



STOCKHOLM CHINA ECONOMIC  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

# **The Dynamics of Conflict in Southern Thailand**

Anders Engvall  
Stockholm School of Economics  
Uppsala University

Magnus Andersson  
Malmö University

**Stockholm School of Economics Asia Working Paper**  
**No. 33**

October 2014

# The Dynamics of Conflict in Southern Thailand

**Anders Engvall**

[anders.engvall@hhs.se](mailto:anders.engvall@hhs.se)

East Asian Peace Program, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University  
Stockholm China Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics

**Magnus Andersson**

[magnus.e.andersson@mah.se](mailto:magnus.e.andersson@mah.se)

Department of Urban Studies, Malmö University

October 2014

# The Dynamics of Conflict in Southern Thailand

## **Abstract**

The prolonged insurgency in Southern Thailand has claimed thousands of victims since the outbreak of major violence in 2004. Drawing on a unique data-set covering all violent incidents since 2004, a hot spot analysis shows that the bulk of the violence is concentrated in clusters of sub-districts forming hotbeds of conflict. Drivers of conflict are identified through a comparative analysis of the hotspots of violence with less violent areas. The analysis shows that identity manifested in language use and religious practices influence the prevalence and patterns of violence instead of international borders, infrastructure, and physical geography.

**JEL Classification:** D74; C21

**Key Words:** Economics of conflict; Thailand; Southeast Asia; Spatial analysis

## **1. Introduction**

Systematic evidence on geographic patterns of conflicts, and on the underlying factors associated with it, is limited. Although most civil wars are geographically limited to small parts of the host countries, the analyses rely almost exclusively on country-level data (Buhaug and Lujala 2005; Medina, Siebeneck and Hepner 2011).

However, the literature on micro studies of violent conflicts is still limited. In a recent overview, Blattman and Miguel (2010) find that the most promising avenue for new empirical research on civil war is on the sub-national scale. They analyze conflict causes at the level of armed groups, communities, and individuals. Recent microeconomic studies of armed conflict cover a range of country cases and provide important insights on the link between violence and socioeconomic development. In an analysis of communal violence in Indonesia, Barron, Kaiser, and Pradhan (2009) identify several factors contributing to conflict including unemployment, economic inequality and natural disasters. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008)'s analysis on the participation in insurgent and counterinsurgent factions in Sierra Leone's civil war, find that both poverty, a lack of access to education, and political alienation predict participation in the conflict. Murshed and Gates (2005) find a strong correlation between district-level civil war deaths and poverty in a study of Nepal's Maoist insurgency. The violent conflict in Southern Thailand has taken more than 6 000 lives, and yet the underlying causes of the conflict remain undetermined. The socioeconomic sources of conflict in the region have yet to receive in-depth attention from researchers and are obscured by the secrecy of the insurgency movement and the widespread use of propaganda on behalf of the Thai authorities.

The analysis in this paper on the underlying socioeconomic sources of the conflict is based on the observation that Southern Thailand's conflict exhibits great spatial variations. While some parts of the four southern provinces are seemingly unaffected by insurgent violence, other areas are plagued by recurring lethal violent incidents. This is also a region with large variations in socioeconomic development. A study of spatial patterns of violence and how these patterns are related to variations in potential explanatory variables sheds light on the conditions under which insurgents and the government mobilize support.

The primary questions addressed in this paper are as follows: (1) Can spatial clustering of lethal violence be identified ? (2) How does the location of lethal violence relate to socioeconomic characteristics of the population, physical infrastructure (represented as roads, forest and urban areas) and the international border to Malaysia? The causes and consequences of violent conflicts have recently received increased attention from researchers. Cross-country studies that explain violence highlight the role of economic predation (Bardhan 1997), grievances and social discontent (Collier and Hoeffler 2004) and weak state capacity (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Besley and Persson 2010). This paper takes a micro-level approach, focusing on the behavior of individuals when explaining violent conflicts. This approach advances our understanding of conflict by accounting for the mechanisms that link the behavior of individuals, households and groups with processes of violent conflict (Verwimp, Justino and Brück 2009). It combines a micro-level approach with geographical methods utilizing Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyze and visualize patterns of lethal violence.

Spatial analysis and GIS provide opportunities to clearly identify incident patterns, and generate possible reasoning and explanations for pattern characteristics. Previous research has

used non-spatial statistics or choropleth maps to visualize the number of incidents within a certain area such as country, region or continent (Aas Rustad et al. 2011). Several studies on conflicts have found that violence tend to cluster spatially (Buhaug and Lujala 2005; Gleditsch 2007; Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Forsberg 2009). A key argument in this paper is that existing analyses of micro-determinants of conflict, often relying on variables such as poverty, ethnicity, or religion for explaining insurgencies, can be improved by using geographical analysis. This paper therefore contributes to an expanding literature on the geography of conflicts (see for example, Buhaug et al. 2011; Buhaug and Lujala 2005; and Duffy Toft 2003).

## ***2. The socioeconomics of Southern Thailand***

The southern border region, made up of Malay Muslim majority areas in the three provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala and parts of Songkhla province, has historically been volatile and prone to periodic outbreaks of insurgencies. An analysis of the history of relations between the south and the central government in Bangkok shows that violent opposition against the state has escalated at times when central control over the area has increased, and when systems for local resolution of grievances have been absent. In particular, the latest outbreak of violence is associated with the dismantling of a system of governance that had guaranteed relative stability in the region since the 1980s.

Southern Thailand and Northern Malaysia make up an important cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic frontier. The southern border region is predominantly Malay and Muslim, giving it a unique character within a Thai-speaking and largely Buddhist country. The local language, religion and culture are akin to those of the Malay Muslims in neighboring

Malaysia. While Malay Muslims form a majority in the southern border area, making up about 80 percent of the population in the region, they are a small minority in Thailand as a whole.

To the north of the area, most people speak dialects of Thai and Buddhism is the dominant religion. The southern border area is a transition zone at a boundary between religions, languages, and cultures. The transition is not clear-cut and does not conform to the borders of modern day countries.

The southern border provinces are among the poorer regions of Thailand and are substantially less economically developed than other parts of the South. Poverty incidence is on par with poor and isolated provinces in the northeast of the country and household income is well below the average of rural Thailand (Bank of Thailand 2006). In addition to the low aggregate level of economic development, there are also persistent economic cleavages within the area, as the Sino-Thai merchants that dominate the urban economy and the Thai Buddhists that make up a substantial share of government officials enjoy higher standards of living than Malay Muslim villagers.

Drawing on the historical background of the Southern border region, it is clear that ethnic relations have shaped the interactions between the state and local population. The main part of the population in the southern border region is ethnically Malay, which is manifested in some unique cultural characteristics (Fraser 1966). To the extent that culture is a defining element of a person's identity, individuals and groups will seek to protect their cultures against outside influences. This may lead to resistance and frictions in their relations with a state that, to a great extent, is built on Thai ethnic identity.

