

**CHE MOHD AZIZ Yaacob**

Universiti Utara Malaysia

## **AGGRESSIVE CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: ROOTS OF HOSTILITY AND AGGRESSION**

*Violent conflict occurred in Southern Thailand in the year 2004. Since then, there has continued to be a spiral of violence without any sign of abatement. Events such as shooting, ambushing, bombing, arson, kidnapping and threatening letters constantly threaten the local inhabitants and exacerbate tensions between the Patani United Liberation Movement and the Thai government. Despite a pro-active effort by the Thai government and civil interest groups in searching for solutions, there has been no sign of a resolution. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to this dialogue by exploring the roots of the conflict from the perspective of the ordinary people involved; especially those supporters of the Patani United Liberation Movement. Discussion will focus on the role of violence during the conflict and will also consider suggestions as to a resolution based on non-violent methods using an approach known as conflict transformation within peace and conflict psychology.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict in Southern Thailand, Patani Liberation Movement, violence and aggression, and potential solutions.*

### **Introduction**

The Patani Conflicts, better known as the Southern Thailand Conflicts, re-emerged on January 4, 2004 when a military camp in Narathiwat province was attacked and robbed by an unknown group. In the attack, four military personnel were killed and 366 weapons were stolen (Yaacob 2009:16). Starting from this event, Patani was shaken again by several terrorist attacks including bombings, shootings, burning of schools, beheadings and kidnappings. The situation worsened as casualties and destruction of property were reported almost every day. According to the statistics released by the Centre for Conflict Studies and Cultural Diversity (CSCD), Prince of Songkhla University, 11,074 incidents have occurred in seven years (January 2004 to August 2011), leading to 4,846 deaths and 7,995 injured. From these casualties, 2,856 (58.9%) were reported to be Muslims and 1,857 (38.3%) Buddhists. Among the injured, 4,854 (60.7%) were Buddhists and 2,616 (32.7%) were Muslims (Jitpiromsri 2011). The Thai government has been sending more than 60,000 members of the security forces, including the army, rangers, police and volunteers since 2007 to maintain public safety and control the rebel movement (Statistics

from Deep South Watch 2009). However, the conflict has not been overcome and the terrorist attacks still occur and the number of deaths among civilians and security forces continues to increase. Although the security forces were sent with systematic strategies to control the Patani Liberation Movement Association (PLMA)<sup>1</sup> and find a solution to the conflict in Patani, there seems to be no progress to a permanent solution. These failures could be due to two core factors. First, the corrupt intention of the security forces who want to continue manipulating this conflict in order to get the funding and budget from Bangkok for their personal gain. They behave in a nonchalant manner and sometimes their activities lead to conflict.<sup>2</sup> Second, the shifting in approaches and strategies of the PLMA make it difficult for the security forces to track them down and arrest them.

Therefore, this article discusses the issues of why PLMA has resurrected its struggles after the silence in the 1980's, and why they have chosen to continue the struggle. Furthermore, the article discusses why they are continuing with the hybrid policy of peace negotiations as well as violence. Here I will apply Ted Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation theory to understand and analyse the struggle of the PLMA. Therefore, this paper discusses the causes and changes in PLMA's struggle and tries to apply an appropriate approach to the peace process in Patani.

## **Background of Conflict**

### ***Composition of Population***

Southern Thailand comprises 14 provinces covering 70,700 square kilometers<sup>3</sup> making up 13.3% of the entire territories of Thailand (Makishima 2008). In terms of conflict, upheaval occurs only in Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla and surrounding areas such as Satun.<sup>4</sup> The third largest of the conflict region is inhabited by ethnic Malays who make up 1.8 million of the population, which is equivalent to 80% compared with the Thai-Buddhist population (McCargo 2007:3). Geographically, these four regions comprise a land area of 13,732 square kilometres and are located at latitude 5°35' to 6°55' north.<sup>11</sup> In terms of language, Malay Muslims of Patani (MMP) speak three dialects. The first group speaks the Patani Malay dialect and uses Jawi or Arabic for writing. The second group comprises those who not only speak Thai but read and write in Thai as well. They consist mostly of the younger generation as a result of the government assimilation of Thailand. The third group of people are those who speak the Patani Malay dialect but do not use the Jawi script to write and read (Mahmood 1990:118).

Economically, these regions are fertile and rich in natural resources such as tin, gas and crude oil. However, these three regions are still behind in economic development compared to other regions due to the prolonged political turmoil. Residents of the three territories are still under the poverty line where

their per capital income is much lower than people in other provinces across the country.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of education, it is compulsory for them to follow the national education system based on Thai culture and Buddhist religion. MMP children at preschool level are allowed to receive an education based on Malay culture and Islamic religion. However, from primary school level until university, they must follow the curriculum determined by the government of Thailand. To develop the Thai and Malay culture in education, private schools have been established by MMP as religious schools and shelters. The curriculum is based on knowledge of Islam and a little about the Malay culture and language. Nevertheless, they are required to teach the Thai language and culture as a prerequisite for approval to establish an educational institution. Culturally, they practice and adopt Malay culture that is based on the Islamic religion. Most of the cultural arts such as attire, traditional games, entertainment, handicrafts and others are the same as those practiced by the Malays in Malaysia. In terms of culture, they have adopted a Malay culture based on Islam.

