Mediating Political Dissent:
A study of Thai news organisations and southern conflict reporting

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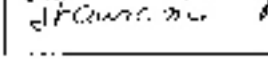
CANDIDATE SIGNATURE	 DATE 15 July 2013

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to explore the roles of news media in the political conflict in Thailand's southernmost provinces by analysing two aspects of Thai journalism: news content and news production practices. Four news organisations of different platforms and organisational natures were selected. The content analysis reveals that, despite their different characteristics, the four organisations' reports similarly highlight the conflict's violent aspect and the preservation of public order via law enforcement and security, rely heavily on authority sources, and primarily label perpetrators as criminals. Therefore, the news coverage tends to support the state's legitimacy in solving the conflict and undermine other interpretations and proposed solutions.

Interviews with news workers and ethnography of news production show that journalists encounter several difficulties in reporting about the conflict, from physical threats, limited access to information, and organisational constraints to the pressures from market competition and predominant beliefs in Thai society. The journalist-source relationship is also instrumental in shaping the aforementioned portrayal of the conflict. In all, these elements contribute to journalists' different stances on the conflict and the various roles they perform.

Three prominent roles of Thai journalism in the southern conflict are identified: 1) *journalism as a presenter of truth*, 2) *journalism as a forum for every party*, and 3) *journalism as a supporter in conflict resolution*. These disparate roles reflect the dynamic power play, debates about news professionalism, and reflexivity among journalists. They also signal the interplay between journalism and other political and social institutions. The thesis argues that, while the news coverage still largely endorses the authority's perspectives and legitimacy, the shifts in the discursive contention and political consensus, as well as diversity and complexity in Thai news ecology could provide opportunities for the counter-hegemonic accounts to emerge and facilitate healthy democratic debates about the southern conflict.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As the intensity of political conflict and violence in the twenty-first century becomes evident and prevalent in different spots around the world, journalism scholars and students are compelled to investigate the news media's roles in such volatile and discursively complex phenomena. A number of studies, which will later be demonstrated in this thesis, have identified the deficiency of journalistic practices and outputs, and proposed desirable roles for news media in political conflict reporting. Several studies argue, for example, that journalism cannot be taken at face value in terms of its conflict representation. This is because, as studies of news production and the interplay between journalism and political conflict explain, the relationship between news media and protagonists in the conflict is complex and often dynamic. These literatures offer the basis for understanding the disparate and multifaceted factors involved and across different levels of analysis – from individual to ideological levels - as well as inside and outside of the journalistic domain that together influence the news production process.

Despite the distinct socio-cultural and political contexts, the resurgence of violence in Thailand's southern border provinces, including Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and four districts in the neighbouring Songkhla Province, bears similar characteristics with political conflict in other parts of the globe: hostility and the vigorous discursive contention among protagonists with unequal resources. Many scholars have explored the complexity of the southern conflict and the shortcomings in Thai journalism in response to the phenomenon. However, there has yet to be a comprehensive study that acknowledges the diversity and variations within the Thai news ecology, as well as the influence of the dynamic contexts encompassing the news media which shape how journalists interact with other social actors and how they produce news outputs.

As will be discussed later in this study, there are grounds for arguing and demonstrating that journalists do not always act as a passive player who simply report, or 'mediate,' the southern conflict. There appear to be pivotal moments when the news media 'mediatize"[1]

[1] The recently-conceptualized notion of 'mediatization' encourages media researchers to explore how media organisations and technology actively influence the power transformation in society through the 'media logic' while also being shaped by such transformation because they are a societal member (Livingstone 2009; Lundby 2009). As opposed to 'mediation', which refers to the communication processes wherein news media merely convey information from one party to another, 'mediatization' sees news media as being "capable of enacting and performing conflicts as well as reporting and representing them" (Cottle 2006a, p. 9). As a result, the news media's role is more than a neutral purveyor of information; they often have a "*performative*

the ongoing violence – the actions which sometimes result in peaceful consequences or unconstructive repercussions. At the same time, as the violence progresses, journalists demonstrate reflexivity in their practices and performance – a development that sometimes signals their aims to carry out productive roles in respect of political conflict and violence. The analysis of the Thai news media's roles in one of the country's most damaging conflicts is, therefore, important in its own terms but also as an opportunity to study in-depth journalism's roles in politics and conflicts involving violence more generally.

This introductory chapter is divided into two parts. The first gives an overview of the southern conflict, and the second part presents the te framework and principal questions that this thesis proposes to answer.

1.1 The historical and current contexts of the political conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces

To understand the re-emergence of violence in Thailand's southern border provinces, which many believe started with the armoury robbery in Narathiwat Province on January 4, 2004, one must also be sensitised to an underpinning historical explanations that involved the notion of Malay nationalism and its distinctive Islamic nuance (Aphornsuvan 2007; Sugunnasil 2007; Funston 2008; McCargo 2008). Being home to the predominantly Muslim and Malay-ethnic population, the three southernmost provinces – Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat – accommodate the natives who have been cast as a minority clique in the Buddhist-dominated kingdom.[2]

In fact, the power struggle between native Malay Muslims[3] and the nation's central ruling apparatus based in Bangkok can be traced back to the fifteenth century and henceforth

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involvement and *constitutive* role within them" (Ibid., original emphasis). Still debatable, nevertheless, the concept offers an outlook into the media's association with and its overtone in many aspects of daily life, as well as the varied effects stemmed from the complexity within the media ecology. For the overview discussions on mediatization, see Lundby, K. ed. 2009. *Mediatization: concept, changes, consequences.* New York: Peter Lang. and Cottle, S. 2006. *Mediatized Conflict.* Maidenhead: Open University Press., for conflict mediatization.

[2] According to the Interior Ministry's statistics in 2009, the proportion of the three southern border provinces' population can be accounted for two percent of the entire Thai population, whereas the number of residents in the capital city of Bangkok can be calculated into eight percent of the entire population.

[3] The usage of "Malay Muslims" as reference to the native of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat who are Muslim and speak Malay in the local Jawi (or Yawi) dialect has raised debates among academics and conservative officials (McCargo 2007: ix). The Thai authority uses the term "Thai Muslims" in official documents, in line with the reference of Thai citizens of other ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs, for example, Thai Chinese, or Thai Buddhist. However, prominent political scientist and peace advocate Chaiwat Satha-Anand, himself a Muslim, has opted for the term "Malay Muslims" to distinguish the southern Muslims from other Islamic believers in other parts of the country, and also as recognition for the region's long history that correlates with the notion of Islam and the Malay inheritance. Despite the suggestion by the National

continued. As will be explicated in Chapter 2, the southern border provinces of Thailand have been recognised as one of the country's significant political struggle battlefields, from the royal dispute over sovereignty during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries as noted by historians, to the Malay separatist- and Communist-driven armed conflicts in the mid twentieth century.

During the 1960s and 1970s, separatist movements sprang into action, and violent incidents were prevalent. A number of armed insurgent groups were formed, including the three most influential ones; the National Front for the Liberation of Patani (*Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani*, or hereafter, BNPP), the National Revolutionary Front (*Barisan Revolusi Nasional*, or hereafter, BRN), and the Patani United Liberation Organisation (hereafter, PULO) (Funston 2008, p. 9). Founders and members of the organisations came from varied backgrounds and deployed different approaches,[4] but they all pursued the same goal: independence for the Patani[5] state. However, in the 1980s, the Prem Tinnasulanon government initiated a set of measures, similar to ones used to suppress Communist militant activities in late 1970s, to combat insurgency and appease the grieving Malay Muslims. Analysts saw the situation had taken on a positive turn as violence subsided afterward. For the following two decades, the region remained relatively undisturbed as former separatists were given amnesties and underwent the 'rehabilitation' programme, while two agencies, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (hereafter, SBPAC), and the Civil-Police-Military joint command unit 43 (hereafter, CPM 43), were set up in the region to gather intelligence, maintain security, and slowly work their way to reinstate justice and establish trust in hopes to bridge the wide and deep rift between the locals and the authority (Ibid., pp. 15-18).

Reconciliation Commission (2006) of another term, "Thai Muslims of Malay descent," many scholars follow Satha-Anand's suit. In this study, I also use "Malay Muslims" to maintain the originality of the cited literatures, and in accordance with Satha-Anand's argument.

[4] As Funston classifies, "the BNPP represented a coalition of the aristocracy and conservative Islamic class; the BRN had a more radical Islamic "republican orientation, with its base in the *pondok*; and PULO focused more on secular nationalism than Islam (although from time to time also emphasized Islam)" (2008, pp. 9-10).

[5] Many academics in the study of southern Thai conflict suggest the use of "Patani" as a reference to the ancient territory connotes political implication. Although the Thai pronunciation of the ancient empire and the modern southern border province is alike, "Pattani" was used in reference to the province in accordance with the official spelling, while "Patani" refers to the old empire that existed from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries and covered the three southernmost provinces, some part of Songkhla (itself a former ancient state, Singora), and some northern Malaysian states. "Patani" also follows the Malay spelling of the region. While Duncan McCargo (2007, p. viii) notes the usage of "Patani" may reflect some authors' political stance, in this study, I follow the original term used in the cited literatures.

The violence had then abated during the 1980s and 1990s, before resurfacing in the twenty-first century, most discernibly in the first term of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra who took office in February 2001. The patterns of the re-emerged unrest have differed markedly from the previous revolts (Funston ibid.; Liow and Pathan 2010). From December 2001 to 2003, the region saw sporadic attacks on police posts and school torching. Nonetheless, the event that marked the beginning of the new round of violence was the massive armoury heist at a military weapon depot in Narathiwat Province on January 4, 2004. Thereafter, attacks and killings have become more frequent and in discernible patterns. Some studies and investigative reports concluded that the administration's incompetence in intelligence gathering and failure to foster a good relationship with the southern natives and religious leaders have facilitated the anti-state sentiment and insurgent movements to grow (Laohong 2006; Deep South Bookazine 2007; Deep South Bookazine 2008). The Thaksin government's disbandment of the southern-based SBPAC and CPM 43 during his first term was believed to have contributed to the deficiency in southern governance. However, Mark Askew argues that during the 1990s, both entities gradually lost their grips in regional intelligence gathering. With this argument, he indicates the abolishment of both agencies did not cause the final blow to the region's peaceful decades because the conflict had been brewing in the region long before 2004 even under the two agencies' purview. The violence, however, was accelerated by the Thaksin government's iron-fist measures in January 2004 (2007, pp. 38-53).

Nine years later (2013, at the time of writing), with six governments taking turns to run the country, the conflict and violence remain unabated and dynamic in nature (see a detailed chronology of events in the southern conflict in Appendix A). According to the constant reviews and analyses of the violence composed by a Prince of Songkla University political scientist, the region has faced 11,754 violent incidents from January 2004 to May 2012 (Jitpiromsri 2012). The statistics also illustrated that 5,206 villagers, civil servants, military and police officers, and suspects and insurgents lost their life and 9,137 others injured. As of 2011, 2,295 women became widowed and 4,455 children orphaned (Panpetch and Ramansiriwong 2011). While the financial and trade activities are hindered by the hostility and instability in the region, the social and psychological repercussions are varied and prevalent. Fear, anxiety, and mistrust percolate among community members, officials, and the Thai population in other parts of the country.

An investigative report indicates that as the violence enters the eighth year in 2011, the state has spent 14.5 billion Thai baht (approximately 2.9 billion pounds sterling) in the

projects that aimed at suppressing the unrest since 2004. The amount has yet to include the salary for state personnel, the budget for the economic boosting schemes and military procurement of new equipments, and the compensation for victims of and those affected by the violence. Among 7,680 national security-related cases under police investigation; only 256 had reached the trial, whereas 5,269 concluded with no suspect found (Krungthep Turakit 19 January 2011). Meanwhile, the previously cited analysis article also estimated 163,422 security and law enforcement officers, including armed village defence volunteers, are stationed in the troubled region where the approximate population is 200,000 and the military projection of the insurgent number is 9,616 (Jitpiromsri 2012).

Having given the summary of the conflict, the subsequent section now moves to present the research framework and questions.

1.2 The research theoretical framework

This study seeks to draw the connection among three sets of theories and concepts, to be elaborated further in the literature review section, and does so to analyse and explain the roles of Thai journalism in the southern conflict. The first set delineates the discussions and debates concerning the Thai southern conflict. The second set explores the relations between news media and political conflict and violence, and the third set focuses on the sociology of news production.

The discussions and debates concerning the southern conflict deserve a close examination as they provide explanations of the distinct contextual structure that governs, facilitates, and restraints news media's operation. Following Gadi Wolfsfeld's *Political Contest* model (1997), this thesis analyses how the vigorous discursive contestation in the Thai conflict influences the news workers' understanding of the phenomenon and their portrayal of the violence. As briefly stated earlier and to will further elaborated in Chapter 2, the region's histories of ethnic and political struggle are infused in the discussions of the current phenomenon. Scholars observe the contradictions among these historical accounts and indicate that the discursive contestation has been rooted in the southern border region long before this conflict re-emerged. Three prominent discourses concerning the current conflict will be highlighted to illustrate how disparate protagonists interpret the phenomenon and compete for legitimacy.

The second set of theories and concepts underpinning this thesis focuses on the relation between journalism and political conflict and violence. These analyses explain the disparate

outlooks towards the interplay between news media and political conflict, the social ramifications of news output, and the desirable roles that news media should perform in conflict situations. In Chapter 3, three main theoretical paradigms in the study of media and political conflict/violence (Nossek 2007) will be presented, which demonstrate different academic views towards the relations between news media and political conflict/violence. By stipulating the different approaches and pointing out the gaps in the existing literatures, this thesis supports the need to examine the news media's roles in the southern conflict using the *Functional/ Professional Approach*, which takes into account the tension of professional conventions at work as well as the dynamic political and media environments at play (Hallin 1989; Wolfsfeld 1997, 2004). Essentially, the study seeks to view news media as neither terrorists' accomplice nor the state's propaganda vehicle, but as a forum, and sometimes an active player, that shifts its role to the ever changing environments. Taking after this framework, the chapter presents the debates and discussions involving the deficiency in journalistic practices, such as *lamal journalism* (Sonwalkar 2005) and the amplification of hegemonic discourses (Kanchanatanee 2004; Nilaphatama 2006). The chapter also presents discussions on the recommendations to improve the quality of conflict reporting, such as *peace journalism* (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005; Kanwerayotin 2006; Choonui 2009) and journalistic variations (Allan 2002; Cottle 2002; Iskandar and El-Nawawy 2004; Cottle 2006; Magpanthong 2007).

Lastly, the theoretical discussions on news production convention are crucial to comprehend the degree of each influencing factor on journalistic operation, from individual to ideological levels. The sociology of news production (Schlesinger 1990; McNair 1998; Schudson 2003) suggests that the study of Thai journalism in political conflict should examine the news production culture from different aspects and across different levels (Reese 2001). In Chapter 4, the debates and discussions involving key journalistic ideologies and practices will be presented, for example, the notion of *objectivity* (Tuchman 1972; Iskandar and El-Nawawy 2004), criteria for story selection and presentation styles (Tuchman 1973; Molotch and Lester 1974; Tiffen 1989; Archetti 2010), and conventions in politics reporting from different political and cultural contexts (Pharr 1996; McCargo 2000). The chapter also highlights the significance of 'news access' (Cottle 2000) or 'sociology of sources' (McNair 1998), which observes the interplay between journalists and their sources of information, and how this interaction affect the representation of different discourses in news media (Hall et al. 1978; Bennett 1990; Wolfsfeld 1997).

The interrelation among the three sets of theories that establish this thesis's theoretical framework is presented in Figure 1.1. Together with the concept of 'mediatization' briefly discussed above (see Footnote 1), the theoretical framework questions how Thai journalism makes sense of and reports about this complex political struggle, and how Thai news media serve as a player in the southern conflict. The thesis also seeks to explore whether the news production culture, shaped by the dynamic journalistic conventions as well as political and structural conditions, contribute and respond to pivotal changes in the conflict.

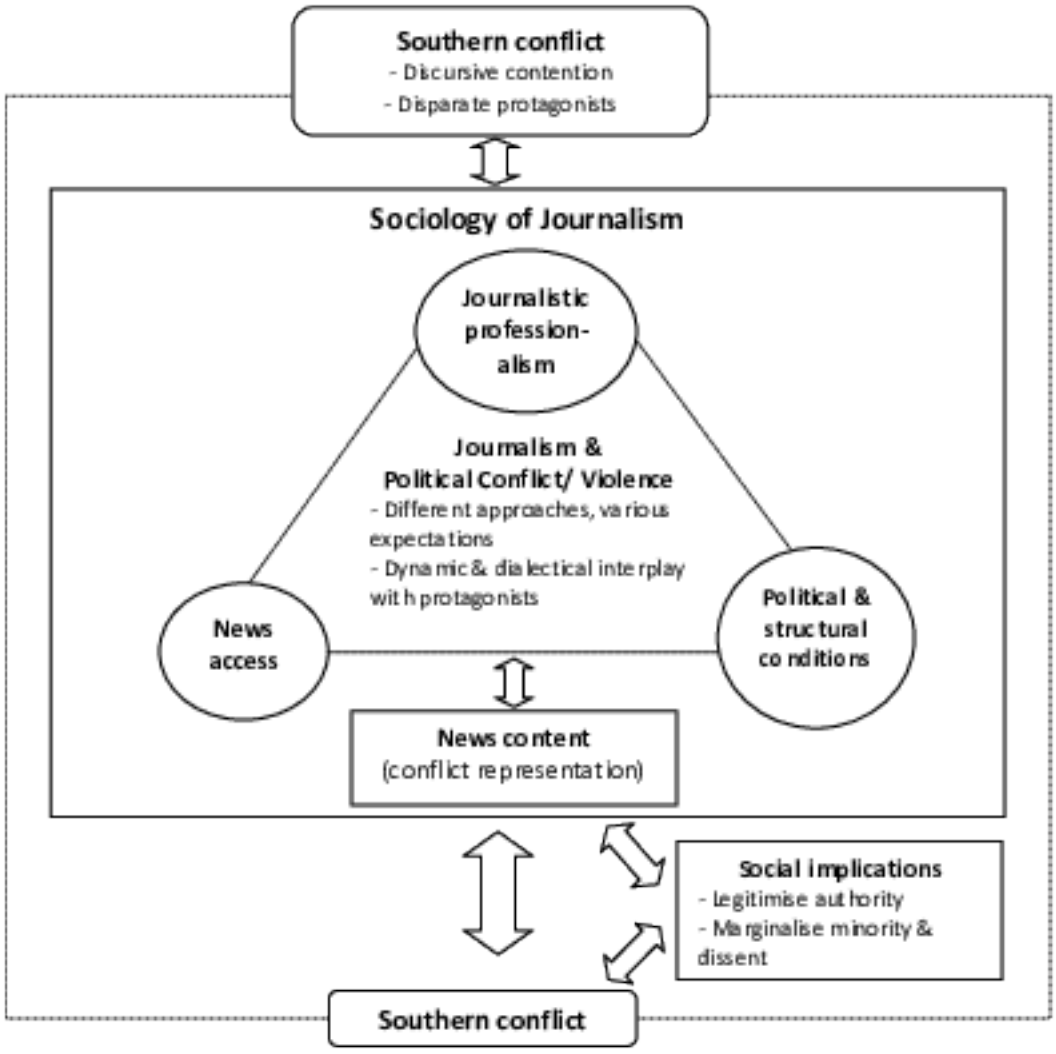

Figure 1.1 The theoretical framework demonstrates the connection among the three sets of theories and concepts that underlie this thesis

Drawn from the above theoretical framework is the study's overarching research query, that is, *"What are the roles Thai journalism plays in the southern conflict?"* The following research questions (RQs), which will be elaborated in Chapter 5, highlight the two emphases this research seeks to explore.

RQ1. How is the southern conflict represented in the news coverage?

RQ2. What are the practices of Thai journalism in the southern conflict reporting?

The thesis is composed of nine chapters. The literature review section, comprising three chapters, seeks to explicate the theories and concepts underpinning the framework of this thesis. Chapter 2 delineates the vigorous discursive contention embedded in and revolving around the southern conflict, and identifies three prominent discourses used to describe the problem and propose solutions. Chapter 3 illustrates the debates and discussions of journalism's performances and roles in political conflict and violence as well as the news media's relations with protagonists. It also recapitulates relevant studies of the Thai media and the southern conflict, which mostly indicate the shortcomings in Thai journalism in regard to politics and conflict reporting. The final literature review chapter, Chapter 4, examines the sociology of news production. This chapter reiterates the needs to explore the complexity of and variations in news production culture in order to understand how journalism plays roles in the southern conflict. Together, these chapters elucidate the complex and dynamic milieu in which news media operate, as well as the multifaceted factors and disparate players involved in the news manufacturing process, from within the realm of journalism to other interacting domains. The research methodology presented in Chapter 5 continues to propose the relevant and systematic means deployed to answer the research questions.

The second half of this thesis then moves on to discuss the findings, presented in three chapters. Chapter 6 focuses on the content and news framing analysis to answer how the southern conflict was reported. The chapter lays out the predominant themes, news frames, and labels used to characterise the problem and antagonists. Along with the analysis of the types and specialisations of most-frequently used news sources and the presentation formats, this chapter illustrates how the news coverage of the southern conflict tends to support authority's perspectives and marginalise other interpretations of the problem. Subsequently, Chapter 7 and 8 present the examinations into the news production practices, including news access and the disparate roles of Thai journalism in this conflict, based on empirical evidences from ethnography and interviews. Chapter 7 primarily focuses on the difficulties faced by news workers and organisations in southern conflict reporting, which helps explain the deficiency in news output, for example, the prevalence of state official sources and their perspectives in news content as demonstrated in Chapter 6. Chapter 8 elaborates on the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between journalists and their sources, and how the diversity of sources is used as a proof of

professional objectivity. The chapter also discusses journalists' three prominent perspectives on the southern conflict, and how they translate those stances into journalism's disparate anticipated roles in the conflict. The culminating Chapter 9 recapitulates the findings that underline the thesis's academic contribution to the studies of news media and political conflict, and offers some suggestions for future research in mediated conflict. The chapter presents the arguments indicating the interplay between Thai journalism and the fierce and dynamic discursive contestation of and disparate protagonists in the conflict, which contributes to the production of southern conflict news. The thesis argues that, while the prominent themes and voices in the news coverage generally echo the state authority's outlooks, the dynamic, diversity, and complexity of Thai news ecology could enable the marginalised interpretations of the southern conflict to emerge in news coverage, producing the 'contra-flows' against the hegemonic discourses. These opportunities could manifest through mechanisms such as professional reflexivity, and the variations of news presentation formats and journalistic and organisational principles.

Chapter 2

The contending discourses of the political conflict in Thailand's southernmost provinces

The introductory chapter has briefly described the history of the political struggle between the southern border region and the central ruling apparatus, as well as the ramifications of the current violence. This chapter elaborates further on the complexity of discursive contention regarding this conflict. Divided into three sections, the chapter will first discuss the discursive contestation in political conflicts. The second section then follows up with the contested histories concerning the resurrections in the southern border region, and the final section moves to consider the disparate interpretations of the ongoing political violence.

2.1 Discourse and the discursive contention in political conflicts

Referring to Michel Foucault's work, Kevin Williams defines discourse as "a systematically organized set of statements that gives expression to the meanings and values of an institution. [...] A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object, process is to be talked about" (2003, p. 160). A discourse, as Norman Fairclough argues, does not merely represent the world; it signifies and constructs the meaning of the world. Because of this, a discourse can describe, govern, facilitate, and even forbid the actions of an individual or a society. Embedded with different sets of beliefs, discourses are used by disparate social actors to maintain their power, or to challenge others', as a discourse "constitutes, naturalizes, sustains and changes significations of the world from diverse positions in power relations" (Fairclough 1994, p. 67). A success in imparting a discourse, Fairclough points out, is when a discursive practice is recognised as "common sense" (Ibid., p. 87). In the struggle for political power, discourses perform what Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner refer to as *strategic functions*: coercion; resistance, opposition, and protest; dissimulation; legitimisation and delegitimisation (1997, pp. 212-213).

Often in the study of political conflict, the remark, "one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter," is brought up to elicit the phenomenon's intense discursive contention (Simmon 1991, pp. 25-26) . What was labelled as treason by one party may be regarded as a legitimate uprising by other stakeholders. Even among academics, the attempt to define the term "political terrorism" constantly invokes challenges and debates (see, for example

Barker 2003; Turnan 2003, pp. 1-16; Schmid and Jongman 2005). Given the incongruent viewpoints, many scholars have instead questioned which discourse (or in certain cases, discourses) prevails over others and how it does so (Schlesinger et al. 1983; Turnan ibid.; or in the case of Thailand's southern conflict, McCargo 2008; Satha-Anand 2008). The protagonists' quest to get their messages across to the general population and to overcome others may not be an equal battle, especially in the case where the conflict involves minorities in society. Differences in ethnicity, race, or religion, are often employed by groups with more power, privileges, or resources as a legitimate course to dominate or marginalise others (Van Dijk et al. 1997, p. 144).

With more discussions on the interaction between the political conflict's discursive contestation and news media to be presented in the next chapter, the following sections will illustrate the contending discourses concerning the southern conflict. The second section will look at the competing historical explanations regarding the relationships between the two former ancient empires, situated in the central and southern regions of present day Thailand. These explanations will help readers understand the distinct culture in the southern border region, and how this notion is played out in the current conflict. The final section will then lay out the prominent discourses concerning the conflict proposed by disparate protagonists.

2.2 The enduring discontent: the contested histories of insurgency in the southern border region

This section brings forward the analyses and discussions on the historical accounts concerning the relationships between the Malay Muslim state and the Buddhist-majority ancient kingdom. These discussions not only suggest the historical nuances underpinning the current conflict – that the re-emerged violence did not happen out of a cultural vacuum, but also reflect the conflicting views that have long been entrenched in the Malay Muslim and the rest of Thai communities.

According to the studies of manuscripts detailing the histories of the Patani empire (Uttayawalee 2005; Aphornsuvan 2007), the sentiment of being placed in a subordinate position by the ancient Thai kingdom of Siam[1] has been rooted in the southern region

[1] "Siam" was used as a reference to the ancient kingdom that encompassed what is now the central part of Thailand. While there is no clear indication of when and how the name was invented, the region, with Ayutthaya appointed as the capital, was believed to be called "Siam" by Western traders since the fourteenth century. The state was officially named "Siam" during the reign of King Rama IV approximately in mid-nineteenth century when the kingdom initiated diplomatic ties with the Western power. The name was changed to "Thailand" in 1939 by Prime Minister Plaek Pibunsongkram as part of his nationalist policies.

since the fifteenth century, although the degree of resistance varied in different periods. Being a smaller sovereignty, Patani was flanked by the larger and more powerful states, Siam in the north and Malacca in the south. The latter shared with Patani a similar language and religious belief. The rulers of Patani had attempted to foster diplomatic relations with both territories while maintaining the empire's independence. Nevertheless, as historian Thanet Aphornsuvan points out, the histories as registered in the Siamese historical dossiers and as perceived by Patani descendents offered contradictory perspectives towards the relationships (2007, pp. 16-22). Siam viewed the relationship with the southern sultanate as a "suzerain-vassal" one (Ibid., p. 16), which involved Patani presenting a set of tributary gestures in exchange for security protection from the larger state. However, a prominent modern history book, the *Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani* (hereafter, SKMP),[2] written by Patani native Ibrahim Syukri, argued the goal of such diplomacy schemes was to merely strengthen the bond of amicability. Notwithstanding Siam's larger territory and army, Patani regarded itself as one of the most influential regimes in the Malay Peninsula, hence, viewing the northern neighbour as equal. The SKMP notes several incidents where the Siamese kings showed a discernible degree of contempt toward the Patani sultans, causing great grievance to the latter and leading their population to cultivate an anti-Siam sentiment.

Succumbing to the larger territory, the Malay sultanate inevitably became annexed to Siam in the early eighteenth century under the ruling of Chakri Dynasty who established Bangkok as the kingdom's new capital. To suppress potential waves of rebellions, the then Thai king divided Patani into seven provinces, and called the region by the collective title of *Khaek Jet Huamuang* (seven Muslim frontier provinces) (Ibid., p. 18). Aphornsuvan argues the new administrative system marked the decline of the Malay region's autonomy, as Siam had full authority over the appointment and selection of the provincial governors which in effect undermined the power of the regional Malay monarchy. The most contradictory positions toward Siam were prevalent during the reign of King Rama V, who was highly regarded as a visionary monarch in the Thai history for revolutionising the kingdom following the modern Western administrative and social welfare systems. While his centralisation scheme was praised as the beginning of the country's administrative reform, Aphornsuvan argues, citing the SKMP, that this was the demise of the Patani rajas'

[2] The book was originally published in the late 1940s in Malaysia's Kelantan state, and was banned in Thailand due to its contradictions against the Thai state's accounts. Later, the monograph turned out to be a sought-after underground book for new generations of Patani intellectuals. In this chapter, I follow Aphornsuvan's analysis of the English translation version of the book, published in 1985 by Ohio University Center for International Studies.

authority, as the region was now split into provinces, and fall under Bangkok's direct rule (Ibid., p. 23).

The histories of the Patani empire became eclipsed as the central Thai administration enforced a number of national assimilation, or "Thai-ification," policies (Buroopat 1983; Che Man 2004, pp. 88-89; Connors 2007, p. 145) to ensure the standardised practices and customs of what it claimed to be "Thai-ness", now that the territory was regarded an official part of the kingdom. The implementation of 'cultural regulation' as part of the civilised-nation-building scheme was seen ever more rigorous in the era of nationalist and military-groomed Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkram during 1938 to 1944. The government intervention into many Islamic Malay traditions marked a pivotal point in the relations between the central administration and the southerners. In particular, the state's interference in the practice of *adat melayu* (Malay customary law) and the registration of *pondok* (community-based Islamic religious school) (Aphornsuvan 2007, pp. 33, 57; McCargo 2008, pp. 39-41) had resulted in the conflict that descended from the elite locals "to the middle and the bottom echelons of Thai and Patani society" (Aphornsuvan ibid.).

Lacking an official or proper forum to voice their dissatisfaction while being under-represented in centralised politics and administration systems,[3] the locals attempted to challenge the central power via unconventional means. Nevertheless, the accounts of the southern revolts were inconsistent between the Thai's and locals' perspectives. The Thai officials' version implied that the arrest of and the treason charge against prominent religious leader Haji Sulong Abdulkader[4] and the "Dusun Nyor Rebellion" [5] were the

[3] According to Aphornsuvan (2007, p. 34), none of the Malay Muslim politicians were able to garner a seat in the general MP elections from 1938 to 1948.

[4] Haji Sulong Abdulkader was regarded as a prominent religious leader. A graduate of Mecca, he pioneered the Islamic education reform in southern Thailand in 1940s. Gaining respects from the locals, Haji Sulong later expanded his campaigns to establishing networks of religious leaders and scholars, and worked to negotiate the government's interference on local customs, as he saw such actions would stray the Muslims from the proper way of life. His 1947 seven-point proposal, demanded certain degrees of self-administration and the endorsement of Islamic elements in the region's political, judicial, and cultural structures. However, the proposal was turned down by the then government and Haji Sulong was later arrested and charged with treason. He was reported to disappear and presumed dead in 1954. His family has also been regarded a legacy in Pattani Province, particularly his son, Den Tohmeena, who is a veteran politician.

[5] The data concerning the Dusun Nyor incident remains debatable and inconsistent, starting with the date when the event took place (from 25th, 26th, to 28th of April 1948). Malay Muslim residents of Dusun Nyor village in Narathiwat Province gathered and brought with them their choice of primitive arms, then performed superstitious rituals, including the sacred oil-bathing ceremony which villagers believed to make them invincible against weapon in their fight against the widespread Communist guerrillas. However, police suspected the villagers were forming an armed revolt against the state, provoked by the arrest of Haji Sulong. Authorities dispatched a number of law enforcement and security officers to the scene, and opened fire on villagers. Thirty police were killed in the incident, but the deaths of villagers, believed to be far more, were

triggering points for separatist movement in modern politics. On the contrary, the Dusun Nyor incident in 1948 was argued by locals, and later academics, to be the villagers' vigilant attempt against the Chinese Communist Party of Malaya. By comparing how the event was documented by Thai officials and Malay Muslim locals and academics, peace studies scholar Chaiwat Satha-Anand (2007) notes the discrepancies in both sides' historical accounts of and perception towards the incident. The Thai government branded the occurrence as a "rebellion" or a "riot". However, Malay academics and villagers who had lived during that period referred to the incident as an "uprising" or a "war" (Satha-Anand 2007, p. 19). The contrasting labels, Satha-Anand notes, also signal the locals' counter-hegemonic stance.

Having laid out the contradictory interpretations of significant moments, this section not only presents the historical contexts of the current conflict, but also signals the competing perspectives on the nation's stability. Overall, this section demonstrates that the southern conflict was not born out of a cultural vacuum and has long been subjected to discursive battles.

2.3 The contending discourses concerning the political conflict in southern Thailand

The analyses of contrasting interpretations on historical moments in the previous section indicate the differences between the southern border region's distinct culture and the predominant beliefs in Thai society, which were put into practice by the central administrations. This section moves on to discuss the disparate explanations of the current conflict, some of which were influenced by the long histories of political struggle.

As will be presented in a moment, disparate stakeholders and academics have different readings on the phenomenon and its causes, and, in consequence, offer diverse solutions to the problem. Three discourses, *Crime and conspiracy*, *Minority's grievance*, and *Malay nationalism and Islamism*, are highlighted here due to their prevalence in media reports, academic literatures, and public debates.

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unaccounted for. Some official Thai accounts referred to Haji Sulong as the mastermind of the incident, but the record also showed the religious leader was in jail at that time. See more details of and debates on the Dusun Nyor incident in Satha-Anand, C. 2007. The Silence of the Bullet Monument': Violence and "Truth" Management, Dusun-nyor 1948, and Kru-Ze 2004. In: McCargo, D. ed. *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 11-34 .

2.3.1. *Crime and conspiracy discourse*

When the violence first erupted in 2004, the government, led by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, proclaimed the interpretation of violence as "banditry and lawlessness" (McCargo 2008, p. 6). Authorities then came up with a more convoluted version of conspiracies, where organised crime syndicates involved in illegal drug and cross-border trades and human trafficking, state officials, and local politicians teamed up to stir up unrest in the region to gain and protect their interests. The belief that the web of local influential figures were behind the insurgency led to heavy surveillance on these people, and treason charges on veteran politicians and local elites, for example, Najmuddin Umar and Dr. Waemahadi Waedao in the same year (see detail of their arrests, charges, and acquittals in Appendix A). Such a perspective resulted in the enforcement of a hard-line approach which relies heavily on crime control and security measures (Funston 2008, p. xii), and the government's reluctance to openly hold dialogues with separatist leaders. The following interview excerpt of a regional army commander, translated from Thai, best reflects this discourse.

> Lieutenant General Udomchai Thammasarorat, commander of the Region 4 Army, said the current unrest situation is caused, up to 80%, by **"additional threats"**, which are underground vested interest groups, drugs lords, illegal dealers of fuel and other products. [The incidents caused by] actual separatist movement was only 20%.
>
> The illegal interest groups hired armed forces from the **"jihadist"** (which means to enter warfare and willing to sacrifice for religious belief) separatist groups to incite various types of violence, especially bombing attacks, to cause concerns among officers or lure them into pouring forces into any particular spot, which will then pave way for other routes or areas to be used in trafficking illicit drugs and illegal products.
>
> "We have obtained evidence of money transfer from illegal traders to accounts of members of separatist networks. When I have received this information, I ordered to arrest them all. Therefore, there are frequent bombings to retaliate [the army's action] recently," the Region 4 Army chief indicated.
> [...]
>
> Lt.Gen. Udomchai pointed out that [separatist] perpetrators, accounted for 20% [of the overall perpetrators], were not innate criminals, but were instilled with wrong historical and religious beliefs, prompting them to take up weapon and fight the state. Therefore, he proposed **"amnesty"** to be granted to this group of people. They should then be brought into rehabilitation training to change their attitude. At the same time, every group of people who have been affected by the unrest is to be treated, and the military should oversee the entire process. [original emphases] (Isara News Agency 15 August 2011)

Authorities also claim that poverty, caused by unemployment, and drug addiction problems particularly among the youths, also contributed to violence. As a result, apart from offering perpetrators amnesty and rehabilitation as the incentive to end violence, the Thaksin administration and its successors have proposed economic development schemes in the region as a way to eradicate poverty and restore peace. However, Jitpiromsri and Sobhonvasu (2007) argue that, while financial deficiency might have been a valid factor in the past, the economy in the southernmost region has improved significantly in the new millennium. The study concludes that poverty alone might not prompt the locals to rebel and cause havoc, and the government's financial boosts have done little to ease the regional tension.

Although the unfavourable ramifications of the government's iron-fist approaches cast doubts on the problem diagnosis, a study by Marc Askew (2007) admits that the explanation of the underground criminal networks and conspiracy may partially be valid, given that the antagonists and their modus operandi have been kept clandestine and obscure. The schemes to generate unrest, Askew argues, might have been devised in the southern border region by groups who share similar interests, from underground crime syndicates to local politicians and state officials. Therefore, there is a possibility that "the competing, fissured, and predatory agencies of the Thai state have been central agents in reproducing this disorder" (Ibid., p. 67) in the southernmost region to maintain their status quo and to reap benefits from the disorderly border. At the same time, the notion of the southernmost region as the prime scene of unrest and instability has facilitated insurgents to exploit the locals' distrust towards the state workers by implicating officials as the attackers in many incidents. As a result, another vested interest group in maintaining the southernmost provinces vulnerable is separatist groups and leaders themselves, who, like the aforementioned antagonists, remained secretive and unapproachable.

An article by Duncan McCargo (2007) suggests the power struggle in the national-level politics played an integral part in this conflict, answering why the violence re-emerged during the Thaksin administration. He argues the government's hard-line policing and security approaches in the beginning of violence were used to stabilise the ruling coalition's authority and discredit the opposition party, who has long earned popularity in the region. More importantly, the government's move was meant to challenge the royal legitimacy, or what he calls the "Network Monarchy" (2007), in the far South. However, the Thaksin

government's plan backfired.[6] Instead of decreasing the locals' loyalty to the royal family and associates, the schemes gave rise to more resentment and distrust among the southerners against the political ruling apparatus.

Overall, the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse still leaves a number of questions unanswered, particularly ones concerning historical and cultural nuances and the record of mistreatment and suppression. As seen in the regional army commander's statements above, although separatism and injustice were mentioned, they were undermined by the more salient aspects of the conflict, namely security and maintenance of public order.

2.3.2. Minority's grievance discourse

The second discourse sees the conflict as the locals' revolts against the central ruling apparatus who denied their political and cultural identity. This discourse indicates the Malay Muslims have long been mistreated and marginalised due to their different customs and beliefs from the predominant Thai-Buddhist convention, particularly when the "Thai-ification" policies were heavily implemented. Calling this conflict a "millenarian revolt", historian Nidhi Aeusrivongse bases his interpretation on the April 28, 2004 uprisings (see Appendix A for detail) and argues that the synchronised attacks were carried out as a form of resistance against the Thai state. He downplays the influence of criminal organisations and the separatist movements' goal for autonomy, explaining that the antagonists were "small people" who took a stand against authorities for what they believed in (Aeusrivongse 2004).

The study by King-oua Laohong (2006) provides evidence that the violence was fuelled with the growing resentment against the state particularly among the Malay Muslim communities – a result of the authorities' abuse of power. Laohong finds that current residents of the southern border provinces, especially the young Muslims who are often targeted as new recruits for the insurgent groups, do not dwell much on the past grievances or the seven-point autonomy proposal by the revered Haji Sulong in the 1950s. Instead, the study suggests that discontent has been cultivated among Malay Muslim youths by insurgents using recent unjust incidents, for example, the Kru-Ze Mosque attack, the

[6] For more discussions on the Thaksin administration's deficiency in southern conflict resolution and the attempts to destabilise the Network Monarchy's political authority and legitimacy, see McCargo, D. 2007. Thaksin and the Resurgence of Violence in the Thai South. In McCargo, D. ed. *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 35-68. and, Pathmanand, U. Thaksin's Achilles' Heel: The Failure of Hawkish Approaches in the Thai South. In McCargo, D. ed. *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 69 – 88.

clampdown on protestors in Tak Bai District, and numerous unprecedented searches and arrests to instigate their anger (Laohong 2006, p. 228).

The following excerpts from the National Reconciliation Commission report (2006) exemplify key features of the *Minority's grievance* discourse, from the problem diagnosis to the proposed solutions.

> *To solve the problem of violence in the southern border provinces, Thai society must understand that although the conflict in the area may have structural causes not unlike those in other parts of rural Thailand–poverty, brutal competition with external economic forces over natural resources, low-quality education, injustice at the hands of state officials and shortcomings in the judicial process–its color is different due to factors which include differences in religions, ethnicity, languages, and understandings of history, all of which could easily be used to justify violence. Therefore, to overcome the problem of violence in the southern border provinces, political measures should be of paramount importance, with the aim of reordering relationship between the state and the people, and between majority and minority populations, both within the area and throughout the country, to solve the problems at the structural level and address the justifications for violence at the cultural level.*
>
> ...
>
> *The National Reconciliation Commission is of the view that whoever uses violence to harm or kill the innocents, or to destroy the property of people and the state, are committing criminal acts and must be made accountable for such acts. However, from a certain angle, the violence that took place in the area was a reaction to the state's excessively harsh tactics and measures, which resulted from miscalculated strategies and circumstantial assessments...* [original emphases]
> (National Reconciliation Commission 2006, pp. 3, 11)

The following passages, extracted from an article by the leader of the United Front for Patani Independence (*Barisan Bersatu Kemerdekaan*, or hereafter, *BERSATU*),[7] Dr. Wan Kadir Che Man, reflect similar views. The statements clearly indicate the causes of the conflict and support the paths to peace recommended by the NRC.

> One answer of this violence is, this is a retaliation against numerous acts of injustice in which [Malay Muslims in the Deep South] were victimised, be it the mass arrests of suspects, the mysterious disappearance of Malay Muslims in the region, and the state officials' privilege to carry out unjustified search in people's houses and Islamic religious schools. The number of these unjust acts has increased ever since the enactment of martial law in the area. [...]

[7] BERSATU was established in late 1980s as a loose umbrella organisation among four prominent separatist groups in that period: PULO, BRN, BIPP (*Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani* or the Islamic Liberation Front of Patani – formerly known as BNPP), and the Patani Mujahidin Movement (GIMP). The objective of BERSATU was to coordinate among the member groups in terms of shared political goals, as well as their strategies in warfare, international recognition, and talks with the Thai government.

> As for the long-term policies, the Thai government needs to accept the fact that Malay Muslims are not Thai, and they are indigenous groups in the region. Therefore, the policies to be implemented must consider these issues. … And please understand, give trust, and be open for [public] participation in as many activities as possible, and always keep in mind to avoid any coercive policies.
> (Che Man 2004, pp. 97-98)

As demonstrated in the above statements, the *Minority's grievance* discourse places the state's disregard of the region's distinct culture and ethnicity at the heart of the conflict; hence, the marginalisation of the Malay Muslims. Therefore, it is crucial for authority and the rest of Thai public to recognise and honour the differences. Changes must be made in all levels through public participation processes, from individuals' attitudes and practices to structural conditions such as local governance and administration of religion-related affairs. Additionally, some proponents suggest public discussions and debates are crucial as they would pave way for long-term solutions.

Regardless of its seemingly well-rounded problem diagnosis and proposed remedy, this discourse still faces criticism for highlighting cultural distinctiveness but downplaying the influence of Malay nationalism and Islam, such as the roles of *pondok* and religious teachers in this conflict. Conceding that violence may have been the locals' acts of resistance against the state's suppression, a former insurgent leader, among other critics, argues such a perspective has romanticised the Malay Muslim ways of living as idyllic (Deep South Bookazine 2007b, pp. 84-86). Such interpretations may not produce solutions that truly tackle the problem at its roots.

2.3.3. Malay nationalism and Islamism discourse

Contrary to the state's initial explanation that violence is part of the network of underground criminals and corrupted officials, the third discourse centres around the long history of Malay nationalism entrenched in the region as discussed in the second section, and the global trend of Islamism since the new millennium. Countering the explanation which pinpoints the region's inferior socio-economic development as the cause of the recurred insurgency, historian Thanet Aphornsuvan notes that "the conflict is not socioeconomic but mainly "ethnic, religious, and nationalist"" (2007, p. 59).

Nevertheless, this explanation carries an array of different analyses. Some are heavily based on the studies of terrorism (Gunaratna et al. 2005) and trace back to the strategies of southern Communist movement and Islamic separatist networks in the 1960s and 1970s

(Rattanachaya 2004; Bamroongsook 2006; Rattanachaya 2006) in order to comprehend insurgents' tactical strategies in the current wave of violence. These studies indicate key underground organisations that battle for autonomy of the Patani state, particularly the BNPP, BRN, PULO, and BERSATU. This set of literature has laid a foundation for other academics to further explore the operative strategies of separatist movement. However, they have circumvented the socio-cultural aspects despite attempting to explain the significant role that local religious institution plays in this insurgency. Critics point out the loopholes in the national security-/terrorism-oriented analyses stem from the fact that these studies were heavily based on authority's accounts and official dossiers, which may have swayed the findings to favour the state's view (Connors 2007; Funston 2008).

Subsequent works that discuss separatism and Malay nationalism bridge the two notions with the unique societal customs and deep-seated anti-Siam sentiment in the three southern border provinces, hence, bringing in the debates on Islamic elements, the changing patterns of violence from the 1960s – 1970s unrests, and the obscure goals of insurgents (Funston ibid; McCargo 2008; Liow and Pathan 2010). Some literatures go further with the investigation of information warfare strategies deployed by insurgents to justify the violence and to delegitimize the state's presence and policies concerning the region (Laohong 2006; Deep South Bookazine 2007a, pp. 28-77; Jitpiromsri and Sobhonvasu 2007; Deep South Bookazine 2008, pp. 32-66).

The following interview excerpt of a PULO leader illustrates the insurgent group's anti-Thai state stance and Malay nationalism as the driving force behind their actions.

> The Patani society and the Thailand society are two different societies. Patanis are Muslim; Thai people believe in Buddhism. We speak the Malay language; Thai people speak the Thai language. … Our ancestors established the Patani Islamic Kingdom and lived freely in their own land. In addition, the Patani culture is not at all similar to the Thai culture. In spite of all these differences, the Thailand government occupied our land and wants to alienate us from our own culture. Our ancestors showed great resistance against the attacks of the Buddhist Thailand Kingdom in order to protect our own religion and culture. In the same way, we will continue our resistance in order to protect our religion and culture.
> (Özköse 2009)

Meanwhile, the influence of Islamism and radical Islam has been brought up in the discussion of southern violence after the April 28, 2004 orchestrated uprising in particular. Reports cited police who found copies of *Berjihad di Patani*, a statement declaring war against the Thai state in the fight for Patani's liberation, in the hands of slain suspects.

Wattana Sugunnasil (2007)'s study on the use of Islam rhetoric in separatist movement indicates that in this monograph, the authors employ an interpretation of the Qu'ran to legitimise the use of forces against the Thai state who has deprived the Malay Muslims from their rightful territory and their religious belief and customs. By proclaiming a *jihad* against the Thai government, the *Berjihad di Patani*, among other interpretations, encourages the locals to sacrifice for martyrdom and join in armed battles to liberate Patani from the state's suppression. At the same time, the booklet provides a convincing rationale for the attacks on state officials, or even *infidel* Muslims who take side with the Thai state.

Sugunnasil notes that the radical Islamic rhetoric in the fight for Patani's independence was not born out of a social and cultural vacuum, but stemmed from the confusion and division of religious sects that have been rooted among the Muslims in the region (Ibid., pp. 132-133) – the view supported by McCargo (2008, pp. 19-54). Funston (2008) concurs, indicating that the Islamic reform which was initiated in the 1970s has significantly intensified the Muslim religiosity and further pushed further the division from the dominant Buddhist communities. The developments have also empowered some *ustadz* (religious teachers), enabling them to be among the driving forces of insurgent movement. Together with the long history of Malay nationalism, which in itself entrenched with the notion of Islam, the separatist organisations have succeeded by conflating both concepts in the secular nationalist struggle for autonomy (Deep South Bookazine 2007a; Sugunnasil 2007). Similar to the debates concerning the religiosity movements elsewhere in the world, the obscure interpretations of the religious scriptures have become highly contested, prompting the religious authority institution to counter by imparting the white paper in hopes to correct the misinterpreted version of Islamic beliefs promoted by the insurgents.

Insofar as the explanation on religious extremist movements has become prevalent, there is also a discursive shift from the local Islamist-separatist concept to the potential connection with transnational jihadist networks following the arrest of a Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) member suspected in the 2002 Bali bombing in Thailand in 2003. Such a hypothesis has been supported by analysts from Western intelligence agencies and has been in line with the U.S.-led global war on terror campaigns (Funston 2008; McCargo 2008, p. 7). However, Thai studies scholars argue that, despite the southern insurgent groups' loose structure and clandestine networks, there is no solid evidence to verify the link between the southern organisations and transnational extremist movements, except for the similar religious undertone. Moreover, the fact that the violence has been contained within the deep South emphasises the insurgents' aim for regional autonomy. As McCargo asserts, "the primary

emphasis of the militants is on historical and political grievances, not religious ones" (2008, p. 188).

Regardless, senior reporter Supalak Ganjanakhundee who specialises in southern conflict indicates that Islam is interwoven in the fabric of southern border communities, and, inevitably, Islamism plays a role in this conflict although it may not be the root cause. Therefore, the solutions should recognise this aspect, as he argues:

> Terrorism and Islam is not the same thing. But it is an acceptable fact that in the current global situation, most terrorists are Muslim. Therefore, the best counter terrorism method proposed is to empower the Muslims who are inclining to secular state, which is likely to be realised. [Empowerment will] coalesce [Muslim communities] and amplify their voices. At least, an appropriate or visibly active portion of them must exist in the state organism. [...] Thai Government, people, society, should show their readiness to let Muslim brothers and sisters actually have their voices.
> (Fah Diew Kan 2005, pp. 122, 124)

It should be noted here that, by pairing Malay nationalism together with Islamism in one discourse, this thesis does not imply that both concepts are identical. As will be demonstrated in a moment, despite basing their argument on similar grounds, proponents deploy disparate actions and define the success of their goals differently. Nonetheless, these two notions were put together in this discourse because they both approach the conflict from ideological angles rather than the structural ones. The *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourse moves further from the *Minority's grievance* discourse by not only acknowledging the cultural distinctiveness in the far South, but also critically analysing how these differences are embedded in the region's social and political structures, and challenge the country's predominant beliefs and systems in the process. As such, the conflict cannot be solved merely by accepting cultural diversity, but also by legitimising the Malay Muslim identity via political means.

Table 2.1 summarises the key features of the three discourses. A clear demarcation was challenging, especially when similar rhetoric was used to identify the causes and propose solutions. These seemingly overlapping territories also signal the fluidity in the discursive contention, which often hinder decision-makers, academia, news media, and general public from sufficiently recognising the complexities at work in the southern conflict (Ganjanakhundee 2009). The separation of discourses proposed here is rather simplified and perhaps does not thoroughly delineate all complexity and disparity among the

competing discourses. Nevertheless, the demarcation helps tease out the key differences among the contending discourses, and forms a pragmatic foundation of further analyses.

Table 2.1 Contesting realities: comparison of contending discourses in the southern conflict

Discourses	***Crime and conspiracy***	***Minority's grievance***	***Malay nationalism and Islamism***	
Description of problem	Criminality and security threats	Marginalisation and injustice	Insurgency	
Primary causes & culprits	1. Vested interest groups maintain & reap benefits in South, facilitated by poverty 2. Separatist/ terrorist movements seeks separation	The locals rebel against discriminatory and unjust practices and structural inequality caused by centralised administration	The locals and insurgent movements challenge political centralisation and dominant beliefs i.e. the Thai nation-state constructs	
Problem Solutions	'state as command centre; top-down' 1. Crime control and security enforcement; information & psychological operations 2. Economic boosting projects 3. 'Healing' compensation for victims of violence 4. 'Moral correction' rehabilitation programmes & amnesty for defected insurgents 5. Secretive peace talks with insurgent leaders overseas	'state as facilitator; multi-lateral' 1. Recognition of local identity 2. Public participation & deliberative democratic processes i.e. community empowerment projects 3. Reconciliation i.e. open dialogue, rectification of unjust treatment/abuses, revelation of 'truth' & free flow of information	'community members as initiator; civic empowerment; bottom-up'	
			'political approach' Similar to solutions proposed in *Minority's grievance*: recognition, public participation, reconciliation	'radical approach' 1. Intimidation & Information warfare 2. Intervention by & recognition from international forum
Ideal political mechanisms	'Restructuring' 1. Install a special administrative body 2. Replace martial law with state of emergency decree	'Reform' Region-specific administrative system	'Revolution'	
			Autonomous local administration	Independence
Political Goals	Centralisation	Decentralisation	(semi) Autonomy	

Compared with other discourses, *Crime and conspiracy* is evidently distinctive as it highlights the violent nature of the conflict and describes the phenomenon as criminality and national security threats. Claiming that the primary culprits are vested interest groups in the region and clandestine insurgent networks, proponents of the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse believe the conflict can be resolved by maintaining tight security and public order. Hence, the established presence of law enforcement and security officers in the region is vital in the peace-keeping process. Despite making suggestions about a special administrative body for the region, proponents of this discourse still firmly believe in a centralised administrative system where the Bangkok-based political and military authorities ultimately make the decisions.

The complexity of this discursive contention is more discernible in the remaining two discourses. As discussed previously, the *Minority's grievance* and *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses point to similar causal explanations that the resurged conflict was ignited by the long history of political and cultural oppression. Nevertheless, not all supporters of the *Minority's grievance* and *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses endorse violence as a means to achieve their goals. Additionally, instead of a region-specific decentralised administrative scheme buttressed by *Minority's grievance*, proponents of the *Malay nationalism and Islamism* support an autonomous administrative system that would enable the southerners to fully self-govern.

The disparate explanations of the conflict also result in how the phenomenon and antagonists are defined. Unlike during the 1960s and 1970s when the notion of separatism was prevalent because the then insurgent groups openly proclaimed their political goals (Liow and Pathan 2010), a number of interlaced underlying concepts have steered stakeholders to label the current upsurge in the same direction. As more casual explanations emerge, a wide range of titles has been used to describe the phenomenon. Generally, to declare a 'neutral' stance or avoid criticism from either stakeholder, "southern problem" is used to circumvent the hostile and complex features of this conflict. Meanwhile, the terms "southern unrest" and "southern violence" are used to signal the intensity and volatility of the situation. In addition, the term "southern insurgency" is utilised to signal the historical backgrounds which involve rebellion and separatism undertones.

During the 1960s and 1970s, perpetrators had regularly been called *"chon* (bandit)*"* with or without the presumed connection with separatist movement, to signal their unlawful and

belligerent characteristics. When the Thai government heralded its crime-suppression approaches during the first year of the resurged violence, the then prime minister said he believed the Narathiwat weapon depot robbery was the work of "common bandits" (Pathmanand 2007, p. 71). Later on, the term "*chon tai* (southern bandit)" continued to be ubiquitous in the beginning of the violence upsurge in 2004, especially on the newspaper headlines (more discussion on the discourses of the southern violence will be presented in the following chapter). Coupled with the interpretations of separatism histories, the term was also deemed to connote the nation-building, Thai nationalism nuance by implying that the Malay Muslims refused to unite with the rest of the Thai state and caused the upheavals. Subsequently, when human rights advocates argued that such a term was defamatory and potentially cast a negative perception toward the southerners,[8] the use of adjective "southern" was declined and other general terms such as "*khon rai* (criminal – literally translated as bad person)", "*phu ko het* (perpetrator)", and "*phu ko khwam mai sa ngop* (instigator – literally translated as disorder maker)" become popularised. National security officials and experts specifically use "insurgents", "separatists" or "separatist movement" only when providing analyses with reference to the known insurgent and separatist groups. However, the term "*phu ko kan rai* (terrorist)" or "*khabuankan ko kan rai* (terrorist movement)" was used sporadically, especially during the justification of Emergency Decree enforcement in the region.