The role of language use goes beyond its link to ethnic identity. Besley and Burgess (2002) highlight the importance of information flows about policy actions in increasing government responsiveness, particularly the role of mass media in creating an incentive for governments to respond to citizens' needs. More than half of the population in the region exclusively speak Pattani Malay at home, while just above 20 percent exclusively speak Thai.

There is a long-standing government policy to allow only Thai in all communication with government officials (Smalley 1994). Since Pattani Malay is distinctively different from Thai, this creates a significant barrier for interaction with the state and its representatives where Thai is the only accepted language. Conservative Thai language policy fails to create opportunities for mutual understanding, as a significant part of the population in the southernmost provinces are so uncomfortable with using Thai that they will avoid all contact with government officials. The failure of the Thai state to accommodate to local language use clearly hampers the ability of the government to respond to the needs of the population in the Malay speaking parts of the southern border region (Smalley 1994).

Education has for long been regarded as a key instrument both for economic development and for integration of minorities throughout the country (Shurke 1970). But the response from the population in the southern border region to government education has been mixed. Many opt out of secular education and enroll their children into pondok (traditional Islamic boarding schools) or private Islamic schools (Liow 2009). Pattani Malay is the main language of instruction in pondok and students rarely develop proficiency in Thai. The religious curriculum does not prepare students for formal employment outside local villages. Private Islamic schools are run on a dual-curriculum basis, with both religious teaching and secular



education similar to that offered in Thai government schools. Receiving education at pondok or private Islamic schools outside the government system may reinforce a perception that the Thai government is unable to fulfill the individual's educational needs. It can also increase the perceived barrier to communication with the Thai state and its institutions towards the Thai state and its institutions. Underdevelopment in the region is confirmed by the fact that more than one-third of the population lacks formal education and about 15 percent are unemployed or outside the labor force.

Religious minorities are susceptible to increasing negative sentiments towards the government if there are frictions between government policies or actions and religious beliefs or practices. While secular states strive to maintain neutrality towards religion, there are still many instances where adherents to minority faiths face discrimination.

As discussed above, the majority of the population in the southern border region is Muslim, while Thailand is a largely Buddhist country. Nevertheless, there is no official religion in Thailand and religious freedom is maintained, with a long tradition of inter-religious co-existence and a state that has been accommodating towards Muslims (Jerryson 2009). Despite a history of harmony between Buddhists and Muslims, there is a clear religious dimension to the conflict in Southern Thailand. During the conflict, religious leaders from both sides have become targets of violence from insurgents and the Thai government security agencies.

Islamic leaders that have been taken into custody by security agencies, have disappeared, or were extrajudicially executed (Human Rights Watch 2007a). Insurgent attacks include decapitations of unarmed Buddhist monks (Human Rights Watch 2007b). There is evidence that the systematic militarization of Buddhist temples, many of which have been turned into military posts, and the practice of allowing soldiers to ordain as military monks while remaining armed have increased religious tensions in the region (Jerryson 2009). This gives

an indication that religious tolerance has declined in Southern Thailand, something that might have a negative impact on inter-faith relations.

Furthermore the statistics give an indication of the division between a large share of the population (more than half) that only speak Pattani Malay at home, and about one-fifth that only speak Thai. Malay use is highest in a core part of the region that is made up of Pattani and northern parts of Yala and Narathiwat as shown in Map 8: Pattani Malay Language. The use of Thai is higher in peripheral areas along the southern border to Malaysia and in sub-districts close to Songkhla province to the northwest as shown in Map 6: Thai Language.

Almost 80 percent of the population adheres to Islam. Islamic faith is high throughout the region with more than 90 percent in most sub-districts. The percentage of those practicing the Islamic faith is lower in peripheral areas along the border to Malaysia as shown in Map 7: Islamic Faith.

### ***3. A history of conflict***

The region has been claimed as a vassal state by Thai kingdoms since the 15th century (Wyatt 2003). Expanding colonial powers created formal Thai hegemony over the region and the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 determined the current Thailand-Malaysia border (Klein 1969). With the treaty, some Malay Muslims were placed under Siamese sovereignty while the majority came under British jurisdiction, later forming an independent Malaysia.

Thai provincial administration was heavily decentralized prior to reforms at the end of the 19th century (Vickery 1970). With the reforms, the Bangkok government made efforts to bring about forcible assimilation and increased central control of the southern provinces (Tej 1977). The centralization brought about the first revolts against Siamese rule in 1903 due to

the resentment of the local aristocracy (Surin 1985). In 1906, Bangkok made a policy reversal and gave traditional ruling families a greater role in governing the area. The system of indirect rule was retained until 1933, after Thailand's transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional rule.

For a long time, the Bangkok government was content with maintaining authority and central control over the southern border provinces without integrating its population, and the Malay Muslims kept their separate religious and ethno-linguistic identity (Forbes 1982). Yet, the local elite gradually lost its position in the provincial administration to Thai Buddhists from outside the region (Shurke 1970). The policy of cautious integration changed when a military-led nationalistic regime came to power in the late 1930s. The administration attempted to forcibly assimilate the Malay Muslim population (Forbes 1982). Broad public resentment grew as the government removed local laws and discriminated against the use of the Pattani Malay language (Thompson and Adloff 1955). This coincided with the emergence of Malay nationalism in Southeast Asia and contributed to the emergence of a separatist movement in Southern Thailand.

This historically rebellious region has seen waves of uprisings against the Thai state since it became part of Thailand through the 1909 Anglo-Siamese treaty. The repressive policies provoked a popular uprising in 1948 (Syukri 2005). During the ensuing decade, Malay Muslim resistance continued, but at a somewhat lower intensity (Che Man 1990). The late 1960s saw further increased attempts in separatism (Forbes 1982) as a succession of separatist groups carried out a series of bombings, arson attacks and shootings, targeting representatives of the Thai government. The insurgent activities continued throughout the 1970s. This

increase in opposition to the Thai rule in the southern border region coincided with increased racial tensions and ethnic violence in Malaysia (Roff 1995).

Many of the armed movements that have fought for independence over the years have emerged as reactions against recurring efforts by Bangkok to exert increased authority over the region. The 1970s and 1980s saw an extended separatist campaign by the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), which relied on traditional guerrilla warfare conducted from jungle bases. This was effectively suppressed by a combination of conventional military campaigns and amnesty programs. Following the decline of PULO, Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate (BRN-C) or National Revolutionary Front Coordinate emerged as the main insurgent group, and the movement made a number of strategic shifts away from its predecessors' failures. BRN-C also focused initially on conducting a systematic mass-indoctrination of the local southern population to build a solid political base before eventually launching its violent struggle.