### ***History of Conflict***

The conflict began in 1786 when the government successfully conquered the kingdom of Siam Patani Sultanate through a series of wars. The conquest changed the structure of government and the government of Siam used a Divide and Rule policy in Patani. Patani was broken down into seven regions and a puppet ruler was appointed for each of the regions, intended to weaken the power of the Malays.<sup>6</sup> This method was aimed at decentralization of power, initiated by the Europeans. European power became more apparent when the French succeeded in conquering the Eastern region of the Mekong River in the south (Syukri 2002:81). Similarly, the British government actively dominated from the Northeast of Burma, South China and states in North Malaya to the Kra Isthmus (Pitsuwan 1982:29). Chulalongkorn, the king of Siam formed the Thesaphiban for centralization of power in Patani. In 1897 the Minister of Home Affairs issued the policies of District Administration known as Phraratchabanyat Pakkhrong Thongti. Two years later this act was further reinforced with the introduction of the regulations on administrative region known as Kho Bangkhap Pokkhrong Huamung (Pitsuwan 1982:28). Both these acts were generally intended to break the Patani provinces and the sovereignty of the Malay rulers. This shift led to the resistance of the Malay rulers of the kingdom of Siam as they became aware of their waning powers over Patani. The strife came to a peak in 1902 when Tengku Abdul Kadir, a king in Patani province was arrested and stripped of his position by the Malay rulers in Patani.

Similarly, the Malay rulers in other provinces also suffered the same fate. After being arrested, the Malay rulers of Malay in Patani were stripped

of their powers. The Malay rulers wanted to triumph again to protect their rights in Patani, which previously was championed by the aristocracy, but later, the struggle included the religious and local leaders. Their resistance involved various strategies including gaining leverage and confidence from the British government in Malaya to pressure the government of Siam. Their efforts failed when the British signed the Bangkok Agreement or the Anglo-Siamese Treaty with Siam in 1909 (Pitsuwan 1982:29). This border agreement granted freedom to the kingdom of Siam and left the decision of Patani without British interference. Starting from this point, the Siamese began to inculcate Siamese culture, identity and education into the lives of the MMP.<sup>7</sup> The most prominent MMP policy that dealt with the question of identity and culture was the Rathaniyom policy introduced by Phibul Songkhram in 1938. According to that policy, only Thai cultural characteristics were allowed to grow in Thailand.<sup>8</sup> MMP had to once again deal with their group of Repressive policies which forced people to abandon their Malay-Muslim identity and adopt a Thai-Buddhist identity. In response to that policy, Haji Sulong bin Abdul Kadir, a famous scholar al-Patani established *Haiah al-Tanfziah li al-Ahkam al-Shariyyah*, and implemented Board Shariah Law in 1939. This organization was dedicated to creating scholars in Patani and organizing activities that would defend the sanctity of Islam. They established a seven-point programme to restore peace in Patani (Fathy 1994:80).

Haji Sulong began the struggle to free MMP from Thai-Buddhist influence and assimilation and enlisted the help of the Patani Malays. Tengku Mahmud Mohyideen, a son of Tengku Abdul Kadir Kamaruddin, the last king led the MMP to request the British government to unite Patani with Malaya. MMP's request was refused by the British because the British were more pro-Siamese. As a result, the British helped Siam by eliminating movements in Malaya, including the Federation Prosecutor Malay Kingdom (GEMPAR)<sup>9</sup> which aimed to help MMP. Tengku Mahmud Mohyideen was instructed not to engage in any activities for the separation of Patani.<sup>10</sup> British aid had weakened the resistance of MMP and allowed the government to threaten the Malay leaders. Many Malay leaders went missing or were murdered secretly, including Haji Sulong and Tengku Mahmud Mohyideen. Consequently, turbulence was controlled by the Kingdom of Siam and subsided with insurgency activities. However, by the end of 1960 and by early 1970, the turbulence re-surfaced. This agitation was led by groups of separatist movements to gain independence as per the aspirations of Malaya in 1957.<sup>11</sup> Most of the leaders of this separatist movement consisted of individuals who had obtained higher education from within and outside the country. They used weapons and violence in their struggle for independence of Patani. Their struggle is still active today, and it is believed that the incidences of murder and burning of public property are not only acts by the separatist movement but also by the authorities of Thailand.

## Conflict Issues

Political developments in the three Southern provinces of Thailand were plagued by acts such as oppression, discrimination, murder and corruption. Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister of Thailand and also the director of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) when interviewed stated: *“The main problem in Southern Thailand is political, while social, economic, identity is a relatively minor.”*<sup>12</sup>

Political issues in this conflict have led to political separation. MMP Through the use of weapons to fight the separatist movement to liberate their territory from the Thai government, the MMP wanted to form their own sovereign government. This issue arose during the post-colonial government of Patani Siam in 1786. This situation continued from generation to generation among the MMP in the struggle for independence from the government of Thailand. Several writings and publications were written on the unrest and difficulties of Malay Muslims of Patani (MMP) during the Thai government rule. As a result of Thai government involvement in the politics of Patani, the struggles of the MMP worsened and a lot of violence was reported. Cases of missing and dead political leaders was a norm in this conflict, often creating tension that culminated in the deaths of many people involved in any particular event.<sup>13</sup> This struggle for independence began with a high spirit of nationalism. Independence was not only about political power struggle over the three regions but included practicing freedom of identity, culture, social, economic and education as a minority group. Surin Pitsuwan stated the nature of Patani, that Malay Muslims belonged to the Malay world, but politically, they were governed by the Buddhist-centric Thai government (Pitsuwan 1982:28). These claims arose from the Thai government’s decision that denied rights to the territories of the MMP. This denial is based on the constitution of Thailand that does not allow any territory in Thailand to have divided sovereignty. So, denial was transformed through the policies and approaches that were blocking the claim. These policies indirectly formed a barrier and a gap between the citizens and the government. Finally, the relations of the two groups were polarised because of the Thai government military approach and formed the base for prolonged conflict among them. The Thai government sought a military approach to suppress them and called for temporary reconciliation.