The nature of insurgent groups does provide neither a clear picture of the antagonists nor their objectives. Perpetrators are cell-based with unclear hierarchy and sketchy goals (Funston 2008; Liow and Pathan 2010), or what McCargo calls a "liminal lattice" which acquires two core features: "a set of cross-cutting linkages – which can be viewed as a lattice – and a quality of liminality, since the movement exists only at the threshold of what constitutes a tangible organisation" (2008, p. 181). Such characteristics have prevented other protagonists from identifying with whom exactly they should suppress, hold dialogue with, or on what ground the negotiation should be based. Despite two high-profile peace talks mediated by the Malaysian government,[9] a third party, and a series of secretive

[8] According to Pathmanand (2007, p. 81), the 2004 government earned a great deal of support from the Buddhist Thai population in other parts of the country for their iron-first measures in the deep South. The consensus was evident in the popular internet bulletin board and opinion poll results.

[9] Initiated by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, the first official peace dialogue, the Langkawi Process, invited leaders from the "old-guard" (those influential in the 1960s – 1970s) separatist groups and senior Thai security officials to participate in a series of meetings during November 2005 to February 2006. The meetings produced the "Peace Proposal for Southern Thailand," which was submitted to the NRC chairman, and subsequently the Thai government. The document proposed a set of reconciliation measures, including the respect of Thailand's integrity over its territory while compromising with the separatist leaders in their wishes for economic development and education reform in the southern border

dialogues between representatives of the state and insurgent organisations, no concrete resolutions have been carried out. While the government was partially responsible for the failed attempts, analysts argue the participating representatives from insurgent groups were not the influential ones in the current conflict (Liow and Pathan 2010, pp. 83-90); therefore, the unrest continues.

The aforementioned discourses on the southern conflict are most prevalent in academic literatures and journalistic reports. It should also be noted that the literatures used to explain each discourse does not necessarily reflect the authors' endorsement of that discourse. Additionally, there may be other interpretations which differ from the three presented here, but have not been brought to light due to the lack of evidential support. However, the fact that the above interpretations have become widely presented and explored illustrates an integral characteristic of the southern conflict: certain discourses are promoted to be recognised, and perhaps to supersede others, in order to legitimise the protagonists' agenda.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the complexity of political and cultural settings in southern conflict reporting. The first section has shown that political conflict in general is not only a physical struggle but also a discursive one where protagonists promote disparate interpretations of events and solutions that best serve their objectives and interests.

The remaining part of the chapter has then moved to present discussions and debates concerning the political conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces. The second section has stipulated the contested histories of power play between the ancient sultanate Patani state and the dominating Siamese kingdom. The historical approach signals the overarching premise of this conflict. While the historical accounts indicate that the current violence was not set off without contexts, at the same time, they are used differently in each discourse to support proponents' claims as demonstrated in the third section.

Three prominent discourses have been presented in the final part to illustrate the varied viewpoints towards the southern conflict, and how the different aspects of the conflict are emphasised or eclipsed. These discourses also reflect the disparate choices for conflict

region. The second round was in Bogor of West Java, Indonesia in September 2008. This time, the talk included the Pattani Malay Consultative Congress, which claimed to be the coordinator among the insurgent groups (Liow and Pathan 2010, pp. 85-88).

resolutions, ranging from the centralized governance and strengthening of security measures to the autonomous administrative system (Deep South Bookazine 2007a, pp. 60-77).

Having described the discursive environment in which journalists operate, the subsequent chapters move on to discuss the interaction between news media and political conflict/violence, as well as how the complexity of professionalism and diversity in news ecology are played out in conflict reporting.

Chapter 3
News Media and Political Conflict/Violence

Chapter 2 presented the discussions of the historical and current contexts of the political conflict in southernmost Thailand and the contesting discourses concerning the phenomenon. In this chapter, the focus moves to consider available theoretical frameworks concerning the role of news media in political conflict and political violence.

By reviewing a collection of literature concerning news media and political violence, this chapter's aim is to argue that the news media's mediatization of political conflict is a complex and dynamic process wherein professional and organisational factors as well as the political contingencies and cultural milieu are at work. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first section will summarise definitions of political conflict, political violence, and terrorism. It will also demonstrate how varied protagonists hold disparate views towards the political conflict and political violence, and these variations lead to the different discourses each group of protagonists constructs to make sense of the conflict and legitimise their actions. The second section will explore theoretical debates in regards to the relations between political violence and journalism, which will explain that different analytical approaches result in the different views and expectations towards the role of journalism in political conflict. The third section will then look at journalistic principles and practices which have been introduced as a way to balance the unequal discursive contestation and facilitate peaceful conflict resolution. By studying these recommendations, this section's aim is to show that journalistic styles and practices are diverse and not static. As a result, there are opportunities in which contemporary journalism can strive to meet certain expected roles in conflict reporting. Finally, the fourth section will examine the existing literature on Thai news media and the southern conflict to identify a new academic trajectory that the remainder of this thesis then develops and pursues.

3.1 Definitions of political conflict, political violence, and the discursive contestation of political violence

The terms 'conflict', 'political conflict', and 'political violence' are used almost interchangeably in this thesis in reference to the unrest in Thailand's southern border region due to the nature of this particular phenomenon. Nevertheless, the three terms bear different definitions. 'Conflict', as Simon Cottle explains, can generally be defined as "struggles between opposing interests and outlooks" which are "mobilized and populated by people" (Cottle 2006a, p. 4). Similarly, peace journalism advocates Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick quote Chris Mitchell (1981) in pointing out that a conflict occurs

because of the involved parties' "incompatible goals, needs and interests" (2005, p. 34). Hillel Nossek, Annabelle Sreberny and Prasun Sonwalkar defines 'political conflict' as a struggle concerning political interests and influences, while 'political violence', or simply put as 'violence in a political context', includes a wide array of behaviours and events, ranging from terrorism and war to political demonstration, all of which involve forms of conflict and elicit political goals (2007, p. 3). Still, it must be stressed that violence is neither a synonym nor the sole outcome of conflict, as there may be other forms of responses to conflict, as well as means to prevent a conflict from progressing to a violent stage (Galtung 2000; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p. 38).

Joseph Tuman views political violence, such as terrorism, as a channel of communication: "a symbolic act aimed at influencing political behaviour through the radical means of the threat of violence" (2003 cited in Nossek 2007, pp. 270-271). Using Stuart Hall's *encoding/decoding* model (1980), he points out that the act of terrorism carries a message of rhetoric and powerful symbols. Terrorists are the encoder, sending the messages of threat, fear, and instability embedded in their actions to the decoder, who are the government and the public, to communicate their demands. For the communication to come full circle, Tuman argues, terrorism also requires a "bi-directional rhetorical communication" as the government or the public must respond to the terrorists' message. However, Michael Walzer (1992 cited in Nossek 2007, p. 271) notes that the terrorists' message of political demands often gets lost in the flames of violence, causing failed dialogue, because terrorism is often regarded as an unacceptable disruption of peace and the perpetration of social norms, hence, it corresponds to criminal acts rather than legitimate warfare.

The general public's perception of political violence, particularly terrorism, often focuses on the anti-state organisations acting outside the dominant socio-political structure – termed as "terrorism from below". On the contrary, "terrorism from above" or "state terrorism" (Nacos 2002 and Tuman 2003 cited in Tumber 2007, p. 31), referring to political violence conceived by the state, often does not receive an equal amount of attention, and mostly gets overlooked. Strikes launched by authority to consolidate the state's power and to quell insurrection are usually deemed legitimate as long as they fall in line with 'humanitarian rules'. Such was the case of the "War on Terror" campaign spearheaded by the U.S. Government following the September 11, 2001 attacks. Because fears of terrorist threats and concerns for public safety and national security were dominating the scene, as Justin Lewis (2007, 2008) observes, minimal public debate and investigation into the matter had led to the allocation of hefty military budget in counter-

terrorism affairs, including the military invasion of other states without much protest or thorough scrutiny.

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter, protagonists' disparate views towards the conflict can lead to various definitions and solutions. For instance, as shown in the study by Philip Schlesinger, Graham Murdock and Philip Elliot (1983), the *official* perspective typically casts terrorism as criminality that requires punishment, a contrast to the *oppositional* perspective that justifies the use of violence to achieve political goals, whether to oppose unjust political and economic conditions or to seek a new political apparatus. Grounded on different approaches, these various interpretations of the conflict are then used by protagonists to vie for legitimacy and public support.

3.2 Understanding (and questioning) the relations between news media and political conflict/ violence

The interplay between journalism and other protagonists in political conflict has been theorised as dynamic and changeable (Hallin 1989; Wolfsfeld 1997). Moreover, the interplay is often dialectical – meaning it is an interdependent, negotiated, reciprocal relationship. It can also be governed by economic and political imperatives (Herman and Chomsky 1988) and influenced by the surrounding cultural settings (Sonwalkar 2004). Various stakeholders' perspectives towards political conflict/violence contribute to news media's understanding of the conflict, and thus, the representation of conflict in news content. At the same time, these views also determine protagonists' anticipation on how news media should portray political conflict (Schlesinger et al. 1983; Nossek 2007).

To locate the positions of news media in political conflict/violence, Hillel Nossek (2007) proposes three approaches to explain the symbiotic relation between political violence (in this study, terrorism) and journalism. The first, the *Classical Approach*, sees journalism serving terrorism in three ways: 1) providing publicity, 2) giving legitimate causes for their actions, and 3) becoming an arena where terrorists from different camps can learn their tactics and strategies from one another and contributing to the so-called "contagion" effect (Brosius and Weimann 1991 cited in Cottle 2006a, p. 146; Dobkin 1992 cited in Nossek 2007, p. 274). Susan Carruthers (2000) and Brigitte L. Nacos (2002) argue in similar vein that the spectacle of terrorist acts prompts news media to present the stories to mass audience, hence, serving as the 'oxygen provider' for terrorism (Nossek 2007, p. 275). Also, knowing how dramatic scenes can grab the media's attention, perpetrators also opt for extreme violence as their messenger, as demonstrated in the live and repeated broadcasts of the September 11, 2001 attacks via global satellite television networks. Regardless of the

diverse interpretations, the incidents' magnitude of violence ensured the fast dissemination of the attackers' messages to audience worldwide, or as Cottle puts it, this was "a calculated act of political communication enacted on the global stage" (2006a, p. 153).

Some studies (Carruthers 2000; Tuman 2003; Nacos 2010) argue that by providing platforms to publicise terrorists' use of weapons and tactics, the media help glorify, legitimise, and rationalise terrorist groups' activities. Other studies (Weimann 1992, Weimann and Winn 1994 cited in Nossek 2007, pp. 275-276) also state that coverage of terrorism and the various labels which the news media place on terrorist groups (such as 'freedom fighters') helps promote positive images of the antagonists, and as a consequence generates positive public perceptions toward them.

While the *Classical Approach* sees news media effectively taking sides with the anti-establishment perpetrators, the second approach proposed by Nossek, the *Critical Approach,* offers a contrasting analysis. Based on Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's *Propaganda Model* (1988), this approach argues that in reporting about terrorism, the news media in fact serve the state's aims by amplifying panic among the public which subsequently legitimatising the state's uses of force to control any forms of public order disruption and strengthens the government's position. This perspective points to economic interests as the main cause for the news media's favour for sensational and dramatic presentation and the occlusion of the conflict's contexts. Howard Tumber supports this view by arguing that, "as news organisations move towards a more market-driven, profit-oriented characters, the dividing line between entertainment and 'hard' news starts to blur, making the terrorist incidents an attractive opportunity for drama, tragedy, shock and panic" (Tumber 2007, p. 30).

The impact of this dramatic and sensational coverage, the *Critical Approach* suggests, lies in the interest of the state rather than that of terrorist groups. The lack of substantial information prevents the public from forming a clear understanding of the complexity of the conflict's political nature; let alone sympathising with the terrorists' goals. Furthermore, siding with the state, intentionally or unknowingly, the media tend to ignore 'terrorism from above' which "seeks to sow terror in the public mind so that people will obey and overlook government actions that violate their rights and weaken their ability to criticise government" (Nossek 2007, p. 276). A clear example of this case was Chomsky (2002 cited in Nossek 2007, p. 277)'s study on the US military operation in Afghanistan where the American media failed to challenge the administration's decision to invade another country,

or Lewis' aforementioned articles on the media's support of the US and UK military budget allocation (2007, 2008).

From this perspective, therefore, the media can be seen as the state's accomplice in publicising homogenous and hegemonic views toward political violence among the public, usually the views of the dominant elites. Schlesinger et al point out that people are likely to place trust in authorities to eradicate criminal disruption and restore public order when they feel threatened by terrorists (1983, pp. 24-27). The continuing portrayal of aggressions can give rise to the growing fear and terror among the public (Altheide 2002, 2006) and the "us versus them" perspective (Sonwalkar 2004, 2005) towards those identified with the insurgents. While carrying apathy or resentment towards "the Others", be it the insurgents or the people with whom they identified, the public may then justify the use of forces against the 'deviant' to protect their own safety, if governmental protection measures are deemed insufficient.

One prominent element of political conflict, as viewed by both approaches, is the state's measure to limit information access, such as censorship, military's press handler system, and national security law. Still, the two perspectives have different readings on such restrictions. The *Classical Approach* sees these restrictions as the state's attempt to weaken news media's information gathering ability, preventing them from further spreading the terrorists' messages. On the contrary, the *Critical Approach* views the state's deployment of *structural constraints* (Schlesinger et al. 1983) as a way to ensure the elite hegemonic view as the sole representation of the conflict.

Regardless of their arguments, both approaches contain weaknesses in their analyses of journalism's roles in political conflict. The *Classical Approach*'s "contagion" effect that draws causal links between media and terrorism remains debatable due to insufficient empirical evidence (Picard 1991b; Nacos 2010), and the portrayal of news media as promoters of blood-frenzy does not do justice to other journalistic efforts, for example, *peace journalism*, that promote conflict resolution. In same vein, although critics from the *Critical Approach* have placed a strong accusation against news media as the state's guard dog, they have yet to form a clear answer when it comes to the desirable role of journalism in reporting conflict. Nossek (2007, pp. 280-281) notes the paradoxical solution regarding the role of journalism raised by this camp. While agreeing that the news media should break away from the state's firm grip, which can be achieved through the media reform process, and provide the public with extensive information to form a shield against elite domination,

critics foresee how news organisations may then face the *Classical Approach*'s blame for forging an alliance with terrorists if they publicise terrorism and undermine the state's capacity. Overall, both approaches see news media as a passive, yet influential actor, whose job is to spread propaganda, be it for government or anti-state movement. At the same time, this shared presumption does not recognise constructive professional values such as 'public watchdog' and 'objectivity.' Moreover, the relationship between journalism and associated forces is not a static one, and there are circumstances where news media may emerge as a more active agent in the conflict.

In the *Functional or Professional Approach* perspective, news media are still criticised for underperforming in resolving political conflicts. But contrary to the previous two approaches, this perspective does not label news media as a servant of the state or co-conspirator of terrorists purely because of market imperatives or the dominant political perspectives. Instead, this approach attempts to explain that, the political, socio-cultural, and media environments which encompass news organisations are major variables that shape journalists' perspectives towards political violence and these must therefore be granted heightened theoretical recognition.

Similar to Gadi Wolfsfeld's *Political Contest* model (1997), the approach positions the media as the central stage in political conflict where key players compete to rally public's support, and not simply where the media is taken to be a prime campaigner for either the state or insurgents. In similar vein, Daniel Hallin's *Sphere of Legitimate Controversy* (1989) argues that news media merely play a responsive role to elites' consensus and disagreements. As a result, they are unlikely to break away from the agreed discourse that dominates the debate at the time so as to avoid being cast as dissident. However, as shown in his study on the coverage of the Vietnam War politics, it is when there is a dissensus among political leaders that news media become proactive in promoting a different stance from elites and other fellow press.

While accepting that the news media favour the dramatised and sensationalised elements of political violence to gain financial interests, this approach admits that there are other professional conventions to explain why not all violent events are selected to be in the news. The 'newsworthiness' of political violence and how it is portrayed also depend on journalistic conventions like frames and narrative styles (Picard 1991a; Fawcett 2002) or geopolitical interests. Prasun Sonwalkar's study of the Nagaland conflict (2004) in north-eastern India, for example, proves the latter point. The study shows that stories of this

ethnic minority community barely appeared on the national news agenda, because, in the news editors' eyes, the far-reached region had neither the cultural proximity to the general audience nor a major economic contribution to the central administration. The dominant discourses of this conflict were those generated by the state, whose proximity of location with the news media headquarters is more favourable than the border region. Meanwhile, the voices of the local administration and population became marginalised, distorted, and muffled due to the central newsroom's limited understanding of the region's complex ethnic contexts. Taking after Gaye Tuchman's concept of "symbolic annihilation" (1978 cited in Sonwalkar 2005, p. 262), Sonwalkar coins the term *banal journalism* (2005) to explain the practice where journalists choose to present some events and issues over the others, and in effect keep certain perspectives, usually those of the minorities, out of the public's sight. In his view, *banal journalism* carries the elite hegemonic undertone, hence, detrimental to democratic process.

In the case of news access, the third approach holds a different view from the previous two. Journalists' choice of news sources are not solely determined by their economic interests, political beliefs, or structural restrictions, but professional requirements such as deadline and the 'index' system (Bennett 1990 cited in Wolfsfeld 2004, p. 21) also come into play. Meanwhile, David E. Morrison and Howard Tumber (1988 cited in Tumber 2004, pp. 192-193; Cottle 2006a, p. 190) also point out that human experiences of war, such as being under similar hostile situations and being bonded with their military companions, can also shape journalists' outlook, or phenomenology of the war they cover. Moreover, keeping confidentiality of news sources and off-record information for the purpose of ensuring the safety of informants rather than abiding by authorities' rules is another factor that compels news media to leave certain stories in the dark when covering wars and conflicts (Tumber 2005).

The desirable role of journalism, in this perspective, involves the exercise of media self-regulation and the social responsibility principle. Interestingly, Nossek notes the exceptions when journalism's preferred role is to promote public's support for the authority (Nossek 2007, p. 300). For instance, when reporting about implications of unknown risks from terrorists' unconventional weapons such as anthrax threats, both *Critical* and *Functional/ Professional* approaches concur that it is permissible for news media to encourage trust in and compliance to government measures to protect public safety, insofar as there are no other reliable sources of information besides the state.

The three approaches reflect different positions on journalism's roles in political conflict and help sensitise researchers to the varied rationale of news organisations and other stakeholders' decisions, policies, or actions towards the conflict. This thesis, with the following chapter discussing the sociology of news production, sets out to employ and build on the *Functional/Professional Approach* as a key framework with which to explore and analyse the roles of Thai journalism in reporting the southern conflict. Nevertheless, it is crucial to be aware of other approaches as they suggest the logic behind different protagonists' views on the roles of Thai news media in this political violence.

3.3 Countering the mainstream: peace journalism and other forms of journalism in political conflict reporting

This section will explore academic works and professional views that propose desirable roles of journalism in conflict situations. To be discussed first is the notion of *peace journalism* as an effort to break away from conventional journalistic practices and facilitate conflict resolution. The discussion will then turn to consider the types of news production that help generate the 'contra-flows' of information by offering alternative perspectives, recognising minority's identity and needs, and encouraging participation of relevant stakeholders. Lastly, the notion of professional reflexivity which aims to improve the quality of conflict reporting will be discussed.

3.3.1. Peace journalism: promoting 'ideal' journalism in a cynical world

Veteran journalists Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have developed the peace journalism approach (2005), derived from peace studies scholar Johan Galtung's recommendation of an 'ethical' journalistic principle in reporting conflicts that promotes peace resolutions. The advocates identify one binary framework in covering war and conflict: *war/violence journalism* and *peace/conflict journalism*. According to these advocates, the more dominant *war/violence journalism* approach, prevalent in most mainstream news media, focuses on the visible violence and competitive elements of the conflict and relies on elite sources, the latter often propagandising their cause. Such practices do not contribute to peaceful conflict resolutions, but instead produce the "us versus them" perspective that further deepens social division. *Peace/conflict journalism*, on the contrary, veers away from such characteristics. Its focal point is to provide a variety of voices and perspectives on the conflict to offer a comprehensive understanding of the situation and bring about non-violent solutions (Lynch and McGoldrick ibid.; Galtung 2006). As Liz Fawcett summarises, while conventional conflict reporting highlights "the visible effects of violence" and

focuses "on tangible outcomes and institutions, peace journalism adopts a more analytical approach, examining the role of social structures and cultures" (2002, p. 213).

Promoting the ethic of 'social responsibility,' the ideas of peace journalism find some support in many national and international self-regulation agreements such as the UNESCO's International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism (1983), and was incorporated in several handbooks on practical guidelines for reporting in conflict zones (see, for example, Howard 2003; Klussmann 2003; Park and Deshapriya 2005). Regardless, the idea of *peace journalism* still faces criticism from news professionals. A BBC correspondent argues, for instance, that the established pillars of journalism – namely objectivity, balance, and fairness, already encapsulate key principles in producing quality reports in any situations. He also questions if the news media's engagement in conflict resolutions, encouraged in these guidelines, will breach journalism's golden rule of detachment (Loyn 2003).

A number of studies question the practicality of the concept. The obstacles range from journalists' individual background to professional conventions such as news rhetoric and narrative structures (Fawcett 2002) and news values (Irvan 2006). Concurrently, the profit-driven nature of news industry also results in the dramatic, violent-oriented stories being chosen over those carrying peace journalism frames that may lack the sensational elements. At the ideological level, the dominant discourses such as national identity play a crucial part in encouraging journalists and news organisations to take on the usual path, and not the alternative reporting approach, especially when the conflict is close to home (Irvan ibid.).

Although peace journalism holds the merit of visioning the news media's preferred roles in conflict situations, Thomas Hanitzsch (2007) argues that the concept's major flaws are that it believes the news media acquire a powerful direct impact on the audience's perception of the conflict and the peace process, and disregards the influence of other institutional components of the conflict. Advocates of peace journalism, Hanitzsch comments, overlook the socio-cultural and political environments wherein journalists operate and their audience reside. These settings could also influence how journalists form the idea of 'peace' in the first place (2004, p. 491). As Wolfsfeld's 'politics-media-politics cycle' (1997, 2004) demonstrates, because news organisations have a dialectical interplay with other institutions in conflicts, they are likely to rely on the ideas circulated in public debates by protagonists at that time rather than coming up with an understanding on their own. By the same token, the interplay is dynamic; thus, each conflict can be portrayed differently. For instance, while

news media might be criticised for their negative contribution to peace process from their coverage of the conflicts between Israel and the Palestine and Jordan, their role in enhancing the peace process in Northern Ireland was more commendable (Wolfsfeld 2004). Therefore, peace journalism does not necessarily revolutionise the ways journalists work entirely. The approach may already be employed when an opportunity strikes, for instance, when there is a dissensus among political elites that allows oppositional voices to emerge (Hallin 1989), or when journalists feel the need to reflect on their performance via memoir literatures or media monitoring programmes (Hanitzsch 2004, p. 492; Cottle 2005, pp. 119-120).

3.3.2. 'Thick' journalism: going beyond daily news updates

Whilst journalists face harsh criticism for their less-than-impressive role in conflict resolution, some academics argue that these assessments may be unfair to media professionals because they are based on traditional news narrative styles and structures, which become the limitation that hinders reporters from venturing into more complex reporting styles or modes (Hanitzsch 2004; Wolfsfeld 2004). This section will examine the variations of journalistic presentation that attempt to go beyond the daily news update and which may provide audiences a more comprehensive picture of some conflicts.

The varied forms of journalism can facilitate a fair discursive competition or marginalise dissenting voices. Cottle (2005) suggests that, 'thick' journalism, referring to television journalism formats that put forward the issue's in-depth replete with competing views and "lived experiences," can enhance the visibility of often-overlooked issues such as those of the minorities and the voiceless in the public agenda – a contribution to the development of democratic processes and a healthy civil society. He further argues that journalism bears dualistic characters through the "communicative architecture of television" – that is, a complex set of communicative frames journalists routinely use to present news stories. While the *reporting*, *dominant*, and *contest* frames, largely employed in the story-telling of the war on terror, give little chances for oppositional and minority voices to come into view, other less-used communicative frames such as *expose/investigation*, *campaigning*, and *reportage* can offer a promising opportunity in counter-balancing the dominant discourses presented via the frequently-deployed frames (Cottle 2006b).

Studies also show that long-format and discussion programmes, which consume more preparation and production time are likely to articulate the complexity of conflict issue better than the time-constraint regular newscasts. Schlesinger et al observe that "different

forms of television journalism may handle the question of political violence with varying degrees of openness to argument which depart from official orthodoxy," (1983, p. 68). For instance, David Altheide's comparative study on the format and symbols of television news coverage of terrorism in the United States and the United Kingdom (1987) reveals that the *topic type* news format, usually involving interviews and documentary forms of reporting, tended to go behind the scene by highlighting the perpetrators' purposes, goals, and rationale, whereas the *event type* format such as evening newscasts merely presented visuals of the terrorism aftermaths and tactics. Following up on their previous research, Elliot et al (1996 cited in Cottle 2006a, pp. 147-148)'s study of the television's "discourse of terrorism" in the Northern Ireland conflict indicates that the more "open" spaces the format provides, as in the case of current affairs, documentary, and drama programmes, the more opportunity there is for marginalised perspectives and unheard voices to emerge, balancing the discursive contention among protagonists. In same vein, Cottle (2002)'s study of the three debate-style current affair programmes on British television demonstrates how the structure of these televised "agorae" can encourage public participation and deliberation on crucial societal matters. Given their less-frequent appearance on air, the impact of these programmes in putting the discussed issue on the news agenda or stimulating public response is minimal. Nevertheless, their presence indicates manifold perspectives among the audience, suggesting the heterogeneous public as opposed to the consensual one – a feature that cannot be taken for granted (Ibid., p. 196).

As the expansion of media landscape in the twenty-first century paves the way for new media channels, scholars also express optimistic views toward these new platforms and genres and anticipate how they may yet enhance democratic dialogue concerning political conflict, making it more accessible and fairer to every party. Studies by Stuart Allan (2002) and Adel Iskandar and Mohammed El-Nawawy (2004) which explore the potential of online media and regional satellite broadcaster respectively demonstrate the 'contra-flows' of information that challenges the dominant hegemonic discourses in political conflict. Allan's study suggests that the Internet's accessibility and interaction features encourage users to not only consume and scrutinise online news from a myriad of sources, but to also express opinions. In political conflict, he argues, the internet makes it easier for those with marginalised views to produce their own content so they can correct the misrepresentation or counter the dominating forces.

Meanwhile, Iskandar and El-Nawawy's work examines the Qatar-based satellite television broadcaster Al-Jazeera's coverage of the Iraq war in 2003. Using the concept of "contextual

objectivity" (2004, pp. 319-323) to analyse the case, the researchers indicate the station strives to maintain balance between upholding journalistic integrity and presenting the regional perspectives to their Arab and global audience in the Western-dominant discursive environment. While being praised for unveiling the underrepresented perspectives from the Arab world to audience elsewhere, the broadcaster still faced accusation from U.S. officials of disseminating the then Iraqi government's propaganda when their reports depicted the deaths of Iraqi civilians. Such a precarious position makes it difficult for Al-Jazeera to receive a universal recognition as a 'fair and balanced' news organisation, even from their western counterparts (Samuel-Azran 2010). Nevertheless, Iskandar and El-Nawawy argue that the presence of Al-Jazeera and the likes, as well as the use of "contextual objectivity," is crucial in conflicts where the representation of certain protagonists is inadequate.

Also, among the traits of 'thick' journalism exemplified by Cottle is the notion of *media reflexivity* (2005, pp. 119-120), referring to programmes in which news media scrutinize and critique their actions and decisions. The practice also shows journalists' vulnerability because behind-the-scene factors such as obstacles and ethical dilemmas are brought to light. He asserts that "deconstructing 'spin' and understanding symbolic and rhetorical forms of power" (Ibid.) are essential for both media professionals and the audience to be aware of the vigorous discursive contestation environment they are in. The idea is in line with Hanitzsch's recommendation that exposing conditions of reporting and applying critical view of sources will enhance transparency and reflexivity, which will bring *peace journalism* into practice in the real work environment (2004, p. 492).

Despite the promising prospects, some scholars express concerns towards the survival of 'thick' journalism and alternative channels in the profit-oriented media industry and consumerism environment (Cottle 2005). Current affairs programmes usually attract a small audience due to the non-entertaining nature of its topics. Therefore, they are generally placed in the 'grave-yard' slot, the position that inevitably affects their ratings and potential sponsors in the case of commercial stations. Moreover, the impact of online news and regional media on the news agenda remain minimal, compared with that of other mainstream outlets. Going back to Wolfsfeld (2004)'s argument which connects the media environment and the role of journalism in peace process; insofar as sensationalism maintains its strong foothold in most newsrooms, the likelihood for other genres to emerge and become influential seems unlikely. Regardless, the struggle with commercial interests can sometimes be overcome by professional reflexivity and organisational principles that facilitate the production of quality journalism.

3.4 Thai journalism and southern conflict

Divided into two subsections, this part now explores further the nature of news media output, audience's reaction, and the modus operandi of journalists in covering the insurgency to form a preliminary insight on Thai journalism and factors involved in covering the conflict.

3.4.1. The analyses of news reports on southern conflict: news media as purveyor of violence and state propaganda

Most studies concerning Thai news media and the southern violence examine the news media output to investigate how the media make sense of the political conflict. These studies have demonstrated that the media discourses of this phenomenon mainly revolve around the notion of criminality and violence.

Tracing how the southern conflict had been played out in major Thai dailies prior to and during the course of the new round of violence, Jareeya Arttaanuchit (2007) finds that the number of front-page stories concerning unrest from the far South had increased sharply during the first two years of resurged violence. The trend is a major contrast to the amount of stories that made front page during the decade before the new round of conflict. However, the key theme remains unchanged, as it revolves around the authority's pursuit of suspects and perpetrators. Moreover, the dailies used more state official sources than civilians.

Two other recent studies take a step further by bringing in journalistic factors, which are the television news narrative structure and professional values that could influence the representation of the southern conflict in news media. Kanlayanee Kanchanatanee (2004) and Samatcha Nilaphatama (2006) studied the reports of high-profile incidents in 2004 produced by commercial and state-owned television stations and the national radio broadcaster respectively. These incidents included the armoury heist in Narathiwat in January, the clampdown on suspected insurgents at Kru-Ze Mosque in April, and the deaths of protesters in Tak Bai district in October (see Appendix A for detail of these incidents).

In line with the findings of Arttanuchit's study, Kanchanatanee's analysis indicates that through television narrative styles and presentation techniques, the newscasts presented an "unclear reality" of the arms depot robbery. Failing to answer who the perpetrators were

and what their goals would be, the broadcasters instead focused on authority's investigation of the case and their pursuit of suspected insurgents while in fact little progress had been made. More importantly, the coverage relied heavily on state leaders and officials' opinions, which were found to be contradicting one another's. Apart from the ambiguous information, the broadcasters also largely employed the emotional elements, which included horror, sorrow, and violence in their news reports. Kanchanatanee's study reflects significant limitations in the nature of broadcast media: their dependence on immediacy and limited airtime, which encourage news practitioners to focus on the dramatic elements of the events and convenient access to news sources. It can be argued that, the sensational and emotional aspects of these reports could invoke public sympathy for those affected by aggression and expedite political responses, similar to the case of disaster victims (Wahl-Jorgensen and Pantti 2007). However, the coverage's emphasis on authority's actions and opinions tended to support the state's legitimacy in suppressing the alleged instigators rather than to provide other alternatives to end violence or call for sympathy for the locals.

Concurring with Kanchanatanee's study, Nilaphatama's textual analysis of the newscasts presented by the Public Relations Department's Radio Thailand also demonstrates the potential ideological impact of the newscasts on audience (2006, pp. 80-100). He explains that the state-owned broadcaster distorted its explanations of both events in terms of their details and ramifications by downplaying the testimonies of eyewitnesses and victims of violence, as well as the concerns and criticisms, especially ones opposing the authority. The study also indicates that the coverage concealed other crucial information that could have helped the audience form a well-rounded understanding of the events. For instance, the broadcasters refrained from investigating further the claims of potential resurrection of separatist movements or illegal drug traders who could have been behind the resurged insurgency, or the army's responsibility in mishandling the protesters. The reference to the nation's most revered institutions, such as the monarchy and religious leaders who proposed reconciliatory campaign, also lends credibility to the news reports and consequently the rhetoric promoted by the state. Nilaphatama argues that such news coverage became a key mechanism to legitimise the state's aggressive actions on dissidents and protesters in the far South and to endorse the subsequent peace-keeping policies and reconciliation rhetoric.

Studies on the news discourse and news framing support the criticism that the mainstream media have done little to facilitate the peace process, and may have widened the rift among local Malay Muslims, authorities, and the rest of the Thai population. In their study on the

discourses of the deep South and violence in Thai society, Kritsadawan and Soraj Hongladaroms argue that the usage of "fire" in news reports and commentaries written by analysts and scholars as a metaphor referring to the southern violence makes the southern border region synonymous with the dangerous and ferocious flame. The same goes with related terms such as "fuming" and "simmering" to describe the severity and lingering effects of the situation. Moreover, the media's frequent reference to insurgents as "*chon tai* (southern bandits)" further prompts the central population to perceive the southernmost provinces as infiltrated with two detrimental features: violent danger and vicious locals (2006, pp. 119, 133). The reference has cast the feeling of insecurity upon the troubled region. Another metaphor used was the notion in which the southern problem was a disease, and the government, who looked after people's well-being, had the direct duty to cure it. Therefore, the government must be entrusted with full authority to implement the treatment as they saw fit. In this case, the remedy was economic development schemes to rid poverty – the perceived cause of this disease (Ibid., pp. 119-120).

Using the *peace journalism/ war journalism* frames, Supapohn Kanwerayotin (2006) and Witchayawanee Choonui (2009) conducted a content analysis of the popular *Thai Rath* daily's coverage of the Tanyong Limo hostage incident (see Appendix A for more detail), and the two studies generated similar results. These studies suggest that Thailand's highest distribution daily newspaper applied the *war journalism* frame by focusing on the "here and now" and "victory-oriented" elements of the story (Kanwerayotin 2006, p. 46) as well as the visible impact of the violence (Choonui 2009). Its semantic terms, particularly the headlines and sub-headings, were found to carry a dehumanising tone, which could easily propagate the "us versus them" perception against the perpetrators. More importantly, *Thai Rath*'s reports granted minimal spaces to scholars, peace advocates, and NGOs, compared with the amount of spaces given to the authority.

Taking a different approach, a frame analysis study by Sara Jones (2007) shows the strong influence of the binary Thai/Malay ethnicity and Buddhist/Islamic identity notions in media framing. Based on the analysis of the news reports by English-language daily *The Nation* on four major events in 2004, Jones identifies three frames used in news media representation of the southern conflict: 1) "Southern Violence: A Regional Problem", 2) "The Threat of International Terrorism", and 3) "Shirking Responsibility" (Ibid., p. 13). She argues that the first two frames imply the geographical and religious divide in Thailand by singling out the South as a violent-filled region and linking the conflict with the transnational Islamic terrorist networks. In line with the previous two frames, the last

frame, "Shirking Responsibility" is used to conclude that, since the instigators were unknown and the conflict is regional-based, the government and the rest of Thai public do not have to be accountable for or to solve this problem (Ibid., pp. 101-102). The research points out that such media frames do not facilitate the southerners to achieve their demand for justice.

So far, these studies have indicated that several journalistic practices which gave rise to an incomplete set of information and barred the Thai population in other parts of the country from forming a better understanding of the complex political violence. The public's lack of awareness of the problem paves the way for the government to play down the plausible resurgence of separatist movements (McCargo 2008, p. xii) and keep the problem at a distance at first, and later to galvanise public support and earn legitimacy for its hard-line approach to quell violence (Nilaphatama 2006).

What Nilaphatama calls the national broadcaster's "sophisticated and neat" structure (Ibid., p. 285) might succeed in manufacturing consent among the majority Thais. However, the process failed to convince the southern residents and officials based in the region due to their direct experience, negative attitude toward the government's inefficient policies, other means of information verification, prevalent alternative media channels, and their background. Moreover, Radio Thailand was caught in the dilemma between performing journalistic duty and residing under its employer, the Government's Public Relations Department, which meant to abide by the state's national security protocol. As a result, in reporting the attack on suspected instigators at the sacred Kru-Ze Mosque and the Tak Bai demonstration clampdown, the state-run radio legitimised the authority's use of force. On the contrary, the locals disagreed with the coverage, resulting in the mistrust of the state broadcaster that extends to other mainstream vernacular press.

The aforementioned studies hold the merits of signalling the preferred benchmark that news media should gear towards; nonetheless, the findings deal little with organisational factors and relevant structural constraints of news media, making the criticism that seems detached and impractical in the journalists' world (Deep South Bookazine 2008, p. 59). While the study by Nilaphatama (2006) took into account the state broadcaster's organisational restraints and Kanwerayotin's study (2006) briefly discussed the commercial news media's for-profit nature that to a certain extent jeopardised the *peace journalism* project, these studies have yet to explore further why journalists and the news organisations cannot perform the anticipated roles, or even agreeing on what the desirable roles should

be, given their existing professional and organizational limitations. Additionally, there have yet to be studies that explore the complexity of the Thai news ecology, which may potentially be a contributing factor to changes in conflict reporting.

3.4.2. Alternative means of journalism in reporting southern conflict: challenging the conventions

This subsection looks at the studies of Thai news media and their attempts to challenge the conventional practices in hopes to improve the quality of reports on southern violence. Two alternative media operations will be discussed, namely the *peace journalism* project and the non-profit civic community radio in the far South. This subsection will include analytical assessment of these projects through the lens of journalism theories to identify new research trajectories needed for investigating the roles of journalism in this conflict.

The first alternative means of conflict reporting is the *peace journalism* initiative. The call for 'responsible and ethical' news media to facilitate the peace-building process in the deep South from scholars of various specialisations has been prevalent and consistent. In same vein, a number of news media professionals, especially ones who campaign for quality development of Thai journalism, recognise the *peace journalism* approach as a 'corrective' form of reporting about the ongoing political violence. The notion is also supported by Sermsiri Nindum (2007)'s study which indicates "problem solution" and "peace" are among the top desirable news values whereas conflict is listed last.

With the start-up funding from the National Reconciliation Commission and the National Health Foundation,[1] the Thai Journalists Association (TJA) founded the Isara News Centre project, which later became the Isara News Agency (see more detail of the agency's development and operation in Appendix B). In the beginning, the centre's main task was to highlight what might be under-reported, or even neglected, angles of southern stories. The centre not only expected the public to see other sides of the phenomenon, but also hoped that journalists would become sensitised to the regional culture and could experiment on different approaches in covering political violence (Chamlongrat 2007; Ruengdit 2007, pp. 22-26). While the news agency's main platform was its website, some stories were also picked up by and re-published on the mainstream outlets, particularly ones that sent their

[1] The National Health Foundation was officially founded in 1991 by a network of concerned public health officials and scholars, with the aims to promote a healthy living environment and to campaign for national policies regarding public health. An independent non-profit agency, the foundation also campaigns for freedom of expression as part of a healthy living condition, which results in the funding for activities and projects from media professional organisations and the like.

reporters to join in the project. In many instances, the agency proved to be a useful source for national-level media, for example, in its coverage of the Tanyong Limo hostage where the Isara reporters were able to break the stories, thanks to the combination between the staff's experienced reporting skills and the vital knowledge; local language and customs (Kanwerayotin 2006, pp. 30-48; Choonui 2009).

The studies by Kanwerayotin (2006) and Choonui (2009) on the Isara News Centre and its coverage elucidate two important points. First, similar to what Hanitzsch (2004) and Irvan (2006) propose, journalists generally find it crucial to constantly evaluate their performance and amend their roles. Secondly, a joint working group composed of reporters from varied backgrounds, or a *shared media* (Wolfsfeld 2004, p. 230), is likely to enhance their ability in information gathering and analyzing the situation, which will facilitate the presentation of alternative perspectives in the conflict. Nevertheless, the obstacles in employing the peace journalism concept and in executing the project are apparent in all three levels as discussed by Irvan (2006) above.

Despite its good intention to challenge the mainstream media's conventions, Kanwerayotin points out that the news centre's loose organisational structure obstructed the agency from achieving a sustainable goal. As a non-profit organisation, the agency relied heavily on volunteer experienced journalists, on loan from mainstream dailies in the beginning. The inconsistent support from Bangkok-based journalists and the unclear TJA project timeline made the flow of operation uncertain (Kanwerayotin 2006, pp. 53-59). When these reporters were called back to the capital city as the national-level political turmoil started in the capital early 2006, local junior reporters with a few years of experience were left behind to do the fieldwork. Despite having experienced senior reporters to act as news editors, the agency acquired neither the systematic training for required skills, from basic reporting to peace journalism or safety precautions, nor concrete manuals or guidelines. The reports in the subsequent phases of the news centre rarely attracted Bangkok news editors' attention the way the centre did in its beginning days. Kanwerayotin further argues that other news stories, especially the heated political conflict in Bangkok made it difficult for stories from the deep South to emerge on the national news agenda. Another factor was young journalists' lack of experience and skills which made the news pegs and presentation unappealing season editors to publish the stories (Ibid., pp. 61-62).

Later, the TJA's subsequent attempt to promote the conflict reporting manual was criticised for being naive to the other structural constraints and the Thai socio-political

environment (Rojanaphruk 2009). This comment suggests that although *peace journalism* can be adopted by individual journalists, the approach can hardly penetrate into the mainstream news structure which is immensely market- and industrial-driven.

In all, these criticisms are in line with McCargo's analysis of the Thai news media's attempt to report the southern conflict (2006). Firstly, the changes in news manufacturing conventions were proved to be a tremendous challenge because news workers were too accustomed to the familiar routine and framework to welcome new practices. Secondly and more importantly, these changes did not only question the existing journalistic customs, but also the predominant, and perhaps underlying, beliefs in Thai society, particularly the nation-state stability. This remark signals that, to become effective, the shifts in journalism may have to go in tandem with the changes in socio-political milieu.

The second alternative means of southern conflict reporting to be discussed here is the operation of civic community radio.[2] One research indirectly shows the implications of the political conflict and violence on civic community radio practitioners. According to Chalisa Magpanthong (2007), the Pattani Community Radio Group was among a few community radio stations whose majority of programmes was conducted in the local Malay dialect. As a result, this pioneering non-profit community broadcaster, which was run by local volunteers, had been playing a vital role in encouraging the locals' participation and fostering a sense of community ownership as well as their Malay Muslim identity.

However, the re-emergence of violence marred its operations profoundly. The hostile situation in the province intimidated both volunteer staff and the previously-frequent guests, deterring them from working at late hours and visiting the station. The locals' fear of violence effectively decreased the level of participation – the principle of civic community radio. More importantly, like other community radio stations in the volatile provinces, the broadcaster was under the authority's close surveillance. The researcher points out that the broadcast language of Malay raised officials' concerns and the station was asked to translate their programmes into Thai so that officials could understand the

[2] Civic community radio in Thailand refers to non-commercial short-wave radio operation with the transmission radius of no more than 15 kilometres (approx. 9.3 miles). Mostly situated in rural residential areas, community radios require operation license from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission, the independent regulatory agency. Funded by community members or sponsored by civil societies, most community radios are run by volunteering members of the community and broadcast during certain hours. Some stations allow local governmental agencies and civil advocate groups, such as public health and army, to host programmes. For more detail on civic community radio in Thailand, see Ramasoota, P. 2013. *Community radio in Thailand: from media reform to a sustainable regulatory framework*. Bangkok: Heinrich Boell Stiftung and Thai Media Policy Center.

content (Ibid., p. 206). Some stations in Narathiwat which broadcast in Malay language were reportedly shut down by the army in the name of national security (Ibid., p. 209). In the studied radio station, volunteer staff felt compelled to perform certain degrees of self-censorship by refraining from discussing politics or presenting analytical reports concerning the conflict, fearing that any misinterpreted messages might prompt the government to close it down, or insurgents to set the station as an attack target (Ibid., p. 204). On the contrary, local audience felt it was crucial for the community radio station to talk about the ramifications of conflict and to particularly correct the army's misrepresentation of the Muslims (Ibid., p. 202).

Concluding her research, Magpanthong identifies a number of obstacles, especially in the management of community radio stations which hinders them from creating an effective channel for participatory communication. Regardless, the researcher sees the local broadcasters' potentials in strengthening the community and earning the locals' trust, in the case of the Pattani community radio station, by using the Malay language, the native tongue which is not officially recognised by the central broadcasters. This remark is supported by Walakkamon Jangkramon (2007), who argues that community radio had yet to show their role in facilitating conflict resolution despite their civic principles due to safety concerns and interference from the state and other influential groups. To enhance the participation of community radio practitioners in conflict resolution, the researcher suggests structural changes, including the granting of legal status and systematic media reform policies to support the operations of civic community radio, and subsequently pave the way for effective participatory communication among involved parties.

Overall, these studies reflect authority's views towards media outlets, especially those operated by the Malay Muslims, regarding them as serving the antagonists in line with the theoretical approaches discussed earlier. Such perspectives gave rise to state restrictions and cast the chilling effects on media operation, even with those catering to a small group of audience and considered 'amateur' by big corporations. At the same time, these literatures suggest that there is the interplay between changes in politics and media, as well as the opportunities for alternative media to present counter-state arguments in conflict reporting.

In summary, the compilation of studies in this section indicates that the Thai news production culture has not always been static and passive. Despite the criticism against their less-than-impressive performance, news workers occasionally employed professional reflexivity, strived to improve the quality of southern conflict coverage, and attempted to

expand the news ecology. At the same time, there are signs that the changes in politics and news industry played significant roles in shaping the news production culture. Such indications point to the importance of further investigation into how journalists take advantage of or are affected by the dynamic environment in reporting about the southern conflict.

3.5 Conclusion

By reviewing a collection of literatures in the field of journalism and political conflict/violence, this chapter presents useful analytical frameworks, which can be employed to scrutinise the Thai news media's coverage of the political conflict in the three southernmost provinces. Similarly, the look at studies in the Thai academia indicates that gaps needed to be filled in order to form a more comprehensive understanding of Thai journalism's roles in conflict reporting.

The three approaches: *Classical*, *Critical*, and *Functional/Professional* (Nossek 2007), suggests the different outlooks towards the symbiotic relations between news media and political violence. The explanation of these perspectives signals how most studies rarely probe the Thai media using the *Functional/Professional Approach*. By occluding the 'behind-the-scene' factors such as occupational conventions and structural constraints in the profession, these studies only give partial explanations of why journalists operated the way they did, and recommended treatment that was challenging to become materialised.

Moreover, existing Thai studies emphasise on the aspect of news representation, showing how journalism tended to take side with authority in the conflict. The interplay between news media and political actors were mentioned briefly, but not as a focal point in most communication studies, although the history-, security- and political science-based literatures concerning southern violence subtly imply the complex relation between key protagonists in the conflict and the news media, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. The framework from Wolfsfeld's landmark studies (1997, 2004) will be useful in examining the dynamic and dialectical relation between news media and antagonists, as well as how journalists respond to violent incidents and to peace processes.

Lastly, as journalists strive to better perform and produce better quality reports, there is a need to investigate the varied types of journalism and how they may yield different implications from mainstream commercial outlets as largely illustrated in the existing studies. The inception of the Isara News Centre (later the Isara News Agency), the

promotion of conflict reporting guidelines, and the existence of non-profit media outlets such as the national public service broadcaster Thai PBS and community radio operators may all suggest and indeed help project new journalism trajectories. As demonstrated in the case of online news (Allan 2002) and regional satellite television station Al-Jazeera (Iskandar and El-Nawawy 2004), these emerging trends add new perspectives in explaining about complex conflict, amplify the previously-silenced voices, and make the discursive contestation of conflict more vibrant and fairer.

Chapter 4
The Sociology of News Production

The previous two chapters on the historical and contemporary contexts of Thailand's southern conflict and the relations between news media and political conflict/ violence identified and discussed contending discourses within and around the conflict, and the disparate perspectives on news media's role in political conflict. These discussions centre on the issue of how, being caught in the middle of the discursive and physical battlefields, journalists assume diverse and dynamic roles in reporting about the conflict. Various circumstances and conditions require journalists to perform their job differently, and their actions may result in facilitating peaceful resolution or exacerbating the conflict. This is an important issue which demands further theorization and empirical exploration. The discussion and debates addressed in this chapter focus on the rationales and forces that govern journalists' practices such as the processes of story selection and information gathering, and the design of presentation formats. Additionally, this chapter look at the implications of these practices on news content.

The chapter is divided into four parts. The first section deals with the discussions and debates on the sociology of journalism, and why it is essential to use the sociological analytical lens to study the roles that Thai news media and journalists play in the southern conflict. The second section then explores factors within the realm of journalistic operation and news professionalism: professional values, organisational structure, and presentation variations. The third section investigates a vital element of news production: the notion of news access, which examines the reciprocal relationship between journalists and their sources. The forth section takes into account the political and economic forces that influence the news production culture. In conclusion, the principal argument of this chapter is that, generally, there are multifaceted and complex forces that govern the actions of journalists and news organisations. Therefore, these forces are considered part of political conflict mediatization.[1]

4.1 Defining the sociology of journalism

The sociology of journalism argues, broadly, that news media are shaped by the social, political, economic, and technological determinants (Schlesinger 1990; McNair 1998; Schudson 2003) as opposed to being solely determined by journalistic features or one

[1] See a brief discussion of 'mediatization' in Footnote 1 of Chapter 1.

particular force outside the news organizations. As Michael Schudson puts it, "the decisions inherent in the manufacture of news have more to do with the marketplace, the nature of organizations, and the assumptions of news professionals than with individual bias" (Schudson 2003, p. 47).

To understand the news manufacturing process, Stephen Reese offers the *hierarchy-of-influences* model (2001b) which points at five cascading levels of contributory factors performing both independently and along with one another: 1) individual level, 2) routines level, 3) organisational level, 4) extra-media level, and 5) ideological level. Reese looks at news professionals' individual attitudes, training, and background as the first mould that shapes journalists' actions and outputs, followed by routines – the "ongoing, structured, deeply naturalized rules, norms, procedures that are embedded in media work" (Ibid., p. 180), which require individuals to adhere to. Routines then fall in line with the news organisation's larger and formal structure, for example, editorial policies and company's rules, and the power play inside the organisation such as line of command and self-censorship. The model then suggests the investigation of extra-media influences which include those of the government, advertisers, and even other media organisations. Lastly, Reese concludes that, ultimately, the ideological level subsumes the previous four factors so that they work to sustain particular ideological goals, and lead the news media, as a social actor, to maintain their status quo and be part of a social control system. The model offers a broad outlook of many variables influencing news production; nonetheless, its focal point on an individual journalist or organisation does not sufficiently recognise the dynamic and complexity of news ecology.

Other scholars offer more dynamic perspectives that acknowledge the evolving environments within and around news media. Seeing the performances of and changes in journalism go in tandem with the changes in its surrounding contexts, the sociology of journalism counters the static view of what Brian McNair calls the 'Dominance Paradigm' (1998, p. 25) which sees elite groups as the sole promoters of dominant discourses and the media faithfully legitimising and maintaining such domination. While accepting the unequal distribution of power among members of the stratified social groups, the concept further argues that there is no guarantee for any ideologies to always stay in the superior position. As a result, "the media function not always or necessarily as a tool of ideological domination, but often as an arena for a real competition of ideas and interpretation of events" (Ibid., p. 29). The analysis is in line with Wolfsfeld's argument concerning journalism's role as a forum for competing discourses in political conflict, and that there

are opportunities for antagonists to challenge the control of dominating discourses (Wolfsfeld 1997, 2004).

Many studies demonstrate how the news media react to and interact with the political settings surrounding them (see, for example, Hallin 1989; Pharr 1996; Wolfsfeld 1997; McCargo 2000; Wolfsfeld 2004; Archetti 2010), and the economic system in which they operate (Hallin and Mancini 2004). These studies suggest the news media invent and amend their norms, professional and moral judgment, practices, and outputs in accordance with the dynamic political culture they work in. At the same time, the market demands also determine the use of presentation formats of journalism, as seen in the hybrid 'infotainment' or 'popular journalism' (Bourdieu 1996; McNair 1998). Literatures also indicate that the development of technology and the globalised flow of information enable new forms and genres of journalism to emerge, effectively broadening the news ecology (Cottle 2006a; McNair 2006). Such an impact, as demonstrated in McNair's *cultural chaos paradigm* (2006), diminishes the power of dominant discourses by allowing minority and alternative voices to be heard more than before, although their presence may not entirely outdo the existing dominating discourses.

In conclusion, to investigate news media's political conflict mediatization, one needs to take into account the interaction between the features of journalism and surrounding environments. The sociology of journalism moves beyond a media-centric view by proposing an analytical model that considers the political and cultural milieu as equally influential in shaping news media's performance; nevertheless, it does not downplay the influence of journalistic characteristics embedded in the news culture. This framework enables the examination of three "major factors" that contour the news coverage of politics, suggested by Rodney Benson , which are "a) commercial or economic, b) political, and c) interorganizational field of journalism" (2004, p. 280). Given that political conflicts are defined by contending discourses, some of which come from contradictory viewpoints, the sociology of journalism helps shed light on relevant actors on the news stage. Among them is the news media itself as an active player who does not only serve to establish and mediate the forum, but can also entertain various relationships with these protagonists and sometimes also proactively engage in the issue at hand. Such relationships and engagement contribute to journalists' varied roles: a purveyor of information, a watchdog, a servant of

state, or, more often found, an unpredictable "trickster"[2] (Pharr 1996; McCargo 2000), depending on the circumstances.

4.2 Inside the world of journalism

Using the sociology of journalism as the main analytical framework of the Thai news media's roles in reporting about the southern conflict, this section continues with the examination of journalistic culture, including professional norms, values, beliefs, practices, as well as the line of command and protocols in news organisations to acquire an understanding of how such elements and conditions can positively or negatively contribute to journalists' works.

Before drawing a connection between the journalistic environment and its interchanges with other social actors in the following sections, key features of journalism which are frequently discussed and debated will be pointed out to illustrate the complexity and constant contention within the world of journalism, which, at the same time, casts major influences in reporting political conflict situations.

4.2.1. Journalist as a distinctive profession

Journalists in different political and cultural settings may operate differently, but Mark Deuze (2005) argues that those in democratic societies are likely to acquire a shared professional ideology which defines their identity. Serving as the 'journalistic cultural cement,' the five principles are: 1) providing a public service, 2) maintaining impartiality, neutrality, objectivity, fairness, and credibility, 3) enjoying editorial autonomy, freedom, and independence, 4) performing with immediacy, actuality and speed, and 5) having the sense of ethics, validity, and legitimacy (Ibid., pp. 455-457). Looking at news media as a political institution, Timothy E. Cook similarly identifies factors that facilitate the conformity of news organisations, which are "professional consensus, comparable routines of making news, the need under deadline to reduce high uncertainty about what is news, the reliance

[2] Using the symbolical anthropology approach, Susan Pharr proposes another perspective on the media's role in society: media as trickster. Pharr argues that the media hold an outsider status in politics, or as she puts it, "the trickster's domain lies in a zone of liminality or "periphery" between the established order and the symbolic universe surrounding it" (Pharr, S. 1996. Media as Trickster in Japan. In: Pharr, S. and Krauss, E. eds. *Media and Politics in Japan*. Honolulu University of Hawai'i Press, p. 26). Yet, it is because of this flexible position and relationship with the power-that-be that enables media practitioners to wander in and out of the political territory conveniently. Being an outsider allows the media to become independent from the state's control; by the same token, they are not bound by social obligations. Such a "betwixt-and-between position" (Ibid., p.27) facilitates the media to produce "a seamless stream of commentary, parody, analysis, evaluation, and satire about that world" (Ibid.) that can critically scrutinise and criticise the powerful establishments. At the same time, the media's detachment may lead to them siding with the political power who can provide them with beneficial inputs, averting them from serving public interest.

on standard definers of reality, and, not least, how public policies and government officials accommodate (and regulate) newsworkers as a distinct group" (2006, p. 163).