Maintaining separate political and militant cells in villages throughout the Malay-Muslim south, BRN-C has built a strong base and effectively undermined state control in the region. Rather than relying on a regular guerrilla force, the movement relies on part-time fighters organized in autonomous cells acting in their own communities. This mode of operation provides a challenge to state security agencies employing traditional counterinsurgency tactics. The largely Thai-Buddhist police and military is simply incapable of separating friend from foe when operating in the 'Deep South'.

On 4 January 2004, the insurgents launched their largest attack in almost three decades. Unidentified gunmen attacked the Chulaporn military army camp in Narathiwat, killing four

and making off with large numbers of weapons. More violence followed in the early hours of 28 April in the same year, when simultaneous attacks were launched on a dozen checkpoints throughout the region, including a symbolic storming of the Kru Se Mosque. Many of the militants were only armed with sticks or knives and 105 were killed by the security agencies, which only suffered 5 casualties. On 25 October 2004, a demonstration outside the Tak Bai police station in Narathiwat got out of hand and left seven demonstrators killed at the site with another 78 casualties claimed from suffocation during transport to an army camp (Senate 2005).

The security agencies initially tried to counter the insurgency using cruel repression: the infamous massacres at the Kru Se mosque and later at the police station in the small town of Tak Bai are two clear examples. While outside attention has largely focused on these symbolic events, the bulk of casualties have been caused by a drawn-out campaign of daily acts of violence using small arms, explosives and arson attacks. The security agencies' mismanagement of the initial wave of violence has also contributed to its steady escalation. To date, the violent insurgency in Thailand's southern border region has claimed more than 6 000 lives. Most of the casualties were claimed through a continuous stream of attacks using light weapons with a small number of victims in each attack. There have also been a few spectacular and coordinated acts of violence, including bombings.

On the evening of 25 October 2012 the southern Thai town of Yala was shaken by a string of 30 explosions that caused great terror and loss of life. The following day the neighboring province of Narathiwat saw a similar wave of attacks. This latest bombing campaign was a stark reminder from Southern Thailand's insurgency movement of the seventh anniversary of

the Tak Bai massacre, in which 85 people died at the hands of the security forces after a crackdown of a protest in front of a local police station.

The spread of violence has reduced state power in the south, leading to increased lawlessness and secondary violence in the form of revenge killings, settling of scores among criminals and extra-judicial executions at the hands of rogue elements within Thailand's security agencies. BRN-C is the leading insurgent group in Southern Thailand, while other organizations such as PULO play a secondary role (Helbardt 2011; National Reconciliation Commission 2006; Liow & Pathan 2010). BRN-C's goal is an independent Islamic state and it seeks to achieve political change using references to both the history of the independent Sultanate of Patani and Malay-Muslim nationalism.

BRN-C strategy and organization is based on the experiences of earlier failed insurgencies. A key principle of BRN-C is to maintain total secrecy and never assume responsibility for its actions. BRN-C has developed a refined organizational strategy that directs the group's activities (Helbardt 2011). In the past, Patani insurgent groups claimed responsibility for violent attacks, a practice that proved fatal in the end as it allowed security agencies to target them effectively. The centralized administrative structure is led by a Party Leadership Council under which there are military and political wings. The two wings serve as a link between leaders and the general population at the local level. The political strategy of BRN-C is primarily centered on building mass support among the general population in the region. Having local level support is a precondition for insurgent activity. A primary aim of the group is to ensure that the political wing gains control over the population and destroys the state's legitimacy among the Malay-Muslims in the region through continued subversion. Ideally,

members of the communities recruit additional supporters. Therefore, BRN-C tries to win support from local religious leaders, which are well placed to take on this role.

BRN-C's military wing is estimated to have around 3,000 fighters (Helbardt 2011; McCargo 2009). The militants are organized into squads, each with half a dozen fighters. These squads function as small-group assault units and are organized as largely independent cells. Larger operations may be carried out through cooperation between two or more militant squads. Such coordinated military action is planned and executed by commanders. Being based in the villages, members of the BRN-C military wing are amateurs and may switch between their roles as combatants and civilians. This makes counter-insurgency difficult for the Thai authorities.

The insurgency displays some clear strategic patterns, such as the targeting of representatives of the Thai state, notably military, police and civil servants. The targets extend to locals collaborating with or working for the government, including village headmen and teachers. Moreover, the strategy includes attempts to provoke violent reactions from the security forces to generate sympathy for the insurgents and legitimize their use of force. The selection of the highly symbolic Krue Se Mosque <sup>1</sup> for a hostage siege is an example of this strategy.

The Thai state has responded with violent suppression of the insurgency and with increased presence of police and military personnel (Ukrist 2006). Security agencies have also resorted to extrajudicial killings and abductions (Amnesty International 2009). The government has

---

<sup>1</sup> On 4 April 2004, there was a seven hour stand-off between Islamic nationalists in the southernmost provinces in Thailand and Thai military personnel. 32 suspected guerrillas took shelter in the Krue Se Mosque and Thai military soldiers attacked and killed all 32. The attack was made in contradiction of orders from the Minister of Defense to end the confrontation peacefully, and has been the subject of an international inquiry, which concluded the military used excessive force.

also promoted paramilitary groups, such as village defense volunteers and rangers (International Crisis Group 2007).

#### **4. Method**

Three main components of the analysis in this paper consists of: (1) describing the geographical patterns of lethal violence in Southern Thailand; (2) detecting patterns and potential concentration of violence over space; and lastly (3) to determine if these clusters are of statistical significance and what can be said to be hot spots. Though no common definition of the term hot spot of crime exists, the common understanding is that a hot spot is an area that has a greater than average number of criminal or disorder events, or an area where people have a higher than average risk of victimization. Analysts observing neighborhoods and neighborhood clusters with high crime or civil disorder levels try to link these to underlying social conditions (Openshaw and Alvanides 1997).

The present analysis use Getis-Ord  $G_i^*$  statistics to identify clusters of violent events with higher magnitude of violence than by random chance (Getis and Ord 1996). The Getis z-score represents the statistical significance of clustering for the specific spatial area. A high Getis z-score indicates its neighbors have high attributed values and low values indicate low attributed values. The higher (or lower) the Getis z-score, the stronger the association. A Getis z-score close to zero indicates no apparent concentration (neighbors have a range of values). Identification of hot spots of lethal violence is necessary to see if there is any spatial pattern of violence in the region.



