

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The southernmost provinces of Thailand comprise Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. The region borders the Gulf of Thailand to the north and north-east, Malaysia to the east and south, and Songkla province of Thailand to the west. The total area of the three provinces is 1,962 square kilometers and 80 percent of the population is Muslim, with the remainder almost entirely Buddhist. The ethnicity of the people in this region is mixed, many being of Chinese ancestry. Thailand has a plural society comprising people of widely different religious beliefs and diverse social traditions and culture. In southern Thailand, which comprises much of the upper part of the Malay Peninsula, several ethnic groups live together in a multicultural society, and a similar situation exists in western Malaysia, which comprises the southern part of the Malay Peninsula (Kounchart 2000). Conquered by Bangkok in 1786 and incorporated into the Kingdom of Thailand in 1902, the three southernmost provinces of Thailand formed the independent sultanate of Pattani, which was established during the conversion of the southern Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago to Islam around the 11th century (Syukri 2005). For most of the 20th century the region was relatively peaceful, with Muslims, Thai and Chinese Buddhists, and persons of other faiths including Christians able to practice their religion and live, attend school and work together in villages, towns and cities (Office of the National Security Council 1994).

However, the situation changed with the raid on a military base in Narathiwat by insurgents who stole a large quantity of weapons in early January 2004. Four soldiers were killed in this raid and twenty schools were set on fire around the same time. Since then, the insurgency has increased in strength and continued unabated, claiming more than 2000 lives (Croissant 2005). In an earlier study (Satha-Anand 1987) had suggested that the underlying causes of the historical violence were complex, and based on differences between the southern region and other regions of Thailand with respect to its society, economy, culture and history.

The causes of the insurgency are thus complex but to some extent understandable. The official language of the region is Thai, and the government of Thailand is strongly influenced by its citizens in the northern regions. Such influences can alienate people in a predominantly Muslim region of the Kingdom. Some Muslims feel that they do not have an important place and status in their society (Stephen 1994). Muslims in Southern Thailand are faced with conflicting expectations and become uncertain of what they should do. They can be said to experience a situation where no clear rules are adopted. They can then become easily influenced and unpredictable in their behaviour (Uamnoey et al 2005). Stronger identification with religion can then provide economic, social and political sustenance, as well as security.

The basic traditional culture and religion in the southernmost provinces are different from those common to the rest of Thailand. The terrorist activity in southern Thailand can be explained both by geography and what might be called an alienation factor. The terrorists' enemy is the Thai government and its representatives in government offices, the army, police force, public schools and their teachers, and the Buddhist temples and their monks. Actions against ordinary citizens are also usually seen as actions against

the Thai government, because the government is responsible for security. These insurgent actions in turn prompt the government to act more strongly to ensure safety of life and property (Southern Border Peace Building Command 2005). In this way violent conflict escalates.

If the government is to be successful in providing safety and security for the people of southern Thailand it needs clear knowledge of patterns and trends in terrorist events, and this fact is the basic rationale for our study.

The overall aim of our study is to describe how the risk rate of a terrorist event occurring in the population resident in the study region depends on the place and time, using actual data for 2004-2005. It is hoped that use of this model will be a tool to assist the Thai government in rectifying the situation in Southern Thailand.

1.2 Objectives

Our study aims to describe how the risk rate of the terrorist event occurring in the population resident in the study region depends on the place and time, using actual data 2004 – 2005.

The risk of a terrorist event depends on its location and time of occurrence. The overall location of interest for our study comprises the three southernmost provinces of Thailand – Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat – together with the four southernmost districts of Songkla province (Chana, ThePa, SabaYoi and NaTawi). The overall period of interest in our study covers the two years immediately following the first serious outbreak of terrorist violence – the raid on the military base in Narathiwat – that is, from the beginning of January 2004 to the end of December 2005.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

Our research hypothesis may be defined in terms of the extent to which the methodology we use is useful for effective policy planning aimed at reducing the risk of terrorist events. This is possible if the model we develop for predicting such events is valid for such forecasting. However, even if our study shows that the risk variation over the study period in the target population is explainable by a statistical model, it does not guarantee that they can be used to forecast future events. This is because the history of the recent high level of violence is restricted to two years. Despite this limitation, it is possible that the methodology we develop will prove useful in the future.

