WEAK STATES, ISLAM AND TERRORISM:
EXAMINING CAUSAL CONNECTIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

By

CIARAN THOMAS AIKEN

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Abstract

Since 9/11, terrorism has become one of the top strategic concerns for the international community. At present, this phenomenon is often attributed to two main factors. First are 'weak' states, whose internal conditions provide an opportune environment for the development and facilitation of terrorist groups. Second is Islam fundamentalism, a religious ideology seen as particularly vulnerable to extremism. It is further assumed that many local militant Islamist groups are part of a larger ideologically congruent network coordinated by Al-Qaeda; in other words, a 'second front' of international terrorism.

While there is little doubt that weak states and Islam play some role in the path to terrorism, initial investigation reveals that the assumed bi-causal relationship between either of these factors and terrorism is poorly grounded. The 'weak' state remains conceptually vague, while evidence suggests that Islam in a political context cannot be automatically associated with religious extremism.

Using a proposed conceptual framework, this thesis argues that political violence stems from grievance felt within a particular group. This grievance is a result of specific dimensions of weakness found within states. The move from 'standard' political violence to terrorism requires an ideological bridge: a 'higher' justification that permits the use of exceptionally violent or destructive acts as a means to an end. I apply this framework to Southeast Asia and in particular three cases where Islam and terrorism coincide: Aceh, Indonesia, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand. I ask: what are the causal connections between dimensions of weakness, Islam and terrorism in these cases? Is Southeast Asia a 'second front' of international terrorism?

Examination of the cases reveals that terrorism is more clearly attributed to grievance felt by a particular Islamic community as a result of concentrated structural weaknesses within the regions they reside. Terrorism also appears less driven by religion than assumed. The motivation for local militant Islamist groups to use terrorist acts is derived predominantly from a need to preserve a particular ethnic identity that also happens to be Islamic. Finally, evidence reveals that these conflicts remain largely local in character, with little or no outside influence from international Islamic terrorist groups, weakening the theory that Southeast Asia is a 'second front' of international terrorism.

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For Malcolm,
whose drive is contagious

Chapter One: Introduction

Since the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, terrorism has become one of the top strategic concerns for the international security community. In the attempt understand this phenomenon, few questions have preoccupied governments, analysts and scholars more than the conditions that produce terrorist groups. But despite the great deal of thought that has gone into understanding terrorist movements, few scholars have provided a compelling analytical framework for understanding the causes of terrorism.

Currently, analysts and terrorism 'experts' attribute two core factors to the development of terrorism: weak states and Islamic fundamentalism. Weak, failing or collapsed states are presumed to provide 'terrorism-friendly' environments, unlike stronger states, where the risk of terrorism is said to be lower. The ideological framework of the Islamic religion is suggested to be prone to radicalization and, in turn, a significant factor that fosters the violent activities of certain Islamist groups.

This thesis shall investigate the relationship between state capacity, Islam and terrorism through an examination of three cases in Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. With respect to these cases, I ask: *what are the causal connections between these three factors?*

The fact that weak states and Islam play some role in terrorism is beyond doubt. Numerous examples demonstrate that weak states are at a greater risk of political

violence with terrorism being only one of its more nefarious forms. On the one hand, weak states may actively nurture terrorist groups by playing host to their activities; on the other, their fragile institutions may simply be unable to control the actions of relatively well-organized sub-state groups. In Afghanistan and Somalia, terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda were able to successfully infiltrate and exploit relatively weak state institutions to their advantage.

Similarly, the majority of terrorist activities that preoccupy the international community appear to be organized by self-professed Islamist groups. Whether it is the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines or Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah, these groups focus on the defense of Islamic values against the incursions of their home governments or secularized values of the "West." In either case, the result is that weak states and Islam, either alone or in tandem, are seen as forces driving the development of terrorism.

These assumptions are problematic on closer examination. One of the main difficulties is that the conceptual demarcation of weak states remains vague. While dimensions of weakness within states are related to political violence, there remains some difficulty in the ability to analyze the varying 'quality' of states. Scholars have attempted to create clear analytical categories which, while useful, sacrifice the complex social, economic and cultural conditions of an individual state in the interest of a more generalized theoretical model.

In addition, even if it is possible to find develop quantitative or qualitative categories for weak and strong states, explanations that rely on state typologies do not adequately explain why terrorist groups are present in relatively strong states. That is to say, while it is true that weak states may provide a *sufficient condition* to support terrorist activities, they are not a *necessary condition*. Great Britain, Japan and Germany provide clear examples where relatively strong states have produced domestic terrorist organizations. In contrast, the majority of weak states do not harbour terrorist groups. In Africa, there are numerous states that could be described as weak, failing or failed in which no terrorist groups exist nor terrorist activities take place.

It is also difficult to apply generalized state models to varying regions of the world. In Southeast Asia for example, the connection between weak states and terrorism appears tenuous. The three countries that exhibit the majority of terrorist activities in the region – Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines – are arguably relatively stable, modernizing states, with democratic systems and developed economies. Yet despite exhibiting characteristics of strong states, these countries continue to face the region's highest levels of domestic terrorist activity. This anomaly is underscored by the fact that these states' relatively weaker regional neighbours (e.g. Cambodia, Laos) exhibit little if any domestic terrorism. It is necessary to examine why the weak state – terrorism connection is not appropriate in the context of Southeast Asia.

The conflation of Islam with terrorism is similarly problematic. Although significant attention has been given to understanding the relationship between Islam and

international terrorism, the role played by Islam in the terrorist groups in Southeast Asia remains poorly understood. Much of the scholarship on the development of transnational terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda focuses on the international character of their movements. These terrorist groups are often perceived to be derivative of a larger global jihadist movement, rather than a product of a specific set of circumstances within the region.

At the root of all political violence is a sense of grievance that can take various forms. However, it may be a misconception to conflate the motives driving international terrorist groups with those of local terrorist groups in Southeast Asia. Whereas international terrorist groups tend to envision themselves as fighting to save Islam from the encroachment of liberal secularism, the localized groups in Southeast Asia appear more focused on narrower conflicts between dominant states and marginalized ethnic or political communities. Many local conflicts in Southeast Asia, where Islam appears to be a significant factor, are actually rooted in the ethnic or nationalist aspirations of a particular group, rather than pure Islamic ideology. This calls into question whether Islam is actually 'driving' terrorism in these cases.

To understand the complex inter-relationship between weak states, Islam, and the development of terrorism, this thesis proposes a new conceptual approach to the topic. Rather than postulating a mono- or bi-casual relationship between weak states, Islam and terrorist activities, I argue that terrorist groups require an ideological bridge that leads groups to move beyond general feelings of grievance to adopting strategies of political

violence and terrorism. Although weak states and an Islamic ideology are often related to the development of terrorist groups, this bridging mechanism provides the ideological link and moral validation necessary to rationalize terrorism.

To evaluate this analytical approach, I will focus on three specific regions in Southeast Asia: southern Thailand (Pattani); Aceh, Indonesia; and the southern Philippines (Mindanao). These regions are apt for this type of examination for a number of reasons. First, they constitute the greatest areas of terrorist activity in recent Southeast Asian history. Second, they are home to significant Muslim minority communities as well as several Islamist groups engaged in terrorist activities. Finally, many analysts consider these regions, as well as their Islamist groups, to have been deeply infiltrated by international terrorism, claiming that groups such as Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah have provided an ideological backbone to the so-called 'Islamic conflicts' in these areas. This suggested collusion between domestic and international terrorist groups has led analysts to declare Southeast Asia as a 'second front' in the fight against terrorism.

The first chapter following this introduction will provide terminological clarification of the key concepts and expand on the conceptual framework discussed above. Chapter three will outline the character of Islam in the context of Southeast Asia. Chapters four, five and six shall examine the role played by state capacity and Islam in the development of terrorist groups in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, respectively. Chapter seven links the theoretical discussion with empirical evidence,

providing analysis of the relationship between dimensions of state weakness, Islam and terrorism.

My conclusions with respect to the cases presented are that terrorism is more clearly attributed to grievance felt by a particular group as a result of concentrations of weakness *within* the regions of states, rather than more general macro-scale categorization of states. Terrorism within these cases is less driven by religious ideology than currently presumed. Instead, the use of terrorist tactics by domestic militant Islamist groups appears to be motivated primarily by nationalist ideologies or ethnic identities, not the religious ideology attributed to international Islamist groups. While appearing Islamic in character, terrorist activities within these cases are more accurately described as attempts to protect the interests of an ethnic community which also happens to be Islamic. In fact, the evidence reveals that these conflicts remain largely local in character, and that the 'second front' theory of deep interconnections between local and transnational terrorism is poorly grounded.

Chapter Two: Theory and Analytical Framework

General Understandings: Terrorism and State Capacity

Before examining the specific aspects of terrorism in Southeast Asia, it is important to consider some of the fundamental concepts at the centre of this investigation. Even a cursory examination of the literature reveals disagreement over the precise meaning of terrorism and over the definition of weak and strong states. Although both "terrorism" and "weak states" are used frequently in policy circles, governments and the media, there is a lack of consensus on their meaning.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first shall briefly outline the conceptual difficulty of characterizing terrorism and will define the concept of terrorism for this thesis. The second section will categorize terrorist acts, providing an outline of the typologies used to define terrorism as well as the definition that will be used to describe religiously-motivated terrorist groups. The third section shall examine the categorization of state capacity, outlining the different 'types' of states as well as highlighting the conceptual difficulty of defining a 'weak' state. The final section shall question the weak state – terrorism connection and provide a conceptual framework for examining the relationship with respect to the cases.

Characterizing Terrorism

There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. The international community has long battled, and largely failed, to come to consensus.[1] Even the United States, the leading proponent in the 'war on terror', does not have a single definition of terrorism.[2] The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), which attempted to tackle the definition problem at a 2002 summit in Kuala Lumpur, failed to reach consensus among its Muslim members, stalling on one central problem: how to differentiate between legitimate struggles of liberation and acts of terrorism.[3] To recall the rather overused, but still poignant phrase, "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter", the critical notion of perception continues to be a significant, and seemingly unbridgeable chasm that has prevented a universal definition consensus for more than half a century. As Brian Michael Jenkins has observed, more often than not, the labeling of an act or group as terrorism or terrorist is derived from a moral viewpoint, one that identifies with the victims of the particular act.[4]

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[1] The first attempt by the international community to come to terminological consensus on terrorism came in 1937, under the League of Nations, which was summarily rejected. The United Nations General Assembly has had a resolution on terrorism on the table since 1999, which continues to fail to reach consensus. As a result, the UN must make do with a present piecemeal grouping of 12 protocols and conventions, while many nations would favour a single comprehensive convention on terrorism. See: "Definitions of Terrorism," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (2005), <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/terrorism_definitions.html>; "Conventions Against Terrorism," *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* (2005), <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/terrorism_conventions.html>.

[2] The US State Department, Department of Defense, and the FBI use similar, but nevertheless different, definitions of terrorism. Refer to: Mark Burgess, "Terrorism: the Problems of Definition," *Center for Defense Information (CDI) Report*, 1 August 2003, <http://www.cdi.org>.

[3] Carlyle Thayer, "Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *Journal of the Singaporean Armed Forces*, Vol. 29(4) (Fall 2003), 2, <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer/back/journals/2003/Vol29_4/5.htm>.

[4] Brian Michael Jenkins, *The Study of Terrorism: Definitional Problems* (RAND, December 1980), 10, as quoted in Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (USA: Columbia University Press, 1998), 31.

For the purposes of this study, terrorism will be defined in accordance with the recent definition adopted by the United Nations' *High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.* Terrorism is defined as:

> [A]ny action, in addition to actions already specified by the existing conventions on aspects of terrorism, the Geneva Conventions and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004), that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.[5]

While not without its critics, this definition attempts to avoid the pejorative nature of terrorism by focusing on the quality of the act itself and not on the identity of the perpetrators or the nature of their cause. Further, it includes many of the common points shared by otherwise contending definitions namely, that terrorism is:

- an *extreme* form of political violence that relies heavily on intimidation;

- a strategy whose action falls *outside* of the laws of war; and

- a *political* concept, in the sense that terrorist acts are intended to bring about change to a society, its government or its political institutions

It is generally agreed that acts constituted as terrorism involve directed attacks on noncombatants and innocent civilians (e.g. civilians, political assassinations of state leadership) by non-state actors, although the lack of a specific definition has led to broad applications of the term. Finally, while it is acknowledged that states and state actors

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[5] "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility," *United Nations Report* (2004), 83, <http://www.un.org/secureworld/>.

have committed terrorism and terrorist acts, this paper shall largely avoid the topic of 'state' or 'state-sponsored' terrorism.[6]

Defining what constitutes a terrorist organization is similarly ambiguous. There is no comprehensive, all-inclusive list of terrorist groups. The UN Security Council's 1267 Committee maintains a consolidated list of individuals and entities belonging to or associated with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.[7] Within this list, three organizations active within Southeast Asia are considered terrorist groups:[8] Al-Qaeda, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).[9]

There are, however, groups active within particular states that are marked as 'terrorist' whose names do not appear on the 1267 Committee list. In Southeast Asia, national governments have labeled several groups terrorists despite the fact they are not formally recognized as such by either the United States or the UN. These groups include: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF, Philippines), Laskar Jihad (Indonesia), the Free Aceh Movement (GAM, Indonesia) and the Pattani United Liberation Organization

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[6] The controversial concept of *state terrorism* refers to egregious violence or repression sanctioned by a state government, using its own security forces (army, police) against its own citizens or at others. *State-sponsored terrorism* refers to the use of egregious violence or repression against the citizens of a state through the use of proxy forces (e.g. militias, sub-state groups) not formally associated with the state itself.
[7] The 1267 Resolution Committee list can be viewed online at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/committees/1267/1267ListEng.htm>.
[8] The U.S. State Department, under its classification system of "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" (40) and "Terrorist Groups of Interest" (39), has identified, as well as Al-Qaeda, ASG and JI, four more Southeast Asian groups: the Alex Boncayao Brigade (Philippines), the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army, Cambodian Freedom Fighters and Kumpulan Mujahiddin Malaysia (KMM). "Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," *Country Reports on Terrorism*, US State Department (2005), <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/45394>.
[9] There are several variations in the spelling of JI, although *Jemaah Islamiyah* is the most commonly used version.

(PULO, Thailand).[10] While these groups are not formally recognized at the international level as terrorist organizations, each has committed actions that fall within the definitional parameters of a terrorist act outlined in the aforementioned UN high panel statement.

Categorizing Terrorism

Due to its multi-faceted nature, there is no single characteristic that defines terrorist acts. Instead, terrorism can be classified according to a general typology that focuses on type (political, criminal and pathological), target (symbolic, strategic), geographical reach (local/domestic, international/transnational), and motive (social revolutionary/right wing, religious/millenarian, national secessionist, single issue).

Type. Terrorism can be differentiated in three ways: political, criminal and pathological ('lone wolf' terrorism). Criminal terrorism is committed primarily for financial gain, while pathological terrorism is driven by personal gain or a vendetta. What distinguishes political terrorism from the criminal or pathological is that it is undertaken by a particular group for wholly or primarily political reasons (e.g. overthrow government, upset the status quo, or force social change and political policy). To qualify as political terrorism, Bruce Hoffman states, "violence must be perpetrated by some organizational entity with at least some conspiratorial structure and identifiable chain of command beyond a single individual acting on his or her own" for an ostensibly political rationale.[11]

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[10] Thayer, "Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia," 2.
[11] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (Columbia University Press: USA 1998), 43. All subsequent references to terrorism, unless specifically addressed, are considered political terrorism.

Targets. The targets of terrorist attacks can be generally distinguished between those that are purely symbolic and those that are purely strategic. Attacks on the general public, such as the targeting of civilians can be considered primarily symbolic in nature, since there are few, if any, direct strategic military gains. However, attacks on infrastructure (military/economic), off-duty personnel or government or military officials provide more obvious strategic gains since they are designed to weaken a given states' institutional strength. It is important to note that certain targets, such as state embassies or transportation infrastructures, may be chosen for both symbolic and strategic purposes.

Geographical Reach. Terrorism is generally defined as a phenomenon dependent on the geographical operations (e.g. locale of targets, centre of operations) of terrorist groups. Terrorist groups are described as either *local/domestic* (within-state) or *international/transnational* (pan-states). Al Qaeda and JI, for example, are considered international terrorist groups because their operations and targets take place across multiple states, whereas the operations and targets of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front take place solely in Filipino territory. The division, however, between international and domestic terrorist groups can be blurry: international terrorism is often described as a coordinated network of domestic groups, which can cause dispute as to whether a particular act (e.g. the 2004 bombing of the Filipino Superferry by the Abu Sayyaf, a domestic terrorist group associated with Al-Qaeda) is to be considered a case of either international or domestic terrorism.

Motive. There are a variety of motives that may drive a particular group to engage in terrorist activities. Often, political terrorism is motivated by a perception that there is need for a wholesale change in social structure and that violence is the only means of achieving goal. Although many groups have numerous goals, it is possible to group their motives under four key categories:

1. *Social revolutionary/right-wing terrorism* is driven by non-religious political ideologies that seek social transformation through violence (e.g. anarchism, Marxism, fascism, white supremacist groups);[12]

2. *Nationalist/secessionist terrorism* seeks to achieve autonomy or separation from a larger state body through the use of violence and intimidation.[13] The liberation of a particular 'nation,' crafted from either ethnic background or religious conviction, is regarded as necessary for greater justice to a particular group;

3. *Single-issue terrorism* utilizes extremist violence to propel political change in a specific issue area (e.g. animal rights, the environment).[14]

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[12] A. P. Schmid, "Frameworks for Conceptualising Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 16(2) (2004), 201.
[13] "Types of Terrorism," *Terrorism: Questions and Answers*, Council on Foreign Relations (2004), <http://cfrterrorism.org/terrorism/types.html>.
[14] James F. Jarboe, "The Threat of Eco-Terrorism," *Testimony Before the House Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health*, (12 February 2002), <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress02/jarboe021202.htm>.

4. *Religious/millenarian terrorism* stems from religious or pseudo-religious ideologies, where violence is justified through 'divine law' while casualties are seen as sacrifices towards a greater cause;[15]

Terrorism discourse to date uses a number of terms interchangeably when describing groups, both peaceful and violent, who draw inspiration from religious ideology to pursue their objectives, including fundamentalist, deviationalist, radical, extremist and militant. For the purpose of clarity, this thesis adopts the definitional framework outlined by Carlyle Thayer, who draws distinction between religious views (radical, fundamentalist, or extremist) and public actions (peaceful, intimidating, violent).[16] Here, an important distinction is drawn between *militant Islam* and *Islamism*: while both "advocate the overturning [of] the secular order with the aim of establishing an Islamic state," militant Islam is differentiated from Islamism by its deliberate use of physical or psychological intimidation of opponents, including through acts of violence, in the pursuit of political objectives.[17]

Characterizing State Capacity

A state can be defined as a distinct set of political institutions that exist, in theory, to provide political (public) goods to citizens living within a geographical territory, encapsulated by borders.[18] The integrity of the modern state, in the Weberian sense, is

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[15] Schmid, "Conceptualising Terrorism," 211.

[16] Carlyle A. Thayer and Mohd Shafie. "Security, Political Terrorism and Militant Islam in Southeast Asia," *Trends in Southeast Asia Series 7*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, (August 2003), 15-16, < http://www.iseas.edu.sg/trendsback.html>.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Robert Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," in Robert Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington: Brookings, 2003), 2.

determined by three factors: its territoriality; its monopoly of the means of physical violence; and its legitimacy.[19]

State *capacity* is defined in terms of performance within these three realms and, most importantly, the extent to which the state is able, or willing, to provide political goods to its citizens. There are three basic functions that effective governments must be able to perform: ensuring security, meeting the basic needs of citizens, and maintaining legitimacy.[20] Robert Rotberg summarizes political goods provided by the state in the following hierarchical order:[21]

- security of person and state;

- citizen access to politics and the political process;

- medical and health care institutions;

- educational institutions; and

- physical, economic and communication infrastructures (e.g. roads, banking systems, telephone networks)

The state's most basic function is to ensure security "by maintaining a monopoly over the use of force, protecting against internal and external threats, and preserving effective sovereignty and order within its territory."[22] The pillar of security is central because meeting basic needs and establishing legitimacy cannot be guaranteed without a

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[19] Maclean, Iain and Alistair McMillian (eds.), *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 513.

[20] Jeremy Weinstein et al., "On the Brink: Weak States and US National Security," *CGD Issue Report*, Center for Global Development (June 2004), 13, <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/2879/>.

[21] Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," 3-4.

[22] Weinstein, "On the Brink," 14.

modicum of security and law and order. If a state fails to fulfill this function, "a gap emerges that other states, non-state actors, and simple criminals may seek to fill with violent, hostile or illicit acts."[23]

The overall level of economic and social development of states is also an important indicator of state capacity, particularly in measuring the risk of political violence within countries. Evidence suggests high correlation between the level economic development and the risk of conflict within states, and "that as per capita income increases, the risk of war declines."[24] In their 2001 report analyzing the economics of civil war in 78 countries, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler concluded that male secondary education and enrollment, per capita income and the economic growth rate "all have statistically significant and substantial effects that reduce conflict risk."[25] States that rank higher on a developmental scale, such as the United Nation's Human Development Index (HDI),[26] are less likely to be at risk of political violence, including terrorism. The general conclusion is that the greater the state capacity, the more stable states tend to be: "If some states do a better job than others at developing basic infrastructure, operating the core machinery of government, and setting and

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[23] Ibid., 14.

[24] "Human Security Report 2005: War and Peace in the Twentieth Century," *Human Security Centre* (17 October 2005), 152 < http://www.humansecurityreport.info/>.

[25] Paul Collier and Anne Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *World Bank Research* (October 2001), 16, <http://econ.worldbank.org>.

