Illusionary Myth about Violence on the Southern Border: A Case Study of Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province

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วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีเป้าประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาและวิเคราะห์มายาคติคและเจตคติเกี่ยวกับความรุนแรงในจังหวัดยะลา ผ่านปฏิสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจระหว่างสถาบันทางสังคมต่างๆ และผู้คนในพื้นที่ 2) เพื่อวิเคราะห์เปรียบเทียบมุมมองเกี่ยวกับความรุนแรงในพื้นที่ชายแดนใต้ระหว่างผู้คนภายในและภายนอกพื้นที่ และ 3) เพื่อศึกษาวิกฤตภาพแทนความรุนแรงเกี่ยวกับความรุนแรงในพื้นที่จังหวัดชายแดนใต้ โดยได้ประยุกต์ใช้กรอบแนวคิดเรื่องมายาคติ อำนาจ/วาทกรรม และทฤษฎีเศรษฐศาสตร์การเมืองว่าด้วยความรุนแรงมาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์และอธิบายปรากฏการณ์ งานศึกษาวิจัยชิ้นนี้ได้เลือกอำเภอแห่งหนึ่งในจังหวัดยะลาเป็นพื้นที่ศึกษาหลัก ควบคู่กับศึกษาวิจัยข้อมูลทุติยภูมิในจังหวัดกรุงเทพฯ การวิจัยภาคสนามได้ใช้ระยะเวลา 4 เดือน โดยใช้การสังเกตการณ์แบบมีส่วนร่วม การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง และการสนทนากลุ่มกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลจากหลากหลายกลุ่ม จำนวนทั้งสิ้น 31 คน อาทิ เหยื่อความรุนแรงทั้งทางตรงและทางอ้อม เจ้าหน้าที่ของรัฐ ผู้นำศาสนา ตัวแทนขององค์กรไม่แสวงหาผลกำไรที่ปฏิบัติงานภายในพื้นที่ ตลอดจนตัวแทนภาครัฐส่วนกลาง และผู้คนภายนอกพื้นที่

ผลการศึกษาเผยให้เห็นว่า ถึงแม้วาทกรรมหลักที่ครอบงำเจตคติและความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับความรุนแรงในพื้นที่จังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ของผู้คนทั้งในและนอกพื้นที่จะเป็นเรื่องของการพยายามแบ่งแยกดินแดนของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์และศาสนาบางกลุ่ม หากทว่าคนในพื้นที่เข้าใจและตระหนักรับรู้ถึงความรุนแรงว่ามีลักษณะซับซ้อนและหลากหลายเฉดมากกว่า ตั้งแต่เรื่องของความแตกต่างเชิงศาสนาและการเมือง ความไม่เท่าเทียมและการกดขี่ข่มเหงกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์มลายูมุสลิมโดยรัฐไทย ไปจนถึงกิจกรรมอาชญากรรมที่เกิดขึ้นระหว่างชายแดนของรัฐไทยและมาเลเซีย (อาทิ การลักลอบค้ายาเสพติด ธุรกิจค้าของเถื่อน และการค้ามนุษย์) ขณะที่คนภายนอกพื้นที่เข้าใจและรับรู้ว่าความรุนแรงในลักษณะเชิงเดี่ยวที่เกิดจากความพยายามในการแบ่งแยกดินแดนของกลุ่มต่างชาติพันธุ์ต่างศาสนาเป็นหลัก ซึ่งความเข้าใจของคนนอกเป็นผลจากการครอบงำของวาทกรรมกระแสหลักที่สื่อพยายามนำเสนอและผลิตซ้ำในลักษณะ "ภาพแทนสาเหตุเชิงเดี่ยว" ของความรุนแรงว่าเกิดขึ้นจากความพยายามแบ่งแยกดินแดน วาทกรรมดังกล่าวถูกประกอบสร้างและขับเคลื่อนโดยกลไกและสถาบันต่างๆ ของรัฐให้กลายเป็นวาทกรรมกระแสหลักโลดแล่นในสังคม โดยรัฐไทยพยายามผลิตสร้างชุดวาทกรรม/ความรู้เกี่ยวกับความขัดแย้งในชายแดนใต้ของตนบนฐานคิดอำนาจอธิปไตยแบบไม่แยกย่อย เพื่อรองรับการใช้อำนาจอย่างชอบธรรมของรัฐไทยในการกดปราบควบคุมและใช้ความรุนแรงกับสิ่งที่รัฐไทยมองว่าเป็นความกระด้างกระเดื่องหรือเป็นภัยต่อความมั่นคงของรัฐ ขณะเดียวกันชุดวาทกรรมความขัดแย้งที่ถูกผลิตสร้างโดยรัฐก็ซึมซับและถูกยอมรับจากผู้คนภายนอกพื้นที่ เนื่องจากผู้คนภายนอกพื้นที่รับรู้ว่ารัฐเป็นผู้มีความรู้และสิทธิอำนาจหน้าที่โดยตรงในการแก้ไขปัญหาความไม่สงบ ด้วยปฏิบัติการทวิลักษณ์ของอำนาจ/ความรู้ทำให้การแทรกแซงและการใช้ความรุนแรงของรัฐจึงมีความชอบธรรมและไม่ถูกตั้งคำถาม ผลจากการปะทะประสานระหว่างภาพแทนความขัดแย้งที่หลากหลายของคนในพื้นที่กับภาพแทนความขัดแย้งที่ถูกผลิตสร้างโดยรัฐไทยได้ทำให้เกิดเป็นวิกฤตการณ์ภาพแทนเกี่ยวกับความรุนแรงในชายแดนใต้ที่มีความคลุมเครือหลากหลายเฉด และยากต่อการแก้ไขปัญหาความขัดแย้งในชายแดนภาคใต้

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Poramin Tangopasvilaisakul : Illusionary Myth about Violence on the Southern Border: A Case Study of Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province. Advisor: Asst. Prof. GULLINEE MUTAKALIN, Ph.D.

The objectives of the research, "Illusionary Myth about Violence on the Southern Border: A Case Study of Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province" are to 1) study the construction of myth about and the intention of violence in Yala Province by means of power interactions between social institutions and the local people; 2) analyse and compare the perspectives on violence on the Southern border of the people within the area of violence and those outside; and 3) study the crisis concerning rhetorical representations which are related to conflict on the Southern border created by clashes and collisions, using the concept of power/discourse, political economy of socio-cultural conflict, and symbolical violence to analyse and explain the existing phenomena. The research has chosen to study Yala Province, which is located in the middle of the four Southern border provinces, together with studying secondary information obtained in Bangkok. The field research took four months through participant observation, semi-structured interviews and group conversations with thirty-one information providers who were from different groups, for example, direct and indirect victims of violence, local authorities, religious leaders, journalists, representatives of non-profit organization who worked in the area, representatives of the Central administration and people outside the area.

The research has found that though the main rhetoric which has dominated the intention of and understanding about the violence on the Southern border of people in and outside the area is concerned with attempts to separate the land by an ethnic and religious group; the people in the area have understood and have been aware of the complexity and different shades of violence. These include religious and political differences, inequality, suppression of Muslim Malays by the Thai State and criminal activities which have taken place along the border between Thailand and Malaysia (for example, drug trafficking, smuggling of illegal merchandise and human trafficking). Meanwhile, outsiders have thought and acknowledged that violence is mainly caused by attempts of the ethnic and religious group to separate the land. Their understanding has resulted from the domination of the main rhetoric presented by the media in the form of "a single causal representation" of the violence which has been caused by attempts to separate the land. This rhetoric has been constructed and driven by the State's institutions so that it has become the main rhetorical current in society. The Thai State has tried to create a set of rhetoric/knowledge about conflict on the Southern border, which is based on the notion of indivisible sovereignty, in order to justify its exercise of power to control and its use of violence against things which are considered to be rebellious or harmful to State security. At the same time, the rhetorical set on violence created by the State has been accepted by people outside the area because they have acknowledged that the State consists of knowledgeable authorities who have direct responsibility for solving the problems caused by violence through the exercise of the duality of power and knowledge. This has made the intervention and use of violence of the State justified and unquestioned. The results of the clashes and collisions of the diverse representations of conflict of the people in the area and the conflict representations created by the Thai State has contributed to the existence of the crisis in the representations of violence on the Southern border, which are unclear and thus make the crisis difficult to solve.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

This study examines the occurrence of violence in the southernmost region of Thailand as observed by the perspective of local residents and involved actors in Amphoe SaNgob (assumed name) of Yala Province. The origins of the Southern Border conflict in Thailand lie in the 19th century, when King Rama V began a series of reforms intended to transition Thailand from its historical status as a kingdom to a form of the modern nation-state (Thai Khadi Research Institute, 2005; Thananithichot, 2011, pp. 255 - 257). These reforms included development of infrastructure and services like postal systems and railroads, as well as creation and redefinition of national identities with actions like establishing symbols (maps and flags) and the name transition from the Kingdom of Siam to Thailand in 1939. These reforms drew the previous far-flung kingdom (now nation-state) together in the short term, but delayed several critical questions of national identity and belonging that have yet to be resolved. One of these key questions was how to deal with the cultural, religious, and social alignments of the encircling four southernmost provinces which are Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani and Songkhla with the neighbouring nation-state of Malaysia, which was emerging at the same time (Sathan-Anand, 2017, p. 4). As Satha-Anand (2017, p. 4) points out, many of the residents of this region had existing familial and cultural ties across the new national border, followed Islam rather than the more common religion of Buddhism, and were geographically closer to Malaysia than to the new nation-state's central administration in Bangkok. This meant that despite the new networks of infrastructure and administration, the southernmost provinces were only uneasily integrated into the Thai nation-state. Despite sporadic official policy changes to lessen the effects, Malay Muslims inhabiting in the Southern Border have continued to experience discrimination and inequality in employment, access to education and services, and limits to political participation in Thailand (Sugunnasil,

2006, p. 120). The result of this uncomfortable integration, along with persistent economic inequality and injustice suffered by Thai Muslims in the region, has led to nearly 50 years of sporadic insurgencies (Jitpiromsri, 2016; Sathan-Anand, 2017, p. 4).

The beginning of the current period of insurgency is commonly stated to be the "January 4th incident", which was an armed raid on the Fourth Development Battalion in Cho Airong District, Narathiwat, in which four soldiers were killed in an attack by an estimated 60 insurgents (Aphornsuvan, 2008, p. 95). Several other major incidents occurred during this period as well, including the Kru-Ze mosque incident (discussed in more detail below) and a mass protest which took place at Tak Bai in Narathiwat province on October 25th, 2004, in which 78 protesters were killed in army detention (McCargo, 2009a, pp. 1 - 2). Between this initial incident and May 2018, there were roughly 20,342 fatal and non-fatal incidents recorded by the Deep South Watch, the nongovernment organization (NGO), resulting in an estimated 7,000 deaths and 13,644 injuries among those affected (Deep South Watch, 2018) (Figure 1 and 2). Although previous insurgencies have been cyclical in nature, the past 13 years has been characterized by its relatively unrelenting and violent nature despite the ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict through the Pattani Peace Process (Jitpiromsri, 2017). This trend of increased violence occurred under the Thaksin government, in the context of the so-called "Thaksinomics" populist movement which emerged during the postmodern state (Arpapirom, 2005; Pattamanan, 2005).

Figure 1 The Statistics of Violence Incident in Southern Border Conflict

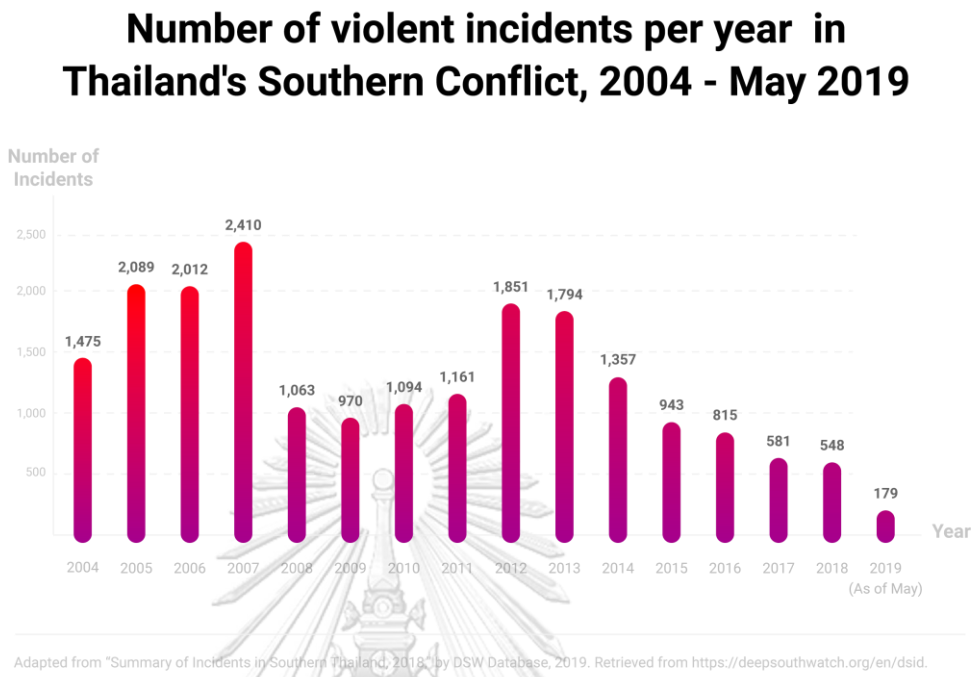
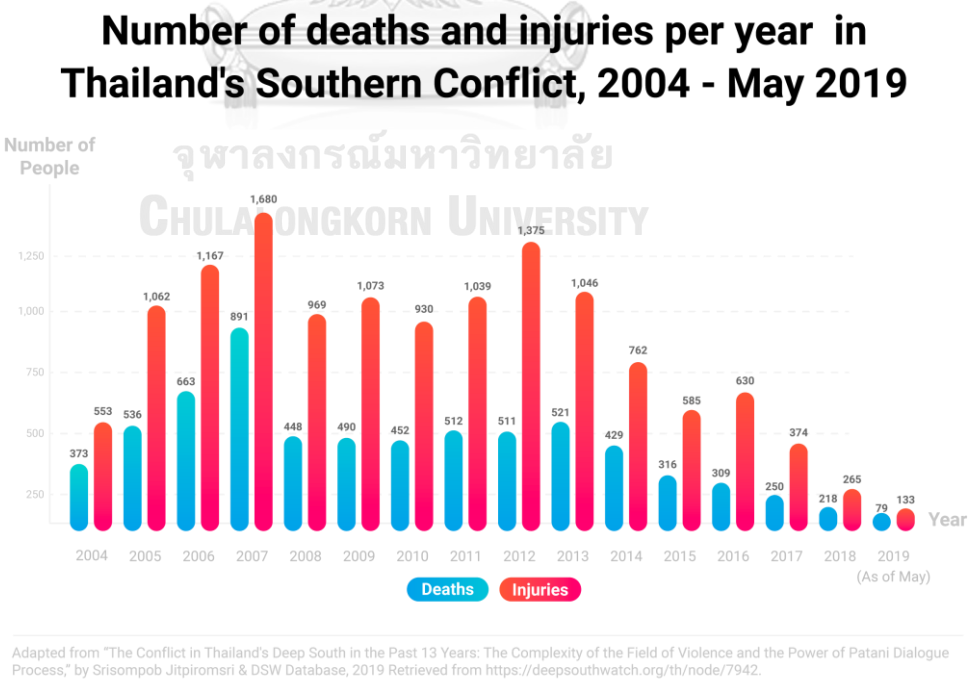


Figure 2 The Statistics of Deaths and Injuries in Southern Border Conflict



While the existence of a long-standing and currently intensified internal conflict in the Southern Border provinces is indisputable, there has been considerable doubt about exactly how to explain what has caused this conflict. Complex explanations involving history, ethnic and national identity, politics and military action, and purported differences in culture, religion, language and lifestyles have all been offered as an attempt to shed light on the origins and reasons for the continuation of the border conflict. Among many other explanations, it has been proposed that the violence and conflict are an ethno-religious and separatist movement of Malay Muslims or a coalition of international terrorist groups, that it is a non-separatist ethnic identity movement, that it is a response to economic structural issues or deliberate economic discrimination, that it has resulted from perceived injustice and unfair treatment, or even that it is the outcome of the need to justify an excessive state security budget. (It is, of course, also possible that some combination of these factors is at the heart of the conflict, further complicating matters.) In academic circles, the debate about the cause of conflict has become increasingly complex and removed from actually-existing conditions within the Southern Border provinces, which one author argues is approaching a state of self-satirization (Unno, 2017). Throughout both popular media and academic debates, these representations tend to be limited in the scope of space and time, and rarely consider broader or more systematic explanations for the conflict (McCargo, 2012, pp. 78 - 79). Furthermore, these analyses also rarely question the assumptions of reporting on the conflict, such as the assumption that Thai Buddhists are peaceful non-aggressors or are in some way more representative of Thailand than Muslims (McCargo, 2009b, pp. 12 - 13). Thus, there are few resources for developing a fuller understanding of the border conflict from an outsider perspective.

This confusion is in some ways endemic to evaluation of ethnic conflict, which is often fragmented and conflicted, badly limited by an attempt to offer a simple explanation for a complex and seemingly inexplicable phenomenon

(Appadurai, 1998). However, there is also another action at work, which is a crisis of representation between insiders (those who reside in Yala Province) and outsiders (those with no involvement in Yala Province) (Aim-Aur-Yut, 2008). While the locals in Yala Province have encountered the lived experience of the violence and conflicts, the views of outsiders are mainly set by mass media reporting of occurrences and related political statements and movements. While this broadens the awareness of the conflict among outsiders, it also distorts and changes the perception depending on what is reported in the news media, which may be limited, misleading, partial, or otherwise inadequate to convey full knowledge of the conflict and its causes (Appadurai, 1996). This media representation overwhelmingly positions Malay Muslim separatists as the violent aggressors in actions against peaceful Thai Buddhists, who fight only out of national loyalty or to protect others (McCargo, 2009a, pp. 2 - 3). Such dramatic and one-sided political representations are not uncommon in Thai politics, where mediated depictions of violence have been used to garner public support (or provoke public opposition) for movements including the anti-Thaksin internal movement (McCargo, 2009c, p. 17). Regardless, the fact that outsiders have a constrained and mediated view on the Southern border conflict, which is largely controlled by conflicting interests of different institutions, cannot be avoided.

One example of this partial and conflicted understanding is the public memory of the so-called “incident at the Kru-Ze mosque” of April 28th, 2004 (Sugunnasil, 2006, pp. 124 - 125). This incident was one of a series of 11 coordinated insurgent attacks, in which 32 insurgents were killed during a siege at the Kru-Ze Mosque (Sugunnasil, 2006, pp. 124 - 125). Many of these insurgents were shot point-blank by soldiers, and the incident at the mosque is remembered as a critical point in the early conflict, but the other incidents which occurred the same day are largely forgotten about. This problem of fragmentary and conflicting images of the conflict is exacerbated by the framing of the conflict by state-controlled and other media sources as primarily religious and separatist in nature, despite evidence that more

complex issues are at play (Joll, 2010, pp. 259 - 260). The use of the media to frame different perspectives in violent conflicts is not unusual, and is a typical practice of both the state and of different groups involved in conflict (Taylor, 2017, pp. 3 - 4). Local people are not immune from this reductivist media framing of the conflict, as reported by a previous author's analysis of the Muslim experience in Thailand (Sathan-Anand, 2005). However, outsiders with no direct points of reference other than the relatively limited perspective provided by mass media may not hold the same view as those who reside in the area.

This difference in perspectives on the conflict between insiders and outsiders has real consequences for its potential resolution. If people viewing the conflict from insider perspectives have different ideas about the causes and consequences of the indisputably violent acts than those viewing from outsider perspectives, they are likely to arrive at different potential solutions and preferred approaches to conflict resolution. Insiders may also fail to understand debate and controversy arising in academic and policy circles on a situation that may seem obvious to them, preventing a true dialogue and understanding that would allow insiders to contribute their voices. However, there is currently limited evidence from the field or from the academic literature on these (potential) differences in perspective between outsiders and insiders and what role these differences could play in long-term conflict resolution in Thailand. Instead, most previous studies, such as those conducted extensively by McCargo's (2009a, 2009b, 2012) that address the conflict choose a centralized historical and political perspective. These studies attempt to explain the conflict through a confluence of historical flows, sometimes introducing the notion of anxieties, but most are conducted at the national level and choose by default the ethno-nationalist perspective. In contrast, there have been very few studies that have chosen an insider perspective on the lived experience of insiders in the three Southern Border provinces, offering what Aim-Aur-Yut (2017) and Unno (2017) termed a depiction of the "man in the field of violence", or in other words the perspective

of those living in conditions of violence. This perspective, which represents the experience and viewpoints of the individual within the conflict – whether this is a combatant or a victim (who can be the same person), an affected bystander, or simply someone who lives in the area – is essential for developing a full understanding of the Southern Border conflict past the current media coverage.

This thesis intends to challenge this traditional depiction of the Southern Border conflict in several dimensions. First, it will move the depiction of the conflict from the central perspective of Bangkok to the margins of ordinary people and victims in the region (Aeusrivongse, 2004). Second, it will use the concept of *webs of significance* (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) to investigate the formation of mythologies of violence through exchanges of power and agency between networked officials, scholars, and victims of violence (including insurgents themselves). This exchange of power cannot be underestimated in its importance (Aim-Aur-Yut, 2017).

The site of the research is Yala Province, the central of the Southern Border provinces. Yala is a culturally diverse region, including geopolitical and demographic differences and several different religions and cultures. However, Yala is also the focus of much of the violence associated with the conflict; between 2004 and 2016, even when the total number of violent incidents was falling, violence in Yala Province remained at a high of 5,357 events, and almost all of the districts in Yala were ranked as the top ten most frequent incident area in the recent year (Deep South Watch, 2018). Thus, Yala Province, as one of the most persistently affected sites of the conflict and violence, provides an ideal site for investigation of the border conflict and the formation of its representative myth.

1.2 Research Questions

The research investigated several key questions, including:

1. How are formal and informal socio-political institutions, including government agencies, military organizations, media, religious

representatives, academics, insurgent groups, and other institutions, involved in the construction of the myth of violence in the Southern Border?

2. How do local people recognize and understand violence in Yala Province and how does this relate to the mythical depiction provided to outsiders?

3. Does the difference in perception of the border crisis indicate a crisis of representation of the conflict?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

There were three objectives of the research. These objectives included:

1. To analyse the construction of illusions about and the intention of violence in Yala Province by means of power interactions between social institutions and the local people;

2. To analyse and compare the perspectives on violence on the Southern border of the people within the area of violence and those outside; and

3. To study the crisis concerning rhetorical representations which are related to conflict on the Southern border.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of the research focuses on three dimensions, including the population and area in which the research is conducted (the site) and the period of study (the time).

1.4.1 Population and Area Boundaries.

This research was multi-sited, with two sites selected to represent insider and outsider perspectives on the Southernmost Border conflict.

Yala Province is the main site of the study, representing the insider perspective on the Southernmost Border conflict and the characterization of the

illusionary myths of violence in the region from the inside perspectives. Yala Province has an estimated population of about 532,326 people as of 2018 (Department of Provincial Administration, 2018). People with a regular residence in Yala Province are therefore the main population of interest in the study. This population includes ordinary residents of the area as well as administrators and officials and representatives of organizations in the area.

Bangkok is the secondary site of the study, representing the outsider perspective on the conflict and how the mythical image of regional violence is received. Bangkok has an estimated population of 5.68 million people (Department of Provincial Administration, 2018). In addition to being a global city, Bangkok is the administrative, business, and cultural capital of Thailand. As a result, Bangkok's population includes both locals and Thais from many other regions of Thailand who relocate to the Bangkok metropolitan area in order to work and study, either temporarily or permanently. Thus, Bangkok represents a multi-vocal outsider perspective on the Southern Border conflict.