The MMP experienced an assimilation process in history, identity and culture when the government introduced the Thai policy. Thai-Buddhist culture requires all citizens to practice it. The Thai Buddhist government applied their own policies which were against the Islamic religion and Malay culture. As a result, the MMP faced several difficulties and a lot of hardship, since the Thai government policies were against their Islamic practices. The Thai government did not respect the values of their lives and this influenced the MMP to stand up in defence of their rights as Muslim Malays. From a historical

perspective, this assimilation started during the regime of Phibul Songkhram when he introduced the Rathaniyom and which was continued by subsequent leaders. Under this policy, the Malay language and culture was to be abolished, marriage laws and faraid were set aside Malay attire was banned while western style of dressing was required. At the same time, the individual's name as well as the province's name was changed to Siamese spelling (*Belitan Sejarah* 2000). For example, Senggora became Songkhla, Ligor became Nakhorn Sri Thamarat, Becah Herong was changed to Cho Ai Rong, Teluk Hala became TaLoHaLO, Bendang Setar was Ban Nang Sata, Jambu became Yaring and Teluban was renamed Saiburi. This policy has had a significant impact until today. Many of the younger generation no longer enjoy speaking in Malay and Thai languages.<sup>14</sup> Even then, the MMP still practiced their Muslim culture. For example, during the reign of Phibul, there was an attempt to change to Sharia Law from Civil Law but it was not successful. They still practice their religious values.

### **Peace Building: The Relative deprivation and Conflict Transformation** *Relative deprivation: the causes of political violence*

Relative deprivation refers to the discrepancy between the expected responses to the value of capabilities (Gurr 1971:37). As such, it has a specific role and functions of the cause of the rebellion. Relative deprivation occurs when people push their dream to achieve something even though they are unable to do so. This approach refers to the levels specified value to identify community groups or individuals who think and act otherwise in their lives. Relative deprivation approach has to do with the cause of the rebellion or revolution in a country. According to Edward, all rebellion has insisted on practicing the elements of their wants. Committed acts of violence are in line with the emphasis on sustainability (Edwards 1927:33).

Pettees says, according to his concept of stress, minorities feel stress if they are not met with their basic needs such as freedom and security, which are not negotiable (Gurr 1971:38). As a result, minorities in a country will revolt if they feel their basic rights are being denied.

One of the elements of the theory of relative deprivation is frustration which leads to violence. Within a conflict background, in socio-economic development in a country, there is a relationship between behaviour of rebellion and their attitudes. Frustration arises when the government reduces the short-term socio-economic plan in order to improve the long-term plan. This kind of frustration arises when there is an imbalance between the implementation of inspiration (Gurr 1971:39). Crozier stated that the key element that causes frustration among the rebels is the inability to achieve something, which is different from systematic frustration (Crozier 1960:16). Therefore, inspiration will produce unrealistic feeling of frustration, while unrealistic expectations

deprivation produces feelings. Frustration can be tolerated but deprivation cannot be compromised.

In addition, there are three concepts that can be associated with relative deprivation as a cause of violent or aggressive behaviour. First, is conflict or Dissonance which uses inconsistent cognitive elements. Cognitive elements refer to an individual or community groups and their knowledge about the capacity, the actions and the circumstances surrounding them. During the conflict period, the government is ready to enforce their policy on the communities (minorities/rebellion) but the community is not ready to receive them. As a result, the minority is likely to change the view of the government and will try to change the leader or government policy through political actions.

Second, is a situation of Anomie, where the expected value is a priority in the action by a community group even though the surrounding circumstances do not permit it. Minority groups do not see the development of socio-political and economic structure while achieving the desired values. Anomie can be detected in the community through the consent of community members of the weak against the acceptance of the norms of existing justice. Anomie in a society can be categorized into three types - namely weakness in the norms of human life; the existence of strong norms in society but in conflict with each other and thirdly, neglect of the norms of life. Therefore, Anomie will contribute to the development of behaviour that violates the norms of civil society, ultimately producing alternative norms in the form of rebellion.<sup>15</sup> Anomie correlates with deprivation because minorities are not satisfied with the existing values in the social structure. Agreed values when brought into the global context will be faced with limited spaces for survival (Gurr 1971:43). Anomie occurs because minorities are still sticking to the normative values of the old and are faced with the norms of the new society (the development of the modern world) which ultimately leads to feelings of frustration and anger.

The relative deprivation approach can be attributed to the behaviour of the conflict. Conflict can be considered as a process and sometimes as an event. Conflict as a process occurs when a minority group struggles to get status, power and scarce resources. The values of restricted conflict prompt aggressive action either to ensure that the enemy is killed, injured or destroyed. There is a relative relationship between conflict and the approach of relative deprivation theory, because there are shared values and wishes of the group. This approach is suitable for discussion of case studies, particularly in the transformation that occurred in PLMO due to the effects of structural conflicts in Patani.