#### ***4.1 Data and descriptive statistics***

The primary source of data is a geo-coded dataset constructed based on the violent incidents recorded in the Deep South Watch database. The database has systematically recorded violence throughout the border region since the outbreak of violence (Deep South Watch 2012). The database records information on all incidents of intentional injury throughout the area, by recording information from hospitals as well as reports from security agencies, civilian authorities, and news sources. All reported figures are limited to victims of intentional violence related to the insurrection. The data does not distinguish between violence perpetrated by insurgents, police, military, or any of the various government sponsored militias. Disaggregated data has been made available for the period between 2004 and 2012 (Deep South Watch 2012). The data cover 12,144 fatalities and non-lethal injuries are located with geographical coordinates as illustrated on Map 1.

In any study where spatial patterns are analyzed, the appropriate scale for analysis must be chosen. Scale in the geographical sense is defined as the ratio of map distance to the real world distance of which the map represents. When changing scale or resolution of analysis, new spatial patterns can emerge. Therefore, it is important that the choice of scale should be guided by theory or in-depth knowledge of the studied subject. The present spatial analysis is conducted at the sub-district level to correspond to the character of the conflict and to study the spatial variation within the conflict area.

Information on socioeconomic variables and self-reported perceptions of household welfare was collected in 2003 through a special census for the southern border region (National Statistics Office 2004). Data enumeration was carried out by trained health volunteers. These are members of the local communities that regularly disseminate health-related information

and collect census data. This ensures a low incidence of missing information, non-respondents or language-related misunderstandings. Some of the information collected in this special census is not included in the standard Thai census, and it gives a rich picture of educational status, language use, and religious practices in the region.

#### ***4.2 Analysis: Understanding the dynamics of conflict in Southern Thailand***

The Southern Thai conflict has been highly lethal, and Map 1 shows the bulk of the violence has occurred in roughly 50 sub-districts. Villages with high levels of lethal violence that are marked as shaded in dark on Map 1 are concentrated in central parts of the region in the forested areas along the border between Yala and Narathiwat. Additional hot beds of violence are scattered across the Pattani province. Violence is higher in the core area, with lower rates of casualties from the insurgency in areas bordering Malaysia to the south. The presence of violent areas has been acknowledged before, primarily by the authorities and locals who commonly refer to them as *red zones*.

The map also displays another set of approximately 50 sub-districts that experienced no lethal violence during the analyzed period. These villages shaded in white on Map 1 seem to be largely unaffected by the insurgency.

Linking the prevalence of violence with underlying factors are prone to various statistical problems related to establishing direction of causality. This suggests caution when it comes to drawing conclusions about the relation between violence and socioeconomic characteristics. Bearing this in mind, the remainder of the discussion analyzes the correlation between violence and a range of socioeconomic factors that may have an influence on the violence.

It is commonly observed that the southern border provinces is a majority Muslim area within a largely Buddhist state, but with large local variation in religion as illustrated in Maps 5 and 7. While a core area in the central part of the region is almost universally Muslim, there are many majority Buddhist sub-districts, particularly on the periphery of the three provinces. These descriptive statistics seems to indicate (without suggesting causality) a relationship between religion and prevalence of violence. In the more violent sub-districts shaded in black in Map 7, the share of Muslims (86 percent) is significantly higher than Buddhists (13 percent) as shown in Charts 1 and 3. The green areas unaffected by lethal violence have a higher percentage of Buddhists (23 percent).

Language is another factor separating the deep south area from the remainder of Thailand. The population in the region is largely Malay-speaking in a Thai-speaking country. The linguistic and religious patterns are similar but with large variation in the shares of Malay and Thai speakers across sub-districts. This is not surprising given the close connection between speaking Malay and being of Muslim faith. Areas with high levels of violence tend to have high shares of Malay speakers, while the reverse holds for areas with low violence as illustrated in Chart 2 and 4. This confirms the commonly held view that one source of friction in the region is the conservative Thai language policy that is perceived as discriminatory towards local minority languages.

It has been suggested that outbreaks of conflict is largely driven by local economic conditions (Buhaug et al. 2011; Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Justino, 2009). The data on the deep south does not support this view as variation in the self-reported worsening household economy in 2003 has little relation to subsequent violence on sub-district level. While there is great spatial variation in the shares of households experiencing economic problems there is no clear pattern

between household economy and subsequent violence as shown in Chart 5. Looking at another indicator of economic welfare – unemployment -- a similar pattern emerges as illustrated in Chart 6. While, there is substantial variation in unemployment shares, there is no clear relation between this share and violence. In fact the situation seems to be counterintuitive as the violent red sub-districts had lower unemployment rates prior to the outbreak of violence.

#### ***4.3 Patterns of violence in Thailand's deep south***

The hot spot analysis for 2004 to 2012 is shown in Map 7. The analysis indicates four significant clusters of violence within the studied area. This is important and can be interpreted that within the conflict area there are areas experiencing higher degree of violence than the mean level of violence in the region expected. The largest statistical significant concentration of hot spot violence is in the Yala and Narathiwat provinces.

There are also observed areas of cold spots, which can be explained as a statistical significant concentration of low levels of violence. It is important to note is that there are observed cold spots of violence located in Songkla and Pattani provinces. The hot and cold spot findings coupled with the descriptive statistics from the census data in Maps 1 through 4 confirms that there are localized areas with a higher degree of violence, which suggests further development of the spatial analysis.

The spatial analysis shows a pattern of violence that is concentrated to conflict hot spots, which are shown to be populated rural areas outside urban areas and not in forest areas (Map 3 and 4). This supports the notion that the conflict is driven by violence carried out by a village-based separatist movement. Charts 1-6 compare key socioeconomic measures between

conflict hotspots, areas with moderate violence, and conflict cold spots. These statistics clearly show systematic variations between the different areas.

Patterns of religious faith differ between violent hot spots, moderately violent sub-districts, and cold spots (Charts 1 and 3). Violent areas seem to be predominantly Muslim and cold spots tend to be mostly Buddhist. A similar pattern holds for language use; the hot spots are marked by a high share of households speaking local Malay, while Thai language use is low in the areas with higher rates and violence (Charts 2 and 4). Language and religion are important carriers of ethnic identity; the findings indicate a correlation between population with Malay identity and separatist activity. Chart 5 and 6 shows that there is no systematic relation between either subjective perceptions of economic status or unemployment status. This suggests that there is a weak link between economic factors and hotbeds of violence, reinforcing the importance of identity rather than material motives for violence.

## ***5. Conclusion***

Instances of violence tend to follow linguistic and religious patterns, reinforcing the view that southern insurgents rely on ethnic and religious identities for mobilization. While the Thai state has maintained an inclusive policy toward religious minorities, language policies are extremely conservative. For example, standard Thai is the only accepted language used to communicate with government officials, which leaves the southern Malay-speaking population feeling largely alienated. Economic disadvantage also adds to the sense of exclusion, as the region is among the poorest in the country, and significantly less developed than Thai-Buddhist provinces in the north.