1.4.2 Time Boundaries.

The study was divided into three time-bound phrases. The first phase was a four-month field study in Yala Province. This study was divided into two two-month periods. In between these periods, a review of the first period and a period of reflection was conducted. The second research period was followed by a further reflection period, followed by the analysis and writing period.

1.5 Expected Benefits

The research is expected to have provided several benefits. First, the study will illustrate the depiction of conflict and violence in the southernmost provinces from the viewpoints of the locals. Since previous explanations have mainly been from outsider perspectives, this will offer local people a voice. It will also be useful for helping to arrive at solutions that take the local perspective into account, which

could deliver a better solution for the Southern Border provinces. The study will also provide a deeper, longer-term perspective on the Southern Border conflict, moving away from simple explanations offered today. The findings also benefit those interested in understanding the Southern Border conflict or conflict in general.

1.6 Related Theories

There were several theories that could be identified from political economy studies and anthropology that help to explain the occurrence of violence in society, the formation of discourses and myths in relation to violence and the difference between emic and etic perspectives on conflict. The key theories used in this research include Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, the theory of the subaltern, political economic theories of conflict and violence, sociological theories such as Foucault's theories of discourse and power/knowledge-rhetoric and theories of violence and open access orders, along with theories of discourse and mythmaking. These theories attempt to explain phenomena such as the occurrence of violence in society, differences in access to power/knowledge and discourse based on social position, and how discourse becomes myth.

1.6.1 Symbolic Violence

The theory of practice by Pierre Bourdieu speaks of symbolical violence. Symbolic violence flows from the theory of symbolic power, which argues that symbolic instruments can serve (among other ends) as an instrument of domination (Bourdieu, 1991). Symbolic power dominates, according to Bourdieu (1991, pp. 166 - 167) by constructing reality in ways that serve the interests of dominant groups, for example through the statement of ideologies or the division of economic or religious labour. Perhaps most importantly, "*What creates the power of words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them* (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 170)." Thus, symbolic power stems not just from words, but from the combination of words and beliefs. This concept ties to the habitus, since the beliefs are one of the

unquestioned assumptions that Lau's (2004, p. 377) identifies as a component of the habitus. One of the consequences of symbolic power is that of symbolic violence, or the perceived justification of the right of the powerful to enact specific forms of violence (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 22). Because the holder of symbolic power is believed to have a natural right to enact such violence, this form of violence may be viewed as just and right (Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 21 - 22).

1.6.2 The Subaltern Theory

This research also applies Marxist theories of violence and social oppression to the problem of the Southern border conflict. Marxism, which is derived from the economic theories of Karl Marx, argues essentially that social and historical conditions are based on the economic mode of production (Barnard, 2000). One of the implications of the dominance of economics is that social and political power is predominantly held by elites over the subaltern classes (Spivak, 2010, pp. 78 - 79). Elites are groups whose structural position and accumulated capital allow them to hold a position of relative power over others, either directly or by using power such as the power to pass laws. These elites, according to Spivak's (2010, p. 79) analysis of the Indian social group, may include international elites, national-level elites, or local and indigenous elites; for example, international businessmen, national politicians, and local leaders or chiefs may all be considered part of the elite, while those they rule over are the subaltern. The distinction between the elite and subaltern poses a particular problem for social and anthropological research, because the intellectuals who are tasked with generation of knowledge within the division of labour in society are by their nature elites (Spivak, 2010, pp. 80 - 81). However, this does not absolve the intellectual from their responsibility to give voice to the subaltern if possible (Spivak, 2010, p. 80). The position of Malay Muslims as a subaltern group raises the possibility that strategic movements could arise as a resistance strategy. This type of strategic movement has emerged in other instances where resistance strategies have included both working against dominant elites and where necessary working with

these elites to achieve specific goals (Lizarazo, 2018, pp. 191 - 192). Since strategic resistance movements by subaltern groups do have the potential to include working with as well as working against, the scope of resistance could be broadened in this case to include civil society groups as well as armed insurgency groups.

The theory of the subaltern will be useful in application to the research because of the clear relevance of elite social structures and the position of the Southern Provinces as internal colonies (Chávez, 2011, pp. 785 - 786) that are poorer and more constrained in their choices and power than the central government in Bangkok and its agents in the south.

1.6.3 Political Economy of Socio-Cultural Conflict and Violence

The economic inequality that is evident between Malay Muslims and other Thais requires consideration of the political economy of cultural conflict and violence. Studies of previous conflicts have shown that internal violent conflicts, including civil wars and ethnic conflicts, are most likely to break out in geographic regions that have low absolute income and significant and large negative differences compared to national incomes (Buhaug et al., 2011, p. 1). Thus, economic inequality compared to the rest of the country is a potential causal factor for cultural conflict and violence. There are also other economic characteristics of conflict areas, including that black markets and informal economies thrive, that violence against civilians may be used to aggregate economic power, and that combatants may exploit natural resources or engage in cross-border trading and trafficking and illegal economic activity (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005, p. 1). A study of the long-running 1990s internal conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina illustrates these economic conditions (H. Griffiths, 1999). For example, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic cleansing (one of the characteristics of that conflict) served as a tool to aggregate economic power among a few small groups. Additionally, the conflict allowed an informal and illicit parallel economy to arise and made room for the entry of international crime syndicates. These parallel and illicit economies made it difficult to distinguish between conflict-

related violence and violence associated with these parallel criminal activities. In the long term, violence will negatively affect the economy of the region even further, as social capital is eroded through rapid economic and social change (Goodhand et al., 2001, p. 401) and as vested interests prolong violence to preserve their economic position (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005). Thus, there are political economy explanations for ethnic violence and its effects.

1.6.4 Violence and Open Access Orders

Foucault's (1990, 2002) theories of violence also contribute significantly to the analysis of the Southern Border conflict. These theories developed piecemeal and are addressed in several distinct works, which ultimately lead to a description of the power relationship of the individual and the state (Kingsolver, 2002, p. 447). Two of the most important works of Foucault include the essays "*Truth and Power*" (2012) and "*Governmentality*" (1991), which identify key elements of the theory of power.

The first two key concepts of Foucault's theory of power concern that of discourse and power/knowledge. Discourse refers to how the social communication surrounding a concept influences and shapes the perception of the concept, through specific phrases and framings, the structure of discourse, and what is allowed and taboo (Foucault, 1990, pp. 17 - 18). For example, Foucault's (1990) exploration of the history of sexuality demonstrated that changes in the discourse surrounding sexuality resulted in changes in how Europeans thought about sexuality (Foucault, 1990). The duality of power/knowledge refers to Foucault's assertion that power stems from knowledge: those with knowledge have power, which they exercise on those with no knowledge (Kingsolver, 2002). Furthermore, those with power may seek to increase their power further by establishing rituals of discourse such as the religious confession, in which individuals are encouraged or even required to pass information that allows for the confessor to have increased power over them (Foucault, 1990). These rites and ideologies serve to repress the action of the individual, but more

importantly serve to structure and shape that action to the form preferred by the one holding power (Foucault, 2002, pp. 120 - 122). Thus, knowledge and discourse are related tools of power. Furthermore, the struggle between the state (a codified, institutionalised form of power) and its subjects is the natural result of the imposition of power and repression (Foucault, 2002, p. 124).

An additional concept is that of state discipline over the bodies of its subjects, which is one of the ways in which the state uses and gains power (Kingsolver, 2002). Foucault explored the concept of discipline in ***Discipline and Punish*** (1995), in which he examined the emergence of control over the body of the prisoner in the prison and the soldier in the military to explain the emergence of the power of the state over its subjects' physical being. The concept of biopower, or the state control over the physical processes of its subjects from before birth to after death, and governmentality, in which the control of the state is internalized into the bodies of its subjects, were introduced later (Kingsolver, 2002). Finally, Foucault addressed the critically important question of truth in politics. He pointed out that the accepted historical truth is not what has happened, but the cultural acceptance and framing of what has happened, which is vulnerable to manipulation by power (Foucault, 2007). These concepts are particularly important for the research, which will address the imposition of the state on the religious beliefs and practices of its subjects as a form of repression as well as the state's control of perceived truth through the news media and academic literature/discourse.

The theories of violence expressed by Bourdieu and Foucault are similar, in that both propose that power emerges from the combination of rhetoric, beliefs and practices which serve to justify the assignment and use of power (including violence) to elites. However, Foucault goes further than Bourdieu in his acknowledgement of manipulation of power by elites: while Bourdieu only addresses the question of where beliefs come from obliquely with the concept of the habitus, Foucault, in his concept of power/knowledge, recognises the manipulation of beliefs to obtain

power. This manipulation of beliefs is central to the thesis of this research, which investigates the myth-building process by elites as a means of justifying violence.

Another group of authors takes a systematic approach to explaining violence through economic and political structures and systems within society (Weingast et al., 2009, p. 56). These authors present a theory of social orders, or "*[ways] in which societies craft the institutions that form human organizations, limit or open access to those organizations, and shape incentives to limit and control violence* (Weingast et al., 2009, p. 55)." These authors describe the societies that have emerged since the 19th century (which includes Thailand as a modern nation-state) as open access orders, which are defined as the active and open participation of citizens in politics, the state, and economic production, as well as strict limitations on and even prohibitions of the use of violence (Weingast et al., 2009, pp. 55 - 56). In fact, the controlled limitation of violence in the open access order is one of the characteristics that sets it apart from the natural state that characterized pre-agricultural societies (North et al., 2009, p. 121). As these authors explain, the notion of impersonality is key here. In the natural state, violence was personal – was in fact "open to anyone strong enough and well organized enough to use it (North et al., 2009, p. 121)." However, in the open access state, violence is strictly reserved for institutions and roles, rather than individuals; for example, military and police forces, who operate under rules about when violence can be used. This means that violence is impersonal in that it does not depend either on the individual enactor of violence or political entities that order violence. While this rule of impersonality may be violated by politicians, if citizens do not agree with the use of violence they may withdraw support, or the violent actor may be censured by the judiciary (North et al., 2009, p. 122). Thus, this theory explains the assignment of rights to violence and the interaction of political and economic systems and citizenship that enforce it.

1.6.5 Discourse, Myth, and Discursive Practice

A further theoretical concern of this study is the relationship of discourse, myth, and practices. Discourse is described by Foucault as a form of representation through the use of speaking, in which the words, syntax, and semantics chosen for speech both communicates about and interprets the knowledge represented (Foucault, 1994, p. 40). Foucault's understanding of discourse is critical because it allows evaluation of the social effects of discourse, rather than assigning only linguistic meaning (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 9). Its fundamentally interpretive offers the likelihood that discourse can be used to construct myths, or fragmented and constructed depictions purported to be real (G. Griffiths, 1994). Griffiths uses the example of reporting on 'authenticity' movements among Australian Aboriginal groups to demonstrate that this myth-building use of discourse often serves not to further the interests of the subaltern, but instead to entrench the interests of the elite. Thus, discourse can both serve as a myth and can be used in its mythic form to continue to deny subalterns a voice through the imposition of arbitrary conditions of authenticity (G. Griffiths, 1994, p. 78). Understanding the formation of these discourse/myths is a central concern of this study.

If discourse is a myth (or can communicate or construct a myth), then the formation of the myth can be investigated through the discourse. Classical discourse analysis, which attempts to illustrate and interpret the function of language, is limited in how far it can explain the underlying truth of a discourse (Foucault, 1994, p. 337). However, the approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA) does not just describes and interprets, but also explains the discourse in terms of its social and political meaning (Gee, 2011). The CDA approach, which is described more in the methods section, is the selected analytical tool for this study.

A final theoretical perspective of concern here is that of discursive practice. One of the observations made by Foucault on the notion of discourse is that "discourse itself [is] a practice" (Foucault, 1973, p. 46). This perspective rejects the

notion that discourses are reducible to semiotics or language, in which words are used as signs that have meaning (Foucault, 1973). Instead, discourses must be seen as *"practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things"* (Foucault, 1973, p. 49). In the discursive practice perspective, the discourse is defined by discursive relations or rules that establish what can be the subject of discourse, as well as where and when discourse can occur among other aspects of the discourse (Foucault, 1973, p. 46). These rules can include social rules (for example political prohibition against specific objects of discourse). More subtly, however, discursive practice is limited by discursive relations inherent within the structures of language and thought, for example grammar and formal construction and rhetorical traditions (Foucault, 1973, p. 59). These discursive relations are not universal, but instead are inherent to specific times, places, languages, and other contexts (Foucault, 1973, p. 59). Finally, the discursive practice does not limit or impose externally on individual expression, but instead, like the rules of formal grammar, imposes shared rules on what may be said and how it can be said (Foucault, 1973, pp. 59 - 60). Thus in summary, discursive practice means that discourse is not the end result (a text) but a practice which individuals do, according to the discursive relations that are in place at the time and context of their expression.

Discursive practices can come from different places, and there are specific mechanisms for change. For example, discursive practices may stem from the work of influential writers, such as philosophers and influential authors or authorities, who push the boundaries of existing discursive relations, changing what may be said and how it can be said (Foucault, 1977, p. 132). In contrast, mechanisms of censorship act to preserve discursive practices and prevent such change (Heath, 2019). Such censorship may include active censorship by the state, but it also includes self-censorship of individuals, based on their understanding of the rules of discourse (Fu

& Lee, 2016, p. 88). Thus, discursive practices are not directed by a hierarchical or external imposition of rules, but instead emerge from the push and pull of different forces which seek to either extend or maintain (or even constrain) the limits of discourse. Furthermore, discursive practice is not fixed, but changes over time (Foucault, 1977, p. 133). In certain cases, this change may be performed through what Foucault (1977, p. 134) terms a "return to the origin", in which the author (or other discourser) argues that there has been a critical omission or abandonment of a specific discursive relation; by returning to a (hypothesized) original rule, it is then possible to incorporate this omission into a new discursive practice (Foucault, 1977, p. 135)

Analysis of discursive practice helps to reveal how knowledge and 'truth' are formed and what is considered 'real' (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 173). It can also help to understand how materiality and language are interconnected to create a perceived reality and how politics influences the formation of the 'real' (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 176). Discursive practice is also an aspect of problematization, or the analysis of how discourses and other practices connect with each other and the unspoken assumptions that underlie these seemingly unproblematic practices (Bacchi, 2012, pp. 2 - 3). In fact, discursive practices may be among the practices that the researcher may problematize, for example by investigating the influence of politics on what is considered the 'truth' of the matter. As the interplay of discourse, politics, and 'truth' is crucial to this research, discursive practice is therefore important here.

Another reason why it is important is the concept of counter-memory. Counter-memory can be considered a form of collective memory, which can be viewed as a sort of synthesis of personal memory of the lived experience, memory of the retold experiences of others, and historiographical memory relevant to a specific group (Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 50 - 54). Following from this notion, counter-memory can be considered as a form of collective or individual memory that stands

in opposition to ‘official’ collective memories as promoted through government, law and official media or other such sources (Foucault, 1977, pp. 120 - 123). Counter-memory may result from a process of fracture and conflict within the boundaries of the state; a particularly powerful source is the victimization of some citizens of the state by the state itself, for example genocide or ethnic cleansing (Frieze, 2014, p. 47). In this research, counter-memory as a concept will be used to analyse how the three Southern Border residents have constructed their own discourse and memory of the conflict and how this relates to the ‘official’ discourse promoted by the state.

In summary, the notion of discursive practice rejects the idea that discourse is merely words, and instead argues that it is an active practice which makes ‘things’ – truths, conditions, constraints, and rules. Although it is governed by discursive relations, these relations are ambiguous, dynamic, flexible, and context-driven. The use of the concept of discursive practice allows us to investigate how the state and other actors create ‘truth’ surrounding the conflict, to problematize this creation of ‘truth’, and to consider how other groups reject this ‘truth’ through formation of counter-memory within their own discourse.

1.7 Literature Review

The current violent conflict in the southern border can be traced back to 2004, but it has its roots in complex and overlapping historical, social, cultural and political contexts. There have been multiple attempts to explain this conflict and isolate factors that are partly responsible for the level of conflict occurring in the region. The literature review identified several distinct types of explanations, including the top-down explanation (focused on structural and institutional causes and historical determinist explanations), the bottom-up explanation (focused on individual conflict and economic causes), and the discourse-oriented explanation (focused on myth-making and crises of representation).

1.7.1 Top-Down Explanations for the Conflict

There are two key main types of top-down explanations offered for the conflict. Most of these studies have focused on structural problems such as economic and social institutions, while a relatively smaller number of studies have taken a historical perspective to the conflict.

1.7.1.1 Study of Structural Problems

Top-down explanations are commonplace for studies of ethnic violence and conflict in general as the result of structural change or structural failure. One such study chose a political economy perspective to explain ethnic conflict in Ivory Coast (Woods, 2003). This explanation, which was based on a historical economic analysis, posited that ethnic conflict between Christian and Muslim cultural-religious groups was caused by the conflict between the groups for forest resources and other land resources. This resource competition was spurred by a land tenure system which allowed outsiders easy access to and control of land, which was created during the French colonial period (Woods, 2003, p. 645). Rather than investigating local perspectives, Woods (2003, pp. 649 - 650) used a broad nationalist perspective on the conflict. Thus, although this study does provide insight into the conflict's macro origins, it says little about the local experience of conflict or its causes. Similar approaches have also been used elsewhere. For example, an evaluation of warning systems for identifying state failure establishes several top-down tools for evaluation and assessment of risk, including expert opinion, historical documentation, and monitoring of the field and events, but does not include any evaluation of bottom-up concerns of locals (Carment, 2003, p. 407). In contrast, another study has examined social and political cleavages in Ukraine, which have resulted in a state of equilibrium despite ethnic conflict (D'anieri, 2007, p. 5). In the meantime, a study of police reform in Bosnia used an international political framework to

explain mechanisms of change without reference even to police officers (Juncos, 2011).

The top-down explanation, which emphasizes institutional and structural causes of the conflict, is one of the most common approaches to explaining the southernmost border conflict. There are some objective indicators of structural inequality and social conditions such as drugs and violent crime that contribute to the conflict (Jitpiromsri & Soponvasu, 2005, p. 5). For example, these authors showed that there were pockets of inequality that had higher poverty and crime rates, although later research showed that it was not the case that they were starved of government resources (but rather that funds were reallocated toward violence prevention) (Jitpiromsri, 2016; Jitpiromsri & Chaijaroenwatana, 2010).

However, there is a lack of unity in the perspective of which institutional and structural factors play a role in the conflict. For example, Panpigool (2012), who used a combination of interviews with key actors like military officers, civil servants, academics, and local political and religious leaders and residents, found factors including historical and ethnic conflict and lack of cultural diversity and inequality led to perceptions of oppression and injustice, which in turn led to participation in violent separatist movements.

Another common explanation is that there is a cultural gap between the Thai state and the citizens of Malay-Muslim residing in the southernmost provinces. Taneerananon's work (2005) has argued that there is a lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity in government institutions which creates conditions that lead to conflict. Walliphodom (2007) argued that insensitive development activities such as the construction of the Pattani Dam led to ecosystem damage and challenged traditional values. Similarly,

Pangigool (2012) also noted that lack of cultural understanding made even well-intentioned government programs largely ineffective. This lack of cultural awareness and cultural insensitivity, along with attendant lack of justice for Muslim people, was found to be a common perception among Muslim residents of the border provinces (Kittivibul, 2007).

Not all studies have been so sympathizing with the position of Malay-Muslim citizens in the Southern Border. Bunnag's work (2003) argued that Malaysian Muslims lacked diligence and leadership to make use of available resources, leading to economic underdevelopment. This echoes the perception of many Buddhist residents of the area, who advocate for strict punishment and often do not recognise cultural or structural inequalities (Kittivibul, 2007). The public opinion-based study of Kittivibul (2007) must be taken in light of the findings of other authors, who have shown that border region residents (both Buddhist and Muslim) had a low level of knowledge about the Emergency Decree BE 2005 (Bunmak et al., 2015). This does not mean that this decree did not have an effect (Jitpiromsri & Chaijaroenwatana, 2010). Several of the more detailed top-down explanations that could be found are highlighted here, as they illuminate the complex role of structures and institutions in the conflict.

1.7.1.2 Historical Document Studies

Historical explanations are also frequently proposed for the Southern Border conflict. Some of these historical explanations have gone back in the history of the Southern Border region to explain the separatist movement. One such study traced the Malay Muslim separatism back to the formation of the mono-ethnic Thai state beginning in the late 1800s and continuing through World War II (Aphornsuvan, 2008). This author observed that the mono-ethnic Thai Buddhist state and its officials, with poor understanding of the culture of the region, created conditions for conflict that persist today. He

also noted that historically, actions by Muslims have been thought to have a hidden religious or separatist agenda, which leads to unequal treatment and tends to attenuate the validity of the Thai state legitimacy and its actions, which only serves to exacerbate conflict conditions. However, other authors have found much more recent historical causes for the conflict. Jarerndej (2005) focused on the activities of the Thaksin government, especially control of state government and media outlets, to influence the perception of the conflict. This author argued that Thaksin used control of the media to shape and direct the perception that lack of education, underdevelopment and poverty was undermining legitimate government efforts, rather than cultural or religious misunderstanding (Jarerndej, 2005). At the same time, several authors have also shown that the effect of the media has historically promoted conditions for conflict. One such study showed that newspapers in the region promoted the conflict both through the use of exclusionary language (enforcing Thai-only publication) and through the use of language that promoted hostility toward the Muslim Other (Maharueankwan, 2007). This was similar to the study of Prasertsri (2011), who used content analysis to demonstrate that newspaper reports promoted the perception of separatist groups as violent rebels engaged in illegal acts, while the actions of the state were presented as legitimate. Thus, it is not just the historic activities of the Thai state that have created conditions for conflict, according to the historic analysis. Instead, it is how these conditions are perceived, which has been influenced by news media reporting and political discussion.

1.7.1.3 Summary of Top-Down Explanations

Top-down and centralized explanations for conflict are a fundamental problem of structural Marxist analysis and conflict studies, which often concentrate on the aspects of socio-political institutions and systems rather than that of resident's perspectives (Duncan & Ley, 1982; Tickner, 2003). This

literature review has shown that most of the explanations for the ethno-religious conflict happening in the Southern Border provinces have all followed such approach, with structural explanations focusing on economic conditions, administrative and institutional frameworks, and group-level ethnic differences used to explain the conflict. These studies contain relatively little insight from the perspective of individuals, which is also consistent with the examples from Ivory Coast, Bosnia and Ukraine discussed above. Historical explanations are also common (as consistent with Woods (2003)'s historical study of Ivory Coast). Thus, it can be stated that the majority of studies can explain broad political and economic conditions, but do not necessarily reflect the perspectives or experience of insiders. However, these studies do identify causes like economic inequality and oppression related to nation-building and, more recently, Thaksinization and its attendant economic and institutional changes. Thus, even though these studies do not provide a full explanation of the conflict, they do provide a broader context of national and international political, economic, and social conditions that have facilitated conflict.

1.7.2 Bottom-Up Explanations for the Conflict

While the top-down perspective on the conflict dominates the literature, there are also studies from the bottom-up perspective, examining the conflict from the viewpoint of locals and from the perspective of local action. While some studies have investigated this characteristic from the structural and economic perspective, more of these studies have used an anthropological perspective that details the lives and lived experiences of people in the region.

1.7.2.1 Structural and Economic Conditions

Many bottom-up studies have addressed problems such as poverty and economic development. Taneerananon (2005), who synthesised the findings of previous participatory poverty assessments in the area found that

Thai Muslims in Pattani had higher rates of poverty than their Buddhist neighbours. These poverty rates were attributed to high birth rates, poor education, dependence on subsistence occupations like fishing and high rates of child labour, and economic isolation. This high poverty rate was associated with poor socioeconomic integration and human capital development, for example few students attending university. Thus, in this study, conditions for the conflict were set by individual poverty and economic exclusion, which fostered feelings of resentment and perceptions of economic injustice. The authors therefore argued that the Thai government should pursue economic development and economic inclusion programs to gain legitimacy, and address problems such as inadequate development programs. Other bottom-up studies have used different explanations. For example, one author proposed a theory of farmer rebellion, in which most actors were not involved in the conflict for separatist reasons but instead as an action against the government in response to economic and social grievances (Aeusrivongse, 2004). Although this model of farmer rebellion is helpful in that it does argue against attributing separatist motives to all participating actors (and indeed against assuming all Thai Muslims are in favour of separatism at all), it does not address the truth of the economic and socio-cultural grievances at the heart of the model. Thus, the poverty-driven explanations for the conflict remain more common.

