THE FREEDOM TO DECIDE OUR FUTURE

Patani People Call for a Peaceful Settlement

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Cover photograph: Titiwangsa Mountains, the lifeblood of the people of Patani, the backbone of the peninsula. The mountains are the source of the rivers that flow through the land, which support the agriculture and fisheries, two of the most important industries in the region.

Dedicated to the struggle for peace in Thailand and South-East Asia

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasional
CDA	Collaborative learning
CPCS	The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command
NSAG	Non-state Armed Groups
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organisation

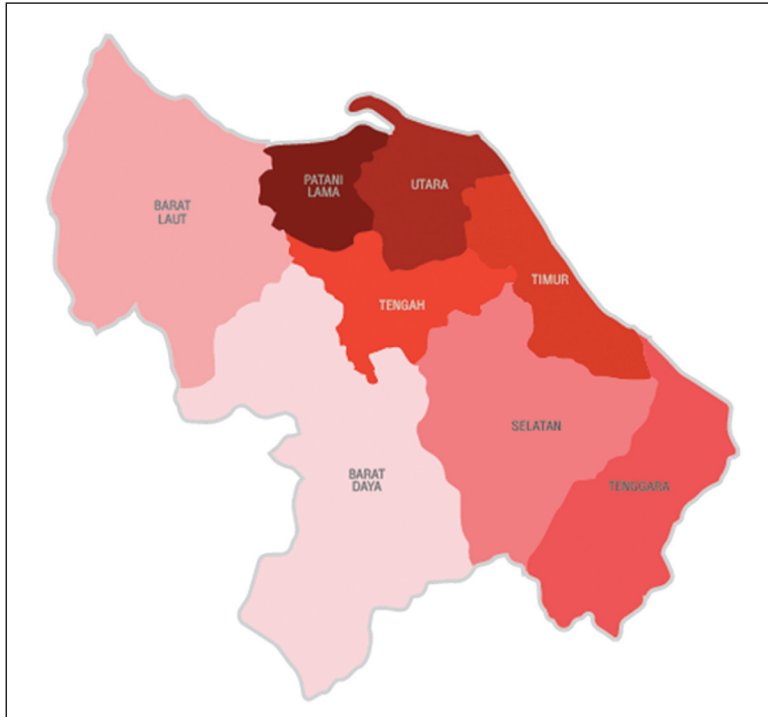# Table of Contents

Map of Thailand

Map of Patani

The people of Patani came together for the first anniversary of Bicara Patani, a public debate relating to socio-political dynamics of the region.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Key Findings

Introduction

The conflict in Patani has its roots dating back to the annexation of the region by the Kingdom of Siam under the support of the British colonial power that sought to protect its commercial and strategic position on the Malay peninsula. The British signed a secret agreement with the Kingdom of Siam in 1897, which stipulated that Siam would not give any concession on the Malay Peninsula without British consent. The treaty known as the Anglo–Siamese Treaty of 1909 transferred the sovereignty of Patani to the Siamese and has contributed to the insurgency. In the 1930s, forced assimilation policies set forth by the central Thai government exacerbated tensions between the culturally different groups of Thai-Buddhists and Malay-Muslims. Moreover, forced assimilation policies placed Thai language as the medium of communication, whilst overshadowing the cultural and religious rights of Malay–Muslims. This has fostered an environment of silence and fear, as well as contributing to suspicion and violence between the Malays, Thais and Chinese living in Patani [3]. The region referred to as Patani consists of 37 districts in four of the Southernmost border provinces of Thailand - those of Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala and parts of Songkhla. More than 2.3 million people live there at present. The demographics of the Patani area is the opposite of the national demographics with 94% identifying as Muslim and 6% as Buddhists.

Armed secessionist movements emerged throughout the following decades while physical violence from coercive organisations resulted in a low intensity conflict. Moreover, during this period, Bangkok's governing elites embarked on its' revised nation building process; to unify Thai territories and peoples under the umbrella of a singular notion of 'Thainess' and 'Thai identity'. Thus, it was only in 1932 that it was stated in the constitution that Thailand as a unified Kingdom was indivisible, which reflects one of the root causes of the conflict; whereby the contestations can be understood as an ethno-religious political homeland nationalist ideological struggle. The most recent phase of violence increased drastically in 2004 due to physical confrontation between Patani armed groups and Thai security forces. Whilst the Patani armed groups launched attacks; the Thai State through operations by their security forces also forcefully suppressed dissidents replace with: Thai State security forces also forcefully suppressed dissidents. Since the reemergence of the conflict in contemporary history more than 6,000 lives have been lost as a result of the actions from both sides (see appendix 5).

Through the enactment of the special security laws the Thai military has been empowered to occupy the region, set up over 1000 checkpoints across Patani and have the authority to arrest anyone they deem suspicious without evidence and conduct searches in peoples homes without court-issued warrants. The enactment of security laws created an environment of fear amongst the local population whose rights have been suppressed, which has led some people who cannot express their differences of opinions and perspectives to take up arms in retaliation to the Thai government.

In 2013, under the government of Yingluck Shinawatra from the Pheu Thai Party, the Thai State took its first step in attempting to resolve the conflict in the region under the framework of the Constitution of Thailand. The State invited armed secessionist groups to participate in a peace dialogue facilitated by the government of Malaysia. Through the peace talks, the Thai State was able to engage with the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), an underground-armed secessionist movement, which has the most active combatants engaged in the region. However, the State rejected the five key points[1] proposed by the BRN during the planning stages for the framework of peace talks, which subsequently led to the end of talks between the two parties. The BRN resumed their struggle. Shortly after the talks ended the military took over the democratically elected government in May 2014, which ousted the government of Yingluck Shinawatra, leaving the agenda for peace in the hands of the newly formed military government. Since then, the government has begun a new set of talks facilitated by the Malaysian government, but this time with an umbrella organisation representing six secessionist groups referred to as the MARA Patani which claims control over combatants in Patani. The initial outcome of these new talks was a verbal agreement to designate 'safety zones', which were areas selected by both parties to be free from any form of hostilities. However, due to a number of intervening factors, the proposal did not come to fruition and the peace talks reached an impasse.[4]

The recent elections in Malaysia, which saw the ousting of Barisan Nasional and a victory for Pakatan Harapan helmed by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is predicted to change the approach of facilitation of peace talks. Malaysia has appointed Tan Sri

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[1] *The five demands include the release of all detainees, acknowledging that the peace process is a national agenda, permitting members of the international community to participate in the talks, permitting Malaysia to mediate the talk, and acknowledging that Patani is the historical homeland of the Malays and that the right to the land belongs to the local people (under the principle of Pertuanan), and acknowledging that BRN is a liberation movement representing the entire population of the Patani region.*

Abdul Rahim Noor as facilitator replacing Datuk Sri Ahmad Zamzamin Hashim. Thailand has chosen former Fourth Army Region Commander, General Udomchai Thammasarorat as Chief of the Thai Peace Dialogue Panel, the negotiation team in peace talks to lead negotiations with secessionist groups. The highlight of Prime Minister Mahathir's recent visit to Thailand was his proposals that stated: any kind of peace talk must be people centred and inclusive of their perspectives and that peace negotiations are a long term process. This could signify a more inclusive and substantive approach to addressing the conflict in the region. [5][6][7]

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) in collaboration with The Patani recognizes the importance of accessing the voices of communities to understand how they have been affected by conflict and the peace process. Listening to a diversity of voices and considering their experiences is crucial in finding lasting solutions to long-standing problems that are at the root of violent conflict. Inclusivity and wide ownership are often regarded as hallmarks of a sustainable peace process, which is accomplished by including communities who are directly affected by decisions made at peace talks, while also acknowledging that they are the key drivers for change within the region. It is the objective of this report, after collecting and collating the voices of communities in Patani, to channel findings to top level actors and decision makers so that these voices may be considered in the resolution of the conflict.

Key Findings

A local coffee shop in Patani

Communities believe that the peace process is a necessary means to bring forth solutions to the conflict however they do not have confidence in the current peace process and they feel it needs to be more inclusive. Many of those interviewed expressed that the State has a zero-sum approach to handling the conflict. Rather than addressing issues such as structural violence and sovereignty, the State is framing the root cause of the conflict as issues of under-development and criminality. The State also continues to engage with MARA Patani in the formal peace talks rather than with the BRN, the latter being the combatant group which a significant portion of the local community views as the legitimate representative of the Patani liberation movement with control over armed combatants on the ground. Communities appreciate the humanitarian assistance that the Malaysian government has provided for the people of Patani, but there are calls for countries outside of the region to facilitate the peace talks as well.

Communities that were interviewed have a strong desire for the right to self-determination for the future of Patani. Many of those interviewed spoke about their desire for political rights and a chance at a better future, which they believe can only be achieved by accepting their right to self-determination. They believe that self-determination must be a collective effort of the people of Patani with the help of the international community. They note that this is an important issue to be discussed openly.

Many of those interviewed have expressed that there is not enough freedom for political expression such as a discussion about independence for Patani and democracy for Thailand as a whole. Those spoken to explained that the conflict is partly fueled by the failure of the State in providing adequate open political space to encourage dialogue and constructive discussion. Instead, voices and narratives that differ from the governments are stifled, which communities believe contributes partly to the continued existence of the underground armed movement.

The constant presence of the military and the multitude of checkpoints is viewed as a symbolic reminder that Patani is under the occupation of the Thai State. Empowered by three Special Laws which operate only in the Patani region, authorities are said to regularly conduct arbitrary arrests and search peoples' homes without a warrant. Institutes of cultural and religious education, referred to as Sekolah Melayu, are often monitored by the military. Those interviewed mentioned that the Special Laws restrain their political freedoms and limit their opportunities for livelihood.

