

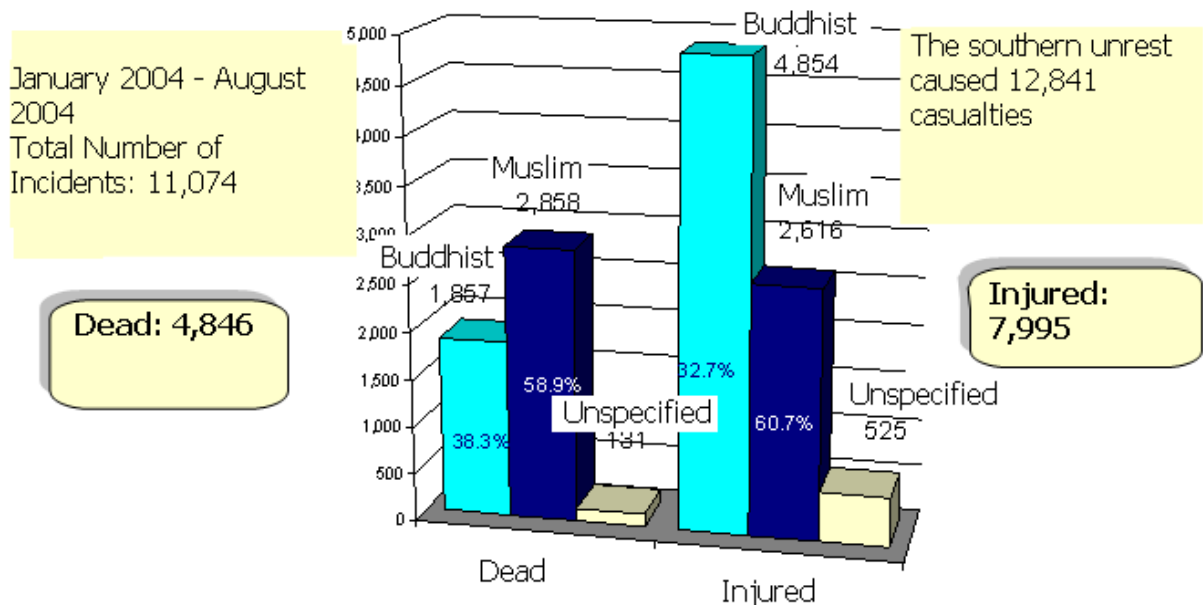
## The Protracted Violence amidst the Unstable Political Situation after 2011 Elections

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Latest statistics on the situation of unrest in the deep south provinces after the 4 July elections and the holy month of Ramadan of Deep South Watch, Prince of Songkla University, showed the total number of deaths and injuries after more than 7 years (from January 2004 to August 2011) that there were more than 11,074 incidents of unrest, resulting in 12,841 casualties with 4,846 dead and 7,995 injured.

The statistics also showed that of the 4,846 deaths, most of the dead were Muslims with 2,856 victims or approximately 58.9 percent, while there were 1,857 Buddhist deaths or approximately 38.3 percent. On the contrary, there were a total of 7,995 victims who were injured, most of whom were Buddhists at 4,854 individuals or 60.7 percent, while there were 2,616 injured Muslims, or approximately 32.7 percent.