[26] The Human Development Index (HDI), published annually by the UN, ranks nations according to their citizens' quality of life rather than strictly by a nation's traditional economic figures. The criteria for calculating rankings include life expectancy, educational attainment, and adjusted real income.

implementing policy objectives, then those states, all other things being equal, ought to be more stable over time."[27]

Categorizing State Capacity

Categorizing state capacity is a macro-level exercise that involves observing the structural, social and economic characteristics of a state. This assessment requires both qualitative and quantitative analysis, focusing on particular indicators that allow one to determine matters such as the relative political or economic integrity of a state's institutions. Yet while it is useful to engage in such a process for both analytical and comparative purposes, it is not without its critics. Since a state is a complex and multifaceted entity, observers must necessarily pick and choose the factors that will be given weight. The result is that certain state-specific conditions will be stripped away in order to make the comparisons possible.

Scholars have made a number of attempts to categorize the dimensions of strength and weakness of states.[28] Most analysts place states along a developmental continuum, ranging from "strong," "weak," "failed," or "collapsed." In general, these analytical constructs use a number of shared variables such as G.D.P and the infant mortality rate. However, this process of abstraction faces a number of difficulties. The authors of the State Failure Task Force Report, for instance, have pointed to the fact that the use of

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[27] Jack A. Goldstone et al., "State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings," *Center for International Development and Conflict Management* (2002), 49.

[28] See for example: Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, "Saving Failed States," *Foreign Policy* 89 (Winter 1992-93), 3-5; William Zartman, "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse," in William Zartman (ed.), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (London: Lynne Reinner: 1995), 2-10; Robert Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge University Press: UK 1993): 21-25; Kal J. Holsti, "War, Peace and the State of the State," *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 16(4) (1995).

these proxies does not allow analysts to capture the finer dimensions of state capacity.[29] In many respects, this touches on a central concern that for the purpose of theoretical simplicity, such models of state categorization inevitably sacrifice accuracy.

Yet most of the debate is not focused on the choice of variables, but on how to place states along an analytical spectrum. Although most can agree on the meaning of "strong" and "failed" states, consensus is less evident when it comes to the defining weak states. Many states exhibit both weak and strong characteristics. For example, whereas North Korea has a strong internal and external security framework, it is nevertheless weak in providing political goods to its citizens. While Singapore is characterized by robust internal security institutions and grants considerable political goods to its citizens, its centralized government restricts political freedom. This raises difficult questions such as whether highly centralized, authoritarian regimes can truly be called weak. At the same time, while these types of states harbour little if any terrorist activities, they place great restrictions on freedom of expression and movement. In these cases, and most pronounced in a state such as North Korea, there is more of a concern over human rights violations and terror committed by the state against their own citizens.

Although it is worth remarking on the more problematic aspects of these debates, state categorization nevertheless provides a useful method of comparing different states. One of the more effective models of state capacity is offered by Rotberg. Rotberg divides states into five categories, ranging from strong, weak, failed, failing and collapsed, based on a state's ability to maintain internal security and provide "political goods" to its

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[29] Goldstone et al., *State Failure Task Force Report*, 49.

citizens. The following section considers Rotberg's approach to state classification,[30] while highlighting some of the points of tension. This model will be further developed and applied in my evaluation of the dimensions of state weakness in Southeast Asia.

Strong States. According to Rotberg, strong states have structural and social features that provide a full spectrum of security. Structural features include: effective sovereignty, control of borders, a monopoly of violence by the state, effective law and order, an effective judicial system, and a strong civil-military relationship. Social features include: free participation by citizens in the political system, human and civil rights, and tolerance for dissent and difference, and avenues to vent problems and solve disputes through non-violent means. Strong states are also characterized by effective health care and education systems, robust economic systems, and reliable banking and securities regulation.[31] Strong states are considered to be 'mature' across all of these categories, and experience minimal, if any, internal violent conflict. Examples of strong states would include western, democratic states such as Canada, United States, and the countries of Western Europe.

Failed/Failing/Collapsed States. In contrast to strong states, failed states are those that largely fail or fail to provide the structural and social features described above. In addition, civil war and/or violent conflict based on sectarian, ethnic or linguistic lines are common or endemic features of such states.[32] In identifying failed or failing states,

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[30] See: Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," 2-10.
[31] Ibid., 3.
[32] Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States," 5.

Rotberg draws upon indicators provided by Jenne, which include:

- the loss of control over borders;

- the inability to protect citizens from organized violence (or a state's active participation in violence against citizens)

- the inability to prevent the growth of organized crime;

- the existence of weak or failed institutions;

- a failure to provide adequate health care, education, or other social services; and

- the loss of legitimacy in the eyes of a state's citizens[33]

Unlike failing or failed states, collapsed states are characterized by their total lack of state control. Whereas failed or failing states continue to maintain a modicum of working order, collapsed states exist in a vacuum of security where the formal economies have disintegrated (e.g. Somalia in the late 1980s; Nigeria and Sierra Leone in the 1990s).[34] Instead of relying on their states, Rotberg remarks, citizens are only able to obtain political goods "through private or ad hoc means."[35] Collapsed states are essentially Hobbesian in character, in that power rests in the hands of the strong while government institutions have been co-opted or are non-existent.

The essential quality of all failed, failing, or collapsed states is that they have varying degrees of breakdown in a state's integrity. These states either lack many or all

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[33] Erin K. Jenne, "Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State," in Robert Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington: Brookings 2003), 221-2.
[34] Ibid: 9.
[35] Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States," 9.

of the fundamental elements of the Weberian state model; that is to say, they are unable to maintain control over their territory; they do not exercise a monopoly over the means of violence; and they generally lack legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens in part or as a whole.

Weak States. Weak states exhibit qualities of both strong and failing states. In essence, they rest in a grey zone, "[showing] a mixed profile, fulfilling expectations in some areas, and performing poorly in others."[36] Rotberg describes them as

> Inherently weak because of geographical, physical, or fundamental economic restraints; basically strong, but temporarily or situationally weak because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed, despotism, or external attacks; and a mixture of the two.[37]

According to Rotberg, weak states are typified by non-democratic regimes. Although the regime in power carries a monopoly of force over the state territory, it "does not provide [its] citizens with the basic services expected of modern states."[38] Rotberg further elaborates on the internal environment of weak states, stating that

> Weak states typically harbor ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other intercommunal tensions that have not yet, or not yet thoroughly, become overtly violent. Urban crime rates tend to be higher and increasing. In weak states, the ability to provide adequate measures of other political goods is diminished or diminishing. Physical infrastructure networks have deteriorated. Schools and hospitals show signs of neglect, particularly outside the main cities. GDP per capita and other critical economic indicators have fallen or are falling, sometimes dramatically; levels of venal corruption are embarrassingly high and escalated. Weak states

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[36] Ibid., 4.
[37] Ibid., 4.
[38] Jenne, "Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State," 219.

usually honor rule of law precepts in the breach. They harass civil society.
Weak states are often ruled by despots, elected or not.[39]

Rotberg's characterization of weak states provides a number of useful analytical tools. In particular, it provides a relatively simple method of identifying attributes commonly shared by weak states while allowing flexibility in the face of states that exhibit qualities from both sides of the spectrum. His use of quantitative measures such as G.D.P. and the human development index provide a source of empirical data to gauge the position of a state on the developmental continuum. Further, his employment of qualitative indicators such as regime type and perceptions of legitimacy provide a useful means of gauging relative state weakness.

Yet despite the positive aspects of his weak state model, Rotberg's flexibility also leads to a number of conceptual difficulties. To begin, he places significant reliance on normative assessments of strength. Assertions such as that only democratic states can be considered strong, appears problematic when applied to certain cases. According to his framework, states such as China and Singapore may at best be described as "weak" because of their non-democratic character. On the other hand, democratic states such as Argentina and Venezuela would appear to automatically assume a stronger position because they are democracies. Although these aspects of a state are undoubtedly important, it is equally true that political legitimacy is not based on democracy alone.

Similarly, his parameters result in weak states becoming a 'catch-all' category for those states that do not easily fit into either end of the spectrum. According to Rotberg's

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[39] Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States," 5.

definition, the majority of the world's states fall into the category of weak states. Despite the apparent importance of this category, Rotberg neglects to provide a method of distinguishing between a number of possible variations between weak states. Clearly, some states are weaker in some areas, while comparatively stronger in others. It is simply erroneous to characterize all weak states as the same when it is apparent that considerable variations of strength and weakness exist in these states' structural, political and sociological frameworks.

Despite these criticisms, Rotberg's model of weak states remains useful, particularly when one considers it in light of the work of other scholars. For example, Erin Jenne has developed a special category of weak states that address some of the problems discussed above. Jenne proposes a subcategory of *fragmented* states that stand apart from their weak counterparts. Fragmented states carry some measure of (a) stable institutions, (b) political goods, including regular elections and broad civic freedoms, (c) the provision of social services, including health and education programs to some components of their populations, and (d) legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of state citizens.[40] However, a key characteristic of fragmented states is that they "have lost – or are losing – coercive control over significant portions of their territory."[41]

At the macro level, fragmented states appear to function at an economic, developmental and social level that places them closer to strong states than to weak ones. On the ground, however, fragmented states carry within them localized pockets of

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[40] Jenne, "Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State," 221-222.
[41] My emphasis. Jenne, "Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State," 219.

weakness, or 'brown zones.'[42] While state governments do provide a certain level of political goods within these regions, the regulatory capacity and security control of state governments is weak, and the legitimacy of the ruling state body is also low.

Although Rotberg's macro-level analysis is useful for many situations, certain cases may be better understood by employing Jenne's model as a secondary lens. In the southern Philippines, for example, the central government has effectively lost control; however, the Philippines as a whole tends to be characterized by strong social and political institutions when compared with its regional neighbours. If one relies on a macro-level approach, these types of regional weakness are lost. Yet it is within these "brown zones" where *dimensions* of state weakness remain prevalent, and where the socio-economic climate is comparatively worse than elsewhere, that political violence may flare up.

Do Weak States Create Terrorism?

The assumption that a relationship exists between weak states and terrorism rests on the following premises: if terrorism is a form of political violence and political violence is aggravated as a result of substandard state performance, then it follows that the weaker state capacity is within a country, the more prone it will be to terrorist activity. It is assumed that there is a *negative* correlation between state capacity, political violence and terrorism: the greater the state capacity, the less likelihood there will be of political violence and terrorist activities and vice versa.

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[42] I borrow the concept of 'brown zones' from Ray Takeyh and Nikolas Gvosdev, in their article "Do Terrorist Networks Need a Home?," *Washington Quarterly* Vol. 25(3) (Summer 2002), 98.

Although there is an intuitive logic to this proposition, it is problematic for a number of reasons. To begin, terrorism in not isolated to weak states. Strong states, such as the United States, Britain, Spain, France and Germany and Japan have all experienced domestic terrorist activities. Many, if not all of these groups have justified their use of violence based on their respective state's alleged failure to meet the group's particular needs.

Similarly, while many states experiencing terrorism carry characteristics of weakness, the significant majority of weak states do not experience terrorist violence. The states with the lowest levels of state capacity, at or near the level of failure or collapse, show very little, if any, terrorist activities.[43] According to the *Failed States Index* (FSI), an in-depth study that analyzed the world's most instable states, no terrorist activity is present in 16 of the 20 countries deemed most at risk of state failure. Their research, however, did find that "uneven development is high in almost all states in the index, suggesting that inequality within states [...] increases instability.[44] In contrast to popular assumptions, empirical evidence demonstrates that while low state capacity is correlated to state instability, it does not necessarily correspond to higher levels of terrorism.

Southeast Asia demonstrates another case in point. The region has long experienced domestic political violence in the form of insurgencies, regional separatism,

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[43] Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 16.
[44] "The Failed State Index," *Foreign Policy* (July/August 2005), 56-65, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3098>.

and ethno-religious strife.[45] It is also now considered a hotbed of terrorism. From a macro-level inspection based on Rotberg's framework, all the states within the region could be considered weak. According to the classification provided by the FSI, however, only two states in Southeast Asia, Burma and Laos, rank within the 'medium risk' zone of state failure (23rd and 28th, respectively), with none in the 'high risk' category.[46] While still weak, Vietnam (52nd) is considered more stable than Turkey. Singapore is decidedly stable, although its authoritarian government prevents it, according to Rotberg's framework, from being classified as strong. What is striking however is that those states that have seen the greatest incidents of terrorist activities – Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand – rank as relatively stable and strong states (46th, 56th and 69th respectively). In fact, Indonesia stands the greatest at odds with the weak state-terrorism hypothesis in spite of being the state most visibly shaken by terrorist activities since 2001.

All of these examples provide strong empirical evidence that belies the proposition that weak state capacity is directly correlated to terrorism. The question this raises is how to understand the relationship between state capacity and terrorism. If weak state capacity cannot alone explain the development of terrorist activities, it appears necessary to reconceptualize the relationship between these phenomena.

Conceptualizing the Relationship Between State Capacity and Terrorism

Current conceptual models of state capacity fail to adequately explain why some weak states exhibit terrorist activities while others do not. It is erroneous to assume that actors
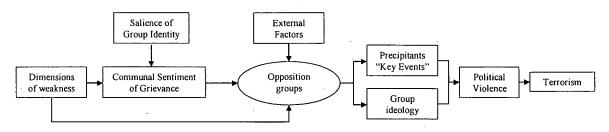
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[45] Thayer, "Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia," 3.
[46] "The Failed State Index," 56-65.

are driven towards terrorism based solely on the condition of a state, as exemplified by the lack of terrorism in the great majority of the world's poorest countries. State weakness, in other words, is an insufficient variable to explain the emergence of terrorism.

In order to better understand the complex inter-relationship between state capacity and terrorism, this paper proposes a conceptual framework (see Figure 1). In this framework, low state capacity is viewed as part of a causal process towards political violence. Low state capacity, generally speaking, generates frustration and builds grievance within a particular group against the state, which in turn can escalate into political violence. On their own, however, low state capacity and grievance are not sufficient factors to explain the emergence of terrorism. In order for groups to move from political violence to terrorism, an ideological bridge is required to provide the moral validation for more heinous acts: a 'higher justification' that rationalizes terrorism as a necessary, and acceptable, activity. This conceptual model shall be utilized to examine the three cases.

Figure 1: Linking State Capacity and Terrorism

Sources: Crenshaw (1981); Gurr (1993)

This model expands on previous scholarly work focused on the relationship between the state and political violence. In order to develop this framework, we must establish conceptual distinctions among different types of factors. First, *dimensions of weakness*, specific structural conditions whereby the state cannot, or does not, provide citizens with basic political goods, are the foundation in the causal chain of political violence. Dimensions of weakness are responsible for generating, in the view of Martha Crenshaw, "preconditions" that set the stage for terrorism over the long run.[47] A further classification divides dimensions of weakness into those that (a) give rise to a communal sentiment of grievance within particular groups and; (b) those that provide the "functional space" that expedites the operative abilities of non-state groups.[48] These two factors shall be discussed in greater detail below.

Communal Sense of Grievance

Numerous attempts have been made in order to better understand the complex mixture of factors that fuel terrorism. Poverty, inequality, poor education, modernization and religion, among others, have all been identified as 'root causes' of political violence. But such causes produce all kinds of social outcomes, of which terrorism is just one.[49]

The single common denominator that lies at the heart of all political violence, including terrorism, is a strong sentiment of grievance. Political violence occurs when

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[47] Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* Vol. 13(4) (July 1981), 381.
[48] I borrow the term "functional space" from Kumar Ramakrishna. See: Kumar Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam in Southeast Asia." In: Paul J. Smith (ed.), *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability* (New York: ME Sharpe, 2005), 146.
[49] Tore Bjorgo (ed.), "Root Causes of Terrorism," *Proceedings from an International Expert Meeting in Oslo* (June 2003), 5.

"grievances are sufficiently acute that people want to engage in violent protest."[50] All sub-state groups, today and in the past, have justified political violence, including terrorism, by their disenchantment with a dominating regime, or with the ethnic, political or social groups that control or support that regime.

Three prominent structural conditions within weak states appear to give rise to grievance among groups:

High income inequality. Enduring economic disparities between nations, between social and ethnic groups with states can fuel local dissatisfaction.[51] Sentiments of grievance and alienation can build against national governments, which are viewed as either ignoring or unwilling to address particular economic inequities between groups within states, or favour one group over another.

Discrimination and/or persecution based on religious/ethnic affiliation. Grievance can proliferate from a perception that particular communities are marginalized as a result of their ethnic and/or religious affiliation.[52] The fear of some local communities that their culture, heritage and traditions are threatened by the actions of a dominant state creates mistrust, disillusionment and resentment of national state governments. Empirical

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[50] Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," 2.
[51] Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*, (Washington: USIP, 1993), 40.
[52] Ibid., 48.

evidence has demonstrated that the greater the cultural distinction between groups, "the more they tend to suffer from political and economic inequalities."[53]

Incompetent, repressive or corrupt government/military/judicial institutions. Poor governance and a deficiency of properly functioning government institutions often characterize weak states. Graft and corruption within government and its agencies, poor civil-military relations, and questionably independent judiciaries contribute to a general lack of legitimacy of state institutions. Abuses of power and violations of human rights as a result of poor governance can further corrode legitimacy in government, particularly in the eyes of marginalized groups. Repressive control by a dominant group within a state is also seen as a key factor stimulating grievance amongst ethnic or religious minorities within states.[54]

Functional Space

All terrorist organizations – local, regional and transnational – require some territorial location, and thus operate within and across states. Functional space is created as a result of security gaps in the physical, governmental, and financial frameworks of states. Terrorist groups exploit the functional space provided by weak states for recruitment, for logistics, for the generation of finances, and for physical centres of operations.

There are four prominent dimensions of state weakness that provide non-state groups with functional space for their activities:

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[53] Ibid., 38.
[54] Ibid., 128-129.

Porous borders. Porous borders can facilitate the movement of dubious individuals and groups both in and out of states. Weak monitoring and border security can be a result of difficult or expansive geographic terrain, or insufficient security capabilities of state governments, or both.[55]

Lax immigration controls. State sovereignty and control can be compromised as a result of lax immigration and visa controls that provide individuals with legal entrance into states or regions. Lax immigration controls can be a result of either poor regulatory capabilities, insufficient training of personnel, or corruption within customs and immigration institutions.[56]

Poorly regulated financial systems. The ease of money-laundering and the transfer of funds below the radar of the state can make both individual states, and in cases regions, particularly attractive to non-state groups. A lack of proper financial regulation allows groups to wash dirty money through legitimate businesses, as well as provide relatively unregulated financial exchanges to fund the agendas of groups.[57]

Criminality and Corruption. Terrorist groups and criminal syndicates alike flourish in environments of state corruption, weak regulation and poor security enforcement.

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[55] Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam," 146; Anthony Smith, "Trouble in Thailand's Separatist South: Separatism not Global Terrorism," *Asia Pacific Security Study Series*, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Vol. 3(10) (December 2004), 213, <http://www.apcss.org/graphics/graphics_research.htm>.
[56] Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam," 147.
[57] Ibid., 147.

Relationships of convenience with the criminal underworld provide terrorist organizations not only with forged documents, but access to a prolific black market in arms and weaponry.[58] Compromised government institutions can facilitate the agendas of non-state groups through bribery or tip-offs as well as sympathy and even allegiance to their goals. Intelligence and weapons leakage can also bolster the effectiveness of such groups.

Salience of group identity

A group is defined by markers of communal identity, such as ethnicity, religious beliefs, region of residence, and shared historical experiences.[59] The salience of group identity impacts on the intensity of grievance felt within a particular group. Gurr attributes three external conditions to the salience of group identity: the perceived relative disadvantage of a communal group with respect to other groups; the extent of cultural differences that exist between groups; and the intensity of conflict with relation to other groups within the state.[60] An additional factor tied to the strength of group identity is the extent of group cohesion, which "tends to be greater among groups that are concentrated in a single region."[61]

As Crenshaw stipulates, one of the formidable causes of terrorism "is the existence of concrete grievances among an identifiable subgroup of a larger population,

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[58] Smith, Trouble in Thailand's Separatist South," 214-215.
[59] Gurr, "Minorities at Risk," 3.
[60] Ibid., 126.
[61] Ibid., 127.

such as an ethnic minority discriminated by the majority."[62] In addition, the combination of shared grievances with a strong sense of group identity is a powerful motivator that develops group mobilization and "provides highly combustible material that fuels spontaneous action."[63]

External Factors

External factors or conditions that exist outside of the state can inspire or assist a sub-state group and their agenda. Gurr defines this as the *contagion of communal activism*: "the process by which one group's actions provide inspiration and strategic and tactical guidance for groups elsewhere."[64]

Inspiration for action can be drawn from trends affecting religious or ethnic communities at the global level or from specific circumstances where local religious or ethnic communities are in a state of conflict with a perceived opposing ideological force. For example, the reassertion of traditional religious and political values throughout the Islamic world has provided the moral encouragement to stimulate self-assertion by Islamic minorities living in non-Islamic states.[65] The belief that Islam is under attack from the West acts as an ideological cornerstone for many militant Islamist groups. A selection of these groups has similarly found inspiration through key events in the Muslim world, such as the September 11th attacks and the US occupation of Iraq.

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[62] Crenshaw, "Causes of Terrorism," 383.
[63] Gurr, "Minorities at Risk," 124.
[64] Ibid., 134.
[65] Ibid.