To understand journalists as a distinct group of professionals, Pierre Bourdieu's *field theory* describes how journalists constitute their domain to be unique and autonomous, yet remain dependent on other institutions and social actors. Like other fields, for example, political or cultural fields, the *journalistic field* is composed of its own socially-constructed *habitus* – "a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices...configurations of properties expressing the differences objectivity inscribed in conditions of existence" (Bourdieu, *Distinction*, cited in Benson and Neveu 2005, p. 3). Using the *journalistic field* as an analytical frame, Bourdieu states that the characteristics of journalists as individuals, such as their social and educational background – the social capital, and those of journalists as a corporate collective together constitute the "institutionalization" process of the field. Similar to what happens in most fields, despite the seeming harmonisation and homogenisation, such a process also undergoes incessant contestations and changes. This is in line with Roger Dickinson's observation which suggests that, "[p]roduction processes did not go unquestioned or patterns of reporting and presentation uncontested. The newsroom was more a place of conflict than conformity. [...] While Sigelman's rule-following and Tuchman's and Tunstall's routinization were evident, disputes and arguments over the way journalism should be done were an intrinsic part of the job" (Dickinson 2007, p. 193).

Bourdieu's *field theory* offers a useful insight into how news professionals invent their own rules and earn the acceptance from members of the other fields for their distinctiveness. The theory also provides ground for further investigation into the diversity of journalistic field, for example, by recognising specialised journalism practices (Marchetti 2005). Nonetheless, the *field theory* alone may be inadequate to understand the complexity of Thai news ecology with respect to southern conflict reporting. Firstly, the concept focuses on news workers' struggle to maintain autonomy from other, particularly economic, fields. However, it gives little explanation about the dynamics and tension among various players, as well as sub-cultures within the journalistic field, such as the different status of Bangkok-based and southern reporters/stringers, or the dissimilar practices between employees of commercial media and alternative ones, which are significant elements of the complex news ecology. Secondly, as Dickinson argues, the *field theory* underlines the competition among news organisations because they are driven by market economy. This presupposition makes it overlook the co-operation among news workers at all levels

(Dickinson 2008, p. 1930), which, in political conflict, appears to be the news media's efforts to support conflict resolution, such as Wolfsfeld's *shared media* proposal (2004, p. 230), and the TJA's peace journalism Isara News Centre project as discussed in Chapter 3.

Moreover, as will be discussed later in the chapter, journalism cannot be completely detached from other fields or merely respond to other social actors when provoked. Often times, as a social actor, the domain of journalism does intersect with, or even becomes subsumed under, other fields. As Schudson puts it, "journalism doesn't stand outside politics looking in; journalism is an element of politics" (2003, p. 166). Despite concurring that journalism deserves certain degrees of independence from political and market interference to maintain freedom of expression and pluralism in democratic societies, Schudson further argues that completely detaching itself from other social actors may lead to journalism's insular and egoistic perspectives (2005, p. 221).

4.2.2. Objectivity as professional ideology and occupational necessity

Embedded in the process of institutionalization is the news workers' attempt to create and maintain their professionalism, which includes the normative belief of what 'good' journalists should be. The notion of objectivity has chiefly been campaigned as the cornerstone of 'good' journalism, which promotes non-partisan news reporting, as opposed to supporting any particular parties or interest groups (Schudson 2001). McNair points out that 'objective journalism' contains three characteristics: 1) the separation of fact from opinion, 2) a balanced account of debate, and 3) the validation of journalistic statements by reference of authoritative others (1998, pp. 68-69). Nevertheless, from the critical perspective, objectivity in the form of giving spaces to all claims does not only prevent news organisations from being accused of bias, but it also enables them to become part of the commodification process for the news product to reach a wider readership. In the same vein, proclaiming objectivity can also serve as a selling-point of the news organisation (Ibid., pp. 67-68).

In her ethnographic study of the American newsroom culture, Gaye Tuchman (1972) observes how journalists translate the abstract concept of objectivity into tangible practices to shield themselves against an accusation of being biased. Embedded in the information gathering process and presentation techniques, these "strategic rituals" include presenting conflicting possibilities and supporting evidence, using direct quotations from sources, presenting "material facts" first, and using the "news analysis" label to separate facts from opinions(Ibid., pp. 665-670, 676). By doing so, it is ensured that the news report is

objective as reporters do not employ their personal judgment in the piece. Nevertheless, the practices seem to backfire as most of the sources deemed to provide "material facts" are often in high positions (Ibid., p. 672). Such deference to elite sources then leads to the problem of monopolised news access, which will be discussed in a moment. This is in line with Robert Entman's argument which indicates that, "'objectivity' facilitates the manipulation of news slant. With knowledge of objectivity rules and other news norms, elites can concentrate their resources where it will most benefit their press coverage" (1989, p. 38 cited in McNair 1998, pp. 76-77).

Similar observations are found in the analysis of Thai newspapers' practices, as McCargo demonstrates in his study of the relationship between Thai press and politics. To declare their objectivity, news professionals adopt a routinised newsgathering system in which asking high-ranking authorities for their views in every political issue is necessary. Editors will then assemble those words in a barely-edited chunk of quotations, mostly opinions, without giving additional analysis, explanation, or context, to prevent the press from being labelled opinionated (McCargo 2000, p. 2), which is deemed unethical. While these types of stories give little contextual details to the subjects, the coverage's potential impact to rally for public support and push for further investigation into political misgivings are also diminished. To the news culture, the system inadvertently reduces the role of field reporters, especially the little-trained and inexperienced junior ones, to a mere human tape-recorder who only gathers quotes without having to think much beyond their daily assignment to trail in pack after politicians (Ibid., pp. 37-38, 55-36).

News professionals, particularly ones in the liberal democratic settings, hold the notion of objectivity as an integral occupational principle, be it for maintaining the institution's integrity or commercial necessity. While the reason of existence of objectivity is multi-level, the interpretation of objectivity also varies. The Anglo-American concept of objectivity is still highly debated and deems deficient in certain cultural settings and in conflict situations (McNair 1998, pp. 71-72; Schudson 2001). The diverse and expanding news ecology enables new players to emerge in the field, and they hold alternative views of objectivity from the one deeply rooted in the history of American journalism (Tumber 1997 and Waisbord 2000 cited in Campbell 2004, pp. 173-176). For instance, the Qatar-based Al Jazeera television employs what Iskandar and el-Nawawy call 'contextual objectivity' (2004) to present global audience with the previously silenced voices of the Arabs – a major shortcoming in the dominant western news media, especially in times of wars and conflicts when the discursive competition is fierce.

This subsection aims to highlight the complexity in the notion of objectivity, an integral principle of journalism. While continually being heralded as a key practice among news professionals in democratic societies, objectivity has also been critiqued for its weaknesses, resulting in journalism's deficiency. Therefore, it is worth taking into account the debate on 'objective journalism' in political conflict mediatization, and seeing how the concept can be played out in conflict situations.

4.2.3. News values and news selection

As discussed in Chapter 3, the criteria and process journalists use to filter the events to be made news play an important part in political conflict mediatization. Selected to be published or aired from a myriad of events occurring in a day, an event must be considered 'newsworthy' by reporters and editors.

Many studies have summarised sets of common traits, or 'news values', which news professionals employ to determine which events are newsworthy (Galtung and Ruge 1973, Gans 1979, Golding and Elliot 1979, Hetherington 1985, Shoemaker et al. 1987 cited in Campbell 2004, p. 118). Nevertheless, these criteria, like other journalistic characteristics, are not permanent and universal. News values are constantly challenged, amended, or sometimes overridden depending on circumstances and settings (Tiffen 1989). Meanwhile, there are also discrepancies between what news professionals and the audience perceive as newsworthy. A Thai study indicates that readers prioritise characteristics such as "public interest", "individual interest", and "morality" over "oddity" and "entertainment", which are the news industry's oft-cited best-selling news values (Yuwakosol 2002 cited in Nindum 2007).

In political conflict reporting, critics frequently argue that news organisations favour dramatised and sensationalised angles of the events for financial gains. Nonetheless, as briefly discussed in the previous chapter, studies suggest that other features, for example, cultural proximity and geopolitical interests (Sonwalkar 2004, 2005), come into play and may even overshadow other news values elements. Cristina Archetti (2010)'s comparative study of the September 11, 2001 coverage in eight elite newspapers in the United States, France, Italy, and Pakistan support the above findings. Her study identifies three factors influencing journalists' sense of newsworthiness: national interest, national journalistic culture, and editorial policy of each media organisation. From these studies, one can further

argue that news values do not only determine which event is to be selected as a news story, but they also influence the selection of sources, as well as the presentation styles.

Another set of tools employed by news professionals to facilitate their news manufacturing process is what Tuchman calls *news typification* – that is, when journalists classify events into five types based on the nature of factual information about the events: hard news, soft news, spot news, developing news, and continuing news (1973). By pigeonholing the events into different slots, news organisations can manage the influx of information they receive everyday in a "routinised" system which enables them to allocate space or airtime and manpower for news stories. Like *news values*, news organisations use *news typification* to determine when and how a story will be presented, and what kind of technology is required to cover the story. As a result, by "routinizing the unexpected", as Tuchman puts it, journalists do not only establish a systematic news production procedure for immediate and future reference, but they also construct the social reality of the 'event-as-news' by emphasising on how it happens, as journalists see it.

Although frequently included in most journalism textbooks, both *news values* and *news typification* may not be found in the news organisations' manual; they are often referred to by journalists as part of the "reporter's instinct" (Campbell 2004, p. 123). Deeply entrenched in the newsroom culture, they serve as journalists' quick tools to help classify and manage the frenzy traffic of incoming and outgoing information and select what they need. However, it is worth noting that these tools are not merely idle plastic cones separating the driving lanes; they are in fact the blue prints of the traffic plan, directing which way and how the stories will be presented. The investigation into how news workers and organisations define news values and typify events-as-news in the case of Thailand's southern conflict is therefore essential in order to understand journalists' role in mediating and mediatizing political violence.

4.2.4. Routines and organisational structure

Early studies of newsroom structure indicate that the news beat or news desk system serves as the news organisations' effective division of labour in the news commodification process (Fishman 1980, Gans 1979, Tuchman 1978 cited in Becker and Vlad 2009, pp. 64-65). The beat system helps news editors manage story assignment, enables reporters to develop specialisations, and ensures the news organisation that at the end of the day, the required quantity and combination of output to fill up the space and airtime are met.

While the news desks arrangement helps maintain the division of labour and productivity, McCargo argues that the system can become a bureaucratic barrier that prevents journalists from sharing their expertise or collaborating in news gathering. The failure to coordinate is a major shortcoming in reporting modern politics as political affairs are often intertwined with economic, legal, and other social implications (2000, pp. 99, 106). In the case of the southern conflict, the fact that incidents are taking place outside of the capital city already throws the newsroom into disarray; it is tricky to determine whether the stories should fall under the purview of provincial (or regional), crime, military affairs, or political news desks (McCargo 2006, p. 23). More importantly, because of the conflict's complexity, interdisciplinary knowledge is required for news professionals to understand the bigger picture. However, the existing news desk system leads to inefficient responses to certain stories, and subsequently sabotages the quality of news coverage, because it discourages collaboration of manpower and expertises among news desks (Ibid., pp. 22-24).

Another limitation in the Thai press posed by newsgathering routines, according to McCargo, is the static stationing of beat reporters, especially political reporters who are mostly based at four major institutions: Government House, the parliament, the interior ministry, and the military headquarters (2000, p. 46). The beat system assigns them to a physical location rather than the domain of knowledge. While being physically rooted in one particular place, field reporters, particularly the inexperienced ones, become the target of politicians and other elite sources who use their proximity with news workers to feed them with news tips and information. As McCargo puts it, journalists are "waiting for news to come to them. When news did not come to them, or when it did not fit into the predefined, Bangkok-centred categories determined by the structure of news desks, news went unreported or incompletely reported" (Ibid., pp. 102-103). Such a conduct also leads to the emphasis of official sources in news, which will be discussed later. To prevent journalists from becoming too source-dependent, institutionalised, or insular within their assigned beat, some news organisations experimented in the annual or biennial rotation system by relocating reporters to new, yet relevant beats. However, senior reporters criticised the system, arguing that the rotation would deprive journalists of the chance to maintain their contacts and develop their expertise in the field (Ibid., p. 56).

The aforementioned discussions concerning newsroom structure has yet to bring in key features of news organisations in the twenty-first century: media convergence and cross-platform content production, which, as Thorsten Quandt and Jane B. Singer argue, will influence how news workers operate and change the face of traditional newsroom structure

and routines (2009). In political conflict mediatization, such changes may encourage and facilitate newsroom staff to share content, platforms, and expertise among themselves or with alternative news outlets like the Isara News Agency and the civil society Deep South Watch website, or even with citizen/civic media producers – the move that may lead to more comprehensive and critically engaged news reports. By the same token, convergence and cross-platform production may merely enhance the speed and scope of news dissemination, and create yet another pressure for journalists to work under.

Ultimately, certain predominant beliefs and customs in Thai society are profoundly pervasive within the newsroom, especially that of the vernacular press. Underlying the official news organisation's line of command is the custom of seniority. Most senior reporters, columnists, and news editors are usually in the trade for a long time, while fresh-off-university junior reporters generally enter into the world of journalism for a few years before changing to more lucrative careers. Therefore, the latter are generally assigned with mundane routines like hunting for politicians' quotes, while the former are in charge of more influential tasks such as composing the stories, phoning the political leaders and writing analysis and commentary pieces. According to McCargo, the tension between the *dek* (kids) and *phuyai* (adults) in the newsroom is brewing and the seniors often win (2000, p. 38). The subtle power struggle gives rise to the hegemonic environment where the seniors maintain their revered status and influence, while the juniors are given the gopher position. Thus, changes and challenges from the base of newsroom hierarchy are difficult to emerge, let alone prevail.

4.2.5. The journalistic presentation styles

As briefly discussed in the previous chapter on news media and political conflict/violence, variations of journalistic presentation require different production principles and approaches, and may also produce different impacts (Schlesinger et al. 1983; Cottle 2003, 2005, 2006b). While the implication of presentation styles in the coverage of Thai news media has yet to be thoroughly explored, existing literature points out problems in the news presentation techniques that help legitimise the state's discourses of the conflict (Kanchanatanee 2004; Nilaphatama 2006).

One common characteristic found in both Thai print and broadcast media is the use of authoritative and aggressive language when describing the government's action against the insurgents, and the condemning tone against the assailants (Hongladarom and Hongladarom 2006). The vernacular popular newspapers tend to use more sensational

language and slang, especially in the headlines, to compete with one another on the newsstands or in cyberspace. Nonetheless, the broadcasters who generally employ a formal tone are found to have taken up the similar custom, particularly in news-talk programmes and the morning shows where newspapers are used as references, although not with the same degree of drama and bluntness (see, for example, Media Monitor 2007a).

Another limitation of the Thai news format, as frequently highlighted by McCargo (2000), is how news-makers' quotations are sewn together to form a lengthy news story, while little context and analysis are provided. This practice, Thai news professionals claim, is used to maintain their objectivity. The compilation of quotes does not help readers to foster an understanding of the ongoing and complex subject; by the same token, such formats can provide news-makers with an opportunity to initiate a new subject and spin the news agenda.

The creation of alternative news outlets such as the Isara News Agency provides platforms for the under-reported stories left out by the mainstream commercials. Moreover, the recently-established public service broadcaster, Thai PBS, also allots specific airtime for news documentary and a discussion programme concerning the troubled region. It will therefore be interesting to see whether these new channels offer more comprehensive explanations and serve to untangle the complexity of the southern conflict.

4.2.6. Peer pressure: interaction and competition among news organisations

The interchange among journalists from different organisations is a complicated power play. From the business perspective, each agency must compete with one another to produce a unique type of commodity that will garner a larger share of advertising revenue and readership. Paradoxically, the competition sometimes seems obsolete in the field when reporters find it necessary to work in pack to press high-power sources for information. Moreover, when it comes to countering threats from the state, journalists and news organisations forge alliance by formal and informal means to protect their interest.

In the study of Thai press and politics, McCargo observes that parliamentary reporters are likely to adopt the 'information-sharing' system to avoid missing out on the story. Due to numerous political activities and press conferences taking place daily, journalists do not only share press releases, interview transcripts or soundbite with fellow reporters, but also, often times, their finished copy of story, ready to be submitted to any news headquarters (2000, p. 58). While the system could lead to inaccurate or erroneous reports in several

newspapers – an apparent repercussion, McCargo indicates that such conduct also causes a setback in the standard of news reporting (Ibid., p. 75). He further argues, however, that the root of this problem does not come from journalists' individual laziness, but rather, from the newsroom policy that demands field reporters not to miss out on any story (Ibid.). It is the competition that makes journalists fear that they would miss out on the 'current' trend, or *tok khao* (fall off the news) (McCargo 2000, p. 40), and in turn, moulds the news commodity as if coming from the same news outlet. In similar vein, Cook (2006) argues that the conformity of news organisations may potentially contribute to the homogeneity of the news products despite being produced by different agencies.

On the contrary, maintaining an absolute exclusivity can sometimes be ineffectual. Referring to the case of the medium-size *Siam Post* newspaper who broke the story of the alleged corruption charge against a high-profile cabinet member, McCargo (2000) remarks that the newspaper's monopoly of the story failed to push the matter further due to its deficient investigative reporting mechanism; hence, the lack of solid proof. By first refusing to share the information that could expose the alleged misconduct, and later being unable to convince other newspapers to take on the subject, *Siam Post* was the only wobbly voice and quickly faded. In summarising the case, McCargo notes that, "instead of a struggle between the press and the political establishment, in which the press unites to expose wrongdoing, a struggle may emerge between rival newspapers, one trying to expose wrongdoing, and the rest trying to kill off the story" (Ibid., p. 168).

4.3 News access: balancing on the tightrope

Following the examination of an environment within news organisations, this section shifts its focus to the interchange between journalists and their prime contributors, news sources. In analysing the American news media's role in political communication, Cook (2006, p. 169) notes that "newsworkers constitute only a small set of the co-authors of the news, along with officials, experts, political activists, and, occasionally, persons-on-the-street." The statement implies that news is not the product solely manufactured by journalists, but rather, by a combination of composers. It is crucial, therefore, to also examine the mechanisms of "news access" (Cottle 2000) or "sociology of sources" (McNair 1998, pp. 143-161) to understand the goals and strategy of protagonists in political conflict, and the interplay between these actors and news media.

4.3.1. Interviewing as occupational craft and professional identity

As pointed out in the previous section, interviewing has been Thai journalists' key means of gathering information, and the conduct is similar in other countries. Schudson notes that, since the 1870s, interviews have been recognised as a necessary craft in journalistic work, and helped distinguish journalists from other occupational groups (Schudson 2001, pp. 156-157). Because contacting news sources and interviewing them have become part of the journalistic identity, challenges or changes in the practice can make news workers feel reluctant and stripped off a vital part of their identity.

The study of a mid-sized American newspaper by David M. Ryfe (2009) shows that newsroom staff perceived the management's change of strategy, aiming for more interpretative reporting, to bypass the daily governmental meeting and conference reportage as a disruption in their fostering contact with sources. Without seeing their sources on a regular basis, journalists were confused and felt lost, wondering where and how to extract information. More importantly, many felt less like a "real" reporter (Ibid., p. 198). By demonstrating this, Ryfe argues that "the identity of a journalist is tightly bound to its practice. […] It also means that a change in practice may implicate a change in identity" (Ibid., p. 205).

As stated in McCargo's study of the Thai press, the anticipation of getting quotations from interviewing sources does not only reside with field reporters, but also with the management. Since the news format of Thai newspapers heavily relies more on quotations, composed of factual information and opinions, than data analysis or interpretation, journalists are then required to conduct interviews and produce quotations rather than to analyse information (McCargo 2000). This conduct does not only reduce the role of journalists to a stenographer, as previously discussed, but also prevents them from developing further analytical and investigative skills.

4.3.2. The elite sources as "primary definers" of events

While there may be several protagonists vying for the media's attention, not all of them receive the same treatment from news media. Similar to the news values rationale, Archetti argues that "a social embedding of journalistic practices, or national journalistic culture, affects the journalists' very sense of what is news and what is newsworthy. This, again, also applies to the sources" (2010, p. 578). Journalists' source selection also goes in tandem with the application of *media frames*. Wolfsfeld suggests that the political actors with more resources and power usually make their appearance through the gatekeeper's '*the front gate*',

endorsing their legitimacy in the discursive battle, while '*the back gate*' is generally reserved for the political and social deviants (1997, p. 42), which effectively undermine them as legitimate actors.

McCargo's study corresponds with this observation, elaborating that political reporters approach only a handful of MPs as their regular news sources due to their position which implies the well-informed intelligence (i.e. spokesperson, committee chairperson) or the outspoken personality and rhetorical ability (McCargo 2000, p. 61). Several studies of Thai televisions news coverage of political affairs and demonstrations show that the broadcasters favour the voices of government and politicians over academics, civil society sector, or demonstrators (Kanchanatanee 2004; Media Monitor 2005, 2007a, b, 2008a, b).

The findings concur with the previously discussed studies on news access, which explain why news media tend to give higher rate of credibility and significance to those in the upper echelon of society than that of other groups (Bennett 1990, cited in Wolfsfeld 1997; Becker 1967, GUMG 1980, Hall et al. 1978 cited in Cottle 2000; McChesney 2002). As the phenomena are typified as 'routine events', the groups of sources involved then earn the privileged 'habitual access' (Molotch and Lester 1974) which guarantee their newsworthiness to news organisations; hence, their constant appearance in the news.

However, news media do not deliberately marginalise the non-elite in order to sustain the hegemonic control of the powerful as criticised by the Propaganda Model critics; they generally follow the pre-set "culturally dominant assumptions" that shapes their views of who to approach and get information (Cottle 2000, p. 431). Bringing up a shortcoming caused by the newsroom structure, Wolfsfeld argues that the news beat system "not only provide routine access to particular sources, they also serve as means of a cultural inculcation" (1997, p. 42). In similar vein, Schudson argues that the news beat mechanism is usually drawn up after the bureaucratic system (2003, p. 150), which is no different in the Thai case, where reporters are practically stationed at the governmental offices as previously discussed. Such arrangements enable journalists to identify with their sources and become institutionalised by the official settings in which they are based. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the pressures of deadlines and maintaining objectivity prompt news workers to turn to those with information readily available and easy to decode rather than to those that require time tracking and deciphering. As a result, informants with better and richer resources and closer proximity, mostly the powerful, can gain easier access to the press than the resource-poor groups (Ibid., p. 151).

In political conflict reporting where the discursive contention among protagonists is fierce, having the voices of certain groups of actors louder than others can dismiss or silence the minority's discourses. While journalists may proclaim the integrity of being objective and attempt to provide spaces for the parties involved, it is worth noting that there are still other structural and cultural limitations at play that allow a handful of powerful groups to maintain their discursive domination. Nevertheless, as Wolfsfeld suggests, the competition is subject to constant changes, and the dominating group may lose their control if the challengers' discourses are able to attract media's attention (1997).

4.3.3. The 'exchange' system: the reciprocal relationship between journalists and their sources

The previous two subsections highlighted journalists' dependence on interviewing and a group of elite sources as a vital part of news commodification process and occupational identity. Many studies further argue that, while reporters rely on their sources for soundbite and news tips, the sources also need journalists for valuable information and publicity in many cases (McCargo 2000, p. 64; Schudson 2003, p. 151). As the result, the interplay between news media and sources, especially in political news, tends to be reciprocal and collaborative rather than confrontational (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995 cited in McCargo 2000, p. 63; Franklin 2003).

Schudson explains that the symbiotic interchange between journalists and their sources is a "human relation" where each party takes turn to manipulate the other (2003, p. 144). Knowing news organisations' thirst for information, the news sources especially those who already gain the 'habitual access' may take this as their opportunity to feed journalists with information and events. Political actors, in particular, adopt the "going public" strategy (Ibid., pp. 158-159) to keep their appearance and agenda in the news (Franklin 2003; Cook 2006). Attempting to secure their place as "primary definers" (Hall et al. 1978), some political players deploy the 'media strategy' such as appointing professional public relations officers or press counsellors to liaise with journalists, to plan and organise publicity events, or sometimes to 'spin' the story to create positive feedback (McNair 1998, pp. 147-153; Schudson 2003, p. 147; Campbell 2004, pp. 88-92). The employment of such schemes further widens the gap between the elite sources and the resource-poor ones, as demonstrated in the case of the Gulf War, where news media were fed with information from the state and military sources, leading to news coverage that underpins hegemonic views of the elites (Wolfsfeld 1997).

As suggested by Schudson, as the interaction between journalists and their sources is a "human relation" – the boundary between the two sides based on the occupational ethics and objectivity principle, can sometimes be overridden by the frequent acquaintance and intimacy. For instance, Morrison and Tumber (1988, cited in Tumber 2004, pp. 191-194) argue that reporters who travelled with the British troops on the Falklands mission became bonded with soldiers with whom they accompanied and inadvertently shared the troops' sentiments and agenda. In covering politics, Schudson cautions the "seduction by proximity to power" (2003, p. 142), in which journalists consider themselves privileged to gain access to political elite sources, and fear if they cannot achieve that goal. McCargo makes similar observations in the case of Thai politics reporting, saying that "in seeking to establish good relationships with news sources, reporters might find that their independence and integrity were compromised" (2000, p. 67). He notes that reporters often face a dilemma when the sources host complementary dinners or parties, or invite them on a 'fact-finding' trip-cum-press junket. By partaking in such events, journalists are considered to owe the host a favour or to indirectly take bribe. But to deny such invitation, news professionals risk themselves of weakening the affiliation with sources, or of missing out on valuable information. While concurring that news workers may constantly be "seduced" by benefits from the intimacy with their sources, journalist and researcher Jennifer Hasty argues that, occupational ideology and obligations will evoke professional reflexivity and prompt journalists to scrutinise their sources despite the propinquity (2010, p. 147).

In summary, the play of power between journalists and their sources resembles the walk on a tightrope. Journalists feel that it is crucial for them to strike a balance in gleaning information from the sources while preserving their accessibility without compromising their occupational ethics and ideology. A slip can jeopardise either their source relations or their career, or both. Under the conditions of political conflict and violence, journalists will find themselves in an even more precarious position, as their sources will be varied, potentially on the opposite end of socio-economic and ideological spectrum. How news workers cultivate and select their sources is, therefore, essential in the investigation of news media's role in political conflict.

4.4 Outside looking in: the external forces that shape news production

The final point to be explored in the sociology of news production is similar to what Reese (2001) calls the 'extra media' factors, which looks at influences of other institutions on the

news manufacturing process. This section examines the influence of political players and economic imperatives on news production.

4.4.1. Political engagement: the power play between news media and political actors

As previously discussed in the chapter on news media and political conflict/violence, the nature of the political system, political culture, and the changes of elite consensus in which news media operate can all play a crucial part in shaping journalists' roles (Hallin 1989; Wolfsfeld 1997; McNair 1998; Wolfsfeld 2004). The Thai case is no different. McCargo argues that parliamentary politics resembles a rhetorical showdown as opposed to being a serious and critical policy debate. Frequently, the discussions on policy implications or the scrutiny on the state's performance take place outside of parliament chambers, and even carried out by members of the public. As a result, being in the lion's den, parliamentary reporters are more interested in the feisty feuds and conflicts among political parties and factions than the legislative debates (2000, p. 60).

While the political culture may bring about subtle and invisible impact on the journalistic culture, the structural constraint, such as law and regulations imposed on news media, is likely to yield more discernible and immediate corollary and penalty (McNair 1998, pp. 94-97). In Thailand's case, the international press freedom campaigner Freedom House raised concerns over the country's decline in press freedom index for three consecutive years, from 2007 to 2010 (Freedom House 2010). Contributing to the downward trend were the new computer law[3] and the enactment of the State of Emergency Decree.[4] The latter regulation was initially implemented in the southern border provinces to curtail violence in the area, but was later enacted in major cities to curb anti-coup mass demonstrations in 2008 (see more detail in Appendix A). The law permits state authorities to scrutinise and restrict media content that is deemed a threat to national security, a disruption of social order, an instigation of social division, or an insult against the monarchy. An analysis by the global human rights advocacy organisation, the International Commission of Jurists, projects that, the regulation will cause the chilling effect on the press, which contributes to

[3] The Act on Computer Crimes BE 2550 (2007) was enacted on June 10, 2007, with the primary aim to prevent illegal online activities such as identity theft and financial frauds. However, the law is criticised by academics and critics for infringing on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The act stipulates that operators of websites must hold accountability for any content posted on their online – the move which critics see as a "burden of conduit" for news and online forum sites, because there are other regulations, such as libel and lèse majesté laws, for such matters.

[4] The Emergency Decree on the Administration of the State of Emergency BE 2548 (2005) was declared on July 16, 2005.

a major setback in democracy (2005). Coupled with the volatile political climate where media professionals become targets of physical attacks, the legal limitations render some journalists and news organisations extremely cautious about their reports, or even exercise self-censorship, to avoid potential disruption in their operation or being castigated by their sources and readers (Thai Journalists Association 2010).

These observations are in line with the 2010 report conducted by the media reform advocate Campaign for Popular Media Reform (CPMR). Surveying the impact of the state of emergency law on civic community radio operation during the national political crisis in 2010, the agency finds that the practitioners encountered many forms of pressures, for example, receiving warnings from the state about community radio's content presentation, being "invited" to meet with authorities who asked them to cooperate with the government, and being summoned to local police station and asked to sign an memorandum of understanding to regulate their content. Because of their uncertain legal status at that time,[5] most civic community operators steered clear from political content and employed self-censorship. Meanwhile, 86 stations which were found to violate the law were shut down, and 35 operators faced legal actions (Campaign for Popular Media Reform 2010).

The final point to be made about the political influence on news production is journalists' ambiguous status of being an official member of the news institution and an informal one of the political establishment, similar to what Pharr (1996) describes in her 'media as trickster' argument (see Footnote 2 above). As discussed in Chapter 3 and again in the section on news access, the relationship between journalists and the political players that they report is a symbiotic and dialectical one. There are also occasions where their worlds overlap or even unite, causing journalists to question their identity and role.

McCargo argues that, ironically, reporters are "double outsiders" who do not belong completely to either the journalistic or the political world. He remarks that reporters, especially junior ones, hold "only peripheral or associate membership of the institutions

[5] The operation of community radio in Thailand begun since 2001, catering mostly to grassroots listeners in rural areas; however, at that time, the sector was not regulated due to the absence of a broadcast regulator (see more detail about the development and regulation of civic community radio in Thailand in Ramasoota, P. 2013. *Community radio in Thailand: from media reform to a sustainable regulatory framework*. Bangkok: Heinrich Boell Stiftung and Thai Media Policy Center). In 2010, community radios became regulated by the National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) who had to take on this duty because the official broadcast regulator, as stipulated by the organic law of the constitution, had not been established. In this interim period, community radio stations must be registered with the NTC in order to receive a temporary broadcast licence to guarantee their legal status. If any station failed to do so, or as discussed in the CPMR report, violated the state of emergency law, the station's legal status would be terminated.

they covered, and occupying a peripheral or marginal position within the newspaper itself" (2000, p. 45), because the influential works are assigned to newsroom-based senior editors and columnists. Nevertheless, the attempt to include journalists as a core member in the political world is strong and appealing. Schudson remarks that in the case of American journalism, political reporters find it difficult to position themselves when granted the privileged entry to off-the-record parties and briefings hosted by politicians. As reporter Joan Vennochi puts it, "Walking the line between working press and elite partygoer was just too hard to do. I went, I saw, and I wanted to write. At the same time, I went, I drank wine, and I wanted to be an insider" (August 19, 2000 cited in Schudson 2003, p. 141). McCargo raises similar cases where Thai politicians would foster a connection with reporters, the selected few, with whom they share exclusive information and explicitly express their trust (2000, p. 68). As journalists are pushed aside in what appears to be their own territory, they may find being taken in by the world of politics more enticing and rewarding, which can subsequently result in them inadvertently serving the politicians' agenda, or eventually jumping ship and crossing over for a full membership.

4.4.2. Media ownership and market demands: the newsroom's "Church versus State" conundrum

Last to be discussed is the influence of economic imperatives on the news production. Being a business entity that produces cultural commodities, most mainstream news outlets are prone to commercial interference to varied extents. Meanwhile, those who opt for the non-profit route still find themselves pressured by the financial demand and competition for audience. One way or another, news organisations are affected by financial demands, and such pressures can prompt the media to play a part that is detrimental to the democratic process (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Bourdieu 1996; Siriyuwasak 1998; McChesney 2002).

The ownership of news media plays a crucial role in shaping the agency's news presentation via structural mechanisms such as editorial policies and budget allocation (McNair 1998, pp. 102-109). McCargo's study concurs that the Thai newspaper owners' attitude towards political actors or interest groups, and their interference in news content, presentation, and planning do not only pose a significant effect on the news production, but also on the political debate (2000, p. 170). In line with McChesney (2002), the studies by Thai academics on the political economy structure of Thai broadcast media indicate that the economic success of broadcast operators does not necessarily guarantee the informed citizenry or public participation (Siriyuwasak 1998; Tangkijwanich 2003). While enhancing

broadcasters' bargaining power with advertisers to secure lucrative investment for programme production and distribution, the existing structure, in which the state holds the absolute ownership of broadcast frequencies,[6] does little to encourage the public in political engagement or challenges.

Some scholars are critical of the competition for market and audience share among news organisations, particularly the trend of "infotainment" and "tabloidization". Somkiat Tangkijwanich (2003) points out an increase of entertainment programme and the decline in education, documentary, and commentary programmes in Thai commercial television in the beginning of the new millennium. In terms of journalistic programmes, Media Monitor could also observe "drama" characteristics in the election news coverage (2007a). The media watchdog further explains that through communicative architecture such as the casual and open news-talk programmes, television news coverage emphasises on the sensational elements of the election process such as conflict and competition among parties and their campaign gimmicks and strategies rather than the policies and promises. As for the Thai press, Nuannoi Treerat and Thanee Chaiwat (2004) indicate that the oligopoly market structure leads to a competition where newspapers exercise the economies of scale principle to reduce production costs. More importantly, the competition to garner the largest market share and highest readership prompts newspapers to focus on the speed instead of the quality of their reports.

Regardless of the criticism, Schudson remarks that the communicative features of infotainment may not necessarily lead to the downfall of political scrutiny and healthy democracy. Raising the case of Latin American television journalism, he argues that despite its soap-like narrative and personality-focused style presentation, the entertainment-oriented news programmes give rise to hard-hitting investigative journalism which exposes political misconducts (2003, p. 100). In the end, he argues that commercial interference is more welcoming than that of the state because 'the commercialization of the news media in the long run helped shield news production from government control and later helped liberate it from the sway of political parties" (2003, p. 132). Ultimately, it is the financial

[6] Since the inception of broadcast media operation in Thailand in the 1940s, the broadcast frequencies were allocated to the state and military agencies, who then gave out concessions to private media companies to make use of them. However, thanks to the media reform movement which started in 1992, the 1997 Constitution became the first charter to acknowledge that the frequencies are national communication resources and should be distributed for public interests. The charter also stipulated a new arrangement of frequency allocation: 40 per cent to the state and private sectors each, and 20 per cent to the public (civil) sector. Although the 1997 Constitution was abolished following the military coup in late 2006, its organic laws are still intact, and the 2007 Constitution also maintains the essence of the preceding charter regarding this issue. The new frequency allocation process is still ongoing in 2013 (at the time of writing).

factor that facilitates the development of journalistic professionalism and news commodification.

4.5 Conclusion

Following the discussions on the complexity and intense discursive contestation of Thailand's southern insurgency in Chapter 2, and the relations between news media and political conflict/violence in Chapter 3, this chapter further sheds light on the rationales and forces behind news media's decision and action in conflict mediatization. Using the sociology of journalism as the analytical framework, this chapter highlights key determinants that have significant influences on journalism's role in political conflict/violence, ranging from intra-institutional factors, such as professional values and practices, to inter-institutional factors, for example, the relation with news sources, fellow news organisations, political actors, and economic determinants. Overall, this chapter has sought to argue that in the study of political conflict reporting, one should analyse the individual level of news practitioners, the organisational level, and the macro level which includes the settings in which journalists operate, because, although with varied degrees, these factors all determine the direction of news media.

Because the dynamic changes and volatility of the Thai political settings are striking features of the southern conflict, the emphasis of this thesis will be on the interplay between journalism and political actors, and how news professionals and organisations adapt their practices and principles to the changing conditions during the course of the conflict. Regardless, relevant factors such as individual backgrounds and economic constraints will also be considered, although not as extensively, to give a comprehensive picture of the Thai journalism's roles.

Chapter 5

Statement of Aims and Research Methodology

The literature review section presented three sets of theoretical discussions and debates that together form the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter on Thailand's southern conflict highlighted the nature of this political conflict wherein disparate groups of protagonists are presenting varied, and sometimes opposing, discourses. The competition centres around three prominent discourses: 1) *Crimes and conspiracy*, 2) *Minority's grievance*, and 3) *Malay nationalism and Islamism*. Promoting their principal discourse, protagonists who possess unequal resources also deploy different approaches and tactics towards the southern conflict to win legitimacy and galvanise support for their causes. The subsequent two chapters explicated different aspects of journalism. Chapter 3 focused on the interplay between news media, socio-political environments, and political conflict/violence, while Chapter 4 examined the factors that regularly facilitate, govern, and hinder news operation. Overall, the three chapters have sought to signal the complex arena of conflict in which Thai news media work, and the influence of various and multifaceted conditions brought about by journalistic practices, organisational norms, and the political and economic structures that shape news operation.

This chapter now presents the research questions and the proposed methodology. Divided into two parts, this chapter first lays out the research questions, followed by the elaboration of research methodology in the second part.

5.1 Research questions

As previously stated in Chapter 1, the overarching research question of this thesis aims at exploring the roles that Thai journalism plays in the southern conflict. This key question is divided into two operationalised research questions (RQs). Each query incorporates a list of sub-questions which enable a comprehensive scrutiny of the topic in question, as follows:

RQ 1: How is the southern conflict represented in the news coverage?

This question explores how the news professionals interpret the southern conflict by examining the representation of this problem in news coverage. The investigation also considers the variations of Thai journalistic presentations as well as the dynamic of discursive contention concerning the conflict, as shown in the following sub-questions.

1.1. What are the dominating discourses and which are more marginalised or silenced?

1.2. Which protagonist(s) dominate the news representation and news access?

1.3. In which circumstances do the challengers of dominating discourses emerge?

RQ 2: What are the practices of Thai journalism in the southern conflict reporting?

This question focuses on the influence of the news professional culture, organisational conventions, and media environment on Thai news media's southern conflict reporting. Additionally, the aim is to examine the dynamic and diversity of Thai news media ecology during the seven-year review period, as well as the relationship between journalism and the changing socio-political contexts. The following points will be investigated.

2.1. How do the different journalistic practices and news organisational cultures influence southern conflict reporting?

2.2. How does the dynamic nature of the southern conflict, political settings, and other social pressures affect the news media's operation and performance?

2.3. How do the opportunities for professional reflexivity and unconventional practices and presentations emerge?

5.2 Research methodology

Three sets of research methods were adopted to answer the RQs: content analysis, news framing analysis, and ethnographic studies of news production. The use of "frames" and "news framing analysis" in this study refers to the analytical methodology which is carried out to uncover the discourses embedded in the news content. Meanwhile, "discourse", as discussed in Chapter 2, is used in reference to the wider socially-prevailing beliefs or ideologies that cohere together as recognisable perspectives. Essentially, "frames" are considered here as contributing components of a discourse; different frames may culminate in supporting one discourse. As a result, the discovery of frames used to report about a phenomenon can pave the way for the investigation of discourse construction (Hertog and McLeod 2001; D'Angelo 2002; Reese 2010, p. 20).

The content analysis was used to examine news reports about the southern conflict. The objective was to identify the frequency of themes, labels on the phenomenon and antagonists, and sources in news content. The news framing analysis was employed in complementary ways with the content analysis to further investigate the aspects of news reports in more detail. Together, these two methods elucidate the representation of the conflict, the predominant discourses, and possibly the dynamic of discursive patterns in

news coverage. Lastly, the ethnographic studies of news production were adopted to explore journalists' work environments. The methodology was expected to identify the rationales behind the journalists' actions and decisions, and the factors influencing their operations. The following subsections delineate the research's methodological approaches.

5.2.1. Content analysis

This method was used to primarily answer RQ 1 concerning the news representation of southern conflict. Using the content analysis, I looked for the frequency and pattern of themes, labels on the phenomenon and the antagonists, and the source attribution in the southern conflict reports.

5.2.1.1. The unit of analysis and data sampling

As the primary objective of this research is to explore the complexity and dynamic of Thai journalism in southern conflict reporting, I selected four media outlets of different platforms and organisational natures, and their reports during the course of seven years (2004 to 2010) to observe the variations in news content, if any, across time. These media outlets were chosen for their continuous reports of the conflict (see the profile and background of these organisations in Appendix B). The selected organisations are: 1) the political news-oriented national broadsheet Matichon Daily[1] (newspaper, hereafter *Matichon*), 2) the public service broadcaster Thai PBS[2] (television), 3) the popular online news site ASTV Manager Online[3] (website, hereafter *Manager*), and 4) the alternative southern conflict-focused Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk (website, hereafter *Isara*).

The newspaper sample was collected from any sections of the print edition, whereas the television sample was collected from two primetime news bulletins (at noon and 7 p.m.) for practicality reasons[4]. The online news sample was collected from stories posted on the

[1] According to the Matichon Group Co.ltd.'s report to the Securities and Exchange Commission of Thailand, the company claimed the sale of Matichon daily was 500,000 copies per day.

[2] The rating company AC Nielsen ranked Thai PBS' news bulletins among the station's ten most viewed programmes in the 2010 ratings survey. The station's 12 p.m. bulletin also ranked third among those of six free terrestrial television stations.

[3] According to Truehits, a web statistics tracking state enterprise, the Manager Online website has been ranked the most visited online news website since 2003, with approximately two million viewers per day. The news agency has also been listed among the ten most-visited Thai websites since 2003.

[4] *Thai PBS* produces six news bulletins per day: 1) 6 a.m. (Morning News), 2) 9 a.m., 3) noon (Midday News), 4) 5 p.m., 5) 7 p.m. (Evening News), and 6) 11.45 p.m. (Late Night News). The Morning News and Evening News bulletins are 1 hour and 30 minutes. The Midday News lasts 1 hour, and the Late Night News lasts 45

dates selected. The sample was collected from the organisations' archive, subscribed news database (IQ NewsClip), and online archive service (Matichon e-Library and ASTV Manager Group's myfirstinfo.com).

A rolling random sampling was deployed to select the stories that were published/ broadcast/posted from January 2004 to December 2010. Starting with the first week of January 2004, I chose one day from every two weeks over the course of seven years. This means, Monday would be chosen for the first week, then Tuesday for the second week selected, and so forth. The arrangement resulted in the examination of stories in 25 to 27 days per year, and 183 days in total (see Appendix C for more detail). Concurrently, the keyword search was applied to extract relevant stories and screen out impertinent ones, using the following key terms collectively: 1) three southern border provinces, and/or southern border[5], 2) unrest[6], 3) insurgency[7], 4) violence[8], 5) conflict[9], 6) terrorism.[10] This sampling system helped to ensure representativeness and manageability within the selected samples.

In summary, 793 stories were selected: 260 from *Matichon*, 59 from *Thai PBS*, 246 from *Manager*, and 228 from *Isara*.[11] The sample was then examined and coded by me using the coding scheme. Descriptive statistics would be used to present the findings. It should be

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minutes. The 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. bulletins are 30 minutes each. Additionally, there is a top-of-the-hour three-minute news brief five times a day, at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 2 p.m., 3 p.m., and 4 p.m. The primetime Midday and Evening News programmes generally recap the day's events. Apart from re-using and re-packaging the reports which have already been aired in other bulletins, the programmes also present first-run stories. As a result, the data collected from these two programmes sufficiently represent that day's coverage. Also, to collect every piece of reports on the same day would render repetitive data that did not serve the purpose of this study.

[5] The key word search was conducted in Thai language, using the terms three southern border provinces (สามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ [*saam jang wat chai daen tai*]) and southern border (ชายแดนภาคใต้ [*chai daen tai*]).

[6] ความไม่สงบ [*khwaam mai sa ngop*]

[7] การก่อความไม่สงบ [*kaan ko khwaam mai sa ngop*]

[8] ความรุนแรง [*khwaam run raeng*]

[9] ความขัดแย้ง [*khwaam khad yaeng*]

[10] การก่อการร้าย [*kaan ko kaan rai*]

[11] I faced some difficulties in accessing certain news database due to the organisation's incomplete archive, and, in the case of *Thai PBS*, the copyrights limitation to gain access to materials owned by ITV, its predecessor. As a result, the TV station sample comprised the selected stories from 2009 to 2010. Only the *Matichon* sample was available for all reviewed period, and the *Manager* sample in 2004 and 2005 might be incomplete. In the case of *Isara*, because the outlet was established in mid 2005, the sample from 2004 and early 2005 was unavailable.

noted that this research does not aim at comparing the coverage of each news outlet, but it focuses more on the overall outlook of Thai journalism. Therefore, despite the uneven sample sizes among the four organisations selected, the representativeness of the entire sample is still achieved. Firstly, this is because, apart from *Thai PBS*' content, the sample sizes of the remaining three organisations were in the same range. Moreover, when examined individually, the findings from the sample of different news organisations show similar patterns in key categories, namely the frequency of themes, news frames, and the types and specialisations of news sources, with minimal dissimilarities. Meanwhile, the significant discrepancies, for example, the locations of sources, the trajectories of story length, and the number of sources, could be explained by the differences of each organisation's news production structures, which will be discussed in Chapter 6 and 7. In all, despite the limited data, the content and news framing analysis findings give an overview of the representation of the southern conflict that is adequate for the subsequent ethnographic studies, which is the thesis' emphasis. Additionally, these results corresponded with the journalism practices carried out by the organisations selected.

5.2.1.2. The coding scheme

The coding scheme was designed to analyse the frequency of presentation formats, topics, labels, and source attribution in news contents. The coding scheme comprises four parts (see the coding sheet in Appendix D). In the first part, the story's general information, including the placement, length, topic, and presentation format was registered. The second part of the coding scheme considers the source attribution, to take note of the frequency and characteristics of sources in the coverage. The characteristics of source are classified into three categories: 1) the types of sources, 2) the sources' expertise and specialisation, and 3) the sources' locations or bases. The third part considers the frequency of labels used to identify the phenomenon and the antagonists for lexical choices analysis (see, for example, Picard and Adams 1991; Simmon 1991; The Guardian, 23 January 1991, cited in Cottle 2006, pp. 81-82; Kuypers 2010). The final part examines the visual presentation used to accompany the reports. How the visual presentation is analysed will be discussed in Chapter 6.

5.2.2. News framing analysis

The objective of this method is to further scrutinise the discursive patterns appeared in the news content in detail. More importantly, by presenting the detailed illustration of *how* discourses are presented in news stories, this analysis serves as a springboard for the

subsequent ethnographic studies of news production that seek to answer *why* such discourses are selected and redistributed.

As stated earlier, I chose the news framing analysis as a tool to examine the formation and promotion of discourses in news contents instead of employing linguistic or critical discourse analyses. The reason is because this approach generally allows researchers to evoke the pragmatic and professional aspects of a news organisation, which concurs with the ensuing ethnographic fieldwork and the sociology of news production framework used in this thesis. Previous studies have shown that journalists may not employ certain news frames because they are discursively- or politically-motivated or expressive, but rather because those frames conform to or are shaped by the pragmatics and logistics of news production (Gitlin 1980; Wolfsfeld 1997).

The concept of frames and framing has been defined by several scholars (see, for example, Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Tankard et al. 1991; Entman 1993; Reese 2001a; D'Angelo 2002; Reese 2007). Stephen Reese offers an operationalised definition which concludes that frames function as "*organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world" (2001a, p.5, original emphasis). This notion of frames concurs with Robert Entman's explanation, which implies that frames can shape how an individual and society see a problem, identify its causes, morally evaluate the situation, and propose remedy to the problem (1993, p. 52). The framing process, such as the inclusion or exclusion of vocabulary, actors, and visual usages, can make certain aspects of a phenomenon salient or marginalized. In similar vein, William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani operationalise the framing process by identifying five elements of framing devices: 1) metaphors, 2) exemplars, 3) catchphrases, 4) depictions, and 5) visual images, and three elements of reasoning devices: 1) roots, 2) consequences and 3) appeals to principles (1989, pp. 3-4).

Because the use of frames in news contents indicates the symbolic values and meanings that news media assign to the events, the news frame research tradition often focuses on the media effect on cognitive responses of audience (see, for example, Gamson and Modigliani ibid.; Iyengar 1991) and on the public opinion and public agenda (see, for example, Norris et al. 2003). A number of studies also connote the influences of cultural and political milieu on journalists' frame selection and judgment (Hertog and McLeod 2001; Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008; Lewis and Reese 2009; Reese 2010). Similarly, Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just (2003) formulate the *framing model*, explaining the

process in which a news frame is generated. They argue that while the disparate nature of news organisations can contribute to the different news frames (Jasperson and El-Kikhia 2003), other societal processes such as public opinion and policy agenda also take part in shaping the frames.

In this thesis, the news framing analysis was employed to identify the news frames in the southern conflict reports and determine how these frames support the contending discourses concerning the southern conflict. Because the southern conflict reports covered a wide range of topics (see the coding sheet's topic categories in Appendix D, and more discussions on news frames in Chapter 6), I did not use a pre-defined set of news frames to examine the sample. Instead, I adopted the inductive framing analysis, recommended by Baldwin Van Gorp (2010, p. 91), so that the analysis was flexible to discover the less prevalent and emerging frames resulted from the shifts in political discourses during the seven year review period.

Because of the large sample size, I followed Jörg Matthes and Matthias Kohring (2008)'s *hierarchical cluster analysis* approach to first classify the sample into four broad categories. I used Robert Entman's definition of frame elements: *problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation,* and *treatment recommendation* (1993, p. 52 original emphasis) as a starting point. This means of analysis not only facilitated the classification of news that contained a wide range of topics, but also corresponded with how the three discourses concerning the southern conflict were distinguished from one another in Chapter 2. The four meta-frames were 1) *causes of conflict and violence*, 2) *uses of force*, 3) *repercussions of conflict and violence*, and 4) *solutions*, as explained in Table 5.1. Going through every piece of sample, I determined which meta-frame group a story belonged to. For stories that contained more than one meta-frame, the analysis would be based on the primary frame – meaning the one that was mentioned first. After the sample was categorised into different meta-frame groups, it would be further examined and put into the sub-categories with ones that highlighted similar contexts, such as *retaliation against state authority* or *impact on stakeholders*. Then, I would examine how the stories were reported, for example, positive and supportive, or negative and critical (see the components of frames in Appendix G). Henceforth, I would then analyse the frames discovered and present the findings.

Table 5.1 The four meta-frames for the news framing analysis

Meta-frames	Descriptions
1. *Causes of conflict and violence*	Explanations on what caused the conflict and who instigated violence in the region
2. *Uses of force*	Aggressive actions instigated by both unknown aggressors and state officials. These include incidents launched by perpetrators such as shooting and bombing attacks, and those caused by state authorities, for example, searches, arrests, clashes with suspects, and abuses of power.
3. *Repercussions of conflict and violence*	Situations that ensued as the results of conflict and violence, for example, administrative changes and investigations into the responsible parties, contingency security and legal measures, impact on southern communities and victims, and public reactions towards the problems.
4. *Solutions*	Policies, instruments, and proposals to solve the conflict, for example, political reform, security measures, dialogues, reconciliation, and public involvement.

In addition, the analysis considered the formatting devices, which was noted in the first and forth parts of the coding sheet such as the story placement, the length, the edited photographs and visuals (Van Gorp 2010, p. 99), in order to determine the salient aspects of the southern conflict in the news coverage.

5.2.3. Ethnographic studies of news production

The ethnographic studies of news production have been encouraged by many scholars as a means to elucidate on what happens behind the scene in the news manufacturing processes, and to form epistemological explanations of these obscure procedures to connect "the structural characteristics of media systems to the production of journalistic discourse about politics" (Benson 2004). Most importantly, with the fast-changing practices in newsroom and field reporting, the expansion of news ecology, and the dynamic socio-political contingencies, ethnography allows flexible research expediency and provides insightful perspectives on how journalists reflect upon and adjust themselves to these variances and transformations (Boyer and Hannerz 2006; Cottle 2007; Paterson 2008; Wahl-Jorgensen 2010). In this study, I carried out ethnographic studies, with an emphasis

on participant observation, and in-depth interview, along with documentary research of newsroom documents concerning southern conflict reporting.

The use of ethnographic studies of news production was also a personal reason. Firstly, this methodological approach corresponded with the thesis' theoretical framework that aimed at peeling the multifaceted layers of determinants influencing news production. Secondly and more importantly, as a former journalist, I felt that field research could unveil journalistic routines and organisational cultures, and "dispel any undue resort to 'conspiracy theories' in describing news production," as Schlesinger puts it (1980, pp. 363-4 cited in Deacon et al 2007, p. 255). Such a research design would allow me to see the subjects in their natural settings to best glean relevant and rich empirical data without excessive intrusion.

Notwithstanding the advantages of ethnographic approach, I acknowledged the blind spots that the methodology might create, particularly ones stemmed from my personal and professional backgrounds, as well as my perspectives on Thai politics and the southern conflict. My personal and vocational experiences associated very little with the far South. I am a Buddhist Thai living in Bangkok and travelled to Pattani once more than a decade ago. As for my professional experience, I worked as a reporter, writer, and news editor at three Bangkok-based television stations, and a coordinator for Asian broadcast affiliates at an American satellite news network in separate occasions. I became a journalism lecturer at a Bangkok-based university in October 2005, and since then participated in several skills training and academic projects organised by the Thai Journalists Association. Meanwhile, my stance on the political spectrum may be described as centre-left (social liberalism). Nonetheless, I believe that the preservation of the monarchy is essential for the Thai nation, although the institution should ensure transparency by being subject to certain degree of public scrutiny. As for my views on the southern conflict, although I do not entirely dismiss the influence of politics and vested interest groups, as well as Islamism, in the violence, I believe the root cause of the problem is the clash of ideologies between the Thai nation-state constructs and the Malay nationalism. Thus, the solutions should concern decentralisation that empowers the locals' rights and enhances the recognition of Malay Muslim identity. I feel that public engagement, deliberative process, and peace dialogues must take place to bring about solutions.

Notwithstanding my disassociation with the conflict and political presupposition, by studying the cautions raised by prominent researchers (see, for example, Elliot 1971, Gans

1979 cited in Deacon et al 2007, pp. 260-262, Schlesinger 1980 cited in Deacon et al 2007: pp. 255-256), as well as by thoroughly and critically examining the disparate discourses concerning the southern conflict as demonstrated in Chapter 2, I became sensitised to the complexity of the discursive contention. Having this analytical lens, I was able to locate my stance in the conflict's discursive spectrum, became aware when my personal views were to interfere with the analysis, and prevent them from doing so.

Using the ethnographic studies, which examine the impacts of political and social institutions and professional and organisational factors on news production processes (Tuchman 1972, 1973; Altheide 1976; Gitlin 1980; Schlesinger 1987; Ryfe 2009), I observed how reporters, production crew, and news managers in the four selected media organisations produced the southern conflict coverage. Corresponding with the rationale in the content and news framing analysis sample selection, these media organisations were chosen for their constant and continuous coverage of the southern conflict, as well as their distinctive organisational principles and settings. Additionally, these organisations underwent several major structural changes (see Appendix B for detail), which would provide useful contexts for discussions on the dynamic of journalistic practices.

Similar to the limited access to news database, I was not granted the same degree of accessibility to all selected news organisations. The duration of news production observation ranged from five to ten days, depending on each organisation's consent for accessibility. The *Matichon* daily only permitted an interview with its Regional News editor, whereas public service broadcaster *Thai PBS* allowed me to observe the daily editorial meetings and production process of its news bulletins. *Manager* consented to the observation of its southern office, but not at the Bangkok headquarters. Lastly, the *Isara*'s crew allowed me to accompany them on their newsgathering trip in the three southern border provinces. Despite the limited access at each media outlets, I was still able to observe the news production process from the beginning to the end, and interview people involved in southern conflict reporting at many levels.