There have also been studies that offered bottom-up explanations of structural conditions in ethnic conflict and cultural conflict in other contexts, although as with the study of Thailand there have been many fewer of these compared to top-down explanations. One such study took place in Cyprus, investigating the geographies of discrimination between ethnically divided regions (Trimikliniotis, 2004). This study evaluated the experience of discrimination and its effects from the perspective of headmasters, teachers

and students. However, most of the literature the author referred to was top-down and structural in nature. This study also demonstrated that a bottom-up perspective was no guarantee of equal representation. In this research, it was shown that teachers and headmasters attribute poor performance of Pontian children (who belong to a discriminated-against minority group) to poverty and home conditions, rather than school-based inequality (Trimikliniotis, 2004, p. 70). Another study investigated Kurdish youth in Turkey and their perspectives on peace (Başer & Çelik, 2014). These authors provided a powerful critique of structures of violence from this group of youth voices. These critiques stemmed from focus groups. The authors compared perspectives between Kurdish and Turkish youth, which demonstrated that these groups had different viewpoints on the violence. The difference between insider and outsider perspectives is one of the key issues of this study, and has been relatively under-studied, which makes this study particularly useful to the current research.

1.7.2.2 Anthropological Studies

Anusorn Unno (2017) has observed that studies of the lived experiences of the local in the Southern Border are uncommon, perhaps because of the potential danger of field research in conflict zones or because of the apparently political nature of the conflict. However, there have been several field-based anthropological studies of the conflict, many of which emphasize on the problems of narrative, identity, subjectivity and diversity of culture apparent in the border provinces.

Aim-Aur-Yut (2008) studied the lived experience and memory of Muslims in the Pattani fishing community of Pa Ne Ke, focusing on the ethnic Malayan identity and how it related to the state and to Islamic history. The author found that prior to the emergence of the Islamic Movement and the response of the Thai state, most Muslims in Pa Ne Ke did not have a separate

identity. Instead, this identity was negotiated as a result of the changing external perception of their way of life. This was even further distinguished as conflicts between neighbours increased in Thai Buddhists became more entrenched in a Thai identity (Aim-Aur-Yut, 2008). This slightly contrasted with Saleh (2008), who examined villagers in the southern border provinces. She found that up to mid-2006, Buddhist and Muslim villagers still lived in mostly shared social environments, with only a normal amount of conflict between villagers (although they were aware of external conflict).

Sing-In (2012) examined the experience of Buddhist victims who have suffered from violent conflict through the experience of teachers in the southern region. Teachers are uniquely positioned because although as government officials they are aligned with the state, but are also actors within a multicultural community. Her study showed that although teachers did not consider themselves 'puppets' of the state, they did sometimes echo the ideologies of the state (either consciously or unconsciously). She also found that the Buddhist teachers had complex feelings toward Muslims, both respecting and fearing them, and wanting to live in harmony. This is consistent with the romantic image of a multicultural and harmonious Thai society as found in other studies (Aim-Aur-Yut, 2017; Jongwilaikasaem, 2012; Saleh, 2008). Other authors have investigated factors such as ethnocentrism and rejection of a Thai identity as factors in the conflict, showing that despite this romantic image there is now distance between the communities (Changsorn, 2010, 2012).

Socio-Cultural effects of the conflict, such as distant relationships and difficulty in accessing education or suspicion of education have been identified (Boonsiri, 2016; Changsorn, 2010; Promsaka Na Sakolnakorn & Chandaeng, 2012). Changsorn (2010), who conducted his research in the Lam Pa Ya subdistrict, used functional structure theory to explain the interactions

of the social, political, economic, educational and religious structures and the conflict to explain how life was affected. This investigation showed multiple negative effects of the conflict on life in the village, from minor effects such as earlier ending times for religious festivals to major effects on workplaces and the economy in general. These findings were in accordance with that of Promsaka Na Sakolnakorn and Chandaeng's (2012). In the meantime, Boonsiri (2016) also found significant negative effects on family life in addition to these effects.

These anthropological studies are valuable because they help explain the lived experience of the violent conflict, both in terms of the effects on social life and in terms of how local people view themselves and their neighbours. This goes beyond the structural and economic explanations of political studies, illustrating that even though fieldwork may be difficult in the region it still has significant value. Thus, this research can also contribute to the literature by explaining how people view the conflict and how it influences their lived experience.

1.7.2.3 Summary of Bottom-Up Studies

The bottom-up and local perspective on conflict and conflict resolution is increasingly important in the field of peace studies, as top-down approaches that have focused on structural change and ignored local perspectives have been unsuccessful (Ginty & Richmond, 2013, pp. 763 - 764). The literature reviewed in this section has shown that while there are commonalities in local perspectives, these perspectives are not uniform. In particular, the anthropological studies have shown that there are differences in perceived causes of the conflict between groups and different effects on residents in the area. These anthropological studies, however, have not addressed the question of politics and structural problems very well. While there have been bottom-up studies of the political and structural conditions

in play, these studies have been limited in nature and have not had a very broad perspective. Thus, in addition to the considerably limited number of studies which have addressed the top-down perspective on the conflict, there are some gaps in the representation which do not allow a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.

1.7.3 Discourse Studies

This research is particularly concerned with the discourse that surrounds the conflict, rather than identifying causes of the conflict per se. Thus, a third set of studies that is relevant to this research is studies that focus on the discourse of conflict. These studies include general analyses of the discourse of conflict in the media and studies that have investigated discourse and myth-making.

1.7.3.1 Discourses of Violence and Conflict in the Media

Another common perspective on the Southern Border conflict is the discourse of violence present in the media. Prasertsri (2011), who investigated historical discourses of violence through the news, has already been discussed above. That study demonstrated that the dominant discourse served to stereotype Muslim motivations and identities by simplifying violence and assigning it to a set of stereotyped shortcuts. Another perspective was offered by Mahareankwan (2007) who examined news reports of violence from the Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra military camp robbery in 2004 (identified as the start of the violence) to 2007. The author examined discourses of separatism using a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach. He found that there were divergences in the discourses of separatism used by different groups (political officials, military police, scholars, priests, terrorists, Muslims, victims and newspapers). The dominant discourse was of separatism, which emphasized the antisocial and violent aspect of the violence and its difference from Thai-ness. Malay Muslims promoted an alternative discourse of liberation and righteous struggle. While

there were overlapping and sometimes contradictory discourses surrounding the unrest, the predominant discourse in the media was the separatist discourse promoted by officials and the state. Therefore, Maharueankwan (2007) concluded, the dominant discourse was produced by formal distributions and legitimated by its publication in the media. Within this dominant discourse, Malay Muslims were presented as terrorists, dishonest and ungrateful, and even thieves of the resources of the state or as criminals (for example, emphasizing cross-border drug trafficking), and the violent activity by the state was promoted as appropriate treatment of criminals. The language used in newspapers reinforced the idea of the Muslim cause as a separatist, criminal rebellion and the actions of the Thai state as a righteous and correct application of legal power. Therefore, the newspaper discourse served to reinforce public opinion against Muslims and assign blame to their illegal and violent actions.

1.7.3.2 Discourses of Violence and Conflict and Their Role in Myth-Making

Discourse analysis has also been used to investigate mythmaking surrounding the Southern Border unrest, which is a question of this research. Saengthong's (2008) and Jongwiliakasaem's (2012) both identified myths and narratives as powerful tools to build and retain identity and to create or reconcile conflict. Saengthong (2008) compared Buddhist and Muslim myths of power and resistance. This work divided eight distinct myths into two groups: (a) Ordinary myths (legendary legends of Nakhon Si Thammarat, Hikayat Pattani, Hikayat Marong Mahawong, and White Blood Woman legend); and (b) Contemporary myths (Jatukam Ramathep legend, the history of the Kingdom of Malayan Pattani, the legendary Lim Toh Kiam- Lim Kor Nie, and Krue Se Mosque, and White Blood Woman legend). The author showed that these myths were cultural products and a field of action for both conflict and

reconciliation between followers of the different religions. In Buddhist myths, power resulted from personal qualities, while in Muslim legend power resulted as a gift from God. Power resulted in combined myths from merit and public worship. The effect of this power can be seen in the integration of a Chinese Thai identity. Jongwiliakasaem (2012) focused on the question of peace in Tambon Sai Khao, using memory and politics as the lens. Sai Khao is the site of the "300-year old mosque", a popular media device for telling the story of an area where peaceful integration of Buddhist and Muslim communities was achieved. The dominant discourse of peace in Sai Khao was promoted through the media and by state education and tourism programs as an example of how peace was possible in three provinces of the southern border. However, this myth of peace did not survive, as ultimately Sai Khao was caught up in violence and became subsumed in national discourses of violence. Thus, the attempt at mythmaking towards peace was unsuccessful. These studies show that mythmaking is an activity undertaken by both groups and the state, and that it has effects on the dominant discourse (although these effects may be limited).

1.7.3.3 Evidence for a Crisis of Representation in Study of the Conflict and Violence

The discourse analyses above have raised the possibility that there is a crisis of representation in the discourse on the conflict and violence in the Southern Provinces. A crisis of representation is "*the uncertainty within the human sciences about adequate means of describing social reality… [arising] from the (noncontroversial claim) that no interpretive account can ever directly nor completely capture lived experience* (Schwandt, 2007, p. 9)." Such crises can emerge as part of internal academic inquiry changes or, as in the case of American political communication, can arise suddenly through changes in the environment such as the relatively sudden emergence of

social media as a communication channel (Barnhurst, 2011, p. 580). The crisis of representation manifests in critique and uncertainty about forms of representation and about methodologies of investigation of lived experience. Furthermore, it argues that there may be a loss of referents for what can be considered reality or truth, instead reducing discourses to a series of conflicting claims (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 9 - 11). The crisis of representation is a postmodernist idea that challenges the Enlightenment view of the world, which privileges seemingly scientific approaches over the interpretive, romantic, or individualized approaches (Greene, 1994, pp. 207 - 208). Within this challenge, representation becomes problematized, as there is seemingly no single approach that could be used to examine the problem.

To date, only a few studies could be found that investigated the study of ethnic and cultural violence in Thailand as a crisis of representation. One author's caution must be taken into account here, as she argues that the concept of 'crisis of representation' may be overused in the social sciences (Nöth, 2003, pp. 14 - 15). She also observes that it is important not to consider that the crisis of representation necessarily means that signs or indicators of reality are lost, so much as that it may be difficult to evaluate conflicting truth claims. Thus, it should not be concluded without evidence that there is a crisis of representation in this area. However, the predominance of unquestioned assumptions, structural and broad explanations for local conflict, and failure to take into account the political dimensions of bottom-up perspectives on the conflict do suggest that there has not been enough consideration given to the limitations of methodology and theory in representation of the conflict. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a potential crisis of representation in this area.

1.7.3.4 Summary of Studies in Discourses of Violence

Several studies have used the idea of the discourse to investigate written texts or scripts through media sources such as newspapers, academic writings, literary works, and legendary tales. These studies have shown that there are power gradients between different groups and social institutions. The discourse of the state – a discourse of separatist, criminal violence, supporting state control of violence – has dominated the production of such texts. However, there is still conflict within these text productions, with different groups attempting to produce and disseminate their own discourses on the unrest and to counter the productions of other groups in a dynamic fashion. Furthermore, the studies have shown that discourses of violence have been used in myth-making practices, with the partial communication and interpretation of knowledge and the deliberate manipulation of academic and media discourses in the debate. The extent of partial and interest-laden discourse on the conflict and its causes therefore could be argued to be a crisis of representation of the conflict, which serves the interests of the elite and positions Malay Muslims as a misrepresented subaltern. However, few if any other studies have directly evaluated whether this represents a crisis of representation, leaving a significant gap in the literature.

1.7.4 Evaluation of the Literature and Identification of the Literature Gap

The literature review found that there were several different types of studies on violent conflict in the Deep South provinces, which had three shared limitations. The first limitation was that the political science perspective, which looked for top-down structural and historical causes for the conflict, predominated. Structural studies tried to explain the causes of the conflict by investigating what the unrest was about, who was behind it and what their motivations and needs were, and why violence continued and accelerated. Historical studies tried to explain the conflict

with reference to the past, for example the formation of the modern Thai state. Media studies also mainly investigated the political perspective on the conflict. Most bottom-up studies focused on economic conditions and underdevelopment, especially among Malay Muslim communities. These studies do provide strong structural and historical explanations for the conflict. For example, it cannot be denied that the border provinces are economically less well-off than the rest of Thailand, that Muslims are worse off than Buddhists in the border provinces, and that this leads to gaps in education and economic potential. It also cannot be denied that Muslims face structural inequalities and injustice. However, these studies do not provide much insight into the lived experience or perspectives of individuals and life in the border provinces. Another limitation is that these studies use data collection techniques like questionnaires, short-term fieldwork or media discourse analysis rather than longer fieldwork. This is understandable given the difficulty in conducting fieldwork in conflict areas, but it also limits the ability of these studies to offer insight into the lives of those in the provinces. Third, the studies do not compare perspectives from inside and outside the provinces, precluding the possibility of investigating a possible crisis of representation.

In summary, there is evidence that discourse is used as a tool for myth building in the conflict, and at least some evidence (though no direct studies) that suggest a crisis of representation. The predominance of structural explanations focusing on economy, religion and the nation-state and its borders from a top-down perspective, paired with anthropological studies that address the bottom-up experience of conflict but do not consider the broader political and structural issues of conflict, leave a gap in the literature in relation to the bottom-up perception of the conflict in local people and the perception of locals as compared to outsiders. This gap is meaningful for understanding the role of discourse in mythmaking about the conflict. This study concentrates on the multi-voices of those who reside in the southernmost region by using the case study of Amphoe SaNgob (assumed name),

Yala Province in an effort to overcome the limitations of the existing research. It acknowledges the complexities of the context, historic conditions, cultural identities, politics, and geography of the region while centralising the perspective of the lived experience of local people. It emphasizes polyvocality and draws on multiple discourses to examine differences between insider and outsider perspectives on the violence.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Methodology

This study is a multi-method research designed to study the process of myth creation and representation of violence in the Southern Border as seen from the viewpoints of local people. Data collection began with secondary sources (academic writing and electronic media) for an overview of the problem and understanding of historical and structural context. The primary study was conducted using ethnographic fieldwork in Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province, which was conducted over a period of four months (divided into two two-month segments). During the fieldwork, the methods of participant observation and interviews were used in order to collect data from both the emic and etic perspectives. Informal and formal interviews with gatekeepers (religious leaders, police and administrators, local leaders, victims, teachers, and soldiers) were also used for information on additional perspectives. After leaving the field site, the researcher collected information about the conflict from people outside the area. Group conversations with people in Bangkok, along with in-depth interviews with key participants, were used to collect the outsider perspective. Textual analysis and thick description (Geertz, 1973) was then used to describe the situation. Theoretical perspectives including theories of violence and power, symbolic violence, and discourse and discursive practices, along with other political economy perspectives on violence and terrorism, were then applied to provide a deeper analysis of the violence.

1.8.2 Operating Procedures

The research followed a four-stage process to collect and analyse the data. The first stage was preliminary online research. During this stage, the literature review and review of primary source documents was conducted. This review provided basic information from online databases, district offices and other information sources about the basic situation. This established the groundwork for the remaining part of the study.

The second stage of the research was preliminary fieldwork. The preliminary fieldwork period lasted 14 days, during which time I established contacts and key contributors, learned basic information for the site, and conducted a preliminary evaluation for the site. This stage was used as preparation for the more extended fieldwork period.

The third stage of the research was the main fieldwork period. This stage lasted four months, in which I stayed at the host families' home and participated in daily domestic activities and religious rituals with both Buddhist and Malay-Muslim community. This stage also involved both formal and informal interviews with individuals and groups, during which time more information about the lived experience of people in the region was collected. Participant selection and profiles are summarised in the following section. Fieldnotes also provided information about my own observations and experiences.

The fourth stage of the research was data analysis. The data analysis stage included all data obtained from interviews, observations, and desk research. This data was categorized and analysed, described and then analysed theoretically to provide a comparative viewpoint. A narrative was also constructed for presentation of the findings in this final stage.

This research used thick description (as discussed above) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the textual analysis tool. The reason for choosing CDA is

that it allows for synthesis and analysis of discourses from multiple perspectives and different sources. CDA is a problem-oriented approach to analysis of text and speech which is particularly sensitive to concerns like structures of power and inequality and understanding hidden or implicit meaning (van Dijk, 1995). This makes the CDA approach ideal for the current research, since the different participants in the discourse surrounding the Southern Border violence are integrated into a social and institutional hierarchy of inequality and power. Furthermore, CDA is intended to not just interpret the meaning of texts, but also to impart broader socio-political meaning to these texts, relating them to both current events and longer-term trends and issues (van Dijk, 1993, pp. 252 - 253). Once again, this is critical for the current study, since much of the previous research has shown that discourses of violence have explicit socio-political foundations and goals. Thus, the CDA approach is ideal for this study. Although there are several approaches to CDA, this study uses a three-stage analysis technique proposed by Fairclough (1995, cited in Janks, 1997, p. 329). This analysis technique identifies three different aspects of the rhetoric, which include "*the object of the analysis… the processes by which the object is produced and received… [and] the sociohistorical conditions that govern this process* (Janks, 1997, p. 329)." Thus, the CDA process also requires three categories of analysis, including "*text analysis (description); processing analysis (interpretation); [and] social analysis (explanation) (Janks, 1997, p. 329)*". The resulting analysis is therefore more intensive than traditional thematic or content analysis, since it evaluates the social conditions of exchange as well. To begin the analysis, the data was transcribed, selecting a broad approach to transcription that identified speech characteristics such as hesitation and emphasis (Gee, 2011, p. 118). The seven building tasks identified by Gee (2011, pp. 121 - 122) were then used as a guide to direct the multi-level analysis process. These building tasks, each of which has seven sub-questions, ask the researcher to evaluate *"the significance, activities, practices, identities, relationships, politics, connections, and sign systems and knowledge (Greckhamer & Cilesiz, 2014,*

p. 429)" underlying within the texts in order to to describe, interpret, and explain the content within the text. Validity within this analysis is evaluated through characteristics of convergence within the data, agreement, coverage of related areas, and linguistic details (Gee, 2011, p. 123).

1.9 Participants in the Research

The interlocutors selected to participate in the interviews and focus group discussions were curated to represent two perspectives, including the insider perspective and the outsider perspective. There were 21 participants selected for the insider perspective, where data was collected using individual interviews. The outsider perspective was represented by 10 participants, who were divided into two groups at random for focus group interviews.

1.9.1 Insiders

The nature of fieldwork-based research is that the researcher had contact with a range of people during the research period, from many different groups and levels of society. For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher attempted to select participants from different groups, which might have different perspectives on and experience within the conflict. Some of these groups were easier to access than others, either because of the size of the group or because of the unwillingness of potential participants to be interviewed. For example, there were relatively few religious officials in the area compared to the overall population, which meant that there were fewer participants in this groups. Overall, former separatists were the most difficult group to access, with only two participants willing to speak in formal interviews about their experience of violence. In one conversation, a non-participant explained that this was because of the conditions of their anti-insurgency integration program, which meant they were unwilling to be thought to be endorsing or justifying the insurgency activities. Thus, the participants are not evenly divided between groups and, to some extent, represent who was willing to talk about the conflict and its effects.

1.9.2 Outsiders

Outsiders were selected not for their experience of the conflict, but for their inexperience of it. Selection of interviewees for this group was first of all based in Bangkok rather than the region. The researcher also looked for individuals without significant connections or ties to the Southern Border provinces. This was done to make sure that the participants were truly an outsider perspective, and not for example a person who had relocated from the Southern Border provinces, which is very common. Participants were selected based on convenience sampling and availability, beginning with university students and moving outward from recommendations from the initial participants.

Table 1 Summary of Participants in the Research

Participant Group	Interlocutors (assumed name)	Brief Profile	Experience of Violence
Victims of Violence	Kah Fah	Malay-Muslim merchant	Her son was shot by soldier at a mosque incident.
	Kah Ya	Malay-Muslim housekeeper	Was present at a hospital bombing, subsequently miscarried and was victimised by soldiers while in the hospital.
	Khun Phol	Thai Buddhist business owner	Wife was an innocent bystander who was shot and killed in a confrontation between military officers and separatists.
	Khun Phong	Thai Buddhist labourer	Injured during a bombing.

Participant Group	Interlocutors (assumed name)	Brief Profile	Experience of Violence
	Khun Win	Thai Buddhist engineer	School was bombed several times when she was in high school.
	Kah Na	Malay-Muslim school teacher	Present at the incident of car bombing and fire where students' parents were killed.
	Bang Toh	Malay-Muslim school teacher	Present at the same scene of violence as Kah Na.
	Bang Yuth	Malay-Muslim engineer	Present at the scene of a shooting in Pattani province.
Victims of Violence	Khun Wat	Thai Buddhist durian orchard owner	His parents were shot by the insurgents.
	Khun Mon	Thai Buddhist government official	Present at the scene of multiple violent attacks and was injured during the incidents.
Former Separatists	Bang Bee	Former separatist group member	Participant in an anti-insurgency program (Bring Back Home project) for reintegration, but was not directly involved in violence.
	Bang Ar-Bu	Former BRN Youth Alliance member	Was not directly involved in violence and has now reintegrated into his former village.
Religious Leaders	Imam Leam	The Imam of a local mosque	Imam of a large mosque.
	Phra Wisit	The abbot of a local temple	Leader of a large temple.

Participant Group	Interlocutors (assumed name)	Brief Profile	Experience of Violence
Local Government Officers	Khun Chaiwat	Sheriff	Is involved with law enforcement actions against separatists.
	Khun Sak	Former Mayor	Was responsible for social initiatives and leading the town.
	Khun Tawee	Current Mayor	Is involved in social and economic initiatives.
	Khun Nee	Policy and Planning Analyst of Yala Province	Involved in long-term planning for the district.
	Khun Prasak	Director, Rights and Liberties Protection Department in Yala Province	Involved in government policy creation with regard to separatists and others.
Activists and Media	Khun Pitak	Human Rights NGO Observer	Has been observing the situation in Yala Province over 10 years.
	Mr. Ian	International Reporter	Has been reporting on the conflict in the Southern Border for international media outlets over 10 years.
Outsiders	Khun Jeerapan	Housewife (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Naree	Housewife (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media

Participant Group	Interlocutors (assumed name)	Brief Profile	Experience of Violence
	Khun Laddawan	Banker (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Kwanthip	HR Officer (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Naowarat	University Student (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Sinee	Airline Worker (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Wittaya	Freelance (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Nattakarn	Engineer (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Chanitnat	Retail Worker (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media
	Khun Onnapha	Retail Worker (Bangkok)	No first-hand experience, only consumes information from the media

1.10 Limitation and Ethical Considerations

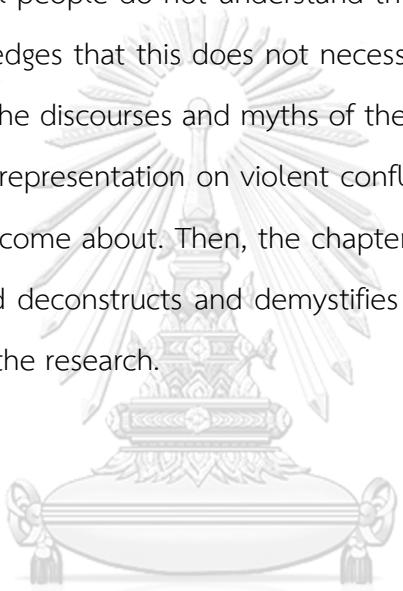
This research is bounded by the place and time it was conducted. Given the evolution of the sociocultural-political situation in Yala Province, it is probable that the situation may change in future. Furthermore, my research is limited by my ability to form relationships with key interlocutors. This could depend on my own social status, which cannot easily be changed (if at all). My outsider position could be especially challenging, as it is possible that interlocutors could lie or omit information, especially since my research is on a sensitive topic (Bleek, 1987, p. 315). Thus, there are several limitations to the scope of the study.

