework can be used to measure COIN progress. But more elements are necessary to understand a COIN campaign than just the three pillars, Kilcullen’s base of information, and his roof of control.

Specifically, underlying every military campaign in history, successful or not, is strategy, so strategy must form the base of an analytical model aimed at deciphering a military campaign, including a civil military COIN campaign. More, executing every strategy of every military campaign in history is some kind of command and control element. In COIN, the command and control element must be interagency, as Kilcullen, Thompson, Galula, Kitson and others explain.

¹⁴⁶ D. Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc. 1964), p. 64.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

¹⁴⁸ R. Clark, *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-Centric Approach*, (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2004), pp. 28-61.

So command and control, overall known as coordination in COIN, must be included in the model as well.

The enemy is yet another crucial aspect that must be addressed to understand a war, specifically, their intentions and capabilities. These two issues must be mastered because COIN operations begin protecting against them, and then eventually, when and if the government achieves effectiveness, attacking and then overcoming them. And in COIN, since insurgency is population based, comprehending the at-risk population is also necessary, especially the junction points where the insurgency and the population interface.

These elements, then – strategy, coordination, the three pillars, the insurgents, and the population – make up the edifice for a new model, one based on Kilcullen’s three pillars. (See appendix 4 for an illustration). It is a tool to decipher a COIN effort against an insurgent movement. By default, since they include the most basic elements of war, the COIN Pantheon can also be used as a COIN planning tool, but more for strategic design, as stipulated in FM 3-24, rather than actual operations planning.

The COIN Pantheon Explained

Strategy is the base that provides doctrine, commander’s intent, and defines the mission. Coordination is the next edifice. It synchronizes all operations and funnels material and manpower where needed. The columns consist of security, politics, and economics. They push against the next edifice, which defines insurgent capabilities and intentions. The roof is the population the government structure aims to uplift and support.

In broad terms, the security pillar entails quelling guerrilla and terrorist operations. The ultimate goal of security is protection of the population. Destruction of insurgent forces is of secondary importance, but if the chance arises, COIN forces usually seize it. The military is one component in the security pillar; the police, intelligence services, local forces, human rights groups, and the media all have a part to play.

The political pillar entails instilling effective and just governance that reduces the political reasons for revolt. Government over insurgent legitimacy is the ultimate goal. Tasks in this pillar might include, but are not restricted to, reintegrating surrendered insurgents into society, disarming fighters, instituting population-friendly government reforms, correcting grievances, and increasing the at-risk population’s political participation.

The economic pillar includes micro and macroeconomic initiatives designed to build capacity to grow and develop a sustainable economy, including resources and infrastructure management. Poverty reduction is a key aspect. Local buy-in

regarding what development projects will work is pivotal. Development is rarely decisive, however.

The research process here was to answer specific questions of each section of the COIN Pantheon for the two insurgencies Thailand fought in the past and the one it continues fighting today. The analytical method aimed to compare the answers to the questions from each war and look for similarities. In the end, this method sought to reveal how the Thai waged COIN.

For strategy, it entailed researching the end goals for each war and how the government sought to achieve them. Researching coordination encompassed investigating the coordinating body for each COIN campaign – why the Thai needed them, how they were structured, and their effectiveness. Security research included exploring police, military, intelligence, and local force activities used to quell insurgent violence. Examining political COIN measures included local and national political reform, psychological operations, social aid, and international diplomacy. Delving into economics entailed everything from local projects – such as village wells and footbridges – to massive road building projects and building factories to spur job growth. Research on the guerrillas for each war followed a “capabilities plus intentions” formula, and exploring the at risk population for these wars entailed looking at their political, cultural, and socio-economic context.

Within the COIN Pantheon framework, it was then a matter of extracting information from the relevant books, monographs, websites, and articles that helped answer these questions. Interviews with personnel who were and are involved in these wars, however, was critical because of the lack of comprehensive literature on Thai COIN. Through networking over 100 people, 38 interviews in Southeast Asia – mostly in Thailand – were achieved in four months, which revealed much ground truth not available in scant written records. In the end, only by combining all mentioned sources together – written and oral – was a quality level of research and analysis possible.

Still, there were pitfalls. The memories of some interviewees were fallible, which forced additional research. A few interviewees had political aims, and they needed filtering and also forced additional research. Some written sources suffered similar biases. One renowned text on the war in the far south decisively stated the government’s rubber plantation scheme would never work. Years later, however, rubber was the south’s main export. Accordingly, wading through political biases about Thailand’s insurgencies was, on occasion, tantamount to deciphering an actual insurgency.

An additional frustrating research pitfall was lack of access to certain “windfall” sources. General Harn Lennanond, the man who helped design victories for two of Thailand’s COINs, was reclusive and not readily available. Southern insurgents had no intentions of speaking to certain foreigners, and the dangers of seeking

them out was quite real. Most village security forces from present and past wars were far and remotely located.

Research Method Explained

Because interviews were pivotal to the information collection phase of this PhD – again, the Thai have few written historical accounts of these wars – the author began searching for people to question in fall 2007 while on campus at Exeter.

Hammersley and Atkinson underscore the importance of interviews, especially in cases such as with ascertaining the Thai way of COIN:

Interviewing can be an extremely important source of data: it may allow one to generate information that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise – both about events described and about perspectives and discursive strategies. And, of course, some sorts of qualitative research rely very heavily if not entirely on interview data, notably life-history work.¹⁴⁹

Marshall and Rossman also observed: “Qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing. Kvale (1996) describes qualitative interviews as ‘a construction site of knowledge’ (p. 2), where two (or more) individuals discuss a ‘theme of mutual interest’ (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 2).”¹⁵⁰ This was ever so true with this research. Regarding in-depth interviewing, multiple interviewees gave the author several hours of time, particularly a senior ex-intelligence officer who had unique knowledge and insight into all three of Thailand’s wars. Several of his interviews took many hours and generated, in one case, nearly 20 pages of notes. As for “theme[s] of mutual interest,” many interviewees gave information that overlapped, which added validity to their subject material by way of confirmation and reinforcement. And information from one person frequently gave the author new information, which could be brought up with other interviewees to probe subjects more deeply.

At any rate, interviews began with identifying and locating interviewees. There were three methods for this. The first was to research key individuals discussed in the scant literature on Thai COIN and make a list of who they were and what their positions were during each war. The next step was to search for them via the Internet by “Googling” them via different queries and filtering the results. Dr. Tom Marks, for example, made reference in his book, *Making Revolution*, to an elusive Somchai Rakwijit who was instrumental to intelligence for the communist COIN. His name was placed on a personnel roster and then searched for on

¹⁴⁹ M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice, Third Edition*, (London, Routledge, 2007), Kindle version, location 2,915

¹⁵⁰ C. Marshall and G. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research, Fifth Edition*, (Los Angeles: Sage), 2011, Kindle version, location 1,836.

the Internet via his name and also a wide array of possible e-mail configurations. In this particular case, Somchai was found working for a business consulting firm and agreed to a series of interviews after being briefed on the entire structure and purpose of the PhD. Identifying interviewees using this method was rare, however. Many people on the roster were not traceable this way, and others were not too receptive to e-mail queries. This was a cultural issue – the Thai did not like to engage via e-mail, preferring phone and face-to-face conversations instead. It was also a practical issue as the subject material was sensitive, rarely discussed, and person-to-person engagement gave the Thai assurance of the PhD's validity. But as a “starter” method, “Googling” key COIN personnel mentioned in Thai military literature was valuable in gaining a toehold in the interviewee identification process. As an aside, providing transparency of purpose and scope of questions, being 100 percent open, and following strict ethics paved the way for success in obtaining interviewees. In short, trust and quality begat good information.

A more effective way of obtaining interviewees was through corporate security consultants in Thailand. This was effective because security personnel had access to ex-Thai military and police. Security consultants were found via Internet searches, and, again, by a transparent and ethical pitch, scores of interviewees were identified and later agreed to meetings. These happened in Thailand, however, and the consultants were foreigners, or *farang*, as the Thai call them. No security consultants agreed to aid in the interviewee identification process until the author had physically arrived in Thailand. Proximity, then, was a driver to achieve effective information. Like the e-mail phenomenon, this was likely a trust and transparency issue. Once contact was made with an interviewee and the questioning finalized, however, they would often provide the name and contact information of yet another person to interview; this was a highly dependent on making a good first impression during the interview.

This latter point is very important to the qualitative research process – getting interviewees to provide additional interviewees. Marshall and Rossman refer to it as “snowballing.” They write: “...the researcher may start with ‘theory based’ sampling (e.g., social justice leadership theory directs the researcher to interview two people who fit) and then proceed to “snowball,” sampling by seeking interviews with people suggested from the first two interviews.”¹⁵¹ This was pivotal in massing more and more interviews during the field research phase in Thailand.

The next most effective interviewee identification method was through university contacts. Specific Thai professors, steeped in national security issues, had access to key COIN personnel, past and present. The author identified these professors by reading their quotes in news stories, books, and monographs. Once engaged face-to-face and briefed on the scope and purpose of this study,

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Kindle location 1,426.

some willingly provided contacts of senior level personnel and of those in the field. A handful engaged at only a cursory degree. Like the contacts made from the security consultants, interviewees gained via this method frequently provided additional contacts to speak with at the behest of the author, and the contact list snowballed, as Marshall and Rossman so aptly put it.

The interviews flowed as follows: the author would a) identify himself and his institution, the University of Exeter, b) identify how he located the subject – usually through a third party, such as a Thai university professor (this established an additional measure of validity to the approach), c) explain his project briefly and offer to forward the potential interviewee a PowerPoint presentation explaining the PhD in more detail, d) offer to send questions ahead of time – but reserve the right to ask spin-off questions, and, finally, e) close the pitch with either a planned interview date and time, or a rejection. The author used this method because it had shown positive results in his 15-years of experience interviewing people for Department of Defense research projects as a contractor, writing freelance journalism pieces for a multitude of magazines, and from writing a book published by the U.S. Naval Institute Press. It was also a technical and sanctioned approach by research experts – some already mentioned – such as Hammersley and Atkinson in *Ethnography: Principles in Practice, Third Edition*, Creswell and Vicki Clark in *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, and Marshall and Rossman's, *Designing Qualitative Research, Fifth Edition*.

Regarding the actual face-to-face interview process, the author followed schematics established by the likes of Hammersley and Atkinson who wrote, "This underlies an important feature of much ethnographic interviewing: that, within the boundaries of the interview context, the aim is to facilitate a conversation, giving the interviewee a good deal more leeway to talk on their own terms than is the case in standardized interviews."¹⁵² Specifically, these were semistructured interviews that relied on open-ended questions based on the COIN Pantheon model. Creswell and Clark cite the validity and importance of this approach: "...qualitative data consists of open-ended information that the researcher gathers through interviews with participants. The general, open-ended questions asked during these interviews allow the participants to supply answers in their own words."¹⁵³

Throughout the interview process, the author maintained neutrality so as not to lead the interviewee down a logic path of a certain conclusion. The author wanted objective information, not predetermined outcomes. Marshall and Rossman cite the importance of this issue: "A more traditional qualitative researcher learns from participants' lives but maintains a stance of 'empathetic

¹⁵² M. Hammersley and P. Atkinson, *op. cit.*, Kindle version, location 3,151.

¹⁵³ J. Creswell and V. Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, (London: Sage, 2007), Kindle version, locations 212 and 2,004.

neutrality' to collect data and provide descriptive representations."¹⁵⁴ This was especially necessary in Thailand where culture, far different from American and British thinking, played a part not only in the historical information provided, but the quality of information as well. And after all, the author was looking for Thai information through Thai eyes, not American or British eyes. Neutrality was critical to understand Thai thinking behind national security issues.

At any rate, most interview requests ended with positive responses. A few did not, and a handful agreed to interviews but infinitely delayed, a possible rejection mechanism. These latter instances were rare, however, and most Thai generously gave their time and exceptional information – they wanted to get this story out to the public once they understood the project in its entirety. As such, it cannot be understated that without the gracious and willing participation of Thai military, police, intelligence personnel, national security civilians, professors, politicians, and ordinary civilians, primary source information, the bulwark of this PhD, would not have been possible.

But the Thai were exceptionally forthcoming and provided outstanding information. And after assembling all interviews – the author took dictation as interviewees spoke; the Thai as a rule did *not* want to be recorded – the interviews were all coded according to what war they spoke of and what edifice of the COIN Pantheon they spoke to. Creswell and Clark assert: “Researchers need basic skills in analyzing qualitative text data, including coding text and developing themes and description based on these codes.”¹⁵⁵ This was indeed done. For example, interviews with Somchai Rakwijit almost exclusively dealt with the war against the CPT, though he did comment on the subsequent wars. As for the war against the CPT, his quotes were coded according to strategy, coordination, security operations – namely intelligence – politics, and economics. He moreover commented on the at risk population and the CPT’s capabilities and intentions.

The words of the interviewees were then positioned in the outline for each chapter and footnoted. Positioned as such, they were the first pieces of information to fill in the outline. This information was critical to the path of discovery regarding the Thai way of COIN. Creswell and Clark argue that “In qualitative research, the data tend to be words from participants (e.g., transcripts from interviews of field notes from observations).”¹⁵⁶ This was certainly the case with Thai interviewees. And from there, the author used information from books, journals, and articles to fill in the gaps and add layers of understanding to what the interviewees had said. The result was an overlapping field of information of interviews buttressed by books, journal articles, and newspaper articles that helped complete a complex and elusive picture.

¹⁵⁴ C. Marshall and G. Rossman, *op. cit.*, Kindle version, location 1,431.

¹⁵⁵ J. Creswell and V. Clark, *op. cit.*, Kindle version, location 2,004.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 456.

Ultimately, the research plan for this thesis did unfold as designed, and quality sources were accessed. It resulted in eight core research questions and a methodical outline that demonstrates to the reader specific aspects of the COIN Pantheon that demonstrate the Thai way of COIN.

The eight core questions this paper sought to answer were:

1. What is the Thai strategic approach to COIN?
2. How do the Thai, if at all, coordinate COIN?
3. What security programs – ranging from military to police to local forces (and intelligence throughout) – did the Thai apply to COIN?
4. What political programs – from the national, regional, local levels, and international levels (and other related political issues such as social and information campaigns such as propaganda) – did the Thai apply to COIN?
5. What economic programs – from the national, regional, local levels, and international levels – did the Thai apply to COIN?
6. What have been the insurgent capabilities and intentions in Thailand's COINs, and how has that shaped Thailand's COIN efforts?
7. What has been the situation of the at-risk population in Thailand's COINs and how has their plight shaped Thailand's COIN efforts?
8. Given the collective answers to all these questions for all three Thai COINs, is it possible to identify a 'Thai way of COIN' – and if so, what is it?

4. Outline of the Thesis

To achieve this, each chapter on Thailand's COINs follows a specific format using components of the COIN Pantheon and supporting sections. For each war, the first chapter begins with a background and overview of the conflict in question. These sections summarize for the reader how each war played out. Following that is a discussion on the capabilities and intentions of the opposition force. This includes their ideologies and use of violence. Following that is information on the at-risk population – their socio economic plight, their political and geographic context, and related information that demonstrates how they were ripe for revolt. COIN strategy for each war comes next. This section describes the end goals the Thai government wanted to achieve and how it formulated those goals.

Following that comes a section on how the Thai coordinated their COIN campaigns, and trailing that are three sections on the ways and means the Thai

used to quell each opposition group – an ongoing saga for the present war. The three sections come from insurgency expert David Kilcullen’s “Three Pillars of COIN”: security, politics, and economics. Discussed here are what security measures the Thai took to halt insurgent violence, what political measures the Thai took to abate insurgent political angst, and what economic measures the Thai took to assuage the at-risk population’s poor economic plight.

Because each chapter is aligned in the same manner, and because each chapter answers the same questions for each section of the COIN Pantheon, the conclusions that follow make themselves readily apparent. There is an executive summary to cap off this initially seeming complex material to clear the fog of war and reveal the core findings of the research. What follows is a methodical comparison and deciphering of each edifice of the COIN Pantheon from each COIN that reveals the analyses behind the executive summaries. In doing so, the Thai way of COIN is revealed.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNIST COIN

The rich history of Thailand need not be repeated here. There are, however, historical issues that helped set the stage for insurgency that merit mention. These include a societal rank system called *sakdi na*, Theravada Buddhism, Thailand's administrative clash with outlying ethnicities, and the rise of communism.

1. Background – Thai Political History to 1965

In the 1400s, Siamese royalty imposed a class system on its subjects called *sakdi na*. Literally translated as “field power,” it was a feudal rank system based on points and proximity to the throne. If one's *sakdi na* point accumulation was high, such as the royal class, one was closer to the royal court and afforded privileges such as education, special legal rights, and land. If one's points were low, such as the peasant class, one had fewer privileges and lived a meager life. *Sakdi na* also established client-patron relationships throughout the country, which locked lower level citizens into the orbits of higher-level citizens. *Sakdi na* had long-term implications for Thai society and politics; it provided an informal vehicle for upper class rule over the lower classes even after its demise in the 1930s.¹⁵⁷

Another deep-rooted tenet of Thai society was Theravada Buddhism. Siam adopted it in the 13th Century as the national religion, though it had been in country since Ceylonese monks introduced it in the Sixth Century. Buddhism introduced ideas of *karma* and fate to the country and provided it with a set of ethics. Buddhist monks, collectively known as *sangha*, held a special place in society as sacred advocates of the teachings of the Buddha. Society helped support the *sangha* with money and alms giving, the donation of food to monks each morning. In return, the monks bestowed on the people blessings, which helped earn good *karma*. The main point about Buddhism in Thailand is it gradually became the national moral compass for not only the people, but the government as well.¹⁵⁸

By the early 20th Century, Siam had gone through scores of kings who ruled a loose expanse of territory through powerful city-states, among them the 13th

¹⁵⁷ D. Nuechterlein, *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp. 28-37, and T. Marks, *Making Revolution: The Insurgency of the Communist Party of Thailand in Structural Perspective* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1994), p. 21.

¹⁵⁸ B. LePoer (ed.), *A Country Study: Thailand* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1987), available on <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/thtoc.html>.

Century Sukhotai and the late 16th Century Ayutia. After Ayutia fell in 1767, General Maha Kshatriyaseuk assumed the title “Rama I,” took over the country by coup, and united it under the Chakri dynasty in 1736. In the 1800, Kings Rama IV and V went through great diplomatic, military, and domestic administrative lengths to consolidate Siam’s borders via European governance systems to stave off European colonization. These included establishing a provincial system complete with local rulers who enforced Bangkok’s regulations. By the 1900s, Siam had fended off every attempt to colonize it, the only country in Southeast Asia to do so.¹⁵⁹

Bangkok’s new administrative initiatives also aimed at reigning in outlying ethnic groups such as the Lao-related *Issan* peoples in the northeast and ethnic Malay Muslims in the far south. Never having been fully consolidated under Bangkok’s rule, these groups resisted central government control. Though *sakdi na* had begun to wither with the government’s new administrative model, its class division roots remained. This had a negative impact on the way some in the government treated these outlying peoples. So while these new policies helped Bangkok better manage the country as a sovereign state, they also set the stage for internal unrest.

In 1932, Pridi Panomyong and 50 other European-schooled Thai students and military officers formed the People’s Party. A Major Pibun Songkhram was among them. The People’s Party wanted freedom, equality, rule of law, national economic policies, and universal access to education. It forced King Prachatiok to adopt a constitutional form of government with reduced royal powers and no *sakdi na* type class divisions.¹⁶⁰

Despite these positive demands and ending *sakdi na*, Pridi, now finance minister, was Marxist-leaning, and his ideas for enforcing his economic plan included totalitarian tactics. Conservative forces led by Prime Minister Pya Mano fell out with Pridi and accused him of being a communist.¹⁶¹ Such accusations in that era were not uncommon as scores of Southeast Asians who studied in France adopted communist ideologies. Many communists advocated the violent overthrow of existing governments, and their presence in Thailand unnerved the status quo and those opposed to communism.

As a result, Pridi and four cohorts left for Europe, and PM Mano made it a criminal offense to be a communist via the Anti-Communist Act of 1933.¹⁶² By 1934, an investigation had cleared Pridi. He returned to Thai politics and gained the Ministry of Interior portfolio by 1935 and was Foreign Affairs Minister by 1937.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Nuechterlein, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-27.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-37.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37, 40, and LePoer, *op. cit.*

¹⁶² Nuechterlein, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37, 40.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Pibun passed the National Culture Act in 1939. It consisted of decrees that promoted Thai nationalism and “Thai-ness” – the Thai way of living life. It forced all citizens within Thai territory, regardless of religion or ethnicity, to adopt uniform cultural practices. By law, for example, neither *Hmong* tribes in the north, *Issan* peoples in the northeast, nor ethnic Malay Muslims in the south were allowed to wear their traditional garb, and they were required to speak Thai instead of their local dialects. Thai historian Thanet Aphornsuvan wrote that other aspects of the act “required women to wear hats and Western dress, forbade the chewing of betel and areca nuts, and instructed the use of forks and spoons as the ‘national cutlery’.”¹⁶⁴ The far south rejected Pibun’s 1939 National Culture Act in 1939 because it tampered with deep-rooted Malay Muslim customs such as dress and language. Many southerners thought it meant to erase their culture, and they revolted. While their Lao heritage was not unlike Thai culture, *Issan* people also balked.

In 1941, Pibun collaborated with Japan and did not resist its occupation of Thailand during World War II.¹⁶⁵ When World War II ended, Thailand successfully avoided being carved up by the Allies despite having officially sided with the Axis in part by courting America’s favor via M.R. Seni, the WW II-era Thai ambassador to Washington. Bangkok also nullified the Anti-Communist Act of 1933 to appease the Soviet Union to gain entry into the United Nations.¹⁶⁶

After a short stint by Pridi as prime minister, Pibun returned to power by coup in 1947. He adopted an anti-communist stance in part because Thailand was surrounded by communist wars, and he and his government wanted none of it. The Soviet Union emerged from the ashes of WW II Europe as a Marxist-Leninist powerhouse, exporting its ideology around the world by diplomacy, propaganda, subterfuge, insurgency, and conventional warfare. China’s Mao Tse Dong had defeated the nationalist government by 1949 and also expressed its intent of spreading communism to the world. In Malaysia, Chin Peng’s rebel communist forces were not only engaged in a full-scale guerrilla war, but also heinous acts of terrorism against civilians.¹⁶⁷ Communist North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap’s communist forces defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. Cambodian communists, the forbearers of the Khmer Rouge (KR), fought the French as well. To Thailand’s west, the communist Revolutionary Burma Army was waging insurgency. Throughout Asia,

¹⁶⁴ T. Aphornsuvan, *Origins of Malay Muslim “Separatism” in Southern Thailand*, Working Paper Series No. 32 (Singapore: Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore), pp. 24-25.

¹⁶⁵ Central Intelligence Agency Featured Story Archive, “A Look Back ... ‘Free Thai’ Movement is Born, 3 July 2008,” available on <<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/free-thai-movement.html>>.

¹⁶⁶ Nuechterlein, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-51, 59, and G. Chutima, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Thailand, 1973-1987*, Occasional Paper No. 12, (Canterbury, UK: The University of Kent, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1988), pp. 17-18.

¹⁶⁷ Nuechterlein, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

communists infiltrated social clubs, labor unions, schools, and governments. Once established, they mobilized their ranks into political and subversive action.

Pibun responded by touting himself as the strongest anti-communist in Asia. He increased the size of his military and police and designed hard anti-communist domestic policies. But in a post WW II-era, Pibun did not wield sole authority as he used to. Since 1945, Thailand witnessed the rise of powerful politicians and military men such as Royal Thai Army (RTA) Commander Marshal Sarit Tanarat and Police General Pao Siyanon. Pibun shared power with them, and his job and many dictators and prime ministers after him would end up in the same position – as leaders of the government, but bargaining with and manipulating other power brokers in Bangkok to achieve their aims.¹⁶⁸

Still, Pibun hammered domestic communists who at the time were predominantly ethnic Chinese. His policies also affected non-communist Chinese. The Chinese were the most effective merchant class in Thailand, and he sought to control their influence over the economy and simultaneously curtail both their real and alleged communist leanings. In a crackdown in 1948, police raided Chinese schools, clubs, and associations and arrested hundreds. Pibun also limited the number of Chinese entering the country from 10,000 to 200. In 1952-53 after exposing a communist plot to overthrow the government, Thai police arrested more than 250 Chinese, raided over 150 Chinese businesses, and closed yet more clubs and schools. The legislature passed the Anti-Communist Act of 1952 (aka, the Un-Thai Activities Act) that made it a crime to not only be a communist and but to merely associate with communists. It gave wide arrest and detention powers to the military, police, and local administrative officials to search and seize personnel without warrants, and detain suspects for 30 days without charges (180 days if approved by the police chief). Aptly empowered, authorities thereafter arrested more people than the Thai police had ever arrested on charges of communist subversion.¹⁶⁹

Even so, communism gained traction in *Issan*, and political violence increasingly occurred. The “Kilo 11 incident,” for example, involved the deaths of four prominent northeast politicians: Nai Thong-In, Nai Chamlong, and Nai Thawil, and Dr. Thongphaeo Chonlaphum. Far from being local rabble-rousers, Nai Thong-In had served as Minister of Industry, and Nai Chamlong Daoruang had been a Deputy Commerce Minister. But they were Pridi supporters, accused of being communists, and advocated an autonomous zone for north easterners and their unique culture.

Though accounts are sketchy, it appears the four had been arrested on charges of sedition, released, and then arrested again on 4 March 1949 after the attempted marine-backed Pridi coup the same year. Police claimed a band of supporters

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 110-111, and “Thailand: Minister for Scrapping Anti-Communism Act,” in *Bangkok Post*, 30 April 1998.

tried to rescue the prisoners by force of arms while being transported to an alternate prison, and the captives died in the crossfire. Their supporters claimed nothing of the sort and said they had been executed. Regardless of the exact scenario, the Kilo 11 episode raised *Issan's* resentment of the central government in Bangkok. It reinforced north easterners' angst over the government's centralization policies they felt were diluting their culture while they remained one of the poorest regions in the country largely due to dreary agricultural conditions.¹⁷⁰

The 1950s saw little improvement in the northeast and far south even as the rest of Thailand continued to modernize its economy, infrastructure, and politics. King Bhumibol Adulyade (Rama IX) took the throne on 5 May 1950 and slowly began to reinstate some of the royal power that had been lost in the 1932 coup. But King Bhumibol would prove neither meddling nor tyrannical, and his leadership, aid projects, and strategic thinking would greatly benefit Thailand in both peaceful and turbulent years to come.

But as the 1950s progressed, two startling events pushed Thailand into a corner and set the stage for insurgency. First, in 1953, the People's Republic of China suddenly announced via radio, the most powerful psychological operations (psyops) tool of the era, the establishment of the Thai Autonomous People's Government in Yunnan Province. It was anti-Bangkok, anti-Nationalist Chinese, and anti-American. In doing so, Beijing had sponsored a Thai shadow government outside Thailand, a move that Bangkok regarded as an act of war. China also said the Thai Autonomous People's Government would represent a "Greater Thailand," something Bangkok and a large swathe of the population had pined for since the 1940s. It meant a Thailand with expanded borders and greater regional influence than it had at the time. In doing so, China had adopted a popular Thai nationalist sentiment and made it a communist one, a brilliant psyops maneuver.¹⁷¹

Second, in 1954, Ho Chi Minh's *Viet Minh* troops crossed into Laos and established a Free Laos Government, a communist regime outside Vientiane's purview, yet another act of war. Bangkok perceived a threat because of *Issan's* rebellious streak, its communist activists, and its cultural and geographic proximity to communist China and North Vietnam. More ominous, there were 50,000 Vietnamese loyal to Ho Chi Minh along the Thailand's side of the Mekong. In short, Thailand faced growing internal communist dissent and was surrounded by communist wars of liberation. And China and Vietnam began to squeeze that

¹⁷⁰ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 94, and C. Karnchanapee, "Thai Politics and Foreign Aid in Rural Isan Development and Modernization in 1990s," Rutgers University paper, available on <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~karnchan/thai_isa.txt>. Char Karnchanapee is an Analyst and a Researcher at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He can be reached at karnchan@rci.rutgers.edu.

¹⁷¹ Nuechterlein, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

perimeter harder through the 1950s and into the 60s. A communist war of liberation would hit Thailand by 1965.¹⁷²

2. Overview of the Communist Insurgency and COIN

1965-67

The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) launched its war to overthrow the government and replace it with a Marxist one in August 1965 on “gun-firing day.” The government analyzed the regional strategic and domestic situation accurately, realized the communists were spreading insurgent wars throughout Southeast Asia, and took steps to shore up internal defenses and institute a lucid counterinsurgency (COIN) program. Says Dr. Arun Bhunupong, former diplomat for the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA): “At the time, people were alarmed by the spread of communism and spoke of the domino theory, and many thought the next to fall would be Thailand.”¹⁷³

In 1965, insurgent violence was mainly in the northeast. General Prapass Charusathira, Deputy PM, Commander in Chief of the Army and Minister of Interior, personally took over the problem. He knew COIN entailed more than just suppression, and solicited the assistance of RTA General Saiyud Kerdphol, a student of COIN, to help organize and manage the fight. From the start, the government saw the insurgency as both a security problem and a socio-economic problem. It decided to use kinetic operations to destroy the CPT’s military units and development operations to lift the population up from poverty. Psychological operations were the only political schemes the government applied in the early stages of the war.

To coordinate the fight, the government established the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), headquartered in Bangkok, with satellite headquarters throughout insurgent areas. Prapass placed Saiyud in charge of CSOC. CSOC supervised RTA, Thai National Police (TNP), development related ministries such as the Ministries of Health and Education, and COIN-specific agencies such as the Accelerated Rural Development program (ARD). To implement the fight, the government established the Civilian-Police-Military (CPM) program, which employed civilians, police, and military forces working together to quell the insurgency.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁷³ Dr. Arun Bhunupong, Diplomat, Ret, Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, 28 March 2008, Thamassat University, Bangkok, Thailand. Dr. Arun past served in Washington, Moscow, and Paris.

¹⁷⁴ D. Ball and D. Mathieson, *Militia Redux; Or Sor and the Revival of Paramilitarism in Thailand* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2007), p. 34.

From 1965-67, CPM operations reduced the CPT by about half and killed or arrested more than a hundred of its leaders.¹⁷⁵ The program was not flawless, however. It suffered from a lack of coordination between its three components at times, and the military on occasion used too much force by napalming entire CPT sympathetic villages.

By January 1967, the government discovered the use of local people was key to defeating the insurgency and developed a new version of the CPM COIN plan, the 09/10 Plan. The government began to draft the people into its fight via village security teams just as the CPT had drafted the people into its fight. General Saiyud believes had the government stuck to this program and kept its momentum, it could have won the war before 1975, but it did not.¹⁷⁶

Instead, the RTA's Regional Army Commanders felt threatened by General Saiyud's power, and they revolted in 1967. General Prapass gave into their demands and granted them the power to run their own COIN operations as they saw fit. They still used the CSOC name and the CPM concept, but they ran their own versions of it, and the war from then until 1977 ran on uncoordinated.

This was unfortunate, because in February 1967, the CPT expanded its violent operations in the north and increased its terror operations to panic the RTA. It knew the military would overreact and implement massive sweeps, which were unpopular with the population. That is exactly what happened. "From that moment," says General Saiyud, "the emphasis shifted toward military operations of the Vietnam type." (General Saiyud refers to the "Vietnam type" as American style search and destroy operations using large formations of troops hunting for signs of the enemy so it could track down and fight them.)¹⁷⁷

In the northeast, the RTA's Second Army dropped the CPM scheme that had covered 200 villages. In the north, the Third Army used excessive force in many cases, which lead to innocent civilian deaths in Nan, Chiang Rai, and Tak

¹⁷⁵ Saiyud Kerdphol, *The Struggle for Thailand: Counterinsurgency 1965-1985* (Bangkok: S Research Center, Co, Ltd, 1986), p. 48. Information for this section also came from the timeline in Saiyud's book, pp. 179-185.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116. Not all American operations in Vietnam were the search and destroy type. In I Corps in the north, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) typically fought maneuver warfare with battalion and regimental size formations, and the U.S. Marines deployed, likewise. In lieu of NVA operations in other areas, main force and insurgent Viet Cong carried out hit and run operations, ambushes, and sabotage. Americans conducted search and destroy against these forces and also small unit harassment. General Saiyud's assertion comes from a prevalent idea in the U.S. military that breaking the enemy's ability to make war by attacking his forces was the key to victory, but it was not the only strategy applied.

provinces. In the south, RTA Major General Cherm Preutsayachiwa did not see the communists as a threat, and he quit COIN operations altogether.¹⁷⁸

1968-73

The CPT evaded the RTA's large sweeps and infiltrated more villages after the village security teams sloughed off. The CPT's clandestine agents increased ties to leftist organizations throughout the country and shored up their cell structures to tap domestic sources of support instead of relying solely on logistics from China, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. It established the Supreme Command of the People's Liberation Army of Thailand on 1 January 1969 and increased radio propaganda via the Voice of the People of Thailand (VOPT) against the government and Thai Royal Family.

In May 1969, CSOC convinced the PM to make law a new war plan, the 110/2512 Plan. It relied more heavily on harnessing local forces, increased economic development, and building trust between villagers and the government. Corrupt officials scammed and extorted the people, and it ruined the people's faith in the central government. The CPT exploited this injustice to recruit villagers. But the RTA, except for some officers in the Second Army, ignored the 110/2512 Plan. As a result, the CPT infiltrated 35 of Thailand's then 72 provinces by 1970.

Similar statistics demonstrated an alarming surge of CPT strength. Armed communist propaganda platoons ratcheted up their activities from an average of 6.4 instances a month in 1966-1969 to 16.4 a month by 1970. Assassinations of villagers who did not cooperate with the CPT increased from 5.6 a month to 11.6 a month. Murder of government officials increased from 3.6 a month to 10 per month.¹⁷⁹

By 1971, the CPT doubled its strength to 5,000 and recuperated from its earlier losses – not that the government had not fought well. That year, government offensives resulted in 1,500 CPT weapons seized, 540 insurgents killed, and scores of bases overrun. Moreover, some 3,000 communists surrendered.¹⁸⁰ But it was not enough. The government had been bloodied, too. The RTA withdrew the First Division from the tri-border area in the north as a result of high casualties. The RTA's uncoordinated suppression efforts contributed to its losses.

According to General Saiyud, from 1971 to October 1973, the RTA finally learned from its mistake of applying heavy suppression to the insurgency: "Military sweep operations contributed only to the statistics of clashes, killed, and wounded."¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48, 115-117, and G. Tanham, *Trial in Thailand* (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc.), p. 88.

¹⁷⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

Accordingly, RTA commanders slowly began to apply the CSOC/CPM concept, first to CPT areas in Na Kae District, Nakhon Phanom province. It then followed suit in Phetchabun, Loei, and Phitsanulok provinces, and then later in the mountains between Udon Thani and Loei provinces.¹⁸²

1973-76

As the RTA refocused its COIN operations, the government lost control of domestic politics, which fed the insurgency. Supreme Commander and PM Thanom Kittikachorn and General Prapass controlled all diplomatic, justice, and national security ministerial portfolios, and they enforced heavy-handed domestic policies such as suspension of due process. They assumed the power to arrest and execute without trial any enemy of the government. They and several other successive administrations banned all political parties in attempts to curb communism and quell all dissent, but the policies disenfranchised the population, not just communists. The CPT, then, provided the only political force opposing government autocracy. People who were not communists began to support the movement.

As a result, the CPT increased its infiltration of intellectual, labor, and university groups. These people clashed with police on numerous occasions that left scores dead and wounded on both sides. A major student-police clash occurred on 14 October 1973 in Bangkok, which left many dead and caused the King to intercede and force the resignation of the government. CPT strength increased to 6,500 by the end of 1973.¹⁸³ Because of lacking leadership, the government was unable to handle the domestic political and insurgent crisis at the same time. Thailand's COIN campaign temporarily ground to a halt in 1973.¹⁸⁴

The government changed hands between four administrations from October 1973 to October 1976 when Thailand's insurgency and domestic turmoil came to a head with the Thammasat University massacre. On 6 October, thousands of students and intellectuals, some simply anti-dictator and some pro-CPT, clashed with the police and several government sponsored paramilitary groups. The latter were civilians and factions of the government that conspired to counter the CPT in the wake of the executive branch's inability to fight back. The violence left multitudes of dead and wounded – mostly students – the nation was horrified, and some 3,000 students fled to the jungles to join the CPT, swelling its ranks with organizational expertise and anti-government fervor. Popular support for the government wavered. CPT fighters grew to 14,000.¹⁸⁵ Its auxiliary support

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 117-118.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁸⁴ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹⁸⁵ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118, and C. Samudavanija and S. Paribatra, "In Search of Balance: Prospects for Stability in Thailand During the Post CPT Era," in K.

numbered over 100,000. With this new injection of manpower and political support, the CPT was able to exert direct control over 400 villages and indirect control over 6,000 villages, which equated to four million people.¹⁸⁶

In 1976, CSOC, now ISOC, which stands for the Internal Security Operations Command, upgraded the CPM program with a special village self defense and development scheme called *Asa-samak Pattana lae Pongkan ton-eng*, or *Aw Paw Paw* for short. Part of the impetus behind the new program was intelligence reports saying the CPT would reach a strength that would rival that of the government by 1977 or 1978. It applied to 3,754 villages, and while government managerial upheaval kept it from expanding more, it did nevertheless, represent an effective program that the government would build upon later on to secure the countryside.

1977-80

Officers in the Second Army Region began to run CSOC style CPM operations in the mid-1970s via the CSOC and CPM model. It made slow progress separating the communists from the population, but it was indeed progress. This would eventually form the basis of Thailand's victorious COIN strategy, but no one knew it yet. Despite the Second Army's improvement, the CPT increased its operations by 20 percent. In the south, the government's effort fell apart. The Fourth Army commander there, "...withdrew from the field for no good reason..." says General Saiyud.¹⁸⁷ He blames friction between Bangkok, the governor of Phattalung province, and General San.¹⁸⁸

Communist forces surrounding Thailand had gained strength, too. Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia all fell to Chinese and/or Soviet supported communists in 1975, but that is where the solidarity ended. Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December 1978 over the latter's border raids that targeted civilians. This caused a row between Vietnam and China, the two main supporters of the CPT, which subsequently caused a split between the Vietnamese and Chinese factions of the CPT. Thailand committed diplomats to take advantage of the divide and lobbied Beijing to cut off support for the insurgents. It worked. In 1979, the Chinese shut down the VOPT, and Vietnam and Laos punished the Chinese faction of the CPT by ousting them from their territory.¹⁸⁹ These events began the end of foreign support for the CPT, which severely injured and isolated the movement.

Snitwongse and S. Paribatra (ed.) in *Durable Stability in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1987), p. 188.

¹⁸⁶ Samudavanija and Paribatra, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

¹⁸⁷ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119, see footnote comment, and p. 120.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

Simply cutting off external support was not enough, however. There were still 14,000 CPT fighters and over 100,000 supporters in the field.¹⁹⁰ In 1977, RTA General Kriangsak Chomanand took over the government by coup. He initiated countrywide democratic reforms that undid many of the autocratic policies of the last several regimes, and he offered amnesty to the Thammasat students that had joined the CPT after the 1976 massacre.¹⁹¹ Democratic reform relieved pressure off the population, and popular political support for the CPT dwindled.¹⁹²

Not all innovative COIN reforms during this time were political, however. In 1978, RTA General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Chief of Army Operations, designed a new local force unit to out-guerrilla the CPT guerrillas – the *Thahan Phran*, or literally, *Soldier Hunters*.¹⁹³ Kriangsak passed the Anti-Communist Act of 1979, which gave authorities wide police powers, including warrantless search and seizures and detention of insurgent suspects for 480 days. It gave RTA commanders and governors the power to impose curfews, ban demonstrations and meetings, monitor phone conversations, and access to businesses' personnel files.¹⁹⁴ Thai historians such as S. Bunbongkarn assert Kriangsak began the turnaround that eventually defeated the CPT.

1980-85

General Prem Tinsulanonda, former head of the Second Army and Commander in Chief of the Army and Defense Minister, took over by coup in 1980.¹⁹⁵ He placed other COIN-minded leaders in positions of power throughout the RTA and forced the country's entire national security complex to accept his plans to defeat the CPT, namely the 66/2523 Plan, the "Policy to Win Over Communism," and the 65/2525 Plan, the "Plan for Political Offensive." Amnesty was a major component, but so was focused force application. These expanded on previous CSOC-CPM plans but added the political element of democracy as the main tool to defeat communism. The plan mimicked without apology the CPT political mass mobilization strategies.¹⁹⁶ Aptly applied and backed by well-run kinetic operations, the CPT fell into disarray.¹⁹⁷ Famed CPT student leader Seksan Prasertgul and

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

¹⁹¹ C. Samudavanija, K. Snitwongse, and S. Bunbongkarn, *From Armed Suppression to Political Offensive* (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Aksornsiam Press, 1990), pp. 67-68.

¹⁹² Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-185.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

¹⁹⁴ LePoer, *op. cit.*, see "Internal Security System."

¹⁹⁵ Official website of General Prem Tinsulanonda, <<http://www.generalprem.com/ranks.html>>, accessed 3 July 2009.

¹⁹⁶ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-185.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

heralded communist labor leader Therdpoom Chaidee surrendered in October 1980.¹⁹⁸

In January 1981, former deputy of the Thai Socialist Party Khaiseng Suksai, surrendered, followed by Thirayuth Boonmee, student leader and leading organizer of the communist front organization, the Coordinating Committee for Patriotic and Democratic Forces (CCPDF). In April, authorities captured CPT politburo member Damri Ruengsutham at a road checkpoint in the south's Surat Thani province. The same year, the RTA launched a major offensive against CPT strongholds in Khao Kho mountain range. CPT forces in Petchabun fell in defeat.¹⁹⁹ CPT fighters shrank to 12,000.²⁰⁰

From March-May 1982, the RTA took over three major CPT base camps. RTA Chief of Operations Major General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh proclaimed all major CPT bases destroyed. Roughly the same time, Secretary General of the CPT, Mit Samanan (aka Charoen Wangnarm) died.²⁰¹

By the end of 1982, there were seven thousand CPT fighters in the field.²⁰² Widespread defections continued in 1983, and by September, ISOC declared only four provinces still had active CPT units. By 1984, the CPT had dwindled to 1,200 operators, countrywide.²⁰³ In October, ISOC declared victory over the CPT, but defections continued into 1984. By 1986, Prem's strategies had defeated the CPT, and the war ended.²⁰⁴

3. The Insurgents – The CPT

CPT Strategy

The CPT declared its 10-point strategy in 1969; four years after it began its offensive.²⁰⁵ With the aim to win over the disaffected population, the CPT promised to establish a representative form of government based on a CPT-led coalition of like-minded groups. It also sought to bring to justice all those who fought against the CPT, ensure equal rights of men and women, embrace labor

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-185.

²⁰⁰ Ball and Mathieson, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁰¹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-185.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁰³ Ball and Mathieson, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

²⁰⁴ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-185.

²⁰⁵ W. Heaton and R. MacLeod, "People's War in Thailand," in B. O'Neil, W. Heaton, and D. Roberts (eds.), *Insurgency in the Modern World* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), p. 95.

and education, eject all U.S. influence, and remove the culture of the monarchy. It moreover wanted farmers to own land.²⁰⁶

In addition to stating what CPT stood for, it also took a stand against the presence of U.S. forces in Thailand. The CPT particularly sought to whip up public opposition to the 1962 Rusk-Thanat Agreement that Washington and Bangkok signed to help the latter fend off communist infiltration from Laos. Essentially, it stated the U.S. guaranteed Thailand's protection from invasion.²⁰⁷ More, American troop presence in Thailand grew as American involvement in Vietnam deepened in the mid-1960s. The U.S. Air Force had aircraft, men, and equipment on Thai bases in Udorn, Nakhon Phanom, Ubon, Korat, and U-Tapao to name but a few. From there, it flew air support and bombing missions into North and South Vietnam. At the height of the Vietnam War, there were 40,000 U.S. servicemen in Thailand.²⁰⁸ The Chinese, North Vietnamese, and CPT saw these forces as a threat to their plans in both Vietnam and Thailand, hence the CPT's harping on their exit.²⁰⁹

CPT's political strategy also included a military strategy borrowed from the Chinese communists to fight the government. Maoist war, also called "People's War," required mass mobilization of the population to form underground political cells and a guerrilla army to weaken the government. Once the political and military strategies could be developed, the guerrilla movement would increasingly take on the characteristics of a standing army capable of taking on the state's forces toe-to-toe on the battlefield. Politics and psyops drove all aspects of this process, which started in the countryside and then took the cities.²¹⁰

On the ground, the CPT made its strategy operational systematically one region at the time starting in the north and moving out from there. Former National Intelligence Agency (NIA) Chief Bhumarat Taksadipong says: "The CPT began fighting in *Issan*, Sakhon Nakhon, in the northeast. It was the poorest region in the country, just one day's drive to the Vietnamese border, and communist philosophy attacks the poor. And there was some sentiment of fighting the government in the past."²¹¹ He also says the CPT took to *Issan* because of its difficult terrain, just as Mao proscribed, and branched out from there. "It has rough mountain ranges and

²⁰⁶ Marks, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

²⁰⁷ A. Ferry, "The Laotian Crisis of 1960-62: Birth of the Rusk-Thanat Joint Communiqué," in *International Affairs Journal*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, Winter 2005, (Davis, California: University of California at Davis), available at <http://davisiaj.com/content/view/378/86/>.

²⁰⁸ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²⁰⁹ LePoer, *op. cit.*, and J. Schlight, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia; The War in South Vietnam, The Years of the Offensive: 1965-1968* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1988), pp. 7-8, 54, 76.

²¹⁰ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

²¹¹ Bhumarat Taksadipong, interview by author, 3 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

the jungle, so the CPT started in the jungle, and from the jungle to the villages, and then later, all over.”²¹²

He continues: “From *Issan*, the communist then went north, because the northerners were the second poorest in Thailand. The terrain was very suitable for communist insurgency.”²¹³ Southern Thailand was next, he says. Chinese, North Vietnamese, and Lao material support poured in from the porous border the communists controlled.

In 1967, the CPT expanded on its exploitation of poor minority areas and made Thailand’s hill tribes a key part of its strategy. They were native ethnic people that spanned from Burma and Thailand through Laos and into Vietnam. Thailand’s hill tribes consisted of six major tribes. The most prevalent was the Hmong, also called Meo or Miao. Other tribes were the Mien (aka Yao) and Lahu, Akha, Lisu, and Karen. Collectively, they were 700,000 strong in the 1980s.²¹⁴

CPT Organizational Structure

The CPT’s organization was hierarchical and arranged along standard Leninist lines, a strict vertical command structure with power at the top.²¹⁵ Ex-CPT member Gawin Chutima describes this as strictly hierarchical, and all communication between units had to be funnelled through higher units, a system the CPT called “democratic centralism.” Democratic centralism called for “iron discipline” through four key tenets: 1) the party’s authority is final and supreme, 2) the minority must follow the majority, 3) lower ranks must follow the upper ranks, 4) the Central Committee has power of every unit, every branch, and every person in the CPT.²¹⁶

As for its internal structure, Marks describes a seven-man politburo as running the CPT, which gave orders to the lower ranks. At the second highest level was a 25-man Central Committee. It served as a staff to manage military operations, building political support, and the like. Its members moreover served as head of Party Provincial Committees. These oversaw Party District Committees, and these oversaw CPT operations at the town and village levels. Marks notes from the district level down, however, the CPT did not follow Bangkok’s organization so formally. It sometimes referred to lower echelons and even provincial areas of operations as “zones.”²¹⁷

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ LePoer, *op. cit.*

²¹⁵ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²¹⁶ Chutima, *op. cit.*, pp. xi, 60-61.

²¹⁷ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

But there was a formal CPT structure at the bottom of the chain of command. A zone commander managed party committees at the village levels. Village committees consisted of seven-man teams headed by a chairman. They supervised eight committees of as many as 30 people that ran services for the CPT such as military affairs, propaganda operations, youth and women's affairs, and labor activities.²¹⁸

The CPT's fighting wing had always been the Thai People's Liberation Army (TPLAF), but early in the war, it was not a true standing army. It was more a series of platoons and squads.²¹⁹ On 1 January 1969, the Chinese took steps to change that and established a CPT military "Supreme Command" and began to call all fighting units in north and northeast Thailand as the TPLAF.²²⁰ As the CPT expanded in the 1970s, these small units grew into larger formations.

The CPT had five areas of responsibility (AORs): the northeast, the north, the west central, mid south, and far south. Of the five, the north and northeast were the most active areas. They were attached to CPT interior lines of communication to Vietnam, Laos, and China and therefore had good sanctuary logistics flow. They also had more CPT members there.²²¹

The CPT had a separate organizational system for student groups. According to Gawin, it, "...succeeded in getting its agents into key positions in student organizations, and was able to use journals such as *Athipat* (of the communist National Student Center of Thailand), and *Asia* magazine to provide guidelines for the movement."²²² The CPT's student leaders did not lead from the battlefield, but rather, "...formed part of clandestine groups that discussed and analysed the political situation and decided on the action to be taken."²²³ In short, student CPT members led the student movement from the shadows. They had a real impact, writes Gawin; "It is likely that, without the CPT's infiltration of the student movement, the student activities would not have adopted the extreme, far left strategies they did."²²⁴

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²¹⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, *Intelligence Report: Peking's Support of Insurgencies in Southeast Asia*, Reference Title: POLO LIII, (Washington, DC: CIA, April 1973), pp. 72-73.

²²¹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-65.

²²² Chutima, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

CPT Numbers

By 1968, the government estimated it had as many as 2,500 troops and as many as 25,000 auxiliary forces.²²⁵ In 1975 the CPT had 8,500 fighters, seemingly a small number for a population of 41 million, but three fourths of these were situated in the north and northeast, “which magnified their effect,” writes Marks.²²⁶

At its height in the years following the 1976 Thammasat University massacre the CPT’s ranks swelled to 14,000 with what Marks calls its “rural base” with a strength of 20,000, making total membership 34,000.²²⁷ But General Saiyud said the government’s estimate of auxiliary support in 1968 was 25,000 for 2,500 fighters, which roughly equates to 10 auxiliary or support personnel for every fighter in the field. If this was accurate, then the CPT might have had 140,000 auxiliary supporters at its peak, which is possible because it had cells and political support throughout the entire country.

Recruiting

The CPT used multiple types of recruiting. Its most prolific was radio propaganda via the VOPT. The CPT preached the evils of Bangkok and the salvation of communism and followed with calls to join its ranks. Armed cadres went from village to village toting guns and preaching the benefits of communism and the evils of Bangkok’s rule. In these sessions, its troops both took on volunteers and forced people into its ranks.

Bowie says the CPT engaged in surreptitious recruiting, too:

In the initial process of wooing villagers, the guerrillas appealed to economic grievances to mobilize villagers’ opposition to the government. For example, a cadre travelling about the villages dressed as a pig merchant might start a conversation about the low price of pigs compared to the high price of pig food.²²⁸

She describes this particular type of pitch evolving into a conversation about other gripes, such as the government’s lack of care for the villagers and how government development projects only benefited the rich, exploited the poor, and offered no real aid to villagers.²²⁹

²²⁵ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²²⁶ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

²²⁸ K. A. Bowie, *Rituals of National Loyalty: An Anthropology of the State and the Village Scout Movement in Thailand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 9, 261-269.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 261-269.

The CPT used personal ties for recruiting, too. Writes Gawin: “A new recruit was often a friend or relative of an existing member.” He continues: “For those who were not relatives, the ties were likely to be those of a patron-client relationship.”²³⁰ The latter refers directly to the *sakdi na* system that the CPT both fought against and exploited to aid their recruitment efforts.²³¹

Recruiting students in urban areas required different methods. According to Gawin, the CPT penetrated university student groups, teacher training institutions, high schools, and vocational schools throughout Thailand with spies. These spies controlled the direction of some student groups. They increased recruiting and provided communist political literature on the correct positions to adopt.²³² Government versus student pressure mounted in 1973-76, many student idealists gravitated to the rebels; “[They] were already in search of the CPT before being personally contact by a CPT agent,” writes Gawin.²³³

Student motivations to join the CPT had its roots in the 1973 student democracy movement that violently clashed with police. It was not a pure democracy movement, however. It was also an anti-establishment movement like other 1960s-70s era student groups in the U.S., and it moreover had decidedly leftist and communist tendencies. Clashes with police and the 6 October 1976 Thammasat massacre codified the students’ loyalties. Gawin said there were few true Maoists in the student community, however.²³⁴

In addition to the campuses, CPT recruitment flourished in the rural areas. Tyrell Haberkorn describes farmers heavily exploited by landowners: “In both the 1950s and the 1970s, farmers organized to challenge what they perceived as unjust practices which forced them to often give more than half the yearly rice harvest to the landlords from whom they rented land.”²³⁵ She asserts some landowners cheated farmers and ignored their indebtedness.²³⁶ The CPT teamed up with disaffected farmers to petition the government to pass the 1974 Land Rent Control Act, which cut landowner’s share of tenet farmers’ rice crops by a third or more. Right wing paramilitaries assassinated scores of alleged communist farmers, which made many in the agricultural sector ripe for CPT recruiting.²³⁷

²³⁰ Chutima, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²³⁴ Y. Wedel, *The Thai Radicals and the Communist Party: Interaction of Ideology and Nationalism in the Forest, 1975-1980*, Occasional Paper No. 72 (Singapore: ISEAS, 1983), p. 3.

²³⁵ T. C. Haberkorn, “States Of Transgression: Politics, Violence, And Agrarian Transformation In Northern Thailand,” PhD dissertation presented to the faculty of the graduate school of Cornell University, August 2007, pp. 5, 90, 133.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 90, 133.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 137-38, 140-42, 150, 173-174, 204-08.

Another grievance was government corruption. General Saiyud said: “In particular, the abuse of power by some government officials has been the single most important factor in alienating people and breeding recruits for communist terrorism in Thailand.”²³⁸ Corruption in the business sector compounded government abuse and further disaffected the population.²³⁹

General Prem wrote of the cancer of corruption:

Of course, we had heard of oppressive practices which officialdom in remote areas were prone to. But to come across it at first hand made us intensely conscious of the intimidation, the harassment and exploitation, which had become all too routine. Once we succeeded in getting the villagers to talk to us, we learned of extortions, of husbands and sons being summarily “put away” at the slightest suspicion or of daughters being abducted to satisfy the casual needs of someone or another. In short, officialdom was its own enemy, turning ordinary villagers into communist sympathizers determined to avenge the wrongs perpetrated.²⁴⁰

Thai culture and COIN expert Jeffrey Race cites a classic corruption case in May 1967 in Huai Chom Poo village in Thoeng district, Chaing Rai province. A local authority demanded bribe money from Huai Chom Poo village as it began slashing and burning a mountain forest to plant crops, an illegal act. A second authority that did not know about the first bribe demanded yet another payment. Later, a group of provincial police went to Huai Chom Poo and demanded a third bribe. Fed up, the beleaguered tribesmen ambushed the police. The next day, the police raided Huai Chom Poo with 64 officers who engaged in a two and a half hour firefight with villagers.²⁴¹

Training

The CPT trained in Thailand and in Laos, Vietnam, and China. In Thailand, they took over remote and inaccessible areas.²⁴² In the early stages of CPT development, according to George K. Tanham, Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok in the 1970s, CPT recruits learned infantry tactics in Laos and Vietnam such as Long Mu near Hoa Binh. Military training courses lasted three to six months, the latter being a typical basic training time span. After finishing, many CPT recruits fought along side the Pathet

²³⁸ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²⁴⁰ General Prem Tinsulanonda, “Thai Experience in Combating Insurgency,” 4 March 1995, Manila, available on <<http://www.generalprem.com/Speech4.html>>.

²⁴¹ J. Race, “The War in Northern Thailand,” in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 8, No 1 (January 1974), pp. 98-99.

²⁴² Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

Lao against the royalist government in order to gain combat experience.²⁴³ They learned political tactics in China, mostly in Beijing, for two to five months.²⁴⁴ High-level cadres also trained in China for about the same length of time.²⁴⁵

The main school for political indoctrination was in Beijing. Gawin quoted a CPT leader as saying: “Most of us (the CPT leaders) graduated from the Marxist-Leninist Institute in Peking [Beijing], so we have been doing what we learned from that institute, setting up a form of revolution like the one we saw in China.”²⁴⁶ High-level cadres trained in China for approximately two to five months.²⁴⁷

Logistics and Sanctuary

Logistics from China – the CPT’s main provider – Vietnam and Laos followed the same lines of communication trainees followed. Says Bhumarat: “*Issan* has a border with Laos and Kampuchea, both areas where the communists were very active. It was easy to get supplies and people through their rear lines.”²⁴⁸ RTA General Harn Pathai adds: “The Hmong from Laos were fighting in Thailand, too, to spread communism, but more in a logistics and transport role than a direct combat role. There was continual infiltration into Thailand via Laos.”²⁴⁹

“With material support from Vietnam coming through Laos and Cambodia, the CPT became stronger,” says Bhumarat.²⁵⁰ According to Tanham, Chinese weapons shipments to the CPT in the early years of the war were not immense, but they greatly increased in the 1971-73 period.²⁵¹ In 1975-78, the Chinese provided approximately 600 tons of logistics and 1,000 tons of rice a year.²⁵² China, Vietnam, and especially Laos moreover provided sanctuary for the CPT, a key insurgency ingredient that allows guerrillas to retreat to safe zones where they can rest, recuperate, and reconstitute forces and logistics.²⁵³

Gawin writes the CPT’s headquarters was in northern Laos, but he does not say exactly where. “This capital, as Wirat Sakchirapapong, a Socialist Party Central Committee member, has stated, ...comprised hospitals (at least six) children’s schools, the CCPDF office, the research office, training camps, storehouses and

²⁴³ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²⁴⁴ Chutima, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, footnote 35, p 16.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, footnote 35, pp 16.

²⁴⁸ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

²⁴⁹ General Harn Pathai, Special Army Advisory General (RET), interview by author, 1 April 2008, Bangkok, Thailand, and Kerdphol, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²⁵⁰ Bhumarat Taksadipong, interview by author, 1 February 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

²⁵¹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48, 61, 69.

²⁵² Wedel, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁵³ Kerdphol, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

other buildings, and could not possibly have existed without enormous help from China.”²⁵⁴ Jeffrey Race noted another CPT base in Laos near the Thai border at Phu Miang, “...the site of a major communist base camp and training area. Infiltration of men would thus be easy southward down the ridgeline connecting Phu Miang with the tri-province boundary area.”²⁵⁵ A CIA report claimed there was a Chinese cultural school in Laos that kept the CPT linked to the Chinese Communist Party. It focused on reading, writing, and indoctrination.²⁵⁶

Indoctrination

CPT indoctrination – the education of its own membership to keep it thinking correctly and focused on the revolution – was prolific. Its main target population, the peasants, were poorly educated. CPT leaders mainly told their subordinates to follow the party’s leadership and Mao’s thought. Writes Gawin, “...the CPT’s educational system was narrow and conservative...,” and this kept the movement from “...becoming a true Marxist-Leninist party.” More, even as it told peasants to follow Mao’s thought, the CPT itself by and large did not immerse itself in the Chinese leader’s teachings. According to Gawin, “...CPT cadres did not read Mao’s works much or even memorize quotations, and if they did they never really understood them.”²⁵⁷

Instead, the CPT had widely distributed booklets that instructed their ranks on how the CPT viewed the ruling elite, the government of Thailand, international trade, the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the like.²⁵⁸ Gawin acknowledges the CPT violated some tenets of Mao in keeping its cadres only partially indoctrinated. Mao said followers should be both “red,” meaning communist, and “expert,” meaning politically acute. The CPT just wanted its cadres red – moral and disciplined.²⁵⁹

CPT indoctrination changed somewhat when the student movement joined its ranks. The communist-minded students increased the effectiveness of the CPT’s indoctrination messages and taught “revolutionary morality,” that rebelling for justice and equal status for all was congruous with being a true human being.²⁶⁰

Propaganda

The CPT delivered its propaganda through four methods: the VOPT, by armed propaganda teams, word of mouth, and the written word. The primary goal of the

²⁵⁴ Chutima, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

²⁵⁵ Race, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

²⁵⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

²⁵⁷ Chutima, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

propaganda effort was to persuade people to see history, economics, politics, and outside threats through Marxist eyes. Communism will not work if the people have different ideas about these issues. Within these issues, the CPT focused on government shortcomings. Marks notes almost all insurgencies exploit the grievances that cause people to resent governments.²⁶¹

This was fertile ground for CPT propagandists. Many students, workers, and farmers felt a high level of angst about the dilapidated and oppressive political-economic situation. *Issan* people, the hill tribes, and Malay Muslims as minorities all had cultural, economic, political, and security grievances with Bangkok – especially *Issan*. Says Bhumarat: “*Issan* had the seeds for revolution for years and years. It was easy to get them to go against the government.”²⁶²

Unless a family was urban, it was likely quite isolated. Radio connected villages all over the region to the rest of the world with news and varying political and economic ideas. The CPT used the VOPT airwaves as a means to propagandize, and it was highly effective.²⁶³

Some armed propaganda cadres saw the people were their most precious assets, and they were dedicated to getting the CPT’s message out to their target audiences even at the risk of being ambushed and killed by an RTA patrol.²⁶⁴ Others behaved more Viet Cong-like, which is fitting because the North Vietnamese Army trained many of them. Writes Tanham: “Early in 1966, the CTs [communists terrorists] in the northeast began to conduct armed propaganda meetings, which combined propaganda with terror. On these occasions a guerrilla band would appear in a village, intimidate the population by show of arms and sometimes violence, and then deliver long lectures on the failures of the RTG and the unhappy lives of the people.”²⁶⁵

Word-of-mouth propaganda worked similarly. They could be rumors of an alleged government offensive against the peasant class, conversations in student groups, or CPT propagandists disguised as peasants intermingling with locals complaining of government policies and heralding communist alternatives. Word of mouth and the VOPT made tactical guerrilla victories – firefights, for example – seem grander than they really were. It served to rally the people to join the winning army.²⁶⁶ As for written propaganda, the CPT used propaganda chits – such as for recruiting –

²⁶¹ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁶² Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*, and Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

²⁶³ Ahmed Ghazi, Colonel, Malaysian Army (RET), interview by author, 26 February 2008, KAL Airport, Pan Pacific Hotel, Malaysia.

²⁶⁴ Srisompob Jitpiromsri, Senior Professor, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, interview by author, 22 March 2008, Hat Yai, Songkhla, Thailand, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁶⁵ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

and also newspapers such as the student-run, NSCT *Athipat*, and *Asia* magazine.²⁶⁷

Educational propaganda explained benefits of Mao's communism and the perils of Bangkok's policies. This was necessary because most rural people were apolitical and wanted to be left alone to farm and live day to day. But by "educating" such persons about the abuse of the rich and the uneven distribution of income, the CPT "enlightened" the masses to realities they were previously unaware of. Made aware of wealthy "indifference and hostility" toward the poor, the CPT told the peasants that justice existed within the CPT.²⁶⁸ With CPT propaganda, writes Saiyud, "...rural people slowly awoke to the realities of their relatively deprived existence...."²⁶⁹

Beyond simply pointing out Bangkok's shortcomings, the CPT offered solutions to rural problems. Tanham writes it offered villagers "...tractors, food, regular salaries for guerrillas, and official status within the government." For the young, the CPT offered "...opportunities for travel and education..." These were popular messages that resonated amongst the deprived sections of society.²⁷⁰ Realistically, however, the CPT was in no position to grant any of these things, and it rarely told the population they came with Maoist strings attached.

Propaganda attacks on the Thai Royal Family were necessary for communism to sweep into power. On 23 September 1977, the CPT launched a direct attack on the king, titled, *Who is the Father of Thai Medicine?* In it, the CPT said the king sent troops to kill students at Thammasat University in October 1976. By saying such, the CPT linked the king with the most heinous government act perpetrated on the Thai population in modern times. Labelling the king as an instigator of the 6 October violence, the CPT tried to cast the king – often a revered and benevolent figure in Thailand – into one of its most loathsome enemies.²⁷¹

Weaponry

For the most part, the CPT relied on light infantry weapons. In the early days of the war, a then young General Harn Pathai – as an army lieutenant – says "They did not have very good weapons to fight with when I was [first] there. They had some M-1 carbines, M-3 'Grease Guns,' things like that."²⁷² In 1969, a CIA report cited the first discovery of Chinese supplied AK-47s to the CPT. With the AK-47s came heavier weapons the CPT had been training on in North Vietnam, weapons such as rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), 60mm mortars, and M-79 grenade

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50, and Chutima, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁶⁸ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

²⁷⁰ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

²⁷¹ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

²⁷² Pathai, *op. cit.*, and Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

launchers. Radios, medical supplies, and uniforms came in, too.²⁷³ Later, in 1980 when General Harn was an infantry battalion commander, he says the CPT was much better armed: “The CPT was stronger than when I first fought them. They had better weapons and more people. They had AK-47s, RPGs, and a lot of mines, too. Lots of mines.”²⁷⁴

CPT Operations

The CPT used classic guerrilla tactics in its military operations. It conducted hit and run raids, set up ambushes, burned down buildings, assassinated people, used terror to a certain extent, and built elaborate defensive positions on mountain bases to repel conventional military attacks by the government. CPT units used the jungle, difficult terrain, and night to their advantage as part of their doctrine. “They stayed deep in the jungles,” says General Harn.

In the day, they stayed in the villages. At night, they fought in the jungles. ... The CPT, they did patrols and ambushes. And [they deployed] land mines. They used land mines to place on trails where they thought the army would walk. They mostly targeted soldiers, not so much the population. They did not fight the people because they wanted their support. But if they knew you were helping the Army, they’d kill you.²⁷⁵

Harn says despite their lack of heavy weaponry, the CPT had hard and skilled fighters. They did not shy from combat. “They had more advantage because they knew the landscape. Their fighting skill was good. Normally, they would have the advantage of maneuver because of terrain appreciation. And for the same reasons, they could set up ambushes easily. When we first began fighting them this way, you never knew where they’d hit you.”²⁷⁶ And though the Thai government never admitted the CPT had seized certain areas of Thailand, it had indeed occupied and mastered various pieces of territory. As a result, says General Harn: “There was some trepidation on behalf of the troops when going through CPT prone areas.”²⁷⁷

Tanham writes: “As 1970 unfolded, the CTs turned more and more to armed encounters and attacks on communications. A number of bridges were burned, ambushes were laid on the main Sakon Nakhon-Nakhon Phanom highway, and the first armored personnel carrier was mined.”²⁷⁸ As an example, Tanham writes: “On 28 February 1970, eighty or ninety CTs operating in six groups burned nine

²⁷³ Central Intelligence Agency, *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 65, 72, 78

²⁷⁴ Pathai, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

bridges, blocked two roads, attacked village protection units, and laid an armed ambush against the army, all in one district of Nakhon Phanom.”²⁷⁹

There are multiple cases that prove the CPT’s fighting capabilities. The CPT carried out a campaign of ambushes against the government’s Mae Sot-Umphong road building project. In December 1969, communist forces ambushed a roadwork crew in Tak province, killing four and blocking the quick reaction force (QRF) sent to rescue them.²⁸⁰ In 1971 at kilometer 47, the CPT ambushed a police truck, killing seven. A photograph of the truck shows a beat up cab peppered by bullets, indicating the CPT used overwhelming fire superiority and possibly a road mine.²⁸¹ Such incidents forced the government to abandon the road project later that same year.²⁸²

On 24 December 1976, an unknown number of Meo CPT ambushed a column of 17 Border Patrol Police (BPP) on patrol. They were near their base in Mae Lamao village. The ambushers killed three and sustained no casualties themselves. The operation indicated the Meo knew the route of the BPP, their base camp’s location, and had effective exfiltration routes planned. It was professionally planned and executed.²⁸³

Targeting

The CPT targeted Thai government civilians, military, and police and their activities. Government personnel the CPT aimed at included elected and appointed civilian administrators such as governors and village heads. These people usually headed up government security and development programs. The CPT also put development workers on its hit list. The CPT did not want government development projects to be successful because they could sway the people to the government’s side. The CPT launched violence against road building projects, social aid centers, and murdered the workers, too. The CPT moreover targeted civilians recruited to help Thai security forces at the village level. These included village defense units, to be discussed later, that provided overt and covert intelligence and defense services.

4. People – The At-Risk Population

During the communist COIN, the Thai people lived in 73 provinces (now there are 75) ruled by appointed governors and district administrators. It was largely an agricultural society that Saiyud described as “docile and politically apathetic.” He

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁸¹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁸² Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

²⁸³ Race, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

moreover said that “master-client” and “tolerant Buddhist” ethics were two of their key characteristics.²⁸⁴ In 1966, farming employed 80 percent of the national labor force, accounted for 32 percent of GDP, and produced 80 percent of value of exported goods.²⁸⁵

As discussed earlier, the *Issan in the northeast* were among the most susceptible to the CPT. The terrain in that area is both flat and dry, and dotted with forest covered hills with maximum elevations of 3,000 feet. The wet season is not enough to sustain effective agriculture. Droughts in *Issan* in the 1950s and 1960s added to the agony in this rice-growing, overpopulated area. Its soil was less than fertile, and rice was its main product. *Issan* at that time was home to one third of Thailand’s 40 million people. Saiyud says substandard communications, inferior medical services, and a second rate educational system helped make the northeast chronically impoverished.

Its population is closely related to Laos but, as Tanham writes, “...definitely Thai in their political and economic allegiance.”²⁸⁶ Handley points out, however, that Thai was the third most popular language of *Issan* in the 1960s, after Lao and Khmer. They had their own customs and an independent political streak. More than 100,000 Cambodians lived in *Issan*’s border region, along with 50,000 Vietnamese.²⁸⁷ These enclaves presented the CPT numerous recruiting opportunities.

General Prem wrote of *Issan*: “Generally, villages were inaccessible. One day, having covered some distance on foot on the way to a village, we came across coconut trees. Tired and thirsty, we asked the owner who was standing nearby if we could buy some coconuts. He happily brought over the coconuts, [and we] asked how much we should pay for the coconuts, he said that he didn’t know because he had never sold a coconut in his life. To me, this showed the extent of the neglect. People were being abandoned to an existence beyond the pale of society.”²⁸⁸

While the northeast is flat, the North is mountainous and jungle clad with peaks reaching 8,000 feet. As a result, it has scores of areas accessible only by foot,

²⁸⁴ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

²⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, “Counterinsurgency in Thailand, Volume IV: Appendixes: The Insurgent Threat and the RTG Counterinsurgency Effort,” written for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tasked through the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group, (Washington, DC: Institute for Defense Analyses, International and Social Studies Division, June 1968), p. 4, 7.

²⁸⁶ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁸⁷ P. M. Handley, *The King Never Smiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 127.

²⁸⁸ Official website of General Prem Tinsulanonda, “Thai Experience in Combating Insurgency,” 4 March 1995, Manila, available on <<http://www.generalprem.com/Speech4.html>>.

helicopter, and short landing and takeoff aircraft. Four major rivers run through the north, including the Chao Phya that flows through Bangkok. Rain is prevalent, and the soil is ideal for agriculture. Lowland farmers – ethnic Thai – grew rice, and there was some phosphate mining and teak tree logging. The road network during that time was small as well, and it hindered development work and economic expansion. As many as 500,000 hill people occupied the north's mountain range.²⁸⁹

The two main tribes were the Yao and the Hmong. The Thai hill tribes had their own customs, religions, and were fiercely proud.²⁹⁰ They viewed outsiders with suspicion. The rest of the northern population, some 5.5 million, were Thai and occupied the foothills and lowlands.²⁹¹ The lowland farmers were by no means destitute, but government services did not extend to them so readily because of geography. They had no stiff allegiance to a distant central government.

The hill tribes' relationships with the Thai and the government were bad. Some Thai ridiculed and conned hill people when they took their goods to markets. Many Thai saw the tribes as inferior. Their citizenship status was in limbo for decades, and during the 1960s-70s, the Bangkok categorized them as refugees because they were nomadic and did not recognize national or internal borders. In the mountainous jungles, borders were not well marked. Since they were not citizens, they could not own land, nor could they have government jobs. And since they lived in what the Thai government considered a royal nature preserve area, Jeffrey Race asserts technically, they were illegal squatters.²⁹² The hill tribes lived by hunting and gathering and also slash and burn agriculture. The latter destroyed the mountain ecosystem. They also grew opium, which was illegal.²⁹³

The south had two sections, the mid and far south. The mid-south ran from north of Songkhla, to Prachuap Kiri Khan province. Rice and rubber cultivation, tin mining, and fishing were its key industries. When tin and rubber prices were high, the region prospered. In the 1960s, when such commodities declined, its economy faltered. A rice shortage added to the difficulties. Tanham notes in the 1960s-70s, the crime rate was high in this region; Nakhon Si Thammarat province had one of the highest murder rates in all of Thailand.²⁹⁴ No one was sure why.

The far south was the third poorest region behind the northeast and north. It was, and still is, 80 percent ethnically Malay Muslim – Thai Buddhists make most of the remainder. Songkhla has a large Chinese population replete with Chinese style pagodas in Hat Yai city. Thai Malay Muslims have their own customs; many prefer *sharia* law to Bangkok's laws. Low-level resistance to Bangkok's rule festered

²⁸⁹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁹⁰ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁹¹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-8, and Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁹² Race, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-100.

²⁹³ Marks, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-105, and Race, *op. cit.*, p. 106, and Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁹⁴ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

there for decades, sometimes boiling over into intense periods of violence. Like the northeast, Bangkok neglected the far south's welfare for years, and many government agencies sent civil servants there as punishment. Government corruption in the far south was high. Few Thai Malay Muslims held local government positions.²⁹⁵

Aside from these three at-risk regions, the rest of the country, that was ethnic Thai and Buddhist, became susceptible to rebellion as well by the early to mid-1970s. They fell under the rule of an increasingly autocratic government, and a global recession had set in. Wages had fallen, and inflation rose to five percent a month. A million Thais were unemployed, and in one case in 1976, 200,000 workers went on strike. The government assumed a dictatorial stance and arrested political opposition, no matter how docile, without due process, allegedly executing many. With no room for even loyal political opposition, a large swath of central Thai that never would have considered rebellion became vulnerable to the CPT. Student protest groups, full of idealism and zeal for confrontation with the police, added to the government's folly. The more violent students weakened their own political position by alienating themselves from the mainstream. Without a just central government, societal weakness resulted. CPT agents easily stepped into the void and infiltrated student groups, intellectuals, laborers, and the like.²⁹⁶

5. Thai Communist COIN Strategy

The Thai government changed its communist COIN strategy, informally known as "the CPM plan," at least four times during the war. This occurred for two reasons: CPT progress and government COIN shortcomings. Communist Thai COIN era expert Kanok Wongtrangan writes, "...the CPM Plan was gradually developed through learning from the mistakes and experiences of the government in dealing with the communist insurgency."²⁹⁷

Government shortcomings included executive instability. From 1963-80, Thailand went through nine different governments. Each time a new regime came to power, it brought with it its political and patronage networks, plus people with different socio-economic and military ideas from the last administration. This impacted all Thai government policies. Six PM changes took place in a mere four years from 1973-77, critical years in the communist COIN era.²⁹⁸ It is not surprising that there is an inverse relationship between the power and effectiveness of the central government and the communist resistance.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

²⁹⁶ Handley, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-218, 229, and Chutima, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, 22, 23, 26, and Wedel, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁹⁷ K. Wongtrangan, "Change and Persistence in Thai Counter-Insurgency Policy," ISIS Occasional Paper, No. 1, (Bangkok: Institute of Security and International Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, 1983), p. 10.

²⁹⁸ LePoer, *op. cit.*, "Table 14. Prime Ministers, 1932-87."

1965 – The CPM Plan

In December 1965, the government developed the Civilian-Police-Military (CPM) program to confront the growing communist problem.²⁹⁹ The initial strategy was to apply kinetic force to destroy CPT military units and to provide economic development via aid projects to uplift impoverished people and improve their standard of living. A side goal of the latter was to win political loyalty. Communist COIN analysts Chai-Anan Samudavanija, Kusuma Snitwongse, and Suchit Bunbongkarn argue the 1965 plan leaned too heavily on suppression, specifically search and destroy, one of the reasons it languished. The government did not fully understand the CPT's capabilities and intentions to bleed political support from Bangkok. They also claim a mere five people in the Thai government really understood communism. In 1965, then Chief of Army Intelligence, Prayuth Charumanee, asserted he did not understand how to fight the CPT.³⁰⁰ This is interesting because the Thai government had been politically fighting and arresting communists since at least the 1950s. Apparently, it never sought to fully understand the movement.

1967 – The 09/10 Plan

In 1967, the government tweaked its COIN strategy based on results of lackluster combat operations against the CPT. Toward the end of 1966, the RTA and RTAF, joining together as the 13th Combined Regiment as a special task force (TF), conducted a combined, large scale suppression operation in Na Kae, Nakorn Panom province. It did not net many CPT, and the army's top brass saw the folly. Large-scale suppression operations were ineffective. Accordingly, it upgraded the CPM strategy and rolled out a new plan, the 09/10 Plan. (The 09/10 Plan signified the Buddhist calendar years 2509 and 2510, which translate to 1966 and 1967 on the Western calendar.)

The government concluded that the insurgency had successfully taken root amongst the people, and they had to reverse this trend and make the people into a defensive element of the government's strategy. In other words, the CPT used the people for its offense, and the government decided to use it as defense, something it called "mass mobilization," which was straight out of the Maoist playbook. The 09/10 Plan mandated village self-defense forces. This concept was essentially the same as the CPM plan, but it formally parsed CPM tasks and made them general orders. It also was a response to the popular backlash against heavy suppression.

²⁹⁹ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 143.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

The 09/10 Plan had four main strategies:³⁰¹

1. To clear the guerrillas from the target areas;
2. to provide local security;
3. to stimulate civilian action; and
4. to initiate short-term development projects for the villagers.

Kanok identifies weaknesses in the plan as poor RTA and TNP coordination and too much focus on suppression.³⁰² More, the CPT's counter strategy of political subversion and guerrilla warfare and some terror proved more effective than the government's plan. The COIN strategy fell short, and CPT ranks grew.

1969 – The 110/2512 Plan

The RTA changed its strategy yet again in on 30 May 1969 via the 110/2512 plan. Kanok contends several factions evolved within the military to influence strategy, 1) those who believed in suppression, 2) those who believed development was the key to political allegiance, and 3) those who believed in a combination of both.³⁰³ CSOC had plenty of the latter two groups, and they had the biggest influence on the 110/2512 Plan.³⁰⁴ The new strategy stated:³⁰⁵

1. By all means, to persuade people from all social strata to have trust and faith in the authorities' work and the government's administration; to win over the peoples' mind in order to maintain their loyalty to the government;
2. To provide security to people, so they can peacefully live and work in their village;
3. To formulate a system which will facilitate the peoples' acquisition of adequate knowledge and experience in economic social, political and military as well as psychological questions in order to protect their families and villages from communist threats, with the support and assistance of the government; this is the 'supreme objective' of communist prevention and suppression;
4. In prevention and suppression, political and psychological, to utilize public relations measures as primary instruments and military or severe physical suppression or [judicial] measures only when necessary.

³⁰¹ Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, and Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

³⁰⁵ Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

The 1969 strategy marked a significant change from past schemes. The first tenet was political – winning hearts and minds of the population by good governance. It required civil servants and military and police to shed corruption, become more professional, and put the people’s needs first. In doing so, Bangkok admitted it had governance problems. Putting the people’s needs first included paying attention to their day-to-day needs – life at the village level. General Saiyud said: “The question of village security is the foremost problem confronting us today in Thailand and it is my belief that basic to this question is the mental attitude of villagers toward their future.”³⁰⁶ He stressed the government had to tackle the effects of bad harvests, access to schools, and care for infants and the elderly. These were core security issues outside the kinetic realm, but just as important as destroying the CPT’s military units.

The second new tenet was psyops to win villagers’ minds – to educate them about Bangkok’s policies and warn about the perils of communism. This became the government’s “supreme objective,” a turn from the past when the supreme objective was the destruction of the enemy’s military units. The government’s psyops included educational sessions and both soft and hard propaganda – gentle political spin and outright lies.

The third new strategic aspect made sure the public understood the government’s communist COIN across every spectrum, security, political, and economic. This way, it would understand the government’s intentions when its various agencies and security forces came to the villages. It moreover proclaimed the government would use political means as its primary COIN weapon and suppression as its secondary weapon. Unfortunately, only a handful of officers, some in the Second Army, embraced PM Order 110/2512, and nothing really changed. Conventional suppression tactics continued to be employed widely by the government.³⁰⁷

Strategic Reconfiguring – Road to the 66/2523 Plan

This experience in the late 1960s sent various RTA officers and security officials back to the drawing board. They spent the entire 1970s studying the insurgency and how to defeat it. Past strategies were only marginally helpful and coordination was nil. Chief among these were Second Army Commander General Prem, and his Chief of Staff, General Harn Leenanond. The U.S. had some influence, too, via its embassy and CIA COIN specialists, many of them British contractors from the Malaya campaign.