The central Thai government has been largely ineffective at handling the violence in the south. Efforts to mediate the conflict are hampered by the hyper secrecy maintained by BRN-C leaders and the state's unwillingness to make any concessions such as increased self governance for the southern provinces. Consequently, any serious proposals for handling the conflict have principally been found from outside of this region. Researchers at the Prince of Songkla University in Pattani have suggested that autonomy through the creation of a Pattani Metropolitan Administration could provide an opportunity to pursue local identity within the bounds of the Thai state — and undermine local support for the armed uprising (for an analysis of alternative governance models for the South, see Srisompob and McCargo 2008).

In the July 2011 election, several parties floated policies for autonomy or decentralization, with the pro-Thaksin Pheu Thai Party adopting the Pattani Metropolitan Administration proposal as party policy. In the end, the pro-establishment Democrat Party triumphed in the Deep South, taking nine of 11 parliamentary seats. The party benefited from a spilt of the Malay-Muslim vote between large numbers of candidates contesting the elections after the break-up of the Wadah faction, which had dominated Malay-Muslim politics for decades. In early 2013, a peace processes was initiated as BRN-C and the Thai state agreed to initiate a dialogue for peace facilitated by Malaysia. At the end of 2013, this peace process has yet to end the ongoing violence.

## References

- Amnesty International. 2009. *Thailand: Torture in the Southern Counter-Insurgency*. London: Amnesty International Publications.
- Aas Rustad, Siri Camilla, Halvard Buhaug, Åshild Falch and Scott Gates. 2011, All Conflict is Local, in: *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 281, 15 –40.
- Bank of Thailand. 2006. *The Economy of Three Southern Border Provinces: Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala*. Hat Yai: Bank of Thailand, Branch.
- Bardhan, P. 1997. “Method in the Madness? A Political-Economy Analysis of the Ethnic Conflicts in Less Developed Countries.” *World Development*, 25(9): 1381-1398.
- Barron, P., Kaiser, K. and Pradhan, M. 2009. “Understanding Variations in Local Conflict: Evidence and Implications from Indonesia.” *World Development*, 37:3, 698-713.
- Besley, T. and Burgess, R. 2002. “The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 117:4, 1415-1451.
- Besley, T. and Persson, T. 2010. “State Capacity, Conflict, and Development.” *Econometrica*, 78:1, 1-34.
- Blattman, C. and Miguel, E. 2010. “Civil War.” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 48:1, 3-57.
- Buhaug, Halvard, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2008. Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space. *International Studies Quarterly* 52:215–33.
- Buhaug, H., Skrede Gleditsch, K., Holtermann, H., Østby, G. and Forø Tollefsen, A. 2011. ”It’s the Local Economy, Stupid! Geographic Wealth Dispersion and Conflict Outbreak Location.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 55:5, 814-840.
- Buhaug, H., and Lujala, P. 2005. “Accounting for scale: Measuring geography in quantitative studies of civil war.” *Political Geography*, 24, 399-418.
- Che Man, W. K. 1990. *Muslim Separatism: The Moros of southern Philippines and the Malay of Southern Thailand*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. 1998. “On Economic Causes of Civil War.” *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50:4, 563-573.
- Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. 2004. “Greed and Grievance in Civil War.” *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56:4, 563-595.

Deep South Watch. 2012. *Deep South Watch Data-base on the Southern Conflict*. Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus

Duffy Toft M. 2003. *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, interests, and the indivisibility of territory*. Princeton University Press.

Fearon, J. and Laitin, D. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War." *American Political Science Review*, 97:1, 75-90.

Forsberg, Erika. 2009. *Neighbors at Risk: A Quantitative Study of Civil War Contagion*. Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala Universitet.

Forbes, A. D. W. 1982. "Thailand's Muslim Minorities: Assimilation, Secession, or Coexistence?" *Asian Survey*, 22:11, 1056-1073.

Fraser, T. M. 1966. *Fishermen of South Thailand: The Malay Villagers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Getis A. and Ord JK. 1996. Local spatial statistics: an overview. In: Longley P, Batty M (eds) *Spatial analysis: modelling in a GIS environment*. Geoinformation International, Cambridge, UK, pp 261–278

Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede. 2007. Transnational Dimensions of Civil War. *Journal of Peace Research* 44:293–309

Helbardt, S. 2011. *Deciphering Southern Thailand's violence: organisation and insurgent practices of BRN-Coordinate*. Doctoral thesis submitted at the Department for Southeast Asian Studies II, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Passau.

Human Rights Watch. 2007a. "It Was Like Suddenly My Son No Longer Existed": *Enforced disappearances in Thailand's southern border provinces*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch. 2007b. *No One is Safe: Insurgent attacks on civilians in Thailand's southern border provinces*. New York: Human Rights Watch.

Humphreys, M. and Weinstein, J. M. 2008. "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science*, 52:2, 436-455.

International Crisis Group. 2007. *Southern Thailand: The problem with paramilitaries*. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

Jerryson, M. 2009. "Appropriating a Space for Violence: State Buddhism in Southern Thailand." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40:1, 33-57.



Justino, P. 2009. "Poverty and Violent Conflict: A micro-level perspective on the causes and duration of warfare." *Journal of Peace Research*, 46:3, 315-333.

Klein, I. 1969. "Britain, Siam and the Malay Peninsula, 1906-1909." *The Historical Journal*, 12:1, 119-136.

Liow, J. C. 2009. *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Liow, J. C. & Pathan, D. 2010. "Confronting Ghosts: Thailand's shapeless southern insurgency." *Lowy Institute Paper 30*. Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney.

McCargo, D. 2009. *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and legitimacy in Southern Thailand*. Singapore: NUS Press.

Medina, R.M., Siebeneck, L.K., & Hepner, G.F. 2011. A geographic information systems (GIS) analysis of spatiotemporal patterns of terrorist incidents in Iraq 2004-2009. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 34: 862-882.

Murshed, S.M. and Gates, S. 2005. "Spatial-Horizontal Inequality and the Maoist Conflict in Nepal." *Review of Development Economics* 9:1, 121-134.

National Reconciliation Commission. 2005. *Overcoming Violence Through the Power of Reconciliation*. Bangkok: National Reconciliation Commission, Royal Government of Thailand.

National Statistics Office. 2004. *2003 Census Project in the Southern Region*. Bangkok: National Statistics Office.

Openshaw S, Albanides S. 1997. Designing zoning systems for representation of socioeconomic data. In Frank I, Raper J, Cheylan J (eds) *Time and motion of socioeconomic units*. GISDATA series. London, Taylor and Francis

Roff, W. R. 1995. *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Senate. 2005. "Violent Incident at Tak Bai and Problems of Human Security in the Area of Three Southern Border Provinces." *Report of Senate Committee on Social Development and Human Security*. Bangkok.

Shurke, A. 1970. "The Thai Muslims: Some Aspects of Minority Integration." *Pacific Affairs*, 43:4, 531-547.