There are also several ethical considerations for the study. First, I need to be concerned for the safety of my participants; even though I cannot control what happens to them, ultimately, my actions could have consequences that threaten this safety (Vanderstaay, 2005, pp. 375 - 376). I also need to be concerned for my own safety, as well as the subtler effects on my analysis that working under stressful conditions can have (Kovats-Bernat, 2002, pp. 1 - 2). Thus, there are some limits that will be imposed on my research because of these two fundamental ethical issues. There are also broader ethical issues of concern. For example, I need to consider whether and how my work could be used in counterinsurgency efforts or military response against people in Yala Province, since so-called “human terrain systems” rely on such information (Sluka, 2010, pp. 101 - 102). However, I should also be aware that my work is a political outlet and communication channel for people that may otherwise be constrained or voiceless (Bourgois, 1990, p. 43). Therefore, I also should not censor my work’s political meaning because of its potential for political use. This will be a difficult but necessary balance.

1.11 Outline

This research is arranged in five chapters. In Chapter 1, the theoretical and empirical background of the study was presented. This included explaining key theories and presenting a literature review of previous studies. It also included the

explanation of the literature review, methodology, framework for inquiry, and limitations and ethics of the study. In Chapter 2, the dominance of the violence explanations in the mainstream media, including a historical account and critique, is examined. This examination evaluates how the current explanation of violence became entrenched and how it does not have an intrinsic dynamic relationship to the occurrences in the region. In Chapter 3, the view of regional violence from the insider perspective of people from the local region is presented. This view demonstrates that local people do not understand the violence in the same way as outsiders, but acknowledges that this does not necessarily legitimate the local view. Chapter 4 investigates the discourses and myths of the conflict. First, it evaluates the evidence for a crisis of representation on violent conflict in the southernmost region and how this crisis has come about. Then, the chapter investigates the discourses of violence as a myth and deconstructs and demystifies this myth. Chapter 5 provides the final conclusion of the research.



CHAPTER 2
THE DOMINANCE RHETORIC OF VIOLENCE OFFERED BY FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

The literature review and its discussion of discourses on the violence showed that there are certain explanations, such as religious and cultural separatism and different propensities to violence, that dominate the discourse. These explanations, which are promulgated by the state media, are commonly offered by formal institutions such as government agencies and academic institutions. In contrast, the perspective of local people is often missing, or if it is presented it is present only in ways that support the dominant discourse (for example, the perspective of primarily Buddhist victims of violence, who are perceived as legitimate voices). This means that there is a disconnection between the dominant discourse and the perspective and experience of local people, who are present only as stereotypes in the media discourse. However, this process of mythmaking would not be possible without the exchange of power through what Geertz (1973, p. 5) termed webs of significance, or exchanges of power and agency between networked individuals, groups, and formal institutions. Thus, it is not just the government, academics, media and its audiences, separatists, and local residents on their own that create the myths of the Southern Border violence, but instead the interaction and exchange between them. This chapter investigates the nature of these explanations as myths and the reasons for the dominance of the myth, as well as differences in perception and acceptance of the myth of violence by outsiders. It also critiques whether this representation truly represents the intrinsic dynamic of violence and its causes.

2.1 The Informants and Their Attribution of the Causes of Violence

There were a total of 31 local interlocutors and 10 Bangkokian whose viewpoints are the basis of this research. These informants include people I encountered during my stay in the district, those that I was referred to by others, and a group of outsiders who live in and around Bangkok. The informants belonged to

several groups, including the direct and indirect victims of violence, former members of separatist groups, religious leaders, government officials, activists and media, and outsiders. Each of the interlocutors has an assumed name, which is either their nickname or a pseudonym chosen for the research. While each of these interlocutors has their own perspective on the violence, insider perspectives tend to be more nuanced and less consistent with media representations of violence compared to outsiders.

2.1.1 Victims of Violence

Many of the local interlocutors were victims of violence attributed to separatists, either directly or indirectly. Direct victims are those who have been injured (either physically or psychologically) in violent attacks or who have lost relatives or other important people due to violence. Indirect victims are those that were present or near victims of violence. Although the victims of violence have slightly different perspectives on the violence, most of them view the violence as complex and having several underlying causes, including religious and political separatist groups, political influence and military power, a media whose discourse stokes anti-Malay Muslim sentiment, and the effect of outsider groups like Malaysian border groups and cross-border criminal groups. Thus, few if any of the victims see the conflict as solely a religious or cultural conflict.

Kah Fah is a local Malay-Muslim merchant. In 2013, Fah's son was shot by a soldier at the scene of a mosque explosion. She had been mistaken for one of the attackers that caused the explosion. Fah feels that Malay Muslims are unfairly blamed for the violence, scapegoats for a complex, multi-faction conflict.

> *"While they thought we are Muslims who have caused this unrest situation, I think they are mistaken. It is a complicated incident and many people including the Buddhist, Muslim and non-religion were involved. However, the only represented image is that the Muslim is a*

criminal and a radical group. In reality, our religion is very peaceful, but it is distorted by the media who frames us, victims of the situation, as criminals."

Kah Yah is a Malay Muslim housekeeper. She was attending a neonatal clinic in 2006 when the hospital was bombed, and subsequently suffered a miscarriage. During the following hospital stay, she was restrained by soldiers and forced to remove her hijab, creating further trauma. Yah feels that the violence is two-sided, even though Malay Muslims are blamed by the government and media. She argues that it is not a religious conflict, but a struggle for resources and for certain benefits.

"The conflict is more than religious conflict, but it is told as one for outsiders to believe so by the government and the media, portraying the Muslims as terrorists. Actually, we all know that there are Thai Buddhists and Thai Muslims who are both local people and officials in the active rebel group. The victims are also from both sides as well."

Khun Phol is a local Thai Buddhist business owner. Phol's wife was killed in a fire fight between separatists and government officials in the Amphoe SaNgob. He believes that the conflict is too complicated to attribute to a single cause.

" There are many actors involved such as drug ring, politician group, active rebel group, and government solider group who are both Buddhists and Muslims, along with the victims themselves such as innocent villagers, local politicians. And, the soldiers and polices come from both religions as well."

Khun Phong, a local Thai Buddhist labour, was injured on his way to work during a bombing incident. He believes that the violent conflict is mostly attributable to Malay-Muslim actors like religious teachers and separatist groups, but also acknowledges that drugs and crime and outside influence plays a role. He also

believes that media reports of the violence are exaggerated, placing too much blame on Muslims, and that local Malay Muslim interest groups are mostly peaceful.

> *"In my opinion, the conflict happens because of benefits in which most of the recipients are Muslim... The media reproduces the violent news and shows the image of Muslim terrorists so that the incident looks exaggerated and the people outside will think that it is religious conflict which is not true."*

Khun Win is a Thai Buddhist engineer. Her high school was bombed multiple times, including once when she was on the scene, though she was not injured. Win believes the conflict has many different causes, including political and religious separatism, military interest, inequality, and outside influence.

> *"It is more like different opinions and disagreements of benefit, but we do not know the truth because there are many sets of truth while some say that it is religious conflict, some say that it is soldiers who aim for budget, and some say that it is supported by Malaysia."*

Kah Na is a Malay-Muslim public school instructor. One of her students lost his parents in a car bomb and fire in 2014, where Na was present at the scene. Na does not believe that the violence is religious in nature, but instead believes that it has developed because of resource conflicts, crime, and the role of military interests.

> *"I think it is something more than religious conflict for sure because as I am a teacher, I see love and harmony of parents and students no matter who they are: Thai Buddhists, Muslims, or Christians ... The actual cause of the unrest situation tends to concern benefits such as drug issue, benefit issue between the borders of Thailand and Malaysia, natural gas from Southern natural resources, and huge military budget, etc."*

Bang Toh is a Malay-Muslim instructor who teaches at the same public school as *Kah Na* and was present at the same bombing. He believes that the conflict is too multifaceted and complex to understand the true underlying causes. With so many different perspectives on the violence, there may not be a single underlying cause.

> *"The actual cause is unknown because there are many truths from many parties like the active rebel group, the media, and the local people from both Thai Buddhist and Muslim. It is too much. However, I believe that the cause is too complicated with the combination of history, drug, local benefit, private reason, and huge military budget."*

Bang Yuth is a Malay Muslim Internet maintenance engineer. Yuth recently moved back to Amphoe SaNgob from Pattani after a situation where he had to hide in a shop during a shooting. He feels that the violence is complex and there are multiple causes. He also thinks that media discourses exaggerate the role of Malay Muslims in the violence, which only makes exclusion and victimisation of the group worse.

> *"The cause is complicated because it is from conflict about benefit, local politics, fight between superior people, budget seizure.... Moreover, the media also reflects the violent image which supports the active rebel group to acquire resource and instill more encouragement among them. Also, the soldiers and the government make it worse by representing the Muslims as terrorists, not respecting the Muslims by invading their homes, and talking badly to the Muslims."*

Khun Wat is the owner of a durian orchard. In year 10, his high school was evacuated after a bomb was found at the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives branch behind his school. Wat views violence as a complex situation,

involving active rebel groups, political and military groups, criminal groups, and Malaysian border violence all creating a violent environment.

> *"I hate those radical Muslims who distorted religion and the corrupted military officials who are greedy as well as the wilderness which makes three Southern border provinces look bad. I believe that it is because of the active rebel group that we are also considered as the violent people from three Southern border provinces since my friends in Bangkok always tease me like that."*

Khun Mon is a local Thai Buddhist government official. She has been present at the scent of violent attacks and arrests of separatists. Mon believes that the violence is mainly caused by Malay Muslims, who believe they are oppressed by the Thai government agencies. However, Mon does not appear to feel that this viewpoint is valid.

Overall, these narratives make it clear that among this group – the victims, whose lives have been most affected by the violence, including personal injury and loss of loved ones – there is no single attribution of simple causes of the violence. Instead, most of the victims acknowledge that there is a complex set of circumstances surrounding the violence. Furthermore, there is little sense that the victims view either Malay Muslims or Thai Buddhists are in general responsible for the violence. Thus, for this group of most affected informants, it is clear that there is no simple cause, as promoted within the media.

2.1.2 Former Separatists

Two former separatists were interviewed. These separatists, while they have left the separatist movements of which they are a part, have a somewhat shared perspective on the violence. They view the separatist groups as the main actors, but believe that the actions of the separatist groups are attributable to economic and social oppression and exclusion of the Malay Muslim cultural group. This is similar to

the perspectives of the victims, who also identified a complex set of causes, although the former separatists were more likely to argue that systematic oppression by the state was one of the causes.

Bang Bee has a history of participation in separatist groups and was arrested in Yala Province. *Bang Bee* then participated in the "Bring People Back Home" (Pa Kon Gub Ban) anti-insurgency project, which is intended to reintegrate separatists who have not participated directly in violence into society. He believes that separatist groups are mainly responsible for the violence, but does not believe that the conflict is primarily religious in nature. Instead, he argues that economic and social isolation is the basis for the violent conflict.

> *"The problem of the unrest situation is complex but we do not think that it is ethno-religious conflict because the locals in the area live in harmony and help each other no matter what religions they are."*

Bang Ar-Bu was a participant in the BRN youth alliance, but was not directly involved in separatist activities. He has since left the BRN movement. He believes that violence is caused by separatist groups, but that these groups have justifiable reasons for their activities. He points to the fining of people for not speaking Thai, laws against traditional dress and other oppressive and isolating state actions as causes for the violence.

> *"The problem in the South is caused by a group of Muslim Malaysian, a major group that sticks with identity in terms of their language and culture."*

2.1.3 Religious Leaders

The difference in Buddhist and Muslim perspectives is perhaps clearest in the viewpoints of religious leaders. Unlike other groups, the two religious leaders who were interviewed had nearly diametrically opposed viewpoints on the causes of violence.

Imam Leam is a local religious leader at a large mosque in the Amphoe SaNgob (assumed name). He does not believe that the conflict is religious in nature. Instead, be believes that religion is being used as an excuse by both separatists and the state, serving as a justification for the violence.

> *"The distorted information regarding the unrest situation in the area is presented especially by the terrorists who try to create hatred towards Thai government to the participants by presenting the image of Muslims in the area as oppressed and recognised as secondary citizens, along with historical information that we govern ourselves."*

Provost Wisit is the abbot of a large local temple in Amphoe SaNgob. He has been a monk at the temple for thirty years, serving as abbot for the past four years. Almost uniquely among the participants, *Phra Wisit* attributes the violence solely to Malay Muslims as a deliberate attempt to victimise Thai Buddhists.

> *"The target is Buddhist victims... Islam was even requested to do worship of the Allah's kindness in the ubosot (Buddhist chapel) and then there was the incident of electricity post explosion in the next morning. What should we think then: that it is not religious conflict? We have to accept the truth."*

These viewpoints are among the strongest and most straightforward of the group. They are also the most clearly opposed: *Imam Leam*'s perspective views the violence as an issue of separatist terrorism and the exercise of state power, while *Phra Wisit* attributes violence to Malay Muslims in general. This is important because *Phra Wisit* is an influential member of the community and is responsible for religious and pastoral care among his community. Thus, even though his viewpoint is extreme, it could be highly influential on the perspectives of others.

2.1.4 Local Government Officials

Government officials were included in the study because they are responsible for administering (and in some cases planning) local programs and solving community problems, giving them a central role in the community and a multifaceted perspective on the violence. In general, government officials appear to attribute the violence to multiple causes. While religious and nationalist ideologies are not excluded as causes, government officials also attribute causes such as economic development and cultural change. Government officials also generally acknowledge that not everyone is involved in or can be blamed for violence, even among groups such as Malay Muslims or even separatist groups.

Khun Chaiwat, the Sheriff of Amphoe SaNgo, has been a government official since 1982. He believes that actual secession is not the underlying intention of the violence, even though Muslim separatists and terrorist groups appear to be the main actors. While religious belief does play a role, it is not the underlying cause of the violence. Fundamentally, the Sheriff believes that most people- even Muslims – are not involved with the conflict. At the same time, his view on Malay Muslims is somewhat contemptuous:

> *"Muslims have no education, so they can be easily convinced by using religion as myth... They have no ideology."*

Khun Sak, the former Mayor, was the acting mayor from 2012 to 2017. He believes that the causes of violence are complicated and that there are multiple causes. These causes included religious and nationalist ideology, cross-border criminal activities, and economic exclusion and lack of opportunities.

> *"It is complicated. It is like the conflict towards benefit and non-patriotism."*

Khun Nee, the policy and planning analyst of Yala Province, plays a major role in development planning. She believes that there are many underlying factors

that cause the violence. Some of these factors include religious ideology, lack of economic opportunities and poor economic development programs, and families moving away and the countryside being repopulated with violent actors from Malay Muslims' extended families. Thus, She views the underlying cause of the violence not as a religious conflict necessarily, but as part of a broader cultural shift.

Khun Prasak is the director of the Rights and Liberties Protection Department Area 4, which covers Yala Province and Amphoe SaNgob. He also views the conflict as related to multiple factors, including inappropriate development policies and poor government information. He also thinks religious and nationalist ideologies and cross-border criminal activities play a role in the violence. However, he also believes that the violence is not as bad as it has been reported in the media. He thinks that media sensationalism and "fake news" driven by a rapid reporting cycle have resulted in misreporting that makes the violence seem worse than it is.

> *"The fact that they do not understand or make an attempt to approach the root of the problem leads to the mistake of development and intervention disaster such as drug, smuggling, and casino because they have to use power to observe."*

2.1.5 Activists and Media

Activists and media outsiders live and work within the region, but unlike the other groups resident in the region, typically are not local to the area. Instead, they come from outside, and work for organisations that do not necessarily have a direct role in the organisation. Thus, these participants occupy a hybrid role of insider-outsiders, without direct roots in the community but with a long history of community participation. These participants had a multifaceted view of the violence, and barely attributed it to religious conflict at all.

Khun Pitak, a peace-building expert, is employed by an NGO that monitors human rights in the Southern Border, and has been in his role over ten years. While

he acknowledges that there is a political separatist component to the violence, he also points to criminal groups and activities as a major cause of violence that is often attributed to separatists.

> *"The centre is the active rebel group that would like to govern themselves. It is true that the problem in the centre is present according to history; however, there are also other beneficial factors interfered such as drug and human trafficking."*

Mr. Ian is a German journalist who covered the Southern border provinces for several international media outlets, including Al Jazeera, the BBC and CCTV, from 2008 to 2019. He viewed the violence as being complex and not attributable to a single conflict. Instead, he feels that it is a confluence of factors that influenced the conflict and which continue to drive and destabilise the region.

> *"I can say that the insurgency is not based on a single conflict. Various factors come together in destabilizing the region, its people, culture, business and education."*

2.1.6 Outsiders

Outsiders including *Khun Jeerapan*, *Khun Naree*, *Khun Laddawan*, *Khun Kwanthip*, and *Khun Naowarat* took part in the first focus group that discussed the violence and its causes in Bangkok. The other focus outsiders have never visited, and receive most of their information about the conflict by the news media. The second focus group consisted of *Khun Sinee, Khun Wittaya, Khun Nattakarn, Khun Chanitnat,* and *Khun Onnapha*. Among this group, *Khun Sinee* has friends in the Southern Border provinces (though she has never visited herself). All of outsider participants had never visited and mostly got their information from the news media.

These two groups were marked by having the most consistent and simple view of the conflict. All participants thought that religious separatist groups were the cause of the violence. *Khun Kwanthip* acknowledged the role of criminal groups in

the conflict, but this was the only variation in the viewpoints. Others in the two focus groups only presented the government/media discourse of religiously driven Malay Muslim separatism and the essential non-Thainess of the Malay Muslims. When queried, the focus groups agreed that they received most of their information from mainstream news, and had little interest in the conflict in general. As reflected by *Khun Onnapha*, who reports that *"Bangkokian were not interested in this issue perhaps because we were not directly affected by the conflict."* Thus, the outsider focus represented by the focus groups could be considered as an uncritical acceptance of the government discourse presented through the media. The conflict between this view of outsiders and the more complex and nuanced views of the insiders problematizes the government/media discourse, given that there is so much disagreement.

2.1.7 Summary of Attributions of the Violence

Table 2 collates the responses by who the participants attribute the violence to. This shows that the most common explanations for violence were religious separatism and government policies and actions. It is notable that a majority of the informants (though not all) acknowledged that the conflict was a complicated interaction with multiple causes, rather than simply a religious or political group. This is an important insight because it indicates that most insiders, as well as outsiders with an informed perspective on the unrest situation in the Deep South provinces, do not accept a simple religious or political separatism discourse for the conflict. However, uninformed outsiders almost all viewed the conflict as driven mainly by religious separatism (and in one case, criminal activity). This suggests that while insiders may have more nuanced views, for outsiders, the simplistic religious separatism explanation promoted by the media predominates. It is also relevant to note particularly that both Buddhist and Muslim victims of violence tended to have these nuanced views of the causes of violence. This suggests that the experience of

violence does not create the perception that only Muslim religious separatist groups are responsible for the violence.

Table 2 Summary of Attributed Causes of Violence in Informant Discourses

Causes of Violence									
Actor Group	**Religious Separatism**	**Political Separatism**	**Inequality, Oppression and Economic Exclusion**	**Criminal Groups**	**Government Policy, Budget and Resources**	**Military Interest and Budget**	**News Media**	**Outside Influences (e.g. Malaysian groups and border conflict)**	**Too complicated to unpick or unknown**
Direct Victims (5)	5	4	1	1	5	2	3	2	
Indirect Victims (5)	4	2	1	3	4	4	3	2	2
Former Separatists (2)	1	2	2		1				
Religious Leaders (2)	1	1			1				
Government Officials (5)	5	2	3	3	3		2		3
NGO Activists (1)	1								1
Media (1)	1			1					
Outsiders (10)	10			1					
Total Attributions	27	10	6	8	13	6	7	4	5

2.2 The Dominance of Formal Explanations for Violence

The literature review revealed that explanations of the violence as promoted in the media almost always come from formal institutional sources, which provides a uniformity of attributed causes and who is characterized as perpetrators and victims. One example of this type of discourse is the division of actors in the conflict into Malay Muslim attackers and Thai Buddhist victims, which is either actively promoted or simply accepted by multiple authors (Aim-Aur-Yut, 2017; Saleh, 2008; Sing-In, 2012) as well as predominating in the news media (Maharueankwan, 2007; Prasertsri, 2011). While these explanations are not always accepted by academics, in many cases these assumptions remain unquestioned. These explanations are noticeably lacking in their local perspective and voices, and do not offer much in the way of understanding how the violence is actually experienced or perceived.

2.2.1 Academic Explanations for Violence and the Dominance of the Political Economy Model

Academic explanations for violence are typically offered at two levels: those that focus on Malay Muslims and their individual situations as the primary cause or vector for violence and those that evaluate discourses of violence and institutional roles. Some of the academic explanations for violence that focus on Malay Muslims address issues like: Some representations of explanations for violence as present in the academic literature include: history and ethnic identity of Malay Muslims (although not of Thai Buddhists, which are assumed to be the default Thai ethnic identity), along with ethnicity-based oppression (Panpigool, 2012); lack of a sense of community and alienation from communities, or isolation of communities from each other (Wallipodom, 2007) or personal failings and characteristics of Malay Muslims such as lack of diligence and unsuccessful economic production (Bundhuwong, 2017; Bunnag, 2003); poverty and lack of integration of Malay Muslims (Taneerananon, 2005); and political corruption and lack of social and economic capital (Jitpiromsri, 2016; Panpigool, 2012). While these studies attempt to speak to the experience of

local life in the southern border provinces, they do not actually draw on the lived experience of the communities, and many of these explanations are essentialised or stereotyped. This is particularly true of Bunnag's (2003) attribution of lack of diligence to Malay Muslims. As a simple example of the lack of local voice, Wallipodom (2007) argues that the communities of Malay-Muslim and Thai-Buddhist are detached from each other and do not understand each other. The evidence from informants in this study suggests that this is not the case; although some aspects of religious life are separated, in practice Buddhist and Muslim life in the district is intertwined and interactions are commonplace. Thus, there is only a partial acceptance of official explanations in the academic literature, but many of the assumptions that these explanations are based on do continue to exist. Furthermore, these academic explanations for violence as an individual (or at most a community) experience contributes to the hegemonic message of the state that Malay Muslims are uniquely to blame for the violence, and furthermore that the violence is fundamentally non-Thai in nature. Bunnag's (2003) focus on personal characteristics like laziness makes this particularly clear, but Taneerananon (2005) also argued that 'lack of integration' – e.g. a fundamental refusal on the part of non-Thai Malay Muslims to become Thai in some way – was to blame for their economic condition and subsequent violence. Even in studies such as Panpigool's (2012) study, where the author was relatively sympathetic to the Malay Muslim situation, a distinction between 'Thai' characteristics (social capital, honesty, and ethnicity and language) and the characteristics of Malay Muslims is made. Thus, these individualist explanations for the violence, which focus on what Malay Muslims lack (often coming down to an essential Thai-ness), support the state discourse of Malay Muslims as fundamentally non-Thai and therefore acting against the state in their quest for equality.

