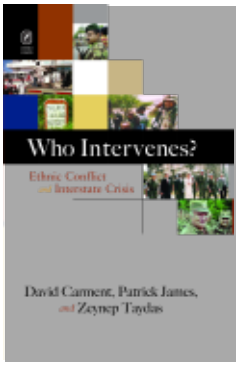
5. Thai Malay Separatism: Managing Interstate Ethnic Conflict



CHAPTER FIVE

Thai Malay Separatism:
Managing Interstate Ethnic Conflict

> The southern region of Thailand is a demarcation line between the Buddhist mainland and the Malay-Muslim world of Southeast Asia. Thus the centrifugal forces that are manifest in the case of the Muslim-Malays of South Thailand can, at the same time, be viewed as a result of the centripetal tendency of the Malay geo-cultural phenomenon. The ethnic ties, cultural links and historical roots are exerting themselves, in defiance of political boundaries superficially imposed on them. (Pitsuwan 1985: 259)

1. Introduction: Managing Interstate Ethnic Conflict, or the Pursuit of the Stag

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the factors that contribute to the effective management of interstate ethnic crises. This objective will be accomplished by assessing the framework on the basis of a case study of the Thai Malay struggle for autonomy, centered in the southern Thai provinces of Patani and Yala.[1] As the section heading suggests, the case will show similarities to Rousseau's famous story of the stag hunt, which often is used to explore strategic interactions. The implication is that Thailand and Malaysia selected mutual cooperation in pursuit of the stag (opting for a joint effort to protect themselves from a mutual threat from communism) instead of defecting to pursue the "hare" (support for ethnic kin).

Next to the Moro of the Philippines, the Malay of Thailand represent one of Southeast Asia's most vocal and least assimilated Muslim minorities. Consistent with the preceding assessments of interstate ethnic conflict, the Thai Malay struggle shows strains of both separatism and irredentism. On the one hand, the Thai Malay developed their separatist tendencies in close association with extraregional support as well as by emulating patterns of politicization that existed within Southeast Asia's larger Islamic community (Che Man 1990; Chaiwat 1993). On the other hand, elements of irredentism

are evident in the way in which some of Malaysia's more strident regional leaders approached the Thai Malay issue; calls for reunification, intervention, and rebellion became common in the early and middle stages of the conflict.[2] Despite deep-seated ethnic cleavages and affinities, a history of minority repression and assimilation, along with long periods of mutual mistrust, frictions between Malaysia and Thailand, at least on this issue, have been minimized in three important ways (May 1990).

First, according to Saideman (1997), ethnic discord often can be reduced by a focus on more extensive threats to state security. The Thai Malay case is no exception. To be sure, growth of a communist threat within the region had the side effect of generating space within which Thai Malay separatists could function. But the communist insurgency assumed paramount importance in inducing Malaysia and Thailand to set aside their differences to face the higher threat. Indeed, extensive cooperative efforts to manage the shared threat of a communist insurgency offset disagreements between Thailand and Malaysia over the issue of Thai Malay autonomy.

Second, and related to the first point, despite strong transborder ethnic ties, a perceived mutual vulnerability on regional and development-related security issues served as a source of cooperation between the two states. Existing perspectives on the interstate dimensions of ethnic conflict tend to underemphasize alternative security threats as a basis for interstate cooperation (Heraclides 1991; Gurr 1993; Van Evera 1994). Yet the common interests of both Thailand and Malaysia in building regional stability, coupled with a desire for domestic economic growth, served as counterweights to interstate tensions that otherwise might have developed out of the Thai Malay issue (May 1990). In addition to various state-to-state agreements, protocols, and treaties, Thailand's efforts in the 1980s and 1990s to enhance basic minority rights and guarantees through regional development programs reduced the overall intensity of the conflict to a manageable level (de Silva et al. 1988).

Third, consistent with Heraclides' findings (1990, 1991), minority movements usually require more than affective support to prosper and grow. In particular, when the foundations of international support are seen by the majority population to be both vulnerable and controversial, separatist aspirations of a minority will be more difficult to sustain. This seems to be true for the Thai Malay, who have been on the receiving end of economic, cultural, and political support from wealthy but politically moderate Arab states. On the one hand, the net effect of this activity has been to raise awareness of the political situation of the Thai Malay and to develop a consciousness of a shared destiny among them. On the other hand, political challenges to vari-

ous Thai regimes did not generate commensurate international efforts in providing critical levels of military support to the minority challenge. With time, the latter point weighed more heavily.

Even at the height of the Thai Malay movement and despite a current resurgence in violence in Patani province, political action seldom took the form of full-scale organized violence, and when it did, that violence clearly depended on material sustenance from leadership pools within the communist movement. In fact, since the mid-1950s, when Thai Malay separatism entered a phase of heightened politicization and regional irredentist aspirations intensified, the southern provinces of Thailand became identified with violence—not just Thai Malay, but communist inspired as well (Che Man 1990; Chaiwat 1993).[3]

The general pattern of association appears to be as follows: during the 1960s and 1970s, cooperative efforts in response to the regional threat posed by communism reduced friction between the two states over the issue of Thai Malay autonomy. The threat of a communist insurgency acted as both the catalyst for cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia and for a vigorous Thai Malay political movement. When the communist insurgency reached its zenith, confrontation between the two states remained at a minimum. As that threat subsided, so too did the Thai Malay insurgency, which derived much of its material and logistical support from the communists.

Five additional sections make up this chapter. The next section traces the evolution of Thai Malay separatism over a five-decade period from inception to the present. In the third part of the chapter, the roles of domestic and international factors are presented and assessed. The fourth section is devoted to an examination of two near crisis periods. In the fifth part, the propositions are evaluated. The sixth and final section concludes with directions for future research.

2. Thailand's Malay Community: Politics on the Periphery

2.1 The Roots of Separatism—Ethnic Cleavage

Figure 5.1 provides a timeline for Thai Malay separatism from the establishment of a constitutional democracy in 1932 to the present period. During the formative years of Thai Malay separatism, Thailand exhibited high levels of ethnic cleavage.[4] Among the various underlying causes for high levels of cleavage within Thailand, the first and most important has always been that the Malay see themselves as a small, repressed religious minority within a

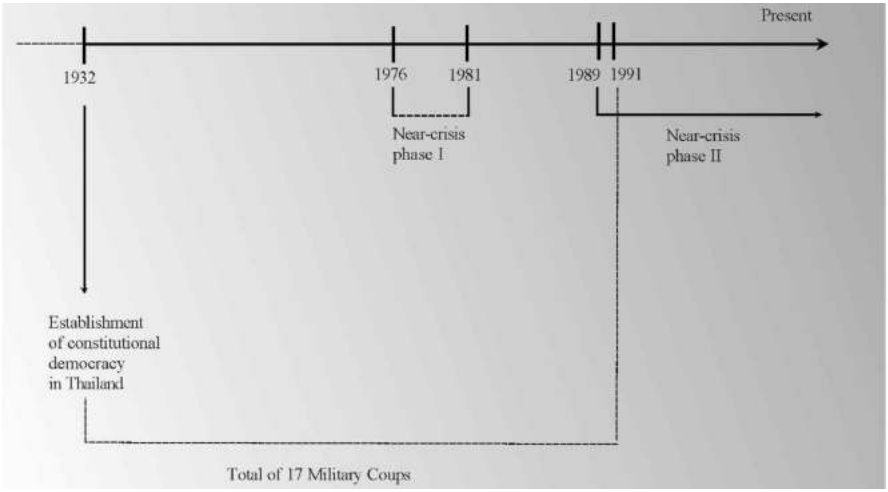


Figure 5.1. Thai Malay Separatism

Buddhist-dominated Thailand. Measured against the spectrum of states ranging from diversity to complete ethnic homogeneity, Thailand's ethnic composition reflects a moderately diverse society but one governed by Buddhists of Thai descent. According to ethnolinguistic criteria, the Thai constitute 60 percent of the population and the Lao-related people another 25 percent. Estimates of the total Thai Malay population range from 1.4 million to 1.5 million, which is slightly less than 4 percent of Thailand's total population of 60 million (The higher estimates usually come from the separatists while the lower figures are provided by Thai government sources). The remainder includes hill tribes in the north, ethnic Chinese, Thai Muslims, and (not counting the ongoing influx of refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia) communities of Vietnamese, Hmuong, and Khmer along the Thai border (Suhrke 1981).[5]

Despite this diversity, however, there is a great deal of religious homogeneity among most of these ethnic groups, which has served to isolate the Thai Malay even more.[6] When measured in terms of religious identity, for example, the Buddhists occupy a dominant position in excess of 95 percent of the population. Muslims constitute the largest religious minority. Language, by contrast, tends to crosscut the religious dominance of Thai Buddhists so that Thailand is a more ethnically diverse country than its religious composition would indicate. However, within the four southern provinces of Patani, Narathiwat, Satul, and Yala, where they are most heavily concentrated, the Malay form the dominant ethnic group (Suhrke 1989).[7]

The second cause of ethnic cleavage relates to the political and economic aspirations of the Thai Malay. A number of theories have been put forward to account for the rise of political divisiveness in the Patani region, including variations on the themes of relative deprivation (Brown 1988), religious revivalism (Chaiwat 1993), historical materialism (Forbes 1989), statism (McVey 1984), and core-periphery relations (Pitsuwan 1985; Suhrke 1989; Rumley and Minghi 1991). In reality, several related factors, including sociocultural and economic conditions, have produced an ethnic consciousness among the Malay-speaking Muslims in Thailand.