In some cases, encouragement has come in the form of moral, material or diplomatic support from outside sources sympathetic to the plight of a particular group (e.g. financial assistance, training, state legitimization of conflict). In the 1970s, the Libyan government provided assistance and training to the Moro National Islamic Front, and was actively involved in their truce negotiations with the Filipino government in 1976.[66] For many years, Iran has been accused of financially supporting a number of prominent Middle Eastern terrorist groups, including Hamas and Hezbollah. While Iran has consistently denied these allegations, the government has nevertheless admitted to providing moral and intellectual support in their fight for a Palestinian state.[67]

More recently, we have seen tactical inspiration for particular acts derived from other conflicts. For example, the use of car bombs, suicide bombings, attacks on clearly economic targets (i.e. hotels, tourist industry), and the beheading of soldiers in southern Thailand shows some distinct parallels to other Muslim conflicts around the world, particularly in Indonesia and Iraq.

Precipitants

Precipitants are defined as "specific events that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism."[68] Often a particular instance of a government's use of "unexpected and unusual force" in response to protest or reform attempts compels retaliation by a

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[66] Willem Wolters, "Muslim Rebel Movements in the Southern Philippines," *European Journal of Anthropology* 40 (2002), 149.
[67] "Interview with Iran's Foreign Minister," *Middle East Insight* 13(1) (November-December 1997), 37.
[68] Crenshaw, "Causes of Terrorism," 381.

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particular group.[69] These "key events" spark a sentiment of outrage in a communal group and in turn can act as catalysts, triggering political violence. Precipitants can also serve to justify reactionary attacks. Over the course of time, precipitant events can build on one another, reinforcing calls for action. As Gurr states, "once a serious episode of conflict occurs [...] it leaves a persistent residue in people's memories for a long time."[70]

Group ideology

A strong sense of grievance appears to be a necessary, but not sufficient precondition for the emergence of terrorism. Sentiments of grievance, in addition to precipitants, may be enough to start groups down pathways of political violence. But overt terrorist tactics – assassinations of state officials or the indiscriminate targeting of non-military personnel and individuals – seems to require an extra rationalization. Here, an ideological bridge is required to provide the moral validation necessary to justify and rationalize terrorism.

The ideological rationale for the use of terrorist tactics can be divided into three distinct types. First are *nationalist ideologies*, where sub-state groups feel compelled towards terrorism (a) to protect the state from a perceived enemy (state-based nationalism); or (b) to protect a particular 'nation' or ethnic community (ethnic-based nationalism). Second are *political ideologies*, where sub-state groups rationalize terrorism on the basis of protecting or promoting a particular political philosophy, such as Maoism, Marxism, or anarchism. Third and finally are *religious ideologies*, where sub-state groups

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[69] Ibid.
[70] Gurr, "Minorities at Risk," 126.

rationalize terrorism as essential to promote, or protect, a particular religion, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Sikhism.

From Political Violence to Terrorism

Terrorist acts are an extreme method of attracting attention to particular cause and a shock tactic whose intent is to force a political establishment to address the demands of a particular group. Terrorism becomes an option to achieve a 'greater good,' especially when other avenues to reach their goal appear to be blocked or have been ineffective in the past.[71] It has also been suggested that the escalation to more spectacular acts of terrorism (e.g. mass-casualty terrorism, suicide bombers) are a result of the global community's increasing immunity to acts of political violence, and that more devastating attacks are required to capture regional or global attention.

The aforementioned ideologies provide a higher justification, beyond merely a sense of grievance or the employment of 'standard' political violence (e.g. protest, riots, insurgency), to the use of terrorist tactics. In combination with particular precipitating events, these ideologies can provide the moral authority that sanctifies the use of more deadly variations of political violence.

Religious ideology, however, is differentiated from other motivating ideologies in the sense that it derives its justification from otherworldly sources. For certain radicalized groups terrorist acts, no matter how destructive, are sanctified by religious doctrine and permissible by a higher spiritual power. In the words of Alex Schmidt,

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[71] Schmid, "Conceptualising Terrorism," 211.

> Human rights violations are justified in the name of an invoked 'divine law' which supersedes man-made laws and which can give brutal violence a 'sacred' character and elevate the slaughter of infidels to a 'holy war'... Many acts of violence which we consider immoral as a means to achieve an end are, in the view of the religiously motivated terrorist, justified by the absolute end for which the terrorist purports to fight.[72]

In other words, violent acts are perceived as 'crimes of obedience' executed by the will of God, thereby removing the notion of individual culpability. It is for this absence of restraint that analysts consider religious motivation the most dangerous and destructive form of terrorism.

Radical Islamic ideology is currently assumed to be the dominant ideological bridge that rationalizes the use of terrorism. Indeed, this observation is derived from the reality that the great extent of terrorist acts in recent years have been committed in the name of Islam, including in Southeast Asia. It is important to note, however, that this has not always been the case. While the majority of sub-state group terrorism today is committed on the behalf of Islamic preservation, this is simply a characteristic of the current historical period. Religious ideology has been a motivating factor for terrorist acts for centuries, and a phenomenon not isolated to the Islamic faith alone.[73]

Is, however, religious ideology the predominant driving force for terrorism in Southeast Asia? While outside observers are quick to highlight the religious aspect of the region's local conflicts, there is a tendency to ignore the possibility that these conflicts

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[72] Ibid.

[73] For greater detail, see Bruce Hoffman (1998), *Inside Terrorism*, Columbia University Press: USA, chapters 1-2.

are driven by more than one ideological standpoint. A closer examination is therefore required to expose the nature of these conflicts and their actors, and whether they are inspired uniquely by religion.

Chapter Three: Islam and Political Violence in Southeast Asia

Prior to the discussion of the cases, it is important to contextualize the relationship between Islam and political violence in Southeast Asia. While political violence is not a new phenomenon in the region, a sharp spike in terrorist acts in congruent with the rise of radicalized Islamist groups in recent years requires closer examination.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first shall provide an overview of the Islamic communities across Southeast Asia and outline the general character of Islam in the region. The second section shall briefly outline the relationship between Islam and the state. The third section shall discuss the impact of the global resurgence of Islam and the factors that contributed to the shift in religious attitudes in the region. The final section shall evaluate the premise that Southeast Asia is to be considered a second front of terrorism and introduce the three cases to be examined.

Characterizing Southeast Asian Islam

Southeast Asia is home to more than 206 million Muslims. It is considered one of the two epicentres of the Islamic world, encompassing roughly 20 percent of the world's estimated 1.2 billion Muslims.[74] Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei are the only countries within the region where Islam is the religion of the majority, although every other Southeast Asian state does contain a significant minority Islamic community.

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[74] "Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Introduction," *SAIS Johns Hopkins University Conference Report* (25 March 2003), Washington, D.C., 2, <www.sais-jhu.edu/programs/asia/SEA/SEA_Publications/SoutheastAsia/PoliticalIslamReport.pdf>.

Table 1 Islam and Southeast Asia: State Populations

Country	Total Population	% Muslims in Country	Muslim Population	% of Total SEAn Islamic Community
Indonesia	212,195,000	87.0	184,609,605	89.5
Malaysia	22,229,040	55.0	12,225,972	5.93
Philippines	82,841,518	4.6	4,142,076	2.00
Thailand	61,797,751	3.8	2,348,315	1.14
Burma	41,994,678	3.8	1,679,787	0.81
Singapore	4,300,419	14.0	602,059	0.29
Vietnam	79,939,014	0.7	531,000	0.25
Cambodia	12,491,501	2.4	299,796	0.14
Brunei	343,653	67.0	230,248	0.10
Laos	5,635,967	1.0	57,000	0.10
Southeast Asia	468,011,411		206,725,858	

Source: "Political Islam in Southeast Asia," Johns Hopkins University, 3

Islam in Southeast Asia is characterized by its tradition of tolerance, moderation and pluralism.[75] While most of the region's Muslims consider themselves Sunni, Islam in Southeast Asia is a diverse blend of pre-existing Hindu, Buddhist, Animist and folk religious traditions which has created a plethora of regional and subregional variations of Islamic practice.[76] The incorporation of traditional beliefs into the Islamic framework has created "many faces of Islam" in the region, a characteristic that differentiates it from many of its Middle Eastern counterparts.[77]

Traditionally, Southeast Asians have lived peacefully in religiously mixed communities, including those where Islam has constituted the large majority.[78] While there has for generations existed a small minority of Muslims in the region that have prescribed to more fundamentalist variations of Islamic practice, religious violence has

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[75] Zachary Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Colorado: Lynne Reinner, 2003), 1.

[76] "Political Islam in Southeast Asia," 3.

[77] Yukiko Ohashi, "The Many Faces of Islam in Malaysia," *Asia Times* (9 July 2004), <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/FG09Ae04.html>.

[78] "Political Islam in Southeast Asia," 4.

been statistically rare in these communities. "Despite their strict or unyielding stance on matters of doctrine or ritual practice," Hefner has observed, "very few Muslims in this category were disposed to violence to achieve their objectives."[79] It is only in the last few decades that this trend has shifted, with the emergence of several self-proscribed Islamic opposition groups who view political violence as a means to an end.

The State and Islam

Almost all of Southeast Asia's states are governed by secular governments; the Islamic monarchy of Brunei Darussalam remains the exception.[80] Despite the large Islamic population in Southeast Asia, there is only modest support for the creation of Islamic states, while more extremist forms of Islamism continue to remain at the fringes.[81] This includes Indonesia and Malaysia, where Islam is the dominant religion.

This attitude is reflected in recent voting statistics. In the case of Indonesia, "only a quarter of the parties that contested the 1999 elections advocated creating an Islamic government...These parties received about 16 percent of the vote, whereas secular partied polled over 60 percent and moderate Islamic parties received 20 percent."[82] In the 2004 Indonesian elections, Islamist parties seeking to institute Islamic Sharia law and have Indonesia officially become an Islamic state only achieved a small percentage of the popular vote.[83] In Malaysia, the radical Islamist party, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS)

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[79] Ibid., 3.
[80] "Brunei Darussalam," *Background Report*, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, US Department of State, March 2005, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2700.htm>.
[81] John Gershman, "Is Southeast Asia a Second Front?," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2002), 62.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Bruce Vaughn, "Indonesian Elections," *CRS Reports*, US Library of Congress (20 May 2005), p. 3. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21874.pdf>.

won its "greatest victory at the polls" in 1999, "capturing 27 parliamentary seats (out of a total of 193) and gaining control of 2 of Malaysia's 14 states."[84] In the 2004 parliamentary elections, however, PAS suffered major setbacks, an indication that "mainstream Islam in Malaysia [had] reasserted its moderate character."[85] Such results indicate that Southeast Asia's Islamic constituency is largely reluctant to grant Islam a larger role in politics and state affairs.

The Resurgence of Islam in Southeast Asia

Since the 1970s Southeast Asia has seen an unprecedented Islamic revival and a general shift towards religious conservatism. This has been most apparent in Muslim-dominated Indonesia and Malaysia but also significant in the southern provinces of both Thailand and the Philippines. Most evident is the rise of devout Muslims, a growing number of Mosques, religious schools, and a general surge in the availability of Islamic material.[86] The popularity of religious symbolism is also apparent within the Islamic community, including growing popularity of Islamic dress codes (e.g. headdresses for women and white skullcaps for men), the use of Arabic sayings and the studying of religious texts, as well as the increased numbers of Southeast Asian Muslims either studying in the Middle East or taking the pilgrimage to Mecca.[87]

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[84] Gershman, "Southeast Asia a Second Front?," 62.
[85] Mark Manyin et al., "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *CRS Report*, US Library of Congress (7 February 2005), 3.
[86] Robert W. Hefner, "Chapter 1: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia", in Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatich (eds.), *Islam in an Era of Nation-States* (Hawaii University Press: Hawaii 1997), 5.
[87] "Political Islam in Southeast Asia," 3.

This resurgence is attributed to several factors within the international Islamic community. First, the growth of widespread disenchantment with secular nationalism in much of the Muslim world, where liberal individualism and its perceived *laissez-faire* moralist attitude are seen to directly conflict with Muslim values, which has in turn prompted calls for the preservation of Islamic traditions.[88] A second factor was the 1979 Iranian revolution, a profound event in modern Islamic history, which provided inspiration to many Muslims that an Islamic state was a viable and attainable socio-political alternative in an international system dominated by secular governments.[89] A third contributing factor is the growth of Middle Eastern economic power since the 1970s, with Islamic countries such as Saudi Arabia and Libya building religious, political and financial networks with the larger Islamic community.[90] A fourth contributing factor has been the ongoing series of conflicts involving Islamic communities, the Israel-Palestine situation, the occupation of Iraq by the United States and its allies taking centre stage. No less significant was the September 11th attacks, which have polarized much of the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Through these events, a perception has built for many Muslims that Islam as an identity is on the defense from Western military and political policy as well as its "war on terrorism."

Explaining the shift towards more conservative Islamic practice in Southeast Asia has been attributed more specifically to the importation of fundamentalist strains of Islam, such as Salafism and Wahhabism, from the Middle East. This ideological inflow

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[88] Magnus Ranthorp, "Terrorism in the Name of Religion," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 50(1) (Summer 1996), 44.
[89] Robert Hefner, "Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Keynote Address," *SAIS Johns Hopkins University Conference Report*, Washington, D.C. (25 March 2003), 5.
[90] Hefner, "Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia," 5.

has been channeled through Islamic charity organizations, financial assistance to Islamic political parties, scholarships for religious study in the Middle East, the construction of mosques and religious schools, as well as the distribution of Islamic reading materials. The Wahhabist and Salafist sects of Islam, noted for rigid interpretation of Islamic faith, have made considerable inroads into the Southeast Asian Muslim community are seen by many scholars as largely responsible for the growth of religious extremism in the region. The growth of Middle East-, and notably Saudi-,funded religious schools is seen to have contributed significantly to the proliferation of what has been described as neo-Salafism, "which blends the return-to-roots fundamentalism of traditional Salafism with an additional ideational threat of an Islam under siege from Christian, Zionist, and secular forces."[91] While neo-Salafism may not promote the use of violence directly it, in the words of Ramakrishna, "certainly engenders an exclusionist mindset that may prove particularly prone to radicalization in certain circumstances."[92]

While an Islamic resurgence and a trend towards religious conservatism is apparent within Southeast Asia's Islamic communities, it is important to note that only a fraction of Muslims or Islamic groups view terrorism as a means to an end. Most Islamic groups, parties and organizations in Southeast Asia are in fact nonviolent. One of the largest and most influential Islamic organizations in the region, Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), characterizes the general stance of popular Islamic organizations. As John Gershman explains, "[t]he NU espouses 'traditional' Muslim values, but 'traditional' in

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[91] Elizabeth Fuller Collins, "Dakwah and Democracy: The Significance of Partai Deadilan and Hizbut Tahrir," paper presented at the International Seminar on Islamic Militant Movements in Southeast asia, July 22-23, 2003, Jakarta. As quoted from Ramakirshna, "Countering Radical Islam," 155.
[92] Ibid., 155.

this context means a fairly tolerant and pluralistic approach to the observance and practice of Islam…Indeed, the NU recently agreed to help combat the extremism of some Islamist groups and has supported efforts to crack down on violence."[93]

While Southeast Asia has long experienced domestic political violence, the number of terrorist incidents in recent years where actors have claimed an Islamic rationale as their guiding force, as in cases of the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings and the 2003 attacks on the Jakarta Marriot Hotel and the Australian Embassy, have led many analysts to conflate the growth of conservative Islam with the escalation of religiously motivated political violence. Hefner, for example, has blamed much conflict in Southeast Asia on "a volatile mix of economic crisis, diminished state capacity, ethnoreligious tensions, and sectarian trawling by an odd alliance of political bosses and paramilitary *jihadis* willing to exacerbate ethnoreligious divides for their own ends."[94] However, this does not adequately explain, paralleling the words of Ramakrishna, the certain circumstances that render individuals, groups or communities prone to radicalization. Neither does it explain the linkages between these factors.

This type of generalization has led to a rather uncritical perception that pegs radicalized religious ideology as the overarching factor leading to conflict. Events such as September 11th and the Bali bombings have only served to reinforce this belief. And while there is a measure of truth to these statements, such perspectives tend to overshadow the socio-political issues that underlie all religious conflicts. A closer inquiry

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[93] Gershman, "Southeast Asia a Second Front?," 62.
[94] Hefner, "Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Keynote Address," 5.

into individual cases is required in order to more deeply understand the conditions that nurture these conflict scenarios. Most important is the need to develop a better sense of the actual role Islam plays in these conflicts.

Southeast Asia – A Second Front?

Soon after the September 11th attacks, followed by the equally indiscriminant 2002 Bali bombings, many terrorism analysts coined this latest breed as 'new terrorism', a deadly mixture of secular modernity and technological savvy steeped in religious tradition.[95] Distinct from its more traditional counterparts, this new terrorism is typified by its networked structure, transnational in both scope and reach, in addition to what Bruce Hoffman described as groups "unparalleled in their severity and lethal ambitions."[96] Some experts view that Osama Bin Laden, leader of Al-Qaeda ("the Base"), acts as "terrorism's CEO ... [applying] business administration and modern management techniques to the running of a transnational terrorist organization."[97] In this top-down formula, Al-Qaeda is seen to provide seed money, training, operations guidance to "like-minded insurgent guerillas and terrorists" worldwide.[98]

Since 2001, there has been a tendency to view conflicts where religious identity is a factor as potentially 'hijacked' or influenced to a significant extent by external actors. A popular perception is that Al-Qaeda has created a network of terrorists groups throughout

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[95] Kumar Ramakrishna and Andrew Tan, "The New Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prescriptions," in: Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna, *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2002), 4.
[96] Ibid., 7.
[97] Bruce Hoffman, "The Emergence of the New Terrorism," in Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakrishna (eds.), *The New Terrorism*, 38.
[98] Hoffman, "The Emergence of the New Terrorism," 40.

the region, based on common belief, strategy and agenda.[99] Regional groups, including JI and Laskar Jihad, are all said to have established ties to Al-Qaeda. These groups in turn have been accused of collaboration with smaller, more localized groups. Following the 2002 Bali bombings, some went further to argue that many local militant Islamist groups not only had extensive links with Al-Qaeda, but were driven by the same extremist ideology.[100] On the whole, evidence of Al-Qaeda activities and suggestions of ideological congruity between international, regional and local terrorist groups has led to the belief that Southeast Asia is a second front in the war on terrorism.

But is religion really the prime mover rationalizing terrorist incidents and activities in Southeast Asia? Is Al-Qaeda behind all seemingly religiously motivated attacks? This view has generated debate, with a number of academics condemning it as alarmist rhetoric. Regional specialists, for example, have countered these claims, arguing that they suffer from a monocausal or shallow understanding of Islam, political Islam and the legacy of insurgency within the region. And while they acknowledge that there is a degree of validity to the second front theory, they maintain that the emphasis placed on such a phenomenon is "unbalanced" in accordance to the actual sociopolitical dynamics of Southeast Asian society.[101]

Evidence also suggests important distinctions exist between local and transnational terrorism, in matters of both aim and ideology. First, local Islamist groups

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[99] Manyin et al., "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," 3.
[100] Ibid.; Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, 25; Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (USA: Penguin, 2003), 224.
[101] Hefner, "Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Keynote Address," 5.

frequently call for secession and independence, not worldwide Islamic revolution or Islamic caliphates as demanded by transnational or even regional groups. This weakens the claim that the region's militant Islamist groups are ideologically congruent.

Second, while Islamist violence has increased in the last half decade, sectarian tensions, conflict and even terrorism are not new phenomena in Southeast Asia. The majority of Southeast Asia's influential militant Islamist groups predate the birth of Al-Qaeda, and have fought nationalist conflicts against state governments for many years under the banner of Islam. To suggest that the use of Al-Qaeda-style terrorist tactics and an upsurge in violence is proof of infiltration by international terrorism ignores a deeper set of conditions on the ground that have resulted in conflict in the past.

The following three chapters shall test some of these assumptions in reference to the states of Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Specifically, I shall examine three regions in these states: Aceh, Pattani and Mindanao, respectively. In each of these cases there exist Islamic communities concentrated in a geographical territory, where political violence and acts of terrorism have been justified in the name of Islam. These regions are also suggested to be at greatest risk of infiltration by Al-Qaeda, or worse, conflicts hijacked by its militant Islamist network.

Using the framework above, I shall attempt to shed light on the relationship between state capacity, Islam, and terrorism with respect to these cases. Initial examination shall focus on how the conditions of state capacity discussed above have

contributed to grievance felt by these Islamic communities, as well as how the weak

security environments provide operational space for these groups. Further, I shall explore

the role Islam plays in these conflicts, and how it relates to the aims and ideology of the

groups in the cases. Finally, I shall examine the international and regional linkages of

these local groups, in order to assess the validity of the second front theory.

Chapter Four: Aceh, Indonesia

Introduction

Located on the westernmost point of Sumatra, Aceh province is a region rich in natural resources, including timber and oil and gas deposits, and home to Indonesia's most conservative Islamic community. Aceh is also considered one of Indonesia's most unstable regions. With a population of approximately four million spread over a territory of 55,392 square kilometres Aceh has, until only recently, been rocked by a decades-old conflict fought between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), a local group vying for independence, and the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI), which has claimed the lives of over 10,000 civilians while displacing tens of thousands.[102] On August 15, 2005, the GAM and the Indonesian government signed a peace agreement aimed at ending nearly 30 years of conflict.[103]

Poverty and violence, as a result of historical, structural and institutional factors, have left Aceh lagging behind the rest of Indonesia, comparatively. A deep sense of grievance pervades the indigenous Acehnese community, who largely blame the government for their status; while a functional space characterized by inadequate security institutions, poor governance and corruption has allowed militancy to flourish. The 2004 Asian Tsunami, from which Aceh was hardest hit, only served to deepen the crisis, killing over 125,000 with an additional 37,000 missing.

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[102] According to a recent IDP Report, an estimated 120,000 to 150,000 people were internally displaced in Aceh between May 2003 and December 2004 as a result of a major military operation against the Free Aceh Movement. See: "Post-Tsunami Assistance Risks Neglecting Reintegration Needs of Conflict Induced IDPs," *Global IDP Database*, International Displaced Persons Project (2005), <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/SODA-6CS4QH?OpenDocument >.
[103] "Aceh Rebels Sign Peace Agreement," *BBC News* (15 August 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4151980.stm>.