People support the struggle for liberation and believe they are necessary for achieving their political ambitions, particularly BRN, who they view as the dominant armed secessionist group of Patani. They mentioned however, that these groups should be guided by humanitarian principles and make public apologies for the deaths of civilians during armed clashes throughout the years.

Communities report human rights abuses reflected in the predominant culture of impunity and lack of accountability by authorities operating in their areas. Grievances over many of the past

injustices inflicted upon communities in Patani, such as the Takbai Massacre, still hang heavy in the minds of those who were afflicted, however, there are others who recognize incidents such as Takbai as an event that is manipulated by both the military and armed groups for their agendas. Be that as it may, there is a strong desire for acknowledgement for these past events, respect for human rights, and accountability.

The development projects initiated by the State are seen as a means to pacify local people to further their political agenda, enrich governing elites and their networks, and to project an image of generosity to the international community. Many of the development projects are seen as causing more harm than good and destroying natural resources that locals rely on such as fishing areas and farmland. Communities feel that the government's focus on poverty and development are used as a diversion from the root causes of the conflict.

The State's direct and indirect policies to assimilate Patani Malay culture fall under its dominant policy of 'multiculturalism'. People have said that the State's definition of the word 'multicultural' is not the generally accepted meaning, but a disguise for a policy to dilute other local cultures and identities especially amongst the people of Patani. The suppression of their identity is done through the restriction of books on Patani history; government run campaigns to bring Patani Malay youths to Thai Muslim villages, so that they can learn Thai Muslim values that don't align with traditional culture and values of Patani. Finally, internal migration with aims to manipulate local demographics by mobilizing Thai – Buddhists from other regions to Patani is believed to be an indirect measure to suppress Patani Malay identity.

Local people are proud of the ethno-cultural diversity of Patani and accept that Patani itself is multicultural. However, they do not accept the State's forced understanding of multiculturalism. People that were interviewed talk about a sense of pride in their history and the diversity of the region. Even though there are grievances of the annexation of Siam and assimilation policies in the past up till the present the understanding of diversity is still highlighted amongst people as being unique to Patani but since 2004 the idea of multiculturalism is overshadowed by fear and mistrust between groups.

The sense of attachment between Patani Muslim people to non Muslims exists especially those that have lived there for a long time, but not so much can be said for those who have just recently relocated.

Communities say that the Thai educational system is driven by a dominant Thai nationalistic ideology. Communities feel that the education system constructed by the state overlooks the needs of the people, their identity, and dignity. For example one aspect of identity is signified by their language, which is not promoted in schools leading to feelings of identity loss. After 2004, security measures were put in place to target all institutions in the area that the military considered to be breeding grounds for rebellion. The military has since monitored the schools and attempted to indoctrinate the people with Thai values.

There are not enough employment opportunities, which has forced many Patani Malay people to migrate abroad. Besides this, there are reports of discrimination in the workplace, particularly in government jobs where people have said there are no opportunities for career advancement unless they accept Thai nationalistic ideology and Thai values to a certain degree. The current means of livelihood is based on agriculture and fishing which Patani people have felt a sense of ownership over, presently Chinese families monopolize the fishing industry with the use of larger ships and this has led a sense of loss of ownership. but there is a potential to advance to a more manufacturing based economy, which people feel the government should support.

Chapter 2

Recommendations

After analysing the perspectives, opinions, and challenges that have emerged from communities in the Patani districts, The Patani and CPCS have outlined a set of recommendations for the international community, the government of Thailand, the BRN, local political parties, and the general public.

To the international community

- The international community needs to understand the legitimacy and the need for the struggle of the people of Patani for their right to self-determination. By acknowledging this issue, and understanding that the crux of the issue is a matter of freedom of political expression and self-determination, thus providing support that aligns to this aim, the people of Patani may be able to have the freedom to discuss this issue openly and without fear of intimidation. This will empower them so that they may achieve their intended political goals.
- INGOs that operate in Patani have made significant contributions to development and this should continue.
- Members of the international community need to be a part of the peace process to ensure that peace talks are fair, impartial and to ensure satisfactory solutions for all parties are realized.
- Malaysia's role in the conflict is respected and appreciated particularly the humanitarian assistance it has provided throughout the years. The Malaysian government should work with the international community to develop a road map for the peace process, and should consider sharing the role as facilitator to the peace talks. This is to mitigate any possibility of perceived bias and to ensure impartiality.

To the Thai Government

- The Thai Government could reduce the number of military personnel and checkpoints in community areas so that people feel safer and ease tensions between local communities. This would also help shift popular perceptions of being under occupation. Moreover, this would alleviate local people of the fear and anxiety they deal with daily, and would create the opportunity to nurture a productive and respectful relationship.
- The government could consult communities on their needs and on development projects in their areas. This would help identify the needs and providing services and development projects that suit the context of the area. Furthermore, the central government could identify other models of power sharing in the South East Asia region especially in regards to natural resource sharing. These steps could help foster a better relationship between the state and local population by including their voices in the decision making process through public consultation and ensuring they benefit from the resources in their areas.
- The government could implement mechanisms that are derived from public consultation to regulate natural resource extraction from degradation and exploitation so as to protect the environment that communities rely on for their livelihood.
- The government could allow for more opportunities for people to speak freely about political issues and to find ways to include voices from those affected to be heard. This could be done by providing space for political activists in Patani to speak openly about issues in their communities, and channelling the outcomes of those discussions to the central government.
- The government could consider nurturing the diversity of ethnic cultures within the country by allowing local history and language to be taught in schools. Moreover, multiculturalism needs to be a natural process and not derived from top to bottom policies, which is seen as a means of forced assimilation, for ethno-religiously different groups across the country.
- The government could consider initiating a peace process with the dominant armed secessionist group that has control over combatants in Patani, which are seen as having leverage in determining the outcomes of peace talks. There must be a pre-mutual agreement between parties in determining the framework of the peace talks. By doing this it could mitigate perceptions of a lack of political will and a genuine desire for peace.

To Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) and Political Parties

- Political parties and pro democracy parties could recognize the issue in Patani as a priority on the national agenda. By doing so they could work at understanding the root causes of the issue so as to work on possible solutions.
- BRN could aspire to follow certain norms and principles of humanitarian conduct in regards to their struggle so that they may maintain their own legitimacy. Further, it could focus more on a political approach and to shift towards negotiations for the sake of the peace process.
- BRN could strive to have more open communication with people and develop a communication strategy with the international community and strive to be more transparent and have a clearer set of objectives.

To the general public of Thailand

- The public needs to understand the conflict at a more nuanced level, particularly understanding that both the Patani Malay community and Thai Buddhist community as victims of intractable hostilities.
- The public needs to understand that Patani is more than the Muslim – Malay demographic, but rather a part of the country that is ethno-religiously diverse.
- The public needs to recognize that the conflict is political in nature with some elements of religious motivation. They need to understand that the variety of ethnic groups within Patani are not in dispute, as the binary State narrative dictates, but the conflict is more complex and nuanced, which stems from a long term historically rooted struggle for self-determination.

Everyday inteactions between Thai security forces visiting and teaching Patani Malay children about civil duties and values with regards to being Thai and 'Thainess' at Sekolah Melayu (Tadika)

Chapter 3

Analysis

Community Opinions on Governance and Policy

Constant military presence

'Increased security checkpoints do not create more safety for the people, but rather it creates more problems.'

- A middle-aged man in Yala

People in communities feel threatened by the constant presence of the military and have said in various conversations that it does not increase their feelings of security. In one conversation that took place it was said that the presence of soldiers makes people feel that they could become victims if an armed clash were to take place. The presence of the military is viewed by people as an expression of the State that they occupy the 13 districts in the South, which perpetuates feelings of being under colonial rule. Community members question the sincerity and conduct of the soldiers in the areas covered for this research, as there are reports of harassments and other abuses of power. In many reports it was learned that soldiers conduct random searches through people's homes sometimes using the excuse that 'there are too many shoes outside the front door', indicating to communities that a gathering of many local people in their own homes is grounds for suspicion. Moreover, those spoken to mentioned that during these searches many of their valuable items are taken. Those spoken to have said that these acts are enabled due to controversial articles[2] in law that state that authorities do not need probable cause to detain you or a search warrant to enter homes.

'The interference by the military in community spaces such as Tadika (schools), this is not appropriate for soldiers to come and intrude in the children's space with arms'

- A female teacher from Yala

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[2] See Martial Law Section 14 & 15: http://thailawforum.com/laws/Martial%20Law.pdf

People interviewed observed that soldiers insert themselves within Tadika/ Sekolah Melayu[3], and commented on how this was inappropriate as it creates a tense atmosphere for the children. There have been reports that officers harass teachers, for example, in one conversation it emerged that teachers that work in Sekolah Melayu are photographed by the military during classes. Community members want to protect their Sekolah Melayu, as they believe that it is the foundation of their culture and education.

Those interviewed spoke on the state of law and order in the districts, as the government's imposed security laws have shackled political expression, daily life, and business. People who took part in listening request that the government consult them on how to better secure their provinces rather than over populating their towns and villages with armed soldiers. In one conversation, a participant stressed the importance of the compatibility between implementation and policy design, commenting that even if polices have good intentions if they are implemented poorly they will have negative impact. Those who took part in listening feel that the constant military presence, Article 1 of the Constitution and the three security laws in their areas have suppressed their voices and limited them from expressing their desires.