The objects of participant observation included the actions in the newsroom and on location. The observation also entailed informal interviews with miscellaneous news workers, such as desk editors, daily producers, reporters, and camera persons, as well as sources. Before carrying out the ethnographic studies, I contacted the responsible people at these organisations who could authorise and coordinate for the approval of my observation, such as the station manager and managing editor. At this stage, the

correspondence with the Bangkok-based headquarters tended to be formal and procedural, whereas the communication with the local news workers was more casual and spontaneous. Moreover, while I made arrangements with some southern journalists prior to travelling to the region, I also relied on the two *Isara* reporters based in Pattani and the chief of *Manager*'s southern news centre to help coordinate with local reporters with whom they are better acquainted. At the *Thai PBS* newsroom, a chief editor, whom I knew personally, was assigned to be my coordinator. She then introduced me to staff in different departments and brought me to the first editorial meeting, so that I could later go around the newsroom, observe the processes, and ask people about their works independently.[12] In the South, I was attached to the *Isara* news team most of the time due to my unfamiliarity with the area and for safety reasons. Although my independence might be compromised by these constraints, I was able to gather a wide array of data on the views and news production practices from various journalists, which were sufficient for the analysis and triangulation.

Additional in-depth interviews with news workers of the selected organisations and those from other media outlets, purposively selected due to their experience and expertise in the subject, were also conducted for further clarification, reflexivity, and retrospective scrutiny of the performances carried out by them and their peers (see Appendix E for the list of in-depth interviewees). The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to enable interviewees to elaborate on their answers, and allow for flexible and follow-up questions (see Appendix F for the list of the topics of in-depth interviews). The interviews were face-to-face, and all but two interviews were recorded.[13] Observation notes and interview transcripts were used for the analysis, along with relevant documents and digital files, for example, newsroom memo, news bulletin rundowns, scripts, video and audio files of the stories, image files, etc. The analysis is based on the original language of conversation and materials, and the relevant excerpts were translated into English in the presentation of research findings and discussions.

[12] During the study period at *Thai PBS*, I observed and talked with news producers, editors and writers at the Regional News and Political News desks who are responsible for stories pertinent to the southern conflict. Additionally, I talked to a News Department manager who oversees the newsroom's administration and strategic planning. The conversation provided me with a better grasp of the newsroom structure and hierarchy, as well as the internal power play.

[13] Two interviewees, a senior reporter of an English-language newspaper – the organisation that was not selected for this study, and a freelance media producer/trainer, were more comfortable with casual interview in which the conversation was not audio-recorded, but notes could be taken.

Similar to the limited access to news database, I was not granted the same degree of accessibility to all selected news organisations. The *Matichon* daily only permitted an interview with its Regional News editor, whereas public service broadcaster *Thai PBS* allowed me to observe the daily editorial meetings and production process of its news bulletins. *Manager* consented to the observation of its southern office, but not at the Bangkok headquarters. Lastly, the *Isara*'s crew allowed me to accompany them on their newsgathering trip in the three southern border provinces. Despite the limited access at each media outlets, I was still able to observe the news production process from the beginning to the end, and interview people involved in southern conflict reporting at many levels.

5.3 Conclusion

Using the research methodology laid out above, this thesis seeks to bring together the analytical perspectives from two of the three news production research traditions as identified by Schudson (1991 cited in Tuchman 2002, pp. 81-89): *political economy* and *textual studies*. This mixed-method design nevertheless enabled me to examine three key dimensions of the news production: "its political-economic preconditions, its organizational enactment, and its textual articulation" (Tuchman 2002, p. 88), sufficient to form a comprehensive analysis and understanding of the roles of Thai journalism in conflict reporting and mediatization.

Chapter 6

The representation of the southern conflict in news content

This chapter sets out to provide answers to the first RQ – that is, how the southern conflict is represented by the Thai news organisations. By examining the news content produced by four media outlets, the analysis reveals the dominant themes and preferred sources in the coverage, which also indicate the news media's inclination towards and marginalisation of the political discourses used to explain the conflict.

The chapter is presented in five sections. The first section discusses the news themes, frames, and labels on the southern conflict and antagonists. The second part examines source attribution in the coverage. The third section explores the presentation formats used in southern conflict reporting and the trends of coverage during the seven-year review period. The forth section looks at the influence of the news ecology's diversity, from media platforms to organisational principles, on southern conflict reporting. The final section then concludes this chapter with key arguments derived from the findings.

6.1 The volatile deep South: the news themes and frames in the southern conflict coverage

Having reviewed the prominent discourses and the complex discursive contention in Chapter 2, this chapter continues with the analysis of headlines and anchor introductions[1] in the case of broadcast news sample to identify the dominant news themes, frames, and labels on the conflict and antagonists. The analysis focuses on the headlines and introductions, but not the entire news stories, because these elements sufficiently indicate what journalists consider the story's main and most important point. In this sense, the headlines and introductions elucidate journalists' preference towards certain explanations of a phenomenon, compelling them to highlight such an aspect and downplay other details (Van Dijk 1988).

This section is divided into two subsections: the first presenting the analysis of themes and news frames, and the second examining the labels that news organisations used to describe the conflict and antagonists.

[1] Some stories from *Thai PBS* were presented without an on-screen headline caption. The analysis was then based on the anchor introductions of these stories.

6.1.1. The themes in the southern conflict coverage

The headline and introduction topics, as listed in the coding sheet (see Appendix D), are categorised into three thematic groups: 1) *governance and politics*,[2] 2) *security and public order*,[3] and 3) *socio-economy and culture*.[4] As Figure 6.1 illustrates, the most highlighted theme is *security and public order* (47 per cent), for example, stories about attacks, authorities' investigations, suspect arrests, security reinforcement, and the connection between narcotics trade and southern violence. Meanwhile, the *socio-economy and culture* theme scores slightly higher than the *governance and politics* (27 and 26 per cent respectively). Based on this finding, the frequent coverage on security and public order-related issues could signal journalists' support for the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse. However, journalists could argue that these reports are the most frequent because of the constant aggressions in the far South. To not report them would be considered concealing facts from the public.

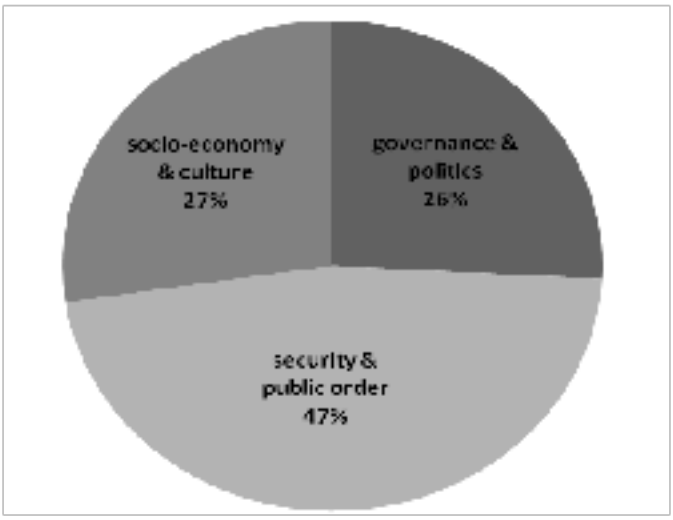

Figure 6.1 An overview of the southern conflict coverage classified by themes

[2] The *governance and politics* theme comprises five topics: 1) policy, which refers to the government's decisions and actions concerning the southern conflict such as policies, measures, and regulations, 2) local & national administration, which refers to actions, measures, and policies carried out by administrative officials such as provincial governors, district chief-officers, village chief, etc., 3) political contention & election campaign, 4) human rights, and 5) international affairs, which refers to the relationship with and other countries and international agencies and forums, as well as their involvement in the southern conflict.

[3] The *security and public order* theme covers six topics: 1) regional and national security, 2) violent incidents, 3) terrorism, which counts the direct attribution to terrorism, insurgency, and unrest, 4) separatism, which refers to the direct attribution to secessionist movements, 5) law enforcement & justice system, which refers to decisions and actions carried out by law enforcement officers (i.e. police, forensic teams, investigators), and those in the justice system, and 6) drugs, which refers to illicit drug trade and trafficking.

[4] The *socio-economy and culture* theme comprises seven topics: 1) religions, 2) religion education, 3) history & culture, 4) education, which refers to the standardised education system, 5) economy, 6) medical & healthcare service, and 7) the impact of conflict on the livelihood of southern community and the general public.

This finding presents an interesting discussion point. When looking at the frequency of topics, as shown in Table 6.1, stories concerning violent incidents are most reported (20 per cent). However, the episodes with direct reference to terrorist or separatist movements are rarely highlighted (both one per cent). The finding suggests that, despite seeing violent incidents in the southern border provinces as part of their routine coverage, journalists often refrain from identifying perpetrators or connecting these occurrences to insurgent movements unless authorities state so. With minimal context and background about the assailants, the depiction of violence in the news coverage gives more support to the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse than the *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourse. The following headlines and anchor introduction demonstrate how an incident was typically reported.

> Southern bandits attack border rangers – railway personnel, killing 3.
> (*Matichon* 19 July 2004) [5]
>
> 4 Buddhist Thais, the last group in Bajo, brutally killed. Victims' children ask for transfer, revealing "death is definite" if continue to stay.
> (*Matichon* 20 September 2010)[6]
>
> Southern bandit(s) snipes villagers in Nara[thiwat], killing 1.
> (*Manager* 15 December 2009) [7]
>
> Last night, perpetrators opened fire on villagers and a village chief in both Pattani and Yala Provinces. Four people died and another two were injured. This made officials specially increase surveillance in the areas.
> (*Thai PBS* 28 August 2010) [8]

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5 โจรใต้ถล่มพราน-คนการรถไฟดับ 3. *Matichon*. 19 July 2004.

6 ฆ่าไทยพุทธกลุ่มสุดท้ายบาเจาะ ลูกเหยื่อขอย้าย เผยอยู่ต่อตายแน่. *Matichon*. 20 September 2010.

7 โจรใต้ซุ่มยิงชาวบ้านในนราฯ ดับ 1. *Manager*. 15 December 2009.

8 เหตุยิงหลายพื้นที่ในปัตตานี [Shootings in several areas in Pattani]. *Thai PBS*. 28 August 2010. 12:00 news bulletin.

Table 6.1 The frequency of topics in the southern conflict coverage

a. *Governance and politics* theme

Topics	**Frequency** (percentage)
Southern policy	18
International affairs	3
Political contention & election campaign	2
Local & national administration	2
Human rights	1
Total	*26*

b. *Security and public order* theme

Topics	**Frequency** (percentage)
Violent incidents	20
Law enforcement & judicial process	13
Local & national security	9
Drugs	3
Separatism	1
Terrorism	1
Total	*47*

c. *Socio-economy and culture* theme

Topics	**Frequency** (percentage)
Impact on livelihood	10
Education	5
Economy	4
History & culture	4
Religions	2
Medical & healthcare services	1
Religious education	1
Total	*27*
Others[9]	1

Total ($n = 793$)	*100*

[9] 'Others' refers to the stories that were not directly pertinent to the conflict, but the southern conflict was mentioned in the coverage. These stories included the life of a respected senior citizen in the region, problems with garbage collection mismanagement in a southern village, the life of a grandmother and her blind grandchild, and a helicopter accident that killed a team of forensic scientists working in the area.

In addition, human rights and religious education, which are key elements of the *Minority's grievance* and the *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses, are among the least reported topics (both 1 per cent), compared to other topics relevant to these discourses, such as impact on livelihood (10 per cent), history and culture (4 per cent), and religions (2 per cent). This finding suggests that, while allowing the interpretations of *Minority's grievance* and *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses to emerge, journalists choose to bring forward the aspects that the general public could sympathise with or relate to over subjects that people may find too abstract or less familiar with, such as human rights or specialised education system. Interestingly, as will be later elaborated, the human rights topic has a better chance of making headlines when the sources of information are influential international figures.

6.1.2. The news frames in the southern conflict coverage

While the frequency of topics presented above gives an overview of the coverage, the news framing analysis, which examines the contexts of headlines and introductions, illustrates how these topics are reported. Based on the meta-frame matrix shown in Chapter 5 (Table 5.1), the analysis reveals the frequency of the news meta-frames in the coverage and teases out the disparate frames that are used to explain the conflict.

As shown in Figure 6.2 below, the *solutions* meta-frame is used most (35 per cent), closely followed by the *uses of force* meta-frame (31 per cent). While the high frequency of the *uses of force* meta-frame buttresses the previous analysis where violent incidents are the most reported topic, it also elicits an interesting point. This discovery shows that, although news organisations primarily report about the bloodshed, they also give considerable attention to the solutions to this enduring conflict. Nonetheless, it will be discussed later that the solutions presented in the news content are varied and supported different discourses. As a result, while signalling news media's intention to help end the conflict, the disparate subcategories in the *solutions* meta-frame also reflect journalists' preference towards dissimilar political perspectives.

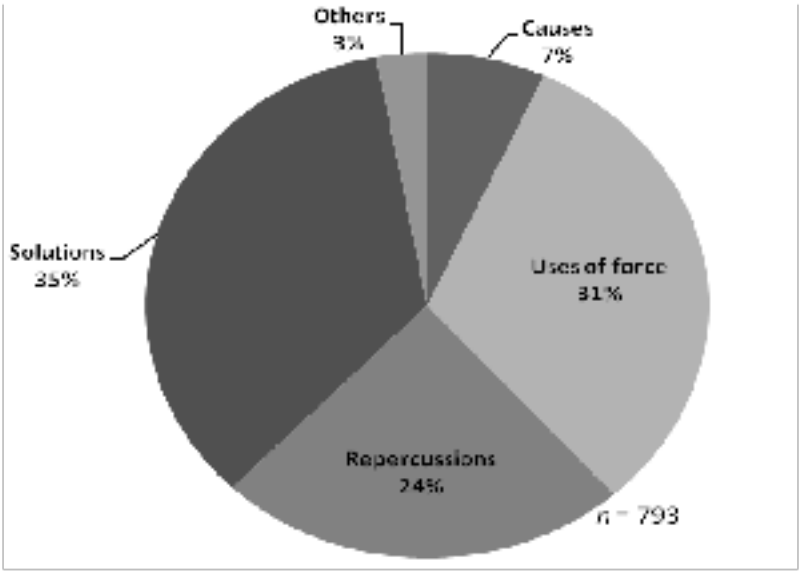

Figure 6.2 The frequency of the four meta-frames in the southern conflict coverage

It is also interesting to see that the reports on the *causes of conflict and violence* are relatively minimal compared to other meta-frames. The small number of reports about the causes of conflict suggests that the news media tend to focus on the problem at hand and how it should be resolved, rather than questioning what caused the trouble. While it can be argued that, in order to bring the conflict to an end, the news media prioritise acknowledging the problem and introducing solutions before investigating the causes. Nevertheless, the insufficient investigation into its causes could also lead to misjudgement and ineffective remedies for this complex and dynamic conflict.

The examination into the disparate frames, which are the components of each meta-frame, further reveals the complexity of the discursive contention of the southern conflict, particularly in the *causes* and *solutions* meta-frames. In the *causes* meta-frame, five frames are used to explain the rationales behind the southern conflict and violence, as shown in Figure 6.3. Three frames, the *retaliation against authority*, *transnational radical Islam*, and *identity politics* give the nuance of resistance against the state (see the detail of frame components in Appendix G). Regardless, these frames underline different reasons for the struggle. The *transnational radical Islam* frame emphasises a link between the southern conflict and the transnational terrorist movements heralding religiosity, while the *identity politics* frame highlights the Malay Muslim's grievance for being deprived of their local identity and rights. However, the *retaliation against authority* frame, which is used most, omit to provide reasons as to why the local armed groups retaliate. Moreover, the fact that the active insurgent groups seldom speak to the media, openly voice their demand, or publicly claim

responsibility for the attacks enables authorities to become the "primary definers" of the southern conflict. This point will be discussed again in Chapter 7 and 8 regarding the state authorities' media strategies and relationship with the journalists. Therefore, the *retaliation against authority* frame renders these insurgents faceless, irrational, and vindictive, rather than the suffering indigenous people who fight for a cause.

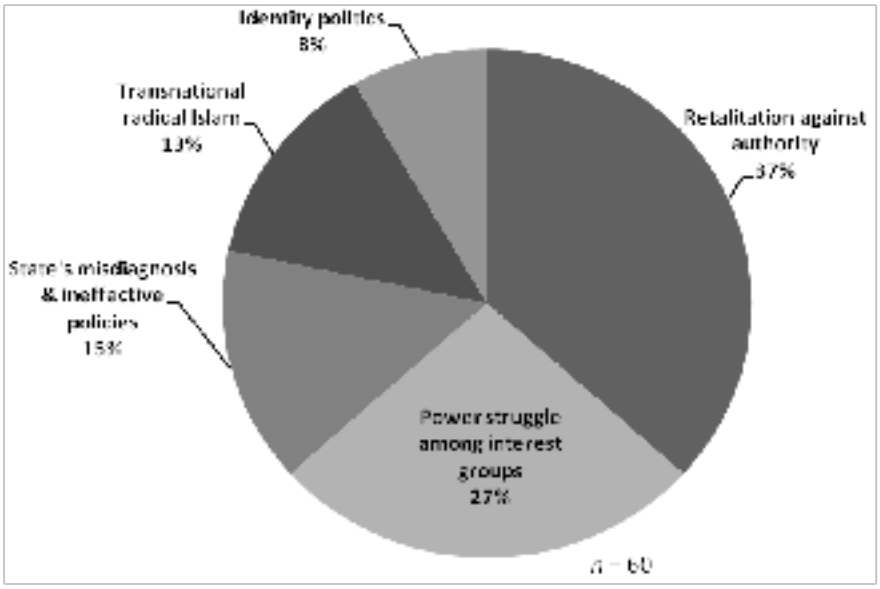

Figure 6.3 The frequency of news frames used to identify the causes of the southern conflict and violence

The two remaining frames approach the southern conflict differently by downplaying the ideological influences suggested in the previous three frames. The *power struggle among interest groups* frame points to influential factions who cause unrest in the far South to maintain their status quo and benefits in the region, such as political power, financial gains through illegal businesses, and social influence. Similar to the *retaliation against authority* frame, this frame sees the conflict as organised criminal activities that need to be eradicated rather than pacified. Meanwhile, the *state's misdiagnosis & ineffective policies* frame scrutinises the government's mishandling of the conflict, for example, inefficient military-led strategies and intelligence, irregular budget spending, state officials' incompetency and mistreatment of the locals, and the power struggle in national politics. Regardless, the frame is based on two grounds: first, the counter-insurgency viewpoint that sees the conflict as a military combat; and second, the political contention perspective that regards politicians' proposals mere rhetorical campaigns rather than productive endeavours. Despite eliciting a critical

stance against state authorities, the frame does not delve into why the conflict was initiated at the first place.

Because the most frequently-used frames are the *retaliation against authority* and *power struggle among interest groups*, the conflict is, therefore, often depicted as crimes committed by clandestine armed groups and local underground syndicates, in line with the military's "additional threats" theory, which was discussed in Chapter 2. The *state's misdiagnosis & ineffective policies* frame questions the government's actions, but the basis of these criticisms remain on the same ground as the previous two frames; that this conflict is a combat situation. As such, the majority of coverage inadvertently supports the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse despite the attribution to separatist groups or the locals' dissent and suffering. On the contrary, explanations on relevant concepts such as the Malay Muslim identity and Islamism are minimal. As a result, the cultural and ideological-based discourses, namely, the *Minority's grievance* and *Malay nationalism and Islamism,* are undermined.

The second meta-frame, *uses of force*, comprises the elements that underpin the aforementioned argument about the generalisation of the agents of violence. Five frames are discovered: 1) *use of force by unknown actors*, 2) *use of force by authorities*, 3) *arrest & suspect surrender*, 4) *search*, and 5) *security reinforcement*.[10] As illustrated in Figure 6.4 below, the *uses of force by unknown actors* frame takes up more than half of the entire coverage amount, while the four latter frames which refer to the actions in which state officials are in command still fall behind. Additionally, these actions are reported in ways that would affirm the state's legitimacy to suppress violence, whereas the strikes launched by unknown antagonists are generally described with a considerable degree of cruelty.

[10] The four latter frames refer to the actions taken by state authorities; nevertheless, they carry different emphases. The *use of force by authorities* frame focuses on the officials' attacks on suspects, which often lead to the deaths of suspects, or officers, or both. The *arrest & suspect surrender* frame emphasises the capture of suspect, and when the suspects surrender or report themselves to state officials. The *search* frame highlights the authorities' examination of an area believed to harbour the suspects, such as the suspect's house and village. The *security reinforcement* frame focuses on the intensification of policing and security measures.

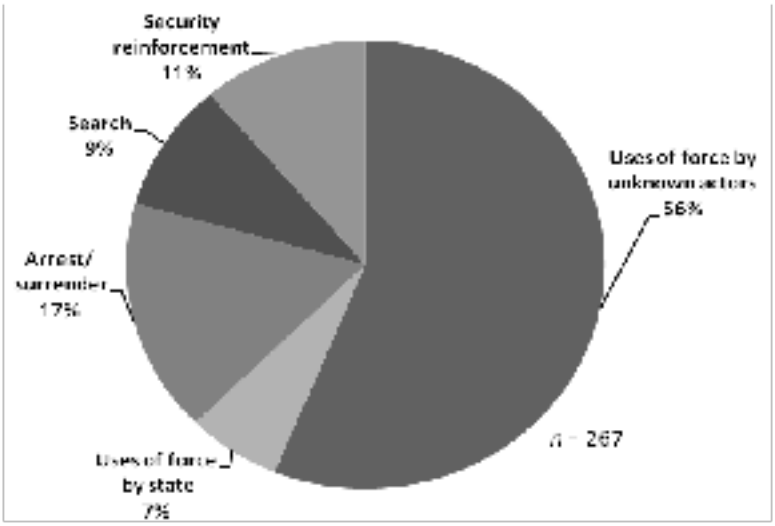

Figure 6.4 The frequency of news frames used to describe the uses of force in southern violence

Moreover, the actions by unknown perpetrators are often depicted in detail, such as, "bomb-attacked then shot in the head", and coloured with adjectives and exclamation marks. On the other hand, the outcome of the state officials' actions is usually highlighted ("annihilated", "smashed"). Table 6.2 illustrates the examples of headlines using such lexicon choices. While it can be argued that the brutality of violence and the loss of life could invoke public sympathy and pressure the authorities to quickly attend to the situation, this kind of portrayal only sheds light on one aspect of the problem. It also allows the authorities' actions to go on unquestioned. Together with the eulogy-style storytelling in the cases where officials were killed and the use of criminological labels on the antagonists which will be discussed later, these frames tend to support the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse rather than the *Minority's grievance* and the *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses.

Table 6.2 The comparison of headlines with different *uses of force* frames

Uses of force by unknown actors	Uses of force by authorities
Extremely cruel. 7 special forces killed. Bomb-attacked then shot in the head. 7 M16s seized and stolen. (*Matichon* 17 July 2007)[11]	Mujahedeen Aiyerweng-attackers cornered at border, arrested – pressed in interrogation for more info. (*Matichon* 17 March 2005)[14]
Southern bandit makes a harsh insult!! 'Wan Nor''s relative sniped. (*Manager* 24 May 2005)[12]	Southern bandit takes fire, injuring 3 border patrol officers. 2 bandits annihilated. (*Manager* 25 January 2009)[15]
Car-bombing in Yaha! A major sacrifices his life with subordinates. (*Isara* 17 July 2009)[13]	Bomb-producing site smashed. 2 suspects captured. (*Isara* 21 April 2008)[16]

The third meta-frame, *repercussions*, comprises three main frames: 1) *governance*, 2) *impact on stakeholders*, and 3) *public reactions* (see the detail of frame components in Appendix G). As shown in Figure 6.5, the *impact on stakeholders* frame is used most to explicate how people involved are affected by the conflict and violence. The *governance* frame, which looks at the administration's and political elites' reactions to the problems as well as the trial and investigations, is also considerably featured. The *public reactions* frame registers how people who are not directly affected by the conflict respond to the problems, for example, by making donations or raising funds for the victims. This frame reflects the sentiment of the general public, as well as influential public figures particularly the royal family, and how they make sense of the southern conflict.

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11 [illegible]. *Matichon*. 17 July 2007.

12 [illegible]". *Manager*. 24 May 2005.

13 [illegible]. *Isara*. 17 July 2009.

14 [illegible]. *Matichon*. 17 March 2005.

15 [illegible] 3 [illegible]2. *Manager*. 25 January 2009.

16 [illegible] 2 [illegible]. *Isara*. 21 April 2008.

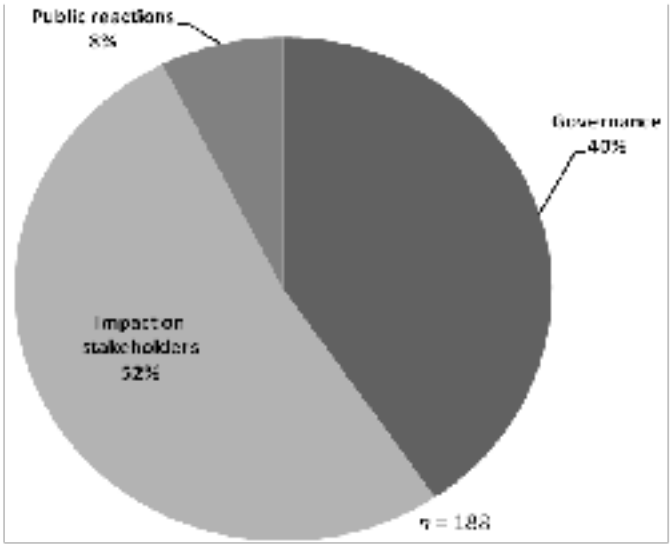

Figure 6.5 The frequency of news frames used to describe the repercussions of southern conflict and violence

The analysis of the stories about the impact of the conflict and violence on the livelihood of community members and people involved produces interesting findings. Among 111 reports relevant to this issue, the majority of coverage centres on the state officials, such as teachers, police officers, and soldiers, as shown in Table 6.3. The stories often tell how these officials perform their duty amidst the hostility and difficulties, and are often honoured for their bravery, devotion, and sacrifice for putting themselves in the violence-prone zone. On the contrary, there are far fewer reports about how local victims, suspects who were later exonerated, and their families deal with the plights. The finding corresponds with a remark made by a news editor who pointed out that as the conflict continues, stories about people's sufferings from conflict and violence become repetitive and considered "old news". For instance, if a family member was killed in a random shooting incident, it would be unlikely for this case to make news. However, the loss of four members from the same family in separate violent incidents could be deemed more newsworthy. Because of such a notion, the coverage concerning the locals' sufferings appears less frequently because these cases are regarded "too common".

Table 6.3 The contexts of headlines and introductions concerning the impact of conflict

Types of contexts	Frequency (percentage)
Heroic acts	24
Impact on state officials	20
Impact on residents' livelihood	19
Impact on victims & families	15
Impact on local education	11
Success stories	7
Impact on suspects & families	4
Total (n = 111)	100

It can be argued that, notwithstanding the primary actors in the news, this type of coverage still underlines the humanitarian aspect of the conflict. Audience could better relate to people's grief when the subjects are singled out from the seas of the sufferers. Nonetheless, a closer look at the description on how people are affected by and cope with the conflict and violence renders quite an interesting contrast. As demonstrated in Table 6.4, while state officials are depicted as courageous and dedicated, the affected locals are often cast as strong-willed people who strive to carry on with their lives, yet powerless. In addition, by featuring state officials individually or in a small group, the coverage seemingly separates the state agents from their institutional attachment and portrays them as a mere human being in stressful situations. Still, in the end, the reports usually link the officials with the professional values and obligations of their institutions, and praise these officials for upholding such merits despite being in life-threatening situations.

This observation will be brought up again in the subsequent chapters, when some reporters who are based in the far South and those who have been following the situations for many years revealed that they sometimes faced a dilemma when assigned to do a profile piece on state officials who were killed in the region. As these journalists explained, there are several episodes in which the officials were killed in a personal conflict. However, the incidents were filed as a result of the unrest, so that police investigators would approach the cases differently from typical criminal acts, and the victims could then earn compensation money. Certain officers who were called hero by the peers for their long and decorated career did not receive the same degree of admiration from the locals. Regardless, the

Bangkok headquarters sees civil servant casualties as newsworthy and deserved a tribute for their sacrifice.

Therefore, collectively, the constant glorifying coverage reinforces the portrayal of state officials as rescuers and protectors, and subtly supports the institutions they associate with, particularly the military, police, and standardised education – the foundation of the Thai nation-state constructs. By commending state officials' bravery and devotion, the news media endorse these institutions and support the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse in the process, while overlooking the challenges against these establishments raised by other discourses.

Table 6.4 The comparison between the coverage of impact on state officials and on the locals

Impact on state officials	**Impact on the locals**
a. Heroic acts Privy councillor praises Teacher Juling, like the candlelight leading education. (*Matichon* 5 June 2006)[17] Nearly a thousand of Nakhon people welcome home the body of "Major Pansak", hero of the southern border. (*Manager* 9 August 2009)[18]	*a. Heroic acts* Open heart [feelings revealed – researcher] … Southern kids smile to combat the southern situation. (*Matichon* 1 February 2007)[19] Khueng Naruemol, the strong lady of Baan Pan (*Isara* 6 May 2008)[20]
b. Impact on state officials (teachers) **Story title**: Southern teachers concerned about the unrest **Anchor introduction**: The [attack] on the teacher guard team at the Bangnang Guwae School of Bannang Sata District in Yala Province this morning prompted the school to be closed immediately. Meanwhile, teachers in the nearby areas were fearful about the incident while trying to come to terms with it. They also hope the shooting skill they have been trained would help protect their life. (*Thai PBS* 18 May 2009)[21]	*b. Impact on residents' livelihood* Thai Buddhists in Yala begin moving out of the area as violence continues. (*Manager* 25 November 2006)[22] Some thousand of Buddhist Thais at Sabayoi [District] gather, demanding the military rangers not to be removed from the area following a pondok attack at Baan Kuan Lan. (*Isara* 26 March 2007)[23]

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17 องคมนตรียกย่องครูจูหลิงดั่งเทียนส่องทางการศึกษา. *Matichon*. 5 June 2006.

18 ชาวนครฯ ร่วมรับศพ "พ.ต.พันศักดิ์" วีรบุรุษชายแดนใต้. *Manager*. 9 August 2009.

19 เปิดใจ..เด็กใต้ยิ้มสู้..สถานการณ์ไฟใต้. *Matichon*. 1 February 2007.

20 เขื่อง นฤมล หญิงแกร่งแห่งบ้านปาน. *Isara*. 6 May 2008.

21 ครูใต้วิตกเหตุการณ์ไม่สงบ. *Thai PBS*. 18 May 2009. 19:00 news bulletin.

22 ชาวไทยพุทธ จ.ยะลา เริ่มอพยพออกนอกพื้นที่ หลังเหตุรุนแรงยังเกิดขึ้นต่อเนื่อง. *Manager*. 25 November 2006.

23 [illegible]. *Isara*. 26 March 2007.

Impact on state officials	Impact on the locals
	c. Impact on victims/ suspects and their families 2 Years after Kru-Ze -Tak Bai. Southern border still weeps. (*Matichon* 28 April 2006)[24] Husband disappears… in the southern fire. (*Manager* 8 January 2009)[25]
d. Success stories Cultivator of the seeds of friendship. The life of "military doctor" in the Red Zone. (*Isara* 29 October 2005)[26] Bad never wins Good, and the today's life of "Noppadol Pueaksophon" the steel-willed vice commander. (*Isara* 16 August 2007)[27]	*d. Success stories* Buddhist and Muslim communities must learn to love and unite. The lesson to fight the southern fire crisis of Kirikhet people. (*Isara* 18 December 2006)[28] **Story title**: City monitor network **Anchor introduction**: The problem of the explosive detector GT 200's deficiency and the losses from several bombing incidents in Songkhla's Had Yai commercial district previously lead to the birth of the people's city watch network, which can set a boundary of insurgent movement in a limited area. … (*Thai PBS* 21 February 2010)[29]

[24] [illegible]. *Matichon*. 28 April 2006.

[25] [illegible]. *Manager*. 8 January 2009.

[26] [illegible]. *Isara*. 29 October 2005.

[27] [illegible]. *Isara*. 16 August 2007.

[28] [illegible]. *Isara* 18 December 2006.

[29] [illegible]. *Thai PBS*. 21 February 2010. 19:00 news bulletin.

The examination of the references to perpetrators and victims of violence in news headlines and introductions reveals that state official casualties are more mentioned (27 per cent) than civilian ones (15 per cent), as demonstrated in Table 6.5. Interestingly, the reference to Buddhist victims is also slightly more frequent than the Malay Muslim victims (twp and one per cent respectively). These reports contradict the statistics of violent incidents from 2004 to 2009 compiled by a Pattani-based Prince of Songkla University political scientist, which places the number of civilian and Muslim casualties at the top (Jitpiromsri 2010).

Table 6.5 The frequency of the references to antagonists and victims

References to people involving in and affected by violence		**Frequency** (percentage)
Perpetrators	Unnamed perpetrators	28
	Identified perpetrators	3
Victims	State officials	27
	Suspects/ insurgents	17
	Civilians	15
	Unidentified victims	3
	Buddhists	2
	Muslims	2
Damages	Damage on property	4
	Total (n = 401)	100

The last meta-frame, *solutions*, comprises seven key frames drawn from the disparate policies, initiatives, and proposals that were brought up in a bid to solve the conflict (see the detail of frame components in Appendix G). As seen in Figure 6.6, the most featured solutions fall into the *governance & political structure* frame (29 per cent), which suggests the changes from administrative agencies. The proposed solutions range from the rectification and improvement of ineffective political mechanisms such as governmental policies and budget spending on southern conflict affairs, Thailand's relationships with Islamic countries and stance on the conflict in the global forum, to political parties' strategies, and the debates on administrative reform in the region such as the special administrative models. The prominence of this frame affirms that news media represent the conflict as a political problem that requires solutions from the state. However, most solutions and criticisms are still based on the current political structure – essentially, representative democratic politics. The only solution that could challenge Thailand's political convention

is the debates and discussions about special administrative models and autonomy. Nevertheless, the subject is brought up after the conflict entered its fourth year in 2007, and the coverage of this issue, particularly on autonomy, is more disapproved than supportive.

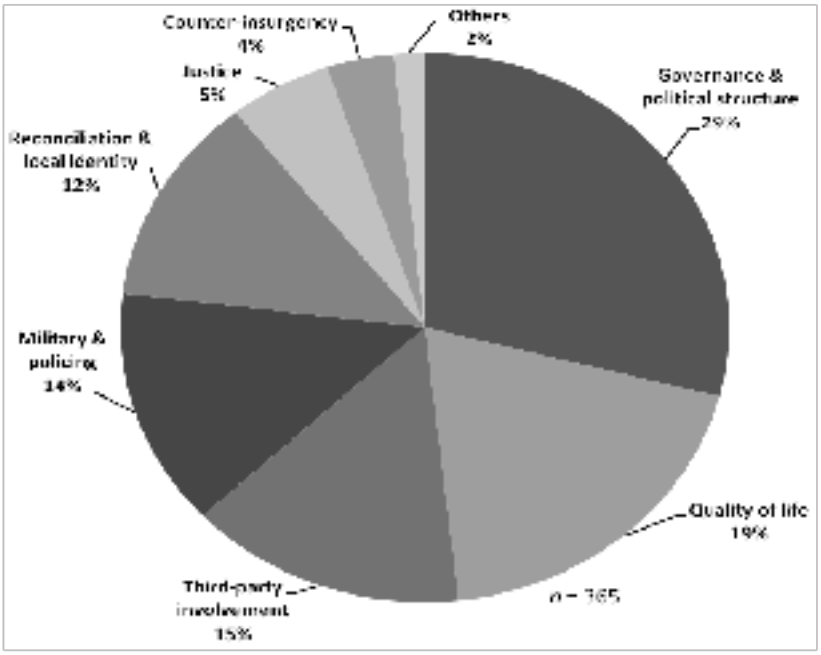

Figure 6.6 The frequency of news frames used to identify the solutions to the southern conflict

In similar vein with the proposal on autonomy and region-specific administrative models, the *reconciliation & recognition of local identity* and *counter-insurgency* frames, which include the solutions that acknowledge cultural diversity and different political beliefs and propose dialogues with insurgents and local people as a way to pacify the conflict, are among the least used frames (12 and four per cent respectively). The use of these frames, nonetheless, does not guarantee positive views towards the proposed solutions. For instance, the stories about dialogues, especially with insurgent movements, demonstrate government's ambivalent stances towards the action, whereas insurgents and third party seem more supportive of the idea, as shown in Table 6.6. Meanwhile, the *justice* frame, which suggests the scrutiny and overhaul of justice system, human rights protection, and healing for the affected parties, is also eclipsed (five per cent).

Table 6.6 Comparison of protagonists' views towards peace dialogues as a solution to the southern conflict

Thai Government	Insurgents/ Third-party
PM indicates the southern troublemaker[30] leaders asking for dialogue is a good sign, but he has not received the report. (*Manager* 11 October 2006)[31] Defence Minister states Govt is ready for dialogue with southern troublemaker groups; shuts the door[32] on special administrative zone or autonomy proposals. (*Isara* 2 July 2007)[33] **Anchor lead**: Government affirms that there was no secret dialogue with terrorist movements in the southern border provinces, after the dissemination of one month ceasefire declaration in Narathiwat Province. (*Thai PBS* 14 July 2010)[34]	Mahathir's son[35] reveals the secret dialogue with 50 southern troublemaker leaders [indicating] no expectation for secession. (*Matichon* 11 October 2006)[36] PULO leader suggests Govt to organise dialogue to distinguish southern fire. (*Matichon* 21 April 2008)[37]

On the contrary, the *quality of life* frame which focuses on the improvement of southerners' well-being, particularly in standardised education, community development, and healthcare services, fares higher (19 per cent). This discovery shows that the majority of solutions are aimed at dealing with social problems at hand and expected discernible results, such as better living, certified education degrees, or employment, rather than dealing with abstract notions such as marginalisation of local identity and human rights abuse.

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[30] Literal translation of the term, ป่วนใต้ [Puan Tai], frequently used in news media headlines in reference to insurgents and perpetrators in general. See more discussions in the subsequent section on labels on antagonists.

[31] *นายกฯ ระบุแกนนำป่วนใต้ขอเจรจาเป็นสัญญาณที่ดี แต่ยังไม่ได้รับรายงาน*. *Manager*. 11 October 2006.

[32] Literal translation of the term, ปิดประตู [Pid Pratu], which means "to refuse."

[33] *รมต.กลาโหม ชี้รัฐพร้อมเจรจากลุ่มป่วนใต้ ปิดประตูเขตปกครองพิเศษหรือเขตปกครองตนเอง* (Autonomy). *Isara*. 2 July 2007.

[34] (no story title). *Thai PBS*. 14 July 2010. 12:00 news bulletin.

[35] Referring to Mukhriz Mahathir, a son of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who was the prime minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003.

[36] ลูกมหาธีร์เผยเจรจาลับ 50 แกนนำป่วนใต้ไม่หวังแยกดินแดน. *Matichon*. 11 October 2006.

[37] แกนนำพูโลแนะรัฐเปิดโต๊ะเจรจาดับไฟใต้. *Matichon*. 21 April 2008.

Interestingly, the *third-party involvement* frame introduces the players who may not be directly accountable for or affected by the conflict but still pose subtle influence in conflict solutions. This frame registers a number of contributions from international community particularly the Southeast Asian nations, for example, the role of Malaysia as mediator in the peace dialogues between Thailand and insurgent leaders and the lessons on peace negotiation and autonomous administrative models in Indonesia and the Philippines. Another type of input comes in forms of assessment on the Thai government's performance in maintaining universal civil rights, of which results often fail to impress the international examiners. The coverage of international community's concerns and recommendations for southern conflict solutions shows that, despite the government's assertion that the southern conflict is an internal affairs, the problem still garners considerable attention from overseas because of certain shared elements, from the cultural and religious similarity and the regional security, to the protection of basic citizen and human rights.

Other players are the general public and the royal institution. The general public, referring to people in other parts of the country, sometimes express concerns about the ongoing violence and contribute assistance to the locals through donations and fund-raising. Also frequently displaying their stance on the conflict are the royal family and associated agencies. The recurring media coverage of the monarchy and associates, for example, the attendance of royal members at slain civil servants' funerals, the Queen's unequivocal condemnation against violence, and the deputy chief of the royal aide-de-camp's adamant view on the necessity of weapon training for villagers, signals the influence the royal institution on political elites and the conflict solution processes, despite not being a constitutional political player (see more detail of the royal patronage projects for southern conflict relief in Appendix A). The following headlines exemplify this observation.

> HM Queen tells PM to solve southern problem with understanding.
> (*Matichon* 4 February 2004)[38]
>
> Deputy royal aide-de-camp reveals strategy in training village defence volunteers, "Don't bring spies in for weapon training".
> (*Isara* 29 October 2005)[39]
>
> HM Queen concerned about southern problem, establishing "Teacher Centre" for teachers to stay safely together.
> (*Isara* 12 August 2008)[40]

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[38] พระราชินีทรงรับสั่งนายกฯแก้ปัญหาใต้ด้วยความเข้าใจ. *Matichon*. 4 February 2004.

[39] รองราชองครักษ์เปิดยุทธวิธีฝึกอรบ "อย่านำไส้ศึกมาฝึกอาวุธ". *Isara*. 29 October 2005.

Mark [PM's name] to follow the royal guidance in extinguishing southern fire.
(*Matichon* 2 January 2009)[41]

"Old City" organises *tod pha pa* [Buddhist offering ritual] for HM Queen to help teachers in southern border.
(*Matichon* 10 November 2006)[42]

Muslims in Yala join in du'a praying to bless [HM Queen] on "National Mother's day".
(*Manager* 12 August 2008)[43]

The last two headlines reflect the influence of the monarch as well as religious institutions on Thai community. While these headlines demonstrate that the general public are concerned about those suffering in the far South, their acts also show loyalty towards the royal family. Thus, this type of coverage illustrates how the predominant beliefs considered to be an integral part of Thai society are played out in the conflict.

In summary, this section demonstrates the preferred theme and news frames in the southern conflict coverage. A wide array of disparate frame components discovered in this study indicates that the complexity and fluidity of the discursive contention are played out in the coverage. However, these components are not equally featured. The salience of certain news frames shows that the southern conflict is represented with a simplified and narrow set of explanations rather than a variety of interpretations based on different perspectives and approaches, evenly presented and contested.

The analysis suggests that the most used news frames is more inclined towards the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse than others. As discussed above, the predominant news theme – *security and public order*, alludes to violence as the most discernible reality of the conflict. The news framing analysis, which indicates how the conflict is explained, shows similar results. It can be argued that the violent aspect of the phenomenon is most evident and can invoke public sympathy. Nonetheless, the salience of the hostile situations undermines other interpretations of this multifaceted conflict, and justifies the use of some solutions without much scrutiny or protestation.

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[40] [illegible]. *Isara* 12 August 2008.

[41] [illegible]. *Matichon*. 2 January 2009.

[42] [illegible]. *Matichon*. 10 November 2006.

[43] [illegible]. *Manager*. 12 August 2008.

6.1.3. The news media's labels of the southern conflict and antagonists

As discussed in the previous sub-section, the hostility and public order aspects are the principal depiction of the southern conflict. This subsection looks into another practice where journalists' inclination towards certain discourses can be detected, which is how the problem and antagonists are characterised.

The label analysis examines 150 stories of which headlines and anchor introductions directly mention the phenomenon. As illustrated in Table 6.7, there is a wide array of terms used to describe the conflict. Interestingly, the most frequently-used term is the metaphorical "southern fire" (51 per cent), in line with a study that finds the constant use of "southern fire" in newspaper coverage, depicting the deep South as a perilous zone (Hongladarom and Hongladarom 2006). The analysis also reveals that more than half of the labels are based on the "southern fire" metaphor, for example, "southern fire problem", "southern fire situation", "toxin of the southern fire". Additionally, generic terms that identify the conflict as "problem", such as "southern problem", "unrest", "southern situation" are commonly used, although not as prevalent as the metaphoric labels (33 per cent). Lastly, in many cases, the use of geographical terms such as "South", "southern border" also refers to the conflict. Despite the wide range of names, the labelling of the conflict resonates with the dominance of *security and public order* theme – that is, the conflict's restive, violent-prone, and problematic features are highlighted, often with the connotation of ferocity and brutality.

Table 6.7 Labels on the southern conflict in the headlines and introductions

Labels on the southern conflict	Frequency (percentage)
Metaphors	*(54)*
Southern fire, fire	51
Others relevant terms: Toxin of southern fire, southern danger, southern germ	3
Characteristics	*(33)*
Southern problem	13
Southern mishaps, chaos, violent incidents	9
Southern unrest, unrest problem	9
Southern situation, southern border situation	3
Geographical location	*(11)*
South, Southern provinces, Southern border	11
Terrorism-oriented term	*(2)*
'Red Village'[44]	1
Terrorism	1
Total (n = 150)	100

Among the 793 stories sampled, the references to perpetrators of violent incidents and suspects appear 204 times, 24 stories with identifications and 180 with unnamed actors. The study of the latter group reveals that antagonists in the conflict are given various labels; nevertheless, the most used terms allude to criminality rather than insurgency. As Table 6.8 shows, the terms involving criminal acts such as "bandit", "instigator", "turbulence maker" are widely used (64 per cent), particularly the term "southern bandit" (29 per cent). Other oft-cited labels, such as the legal terminology (13 per cent) and action-based terms (5 per cent) also signal the illegality of their actions. The explicit identification of terrorists and separatists appear less frequently (12 per cent), in line with a small number of stories with terrorism and separatism topics.

[44] The term 'Red Village' or 'Red Zone' refers to the areas where militia movements are highly active and attacks are prevalent.

Table 6.8 Labels on the antagonists in the southern conflict in the headlines and introductions

Labels on antagonists	Frequency (percentage)
Criminals	*(64)*
Southern bandit	29
Criminal/ bandit	21
Trouble maker	7
Instigator	6
Ruthless/ brutal southern bandit, Pattani bandit	1
Legal terms	*(14)*
Suspect	7
Accused/ offender	7
Insurgents	*(12)*
(Southern turbulence-making) leader	4
(Southern turbulence-making) ally/ member/ sympathiser	4
Terrorist/ terrorist group	4
Action-based terms	*(6)*
Shooter/ sniper	3
Bomber	1
Arsonist	1
Motorcyclist attacker	1
Judgment on characters	*(4)*
Ruthless South/ Unlawful South	2
Commander/ ringleader/ chief/ 'uncommon thief'	2
Social groups	*(2)*
Trouble teens	2
Total (n =180)	102[45]

Similar to the observation of the themes and news frames, journalists for vernacular press tend not to label perpetrators or suspects with military terms that connote the sense of civil warfare or insurgency, for example, "insurgent", "militia", or "guerrilla movement", but opt to describe them according to their actions, such as "shooters", "sniper", and "bombers". In line with Picard and Adams' study of the media's characterizations of acts

[45] The numbers are rounded up/down. Therefore, the total is not 100%.

and perpetrators of political violence in U.S. elite newspapers (1991), the generic criminological characterisation helps prevent journalists from giving a premature assumption about the assailants. However, the use of these neutral terms inadvertently underpins the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse, which portrays the perpetrators as faceless with obscure background and the incidents as frequent but random. Such labelling, despite its nonjudgmental tone, also prevents the general public to learn more about the perpetrators and their motives, and essentially undermines other discourses which give the explanations beyond what deemed unlawful acts.

In summary, looking back at the prominent theme, news frames, and labels, it is apparent that news media's depiction of southern conflict tends to highlight violence and its discernible consequences and solutions rather than providing explanations on the causes or invisible impact. Describing the far South as a restive region where the outlaws roam freely and launch daily strikes, journalists often seek after state authority and military for prescriptions to alleviate the conflict. As a result, the coverage's main focuses are on political and military elites' actions and responses rather than those of other players. Based on these findings, the following subsection elaborates further on the frequency of news sources to see how these informers contribute to the construction of predominant news themes and frames.

6.2 'In authority, we trust': the analysis of news sources in southern conflict reporting

Following the analysis of themes, news frames, and labels, this section continues by examining the providers of information and drawing the connection between the preferred sources and how the southern conflict is represented in news reports.

To analyse the use of sources in news content, all sample stories were examined, but only ones with direct and indirect quotation were coded. The subjects that were mentioned in the stories but not quoted were not counted as a source. From the 793 reviewed stories, 80 of them (approximately 10 per cent) were presented without any explicit attribution. In the remaining stories, there are 2,237 source citations.

6.2.1. Police, government, and military: the trinity sources of information in southern conflict reporting

The study of source attribution reveals that the frequently-cited informers are mostly authority figures, particularly police officers and members of the government, as shown in Table 6.9. In line with existing literature, it is apparent that the coverage of southern

conflict is principally relied on the authorities' accounts. While the voices of community members are often featured, the analysis also shows that sources who are likely to challenge the state's explanations, such as independent agencies,[46] civil societies, academics, and even insurgents, are among the minimally quoted ones (accounted for 10 per cent altogether). It is too premature to conclude here that the prominence of authority sources and the minimal citation of challengers indicate journalists' intention to support the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse. Nevertheless, in line with the previous analysis, it can be concluded that with state authority gaining privilege in news access, the news media in effect follow the discourses proposed by political elites rather than those proposed by other groups.

Interestingly, reporters and news organisations are also among the most frequently-used sources, even more often than other societal members and stakeholders. The study also shows that reporters' accounts are mostly used to describe the scene and atmosphere. While these accounts give additional information that is not mentioned by sources or shown in the photographs and video footage that accompany the stories, the frequent attribution enhances journalists' role in the southern conflict. Rather than being a mere messenger, journalists become an indispensable element of southern conflict reporting. Moreover, the attribution to reporters' observations as a source of information is a way to ensure that the stories meet professional standards: accuracy and objectivity. As a southern reporter put it, every account in the news article must be accompanied with sources attribution to guarantee that it is not fabricated. Therefore, a story with "It was reported that…" would not be as reliable as "Our reporter observed that…".

[46] Most independent agencies are the regulatory bodies that were established following the constitutional mandates and organic laws with the mission to scrutinise the actions of elected officials and state employees. These agencies are empowered with judicial authority and autonomy to prevent the government's interference. Among the prominent independent agencies are the Election Commission, the State Audit Commission, the Administrative Court, and the National Human Rights Commissions, etc. In the case of the southern conflict, the National Reconciliation Commission was an ad-hoc independent agency which was set up according to the Prime Minister's directive in 2005 to investigate the conflict and propose solutions.

Table 6.9 The types of sources quoted in news content

Rank	Types of sources	Frequency (percentage - each)
1	Police	16
2	Government	14
3	Military State agencies[47]	9
4	Media: Thai Parliamentarians (MPs, senators)	7
5	Community members	6
6	Administrative agencies	5
7	Civil societies	4
8	Business & agriculture sectors Academics Family of victims Anonymous with association	3
9	Independent agencies International figures/ agencies Others (miscellaneous) Anonymous without association Media: Foreign	2
10	Ministerial officials Members of royal family & associates Insurgents	1
	Total (n = 2,237)	100

6.2.2. Law enforcement, national security, and policies: principal perspectives in the southern conflict coverage

The study produces the results that still support the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse, which sees the problem as criminality and security threats. As demonstrated in Table 6.10, sources with the expertise in law enforcement and crime investigation, often police officers, are quoted most (18 per cent), followed by those with specialisation in security (14 per cent) and state policies (12 per cent). This finding is in accordance with the emphasis of coverage on policies, description and investigation of violent incidents, and security measures found in the analysis of news themes and frames. Similarly, sources offering observations, mostly

[47] 'State agencies' refer to organisations under the government's supervision and operated by civil servants, such as the education institutions, medical and healthcare services organisations, etc., whereas 'Administrative agencies' refer specifically to national and local administrative organisations such as the provincial governor's offices and the local administrative offices, etc. The SBPAC, for example, was considered a regional administrative agency.

personal experiences, eye-witness accounts, and journalistic descriptions score considerably high (11 per cent and 8 per cent respectively). On the contrary, those with expertise in southern affairs, history and culture, human rights, and terrorism and separatism – the subjects that are relevant to the *Minority's grievance* and the *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses, score far fewer. While the information these experts provide may not necessarily support the three aforementioned discourses, their minimal presence indicates that journalists treat the southern conflict like other political conflict and unrests, and engage very little with the distinctive elements of the phenomenon. Because of this, the explanations beyond the visible impact of conflict are rare, and their absence effectively allows the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse to dominate others.

Table 6.10 The specialisation of sources presented in news content

Rank	Sources' specialisation & contribution	Frequency (percentage - each)
1	Law enforcement & investigation	18
2	Security	14
3	National policies	12
4	Personal experience & eyewitness accounts	11
5	Journalistic observations	8
6	Administrative authority	7
7	Economy Southern affairs Education	4
8	Justice system	3
9	Religion (Islam) International relations / affairs History & culture Human rights Healthcare & medical services	2
10	Others (miscellaneous) Social/community development Religion (Buddhism) Terrorism/ Separatism Royal affairs	1
	Total (n = 2,237)	100

6.2.3. A national problem: the use of national-level sources in southern conflict reporting

The final discussion point looks at the sources' locations and bases. While the frequent attribution of sources based in the restive region is the highest, about one third of sources are from the capital city or representing the national-level politics, as seen in Table 6.11. This finding shows that the conflict is not a mere regional problem despite being originated in the far South, but is also considered a significant national problem as it receives a great deal of attention from national-level sources, mostly policy-makers.

However, as will be discussed later, the finding shows the Bangkok-based media organisations use more national-level sources than those in the region. On the contrary, a majority of sources appearing in the coverage of the southern-based *Isara* website is local, while the attribution to national-level sources scores far fewer. Corresponding with the subsequent analysis of the journalist-source relationship in Chapter 8, this discovery shows that the national-level mainstream media have better access to political elite sources than smaller alternative operation, and explains why alternative outlets choose to dedicate more spaces to local and non-elite sources as a way to distinguish their coverage.

In line with the previous discussion on international influence, the sources based overseas are featured in news content more than those from other parts of the South or the country. This finding indicates the involvement of international figures, from Islamic countries and the neighbouring Malaysia, to international watchdog agencies, in what the Thai government considers domestic affairs.

Table 6.11 The locations and bases of sources in southern conflict reporting

Bases & locations	**Frequency** (percentage)
Southernmost provinces	50
National level (capital city)	37
Overseas	5
Other southern provinces	4
Other parts of the country	3
Unknown location	1
Total (n = 2,237)	100

In summary, the examination of source attribution agrees with the theme and news framing analysis: the news coverage tends to favour the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse over others, because the majority of sources are state authorities and political elites, and have expertises in national security, policies, and law enforcement and crime investigation.

6.3 'Thin and straight-forward': the news genres and visual presentation in southern conflict reporting

While the previous sections discussed the analyses of texts and lexicon choices in news reports, this section moves on to examine the journalistic genres and visual presentation to explicate the ways that stories about the southern conflict are told. The last subsection also presents the observations on the coverage's trends during the seven-year review period to analyse the changes in southern conflict reporting as the conflict progressed.

6.3.1. Summarising what happened and what people said: the common mode of southern conflict reporting

The examination of the presentation formats identifies four categories of news genres, based on their characteristics, in the southern conflict reporting: 1) *summary & immediacy*, 2) *depth*, 3) *personification*, and 4) *verbatim*. These genres usually require different writing styles and emphases. *Summary & immediacy* includes general news stories, breaking news and live reports, which mainly recapitulate events and interviews. *Depth* refers to stories with literary writing styles to elaborate on emotional elements and analytical perspectives, such as feature articles, short TV documentary, analysis articles and investigative reports. *Personification* refers to stories that focus solely on the accounts or opinions of a person or people involved, mostly interview or profile pieces. As opposed to *depth* which centres on an issue or event, this genre highlights the interviewed subject's outlooks and feelings. The last category, *verbatim*, refers to the word-for-word publication of raw data such as reports and studies, government dossiers, regulations, statistics, and speech transcripts. Generally, *verbatim* requires little or no editorial editing.