Smalley, W.A. 1994. *Linguistic Diversity and National Unity: Language ecology in Thailand*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Srisompob Jitpiromsri. and McCargo, D. 2008. "A Ministry for the South: New governance proposals for Thailand's southern region." *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 30:3, 403-428.

Syukri, I. 2005. *History of the Malay Kingdom of Patani*. With introduction by D.K. Wyatt. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Surin Pitsuwan. 1985. *Islam and Malay Nationalism: A case study of the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand*. Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University.

Tej Bunnag. 1977. *The Provincial Administration of Siam 1892-1915: The Ministry of the Interior under Prince Damrong Rajanubhab*. London: Oxford University Press.

Thompson, V. and Adloff, R. 1955. *Minority Problems in Southeast Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

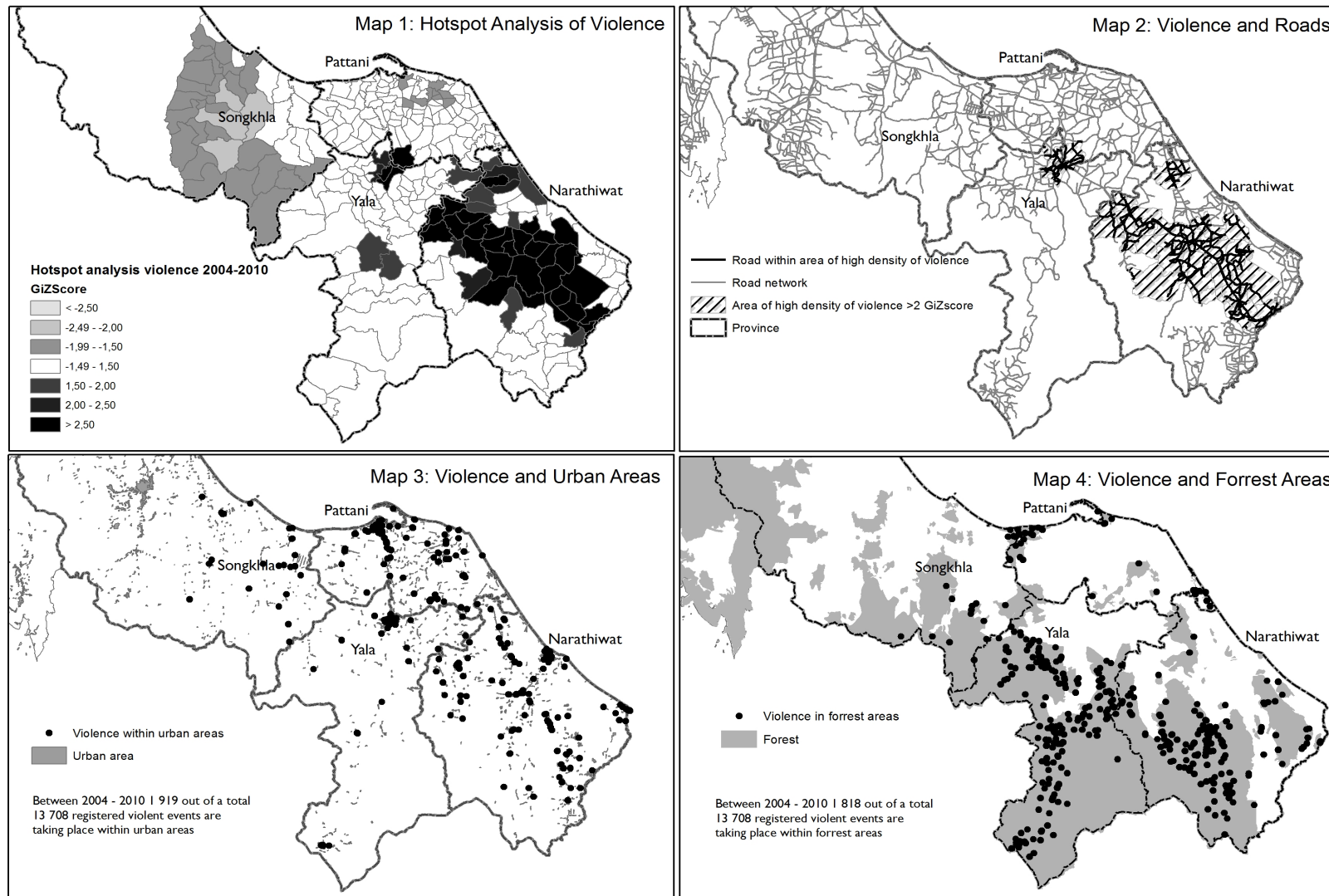
Ukrist Pathmanand. 2006. "Thaksin's Achilles' Heel: The failure of Hawkish approaches in the Thai South." *Critical Asian Studies*, 38:1, 73-93.

Verwimp, P. Justino, P. and Brück, T. 2009. "The Analysis of Conflict: A micro-level perspective." *Journal of Peace Research*, 46:3, 307-314.