Dimensions of Weakness

The deeply rooted grievance felt within the Acehnese community[104] against the Indonesian government has developed as a result of a series of historical and structural conditions, as explained below.

Structural factors

Income Inequality

There is a widespread perception within the Acehnese community that they have been largely left out of Indonesia's modernization and economic growth over the course of the last four decades. The discovery and development of Acehnese oil and gas reserves in the 1970s brought a measure of rapid industrialization, modernity and development to the region; however, a majority of the resource wealth flowed directly to Jakarta in accordance to New Order policy of centralization envisioned by then-president Suharto (1966 to 1998). The economic aspect of Suharto's centralization policy focused on Javanese development and economic modernization, in what many came to feel was at the expense of the peripheral provinces.[105] This sentiment was distinct within the Acehnese community, where comparatively little of Aceh's oil and gas export earnings flowed back into the local economy.[106]

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[104] The "Achenese community," unless otherwise noted, refers to the indigenous Acehnese only and not those that have relocated from other Indonesian provinces.

[105] Kirsten E. Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh: The Ideology, Capacity and Strategy of GAM," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 26 (2003), 242.

[106] David Armstrong, "The Next Yugoslavia? The Fragmentation of Indonesia," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 15(4) (2004), 794.

Rapid development at the local level also generated negative effects. Exploitation of Aceh's timber and oil resources were often done at the expense of the local economy. Aceh's traditional farming communities were often unfairly dispossessed of lands by Javanese entrepreneurs, and strong-arm tactics were employed by local factions of the military to maintain security of these regions for economic exploitation.[107]

Economic inequality has worsened considerably over the years for the Acehnese. According to a 1971 national survey, Aceh's per capita GDP was "97 percent of the national average (without oil or gas)."[108] In contrast to Indonesia today, where national poverty levels have decreased to "single digit levels," poverty levels in Aceh continue to hover around 30 percent.[109] A 2003 World Bank report on the Indonesian economy calculated that oil and gas accounted for 43 percent of Aceh's GDP and roughly half of its total exports,[110] although as of 1998, it employed only one-third of one percent of the province's labor force.[111] While Aceh continues to carry an average GDP higher per capita in comparison to the rest of Indonesia, the bulk of wealth remains largely in the hands of non-indigenous Acehnese.[112]

[107] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 244.
[108] Hal Hill and Anna Weidemann, "Regional Development in Indonesia: Patterns and Issues," in: Hal Hill (ed.), *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia since 1970* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), as quoted in Michael Ross, "Resources and Rebellion, Aceh Indonesia," *Conference Paper*, Yale-World Bank Project 'The Economics of Political Violence' (5 June 2003), 7, <www.polisci.ucla.edu/faculty/ross/ResourcesRebellion.pdf>.
[109] Romeo Reyes, "How Can ASEAN Help Achieve Millennium Development Goals?," *The Jakarta Post* (11 February 2005).
[110] As tabled in "Indonesia: Preliminary Damage and Loss," *Asia Development Bank Report*, (19 January 2005), 5, <http://www.adb.org/tsunami/ind-damage.asp>.
[111] Ross, "Resources and Rebellion," 19.
[112] Andrew Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion in Southeast Asia: Persistence, Prospects and Implications," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 23, (Fall 2000), 278.

Ethno-religious Marginalization

Acehnese culture is characterized by a history of resistance to outside norms, customs and religious beliefs. While Islam in Java is deeply infused with Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism and Christianity, Acehnese Islam has remained orthodox. The Acehnese community has traditionally rejected the secular, *abangan* culture that dominates the Indonesian state, armed forces and bureaucracy.[113] The more relaxed Javanese approach to Islam is seen as at odds with Aceh's more devout Muslim ways.[114]

Indonesia's long-standing *transmigrasi* (transmigration program), described as "the world's largest resettlement project" and based on earlier Dutch colonial policy that was reinstated during the Suharto regime, drew harsh criticism and sowed deep resentment within the Acehnese community.[115] Between 1969 and 1995, it is estimated that over eight million people were relocated from overly-populated Java to the outer islands, including Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and West Papua.[116] The Indonesian government used its authority, and at times intimidation, to appropriate land for development projects, particularly in areas claimed by indigenous people, and often without fair compensation.[117] With transmigration came a range of socioeconomic impacts, more often than not at the expense of the local Acehnese community, who viewed the influx of 'outsiders' as a violation of their traditional ethnic, religious and

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[113] Abangan comes from the Arabic word *aba'a*, which means 'not obey.' The abangan form a large majority of Javanese Muslims, and take a more tolerant approach to Islamic practice. Ibid., 278.
[114] Peter Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia: The Islamic Factor in Southern Thailand, Mindanao and Aceh," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 24 (2001), 247.
[115] "Building Human Security in Indonesia: Transmigration," *Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research*, Harvard University (April 2000), <http://www.preventconflict.org/portal/main/background_transmigration.php>
[116] Ibid.
[117] "Indonesia," Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, U.S. Department of State Report (25 February 2004), < http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27771.htm >.

economic practices. As a result, many Acehnese came to view this policy as "a thinly veiled attempt to impose Javanese social, cultural and economic domination."[118] This large scale movement of Javanese settlers contributed to ethnic tensions that continue to persist in Aceh today.

Poor Governance

Following Indonesia's formal independence, following the departure of the Duch in 1949, Aceh was initially granted autonomous provincial status in the new Indonesian state. In 1950, however, this status was revoked when President Sukarno merged Aceh into the province of North Sumatra. Many in Aceh felt betrayed by this move. As Basuki states, "absorbing Aceh into North Sumatra province not only offended Aceh's amour proper [self esteem], but also destroyed the de facto network of self-government that had been operating in the late 1940s."[119]

Aceh's "special region" status was subsequently restored in 1959 following violent clashes against the central government, granting autonomy in customary law, religious and educational affairs.[120] In practice, however, autonomy was never fully implemented, as President Suharto's New Order policy began to tighten its control over the religion, society, and economy of the region.[121] In July 2001, Aceh was again granted

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[118] Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia," 247.

[119] Supriyanto Basuki, "Reconciliation is the Best Solution for Conflict in Aceh," *Master's Thesis*, Centre for Contemporary Conflict (December 2003), 11, <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/research/theses/Basuki03.asp>.

[120] "Assessment for Acehnese in Indonesia," *Minorities at Risk Project*, University of Maryland (31 December 2003), <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=85006>.

[121] The *Orde Baru*, or New Order, was the term coined by Suharto to characterize his regime as it came to power in 1966. Suharto used this term to contrast what he described as predecessor Sukarno's *Orde Lama* (Old Order).

"special region" status but the combination of continued conflict and the subsequent imposing of martial law in Aceh by the Indonesian government in 2003 effectively sidelined substantial implementation.[122]

The Indonesian government's heavy-handed military approach to quelling unrest in Aceh has contributed to widespread resentment and animosity towards both the military and government institutions. Allegations of widespread atrocities and the brutality of the TNI's response fuelled discontent and anger at the local level.[123] Escalation of violence in 1989-1990 not only saw a swift and brutal response from the TNI, but the termination of Aceh's "special region" status, as the province was designated *daerah operasi militer* (military operations area, or DOM). The army was given a virtual free hand to crush the rebels with all means possible, at a heavy cost to civilian lives.[124]

While the DOM designation was eventually withdrawn in 1998, and the Indonesian government admitted to human rights violations and military atrocities during this time, few military personnel were punished.[125] This lack of accountability keeps alive grievance, mistrust and a general sense of injustice against Jakarta. "The prolonged use

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[122] "In-depth: Indonesia," *CBC News* (9 September 2004), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/indonesia/aceh.html>.
[123] Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion," 278.
[124] As a 2001 ICG report explains: "the unreconstructed TNI and police inflamed the situation by the indiscriminate application of force to disperse protesters and take revenge for attacks on themselves as they sought to annihilate a resurgent AGAM. In the absence of coherent government policy and leadership, the TNI and police were left to put together military strategies unanchored to any declared policy except a determination to prevent independence. Moreover, without effective political leadership, a declared state of emergency, or a functioning justice sector, the TNI and police were acting, with rare exceptions, in a virtual legal vacuum." See: "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Long-Lasting Peace," *ICG Asia Report N. 17*, International Crisis Group (12 June 2001), 4, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1457&l=1>.
[125] Ibid.,12.

of force," as Schulze explains, "proved counterproductive as the majority of casualties were civilian and the failure to address the military excesses further alienated the population."[126]

The recent negotiated settlement between the GAM and the Indonesian government is an attempt to address perceived deficiencies in local government and bring the GAM into the political process. In return for the GAM's total disarmament, the government has promised to remove its non-local military and police forces and grant full amnesty to the GAM guerillas.[127] Furthermore, a truth and reconciliation commission has been established in an attempt to maintain dialogue and alleviate the deep mistrust between the Acehnese and the Indonesian government. Recently, Bakhtiar Abdullah, a formerly exiled member of the GAM leadership, declared that the peace process as running "smoothly…beyond expectations."[128]

Functional Environment

Beyond the grievance felt by the Acehnese towards the Indonesian government, the situation in Aceh has been aggravated by a number of deficiencies in state capacity. These have contributed to form an enabling environment beneficial to the local insurgency in Aceh.

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[126] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 242.
[127] "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement," 15 August 2005, <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/SODA-6FC7HP?OpenDocument>.
[128] "Aceh Exile Returns After 25 Years," *BBC News* (31 October 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4393384.stm>.

Border Security and Immigration Controls

Indonesia is best described as a "fragmented archipelagic entity," whose land and maritime boundaries are "notoriously difficult to police even at the best of times."[129] Along with this geographic reality, the weak regulatory capabilities of the Indonesian forces have resulted in considerable porosity, a factor that has facilitated both inter-provincial and inter-state movement of militants and arms.[130] Aceh's geographical proximity to Thailand has facilitated the development of a "major arms trafficking pipeline," and provides an opportune entrance point into Indonesia and beyond.[131] Neighboring Malaysia's porous coastal border with Aceh has been a key access point for militants to enter illegally into the province.[132]

Financial Regulation

Traditionally, the regulatory capacities overseeing Indonesia's financial and economic sectors have been hindered by poor enforcement mechanisms, bureaucratic corruption and an overall lack of economic rigour and consistency. While Indonesia was increasingly pressured since 2001 to overhaul its creaking and porous economic framework in light of transnational terrorism, implementations so far have been moderate.[133] More troublesome have been efforts to regulate Indonesia's extensive and informal *hawalla* network that has facilitated money transfers in the hundreds of millions

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[129] Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam," 146.
[130] Ibid.
[131] David Capie, "Trading the Tools of Terror," in Paul J. Smith (ed.), *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to States and Regional Stability* (New York: M.E. Sharpe), 193.
[132] "Indonesia Asks Malaysia to Arrest Aceh Rebel Leader," *Jakarta Post* (30 September 2003).
[133] In February 2005, Indonesia was removed from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) 'black' list of non-cooperative countries and territories (NCCT), although the FATF will monitor Indonesia's progress on commitments made to shore up regulatory capabilities. See: "FATF Annual Report 2004-5," *Financial Action Task Force* (10 June 2005), 12, <http://www1.oecd.org/fatf/>.

from overseas, including the Middle East.[134] Moreover, weak border controls have allowed the easy transfer of funds person to person.[135]

The factors combined have facilitated the movement of money across borders to fund the operations of Indonesian substate groups. In the wake of the Bali bombings, subsequent investigation into terrorist financing showed that groups "left very few 'paper trails' or records," and that most funds were transferred hand-to-hand, using cash.[136] Acehnese expatriates are suggested as one of the primary sources of the GAM's funding; it is estimated that more than 5,000 Acehnese in Kuala Lumpur alone provide the GAM with regular donations,[137] presumably through the *hawalla* network.

Corruption and Criminality

Corruption remains pervasive in Indonesia's government and the military spheres. Indonesia continues to rank as one of the world's most corrupt states, where graft and bribery are widespread at the local, regional and state levels of government, and where public office is perceived as a vehicle for private gain.[138]

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[134] Zacharay Abuza, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia and International Linkages," *USINDO Brief* (4 December 2002), <http://www.usindo.org/Briefs/TerrorisminSoutheastAsia.htm>.
[135] Christopher Bond, "Indonesia and the Changing Front on the War on Terrorism," *Heritage Lecture No. 875*, Heritage Foundation (28 April 2005), <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/hl875.cfm>.
[136] Al Santoli, "Al-Qaeda Financial Support Evades International Investigators," *Asia Security Monitor No. 48*, American Foreign Policy Council (25 September 2003), <http://www.afpc.org/asm/asm48.shtml>
[137] Kirsten Schulze, "The Free Aceh Movement: Anatomy of a Separatist Organization," *Policy Studies No. 2*, East-West Center, Washington, D.C. (2004), 27, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/res rppublicationdetails.asp?pub_ID=1449&SearchString=>.
[138] "2004 Corruption Perceptions Index," *Transparency International* (22 October 2004), <http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2004/cpi2004.en.html#cpi2004>.

Aceh province is considered the most corrupt province in Indonesia. Its oil and gas industry "is plagued by revenues vanishing into the pockets of western oil executives, middlemen and local officials"[139] including members of the TNI, an institution that is accused of much of the endemic corruption in Aceh.[140] The GAM, however, has also been implicated in corruption and profiteering through unofficial taxes and levies.[141]

An additional problem is widespread weapons leakage from army caches. Indonesia's notoriously poorly-funded and under-regulated security forces provide tempting opportunities for corruption. According to a recent International Crisis Group (ICG) report, the TNI leaks weapons "like a sieve."[142] Members of both the TNI and the police forces are known to contribute weapons to the Aceh movement, sometimes for ideological reasons, but mostly for profit. As Capie states, "there have been numerous cases where TNI soldiers have been caught selling weapons to the GAM rebels they are supposed to be fighting."[143] The GAM in turn has claimed in the past that a significant amount of their arms are supplied directly from soldiers or police.[144]

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[139] Ibid.

[140] For example, a 2003 state-sanctioned auditor's report on military expenditures found that of the US$ 429.5 million allocated to military operation in Aceh, some US$291m had gone missing. See: Bill Guerin, "Aceh Aid a Test for Corruption Capers," *Asia Times* (29 March 2005), <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/GC29Ae04.html>.

[141] It is reported that Acehnese wishing to marry need to obtain two licenses – one from the local government officials and one from GAM. Additionally, GAM collects an 8% "tax" on all building projects and also collects tax on land purchases. See: "Building Human Security in Indonesia: Actors," *Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research*, Harvard University (April 2000), <http://www.preventconflict.org/portal/main/maps_sumatra_actors.php>.

[142] "Impact of the Bali Bombings," *Indonesia Briefing Paper*, International Crisis Group (24 October 2004), 4, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1766&l=1>.

[143] Capie, "Trading the Tools of Terror," 197.

[144] Jose Manuel Tesoro and Dewi Loveard, "Aceh: Jakarta's Big Headache," *Asiaweek*, Vol. 25(47) (26 November 1999), <http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/magazine/99/1126/nat.indonesia1.aceh.html>.

Local Conflict in Perspective

Islam in Aceh: Origins and Identity

Islam, both as religion and civilization, remain "inextricably intertwined with Acehnese cultural, social, political, historical, and communal identity."[145] Referred to as *Serambi Mekah* ("Window to Mecca"), Aceh is considered the birthplace of the Malay-language Islamic culture and location of the first Muslim kingdom in Indonesia. Aceh remains one of the "most staunchly Muslim regions in Indonesia."[146]

Acehnese Islamic identity has been forged from a deep-rooted history of resistance, rebellion and political violence, divided over the course of three historical periods:

Phase One (1524-1873) A conglomerate of annexed kingdoms became the Sultanate of Aceh, a "fiercely independent" state that existed as a sovereign entity for nearly 300 years.[147] In the 17th century, Aceh excelled into what is referred to its "Golden Age," becoming the most powerful state in the region and a centre of Islamic scholarship.[148]

Phase Two (1873-1949) In its second historical phase, Aceh defended itself against colonial rule, both from the Dutch (1873-1941; 1945-1949) and the Japanese (1942-1945). Dutch attempts to vanquish Aceh were met with bitter resistance from the

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[145] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 249.
[146] Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia," 254.
[147] Ibid, 254.
[148] Basuki, "Reconciliation is the Best Solution," 8.

Acehnese and at heavy cost to both sides.[149] Initially welcoming the Japanese, the Acehnese soon thereafter mounted a "ferocious rebellion" which was among "the bloodiest in Asia."[150] For the resistance, defense was symbolized as a defense of Islam, with many prominent Acehnese *ulama* (religious teachers) taking leadership positions, inspiring courage through the idiom of Islamic martyrdom.[151]

Phase Three (1950-1998) The third historical phase occurred following Indonesia's emancipation from Dutch rule in 1949, when the newly-independent Java-based Sukarno government made a vigourous attempt to consolidate control over Aceh province in its goal of national, post-colonial unity.[152] Acehnese leadership denounced the secular *pancasila* ideology that characterizes Indonesian politics, leading the *Darul Islam* (House of Islam) movement that spread across Indonesia in call for greater regional autonomy and a stronger role for Islam in the national government.[153]

The GAM: Aims and Ideology

The Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), more commonly known as the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* ("Free Aceh Movement"; or GAM), is the principle separatist movement active in Aceh. Founded in 1976 by Hassan Di Toro, a descendent of a prominent *ulama* and royal family that had been at the forefront of the anti-colonial

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[149] Estimates vary, with the highest noted at 37,500 on the Dutch side, and 70,000 Acehnese. See: Basuki, "Reconciliations is the Best Solution for Conflict in Aceh," 9.
[150] Anthony Reid, "War, Peace and the Burden of History in Aceh," *Working Paper Series No. 1*, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (June 2003), 2, <http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/pub/wps2003/abs001.htm>.
[151] Ibid., 4.
[152] Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia," 247.
[153] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 242.

struggle against the Dutch[154], the GAM has since become a significant opposition force

that until recently has resisted any negotiated settlement less than full independence from

Indonesia.[155] At its peak, the GAM leadership claimed to have an active guerilla army of

30,000 and a reserve of almost the whole population of Aceh, although this figure is

probably exaggerated.[156]

According to Di Toro, the GAM was created in direct response to what he saw as

the economic exploitation and colonialization of Aceh by the Indonesian state. The aim

of their struggle:

> is the survival of the people of Acheh Sumatra as a nation; the survival of
> their political, social, cultural, and religious heritage which are being
> destroyed by the Javanese colonialists; the continued existence of their
> national homeland which is being confiscated and divided among
> Javanese colonialists settlers called "transmigrants"; the preservation of
> their economic and natural resources which are being plundered by the
> Javanese colonialists and their foreign backers under the guise of
> "developments".[157]

To the GAM, the Acehnese people constitute a distinct ethnic nation, based on Islamic

values, underpinned by a long history of statehood violated by forced annexation with

Indonesia.[158] The economic exploitation of Acehnese resources has provided a key

mainstay to the GAM's call for autonomy, who highlight the comparative poverty of the

Acehnese despite a wealth of natural resources. "It gave credibility," Schulze explains,

"to the GAM's claims that Aceh was a rich province, that the Acehnese were poor

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[154] Ibid., 243.
[155] In July 2005, the Indonesian government and GAM negotiated a peace accord in which GAM agreed to drop calls for autonomy in exchange for an undisclosed measure of formal political inclusion in Acehnese affairs. See "Indonesia Agrees Aceh Peace Deal," *BBC News* (17 July 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4690293.stm> .
[156] Schulze, "Stuggle for an Independent Aceh," 255.
[157] "The Aims of the ASNLF," *GAM Website* (no date), <http://www.asnlf.net>.
[158] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 246.

because of Jakarta's neo-colonialist exploitation, and that every Acehnese could be rich if they had independence."[159] From their view, these factors have justified a violent opposition to Indonesian control.

There is a general misconception that the GAM seeks to form an independent *Islamic* state. The GAM casts its struggle in ethno-nationalist, not religious, terms, contextualized as a fight for self-determination against colonial forces, with an endpoint of a secular-nationalist state, not an Islamic nation.[160] As di Toro articulated in 1976, "my mission is to save my people from oblivion, to free my country from foreign domination which means to wage war of national liberation; in short to redeem the past and to justify the future of the Achehnese as a nation."[161] This has been further buttressed by the recent negotiated settlement, where the GAM has put to one side their demand for full independence in exchange for a new form of local government and the right eventually to establish a political party.[162]

It is important to note that the official ideological position of the GAM leadership, who have lived in exile in Sweden for more than 20 years (including di Toro), tends to differ from the local commanders on the frontlines in Aceh. At the village level, Schulze

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[159] Ibid: 256.
[160] Yang Razali Kassim, "GAM, Islam and the Future of Aceh," *IDSS Commentaries*, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University (8 February 2005), <http://www.ntu.edu.sg/idss/publications/commenatries.html>.
[161] A review of GAM literature sees that references to Islam in official documents remain few and far between. In both the 1976 declaration of Independence of Aceh, as well as the more recent 2002 Stavanger Declaration, which outlines the governing body of an independent Aceh, no references are made to either Islam or the Muslim community. See: Hasan Di Toro, *The Price of Freedoms: The Unfinished Diary of Tengku Hasan di Toro* (1984): 8; "Declaration of Independence"; "Stavanger Declaration," <www.asnlf.net>.
[162] "Memorandum of Understanding," 2.

notes, "it is clear that Islam remained central to GAM's membership," and that the GAM "has very much presented its struggle in an Islamic idiom, involving condemnation of the impious behaviour of the rulers, promises of restitution of *syariah* [Sharia] law, and an Islamic base to an independent Aceh."[163] From interviews conducted in the field, Schulze noted that certain individual GAM commanders had "enforced some form of *syariah* law in their own fiefdoms," including the mandatory wearing of the *jilbalb* (headscarf) for women.[164]

Power struggles between the exiled GAM leadership and its local officials have resulted in the formation of small Islamist factions, "some of which have remained under the GAM umbrella and others that have gone separate ways."[165] Two groups in particular, the *Front Mujahideen Islam Aceh* (FMIA) and the *Republik Islam Aceh* (RIA), have accused the GAM leadership of straying from its original path. Fauzi Hasbi, leader of the FMIA and possibly tied to the leadership of the RIA, has been openly critical of the GAM's secular nationalist ideology and lambasted the GAM leadership for "not fighting for the interests of the Islamic *umma* in Aceh," and abandoning the "framework of devotion to Allah" and the "path of *syariah*."[166] These groups, however, do not appear to have a significant support base amongst the Acehnese population.