Thai Malay have tended to remain in the province where they were born; net migration to Buddhist-dominant provinces tends to be very low for Malay Muslims (Suhrke 1989). Therefore, the Malay are a geographically concentrated group straddling the border of Malaysia and Thailand (Rumley and Minghi 1991). As Suhrke (1989) has shown, most Malay within the region come from rural smallholder farms or coastal fishing villages. They traditionally have dominated rural rice production, rubber tapping, and cash crop production sectors in Patani. In contrast, the Buddhist population of these provinces, which includes Thai as well as Thai Chinese, is predominately urban and mobile (Anurugsa 1984). Historically, the Malay have been underrepresented in the civil service as well as the private sector, so urban-rural lines of cleavage between Malay and non-Malay are reinforced by divisions in income, language, and religion. This economic and political balance remained relatively unchanged at least since the 1950s (Brown 1988; Suhrke 1989). In the 1980s and 1990s, available aggregate data indicated that the Thai Malay occupied the lowest economic rung among the three ethnic groups in the region, although Yala province does constitute an exception because of its large-scale rubber production and tin reserve. Until recently, rural poverty in the south has been the highest in Thailand, and it is in the poorest of these provinces, namely Patani, where Malay separatism has been most vociferous and resilient (Suhrke 1989).

Demographic and economic characteristics explain, in part, the development of Malay ethnic consciousness. A third factor, Thai national development policies, also is noteworthy. Successive Thai regimes have approached the Muslim issue from two perspectives: implementation of policies toward all Thai Muslims and specific policies directed toward the Thai Malay. Since the late 1950s, the central government's policy toward Thai Muslims has been relatively flexible. More recently, sporadic efforts by Thai regimes to recognize religious freedoms for Muslims in the constitution at both national and provincial levels have eased tensions between Muslim minorities and Buddhists (Forbes 1982; Suhrke 1989). These policies recognize the fact that,

in aggregate, the population of Muslims in Thailand is nearly double that of the Malay. In an overall sense, Bangkok's treatment of the Malay has been less consistent, ranging from policies of forced assimilation during the 1930s and 1940s to political repression in the 1950s, minority rights recognition in the 1970s, and regional autonomy in the 1980s and 1990s.

Little doubt exists that Thai repression against Thai Malay political and religious leaders played a fundamental role in establishing and broadening international political linkages. In the early formative years of the Thai Malay movement, the search for international security guarantees in response to Thai repression assumed two forms. First, Thai Malay leaders sought annexation to preindependence Malaya in the hope that ethnic allies would support them in their struggle (de Silva et al. 1988; May 1990). Second, the Thai Malay also looked to the international community for recognition and legitimacy. For example, when the military-nationalist government of Pibul Songkhram came to power (for the second time) in 1948, Thai Malay leaders demanded that the fledgling UN give them recognition as a repressed minority. Fearful that the nationalist and authoritarian policies of Phibul would eliminate their religious and political power, Malay religious leaders sent a petition to the UN requesting that the three provinces of Patani, Yala, and Narathiwat be allowed to secede and join the newly constituted Federation of Malaya (Forbes 1982; Thomas 1989). Indeed, efforts at unification with Malaysia had been pursued since 1902, when Thailand's King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) formally annexed the three southern provinces (Gopinath 1991).[8]

Conditions for internationalization became riper still when the Pibul regime suppressed the appeal and jailed the leaders of the reunification movement (Forbes 1982). In response to the crackdown, leading Thai Malay religious leaders (mostly wealthy and conservative) fled to Kelantan province in the northern part of what then was called West Malaya. Using Kelantan as a base of operations, Thai Malay leaders slowly cultivated links between themselves and supporters in West Malaya as well as within the international community.

Political pressures applied by an aloof but concerned British government (who still controlled Malaya and had concerns about regional escalation) had already resulted in a slight relaxation of tensions between Thailand's central government and Malay elites. For example, after several Thai Malay dissidents were jailed, the British government called on Bangkok to provide "a just solution of Patani's case" but made no effort to mediate or provide good offices for a negotiated solution or even to recognize the legitimacy of the Thai Malay movement within the confines of UN definitions of minority self-

determination (Jones 1948: 4–5). Thereafter the government abandoned efforts at forcible assimilation in favor of an uneasy combination of accommodation and integration strategies that included dropping compulsory attendance at Thai primary schools and promotion of the use of Thai over the Malay language (Brown 1988; May 1990; for further details see Thomas 1989 and Forbes 1989).

Despite directives from UN Security Council members to cease and desist, successive Thai regimes continued to pursue expansionist and centralizing policies. These included elimination of minority language access in education and dismissal of local councils in matters of education and religious practice. These centralizing efforts had been aimed primarily toward building Thai national identity, with an emphasis on strengthening the observance of Buddhist religious practice in minority areas and enhancing the use of Thai language in Thailand's border regions (Yegar 2002).

To be sure, these policies did have the immediate effect of stalling the Malay movement in Thailand, but several important and unintended consequences ensued. On the one hand, nationalist policies served to undermine the legitimacy of local Malay elites, especially political leaders who had been shown to be powerless against Bangkok's heavy hand. On the other hand, by design, nationalization diminished opportunities for moderation and dialogue between the two contending loci of power: the central government and Patani province. Some Thai Malay believed that without quick acquisition of local autonomy guarantees, the Thai Malay would be forced to pursue alternative, and potentially more violent, paths to autonomy (D. Brown 1988; May 1990).

Nationalization, in sum, affected the Thai Malay movement in three fundamental ways. First, more Thai Malay began to see themselves as leaders of a marginalized community within someone else's homeland (Suhrke 1989). As a consequence, the Thai Malay, especially those who already had fled to Kelantan, believed reunification with Malaya to be the only way to ensure the survival of the Thai Malay language and culture.

Second, nationalization coincided with and perhaps precipitated an irrevocable erosion of the traditional authority structures of the Thai Malay political and religious elites. Thai centralization hastened this process considerably, but challenges from younger, generally better-educated Thai Malay (i.e., those who would be most likely to suffer under Thai discrimination in the private and public sectors) also served to undermine the traditional authority structure. Thai Malay could no longer be convinced that those who fled to Malaya would be capable of directing the group's interests and began to form alternative and often more radical bases of support in Patani. The main

distinction between the leaders of these two groups can be understood in terms of their divergent strategies. The less educated and older separatists favored an independent sultanate, while the younger students favored an autonomous republic (Gopinath 1991).

Third, the broadening of leadership across territorial boundaries meant that alternative bases of support for the Thai Malay movement, including those traditionally associated with the Malay regional movement, fast became main sources of moral and material support. The most important of these linkages, to be discussed below, concerned the Islamic community in Southeast Asia and in the Middle East. In effect, because the Thai Malay nationalist movement became larger, with more diverse (and potentially contending) interests, it drew other countries into the process of ethnic minority struggle. This process took place at a distance, but also more directly within Malaysia through transnational linkages, population transfers, and increasing financial and ideological support from benefactors beyond the Malaya peninsula.

2.2 Ethnic Affinity—Spanning the Border

During the decades between World War Two and 1960, Malay elites in Thailand focused primarily on irredentist strategies rather than secessionist goals. (Gurr [1993: 21] uses the term "secession" as intended here: "to signify any strong tendency within an identity group to attain greater political autonomy.") Leaders pursued reunification with the Malay Peninsula rather than independence or autonomy. Territorial redemption related directly to the ongoing plans to create a federated Malaysia consisting of West Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, and Singapore. The assimilationist policies of the government, initiated during the war and continued under the leadership of Pibul Songkhram, played a crucial role in intensifying feelings of resentment within the Muslim population toward the government and in strengthening the resistance of Malay Muslims to the central government (Yegar 2002).

Most Malay elites in the southern border regions of Thailand pursued unification with a federated Malaysia to ensure the constant flow of material support from wealthy expatriates in Kelantan province. As Suhrke (1977) notes, Kelantan is an obvious source of support for other reasons: a shared dialect, religion, and history. Kelantan is one of the most orthodox states in Malaysia, and orthodoxy, according to Suhrke, implies special interest in a condition in which fellow Muslims are governed by non-Muslims.