It should be noted here that the sample came in relatively close formats which allow little rooms for discussions and counter-argumentation. Nevertheless, these genres still show journalistic variations and enable further investigation into how these variances may highlight or downplay certain angles of the conflict.

The finding in Table 6.12 shows that the most frequently-used genre in southern conflict reporting is *summary & immediacy* (74 per cent), with news format topping the chart. Stories in other genres appear far fewer. This implies that the coverage tends to tell what happened

and what people said rather than explicating the contexts of these incidents and statements. With the minimal use of exploratory and in-depth presentation modes, the reports on southern conflict seem to stay the surface and provide few explanations about this complex phenomenon.

Table 6.12 The news genres in southern conflict reporting

News genres	Frequency (percentage)
Summary & Immediacy	*(74)*
News	68
News brief[48]	5
Others: Live reports, breaking news	1
Depth	*(18)*
Feature articles/ short documentary	12
Analysis articles/ investigative reports	6
Personification	*(5)*
Interviews, live interviews	4
Profiles of key players	1
Verbatim	*(5)*
Reports	2
Detail of projects/ announcements	1
Transcripts of speeches	1
Summary/ chronology of events/ statistics	1
Total (n = 793)	101[49]

6.3.2. Seen but not heard: the visual presentation of southerners and insurgents in news content

This analysis finds that the visual presentation enhances the textual description and helps shed light on certain features of the conflict that are left unexplained in the texts. Some findings even contradict the previous analysis on source attribution.

[48] "News brief" is used here in reference to reports containing a few sentences or a short paragraph, generally used in newspapers and website. Despite the brevity, "news brief" does not reflect the sense of urgency, as opposed to "breaking news", which is presented in similar patterns.

[49] The numbers are rounded up/down. Therefore, the total is not 100%.

The visual presentation in the print, broadcast, and online news coverage varies only slightly, featuring similar actors and contexts, as shown in Tables 6.13.[50] While police and military officers are still among the most featured actors, the presence of the locals, victims of conflict and violence, as well as insurgents and suspects is highly prominent especially in print and online news content. The findings are contrary to the source attribution analysis where these sources are rarely quoted, particularly in the case of insurgents and suspects. Instead of interviewing these sources, journalists present them by featuring the locals' way of life, their participation in events, or their facial expression in photographs and video footage. While the textual analysis points out that the reports often describe insurgents as unknown, clandestine, and faceless, the visual presentation helps match the face to the description. However, it should be noted that the portrayal of insurgents and suspects remains incomplete. The mug shots of suspects, pictures of them in custody, or shots of their actions from CCTV footage, do not offer additional contexts or explanations, as they lack details about their backgrounds or motives. Rather, such depiction emphasises the authority's allegation that these people committed crime and should be publicly admonished (see more detail on the types of visual presentation in news content in Appendix H).

Meanwhile, the analysis of the visual presentation's contexts reverts to agreeing with the analysis of the preferred theme, news frames, and sources. The majority of visual presentation revolves around organised events and the immediate aftermaths of violence such as inspection at the scene of incidents, security reinforcement, casualties, and arrests, as demonstrated in Tables 6.14. Other elements of the conflict, such as the southern natives' ways of life, human sufferings, and history and culture, are also featured, but not to the same degree as the violence-related incidents. This discovery raises two interesting points. The first is that the brutality aspect of the conflict is once again highlighted. The second point is related to journalistic practices. The fact that organised events are photographed most shows that news workers tend to make use of the occasions arranged by sources rather than finding the subjects on their own. This is in line with McCargo's comment that journalists are likely to wait for news to come to them, instead of being pro-active to approach a story (2000).

[50] The results of visual presentation in print and online news content and broadcast news content are presented in separate tables because the units of analysis are different. In print and online news content, the still images are analysed, whereas in broadcast news content, the shots of video footage are analysed.

Tables 6.13 The actors featured in visual presentation of the news coverage

a. print and online news content

	Actors	Frequency (percentage – each)
1	Locals	20
2	Military	19
3	Police	14
4	Insurgents & suspects	9
5	Victims of conflict & violence	8
6	Government	7
7	State officials	6
8	Others[52]	4
9	Parliamentarians Civil Sector Academics	3
10	Members of independent agencies*	2
11	Private sector Royal family members & associates*	1
	Total (n = 802)	100

b. broadcast news content

	Actors	Frequency (percentage – each)
1	Police	26
2	Locals	24
3	Military	15
4	State officials	11
5	Government	7
6	Others[51] Victims of conflict & violence	4
7	Civil sector	3
8	Insurgents & suspects	2
9	Academics	2
10	Parliamentarians	1
11	Private sector	1
	Total (n = 1,206)	100

* These groups of actors were not featured in the broadcast news sample

[51] Miscellaneous actors, for example, religious leaders, reporters and camera crew, non-locals/ visitors, unidentified persons.

[52] Miscellaneous actors, for example, representatives from overseas organisations, members of the press, non-locals, unidentified persons.

Tables 6.14 The contexts of visual presentation in news content

a. print and online news content

	Contexts	Frequency (percentage -each)
1	Organised events	29
2	Scenes of violent incidents	15
3	Ways of life[53]	13
4	Security measures[54] Casualties[55]	9
5	Arrests/searches/ suspect's surrenders	7
6	Human sufferings[56] History & culture[57]	5
7	Visits[58]	4
8	Others Protests	2
	Total (n = 692)	100

b. broadcast news content

	Contexts	Frequency (percentage -each)
1	Scenes of violent incidents	26
2	Ways of life	18
3	Organised events	16
4	Security measures	13
5	Others (i.e. sources giving interview)	7
6	History & culture Casualties Arrests/searches/ suspect's surrenders	5
7	Human sufferings	3
8	Visits	2
9	Protests	1
	Total (n = 1,565)	100

6.3.3. The fluctuating and oscillating coverage: The dynamic and variability of southern conflict reporting

This subsection examines the trends of the coverage to identify the changes in the way that the southern conflict has been reported during the seven years. To do so, the study looks at the length of story and the number of sources to determine if the conflict has received the same degree of media attention as the situation continues. The analysis also takes note of

[53] General activities of the locals, for example, people shopping at local market, people pray at mosque, students in classroom etc.

[54] Military activities, for example, army patrol, soldiers guarding school and temple, weapon training and military equipment etc.

[55] Corpses, injured people, funeral, etc.

[56] People affected by conflict/ violence expressing and/or demonstrating grief and difficulties, situations that elicit grief and difficulties in life, etc.

[57] Local heritage, for example, ancient mosque, people performing traditional dance etc.

[58] Photo opportunity of public figures/state officials visiting villages, the locals or injured people etc.

the consistency and recurrence of news frames to find out if there are any discursive shifts in news representation.

Contrary to the previous discussions, the analysis in these areas shows discrepancies among the four selected media organisations, which reflect the diversity in Thai journalism (see the graphs demonstrating the trajectories of story lengths and number of sources in news reports in Appendix I). The evaluation of story length indicates a downward direction in the coverage of commercial media, namely the daily *Matichon* and *Manager*, but a consistent trend in that of the non-profit organisations, *Thai PBS* and *Isara*. The coverage becomes shorter from 2008 onwards, even in the case of *Isara*, possibly because the crisis in national politics started brewing. Similarly, there is a declining tendency in the number of source attribution in *Matichon*'s and *Manager*'s news content, and an invariable line in *Thai PBS*'s, whereas the coverage of *Isara* sees a rising trajectory.

The inverse relationship between the story length and the number of sources in commercial media, and the progression of conflict also signals the waning interest of journalists in the issue. To them, the matter is no longer as groundbreaking as when it began. Meanwhile, the consistent coverage in not-for--profit news media could be a result of the organisations' dedication on the issue. *Thai PBS* allocates specific time slots for the southern conflict-related content, while *Isara* was purposely established to report about the conflict and the far South. Such principles ensure that there would always be a fair amount of spaces for such reports. These findings reflect the degree of attention given to this issue by different media organisations' editorial team. They also imply that, although the issue is reported regularly throughout the seven years, the frequency of the coverage does not necessarily result in the elaborated and multiperspectival explanations.

The statistics of news frames' frequency are too inconclusive to form a clear correlation between the presence of news frames and political movements. Nonetheless, there are cases where the link becomes discernible. Moreover, the fluctuating trend of certain key frames still shows subtle fluidity of the contending discourses, and reflects the shifts in the news representation of southern conflict (see Appendix J for the graphs illustrating the trajectories of news frames in the southern conflict reports). This finding is in line with studies, which suggests that the interpretations of the southern conflict are not only disparate, but may also be contested and amended as the phenomenon continues (see, for example, Aphornsuwan 2007, Ganjanakhundee 2009, Satha-Anand 2007).

In the *cause* meta-frame, for instance, the *power struggle among interest groups* frame which rarely appears at the beginning of the conflict becomes more evident in 2007 and thereafter, following the military's introduction of the "additional threats" theory. On the other hand, the presence of the *identity politics* frame becomes less noticeable in the latter years of the conflict than when it began. At the same time, the *uses for force by unknown actors* frame is on the rise. These observations suggest that elements of the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse remain predominant in southern conflict reporting during the seven years, whereas those of other discourses tend to fade into the background.

The fluctuation of some frames could also be a consequence of journalistic practices. For instance, the frequency of the *impact on stakeholders* frame, part of the *repercussions* meta-frame, starts to drop significantly as the conflict entered its fifth year. This corresponds with the earlier observation that, as the situation continued, journalists no longer gives the same degree of attention to such stories, considering them "old news". This attitude may change when new angles are introduced or if the stories could be linked to current phenomena.

The connection between news representation and Thai politics could be detected, particularly in the *solutions* meta-frame. For example, the frequency of the *governance and political structure* frame goes up as the debates and discussions on the regional administrative policy for the far South are prevalent in national politics in 2009. Most notably, the special administrative model for the southern border provinces (a component of the *governance & political structure* frame) is not brought up until 2007 – the fourth year of the conflict, and even then, the proposal is faced with negative responses. A few years later, when the topic receives more attention from a new government and civil sector, positivity towards special administrative model and autonomy then emerges. This discovery corresponds with Hallin's *Sphere of Legitimate Controversy* (1989), which indicates the influence of political elites' sentiment in public discussions on certain issues. By contrast, the frequency of the *reconciliation & recognition of local identity* frame, which sees its peak in 2006 in line with the appointment of the National Reconciliation Commission, declines as the conflict continues. This is partly because the agency concluded its work in the subsequent year; hence, the disappearance of a key proponent of the frame from the media's radar.

In summary, this section explains that the presentation styles of southern conflict coverage have a tendency to favour the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse over others. The study of news genres demonstrates that the southern conflict reports are mostly straight-forward and

presented without many contexts. The visual presentation could help shed light on the marginalised players, such as affected stakeholders and perpetrators. However, the representation remains fractional. At the same time, the frequent depiction of violence-related incidents is in accordance with the most highlighted theme, frames, and sources. The analysis also shows the limitation of journalistic presentation and practices to generate multiperspectival depictions of this complex and dynamic conflict.

Nonetheless, the study of news reports during seven years indicates that the coverage is not always static. The examination of the story length and number of sources notices the declining trends, particularly in the reports produced by national-level commercial media. As the conflict entered its fourth year, the attention of national-level news organisations on this issue started to wane, with shorter reports and fewer informers. On the contrary, the average story length and number of sources in the public service and alternative media's reports remain steady. This shows that the news organisations with dedicated spaces for this issue play a significant role in southern conflict reporting, because they could ensure the constant and ample presence of the matter. In similar vein, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, the southern-based alternative media and their partnership with civil societies in the far South could keep the subject circulated in regional public forums, and sometimes successfully push the matter forward to the national media.

The subtle changes in the coverage could be denoted from the fluidity of news frames throughout the seven-year review period. Despite the fluctuation of news frames' frequency, the analysis indicates that the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse remains in a dominating position, while other discourses are recurring but mostly kept in the background. The rise and fall of news frames in certain periods of the conflict could have been contributed by the prevalent discussions in national politics, the emergence of new protagonists, or the interests of news media on the issue. This discovery also provides a basis for further investigation into the relationships between news media and protagonists and political settings in the following chapters.

6.4 Different media, similar outputs: the Thai news ecology and southern conflict reporting

This final part of the chapter, composed of three subsections, concludes the analysis of news content with the comparative assessment of media outputs based on their different journalistic and organisational features. The study is aimed at finding how the complexity and diversity in Thai news ecology are played out in southern conflict reporting. Instead of examining the sample as a collective whole like in the previous analyses, this analysis

investigates each organisation individually and considers the different natures of the selected media organisations, as presented in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15 Considerations for the analysis of the diversity in Thai news ecology and southern conflict reporting

Categories	Components	Media Organisations
1. Media platforms	a. Print b. TV c. Online	a. *Matichon* b. *Thai PBS* c. *Manager, Isara*
2. News orientations	a. Political & public policy news b. General news c. Concentration on the southern conflict	a. *Matichon, Thai PBS* b. *Manager* c. *Isara*
3. Media organisational principles	a. Commercial b. Public service broadcasting & Non-profit/alternative	a. *Matichon, Manager* b. *Thai PBS, Isara*

6.4.1. Media platforms and the presentation of southern conflict coverage

The different platforms of the four media agencies are considered in the analysis because the platforms fundamentally determine the organisation's presentation formats and styles. As such, the advantages and limitations of each medium can shape the use of news genres in southern conflict reporting.

Similar patterns emerge when the sample is compared across three different media platforms, as illustrated in Figure 6.7. The coverage of two news agencies using the online platform presents an interesting contrast, reflecting the organisations' different approaches in utilising the medium. The majority of *Manager* reports is in the *summary & immediacy* genre, whereas *Isara* scores highest in the *depth* genre. It can be inferred from this discovery that the *Manager* website optimises the new media's benefits of fast and straight-forward delivery more than other features. The company also takes advantage of its multimedia and interactive functions by posting video and audio clips produced by its sister media outlets to accompany some stories. On the contrary, *Isara* focuses more on the benefits of virtually unlimited space and flexible structure, and is able to offer a wider variety of news genres compared to other outlets despite its much smaller operation costs. Moreover, the use of hyperlink in *Isara*'s reports also supplements the coverage with additional backgrounds and perspectives on the issue, making the reports more comprehensive and contextualised.

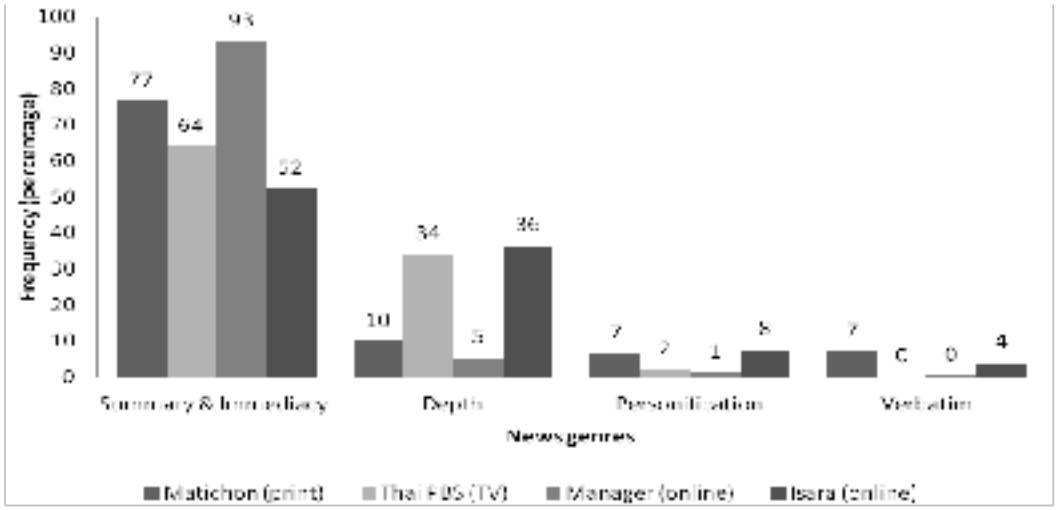

Figure 6.7 Comparison of news genres in the coverage of four media organisations of three different platforms

Another noteworthy point is the high frequency of the *depth* genre in *Isara*'s and *Thai PBS*' reports, which implies that broadcast media could also facilitate explanatory reporting such as in forms of documentary-style and analytical packages. Apart from maximising on the advantages of their respective platforms, these organisations' news concentration could also facilitate journalists to create various presentation formats and genres.

6.4.2. Organisation's news orientations and the news representation of southern conflict

The analyses of themes and source attribution are used here to identify the link between the organisations' news orientations and the salient aspects of the southern conflict that they present.

As shown in Figure 6.8, regardless of the four agencies' different news orientations, the *security and public order* theme still dominates the remainders. Unsurprisingly, with its emphasis on political news, the *Matichon* daily scores higher than others in the *governance & politics* theme. Meanwhile, the online *Manager* and *Isara*'s frequent *socio-economy & culture* reports may be benefited from the proximity of their southern-based staffers to the region, which will be discussed more in the next chapter. The most unprecedented finding is *Thai PBS*'s high frequency in the *security & public order* theme. This might be contributed by the station's frequent reports on the aggression in the region and the security measures that ensue.

Figure 6.8 Comparison of the news coverage themes of the four news organisation

As for the source attribution, the findings, displayed in Tables 6.16 and 6.17, show that community members and personal experiences are among the most cited sources and contributions in the coverage of *Isam* and *Thai PBS*. Meanwhile, the reports by *Matichon* and *Manager* rely more on authority figures and administrative matters such as security, policy, and law enforcement and investigation. The different source emphases among these outlets suggest that the political and general news-focused news agencies such as *Matichon* and *Manager* tend to depend on regular official sources. Meanwhile, *Thai PBS* and *Isara*'s inclination to include opinions from community members could be shaped by their news focuses on the impact of public policy and the conflict on the southerners.

Table 6.16 Comparison of the five most frequently-cited sources in the coverage of the four news organisation

Ranks	Matichon	Thai PBS	Manager	Isara
1	Government	Police	Police	Police
2	Police	Military	Government	Community members
3	Parliamentarians	Media: Thai	State agencies	Military
4	State agencies	Community members	Military	State agencies
5	Military	State agencies	Media: Thai	Administrative agencies

Table 6.17 Comparison of the five most frequently-used sources' specialisation in the coverage of the four news organisation

Ranks	Matichon	Thai PBS	Manager	Isara
1	Security	Law enforcement & investigation	Law enforcement & investigation	Law enforcement & investigation
2	State policies	Personal experience & eyewitness	Security	Personal experience & eyewitness
3	Law enforcement & investigation	Security	Economy	Security
4	Journalistic observations	Journalistic observations	Journalistic observations	State policies
5	Administrative authority	Administrative authority	State policies	Administrative authority

Lastly, the analysis looks at the bases and locations of the sources, as shown in Figure 6.9. As briefly discussed earlier, the coverage of *Isara* regularly features sources from the southern border provinces. It is shown here that the Bangkok-based *Thai PBS* and *Manager* produce a similar pattern, whereas the majority of sources in the Bangkok-based *Matichon*'s reports are based in the capital city. The frequency of regional source citation could be resulted from the agencies' news concentration and perhaps the presence of their production centres in the South. The fact that *Thai PBS*, *Manager*, and *Isam* have full-time news crews being stationed in the area, whilst *Matichon* depends mostly on stringers, could influence the organisations' frequent use of sources.

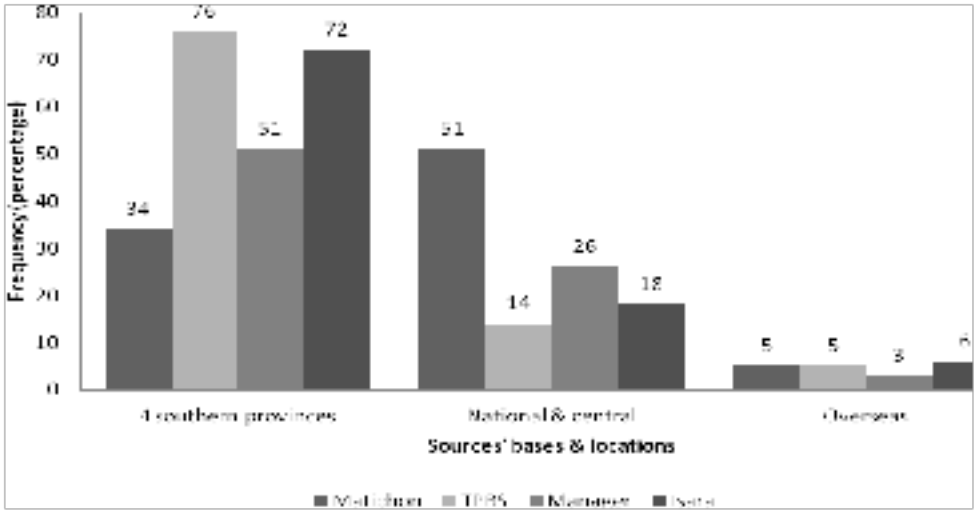

Figure 6.9 Comparison of the sources' bases and locations between mainstream and alternative media

6.4.3. The media organisations' principles and the representation of southern conflict

The results of news framing and label analyses are brought in to examine the relations between the organisations' principles and their representations of the southern conflict. The main focus of this comparison is to find out whether the public service and alternative media outlets, namely *Thai PBS* and *Isara*, would fare differently from the mainstream commercial organisations like *Matichon* and *Manager* in southern conflict reporting.

Contrary to the anticipated results, the overall outcomes do not indicate significant discrepancies between the two media camps (see Appendix K for the graphs showing the comparisons of news frames in the coverage of commercial and not-for-profit news organisations). There are a few distinctive dissimilarities which prompts further discussions. The first is that, the *power struggle among interest groups* frame is used more in the reports produced by the public service broadcaster *Thai PBS* and the alternative *Isara* to identify the causes of conflict than in ones produced by the commercial media. As will be discussed further in the following chapter on ethnography of news production, the expertise of journalists who are primarily responsible for southern conflict reporting in these organisations could contribute to the frequent presence of *power struggle among interest groups* frame. Mostly specialising in security affairs, these reporters tend to follow the military's intelligence and investigations to explore the modus operandi of militia groups and underground crime syndicates.

Another striking difference is the non-mainstream media's emphasis on the *impact on stakeholders* frame, whereas the commercial organisations' focus is on authorities' reactions in the *governance* frame. This corresponds with the earlier analysis on source attribution where *Thai PBS* and *Isara* are found to provide more spaces for community members and victims than *Matichon* and *Manager*.

The last discernible difference between the commercial and not-for-profit organisations is in the *solutions* meta-frame. The commercial media underline the political and administrative approaches to maintain public order, as apparent in the *governance*, *quality of life*, and *military* frames. Meanwhile, the public service broadcaster and alternative media emphasise more on the conflict's cultural distinctiveness, as shown in the *reconciliation*, *justice*, and *counter-insurgency* frames. This signals the attempts of public service and alternative media organisations to present the underreported explanations about the conflict.

In all, the similar patterns of news coverage produced by the commercial and not-for-profit media organisations are more prominent than their differences. The similarities could be a consequence of the general journalistic nature shared by these agencies, from how editors and reporters make news judgement to their relationship and access to news sources. This argument will be discussed more in detail in the subsequent chapters.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter presents the examination into various elements of news content to explicate how the southern conflict is represented. Overall, the study suggests that the preferred theme, news frames, and sources together render the depiction of the southern conflict that buttress the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse over others. The analysis of the coverage's trends also shows an inverse relationship between the conflict's continuation and the news media's interest in the subject. Although there are some fluidity and dynamic in the coverage throughout seven years, the most recurring themes and news frames remain steady, keeping the predominant discourse in place and revealing minimal discursive shifts. Meanwhile, the journalistic variations, such as news genres, platforms, news orientations, and organisation principles, contribute little to balancing the discursive contestation. These findings question why news media portray the conflict similarly albeit their different natures, and how alternative explanations can emerge despite these conditions. These queries will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 7

The production of southern conflict coverage

The previous content and news framing analysis chapter demonstrated that, notwithstanding the differences among the four news organisations in this study, violence and preservation of public order have constantly been prominent aspects of the southern conflict in news content. The news framing analysis further indicates that the coverage focuses more on the unrest situations and solutions than investigating the causes or elaborating on the impacts of the conflict on involved stakeholders. By doing so, the conflict is represented as a regional warfare, committed by clandestine forces with no clear goals and demands, and required solutions that deals with visible symptoms of violence. Moreover, authority sources, particularly those specialising in law enforcement and crime investigation, security affairs and policies are used more frequently than others. Additionally, the depiction of state officials as heroic and protective, the portrayal of the locals as vulnerable and helpless, and the labels on antagonists as criminals together endorse the state's action as legitimate. Thus, these findings imply the news media's inclination towards the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse over others.

The analysis shows minimal discursive shifts through the seven-year review period, although there are signs of subtle changes and fluidity. The frames that have recurred most frequently concern the aggressions, while some frames, such as the recognition of local identity and reconciliation, emerge only when political contingencies and opportunities struck. The findings reflect the relations between media and politics, as suggested by Wolfsfeld (1997), and how the political elites' consensus and dissensus towards the subject would be echoed in news representation of the issue (Hallin 1989). The trends of coverage also reflect the news media's waning interest in the conflict despite its continuation, as the phenomenon is considered repetitive.

In all, the content and news framing analysis chapter showed that the diversity of Thai news ecology does little to produce diversified news representations of the southern conflict. Nonetheless, there are some discrepancies in the four news organisations' interpretations of the conflict, particularly its causes and solutions, which enable other competing discourses to rise. Such opportunities signal the struggle and complexity in news ecology, and imply that it would be unfair to conclude that Thai journalism as a whole performs a singular and static role in the southern conflict.

To answer RQ2 regarding the news production culture and its influence on the roles of Thai journalism in the southern conflict, the next two chapters further tease out the reasons behind journalists' decisions and actions in producing the previously discussed news representation. Using the data gathered from the ethnographic studies of news production and in-depth interviews, this chapter describes the key elements involved in journalists' reporting of the southern conflict at different levels, and the subsequent chapter will present the debates and discussions concerning the relationship between news workers and sources, and the disparate roles of journalism in this conflict.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first gives an overview of the news production process and the interaction among journalists in southern conflict coverage. The second part examines the factors influencing journalists' work in the reporting of southern violence and conflict, presented in two subsections; the first subsection deals with the difficulties of field reporting, particularly in the restive area, while the second subsection then looks at factors occurring in the newsroom. The final part then presents a conclusion. Together, this chapter seeks to establish a basic understanding of Thai journalists' modus operandi, particularly on how the professional principles and practices influence southern conflict reporting.

7.1 Making news about the southern conflict

This section starts with an overall picture of the news production process, then moves on to discuss the practices that members of the studied news organisations and local media outlets deploy in reporting the southern conflict.

The previous news content analysis chapter identified one difference among the selected media outlets: their platforms. In this chapter, it should be reminded that these organisations also differ in their sizes, management structures, as well as journalistic and operational principles. Two of the selected agencies, the *Matichon* daily and *Manager* website, are commercial media. The remaining two, in spite of being non-profit, vary in terms of their journalistic principles. The *Thai PBS* television station upholds the public service broadcasting ethos that emphasizes plurality and diversity, while the *Isara* website's goal is to be an alternative source of news from the far South. The main differences among these organisations can be described in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 The differences of the four news organisations in this study

	Matichon	***Thai PBS***	***Manager***	***Isara***
Type of organisation	Public company	National public service broadcaster	Privately-owned company	Professional organisation
Ownership	Matichon Group (a listed media corporation)	Public Broadcasting Organisation of Thailand (a state independent agency)	Manager Group (a medium-size media company)	Isara Institute (a professional organisation)
Primary source of revenue	Advertising	Excise tax (approx. £40 million set for annual budget)	Advertising	Various domestic and international civil society organisations
Other media operations under the same ownership	• 2 newspapers: (1 tabloid-style daily, 1 business weekly) • 1 weekly & 3 monthly magazines: (1 news & current affairs, 1 history & culture, 2 small business-oriented) • 1 publishing house	1 digital radio station (as of 2012)	• 1 daily newspaper • 1 financial weekly magazine • 1 news & current affairs monthly magazine • sister companies run 4 satellite TV channels and 2 monthly magazines[1]	The Southern News Desk is a section of the Isara News Agency's website, which also hosts: • 1 'news for community centre' website • 1 'public policy news centre' website • 1 'investigative news centre' website

[1] In March 2012, the *Manager* Group announced it would close down the magazines and other satellite television channels to streamline the production costs, and maintain only 1 daily newspaper, 1 satellite TV news channel, and the *Manager* online news website.

	Matichon	***Thai PBS***	***Manager* Online**	***Isara***
Newsroom operation	• HQ in Bangkok • no news centre in South • stringers based in southern provinces – under Regional News desk	• HQ in Bangkok • the Southern news centre based in Hat Yai, Songkhla • stringers based in southern provinces – under Regional News desk	• HQ in Bangkok • the Southern News Centre based in Hat Yai, Songkhla • stringers based in southern provinces - under Southern News Centre	• no official HQ/ editor based in Bangkok • no office in southern provinces, reporters mostly based in Pattani • stringers and contributors based in southern provinces
News content orientation	Political news	Public policy news	General news	News about southern conflict and the southernmost region
General presentation of southern conflict news	Appear on: Front page, Regional News section, Feature sections	Appear in: • 7 regular newscasts • 5 hourly bulletins	Front page, Southern News website (covering stories from the entire South, but not specifically about southern conflict)	The entire website content is dedicated to the subject
Regular section for southern conflict reports	None	• One 5-minute weekly package on Sunday prime-time newscast • One 30-minute magazine programme on Monday afternoon slot	None	The entire website content is dedicated to the subject

The content analysis findings demonstrated that southern conflict reports are mostly originated in the three southern border provinces, namely, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, and four districts of the neighbouring Songkhla Province, while some stories come from the capital city where the national-level politics takes place. For the incidents happened in Bangkok, reporters attached to different news desks at the headquarters are responsible for filing stories to the newsroom directly. Additional steps occur with regard to stories from the southernmost region. Typically, the Bangkok-based media outlets hire stringers who reside in the provinces to send in stories from the area. Most television stations also establish the southern news centre, generally composed of a chief, reporters, and production crews, to produce their own reports, liaise with local stringers, and edit stringers' copies before sending them to the headquarters. All stringers and regional news centres fall under the supervision of the Regional News desk in Bangkok.

Stringers are primarily responsible for filing straight-forward news reports and rough data, while reporters are mostly tasked with producing news and feature-style packages as well as live report. It should also be noted that local stringers usually work for more than one news organisations. For instance, a stringer who was interviewed for his work with *Thai PBS* also files stories to eight other news companies: five dailies and three television channels.

In line with Leon Sigal's study (1973 cited in Gamson and Modigliani 1989, p. 8), journalists generally obtain information from three channels: 1) *routine*, 2) *informal*, and 3) *enterprise*. The *routine* channel refers to press releases, press conferences, and scheduled events. The *informal* channel is when reporters receive information via background briefings, leaks, or reports from other news organisations.[2] Lastly, the *enterprise* channel refers to journalists' own initiatives such as one-on-one interviews, unprecedented events, first-hand observations, and independent research and analysis.

When covering news about violent incidents, local journalists usually receive the preliminary investigation summary sent out by three local authorities: army, police, and the provincial data centre. As will be discussed in a moment, southern journalists and stringers'

[2] In Sigal's study, the difference between the *routine* and the *informal* channels is that the *routine* channel centres around governmental activities, while the *informal* channel focuses on unofficial and non-governmental sources. However, in the case of Thailand's southern conflict, the sources become more diverse and complex than those in the original study in early 1970s. In this case, a number of non-governmental sources also employ press relations strategies similar to those carried out by authority sources such as organising events and issuing press releases. Such tactics enable the information to reach journalists via the *routine* channel. Therefore, in this thesis, the *routine* channel includes scheduled events and activities organised by both governmental and non-governmental sources, while the *informal* channel refers to background and confidential information.

safety concern makes them rely more on these official reports than going out in the field. This dependency, therefore, enables official voices to appear in news content more frequently than that of other protagonists. The stories from the field and those produced in-house are sent to desk editors, then screened in editorial meetings, prioritised by the editor in charge of the daily production, and edited by responsible crews before being presented on the respective media platforms. The line of production of the southern conflict news employed by different studied organisations is described in Figure 7.1 below.

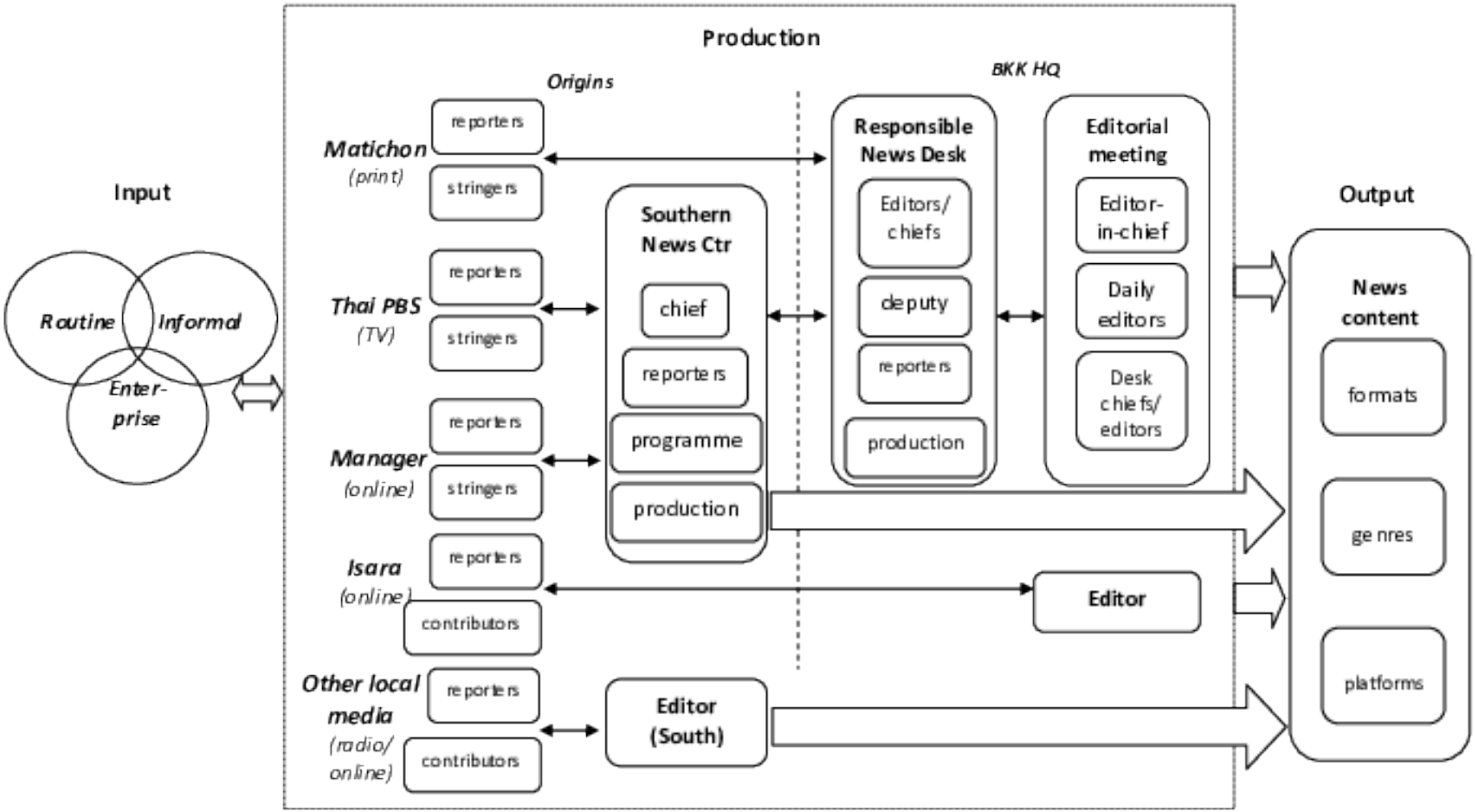

Figure 7.1 The line of production of the southern conflict news employed by news organisations

The news organisations have different arrangements in terms of the coordination between the headquarters and southern reporters. The *Matichon* newspaper does not own a news centre in the region; therefore, their local stringers have a direct contact with the regional news desk in Bangkok. Both *Thai PBS* and *Manager* have the southern news centre, as shown in Table 7.1, but their scale of operation differs. *Thai PBS*' southern news centre comprises approximately 30 staff, including news production crews and transmission technicians, whereas the *Manager*'s southern news unit is composed of 10 people who are responsible for the content on southern violence across all Manager Group media platforms: print, television, and online. Another difference between these two organisations is the interaction with the Bangkok head office. *Thai PBS* uses its regional news centre to coordinate with stringers and edit copies, but the ultimate decision on media output rests with the Bangkok desk and daily editors. Meanwhile, with the southern news website launched in February 2012, the *Manager* southern team takes own responsibilities, bypassing Bangkok, in producing the online presentation themselves. Like the *Matichon* daily, the two news centres still exchange story ideas and assignments with the Bangkok editorial team.

Meanwhile, the *Isara* website operates with a small news production team similar to most local alternative media. The difference was the *Isara* editor for southern conflict news is based in Bangkok and also works as a senior reporter/editor for a national newspaper whereas editors and managers of most local alternative media are based in the region, and some work as stringers and fixers.

While the news filtering process varies from one organisation to another, the media outlets still share one similar practice: the editor has to approve the story ideas and the finished product. The next step after receiving the southern conflict reports from the field is similar across all media outlets. For large media operations, such as *Matichon* and *Thai PBS*, the responsible editors would present the stories in the editorial meetings in which other reports and ideas would also be discussed. The editorial meetings are held at least twice a day and attended by desk editors, news managers, producers, and senior staff. At *Thai PBS*, a representative from the legal department also attends the evening editorial meeting to share expertise and ensure the coverage does not violate the law. Additionally, a staffer from the Civil Media Network department, which is in charge of the citizen reporter training and production, partakes in the meeting to provide stories and ideas from citizen reporters based around the country, including the southern border provinces.

Generally, the Regional News desk becomes the 'host' of the southern conflict issue because most incidents are originated in the South. Nevertheless, when authorities in Bangkok or other parts of the country speak about or react towards the events that take place in the southern region, reporters from relevant news desks, such as political, security affairs, current affairs, or special report, would be required to cover the story. Therefore, sometimes the coverage becomes a collaborative product of different news desks and production departments. Based on the information presented and discussed in the editorial meeting, the editors in charge (i.e. front page editor and editors of daily news bulletins) would prioritise the stories for their responsible presentation as they arrange the front page appearance or assemble the news bulletin rundown. At the same time, the meeting attendees would discuss news angles and presentation formats, make suggestions, seek coordination with other desks and departments, and give new assignments to relevant parties.

Corresponding with the findings in the content analysis chapter, the common presentation formats are straight-forward news reports, feature articles or TV packages, interviews, and analysis and investigative reports. The print and online media sometimes publish interview transcripts, reports, or speeches in their entirety, while the TV station leverage on its broadcast media features by reporting live and hosting discussion programmes with involved parties exchanging comments on the spot. In the southern conflict reporting, the general news topics include criminal investigation and justice system, policies and politics, security affairs, impact on lives, and history and culture. In terms of media platforms, the editorial meetings usually entail the talks about news presentation on the main distribution channel. Participants sometimes discuss additional presentation channels for some major stories, such as live streaming via website. But generally, the presentation of news outputs on additional platforms, for example, the organisations' website, online social media such as YouTube, or online social networks such as the reporters' personal or the organisation's Facebook or Twitter accounts, is carried out independently by the responsible departments or the reporters themselves.

Talks and discussions in the editorial meetings normally involve the immediate tasks such as daily news presentation and coverage of the following day and week. Ideally, the editorial meeting would be the forum where news managers and senior reporters share their ideas, news tips, and expertises. Nonetheless, based on my observations and those of some senior participants in the *Thai PBS* editorial meetings, the meetings are a rather "passive" panel where editors merely present the stories they receive from their reporters, then leave.

Occasionally, there would be debates about news angles and presentation formats, but in-depth discussions about the situation rarely happen.

The editorial and production process is described in Figure 7.2 below. The diagram may best explain the practice in large media organisations as it shows various parties involved in the process. Nonetheless, smaller operations such as *Manager*, *Isam*, and other local media outlets also apply similar editorial procedures, although the process may not include as many participants.

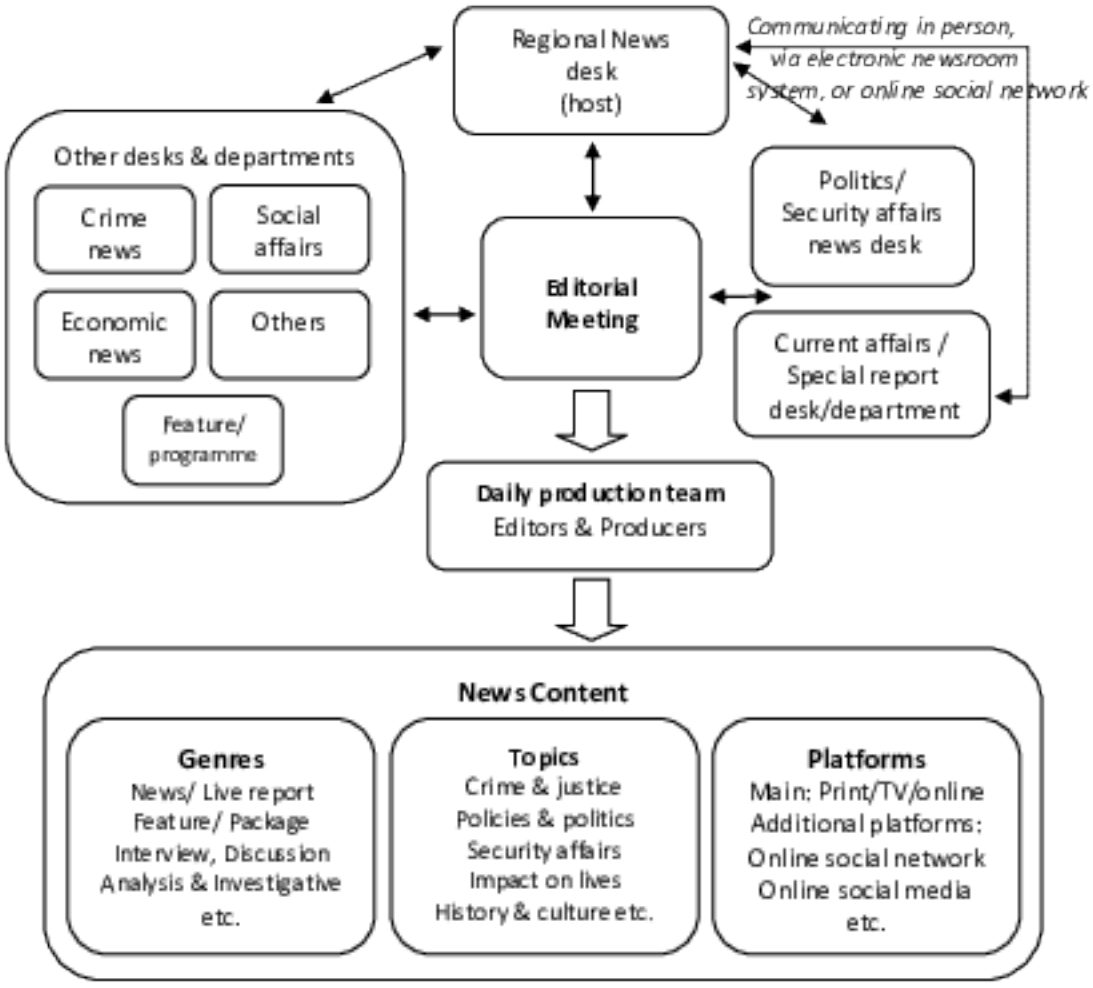

Figure 7.2 The editorial meeting and news production process employed by news organisations

Overall, it can be concluded that despite their different organisational principles and structures, the four selected news media organisations employ a similar news production machination. At the heart of this system is the acts of screening, selecting, editing, packaging, and prioritising – the clear evidences that news is not simply presented on 'how it happened', but rather, 'how it happened as journalists see it'. As will be discussed in the

next chapter regarding the roles of journalism, it is this editorial system, along with the notion of 'neutrality', that news organisations and its employees proclaim to be the foundation of journalistic professionalism, and use these characteristics to distinguish themselves from other alternative and advocacy media outlets. Nonetheless, the information from observations and interviews will show that news workers' perceptions towards these notions vary, hence leading to disparate roles they play in the conflict.

Having mapped out the news making processes and key people in the production of southern conflict news, this chapter moves to elaborate further on the elements involving in these processes in the following section.

7.2 Journalists and the difficulties in southern conflict reporting

People involved in the making of southern conflict news could be categorised into two groups. The first is news workers based in the southern border provinces where the conflict is originated, which includes stringers for mainstream national media, the southern news centre crews, local media producers, and those working for alternative and advocacy media based in the region. The second group comprises those based in Bangkok, including beat and senior reporters, desk editors, and the daily production editors.

The following two subsections start with difficulties faced by those in the field, then move on to describe the factors contributing to the newsroom's decisions and actions regarding southern conflict reporting. These elements are laid out in this section to pave the way for the discussions on the disparate roles of journalism in the following chapter.

7.2.1. Difficulties in the field: reporting from the volatile environment

This subsection identifies four key factors that influence journalists' work in the restive area, from most apparent to most subtle. These factors are 1) intimidations and threats, 2) information deficit and disinformation, 3) personal and professional dilemmas, and 4) the "Bangkok-centric" mindset.

7.2.1.1. Intimidations and threats

Bangkok-based desk reporters and editors often specialise in their assigned beats, for example, politics, security affairs, economy, and criminal investigation and justice system, etc. On the contrary, reporters and stringers based in the provinces are required to cover a broader range of issues in their responsible area, from local politics and economy to social problems and environmental issues. Their job description resembles that of current affairs

or investigative reporters who are not attached to specific beats; however, the regional news reporters' works are more geographical-oriented. Being based outside the main office, regional news reporters are often regarded as 'second-class reporter' by those based in the HQ because most stories from the provinces are often considered trivial, as a southern news centre chief and a veteran regional news reporter puts it. This attitude also signals how the Bangkok-based news organisations regard regional news in general.

When violent incidents re-emerged in the southernmost provinces in early 2004, reporters stationed in the area learned to acquire a new set of skills to do their work. Despite not being a direct target, journalists were injured in several bombing attacks when reporting from the scenes. Since then, reporters' newsgathering routine has been affected. They have to study the patterns of attacks and come up with ways to keep themselves safe in the hostile environment. As told by news editors and local reporters, how to stay safe in the volatile area is considered the first quality of reporters in the deep South.

> People usually have an overall impression that [we] need media that are talented and skilful. There are many levels of expertise. If you are in that area, we need the media whose top skill is to get stories without having friends attending their funeral or visiting them at the hospital.
> (Korkhet Jantalertrat, *Thai PBS* assistant news director, interview 8 February 2012)

> We must admit that reporters cannot go places freely. Their safety is most important. So when we assign something, we have to take care of them. For example, we do not recommend entering a risky area. […] It's not like we want them to go in and wear an armoured vest. It is not that necessary. But if it is really significant, we will discuss and find other ways to gather information, perhaps via telephone?
> (Seksan Kittitaweesin, *Matichon* Regional News desk chief, interview 23 February 2012)

> Safety issue is the only thing we need to check. Lately, we have to be cautious about repeated bombing because it can happen anytime – a 50:50 chance. The best way is to minimise the frequency of visits to the scene; only go when it is necessary. For instance, if the case is not complicated, I would not go [to the scene]… But if it is a clash, or the information is complicated, I would go [to the scene].
> (Roseedah Pusu, stringer, interview 19 February 2012)

An interesting point drawn from the above interview excerpts is that news organisations prefer to keep reporters from the scene over sending them in equipped with protective gears. While this caution corresponds with the remark, "no news is worth getting killed for", it also reflects the news organisations' pretermission of southern conflict reporting.

Most Thai news outlets do not specifically provide hostile environment training or protective equipment for their southern reporters. Moreover, stringers are not covered by news media organisations' insurance policy.[3] With safety being the key concern and the frequency of field visits minimised, the reports might lose certain details essential to better understand the cases and rely more on official accounts of the events.

While unprecedented attacks are the obvious danger, reporters in the far South also encounter other forms of pressures that could compromise their reporting ability. The threats range from subtle means like verbal abuse to bold methods such as stalking. More importantly, the intimidations come from various involved parties from all levels, be it junior officers, high-ranking authorities, villagers, or local interest groups.

Reporters are used to snide comments and officials' requests to "tone down" their reports. Army officials sometimes accused journalists of being an "indirect ally" of insurgents by reporting about their attacks. Some accused journalists of being "oxygen provider" for insurgent movements and cited the "contagion effect", reasoning that perpetrators might feel glorified by the reports and encouraged to instigate more violent incidents. While these remarks do not cause physical harm, they do not foster a comfortable environment for journalists to work in either. As seen in the excerpt below, these small banters reflect the authorities' negative attitude towards journalists – that they are unpatriotic for discrediting the army's reputation.

> Sometimes the soldiers said to me, "Hey, pop, you only take photos of negative stories. It's damaging for us. [...] You only take photo when we are harmed, shot, bombed, injured. You always come." These sentences are really painful.
> (Surapan Boonthanom, local reporter and freelance photographer, interview 16 December 2011)

Besides the subtle criticism, journalists also receive 'warnings' in forms of mysterious calls or tailings to signal that they are being watched. A local news website editor who once

[3] It cannot be inferred based on the southern conflict reporting case alone that media organisations neglect the safety of their employees; however, the argument here is that the media organisations' policies concerning reporters' safety seem to vary from one case to another, depending on the level of physical threats, the magnitude of the problem, and possibly the geo-political interests. For instance, during the coverage of the anti-government mass demonstrations in Bangkok, which turned violence and were later suppressed by police and military during May 2010, reporters, especially broadcast journalists, were shown to be equipped with bullet proof vests and helmets when reporting from the demonstration sites. The professional organisations also issued statements condemning threats against and assaults on media practitioners (Thai Journalists Association, 20 May 2010). Nonetheless, media and professional organisations generally do not organise training on hostile environment reporting specifically for relevant reporters and southern stringers, although other types of training courses held by professional organisations, such as investigative reporting workshops, may include a brief session on weapons and surviving skills.

worked for *Isara* said he was warned of becoming a target following an interview with an Islamic studies professor criticising the insurgents' attacks on civilians.

> The story lead was [the professor]'s words, but the by-line was my name, which said something like, "the movement that claims to fight for… but uses brutality… […] After the story was posted, an email came to our central mailbox and made a threat, saying that they all knew me, where I came from, where I studied. That person might be someone close to me, an acquaintance. The person then warned me that, "Previously the gun was pointed towards state officials. But today, the aim was changed from state officials to include you, too."
> (Tuwaedaniya Meringing, Aman News Agency[4] editor, interview 18 December 2011)

Upon entering unfamiliar territories, especially the communities where attacks recently occur, reporters also face an unwelcoming atmosphere, as told by *Isara* reporters based in Pattani.

> Jeh-ha: [Villagers] moved in slowly, and started to question us.
> Wangni: A few of them came first. We recognised them as members of [the insurgent movement's] community relations team. They asked if we were reporters. Then they started shouting, saying "there reporters never reported correctly… Lame." As they became louder, the crowd started to gather around us.
> Jeh-ha: I could barely breathe.
> Wangni: When more people came, they would throw more accusations at us to mobilise the crowd. But lucky for us, at that moment, [the provincial governor] arrived, so the villagers dispersed. We were saved. […] If he came a little later, we might be in trouble.
> Jeh-ha: Definitely. It almost happened many times.
> (Nasurah Jeh-ha and Abdullah Wangni, *Isara* reporters, interview 19 February 2012)

Journalists said authorities also deploy similar methods to intimidate them, ranging from subtle interrogation to monitoring their movements. Members of local alternative media raised concerns when one producer was "invited" by the regional military officials for "interviews and talks" at a military camp, where he was questioned about the production process, the funding from organisation overseas, and the content emphasis on the sufferings of Muslims.[5] A local online news editor who also worked as a fixer was

[4] The Aman News Agency (http://amannews.org) was set up in 2009 by members of local alternative media in Pattani Province, and is funded by civil society agencies and education institutes. The website's objective is to serve as a non-profit online news source concerning the southern conflict and to promote peaceful resolutions. The contents, mostly news and features, are presented in three languages: Thai, English, and Bahasa (the language used in Malaysia and Indonesia, similar to the region's Malayu or Jawi dialect).

[5] Local media producers reported that Sabari Jeh-long, a volunteer of the Southern Peace Media Volunteer Network, was called in for questioning by military officers at a Pattani military camp for two days in July 2012. According to the articles, authority "invited" Mr. Jeh-long in for interrogation because he was a former student leader who was involved in a demonstration in 2007 and suspected to be involved in other violent

questioned by state authorities after helping foreign correspondents conduct an interview with alleged insurgents.

> Many TV crews really wanted to [interview insurgents]. For example, they would blur the face or alter the audio. But you did not realise that after you went back, how people in the area…your coordinator…would continue their lives here. For example, the recent Al-Jazeera interview became an issue. I had been followed by ISOC [Internal Security Operation Command] officials for several days. They met with me and asked, "Where did you bring [the TV crew] to get that interview?" (Meringing)

An *Isara* reporter said she was tailed and the house where she lived with her husband and three small children were broken into after a story deemed to pose a negative impact on the local administrative body was broadcasted on radio.

> Jeh-ha: [A] district chief-officer was sent to meet with us.
> Wangni: A sedan had been following us for more than a week.
> Jeh-ha: There had always been intimidations, but we didn't report them to officials. I would tell [the editor] that we constantly faced such situations. At first we didn't think it would happen, so we didn't do anything. But later, there were a lot of things missing [from the house]. It was baffling.
> (Jeh-ha and Wangni)

Apart from facing harassment from state authorities, the two aforementioned reporters also came across similar intimidation methods suspected to be carried out by another local interest group. After her interview piece with a senator about his views on the special administrative models, part of *Isara*'s series on the issue, was posted on the website, Nasurah noticed she was trailed around the town by unknown motorcyclists. Fearing for the safety of their children, the couple moved from their rental house in the city to a "safe house" – a quiet rural neighbourhood surrounded by Abdullah's relatives, to help with the lookout. Although no harm has been done, the young journalists are constantly intimidated, such as their vehicles being tampered with, or some strangers suspiciously driving around their current residence. The duress even prompted them to consider purchasing a handgun for protection. The facts that these two junior reporters started out

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incidents. Apart from being asked about his participation in Islamic students' activities, Mr. Jeh-long revealed he faced queries regarding alternative media production, and was questioned about the local media's financial supports and emphasis on the sufferings of Muslims. For more detail, see, Choen Sue Tang Lueak Sob Set Laew Kho Keb DNA [Alternative media summoned for interrogation, DNA also collected] [Online]. *Deep South Watch*. 26 July 2012. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/3422 [Accessed: 14 January 2013], and Patani Design 1: Sue Tang Lueak Lueak Sue Tang Yuttitham [Patani Design 1: Alternative media select to communicate with justice] [Online]. *Prachatai*. 28 July 2012. Available at: http://prachatai.com/journal/2012/07/41768 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

as freelance journalists and have been working for small media organisations for less than a decade potentially deprive them of a well-known journalistic institution that would support their works and protect their safety, making them more vulnerable to intimidation than the senior peers.

In all, these examples demonstrate how journalists manage themselves in the conflict's hostile environment. The aggressions and intimidations from stakeholders involved occasionally deter news workers from fully performing their duties, and such limitations inevitably affect the news output.

7.2.1.2. Information deficit and disinformation

Reporters often come across the situations where they cannot gain access to the data, or receive information they cannot verify, as disparate players utilise several means to conceal information or disseminate the versions that best promote their cause. Stringers said the murky atmosphere following an incident when no one was willing to talk made their job of gathering information even more problematic.