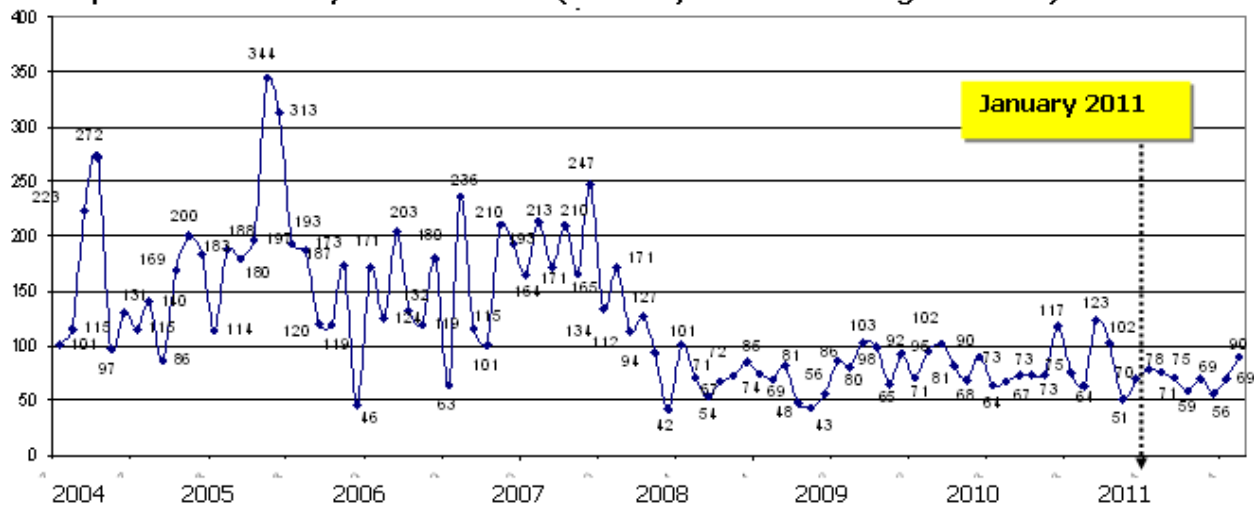


## Violence with Qualitative Changes and Protracted Nature

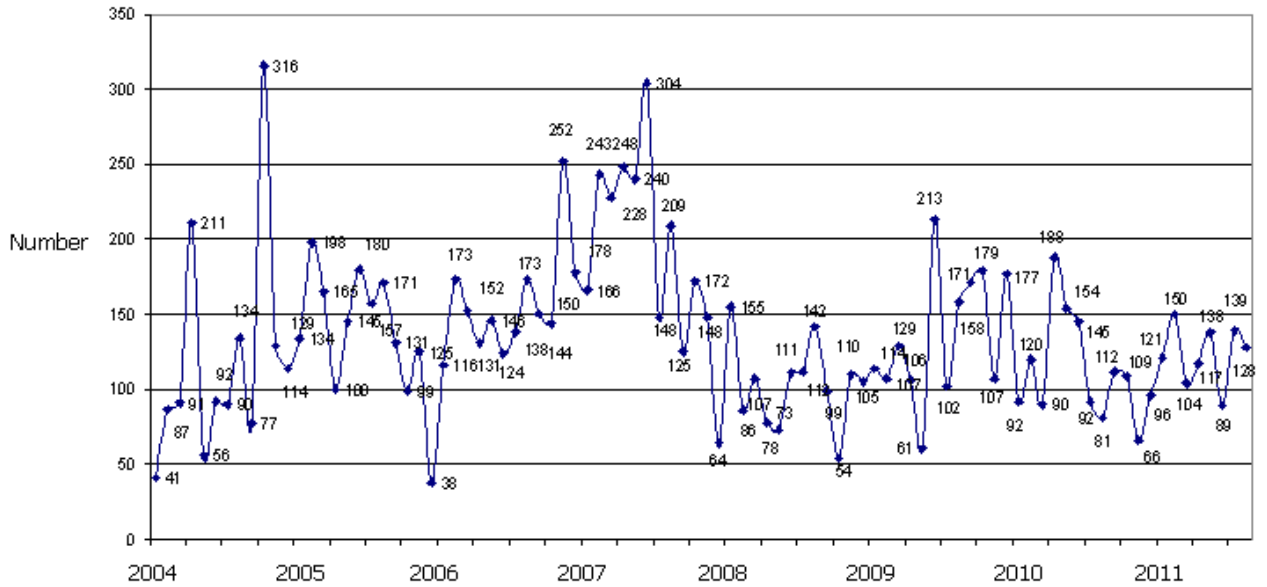
In the overall picture, the statistics of violence appeared to have declined as the state often described. If the turning point of June 2007 was considered, it would appear that the frequency of violent incidents actually started declining in a certain way. However, it was noticeable that from 2008 onwards, there were attempts at insurgency in the form that would sustain the goals of the struggle, and would also cause the situation in the area to rapidly become very intense at intervals. Therefore, from 2008 onwards, if we monitor the situation closely and continuously, the situation of unrest in the Deep South would be of a continuous pattern with occasional spikes, reflecting an image of a never-ending situation of violence. The lack of stability and uncertainty of the situation, with fluctuating frequency of incidents represents the dynamics of continuity of the unrest, the prime nature of the conflict. Such dynamics should be monitored with great care, as they may also have an impact on undermining the legitimacy of the state in the long run.

We may call this a situation of "protracted violence" due to the continuity of violence every day, every month, and every year. It is a state of violence that consists of shooting different groups of people going about their daily lives, bombing of public places and attacking targets that are state officials, attacking the base of the military, police, or volunteer forces, armed clashes during the "surround, search, and arrest" raids of state officials against the insurgents, as well as killing of innocent individuals. Such incidents frequently appear in the news.

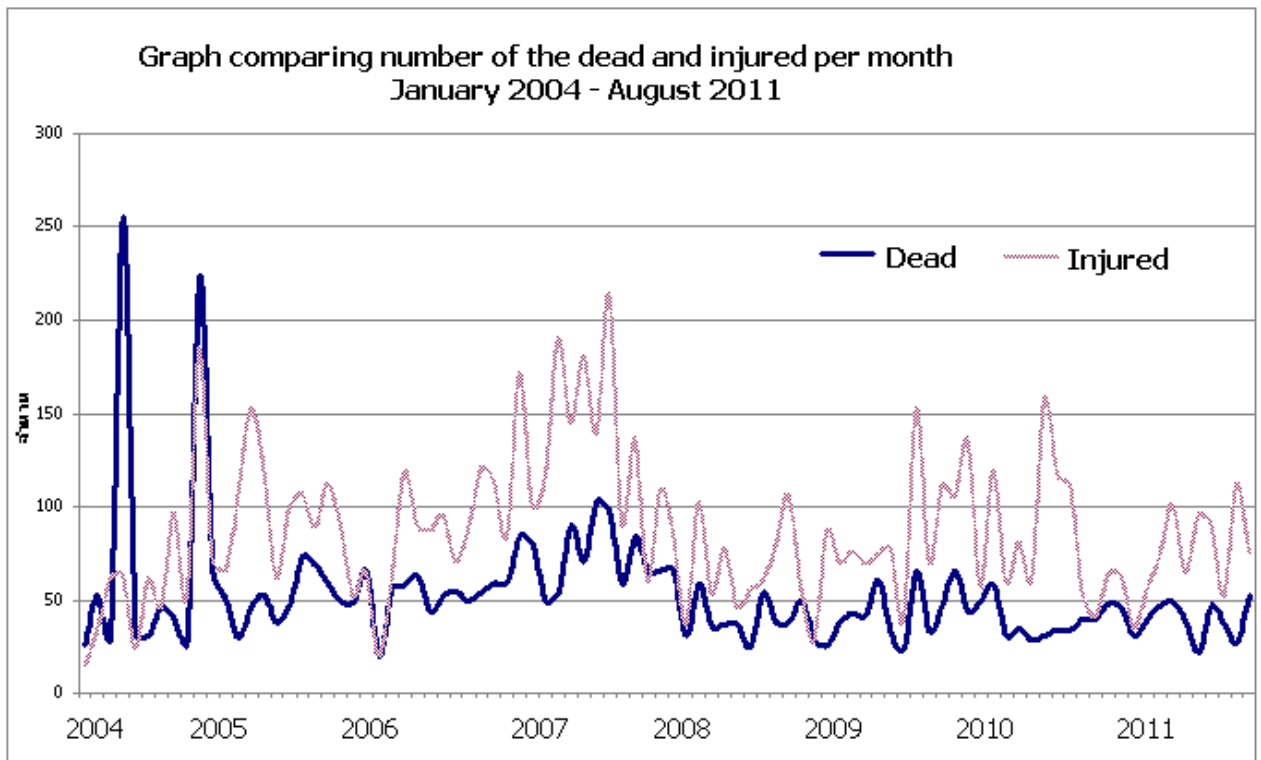
**Graph showing number of incidents of unrest in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla Provinces combined over 92-months periods with 11,074 incidents (January 2004 - 31 August 2011)**