## **Patani Liberation Movement Organization (PLMO): BRN, PULO, BIPP and GMIP**

### ***Barisan Revolusi Nasional Patani (BRN)***

It was founded on March 13, 1960 in a famous Islamic institution or in the Siamese language, Thamwitya Mulniti in the Yala province. Among its founders were Ustad Abdul Karim Hassan, Dr. Haji Harun, Wan Muhammad Dude, DJ Razali Yaacob Aaron, Yussoff Chapakiya, Ahmad Shariff and Abdul Qayoom. The National ideology based organizations and Islamic Socialism (NASOSI), were influenced by the temperamental Sukarno who was fighting for the independence of Indonesia (Abd. Malek 1993:323). The ambition of this group was to form the Republic of Patani and fight for independence. In terms of administration, BRN had proper administrative order. At the top, BRN was led by the Central Chamber (DPP), whose members would convene to make a decision. In addition, there were several branches of the Revolutionary Armed Forces under it like Patani (ABREP), Urban Guerrilla Brigade (GURBAN), BRN Congress (KOGAP) and the Revolutionary People's Commando Team Patani (PKRRP). The establishment of ABREP which was under the helm of the military wing of BRN was believed to be influenced by the Movement Armed Republic of Indonesia (ABRI). This movement was led by Pak Yeh carried out guerrilla attacks and acts of sabotage against the security of Thailand. To further intensify attacks against the security of Thailand, in 1974 BRN established Guerilla City Brigade (GURBAN). Previously ABREP only operated in the vicinity of the villages and remote areas. So, in order to expand the scope of their struggles, GURBAN was established to play a role in a series of attacks in the cities. This movement was led by Lukman Iskandar and many security forces stormed ABREP Thailand in collaboration with the movement in the villages.

By 2004, BRN practiced both violence and negotiations in their policy in Patani. Armed forces consisted of young people who continued their missions and struggles with guidance from the old leadership.<sup>16</sup> Labeled as Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK) by the Thai government they carried out mob attacks on the military, control posts, bombed military places together and so on.<sup>17</sup> BRN changed its policy politically to collaborate with other organizations because they had realized that they were alone in their conflict.<sup>18</sup> A cooperation agreement was sealed between BRN and PULO in terms of division of labor. BRN, especially those with strength in Patani at the local level were given the mandate to continue performing various operations and activities in the form of pressing the Thai government to negotiate. On the other hand, PULO policy was different from BRN. PULO which had strong relations outside the country received support in terms of funds to pressure the Thai government.<sup>19</sup> While in negotiations with the Government of Thailand, BRN showed a clear change when it agreed to hold a dialogue to resolve side issues. However, today BRN



is more open when working and PULO mandated to have a dialogue with the government of Thailand. BRN-Congress leadership refused the autonomy but they aim to gain independence from the Thai government.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Patani National Liberation Front (BNPP)***

BNPP was established on October 9, 1970 by Tengku Abdul Jalal and Tengku Mahmud Haji Sulong Mohyideen to continue the struggle. But within a short time BNPP gave up their struggle because of ideological poverty, and it was more concerned with policy aristocracy (Wan Kadir 1990:99). Other parties which are members of the BNPP such as Patani Revolutionary Front (BRN), Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) and Gerakan Melayu Patani Raya (GEMPAR) were related groups to BNNPP (Abd. Malek 1993:319). This was discovered when there was no clear and assigned works within the movement. This movement was founded by the leading aristocratic and religious leaders. Tengku Abdul Jalal and Tengku Abdul Kadir were the founders of this organization. The ideological notion of this movement was to liberate Patani and restore the powers of the Malay Sultans who ruled before. They were political and radical. To achieve the goals of the struggle, the National Liberation Army of The People Patani led by Idris Mat Diah better known as Pak Yeh was established under the BNPP.

This separatist movement of armed forces used guerrilla tactics to undermine the security of the Thai government. There were 15 rules in the concept of the establishment of this struggle. Among the actions that were prohibited were closing down the rubber plantations, kidnapping, ransom and other acts that could cause damage to the public. In addition, every member was banned from mixing with the general public without the consent of the Revolutionary Council. They were Islamist revolutionaries and were ready at any time to establish a relationship with those who loved peace, freedom and independence. Moreover, their struggle referred to the Islamic values. In 1985, BNPP became weak because Wahyuddin Ahmad was not allowed to join the organization after three years of his medical leave.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this, the organization further deteriorated and later the name was changed to Patani Islamic Liberation Front (BIPP). Then, BIPP could continue the struggle with a political vision, to get the people prepared for the independence of Patani.

After 2004 the organization became inactive. According to Dr. Wan Kadir Che Man, one of the former leaders of this organization, he stated that he did not speak on behalf of BIPP but rather as a social activist. It is difficult to identify the development of the organization because of the absence of new leadership and their lack of action. Hence, it can be seen that the BIPP with the old leadership was seen as not wanting to stand up and fight for the ongoing struggle.

### ***Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO)***

The Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) was established on 22 January 1968 under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman or Kadir Kotanila Bera. The organization was founded at the University of Aligarh, India but later moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia because many students were drawn to joining PULO. The name 'PULO' is formed by four letters P or letters Pa in Jawi. In Arabic it is called al-Munazanah al-Mutahidah Lan Tahrin Fathoni which means Patani Liberation Organization Association. In its infancy, this movement formed a team known as the Kibas Putih in the Ternal Village, which served to expand the ideological struggle among the MMP in Patani province. However, the team was not successful and planned to return to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. PULO set up 44 teams to launch guerrilla attacks against government military camps. PULO guerrillas were divided by region such as Sri Patani (Patani), Sri Hikmah (Narathiwat) and Sri Negara (Yala).<sup>22</sup> This organization is fighting for UBANGTAPEKMA ideology:

1. Religion = Islam is the right path
2. Nation = Language and culture
3. Nationalism = Province and the economy
4. Humanitarian = Identify yourself

Their aim is to live in a free, independent, peaceful and neutral world. Among PULO's calls on the Thai government are:

1. Thai government should return Patani to the MMP to determine its future.
2. All foreigners (Thai, Chinese and others) who dominate the Patani economy should leave Patani.
3. Malay must be the official language or in offices, schools, radio, television, newspapers and so on.
4. All military forces should remove their troops from Patani (Luqman 2004).