Nevertheless, the GAM leadership's determination to portray its struggle in nationalist terms is reflected by its distaste for contending Islamic groups. In the wake of

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[163] Schulze, "Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 249.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 252.
[166] Ibid.

the Tsunami disaster which took a severe human and economic toll on Aceh, two radical Islamist groups, the *Majlis Mujahideen Indonesia* (MMI) and the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI) sent volunteers to Aceh to provide humanitarian relief.[167] The GAM quickly expelled the two, stating: "FPI and MMI are not welcome in Aceh and have never been supportive of the Acehnese people, nor has their presence been requested. Their intervention in Aceh is therefore counterproductive."[168] The GAM leadership has also sought to discredit the FMIA and RIA, accusing them of being products of Indonesian intelligence "with the specific purpose of discrediting GAM by making it look fanatical and fundamentalist."[169]

GAM and Islam

Islam remains an important component of the GAM. To the Acehnese, religious identity is inseparable from ethnicity; a fusion acknowledged by di Toro in 1977:

> Everything in Acheh is judged by Islamic standard. Islam is an inseparable part of Achehnese identity. As far as my people is concerned [sic] Acheh and Islam have the same meaning. If Acheh is a coin, Islam is the other side of that coin. Acheh is a nation founded on Islam and lives by the law of Islam. It has been like this for the most part of our recorded history.[170]

For the GAM, Islam has acted as a powerful mobilization force towards a common cause. The GAM frequently uses appeals in the name of Islam to generate support. Its potential as a unifying factor has led to ambiguity in terms of the precise role Islam would play in an autonomous, and secular, Acehnese state. However, this ambiguity is clearly

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[167] MMI was founded in 2000 by Abu Bakar Bashir, the alleged spiritual head of JI; the FPI, lead by Muhammad Habib Rizieq, is known "for its radical approach of confronting bars and nightclubs that refused to shut down during the fasting month of Ramadan. See Kassim, "GAM, Islam and the Future of Aceh," 1-2.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 253.
[170] di Tiro, The Price of Freedoms," 124.

strategic. An outright secular stance would not generate the popularity needed to "back up its claim that it represented the people of Aceh."[171] Further, ideological ambiguity on Islam allows the GAM to control internal challenges and insulate itself from factionalization over the role of Islam.[172]

GAM: Terrorist Activities

The GAM has pursued a strategy of violent confrontation, intimidation, and at times, terrorism in pursuit of their independence agenda.[173] The GAM has traditionally targeted both the TNI and police forces, through both open confrontation and ambush. The group's attempt to make "occupation" of Acehnese soil "as painful as possible," resulting in the deaths of hundreds of security personnel.[174] Complementing this strategy is a policy of political assassination targeting Acehnese politicians who challenged the GAM's struggle for independence. Vocal political supporters of either autonomy or Jakarta were deemed as "siding with the enemy" and therefore "considered legitimate targets."[175] Both of these tactics have often resulted in heavy repercussions against the GAM and its suspected followers.

More recently, the GAM focused on a policy of economic disruption, with repeated attacks on Aceh's oil pipelines, extraction and refinement industries, as well as

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[171] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 250.
[172] Ibid.
[173] "Group Profile: Free Aceh Movement," *MIPT Terrorism Base*, National Memorial·Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (24 July 2005), <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3600>; Dana Dillon, "Southeast Asia and the Brotherhood of Terrorism," *Heritage Lecture No. 860*, Heritage Foundation (20 December 2004), <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/hl860.cfm> .
[174] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 261.
[175] Ibid., 260.

logging operations in the region.[176] In two incidents in May 2001 GAM guerillas sabotaged major oil pipelines, severely disrupting oil production.[177] The GAM has also been accused of "firing on ExxonMobil aircraft, hijacking the company's vehicles, as well as stopping and burning buses or planting landmines along roads to blow them up."[178] The GAM has also openly admitted targeting forestry operations in Aceh, burning and destroying logging infrastructure, companies and trucks.[179]

The state education system, accused of promoting "the glorification of Javanese history,"[180] was frequently targeted. The GAM has been implicated in a "large number of school burnings as well as intimidation and killing of teaching staff," which have resulted in the deaths of over 60 teachers and 200 others being physically assaulted.[181] The GAM is also accused of widespread terrorization of transmigrants, which has forced tens of thousands of non-indigenous Acehnese settlers to flee the province, many to nearby Malaysia.[182]

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[176] Angel Rabasa and John Haseman, *The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics and Power*, Rand Corporation (2002), 102, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1599/>.
[177] "Aceh: Why Military Force Won't Bring Long Lasting Peace," 9
[178] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 261.
[179] Interview with Amni Ahmad bin Marzuki, GAM negotiator, Banda Aceh, 24 June 2001, in Shulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 261.
[180] Ibid., 260.
[181] "Schools Torched in Aceh Conflict," *BBC News* (20 May 2003), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/3042211.stm>
[182] Jonathan Kent, "Malaysia Orders Migrants to Leave," *BBC News*, (21 January 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4196355.stm>.

International and Regional Linkages

International Linkages

Unlike other active groups in southern Thailand and the Philippines, there is no credible evidence of a connection between the GAM and international terrorist groups.[183] The group has taken measures to distance itself from both Al-Qaeda and JI, stressing that it remains a nationalist group and not an "Islamist organization."[184] According to Sidney Jones, there is "no chance" that such allegations are true:

> It's hard to overstate how hostile the GAM leadership is to the Acehnese that are in Jemaah Islamiyah. Al Qaeda did go in 1998 and try to interest GAM in a partnership, but after a series of meetings they both decided they didn't like the other... Aceh has never been a source of support for international terrorism... Aceh has been largely immune to radical Islam and GAM has no interest in international JI; it is only interested in Aceh.[185]

Al-Qaeda associates are reported to have visited Aceh again in 2000, but GAM leaders summarily rejected their efforts at potential collaboration.[186] The rejection of suggested ties has also met rare agreement between the GAM and the TNI forces. According to a 2002 CNN interview, a senior military source based in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh noted that "Osama Bin Laden is not popular [in Aceh]. There are no signs to show that Al-Qaeda is here."[187]

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[183] Allegations of a connection rest predominantly on documents captured in Afghanistan that reportedly referred to Al-Qaeda recruitment centres and training facilities in Aceh; however, factual evidence to support these claims has yet to come to light. See: Sonia Koleshnikov-Jessop, "Aceh Not Fertile Ground for Al-Qaida," *Washington Times*, (6 January 2005), < http://www.washtimes.com/upi-breaking/20050106-032604-4492r.htm>.

[184] Anthony Smith, "Terrorism and the Political Landscape in Indonesia: The Fragile Post-Bali Consensus," in Paul, J. Smith, *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia*, 108.

[185] Koleshnikov-Jessop, "Aceh Not Fertile Ground for Al-Qaida."

[186] Amy Chew, "Aceh Links to Al Qaeda Dismissed," *CNN* (14 July 2002), <http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/07/12/indo.aceh>.

[187] Ibid.

Nevertheless, a 2002 ICG report alleged that Hasbi had on several occasions met or talked with Al-Qaeda operatives, including Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the head of JI. While the GAM leadership steadfastly denies this link, Shulze explains that, if there is some merit to these allegations, "they may be the result of GAM's inability to admit that there are splits and factions within its organization."[188]

Regional Linkages

The GAM does maintain connections with other regional insurgent groups, including those in Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines.[189] These linkages appear primarily based on a pragmatic basis, established to facilitate the smuggling of arms. The GAM is also reported to have used the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's (MILF) training facilities at Camp Abu Bakar in the Philippines to train new recruits,[190] a claim which the GAM denies.[191] While this camp is also known to have trained members of JI, there again is no solid evidence to suggest that such training sessions were based on ideological commonality and more likely a "you pay, we train" mutual agreement.

Conclusion

There is great hope that the recent peace negotiations between the GAM and Jakarta will hold; however, stability and security in Aceh will ultimately rest on longer term efforts to

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[188] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 253.
[189] Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia," 249.
[190] Amitav Acharya , "Terrorism and Security in Asia: Redefining Regional Order?" *Working Paper No. 113*, Asia Research Center, Murdoch University (October 2004), 6, <http://wwwarc.murdoch.edu.au/workingpapers.html>.
[191] Schulze, "The Struggle for an Independent Aceh," 253.

rectify dimensions of weakness prevalent in the region. Income inequality between the Acehnese and non-Acehnese remains high and discrimination and marginalization along religious lines continues to be pervasive. Low state capacity has likewise continued to provide a rich functional environment for substate groups to operate.

The GAM leadership has characterized its reasons for conflict in ethno-nationalist terms; however, it has clearly used the preservation of the Acehnese style of Islamic practice, an inseparable aspect of the Acehnese identity, to bolster its popularity. Formal access into the political realm of Acehnese governance has quelled the GAM's calls for outright independence, although its more radically Islamist splinter factions maintain total opposition to anything less than an independent Islamic state.

As the GAM's struggle continued, it appeared more willing to use terrorist methods as a means to an end. Evidence shows established links with other regional militant Islamist groups in order to fulfill those goals. These connections appear pragmatic, not ideological, even when opportunities for collusion were presented. Such evidence demonstrates that ethno-nationalist concerns, and not solely the preservation of Islam, best characterizes the GAM's ideological justification for terrorism.

Chapter Five: Southern Philippines

Introduction

The southern Philippines, consisting of Mindanao Island and the Sulu archipelago, is home to the Moros,[192] one of the oldest Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Arguably the richest part of the Philippines in terms of arable land, forests and mineral deposits, this region has floundered in a general state of lawlessness, largely beyond the control of the national government.

With a population of roughly four and a half million, roughly five percent of the Philippine population, the Moros are greatly outweighed by the predominantly Catholic majority. A combination of historical dilution of Islamic power in Southeast Asia, alienation of Muslims from their traditional lands, values and ways of life, as well as the disintegration of economic conditions has contributed to the long standing sentiment of grievance felt by the southern Muslim community. Blame is placed on the Manila government, whom the Moros see as directly responsible for their social, political and economic conditions.

These factors have culminated in a decades-long conflict between national security forces and various militant Islamist groups. Their call to arms has traditionally focused on the need to preserve Islamic culture, values and traditions in the wake of prolonged dominance of southern political and economic affairs by Manila. Weakness

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[192] The term 'Moro' is Spanish for 'Moors,' a term that 16th century Spaniards extended to Muslims in the Philippines and elsewhere.

and low state capacity has typified the southern provinces, providing an opportune enabling environment for groups, both local and transnational, to organize, recruit and train.

Dimensions of Weakness

Grievance is deeply rooted in the Moro community. As described below, a combination of structural factors and an opportune enabling environment have contributed to the growth of militant Islamism in the region.

Structural Factors

Income Inequality

Income poverty and inequality are enduring characteristics of the Philippines. A 2005 Asia Development Bank (ADB) report concluded that poverty levels between 1985 and 2000 had worsened, while the gap between the rich and poor further widened.[193] Mindanao was one of the poorest regions of the Philippines in 2000, with nearly two-thirds of families below the poverty line, "[ranking] at the bottom of most poverty and social indicators."[194] On a whole, the southern island chain averages significant levels of poverty, on account of its mainly rural economy and lack of economic development.

Income inequality in the south in part can be traced back to the 1960s, where an influx of northern settlers coupled with a substantial inflow of domestic and foreign

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[193] "Poverty in the Philippines: Income, Assets and Access," *Country Report*, Asia Development Bank (January 2005), xiii, <http://www.adb.org/documents/books/Poverty-in-the-Philippines/default.asp>.
[194] Ibid.

investment "led to the transfer of wealth from Mindanao to other parts of the country."[195]

The exploitation of the region's rich natural resources by these settlers, including timber

and ore, have traditionally seen little money flow back into the local economy or into the

hands of the indigenous Muslim Moros.[196] The ADB study revealed that while the

Moros are not necessarily the poorest of the poor, the worsening poverty situation is

directly related to "extreme inequality, poor infrastructure and massive exploitation."[197]

This contrast of poverty amongst resource wealth and a perception of Manila-sanctioned

exploitation have contributed to a deep-felt grievance in the Muslim south against the

Philippine government.

Ethno-Religious Marginalization

The Muslim south, historically a "stronghold of Islam in Southeast Asia," has deep

resentment of the Manila government, which is perceived as promoting both political and

religious domination in Mindanao.[198] Integrationist policies enacted by the Philippine

government have largely ignored the cultural, religious, and political traditions of the

Moro community, fuelling a belief that the government is determined to "de-Islamize"

the region.[199]

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[195] Syed Serajul Islam, "Islamic Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38(5) (May 1998), 448.
[196] Ibid., 452.
[197] "Poverty in the Philippines," 25.
[198] The Catholic dominated republic of the Philippines is well documented to have actively encouraged Christian transmigration and settlement in the south, prompting bitter conflicts over land distribution and ownership. See: Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation and the Stability of Southeast Asia*, Rand Corporation (2001), 86, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1344/>.
[199] Ibid.

A tradition of transmigration programs formally intended to alleviate northern overpopulation has further aggravated north-south relations. This policy is generally perceived by the Moros as a marked attempt to increase a Christian presence in the south with a purposeful intent to dilute Muslim strength.[200] Over the span of the twentieth century, Manila encouraged Christians to settle in the south through economic incentives, including offers of lucrative real estate holdings.[201] Many Moros, as a result, lost their land to Catholic settlers.

The Manila government traditionally turned a blind eye to calls for fairness from the Muslim minority. Through legal loopholes and corruptive practices, Catholic Filipinos have since become the dominant landowners in the region, gradually depriving the Muslim minority of their traditional land ownership and rights.[202] Aggravating the situation is the attitude of the Catholic majority, many who see the Muslim minority as inferior, thus adding to a sense of justification or indifference of actions that affect the Muslim population. As Chalk stipulates, the attempt to "impose 'national' values, that is, the values of the dominant group, on the minorities, has resulted in resentment and the fear of losing their own identity to what they see as foreigners and intruders."[203]

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[200] The ethnic and religious imbalance as a result of transmigration has decisively lowered the Muslim population in the south, from an overall Muslim majority in Mindanao and Sulu islands at the end of the nineteenth century to less than 17 percent in 2001. See: Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation*, 87.

[201] Like the colonial governments before it, the Filipino government passed a series of laws "to legitimize its expropriation of lands traditionally owned by the Muslim population for resettlement projects and plantation agriculture." Islam, "Islamic Independence Movements," 448; Peter Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia," 247.

[202] Andrew Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion," 271.

[203] Ibid.

Poor Governance

The Philippines' political history is marked by two periods of colonialization, first by the Spanish (1521-1898) followed by the United States (1898-1946). During both of these periods, attempts were made to aggressively pacify the prolonged opposition in the southern provinces. Only the Americans managed to succeed, imposing a policy of direct rule over a newly established 'Moro Province.'[204] Rebellion endured following the Philippines' formal independence in 1946.

In response to growing internal conflict, President Ferdinand E. Marcos (1965-86) declared martial law (1972-1981) over the Philippines, suppressing democratic institutions and restricting civil liberties, ruling "ruling largely by decree and popular agenda."[205] During his tenure, respect for human rights remained low.[206] Wide arrest and detention powers were frequently abused in the name of stability, while corruption and favoritism "contributed to a serious decline in economic growth and development."[207] Military operations led to the death of thousands of southern civilians. These conditions only served to further popular animosity against the national government, reaching acute, and violent, levels in the Muslim south.

For decades, discrimination has denied entrance of the Moro educated elite into the regional politics, a key sore point of opposition groups.[208] In an attempt to quell

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[204] Islam, "Independence Movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines," 445.
[205] U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Philippines," *Country Profile*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (September 2004), <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2794.htm>.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Islam, "Islamic Independence Movements," 453.

Muslim unrest, Manila granted in 1996 the creation of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)[209] and greater Muslim political representation in exchange for the most active secessionist group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), to lay down their arms. Both sides agreed in principle that the ARMM was a decisive first step towards better Muslim representation in the south, although it only covers a portion of the Muslim community.

Functional Environment

Border Security and Immigration Controls

Geographically similar to Indonesia, the Philippines is an archipelago consisting of more than 7,000 islands, sixty percent of which remain uninhabited. The vastness of its maritime territory, coupled with and overburdened and under-resourced security apparatus, have contributed to significant porosity. This lack of security has created, in Smith's words, "a potentially ideal environment for terrorist or criminal groups seeking to hide out or secretly train operatives."[210] The lack of state capacity to effectively police borders and movements of people, money and contraband, particularly in the south, continues to make it attractive to 'lone wolf' operators and cells of various jihadist organizations, in addition to facilitating the Philippines' domestic militant Islamist groups.[211]

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[209] This is a region located in the southern portion of Mindanao and includes the mainland provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and the traditional island centers of Muslim economic, political and cultural activities, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi in the Sulu archipelago. ARMM covers approximately 12,000 square kilometers - about four percent of the country's total land area and has a population of more than two million predominantly Muslim inhabitants.
[210] Smith, "Terrorism and the Political Landscape," 216.
[211] "Southern Philippines Backgrounder: Terrorism and the Peace Process," *ICG Asia Report N.80*, International Crisis Group (13 July 2004), 2, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2863&l=1>.

Lax immigration and visa requirements continue to be problematic. While illegal entry, including through the use of forged passports or circumvention of administration continues to be a security issue, legal entry remains less than stringent. In March 2003, Philippine authorities reported that a four man Al-Qaeda cell entered Mindanao either as "tourists, preachers or spouses of Filipinas."[212] To add, the Philippines have a notoriously flexible immigration system that "makes it easy for foreigners to marry Filipinos and effectively change their identity."[213] JI operatives are well known to have frequently circumvented border security in the Philippines to train in camps operated by the MILF.[214]

Financial Regulations

Money laundering and non-regulating money transfers remain a serious problem in the Philippines. An extensive *hawalla* network, used by ten of thousands of Filipinos to transfer money from overseas, has allowed huge amounts of funds to transfer into and within the Philippines, bypassing financial monitoring systems.[215]

The recent implementation in the Philippines of the 2003 Anti-Money Laundering Act has shown limited results, as inter-agency communication and logistical challenges continue to stymie effective monitoring.[216] The international Financial Action Task

[212] "Police Monitoring Al Qaida in South," *Gulf News* (23 March, 2003). As quoted in Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam in Southeast Asia," 147.

[213] "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," *Backgrounder*, Australian Parliamentary Library Research Division, Parliament of Australia (11 April 2003), <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/FAD/sea.htm>.

[214] Paul Smith, "Border Security and Transnational Violence," in: Paul Smith (ed.), *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia*, 217.

[215] Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam," 147.

[216] "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003," U.S. Department of State, (22 June 2004), 28, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2003/>.

Force (FATF) only recently removed the Philippines from their list of non-cooperative countries and territories (NCCT) in February 2005, but continues to monitor amendments made by the state towards more stringent action to curb money laundering and shore up lax monetary regulations.[217]

Corruption and Criminality

Corruption in public functioning remains acute in the Philippines.[218] Poor oversight and gross mismanagement over several decades "has provided countless opportunities for weapons to be diverted onto the local black market and ultimately into the hands of terrorists."[219] A senior AFP officer admitted in August 2003 that more than 8000 weapons had disappeared from army caches in Sulu province alone since 1989.[220] In 2000, over 100 policemen were charged with malversation of government property for failure to return firearms issued to them.[221] It is widely assumed that many of these 'lost' weapons have been either sold on the black market or directly to militant Islamist groups active in the Philippines, including the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (to be discussed in greater detail below).[222] This leakage has in part accounted for the region being noted as "one of the most heavily armed areas in

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[217] "FATF Annual Report," 12.

[218] According the 2004 Corruption Perception Index (10 highly clean – 0 highly corrupt), an annual report issued by Transparency International, the Philippines ranks 2.6 See: "2004 Corruption Perceptions Index."

[219] Capie, "Trading the Tools of Terror," 195.

[220] Anthony Davis, "Philippine Security Threatened by Small Arms Proliferation," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (August 2003), 32.

[221] Carla Gomez, "Across the Nation 120 Policemen Sued for Failing to Return 463 Pistols, Rifles," *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* (4 October 2000).

[222] As Capie asserts, "the fact that the MILF and ASG have fought 'overwhelmingly' with American-made weapons such as M-16s, M-203 grenade launchers, and M-60 machine guns…lends support to the view that most of their arms are acquired from AFP stocks and are not smuggled imports." See: Capie, "Trading the Tools of Terror,"197.