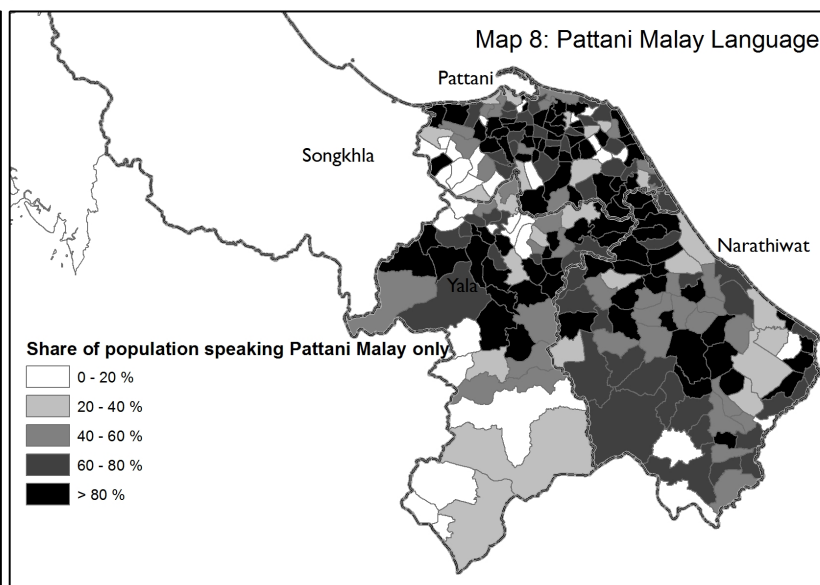
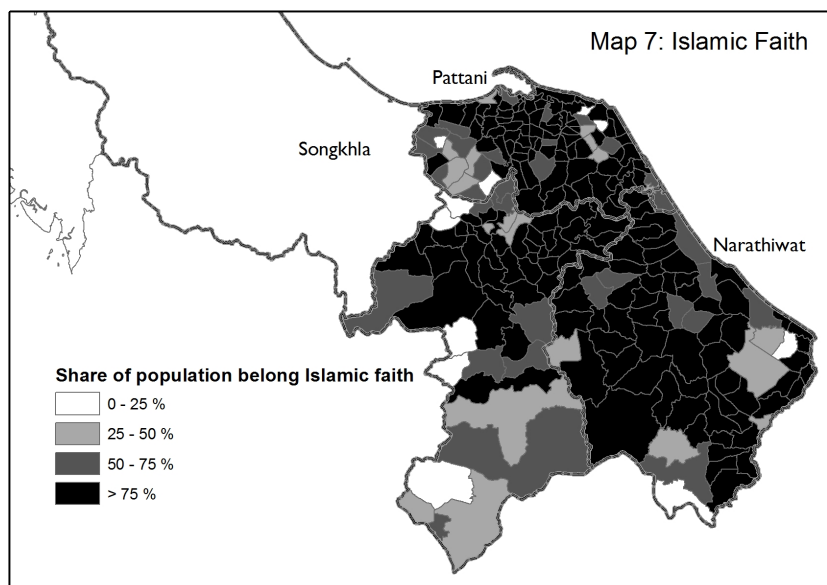
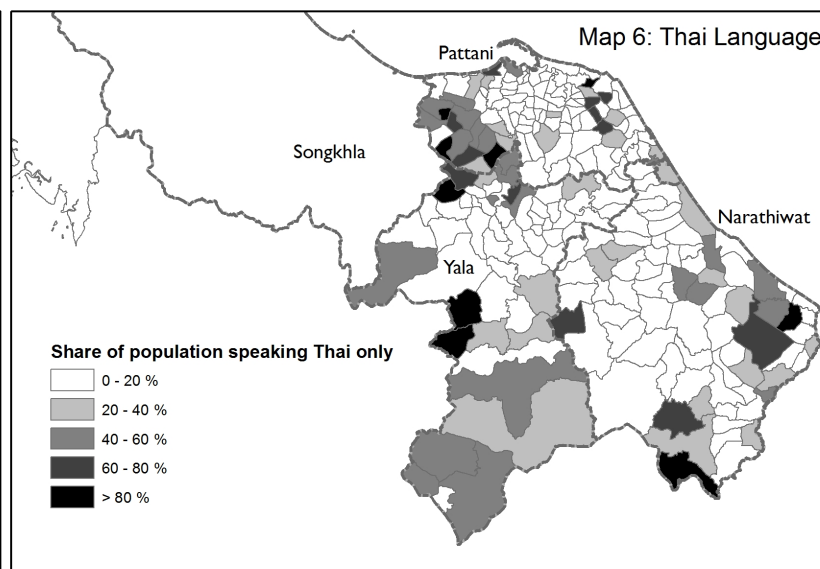
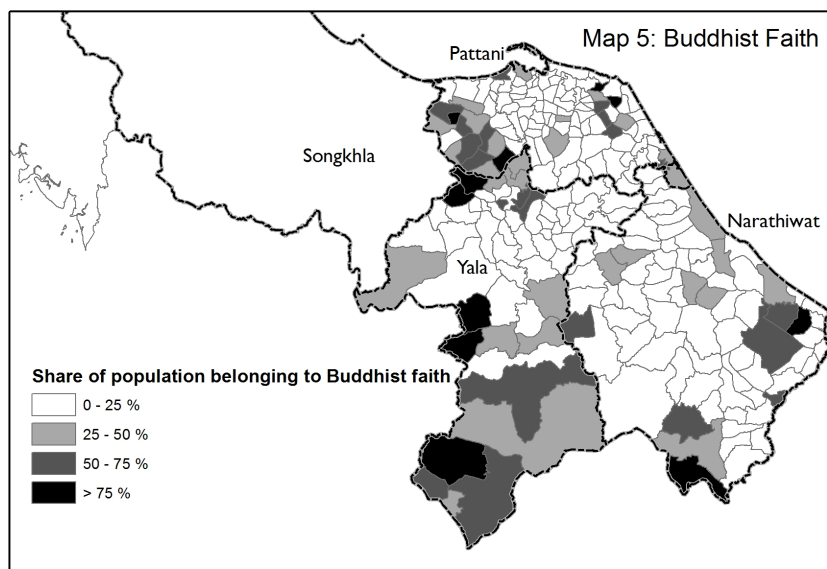
Vickery, M. 1970. "Thai Regional Elites and the Reform of King Chulalongkorn." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 29:4, 863-881.

Wyatt, D. 2003. *Thailand: A short history*. Second Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

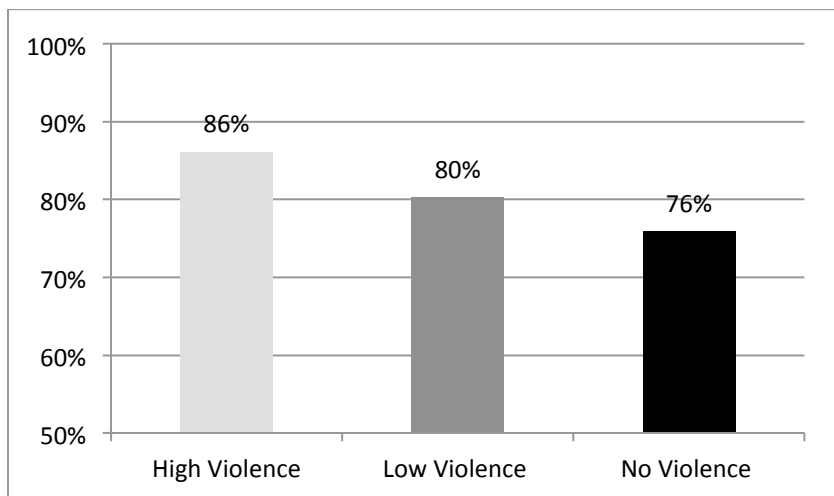
## Maps and Tables



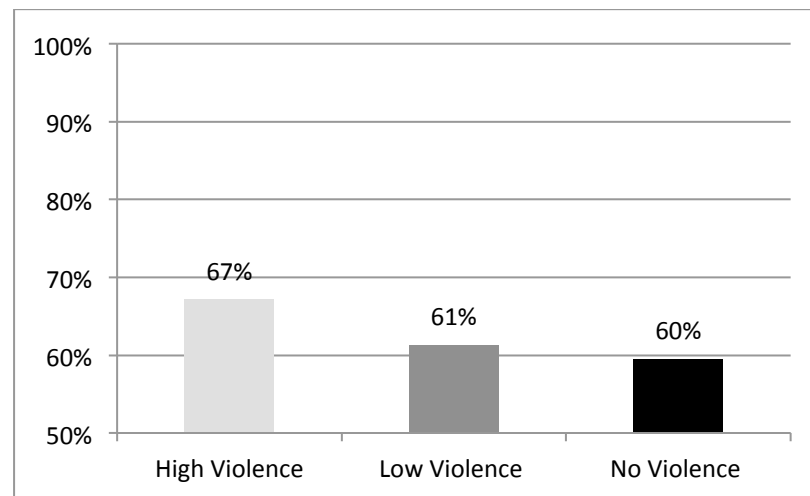
*Source: Maps based on Deep South Watch 2012.*