While General Prem was Second Army Commander (1 October 1974-30 September 1977), he ran his own COIN program based on the best practices of existing strategies and added those of his own and his staff. As Kanok writes, Prem and Harn saw insurgency as “a consequence of conflict among the people

³⁰⁶ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

³⁰⁷ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

and/or conflict between the people and government officials. This conflict arises from various causes, e.g., exploitation by local influential people, poverty, social injustice, corruption, and abuse of power by the authorities.”³⁰⁸ Politics, then, became the main weapon in the COIN arsenal. They called this policy *karnmuang nam karn taharn*, or “politics leads the military.”³⁰⁹ Solving insurgency, Prem and Harn figured, took cooperation with the people, improving governance, bettering the people’s lives, and providing security from CPT intimidation and violence. General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, by 1971 Chief of Army Operations, was also a key architect of this strategy. All three men were proponents of the CPM concept. This also increased intelligence flow from the people and heightened the political connection between the government and the population. And despite all the political and development strategies, Prem and his lieutenants firmly believed suppression was still necessary to physically drive a wedge between the insurgents and the people. They just believed force should not be applied haphazardly.

As for Prem, Harn, and Chavalit’s ideas on political issues, they believed in widespread psychological operations and PR. This included educational seminars on the perils of communism, and identifying key CPT personnel in the villages and singling them out for re-education. Consolidating all these ideas into a single strategy, Prem arrived at, “the villages surrounding the jungle,” which was the direct opposite of Mao and the CPT’s, “villages surrounding the cities.”³¹⁰

Other influential COIN persons included men such as General Saiyud Kerdphol, the first Director of Operations and later Chief of Staff of CSOC.³¹¹ General Saiyud broke down his ideas for COIN into subjective equations. The variables for his “COIN algebra” were: G = government, P = people (“or target villages”), C = CPT, and V = victory.³¹² A failed strategy, Saiyud believed, followed the following formula:

$G - (C + P) = -V$, or the government minus a combination of the communists plus the people equals defeat.

A stalemate strategy, he figured was when the government plus a somewhat cooperative people minus the communists equalled stalemate, or:

$G + -P - C = +-V$.³¹³

³⁰⁸ Wongtrangan, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

³⁰⁹ S. Saniwa, “Democracy and Elections: A Case Study Of The Malay-Muslims In Southern Thailand,” available on <<http://gotoknow.org/blog/niksof/101398/>>.

³¹⁰ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

³¹¹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

To win, Saiyud wanted a different formula, one where the people and the government were in the fight together, or:

$P^G - C = V$. In this case, the people, supported and empowered by the government as a force multiplier, minus the communists equals victory.³¹⁴

1980 – The 66/2523 Plan

In 1978 the RTA concluded at a secret meeting the government was suddenly making ground against the CPT. General Prem and Harn's CPM program in *Issan*, their political impetus, and focused offensives began to bare fruit. Villagers were cooperating more, and Chai-Anan, Kusuma, and Suchit conclude 1978 – under Kriangsak – was the most successful year for the government's COIN campaign. Part of this was also due to improved intelligence, which resulted in a greater understanding of the CPT and the peoples' motivations for joining it.³¹⁵

For the new COIN strategy to take effect throughout the entire national security structure, it took Prem seizing power in 1980. When he did, the government applied the plan at lightening speed, partly because it was a readymade and already in action in *Issan*. Prem took over the PM's position from his ally, Kriangsak, on 3 March 1980, and issued Thailand's final and successful COIN strategy on 23 April 1980 as Prime Minister's Order No. 66/2523, the "Policy to Win Over Communism."³¹⁶ General Harn was one of its main authors.³¹⁷ Paraphrased, the strategy consisted of an overview of Thailand's strategic situation, the government's objective, its policy, the types of operations to be carried out, and the administrative structure of the campaign.³¹⁸

Overview

1. The 66/2523 Plan recognized there was an ongoing Cold War with all its associated problems such as lacking energy supplies [likely a nod to the 1973 oil crisis], and the international military balance between the superpowers. Communist war had come to Thailand as a part of such global troubles.

2. The government recognized the CPT had exploited Thailand's governmental troubles as its primary means to sway the population to its side, and that it had spread from the jungles to the cities. It moreover saw weakness in the CPT; that it was not sure it could rely on the proletariat for a communist revolution.

3. The government stated it would protect Nation, Religion, and King, the heart of Thai domestic, international, and defense policy, which included mass reform to

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³¹⁵ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³¹⁷ Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Appendix I.

ensure good governance, uphold the welfare of the people, and to instill idealism amongst the Thai people that centered on sacrifice for the common good. The military swore to protect the monarchy and to defeat communism, the chief threat to national security.

Objective

The objective of the 66/2523 Plan was: “To put an end in the shortest possible time the communist revolutionary war which is of the utmost significance and danger to national security.”

Policy

The plan stated the government’s COIN policy was to wage a continual political campaign against the CPT and its United Front organizations while also using force against its armed forces. The policy also sought to adopt neutrality, a veiled gesture toward having been aligned with the U.S. and the political angst it had caused the left.

Operations

The operations section had nine points. First, the political offensive took precedence, which entailed convincing the people the land was theirs, and they had a stake in protecting it. The military’s role was to support all political offensives. Second, war had to be declared on corruption, bad governance, and poverty. Third, rules of conduct were necessary to promote harmony between the many classes of Thai people and that everyone had to sacrifice their positions in society for the common good – country first, regardless of status. Fourth, political participation of all ranks of society was vital not only for a better society, but also to assuage grievances. Fifth, all democratic movements were welcome and encouraged as long as they were not communist organizations in disguise.

Sixth, all elements in the CPM equation were to carry out both armed and political campaigns. Political campaigns had to be uniform across the entire nation – all units had to promulgate the same message. That message was the spread of democracy throughout Thailand to insure individual liberties. (In the long run, democracy did not spread as in Western circles, but it spread enough to help defeat the CPT.) Armed operations were to be executed according to the regional threat level and in proportion to CPT activities. The goal of the latter was to, “...pressure, cut down, and destroy armed bands on a continuous basis.” Seventh, all prisoners of war and defectors were to be treated as, “fellow countrymen,” and the government was responsible for integrating them back into society.

Eighth, the CPT infrastructure absolutely had to be rooted out of the towns, eliminated, and blocked from ever returning. Organizations had to be vetted to insure they were not part of a united front, and no group, surreptitiously or otherwise, could be allowed to separate the people from the government and create war conditions. Ninth, the importance of psyops – “information,

psychological measure, and public relations” – was paramount in every aspect of COIN, and it would be carried out at each phase of every operation against the CPT. A tenth and unlisted strategy was to separate the CPT from its regional sponsors, namely China and Vietnam. Thailand’s main tool in this regard was diplomacy, one of its legendary strengths.

6. Coordination for the Communist COIN

1965 – CSOC

In 1965, as Bangkok developed its COIN strategy, it also created a coordinating agency to manage the COIN, the CSOC. The government made it legal via the 1952 Anti-Communist Act and PM Order No. 219/2508. Prapass was technically in charge of CSOC but General Saiyud ran its day-to-day operations as Chief of Staff of Operations.³¹⁹ The Thai saw coordination as crucial. Marks interviewed Saiyud on the subject, who said: “Coordination is the key to winning, but all must look at the problem through the same eyes. You need a common blueprint upon which to base the plan.”³²⁰

CSOC’s mission was to plan and execute suppression operations and development programs against the CPT throughout Thailand. It had control of not only military units placed under it, but police forces as well. Sometimes, however, police, army, and civilian agency headquarters bypassed CSOC and passed their own orders to their respective CPM elements in the field. This worked against coordination and muddied COIN operations.³²¹ More, scores of other government agencies also ran their own development projects outside of CSOC, and this, too, crowded the COIN arena.

CSOC headquartered in Bangkok at the Rose Palace via its Operations and Coordination Center, the agency’s “nerve center.” It had staff sections called “committees,” which included intelligence, operations planning, and psychological operations groups. To execute COIN operations, CSOC had multitudes of CPM centers in the field supported by intelligence units.³²²

CSOC placed CPM centers in CPT affected provinces. Their missions were to plan missions to separate the population from the CPT by using CPM strategy and assets. The assets were civilian development personnel, local security forces, the

³¹⁹ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53, 57, 101, and Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, p. 6, and Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

³²⁰ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 102, and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

³²¹ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 99, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86, 89, and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

³²² Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 99, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86, 89, and Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

police, and the military.³²³ CSOC did not micro-manage CPM units in their daily routines, however. Under CSOC, CPM cells designed their own operations.³²⁴ It was a decentralized command system.

Both provincial governors and Army Regional Commanders ran CPM units at the provincial level, a job technically just for the governors, but the RTA was powerful and wanted a leadership role. An RTA general commanded the first CPM unit ever deployed, called CPM-1, stationed in Mukdahan.³²⁵

More, RTA regional commanders had seniority over the governors, a product of the Anti-Communist Act of 1969. Says Major General Perapong Manakit of the National Security Council: "...for example, the Third Army area has 17 governors, and its military commander could call all 17 together and get things done. All army areas operated like this. [CSOC] was clever enough to set up area offices. The governors participated in this system via the Mol [Ministry of Interior], a civilian run agency. But they were all under the Army Area Commanders."³²⁶ Governors, however, had both military and police advisors on staff to aid them with security issues and civilians to assist them with development programs.³²⁷

CSOC had under it five Joint Security Centers (JSCs) at the regional level that fused and analyzed intelligence from all Thai intelligence agencies – the joint aspect of the JSCs – to feed CSOC planning.³²⁸ While the JSCs relied on multiple agencies for collection, CSOC did have a special collection and analysis intelligence team headed by Somchai Rakwijit. He sent operatives into rural areas undercover to collect information on the state of the at-risk population and their susceptibility to the CPT. They moreover sought information on the capabilities and intentions of the CPT.³²⁹

At the provincial level under the governors and were the provincial CPMs. They were permanent organs that coordinated CPM actions at district and village levels. Under these were temporary units called Communist Suppression Committees (CSCs).³³⁰

³²³ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 99, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³²⁴ Major General Perapong Manakit, Thai National Security Council, interview by author, 24 March 2008, Ministry of Defense, Bangkok, Thailand.

³²⁵ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 99, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³²⁶ Perapong, *op. cit.*

³²⁷ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 99, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³²⁸ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 99, and Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³²⁹ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³³⁰ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

CSOC's troops and police came from existing military and police units.³³¹ If, for example, CSOC needed a battalion-sized formation to operate in *Issan*, it drew them from the Second Army because *Issan* was the Second Army's AOR. Drawing from the police worked similarly. Civilians in CPM came from two sources: government civilians who were expert in niche areas such as from the Ministry of Agriculture or Education, from local government bodies such as the Department of Local Administration (DoLA), and from the at-risk population itself.

The CSOC-CPM Process

CSOC and its CPM units approached villages in a methodical manner. The village was the heart of Thailand's social structure and the CPT's chosen battleground. "The question of the security and development of the village, therefore, is at the heart of any government campaign to defeat the insurgency," said General Saiyud.³³²

CSOC researched the anthropology of villages and identified five key leaders it had to coordinate with. If it won these trust of these people, then in theory, it could win the trust of villages. They were:³³³

1. The village headman (*phuyai baan*): the most popular and respected man in village, elected by popular vote. The headman's main task was to mediate village disputes and provide security. (*Kamnans*, commonly referred to as village heads, were *tambon*/subdistrict chiefs in charge of clusters of villages and were appointed by governors.)
2. The religious layman (*makkh-thayok*): the link between the village and the nearby Buddhist monastery (*wat*). He organized religious ceremonies for the village.
3. The teacher (*khru*): the smartest person in the village. He taught village children and helped solve problems. It was highly respected position.
4. The family doctor (*mor prajam baan*): the village physician. He used both modern and traditional techniques, the latter of which might include magic and herbal remedies.
5. The midwife (*mor tam-yae*): she supervised childbirth and used both traditional and modern methods.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Identifying Target Areas

CSOC sent CPM units to areas where it thought the CPT was active or areas where it might be active in the future. This required intelligence on the at-risk population, CPT activities, and CPT targeting trends. Only then could CSOC tell if CPT infiltration was approaching or had occurred. Accordingly, CSOC divided at-risk areas into five categories and had slightly different COIN plans for each type. They were:³³⁴

1. External critical areas, the CPT's initial base of operations
2. Internal critical areas, the CPT's projected next base of operations
3. Border populations, or areas of CPT infiltration
4. The hill tribe population
5. Other minority groups the CPT might target

For external critical areas, CSOC used the classic CPM model. It consisted of a village security team (VST) of local villagers set up and trained by the TNP.³³⁵ This was different from pre-1965 village defense forces where village outsiders constituted some security units. CSOC wanted to increase it, and "local boys" were more likely to fight harder for their own villages, and their inhabitants were more than likely to support them.

The village headman was chief of the village defense force, but the police were its tactical commanders on operations. In case a VST needed support, it could rely on a host of forces above it, namely troops from a national local reserve force called *Komg Asa Raksa Dindaen*, or *Or Sor* for short ("Volunteer Defense Corps," VDC), and the police and the army acting as QRFs stationed on nearby strategic ground such as crossroads, rail stations, and towns.³³⁶

Many rural villages, especially the hill tribes, did not want too much interaction with outsiders. For this reason, they frequently did not want the RTA camped out in or next to their villages. Additionally, the presence of security forces in or next to a village was sure to invite an attack by the CPT. Therefore, the CPM program distanced heavy forces from the at-risk villages just enough for there to be a social and threat gap between the two, but not too far to neutralize effective QRF response times.

This was the optimum CPM model, which went through several iterations. By 1969, there were 57 designated external critical areas, 30 in the northeast, 13 in the north, seven in the central region, and seven in the mid south. This amounted to 628 villages, 410 in the northeast, 100 in the north, 46 in the central area, and 72 in the mid south.³³⁷

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

For internal critical areas, the government focused on CPT prevention using rudimentary security tactics, intelligence, development, and psyops. The goal was to secure villages before the CPT did. Much of this involved linking with and shoring up the capacity of local provincial and district authorities that who saw the threat coming in the early days of the war but felt they had been abandoned by Bangkok.³³⁸

For border populations, military and police, especially the BPP, established relationships with villages along the border with Burma, Laos, and Cambodia to monitor and curb CPT infiltration. The government harnessed locals because of their intimate knowledge of border town life, habits, terrain, and border crossing routes.³³⁹ Their operations consisted of patrolling, surveillance, and ambushes. The authorities provided the majority of the kinetic element, and the locals provided the intelligence and guide element.

The CSOC plan for the hill tribe populations was more complex. It had three stages: 1) development, 2) security, and 3) rehabilitation of CPT infected villages. It was broadly akin to the external critical areas approach but with added political and socio-economic features specifically designed to appeal to the hill tribes and to shape their behavior to Bangkok's will on halting ecologically unfriendly slash and burn agriculture and the like.³⁴⁰ Since hill tribe terrain was hilly and mountainous, Bangkok began using the "oil spot strategy" to secure lowland villages and then a "loyal ring strategy" in the hills in attempts to surround higher elevations where it could.³⁴¹

Thai COIN operations did not always follow this model, however. Early in the war, there were RTA units that did development work in the villages. They camped next to villages and helped them harvest rice, make small repairs, and protected them.

Jealousy and infighting, however, muted CSOC a mere two years after it began. Powerful Army Region Commanders saw CSOC siphon off its troops and resources for COIN, so they mobilized against it. They were moreover worried General Saiyud would gain too much power at their expense, and they lobbied General Prapass to return suppression operations back to them. In 1967, he relented.³⁴² Former intelligence officer Somchai Rakwijit explains it this way: "The army commanders often think that they know the situation in their area better than Bangkok. And the counterinsurgency force deployed in their area was the force under their own command, and they didn't want outsiders to give detailed instructions to them about force deployment. So, Saiyud, as director of the

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

³⁴² U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[CSOC] operational center, was at the time a lieutenant general, and the commander of the army areas were also lieutenant generals. They thought they had parity, so far as the level of command was concerned. They wanted Saiyud to give advice only, and they wanted to have detailed operational planning control of their own areas. Military Commanders were then, and are now, in fact, very jealous of control of the force.³⁴³ Thereafter, CSOC's organizations structure remained the same, but its official mission changed to one of COIN advisory. The war ran on uncoordinated and ineffective.³⁴⁴

The Second Anti-Communist Act of 1969 attempted to better coordinate and defined government and military responsibilities for the war. The act created five regions, all called CSOC -1, -2, -3, -4, and -5. Essentially, the RTA lifted the CSOC name and applied it to its new command and control structure. The regions aligned somewhat with the Army regions. The First, Second, and Third Army commanders executed CSOC operations in their respective theaters. Another command called the "Fifth Military Circle" commanded CSOC-4 and -5 in the south. The Fifth Military Circle's command was called CSOC-4/1, headquartered in Songkhla province. Its commander was supposed to report to the Fifth Military Circle but instead reported directly to RTA Headquarters in Bangkok, evidence of still more internal backbiting.³⁴⁵

ISOC

In the 1970s, CSOC began to receive widespread and harsh public criticism for heavy suppression operations. The criticism likely resulted from the public still assuming General Saiyud's CSOC was still in charge of suppression. Furthermore, there were legislators who suspected CSOC supported right wing paramilitaries attacking students.³⁴⁶ Additionally, Army and Interior Chief General Prapass, with his ties to the ousted autocratic PM Thanom, was a lightning rod for criticism, and he was also head of CSOC. To deflect the onslaught, and on the advice of General Saiyud, PM Sanya Dharmasakti on 10 May 1974 changed the name of CSOC to ISOC, or the Internal Security Operations Command. Saiyud recalls saying simply: "If nobody likes CSOC as a name, why don't we change it?"³⁴⁷ The name change was a light psyop. It gave the illusion ISOC was a brand new agency.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Somchai Rakwijit, former intelligence officer and advisor to PM General Prem, interview by author, 24 February 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

³⁴⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 81, and figure 4, and Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-103. DO YOU MEAN 1031 HERE OR 103?

³⁴⁵ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

³⁴⁶ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

³⁴⁷ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁴⁸ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p.103-04, and Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

There were a few changes, however; namely the Development and Self Defense Volunteer Program. In Thai, the program was *Asa-samak Pattana lae Pongkan ton-eng*, or *Aw Paw Paw* for short. It began in 1976. The main thrust of *Aw Paw Paw* was to increase administration, development, and security training at the village level to make them more self-sufficient and further advance the ownership strategy heralded by past programs.³⁴⁹

The *Aw Paw Paw* Center co-opted personnel from the Ministries of Agriculture, Industry, Health, and Education and coupled them with those from the MoI and the military for work on training and development projects in the field. Ministry personnel served the center for three or four years. All these departments had been working on development and suppression in the past, but none were ever too coordinated. *Aw Paw Paw* sought to correct this.³⁵⁰

The *Aw Paw Paw* program further extended into the villages via village *Aw Paw Paw* Committees. Per usual, the village headman ran the committee with two deputies. Under him were six sub committees on government, finance, defense, development, education and culture, and health. Villagers elected the heads of the sub committees.³⁵¹

The program had a positive impact. "Between 1975 and 1985," says Saiyud, "a total of 6,960 villages across the country were set up along the lines of the APP program." A little over half those were set up between 1975 and 1981. In the end, the APP program covered 52 of Thailand's then 73 provinces.³⁵²

In 1983, the government revamped ISOC via PM Order No. 83/2526 and gave it more power. It said ISOC's mission was:

1. To command and control the government agencies, civilian-police-military forces, paramilitary forces and all citizen volunteers in joint operations to win over communism.
2. To direct, supervise, monitor and implement the campaign to win over communism in accordance with the orders Nos. 66/2523 and 65/2525.
3. To coordinate with other government al agencies in order to win over communism.³⁵³

Finally, the government had once again centralized total COIN coordination in ISOC from when it sidelined CSOC in 1967. ISOC took control of COIN via

³⁴⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-85, 154.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, footnotes pp. 86-87.

³⁵³ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

regional ISOC offices and the Army Regional Commanders contributed to CPM operations as ordered.³⁵⁴

* * *

In summary, while Thailand certainly created the environment for a communist revolution, the CPT was largely a Chinese-North Vietnamese concoction. These two powers surreptitiously inserted it into Thailand where it eventually threatened to topple the government by force of arms and a prolific political and psychological campaign. Thailand's initial strategy was good enough to slow, but not defeat, the CPT. Victory demanded sweeping political efforts the government was not interested in carrying out until the insightful Kriangsak government took over by coup in 1977 – a time when the CPT was close to victory and the Vietnamese Army was threatening invasion. At about the same time, Generals Prem, Harn, and their COIN-minded camp began to inundate the upper levels of the government and military and revamp the national COIN strategy to apply the three pillars while heralding the population as the prize to win. Killing the enemy came second.

Coordination, perfect on paper from the beginning of the war but soiled by obstinate generals in the field, also improved. Prem demanded a whole of government effort to defeat the CPT and an organization to guide it all. That organization was the longstanding but largely impotent CSOC/ISOC. Under Prem, ISOC gained Mammoth power and successfully guided the war to a close.

³⁵⁴ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 200, and Ball and Mathieson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

CHAPTER 3

The Three Pillars of COIN Against the CPT

This chapter addresses Kilcullen's "three pillars of COIN" component of the COIN Pantheon with regard to fighting the communist insurgency from 1965-85. The first section addresses security measures the Thai took to halt CPT violence. The second section addresses political measures the Thai took to assuage the CPT's political angst, and the third section covers the economic measures the Thai took to alleviate the at-risk population's poor economic plight.

1. Thai COIN Security Measures

The Royal Thai Military, all the government's intelligence services, the TNP, and local forces comprised Thailand's security element for fighting the CPT. Under the most ideal circumstances they all worked together, complementing each other's strengths and shoring up each others weaknesses. Local forces, the police that trained and led them (and in some cases the military), and their military support was specifically designed to function as an interdependent command structure. When they did not cooperate, COIN not surprisingly was less effective.

Military units active in COIN were the RTA, Royal Thai Navy (RTN) and its Royal Thai Marines (RTM), and Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF). The RTA played the dominant role. The RTAF, with its tactical air support operations, was second in the military pecking order, and the RTN and RTM were third. They had small roles, the RTN conducting river and littoral patrols and the RTM inserting infantry forces where needed.

The COIN missions of Thailand's security forces were 1) destruction of CPT forces, 2) separation of the CPT from the people, 3) protection of the people, and 4) population control. Protection from the CPT was the ultimate security goal as Thailand's COIN matured. In the beginning, however, it was simply the destruction of the CPT.

The RTA

The RTA used the basic triangular military structure of armies, divisions, regiments, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. Each Army Regional Command, led by a lieutenant general, had under it an infantry division and two "military circles." Military circles were sections of Army Regional Commands led by major generals. For example, under the First Army Command were the 1st Infantry Division, the First Military Circle, and the Second Military Circle. Along with the First, Second, and Third Armies and the Fifth Military Circle – unique to

the south – was a Cavalry Division, and Special Forces (SF). In 1967, the RTA had 141,756 personnel, half of whom were volunteers, and half were conscripts.³⁵⁵

A U.S. advisor's analysis of RTA operations in the first four years of the war said bands of 20-30 CPT easily avoided RTA patrols. The problem was that there were not enough men to patrol and control the countryside. The RTA was using two infantry battalions to control 150 square miles. Small-scale operations were inadequate. They did not maintain correct pressure on the CPT.³⁵⁶ U.S. advisors say they needed 13 battalions to control an area this large in absence of more local forces and police; nine battalions for saturation patrolling and security, and four for strike and QRF. Second Army's commanding general had requested 10 more battalions in 1968. RTA operations were of average quality in the early years, but later on they improved, especially in the Second Army area of responsibility, beginning in 1968.³⁵⁷

Their ability to adopt COIN lessons did, too. The Second Army forward staff and commanding officer in 1968 was thoughtful, intelligent, and had taken steps to win the population by treating them fairly, aiding them with development projects and restricting artillery and air strikes to confirmed CPT formations only. U.S. advisors reported the morale of Second Army at the time was high, and it had a zeal for winning.³⁵⁸

In the north, the RTA had mostly halted its indiscriminate artillery and air strikes by 1968. The Third Army had indoctrinated its troops to be respectful and considerate of locals, and it improved the RTA's image. This resulted in fewer CPT recruits and more intelligence on CPT activities from locals.³⁵⁹ These were the first improvements in Third Army performance since 1965.³⁶⁰ And more vigorous patrols led to more contact with the CPT.³⁶¹ For example, in a five-month period in 1968, there were 81 CPT-government clashes. The CPT initiated only five. These fights resulted in 56 CPT killed, two RTA killed, 342 prisoners of war, and 286 surrendered CPT.³⁶²

RTA SF played a significant role in the war in all three army missions, but mostly in Direct Action (DA) roles – ambushes, raids, and QRF duty.³⁶³ Harn says SF frequently recruited local men such as hunters as guides and translators as they negotiated the countryside. Harn and his men did not speak *Issan*. While the different Army Regional Commanders mostly recruited men from the areas they

³⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

³⁵⁶ Samudavaniya, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

³⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, report p. 98, pdf p. 111.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

³⁶³ Pathai, *op. cit.*

operated in, SF was different. They came from all over Thailand and deployed all over Thailand.³⁶⁴

Says a former CPT armed propaganda cadre: “What was the thing that put the most pressure on us? The Army Special Forces. They used the small unit tactics and were very good. Like on patrol or walking through the jungle. We always worried about being ambushed. And when they started shooting, it was very heavy. You could not do anything.”³⁶⁵

Many Thai COIN operations were joint and combined operations. Operation Bunnam was one such operation. It ran from 10 April - 27 May 1966 in the Sakon Nakhon-Udon border area. It included TNP, a Mobile Reserve Platoon of the BPP, the VDC, elements of the 1st Battalion of the 3d Regimental Combat Team (RCT), and one company of the 13th RCT from Udon. The RTAF provided air support with five helicopters, and the U.S. Air Force aided with six. U.S. analysts wrote that through six large clashes, Thai forces captured 44 CPT suspects and killed four. Twenty-three surrendered.³⁶⁶ A similar operation that entailed a four-day sweep of Sahat Sakhan district, Kalasin province, found evidence of CPT camps but made no enemy contact to speak of.³⁶⁷

The Thai National Police

The TNP's main COIN forces consisted of the Provincial Police, which were regular police forces, the BPP, which were light infantry and SWAT combined, and Special Branch. The force was about 40,000 strong in the 1960s. The TNP had three missions during the communist COIN: law enforcement, maintaining law and order, and criminal investigation. At that time, it was under the Ministry of Interior. The government used the TNP as its main suppression tool against the CPT until open warfare broke out in 1965. At that time, the military took control of the conflict and the police fell under its command. The police, however, were an integral part of COIN operations and received COIN training throughout the war.³⁶⁸

Before the communist COIN, the TNP mostly worked at the district level, but the insurgency forced the police to operate at the village level, which changed the way the police trained, deployed, and operated. For example, the war caused the TNP to begin to build a target of 1,150 *tambon* police stations in CPT affected areas. The goal was to have 20 police at each station. In 1976, however, the police recruited only 1,300 recruits, not nearly enough manpower to fulfill the new scheme, so they staffed the new stations with two to three police and augmented

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ Srisompob, 22 March 2008, *op. cit.*

³⁶⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202, 203, 207.

them with the VDC.³⁶⁹ It was a flexible system; in the face of personnel shortages, the Thai government could reach into its vast arsenal of local forces. The main drawback, however, was these forces were not trained as well as active duty units.

Because they were scattered throughout the countryside and their job was law and order, the police were usually the first to respond to CPT incidents, so they took on a SWAT-type role. And because of the CPM program and its swath of local and military forces, the police could usually tap support units to bolster its numbers in high threat situations. For the same reason – their close proximity to the people – the TNP was ideally placed to collect intelligence on CPT activities.³⁷⁰

For population control, the TNP conducted spot checks of villagers for evidence of CPT membership and support activities. All Thai citizens of 18 years of age were at the time required to have ID cards, and TNP could note their names for suspicious activities when necessary, which might have spurred an investigation, possibly by Special Branch. The TNP also set up road checkpoints and searched vehicles for evidence of the same and/or illegal smuggling. Finally, the TNP networked with food sellers to provide information on large acquisitions that might be destined for CPT units.³⁷¹

Unfortunately, the TNP suffered from a bad reputation. Corruption, in part a consequence of low pay, was rampant in the TNP, and this maligned the people, the ultimate prize in COIN. The U.S., in its COIN support for Thailand, recommended a series of measures to improve the police reputation in 1965, which included mass public relations campaigns, radio programs, and mobile exhibits. These measures worked in some cases, and the police units that worked with CPM at the village level were generally good. In 1965, the Director General of the Police relieved several corrupt officers in Region 4 after the military commander of an MDU complained about them. These type measures were critical to effectively coordinate and execute COIN and show the people the government meant well. Police reputation and its effectiveness increased dramatically as the war marched on, but it did not last.³⁷² It seems while the

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-194.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202, 203, and personal observations by author over a four-month stay in Thailand. Merchants, students, professionals, hotel and restaurant employees, professors, the military, and people on the street; they all decry the police over corruption and perceived ineptitude. The author was witness to a traffic violation where a police officer instructed the violator how to offer and extend a bribe in lieu of receiving a ticket. It is important to note, however, that other police, such as BPP units and police on patrol in southern Thailand, an active insurgency zone, were exceptional, competent, and professional. Many dedicated police have died fighting southern insurgents.

country was on the brink of a communist takeover, the TNP was well motivated to perform. At the end of the war, it went back to its standard operating procedures.

Special Branch was a pivotal tool in the communist COIN. As part of the Central Investigation Bureau, its mission was to collect intelligence on subversive activities and counter them. The government extended Special Branch's reach to the village level in 1963 with the Special Branch's 7th Division. U.S. advisors helped spur this expansion. In 1968, there were 33 Special Branch offices throughout Thailand, all working on communist COIN operations. Aside from collecting its own intelligence, Special Branch also received information from the PP and BPP via JSCs. It also used intelligence from interrogations of captured CPT personnel and their auxiliary support. Special Branch interviewed prisoners at one of two Interrogation Centers founded in 1966 – one in Bangkok, and the other in Udorn.³⁷³

Special Branch was successful early in the war. In September 1967 in the northeast, it planned and executed a mass arrest of CPT leadership, which also resulted in the shutting down of a communist financial network. The operation resulted in highly effective intelligence on the CPT and its activities that increased the government's understanding of insurgent capabilities and intentions.³⁷⁴ Operations such as this were sensitive, complex, and time consuming because they illuminated, day-by-day, week-by-week, and month-by-month, the inner workings of CPT cells. Some such operations took years. They usually entailed one of two types: 1) clandestinely infiltrating agents into the CPT or auxiliary force, or 2) silently identifying CPT or auxiliary personnel and then recruiting them as informants. Only when scores of agents had been placed and/or informants recruited, and only after their information had been confirmed and processed, would Special Branch make arrests.

Local Forces

Thailand had a dizzying array of local forces during the communist COIN. More, many old local force program names carried on and overlapped new local force program names. The Thai government was a firm believer in recruiting, training, and arming the population to protect itself and also to politically solidify the population in the government's camp. The security part of the equation was obvious. The political theory was subtler, on paper, at least; once you pick up a rifle and join a side, you take a political stand as well. Mao called it "mobilization of the masses." Bangkok turned it around on the CPT, calling it the exact same thing – co-opting the population via "major mass organization." Thailand's local COIN forces totalled over 1.2 million during the war.³⁷⁵ After the war ended, they roughly doubled in size to 2,226,000 as part of a follow through program to insure

³⁷³ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³⁷⁵ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

the CPT stayed gone.³⁷⁶ The Thai went through scores of different types of local forces through the war and learned the hard way more training and higher pay meant more effective local troops. Different types of local forces included:³⁷⁷

1. *Or Sor* (VDC), a standing reserve militia developed in the 1950s
2. Self Defense Volunteer (SDV) program, a 1976 founded aspect of the *Aw Paw Paw* program
3. *Thahan Phran*, (“Rangers”) an RTA controlled counter-guerrilla force

The *Or Sor* began as a reserve paramilitary force run by the Ministry of Interior on 10 February 1954.³⁷⁸ The CIA sponsored it in the 1950s along with the BPP.³⁷⁹ In 1968, there were 3,000 VDC.³⁸⁰ It was a security force the Interior Ministry could tap for a wide array of security projects. For COIN, particularly under the 09/10 Plan, the government used the *Or Sor* for Joint Security Teams (JSTs). JSTs were lead by two or three police or military personnel and a squad-sized element of VDC – nine to 12 men. Their mission was to prevent CPT incursion into villages, and they deployed in CPT prone areas only. In theory, as the villages were cut off from the CPT, military and CPM offensives would break up CPT units. VDC troops also filled the ranks of myriad village security programs such as Village Protection Units (VPUs).³⁸¹

Self Defense Volunteers

In 1976, ISOC implemented the *Aw Paw Paw* program, of which the SDVs were a part. SDVs represented the ideal village security force as they took lessons from past local forces that had mixed track records such as the VPUs. Ad hoc units fared poorly against the CPT. Well trained and paid units kept communists out of the villages.³⁸²

Says General Prem:

This Self-defense Volunteers Program was later to become the thrust of our counter-insurgency campaign in that it served as the organizational framework for dialogue and interaction with the villagers at grassroots level. The Program took on life from an initiative of a local District Officer whose commitment to his work was total. He went around recruiting local teachers, village leaders or just acquaintances, engaging them in discussion on how best to organize and train self-

³⁷⁶ Ball and Mathieson, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 39.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xxvii, 1.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

³⁸¹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 31 and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

³⁸² Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

defense volunteers to resist the CPT. We simply amplified on his initiative and extended it cover all other villages.³⁸³

As the government proselytized, the program expanded. “Volunteers began to trickle in and we also started to learn who our friends were,” says General Prem.

Even if there were CPT infiltrators among the volunteers, we would at least be able to keep an eye on them, to monitor their movements. We would know where they were and what they did at various times of the day and night. Some would vanish into the jungle at night and return to the village in the morning. In truth, the villagers themselves already knew who these so-called “jungle people” were. It was a question gaining their trust and confidence before they were prepared to tell us what they knew.³⁸⁴

While local forces were critical to the success of Thailand’s communist COIN – and every COIN, for that matter – they were not without their problems. Poorly motivated and trained fighters did not perform. Not applying a uniform force to all CPM programs had a negative impact, too. It took 10 years for Bangkok to develop a central local force for CPM operations. Fractured forces moreover contributed to inter-service rivalries between the police, Mol civilians, and the military. The TNP, for example, did not like local forces the Army sponsored, so it was less likely to support them. Local forces did not do well when the police and military did most of the work, and they got killed when the security forces did not back them up. Finding the right balance was difficult, but vital.³⁸⁵

Thahan Phran

Marks writes the *Thahan Phran* had its origins in three issues: 1) the CPM concept of mass mobilization against the CPT, 2) the fact that large formations of active duty military were called to defend the Thai-Cambodian border where Vietnamese forces were poised for invasion, and 3) the idea of fielding a guerrilla force that could “out guerrilla the guerrilla.”³⁸⁶

General Chavalit established the *Thahan Phran* in 1978. Recruits, writes Desmond Ball, were 18-39 years old and ideally from the areas where they would deploy to fight the CPT.³⁸⁷ Basic training was 45 days. Training included light

³⁸³ Official Website of General Prem Tinsulanonda, “Thai Experience in Combating Insurgency,” 4 March 1995, Manila, available on <<http://www.generalprem.com/Speech4.html>>.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 80, and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-216-218.

³⁸⁶ Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

³⁸⁷ D. Ball, *The Boys in Black: The Thahan Phran (Rangers), Thailand’s Para-military Border Guards* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2004), p. 22.

infantry tactics and instruction in modern weaponry.³⁸⁸ *Thahan Phran's* motto is "Nation, Religion, King, and Citizens," an adaptation of the national motto developed by Rama VI, especially that of the military, that hails "Nation, Religion, King."³⁸⁹

Says John Cole (USA SF RET), former U.S. defense attaché to Thailand during the communist COIN: "The *Thahan Phran* were formed into companies only, no battalions or regiments, but there could be as many as six to eight companies in one grouping, all run by an active duty army colonel."³⁹⁰ Initially, SF noncommissioned and commissioned officers commanded *Thahan Phran* units. Later, regular RTA officers did. Regiments of *Thahan Phran* would form later in the war, however. In 1981, the *Thahan Phran* had reached a strength of 13,000 divided into 160 companies, which, points out Ball, was a bigger force than the CPT's then strength of 12,500 fighters.³⁹¹

The operational concept behind the *Thahan Phran* was to deploy in communist infested areas from where they came, collect intelligence on CPT personnel and activities, and then act on that intelligence by killing and/or capturing CPT members. They sometimes engaged in hunter-killer operations, as did small units of the RTA. In this regard, the government acted as the CPT did when it assassinated governors and village heads that were blocking its political and military initiatives.

Says Denny Lane, a former U.S. defense attaché to Thailand during the communist COIN: "The Thai deployed *Thahan Phran* deep into communist insurgent areas more than regulars. It was an irregular war, so it needed irregular forces. Additionally, if an RTA trooper got killed in a village, he was just a nameless trooper to many. But if it was a *Thahan Phran*, then it was likely a local boy, and it created all sorts of problems, like blood feuds."³⁹²

Border Security

Border security was a major aspect of Thailand's communist COIN. On the borders with Burma and Laos, the Thai used BPP and military units to patrol, reconnoiter, and interdict CPT activities. They had bases and posts in strategic terrain from where they would fan out on their missions. It was the same on the Cambodian border until the Vietnamese massed there in 1979, forcing Bangkok to man the border with conventional forces as a blocking force.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁹⁰ John Cole, Colonel, USA, RET, former U.S. Army defense attaché to Thailand, interview by author, 14 March 2008, JUSMAG compound, Bangkok, Thailand.

³⁹¹ Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁹² Denny Lane, former U.S. Defense Attaché to Thailand, interview by author, 26 January 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

Bilateral security between Malaysia and Thailand increased as threats gathered there, which included the CPT, the Malaysian Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO), and Malay Muslim insurgent groups. The CTO was the Malaysian government name for the Communist Party of Malaysia's guerrilla army. To achieve border security, Thailand and Malaysia signed an accord creating the General Border Committee (GBC) on 13 March 1965. It established a bilateral working group that spelled out the duties of the group, intelligence coordination, the message of psychological operations (which had to be unified), and types of kinetic operations that would help seal the border and also reduce CTO forces. GBC membership included senior defense, interior, military, and police officials.³⁹³ GBC operations were not continual from 1965 on, however. They happened in spurts for durations up to a year or more, but there were also gaps after big operations that netted and/or killed insurgents. This reduced the GBC's effectiveness.

The GBC carried out three types of military border operations. The first were combined operations, or Thai-Malay forces working together as a single TF to fix and destroy CTO forces. The second type was coordination operations, which entailed Thai and Malay forces deploying on their own sides of the border at the same time with the same mission objective, and if they overlapped the other's border, they had to report it. The third type was unilateral operations where the Thai and Malaysians operated on their own within their respective borders with no coordination with the other force. All border operations ranged from the small squad patrol to larger deployments complete with armored cars, artillery, and air support. A joint intelligence center in Songkhla supported them.³⁹⁴

Border operations were not simply static security missions or beating the bush to flush out the enemy. There was a method the Thai and Malay used, which included harnessing intelligence every step of the way. "Intelligence was very important for this type of mission," says Ahmed. "Border operations used HUMINT [human intelligence], too." Intelligence "drove" operations, as they say in the U.S. Army – it dictated where, what type, and how many forces would deploy in a given area and what type of operation they would conduct.³⁹⁵

Regarding the static security of the border, the Thai and Malaysians left no stone unturned when both sides committed to the mission. "We manned the whole border, every couple of hundred meters," says Ahmed Ghazi, a retired Malaysian Army Colonel who used to work on the border as a young lieutenant. "The mines on the border we called the *Naga Belt*, or 'dragon belt.' We used antipersonnel

³⁹³ General K. Rattanachaya, *The Last Role of Chin Peng; The Communist Party of Malaya, Malaysia, and Thailand* (Thailand: Sahadhammika, second printing, 2007), pp. 18-26.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-26. 31-32, 45, 47.

³⁹⁵ Ghazi, *op. cit.*

mines. They were homemade devices.”³⁹⁶ The Malaysians got the idea to use mines from the CTO themselves. Says Colonel Ghazi: “The communist made homemade mines out of fertilizer as the explosive compound, tin cans as the casing, and nails and other metals as shrapnel. They used torch light [flashlight] batteries as a power source, and they did not last long as a result. They wrapped these devices in tarpaper to make them waterproof, but this device lasted only a few months.”³⁹⁷ The Malay military made the same mines, but with commercial grade explosives. Says Ghazi: “We deployed them the same way they did, but against the CTs [communist terrorists]. We copied their techniques.”³⁹⁸

Intelligence

The key tasks of the Thai Government’s intelligence during the communist COIN were two: 1) to identify the CPT’s infrastructure, namely its personnel, and 2) to disseminate to paramilitary and military forces precise intelligence that would facilitate contact the CPT on favorable government terms.³⁹⁹ There were four main Thai intelligence entities in the fight against the CPT. They were 1) Division 7 of Special Branch, 2) the TNP, 3), the RTA, and Department of Central Intelligence (DCI, later called the NIA).⁴⁰⁰

To coordinate intelligence collection, collation, processing/analysis, and dissemination, the government established Joint Security Centers (JSCs) under the CSOC structure. Special Branch managed the JSCs, but military, police, and civilians also staffed them. JSCs existed at regional levels where needed. The far south had a unique intelligence coordination center, the Combined Intelligence Headquarters, staffed by both Malaysian and Thai government personnel.

JSC intelligence flow collected intelligence from CPM teams, police, and Special Branch in the villages, then pooled it at the regional JSCs, and then disseminated it to the military, provincial CPMs, and CSOC’s JSC. All these entities used the intelligence for operations planning. The first head of intelligence at CSOC was a TNP lieutenant general, but that changed as the organization became more RTA-centric.⁴⁰¹

The Army and its organic G-2 section was also active in the communist COIN. In the early 1960s, however, the Army’s G-2 had but seven staff officers and six field intelligence “D Teams.” D Teams had 12 men each. Among other things, they processed prisoners and captured CPT documents, and they debriefed defectors. Army intelligence moreover included photo interpretation, interrogation, and

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 343.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 347, diagram, 349.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74, 75, 346, 347, 351.

polygraph sections. The Armed Forces Security Center and the Joint Intelligence Agency under the MoD had minor roles in COIN intelligence and were not part of the every day intelligence machinery.⁴⁰²

The DCI, perhaps the most secretive Thai intelligence agency, began as the Government Affairs Collation Department in 1954. It changed its name a few years later to the DCI. It was Thailand's main intelligence and counterintelligence agency, and it coordinated all other intelligence agencies. The National Intelligence Act of 1985 changed the DCI internally and also changed its name to the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) the same year. Throughout its history, the organization's four main missions have been foreign intelligence, domestic intelligence and security, signal intelligence, and protective security.

Sources of information for all intelligence entities included village heads, teachers, development workers, and rank-and-file rural people. The village defense teams, however, were plugged into the heart of the village and proved invaluable sources of information. They were lifetime members of the villages, as were their families and friends. They were, in effect, a de facto informant network the government simply laid the village defense force scheme on top of. These people had access to village gossip and internal affairs that police and other agencies could not access because, as a CIA report describes, they were "outsiders."⁴⁰³

While most government intelligence units stumbled to find their way early in the war, Somchai Rakwijit's group was effective from the very beginning. He advocated from the start for a greater emphasis on intelligence, not just to ascertain the CPT's capabilities and intentions, but also to find out the intentions and living situation of the at-risk population. Says Somchai of the standing intelligence entities: "They were very much concerned about the communist planning, military planning, and their previous actions of how they took control of certain areas, but they didn't give much thought to trying to understand the communist propaganda appeals, how they infiltrated the villages, and the indoctrination of the villagers."⁴⁰⁴

Somchai lobbied Field Marshal Prapass to set up the organization in 1965. It lasted until 1983. "I think it was quite effective," says Somchai.⁴⁰⁵ His unit received U.S. funding for the first two and a half years. Afterward, the Thai government provided financing. He went on the first several missions himself by wandering into villages alone, which was extremely risky. Once accepted, he lived there for six months. He collected information on the villagers' lives, what they did, what their political beliefs were, why they might or might not link with the insurgents, what their attitudes toward communism were, etc. "We were more interested in these things," says Somchai, "understanding their ideological appeal

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 347, 351.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁴⁰⁴ Somchai, 24 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

and [the CPT] approach to the people, the way they were organized, and how they indoctrinated, and how they motivated the people to fight for their cause.”⁴⁰⁶ Somchai’s cover was a book author covering village life in rural Thailand. His preparatory studies told him villagers wanted outsiders to know about their lives, so he adopted an approach that fit their desires.⁴⁰⁷

Toward the late 1970s, the government had achieved intelligence domination. Military intelligence had improved, and the RTA had a clearer idea of where the CPT was based, what its capabilities were, and its month-to-month intentions. This strengthened government decisions making, situational awareness, and operational effectiveness. Bhumarat says: “We got tired of arresting these people. We’d identify them, and then I’d talk to them instead of arresting them. I would go to them and say: ‘I know you are waiting for your contact to meet you, but he’s not going to make it. We captured him earlier. But I’m not going to arrest you; let’s talk.’ We’d try to convince them: ‘work with us; you must realize what is right and what is wrong’.”⁴⁰⁸ It hastened the destruction of CPT forces in the field.⁴⁰⁹

2. Political COIN Measures

Politics played a major role in Thailand’s communist COIN. In fact, it played the central role, but it did not happen at the beginning. It took the government from 1965 until the mid to late 1970s to develop a winning political COIN formula. Overall, Thailand used six political tools to fight the CPT: psyops, military Civil Affairs (CA), democratic reform, the Village Scout program, amnesty, and diplomacy.⁴¹⁰

Psyops

The Thai government was at first resistant to using psyops and educational programs in the beginning of the war, primarily because it did not widely understand the CPT and how to best counter it. In the beginning of the war, the RTA had but a single psyops company, and by 1969 had plans for two such battalions in the post-1970 period.⁴¹¹ Upon gaining a deeper understanding of the CPT and its methods, and with American urging, the government eventually used psyops at every turn, and it became a mainstay of Thai COIN from then on.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 69, and Srisompob Jitpiromsri, professor and Thai south expert, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani campus, interview by author, 7 April 2008, Pattani, Thailand.

⁴¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 106, chart pp. 162, 74.

⁴¹² Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

The government must have realized in 1969, however, the critical nature of psyops in COIN. This is evident because of the preeminence of psyops in the 110/2512 Plan. In it, General Harn Pongsithanonda said: “In the prevention and suppression (of communism), political measures and psychological operations and public relations are to be used principally.”⁴¹³

The purpose of psyops was two-fold: 1) to weaken and demoralize the CPT, and 2) to sway the population away from the CPT to the government’s side. CSOC had the most active psyop program. Other organizations carrying out psyops included the National Information Psychological Operations Organization (NIPSO), the Public Relations Department, the Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) program, the Community Development Department, the TNP, and psyops units organic to the RTA.⁴¹⁴

CSOC first communist psyops operations were done using leaflets and radio where most Thai got their news. Almost 90 percent of homes in Thailand had radios during the war, and nearly 70 percent of rural homes had them. They were a powerful form of media, especially before the proliferation of television.⁴¹⁵

As the war progressed, CSOC formed two psyops teams: Modular Audio-Visual Units (MAVUs) and Mobile Information Service Teams (MISTs). Army psyops teams formed and led the MAVUs in CPM target areas and were an integral part of harnessing civilians in the fight against the CPT. The Mol ran the MISTs through the governors and subordinate civilian administrators.⁴¹⁶

MAVUs and MISTs went from village to village, preaching the perils of communism and the merits of the government, how Bangkok’s governance was improving, and how it wanted to better the lives of the people. They coordinated their visits with village headmen, usually the village radio owner and main source of information on the outside world for the people. MAVUs and MISTs gave lectures, passed out literature, and showed movies, which was novel to many in the countryside who had never seen such technology. Some of the lectures featured surrendered CPT, and as post 1975, bedraggled refugees chased out of Cambodia by the KR. These type meetings offered villagers an alternative and scary version of communism compared the saintly and just version provided by the CPT.

Aside from CSOC, the Second Army’s Village Voice psyops teams had success with their lectures, movies, and pamphlets in combination with passing out medicine. In the south, the military used the same concept but called the teams *Santi Nimit* (“Peace Teams.”) Fielded in 1980, they consisted of 12-15 people, three or four of who were armed RTA psyops personnel. They supervised the

⁴¹³ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁴¹⁴ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁴¹⁶ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18, 53, 63.

rest; paid volunteers, including women, who went from village to village distributing psyops and PR via entertainment, songs, and skits.⁴¹⁷

Another successful psyop program was *Santi Suk* (“Peace and Happiness”). An Mol program, it used village informants to identify CPT members inside the village. Once identified, the government would re-educate these people. Re-education included taking the captured personnel on tours of towns to prove CPT indoctrination wrong. Once re-educated, the government re-inserted these persons back into their villages to get them to convince other CPT to surrender.⁴¹⁸

Civil Affairs

Though CA entails both political and economic operations to meet its goal of gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it is categorized simply as a political means. For Thailand’s communist COIN, CA meant military and civilian personnel working together to provide better governance, development, and training to improve the lives of the people. In effect, Bangkok had to nation-build in areas it had neglected for decades. General Saiyud described swaths of the country as, “...a village environment totally lacking in self government.”⁴¹⁹

According to the CIA, “The Civil Affairs section of CSOC was charged with coordinating the activities of the ministries, departments, and bureaus concerned with administration, development, public relations, education, local security, and other civil matters.”⁴²⁰ Early on, CSOC had difficulty coordinating all the CA-related government agencies to focus their energies in the field because it had to reach out to the so many ministries such as Education, Agriculture, and Interior, for example, and persuade them to cooperate in a COIN mission. Unfortunately, they did not, which ran counter to the core of the 09/10 Plan. General Prapass, as deputy PM, then ordered the DoLA – a provincial administrative organ of the Mol – along with staff from the Ministries of Education, National Development, Agriculture, and Interior to set up offices in the CA section at CSOC. Afterward, CSOC’s CA guided all these agencies plus the governors in all CA related activities.⁴²¹

When Prem took over as prime minister, he brought using politics as the main weapon of COIN to the RTA, which Somchai Rakwijit translated into the army’s first ever Directorate of CA in January 1982. The Thai called it the “J-5,” which in U.S. military nomenclature means Plans and Policy and includes liaison with

⁴¹⁷ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 74, and Saiyud, *op. cit.*, footnote, p. 170.

⁴¹⁸ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁴¹⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁴²⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74, 103, 157, 158, 177.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

foreign forces.⁴²² The Assistant Chief of Staff of the Army's CA unit was also commander of ISOC's CA center.⁴²³ From then on, ISOC and RTA CA were, in effect, the same.

The mission of CA from then on was not merely coordinating development; it entailed a combination of development, psyops – to include educational seminars all over the country on democracy, how the government was waging COIN, what the government was doing for the people, and what the people could do for the country. CA was also responsible for removing corrupt officials from the field. Saiyud thought it more important than development programs: “I am thus convinced that despite the prodigious sums of money being allocated for economic development, political stability is only likely to come about when people are assured that social injustices are being corrected.”⁴²⁴ CA moreover took the job of organizing and coordinating most local forces. This was one of the biggest COIN portfolios in the government. Training government personnel and even businessmen on democratic ideals became a CA task under Prem, too.⁴²⁵

The Village Scouts

BPP Major General Somkhuan Harikul founded the Village Scout program in 1970. The Thai name for the scouts was *Luk Sua Chaoban*, or “Village Tiger Cubs.” The purpose of the program was three fold: 1) to provide intelligence on CPT infiltration of villages, 2) to build citizenship consensus throughout Thailand to mend internal division, and 3) to build a political movement counter to the CPT.⁴²⁶

General Somkhuan developed the idea after his troops suffering badly from a 17-day CPT offensive against the BPP in December 1968 in Loei province. He realized Thailand had descended into civil war, and he sought a political solution. Since he was also a major proponent of the Boy Scouts and had served in its leadership, he thought a similar program might help curb the insurgency. More, the BPP promoted the Boy Scout program wherever it deployed, so creating an anti-communist scouting movement for the whole population was well within its expertise.⁴²⁷

The Village Scouts began in select villages as three-person cells. From there, they proselytized the values of the organization and recruited more members. This was one of the tactics the CPT used to infiltrate and take over villages with communist rhetoric. Adult men and women joined the Scouts, and bylaws

⁴²² Somchai Rakwijit, former intelligence officer and advisor to PM General Prem, interview by author, 27 February 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁴²³ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

⁴²⁴ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁴²⁵ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁴²⁶ Bowie, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 56-59, 191.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 56-59, 191.

required a man and a woman head each group as either president or vice president.⁴²⁸ They took classes on citizenship, Thai history, personal responsibility, and held campfire style banquets to codify the organization's unity. The Village Scouts' royal association gave it high prestige. His Majesty the King ordained the scarves the Scouts wore, which many saw as nearly sacred.⁴²⁹ The end results were a five million strong, pro-government, pro-Thai Royal Family movement that was vehemently anti-communist.⁴³⁰

The Village Scouts effectively blocked the CPT from recruiting a fifth of Thailand's adult population. And these people influenced others against the CPT as well. As a political blocking force against the CPT, the Village Scouts was a brilliant idea. Says Bhumarat, "At that time, the Village Scouts worked very well because people could see the threat to our national security, and they played the role of bringing people from the communist side to the government. And they did psyops, too. And they were a force to support the monarchy."⁴³¹

Amnesty

Amnesty began under CSOC in the 1960s as the National Open Arms and Rehabilitation Program. It took in surrendered and captured CPT, re-educated them, and put them in job programs to integrate them back into society.⁴³² As the government took a more political tact with the communist COIN in the late 1970s, it called its rehabilitation program *Karunthep* and referred to ex-CPT as "Cooperators in National Development." The government gave them housing assistance and land in some cases.⁴³³ Says Denny Lane, "The government also gave land to surrendering CPT, much to the chagrin of many army personnel who were promised land and did not receive it. So for the communist, it was a good program."⁴³⁴ The government also co-opted many surrendering communists into running NGO projects.⁴³⁵

The concept of offering amnesty to enemies was in part rooted in the Thai belief system. Jeffrey Race says, "It boils down to religion, which is a basic building block of any society. It dictates what is wrong, what is right, what is to be rewarded, and what is to be punished."⁴³⁶ Theravada Buddhism was the core

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 119, 120, 124, 182-201, 190, 229.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 119, 120, 124, 182-201, 190, 229.

⁴³¹ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴³² Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴³³ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴³⁴ Lane, *op. cit.*

⁴³⁵ Dr. Amara Pongsapich, Chair, Thai Rotary Club, Chulalongkorn University, Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program, interview by author, 29 February 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁴³⁶ Jeffrey Race, 29 February 2008, *op. cit.*

belief system of the Thai, and it was one of the themes that made amnesty possible. Lane adds, "This is unique. It had to do with the Buddhist idea of detachment, compassion, and recognizing the moral capacity of the other person."⁴³⁷ The Thai did not believe they had to kill all their enemies, nor should they jail them indefinitely.

The fact that the CPT's terror operations were few also enabled Bangkok to adopt an amnesty policy. Simply put, says Major General Perapong Manakit of the Thai National Security Council, "The CPT did not harm many villagers."⁴³⁸ Despite assassinations of aid workers, governors and other such officials, most CPT violence was aimed at Thai government security personnel or local forces and their leaders, or "force on force" violence.

A trickle of CPT sought amnesty in the 1960s and mid-1970s, but it increased dramatically in the late 1970s and 1980s. Aside from ushering in a new constitution, PM Kriangsak offered blanket amnesty for all students and intellectuals who fled to the jungles in 1978, some 3,000 people.

General Prem's 66/2523 Plan in 1980 increased the impact of the amnesty strategy by better publicizing it. Some 2,000 people surrendered in the first 10 months of the 1978 amnesty announcement under Kriangsak. The more the government publicized scenes of CPT returning from the field being greeted as citizens, the more insurgents surrendered. The number of amnesty seekers tripled in 1979. High profile CPT amnesty seekers added to the bonanza. The press had a field day when high profile student CPT leader Thirayuth Bunmee who returned home after five years in the jungle. That publicity triggered more surrenders.⁴³⁹ In May 1982, 1,500 CPT and their auxiliary surrendered in Loei. In August, 7,400 hill tribesmen and their entire families surrendered. In December, 216 CPT surrendered in Yasothon Loeng. In January 1983, 422 CPT surrendered in the northeast in two provinces, Nakhon Phanom, and Udon Thani. In November, the surrenders continued with 664 CPT coming in, again with their auxiliary support. This continued into 1984 and beyond until the CPT had withered as a threat.⁴⁴⁰

Diplomacy

The diplomatic prowess of the Thai is legendary, and the government used it with great success in their communist COIN. The Thai government aimed its main diplomatic offensive at halting Chinese support for the CPT by exploiting rift between the Beijing and Hanoi. The diplomatic offensive developed because of a

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ Perapong, *op. cit.*

⁴³⁹ LePoer, *op. cit.*, see "Thailand, Insurgency."

⁴⁴⁰ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-185, and Dr. Gothom Arya, Director, Mahidol University Research Centre on Peace Building, Ph.D., Chairman of the 2nd National Economic and Social Advisory Council, interview by author, 4 January 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

rift occurred between China and Vietnam. The relationship between Hanoi and Beijing fell apart in the late 1960s as Hanoi courted Moscow, Beijing's enemy at the time.

But it was easier said than done. Bangkok and Beijing did not have diplomatic relations at the time, so Thailand used Chinese spies to contact Peking to try to open a dialogue. "We had agents, communist agents, inside their movement [the CPT]," Bhumarat says. "See, the Chinese collected intelligence in Thailand by recruiting local Chinese businessmen. The businessmen then sent the information to their case officers in Hong Kong, who then sent the information to Beijing."⁴⁴¹ Thai intelligence had identified scores of these agents, and it decided to use them to get their diplomatic request to Beijing.

Once the Thai made their pitch, the Chinese accepted. Bhumarat describes the meeting this way: "Later, PM Kukrit went to Beijing [June 1975], and Mao treated him like he was a son. Our PM was very smart. He told the Chinese, 'we love Mao.' Mao enjoyed talking with him very much."⁴⁴² The visit proved fruitful for both sides. Kukrit and Premier Chou En-lai signed a joint communiqué announcing diplomatic relations between Bangkok and Peking. This set the stage for future empowerment of Thailand when it would need China's help the most.⁴⁴³ While Mao died on 9 September 1976, this was the first of many secret Thai visits to China to persuade Beijing of Thailand's goals.

Thailand increased its diplomatic efforts with China as the situation Southeast Asia continued to deteriorate. Pol Pot's terrorist expeditions into Vietnam throughout 1977 triggered Hanoi's invasion of Cambodia in November 1978. That, in turn, triggered Beijing's invasion of the northern portion of Vietnam on 17 February 1979. Undeterred, Hanoi pressed its attack into Cambodia all the way to the Thai border where it massed some 10 battalions.⁴⁴⁴

The Thai had communications intelligence saying Vietnamese forces kept asking Hanoi for permission to invade Thailand.⁴⁴⁵ As the Vietnamese massed their forces on the Thai border, PM Kriangsak, who had assumed power in 1977, summoned General Serm Na Nakorn, the Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces. Bhumarat says Kriangsak asked him, " 'What shall we do? If they

⁴⁴¹ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴² *Ibid.* Kukrit's visit to China is well documented. See also J. B. Haseman, "Thailand and the Realities of Southeast Asia," in *Military Review*, May 1977, pp. 83-84, available on http://calldp.leavenworth.army.mil/eng_mr/txts/VOL57/00000005/art10.pdf.

⁴⁴³ V. Chinvarakorn and S. Janchitfah, columnists, in "The Long Road Ahead," in *Bangkok Post*, available on http://www.thaiworld.org/en/thailand_monitor/answer.php?question_id=263.

⁴⁴⁴ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*, and C. Samudavanija and S. Paribatra, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁴⁴⁵ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

send troops to Thailand, can we fight them, and how long can we fight'? Serm told the PM, 'Seven days, sir.' And he said, 'Seven days for what?' And Serm replied, 'We can hold them for seven days, and that's it.' So the PM said, 'Pack. We are going to Beijing. If we can talk to them, they may help us'.⁴⁴⁶

Kriangsak went to Beijing in March 1978 and, like Kukrit before him, he made his pitch.⁴⁴⁷ However, following Mao's death in 1976, the Thai had to deal with a new Chinese leader, Hua Guofeng. Kriangsak's main request was that Beijing stop supporting the CPT. His secondary request was that China maintain its troop presence on the Vietnamese border. "So we asked them to please keep strategic forces in the northern part of Vietnam to keep Vietnamese forces occupied, because if they moved near to us, we'd be in trouble," says Bhumarat.⁴⁴⁸

In time, Thailand got what it wanted – Chinese intimidation of Vietnam over its overt threat to Thailand and a gradual cut off of support for the CPT.⁴⁴⁹ The China-based VOPT went off the air in 1979, and logistics for CPT bases in Laos dried up. China stopped supplying them, and the Laotians could not do it themselves. Threatened by China, the Vietnamese backed off their support for the CPT, too.

China wanted something in return, however: aid for Cambodian insurgent groups fighting the Vietnamese, which the Thai were happy to provide. As long as the Vietnamese were embroiled in an insurgency in Cambodia, and as long as China kept up its intimidation, the Vietnamese forces in Cambodia were less likely to widen the war by attacking Thailand.⁴⁵⁰

Thailand supported several Cambodian insurgent groups; among them were Khmer People's National Liberation Front, the army of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and bloody KR.⁴⁵¹ Bangkok knew supporting the KR was taboo, but Vietnam had supported CPT rebels inside Thailand since before 1965, which had resulted in the deaths of thousands of Thai. "We knew the Khmer Rouge was not popular," says

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.* and V. Chinvarakorn and S. Janchitfah, columnists for the *Bangkok Post*, in "The Long Road Ahead," explains it differently – as Kukrit fearing a Vietnamese invasion of Thailand in 1975, but Vietnam did not invade Cambodia until 1978. The story these journalists tell and Bhumarat's are similar, however: <http://www.thaiworld.org/en/thailand_monitor/answer.php?question_id=263>.

⁴⁴⁷ C. Samudavanija and S. Paribatra, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁴⁴⁸ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁰ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁴⁵¹ "Cambodian Rebels Fight Vietnamese at Camp," in UPI, 7 January 1985, available on <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B01E1D71F38F934A35752C0A963948260>>, and B. Crossette, "3 Cambodian Rebel Forces Unite Over Vietnam Talks," in *The New York Times*, 2 July 1988, available on <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=940DE1D61F3CF931A35754C0A96E948260>>.

Bhumarat, “but the Khmer Rouge was a good boxer. How can we ignore them? So we had to exploit them to fight against the Vietnamese, and years later, we would have to pay the diplomatic price, and our image would suffer for supporting them, but at the time, it was the thing to do.”⁴⁵²

Democratic Reform at the National Level

Democratic reform had a major impact on the CPT and the population it was trying to co-opt, so much so that it caused General Chavalit to remark, “We can say that the real reason behind the halt in the armed struggle was merely the expansion of individual liberty.”⁴⁵³ There was no single democratic program, however, that forced the issue. It was instead a strategic movement of scores of laws, decrees, and programs that removed autocratic laws from the books and replaced them with more democratic ideals. Spelled from government autocracy, the people were less inclined to support the CPT, which falsely heralded democracy as one of its goals.

When General Thanom took over by coup on 17 November 1971, he scrapped the 1968 constitution and declared martial law. His government also banned all political parties, curtailed freedom of the press, and discarded due process legal rights for suspected opponents of the regime. This led to unrest that strengthened the CPT’s hand.

Thanom assumed command of the PM, Supreme Commander, and Foreign Minister portfolios. His brother-in-law, Prapass, took over the deputy PM, Interior, Police Chief, Deputy Supreme Commander, RTA Commander, and CSOC portfolios. Thanom’s son, Narong, held optimum Army posts as a favored colonel. Opponents, which included students and regular Thai citizens fearful of their rights, called these leaders, “The Three Tyrants.” The civilian political elite joined students and workers in opposing Thanom’s apparent aim to perpetuate a political dynasty through his son, Narong, whose rise the military officer corps particularly resented.

According to Paul Handley, corruption during the Thanom government ran rampant, and the economy, beset by the global recession of the early 1970s, declined. Between 1971-73, some 180,000 engaged in hundreds of strikes, and a meager rice harvest led to shortages and long lines in Bangkok. In the face of internal government opposition, Thanom abolished the election process for the National Assembly and appointed all 299 members in 1972. The abuse of power gave rise to the 14 October student protest movement, the deaths of 70 student protestors, and an overall national dissatisfaction with the government. The king, primarily urged by the students, stepped in and pressured Thanom to give up power.

⁴⁵² Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵³ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Successive governments were either paralyzed by lack of consensus or similarly autocratic. The Thanin government that took over in 1976 via coup, for example, and threw out the 1974 constitution, dissolved parliament, banned all political parties, increased press censorship, harangued unions – even ones not penetrated by the CPT – and again placed the country under martial law. The government arrested some 8,000 people suspected of communist activities in the first three months of power. Thanin also assumed the power to execute without trial anyone deemed a national security risk.⁴⁵⁴

Thanin's government moreover refused to address pressing economic problems, further leaving the population to suffer. Inflation grew 13 percent under him, and he did nothing to assuage it. Thanin ignored labor groups' requests for a higher minimum wage, and strike breaking caused a passive "go slow" industrial rebellion that hurt national output. Forty percent of 1976 college graduates were jobless. One million farmers hurt by poor growing conditions struggled to make ends meet, and Thanin lifted not a finger to help. His neglect further drove a wedge between the autocratic government and the people.⁴⁵⁵

Thanin fell in a coup on 11 November 1977 and the successor Kriangsak government reversed past administrations' dictatorial practices. The removal of draconian laws helped to restore public faith in government, thereby denying the CPT a pool of large recruits and sympathizers. Kriangsak enacted a law in 1978 releasing the "Bangkok 18," students and labor organizers charged with instigating the Thamassat University massacre. He reduced the number of provinces under martial law and narrowed anti-communist laws so they would net only communists and not all those who longed for political change.⁴⁵⁶ For the government at large, Kriangsak paved the way for the return to a constitutional government by 1978 and then parliament by 1979.⁴⁵⁷ He raised the minimum wage in Bangkok in 1978 and 1979. He brought back some press freedoms and released 12,000 prisoners, with full pardons, detained since 1976 as "dangers to society."⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ Handley, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-213, and "Thanom Kittikachorn: Tyrannical soldier-strongman who ruled Thailand with an iron fist," in *The Guardian*, 21 June 2004, available on <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2004/jun/21/guardianobituaries.johnaglionby>>, and LePoer, *op. cit.*, see "November 1971 Coup," "Thailand in Transition," and "Military rule and Limited Parliamentary Government, 1976-83," and S. Rakwijit, "Problems of Thai Internal Security," in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1978*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Heinmann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd, 1977), p. 286.

⁴⁵⁵ Rakwijit, *op. cit.*, pp. 298-300.

⁴⁵⁶ Samudavanija, Snitwongse, and Bunbongkarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁵⁷ "Kriangsak Chamanand, Thai General, Dies at 86," in *The New York Times*, 25 December 2003, available on <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E05E5D71F3FF936A15751C1A9659C8B63>>, and S. Rakwijit, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

⁴⁵⁸ LePoer, *op. cit.*, see "Military Rule And Limited Parliamentary Government, 1976-83," and "Internal Security system."

Nevertheless, the coups kept coming. The next was Prem, who took over from Kriangsak. The catalyst was supposedly the death of a Thai princess in the far south. Her helicopter crashed, or Thai Malay Muslim rebels shot it down; Thai sources differ on the exact details. Regardless, Prem expanded his predecessor's reforms via the 66/2523 and 65/2525 plans, the latter called "Plan for Political Offensive Plan. It not only called for the defeat of the CPT, but also spreading democracy throughout Thailand. The RTA and ISOC's CA programs took the lead in these efforts.

3. Economic COIN Programs

Thailand had too many COIN development programs to count. The main impetus behind this phenomenon was King Bhumibol. One of his key policies was to develop the poor areas of Thailand through royal development projects, and he urged all government agencies to do the same, and they did so enthusiastically. There were, however, specific development agencies set up to assuage citizens' grievances as a way of combating the CPT. Many operated with the CPM program as a direct result of the 09/10 Plan.⁴⁵⁹ The main development programs for the communist COIN were royal projects, government agency projects, and RTA CA.

"Why did we use development projects to help fight the CPT?" asks General Harn Pathai. "Because the communists told people that the government made them poor, and that the government walked on the people. The CPT brainwashed them, so we went in and took that away from the communists. We showed the villagers that this was not true. We proved it to them with our work."⁴⁶⁰ Adds General Perapong Manakit, "Our goal [with development] was to help them and give everything to them and win their loyalty; it was used as means to fight communists."⁴⁶¹

Royal Projects

There were two kinds of royal projects during the communist COIN: official programs, and suggested programs. This trend continued after the war. Official programs were standing projects the royal family ran year round. Suggested projects were those King Bhumibol recommended government agencies to undertake. When the king toured the countryside, for example, he might suggest to a government minister travelling with him that his or her agency set up a potable water project in a particular village that needed it. The agency in question then set up the project with royal guidance and technical support, but mostly with its own

⁴⁵⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁶⁰ Pathai, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶¹ Perapong, *op. cit.*

funding. But it had the very real honor of running a royal project, which brought high esteem to the project manager and the agency.

Such undertakings were critical to the royal family. King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit followed the war closely and knew failure would bring their demise as it had the royals in Laos and Cambodia. Both also had a demonstrated real affection for their subjects, which were reciprocated in a way that helps explain why Thailand today remains one of the few monarchies in Asia. The king spent considerable time touring all the country's provinces himself, informally meeting his subjects and assessing their plight first hand. Even before the war in 1955, King Bhumibol spent 55 days touring *Issan*, meeting with locals, listening to their needs. The trip spurred much of his charity work.⁴⁶²

One of the most notable official royal development projects that helped farmers was the Royal Irrigation Department. Rainfall was not always sufficient for farmers' crops, and irrigation became a major agricultural sector issue. As the communist COIN pressed forward and many farmers joined the CPT, the king had more than 200 dams built in the northeast, six of them large ones. Some of them suffered from engineering defects, which impacted efforts to deliver water to parched *Issan* where the CPT thrived. Royal irrigation projects were more successful in the Mae Nam Mae Klong Basin, where the king brought water to 175,000 hectares, a wide area. His dams in this region allowed many farmers over 250,000 hectares to "double crop," or produce two crops on the same piece of land in a single year. In the south on the east coast, the king's projects brought water to about 25 percent of arable land in the 75,000 hectares with another 52,000 for the Pattani basin. There were 500,000 hectares available in the far south for irrigation at the time.⁴⁶³

Another was the Royal Hilltribe Development Project in the north that began in 1969. It was designed to better the lives of the hill tribes and reduce the friction with the government. "[King Bhumibol] went in and helped them, and his efforts were more like philanthropy," says Dr. Amara Pongsapich, head of the Rotary Club's Chulalongkorn branch. "His first trips into the mountains mostly involved giving medicine and basic staples to the Meo."⁴⁶⁴ It was a chance for the King to establish relations with them and gain their trust. "Then the second phase would include anti-narcotics programs and encouraging them to stop growing opium and instead grow fruits and things like that," says Amara.⁴⁶⁵ The Royal Hilltribe Development Project specifically encouraged coffee, chrysanthemums, apples, peaches, strawberries, apricots, and lychees as opium crop substitution and brought in specialists to teach the tribes how to grow them.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶² LePoer, *op. cit.*, see "Irrigation."

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, see "Irrigation."

⁴⁶⁴ Amara, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ Mahidol University, "The modern Monarchy," available on <http://www.mahidol.ac.th/thailand/monarchy.html>, and Royal Project Foundation,

Government Development Projects

The most prominent COIN development agency during the communist COIN was the Accelerated Rural Development Program (ARD). In 1966, the PM's Budget Bureau annexed it because its leader, Prasong Sukhum, was a founder of the COIN development strategy. He was Deputy Minister of Commerce and Transportation in the late 1970s, accounting for ARD's emphasis on road building. In 1972, the Mol took ARD back. ARD's Committee for Coordination or ARD in Bangkok made its policy, and it mostly deployed in COPT prone areas. The RTA and local forces provided security for ARD staff and other development projects for that matter.⁴⁶⁷

ARD provided the expertise, personnel, and finances for its many road projects, as well as efforts to deploy Mobile Medical Teams (MMTs), a District Farmer Group Program, a youth program, a drinkable water program, and a psyops program to demonstrate to the population ARD's capacity to help. The Ministry of Public Health helped staff the MMTs. ARD began under the Mol's DOLA and the CSC.⁴⁶⁸

The road-building aspect was important to the government's COIN strategy because it gave the government easier means to reach people in remote areas where insurgents operated. There were also economic benefits of extending the road network. The government worked to integrate rural farmers with the rest of the country so that they could more easily market their goods. In its early years, ARD built 2,000 kilometers of all-weather roads, small feeder roads, dams, wells, storage ponds, and the like. It additionally organized 30 youth groups, made the U.S. dollar equivalent of \$2 million in loans through special credit entities, and showed a hundred films a month in at-risk areas.⁴⁶⁹

The Community Development (CD) Department began development projects in 1962 before the war but became a COIN entity in 1965. Unlike ARD, the CD did not do development for the villagers; it helped the villagers with their own development. Tanham writes its main goals were to, "...facilitate communications

available on <<http://www.royalprojectthailand.com/general/english/index.html>>, and "Principles of Royally Initiated Projects," in *Inside Thailand Review*, available on <<http://thailand.prd.go.th/ebook/review/content.php?chapterID=35&PHPSESSID=1c5e22987e665e511bf6059fb9be3680>>.

⁴⁶⁷ Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75, and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 274, and see <http://www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/eng/bb2_main11.htm> for a list of positions held by Prasong.

⁴⁶⁸ Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75, and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 274 and chart p. 282.

⁴⁶⁹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75, and U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 274 and chart p. 282.

between the government and the rural population, to improve the peasants' economic status, and to help develop local leadership."⁴⁷⁰ CD trained its staff to enter villages to find out what development projects they needed. They moreover organized village committees to vote yes or no on the projects to spur leadership and political awareness. Once approved, CD and village staff then organized the projects and carried them out. The projects were small and included miniature dams, canals, and markets. Tanham writes the CD was a novel idea because the Thai were "strongly individualistic" and were not accustomed to community programs unless they dealt with helping monks, agricultural tasks like harvesting, or helping a neighbor build a house. Still, the CD program expanded with the war and had a record of success.⁴⁷¹

Government expenditures for its development programs increased as the war continued, indicating the confidence the Thai had in their COIN development strategy. In 1967, the government spent \$21.6 million on development programs. U.S. aid contributed \$19.7 million. In 1968, Bangkok spent \$26.7 million, the U.S., \$17.1. In 1969, government expenditures rose dramatically to \$51 million, and U.S. funding dropped off to \$16.6 million as the Thai government increasingly took more responsibility for its programs as was planned.⁴⁷² And all programs expanded as a result of the increase funding. ARD, for example, eventually grew to a staff of 250 and operated in 24 provinces.

Other ministries that ran COIN development programs included the Ministry of Public Health's potable water and protein development projects to improve the nutrition of villagers. The Ministry of Education (MoE) ran Mobile Trade Training units to better their business and marketing prowess. The Ministry of National Development ran labor-intensive construction projects.⁴⁷³

RTA CA

The RTA had development programs of its own, which ultimately fell under its CA division. The RTA's interest resulted from it being the most powerful COIN entity in the government, and it understood the poverty-CPT nexus. "Development spurred the J-5," says General Perapong, "something we never had before. It means political, development, and social programs. So long as you accept the cause of the war is poor people and lack of development, or bad economics, then this is meaningful."⁴⁷⁴

General Prem says of RTA development projects:

⁴⁷⁰ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 73, and Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

⁴⁷¹ Tanham, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

⁴⁷² U.S. Department of Defense, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, chart, p. 282.

⁴⁷⁴ Perapong, *op. cit.*

By far the more formidable task was how to tackle the widespread poverty, which we saw as the root cause of insurgency and indeed all social ills. The Second Army Region, despite being the unified command of military and civilian resources in the Northeast, had its obvious limitations. We had to do the best we could. We started by identifying three main areas in which we could be of help to the villagers: means of subsistence, schooling and health care. In all these areas, the aim was to 'help them help themselves'.⁴⁷⁵

So the RTA, in this case the Second Army, dedicated considerable resources to dissecting the poverty problem; it researched on its own in the field and came up with subsequent solutions and provided the resources. This went on in *Issan* from 1974-77. From then on, RTA development of poor areas, not just insurgent-prone areas, became a long-standing tradition.

General Prem recounts the development projects were not easy to implement. "We simply did not have enough budgets to give handouts, nor did we have enough manpower to carry out the work on that scale," he says. "If money was given out, it was for seeds, farming tools, poultry stocks or fish stocks for the ponds."⁴⁷⁶ The RTA's many small projects immediately impacted villagers' lives. The effect was like that of a blanket of help cast over a third of the population. It was a powerful strategy.

The army benefited greatly from local volunteers. Says General Prem: "Volunteers in each locality served as manpower; once trained, they were put to work applying and extending their newly acquired skills, be it in teaching or in rudimentary medical knowledge. The response we had from the volunteers, all of whom worked without pay or personal gain, went beyond anything I had expected or indeed had any right to expect."⁴⁷⁷ There was a groundswell of support for these economic projects everyone understood was ultimately aimed at shoring up the well being of the population to counter keep it from the CPT. This indicates a "whole of country" approach to COIN, especially the fact the volunteers pitched in. This does not mean the whole country aided the COIN in this manner, but it does signify the "whole of country" concept was there, and that certain parts of the nation participated with rigor.

"I did some development, too," says General Harn Pathai. "We provided land and built houses...a *rai* of land [to each settler]. Lots of people [in CPT areas] got a half *rai* of land. And we gave money, too, and let them buy wood, and had them build their own houses. These were royal projects. We won because of these royal projects in his area."⁴⁷⁸ Here, General Harn describes a combined royal and

⁴⁷⁵ Official website of General Prem Tinsulanonda, "Thai Experience in Combating Insurgency," 4 March 1995, Manila, available on <<http://www.generalprem.com/Speech4.html>>.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁸ Pathai, *op. cit.*

army project where the army had cash on hand, called “flash cash” in Special Operations vernacular, to dole out for unique projects. It represents how much flexibility and development know-how the RTA had in COIN.

One of many private development projects was the Association for the Relief of Communist Victims (ARVC). ARVC got financing from private companies. Its main task was to provide educational supplies to hill tribes in Nan and Chiang Rai provinces. ARVAC also tried to convince hill tribes to stay on their ancestral lands to avoid creating refugee problems. “In doing so,” says Saiyud, the ARCV has significantly lightened the burden shouldered by the government in those areas.”⁴⁷⁹

There were many instances where the military and private development societies worked together. For example, General Saiyud worked with the *Mitrapap* (“Friendship”) program, which put on skydiving exhibitions to raise money for school construction. He also worked for the Rotary Club of Thailand, an international service society that helps the poor and disadvantaged.⁴⁸⁰ Founded on 17 September 1930, the first Rotary Club in Thailand began under the sanction of Prince Purachatra Jayakar (1882-1936) after being introduced to the idea by Canadian Rotarian James W. Davidson. King Bhumibol became its patron in 1955. By 1980, Thailand had 48 Rotary Clubs.⁴⁸¹ Saiyud helped develop Rotary projects in the north to help tribes with getting their goods to market, medical aid, and education.⁴⁸²

Rotary also worked with monks to achieve its goals. Says Dr. Amara: “For example, with the Buddhist monks, we had three programs: one working with hill tribes, one with the lowland people. We invited monks, trained them, asked them to be the development people. For the lowlands, mostly the northeast, they sent out the monks and went out on caravans into the villages.”⁴⁸³

The results of the government’s development projects were mixed. There is a range of data that suggests that development did nothing to assuage villagers’ CPT sympathies. Marks writes: “...a Cornell University report confirmed a phenomenon which had already been observed by some American officials: namely, that there appeared to be a strong association between rate of structural growth and incidence of insurgent activities!”⁴⁸⁴ Mark’s own analyses of the ARD program indicate little progress. Regarding improving living standards, he writes

⁴⁷⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, foreword by G. Tanham, p. 6.

⁴⁸¹ Official Rotary Club of Thailand Website, “Brief histories of the first clubs of each geographic region, Rotary Club of Bangkok, the First Club of Thailand, 28 Nov 1930, Rotary International District 3350, Rotary International Convention host: 2012,” available on <<http://www.rotaryfirst100.org/global/countries/thailand/index.htm>>.

⁴⁸² Saiyud, *op. cit.*, foreword by G. Tanham, p. 6.