The second level of academic explanations are focused on understanding the discourses of violence offered by government officers, NGOs and the media. Studies of discourse analysis have identified several dominant explanations for violence and

their relationship to formal institutions. For example, one investigation into newspaper coverage of the Southern Border crisis showed that media explanations preferred the separatist movement explanation (Maharueankwan, 2007). This explanation, which was offered by the Thaksin government, promoted the viewpoint that the Southern Border crisis consisted of an armed insurgency by an ethnically distinct group of Malay Muslim separatists with the goal of transferring control of the Southern Border to the culturally and religiously similar Malaysia. This explanation also relied on historical notions about separatists and their identities, tracing back to the establishment of Thailand as a nation state. Maharueankwan (2007) also illustrated that this discourse had not emerged directly, but instead had changed over time with differences in context and explanation provided. Another example of formal discourse that has simply been accepted without question in the media and to some extent in academia is the contradiction of peace-loving Buddhists (cast as the victims of the conflict) and violent Muslims (cast as the perpetrators). Thus, there are evident signs that the dominant discourse surrounding the violence is directed by the state, and that this has been the case for some time. These discourses studies do a better job than the individualist explanations at laying bare the power interactions between the state and the media, which result in unquestioned assumptions like those held by academics. For example, Maharueankwan's (2007) demonstration that the dominant discourse had changed over time in response to government policy makes it clear that state discourses have exerted power over the media (which in turn influences outsider perspectives especially). This dominant discourse is not necessarily the viewpoint of locals in Yala Province – especially the discourse of violent Muslims and peaceful Buddhists. However, the discourse has had a strong influence on outsider perspectives. Thus, while this use of discourse power by the state has not been successful in influencing insider views (at least in most cases), it has been successful at influencing outsiders.

2.2.2 Why is the Thai-State Eager to Control the Discourse?

As discussed above, the state discourse on the Southern Border provinces violence is obvious in the analysis of media discourses, which promote the violence as predominantly a religious separatist issue rather than the complex problem as seen by locals. The effect on academic discourse is subtler, but many of the tropes seen in academic discourse – such as individualist attribution of violence to specific outcomes like corruption, poverty, and lack of worth ethic, or simply the unquestioned role of religion in the violence – also reflect the state's discourse on the violence and its perspective of Malay Muslims as non-Thai.

The question of why formal institutions – particularly the state – control and dominate the discourse on the violence in the Southern Provinces is interesting. This question can be answered with reference to theories on legitimate power and violence. Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power indicates that discourses – or "words (rhetoric) and slogans" are believed only if "those who utter them" are perceived to be legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 170). Thus, at the most basic level, discourse on the conflict may be dominated by formal institutions because these institutions may be perceived as legitimate, while social movements may not be perceived as such. However, simple legitimacy is not really an adequate explanation here. Foucault's duality of power/knowledge (Foucault, 2002; Kingsolver, 2002) provides more insight into the question of dominance of discourse. Under this explanation, formal institutions such as the state may be presumed to have more knowledge about the violence than others; therefore, the assertions of these institutions may be accepted without question. However, this power/knowledge duality is not a neutral state. As Foucault (2002, pp. 120 - 122) points out, those with power may create rituals of discourse that increase power flows that result from control of discourse. An example of this type of unquestioned ritual control can be seen in the acceptance of the violent/non-violent duality of religions, which often goes unquestioned even by academics in the field (McCargo, 2009a, 2009b). The disciplining of the person, in

the form of control over dress, language and even diet, is also a characteristic of power use within the state in an attempt to control its subjects (Foucault, 1995). Thus, the state's control of the discourse on the Southern Border conflict results not just in a singular perspective on the violence among outsiders, but also a type of reality in which more power flows to the state through this control, as people do not seek out alternative explanations for the violence.

One way to understand the depiction of terrorism and the state's attempt to control the discourse is the concept of hyper-realism. Baudrillard notes that "*We set the distance to the 'reality' – the hyper-reality, of our world, as we do that of a photographic lens* (Baudrillard, 2012, p. 94)" as news and information is performed in front of us. Therefore, what is perceived as reality is in fact a simulation, determined by a combination of the performer's presentation of their perceived reality and the audience's perception of their own. This implies that terrorism is only effective because it is both performed as and perceived as a real threat. However, it also implies that controlling the perception of Malay Muslim separatist activities as an existential threat against the state also controls perception that the Thai Buddhist state is a cohesive unit with shared norms and a single cultural identity. This in turn would reinforce the perception by outsiders that the activities of Malay Muslim terrorists are invalid, since they reject the shared perception of reality of Thailand as a single, cohesive cultural identity unit, controlled by the norms of the Thai state. Thus, even though the perspective of Malay Muslim separatists as terrorists results in a perceived and real threat to outsiders, it also reinforces the perception that there is a real sense of "Thainess" that it threatens.

2.2.3 What Constitutes Legitimate and Illegitimate Uses of Violence?

The question of who is allowed to use violence is also important here. For example, in an open access society such as modern Thailand, violence by the military and police (state-sanctioned users of violence) may be perceived as legitimate, while violence by Malay Muslim groups (who are perceived as private

citizens for whom violence is proscribed) is not legitimate (North et al., 2009, p. 121). Therefore, there may be the tendency to accept violence and explanations of violence from the state, but to reject explanations by non-state groups. States also assume the power to punish and control their subjects, including bodily and mental controls (Foucault, 1995). Thus, the state and its representatives are afforded the power to control the discourse because they can control the actions and thoughts of their citizens. In the case of Thailand, the state also engages in both explicit and inexplicit controls of the media through censorship and actions against reporters (Reporters Without Borders, 2019, August 23). Thus, there are both direct and indirect controls of the media through which the dominant discourse is promoted.

The concept of the open access order is relevant to the understanding why the Thai state discourse that emphasizes the illegitimacy of the use of brutality by Malay Muslims prevails. Within the open access order, citizens are in general free to participate in politics, economics, and the formation of the state, but are strictly limited in ways in which they can use violence (Weingast et al., 2009, p. 56). In fact, within the open access order, violence is only legitimate when used as an instrument of the state (for example, in the context of military or law enforcement actions) (Weingast et al., 2009, p. 56). Therefore, in Thailand – a modern nation-state that may therefore be assumed to be an open access order – violence is not legitimated by the strength of the individual user, but instead by their official sanction from the state (North et al., 2009, p. 121). The concept implies that the Thai state would regard actions in state actors (especially military officers) used violence as more legitimate than those in which non-state actors (such as Malay Muslim separatists) used the same level of violence. Of course, this theory is only partially explanatory, because of the actually-existing position of Malay Muslims within the state. Studies into the position of Malay Muslims within the state have shown that this group does not have open access to the political, economic, and state structures of Thailand. For example, Malay Muslims have much higher poverty rates than their Thai Buddhist

neighbours, in large part because they do not have equal economic access (for example, including higher unemployment rates and poorer educational access) (Taneerananon, 2005). Furthermore, Malay Muslims are socially isolated and politically marginalised, with low political participation rates and little voice in the media or other formal institutions (Panpigool, 2012). Therefore, while it might be the case under an ideal open access order that violence was reserved for the use of the state, it could also be argued that the Thai state, by allowing Malay Muslims to be excluded from the societal order, has created conditions where violence would be viewed as legitimate by non-state actors such as separatists.

Contrasting norms toward violence are routinely assumed in the predominant discourse surrounding the causes of conflict (McCargo, 2009b, pp. 12 - 13). However, this does not necessarily represent the actual position of these religious groups towards violence. Instead, it represents the official position on the authenticity of the use of brutality depending on the position of the religion. Buddhist religious texts (such as the *Dhammapada or* The Path of Dhamma) do warn against the use of violence, and the teachings of Buddha did not actively reject violence (although Buddhist monks were removed from the practice of state violence by, for example, not being allowed to preach to armies) (Tikhonov, 2013, p. 8). In practice, however, modern Buddhist practice allows for a concept of so-called 'acceptable warfare', which is assigned not to religious leaders but to rulers and the state to determine (Tikhonov, 2013, p. 9). Thus, Buddhism sanctions violence at a personal level but does not remove it from the possible tools of the state, resulting in violent actions being overlooked by practitioners. In Islam, political violence is often justified using religious script - which is equally often used to promote peace (Hajjar, 1995, pp. 340 - 342). Thus, both Buddhism and Islam have conflicted messages and uses of violence and peace, and neither religion is wholly a religion of war or of peace. As Tikhonov (2013, pp. 7 - 9) points out, these positions are also shared in other major religions such as Christianity, and for many of the same reasons. This complex view

of violence within the respective religious groups involved in the conflict requires rejection of the mainstream discourse of violent Islamic attacks on peace-loving Buddhists, and acknowledgement that capacity for both violent and peace exists within each.

In contrast to the state and formal organisations, Malay Muslims and other area residents have little power or voice in mainstream discourses on the conflict. These groups represent a subaltern class, over whom economic and political power is held by elites (Spivak, 2010, pp. 78 - 79). In this case, the elite is represented by government and other formal institutions, many of whom are centralised and remote from the concerns of the local area. Even the unquestioned acceptance of at least parts of the dominant discourse by academics supports this position, since these groups are elite by their nature (Spivak, 2010, pp. 81 - 82). When positioned as subalterns, it makes sense that Malay Muslim groups have little voice, since allowing them to speak would disrupt the flows of power and away from the centre, toward the internal colonies of the south (Chávez, 2011, pp. 785 - 786). It is possible that Malay Muslims and area residents have engaged in more resistance than commonly recognised, since working with elites to meet specific strategic goals can be characterised as resistance (Lizarazo, 2018, pp. 191 - 192). However, the overall sense is that Malay Muslim groups hold little legitimate power and in effect function as a subaltern group.

2.2.4 Summary of the State Control of Discourse

In summary, there is no question that the dominant media discourse of the Southern Border conflict – characterized by separatist goals and Malay Muslim violence – is controlled by formal institutions. This control of the discourse is especially visible in the direct attribution of a specific cause of violence (Malay Muslim religious separatism) by the state, which propagates through the media directly, as well as being visible in the discourse of academics who do not question underlying assumptions. This explanation for violence arose with the Thaksin

government, which used the explanation as a justification for military intervention in the Southern Border provinces (Maharueankwan, 2007). There are several reasons for this control, among which the main reason is a deliberate effort on the part of the state to promote a specific discourse in which Malay Muslim groups become illegitimate because of their assumption of the power of violence. The discourse is controlled by the state through active control of media channels through which discourse is promoted and exercise of power on the bodies and minds of its citizens. Thus, the dominant discourse on the violence is that of formal institutions because of direct action to control flows of power, rather than through incidental action. It can also be viewed as an attempt to justify the reservation of violence to the organs of the state (especially military institutions) on the basis that citizens of the state are able to access to socio-political, cultural and economic routes to participation and that only the state may use legitimate violence (North et al., 2009, p. 121). This hypothetical argument would delegitimize the violence practiced by the groups of Malay Muslim separatists, except for the fact that in fact, Malay Muslims do not have full participation in society (Taneerananon, 2005). The notion that there are different norms surrounding violence in Buddhism and Islam has also been promoted as an explanation for the violence (McCargo, 2009b, pp. 12 - 13), but these differences are also not borne out – in fact, modern Buddhism acknowledges the possibility of 'acceptable warfare' (Tikhonov, 2013, p. 9), while Islamic scripture is often used to call for peace (Hajjar, 1995). The dominant discourse of the state also serves the purpose of creating a shared reality of a singular, unitary state of "Thainess", which the separatist action serves to reinforce. In contrast, Malay Muslims become a subaltern group, with no clear voice in the discourse. At the same time, it is not clear from the perspective of formal separatists that there would be a single shared discourse if the separatist groups did have access to media to disperse such a discourse. This is, according to Baudrillard's (2002) theory of terrorism, unnecessary

to the struggle against the state, because this occurs as a response to accumulation of power rather than formation of a specific ideology.

2.3 Formal Institutions and Their Role in Myth-Making

The fragmentary and misleading nature of myths is evident in the dominant discourse on Southern Border violence. For example, one of these fragmentary and misleading aspects of the mainstream discourse, promoted by the government and even academics, is that peaceful Thai Buddhists are the victims of violent Malay Muslim separatists, frequently through a series of highly memorable and violent incidents (McCargo, 2009b, pp. 12 - 13). However, statistics tell a different story. Deep South Watch (2018), which collects statistics about violence in the Southern Provinces, show that of 45 incidents reported in November 2018, 17 incidents (or 37.8%) were clearly identifiable as separatist actions. The reports also show that both Muslims and Buddhists are affected, with 17 Muslims and 7 Thais dead (Deep South Watch, 2018). In other cases, the perception of the incident is distorted to exaggerate the effects on the military while minimizing the effects on insurgents (Sugunnasil, 2006, pp. 124 - 125). In other cases, explanations offered by Malay Muslims, such as entrenched economic inequality, are not promoted at all, or are actively rejected in favour of individualist explanations such as “lack of diligence” (Bunnag, 2003).

This fragmentation of the violence myth may be due to conflicting pressures and discourse flows from formal institutions, which have different motivations and justifications and are meant to serve different purposes. Formal institutions are not just in control of the dominant discourse of Southern Border violence – instead, they play an active role in mythmaking surrounding the violence. Myths or fragmentary and misleading discourses result in inaccurate perceptions of reality and entrench the interests and power of the elite (G. Griffiths, 1994). In other words, the communication and interpretation provided by the mythmaker is partial and inadequate to develop a real understanding (Foucault, 1994, p. 40). The dominance of formal institutions and the voice of the government, particularly in the media,

means that local voices are crowded out, or are supported only when their perspective supports the fragmented myth presented by these formal institutions. For example, the case of Sai Khao and the "300-year old mosque" (Jongwilaikasaem, 2012), held up as an example of peace between communities, is a representation of local people, but does not stem from the voice of local people.

This is not to say that insurgent violence is not a serious problem in the Southern Border or that it does not have real consequences. However, it is clear that the discourse promoted by formal institutions, which emphasize irresolvable ethnic and religious differences and illegitimate use of violence rather than more complex explanations, do present a partial, fragmented, and misleading view of the Southern Border conflict. Furthermore, this presentation serves the interests of the powerful, for example by privileging harm suffered by the military or Thai Buddhists over that suffered by Malay Muslims. Thus, it can be stated that the mainstream discourse on the Southern Border violence has created a myth that ignores many of the complexities of the situation, and that furthermore, formal institutions have played an active role in establishing this myth.

2.4 Acceptance of the Myth by Outsiders as a Result of Interaction of Discourses and the Production of a Myth

One critical question is how much the violence myth promoted by formal institutions and media discourse is accepted by outsiders. Interviews with Bangkok residents (the outsider group investigated in this research) suggest that this myth is accepted to a great extent, but not unquestioningly. For example, a common perspective is that the conflict comes from a desire of Malay Muslims to avoid becoming Thai. *Khun Sinee* said, *"The leaders of the separatist group make up stories, since they want their land to be separated and no longer want to be Thai." Khun Chanitnat* says, *"Some of them are forced to become a part of Siam even though their relatives are still in Malaysia,"* while *Khun Wittaya* says *"It is because of religion as well as separatism for sure, since the Southern border provinces*

cannot govern themselves." Thus, these outsider views accept several tenets of the myth promoted by formal institutions and the media, including that Malay Muslims are in some way un-Thai (and furthermore do not want to be Thai) that they are incapable of self-governance, and that their desire for separation stems from a religious difference.

Outsiders did not uniformly accept the media discourse at all times. For example, in one of the focus groups, *Khun Nattakarn* reported that he had asked local people, and *"they told me that it is not a transitional problem or separatism... but dissatisfaction toward management of the province."* Thus, while outsiders did broadly believe the official discourse, there was also some questioning about whether the state was performing its duties with respect to the Southern border provinces and whether there were deeper explanations for the conflict. At the same time, most of the outsiders did not question the official discourse in this way; thus, even though there is some questioning, it could not be said to be common. Thailand has been acknowledged to have relatively low freedom of the press, with the state maintaining strong control over mainstream media outlets and using regulatory pressure and intimidation to ensure compliance (Freedom House, 2017; Panjor, 2015). These mechanisms of censorship are designed to maintain the boundaries of discursive practice to the state's preference (Heath, 2019, pp. 804 - 805). Beyond official censorship, it is also likely that what is published in the press is influenced by self-censorship by journalists who understand the consequences for breaching existing rules of discourse (Fu & Lee, 2016, p. 88; Maharueankwan, 2007). Thus, it is not the case that the outsiders are necessarily uninterested in or negligent in accepting the mainstream media discourse on the violence. Instead, government power over discursive practice enables it to maintain an information asymmetry through censorship of the press. Fundamentally, the discursive implementation of censorship enables the Thai government to maintain control over what is considered 'true' (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014, p. 173; McCargo, 2009c) and what can be said

(Foucault, 1977, p. 132). Thus, the government/media discourse is driven by government preferences for discursive practice, which serves to support the government's interest.

Other beliefs include that unrest is caused by religious discrimination and supported by entrenched interests or bad actors in the region, who promote and exacerbate violence. However, even though some areas have been questioned (such as the question of unfair treatment or the relative unimportance of religious differences) others are not unquestioned. For example, interviewees rarely, if ever, attributed violent actions to anyone except Malay Muslims. While it is possible this was self-censorship to avoid state action, it is also possible that the myth has been successful in promoting the conflict entirely as an action of Malay Muslim separatists.

Overall, it appears that state power directed toward control of the media has been effective at promoting an official myth of the Southern Border violence as a separatist conflict promoted by non-Thai actors with religious and nationalist motivations. Fundamentally, the question of who perpetrates the violence and why rarely arises in casual outside discourses, even those that are informed by at least some information from insiders, like *Khun Nattakarn*'s. Illusionary belief in this violence myth is produced through interaction of discourses, including the role of the media (to inform) and the media's promotion of the official discourse of the Thai government. Thus, the media serves as a conduit through which the discourse of the Thai government is passed second hand, and which is viewed as more reliable than it might if it were promoted directly by the government. Furthermore, this myth thrives in the absence of alternative discourses, which is discussed in Chapter 3.

2.5 Does This Myth Represent the Intrinsic Dynamic of Violence Present Here?

The final question of the chapter is whether the myth fully represents the intrinsic dynamic of violence in the southernmost border conflict. The notion of webs of significance (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) would argue that it would not be possible for

only one actor to engage in the formation of a myth of power/violence. This can be observed to be the case. Deep South Watch's database indicates that the victims of brutality include both Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists. Moreover, many of the founding incidents of the myth, such as the 2004 mosque incident (Sugunnasil, 2006, pp. 124 - 125) were far more deadly for insurgents than for either the Thai military or Thai Buddhist bystanders. There is also a frequent application of the framing of terrorist attacks, which immediately limit and control discourse (Baudrillard, 2002). In practice, it is unclear whether the actual number of the violence occurring in the Deep South provinces is attributable to the conflict itself and how much is attributable to the parallel illicit economies and activities that spring up around uncontrolled cultural and ethnic conflicts (Ballentine & Nitzschke, 2005, pp. 1 - 2). Therefore, it cannot be said that the illusionary myth of violence in the Southern Border is a full representation of the dynamic of violence.

2.6 Discursive Practice at Work in Conflicting Explanations

Given that, as discussed above, the there is evidence of myth-building in the government/media discourses of the Southern Border conflict, this raises the question of the discursive practices that are creating this discourse and establishing it as 'truth' in the eyes of outsiders. The main discourse of the state can be summarized as: the violent conflict is caused by Malay-Muslim insurgents, with sympathy from all Malay Muslims, due to religious extremism, a sense of essential non-Thai otherness and alienation from the Thai state. There are several discursive practices that the state uses to enforce and perpetuate this discourse. One of these discursive practices is that of direct censorship of the state media to promote the preferred vision of the state, which has already been discussed. However, there are also other discursive practices the state uses to reinforce its vision of the truth. One example of this is the state's approach of economic development. On the one hand, the state argues that Malay Muslims are poorly educated and economically unproductive. This position has been echoed by at least some scholars, who have

attributed these problems to causes such as lack of diligence (Bunnag, 2003) or resistance to economic and social integration (Bundhuwong, 2017; Panpigool, 2012; Taneerananon, 2005). Simultaneously, the Thai state's educational and socio-economic development policies for the region reinforce and perpetuate these problems. For example, the state uses its power to limit Malay Muslim access to the educational system by under-provisioning and underfunding schools for Malay Muslim children. This in turn forces Malay Muslim into religious schools, whereas the former insurgents interviewed here argued, increases their exposure to religious arguments for separatism. It also causes a limitation of educational development projects for Malay Muslims, such as 'Thai' libraries for Thais, further limiting access to outside views, and, consequently, limiting the opportunity for authors to challenge the boundaries of discursive practice (Foucault, 1977). Similarly, economic development activities such as catfish farming have been abandoned because of their cultural inappropriateness: Malay Muslims in the Southern Border do not eat catfish (as they are considered haram), and the farms and ponds have been abandoned. Thus, through the discursive practice of economic and educational policy, the government materializes its own 'truth' of the situation, enforcing educational barriers, creating economic productivity barriers and failing to address poverty, and increasing alienation in the Malay Muslim community. Thus, it can be argued that press censorship, which influences media reporting on the southern border conflict, is only one of the discursive practices creating the government's preferred truth of the conflict. In many ways, the discursive practices involved in educational and economic development policy may be even more powerful, since these actions create conditions for conflict by themselves, as well as the conditions to which the conflict may be attributed.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that media reports and explanations for the violence in the Southern Border are dominated by explanations and interpretations

provided by formal institutions, particularly the government. These explanations are partial and fragmented, contributing to the mainstream outsider perception that the violent conflict is one-sided, separatist, or non-Thai, resulting from the essential Otherness of Malay Muslims (who are even identified as a separate nationality, despite the more or less indisputable fact of their Thai citizenship and nationality). This partial and directed discourse, which is clearly motivated by power accumulation and control and which silences the subaltern voice of insiders (particularly Malay Muslims) therefore can be understood as a myth, which does not fully represent the intrinsic dynamic of violence and largely ignores the complex causes of the violent conflict. In the next chapter, a detailed explanation of the violence from the perspective of local people and the limitations of this insider view is provided, to contrast with this official discourse.

CHAPTER 3

THE INSIDER EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

In the previous chapter, the perspectives of the state, academics, media, former separatists, victims, and outsiders on the Southern border conflict were evaluated with regard to their role as discourse. This perspective revealed not so much an inherent truth about the violent conflict, but a set of complex interacting motivations and perspectives that served different purposes, such as state control over the definition and perception of Thai society, a struggle over globalization, and counter-movements against the accumulation of power in the state and perceived discrimination and neglect of the Southern border provinces. However, what it did not address was the full experience of living with violence and how it affects the lives of those in the villages of Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province.

The goal of this chapter is to investigate the insider perspective on the violence, drawing on formal and informal interviews from officials and residents of the provinces. These interviews and conversations were held over the course of four months of fieldwork, and come from a wide variety of different sources, ranging from direct victims of violence to ex-separatists to state bureaucrats, NGO officials, local elected representatives, and residents of the local area. This analysis of the insider perspective indicates that there is no single, shared attitude on the causes and effects of the violence and how it has developed in the southernmost provinces. Instead, the insider perspective consists of a complex confluence of views, incorporating state discourses of separatist terrorism, socio-political perspectives on inequality and injustice, and personal reflections on their lives with their neighbours. The chapter addresses the insider views on the causes and effects of violence and the broader issue of how the violence affects society and social relationships within Yala's society.