Southeast Asia."[223] Muslim rebels in turn have claimed that the bulk of their weaponry comes from the military forces themselves.[224]

Apparent collusion between rebels and members of the security forces is a further serious security breach. For example, two documented attempts to capture ASG members, where hideouts were surrounded and militants made seemingly impossible escapes, led to allegation that members of the security forces, including commanders, had been bribed to allow the escapes to happen.[225] According to an Army corporal local political officials, including Basilan governor Wahab Akbar (himself a former guerilla), were seen meeting an ASG leader in addition to "sending a government truck full of supplies to their camp."[226]

Local Conflict in Perspective

Islam in the Southern Philippines: Origins and Identity

Early contact with Muslim traders brought Islam to the inhabitants of southern Philippines. Widespread conversion was followed by the creation of Muslim sultanates. Until recent times, Mindanao and Sulu, like Aceh, were historical power centres of Islamic faith in Southeast Asia, key areas of religious identity and a significant source of Muslim leadership in the area for centuries.[227]

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[223] Davis, "Philippine Security Threatened by Small Arms Proliferation," 32.
[224] Ramakrishna, "Countering Radical Islam,"148.
[225] Carlito Pablo and Martin P. Marfil, "President Stands Behind Armed Forces," *Inquirer News Service* (8 March 2003), <http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/may/08/nat_4-1.htm>.
[226] Indira Lakshmanan, "Amid the Deaths, Tales of Collusion," *The Boston Globe* (3 February 2002).
[227] Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatism Rebellion," 270.

As a result of its historical roots in the southern Philippines, Islam is a defining characteristic of Moro identity, and an inseparable aspect of their ethnicity. Several centuries of conflict against colonial domination, Catholic conversion, and sociopolitical subordination have served to reinforce a sense of Islamic identity. This 'identity of defense' has also in part contributed to the more devout nature of Islam in the Muslim south.[228]

Militant Islamic Groups: Aims and Ideology

Religious conflict in the Philippines goes well back into colonial history. Spanish colonists, who arrived in the 16th century, halted the Islamization of the Philippine Islands and repeatedly attacked Moro sultanates in Mindanao and the Sulu Islands for the next 350 years.[229] Following the 1898 Spanish-American War, the Moros protested the handover of the Philippines to the United States, and the new colonists embarked on a "brutal campaign of pacification" against anti-American resistance.[230]

Islamic resistance groups re-emerged in the late 1960s, growing from increasingly violent conflicts between Catholic settlers and Muslim Moros. Several Islamist groups, including the Mindanao Independence Movement (MIM), the Union of Islamic Forces and Organizations and the Ansar El Islam, vowed to establish an independent Islamic state in Mindanao, although it was the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that

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[228] Federico Magdalena, "Islam and the Politics of Identity: Lessons from the Philippines and Southeast Asia," *Lecture,* Center for Philippine Studies and the Matsunaga Institute for Peace, University of Hawaii (17 November 2003), <http://www.hawaii.edu/cps/identity.html>.

[229] Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion," 271.

[230] Ibid.

became the formidable opposition force to the Filipino state. [231] After President Ferdinand

Marcos declared martial law in 1972, "simmering conflict in the South became full scale

civil war."[232] The MNLF's military wing, the Bangsa Moro Army, conducted a bitter

four year guerilla campaign against the Philippine Armed Forces (PAF), resulting in over

100,000 deaths and half a million internally displaced persons.[233]

With the signing of the 1976 Tripoli agreement, the MNLF abandoned their

secessionist aspirations in exchange for autonomy within the state.[234] This caused a rift

within the MNLF elite, and several of the MNLF's more radical top leaders eventually

defected to form the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1984.[235] In 1996, the

MNLF leadership and the Philippine government finally enacted the terms of the Tripoli

agreement, leading to the formation of the ARMM; The MILF, however, opposed any

deal short of total independence. The Bangsa-Moro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), the

MILF's military wing, continued clashing with government forces in their aim for an

independent Muslim Moro state.[236] As of 2000, the MILF claimed to have a force of

120,000 *mujahideen* in four fully armed divisions, although Western intelligence

estimates put its standing army at 35,000.[237] The MILF is now in control of large swathes

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[231] The MIM was dissolved in favour of the MNLF in 1972. Tan, "Armed Separatist Rebellion," 272.
[232] "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 4.
[233] Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion," 272.
[234] "The Tripoli Agreement," *Peace Agreements Digital Collection*, United States Institute for Peace
(1976), <http://www.usip.org/library/pa/philippines/tripoli_12231976.html>.
[235] The MILF was originally a semi-autonomous faction of the MNLF called the "New Leadership" wing,
formed shortly after 1976. "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 4.
[236] The MNLF continues to exist as a group, but is confined to the isolated and less populated Sulu. Ibid.,
272-3.
[237] Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion," 273.

of at least seven provinces in Mindanao, and enjoys popular support from its local Muslim inhabitants, who form the bulk of the Philippines' Islamic constituency.[238]

In 2002, the MILF accepted a peacefire agreement in exchange for negotiations with Manila, although periodic violence continues. This has been blamed on the "loosely knit, personalized nature" of the MILF, which has allowed "individual units to pursue their own strengths guided by only vague objectives."[239] Local commanders are described as "power centres in themselves," and that their "areas of operation and locally-rooted armed followings tend to outlast organizational renaming."[240] A lack of evidence renders unclear the extent to which ideological difference exists between local commanders and the MILF leadership; however, the semi-autonomous structure of the MILF has provided local commanders the room to embark in a more radicalized fashion, including the use of terrorist tactics and the development of relationships with foreign militant Islamist groups.[241]

The ASG, the Philippines' most radical Islamist group, was formed in 1993 by Abudurah Janjalani, a former member of the MNLF.[242] Based on the islands of Basilan and Jolo, west of Mindanao, the ASG is driven by neo-Salafist ideology. They are opposed to any religious accommodation with the Christians, [believing] that "violent

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[238] Ibid.
[239] "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 12.
[240] Ibid., 10.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Charles Donnelly, "Terrorism in the Southern Philippines: Contextualising the Abu Sayyaf Group as an Islamic Secessionist Organisation," *Conference Proceeding,* 15th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (29 June-2 July 2004): 3, <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/ASAA/conference/>.

action is the only solution."[243] Like the MILF, the ASG's insurgency is rooted in the inequity and economic imbalance present in the south. The ASG calls for the establishment of an independent Islamic state based on Sharia principles.[244] While it is not formally associated with the MNLF or the MILF, the ASG is known to have drawn support from ex-MILF supporters disillusioned with the MILF leadership's willingness to negotiate with the government.[245] National support for the ASG has been described as "limited," although it has been said that locals in its stronghold of Basilan and Jolo "tolerate the rebels and even work for them, attracted by the prospect of receiving lucrative ransom payments."[246] At its peak, the ASG is estimated to have had 500 core fighters, although repeated clashes with the PAF have diminished their numbers.[247]

Militant Islamist Groups and Islam

Preserving Islamic religious identity has historically been a key component underpinning the motivations for all militant Islamist groups in the south. From a strategic standpoint, this has been a natural decision for drawing popular support from the Moro community.

Distinctions can be made however in terms of the potency of Islam in the role of these groups. The MNLF has vocalized its determination to defend the interests of the Moro ethnicity, including religious values, although in a secular political environment.[248] The MILF by contrast, which appears to have captured the majority of southern Muslim

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[243] Tan, "Armed Separatist Rebellion," 274.
[244] Donnelly, "Terrorism in the Southern Philippines," 3.
[245] Tan, "Armed Muslim Separatist Rebellion," 274.
[246] "Guide to the Philippine Conflict," *BBC News* (10 February 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1695576.stm>.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Tan, "Armed Separatist Rebellion," 273.

popular support, continues to publicly state its conflict with Manila as a religious one. The MILF has traditionally been "critical of the leftist orientation of the MNLF, and has sought to emphasize its Islamic credentials and identity, and remains, at least formally, adamant on the formation of an Islamic state.[249] Informally, however, there is suggestion that the current MILF leadership is less ideological and more pragmatic in its leanings, a factor that has led to internal fracturing along ideological lines.[250] Finally, while the ASG describes itself as dedicated to the preservation of Moro Islamic society, the group's preferred tactic of kidnapping for ransom has overshadowed its secessionist aspirations and casts doubt on the integrity of their claims.[251]

Militant Islamist Groups: Terrorist Activities

While the MNLF's military strategy was focused on conventional warfare against the Philippine security forces, the MILF's strategy has been confined to "orthodox guerilla warfare with hit-and-run attacks" directed against the PAF.[252] The group has typically avoided indiscriminant attacks on civilians and non-combatants, although isolated examples of terrorist acts do exist.[253] As Chalk states, "such 'self-restraint' has been used to distance the MILF from the activities of the ASG and is very much in line with the

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[249] Ibid., 272.

[250] According to the ICG, central command over MILF elites is weak. In their words, "Local pockets of anarchy…are dominated by local rebel 'commanders' owing varying degrees of allegiance to umbrella coalitions like the MILF or ASG, but whose power is rooted in pyramids of particularistic clan or tribal loyalties. It is unclear how much control the central MILF leadership exercises over these commanders. See: "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 2.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Donnelly, "Terrorism in the Southern Philippines," 5.

[252] Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation*, 89.

[253] "Bus companies and department stores in provincial Mindanao towns," as reported by the ICG, "have been frequent targets of extortion demands backed up by bomb threats since the early 1990s… some units may have become increasingly dependent on such revenue from commercial terrorism, while helping to subsidise the MILF's overall operating expenses." See: "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 12; Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation*, 89.

group's own self-image as a revolutionary military (as opposed to terrorist) force."[254]

What has complicated matters has been the matter of its military camps, including Camp Abu Bakar, which has been widely accused of training Al-Qaeda and JI operatives.[255]

In contrast, the activities of the ASG have almost exclusively been terrorist in nature. The group gained domestic notoriety in the mid 1990s with a series of grenade attacks on Christian targets.[256] From 2000, the ASG increasingly resorted to criminal terrorism; a series of high profile kidnappings, and beheadings, of western and Philippine nationals launched the group into the international spotlight.[257] Members of ASG were also recently charged with the February 2004 bombing of a Philippine passenger ferry resulting in the deaths more than 100 people, an act considered the Philippines' worst known terrorist attack.[258]

International and Regional Linkages

International Linkages

The MILF has repeatedly denied any links to external groups.   There is however considerable evidence of personal, operational and training tries to known JI members.[259] According to ICG interviews MILF members, including several of its high ranking

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[254] Rabasa and Chalk, *Indonesia's Transformation*, 89..

[255] The MILF is reported to have allowed JI to set up its own training facilities in the camp in 1997. See: C.S. Kuppuswamy, "Philippines: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Imbroglio," *Paper no. 765*, South Asia Analysis Group (SAAG) (18 August 2003), <http://www.saag.org/papers8/paper765.html>.

[256] Steven Rogers, "Beyond the Abu Sayyaf," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83(1) (January/February 2004), 17.

[257] John Maclean, "Philippines Kidnapping 'Industry'," *BBC News*, (27 May 2001), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/1354744.stm>.

[258] "Bomb Caused Philippine Ferry Fire," *BBC News*, (11 October 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3732356.stm>.

[259] "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," i.

officials, were trained in the 1980s and early 1990s on the Afghan-Pakistan border.[260]

Here, personal relationships were formed with other like-minded jihadists, some whom

later became part of other South- and Southeast Asian groups, including JI.[261] Philippine

intelligence services claim to have evidence that individuals of Middle Eastern and South

Asian extremist groups "have traveled to Mindanao to train MILF cadres in the

fundamentals of assassination, bombing, sabotage and possibly suicide attacks."[262]

Janjalani also received extensive training during time spent in Afghanistan in the

1980s, where he fought alongside the International Islamic Brigade during the Afghan-

Soviet War.[263] It has been reported that *Abu Sayyaf* was Janjalani's Afghan fighting

name.[264] Evidence also suggests that the ASG has established some operational and

financial links to Al-Qaeda, although the extent of these connections remains unclear.

Bin Laden's brother-in-law, Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, is reported to have provided

"direct financial aid to the ASG whilst living in the Philippines in the early 1990s."[265]

Ramzi Yosef, an Al-Qaeda operative who came to the Philippines in 1994, is reported to

have trained Abu Sayyaf fighters.[266]

It is important to note however that links between some Indonesian militant

Islamist groups and Mindanao go back to before the creation of either MILF or JI, a

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[260] Ibid., 4.
[261] Ibid., 12.
[262] Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia," 242.
[263] Donnelly, "Terrorism in the Southern Philippines," 6.
[264] Simon Reeve, *The New Jackals: Ramzi Yousef, Osama bin Laden and the Future of Terrorism*, (UK: Andre Deutsch, 1999), 136.
[265] Donnelly, "Terrorism in the Southern Philippines," 5.
[266] Jean-Claude Pomoti, "Al Qaeda's Invisible Presence in Southeast Asia, " *Le Monde* (4-5 November 2001): 12.

result of marriage and familial ties, as well as personal relationships formed through "shared experiences of training and fighting."[267] In addition, the loose command of MILF elites has meant that training of JI members may have been facilitated through individual commanders, not necessarily ordained by MILF leadership.[268] And while these linkages are suggested as a result of ideological congruity, the MILF's typical reliance on external funding opens the possibility that such training exercises are done for financial, and hence pragmatic, reasons.

Regional Linkages

It has been suggested that the MILF maintains connections with external regional groups.[269] There is, however, there is little evidence to indicate significant connections. In reality, the MILF have sought to distance themselves from local and regional militant Islamist groups. Since 1995, the MILF has denounced their ideologies as "un-Islamic" and have stressed that they have "no formal or informal contact" with the ASG.[270]

Evidence suggests that this is not entirely true. According to interviews with captured JI members, collaboration has happened in the past. Two such examples were the 2002 Fitmart department store bombings in Tacurong and General Santos City, the latter of which killed 15 people.[271] In Tacurong, ASG members are said to have been aided by a MILF operative; in General Santos City, ASG, MILF and JI operatives are

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[267] "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 2.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Dillon, "Brotherhood of Terrorism."
[270] Anthony Davis, "A conversation with the MILF's military chief," *Asia Week*, Vol. 26(20) (26 May 2000), <http://www.asiaweek.com/asiaweek/magazine/2000/0526/index.html>.
[271] "Southern Philippines Backgrounder," 17.

believed to have been involved.[272]   As the ICG notes, it is possible "that the MILF leadership is not fully aware of the extent to which individual local commanders have made their own arrangements with JI and other groups."[273] As for the ASG, there is little evidence to indicate collusion with other regional militant Islamist groups, apart from the limited connections described above.

Conclusion

The southern Philippines is an archetypical brown zone. The Manila government continues to lack political legitimacy with the Moro population, while the state of security in the Muslim strongholds remains largely in the hands of the local militant Islamist groups. While day to day violence has been limited in recent years in part due to the extended negotiations between the MILF and the Philippine government, the ASG continues to operate in almost total freedom.

Despite its demand for an Islamist state, the MILF leadership appears willing to compromise its position in exchange for greater political representation. The fractured state of the MILF, however, calls into question whether local commanders, some which operate with great autonomy, will accept a peace deal short of an independent Islamic state. In addition, evidence of transnational terrorist elements operating within MILF training camps continues to be a key concern. Finally, both the MILF and the ASG have used terrorism as a means to an end. In the case of the latter, however, the use of

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[272] Ibid.
[273] Ibid.

terrorism appears to be the first and only resort, granting little room for political negotiation.

Chapter Six: Southern Thailand

Introduction

Of the estimated four million Muslims that live in Thailand, over eighty percent are concentrated in the three most southernmost provinces, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, (collectively known as "Pattani") that border the northern tip of Malaysia.[274] Deep-felt grievance originating in Thailand's predominantly Muslim southern provinces has been a key source of an enduring conflict waged against Thai government forces. A history of discrimination in matters of religion, culture and employment has fuelled a widespread sense of alienation among the Muslims from Thai politics.

Today, violent attacks, including bombings and assassination, have become nearly daily occurrences in the southern provinces. While the heavy-handed, military approach taken against southern unrest by the current Thaksin government has fuelled a wave of attacks, deeper examination of Pattani-Bangkok relations reveals that mistrust, suspicion and ultimately grievance against the Thai government has contributed to a historical cycle of violence in the region, including terrorism.

In addition, Thailand's enabling environment, including weak border regulation, endemic corruption and a thriving black market trade in arms and identity forgery have proved advantageous for both local and transnational militant Islamist groups. A

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[274] Anthony Smith, "Trouble in Thailand's Separatist South: Separatism not Global Terrorism," *Asia Pacific Security Study Series*, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Vol. 3(10) (December 2004), 1, <http://www.apcss.org/graphics/graphics_research.htm>.

particularly opportune climate of weakness in the south has facilitated the growth and activities of these groups, thriving on a resurging Thai-Muslim 'identity crisis.'

Dimensions of Weakness

Enduring issues of relative deprivation and ethnoreligious marginalization characterize southern Thailand. As discussed below, a history of low state capacity has generated grievance in the Muslim minority, while security deficiencies have facilitated opposition forces.

Structural Factors

Income Inequality

Pattani constitutes one of the poorest regions in Thailand. Economic deprivation and the deepening of economic disparities between the centre (Bangkok) and the rural hinterland have resulted in the economic underdevelopment of the south.[275] While economic growth and development in Thailand on the whole rose significantly between 1960 and 1997, with Thailand enjoying the world's highest growth rate between 1985 and 1995, regional economic imbalances widened during this period. As Croissant states, "in the early 1960s, the mean household income in the south was one fifth higher than the average national household income and the regional GDP per head was one quarter above the national average. Four decades later, the south has significantly fallen behind."[276] Recent economic initiatives set forth by Bangkok aimed at the development of Thailand's

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[275] Aurel Croissant, "Unrest in Southern Thailand: Contours, Causes and Consequences Since 2001," *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 4(2) (February 2005), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Feb/croissantfeb05.asp>.
[276] Ibid.

peripheral states have only seen limited results, and have "failed to reduce regional economic disparities between the south and the center."[277]

The visible condition of the south, in comparison to Thailand's more prosperous regions, has contributed to a local sense of alienation and grievance against the Thai government, who blame the centre for historical economic neglect. The concentration of Malay-Muslims in the South has meant that the Islamic community of Pattani has taken the majority of the brunt of this economic inequality.

Ethno-Religious Marginalization

The Malay Muslim population of Thailand[278] has long perceived themselves as second-class citizens; a "forgotten minority" in this predominately Buddhist state.[279] These sentiments stem from old origins, namely Bangkok's long-standing determination to form a single Thai identity, and state disapproval of reference to Thai multiculturalism.[280] Indeed, from turn of the century the Thai government has firmly discouraged use of ethnic labels, including "Lao," "Khmer," and "Malay" in favour of one category: "Thai."[281]

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[277] Ibid.

[278] While I use Malay Muslim and Thai Muslim interchangeably, unless otherwise noted, this shall refer only to the Thai Muslim community and not Malay-Muslims residing in Malaysia.

[279] Roger Hardy, "Islam's Furthest Frontier: Thailand," *BBC Documentary* (14 February 2005), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/930_furthestfrontier/page3.shtml>.

[280] Patrick Joy, "Multiculturalism in Thailand? Cultural and Regional Resurgence in a Diverse Kingdom," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* (Winter 2000), <http://hcs.harvard.edu/~hapr/winter00_millenium/Thailand.html>.

[281] Ibid.

Historically, Thai nationalist policies sought to weaken Muslim-Malay identity. Following the incorporation of Pattani into the Kingdom of Siam in the early twentieth century,[282] all children were required to attend state primary schools for instruction in the Thai language. Curriculums were secularized, while instruction in Buddhist ethics was incorporated into daily teachings.[283] The inception of *Ratthaniyom* (Cultural Mandates) in 1939 went even farther, banning the use of Malay in government offices, forbidding traditional Muslim-Malay dress in public, while expression of non-Thai identity was viewed as a security threat in the eyes of the authorities.[284] Such actions were considered a "huge affront to Malay Muslims, who perceived it as a direct on their culture, religion and language."[285]

While many overt assimilationist policies were withdrawn by the 1960s and the policy of assimilation was formally dropped in the 1980s, political integration policies with "Thai-centric elements" continue to this day, including the changing of street names from Malay to Thai, encouragement of Malay Muslims to take Thai names, and the lack of Malay language taught in primary and secondary schools.[286] Officially, Thai Muslim-Malays now enjoy equal rights and opportunities within the Thai constitution, although

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[282] The three southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat formed an independent Sultanate until 1786, when they were conquered by the Kingdom of Siam. Formal incorporation, however, did not occur until 1909. See: Croissant, "Unrest in Southern Thailand."

[283] In accordance to the Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1921. See: Moshe Yegar, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar* (Lexington: Colorado 2002): 89.

[284] "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," *Asia Report No. 98*, International Crisis Group (18 May 2005), 3, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3436&l=1>.

[285] Ibid.

[286] Ibid., 12.

an unwritten code of social conformity has led to many complaints of discrimination in jobs and education for Thai Muslim-Malays.[287]

Poor Governance

The Thai government has traditionally taken a 'top-down' approach with the southern provinces through a centralized power system that favours political allegiance to Bangkok. Determination to force minorities into mainstream Buddhist 'Thai-ness,' and the backlash that resulted within the Thai Muslim communities of the south, developed a traditional hard-line stance that until only recently provided little room for local opposition and political development. Thai Muslims, as a result, remain poorly represented at the national level, while local government positions are almost exclusively held by non-Muslims.

The south's stigma as a political backwater has meant that for years southern Thailand has served as a "dumping ground" for corrupt and/or incompetent civilian and military officials, resulting in a ramshackle and poorly run local governance structure.[288] According to interviews conducted between the ICG and members of the Thai military, "the rotation of officials into the southern provinces was used as punishment for poor performance, an unofficial policy that continues today."[289]

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[287] John Bradley, "Waking Up to the Terror Threat in Southern Thailand," *Straits Times* (27 May 2004), <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=3985> .
[288] "Thailand Islamic Insurgency," *Conflict Backgrounder*, Global Security Organization (27 April 2004), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/thailand2.htm>.
[289] "Insurgency, Not Jihad," 12.