⁴⁸³ Amara, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸⁴ Marks, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

the ARD had “no overall impact” and only a few individuals were able to benefit from “market mechanisms.” In other cases, Marks observed many villagers came to rely too much on government initiatives instead of helping themselves, ironic because the very goal of the CD program was village self reliance. He moreover writes the ARD had little success in passing on technical know-how to villagers, and the improved communication between the villagers and the government was marginal.⁴⁸⁵

Tactical problems with development resulted from some projects being too sophisticated or beyond the capabilities of uneducated villagers. In one case cited by Saiyud, a development team brought a water pump to a village they could use at their well, but they preferred using a bucket on a string, so the pump went unused and rusted. In other cases, some rural people felt insulted or embarrassed to have urban government personnel try to modernize them. Says Saiyud, “They felt change was being forced upon them. Usually, they begin to want it only when they have seen it with their own eyes somewhere else first.”⁴⁸⁶

Other critics say some villagers did not like development projects because they believed the government was essentially trying to buy their loyalty and forcing them to take sides in an armed conflict, opening them up to possible retaliation from CPT. “Some were not happy,” says Dr. Amara, “because they knew that there was some influence swaying here with some of these projects.”⁴⁸⁷

Ultimately, however, despite seeing many communist COIN programs as akin to political buyoff, Dr. Amara says, “They did help, but I saw it as a very political issue. It did help improve the lives of the *Issan* people, and it did bring them to the government side. At the very least it kept many of them from joining the communist party. Follow through was not very clear, but these areas are very accessible today, so it’s not like they’ve been abandoned.”⁴⁸⁸

Others say development did help defeat the CPT. General Saiyud in 1969 noticed while excessive force surely turned villages against the government, development projects, at the very least, kept rural people from sliding further into poverty, a key government goal. In other cases, he says development certainly won many villages over to the government’s side.⁴⁸⁹ Says Saiyud, “These multi-faceted [development] efforts have resulted in a full range of government-to-people relations; and, as elsewhere, some have been good, while others have been, frankly, bad. Misunderstandings between officials and hill tribe leaders have, on occasion, led to gunfire,” sparked by real and/or imagined “government perpetrated inequity.”⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

⁴⁸⁶ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁴⁸⁷ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸⁸ Amara, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸⁹ Saiyud, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Former communists say development did, in fact, help COIN efforts. Ex- CPT Srisompob Jitpiromsri says, “We did not worry too much about them [development workers] or the development projects. But they did help Bangkok in the end to bring the people to their side.”⁴⁹¹

Denny Lane toured southern provinces during the war years and witnessed good progress. “Regarding development,” says Lane, “go to Nan province. The road network the government built there was incredible. And it allowed the villagers to readily get their goods and food to market. And lots of road construction personnel were killed building those roads; as in a staggering number.”⁴⁹² It numbered in the thousands.

Lane does not believe development projects had an immediate decisive impact, but he certainly believes they helped. “One day, I visited a southern CPT area of Malay Muslims. It was night. The village head met me, and we spoke about the insurgents. The village head pointed to the next village over in the hills and said, ‘See there? They have electricity,’ pointing to the lights. He knew he’d get electricity next. Then he said, ‘last night, I told the communist insurgents that only an established government could give me and my village electricity and the paved road the government had recently put in, and you cannot.’ And it counted,” said Lane. “It meant something.”⁴⁹³

* * *

In summary, regarding the three pillars, the Thai wrestled with their use of force against the CPT until achieving the right approach in 1977-80. Interestingly, while Thai COIN experts knew the right approach in 1965, senior officers in the field did not, or ignored it, and their abuse of force angered the population, thereby expanding the CPT’s ranks. The police also failed early on to learn about the enemy they were arresting en mass until the movement had grown to a size beyond their control. When the Prem COIN-minded camp rose to power they applied highly focused force against the CPT – physically separating them from citizens and destroying its ability to fight – to great success. These victories were enabled by intelligence.

In tandem, the Thai also eventually realized politically marginalizing the enemy was more important than physically destroying the enemy. Part of this equation entailed a flood of psychological operations and also politically uplifting the disaffected population with “surged democracy.” This drew off membership from the CPT and curbed its recruiting efforts. Masterful diplomacy rounded out

⁴⁹¹ Srisompob, 22 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹² Lane, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

Thailand's political attack and isolated the CPT from its regional sponsors, leaving it ripe for a knockdown.

Underlying all this was Thailand's economic aid to the disaffected. The at-risk population was indeed impoverished, and Thailand physically reversed this with village level and enterprise projects. The rewards of these programs were not decisive. Instead, they slowly eroded the CPT's propaganda that claimed the government cared not for the people. This latter phenomenon demonstrated economic programs had not only tangible but political implications as well.

CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE 1980S-90S THAI MALAY MUSLIM INSURGENCY AND COIN

1. Background of the 1980s-90s Thai Malay Muslim Insurgency and COIN

The history of how Thailand acquired its southern border provinces is well told by modern historians. Suffice to say the region was a Hindu-Buddhist nation named Langasuka that adopted Islam in the 1500s and the name Patani, spelled with a single “t” at the time. Ethnic Malays have populated the area for centuries. Patani was a reluctant vassal state of Siam, leading to sporadic clashes between the two. Patani also fought multiple civil wars by competing *raja* rulers who courted Siam to gain power over their rivals. This kept Patani in Siam’s orbit for centuries. Legend says Patani was a lush agricultural state, prosperous, and the cradle of Islam in Southeast Asia. Though the area had busy trading ports and Islamic centers of learning, there is little factual evidence to support the notions of widespread prosperity and that Islam in Southeast Asia began there. Other than lore and scant reporting by travellers such as 16th Century Portuguese historian Tome Pires, there is little recorded history of Patani, especially in comparison to the historical records of Thailand and Malaysia.⁴⁹⁴

In modern times, however, Pattani, spelled with two “ts” in the 20th Century, resisted Bangkok’s rule following its annexation in 1902. “The separatists’ idea had been there all along,” says former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai. “Some separatists came from the families and political power cliques that lost power when Thailand annexed the area. They lost their controlling interests.”⁴⁹⁵ Adds Bhumarat, “The idea of separatism began big in the 1940s. But the movement did not have a lot of backing. It was not the intellectuals. It was the Muslim politicians. And at that time, it was not the idea of pure separatism. It was to establish the Muslim minority identity issue, not quite full-blown separatism.”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ M. Gilquin, trans. by M. Smithies, *The Muslims of Thailand* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2002), pp. 64-66, and S. Pitsuan, “Islam and Malay Nationalism: A Case Study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand” (Boston: Harvard University PhD in Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies, 1982), p. 213, and T. Aphornsuvan, *History and Politics of the Muslims in Thailand*, a monologue written at Thammasat University, 12 February 2003, <https://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/SouthEastAsia/outreach/resources/history_and_politics.pdf>, and Aphornsuvan, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁹⁵ Chuan Leekpai, twice former prime minister of Thailand, interview by author, 3 April 2008, National Legislative Building, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁴⁹⁶ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

In the mid 1970s, the insurgency gained political momentum following the Pattani Demonstration of 1975. Up to 100,000 Thai Malay Muslims protested the killings by Royal Thai Marines of five villagers in Narathiwat alleged to be insurgents. Crowds gathered in front of Pattani's Central *Mosque* and Provincial Hall at different times from 11 December 1975 to 4 January 1976.⁴⁹⁷

The insurgent group PULO (Pattani United Liberation Organization) was the protest's key organizer. It staged highly emotional readings from the *Koran* and calls to the Prophet Muhammad. "Every Muslim present was engulfed with emotions, sympathy for the victims and full of hatred," writes Surin Pitsuwan, former Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a Muslim.⁴⁹⁸

The protest was timed to coincide with Muslim holidays when religious fervor runs high. PULO waited until 11 December – 12 days after the killings – to hold the protests because, asserts Surin, the 11th was three days from the most important Muslim holiday, *Raja Hajji* (*Id al Adha* in most Islamic countries – *Raja Hajji* is Malay) the end of the *haj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca. The largest protest came on the actual day of *Raja Hajji*. Surin notes the holiday also marked the intended sacrifice of Abraham's son, Ishmael, as commanded by God. "In such an emotion-filled period," writes Surin, "religious and ethnic consciousness was easily transformed into political solidarity."⁴⁹⁹

On 13 December, someone in a government building hurled a grenade or two onto the speaker's stage, killing as many as 18 and injuring 40. In the middle of the carnage, someone made the call to prayer and recited the Islamic profession of faith, the *Shahada*: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God."⁵⁰⁰ Incensed, the crowd blamed the government and issued a five-point demand, namely a full investigation of the killings of the Narathiwat five and the withdrawal of all military forces from the south. The government moved the RTM unit in question from the area of contention, launched an investigation, and did not penalize any civil servant who left work to join the protests. Thai researcher Panomporn Anurugsa notes the protest empowered Thai Malay Muslims who then began to distance themselves from Thai Buddhists, labelling them lackeys of the government. The violence and its aftermath drove a wedge between the two groups.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁷ F. Noor, R. Amin and B. Hisham, "Betrayal after betrayal," in *The New Nation*, 9 April 2005, and S. Pitsuwan, *op. cit.*, p. 238, and O. Noi Wong, "Political Integration Policies and Strategies of the Thai Government Toward the Malay-Muslims of Southernmost Thailand (1973-2000)" (DeKalb, Illinois, Northern Illinois University PhD in Political Science, 2001), pp. 148-149, and P. Anurugsa, "Political Integration Policy in Thailand: The Case of the Malay Muslim Minority" (Austin, University of Texas at Austin, PhD, Political Science, 1984), pp. 220-223.

⁴⁹⁸ Pitsuwan, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁰¹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-223, 427, and Noi Wong, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

Wan Kadir Che Wan, former separatist leader of the umbrella group *Bersatu*, writes: “Some separatist leaders interpreted this demonstration as an expression of Muslim anger towards Thai-Buddhists. They believed that this anger could be manipulated and directed ‘correctly’ to support the struggle.”⁵⁰² He also writes insurgent leaders saw the demonstration as a sign popular support “was always potentially present.”⁵⁰³

The demonstration was a wakeup call for the government. Bangkok came to the sudden realization the insurgents had real political power. On the heels of the chaos, the far south constituency rejected all previous Buddhist parliamentary representatives and instead elected all Thai Malay Muslim candidates to the National Assembly.⁵⁰⁴

By 1979, four years later, the southern insurgency had grown to 84 rebel groups with 1,500 fighters, not including auxiliary support. Not all 84 were significant threats to the state, however, and none were pure in their separatist ideology. Most used rebellion as a cover for their criminal empires specializing in extortion and kidnap and ransom (K&R) schemes, which is one reason why the south’s rebellion was never popular with a majority of the local population. The southern insurgency was kept local and never achieved the organization, depth, and breadth the CPT did.

The most active groups in the 1970s were the *Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani* (BNPP), the *Barisan Revolusi Nasional* (BRN, “National Revolutionary Front”), and PULO.⁵⁰⁵ Their combined attack tempo amounted to a handful of operations each month, sometimes weekly during a campaign, but this was rare. Their violence increased in the late 1970s for several reasons, in part inspired by the Iranian revolution that sparked a worldwide radical Islamic revival, and in part because Bangkok was preoccupied with the CPT. From October 1976-December 1981, there were 127 major acts of insurgent violence that resulted in 300 wounded and 200 killed, most of it by PULO.⁵⁰⁶

Some of their biggest attacks in the 1970s included the 6 June 1977 bombing of the Sungei Golok-Bangkok express train in Yala; the 22 September 1977 bombing

⁵⁰² W. K. Che Man, “Muslim Separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand” (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1 January 1990), p. 101.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁵⁰⁴ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

⁵⁰⁵ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-241, 256, and Global Security.org commentary on Thai insurgents, available on <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/gmip.htm>>, and Anuragsa, *op. cit.*, p. 432.

⁵⁰⁶ C. Satha-Anand, *Islam and Violence: A Case Study of Violent Events in the Four Southern Provinces, Thailand, 1976-1981*, USF Monographs in Religion and Public Policy, No. 2 (Tampa, Florida: University of South Florida, 1987), p. 13.

of a royal ceremony for Village Scouts and private Islamic school principals in Yala, and; and the 1 April 1978 bombing of the Hua Lampong Railway Station in Bangkok.⁵⁰⁷

To stop the insurgency, Bangkok applied security, political, and economic programs. It began many of these in the 1960s and continued them in the 1970s. None were coordinated, however, and the insurgency continued relatively unfettered. The government attempted to coordinate political and economic operations via the Yala-based Coordination Center (CC), but competition with the southern DoLA, which was powerful, made it ineffective. Moreover, the CC was not synchronized with military operations.

Security programs during this time period consisted mostly of temporary surge and mass arrest operations. None were successful in bringing peace to the area, and some were reportedly cruel, but they did succeed in destroying the military capabilities of the largest insurgency group of the 1970s, the BNPP. Politically, the BNPP never regained its status, partially due to the loss of its leader, Tengku Yala Nasae, in 1977, and the loss of support from Malaysia's *Parti Islam* (PI). The PI lost elections and was unable to help its protégés in Pattani.⁵⁰⁸

Regarding political COIN initiatives in the 1960s-70s, the government's master political strategy for the south was integration. Detractors called it assimilation or resocialization. Integration entailed bringing Thai Malay Muslims into the state's society via programs that penetrated their isolation. The goal was to make them productive and employable citizens who accepted a pluralistic society. Critics said Bangkok aimed to destroy Malay Muslim culture.⁵⁰⁹

Bangkok's primary integration instrument was education. The biggest educational program was *pondok* reform.⁵¹⁰ *Pondoks* were private religious schools for high school level students. They had been in the south for decades but increased post WW II. They taught the *Koran*, Islamic culture, and little else. Enrollment was

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12, and 2Bangkok.com's expose on southern violence: <<http://www.2bangkok.com/thai-terror-incidents.shtml>>, and M. Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 151.

⁵⁰⁸ M. L. Thomas, "Thai Muslim Separatism in South Thailand," in A. D. W. Forbes (ed.) *The Muslims of Thailand, Volume 2: Politics of the Malay-Speaking South*, (Bihar, India: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p. 24, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁵⁰⁹ M. L. Thomas, *Political Violence in the Muslim Provinces of Southern Thailand*, Occasional Paper No. 28 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1975), p. 23.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23, and *Thai Muslims*, Royal Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 1979, 15-16, and Noi Wong, *op. cit.*, p. 137, and U. Dulyakasem and L. Sirichai (eds.) *Knowledge and Conflict Resolution: The Crisis of the Border Region of Southern Thailand*, (Bangkok: School of Liberal Arts, Walailak University, Thailand, December 2005), p. 86.

free. There were no tests, no standardized system of learning, and no vocational or secular subjects taught such as math and history.⁵¹¹ Moreover, the government discovered some *pondok* teachers were fostering rebellion amongst their students. Bangkok sought to recast *pondoks* to include secular subjects and produce learned citizens open to the rest of the country.⁵¹² By 1966, Bangkok had designed the Private Schools Teaching Islam program (PSTI) that imposed minimum MoE learning standards and a government curriculum on *pondoks* that included some secular subjects. They could still teach Islam.⁵¹³

A 1968 government survey of the government's educational reform indicated a majority of parents – 53 percent – saw the changes as positive and a chance for their children to achieve and progress. *Pondok* teachers, however – generally believed to be Islamic conservatives – rejected the program by 95 percent. They asserted the changes were designed to “make [young Malays] deny their ethnic and religious background,” and destroy what they thought was Islamic purity.⁵¹⁴ It created divisions between religious leaders with power to lose and everyday southerners trying to improve their lot in life. As the insurgency progressed from the 1970s into the 80s, it began to develop along these religious fracture lines.

Other political COIN programs the government listed in the 1978 National Security Policy included teaching Thai Malay Muslim students Thai history and Thai and English (a required foreign language). It also extended the minimum time Thai Malay Muslims spent in high school, and offered to them university quotas and scholarships.⁵¹⁵ Language control for the southern border population was another political COIN program. Bangkok banned Malay language newspapers and put televisions in village headmen's homes to sway the population to watch Thai news, entertainment, and government policy programs.⁵¹⁶

These applications aimed to reduce cultural isolation and shape a productive, employable population, including recruiting quota and scholarship university students into government service. Thai south researcher Ornanong Noiwing asserts the language program was partially successful. In the present day, publicly educated Thai Malay Muslims speak Thai at school and at home, and speaking Thai has become fashionable amongst the region's youth. Thai language abilities reflect education and even high status for many families.⁵¹⁷ Ornanong writes the media programs helped convince many Thai Malay Muslims they were Thai citizens and part of society.⁵¹⁸ Regional employment rose in the 1990s, and many Thai Malay Muslims entered civil service.

⁵¹¹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-169, 170-171, 173.

⁵¹² *Thai Muslims, op. cit.*, p. 12, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

⁵¹³ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.

⁵¹⁴ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180, quote p. 179.

⁵¹⁵ “Political Violence,” p. 24, and Noiwing, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-143.

⁵¹⁶ Noiwing, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-143, and *Thai Muslims*, p. 15, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 173, 205-210.

⁵¹⁸ Noiwing, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

Conservative Muslims, however, rejected the language programs outright. The government admitted in 1979, “the Thai Muslims hold that their custom and tradition is part of their religious life, and they tend to refuse anything out of their own realm, thinking that it would be religiously wrong.”⁵¹⁹ The government also understood some Thai Malay Muslims believed studying Thai was religiously faux pas – that Malay and Arabic were the only acceptable languages.⁵²⁰

Not all political COIN policies fared well, however. Many failed. Says Somchai Rakwijit, “The government did not adjust its administrators to the culture of the Muslim people of the southern most provinces. The officials have long been looking down on those people. They don’t have enough cultural understanding and langue to communicate with them.”⁵²¹ This type of defect caused many Thai Malay Muslims to believe the government saw them as second-class citizens, a problem that festered for decades.

COIN economic development programs in the 1960s-70s were in some cases identical to those of the communist COIN.⁵²² These were road building projects, agriculture improvement, infrastructure building, and village improvement projects. And the far south needed it, too. Writes Ornanong: “The 1975-76 socioeconomic survey shows that poverty in rural areas of the Muslim provinces approximated, and in some cases exceeded, the poverty of northeast Thailand.”⁵²³ The latter has always been the poorest section of the country.

There were also ARD and MDU projects, and agricultural programs for rubber, coffee, fisheries, and the like. The results were mixed. Coffee never took, but rubber became the south’s biggest industry. These helped lift many farmers from abject poverty, but little else. Bad civil servants, poorly designed programs, a lack of follow through, and Thai Malay Muslims unmotivated and untrained to drive businesses forward kept them from reaching their potential. Programs that helped local fishermen buy motors and modern nets achieved meager results in the face of large fishing companies with their massive vessels and catchall nets that Bangkok allowed into the area. In some cases, locals resented Bangkok turning their traditional subsistence economy – their culture – into a cash economy.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁹ *Thai Muslims, op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵²¹ Somchai, 24 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁵²² Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 173

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

⁵²⁴ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-162, quote on p. 163, author’s personal observation, March 2008, while traveling to the border with Malaysia to renew a visa, and “Bombing at Yala government unit, wounds 2 soldiers, 7 residents,” in TNA, 29 October 2008, and “Insurgents decapitate Thai shrimp farmer,” in *The Nation*, 17 April 08.

When Kriangsak seized power in 1977 and implemented national political and COIN reform against the CPT, he and his cabinet also issued strategy modifications for the far south's COIN. This included a 24 January 1978 six-point policy for the south.⁵²⁵ "This new policy," says Chuan Leekpai, "was written officially in 1978. It was considered to be the manual or guidance for any policy implementation for the five provinces for the first time."⁵²⁶

The new strategy was:⁵²⁷

1. To teach Thai Malay Muslims, particularly youngsters, to be proficient in the Thai language.
2. To foster trust between Thai Malays Muslims and the government.
3. To improve the standard of living in the far south.
4. To eliminate terrorist and separatist threats endangering the southern people, the territorial integrity of Thailand, and the King.
5. To persuade Muslim countries that Thai Malay Muslims are not being repressed and to halt supporting their insurgent and terrorist activities.

Kriangsak also established guidelines for civil servants in the far south. They had to be well trained and high caliber – not rejects from other provinces. They had to speak Malay, be Muslims, or at least be well versed in Thai Malay Muslim culture, and they had to have good reputations.⁵²⁸

Kriangsak moreover brought in Thai Malay Muslims to key government posts. He made members of the National Council for Islamic Affairs consultants for the Mol. He made members of Provincial Councils for Islamic Affairs consultants for provincial authorities.⁵²⁹ As with the communist COIN, Kriangsak set the stage for Prem and his lieutenants to make badly needed upgrades to the COIN campaign in the far south. Despite Kriangsak's reform efforts, however, insurgent violence increased in the late 1970s and continued unabated into the early 1980s.

2. Overview of the 1980s-90s Malay Muslim COIN

1980-83

In 1980, when Prem took over as PM, he applied communist COIN strategies and programs to the Thai Malay Muslim insurgency. His able lieutenant, General Harn, who had taken over as Fourth Army Commander (1 October 1981-30 October 1983), tailored them to fit the far south to great effect via the *Tai Rom Yen*

⁵²⁵ Samacha Potavorn, former Deputy Director of SB-PAC in Buddhist calendar years 2544-2546, interview by author, 4 April 2008, Mol building, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁵²⁶ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁵²⁷ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236.

⁵²⁸ *Thai Muslims*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Plan (“Cool Shade in the South”), which was rooted in the 66/2523 Plan. Prem also established two coordination centers to carry out the COIN, Civil-Police-Military unit 43 (CPM-43), and the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SB-PAC.) CPM-43 was in charge of suppression. SB-PAC was in charge of political and economic development. They would be the mainstays of Bangkok’s southern COIN for decades to come.

Their impact was immediate, and insurgents responded with a rash of violence not only in the south, but in Bangkok as well where PULO bombed five targets in 1980. These included a movie theater, a bus, rail stations, and a bus terminal. In the south, it set up roadblocks and murdered highway drivers and passengers, assassinated government employees and civilians, set fire to schools, and bombed buildings.

Regardless, CPM-43’s focused kinetic operations severely reduced the military capabilities of all insurgent groups early in the war, which broke them up into smaller cells. This also made them more difficult to detect.⁵³⁰ Generous amnesty programs contributed to these successes; 450 Thai Malay Muslim insurgents surrendered from 1982-83. Orders from the PM for government personnel to treat Thai Malay Muslims with respect along General Kriangsak’s policies had a significant political impact. The RTA and the king’s development projects signaled to Thai Malay Muslims the government cared for them, thereby winning much of the population over politically. They also provided direct aid to impoverished peoples, which improved their standards of living.

1984-88

By 1984, the BRN *Ulama* faction, led by Haji Abdul Garim bin Hassan, urged the southern insurgency at large to cease and desist its guerrilla war against the state and seek a political resolution.⁵³¹ Hundreds complied, and the movement fizzled. Evidence indicates Bangkok diplomatically courted Saudi Arabia to shut down PULO’s main base in Mecca, which severely injured its operational support regimen.

The insurgency did not die, however. True, political-minded insurgents compromised with the government, in part because Bangkok began to acknowledge their culture, provided more development, and widened access to politics. But the fierce Pattani nationalists, ultra-conservative Muslims, and a small but growing crop of extremist Muslims thought otherwise.⁵³²

It was not so easy for these extremists, however, because the government’s integration programs via the SB-PAC continued to bear fruit politically and

⁵³⁰ “Malaysia Arrests Four Muslim Thai Separatists,” in *The Nation*, 27 October 1996.

⁵³¹ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

economically. Swathes of the population reacted positively to these programs, which lessened resistance to the state and shrank the insurgents' auxiliary force. The SB-PAC's full spectrum of large and small development projects greatly contributed to this trend, as did its interaction with Thai Malay Muslim leadership and rank-and-file villagers on a daily basis. As a result, locals held the organization in high esteem, which showed increased trust in Bangkok. The SB-PAC directly increased the legitimacy of the central government in the eyes of Thai Malay Muslims.

Meanwhile, CPM-43 continued its kinetic operations, and the government added to this a new amnesty program in October 1987, *Muslim Santi* ("Muslim Peace.") It was more or less the same as the communist amnesty program but repackaged via PR to ensure insurgents understood they could surrender without penalty, so long as they had not committed acts of terror. As a result, 641 insurgents laid down their arms and swore allegiance to Thailand by January 1988.⁵³³ This means from 1980, over a thousand insurgents applied for amnesty, effectively defanging about half the movement.

1989-95

PM Chatichai Choonhavan (1988-91) took over as PM after Prem left office and distanced himself from RTA COIN advisors. Instead, he relied on his own civilian advisers for COIN advice. While this did not kill COIN progress in the far south, it did not advance it, either. The RTA, Thailand's traditional COIN leader, lost significant power to Chatichai's civilian clique. But because of COIN progress in the 1980s, RTA Commander General Chavalit of communist COIN fame estimated in 1990 the southern COIN would end with the defeat of the insurgents in two years – by 1992.⁵³⁴ This did not happen, however. The insurgency again reorganized into small cells as it did when subjected to Prem and Harn's offensives. A splinter group broke off from PULO in 1993, for example, and formed New PULO. It carried out a multitude of bombings, assassinations, and extortion schemes for several years.

A savvy Chuan Leekpai became PM in 1992 (1992-1995; 1997-2001) and brought with him a vast array of knowledge of economic development programs, security issues, and local politics – all from having served as Minister of Justice, Commerce, Agriculture and Co-operatives, Education, Public Health, and Deputy PM. It provided him a wealth of knowledge to continue to prosecute COIN.⁵³⁵ Under him was the able General Kitti Ratanachaya, Commander of the Fourth Army (1 April 1991-30 September 1994), who had studied the far south and served there his entire career. During his tenure, he contributed to the demise of

⁵³³ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵³⁵ Official Thai Government website on the cabinet:
<http://www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/eng/pm_20.htm>.

the southern insurgency to the point it nearly ran out of manpower. He believed as Prem and Harn did – that although kinetic operations were highly necessary, they must be conducted in tandem with politics and development. He ran aggressive but focused security operations. After insurgents ambushed soldiers in Yala on 17 August 1993, killing two, General Kittti told the press: “We will not stop until the last man is killed,” and he backed it up with RTA search and destroy teams with helicopter gunship support.⁵³⁶ But he also personally interacted with the local population and its Muslim leaders as much as possible. Kittti moreover began direct negotiations with insurgent commanders hiding in the Middle East, spearheaded by his efficient and longtime subordinate Colonel Akanit Munsewat (now a General). General Kittti developed an avant-garde amnesty program for the southern rebels that included work programs to give jobs to the poor, but it was not fully implemented at the time because of political constraints. By the end of the decade, however, government leaders adopted his ideas to great effect.

While Kittti’s operations continued to erode insurgent operations, rebels were still on occasion able to carry out violent campaigns. For example, from August 1993 to April 1994, insurgents executed 49 acts of arson, five train bombings, and two major light infantry operations – miniscule compared to CPT operations, but destructive for the far south.⁵³⁷ There was a rash of shootings and kidnappings as well.

Still, Kittti’s and the SB-PAC’s programs sapped so many fighters from PULO and BRN that the diehards had to join forces and form a new group partially made up of drug dealers and addicts. Their light infantry prowess was generally gone, however. General Kittti told the press, “They really can’t fight against the military. All they can do is sabotage.”⁵³⁸

For example, in January 1994, disenfranchised members of PULO and BRN formed a temporary group, *Tantra Jihad Islam* (TJI), and attacked a police station. Later in April, it burned tires on 14 bridges across the south. While not discounting TJI’s violence, it was not at all able to threaten Thailand’s national security, nor did it have noteworthy popular backing. It was more of an angry violent gang than an insurgent group.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁶ R. Tasker, “Southern Discomfort,” in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 (September 1993), p. 21.

⁵³⁷ D. Abhiradee, “Adhammic Society,” in *Business Review*, June 1994, p. 105.

⁵³⁸ G. Fairclough, “Hidden Hands; Politicians and Army Blamed for Bombings in the South,” in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 June 1994, p. 20.

⁵³⁹ University of Maryland, “Minorities at Risk,” available on <<http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=80002>>.

1996-98

In 1996, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Interior Paitoon Bunyawat took over security duties in the southern border provinces from the Fourth Army.⁵⁴⁰ The RTA was still involved in operations, but the civilian leadership had commandeered its traditional and lofty authority. There had always been rivalry between the Fourth Army and the SB-PAC, but most of the time, they worked closely together. Unfortunately, the RTA lost some of its intelligence capabilities in the process, which compromised its ability to monitor and thwart insurgent violence.⁵⁴¹ Coordination also suffered.

Insurgent attacks increased gradually in 1996 to the point it scared investors away from a proposed regional trade bloc – the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle – which was supposed to be centered in, and bring new wealth to, Thailand's far south. Accordingly, on 18 January 1997, PM Chavalit (25 November 1996-8 November 1997) announced an increase in troops and spending for the southern COIN. Increases came from the disbanding counter-communist ISOC units in other parts of the country and deploying them in the south.⁵⁴²

But because of the Mol's earlier takeover in security affairs, the RTA's intelligence network was unable to see the pending attack by *Bersatu*, a new insurgent group that unified the fractured and generally ineffectual insurgent organizations that had been so powerful in the 1970s-80s. This included PULO, New PULO, the BRN, the GMIP, and others. The group's official name was "The United Front for the Independence of Pattani." Under it, the southern insurgency was unified under a single command for the first time. Its operations were punishing. *Bersatu* began striking a multitude of targets in spring 1997 in what were likely probing attacks to test the reaction of Thai security forces. In July, it began its Falling Leaves campaign of terror against civilians and security forces.⁵⁴³

In its opening attacks, *Bersatu* operatives threw grenades at people and planted dynamite at public utilities and infrastructure such as a railroad bridge in Narathiwat. Its operatives bombed transport, government and civilian buildings, and infrastructure. They burned schools and houses and assassinated scores of people. The campaign killed and injured multitudes. Authorities assumed it was

⁵⁴⁰ "Security in Southern Thailand Tightened After Bombings," in *Bangkok Post*, 12 Nov 1997.

⁵⁴¹ "Army Chief Notes Lack of Unity Among Officials in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 4 May 1997.

⁵⁴² "Prime Minister Urges Soldiers To Restore Peace in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 January 1997.

⁵⁴³ "Southern Thai Separatists Said Getting Little Support," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 January 1998.

factions of old insurgent groups such as BRN, PULO, New PULO, and the GMIP. They did not realize the violence was the work of a single front.⁵⁴⁴

By November 1997, Chavalit had resigned in the wake of the Asian Economic Crisis, and Chuan Leekpai once again took over as PM. Alarmed at *Bersatu's* mass violence, Chuan, the MoI, and RTA cooperated to restore order to the south and crush the insurgency once and for all. Military and government intelligence agencies published a report for the PM that analyzed the state of the insurgency as of January 1998.

It stated violence increased when PM Chuan Leekpai took over, but it did not blame his administration. It is possible the insurgents were attempting to test Chuan, or it could have been coincidental timing as General Chavalit resigned. The report also criticized local police for not having arrested more insurgents, which impacted the public's confidence in the government's ability to provide security. Loss of confidence in the government meant, at the very least, an empowered insurgency. At the worst, it meant more support, forced or voluntary, for insurgents.

Other than these criticisms, the intelligence report listed six reasons for the rebel violence. First, local politics created instability: "The fact is that community leaders and local leaders each turn to a political party for protection and as a means to build up their clout because they do not trust the state authorities. At the same time, political parties are looking to the state authorities to help secure their political base and victory in the elections. This results in conflicts of interest."⁵⁴⁵

Second, insurgents had increased the effectiveness of their anti-state propaganda. A large portion of the far south, especially rural people, believed the negative things *Bersatu* said about the government. Third, separatist leaders hiding in their Malaysian sanctuaries were still in full command of their troops, personnel, intelligence, and logistics networks in Thailand, even though their personnel pool had decreased.

Fourth, some Thai Malay Muslim politicians neglected local affairs in pursuit of national-level politics. Ignoring local issues made the people feel isolated and unworthy and provided a vacuum for insurgents to fill. Fifth, the people of the far south still did not fully trust state security officials. Some security personnel engaged in local corruption such as petty bribery, and others were involved in organized crime and possibly disappearances of innocent suspects.

Sixth, drug trafficking and use became rampant. In fact, the latter two issues were combined; many Thai Malay Muslims believed non-Malay Muslims were trafficking

⁵⁴⁴ "Reports Lists 4 Terrorists Groups Operating in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 14 July 1997.

⁵⁴⁵ "Report Suggests Way to End Violence in Thailand's South," in *The Nation*, 8 January 1998.

illegal drugs into the south to destroy Islam.⁵⁴⁶ Drug crime further destabilized southern border society and created fractures that insurgents exploited. It gave the rebels drug dealers and users to deploy as fighters for the Falling Leaves campaign.

The government's response to the Falling Leaves campaign was the *Pitak Tai* Plan ("Safeguarding the South"). It called for the destruction of insurgent military forces and coaxing their members from the shadows and back into Thai society with a new and improved amnesty program. The government used psyops to tell the population the military had not deployed to massacre Muslims, and repentant insurgents would be pardoned. Government psyops also let southerners know it would decisively hunt down and destroy unrepentant insurgents with a surge of RTA, *Thahan Phran*, and TNP.

Key to *Pitak Tai*, however, was cooperation from Malaysia in shutting down cross-border insurgent sanctuaries, something Bangkok had sought for decades. It finally got it in January 1998 as Malaysian Special Branch swept up several *Bersatu* cells on its own soil ranging from KAL to Kelantan. By the end of 1998, the vast majority of the insurgent groups had been defeated with only a handful of isolated members left, their always-tenuous sway with the population gone, their infrastructure destroyed.

3. The Thai Malay Muslim Insurgents of the 1980s-90s

Parliament published a report in 1978 announcing Thai Malay Muslim separatists had overtaken the CPT as the most dangerous threat in the far south.⁵⁴⁷ While there were many different southern rebel groups, they followed similar or identical lines of operation and comparable organizational structures.⁵⁴⁸ The main organizations were PULO and its offshoots such as New PULO, BRN and its splinter groups, the GMIP, and *Bersatu*.⁵⁴⁹ Other small but active organizations included Black December and *Sabilillah*.

Strategy

Being both criminal and separatist organizations, Thai Malay Muslim groups had two broad strategies. The first was to use crime to earn money. The second was to either separate from Thailand or gain some kind of autonomy. When they were not involved in K&R and extortion schemes, they tried to co-opt as much of the

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁷ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

⁵⁴⁸ "50 bandits operating in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 14 July 1997.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

southern population as possible by outright threats of violence or by appeals to nationalism, race, and Islam.⁵⁵⁰

Despite the number of disparate groups at work in the south, no one group could claim to represent the interests or aspirations of the whole southern population. Says Dr. Arun, “We know that they were not ordinary criminals. They had political motives as well. But did they represent the whole people? We don’t believe so.” He adds, “PULO and like groups, they emphasized more on nationalism. The BRN was radical revolutionary – leftist. The GMIP had religious motivations. Other groups had different motivations, so who could speak on behalf of the people living in the south?”⁵⁵¹

Organizational Structure

The main Thai Malay Muslim insurgent groups of the 1980s-90s – PULO and BRN – had three organizational levels (some of this is also based on the defeated BMPP.) They had headquarters elements in Malaysia that organized and ran their movements (personnel, intelligence, strategic planning, training, logistics), operational commands in the provinces, and foreign affairs elements in countries overseas to secure material and political support.⁵⁵²

The staffs of the insurgent groups were mostly Middle East-educated religious leaders with a clear Islamic bent. Of the 13 leaders of the BNPP, for example, one was a secular teacher, one was a lawyer, and all others were religious teachers. Writes Wan, the religious elite was the insurgency’s “...stronghold of cultural resistance.”⁵⁵³

Factionalism plagued the Thai Malay Muslim groups, however. They were never able to stay united for very long. Says Police Major General Tritot Ronnaritvichai, Deputy Commissioner of Thailand’s Special Branch, “Before, in the 1980s and 1990s, BRN, PULO, *Bersatu*, and New PULO; they all fought to be the leader of the region, but they could not unite.”⁵⁵⁴ Wan claims this was due to ideological and class differences. Groups such as the BNPP were conservative Islamic, the BRN was socialist Islamic, and PULO was everything to everyone – nationalistic to politicians, conservative Islamic to those recruited in Mecca on the *hajj*, and a criminal syndicate to gangsters looking for a group to attach themselves to.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁰ I. A. Mansurnoor, “Muslims in Modern Southeast Asia: Radicalism in Historical Perspectives” in *Taiwan Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2005, pp. 3-54, available on <http://www.cseas.ncnu.edu.tw/journal/v02_no2/pp3-54.pdf>.

⁵⁵¹ Arun, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵² Che Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵⁵⁴ Police Major General Tritot Ronnaritvichai, Deputy Commissioner, Special Branch, interview by author, 13 March 2008, Police Headquarters, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁵⁵⁵ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

The various groups were also divided internally. From 1980-84, the top two leaders of the BRN argued over “several issues,” none of which Wan describes in his book on the insurgents, but they forced a split into three factions. The most powerful was the BRN-Coordinate, or BRN-C. PULO also split in 1981 over the inclusion of gangsters in its ranks, and it split again in the early-mid 1990s forming the offshoot, New PULO.⁵⁵⁶ Dr. Arun says infighting amongst the various factions was terrible. “As a matter of fact, they fought amongst themselves. They tried to gain support from the people to go along with their ideology but were unsuccessful.”⁵⁵⁷ Adds Bhumarat, “The movements did not have a lot of backing.”⁵⁵⁸ Lack of popular support was a key reason in their failure in the 1980s-90s.

Numbers

The number of insurgents and their auxiliary support in the 1980s-90s is difficult to discern because of the high number of disparate groups. PULO, the largest group of the time, claimed 20,000 members. Andrew Tian Huat Tan, a Singaporean expert on Southeast Asian terror groups, says it had 1,000 fighters.⁵⁵⁹ The BRN and its supporters might have been half the size of PULO at its height, and the GMIP and others never had more than company-sized units active at any time. None of them had standing field units like the CPT, though PULO had unit designations.

A broad estimate of total insurgent operators in the far south at their peak is approximately 2,000. Auxiliary supporters might have numbered 50,000, and people who could be mobilized for public protests might have numbered 100,000, as indicated by political protests such as the Pattani Demonstration of 1975. Passive support might have been much higher, as in several hundred thousand. These rough figures also come from the fact that the southern insurgent movements have always been there, indicating a long-running undercurrent of popular support. At the same time, they are not decisive numbers because the insurgents have never successfully inspired the whole population. In the 1980s, for example, southern Thai terror expert M. Ladd Thomas estimated a mere 10 percent of the population of the far south supported the insurgents, 10 percent favored the Thai government, and 80 percent were neutral.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁵⁷ Arun, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵⁸ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵⁹ A. T. H. Tan, *Handbook of Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Postmodern Terrorism* (University of New South Wales: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2007), p. 57.

⁵⁶⁰ Thomas, “Thai Muslim Separatism,” *op. cit.*, p. 29, and University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

Recruiting

Insurgent groups tightly controlled recruitment to keep out government infiltrators and people who were not sufficiently Islamic. Field commanders and insurgent-related *imams* identified potential recruits in the provinces and submitted their names for approval to their respective headquarters in Malaysia. If the latter approved the names, a field agent made the pitch to the recruit to join the movement.⁵⁶¹

Insurgents used their overseas bases to recruit, too. PULO's base in Mecca provided an advantage in recruiting; insurgents used the *haj* as a forum to bring Thai Malay Muslims to their cause. It became such an issue that in the 1970s, the Thai consulate in Jeddah beefed up its intelligence capabilities to monitor insurgent activities. The government also increased its pre-trip briefings for Muslims making the *haj*, some of which the government funded.⁵⁶² They warned pilgrims not to associate with insurgents while on their holy trek.

Writes Wan: "the fronts successfully mobilized Patani students and workers in foreign lands, particularly in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan. These Patani Malays abroad played a significant role in establishing contacts with the authorities and political parties of other countries. They were anxious to be recognized by Muslim countries as fighting in the cause of Islam and preserving the Muslim *ummah*..."⁵⁶³ The *ummah* refers to the global Muslim community, which some view as one huge family, or indeed a community at least as important as national belonging. Harnessing the *ummah* for material and political support was critical for the insurgency in southern Thailand.

Both real and perceived grievances fueled recruiting. Many Thai government authorities looked down on Thai Malay Muslims as second-class citizens, referring to them as *khek*, or "guests." Thai political scientists say it is a demeaning racial slur.⁵⁶⁴ *Khek* embodied the ill treatment of Malays, which drove many to support the insurgency for cultural security.

Lack of political voice was another grievance. Until the Pattani Demonstration of 1975, few Thai Malay Muslims had served in parliament – even though they could run for office – and scores of them had no way to proffer their political needs such as greater local autonomy and complaints about rampant government corruption. The insurgency gave some of them their political voice.

⁵⁶¹ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, p.162.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.101.

⁵⁶⁴ Author's personal observations from "Panel on the Violence in the Thai South," Thai Studies Conference, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand, 11-13 January 2008.

Conservative and radical Islam created an “us vs. them” mentality that bolstered recruiting, too. Radicals saw Bangkok as an *infidel* regime that unjustly ruled over them, forbidding *sharia* law, ignoring the *Koran*, and dismissing the *Hadith*. Muslims susceptible to this indoctrination lashed out. “We arrested a Chinese Muslim convert in ’92 or ’93,” says Bhumarat. “We asked, ‘why are you so militant? You were not bred into it.’ His reply, ‘I must do something big to impress my Muslim friends, to prove I am a good Muslim’.”⁵⁶⁵

Conservative and radical Islam became a global threat in the 1970s when Iran’s radical Ayatollah Khomeini spread firebrand *Shia* Islam throughout the world, including to Indonesia, the Philippines, Burma, and Malaysia. Panomporn writes of the phenomenon: “The most immediate concern of the Thai government [in the late 70s] is the fundamentalist Islamic movement in Malaysia, which is now pressing for daily prayers at the *mosques*. They distribute pamphlet copies of a speech, translated into Malay, by Khomeini.”⁵⁶⁶

Saudi Arabia, worried about Iran’s influence, countered with spreading ultra-orthodox *Wahhabi* Islam around the world. It proliferated more so than Khomeini’s brand and wound up in Thailand.⁵⁶⁷ The latter was a direct factor in the birth of the *da-wah* movement in southern Thailand. The *da-wah* movement entailed roving conservative and radical *imams* preaching *Wahhabi*-like Islam and anti-government messages.

Training

Insurgents trained in southern Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East. Training in Thailand was sporadic, informal, and happened in remote areas. Middle Eastern training through the 1970s-90s took place in Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.⁵⁶⁸ It is obvious from insurgent operations they trained in light infantry tactics such as raids and ambushes. They also schooled in assassinations, bomb making and intelligence. Their endurance and flexibility also suggests training in clandestine intelligence operations – such as covert communications, surveillance, and vulnerability assessments – on people they targeted for assassination and buildings they wanted to bomb.

Some groups conducted political training in Malaysia and probably the Middle East. Senior Islamic teachers ran such courses, which trained 10-15 recruits for up to three weeks. Trainees learned about the insurgency’s goals, philosophies, and operations. Many recruits served as auxiliary support upon reinserting back

⁵⁶⁵ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁵⁶⁶ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 433-434, quote p. 434.

⁵⁶⁷ Un-attributed comment by an ISOC official, 3 September 2009, National Defense University, Washington, DC.

⁵⁶⁸ Che Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

into Thailand. These agents aided in recruiting, carried out intelligence collection, and served as messengers.⁵⁶⁹ Some morphed into full-fledged fighters.

Logistics and Sanctuary

While some insurgents operated and lived in Thailand permanently, others conducted strikes in Thailand and fled back across the border to Malaysia. More, cross border traffic was vital for insurgent leaders to occasionally supervise field operations. Logistics, food, weapons, ammunition, explosives, documents, intelligence, and a largely supportive population – all the things that make an army work – waited across the border in Malaysia.⁵⁷⁰ “Patani people,” as Wan Kadir calls them, living there (and in other countries) made these things possible.⁵⁷¹ Northern Malay citizens and possibly local government personnel seemed largely supportive of the insurgency, too. Otherwise, they would not have provided sanctuary.

Making things easier, many insurgents had dual citizenship making border crossings simple because they did not raise red flags with border officials. According to Panomporn, “The separatists always have dual citizenship – Thai and Malaysian. This dual citizenship is a result of the 1960s when the Chairman of the *Patani Islam Parti* granted Malaysian nationality to people who resided in Malaysian territory for three years.”⁵⁷² This provides more evidence local Malaysian government and/or politicians supported Thai rebels. It never appeared to be KAL’s policy, however.

Overseas sanctuary was pivotal to the insurgents. The BRN had assets in Syria, PULO in Saudi Arabia, and most groups had links to enablers in Egypt. PULO’s base in Mecca was quite large and facilitated links to Middle Eastern political parties and offices in other countries such as Iran.

Funding was a major aspect of insurgent logistics. “The separatists in the higher echelons like PULO and BRN, most of them were concerned with criminal pursuits, such as kidnap and ransom, drug running, extortion, things like that,” says Chuan.⁵⁷³ In 1998 in Narathiwat, for example, *Thahan Phran* clashed with a

⁵⁶⁹ Che Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-109. The author did not write such training took place in Malaysia, but he did write he was in Malaysia in mid June 1985, and he separately explained he observed political training in June 1985 (p. 109), so it was likely Malaysia.

⁵⁷⁰ A. Rabasa and P. Chalk, Chapter 9, “Muslim Separatist Movements In the Philippines and Thailand,” in *Indonesia’s Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia* (Rand, 2001), available on <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1344/MR1344.ch9.pdf>.

⁵⁷¹ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁵⁷² Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

⁵⁷³ Chuan, *op. cit.*

group BRN and shot dead one of its members who had on his person extortion letters written in Thai and Jawi with the BRN letterhead.⁵⁷⁴ *Jawi* is Malay written in Arabic and in common use in the far south.

Aside from criminal rackets, insurgent groups received funds from local, regional, and international donations, mostly from Arabic and Muslim countries.⁵⁷⁵ For the BNPP, for example, members with jobs were required to donate between .40 cents and \$40.00 USD monthly, according to their abilities. Nonmembers of the groups who supported their causes gave, too, as did thousands of Malay Muslims living in the Middle East. Members in southern Thailand also provided food to guerrillas that temporarily massed in the field for attack or escape and evasion operations.⁵⁷⁶

Wan asserts the biggest source of funding were Arabic and Muslim charities. Charitable giving, or *zakat*, is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and a requirement of all Muslims. Insurgents exploited this *zakat* requirement to fund violence. For example, Sheik Abdul Aziz Ibn Baz, President of Saudi Arabia's Department of Scholarly Research and Religious Ruling, issued a *fatawa* saying the BNPP qualified for donations. The Muslim World League donated to the BNPP, and the Islamic Development Bank through the Islamic Solidarity Fund is alleged to have contributed, too. The Kuwaiti government's Welfare Department, and the Islamic Call Society, also in Kuwait, was the BNPP's biggest donators.⁵⁷⁷

Indoctrination

Insurgent indoctrination mostly entailed highlighting Thai Malay Muslim grievances, both real and perceived, to its members. The *da-wah* movement was both an indoctrination and a propaganda tool. *Da-wah imams* constantly reinforced the conservative or radical Islamic message and anti-state sentiments in the villages, which kept both fighters and auxiliary support aligned.

Some groups used Islamic lectures in classroom setting for indoctrination.⁵⁷⁸ One of the BNPP's for new recruits included *Koran* VIII: 60: "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies, of God and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom God doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the Cause of God, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly."⁵⁷⁹ This stanza made terrorism ok, and by fusing rebellion and Islam

⁵⁷⁴ "Bandit shot dead in southern clash," in *Bangkok Post*, 5 April 1998.

⁵⁷⁵ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷⁶ Che Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-105.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.105-105.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110, 160.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

together, insurgent leaders locked in many members, insulating them from compromise.

Propaganda

Propaganda was a major aspect of southern insurgents' modus operandi. PULO was the biggest prognosticator of propaganda. Its founder wrote that southerners freeing themselves from the "Thai imperialist" was "a matter of life and death for the Patani people in every level at all times."⁵⁸⁰ This message aimed to separate the government from the people via an "us vs. them" sentiment. It moreover told its audience they would die at the hands of the Thai unless they joined the movement, thereby using fear to increase its membership. While that fear was not without some genuine roots – Bangkok was at war with the insurgents – the government was not trying to kill all Thai Malay Muslims. Thai racism, discrimination, and combat, however, combined to create popular uncertainty that PULO turned into fear with a little prodding.

In order to secure overseas material and political support, insurgent groups propagandized international Islamic organizations and their publications to broadcast the lie that Bangkok aimed to exterminate Muslims.⁵⁸¹ They moreover used scare tactics to combat government political and psyops schemes such as amnesty. In 1998, for example, at the height of the government's amnesty program in the far south, Malaysia-based insurgents spread rumors the government was really arresting those who turned themselves in, "spreading concern and confusion among the Thai communities," writes Dr. Chaiwat Satha-Anand, professor at Thammasat University.⁵⁸² Threat propaganda was also common. Sometimes, groups such as PULO would leave revenge notes at murder scenes to intimidate security and medical officials, and also to scare the public.⁵⁸³

Thai Malay Muslim insurgents networked extensively with international Muslim organizations. The BNPP in 1974 lobbied the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, a branch of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), to support Malay Muslim separatism and to get Arabic and Muslim nations to levy an oil embargo against Thailand.⁵⁸⁴ PULO in 1980-81 lobbied support at the Islamic Summit Conference. Insurgents scored success with the OIC in September 1984 in Perth, Australia, when the OIC's Seminar on Muslim Minorities stated the

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236, and Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁸¹ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, footnote 6, pp. 44-45.

⁵⁸² University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸³ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁵⁸⁴ General K. Rattanachaya, *Thailand's Southern Insurgency: Creation of Pattani State* (Bangkok: Sor. Pichit Publication Co Ltd., 1 November 2004), cf. Chapter 17, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

organization should give full “moral and financial support” to safeguard Malay Muslim culture in Thailand and improve their economic situation.⁵⁸⁵

Weaponry

Thai Malay Muslim insurgent groups mostly used pistols, rifles, and commercial and homemade explosives. They acquired them by smuggling or by taking them off dead security officials. Says General Kittti, “The enemy’s weapons were machine guns and assault rifles, but not too many. M-16s were hard for them to get. But they had some M-16s and AK-47s.”⁵⁸⁶ There were a few odd cases where the BRN or New PULO used land mines and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), but these were not the norm. They also used hand grenades and dynamite.⁵⁸⁷

Operations

Southern insurgent operations were mostly sabotage, crime, assassination, and scattered light infantry operations. Insurgents acted singly and in groups, and they operated out of comps in the countryside, too. While they did mix with the population in the villages, it was not their main modus operandi. They committed acts of arson against schools in protest of secular programs and what they saw as state control. In August 1993, for example, insurgents set fire to at least 30 schools simultaneously.⁵⁸⁸

Insurgents occasionally launched campaigns such as the Falling Leaves operation that lasted half of 1997. The *Bangkok Post* described one July operation as swift, well coordinated, and effectively executed:

Regional Police Bureau 9 reports show the terrorists have been at work in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Terrorists have been using a greater degree of violence, homemade grenades and large amounts of dynamite to destroy public utilities, including a rail bridge in Narathiwat’s Ra-ngae district. The terrorists have managed to carry out their activities and slip through police cordons because relatives and supporters have been supplying them with information about the movement of officials.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁵ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 217, 262, 263, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

⁵⁸⁶ General Kittti Rattanachaya, former Fourth Army Commander, interview by author, 28 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁵⁸⁷ “Reports Lists 4 Terrorists Groups Operating in South,” *op. cit.*

⁵⁸⁸ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*, and “INSIDE POLITICS: Confession - no surprise,” in *Bangkok Post*, 19 February 1998.

⁵⁸⁹ “50 bandits operating in South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 14 July 1997.

This particular operation highlighted that the southern rebels did not just excel in violence; they also were expert at building and maintaining support networks that allowed them to organize, gather logistics, collect intelligence, plan, execute operations, and escape government dragnets.

In the mid 1990s, General Kitti writes insurgents developed particular methods for countering government COIN initiatives. Most entailed infiltrating insurgent-minded personnel into leadership positions throughout four southern provinces. These included:⁵⁹⁰

1. Winning enough popular support to get their representatives elected to positions at the local, parliamentary, and ministerial positions
2. Inserting intelligence agents into state bodies
3. Maintaining dual nationality to evade capture
4. Placing their people into as many Muslim leadership positions as possible to preach separatism
5. Eliminating Muslim leaders who do not subscribe to separatist ideology
6. Using *mosques* for secret planning sessions
7. Extorting money from Thai Buddhists and Chinese
8. Transferring businesses from Thai Buddhists and Chinese to Muslims
9. Using Malay instead of Thai in the villages

Targeting

Southern border insurgents had categories of people they sought to kill and venues they wanted to destroy. The overall goal of their targeting was twofold: 1) to kill and/or terrify as many Thai Buddhists as possible to force their exodus from southern Thailand, and 2) to obliterate as much of the government structure as possible – people and buildings – to create a vacuum of chaos that the insurgents would then fill with their own government. The CPT, and every terrorist and insurgent group in history, for that matter, follows a similar targeting policy. Thai Malay Muslim insurgents, however, included civilians in their targeting much more than did the CPT, giving them a more prevalent terrorist edge. Kidnapping teachers and civilians for ransom and bombing markets and popular areas all purposefully targeted civilians. They also tried to kill the king and queen in a September 1977 bombing.

Personnel

While religious leaders and relatives of the old Pattani ruling class lead post-World War II separatist groups, the 1970s saw the beginning of a more ideologically oriented and violent leadership led by a younger generation that was academically

⁵⁹⁰ *Thailand's Southern Insurgency*, pp. 115-116.

accomplished with high organizational capabilities.⁵⁹¹ This increased into the 1980s-90s. Bangkok said in a special report on the insurgency this made the new leadership more dangerous.⁵⁹² Insurgent leaders in many organizations such as PULO and BNPP tended to be university graduates. Field operators were usually villagers of all types; local religious leaders, teens recruited from *pondoks*, and young men from all segments of society. General Kitti asserts insurgents focused most of their energies on indoctrinating the far south's youth into harboring separatist ideals so the movement would have longevity.⁵⁹³

Insurgent groups

Scores of historians, political scientists, security professionals, and insurgents have written about the southern insurgent groups. Their histories need not be repeated here. Certain details on their activities are necessary, however, to help reveal the scope of the rebellion.

BNPP

The oldest of the post WW II southern insurgents groups, the BNPP began in 1959. Tengku Mahyiddin founded it.⁵⁹⁴ Originally an *ex-raj*a-driven political movement, in 1981, the BNPP's constitution stated: "The basic political ideology of the BNPP is based on *al-Qur'an*, *al-Hadith* and other sources of Islamic law."⁵⁹⁵ After that, its international connections reflected its religious philosophy: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Malaysia.⁵⁹⁶ It had a headquarters in Mecca.⁵⁹⁷ "In fact," writes Angelo Carlo Valsesia, "the BNPP network maintained relations with external subjects such as the Al-Azhar University in Cairo where they established a centre for advocacy and fund raising, as well as with the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)."⁵⁹⁸ It also funneled southern Thai youth into the University of King Abdul Aziz in Jedda, Saudi Arabia. It had a headquarters in Kelantan, Malaysia as well, and had good relations with conservative Islamic parties in Malaysia such as the *Parti Islam*.⁵⁹⁹ In 1986, the BNPP changed its name to the *Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani*

⁵⁹¹ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁵⁹³ *Thailand's Southern Insurgency*, pp. 126-128.

⁵⁹⁴ *Thai Muslim Separatism*, p. 24.

⁵⁹⁵ Mansurnoor, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁵⁹⁶ Che Man, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100, 106.

⁵⁹⁷ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-230.

⁵⁹⁸ A. C. Valsesia, "Thailand: Insurgency in the South," on Equilibri.net, 19 May 2007, p. 6, available on <http://uk.equilibri.net/article/6794/Thailand__insurgency_in_the_South>.

⁵⁹⁹ Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-230.

(BIPP) (“Islamic Liberation Front of Pattani”) to reflect its more staunch Islamic leanings.⁶⁰⁰

PULO

PULO formed in 1968 in India at Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, a city in Uttar Pradesh, a state in central northeast India. Tengku Bria Kotanila, aka Kabir Abdul Rahman, a political science student from Pattani, founded it. PULO found inspiration for its name in the PLO.⁶⁰¹

PULO organized around secular principles. Its rally cry was “national secularism.” PULO did not shun Islam, however. On the contrary, evidence demonstrates PULO was never a wholly secular movement. Tangku kept Islam in his movement by calling for the establishment of a Muslim state. He proclaimed, “With all our might, the people, of Patani will try and will continue to fight for the freedom of Patani and the emergence of an Islamic Republic.”⁶⁰²

PULO’s prime recruiting ground and early 1980s headquarters was Mecca, the holy Muslim city. Thai Malay Muslims visited and/or lived there to be close to God, not for business or tourism, thereby illustrating the religious side of PULO.⁶⁰³ PULO’s constitution states its ideology is anchored in Islam, nation, and humanitarianism.⁶⁰⁴ More evidence comes from a PULO fighter’s diary; he claimed he helped murder Muslims that were not Islamic enough. This latter type of killing meant PULO had *takfir* tendencies, or a Muslim killing a Muslim, which is illegal under mainstream Islamic law.⁶⁰⁵

PULO had a strong overseas network. It had training headquarters in Damascus, Syria and in northern Malaysia. Its operational command was in Tumpat, a city on the east coast of Malaysia northeast of Kota Baru – just south of Tak Bai, Narathiwat.⁶⁰⁶ So strong was the Malaysian network, in January 1994, the Consul-General of Kota Baru, Malaysia, indicated Thai Malay Muslims were joining PULO to get its membership cards. PULO membership cards gave Thai

⁶⁰⁰ PULO website: <<http://puloinfo.net/?Show=Sejarah>>.

⁶⁰¹ *Thailand’s Southern Insurgency*, p. 81, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 97, and *Thai Muslim Separatism*, pp. 24-25.

⁶⁰² Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 97, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 235-236, and Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁰³ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁰⁴ General Kitti Rattanachaya, former Fourth Army Commander, interview by author, 28 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁶⁰⁵ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, p. 16, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁶⁰⁶ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 108, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 223, 234, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, passim. and Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, p. 15, and “Abolition of crucial law ‘is sensitive’,” in *Bangkok Post*, 14 February 1998.

Malay Muslims work privileges in Malaysia. This signified at least some northern Malaysian government officials recognized the card as legitimate.⁶⁰⁷

PULO was adept at gathering international Islamic support. Tengku successfully lobbied Syria and Libya for economic aid, and he also garnered Arabic Muslim political support. He traveled throughout Muslim countries making his case, even in West Africa. In January 1980, at the Islamic Summit Conference in Mecca and Taif, PULO published "Pattani Plea for Muslim Help" in the April 1981 issue of *The Journal of the Muslim World League*. The article was republished elsewhere, and PULO received international aid as a result.⁶⁰⁸

New PULO

New PULO formed between 1993 and 1995 – dates vary – as a result of rifts in PULO's leadership.⁶⁰⁹ Thai officials believe it received funding from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Pakistan.⁶¹⁰ New PULO was dedicated to violence. In one of its earliest operations in August 1993, it set fire to 30 or more schools in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat.⁶¹¹ Working along side the BRN in April 1997, it killed four rubber tappers in Betong, Narathiwat.⁶¹² In February 1998, captured PULO insurgent Abdulharem Dorloh said to the press New PULO was continuing its violent operations while PULO had opted not to: "Haji Da-oh [of New PULO] still wants to use sabotage acts in his fight against the government while Haji Sama-aer [of PULO] disagrees with the strategy."⁶¹³

BRN (National Liberation Front)

Also known as the Liberation Front of the Republic of Patani (LFRP), the BRN formed on 13 March 1960. Other researchers say 1968. The BRN was socialist and loosely aligned with the Communist Party of Malaysia and the CPT. For this reason, many *imams* shunned it. Its nexus with Islam came from Moammar Kadafi's Libyan brand of Arabic nationalism-socialism. The BRN associated with what Wan Kadir writes were "liberal" Muslim countries such as Syria, Libya, and

⁶⁰⁷ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰⁸ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, footnote 6, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁰⁹ *Thailand's Southern Insurgency*, p. 54, and I. Storey, "Ethnic Separatism In Southern Thailand: Kingdom Fraying At The Edge?" (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, March 2007), available on <<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370121>>.

⁶¹⁰ S. Brown, "Thailand's Rising Terrorism Problem," on Front Page Magazine.com, 17 July 2003.

⁶¹¹ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁶¹² "Malaysia to be asked to help trace killers," in *Bangkok Post*, 26 April 1997.

⁶¹³ "Abolition of crucial law 'is sensitive'."

Algeria.⁶¹⁴ Despite its political roots, its first leader was *ex-pondok* teacher Karim Hajj Hassan. As a result, the BRN was exceptionally effective at recruiting *pondok* students.⁶¹⁵

The BRN built an effective fighting force that carried out multiple bombings and kidnappings. One of its more memorable operations was the 7 March 1980 attack on Yala town using six time bombs that wounded seven.⁶¹⁶ In 1994, the BRN formed a “Muslim Commando Unit,” but not of fighters. Government COIN operations had taken their toll, and BRN began to place more emphasis on political and religious psyops than kinetic operations. This is what the BNPP did in the 1980s when it failed militarily to achieve its goals.⁶¹⁷ The BRN did not wholly cease its operations, however, and launched a slew of attacks in 1994.⁶¹⁸ In November 1997, it conducted joint bombing operations with New PULO targeting military, police, and local government targets to avenge the death of BRN leader Arlee Torbala by police in Narathiwat.⁶¹⁹ This seemed to be separate from the Falling Leaves campaign.

BRN-C

Beginning in the 1970s, the BRN divided into three factions. The first breakaway group was the BRN-Coordinate (BRN-C), which formed in 1979. The other two were the BRN-Congress, which formed 10 April 1984, and BRN-*Uran* or BRN-*Ulama*, which also formed in 1984. Sources vary on which one was the strongest – some say the Coordinate, others, the Congress.⁶²⁰ Thai insurgency and expert Zachary Abuza asserts the BRN-C sought public support in the *mosques* for its program of separatism and Islam. He describes the group as “distinctly Islamist.” They also formed a youth group, *Pemuda* (“Youth”), in 1992.⁶²¹ In 1996, its main operations were extortion rackets taking protection fees from rubber tree plantation owners planters in Rangae district, Narathiwat.⁶²²

⁶¹⁴ *Thailand's Southern Insurgency*, p. 45, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 106, and “Amin urged to return from exile,” in *Bangkok Post*, 9 March 1998.

⁶¹⁵ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁶¹⁶ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-12.

⁶¹⁷ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁹ “Security beefed up in South after bomb attacks,” in *Bangkok Post*, 12 November 1997.

⁶²⁰ *Thailand's Southern Insurgency*, p. 46.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46, and Z. Abuza, “A Breakdown of Southern Thailand's Insurgent Groups,” in *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume: 4 Issue: 17, Jamestown Foundation, 8 September 2006, available on <http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=893>.

⁶²² “3 armed separatist leaders surrender to Yala police,” in *Bangkok Post*, 24 February 1998.

GMIP

Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani (“Pattani Islamic Holy Warriors Movement”) formed in 1989 from disgruntled members of the BIPP and a small group called *Gerakan Mujahideen Patani*. Some analysts assert it was more of a criminal organization than a separatist one. Others differ and describe it as a political organizer based in Malaysia with more than 1,000 members. The latter also say it had an active sabotage movement that engaged in mayhem and extortion. Most analysts agree the GMIP had in its leadership Afghan war veterans. It is alleged to have trafficked weapons for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines and the Free Aceh Movement in Indonesia.⁶²³

Black December 1902

Black December 1902 was a small group little written about except for its assassination attempt via bomb – with the help of PULO – on the king and queen on 22 September 1977 in Yala, its main area of operations. Its name came from the month and year Thailand and the British (who then controlled Malaysia) agreed on their common border partition, which officially annexed Patani into Thailand proper. Authorities in the 1970s believed the group began operations in January 1975 after announcing its presence via hundreds of propaganda leaflets. Shortly thereafter, it allegedly shot three Buddhist hunters in Yala and stabbed to death and then beheaded a postmaster at his Yala home.⁶²⁴ Other than that, Black September 1902 claimed to have bombed numerous targets in 1977-78 in the south.

Sabilillah

Sabilillah (“The Path of God”) formed during the Pattani Demonstration in 1975 where it handed out propaganda leaflets. It was responsible for the bombing of the Sungai Kolok-Bangkok express rail line on 4 June 1977. It also bombed the Hat Yai rail station in October 1978.⁶²⁵ In a more daring operation, *Sabilillah* bombed Don Muang Airport in Bangkok on 4 June 1977 (Panomporn, pp. 428, writes this was July 1977.) In an interview with the Far Eastern Economic Review in 1980, the governor of Narathiwat said he “reluctantly respected” *Sabilillah*. It was the only insurgent group that concentrated on urban operations.⁶²⁶

⁶²³ *Thailand’s Southern Insurgency*, pp. 66-67, and I. Storey, “Ethnic Separatism In Southern Thailand: Kingdom Fraying At The Edge?” (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, March 2007), available on <<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370121>>.

⁶²⁴ “Political Violence,” p. 18.

⁶²⁵ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-428.

⁶²⁶ Satha-Anand, *op. cit.*, p. 16, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 427.

Bersatu

Bersatu was an umbrella organization that brought together PULO, New PULO, GMP, and BRN.⁶²⁷ It had its origins on 31 August 1989 when Wan Kadir Che Man sponsored a meeting in Malaysia called “the gathering of the fighters for Pattani” and formed the “*Payong* Organization,” an umbrella insurgent group that sought to unite all Malay Muslim insurgent groups. It was unable to unite all groups at that time. Its formal name was *Majelis Permesyuaratan Rakyat Melayu Patani*, (MPRMP) (“Patani Malay People’s Consultative Council.”) In 1991, it changed its name to “The United Front for the Independence of Pattani” or *Bersatu* (“United”) for short. Wan knew personally many insurgent leaders from their school days together in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, particularly the BNPP’s Badi Hamdan.⁶²⁸ He moreover had international Islamic connections, particularly with the Muslim World League, that funded his research and book on the insurgency. His research included travel to Saudi Arabia and Malaysia in 1986.⁶²⁹

In 1997, *Bersatu* successfully united the far south’s insurgent groups and declared *jihad* against the state.⁶³⁰ That launched the Falling Leaves campaign. It mostly targeted Thai government personnel, including local administrators, police, and teachers with bombings, arson, and assassinations.⁶³¹ Because of effective government COIN operations, *Bersatu* was short on manpower, so it recruited drug dealers and addicts to carry out most of its attacks. They crossed into Malaysia, met with insurgent leaders for operational orders, and then crossed back into Thailand to carry them out. *Bersatu* paid its new fighters 5,000 *baht* each. The campaign spanned through Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat.⁶³² It included six bombing operations, at least two ambushes, four grenade attacks, scores of assassinations, and at least one major raid.⁶³³

⁶²⁷ International Crisis Group (ICG), “Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad,” Asia Report No. 98 (Jakarta/Brussels: 18 May 2005), Footnote 118.

⁶²⁸ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 109, and ICG, “Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad,” p. 14, and Human Rights Watch, “No One Is Safe” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 27 August 2007), available on <<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2007/08/27/no-one-safe>> and The Virtual Information Center, “Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand,” a paper provided for the U.S. Commander in Chief, Pacific, 29 July 2002.

⁶²⁹ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

⁶³⁰ M. Vatikiotis, “Resolving Internal Conflicts in Southeast Asia: Domestic Challenges and Regional Perspectives,” in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Singapore, Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), pp. 27-47.

⁶³¹ P. Chalk, “The Malay-Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand; Understanding the Conflict’s Evolving Dynamic,” prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, (Washington, DC, Rand Corporation, 2008), available on <http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2008/RAND_OP198.pdf>.

⁶³² “Bomb Blast at School Fair Kills Two, Injures 13 in Yala,” in *The Nation*, 30 December 1997.

⁶³³ “Southern centre director to decide on personnel changes,” in *Bangkok Post*, 8 January 1998.

4. People – The At-Risk Population

In the 1980s-90s, the population in the far south was, and still is, ethnically and religiously different from the rest of Thailand. About 3.5 percent of Thailand is Muslim, or 2.1 million people. The total population is 64 million and overwhelmingly Theravada Buddhist. There are 27,000 Buddhist temples in Thailand and 3,000 *mosques* – 70 percent of which are in the far south.⁶³⁴ Seventy-five to 80 percent of the far southern population is Malay Muslim.⁶³⁵ Most of these are *Sunnis* and follow the *Shafi'i* sect.⁶³⁶ They commonly speak Malay and Thai, but more rural people speak Malay. The latter also use *Jawi* as written script more than Thai. This is not so in towns.

The rest of the southern population is Thai or Chinese and Buddhist. The far south's population historically has been divided in its loyalty to the Thai state. While loyalists outnumber those who are not, rebellion is indeed a part of the region's social fabric and history. And loyalty in the far south does not necessarily mean dedication to Nation, Religion, and King. For some, it means loyalty out of convenience by a population with nowhere else to go.

The far south began as what Thai Malay Muslim expert Michael Gilquin says was an "inward-looking, rural society" based on subsistence farming and fishing.⁶³⁷ In the 1980s, as in the present, agriculture was the main economic sector of the far south, specifically rubber (23.4%), rice (9.2 %), fruit (3.1 %), coconuts (1.9), palm oil (NA), and fishing (NA).⁶³⁸ These sectors provide 45 percent of the region's jobs. The import-export sector employs 15 percent of the population, tourism 13 percent, and miscellaneous industries account for the remainder. In the 1980s, there was a growing industrial sector that included food processing, wood mills, and the like.⁶³⁹

Far south cultural expert Andrew Cornish argues there was an understudied division between rural and town populations in the far south. Rural populations at the time of his research, the mid-1980s-90s, far outnumbered those who lived in urban areas. He notes in 1986, for example, Yala and Betong, the two biggest towns in Yala province, accounted for only 26 percent of the population. Yet those

⁶³⁴ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-42.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶³⁶ O. F. Bajunid, "Islam, Nationalism, and the Thai State," in W. Sungunnasil (ed.) *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*, (Pattani, Thailand: Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand, 2005), p. 5.

⁶³⁷ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁶³⁸ *Thai Muslims*, pp. 6-7.

⁶³⁹ P. Kittaworn, "Voices from the Grassroots," in W. Sungunnasil (ed.) *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand*, (Pattani, Thailand: Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand, 2005), p. 38.

in cities looked down upon villagers. Rural people were embarrassed to wear their “country” clothing to town; they would even make fun of each other over their inability to navigate cities and tend to town business. People in towns were more apt to speak Thai to show their sophistication. It was a definite societal divide that caused social friction. Conservative Muslims, asserts Cornish, provided a social shelter from that friction, as it transcended the gap.⁶⁴⁰

Thai Malay Muslims in the far south herald their identity and see themselves as unique. Malays all over Southeast Asia behave similarly, and in Thailand, the fact that they are a dense minority surrounded by a culture much different from theirs elevates this sentiment. “They cherish their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness,” writes Omar Farouk Bajunid, a specialist on Thai Malay Muslims.⁶⁴¹ Gilquin, adds, “It is revealing that the term for converting to Islam in the local language, *masok melayu*, literally means, ‘to become Malay’.”⁶⁴² So to a Malay Muslim, it is not simply an ethnicity or religious issue, it is a merging of the two that has created, in their perception, an essence that has deep cultural and historical roots.

Thai researchers Utai and Lertchai write the *mosque* and the *pondok* are two of the most important institutions to the faithful. They claim the *pondok* is the oldest learning institution in the far south and preserves their culture more than any other entity. Historians trace the first *pondok* to 1624 in Talomanok village in Narathiwat. Likewise, the *imam* and *pondok* teacher, the *toguru* or *ustaz*, are two of the most influential people in society. They provide wisdom, knowledge, and guidance in all manners of life – spiritual, material, and political.⁶⁴³ Perhaps a third of the far south’s population adheres to conservative or ultra-conservative Islam, but this is only an estimate.

Thai Malay Muslims believe in what Gilquin calls a “culture of prestige” where “notability seems a permanent quest.”⁶⁴⁴ It includes specialized hobbies such as top spinning, kite flying, and raising songbirds – all of which entail competitions. *Koran* reading competitions are common, too. The culture overall holds Islamic study and the medical field in high esteem.⁶⁴⁵ Despite seeing themselves as culturally unique, Gilquin notes, “...there is a desire to exist as social, economic, cultural, and political participants in the Thai framework.”⁶⁴⁶ So while they are different, rebellion is not necessarily their culture, but insurgents have certainly tried to make it so.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁰ A. Cornish, *Whose Place is This?; Malay Rubber Producers and Thai Government Officials in Yala* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997), pp. 10-13.

⁶⁴¹ Bajunid, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶⁴² Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁶⁴³ Dulyakasem and Sirichai, *op. cit.*, pp. 70, 81.

⁶⁴⁴ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶⁴⁶ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁶⁴⁷ Cornish, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Crime and violence is a part of the far south's culture, too. Historically, Malay Muslims have been hardy survivors in a tough, less-than-friendly agricultural environment. Duncan McCargo writes theft, a readiness to fight, and an argumentative nature characterize the region's arduous side.⁶⁴⁸ He also says these rough and tumble attributes coupled with a high level of crime and insurgency characterize not only the population, but their politics as well.⁶⁴⁹ K&R schemes, smuggling, and extortion by criminal gangs are common. Organized crime heads called *chao pho* in Thai ("godfather") were particularly prevalent in the 1980s.⁶⁵⁰ Gilquin notes while Islam forbids gambling, Thai Malay Muslim culture has a "clandestine betting" penchant for animal fights with roosters, buffalos, and fish.⁶⁵¹

Muslims in other parts of Thailand – Bangkok, Chachoengsao (east southeast of Bangkok), Ayutthaya, Chiang Rai, and Chaing Mai live in harmony with Thailand and do not isolate themselves from the rest of the country.⁶⁵² Malay Muslims are different. Bajunid writes they have historically been resistant to assimilation into Thai society.⁶⁵³ This is different from them wanting to exist within the Thai framework as their own unique culture; but the two sentiments – wanting to exist within the framework while simultaneously striving to be uniquely Malay Muslim – are not always synonymous. Citing cultural dogma, some Thai Malay Muslims put Islam before state laws, which causes friction with Bangkok.

Despite their adherence to Islam, Malay Muslims in southern Thailand have little knowledge of the *Koran*. Their knowledge of Arabic, the holy language of Islam, is scant, which hinders deeper understanding of the religion. Most locals learned Islam by word of mouth.⁶⁵⁴

Gilquin asserts the traditional Thai Malay Muslim method of learning Islam is a poor substitute for learning critical thinking. Islamic students in the border provinces traditionally memorized *Koran* verses by reciting them over and over again in Arabic without fully understanding the language. He writes, "This way of studying Islam was based on assimilating unchallengeable norms, rather than true acquisition of theological knowledge. Rationality and logic, though central to classic Muslim thought, were annihilated in rigid reading of texts which did not provide a means of facing a changing world."⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁴⁸ D. McCargo, "Southern Thai Politics," in W. Sungunnasil (ed.) *Dynamic Diversity in Southern Thailand* (Pattani, Thailand: Prince of Songkhla University, 2005), p. 28.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶⁵¹ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁵³ Bajunid, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁶⁵⁴ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54, 93.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Malay Muslims in Southern Thailand have traditionally not been big business owners. They were more often the labor pool for Thai and Chinese businesses. During economic down times, they found work across the border in north Malaysia by the thousands. Many have dual citizenship in both countries, and their families are scattered on both sides of the border.⁶⁵⁶

Gilquin also asserts many Thai Malay Muslims compound their unique view of themselves with a “nostalgic” and “embellished” history, not because it is irrelevant, but because it is largely undocumented and oral. Some Thai Malay Muslims, however, are fiercely protective of their version of their own history, which is replete with glorious economic, political, and military feats and also extreme cruelty at the hands of Siam. The extreme version feeds separatist sentiments and anti-Thai fervor. It clashes with Thai versions of the far south’s history, which has been dismissive and damaging to Thai-Malay Muslim relations.⁶⁵⁷

Since WW II, and especially in the 1990s, Gilquin says conservative Islam in the far south has clashed with traditional customs, such as women wearing black head-to-toe and face-covering *niqab*. It represented an ultra orthodox treatment of women and other strict Islamic interpretations. *Hijab* is the usual female Muslim garb in the border provinces. *Hijab* suggests faith in mainstream Islam without radical tendencies.⁶⁵⁸ Of the increase in radical Islam, Gilquin warned in the early 2000s, “the development of these micro-societies, which seek a model in a mythical past having little in common with Southeast Asian society, need to be watched.”⁶⁵⁹

5. The Thai Malay Muslim 1980s-90s COIN Strategy

The Tai Rom Yen Plan

The *Tai RomYen* Plan was the COIN plan for the far southern border provinces under Prem. General Harn produced it on 2 October 1981 as Fourth Army Order No. 751/2524 and was in charge of its execution.⁶⁶⁰ The plan was remarkably similar to the 66/2523 Plan but tailored to fit the nuances of the far south.⁶⁶¹ “The strategy was to use development coupled with security; it was our Cold War

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

⁶⁵⁷ Cornish, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10, and Gilquin, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64. Cf. I. Syukri, *History of The Malay Kingdom of Pattani*, trans. by C. Bailey and J. N. Miksic (Bangkok: Silkworm Books 1985), and Bajunid, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁸ Cornish, *op. cit.*, p. 2, and Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁶⁵⁹ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁶⁶⁰ Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25, and Dulyakasem and Sirichai, *op. cit.*, footnote 27, p. 25.

⁶⁶¹ Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25, and Dulyakasem and Sirichai, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

strategy,” says Major General Perapong Manakit.⁶⁶² The overall goal was to eliminate the terror and insurgent groups operating there, including the CPT, the Communist Party of Malaysia, and Thai Malay Muslim rebels.⁶⁶³ The plan stated:⁶⁶⁴

1. To secure the lives and properties of all the people regardless ethnicity and religion. Both Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims will be protected by government forces from the threat of communist insurgents, terrorist movements, Malaya communist terrorists and various influential persons.
2. To establish security on the Thai-Malaysian border area in order to revitalize the economy of the border provinces and to upgrade good relationship between Thailand and Malaysia.
3. To eliminate by peaceful means dictatorial, influential, and shady power, which dominate the region, in order to ensure that all the people enjoy their right, freedom, and equality be it political, economic, or social, under a constitutional monarchy.
4. To establish good relationship and to manage conflicts between the authorities and the people.

It was the first comprehensive, coordinated, and long-term strategy the government ever applied to the south. And since it was derived from the communist COIN strategy and the war had been going on for some time, the government did not have to generate a new COIN doctrine and re-learn about the southern border problem.⁶⁶⁵ The ingredients for action were all there.

There was a key difference from communist COIN approach, however; the inclusion of the government’s 1960s-70s integration policies, which continued under *Tai Rom Yen*. Even when General Harn left his command in 1985, commanders that followed adhered to his strategic premise.⁶⁶⁶ Chuan Leekpai notes the southern COIN strategies were designed so successive governments would not have to significantly redesign their approaches to the insurgency, though changes did occur.⁶⁶⁷

Tai Rom Yen differed substantially from past Thai Malay Muslim COIN policies. First, past COIN plans were temporary suppression, political integration, or development programs. None were permanent, and few included multiple COIN pillars all at once. The *Tai Rom Yen* scheme did. Second, the new plan included

⁶⁶² Perapong, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶³ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-425 and Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁶⁶⁴ Wongtrangan, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁶⁶⁵ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-425.

⁶⁶⁶ Cole, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶⁷ Chuan, *op. cit.*

a border security campaign. Insurgents for years had free reign to seek sanctuary on either side of the Thai-Malay boundary. It was a key enabler of insurgent violence.⁶⁶⁸

Amnesty was absent from *Tai Rom Yen*, but the 66/2523 Plan applied nationwide, so General Harn did not include it in his plan for the far south. Additionally, amnesty was not alien in the southern war. Thai Malay Muslim insurgents had previously surrendered in the 1970s, and they continued to do so in the 1980s-90s. Amnesty in the south was not so widely bestowed, however. The government did not give it to terrorists, but it did to their auxiliary support and low-level fighters. Says Dr. Arun, “So our policy at that time was to treat the various organizations [insurgents] as criminals instead of political groups. Their tactics at the time were criminal – extortion, kidnapping, and arson.”⁶⁶⁹

General Akanit adds:

Look, PULO and the others might have been insurgent groups aiming for independence, or whatever they thought that was, but they also excelled in extortion, organized crime, and killing civilians with bombings. So during that time, we fought PULO and the other insurgents by using the criminal law. With the communists, we used the anti-communist law. With [that], we had the authority to grant amnesty. But it was criminal law for the southern insurgents. They murdered civilians.⁶⁷⁰

Neither did *Tai Rom Yen* discuss diplomacy with Middle Eastern countries or cooperation with Malaysia beyond border operations. “At that time,” Says Dr. Arun, “you know, we used intelligence, patience, and an internal policy to handle the matter. Without looking far to other countries, even to Malaysia, when their connection was by blood and ethnicity.”⁶⁷¹ Diplomacy would play a major COIN role in the 1990s, however.