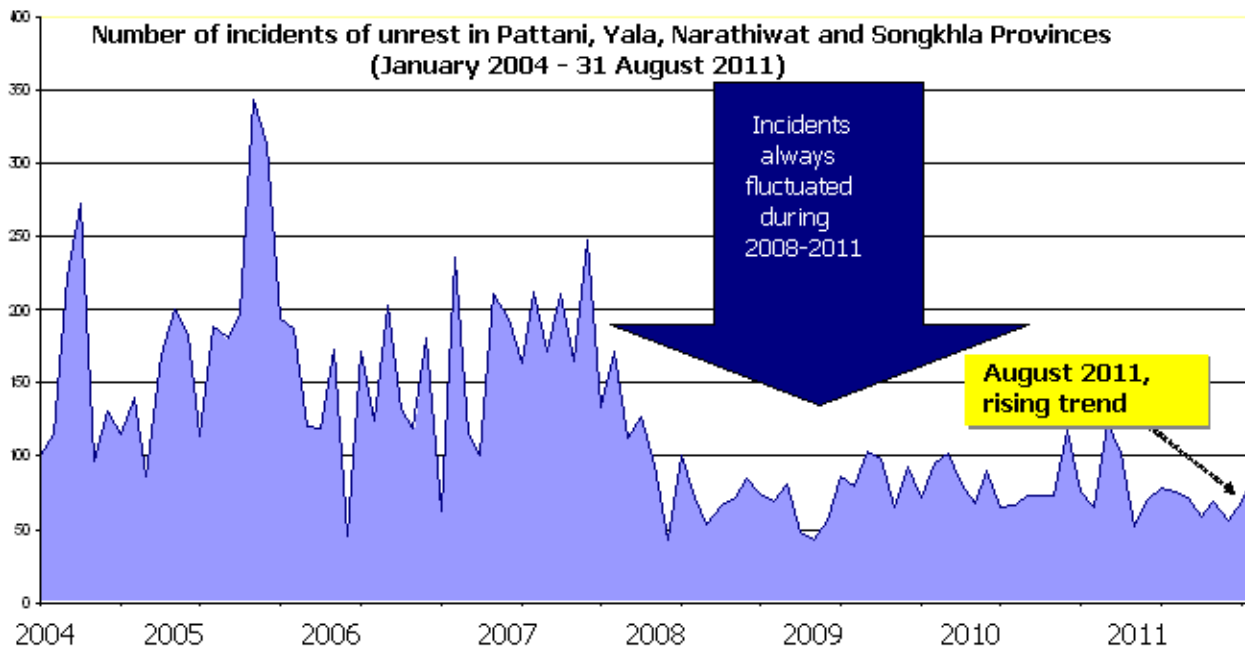
Graph showing number of casualties in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla Provinces combined over 92-months period with 11,074 incidents (January 2004 - 31 August 2011)

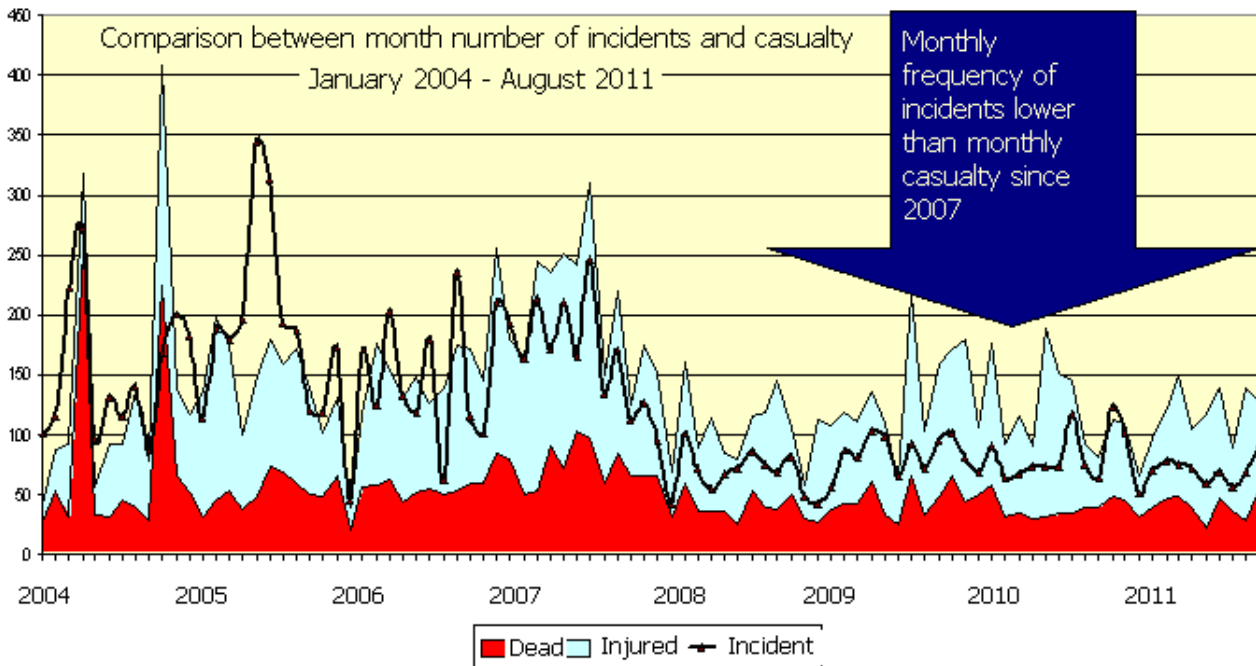
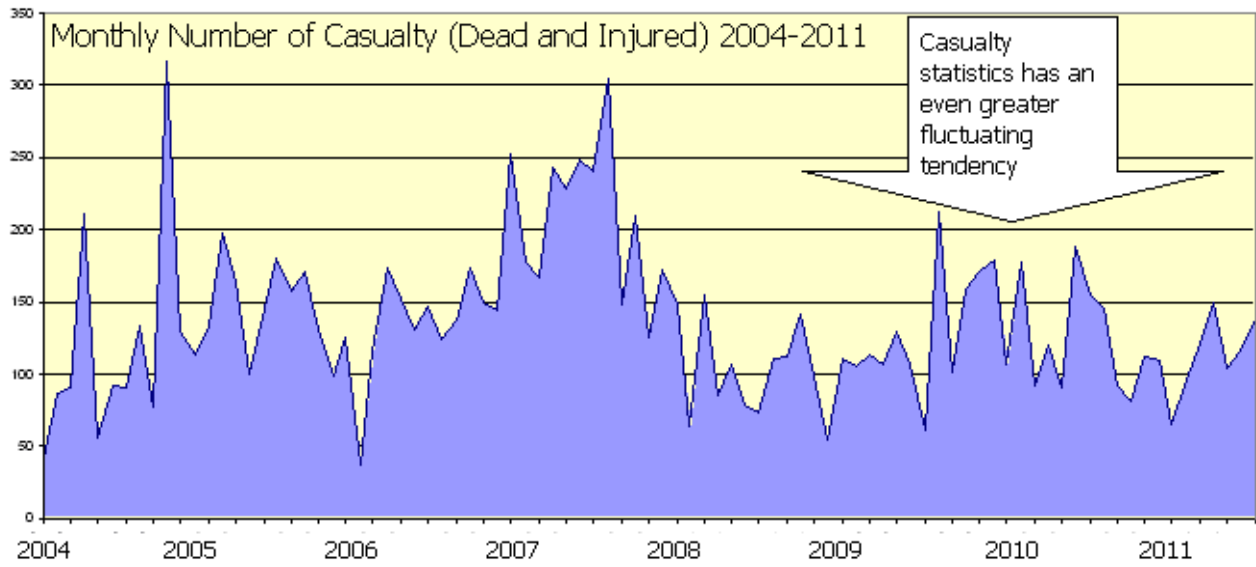