3.1 Life in the Amphoe of SaNgob, Yala

One of the predominant depictions of life in the Southern Border is that it is violent and isolated. This was not the case at all during my time in Yala province. Yala Province is a small rural province with just over half a million residents. The Amphoe SaNgob, where I did my fieldwork, has three sub-districts (tambon) with a combined population of about 30,000 residents in its four subdistricts and 32 villages (mooban) (Department of Provincial Administration, 2018). Although there is some distance between villages, they are not isolated, but instead have an active inter-village life. The villages also are not segregated by religion or nationality. The overall impression of the society is that it is multicultural and vibrant. *Khun Tawee*, the Mayor, points out that there are five distinct cultures in the town, with regional influences not just from Thailand but also from Malaysia and China. Despite the popular image of the Southern provinces as scary and isolated, in fact the town is vibrant and has a range of shared festivals and activities from different cultures, including Chinese New Year, Songkran festival, Muslim festivals such as Hari Raya, and other international festivals. The province and the city are growing tourist attractions, with agriculture and food and natural attractions like the hot springs, sea of mist, and the winter gardens drawing international and domestic tourists. This does not mean that there are no negative aspects of Yala society. In fact, many people report a gradual process of depopulation due to poverty and violence, isolation and suspicion of neighbours, and a limiting of freedom as a result of the violence. A typical story was that young people moved away to escape violence and poverty, which led to increasing isolation of Muslim families. The violence also led to breakdown in relations between Malay Muslims and their Thai Buddhist neighbours, but many people have remained steadfast in their view that religion was not a factor in their communal relationships. Even though people resisted the discourse of religious conflict, many reported feeling constrained, either by their own fear or by increasingly strict monitoring and regulation of the public sphere by the military and

police. Despite this situation, it can be strongly stated that life in Yala Province is not as ridden with violence as the mainstream media makes out. This raises the question of what the view on the causes of violence are and how it is experienced in Yala province.

3.2 The Insider View on the Causes of Violence

Violence in the Amphoe SaNgob is relatively rare compared to larger southern cities, but it has still become increasingly common in recent years. Occasional violence has occurred in Yala Province since the 2004 incidents, which marks the beginning of the current period of violence (McCargo, 2009a, pp. 1 - 2), but it is still relatively rare in Amphoe SaNgob. One of the most notable separatist incidents was in 2005 and 2014, when there were several bomb attacks around Yala Province.

The insider view on the causes of violence is far more complex than that presented by the media, academics, and government sources in the previous chapter, but it draws on many of the same themes of economic inequality, lack of opportunity and active discrimination. Other factors, including the influence of the government and the media themselves, are also considered by insiders to be causes, or at least factors, in the violence. This multi-dimensional explanation is consistent with what *Mr Ian*, an international journalist who has worked in the region since 2003, has found over the course of his professional career.

> *"From my experience, including hundreds of interviews with locals, researches, experts, as well as various literature studies over the years, I can say that the insurgency is not based on a single conflict. Various factors come together in destabilizing the region, its people, culture, business and education."*

This section builds on the general overview of the causes of violence offered in Section 2.1.1, Chapter 2, focusing not just on the superficial causes of violence

identified but also whose interests and purpose insiders believe the violence serves. It also addresses a key question, which is where insiders believe the general perception of violence within the state comes from.

3.2.1 Who Benefits from the Violence?

One of the most common perceptions of insiders is that the unrest persists because it creates benefits for certain groups, including both the separatist groups and those that back them and the government. Rather than being an ideologically driven movement, the separatist groups are often considered as covers or distractions from illegal activities like human trafficking or drug trafficking. This goes unreported either because it is not seen or, as *Khun Somsak* who has a role in the Rights and Liberties Protection Department for the area argues, it does not support the government narrative on the violence.

> *"The media does not report the fact and there is marketing involved. For bad news, there is no need to pay for reporting, yet the good news requires some kinds of payment, resulting in the misunderstanding of outside people that there is only violent. However, if they report in the more creative point of view, the unrest situation in the southernmost region is not as frightening as many people think. Sometimes, it cannot be checked whether the news is true or not as well... The government policy does not actually correspond to the situation of the region, so where does the data leading to its creation come from? Who will obtain the benefit from the people? We are not fighting with poverty, but ideology."*

Many view the main instigators of violence as outsiders rather than locals. For example, *Khun Nee*, the planning and policy analyst of Yala Province, argues that locals are not, in general, involved in the conflict. Locals who are economically and socially involved with the communities they live in, for example having jobs, owning

property and so on, tend to view the violence as detrimental and do not support it, even if they once participated in separatist activities. However, migrant workers that come because of the labour shortages caused by depopulation may be involved in rebel groups and may be more violent. There are also differences between the various separatist groups that insiders see. For example, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani (BRN) and the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) are both active long-standing groups that are considered as mainstream groups working for Malay Muslim rights, which may be legitimately supported by the informants' Malay Muslim neighbours and which authorities may work with to achieve specific goals. *Khun Wat*, a local resident, reports that *"There is a rumor that there is an old Muslim bandit group who protects the area and an active rebel group from other provinces who fight for power."* In the local's view, these groups are not equivalent, with active rebel groups and groups engaged in cross-border crime culpable for the violence in a way that the older and more established groups are not.

Others view government police, military, and vigilante groups as instigators of conflict. One respondent, *Bang Toh*, a Muslim high school teacher, said, *"I am not sure whether the soldiers or police come to help or make it worse."* Individuals noted that budget strategies that emphasized response rather than prevention of conflict, along with seemingly unchecked violence in their responses to the conflict. In a way, these groups may also be seen as outsiders, as even if they come from the local area they are dispatched from the central authority of Bangkok.

The media is also viewed as being complicit in the conflict. For example, locals view the rapid news cycle, which focuses on reporting breaking stories of violence but never reports the aftermath, as a major problem. Such a representative view is offered by *Khun Win*, a female Buddhist victim of violence, who says:

> *"The media reproduce the violent news by showing the image of Muslim terrorists, so the incident looks more violent and the people outside will think that it is religious conflict which is not true."*

Mr Ian, an international journalist, also argues that the conflict is underreported, but paradoxically is also the focus of most national and international reporting from the region is focused on violent incidents rather than on day-to-day news coverage. As a result, there is a perception that violent incidents play more of a role than they do in the life of the province.

A final, but fundamental, attribution of the violence is the government's treatment of Malay-Muslim groups as second-class citizens or even non-citizens. For example, *Bang Yuth*, a victim of the violence, stated,

> *"The soldiers and the government make things worse since they portray the Muslim as terrorists, not respecting the Muslims by invading their homes, and talking badly to the Muslims."*

The perspective that government does not treat Malay Muslims as equal is commonplace among Malay Muslim victims of violence. *Kah Fah* believes that Malay Muslims act as scapegoats for the conflict, and are viewed as a religiously violent group. *Kah Yah* agrees with this perception. Additionally, *Bang Bee* and *Bang Ar-Bu*, both former separatists, help point out that economic and social victimisation and isolation perpetrated by the Thai state are used by separatist groups to justify their actions. Economic and social isolation and lack of equal rights are also noted by *Imam Leam* (local Muslim religious leader), and local officials (including *Khun Tawee*, the mayor, and *Khun Nee*, the policy and planning analyst of Yala Province, along with *Khun Somsak*, the director of the Rights and Liberties Protection Department in the area and *Khun Pitak*, a human rights monitor). However, this does not mean that either victims or former separatists are willing to excuse the actions of separatist groups. *Bang Ar-Bu* specifically attributes violence to groups of Malay Muslim

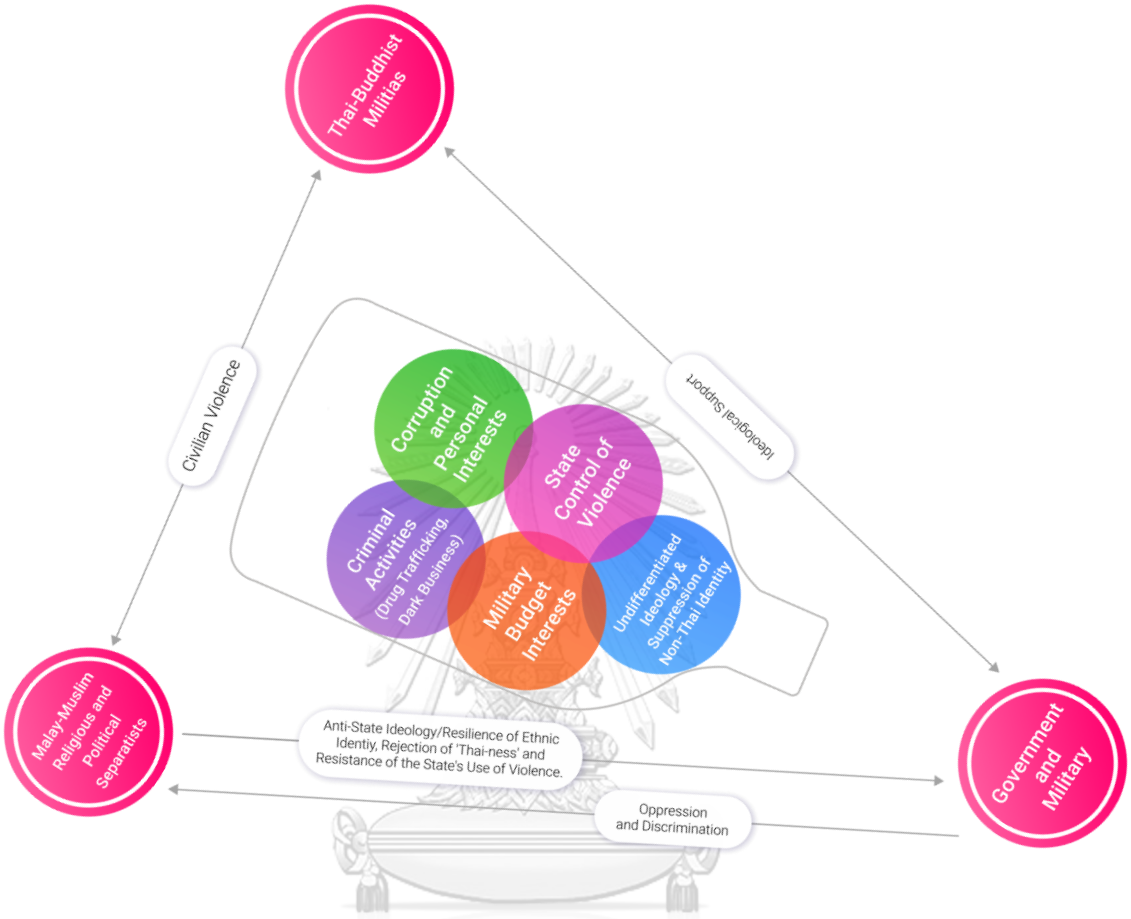
separatists who fight strongly to maintain their own culture. *Khun Wat*, a local Buddhist farmer, says

> *"I hate those Muslims who distorted religion... because of the actions of rebel groups, we are considered as violent..."*

In brief, the economic and social exclusion of Malay Muslims is considered as a cause of the conflict by many insiders, including victims (both Thai Buddhist and Malay Muslim), former separatists, government officials and outside observers. However, this isolation and exclusion is not truly accepted as a justification for the violence – as many, many observers point out, the vast majority of Malay Muslims are not violent separatists.

The perception of insiders is that the outer layer of conflict (the embedded conflict between the Malay-Muslim insurgents and the Thai state, supported by Thai Buddhist militias) is only a single layer of the conflict, and one that does not fully explain the violence that occurs. Internal to this conflict, and often hidden and unremarked, is a host of internal interests, such as corruption and personal interest, criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking and human trafficking, bureaucratic concerns like justification of the military budget, and the state concern with imposition of its own ideology and the state's assumed authority to control violence. Figure 3 represents these different levels of causal explanation for the violence and demonstrates how these are not individual or isolated concerns. Instead, these concerns overlap, and there are many shared causes between them. For example, many of the informants considered both military and criminal interests to be part of the underlying or hidden causes of the conflict. As this model shows (Figure 3), the state itself, according to insiders, contributes significantly to the production and reproduction of the violence, and is not a passive participant.

Figure 3 The Outer and Inner Causes of Violence



3.2.2 The Government Agencies' Role in the Conflict: Actions and Policies

The locals do not have a positive view on the government agencies' role in the violent conflict. One informant described the government's role as one of "carelessness and ignorance", which caused rather than fixed problems. He cited lack of surveillance and monitoring, inadequate information about violent activities, and lack of responsibility for the district on the part of police and soldiers. Instead, the police and soldiers are reactive only, responding strictly and even violently after a violent incident but not attempting to prevent them. Another respondent, *Kah Na*, a Muslim public school teacher and one of the victims of violence, argues that this reactive approach is because of the way the budget is allocated. She argues that

"*Once the bandits are arrested and the unrest is gone, [law enforcement] will not receive their budgets anymore."* Therefore, officials use reactive strategies instead of trying to address or contain the conflict.

The government's community economic development policies are also viewed as unhelpful. These policies have been implemented by both NGOs and Thai government agencies through the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) (Burke et al., 2013, p. 62). Two examples of these programs included "Panop project" (Self-Sufficiency Economy), which offered funding of $170/household to promote local development, and "Phnom project" (Quality of Life Development), which offered funding of 220,000 bath (about $7,300) per village for educational development and other village-level requirements. (Askew, 2010; Burke et al., 2013, p. 63) noted that these programs were viewed as highly ineffective, because they were top-down and unresponsive to local conditions. In fact, the authors noted that these programs were more likely to exacerbate rather than reduce village conflict because of insensitivity to local conditions and lack of flexibility.

Such development programs were not viewed as highly effective at the local level according to this study, too. For example, informants point to a lack of assessment to determine what local communities need and how development could best be done to support their livelihoods. Instead, a one size fits all approach has been implemented, for example the construction of dams and weirs to support fishing without actually considering local fish stocks, which may be inappropriate for observant Muslims. (Specifically, there are local interpretations of halal which forbid eating catfish). The same problem arises with development policies that emphasize poultry farming, since observant Muslims may only eat chicken that is raised and slaughtered in keeping with halal principles. Another example is the introduction of the Shogun orange, which has led to deforestation and the destruction of many local Muslim villages, according to *Khun Nee*, Yala's planning and policy analyst. Some of these activities, such as animal husbandry development, has had very poor uptake

because the programs were implemented without reference to the Malay Muslim religious requirements for tasks such as animal keeping and slaughter, and therefore are fundamentally at odds with cultural norms and beliefs of the group the programs are aimed at. Not only do people not want to farm in this way, according to *Khun Nee*, people also do not want to buy the chicken produced; once again, this leaves local producers without a market. Other programs, like the *One Tambon One Futsal Field* project or local library project, are abandoned after only a year or two in operation, not giving them enough time to become effective. More sustainable development activities, such as tourism service development, are considered desirable, but have not been undertaken by government programs.

There are some planned development activities, including opening up of the local highway to logistics and through traffic and developing the city of Amphoe SaNgob as a tourist destination through construction of facilities like wider roads, a regional airport and a skywalk for mist sightseeing. These activities, according to *Khun Tawee*, the mayor, have been undertaken with the input of local people; however, they have not yet been implemented. Given the government's record of completing conflict.

Some people also view village development policies, such as the Panop and Phnom development projects, and reporting to be actively unhelpful. For example, *Khun Somsak*, a person involved in the Rights and Liberties Protection Department argues that government reporting tends to be budget-focused and divisive, creating additional conflict between Buddhists and Muslims. Without any independent reporting, he also argues that it is impossible to determine whether the government's report is truthful or not.

3.2.3 Religion's Role in the Conflict

Most insiders strongly believe that the conflict is not religious in nature. As *Khun Tawee*, the mayor, notes both religions, Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists,

have historically lived and worked together in Amphoe SaNgob of Yala Province, and they continue to do so. Even though locals do not profess in general that the unrest is religious in nature, there are some that view religious officials as complicit in sustaining the conflict. For example, some (though not all) Muslim religious leaders, who may also act as educators, support the ideology of conflict and may refuse to work with others to reduce conflict. However, most conversations about religion resulted in insiders rejecting religious conflict as a sole or even a main explanation for the violence, as most preferred to point to government inaction or other problems.

The notion that Islam is a religion of war and Buddhism is a religion of peace is inherent to the representation of the conflict, but this notion is essentialist and misguided on both fronts. Islam is not a single religion, but – as with other 'world' religions – is practiced in different ways by different individuals in different times and spaces (Etienne, 2007, p. 238). Thus, even though it is true that Islamic peoples have waged war, this is no more true than it is of any other large-scale religion. As another author notes, the justifications for use of violence within the Quran are very similar to those within Christian and Judaic scriptures, and the majority of Malay Muslims today do not approve the use of brutality for political gain (Esposito, 2015). The situation of Buddhism is slightly different in Thailand. Within Theravada Buddhist scripture there is little (if any) justification for violence, which lends the notion that Buddhism is a peaceful religion (Deegalle 2003). In the instance of Southern Border, the Thai state has increasingly gained control of monasteries since 2004, with 'soldier monks' and military officials crowding out formerly peaceful religious communities (Jerryson, 2009, pp. 38 - 39). This creates a conflict in the state's discourse surrounding Thai Buddhism as a religion of peace and its discursive practice, which has recreated Buddhism as a religion of war. Thus, the dichotomy of Islam/war versus Buddhism/peace must be problematized in this context.

There was only one insider who held a strong view that the violence was *Provost Wisit*, the abbot of the local temple in Amphoe SaNgob. His views stand out among others not just for their vehemence but for their atypicality. Along among the insider views, the Provost viewed the conflict as a violent religious conflict, viewing Muslims as the aggressors and Buddhists as the victims. He was alone in arguing that the government policy was too lenient and representative, feeling that the requirement to build mosques in communities and to have Muslim religious representation on advisory boards was overstating the presence of Muslims in communities and giving them a higher proportion of representation altogether. It is unclear what religious basis, if any, the *Provost Wisit* had for his views, and he did not attempt to offer one. It could be observed that the *Provost Wisit*, as the leader in the religious organisation which holds a dominant role in the conflict, has a certain interest in supporting the dominant discourse of religious separatism. Simultaneously, government officials at the regional and national position, who would also have such an interest, are not such strong defenders of their belief that religion is the sole or main cause of the conflict, instead recognising a more complex set of factors. The beliefs of the Provost are interesting because they demonstrate how extreme a full acceptance of the discourse of religious separatism is.

3.2.4 Discourses of Resistance: What Discourse Would Separatists Present?

It is clear that Malay Muslims do have legitimate complaints with regard to economic equality and legitimate power, and this is reflected in the academic studies on the socioeconomics and political economy of the region (Bundhuwong, 2017; Jitpiromsri & Soponvasu, 2005; Panpigool, 2012; Sugunnasil, 2006). The state dominance of the media and its control of the official discourses obscures the discourse that would be presented by separatist groups in opposition to the state. Is there also a shared narrative that is held by the former separatist fighters interviewed for this research, which would indicate that there is a single discourse or narrative of separatism? This question cannot be answered from mainstream media or academic

sources, which rarely represent the perspective of separatist activists of any type. Of the limited information available, some authors find that Malay Muslim separatists may promote a discourse of separatism that emphasizes liberation and religious struggle, in opposition to the dominant discourse of nationalistic violence and antisocial and anti-society tendencies (Maharueankwan, 2007; Panjor, 2015). Although only a few former separatists could be interviewed for this research, the interviews suggest that there is not a single discourse that could be identified, although Maharueankwan's (2007) discourse of religious struggle and liberation was evident (though not dominant). For example, *Bang Heam*, who describes himself as a former terrorist, argues:

> *"I think [the violence] is outstandingly caused by the inequality of the importance of religions... People in the Southern border provinces are divided into Thai Buddhism and Malay Muslim through differences in social rights and selection of the political system... Malay Muslims have been excluded from religious festivals, from school lessons, and there is no support for religious and cultural diversity... The budget [for the province] is used more for benefitting politicians than helping [people]."*

However, it is not clear that this is the whole story. *Bang Bee*, who was a non-violent separatist activist before becoming involved in the "Bring People [Insurgent] Back Home" program (a government intervention program which seeks to reintegrate separatists), acknowledges that he was also aware of the inequality and lack of power of Malay Muslims in the community, which he had learned about during his education in a religious school. However, he also observes that:

> *"The cause of the unrest situation is distorted with history and the actions of government, which neglect Muslims in the area. Young people in religious schools are easily persuaded by teachers... When I*

> *was a group member, I saw many things which are not [consistent with the ideologies presented to him in school]. It was actually an excuse of the active rebel group... [where] the inferior members are instructed only in separatism, but for the superior ones, we all know it is more complicated."*

Bang Bee does not accept the government discourse, noting that at the personal level people interacted and cooperated with each other and that the government had been unable to resolve the situation after so long. However, he also was not eager to accept the ideological causes presented by the rebel group he was involved with, which focused on social and economic injustice, inequality, and cultural essentialism that associated Malay Muslims with Malaysia rather than Thailand.

Another former separatist is *Bang Ar-Bu*, who was previously involved with the youth alliance of one of the largest separatist groups. He argues that the problem comes from the conflict between Malay Muslims and their desire to retain their own language and customs and state and social pressure to conform to Thai norms (for example, fines for refusing to speak Thai), which resulted in long-term feelings of discrimination from society and government.

Thus, from three former separatist activists who were involved in three different groups and at different levels, there are three different views on both the cause of the conflict and the discourse presented by the separatist groups. This seemingly diffuse discourse, with conflicts in hierarchy level understandings of the conflict founded on observable differences in economic position and state-driven discrimination against Malay Muslims, but without a strong central core of ideology or shared position. There are multiple influences that can be identified, including a clash of cultures and resulting injustices, socioeconomic discrimination against Malay

Muslims, and historical reasons, as well as the sticky problem of the benefits accruing to separatist leaders.

Symbolic violence can be put to specific purposes by the state. Baudrillard (2002) argues that the violence of terrorism constitutes action on a shared fantasy held by others in society, and developed in response to an increasing accumulation of power by the state (Baudrillard, 2002, pp. 4 - 7). This shared fantasy can be seen in the view of separatists of the state, which is that of an overbearing, authoritarian state which simultaneously exercises micro-control over Malay Muslim efforts to control their own personal identity (including trivialities like religious exercise, dress, and everyday language) while at the same time either neglecting or even actively withholding from its responsibilities toward them as equal citizens. It is this shared fantasy of overthrowing power that causes terrorism to be such an appealing act for those that commit it, and such an appalling act for those that witness it.

Baudrillard argues, "*When global power monopolizes the situation to this extent, when there is such a formidable condensation of all functions in the technocratic machinery, and when no alternative thinking is allowed, what other way is there but a terroristic situational transfer?* (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 11)" In this viewpoint, the act of terrorism and insurgency is a natural response to the concentration of power within the state and elimination of all other views. Baudrillard (2002, pp. 11 - 14) rejects the notion that terrorism results from an internalized suicide wish, a broken ideology, or a clash of good and evil. Instead, he argues that terrorism represents *"triumphant globalization battling against itself"* (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 11), or a clash of globalizing norms and practices. This clash of norms is most evident not in the larger questions of integration, injustice and state-led discrimination policies of the Thai state, but in its focus on controlling the everyday lives of its Malay Muslim citizens. At its most petty, this relates to a small daily fine of one baht for not speaking Thai – from the state perspective, a small

incentive to conform to its official norms, but from the Malay Muslim perspective, a profound insult to their cultural identity.

The most important lesson Baudrillard's deconstruction of the notion of terrorism holds is that terrorism does not necessarily result from ideologies or individual beliefs, but instead as a response to the excess accumulation of power in a certain locale. This can be connected to Bourdieu's (1986) notion of capital, particularly economic capital and the capital of symbolic, Furthermore, the chaotic nature of response to terrorism creates increasing instability, which those holding power have limited response to (Baudrillard, 2002). One of the few effective responses is to impose a public frame of terrorist attack on the occurrence, to attempt to control beliefs about the occurrence and limit the potential for demands for increased freedom in response (Baudrillard, 2002). This insight implies that it is not even necessary for Malay Muslim terrorists and supporters of separatism to have a shared ideology or set of beliefs, since this support arises from an accumulation of state power and the perceived injustice of its use, along with failure of the state to respond constructively.