The net political effect of cross-border involvement led to the formation of the Gambungan Melayu Patani Raya (Association of Malay of Greater

Patani, GAMPAR). GAMPAR was one of the first nationalist Muslim groups to emerge after the Second World War and served as the forerunner of the separatist underground movements that developed in later periods (Yegar 2002). It had the specific goal of uniting all Malay Muslims living in Thailand and Malaya (Gopinath 1991). Leaders of GAMPAR designed the pan-Malay doctrine during the Pibul regime. The party's related objectives included improvement in living standards, education, and cultural awareness. Leadership was assumed by the Malay Muslim religious and royal exiles living in Malaya. A second populist organization—the Patani People's Movement (PPM)—was also established at this time (Gopinath 137).

Unfortunately for those Thai Malay bent on the idea of a pan-Malay state, Indonesia's confrontation (i.e., *konfrontasi*) with Malaysia from 1963 to 1965 undermined the credibility of the pan-Malay movement in general and reclamation of Thai territory in particular. This is because Indonesia's more strident interpretation of Malay nationalism was consistent with GAMPAR's own stated objectives, and to that extent, Indonesia would be willing to play "big brother" by providing support to the Thai Malay movement. Indonesia's open hand to GAMPAR, not surprisingly, became a source of irritation to both Thailand and Malaysia. Indonesia's leaders, however, also preferred not to see postindependence Malaysia expand beyond its current borders. Therefore, they would support the Thai Malay movement up to a point, but not at the expense of larger geopolitical concerns. Indeed, Indonesia had already confronted Malaysia over that country's claims to Sabah and Sarawak and had backed down. In fact, Indonesia's confrontational policies failed to generate much support for its irredentist claims within West Malaya itself, let alone within southern Thailand.

The net short-term effect was to deny GAMPAR the crucial political legitimacy it required from a leading Malay state and a radical one at that. In addition, GAMPAR's connection with the *konfrontasi* did not help its relationship with the Malaysian government. By default, GAMPAR had to seek out and build on support from the politically isolated ethnic brethren of Kelantan province in Malaysia, an otherwise inauspicious beginning for a fledgling movement that laid bold claims to reuniting all Malay in Southeast Asia. Thus, for the Thai Malay, the political dilemma became double-edged.

On the one hand, open support from Malaysia's federal government could not be counted on. From the perspective of Malaysia's leaders in Kuala Lumpur, the Thai Malay constituted a troublesome fringe minority, neither sizable enough to warrant a firmer course of action nor small enough to be ignored. Thus, Malaysia's new government had an interest in the Thai Malay situation, but one tempered by the realities of time and demography. In addition to these

two obvious factors, Kuala Lumpur did not share Kelantan's enthusiasm for another reason: other Malay did not broadly share the particularist affinities between Kelantan and the Thai Malay (Farouk 1984).

On the other hand, although the Malay have not always constituted a numerical majority, since 1969 they have enjoyed special constitutional and political privileges as *bumiputra* (sons of the soil) in Malaysia.[9] Although Malaysia is constitutionally a Muslim state to the extent that Islam is the official religion, in reality the society is highly diverse. No province within Malaysia has been more vociferous in supporting the rights of the *bumiputra* than Kelantan. To be sure, the development of a pro-Malay and staunchly Islamic province on their southern border had a powerful demonstration effect on Malay elites in the Patani region. For example, in 1969, the leader of the Pan Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP or PAS) openly discussed the prospect of an alternative Malay nation—comprising the Malay states of Malaysia and those of southern Thailand "should Malaysia collapse as a country" (Farouk 1984: 245). Kelantan was (and is) the home of Malaysia's political conservatives, with PAS as the primary political instrument through which these leaders expressed their views on the Thai Malay issue. PAS ruled Kelantan from 1959 until 1978 and returned to power in the late 1980s.

While in opposition during 1970, Datuk Seri Mohammed Asri, a senior official in Malaysia's National Front cabinet and later leader of Kelantan, described the struggle against Thai rule as a "holy one" that merited support from Muslims the world over (Pitsuwan 1988a, 1988b). Later, while serving as chief minister for Religious Affairs in the United Malay National Organization, he also commented that "the request for autonomy with specific conditions for the four provinces as put forward by the freedom front seem credible if well received."[10] In essence, Malaysia regarded the Thai Malay and their Kelantan connections as a radical fringe that mainstream Malay leadership would not accept but also could not overlook. Malaysia faced an ongoing communist insurgency and looked to Thailand for support, and the probability of Thai Malay success became even less likely.

3. The Key Actors in the Conflict, the Separatist Movements, and Linkages

After the formation of GAMPAR it became evident that neither the international community nor the newly established Malay Federation would support reunification openly. However, links between Thai Malay leaders and Kelantan province remained strong. Tensions between traditional elites (who

favored unification with West Malaya) and younger, more progressive Malay students within GAMPAR (who pursued separatist goals) began to undermine the effectiveness and unity of the Malay nationalist movement. Not until Malay leaders traded in the strategy of irredentism for autonomy across the board did the nationalist movement regain its lost momentum (Farouk 1984; Pitsuwan 1988a).

According to Yegar (2002), in 1963–64 a severe problem emerged when guerrilla units of the Malay People's Liberation Army (MPLA)—the military arm of the Communist Party of Malaysia—organized a recruitment campaign among Muslims in southern Thailand. This had the purpose of reinforcing their rebellion against the Malay governments. However, due to lack of empathy between the Malay Muslims and the Chinese Marxists, cooperation did not come into being (Yegar 2002).

Several distinct separatist organizations emerged on Thailand's political map by the mid-1960s, with each group featuring different goals, leadership, and strategies. They therefore could not unite within one institution, and fragmentation prevented their success. Although approximately twenty separatist bodies existed in the early 1970s, the number declined sharply in the latter part of that decade. By 1981, only five remained active, with three being notable (Yegar 2002; see also Anurugsa 1984). The first, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), formed in Kelantan in 1960 under the leadership of Tengku Abdul Jalal. It obtained support mainly from educated young Muslims and intellectuals who had studied abroad (Yegar 2002). A creation of conservative Malay Muslim leadership, the BRN initially espoused pan-Malay objectives. The BRN was not merely a separatist movement. It also had Pan-Malay aspirations and therefore aimed to remove the four Muslim provinces from Thailand and then, if successful, incorporate them into a wider state within the Malaysian Federation (Gopinath 1991).[11] BRN leaders favored creation of a new state that would combine socialism and Malay nationalism with Islamic principles. Its leaders initially had important affiliations with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) and later with radical states in the Middle East.

The BRN was the one Thai Malay organization most heavily affected by *konfrontasi* and its aftermath. In essence, confrontation raised questions within Islamic Southeast Asia about Malaysia's foreign policy orientation, especially its relations with Britain and other Western powers. For example, Indonesian support for the Thai Muslim movement had both ideological and ethnic foundations, that is, to liberate those Malay unfortunate enough to be ruled by conservative, "Old Established Force" governments (Suhrke and Noble 1977: 207). In 1965, Thai Malay leaders who supported Indonesia's

confrontational and Islamic worldview split from the BRN and formed the Partai Revolusi Nasional (PARNAS). Throughout the decade and into the 1970s, PARNAS operated in unison with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM).

Conservative Islamic elites formed the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (National Liberation front of Patani, BNPP). Founded by Tunku Mayhiddin, the BNPP developed in liaison with traditional and religious elites living in Kelantan, although much of its support consisted of financial transfers from overseas Malay students in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan (May 1990). By 1991, the BNPP, which had become marginalized, remained an Islamic organization, and its political objectives still included the unlikely goal of liberation of all Muslims, including the Thai Malay, and establishment of a sovereign state of Patani (Gopinath 1991). The BNPP maintains close relations with the Islamic Secretariat, the Arab League, and the Palestine Liberation Organization. At its height, the BNPP claimed a guerrilla force of three thousand mostly trained in Libya, with weapons obtained from Indochina after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam (Gopinath 1991).

A third group, the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), was established in 1967. The PULO became the largest and most influential of the various Muslim militant separatist organizations that operated in Southern Thailand since the 1960s—mainly because of material support from Libya and Syria and ideological backing from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. (Little is known of the two remaining groups, the Sabilallah [the way of God], which emerged in the late 1970s, and the Patani Islamic Nationalities Revolutionary Party, which came into being in 1980 or 1981.) The Patani United Liberation Army (PULA) conducted military actions on behalf of the PULO. Although the PULO began as a loosely organized insurgency movement and not a political organization, it evolved over time. Twenty years later, the PULO had become Thai Malay's most internationally active and violent separatist group (Gopinath 1991). The PULO continues to rely on external support, without which it could not persist.[12] For example, during its heyday, the leadership of the PULO was centered in Mecca, with much of the recruitment of members carried out from there (Thomas 1989).