This movement is well known. It has an organizational structure which is divided into several parts. Among others it has, administrative, political, economic, military, religious bureaus and a foreign affairs department. Through this systematic governance, PULO had the opportunity to receive financial and military aid from Libya and Syria (Hayimasae 2002:212). The administrative structure of the organization was broken down into three main parts - the Supreme Administrative Centre, Branch Administration Centre and Guerilla Army Operations Centre which was managed by a chief. In the early years, the administrative center was located in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia with

several branches in Malaysia.

Since 2004, PULO has been active in fighting for independence in Patani. There has been a change in approach and strategy of the organization in accordance with the current political environment. In terms of approach, the change can be seen in the short-term plans, long-term plans and other activities that have been enshrined in the constitution. Among the important facts are the fifth and sixth articles of the PULO constitution which are about its relations with global liberation movements and international organizations like the United Nations (UN) and other international organizations.<sup>23</sup> PULO is looking to intensifying its relations with other countries, civil societies and international organizations. According to this, PULO is extending its policy to connect with civil societies. PULO has realized the importance of the role of civil society such as academics and NGOs which will support their efforts to bring peace to Patani. Therefore, Human Rights and self-determination has been included in the PULO struggle to join the external world.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Gerakan Mujahideen Islamiya Patani (GMIP)***

This organization, also known as the United Front Mujahideen Pattani (BBMP), was established on 16 September 1985. GMIP was formed because Wahyuddin Ahmad was not allowed to rejoin the organization after 3 years of medical leave. This organization was oriented according to Islamization based on the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 (Farish 2004). It is also a movement that is truly based on Islamic principles of Quranul al-Karim, Sunnah, Ijtihad Al-Salaf and Ulama al-Salihin. To deal with the Thai government, a peaceful approach would be used but if not successful then they would consider the Jihad approach. The principals of independence are claimed on :

1. Impact of historical facts: Patani had Malay-Muslim government and political relations, economic and trade with foreign countries.
2. The remains of the Patani Sultanate which can be still be seen today.
3. Multiculturalism and population groups, language and writing, religious beliefs and cultural customs.

In accordance with the claims made, GMIP has come out with some sensible and positive steps towards the jihadist movement:

1. Patani Muslims will be involved directly or indirectly in the jihadist struggle.
2. Muslims should not forge relations with the Thai government.
3. Execute the armed resistance acts as the situation requires.
4. Take necessary action to join the countries which are interested in Thailand.

5. Taking the necessary actions to prevent foreign investment in the region.
6. Take a new approach with all countries, international organizations, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Organization of Non-Aligned Nations, especially the United Nations, to ensure support for the independence of Patani held at international forums
7. Mujahideen Pattani to assure safety and property of all citizens regardless of ethnicity and religious beliefs as long as they do not oppose this sacred struggle.
8. Mujahideen Pattani will oppose all forms of abuse, oppression, tyranny and corruption but instead will act to remove the cause of injustice and look out for the welfare of the people.
9. Will plan the economic development policy, education, administration and law in Islam, taking into account the interests of other races and religion of Islam as a pluralistic society (Abd. Malek 1993:331).

In addition, Wahyuddin Ahmad established the Malay Patani Consultative Council (MPRMP) which serves as a platform for the consolidation and unification of all Patani liberation movements. It operated as a parliament (shadow government) for Patani. Meetings revealed each party had their own agenda and own approach in the conflict. MPRMP provides room for each party representative BRN, PULO, BIPP, GMIP and others to sit at these meetings. The result was MMP made their decisions after discussions with all groups. MPRMP also acts as a conduit to appoint representatives from each party to conduct negotiations with the Thai government. According to Wahyuddin Ahmad, MPRMP, this discussion and meeting would serve as a forum to solve the internal problems among the parties.<sup>25</sup> He also believes that each party will be able to overcome issues and MPRMP will not want to interfere in the internal affairs of each party. After 2004, the GIMP and PULO worked together under the leadership of Abu Yasir Fikri. Given that GMIP did not have young leaders the mandate was then handed to PULO to continue the fight for the independence of Patani. The mandate was given together with the number of members of armed forces who had been trained by PULO.<sup>26</sup> Cooperation was also recognized by Yazid and Abu Jauwab Hamka as Abu Yasir PULO military leadership in an interview. They stated this collaboration was not only official but also acted as the mandate which allowed them to get their decisions to PULO.<sup>27</sup>

### **Cause and durability Violence: An Analysis of Conflicts in Patani**

The aim of this section is to see if there has been a relative deprivation of PLMA since 2004, compared with its early period. Crozier as discussed explained the main elements that caused the frustration of the rebels was the inability to do

anything to achieve what they wanted. Inspiration often produced unrealistic frustration while unrealistic expectations produced feelings of deprivation. In accordance with the Patani case, it is clear that PLMA experienced many frustrations in 1960's and 1970's because of the failure of government services of Haji Sulong and unfair pressure of the Thai government. The PLMA armed uprising was an aggressive action that had experienced a relative deprivation. PLMA then realized they had to commence a military struggle to liberate Patani but they did not have enough tactics and weapons to commence their struggle. As a result they suffered failure after failure, adding to the growing sense of frustration. Abu Jihad the veteran leader in the state BRN had an ideology and passion for justice in Patani but did not know the right method to do this. Therefore, it can be understood that PLMA did not have the capacity (skills, knowledge and weapons) to fulfill their dreams of independence.