3.3 Effects of the Unrest on Life in Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province

3.3.1 Depopulation and Its Effects

The most obvious effect of the violence on the community as a whole was depopulation, as people (especially young people) left to escape the violence. In both Thai-Buddhist and Malay-Muslim communities, it was observable that there were relatively few young adults of university age or higher. With few universities in the area, most young people had to move away to attend university, and often, they did not return. In part, this was due to the economic depression of the southern border provinces; as one mother stated in an informal conversation, *"I would like my son to come home, but what could he come back to? There are only few jobs here for him."* However, it was also due to violence; in a conversation with a visiting student, I learned that *"it is really violent here, and I can make more in Bangkok."*

Thus, depopulation of the area is not simply because of the conflict, but instead exists as part of a broader set of economic and social circumstances that have created it.

Depopulation has negative economic effects, especially because it creates a 'brain drain', as young people go away for higher education and then do not return with their high-value skills. This means that the communities have a relative lack of highly skilled workers, especially professional workers such as doctors and teachers, according to the Mayor. What is less obvious is that it also creates an opportunities for insurgents to gain a stronger foothold in the region. As *Khun Chaiwat*, the Sheriff, explains, a shortage of farm labourers leaves farmers dependent on migrant labourers, many of whom cross the border from Malaysia on a seasonal basis. Coupled with a lack of border enforcement, this creates conditions where leaders of Malay-Muslim nationalist groups from other provinces come into the area and create even more violence. It also has negative social effects, including increasing ageing and even disappearance of the entire locals in communities. Thus, this depopulation is a trend accelerated by, though not entirely due to the violence and the government's discursive practices of education and development, and it has extreme effects on the community as a whole.

3.3.2 Emotional and Social Effects on Victims

The direct impact of the violence on victims is a particularly important issue in this research, since these victims are so often reduced to stereotypes. This research involved a number of victims of violence, including: *Kah Fah*, a local Malay-Muslim merchant whose son was shot by a soldier at a mosque in 2013; *Kah Na*, *Bang Toh*, and *Khun Win*, public school teachers whose school was targeted by a car bomb in 2014; *Kah Yah*, who was present at a hospital bombing in 2006, causing her to miscarry; *Khun Wat*, whose school was closed after a bombing at the bank nearby; and *Khun Phong*, who was wounded by a bomb while he was commuting to work. These victims experienced a range of direct consequences, including the deaths or

injuries of acquaintances, injuries to themselves, and disruptions to their daily life stemming from the targeting of their daily places of routine. It was common for the victims to report effects like anxiety and fear, nervousness of going places on their own or to specific locations such as hospitals, schools and mosques, and anger and fear. Some changed school or work, or avoided going out of the house, in order to avoid being reminded of the attacks themselves.

It is not surprising that the direct effect of violence on its victims was significant. What is noticeable, though, is that these victims do not attribute a fundamental religious motivation to the violence, although some perceive that others do. *Kah Fah*, a Malay-Muslim woman whose son was shot on suspicion of participating in the mosque bombing, said:

> *"While they thought we are Muslims who have caused this unrest situation, I think they are mistaken... many [actors] were involved. However, the only represented image is that the Muslim is a criminal...[Which] is distorted by the media who frames us...as criminals."*

Kah Na, a Malay-Muslim public school teacher, said:

> *"I think it is something more than religious conflict for sure ... I see love and harmony of parents and students no matter who they are ... The actual cause of the unrest situation tends to concern benefits..."*

Bang Toh says,

> *"I want to tell the outside society that the unrest situation is not violent as represented by the media. This conflict does not come from religion; it is only used as a tool to break people's unity and create opportunities for the interference of active rebel groups and*

criminal groups. We cannot solve the situation unless we understand this."

Thus, even the locals whose lives have been most affected by the violence are not inclined toward the official discourse of religious separatism.

3.3.3 Economic Changes

The most common perception of the violence and unrest is that it has changed economic life in the province. For example, *Khun Chaiwat*, the Sheriff of Amphoe SaNgob, notes that there have been changes like destruction of natural resources and invasive reforestation, resulting from the introduction of weirs and dams as a developmental activity. Destruction of natural resources and reforestation creates conflict for agricultural land in the region, which is difficult to manage when traditional land tenure rights, rather than strict legal registry approaches, predominate. Since subsistence agriculture is one of the main socio-economic activities in the region, this is a serious problem. This development activity was intended to introduce fishing as an economic productivity measure, but it has been ineffective because of a lack of routes to market for the Malay Muslims now engaged in fisheries work. The Sheriff argues that the effect of tourism is far greater. The number of 700,000 to 800,000 visitors who come to the province every year for events like the local fruit festival are a major source of income through the tourism industry. However, the Sheriff notes that the effect of tourism is dampened by the unrest because it prevents tourism flows from Malaysia, which were previously important.

3.3.4 Social Changes in the Community

Another major change has been a change in social structure with the loss of young people, especially educated young people, who leave for university and then work in Bangkok and never return. The young people who are left are often Malay Muslims who did not have equal access to education, and therefore are less skilled

than those who have left. Other people have also moved away, including Malay Muslims whose lands have been seized by the government and others who just do not feel safe in the area anymore. There are now labour shortages in areas like farming and rubber plantations, because Malay Muslims from Thailand and Malaysia are less willing to come for temporary work during planting and harvest seasons.

Personal interactions now take on a new feeling, especially right after an attack. *Bang Toh* says:

> *"People have to be careful when they go out, and should always be doubtful when they see someone acting unusual. Whether they are Buddhist or Muslim... children are not allowed to go out at night. I would like to know why we have to live in fear like this in my own hometown."*

Others report increasing isolation from neighbours, which is very common for Muslim communities. Mr Ian, an international journalist, says that:

> *"Many Muslim communities feel isolated by government decisions in the education sector and general welfare. Isolation and poor communication are to blame for many of the incidents."*

Others have also reported increasing social isolation, which has only grown as people have moved away due to habitat destruction, village abandonment and the "brain drain" of young people toward Bangkok. At the same time, those who have returned, like *Khun Wat*, who returned after university to run his father's durian orchard reports that the community still feels peaceful.

3.3.5 Perceptions of the Frequency and Magnitude of the Violence

One of the notable differences between the insider and outsider views of the effects of violence is that insiders often perceive violence as less frequent than it is reported. For example, *Khun Chaiwat*, the Sheriff of the city, reports that *"only two*

unrest situations have ever happened in Yala, so the overall situation is not really worrying." This sometimes leads to the belief that succession is not really the intended goal of the separatist movements. The Sheriff reports, *"If they are [for] succession, their attacks would be more violent and frequent, and more often to press the government..."* This was echoed by other respondents, who observed that despite the general popularity for at least some groups such as BRN, the actual outbreak of separatist violence was rare. It should be pointed out that during the four months of fieldwork, there were no violent occurrences that were attributed to unrest, and that the victims of violence in Yala were all related to only two incidents that had occurred in the past several years, as well as one that occurred in 2006. Thus, from the local perspective, it is not clear that the unrest associated with separatist activities is as frequent and enduring as the media representations make it out to be.

3.4 Resolving the Conflict

There are many difficulties involved in resolving the conflict. For example, *Khun Chaiwat*, the Sheriff of Amphoe SaNgob, notes that local authorities just do not have enough information about the parties involved. He remarks that:

> *"It is imperative to communicate with the group leaders, but we do not know who they are. Their identities are concealed, which makes it difficult to tell who benefits from the violence, what funds and support do they receive from international [terrorist] organisations, or what they do with the money they gain, for example, from extortion or protection rackets."*

Another difficulty is lack of political will and effort by the government. For example, *Bang Bee, Bang Heam* and *Bang Ar-Bu,* former separatists, all ask why it has been over a decade since the outbreak of conflict and no progress has been made. Others point to the lack of effective solutions offered by the government, noting that

the reactive, distant and uninformed decision making style and the perverse incentives created by the budget result in problems growing rather than resolving.

Despite these difficulties, some local people are optimistic that there can be a solution for the unrest. *Khun Tawee*, the Mayor, points to solutions including better education, treatment of violent incidents as criminal activity, increased surveillance and detection designed to reduce incidents, and elimination of discriminatory policies directed at Malay Muslims. *Kah Na*, a Malay-Muslim public school teacher, points out that development activities could be redirected toward sustainable livelihood and community integration, focusing on what community members need in the long term rather than a short-term, generic economic stopgap measure. These solutions are representative of those that are offered by local people as a means of resolving the conflict and reducing the threat of recurrence.

Despite the optimistic view of the solutions above, is not clear that these strategies would be effective. These suggested solutions reference the use of other forms of state power that are inherent in the theory of graduated sovereignty, in which tools such as surveillance and economic and market activities are used to control and manipulate citizens and international relationships (Ong, 2000, pp. 56 - 57). Ong (2000), who examined the role of graduated sovereignty in emerging countries in Southeast Asia, argued that these may be seemingly effective in control of the population, but result in increasing fragmentation and isolation of the state's citizens as tools are used against different groups. Since fragmentation, isolation and differential treatment are already viewed as causes of the conflict, exacerbating these conditions would worsen, rather than improve, conflict. This makes it an example of a wicked problem, or a problem that is so complex and socially embedded that attempting to solve it will create more problems (Head & Alford, 2015, pp. 712 - 713). Thus, a solution must look beyond 'technocratic manipulation of tools' such as surveillance and economic development funding.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has stressed on the opinions of insiders in Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province, rather than the outside voices of academics, theorists and government officials in Bangkok. It has shown that insiders have a complex and nuanced view of the conflict. In general, they reject the stereotypes and superficial explanations offered in the media, which tends to blame incidents on violent Malay Muslim separatists driven by religious ideology and rejection of Thai culture. Instead, they see a complex web of causes, not excluding religion and socio-political and economic causes but instead contextualizing these contexts among a web of influence from the government, media, and institutions. Furthermore, insiders feel that the perception of their communities as conflict-ridden and violent in the popular press is overblown, with news coverage focusing on simplistic reporting of only the outbreak of violent events. Violence has had an effect on communities, especially on its direct victims, but the effect of depopulation caused by young people's relocation from the province and the destruction of communities through poorly planned development programs has had a much stronger effect. Insiders acknowledge the difficulty involved in resolving the underlying conflict, but point to solutions like better planned economic development and integration activities and improvement in education and sustainable community development as tools to overcome the challenge. This perspective, which is even held by local authorities, is considerably different from the perspective on the conflict previously explored in Chapter 2. This calls into the question of why this conflict between insider and outsider views exists, which is the topic addressed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

DISCOURSES, MYTHS AND A CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

Chapter 2 of this research presented one view of the Southern Border conflict, which emerges from outsider viewpoints expressed in government policies, academic studies and mainstream news reports and audience perceptions. In this explanation, the unrest in the southernmost provinces is viewed as a continual acts of violence by Malay Muslims against Thai Buddhists, driven by an essentialised ideology of religious violence, and exacerbated by poor economic conditions. Chapter 3 complicated this simple explanation by pointing out that the locals – residents, victims, and officials and authorities – do not consider the conflict nearly so simple. Instead, they point to a combination of self-dealing on the part of both criminals and government agencies, failed government development activities and subsequent economic exclusion, poverty, and depopulation, and poorly aligned budgets and goals that prevent effective law enforcement or government action. Rather than separatists per se (some of whom, at least, are considered to hold valid if controversial political views), blame for the violence is laid by local residents largely at the feet of the government, media, and those that engage in the violent activities, who are viewed as criminals. Rather than the frequent outbreaks of violence presented in the media, locals view violent unrest as a rare occurrence, and see their communities as being mainly peaceful and multicultural. The question this chapter addresses is why and how these contradictions between insiders and outsiders came to be, and to what extent the outsider (and insider) perspectives of the violence can be considered a myth. To do so, the first question addressed is: to what extent do the various discourses surrounding the unrest constitute myths? The second question addressed is: to what extent do these discourses represent a crisis of representation?

4.1 Discourse and Myth

Chapter 2 established the type of discourse that is promoted through the media, which broadly follows the preferred is generally dictated by the Thai government. This discourse draws on equalities of knowledge and resulting power to present a preferred image of the unrest in the Deep South as a matter of violent, one-way religious nationalist terrorism. Academic analysts, while they attempt to further deepen the analysis (for example by focusing on socioeconomic and historic reasons for the conflict), often leave the core of this discourse untouched and questioned. A recent example of such media discourse comes from the *Bangkok Post*, which reported on an attack on a Buddhist temple in Narathiwat Province in which two monks were killed (Treedangnoi & Harai, 2019, January 20). The Bangkok Post's report comes mainly from the statements of the National Office of Buddhism (NOB) and the Prime Minister's office about the introduction of additional safety measures, but does not identify the specific identities of the attackers, and only quoting a representative of the Islamic Council of Thailand superficially. This report creates the perception that the attack was conducted by generic Muslim attackers because of religious strife, and that Muslims were largely unconcerned about this.

Outsider views fundamentally accept this media discourse, even though they do not believe it is a pure religious conflict, and it is uncommon for individuals to follow up beyond the headlines. The view from the inside of Yala Province, on the other hand, is far more complex. Individuals use their lived experience of fellowship and community with their neighbours who follow different religions, along with their awareness of day-to-day life in the community and long-term problems such as poorly designed development initiatives, for a more complex understanding of the violence. This conflict several questions: for example, how does this conflicting discourse form and why is the media discourse dominant? In what way does the media discourse represent a myth, if it does, and what are the implications of this?

4.1.1 The Formation and Persistence of the Illusion of Violence

Insider discourses on the conflict, including both separatist discourses and the discourses of the insiders interviewed, showed considerable differences from the media discourse, but these insider discourses are reflected in the media poorly if at all. Why has this situation occurred? There are various explanations for this within the theoretical literature.

One of these explanations is that at least some of these discourses are the discourses of subaltern groups, while the discourse presented in the media is that of the elite, (particularly) the government). The discourse example provided above (Treedangnoi & Harai, 2019, January 20) demonstrates this focus on the discourse of the elite, as Buddhist religious leaders and the government are the main voices in the article. The theory of the subaltern argues that discourses within society are controlled by elites, who use legitimate power to control public perceptions and ideas (Spivak, 2010, pp. 78 - 79). In contrast, the subalterns or lower classes have little or no voice in society, existing instead to serve the interests of the elite. It cannot be denied that Malay Muslims in general have many of the characteristics of a subaltern group, for example socioeconomic inequality and discrimination, poor access to education, and a legally imposed lesser position in society. Structurally, Malay Muslims do have fewer resources and capital than elites, although the difference between them and their closest Thai Buddhist neighbours is relatively small. Therefore, it is not a stretch to assume that Malay Muslims are a subaltern group, and therefore have restricted access to media discourses and other powerful communication channels which they could use to resist. In this respect, the separatist discourse of inequality and injustice are consistent given the position of the group. However, there are also other strategies that could be used, such as strategic movements that work with elites (rather than against them) to achieve group aims and improve the position of the group (Lizarazo, 2018, pp. 191 - 192). Several of these programs can be identified, including intervention programs aimed

at former separatist activists and fighters, economic development programs, and programs that encourage religious tolerance and interfaith activities. These programs are following Lazarazo's Lizarazo (2018) work in Afro-Caribbean communities, likely to be effective in achieving specific goals. (These programs do not report their results systematically and it is not possible to confirm that the programs have been effective.) (Lizarazo, 2018, pp. 191 - 194) However, this does not answer the question of why the government-dominated media discourse should persist, given the responsibility and role of academics in representing the voice of the subaltern (Spivak, 2010, pp. 81 - 82).

An alternative explanation lies in Geertz's (1973, p. 5) idea of webs of significance. According to this theory, discourses gain power and become entrenched as myths by passing through networks of power and agency (Foucault, 2002; Geertz, 1973). In this case, it is clear that the government, which has multiple objectives for reinforcing its discourse of violence as a non-Thai, Malay Muslim religious separatist activity, is the main beneficiary of the formation of this myth. It is also the main actor which disseminates this discourse, using various discursive practices to both enforce how violence is discussed and to create the actual conditions under which it occurs (Foucault, 1977). The echoing and reinforcement of government discourses on the border unrest by the media, academics, and other officials creates a perception of reality, because individuals within this network of powerful institutions and individuals have accepted the underlying assumptions of the discourse without question. This perception can be seen in the viewpoints of the outsider focus group, who, dependent mainly on news sources for information about the southern border conflict, accept the discourse of religious separatist conflict without question. However, it is possible that it is not just uncritical acceptance of the myth, but also self-censorship, based on their understanding of discursive relations which discourage or outright prevent addressing the question in any other way (Fu & Lee, 2016). Thus, minor actors in these webs of significance may not be acting simply because they

believe the government's discourse, but also because of the potential for benefit or fear of loss that contravening these discursive relations would result in. Thus, the conditions for mythmaking according to the model of webs of significance are present (Geertz, 1973) – the discourse or story is perceived as reality by outsiders who do not have other experience, and is reinforced by its acceptance by seemingly every legitimate channel. In short, the webs of significance formed by the seemingly consistent exchange of knowledge between the state, media, and academics, which results in increased power over others, because of this lack of knowledge by others (Kingsolver, 2002). For example, in this case there is evidence that the state promotes a specific cause of the conflict (attributing it to Malay Muslim separatists), which is then reflected in the media (Maharueankwan, 2007; Prasertsri, 2011) (for example, the report on tightening security for monks in the wake of largely unexplained attacks attributed to generic Muslim attackers (Treedangnoi & Harai, 2019, January 20)) and in the work of academics (which tend to focus on specific incidents (McCargo, 2012, pp. 78 - 79) and do not refute the assumption of violent Muslim attackers and peaceful Buddhist victims inherent in the news media (McCargo, 2009b, pp. 12 - 13). Thus, there is a circular exchange of stereotypes and unquestioned assumptions that create the perception of unanimity among authoritative voices.

It is interesting that the only insider that fully accepted the discourse of the conflict as a form of religious violence specifically against (and only against) Thai Buddhists and the Buddhist way of life was the Provost of a monastery in the region, who himself represents a legitimate religious authority. Thus, the web of significance stretches to all areas of knowledge production, including government and the public sphere and secular and religious knowledge. Given this situation, it is not surprising that the dominant discourse is that of outsiders, who control all routes to communication except personal communication.

In summary, the myth presented in the media does not hold sway just because of government control of the discourse through media control. Instead, it emerges from several sources. First and most important, the group to whom responsibility for the violence is assigned – Muslim separatists specifically and Malay Muslims as a group – are a subaltern group who have little or no power or control, with few opportunities to present their position. Instead, they are represented from the outside, with governments, media and academics exchanging knowledge that continues to reinforce this partial representation. This external representation can be seen in the lack of Muslim voices in academic and policy, as well as non-representation in the news media. This raises the question of whether there is a crisis of representation in the discussion of the myth in the media.

4.1.2 Discourse Conflicts between Insiders and Outsiders

One of the clearest differences in the acceptance of the myth of violence in the Southern Border is how insiders and outsiders hold different views. Almost universally, insiders rejected the official myth of a single cause of conflict (that cause being the actions of religiously violent, nationalist, and separatist Malay Muslims who were in some way non-Thai). Instead, the majority view was that there were multiple structural and interactional causes of violence. While the role of political and religious separatism was acknowledged, other forces – political and military power flows and interests, cross-border criminal activity, and economic and political oppression of Malay Muslims – was acknowledged. The sole exception to this, *Provost Kasem*, stands out because his viewpoint is so exceptionally focused on Malay Muslims and their religious separatism as the cause of conflict. The conflict was also viewed as having multiple actors in the minds of insiders. It was not only Malay Muslim separatist groups (or worse, all Malay Muslims) who were acting violently, but also state forces of violence such as the police and military, cross-border criminal groups, and other outside groups. Thus, insiders in general had a nuanced view on both the causes and the actors of violence that was much more

complex than the official myth as propagated through the media. In contrast, outsiders generally accepted the official myth as propagated in the media, viewing the conflict as a religious and political separatist movement with violence perpetrated by Malay Muslims. Although a few sought outside validation of these views, most did not, and as a result echoed the official myth clearly.

The difference in insider and outsider views relates largely to what information is available. For outsiders, the major source of information is official information from the state and from the news media. Since, as discussed in Chapter 3, separatist voices and Malay Muslim voices generally are excluded from the media, the discourses of the state and the media appear to validate each other. Therefore, there is no reason not to accept this official discourse, especially since it exists as a set of unspoken assumptions within academic and other discourses, enforcing the idea that it is accepted by elites (Spivak, 2010, pp. 78 - 79). In brief, a web of significance (Geertz, 1973) is woven by these interacting discourses which create the appearance of truth. However, insiders have access to other information and their own lived experience which negates the power of this myth-making exercise. However, whether this makes a practical difference is uncertain. It does not have to be the case that the elite view predominates and continues to oppress the subaltern class. For example, groups representing subalterns can work with elites to change conditions (Lizarazo, 2018), or outsiders with ethical interest in the question such as academics can represent the voices of the subaltern (Spivak, 2010, pp. 81 - 82). In practice, however, neither of these opportunities have been taken, which means that the government has generally succeeded in enforcing its preferred discourse where it matters – in the outsider audience for whom it is constructing Thai-ness in opposition to Malay Muslim-ness.

Insider's counter discourses reject the simple framing of the outsider's discourse in almost every case (although a few insiders, such as *Provost Kasem*, did adopt the outsider's view). For outsiders, there are clear perpetrators and victims of

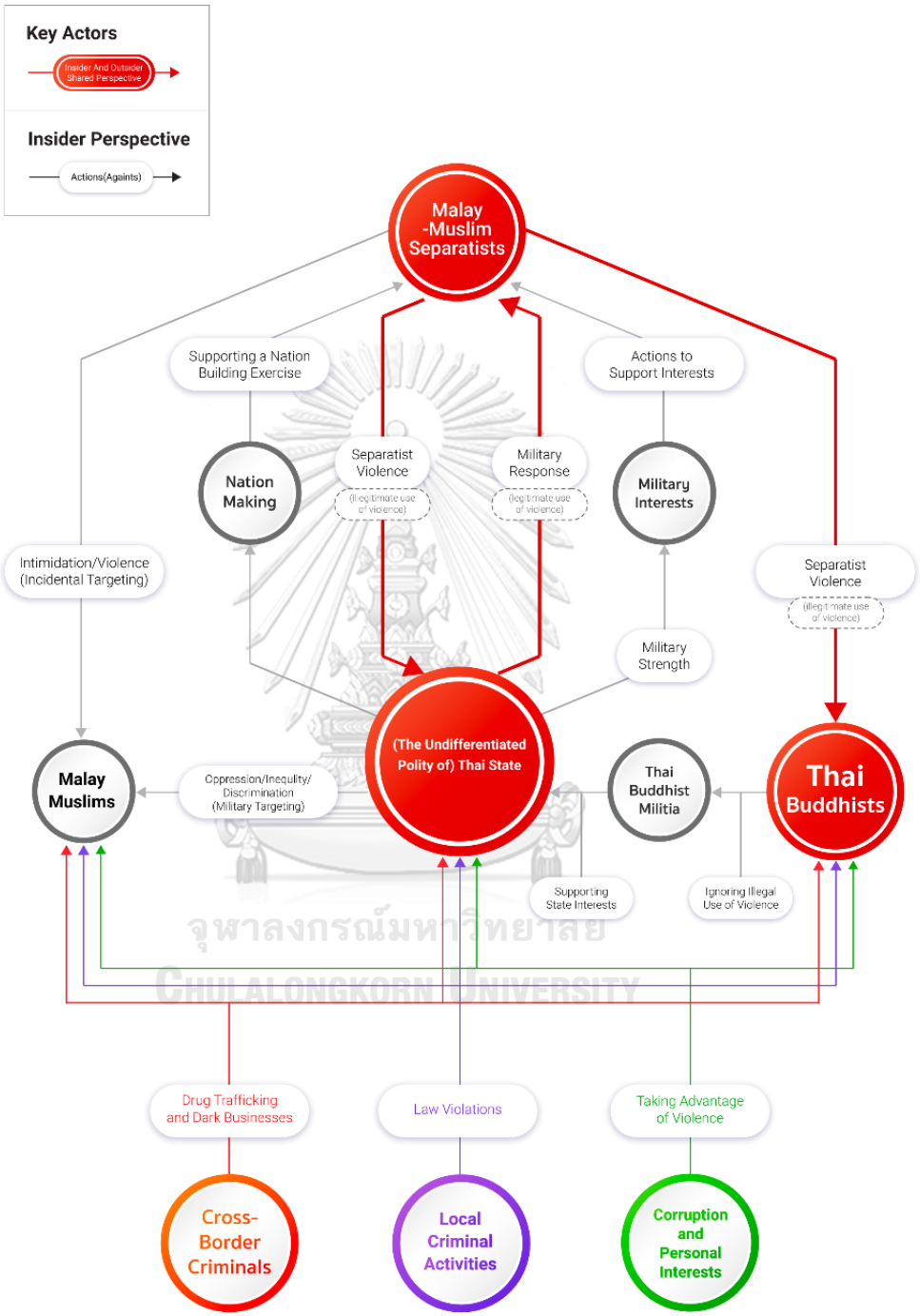
violence. The perpetrators are members of Malay Muslim separatist groups (which is sometimes spread to all Malay Muslims). The victims are Thai Buddhists, who serve as a metonym for the Thai state. Thus, the attacks by Malay Muslim separatist groups on the Thai Buddhists of the Southern Border represent an attack on the Thai state and, more or less, on Thai-ness itself. For insiders, the discourse is vastly more complicated. Although the embedded conflict between Malay Muslim insurgents and the Thai (Buddhist) state may remain at the heart of the chronic violence, there are many more players and interests involved in the explanation of the violence.