While the BNPP is a religious and conservative organization and the BRN represented pan-Malay interests, PULO existed primarily as a militant insurgency movement. In the mid-1970s, efforts took place to create an organization that could represent all (or most) of the separate bodies by bringing them under an umbrella-type structure. Although BNPP and PULO agreed to cooperate and coordinate their military actions, this fell short of a fully unified approach. Together, these organizations, in particular the BRN and

PULO, applied pressure on the government in Bangkok. In concert with the CPM, they would pose a considerable obstacle to cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia.

With the emergence of three significant separatist movements on its southern flank, the government in Bangkok began to look for diplomatic support from both Indonesia and Malaysia for its own activities against the Thai Malay separatists (Pitsuwan 1988b). Indeed, at one point, sensing an opportunity, Thailand's Prime Minister Kriangasak Chomanand personally sought out and obtained Malaysian and Indonesian support for Thailand to contain the Malay separatist elements (*National Security Council Document on Policy toward the Malay Muslims, 1978:* 14; Pitsuwan 1988b). Signals from Malaysia remained ambiguous at best. At times it became difficult to deduce the exact message Kuala Lumpur was trying to convey to Bangkok. On the one hand, the government of Malaysia distanced itself from the Thai Malay issue. On the other hand, Malaysia's Islamic community expressed solidarity with the Thai Malay. For example, Seri Abdul Aziz bin Zain, vice president of the Muslim Welfare Organization of Malaysia, was quoted in 1977 as saying that "the Malay in South Thailand had nourished a resentment to what they considered the forcible incorporation of their homeland into Thai-speaking Buddhist Thailand" (Pitsuwan 1988b: 341).

On balance, consolidation of power under UMNO brought the Thai Malay question into comparative perspective. Development of a vigorous government policy to improve the economic well-being of all *bumiputra* through strategies of economic and political rebalancing had become the main platform of the UMNO after the 1969 emergency. These policies, collectively known as the New Economic Policy (NEP), aimed primarily at bringing the Malay peoples into the modernizing, commercial, industrial, and educational sectors of Malaysian society, an area long dominated by Malaysian Chinese. The effect the NEP had on the Thai Malay expatriates who had become political activists in Malaysia represented an important consequence. The NEP and its pro-Malay emphasis induced many Malay to support conservative, pro-Malay opposition parties. Parties such as PAS attempted to make political gains by emphasizing the Thai Malay problem to an even greater extent than did official government channels. In general, these policies appeared insufficient to either decrease hostilities or raise the standard of living in the southern provinces (Yegar 2002).

Dovetailing of platforms between the UMNO and its Islamic party opposition in the north became the net effect; the UMNO government rarely renounced the PAS position publicly. Malaysia's leaders knew that pan-Malay sentiment remained popular with voters in that region. For example,

a 1977 poll of Malaysian attitudes toward the Muslim problem in southern Thailand indicated that a majority supported a policy of active Malaysian governmental intervention in favor of the Malay Muslims (Gopinath 1991: 139). Thus, official relations between Thailand and Malaysia in the 1970s, although cordial, remained influenced heavily by regional politics. Thai Malay leaders tried to make political gains within Malaysia, where their ideas were well received.

Indonesia's clear approach to the Thai Malay issue contrasted with Malaysian ambiguity. In quid pro quo fashion, Indonesia moved to support Bangkok precisely because it also faced separatist problems. In fact, Sukarno's initial policy of support for the Thai Malay did not persist after Suharto came to power in 1965. Separatist movements in East Timor, West Papua, Aceh, and the South Molluccas, among others, ensured that the Suharto government would be extremely sensitive to pursuing an aggressive ethnically based foreign policy, for fear of obvious repercussions at home. As Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik said when he returned from the Islamic Conference at Kuala Lumpur in 1974, "We cannot have a separate state for every minority in a country" (Suhrke 1977: 207). Two effects ensued. First, to the extent that each recognized a potential internal threat to political stability, the bonds between and among the governments of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand became stronger. Second, Thai Malay separatists would have to look further abroad for support.

Rising Islamic nationalism in other parts of the world at this time (notably the Sudan, Philippines, Pakistan, Iran, and India) inspired local Thai Malay elites to look to the Middle East and North Africa, the centers of backing for Islamic movements worldwide. Initially, their cause became known through international awareness and human rights monitoring (Gopinath 1991). For example, Malay Muslims in exile (mostly in Saudi Arabia) and students in Saudi Arabia proved to be instrumental in organizing international opposition to Thai policy. Separatist meetings were held during the Haj season (Farouk 1984), and Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Syria primarily provided training for PULO leaders (Chaiwat 1991).

Muslim religious organizations also served as sources of support for the Thai Malay (Farouk 1984). Initially, the Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers held disparate views about the Patani issue. Formally, the conference excluded communiqués that referred to the problem (Suhrke 1977). Informally, however, subjects of discussion included imposing an oil embargo against Thailand (Gopinath 1991) and the problem of Muslim minorities all over the world (Gopinath 1991; Chaiwat 1991). By the 1980s, the issue of Patani became an important item on the agenda of the Islamic Summit

Conference, and the PULO received considerable financial support from the Muslim World League (Saudi Arabia's official government organ for rendering assistance to Muslims around the world). The 1990s witnessed a warming of relations between Thailand and the states of the Middle East, with the possible exclusion of Iran and Iraq. Instances of social, educational, and religious assistance also have been documented (Gopinath 1991).

Finally, it is important to include China and Vietnam as potential sources of support for the Thai Malay cause when both countries were flexing their internationalist muscles in the 1970s. Both countries became involved in the region because the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and the CPM engaged actively in supporting various elements of the Patani separatist movement. (Of the two parties, the CPM has been by far the most active; for its part the Communist Party of Thailand had become a spent force by the 1970s.) In the atmosphere of ideological confrontation between the then-communist bloc of Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea) and the ASEAN states, the Malay insurgents and the CPM (and to a lesser extent the CPT) held particular interest for all regional actors. Both became effective weapons in destabilizing national governments and subverting the positive effects of intra-ASEAN relations. In 1948, the revolt of communists in Malaysia started and the Malaysian government termed this situation an "emergency." When this period ended in 1960, remnants of the CPM units started to establish camps on the Thai part of the border, areas well suited to them due to the nature of the terrain and jungles. These developments and Thailand's apathy regarding communist penetration upset Malaysia: "It appeared that there was an unspoken understanding between the CPM and the Thai authorities in which the communists concentrated their actions only against Malaysia and did not attack Thai targets or incite the Malay population in the south" (Yegar 2002: 155). Under these circumstances, the government of Thailand acted slowly and carefully in cooperating with Malaysia because "as long as the organization existed, it posed a potential threat to Malaysia, in consequence of which Malaysia would refrain from aiding Muslim separatists" (156).

After the mid-1960s, Thai policy started to change because the government began to worry about cooperation between the CPM and the CPT: "The Thai government feared that not only the CPM of Malaya but also the underground Thai communists would exploit separatist tendencies in the south" (Yegar 2002: 156). Anxiety also existed about potential cooperation between the communists and the Malay Muslims. Indeed, despite communist efforts, Malay Muslims rejected that ideology and kept their distance. However, it is reported that an exchange of information and a supply of arms

continued to take place between communists and Malay Muslims. Communist fighters crossed the border often due to its unsettled nature and an absence of agreement between Thai and Malaysian forces in the frontier area.

When the conflict in Indochina culminated in Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia in 1978 and the subsequent Sino-Vietnam war of 1979, the struggle to exert influence over the whole of Southeast Asia led these states to seek allies on the Malay Peninsula (Pitsuwan 1985). How this process generated near crises for Malaysia and Thailand is the subject of the next section.

4. The Regional Threat

4.1 Malaysia's Ethnic Politics—Divided Interests before the Emergency

Although the primary focus of this chapter is on Thailand's internal cleavage as a source for interstate ethnic conflict, Malaysia's domestic ethnic politics influenced its foreign policies in two ways.

First, as noted, with the belief that Malaysia's pro-Malay orientation eventually would include them, Thai Malay separatists stepped up their activities against the Thai central government. The threats, however, had the effect of stimulating collaboration between the two governments.

Second, the anticommunist stance of successive Malaysian governments had distinct anti-Chinese overtones (Suhrke 1977). Malaysia's pro-West foreign policy emanated largely from the internal threat posed by a large Chinese communist community. The CPM was primarily a Chinese organization, and since the Chinese constituted a significant proportion of Malaysia's population, the government could not tolerate infiltration of the CPM into Malaysia through Thailand. The Chinese minority clearly had a firm hand in influencing Malaysia's foreign policy. Malaysia had, for example, consistently declined to join SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organization) because its Chinese leaders saw the organization as essentially a U.S. device designed to contain China. Relations between Thailand and Malaysia, however, remained generally good in spite of Malaysia's reluctance to join SEATO (Thomas 1977).