Community opinion on government development projects

'Without addressing political causes of the conflict development initiative are meaningless. I think when it comes to development and solving the problem it is important to address three things together: economy, society, and politics. For example even if the economy is good and the livelihood of the people is good we have to see if there is harmony in the society, how is safety in life and properties? Then there is politics whether we have good leaders. You can see that now the State emphasizes a lot on economic development but dismisses other parts. But all these things need to go together.'

- A 32 year-old Female Shopkeeper

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[3] *'Sekolah Melayu' refers to schools in which students are taught about Malay culture, language and identity, along with other subjects including science and math. These have been incorrectly called 'Tadika schools' by the Thai government to create the impression that they are schools of religious indoctrination.*

'The conflict is not about poverty, it is an ideological and political struggle for self-determination. Even if Bangkok develops this place into the richest part of the country, our struggle will continue.'

- A 64 year-old Male Activist in Patani

Development policies employed by the government have been described as unhelpful to communities in Patani districts, and what is more only for enriching military cronies, elites in Bangkok and to pander to the international community (see appendix 4). In other conversations, community members suspect that the rapid development projects are a means to pacify them and have commented on how it has severely affected their livelihood opportunities. For example, after the coup in 2014, the military government invested in the rapid construction of a coal power plant in Patani without conducting any public hearings, conducting an environmental impact assessment, or sharing the ownership of the plant with any local partners. Objections were made from environmental groups, democracy activists, local people and religious groups. When activists staged a protest against the construction of this plant they were arrested, and plans for construction continued. Community members feel that the economic and infrastructural development in their areas does not align with the local context and the needs of the people; they strongly desire to be consulted on development projects in the future.

One interviewee spoke about the impact of government development policies on rice production to decrease the self-sufficiency of people in Patani, particularly in the Nongchik area. He observed that earlier, people were able to grow their own rice and feed themselves. However, based on a Royal Proclamation to change rice production mechanisms, the military forced the construction of new irrigation systems that significantly reduced the yield of the rice fields. They had to abandon their rice fields and shift to cultivating rubber plantations. This forced locals to invest in importing rice from other parts of the country, increasing their dependence on the State.

Some of those spoken to feel that the government has distorted the conflict making it appear as though it were a struggle motivated by poverty. The development projects are seen as politicized by bringing it under the control of ISOC this removes local ownership from people in Patani because of its top down military hierarchy, which provides no room for criticism and community involvement.

'Development by the Thai State is perceived not to give any benefits to the Patani people since the people didn't have the say and participation in designing the projects. The policies didn't consider the people's voices'.

- 42 year-old Homemaker

Those interviewed also shared how they envisioned development in their areas. The first of which is their desire for economic development to match the local context, which is an agricultural based economy. They spoke about the need for infrastructure projects that are designed according to the needs of the local people, as it was mentioned that this was one factor that limited their ability to earn an income. In some conversations towns were described as being 'closed' that is the constant presence of the military creates this feeling of a barrier making it difficult for people from the outside to enter and thus limiting business opportunities. Communities hope that in the future more focus will be placed on growing the economy and that there will be genuine development projects in their areas.

People stressed that the development projects in and of themselves are not seen as a problem. However, within the context of the conflict in the region, the issue of development is resisted by three broad kinds of groups. The first are environmentalists, who oppose the damage to environment that comes from these large projects. The second are pro-democracy activists, who oppose any actions that are not conducted without consulting the community and getting their consent. The third are the Patani Malay nationalists, who reject any initiatives by the Thai State.

Community Opinion on the Education System

'We do not reject educational system but reject centralised policies from Bangkok's ruling elites driven by an assimilationist agenda that aims to change people's identity from Patani-Malay to Thai.'

- A 57 year-old Patani Malay Man who was part of a movement which sought education in Malaysia, and rejected the influence of Thai education.

A concern for many people in the areas covered revolved around the current education system. One aspect that communities brought up in conversations was the inequality that exists between the rural and urban areas in regards to facilities, funding, and scholarships, with urban areas having more over rural areas. In like manner, some people interviewed explained that the education system was not comprehensive enough and accessible, they spoke on the need for a flexible education system that can cater to long distance learners and variety of subjects for students to study.

In other conversations, people believed that the education system was used as a political tool by the government especially after 2004 when new regulations were put on certain places that are targeted because they 'breed rebel groups', using education as a means to fight any uprising. People that took part in listening feel that teachers in the past had behaved more like spies due to cases that happened during the emergence of the conflict as some teachers were targeted by insurgents because of their role as spies on behalf of the Thai Security Forces not because of their role as educators.

In some cases, those interviewed explained that there are enough institutions of higher learning in their areas but the curriculum provided does not address local needs and context. Another issue is that the medium of instruction in higher education is predominantly in Thai. As the local students are not fluent in Thai, this creates communication problems and is another driving factor compelling them to study in Malaysia. Studying abroad is often too expensive for students, so people need to migrate to Malaysia to work. To add to this, the entire education system does not try to accommodate improvement of people's education. That's why people prefer to send their children to religious schools remarked those who were interviewed.

"There needs to be a push for change in terms of language of instruction within formal and informal education institutions. The language barrier demotivates Malay students to pursue higher education. Thai should have that same choice."

- A 31 year-old Female Activist

'I want Patani to build a comprehensive and accessible educational system. These days there are a number of children who remain outside of the educational system and this is concerning because in the next 10 years it is actually these people who will bring a social change.'

- A 53 year old administrative staff person from a Sekolah Melayu

When discussing the school curriculum, community members that were interviewed were concerned with the representation of history and its lack of focus on the root cause of conflict. They believe that the central government's version of history does not align with the local narrative, and strongly believe that education is a means to unite the community and to learn about their history. Moreover, people have said that the education system is overseen by the military, and they design a curriculum that is so agenda driven that students are not learning anything meaningful. The local population knows that the Thai State can design a good curriculum that produces world-class students but it is only accessible for youths in upper class predominantly located in the urban areas. Those interviewed feel they are not gaining anything from the system because they do not fit in the mould of a Thai citizen.

Besides the school curriculum, those interviewed explained that in the past they were not allowed to study subjects in their native language although now the use of Bahasa Melayu and Jawi script is promoted it is still not widespread. This has resulted in some communities feeling that they cannot express their identity in their own language even though they want to preserve it. In regards to language there are two dominant narratives amongst communities: the first identifies the cause of poor education policies as the weakness of local leaders in identifying and putting forth their own agenda; the second places blame on overarching systems and structures that come from elites in Bangkok, who do not acknowledge the needs of the local context.

Finally, there are calls for the education system to respond to the industrial development that is happening in their areas, as many people interviewed have noted that subjects that are available in schools do not match the jobs available in their society. Be that as it may, those interviewed acknowledge that the lack of variety of jobs available is due to the conflict, which drives away investment in their areas. They believe that if there was a better link between the education system and industrial sector than they could have graduates with jobs that are relevant to the job market and a more opportunities for members of their communities. Overall, communities feel that the education system constructed by the State overlooks the needs of the people, their identity, and dignity. The conflict has made it difficult for teachers in the area to focus on teaching and more on security making it harder for students to learn. Communities hope that they are able to fix the system so that the younger generation in Patani can benefit from an education that is of their own choosing.

'We know that our education system has been one of the most affected spaces facing consequences by the protracted conflict. That is why we also want this conflict to end as soon as possible. How are we meant to focus on providing quality education if we are always worried about our own safety?'

- A 40 year old male teacher

Forced assimilation and suppression of Malay culture

Taken at a state owned university student's sports day parade in Yala. The banner caused quite a stir in the media and Thai public as it reads: 'Permission to call ourselves Patani'

'I remember that my husband used to like reading books about Patani. If the soldiers knew we had those in our possession, we would be arrested… Later I decided to bury all those books.'

- A 57 year old female administrator

A strong theme that emerged from conversations was on how the government has been suppressing Malay culture and forcing people to assimilate into the broader Thai culture. One means of this is through the government's heavy handed approach to publications and narratives on the history of Patani, as explained in one conversation, people have been arrested by authorities for reading publications on the history of Patani.

The Malay identity is inseparable from Islam and the desire for the faith to be the foundation of how people in Patani want to live has been raised many times during conversations. People interviewed believe that Muslims are not targeted by themselves, but rather that the government perceives that the combination of Patani Malay ideology with religion creates problems. Conversely, there are people

who say that the State doesn't really oppress religious freedom. For example, in the past there were problems between Buddhists and Muslims as there was nationwide policy to convert Muslims to Buddhism. However, the government is now more accommodating to the Muslim way of life.

The forced practice of the Wai in schools, which was introduced in the 1950s during the peak of Thai nationalism, between Malay students is another instance of forced assimilation that some people take issue with. However, others mentioned that over time the practice of Wai has become more accepted and normalized, with a minority of the older generation against it due to historical grievances. In particular, they are concerned about students being forced to revere pictures or statues symbolic of the Thai State. Some interviewees spoke about a shift in the State's policy from 'forced assimilation' to 'multi-culturalism'. For example, the *songkok* (a black hat worn by Malay - Muslims) used to be considered a symbol of Malay-Muslim nationalism, and consequently boys were targeted for opposing the State. At present, it is considered acceptable as a simple expression of religion.

The definition of multiculturalism, some say, is not the generally accepted definition. They say it is a politically loaded word used to create confusion and dilutes the existence of other identities in the country. For example, the State encourages Thai-Muslim youth from other parts of the country to show Malay-Muslims how to live. Another example is that the State promotes the celebration of Chinese New Year, but not Hari Raya, which is an important holiday for the Malay-Muslims. Those interviewed state that Multiculturalism is not the problem but only when it is forced or staged. For example, the State brings monks and Imams together to eat but does not consider customary practices such as certain times when a monk can eat. People feel that the multiculturalism promoted by the Thai state overshadows the main issue, which is the consequnces of the former colonial era.