Graph comparing number of the dead and injured per month  
 January 2004 - August 2011



The protracted violence has real impacts on everyday life of people in the Deep South. Monthly statistics of deaths and injuries of victims of the unrest fluctuated even more than the reported statistics of incidence. It has formulated a pattern that the monthly number of incidence tends to be lower than the daily/monthly number of victims of the violence. This is identified as the “qualitative violence”, whereas the number of incidents appeared to be declined from 2008 onwards, but the number of deaths and injuries from the unrest were relatively stable or, in some cases, higher than the number of incidents of unrest. Deep South Watch has reported this information on a regular basis, and the situational analyses and reports from the military such as the 4th Region Army (ISOC 4th Region) and the Ministry of Public Health have recently shown a similar pattern as well.





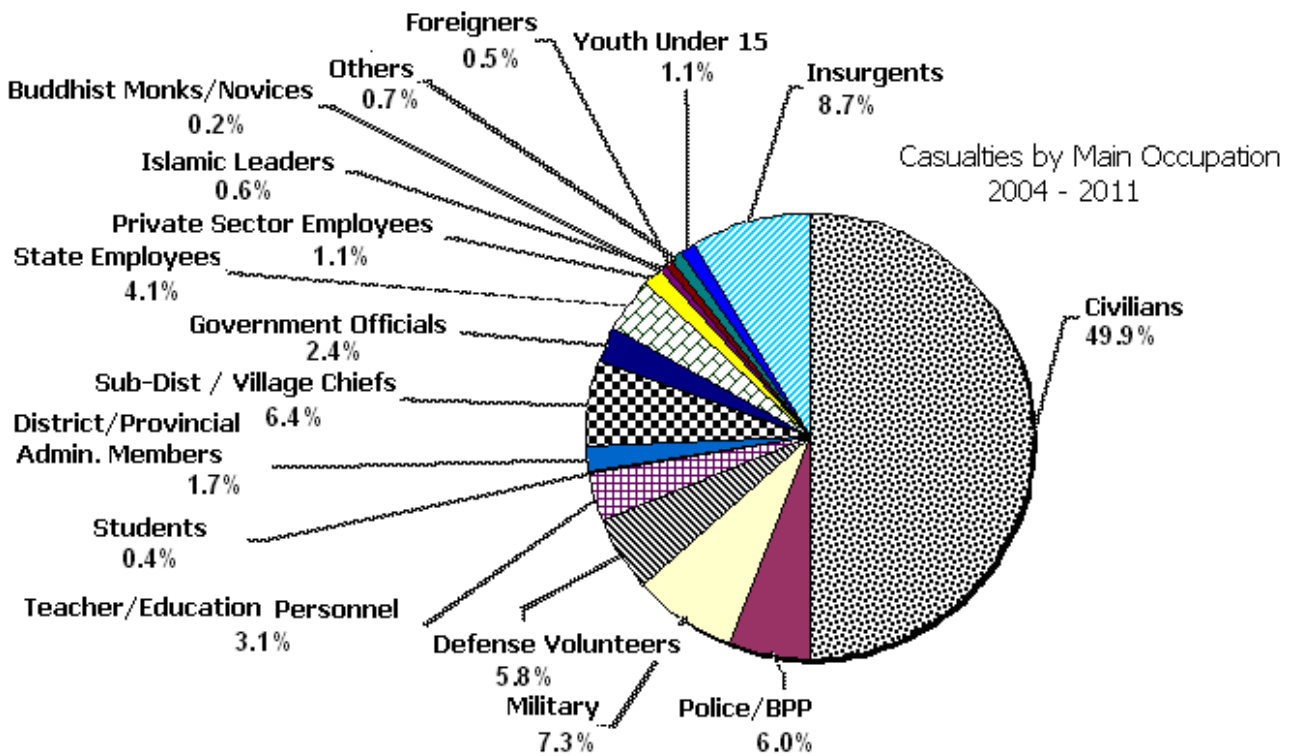
## Who Are the Victims: Challenges for Coping Strategies?

Numbers are truly meaningful. The mentioned statistics serve as a signal for policy-makers and strategists in solving the problem of the southern unrest. From previous experiences of ethnic and religious violence in many countries around the world, it is a common knowledge that the deeply embedded, sophisticated, and protracted conflicts and violence have a tendency to develop themselves to a state in which the conflicts reaches some “plateau” in their relationship, to become “trapped in a repetitive pattern of interaction—usually involving the exchange of violent or coercive behaviors—that seems dynamic, yet stable.”

Furthermore, it can be observed that among the 4,846 deaths from the unrest during the 92-month period from January 2004 to August 2011, most of the victims were ordinary civilians (49.9%), followed by the so-called insurgents who died from the action of state officials (8.7%), followed by state officials or those working for the state with the highest death toll among soldiers (7.3%) followed by Kamnans (sub-district chiefs), village chiefs, or assistant village chiefs (6.4%), police officers (6%), village volunteers—Chor roe Bor and civilian defense volunteers—Or Sor (5.8%), state employees (4.1%), teachers and education personnel (3.1%), state and state enterprise officials (3.4%), and others.

The data clearly showed that a large number of innocent civilians who were not involved with the state lost their lives, consisting of half of the death tolls or 2,320 individuals. It should also be noted that local people who were working for the state as local leaders were also killed in large number at 298 victims, one level lower than the death toll of the military. Villagers who are volunteer forces organized by the state also perished in large number at 270 victims. If victims who were sub-district chiefs, village chiefs, and various forms of village defense volunteers were combined together, this group would make up as many as 12.2% of all deaths, which is more than the death toll of the military and the police, up to the point where it could be said that the fields of violence were fairly intense in many villages and communities.