> Now I'm worried about facts and misinformation. Which is which, we cannot prove it. We can only present the news. Now, it is information warfare. Who shot whom? Was it the perpetrator? Was it the officer? So when we present the stories, we cannot rely on our emotion to know the cause of the attack. It is quite frustrating.
> (Muhammadpares Lohasan, stringer, interview 17 December 2011)

> During the first 2 years [of the unrest], my job had been rather difficult, because we had no idea who the perpetrators were. Especially the first year, we didn't know what happened. We only knew there were casualties and losses, but not about who caused them. For the locals, they felt these were the state's actions. And for people working in the area like us, accessing information had been difficult. No news was released, and there were attempts to conceal the information, as if those events were nothing or they were small matters.
> (Pusu)

Additionally, because most incidents that reporters have to report are from the scenes of violent incidents, getting pass security officers guarding the perimeters and gleaning first-hand information from investigators become difficult, yet common.

> I think, to report news now, the first is problems about information – information from officials. Did they give us the correct or inaccurate information? And can we enter the scene of incident? I understand that they are concerned about our safety, but sometimes…[the blockade caused] delay. […] For incidents in which [soldiers]

> were the target, they would close the area, block the media and have us wait until they have cleared the area, which means taking out the bodies.
> (Ahmad Ramansiriwong, stringer, interview 19 February 2012)
>
> [Soldiers] blocked me, prohibited me from entering the scene, saying the boss didn't allow me to enter. So I said, "Sir, I'm also working here. I have to perform my duty, and you have to do yours. I know what is appropriate or not. I am also a Thai and love my homeland. I know what to do. If I don't get any photos back, how can I make my living? Many lives are waiting for me (laughing)."
> (Boonthanom)

Interestingly, the latter remark corresponds with an earlier observation that state officials often see reporters as being unpatriotic. Thus, the "I'm also a Thai" defence is used to show the reporter's patriotism and that he is on the same side as the soldiers.

Another method used by the protagonists is to feed journalists with their side of stories. Authorities usually do so by organising press conferences, disseminating official statements, and seeking cooperation from the media to report "correctly". There are several occasions in which the regional Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) issued their statements to clarify the situations and counter the news reports that were deemed to criticise or undermine the military's operation.[6] Interestingly, these statements were generally faxed or emailed to the journalists in charge of southern conflict news and the news organisations directly, but were not posted on the agency's official website. Meanwhile, local civil societies, like the Muslim Attorney Centre, or even separatist groups based overseas such as the PULO, are persistent in sending out press releases criticising the Thai government and justice system to reporters in the deep South and those specialising in the issue.

The press conferences, news releases, and "fact-finding" trips are among the frequently used formal methods to provide journalists with their explanations of the problem, but some players in the conflict employ more subtle means such as involving journalists in their works. For example, the local administrative body SBPAC appointed several local reporters as members of its committees on southern solutions, reasoning that these reporters could share their expertise in the field with other responsible agencies. An experienced editor

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[6] See, for example, "Ko O Ro Mo No Pak 4 So No" To "Naew Na" Koranee Tang Sun Prasan-ngan Khao San Chai Daen Tai [ISOC Region 4 refutes "Naew Na" in the southern border information collaboration centre case] [Online]. *Manager Online*. 2 September 2012. Available at: http://www.manager.co.th/South/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID =9550000107948 on 17 December 2012 [Accessed: 14 January 2013], and Patibatkan Khoa San Khong Ko O Ro Mo No [ISOC's Information Operation] [Online]. *Krungthep Turakit*. 11 December 2012. Available at: http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/home/ detail/politics/opinion/ politic-view/20121211/481533/ปฏิบัติการข่าวสาร-กอ.รมน..html [Accessed: 17 December 2012].

revealed that some intelligence agencies went as far as paying local reporters retainer fees in exchange for information they gathered. In similar vein, local NGOs working on the southern violence issues often forge partnership with alternative media in running their campaigns. For instance, the public service broadcaster *Thai PBS* establishes a working group, comprising local academics, civil societies, and media workers, to consult on the southern news centre's locally-produced programme production.

From a positive outlook, the partnership with local NGOs brings about the reciprocal exchange of information that enables journalists to acquire the locals' underreported insights. However, the socialisation does not necessarily guarantee every player involved would be fairly represented or help stabilise trust and credibility in news media. As some senior editors observed, civil society groups also have their own agenda, and their press releases sometimes omit certain crucial information to buttress their arguments. But because of their non-profit organisation status, their messages are usually reported unchecked or un-analysed. This is a significant point and will be brought up again in the next chapter to discuss the complex relationships between sources and journalists, and their influences on the diverse roles journalism plays in this conflict.

7.2.1.3. Personal and professional dilemmas

Violence, intimidation, and confusing information generate an obscure climate that prompts news workers to carry themselves carefully in order to get the story while maintaining relationship with disparate sources and staying safe. Similar to reporting about other conflicts, journalists said the involved protagonists usually accuse them of supporting their adversaries. No matter how the news media report about the conflict, not every player would be pleased. This perception puts reporters in a precarious position as they negotiate their stance in the conflict.

> Reporters are not different from religious leaders in the area, being caught between the buffalo horns. We're only the egg – anywhere we turn, we may break. […] If we give more weight on one side, suppose the people, the state may accuse us of siding with the movement, right? When we are heavy on criticising the movement, they may also think that we side with the state, is it not? The area we stand is a dangerous area. The two sides do not understand this. We are also in trouble. Therefore, the work we do here, sometimes we want to communicate to the state, security, or the movement, so they understand that we stand in the middle.
> (Meringing)

> Sometimes, performing our duty as the media here is very difficult because we are amidst a lot of interests. We are attacked from every direction. And if we don't do

> it, sometimes villagers will say that we are gagged by state officials or whatever. But if we [criticise the state], we are attacked either way. So we have to be careful. Working in the conflict is difficult, and if [your knowledge] isn't crystallised or you don't have enough time to talk with everyone, you are set to become a tool of any parties all the time. You cannot stand in the middle as you wish you could .
> (Tichila Puttasarapan, *Thai PBS* southern news centre reporter, interview 23 December 2011)

As stated earlier, to minimise travelling to unfamiliar zones could compromise the newsgathering process. At the same time, the concerns over threats from local interest groups, particularly underground crime syndicates, as well as intervention from authorities, also cause the chilling effect among local media workers, including civic media practitioners. This is in line with the discussions about the impact of State of Emergency Decree on Thai media in Chapter 4, where media producers resorted to self-censorship to prevent state interference. As told by a community radio practitioner, the station's staffers avoid directly discussing the southern conflict and relevant problems even in their internal workshop.

> First, we wanted to analyse problems about narcotic drugs [in the community], but we became scared that if the drug dealers [knew about it]… we'd be dead. So we said that, let's do it like this, let's not talk about narcotics. Let's talk about safety instead. How can we maintain safety in our community?
> (Yah Alee, community radio practitioner, interview 17 February 2012)

Instead of tackling the conflict bluntly, local media talk about the impact of violence on their lives. For instance, if an attack occurs, the university radio station in Pattani would immediately devote airtime to traffic reports and safety precautions announcements rather than focusing on the investigation of the incident. According to one of the station's senior producers, such reports would keep listeners informed and remain calm amidst the chaos. In similar vein, a community radio in central Pattani focuses on boosting morale among the locals, which would be more useful to them than talking about their predicament.

> Researcher: Can you talk about the unrest [on community radio]?
> Alee: Neutrally, yes. The unrest in three southernmost provinces, we would talk about it, but we must not implicate state agencies or instigators. We would talk about…positive issues. Anything here should be positive.
> Researcher: How about the Pulo Puyo shooting case?[7]

[7] The 'Pulo Puyo shooting' case refers to the shooting of villagers from Baan Namdam village in Pulo Puyo Sub-district of Pattani on January 29, 2012. Four villagers were killed at the scene and four other injured. It was later reported that army rangers opened fire on these villagers, suspecting them of attacking a security checkpoint earlier that evening. After the investigation, authorities revealed the villagers were travelling to another village to attend a funeral, and were not involved in any shootout. The ranger unit that launched the

Alee: That one, we did not talk about at all, that kind of stories, because mainstream national media already reported about it. We won't talk about the unrest. But we would talk in the way that…sort of fostering villagers' conscience, making them strong, empowering them. Encourage them to think that those who perished, they already met with God. Something like that. If we take on revenge, it will not end. We must tolerate what happened. Let the justice system decides that [shooters] are wrong or not. We will say it fairly.

Researcher: You didn't talk in detail about the incident then?

Alee: No, we didn't talk about who did it. No. We must be neutral, otherwise we can't stay. This is the thing. We have to set our position.

(Alee)

It is also worth noting that the community radio DJ's definition of "being neutral" is not to allude to any actors, and, as hinted here, one reason behind this is so that their small operation would not be interfered by state authorities, insurgents, or interest groups.

The observation that local media do not want to elaborate further on violent incidents corresponds with a comment by a key member of the civic advocacy website Deep South Watch who organises a citizen reporter workshop for the locals. She pointed out that, rather than talking about the unrest, the southerners opted to produce stories about local traditions to inform the world outside about their peaceful ways of living.

> The case of citizen reporters is very interesting. We trained them so that they can communicate, and we asked them to communicate from their stance. So instead of communicating about the impact of violent incidents on their lives, they chose to communicate about culture, their ways of life first. That was what they wanted to tell, under the condition that there were stories they could and could not talk about. [In the stories that] they could tell, they wanted to explain the kind of people that they are. Then, the society needs to read [between the line] to realise what they could not talk about [because] they live in a violence-ridden area.
> (Thitinob Komolnimi, Deep South Watch, interview 20 December 2011)

Meanwhile, mainstream journalists incorporate news judgment with professional ethics and personal belief to form a set of criteria of what they can and cannot report. A Muslim stringer said he was concerned about local social problems such as the prevalence of narcotic drugs among local youths, but did not report the issue in national media as it went against his religious belief.

> For Muslims, there are rules. Any negativity connected to Islam must not be amplified. We must solve the problem first. So, I'm a reporter…but this is the

shooting was removed from the village and replaced by a new unit. Families of those killed and injured in the incident would receive compensation for the misconduct.

> position I got stuck wit. For example, the [provincial] Islamic committee must devote themselves for Islam, but they bought votes. Like this. Can I write about it?
> (Lohasan)

Other journalists cited the scenarios when they were tipped off or came across crucial information, but could not report because no sources would openly verify it. A number of these problematic cases involve the deaths of locals, which authorities ruled out as resulted from the unrest. Although these cases were known among community members as personal conflict, no one would formally and publicly admit it because the victim's family would earn compensation from the state from such casualties. In line with the content analysis findings, stories about civil servants such as teachers, police officers, and army personnel who perished in the deep South usually honoured the deceased for their sacrifice. But as these reporters told, using the non-glorifying narrative to report these incidents might not be supported by the newsroom or other peers.

> There is this one case. A police officer had an affair with someone's wife and was shot dead. But, excuse me, every TV station made a package, honouring him, saying he made a sacrifice because he didn't want to be relocated. But do you understand, that was not the truth. [The headquarters] told me to report about this, but I didn't do it because I knew what the truth was. [...] They became heroes, praised for not moving away and being loved by the locals. But I don't do this. I can't do it. It goes against my will. But I don't object [the headquarters] from reporting. I don't write about it, but I let others do it. At least I'm not part of this. I really can't do it.
> (Puttasarapan)

> Every reporter in the area knows what happened in each incident. They know, but sometimes we can't do anything. One, it is our safety. It's risky because there are people who hate us and people who like us.[...] If I go against the trend, others would attack me. It's difficult. We know about many cases, but we can't do anything about them.
> (Ramansiriwong)

Another news editor raised an interesting argument concerning conflict reporting. Giving the example of citizen journalism, he remarked that, more important than reporting 'the truth', journalists should also consider the implications of their exposé. His statement below brings in a new perspective in the dilemma news workers face in southern conflict reporting: peaceful resolutions

> Somebody asked me if citizen reporters could report about soldiers slapping villagers. They had photos. I said, "The question is, if you present it, what do you think it would bring about?" Okay, for one thing, you might be attacked. But secondly, it would definitely intensify the hatred between the locals and state officials in the area, wouldn't it?

(Somkiat Jantaraseema, *Thai PBS* Civic Media Network Director, interview 1 February 2012)

Overall, this subsection infers that the manufacturing of southern conflict news is not always a clear-cut process as journalists sometimes struggle to overcome their personal and professional limitations while producing news reports. Still, self-censorship does not necessarily mean journalists willingly become the state's propaganda vehicle. In several cases, such as demonstrated in the last two statements, certain issues are not reported because they may bring harm to informants or incite further hatred instead of serving public interest.

7.2.1.4. The "Bangkok-centric" mindset[8]

The final factor influencing reporters' works in the restive area is how the newsroom handles the coverage of southern conflict. Despite being called "Bangkok-centric" here, the notion refers not only to the geographically-focused views, but also the emphasis on the conventional top-down approach of centralised administration where main decisions come from authorities. The "Bangkok-centric" mindset is discernible in the interactions between field reporters and the newsroom staffers, and will be discussed again in the next subsection. As demonstrated below, stringers said the limited understanding of the southern conflict among some Bangkok-based writers and editors put more pressure on them.

> Bangkok [newsroom] only makes demands and constantly pushes for answers. "Sis, so what was the cause?" The incident occurred a few hours ago, then they asked what the cause was, asking for details. They thought the situation was like what happened in Bangkok. When a person was shot, they knew immediately. Here, no one knew who launched that shot. All of the sudden, a dead body was found. What happened before that? Even officials did not know. But we had to report the story, as well as provide context as to what happened before this incident happened. It's difficult, especially when I have to file a report for radio. Reporting quickly may cause misunderstanding. If we report it, especially for TV, the villagers may be upset.
> [...]
> There are some incidents where they want photographs – be it small or big incidents, they want photos to accompany the story. So I tell them, there is no photo because it's difficult, it's not worth going, there is nothing much there. (Pusu)

[8]By using the term "mindset", I do not intend to base this argument on a psychological approach. Interestingly, the expression was frequently used by many informants, so I maintain that term as such in this thesis. Nonetheless, to me, the use of "mindset" here refers to the prevailing beliefs entrenched in the Thai newsrooms and Thai society, rather than to the way of thinking of an individual or a collective group of journalists. In line with my proposition on the discursive contention of the southern conflict, I see the "Bangkok-centric" mindset as a socially-constructed perspective that determines how news workers view the problem, and as to be elaborated further, influences the production of southern conflict news.

This Yala stringer told a story of how a senior TV reporter from Bangkok's insensitivity towards conflict situations nearly put the team in danger.

> [The reporter] went to Bajoh, Bannang Sata, and asked the villagers, like, "Do you have the idea to incite people?" On our way back, the guys sprayed the road with spikes and tree trunks. Somebody told us, "You have 5 minutes. You go back. We give you 5 minutes to get out of here." He shouldn't have asked like that. Sometimes it's not like that. And this makes the work of local reporters more difficult.
> (Ramansiriwong)

The "Bangkok-centric" mindset also affects how the stories are presented and prioritised. Because most local stringers make their living on selling stories – only a few would receive monthly retainer fees from media organisations, they attempt to file as many reports as possible, making their daily routine similar to most reporters'. Typically, their routine entails listening to police scanners for incidents, screening press releases and invitations to events, and making contact with sources and informants for news tips. Since not all stories would make news, stringers need to "read the mind" of responsible daily editors on the kinds of stories they prefer, so that the stories they file would be used and they would be paid accordingly. Considering this, stringers cannot pursue every story they come across because they have to focus on the ones that are more likely to be taken by the news centre and the Bangkok newsroom. Stringers said covering stories that are unlikely to be reported is not a worthy investment, and may even cause troubles with the locals.

> Other channels do not report it, so the coverage isn't continued. Sometimes they report it, sometimes they don't. For TV, especially, a particular story has to be continued [until there is a certain form of conclusion]. If I file a story today, and again tomorrow, but [the stations] don't report on that, then I have to file a different issue the day after tomorrow. Then the coverage would be interrupted.
> (Lohasan)

> If they don't take [the story] or follow up on it, letting it fall out of the trend, I may be in a difficult position. If I investigate too deep, there would be criticism or attack, like, "why do you have to dig on this issue?"
> (Ramansiriwong)

An *Isam* reporter expressed her slight disappointment that, currently, most stories on the website are policy-oriented, which, in her opinion, may not answer the locals' needs. While she understands the limitation of *Isam*'s news operation and the reasons behind such

presentation, the reporter feels that the lack of local content makes it difficult for her to build trust with southern residents.

> Currently, [most stories] are the analyses of strategies and policies. Before, there weren't stories about budget or policies, which seem to be the issues that are brought up by 'the above' [referring to the Bangkok editor], following the [national news] trend…something 'the above' is interested in. But there is no attention to 'the below' [referring to the locals] – what kind of stories that 'the below' wants, what kind of problems… Sometimes there are problems in the area, but they don't become a big issue. So [the Bangkok editor] isn't interested, and it takes a long time for some stories to be reported. Or sometimes the stories were overlooked because the editor didn't care for them. […] which we feel bad, as someone who works here… I've followed the stories, and people whom I talked to anticipated that their problems would be presented to the public. We have been anxious many times… will our stories be reported? And the sources constantly called and asked, and I had to tell them we got to wait.
> […]
> For ordinary people, there is no way for them to become news. Just like the teachers today. They had to make a movement to make news, then everyone would be interested. They had to find an angle, such as demanding the 7.5 million baht [compensation money], making it an issue, inviting the press to cover their stories, then the state would be interested in them.
> (Jeh-ha)

The latter excerpt signals another interesting point: the "Bangkok-centric" mindset influences news judgement, and could silence the locals' voices. Like the insurgents who resort to violent means to show their resistance, the locals needs to shout about their problems by demonstrating or connecting with the press directly, so that their voices would be heard by the state.

In conclusion, this section presents the difficulties journalists based in the heart of the conflict encounter. Some elements not only happen in the field, but also exist in the newsroom. As a result, they will be brought up again in the following section regarding difficulties of southern conflict reporting in the newsroom.

7.2.2. Difficulties in the newsroom: producing news in the competitive environment

The previous section deals mainly with four problematic aspects that field journalists in the restive southernmost provinces come across. This subsection moves to present the factors influencing the works of newsroom staffers, mostly Bangkok-based senior news managers such as desk editors and daily editors. Two key factors are highlighted: 1) the diverse understandings of the southern conflict and the "Bangkok-centric" mindset, and 2) the

pressure of competition among news organisations. Similar to what happens in field reporting, the two factors here also determine how the southern conflict coverage is carried out, especially in terms of news presentation and coverage continuity.

7.2.2.1. The diverse understandings of the southern conflict and the "Bangkok-centric" mindset

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, although stories are sent from the field, it is people in the newsroom who decide on the final output. Many news workers, particularly field and senior reporters, voice their concerns that the newsroom staffers' diverse understandings of the conflict cause problems in the field similar to the previous examples. The diverse understandings of the conflict could highlight some interpretations of the conflict and undermine others.

One clear indication of how newsroom workers perceive the conflict is the labelling of antagonists. As previously elaborated in the content analysis chapter, the most prevalent label is "southern bandits" because it best fits with the limited headline space,[9] despite it casting a criminality undertone and deemed offensive by the locals. A stringer said the use of "southern bandits" also corresponds with how news media compete in the market. The more dramatic and appealing the headlines, the more readers and viewers.

> Bangkok newspapers are terrible. They write "Muslim bandits", or "[Suspect] used Muslim-style veil". Using veil is a way to dress – how could you pinpoint it? […] Writing headlines is a responsibility of editors who seek to sell the newspapers. [Stringers] could just present, but [editors] write the headlines themselves. They compete – how to write award-winning headlines. It's the policy of each newspaper – how to get people to buy the newspapers… So, although we are called in for meetings, the result is the same. Or you may bring in editors for the conferences,[10] spending some 10 million baht on the tour, the result would be the same. It is not a solution because their policy is like that. The army also spend money on recreational trips. This cannot be changed. It's business.
> (Lohasan)

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[9] In Thai, the word *chon tai* (โจรใต้) or "southern bandits" occupies 4 headline units. Other relevant terms such as *klum phu ko kwam mai sa ngop* (กลุ่มผู้ก่อความไม่สงบ – instigators), or *klum phu ko het run raeng* (กลุ่มผู้ก่อเหตุรุนแรง – perpetrators of violence) are composed of 14 and 13 units respectively. Interestingly, the term *khon rai* (คนร้าย – criminals) which carries a less implicating undertone and comprises 4 ½ headline units are typically used in the news leads and content, but not as often in the headlines.

[10] The interviewee referred to the 'fact-finding' trips and seminars in the deep South, organised by professional organisations and state agencies, in which news editors, managers, and reporters from Bangkok were invited to attend. These projects were aimed at educating the Bangkok-based and national-level news crews about the distinctive nature of the southern border provinces and the conflict, so that they could have a better grasp of the phenomenon, become sensitised to the matter, and produce constructive reports.

The *Isara* editor who is also a senior reporter/editor at a daily newspaper in Bangkok admitted he recently became aware that the regional administrative agencies and the locals have opposed the use of "southern bandits" because it tarnishes the reputation of the southern population. While affirming that such a label was never used in *Isara* stories or the reports he wrote for his newspapers, the editor said the words are shorter than others, hence, fitting the headline space better. His comment on other editors' reaction below also reflects the newsroom's "Bangkok-centric" mindset and insensitivity towards the conflict.

> Some editors, when they were advised against using "southern bandits", they would go, "Well, when there was a gold shop robbery in Bangkok and we used 'city bandits,' no one protested. So from now on, can I also make an objection against the use of 'city bandits' because I'm a Bangkokian?"
> (Pakorn Puengnetr, *Isara*'s Southern News Desk editor, interview 25 January 2012)

One senior reporter who covered civic movements and the impact of southern violence on the locals raised a similar problem. When reporting about violent incidents under investigation, instead of labelling the suspects "separatist", "secessionist", or "insurgent", she opted for the term "troublemaker", which, to her, seems neutral and does not implicate any parties. However, the same practice was not carried out by other editors, and sometimes she conceded to allow such labelling, thinking it was too troublesome to argue with her colleagues all the time.

Meanwhile, specialising in security affairs, the *Isara* editor uses "instigators" (*khon ko khwam mai sa-ngop* – literally translated as "unrest makers"), instead of "perpetrators of violence" (*khon phu ko het nan reng* – literally translated as "violent incident makers"), the label that the army has asked the media to use. Citing academic works, he added that the use of "instigators" implies that the violent incidents are carried out with particular political motives, while "perpetrators of violence" refers to those performing random attacks without clear goals. Another senior reporter agrees with this practice. He uses "separatist", "insurgent", or "Juwae" – the local Jawi term used to call militant groups,[11] when insurgent movements' involvement is proven. He added that the use of "terrorism" to label antagonists would imply that the conflict is beyond the Thai authority's control and requires international intervention and mediation – something that the Thai administration

[11] The term "Juwae" is a Jawi word meaning fighter. Local insurgent members use the term to call themselves, and many southern insurgency experts also use it in reference to the movements. According to senior journalist Don Pathan, "Juwae are organised into semi-independent cells that span the three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat and the four Malay-speaking districts in Songkhla. Juwae and the BRN-Coordinate are working towards establishing a shared command" (Pathan. D. Did Thaksin meet insurgents? [Online]. *The Nation*. 9 April 2012 Available at: http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Did-Thaksin-meet-insurgents-30179611.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013]).

does not wish for. While not directly commenting on a question if the southern conflict has reached such a magnitude, the senior reporter said the Thai media's uses of disparate labels also reflect the Thai authorities' varying stances towards the southern conflict, hence, its ambivalence on labelling the antagonists.

Apart from the lexicon choices used to label the antagonists, the newsroom staffers' diverse understandings of the southern conflict also reflect in the coverage's continuity and approaches. Journalists who spend a long time reporting about the problem said as the violence becomes protracted, news editors see the southern situation as repetitive incidents that offer no new angles. This circumstance renders most newsroom staffers passive as they generally wait for a story to emerge rather than taking on a pro-active role by breaking the story themselves. One example of news managers' passive role: a newspaper editor said the primary source of information about the conflict is local stringers, saying they know best about the situation because they live in the region.

Because most stories filed from stringers are events of the day, mostly attacks and skirmishes, the newsroom then treats most stories of southern violence as generic crime stories and presents them in a straight-forward news format. Coupled that factor with the high costs of news production, which will be subsequently discussed, the newsroom has minimal capital and interest in pursuing the stories further. Only when the cases become more critical, such as when they involve a significant number of civilian and/or official casualties, the coverage would include more contexts, which are typically presented successively and in a variety of formats.

Among the three national-level mainstream media studied, only the *Thai PBS* TV station has special segments dedicated to southern conflict issues and occasionally produces short documentaries or discussion programmes about the problem.[12] Nonetheless, seeing the protraction of this damaging conflict, a southern news centre reporter suggested that, rather than delegating the production responsibility to certain departments like typical special report assignments, the news organisation should have made this issue "the station's agenda" and established a concrete long-term policy about southern conflict reporting.

[12] In 2011, *Thai PBS* was supported by the US-based press freedom advocacy organisation INTERNEWS in organising the on-location training for the station's journalists, including those from the Bangkok headquarters and its southern news centre, to investigate various aspects of the conflict. The end-product of this months-long training was a series of short documentary that were aired as a special programme, titled *Rai Rao Chai Daen Tai* [Cleavage in the Southern Provinces]. The documentary, investigating the deficiency of governmental agencies in dealing with the southern problems, legal disputes, excessive use of forces, and authority's lack of understanding of local identity and culture, won the Sangchai Sunthornwat award, the Thai journalism's equivalence of the Pulitzer Prize, in 2012.

Kaewkam: The editors hardly understand [the conflict]… [The editors] barely know what the problems in the three provinces are.

Researcher: And how does that affect your works?

Kaewkam: If we don't understand [the conflict], we can never solve it right. If you don't understand [the problem], you cannot make the right plan. [...] [The southern news centre] is fully capable. We don't underestimate ourselves. But if you ask me if this is enough, it is not. We must move forward together, every desk. Political news desk must move with us. Economy news must move with us.

[…]

As a whole, the office's vision should be in the same direction. It doesn't necessarily have to be one vision, but heads to a similar direction, because I don't like it either when we have to focus on just one idea. There should be a variety of ideas, but we have to understand that we are heading toward the same direction.

(Sonthaya Kaewkam, *Thai PBS* southern news centre reporter, interview 20 February 2012)

Some editors and senior reporters view the mainstream media's passive coverage and minimal emphasis on southern conflict media as a problem. Seeing online news agencies such as *Isara* and Deep South Watch as main reference sources for southern conflict news, some mainstream media news manager suggested the establishment of the "southern conflict news desk" to oversee the issue directly. Regardless, a veteran correspondent who now organises media production trainings for southern civil society groups remarked that, insofar as the "Bangkok-centric" mentality is sustained in the newsroom, the issue-specific news desk does not necessarily guarantee new approaches of southern conflict reporting.

7.2.2.2. The pressure of competition among news organisations

Newsroom staffers and field reporters agree that, be it commercial or non-profit, news media organisations are vying with one another for readership and viewership. While it is clear that commercial media rely on circulation numbers, audience ratings, or page hits to generate advertising revenue, non-profit media are also compelled to prove to financial sponsors that their news contents are worth funded, using similar quantitative evidence. Therefore, at the heart of their news operation, news workers constantly look for ways to appeal to audience.

For most organisations, especially commercial broadcasters and news websites, being the first to report a story is a win. However, in reporting the southern conflict, getting the story out quickly means the report is likely to lose some contexts. A TV reporter recalled when

she was working for a commercial station that the newsroom's constant need for live reports barred her from investigating the issues further.

> Suppose there was a shooting. Previously, I would rush to file the report, and after that I would be done. Because before we had the OB [SNG] van, we needed to report and produce [the news] quickly. That was also another pressure. Because of that, we didn't have time to think about the causes – no time to talk with the locals. (Puttasarapan)

A *Thai PBS* news manager conceded that the conflict's dynamic nature and the rushes of daily news production do not enhance journalists' ability to explore the southern problem further. In the end, the news media must be able to disseminate their output at the expected schedule.

> Whenever we try to do something, we would face the whirlwind sweeping us away from what we were trying to work in a long term. We attempt to have a profound knowledge of the southern problem. We want to talk more with community leaders, thinkers, academics, and army officials – the job which takes time. [...] But suppose there was an explosion or shooting, the main mission of local reporters is to cover this story.
> (Jantalertrat)

Speed is not the only element of media competition. Paradoxically, news organisations contend to be alike, yet different, as some journalists put it. They cover the same issues, but have to distinguish their news content from others, presenting with different styles, angles, or approaches. Ironically, in the case of southern conflict reporting, the fact that one local stringer works for many news outlets means the reports usually come from the same source. With the demand to meet deadlines and sometimes the insufficient understanding of the issues, the newsrooms may edit the copy only slightly. Even though the end products are not identical, they nonetheless offer the same angle.

Contrary to the above notion, some senior reporters observed that news media are no longer keen on reporting about the same issue but using more innovative news pegs to compete with other organisations. Members of news industry, especially newspapers, vie for readership by disregarding the current news trend and launching their exclusive reports. This practice allows new issues to emerge. By the same token, the variety of new 'hot' subjects could also push the long-termed, recurring, and 'no longer sexy' stories such as the southern conflict off the media platforms, especially when there is an influx of more pressing stories emerging.

After all, the southern conflict issues must compete with other news stories to win media space. In line with the findings in the content analysis chapter, the frequency and variety of themes concerning southern conflict decrease in the later years of the conflict, partly due to the national political crisis originated in the capital city in early 2006. Stringers and reporters' testimonies support this finding. Stringers and fixers said their income dropped significantly when the newsrooms' attention was moved to other major news stories such as what happened during the mass political demonstrations in 2009 and 2010, or the massive flooding in late 2011.

The final discussion point is the costs of southern conflict reporting. A senior correspondent called the restive area "a challenging field" because the quality news coverage comes at expensive prices. Apart from hiring experienced news crews to cover the ground, news organisations also need to consider additional costs such as accessibility to certain areas, live broadcast, safety precautions, translation, logistics and administrative tasks. When the stories become repetitive and other crises happen, news management have to relocate their resources to cover more pressing issues.

The changes in *Isara*'s organisational structure and sponsorship best exemplify the impact of financial deficit on news coverage. No longer acquiring the hefty budget from the National Reconciliation Commission like when it was established in 2005, the Southern News Desk, now part of the Isara News Agency (see the organisation's changes in Appendix B), has a quarter share in the agency's four million baht (approximately 80,000 pounds sterling) funding in 2011 and 2012. Unable to afford a rental office and hire permanent staff in the south, the current editor decided to shift the website's emphasis from cultural affairs and local inputs to the analysis of and the investigation into the state's strategies, budgets, and policies, using the existing news database and limited manpower.

> It is difficult for us to investigate the local issues deeper, to seek comments from [insurgent movements'] allies, or to travel to remote areas and follow up on some stories. So I have changed the website's focus so it heads to the direction which I think is right, which is to scrutinise the policies of state agencies responsible for solving the southern problem, and to examine those working in the region – performing my duty as the media, just like professional ones. I would examine the issues that affect people's lives, and the solutions [to the problem]. If the issues don't have an impact, or are minor, there are local alternative media reporting them.
> (Puengnetr)

As per the previous reporter's comment, the website's position shift, albeit necessary and offering critical insights, does not allow for as many local voices and diverse views as before. More importantly, the future of their desk looks uncertain due to unstable financial support. The *Isara* news team also expressed concerns about the unsustainable state of southern conflict reporting, especially from the policy-analysis approach because its operation has been heavily relied on individual journalists rather than establishing a solid news production system and workforce.

In conclusion, this subsection draws out two key factors influencing the decisions and actions of newsroom staffers who are the last to determine the presentation of southern conflict news. Similar to difficulties in field reporting, these factors derive from the entrenched predominant beliefs in Thai society and the demand of media economy, and will influence what news media workers perceive as their appropriate roles in the conflict.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of Thai journalists' modus operandi in southern conflict reporting. In the beginning, the analysis and discussions demonstrate that Thai journalism seems rather homogenous, because the four news organisations studied and local civic media producers adopt some common practices and professional values, notably the editorial and production process, non-partisanship, and objectivity. However, there appear to be subtle variations in how journalists translate these abstract terms into practice, particularly when they come from dissimilar backgrounds and operate in different environments or under news organisations of different principles.

The difficulties that journalists face in producing the southern conflict coverage are summarised in Figure 7.3. These difficulties reflect disparate conditions that influence news production, ranging from the vocational conventions, the culture of news industry, the conflict's distinct characteristics such as hostility and fierce discursive contestation, to the influence of hegemonic beliefs in Thai society. In line with what the sociology of journalism suggests, there are multifaceted factors from different levels involved in the production of southern conflict news. These factors show that, although being shaped by the professional customs, the practices of journalists and their news outputs are not born out of a political and cultural vacuum. The difficulties outlined here also signal the interplay between journalism and other political actors, and the impact of the overarching ideologies in the settings where journalists operate.

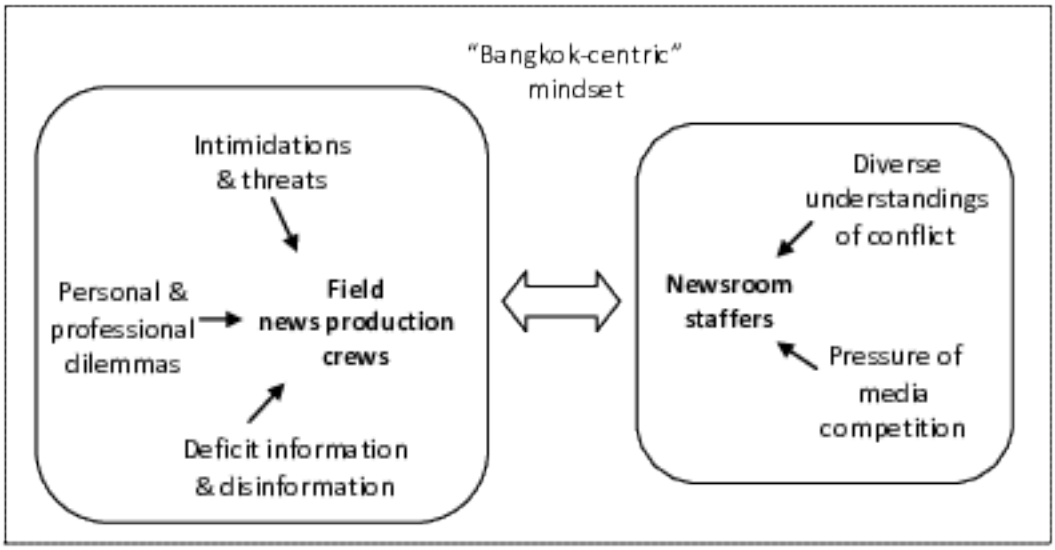

Figure 7.3 The difficulties of southern conflict reporting: in the field and in the newsroom

Moreover, the testimonies and other empirical evidences presented here also indicate that Thai journalists sometimes reflect upon their works, question the predominant views, and attempt to challenge the collective conventional practices. These signs demonstrate that, instead of simply being a passive player and a propaganda vehicle of interest groups in political conflict as implied in the *Classical* and *Critical Approaches* (Nossek 2007), journalists strive to overcome certain difficulties in order to perform the roles that they see fit. This indication suggests the professional ideology at work, as argued in the *Functional/Professional Approach* (Nossek 2007).

This chapter merely focuses on the interactions between journalists from the same organisation, but discusses briefly on the interchanges among news workers from disparate outlets and between journalists and other protagonists. The relationships of various players in the conflict will be discussed in the following chapter. In the end, the findings are expected to answer what journalists view to be their roles in the conflict, and how they perform so.

Chapter 8

News access and the disparate roles of journalism in the southern conflict

The previous chapter discussed various difficulties faced by journalists that also influence their coverage of the southern conflict from two perspectives: the elements involved in reporting from the field, particularly in the restive deep South, and the conditions of newsroom production. Having described the environment in which journalists operate, the thesis moves on to discuss another important component of news manufacturing, a relationship with sources, and what journalists think they do, and/or should do, in this conflict.

Composed of three sections, the chapter opens up discussions about how journalists form and maintain relationship with their sources and how the interplay between them influences the news production. It continues with journalists' understandings of the conflict, and concludes with the news workers' views towards their roles in this conflict and how they undertake such roles.

8.1 Cultivating reciprocity: the relationships between journalists and sources

The preceding chapter briefly discussed how journalists' socialisation with their sources tends to influence how reporters perceive, and subsequently portray, the southern conflict, although such relationship might lead to exclusivity and insider information. This section follows up on that note by further examining the interchange between journalists and their informants and looking into how their relationship shapes the news production and content.

This section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection discusses the elements involving source accessibility in general. The second subsection deals with journalists' professional etiquettes of maintaining the sources' trust. The final part then investigates the informal interchange between journalists and their sources outside the work contexts that help stabilise their relationship.

8.1.1. Initiating contact: getting access to and approached by sources

Sources play an integral role in the newsgathering process. However, as demonstrated here, the southern conflict's violent nature and the complex political and cultural contexts make it difficult for journalists to gain access to a variety of sources and produce multiperspectival coverage of the issue.

In the case of southern conflict reporting, to earn the sources' trust and openness is not a simple task. Journalists often find that the volatile settings could prompt the locals to cast doubt and distrust on reporters at first. As briefly discussed in the previous chapter concerning threats and intimidations against journalists, news workers are generally greeted by an unwelcoming, if not hostile, atmosphere, when entering unfamiliar grounds. Southern reporters added that some locals believe that intelligence officials sometimes posed as journalists to glean information from them, which further increased the residents' scepticism towards strangers.

Under this apprehensive mood, the characteristics of both journalists and sources, from their identities to their employers, play an important part in their interplay. A Muslim reporter said she occasionally found Buddhist villagers, especially those believed to be attacked by insurgent groups, reluctant to speak to her.

> There was a case where [the interviewee and I] were just talking at the front door until the conversation ended and I didn't even get inside [the house]. So I used that to tell the story – something like, "As the afternoon sun was shining and we ended our talk, [...] the door remained slightly opened."
> [...]
> The thing was they didn't trust us, but part of it was that they couldn't still accept the condition that they lost their son.
> (Waeleemoh Pusu, *Isara* reporter, interview 19 February 2012)

Local Muslim reporters also observed that high-ranking military and police officials seemed more cautious around them than their fellow Buddhist or Bangkok-based reporters. By the same token, another veteran reporter said that senior Islamic religious leaders sometimes subtly expressed contempt against her, a Buddhist woman. In several incidents, including the oft-cited navy officers hostage situation in Tanyong Limo village (see Appendix A for more detail), the villagers strictly forbade members of vernacular press from entering the scene, allowing only Thai authorities and a local Muslim stringer who worked for international media and demanding for Malaysian reporters to cover the story.

Some stringers and senior correspondents are able to get in touch with insurgents and the claimed leaders of separatist groups. A stringer who connected a Bangkok-based TV news crew with a former leader of a separatist movement, stationed in Malaysia, revealed his way of negotiating access with the secretive sources.

> They didn't see us as coming from TV – they saw [the interview] as an exchange. It depends on the coordinator. The coordinator must explain about me first, who I was… And when I negotiated with them, they would question me to determine if we really wanted to get a story. I told them straight away that I needed a story and wanted them to be on TV to clarify [their] actions to other people.
> (Lohasan)

While not entirely disregarding journalists' personal attributes as an obstacle in newsgathering, news editors and senior reporters argue that the sources' reservation might not stem from the religious or cultural differences alone. They indicate that the association with news organisations could also become a leverage or hindrance in accessing the sources. Being a senior reporter for a national-level daily, the *Isara* editor said that to the sources' eye, his primary employer exudes more credibility and influence than the small alternative online news agencies. Such an impression grants journalists from large, mainstream news outlets a competitive edge in gaining access to or being approached by sources, particularly high-ranking authorities. Meanwhile, Deep South Watch editors and *Isara* reporters conceded that it is difficult for junior reporters and those from smaller agencies like them to schedule interviews with top-brass officials. The reluctance may change into a more accommodating tone, however, if the Bangkok-based editor makes the contact or says the mainstream media will also cover the stories.

Contrary to the aforementioned argument that journalists' characters and organisational attachment might impede them from gaining easy access to the sources, sometimes these features could work to reporters' benefits. In the southern border provinces, being a native or speaking the local dialect enables journalists to put their sources at ease quicker. Personal connections are also crucial. As mentioned in the previous chapter, when reporting about violent incidents, journalists generally rely on authorities' statements to minimise the travelling costs and the risks of entering unfamiliar territories. Regardless, if there are discrepancies among official reports or sceptical data, reporters would phone their sources in the areas such as district chief-officers, defence volunteers, community and religious leaders, or even acquaintances and families to verify facts and collect unreported information. A pair of local reporters mentioned that they earned the first and exclusive interview with survivors of a high-profile shooting case – vital testimonies concerning the event, through a relative who was a survivor's in-law. A stringer said that her additional advocacy works in community and women development help foster strong ties with sources in many villages.

Essentially, the locals become the "eyes and ears", as southern journalists put it, especially in inaccessible areas. Not only do the members of communities provide reporters with invaluable information which is sometimes contradictory to the officials' accounts, but they also tip off journalists. However, reporters have to treat the information with caution, and occasionally these tips are not reported in order to protect the sources' and the reporters' own safety.

> There were several cases where the locals phoned me, saying they were at a rubber plantation, then saw soldiers stopped their vehicle by the road and opened fire on their own vehicle. A few moments later, the radio scanner announced that soldiers were [attacked]. I was like, I knew it. Because there were no injuries as well. [...] There were many cases, but it's difficult to report – quite problematic.
> (Ramansiriwong)

To make up for their limited access to high-ranking officials, local alternative media agencies attempt to forge alliance among themselves and with southern civic advocacy groups. By doing so, small media outlets can acquire information, some of which are hardly featured in mainstream national press, and at the same time, help their fellow small productions and local NGOs disseminate information and support their agendas. This mutual exchange elicits a noteworthy discussion point. As will be demonstrated in the third subsection, a relationship between journalists and sources from all levels is reciprocal. By immersing themselves in the sources' domains, journalists get the stories and earned an 'insider' status, prompting them to walk the line between professional values, particularly objectivity, and maintaining the relationship.

8.1.2. Building trust: the art of cultivating relationships

Senior journalists admitted that maintaining a relationship with their sources is essential to newsgathering, a "capital", according to one seasoned correspondent. Journalists voiced that sustaining the relationship with their sources is a "craft" which requires a great deal of personalities and experiences as much as professional integrity.

News workers learn that sources' trust cannot be built overnight. As a result, it is even more difficult for junior reporters to gain access to influential sources, let alone exclusivity, especially if they do not have other advantages such as personal connection and organisations' reputation to back them. A veteran security affairs correspondent shared how he fostered relationship with military sources.

> Trust wasn't born in a few years – it took some 10 years. Many big army officers, I have known them for more than 10 years. They have seen me working and my works presented on the screen. They are aware how I present them. So the Region 4 Army even said, "Whenever you come here to cover stories, brother, tell us right away. Whatever you want, however you want." They asked for one thing; they asked for an opportunity to say what they want to present. So I told them, "Whatever errors or incidents caused by the officers, I must report about them. You cannot ask me not to cover it, alright?"
> (Sermsuk Kasitipradit, *Thai PBS* senior correspondent, interview 1 February 2012)

The statement reflects two interesting points. The first is, notwithstanding the closeness with their sources, journalists feel that their priority is to "do their job" – that is, to report about newsworthy incidents. Therefore, it is essential to set certain ground rules on what can and cannot be done in a way that will not sabotage the relationship while maintaining professional objectivity. The second point is, while seemingly accommodating, both sources and journalists exercise their power to negotiate the extent of this access, which indicate that, instead of being confrontational, journalists and sources have a rather negotiable and cooperative interplay.

Another element involved in the establishment of trust between reporters and sources is the constant violence in the region. The complex and volatile nature of the southern conflict puts journalists in positions where they come across an array of sensitive information from classified intelligence and military policies to unconventional narratives that would challenge predominant beliefs in Thai society. Given the circumstance, journalists admitted that they have to consider if their reports would jeopardise both the safety of people involved and the relationships with these sources. The boundary between confidentiality and self-censorship is sometimes difficult to justify.

Nonetheless, decisions are clear when it comes to protecting vulnerable informants such as key witnesses, victims of violence, and minors. Referring to her exclusive interview with survivors of the Pulo Puyo shooting incident, an *Isara* reporter said that she had to seriously consider how to write the story in a way that would not endanger her sources. Like other media organisations, the reporter used both the name and photo of an elderly survivor in her story as he allowed disclosure, but did not name or interview another surviving victim, a 15-year-old boy, until official investigation commenced.

> It was depressing. After I came back [from the interview], it took me two days to finish and file the piece to [the editor]. [...] Well, I must consider the safety of the informants, whether they would be affected after the story was released. Would they be watched by state officials even more?
> (W. Pusu)

According to the content analysis findings and interviews with journalists, insurgent sources in news reports are mostly the claimed leaders of separatist groups based overseas, former insurgents who were active in the 1980s, and those who were convicted and imprisoned. Approaching and interviewing currently active field operative insurgents are rather difficult due to their clandestine nature and concerns over their safety. Therefore, these people often become anonymous tipsters rather than on-the-record sources. As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, state authorities sometimes contact journalists, asking for their knowledge of insurgent movements. To keep confidentiality of their sources, journalists would refuse to divulge vital information. Regardless, as will be discussed in the following section, while not revealing their insurgent sources and their whereabouts, journalists could still share their analyses of the situations with sources from other camps.

In summary, this subsection presents additional elements that emphasise the complex journalist-source interaction in southern conflict reporting. Apart from the personalities and organisational attachment indicated in the first subsection, journalists' experiences play an important part to gain the sources' endorsement. Maintaining source confidentiality and anonymity is also crucial, especially when journalists have to deal with sources from the opposite groups. Nonetheless, as will be presented in the final subsection, staying in the 'middle' position is a challenge, particularly when news workers are engrossed by the circumstances.

8.1.3. Being the insiders: balancing between blending in and keeping distance

This subsection discusses the journalist and source relationship outside the work context. To sustain their relationship, news workers and sources occasionally touch base and socialise. This kind of closeness enables journalists to phone their sources at any time of the day for tips, verification, and responses without much refusal, and vice versa. Despite the propinquity with their sources from various societal sectors, journalists adamantly affirm their professional neutrality and see the close acquaintance as a leverage to gain information rather than causing impartiality. Like many news workers, the *Isam* editor

asserted that he is able to demonstrate his professional integrity and credibility by not exploiting the relationship.

> I'm close to many army officials – a lot, actually. They even ask for my advice or ask me to write this and that for them. But I don't do it. Most importantly, I never ask them for anything except their comments. Never ask them to treat me a meal, to give me money, to fund *Isara*, nothing at all that is my personal interest…
> (Puengnetr)

Insisting on upholding professional independence from sources, journalists acknowledge some unacceptable and unethical practices such as accepting or paying bribes or any forms of financial rewards. Regardless, some forms of relationship bring about the 'objectivity versus practicality' debates. For instance, during the observation of the *Isara* news crew in the South, the SBPAC Secretary General invited the news team, including me, to stay for two nights at the security-guarded SBPAC compound in central Yala, generally reserved for the organisation's honoured guests. During the stay, the SBPAC chief did not only spend some time talking to the reporters and asking their opinions on various matters, but he also invited them to dine with his aides and visitors. By doing so, the reporters are able to converse with these guests, while observing and learning about the agency's future plans and the dynamic of people involved.

While the reporters expressed their unease towards the invitation, they conceded to accept it in order to maintain a good connection with the high-ranking official. The Bangkok-based *Isara* editor said he has been close with the SBPAC head ever since he was the chief of a special police investigation task force, and revealed that he had been consulted on several matters since the bureaucrat assumed this post. Meanwhile, the two local reporters were appointed as members of the SBPAC's working committees – the position in which the two often expressed the dilemma of maintaining news professionalism versus being able to convey their insights and "help the locals" via official mechanisms.

In another example, a *Thai PBS* reporter was invited to attend a counter-terrorism course at the Army's prestigious Command and General College and was later invited to be a guest speaker for the course. The reporter said that, while the participation enabled her to better understand the army officers' perspectives and rationales behind their moves, she could also share her expertise in field reporting so these officials learned how to best utilise mass media to counter insurgency.

> [Referring to army officials' lack of knowledge on local media] "Because you aren't familiar with them, you don't know how to use them. But the bandits know. They don't have to be acquainted [with the reporters], but know what types of news journalists like to do. How about you? Do you know the types of stories that reporters like? How would you twist the angle?" So I taught them ways to twist the news angle. […] Before you use [the news media], you must know their nature, how they are…
> (Puttasarapan)

Journalists do not only connect with state official sources, but also other social groups involved in the conflict. While establishing a relationship with army authorities, the same reporter also forms a network of local sources as she spends most time covering the southern region. When available, the reporter would visit her informants and accepted the invitation to attend their social functions so she could strengthen the bond. Another reporter uses her connection with state officials to stabilise her relationship with villagers, indicating it is a way to expedite the assistance for these locals.

> Many times, if we said, "No, we wouldn't report about that," I would say that we won't report about it via the media. But sometimes, we might know some authorities. So we asked if [the locals] wanted give us their address and contact numbers so we could connect them with the officials who could help. Would they like that? And they said, "good", and gave us [the phone numbers]. They would have their hope on us.
> (Jeh-ha)

These examples show that a diverse source pool and claiming non-partisanship is crucial in newsgathering, not simply because the professional principle of objectivity requires journalists to do so, but because it is also a production necessity. It is vital for journalists to generate a vast and wide array of sources at every level to produce more extensive news coverage than their competitors. Moreover, as shown in the recent remark, the connection with one group could advance the relationship with another. While it may take some time for individual journalists to establish a wide range of sources of their own, a large news organisation comprising various news beats and specialist journalists could benefit from such diversity, generating a broad network of disparate sources.

In conclusion, this section demonstrates that sources are vital to newsgathering, but getting access and strengthening the connection with sources can be a complex process with disparate elements and debates involved. Junior reporters and small alternative news organisations often find it difficult to reach and be approached by influential sources, making it hard for them to produce in-depth or investigative reports on their own. For

seasoned journalists, getting access to high power sources might not be a problem, but they might be more inclined towards the sources' perspectives due to years of acquaintances.

To make up for their lack of opportunity with elite sources, alternative media seek new sets of informers with easier access, who sometimes offer underreported, even challenging, insights and analyses. These new sources include marginalised local voices, such as southern residents, academicians, and activists. Some of these sources are considered unconventional by mainstream media, and if allowed to emerge, usually enter media space via '*the back gate*'. By providing them with '*the front gate*' entrance, local alternative news outlets add the diversity and dynamic to the source pool in the ecology of southern conflict reporting.

It should also be noted that the diversity of sources also happens in the same news organisation. Members of a news outlet do not necessarily hold similar views towards the conflict and the roles of journalism, as will be discussed further in the following section. For instance, at *Thai PBS*, journalists with extensive experience and source association in this large news corporation could contribute to a wide array of diverse sources who presented disparate interpretations of the conflict. By the same token, these journalists' dissimilar expertise, inclinations towards certain groups of sources, experiences in the field, and ultimately, understandings of the southern conflict, also give rise to the power play in the news production. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, in the editorial meeting, news managers and senior journalists occasionally discuss and argue about the news angles that they believe could best represent the problem. Therefore, even within one organisation, the discursive contention subtly manifests.

Another noteworthy point is that the journalist-source interchange is often fluid and dynamic. Both parties are seemingly close and trusting each other, but at the same time, they maintain moderate distance and professional autonomy. Journalists do not openly pledge their alliance with any particular camps to claim professionalism and objectivity, while attempting to expand their connection with every involved party. While it is a professional value for journalists to be non-partisan, becoming acquainted with disparate players involved in the conflict could also become leverage in newsgathering.

The final discussion point here is that the journalist-source relationship is a symbiotic and reciprocal one. It is often a subtle mutual exchange between journalists and sources, no matter at which level. Journalists acquire information for their news production, and in the

process, earn certain social status, for example, an advisor to state officials and NGOs working on particular issues, ad-hoc intermediary in conflict situation, or coordinator between villagers and responsible officials. By the same token, apart from getting their messages across, sources could earn publicity, authority over the issues, or prompt assistance. In the end, despite some struggling accesses, these relationships are cooperative rather than confrontational; journalists get stories and sources get closer to their goals.

8.2 Journalists' understandings of the southern conflict

With the previous chapter and above section on news access detailing key aspects involved in southern conflict reporting, this section continues to present how journalists make sense of this conflict, before presenting what they see as their desirable roles and how they carry out such roles in the subsequent section.

The observations and interviews with journalists reflect how news workers from disparate news organisations and a variety of expertise understand the southern conflict. My casual conversations with two journalists epitomise their different, if not opposite, stances on the issue. In the first situation, after speaking about the deep South's many natural and cultural treasures, a senior reporter ended his comment with a rhetorical question, "So, can we simply cede [the deep South] to them?" In another incident, a news manager jokingly remarked, "I'm supporting separatism," after explaining about his department's works with local NGOs campaigning for the implementation of special administrative system in the southernmost provinces. What is even more interesting is the fact that both journalists served as the alternative *Isara*'s news editor at different periods. Their contrasting views do not only reflect the diverse perspectives among news workers, but also the shifts of news organisations' directions especially when they change hands.

While the aforementioned cases clearly demonstrate the speakers' positions, most interviewees did not reveal such discernible stances. Because the unrest has entered its ninth year (as of 2013) and has been the centre of many public debates, journalist involved in southern conflict reporting have became familiar with the common sets of rhetoric used to describe the phenomenon. Therefore, they tend to adopt similar views towards the conflict: it is a political struggle stemming from ethnic minority insurgents' fight for recognition, separatism, and independence. Reporters generally cite the state's lack of understanding in the region's cultural and religious distinctiveness as well as mistreatment and injustice against the locals as contributing factors to the conflict and violence, and anticipate peaceful resolution via dialogues and local participation to end the conflict.

Some journalists also view the southern conflict as a lucrative enterprise in which many stakeholders clamour for authority over the issue and financial sponsorship (see, for example, Janchidfah 2009). Military and local administrative agencies vie for hefty state budget. Residents demand compensation for their losses, while local NGOs, including the mushrooming alternative news outlets, strive for funding, mostly from international sponsors. As a result, a number of journalists eye these non-profit organisations sceptically and do not believe their causes are genuine.

Despite their nearly conformed answer, news reporters and producers approach the conflict dissimilarly and focus on different aspects of conflict that they deem to be most severe and deserve immediate attention. As mentioned by a southern reporter, even in the same news organisation, people do not share similar outlooks for the conflict. This section identifies three main emphases used to explain the southern conflict and propose solutions: 1) security-oriented, 2) socio-cultural, and 3) ideology-oriented emphases.

8.2.1. The security-oriented emphasis

In general, journalists cite the continuing unrests and the impact of violence on the locals' livelihood – the warfare dimension of the conflict, as the primary problems. While not completely ruling out insurgent groups as instigators, many veteran journalists and local reporters point to other interest groups, such as narcotics and illegal oil traders, or even state officials, as the instigators of violence. This interpretation is in line with the military's "additional threats" theory, which explains that underground crime syndicates keep the region in disorder, and potentially fund the insurgents to do so to maintain their interests.

> The unrest, if happened between the two parties, it could definitely end. If it happened because of the state and the [separatist] movement, it would end easily. But the unrest in the three southern border provinces isn't caused by only two parties. It also comes from drugs cartels, human trafficking, corruption, local influential groups, local politics, personal reasons… all mixed up. It's difficult to solve, and difficult to end, as long as there are a lot of weaponry involved, a lot of budget.
> (Meringging)

> Now, I don't think it's much of the separatist movement. If you put [separatist movement] in percentage, it is only a little. Now, it's about illegal oil trade, contraband, drugs. Simply put, it's about interests. There is a lot of conflict of interests.
> (Ramansiriwong)

Many reporters focus on the ramifications of violence such as the suffering of people involved, as well as unjust treatment and human rights violation faced by the locals, victims of violence, and detainees. Some local reporters, being in the heart of the conflict, have raised concerns about local social problems such as the prevalence of narcotic drugs in communities, the deficiency of standardised and religious education systems, and corruption in local administrations. Believing that these problems are as equally crucial as the unrest, journalists expect the government and military to set out clear security maintenance strategies in the region and policies that facilitate rehabilitation, justice, social improvement, and local participation.