The cultural background and attitude of MMP showed that they had enough background to form the independence movement. Patani culture was more concerned with relationship but the MMP insisted on the rights of the Patani people. The MMP were ready to sacrifice for their struggle. This MMP attitude can be compared with the attitudes of the Malays in Satun province and the Chin and Mon population in Northern Thailand. Even though they faced the experience of suppression by the Thai government, they did not react to the government. They underwent the assimilation process of the Thai government. As they had limited resources, MMP realized their financial situation was limited compared with other areas. MMP realized that they would fail even in minor issues. As discussed previously, BRN also faced the experience of limited resources. Similarly, because of the protracted dispute between the former and new leadership of PULO, the new leader could remove the former leader. So, it can be seen that the MMP easily made unrealistic decisions. In other words, the plan for their struggle was not well organized or systematic.

The Islamic religion also influenced the formation of these unrealistic dreams. As previously discussed, Islam played a role basically in guiding BRN or PULO in this dream. The Syariah Court and decisions were a threat to the people during this conflict period. Cooperation between BRN and PULO caused their people to unite and work together for the sake of Allah. The leaders acknowledged that their struggle depended on the Quran, Hadith and Sunnah for blessings. In the battlefield, the armed troops had a clear idea that they were fighting for land and water as sanctioned by Islam. So Islam was the main factor that motivated PLMO to form a visible dream. Even so, members of the BRN and PULO believed that Allah Almighty would give them victory because they were right and followed the commands of religion.

Finally, in connection with external support for the struggle for independence that allowed BRN and PULO to form a dream to achieve it. There are two factors that motivate PLMO, the first in terms of both moral

support and material support. Moral support refers to similar conflicts that arise in other regions. BRN and PULO feel that they are not alone in this separation issue. As is already known, there are two regions in Southeast Asia that have experienced conflict namely, the Kingdom of Mindanao and Aceh. Libya and Syria supplied military training and arms and ammunitions to the PULO. This support continued into the 1970's and 1980's. Many students from Patani were sponsored by PULO to study in the Middle East and some of them had been absorbed into military service. Haji Roslan, the head of the armed forces in PULO was undergoing military knowledge from Libya. The experiences in Libya enabled him to serve as a lieutenant general in the army.

From each individual corner, the PLMO leadership in early years also experienced a relative deprivation. Their attitude had a strong influence and impact on society. BNPP organizations, BRN and PULO around the 80s experienced internal conflict that was serious enough to lead to fallouts and fighting. Often, there were many conflicts among the organizations and this paved the way for a split and the formation of GIMP by Wahyuddin Ahmad. Similarly, BRN split into two groups - BRN Coordinate and BRN Congress. PULO also suffered the same fate and Dr. Aaron Muleng left PULO and established NewPULO. PULO has been split into three groups. Dr. Wan Kadir Che Man under his leadership established the united BIPP for unity and coordinated the struggle but this also resulted in failure.

After 2004, it was found that relative deprivation among PLMO was declining. There were a lot of weaknesses and it was difficult to achieve their aim. Similarly they focused on a political and diplomatic approach rather than a military approach. Furthermore, BIPP and GIMP gave their mandate to BRN and PULO to make decisions according to their wishes. According to Elliot and Hickie, a community will make decisions in their life based on the things that are necessary and the possibility of making changes if they are influenced by environmental conditions. Decisions made were with regard to material social profit and loss when not participating in the government. Based on the case of Patani, BRN and PULO were aware of this weakness of their ability to reduce the relative deprivation. To overcome these obstacles in the organization it was essential to adopt an open relationship and work together. This kind of cooperation was more important on internal and external relations, which are skills, knowledge and weapons. Based on these factors BRN, PULO, BIPP and GMIP would have to work on the basis of Patani Ummah. BRN acknowledge that their abilities were still weak and that they needed to cooperate with other movements. In the formation of collaborative relationships, the BRN did not give priority for ideological struggle as it was deemed unnecessary. So, BRN lifted the term and introduced its struggle based on Allah S.W.T. The task has been distributed according to ability and their respective advantages.

PULO with international capabilities mandated by the BRN, can ask any kind of help from outside the country and pressure the Thai government.

BRN while having in-house capability will be responsible for mobilizing people at local and national levels as well as attacks on the security forces for the purpose of pressuring the government of Thailand in the country. They see that through this partnership they will be able to overcome existing weaknesses, particularly in dealing with the government of Thailand. However, there are some other contributing factors. Regarding their cultural life, the members have informal relationships in the organizations of BRN and PULO.

Open relationship should be built not only within their civil society but also with the Thai government as open relationship is a strategy to overcome the drawbacks in terms of weaponry. BRN and PULO as discussed here, have transformed their policies from struggle to diplomacy. BRN felt the need to form relationships with civil society and wanted to learn approaches in diplomacy skills like conflict analysis, negotiation, mediation, advocacy and others.

According to Elliot and Hickie, the environmental conditions have influenced the change in attitudes of the two organizations. BRN and PULO were required to change according to the present world order and give up their irrelevant policies. Kasturi Mahkota explains, PULO changed its policy and selected the right approach. He stressed that the PULO should change its policy according to the political world. This was also supported by Haji Roslan who says that PULO's struggle should be founded on the four basic principles of Islam and that they can get support from the Middle East countries and Muslim Organizations. Similarly, PULO can gain support from other nations of the world on the grounds of human rights. For BRN, it is necessary for it to make changes on organizational management, strategy, approach, contacts and other necessary fields.

Therefore, based on the above analysis, it can be said that relative deprivation experienced by PLMO has gained maturity in their struggle. They previously experienced high relative deprivation and it affected their own organization and the Patani conflict. But, after 2004, the PLMO suffered a decrease in relative deprivation because they had many weaknesses in their struggle. Disappointment has been a leading factor in the decrease in the strength of the struggle. If terror attacks occur, today they are used as a strategy to gain support for negotiations. Therefore, there is no aggression based on emotion of PLMO, as a strategy under the intention of getting their rights in Patani.