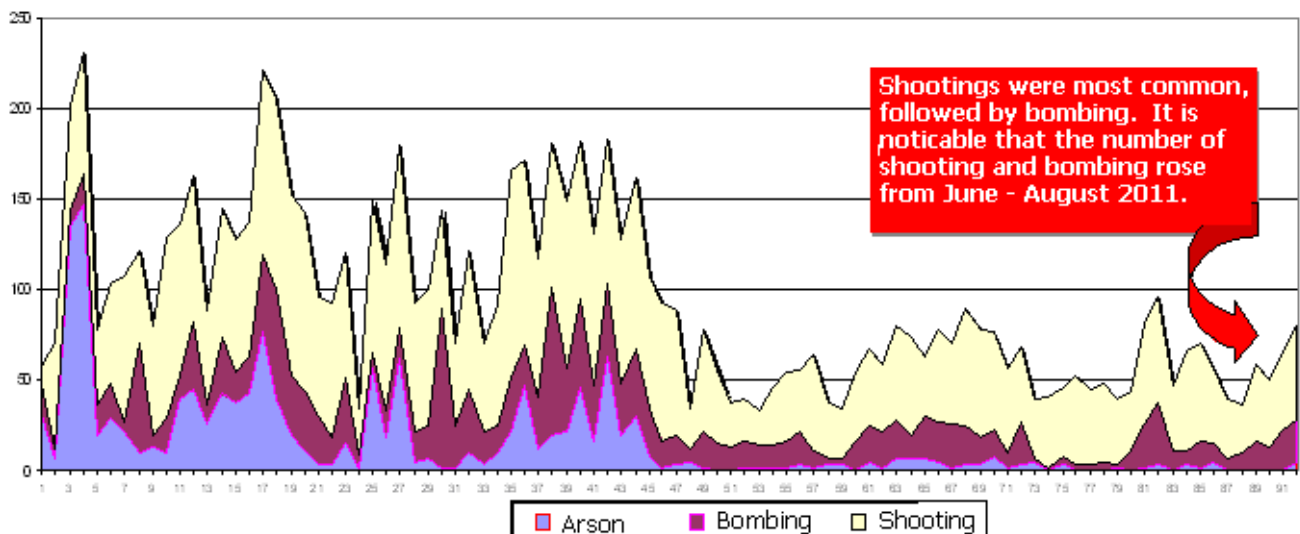
If this pattern of violence persists, there would be a frightening mark that conflict in the region would continue without any conclusion. Terrifyingly, an average of 2 persons died everyday from the conflict during the past 7 years and 8 months. The situation has thus evolved into a state of the "conflict perpetuation", a situation that generally comes about in many conflict areas around the world without appropriate resolutions.



### A new wave of violence: Whose logic of violence is this?

In 2011, the state of unrest fluctuates as it has been in the past, but it is noticeable that from August 2011 onwards, particularly during the end of the Ramadan month, the frequency of the unrest was markedly higher. Considering the types of attack, it could be observed that, generally, the main forms of attack were shooting and improvised explosive devices. The critical point is that the frequency of shooting and bombing becomes higher during the three-month period from June to August 2011. The escalation of violence thus appeared to represent certain pressure or deliberate signals that await interpretation.

Monthly frequency of incidents  
92-month period (January 2004 - August 2011)

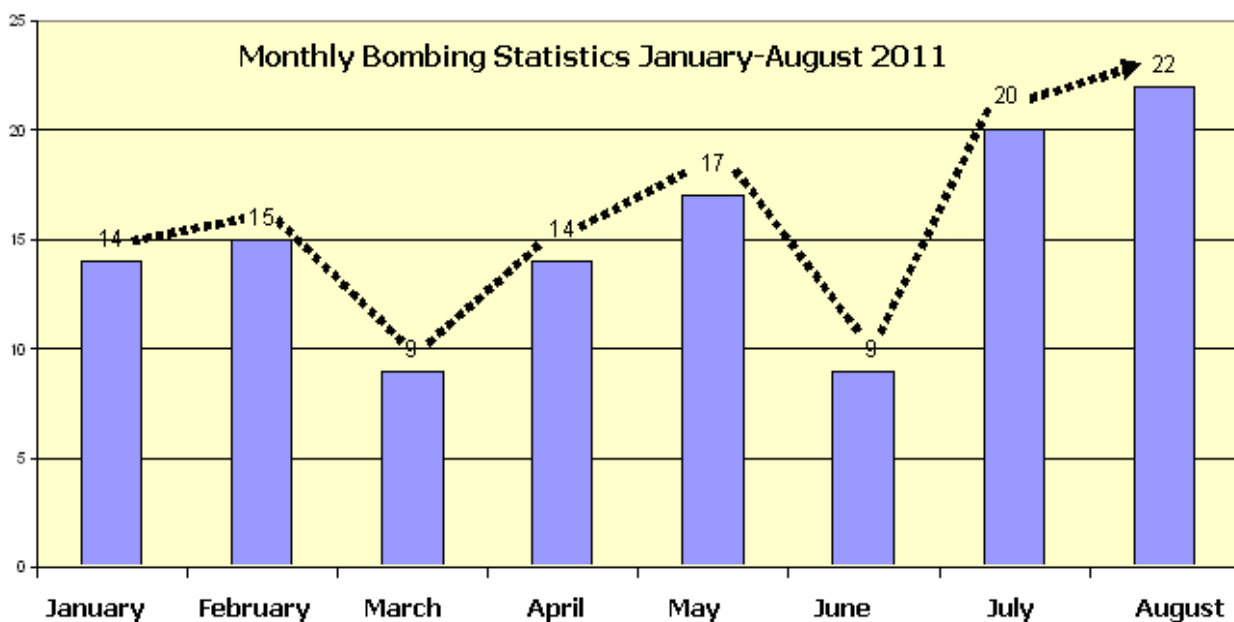
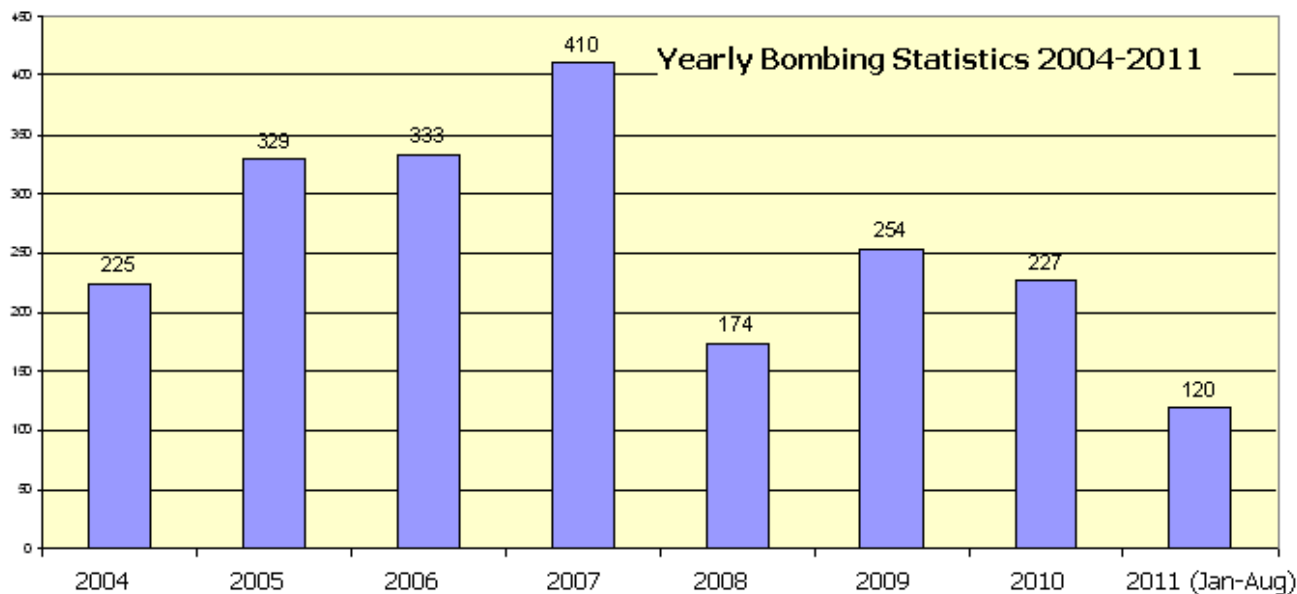