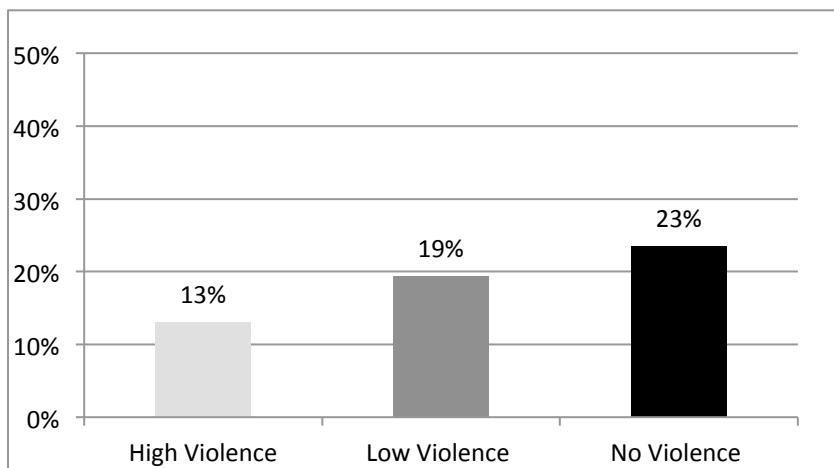
*Source: Maps based on National Statistics Office 2004.*



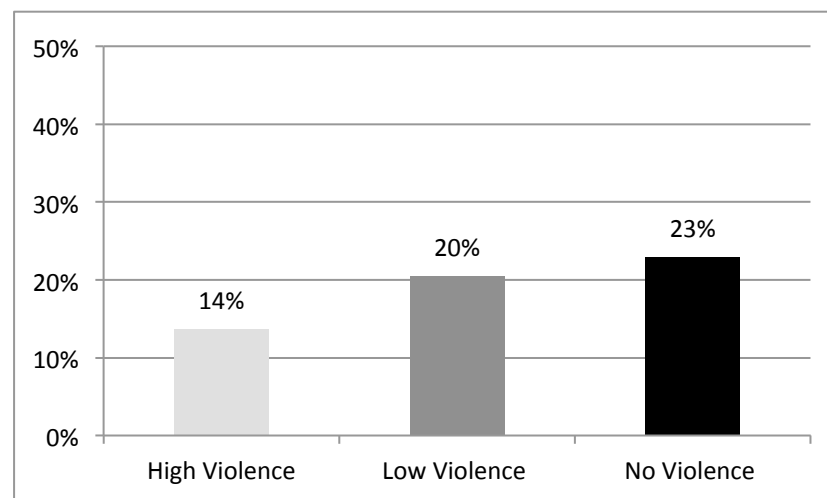
**Chart 1: Share with Islamic faith, by level of sub-district violence.**



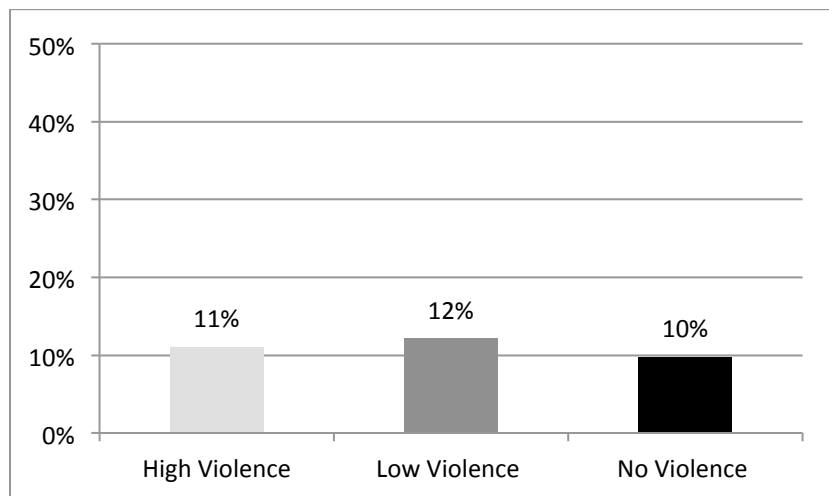
**Chart 2: Households speaking Pattani Malay, by violence.**



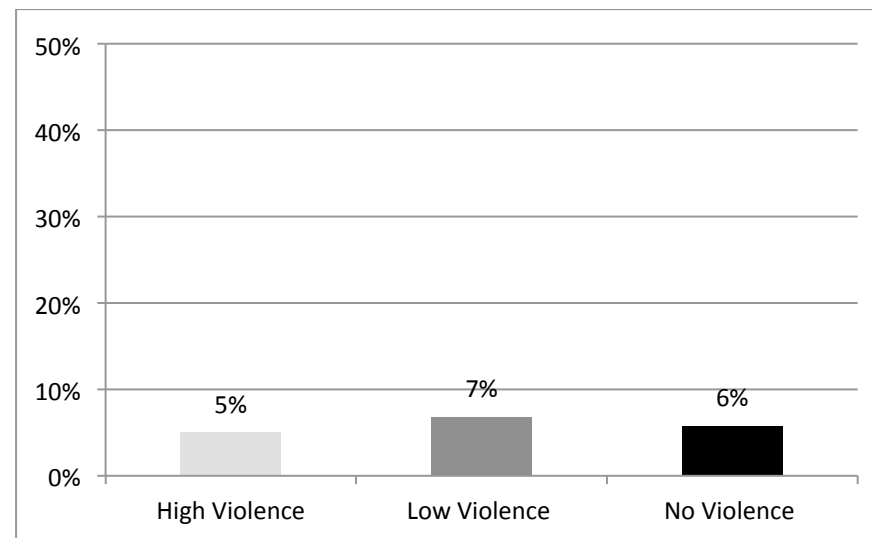
**Chart 3: Share with Buddhist faith, by sub-district violence.**



**Chart 4: Share of households only speaking Thai, by level of sub-district violence.**



**Chart 5: Share experiencing worsening household economy, by level of sub-district violence.**



**Chart 6: Share unemployed, by level of sub-district violence.**

*Source: Charts based on National Statistics Office 2004.*