Integration strategies from the 1970s remained, but they were the Kriangsak type – gentle. The goal of integration was in the 1980s-90s the same as it was in the 1970s: to shape a Thai Malay Muslim population that was moderate and friendly to the government and other races and religions to drown out the conservative and hostile section of the southern border community. To shape the population, the government, through new coordination programs and allied with the moderates, sought to co-opt the neutrals. It also aimed to educate the region’s youth in secular-Muslim programs to make them less gullible to radicals. “This [was] one of

⁶⁶⁸ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-425.

⁶⁶⁹ Arun, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷⁰ General Akanit Munsewat, Royal Thai Army (RTA) Liaison to Malaysia, interview by author, 21 April 2008, RTA Headquarters, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁶⁷¹ Arun, *op. cit.*

the most important strategies of the Army and the Thai government in contemporary integration,” writes Panomporn.⁶⁷²

General Kitti, Fourth Army commander in the early 1990s, added to the state’s COIN strategy. While he kept to the basics of *Tai Rom Yen*, General Kitti added several tenets, including amnesty and diplomacy with insurgents living overseas. He moreover engaged Malaysia regarding help with investigations and suppression, something that paid massive dividends years later.

Regarding diplomacy with the insurgent leaders, General Kitti says, “When I was the Fourth Army Area Commander, I thought we should solve the problem with the separatists by the peaceful means, not military means, so I contacted the leaders of PULO and BRN. They lived abroad, some in the Middle East, some in Malaysia. So I sent my aid, then Colonel Akanit, to meet with them in Egypt.”⁶⁷³ His goal, at the very least, was to convince them to stop fighting.

He also offered them and other insurgent leaders amnesty via an upgrade to the existing *Phu Ruom Pattana Chat* amnesty program. Kitti’s upgrade such was the *Krong Kahn Thai Muslim Keh Ban Hah Thai Muslim* program, which means, “Thai Muslim Must Solve the Problem Himself.”⁶⁷⁴ The Fourth Army funded it, and CPM-43 managed it. The plan allowed insurgents to surrender so long as they joined government development programs to improve the plight of the nation’s poor. General Kitti thought it was a good way for insurgents to put their energies into changing the south, but not by violence. The programs worked but never had the chance to fully develop because Bangkok transferred Kitti out of the south. Years later, however, the government adapted near identical programs to help defeat the guerrillas.⁶⁷⁵

Economic Strategy

Another alteration of the southern COIN strategy in the 1980s-90s was to prioritize economic development. In the 1980s, economic programs kept the southern border population from falling deeper into poverty, but they were still the third poorest people in Thailand, which exacerbated the insurgency. To fix this, the government in 1994 injected massive funds into industrial, strategic development, and business projects. As a result, the government changed its COIN strategy that year to reflect its success to “economic leads, public relations follows, peace and order supports.”⁶⁷⁶ It was essentially an alteration of the mix of the three pillars.

⁶⁷² Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 305 (quote), 435, and Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁶⁷³ Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.

The Pitak Tai Plan

In 1998, because of the Falling Leaves offensive by *Bersatu*, the government drew up a new strategy, *Pitak Tai*. One of its main drivers was PM Chuan Leekpai, and it is evident some of the ideas for it came from General Kitti and his *Krong Kahn Thai Muslim Keh Ban Hah Thai Muslim* program. *Pitak Tai* was also rooted in General Prem's and Harn's 1980s-era COIN strategies. Operations began in January 1998, but official sanctioning of the strategy did not occur until July 1998 via PM Order No. 127/2541.

Pitak Tai had a force component and two political components; amnesty and diplomacy. Like the communist COIN, amnesty allowed insurgents back into society, but with conditions. The government used hard-hitting kinetic operations, however, to scare insurgents into making a choice between fighting and dying or accepting the government's generous rehabilitation program. Regarding diplomacy, the main thrust aimed at getting Malaysia to go beyond border security cooperation and actually identify and arrest Thai Malay Muslim insurgents hiding in Malaysia. It was a major change in policy – something General Kitti tried to do but was stifled for reasons unknown.

Special Branch Commissioner Somkiat Phuangsup was the main architect of the amnesty program under *Pitak Tai*.⁶⁷⁷ Commissioner Somkiat spent but a year as chief of Special Branch that began in mid-1997. He was not a southern insurgency expert like Kitti and Akanit. Nor did he have the intricate understanding of southern political and security issues like Chuan. Somkiat was a police crime fighter for 34 years and had spent significant time in Bangkok. One of his colleagues said of him to the press: "Mention his name and every hired gunman felt a chill down his spine."⁶⁷⁸ When he took the Special Branch position, he brought his dedication and long experience in investigative skills to the fore, key in identifying, locating, and then neutralizing insurgent leaders and their networks.⁶⁷⁹

6. Coordination for the Thai Malay Muslim 1980s-90s COIN

With Kriangsak and Prem, COIN coordination became doctrine, not only for the communist COIN, but also for the war in the far south. "According to the Army," writes Panomporn, "integration of this area in the 80s must be unified and systematized for security purposes."⁶⁸⁰ Up to that point, political, economic, and security affairs had been uncoordinated and done piecemeal in the far south; witness the scattered kinetic operations in the 1960s-70s that occurred amidst free-floating political and economic projects. The chain of command was muddled

⁶⁷⁷ "It's time for peace – not violence," in *Bangkok Post*, 25 October 1998.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁰ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

and ineffectual. Thai leaders of the 1980s realized this, and they also knew from their own experiences with the communist COIN discombobulated agencies and a divided government hindered operations and allowed the enemy to strengthen its ranks. Kriangsak and Prem's coordination efforts proved a united front of security, politics, and development was far more effective. In the south, the government used ISOC and CPM-43 to coordinate and execute the security front and the SB-PAC to coordinate and execute the political and economic fronts.

ISOC and CPM-43

ISOC and the CPM concept proved successful in the communist COIN, so there was no need to reinvent the wheel for the far south's COIN. Prem made CPM-43 official via PM's order No. 8/2524, on 20 January 1981.⁶⁸¹ The security chain of command for the Thai Malay Muslim COIN was the same as the communist COIN accept for the injection of the Fourth Army into the mix. The PM was in command of all COIN efforts. The NSC served as a security advisory board and policy maker.⁶⁸² ISOC, specifically ISOC 4, served as the regional coordinator, and CPM-43 was the on-the-ground implementer. (ISOC 1, 2, 3, and 4 coordinated national security affairs in Army Regional Commands 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.) The Fourth Army had major influence at all levels. Says General Kitti, "The Fourth Army commanded the Army and police under CPM-43. The PM let the Fourth Army solve the problems – the government made the policy – but the Fourth Army ran the projects the planning, devised how to fight, figured out the tactics. It executed operations, got in touch with the people and, eventually, the rebels."⁶⁸³

Early in the war, General Kitti was the Fifth Division Commander of the Fourth Army. There were 10,000 soldiers in a division. He says, "We had the responsibility to deal with this problem in the south, but only some of my unit, not the entire Fifth Division."⁶⁸⁴ This was in accordance with Prem's policy of using force, but not too much. Other units assigned to CPM-43 included 800 Marines and 900 *Thahan Phran* of the 41st and 43d Regiments.⁶⁸⁵ Standard units of the police and BPP of the TNP' Region 9, the latter's police command for the entire south, also participated.

"The functions of the combined force, or CPM-43, were many," says Chuan. "First, it gathered intelligence about the insurgency. Second, it engaged in prevention of insurgent attacks, which was like physical security. Third, it carried

⁶⁸¹ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," 1991, pp. 12-13, and anonymous.

⁶⁸² "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 12-13.

⁶⁸³ Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ Ball and Mathieson, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

out suppression operations of insurgents, which was actively seeking out and engaging insurgents through military operations.”⁶⁸⁶

The RTA largely took responsibility for security of rural and mountainous areas where guerrillas might coagulate, and the TNP took responsibility for security for more populated areas, the plateaus and towns. The RTA mostly operated at the tambon level with rifle companies where they could send QRFs to aid CPM forces and react to intelligence concerning insurgents on the move. This is where the RTA identified, fixed, and fought guerrillas with ambushes, raids, and pursuits.⁶⁸⁷

There were exceptions, however, and the Thai stayed flexible regarding deployments. Sometimes, this would result in a seesaw effect with insurgents. When the RTA conducted operations in the mountains, it sometimes forced insurgents into the plains and towns for sanctuary. They also occasionally used these times to stage attacks in areas where the RTA was not.⁶⁸⁸ This was a natural guerrilla reaction, however, to government operations that were not entirely seamless.

A side project of CPM-43 was the Land Resettlement Project. It took Thai Buddhist volunteers from other parts of Thailand and provided them farmland on the Thai-Malay border. The farmers not only tilled their plots, they collected intelligence and provided security, too. The government trained and organized them. There is no outward evidence the program was successful, however. Insurgents penetrated the border at will, and puritanical Thai Malay Muslims protested the program as an effort to dilute their race.⁶⁸⁹

The SB-PAC

In September 1980 at the Senanarong RTA base in Songkhla, top government officials discussed the pros and cons of establishing a new administrative center for the far south that would focus on political, cultural, economic, and development issues. The old one did not work, allowing the insurgency to increase its intensity. They decided to create a new agency that would have more clout and competence than the old Coordination Center.⁶⁹⁰ That agency was the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SB-PAC). The Thai nicknamed it “*Saw Aw Paw Taw*.”⁶⁹¹

⁶⁸⁶ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸⁷ Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸⁸ “Thailand: Situation Seen Improving After Key Terrorist’s Death,” in *Bangkok Post*, 8 April 1997.

⁶⁸⁹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 317-320, 323.

⁶⁹¹ Arya, *op. cit.*

The PM sanctioned the SB-PAC with the same order that established CPM-43, No. 8/2524.⁶⁹² The SB-PAC began operations in Yala in the old Coordination Center building in on 23 March 1981 (unofficial SB-PAC documents say it began operations in February 1981.⁶⁹³) SB-PAC's main job was to administer Civil Affairs policy, help the military maintain law and order, and restore peace to the area.⁶⁹⁴ An official SP-PAC history states: "Since its establishment in 1981, A.D., SBPAC had carried out various tasks mainly concerning psychological activities to win the heart[s] of the citizen[s] of the 5 southern border provinces and enhance mutual understanding between government officials and the general public of the era."⁶⁹⁵

Chuan describes the SB-PAC this way:

The function of SB-PAC was to command and supervise government agencies in the area as they carried out tasks to improve the plight of the southerners. It worked with the military to transfer corrupt officials out of the south and focused on improving the effectiveness of local officials and the local government apparatus. It moreover drew up plans for development and followed up and evaluated those projects. It had a local advisory board to aid it in its planning and decision-making. And it also did other jobs assigned by Fourth Army Commander.⁶⁹⁶

The SB-PAC had 175 civil servants in 1981, 132 of which came from the Mol.⁶⁹⁷ It added more personnel as needed.

The SB-PAC's chain of command was clear and concise. It was an Mol organization, which meant Mol management of operations and budget. PM Prem directly supervised it, however.⁶⁹⁸ This latter arrangement signified the government's desire to circumvent the inadequate DoLA that had done so poorly run the old Coordination Center.⁶⁹⁹ Since the Fourth Army Commander was in charge of all COIN operation in the far south, he was also above the head of the SB-PAC in the chain of command, though such commanders rarely, if ever, micro-managed it.⁷⁰⁰ For the most part, the RTA let the SB-PAC run its own affairs.

The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) was also in the SB-PAC chain of command. The NESDB was an agency on par with the lofty

⁶⁹² "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 12-13, and anonymous, and Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹³ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 326, and anonymous and "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹⁵ Anonymous.

⁶⁹⁶ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹⁷ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

⁶⁹⁸ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹⁹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

⁷⁰⁰ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 12-14, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

NSC, and it planned the SB-PAC's economic and social projects on a strategic level. The Office of the Secretary of the Royal Initiatives Projects (RIP) also had a hand in making development policy for the far south, but royal projects were not under the purview of the SB-PAC. They fell under the Thai Royal Family.⁷⁰¹

Tasking

The SB-PAC had five areas it sought to improve: social, political, foreign relations with Muslim countries, economic development, and security.⁷⁰² Within these, it had seven main responsibilities. They were:⁷⁰³

1. To supervise all government agencies working on political, cultural, and economic projects in the southern border provinces
2. To manage all SB-PAC projects
3. To identify corrupt or inept government officials working in the far south and turn their names and transgressions over to the Fourth Army commander for their removal from office
4. To help develop the capabilities of the government personnel to make them better civil servants, especially with regard to recognizing the culture of the southern border provinces
5. To insure all SB-PAC projects are coordinated with the appropriate agencies and CPM-43 and to collect and analyze information of such projects to monitor their progress and effectiveness
6. To assign from the local community advisors to SB-PAC to insure projects are carried out according to local needs and customs
7. To execute the orders of the Fourth Army Commander

To this, the government added seven objectives for SB-PAC. Many were multifaceted and repetitive of SB-PAC's seven main responsibilities:⁷⁰⁴

1. To promote the Thai language, to improve understanding between the government and people, and to improve the locals' quality of life
2. Increase "cross cultural contact" between Malay Muslims with persons of other religions and races throughout Thailand
3. Consult with local Muslim leaders in all aspects of SB-PAC work
4. Coordination of all government administrative bodies in the border provinces
5. Demonstrate to foreign Muslim countries the situation in the far south and secure their help in cutting off outside aid to insurgents
6. Upgrade social and economic projects to increase the standard of living of people in the southern border provinces

⁷⁰¹ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 14-15, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

⁷⁰² "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 25-26.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 17, and anonymous.

⁷⁰⁴ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," pp. 22-23.

7. Protect locals from terrorism

While the central government made broad policy, the SB-PAC had the power and the responsibility to plan and carry out projects in the field and deal directly with Islamic leaders by appointing local advisors, which was one of its strong points.⁷⁰⁵ Chuan explains, “The government, no matter the level, got information from local business leaders for plans and projects that were necessary to enhance the south, so these were always reasonable projects.”⁷⁰⁶ So there was considerable consultation with locals concerning SB-PAC projects, which meant the organization was, in fact, more than a simple executor of Bangkok’s plans. The SB-PAC planned and made local policy, too.

More than this, the government meant the SB-PAC to be the continual torchbearer of a specific southern border COIN policy despite changes that might occur in the central government. Says Chuan:

Together with the policies created and following amendments, the SB-PAC was used to guide policy implementation in the area despite government changes in Bangkok. So new governments at the national level relied on the SB-PAC to help maintain stability in the south. We can say that through this national security policy, it helped various agencies execute their policies with continuity, and it helped resolve the problems effectively.⁷⁰⁷

Organization

The SB-PAC’s organization was purely functional. It began with eight divisions, but in 1981-82, the government changed its structure to seven. They were:⁷⁰⁸

1. Planning and projects
2. Information
3. Registration
4. Personnel
5. Education and Religious
6. Psychological Operations and Public Relations
7. Research and Evaluation

The cabinet, at the behest of the Fourth Army Commander, assigned four special committees to SB-PAC that focused on political integration. They were.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁵ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

⁷⁰⁶ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁸ “Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC),” p. 19, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-347.

⁷⁰⁹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

1. Advisory
2. Psychological Operations
3. Master Plan (for establishing security on the border)
4. Educational Improvement

These were political, cultural, and social means the Fourth Army Commander saw as pivotal to pacifying the far south. Additionally, he had sway over who headed and served on these committees. The Fourth Army's chief representative to the SB-PAC headed Psychological Operations, for example. CPM-43's commander headed the Master Plan Committee. Not all were headed by the military, however; Vice Rector of Prince of Songkhla University headed Education Improvement.⁷¹⁰ These committees were designed to work closely with the local population, a major switch from the way the Coordination Center used to work with little input from Malay Muslims. As a result, the SB-PAC earned the respect of many southerners. It had an excellent reputation as a problem solver and became a positive force to improve the region.⁷¹¹

Despite the friction, this chain of command worked well until the end of General Kitti's tenure as Fourth Army Commander in 1994. At around that time – sources do not say exactly when – the RTA ceded significant power to SB-PAC and the Mol. By at least 1996, the government placed Deputy Permanent Secretary for Interior Paitoon Bunyawat in charge of security in the far south.⁷¹² This included intelligence and command and control of COIN operations. Pushing the RTA aside meant pushing its assets aside, including its robust intelligence network. As a result, the government lost part of its ability to “see” what was going on in the insurgency zone.⁷¹³

It is unclear what caused the change in coordination authority. It might have been because successful suppression operations made the SB-PAC and Mol believe there was no need for a heavy military presence. It also might have been pure power politics such as when the Army Region Commanders took power from CSOC in 1967; SB-PAC might have lobbied for the army's dismissal. If so, the mild ISOC-SB-PAC friction finally manifested itself into a chain of command shake-up. Whatever the cause, it resulted in less Army-SB-PAC coordination, and the insurgents eventually exploited it with their 1997 Falling Leaves campaign. This included preparation for that campaign that likely extended back to at least 1996.

In May 1997, then Army Commander-in-Chief General Chettha Thanajaro saw troubled waters ahead. He said security command and control changes in the

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 332-333.

⁷¹¹ One of two views expressed by Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 332, and Pranai Suwannarat, Director, SB-PAC, interview by author, 28 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁷¹² “Security in Southern Thailand Tightened After Bombings.”

⁷¹³ “Army Chief Notes Lack of Unity Among Officials in South.”

mid-1990s had resulted in “coordination problems among local officials,” but did not elaborate further. He also said, however, he had ordered the Fourth Army to cooperate with the civil service regardless of who was in charge of what.⁷¹⁴ The implication was the Army was less inclined to fully pitch in since the SB-PAC took command.

By spring 1997, however, it was too late for the two sides to cooperate. *Bersatu’s* violent campaign had begun. Other government leaders realized the folly of the civil-military breakdown in the midst of the Falling Leaves mayhem. Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart said in December 1997 the SB-PAC did not have the funds to effectively operate security programs, and the various intelligence agencies involved in the far south were not integrated and ineffectual as a result. He also contemplated shutting down the SB-PAC because of the morass.⁷¹⁵ It appears the governors and the SB-PAC did not have the expertise to run COIN operations without RTA assistance.

Adding to these issues, however, was the fact the insurgents had hired teen drug addicts and dealers to carry out the Falling Leaves missions, and their parents, who were frequently forthcoming with intelligence on adult fighters, were hard pressed to turn in their children. As such, and with the RTA’s intelligence apparatus largely out of the picture as a result of infighting with the SB-PAC, the up-and-coming offensive went undetected.⁷¹⁶

When the Falling Leaves campaign peaked, it prompted major coordination changes. Many government ministers saw the SB-PAC as having failed to detect and prevent the operation. Deputy Interior Minister Chamni Sakdiset on 23 December 1997 suggested moving all far southern national security issues to the cabinet level, which would have cut out the SB-PAC, CPM-43, and the Fourth Army from decision making. Minister Chamni said the problems were beyond the problem-solving abilities of the SB-PAC, especially since smuggling and drug use had increased as well. He said the SB-PAC needed to be restructured as a coordinator between the TNP and RTA, and talks with KAL were necessary to assuage southern border insurgent violence and crime.⁷¹⁷ Quite obviously, this meant the fragile relationship between the army and police had also fallen into disarray, and the security situation on the ground had suffered.⁷¹⁸ While Chamni’s changes did not occur, they reflected the central government’s frustration with the south’s coordination breakdown.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁵ “Minister Wants Military To Secure Southern Zone,” in *The Nation*, 28 December 1997, and “Sanan ready to disband border centre,” in *Bangkok Post*, 29 December 1997, and “Southern Thai Separatists Said Getting Little Support.”

⁷¹⁶ “Southern Thai Separatists Said Getting Little Support.”

⁷¹⁷ “Another policeman shot dead,” in *Bangkok Post*, 23 December 1997.

⁷¹⁸ “Fourth Army to take full charge of South security,” in *Bangkok Post*, 31 December 1997.

Instead of drastic changes in the wake of the Falling Leaves campaign, Bangkok instead shifted portfolios within the existing coordination structure. The SB-PAC went back to political and economic affairs and also took on a new psyops task – educating the locals on the perils of insurgent groups, their propaganda, and how to avoid becoming mixed up with them. Bangkok put the Fourth Army and its CPM-43 back in charge of all intelligence and force application. ISOC retained its coordinating and resource-providing role.⁷¹⁹ Government consultants were mixed on the return of the military to the south in such full force. General Kittu supported it and also supported PM Chuan in his decision to increase the military presence. But he also reminded the government to follow through on post operational security measures to insure insurgents and criminals did not melt away only to reconstitute and return. Surin Pitsuwan was against the return of the military and lobbied for restraint.⁷²⁰

Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart agreed with bringing back the Fourth Army, which was unusual, because it usurped authority from his portfolio. He was a former military man, however, and it seems likely his main goal was to solve the problem and not to cling to power at the expense of the country like some Thai officials. Sanan put the mission first. “I would like the military to take over the task,” he said to the press in December 1997, “with the southern military chief being in overall commander. Provincial governors would receive orders from the military.”⁷²¹ It was a complete turnaround from his previous policy, but the most practical decision.

At the same time, the government removed governors, senior police, and top military officers from their posts and replaced them as well. Incompetence and corruption had set in, and narcotics trafficking had risen. Police in Sungai Kolok, for example, were caught taking five million *baht* a month in bribes to ignore drug smuggling.⁷²² These were sad signs the gains made under Harn and Kittu regarding improving government legitimacy had not taken root.

As for the coordination reshuffle, directly afterward, SB-PAC Governor Palakorn Suwannarat had a meeting with the TNP chiefs from Region 9 – all the police chiefs in the south – and liaisons from the Fourth Army to re-coordinate the SB-PAC-ISOC/Fourth Army relationship and put the southern COIN back on track. A major part of this included the SB-PAC’s leading role in the amnesty program specified in *Pitak Tai*.⁷²³ After the official PM sanction of *Pitak Tai* in July 1998, Fourth Army Commander Lieutenant General Preecha Suwannasri said his forces would remain in the far south to execute kinetic and psychological operations for

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁰ “Thailand: Army Commander Backs Chuan Order on Southern Separatists,” in *Bangkok Post*, 24 July 1998.

⁷²¹ “Minister Wants Military To Secure Southern Zone.”

⁷²² “Southern Thai Separatists Said Getting Little Support.”

⁷²³ “Surin against deploying forces in the South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 7 January 1998.

as long as it took to destroy insurgent forces that wanted to fight and help those who wanted to surrender.⁷²⁴

* * *

The multitude of insurgent groups in the Thai far south in the 1980s-90s was part separatist and part criminal. With the exception of a small but growing cadre of radical Islamists, the insurgents had no grand designs on society. Their fractured nature meant a majority of the population were not behind the movement. Additionally, the insurgents' propensity for terrorism further alienated the population from the rebels. However, Thailand's penchant for mistreating its outlying populations – especially this one that was neither Thai nor Buddhist – guaranteed the insurgents a marginal active base of support, and passively, a larger one.

Accordingly, Thailand adopted a COIN strategy to change its politico-economic approach toward the population, shape the population itself, and isolate insurgents from the population. The end goal was to integrate the south with the rest of Thailand while recognizing its unique culture. The broad tenets of the strategy came from the government's anti-communist COIN. Specific tents came from Bangkok's efforts to work with a proud Malay Muslim people that heralded their culture as sacrosanct.

Lessons about what hindered the communist COIN resulted in a tight coordination effort. This included two commands; one to prosecute security operations, and the other to carry out political-economic action. They were the CPM-43 for the former, and the SB-PAC for the latter. This arrangement forced security, political, and economic cooperation by relevant parties, or at least as much as possible in government "turf sensitive" Thailand.

⁷²⁴ "Troops To Stay in South as Separatist Movements Remain," in *Bangkok Post*, 5 July 1998.

CHAPTER 5

The Three Pillars of COIN Against the Thai Malay Muslim 1980s-90s Insurgency

This chapter addresses Kilcullen's "three pillars of COIN" against the Malay Muslim insurgency in the 80s-90s. The first section discusses security measures to halt insurgent violence. The second discusses political ways and means. The third addresses economic activities used to assuage the far south's poverty.

1. Thai COIN Security Measures

The security effort for the Thai Malay Muslim COIN mirrored that of the communist COIN, but it was not nearly as large or complex. The threat area and insurgent operational tempo were not as significant as that of the CPT. Geographically, the security effort in the far south focused on the four southernmost border provinces: Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Insurgents staged sporadic attacks ranging from a few a months to sustained campaigns such as the Falling Leaves operation were there were at least 48 significant attacks in six months. Accordingly, using all of Thailand's military and police was not necessary, but using all its capabilities was. Security operations resulted in more than a thousand insurgents arrested and/or killed, and they helped pressure hundreds more to request amnesty.⁷²⁵

RTA

RTA forces used in the Thai Malay Muslim COIN consisted of the Fourth Army because it was responsible for all security operations in the south. The main units used were the Fourth Army's 5th Infantry and 4th Development Divisions, Special Forces units from Lop Buri, the RTM who were traditionally stationed in Narathiwat, and RTAF units that provided tactical air support, transport, and logistics. They all operated under the CPM-43 banner, however, so the term "CPM" did not only mean village security teams backed by the police and military. CPM encompassed all security duties. Says Chuan, "It was the main implementer of security. It patrolled the border, and provided security for development projects."⁷²⁶

While the RTA fought mostly a light infantry war against the insurgents, it did use technology to its advantage. "In the present war in the in the south, we have helicopters, but only for logistics, not tactical attack," says General Kitti. "But we had them back when I was in command. We had gunships [Bell UH-1

⁷²⁵ U. Dulyakasem and L. Sirichai, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁷²⁶ Chuan, *op. cit.*

helicopters], so when platoons made contact, we had fire support. We did not use artillery...”⁷²⁷ For observation and reconnaissance aircraft, the Thai mostly used L-19s, or Cessna 305 “Bird Dogs.”⁷²⁸

Military operations consisted of the same type of operations from the communist COIN – patrols, ambushes, sweeps, and supporting local forces with QRF. These were to keep pressure on insurgent forces and to destroy them when possible. Aggressive operations based on actionable intelligence in the 1980s severely damaged insurgent groups and forced them to break up into smaller bands. General Kitti continued this trend in the early 1990s to the point the main guerrilla units, PULO and BRN, suffered from a shortage of manpower. As a result, insurgent capabilities waned.⁷²⁹ Thai security operations were successful.

COIN Operations in the Field

Some operations resulted in kills, and some did not; most often, they did not, as is typical for insurgencies light on manpower. A typical successful COIN mission happened on 29 September 1994. RTA forces on patrol engaged in a firefight with the BRN and killed three.⁷³⁰ Another happened in April 1997 when a patrol on a sweep hunting for specific insurgents identified and killed BRN Zone 2 leader Ariya Tohbala and his top three aids in Narathiwat. Major General Wanchai Kanprapha, CPM-43 commander, said intelligence from locals was a major reason for the operation’s success.⁷³¹ There were no pitched battles, no Khao Kho type operations as in the communist COIN, just light infantry missions that whittled away at insurgent forces over time and decreased their abilities to move and communicate.

General Kitti says: “We tracked all the time the armed groups. We sent platoon-sized formations to fight them all the time. So we fought them hard and forced them into Malaysia...pushed them into Malaysia. We used small unit tactics. There were no battalion-sized operations. We sent the troops – rifle companies – to stay in the *tambon* in area of operations...”⁷³²

Large operations were necessary to respond to large insurgent campaigns. *Pitak Tai*, for example, required planning in 1997 for deployments in 1998, as did the build-up of forces, which included 700 newly ordained police. On the ground, the RTA sought to engage and destroy insurgent forces, but it did so with the minimum forces required, adhering to the principles of *Tai Rom Yen*. The RTA moreover launched a psyops campaign alongside the surge to inform the

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁹ “Malaysia Arrests Four Muslim Thai Separatists.”

⁷³⁰ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁷³¹ “Thailand: Situation Seen Improving After Key Terrorist’s Death.”

⁷³² Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

population of the broad goals of the operations so insurgents would not spread rumors the RTA was coming to kill all Muslims and cause the propaganda-susceptible population to panic. The campaign also included a significant amnesty program.⁷³³

Village security operations under CPM-43 in the Malay Muslim COIN were nearly identical as those used in *Issan* during the communist COIN.⁷³⁴ There were VSTs, with the sub-district village head or *Kamnan* as chief (higher than an individual village head), and police or BPP there to provide tactical leadership. In some cases, TNP village security personnel spent less time in the villages and instead coordinated with village heads, which weakened the system. But this was not by design.

Regardless, larger police forces nearby provided reinforcements, and the military provided QRF. The government put special emphasis on working with locals at every chance because it wanted to demonstrate its good intentions and establish trust. “Regarding security forces,” says Chuan, “defense volunteers, the military, the police; they all worked at the village level. CPM-43 always worked in rural communities, it always had contact with village heads and district heads; it was always involved at the community level.”⁷³⁵

Bhumarat says of the CPM-43 program, “Under Prem, the CPM worked very well. It had *Thahan Phran*, village militias; we recruited people from the villages. They provided access to the villages and good information. At that time, they played a major role in maintaining peace and order and by suppressing the separatist movement.”⁷³⁶

TNP

Police Region 9 was responsible for maintaining law and order in the southern provinces. The TNP, including its BPP, patrolled the cities and rural areas to pressure insurgents. They also investigated crimes, arrested suspects, and staffed some village security units. Seemingly simple, police participation in the southern COIN was key to demonstrating to the population the government system was based on law and order and not the work of a dictatorial regime. Therefore, the government usually had the police and not the army arrest suspected insurgents and process them into the justice system. The army could detain and question suspects, however. Unfortunately, the southern population held the police in sharp disdain over rampant corruption, and this hurt government

⁷³³ “Bomb Blast at School Fair Kills Two, Injures 13 in Yala,” and “Army Chief Considers Deployment in South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 5 January 1998, and “Thai Government Gives Separatists One Month To Surrender,” in *Bangkok Post*, 27 January 1998.

⁷³⁴ Perapong, *op. cit.*

⁷³⁵ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷³⁶ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

legitimacy and fostered support for insurgents. Police misbehavior created insurgents as well; it demonstrated to locals the government was out to use them, and it isolated them from the rest of society. And while there were Thai Malay Muslim police, most were Thai Buddhists, and the language barrier kept them from interacting more with ethnic Malays, especially at the village level.

RTA General Perapong adds the police were not particularly suited for COIN work. "In the 1980s-90s," he says, "the military operations in the south were small. With the police, they follow the standard 'bad guy vs. good guy' scenario; they see a bad guy in the south, they arrest and jail him; but you can't fight an insurgency only like this."⁷³⁷ Perapong says they needed to investigate more and start case files on all insurgents and all their connections, but did not.

This does not mean all police were corrupt and ineffective in their COIN mission. On the contrary, scores of dedicated police died in the line of duty while protecting the southern border population. Police Chief General Pracha Promnok had the confidence of PM Chuan and briefed him on the southern insurgency as did with other top officials. If General Pracha had not been effective, the no-nonsense Chuan would not have received his briefs.⁷³⁸ Police also successfully identified and arrested multitudes of insurgents. In fact, without the TNP, the Malay Muslim COIN of the 1980s-90s would not have been defeated. Corruption, however, blunted its efforts.

Nevertheless, the TNP was constantly on the prowl, a continual process of crime scene processing, interviewing, intelligence collection, and case building for arrests. In September 1993, for example, police arrested senior PULO leader Da-o Krongpinang who was responsible for a string of attacks that year.⁷³⁹ On 29 December 1997, police arrested five suspect insurgents the same day a bomb detonated at Betong Weera Ratprasarn School in Yala, killing two and injuring 13. The five, who confessed to working for PULO leader Hayee Da-oh Thanam based in Malaysia, were responsible for a series of bomb blasts and at least one grenade attack.⁷⁴⁰ Operations such as these not only chipped away at insurgent manpower; they frequently produced intelligence on the rebel organizations, which fed more arrests and kinetic operations by the military.

The TNP worked with the SB-PAC on anti-drug campaigns, too, especially in 1997. SB-PAC-police cooperation detained 3,109 drug users and dealers and confiscated 2 kilograms (kgs) of opium, 201 kgs of heroin, and 512 kgs of marijuana that year. Hat Yai was the far south's central drug market with distribution centers in Trang, Satun, Yala, and Narathiwat. Fishermen in Pattani used drugs heavily, and scores of boat captains were traffickers. Drug trafficking into Malaysia had clogged produce transport lines because of increased scrutiny

⁷³⁷ Perapong, *op. cit.*

⁷³⁸ "Another policeman shot dead."

⁷³⁹ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴⁰ "Bomb Blast at School Fair Kills Two, Injures 13 in Yala."

by Malaysian customs agents. Fruit sellers' incomes suffered as a result. Authorities identified local and regional government leaders and persons of influence in the drug trade as well.⁷⁴¹ It is no wonder, then, when *Bersatu* fell short of manpower for its Falling Leaves campaign, it co-opted drug dealers and users as its fighters.

The TNP was not only about investigation and suppression, however. It contributed to psyops in support of other operations such as amnesty under *Pitak Tai*. On 1 July 1998, for example, Police Chief Pracha stood with Interior Minister Sanan and SB-PAC Governor Palakorn at a surrender ceremony of five insurgents of the *Kasdan* Army faction of New PULO. Led by one of their leaders, Lohmae Sa-i Buke, aka Mae Dam, they turned themselves in at a publicized reception at the TNP training school in Bang Khen. Such psyops helped spread the word that *Pitak Tai's* amnesty was a real program, and those who surrendered would not be maligned.⁷⁴²

Like the in communist COIN, Special Branch operations were pivotal to victory and infrequently commented on because of their extreme sensitivity. Special Branch had excellent sources and worked with SB-PAC to accumulate intelligence that would illuminate insurgent organizations, frequently from the inside. Says Chuan, "SB-PAC and Special Branch? Special Branch had staff at the SB-PAC; it had personal links to sources in the region. The organization could extract information from the provinces better, not because of strong armed intervention, but because of its closer relations with the people there."⁷⁴³ Nationwide, by 1998, Special Branch had 2,000 members, no doubt a large portion of them working in the far south in COIN operations.⁷⁴⁴

Special Branch was a key actor in *Pitak Tai* when the Thai and Malaysian governments worked jointly to identify and arrest Thai Malay Muslim insurgents. It cooperated with Malaysian Special Branch to locate safe houses of insurgents in Malaysian territory. As a clear indication of Special Branch's role in the defeat of the insurgents, when Commissioner Somkiat retired in September 1998, the *Bangkok Post* wrote: "He left behind a legacy that many of his colleagues can be proud of."⁷⁴⁵ Commissioner Somkiat was behind of the arrest of four key PULO insurgents in February 1998. This triggered scores of other insurgents to take advantage of *Pitak Tai's* amnesty program and surrender.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴¹ "Drug Trafficking Major Cause of Social, Economic Problems," in *Bangkok Post*, 30 June 1997.

⁷⁴² "Muslim Separatists Surrender To Thai Police," in *Bangkok Post*, 2 July 1998.

⁷⁴³ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁴⁴ "It's time for peace – not violence."

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Local Forces

Local forces played a major role in the southern COIN throughout the 1980s-90s. They were based on the exact same village security concepts as the communist COIN. Accordingly, the forces were nearly the same as well – including the Mol's *Or Sor* (VDC) – and they need not all be repeated here.

The *Chor Ror Bor*, (“Village Defense Volunteers,” VDV)

At the village level, the government again relied on a communist COIN type security program, the *Chor Ror Bor*. This was the Mol's 1985 version of a long line of CPM village level security forces that had been tested and deployed since the 1960s. The Department of Provincial Administration, one level higher than DoLA, managed the program.⁷⁴⁷ The mission of the VDV was to provide security in the villages and keep out insurgent forces. The police ceded a lot of local village law enforcement authority to village heads, in part because of the CPM concept called for it, but also because most police were Thai Buddhists and could not speak Malay.⁷⁴⁸

Security missions of the VDV included setting up checkpoints at village entries and exits to control who came and went. They participated in local patrols when government forces needed them, and they fended off insurgent attacks, which were rare. On occasion, they provided security at schools, government facilities, and development projects. Their main weapons were 12-gage shotguns. As with other such programs, the village head ran the *Chor Ror Bor*. CPM-43 trained them.⁷⁴⁹ Says Prince of Songkhla University Professor Srisompob Jitpiromsri, “The village head was leader of the *Chor Ror Bor*. They were an armed militia of about 20 for each village. This was the old way.”⁷⁵⁰ And using the “old way” here was not surprising since this program was based on those used by Prem, Harn, and Chavalit.

Thahan Phran

Since the *Thahan Phran* worked well against the CPT, the government used them against the Thai Malay Muslim insurgents, too. “We had *Thahan Phran*,” says General Kitt. “They were very good because it was local people fighting local people, so they knew about the intelligence – they got the good intelligence from the people in those areas. These were local *Thahan Phran*, not from the north. I think everything should be local. When they send the troops from the north, it's not a correct policy.”⁷⁵¹ The 43d *Thahan Phran* Regiment, headquartered in

⁷⁴⁷ ICG, “Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries” (Jakarta/Brussels: 23 October 2007), p. 15.

⁷⁴⁸ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁷⁴⁹ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵⁰ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵¹ Kitt, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

Narathiwat, and the 41st Regiment, headquartered in Yala, operated in the south. The RTA established the latter in 1984.⁷⁵²

Desmond Ball writes the *Thahan Phran's* mission was to conduct unconventional warfare and special operations in support of ISOC, the Fourth Army, and CPM-43. They operated at the village level and mostly utilized personnel from local areas. *Thahan Phran* put much stock in collecting intelligence, including open and clandestine human intelligence.⁷⁵³

Poor discipline and criminal activity blighted the *Thahan Phran's* reputation in many instances, however, and Ball writes they were responsible for murder, rape, and wanton violence. In 1981, General Harn Leenanond disbanded *Thahan Phran* units in Surat Thani and Phattalung provinces. While these were not involved in the Thai Malay Muslim COIN, they were in the south and served to sully *Thahan Phran's* reputation in the region and also demonstrated their sometimes-counterproductive nature in COIN.⁷⁵⁴

The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports *Thahan Phran* in Songkhla in November 1987 killed four unarmed Thai Malay Muslims suspected of supporting insurgents, which caused the RTA to transfer the 43d *Thahan Phran* Regimental Commander out of the region.⁷⁵⁵ Ball argues that, in the south, "...criminal intent related to banditry, illegal logging, drug trafficking, etc., has come to dominate the relations between the Rangers and the so-called separatists."⁷⁵⁶ (Ball asserts the government exaggerated the separatist threat in the far south.⁷⁵⁷)

In 1987, the government began to reform *Thahan Phran* by recruiting better quality personnel, namely from military reserves, but they were not all from the reserves. Some still came from local villages. It also instituted additional training aimed at instilling more discipline and skill. By 1995, the RTA said it had increased *Thahan Phran* training to six months, but the ICG claims it is unlikely this happened.⁷⁵⁸

Despite the sometimes-unsatisfactory behavior of the *Thahan Phran* and heavy criticism by their detractors, including insurgent propaganda, the force nevertheless proved valuable to the southern border COIN. There are multiple examples of where the *Thahan Phran's* expertise resulted in the neutralization of enemy personnel. Even on operations where there was no kill, the *Thahan Phran* demonstrated their worth by keeping continual pressure on insurgents. In May 1989, for example, a combined force of 20 *Thahan Phran*, RTA, and TNP clashed with a PULO unit in Narathiwat, killing one. In July 1996, *Thahan Phran* battled

⁷⁵² Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 98

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 101, 103.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 97.

⁷⁵⁵ ICG, "Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries," p. 4.

⁷⁵⁶ Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁷⁵⁸ ICG, "Southern Thailand: The Problem with Paramilitaries," p. 5.

insurgents in Narathiwat where two were wounded. In April 1997, *Thahan Phran* killed a top BRN leader in Narathiwat.⁷⁵⁹ In August 1997, *Thahan Phran* raided the house of suspected insurgent Samaoong Sulong who eluded capture. In his house, however, they found 49 sticks of dynamite, homemade explosives, an instructional on how to make explosives, a book on how to wage guerrilla warfare, and maps marking sabotage targets that included government buildings and bridges.⁷⁶⁰ In doing so, the *Thahan Phran* prevented Sulong from making and deploying at least 49 bombs that could have killed and maimed hundreds.

For *Pitak Tai*, the RTA deployed 600 *Thahan Phran* to hunt down and destroy insurgent forces once and for all. They applied relentless pressure to the enemy with continual operations. In 1998, as part of an operation to hunt down BRN in Narathiwat, *Thahan Phran* began a series of running clashes against one particular guerrilla unit. It began on 31 March when a platoon of 15 *Thahan Phran* located and engaged a group of BRN in a brief firefight. There were no reported casualties, and the insurgents escaped. Then in April, the *Thahan Phran* platoon caught up with the guerrillas and fought several more engagements. One was on 2 April, when, according to Ball, 11 *Thahan Phran* captured and killed several BRN in Si Sakhon district.⁷⁶¹ Small unit operations such as these kept continual pressure on the BRN. That pressure forced them into survival mode – escape and evasion – and kept them from planning and executing attacks. *Thahan Phran* were indeed valuable.

Intelligence

Intelligence for the 1980s-90s Thai Malay Muslim insurgency came from the same agencies that processed intelligence for the communist COIN: 1) Division 7 of Special Branch, 2) the TNP, 3), the RTA, and 4) the NIA. The latter's role in this conflict was kept confidential, however. The SB-PAC also collected and processed intelligence since it had continual contact with the people.⁷⁶² Otherwise, there were no special intelligence units like Somchai Rakwijit's that lived in villages and reported on rural people's habits and CPT activities. The SB-PAC partly facilitated this end, however.

The RTA's intelligence units were highly active. They identified threats and processed combat intelligence. In fact, the RTA ran the most powerful intelligence network in the region, at least up to the mid-1990s when the Mol took over most of these responsibilities. Says General Akanit, "Army intelligence at that time was

⁷⁵⁹ Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁷⁶⁰ "Rangers Seize Explosives, Ammunition in Separatist's House," in *The Nation*, 15 August 1997.

⁷⁶¹ "Thailand: Thai Rangers Clash With Southern Separatists," in *Bangkok Post*, 2 April 1998, and Ball, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁷⁶² Tritot, *op. cit.*

stronger than police intelligence.”⁷⁶³ Chuan adds, “Regarding intelligence, the capabilities of various forces differed; we had to accept the fact that military intelligence capabilities were higher than those of the police.”⁷⁶⁴

General Kitti’s forces stayed in the field constantly and solicited information from villagers on a regular basis. Army-run *Thahan Phran* did the same thing but in smaller units, which was ideal for clandestine intelligence work, especially targeting, which is vital for the capture and/or elimination of insurgents.⁷⁶⁵ Interestingly, the army also had sources that led it to identify the whereabouts of insurgents overseas, indicating either strong links to Special Branch and the NIA. It might have also meant the RTA had some overseas intelligence capabilities, perhaps via defense attaches.⁷⁶⁶

Locals provided the best intelligence on insurgents because they knew the pulse of local activities and the people who made things happen. Moreover, the insurgents depended on contact with locals, forced or voluntary, for support. While local people provided great strength to guerrillas, they were also a devastating weakness when savvy intelligence units put pressure on them to cooperate with the government. In the case of the latter, Chuan Leekpai says the people became pivotal sources of information. Village heads were the best sources for all government entities. Says Chuan, “...they provided intelligence to both CPM-43 and SB-PAC.”⁷⁶⁷

For *Pitak Tai*, CPM-43 established a tips and information mailbox for citizens who wanted to anonymously provide intelligence to security forces. It publicly announced the address, which was located outside the far south, likely for security reasons in case insurgents had agents imbedded in the local post offices. It was (in 1998) PO Box 20, Muang district, Nakhon Si Thammarat province.⁷⁶⁸

SB-PAC Intelligence

SB-PAC had to have an intelligence capability because much of its work required it. It needed political and cultural intelligence to keep informed of the population’s attitude toward the government, development projects, and the insurgency. Intelligence on these issues also helped the SB-PAC assess if it was making progress or not. The SB-PAC also needed information from the people so it could identify corrupt and inefficient civil servants that needed to be transferred out of the south. For this program to be effective, the flow of information had to be clandestine and secure. Lastly, since the SB-PAC was so close to the people and

⁷⁶³ Akanit, *op cit.*

⁷⁶⁴ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶⁵ Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶⁸ “Anti-terrorism force launched,” in *Bangkok Post*, 16 January 1998.

therefore close to the insurgency, it collected intelligence on threats and passed it on to CPM-43.

“Intelligence,” says Chuan Leekpai; “It was not just from the army, but the Mol had good spies, too. At that period, I think Interior officials had good intelligence. We had a good understanding with the local people, we approached them via grass roots, by the SB-PAC, and we could transfer crooks out of the region, which the people liked us for. At the SB-PAC, we used provincial and district level offices to get things done. We could monitor all things, not just the insurgency.”⁷⁶⁹

2. Political COIN Measures

The Thai government had more political programs in the 1980s-90s COIN than security programs. The SB-PAC ran most of them. So many political programs demonstrate Bangkok well understood the key facets of the southern problems were political. Some of its initiatives were the same as those from the 1970s but better run. They included, but were not limited to, the following eight programs: political inclusion at the national level, political inclusion at the grass roots level, local advisors for the SB-PAC’s COIN programs, political integration through the education system, diplomacy across multiple fronts, amnesty, quality control – removing corrupt civil servants, and psyops.

Before the SB-PAC developed a mass of programs, however, it surveyed Thai Malay Muslim leaders in 1981 to analyze their attitudes toward the government and civil servants. The survey also gathered information on their living environment. The SB-PAC’s goal was to gain an understanding of the concerns of southerners regarding the government and their daily lives so it could direct resources to problem areas. The survey asked respondents to comment on four characteristics of government workers: honesty, justness, public devotion, and competence.⁷⁷⁰

Survey results graded civil servants low in all areas. It also stated local Thai Malay Muslim leaders gave loyalty to their *imams* first, to their communities second, and to the Thai state third. This information fed back to the government and codified government integration strategy to continue to influence the youth of the far south to put loyalty to the state above religious leaders through PSTIs and other educational systems.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁹ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁷⁷⁰ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Political Inclusion at the National Level

Beginning in the 1980s, the government sought to enhance Thai Malay Muslims' political participation to remove some of their angst that contributed to the insurgency. "By providing increasing avenues for the participation of the citizenry in the political life of the country," writes Ornanong, "the rulers hoped to enlarge their popular base of support."⁷⁷² This mainly happened through national recognition and national political parties.

Lack of representation was not the issue, however. Thai Malay Muslims had been participating in the government for years and were not excluded from the democratic process. Thai Muslims had been serving in the Parliament since 1932, Thai Malay Muslims since at least 1976.⁷⁷³

Thai Malay Muslims had leaders at the national level they could look up to for political aspiration as well. They were living proof of political inclusion. One such leader was Wan Muhammad Nor Matha.⁷⁷⁴ Born in Yala, he rose to prominence in the government after completing a BA and MA from Chulalongkorn University in 1974. From 1980-1996, he served seven terms as a representative from Yala. He moreover received nine royal decorations and served high profile posts such as:⁷⁷⁵

Vice Speaker, House of Representatives, 1992
Deputy Minister of Interior, 1994
Deputy Minister of Interior, 1995
Minister of Transport and Communication, 1995
Speaker, House of Representatives and Parliament, 1996

Surin Pitsuwan was another Muslim that represented inclusion. Born in Nakhon Si Thammarat, Surin was not Malay, but he integrated into a Malay Muslim family, so he held considerable influence with the far south's population. After earning his PhD at Harvard in 1982 and working as a reporter for the Bangkok Post, Surin held a number of high government posts.⁷⁷⁶

Representative of Nakorn Sri Thammarat (eight times from 1986)
Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1997
Chair of ASEAN and its Regional Forum (ARF), 1999

The government specified more political inclusion for Thai Malay Muslims in its official 1988 National Security Policy. "It supported the Muslim leaders playing

⁷⁷² Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

⁷⁷³ Bajunid, *op. cit.*, p. 11, and Pitsuan, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

⁷⁷⁴ Bajunid, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁷⁷⁵ Official Thai government website,
<http://www.cabinet.thaigov.go.th/eng/WanMuhamadNoor47_1.htm>.

⁷⁷⁶ Official Association of Southeast Asian Nations website,
<<http://www.aseansec.org/drsurin-biodata.pdf>>.

greater roles at every level to solve the problems of the southern border provinces,” writes Ornanaong.⁷⁷⁷ At the national level, this meant political parties.

One such Thai Malay Muslim party the government encouraged was the New Aspiration Party, of which Wan Muhammad was a key member. General Chavalit established it after his retirement from the military. It helped propel him to the PM’s position in 1996.⁷⁷⁸ To win, General Chavalit courted and won the Thai Malay Muslim vote, among others, and propelled this group to high political power. Patrick Jory writes in the *Harvard Asia Pacific Review*, “Under the Chavalit government a number of Malay Muslims held influential senior positions, including Wan Muhammad Nor Matha, who remains Parliamentary President and deputy leader of the New Aspiration Party, and New Aspiration Party power broker Den Dohmeena, whose family has a history of Muslim political activism.”⁷⁷⁹

Another Thai Malay Muslim party the government sanctioned was the *Wahdah* party, officially the *al Wahdah* Party of Thailand. Founded on 3 May 1986 by the Islamic Council of Pattani by former Narathiwat MP, *Ustaz* Sha-roning (aka *Seni Madakakul*), it had the support of both Den Dohmeena and Wan Mohammad Nor Matha. The goal of *al Wahdah* was to put more Thai Malay Muslims in Parliament and to lobby the cabinet for southern Muslim interests. It allied with the Chavalit’s New Aspiration Party because both wanted to improve the far south via national-level politics and by economic development for its poor population. The fact the General Chavalit spawned the *Thahan Phran* did not seem to bother the *Wahdah* party.⁷⁸⁰

The *Wahdah* party believes it had a positive impact on the southern insurgency by giving people a peaceful and legal outlet to lobby for reform. Political scholar Dr. Suria Saniwa thinks *Wahdah* and Muslims in high positions have eased southern political grievances as well: “These ministerial positions have empowered the Muslim political leaders and have become a source of pride to the Muslim community. In fact, the tactical alliance [between *Wahdah* and the New Aspiration Party] has been instrumental in appeasing the needs of the Malay-Muslims within the Thai political system.”⁷⁸¹

Because of initiatives such as these, Thai Malay Muslims won six parliament seats in the September 1992 elections. They helped form Chuan Leekpai’s coalition government. He chose a New Aspiration Party Muslim as his Deputy Foreign

⁷⁷⁷ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁷⁷⁸ B. Lintner, “Peace stays far away in southern Thailand,” in *Asia Times*, 15 March 2006, available on <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/HC15Ae02.html>.

⁷⁷⁹ P. Jory, “Multiculturalism in Thailand? Cultural and Regional Resurgence in a Diverse Kingdom,” in *Harvard Asia Pacific Review*, 2002, available on <http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hapr/winter00_millenium/Thailand.html>.

⁷⁸⁰ Saniwa, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Minister, Surin Pitsuwan, and Deputy Speaker of the Parliament, Wan Muhammad Nor Matha.⁷⁸²

The government also used national cultural recognition to assuage the insurgency. In December 1991, On the heels of the 1991 election, for the first time in the history of Thailand, the government began writing a new constitution (the 1992 Constitution) that recognized the right of all minorities to speak and promote their languages. The constitution moreover, “[provided] support for the administration of Islamic affairs and the teaching of minority languages.”⁷⁸³

Subsequently, one seemingly small but meaningful measure was a tenet in the new constitution declaring Thailand a secular state. Up to that year, it had officially been a Buddhist country. Part of the reasoning behind the secular declaration was to embrace Thailand’s other religions such as the Thai Malay brand of Islam and to make them feel more a part of the Kingdom. Before this, Thai Malay Muslims felt marginalized by the previous constitutions that favored Thai Buddhists. Ornanong cites Thai Malay Muslim students as saying they did not feel part of Thailand because, “...being a Thai is being a Buddhist.”⁷⁸⁴

Political Inclusion at the Grass Roots Level

The government increased Thai Malay Muslim political inclusion at district, sub-district, and village levels first via the SB-PAC and later through the 1988 National Security Policy that also encouraged Thai Malay Muslim participation in national politics. This policy was rooted in Kriangsak’s 1979 policy of organizing annual seminars for the Provincial Councils for Islamic Affairs to discuss local problems of, and solutions for, Muslims all over Thailand.⁷⁸⁵ These programs simply encouraged more of them to join the local governing system.⁷⁸⁶ It had both positive and negative effects.

Bajunid cites a 1998 study that states, “...the democratization of the Thai political system has significantly contributed to the deradicalization of Malay Muslim opposition...”⁷⁸⁷ Said Special Branch Commissioner Somkiat to the *Bangkok Post* in October 1998, “There are now legal channels for those seeking political freedom. It is useless to pursue the old violent way. I think they now realise that violence is not the answer. Have they gained anything during the past 50 years?”⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸² University of Maryland, *op. cit.* and Saniwa, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸³ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁷⁸⁴ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁷⁸⁵ *Thai Muslims*, p. 14.

⁷⁸⁶ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁷⁸⁷ Bajunid, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷⁸⁸ “It’s time for peace – not violence,” *op. cit.*

The Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) and the Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO) were, and remain, two such entities that allowed Thai Malay Muslims administrative say in their own provinces, the TAO being the most influential.⁷⁸⁹ The government established TAOs via the TAO Act of 1994.⁷⁹⁰ The PAO Act came later in 1997.⁷⁹¹ PAOs and TAOs were established to decentralize government authority and put more power in the hands of locals over local affairs. PAOs consist of an elected official and their staff that supervise public works at the provincial level. The TAO, at the *tambon*/sub district level, has 31 tasks. They involve managing public services in the infrastructure development, local business, health, and forest/aquatic sectors. TAOs are composed of two elected representatives from each village in each tambon. The Mol appoints the secretary of each TAO.⁷⁹² “If they stop and think about it, these are the same rights they have been fighting for,” said Commissioner Somkiat to the press.⁷⁹³

Others believe democracy enabled religious radicals to infiltrate the government, meaning they masqueraded as participants in the state system only to subvert it from the inside. “The position of this group [conservative Malay Muslims],” writes Gilquin, “both regional and religious, is a challenge to the country’s authority, the more so as there is increased democratization in society.”⁷⁹⁴

Moreover, increased election competition damaged age-old systems that had previously been in effect, such as village headmen running security. Chuan explains, “So the heads of the villages were strong enough to provide security and to handle any problems, handle any misunderstanding. This man was key in the village structure. In the 80s and mid-90s, the heads of the villages were strong. Afterward to 2007 they were weak.”⁷⁹⁵ Chuan says they went from being appointed by governors in the late 1990s – men who the government knew would keep order – to being elected, where the best politician took over. Security suffered as a result.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁰ “Participatory Approach to Transport Infrastructure Development,” in *Economic and Social Commission For Asia and The Pacific, Transport And Communications Bulletin for Asia and The Pacific* (New York: United Nations, No. 69, 1999), p. 34, available on <http://www.unescap.org/TTDW/Publications/TPTS_pubs/bulletin69_fulltext.pdf>.

⁷⁹¹ F. Nagai, N. Mektrairat, and T. Funatsu, “Local Government in Thailand: Analysis of the Local Administrative Organization Survey,” JRP Series 147 (Wakaba Mihama-ku Chiba-s, Japan: Institute of Developing Economies, 2008), available on <<http://www.ide-jetro.jp/English/Publish/Download/Jrp/147.html>>, Chapter 3, 51.

⁷⁹² N. Thapthim, “The Roles of Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO) in Coastal Fishery Resource Management,” thesis abstract, Asian Institute of Technology, available on <<http://www.library.ait.ac.th/ThesisSearch/summary/Narumol%20Thapthim.pdf>>, and “Participatory Approach to Transport Infrastructure Development,” pp. 30-36.

⁷⁹³ “It’s time for peace – not violence,” *op. cit.*

⁷⁹⁴ Gilquin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁷⁹⁵ Chuan, *op. cit.*

Special Branch General Tritot says the new political elite made a lot of mistakes. “They let the locals build *ponohs* [*pondoks*] again and they reduced the security presence – all because local pundits kept harping on how the Muslims were not free and that they needed to be free. And ultimately, it’s easier for politicians to push these issues, because they get more power as a result.”⁷⁹⁶ These programs became platforms for a new generation of insurgents years later, though no one knew it in the 1990s.

Local Advisors for the SB-PAC’s COIN Programs

Aside from elected locals, the SB-PAC tapped Thai Malay Muslims for advisory positions to insure it was focusing on the most pressing problems and applying the correct solutions. “So the southern border command set up an advisory committee,” says Dr. Gothom. “It’s the correct approach to have local people as advisors, and they are more people friendly since ordinary people can walk in [to the SB-PAC] and speak to everyone.”⁷⁹⁷

The result? “Local Muslims and leaders got more access to public decision making and governing,” says Chuan. “We had town meetings and got local leaders involved. We worked through *imams*. We invited them to be members of local committees and advise us on political and development matters.”⁷⁹⁸ Inviting *imams* into the equation was yet another psyops innovation in the south. Vehement anti-state radicals were among them, and bringing them into the system sought to ease their ill will by showing they could live within the state system and still be Malay Muslims. Bangkok aimed to use moderate *imams* to broadcast to the villages its new pro-Thai Malay Muslim policies the same way it used local shamans and other leaders in the north and northeast during the communist COIN.

Political Integration through the Education System

The education system was the state’s main integration program. It had been since the 1960s, and this did not change in the 1980s and 90s. Ornanong calls it “citizenship training.” Every school in Thailand, however, experienced upgrades in the 1980s-90s, much of it citizenship training and tougher curriculums.

Unfortunately, many Thai Malay Muslims did not believe that school of any kind would improve their lot in life. Statistics from the 1970s said after compulsory schooling, for example, 95% of Thai Malay Muslim teens dropped out. The five percent remainder went on to achieve higher learning. By comparison, 43 percent of Thai Buddhists in the far south continued higher learning. Many Thai Malay

⁷⁹⁶ Tritot, *op. cit.*

⁷⁹⁷ Arya, *op. cit.*

⁷⁹⁸ Chuan, *op. cit.*

Muslims complained most of their teachers were Thai Buddhists, which did not sit well with the racially and religiously insular minded.⁷⁹⁹

The *pondok* system was the main anti-government program of the insurgents, which the *ustaz* controlled.⁸⁰⁰ On the whole, the far south's entire school system became the central ideological battleground for the war, and when the insurgents began killing and kidnapping teachers, it became a physical battleground as well. The MoE was a pivotal actor in the government's education integration programs.⁸⁰¹

In 1979, on the cusp of Bangkok's re-invigorated COIN campaign in the far south, there were 1,500 schools ranging from kindergarten to the university level. There were 10,850 teachers and 283,000 students, and 23,000 of those students attended *pondoks*.⁸⁰² There were five kinds of schools in the far south when 1980 began:⁸⁰³

1. Public schools not teaching any Islam
2. Public schools teaching Islam two hours each week
3. PSTIs with secular curriculums along with Islam
4. PSTIs that have no secular teaching
5. Unregistered and illegal *pondoks* that were nonetheless tolerated by the state.

By 1985, the government had declared there would be no new *pondoks*, but in 1997, TAO and PAO officials overturned this.⁸⁰⁴

There were four main projects in the government's education integration program. Some began in 1977 and continued into the 1980s. The SB-PAC carried on these and began new ones, too. The projects were part of the government's Master Plan on Education for the Malay Muslims (1977-1982). They were:⁸⁰⁵

1. Revision of curriculum at PSTIs
2. Use of Thai language in Islamic studies
3. Teaching Islam in public schools

By the end of 1980, the government and its Thai Malay Muslim advisors joined to revise PSTI curriculum. They called it "The Curriculum for the Study of Islam in 1980," and it went into effect on 5 June 1981. It had three levels of study. The first level was *ibtidaiyya*, or grades 1-4, which paralleled the government's primary

⁷⁹⁹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-268.

⁸⁰⁰ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁸⁰¹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

⁸⁰² *Thai Muslims*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁸⁰³ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269.

⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 166, and Tritot, *op. cit.*

⁸⁰⁵ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-55.

school system. The second was *mutawatsita*, or grades 5-7, which paralleled the government's secondary school system. The third was grades 8-10, the highest compulsory educational level.⁸⁰⁶ Aside from secular subjects, PSTI students also studied the *Koran*, Islamic traditions, and *sharia* law.

The new curriculum was designed to make Thai Malay Muslims more competitive and also to assuage *imams'* angst of the state making all educational programs secular. It included Thai history, math, science, and the Thai language; things students never used to study at traditional *pondoks*.⁸⁰⁷ In the end, however, since the government controlled the curriculum, it took most of the power away from the *ustaz*.⁸⁰⁸ They were disenfranchised as a result.

University affirmative action was another political integration program. In the 1980s, a mere 20 percent of Thai high school graduates enrolled in college, in part because of the system's fiercely competitive nature. *Pondok*-educated Thai Malay Muslims, because of their Islamic-focused education, found it difficult to gain entrance to secular universities. The government recognized that these students needed greater access to higher learning and made changes in the education policy as part of its COIN strategy. As a result, the Prem administration and successive governments continued the Thai Malay Muslim university quota system began in 1971. DoLA ran it.⁸⁰⁹

From 1971-81, 458 Thai Malay Muslim students went through the university quota program. Two hundred and five had graduated by 1981, 165 were still studying. Just over 80 percent of the students in the programs graduated and many became civil servants. The government considers the program a success and continued it into the 1990s.⁸¹⁰

Outside the school system, the SB-PAC promulgated Thai language education, some of it at the village level. The government had done this in the 1970s as well. For example, in 1991, the SB-PAC ran Thai language courses for 288 people in 72 villages. Participants included youth leaders, schoolteachers, local leaders, and *imams*.⁸¹¹

Diplomacy with Insurgents

The government applied direct diplomacy with rebel leaders as an additional means to try and halt the insurgency. General Kitti developed and executed the

⁸⁰⁶ Dulyakasem and Sirichai, *op. cit.*, p. 73, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-56, 258.

⁸⁰⁷ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-56, 258.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁸⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-293.

⁸¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 289-293.

⁸¹¹ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," p. 31, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-258.

strategy. In his mind, and based on his experience in the early 1980s negotiating the end of the Communist Party of Malaysia using Thailand as sanctuary, diplomacy was an excellent tool with which to end conflict. More, it was culturally in line with the Buddhist sense of restoring balance and clam to a tumultuous situation.

Major General Perapong echoed this sentiment. “Because the insurgent groups of the 80s and 90s had some political aspirations – PULO wanted political voice in the villages and representation in local government offices – you could negotiate with PULO. It’s ok. So we go to the table,” he says.⁸¹² “We talked to them,” adds Bhumarat. “Back then, the old PULO, for example, they realized they would never win. Eventually, they stopped.”⁸¹³ But it took years of frustrating sessions, and when the end came, there was no climatic “peace talk conclusion.” Talks served as a slow, droning erosion of insurgent will with no decisive end.

General Kitti sent then Colonel Akanit, to several countries – first to Egypt – to meet with PULO and BRN leaders. Akanit was Fourth Army Deputy of Operations at the time.⁸¹⁴ Kitti saw the problem as a security issue, which put the RTA in the lead. “Army intelligence knew [the rebels] were in Egypt. Army intelligence was better than the police. Everything was up to the Army,” says Kitti.⁸¹⁵ Diplomats were not integral to the negotiating process, according to Akanit. “They have their own mindset,” he says. “It’s different from us because this is a security issue.”⁸¹⁶ He and others involved believed fighting men should talk to fighting men.

Securing a place to hold the talks was sensitive. The exact nature of the talks themselves were classified Top Secret and remain so. “PULO suggested we talk in Malaysia, Pakistan, or Egypt,” says Akanit. “Why Egypt? There is one officer from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; he’s a Muslim, and close to me. This officer was not in the working group, but we thought he’d be a good person to cooperate with to help put these meetings together.”⁸¹⁷

“Our contact in the MoFA contacted all three countries,” says Akanit, “and both Malaysia and Pakistan declined. But Egypt allowed us to go. So we agreed to go to Cairo and meet at the Meridian Hotel. The meeting lasted about one week. It was just PULO and us. PULO was the biggest threat at the time.”⁸¹⁸

At the meeting, PULO representatives requested one thing: autonomy for “Patani.” Akanit asked them to explain their conception of what autonomy would mean in practice, and PULO could not answer. “They did not know what a ‘Patani state’

⁸¹² Perapong, *op. cit.*

⁸¹³ Bhumarat, 1 February 2008, *op. cit.*

⁸¹⁴ Akanit, *op. cit.*

⁸¹⁵ Kitti, *op. cit.*

⁸¹⁶ Akanit, *op. cit.*

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*

would look like, how it would operate, how it would collect taxes, nothing,” says Akanit. His counter proposal was 1) stop the violence, and 2) join the political process. “I said they should let the people make decisions. I gave them three months to give us an answer.”⁸¹⁹

After the Cairo meeting, however, the leader of PULO gave a statement to a Pakistani newspaper about the peace talks, breaking their agreement to keep the talks secret. The Thai government felt betrayed, was angry, and figured PULO had no intention of achieving peace through dialogue. “They simply wanted to raise up their status,” says Akanit, “and raise up the problem to an international level.”⁸²⁰

Akanit continued informal talks with PULO for years, such as coffee with its leaders in Syria, but they went nowhere. Contact with the rebels languished for two to three years until Akanit heard the leader of PULO in Syria was sick. “So I contacted him and wanted to see him as a friend. I sent a message to him if he’d agreed to a visit. Then a newspaper in Saudi Arabia announced, ‘The Thai are going to negotiate with PULO again.’ So I canceled the trip. Regardless, afterward, I would still call them, the insurgent leaders in Syria, Sweden, and Malaysia, and we kept in touch with them.”⁸²¹

Ultimately, Akanit’s assessment was the negotiations were a dead end. “In the end,” he says, “I realized we could not talk with PULO. I saw that the best way to solve the problem was to get support from the Malaysian government. Malaysia must assist us. Why? Because most of the separatists leaders, they stayed in Malaysia and used it as sanctuary.”⁸²²

While Kitti and Akanit’s efforts did not reach a decisive diplomatic end, they did seem to erode the will of the insurgent leadership over the years similar to how the North Vietnamese frustrated American war efforts with a “talk-fight” strategy. Their cat-and-mouse diplomacy likely helped set the stage for the end of the insurgency in 1998 when diplomacy, force, and amnesty combined with Malaysia’s denial of sanctuary – spurred by Thai diplomacy – brought great pressure that PULO leaders could not handle. “I know all the leaders of PULO, GMIP, BRN, and all of them know me,” says General Akanit. “My concept is like tearing the pages from book. I talked with them – a few pages out. I wrote them letters – a few more pages. I kept on until the book went from 100 pages to only 30, so they are very weak in the end.”⁸²³

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*

⁸²² *Ibid.*

⁸²³ *Ibid.*

Diplomacy with Saudi Arabia

When PULO increased its violence in the late 1970s and early 80s, the government used diplomacy to help curb the problem. It was probably the several PULO bombings in Bangkok in the early 1980s that pushed the Thai into action. Committing sporadic terrorism in the far south was one thing, but concentrated bombing campaigns in the capital were intolerable to the government. Accordingly, in 1984, Bangkok seemingly persuaded Saudi Arabia to shut down PULO's offices in Mecca – officials from both sides have kept quiet on the subject, but evidence supports the diplomatic angle.

True, Saudi officials were hesitant to allow too much foreign influence from any country in any capacity to prolong on Saudi soil. But Riyadh's shutdown of PULO came soon after its Bangkok bombings. More, despite Saudi Arabian and PULO similarities on Islamic philosophy, Riyadh's actions decisively damaged PULO, which was loosely a religious ally. It erased PULO's biggest command and control, recruiting, and propaganda headquarters. PULO was critically dependent on Mecca and had no other location from where it could manage and grow its insurgency with such impunity. From Mecca, it issued Thai Malay Muslims living in the region PULO ID cards, collected taxes, developed relations with the *Baath* Party of Syria, and opened an office in Iran. These actions likely contributed to PULO's demise on the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi authorities arrested scores of PULO officers and deported 700 others. The incident forced the resignation of PULO head Tengku Bira Kotanila.⁸²⁴ And while PULO was able to increase its presence in Malaysia in the wake of the shutdown, even with passive local Malaysian government support, it could not risk angering KAL by growing too large. The Saudi government's actions, then, were so injurious that PULO never recovered to its early 1980s level of power.

Diplomacy with Malaysia

During General Kitti's tenure as Fourth Army Commander, he sent Colonel Akanit on a special mission to get Malaysia to help quell the insurgency. It was one of the Thai government's first major attempts to bring the two countries together on the issue. "So I went to see a high authority within Malaysian Special Branch who was my friend," says Akanit. "After that he was Inspector in Chief of Police. And I talked with him, and said that I needed his support. I said, 'It's time the Malaysian government assisted the Thai government to solve the insurgency problem'."⁸²⁵

Says General Akanit: "The head of the Malaysian police went to Bangkok to see the Secretary of the NSC, the Supreme Commander, the Chief of Thai Police, and also General Kitti. He said that Mahathir [the Malaysian PM] had agreed to help

⁸²⁴ Che Man, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁸²⁵ Akanit, *op. cit.*

Thailand solve the problem. So we agreed to form up a working group to work together, the Thai and Malaysian Governments.”⁸²⁶

“We drafted a ToR, or Terms of Responsibility,” he explains. “But during the drafting, we also cooperated on other matters, such as when the Malaysian police arrested some members of PULO. They seized them and sent them back to Thailand.”⁸²⁷

In the meantime, Thai diplomacy led to KAL in January 1994 issuing a warning to Thai Malay Muslim insurgents from Thailand hiding in northern Malaysia to cease terrorist operations or face police action.⁸²⁸ While it was not the comprehensive arrests Bangkok was hoping for, it was a good start for the Thai-Malaysian COIN relationship. But it bothered the insurgents not at all. It is possible Malaysia’s central government had less sway over the outlying states, and the insurgents knew their local contacts would keep them secure.

As the working group was making progress, however, the unthinkable happened in 1995. Says General Akanit: “During our work together, General Parnthep [Puwanartnurak, (1 October 1994 - 30 April 1996)] took over as Fourth Army Commander from Kittti. General Parnthep ordered me to stop the case. He ordered me to go to Malaysia to explain we were stopping the case. I asked General Parnthep about the reason [sic], and he just said, ‘Akanit, you tell them it’s the policy of the PM.’⁸²⁹ The PM at that time was Banharn Silpa-Archa (13 July 1995 - 24 November 1996), after Chuan Leekpai’s first term. Akanit did, and says: “Parnthep reported to the NSC that he wanted to form up a new working group headed by Major General Leawat Wattanat Pongsai that would deal with the Malaysian Army. So he went through the wrong channel.”⁸³⁰

Explains Akanit:

Internal security in Malaysia is not under the army; it’s under Special Branch. I have many friends in Special Branch. So the Malaysian Army didn’t know much about this, the terrorists in their country’s border lands, because its not military work. It’s not their job. And Parnthep asked for the budget for the working group from the government, but he did not get it, so he could not form the group. The end. No more cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia to solve the separatist problem.⁸³¹

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸²⁸ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁸²⁹ Akanit, *op. cit.*

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

A year later, on 19 October 1996, an incident in Malaysia forced the issue and provided an opening for diplomacy once more, but it did not produce immediate results. Malaysian police arrested on Malaysian soil PULO insurgents Hanji Samail Thanam, then commander of the group's military wing, and Jama Sateng, a bomb maker, for possession of several bombs and ammunition. Samail had lived in KAL for several years, running a restaurant in Selangor. They were going from Kelantan to Kedah when forced to stop at a police checkpoint 40 kilometers from the Thai border.⁸³² The link between the insurgents and their Malaysian sanctuary was now embarrassingly out in the open.

Despite the Malaysian penalty for possession of explosives being death, KAL on 18 November granted Thanam bail on the equivalent of 100,000 *baht*. This strained Thai-Malaysian relations terribly and demonstrated the support Bangkok had garnered from KAL was not too solid.⁸³³ PM Chavalit (25 November 1996 - 8 November 1997) then ordered Foreign Minister Prachuap Chaiyasan to Malaysia to shore up their relations and to press for still more help, such as identifying and arresting insurgent leaders hiding in Malaysia. Chavalit planned a follow-on visit in January 1997. Malaysia's Supreme Commander, General Tan Sri Ismail, also scheduled meetings with his Thai counterparts to discuss the insurgency.⁸³⁴ The talks produced no major breakthroughs, but they did keep the issue alive.

In the wake of the Falling Leaves campaign, a number of politicians said publicly the insurgent problem demanded Malaysian help. Said an anonymous source to the *Bangkok Post* in 1998, "Malaysia has repeatedly said this is our affair but it would be impossible to end the problem without help from our southern neighbour."⁸³⁵ Interior Minister Sanan Kachornprasart said terrorists fled to the sanctuary of Malaysia after committing acts of violence on Thai soil, and they sometimes used Malaysia as a base from which to launch attacks into Thailand.⁸³⁶ Thai Parliament President Wan Muhammad Nor Matha, a native of Yala, said for years that unless Malaysia helped Thailand with the insurgency, it would not go away. He moreover said there was an economic angle to consider; "Prosperity in the southernmost region is not possible unless there is permanent peace in the

⁸³² "Malaysia Arrests Four Muslim Thai Separatists," and "Army Given Approval To Divert Funds to South for Security," in *Bangkok Post*, 20 December 1996, and "Malaysia's Release of PULO 'Terrorist' May Harm Cooperation," in *Bangkok Post* in, 23 November 1996.

⁸³³ "Malaysia Arrests Four Muslim Thai Separatists," and "Army Given Approval To Divert Funds to South for Security," and "Malaysia's Release of PULO 'Terrorist' May Harm Cooperation."

⁸³⁴ "PULO Men Said To Be Behind 'Bomb Blasts' in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 2 December 1996.

⁸³⁵ "Malaysia Arrests, Detains Three Thai Separatists," in *Bangkok Post*, 20 January 1998.

⁸³⁶ "3-year-old may never recover from vicious parental beatings," in *Bangkok Post*, 20 January 1998.

area.”⁸³⁷ He was referring to the Growth Triangle project originated by Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohammad and pushed by PM Chuan that aimed to promote trade between Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia.⁸³⁸ In the long run, the plan did not evolve, but at the time, it was a major impetus in solving Thailand’s southern insurgency.

In January 1998, Foreign Minister Surin announced he was working with Malaysia to secure increased intelligence and investigative cooperation to identify the perpetrators of the Falling Leaves campaign. Going further, he said Thailand wanted to join Malaysia in neutralizing those threats. “What I am expecting from Malaysia is an exchange of information and details, possibly involving the violence in the southernmost provinces of Thailand. With the intelligence information we have and that from Malaysia, we expect to identify the cause of recent events,” he told *The Nation* newspaper.⁸³⁹

Surin’s work, past diplomatic pressure from Bangkok, and the embarrassment of the Falling Leaves campaign obviously originating in northern Malaysia was too much for KAL to bare. It resulted in a 100 percent cooperative effort by Malaysia’s Special Branch and other security forces. As a result, the end came swiftly for the insurgents. On the night of 12 January 1998, Malaysian Police raided PULO and New PULO bases throughout northern Malaysia.⁸⁴⁰ They detained individual insurgents near the border and in KAL on the 13th. Among them were Hayi Abdul Rohman Bazo of New PULO, Hayi Da-oh Thanam, military chief of New PULO’s military, and Hayi Sama-ae Thanam, military chief of PULO.⁸⁴¹

The arrests sent shockwaves through the insurgent community that had for decades relied on what it thought was a sympathetic government in KAL to look the other way as they waged war in Thailand. Malaysians in the northern part of the country that aided them bolstered the insurgents’ confidence. But the insurgents were wrong. Now their sanctuary was wrecked.

Twelve days after the raids and arrests, insurgent leaders held several emergency meetings in Kelantan to discuss their situation as they were essentially being overrun.⁸⁴² An anonymous source told the *Bangkok Post*, “[The insurgents] have held several meetings over the situation which has dramatically changed during the past several months. Some feel insecure, thinking it might be better for them to leave the country at the moment as they are uncertain about what happens

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, and “PM: Peace in South vital to growth triangle,” in *Bangkok Post*, 21 January 21, 1998, and Akanit, *op. cit.*, and Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁸³⁸ “PM: Peace in South vital to Growth Triangle.”

⁸³⁹ “Surin: Malaysian Terrorism Data To Help Thai Police,” in *The Nation*, 10 January 1998.

⁸⁴⁰ “Arrest of 4 Southern Separatists Viewed,” in *Bangkok Post*, 5 February 1998.

⁸⁴¹ “Malaysia Arrests, Detains Three Thai Separatists.”

⁸⁴² “Southern Separatists Hold Urgent Talks in Kelantan,” in *Bangkok Post*, 24 January 1998.

next.”⁸⁴³ It was their final breaking point. With Thai military, police, and political-economic pressure, the insurgents were severely injured, but with the added pressure KAL denying them sanctuary, their organizations collapsed, and their top leadership scattered.⁸⁴⁴ In February, the leaders of PULO, New PULO, and *Bersatu* began to flee to Syria, Sweden, and Saudi Arabia.⁸⁴⁵ They were PULO chief Tunku Bilor Kortor Nilor, *Bersatu* chief Wan Suleiman, Ex-New PULO leader Ar-rong Mooreng and his deputy Hadi Muno.⁸⁴⁶

Amnesty

Bangkok promoted amnesty throughout the war by re-branding it. It began in the early 1980s under *Tai Rom Yen* and the 66/2523 Plan. In October 1987, the government initiated *Muslim Santi* (“Muslim Peace”), a pacification program that included amnesty. Six hundred forty one insurgents surrendered as a result and took an oath of loyalty to the country in January 1988.⁸⁴⁷ The government started a new amnesty program the same year called *Phu Ruom Pattana Chat* (“Developer of the Thai Nation.”)⁸⁴⁸ It was a good program on paper, but the authorities often harassed those who surrendered, and many of them rejoined the insurgency. “We admit that in the past, some members of terrorist groups were given a hard time by some officials, while others faced extreme hardship or poverty when they surrendered,” SB-PAC security coordinator Thira Mindrasak told the press. “So they returned to the jungle.”⁸⁴⁹

In 1998, during *Pitak Tai*, the government upgraded *Phu Ruom Pattana Chat* to appeal to insurgents on the run from a surge of security forces into the south. It was practically the same amnesty program General Kitti designed years prior but was never applied, indicating Kitti was ahead of his time in this war.

Since past amnesty was based on Prem’s 66/2523 policy and specifically aimed at communists, PM Chuan issued order 127/2541 in July 1998 to apply to Thai Malay Muslim insurgents. It aimed to convince them to surrender, undergo re-education, and attend vocational job training programs to become productive citizens. The new program also allowed suspected insurgents who escaped Thailand to other countries to return to Thailand without legal prosecution so long as they did not have criminal records. Those with criminal records were handed over to the police

⁸⁴³ “Border Separatists Flee Abroad,” in *Bangkok Post*, 22 February 1998.

⁸⁴⁴ “Pulo Net Closing in on Rebels in Malaysia,” in *Bangkok Post*, 12 February 1998.

⁸⁴⁵ “Border Separatists Flee Abroad.”

⁸⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁷ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁸⁴⁹ “From the jungle, separatists turn over a new leaf,” in *Bangkok Post*, 27 September 1998, and “Thailand: Thai Official Confident of Achieving Peace in South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 20 July 1998.

who were responsible for the returnees' safety.⁸⁵⁰ Equally important, it sought to protect those who surrendered from harassment by ill meaning government officials, a key ingredient missing from earlier amnesties. Thira Mindrasak ran the project.⁸⁵¹ The government backed up the amnesty request with a veiled threat, however. It told insurgents to surrender by 10 March 1998 or face harsh action. It was clear. Insurgents could rejoin the nation, or face the military.⁸⁵²

Phu Ruom Pattana Chat followed a set process. First, the head of the Mol and a 16-member committee considered surrender requests. Once accepted, the surrendered entered the second phase – orientation by CPM-43. This was much like a parole program where former insurgents received lectures on acceptable behavior and what was expected of them, which was a cessation of violence and auxiliary support activities. Third, the SB-PAC took over and put returnees into vocational training or development projects, just like in the communist COIN. This included job placement as well. Fourth, the SB-PAC also set up methods for communicating mistreatment of amnesty seekers by corrupt officials.⁸⁵³

Fifth, the government made direct appeals to some insurgents to surrender. Minister Sanan passed the word to insurgents overseas and those hiding in foreign embassies in Thailand via the MoFA. Interestingly, one of the requests for surrender went directly to insurgent leader Amin Tomeena in Saudi Arabia, who happened to be the older brother of former Deputy Interior Minister Den Tomeena. This situation was highly reminiscent of General Surayud Chulanont's father who was a CPT Central Committee member and Chief of Staff of the CPT's armed forces; the Thai did not persecute relatives of insurgents by keeping them from office. This showed high flexibility and represented a key trait that allowed amnesty programs in the first place.⁸⁵⁴

The sixth component of amnesty entailed SB-PAC teams in each district serving as parole supervisors. The teams were made up of a district or deputy district head, an agricultural official, and a policeman. They visited the returnees regularly to make sure they were not being harassed, to provide medical treatment, to insure they had enough food, and to register them and their houses with the government.⁸⁵⁵ The latter was a form of population control.