During the past two months, it could be seen that the tendency in escalation of violence was very clear. The situation of violence was escalated by many means: ambush on teachers, attacks on army's monk-protection units, attack on paramilitary officials with violent and cruel method of killing such as killing and torching the bodies, ambushing and attacking shooting individual victims in the form of a massacre, or multiple-sites urban bombing as recently happened in Sungai Kolok District.

What was clear was the "pattern" of violence. There were deliberate mobilizations in multiple areas at nearly the same time and tended to be coordinated attacks, starting from the last 10 days of the fasting month (August 2011) until September. It was also observed that there was usage of all types of bombs: motorcycle bombs, car bombs, improvised explosive devices (IED) with increasing frequency from January 2011 until August.

In addition, the number of attacks rose significantly after formation of the new Puea Thai Party government led by Yingluck Shinawatra. When the forms of attack were considered, it was possible that the attacks had symbolic political goals rather than attacks by criminal motives or drug trade, as suggested by many without proper analysis and understanding of the political context of the region, logic of violence that appears in most cases.





In other words, although there have been attempts to use certain sets of explanation to connect the cause of the violence to other problems in the area, such as activities of people involving in illicit drugs, and although such explanations are worthy of attention, evidence from state agencies working directly on drugs issues, closely monitoring the local narcotic situation for years, showed that the direct, reliable evidence of linkage between the problem of drugs and insurgency was still unclear, un-systematic, and disperse.

It should be noted that in only "certain incidents" did narcotics suppression officers have "scientific" evidence to link the incidence with the insurgency, out of more than one thousand incidents. Furthermore, from behind closed doors screening of the personal history of more than 8,000-10,000 Muslim youths in the high-risk group for drug abuse from many villages and communities who attended the rehabilitation and therapy programme run by state officials working on narcotics prevention during the past few years, it turned out that less than 5% had any evidence of working with the insurgents in the area.

Therefore, a more credible explanation for insurgency would be the political/ideological factor, particularly on the impact of governmental policy on the unrest. The systematic reactions of the insurgents presented the pattern of a movement with clear objectives in the "politics of identity" of the majority of the people in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces. These factors should have significance, credibility, and logical weight in explaining the situation of violence. Such clear understanding would also help to define the overall approaches, policies, and methods in solving the problem of Southern unrest.

## Political Dynamics and the Violence

On the other hand, we may be able to see the "signs and symbols" of the violence and the unrest in the Deep South from the changes and modifications in state policy on the Southern unrest. During the past 7 years and 8 months, under 6 governments that came to run the country, the question on the political significances of the dynamic situation in the deep south, and the question about interactions between the situation of unrest and changes in state policy, are worthy of analysis.

The violence has erupted during the Thai Rak Thai government of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra after a raid on the Princess of Narathiwat Camp at Pileng Village, Cho-airong District, Narathiwat Province, on 4 January 2004. Afterward, the incidents of violence escalated, particularly in April 2004 during the incident at Krue Se Mosque, Pattani Province, and many other locations in Yala Province, which resulted in 107 deaths, 6 injuries, and 17 arrests on the attackers, while the officials suffered 5 deaths and 15 injuries. Then there was the incidence on 25 October 2004 in Tak Bai District, Narathiwat Province, with at least 85 deaths.

In 2005, the violence greatly expanded, particularly in April and May, up until the month of July 2005, when there were attacks within the Yala City Municipality Area with attacks on power plants in the night time, resulting in 2 dead police officers and 23 injured civilians, with the entire city experiencing blackout for hours. After the mentioned wave of violence, the Thaksin

government issued the Royal Decree on Administration Under the State of Emergency B.E. 2548 (2005 AD).

A key characteristic of response during the Thaksin government was harsh measures in suppressing the insurgents. The Southern Border Provinces Peace-Building Command (SBPPBC) was established under the Order of the Prime Minister No. 69/2547 for extraordinary oversight to the problem. There was also an establishment of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) on 28 March 2005 to be an independent commission studying the root-causes and structural problems of the Southern unrest. However, the notorious characteristics of Thaksin's policy were the use of force in suppressing the unrest, with emphasis on open and clandestine police actions, resulting in greater intensity of the violence during 2004-2006.

The level of violence in the Deep South reached the peak during the Thaksin / Thai Rak Thai government with 4 particularly intense periods: April 2004 with 272 incidents, May 2005 with the historic-record of 344 incidents, June 2005 with as many as 313 incidents, and August 2006 with 236 incidents. During this time, there were two incidents which were greatly embedded in the locals' memory: the incidents at Krue Se Mosque and the Tak Bai Incident.

One might observe that a major pattern of violent incidents during 2004-2006 was a multiple-site and coordinated pattern. For example, in June 2006, there were simultaneous carpet attacks of militants in 54 spots in all 3 provinces of the deep south. Most of the attacks were from small improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with an aim to create disturbance in a variety of target areas. Incidents of violence still occurred a few days afterward. In August 2006, disturbances occurred in more than 122 locations in the 4 deep south provinces at nearly the same time, ranging from bombing, arson, puncture nail scattering, tire-burning, etc. and in September 2006, there were bombings of residential and tourist areas in 7 spots in the center of Songkla's Hat Yai city with 5 deaths and more than 60 individuals injured. The incident occurred on 16 September 2006, approximately 3 days before the coup d'etat in Bangkok.