Unrest in the south has traditionally been met with a heavy-handed military approach coupled with political consolidation,[290] a strategy favoured by the current Thaksin government. Poor restraint and excessive use of force by the military in recent years have served to inflame Muslim-Buddhist relations.[291] Key incidents, including the 2004 Tak Bai incident, which saw 78 Muslim protesters die while under police custody, have served to increase mistrust, suspicion and ultimately grievance against security authorities active in the south. The recent declaration of martial law throughout the region has only served to intensify these feelings.[292]

Functional Environment

Thailand has been described as a "country of convenience" for terrorist groups.[293] Sub-state actors have benefited from weak security and immigration enforcement and a well-established criminal underground industry. These problems are most acute in the south, where a climate of lawlessness, unrest and geographical reality has facilitated these groups and their activities. In addition, Thailand's porous border with Burma has also fuelled a sophisticated network of arms and people smuggling.

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[290] Under General Prem (1980-1988), the Thai government changed stride by eliminating the assimilation policy and increased economic development as a means to stem violence in the South. See: Croissant, "Unrest in Southern Thailand."

[291] Two key factors have been attributed to the recent outbreak of violence in the south: first, the decision to "re-impose central control over the opposition-Democratic Party-controlled southern province" by replacing key official positions with his own people or disbanding particular institutions (including the joint civilian-police-military task force, or CPM) which disturbed an otherwise delicate balance between intelligence services, government and civilians. Second, has been an apparent upsurge in human rights violations in relation to the Thai government's latest crackdown on narco-trafficking in the south. Arbitrary arrests, seizures and sometime disappearances of citizens in the name of a "war on drugs" heavily affected the southern border provinces. While these are key smuggling routes, police and military actions have since built a perception among Malay Muslims that they are specifically targeted, reinforcing mistrust, suspicion and resentment of authorities. See: "Insurgency, Not Jihad," 33-36.

[292] "Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution," *ICG Asia Report n. 105* (18 November 2005), 1, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3795&l=1>.

[293] "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," Australian Parliamentary Library Research Division.

Border Security and Immigration Controls

Southern Thailand is encapsulated by two coastlines while dense jungles form the border with Malaysia to the south. The lack of sufficient internal control, coupled by weak enforcement mechanisms, grants militants easy passage in and out of the country. In addition, a tradition of unchecked cross-border movement has been the basis of local economy, an attitude which has lent itself to general acceptance by security forces in the past.[294] Immigration entry/exit points are known to lack rigorous screening of travelers, especially in more remote areas.

Both local and international groups have benefited from these security gaps. The Thai government recently charged that Muslim Malay militants are using the thick jungles on the Thai-Malay border, where "where border guards are few," for training and for personnel movement between countries.[295] According to the Thai authorities Hambali, the operation head of JI, entered Thailand using a fake Spanish passport, and made repeated trips from Thailand to Cambodia and Myanmar in the year before his arrest.[296]

Thai intelligence sources recently admitted that 220 suspected members of terrorist organizations, including members of Al-Qaeda and JI, had passed through the state between 2001 and 2003, saying that "most operatives used several forged passports

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[294] Paul Smith, "Border Security and Transnational Violence in Southeast Asia," in Paul J. Smith (ed.), *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia*, 216.
[295] "Thailand, Philippines Rethink Terrorism," *Taipei Times* (21 February 2005), <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/world/archives/2005/02/21/2003223971>.
[296] Uamdao Noikorn, "River Gives Terrorist Access to Thailand," *Associated Press* (24 September 2003).

and some crossed the porous borders without going through official entry points."[297] Thai intelligence services have also admitted that effective monitoring of who enters and leaves Thailand has proven difficult due to the use of sophisticated forged passports.[298]

Financial Regulations

Like Indonesia and the Philippines, Thailand's banking and finance sectors increasingly have come under fire since 2001. A tradition of lax policy, poor enforcement mechanisms and bribery have made Thailand's financial sector opportune for money laundering a *hawalla* network operating in the Muslim south has allowed for largely unregulated money transfers locally, regionally and internationally. According to confessions of detained Al-Qaeda and JI members, Thailand was used as a base for money laundering.[299] While little evidence exists, it can be assumed that militant Islamist groups in the south have exploited the *hawalla* system for money transfers.

Corruption and Criminality

Corruption remains an enduring problem within Thailand. In the words of Peter Chalk, "Thailand is a country where 'money talks,' allowing syndicates and traffickers to buy co-operation and, more importantly, silence in high places."[300] Bribes and secret arrangements between criminals, terrorists and government officials allow borders to be crossed with minimal risks.[301] The fabrication of false identities, including illegal

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[297] Prayuth Sivayaviroj and Kavi Chongkittavorn, "Key Terrorists Passing Through Kingdom," *The Nation* (26 November 2003).
[298] Ibid.
[299] Mark Manyin et al., "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," 23.
[300] Peter Chalk, "Light Arms Trading in Southeast Asia," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (1 March 2001), <http://www.rand.org/commentary/030101JIR.html>.
[301] Smith, "Border Security and Transnational Violence," 217.

passports and fake visas is a "major criminal enterprise" in Southeast Asia, with Thailand considered as one of the globe's key centres of document forgery.[302]

Thailand is considered a key source for illegally sourced weaponry in Southeast Asia. As David Capie highlights, local weapons leakages typically come from three primary sources: theft and leakage from police and military armouries; complicit transfer from security forces for political purposes or profit; and theft and unlawful transfer of privately-owned civilian weapons.[303] The most high profile example to date of serious theft related to insurgent movements took place on 4 January 2004, when a group of at least 100 assailants stormed the Royal Thai Army's 4th Engineering Battalion in Narathiwat province, stealing a large cache of weapons.[304] Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh remarked shortly thereafter that the skill, sophistication and foreknowledge of the whereabouts of the weapons suggested aid from someone inside the military's armory.[305] A raid in March 2004, in which large quantities of bomb-making material, including dynamite, detonators and ammonium nitrate were stolen from a quarry in Yala province, was blamed on suspected militants.[306]

In addition, there are several reported cases of Thai military officials selling arms to insurgent groups. An official accused of doing so was also assigned to security

[302] Ibid., 214.
[303] Capie, "Trading the Tools of Terror," 195-198.
[304] Using oxyacetylene torches and bolt cutters, the assailants made away with a substantial cache of weaponry from the armory, including assault rifles, M-16s, pistols and rocket launchers, killing four soldiers in the process. See: "Insurgency, not Jihad," 17.
[305] "Thailand Islamic Insurgency."
[306] "Explosives Stolen in Thai Raid," BBC News (31 March 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3584841.stm>.

operations at Bangkok's international airport.[307] Thailand is also flooded with as many as 10 million privately owned firearms, which have been found in the hands of militants. As Capie notes, "the combination of vast stocks of privately owned weapons with weak and corrupt law enforcement and poor regulation provides many opportunities for theft and diversion.[308]

Local Conflict in Perspective

Islam in Southern Thailand: Origins and Identity

The origins of Islam in southern Thailand can be traced back several centuries. Pattani acted as an independent sultanate until 1786 when it was conquered by the Kingdom of Siam, although the state was not formally dissolved until the early twentieth century.[309] Although the Kingdom abolished the Muslim dynasty, the Islamic culture was largely left intact.

Thai Muslim identity is comprised of two often inseparable characteristics – their Malay origins, and their Islamic roots.[310] In culture, traditions and language, the Muslim community in the south carries more of a Malay character than a Thai one. It remains religiously distinct from the Buddhist Thai majority, and on the whole identifies with its Malay roots, and does not consider itself as "Thai."[311]

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[307] Larry Jagan, "Thai officials 'Sold Arms to Tigers'," *BBC News* (23 September 2003), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3133016.stm>; In a prior incident, Thai air force officials were found to have been reselling Glock pistols onto the local black market. "Airforce Firearms Theft: Informants hand in 25 of the Stolen Glock Pistols, Only Five Still Not Accounted For," *Bangkok Post,* April 16, 2001.
[308] Capie, "Trading the Tools of Terror," 197.
[309] Croissant, "Unrest in Southern Thailand."
[310] Joy, "Multiculturalism in Thailand?"
[311] "Insurgency, Not Jihad," 2.

Thai Muslims are generally characterized by their more conservative religious identity. The traditional *pondok* (Islamic school) is a central factor that reinforces the Malay-Muslim identity and lifestyle of Thai Muslims in Pattani, offering religious education, a regular curriculum and training in Arabic and the local Yawi dialect.[312]

Militant Islamist Groups: Aims and Ideology

Organized Islamic resistance groups can be traced back to the late 1950s, in reaction to Bangkok's aggressive assimilation policies and political domination.[313] Since then, a series of opposition groups in the name of Islam have formed, dissolved and splintered. The number of groups, as well as intensity of violence has waxed and waned over the course of the last half-century, peaking from 1960 to 1980, with gradual reductions from the 1980s into the late 1990s[314] to spiking again in 2004.

Over the course of this period, several militant Islamist groups emerged, all calling for the creation of an independent Islamic Pattani state (See Table 2). For these groups, the demand for independence is based on a sentiment of political and religious domination by the Buddhist majority, perceived social and economic neglect of the

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[312] Joseph Liow, "The Pondok Schools of Southern Thailand: Bastian of Islamic Education or Hotbed of Militancy?" *IDSS Commentaries* (25 August 2004),
<http://www.ntu.edu.sg/idss/publications/commenatries.html>; Bradley, "Waking Up to the Terror Threat."
[313] The National Patani Liberation Front (BNPP), formed in 1959, is considered the first group to organize armed resistance in the south. The BNPP called for full independence of the southern provinces, later switching its name to Patani Islamic Liberation Front (BIPP) to emphasize its commitment to Islam. It is said to have been dissolved in the 1990s, but there is speculation that the group, or elements of, have been involved in recent spate of violence. See: "Insurgency, Not Jihad," 10; Croissant "Unrest in Thailand."
[314] The incorporation of greater political and economic development strategies, increased government-opposition negotiation and a broad amnesty offered to opposition groups are generally recognized factors that undercut the popularity of a violent struggle during this period. See: "Insurgency, Not Jihad," 10-12.

southern provinces, and the defense of the Malay Muslim community from perceived

injustice on the part of the Thai government. Apart from suggested attraction of GMIP to

the global Islamic struggle agenda,[315] these militant Islamist groups are predominantly

focused on local concerns and action. The PULO has recently changed its demand to

"autonomous self-rule," rather than outright separation.[316] According to the ICG, PULO

is "more accurately characterized as ethno-nationalist than Islamist."[317]

TABLE 2 *Local militant Islamist groups in Thailand*

Group	Emergence	Ideology/Character	Aims and tactics
BRN Barisan Revolusi Nasional	Early 1960s	Early agenda committed to elements of socialism, Islamism and nationalism, now more ethno-nationalist	Independent republic of the four majority Muslim provinces; focused on political organization; some guerilla activities
PULO Patani United Liberation Front	1968	One of the earliest and most organized Islamic groups	Autonomous self-rule of Pattani; "dramatic violent attacks"
BRN-Coordinate (BRN-C) Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate, National Revolutionary Front-Coordinate	1980	Splinter group of BRN	Independent Islamic state; longer term political strategy of expanding support in Islamic schools; limited guerilla activity; "urban sabotage"
GMP Mujahideen Islam Patani	1986	Short-lived Islamic group; dissolved in 1993	Independent Islamic state
Pemuda	1992	Separatist youth movement; partially controlled by BRN-C	Independent Islamic state; day to day violence; shooting and bombing attacks
New PULO Patani United Liberation Front	1992[318]	Splinter faction of PULO; smallest of active Islamic groups	Independent Islamic state of Pattani; attacks on government installations
GMIP Geraint Mujahideen Islam Patani, Patani Islamic Mujahideen Group	1995	Splinter faction of GMP	Independent Islamic state; suggested ties to international terrorism and support for bin Laden

Sources: ICG documents (2005); MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base

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[315] The GMIP is reported to have distributed leaflets calling for support of Osama Bin Laden in 2001. Anthony Davis, "Thailand Faces up to Southern Extremist Threat," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (October 2003).

[316] Barry Deely, "Blasts Follow Thai Insurgents Call for Self-Rule," *ISN Security Watch* (3 November 2005), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=13377>.

[317] "Insurgency, not Jihad," 8.

[318] Although New PULO split from the PULO in 1992, they did not formally announce the split until 1995. Ibid., 13.

The conflict in southern Thailand has been described as a "headless insurgency," with no clear "center of gravity."[319] Factionalization along ideological lines has left the south bereft of a dominant militant Islamist group, although the PULO, New PULO and the BRN-C have been described by analysts as the region's most organized and active.[320] Nevertheless, there is little hard evidence available in regards to the size, the extent of operations, and popular support base of these militant Islamist groups. It has been estimated that the combined total of insurgents is between 4,000 and 5,000 strong.[321] The PULO has been described as having "latent pools of support" among the Thai Muslim community, with a group of "hardcore members" estimated to be in the hundreds, although Thai officials claim this to be closer to a thousand.[322] Evidence suggests that the BRN is inactive, although the BRN-C, through its youth wing Pemuda, has been accused of orchestrating much of the current violence. Thai military intelligence estimates that the GMIP, an offshoot of the now defunct GMP, is a force of no more than seventeen men who act as "guns for hire."[323]

Militant Islamist Groups and Islam

Militancy in southern Thailand is characterized by its religious orientation to Islam. As stated by Peter Chalk and Angel Rabasa, Thai Muslim separatist movements are driven

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[319] "Thailand: The Headless Southern Insurgency," *Strategic Forecasting* (3 November 2005), <http://www.stratfor.com/products/premium/read_article.php?id=258058>.
[320] "Insurgency not Jihad," 8, 13.
[321] Stephen Ulph, "Thailand Crisis Deepening," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Focus* Vol. 2(21) (14 November 2005), 5 <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/tf_002_021.pdf>.
[322] Andrew Holt, "Thailand's Troubled Border: Islamic Insurgency or Criminal Playground?," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* Vol. 2(10) (20 May 2004), <http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=400&issue_id=2960&article_id=236740>.
[323] "Thailand's Trouble in the South," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (8 January 2004).

by the principle of *hijra* ("emigration in the cause of God"), which asserts "all Islamic communities have both a religious right and duty to 'withdraw' from any form of persecution that is serving to place their survival in jeopardy."[324] This religious edict, as they further explain, has served to justify Malay Muslim-instigated civil disobedience and separatist violence, including terrorism.[325]

Thai Muslim militant groups have sought to encapsulate their struggle in defense of local Islamic values and traditions. While disagreement over the precise role of Islam appears to have contributed to factionalization, there is a distinct paucity of information available with regard to the relationship between Islam and these groups. Apart from the PULO, no group has publicly declared a political doctrine nor provided any indication as to the specific role played by Islam within their desired state.[326] There is, however, some direct evidence that shows justification for political violence through religious interpretation. Analysis has revealed that the PULO rely heavily on Koran citations to justify violence.[327] Moreover, the GMIP has called for jihad in the south and pledged support for bin Laden and Al-Qaeda's Islamist struggle, an indication that the GMIP is accepting of their terrorist tactics.

There is evidence, however, that the BRN-C is using southern Thailand's network of religious schools to recruit new militants. According to the ICG, "the BRN has a

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[324] Rabasa and Chalk, "Muslim Separatist Movements," 95.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Zachary Abuza, "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand?," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* Vol. 3(9) (6 May 2005), <http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369684>.
[327] "Insurgency not Jihad," 8.

history of organizing in religious schools and has reportedly been stepping up this effort in recent years."[328] In December 2004, Thai authorities arrested four school teachers working at the Thamma Witthaya Foundation School, and elite private Islamic college in Yala, claiming that they were "key mastermind figures" who "played a commanding role" in this recruitment process.[329]

Militant Islamist Groups: Terrorist Activities

Following a decade-long hiatus, violence has escalated considerably in the south. It is estimated that in the last two years, nearly 1000 people have been killed in a spate of bombings and assassinations.[330] While no group has admitted responsibility for these attacks, the Thai government has formally conceded that they are the work of militant separatists, not criminal banditry.[331]

Targets have been both strategic and symbolic. In the last two years, nearly 40 policemen have been slain, mostly through ambush and bike bombs.[332] In addition to the spate of killings of Buddhists in the south, directed attacks against economic targets, including hotels, gas stations and bars have claimed hundreds of lives.[333] Schools and teachers, considered "symbols of government control," have been increasingly targeted

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[328] Ibid.

[329] "Thailand Arrests Muslim Teachers," *BBC News* (16 December 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4100793.stm>.

[330] "Bomb Blasts hit Southern Thailand," *BBC News* (2 November 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4400488.stm>.

[331] Nualnoi Thammasathien, "Thailand Wakes up to Southern Threat," *BBC News* (8 January 2004), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3379345.stm>.

[332] "Thailand Islamic insurgency."

[333] Simon Montlake, "Thai Insurgency Takes Toll on Locals," *BBC News* (19 July 2002), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4696829.stm>; "Southern Thailand Bomb Kills Two," *BBC News* (3 April 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4406721.stm>.

since 2004.[334] According to Joseph Liow, the killing of Buddhist monks and attacks on tourist destinations "suggests that violence is beginning to manifest a degree of rage previously unseen in Thailand."[335]

As a result of what Zachary Abuza describes as a "conspiracy of silence" among the perpetrators, it is unclear which group is responsible for these attacks.[336] While New PULO has been characterized as a "more militant faction" than its predecessor, they are reported to have focused their attacks on government installations rather than police or Buddhist settlers.[337] According to interviews conducted by the ICG the BRN-C is believed to be directing a significant proportion of the current violence, largely through its youth wing Pemuda. [338]

International and Regional Linkages

International Linkages

There has been much speculation among regional analysts that international terrorist groups were establishing themselves in southern Thailand, even likely responsible for some of the current terrorist activities.[339] The targets chosen and sophistication of recent

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[334] Simon Montlake, "Learning to Live with Thai Violence," *BBC News* (12 July 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4675415.stm>.
[335] Joseph Liow, "Bangkok's Southern Discomfort: Violence and Response in Southern Thailand," *IDSS Commentaries 14* (2004). <http://www.pvtr.org/pdf/Southern_Discomfort.pdf>.
[336] Abuza, "A Conspiracy of Silence."
[337] "Insurgency, not Jihad," 13.
[338] Ibid., 19.
[339] Rohan Gunaratna, "Understanding Al-Qaeda and Its Network," in Paul J. Smith, *Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia,* 70-73; Zachary Abuza, "Militant Islam in Indonesia," *USINDO Open Forum,* Washington D.C. (6 May 2004), Jeremy Bransten, "Thai Attacks Raise Specter That Terrorists Are Broadening their Reach in Region," *Radio Free Europe* (8 January 2003), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2004/01/sec-040108-rferl-175357.htm>.

attacks has led some analysts to speculate involvement of regional or international terrorist organizations, in particular JI.[340]

Transnational terrorist groups do have network ties and connections with local groups in Thailand. Connections between some Thai Muslims and members of JI go back to the 1980s, where bonds were forged in mujahideen training camps on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border during the Afghan-Soviet War.[341] In May 2003, four Thai Muslims, suspected as belonging to JI, were arrested on suspicion of planning major bomb attacks against US, British, Israeli, Singaporean and Australian embassies in Thailand, as well as tourist sites, as part of a JI plot.[342] In addition, individuals linked to Al-Qaeda and JI are documented to have both used the country for meetings as well as passed through them.[343]

While evidence exists of a JI presence in Thailand, as well as established contacts between members of local militant Islamist groups and transnational terrorist organizations such as JI, there is little concrete proof that links the current spate of violence in southern Thailand with transnational terrorist groups. According to the findings of a recent ICG report, "there is no evidence that jihadist groups from outside

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[340] "Thaksin Plan for South Criticized," *BBC News* (18 February 2005),
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4276279.stm>.
[341] In the early 1990s, Thais joined Indonesians in further training in Afghanistan, including members of GMIP. See: "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," 37.
[342] Recently, the four suspects were acquitted of the charges, on the grounds that "no evidence was found that they were setting up a JI network or gathering people to launch a terror attack." See: "Thailand Terror Case Collapses," *BBC News* (1 June 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4598391.stm>.
[343] Dana Dillon, "Thai Troubles: Combating Terror or Creating Insurgency?" *Web Memo No. 716*, Heritage Foundation (8 April 2005), <http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/wm716.cfm>.

Thailand, such as Jemaah Islamiyah, have been involved in the violence in the south."[344]
Even Thailand's security officials believe that the southern violence "is a purely domestic affair."[345]

While the sophistication of the terrorist methods recently used has led some to speculate the possibility of outside influence, the Thai government as well as the PULO have downplayed this interpretation.[346] Many experts do concur, however, that sectarian violence involving local Muslim grievances provides a ripe environment for JI to become more engaged in the struggle.[347] In an interview with the Associated Press Lukman Lima, the acting head of the PULO, warned that "If the government opts to kill, and kill without reason, perhaps fighters from Indonesia and Arab countries will help us."[348] In addition, PULO has recently referred to financial support for the insurgents arriving from "Islamic sympathizers in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia."[349]

Attempts by JI to graft itself into the current climate appear for the most part have proven unsuccessful due to ideological differences. After a series of meetings in 2000 between members of PULO and JI, attempts to form an alliance failed because the Thai

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[344] "Insurgency, Not Jihad," 37.
[345] "Thailand's Emergency Decree: No Solution," 21.
[346] Stephen Ulph, "Thailand Crisis Deepening," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Focus*, Vol. 2(21) (14 November 2005), < http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369828>.
[347] Manyin et al., "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," 29.
[348] Barry Deely, "Blasts Follow Thai Insurgents Calls for Self-Rule," *ISN Security Watch* (3 November 2005), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=13377>.
[349] Stephen Ulph, "Southern Thailand in Crisis," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Focus*, Vol. 2(18) (4 October 2005), <http://www.jamestown.org/publications_view.php?publication_id=15>.