In addition to the information asymmetries between insiders and outsiders, the concept of counter-memory can be applied here. Counter-memory emerges from the conflict between the 'official' recounting of an occurrence and the combination of lived experience and individual memory and knowledge of conditions in place (Foucault, 1977; Halbwachs, 1992). Counter-memory relates not just to the experience of oneself, but also that of others; thus, the collective memory of others that those that were actually involved can be included (Halbwachs, 1992). Outsiders, with little or no personal experience and with few personal connections or other sources to challenge the 'official' account of the conflict, have no basis for this formation of counter-memory. However, insiders – most of whom have either been directly involved in or affected by the conflict in some way, or close to those that have been affected – do have this knowledge and memory through which a counter-memory can be formed. Thus, even for most victims of the conflict, the recounting of what has occurred is complex, with actors including both insurgents and the state (as well as militias and other informal groups). As in other cases (for example, Frieze, 2014), this formation of counter-memory is particularly strong because it is in response to a government discursive practice that not only enforces and naturalizes the idea that the conflict is due to religious extremism of Malay Muslim separatists, but actually creates conditions through oppressive and unjust policies that have theoretically been put into place

for the benefit of Malay Muslims, but which only serve to alienate them further. Thus, the formation of different viewpoints and memories of the causes of violence between insiders and outsiders is entirely to be expected given the theory of discursive practice and formation of counter-memory.

The conceptual map presented in Figure 4 shows the difference between the insider perspective and the outsider perspective – while there is an overlapping core of causal explanation between insiders and outsiders, the insiders view the causes of violence as vastly more complex. Within this graph, the red actors and relationships are those that are represented in the outsider view of the violence and its causes. The insider view begins with the red actors, but also encompasses some or all of the actors and relationships in black. This map shows that insider and outsider perspectives are not completely disjoint, and actually have the same set of actors and interactions at the heart of the conflict. However, the outsider analysis of the conflict ends, for most, at this point. Individuals rarely, if ever, consider the effect of oppression, inequality, and military targeting of Malay Muslims as a potential factor in the conflict, or the problem that Malay Muslims, more so than Thai Buddhists, are victims of violence. The outsider analysis also rarely addresses problems like cross-border criminals or even ordinary Thai criminals, whose activities are often attributed to separatist groups, or the influence of military interests and other private interests in keeping the conflict going. As will be discussed in the next section, academic discourse is to some extent an exception to this, as researchers do sometimes consider effects like oppression and inequality. At the same time, even this group of outsiders does not go very far into the wide-reaching web of interrelated causes and violent interactions that insiders can identify in their interpretation of the violence.

Figure 4 The Web of Causes of Violence



4.2 The Violence and a Crisis of Representation

The final question of this research is: does the difference in perceptions of the border crisis signal a crisis of representation of the conflict? A crisis of representation is, strictly speaking, an academic crisis, in which researchers are confronted with a fundamental inability to represent reality or perceived reality using existing tools or measures (Schwandt, 2007, p. 9). Schwandt's (2007) point regarding the crisis of representation is that no inquiry can ever fully represent reality, which is a largely uncontroversial claim. However, this claim does not establish why and how such crises of representation emerge.

The predominance of the official discourse on the unrest in the Deep South is obvious from the investigation of previous academic studies and media coverage of the violent conflict, as summarized in Chapters 1 and 2. It is also clear that although there are some similarities, this official discourse does not fully coincide with the perception of most insiders. Of course, insiders live partially within the same mediascape as the outsiders in Bangkok, are aware of the partial representation of the conflict, and often view media coverage as not just inadequate but actively harmful (for example, only focusing on the breaking news of violent incidents and not following up with resolutions or positive news, which creates an inaccurate viewpoint on the level of violence in the communities of the Southern provinces.) Thus, there does exist the conflicting claims (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 9 - 12) which characterise the crisis of representation, indicating that there are some similarities.

At the same time, it is not clear that the predominance of the official discourse, both explicitly in the media and internalised within the works of academics and government, truly constitutes a crisis of representation in that it is not known or uncertain how reality could be measured. One of the critical problems as seen by insiders is that representations of the violence do prioritize scientific and statistical representations, as discussed in the evaluation of academic representations of the violence in Chapter 2, which is one of the problems of the crisis of

representation (Greene, 1994, pp. 207 - 208). One example of this is the case of *Kah Fa*, whose son was shot by soldiers at a mosque in 2013. She notes that because he was at a mosque, he was believed to be a terrorist, which she does not believe at all. Thus, an assumption about the nature of people at the mosque at the time has overridden the interpretation of those who knew this particular victim the best. At the same time, some of the representations of the violence seem to ignore or even defy the logic of scientific and empirical knowledge. One example of this is the belief that Thai Buddhists are the main victims of the conflict, despite evidence from groups like Deep South Watch (NGO) that the Malay Muslim ethnic group is one of the main targets and victims of the violence. Another example is the characterization of ordinary crime and cross-border crime as separatist violence, despite evidence to the contrary. Insiders offered a range of explanations for these differences between representation and reality, including self-dealing by government officials and separatist groups, which creates uncertainty about the source of the violence and its underlying causes. While this is somewhat different from previous characterizations of the crisis of representation of the conflict, it does appear to indicate a fundamental disagreement about how the conflict should be represented and what viewpoints or techniques of knowledge production are legitimate (or illegitimate).

There is a question about why this crisis of representation is not resolved through intervention of the media, given that journalists such as Mr Ian, interviewed in this research, have access to insider viewpoints on the conflict. One reason could be the control of knowledge by the government. Foucault's theory of knowledge/power argues that those with power control the formation and exchange of knowledge through ritual (Foucault, 2002, pp. 120 - 122). One of the ways in which the state controls its subjects is through the exercise of power through repression (Foucault, 2002, p. 124). Fundamentally, the representation of truth is susceptible to the exercise of power, especially if this power is deliberately used to control cultural representations of a specific occurrence (Foucault, 2007). Given the Thai state's

control of media, it is not surprising that the representation of the unrest follows the script promoted by the state – simply, state control of power and knowledge, along with control of media channels, means that it is not merely that media sources are lying about the truth of the conflict on purpose, but that the power of the state distorts the perception of reality itself. In effect, media coverage becomes a perception of hyper-reality (Baudrillard, 1994, 2012), in which the state discourse is perceived as reality because it is represented as such. This perception comes from a combination of control of sources and access and promotion of a specific discourse by the state, and from the active control of the media through censorship and intimidation, which is an acknowledged issue of press freedom in Thailand (Freedom House, 2017).

Another question is why academics do not reject the fundamental arguments of the state discourse, particularly in relation to the fundamental causes of the violence. While there is an obvious possibility that academic research is actively censored, this is not really true, as can be seen by several studies which do reject these state discourses (for example, the works of Unno (2018), McCargo (2012), Panpigool (2012), Taneerananon (2005), and Walliphodom (2007), all of whom pointed to failings in the Thai state's management of the provinces and their development activities). Instead, it is likely that academics are responding to the power of the state by internalizing its power and its demands, a process known as governmentality (Foucault, 1991; Kingsolver, 2002). While it is difficult to identify direct evidence for this, the fact that academics accept this perspective without explicitly referencing it does suggest that this would occur. While Foucault's viewpoint on governmentality is mainly concerned with the internalization of bodily control, it also extends to control of the mind and to perceptions of reality (Foucault, 2007). In other words, academics do not adequately refute the representation of the state not because they actively agree with it or because they are actively censored, but because it lies in area of unquestioned assumptions and

unrecognized use of state power. This conclusion comes about because of the seeming unquestioned acceptance of certain viewpoints, such as the religious separatist basis of the conflict, paired with a focus on issues like economic integration and development.

In summary, there is evidence for a crisis of representation, but this crisis not simply a matter of epistemological or methodological uncertainty. Instead, the crisis of representation stems from the flows of power from the state and its use of power to control representations of reality, coupled with the unconscious governmentality of the subject bodies and minds of the academics and media. Thus, while this is not a traditional crisis of representation, it does show how the use of power can obscure the representation of reality.

4.3 Chapter Summary

This section has explored the dominant discourse of unrest, the formation and persistence of this discourse as a myth, and the possibility of a crisis of representation. The chapter identified a fundamental difference between the perceptions of outsiders and insiders. Outsider views rely on historic, socio-economic and religious and cultural explanations for the conflict: in essence, the media discourse represents the unrest as the result of violent Malay Muslim separatists who are essentially rejecting Thai-ness as it is defined by the government. These discourses are supported by the government, which prefers the separatist and terrorist presentations to which it attributes much of the violence in the Southern border. Although academic analysis is more nuanced, many analysts do not question the fundamental nature of the conflict as a conflict of religious ideologies. The insider view, which relies more on lived experience than news reports, rejects the religious viewpoint, instead attributing the conflict to socio-economic inequality and exclusion and inadequate and ineffectual government activities. Despite the more nuanced view of insiders, their position in society as a subaltern, along with the reinforcement of the government-supported media myth through webs of

significance and exchange of power, means that there is little chance for the insider discourse to take hold. Furthermore, there has been an insignificant effort in academic circles to further explore the rhetoric on the southernmost border conflict, despite the responsibility of academics to represent the subaltern. The emphasis on breaking news, along with a fundamental failure to question the underlying assumptions of the news media within academic discourse, does point to the possibility of a crisis of representation. However, in this case it is not simply that academia does not have a way to represent the conflict, but that they may be prevented from doing so effectively by the exercise of state power. Since academics and news media in Thailand also exist under the control of the Thai state, and fall under state laws on control of knowledge, they have limited freedom to develop new representations of the conflict. Therefore, in a sense this does represent a crisis of representation, but it is one in which the accurate representation is presented through an exercise of state power, rather than as a matter of epistemological or ontological uncertainty.

Moreover, the study also unfold the southern border region conflict at three different levels. The first level was that of an unequal power interaction between the state and the people of Yala Province, especially the Malay Muslim community. This actually-existing conflict consists of violent interactions between the state (as represented by the military and officials) and a diverse and poorly defined set of non-state actors (including organized Malay Muslim separatist groups and criminals). These activities are described as terrorism, which can be viewed as a response to state power accumulation (Baudrillard, 2002, pp. 4 - 7). Social and economic context was key for understanding conflict at this level. The Malay Muslim community is subjected to high levels of economic and social exclusion, including lower access to education, higher poverty levels, and social exclusion, which has grown worse since the outbreak of the most recent conflict in 2004. The Thai state has not implemented effective programs to overcome this social and economic exclusion. In

brief, the Malay Muslims of the southernmost region of Thailand could be described as an internal colony (Chávez, 2011, pp. 785 - 786). As a result, many Malay Muslims feel a sense of injustice and as a result alienation from the Thai state. As a subaltern group (Spivak, 2010, pp. 78 - 79), there are few modes of resistance available to Malay Muslims, increasing the potential that individuals would either approve of or engage in a separatist movement.

The second level was that of the stereotype of the conflict, which is constructed primarily through the media as a state-driven discourse or myth. At this level, theories such as symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 164 - 165) and discourses of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1990, pp. 17 - 18) can be applied. At this level, the conflict stereotype has been described as a conflict between two peoples – the peace-loving Thai Buddhists and the violent Malay Muslim separatists (McCargo, 2009b, pp. 12 - 13). This research showed that this stereotype was developed extensively through the media, and was reflected in public memory of key events which were identified in the news media as violent, separatist and terrorist actions. This discourse, which is largely controlled by the state (although it is also actively disseminated by others) can be considered from a historical perspective, in particular the formation of the mono-ethnic Thai state and the resulting poor understanding and acceptance of internal differences (Aphornsuvan, 2008; Unno, 2018).

The third level of investigation is the mismatch between the actual conflict and its perceptions. The actual statistics do not hold up the stereotype of violence; for example, most recent statistics show that only about 38% of violent incidents are actually attributable to separatist groups, and Malay Muslims are the main targets (Deep South Watch, 2018). This level of investigation showed that there is considerable confusion even among provincial residents, who often accept the separatist terrorism explanation for violence. Outsiders (those who lived in Bangkok) almost all accepted the state-driven discourse without question, and were unaware of alternative causes and context of the conflict. The implication of the finding

representing of the previous three chapters is discussed in the next chapter, which represents the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion of the Study

The objectives of this research included:

1. To look into the construction of violence and the perception of violence in Yala Province through power interactions of formal and informal socio-political institutions and local people;

2. To compare insider and outsider perspectives on violence in Yala Province and understand differences between them; and

3. To investigate the possibility of a crisis of representation in discourses surrounding the southern border conflict.

The objectives were accomplished through two periods of fieldwork in Amphoe SaNgob (assumed name), Yala Province, a small rural district which has seen increasing violence over the last decade, but where it is still relatively rare. During the fieldwork, I stayed with host families from both Malay-Muslim and Buddhist religions and engaged in everyday social and economic activities in Amphoe SaNgob. I also conducted formal interviews with members of various groups, including direct and indirect victims of the violence, former separatists, religious leaders, government officials, NGO activists, the media, and outsiders (residents of Bangkok, who relied mainly on news media for information about the southern provinces). I then analysed the experience of fieldwork and the interview data in light of key theories surrounding violence, power, and the construction of myths and representation.

In Chapter 2, I evaluated the discourses of violence and the possibility that there were activities of mythmaking involved in representation of violence, as well as the possibility of a crisis of representation. This analysis showed that although the predominant discourse of violence for both insiders and outsiders was that it was caused by religious separatists, the view of insiders was far more nuanced. Insiders

recognised, to various extents, the role of nonreligious separatist movements, the government's policies and direct actions, self-interest on the part of the military, criminal activity, inequality, oppression and lack of representation for Muslims, and the news media's promulgation of a one-sided perspective in violence. In contrast, outsiders almost entirely viewed the problem of violence only as a Muslim religious separatist conflict. This perspective results from a predominant media discourse, which promotes this perspective aggressively. However, this media discourse comes from government promotion of the discourse of violence as a religious separatist activity. This discourse serves government interests by both justifying the use of brutality by the state and legitimating the construction of the 'Thai' national identity as a Buddhist identity, and in turn limiting the Muslim majority of Yala Province to a subaltern group. Furthermore, the government's discursive practices, including censorship and educational and socio-economic development policies, both limited the press's ability to challenge the dominant discourse, resulting in information asymmetries for outsiders, and created 'truth' through conditions such as educational and economic underperformance in the region, which only increased alienation and the tendency to support separatism. This chapter demonstrated that power interactions between the state, media, and academics resulted in an apparently self-reinforcing web of significance, in which the preferred discourse of the state was promoted directly through control of the media and indirectly through unquestioned acceptance of assumptions underlying the state discourse. For example, the state's direct use of power (which changed over time to meet its objectives) could be seen in the changing media discourse of the causes and attribution of violence in the southernmost provinces. While acceptance of state discourse was not assured in academic discourse, academic studies that focused directly on violence and its causes tended to attribute violence to individual and social differences of Malay Muslims, rather than providing a structural explanation for violence. Thus, the Thai state has largely succeeded in positioning itself as the

legitimate user of violence and the Malay Muslim separatist groups as illegitimate users of violence, while obscuring the structural inequalities that have meant that Malay Muslims do not have equal access to the mechanisms of the state and public participation.

In Chapter 3, insider perspectives on the violence were considered. As noted, insider perspectives are far more nuanced than those of outsiders, with multiple causes attributed. The locals were likely to view the conflict as externally imposed, highlighting the role of the government and military as well as outsiders such as Malaysian groups and criminal organisations in the conflict, arguing that within Amphoe SaNgob, residents worked together. This did not mean that insiders rejected explanations such as economic inequality and discrimination – some of these explanations were at the core of their beliefs on the causes of violence, such as culturally insensitive top-down development programs that destroyed habitat and were unsuitable for Muslim farmers and forced removal of hijab as a security measure. However, almost without exception, insiders rejected the view that the conflict was primarily religious or even separatist in nature. This represents a counter-memory of the crisis, which stands in direct opposition to the state's discourse of religious separatist conflict. Regardless of the nature of the conflict, it cannot be denied that there have been significant effects of rising violence on Amphoe SaNgob, Yala Province. In addition to the direct emotional, physical and psychological impacts on victims, there has also been environmental damage from development activities, increasing social isolation and suspicion, and economic effects resulting from growing depopulation, especially of young skilled residents. Thus, even though Amphoe SaNgob is a relatively small community and has not as yet been the site of intense violence, it has still felt its effects in other ways, possibly threatening the future sustainability of the community. While there are some possible solutions for resolving the conflict, none of these solutions have been effective, and may actually serve to entrench the wicked problem of the conflict rather than resolve it.

In Chapter 4, evidence for a myth and a crisis of representation was evaluated. This chapter drew on the evidence presented previously to consider this question. This evidence illustrated that there was an indication of a fundamental difference in the outlooks of insiders and outsiders n the violence. Outsider views, especially that of the media, rely primarily on religious and cultural difference as a primary cause of the violence, arguing in essence that Malay Muslim separatists are violent non-Thais seeking to reject the Thai state. (Not coincidentally, this is the preferred discourse of the Thai state.) This serves as evidence that there is a process of mythmaking in progress, where the insider view of complex and multi-causal violence is reduced to a single, easy to understand cause that is distant from the viewer. While academic discourse is somewhat more nuanced, it often does not question the dominance of the preferred discourse, and instead often works from the assumption that the conflict is both religious and separatist in nature. The chapter also demonstrated that this mythmaking process was only effective on outsiders. For example, while most outsiders viewed the conflict as a straightforward religious and political separatism conflict driven by Malay Muslim groups, insiders had a complex and nuanced view of the causes of the violence – so complex that many were not able to attribute specific causes at all. Instead, conflict is viewed as stemming from the interactions of separatist groups, local authorities and military, other interest groups, criminal groups, and external groups, and was attributed to causes including economic and social exclusion and personal benefits (for example, corruption or criminal activities). Ultimately, this suggests that the Thai government's mythmaking exercise was not effective for insiders, but it is not clear that this is important at all for the government's purposes given the Malay Muslim insider's position as an oppressed subaltern group whose cause has not been taken up by academics or others who would potentially have a voice to advocate for change. While this does seem to be a crisis of representation, at the same time it is caused not by lack of methods or terms to represent the conflict, but an intervention of the

state to prevent its accurate representation. As a result, it is not a classical crisis of representation, but instead the outcome of an exercise of both conscious state control of academic discourse and internalization of assumptions surrounding the conflict, or governmentality.

In conclusion, the viewpoints of the people of Amphoe SaNgob, Yala province and the viewpoints of outsiders are substantially different with regards to the conflict. This difference stems from multiple causes, including the position of Malay Muslims as a subaltern group, dominance of the media by elites (especially governments), government limitation of discourse through discursive practices that create a single reality, and subsequent discourses that prioritise a single cause. This does represent both the emergence of a myth and a crisis of representation, creating conditions where the government/media discourse directly contradicts with the counter-memory of the local people and victims and where it is not being challenged. The dominant discourse also prevents resolution of the crisis because the true causes cannot be tackled. Moreover, in the local villagers' perspectives regarding the southern border unrest, there were beneficiaries from both inside and outside. Because of false ideologies and ambiguities that still lingered in the Southern border, the perpetrators found no need to justify their actions and explain the rationale behind such ongoing crimes in the South. Meanwhile, outsiders did not ask questions about the false ideologies and misconceptions until they turned into reality and there was no one to make a change. The locals in the area themselves attempted to create a counter-discourse to show their disagreement with the existing conflicts. Unfortunately, the attempt did not seem to be substantial enough to generate any transformation. For this reason, it was the duty of the scholars to help broadcast and criticize, and put an end to these false ideologies concerning the violence happening in the Southern Border. Policies and projects related to the southern border area are often small scale, such as tourism promotion, or agricultural farming support. However, the form of governance and management of

the southern border areas, which was the bone of contention among Muslim Malay ethnic groups has never responded.

Thus, to begin solving this wicked problem, it is critical to question the dominant discourse and to reject its underlying assumptions. Academics bear a singular responsibility for raising these questions, since they may be able to step beyond the boundaries of existing discourse and question their own assumptions about the causes of violence. To date, however, this type of opposition to the controlling authority of the state and its discourse has not been demonstrated very much. Instead, academic discourses that individualise violence and make assumptions about the nature of Malay Muslims, their access to the Thai state, and their essential Thai-ness have prevailed. This situation must be corrected in order to rebalance the discourse on the Thai border conflict, representing the insider viewpoint of a complex, multi-cause and multi-actor conflict in which several different interests are at stake.

5.2 The Contribution of the Research

The most important contribution to this research is its fulfilment of the obligation of academics to serve as a voice for the subaltern. By using a polyphonic approach to the research and representing as many voices as possible, I hope that I have accomplished my goal of offering voice to those who otherwise would not have an opportunity to speak for themselves. This voice has been relatively lacking in the academic research on the chronic conflict happening in the Deep South, where researchers have either focused on structural causes of violence such as oppression and inequality or even, in extreme cases, supported the state discourse of Malay Muslims as other or fundamentally non-Thai. It is my opinion that the existing research has not taken the lived experience of people living in the Southern Border into serious consideration, which is a fundamental obligation of the anthropologist (Ingold, 2018, pp. 10 - 11). While Ingold (2018) does not argue that we are obligated to agree or accept the perspective of others, he does argue that we

must take their perspective seriously. In this research, I tried, above all else, to take the perspective of insiders in Yala Province seriously, and to consider: if their experience is true, why has the dominant discourse of the conflict emerged? This perspective, which informed the entire research, also led to the contribution of the research in its comprehension of the formation of the illusionary myth concerning the Southern Border conflict and what must be done to address it.

5.3 Limitations and Opportunities for Further Study

Like any other research, this research has its own limitations. One of these limitations is that, as with any participant observation-based research study, my findings were determined by my own position with respect to the social environment of Yala Province (Davies, 2008, p. 18). What I could find out in the field was limited by my own position as an outsider, as well as my own social identity and assumptions about the conflict. While I tried to use reflection techniques to identify my own assumptions and biases and remove them from my analysis, there is no guarantee that I was successful. This is always a limitation to the use of participant observation research, since there is no way to remove either the effect of one's own social position or one's own unconscious biases fully from the analysis. Thus, although the research has this limitation, it does not affect the basic usefulness of the study. At the same time, it also means that there is an opportunity for further research. One type of research that would be very useful is insider research from academics from the Southern Border provinces. Insider researchers could access knowledge and resources that I could not, and may be more successful at extracting detailed insider perspectives on the violence. This difference in experience and position would further deepen the understanding of insider perspectives on the conflict and give additional voice to the people of the Southern Border provinces.

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