Meanwhile, in Bangkok, there was a political crisis against Thaksin Shinawatra, followed by the 19 September 2006 coup d'etat. Coincidentally or not, the political situation in Bangkok was occurring in parallel with the violence in the south with increasing frequency and intensity in August and a month earlier. However, the ensuing result of the coup was that the military government of General Surayuth Julanont was distinctive in issuing the "Deep South Peacebuilding Policy" by Order of the Prime Minister no. 206/2549, allowing the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) to play a leading role in terms of both strategic and tactical tasks. Meanwhile, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) was also revived after being dismantled by the Thaksin government.

The new SBPAC was designated to play a role in coordinating civil and economic development affairs. The foremost tool in solving the southern issue of the General Surayudh government was issuing the Internal Security Act of B.E. 2551 (2008 AD), which granted power to ISOC in directing the SBPAC to implement all policies concerning the Deep South. In addition, in Section 21 of the mentioned Act, it was also stated that those who committed wrong-doing but decided to surrender themselves to the authorities, the court of justice may order these individuals to be trained at any designated location for no more than 6 months, opening another venue for compromise and negotiations to end the violence.

Nonetheless, violence in the Deep South intensified even further in 2007, as can be observed that there were as many as 213 incidents in February 2007. Afterward, in April, there were 210 incidents, while in June there were as many as 247 incidents. The security sector at the time, particularly the Royal Thai Army, mobilized massive reinforcement to the Deep South. The mentioned process involved combining forces in the military, the police, and civilian services of more than 60,000 individuals. Soldiers were rallied from the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Region Armies to perform massive surround-and-search operations in violent areas e.g. Bannang Sata District in Yala Province, and Ra-ngae, Sungai Padi, and Rueso Districts in Narathiwat Province. Under the power granted by the Royal Decree for Administration under the State of Emergency of B.E. 2548 ("the Emergency Decree") and by military authority according to the Martial Laws Act of B.E. 2457 (1914 AD), more than 3,000 individuals were detained in 2007 (most of whom were subsequently released).

It appeared that the frequency of unrest was significantly reduced from 2008 onwards. On the other hand, it should be noted that the decrease in the number of incidents had no significant correlation with the impact in term of the number of casualties on the daily and monthly basis. In other words, policy-based operations and de-escalatory measures using military might during that time had an effect on the frequency or number of incidents of unrest, but had no significance on the changes in the rate of deaths and injuries in each month.

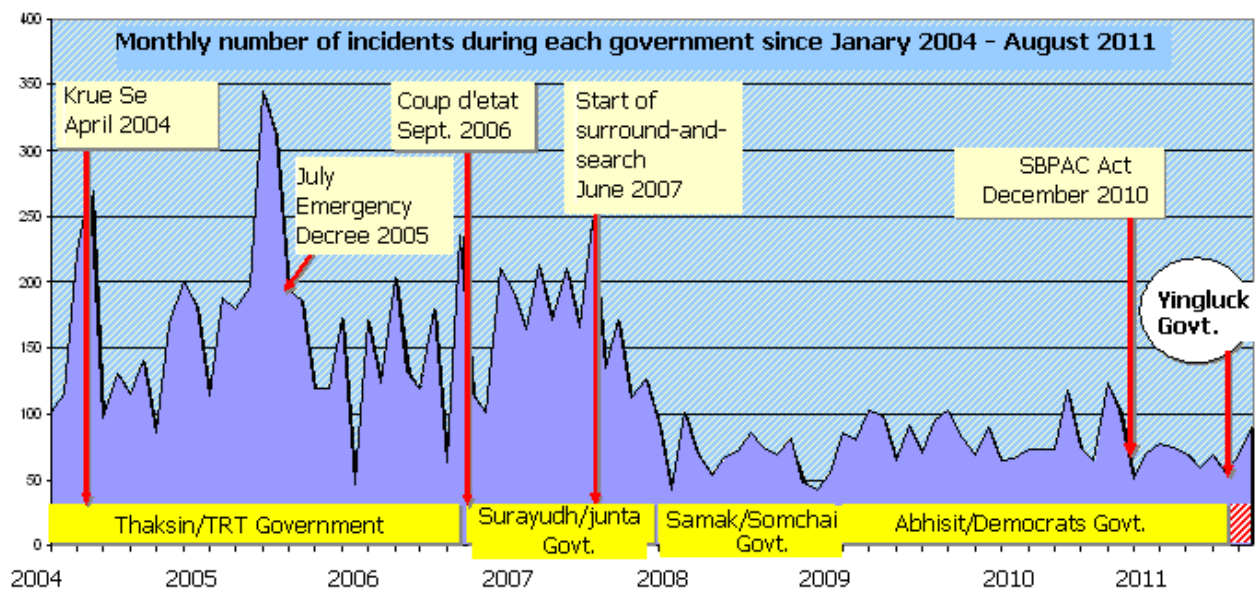
During the Samak Sundaravej and and Somchai Wongsawat governments, the situation of unrest in the Deep South also had the same fluctuating pattern. The government was totally occupied with the turbulences of "yellow shirts" (People's Alliance for Democracy) in Bangkok to the point that it had no time to pay serious attention to the southern unrest. Up to this point, as time went by, the southern issue had formulated itself to become a constant violence with its own life cycle.

During the Abhisit Vejjajiva and the Democrats Party's government, starting from December 2008, there were attempts to solve the policy of the South through institutionalization and the structural adjustments of policy implementation by commissioning a group of ministers and civil

servants from various agencies overseeing the problems of the Deep South. The Special Ministerial Committee for Development of the 5 Southern Border Provinces Special Zone was then formed to determine the special development plans and projects. In addition, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) also underwent restructuring to become an official and permanent organ by issuing the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre Act of B.E. 2553 (2010 AD), allowing the mentioned organization to become a juristic person with authority to oversee development and administration in the civilian sectors detached from the military or the ISOC.

On one hand, the state has implemented social and economic development plans to address the lack of material goods, emphasized on respect for human rights, increased the use of forensic science, installed CCTV cameras, and used technology to make arrests and trials, and encouraged the locals to become involved in security, e.g. increasing the number of assistant village chiefs and Defense Volunteers (DVs), and hiring graduate volunteers from the local people.

The core concepts of the "political before military" approach of the Abhisit government were the emphasis on economic development and the special plans for development of Deep South provinces, with large spending on many projects to raise the level of income and standards of living, economic revival, investment, and connecting the economy to the neighboring country, with the SBPAC as the main organ for mobilization and coordination.