⁸⁵⁰ "From the jungle, separatists turn over a new leaf," and "Thailand: Thai Official Confident of Achieving Peace in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 20 July 1998.

⁸⁵¹ "From the jungle, separatists turn over a new leaf."

⁸⁵² "Anti-terrorism force launched," and "Thailand: Army Commander Backs Chuan Order on Southern Separatists," and "Ultimatum to top Pulo leaders," in *Bangkok Post*, 27 January 1998, and "Net closing on rebels in Malaysia," in *Bangkok Post*, 12 February 1998, and "A storm in a teacup?," in *Bangkok Post*, 27 September 1998, and "Separatist groups face crackdown," in *Bangkok Post*, 27 February 1998.

⁸⁵³ "From the jungle, separatists turn over a new leaf."

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The seventh aspect was vocational training. Returnees and even their relatives could take three-month courses at a government facility near where they lived, or they could attend classes in their villages. The three-month courses included electronics, construction, and mechanics. The village courses were about 45 days and entailed farming, dressmaking, brick laying, and furniture making.⁸⁵⁶

Overall, between 1979-97, 919 separatists surrendered. From the beginning of the upgraded *Phu Ruom Pattana Chat* to September 1998, 58 more insurgents joined the program. An SB-PAC survey stated many returnees wanted land and scholarships for their children. Others asked for houses and livestock so they could begin farming. The SB-PAC seems to have met these needs, and the program proved successful.⁸⁵⁷

Quality Control – Removing Corrupt Civil Servants

Government corruption was a major problem in the far south and one of the main reasons for state resentment. Part of this stemmed from Thailand's undercurrent of patronage and the deluge of the *sakdi na* system. Poor civil service quality, attitudes of entitlement, and racism helped sour the system to the point many thought it illegitimate.

Says Chuan:

But one must accept all organizations in the provinces have problems with human resources – personnel in the organizations. For example, there were various types of misconduct, such as using influence to extract personal interests from various civic groups in the area, or getting involved in, or having knowledge of, illegal projects in the area – organized crime. This is one of the conditions that have caused conflicts between the people in the area and the administrators. And those who do not mean well [insurgents] used this as leverage to intensify the situation. But misconduct is in all agencies.⁸⁵⁸

While Chuan acknowledged corruption was there, he stressed there were thousands of dedicated and honest civil servants in country, and they were one of the reasons Thailand functioned well.

The SB-PAC was centrally involved in expelling corrupt officials. First, it collected intelligence on wrong doers from other civil servants and the local population. Second, it investigated suspects' alleged misdeeds, and if true, it built a case

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁸ Chuan, *op. cit.*

against them. Third, it submitted their names to the Fourth Army Commander who would hand out punishments.⁸⁵⁹

In the beginning, however, PM Prem had a direct hand in cleaning up the south, in part based on his relationship with General Harn. They cut through the red tape and streamlined the process. Says Dr. Gothom, “Prem had a direct line to the SB-PAC so people could directly tell him, ‘Here’s a bad governor, a bad policeman,’ etc. It was a hotline to take care of problems. He acted immediately. He gave ‘ears’ to that organization to make it more powerful than it was on paper. On paper, the SB-PAC had to report to many levels to get to the PM. In reality, the SB-PAC talked directly to Prem, so if a local complained about a local problem, there was a response.”⁸⁶⁰

From 1981-82, the SB-PAC identified 72 government workers for malfeasance. The Fourth Army Commander transferred all of them out of the south and charged 51 with criminal conduct. This was similar to what COIN-minded commanders did in CPT areas where officials harassed locals.

Corruption continued to be a major problem in the south, however, and it seems the SB-PAC, while successful, was never able to eradicate the problem. Even in 1998, on the heels of the Falling Leaves campaign, and in the early stages of the *Pitak Tai*, the Chief of Police met Thai Malay Muslim leaders saying he would work harder to eject corrupt officials from the south. This meant almost ten years had gone since Prem and Harn tried to improve the far south’s civil service, and it was still a troubled force.⁸⁶¹

Psyops and PR

The SB-PAC was heavily involved in psychological operations. “Propaganda operations, or as you Americans call IO [Information Operations] – we called it propaganda and PR – we did it,” says Chuan. “Our messages were essentially to ‘stay away from insurgents.’ We had seminars at the village level, we had billboards, things like that.”⁸⁶² The SB-PAC also relied on village leaders to exfoliate government psychological operations. “The head or subhead of the village easily approached their people – they knew them,” says Chuan. “They were born there. PR was easy for them.”⁸⁶³

One of the first things the SB-PAC did, in fact, was set up a series of seminars in 1981-82 where local *imams* met and discussed Islam and local issues with the *Masjid* Committee (provincial *mosque* committee) and District Committees for

⁸⁵⁹ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-344.

⁸⁶⁰ Arya, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶¹ University of Maryland, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶² Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*

Islamic Affairs. These were persuasive psyops based on open exchange of information between the two sides. Not all locals were satisfied with the government's Islamic leaders' points of view, but the SB-PAC believed the fact that locals showed up was a sign they acknowledged government authority. It also opened unprecedented communication between government and local Muslims. The aim here was to drive a wedge between the population and the separatists. Separatists and conservative *imams* refused to participate in these meetings.⁸⁶⁴

Similarly, the SB-PAC held conferences with local Muslim leaders to discuss problems in their communities. Doing so brought locals and government officials together like never before, each side talking and listening to the other, establishing trust and personal relationships. "It has actually reduced the alienation and isolation of the minority in participating in the local projects for their community," writes Panomporn.⁸⁶⁵

The SB-PAC tried as well to curb radical Islam, which was a growing driver of the rebellion. Says Chuan: "At that time, they also set up teams of local Islamic leaders to propagate true Islamic doctrine to the people to keep them from being radicalized, and they went to every district. And these Muslims who taught true Islam were Thai Muslims."⁸⁶⁶ Many Thai Malay Muslims, however, racially discriminated against Thai Muslims, believing them racially and religiously inferior; they rejected Thai Muslim sermons.

Educating Thai Malay Muslims on the way the Thai government worked was also important. Many locals were extremely isolated and susceptible to whatever wild rumors and accusations the insurgents could dream up. Says Chuan, "We held meetings or seminars and took them to the other provinces of Thailand for visits to show them how the country worked and that their problems were similar to those of others in the country. We made visits to the PM and national leaders."⁸⁶⁷

The government had scores of other psyops designed to reduce the southern population's mistrust of the government and demonstrate it was not trying to destroy Islam and Malay culture. For example, Channel 11 in Yala broadcasted news for one hour each day in the Malay language beginning in 1996.⁸⁶⁸ It let the population know the government's Thai language programs were not aiming to replace Malay. In other programs, the SB-PAC even helped Muslims make the *haj* to Mecca on a yearly basis. In 1991, for example, it sent 471 Muslims to the *haj*. "We helped them make the *haj*," says Chuan. "We held safety orientation for them before they went overseas to study. The main points were that they were Thai

⁸⁶⁴ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 336-338.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁸⁶⁶ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁸ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p.141.

people, and when you go study overseas, you must behave yourself and follow a good way of life.”⁸⁶⁹

ISOC and Fourth Army Psyops

In the 1980s, to combat the *da-wah* movement, ISOC created a counter *da-wah* movement. Called, “the official *da-wah* movement,” ISOC 4 ran it and staffed it with moderate Thai Malay Muslims. Their mission was to protect Islam from radicals. It was parallel to the SB-PAC’s moderate Islam preaching program Chuan described. “This action from the government,” writes Panomporn, “is to bring religious activities within sight and sound [of] the government’s eye and ear.”⁸⁷⁰ It was also designed to capture the sphere of information in the south to the extent possible and head off propaganda and rumors that might goad the population into anti-government demonstrations.⁸⁷¹

The RTA had psyops programs as well, but not too many. “We had some leaflet programs, but not too much,” says General Kitti. “We did not need to launch a mass leaflet program...because the program was working.”⁸⁷² The insurgency then was not rampantly out of control, and there were significant periods of quiet and normalcy, so the urgency was less than in the 1960s-70s.

General Kitti’s amnesty program, *Krong Kahn Thai Muslim Keh Ban Hah Thai Muslim*, had psyops aspects, too.⁸⁷³ The development side entailed standard development projects the villagers needed. Aside from economic goals, these also had political goals. Says General Kitti, “...We did not just give them money. We helped them budget projects and taught them self-sufficiency. We wanted them to be proud of themselves at the same time. This was psyops, or part of it, because they were proud of themselves. They didn’t think of themselves Malay. They thought of themselves as Thai. It taught them to be one with the state.”⁸⁷⁴ Here, General Kitti refers to nationality, not race.

To join the *Krong Kahn* projects, General Kitti came up with four political tenets. Participants had to swear 1) to be loyal to Thailand, 2) be good Muslims, 3) be loyal to the royal family, and 4) reject insurgency and be good citizens.⁸⁷⁵ Because of the development projects and his soft political allegiance requirements, General Kitti established good relationships with a wide range of southerners. “At that

⁸⁶⁹ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

⁸⁷¹ Chuan, *op. cit.*, and Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-288.

⁸⁷² Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

time,” he says, “in that area, most of the Muslim leaders, they worked with me together with me, the *imams*, and the political leaders, too.⁸⁷⁶

3. Economic COIN Programs

Development programs for the 1980s-90s COIN were the same type as the communist COIN. They included improving the education system, road-building projects, bringing electricity to rural areas, agricultural projects, job programs, etc. The motivation behind them was the same as the communist COIN as well – to lift the population out of poverty as best could be done, which would improve its standard of living and cultivate a grateful population. The RTA was part of this effort. Says General Kitti: SB-PAC had development projects, and so did the army.⁸⁷⁷ The RTA considered southern development a matter of national security, a major reason it did not relinquish the entire matter to the SB-PAC.

Education

The 80s-90s COIN education programs were a continuation of what the government had begun in the late 1970s. Aside from political training, they also aimed at building an economically productive southern population. State schools and state sponsored *pondoks* continued to teach secular subject material, and quotas for Thai Malay Muslims put over a thousand students through college, many of whom continued to help the south develop. More, in the 1980s-90s, most Thai Malay Muslim families stopped resisting school. Ornanong writes by 1987, 78.1 percent of Thai Malay Muslims finished primary school, and 89.3 percent had achieved literacy. Additionally, in the late 1980s, there were not enough high schools and colleges in the far south to accept all who had enrolled.⁸⁷⁸

The PSTI program had excelled to an extent the government in 1982 categorized those that met the highest benchmarks as standard private schools. It offered students at these PSTIs 10,000-*baht* subsidies. From October 1999 and April 2000, the government gave 68 private PSTI schools over 210,000,000 *baht*.⁸⁷⁹ By 1999, the government closed 172 PSTIs that did not meet government standards, and Islam-teaching only *pondoks* had withered to a mere 37. A 2000 survey of Thai Malay Muslim students in grades nine and 12 said their Thai language abilities surpassed the national average.⁸⁸⁰

Bangkok carried on 1970s-era college level reforms into the 1980s-90s as well. With the help of the Islamic Development Bank, the government opened a private

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁸ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164-165, 166.

⁸⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

Islamic college in Yala in 1998. It began Islamic studies programs at the Prince of Songkhla University's Pattani campus, the Teacher's College in Yala, and the Yala Islamic College.⁸⁸¹

The government reduced college quotas but increased scholarships in the 1980s. SB-PAC educational programs in 1991 sent 128 Thai Malay Muslim students to universities and granted 16 scholarships worth 54,000 *baht*.⁸⁸² The *Kuruthayat* program was the biggest such program for Thai Malay Muslims, providing four-year university scholarships for prospective teachers. Upon graduation, these people taught in the far south, which was intended to close the culture gap between students and teachers – teachers that had mostly been Thai Buddhists. These teachers also replaced Thai Malay Muslims educated in overseas Islamic institutions the government suspected of preaching rebellion. The Department of Teacher Training and the Department of Vocational Training doled out tens of millions of *baht* for scholarships since the 1990s – 29 million *baht* for 1,260 scholarships between 1994 and 1996 alone.⁸⁸³

Bangkok's secular education programs seemed successful.⁸⁸⁴ Thai Malay Muslim college attendance dramatically increased. Ornanong writes, "One bit of evidence is the demonstration at Yala's Teacher's College in 1998, where parents and students called for an increase in the number of students admitted."⁸⁸⁵ Participation in the system in theory co-opted Thai Malay Muslims into the government system, which made them willing participants, which reduced rebellion.⁸⁸⁶

Development

The SB-PAC the RTA, and the Thai Royal Family ran development projects in the far south. The SB-PAC ran national level programs and its own. The RTA managed village level projects. The royal family, via Prem organized a new system for its projects, the Royal Initiatives Projects (RIP).

The SB-PAC carried on the 1977-81 economic plan and a number of earlier-planned projects, among them the 150-million *baht* energy distribution plan to provide electricity to 300 southern border villages and the 2.7-million *baht* Bangrang Dam in Yala to not only provide electricity but also irrigation to farms in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. It and the RTA continued road building and like infrastructure projects.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

⁸⁸² "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SB-PAC)," p. 31.

⁸⁸³ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-172.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

⁸⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

⁸⁸⁷ *Thai Muslims*, p. 17, and Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

Regarding agriculture, the SB-PAC promoted technology to double rice crops each year, and it supported the Rubber Plantation Board in Yala to boost rubber crop yields.⁸⁸⁸ It moreover pressed forward major irrigation projects such as the Munoh Irrigation project in Pattani and the Baroei projects in Satun. The government stated these projects would allow the farmers to grow two rice crops a year instead of one, thereby raising the income of local farmers.⁸⁸⁹

When the government passed the Southern Border Provinces Development Plan of 1985-87, it continued the infrastructure development and agricultural programs of the early 1980s. Many programs were delayed, likely for budget reasons, and they made paltry progress. A 1980s SB-PAC study stated the far south remained in abject poverty. In 1985, the per capita income there was a mere 15,449 *baht*, 4,814 *baht* below the national average. This type of poverty continued into 1988. Low technology was partly to blame for keeping the agricultural sector that employed 80 percent of the population depressed. Ornanong cites the SB-PAC economic study as saying, “most of the people are in poverty and cannot depend on themselves economically.”⁸⁹⁰ Because of this, the government decided to increase its development projects.

The RTA did, too. In 1988, it began a major development project called *Harapan Baru*, short for *Krongkarn Puea Kuamwang Mai*, or “The New Hope Project.” CPM-43 carried it out. It ran concurrently with a similar project the army began in *Issan* at the behest of the king called *Issan Keaw* (“Green *Issan*,”) which aimed to bring mass irrigation to the northeast to improve agricultural output.⁸⁹¹ It also had scores of subprojects such as providing dental care.

The goal of *Harapan Baru* was two-fold: 1) to improve the standard of living of villagers, and 2) to let the border provinces know the government cared for them so they would, in turn, believe they were Thai citizens. The budget was more than 619.09 million *baht*.⁸⁹²

Harapan Baru entailed RTA troops interacting with the local population at the village level, and doing small development projects villagers needed right away. “The army did psyops and civic action,” says General Kitti. “It ran some medical teams, built houses for the poor, gave clothes, provide education, and gave scholarships. The troops visited the *pondoks* and Muslim schools and talked to people about peace, citizenship, and the dangers of joining the insurgency.”⁸⁹³ RTA CA also included house and farm repairs, small plot agricultural assistance, and minor road and bridge repairs.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁹ *Thai Muslims*, p. 17.

⁸⁹⁰ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128,

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁸⁹³ Kitti, 28 March 2008, *op. cit.*

Regarding large-scale development, the government launched the National Security Policy for the Border Provinces of 1988-92 to bring more business and industry to the far south to increase employment and diversify the economics of the region. Because of this and other programs, by 1991, a vigorous business and industry had developed in the far south. That year, the border provinces had a trade surplus of 17,423.79 million *baht* that included exports of natural gas, plastics, seafood, canned food, and rubber products. Per capita income of the far south rose to 19,389.20 *baht*, about 2,500 *baht* below the national average, but still a 4,000 *baht* improvement over 1988 levels.⁸⁹⁴ By 1993, Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani had an average income of 28,833.6 *baht*. Songkhla had an average income of 43,849 *baht*.⁸⁹⁵

In 1991, the SB-PAC helped the NESDB write a new Southern Border Area Development Plan as a part of Thailand's Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-96). It also managed infrastructure projects totaling 370 million *baht* for the Ad Hoc Committee, a special projects board created to manage unique projects; in this case, the Special Infrastructure Development Project. In line with the central government's plan to turn the south into a Special Free Trade Zone, the SB-PAC helped the government generate investment privileges for far south investors, establish government backed low interest loans, design industrial estates in Yala and Narathiwat, upgrade the existing industrial estate in Pattani, and promote tourism, airport, seaport, and warehouse improvement.⁸⁹⁶

These were in part in preparation to contribute to the IMT-GT proposed by then Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohammad and agreed to by Jakarta and Bangkok. Quelling the insurgency therefore became a top economic priority for Thailand. The fighting and bombings would keep the IMT-GT from happening, so Thailand needed a clean slate in the south. Unfortunately, the IMT-GT never materialized. The three governments never unified enough to make it happen, and they abandoned it in the late 1990s.

Regardless, the preparations for it still benefited the south, and the SB-PAC pressed its economic programs forward, adding to progress made in the late 1980s and 1990-91. By 1992, the far south had 8,738 factories worth over 12 million *baht* employing 53,397 workers. They processed rubber (resin and latex sheets), seafood, and palm oil, among other products. The region had by that time 664 companies worth 1,238.2 million *baht*. The south had emerged as a mini-economic powerhouse, its overall population no longer in poverty, its workers no longer unemployed on a mass scale. So important was economic development to the southern COIN that Bangkok's 1994 National Security Policy for the Southern Border Provinces (NSPSBP) stated economics was its primary COIN

⁸⁹⁴ Noiwong, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-176.

⁸⁹⁵ Dulyakasem and Sirichai, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

⁸⁹⁶ "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, (SBPAC)," p. 34.

weapon. The SB-PAC's slogan that year was, "economics leads, public relations follows, peace and order supports."⁸⁹⁷

These policies resulted in increases in the south's development budget. In 1994, it averaged one million *baht* a year. By 1997, it was five million. Most monies went into infrastructure projects. Private investment and business associations joined the fray and proved pivotal in the far south's economy.⁸⁹⁸ Ornanong criticizes the progress, however, by noting the 1994 economic plan focused more on business interests and less on the economic wellbeing of the southern population.⁸⁹⁹

As business activity increased, the SB-PAC began to solve local business problems, some associated with development projects. For example, in March 1996, the Construction Business Club of Pattani asked the SB-PAC to help alleviate a shortage of gravel for building projects, including ARD road construction. It seems most stone grinding companies in Yala had expired licenses and authorities had shut them down thus driving up unemployment. The SB-PAC helped by lobbying Yala Governor Chuchart Pulsiri to act on the licensing problem, which spurred coordination with Transport and Communications Minister Wan Muhammad Nor Matha and the Land Department.⁹⁰⁰

The 1999-2003 NSPSBP picked up were the 1994 version left off. It aimed to continue infrastructure projects but also added a human element. That was to improve, "the potential of human resources and society," cites Ornanong.⁹⁰¹ The government included in the policy stipulations for training locals for factory jobs and skilled labor, insuring incomes were adequate, and for providing for the general welfare of the population. The government also sought to insure fairness, equal opportunity, and peaceful living conditions. The latter might have been added in the wake of *Bersatu's* 1997-98 Falling Leaves campaign. The violence had erupted after a period of relative calm, and Bangkok likely sought COIN follow through; it had to let the population know its well being continued to be a top government priority.

This was vital because economic development in the far south, effective as it was, had some pitfalls. First, the industrial investment that helped alleviate abject poverty and increase incomes by an average of 4,000 *baht* did not reveal that Chinese and Thai businessmen ran most businesses, and Thai Malay Muslims provided most of the labor. Some businessmen assert most Thai Malay Muslims in southern Thailand had not sought to become business leaders at the time; that it was not in their perceived sedentary culture.

⁸⁹⁷ Noi Wong, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177, and Dulyakasem and Sirichai, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

⁸⁹⁸ Noi Wong, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁹⁰⁰ "Builders call for help to alleviate shortage of stones," in *Bangkok Post*, 13 March 1996.

⁹⁰¹ Noi Wong, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

Second, a lot of the investment in the south reaped profits for big businessmen without improving the lives of small-scale farmers and fishermen. To be sure, regional investment beginning in the late 1980s saved the far south from economic destitution, and road projects, for example, improved the lives of laborers and small businessmen with increased business traffic and access to markets. But because most big profits went to non-Thai Malay Muslims, some of the latter resented the economic boom, and anti-state advocates used it as a rally cry – “the outsiders are economically exploiting us.” As a result, there developed pockets of the population that were mere labor pools, and they experienced less economic growth than other parts of the population, which created resentment.

In the labor pockets, Ornanong asserts some poverty remained. Development and investment did not reach everyone, and rural people with no access to industry jobs remained on the fringes while the rest of Thailand became known as an “economic tiger” in the 1990s. In some areas, poverty remained because inept civil servants kept development projects from happening. In other cases, it was due to Thai Malay Muslims not wanting development projects of any kind. In this regard, the latter contributed to their own economic plight.⁹⁰² Says Dr. Amara: “Locals did not fight development in the communist counterinsurgency. But some southerners did. An anti-infrastructure movement did start in the south.”⁹⁰³

Royal Initiative Projects

Just as in the communist COIN, King Bhumibol was highly active in the southern COIN. Royal development projects were successful in the first COIN helping people out of poverty and convincing them the state cared for them. When the king himself visited villages and personally assigned state agencies specific projects, the political soothing had a giant ripple effect to everyone who saw or heard about the project. The king had a political multiplying impact in everything he did because he was, and still is, fervently revered and loved by the people of Thailand.

Past royal projects were scattered and uncoordinated, however, and for the southern COIN, PM Prem organized and coordinated them via law in 1982 through a single office, the Royal Initiatives Project (RIP). Managing members of the RIP included the Minister of Defense, the Commander in Chief of the RTA, and the heads of the Mol and Agriculture, the National Economic and Social Development Board, and the National Budget Office. The Fourth Army Commander managed the projects in the field. The RIP had its own budget and was not beholden to other agencies for funding, which streamlined its chain of command.⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.

⁹⁰³ Amara, *op. cit.*

⁹⁰⁴ Anurugsa, *op. cit.*, pp. 392-393.

RIP's main mission was to combat poverty at the village level. Its ministers could draft any civil servant, or military, or police officer into any RIP project. It was the most efficiently coordinated development program in the far south, and it was by far the most successful. It was moreover highly prestigious. The main reason was there was no internal squabbling or personal power plays involved. The mission was to carry out the king's orders to alleviate poverty in Thai Malay Muslim and Buddhist villages, and his subjects carried out those orders, period.⁹⁰⁵

Aside from small but numerous village improvement projects, the RIP was heavily involved in irrigation projects, which included irrigation ditches, small dams, wells, and the like to help improve agriculture. It also introduced handicrafts to the far south – weaving, pottery, and silk growing. Fish farming for fishing villages hit by a decreasing aquatic population was yet another RIP project, as was road building.⁹⁰⁶

Narathiwat was the epicenter of RIP programs where in 1982 alone on 65,520 *rai* of land there were 19 irrigation projects, according to Panomporn. The king built in Narathiwat the Pikulthong Research Center, an RIP agricultural research institution, to infuse new farming technology into the far south.⁹⁰⁷ It remains to this day.

* * *

As in the communist COIN, the Thai successfully applied the three pillars of COIN against the southern separatists of the 1980s-90s. Unlike the communist war, however, force application was much smaller because of the isolated geographic reach of the group – the Bangkok bombings excepted – and also because of their limited operational tempo. Having said this, security operations against the separatists were not only focused, but rigorous because their prolific terror operations targeted the public. A good balance of police and military operations using local forces was effective. It took deft Thai diplomacy, however, to enable Malaysian police to end insurgent sanctuary, which, in combination with other COIN operations, ended the rebels.

Politically, Bangkok tried to curb government corruption and train civil servants to better serve what was to most Thai an alien Muslim society. This was only partially effective. Education and language programs designed to decrease Malay Muslim isolation worked to a certain degree, but diehards resisted this as cultural assassination. The government, however, was successful in bringing the far south's youth into the national realm, not as fiercely loyal citizens, but something more like content protectorates. Government sponsored political

⁹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 393-395.

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 396-399.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 399-401.

party inclusion programs did more than any other political initiative to defang the movement.

Economic integration worked in tandem with political programs to make Malay Muslims productive in the work arena. Studying mostly Islam and living in a largely self-reliance style economy as opposed to a cash economy for multiple decades was difficult to undo, but the Thai did manage just enough economic projects, some of them large scale businesses, to alleviate abject poverty in a majority of the provinces.

CHAPTER 6

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT INSURGENCY AND COIN

1. Background of the Current Insurgency and COIN to 2003

After their defeat in 1998, some insurgent leaders retired to mediocrity in Europe and Malaysia, still fervent in their cause but exiled and impotent. Sometime between then and 2002, however, someone – Thai authorities are not sure who – engineered an insurgent revival in the far south. Says Bhumarat: "...after 2001, the separatists spurred a new chapter, a new generation, which included educated people."⁹⁰⁸ This time, however, gone were the political overtones, the multi-point demands, and the gangland goals. This was a new movement steeped in radical Islam, secrecy, and terrorism. While its origins remain a mystery, there are events that demonstrate a rebel storm was on the horizon and gaining momentum.

Despite victory over the insurgents in 1998, the far south remained unstable. From then into the 21st Century, violence continued because of the growing drug trade. Thai Malay Muslim gangs, corrupt politicians, crooked military officers and policemen, and smugglers were active during this period. All of them killed to protect their turfs, revenue streams, and trafficking routes.

Some assert the Thaksin Shinawatra Administration (9 February 2001-19 September 2006) used extra judicial killings to get rid of the far south's undesired elements in efforts to clean it up once and for all. According to Chuan Leekpai, "The administration had the belief that the way to solve problems in the south was via violence and extra judicial killings. This was the beginning of the use of extra judicial killings – murders of the suspects of terror and criminal organizations beginning in year 2001. This was not the war on drugs. That came later."⁹⁰⁹

A lot of those killed were former insurgents and gangsters that provided intelligence to the RTA, which helped it and the SB-PAC keep tabs on former insurgents and maintain relative peace.⁹¹⁰ Despite their defeat in 1998, there was still a smattering of rebellious tension. Southern insurgents still lived in the far south just like ex-CPT still lived throughout Thailand. Whether they activated and fought or not in part depended on Bangkok's handling of the peace, and in part on external factors, such as inspiration from regional and international religious radicals.

While all this was happening, there was a surge of violence in Thailand's far south, too – some of it apparently by insurgent groups. In summer 2001, authorities say

⁹⁰⁸ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

⁹⁰⁹ Chuan, *op. cit.*

⁹¹⁰ Cole, *op. cit.*

the BRN killed six people in Narathiwat. While it was defeated years earlier, a handful of old BRN cadre might have tried to continue the fight, or it might have been some other group. Regardless, violence kept on. Unknown persons kidnapped and beheaded two people in Sai Buri district, Pattani.⁹¹¹ The latter did not mesh with organized crime. The decapitation signified radical Islamic overtones.

General Akanit, one of the RTA's top intelligence officers, watched the region's turmoil and Thailand's far south burgeoning chaos with alarm. He was Chief of Staff of CPM-43 in 2002. "There was a rash of incidents in the late 1990s and before 2004..." he comments. "They were not done by PULO and BRN."⁹¹² He wrote an intelligence estimate on the violence and hypothesized a new movement was behind it, but he did not know its name.

"When I presented this report," he says, "they laughed at me. I warned the Fourth Army commander. I warned many people in the Fourth Army that it would face Islamic militants. Nobody understood what I said. 'What's the meaning of Islamic militants?' they asked. 'Now you are facing the soldiers of God,' I told them. I did not use *mujahideen* or *jihad* terminology. I said the struggle in the southern provinces was going to be a new paradigm."⁹¹³ Akanit's warnings went unheeded.

Despite these issues, violence had subsided well below insurgency levels, which provided PM Thaksin opportunities to make changes. Thaksin dissolved CPM-43 and the SB-PAC in April 2002. Says current SB-PAC Director General Pranai Suwannarat, "The Interior Minister, Dr. Purachai, [Piumsombun] submitted to the cabinet to close the SB-PAC [and CPM-43] on grounds that it was no longer needed since the situation was close to normal."⁹¹⁴ Others speculate Thaksin wanted these agencies gone because they were connected to his political rivals, the Democrats.⁹¹⁵

The result of the shut downs were intelligence blindness in a region that still needed to be watched. Insurgencies never end cleanly. "When Thaksin got rid of CPM, we lost our access to the villages," says Bhumarat. "Our information on the separatist movements in the villages dropped off."⁹¹⁶ By design or not, the new crop of insurgents took advantage of the vacuum and moved in. Violence grew in 2002. From March to November, there were multiple raids against police

⁹¹¹ "Thailand: Muslims Rally Rejecting Violence," in *Islam Online*, 22 June 2001.

⁹¹² Akanit, *op. cit.*

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁴ Pranai, *op. cit.*

⁹¹⁵ P. Chalk, A. Rabasa, W. Rosenau, and L. Piggott, "The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment," prepared for The Office of the Secretary of Defense, (Washington, DC: The Rand Corporation, 2009), p. 11, footnote 15.

⁹¹⁶ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

checkpoints, several bombings at hotels and bars and Buddhists *wats*, many schools burned, and more than 20 police assassinated.⁹¹⁷

At the same time, security agencies in the United States, Singapore, and Malaysia cautioned *al Qaeda*-linked *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) and *ihadists* in general were trying to infiltrate Thailand's far south. Then Professor Panitan Watanayagorn said Islamic terrorists might indeed have begun to base in southern Thailand. He told *Time*, "Security has been tightened dramatically in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and now Indonesia. If these guys have fled, where would they go? Thailand is the obvious choice."⁹¹⁸

Bangkok launched investigations in fall 2002 to discover who was behind the upsurge and discovered eight sticks of Powergel mining explosives and extortion letters written in 2001 from the BRN's Poh Ma Su-ngaibatu aimed at terrorizing 1.5 million *baht* from gas stations.⁹¹⁹ Then in December, an organization calling itself the Young Liberators of Pattani burned a Buddhist school – *Wat Tantikaram* School in Narathiwat – and left threat propaganda saying it would continue attacking government buildings, civil servants, and their families until it liberated Pattani.⁹²⁰

There was more evidence of burgeoning unrest in 2003. On 28 April, raiders attacked RTM outposts in Narathiwat and Yala.⁹²¹ In Cambodia on 26 May, authorities arrested two Thai Malay Muslims from Yala planning terror attacks. They were captured along with an Egyptian national. The trio formed an *al Qaeda* cell in Phnom Penh under the guise of a Saudi Arabian funded *Umm al-Qura*

⁹¹⁷ "Bomb Explodes in Southern Province Before Thai Interior Minister Arrives," on *People's Daily Online*, 16 March 2002, and "Primer: Muslim Separatism in Southern Thailand," and "Silent witness; Has Thailand's Muslim-dominated south served as a training and staging base for *jihadi* terrorists?," in *Time*, 17 November 2002.

⁹¹⁸ "Silent Witness; Has Thailand's Muslim-dominated south served as a training and staging base for *jihadi* terrorists?"

⁹¹⁹ "Thai teacher arrested for suspected involvement in bomb attack," in Xinhuanet, 4 November 2002.

⁹²⁰ "Temple school in southern Thailand burnt down by separatists," in Xinhuanet, 6 December 2002, and The University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Responses to Terrorism (START), Terrorist Organization Profile: Young Liberators of Pattani, available on <http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4522>

⁹²¹ S. Mydans, "Tales of Black Ninjas Are Spreading Fear in Rural Thailand," in *The New York Times*, 24 May 2003.

mosque.⁹²² The operation led directly to the apprehension of JI operations chief Hambali (Riduan Isamuddin) months later in Chiang Mai.⁹²³

On 3 July, police arrested three Muslims and a Thai Buddhist trafficking 15 AK-47s to the far south in Nakhon Ratchasima town, 210 kilometers northeast of Bangkok. Hours later, unknown attackers killed six people and injured three in Pattani.⁹²⁴ In the summer, police broke up a three-person JI cell in Narathiwat planning embassy bombings in Bangkok.⁹²⁵ A court years later acquitted the trio. Authorities insisted they were guilty after the fact and blamed inept police for not gathering enough evidence for conviction. In late summer and through the fall, police had shootouts with suspected Islamic militants in Pattani, and there were more raids on police outposts by unknown attackers.⁹²⁶

So there was an upswing of southern border violence – seemingly insurgent related – and indicators of regional and domestic *ihadists* in the mix as well. Still, none of the evidence decisively pointed to insurgency or *ihad*. Had CPM-43 and the SB-PAC been operational, however, the government might have been able to ascertain the reality of the situation. But it did not. When the insurgents struck overtly in 2004, it stunned Bangkok.

2. Overview of the Current Insurgency and COIN

2004

On 4 January 2004, more than 30 insurgents raided on the Rajanakarin RTA camp that housed an engineer battalion in Narathiwat. They slit the throats of four Thai Buddhist soldiers, told the Muslim troops to quit the army, and stole 40 pistols, 300 assault rifles, four M-60 machine guns, and ammunition.⁹²⁷ At the same time,

⁹²² “Al-Qaeda supporters in Thailand inactive, says premier,” in *International, The News*, Jang Group online editions, 30 May 2003, and “Cambodia arrests ‘JI members’,” in BBC, 28 May 2003, and “Cambodia court upholds life sentences,” Radio Australia, 14 March 2008.

⁹²³ W. Turnbull, “A Tangled Web of Southeast Asian Islamic Terrorism: The Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network,” (Monterey, California: Monterey Institute of International Studies, 31 July 2003).

⁹²⁴ “Large weapons cache seized in south Thailand,” in AP, 4 July 2003.

⁹²⁵ Global Security.org, “Thai Islamic Insurgency,” available on <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/thailand2.htm>>.

⁹²⁶ “Give info on hired killer, Thai cops told,” in *The Star*, 31 August 2003, and “Thai police gun down hired killer,” in *The Star*, 11 September 2003 (these two articles mentioned both Pattani and Satun, but it was likely in Pattani), and “Police kill most wanted Muslim gunman in southern Thailand,” in Xinhuanet, 28 August 2003, and “Army on trail of attackers,” in *The Nation*, 27 October 2003.

⁹²⁷ “Blast Hits Southern Thailand,” in BBC, 5 January 2004, and “Armed Raids in Southern Thailand,” in BBC, 4 January 2004, and “Militants Face Treason Charges,” in *The Nation*, 15 January 2004, and “Barrack Raided, 20 Schools Torched in South,”

arsonists burned 18 schools, killed two police with a motorcycle bomb in Pattani, and injured another with a bomb at a park. Authorities found two more bombs at a gas station and a shopping mall. More attacks followed, and police discovered a plot by 12 Thai Malay Muslims to bomb all four provinces in the far south.⁹²⁸

In response, the Thaksin administration declared martial law in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat and sent 3,000 soldiers for security.⁹²⁹ The Fourth Army saw it as an insurgency and developed a COIN plan complete with security, political, and economic measures, but it never seemed to go into effect. Many blamed Thaksin's meddling with the national security chain of command for not allowing the RTA to do its work. The Army "stayed behind the wire," said foreign military attaches. The authorities kept on the defensive, and the insurgents kept on the offensive.

On 28 April 2004, more than 100 insurgents attempted a region wide revolt, an operation planned on 20 April led by a man named "Ustaz Soh" Rayarong, a *pondok* teacher. At least seven groups raided an equal number of TNP and RTA posts in Pattani, Yala, and one in Songkhla shouting Islamic and death slogans. One raid party, some 30 militants, took over Krue Se *mosque* in Pattani town by chasing down and stabbing to death nearby police. Attackers broadcast over the *mosque's* loudspeaker they would fight to the death for the rebellion and called for civilians to join them.⁹³⁰

Armed with a few firearms and mostly machetes and knives, all but one of the raids failed. Raid leaders had brainwashed most attackers with mystic Islamic chants and holy water into believing they were bulletproof.⁹³¹ Insurgents overran the 5th Southern Development Unit in Yala, stealing 17 M-16 A2s and two M-203s. They took an M-79 grenade-launcher from the Krong Penang police station in Yala.⁹³²

in *The Nation*, 5 January 2004, and "Two More Suspects Held in Swoop on Pattani Village," in *The Nation*, 9 January 2004, and Conference on Thailand's Southern violence, Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, comments by D. Pathon, journalist for *The Nation*, and K. Mark, "Special Press Summary: Unrest in Southern Thailand," 9 January 2004, VIC for U.S. Pacific Command, Honolulu, Hawaii, 3.

⁹²⁸ Mark, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹³⁰ *The Nation's* translation of the Royal Thai Government's Krue Se report: <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/specials/takbai/p2.htm>>.

⁹³¹ D. McCargo, *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 135-142.

⁹³² Thai military press conference web page, "The Royal Thai Army (RTA) Organic Units Meeting 4/2003," found on the Internet at <<http://armysecretary.rta.mi.th/pressconferencee.htm>>, and "The South Erupts as Never Before," in *The Nation*, 29 April 2004.

RTA forces surrounded the insurgents in Krue Se and pressed for negotiations for several hours. The insurgents responded with assault rifle and 40 mm grenade fire, which wounded several troopers. A crowd of civilians that eventually reached 1,000 gathered to protest the troops amidst the shooting. They chanted not to kill Muslims after an *imam* entered Krue Se during the fighting to administer last rites to insurgents and was shot.⁹³³ They did not chant for the insurgents not to kill Buddhists, nor did they urge them to surrender.

After many hours of failed negotiations and shooting from the *mosque*, two assault teams throwing grenades and covered by snipers cleared Krue Se, killing all 31 inside.⁹³⁴ In total, insurgents killed as many as five security personnel and wounded scores more. Thai forces killed more than 100 insurgents. Political activists and Thaksin's opponents condemned the action as a barbaric human rights violation, decrying the use of firearms against people armed only with edged weapons. Relatives of the dead see them as martyrs.⁹³⁵

Following a summer of assassinations, bombings, and arson against government and civilian targets, there was a government blunder at Tak Bai, Narathiwat. On 25 October 2004, more than 1,000 male protestors gathered at the Tak Bai police station to demand the release of village security personnel arrested for earlier handing their guns over to insurgents without a struggle. A handful of protestors were armed, and they had a few weapons wrapped in plastic in the river next to the station.⁹³⁶

At 3:10 pm, protestors rushed the police station, shooting and injuring an officer. A riot ensued. Authorities fired their guns in the air and at protestors. After a tense melee, government forces subdued the crowd. Police and military arrested, handcuffed, and then stacked hundreds of them like cordwood into trucks face down with their hands tied behind their backs. There were multiple beatings, too, which caused deadly injuries. Seventy-eight died while being transported to the RTA's Pattani's Ingkayuth camp. Protestors injured 15 police.⁹³⁷

It is apparent insurgents organized the protest to goad authorities into harsh action, and it worked.⁹³⁸ While the police and military rightfully defended their station and arrested those who refused to leave, they blundered in killing 85 of them, especially the 78 who died in transport to Ingkayuth. Opponents of the government, including insurgents, have successfully used it as a human rights

⁹³³ *The Nation's* translation of the Royal Thai Government's Krue Se report: <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/specials/takbai/p2.htm>>.

⁹³⁴ *The Nation's* translation of the Royal Thai Government's Krue Se report.

⁹³⁵ "The New Face of Militancy in the South," in *The Nation*, 19 May 2004, and *The Nation's* translation of the Royal Thai Government's Krue Se report.

⁹³⁶ *The Nation's* translation of the Royal Thai Government's Tak Bai report.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*

violation trump card. The rest of the year continued with weekly assassinations, and monthly bombings and arson attacks.

2005

Violence increased in 2005, but the government took no significant offensive action to stem it, seemingly because of Thaksin's meddling in RTA and TNP command and control issues. Insurgents doubled the number of bombings and arson attacks. Assassinations remained at about one a day. It is likely that BRN-C's assault group, *Runda Kumpulan Kecil* (RKK), which trained in Indonesia in irregular warfare, brought these new capabilities to the movement. Authorities, however, were not a hundred percent sure if BRN-C was behind the insurgency – it was a hypothesis.

In any case, violence grew. On 17 February 2005 at 7:00 pm, insurgents set off a 50-100 kilogram car bomb next to the Pikul Restaurant and Marina Hotel in Narathiwat. Authorities said it was Thailand's first car bomb. It killed six and wounded 50.⁹³⁹

On 3 April 2005, at around 8:24-8:30 pm, insurgents set off three bombs in Songkhla at the Hat Yai International Airport, the French-owned Carrefour department store in Hat Yai, and the beachfront Green World Palace Hotel in Songkhla town. The bombings killed two and wounded 65, including Thai, French, British, American, Malaysian, and Brunei citizens.⁹⁴⁰

On 15 July 2005, insurgents raided downtown Yala in a well coordinated attack. Witnesses said the raid consisted of at least 60 insurgents divided into three groups, each with specific missions. One group pinned down *Thahan Phran* at a railroad station from responding to the attack. The other two other bombed and

⁹³⁹ "Rebels' response: car bomb blast in Narathiwat," in *The Nation*, 18 February 2005, and "Phones to be cut after bomb blasts," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 February 2005, and "Police hold bomb maker for blast," in *The Nation*, 20 February 2005.

⁹⁴⁰ "Three bomb blasts in Hat Yai kill two," in TNA, 3 April 2005, and "Two dead, 40 wounded as bombs rock airport, cities in Thai south: police," in AFP, 3 April 2005, and "Emergency security meeting following latest bomb attacks in south," in *The Nation*, 4 April 2005, and "Full alert at airports in the south after bomb attacks," in *The Nation*, 4 April 2005, and "Public Announcement, U.S. Department Of State, Office of the Spokesman," 4 April 2005, and "Police announce name of suspect in hotel bombing," in *The Nation*, 6 April 2005, and "Bombs Kill Two, Wound Dozens in Thailand," in AP, 3 April 2005, and "Lone bomber suspected," in *The Nation*, 4 April 2005, and "Two die in triple Hat Yai blasts," in *Bangkok Post*, 4 April 2005, and "TERROR IN HAT YAI: Blasts hit airport, hotel and Carrefour," in *Bangkok Post*, 4 April 2005, and "DPM calls meeting of authorities concerned in aftermath of three bomb blasts in Hat Yai," in TNA, 4 April 2005.

shot up the town's hotels, businesses, and a movie theater.⁹⁴¹ On 16 October, 20 insurgents raided Wat Promprasith in Pattani. They murdered and mutilated a monk and killed two temple workers. They also desecrated the *wat's* interior.⁹⁴²

2006

Insurgent violence increased dramatically in 2006. There were close to 90 raids and ambushes, triple the number of bombings from 2004, scores of arson campaigns, and statistically more than an assassination per day. Some insurgency watchers, however, believe 20 percent of the assassinations might have been due to personal conflicts.

On 15 June, insurgents detonated 69 bombs between Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala. Some of the targets included Pattani City Hall (via car bomb), an Informal Education Office in Pattani, rail and ferry facilities in Narathiwat, karaoke bars and other civilian targets. The attacks killed two and wounded 23.⁹⁴³

Insurgents demonstrated their growing tenacity and light infantry abilities when on 28 June, after ambushing a column of local forces, they broke cover, entered the kill zone, and executed all the wounded they could find. It marked the first time militants decisively cleared the kill zone in an ambush.⁹⁴⁴

As for the COIN campaign, Thaksin had given RTA commander General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, newly appointed and a Thai Muslim, complete power over all government agencies involved in the war. After a few weeks, however, it was evident Sonthi's power was in name only. But Thaksin was reporting Sonthi indeed had all the resources and command and control he needed. The rumor mill asserted this was designed to cause Sonthi's failure and allow Thaksin to seize more national security power as the only man who could solve the unrest.⁹⁴⁵ It

⁹⁴¹ "2006-South Roundup: No end in sight to deadly violence," in *The Nation*, 27 December 2006, and author's discussion with Thai police at the SB-PAC lunch pavilion in Yala and four Yala businessmen in Yala, April 2008.

⁹⁴² "Two teenagers, monk, killed in southern Thailand," in AFP, 16 October 2005, and "Three killed in southern temple attack," in TNA, 16 October 2005, and "Raid splits peaceful village community," in *Bangkok Post*, 17 October 2005.

⁹⁴³ "2 dead 17 wounded as explosions rock far South," in TNA, 15 June 2006, and "PM Government must boost counter-insurgency measures," in TNA, 15 June 2006, and "Caretaker PM blames police for bomb attacks in the south," in *The Nation*, 15 June 2006, and "Bombs kill two Thaksin raps police," in *Bangkok Post*, 15 June 2006, and "Six arrested after new wave of blasts," in *Bangkok Post*, 17 June 2006.

⁹⁴⁴ "Six dead in series of bombings, shootings in Yala, Narathiwat," in *The Nation*, 28 June 2006.

⁹⁴⁵ "Policy shifts in the South," in *Bangkok Post*, 4 July 2006, and "Emergency decree extended once more," in *Bangkok Post*, 7 July 2006.

would have also allowed Thaksin to put his classmate and ally Assistant Army Chief of Staff General Pornchai Kranlert in charge of the RTA.⁹⁴⁶

None of this sat well with the RTA. It seemed Thaksin was using the insurgency to expand his political power while the terrorists were running amok. Defense Minister Thammarak Issarangkura said on 25 July the government still did not have a cohesive COIN strategy, and the existing command structure lacked unity. He told the press “certain people in high places” had denied Sonthi full command to wage COIN, and the result was death and destruction.⁹⁴⁷ It followed an unsettling pattern of Thaksin’s apparent meddling in military affairs. For example, from 2004 to the September 2006 coup, the Fourth Army had four different commanders.

Amidst the political wrangling, on 16 September, insurgents detonated six bombs in downtown Hat Yai’s tourist district, killing four and injuring as many as 70. All bombs went off simultaneously at 9:15 pm. The targets were the Big C department store, the Lee Gardens Hotel, the Monkey Pub, the Odeon Shopping Mall, and a cinema toilet near the Diana department store.⁹⁴⁸ So brazen was the attack on Hat Yai security officials thought the insurgents might make similar strikes on other resort areas such as Phuket that contribute to Thailand’s \$10 billion USD a year tourist sector.⁹⁴⁹

It was the last straw for the RTA. Because of the PM’s inaction on the insurgency, his political intrigue, and his apparent illegal business affairs, General Sonthi led a coup against Thaksin on 19 September 2006 while he was in New York at a UN meeting. Backing Sonthi was a consortium of RTA personalities via the Council for Democratic Reform under Constitutional Monarchy (CDRM). The CDRM was rumored to have the blessing of the king and Privy Council, of which Prem was a member. Sonthi’s forces arrested the cabinet and established an interim government under the Council for National Security.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁶ “Sonthi out to block Thaksin’s man,” in *Bangkok Post*, 18 July 2006, and “Sonthi to take over in South,” in *The Nation*, 2 August 2006.

⁹⁴⁷ “Teacher shot dead in his class,” in *Bangkok Post*, 25 July 2006, and M. Sheridan, “Thai coup sparked by failed war on Islamists,” in *The Sunday Times*, 24 September 2006.

⁹⁴⁸ “Bombs kill 4 in Thai department stores,” in AP, 16 September 2006, and “Series of bombs rock Hat Yai,” in *Bangkok Post*, 17 September 2006, and “Canadian teacher dead in Hat Yai bombings, top brass fly south,” in TNA, 17 September 2006, and “Hat Yai bombs detonated by mobile phones, southern army chief,” in *The Nation*, 17 September 2006, and “Rally of reformed separatists a factor in Hat Yai bombings,” trans. and summarized from Komchadluek, 17 September 2006, posted in 2Bangkok.com, available on <<http://www.2bangkok.com/>>, and “Six blasts rock Hat Yai,” in *The Nation*, 17 September 2006.

⁹⁴⁹ Sheridan, *op. cit.*, and “Bombs kill 4 in Thai department stores.”

⁹⁵⁰ “Rebels signal they may talk to end unrest,” in *Bangkok Post*, 5 October 2006.

From that point on, the RTA began the COIN campaign Thaksin had blocked for two years. But the army was behind. From January 2004 to December 2006, the insurgency had killed 1,900 people.⁹⁵¹ Quelling the insurgency, then, was the new government's top priority. As a first step, retired RTA General Surayud Chulanont took over as PM and apologized to Thai Malay Muslims for decades of ill treatment and for the deaths at Tak Bai.⁹⁵² In the meantime, the RTA planned its COIN campaign to begin in early 2007.

The year ended with a series of nine bombings throughout Bangkok on 31 December, New Year's Eve. They killed three and wounded 42. The explosive devices and targets mimicked those in the far south. Anonymous intelligence officials said it was JI on behalf of the insurgency. The Department of Special Investigation insisted there was a "possible link" to the insurgency based on technical aspects of the devices used such as the timing devices – Casio watches. The most vocal pundits blamed internal wrangling in the military and/or Thaksin's followers.⁹⁵³ The culprits were never caught.

2007

Before PM Surayud and General Sonthi could put their COIN plan into action, the insurgents staged the biggest bombing campaign of the war (to that point) on Sunday, 18 February. For the first time, they struck all four provinces at once, beginning at 7:00 pm and lasting into the next day. There were about 50 bombings along with multiple acts of arson and scores of assassinations.⁹⁵⁴

From 27-29 May, insurgents targeted Songkhla, mostly Hat Yai, in another bombing campaign. On the 27th, they detonated seven bombs in Hat Yai at hotels and other tourist venues, killing one and wounding 13. The next day, they set off a massive bomb at a market in Saba Yoi district, killing four and wounding 26.⁹⁵⁵

As for the RTA's COIN campaign, it applied the King's advice of understanding the population's needs, interfacing with them on a regular basis, and executing

⁹⁵¹ "2006-South Roundup: No end in sight to deadly violence."

⁹⁵² *Ibid.*

⁹⁵³ "Investigators split over New Year's bombings," in *Bangkok Post*, 5 February 2007, and "Thai police abandon probe of Bangkok blasts," in AFP, 20 March 2008.

⁹⁵⁴ "Four dead, 49 injured as bombs rip through Thai Muslim south," in AFP, 18 February 2007, and "Thai Army paranoia gives Muslim militants room," in Reuters, 20 February 2007, and "Death toll hits nine in Thai separatist attacks," in *The Nation*, 20 February 2007, and "Sunday bombers bolstered by drugs," in *Bangkok Post*, 21 February 2007, and "Aree says South strategy flawed," in *Bangkok Post*, 20 February 2007, and "Bomb attack inside 7-Eleven shop in Yala averted," in *The Nation*, 20 February 2007, and "Thailand warns of more terrorist attacks," in AFP, 19 February 2007.

⁹⁵⁵ "Third day of bombings rattles Hat Yai," in TNA, 29 May 2007.

development projects. The government overhauled ISOC and focused its resources on the insurgency. The RTA moreover brought back CPM-43, now simply called CPM, and the SB-PAC.

For security operations, the RTA first increased its intelligence capabilities and began receiving more tips from villagers that resulted in scores of successful arrests and weapons cache raids. On many occasions, CPM, usually the RTA and BPP, attempted arrests only to be met by hasty ambushes by insurgents, proof their intelligence was good. Many more raids, however, were a complete surprise and resulted in yet more captured insurgents and more intelligence to fuel future COIN operations.

On 29 July, for example, a battalion-sized CPM force of 500 raided *tambon* Tapoyor in Narathiwat's Yi-ngo district at 6:00 am. They arrested 50 suspects, including alleged RKK officer Abdulromae Pereese, and found a cache of four pistols, two M-16s, ammunition, PVC piping, fertilizer, camouflage uniforms, and medical supplies. (Insurgents used fertilizer to make bombs and PVD piping as bomb casings.) Police in Yala arrested three after 22 raids throughout the province. The new government's COIN campaign resulted in nearly 2,000 detentions since early 2007. The government said some 300 were rank and file fighters and or organizers. The rest were allegedly auxiliary support personnel.⁹⁵⁶ Some insurgency watchers, however, say many were innocent villagers caught up in government dragnets.

As CPM carried out its missions, the SB-PAC infused cash into the border provinces and assembled advisory boards of local *imams*, village leaders, and businessmen to develop solutions for the south's socio-economic woes. Diplomatically, the government engaged Malaysia to try and resurrect a 1998 style working relationship, but it appeared slow in coming. Internationally, Bangkok threw both diplomats and its top military brass into halting Middle East support for the insurgency, particularly the OIC.

Security operations began to show some results. Authorities discovered and stopped a plot to bomb Hat Yai on 5 October. They found as many as 17 bombs hidden near Prince of Songkhla University and 12 near a restaurant owned by the RTN.⁹⁵⁷ At the same time, in Narathiwat, they discovered and shut down a 10-person terrorist cell, including two women, that had communications equipment, ammunition, Molotov cocktails, bomb material such as electronic circuits, and fake license plates.⁹⁵⁸ Additionally, multiple bombings went bad because of poor device placement and faulty construction. In a more dramatic case in December,

⁹⁵⁶ "53 arrests in raids in far South; Dawn swoops in Narathiwat and Yala," in *Bangkok Post*, 30 July 2007.

⁹⁵⁷ "Busted: Hat Yai bomb plot," in *Bangkok Post*, 6 October 2007.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

two insurgents in Pattani blew up when the device they were transporting exploded prematurely.⁹⁵⁹

But insurgents again demonstrated their proficiency on New Years Eve by bombing two celebrations in Narathiwat; one at the Riviera Hotel, and the other at the Marina Hotel, the second time they bombed the latter. They exploded two bombs behind speakers at the Riviera, and as patrons fled the building, they set off another in the parking lot. They did the same thing at the Marina. The explosions injured 31.⁹⁶⁰ By the end of 2007, 2,848 people had died as a result of the insurgency.⁹⁶¹

2008-09

Despite political turmoil resulting in four PMs coming and going post Surayud's scheduled step down on 6 February 2008. (Abhisit Vejjajiva attained the position on 17 December 2008), the RTA managed to decrease insurgent violence by nearly half, except for assassinations, which rebels continued to carry out at will.⁹⁶² Part of the army's success happened because of General Anupong Paochinda's strategy to deploy to the far south parts of each Army Regional Command, a surge of troops. Anupong took over as RTA commander on 1 October 2007. This bought the SB-PAC time to institute political and economic programs that had a positive impact on villagers.

While the insurgents certainly were not down and out, RTA operations continued to show their effects. On 3 August, for example, insurgents launched another bombing campaign against Hat Yai, but it was weak, killed no one, and was not exclusively against Hat Yai. Because of city security measures, rebels were forced to attack several targets with little bombs in Songkhla town, north of Hat Yai, on the coast. The last target they struck there was the Green World Hotel on 3 April 2005.⁹⁶³

By early to mid 2009, the government had managed to institute a new village security program, *Pattana Santi* ("Development and Peace") combining village security forces coupled with specially CA-trained *Thahan Phran* and TNP and RTA forces. While not decisive, they showed positive effect. Violence had not gone away, but it had decreased, and intelligence tips on insurgent activities had increased. Former professor and now Government Spokesman Panitan said the number of insurgent controlled villages, more than 400, had nearly decreased by half, about 200. Violence, however, increased slightly in spring 2009, and then on

⁹⁵⁹ "Suicide killers," in *Bangkok Post*, 6 December 2007.

⁹⁶⁰ "Three held for disco bombs," in *The Nation*, 1 January 2008, and "31 people injured in explosions at two discotheques in Narathiwat," in *The Nation*, 1 January 2007.

⁹⁶¹ "Academic raps lack of govt action in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 11 January 2008.

⁹⁶² "Number of attacks drop, but not the threat," in *Bangkok Post*, 25 December 2008.

⁹⁶³ "RKK linked to Songkhla bomb blasts," in *Bangkok Post*, 3 August 2008.

8 June, unknown assailants in Narathiwat fired into *al Pukon Mosque* in Joh I Rong district, massacring 10 people during prayers. By fall 2009, the government had a suspect in mind, a former local force trooper apparently incensed at the recent insurgent murder of a pregnant Thai Buddhist woman.⁹⁶⁴ This episode illustrated the growing Muslim vs. Buddhist violence that had characterized facets of the war since 2004.

3. The Insurgents of the Current COIN

Strategy

The insurgency wants to separate Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, and Songkhla provinces from Thailand and establish *Pattani Raya*, a pre-1909-like Malay Muslim nation state. It seeks UN or other international assistance in mediating an East Timor type settlement to achieve its goals.⁹⁶⁵ These goals were made clear by PULO in 2004-05 on its website and are akin to what Algerian insurgents achieved in the 1950s-60s against their French colonial masters. While Bangkok does not suspect PULO of being a major actor in the insurgency, its Sweden-based leaders are active propagandists for the movement to the point it appears they are coordinated.⁹⁶⁶ Scores of propaganda leaflets saying, “We want Patani back,” scattered at the scenes of attack sites since the conflicts beginning also make the separatism point clear.

Religiously, the insurgency wants to create a conservative Islamic republic. (In orthodox Islamic circles, political and religious goals are the same.) This comes from several sources. Retired RTA General and advisor to PM Surayud Watanachai Chaimuanwong said in March 2007 the insurgency consisted of radical Islamists that wanted to create “a pure Islamic state” called *Pattani Darusalam* that encompasses Thailand’s Malay Muslim provinces and Malaysia’s two northern states.⁹⁶⁷ Well before this, authorities found a 2002-published insurgent guidebook, “Fight for the Liberation of Pattani,” that spoke of the movement’s goals. It included the goal of founding what sounds like a *Taliban*-like regime.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁶⁴ “Attack on a Narathiwat mosque kills 10,” in *The Nation*, 8 June 2009.

⁹⁶⁵ Indonesia took over East Timor in 1975 after Portugal relinquished it from colonial status. In 1999, after years of insurgency and under the UN’s act of self-determination, Jakarta released East Timor from its control.

⁹⁶⁶ See <www.pulo.org>, translated for the author by a native Thai speaker, 21 January 2005, and “Separatists well organised, police believe,” in *Bangkok Post*, 25 December 2008.

⁹⁶⁷ “Thai militants adopting Al-Qaeda tactics: general,” in AFP, 21 March 2007.

⁹⁶⁸ “April 28 raids: Militants’ guide book from M’sia,” in *The Nation*, 3 June 2004.

Some press reports said early in the conflict the insurgents wanted to rule the south by *Shafi'i* law, a tolerant form of Islam popular in Southeast Asia.⁹⁶⁹ But the insurgents behave like JI and *al Qaeda* with their vicious intolerance of other religions, their genocidal actions of Buddhists, and their prolific murdering of other Muslims. The latter makes them *takfir*. For example, on 12 March 2009, insurgents assassinated well-known women's rights activist Laila Paaitae Daoh in Yala. It was an example of their disdain toward her status as a woman in society, her peace efforts, and her development work with the government. Insurgents had threatened her and her family for years, branding her *munafik* ("hypocrite").⁹⁷⁰

Organizational Structure

The insurgency appears to be an umbrella organization of different groups. Authorities suspect the umbrella organization is the *Dewan Pembabasan Pattani*, ("Patani Liberation Council.") It has a pyramid structure with a leadership hierarchy and field lieutenants running fighters and auxiliary forces in the field. Operational security has effectively insulated the movement's leadership, and its compartmentalized cell structure reflects professional planning designed to protect the movement if a cell is compromised. It appears to be an Algerian insurgent organizational model.⁹⁷¹

Insurgency expert Mark Askew interviewed an insurgent field commander named Abdul who knew only the names and locations of his 24 fighters. Abdul knew there were other cells, and his operations and theirs coincided, but he did not know their names or locations. Hamad, another insurgent, told Askew: "I often wondered just what the structure of the organisation was like. But I was told that it wasn't necessary; it was enough just to do my job."⁹⁷²

The Police Operation Center Forward Command in Yala says the insurgents operate under a five-tiered structure. Group one consists of Islamic leaders and *ustaz* who propagandize, recruit, and indoctrinate people to hate the state and join the movement. It also initiates new recruits via ceremonies designed to solidify groupthink and loyalty. The *ulama* are part of this top tier; they study the Thai government's activities and world events, and serve as a think tank for the

⁹⁶⁹ "Book Found on Dead Militants a Call to Arms," in *The Nation*, 5 June 2004.

⁹⁷⁰ "Thailand: Insurgents Target Leading Muslim Woman Activist," Human Rights Watch report, 18 March 2009, available on <<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/03/18/thailand-insurgents-target-leading-muslim-woman-activist>>.

⁹⁷¹ Algerian insurgents in the 1950s revolted against their French colonial masters and used a triangular cell structure. There were but five commanders in charge of the entire movement, and each had two personnel under them, and each of the latter had a cell under them and so forth. The structure kept cells from knowing much, if anything, about cells vertically and horizontally from each other.

⁹⁷² "A tale of two insurgents," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 July 2009.

movement.⁹⁷³ Group two consists of the movement's administrative body. It manages the rebellion via a structure that parallels that of the state. *Bersatu's* Wan Kadir alleges the insurgents are also hidden inside the Thai government.⁹⁷⁴ Group two's other mission is to infiltrate every village it can and convince people to commit acts of violence.

Group three is the rebels' financial wing. It raises and distributes money. Group four is the military wing, the RKK and its many trainees. (*Runda Kumpulan Kecil* stands for "guerrilla warfare" or "small unit tactics" in Indonesian and Malay.) Authorities discovered RKK in November during the investigation into the 16 October 2005 insurgent raid on Wat Phromprasit in Pattani. RKK is a subgroup of BRN.⁹⁷⁵ Interestingly, Askew's research demonstrates insurgent combatants do not call themselves RKK. Insurgents he interviewed say it is a term the military uses to label them. They call themselves simply, *jihadists*.⁹⁷⁶

Group five is *Pemuda* (or *Permudor*.) Like its 1980s-90s predecessor, it consists of the far south's youthful sympathizers. They provide auxiliary support such as intelligence gathering on the routines of state officials and conduct harassment operations such as spike laying on roads. Through these type activities, they prepare to become RKK fighters themselves.⁹⁷⁷ It also means the insurgency uses child soldiers.

Numbers

Regarding numbers, in the early years of the war, Bangkok estimated insurgents numbered 3,000 fighters. General Sonthi said in a November 2005 press conference the auxiliary force numbered about 5,000. In 2004, some observers had put the auxiliary force at 70,000.⁹⁷⁸ In July 2009, new reporting emerged based on police information there were between 7,000 and 9,000 insurgents in the far south. These numbers ostensibly helped the insurgents co-opt 274 villages. There are a total of 2,200 villages in the area.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷³ "Queen vows to protect southerners," in *Bangkok Post*, 18 March 2007.

⁹⁷⁴ Al Jazeera interview (via Fringer) with Wan Kadir Che Man on 21 November 2006, posted by "Bangkok Pundit" at 6:38 AM, 21 February 2007.

⁹⁷⁵ "RKK insurgents admit they trained in Indonesia, says army," in *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 2005, and "Government rejects insurgent amnesty proposal," in TNA, 29 November 2005.

⁹⁷⁶ "A tale of two insurgents."

⁹⁷⁷ "Separatists well organised, police believe."

⁹⁷⁸ "Cyber war Army website paves paths to peace in far South," in TNA, 2 November 2005.

⁹⁷⁹ "Southern Thai Split On Emergency Decree Extension," in Bernama, 1 July 2009.

Recruiting

Insurgents have four general recruiting methods. First, they recruit people its members have personally studied, such as friends or colleagues. One youth said his friend recruited him for the 28 April uprising, and an *imam* said insurgents approached him because of his apparent radical and sympathetic views.⁹⁸⁰ According to the TNP, RKK recruits its members “from devout Muslim students who are clever, well-behaved, and disciplined.”⁹⁸¹

Second, insurgents use *ustaz* at *pondoks* as recruiting vehicles. This is based on the fact that scores of insurgent leaders are *ustaz*, and at the very least, half of its rank and file is *pondok* students. Additionally, authorities discovered many *pondoks* teach separatist ideology as part of their curriculum.⁹⁸²

Third, insurgents rely on *imams* to indoctrinate the masses and then recruit them. In October 2004, a reporter witnessed an *imam* preach for two hours to 50 people about Thailand’s social evils, its history of cruelty, and the West’s “war on Islam.” Upon conclusion, he made an appeal for his audience to stand up for their rights, join the insurgency, and liberate the south. Another captured insurgent in 2009 said his village *imam* said all Muslims had to join the insurgency, which he called *jihad*, as their duty to God.⁹⁸³

Fourth, they use trickery and group pressure to convince people to join. A former insurgent describes how an *imam* used to preach to him about the evils of Siam and how terrible the government was to Muslims. Eventually, the preacher made his pitch, telling the young man everyone else in the village had joined the rebellion, and he was the last one not in the movement. He later witnessed other people being recruited, negating the “last man to join” angle, but it was, nevertheless, effective.⁹⁸⁴

Training

Insurgents train locally, on the job, and outside Thailand. Within Thailand, they undertake light training in indoctrination, arson, weapons familiarity, harassment, intelligence, and calisthenics.⁹⁸⁵ Some receive light infantry and sabotage training from the RKK. On the job training is a constant theme, and insurgents obtain

⁹⁸⁰ “I joined to liberate Pattani,” in *The Nation*, 5 May 2004, and “Imam admits to contact with separatists,” in *The Nation*, 15 September 2004.

⁹⁸¹ “Separatists well organised, police believe,” *op. cit.*

⁹⁸² “Teaching ‘Pure’ Islam in South,” in *The Nation*, 6 March 2004.

⁹⁸³ “Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of Patani,” trans. and summarized from Issara News Centre, 24 April 2009, posted on 2Bangkok.com, available on <<http://2Bangkok.com/09/National-Liberation-Front-of-Patani.shtml>>.

⁹⁸⁴ “Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of Patani.”

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

knowledge on guerrilla warfare tactics from manuals and the Internet. On 20 January 2008, the 15th Infantry Division Commander Major General Jamlong Khunsong said the government had uncovered evidence the insurgents were studying terrorist tactics such as how to build bombs and set up ambushes from *jihadist* websites.⁹⁸⁶

Police have discovered multiple local training facilities since the war started. In May 2004, a joint military and police task force raided several Islamic schools in Pattani and found not only written and audio-visual instructionals on weapons handling, explosives, and surveillance authored by *al Qaida*, but also a makeshift shooting range. The range was nearby the dormitories of Jihad Witthaya school at Ban Taloh Kapo village. Four students acknowledged that *ustaz* had given attendees firearms training and taught them how to make bombs. Authorities found bullet holes in coconut trees and cans. Some documents contained indoctrination and propaganda material that urged students to revolt against Thailand.⁹⁸⁷

The RTA says *ustaz* have provided information on Thai Islamic students in Indonesia and Malaysia undergoing tactical training. They also say women insurgents have taken medical classes in Kedah in Malaysia.⁹⁸⁸ To date, Malaysia has kept quiet on the accusations. RKK supposedly began training in Bandung, Indonesia, years before the current violence erupted in southern Thailand.⁹⁸⁹

Logistics and Sanctuary

Insurgents rely heavily on smuggling of weapons and explosives. They also collect firearms from victims they kill. From 2004-06, they stole scores of weapons from poorly trained and unmotivated village defense forces. Authorities intercepted multiple smuggling operations in 2005 that demonstrate their logistics. One notable incident occurred on 9 March when Malaysian police arrested five insurgents at Sentral Station in KAL, the city's new main rail station, who were out to secure weapons from a JI arms cache. All five were armed at the time of arrest. Regional security officials said increased security in Thailand had made it difficult to secure arms in country, so they turned to outside sources. Ironically, the very cache the insurgents were aiming for was, in fact, the result of arms smuggling

⁹⁸⁶ "Militants getting info from websites," in *The Nation*, 21 January 2008.

⁹⁸⁷ "Raids lead to valuable haul," in *The Nation*, 20 May 2005, and "Students say weapons training held at school," in *Bangkok Post*, 20 May 2005, and "Al Qaeda training booklets found," in TNA, 20 May 2005, and, "Students say *ustazes* gave firearms training," in *Bangkok Post*, 24 May 2005.

⁹⁸⁸ "PM cancels rebel boss bounties," in *Bangkok Post*, 7 April 2007.

⁹⁸⁹ "RKK insurgents admit they trained in Indonesia, says army," and "Government rejects insurgent amnesty proposal."

operations out of Thailand that ran to Indonesia. JI had been using this particular overland weapons trafficking route since at least 2000.⁹⁹⁰

On 19 October, police seized a container truck in Phetchaburi headed for Pattani that was carrying one AK-47, two M-16s, and 200 rounds of ammunition. Police arrested three Pattani natives in the truck, and one confessed he had smuggled weapons to his brother in Pattani on eight previous occasions.⁹⁹¹

The most audacious weapons theft operation occurred on 26 October. Between 7:00-9:00 pm, insurgents raided defense volunteers for weapons at 20 locations in Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani, stealing 92 firearms, 85 of which were shotguns. Police recovered only three. Insurgents struck while the volunteers were either at home or on guard duty – demonstrating their intelligence prowess, among other things.⁹⁹² Some volunteers gave up their weapons without a struggle, and militants killed those who resisted. The raids took place a day after the one-year anniversary of the Tak Bai protest.⁹⁹³

Regarding financing, authorities have discovered varying degrees of information on insurgent involvement with drug money, Islamic charities, and cash smuggling. Thai Interior Minister Kongsak Wanthana linked drug dealers caught in November 2005 moving \$3 million in narcotics from Malaysia to Thai Malay Muslim insurgents.⁹⁹⁴ Days later, Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Minister Police General Chidchai Vanasatidya cited more than 10 drug gangs that were providing insurgents with millions of dollars from illicit narcotics sales. He moreover pinpointed 20 locations in Thailand targeted for counter narcotics operations, many within the insurgents' battle space. Anti-narcotics officials said the main drug involved in these scenarios was methamphetamines, colloquially known as *yaba*.⁹⁹⁵

Zakat is another form of insurgent financing. In August 2005, Nimu Makaje, the vice president of the Yala Islamic Committee, asserted the government needed to more strongly regulate Islamic charities because militants were siphoning money

⁹⁹⁰ "Arms at the ready; What were five Thai militants arrested in Malaysia looking for?" in *Time*, 1 May 2005, and "Protest against senseless violence," in *Bangkok Post*, 5 December 2005.

⁹⁹¹ "Police intercept weapons heading for deep South," in *The Nation*, 19 October 2005, and "Police arrest 3, find arms, ammunition in southbound truck," in TNA, 19 October 2005.

⁹⁹² "PM, hunt them down," in *Bangkok Post*, 28 October 2005.

⁹⁹³ "Security forces hunt for arm robbers in deep South," in TNA, 27 October 2005, and "PM, hunt them down," and "Village volunteer attacks and gun robberies linked to Takbai," in TNA, 28 October 2005.

⁹⁹⁴ "Interior Minister: Drug dealers supporting insurgents will be brought to justice," in TNA, 14 November 2005.

⁹⁹⁵ "Police raise vigilance against drug dealers supporting insurgency in south," in TNA, 17 November 2005.

from them to fund operations.⁹⁹⁶ In December 2005, Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) Secretary General Police Major General Peeraphan Prempooti said police had arrested several insurgents via tracking their illegal financial activities through *zakat* networks. The accused had also abused charity funds for their own personal use to purchase vehicles, homes, and to send their children to foreign schools.⁹⁹⁷

Police in November staged a series of raids that netted 15 insurgents who had in their possession six bank deposit passbooks, indicating militants spread their financing activities across multiple accounts to camouflage it.⁹⁹⁸ The same month, General Peeraphan said anti-money laundering operations had forced the insurgents to rely mostly on cash smuggling. General Peeraphan also said his officers had evidence from 1997-2003 revealing Middle Eastern financial transfers into the accounts of organizations linked to the insurgency.⁹⁹⁹

Tax collecting is also a factor. A former tax collector told the press in 2009: “They told me to collect one *baht* from a person daily – as a monthly payment. For annual payment, 360 *baht* would be collected from everyone. And they could pay more than that if they wanted. Every tenth of a month, members would have to get the collected money to me. After that, another member would take it from me. I did not know what the organization did with the money.”¹⁰⁰⁰

Regarding border sanctuary, Bangkok has, since the war began, asked Malaysia for increased border security to shut down what it says is insurgent sanctuary in northern Malaysia. Thai authorities say, for example, captured rebels who participated in the 14 July 2005 raid on Yala town confessed to have planned the operation on 28 June in Kelantan, Malaysia.¹⁰⁰¹ And in August, police captured Masaki Ma, a 38-year old bomber who crossed from Thailand to Malaysia and back regularly, further indicating the insurgents’ use of Malaysia as sanctuary.¹⁰⁰²

Indoctrination

Insurgents indoctrinate recruits with political and religious rhetoric. Insurgents cast negative dispersions on Thailand, calling it “Siam,” asserting it unlawfully invaded

⁹⁹⁶ “Dozens of fighters to surrender,” in *The Nation*, 28 August 2005.

⁹⁹⁷ “Amlo plans to seize assets of insurgent sympathizers,” in *Bangkok Post*, 27 December 2005.

⁹⁹⁸ “RKK insurgents admit they trained in Indonesia says army,” in *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 2005.

⁹⁹⁹ “AMLO eyes cash smuggling backing up southern insurgency,” in TNA, 10 November 2005.

¹⁰⁰⁰ “Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of Patani.”

¹⁰⁰¹ “YALA ATTACKS: 60 people believed to have taken part,” in *The Nation*, 16 July 2005.

¹⁰⁰² “Police arrest two men on bomb charges,” in *Bangkok Post*, 22 August 2005.

and subjugated Pattani centuries ago. PULO's website specifically says that "Siam" in the early 1900s burned southerners' homes, took their water and land, and stole their women and children. It also says Bangkok's present goal is to kill all southern Muslims or breed them out so it can establish more effective control of the region and its natural resources. PULO asserts the south is made up of Malay people who despise being called Thai and have nothing in common with Thai people – not religion, not language, not history, not culture. It says they and Thai people cannot live together because of these differences and historical "bad blood." For these reasons, PULO claims the southern revolt is legal.¹⁰⁰³

Insurgent religious indoctrination is powerful, and many members have sacrificed their lives for it. This is best illustrated by the 28 April 2004 uprising that ended at Krue Se mosque when about a hundred true believers, armed with but a few firearms and scores of machetes screaming they were willing to die for Allah, charged as many as 15 TNP and RTA posts. At least 19 ran to their deaths.

The insurgents' most prolific propaganda – taken from *Fight for the Liberation of Pattani* – calls for southern Muslims to unite and defend Islam against the *infidels*. It also says they should kill all non-Muslims and anyone who does not support the insurgency. The book says it is the religious duty of all Muslims to fight and die to liberate "Patani" from Thailand. It also says all true Muslims have "warriors' blood," and if they shed it for "Patani," history will remember their glorious feats forever.

For example, the book says: "It is known that all Muslims who have faith in God and his prophets have warriors' blood."¹⁰⁰⁴ It further states: "If any Muslim betrays Islamic principles, even though he is a father or friend, you should kill him. They are enemies of those who have true faith in religion."¹⁰⁰⁵ Perhaps its most powerful statement is: "Let us go and spark this fire and look for them everywhere, night and day, and kill those *infidels* to show non-believers that Muslims are strong while living in this world."¹⁰⁰⁶ This stanza means Muslims are victims, and they must fight back and prove themselves to their detractors.

A former insurgent of four years describes an *ayah*, or a village religious leader, talking to him for several years in casual conversations about the history of Pattani and Thailand's transgressions against it. The ex-rebel told the press: "He never talked about the good side of the Thai government. No one thought of asking him either."¹⁰⁰⁷ Over an extended period of time, the *ayah* told villagers the insurgent movement was powerful, that it could be successful. He would talk to individual villagers alone, telling them everyone else in the village had joined the movement,

¹⁰⁰³ See <www.pulo.org>, (website since shut down by Thai government) translated for the author by a native Thai speaker, 21 January 2005.

¹⁰⁰⁴ "Book Found on Dead Militants a Call to Arms."

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Militants' Guide Book from M'sia."

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Book Found on Dead Militants a Call to Arms."

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of Patani."

which he called *jihad*, and they needed to as well. By doing so, the *ayah* convinced the entire village to join.¹⁰⁰⁸

Propaganda

Insurgents use four kinds of propaganda: 1) anti-government, 2) threat messages, and 3) actionable manipulation. They print some of it as leaflets in Thai, English, and Yawi. Some of it is spoken at *pondoks* and *mosques* by *ustaz* and *imams*. Leaflets appear in common meeting places such as teashops, scattered around villages, and at arson or murder sites.

Regarding anti-government propaganda, in July 2005, insurgent leaflets found in Yala said not to cooperate with government work and aid programs: “Those who cooperate are merely loyal dogs to their rulers,” and, “You are not the enemy of *Mujahidin* fighters for Pattani, but if you still cooperate and support Siamese rulers who invaded our sovereignty, it is the equivalent of declaring war against us.”¹⁰⁰⁹

Other anti-government propaganda assailed former PM Thaksin. In November 2005, for example, insurgents placed scarecrows draped with the Thai flag mocking Thaksin in 20 different places throughout Pattani during the Muslim holiday, *Eid al-Fitri*. *Eid al-Fitri*, also known as *Hari Raya* in the far south, marks the end of the holy month of *Ramadan* and is when Muslims travel home to visit their families.¹⁰¹⁰

As for threat propaganda, in August 2005, assassins murdered a husband and wife in Narathiwat and left four threat propaganda leaflets behind that said it was for revenge for the government’s killing and arrests of “innocent people.”¹⁰¹¹ In a beheading in Yala in June, militants placed the head of the deceased in a box by a road with a note that stated: “We want to get Pattani State back. You arrest innocents, we’ll kill innocents.”¹⁰¹² This particular incident happened while six representatives from the OIC were visiting the region. Observers of the conflict say such violence is a propaganda attempt to reach out to the OIC and enlist its support.¹⁰¹³

There have been several cases of actionable propaganda where militants induced civilians to behave in the exact manner they wanted, which bolstered their cause. One happened in July and August 2005 when militants distributed leaflets throughout Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat threatening violence against merchants

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰⁹ “Leaflets tell Muslims to quit govt jobs or die,” in *Bangkok Post*, 7 July 2005.

¹⁰¹⁰ “Decapitated head scarecrows of PM found in Pattani,” in *The Nation*, 3 November 2005.

¹⁰¹¹ “Three shot dead in the south,” in TNA, 4 August 2005.

¹⁰¹² “Militants chop off plantation worker’s head,” in *The Nation*, 7 June 2005.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*

that did not close their businesses on Friday, a Muslim holy day. Thousands obeyed. In Yala, more than 90 percent of businesses closed, and across the south, street vendors stayed indoors. Some buses stopped running their routes.¹⁰¹⁴ This gave the false appearance southern Thailand was an ultra conservative Islamic area and people supported the movement.

Weaponry

Based on acts of violence and seized arms caches, it is evident insurgents use a wide range of infantry small arms, namely M-16s, AK-47s, HK-33s, a wide range of pistols (1911 .45s, HK USP 9 mms, and .38 revolvers), Mk-26 hand grenades, and M-79 grenade launchers. Infantry weapons stolen from the RTA Rajanakarin base in Narathiwat on 4 January 2004 remain in circulation. They also have various explosives – mostly home made ammonium nitrate compounds, but also dynamite, TNT, C-4, Semtex, and PETN.¹⁰¹⁵ They also use several types of mining explosives such as Powergel.¹⁰¹⁶ They make bomb triggers out of cell phones, clocks and Casio watches, and electronic car unlock devices. They use commercial detonators and home made ones constructed with writing pens. General Kitti Rattanachaya said 2005 militants had stockpiled more than 7,000 weapons.¹⁰¹⁷

Operations

Insurgents have five main lines of operations: 1) assassinations, 2) arson, 3) bombings, 4) raids, and 5) ambushes. Former Yala governor Boonyasit Suwanrat said in October 2006 insurgent tactics were not like those of the past; that instead of living in jungle bases, they masqueraded as civilians and lived amongst the

¹⁰¹⁴ “Three killed by insurgents in Narathiwat,” in *Bangkok Post*, 5 August 2005, and “Rebel threat shuts Yala, Pattani businesses,” in *Bangkok Post*, 6 August 2005, and “Businesses in South seek return of order,” in *The Nation*, 7 August 2005, and “Bt 10,000 reward for tipoff on leaflet distributors in Pattani,” in TNA, 5 August 2005, and “Almost like being there: Yala closed” a pictorial and description of the forced closing of business, 12 August 2005, available on <<http://www.2bangkok.com/south05August2.shtml>>.

¹⁰¹⁵ “Eight Muslim teachers face terror charges,” in *Bangkok Post*, 10 March 2005.