Malaysia's 1969 communal riots provided the catalyst for renewed Thai Malay–CPM collaboration and a positive shift in relations between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. Sensing an opportunity to exploit a weakened Malaysian regime, the CPM stepped up its infiltration along the border. As a result, the

Malaysian and Thai governments established joint formal border operations. Since 1952, the year the CPM established its base of operations in the jungle along the Thai border, there had been small-scale, joint border operations. However, during the 1969 Malaysian emergency, a Thai Malaysian Communist Suppression Command was established to conduct joint operations against terrorists in the border provinces. In the same year the Thai government placed the four southern provinces under martial law.

Potential linkages between the PULO and communist insurgents also created concerns for the Thai government. With PULO activities connected explicitly to those of the CPM in the southern region, the Thai government acted to suppress quickly any hint of Malay insurgency (Alpern 1974). In turn, support for the rebels in the form of arms shipments from Kelantan ensured a growth in the militancy of these movements. Although the CPM posed a more serious threat to Thai-Malaysian relations at this time, the separatist movement remained a constant source of irritation between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. For several reasons, both the Thai and Malaysian governments had reason to fear a CPM–Thai Malay alliance (Thomas 1977).

For the Malaysian government of the day, a communist insurgency movement operating out of southern Thailand represented a considerable deterrent to its plans for the political unity of disparate ethnic groups within the Malaysia Federation (Thomas 1977). The Thai government, on the other hand, could not risk losing favor with Malaysia's leaders by neglecting the CPM, for fear that the Malay card would be used against it. Mutual insecurity in these two separate issue-areas led to a convergence of interests between the two governments.

Thai leaders remained convinced that as long as a communist threat to Malaysian political stability existed, formal support for Thai Malay separatism would remain at low levels. In turn, any confrontation between Thailand and Malaysia would be to the CPM's gain, and thus the communists' strategy had been precisely to inflame existing conflict (Suhrke 1977). For example, on 7 March 1970, Thai and Malaysian military units established a new border agreement that would allow "hot pursuit" in each other's territory. Two years later, in May 1972, a joint Thai Malaysian border command was established in a further effort to suppress transborder movements of the CPM and PULO. A coup d'état in Bangkok later that year brought a staunchly anticommunist government to power which, in an unprecedented move, showed willingness to allow Malaysian forces to expand their area of operation into southern Thailand.[13]

Both governments knew that Malaysia's extraterritorial activity could not be delinked easily from its suppressed irredentist goals. While there is no

proof that by the 1980s Kuala Lumpur had designs on Patani (or any other southern province for that matter), evidence exists that fringe elements within Kelantan as well as PAS continued to advocate reunification and offered open support to Thai Malay rebels. Furthermore, Thai nationalists also began to grumble about threats to sovereignty. They could not reconcile the need for Malaysian troops on Thai soil with Thai security needs and the fact that their government remained incapable of confronting both the Thai Malay and CPM issues without Malaysia's support. To deal with this dilemma, both governments came to the conclusion that eradication of the CPM could lead, in theory, to a decline in the activities of the Thai Malay insurgents, who had relied extensively on the communists for logistical and material support. As a result, in 1977 a massive joint operation began against the CPM. At that time, the Malaysian government tried to reassure the Thai government that it had suppressed all claims to southern Thailand (Pitsuwan 1985: 175).

4.2 Near Crisis, Phase I—1976 to 1981

Under the agreement of 1970, Malaysian troops could enter Thai areas in hot pursuit of the CPM, but Thai forces could not enter Malaysia in pursuit of Malay insurgents, a fact that led Thai nationalists to protest against the government (Anurugsa 1984). In their efforts to eliminate the CPM, Malaysian forces often had crossed the Thai border. One such incident served to trigger a series of threats and counterthreats between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

When Malaysian security forces suspected Thai officials of helping communist guerrillas find refuge, they engaged in a unilateral "cleanup" and indiscriminately killed, wounded, and arrested Thai citizens (mostly of Chinese origin) without Thai consent and lingered on Thai soil for another fourteen days during May 1976. The Thai government accused Kuala Lumpur of "showing no trust and displaying an unfriendly attitude toward their Thai hosts" and asked for withdrawal of Malaysia's peace force from the region (*Foreign Relations Committee Report*, 11 June 1976). In response, the Malaysian Home Affairs Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie asserted that "[t]o protect our national interests and indeed our survival, we will have to regard that part of Thailand as hostile and the ramifications of such an attitude must not only be understood but accepted by all" (*Far Eastern Economic Review,* 18 June 1976: 11). Under pressure from Bangkok to withdraw by January 1980, the Malaysian field forces had stepped up their operations against the CPM (*Asiaweek,* 2 May 1980, cited in Pitsuwan 1985). They forced the communist insurgents to disband into small units and cede

their long-established sanctuaries in Narathiwat and Yala. As a result of this action, Malay Muslims, including elements of and sympathizers with the PULO, moved in to fill the vacuum.

Malaysia and Thailand had different priorities among the various threats that they faced in Phase I. For Thailand the main problem was Muslim separatism, with the communist threat in second place. However, for Malaysia the most important goal was to suppress communism. Therefore, as long as Malaysia had the communist problem, "it would not jeopardize its interests by supporting Muslim separatists" (Yegar 2002: 158).

Concomitantly, the PULO initiated several near crises against the Thai government. They began with a series of internal violent acts culminating in an exchange of threats between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. Several interrelated events took place between 1976 and 1981 (Chaiwat 1987). At least one event constituted a threat to the Thai regime but did not lead to a foreign policy crisis for Thailand. A bomb attack during the royal visit to Yala province on 22 September 1977 is believed to have been linked indirectly to the downfall of Thanin Kraivixien's administration (Forbes 1982, 1989).[14] The attempt to assassinate the king and his royal family led to resignation of the prime minister in the same year (Anurugsa 1984). Another sixteen violent minor acts occurred over the same period. In all, twenty-one acts of violence resulted in at least 221 civilian casualties, although the Thai government reported higher figures (Chaiwat 1987). All of these acts occurred in Yala province, with separatist rebels involved in each of the major incidents being connected to the PULO (Chaiwat 1987; see also Forbes 1989 and the MAR Project).

Three emerging patterns can be ascertained from the above-noted twenty-one events. First, the terrorists showed the willingness to attack and kill Thai Buddhist civilians, a notable change in tactics. Second, efforts by the PULO to extend the campaign to Bangkok became extensive. A third discernible pattern took the form of a growing threat of transnational terrorist attacks, including foreign government targets in Thailand and Thai government targets in other countries (Forbes 1982, 1989). Within the series of events, four violent acts stand out:

> 1. 22 September 1977—a bombing undertaken by members of the PULO, Sabilallah, and Black December during the royal visit to Podoks in Yala province (47 casualties, no deaths reported);
>
> 2. 14 December 1977—a holdup/shooting of a local casino (18 casualties, 10 deaths reported);

3. 6 October 1979—a bombing of a railway station in Yala (9 casualties, no deaths reported);

4. 21 February 1981—a shooting of travelers on a road in Yala (25 casualties, 15 deaths reported).

One obvious question arises: Why did this period witness an increase in violent tactics? Several patterns stand out. The more notable of these patterns is the parallel course of events relating to the activities of the CPM, most significantly a rise in its activities and a subsequent decline around the same time. The behavior of the CPM provides the first clue as to why the Malay separatist insurgency also peaked and then declined during this period.

With respect to the first point, the CPM, working alongside the PULO, found that they could generate a great deal of political instability and violence in the region (Anurugsa 1984).[15] When the Thai military took control of the southern area, protest and violence became the preferred path to liberation, followed by equally oppressive governmental measures and more PULO violence (Pitsuwan 1985, 1988a).

Violent confrontations between PULO and Thai forces ensued in 1980 when Malaysian forces withdrew and Thai forces tried to round up both CPM and PULO leaders. Muslim villagers, caught in the crossfire, fled to nearby Kelantan and Kedah. At the height of the confrontation an estimated 1,178 people took refuge in "refugee camps" inside Malaysia and vowed not to return until their safety could be guaranteed (Pitsuwan 1988b). For its part, Malaysia's UMNO leaders said that the "refugees would not be returned against their wish and Malaysia would provide them shelter on purely humanitarian grounds" (338). From Bangkok, charges ensued that the Malaysian authorities had encouraged elements of the PULO to strike at CPM base areas because the latter had informed the Thai authorities of their activities and movements (*Far Eastern Economic Review,* 9 October 1981: 12).

