# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

*"The very nature of international borders has produced and invented ethnic minorities which have been forced into marginal positions on the frontier of the nation-state."*

*Alexander Horstmann*

Incorporation and Resistance: Borderlands, Transnational

Communities and Social Change in Southeast Asia

In the post Cold War period, Thailand received refugees (although Thailand is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and its protocol and is under no international obligation to resettle refugees within Thailand) from China, Burma and even a few from Malaysia. Malaysian refugees migrated to Thailand in the late 1950s at the close of the "Malaysian or Malayan Emergency". The Malayan Emergency was a state of emergency declared by the British colonial government of Malaya in 1948 and lifted in 1960, as well as an insurrection and guerrilla war fought between government forces and the Malayan National Liberation Army around the same period. During this time there were Communist guerrillas who slipped across the border into Thailand, where they blended into the local Malay community. As a scholar, Aristide Zolberg viewed the refugee is a product of the modern world.[1] The migrants of the turn of the 20th century certainly included people fleeing political hostility.

---

[1] Roger Waldingger, Immigrant Transnationalism and the Presence and the Past (USA: University of California, October 2003), p. 11.

The patterns of refugee flows and international migration can be explained within the context of transnationalism which refers to sustained ties of persons, networks, and organizations across nation-state borders. Transnationalism is often used for identifying the social connections between receiving and sending countries. One of Transnationalism scholars, Alejandro Portes views 'transnational communities' as networks across political borders, created by immigrants, people who "are able to lead dual lives."[2]

Malays who migrated into Thailand played a decisive role in the construction of the communities, systems and states and their boundaries in the Southern Thailand and they are often blamed for the continuing insurgency problems experienced in Southern Thailand[3]. S.P. Harish explained that the conflict in Southern Thailand is primarily an ethnic strife.[4] In addition, according to Crisis Group report, the roots of the current violence lie in historical grievances stemming from discrimination against the ethnic Malay Muslim population and attempts at forced assimilation by successive ethnic Thai Buddhist governments in Bangkok for almost a century[5].

The problem in the South can be viewed differently. For the Thai government, the problem in Southern Thailand is stated to be a domestic issue. Another view on the problem in the South of Thailand as a domestic issue was from U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, Ralph L. Boyce. Recently in January 24, 2007 Thailand, he answered questions in a USINFO Webchat on U.S.-Thailand relations and stated that "both the U.S. and Thailand view the situation in the South as a domestic issue." Thai Foreign Ministry Spokesman also said, "The causes of the

---

[2] Waldingger, p. 5.

[3] Michael Hynd, "Thailand," FMO:Forced Migration online (October 2002), p. 3, http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo012/.

[4] S.P. Harish, "Ethnic or Religious Cleavage? Investigating the Nature of Conflict in Southern Thailand," Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs 28, no. 1 (April 2006), p. 48.

[5] International Crisis Group, "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," ICG Asia Report no. 98 (May 2005), http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3436.

situation [are] domestic. It's not part of any international terrorist network but of course we are concerned about the introduction of extremist ideologies among the youths. We are concerned about the possibility of extremist groups in the region connecting together and this could become a serious problem."[6]

However, the issue can be viewed at the international level as it has escalated tension between Thailand and Malaysia. The situation along the frontier has become "tense enough for the Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister to warn that both countries should inform each other of their troop movements in order to prevent an untoward incident."[7]

At regional level, globalization plays a significant role for the problem in the Deep South. Wattana Sugunnasil viewed that the modern globalized world de-territorialized the importance of radical Islamist ideologies and a new articulation of Jihad.[8] This conflict in the South, in some point of views could be related to transnational terrorist groups such as the notorious terrorist organization, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). According to Dr Frank Frost from the Information and Research Services of the Parliamentary Library of Australia, a new dimension to Southeast Asian Islamic separatism was a result of the advent of a large-scale and radical Islamic resistance in Afghanistan. Local groups in Southeast Asia could now gain added inspiration, assistance and funding from prominent and well-financed international movements. Southeast Asia up to the 1980s already had several regionalist and separatist Islamic based movements, notably in southern Thailand,

---

[6] Zachary Abuza, "A Conspiracy of Silence: Who is Behind the Escalating Insurgency in Southern Thailand?," Terrorism Monitor 3, issue 9 (May 2005), http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369684.

[7] The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, "Thailand-Malaysia Diplomatic Row Tests ASEAN Solidarity," Asia Pacific Bulletin 233 (2005), p.1, http://www.asiapacificbusiness.ca/apbn/pdfs/bulletin233.pdf.

[8] Wattana Sugunnasil, "Islam, Radicalism, and Violence in Southern Thailand; Berjihad di Patani and the 28 April 2004 Attacks," Critical Asian Studies 38, no. 1 (2006), p. 119.

also the long running resistance in Aceh and especially, in the southern Philippines. While the Afghanistan conflict had comparatively little impact on the situation in southern Thailand or in Aceh, it has had a major impact on the southern Philippines, where Islamic radicals have found added sources of support and finance.[9]

This paper puts the emphasis on ethnicity as a rooted cause of insurgency in Southern Thailand and that ethnicity is the primary cause which brings about ethnic movement in the Southern Thailand. To further extent, the paper presents that globalization and transnational network shifted the understanding about Southern insurgency as ethnic movement to religious movement.

---

[9] Dr Frank Frost, "Terrorism in Southeast Asia," Parliament of Australia (April 2003), p. 1, http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/FAD/sea.htm.