## **Conclusion**

The Patani conflict is not something recent as it happened hundreds of years ago. This conflict is repetitive and has not been resolved despite various attempts made by the government of Thailand. Therefore, it is logical to decide that this is a conflict between two groups which differ in their identity and culture and



this has adverse impact on politics. The causes of the political violence in Patani involve political domination which has led to a prolonged conflict. Therefore, there should be a clear understanding between these groups (Thai and Malay Muslim of Patani) in the effort to move the dynamics of human civilization on a stronger foundation. Third parties, especially civil society, should play their role in this agitation chiefly in leading transformation, particularly in the context, structure, issues, actors and personnel in ensuring that these conflicts can be overcome and the desired solution achieved by both parties.

## End Notes

1. PLMA is a word used by the author to represent all organizations in Pattani separatist movement involving the Patani National Revolutionary Front (BRN) consisting of BRN and BRN coordinates Congress, Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), Islamic Liberation Front (BIPP) and Movement Islamiya Mujahideen Pattani (GMIP). According to the study, of the four organizations, only the BRN and PULO are active at present. Both these organizations have used the violence and reconciliation approach in achieving their goals in Patani. In terms of hardness approach, they still commit armed operations targeting security forces stationed in Patani, while conciliatory approach refers to the efforts to build relationships with civil society particularly in capacity building and their influence at the national, regional and international.
2. Interviewed Wan Kadir Che Man, former Leader of United Front for the Independence of Patani (Bersatu) on January, 20, 2011 at Gombak, Malaysia.
3. Territories consist of Chumphon, Ranong, Surat Thani, Phangnga, Phuket, Krabi, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Trang, Phthalung, Satun, Songkhla, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.
4. Some authors and researchers about the Patani conflict use the word conflict in Southern Thailand actually do not meet the conflict discussion. This is because the conflict only involves three provinces (Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat), while other provinces do not have conflicts. Therefore, the author uses the word Patani conflict precisely because it represents the conflict. The term 'Conflicts' in Patani is used as based on historical facts which exist in the Patani Malay sultanate before the occupation by the Kingdom of Siam in 1786. Thus, the word Patani conflict corresponds to the conflict situation in the province of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat in Patani before it was taken over by the Siamese.
5. Income disparity between regions in spite of having the same economic resources. Economic resources in Patani depend on fishing, planting

- rice, fruit crops and rubber gardening as the geographical location bordering the South China Sea and the Andaman Sea and in the middle is filled with paddy fields surrounded by hills. However, there were also those who participated in the commercial field such as manufacturing handicrafts, clothing, food, transportation, farming and retail.
6. Among the regions taken over are Patani, Nong Chik, Remand, band, Watershed, Soaking and Pink.
  7. This Agreement is to define the respective colonies specifically dominated by the Siamese previously. As a result of this agreement, the state of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu had ceded to the British government and the state government was handed over to the Kingdom of Siam.
  8. From a religious perspective, the Thai government has changed its shariah law practiced previously to the secular system. Practicing Malay customs is not allowed in everyday life. As a result, cases related to shariah such as marriage-divorce and inheritance of the estate will be tried in a civil court and judged by judges who are Thai-Buddhist. This situation has blocked all Islamic religious functions in the life of the MMP. Malay rulers who became the patrons of Islam have been removed, while the mosques and religious institutions also have no power. Similarly, in hut schools, the curriculum has been modified to incorporate Thai language as the medium of instruction and includes ethnic Thai trainers.
  9. According to Maher Nik Nik Mahmood, among some of the calls made by Haji Sulong is firstly, the appointment of an individual as a representative of the kingdom of Siam with full authority to administer all four provinces - Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun and has the power to dismiss, suspend or replace government officials. This individual must be born in one of the four provinces and the appointment shall be with the consent of the people in these regions. Second, eighty percent of the government officials who will serve in the territories are to be Muslims. Third, Malay and Thai language should be the official language. Fourth, the Malay language should be the medium of instruction in primary schools. Fifth, Islamic law should be recognized and enforced in the Shariah Court. Sixth, all revenues and income derived from all four provinces shall be used in the region. Seventh, the formation of a body that has full authority to manage the affairs of all the Muslims who are under the responsibility of the Head of State.
  10. GEMPAR was established in March 1948 in Kota Bharu, Kelantan by the people who live in the Land of Patani Malays. Its establishment aims to unite the provinces of Patani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun to be Malay-Muslim. The second aim is in accordance with the requirements of the rule and the establishment of Malay nationalism, Malay customs

and religion. The third aim is improve the living standards of the Patani Malays to gain rights, justice, freedom and education.