In September 1981 the Thai government attempted to settle the refugee issue with Kuala Lumpur. As a gesture of friendship and "a favor to an ASEAN neighbor" the Malaysian government decided to absorb the refugees, as had been done previously. The near crisis wound down with an offer of general amnesty to members of the CPM in 1984. In December 1989 an accord between Thailand, Malaysia, and the CPM formally ended the CPM's forty-year struggle (*Straits Times,* 28 September 1991). The communist threat diminished considerably along the border after CPM leaders agreed to lay down their arms in return for Malaysian financial compensation and rehabilitation. One thousand members of the disbanded units decided to set-

tle down in Thailand (*Straits Times,* 11 February 1993). With the removal of the CPM from the scene, the activities of the Malay separatist movement also declined in scope and violence, at least until 1989. In that year a series of internal events triggered a second near crisis for Thailand. In contrast to the first, this conflict featured full cooperation between Malaysia and Thailand.

4.3 Near Crisis, Phase II—1989 to the Present

After the demise of the CPM, both the Thai and Malaysian governments could give full attention to the Thai Malay dispute. The year 1989 marked renewed attempts by the popularly elected Chat Thai government to resolve, with the assistance of Kuala Lumpur, the PULO insurgency in the southern provinces. Under pressure from opposition parties to resolve the question amicably and have the army withdraw from the region, Bangkok devised an economic plan called the Hardpan Barau (New Hope). The plan was implemented as a strategy for development of tourism, the southern seaboards, and a coastal industrial zone. The goal was to strengthen the regional economy and defuse tensions between the Malay and Thai communities (*Asiaweek,* 21 April 1989). The year 1989 became noteworthy for another reason. It marked a brief revival of violent activities in the Patani region. Throughout the year, what then were believed to be Thai Malay rebels carried out attacks on non-Malay teachers, random bombings, and kidnappings.

These significant events signaled a change in direction among the Thai Malay leadership. The source of this change could be traced to a minority Shi'ia sect with considerable Middle East international connections. From the end of 1988 onward, Iran became especially active among Shi'ite Muslims in the south. For example, as part of the New Hope plan, the government chose to restore a mosque in Yala province. Between 23 October 1989 and 3 June 1990, followers of the Shi'ia leader, Sorayuth Sakunasantisart, protested the use of government money to renovate the mosque in a series of marches, speeches, and mass prayers (Chaiwat 1993).

Given that the dissidents came from a Shi'ia core group, Thai sources believed the preceding events and violence in 1989 to be promulgated with the assistance of the Iranian embassy in Bangkok (Chaiwat 1993). The PULO was not implicated in the attacks, which signified a significant realignment in Muslim minority politics in Thailand. A new pan-Muslim movement under Shi'ia leadership included not only disgruntled Malay of the southern provinces but also the non-Malay Muslims centered around Bangkok. Thai Malay autonomy now became of secondary importance relative to the larger issue of Muslim religious revivalism.

This transformation in leadership is important because of the realignment of international interests in the conflict. A significant shift occurred from Saudi Arabia to Iran as the primary external focal point of support. The Gulf War did much to hasten this process. At the beginning of the crisis, many Muslims were pro-Saudi because the country was the biggest sponsor of Thai Malay students. After the war, these students viewed Saudi Arabia as a "tool" of the United States in its efforts to destroy Muslims. According to one source, hundreds of young men crossed the border to Malaysia to link up with the fundamentalists there, in an effort to serve with Iraq (*Straits Times,* 22 February 1991).

These events concerned Thai officials because of their potentially broader impact on national security. The Kruzai event, a violent protest by Muslim groups at a Buddhist temple, became significant because of its implications for an Islamic resurgence independent of traditional Thai Malay political interests (Gopinath 1991; Chaiwat 1993). The fact that the PULO was not involved in the demonstrations also is significant. In fact, in the past decade, PULO guerrilla activity in Thailand and along the border had declined to almost nothing. By 1991 PULO membership disintegrated into several small factions—their movement was finished (*Straits Times,* 28 September, 4 October 1991).

Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, in an effort to bring the issue to a close, formalized a joint bid to suppress the rebels in 1991. Malaysia agreed to seal the border to the rebels. Even Kelantan's PAS government proved willing to cooperate, calling the matter a concern between Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. With the Kelantan government siding against the rebels, the potential for interstate conflict diminished significantly. Finally, cooperation between the Thai and Malaysian governments had been obtained with perceived gains on all fronts except one. The internal threat posed by the radical leaders of Thailand's Shi'ia community remained in place.[16]

Indeed, in the spring of 1994, a series of bombings occurred, and PULO members with Shi'ia sect connections in Iran and Pakistan claimed responsibility. These bombings occurred mostly in popular tourist areas (U.S. Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare 1998; MAR Project). From 1997 onward, the issue of Malaysian support increased in importance. The Malaysian government started a campaign against Thai insurgent leaders. Cooperation against the separatists took place because Malaysia did not want to jeopardize the emerging Malaysia-Thailand-Indonesia "growth triangle."[17] Collaboration resulted in success and led to the arrest of four core PULO leaders in 1998.

After this event, many militants participated in the government's reha-

bilitation program while some leaders as well as their followers fled the country. However, these events have not been sufficient to bring an end to armed separatism in southern Thailand. Isolated, small-scale incidents continue to occur. For example, on 11 July 2000, the BBC reported that two policemen had been killed in the south, near the Malaysian border. The interior minister claimed, however, that "it must be a bandit group but not terrorists" and linked violence to the issue of drug trafficking. Past events make it clear that Thailand's policy is firm: granting autonomy to Muslims is unacceptable. Cultural differences between Muslims and Thais, however, persist. In 1998 the Minorities at Risk Project concluded that the Thai Malay movement remained active but highly fragmented in organization and capability:

> The factionalization of the Muslim separatist movement and the limited nature of their support raises questions about the ability of the groups to launch a large-scale campaign for autonomy or even independence. Recent campaigns by the groups to forcibly obtain funds from locals in the southern region are likely to alienate many Muslims. Finally, Malaysia's decision to take a strong stand toward actions by Thai separatists living in Malaysia could reduce external support for the separatist movement. (http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/mar/thamusl.htm, 4 October 1998)

Violence in the southern provinces has increased since September 11, 2001. The PULO claim lives lost at the hands of the Thai government numbering in the hundreds and thousands displaced. Support for the PULO continues to emanate from Islamic organizations in the Middle East. From January through March 2004, separatist activities and attacks continued throughout southern Thailand. Martial law was declared by the government in the affected areas including the provinces of Narathiwat, Patani, and Yala. In April of 2004 more than a hundred suspected Islamic militants were killed in clashes with security forces in southern Thailand. In October 2004, seventy-eight Muslim protestors died in trucks, many from suffocation, while in military custody after being arrested at a demonstration outside a police station in Narathiwat province. Government officials claimed that the deaths were not intended, but feelings continued to run high after the incident. In short, the separatist movement continues, but on a smaller scale than in the 1980s as a result of the government's efforts to improve integration and development. So far, the Thai government has not been able to resolve the troubles in the south.

Our analysis now turns to an assessment of the key explanatory variables

used in this study. The two main actors, Thailand and Malaysia, are examined on the four dimensions: ethnic composition, institutional constraint, ethnic cleavage, and ethnic affinity.

5. Analysis and Propositions

Three distinct stages of interaction took place between Malaysia and Thailand, each marked by peaks and valleys of conflict and cooperation.

The first stage featured general receptiveness to the plight of the Thai Malay from specific groups within West Malaya, but a general lack of response from extraregional sources and the Malaysian government. Conservative and radical Malay political organizations formed with the specific goal of being incorporated into West Malaya. Their politicization increased under the centralization policies of the military-nationalist regimes of succeeding Thai governments. In the years before Malaysia's independence, the international community failed to adequately resolve the issue of Malay irredentism and Thai minority rights. For example, the United Nations would not recognize the inclusion of Patani province into a greater Malay state.

After Malaysia obtained formal independence, the second stage of interactions ensued. The Thai Malay conflict became a vigorous political issue in the context of Indonesian "confrontation" and growing concern about communist activities in Malaysia and Thailand. Initially, the leaders of both states were wary that their internal threats could be used against them by the other, as they often had been. For example, the CPM obtained sanctuary in southern Thailand, while the Malaysian government rarely denounced the support that Kelantan province continued to provide to the Thai Malay separatists. Around this time, the strategy of Thai Malay elites transformed; their irredentist goal changed to demands for greater autonomy and a separate state independent of both Malaysia and Thailand. Levels of violence increased, new movements formed, and support spread to the Middle East. Although the means of achieving it took various forms, the organizations covered the political spectrum from left to right and generally supported outright independence. The radical PULO emerged on the scene as the leading insurgent group and cooperated with the CPM in efforts to challenge both state-centers. Ethnic cleavage came to the fore.