'They bring Buddhists from other parts of the country to settle in Sukhirin area…The transmigration policy was not just limited to this area it was a widespread policy that was to transmigrate people from across the country down to Patani in order to dilute the Malay population… Now the pattern is to encourage soldiers from other parts of the country to marry locals as a way to assimilate Patani Muslim People.'

- An unidentified participant

'Marriage between different ethnic groups is good as long as it is based on something real …based on love…It is not acceptable if it has political motivations and I think this has led to a lot of social problems whereby families are destroyed. There are a high numbers of divorce cases after these soldiers finish their service… They revert to Buddhism and don't follow islamic practices. I believe that there are consequences… this is problematic for the youth wing who feel that it is a slap in the face by the Thai State'

- A 25 year old son of a former Paramilitary Ranger

Those spoken to believe that there can be no reconciliation between them and the government as long as the latter continues to harass and force the people of Patani to take on Thai culture. This coupled with the mobilization of Buddhists from other parts of the country to Patani leads communities to believe that the government is trying to manipulate the demographics of the area and further suppress the culture of Patani.

Injustices faced by communities and the need for protection of human rights

'The current injustice is widespread and occuring on all levels, even in the judiciary. This is derived from political policies which are aimed at "taking fish out of the water and taking the tigers from the forest". It has led to the punishment of innocent people, extra-judicial killings and the imprisonment of local populations, which are accommodated within special legislations promulgated in the region.'

- A 56 year old male participant

Broadly, the people interviewed discuss two dominant perspectives about the legal institutions. The first is an outright rejection of the Thai judicial process and institutions, based on the idea that power lies solely in the hands of the Thai State. The second is not a rejection as a whole, but rather advocates for legal systems to be used to hold public officials accountable for abuses of power such as with extra-judicial killings, and torture.

A recurring theme that emerged throughout conversations was the regular human rights abuses and lack of due process. Those spoken to often mentioned the culture of impunity that was growing in Patani, as people are subjected to imprisonment without a trial, authorities opening fire on protestors but facing no punishment or investigation. Communities report arbitrary arrests and what they describe as kangaroo courts, in one instance a man was shot under police custody with the police later offering the family monetary compensation. Reports of torture and forced confessions are also regular occurrences when arrested, however, with more human rights organizations in the area torture has decreased.

Communities reflect on incidents that occurred in recent history such as the Takbai Massacre[4], one person who took part in listening was a survivor and explained his experience of how the military allegedly forced people into the ocean then open fired on them, after during a court hearing it was decided that they died of drowning. People highlight this as a grave human rights violation and as an example of the lack of accountability and bias, other voices however say that both the government and armed groups exaggerate and manipulate the tragic incident for their political agendas. Protesters from that day were killed but a majority of those who took part were killed later one by one but it wasn't documented, report participants. From these experiences community members in Patani are motivated to create more awareness on human rights and greater participation between all people to protect their rights, as a majority of those interviewed say that the massacre was a tremendously painful experience.

Limited Political Space and the need for good governance

'The State should open more political space for freedom of expression to express people's desire / needs. People are pushed into joining the armed struggles because there is no other space to express different opinions.'

- An unidentified participant

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[4] *The Takbai Massacre took place during the holy month of Ramadan in 2004 during the reemergence of the conflict. Thai National Security Forces gunned down 7 protesters and forcibly detained 87 people who suffocated to death due to being stacked up on one another in overcrowded trucks whilst being transported to Inkayuth Army Base. Roughly 1200 were detained and did not receive medical attention. Moreover, the fact finding committee concluded that the method to disperse crowds did not align to international standards and practices as they used live ammunition.*

Calls for freedom of expression and the need for better governance is a continuing demand expressed by communities. Those spoken to explained that part of what fuels the conflict is that the government does not provide an open political space that encourages dialogue and discussion. Instead, voices and narratives that differ from the government's stance are stifled, which communities believe is part of the reason why armed groups have continued to engage in hostilities. Moreover, the limited political space has driven educated members of their society out of the country because of the restraints on community participation in governance.

At the same time there have been reports that organizations have recently been permitted to use the term 'Patani', whereas before this was prohibited and publicly condemned. One interviewee discussed the politics behind the revival of the term 'Patani'. He said there is a common perception that it is a new word, designed to manipulate people into mobilisation for an independent state. He explained however, that this word has deep roots that encapsulate a sense of belonging and identity of the Malay-Muslim population. This has been evidenced by the fact that political leaders who have been exiled decades ago still use the word 'Patani'.

When speaking on political space, communities provide a nuanced definition in the context of Patani, which for them is allowing the freedom for the discussion of independence, however, in the wider sense of the country communities say it is a discussion on democracy that needs to be addressed. Participants to listening commented that over the course of 15 years, local Patani politicians have managed to stay above the dynamics of the conflict and have not made efforts in bringing the needs of communities to decision makers in Bangkok. Those spoken to want politicians in Patani to transmit the voices of communities to the decision makers at the policy level. Moreover, participants to listening want local institutions to be operated by local people to manage local problems. They wish for a safe space to open up dialogue on issues regarding the economy, development, and to reach their political objectives, including but not limited to political independence from Thailand.

'There is a call for freedom of political expression in the region. This should remove the taboo on expressing ideas of political independence. This will lessen the possibility of people resorting to taking up arms. Following Malcom X's doctrine, we must change from using bullets to using ballots. We must change from insurgents to voters.'
- Former Secretary General of a Student Union, 33 year-old male

Throughout conversations, community members explained that the current government is non-democratic and controlled by the military. There were calls for a safe transition from a military government to a civilian led government. In other conversations, people spoke about the need for structural change, so that there is space for minority voices to be heard, and where political power accommodates to the needs of the people over business and corporate interests.

Buddhist interviewees in the region expressed that while they are not being oppressed by the legal instruments and special legislations implemented by the State, they feel they are violated by the actions of armed combatants. They asserted that these sentiments need to be addressed as well.

Communities want better employment opportunities and an improved economy

Fishermen selling fresh fish for people within the community

'I want the people here to build their own economic model based on the economy here, which is agriculture. People should be able to build it on our own. I want the people here to have their own economic model. The economy here is our own culture and we don't need to be fully dependent on the centralised State in Bangkok.'

- A female Buddhist resident of Songkhla

Issues associated with employment opportunities and a weak economy is a common theme that emerged from findings. Those who took part in listening raised concerns over the lack of job opportunities in their areas causing many to migrate to Phuket, Malaysia, and Bangkok where they do manual labor. Agriculture plays a big part in the local economy, particularly rubber plantations, which is popular amongst communities as it is a good source of income. However, as the price of rubber decreases communities have to resort to other means of earning a living, by switching to other crops or doing manual labor in Malaysia just so that they can earn enough money to sustain themselves.

Some interviewees spoke about large-scale industrial fishing. They noted that it is the most important industry and source of income in the Patani districts. Earlier, the local population controlled the fishing industry. However, as the industry scaled up, it became untenable for locals to sustain their ownership. They did not have the seed capital to invest in large fishing boats to compete with Chinese investors and so eventually got cut out of ownership. This is why many people say that Chinese investors are the ones in charge of the industry and lacks local ownership.

In seaside villages, interviewees explained that they cannot compete with large scale fishing boats, such as trawlers. However, the older generation fishermen still continue fishing by taking out smaller boats to get fresh produces on a small scale for their communities.

A popular career path in the areas visited is in government, but some say this limits opportunities, as it does not encourage exploring other careers. However, when trying to get jobs in government offices, community members from Patani speak about the discrimination they faced in the past. In some conversations communities mentioned that in the past they would have to change their names to Thai names in order to get a job in government. The demand for government jobs is due to the incentives and job security provided, but when they enter these positions and climb the ranks they need to increase their degree of 'Thainess' and lessen their Patani Malay identity to conform to organizational culture. At present there are more Patani Malay people working in government jobs, however, they are limited to low ranking civil servants.

Another recurring theme relates to the poor state of the economy, those interviewed compare the current economic situation to the previous years and notice that it's harder to find jobs and with the lower price in rubber there is less expendable income circulating in the economy and thus affecting smaller businesses such as street vendors and hawker stalls. There is an absence of small medium enterprise (SMEs) and the market is stagnant. It is yet to progress from an agriculture-based to a manufacturing and industry-based economy. Communities feel this is an entry point for the government to help. One way that communities in Patani feel the economy could be developed is in the manufacturing sector, as currently it relies heavily on agriculture. Another way the government could help is by providing start up capital from banks to support SMEs and removing feelings that the system does not support the context and needs of the local people.

Besides this, communities interviewed have a strong desire for the implementation of Islamic Banking. They note that there are several issues with the present system of managing finances at the local level. This includes the system of usury, as well as taxation and other issues of local finance management. These practices are against the principles of Islam and do not benefit people at the local level. They suggest that a more sustainable and mutually beneficial system of managing finances can be found within Islam. Those spoken to are in need of more job opportunities with potential of career advancement, a developed economy that is geared towards the manufacturing sector, and support for local SMEs and business ventures.

Daily trade at a local outdoor flea market in Patani

Community perceptions of Thai State's approach to the conflict

'I think today's current conflict is very much about political freedom. There is no political freedom to solve this problem and solve the structural problem. It is obvious that the State does not want to solve the problem in this area meaningfully. The Thai State always uses direct and indirect means of violence in addressing the problem. In my everyday life, I feel quite scared because I don't know which individuals in my community belong to which side. So I try to build my own space for my own living, which is non-partisan.'