'delegates' objection to the use of violence.[350] In addition, Hambali is said to have told his US interrogators, shortly after his arrest, that Thai militants refused to help him blow up tourist spots in the country, because they did not agree with the targets.[351]

Regional Linkages

Certain Thai militant Islamist groups maintain ties with other militant Islamist groups in Southeast Asia. Several groups, including PULO and GMIP, maintain links with the GAM in Indonesia for smuggling purposes.[352] Through Thailand's southern ports, significant quantities of arms are regularly passed, en route to Muslim guerrillas in Indonesia and the Philippines.[353] While these groups derive inspiration from similar religious or situational experience, these ties appear to based more on pragmatic considerations, underpinned by extended connections, than focused on a unitary plight.

Conclusion

A history of economic and political neglect has left the Thai Muslim community marginalized and under-represented. Cultural insensitivity on the part of the Bangkok government has contributed to a deep sense of mistrust by Thai Muslims for the political and security establishments. And while less overt than in previous decades, Bangkok's

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[350] "Indonesia Backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates," *Asia Report No. 43*, International Crisis Group (11 December 2002), 8, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1397&l=1>.

[351] "Indonesia Backgrounder," 38; Andrew Perrin, "Targeting Thailand: Are Islamic Militants Behind the Latest Wave of Attacks and Bombings in the Country's Restless South?" *Time Asia* (11 January 2004), <http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501040119-574944,00.html>.

[352] "Thailand Islamic Insurgency."

[353] Chalk, "Light Arms Trading in Southeast Asia."

traditional assertion of a Pan-Thai community continues to leave little room for a Thai Muslim identity.

Militant Islamist groups have arisen in southern Thailand, some demanding increased political representation, most calling for total separation. Intense factionalization along ideological lines, however, has left these groups weak and divided. To date, there is no clear indication of either the strength or popularity of these groups. Traditionally, little dialogue has taken place between Bangkok and insurgency groups, the former preferring a military approach at quelling unrest.

While terrorist acts were evident in the past, the current spate of violence in Pattani indicates that these tactics are increasingly popular. Nevertheless, despite suggestions of outside influence, evidence suggests that the reasons for the increase in terrorist tactics stem from local issues and local groups. While Al-Qaeda and JI members have been evident in the region, connections with domestic groups do not appear to have come about; however, these domestic groups do maintain pragmatic relationships with similarly-minded groups in proximity with southern Thailand.

Chapter Seven: Weak States, Islam and Terrorism in Southeast Asia

To recall, there are three popular assumptions in current terrorism analysis: first, that there exists a negative correlation between state capacity and terrorism at the macro-level; second, that conservative Islamic ideology is the principal driving force of terrorism today; and third, that Southeast Asia is a 'second front' of terrorism, where the region's militant Islamist groups are part of a broader like-minded network of terrorism with Al-Qaeda at the helm.

Subsequent analysis of the three case studies, however, has revealed distinct flaws within these assumptions that weaken their validity. I divide these findings along the three assumptions given above.

FINDING 1 *Macro-classifications are a poor indicator for terrorism*

There is a tendency within terrorism analysis to generalize the dangers posed by state failure to the extent that that any state showing signs of weakness or failure is seen as a potential haven for terrorism. This is an assumption based on a general observation that terrorism is seeded by state weakness. Further, it is assumed that the greater the state capacity, the less likelihood of political violence, terrorism included.

Putting this assumption to the test in the context of Southeast Asia has revealed errors in this logic. Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, states which have clearly

taken the brunt of terrorist activities and attacks, do not cleanly fit into the generally assumed character of a weak state. With modernized economies, modest economic growth rates, democratic rule and relative stability at the state level, they are a far cry in comparison to many of the world's more troubled states. The ability of these states to provide political goods for their citizens is, on the whole, not insignificant. Each of these states maintains a comfortable mid-range status on the HDI, while their standing on the FSI does not indicate an acute level of state instability. Yet within all three cases, homegrown militant groups have come about who have used terrorist tactics to forward political agendas.

It is here where macro-analysis breaks down: state-level categorization, such as that put forth by Rotberg, requires an averaging of dimensions of state capacity within a state. Apart from the conceptual vagueness of what characterizes a weak state in the first place, macro-level categorization has a tendency to mask internal issues.

As shown by the cases, specific concentrations of weakness can exist that are shadowed by larger macro-level examinations. Aceh, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines are all 'brown zones,' where the national government carries little, if any monopoly of violence or political legitimacy. It is also within these regions where dimensions of weakness are most acute. The social, economic and security climates of these geographical pockets render them highly prone to violence and in these cases, terrorism.

Grievance, in these cases, has stemmed directly from social, economic and political marginalization felt by a concentrated ethnic minority. Aggressive attempts by the Indonesian, Thai and Philippine governments to create national unity have been met with fierce opposition by the Acehnese, Thai Muslims and the Muslim Moro communities, respectively. Repressive integrationist strategies served to further alienate these communities while transmigration policies, as in the case with Aceh and the southern Philippines, created a dual economic class largely divided along ethno-religious lines.

The widening of income inequality, not only between the centre and periphery, but between ethno-religious groups within these brown zones, has further fuelled resentment. In Aceh and the southern Philippines, extraction of local natural resources has promoted uneven economic development that has largely benefited non-indigenous locals, spurring animosity. Southern Thailand, in contrast, has suffered from a condition of region-wide economic underdevelopment, a result of what appears to be a historical disinterest in reducing the economic disparity of its peripheral regions. Moreover, the limited initiatives introduced by the Bangkok government to promote economic development in the region have generated only marginal results, and have done little to quell the Thai Muslim perception that the centre is simply uninterested in their economic well-being.

Poor governance from the centre appears to have hindered political development within these regions. The perceived need for political domination in order to maintain

stability, as seen in all three cases, stunted the development of a local political base. Ethnic discrimination has prevented the entrance of indigenous political elites into the larger realm of state politics; although it can be equally argued that the high rates of poverty within these cases' Muslim communities have reduced the pool of qualified, educated citizens. And in all cases, the historically popular military approach of central governments to quell unrest has served to exacerbated tensions.

Aceh, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines all present opportune climates for illegitimate activity. First, geographical realities, namely large swaths of unmonitored land and maritime borders, have resulted in high border porosity that has facilitated channels of movement, both of people and arms. Paradoxically, it is these same regions where the brunt of the Indonesian, Thai and Philippine security forces have been most active, and where enforcement actions including repression and martial law have been enacted in order to reduce porosity and movement of opposition groups.

Second, loose financial regulations have allowed both local and transnational groups to fund their operations. The need to shore up the integrity of these states' above-ground financial sectors is well vocalized. It appears however that the extensive informal *hawalla* network that exists between Southeast Asia's Muslim communities is widely regarded as the most troublesome factor. While investigations have revealed that these networks have been used by transnational terrorist groups, there is little evidence available as to the extent of which the *hawalla* system or loose financial regulations have benefited local militant Islamist groups. Moreover, border porosity appears to have

facilitated hand-to-hand movements of finances, although again there lacks sufficient hard evidence to move this factor beyond speculation.

Third, corruption and criminality in public functioning appear to have greatly facilitated the agendas of militant Islamist groups in all three cases. Most apparent is corruption and criminality in the security forces. Weapons leakage has either directly boosted the arsenals of groups, by way of direct sales security personnel and group members, or indirectly, whereby state-issued small arms have made their way onto local black markets. The criminal environment found within all three cases appears to increase temptation for such activities, as shown by the numerous examples of illicit weaponry sales by security forces.

The danger posed by dimensions of weakness within these brown zones does not only compromise local security. As the examination of the cases has shown, these brown zones appear feed off one another, and have been used for specific purposes by different groups. Southern Thailand appears to be a key brown zone, acting as the main thoroughfare of the extensive small arms trade currently operating in Southeast Asia, which has, along with Thailand's domestic militant Islamist groups, greatly boosted the arsenals of the GAM, the MILF and the ASG. Evidence has shown that Al-Qaeda and JI have used Thailand's criminal forgery syndicates to obtain false travel documents and identification papers. In the southern Philippines, MILF training camps are well documented to have trained Indonesian militant Islamist groups. This suggests that brown

zones cannot be considered an isolated security risk; a series of brown zones combined effectively create brown *regions*.

Macro-classifications of state capacity do not tell the whole story. The generality of macro-classifications, as the evidence suggests, calls into question its viability of this indicator in assessing the risk of terrorism. We can see that the standard notion of a negative correlation between state capacity and terrorism does not fit easily within the context of Southeast Asia. In fact, there appears to be a *positive* correlation in this relationship – terrorist activities to date have occurred predominantly in those states with not only higher levels of state capacity, but also in those who rank within the middle and upper realms of state development. Terrorism may predominate in weak states, but the conceptual vagueness of what constitutes a weak state in the first place does little to indicate whether a state is at a higher risk, or indeed why terrorism is prevalent in the first place.

What this suggests is that while state weakness can provide some indication of the risk of terrorism, it lacks the consistency required to make a valid correlation. In light of empirical observations, macro-classifications appear to obscure rather than illuminate the link between state capacity and terrorism. *Micro*-classifications, however, appear to provide a more accurate predictive capacity. As the cases have revealed, a positive correlation seems to exist between the presence of brown zones and terrorism. While greater study is warranted in order to order to assess the strength of this correlation, it is

that the relationship between weak states and terrorism is more complex and nuanced than generally assumed.

FINDING 2 *Terrorism is less driven by religious ideology than generally assumed*

The analytical challenge in these cases has been twofold: first, to determine the extent to which religion is fundamental in explaining the outbreak of the insurgencies; and second, whether Islam can be rightly argued to be the predominant ideological bridge justifying the use of terrorist acts. To the former, examination of the cases has revealed that Islamic identity plays a distinct role, although only in conjunction with other precipitating factors. To the latter, while religious ideology *appears* to be the dominant ideological bridge, it is more often ethno-nationalist zeal that rationalizes the use of terrorist tactics.

For the indigenous Acehnese, the Moros and the Thai Malays, Islam has always been an intrinsic component of their communal identity. Examining the history of these groups has revealed that Islam is deeply intertwined in the social fabric of these communities, and remains an aspect inseparable from their ethnic identity.

The salience of these communities' respective identities has been strengthened as a result of deeply-felt grievance, perceived and real. These communities have, for centuries, maintained that they are distinct nations, forged from prior histories of independence, reinforced by a tradition of defense and defiance in the face of a dominant ethnic and/or religious culture. Indeed, the Muslim communities in each of the cases were forcibly pulled into the fold of a larger state over the course of history.

As empirical study has shown, a combination of a perception of economic/social disadvantage, cultural difference and a history a long standing simmering grievance have only served to reinforce this group identity. In addition, a pervasive sense of identity crisis within the global Islamic community, whereby its very integrity is perceived to be put to the test in face of Western moral, spiritual and political values, has contributed to a general resurgence in Islam and ultimately has reinforced the sense of communal identity in these three cases.

This strong sense of ethno-religious group identity has proved a powerful inspiration for group mobilization. Personal and group experiences in combination with specific precipitating events have acted as catalysts, sparking political violence. Because Islam remains a powerful component of Acehnese, Moro and the Thai Malay identity, militant Islamist groups have naturally used the need for Islamic preservation as a rallying call to generate support for their political agendas. But, while appearing Islamic in character, the growth of militant Islamist groups within these cases is more accurately described as attempts to protect the interests of an ethnic community which also happens to be Islamic.

This is not to undermine the importance played by religion in these cases. Indeed, all militant Islamist groups deemed terrorist by either local or international bodies – including Al Qaeda, JI, ABG, GAM, and MILF – derive their legitimacy in terms of recruitment and community sympathy from the perception that they are the defenders of

an Islamic way of life. Examination of the cases has revealed, however, that a crucial

distinction exists between the use of Islam as an *identity* and as an *ideology*, which seems

to be dependent upon whether a local or a transnational group is involved.

For domestic militant Islamist groups, structural disadvantages, in combination

with the perceived necessity to protect local ethno-religious identity, act as driving forces

justifying violent opposition to a dominant state. In the case of Aceh, as in the Muslim

insurgencies in the Philippines and Thailand, a strong religious identity coincides with

ethnic, political, and socioeconomic status. GAM is a clear case of this. While the group

has sought to portray itself as a defender of Acehnese Islamic culture and tradition at the

local level, it has consistently based its justification for violence, including terrorism, on

the need for a greater role in the political and economic affairs of the Acehnese people.

To a similar extent, the MNLF, the MILF and PULO have all made calls for an

autonomous, albeit Islamic, state and have used terrorism as a means to an end when a

political solution proved untenable through standard political violence. But these groups,

GAM included, have sought to promote economic and political subordination alongside

religious domination. None of these groups have chosen to characterize their plights

within strictly sectarian terms.

Transnational militant Islam, by contrast, while deriving their strength from

similar sources, is more focused on what it sees as the need to defend the global Islamic

community, and the faith, as a whole. For groups such as Al-Qaeda and JI, the protection

of Muslim identity is the prime reason for their existence; religious ideology in turn acts

as the driving force for their terrorist-based agendas. Their central motivation seems to be a perception that Islam worldwide is disrespected and under coordinated attack, rather than a concern to defend specific local communities. In other words, for transnational groups, protection of Islamic identity is *the* central driving force.

This distinction is also important with respect to the justification for tactics beyond 'standard' political violence. As the cases have revealed, prominent militant Islamist groups with well-defined political agendas have tended to limit their use of outright terrorism for fear of damaging their image as a legitimate political opposition force. While the GAM, MNLF and MILF have committed acts of terrorism in the past, all have since publicly declared such tactics, or associations with groups that use such tactics, as harmful to their greater cause.

This process of self-limitation, however, has frequently divided the leadership of these groups and resulted in the formation of more radical factions. Groups, such as the ASG and Pemuda, have tended to relish in the use of egregious terrorist tactics, apparently spurred on by a belief that such acts are consecrated by the will of God. Yet even these groups to a certain degree frame their struggles in local socio-economic realities.

In sum, we can say that religious identity only partly explains the inclination towards acts of terrorism by local militant Islamist groups. The degree to which religion justifies terrorism appears dependent upon which type – local or transnational – of group

is studied. Local groups appear driven more by the perceived need to protect a particular group within a state. Transnational groups are driven more by the perceived need to protect the religion as a whole. On the whole, terrorism at the domestic level appears less inspired by religion alone and more a product of a combination of grievances felt in a minority Islamic community.

FINDING 3 *The Second Front theory holds little ground in Southeast Asia*

Examination of these cases has found that linkages do exist between militant Islamist groups in Southeast Asia. There is credible evidence to show that Al-Qaeda and JI cells have a presence in the region, and that members of these groups have either ties, or have attempted to establish ties, with local militant Islamist groups in all three cases. Closer investigation, however, reveals that the popular notion of a top-down hierarchical network operated by Al-Qaeda is more fiction than fact, and that the prospect of 'like-minded' groups working in unison for a common cause is a gross generalization of the actual case on the ground.

Theoretically, each of the cases present an ideal climate for transnational terrorist groups. The concentrated weakness of these locales, as well widely felt grievance and sense of religious persecution that exists with their Islamic minority communities would make us believe that these regions should be a fertile ground for transnational terrorism.

Examination, however, has revealed that no clear indication of widespread collusion between groups. The extent of transnational terrorism entrenchment is varied

within the cases. Significant evidence shows that Al-Qaeda and JI have used southern Thailand and the southern Philippines for operational purposes, including logistics and training. Ties, built through familial and personal relationships appear to exist between members of the MILF, the ASG, JI and certain Thai militants. Aceh, however, stands out among the cases in the sense that there is no visible evidence either of the presence of transnational terrorist groups or collusion with either Al-Qaeda or JI. On the whole, organizational ties appear to have been established for pragmatic reasons, namely for the purpose of arms smuggling and in the case of the southern Philippines, personnel training.

There is no solid evidence of Al-Qaeda/JI entrenchment in these cases, the exception being the Abu Bakar training facilities in Mindanao. While there are documented attempts to form coalitions, as seen in the case of southern Thailand, disagreements over strategy have, to date, hindered collaboration. In fact, some local militant Islamist groups have actively sought to distance themselves from Al-Qaeda and JI, going so far as to call their struggles as "un-Islamic."[354] In the case of Aceh, GAM has vocally denounced any relation with these groups, publicly removing any elements, including volunteer organizations, from the region. Similarly, the MILF has repeatedly made itself clear that they have no ties, either ideologically or operationally with the ASG. In southern Thailand, there is simply no evidence that the current spate of terrorist incidences have been a result of Al-Qaeda, JI or local affiliated groups.

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[354] Hefner, "Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Keynote Address," 6.

Local militant Islamist groups appear to be primarily focused on concerns within their specific ethnoreligious communities. They have little interest, as it appears, in the broader agendas of either Al-Qaeda or JI. To quote Hefner,

> The reason Southeast Asian radicals have kept their distance is not because they are more moderate or less anti-Western than bin Laden; they are not. Rather the difference is that their primary ambitions, audience, and backers are domestic or regional, and they are not particularly impressed with the dream of international jihad entertained by bin Laden.[355]

Neither have there been any visible signs of local popular support for transnational terrorist groups or their ideology in these communities. From this, it would appear that dire warnings of local groups 'going transnational' is an overstatement, or at least an event that has yet to happen.

In part to blame for this assumption is the reality that political violence, and in particular when Islam is a factor, increasingly appears to be seen through a prism of terrorism, which has led many analysts to assume that Al-Qaeda is behind every attack or incident. This prism, and the propensity to focus exclusively on linkages, however circumstantial or peripheral, that exist between regional organizations and groups, such as Al-Qaeda, serve to divert attention away from the probability that long-standing issues and grievances underlie the reasons and rationale towards violent insurgency at the local level.[356] As Hefner correctly states, "the most important influence on Islamist violence has been, not Al-Qaeda, but the collapse of local governance, the loss of elite cohesion,

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[355] Ibid., 6.
[356] Thayer, "Political Terrorism in Southeast Asia," 13.

and the succumbing of some in state and society to the temptation of sectarian trawling."[357]

There has been much speculation as to the depth of transnational terrorism's grip over Southeast Asia. The evidence, however, does not support this accusation. While transnational terrorism does indeed exist within Southeast Asia, and these groups have been known to exploit the functional space provided by regional weakness, there is insufficient evidence to back the claim of close ties between local and transnational terrorist groups and the top-down 'Bin Laden-as-CEO' approach.

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[357] Ibid., 8.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to critically analyze three popular assumptions in the field of terrorism. First, that a direct link exists between weak states and terrorism; second, that Islamic fundamentalism is the principle driving force behind the motivation for terrorist activities; and third, that Southeast Asia is a second front of terrorism.

Preliminary examination reveals a number of discrepancies that weakens the validity of these assumptions. Analysis of the macro-classification system of state capacity does not provide a precise definition of a weak state. Neither does this classification system adequately answer why the significant majority of weak states do not experience terrorist violence. Further, the conflation of conservative Islamic ideology with radically violent Islamic movements contradicts the reality that these groups constitute only a tiny percentage of the global Islamic community. Finally, the apparent lack of ideological congruity between local militant Islamist groups and international terrorist movements calls into question the true nature of the 'jihadist network' operating in Southeast Asia.

The cases of Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand are logical choices for examining these assumptions. While terrorism is apparent in all three cases, neither case easily fits within the framework of a weak state. Examination reveals that these states are better described as fragmented states, within which geographic regions exist where governments carry little monopoly of violence or control. In the key conflict areas of Aceh, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand, concentrated dimensions of

structural weakness are evident. The nature of macro-classification models overshadows these 'brown zones,' revealing the limitations of such frameworks to accurately predict the risk of terrorist violence. Further, while it can be said that Islam plays an important role in the character of the militant groups operating within these conflict zones, religious justifications for violence seldom, if ever, operate independently from other factors.

As a result of these discrepancies, a new conceptual framework was required in order examine the causal connections between dimensions of weakness, Islam and terrorism in these states. According to this framework, a sentiment of grievance is derived from a state's inability to adequately address the needs of a particular group. In combination with key precipitating events, this grievance can spawn political violence. Terrorism, as argued, requires additional moral validation. The higher justification needed to rationalize these acts is derived from national, political or religious ideologies.

Empirical analysis of these cases demonstrates that terrorism is more clearly attributed to grievance felt by a particular group as a result of concentrations of weakness within the regions of states. Structural deficiencies, including inadequate security infrastructures and corruption, also provide an enabling environment that facilitates the operations of these groups. Terrorism within these cases is also less driven by religious ideology than currently presumed. Instead, the use of terrorist tactics by domestic militant Islamist groups appears to be motivated primarily by nationalist ideologies or ethnic identities, not the radical Islamist ideology attributed to international Islamist groups. While appearing Islamic in character, terrorist activities within these cases are better

described as attempts to defend distinct ethnic communities whose identities are deeply tied to Islam. Finally, examination of these conflicts demonstrates that they remain largely local in character and not part of a larger network of like-minded groups coordinated by Al-Qaeda. Connections, as evidence reveals, are often a result of personal ties between individual members of differing groups. Affiliations between groups are made largely for pragmatic, and not ideological reasons.

This investigation has shown evidence of a positive correlation between the existence of brown zones and terrorist activities. The validity of such a correlation, however, is clearly limited by the fact that only three cases were studied. A broader examination over a larger set of cases would bolster the strength of this correlation. It may be interesting to compare the causal connections between dimensions of weakness, Islam and terrorism in a different region, such as the Middle East. A comparison of the role of Islam and the types of terrorist tactics used over several geographic regions would provide more breadth to the findings of this study.

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