The heightened sense of perceived difference between the Thai Buddhist community and Thailand's minorities is not difficult to explain. As in Sri Lanka, the Thai Buddhists constitute a distinct ethnic group with low

linguistic or cultural affinities to groups within the region. This sense of perceived difference clearly became linked to a virulent form of Thai military-nationalism during the 1930s and 1940s. After the nationalist revolution of 1932, the Thai government undertook a program of assimilating its minorities. Under the military rule of Phibul Songkhram (1938 to 1957, with a break from 1944 to 1947), the government attempted to assimilate forcibly the Thai Malay. Thai Buddhist laws displaced Shar'ia law in the areas of marriage, dress, and diet. Forbes (1982: 1059) argues that the period marks the onset of Malay separatist sentiment. Each successive wave of Thai political centralization brought with it rebellion among the Malay elite, who had the primary goal of reestablishing authority in the region. Most government officials, at least until 1975, were Thai Buddhists; hence the dominance of Thais in the political sector. After violence in the Patani region during the mid-1970s, the first of several steps took place to alleviate the problem through, for example, appointment of a southern Muslim as governor of Patani. The penetration of the state into areas of education is particularly notable because it caused a shift in the pattern of separatist leadership from traditional Islamic leaders to Patani youth increasingly conscious of stiff competition for jobs (Thomas 1989: 75).[18]

When Malaysia's own internal threat led to the 1969 emergency, the two states arranged for peaceful comanagement of their internal problems. In turn, Thailand's military leaders did not exploit Malaysia's internal turmoil. In fact, Malaysia would be allowed hot pursuit of the CPM into Thai territory, while Malaysia would make efforts to prevent the flow of material and peoples between Kelantan province and Patani.

As the fallout from the 1969 emergency faded, renewed threats, posed by potential Vietnamese expansion into the region, became a source of concern for both governments and, in fact, all ASEAN states. During the latter half of this second stage, conflict between Thailand and Malaysia also reached a peak and focused on the sovereignty of both states. Thailand accused Malaysia of being overzealous in its pursuit of the CPM into Thai territory. Malaysian leaders countered by providing refuge for Thai Malay dissidents. It appears that even alliances designed as a means for preventing interstate ethnic conflict are sensitive to issues connected to sovereignty and transborder relations. Nevertheless, careful and coordinated government efforts, which combined military and police actions with social and economic policies, had succeeded in reducing the level of both the Thai Malay and communist insurgencies.

The third phase entailed a decline in the CPM threat and with it the Thai Malay insurgency. After the events of 1989, the PULO's original leadership

also admitted defeat, replaced by new Shi'ia leaders. This transition in leadership signaled that a different kind of political movement had gained ground, one that neither Thailand nor Malaysia has proved fully capable of thwarting.

Interestingly enough, Thailand's short-lived, democratically elected government proved slightly better than the subsequent military regime in managing these tensions. The collapse of communism in Southeast Asia may be associated with the decline of class-oriented ethnic struggle and its replacement by more fundamentalist orientations. Perhaps this is because communism in Southeast Asia always had an ethnic as well as ideological character.

Largely because of the low intensity of conflict between the two states, the Thai Malay case offers a somewhat different environment within which to test the propositions. For example, Proposition P_1 focuses on the commitment of a constrained state to different strategies of intervention. Over time, Malaysian leaders developed a consistent and restrained policy of support for the Thai Malay. Although ethnic cleavage within Thailand provided an occasion for Malaysian leaders to maximize their domestic political fortunes, this did not occur. In the case of Malaysia, a diverse ethnic makeup, in combination with the threat from a communist insurgency, appears to have dampened support for the Thai Malay. Except for sporadic and ultimately unsuccessful overtures by the leaders of Kelantan province, ethnic affinities alone proved to be an insufficient justification for direct interstate conflict.

Thailand's nationalist policies, designed at first to assimilate and then integrate the Muslim community, brought the issue of Thai Malay separatism into comparative perspective. Initially, the government tried to prevent forcibly the Thai Malay from exercising control over their education, language use, and local politics. The Malay of Malaysia, by contrast, succeeded in implementing policies (i.e., NEP) that worked to their political advantage. Thus tensions between Thailand and Malaysia came from primarily domestic sources. Malaysia's NEP policy aggravated the conflict in Patani by accentuating differences between Thai Malay and Thai Buddhists. Thailand's pro-Thai, centralist policies made the situation even more intense.

By the mid-1980s, Thailand developed policies to improve the conditions of the Thai Malay so that neither a separate state nor union within Malaysia would be attractive. Horowitz (1985), among others, suggests that Thai military intervention and economic performance are related directly; a second link, connected to perceptions of internal threats, also seems to exist. For example, when the communist and Thai Malay insurgencies reached their zenith, so too did the perceived need for internal security. The lack of con-

straints on the leaders led to policies of unchecked assimilation. As internal threats subsided, the conditions that brought military intervention also declined. Within the past decade, effort continues toward military "civilianization," but democratization remains low.

Proposition P_2, which focuses on the relationship between diversity and pacific strategies, is supported. Evidence indicates that Malaysia's leaders deliberately set about to reduce the impact of the Thai Malay situation on their political fortunes. An important moderating effect on Malaysian nationalism in the northern provinces of West Malaysia is the country's overall multiethnic character. Territorial distinctiveness among the Malay within Malaysia is at only a moderate level, while the Chinese and the Indians are even more scattered. (This fact makes separatism a remote prospect in West Malaysia, at least for Malaysia's minorities, but this is not true for East Malaysia in relation to the federation as a whole [Suhrke and Noble 1977: 207].) Malaysia's leaders always have walked a fine line between advancing the interests of their ethnic group and reducing the negative impact of that policy on Thai-Malaysian relations. Consequently, various aspects appear in Malaysian foreign policy. Formally, Malaysian leaders have persisted in finding cooperative solutions to the conflict because West Malaysia's multiethnic character makes support for Thai Malay self-determination politically inappropriate. Malaysia until recently has been forced to consider the ramifications of such support for its other internal threat—the CPM. Informally, various Malay leaders at the national and regional level have expressed support for the Thai Malay. Material and political support from Kelantan province are noteworthy in that context.

The precise role of the Malaysian government in the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism among the Thai Malay is less conclusive. Given that the Malaysian government persuaded the leaders of Kelantan province to reduce support for the Thai Malay, it appears that Malaysia's leaders are wary of Islamic fundamentalism. This caution may be due to the challenges that the Islamic revival poses to Malaysia's policies of economic and political restructuring. In recent years, Malaysia's leaders have distanced themselves politically from radical Islamic movements. In the Thai Malay case, the more clearly international interests become defined, the less Malaysia's leaders are constrained by mobilized interest groups and by personal investments in the strategy.

With respect to the book's framework, we argued earlier that involuntary defection, a problem for constrained, diverse states, can be reduced if the elites of these states perceive cooperation to be in their interest. For example, Kelantan represented Malaysia's potential rationale for involuntary defection.

Kelantan's support for the Thai Malay might have caused Malaysia to renege on its reciprocal agreements with Thailand. Pressure applied on Kelantan leaders, possibly along with the offering of incentives, eventually resulted in their tacit withdrawal from the issue. Malaysia, an ethnically diverse state, already tilted toward finding a cooperative solution. An alliance structure based on a shared threat enhanced the attractiveness of cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia and reduced the ethnically based security dilemma.

Several decisions suggest that Thai leaders made the Patani conflict an important component of their foreign policy. Their policies might have exacerbated tensions in the region had Malaysia's leaders responded to them in a more confrontational way. By way of contrast, Malaysia's leaders relied extensively on their working relationship with Indonesia and other ASEAN partners as a means of moderating the potential conflict. For Thailand, this included monitoring and controlling the situation in Patani province, in concert with the government in Kuala Lumpur, and seeking assurances from Malaysia and Indonesia that they would not interfere directly in the Patani conflict. Bangkok also sought and obtained support and cooperative measures from moderate states in the Middle East (e.g., Saudi Arabia) to help reduce economic and political cleavages within the southern provinces. Thai elites also showed no aversion to using Thai nationalist sentiment to their advantage. To many Thai nationalists, the right of hot pursuit granted to Malaysia symbolized the weakness of the Thai government and represented an infringement on the country's sovereignty. In general, however, the additional threat of a communist insurgency in both states moderated tensions between them. Cooperative efforts to manage that conflict, within the framework of formal alliances (ASEAN) and border agreements, had positive spillover effects for cooperation on the Thai Malay issue (May 1990).