- A 44 year old Muslim man

During conversations, communities spoke on how they perceive the State's approach to the conflict in Patani. One such approach that communities that were interviewed hoped that the State would take is to address the roots of the conflict. One such issue that needs to be addressed is the people's desire for political freedom, which they explain is not being looked at, but instead voices that differ with the State is handled with force and violence, the State's approach is not to

solve the problem but to defeat the opposing side. Conversely, there are some voices that do believe that the State is trying to be sincere to a certain degree, as one participant noted how the conflict is not framed as a religious one but political. Rather than trying to address the root causes, the State is trying to return the situation and relationship to what it was before that is non violent however this does not solve anything. Be that as it may, others that took part in listening remarked on the State's avoidance on using certain words like 'peace', which is often replaced with the word 'happiness', which according to communities dilutes the significance of the situation. Communities feel that the State knows what the key issues are: structural violence and sovereignty however, people feel the State would rather focus on issues such as criminality, development, and chasing members of armed groups. Still there are voices that wish for the government to address all the root problems through dialogue and not force.

Another aspect of the State's approach is communities' opinions on their policies such as militarizing the civilian areas to give people a sense of security but in reality gives people a sense of insecurity. Those spoken to mention the decision to place soldiers in their towns and Sekolah Melayu, as an approach, which does not help sustain trust between them and the Thai State. They recommend that rather than monitoring these places the government should try to help support these institutions. Through this communities believe that there will be a better chance of mutual understanding and lowered incidents of violence. Another issue that communities have with the State's approach is their perceptions that the State does not take the issue seriously and do not desire to make genuine change. Those spoken to cite the peace talks in which the government is having dialogue with the wrong armed group. Those interviewed hope that the government will address the root causes of the conflict and that the government will take a more genuine approach to the situation.

Opinions on the peace process and negotiations

The federation of Patani Students and Youth (also known as PerMAS) advocating a public campagin for Patani People's right to self-determination on international peace day (21ˢᵗ September)

Community opinions on the peace process

As for the current negotiations process, I am not sure whether they are legitimate representatives.

- A 38 year old female leader

A prevalent theme discussed by communities was their perspectives on the current peace process. Overall, there are mixed opinions on the peace process due to various reasons. For one, communities question the sincerity of the Thai State coming into the peace talks. Those interviewed feel that issues such as Article (1) of the Thai Constitution[5] should be open for debate and discussion, to add, there should be legislation that protects freedom of speech. Those interviewed explained that closing the scope to discuss Article 1 enables the State to dictate a huge part of the agenda for the peace talks, and limits options and opportunities

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[5] *Article 1:Thailand is one and indivisible kingdom*

for any other group negotiating with them. Moreover, the mechanisms of the peace process and the focus by the government, as well as the armed groups, by using military means to gain peace should be replaced with more dialogue. Conversely, there are some who believe that the peace process would not succeed because the State does not understand the context at all, however, there are others who feel that the government has made some progress albeit small. That being said people feel that it is not a matter of the State completely understanding the conflict or not. More about sincerity and political will in truly trying to solve the conflict.

In other conversations, those spoken to remark on the legitimacy of groups that represent them in peace talks such as MARA Patani who do not have control over armed forces on the ground. People feel that MARA Patani does have a role to play, but they may not be the most suitable group to lead the peace process. Further, as voiced in the region MARA Patani should not be considered as the main representative of the armed groups and the people of Patani. Moreover, the State's approach to isolating and excluding Barisan Revolusi Nasional does not help the process. This is due to the group being the most influential revolutionary party, as said by members of the community. Those interviewed said that they believe that BRN are open to joining, but the State has set the agenda so tightly that BRN cannot even discuss the root causes of the problem - they are precluded from doing this because Article 1 cannot be discussed. When discussing the mediator to the peace talks some members of the community believe that Malaysian facilitation is not suitable as they say that they are not a neutral party. Other members of the community acknowledge the efforts the Malaysian government has shown in its humanitarian aid, but Malaysia should not be the only possible facilitator of peace talks.

Finally, those spoken to express that the peace process should include the voices from communities and participation of the international community, as the current process is too focused on top-level actors. Moreover, for the peace talks to gain legitimate recognition in the eyes of the people it needs to address the root causes of the conflict and besides this focus on improving the economy and social services, as some voices in the communities believe that the peace process serves a privileged few. Finally, those interviewed expressed their desire for this conflict to end so the future generation of the country won't have to inherit problems that can be settled through a peace process.

Community opinions on armed groups

'I've been involved in this conflict for so long that I forget that the people I am fighting are also human... maybe that is why the battle should be in the political arena.'

- 35 year-old combatant fugitive

Another important theme was community's perceptions on armed groups, which showed a majority of respondents sympathizing with their cause. During conversations it emerged that because of the human rights abuses, injustices, and historical grievances such as the annexation of their land by the Kingdom of Siam, the existence of armed groups was inevitable and necessary. However, there are many voices that differ on the acts of violence that have occurred over the years. Some of those spoken to believe that violence is not the way to solve their issues but it was the only way to get the attention of the Thai State and a step closer to their political goals. Similarly, other community members share their understanding of why armed groups have emerged but question their approach after several cases of civilian deaths. These instances of collateral damage has shifted some people's perceptions on the legitimacy of the armed struggle as people want them to focus on community development rather than armed conflict with the State.

Those who took part in Listening wish for the armed groups to make a public apology for the civilian casualties that have occurred over the course of their struggle, as they believe this would help with the grieving and reconciliation process. Some people also spoke about the toll of the armed conflict on the families of the combatants too, who often suffer from deep trauma. They are sometimes ostracised by community members because the State will create false 'wanted' posters to target their families. Finally, it emerged during conversations that communities perceive that the State uses the armed groups as a scapegoat for their actions, and to cover up human rights abuses committed, in order to avoid punishment. Those spoken to feel a strong sense of injustice because of this. When Comparing the BRN to the military, communities note that the differences are not immediately clear and obvious, as both have violated humanitarian norms by killing civilians, accidental or not, in order to advance their military operations.

'I am ready to support BRN as long as their military operations respect humanitarian principles and do not affect civilians.'

- A male Buddhist shopkeeper from Patani

"Are we military targets because of our actions or because we are Thai Buddhists?"

- A Thai Buddhist Resident of Yala

When speaking about Barisan Revolusi Nasional, people from the communities in Patani suggest that they communicate more with the international community. People remarked on how they viewed BRN as the military force for some groups of people in Patani, and it is their responsibility to enforce the security for the people of Patani, however, their actions should be.

BRN is considered as a representative of the people as long as their ideological stance on Merdeka is clear. If they join the peace talk and their ideological stance shifts they are no longer considered as a representative of the people

- 40 year old, male villager from Bunnungstar District

Another important aspect is on the matter of representation and 'which organisation/group' communities believe actually represent them and their needs at peace talks. A majority of people interviewed stated that Barisan Revolusi Nasional are their representatives, as they are the true representative of the Patani liberation movement, and should be the ones in the peace talks with State. Communities that were interviewed expressed that although violence is not desirable it is necessary and they need full communication and cooperation of the political wing with their military wing in order to help further their political aspirations.

Communities Hopes and Aspirations

Communities want to nurture local capacity and mobilize themselves for achieving their political desires.

> *Gathering of people to do cooperatives to raise funds for community work. Education must be developed in all fields so that people have knowledge to develop their hometowns and people must help protect each other.*
>
> - An elderly Buddhist woman

A strong theme that emerged from listening was the desire of communities to build local capacity and mobilize themselves to achieve their political goals. When talking about developing capacity their first priority is to improve their knowledge and education, particularly of the youth. This manifests in several ways the first of which is through education, those spoken to remark on the importance of educating the youth so that they may have the power to support and protect their community. One example given by a participant was how important it is to be able to scrutinize government policies which are affecting their local

communities, another example given was the importance of understanding the law so that people can protect their basic human rights. They want the youth to be motivated to take up political channels in order to fight for truth in the conflict and justice and this begins with understanding history, armed with knowledge and to use spaces in their region to discuss important issues that their communities face such as the political future of Patani. Besides this, there is a strong desire for creating stronger connections between the various CSOs in their areas so that they can unify and gain leverage over the State.

Retaining culture, identity, history and preserving ethnic unity

'We know that we are not Thai people as we've always felt that we are Patani people because for generations we have protected our identity, so that we know ourselves.'

- An unidentified participant

Discussions around events in history were a common theme that emerged from conversations during listening. Communities focused on the abuse of power and years of injustice that they have endured throughout the years. One such manifestation of this is the historical narratives that communities speak on regarding the annexation of Patani by Siam many years ago. People spoken to express grief over the feelings of occupation and suppression they have endured and of how even using the name Patani was grounds for treason. In one conversation people spoke on how in the past their ancestors were used as slave labour to build canal infrastructure projects in Bangkok. Those interviewed also reflect on how Patani was economically successful when it was a trading hub in the 18th century, however, now due to conflict the area has become closed off from the rest of the world. In other conversations those interviewed reflected on the Queendom of Patani during its golden age when four queens, which people say reflects the importance that women play in their society, ruled. Moreover, people mentioned the strength of Patani and how it did not rely on military means but diplomacy, which many of those spoken to are proud of. The term 'Patani', many feel, has been taken over by the State and used to define Malay extremism, but communities feel that the term Patani is not owned by any one ethnic group, but rather the name of the area shared by people of varied ethnicities and religions. Communities want a more revised 'framing' in terms of definition for the term Patani that is not only tied to its history but also one that is moving forward into a more inclusive future.