¹⁰¹⁶ Of the hundreds of press reports consulted to conduct this pattern analysis, fewer than half discussed explosives compounds, but the majority that did cited urea and/or fertilizer compounds used with what appeared to be a dynamite initiator. As a sample, fertilizer/urea IEDs exploded on 19 January, 7 February, 17 February, 8 April, 24 April, 10 June, 14 June, 1 August, and 19 October, and “Tracing the strategies of bombers,” translated and summarized from Komchadluek, 7 July 2006, posted on 2Bangkok.com, available on <<http://www.2bangkok.com/06/south06july.shtml>>.

¹⁰¹⁷ “Thai rebels said to have big arsenal,” in AP, 5 July 2005.

population. This makes them harder to decouple from the population than the separatist-criminal groups of the 80s-90s.¹⁰¹⁸

The tempo of insurgent operations peaked in 2005-06. They were excessively violent years, and security forces appeared helpless to stop them. In 2007, however, the TNP and RTA increased their intelligence activities, which drove scores of successful raids against arms caches and wanted suspects. This severely decreased militant attacks for the next two years. For example, attacks – raids, ambushes, bombings, etc. – in 2008 decreased by almost half compared to 2007, some 47 percent. Casualty rates decreased, too. Insurgents killed 546 people and wounded 1,075 in 2008. In 2007, they killed 866.¹⁰¹⁹ In mid-2009, however, insurgents slightly increased their attack tempo, indicating they learned to circumvent some state security measures.

Regarding assassinations, analysts such as Srisompob estimate at least 80 percent of the violence in the region is by insurgents. The rest, he says, is by criminals. Statistically, in 2004, there were approximately 1.04 assassinations a day. In 2005, there were 1.09, in 2006, 1.22.¹⁰²⁰ These patterns have held steady since then and are the one line of operation hardly impacted by government security operations. Assassins mostly kill at close range with pistols, though they occasionally attack people with assault rifles, knives, and machetes. Post mortem mutilation such as beheadings and hacking off arms is common.

Bombings grew from 6.3 a month in 2004 to 18.8 a month in 2005. In 2006, there were 24.5 bombings a month. They decreased in the second half of 2007 and have fallen to 2004 levels since. Insurgents most commonly set off one or two bombs at a time, but in 2006, they executed nine bombing campaigns where they detonated scores of bombs at multiple locations almost simultaneously. Their delivery methods changed year to year. In 2004, it was motorcycle bombs. In 2005, they used car bombs more often. In 2006, they went back to motorcycle bombs.

Arson followed a similar pattern as bombings. In 2004, there were 16.6 a month, in 2005, 23 a month. In 2006, insurgents averaged 18.08 arsons a month. Insurgents mostly targeted schools and commercial businesses. Arson is not complex, and insurgents use it as on-the-job training of recruits destined for light infantry operations.

Regarding light infantry operations, insurgents executed a mere six raids in 2004, none of them too professional. With the advent of the RKK in 2005, however,

¹⁰¹⁸ “Call for return of modern SBPAC,” in *Bangkok Post*, 13 October 2006.

¹⁰¹⁹ “Situation improves in deep South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 22 January 2009.

¹⁰²⁰ The statistics regarding the number of assassinations, bombings, raids, ambushes, and arson attacks from the 2004-2006 time frame comes from meticulous pattern analyses from news stories on violence in the south. For each line of operation, the author consulted hundreds of articles, too many to cite here.

raids increased to 43 for the year. In 2006, there were 40. Ambushes followed a similar pattern. In 2004, there were no classic ambushes. In 2005, there were 45; in 2006, 31. These operations meant the insurgents had transformed from a band of saboteurs to a light infantry force in the time span of less than a year.

Targeting

Insurgents have a robust intelligence network they use to produce rapid, actionable intelligence. Compartmentalized auxiliary forces case targets, conduct surveillance, and carry out vulnerability assessments without detection. Militants would never have been able to bomb so many high value targets – police teacher escort convoys, military patrols, etc. – if they did not know when and where they were on the move. Likewise, insurgents would never be able to assassinate the majority of their victims while they were in transit if they did not know their daily habits. As proof, in May 2005, police raided several Islamic boarding schools in Pattani and found bombing materials along with notebooks containing the habits of military and police personnel and maps of several security posts.¹⁰²¹ They also found instructionals written in Arabic telling how to monitor security forces.¹⁰²²

Additional examples of insurgent intelligence activities surfaced in May 2005 when 19 insurgents surrendered, telling authorities most of them had been paid to collect intelligence and/or assassinate people.¹⁰²³ The same thing happened in December in Narathiwat when police arrested 46 villagers accused of collecting intelligence on security forces for militants. They apparently passed their information to their handlers via clandestine meetings, which is basic case officer tradecraft and yet more proof of the insurgents' intelligence prowess.¹⁰²⁴

The militants' target sets include civilians, civil servants, and security forces. They trend more toward civilians, however, which makes the movement a terrorist one. For example, while militants in 2005 directed assassinations against more than 90 security personnel, they overwhelmingly aimed them at more than 300 civilians. Within this latter set, militants mostly targeted local village government officials. Following them was educational personnel – students, teachers, and administrative officials. In July 2005, authorities captured teenage insurgents who confessed to having targeted teachers and especially school administrators as their main targets.¹⁰²⁵

Insurgent targeting patterns in 2008 were similar. That year, militants killed approximately 422 civilians and 74 government personnel. They injured

¹⁰²¹ "Thai police seize Al Qaeda training video," on ABC.net, 20 May 2005, available on <<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200505/s1373717.htm>>.

¹⁰²² "Raids lead to valuable haul."

¹⁰²³ "19 rebels give up Tak Bai defendant killed," in *Bangkok Post*, 29 November 2005.

¹⁰²⁴ "Authorities parade 46 insurgent spies," in *The Nation*, 2 December 2005.

¹⁰²⁵ "YALA ATTACKS: 60 people believed to have taken part."

approximately 613 civilians and 452 government personnel. There were 741 attacks using pistols and rifles and 218 bombings.¹⁰²⁶ In 2009, the government released statistics showing most people killed in the insurgency were Thai Malay Muslims, some 1,788 people. The violence had killed 1,384 Thai Buddhists. In contrast, the fighting wounded 3,224 Thai Buddhists and 1,633 Thai Malay Muslims.¹⁰²⁷

Insurgents target big businesses and major infrastructure on a regular basis in attempts to injure the far south's economy and scare tourists. Many of these are bombing campaigns such as the 3 April 2005 triple bombing in Hat Yai, Songkhla (the airport, Carrefour department store, and the Green World Palace Hotel in Songkhla.)¹⁰²⁸ The attacks began a period of slowed tourism in Hat Yai that severely hurt the town's usually bustling economy. Hotel occupancy, for example, dropped more than 80 percent.¹⁰²⁹

Militant raids and ambushes mostly target military and police. This is probably because insurgents understand they need overwhelming force to successfully strike security forces. Anything less, and they run the risk of alert police or military personnel returning fire that could result in casualties and compromised operational security by prisoners of war. For example, despite killing three police in a raid on a checkpoint on 20 July 2006, the 10 attacking insurgents were unable to maintain fire superiority against 10 police, and they suffered two killed, seven wounded, and 11 firearms captured.¹⁰³⁰

Personnel

Radical Islamic teachers and students appear to make up the bulk of insurgent leadership and fighters. Authorities continually cite these persons as responsible for leading terror operations, beheading people, and proliferating weapons and training. Proof comes from personnel captured and caches raided.

¹⁰²⁶ "Situation improves in deep South."

¹⁰²⁷ "Understanding is the key to solutions in the South," in *The Nation*, 20 January 2009.

¹⁰²⁸ "Three bomb blasts in Hat Yai kill two," and "Two dead, 40 wounded as bombs rock airport, cities in Thai south: police," and "Emergency security meeting following latest bomb attacks in south," and "Full alert at airports in the south after bomb attacks," and Public Announcement, U.S. Department Of State, Office of the Spokesman, 4 April 2005, and "BLAST INVESTIGATION: Police announce name of suspect in hotel bombing," and "Bombs Kill Two, Wound Dozens in Thailand," and "Lone bomber suspected," and "Two die in triple Hat Yai blasts," and "TERROR IN HAT YAI: Blasts hit airport, hotel and Carrefour," and "DPM calls meeting of authorities concerned in aftermath of three bomb blasts in Hat Yai."

¹⁰²⁹ Author's personal observations from two trips to Hat Yai in March and April 2008 and casual conversations with hotel and nightclub staffs.

¹⁰³⁰ "Insurgents wore soldiers' uniforms," in *Bangkok Post*, 23 July 2006, and "Alleged bombers arrested in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 28 July 2006.

Police said Islamic school students were amongst the main participants of the infamous 60-insurgent, 14 July raid on Yala town in 2005.¹⁰³¹ Investigations in April 2005 led the government to assert Islamic teachers had used Yala's Thammawithaya Foundation School as an operation planning headquarters for several other attacks.¹⁰³² Police also discovered insurgent training facilities at Jihad Witthaya school in Pattani. And authorities said insurgents had used Pattani's Porming school to stage attacks from in August.¹⁰³³

Youth factor into the movement as evidenced by the activities of *Pemuda*. Intelligence indicates *ustaz* at *pondoks* carefully recruit *Pemuda* from their respective student bodies. After indoctrination, their officers send them on harassment operations such as cutting down trees and laying road spikes to disrupt daily life in the south and to support kinetic operations. Those who show promise are apparently sent overseas to an undisclosed location for military training.¹⁰³⁴

Village auxiliary forces in the far south have on occasion gone operational and have participated in kidnappings, beatings, and murders. Villagers who participate in these acts are combatants and enablers of violence.¹⁰³⁵ On 21 September 2005, for example, Thai Malay Muslim women used themselves and their children as shields to keep military and police from aiding two Marines villagers had kidnapped and tortured. Eventually, insurgents in the village murdered the Marines.¹⁰³⁶

On 19 May, 100 villagers led by a Thai Malay Muslim woman seized Kuding Rupa School in Narathiwat, separated the Buddhist from the Muslim teachers, and proceeded to club two Thai Buddhist women, Sirinart Tavornsuk and Julin Kampongmoon, into unconsciousness. A female insurgent encouraged villagers to join in via a *mosque's* loudspeaker. Both victims sustained life threatening broken bones and internal bleeding. Other villagers scattered spikes on nearby

¹⁰³¹ "YALA ATTACKS: 60 people believed to have taken part."

¹⁰³² "Senior police testify against Najmuddin," in *Bangkok Post*, 6 April 2005.

¹⁰³³ "Gov't denies one of 131 Thais returned by M'sia," in *The Nation*, 2 December 2005, and "Students say *ustazes* gave firearms training," and "Seven nabbed over officer's decapitation," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 August 2005, and "Army to buy phone jammers," in *Bangkok Post*, 18 August 2005, and "Dismissed religious leader killed," in *Bangkok Post*, 30 August 2005.

¹⁰³⁴ "4,000 teenagers blacklisted," in *Bangkok Post*, 11 October 2005.

¹⁰³⁵ "Anand assured KL is not backing rebels," in *The Nation*, 9 October 2005.

¹⁰³⁶ "Two soldiers brutally murdered after held hostages by villagers," in *The Nation*, 21 September 2005, and "Another suspect held for murder of marines," in *People's Daily Online*, 2 October 2005, and "Muslim schoolteacher shot dead," in *The Nation*, 13 November 2005.

roads to inhibit security forces accessing the sight. Julin later died from her wounds.¹⁰³⁷

Insurgent Groups

Since the insurgents have not gone overtly public, no one is a hundred percent sure what to call them. As of 2009, it appears to be a conglomerate of groups under the umbrella organization, *Dewan Pembabasan Pattani*.¹⁰³⁸ Under it are several older groups that seem to have reconstituted themselves after 1998. They consist of the BRN-C and its two sub groups, *Pemuda* and the RKK, *Pejuang Kemerdekaan Patani*, PULO, perhaps GMIP, and *Bersatu*.¹⁰³⁹ BRN-C and PULO are supposed to be the biggest rebel groups in the movement. Other groups mentioned include *al Qaeda* in Southeast Asia, *Tarikah*, *Dewan Pimpinan Party* (DPP) and *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Patani*.¹⁰⁴⁰

BRN-C, RKK, and Pemuda

General Anupong announced in 2007 the BRN-C and its military wing, the RKK, was the main threat in the far south. He told the press, “This group is very influential. But the RKK is not the real brains behind the unrest. It is a militant wing of the BRN-Coordinate, the main group causing all the problems in Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala and part of Songkhla since 2004.”¹⁰⁴¹ He said the BRN-C was the organizing asset, and RKK the kinetic asset.¹⁰⁴²

BRN-C allegedly recruited Thai college students from Indonesia in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Bandung and trained them in Indonesia with assistance from JI and Indonesia’s Free Aceh Movement.¹⁰⁴³ A captured RKK member in 2009, however, said he had never heard of the term, “RKK.” Some pundits assume RKK might be a Thai government term.

¹⁰³⁷ “Teachers freed from Pattani hostage beaten by female villagers,” in *The Nation*, 19 May 2006, and “Security forces rescue two teachers held hostage in Narathiwat,” in *Bernama*, 19 May 2006, and “Wife of terrorist suspect arrested for allegedly inciting villagers to lynch teachers,” in *The Nation*, 22 May 2006.

¹⁰³⁸ “Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of Patani.”

¹⁰³⁹ “Murdered headman’s wife killed in drive-by attack,” in *The Nation*, 7 November 2008.

¹⁰⁴⁰ “Talks Between Thai Govt, Separatists Been Going On Since June, 2005,” in *Bernama*, 22 April 2008.

¹⁰⁴¹ “More concerned about the South than about protecting his job,” in *Bangkok Post*, 10 December 2007.

¹⁰⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴³ “Thailand takes battle to deep-South’s Islamic schools,” in *Bangkok Post*, 24 August 2007.

Pejuang Kemerdekaan Patani (“Patani Liberation Fighters”)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in June 2009 the *Pejuang Kemerdekaan Patani* was responsible for killing 115 teachers and wounding 100 more. HRW specifically linked *Pejuang* to the killing of five teachers in May 2009 and the arson of over 200 schools.¹⁰⁴⁴ According to HRW, *Pejuang* are village militants under the BRN-C and the “backbone” of the movement.¹⁰⁴⁵ It is possible *Pejuang* and RKK are one and the same.

PULO

It is not clear if PULO has fighters in the far south or if it is a combat service support group that conducts propaganda for the movement. It has several websites the government has shut down. PULO claims it is active in the insurgency and asserts it speaks for at least some of it. For example, in January 2009, Kasturi Mahkotam, PULO’s Chief of Foreign Affairs, wrote on one of its websites the “Patani Malay Movement” was ready to establish a formal dialogue group with Bangkok in order to end the fighting in the far south. PULO’s founder, Tengku Bira Kotanila remained president of the group until his death in June 2008.¹⁰⁴⁶ PULO seems to keep its headquarters in Sweden, though a forward HQ in Malaysia and/or Thailand is likely.

Bersatu

An anonymous security official told the press in April 2009 after a Thai-Malaysian security meeting on the insurgency *Bersatu* was responsible for attacks in the far south. Wan Kedir Che Man, still its president, denies being involved. The official said *Bersatu* was based in northern Malaysia and infiltrated fighters into Thailand via Sungai Kolok and Waeng districts in Narathiwat and at sea ports where there was little security.¹⁰⁴⁷ In November 2008, another anonymous intelligence official told the press *Bersatu* collected money, weapons, and perhaps cars for car bombs for major attacks.¹⁰⁴⁸

Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia

The *Straits Times* announced in March 2009 a new insurgent group in the region called *al Qaeda* in Southeast Asia was seeking to gather forces to wage *jihad* in

¹⁰⁴⁴ “New Generation Insurgents Killing Teachers In Southern Thai,” in *Bernama*, 19 June 2009.

¹⁰⁴⁵ “Insurgents kill woman teacher, torch schools,” in *Bangkok Post*, 28 August 2007.

¹⁰⁴⁶ “Pulo Willing To Talk To Thai Government,” in *Bernama*, 24 January 2009.

¹⁰⁴⁷ “Military chiefs join forces,” in *Bangkok Post*, 8 April 2009.

¹⁰⁴⁸ “Murdered headman’s wife killed in drive-by attack.”

southern Thailand. *Al Qaeda* in Southeast Asia allegedly formed in May 2009 and is run by Abu Ubaidah. He proclaims the fight in Thailand is not a local insurgency but a “legitimate *jihad*.” *Al Qaeda* in Southeast Asia has yet to outwardly demonstrate kinetic operations in the field.¹⁰⁴⁹

Tarikah (“Truth” or “Way”)

In January 2008, police arrested 22-year old Waeumeng Dueramae and 26-year old Kari Mahman, 26, for the murder of Buddhist schoolteacher Suwit Bunsanit. The pair were apparently involved in the failed 28 April 2004 uprising at Krue Se and said they were now part of a splinter group, *Tarikah*. *Tarikah* typically means “way” or “path” in Arabic, but in *Sufism*, it means “truth.” Since the 28 April fighters believed mystic rituals and Islamic chants would make them bulletproof, *Tarikah* in this case likely refers to the *Sufi* meaning. Regardless, Dueramae and Mahman wanted to leave *Tarikah*, and their leader told them they could so long as they murdered Suwit. They collected their pistols during morning prayers at a *mosque* and completed their mission.¹⁰⁵⁰

Others

The *Dewan Pimpinan Party* (“Directorate Party,” DPP) is yet another small insurgent group operating in the south. Its founder, Sapae-ing Basor, is the former rector of Yala’s Thammawitthaya School in Yala. The RTA says the DPP aids another group, the *Perjuangan Merdeka Patani* (“Independence Struggle of Pattani,”) with economic, diplomatic, recruiting, and psyops services.¹⁰⁵¹ The RTA says the group *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Patani* (“Association of Islamic Graduates of Pattani”) handles finances for the movement. It is allegedly made up of Thai Malay Muslim students in Indonesia.¹⁰⁵² It is possible several of these latter names are simply sub-units of the larger organizations, such as RKK and *Pemuda* are to BRN-C. Time and more intelligence are necessary to decipher the insurgency’s true organizational structure.

4. People – The At-Risk Population

The population involved in the current insurgency in the far south is the same from the 1980s-90s insurgency. They have different cultural norms than the rest of Thailand: Malay culture, Islam, and prestige customs. Just like most the majority of Thailand, however, they live rural and agricultural lifestyles. Crime remains

¹⁰⁴⁹ “New Al Qaeda in SE Asia,” in *Straits Times*, 14 March 2009.

¹⁰⁵⁰ “Pattani killers ‘had Krue Se connection,’” in *Bangkok Post*, 24 January 2008.

¹⁰⁵¹ “PM cancels rebel boss bounties.”

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.*

prevalent. As more researchers have infiltrated the region, however, more nuanced information has evolved on this unique population that reveals more diversity than before – even as recent as 2005. More, the people there have evolved since the 1980s-90s, in part due to government education and language programs, and it has opened up to the rest of Thailand because of communications, commerce, and travel.

Mark Askew, an Australian researcher who has spent four years in the far south as of September 2009, has discovered details about Thai Malay Muslims that debunks some common misperceptions. For one, he is not convinced the quest to get Bangkok to recognize Malay Muslim culture is a mainstay of the insurgency. He writes, “For every Malay nationalist who regards the Thai state as the perpetrator of injustice there is another who resents insurgent groups and affirms the claim to belong to an entity called ‘Thailand’.”¹⁰⁵³

Askew’s following description discredits oversimplifications of Thai Malay Muslims and their politics:¹⁰⁵⁴

‘Ordinary’ Malay Muslims (ie. non-elite Muslims) are not the apathetic or unthinking mass of peasants depicted by Surin Pitsuwan in his elite-centred account of Islam and Malay nationalism over twenty years ago. They are a highly mobile population with a diverse range of occupations and experiences, and their orientations towards the different Islamic movements that compete in the region are also diverse. The essentializing anecdote ‘Scratch a Malay Muslim and you find a separatist underneath’ (cited by McCargo) marginalizes a host of variant views and positions. It is just as common to scratch a Malay Muslim and hear one using the expression “Rak Chart” (love the country/Thailand) and happy to identify as Thai, yet conducting most of his/her daily life in the local Malay dialect.

Askew knows pure Muslim districts in Yala and Pattani where locals have organized their own security forces to eliminate insurgents. Nor do they blindly follow local and religious leaders; some villagers Askew met do not trust their village headmen and *imams*. Many had never heard of some of the most outspoken Thai Malay Muslim leaders on the subject of Malay Muslim identity in Thailand.¹⁰⁵⁵

Srisompob purports a traditional view of the population, viz. that many Malay Muslims want “political space for their own cultural and religious identity.”¹⁰⁵⁶

¹⁰⁵³ M. Askew, “Fighting Ghost; Confronting Thailand’s Enigmatic ‘Southern Fire,’” paper given at the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore titled, “Conference On Southern Thailand: Anatomy Of An Insurgency, 2004-2009” 10-11 March 2009, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Askew, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁰⁵⁶ “Thailand may extend Shariah law in violence-ridden Muslim South,” in Bloomberg, 23 June 2009.

Pattani National Assembly member Nimukta Waba (*Puea Pandin* Party) suggested yet another variation of southerners in February 2008 by saying PULO was out of touch with the political goals of the far south. He told the press: "The local people are only demanding justice, fair treatment and equal rights. I think at least 90 percent of people here do not want autonomy."¹⁰⁵⁷

Far from being a puritanical Islamic society, AIDs is on the increase in the far south, mostly from heroin use and promiscuous sexual behavior by married men who then spread it to their wives.¹⁰⁵⁸ And drug use is so widespread, ISOC anti-narcotics personnel believe as much as 70 percent of the far south's youth use, or have been exposed to, illegal drugs. Aside from *yaba*, the southern border provinces are replete with heroin, marijuana, and a home made narcotic of cough syrup, boiled *kratom* leaves, soft drinks, and mosquito repellent.¹⁰⁵⁹

Medical statistics show a region with health and sanitation problems. The maternal mortality rate (MMR) in the far south is higher than the rest of Thailand. The Ministry of Health found from October-June 2008 the MMR in the five southernmost provinces was 42.4 per 100,000 births. It was 39.5 percent in 2007. The national average is 17.7. Professor Banchong Withayametha of Sinidhorn College of Public Health in Yala told the press it was a cultural issue that frowned on contraception. "We can't tell them to stop getting pregnant. It contradicts their culture and they won't do it."¹⁰⁶⁰ As a result, many Thai Malay Muslims do not engage in family planning. Banchong is working with the UN to find culturally sensitive solutions, a difficult proposition with ultra-sensitive Thai Malay Muslim culture.¹⁰⁶¹ They do not want "outsiders" to force change upon them.

While part of southern border society has abandoned Islam, others continue to embrace it to an extent it influences policy. In March 2005, *Ustaz* Abdulroni Kahama criticized a government-proposed lottery to raise money for scholarships for the far south. He said gambling was against Islam, and Malay Muslims would not accept money from it.¹⁰⁶² These type rules inhibit development projects and limit options in regional problem solving.

Some Thai Malay Muslims blame the government for the insurgency and want Bangkok out of their lives. They have garrison mentalities and reject all the state's aid. Yousef, a Pattani villager, told the press: "Money can't change what's

¹⁰⁵⁷ "Muslim rebel leader calls for referendum on autonomy for restive southern Thailand," in AP, 22 February 2008.

¹⁰⁵⁸ "Public health in the crossfire," in *Bangkok Post*, 3 August 2008.

¹⁰⁵⁹ "Cheap thrills down south," in *Bangkok Post*, 27 January 2008.

¹⁰⁶⁰ "THAILAND: How to curb high maternal mortality in south?," in IRIN, 31 December 2008, available on <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82153>>.

¹⁰⁶¹ "THAILAND: How to curb high maternal mortality in south?"

¹⁰⁶² "MPs fly down to seek out solutions," in *The Nation*, 1 March 2005.

happening. No one can buy an end to the problems here.”¹⁰⁶³ He said government policies caused the war and added: “They have to understand that our way of life is different [from] other Thais...”¹⁰⁶⁴ Another villager, Arware, had a cynical view of government development funding. “It could end up in the hands of the militant groups,” he said to reporters.¹⁰⁶⁵ “Investment won’t stop the violence. Corrupt officials will keep the money for themselves. This is a useless idea.”¹⁰⁶⁶ While the attitude of these men might be overdone for the press, the corruption angle is certainly a factor in southern perceptions. It makes the government appear illegitimate no matter what side a villager might be on.

The combination of violence in the far south and rural locals’ penchant for superstition and rumor mongering sometimes results in mayhem. In May 2003, for example, when a mysterious wave of either insurgent or criminal violence swept the south, people in Narathiwat were convinced it was because of “black ninjas.” When two police stopped in Tam Nob village to have coffee and ask for directions, a mob of 3,000 villagers chased them into hiding. The village headman tried to protect them but could not. The mob stabbed and beat them to death in an orgy of violence. This incident indicates a section of the far south is highly susceptible to manipulation and easily spurred into heinous murder, a characteristic insurgents exploit with tall tales of grotesque state repression against Muslims and the religious duty of villagers to join the *jihad*.¹⁰⁶⁷

In May 2009, Professor Srisompob spearheaded a poll on southern attitudes toward the insurgency for the Deep South Watch Center and Prince of Songkhla University’s Study of Conflict and Cultural Diversity. The poll covered the far south’s socio-economic and security situation. Srisompob and his team interviewed 1,878 people in four districts in Songkhla, plus the whole of Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani. The government’s National Research Council supported the project.¹⁰⁶⁸

Regarding economics, the study found 88.2 percent of participants said their incomes were adequate, and 37.4 percent said they were not. Ninety-one percent said unemployment was the most critical issue confronting the region, while illicit narcotics were second, and the insurgency was third. Srisompob’s analysis concluded, “These opinions show that locals seem to perceive that the current problems confronting communities in the deep south are largely economic and social. Such perceptions are reflective of the alarming rates of unemployment and

¹⁰⁶³ “End Abuses for Peace: Thai Muslims,” in *Islam Online*, 18 June 2009, available on <http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1245159055507&page_name=Zone-English-News/NWELayout>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁷ Mydans, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁶⁸ “Southern border provinces poll,” in Professor S. Jitsomprisi (ed.) *Deep South Watch*, 18 May 2009.

drug abuse – particularly among young men – plaguing the region... Hence, though the current conflict and violence are viewed by locals as a key problem, more pressing issues are economic and social, specifically the often related problems of unemployment and drug abuse.”¹⁰⁶⁹

Regarding the insurgency, 23.6 percent said “unequal treatment by state officials” was the main driver of the violence. Nearly the same amount, 23 percent, said insurgent groups were driving the conflict. Some 16.6 percent said it was injustice, 13.5 said it was state-sponsored violence, 8.5 said poverty, and 8.5 blamed poor education and an excessive population “resulting from large Muslim families.” Only 4.5 percent insurgency was driven by the quest for autonomy.¹⁰⁷⁰

5. The Current COIN Strategy

Thailand struggled for two years to develop its present COIN strategy. From early 2004 to fall 2006, the government had a patchwork of temporary strategies with no singular vision and no effective coordination. Aside from a few wide arrest sprees, Thaksin’s COIN campaign was continually on the defensive. Only when the military overthrew Thaksin in September 2006 did an effective COIN strategy take shape.

2004-September 2006: Thaksin’s COIN strategy

The government decided from the beginning to fight the insurgency and not simply give up the far south. Says Dr. Arun: “How can we accept those provinces as a different part of our country? Our constitution says we are a unitary state. Secondly, we have about at least 20 percent of Thai Buddhist people in that area. What are we going to do? Change their status? And about Islam, we have Muslims in other areas that are not ethnically Malay. Do we change their status, too? It’s impossible.”¹⁰⁷¹

Thaksin’s strategy was: “The Policy to Promote Peace and Happiness in the Three Southern Border Provinces,” sanctioned by PM Order No. 68/2547 and approved in March 2004. General Chavalit, Deputy PM (DPM) for Security Affairs, apparently drafted the plan. It included socio-economic and good governance measures. A Thai government PR announcement said the plan would “promote cultural and traditional identities of the region, as well as their religions and languages. The government will promote the education of people in the localities,

¹⁰⁶⁹ “Southern border provinces poll.”

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷¹ Arun, *op. cit.*

and will respect their cultures, traditions and religious faiths. Everybody will be given freedom to hold any religion, faith and lifestyle.”¹⁰⁷²

Order 68/2547 moreover included the king’s COIN guidance, issued in February 2004, citing *khao jai* (“understanding”), *khao tueng* (“reaching out”), and *pattana* (“development”).¹⁰⁷³ It meant understand the people and culture you are dealing with, interface with them, and provide the assistance they need. Despite all these measures, PM Order No. 68/2547 does not appear to have been a cohesive COIN plan. It did not illustrate a decisive end state, nor the security, political, and economic operations to achieve it.

The RTA did have a decisive strategy. Its COIN coordination body, the Southern Border Provinces Peace-building Command (SBPPC), developed it. Its goal was to carry out the intent of 68/2547: “...to build peace by using psychological operations together with social and economic development leading political and military operations. Organizations with unity will be established by government officials and the patriotic community leadership (local people), to terminate violence, and to quickly establish order, peace and stability in the southern areas.”¹⁰⁷⁴

The SBPPC’s five strategies were:¹⁰⁷⁵

1. Promoting peace and protecting resources
2. Building trust and economic and social strength
3. Developing of potential of people, communities and society
4. Developing cooperation with neighboring countries
5. Exercising good and sound administration and management

Thaksin blocked the RTA’s strategy, however. He retained power over all national security issues. His strategy suffered from five main inadequacies: 1) he did not accurately explain to the public his strategy included politics and economics, 2) he did not put enough effort into politics and economic development, 3) in press conferences, he overemphasized both force and his personal control over the troubles, 4) he failed to establish an adequate coordination system to drive

¹⁰⁷² National News Bureau of Thailand, Public Relations Department, “Prime Minister Thaksin and The Southern Development” (Bangkok, 25 May 2004), available on <<http://thainews.prd.go.th/en/news.php?id=254705250001>>.

¹⁰⁷³ Askew, *op. cit.* 16, and C. Chaigasam (COL, RTA, SF), National Defense University’s Master’s Thesis (he quoted, “Guideline for RTA’s troopers working in the deep south, 2005,”) Response to Insurgent Challenge; Special Operations Forces in Southern Thailand, and C. Mahakanjana, “Decentralization, Local government, and Socio-political Conflict in Southern Thailand,” Working Paper No. 5 (Washington, DC: East West Center, August 2006), p. 13, and footnote 84, and “Prime Minister Thaksin and The Southern Development.”

¹⁰⁷⁴ SBPPC website, <<http://www.southpeace.go.th/eng/vision.html>>.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

strategy in the field, and 5) Thaksin never gave the RTA full authority to carry out its strategy.

Interestingly, Thaksin wisely instituted martial law in the affected areas demonstrating he understood the basics of population control. He gave police and the military wide arrest and detention powers and also declared an evening until dawn curfew to cut down on insurgent mobility. It was not strictly enforced, however, and he let his detractors portray martial law as an excessive set of regulations that punished the population's freedoms, which it did not.

Despite some genuine COIN efforts, Thaksin's attitude sent the wrong message to the people about his COIN strategy. His reaction to the 28 April 2004 uprising, the heavy-handed detention of rioters at Tak Bai, and subsequent callous remarks to the press indicated he was taking a purely forceful approach to the insurgency. Thaksin in November 2004 told the press he was ordering "a crackdown" and would use an iron fist "to sweep out these people" as well as a soft approach.¹⁰⁷⁶ He claimed, "We will decisively prosecute the separatists who wanted a separate territory... Don't worry, if there is a separatist war, I will be on the front line."¹⁰⁷⁷ He additionally instructed the police and military to be more decisive in dealing with southern militants who wanted a religious war in the south.¹⁰⁷⁸

All these issues combined to give the appearance his was a strategy of force when it was more than that. In fact, Thaksin used soft military power, politics, and diplomacy the first year of the conflict. In May 2004, he authorized the RTA to deploy former East Timor peacekeepers to the border provinces. The peacekeepers excelled at political and development tasks – Civil Affairs.¹⁰⁷⁹ Thaksin moreover sought dialogue with the former leader of *Bersatu*. He met at least twice with Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi over enhancing border control, the Tak Bai incident, and requested Malaysian *imams* in southern Thailand to correct radical Islamic propaganda spread by insurgents.¹⁰⁸⁰

In April-May 2005, as Thaksin continued to take heavy criticism for using only force to quell the insurgency, which indicated he had lost control of the insurgency's information sphere, he made a series of strategic changes to assuage such rhetoric. First, he announced he was curtailing the use of the military. "Our forces need to focus on investigation and prevention instead of

¹⁰⁷⁶ "Thai PM rules out militant talks," in BBC, 6 November 2004.

¹⁰⁷⁷ "Thai queen urges nation to unite to end southern violence," in AFP, 17 November 2004.

¹⁰⁷⁸ "Thai premier visits deaths town," in BBC, 7 November 2004.

¹⁰⁷⁹ "Thailand boosts security in south," in BBC, 3 May 2004.

¹⁰⁸⁰ "Thailand ready for talks on South," in BBC, 24 May 2004, and D. R. Dillon, "Insurgency in Thailand: The U.S. Should Support the Government," Heritage Foundation, Executive Memorandum #936, 10 June 2004, available on <http://www.heritage.org/research/asiaandthepacific/upload/64842_1.pdf>, and "Thai violence ahead of key talks," in BBC, 13 October 2004.

heavily armed troops,” he told the press.¹⁰⁸¹ Second, he announced DPM and Interior Minister Police General Chidchai was taking over the COIN effort, and he would be using the Thai National Police as its main COIN tool. Thaksin said using military force was “pointless.” Third, until the government could arrive at a cohesive COIN plan, which would take about a year more, Thaksin said it would deal with the insurgency on a day-to-day basis.¹⁰⁸² This indicated he did not like the SBPPC’s COIN plan.

Fourth, on 28 March 2005, Thaksin, by PM Order No. 104/2548, sanctioned an insurgency study group called the National Reconciliation Committee (NRC). He put the highly respected former PM Anand Panyarachun in charge of the project.¹⁰⁸³ It grew to include at least 48 members.¹⁰⁸⁴ It undertook a widely publicized insurgency study, and its solutions were nearly all cultural and economic. It gave little, if any, credence to security measures save for a proposed unarmed security force to maintain law and order in the face of bombings, raids, and beheadings. The government never adopted its strategies, which it published in May 2006.

Fifth, Thaksin announced he was ending martial law and replacing it with an Emergency Decree. The legislature passed 30 August 2005.¹⁰⁸⁵ The Emergency Decree was supposed to reflect a strategy of crime prevention, as proposed by the NRC’s Anand, UN crime prevention officials, and DPM Chidchai. The law, however, was the same as martial law. It restricted the sale of items that could be used for bomb components, required people to register the SIM phone cards, restricted public gatherings, allowed the detention of suspects for 30 days without showing cause, and gave immunity to government personnel involved in the death and injury of civilians and also damage of property.¹⁰⁸⁶ Getting rid of martial law

¹⁰⁸¹ “Thai Troop Reduction in South,” in *The World News*, 1 April 2005, available on <<http://www9.sbs.com.au/theworldnews/region.php?id=108529®ion=2>>.

¹⁰⁸² “PM rules out violence to solve insurgency,” in TNA, 4 April 2005, and “Thai Panel Says It May Take a Year to Find Solution for Unrest,” in *Bloomberg*, 9 April 2005, and “Emergency security meeting following latest bomb attacks in south.”

¹⁰⁸³ “Critics doubt Thai PM’s openness on Muslim south,” in Reuters, 1 March 2005, and “Report of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC): Overcoming Violence Through the Power of Reconciliation, Unofficial Translation,” 16 May 2006, available on <http://thailand.ahrchk.net/docs/nrc_report_en.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸⁴ “Putting Peace in the hands of the People,” in *Bangkok Post*, 11 April 2005.

¹⁰⁸⁵ “New security law for deep South,” in TNA, 6 May 2005, and “Anand expects end to martial law in deep South,” in *The Nation*, 10 May 2005, and “Executive decree sails through in Senate vote,” in *Bangkok Post*, 30 August 2005.

¹⁰⁸⁶ “Gov’t to end martial law,” in *The Nation*, 12 May 2005, and “Thais lambast new emergency sweeping powers,” in *Islam Online*, 16 July 2005, “Diplomats press government over absolute-power grab,” in *The Nation*, 19 July 2005, and “Zachary Abuza: Thai Democrats can’t see insurgency for what it is,” in *New Straits Times*, 15 March 2009, available on <http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Sunday/Columns/2504958/Article/pppull_index_html>.

was supposed to alleviate locals' concerns the military was "too fierce." Its deployment had somehow made the situation "more tense;" all this despite the fact the military had not launched a single offensive against the insurgents.¹⁰⁸⁷

The government's molested logic, then, was self-defeating. It appeared Bangkok's strategy was all or nothing; either deploy the military and have it widely exert haphazard force – which it had not – or redeploy back to barracks. There was no flexibility. Retraining military units to adjust from a conventional to a COIN role was not an option for Thaksin or the NRC. No one in the government – not Thaksin, not Chidchai, and not Anand – had a realistic strategic solution to protect the southern population.¹⁰⁸⁸

2006: The Surayud-Sonthi COIN Plan

On 21 September 2005, the government appointed General Sonthi Boonyaratglin as RTA Commander-in-Chief. He developed a new COIN plan.¹⁰⁸⁹ A Vietnam War veteran and SF commander, Sonthi had ample experience in small wars and contingencies. Though unafraid to use force, he was a proponent of winning hearts and minds via CA.¹⁰⁹⁰ His COIN fundamentals were: 1) the war had to be fought and won at the village level, 2) the government still did not understand Thai Malay Muslim culture to an effective degree, and 3) separating the insurgents from the population was critical.¹⁰⁹¹

Thaksin stifled Sonthi's COIN efforts, however. Thailand's political rumor mill said he wanted the general to fail so he could retain wide power as PM. This and the PM's narcissistic business activities, some of them apparently illegal, earned him a coup on September 2006. A military ruling commission, led by retired RTA General Surayud Chulanont, immediately designed a new COIN plan, in part based on Sonthi's 2005 plan. Successive administrations and RTA commanders naturally added to the strategy, but none significantly altered the 2006 plan.

Post coup, Sonthi held his post as Commander-in-Chief of the RTA. Fourth Army Commander Lieutenant General Ongkorn Thongprasom assumed command of the southern COIN until Lieutenant General Viroj Buacharoon replaced him by

¹⁰⁸⁷ "New security law for deep South," and "Anand expects end to martial law in deep South."

¹⁰⁸⁸ "Gov't needs force to fight southern unrest," in TNA, 24 June 2005, and "Thailand to offer cheap guns to teachers in restive south," in AFP, 25 June 2005.

¹⁰⁸⁹ "Troops focus to be winning hearts minds," in *Bangkok Post*, 21 September 2005.

¹⁰⁹⁰ "New army chief to merge southern commands," in TNA, 1 October 2005.

¹⁰⁹¹ "PM stakes political future on ending unrest in deep South," in TNA, 24 September 2005, and "PM tells top brass to map new plan to curb violence," in *The Nation*, 2 October 2005, and "Sonthi: Authorities still in dark," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 October 2005.

November.¹⁰⁹² Aree Wong-araya was appointed head of the Mol. Banyat Jansena was his deputy. These men and their planning staffs also arrived at a new COIN strategy,¹⁰⁹³ but public statements indicate Sonthi and Surayud had the heaviest influence.

The first part of the generals' new strategy was to stop the daily violence; it prevented political and development programs.¹⁰⁹⁴ Containment was their first concern, and pressuring insurgents offensively to the point they could not freely operate was his second. Restraint was pivotal, Sonthi said, so as not to isolate the population.¹⁰⁹⁵

Aside from security, Sonthi believed in continual contact with the people. He told the press: "Our strategy to tackle the unrest is to stay close to local people and keep a close eye on violence-prone areas, and suspected insurgents."¹⁰⁹⁶ Parallel to this strategy was Sonthi's heavy investment in local forces. He said they were key to the southern COIN strategy. He told the press: "To win the hearts of local residents through their participation in community defense and local activities, which will also create better understanding between the local villagers and state officers, will lead to the end of the spate of violent unrest"¹⁰⁹⁷

As far as politics were concerned, Sonthi believed the government had to take time to relate to and understand Thai Malay Muslims.¹⁰⁹⁸ He told one COIN planning conference of military, police, and civilians that diversity in society was good and represented "flowers of various colors." More, gaining their trust and cooperation was a cornerstone of his COIN beliefs.¹⁰⁹⁹ Justice and fairness were imperative to win the population and separate them from the insurgents.¹¹⁰⁰

At the same time, Surayud and Sonthi believed in integrating isolated Thai Malay Muslims into Thai society. They sought to befriend government-friendly Muslims

¹⁰⁹² Western Resistance.com blog hosting a combination of articles from Thai English dailies titled, "November 4, 2006, Thailand: Schools Burn In the Muslim South," <<http://www.westernresistance.com/blog/archives/003310.html>>, (website defunct as of 11 October 2009.)

¹⁰⁹³ "Rebels signal they may talk to end unrest," and "Southern border administration centre may be revived: Deputy interior minister," in *The Nation*, 10 October 2006, and "Renewed southern security agency coming, Thai Army chief says," in TNA, 12 October 2006.

¹⁰⁹⁴ "New ranger units for deep South," in *Bangkok Post*, 26 August 2006.

¹⁰⁹⁵ "Time is needed to quell southern insurgency, says Army chief," in TNA, 7 March 2006.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁷ "To win people's hearts is key to resolve southern unrest: Army chief," in TNA, 22 August 2006.

¹⁰⁹⁸ "Time is needed to quell southern insurgency, says Army chief."

¹⁰⁹⁹ "Army chief backs unarmed peace units in South," in TNA, 7 June 2006.

¹¹⁰⁰ "Political solutions become core strategy in solving southern unrest," in TNA, 3 July 2006.

as a way of segregating anti-government forces. They aimed to convert the skeptical via political means such as exposing the far south's youth to the rest of Thailand, modernize *pondoks*, and carry out his Peaceful Village Program, which entailed military CA projects to improve rural standards of living.¹¹⁰¹

Surayud and Sonthi said politics must lead the military – a nod to the policies of Thai COIN strategists past. They believed heavy suppression created more insurgents and negated cooperation between locals and the government.¹¹⁰² And as with Thailand's exceptional COIN thinkers of times past, Surayud and Sonthi, too, believed in amnesty and peace talks with rebels, but they did not know what rebels to speak to because none had stepped forward.¹¹⁰³

Surayud and Sonthi had their COIN strategy written and ready to apply in December 2006. It had two core aims: 1) to win the support of the alienated Malay Muslims population, and 2) to engage with and defeat insurgent forces. The title of the strategy was, "Policy for Peace-building the Southern Border Provinces" and contained in PM Order No. 206/2549."¹¹⁰⁴

Before applying the strategy, Surayud and Sonthi first set out to restructure of the government's main security coordinating body, ISOC. The government changed it into a national coordinating centre for security, almost like a combined U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Combatant Command. Under ISOC and pivotal to executing the new strategy in the field was the SB-PAC and CPM.

The new COIN strategy had four core strategic tenets. They were:¹¹⁰⁵

1. Apply King Bhumibol's strategy of "understand, approach, and development" and add to it His Majesty's "Sufficiency Economy" philosophy. (The king believed sufficiency economics were more important to individual empowerment than enterprise economics.)
2. Apply the rule of law via the nation's justice system to restore authority.
3. Involve local people in developing the region and promoting peace.

¹¹⁰¹ "New ranger units for deep South," and "Time is needed to quell southern insurgency, says Army chief."

¹¹⁰² "Suicide bombers may hit South, says Sonthi; Warns of 'infiltration' rousing locals' hatred," in *Bangkok Post*, 26 April 2006, and Chaigasam, *op. cit.*, and "Political solutions become core strategy in solving southern unrest."

¹¹⁰³ "Army offers amnesty to insurgents," in *Bangkok Post*, 12 August 2006, and "Deep South: Army wants peace talks but unsure who with," in *Bangkok Post*, 19 September 2006.

¹¹⁰⁴ Prakij Prajonpujjanug, "Security Problems in the Most Southern Provinces" (Speech Document, National Security Council, Bangkok, December 23, 2007), provided by COL Chartchai Chaigasam, and and Royal Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs Website, "Policy for Peace-building the Southern Border Provinces," available on <<http://www.thai2arab.com/eng/content.php?page=content&id=421&kword=ec>>.

¹¹⁰⁵ Prajonpujjanug, *op. cit.*, and "Policy for Peace-building the Southern Border Provinces."

4. Communicate with the domestic and international sectors to insure they understand the truth about the conflict and to realize the state promotes harmony, diversity, and multiculturalism.

The strategy had 12 tenets:

1. The political offensive is supreme and “ensure[s] justice in society.” The latter includes law enforcement adhering to rule of law, building up robust intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities, and protecting the population, which will increase their trust in the state.
2. Foster understanding amongst the at-risk population and the government by exchanging “...views among the government, leaders, religious teachers, community leaders and the private sector...” to increase cooperation in stabilizing the area.
3. Purge the conditions causing the at-risk population to feel inferior and isolated. Treat the people as dignified Thai citizens with a unique and valuable culture.
4. Disseminate accurate, timely, and truthful information on events in the affected area and counter rumors and disinformation to instill popular confidence in the government’s problem-solving abilities.
5. Uniformly increase communication with insurgent leaders and field personnel and their auxiliary forces.
6. Instill popular confidence in the judicial system by revamping it, including, “eliminating all forms of injustice,” dispensing justice “in an integrated manner,” creating laws that adhere to local culture, encouraging popular participation in the judicial system to insure peoples’ rights are protected, and by developing a “community judicial system” and “alternative judicial system” based on local customs.
7. Strengthen society, families, communities, and build peace via “social development,” including embracing different cultures, bolstering “inter-religion relations,” advancing non-radical religious teachings, fostering exchanges of variety of culture between the region’s many ethnicities and religions.
8. Upgrade the region’s education sector rapidly with advice from the region’s religious leaders and scholars to adhere to local customs.
9. Create an economy capable of sustaining itself, improve standards of living, and fight poverty using the King’s principles of Sufficiency Economy and local resources while adhering to local customs.

10. Rely on state and private PR, including education and religious sectors and “public forums,” to keep the people informed of government programs to garner their support in problem solving. The King’s guidance of “understand, reach out, and develop” is key here.

11. Inform regional countries and global organizations on the truth of the insurgency in the far south and insure they understand the state guarantees the rights of all its citizens regardless of race or religion.

12. Train government personnel in the far south to appreciate and adhere to local customs and to enact good governance. Deploy only competent officials to the area. Punish civil servants and government personnel who abuse their power and make the insurgency worse.

The strategy also established a chain of command. The NSC was to monitor the progress of the COIN and advise ISOC on planning and budgets. ISOC was made responsible for coordination and implementation. The NESDB was to provide budget and monitoring advice to ISOC on economic and social projects. Finally, the order stated, in bold, “All government agencies concerned shall support operations stated in this Order.”¹¹⁰⁶

The main tenets of the strategy were none too different from the *Tai Rom Yen* plan and the societal retooling goals of the 1970s-90s. The strategy sought to decrease the trust gap between the people and the government, increase the far south’s exposure to the rest of Thailand thereby reducing its isolation, reign in and stamp out radical Islamic sentiment used for separatist purposes, include local people in generating solutions for the south’s problems, embrace the at-risk population as cherished by the government and the country as a whole, use diplomacy to isolate the insurgency from foreign aid, and improve the quality of civil servants and security officials in the region. As with Thailand’s past COIN strategies, the 2006 strategy mentioned little about using force, but it was indeed policy. Martial law and military operations would remain as population control and insurgent suppression tools.¹¹⁰⁷

Lastly, the new strategy said nothing about amnesty, though it did evolve as a government line of operation. One of the reasons Bangkok sought close relations with teachers and Islamic leaders was to get these community pillars to convince insurgents to turn themselves in.¹¹⁰⁸ Overall, the main differences in the new COIN strategy compared to those of Prem, Harn, Kitti, and Chuan was operational execution – the new COIN would employ different tactics.

¹¹⁰⁶ “Policy for Peace-building the Southern Border Provinces.”

¹¹⁰⁷ “Suspected insurgent shoots villagers in Narathiwat,” in TNA, 18 January 2007.

¹¹⁰⁸ “PM: Al Qaeda not funding Muslim insurgents in deep South,” in TNA, 18 January 2008.

2007

As 2007 continued, the Thai COIN chain of command changed, most notably with the ascension of General Anupong to Commander-in-Chief of the RTA on 1 October 2007. On 28 November, General Anupong, upon returning from a tour of the south, wrote a 16-page report on his additions to the Sonthi strategy. He likened COIN to treating a cancer patient and cautioned it would take a long time.¹¹⁰⁹ He announced he was deploying elements of all of Thailand's Army Regional Commands to the far south to better provide security. His strategic objectives were:¹¹¹⁰

1. Gain the trust of Malay Muslims.
2. Instill Malay Muslim confidence in the security forces.
3. Provide security for the southern border population.
4. Streamline the chain of command and coordination regimen.
5. Deploy troops from every RTA Region in the far south to enforce security.
6. Take the offensive against the insurgents (being on the defensive allowed insurgents, who live in the villages, to intimidate villagers into whatever political funnel they want them to be in; "Villagers fear them because it's mainly about survival," General Anupong told the press.¹¹¹¹)
7. Increase the police, BPP, and military in/near the villages with visits and nearby kiosks so they will have confidence in the government and reject the insurgents.

General Anupong's main additions to the original strategy were coordination and security. Without coordination, the strategy and three pillars mattered not at all, and though the government had brought back the proven effective ISOC, CPM, SB-PAC trinity, Anupong seemed to understand even with these concrete institutions, Thai political wrangling could infiltrate and muddle the works, hence his reiteration of coordination. And though the 2006 COIN strategy did include security, it mentioned the subject only once. Since there were near daily assassinations, weekly bombings, and monthly raids and ambushes going on, Anupong likely believed more emphasis on security was necessary. In fact, under Anupong, a new village security program evolved, *Pattana Santi*, that, according to a Thai security official, aimed to "put government-friendly fish into the water of the villages" instead of merely separating the two.¹¹¹² This followed a Village Scout type concept.

¹¹⁰⁹ "More concerned about the South than about protecting his job."

¹¹¹⁰ "Army chief Gen Anupong Phaochinda and his new role in tackling mistrust and unrest in the far South," Isara News Centre, 29 December 2007.

¹¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹² Comment by an anonymous RTA officer, 3 September 2009, National Defense University, Washington, DC.

In spring 2008, General Vaipot Srinual, Director-General of the RTA's Office of Policy and Planning, explained the overall Thai COIN strategy this way: "The priority now is to stop the killing. The second priority is to quell the insurgent ideas and propaganda and indoctrination. So you talk about initiative, you talk about poverty, you talk about economic development; this you have to address and implement, but it takes time. But you have to stop the daily killings first. That is what we are trying to do."¹¹¹³ An anonymous RTA trooper in the field elaborates: "They use security first, so the armed forces to come in and make an area safe. And if an area is safe, they do development after it's a secure area. The military also knows the insurgents know this, too."¹¹¹⁴

6. Coordination for the Current COIN

COIN Coordination Under Thaksin

Thaksin constructed a three-tiered chain of command to coordinate the more than 40,000 RTA, TNP, and civilian workers for the southern COIN. The senior most agency was the Committee on Southern Provinces Peace-Building Policy (CSPPP), based in Bangkok. Next in line was the Southern Provinces Administrative Committee (SPAC), also in Bangkok. On the ground in the far south was the SBPPC.

The SBPPC was formed on 24 March 2004 shortly after the war began. A series of orders, including 68/2547 (Thaksin's strategy order), PM Orders No. 260/2547 and 261/2547 made the SBPPC legal and operational.¹¹¹⁵ General Panlop Pinmanee, then Deputy Commander of ISOC, ran it.¹¹¹⁶ After the PM fired him in the wake of clearing Krue Se of militants, Fourth Army commanders began running the SBPPC. In December 2005, Lieutenant General Ongkorn Thongprason took over the post.¹¹¹⁷ The SBPPC indicates Thaksin understood the value of a coordinating COIN authority even though he scuttled the SB-PAC and CPM-43 in 2000.

The SBPPC's mission was to wage COIN in the far south by military, social, and political means. Its motto was the king's strategy: understand, access, and

¹¹¹³ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

¹¹¹⁴ Anonymous.

¹¹¹⁵ Lieutenant General Sirapong Boonpat, Deputy Director General, National Security Council, "The Security Problem of The Southern Border Provinces of Thailand," a presentation given at a conference titled, "Thailand-United States Relations," Fairfax, Virginia, 9-10 May 2007.

¹¹¹⁶ Mahakanjana, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹¹¹⁷ "4th Army change part of shake-up," in *Bangkok Post*, 8 December 2005, and, "Peace is the Objective of New Southern Provinces Administrative Committee," in TNA, 6 October 2005.

develop. General Ongkorn listed his commander's intent as: "...to [conduct] operations to terminate unrest and establish peace and stability in the southern border provinces by the implementation of winning at the village strategy, accompanied by various parallel operations: offensive operations to terminate daily violence and development for security programs under the political-led-military principle."¹¹¹⁸ The SBPPC was in charge of RTA and TNP in theater, and it had personnel, intelligence, operational, and logistics functions.¹¹¹⁹

On 31 May 2005, the government established the CSPPP, supposedly to streamline security operations, shorten the chain of command, and increase coordination. This is odd, because it added another layer of bureaucracy to the chain of command. Regardless, the CSPPP's primary tasks were to formulate COIN strategy and policy. PM Thaksin supervised it, and DPM Chidchai managed it.¹¹²⁰

The SPAC's mission was to coordinate with the SBPPC, see that Bangkok's new COIN policies were carried out, and advise the military. The CSPPP formed the SPAC in October 2005. The SPAC's 10 members included the armed forces chief of staff and the commanders of the RTA, RTN, RTAF, TNP, and personnel from the Mol.¹¹²¹ General Sonthi headed it, and Supreme Commander General Ruengroj Mahasaranond served as an advisor.¹¹²²

As Bangkok was formulating these agencies, it further refined the coordination effort with one major organizational and one leadership change. For organization, in February 2005, the RTA clarified the coordination effort by color-coding the insurgency zone into red, yellow, and green areas. Green was friendly to the state and low violence – permissive to government operations. Yellow was neutral to the state and had medium levels of violence – semi-permissive to government operations. Red was hostile to the state and had high levels of violence – non-permissive to government operations.¹¹²³ As for leadership, Thaksin handed over management of the war to DPM Chidchai on 13 March 2005. Chidchai then

¹¹¹⁸ Southern Border Provinces Peace-building Command (SBPPC) website, <<http://www.southpeace.go.th/eng/vision.html>>.

¹¹¹⁹ Origin of the Southern Border Provinces Peace-Building Command, <http://www.southpeace.go.th/eng/Origin_of_SBPPC.htm>, and "Vision, Mission," <<http://www.southpeace.go.th/eng/vision.html>>, and, "New security chief for the south to be announced soon," in TNA, 27 May 2005.

¹¹²⁰ "Management Policy for Peace-Building in the Southernmost Provinces," 6 March 2005, available on <http://thailand.prd.go.th/the_inside_view.php?id=755>, and "Peace-building in the Three Southern Border Provinces," in *Inside Thailand Review*, 27 June 2005, available on <<http://thailand.prd.go.th/ebook/review/content.php?chapterID=20>>.

¹¹²¹ "Peace is the Objective of New Southern Provinces Administrative Committee."

¹¹²² "New Thai Army Chief Promises Soft Line on Insurgency," in Reuters, 9 September 2005, and G. Walker, "Thailand: Mollifying the Muslim, Pacification by PR," in *Sobaka*, 9 September 2005.

¹¹²³ "Thai tactics win fear, not favor," in *Asia Times*, 26 February 2005.

assumed COIN control over all the coordinating agencies and the MoD, Mol, NSC, and NIA.¹¹²⁴

Coordination Under Surayud and Sonthi

When the coup group reformulated strategy, it also reformulated coordination. Almost without hesitation, it brought back the familiar and effective SB-PAC and CPM-43 coordination structure. The government called the latter simply “CPM,” however.

Upon the advice of the NSC, it also reinserted ISOC back into the southern COIN chain of command, yet another familiar and proven system. The red-yellow-green color-coded identification system remained since it was an effective tool to gage the expanse of insurgent vs. pro-government territory to better allocate resources.

General Vaipot says coordination was critical to the fight. “The political view of the government or the lead organization needs to be 100 percent, not only the government or lead agency, but all the agencies” he says.¹¹²⁵ “The lead organization needs to have a program to make sure all agencies involved understand the strategy. They must have the same objective. They must have the same picture of the strategy. And we try to encourage everyone to accept the strategy.”¹¹²⁶

ISOC

The government revamped ISOC via PM Order No. 205/2549 dated 30 October 2006. It became operational on 1 January 2007.¹¹²⁷ Its technical name was “Reform era ISOC,” but everyone called it ISOC. It expanded to all 76 provinces – it previously was in only 40 – and added 60,000 personnel. Its COIN mission was to help coordinate the end to the insurgency. It also had another missions, such as combating money laundering, drug trafficking, and political “undercurrents” – such as Thaksin and his clique that were trying to stage a comeback. General Sonthi assumed command of ISOC. The Army Regional Commanders took command of regional ISOCs in their respective areas.¹¹²⁸

¹¹²⁴ “Distrust ‘needs urgent solution’,” in *Bangkok Post*, 13 March 2005.

¹¹²⁵ General Vaipot Srinual, Director-General, Office of Policy and Planning, RTA, interview by author, 4 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

¹¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁷ “Office of the Prime Minister’s Regulation on Peace-Building in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand 2008,” in *Royal Gazette*, Issue 125, Special Section, 21 Ngor, 31 January 2008.

¹¹²⁸ “ISOC expands to all 76 provinces to block turmoil in the southern border region and halt political undercurrents,” in *Thai Daily*, 12 December 2006.

Saiyud's Kerdphol's son was running ISOC as of spring 2008. "One of the reasons they do this," says Bhumarat, "is so the younger brother or son can consult the brother or dad. And the Muslim community looks favorable upon this, so some of their fears are relieved."¹¹²⁹

Under ISOC in the far south, ISOC 4, specifically, was the SB-PAC and CPM. Lieutenant General Wiroj Buacharun was Fourth Army Commander when ISOC began and therefore was ISOC-4 Commander, too.¹¹³⁰ ISOC's new structure incorporated personnel from 25 government bodies – five agencies and 20 ministries. The agencies were: the TNP, the Department of Special Investigation, the AMLO, the Department of Immigration, and the Office of Narcotics Control Board. ISOC also coordinated with provincial governors of the far south and the MoJ.¹¹³¹

CPM

PM Surayud on 30 October 2006 revived CPM and the SB-PAC by PM order No. 207/2549, the same day it revamped ISOC.¹¹³² Order No. No. 207/2549 moreover nullified seven previous coordinating legal orders issued by Thaksin and one by the coup group, in part to pave the way for CPM and the SB-PAC and to sweep away previous orders to give the standing government the authority to essentially begin its COIN anew. It also ordered budgetary authorities of the RTA, the Comptroller General's Department, and the Budget Bureau to transfer all funding from previous coordinating bodies to the new coordinating structure in two months.¹¹³³ This was a mammoth undertaking, and the fact that Surayud wanted it done in such a short time indicates how serious the government was about turning the tide of insurgency. CPM's tasks were:

1. Implement the government's policies in solving the southern unrest while also coordinating with the SB-PAC.
2. Supervise all civilian, police, and military assets involved in preventing and resolving violence and promoting understanding.
3. Generate CPM plans and projects and administering their finances. Submit all such plans to ISOC-4 for approval. Track and evaluate progress of projects.

¹¹²⁹ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

¹¹³⁰ "ISOC expands to all 76 provinces to block turmoil in the southern border region and halt political undercurrents."

¹¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹³² *Unofficial Translation, The Office of the Prime Minister's Order 207/2549, Subject: The Public Administration in the Southern Border Provinces*, by General S. Chulanon, 30 October 2006, and anonymous.

¹¹³³ Chulanon, *op. cit.*

4. Improve intelligence capacity across all relevant civilian, police and military agencies. Establish local forces to aid in protecting the population.
6. Establish TFs as needed to help carry out projects.
7. Carry out other tasks assigned by ISOC-4.

Also part of CPM was the Intelligence Operations Center. It was an RTA-run intelligence fusion center that collated and distributed intelligence to units in the field. It also disseminated intelligence to the TNP in Region 9 and its operations center run by Police Lieutenant General Adun Saengsingkaeo.¹¹³⁴

SB-PAC

General Sonthi met with advisors to formally discuss reinstating SB-PAC on 16 October.¹¹³⁵ The PM and the Ministers of Defense and Interior met on 23 October for the same.¹¹³⁶ PM Surayud on 30 October 2006 revived the SB-PAC by the same order that brought back CPM.¹¹³⁷

The SB-PAC and CPM still had to pass legislative muster to become wholly legal via the pending Internal Security Act (ISA), but they began operations, nonetheless. (The National Assembly passed the first ISA on 7 November 2007, and then another in February 2008.) Of the legality of the organization, SB-PAC Director General Pranai says, as of 18 March 2008, "...the last page of the new security law said the SB-PAC will be under a special office of the ISA. So there's no need to have a specific law for SB-PAC – it's under ISOC and operates under the Fourth Army Area."¹¹³⁸ The SB-PAC began preliminary operations on 1 November 2006.¹¹³⁹ The Interior Minister was its temporary chief. Pranai was the former governor of Nonthaburi and its first regular director.¹¹⁴⁰ PM order No. 207/2549 granted all SB-PAC chiefs status as Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Mol.¹¹⁴¹

¹¹³⁴ "ISOC expands to all 76 provinces to block turmoil in the southern border region and halt political undercurrents."

¹¹³⁵ "Southern border province administration to be revived: Sonthi," in *The Nation*, 16 October 2006.

¹¹³⁶ "PM says Interior and Defense Ministries cooperate in announcing the SBPAC structure," in *Thai News*, 23 October 2006.

¹¹³⁷ Chulanon, *op. cit.*, and anonymous.

¹¹³⁸ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹¹³⁹ "Border provinces peace centre to resume operations soon," in TNA, 27 October 2006.

¹¹⁴⁰ "ISOC expands to all 76 provinces to block turmoil in the southern border region and halt political undercurrents."

¹¹⁴¹ Chulanon, *op. cit.*

Says Pranai: “I was a governor of the best province in Thailand at that time – Nontaburi. I was approached, and it seemed like it was very hard to deny the posting. It was a chance to pay back the country.” He had good experience. “I was in the south 15 years ago,” Pranai explains, “three years in Pattani as a Deputy District official, or ‘DO.’ Also my brother was the old SB-PAC director. He was in Pattani province for four years before getting the post.”¹¹⁴²

SB-PAC’s vision is to “Restore peace and reconciliation to the five southern provinces.”¹¹⁴³ Its mission is to help the government carry out development and like problem-solving missions in an orderly and unified manner to achieve peace in the far south.¹¹⁴⁴ And as in the 1980s-90s, the SB-PAC consists of multiple government agencies. They include the Ministries of Justice, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Commerce, Interior, Education, Public Health, and Industry, just to name seven. Pranai explains the overall gist of SB-PAC this way: “We have [multiple] areas we cover. They include education, health, psychological operations, how to win hearts and minds. The best way to get things done is to spend money on these type programs, so it’s war without bullets.”¹¹⁴⁵

Top security officials welcomed the return of SB-PAC. Says an anonymous senior Thai officer: “In the past, during the communist COIN, many other government ministries came and went from the field, and some of their projects were sustainable, and some were not. But under the SB-PAC, the other organizations worked under the governors, so it’s a clearinghouse of ministries so they can quickly support their work in each province. This makes it flexible and fast, easy for them to operate and respond.”¹¹⁴⁶

The SB-PAC has seven main tasks. They are:¹¹⁴⁷

1. Supervise all civilian government agencies related to justice, development, development, local grievances, and cultural understanding. Coordinate activities with CPM to prevent and resolve unrest.
2. Recommend, manage, and execute all SB-PAC projects, plus manage project funding, and finance all participating government agencies. Submit budgets to ISOC-4 for approval. Monitor and evaluate the progress of all projects.
3. Monitor all justice ministry activities and developments to insure local people are treated fairly in the eyes of the law, including processing citizen’s complaints about corrupt officials and seeking punishment of the guilty.

¹¹⁴² Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴³ Anonymous.

¹¹⁴⁴ Chulanon, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴⁵ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴⁶ Anonymous.

¹¹⁴⁷ Anonymous and Chulanon, *op. cit.*

4. Improve civil servants' abilities to operate according to local cultural, social, and economic conditions.
5. Widen participation in security and development problem solving to "all parties concerned."
6. Establish advisory boards as needed to help carry out projects.
7. Carry out other tasks assigned by ISOC-4.

The SB-PAC has an Advisory Council for Peace consisting of 35 personnel from the government, private, journalist, and religious sectors. The government authorized it in PM Order No. 207/2549 and established it on 16 March 2007. Its job is to advise the Director General of SB-PAC on what types of community-friendly projects to carry out. Aside from focusing on education, social, cultural, and development issues, one of its main assignments is to arrange forums where people in the far south could talk about their experiences and views while encouraging equity and liberty.

The SB-PAC has seven committees:

1. Education, religion, and culture
2. Socio-economic Development
3. Justice, equality, and Security
4. Environment and Natural Resources
5. Communication and Society
6. Cross-cultural Participation
7. Southern Border Provinces Study, Analysis, and Solutions

Shortly after it began operations, the government identified five problems the SB-PAC needed to improve. First, because it was a war zone and insurgents targeted government employees, working at the SB-PAC was not too favorable. Says Pranai: "It's hard to get people in there to work in the south. It's hard to attract people. There is a threat of being killed because these workers must go out into the field and work in red zones and in remote areas, and the insurgents don't want these projects to work."¹¹⁴⁸

Second, the SB-PAC had a "lack of clear-cut vision" to shepherd the organization.¹¹⁴⁹ Third, it had yet to establish effectual communications with red zone villagers because of the unstable situation. Fourth, the SB-PAC lacked support from local government and Islamic leaders, which impeded support from the people.¹¹⁵⁰ The fifth problem was, because the NLA had not passed the ISA, technically, the SB-PAC had no legal authority, but all this changed in 2007 when parliament passed the bill.

¹¹⁴⁸ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴⁹ Anonymous.

¹¹⁵⁰ Anonymous.

To better focus the SB-PAC on these issues, the PM passed on 13 September 2007 Order No. 229/2550, which established the CSD or Committee on Special Administrative Development Zone in the South. The CSD's mission was to develop a framework that would more effectively focus the SB-PAC's resources. It was, in essence, an NSC type board for the SB-PAC the way the NESDB used to function for the 80s-90s version of SB-PAC.¹¹⁵¹ In March 2009, the government was considering making SB-PAC a permanent government agency.¹¹⁵²

General Anupong's Coordination Adjustment

In November 2007, General Anupong adjusted COIN coordination regarding the chain of command and manpower for each province. He deployed elements of all Army Regional Commands to the far south. The First Army deployed assets to Narathiwat, the Second to Pattani, the Third to Yala, and the Fourth to the four at-risk districts in Songkhla.¹¹⁵³ This was to increase the number of RTA troops to provide more security, and it worked to a certain degree. Violence did decrease as a result. Anupong's design was a decentralized system where Army Regional Commanders and their staffs used national strategic guidance working within coordination guidelines – including the red, yellow, and green color code system – to plan and implement security operations as they saw fit.¹¹⁵⁴

Pattana Santi

By 2008, Chavalit was back inside the government as DPM in charge of national security. He developed a village security system similar to the CPM units deployed during the communist COIN. Initially, it was a trial program applied to six districts that began 11 October, the exact ones kept secret.¹¹⁵⁵ After its success, Bangkok standardized the program throughout the entire insurgency zone in February 2009, calling it *Pattana Santi*, or the "Development and Peace" program. *Pattana Santi* seeks to professionalize local forces by integrating them with government kinetic and CA assets. More than just a security-CA program,

¹¹⁵¹ "Office of the Prime Minister's Regulation on Peace-Building in the Southern Border Provinces of Thailand 2008."

¹¹⁵² "Winning The Southern Thai Conflict Through Hearts And Minds," in Bernama, 3 March 2009.

¹¹⁵³ "Bombers strike SBPAC office complex in Yala; Six explosions rock the provincial capital," in *Bangkok Post*, 28 November 2007.

¹¹⁵⁴ "Army chief Gen Anupong Phaochinda and his new role in tackling mistrust and unrest in the far South," "More concerned about the South than about protecting his job," and "Newly appointed Pattani military task force will not use martial law - Narathiwat governor moves on solving economic and educational problems," posted on 2Bangkok.com, trans. and summarized from Issara News Center, 2 October 2008.

¹¹⁵⁵ "Chavalit to Test Peace Project to Stem Ills in South," in *Bangkok Post*, 28 September 2008.

however, it also aims to enlist locals into development and job programs, and it has a psyops and PR component that reinforces the program's ultimate goal. The end goal, according to Chavalit, is, "to engender a sense of shared national and local pride in all the races, religions and cultures present in Thailand."¹¹⁵⁶

Pattana Santi utilizes the wide gamut of 66,000 security personnel in the far south; 38,000 are RTA. The program deploys forces to 217 red zone villages.¹¹⁵⁷ Each *Pattana Santi* unit has 31 personnel made up of RTA, *Thahan Phran*, RTP, and local defense volunteers. An RTA spokesperson said the units' missions are to "stay in the villages and promote better understanding, extend a helping hand and provide mobile medical services."¹¹⁵⁸ It openly injects government forces directly into the red zone villages to counter the presence of guerrillas and auxiliary forces. The spokesman also said the RTA would reduce its hunting of insurgents, but the deployment of 4,000 *Thahan Phran* to the south hints targeting of rebels will continue, nevertheless.¹¹⁵⁹ These are new *Thahan Phran*, however, with CA training.

The current insurgency has definite jihadist overtones, which separates it from its political-nationalist-criminal predecessor. It is also more monolithic in organization, seemingly BRN-C controlled, though compartmentalization keeps its wider membership and leadership protected from wide, penetrating dragnets. Its operational tempo is astoundingly high, and its use of terrorism and small unit tactics is prolific.

The Thai government was slow to realize and act on these issues when the insurgency began, and when it did, blunders resulted. PM Thaksin's political meddling at the expense of security insured an inept COIN strategy. The 2006 coup government remedied this via sound COIN strategy based on the three pillars. Publically addressing radical Islamic insurgent issues, however, remains lacking. Coordination has mirrored that of the last southern COIN, though the government is wrestling with moving the SB-PAC out from under the military and directly under the PM to improve government-population relations a decades old sticking point vital to solving the southern question. Still the RTA has managed to put in place a strategy that has stabilized the war.

¹¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁷ "Govt beefs up forces in South; Focus put on winning hearts and minds," in *Bangkok Post*, 13 March 2009.

¹¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 7

The Three Pillars of COIN Against the Current Thai Malay Muslim Insurgents

This chapter addresses Kilcullen's "three pillars of COIN" against the current insurgency in Thailand's far south. The beginning section covers security ways and means to halt insurgent violence and terrorism. The next section addresses political COIN measures, and the last cites economic efforts.

1. Thai COIN Security Measures

RTA

RTA forces in the current COIN come from the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Army Regional Commands, plus the newly designated 15th Division. SF contributes as well, as does the RTM and RTAF. These forces supply CPM with the units it needs. Most operations are battalion-sized and smaller.¹¹⁶⁰ The RTA relies heavily on SF troops for direct action and CA missions as well. RTA troops serve in the far south anywhere from six months to a year.¹¹⁶¹ In an effort to professionalize and better motivate its forces, PM Abhisit in March 2009 ordered an increase of pay for security forces in the far south, in some cases, by nearly a third. Rank and file troops' pay, for example, increased from an average of 1,500 to 2,500 *baht* a month.¹¹⁶²

As of 2009, Bangkok had deployed more than 60,000 RTA and TNP to the south, covering 1,000 villages and 33 districts.¹¹⁶³ The RTA carries out the same kinds of security operations in prior campaigns. These include, but are not limited to, physical security and population control, incident response, QRF, raids, and ambushes. General Anupong said in 2008 the RTA's main mission was to raid separatist hideouts, sanctuary, and arms caches. These type missions depend heavily on actionable intelligence.¹¹⁶⁴

The RTA, via CPM, works jointly with the police. An RTA official describes it this way: "The south still has the normal police in their regular areas at police stations, etc. Everything operates as normal, but CPM helps the police do their job of investigation, checkpoints, arrests, maintaining order, etc. But if the police find an

¹¹⁶⁰ Anonymous.

¹¹⁶¹ Abhisit Vejjajiva, Head of Democratic Party, interview by author, 30 April 2008, National Legislature Building, Bangkok, Thailand, and anonymous.

¹¹⁶² "4,000 more troops for the far South," in *Bangkok Post*, 13 March 2009.

¹¹⁶³ "Three separatists killed in southern battle," in *Bangkok Post*, 21 December 2007, and "4,000 more troops for the far South."

¹¹⁶⁴ "Army chief visits the south," in *Bangkok Post*, 22 April 2008.

insurgent or group of insurgents they can't handle, then they can request help from CPM. It can feed more forces into the operation. And if the army wants to capture an insurgent, then it must coordinate with the police."¹¹⁶⁵ RTA security operations also protect various development projects.

The effectiveness of RTA operations varies. Says an RTA trooper: "The security sweeps are sometimes effective, sometimes not. Some units train poorly and then deploy poorly. Sometimes...their communications are ineffective and hammer units and anvil units are not in position when the hammer force strikes."¹¹⁶⁶ This allows the insurgents to escape. Also, in many sweeps, it's the army, the police, and the *Thahan Phran* combined on one operation, and they are not coordinated."¹¹⁶⁷ The high number of caches discovered, arrests made, and insurgent operations deterred as of 2008, however, demonstrates overall proficiency.

As for RTA training and doctrine, a high-ranking RTA general says the Thai military trains its officers to value and work with locals, which is key in COIN. "This is the knowledge that has passed through generations of officers. We learned this in Staff College as well. They are aware of the significance of this – it's our way."¹¹⁶⁸ He stressed it was not doctrine for Thai officers to "go around kicking doors," but of course, kinetic operations require a good deal of door kicking.¹¹⁶⁹ Another senior military official stressed the king's philosophy of "understand, access, and develop" was indeed RTA doctrine. "That's the king's philosophy, and it's proper, and we follow it," he asserts.¹¹⁷⁰

All RTA troops receive pre-deployment briefings on Islam, Malay Muslim culture, the basic problems of the far south that contribute to the insurgency, and insurgent tactics. The RTA's Intelligence Command published a guidebook on the south to educate troops on their deployments to the far south. At 408 pages long, it provides background on the origins of the war and the groups involved. It also lists by name over 1,000 auxiliary force personnel.¹¹⁷¹ The RTA also has a COIN manual, FM 100-20, a derivative of a U.S. COIN manual from the 1980s, but not all forces are familiar with it.

¹¹⁶⁵ Anonymous.

¹¹⁶⁶ "Hammer and anvil" refers to a military tactic where mobile attacking forces push an enemy formation into another unit that is stationary.

¹¹⁶⁷ Anonymous.

¹¹⁶⁸ Anonymous.

¹¹⁶⁹ Anonymous.

¹¹⁷⁰ Anonymous.

¹¹⁷¹ "PM cancels rebel boss bounties."

COIN Operations in the Field

Teacher escort duty is one of the most prevalent and dangerous security jobs in the far south, namely because teachers are one of the insurgents' main target sets, and they bomb them frequently. Says reporter Nick Nostiz: "All security forces do teacher escort duties, but it's dangerous, because it's regular and predictable. They hit the pickup point, the drop off point, the same road to and from the schools, etc. Teachers own the cars they convoy in and they usually have an escort in front and back, and sometimes just in front if there's not enough people to cover their six [rear]." ¹¹⁷²

In other cases, some government entities such as the SB-PAC do not always want security. "CPM can provide security for SB-PAC, but mostly *Or Sor* does physical security of SB-PAC buildings and places like that," says an RTA soldier. "In the field, normally, the SB-PAC does not need security. Mostly, if it looks good for the villagers, they can work the projects with no violent incidents. But if it's Thai language instruction, then they must have security. SB-PAC usually tries to avoid military escorts. For example, the health department workers usually don't want to ride with military that has weapons in the vehicle." ¹¹⁷³ Ambulance crews in Songkhla, however, report if they do not carry guns with them and demonstrate to insurgent road sentries they are armed, they will surely be attacked. ¹¹⁷⁴

The RTA has also introduced police forensics into the field. Gathering evidence against insurgents is vital. Neither the military nor the police are supposed to detain suspects on no or little evidence. To help identify insurgents, General Sonthi in 2006 tapped Thailand's top Ministry of Justice Crime Scene Investigator (CSI), Dr. Pornthip Rojanasunand, to deploy to the far south with her team to collect and process evidence at attack sites. To date, she has helped identify and arrest scores of insurgents through painstaking CSI work, including building a massive DNA database of thousands of samples taken from bombings, assassinations, raids, and ambushes.

In January 2009, Fourth Army Commander General Pichet Visaichorn announced DNA had confirmed the army had killed in a firefight wanted insurgent leader Imran Binma-eng. Authorities had his DNA on record from multiple bombings in Narathiwat. Accordingly, the government was able to prove he was indeed an insurgent and not simply an innocent bystander murdered by authorities as human rights organizations and insurgents often allege. ¹¹⁷⁵

¹¹⁷² Nick Nostiz, Thailand-based professional photographer and author, interview by author, 29 January 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

¹¹⁷³ Anonymous.

¹¹⁷⁴ Casual conversation with Thai emergency medical workers, interview by author, 4 April 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

¹¹⁷⁵ "OIC members to be lobbied; man loses legs in blast," in *Bangkok Post*, 30 January 2009.

RTA-run operations have several flaws, according to army personnel. Some officers complain poor information management impedes the decision-making echelon in the far south. They say the CPM staff will not discuss the war on the ground at the staff level – the end goal of the campaign and how to get there, for example. This seems potentially symptomatic of less flexibility at the theater operational planning level. What CPM needs, say many, is to build up the basic COIN soldiering skills of their forces. Others say it needs to include more civilians in operations to make more effective the combined nature of the organization. At present, despite it being overall a good and effective organization, even the some military personnel complain CPM has too heavy a military influence.¹¹⁷⁶

At the same time, security operations are having an impact on the insurgency. Marc Askew interviewed one insurgent, Hamad, who described how security forces chipped away at his cell by arresting his cohorts, one by one. This isolated and demoralized him to the point he wanted to get caught.¹¹⁷⁷

Authorities, through their 2007-08 security sweeps, captured Hamad's teacher and then found bomb-making equipment at Islamburapha school. This severed his chain of command and removed his bomb-making base. Then the government arrested other insurgents he knew, which shrank his network until he was nearly alone. Hamad was reduced to making bombs at home. His expertise was shallow, and he eventually began making errant devices. This angered his insurgent comrades and put him in danger. "I was starting to get scared of this pressure," he told Askew.¹¹⁷⁸

Eventually, the civilian casualties caused by his bombs forced him to reconsider his involvement. When he blew up a bomb at his home and shredded his hand in 2009, the authorities arrested him. Askew writes, "When Hamad was arrested by soldiers outside his parent's home in January 2009, he was already tired, depressed, and disillusioned with the insurgency. He admits that he was relieved to be captured, though also anxious in case the soldiers mistreated him. Fortunately, he was not treated roughly."¹¹⁷⁹ The arresting officers laughed at their long quest to capture Hamad and offered him cigarettes. In turn, Hamad provided them with intelligence on the movement.¹¹⁸⁰

TNP

The police from Police Region 9, the local BPP, and Special Branch make up the bulk of police forces in theater. The TNP established a Police Operation Center Forward Command in Yala to help organize and execute its COIN operations. It

¹¹⁷⁶ Anonymous.

¹¹⁷⁷ "A tale of two insurgents," *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

serves personnel, material resource, and intelligence functions.¹¹⁸¹ Special Branch operations in the far south are highly classified, and it has representation on SB-PAC's staff.

The mission of the TNP in the southern COIN is the same as in past COINs. It exercises regular police duties, investigates violent attacks, builds cases against and arrests suspects, and provides physical security for checkpoints, government facilities, infrastructure, monks, and teachers. The TNP also works with village security forces as it did in the past. The BPP are especially active in rural areas and carry out COIN missions such as patrols, raids on caches, and arrests, especially high-risk arrests where the subjects might be armed. The police are highly active in tracking down over a hundred insurgent suspects. Their wanted posters appear all over the far south in hotels, restaurants, on billboards, and common areas. People who provide information that lead to arrests can earn 20,000 *baht*.¹¹⁸²

Police CPM duties require interaction with the military. There are rivalries between the two, and they have not nearly achieved seamless cooperation. Says a Thai officer, "The police and army relationship is up and down. It's caused a lot of problems in the south because they don't coordinate strategy together. It's been rough."¹¹⁸³ In one case, both the police and the army were going after the same suspects, and when they arrived on scene, the insurgents opened fire, but neither the army nor police had coordinated their actions, and some chaos resulted.¹¹⁸⁴

In other cases, they work well together. The 2 January 2006 beheading case of an SF trooper, Sergeant Somjit Lorsang of the First SF Battalion, provides a good example.¹¹⁸⁵ According to a military officer,

Last year, an SF team was ambushed, and one of the insurgents cut off an NCO's head. Afterward, the police, with the army in tow, launched an operation to find the insurgents who executed the ambush. SF went with a police team on its investigation but as liaison only. The police were in charge of the investigation. However, they requested the military stand by as QRF to aid in the apprehension of the suspects if needed. The police in this case had a great intelligence network, and in seven days, they found all the insurgents involved. Their investigation found the SF NCO's head, his red beret, and his GPS [Global Positioning System unit]. And they tracked the insurgents to their houses, including the head insurgent, and they all lived in

¹¹⁸¹ "Separatists well organised, police believe."