Proposition P_3 focuses on forceful intervention and concentration of costs and benefits. According to this proposition, forceful intervention becomes more likely when there is low political resistance among constituents, particularly within ethnically dominant states. Force did not become a component of Malaysia's foreign policy against Thailand, so indirectly the proposition finds support. The evidence indicates that threats to use force, other than those directed toward the CPM, were exceptional. If, in fact, Malaysia directly supported the PULO, then that must be taken as a more subtle indicator of its willingness to use force. The evidence provided here indicates that Kelantan, not the Malaysian government, provided assistance to the rebels.

It is important to note that the greatest potential for violent interstate conflict occurred during the formation of the Malaysia Federation in 1962, when Indonesia's confrontational policies resulted in a crisis between the two states

but not war (Brecher and Wilkenfeld et al. 1988). After the post-1969 emergency, relations between Malaysia and Thailand also appeared to be on a shaky footing but steadily improved into the 1980s and 1990s.

While Kelantan province supported Thai Malay self-determination, the government in Kuala Lumpur had reasons to adopt a more moderate policy. Even the proposed Federation of Malaysia plan to incorporate the Federation of Malaya (West Malaysia, Brunei, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore) would have worked to the disadvantage of the Thai Malay cause. The plan would have made the new federation even more multiethnic in nature. When Singapore went its own way after federation in 1965, Malaysia's ethnic political situation remained an uneasy balance between its Chinese minority and Malay.

Proposition P_4 is concerned with the role of high affinities and cleavage in exacerbating tensions between states. There is little doubt that uncertainty over rogue elements within Kelantan played a role in aggravating tensions between the two states. Lack of state control over ethnic insurgents also generated uncertainty and influenced the foreign policy strategies of key decision makers. In Malaysia's case, elected leaders proved to be sensitive to the interests of their constituents, even when these interests lay beyond its borders. However, an alternative security arrangement reduced the scope, salience, and intensity of the transborder ethnic confrontation.

Regional frameworks, developed to confront the communist threat, provided a vital and important framework in this context for cooperation between Thailand and Malaysia. At least two aborted crises are in evidence. Had the basis for cooperation been much weaker, the two states may have been less willing to put aside their differences over the Thai Malay issue. The role of transnational ethnic affinities within the cooperation/conflict continuum is significant. These linkages can create either benefits (through aid and trade) or insecurity (support for insurgencies).

Ideological linkages, for the most part, have emanated from extraregional actors, although of course Kelantan also played an important role. Evidence indicates that while these linkages constrained relations between Thailand and Malaysia, they did not prove enervating. Both states eventually could find cooperative solutions to the conflict despite perceived and real ethnically based security threats.

The answer as to why identity politics in Thailand has not resulted in an outright protracted communally based civil war that afflicts, for example, Sri Lanka, relates only partially to the fact that the minority group is far smaller with limited access to resources within the region.[19] It is conceivable that had Thai Malay ethnic strife been *the* salient security issue, conflict between

Thailand and Malaysia would have been much greater in scope and intensity. Indeed, the evidence suggests that a durable form of cooperation between states can be maintained even after the original basis for cooperation dissipates. Efforts to reduce the effects of transborder ethnic insurgencies can be successful under specific circumstances.

The collapse of communism in the region led to an important crossroads for Thailand and Malaysia. Thai authoritarianism dampened both the communist and Thai Malay insurgencies. If Thailand should become a true democratic society, alternative paths to resolving the Thai Malay and the larger Thai Muslim issue will have to be developed (de Silva et al. 1988). By addressing the Thai Malay economic situation, recent Thai governments have initiated the process of reducing disparities between the Thai Malay community and the rest of Thailand. Similarly, a more open and "permissive" Thai society also will have to find ways in which to engender toleration among Thai Buddhists for a new wave of Islamic fundamentalism in the region.

Proposition P_5 focuses on the relative likelihood of intervention among our ideal type states. In the typology from figure 2.1, Malaysia would classify as an ethnically diverse, high-constraint state, or Type II_b. Type II_b states generally adopt a relatively mild position on the autonomy of ethnic kin and try to intervene by using various moderating strategies. Ethnic interventions, therefore, take place only after careful calculation of multiple constraints and when there are strong, even overwhelming preferences among the state's ethnic groups or where a general consensus exists for involvement abroad. Thus a foreign policy based on ethnicity remains unlikely as long as elites can withstand the pressures of ethnic outbidding. Malaysia's foreign policy tends to confirm the predictions based on this typology. Malaysia's diverse constituency, and federalist institutions, decreased the probability of a risky foreign policy and increased its cooperative and towards the end "dovelike" actions. In short, Malaysia's foreign policy toward Thailand confirms the framework's expectations, namely, that the state practiced realpolitik policies.

Intervention always seemed a poor option for Malaysia not just because of ethnic diversity and institutional constraints but also due to the communist threat in the region, which forced leaders to behave prudently in advancing the interests of their constituencies. Although ethnic affinity has played some role in Malaysia's relations with Thailand, high costs and risks prevent those affinities from determining government policy.

To recapitulate, evidence from this case study and the two previous cases indicates that diversity plays a direct role in restraining state adventurism and in moderating ethnically based security dilemmas. Equally important is the

nature of, and perceptions about, the ethnic threat. Under certain conditions, both sides will sense mutual vulnerability and seek out cooperation despite potentially debilitating ethnic affinities and cleavages. For example, in the previous two chapters the states involved interacted within formal but weak regional security regimes (SAARC for India and Sri Lanka, the OAU for Ethiopia and Somalia). Neither of these organizations succeeded in preventing the outbreak of interstate ethnic crisis (and war). A key difference in the Thai Malay case is that cooperation emerged out of a second, very real threat to both antagonists: communism in southeast Asia and potential Vietnamese expansion. For Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, in contrast, ethnic conflicts *defined* and shaped perceptions of India and Somalia as their chief external antagonists and main sources of insecurity.[20]

6. Conclusions

This chapter has examined the interstate dimensions of ethnic conflict in a separatist setting. The Thai Malay case is different from the other cases examined so far because of the relatively low intensity of conflict between Thailand and Malaysia and the absence of a clearly defined foreign policy crisis. The chapter summarized the evolution of Thai Malay separatism and the role of domestic and international factors in that process, which included two near crises. Historical evidence from the case study, in turn, offered general support for the propositions. In brief, three implications can be culled from this conclusion.

First, it appears that a durable form of cooperation can be maintained even after the original threat has dissipated and when the perceived threat is low. Efforts to reduce defection among states seeking to support ethnic groups in other states can be successful under specific circumstances. An alliance structure, even an informal one, enhanced the attractiveness of cooperation and reduced the ethnically based security dilemma. Since ethnically diverse, constrained states already are oriented toward finding cooperative solutions (a point made in chapter 2), the key issue is finding ways in which to restrain less diverse or institutionally unconstrained states. One way, as suggested in this study, is to pursue internal change toward greater diversity and increase the strength of political institutions. In addition, external mechanisms, cooperative agreements, and formal alliances can and do assist in reducing conflict between states who share ethnic kin. For example, the ASEAN states of Southeast Asia are now reevaluating their relationship with nonmember states.

Second, the elites of minority groups who actually benefit from conflict but foresee only interstate cooperation will be forced, as a consequence, to pursue alternative strategies that will undoubtedly involve extraregional support. The evidence for this conclusion is the three stages of strategy and leadership change adopted by the Thai Malay. The first stage was irredentist and political in nature. Regional actors played an important role in perpetuating the conflict. That strategy succumbed to cooperative agreements between the two states and the reduced mutual salience of ethnically based insecurities. In the second stage, new radical leaders pursued separatist and more violent strategies. These second-generation leaders looked farther abroad for support among conservative and radical Arab states. Initially that strategy proved unsuccessful, but gains eventually ensued on several fronts. Thai Malay leaders did obtain a greater degree of economic and political independence. In the third stage, yet to be concluded, a third generation of leaders emerged, seeking increased religious autonomy for Thai Muslims using an even more radical fundamentalist approach.

It remains to be seen whether the growth of Islamic fundamentalism will take root among the Thai Malay and become a source of renewed insecurity for both Malaysia and Thailand. Much of what happens next will depend on the ability of the Thai regime to convey the perception to the Malay of Malaysia and to the world that the country is capable of providing legitimate and tolerant leadership.

The third implication of this case is that extraregional actors are extremely important sources of support for marginalized ethnic minorities. International support directly influences changes in minority leadership pools and strategies. These may be evolving at a much faster pace than the coping mechanisms of the state-center. States that face such internal and external threats to security may become more common in the post-9/11 era. Moderate elites may come to believe that their own security is threatened and consequently take action to shore up their support or, alternatively, give way to more radical leaders who are more effective in motivating their followers.

The former Yugoslavia, 1945–1990. http://www.nytimes.com/specials/bosnia/context/balkans-political.GIF.html