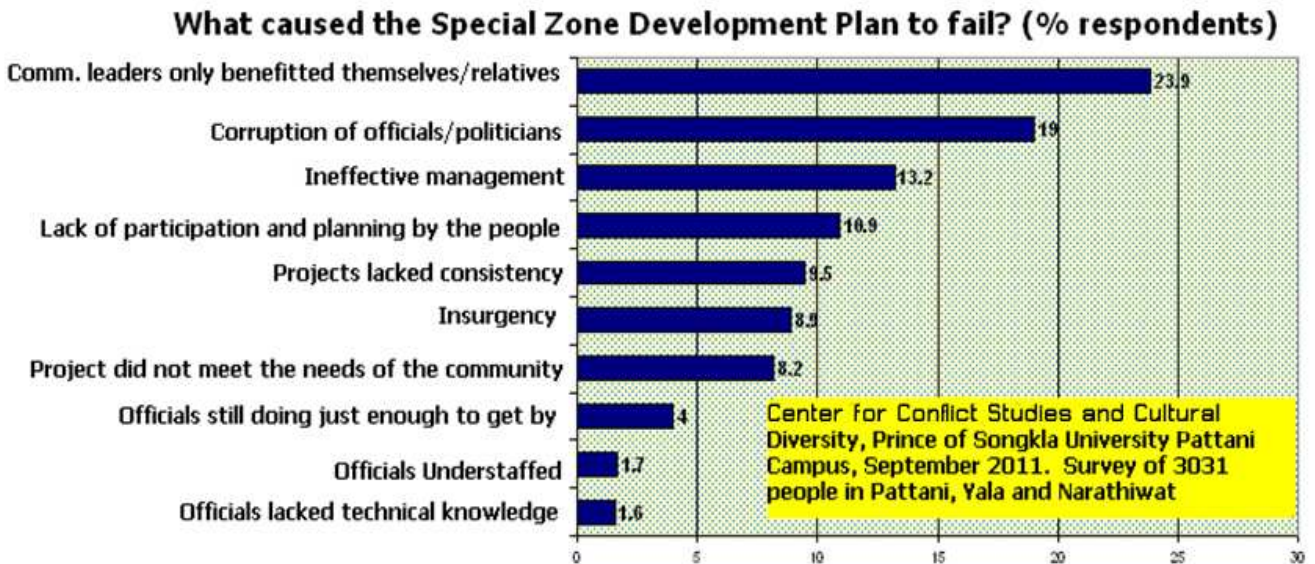


Yet the unrest in the deep south still fluctuated at the same level, while the violence become rather intense in certain months in 2009 and 2010. For example, in March 2009, there were a total of 103 incidents, and in September 2009 there were a total of 102 incidents. The

argument that the Abhisit government was able to reduce the level of unrest thus remained doubtful.

Furthermore, from evaluation of local economic development projects which were initiated in the deep south during 2010, although many local people were satisfied to receive benefits, such as receiving the hand-out project on cattle, goats, chicken, and catfishes, but the efforts were nonetheless criticized by the people as being "top-down" in nature and did not allow the local people to be truly involved in the decision-making process.

A commonly cited problem was that the benefits normally would go to the local leaders, creating problems of non-transparency among responsible civil servants and politicians, and the administration still lacked efficiency, all of which are commonly found in activities of the Thai state.



### Conclusion: Problem-Solving Approach, to Stay in Place or to Move Forward?

During the elections, the Puea Thai party started to make its political campaign by proposing the policy of "special form of local government", which was in harmony with the demands of academics and civil societies movement in the Deep South, proposing a "Pattani City" type of administration, a peaceful approach to resolve the conflict by creating a special form of local government under the Constitution. Although candidates from the Puea Thai Party did not



win a single seat in all electoral regions in the South, the promises made to the public still remain. Furthermore, in all electoral regions of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat Provinces, if one combining the votes of candidates from political parties raising the issue of special administrative zone, including Mathubhumi and Puea Thai Parties, candidates from parties with policy to reform the local governance and reshape the power structures would gain more votes than the parties proposing the former form of governance in all electoral districts. However, the said parties did not win the election because they were competing against each other. Even so, there exists a hidden message that signifies the support of a large number of local people for the fully decentralized, autonomous governance agenda.

The governance agenda thus reflects the understanding of the root-causes of the problem. It should be cautious that the mindset about Southern unrest in Thai society has never escaped the pre-existing frame. Each time that a new policy was proposed, people would try to throw out new things, while ignoring the existing knowledge or the results of the prior deliberations. Certain new policy proposals were thus a repetition of the old ones and staying in place where there were mistakes. Consequently, the Thai society could not enlighten the causes of unrest and regressed back to the argument that the unrest simply consisted of petty crimes committed by "petty criminals" or "drug dealers", as is occurring at the moment, despite the fact that the substantiating evidence is weak, unclear and lacking reliability. Such faltering discourse is merely speculation and faux pas hypotheses.

The central part of Southern issues is the ethnicity and identity factor. If the root-cause is ethnicity, followed by the issue of religion that is related to ethnicity, the approach and strategy in solving the root-cause would have been clearer. The ethno-religious factor has political implication; creating an unsolvable crisis for over one hundred years. The consequence was that the state has been in a chronic state of legitimacy-deficit. Based on ethno-religious factor, resolution model would be more explicit in directly solving the conflict and violence. In term of administration, for years, the government has tried to modify its structure. However, so long as the administrative structure itself remained embedded within the older frameworks, the fundamental problem would not be resolved. The valid issue would always be disregarded, and the violence would never be gone, while "the power structure has not changed".

Then, how should these changes be done? The key issue here is to directly deal with issue of ethnicity, history and religion, while creating a new legitimacy in politics and governance. The special form of local government may be more direct to addressing the core question, more appropriate than restructuring the administration in order to bring about an 'integrated management.' It is supposed that once the power structure is adjusted, other mentioned issues

should be gradually tackled in a systematic manner not very long afterward through new mechanisms that would be checked and monitored by social forces.

This is how to fundamentally unravel the Southern quandary. However, this conflict resolution model must be incorporated with deliberation of various sectors parallel to what the civil societies in the Deep South are currently undertaking, in which such processes are undertaken at different steps, dimensions, and missions.

To conclude, the end result of power and structural changes is dependent on ideas about conflict resolution by peaceful means. Therefore, such changes must be associated with the process of creating and broadening a public space for "dialogues" between various parties involved in the conflict leading towards negotiations to solve the Deep South problem. The resolution proposal must then be conducive to a peaceful transition in order to transform conflict from that of violence into ideological differences based on just and peace for all sides. Such peace processes would in due course serve as the basis for the state legitimacy in the long run.

**Remark:** This report available on <http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/2305> (27 September 2011)