¹¹⁸² See 2Bangkok.com's pictorial of wanted posters at <<http://www.2bangkok.com/07/south07mar.shtml>>. The author observed wanted posters in the employees' section of the JB Hotel's downstairs nightclub in Hat Yai in March 2008.

¹¹⁸³ Anonymous.

¹¹⁸⁴ Anonymous.

¹¹⁸⁵ "Army finds shot sergeant's head," in *Bangkok Post*, 5 January 2006.

different areas. The operation was over in two or three months, and it was integrated between the police and military. The police were a huge help.¹¹⁸⁶

Despite successes such as this, the bad reputation that plagued the police in times past still follows them and is a major impediment to effective COIN. Some accuse the police of being corrupt and abusive, and some are. Since the police represent the state and have power over the population, such abuse, both real and perceived, feeds the insurgency by de-legitimizing the government. Some observers add to this, saying the police are neither properly staffed nor trained to stem the tide of insurgent violence. Says Nostiz: “The police - they can’t properly work. There are lots of deaths – too many to investigate properly – so they all get filed away as being part of the insurgency. And they don’t collect evidence, and they just can do nothing, really. Plus, they are underpaid and corrupt.”¹¹⁸⁷

The Cabinet on 19 August 2008 agreed to create a southern COIN police unit. It would be responsible for recruiting and training its own members. The hypothetical name for the unit would be the “Southern Border Provinces Police Operation Centre,” commanded by a police lieutenant general.¹¹⁸⁸ Such a unit, if properly trained, staffed, and deployed, would dramatically assist government COIN efforts.

Local Forces

Local forces are a significant part of the security-politics-development equation in Thailand’s current COIN, especially the *Pattana Santi* program. The Thai see them as prudent, effective, and the best way to drive a wedge between guerrillas and the people. The government as of 2006 has taken steps to insure their professionalism and efficiency by reinforcing doctrine and increasing training of *Or Lor Bor* (“Buddhist Security Units”), *Chor Lor Bor* (“Village Security Units”), the VDC, and the *Thahan Phran*.

A top Thai military officer describes why the government continues to rely on local forces in COIN:

Regarding the government use of local forces, they have many advantages over some standard government forces. They know the local areas. They know the local language. They know the local people. Soldiers from other parts of the country will have difficulty operating smoothly in these areas regarding intelligence and operations that require contact with villagers. Also, the community has the natural propensity to look out for its own safety, and again, local

¹¹⁸⁶ Anonymous.

¹¹⁸⁷ Nostiz, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁸⁸ “Police unit to be upgraded,” South Thailand.org, 20 August 2008.

forces are highly motivated to do this because it's their families, friends, and property they are protecting.¹¹⁸⁹

Or Lor Bor

Or Lor Bor are exclusively Buddhist. They began at the behest of Buddhists in the far south that were continually under attack and had no protection from radical Muslims bent on genocide. The queen sponsors their training. Their mission is to protect Buddhist personnel and places. In 2008, the *Or Lor Bor* only operated at night, however. Says Pongsak, the Mayor of Yala, "The Queen's *Or Lor Bor* is only a partial solution. They work in the day and provide security only at night. We want to have a full time security force."¹¹⁹⁰

The program's royal ties are supposed to insure its high quality. The exact number of *Or Lor Bor* is elusive. Figures have been quoted as high as 30,000. Originally armed with just shotguns, their training and armament increased as insurgents killed more and more Buddhists. Srisompob says, "...they are very strong and well armed; better armed than the village security groups."¹¹⁹¹ They are increasingly being armed with assault rifles such as AK-47s and M-16s.¹¹⁹²

Chor Lor Bor

Chor Lor Bor are village protection units made of both Thai Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists. They also carry out some village development projects. They are approximately 50,000 strong. An Mol program, they initially carried shotguns but are expanding their arsenals with assault rifles.¹¹⁹³ Says Srisompob, "The village head is leader of the *Chor Lor Bor*. They are an armed militia of about 20. The village headman secures the money to pay them 20,000 *baht* a month for the whole group."¹¹⁹⁴ This pay is quite low and violates CPT COIN era lessons that proved poorly paid and trained local forces perform poorly. *Chor Lor Bor* exercise population control at the village level by manning checkpoints at village entry and exit points.¹¹⁹⁵

¹¹⁸⁹ Anonymous.

¹¹⁹⁰ Group interview with three businessmen in Yala: Tharom, a wood factory owner in Yala, Arwut, owner of the Park View hotel, and Pongsak, mayor of Yala, interview by author, 10 April 2008, Yala town, Yala province.

¹¹⁹¹ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹² Nostiz, *op. cit.*, and Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹³ Nostiz, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹⁴ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Komg Asa Raksa Dindaen, Or Sor (“Volunteer Defense Corps,” VDC)

Or Sor are the same VDC forces used in past COIN campaigns and also for internal military contingencies. The government has increased their training and given them new uniforms – distinct American desert camouflage uniforms from the early 1990s era informally known as “chocolate chip.” *Or Sor* duties include physical security of government buildings such as the SB-PAC building in Yala, and they are increasingly deploying for teacher protection duties, close protection for government officials, and urban patrol. Sometimes, they augment village defense forces.¹¹⁹⁶ They carry M-16s and other light infantry weapons. *Or Sor* remain a joint Mol and RTA program, but the Mol commands it.¹¹⁹⁷ Srisompob says the *Or Sor* are professional and effective, but their ever expanding role puts them more and more into harms way. “More and more of the *Or Sor* are being killed,” he says.¹¹⁹⁸

Thahan Phran

Thahan Phran remain a staple in the Thai COIN arsenal. General Sonthi announced in August 2006 he was deploying 30 new *Thahan Phran* companies (along with 20 regular RTA companies) to the far south at a cost of 800 million *baht*.¹¹⁹⁹ One reason for the deployment was some poorly trained local militias have been too timid and handed over their weapons to insurgents too easily – the exact scenario that led to the Tak Bai protests. Scores of other such forces, however, have died in the line of duty defending their villages, and many have successfully defended their homes. Most of the latter, however, were Thai Buddhist-only units, and the new *Thahan Phran* were slated to be a combination of Thai Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists.¹²⁰⁰

In March 2009, Abhisit announced 4,000 more *Thahan Phran* were deploying to the far south.¹²⁰¹ Most of these were specially trained CA *Thahan Phran* aimed at deploying in the *Pattana Santi* program. While Abhisit said they were deploying in a non-combat role, the *Thahan Phran* are combat capable and will likely be used as such when the need arises.¹²⁰²

Thahan Phran have the same missions as in past COINs – intelligence and DA – but in light of past and a few current allegations of wrongdoing, Bangkok has

¹¹⁹⁶ Anonymous.

¹¹⁹⁷ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹⁹ “Army offers amnesty to insurgents,” and “Army to readjust policy in South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 3 August 2006, and “Sonthi sends another 5,000 troops,” in *Bangkok Post*, 19 August 2006.

¹²⁰⁰ “Army explains amnesty for insurgents,” in DPA, 14 August 2006.

¹²⁰¹ “4,000 troops to join Isoc’s forward command in deep South,” in *The Nation*, 12 March 2009.

¹²⁰² “4,000 more troops for the far South.”

increased their training and widened their tasking to include CA. Says Srisompob, “The new *Thahan Phran* are better, more professional, than the older *Thahan Phran*. They don’t rape and commit atrocities, but that bad image is still there.”¹²⁰³

One aspect of upgrading the *Thahan Phran* is indoctrination. *Thahan Phran* are heavily indoctrinated regarding the Thai Royal Family.¹²⁰⁴ In this regard, Thailand has taken the motivational aspect of the Village Scouts and transferred it to the *Thahan Phran*. This also helps prevent them from barbarism – to behave badly or commit atrocities is to sully the honor of the king. Another upgrade is increased pay. As of 1 October 2009, *Thahan Phran* will get paid 55 *baht* a day instead of a mere 10.¹²⁰⁵ Increasing pay and training of these forces indicates Bangkok is heavily relying on them to make progress in the current COIN.

Thahan Phran go through three months of training. SF runs training, and regular RTA forces command them in the field.¹²⁰⁶ They carry M-16s and AK-47s, but they prefer the latter because they are more durable and the round is heavier. *Thahan Phran* continue training on the job after basic.¹²⁰⁷

Scores of foreigners such as Desmond Ball and analysts at the ICG decry the *Thahan Phran* as ineffective. Some say the *Thahan Phran* do the “dirty work,” the hard jobs the RTA does not want to do or cannot do.¹²⁰⁸ The Thai defend their use of *Thahan Phran* vigorously, however. Says one civil servant in Yala, “People who criticize them don’t understand this about guerrilla war, how gangster-like it is. The *Thahan Phran* can do things the army can’t always do well at the local level, and that is getting intelligence and killing insurgents.”¹²⁰⁹ He continues, “This is guerrilla war, and the normal rules don’t apply. If we fight by all the normal rules, then we will lose. The state will lose.”¹²¹⁰

Border Security

Bangkok is convinced insurgents are using sanctuary in Malaysia as a logistics and operations staging area. This is based on insurgent logistics captured coming from Malaysia, and insurgents being caught in KAL and other locations in country. Both governments say dual citizenship is contributing to the insurgency. There is also major historical precedent for it from the 1980s-90s insurgency. More, Bangkok frequently cites intelligence saying insurgents are using Malaysia for sanctuary. In May 2006, for example, an anonymous Thai intelligence unit

¹²⁰³ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰⁴ Nostiz, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰⁵ “Southern projects approved,” in *Bangkok Post*, 29 January 2009.

¹²⁰⁶ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰⁷ Nostiz, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰⁸ Anonymous.

¹²⁰⁹ Anonymous.

¹²¹⁰ Anonymous.

claimed it had evidence insurgents had trained 50 females in three groups in the capital of Perak state, Ipoh, and in Kota Baru, Kelantan.¹²¹¹

As a result, Bangkok has increased security at border checkpoints, but this is not as effective as joint Malaysian-Thai operations that intermittently sealed the border in the 1970s-80s and contributed to the ultimate defeat of Malaysian communist guerrillas. As of 2009, both countries are in talks, however, to increase border security. General Akanit, General Kittit's aid from the 1980s, is a key leader of that effort.

Colonel Ahmed Ghazi says of the southern border population:

[Locals] don't respect the borders, because they are artificial. They shop, visit relatives. In some places they can wade over the river border. There is smuggling, but it's not serious smuggling. It's fuel, flour, bread, rice. Rice is cheaper in Thailand. Back and forth smuggling is common.¹²¹²

Colonel Ghazi also believes, however, the insurgents are using northern Malaysia. "Kelantan is the only state ruled by the PAS [Pan Malaysian Islamic Party] and Nik Aziz, and they are more sympathetic to those people, the Thai separatists. My gut tells me that they might be connected. They have more sympathies with their cross border friends. This is not so in Kedah."¹²¹³

A top Thai government official says:

Border control is a big part of this conflict. We must find ways to secure the border to make sure the insurgents cannot get away after hit and run operations or to escape our dragnet operations of targeted personnel. We've been working with Malaysians on this. In the old days, Malaysia was facing the CPM [Communist Party of Malaysia], which is why they put emphasis on border control. But now, they don't have the challenge that they used to have, so there is less urgency, but we still cooperate.¹²¹⁴

In April 2009, Bangkok and KAL announced up-and-coming increased border security and intelligence sharing. Thai Supreme Commander General Songkitti Chakkabhat and Malaysian Defense Forces Chief General bin Haji Zainal met to confer on the subject to address insurgent use of Malaysia as sanctuary. On their agenda were specific insurgent border crossing points such as where Narathiwat's Sungai Kolok and Waeng districts meet Malaysia's Kelantan state and certain maritime ports. General Zainal said he agreed with getting rid of dual Thai-

¹²¹¹ "Reliable evidence found of insurgent camps in Malaysia," in *Bangkok Post*, 4 May 2006.

¹²¹² Ghazi, *op. cit.*

¹²¹³ *Ibid.*

¹²¹⁴ Anonymous.

Malaysian citizenship by border peoples that made insurgent crossing between the two nations easy. He also announced the return of 89 Thai Malay Muslims – Narathiwat natives – from Malaysia. They were part of 131 men, women, and children from Tak Bai, Sungai Kolok, and Sungai Padi districts who in 2005 fled to Kelantan citing fear of annihilation by Thai authorities.¹²¹⁵ Both the Malaysian government and the UN investigated the matter and found no credence to their assertions. Malaysia branded their entry into Kelantan as illegal.¹²¹⁶ A suspected insurgent officer led the group, and authorities saw it as a propaganda ploy to gain international sympathy.

Intelligence

The intelligence agencies involved in the current COIN are essentially the same from past COINs: Special Branch, 2) the TNP, 3), the RTA, 4) the NIA, and 5) the newly designated Department of Special Investigations (DSI). The NIA sees the southern COIN and terrorism as two of its top priorities. The DSI serves as Thailand's FBI or MI-5 type organization and is heavily engaged in the far south.¹²¹⁷

As for the RTA's intelligence apparatus, organic intelligence units – both reconnaissance and HUMINT units – collect information, and upper echelons process and disseminate it. Deputy Permanent Secretary of Justice Charnchao says the RTA's intelligence prowess is nearly autonomous. He says: "Most of time, the military has its own intelligence and investigative network and uses the police sparingly."¹²¹⁸

The best information sources for the RTA (and other intelligence assets) continue to be the population. Security forces look for opportunities to reward and build relations with people who volunteer information. After all, insurgency is of, by, and for the people – at least the rebellious people. Says an RTA officer, "If the villagers provide intelligence information, then the troops try to help, and when doctors give away drugs and help with medical things the villagers don't have, it helps build a trustful relationship with the villagers."¹²¹⁹ He adds: "Success most often happens when there is information from a hunter, local villagers, and our spies." The officer says local defense forces also provide good intelligence.¹²²⁰

¹²¹⁵ "Military chiefs join forces."

¹²¹⁶ "Thai, Malaysian PMs confer on violence in Thailand's southern border provinces," in TNA, 11 April 2009.

¹²¹⁷ Tritot, *op. cit.*

¹²¹⁸ Charnchao Chaiyanukij, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Justice, interview by author, 31 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

¹²¹⁹ Anonymous.

¹²²⁰ Anonymous.

According to another RTA officer, “[Local forces] can be used to set up a centralized system to watch the villages, as in intelligence and reconnaissance... Not everyone needs to be shooting. Sometimes, they can just watch and report. Headquarters expects local forces to report on enemy activities...”¹²²¹

Other times, CA spurs intelligence sources. “We can get intelligence from walk-ins or when the army does community relations,” says an RTA field officer, “but if the insurgents can easily strike back at the village or the information source, then the military might not act on it.”¹²²² This is a clear indication the government, as of 2008, had not enough security personnel to protect the population.

A top Thai official says teachers also provide information on suspect students. In this regard, Thai teachers act similarly to American teachers working with truancy police providing information on wayward teens. “The Ministry of Education is trying to work closely with the teachers to make sure the insurgents don’t come to the schools and recruit,” says a Thai general.¹²²³

As in COINs past, the RTA uses *Thahan Phran* to collect intelligence at the village level. Nick Nostiz has seen them in action. “*Thahan Phran* try to get good intelligence. The *Thahan Phran* and RTA get phone call tips, and they do reconnaissance, and take photos, etc. They talk to the village heads, and the village heads might be 100 percent legitimate, or they might also be mafia, but also an RTA supporter, so it’s always a bit difficult to deal with these types.”¹²²⁴

In other cases, *Thahan Phran* set up observation posts in critical areas. Says Nostiz, “They will also pull an operation on a road that gets bombed a lot. They will watch, wait, and see who the bomber is. They can see at night, some of them, through old night vision goggles, but they complain a lot about them. They say they are too old.”¹²²⁵

As of 2008, the Thai intelligence system was proving effective. “At the present time,” says Bhumarat, “there are many insurgent defectors. Things are working very well. The government has information on the separatists. The RTA has a good intelligence network. It gets a lot of intelligence and can send it to other units and organizations to exploit.”¹²²⁶ Intelligence helped reduce 2005-06 levels of violence by nearly half by 2008 with accurate information on arms caches and the whereabouts of insurgent suspects.

Thailand’s southern intelligence apparatus is not without its problems, however. The people, culture, and language create barriers to collection and analysis.

¹²²¹ Anonymous.

¹²²² Anonymous.

¹²²³ Anonymous.

¹²²⁴ Nostiz, *op. cit.*

¹²²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²²⁶ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

Somchai Rakwijit says, “The situation in the south today is much more difficult than getting information from northeast Thailand during the communist insurgency because here you have the cultural gap, the language gap, and the religious gap.”¹²²⁷

A senior officer expands on the impact culture has on intelligence. “At *pondoks*, we have no control, no eyes and ears, but slowly, we are reaching out to local Islamic leaders. They are always there amongst the people, and they know the people well, and so our troops have to contact them, work with them, and intermingle, doing good things with the community. We also work with community leaders. The teachers and *imams* are but two of the groups we contact.”¹²²⁸

The government has to worry about insurgent spies, too. In 2007, authorities accused 10 government intelligence personnel of spying for insurgents at the RTA’s joint intelligence center at Sirindhorn camp in Pattani. Investigators arrested three RTA personnel, including a lieutenant colonel, in late December 2007 who implicated seven police in their scheme. All accused are Thai Malay Muslims. Authorities discovered the moles after finding an insurgent laptop with classified information they traced to government intelligence personnel. Authorities accused them of providing insurgents with information on security tactics, techniques and procedures, including checkpoint locations, troop rotation schedules, and the timing of missions. The insurgents then made the intelligence actionable; they staged several ambushes and bombings that resulted in scores of casualties.¹²²⁹

General Pichet’s “Pineapple Eye” is a new intelligence program as of June 2009. The pineapple aspect refers to “eyes everywhere.” The network turns the insurgent network idea on its head by providing local people – small businessmen, concerned citizens, local forces, etc. – with an armed, insurgent-reporting communications network. This is exactly what insurgents do in their villages. It is also politically oriented in that the program connects the people to the state.¹²³⁰

Pineapple Eye volunteers are organized via a network of static and roving observers who report suspicious activities via walkie-talkies – specifically, pre-attack behaviors. This could range from persons reconnoitering a target for a bombing to insurgents placing a motorcycle bomb. Volunteers also report violent events to alert medical and security forces to improve response times. Pineapple Volunteers provide security at targets insurgents traditionally strike such as

¹²²⁷ Somchai, 24 February 2008, *op. cit.*

¹²²⁸ Anonymous.

¹²²⁹ “Security loopholes endanger South; Decisive measures must be taken to weed out spies, but officials should ensure that locals are not prejudged,” in *The Nation*, 8 January 2008, and “Army chief visits violence-plagued South,” in *Bangkok Post*, 11 January 2008.

¹²³⁰ “The EM general who is making a difference,” in *The Nation*, 29 June 2009, and “Pineapple eye network is turning volunteers into fighters,” in *The Nation*, 3 July 2009.

government buildings, markets, stores, and banks. The program is low cost. The radios cost a mere 3,200 *baht*.¹²³¹

The program began in Songkhla and aimed to expand to other provinces. In the beginning, it had a mere 100 volunteers in Hat Yai. After General Phichet pitched the program to local leaders and businessmen, it expanded to 576 people. He is planning to extend it to Phuket as well. In July, the system extended to Yala.¹²³²

2. Political COIN Measures

The political programs the government is using in the current southern COIN are in many cases identical to what it used in past campaigns. Other programs from the 80s-90s the government having to retool because the insurgents are using them to their advantage. Current political programs include, but are not limited to, revamping grass roots level political programs, hiring SB-PAC advisors from the local community, upgrading the education system, engaging in international diplomacy, offering amnesty, running a complaint department at SB-PAC, and fielding psyops and PR.

Political Reform at the Grass Roots Level

The question of Thai Malay Muslim political participation is no longer a real issue in the far south. Programs in the 1980s-90s were successful. For example, in the December 2008 legislative elections, 75 percent of the population in the far south voted, indicating, according to the RTA, a majority of the population agreed with democracy and did not want to separate from Thailand.¹²³³ The population also joins in the elections of lower level officials such as TAO presidents, and before 2006, local *imams*, and village heads. (These officials were elected from 1997-2006.)

The increased number of elected lower level officials, however, gave an opening to the insurgents, and they exploited it. Says Srisompob, “Many of the Mol officers don’t trust the leaders of TAO. They believe that most of the presidents of the TAO are supporters of the insurgents, that they are a front group of the separatists.”¹²³⁴ As a result, the SB-PAC and TAO officials do not work together too often.

“But many of the presidents of TAO,” says Srisompob, “they are not [insurgents] because they themselves are targets of assassinations and bombs, many of them

¹²³¹ *Ibid.*

¹²³² *Ibid.*

¹²³³ “Muslim rebel leader calls for referendum on autonomy for restive southern Thailand.”

¹²³⁴ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

get killed...maybe the insurgents have infiltrated some TAOs.”¹²³⁵ Srisompob says scores of TAO leaders are caught between the government and the insurgents. “They are pressed by the military and the governors,” he says, “and at the same time, they are threatened by the separatists in the villages, so they have to be careful. They are sitting on the fence.”¹²³⁶

Accordingly, many Thai believe increased democracy – or too much democracy too fast for a population that was not prepared for it – has added to the insurgent turmoil and allowed it to flourish. The increase in democracy was embodied in many institutions, but mainly by the TAOs, created by the 1997 Constitution. Ironically, the TAO and like organizations were designed to counter the insurgency. The theory was, give locals more say in government, and they will appreciate being part of the Thai state, and the insurgency will further weaken. It was part of a governmental decentralization effort, much touted by the UN even today. The new southern insurgency turned this on its head.

Srisompob explains:

Before Thaksin came to power, the village head was elected by locals, the villagers, to serve a five-year term. (The 1997 Constitution made this so.) It became messy. You had an election for the *tambon* administrator and an election for the village headman. And also, the *imam* – they were elected from the members of the mosque. This is why local people complain there are too many elections. Local leaders became more politicians than leaders. They have local parliament elections, senate elections, provincial administrative elections. It’s a lot for the locals to handle.¹²³⁷

Too much democracy manifested itself most evidently in the mosque. According to Director of the Chularatchamontri’s Office Niran Pantharakit, the election of *imams* caused competition and power struggles. Those struggles contributed to the insurgency. The implication is some *imams*, in their zeal to retain power, strived to become “more Islamic” than their competitors, and some leaned toward radical Islam that was sweeping the region at the time. One of Niran’s solutions to the problem was to meticulously screen Islamic leaders before they entered government service, a proposition the government began considering in 2007.¹²³⁸

The creation of TAOs combined with their elections and those of village heads caused friction, too. Chuan describes the local power shift between village heads and *tambon* chiefs as a critical miscalculation. “So the head of the village was strong enough to provide security and to handle any problems, handle any

¹²³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁸ “Advisers suggest national Islamic affairs office,” in *Bangkok Post*, 10 January 2007.

misunderstanding. This was key,” he says. “In the 80s and 90s, the heads of the villages and *tambons*, were strong. After the 90s to 2005, they were weak.”¹²³⁹

To relieve local “election pressure,” PM Surayud changed the *imams* and the village heads back to being appointed in 2006.¹²⁴⁰ “So right now [April 2008],” says Srisompob, “we have three local leaders in the south. One is an elected leader, the president of the TAO; you have the village headman, now appointed by the governor; and you have the *imam*, now appointed by the central Islamic committee in Bangkok and through the provincial Islamic committee.”¹²⁴¹ Village heads now serve 60 years.¹²⁴²

Aside from these national and local programs, governors, under ISOC-4, have their own grass roots political programs. For example, Yala Governor Thira Mintrasak has the *Yala Santisuk* (“Peaceful Yala”) program. It established a local council of 10 in every district where villagers can seek advice, lodge complaints, and ask for justice in cases of wrong doing against them. Councils also advise villagers on their legal rights as Thai citizens and encourage participation in problem solving with the state. In this regard, the government is essentially teaching Thai Malay Muslims, many for the first time in their lives, what it means to be a citizen of Thailand. This, in turn addresses the isolation and fringe mentality of many.¹²⁴³

Despite all the local politics and empowerment at the grass roots level, some politicians complain good governance is the real key to fixing the far south. As long as local politicians are corrupt, the people will not trust Bangkok, they say. Pattani Senator Anusart Suwanmongkol told the press, “What we need is not autonomy but good governance and transparency. Even Muslims are clamoring for good governance. There is already decentralization – 60 to 70 per cent of the budget is in the hands of local officials – but that is meaningless without good governance.”¹²⁴⁴

SB-PAC Advisors

As in the 1980s-90s, in April 2007, the SB-PAC established an advisory board made of 35 locals to help guide its projects. Its purpose is to help the SB-PAC identify and solve problems plaguing villagers at the local level. Heading the

¹²³⁹ Chuan, *op. cit.*

¹²⁴⁰ Srisompob, 7 April 2008, *op. cit.*

¹²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*

¹²⁴³ “Yala Task Force holds meeting with members from Human Rights group aimed to create trust, confidence,” Issara News Centre, 22 January 2008.

¹²⁴⁴ “A wake-up call for Bangkok,” in *The Malay Insider*, 22 June 2009, available on <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/index.php/world/29945-a-wake-up-call-to-bangkok->>.

council as chairman is President of the Yala PAO Aziz Benhawan. His deputies are the rector of Yala Rajabhat University, Kraisorn Sritrairat; National Legislative Assembly member Vichai Ruangroengkulrit; and Prince of Songkhla University's Worawit Baru, a senator as of 2009. The head provincial Buddhist monks and head *imams* also serve on the board. Other members included academics, journalists, and businesspersons. Their span of service is two years.¹²⁴⁵

Local Education System Changes

MoE inspector Prasert Kaewphet, in charge of education in the far south, submitted a *pondok* upgrade plan to Southern Education Board Chair Education Minister Wijit Srisa-arn on 23 July 2007 in Narathiwat. It was in many respects a copy of the 1980s *pondoks* via the PSTI program that the government killed in the late 1990s. The new plan standardizes *pondok* curriculum, checks the backgrounds of *pondok* executives and teachers, and establishes benchmarks to judge the progress of the schools. Specific aspects of the program include standardizing correct teachings of Islam and nullifying radical Islam, providing vocational training, and upgrading teachers' training. The Southern Education Board, staffed by Muslim scholars, local leaders, and southern MoE personnel, supervises the program.¹²⁴⁶

Yet another *pondok* reform program surfaced in August 2008: the Curriculum *Pondok* Reform (CPR) program. Secretary General of the Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) Sumeth Yamnoon explained CPR was attempting to empower *pondoks* to reform themselves but could not force them to; they had to work with Bangkok and develop curriculum that prepared students for the real world. Secretary Sumeth said OHEC partnered Prince of Songkhla, Rajabhat, and Thaksin Universities with *pondoks* to help them modernize. CPR has a diploma program for *ustaz* to attend math and science classes so they can teach secular subjects to their students.¹²⁴⁷

A like program in April 2008 focused on training *tadika* teachers – private Islamic schools for children ages five to 12 – so they would not teach children radical or incorrect Islamic tenets before sending them to *pondoks*. Justice Secretary Charnchao started it. *Tadika* teachers directly requested the training from Charnchao on one of his many fact-finding missions to the far south. They also wanted to learn about Thai state law.

Charnchao's and similar programs directly address the teacher-insurgent nexus, a major enabler of the movement. Pattani *tadika* teacher Nisit Nirano told the press some teachers joined the insurgency out of "...ignorance, lack of education and in-

¹²⁴⁵ "Sonthi to provide evidence to Wada," in *Bangkok Post*, 3 April 2007.

¹²⁴⁶ "A New Face for Islamic Teaching," in *Bangkok Post*, 12 July 2007.

¹²⁴⁷ "Surin calls for reform in Muslim schools," in *The Nation*, 24 August 2008.

depth knowledge of Islam...”¹²⁴⁸ He said others joined to earn money because their salaries were not enough. Others feared the insurgency but were likewise fearful of authorities that did not trust them under suspicion they might be insurgents. Charnchao’s educational system is supposed to alleviate some of the pressures.¹²⁴⁹

The Privy Council runs a *pondok* reform program called *San Jai Thai Su Jai Tai* (“Uniting Thai Hearts for the South.”) It is designed to expose *pondok* students to the rest of Thailand and instill a sense of confidence in students with vocational training. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn sponsored it. Through *San Jai Thai*, many southern border youth have gone to live with host families in Bangkok, and others have learned carpentry and welding skills where they repaired their own schools. In 2008, the program was working with the 295 students of Yala’s Darussalam *pondok* in Muang district.¹²⁵⁰

Says Bhumarat, “I think the program works very well. After one or two months, before they return home, many of them cry and say they were treated very well by the other Muslim families in the central part of the country, and that life, and the lives of Muslims, is more than what they originally thought.” The RTA, the southern border governors, and the Mol chose the participants.¹²⁵¹

ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan, a student of *pondoks* himself, praised Bangkok’s efforts to reform the *pondok* system. At an April 2008 educational reform conference in Pattani titled, “Educational Systems in Majority and Minority Muslim Societies: Strategies and Perspectives,” he said no government should force *pondoks* to change; “We are entitled to learn any subject Allah could offer.”¹²⁵² At the same time, he urged *ustaz* to take the initiative to boost their teaching skills and widen their curriculum to teach students more than just Islam. “But are we ready to do that? I’m not sure,” Surin told the conference.¹²⁵³ He said it was time for Muslims to shed their “long-held siege mentality,” which would pave the way “to interact with the outside.”¹²⁵⁴

¹²⁴⁸ “Tadika teachers want better training; Distortion of Islamic teachings regretted,” in *Bangkok Post*, 27 April 2008.

¹²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁰ “Islamic groups raise funds for teachers jailed in Cambodia,” in *Bangkok Post*, 17 June 2008, and “SCB donates to the ‘San jai thai su jai tai’ Project,” press release by Siam Commercial Bank, 16 October 2008, available on <http://www.scb.co.th/en/csr/csr_nws_081016-ns.shtml>, and “Mouth-watering bouts in store,” news from thebestmuaythai.com website, 23 February 2007, available on <http://www.bestmuaythai.com/muaythai_news_07_02_23b.html>.

¹²⁵¹ Bhumarat Tasadipong, former chief, NIA, interview by author, 3 March 2008, Bangkok, Thailand.

¹²⁵² “Surin calls for reform in Muslim schools.”

¹²⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Diplomacy

As with past COINs, Bangkok has put significant diplomatic effort into its current COIN. It has sought peace talks with southern insurgents hiding in Asia, Switzerland, and Egypt. It has moreover strived to block Middle Eastern support for the insurgency, namely via the OIC. Bangkok has also secured votes of confidence from Arabic countries for its conciliatory approach to its southern COIN and its religious tolerance.

As for peace talks, the Thai government has tried to meet with insurgents many times, but to no avail. Says General Perapong, “In the past, we could negotiate because PULO and the other groups wanted political access. But this current war, they have merged nationalism and Islam together and latched themselves onto an international movement, the *ihadists*.”¹²⁵⁵

The government attempted talks with current insurgent leadership on Langkawi off the northwest coast of Malaysia during the Thaksin administration. The talks were secret and supposedly brokered by former Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad, but they went nowhere. Says a Thai military general:

At Langkawi – we are always open for dialogue, and we’ll talk. There are many occasions that there was an approach about dialogue, but nothing came out of it. The insurgent leaders are still reluctant to show their presence. So they remain in the dark, in the shadows, waiting to see how their war will play out. Most of our dialogue has been with the older insurgent groups, PULO and the like. We went to them, and they also came to us.¹²⁵⁶

PULO Foreign Affairs Chief Kasturi Mahkuta said talks with the government began in June 2005 with the Thaksin administration and continued into the Samak Sundaravej (29 January 2008 - 9 September 2008) administration.¹²⁵⁷ In 2007, Thai academics held talks in Geneva and Jeddah with insurgents.¹²⁵⁸

In September 2008, there were more talks in Indonesia. Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla moderated them. Other moderators included Anis Baswedan, rector of Paramadina University, and M Hatta, Indonesian ambassador to Thailand. The talks were in Bogor, West Java. Five representatives from Thailand attended, headed by Lieutenant General Khwanchart Klahan, former Fourth Army Commander. Eleven insurgent representatives led by a man named Wahyuddin Mohammad attended as the “Pattani Malay Consultative Congress.” After the talks, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono greeted the

¹²⁵⁵ Perapong, *op. cit.*

¹²⁵⁶ Anonymous.

¹²⁵⁷ “Talks Between Thai Govt, Separatists Been Going On Since June,” in Bernama, 22 April 2008. IS THIS THE SAME ARTICLE AS FOOTNOTE ON PG. 195?

¹²⁵⁸ “Thai foreign ministry not aware of talks in Jakarta,” in Antara, 23 September 2008.

insurgents at his palace on 22 September. It is not clear if the talks were official Thai government policy or not. It seems they might have supposed to be secret, and when they were exposed in the press, Bangkok indicated they were unofficial. Regardless, they ended without achieving peace.¹²⁵⁹

COIN cooperation with Malaysia continues to be one of Bangkok's top priorities, but to date, progress has been slow. General Akanit is on the case, but rarely do bilateral negotiations in Southeast Asia happen quickly. Says Dr. Arun: "Diplomacy...first we give notice to our neighbor, [Malaysia]. No separatist movement in the world is located far from the border from which it fights. Movements in Ceylon, Africa, the Middle East, in other areas – most of them rely on other countries."¹²⁶⁰

Says General Vaipot: "Malaysia is an ASEAN country, so it won't agree with Islamic extremism, and they've been a great help to us so far. Malaysia's new policy is a modernized, new Islam... They are creating a 'modern Muslim' and are expanding the 'modern Muslim' community, and that is something we are keenly interested in."¹²⁶¹

Bangkok engaged Malaysia on a continual basis, joining at least five major meetings with KAL from August 2007 to April 2009, and these were just the public ones. One was in April 2008 when PM Samak went to KAL on a two-day visit. He was specifically interested in Malaysia arresting and extraditing two insurgent suspects who allegedly staged terrorist attacks in Thailand and then fled to Malaysia for sanctuary. Samak met with both PM Abdullah Badawi and Foreign Minister Rais Yatim. Pattani Senator Worarit Baru indicated the trip was useless because Malaysia was not harboring any insurgent suspects.¹²⁶²

In April 2009, in tandem with the diplomacy between the RTA and Malaysian Defense Forces, PM Abhisit met with newly elected Malaysian PM Najib Razak to discuss COIN cooperation. They met during the ASEAN summit in Pattaya. They discussed reinvigorating cooperation between the two countries, COIN security, and restarting the IMT-GT to not only combat insurgency, but also to financially benefit all three countries involved.¹²⁶³

Dr. Arun sees Thailand's diplomatic efforts to stave off support from the insurgents as effective. "And now I think we are successful in the diplomatic effort with the OIC.... No country has given overt support to those movements; some material support, yes. Like only from some areas in the name of Islamic donations [*zaka*],

¹²⁵⁹ "Indonesia hosts talk between Thai govt and South group," in *The Nation*, 22 September 2008, and "President SBY welcomes Thai Muslim delegates," in *The Jakarta Post*, 22 September 2008.

¹²⁶⁰ Arun, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶¹ Vaipot, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶² "Pessimism over Samak's visit," in *Bangkok Post*, 24 April 2008.

¹²⁶³ "Thai, Malaysian PMs confer on violence in Thailand's southern border provinces."

so...we think they seek to internationalize the issue. That is why our policy is to manage it. If we cannot solve it...we can manage it.”¹²⁶⁴

Bangkok’s diplomatic managing efforts have been Herculean. From 20-25 April 2007, Foreign Affairs Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram visited Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to shore up support for its COIN efforts and to demonstrate Thailand was not slaughtering Muslims as had apparently been reported by insurgent psyops. Both countries had provided education and *mosque* building assistance to Thailand, and thousands of Thai worked in and/or visited Bahrain and UAE. Thammasat University political science professor Charan Malureem, who was an advisor to PM Surayud, said Thailand saw Bahrain as a “gateway through which Thailand connects with the Muslim world.”¹²⁶⁵ UAE, he told the press, was “the region’s biggest investment powerhouse.”¹²⁶⁶

In May 2007, the Thai government successfully prevented the OIC at its 34th ministerial meeting on 17 May 2007 from calling for an independent Malay Muslim state within Thailand, which would have fired up the rebellion with higher levels of violence.¹²⁶⁷ Bangkok does not want another China or a North Vietnam aiding yet another internal rebel group. And there is evidence things were leaning in this direction.

The coordinator for Yala’s Civil Society Empowerment Project, Mansour Saleh, said in 2007 Thai Malay Muslims in Thailand wanted more control over their own governance. He told the press, “They do not want an advisory role. They want to have their own path of doing things.”¹²⁶⁸ Saleh said the secretary general of the OIC “promised the Muslim *ummahs* in the South that he would cooperate with the government in finding a way for the locals to lead their own lives with dignity, peace and prosperity.”¹²⁶⁹

More, several Muslim scholars told a visiting OIC delegation in early May headed by Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu that Thai Malay Muslims needed an autonomous zone within Thailand. Their language leaned more toward a separate state than autonomy. In this regard, insurgents and some in the OIC might believe this means the OIC should aid the insurgents in gaining independence, something Surin Pitsuwan warned against.¹²⁷⁰

General Sonthi personally applied considerable diplomatic efforts to the issue. The OIC, he said, based on “information from some place else,” was set to

¹²⁶⁴ Arun, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶⁵ “Unrest tops agenda for Nitya’s Arab visit; Bid to offset criticism at next OIC meeting,” in *Bangkok Post*, 20 April 2007.

¹²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶⁷ “Sonthi: OIC understands South situation,” in *Bangkok Post*, 2 May 2007.

¹²⁶⁸ “OIC rewrite brings sigh of relief,” in *Bangkok Post*, 21 May 2007.

¹²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

demand Thailand establish autonomous zones for Thai Malay Muslims because it believed Bangkok denied them religious freedom. Secretary General Ihsanoglu changed his mind after visiting Thailand and speaking to General Sonthi, a Muslim, who convinced him the complaint, was, in fact, a lie.¹²⁷¹

Thai Foreign Minister Nitya also made Thailand's case. He attended the 34th session of the OIC at Islamabad, Pakistan. From his Serena Hotel room, he and his staff lobbied the OIC to not criticize Thailand as being anti-Muslim and also not to call for an independent governing status for Thai-Malay Muslims. Minister Nitya disapproved of the first draft of the OIC's opinion on Thailand's far south that called for "elected Muslim representative[s] and elected governors" for a Malay Muslim "southern state."¹²⁷² The OIC's Ambassador Sayyed Kaseem El-Masry, special envoy of Ihsanoglu, coined these pro-insurgent terms. The OIC previously agreed it would not use such terms and concepts in its report on the matter when it met with Sonthi, so said the Thai.¹²⁷³ In its statement, the OIC also was calling for the Thai government to violate its constitution – the Mol appoints governors. They are not elected.

The OIC's final statement on the matter said it approved of the way Thailand was handing the southern unrest – via a "conciliatory approach." It acknowledged the insurgency was not about religion, but about "political, economic rights and culture." It praised PM Surayud for apologizing for past wrongs done to Thai Malay Muslims by the state. The OIC applauded Thailand's efforts to adjust the local governing system to recognize and embrace the cultural uniqueness of the southern border population while remaining a part of Thailand. The OIC demanded an immediate halt to violence in the southern provinces and said people of different faiths living there should exist peacefully side-by-side.¹²⁷⁴

Amnesty

As in Thailand's past COINs, amnesty is a major proponent of the current COIN. Says an RTA officer, "[We have] big campaigns on TV requesting insurgents and their supporters join the amnesty program and surrender. The message of this initiative is to stop fighting and help develop the south together."¹²⁷⁵ As of 2009, amnesty is available for low-level operatives and auxiliary forces only.

¹²⁷¹ "Sonthi: OIC understands South situation."

¹²⁷² "World Muslim body praises Thai approach to solve violence," in TNA, 18 May 2007, and "OIC rewrite brings sigh of relief."

¹²⁷³ "World Muslim body praises Thai approach to solve violence," and "OIC rewrite brings sigh of relief."

¹²⁷⁴ "World Muslim body praises Thai approach to solve violence," and "OIC rewrite brings sigh of relief."

¹²⁷⁵ Anonymous.

Bangkok began to develop amnesty as an official policy in April-May 2007. Then Fourth Army Commander Ongkorn Thongprasom and his staff developed the core concepts. Defense Minister General Boonrawd Somtas said he would support it if it brought peace to the far south.¹²⁷⁶

Then on 1 May, PM Surayud announced a general amnesty “to all persons involved in the ongoing violence” that had not violated Thailand’s criminal code. By 2008, the National Assembly had passed the measure. He said ISOC-4 and the Fourth Army Commander would work out the details on how to implement the order on the ground.¹²⁷⁷

In the meantime, in March 2008, Yala provincial authorities, including Governor Thira and Deputy Governor Gissada Boonraj, established their own amnesty program with ISOC’s blessing. Called the “Peace Outreach Centre” (POC), it grants amnesty to insurgents and auxiliary personnel. More than a simple surrender program, however, POC provides security, job training, and job placement, much like General Kittti’s program in the 1990s.¹²⁷⁸

ISOC General Akara Thiproj told the press in March 2008:

[Insurgent sympathizers] see others who have turned themselves in are able to lead normal lives and I guess they’re wanting that too. Most separatist sympathizers joined the separatist movement not knowing any better. If they wish to turn themselves in, our priority is to change their past beliefs about the southern situation instead of punishing them. We will then support them in their career development to ensure they are able to lead a happy life.”¹²⁷⁹

Deputy Governor Gissada said many militants surrendered because the conflict “didn’t seem to have an end game.”¹²⁸⁰

ISOC announced in April 2008 the POC was experiencing success. On 7 March, for example, 77 auxiliary support persons surrendered to authorities along with three insurgent leaders. Yala Governor Thira oversaw their surrender ceremony administered by the Yala Islamic Committee. It undid the radical Islamic oath the insurgents took upon joining the movement.¹²⁸¹

¹²⁷⁶ “Minister backs amnesty plan,” in *The Nation*, 23 April 2007.

¹²⁷⁷ “Muslim leaders welcome amnesty offer,” in *Bangkok Post*, 2 May 2007.

¹²⁷⁸ “Militants surrender because of POC: Yala’s deputy governor,” in *The Nation*, 9 March 2008.

¹²⁷⁹ “ISOC welcomes separatists turning themselves in,” in *Bangkok Post*, 11 March 2009, and “80 insurgents surrender in Yala,” in *Bangkok Post*, 7 March 2008.

¹²⁸⁰ “Militants surrender because of POC: Yala’s deputy governor.”

¹²⁸¹ “ISOC welcomes separatists turning themselves in,” and “80 insurgents surrender in Yala.”

SB-PAC Complaint Department

The SB-PAC resurrected its complain department for the current COIN. Says Charnchao, “The complaint unit is run by Mol and MoJ, and supervised by Pranai. But the problem is, when we found something wrong, a human rights violation, for example, we could not do much about it because we had little power.”¹²⁸² Charnchao says the Fourth Army Commander is backing the program, which now gives it teeth.¹²⁸³ Adds Pranai, “Concerning local officials’ abuses, we have measures to deal with them that are the strongest of anywhere in Thailand. We have a law that says the SB-PAC can report any bad doings by the army or police directly to the PM. If we take it seriously, as SB-PAC did in the past, then we can expect changes soon.”¹²⁸⁴

Psyops and PR

The Thai government has a wide array of information related COIN programs such as education, spreading moderate Islam, airing grievances, PR, and psyops. Psyops are the most prolific. Scores of government agencies carry out these programs. The RTA is one of their biggest proponents.

As for education, the SB-PAC runs a series of conferences and workshops to, 1) spread moderate Islam, 2) air and reconcile local grievances, and 3) address gross misperceptions of Thai state and Thai Malay Muslim histories. These programs are akin to “population repair” where the government seeks to mend social ruptures and overdone government-population friction caused by decades of maligned historical perceptions and propaganda.

Regarding spreading moderate Islam, the SB-PAC invites learned and mainstream Muslims from countries such as Jordan to southern Thailand to meet with locals to teach them proper Islam as opposed to the radical view proposed by poorly educated *imams* and *ustaz*. “We try to keep the RKK from getting too radical, partly by talking them out of it,” says Pranai. “We get them to un-commit to their religious insurgent commitment, and we do it with the help of non-radical Muslims.”¹²⁸⁵

Adds Bhumarat:

In southern Thailand, some try to say they are fighting for *jihad*. But it’s actually not *jihad*; *jihad* is simply an excuse to get some youngsters to fight, so we bring the Muslim teachers from Saudi Arabia and Indonesia to tell southerners they are not fighting *jihad*, that their war

¹²⁸² Charnchao, *op. cit.*

¹²⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁴ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

has nothing to do with religion. We try to bring the youngsters who walk in the wrong way to come back to society.¹²⁸⁶

Regarding airing grievances, the SB-PAC hosts workshops for locals, *imams*, and *ustaz* so they can vent their frustrations about southern border inadequacies, injustices they have suffered, and changes they would like to see. During these sessions, the SB-PAC corrects misperceived wrongs; not all Thai Malay Muslim accusations of wrongdoing are factual. “We work with religious teachers and make all grey religious and ethnic issue clear,” explains Pranai:

We do this via workshops; seven-day and a fifteen-day workshops. For these grey area people, we have Muslims come in from Bangkok and tell them about being a Muslim in other parts of Thailand and how the government is not out to destroy Islam or kill Muslims, as insurgent indoctrination says. We have dialogue day-in and day-out about their beliefs and history. They exercise their frustrations and their views of the government, and we try to tell them what is and is not true. They even write their views down. We start with 10 people, and if two change their minds, it can be a good model. We’ve had this program for a long time, quietly. We print books for them on what true Islam discusses. We get experts in, like the Great *Imam* of Cairo, rector of one of the most famous universities in Cairo. The Muslim League, represented by al Turki [Dr. Abdullah al-Turki], helps out with this program, too.¹²⁸⁷

Many Malay Muslims have vented genuine concerns, such as police corruption – something Bangkok must correct if it is serious about COIN. Others have stated what they perceive as problems that are actually issues rooted in exceptionally narrow minded and/or limited thinking. Pranai explains, “One asked, ‘I am a Muslim in a city of sin, surrounded by prostitutes, karaoke, whiskey. What can I do? How am I supposed to live here? I have to do something [war].’ So a Muslim advisor said, ‘Look, you are a Muslim born in a non-Muslim country, so don’t participate in sinful activities and teach your children to do the same.’ “This helps clear the air,” says Pranai. “This program began at the beginning of the SB-PAC.”¹²⁸⁸

Concerning historical distortions, SB-PAC has a program to counter not just specific insurgent propaganda, but general misperceptions of Thai and Malay Muslim history that provide the foundation for propaganda and general malcontent toward the state. Says Pranai, “One [captured insurgent] said his parents were taken to Bangkok with chains through their ankle tendons as slaves to dig a canal. It’s just illogical. It’s impossible.”¹²⁸⁹

¹²⁸⁶ Bhumarat, 3 March 2008, *op. cit.*

¹²⁸⁷ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Thai rulers in the 1800s had canals dug throughout Bangkok for transportation. The most famous is the Khlong Saen Saeb, which connects the Chao Phraya River to Prachin Buri and Chachoengsao provinces. King Rama III had it built between 1837-40. Some rulers used slaves to dig the canals, and many Thai Malay Muslims assert they provided the bulk of the forced labor – even in recent decades.

While slavery was involved in building the canals, the SB-PAC explained to the young insurgent it was historically impossible for his parents to have done so. It was at least 160 years ago. And being cut and chained through the Achilles' tendon and not dying shortly thereafter from gangrene on a several hundred mile forced march in tepid Southeast Asia is yet another improbability. But this is the perceived history Bangkok must contend with. People murder other human beings over it. "...So we try to work the truth into people like this," says Pranai, "but this type of propaganda uses material from 200 years ago, so we work with academics to fix this; try to forget the bad past, look to the future, and fix it."¹²⁹⁰

Fixing it has to date entailed Thai Malay Muslim and Thai historians working together to try to wash out ultra-nationalist aspects of state history and the ultra-fantasy aspects of Malay Muslim history. Powerful issues of race, religion, and culture are at loggerheads. Says Pranai, "We try to work out on clearing up our historical differences, that we are talking to clear up misconceptions by people who use history improperly. And it's not easy, because everyone has real difference in historical views. Historians, even from the universities, have real differences in the history of Thailand and southern Thailand, and that's proven to be a sticking point. So our job is more difficult, but we know where we must go now."¹²⁹¹

As for psyops, says an RTA trooper, "Psyops – we try to do that all the time. Psyops are very important because in this style of war, the main factor is the people. They decide who will win and lose, and we can't win the hearts of the people by killing. This is a reasonable way to think. This is also an army policy."¹²⁹²

The Psychological Affairs section of CPM is responsible for carrying out most psyops in the far south. SF runs it, but regular RTA units also have their own combination CA-psyops teams.¹²⁹³ The SF units are called "Peace Teams," just like the *Santi Nimit* units deployed in 1980.¹²⁹⁴ Their message is simple, says an RTA soldier. "Psyops mainly try to tell the locals that the government and police and troops don't want harm them," he says.¹²⁹⁵ A combat medic says the RTA

¹²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹² Anonymous.

¹²⁹³ Anonymous.

¹²⁹⁴ Anonymous.

¹²⁹⁵ Anonymous.

also tries to explain to locals, “There are insurgents in your village, in your homeland. Even though you have another religion, everyone thinks you are Thai [a Thai citizen], and we must work together to push out the bad people.”¹²⁹⁶ Another army message is, “ ‘Buddhists and Muslims can work and live together,’ and ‘the war does no good – both sides die’.”¹²⁹⁷ Two unifying messages the government uses are, 1) “people living in the southern border provinces are part of the nation – not outcasts,” and 2) “the king wants everyone to live in peace.”¹²⁹⁸

The Thai do not restrict psyops to just psyops units, however. “Every soldier in the south helps with psyops,” says an RTA officer. “They do this by being friendly with people, talking to the villagers, asking what they need; fostering community relations.”¹²⁹⁹

CPM gets its message out by passing out leaflets – in *Jawi* and Thai – by going to demonstrations, coordinating with medical services and health departments, by going to districts and talking with local leaders, and visiting red zones with Medical Mobile Units.¹³⁰⁰ Radio is also a common information outlet in the far south where CPM psyops recruit villagers as “DJs” to spread their message. “But once you become a DJ, you get targeted,” says Nostiz.¹³⁰¹ The RTA also uses TV. It owns “Channel 5” and uses it as a psyops platform on a regular basis.¹³⁰²

In other cases, Thai forces enter villages to explore their options. An RTA CA officer describes it as a two-phase process. “In Phase 1, we initiate contact with a person we can rely on, such as a village leader. We don’t go in with a big force. We assess the problems of an area and gather information on the insurgents and the people.” This is what many COIN experts call “human terrain mapping.” “We don’t talk about the war or fighting or anything like that. We just make contact,” says the officer.¹³⁰³

“In Phase 2,” he explains,

We find the best application by which to access the village. Sometimes, we want to go a village where the Thai forces and medical people and are not well received. So we look for an ‘in.’ For example, in one case in a denied area, a Peace Team found an elderly man who had a leg injury, and it had become severely infected, and they could not move him. So the psyop unit visited him every day and talked to

¹²⁹⁶ Anonymous.

¹²⁹⁷ Anonymous.

¹²⁹⁸ Anonymous.

¹²⁹⁹ Anonymous.

¹³⁰⁰ Anonymous.

¹³⁰¹ Nostiz, *op. cit.*

¹³⁰² Anonymous.

¹³⁰³ Anonymous.

him. They also spoke to a lot of villagers about him and eventually got to know everyone.¹³⁰⁴

By doing this, the team achieved situational awareness. “So, after a while,” he continues,

On the fourth visit, they were able to bring in a doctor. The old man still would not let them look at him, but the fifth time was ‘the charm,’ and he allowed it... It took about a month, but in the end, they took him to a care unit. Each sub district has a small building where they can clean wounds, do sutures, basic medical procedures, first aid, etc. The moral of the story was, they won the confidence of the village over this.¹³⁰⁵

The RTA had a re-education program for suspected insurgents that caused controversy in 2006-07. The MoJ’s Charnchao says it had the right goal but was executed incorrectly. The program had the police and military arrest or detain multitudes of Thai Malay Muslim males at-risk of joining the insurgency and then put them in job training camps against their will. The camps were not hard labor or jail-like, but they did have loyalty and citizenship indoctrination classes – Thai history and the like – but it was still illegal.¹³⁰⁶ Charnchao says, “A local NGO run by the wife of missing lawyer Somchai filed a complaint in the Thai court system, saying the program was illegal. The court agreed, in part, saying persons attending the program could not be forced to do so. They had to attend on a voluntary basis. So the military approached the MoJ, asking if they could work together on the project, and the MoJ agreed.”¹³⁰⁷

Thai courts ordered the RTA to release the detainees, 85 at the time, in October 2007. MoJ-RTA cooperation reestablished it as a voluntary program where the RTA invited Thai Malay Muslims to the camp from one to several days for vocational and citizenship classes. Diana Sarosi of the NGO, Working Group on Justice for Peace, told the press, “People are too scared to turn down these invitations.”¹³⁰⁸ The RTA is open and public about the camps and asserts no one is forced or coerced to go.¹³⁰⁹

As for counter propaganda, an RTA soldier says, “Counter propaganda...in the communist war era, this was possible. But now, the villagers are not all innocent. They have already been indoctrinated by the RKK, and government psyops are less effective. Bad government officials and police have helped to bolster this indoctrination.”¹³¹⁰ Billboards and posters are the government’s main counter

¹³⁰⁴ Anonymous.

¹³⁰⁵ Anonymous.

¹³⁰⁶ “Raids net 9 locals in deep South,” in *The Nation*, 11 June 2008.

¹³⁰⁷ Chaiyanukij, *op. cit.*

¹³⁰⁸ “Thailand uses ‘re-education’ to fight Muslim separatists,” in AFP, 16 July 2008.

¹³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³¹⁰ Anonymous.

propaganda media.¹³¹¹ Says Chuan Leekpai, “One of our billboards reads, ‘Killing one innocent person means to kill the whole world’.”¹³¹²

“Insurgents tell villagers they are not Thai, that they are ‘*Patani Darussalam* people’,” says an RTA medic.

They say the Thai will always refuse you and take your jobs...the Thai will take everything from you and take advantage of you. The government tells the villagers the government would never do these bad things to them. ‘You are Thai,’ is the message. ‘You have all the same rights as other Thai despite having a different religion, but you have to do your duty. If you want something in your village to be fixed, or if there is a situation we can fix, you cannot kill over it or organize a mob; there is a way to go through channels’.¹³¹³

The SB-PAC does psyops through its office of public relations. Normally, civilian psyops or PR is left to the central government’s Department of Public Relations, but warfare requires a more nuanced effort.¹³¹⁴ “Like the army,” says an RTA trooper, “the SB-PAC sets up posters that encourage peace, and togetherness. Its workers will put up a big poster of the *Koran* that says, ‘peace, not war,’ and things like that.”¹³¹⁵

Mass PR is one method Thailand has adopted to help refurbish its not wholly deserved tarnished reputation. In May 2009, for example, Foreign Minister Kasit Pimromya led a host of European Union (EU) diplomats on a tour of the far south. In particular, Kasit led the delegation to the Islamic College in Yala to talk to students. He also introduced them to the NGO, Muslim Women for Peace in Yala. The NGOs said they had received complaints of torture and disappearances. Kasit also took the delegation to the Working Group of Justice and Peace where they heard Mrs. Angkhana Wongrachen’s version of the 8 February 2009 raid on her office by authorities looking for links to insurgents.

Mrs. Angkhana Wongrachen is the wife of the missing and presumed dead Mr. Somchai Neelaphajit. He was once Chair of the Muslim Lawyers Association and Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee of the Lawyers Association of Thailand. His supporters say he was a “human rights lawyer.” In reality, he was a lawyer for New PULO, something his supporters hide. He successfully defended two New PULO fighters in court but lost three others life sentences for charges of violence and treason against the state in 2002.¹³¹⁶ Police allegedly abducted and

¹³¹¹ Anonymous.

¹³¹² Chuan, *op. cit.*

¹³¹³ Anonymous.

¹³¹⁴ Anonymous.

¹³¹⁵ Anonymous.

¹³¹⁶ “3 separatists sentenced to life imprisonment by Thai court,” in Xinhuanet, 16 October 2002.

murdered him in 2004. Some authorities suspect his wife and her NGO might have links to insurgents.

In being open, Kasit wanted to prove to the EU that the assertions by many that Thailand was harming Muslims with reckless abandon was patently false. He also wanted to demonstrate Thailand was not trying to hide what was going on in the insurgency zone, that there was no NGO or press blackout trying to hide alleged government atrocities.¹³¹⁷

ISOC's counter narcotics section runs a dual-purpose national security program aimed not only at getting kids in the far south off drugs, but also psyops aimed at building trust between villagers and the government. RTA Colonel Suwan Chirdshai runs it for ISOC-4. His title is, Chief of Office of Coordination for Mass Strategies to Solve the Problem of Narcotics in the Three Southern Border Provinces.

Colonel Suwan says drugs have become rampant in the far south and are interconnected to the insurgency. He estimates 70 percent of southern youngsters have been exposed to, or regularly use, drugs such as marijuana, *yaba*, ecstasy, ice, and *kratom*. The latter is a natural growing narcotic in Thailand, and the insurgents mix it with cough medicine and give it to teens to inebriate them for certain missions to remove their fear. Insurgents and non-insurgents alike grow marijuana in red zones because authorities no longer patrol many of them. Drug use has gone up because teens are bored, restless, and live in a stressful environment.¹³¹⁸

To execute the program, Colonel Suwan says ISOC uses RTA CA units. "So it's a campaign to teach people about the negative side effects of the drugs and how bad it is for the local people. The output here is trust. They'll trust this operational unit as a result. And they don't suspect we are up to no good."¹³¹⁹

The anti-narcotics teams focus on the parents of the drug addicts, who frequently resist the program at first because, he says, no parent wants to admit their children use drugs. He says they say to the parents, " 'Agree with us.' We must solve the drug problems of the children together." They also work with the community leaders and religious leaders. Says Suwan, "they need to support us so that we can work with the parents and drug users."¹³²⁰

¹³¹⁷ "Kasit leads EU envoys visit Islamic College in Yala," in *The Nation*, 4 May 2009, and "Diplomats take note of Angkhana's work," in *Bangkok Post*, 5 May 2009.

¹³¹⁸ Colonel Suwan Chirdshai, RTA, ISOC, Chief of Office of Coordination for Mass Strategies to Solve the Problem of Narcotics in the Three Southern Border Provinces, interview by author, 9 April 2008, Pattani, Thailand.

¹³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³²⁰ *Ibid.*

The teams then meet with the children, parents, and community and religious leaders all at once. “We make sure they understand that we want to help them help themselves to keep away from drugs,” says Suwan. “We tell the kids they are not on any list of suspects.” After the villages and kids understand the program, ISOC takes them to an educational camp in Songkhla called *Yalanan Baru*, a Malay phrase for “New Road.” It means to adopt a new way of life.¹³²¹ An understated but primary goal of the program is to steal kids back from the insurgents who get them hooked on drugs and then use them as auxiliary forces and fighters.

At the anti-drug camps, for six days, the kids run through light military boot training, learn about the military and citizenship, and also life’s journey and how a person formulates good and bad decision making skills. Srisompob and his team conduct surveys of the attendees to analyze their attitudes and if their outlooks are changing or not.

The camps have been in operational since June 2007 and can take 60 youth at once. As of spring 2008, 3,000 had been through the program. ISOC-4 has enough personnel and space to run 10 camps at once.¹³²²

The results are so far positive. Says Suwan, “Before this project, the local communities did not trust the army, did not trust the officers who are working on the ground. But right now, in many areas where the military was worked with kids on this anti-drug program, the kids went back to the villages and now organized youth groups to help the soldiers. They have become informants and supporters of the army. Before, the army could not penetrate into the communities, but right now, they have the contacts and the *imam* and the leaders of the village, the headman, too, and many realize this is a good project for the Muslim youth.”¹³²³

3. Economic COIN Programs

The development programs currently applied in the far south are none too different from past COINs – especially those of the 1980s-90s. All government ministries, the SB-PAC, and the military engage in development ranging from small village projects to large industrial concerns. As in the past, education is also part of the government’s strategy to integrate isolated Malay Muslims into the state to create productive citizens who study more than just Islam. The Royal Family is intricately involved in developing the far south, as it always has been. While the government has furiously engaged in development, the many administrations that have come and gone have initiated a wide range of projects.

¹³²¹ *Ibid.*

¹³²² *Ibid.*

¹³²³ *Ibid.*

Multiple Development Plans

Administrations from Thaksin to the current Abhisit government have all submitted development plans for the far south. Since there have been so many turnovers in government since 2004 – five to be precise – not all these plans had time to take effect. Some administrations borrowed from those gone by, and others developed wholly new plans. It has been confusing to say the least. It is noteworthy that the RTA's SBPPC had the first actionable development plan for the south.

Thaksin wanted all government agencies to have their COIN development plans finalized by December 2005. Initiatives under his watch included the Board of Investment of Thailand (BOI) sponsoring the “Promotion Years,” which was a “fire sale” of sorts for advantageous investment terms in the southern border provinces for three years. These measures were also aimed at protecting businesses in the south that were floundering because of the violence.¹³²⁴ The Ministry of Industry began planning to expand fishing businesses and create a *halal* food industry.¹³²⁵

One project the government has kept promoting is transforming the far south into a Special Economic Zone, began under Samak's tenure on 1 January 2007. The impetus behind it was to improve investment in the area by lowering taxes and improving infrastructure. For example, Bangkok lowered corporate taxes in the region from 30 percent to three percent, lowered interest rates for easier loans, eased restrictions on importing laborers from outside the south, and compensated businesses for higher insurance premiums as a result of operating in a war zone.¹³²⁶

The Samak government in March 2008 gave the SB-PAC and its associated agencies 45 days to write the far south's economic COIN plan.¹³²⁷ In early April 2008, the SB-PAC submitted, and the cabinet thereafter approved, a more detailed COIN plan for the far south than what it began with in 2006. This plan has more or less remained in tact despite two successive turnovers of government since Samak.

The SB-PAC's plan was essentially a restatement of its 2006 goals but with more precise tasks to carry out on the ground. The government planned for Pattani to become an international Islamic educational and *halal* food center. Yala was to become the region's agricultural hub. Narathiwat was slated to become an export-processing zone for goods destined for Malaysia's East Coast Economic Region. Songkhla was chosen to become a global center for rubber farms, sports, education, and tourism. The SB-PAC included Satun in the plan as well – it was to

¹³²⁴ “Special privileges for investment in South,” in TNA, 21 January 2006.

¹³²⁵ “Development plans for deep South likely to be implemented next year,” in TNA, 5 October 2005.

¹³²⁶ “Violent areas want more tax breaks,” in *Bangkok Post*, 8 January 2007.

¹³²⁷ “PM: Soldiers to work in southern businesses,” in *Bangkok Post*, 22 March 2008.

become a major international and domestic cargo transport center. The NESDB approved the plan on 8 April.¹³²⁸

The current administration – Abhisit’s government – is trying to make these projects more permanent than past governments, however. Abhisit says the government is focusing on, “Education, entrepreneurialship, employment – the ‘three Es’.” The Surayud government began it, and Abhisit’s administration expanded it.¹³²⁹

In March 2009, Abhisit said he wanted to downsize military forces in the far south by 10,000 troops in 2010 “to rid the region of its frightening image and boost tourism and investment.”¹³³⁰ Under Abhisit, Bangkok’s top economic specialists began planning 605 major industrial development projects with a price tag of over 80 billion *baht*. Projects included industrial parks and special economic zones for export.¹³³¹

On 11 June 2009, Abhisit announced an emergency 54 billion *baht* development package for the far south. The money would support 300 projects, presumably already lined up by Abhisit and past administrations. Government Spokesman Panitan said 15 billion *baht* would be released immediately.¹³³²

Education

In April 2007, Deputy Foreign Minister Sawanit Kongsiri went to Egypt to tend to Thai students at al Azad University. Approximately 1,500 Thai students were enrolled there. Sawanit donated one million *baht* to the university and came to an agreement with Dean Sheik Tantawi that Thai students should study secular as well as Islamic subjects such as “engineering, finance and rural development.”¹³³³ The reason was economic. Said Sawanit to the press: “Thai students studying religion overseas often find difficulty landing jobs when they return to Thailand. It is because there are already too many religion teachers. If they study other subjects, with their experience and education background they could find other jobs.”¹³³⁴

Pranai heralds education as the government’s most important COIN instrument. He says, “On March 21st [2008], we submitted to the pm that the Education Ministry must fasten their job under this new strategy as fast as possible. If we

¹³²⁸ “Thai Cabinet adopts growth plan for southern region,” Asia Pulse Data Source via COMTEX, 10 April 2008.

¹³²⁹ Abhisit, *op. cit.*

¹³³⁰ “Govt beefs up forces in South; Focus put on winning hearts and minds.”

¹³³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³³² “Cabinet OKs Bt54 bn for restive South’s economy,” in TNA, 11 June 2009.

¹³³³ “Egyptian spiritual leader to visit,” in *The Nation*, 19 April 2007.

¹³³⁴ *Ibid.*

don't tackle education in the south, things are going to go on like this for some time."¹³³⁵ He told the press: "Through education, people will have more hope, which is very important in this region. The SB-PAC will provide more educational opportunities for Muslim students in the provinces to enable them to achieve their dream."¹³³⁶

Pranai faces an uphill battle. Over 70 percent of Thai-Malay Muslim students attended 6,000 *pondoks* in the far south. The remaining 30 percent attend public schools. As a result of the heavy *pondok* attendance, fewer Thai Malay Muslims make it to universities than any other ethnicity in all of Thailand. This is why scholarship is one of the SB-PAC's biggest programs. In 2008, it provided 1,000 scholarships for southern border youth to study in the Middle East, Indonesia, and Malaysia.¹³³⁷ Scholarships for Thai Malay Muslims are not a new program, however. Says Pranai, "Since 46 years ago, the Mol has had scholarships for southerners."¹³³⁸

In July 2008, the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in the South announced it was increasing the amount of time students studied Islam in public schools. Primary schools would increase from two to 10 hours a week. High schools would increase to 12 hours a week. It began as a test project in 2006 in a few schools and is being expanded because it was achieving its goal: increased Thai Malay Muslim enrollment in public schools where there were secular subjects. The new Islamic curriculum covers Islamic history and culture, and the increased hours of study allow students to receive Islamic studies certificates. About 274 public schools had adopted the program as of July 2008.¹³³⁹

In 2006, Bangkok sanctioned an experimental program where public school teachers used *Jawi* and Malay in the first two years of new students' schooling to help explain their lessons. After two years, teachers weaned students off these and onto Thai. The government believes speaking Thai is necessary for students to be able to function in Thailand's job market after graduation, but *Jawi* and Malay are necessary to lure Thai Malay Muslims into public school in the first place.¹³⁴⁰

The project began at 12 schools and expanded to 24 by October 2007. It applied to primary schooling, a six-year program. To date, the program has been successful. Parents in the region urged Secretary General Kasama Varavarn na Ayudhya of OBEC to broaden it, hence the October expansion. More, Thai Malay Muslims attendance at public schools increased and absentee went down.¹³⁴¹

¹³³⁵ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹³³⁶ "Winning The Southern Thai Conflict Through Hearts And Minds."

¹³³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³³⁸ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹³³⁹ "Islamic study hours to rise in schools," in *Bangkok Post*, 25 July 2008.

¹³⁴⁰ "Bilingual teaching deemed necessary," in *Bangkok Post*, 16 October 2007.

¹³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Development

Government agencies, the SB-PAC, and the RTA have launched scores of programs aimed at improving the far south's economic plight. These initiatives range from jobs and investment programs to agriculture support, import-export initiatives, and cash handouts to victims of the fighting. As of June 2009, it is too early to tell if these programs are having an effect. COIN development programs are rarely, if ever, decisive, but they provide the long-term foundation that can lift a population out of poverty and keep it from backsliding into mediocrity.

Concerning investments, on 15 June 2007, the Bol said existing business in the far south would pay no taxes, and new projects applied for by 31 December 2007 would have an eight-year tax holiday regardless of the value of their companies. The new investment rules were supposed to spur new investments. From 2003-06, a mere eight companies worth 2.42 million *baht* applied for Bol investment incentives in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.¹³⁴²

Pranai says: "We asked the government to instruct the finance ministry to facilitate tax incentives for the very wealthy to invest in the south, like for the top 10 richest bracket, so they can get a reduced tax rate if they invest... We just submitted the plan to the government [March 2008], and the PM told the Finance Ministry to work it out."¹³⁴³

The government continually talks about the IMT-GT as a way to expand the far south's economic prowess and economically link it to similar cultures. General Surayud in January 2007 attended the 2d annual IMT-GT meeting in the Philippines. Surayud and Indonesian and Malaysian leaders agreed to a five-year roadmap and "flagship projects" to begin the project but provided no details.¹³⁴⁴ Despite all the talk, however, pushing it forward has been slow, the projects small. In May 2008, Thai representatives attended an IMT-GT conference in Bangka Belitung, Indonesia. The conference was on insuring the authenticity of *halal* food products via labelling and the potential to expand *halal* food manufacturing between the three countries. As of 2008, IMT-GT members included Thailand's Narathiwat, Pattani, Satun, Songkhla and Yala provinces; northern Malaysia's Kedah, Penang, Perak, Perlis and Selangor states; and Indonesia's Aceh, North Sumatra, South Sumatra, West Sumatra, Bengkulu, Jambi and Riau provinces on Sumatra Island.¹³⁴⁵

Employment programs are yet another focus of government development projects. "Job programs," says Pranai, "yes, as far as the economy in the area is

¹³⁴² "New incentives to stimulate the South; Measures include eight-year tax holiday," in *Bangkok Post*, 16 June 2007.

¹³⁴³ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹³⁴⁴ "Thai PM hopes restive South will improve soon," in TNA, 14 January 2007.

¹³⁴⁵ "Babel to host IMT-GT meeting on halal food," in Antara, 7 May 2008.

concerned, in the past four years, five years ago, there was no investment, not one real plan, no existing one, really. The services industry down there is the hotel and restaurant business. GDP in the south has dropped, purchasing power has fallen.”¹³⁴⁶

“So this caused a lot of problems,” explains Pranai,

especially for those in need of jobs. So what the government did in the past two to three years was hire those people who’ve been unemployed. We have almost have 3,000 jobs that pay about 4,500 *baht* a month, carried out through various channels, like the Labor Department, the army, ISOC, etc. [...] “And we have other job programs, too, such as those in the rubber tapping industry, which is a part time job for a lot of people; they might also do security as their other part time job, and in that way, they can help protect the rubber plantations where so many have been killed.”¹³⁴⁷

SB-PAC pays particular attention to the south’s sometimes-neglected fishermen. “Small fishermen,” says Pranai,

maybe there are 300,000 from Narathiwat to Songkhla. We are talking about the way to empower them to help themselves. We talk about underemployment during the monsoon season when they cannot go out to sea and fish – it’s a seasonal industry. We figured out some local jobs that they can do when they are not employed during monsoon. They can make a secondary product from the sea like crispy snacks. We are trying to upgrade to a higher quality so we can export these things to the Middle East as *halal* food. We talk a lot about this.”¹³⁴⁸

Pranai says it is hard to get people to invest in a war zone to create jobs, so, he says, “...we have to go out looking for jobs. We’ve tried a program in the Middle East where we’ve trained a lot of people in Songkhla in oil the service industry – pipeline welding and things like that. We’ve sent them to Oman, Bahrain, etc.”¹³⁴⁹ In May 2008, the SB-PAC announced it was recruiting for 200 jobs as pipe fitters at 20,000 *baht* a month plus benefits in Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, and Oman.”¹³⁵⁰ Pranai continues, “We’ve also talked with Malaysia and worked out a cross border jobs program. Yesterday, in fact [27 March 2008], we finished a training program where such people can go to Malaysia with grace and work professionally and not underground.”¹³⁵¹

¹³⁴⁶ Pranai, *op. cit.*

¹³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁰ “New centre to teach kids about peace,” in *Bangkok Post*, 8 May 2008.

¹³⁵¹ Pranai, *op. cit.*

Agricultural support is another area the government is pushing for the far south. The SB-PAC's May 2008 program to help some farmers transition from rubber to rice cultivation had resulted in 424 *tonnes* of rice and enough income to keep those in the program from abject poverty.¹³⁵² Since the insurgency had prevented many farmers from cultivating rubber, their incomes were suffering and their plantations were failing from lack of care. Rice, on the other hand, is easier to grow and was in high demand in 2007-08, resulting in good profits. As a result, the SB-PAC provided funding and expertise to help farmers in five districts in Narathiwat transform 900 *rai* of abandoned rubber farms into rice paddies. It aimed to transform 7,900 *rai* by August 2008.¹³⁵³

Health is another major area of importance. While the SB-PAC has Ministry of Health (MoH) personnel on its roster, the MoH also has local health departments in each province it runs independently. Its project for the area is called the Health Center Administration of the South. They provide medical outreach care to locals who in the past needed health assistance but did not know the state could provide it. They moreover cooperate with universities in the far south. The MoH supplies the money and research. It cooperates with universities in the south to expand its reach.¹³⁵⁴

Other than these specific programs, there are a host of scattered, smaller programs throughout the south. Says a Thai soldier: "Every branch of government will have a development project. They are not forced to set up a development project, but they try to apply the King's concept. For example, teachers, educational departments, etc., set up local educational programs, or they teach people how to grow vegetables at the schools they attend so they can eat them there at school for lunch and things like that. They also do things like set up fishponds, take care of the fish, they feed the fish, and so then they can then feed the school. Gardening, farming programs are done by the Department of Agriculture and at lower levels through the district governor's local agriculture depts. The Health Department uses lots of local volunteers to work for it and to try and combat, for example, dengue fever. They spray ponds and jars of water to kill mosquitoes."¹³⁵⁵

RTA CA

Development was one of the first measures the government took when the war began. In fact, the SBPPC's development program was one of the first, if not the first, cohesive government COIN plan in the war. Specifically, in March 2005, SBPPC spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Sanirote Thammayos announced its 250-

¹³⁵² "Rubber loses bounce, farmers growing more rice in Narathiwat," TNA, 19 May 2008.

¹³⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵⁴ Anonymous.

¹³⁵⁵ Anonymous.

tambon, 250-million *baht* development project was in full swing. It had an 11-person advisory board made of local leaders, including *imams*, to help propose needed projects such as irrigation.¹³⁵⁶

The RTA's projects are usually small scale and impact villagers directly. Each battalion has 20 CA personnel, including medics and doctors.¹³⁵⁷ Says an RTA general, "We send medical teams into the villages, and we send some advisors to go out to help with their day-to-day living; some construction teams, some agricultural and animal husbandry experts to teach things like cattle and goat herding, fruit and vegetable farming."¹³⁵⁸ He hopes by reaching out to locals, the government will demonstrate it wants people to have better standards of living and that it understands their culture.

RTA SF has CA programs, too. It works through the RTA's Civil Military Operations Center. An SF CA officer says, "If a TF wants to operate in an area, it goes in and coordinates with district managers and police (and other district leaders), and it asks what the problems are of the whole group, sort of a mini conference or round table, and then they set up small centers to execute problem solving. It's worked well. In Betong, Yala, the police, civilians, and army work well together."¹³⁵⁹

Current Fourth Army Commander (October 2009) Lieutenant General Phichet had put so much effort into development many in the south call him the "EM General" – EM standing for effective microorganisms. It is a fertilizer his community center encourages southerners to use on their crops. Located across from the Fourth Army and CPM headquarters at the Sirindhorn RTA camp in Yarang district, Pattani, locals visit daily to learn how to raise fish in homemade ponds, grow vegetables, and raise livestock. Phichet's experience as Second Army Commander helping *Issan* farmers provided him with the expertise to support the center. It also doubles as a drug treatment center, and auxiliary force insurgents can turn themselves in there, undergo rehabilitation, and reintegrate back into society. The center focuses on positive reinforcement and foregoes crime and punishment, so long as insurgents have not committed major crimes.¹³⁶⁰

An army medical technician says the RTA deploys Mobile Medical Teams into villages to provide health services to rural villagers who cannot travel the to hospitals. He says, "We set up a medical clinic by working together with the local district and hospital staff and army staff. We have nurses, dentists, etc., and a place to print and give out ID cards."¹³⁶¹ Other government administrative personnel participate and run side programs. "The villagers can get local

¹³⁵⁶ "Army to tell Thaksin its plan for South," in *Bangkok Post*, 14 March 2005.

¹³⁵⁷ Anonymous.

¹³⁵⁸ Anonymous.

¹³⁵⁹ Anonymous.

¹³⁶⁰ "The EM general who is making a difference."

¹³⁶¹ Anonymous.

paperwork done there,” says the medical technician. “The agriculture department brings good seeds to the villages. Animal husbandry people get in and help and teach people how to improve local fruit and garden production.”¹³⁶²

The RTA also tells villagers to contact nearby army camps for development assistance when they need it. In one case, swarms of mosquitoes made villagers sick with malaria, and they sent the nearby RTA medical staff a letter requesting help. Says a medic, “Villagers used not to do this at all, but now they do because of the new approach the army has taken in the south. If the army can solve it, then it does. If not, then it gets another government office to do it.”¹³⁶³

Regarding the malaria problem, the army medics could not eradicate the mosquitoes. So they contacted the malaria control unit of the MoH to spray the village and provide medicine. They moreover informed the villagers every step of the way as part of a PR effort, and the problem was solved.¹³⁶⁴

The villagers sometimes do and sometimes do not appreciate government help. Says an RTA medic, “Some Muslim villagers come and say thank you for helping the kids, or for helping with drugs. In these cases, they might give a glass of water and say thanks. Before, they said nothing. There is always a mix. Some take the medicine and then leave quickly.”¹³⁶⁵ The technician says, “Some programs, such as free food distribution, attracts some villagers. But when the army doctors come, everyone shows up. People like the doctors.”¹³⁶⁶

There are indications development is making an impact in the far south. A former insurgent says eventually, the war took its toll, and he felt “only chaos and strain.” In 2008, government development personnel came to his village and, according to him, “showed their sincerity” through development projects. The combination of pressure from war and government aid convinced him and anti-state villagers to give the government a chance and reject the insurgency, which is what happened.¹³⁶⁷ In 2009, General Phichet told the press that troops deployed to villages, meaning security and CA forces, had proven so successful that insurgents were beginning to attack them in the villages, something not seen on a great scale in the past.¹³⁶⁸

¹³⁶² Anonymous.

¹³⁶³ Anonymous.

¹³⁶⁴ Anonymous.

¹³⁶⁵ Anonymous.

¹³⁶⁶ Anonymous.

¹³⁶⁷ “Statement from a member of the National Liberation Front of Patani.”

¹³⁶⁸ “Counter-insurgency success backfires,” *Bangkok Post*, 1 January 2009.

Royal Programs

King Bhumibol's development programs are a prolific now as in past COINs. At his and the queen's personal urging, the government began a *Kampung Janda*, or "Widow Village," for women whose husbands were killed in the insurgency. There are a few poor couples living there, too. Some Malay speakers also call it *Kampung Bujang* ("Unmarried Widow.") It is reminiscent of Malaysia's planned villages. The *Kampung Janda* is located in Narathiwat near Kampung Rotan Batu. It consists of 124 homes inhabited by 300 women and children on 24 hectares of land. The government did not want the far south's widows to succumb to immoral occupations to make a living, and it did not want them to slide into abject poverty, hence the farm. The army guards it.¹³⁶⁹

The women's occupational choices include pottery, growing fruits, vegetables, rice, and/or mushrooms, and raising farm animals. The government buses their children to school. Women living there stay in houses better than what they lived in when their husbands were alive, and some make enough money to send their children overseas for their education. They also are provided with dreg technology to turn cooking and other oils into motorcycle fuel – a bio-diesel project.¹³⁷⁰ A widow and mother of a seven-year old told the press, "I had nobody to turn to after my husband died five years ago. So when the authorities here asked me whether I wanted to stay here, I immediately agreed and I'm glad that I made that decision."¹³⁷¹

* * *

The Thai are applying many three pillars programs to the current COIN that they did in the past southern COIN. This is especially true of security operations. Differences, however, include a dramatic increase in the number of security forces deployed, a better trained Ranger force that also conducts civil affairs, and inclusion of the public as early warning and attack prevention assets. It has cut violence by approximately 40 percent.