'I am Chinese. My ancestors migrated and settled here. All my friends including my neighbors are all Muslims. Before the year 1947 whenever there are gatherings in faraway villages we would always join. Our relationships with the friends are still the same. But if there are any gatherings in far away villages, I am more afraid to join them but I will make sure I pass along my gifts.'

- A Chinese Buddhist street vendor

'I want the situation to be like before violence happened where people of different religions can socialize with each other like brothers and sisters.'

- An urban resident in Pattani city

In other conversations there is resentment towards the education system and its use to erode their local culture and identity. The current education system does not highlight how and why the conflict in Patani has happened, thus most students are unaware of the reasons as to why they live in conflict. Communities highlight this as evidence that the State does not understand the culture and context of Patani. Communities speak on the importance of retaining their culture through less overt ways such as music, art, and traditional games. This allows them to pass on their narratives and traditions to the youth so that they can understand the challenges that lies ahead. Another recurring idea is that communities take pride in its efforts made by locals to keep the fabric of their society intact and unified. One interviewee mentioned that there is a lot of harmony between the Buddhists and Muslims. In one example people spoke about how Buddhists would use Muslim chefs and butchers for their weddings so that they can dine together and celebrate. The main point those spoken to were trying to make was that despite the violence that can lead to a divided community, both these groups of people have found ways to stay united. Communities feel that these grievances have yet to be acknowledged and it gives them the motivation to struggle for change. The strength of intercommunal harmony and their rich shared history are key aspects of their society that they are proud of.

The right to self-determination (Physical separation / independence)

I don't want a repeat of all that has happened in the past. I don't want the younger generation to experience the same things we did. If we were to choose to solve the actual problem we need to fix the root cause of the problem, which is the governance power or gaining independence.

- A 59 year-old fisherman from unidentified location

A very prevalent theme that was heard consistently throughout conversations was a desire for the people of Patani to have the power to decide their own future. In a number of conversations people demanded for their political rights and a chance at a better future that can only be achieved if they could have the right to self-determination. They believe that achieving this will be a collective effort of the people of Patani and the international community in working together, but that is aligned with international norms in terms of charting the future governance of Patani. A minority, however, are afraid of this idea due to the weak economy, as an independent country there would be questions about the economy and financially stability, others still feel that it is not so much a matter of deciding their own future but addressing human rights violations and collective grievances.

When discussing the possibility of separating from Thailand, communities in Patani spoke of their desire to have a State that was governed by Islamic law, but while still celebrating and respecting the variety of other beliefs and cultures, and overwhelmingly, many of those spoken to hope that through gaining the right to self–determination they may cultivate better intercommunal relationships. There is a difference in opinion on the matter of Islamic governance whereby the older generation of Patani feels that Islamic principles should be used but the younger generation envision their right to self-determination to be democratic and the region should no longer be under the occupation of the Thai State. Be that as it may, the overwhelming majority of those spoken to want the people of Patani to have control over their future.

Listeners reflections

The following quotes are excerpts from the data processing workshop that took place shortly after the field research. During the workshop listeners were asked to share their experiences of conducting field research in order to get their perspectives, experiences, and opinions of the situation. This gave context to what communities were saying, but equally important allowed for listeners to express themselves.

'I had a good experience but I felt a lot of different emotions. I was invited by some plainclothes officers to speak with them at the police station because I talked to someone in a coffee shop in Patani. In a way it was a form of detainment. A policeman sat next to us and interrogated us as though they were conducting an investigation, simply because we were having a discussion at a coffee shop. After they questioned us, they made us sign a document we did not understand and then released us.'

'I had mixed feelings of sadness and happiness. I'm happy because I've always wanted to talk to people who work on this issue and I was able to speak to these people. I feel sad because of the dynamics of struggle in the areas. Some people have different perspectives and views that were not similar to mine. Some people spoke about these contentious issues in a lighthearted way. Some of them spoke of selling their land for these [State-led] development projects so easily… When we heard that we realised some people don't share the same attachments to their homeland as we do.'

'I also went to talk to people involved in the peace talks. I was excited because some people we interviewed, they could not open up about who they are but when I met them in Malaysia they were more free to open up about who they were and to talk about their views and perspectives. They were commanders and ranked high up in the revolutionary movement. There was a problem with the generation gap as they were in their 60s and 50s and we could not ask much because we didn't want to be rude or contradict our elders. I was worried when I told them about this project they were having high expectations… the other listeners … all of us have high expectations and it made me question to what degree we can fulfill these expectations.'

Chapter 4
Listening Methodology

A sustainable peace process relies on wide legitimacy and local ownership by multiple stakeholders. To foster this CPCS seeks out avenues of providing ways for less heard voices to participate in on-going national discussions. One process is the listening methodology (listening), which is a qualitative research approach that seeks to elevate community opinions, thoughts, and voices in conflict-afflicted communities across Asia. Listening allows for the observation of various perspectives and insights as well as the examination of ideas. Informal discussions and open-ended conversations facilitated by participants who speak the local language and come from the same context are the guiding principles of these talks. This creates a safe space where community members may discuss issues that affect their lives. The listening methodology compiles the issues raised from these open-ended conversations, taken from a cross section of the countries demographics, into a singular unified voice and presents it to key decision makers. By compiling these voices into a publication, CPCS aims to advocate for policy change and provide wider representation of community voices in governance and decision-making processes.

The listening methodology was adapted from Collaborative Learning's (CDA) listening programme, which sought to listen to communities that were receiving aid in order to understand how to measure its utility. The reasoning was that those who were receiving aid would best be able to explain its effectiveness and assess the impact of the aid they were receiving. Similarly, CPCS uses the listening methodology with the belief that communities that are directly experiencing conflict would best be able to judge the situation more accurately, rather than excluding their insights as to root causes of violence, what perpetuates it, and lasting solutions.

Monitoring community opinions using the listening methodology

In 2013, CPCS began to use the Listening Methodology to support Myanmar's peace process. Listeners traveled to various parts of the country and conducted conversations with non-ranked or lower-ranking soldiers from six non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and the Tatmadaw. This was done to hear their opinions, challenges and desires for the future. These conversations were documented and collated into two publications, and distributed amongst a larger audience so that they could be considered in the top-level negotiating process. The outcomes from this project were two-fold: for the soldiers of the Tatmadaw and the ethnic armed groups, there was a transformation in how they viewed each other, bringing to light a shared common humanity and similarities in their aspirations and challenges. In addition to this, the perspectives that listeners had of the military were transformed, humanizing the soldiers who were once viewed as the enemy.

In 2014, CPCS employed the listening methodology on a cross section of the demographics within Karen state to gather their opinions, challenges, and aspirations during the bilateral ceasefire agreement between the Karen National Union and the military. It was from this listening exercise that the ceasefire monitoring began, identifying the need to monitor community voices against the backdrop of peace talks between the government and various armed groups. The chief objective of which being: the collection of first hand experiences, alternative narratives, and the effects of the ceasefire on communities. Following this experience CPCS decide to utilise this conflict transformation tool in other contexts such as: the recent siege in Marawi and the current conflict in Patani.

In this first year of monitoring community opinions in Thailand, CPCS collaborated with 8 Patani based civil society organizations (CSOs) that provided on the ground logistical support, planning support for trainings, expertise on their context, and worked in their on-going advisory capacity. Besides this, CPCS used this opportunity to bring together listeners from various CSOs in Patani in order to strengthen the networks between local organizations so that they could cooperate, collaborate and share information about their work to avoid duplication of efforts and become more effective as a unified body.

For the listening conducted in 2018, CPCS recruited 29 listeners, 15 male and 14 female, from various local CSOs. The listeners were chosen for their familiarity with the local context and their ability to conduct conversations in the local language and most importantly their contacts with people in the community.

The Listening Methodology Process

The listening methodology began with the training workshop held in Hat Yai, Thailand. The workshop was held over a three-day period and was divided into two processes: the planning and training. During the planning stage the listeners and the research team established the purpose, scope and objective of the listening project in Patani. The training workshop focused on listeners learning the conceptual basis of the listening methodology, active listening, communication skills, and bias mitigation techniques. These skills were then strengthened through practical exercises so that listeners were better able to facilitate conversations with community members.

During the training workshop listeners were equipped with guide questions that they helped formulate during the planning stage. The questions broadly covered the following topics: history of Patani, desire for their community, ideologies, participation, conflict transformation, political transformation, collective future, and development. Although the guide questions were comprehensive, listeners were encouraged to create their own questions based off the guide questions, and by no means to follow them strictly; this was so that discussions could flow naturally (see Appendix 1). Listeners were encouraged to focus more on remembering key words of guide questions so that they could paraphrase and create their own questions. The listeners were instructed not to have the guide questions out in front of participants while having conversations, and to allow participants the space to speak about issues or concerns that were most pressing to them while still in the framework of this research. Listeners held conversations in the local language and were trained not to take down any notes during discussions.

Listeners formed teams of two to three members and travelled to various towns and villages within Patani, but also in the neighboring state of Kelantan, Malaysia (see appendix 2). Research areas were decided by our partner organisations and listeners were designated to as many locations as possible so that listeners could access a variety of communities. The safety and security of the listeners was

essential and listeners were not placed in any locations that may have posed any risk. Moreover, a safety and challenges component of the workshop allowed for CPCS and the listeners to trouble shoot potential issues they may encounter in the field. Listeners were asked to hold three conversations a day with a maximum of five participants in one conversation for ease of facilitation, and spent roughly two weeks doing field research. Listeners were encouraged to speak to a cross-section of the demographics that were recognised as being relevant to the conflict context.