1.4 Definition of Terms

Terrorist events include various events such as

Shooting is the act or process of firing guns or other projectile weapons such as bows or crossbows.

Shooting Assault is the act or process of firing guns or other projectile weapons such as bows or crossbows and the threat of violence caused by an immediate show of force.

Bombing is a device capable of producing damage to material and injury or death to personnel when it is detonated or ignited.

Firearm is a device that can be used as a weapon that fires either single or multiple projectiles propelled at high velocity by the gases produced through rapid, confined burning of a propellant.

Assault Assets is the threat of violence caused by an immediate show of force.

Dead body is dead people and found body.

Bombing injury a device capable of producing damage to material and injury or death to personnel when it is detonated or ignited have people injury.

Burning to give off heat or be hot, be on fire.

Road Nail Trap is a device used for a trap car or motor vehicle to move.

Property Damage is to destroy public or private property or government property and other.

The severity of the outcome was coded as an integer from 1 to 9 as given in Table 1.1.

Type of terrorist event	Severity
minor property damage	1
major property damage	2
psychological threat	3
vehicle trap or armed robbery	5
gun robbery/arrest of terrorist	6
serious fire or bombing injury	7
murder by shooting or road nail trap	8
murder by bombing or beheading	9

Table 1.1: Classification of events by severity

The risk rate of events for each subdistrict in a specified period of time is measured by dividing the total number of events recorded in the subdistrict over the period by the corresponding population resident in the subdistrict in 1000s according to the 2000 Population Census of Thailand.

1.5 Review of Literature

During the years 1993-2000, there were few incidents of separatist violence, although 19 policemen were killed and 50 insurgency-related incidents across the three most affected provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat occurred in the following three years, and in 2002 several police stations were attacked (Croissant 2005).

However, just as scholars such as Rahimmula (2004) concluded that the Thai Government had pacified political tension in the south, the situation deteriorated abruptly with the raid on the military base in Narathiwat (Sugunnasil 2005).

The situation that has developed in Southern Thailand has parallels in many other regions of the world that have experienced terrorist violence in recent years, and much has been written in the press and in scholarly articles about the roots causes of these problems. Areas that have suffered similar conflicts in the past include Burundi, Canada, Cyprus, East Timor, Eritrea, India, Lebanon, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, South Africa, and Sri Lanka (Stavenhagen 1998). Since 11 September and the consequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States the scope and intensity of terrorism has escalated all over the world (Moawad 2005).

After the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 the United States dramatically raised its concerns with radical Islamist groups in Southeast Asia, “particularly those in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Singapore that are known to have ties to the Al Qaeda terrorist network” (Zachary 2003). However, this report, made to the Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, while admitting that some affected countries in the region (notably

Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines) responded quickly by cracking down on militant groups and sharing intelligence with the United States and Australia, some of those with majority or sizable minority Muslim populations have viewed increased American pressure and military presence in their region “with ambivalence because of the political sensitivity of the issue with both mainstream Islamic and secular nationalist groups.” This group includes Thailand.

1.6 Contents of Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters, as follows.

In the current chapter we have briefly described the background and rationale for our study and described some relevant literature.

In Chapter 2 we describe the methodology used for our study. These include statistical methods, graphical methods for displaying data and geographical mapping for comparing risk rates of terrorist event occurrence by location and time, and also statistical modeling based on negative binomial generalized linear models.

Chapter 3 gives details of preliminary results, using sub-districts as the geographical regions.

Chapter 4 presents the results based on the statistical modeling, using districts as the geographical regions.

In Chapter 5 we discuss our findings, and suggest some possibilities for further study.