8.2.2. The socio-cultural emphasis

This group of journalists believe it is equally important to recognise the histories of political struggles as the underlying cause of the current conflict. Therefore, while concurring that maintaining the region's safety is paramount, they believe the recognition and promotion of local identity in the region, such as the Jawi language or Muslim customs, should be key elements in pacifying the tension. At the same time, any unjust treatments, from biased legal actions to prejudice against the Malay Muslim way of living, should be rectified. Additionally, they see the need to empower the locals in public participation and engage every stakeholder in the dialogues as a way to solve the problems.

Researcher: What caused this [conflict]?
Sonthaya: The first is injustice. The second is the differences between our ideas and [insurgents']. We don't try to learn about them, but we want them to learn from us as much as they can. Meanwhile, some of them don't try to learn about us either. [...] I'm not talking about religious [difference] here, because previously, the Buddhists and Muslims, we could still attend one another's [religious events]. But we think differently. [...]
Researcher: Is being Malay Muslim different from being Thai?
Sonthaya: It's not different. It might be different because the state sees it as such. When the state considers [the Malay Muslims] different, it believes they want separation, even though they have been living together [with the Buddhist Thais] for so many years. So the state tries to arrest them or crush their leaders. The more crushed they are, the more hatred they build up.
(Kaewkam)

I felt most disappointed when... after the situation became more aggressive, Mr. Thaksin[1] designated Mr. Jaturon[2] to handle the southern matters. If [Jaturon] had

[1] Thaksin Shinawatra was the Thai prime minister during 2001 to 2006. He served two terms in office.

[2] Jaturon Chaisaeng was a deputy prime minister in both Thaksin administrations. He was appointed a deputy prime minister in 2002 and remained in office until the end of Thaksin's first term, and again in 2005. Five

> been in charge, he would have understood the problems because he had many networks in the region. But as it turned out, Thaksin only assigned him briefly, and then sent in the Army Commander who was his relative instead. When they used the hawkish approach, the situation became worse. It was nepotism. He didn't understand the Muslims. For Muslims, they felt that, if one Muslim is killed, it is like… the same line of blood, the same body… if one part is injured, the others are also hurt. […]
> A lot of problems stem from lack of understanding [of local culture]. Even some state officials who work here, when they are off duty and wind down after working hours, they still use the term "*Ai Khaek*"[3] this and that [to refer to the Malay Muslims]. If they don't actually have a positive attitude with the local Muslims in their heart, the problems cannot be solved. In every aspect, you must understand [the Malay Muslims].
> (Sawat Wansalae, *Thai PBS* programme producer, interview 20 February 2012)

8.2.3. The ideology-oriented emphasis

The third group of journalists believe that the root cause of the conflict is the Thai state's consistent internal colonialism scheme on the far South. To them, the misunderstanding of regional culture and customs, mistreatment against the southerners, many forms of violent retaliation, and lack of trust in authorities are the repercussions of the Thai state's long-term marginalisation of Malay Muslim identity. While the problem diagnosis and prognosis are seemingly similar to the socio-cultural emphasis, the ideology-oriented emphasis focuses more on the structural changes that would encourage the remainder of Thai population to both acknowledge and become more culturally-aware of differences. By doing so, the Malay Muslims would not be regarded a group of minority and are entitled to the citizen rights they deserve despite the dissimilar ethnic identity. Therefore, it is essential to stimulate public dialogues and debates to enable alternative Malay Muslim narratives to co-exist with the Thai accounts and pave the way for a better understanding of their unique and dynamic culture; hence, tackling the conflict at its root.

> If we realize that the problem is simply not a daily incident, we need to find the root cause – what is an actual cause of this? Hatred? We need to think… If you ask experts in the region, they would say the problem happens because of three conditions: the Patani State, Malayu identity, and Islam. These three parts are intertwined and cause the conflict. The Patani State [argument], for one, does not have any space because it explains historical accounts, that the region had been

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months into the second term, he was relocated to the education minister post until the Thaksin government was ousted in the coup d'etat on September 19, 2006. He was also appointed a government representative in the National Reconciliation Commission and a liaison between the cabinet and the commission in 2005.

[3] The term is composed of two words that offend the Malay Muslims as a person and as a Muslim. In Thai parlance, the "*Ai*" title is considered a foul language. Although the prefix is a casual word commonly used in everyday speaking, it reflects contempt or disrespect towards the party mentioned. "*Khaek*" is an informal term used in reference to people of South Asian ethnicity and the Muslims, which are not necessarily the same. Despite being widely used, the term is deemed impolite and scornful by the South Asian ethnics and Muslims.

> crushed by the Thai state. The hatred remains here [in the region] and has constantly been passed down [to next generations]. …
> (Jantarasima)

Some journalists agree with civil advocates campaigning for political decentralisation in the southern border provinces as a key solution, concurring that certain autonomous administrative models should be established to enhance and ensure the residents' political rights and participation. However, a number of news workers do not believe an independent regional administration would alleviate the situation. Instead, it may give rise to a tug of war among national-level politicians, local political elites, and influential cliques in the region.

> I believe [the people] here would agree to stay under the Thai sovereignty, but it has to be under their conditions, not the conditions from Bangkok. And their conditions would be based on their identities, histories, and cultures. [….]
> When we talk about negotiation, we look at it from the dimension of dialogues, or the rebel aspect… the [separatist] movement. But when I talk about negotiation, I mean the negotiation for the locals here. […] It's not like what [the government] did with PULO or BRN in the past… The negotiation I refer to here is about problem solution.
> (Don Pathan, *The Nation* senior reporter and *Patani Forum* website[4], interview 18 February 2012)

Overall, this section lays out different aspects of the conflict which journalists believe to be of paramount concern and require immediate solutions. Similar to the argument made earlier in regards to journalists' various expertise and source pools, disparate understandings of the southern conflict show that perceptions held by news workers are not all homogenous. The different viewpoints among news workers reflect the discursive competition and the constant power struggle at work in news production, prompting journalists to perform differently in the conflict which will be discussed in the following section.

8.3 The disparate roles of journalism in the southern conflict

This final part concludes with the discussions on the reporters' perceptions and their attitudes regarding what the desirable roles of journalism in the southern conflict should be. These views reflect the shared values concerning occupational obligations of news media and variations of how such obligations are carried out, as well as diverse perspectives

[4] *The Nation* is one of the two prominent English-language daily newspapers in Thailand, based in Bangkok. *Patani Forum* (see Appendix L) is a Pattani-based non-profit website, which Don Pathan co-founded. Similar to Deep South Watch and Aman News Agency, the organisation collaborates with local NGOs, academics, students, and writers in publishing articles concerning histories and cultures of the southern border provinces online and organise discussion forums to stimulate public debates about the region.

towards additional positions entrusted to journalists in conflict resolution. These roles are: 1) *journalism as a presenter of truth*, 2) *journalism as a forum for every party*, and 3) *journalism as a supporter in conflict resolution*.

8.3.1. *Journalism as a presenter of truth*: investigating and maintaining neutrality

Many news workers believe the fundamental role for journalists to play in the southern conflict is to perform their occupational duties: monitoring the dynamic situations, examining and investigating every party's actions and claims, and supplying the public with accurate information. They are adamant that the media merely facilitate the conflict resolution processes initiated by responsible parties and that they are not part of the problem-solving mechanism themselves.

> The principle of making news that I tell the younger generation is, our duty is to be a messenger; don't believe in what your eyes see. [...] The constant attempt to investigate and find the facts is an important principle in news making. Don't be entrapped in your own 'Hey, this is right' thinking. Suppose you have certain beliefs in your mind, they may not remain the same, because that was the fact of yesterday. But today, the information changes, the facts also change.
> (Wanchai Tantiwittayapitak, *Thai PBS* Deputy Director of News and Programmes, interview 22 February 2012)

> The media have to solve the problem? No! The government does. And the media report about it. The media are not the one to solve the problem, but the media are an important cogwheel to move the content and issues that lead to solutions of the problem. Society expects that from the media. But some media may say, damn, if the media have to solve the problem...
> (Jantalertrat)

> I won't "build the atmosphere of talks and negotiation," because that doesn't exist. Well, I have gone to work [in the deep South] and I know it doesn't exist. So I don't play that role. [...] For the key people, there are issues that need to be examined, to look at every party's transparency. There are forums [for discussions], but do they really speak the truth? Or do they accept it if the truth is spoken? [...] To build the atmosphere where every party speaks out, I don't think it will lead to peace. Like the issue of the special administrative zone, I did the stories and my junior colleagues were threatened. Like this, it is not peaceful.
> (Puengnetr)

To carry out their role at best, journalists emphasise that it is crucial to produce neutral and well-rounded reports, comprising commentary and analytical views from every stakeholder in every aspect possible. In essence, the multiperspectival news contents would affirm the journalistic values of non-partisanship and objectivity.

> I think the thing that shields us from being stabbed by the buffalo horns is that, what we say must be the truth from both sides. Although they aren't pleased, they

> can't reprimand us for reporting the contents. The most they could do is to say my [quotation] is shorter or longer, but they cannot criticise our contents because they are truthful.
> (Puttasarapan)

> Being the public service media, we attempt to balance every party. To balance every party without choosing a side is difficult because to make TV [content] that satisfy everyone is impossible. [...] Every time there is a political conflict involving [different] political beliefs, it is impossible that you will be free from criticism.
> (Tantiwittayapitak)

For some local media practitioners, the indication of neutrality is to earn trust from and access to insurgents. Interestingly, Al-Jazeera, the Qatari news organisation that presents the counter-Western perspective, is considered the epitome of professional objectivity and ideal news practices.

> Wangni: I want to make [a channel] like Al-Jazeera.
> Jeh-ha: That is the idol of people in this region.
> Wangni: [Al-Jazeera] is neutral. It is the idol because... why has this media organisation gained acceptance from Al Queda or Hezbollah? Why can the channel approach these groups? There must be something right about it. Similar to what happens in this area, if there is a media outlet which the insurgents can reach... when they have some information, they will want this organisation to present because they have confidence in that media organisation.
> (Wang-ni and Jeh-ha)

What news workers see as the duty of journalism is translated into the organisations' news concentration and presentation. For instance, with its public service ethos to promote diversity and plurality, *Thai PBS* allocates segments in the station's primetime news bulletin and programming for contents concerning southern conflict. Additionally, varied expertise of the station's reporters, from those based in the South to veteran security affairs experts, contributes to the variety of news contents and formats.

> Because each programme has different concepts; the *Morning News*, the *Midday News*, *Tee Nee TV Thai*[5] – they have different concepts. So in covering an incident, I would look for variety. For example, the *Evening News* programme prefers stories about people's life. When I had to cover a raid on insurgents' camp, I would also do a story about the rangers who had to walk up to that camp. So I would have one story about the life of rangers, a story about the raid, and shots of beautiful wild flowers along the route. [...] We got three stories, and it was worth it – worth the resources and energy we spent. [...]

5 *Tee Nee TV Thai* (Here is TV Thai), or its current title, *Tee Nee Thai PBS* (Here is Thai PBS), is a current affairs programme, aired at 10 p.m. on weekdays. The programme is divided into two segments. The first segment presents major stories of that day, and the second segment shows interviews or debates concerning major issues in live or pre-recorded format.

> I don't look for big stories, but smaller ones such as stories about people. I think these stories could be charming, and people in Bangkok certainly don't know about them. Because of the region's diversity and uniqueness – the Muslims, the Chinese, the stories have their selling-point.
> (Puttasarapan)

> I see a number of issues concerning the South. But the limitation is sometimes I can't travel to the area, so I don't have the footage. Still, I can solve the problem, for example, yesterday, I phoned [the source] and used that to narrate the story.
> (Kasitipradit)

Thai PBS also issues the codes of ethics and conduct (Thai Public Broadcasting Service 2009), as well as setting up other scrutiny mechanisms such as the Audience Council and the public complaint sub-committee (see Appendix B for more detail on the organisation structure) to ensure that the contents is in compliance with the organisational principles and professional ethics. The code of conduct also stipulates guidelines in reporting about conflict, demonstration, terrorism, and war (Ibid., pp. 138-145). For instance, the code states that its employees should not label antagonists with judgemental or partisan terms such as terrorist, extremist, or fanatic, but they should use the label these antagonists use to call themselves instead (Ibid., pp. 139-140). During my newsroom observation, a chief editor[6] told me that the station was developing the news reporting and writing guidelines to materialise the codes of ethics and conduct. For example, in a murder case, the guidelines suggest the use of the terms "the injured or affected person" instead of "victim", and "perpetrator" instead of "criminal" (unpublished internal document). When asked about concerns and difficulties in southern conflict reporting, a deputy news editor said her tasks at *Thai PBS* is "more stressful", compared with when she was working at another commercial station as she has to be more careful to ensure that the news scripts and footage comply with the organisation's codes of conduct.

In the case of *Isara*, struggling to maintain "professionalism" under the financial and human resources constraints, the editor has re-positioned the online news agency by focusing more on investigating government and military policies and actions, and less on local occurrences. To him, despite the news centre's minimal presence in the southern border provinces, the coverage still offers significant insights that most mainstream media rarely report.

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[6] According to a manager in charge of the news department's strategic planning, the 'chief editor' position was established to oversee the production of every newscast during the entire day. Senior news editors are appointed and take turns to perform this role. Focusing on the station's overall news presentation, chief editors are expected to project news trends and come up with angles that would differentiate the station's coverage from others'.

> The news is mostly concerned policies from the [central administration] – a lot of policy scrutiny. That's the main stories of the news centre. There aren't many miscellaneous stories from the region – perhaps there are stories about justice system and aids. Some people may say [the coverage] is too distant and lacks Muslimness. […]
> In the future, I think that if we stand in this position, it doesn't require much money because I don't travel to the area that often. We won't follow up by doing fieldwork, but we focus on examining the policies, and there are lots of existing knowledge and news archives to support that. […]
> Our position is not a local news centre, not a news centre for people in the region, and not an Islamic news centre. So, I can work on this even without getting paid.
> (Puengnetr)

The following view from a veteran reporter best summarises what news workers considered news professionalism. While welcoming the expansion of alternative media, he believes that the role of journalism is primarily reporting, investigating and questioning political and social players.

> These [online alternative] news agencies need to develop, broaden, and diversify their communication channels, not only via online platform. [These agencies] should become another channel to balance [news contents]. There should be a lot more [of these agencies]. But they need to be trustworthy and professional, not nonsensical. They have to have credibility, some processes, professionalism, and clear ethics – a complete set. These websites may not have a lot of viewers, but if there is diversity, people can select the information they want.
> (Prasong Lertrattanawisut, Isara Institute director, interview 8 December 2012)

8.3.2. *Journalism as a forum for every party*: levelling the playing field

Some news media practitioners argue that journalism should do more than simply presenting 'the truth' from every angle, but also amplifying the non-mainstream voices. By doing so, they believe the contentious discursive arena would become a more level playing field for stakeholders involved, as people would be able to convey their messages and gather valuable information.

News organisations carry out this role differently. Some reporters and stringers working for mainstream media attempt to file 'off-the-trodden-path' stories such as those concerning women's rights, which sometimes receive a positive response from the Bangkok-based editors. Having proximity to the region as their advantage, local alternative news organisations provide platforms for southerners to speak out to the wider public, while community media present information necessary for people in the troubled zone.

> I think the duty of us who work here is to "build the atmosphere", pointing out that there needs to be talks and discussions. But to lead to discussion, we need to build the atmosphere for it. For instance, Malayu language can be used in this state. It is not an illegal language. The second is, you are able to express opinions as long as it is under this country's law. You have to build it. I feel that if it starts to feel this way, those using violence would be immediately rejected. But now they don't feel they have freedom.
> (Muhammad-ayup Pathan, Deep South Watch advisor, interview 20 December 2012)

> The duty of the media is to introduce new players, to open up the space for new groups, new issues, in hopes that there will be new players entering, and help minimise the space occupied by violence. This may reduce the number of players on the other side – the military and those who are armed.
> (Jantarasima)

> We have to push it bit by bit, so that Thai society understands that there are other new narratives… No, not new, they already exist. The narratives of the southern provinces already exist, and they can go in line with the Thai narratives. So we're trying to push the line here, that there needs to be new paradigms, new terminologies, new approaches [towards the southern conflict].
> (D. Pathan)

> There must be ways to provide the body of knowledge to those outside the region so they understand the area, understand the culture here, the people here. They need to understand why people here need to struggle and fight, and call for something that has always been considered a rebel… Actually, there is the history, and based on this history, there comes the fight. Right? There is no nation which fights without having its own history.
> (Meringging)

The operation of small alternative news agencies is facilitated by affordable media technology and platforms. Producers are able to create contents using minimal costs and disseminate their outputs via websites, online social media and social networks such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Despite lack of hefty funding and a wide terrestrial footprint that most mainstream news corporations have, small local media are able to expand their audience base, interact with their supporters, and develop a network of media producers, advocates, and followers via these online channels.

> I'm glad to see women become braver to express themselves, because, previously, they didn't have a channel to communicate. Now there is the Civic Network for Women. There is a forum for them to express their feelings and sufferings, to inspire them to fight and demand, to strengthen their hearts and get them through this crisis.
> (Alee)

> What happens in the area, those who know best are the locals. But sometimes we have a lot of good stories, but we don't have a forum for it. We don't have a space to shout out to people outside. So, [the news agency] become the loudspeaker to

> outside for the little people. Why do I have to make the English version? Because sometimes what happens here, the locals know it, but those outside do not. So we need to spread out these stories so people outside are aware of them, seeing what happens.
> (Meringging)

Notwithstanding their growing presence, the local alternative media's momentum alone may appear inadequate to push the issues further due to their being in an infancy stage, limited audience, and being overlooked by state authorities, as mentioned earlier in the journalists-sources relationship section. According to a senior southern news editor: "Every issue ends in Bangkok." Such a remark is a clear example of an impact of centralised administrative regime. If the national media do not pick up the stories, the national-level political elites would unlikely pay attention to the problems. As a way to promote people's communication rights, *Thai PBS* establishes a mechanism that links community media production with its national-level platforms through its civic engagement projects. Thanks to its extensive civil society and citizen reporter networks, the public service broadcaster could benefit from their technical capacity and manpower to produce reports and programmes from the perspectives of the locals and many advocacy organisations working in the region. Collaborating with one another, *Thai PBS* and small non-profit media work to reach larger groups of audience, including the policy-makers, while preparing the deep South residents and encouraging them to partake in deliberative resolution processes.

> Mainstream media are mainly reporting under the state's conditions because, first, they don't know the area. And second, it seems that in terms of communication, the state manages it. There are laws and regulations. So, the construction of another set of information or the existence of alternative media is rather difficult. So, they think the linkage with [*Thai PBS*] may give a space for them to express and share information or another set of facts. So as a mechanism, [the collaboration with citizen and civic media at *Thai PBS*] somewhat works.
> (Jantarasima)

> Two important issues that community media or horizontal media together push forward are to communicate about the 'Patani City' model and we want to use decentralisation as a solution in the region. From community radio, local radio, personal media, public forum, to various alternative media and social media, we all push for these issues. This is the role of local alternative media that is in consistent with *TV Thai* [former name of *Thai PBS*]. So we try to explain that if every party joins hands, we can create a forum. We started this so it can empower the civil society media network, and open up spaces [for them] so the state and security see the collaboration among civil society media can communicate in a positive way.
> (Komolnimi)

Executing this role differently, local media focus on the matters at hands and provide information necessary for current living situations. Perhaps restrained by the proximity to

hostility as mentioned in the previous chapter, the local pressers circumvent the sensitive and controversial subjects. Instead of rigorously probing authorities, insurgent movements or local interest groups, the southern media produce contents deemed useful for the residents, such as the extensive coverage of local incidents and traffic information, and knowledge about laws and local administrative systems.

> The advantage [of local media] is that… when I arrive at the scene, and suppose, [a mainstream daily] also comes with me, […] [The daily] publishes one photo, or maybe two. But I publish dozens, making them into "The minutes of life" photo essay.
> (Boonthanom)

> The media must help build up the atmosphere of confidence, the feeling that the state mechanism really works and can solve the problem. But we will need to nudge the state as well.
> (Patchara Yingdamnoon, local radio broadcaster, interview 17 December 2012)

> At that time, there was the issue about Martial Law and other emergency regulations. The villagers were not aware about this. I wanted them to know about this, so they knew what to do when the laws were enacted.
> (Alee)

8.3.3. *Journalism as a supporter in conflict resolution*: juggling dual roles

While journalists seemingly agree that the two previous roles discussed above remain within the bound of journalistic professionalism, their opinions markedly divide when it comes to the third duty news workers performed in the southern conflict. Considering their employment by media organisations insufficient to solve the conflict, a number of journalists take upon themselves or are entrusted with disparate tasks, from producing media content to lending their expertise in governmental and private sector's projects concerning conflict resolution. This final subsection lays out two main categories of positions journalists perform in the southern conflict: 1) coordinator and arbitrator, and 2) advocate and political player, and the debates regarding the influences of these positions on news production.

8.3.3.1. Coordinator and arbitrator

As mentioned in the journalist-source relationship section, journalists occasionally use their connection with high-power sources to gain trust with local people. While admitting their reluctance to explicitly advertise their association with authorities, reporters reckon that they could help expedite the assistance that these affected residents rightfully deserve.

> We can use our journalist status to coordinate with state agencies to help [the locals], and this makes us widely known by the locals. Because we are reporters and it is easy to connect [with responsible state agencies]. The villagers don't know how they can contact [the agencies].
> (Wangni)

Another TV reporter said she would rather see a dispute between state officials and villagers settled before airing the report about it. Instead of ambushing the involved parties and demanding solutions on-screen, she would reach out to them and ask both sides to confer first and see if the problem could be resolved. Some off-screen dialogues also are involved in news making.

> People stand in their corner, like they are boxers about to fight. If it is most media, they would perform as a referee. But for me, I would rather be the trainer for both sides. It is already a conflict… being in a conflict area. When the media act like, "Ready? Fight!", isn't that more fun? Of course. Viewers around the country would see and enjoy it, this pair [of rivals]. But for me, this is not the case. We only generate more bloods, increase more vengeance. But if we act like a trainer, telling them to talk and open up their minds… because the media are positioned in the middle. The state officials believe in us. The locals rely on us. The media are the best mediator.
> (Puttasarapan)

Nevertheless, performing as a coordinator could cause professional dilemma. Being a southern native and recognised by villagers, a reporter was asked to contact the Malaysian television station who hired him as a fixer to report about a high-profile hostage situation in which villagers denied access to Thai press. Despite being able to satisfy the residents' demand, the journalist was questioned by another international media corporation he freelanced for about the appropriateness of his involvement in the incident.

> [The organisation's name] was concerned and wondered what role I took there, why I had to be one of the coordinators, because this made them… uncomfortable. Then [the HQ] called me and I had to report to them in detail about what happened, why I had to get involved… This is another experience that I felt… it was a life experience. In hindsight, well, I should not have had get involved. If [the hostage takers] wanted to kill us, they would be able to do so right there. I should not have had put my life at risk.
> (Meringging)

8.3.3.2. Advocate and political player

While being a coordinator and arbitrator tends to be individual-based, the role of an advocate and political player seems more institutionalised and questions the extent of the news media's involvement in civic movements and politics as a whole.

As mentioned previously in Chapter 7, journalists' casual socialisation and formal ties with their informers potentially lead news workers to view the conflict in similar perspectives with their sources and concur with their conflict resolution methods. Recognising the media's impact in distributing information and enhancing the locals' communication rights, many journalists team up with social campaigners or form their own civic advocacy units using mass media to communicate to the public, for example, Deep South Watch and the Civic Women Network (see Appendix L for the list of alternative and advocacy media covering the southern conflict issues).

Regardless, this line of work prompts some of their peers to raise questions about objectivity and professionalism. Believing these civil society-operated media promote their own agendas, many journalists find that they lack objectivity; hence, disqualified from being professional journalists. This similar view also occurs when employees of news organisations appear to be inclining towards civic movement. For some news workers, to endorse the NGOs meant journalists effectively support an interest group and step away from their neutral stance.

> We often face criticism of being an "NGO TV". When I joined the organisation, I have tried not to make it as such, and tried to communicate that the public service broadcaster is not an NGO medium.
> (Tantiwittayapitak)

> Their role is not clear. Are they NGO, or are they journalists, or are they civic movement, or are they the actor? [...] Do they also make demands? Do they also call for the Patani state? [...] Deep South Watch is also an actor, saying they want to mobilise, push their agenda forward, something that benefits them directly. Is this mass media?
> (Lertrattanawisut)

> We see that if we become an NGO, there is some hidden agenda. Some people don't like NGO. They would say this reporter is definitely not neutral. Like a security affairs reporter, they would surely incline to [the military]. As for me, I gave a hard thought on the offer that [the SBPAC secretary general] invited us to use [the space at the SBPAC office]. We really thought about it, because he said we could still report news, and for the safety in our career. But we saw that, that was us reaping benefits from him. What would happen to our news works? Definitely impartial. No credibility left.
> (Wangni)

The last statement in particular raises a noteworthy point. In journalists' view, NGOs are also interest groups, akin to state authorities. Therefore, being associated with a civic advocacy group also implies partisanship, a breach of journalistic professionalism. Interestingly, journalists' engagement in governmental or private sector's projects does not

receive a similar extent of debates and discussions. As mentioned previously, some journalists consider their appointment to state administrations' working committees or charitable enterprises a proper means to contribute to the problem solving processes.

In summary, this section identifies three prominent roles journalists performed in the southern conflict, and each role receives different degrees of support and debates. For most journalists, *a presenter of truth* is considered the principal role of journalism, and the professional values of scrutinising the power-that-be and interest groups while maintaining neutrality are essential to bring about conflict resolution. The second role of providing *a forum for every party* emphasises the significance of information diversity which could enhance every involved party's ability to partake in the problem solving processes and ensure the equilibrium of participation. The last role, *a supporter of conflict resolution*, bring about mixed reactions among news workers as it prompts journalists to step outside what they consider the realm of news professionalism by taking partisanship. Regardless, this role raises interesting questions of whether the existing performances believed to be quality journalism does not suffice in solving this protracted and complex conflict.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter follows up on the discussions in the preceding chapter concerning the elements involved in the news production and concludes with what journalists consider the roles of journalism in the southern conflict. The chapter starts with another crucial aspect of news production, the interchange between journalists and their sources, and demonstrates the complexity of their relationships at various levels. The examination into the journalist-source relation answers some questions raised in the content analysis findings, for example, why political elites receive more coverage than local people or insurgents. The customs of news production and the rush against the deadline may play an important part in source selection. However, maintaining confidentiality to protect the sources' safety or being unable to access the sources that could provide counter-state arguments could equally explain the lop-sided presentation of sources in news reports. Overall, the section brings in a vital factor that cannot be disregarded in southern conflict reporting.

Having presented different aspects of news production, the chapter moves on to summarise news workers' understandings of the southern conflict by laying out three emphases used by journalists to explain this complex phenomenon: security-oriented, socio-cultural, and ideology-oriented. Focusing on different dimensions of the conflict,

journalists approach the problem dissimilarly, and cast different views on what they regard as appropriate roles of journalism in the southern conflict. At the same time, this dissimilarity reflects the discursive contention and power play among news workers, showing that journalism is not always a homogenous culture.

The final part of this chapter discusses three roles that journalists see themselves perform and consider desirable roles of journalism. News workers consider being *a presenter of truth* to be the core professional duty. To carry out such a role, journalists have to investigate the situations from every angle while maintaining neutrality. Second on the list is for journalism to be *a forum for every party*, which means to prepare and encourage every involved party in the participation of problem solution processes. The last role which gives rise to debates and criticism is to serve as *a supporter of conflict resolution*, as it requires journalists to engage in the involved stakeholders' activities. While these roles reveal the diversity and complexity in Thai journalism, they also indicate professional reflexivity at work, as journalists evaluate and analyse their performance in the conflict.

In all, the last two chapters have described the significant aspects of news production culture, from the dynamic violence and political settings and the fluid and complex relationships between news workers and sources, to the media organisational influences such as principles, practices, and competitions. The contribution of these factors and the roles of journalism can be conceptualised as shown in Figure 8.1.

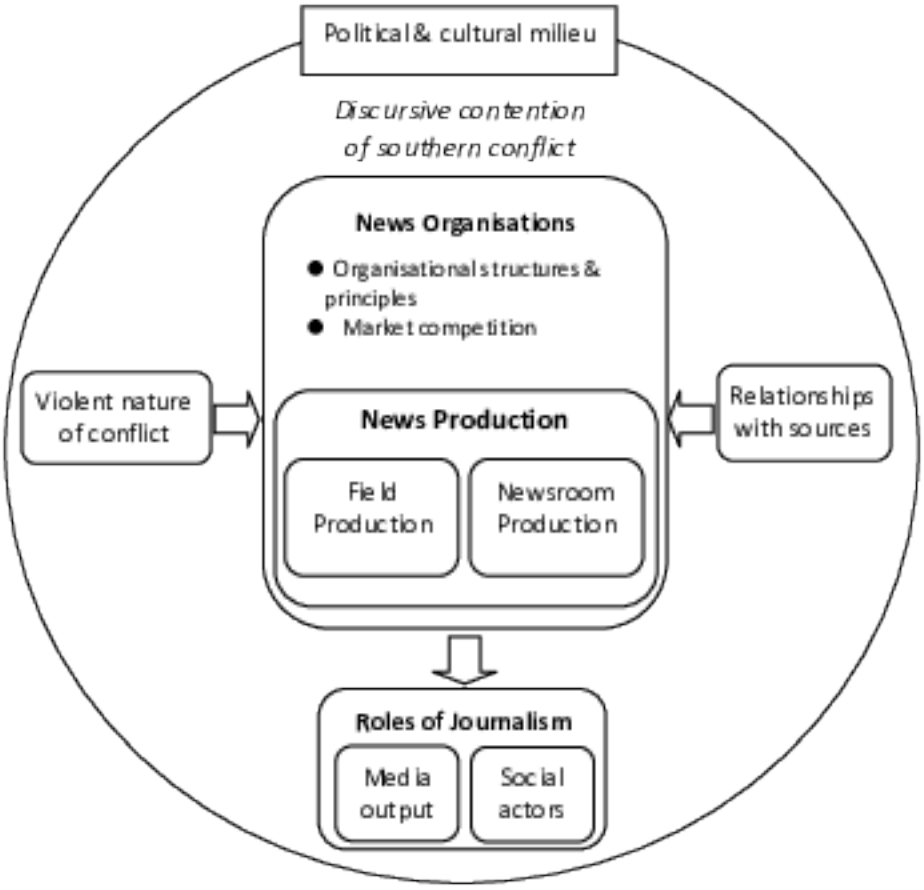

Figure 8.1 Factors influencing news production in southern conflict reporting

The next and final chapter of this thesis will draw a connection among the three findings chapters, and conclude with analyses and academic debates concerning the roles of Thai journalism in the southern conflict.

Chapter 9
Conclusions

The thesis has examined the news media's performance in the political conflict in Thailand's southern border provinces by exploring its news coverage, news production practices, and the interplay between journalism and the dynamic political and socio-cultural milieu. The analyses in this thesis have built on and hopefully contributed to noteworthy positions and debates in the studies of journalism and political conflict/violence, as demonstrated in the previous three chapters. Composed of two parts, this final chapter first recaps the key arguments that I have proposed across the thesis and which I see as its principal academic contribution. The second section then moves on to address this thesis' limitations and provide suggestions for future research.

9.1 Summary of the key arguments and discussions

As stated in Chapter 1, the overarching research question of this thesis is, "*What are the roles journalism plays in the southern conflict?*" To answer this query, the study explores two aspects of Thai journalism: news content and news production practices, using the studies of journalism and political conflict/violence and the sociology of news production as the theoretical framework. The following subsections reiterate the key arguments derived from the findings.

9.1.1. Highlighting *Crime and Conspiracy*: The news representation of the southern conflict

The first RQ, "*How is the southern conflict represented in the news coverage?*" focuses on the portrayal of the southern conflict to determine how news workers make sense of this phenomenon throughout the seven-year review period. In Chapter 2, three prominent discourses concerning the southernmost conflict were identified: *Crime and conspiracy*, *Minority's grievance*, and *Malay nationalism and Islamism*. Approaching this conflict from different analytical grounds, these discourses interpret its causes dissimilarly, emphasise different aspects of the problem, and, thus, prescribe disparate remedies for the conflict. These contending discourses are played out in the news reports, but their frequency and salience are unequal.

In Chapter 6, the content and news framing analysis shows that the news coverage tends to support the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse by highlighting the violent aspect of conflict and the preservation of public order. Concurrently, the news reports have the tendency to

present a variety of solutions to the problem without further investigating the multifaceted contributing factors and the impacts on involved parties. Additionally, the depiction of state officials as heroic and protective and the portrayal of the affected locals as vulnerable and powerless also endorse the state's status as the rescuer and support the legitimacy of their actions. Such emphases in the news coverage eclipse the influence of the *Minority's grievance* and *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses because the reports rarely discuss the underpinning historical, political, socio-cultural, and ideological contexts of this conflict that these two discourses propose.

The examination of labels used to describe this conflict and the antagonists produces results that are in line with the authorities' characterisations of the events and the assailants. By labelling the conflict with the metaphorical "southern fire", or broadly, "southern problem", the news media downplay the nuances of political and cultural struggle in this conflict, casting the phenomenon merely as violence and disruption of public order. In similar vein, the use of labels with criminological undertones, and at times inflammatory and dehumanising descriptions, on antagonists should not be taken for granted (Picard and Adams 1991; Simmon 1991). While the criminological terms such as "bandit" seem socially-prevailing and journalistically practical as it fits with, for example, the limited headline space, these expressions effectively conclude that the perpetrators' actions are unlawful and unacceptable. Together with the limited presence of antagonists' voices in the news coverage, the conflict is reported principally in terms of regional unrest, committed by clandestine militia without clear goals and demands, and the state is deemed the sole responsible party to solve this problem. Such representations also keep the conflict at a far distance from the general public, as the problem seems restricted to the southernmost region and does not present significant geo-political interests to the majority population (Sonwalkar 2004, 2005).

As one veteran journalist put it, the use of criminological labels does not only reflect the Thai authorities' ambiguous stances towards the insurgent groups, particularly the idea of having dialogue with them, but also signals how news workers regard the antagonists. Apart from being described as obscure and aimless, perpetrators are generally cast as despicable criminals. Therefore, it would be objectionable for the state to officially and publicly negotiate with the law-breakers, similar to government's typical adversarial stance on terrorism as suggested by Walzer (1992 cited in Nossek 2007, p. 271). The minimal news coverage about open dialogues between Thai authorities and insurgent leaders, mostly long after the events took place, is partly because the meetings were often done secretively

and behind closed doors, and perhaps because of changes in the Thai administration and their mixed stances on these talks (Liow and Pathan 2010; Pathan 2012, pp. 4-6). At the same time, the clandestine structure of insurgent movements also makes organising dialogue with them difficult (Melvin 2007; Liow and Pathan ibid.). Nonetheless, by characterising the antagonists as ruthless and obscure criminals, the news reports undermine other explanations on the backgrounds and motives of these insurgents. Additionally, the coverage tend to emphasise the security and law enforcement-oriented solutions, while downplaying other means such as peace talks, political restructure and reform, and public participation in peaceful conflict resolution.

The diversity of Thai news ecology does little to make the discursive contention fair and balanced. Despite the differences in their organisational and journalistic natures, the four news organisations in this study report about the southern conflict in broadly similar ways. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 6, there are a few discrepancies in their interpretations of the conflicts' causes and solutions that enable marginalised discourses to secure at least some public presentation.

While the news content is seemingly homogenous, the analysis shows the subtle fluidity and discursive shifts of news coverage, resulted in part from the changes in political debates – one of the factors shaping political news as Benson suggests (2004, p. 280). Also in line with Gadi Wolfsfeld's 'politics-media-politics cycle' argument (1997, 2004), journalists seem to follow the political actors' outlooks on the conflict, which, in this case, vary very little, yet remain predominant during the seven-year review period. The most frequently-used frames involve aggressive actions, while some frames emerge only when political opportunities struck. For instance, the frequency of the *reconciliation & local identity* solutions frame became prominent when the National Reconciliation Commission was active in 2006, but subsided after the agency was dissolved. The discussions on special administrative models and autonomy did not emerge until 2007 when policy-makers started proposing, debating about, and even discrediting the ideas. These examples also indicate how news reports would mirror the political elites' consensus and disagreements on the subject (Hallin 1989). The analysis of the coverage's trajectories also shows the news media's waning interest in the conflict, albeit its continuation, because the situation is considered repetitive. The subtle dynamic and diversity of news frames also indicate that journalists have dissimilar views on the conflict, as elaborated in Chapter 8.

Having said this, to be clear, the thesis does not suggest that the news coverage is all simply pro-state authority. A number of reports are framed in ways that scrutinise and criticise the government and state agencies for their inefficiency and failed attempts in pacifying the conflict. A handful of reports raise questions about unjust treatments that the southern natives and suspected insurgents receive, and touch upon the subject of 'terrorism from above' such as the repercussions of the Kru-Ze Mosque attack and the Tak Bai demonstration clampdown. Nonetheless, such scrutiny and criticism are mostly crime and security-oriented and grounded on the existing political and socio-cultural structures. This approach is more in line with the *Crime and conspiracy* discourse than the *Minority's grievance* and *Malay nationalism and Islamism* discourses which challenge the dominating political establishments and their beliefs in Thai society. Therefore, the state's authority and legitimacy remain intact despite being critiqued.

Overall, the content and news framing analysis demonstrates some deficiencies in the news coverage that could hinder healthy and fair debates about this complex and discursively contentious conflict. Nevertheless, the thesis does not infer that the news media deliberately promote or avoid reporting about certain aspects of the conflict. It would be premature to simply conclude that journalists purposely serve as any stakeholders' propaganda vehicle as proposed by the *Classical* and *Critical Approaches* (Nossek 2007). As stated above, the dynamic, or at times static, political settings contribute to the coverage's frequency and emphases. Moreover, as the sociology of journalism (McNair 1998; Schudson 2003) suggests, news production practices are contoured by disparate forces from different levels. Therefore, it could be argued that the production of southern conflict news is also shaped by the interplay with sources, the conflict's volatile nature, and professional conventions. Furthermore, despite the seemingly homogenous news content, the thesis finds that news workers have diverse views about the conflict and the desirable roles of journalism in this damaging situation. This finding signals the complexity and power struggle within the Thai news ecology, which will be discussed in detail in the last subsection.

9.1.2. Fostering the reciprocal journalist-source relationship: News access and southern conflict reporting

As shown in Chapter 6, the most quoted sources in the southern conflict coverage are members of the government, police and military forces, and politicians. In similar vein, sources with expertises in law enforcement and crime investigation, security, and national policies are also cited more than others. These findings correspond with the most-reported

theme – security and public order. They also reflect the news media's known disposition towards authority figures (Molotch and Lester 1974; Bennett 1990), who are generally resourced richer than other stakeholders in this conflict. Having louder voices than other parties, these authorities and political elite sources essentially become the "primary definers" (Hall et al. 1978) of the southern conflict.

In line with the argument regarding the preferred theme and news frames, the frequent appearance of authorities and elite sources does not, however, always mean that journalists deliberately perform as these sources' propaganda tool. Journalists' favour to certain groups of sources could also result from the proximity and accessibility to these sources, the bonds that reporters and their informants forge during the newsgathering process, or the organisations' principles and news directions, as will be discussed in a moment.

The analysis of journalist-source relationship is taken into account to explain the complexity of news access. Chapter 8 identified three steps of the relationship forming process: 1) initiating contact, 2) building trust, and 3) being the insiders. In each step, reporters and news organisations do not receive the same treatments from disparate groups of sources. News workers need to demonstrate their ability to negotiate power and provide mutual exchanges with their sources, so that they can earn the source's information and trust. Therefore, the journalist-source relationship in the southern conflict can be described as symbiotic and reciprocal rather than confrontational (McCargo 2000; Schudson 2003).

Similar to Tuchman's study of professional objectivity (1972), this thesis further suggests that news organisations' diverse source pool is not only an occupational necessity to garner multiperspectival information that contribute to neutral and objective news content, but also a proof of their non-partisanship. Journalists can use their wide array of sources as leverage: to assert their credibility and earn access to other sources. Nevertheless, for senior reporters who have been rooted in one beat for a long time, the sources and their specialisation become more issue-specific. This concise, although exclusive, list could result in the news workers' insular and single-approach perspectives on the conflict (Wolfsfeld 1997; McCargo 2000; Schudson 2003).

The hostile nature of the conflict also affects journalists' relationship with and dependence on sources. As discussed in Chapter 7, one reason why the authorities' accounts are cited most frequently in news reports is because local reporters have to rely on the investigation summary released by the involved officials as they minimise the risks of entering a perilous

zone. In similar vein, the frequent tribute-style reports about the devotion and sacrifice of soldiers, teachers, police officers, and medical services staff based in the southern border provinces are produced, in part, from the shared experiences of working in the volatile area (Tumber 2004, pp. 192-193), as well as the socially-prevailing outlooks on these lines of occupations. Meanwhile, the minimal presence of insurgents, alleged perpetrators, or counter-state explanations is because of inaccessibility to these antagonists or journalists' confidentiality to protect the safety of these sources and themselves (Tumber 2005).

The thesis also shows that being associated with larger news corporations facilitate the access to elite sources, leading to the news media's tendency to adopt the *official perspective* and allow fewer opportunities for *alternative*, or even *oppositional perspectives* (Schlesinger et al. 1983), to emerge. As a result, proponents of these perspectives need to generate events to galvanise support or seek other channels to publicise their causes. Meanwhile, to make up for the lack of their high-power sources, smaller alternative media producers form alliance with advocacy groups who often provide them with underreported information and analyses. This type of partnership, including the public service broadcaster's collaboration with civic media producers, opens up '*the front gate*' (Wolfsfeld 1997) for the sources who generally do not appear in mainstream media coverage, enabling them to express their counter-hegemonic views. Regardless, some news workers consider civil societies another vested interest group in the conflict, and question if the alliance would bring about partisanship rather than balance.

In summary, the thesis argues that the complexity of journalist-source relationship in the southern conflict largely influence how the problem is reported. The findings present reasons behind the prevalence of authority and elite sources in news content, from professional conventions and human relations in conflict situation, to the predominant views in the newsroom and society in general on certain social actors. The thesis proposes that the investigation into news content and journalistic customs is integral to the study of journalism and political conflict. Nonetheless, political conflict reporting cannot be analysed using the media-centric approach alone, because the interactions between news workers and political players also prove to shape how the southern conflict is portrayed.

9.1.3. Struggling to counter the mainstream: The news production practices in southern conflict reporting

The second RQ, "*What are the practices of Thai journalism in the southern conflict reporting?*", looks into news production culture, including the influence of the political and cultural settings on news operation. The question also seeks to see the impact of the Thai news ecology's diversity and complexity on southern conflict reporting.

As shown in the content and news framing analysis findings, the portrayal of the southern conflict in the news coverage produced by the four media organisations varies slightly. Despite their different scales of operation, organisational structures, and media principles, the media outlets employ similar editorial and production systems that they believe to be the foundation of professional journalism. News workers regard the ideas of neutrality and objectivity, and the editorial process as the core of news professionalism. Thus, they tend to use these qualifications as the benchmark to reflect on their performance, as well as evaluating that of their peers and other social actors using media platforms. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, the views on professional values and practices are neither universal nor static (see, for example, Tiffen 1989; Iskandar and El-Nawawy 2004; Ryfe 2009). Also, as elaborated in Chapter 8, Thai journalists also express disparate opinions about the southern conflict and their roles in the situation. Notwithstanding the similar news output, news workers' disparate and dynamic perspectives about professional obligations and the conflict signal the diversity in the news production culture. This variation also suggests that there are some contestation and power struggles involved in the news production culture (Dickinson 2007, p. 193), although the hegemonic news contents generally prevail in the end.

Chapter 7 discussed the news practices and identified various difficulties in southern conflict reporting at different levels. In line with Reese's *hierarchy-of-influences* model (2001b), journalists' personal backgrounds such as religions, upbringings, and beliefs are at work, particularly when it comes to the subjects that are closer to home or challenge their views. Meanwhile, the news beat and news prioritisation systems are largely geo-political- rather than subject-oriented (McCargo 2000, 2006), as the stories from the southernmost provinces are primarily delegated to the Regional News desk. These stories are simply reported as repetitive violent incidents. The matters would be investigated or analysed further with inter-departmental collaboration only when they have massive or widespread impacts, for example, generating a lot of casualties, causing controversy, being initiated by high-profile protagonists or antagonists, or associated with national security at large.

The conflict's hostility also brings about an intimidating and life-threatening working environment that deters journalists from searching for counter-hegemonic accounts. Concurrently, the political settings and security-oriented policy also lead to information deficit and media manipulation (Schlesinger et al. 1983). Such circumstances cast the chilling effect on small media producers, making them resort to self-censorship (Magpanthong 2007; Campaign for Popular Media Reform 2010). Under these conditions, the state's preferred discourse is persistently kept in the dominating position.

Lastly, Chapter 7 identified the "Bangkok-centric" mindset, referring to the centralised administrative perspective prevalent in the news organisations and political institutions, as a critical obstacle in southern conflict reporting. Rather than being a mere psychological framework, the "Bangkok-centric" mindset is the overarching ideological structure that governs the news operation. The term reflects the hegemonic perspectives in Thai society, such as the general support for the devoted civil servants in the restive region, and the ideas of the Thai nation-state constructs. As discussed in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 8, the histories of the southern border region, certain explanations about the conflict, and some proposed solutions do not resonate with the predominant beliefs and legitimacy of influential establishments in Thai society (see, for example, Aphornsuvan 2007; Satha-Anand 2007). Thus, for the news media to present the counter-hegemonic views could be considered partisan and unprofessional, even unpatriotic in the eyes of the authorities, their advertisers, news sources, and audience.

Having laid out the conditions and constraints that shape the news production practices, as summarised in Figure 9.1, three roles of Thai journalism in the southern conflict were explicated in Chapter 8. These roles are: 1) *journalism as a presenter of truth*: investigating and maintaining neutrality, 2) *journalism as a forum for every party*: levelling the playing field, and 3) *journalism as a supporter in conflict resolution*: juggling dual roles. Journalists seemingly agree that the first role is within the bound of news professionalism, perhaps the core of conflict reporting. The second and third roles, however, prompt debates about professional identity and ideology, as journalists seem to step out of their domain and engage with other political actors in the conflict, be it the powerful establishments or those with *alternative* or *oppositional perspectives*. At the same time, these roles indicate that journalism is "an element of politics", as Schudson proposes (2003, p. 166); therefore, complete detachment from political and social institutions would be impossible. Contrary to McCargo's observation on politics reporting that reporters, especially junior ones, are "double outsiders" who hold a

marginal status in the news organisations and the institutions they are assigned to (2000, p. 45), the thesis argues whether it is possible for journalists in conflict situations to be the "double insiders" who equally belong to both worlds in order to facilitate conflict resolution.

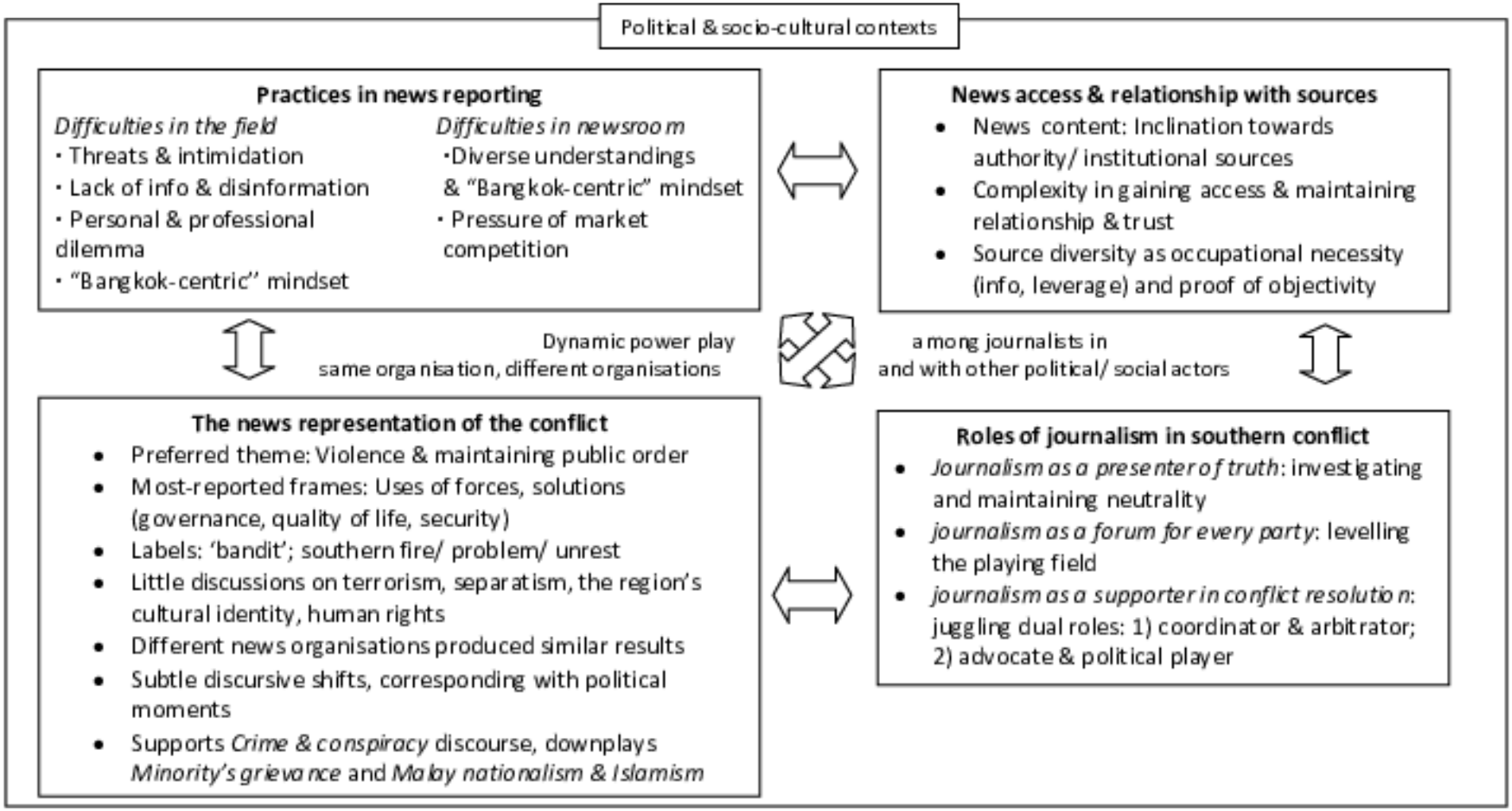

Figure 9.1 The Thai news production culture and the roles of journalism in the southern conflict

Lastly, this thesis argues that, although these conditions and constraints contribute to the production of less than desirable news content, the disparate journalistic principles and practices could bring about diversity and constructive changes in the Thai news ecology, in line with what Cottle proposes (2006, p. 51), as conceptualised in Figure 9.2. The introduction of *peace journalism* (Kanwerayotin 2006; Choonui 2009), the burgeoning alternative and civic media operation and the active civil societies in the southern border provinces (Pathan 2012; Pathan et al. 2012), and the collaboration among national media, local producers, and civil societies that is similar to Wolfsfeld's idea of *shared media* (2004, p. 230), suggest that news workers sometimes reflect on their performance, leading to more discussions and debates about conflict reporting and the desirable roles of journalism in this volatile political situation as discussed earlier. In addition, some forms of 'thick' journalism (Cottle 2005), such as *Thai PBS*'s short documentaries, feature programmes, and citizen media content, and *Isara*'s analytical reports on security policy and expenditure, as well as the subtle display of *media reflexivity* (Ibid., pp. 119 - 120) through online social network and media, could enable the under-represented protagonists and their discourses to emerge. Despite the optimistic outlook, these movements rarely generated a strong momentum in the news ecology and in the public domain, or the 'contra-flows' of information (Cottle 2006), as the predominant discourses and political structures remain unwavering.

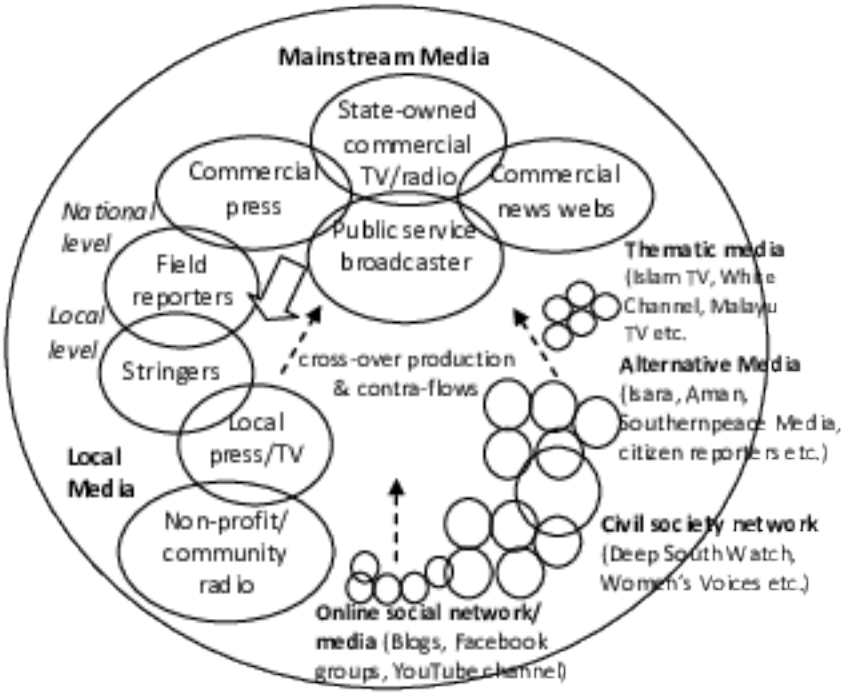

Figure 9.2 The diversity and complexity of news ecology in southern conflict reporting

9.2 The limitations of this thesis and suggestions for future research

Chapter 5 of this thesis explained the research limitations, particularly the limited access to news organisations and their news archives. Although the findings are sufficient to provide grounds to form the thesis' principle arguments, some methodological amendment could be made. For instance, rolling random sampling was used in this study for practicality reasons to select the sample that spanned across the seven-year period. Alternatively, purposive sampling could be carried out to explore the news coverage in different key moments in the southern conflict or similar incidents in different periods to determine the dynamic of and discursive shifts in the news coverage.

The thesis' primary focus on the vernacular media may also overlook the roles of those producing news and programmes in other languages such as English, Jawi, and Malay. The English-language dailies target elite readers who acquire a considerable degree of English proficiency,[1] as well as global audience and foreign press agencies. Moreover, based on the interviews with experienced journalists working for these organisations, these news enterprises also operate with slightly different news production systems. Thus, the study of English-language newspapers can add new dimensions in the discussions of journalistic variations and diversity in news ecology. Meanwhile, the increasing number of the locally-produced Jawi/Malay-language programmes and the recent launch of the state-run Malay-speaking satellite television channel[2] signal how the indigenous dialect, previously considered the language of insurgents, is now recognised as a significant tool to communicate with the Malay Muslim residents in the southernmost provinces and the neighbouring Malaysia. The analysis of their roles in the conflict may offer noteworthy findings in the studies of news media and political conflict/violence.

The study of alternative, community, and advocacy media that focus on the southern conflict and Muslim communities can elaborate on the roles of these non-mainstream

[1] Thailand's official and working language is Thai. English is not formally stated as a second language, although the subject is included in the compulsory education curriculum and regarded as one of the necessary qualifications in job recruitment. Nonetheless, the English language proficiency among the native population is considered rudimentary. According to the UK-based EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) which surveys and assesses the average adult English skill level in 54 countries worldwide, Thailand was in the 'very low proficiency' category in 2012.