Listeners were provided four research tools to record data from conversations: notebooks, logbooks, quote banks, and wherever possible, a photo diary. The key technique of the listening methodology is its reliance on memory. The rationale that guides this is that the most important issues that emerge from a conversation would be easily remembered as they would be discussed the most. Listeners were taught to record what they heard in their notebooks immediately after the conversation, while it was still fresh in their memories. Both listeners in the team facilitated conversations, and each listener would record what they heard into their own notebooks, thereby increasing the chances of capturing everything heard. This provided an additional use in that it allowed CPCS the opportunity to validate data and guard against bias by going through two or three recorded notebooks for each conversation.

At the end of each day, the listening teams met and discussed what they had heard over the course of multiple conversations. They used the logbook to record what they heard most from all conversations for that day. The logbook served as a daily debriefing and processing exercise that acted as a preliminary stage of analysis for listeners to identify trends or patterns from conversations.

When listeners heard a phrase, statement, or in some cases a proverb that they think best captured the essence of a main point, they would record it in the quote bank immediately after conversations were completed. These quotations from participants are used to cite their direct voices in the publication. In order to protect the identity of participants, quotes were not attributed to anyone, but were signified with indicators of where the conversation took place or other descriptive indicators such as: age, job, and gender. The photo diary was also used by listeners to capture images of the locations where they held conversations and to visually illustrate the situation that communities are experiencing.

After conducting two weeks of field research the listening teams reconvened for a two-day processing workshop facilitated by CPCS. Through synthesizing and analytical exercises, the listeners identified the main overall themes for each topic area and guide questions. Additionally, the processing workshop explored what listeners heard that was unexpected and the differences and observations heard from conversations, to provide a snapshot of listener analysis of results.

After the processing workshop, all recording tools (notebooks, logbooks, and photo diaries) were collected and translated from their original language to English. The research and analysis team carefully went through each document and triangulated the findings from the notebook and logbooks by coding the findings from the translated documents based on the main themes and categories that the listeners identified during the processing workshop.

The outcome from CPCS' internal analysis: the preliminary analysis was then shared with our partners. Allowing for our partners to review the analysis helped contextualise the main themes that communities discussed in conversations. Moreover, it validated the findings and allowed for them to integrate their analysis and recommendations for a more nuanced understanding of the communities and situation. Finally, advocacy strategies were discussed that would be the most effective and the format in which to present the findings in order to capture the attention of our intended audience.

Scope and Limitation of Study

This study took place in April of 2018 where listeners conducted 57 conversations with 103 community members. This exceeded the target number of participants that were calculated during the baseline study. The proportions calculated was based on the population of Patani, which is 686,186 people setting the baseline at 40 participants. This baseline was determined by the following factors:

(a) Size of population;
(b) Estimated number of conversations that listeners could hold on a daily basis, taking into consideration the time to travel to various locations;
(c) Time constraints

Listeners were requested to speak to a cross-section of individuals living in each area, with the objective of capturing voices of participants that represent the diversity in ethnicity, gender, age, profession, and religious affiliation. However, in some cases listeners were not able to gather data of some of the demographic groups (See appendix 3).

Challenges and Limitations

The strength of the listening methodology prides is its ability to access less-heard voices and including them into national discourses, however, there are times when challenges and obstacle arise in pursuit of this goal. A few worth mentioning are the inclusion of all voices from society that represent a broad spectrum of ethnic groups, gender, religion, and age. Moreover, obstacles such as logistical challenges coupled with military checkpoints and a high-tension situation has made listening difficult. During field research some listeners were under arrest for holding meetings in cafes, additionally, listeners were afraid of traveling around the area with the research tools (notebooks and logbooks), as there are multiple checkpoints.

Time constrains played a crucial factor in limiting this research, as listeners were only allowed two weeks to perform their field research this may have limited the number of people spoken to. However, this is also based on funding which budgets two weeks only. Similarly, translations was another limiting factor during this research, in order to triangulate the data that emerged from listening workshops the research team was required to peruse the notebooks and logbooks to thoroughly familiarize themselves with the data set. The translations from Thai to English proved to be a long process and maintaining committed translators was challenging.

Another challenge is mitigating bias. The methodology places trust in the listeners' ability to avoid biases. This is highlighted through activities during training workshops that focus on self-awareness, perceptions, and selection of participants. Facilitators identify biases in primary data by reminding listeners of their personal biases as they share main themes during the processing workshop. Reading through the notebooks and logbooks allowed the research team to detect and exclude inconsistent findings and clearly biased data from the internal analyses.

Finally, due to the nature of the listening methodology and its reliance on memory there will always be questions as to how to ensure reliability of findings. Listeners were instructed to take down what they heard from conversations immediately after conducting conversations and again during the end of the day to help the process, analyse and remember what they heard. CPCS held processing workshops as soon as listeners completed the field research period to ensure the preservation of what they heard. During processing workshop the listeners were instructed to recall what they heard most from conversations without referring to their notebook. The heavy reliance on listeners using their memory is based on the assumption that the most heard issues would be most easily remembered. Holding a processing workshop and triangulating the data with the notebooks and logbooks coupled with the consultation workshop with partner organizations helped safeguard the validity of the findings.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Guiding Questions

Table 1. Guiding Question Examples	Key Words
• **If we talk about history of Patani people, which one is more prominent – history of pain?** • **History of livingtogether?** • **How was your life before the violence in 2004 started? (In terms of livelihood, relationships with others, development, freedom, sense of safety, etc.)** • **What has changed since then?** • **How have those changes affected you?** • **Have you personally changed since the violence started?** • **In the recent past, do you remember any important events that have affected yourself and those close to you?** • **Have you or your community been affected by any violent incidents?**	Memories *(Related words: History, changes, livelihood, relationships, violence, events)*
• **How is the situation in your community?** • **What are the needs of your community?** • **What do you expect from your community?** • **What do you wish to be changed in the short term and in the long term – for yourself, your family and your community?**	Desire *(Related words: Needs, expectations, long and short-term, changes)*
• **What has driven you to be where you are?**	Ideology

- How have your livelihood and way of life played a role in the peace process? Do you want to have a greater role in bringing peace? - What kinds of activities have been going on in your communities? Have you ever attended any activity outside your community? - Anything important that you observed related to the peace process? - Have you seen any effort by the government to resolve the conflict? Did you find any of their initiatives helpful? - Have you observed any collaboration between government and civil society? - How do you think activities have included minorities in Patani like Buddhists, Christians and Chinese?	<u>Participation</u>
- Why do we have such violent conflict in the area? Is it related to political freedom? - What do you think about the security situation (including military checkpoints) in your community? How has it affected your life? How can it be improved? - Since the violence broke out, do you feel safe to go out at night? - What's your opinion about the peace talks in the past and in the present? - What is your opinion about the conflict situation in Patani? - What do you think about the armed forces that are fighting for independence? - What do you think about the measures taken by the military? - How has the relationship between the Thai state and the movement developed so far, what do you think about these developments?	<u>Conflict transformation</u>

• **What do you want to change politically?** • **What kind of government do you want to be under?** • **How do we design a political system that will bring about peace in the region?** • **In your opinion, what kind of governance would help solve the conflict?** • **Has the political instability in Thailand affected your life, or the conflict in the area?** • **If the new government is coming in, do you think it would help with conflict resolution or not really?**	Political transformation
• **How do we make decisions about our future collectively?** • **How do you see Patani in the future?** • **In your opinion, what is peace?**	Collective future
• **What is your opinion about state sponsored projects that are happening in your area?**	Development

Appendix 2: Areas Visited by Listeners

Group	Sub district / Village	District / city	Province	Country
1		Khet Wang Tong Lang	Bangkok	Thailand
		Khet Pathum Wan	Bangkok	Thailand
		Khet Bang kapi	Bangkok	Thailand
		Muang	Pahum Tani	Thailand
		Tanya buri	Pahum Tani	Thailand
	Suwanabumi airport		Samut Prakan	Thailand
		Khet Lat Kra Bang	Bangkok	Thailand
	Shinawatra University		Pahum Tani	Thailand
2	Pasir puteh		Kelantan	Malaysia
	Besut		Terangganu	Malaysia
	Lubok Jong		Kelantan	Malaysia
	Kota baru		Kelantan	Malaysia
		Panare	Pattani	Thailand
		Sugai kolok	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Sugai padi	Narathiwat	Thailand
	Palas	Panare	Pattani	Thailand
		Sugai padi	Narathiwat	Thailand
3		Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
	Donrak	Nongcik	Pattani	Thailand
	Yarom	Betong	Yala	Thailand
			Bangkok	Thailand
4		Mayo	Pattani	Thailand
		Panare	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Thong Yang Deang	Pattani	Thailand
		Yaring	Pattani	Thailand

5		Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Saiburi	Pattani	Thailand
		Maiken	Pattani	Thailand
		Mayo	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Saiburi	Pattani	Thailand
		Maiken	Pattani	Thailand
	Puyud	Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
		Kapo	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
6		Hadyai	Songkhla	Thailand
		Weang	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Takbai	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Saiburi	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
			Kelantan	Malaysia
	Shinawatra University		Pahum Tani	Thailand
			Bangkok	Thailand
7	Donyang	Nongcik	Pattani	Thailand
	Tanyong pauh	Nongcik	Pattani	Thailand
	Price of Songkhla University	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
		Sukhirin	Narathiwat	Thailand
	Pukhao Tong	Sukhirin	Narathiwat	Thailand
	Tuyong	Tepa	Songkhla	Thailand
	Lidon	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
8	Kedai lama	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Wang paya	Raman	Yala	Thailand
	Sateng	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Kalupang	Raman	Yala	Thailand
	University	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Kedai lama	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	University	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Mueng	Yala	Thailand