## References

- A. Malek, M.Z. 1993. *Umat Islam Patani: Ssejarah dan politik*. Shah Alam: Hizbi.
- Age, L. 2005. Tsunami and conflict transformation in Aceh. Dlm. *The SEACSN Bulletin*. Penang: Research and Education for Peace Unit, USM.
- Belitan Sejarah* 2000. Online [http://www.geocities.com/pulo\\_99\\_2000/sejarah.html](http://www.geocities.com/pulo_99_2000/sejarah.html) [13 Mac 2004].
- Botes, M. J. 2003. Structural transformation. In S. Cheldelin, D. Druckman & L. Fast (eds.). London: The Tower Building.
- Champakiya, A.O. 2002. *Politik dan perjuangan masyarakat Islam di Selatan Thailand*. (Versi Jawi). Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Crozier, B. 1960. *The rebel: A study of post-war insurrections*. London: Chatto & Windus Press.
- Edwards. L.P. 1927. *The natural history of revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Farish, A.N. 2004. *Sejarah Patani yang tidak tercatat* [Online]. [15 April 2005].
- Farish, A.N. 2005. *Bersatu leader Wan Kadir: Malaysia has never been involved in the troubles in Southern Thailand*. Online <http://www.malaysia-today.net/Blog-e/2005/06/dr-farish-noor-interviews-head-of-hm> [4 December 2005].
- Fathy, A. 1994. *Pengantar sejarah Patani*. Alor Setar: Pustaka Darussalam.
- Gurr, T. R. 1971. *Why men Rebel?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hayimasae, N. 2002. *Haji Sulong Abdul Kadir (1895-1954): Perjuangan dan sumbangan beliau kepada masyarakat Melayu Patani*. M.A Tesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- <http://www.geocities.com/ummahonline/kolum/farish/04051farish-patani.htm> [4 December 2005].
- Interviewed with Assistant Profesor Dr. Worawit Baru, Former Director of Institute of Southeast Asian Maritime State Studies, Prince of Songkhla University on August, 9, 2006 at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus. Thailand.
- Interviewed with Mr. Abu Daud Alikontor, Member of Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK) on July, 10, 2006 at Pattani. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Aman, Leader of BRN Coordinate on November, 15, 2011 at Pattani Province, Thailand. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Anand Panyarachun, the former Prime Minister of

- Thailand and Chairman of National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) on September, 7, 2006 at the C.S Patani Hotel. Pattani, Thailand.
- Interviewed with Mr. Imad Bassam, Member of Leader PULO Council on May, 12, 2011 at Kelantan, Malaysia. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Isamaili Alikkuntor, Hat Yai University's student on Mac, 22, 2007 at Jerejak Island, Penang, Malaysia. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Masri Hassan, Resident of Pattani Province on November, 15, 2011 at Palas Village, Pattani, Thailand. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Salhi Awae, Research Officer of the *Research Center for Peace Building, Mahidol University* on December, 5, 2006 at Vistana Hotel, Penang, Malaysia. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Wan Ahmad, Presiden of Patani Malays Consultative Council of Representative on November, 11, 2011 at Kelantan, Malaysia. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Yazid, Hamka and Abu Jauwab, PULO Leadership of Abu Yasir Group on May, 14, 2011 at Kelantan, Malaysia. Respondents not their real name for security.
- Interviewed with Mr. Zadri Ibrahim, PULO Armed Forces Chief of Pattani Province on November, 15, 2011. Respondent not his real name for security.
- Interviewed with Wan Kadir Che Man. Former Leader of United Front for the Independence of Patani (Bersatu) on January, 20, 2011 at Gombak, Malaysia.
- Jitpiromsri, S. 2011. *The protracted violence amidst the unstable political situations after 2011 elections*. Online <http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/2343> [6 November 2012].
- Luqman, L. 2004. *Memorandum PULO: Berjuang untuk kebebasan bumi Patani Raya* Online [www.pulo.org/pulo/memo.htm](http://www.pulo.org/pulo/memo.htm) [21 April 2004].
- Mahmood, S.S. 1990. *De-radicalization of minority dissent: A case study of the Malay-Muslim Movement in Southern Thailand, 1980–1994*. Philippines, Quezon City 1101.
- Makishima, M. 2008. *Toward a knowledge-based economy: Southern Thailand*. Online [http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Asedp/pdf/066\\_8.pdf](http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Asedp/pdf/066_8.pdf) [28 April 2010].
- McCargo, D. 2007. Behind the slogans: unpacking Patani Merdeka. In D. McCargo (ed.). *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: NUS Publishing.
- Meredith, L.W. 2004. *Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific House International Relation Committee*. Online [http://www.house.gov/international\\_relations/108/wei071404.htm](http://www.house.gov/international_relations/108/wei071404.htm) [6 April 2005].

- Miall, H. 2001. *Conflict transformation: A multy-dimensional Task*. Online [http://www.inglewhite.net/pfp/pdfpapers/p2-miall\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.inglewhite.net/pfp/pdfpapers/p2-miall_handbook.pdf) [28 November 2009].
- Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud. 2000. *Sejarah perjuangan Melayu Patani 1785–1954*. (Jawi Version). Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Pitsuwan, S. 1982. *Islam and Malay nationalism: A case study of the Malay-Muslim of Southern Thailand*. Ph.D thesis, Harvard University.
- Statistic from Deep South Watch. 2009. Online <http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/en/tags/statistic> [11 October 2012].
- Syukri, I. 2002. *Sejarah kerajaan Melayu Patani*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Vayrynen, R. 1991. *New Direction in conflict theory: Conflict resolution and conflict transformation*. London, SAGE Publication.
- Wan Kadir, C. M. 1990. *Muslim separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Yaacob, C.M.A. 2009. *The separatist conflict in Southern Thailand: Issues, actors and resolutions*. M.A. thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

### **Biographical Notes**

Dr. Che Mohd Aziz Yaacob (Email: [drconflict78@gmail.com](mailto:drconflict78@gmail.com)) is a Senior Lecturer in the School of International Studies, UUM College of Law, Government and International, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Among his research areas are the peace-building activities in Patani; constructive engagement with the Patani Liberation Movement, capacity building, and peace-building by Civil Society. He completed his Masters and PhD in Political Science (Conflict and Peace Studies) at Universiti Sains Malaysia. His research field is on the Conflict in Southern Thailand and transformation of the Separatist Movement and potential for resolution in Southern Thailand.