Politically, the government has reduced local election capacity to centralize control under village heads and governors. Bangkok has also dramatically increased the number of Muslims in, or advising, local government, and insurgents have countered this apt move via widespread assassinations. Bangkok has a quiet de-radicalization program joined by Middle Eastern countries, but it appears to have lost control of the public relations realm and suffers heavy criticism for nearly all its policies. Diplomacy wise, Thailand is fending off the OIC's attempts to politically

¹³⁶⁹ "Shelter For Single Mums In Kampung Bujang," in Bernama, 3 June 2009, and "Village of hope for widows of war," in *New Straits Times*, 25 May 2009.

¹³⁷⁰ "Shelter For Single Mums In Kampung Bujang."

¹³⁷¹ "Village of hope for widows of war."

co-opt the insurgents, a move that would empower them beyond Thailand's control.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: COIN THEORY ANALYSIS

Below are an executive summary and the detailed final conclusions on the Thai way of COIN. The executive summary provides a brief overview of the findings for overall Thai COIN theory and each component of the COIN Pantheon. For the latter, the analysis start from the core research questions posed at the beginning of this study. It builds on a comparison of each component of the edifice from each war to see what patterns might have emerged. Following this analysis are comparisons of Thai COIN strategy and methods to the main theories of Galula, Thompson, and Kilcullen. These help further illuminate the Thai way of COIN. The chapter concludes with a summing up the Thai way of COIN – the answer to the final research question of this thesis.

Executive Summary

COIN Theory

Thailand uses strategy, coordination, security, politics, and economics to wage COIN. Thailand seeks to understand its enemies and separate them from the population. The Thai struggle to apply their COIN theory evenly in the face of internal political wrangling.

COIN Strategy

Thai COIN strategy aims to separate the insurgent from the people. Politics leads COIN a majority of the time. Force is just as critical and makes some political and economic programs possible. Economic development is a constant. The Thai believe co-opting the population into the fight is crucial, and it has political and development implications, too.

COIN Coordination

The Thai assert coordination of security, political, and economic operations are pivotal. Though the Thai built coordination bodies for each COIN, they do not always translate seamlessly to the field because of internal turf battles.

Security

Destruction of the enemy's forces and protection of the population are critical. Thailand uses a mix of military, police, and a wide array of local forces.

Politics

Politics are supreme in COIN. The Thai believe convincing the enemy to reject rebellion and rejoin society is a moral imperative, though they do so less with insurgents who use terrorism. The Thai believe politically shaping the at-risk population is essential for separating the people from the insurgents. The government will change itself to influence insurgents only piecemeal and as a last resort. Diplomacy is essential to help isolate the insurgent from outside support.

Economics

Economic development of the at-risk population both at the village and enterprise level is dogma in Thai COIN, but they do not believe it is decisive. Rather, the Thai see it as an erosion tool that helps separate the people from the insurgency over time.

Enemy

Insurgent groups in Thailand varied in their goals from toppling the government, to autonomy, to secession. Their size varied from national to regional. All engaged in guerrilla warfare and some terrorism, but only the current insurgency is fully vested in killing civilians. All insurgencies relied on outside sanctuary and material aid, and all of them harnessed enough of the population to maintain high functionality.

At-risk Population

All at-risk populations embroiled in insurgency in Thailand at least began with impoverished peoples ethnically different from the status quo Thai. All experienced some measure of government neglect and endemic corruption. It is obvious the Thai use strategy, coordination, and the three pillars of security, politics, and economics to quell insurgency and stabilize the at-risk population. They have done so in three COINs spanning over 35 years, which resulted in victory in the first two cases, while they are still fighting the third. None of these elements were evenly applied throughout, and there were internal faults such as power wrangling that kept the Thai from being more efficient, but the pattern is, nevertheless, clear. Drilling down into these individual components reveals more about the Thai way of COIN. Comparative listings help decipher Thai methods.

1. **Strategy:** What is the Thai strategic approach to COIN?

Analysis

These strategic COIN equations reveal definite patterns. First, politics has led every successful Thai COIN strategy, the one exception being in 1994, when, for about three years, economics was the leading pillar. Politics also leads the current COIN strategy with the king's philosophy as doctrinal guidance. The Thai use politics in the lead because they understand insurgency is people's war, whether voluntary or coerced, and rarely do the insurgent army and its support element coagulate in the field. They are scattered, nebulous, and hard to police. Therefore, the Thai believe convincing the insurgent to put down the pistol, rifle, and propaganda chit and stop fighting is the best COIN tool they have. Parallel, to this, in every COIN, they have also used diplomacy to isolate insurgents from foreign sponsors and sanctuary.

Interestingly, the Thai did not put faith in politics at the beginning of the communist COIN; they had to learn the hard way its usefulness, but when they did, it became doctrine. On the other hand, they applied politics to the southern insurgency as early as the 1960s, so they knew it was a logical COIN tool. The Thai understood from the beginning of the 1980s-90s COIN the far south's population was ethnically and religiously different from the rest of Thailand. These patterns indicate the Thai readily believe in using political measures in COIN to change people, to shape the at-risk population. Having said this, the Thai are slow to change their political system in COIN to shape the at-risk population. Changing the domestic political front in both the communist and first far south COIN (increased democracy in the former, more democracy/decentralization by the TAOs in the latter) took a more than a decade. It should be noted in the two instances cited here, democracy post communist COIN did not take full root the way Prem initially proscribed, and insurgents took advantage of the TAO system to undermine decentralization and democracy.

The second definite pattern is that every successful Thai COIN strategy has used aggressive and focused force except one. In that case, economic development led the strategy during a lull in insurgent violence, and they decreased security. The Thai brought it back, however, when insurgents attacked in force.

Regarding force, it is clear the Thai believe destruction of the insurgents' war-making abilities is vital to protecting the state and the people. It took them many years to merge the two concepts, however – destroying the enemy, which

includes pressuring the auxiliary force – while not damaging the at-risk population. The concept was confusing at first because insurgent fighters, their auxiliary forces, and the at-risk population were mixed together, as they are in most insurgencies. Conventional Thai military commanders in the late 1960s did not separate them. They assumed an infected area meant the whole population was the enemy.

But the Thai learned by the 1970s using indiscriminate force against this entire entity added to insurgent ranks by alienating the at-risk population. The Thai realized they could apply aggressive military and police pressure against insurgents and their supporters so long it was focused – not necessarily surgical like the tactics of a hostage rescue team – but something between this and conventional warfare. It required actionable intelligence, an understanding of the population (human terrain), good local diplomatic skills, and patience.

Protecting the population has come late in two Thai COINs: the communist, war and the current one. In the first case, security forces began with destruction of the enemy as their key goal. In the second case, it was a combination of destruction of the enemy and doing nothing, a result of the executive branch's meddlesome tactics and anti-government PR. Thailand began its 1980s-90s southern COIN as it reformed its communist COIN, so population protection was by then doctrine. Thailand otherwise learned the hard way via dead and angry and insurgent sympathetic citizens the supremacy of population protection.

Development has been a constant aspect of Thai COIN strategy. While the Thai have shifted the priorities of politics and security in their wining COIN formulas – albeit fleetly – they have kept development at a constant level in each COIN. They see it as an anchor of their strategy. It is dogma. The Thai believe uplifting the at-risk population from abject poverty is a moral imperative in a Buddhist sense. They are loath to let the less fortunate wither on the vine once they understand it is a critical problem. Unfortunately, Thailand has been late in discovering just how impoverished some of its population has been; witness General Prem hiking through *Issan* in the early 1970s and being astounded by its dilapidated conditions. But once they discovered it, they smothered the affected people with aid programs, sometimes too many.

Moreover, development is dual-use in Thai COIN: it is believed both to increase the standard of living of the poor and endearing the state to them. But there is also a realisation that development is rarely decisive.

Empowering the people through CPM programs is also a constant in every COIN, though many COIN practitioners in Thailand have put more emphasis on destruction of the enemy's forces. Regardless, empowering the people combines elements of politics, security, and development, but General Saiyud thought it important enough to separate it as an individual factor in his "COIN algebra." The people, after all, are the prize in COIN. And the people

themselves are the battlespace just as much as the terrain is. Insurgency happens in villages and homes, amongst families, and in neighborhoods. The Thai believe in taking the fight to the enemy in these places and separating the insurgent “fish” from the popular “water.” They have termed it in many different ways, to include “the villages surrounding the jungle,” which was the direct opposite of Mao and the CPT’s, “villages surrounding the cities,” and also “adding good fish to the water” to control, neutralize, and/or marginalize the “bad fish.”

To put it another way, the people are a tool the insurgents steal to use against the state, and the Thai believe in stealing them back. They steal them back by granting them political concessions, by development, and by putting weapons in their hands to fight insurgents shoulder to shoulder with state forces as local forces. This is necessary for political reasons; nothing sends a political message to the opposition like a man shouldering a rifle and using it. It means locals have taken ownership of the problem along side the state. Development rounds out this “state theft.” It either buys off locals with aid projects or truly convinces locals the Thai state cares.

The Thai believe all these individual variables multiply together to generate an equation that aims to separate the people from the guerrillas. The Thai aim to then arrest, rehabilitate, and/or kill the guerrilla. Victory comes softly with little fanfare. Most insurgencies fade instead of crashing in a single decisive wreck like a conventional army being routed on the battlefield. In Thailand, some insurgents have gone to jail, especially if they committed acts of terror, but others teach, work for aid organizations, advise prime ministers, farm, or simply quit and fade back into society.

2. Coordination: How do the Thai, if at all, coordinate COIN?

Analysis

An obvious pattern here is the Thai believe in coordinating COIN. Even before the communist COIN broke out in earnest, the Thai fielded a coordination center to better marshal law enforcement resources against the then mostly political threat. The subsequent iterations of CSOC and ISOC, plus the CPM programs in each conflict and the two SB-PACs, clearly demonstrate the Thai’s penchant for coordination. Formation of SB-PAC for two wars shows the Thai learned from the uncoordinated and lacking political and development mess of the 1960s-70s. From their mistakes, the Thai gained a full understanding of the criticality of parsing out manpower, finances, and material resources.

Regarding village approach, it seems the Thai were more methodical in the communist COIN than both the southern COINs. General Saiyud described an

intricate village chain of command government forces worked through in order to co-opt villages into the fight. For Thai Malay Muslim villages in the far south, because of cultural differences, the Thai seem to be more comfortable working through village heads than with multiple village leaders, though they do co-opt imams into government advisory panels.¹³⁷² The *Pattana Santi* program's requirement of each soldier getting to know five villagers might demonstrate otherwise, however; the program is young and still evolving.

On the other hand, despite such steadfast belief in coordination, the Thai also work against their own coordination systems. This is not because they are poorly designed, but because of rivalries, turf battles, and personality conflicts. Such wrangling debilitates and stifles COIN, as it did from 1967-77 when the Army Regional Commanders disregarded CSOC's authority. But the Thai know this and tried with COINs in the far south to make coordination systems more robust and permanent via legislation. They succeeded, but the defects in the Thai national security and political system still plague coordination. If the Thai could overcome these problems, their COIN effectiveness might be 50 percent higher. It seems certain characteristics of Thai command sometimes stifles precise Thai organizational logic.

3. Security: What security programs – ranging from military to police to local forces (and intelligence throughout) – did the Thai apply to COIN?

Analysis

Security programs for each Thai COIN are nearly identical. They all have the same missions, which include pressuring the guerrillas, physical security, population control, and village protection. Thai intelligence operations are designed both learn about the enemy to feed planning and operations, and also to identify and turn the enemy. They all use the same forces as well. The RTA and all its regular and irregular forces was the lead security force in every COIN regarding force application (and strategy and coordination, for that matter.) Though the RTA technically cannot arrest suspects, it nevertheless conducts intelligence operations and raids. For arrests, however, it ideally backs the TNP, when necessary.

The main security difference between all these wars was the scope of operations. For the communist COIN, it was countrywide; it not only took all of Thailand's forces, it had to create new units to contend with the insurgency (and the threats that evolved from Cambodia and Vietnam). For the 1980s-90s campaign, the threat was small enough the Fourth Army, regional police units, and local forces could handle it. For the current COIN, the geographic area is

¹³⁷² Sascha Helbardt, interview by author, 6 September 2009, Arlington, Va, USA.

the same as the 1980s-90s COIN, but the scope of violence is astronomical, comparably. This has forced Thailand to add military forces from other regions to the fray.

While the TNP have been integral in every Thai COIN, its general lack of ability to adapt to insurgency and partial avoidance of COIN missions has rendered it a less than optimal COIN force. The TNP overall performed well in the first COIN and marginally in the second two. This is not to say it has been useless. The BPP has been exceptionally capable regarding multiple COIN roles, and many patrolmen and investigators have helped collapse insurgent cells. By and large, however, the police have had to upgrade themselves for two COINs – the communist war and the current one. These were forced changes because the TNP's performance was initially dismal. The RTA has had to assume traditional TNP roles such as urban patrol in the current COIN, something that dilutes the former's abilities.

Special Branch, and to a lesser extent Thailand's intelligence agencies such as the new DSI, proved pivotal in COIN campaigns by penetrating deep into insurgent cells and then collapsing them. In some cases, Special Branch was able to influence the demise of command and control echelons. All Thailand's intelligence agencies well exposed the capabilities and intentions of insurgent groups. However, except for Special Branch and Somchai Rakwijit's CSOC intelligence unit, Thai intelligence services have had to play catch up in COIN. When they finally did, however, they excelled beyond expectations. Intelligence performance in the current COIN has yet to reach optimal levels, but it did, nevertheless, contribute to a 40 percent reduction in violence by late 2007.

Local forces are a mainstay of Thai COIN. Decried by a great many pundits, especially insurgents and anti-government types, the Thai put great faith in local forces, especially *Thahan Phran* and village security. Whether reckless or surgical, they have proven decisive. While the police and military support them, local forces are the tip of the spear regarding separating the insurgent "fish" from the popular "water" kinetically. In each COIN, village security forces more or less are static, while the *Thahan Phran* have played the reconnaissance, intelligence, and hunter killer role. The Thai put stock in these forces because it understands insurgency is local, so it must fight a local war. The guerrillas are imbedded in the roots of the village, and the Thai root them out with troops that serve as the state's guerrillas. The Thai understand no rank and file soldier knows local geographic and human terrain better than a local. And that knowledge is critical for victory, which means harnessing locals into the fight is, too. After all, the insurgents do it; so does the Thai state.

Just as guerrillas sometimes commit atrocities – especially in the current war – so have the government's local forces. Many Thai see aspects of insurgency and counterinsurgency as dirty and underhanded. While this has caused considerable PR problems and in some cases worked counter to government

COIN programs, the Thai have not discarded their local forces. They try to counter poor local force performance with better training and higher pay, which has been successful. They also experiment with local force missions; for example, *Thahan Phran* in the current COIN have a significant CA role.

4. Politics: What political programs and means – from the local, regional and national to the international levels,– did the Thai apply to COIN?

Analysis

Thai political COIN measures show both similar and different patterns from war to war. Similarities across the board include psyops and PR, separating insurgents from sponsors outside Thailand via diplomacy, and enticing the enemy to stop fighting via amnesty. These are definite Thai political COIN methods.

Truce talks are a lesser pattern. They were absent in the communist COIN. The Thai have tried talks with southern insurgents in the last two wars many times despite the fact none of them were productive. Accordingly, the Thai penchant for talks might be true attempts to secure peace, or they might be intelligence-gathering missions, or both.

A side pattern here is the lead of the RTA in these political programs. With security operations, and absent a more effective police force, an RTA in the lead is expected, but not so with politics. Still, the RTA has been the vanguard of many, if not most, political efforts listed here. Other agencies such as the MoFA and Special Branch have played decisive roles, too, but the RTA seems to have overall ownership of Thailand's most prolific non-military initiatives.

Another pattern common to all COINs is better governance programs, but they seem to have been weak. The results have not gone deep enough, nor have they lasted. For example, better governance certainly improved Bangkok's legitimacy in the communist COIN, but corruption and substandard performance persists in many places in *Issan* to the point Thaksin was able to exploit it, and, by using credit lending and other methods, created a staunch political base that has helped him destabilize the country from exile. Likewise, such programs were supposed to correct gross negligence in the far south in the 1980s-90s, but they were not enough to help preclude a second war. Complaints about government corruption and ineptitude in the southern border provinces continues in the present. This is unfortunate for Thailand as bad governance has provided insurgents with anti-state fodder; it is an effective rebel rally cry.

In each COIN, the Thai have sought to improve the government-people relationship via a wide array of tactical measures, including PR, psyops, village

security projects, and leadership training. In the current COIN, the government is engaged in what is essentially population repair – correcting erroneous political, cultural, and religious perceptions fostered by government neglect, a poorly educated and gullible population, and insurgent propaganda. Government deficiencies such as corruption have enabled these, however. The exact mix for each war always differed. Bangkok's main goal in this has been to establish legitimacy over the insurgents.

Political and cultural and integration COIN measures have been unique to the far south. They did little of this in the communist COIN because the most affected areas, such as *Issan*, while different from the iconic central Thai, were at least culturally similar to the Thai. The one exception was the hill tribes, which the Thai tried to change by urging them to settle down in one geographic area and halt their nomadic lifestyles and ecologically ruinous slash and burn agriculture. Hilltribe integration was only marginally successful. Their citizenship status remains tenuous even in 2009, but their allegiance to the state stabilized.

In the far south, integration programs were the mainstay of political COIN. The government believed a swath of the population there was culturally and politically insular, which the insurgency used to nurture anti-state resolve. The government was right. The difference between Thai and Malay culture prevented many ethnic Malays from participating in the Thai Buddhist-designed state system. This is not to say the state system was overbearing and prevented ethnic Malays from being Malay Muslims. Thailand has a pluralistic society and government that accepts all religions. There were a few exceptions for sure; a handful of political measures post WW II/pre-1980 urged ethnic Malays to shed their names, clothing, and the like, but these were nationwide programs aimed at every ethnicity in Thailand, and the government eventually scuttled these programs because they were counterproductive.

Most of the time in the southern border provinces, it was sections of Malay Muslim society that rejected things that were not Malay and Muslim. The radical section of this swath aimed for a pure Malay Islamic society. Its purveyors promoted ultra conservative Islam as the only correct political, business, and educational model, and Malay as the only acceptable cultural identity. Unfortunately, such a society cannot survive without a more diverse employment sector, and Thailand recognized this and sought to change it via the education system without nullifying Malay culture and mainstream Islam.

ISOC's counter drug program is wholly unique to all Thailand's COINs. The insurgents use the drug culture and trade as a way to fund and control their movement. The Thai use it as an avenue of approach to the youth and their parents to 1) keep children and teens off narcotics, and 2) demonstrate government legitimacy.

Regarding education, more and better quality schooling was the norm in the communist COIN. Southern educational COIN programs for both wars, however, have aimed not only at improved education, but convincing the youth of state legitimacy. This worked to a certain degree. It helped increase government acceptance among Thai Malay Muslims and shaped a swath of them into a pro-state or neutral entity. Poorly run programs, a lack of follow through, and exceptionally well-designed insurgent countermeasures have stifled more stellar outcomes, however.

5. Economics: What economic programs – from the local, regional and national to the international levels – did the Thai apply to COIN?

Analysis

In every COIN, the Thai have run extensive anti-poverty programs at the village level. The RTA has been the lead element in these because, in its security role, it has constant contact with the villages and can protect itself while on CA missions. The RTA moreover perceives itself as protectors of the Thai people, and it follows the strategic intent of His Majesty the King, part of which is philanthropy for the poor. The SB-PAC has taken on village level development in the far south, too, but in a less involved role. Subsequently, royal aid projects have existed pre- and post-COIN, but they are especially vigorous during COIN.

Likewise, in every COIN, there were agricultural aid programs, road building and infrastructure development, health initiatives, educational, and job creation/investment programs. This is not simply because they seemed like good COIN programs, it is because the at-risk population genuinely needed them. In short, Thailand, in every COIN, has had to nation build to a certain degree. Despite its many modern amenities and highly functional national system, Thailand remains a developing country in certain regions and wrestles with associated problems. These problems feed insurgencies and fester badly during war.

Besides the RTA and SB-PAC, a hodgepodge of agencies has participated in COIN development projects, many with zeal. This is interesting for a country with seemingly chronic pockets of poverty. One would assume they would disappear with so many agencies involved.

For sure, in each COIN, the Thai have tailored these variables for the realities of each conflict. Job creation in the communist COIN was an issue, but more so in the 1980s-90s COIN – so much so that it plus enterprise industry was the lead COIN strategy in the mid-1990s. More, education in the far south has meant more than just increasing opportunities for schooling as it did in the communist COIN. It has aimed at shaping the population to embrace secular as well as

Islamic programs, so it can make a self-sustaining living and simultaneously retain its unique culture. Job creation in the current COIN is more than employing people through enterprise investment; the government is seeking employment avenues at the local, regional, and international levels, too.

6. Enemy Capabilities and Intentions: What have been the insurgent capabilities and intentions in Thailand's COINs, and how has that shaped Thailand's COIN efforts?

Analysis

Aside from the use of violence, each insurgency has been different. Their ideologies and political goals have varied, substantially. This is interesting because Thailand has used strikingly similar methods to quell them – the first two, successfully.

The only rooted similarities in all three insurgencies are they all used/are using classic insurgency tenets to push their movements forward; that is political subterfuge and guerrilla warfare. They all used propaganda, psyops, and light infantry weapons and tactics, and they all relied/rely upon cross border sanctuary. But these are the core of insurgencies. The corresponding countermeasures are likewise similar. From this variable, the differences in each insurgency expand.

As for goals, the communists wanted to overthrow the government and replace it with a Maoist style regime, an idea initially spurred from outside forces, namely Beijing. The first crop of southern border insurgents wanted independence and might have sued for benign autonomy had they been united. Besides, increased local political control seemed to weaken their movement. Its ideas for rebellion came largely from within political, religious, and ethnic factions of society. The current insurgency appears to want an independent Taliban style regime. Its ideas seem to come from a radical Islamic faction of society, although political power is an obvious motivator, too.

Geographically, the communist movement spread from disaffected areas to the entire country, in part because of its prowess, and in part because government autocracy gave some in society no other choice but to embrace it. The southern movements have restricted their secession to the border provinces, though the 1980s-90s iteration struck Bangkok more than once and had bases in Malaysia. The current insurgency's operatives have been arrested in other parts of Thailand and Malaysia.

The communist insurgency was well organized, disciplined, and outwardly published its manifesto. The 1980s-90s insurgent movement in the far south

was part criminal, part insurgent, and fractured into scores of groups. Only the main groups such as PULO published demands. The current movement appears singular in structure, but it is highly compartmentalized, maybe along old insurgent group lines. Its leaders remain hidden, its manifesto only passively revealed by threat and anti-state propaganda.

And while guerrilla warfare is common to all three movements, the first used terror sparingly; the second quite often, and the current movement uses it regularly. Terror, to include grotesque body mutilation, is the latter's primary method of violence. The population is both prize and target. The current insurgency bombs regularly, too. Other movements used bombs, but not to excess. The latter reflects a modern *jihadist* tactic perfected by insurgencies primarily in Iraq.

7. Population's Main At-risk Factors: What has been the situation of the at-risk population in Thailand's COINs and how has their plight shaped Thailand's COIN efforts?

Analysis

In each case, the at-risk population was ethnically and culturally different from the ideal central Thai ethnicity, exceedingly poorer than the rest of the country, politically underrepresented, had substandard education systems, and, at the very least, was somewhat rebellious of Bangkok's central authority to begin with. It should be noted, however, that only pockets of the far south are presently exceedingly poor, but unemployment is high.

Issan had a particular sharp political independent streak. The ethnic and cultural issue was especially strong regarding the hill tribes and the far south's Malay Muslims. And the latter is critical – Muslims in other parts of Thailand have no problems being a part of Thai society and being practicing Muslims. It appears the Malay ethnic aspect is a key driver in the radical faction of the border society's "us versus them" attitude. It seems Malay Muslims think themselves "more Muslim" than Thai Muslims who have not adopted *jihadist* tendencies to a threatening degree. All these issues made these populations vulnerable to insurgency. Central government neglect and chronic maltreatment was another commonality amongst these groups, a tremendous feeder of their respective revolts in the first place.

Then there are anomalies that show differences. The entire Thai population became at-risk in the communist COIN because tyrannical government antics. The government de-legitimized itself by denying loyal political opposition, forcing people into the communists' arms. This did not come close to happening in the far south, though government critics abound. And Thailand won over a swath of

the at-risk southern population in the 1990s, and the insurgents had to develop new tactics to bring to the surface at-risk factors that had been dormant or forgotten; things like historically skewed “Patani-Siam” animosity from the early 1500s and the pre- and post-WW II period that created a revenge and “justice seeking” faction of the border population. The communists molesting hill tribe Meo “savior lore” to endear tribes to “Meo Tse Tung” is similar. Poor education and gullible villagers were factors here, too.

A violent environment and drugs played a role in both southern insurgencies. Insurgencies can breed easily in high crime areas, the latter feeding the former. This was true toward the end of the 1980s-90s insurgency when the rebels came to rely on drug dealers for their fighters. In the present, the line between the drug trade and the insurgency is blurry, especially regarding funding, thereby giving the current insurgency a Colombia-like narco-insurgency flavor.

8. Comparative Analysis with Prominent COIN Theorists

While it is well beyond the scope of this study to compare all Thai COIN methods to all the COIN theories of the multitudes of commentators, pundits, and authors that exist today, it is indeed useful to compare them to the counsel of some of the most prolific COIN theorists such as Galula, Thompson, and Kilcullen – all covered in the literature review. These three are pertinent because Galula and Thompson, as previously stated, are the “anchor” COIN theorists, and Kilcullen is best known for building on their theories and arriving at a new COIN paradigm to meet modern asymmetric threats. And by comparing Thai COIN methods to these authors, the Thai way of COIN can better be illuminated.

The Thai indeed followed most of Galula’s COIN concepts, especially his strategic and operational concepts. Galula said, from a strategic approach, the population was the prize in COIN because insurgency is political. He also said ideology in COIN is more powerful than armaments, and analyzing the political, economic, and cultural aspects of the conflict area was vital to understand the nexus between the enemy and the people. Galula moreover said isolating the insurgent from outside political and military support was critical to victory. All this was imbedded in his axiom, “A revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political.”

The Thai have applied all of these. To be sure, they did not do so from the beginning of all their COINs; it took them nearly 15 years to use this approach in the communist COIN, for example, a direct result of dominant field commanders applying enemy centric methods over the protests of COIN-minded strategists. But when the Thai did follow these Galula ideals, their COIN campaigns were effective. The Thai certainly made the population the prize in their 66/2523 plan to defeat the CPT, and it was likewise with the *Tai Rom Yen* plan for the far

south. The current COIN in the far south also puts the population as the prize, even to the point population control – checkpoints, for example – have been left a little lax as not to pressure the population too much, so say government officials in Bangkok.

As for ideology, the Thai fully understand its usefulness as a COIN tool, and in the communist COIN and the 80s-90s COIN in the south, they made it one of their main weapons. This is evidenced by their a) making political space for the politically disenfranchised – providing more freedoms to its citizens in the communist COIN and political parties for southerners, and b) making a competing political movement against the communists via the Village Scouts and integrating locals into SB-PAC programs in the south. In today's COIN, the Thai are still ramping up their political programs, but the SB-PAC concept is in use, and the prime minister in 2011 received legal authority to personally direct it, which will enhance its civilian and political emphasis. The latter will include increased anti-jihad counseling at the local level.

All these mesh with understanding the local population and culture in order to comprehend the population-insurgent nexus. The Thai strive to achieve this. In the CPT COIN, they applied Somchai Rakwijit's village intelligence program to seek information into this realm. In the 80s-90s COIN in the south, they did this through the SB-PAC, RTA human intelligence, and like outreach programs. In the current war, it is again the SB-PAC, but it has gotten a slow and cumbersome start. It should be noted here that excellent COIN concepts on paper are just that – concepts on paper. They are nothing without full and effective application on the ground by competent, understanding, and enthusiastic people.

As for Galula's "four laws of COIN" listed in the literature review, as it refers to his strategy for pacification, the Thai have certainly followed them. Regarding the first law, the Thai have realized the importance of, and tapped, support of the population in COIN. Witness their wide ranging political programs meant to bring the population to its side in each war, and also their extensive use of local forces to fight insurgents and secure the population. Regarding the second law, the Thai have also sought support through an active minority in each war. Specifically, their village programs, the local level of the CPM program in particular, have always been applied in friendly areas first and then branched out to the more contested areas. Regarding the third law, the Thai have learned the hard way support from the population is indeed conditional. In the CPT COIN, for example, scores of villages rejected RTA CA assistance until troops helped harvest crops and the like, which proved their sincerity. Only then did certain villages accept the CPM concept. In the south in the 1990s, insurgents who surrendered were harassed by corrupt police and ended up returning to the fight until Special Branch commissioner Somkiat insured their post surrender safety in through the *Ptiak Tai* plan. Regarding the fourth law, the Thai have indeed – once they achieved effective strategy, coordination, and leadership –

applied intensity and vastness of means to their COIN efforts. For the CPT COIN, once Kriangsak and later Prem took over the effort, they applied a whole of country effort to the problem, not just by using all the state's resources, but by expanding them – building the 12,000-strong *Thahan Phran*, for example – and uniting it all under as much intellectual capital they could muster. This latter point included the surge of democracy and easing of harsh domestic conditions such as poor wages, shrunken political protest outlets, and freedom of the press. In the far south, the Thai have done the same by applying all regional assets to the fight – the entirety of Police Region 9, for example, and the all encompassing political-economic and security entities of the SB-PAC that was designed to carry out its mission via set policies regardless of who was in power in Bangkok. There is a like effort happening in the current war in the south, and the Thai have even created a new division, the 15th, to be permanently stationed there.

Regarding Galula's pacification strategy, the Thai have more or less followed his eight-step program that can generally be encapsulated as clearing and keeping enemy forces from a given area; integrating COIN efforts with locals, including improving their administrative and leadership capabilities; and rooting out local insurgent shadow government institutions and personnel.

This can best be highlighted by the use of the CPM concept in every war, though it was poorly applied in the early years of the communist COIN. CPM in the 1980s-90s worked well enough in the south to hold the line against the insurgents, but it did not help improve the population's local government to a significant degree. Nor did CPM link the population enough to the central government to a stabilizing degree. Accordingly, there is weakness in the Thai execution of these particular Galula tenets in the far south, especially in the current war. This is particularly true of Galula's third and fourth steps of his eight-step strategy: "Establish contact with the population, control its movements in order to cut off its links with the guerrillas;" and "Destroy the local insurgent political organizations." Difficulties here, again, stem from not knowing local culture well enough to prevail.

As for assets and coordination, the Thai indeed follow Galula's basic structure – that COIN needs to be done by an array of military, police, and civil servants, because co-opting the population requires a balance of security, socio-political, and anti-poverty and investment programs. All aspects of the Thai government have been involved in all its COIN efforts, including the military, which has traditionally led these affairs, and all ministries, including agriculture, education, interior (another key actor), and health. And the Thai have coordinated them all, as Galula prescribes, under a unified command. But individuals and bureaucracies also push back against these united commands in Thailand. Under Prem against the CPT and under Harn in the far south against insurgents there – all in the early 1980s – was perhaps the only time when Bangkok's COINs were truly united as single, well-coordinated efforts. All other COINs

have been united on paper, but government rivalries – the RTA vs the Mol in the 1990s in the south, for example – always hurt COIN. In this case, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the Mol took over COIN in the south, and the RTA, perceiving its command usurped, disengaged, and security suffered because of it. In the current war, apparent turf rivalries have kept the RTA and the SB-PAC less than coordinated, and political-economic efforts have been half hearted.

As for Galula's "adaptation of minds" concept, the Thai indeed adapted their approach to defeat the CPT on a massive scale in the 1980s. To be sure, the CSOC and CPM concepts of the 1960s and the innovative *Thahan Phran* program were adaptations, but it took Kriangsak's wide ranging political and security programs of the late 70s and Prem's total domination of coordination in the 1980s for adaptation of minds to fully take root. Only then – when the top leadership imposed a new mentality on the RTA, civilian leadership, and the country – could mass amnesty, surge democracy, and a high quality village security program proliferate and succeed. But it did not happen overnight. Kriangsak, Prem and his exceptional second in command General Harn, and other innovators such as Chavalit, had seen their country suffer under insurgency, poor civilian and military leadership, and bad economic conditions, so changed the downward slide of the country based on national survival.

The Thai, via General Harn, applied this new COIN minded in the far south, and others in the Fourth Army area, seemingly influenced by their astute predecessors and also spurred by their own experiences, were likewise innovative – General Kitti, for example. And when the far south went into dramatic decline in 1997 under the Falling Leaves campaign, the entire civilian-military establishment adapted, handing most of the war over to the RTA, which, using a combination of intelligence, PR, focused force, and diplomacy with Malaysia, defeated the insurgents. The police and SB-PAC camp, however, were pivotal in making this happen as well, particularly via a renewed and improved amnesty program run by Special Branch. So in sum, the RTA and the civilian faction switched roles in the late 90s because the region's stability was in sharp decline. They were forced to adapt by dire circumstances, much like in the CPT COIN.

Adaptation of minds in today's COIN has been slow. The Thai have applied classic COIN methods and increased security has indeed brought violence down, but they have been slow to incorporate deep cultural knowledge of Malay Muslim villages into their operations, which is an old problem in the far south. On the other hand, the Thai are beginning to implement counseling against radical Islamic ideology that fuels much of the area's violence. Similarly, they have tapped into anti-drug programs for the far South's youth to firstly curb rampant drug use and secondly to improve the relationship between the people and the government. This demonstrates an innovative approach to COIN by attacking an insurgency contributor indirectly.

Regarding Galula's advice for security operations – mobile strike forces and static occupying forces working in tandem to continually pressure insurgent forces – the Thai have done this in every war. Witness the RTA and police implementing population control while using *Thahan Phran* and Special Forces in DA roles in each COIN demonstrated here. And, as Galula suggested, the Thai have applied PR and psyops along with force application operations to convince insurgents to give up while simultaneously assuring the population the government was there to uplift and protect them.

Where the Thai and Galula differ is two fold. First is in his strategic advice not to mimic the insurgent. Galula says it is a trap and a formula for failure. But if one views Thailand's winning COIN schematics on a wide scale, it appears they do indeed mirror their enemies. Take the CPT, for example. When the Thai fought it using conventional methods, they failed. In contrast, when the Thai met the CPT's guerrilla tactics with RTA SF and *Thahan Phran* guerrilla tactics, when they met the CPT's political infiltration and organization with the Village Scouts, and when they met village infiltration with the village security programs, they were victorious. Similar patterns emerge from the war in the south in the 1980s-90s with force application mentioned here and also when insurgents leveraged Malay Muslim identity to separate the people from the state, and the Thai mirrored their enemy with political inclusion programs. Similar scenarios are playing out in the current insurgency in the south with the government countering radical Islam with state sponsored counseling and lobbying the OIC to not recognize the insurgents as insurgents petition for global Muslim and international recognition.

The second place where Galula and the Thai disagree is civilian control over COIN. Civilians did not run COIN well in the 1970s, they did not do an effective job in the late 1990s in the far south via the Mol, and Thaksin fared worse in the current war, which was part of the reason for overthrowing him. In fact, the RTA successfully managed Thailand to victory in the first two COINs, and it managed to decrease violence in the far south by approximately 40 percent in the current war. Having said this, the old school faction of the RTA ran a shoddy COIN campaign in the 1960s, ignoring their subordinate and innovative COIN-minded thinkers to the country's severe detriment. And in the current war, in order for the SB-PAC to function effectively, it seems it needs to be under civilian control, something PM Abhisit recently achieved. How this plays out in the field will be another story.

Thompson's COIN advice is more detailed than Galula's, and it is evident the Thai have followed much of it. Regarding Thompson's five leading principles stating what a government must do in COIN, the Thai have done the following *once they established their winning strategies*: 1) have had clear political aims, 2) functioned according to the law, 3) had overall COIN plans, 4) gave priority to defeating political subversion, and 5) secured government controlled areas first

and systematically moved into guerrilla controlled areas thereafter. Thai compliance with issues 1, 3, 4, and 5 were made clear under the Galula section.

Issue 2, functioning according to the law, is a key Thai COIN approach for certain. Critics say the Thai pass any COIN law (or any law, for that matter) that suits whoever is in power – not always true because of the complex law-designing and pre-vote maneuvering that goes into Parliament passing or killing a proposed law. But pre-ordained or not, the Thai are aware of the procedural formalities of a constitutional nation state, and they do see laws as a way of achieving either perceived or genuine government legitimacy. For example, to make operations against communist guerrillas illegal, the government passed multiple Anti-Communist Acts in 1933, 52, 69, and 79. This does not mean they were not controversial to critics, but it does mean the Thai sought legal cover, and, therefore, legal legitimacy, for what they were doing. And each of these laws allowed the government to establish COIN institutions and enact prime minister orders to address specific insurgency issues. The Anti-Communist Act of 1969, along with PM order No. 219/2508 for example, made CSOC legal. It also made law the 110/2512 COIN strategy, but the Army Area generals ignored it, conjuring up Denny Lane's admonition about laws in Thailand that there are "relationships and suggestions," not laws as understood by Western standards. But modern times are changing Thailand, ever so slightly.

Regardless, there are many other examples of the Thai using laws in COIN to achieve legitimacy. General Kriangsak, who took over by coup in 1977, enacted a law in 1978 releasing the "Bangkok 18" student protestors. He moreover formulated a new constitution by 1978 and brought back parliament in 1979, all as legal weapons to achieve more legitimacy in the eyes of the Thai citizenry than the CPT. Additionally, the 66/2523 plan to defeat the communists was a PM order but also sanctioned by the Cabinet.

From the 1980s-90s COIN in the south, there are several examples of the Thai using the law to apply COIN measures such as the TAO Act of 1997 and PAO Act of 1997. They also put Thai Malay Muslims into parliament via the New Aspiration Party and the Wahdah Party – here a move to achieve legitimacy in the far south by making locals actual lawmakers. More, the PM's office had to officially ordain the *Pitak Tai* plan via PM Order No. 127/2541 in 1998 to make that strategy and its operations legal. Similarly, in the current war, the government passed versions of the ISA 2007 and 08 to make legal Bangkok's flexibility in applying security methods to border province areas in revolt.

The Thai surely follow Thompsons' theory of harnessing the three key influences on a population: "Nationalism and national policies, religion and customs, material well being and progress." They have used these sentiments to rally the nation to undercut insurgent sentiments such as when Kriangsak took oppressive policies off the population, brought outspoken students back into the national fabric – a very popular move – and increased minimum wage.

Prem followed by rallying the nation around what is generally thought to be Harn's democracy surge throughout the country. Even the *Thahan Phran* used the motto, "nation, religion, king, citizens," a direct appeal to their ranks' sense of nationalism and protectionist nature. The Village Scouts were the embodiment of the political aspect of Thompson's sentiments.

In the 1980s-90s COIN in the far south, the Thai focused on bringing Malay Muslims into the national fold via specially formed political parties, via teaching secular subjects at *pondoks*, by incorporating Malay Muslims into advisory positions at SB-PAC, through CA at the village level, and enterprise investment at the regional level. Similar programs are happening in the current conflict in the far south. They include more secular *pondok* reform, teaching Islam in public schools to attract higher attendance from Malay Muslims, and encouraging moderate Islam as a proper societal code of conduct as opposed to *takfir* based Islam.

As for Thompson's theories on good governance being pivotal in COIN to strengthen legitimacy, the Thai have tried to do so in all its COINs and understand its importance, but corruption has plagued these efforts. CPM has been and remains part of this good governance effort, especially the aspect training village leaders in effective management and administration. Getting rid of corrupt police and local administrators in the hinterlands such as the forestry officials who used to elicit bribes from the Hmong was key in proving to tribal people the government was legitimate. Kriangsak's national level improvement efforts were likewise, and Prem's direct line to the SB-PAC in the far south in the 1980s was, too. Police who harassed former insurgents who re-entered society via amnesty in the 1990s sullied these efforts and was one reason the insurgency flared in the late 1990s. Conversely, Police Commissioner Somkiat's correction of these particular transgressions was a reason the insurgents reversed course yet again and took amnesty post Falling Leaves. The current war in the south has likewise seen attempts by Bangkok to implement better governance with General Sonthi's apology to all the south for suffering poor treatment, the reinstatement of the SB-PAC, the royal-sponsored Widow Farms, the RTA's prolific vocational training programs, and the attempt to weed out lackluster civil servants. But the problem of poor governance remains in this region, according to Pattani Senator Anusart's 2009 statement to the press (previously stated): "What we need is not autonomy but good governance and transparency. Even Muslims are clamoring for good governance. There is already decentralization – 60 to 70 per cent of the budget is in the hands of local officials – but that is meaningless without good governance."

The Thai would also agree with Thompson's – and Kitson's, for that matter – emphasis on intelligence. Witness Somchai Rakwijit's intelligence operations to understand Thai village life and how it was juxtaposed with the CPT. The Thai also expanded Special Branch to fight the CPT and moreover had the DCI/NIA

on the case as well, plus CSOC's JSC intelligence network. Through all this, the Thai were able to understand the human terrain of the insurgent battlespace, the CPT's tactics, techniques, and procedures, and the key insurgent players involved at national, regional, and local levels. They had achieved intelligence mastery of the CPT by the late 1970s.

In the far south in the 80s-90s, the RTA and Special Branch, the latter housed at SB-PAC, had exceptional intelligence on the insurgents as well. The RTA in particular had an amazing human intelligence network that security personnel still marvel over in the present. So well plugged in was the RTA in the far south that Thaksin sought to destroy this network in the 2000s to dampen rival influences. In the current war, partly because of Thaksin's dismantling of these networks, the RTA is paying catch up regarding intelligence, and the police and Special Branch are both ramping up their activities in light of the PM directly assuming control of SB-PAC. All three entities have informants, and they have captured and/or killed scores of insurgents as a direct result of good intelligence. But they have yet to achieve intelligence mastery of the human terrain or the enemy.

The Thai are for certain in agreement with Thompson on information services. They have used this to entice insurgent surrenders in all three wars, and it worked to wondrous effect against the CPT, good effect against the insurgents of the 80s-90s in the south, and in the current war, it is a work in progress, but the program is there. Regarding psyops, the Thai have applied this in all three wars, too. It was particularly effective against the CPT, especially when the government had survivors of Pol Pot's regime speak about the side of communist revolution not addressed by the CPT. Psyops in the 80s-90s by the SB-PAC was more subtle with signs and billboards and the like, but it was most effective at the personal level by coopting government friendly imams and having them influence the villages. At present, the Thai are generally following the 80s-90s psyops game plan, though countering radical Islam will require additional efforts. And while the Thai believe in effective pro-government PR, they have not done too well at it in the current war. They appear to have let the insurgents and NGOs command the information sphere to avoid being seen as a harsh, dictatorial, Muslim hating regime as they have been painted in the anti-Bangkok press pool. On the other hand, the Thai have made good progress touting their Widow Farms and Fourth Army Commander vocational training programs.

The Thai also generally followed Thompson's operational concepts, which are similar, if not the same, as Galula's. Thompson describes them as clear, hold, winning, and won. For certain, the Thai have sent military forces onto enemy held areas to clear them of main force insurgent assets, and then established CA and more involved economic programs while simultaneously implementing wide ranging political programs to integrate disaffected populations. The Kaho Kho campaigns of the 1980s clearly typify these types of operations.

Village security has been a linchpin of these operations as well, which meshes 100 percent with Thompson's strategic hamlet method of villages and smaller subdivisions having internal defense or police measures to clear out insurgents and keep them out. This is most typified by Thailand's CPM concept. Interestingly, in the clear-hold vein, Thompson said state guerrilla forces were necessary to root out deeply penetrated insurgents. He described them as the state's fiercer tomcat going after the guerrilla's tomcat. The Thai describe it as getting a gangster to go after a gangster.

The Thai disagree with Thompson in two areas. First, like Galula, Thompson says COIN should be a civilian run affair by a war council or cabinet headed by a civilian who understands COIN and the military-civilian nexus of it all. While there have been civilians who have well understood COIN, PM Chuan Leekpai, for example, the RTA has decisively run Thailand's COINs in every case. The SB-PAC has been a civilian-run affair since its inception, but it has to contend with the RTA in the far south. Sometimes they cooperate well, and sometimes not. PM Abhisit in 2011 oversaw the passing of a new law to put the SB-PAC directly under the PM's command as it was under Prem in order to have more influence over its operations and to give it more power. This is in line with Thompson, but it is not the norm.

The second Thompson tenet the Thai disagree with is balance of forces. Thompson says COIN is largely a police affair and the military should be subordinate to them and civilians unless the security situation is too unstable and the terrain inhospitable to police forces. In Thailand, the RTA has always been the largest COIN force in the field. The police have rarely been up to the task of COIN because the force as a national entity has not seen it as its mission. There have been exceptions such as the latter portion of the CPT COIN when the nation's survival was at stake. In this case, the police cooperated well with the RTA, especially regarding the CPM concept as it linked to village security. And even while Special Branch and the police have at times been major assets in the COINs in the south, they have taken a back seat to RTA intelligence.

Regarding Kilcullen's modern COIN theories, the Thai have not adopted his tenets on any great scale. For certain, they apply some of his "Twenty-eight Articles," but not so much his disaggregation theory. Still, there are similarities among Thai and Kilcullen approaches.

Again, while disaggregation is not in the Thai COIN vernacular, "management" is. And Kilcullen says one of the outcomes of disaggregation is a conflict dampened down to an acceptable situation advantageous "to us," or in this case, the Thai. History shows that the Thai, despite wrestling with the far south for decades via scores of effective and ineffective COIN programs, is unlikely to give up the region. It is a country fiercely jealous of its borders and, unless a

non traditional Thai takes over the government and changes this border custom in favor of a business minded, “stock loss cutting” mentality, the Thai will continue to manage the cantankerous region for the foreseeable future. Based on its track record, then, Thailand seems content to manage the South’s rebellious streak. More, even Dr. Arun, the former Thai diplomat quoted in previous pages, said of the far south, “That is why our policy is to manage it. If we cannot solve it...we can manage it.” But the Thai would not call this “modern COIN” theory. They have been managing the far south for decades.

Regarding the “Twenty-eight Articles,” the Thai acknowledge issues such as “know your turf,” “diagnose the problem,” “organize for intelligence,” “organize for inter-agency operations,” “find a political/cultural adviser,” “have a game plan,” and “avoid knee jerk responses to first impressions.” Most of these have been covered previously, but it is interesting to note “diagnose the problem” is also the King’s COIN guidance for the current war in the far south, and “find a political/cultural adviser” has been part of the SB-PAC’s standard operating procedure since its inception. “Avoid knee jerk responses to first impressions” became key especially after the Tak Bai massacre of insurgents and their sympathizers, certainly a knee jerk response, after being detained for rioting at a police station.

The Thai struggle with other advice from the “Twenty-eight Articles” in their current COIN. For example, “Train the squad leaders – then trust them,” is hard for the Thai to do with conscripts but easier with professional SF troopers. “Rank is nothing: talent is everything” is wholly against Thailand’s reverence for rank and status. It supersedes talent. “Remember the global audience” is something the Thai have been able to ignore for decades, but with globalization of communications and information, it now must contend with a faction of the *ummah* and the OIC that believes Bangkok is targeting Muslims out of hatred or is using the fake specter of hatred to fuel the current insurgency. As for “local forces should mirror the enemy, not ourselves,” the Thai in the far south have yet to establish on a wide scale a truly effective village security force that mirrors the enemy because of a lack of understanding of Malay Muslim culture. The *Thahan Phran*, especially the local ones, somewhat remedy this. The Thai indeed followed “fight the enemy’s strategy, not his forces” in the CPT COIN once Kriangsak and Prem’s policies took root, and their political-economic strategies in the far south in the 80s-90s set the insurgency up for a knockout blow with *Pitak Tai* in 1998. In the present war, the Thai are fighting the enemy’s strategy, but without understanding the local culture to a masterful degree, their effectiveness will continue to muddle along at a mediocre pace. In line with this, “build your own solution – only attack the enemy when he gets in the way,” requires the Thai take the initiative across a security, political, and economic front, something they have not been able to do to a dominant degree as of yet. The Thai, in short, remain on the defensive, even with a reduction of southern border violence by 40 percent.

As for Kilcullen's theory that the state may be faced with "resistance insurgency" that seeks not a state but an idea, this does not wholly apply to the current war. The southern insurgents do want an independent state in the classic sense – they say so repeatedly in their propaganda and indoctrination. In this regard, they are a classical insurgency. In a modern COIN sense, however, they have not exposed their leadership, and their organization remains highly compartmentalized – just like many modern jihadi movements in Iraq and Afghanistan. And they certainly use jihadi issues as motivators to spur the population and their fighters without a clear definition of what an independent "Patani" state might look like. So the current southern Thai insurgents include elements of both modern and classical insurgencies. Probably because of this and Thailand's tradition of following classical COIN methods, the Thai have not adopted disaggregation methods and a return to normalcy asserted by Kilcullen.

Nor have the Thai called the far south an "insurgent ecosystem." They do realize, however, that there are complex dynamics at work in the far south, such as the region's ethnic, religious, economic, and familial connection with Malaysia's northern states, the movement's educational connectivity to schools in the Middle East (some of them radical Islamic), and its political connection to the OIC. The Thai also see its connection to the local and regional drug trade. And the Thai have vigorous programs to deal with all but the first. Thailand has no physical operations to seal off the insurgency from Malaysia, just diplomacy. This worked in defeating the insurgents in 1998, but only until several embarrassing incidents over a few years regarding the capture and detention of scores of Thai Malay Muslim insurgents with weapons and/or explosives in Malaysia. It is not apparent the Thai and the Malaysians have a strategic understanding regarding the insurgency, but the Indonesians seem to be leaning in that direction as evidenced by their struggle with JI and its possible undercurrent connections (training and ideology, perhaps) with fighters in the south such as RKK.

As for Kilcullen's seven modern COIN tenets, the Thai are engaged in many of them. Regarding "...the side may win which best mobilizes and energizes its global, regional and local support base – and prevents its adversaries doing likewise," again, the OIC example demonstrates the Thai are engaged in this realm. The Thai did the same via negotiations with China regarding the CPT and with Malaysia regarding PULO and like rebel groups in the 1990s. The same can be said for the Thai following Kilcullen's advice that a security force's "area of influence" may need to go regional and even global, which the Thai have done – again, via RTA and civilian government diplomacy with China, Laos, and Cambodia regarding CPT; with Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt regarding the 80s-90s war, and also with Malaysia, Indonesia, and Middle Eastern countries in the current war.

As for the security force controlling a complex "conflict ecosystem," again, the Thai have not called it that but realize in the current war the drug trade's nexus

with the insurgency. This spurred an ISOC counter narcotics program to deal with the issue, especially regarding youth education. The Thai moreover comprehend the intricacies of local politics – voting for imams and TAO officials, for example – and how these democratic processes actually suck insurgents into the polling process over local power and money. This is one reason of several the government reduced local democratic institutions in 2006.

Regarding common diagnosis of the problem, in the current war, Thailand's government remains divided on a lot of the root causes and remedies. The members of the former NRC, for example, saw the war as ethnic and cultural issues, while certain members of ISOC see jihad – based on jihadi propaganda and indoctrination – as an additional and significant motivator of the movement. Former NRC members have reach within the government and can influence policy, and their diagnoses and solutions, such as sending unarmed formations of guards to assert stability, bolster anti-Bangkok sentiment.

As for modern COIN possibly being 100% political, this does not apply in the far south. Whereas Islamic sentiment in the global *ummah* seems to generally be against Bangkok, which significantly boosts the insurgent cause, the war indeed is a shooting, bombing, light infantry, and decapitating war. But Kilcullen's assertion that in modern COIN, permanent containment in lieu of victory might be the solution is a real possibility in the far south. The war has existed in many forms for decades and, as long as there is jihadi sentiment there, sanctuary in Malaysia, and moral support from Islamic states, the war, even in a purely political sense, can continue. And in this case, the possibility of a pure terrorist group emerging from the fight is indeed possible.

As far as secret intelligence possibly mattering less than situational awareness is concerned, this does not apply in the far south. Special Branch and human intelligence operations by the RTA are vital to identify and capture or kill key insurgents. It is evident, however, from many Thai troopers being killed in the same manner over and over again – being bombed repeatedly at rest stops and breakfast areas at markets, for example – that many RTA units have not at all achieved situational awareness. This needs to be changed in order to gain the initiative.

Analysis

So it appears the Thai followed about three fifths of what Galula and Thompson prescribed and about one fifth or less of what Kilcullen prescribed regarding modern COIN (not including his reconstitution of classic COIN concepts.) Clearly, the Thai are steeped in classical COIN theories, for sure at the conceptual, strategic, and operational levels. Does this mean, then, the Thai way of COIN offers nothing unique? Not quite. Again, most any successful COIN campaign follows Galula and Thompson regarding strategic and even

operational design – separate the insurgents from the people, attain legitimacy over the enemy, rely on local people to provide insight into local problems and for certain security issues, politics leads, clear main force insurgents from areas before politics and economic operations begin, etc. Where COIN begins to vary from these points is specific strategy aimed at specific problems, and, even more, is specific ways/methods and means aimed at specific problems. It is the unique political, religious, security, and human terrain issues, which trigger deviation from, or creative adaptation of, the most prominent COIN theories and methods. And this has been the case in Thailand in several instances.

Most of Thai COIN innovations are methods, but there was one instance where the Thai generated an innovative COIN strategy wholly apart from classical and modern COIN prescriptions. This was when, in 1994, the Thai instituted the 1994 National Security Policy for the Southern Border Provinces as its primary COIN weapon, which was economics. In the face of massive poverty, Bangkok injected massive funds into the far south via industrial and business projects. As a result, and for a few short years only, the government changed its COIN strategy to “economics leads, public relations follows, peace and order supports.” It is not in line with any Galula, Thompson, Kitson, or Kilcullen theory. Interestingly, nor is it in line with traditional Thai strategy of “politics leads.” Nor has it ever been repeated. This COIN strategy seems to be an anomaly in Thai history, but it was, nevertheless, significant. Accordingly, it is a unique, “Thai way of COIN.”

Aside from this strategy, there are several original methods the Thai have applied in their COINs that were never in any manual, never directed by Galula, Thompson, or Kitson, and never prescribed by Kilcullen. For example, the Thai application of *Thahan Phran* is indeed a local force, as many COIN theorists such as Thompson suggested be used, but the Thai took it much farther than Thompson intended. Instead of a small, elite hunter-killer unit of locals to apply sparingly, the Thai made the *Thahan Phran* their largest anti-guerrilla force, especially as the Vietnamese Army sat poised on the Cambodian border, ready to drive on Bangkok. The specter of invasion kept the RTA focused on border defense, so the *Thahan Phran* became essential to fight the CPT on a wider scale than perhaps intended. It was a matter of necessity. But the Thai, as evidenced by their belief that insurgency is war by the people, believe it should also be countered by the people – on a wide scale. This makes the *Thahan Phran* a unique “Thai way of COIN.”

It also highlights a unique “Thai COIN theory.” And that is the people should shoulder equally, or near equally, the burden of COIN that the state does. This is not only demonstrated by the kinetic-focused *Thahan Phran*, but also the CPM concept and amnesty programs. The CPM concept aims to use better-trained administrators and leaders coupled with newly trained security providers at the village level, the epicenter of the COIN battlespace, to fend off insurgents and keep them from the villages. The government’s involvement post setting

these programs up is minimal. The people bear most of the burden. Even amnesty seekers and local workshops tend to follow General Kitti's philosophy of the local citizen, with initial government guidance, must learn to solve their own problems in order to have confidence and be productive citizens.

Yet another Thai COIN method that has traits parallel to the sentiment of the *Thahan Phran* is amnesty. Thompson, because of his involvement in Malaya, touted amnesty and surrender programs, and the Thai found them useful as well. But instead of a selective and focused amnesty program, they applied it massively across the board once they achieved the initiative in their COINs. Witness Kriangsak's pardoning of 3,000 students with the stroke of a pen in 1978, Prem's massive rehabilitation programs for CPT in the 1980s that resulted in thousands of surrenders, and the BRN's capitulation in 1984 under the *Tai Rom Yen* strategy. In the current war, amnesty has yet to take wide root, but it is a program in the works. As previously stated, Thai experts such as Denny Lane say such stock in amnesty comes from the Buddhist belief in compassion for another's moral capacity. It also seemed a matter of national survival because the country was so severely divided. To prosecute so many tens of thousands of the enemy seemed impractical. That attitude, particularly the Buddhist compassion aspect of it, likely drove the amnesty programs in the far south, too. In summary, pardoning as much as a third of a guerrilla movement is unique action, rare in the field of COIN, and therefore yet another unique "Thai way of COIN."

The same can be said about the Village Scouts in the CPT COIN. It was never listed as a method to follow by any COIN theorist. And while Galula said to counter the guerrillas' political movement, he also said not to mimic guerrilla actions. With the Village Scouts, the Thai both countered the CPT's political movement and mimicked the CPT's political method. Specifically, the Thai inserted three Scouts into all the villages they could and had them proselytize the benefits of the program and the legitimacy of the government writ large, and then recruit more members. This is exactly what the CPT did to turn villages communist. The Thai simply reversed the process, a unique "Thai way of COIN."

In the same vein in the far south, the Thai have mimicked the radical Islamic aspect of the *da-wah* movement with a direct counter to it, the "official *da-wah* movement." In the current war in the south, the Thai have similarly applied de-radicalization programs to reeducate persons warped by intolerant and murderous *takfiri* Islamic tenets. Reeducation of radical Islamic persons, however, is not too unique – it is also done in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Singapore, and Indonesia.

Diplomacy is a unique "Thai way of COIN" as well. True, all major COIN theorists say to separate the insurgent from sanctuary and outside aid. It is also true that Kilcullen stresses using all sources of national power on the

international stage to counter modern insurgent movements. But the Thai were using diplomacy as a COIN in tool through the 1970s-90s long before Kilcullen wrote his exceptional COIN works, so it cannot be that the Thai use of diplomacy is not unique. More, no prominent, classic COIN theorist mentioned here stressed using diplomacy as a primary COIN tool. To disregard Thailand's use of diplomacy as such, then, is fallacy. Bangkok assigned diplomats, military officers, and prime ministers to counter outside support for insurgents by engaging China, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, Indonesia, and organizations such as the OIC. It is a definite pattern, and an effective COIN method.

9. *Summing Up:* Given the collective answers to all these questions for all three Thai COINs, what is the Thai way of COIN?

What is the Thai way of COIN? The detailed dissection in the bulk of this thesis as reflected in the conclusion so far, and the findings have also been measured against Galula, Thompson, and Kilcullen in particular. The detailed conclusions have been set out above. In the process, unique Thai COIN methods have been exposed. But what is, in the final analysis, the overarching picture that emerges?

The Thai way of COIN largely follows Galula and Thompson's key tenets, save for civilian control and police leadership – it is the Thai Army that has traditionally run Thailand's COINs. The Thai way of COIN is also, unfortunately, self-hindering due to interference from turf battles, rivalries, and egos. But the Thai way of COIN is innovative and practical in the security, political, and economic realms. It generates new and edgy COIN methods, it mirrors the enemy when necessary, and it meets each line of effort of the enemy with matching counter strikes until achieving the upper hand. Then it deals a decisive series of blows. The learning curve to achieve that upper hand, however, is sometimes lengthy because of the relative slowness the Thai have exhibited in seeing beyond the political and cultural status quo. The Thai way of COIN, then, can be clumsy and messy, and it can be sleek and elegant. By and large, however, the Thai way of COIN is mostly successful.

APPENDIX 1

Socio-Economic Statistics

The following statistics demonstrate increased socio-economic prosperity throughout the whole of Thailand from 1970 to the present decade. While none of these mean Thailand's economic COIN programs decisively increased the at-risk population's standards of living in each COIN, they do, nevertheless, indicate broad well being across the population occurred. (Still, the poorest regions of Thailand that experienced insurgent activity remain the poorest regions of Thailand.) Statistics per region were not available. Information here was provided by the Thai Government's Statistical Information Service and Dissemination Group on 28 August 2008 via Excel spreadsheet.

Life Expectancy at Birth

1970: 60.0
1971: 60.4
1972: 60.8
1973: 61.2
1974: 61.6
1975: 62.0
1976: 62.4
1977: 62.8
1978: 63.2
1979: 63.6

1980: 63.9
1981: 64.3
1982: 64.7
1983: 65.2
1984: 65.6
1985: 66.0
1986: 66.5
1987: 66.9
1988: 67.3
1989: 67.7

1990: 68.0
1991: 68.3
1992: 68.5
1993: 68.7
1994: 68.8

1995: 68.9
1996: 68.9
1997: 68.9
1998: 69.0
1999: 69.1

2000: 69.2
2001: 69.4
2002: 69.6
2003: 69.9
2004: 70.2
2005: 70.6
2006: 70.6
2007: 71.4
2008: 71.8
2009: 72.1

Adult Literacy Rate Percent

1970: 80.1
1971: 81.0
1972: 81.9
1973: 82.7
1974: 83.6
1975: 84.4
1976: 85.0
1977: 85.6
1978: 86.2
1979: 86.8

1980: 87.4
1981: 88.0
1982: 88.5
1983: 89.1
1984: 89.7
1985: 90.2
1986: 90.6
1987: 91.1
1988: 91.5
1989: 91.9

1990: 92.3
1991: 92.7
1992: 93.0
1993: 93.4

1994: 93.7
1995: 94.1
1996: 94.3
1997: 94.6
1998: 94.9
1999: 95.1

2000: 95.4
2001: 95.6
2002: 95.8
2003: 96.0
2004: 96.2
2005: 96.3
2006: 96.4
2007: 96.6
2008: 96.7
2009: 96.8

Gross School Enrollment Percentage

1975: 48.0
1980: 53.0
1985: 51.5
1990: 49.6
1995: 54.9
2000: 73.6
2001: 74.9
2003: 75.2
2004: 73.6

GDP per capita (1995 USD converted to 2002 USD)

1975: \$2,071
1976: \$2,071
1977: \$2,376
1978: \$2,571
1979: \$2,660

1980: \$2,731
1981: \$2,731
1982: \$2,955
1983: \$3,042
1984: \$3,177
1985: \$3,288

1986: \$3,425
1987: \$3,683
1988: \$4,103
1989: \$4,521

1990: \$4,953
1991: \$4,953
1992: \$5,708
1993: \$6,051
1994: \$6,517
1995: \$7,041
1996: \$7,417
1997: \$7,266
1998: \$6,493
1999: \$6,665

2000: \$6,833
2001: \$6,922
2002: \$7,222
2003: \$7,681

Human Development Index

1985: 0.729187797
1990: 0.749832296
1995: 0.771429292
2000: 0.809945658
2001: 0.814073649

APPENDIX 2

Analytical Logic Chain for the Three-war Analysis Through the COIN Pantheon

Below are the policies and programs per COIN Pantheon edifice from each of the three wars discussed in this doctorate. They are listed to here to show the trail of logic used to achieve final conclusions.

1. Strategy

General Saiyud's "COIN algebra" from the communist war provided a unique way, a Thai way, of demonstrating strategy for that conflict. Accordingly, the same method applied here helps understand patterns of Thai COIN strategy for all three wars. Thai "COIN algebra" variables are:

POL = politics

S = security

D = economic development

P = people

C = communist insurgents

TMMI = Thai Malay Muslim insurgents

KP = King's philosophy

V = victory

The Successful Communist COIN Strategy:

1. 66/2523 Plan: POL^{(scuttle autocracy/surge democracy, amnesty, diplomacy w/China)³}
(S^(aggressive/focused) + D + P^{(CPM, increased freedoms)²}) – C = V

The Successful Thai Malay Muslim 1980s-90s COIN Strategies (four):

1. *Tai Rom Yen*: POL^{(diplomacy w/Saudi Arabia, amnesty)²} (S^(aggressive/focused) + D + P^{(CPM, increased freedoms)²}) – TMMI = (path to)V

2. General Kitti's iteration: POL^{(diplomacy w/rebels, upgraded amnesty developed)²}
(S^(aggressive/focused) + D + P^(CPM)) – TMMI = (path to)V.

3. Economics leads: D^(surge @ village/enterprise levels) (POL^{(increased democracy/97 Const, amnesty)²} + S + P^{(CPM, increased freedoms)²}) – TMMI = (path to)V.

4. *Pitak Tai*: POL^{(diplomacy w/Malaysia, Kitti's amnesty applied)²} (S^(aggressive,/focused) + D + P^{(CPM, increased freedoms)²}) – TMMI = V.

The Current COIN Strategy:

1. KP + POL (diplomacy w/Malaysia & int'l) (S (aggressive/focused) + D + P (CPM, "population repair")²) –
TMMI = V.

2. Coordination

Core goals per section

Communist COIN:

To martial military, police, and civil forces under a single authority, doctrine, and commander's intent to wage COIN in an effective manner with distribution of resources when and where needed

1980s-90s COIN:

To martial military, police, and civil forces under a single authority, doctrine, and commander's intent to wage COIN in an effective manner with distribution of resources when and where needed regardless of what PM or military leader was in charge

Current COIN:

To martial military, police, and civil forces under a single authority, doctrine, and commander's intent to wage COIN in an effective manner with distribution of resources when and where needed regardless of what PM or military leader was in charge

Core programs per section

CSOC/ISOC, CPM

ISOC, CPM-43, SB-PAC

ISOC, CPM, SB-PAC

3. Security

Main goals, Communist COIN

Pressure CPT, protect people

Investigate and/or arrest CPT

Main programs

Military (primarily RTA) and police patrols, sweeps

Police, Special Branch investigations

Target and eliminate CPT	RTA SF, <i>Thahan Phran</i> , BPP Direct Action
Turn CPT	Special Branch, NIA, RTA HUMINT operations
Separate people from CPT	Local forces (CPM) supported by all security forces, but mainly police and RTA
Shed light on CPT	Intelligence by all security forces, intelligence agencies at all levels

Main goals, 1980s-90s COIN

Main programs

Pressure TMMI, protect people	Military (primarily RTA) and police patrols, sweeps
Investigate and/or arrest TMMI	Police, Special Branch investigations
Target and eliminate TMMI	RTA SF, <i>Thahan Phran</i> , BPP Direct Action
Turn TMMI	Special Branch, NIA, RTA HUMINT operations
Separate people from TMMI	Local forces (CPM) supported by all security forces, but mainly police and RTA
Shed light on TMMI	Intelligence by all security forces, intelligence agencies at all levels

Main goals, current COIN

Main programs

Pressure TMMI, protect people	Military (primarily RTA) and police patrols, sweeps
Investigate and/or arrest TMMI	Police, Special Branch investigations
Target and eliminate TMMI	RTA SF, <i>Thahan Phran</i> , BPP Direct Action

Turn TMMI	Special Branch, NIA, RTA HUMINT operations
Separate people from TMMI	Local forces (CPM) supported by all security forces, but mainly police and RTA
Shed light on TMMI	Intelligence by all security forces, intelligence agencies at all levels

4. Politics

Main goals, Communist COIN

Counter CPT ideology, misinformation

Improve gov-people relationship

Separate insurgents from sponsors

Entice CPT to stop fighting

Better governance

Main goals, 1980s-90s COIN

Counter TMMI ideology, misinformation

Improve gov-people relationship, integration

Main programs

Psyops, PR, inundate masses with
democratic reform, led by RTA,
CSOC/ISOC supported by TNP
and gov agencies

Village Scouts

CA, PR, psyops, led by RTA CA,
supported by TNP and gov
agencies

Diplomacy by PM, MoFA, RTA,
NIA, Special Branch

Amnesty, led by RTA

Local gov/administrator training,
RTA, Mol

Main programs

Psyops, PR, by RTA, ISOC, RTA,
SB-PAC

RTA CA

SB-PAC advisory section, civil
servants training, and complaint
dept

	Political inclusion at national and local levels
	Secular education, <i>pondok</i> quality control
Separating insurgents from sponsors	Diplomacy by PM, MoFA, RTA
	Intel ops by NIA, Special Branch
Entice TMMI to stop fighting	Amnesty program, by RTA, Special Branch, SB-PAC
Peace talks	RTA, MoFA
Better governance	Civil servant training and working with locals by SB-PAC, Mol's DoLA

Main goals, current COIN

Main programs

Counter TMMI ideology, misinformation	Psyops, PR, by RTA, ISOC, RTA, SB-PAC (such as
	ISOC counter narcotics youth program
Improve gov-people relationship, integration	RTA CA
	SB-PAC's advisory section, civil servants training, complaint dept, "group therapy"
	Secular education
	ISOC counter narcotics youth program
	Secular education, <i>pondok</i> quality control
	Youth programs by royal family
Separating insurgents from sponsors	Diplomacy by PM, MoFA, RTA

	Intel ops by NIA, Special Branch likely
Entice TMMI to stop fighting	Amnesty program, run by RTA, peace talks
Better governance, decrease local political pressure	Civil servant training, reduce local elections, increase appointed officials, governors' local district councils by PM, SB-PAC, Mol/governors

5. Economics

Main goals, Communist COIN

Uplift villagers from abject poverty (root cause of the insurgency according to Prem)

Main programs

Village aid by RTA CA, Royal programs, (Hilltribe Development Project), ARD, Community Development Department, Mobile Development Units, Department of Public Welfare's Hilltribe Division, private entities such as Rotary Club

Regional farm aid

Mostly dams and irrigation by Royal Irrigation projects, ARD, RTA CA

Road Building and infrastructure devel

ARD (principally), Royal projects

Health

Eg., potable water, protein development, Ministry of Health, RTA CA

Vocational/scholastic education

More and better schools, scholarships, school supplies, Ministry of Education's Mobile Trade Training units, BPP rural school houses

Main goals, 1980s-90s COIN

Uplift villagers from abject poverty

Regional farm aid

Road Building and infrastructure devel

Health

Education

Enterprise investment (primary COIN
weapon in 1994)

Main programs

Village aid by SB-PAC, RTA CA,
The New Hope Project by CMP-43,
RIP

Dams, irrigation, crop management
(such as boosting rubber and rice
yields) by SB-PAC, RIP

NESDB and SB-PAC, RTA, ARD,
governors, Ministry of Transport
and Communications, Land
Department, private businesses

SB-PAC, RTA CA

Vocational training, increased
secular curriculum, PSTI, new far
south universities, scholarships,
quotas, Thai language training by
MoE , SB-PAC, Department of
Teacher Training, Department of
Vocational Training

Mass infusion of industry devel,
IMT-GT (it failed), NESDB and SB-
PAC's Southern Border Area
Development Plan

Main goals, current COIN

Uplift villagers from abject poverty

Regional farm aid

Road Building and infrastructure devel

Main programs

Village aid by SB-PAC, RTA CA,
Royal projects such as the Widow
Village

Crop management, switching from
rubber to rice, SB-PAC, RTA CA

NESDB and SB-PAC, Ministry of
Transportation, RTA

Health	Increased clinical and hospital care by SB-PAC, RTA CA, Ministry of Health's Health Center Administration of the South
Education (most important COIN tool, says Pranai)	Vocational training, increased secular curriculum, PSTI, new far south universities, scholarships, quotas, Thai language training, increased Muslim studies in state schools by MoE, SB-PAC, MoFA, RTA CA, Office of the Basic Education Commission
Enterprise investment	Improved investment terms, <i>halal</i> food investment, cash infusions, IMT-GT by NESDB, SB-PAC, Board of Investment of Thailand, the Chamber of Commerce of Thailand, the Government Savings Bank, Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Industry
Jobs	Job creation by SB-PAC, Labor Department, ISOC, RTA CA, SB-PAC, Ministry of Public Health

6. Enemy

Communist COIN

Highly organized	Overthrow existing Thai government, replace it with a Maoist communist government
Infiltration of civic groups, unions, societies, universities, villages	
Prolific propaganda and indoctrination	
Platoon and company-sized light infantry operations, battalion-sized defensive operations	
Countrywide operations, high operational tempo	

Some terrorist operations against civilians

Extensive and open support from
China and North Vietnam

1980s-90s COIN

Fractured, multiple groups

Secede border provinces from
Thailand and/or gain autonomy
and run criminal empires

Infiltration of mosques, pondoks,
some villages

Some propaganda and indoctrination

Platoon and squad-sized light infantry operations

Operations in many districts of southern border provinces, medium operational
tempo

Many terrorist operations against civilians

Criminal schemes against civilians

Extensive sanctuary in northern Malaysia,
passive support from Middle East

Current COIN

Highly organized and compartmentalized

Secesion of border provinces from
Thailand

Infiltration of mosques, pondoks, villages,
local government, possibly national
government

Prolific propaganda and indoctrination

Platoon and squad-sized light infantry operations,
some company-sized operations

Operations in nearly all districts of southern border provinces, high operational tempo

Extensive terrorist operations against civilians

Apparent sanctuary in northern Malaysia,
passive support from Middle East

7. At-risk population

Communist COIN

- Extreme poverty in outlying regions, government neglect
- Poorly educated population in regions where war began
- Poor government-people relations based on corruption, neglect
- Lack of communications, infrastructure
- As war progressed, country at large subjected to autocracy
- 1970s era global recession, low wages, high inflation, high unemployment
- Poor health conditions

1980s-90s COIN

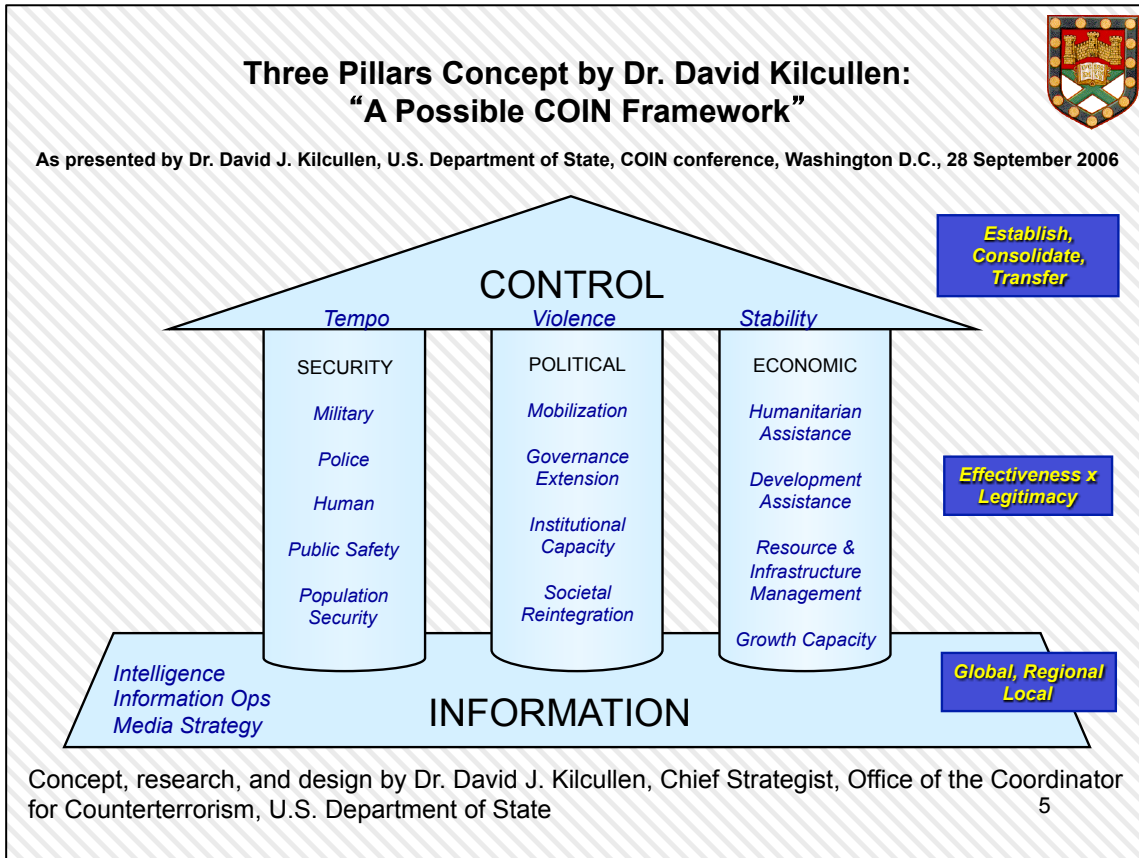
- Extreme poverty
- Poorly educated, conservatives focus studies on Islam only
- Poor government-people relations based on corruption, neglect
- Malay ethnicity/Muslim religion sets at risk population apart from rest of country
- Slight understanding of Islam
- Intolerant conservative Islamic views growing, outsiders are *kuffar al harb*
- Historical lore of a vanquished and subjected people and past glorious empire
- Legacy of revolt against the government, crime
- Drug trade/use growing as of late 1990s
- Prestige culture ignored by state
- Islam comes before the authority of the state for conservatives (not all southerners believe this)
- Little aspiration to adapt from subsistence to cash economy
- Poor health conditions

Current COIN

- Some object poverty but not prolific, unemployment the region's top concern
- Poorly educated, conservatives focus studies on Islam only
- Poor government-people relations based on corruption, neglect
- Malay ethnicity/Muslim religion sets at risk population apart from rest of country
- Fractured pro-state, anti-state and neutral/practical factions of society
- Slight understanding of Islam
- Intolerant conservative Islamic views strong
- Mainstream not imbued in historical lore of a vanquished and subjected people and past glorious empire, anti-state population is
- Legacy of revolt against the government, crime
- Drug trade/use rampant
- Prestige culture ignored by state
- Islam comes before the authority of the state for conservatives (not all southerners believe this)
- Resent ethnic Thai and Chinese business leaders
- Poor health conditions, AIDS on the rise

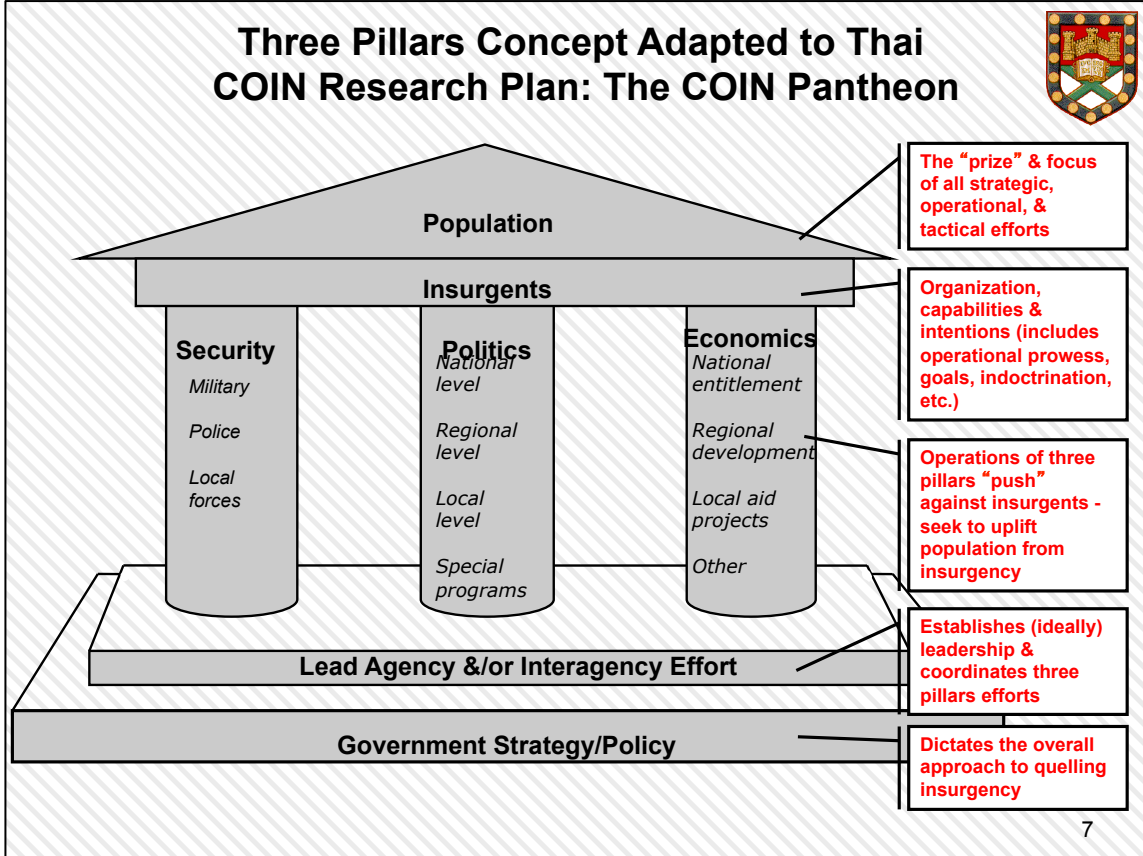
APPENDIX 3

Dr. David Kilcullen's Three Pillars of COIN



APPENDIX 4

The COIN Pantheon



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