	Wang paya	Raman	Yala	Thailand
	Sateng	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
9	Kedai lama	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Wang paya	Raman	Yala	Thailand
	Pimonchai Market	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Wang paya	Raman	Yala	Thailand
	Kedai lama	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Kalupang	Raman	Yala	Thailand
		Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Krong pinang	Yala	Thailand
10	Tasab	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Ratchapat University	Mueng	Yala	Thailand
	Sakho	Mayo	Pattani	Thailand
	Tanyong pauh	Nongcik	Pattani	Thailand
	Baloi	Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
	Price of Songkhla University	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
	Rusamilae	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
	Tadan, Talok kapo	Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
11	C.S. hotel	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
			Kelantan	Malaysia
12		Yigo	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Saiburi	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		kalapo	Pattani	Thailand
		Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Yaha	Yala	Thailand
		Mueng	Pattani	Thailand

		Kapo	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Cok air rong	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Mueng	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Sugai padi	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
		Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
		Rage	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
		Cana	Narathiwat	Thailand
		Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
		Melan	Pattani	Thailand
13	Khuan nori	kapo	Pattani	Thailand
	Napra du	kapo	Pattani	Thailand
	Paka cino, Donrak	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
	Pra can	Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
	Puyud	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
	Kube puyu	Melan	Pattani	Thailand
	Donrak	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
	Tanyong	Nongcik	Pattani	Thailand
	Khok muang	Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
	Kolam	Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
	Bana	Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
14	Namdam	ThongYang Deang	Pattani	Thailand
	Nambo	ThongYang Deang	Pattani	Thailand
	Krawa	Mayo	Pattani	Thailand
		khuan don	Satun	Thailand
	Cayang	Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
	Saban	Yaring	Pattani	Thailand
	Kolam	Yarang	Pattani	Thailand
		Khao tum	Pattani	Thailand
	Tolang	Mayo	Pattani	Thailand
	Laya	Mayo	Pattani	Thailand

15	Pate	Yaha	Yala	Thailand
	Air Ya weang	Betong	Yala	Thailand
	Pulo puyo	Nongcik	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Pattani	Thailand
		Mueng	Yala	Thailand
		Tanto	Yala	Thailand
		Ban nang seta	Yala	Thailand
		Tanto	Yala	Thailand

Appendix 3: Demographics from all selected areas in Patani

Table 2. Gender of Participants

Gender	No. Participants	Percentage
Male	74	71%
Female	29	28%
Unspecified	N/A	N/A
Total	**103**	**99.9%**

Table 3. Ethnicity of Participants

Ethnic Group	No. Participants	Percentage
Malay	97	94%
Thai	6	6%
Total	**103**	**100%**

Table 4. Age Range of Participants

Age Range	No. Participants	Percentage
18 − 30	43	41.7%
31 − 40	12	11.6%
41 − 50	5	4.9%
51 − 60	17	16.5%
61 and above	9	8.7%
Unavailable	17	16.5%
Total	**103**	**99.9%**

Table 5. Educational Background of Participants

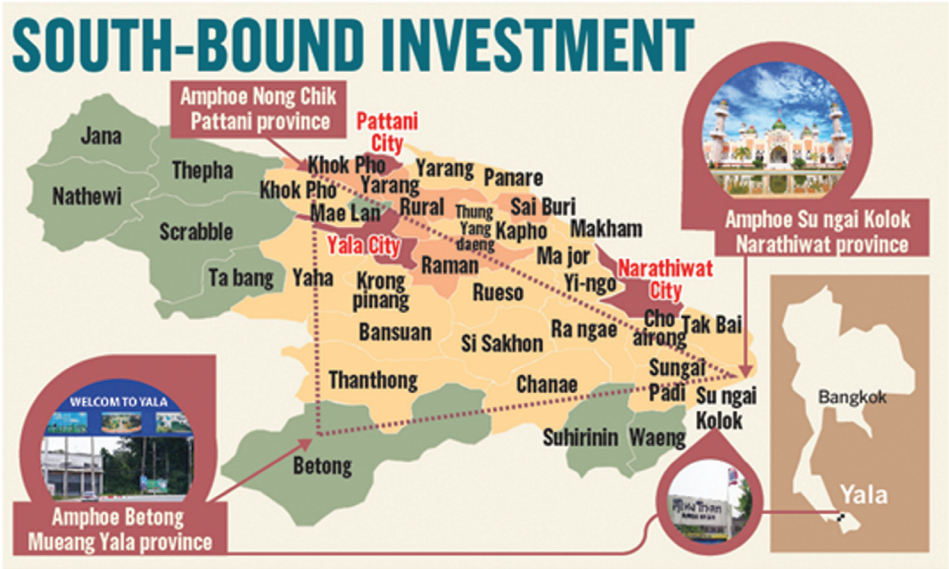| Educational background	No. Of participants	Percentage
None	0	0%
Primary	2	2%
Middle school	0	0%
Secondary	0	0%
University	70	68%
Other/Monastic	0	0%
Not Available	31	30.1%
Total	**103**	**100%**

Table 6. Livelihood of Participants

Livelihood	No. Participants	Percentage
Student	35	34%
Shopkeeper/Merchant	3	3%
Religious Leader	4	3.8%
General worker/laborer	5	4.8%
Politician	11	10.6%
Former/current fighter	4	3.8%
Educator	12	11.6%
Homemaker	2	2%
Bureaucrat	3	3%
Press	2	2%
Security	2	2%
Doctor/nurse	1	1%
Unemployed/retired	2	2%
CSO/NGO	2	2%
Translator	1	1%
Farmer	1	1%
Unknown	13	12.6%
Total	**103**	**100%**

Table 7. Religion of Participants

Religion	No. Participants	Percentage
Muslim	98	95%
Buddhist	5	5%
Total	**103**	**100%**

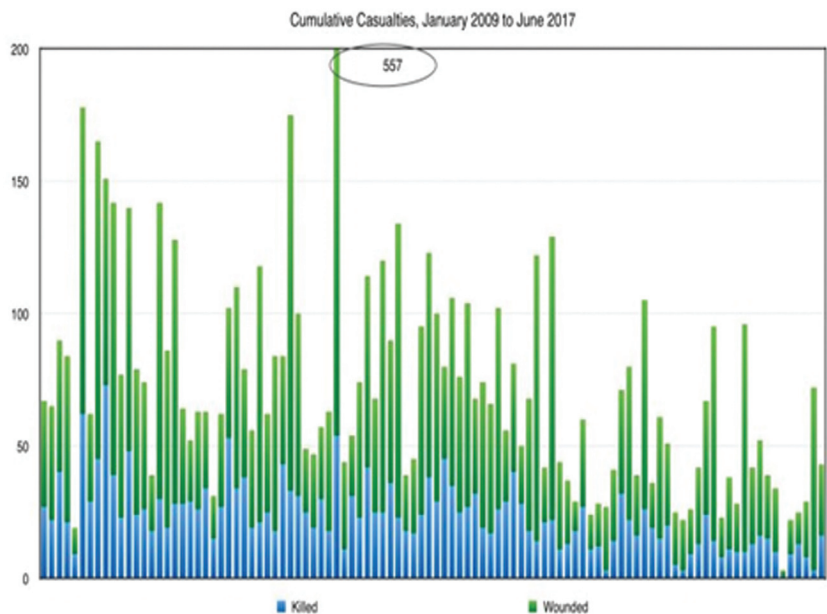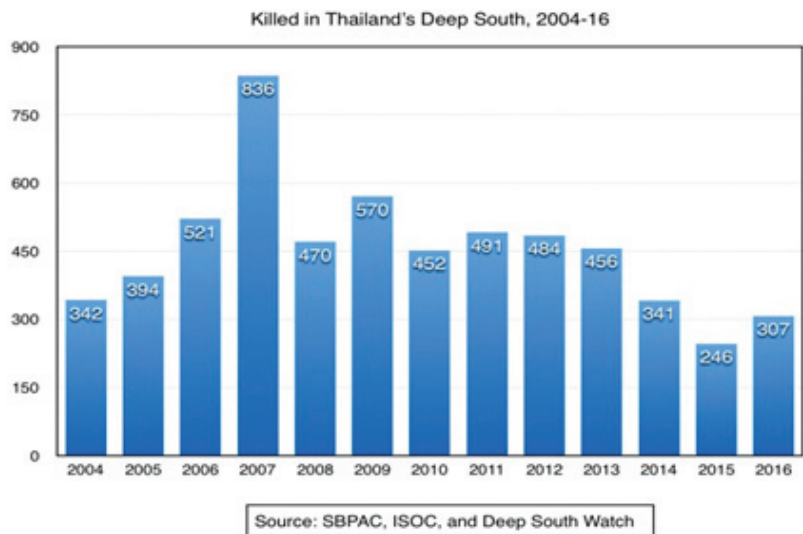**Appendix 4: Development Projects in Patani**

Source: The Nation

NATION GRAPHICS

Appendix 5: Casualties due to Conflict

Killed in Thailand's Deep South, 2004-16

Source: SBPAC, ISOC, and Deep South Watch

Cumulative Casualties, January 2009 to June 2017

■ Killed ■ Wounded

Source: *The diplomat*

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The Patani is a political action group advocating for the right to self-determination for the people in a historically Malay homeland that is at present constituted as the southern most border provinces in Thailand. The Patani promotes critical discussion about the ongoing conflict, its trends and dynamics between coercive organizations involved that being the Thai state and insurgency in this historically contested region and encourages the participation of members of the international community in striving for a long lasting conflict resolution.

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