[2] In January 2013, the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) announced the launch of the Malay-language satellite television channel, catering to the southern residents and the general public. Starting from the daily broadcast of 30 minutes a day at 8 to 8.30 p.m., the channel will be on-air 24 hours by the end of the year. Additionally, the state agency runs a 24-hour radio channel, which also presents programmes produced by local producers. Prior to the launch of the new enterprise, two state-run, free-to-air terrestrial TV stations already broadcast local Malay language programmes for three hours a day, but the programmes are not widely received in the southernmost region.

outlets in conflict mediatization. This thesis discusses briefly on this note, but does not provide the analysis of their news content to fully support the argument. Although *Isam* is considered a non-profit media outlet, it was established and is operated by institutionalised journalists who may carry the similar set of practices as those in the national-level mainstream organisations. The interviews with local alternative and advocacy media operators suggest that these producers aim to challenge the conventional practices and narratives. Therefore, the full examination into their operation may offer worthwhile insights, and test whether they in fact present the counter-hegemonic perspectives and become the 'contra-flows' in southern conflict mediatization.

I also find the production models pioneered by the public service broadcaster *Thai PBS*, which enhances the collaboration between institutionalised journalists and civil sector fascinating. As briefly discussed in Chapter 7 and 8, the projects, such as the joint editorial committee comprising the station's production team, representatives from civil societies, and southern studies experts, as well as the citizen/civic media initiatives, not only provide media access to the grassroots, but also endorse their legitimacy in the process. It would be interesting to see how the models negotiate the boundary between news professionalism and civic engagement.

This thesis examines how journalists make sense of the southern conflict by primarily examining the news coverage. Nonetheless, there are other forms of 'thick' journalism produced by news workers that showcase marginalised views and indicate their professional reflexivity. These include documentary programmes and magazines that occasionally feature the southern conflict at length. Some senior journalists write articles and books about the insurgency and its impacts on the southerners based on their in-depth research, which are recognised by scholars in the field. Reporters who worked or are currently in the restive region recounted their experiences in a series of books and articles in trade journals (see the list of these publications in Appendix M). There are also discussion programmes and public seminars where journalists talked about the difficulties and dilemma they faced in conflict reporting that were not shown in news reports. Because of its already extensive sample, this thesis does not sufficiently explore this aspect of journalism. Regardless, these programmes and publications are worth explored to reveal the diversity of and the debates about news professionalism.

Lastly, the study of the southern conflict coverage produced by foreign press agencies and news outlets can also offer interesting outlooks. Given the southern conflict's religion and

minority nuances and the ongoing radical Islamic movements in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the world, the Thai case has been monitored by the international communities, as briefly discussed in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 6. Therefore, the investigation into foreign news organisations' reports on the subject can help explain how this conflict is communicated in the global forum, and stimulate academic discussions in the field of international journalism and political conflict mediatization.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that there are deficiencies in journalistic content and practices that hinder news media from serving as a fair arena for healthy and rational democratic debates on the discursive-contentious political conflict where stakeholders can equally speak their minds without being curtailed. The thesis argues that, while the constraints of news production practices cause limitations, the political climate and socio-cultural conditions in which journalists operate also shape news practices and contributes to these shortcomings.

Considering the news media as a part of politics, the thesis further points out that, rather than being a powerful proponent of predominant discourses or a propaganda vehicle for any protagonists, news media are, in fact, a crucial facilitator. Nonetheless, the news media are not simply a passive mediator. Shaped by professional ideology and being associated with other political players in one way or another, news workers are not a homogenous group; they form disparate understandings on the conflict and their desirable roles to alleviate the problem. These dissimilar outlooks lead to various news representations of the conflict, and make journalists 'mediatize' the conflict differently.

In spite of the shortcomings in journalism that help amplify the hegemonic discourses and keep them in the dominating position, the thesis argues that the journalists' disparate stances, the subtle discursive shifts manifesting in the news coverage, and the prevalence of alternative news outlets signal that journalism is not always monolithic and static. Such indications suggest that the diversity and complexity in news ecology, as well as the exercise of professional reflexivity, can provide opportunities for marginalised voices to surface, insofar as these underreported sectors can offer journalists certain reciprocity such as worthy information and connection. The diversity and complexity in news ecology may yet contribute to a fairer and more balanced forum that can generate healthier democratic debates. At the same time, the political and socio-cultural conditions will need to be conducive to generating such debates if the mainstream news media are not to rehearse the forms of news media reporting and elite deference documented across this thesis.

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Appendix A: The chronology of the re-emergence of conflict and violence in the southern border provinces of Thailand

The section traces back to the beginning of the re-emerged insurgency and summarises key moments throughout the seven years of the studied period.

2001-2003 (Prelude to the new round of violence)

January 6, 2001:
Thai Rak Thai party, led by Thaksin Shinawatra, won a landslide election victory and became a majority in the coalition government. Thaksin took office as the 23rd prime minister.

December 24, 2001:
Five police officers and one village defence volunteer were shot dead in coordinated attacks on five police posts in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

March 12-15 & 23-24, 2002:
Five police officers were killed in gunfire attacks on police booths and checkpoints in the three provinces.

May 1, 2002:
The Thaksin government disbanded the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (hereafter, SBPAC), and the Civil-Police-Military 43 joint command (hereafter, CPM 43). The agencies' tasks were delegated to the judicial offices, provincial governors, and police who take charges of Southern security.

October 29, 2002:
Five public schools in Songkhla, the neighbouring province of the three southern border provinces, were torched. Insurgents also bombed a Buddhist temple and a Chinese shrine in Pattani.

April 26, 2003:
An angry mob in a Narathiwat village accused two border patrol police intelligence officers of being members of a criminal camp. The officers were reportedly taken hostage, tortured, and killed.

April 28, 2003:
Five marines were killed and five rifles were stolen in attacks on marine bases in Yala and Narathiwat.

July 3, 2003:
Five police officers and one civilian were killed in coordinated attacks at three Pattani checkpoints

What analysts saw as the imminent new round of insurgency was when coordinated attacks at police posts in the three southernmost provinces killed five police officers and a village defence volunteer in 2001.[1] The incident happened at the end of first year of Thaksin Shinawatra's first term as prime minister. Despite the unusual pattern of attacks, state authorities dismissed the needs for any special precautions. Moreover, the Thaksin administration decided to disband the SBPAC and the CPM 43; two agencies that were

[1] Funston, J. 2008. *Southern Thailand: The Dynamics of Conflict*. Washington, D.C.: East-West Center.; McCargo, D. 2008. *Tearing apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

established in 1981 to gather intelligence, maintain security, and build understanding and cooperation between state officials and local Malay Muslims. The situation deteriorated with school torching and bombings at religious premises in the subsequent years. Another repeating pattern of incidents that would emerge during the course of the insurgency was the torture and murder of security officials by an angry villager mob who accused the deceased of being part of a criminal group.

2004

January 4:
Around 100 insurgents raided a weaponry depot of the Army Region 4 in Joh Ai Rong District of Narathiwat Province. Four soldiers were killed in the attack. 413 light infantry weapons and 2,000 rounds of ammunition were stolen. Twenty public schools in Yala were torched. Escape routes were lined with burned rubber tires and fake explosives as diversion.

January 22, 24:
The first time Buddhist monks became the assault targets. Three monks were murdered, one in each of the three southern border provinces while two other were injured.

March 12:
High-profile human right Muslim lawyer Somchai Neelaphaijit was reported missing. His disappearance led to the years-long investigation in which a group of police officers was alleged of abducting him to delay the judicial process concerning suspected insurgents that he represented.

March 19:
The prime minister ordered transfers of the Army Region 4 chief, along with the National Police commander, to inactive posts, as a reprimand for their failure to curb violence in the southern provinces.

March 27:
The first attack where civilians were targeted began with an explosion in front of a hotel and nightclub at the border village of Sungai Golok, Narathiwat. Analysts looked at this incident as a smaller-scale imitation of the Bali, Indonesia bombing in 2002.

March 28-30:
Thirty-nine government buildings in Pattani, Songkhla, and Yala were set on fire in coordinated attacks. Another large-scale explosives heist took place at a Yala depot.

April 28:
Some 200 Malay Muslims used machetes as weapon in the massive orchestrated attacks on police and military posts in Pattani, Yala, and Songkhla. The incident culminated in the clampdown on suspects who retreated to Kru-Ze Mosque, a sacred religious heritage in Pattani. Five security officials and one civilian were killed, while the number of casualty on the suspected insurgent side remained unclear, ranging from 105 to 107 deaths, including 32 who were shot dead in the Kru-Ze Mosque storm. Most victims were in their youth.

May 24:
BERSATU exiled chief Dr. Wan Kadir Che Man suggested his organisation would concede its demand for complete independence and called on the Thai government for talks on peace and autonomy in the deep South.

June 3:
Muslim politician Najmuddin Umar, who was a ruling Thai Rak Thai MP representing Narathiwat, reported to police after facing 10 charges, including treason, for his alleged involvement in the January 4 weapon heist incident. He was acquitted in December 2005.

September:
Relevant agencies commenced the Queen's initiatives: the "Village Security Volunteers" project, and the "Sufficiency Economy Village and Model Farming" project.

September 17:
In Pattani, a judge was killed – the first high-ranking official victim of suspected insurgents.

October 10:
The government established the Southern Border Provinces Peace-building Command (SBPPC) and appointed the deputy supreme military commander as its chief. Operated under the supervision of the Internal Security Operations Command (hereafter, ISOC) and the Military Supreme Commander, the agency was to maintain security in the deep South while facilitating other government's peace-enhancing policies.

October 25:
The clampdown on protestors in Tak Bai, Narathiwat marked another epitomic case in the history of resurgent insurgency. The crowds gathered in front of the district police station, demanding the release of six locals. Seven people were killed when police fired guns into the demonstrators. Later, 1,300 protestors were apprehended, and 78 died. Autopsy reports indicated the cause of death was suffocation during transportation in crowded trucks from the protest site to an army camp in Pattani.

November 26:
Then Prime Minister Thaksin announced he would only partially attend the 2004 ASEAN summit if the Tak Bai incident was to be discussed, stating the incident was a domestic issue, not a matter of ASEAN's concern.

This year marked the new insurgent tactic that would ensue in years to come. On January 4, around 100 insurgents attacked a military weapon depot of the Fourth Army command centre in Joh Ai Rong District of Narathiwat Province, along with a series of school torching in the three southernmost provinces. The government imposed Martial Law[2] in the three provinces on January 5, effectively appointing the military as the key actors in maintaining social order in the restive region.[3] Despite the perpetrators' high-scale and well-planned attacks, Prime Minister Thaksin said the attack was carried out by "petty thieves", leading the government and relevant agencies to treat the case as a mere grand robbery.[4] Subsequently, a string of violent attacks became a daily fright for people in the region.

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[2] Martial Law BE 2457 (1914) was declared on September 13, 1914. The act was amended 5 times since then, with the latest amendment in 1959.

[3] VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTH: Soldiers die. Schools burn. Arms stockpile stolen. Martial law declared. *Bangkok Post*. 5 January 2004.

[4] [illegible]. ["Thaksin" stressed out, slams on Wan Nor, police, army] [Online]. *Krungthep Turakit*. Available at: http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/2004/special/south/news.php?news=02.html [Accessed: 28 July 2010].

Another incident that academics and advocates believe could have exacerbated the already fearful Malay Muslims in the south was the disappearance of human right lawyer Somchai Neelaphaijit, who accused police officers of torturing Muslim suspects in the weapon heist case.[5] Further investigations claimed that a team of police officers had abducted the lawyer to delay the judicial process of his clients' trials.[6]

Two landmark events epitomised the causes of the locals' deepening distrust towards the government and state officials. The first was the massive orchestrated attacks on police and military posts in Pattani, Yala, and Songkhla on April 28. While the police's execution of Muslim attackers, mostly young men, was deemed justified by many Thais, the aggressive response to the suspects who retreated inside the holy Kru-Ze Mosque was widely criticized by locals. The government-appointed independent inquiry committee[7] also saw the clampdown as an excessive use of force and suggested negotiations and other peaceful means could have been used to minimise the casualty of both officers and assailants.[8] The second incident was the October 25 crackdown on demonstrators in Tak Bai District of Narathiwat, where 78 protestors died of suffocation while being transported in crowded trucks from the protest site to an army camp in Pattani. Another independent inquiry committee[9] investigating this case also harshly criticised law enforcement and security entities for mishandling the demonstrators[10]; nevertheless, commanders were excused for their iron-fist approach and were merely relocated to inactive posts – a move that was regarded as unjust by locals.

As the region continued to descend into violence, with Buddhist civilians becoming the target of attacks, the government launched its first structural solution to quell the situation by inventing the military-led Southern Border Provinces Peace-building Command (SBPPC). However, the authorities' stances on potential talks with insurgents remained vague, despite suggestions from senior military officials and a separatist organisation chief.

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5 Homlaor (ed.) 2004. *อุ้มหายทนายสมชาย นีละไพจิตร: บทสะท้อนวัฒนธรรมอำนาจนิยมในสังคมไทย [The disappearance of lawyer Somchai Neelapaichit: An illustration of the authoritarian culture in Thai society]*. Bangkok: Thai Working Group on Human Rights Defenders.; Pathmanand, U. 2007. Thaksin's Achilles' Heel: The Failure of Hawkish Approaches in the Thai South. In: McCargo, D. ed. *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: NUS Press, p. 83; Satha-Anand, C. 2008. *Kwam runraeng kab kan jadkan "kwam jing": Pattani nai rob keung tassawat [Violence and "Truth" Management: Pattani in Half-Century]*. Bangkok: Thammasart University Press, p. 308.

6 ย้อนรอย 2 ปีปริศนา อุ้มหาย 'ทนายสมชาย นีละไพจิตร' [Retracing the 2 mysterious years of 'Somchai Neelaphaijit' abduction] [Online]. *Krungtep Turakit*. Available at: http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/2005/special/critical_south/news.php?news=south193.html [Accessed: 28 July 2010].

7 The committee, appointed on May 4, 2004, comprised seven members, who were revered Muslim scholars, statesmen, and former ambassadors. The report was submitted to the government on July 26, 2004.

8 The Independent Inquiry Committee of the Kru-Ze Mosque Case. 26 July 2004. *รายงานคณะกรรมการอิสระไต่สวนข้อเท็จจริงกรณีเหตุการณ์มัสยิดกรือเซะ [Report by the Independent Inquiry Committee for the Kru-Ze Mosque Situation Case]* [pdf]. Available at: http://prachatai.com/sites/default/files/special/report_gresae .pdf [Accessed: 18 January 2013].

9 This set of committee members was different from that of the Kru-Ze Mosque case. Appointed by the government on November 2, 2004, the committee was consisted of nine members who shared similar qualification with the first set. The report was completed on December 17, 2004. Both reports were released to the general public following the NRC's directive in April 2005.

10 The Independent Inquiry Committee of the Deaths in Tak Bai District of Narathiwat Province. 17 December 2004. *รายงานของคณะกรรมการอิสระตรวจสอบข้อเท็จจริงกรณีมีผู้เสียชีวิตในเหตุการณ์อำเภอตากใบ จังหวัดนราธิวาส เมื่อวันที่ 25 ตุลาคม 2547 [Report of the Independent Inquiry Committee of the Deaths in the Situation in Tak Bai District, Narathiwat Province, on October 25, 2004]* [pdf]. Available at: http://prachatai.com/sites/default/files/special/takbai.pdf [Accessed: 18 January 2013].

News reports quoted Dr. Wan Kadir Che Man, the exiled leader of BERSATU, which served as the coordinator among separatist movement organisations, as saying he welcomed negotiations with the government and that the organisation would compromise on their previous demands for independence.[11] However, the government turned down his offer for peace talks as there was no evidence that suggested that BERSATU or Dr. Che Man had a major influence on other separatist organisations or insurgent operatives.[12]

Following these incidents and the rising number of affected people, the government allocated the one-year emergency budget of more than six billion baht (approximately 120 million pound sterling) for the restive region, some of which became the start-up fund for local civil societies, particularly those working on the "healing" projects.[13] Moreover, while visiting the southern border provinces, Her Majesty the Queen gave a directive to the royal aide-de-camp and secretariat offices to launch two projects, aimed at helping to maintain the locals' safety and well-being. Collaborating with the Army, the agencies organised a weapon training camp for village security volunteers and the farming and community development projects to create jobs for those affected by violence.[14] Presently, the projects continues to operate, and Her Majesty had constantly expressed her concerns for the people impacted by violence, particularly soldiers, police officers, teachers, and local residents.

2005

February 6:

Thai Rak Thai scored the second election win, but the party lost all its seats in the three southernmost provinces, most of which to Democrat.

February 17:

A car-bomb attack, the first in Thailand, killed six people and injured around 50 others in front of a hotel that was also a target of the March 27, 2004 attack in Sungei Golok, Narathiwat.

February 18-19:

The Thai Journalists Association (TJA) and the Thai Broadcast Journalists Association (TBJA) conducted a fact-finding trip for Bangkok-based senior reporters and editors to the deep South.

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[11] Baker, M. Thailand rebels offer peace after 20 years of struggle [Online]. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 25 May 2004. Available at: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/05/24/1085389334934.html# [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[12] Pathan, D. NEGOTIATION: Talks with separatists being overplayed. *The Nation*. 25 May 2004.

[13] Jitpiromsri, S. *ขบวนการประชาสังคมจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้: นกฟีนิกซ์ใต้แสงตะวันแผดกล้า* [Civil society movement in the southern border provinces: phoenix under the glaring sun]. *Sammakkee Chonchon (People Press)*. Available at: http://www.peoplepress.in.th/archives/autopagev3/show_page.php?group_id=1&auto_id=19&topic_id=1777&topic_no=35&page=1&gaction=on [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[14] *พระราชภารกิจใน 3 จังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ เมื่อเล่าโดย พลเอกนพพล บุญทับ รองสมุหราชองครักษ์* [The royal missions in 3 southern border provinces. Tales by General Naphol Bounthap, deputy royal aide-de-camp] [Online]. *Army TV 5*. 12 August 2011. Available at: http://www.tv5.co.th/queen54/wrok06.html [Accessed: January 14, 2013]. And กองทัพบกกับโครงการอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ : โครงการใหม่ที่เพิ่งเกิดขึ้นเพื่อบรรเทาความเดือดร้อนของพี่น้องประชาชนในภาคใต้ จำนวน ๒ โครงการ [The Army and the Royal Initiative Projects: 2 new projects to relieve sufferings of people in the South] [Online]. Available at: http://j5.rtarf.mi.th/heart/161147scoop.htm [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

March 28:
The government established the National Reconciliation Commission (hereafter, NRC), as proposed by academics and human rights campaigners, to initiate a peace process in the troubled region.

April 3:
Three bombing attacks were launched at the Hat Yai International Airport and a supermarket in Songkhla Province.

June 1:
Former Narathiwat doctor, Waemahadi Waedao, and three associates were acquitted of treason charges due to lack of evidence. The four were accused of coordinating with a Singaporean JI member in plotting to bomb five embassies in Bangkok. Following the trial, Dr. Waemahadi ran for a senator seat in a Narathiwat constituency and won. After his term abruptly ended by the 2006 coup, he entered the province's MP race in the following year and won.

June 20:
Three Islamic religious teachers were killed while praying in a Pattani mosque.

June-July:
The degree of violence escalated with the number of people being decapitated by suspected insurgents rose to nine in two months, compared with three during the previous 17 months.

July 14:
A series of synchronised bombings and torching was launched in multiple targeted areas in Yala, causing power blackouts and chaos.

July 16:
The Government issued and enforced the newly-passed State of Emergency Decree in the South and lifted the previously imposed Martial Law.

July 27:
The TJA was set to launch the "Peace Media: The Southern News Desk Project", later dubbed as "Isara News Centre", as another news outlet for stories concerning the southern conflict and other aspects of situation in the region.

August 30-31:
Around 100 villagers in Sungai Padi District of Narathiwat gathered in front of their village to block police from accessing the crime scene where their religious leader was killed, believing officials were responsible for his death. The incident was followed by the exodus of 131 locals to the neighbouring Malaysia.

September 20-21:
Two marines accused of killing two of Narathiwat's Tanyong Limo villagers were taken hostage and later beaten to death by the village's members, who also blocked the authorities' attempts to rescue the captives by gathering in front of the village where they denied any calls for negotiations.

October 5:
A television reporter and team members were wounded after a bomb was thrown into an eatery in Narathiwat. The team was assigned to report the prime minister's southern trip.

October 16:
An elderly Buddhist monk and two temple boys were brutally murdered, while their residence, Phromprasit Temple in Pattani Province, was torched.

October 26:
Synchronised attacks took place in 63 locations around the deep South between 7 to 8 p.m. Insurgents derailed a train, killed four people, and stole firearms from members of village security teams.

November 16:
A Muslim family of nine, including a toddler, was shot dead as their house in Narathiwat was ambushed by unidentified attackers.

November 24:
In the new round of Provincial Islamic Council elections, the Narathiwat president lost his seat, while the Pattani was challenged.

December 18:
Two schools and teachers were held hostages by villagers in two separate incidents in Narathiwat, as they demanded the release of two villagers in police detention.

Violence continued, with emerging patterns such as car bombs and the brutal killing of Malay Muslim residents and Islamic religious teachers.[15] One of the most prominent incidents was the April 3 simultaneous bombings in Hat Yai District of Songkhla, the neighbouring province of the restive region. This marked the first fatal attacks outside of the three southernmost provinces. Two people were killed and 60 others were injured in the explosions, which targeted the province's commercial and tourism district, its international airport, a department store, and a hotel.[16]

Meanwhile, in an attempt to restore peace and reconciliation, the government established the NRC, as proposed by academics, to initiate the peace process in the troubled region. An independent agency, the NRC was led by former prime minister and respected statesman Anand Panyarachun, and comprised 48 members who were academics, civil campaigners, and representatives from relevant state offices.[17] The body's initial mission was to investigate reports of power abuse and conduct public hearings on issue of violence with local residents.

In tandem with promoting the peace rhetoric, the government also moved forward with security strategies. Within only one year, three army generals were taking turn in running

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[15] According to a Manager Online news report, security agencies in the region reported 885 deaths and 1,600 injuries in the violent incidents from January 4, 2004 to January 4, 2006. If 191 people who perished in the April attacks and Tak Bai incidents were included, the total number of deaths was 1,076 in the first two years of the conflict.

[16] Southern Thailand bombs kill two [Online]. *BBC News*. 3 April 2005. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4406721.stm [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[17] เปิดชื่อ48กรรมการสมานฉันท์แห่งชาติ [48 names of National Reconciliation Commissioners revealed] [Online]. *Manager Online*. 28 March 2005. Available at: http://www.manager.co.th/Politics/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9480000043092 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

and being relocated from the Army Region 4, which was responsible for the southern provinces. In July, the government decided to execute the state of emergency law[18] in the deep South, following the commotion in central Yala, in which insurgents blasted the city's electricity transformers, launched attacks, and set fire on property during the widespread blackouts. The new law was to re-enforce the authority of military and police officers, already underpinned by the enacted martial law, in the search, arrest, detention of suspects and confiscation of property without warrants.[19] The NRC chairman deemed the move would go against the peace-rebuilding process. The new regulation also faced heavy criticism from human rights advocates and the media, as it gave the prime minister full authorisation over military operations and allowed him to censor the press in the name of national security.[20]

This was also the year where the region saw a number of incidents where villagers formed a mob prohibiting authorities from accessing their villages, often a crime scene. The oft-cited incident, which reflected the locals' distrust not only toward state officials, but also the mainstream vernacular press, was in Tanyong Limo Village of Narathiwat. On September 20-21, villagers took two marines hostages, accusing them of opening fire on the village teashop and killing two residents.[21] During the tense and day-long standoff between the locals and officials, villagers allowed access only to Malay-speaking or Malay-national journalists. The Thai press was, therefore, unable to report as the event unfolded and could only file the story when the stand-off ended, and authorities found two marines beaten to death.[22]

Another significant case in late 2005 was the exodus of 131 Malay Muslim southerners to Malaysia, which heightened the tensions between the two neighbouring countries and the role Malaysia played in this conflict. The Thai government expressed mixed stances: the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson said the violence and threats from separatist movements forced these Thai nationals to emigrate,[23] whereas the prime minister claimed an insurgent suspect was among those who fled.[24] However, academics and Malay authorities argued the Thais took refuge to escape the abuse by Thai security officers employing their insurgency-suppression measures. As a result, these people would be allowed in Malaysia until the Thai administration guaranteed protections of their basic rights.[25] The case also prompted more debates on the Thai-Malay dual citizenship held by many residents of the deep South – the

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[18] The Emergency Decree on the Administration of the State of Emergency BE 2548 (2005) was declared on July 16, 2005.

[19] England, V. Thai PM uses sweeping powers to crack down on rebels. *The Guardian*. 20 July 2005. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/jul/20/thailand [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[20] EMERGENCY DECREES: Anand slams govt as editors up in arms. *The Nation*. 19 July 2005.

[21] VILLAGE REVENGE: Massive hunt for marines killer. *The Nation*. 22 September 2005.

[22] Ganjanakhundee, S. "BURNING ISSUE: Tanyonglimo a media wake-up call". *The Nation*. 27 September 2005.

[23] Thailand Blames Separatist Group for Thai Muslim Exodus [Online]. *The Irrawaddee*. 8 September 2005. Available at: http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=4962 [Accessed: January 14, 2013].

[24] "ทักษิณ" แฉ 131 คนมาเลย์ถูกหมายจับคดี "ปล้นปืน" ["Thaksin" reveals an arrest warrant in "armoury heist" case was issued to one of the 131 Thais] [Online]. *Manager Online*. 2 October 2005. Available at: http://www.manager.co.th/Politics/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9480000135104 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[25] M'sia Won't Release 131 Thais Without Human Rights Assurance [Online]. *Bernama.com*. 28 September 2005. Available at: http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/news_lite.php?id=157852 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

move which the government anticipated would impede insurgents from crossing the border easily.[26]

2006

January:
The anti-Thaksin demonstrations, led by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), escalated in Bangkok and several provinces. In the far South, 40 mobile phone transmission posts were set on fire. A policeman was killed, while two teachers and three soldiers were injured in other attacks.

March 6:
Insurgents launched attacks on two villages late at night, killing five. Such actions were seen as a possible shift of violent patterns from point-blank assassination to targeting Buddhist civilians.

April 2:
The Thaksin administration declared a snap election.

May 19:
Villagers of Gujing Luepa in Narathiwat demanded the release of two members who were previously arrested for their suspected involvement with insurgent movements. They also took two female Buddhist teachers hostage before beating them. One teacher, Juling Ponganmun, died from severe injuries in January 2007, while another teacher was in critical condition.

June 5:
The NRC published its first report on the southern conflict and presented its recommendations to remedy the troubled situation.

June – August:
Simultaneous bombs targeted governmental offices, banks, and police outposts.

August:
A group of NGOs, media and journalists, public health professionals, and educators and academics working in conflict resolution fields, who are based both in and outside of the region, formed a networked independent organisation, entitled "Deep South Watch".

September 16:
A string of six simultaneous explosions took place in Hat Yai, Songkhla's business centre, killing five people, including a Canadian who was the first foreigner victim of the violence, and injuring about 60 others.

September 19:
The Thaksin government was overthrown by a military coup, led by Army Commander General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin. The then prime minister was ousted, and the 1997 constitution was abolished.

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[26] Jinks, B. Increased Violence in Thailand's South Sparks Fears of Exodus [Online]. *Bloomberg*. 23 September 2005. Available at: http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aCbC8sp4bzLw&refer=asia [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

October 1:
Privy Councillor Surayud Chulanont was nominated as prime minister by the coup leaders. The junta-installed civilian government also revived the SBPAC and the CPM 43.

October 2:
Two reporters were injured while covering the police's investigation at an explosion site in Narathiwat as the insurgents detonated the second bomb.

November 3:
The newly-appointed prime minister visited the far South, and, in a groundbreaking gesture, apologised for the state's mistreatment of demonstrators in the Tak Bai incident. A few days later, a new round of arson attacks was launched, resulting in six people killed and four schools torched. 49 schools were closed for several weeks. Some 100 Buddhist residents of Yala's three villages also fled from their homes and sought refuge at a temple in a nearby district

November 27:
The honorary consul at the Thai Consulate in Malaysia revealed about the "Langkawi Process", in which former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad served as the facilitator in the talks between Thai security officials and representatives of separatist groups.

December 31:
Explosions rocked Bangkok on New Year's Eve, killing three people and injured 38 others.

This year, violence in the southern border region stayed unabated. An analysis of the attack patterns during 2004 to 2006 saw the steady trend of violence in the three southernmost provinces and four neighbouring districts in Songkhla. Moreover, the attacks tended to get more aggressive and sophisticated, as seen in the increasing number of bomb attacks. Explaining that the daily shootings were carried out in parallel with the constant waves of more destructive strikes throughout these years, an analysis by issue expert Srisompob Jitpiromsri suggested these attacks signalled the insurgents' systematic and well-coordinated plans.[27]

Meanwhile, the selling of Shin Corporation, a Bangkok-based telecom conglomerate founded by Prime Minister Thaksin's family, to Singapore's Temasek Holdings[28] sparked a strong censure on the prime minister. Finding the transactions a conflict of interest that breached a number of financial regulations, several prominent government critics and academics continually scrutinised and censured the prime minister and his cabinet, enabling the anti-Thaksin sentiment to grow. PAD, also informally dubbed the "Yellow Shirts" due to the colour of their conformed apparel in the rallies, staged a mass demonstration in

[27] Jitpiromsri, S. 2006. 32 เดือนแห่งการสูญเสียจากเหตุการณ์ความไม่สงบในพื้นที่ชายแดนภาคใต้: รายงานตั้งแต่ 1 มกราคม พ.ศ. 2547 ถึง 30 มิถุนายน พ.ศ. 2549 [32 Months of violence in the southern border provinces: Report from 1 January 2004 to 30 June 2006] [pdf]. *Deep South Watch*. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/documents/20060903_32month_deepsouth.pdf [Accessed: 28 July 2010].

[28] News release: Temasek-SCB led investor group acquires Shinawatra and Damapong Families' stakes in Shin Corp [Online]. 26 January 2006. Available at: http://www.temasek.com.sg/mediacentre/newsreleases?detailid=8450 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

Bangkok that would last nearly six months.[29] With the brewing political climate, the Thaksin administration held a snap election to restore legitimacy in April.[30] The main opposition Democrat party, whose strongest hold is in the South, boycotted the voting. Regardless of their by-default winning, Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party failed to validate their election results in the southern border provinces due to minimal votes.[31]

In May, the capture of two female Buddhist school teachers as hostages in the Gujing Luepa Village of Narathiwat once again put the region on the front page after being brushed aside by the national-level political impasse and stirred up public's resentment towards the South. The two were held captive by angry villagers who demanded the release of two locals arrested for their suspected involvement with insurgency earlier that day. When their demand was not met, the mob beat the hostages severely, putting one teacher in a long coma state before she died in the following year.[32] The case raised a great deal of public attention and sympathy towards educational personnel in the region, particularly from the royal family whose members also attended the hostage teacher's funeral.[33]

In June, the much-anticipated report by the NRC was released to the public, with explanation offered on the roots of the southern conflict and recommendations to remedy the troubled situation, especially the improvement of justice, security, and administrative systems.[34] However, the NRC was criticised for its mild rationalisation of the problems as it tiptoed around the discussions on histories of Malay nationalism and separatism, and the influence of Islam to avoid further marginalising the Malay Muslims.[35] Regardless of its outspoken analyses and propositions, the report failed to convince relevant authorities to carry out the proposed peace roadmap. The proposal to promote the local Yawi dialect as the region's working language was strongly opposed by influential political figures, including the premier, as well as Privy Councillor's President General Prem Tinnasulanon.[36] Meanwhile, the intellectual circle and local campaigners termed the NRC's diagnosis of the complex problem as incomplete and unlikely to bring about precise treatment.[37]

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[29] For more details on the analysis of Thai politics in 2006, see, Freedom in the World Report 2007 [Online]. *Freedom House*. Available at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2007/thailand [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[30] Thai premier calls snap election [Online]. *BBC News*. 24 February 2006. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk /1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4746932.stm [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[31] Freedom House 2007.

[32] Some 20 more villagers face arrest. *The Nation*. 22 May 2006.

[33] Royals to honour Juling's cremation. *Bangkok Post*. 17 January 2007.

[34] See the NRC's full report at *Report of the National Reconciliation Commission: Overcoming Violence Through the Power of Reconciliation*. 2006. Bangkok: NRC, or the unofficial English translation by the Asian Human Rights Commission – Thailand. Available at: bhttp://thailand.ahrchk.net/docs/nrc_report_en.pdf [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[35] McCargo, D. 2008. *Tearing apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 6, 10.

[36] Gen Prem rejects NRC key proposal. *Bangkok Post*. 26 June 2006. and PM opposes 'official' Yawi. *Bangkok Post*. 27 June 2006.

[37] See further debates and discussions on the NRC report in the interview articles *รวมบทวิพากษ์รายงานกอส.* [A compilation of the NRC report criticism] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 19 July 2006. Available at: http://www. isranews.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1093&Itemid=58 [Accessed: 28 July 2010], and news article *คนพื้นที่วิพากษ์รายงานกอส.'ไม่ชัวร์-ไม่ใหม่'* [People in the field criticise the NRC report 'unsure

The pivotal moment of modern Thai politics came as the military coup ousted Prime Minister Thaksin and his cabinet on September 19 – the first military takeover since 1991.[38] Although being well-received by the anti-government protesters for ending the months-long political stalemate, the military faced oppositions from anti-coup critics and supporters of the preceding administration for bringing demise to democracy. Meanwhile, placing the deep South as a priority, the junta-installed government later re-established SBPAC and CPM 43, the two agencies deemed significant in restoring peace and re-building trust among the locals.[39] The new premier, a former army general and one of His Majesty the King's privy councillors, apologised for the state's mistreatment of Malay Muslim suspects in the Tak Bai incident.[40] However, the daily attacks continued, forcing schools to close mid-semester and several hundred Buddhist residents to flee from their villages.[41] The global advocacy group Amnesty International raised concerns over the abuse of human rights by both state officials and armed groups in the region, and remarked the deficiency in the justice system, citing the Tanyong Limo case, in which no security officials were tried for their ill-treatment of the detainees.[42]

In November, the honorary consul at the Royal Thai Consulate in Langkawi, Malaysia revealed progress in the "Langkawi Process", where the former Malaysian premier and the consul served as arbitrators in the talks between Thai authorities and representatives from separatist groups. The dialogues started since late 2005 and yielded a proposal for development in the restive region in February 2006. The honorary consul added that most separatist leaders were willing to reconcile and give up their demand for complete independence.[43]

2007

January 1:
Investigations into the New Year's Eve explosions in Bangkok were carried out. Speculations on the incident being connected to Prime Minister Thaksin were widespread.

January 16:
An improvised explosive device (IED) was detonated near an arson attack site in Narathiwat while police officers were investigating the scene. The blast killed the deputy village headman and injured two local reporters.

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decision, unsatisfied"] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 13 November 2005. Available at: http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/2005/special/critical_south/data/south118.pdf [Accessed: 28 July 2010].

[38] Since the 1932 revolution in which the country's political system was changed from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy, Thailand has experienced 16 military coups, six of which were failed attempts.

[39] Cabinet gives its approval to revive SBPAC. *Bangkok Post*. 25 October 2006.

[40] PREMIER'S FIRST BORDER TOUR: Surayud apologises for govt's abuses in South. *The Nation*. 3 November 2006.

[41] Buddhist villagers to be moved out of South. *The Nation*. 25 December 2006.

[42] For more details, see *Amnesty International Report 2007: the state of the world's human rights* [Online]. Available at: http://report2007.amnesty.org/eng/Regions/Asia-Pacific/Thailand/default.htm [Accessed: 14 January 2013], and ชายแดนใต้กับปัญหาสิทธิมนุษยชน ในสายตาชาวต่างชาติ "สถานการณ์ไม่เปลี่ยนแปลง" [Southern border and the human rights problems in the eyes of foreigners "the situation has not changed"] [Online]. *Sammakkhee Chaoban [People Press]*. Available at: http://www.peoplepress.in.th/archives/autopagev3/show_page.php?group_id=1&auto_id=19&topic_id=238&topic_no=49&page=1&gaction=on [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[43] 'Talks vital to restore peace in the South'. *The Nation*. 27 November 2006.

February 17-19:
A string of bomb and arson attacks took place during the Chinese New Year festival, attended mainly by the Chinese descent population in Songkhla's Hat Yai District.

March-May:
A series of violent incidents, ranging from point-blank shooting, a pondok raid, an attack on mosques, and roadside bombings, took lives of Muslim and Buddhist civilians and soldiers. Border rangers were accused of killing Muslim civilians. Insurgents were believed to launch attacks on Buddhist residents and soldiers as retaliation.

May 22:
Twelve reporters, including an Australian national photographer for TIME magazine, were wounded in a blast in Yala. In a usual pattern, insurgents triggered the bomb when police were investigating a crime scene and reporters were taken in tow to cover the story.

May 28:
Seven explosions were detonated in Songkhla's commercial district of Hat Yai and a crowded market in its Saba Yoi District, injuring 13 people.

May 30:
The former ruling Thai Rak Thai party was disbanded by the Tribunal Court for violating election laws in 2006.

July 15:
Insurgents planted two bombs in front of the Yala train station, and detonated one when the bomb squad arrived at the scene. One officer was killed by the blast, while another 20 people were injured, including four television and print journalists.

July 23:
The anti-coup demonstrators led by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (hereafter, UDD) clashed with police in front of the residence of the Privy Councillor President General Prem Tinnasulanon.

August 19:
Thailand's first ever referendum resulted in the passing of a new constitution, which was drafted by an assembly appointed by the military-installed civilian government.

November 24:
The Press Registration Act BE 2550 (2007) was enacted, replacing the previous draconian Press Act, which allowed authorities to close publishing houses and pre-censor publication contents.

December 20:
The National Legislative Assembly passed the Internal Security Act (ISA).

December 23:
The general election was held, and the Thai Rak Thai's reincarnated People's Power party (hereafter, PPP) won a majority and finally led a 6-party coalition. A month later, the PPP leader, Samak Sundaravej, became the country's 25th prime minister.

This year started off with a series of explosions amidst the celebratory mood of New Year's Eve in Bangkok. The incidents killed three people and injuring 38 others. Prior to the incidents, rumours were widespread that southern insurgents had planned to launch major attacks during the New Year holidays. Such rumours inevitably fed into speculations that the Bangkok city bombings were linked to the restive south. Subsequently, however, the prime minister made a public statement, confirming that national-level politics was the motive, an account which implicitly suggested that ousted and self-exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin was behind the explosions.[44]

The prime minister's insinuation signalled the political elites in power's quest to diminish the exiled leader's influence, believed to be profoundly entrenched in Thai society, particularly among the grassroots in the North and Northeast. Later in the year, the Constitution Tribunal delivered its ruling to dissolve the Thaksin-founded and former ruling party Thai Rak Thai, effectively banning Thaksin and his associates from participating in politics for five years.[45] This prompted supporters of Thaksin and anti-coup critics to come together under the banner of UDD. Informally labelled the "Red Shirts," the group launched campaigns to oppose the military, the junta-installed interim government, and the Privy's Councillor president, whom the group believed to have engineered the 2006 coup. The demonstration in front of the Privy's Councillor president's residence led to clashes between protesters and officers. Reports said 200 riot police and 30 protesters were injured, and arrest warrants for instigating violence were issued against the UDD leaders, most of whom were Thaksin's supporters.[46] A columnist questioned and alleged the government of using 'double standards' by comparing the "Yellow Shirts" PAD's 2005 demonstrations to the UDD's recent protests, stating that the latter was treated with more severe measures.[47] The remark implied the deepening rift in Thai society between the anti-Thaksin and anti-coup camps,[48] which would intensify the nation's political conflict in the following years.

The southerners' lingering resentment towards the Thaksin regime's security-driven measures was apparent in their voting patterns in the charter referendum and the general election. In Thailand's first ever constitutional referendum, around 87 per cent of voters in the southernmost provinces endorsed the new charter.[49] Subsequently, in the general election held in December, despite winning a majority, the pro-Thaksin PPP failed to win a majority in the southern constituencies, with only two from 12 seats secured.[50] Analysts cited the two phenomena as a sign that southern Malay Muslims chose to support the opposition Democrat party, although the party had not shown concrete peace plans. Yet,

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[44] Beech, H. A Violent New Year's Eve in Bangkok [Online]. *Time*. 1 January 2007. Available at: http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1573283,00.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[45] Thai ex-PM banned from politics [Online]. *BBC News*. 30 May 2007. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6704083.stm [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[46] Arrest looms for leaders. *The Nation*. 24 July 2007.

[47] Devakula, N. ANCHORMAN: Double standards against protesters. *Bangkok Post*. 26 July 2007.

[48] For a brief overview of the two political groups, see Profile: Thailand's reds and yellows [Online]. *BBC News*. 13 July 2012. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13294268 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[49] Charter approved. *Bangkok Post*. 20 August 2007; Analysis: Voting pattern shows that political divisions will be difficult to erase. *The Nation*. 20 August 2007.

[50] Two wins help Wadah faction regain some confidence. *Bangkok Post*. 25 December 2007.

the party was more desirable than the PPP, who expected to continue the hard-line approach of the Thaksin regime.[51]

Before the civilian electoral processes were resumed, the interim government-appointed National Legislative Assembly passed the Internal Security Act without any opposition.[52] The controversial law were criticised by academics and human rights campaigns throughout the year. The groups maintained that the law would grant police and the ISOC the ultimate power to restrain citizen's rights in the name of national security without having to hold much accountability for their acts.[53] The law would later become a significant device the government employed to suppress political demonstrations that grew more aggressive in the following years. In the southern conflict case, authorities would replace the State of Emergency Decree in less-violent-prone areas with the law, and later use Article 21 of the Internal Security Act BE 2551 (2008) to enable the exoneration of suspected insurgents if they agree to enter the state's rehabilitation scheme.[54]

As for the unrest, analysts saw this year as the peak of the conflict, with 2,475 violent incidents – the highest number – reported.[55] One of the most serious attacks was the orchestrated bombings in Hat Yai's business centre and a market in Saba Yoi District where 13 people were injured. Insurgents were suspected to trigger the blasts following the similar incidents in the previous year.[56] Nonetheless, investigators also implied that the attack pattern was akin to the New Year's Eve explosions in Bangkok, hence, not ruling out the assailants' motive to stir up national-level politics instead of being a mere local upheaval.[57] Analysts noted the fast rising trend of the improvised explosive device (IED) in the region, a seven-time increase in 2007 from 2004.[58]

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[51] Askew, M. 2007. *Conspiracy, Politics, and a Disorderly Border: The Struggle to Comprehend Insurgency in Thailand's Deep South.* Washington, D.C.: East-West Center Washington, pp. 61-66; McCargo ibid: 83-87

[52] Rojanaphurk, P. Security bill sails through unopposed. *The Nation*. 21 December 2007.

[53] Internal Security Act outrages academics. *The Nation.* 5 July 2007.; Chongkittavorn, K. REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE: Thailand's human-rights record shameful. *The Nation*. 10 December 2007.

[54] เริ่มใช้ ม.21 ใน 4 อำเภอสงขลาเน้นมอบตัวกลับใจ [Article 21 enacted in 4 Songkla districts, focusing on the surrenders and insurgent dissidents] [Online]. *Krungthep Turakit.* 11 January 2010. Available at: http://www.bangkokbiznews.com/home/detail/politics/politics/20100111/94769 /เริ่มใช้ม.21-ใน4อำเภอสงขลาเน้นมอบตัวกลับใจ.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013]; เลขาธิการ สมช. ระบุ การใช้มาตรา 21 จะทำให้เกิดสันติสุขในพื้นที่ภาคใต้ [National Security Commission secretary-general stated, Article 21 would bring peace to the southern region] [Online]. *Royal Thai Government.* 7 February 2012. Available at: http://www.thaigov.go.th/social/item/66419-เลขาธิการ-สมช-ระบุ-การใช้มาตรา-21-จะทำให้เกิดสันติสุขในพื้นที่ภาคใต้-7/2/2012.html?format=html&lang=th [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[55] ข้อมูลตำรวจ..ไฟใต้ 7 ปี 7 เดือนตายทะลุ 4.7 พันราย ประทุษร้ายพระ 33 คดี 194 หมู่บ้านป่วน [Police Information: 7 years and 7 months of Southern fire, deaths surpassing 4.7 thousand, 33 monk-attack cases, 194 suspected insurgent villages] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 1 September 2011. Available at: http://www.isranews.org/south-news/stat-history/item/3382-ข้อมูลตำรวจ-ไฟใต้-7-ปี-7-เดือนตายทะลุ-4-7-พันราย-ประทุษร้ายพระ-31-คดี-194-หมู่บ้านสีแดง.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[56] 13 hurt as bombs rock Hat Yai. *Bangkok Post*. 28 May 2007.

[57] Pathan, D. ANALYSIS: Bombs 'like those in Bankgok'. *The Nation*. 29 May 2007.

[58] 5 ปีไฟใต้ (2)...รู้จักระเบิดแสวงเครื่อง และแนวโน้มในปี 52 [5 Years of Southern Fire (2)…Knowing IED and the explosion trend in 2009] [Online]. *Isara News Agency.* Available at: 1 January 2009. http://wbns.oas.psu.ac.th /shownews.php?news_id=74056 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

Meanwhile, the civic movements concerning human rights, justice, and healing efforts for victims of violence started to grow. For instance, activist university students released a statement, demanding that paramilitary troops withdraw from the region, and called for an investigation and justice against the alleged abuse of power by authorities, particularly border rangers.[59] Some endeavours initiated by local southerners also earned public recognition, for example, Mrs. Yaena Salaemae received the annual Human Rights Protection Award from the National Human Rights Commissions for her work.[60] The 50-year-old Narathiwat-native was praised for her persistent fight in the trial against her son and 58 other suspects of the Tak Bai case until they were acquitted. Being well-known among the locals, she also helped people combat unfair treatment in security lawsuits, and later formed a network with local women to assist one another through the sufferings in 2010.

2008

January 15:
The commercial TITV (originally iTV) station was transformed into the country's first public service broadcaster, Thai PBS. The commercial media organisation was found to have breached its concession agreement, prompting the government to reclaim the station and repurposed it as Thai PBS on February 1.

February:
Newly-appointed interior minister Chalerm Yoobamroong faced severe criticisms after proposing that the southernmost region be declared a special administrative zone.

March 15:
An explosion at CS Pattani Hotel led to two deaths and 14 injuries.

March 25:
Authority started an investigation into the death of an Islamic religious teacher, suspected for involvement with insurgency, while in military detention.

May 26:
PAD launched its second round of anti-government rallies, which led to the demonstration that lasted for nearly seven months.

June 20:
PAD demonstrators seized the Government House.

July 17:
The Army TV Channel 5 aired the pre-recorded ceasefire declaration made by three unnamed men who claimed to oversee insurgent groups in the southernmost provinces. However, senior military officials and analysts viewed the statement as a mere political stage, while the known separatist movements PULO and BRN denied their cooperation in the ceasefire.

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[59] เครือข่ายนักศึกษาร้องทหารพรานถอนกำลังออกจากชายแดนใต้ [Student networks call for paramilitary withdraw out of southern border] [Online]. *Prachatai*. 14 August 2007. Available at: http://prachatai.com/node/13820/talk [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[60] 3หญิงหมัดเหล็กผู้ปกป้องสิทธิมนุษยชน [Three female fighters who protect human rights]. *Khaosod*. 13 March 2007.

August 21:
A car bomb explosion in Narathiwat killed a senior reporter from the popular *Thai Rath* daily and injured another TV reporter.

September:
The Constitution Court terminated Samak Sundaravej's premiership after finding him violating the law by maintaining his status as a TV production company employee while serving as prime minister. The PPP executives later nominated Thaksin's brother-in-law, Somchai Wongsawat, as its new chief, and he subsequently became the 26th prime minister.

October 6-7:
Police fired teargas grenades into the PAD demonstrators who gathered in front of Parliament Building to avert the house meeting. During the clash, two protesters died, while 381 protesters and 11 police officers were injured.

November 17:
Insurgents carried out car- and motorcycle-bomb attacks in Sukirin District of Narathiwat, wounded 73 people including village headmen and security volunteers.

November 26:
PAD demonstrators took control of the Suvarnabhumi Airport, the country's main international air hub, reinforcing their demand for the prime minister to resign.

December 2:
The Constitution Court ruled that executives of three coalition member parties, including the PPP, committed electoral fraud and disbanded the parties. The decision abruptly terminated the Somchai government. The PAD declared victory and ended their months-long rally.

December 15:
Abhisit Vejjajiva, the leader of the opposition party Democrat, was nominated by parliamentarians to be the new prime minster and began forming government.

This year was one of the most turbulent times in modern Thai politics. In late March, after the government signalled its intention to amend the constitution, an effort that would exempt former leader Thaksin Shinawatra from his corruption charges, the "Yellow Shirts" PAD re-formed its anti-government movement that would last nearly seven months and throughout two PPP-lead administrations. Starting with the rally occupying the main streets near Government House,[61] the crowds later reiterated their demand by seizing Government House[62] and surrounding provincial airports.[63] The rallies continued even after the Constitution Court's disqualification of Prime Minister Samak[64] in September, because his successor, Somchai Wongsawat, was still considered "Thaksin's proxy".[65] The crowds subsequently amplified their demands by seizing Bangkok's international airport,[66]

[61] PAD rally demands PM quits. *Bangkok Post*. 26 May 2008.

[62] Govt House seized. *Bangkok Post*. 21 June 2008.

[63] Three airports forced to close. *Bangkok Post*. 30 August 2008.

[64] PM disqualified for violating charter with cookery show. *The Nation*. 10 September 2008.

[65] Defiant PAD demands answers from new PM. *Bangkok Post*. 18 September 2008.

suspending the operation for several days. In December, the Constitution Court's announced its decision which effectively dissolved the PPP along with two other coalition member parties, after finding their executives having committed electoral frauds.[67] The deliberation prompted PAD to end their 192-day demonstration.[68] The opposition Democrat party, the second largest political camp in the parliament, took this opportunity to nominate their leader Abhisit Vejjajiva as the new prime minister. Endorsed by the remaining MPs, Abhisit became the country's 27th premier – the third in 2008. The new cabinet also announced a plan to establish a new regional agency to oversee the southern conflict, signalling an intention to prioritise politics over military measures as part of the solution for the south.[69]

In the southernmost region, violence appeared to ease, with authorities reporting around 44 per cent decrease from the previous year.[70] Regardless, the bomb attack at an upscale hotel in central Pattani in March sent a significant signal. The popular CS Pattani Hotel, deemed one of the safest spots frequented by officials, journalists, social campaigners and the likes, was hit by an explosion, killing two people and wounding 14 others, including the hotel owner who was a newly-appointed senator, and a newspaper journalist. The incident showed the volatility of the region where no location was now exempt from attack.[71]

A number of new rhetoric concerning the southern conflict solutions was introduced this year as three new administrations took turn to run office, although analysts saw no groundbreaking initiatives.[72] In February, Interior Minister Chalerm Yoobamroong suggested to declare the southernmost region as a special administrative zone to minimise insurgency. This was the first time a cabinet member openly discussed the structural changes in politics with regard to the south. However, instead of sparking public debates on the issue, the idea faced severe criticism. The new premier censured his minister for publicly announcing the proposal before discussing the matter with relevant authorities,[73] while academics and critics viewed Chalerm's move as political and insincere.[74]

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[66] PAD shuts Suvarnabhumi. *Bangkok Post*. 26 November 2008.

[67] Three coalition parties bite the dust. *The Nation*. 3 December 2008.

[68] PAD rejoices with warning to govt not to provoke it. *Bangkok Post*. 3 December 2008.

[69] New agency to take over from SBPAC. *Bangkok Post*. 23 December 2008.; OPINION: Abhisit right to put South on the Agenda. *The Nation*. 25 December 2008.

[70] Jitpiromsri, S. ห้าปีห้าเดือน: การวิเคราะห์สถานการณ์ความไม่สงบในจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ใน 65 เดือน [Five years and five months: an analysis on the unrest situation in the southern border provinces during 65 months] [Online]. *Deep South Watch*. 14 June 2009. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/343 [Accessed: 14 January 2013]; ไฟใต้ปี 53 ระวังคนก่อการร้ายแฝงตัว [Southern fire in 2010. Beware of the "ensemble actors" strategy] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 23 January 2010. Available at: http://wbrs.oas.psu.ac.th/showNews.php?news_id=87505 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[71] คาร์บอมบ์หน้าซี.เอส.ปัตตานี ตาย 1 เจ็บนับสิบ ล.ว.เจ้าของโรงแรม-นักข่าวโดนด้วย [Car-bombing in front of C.S. Pattani, 1 dead, dozens injured. Senator, hotel owner-reporter included] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 16 March 2008. Available at: http://www.isranews.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3294&Itemid=47 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[72] EDITORIAL: Reason to hope for the South. *Bangkok Post*. 18 February 2008.

[73] Chalerm idea blocked. *The Nation*. 13 February 2008.

[74] Chalerm 'insincere'. *The Nation*. 17 February 2008.; EDITORIAL: Better ideas needed for South. *The Nation*. 22 February 2008.

Meanwhile, there were a number of incidents where leaders and representatives of the separatist networks came into the spotlight. In July, the army-owned television station broadcasted the ceasefire declaration made by three representatives of the Thailand United Southern Underground (TUSU). The agency claimed to be a coordinating body among the insurgent movements, which included the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) and the Runda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK). The pre-recorded videotape was brought to the station by a former-army chief-turned-politician, General Chetta Thana-jaro, who claimed to have been in negotiation with the group for several months.[75] The ceasefire, however, was undelivered. Many critics said the TUSU was in fact not an influential organization, and the broadcast was merely a political tactic of the politician. In the following month, an executive of the PULO gave an interview, stating that the organization was willing to dialogue with the Thai government, but dismissed the previous ceasefire declaration and the alliance with the TUSU.[76]

Another landmark case this year was the death while in military custody of an *imam* (Islamic religious leader) who was suspected of being involved in a bomb attack.[77] The Human Rights Watch called for an investigation into the abuse of suspects, as the autopsy showed visible signs of torture.[78] The group added they received complaints of the alleged abuse from many former suspects who were released from military detention.

2009

January 18:
Newly-elected Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva went on his first visit to the southern border region and announced a plan to establish a "Southern Cabinet," a special panel of ministers to especially oversee the southern problems.

March 23-27:
A string of attacks was launched during this week, coinciding with the inaugural anniversary of the BRN. Security officers retaliated by launching intensive searches in many areas of Pattani, including the 30-hour long and tense mission to locate the shooter who killed a soldier.

March 26:
The UDD's mass demonstration commenced with around 20,000 people taking Bangkok's main streets, demanding the Democrat prime minister step down.

April 10-14:
UDD demonstrators blocked Bangkok main streets, raided the ASEAN summit site in the resort town of Pattaya, and attacked the prime minister's motorcade at a governmental

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[75] Army chief sceptical of ceasefire. *Bangkok Post*. 18 July 2008.; Doubts greet ceasefire announcement. *Bangkok Post*. 18 July 2008.

[76] Thiosangwan, P. and Pathan, D. Negotiation with Pulo not up to the Army: Anupong. *The Nation*. 19 August 2008. ; and 'พูโล' ยืดอกรับผิดชอบ เผยยุทธศาสตร์ 'ส่งออกความรุนแรง' ลากรัฐไทยขึ้นโต๊ะเจรจา ['PULO' stands up to take responsibility, revealing 'importing violence' strategy, pulling the Thai state to dialogue table] [Online]. *Deep South Watch*. 20 April 2008. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/233 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[77] Police investigating imam's suspect death. *Bangkok Post*. 26 March 2008.

[78] See the Human Rights Watch report at Thailand: Imam's Killing Highlights Army Abuse in South [Online]. *Human Rights Watch*. 26 March 2008. Available at: http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/03/25/thailand-imam-s-killing-highlights-army-abuse-south [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

compound. The government enforced the Emergency Decree in the capital city and its peripheral provinces. UDD leaders claimed up to six demonstrators were killed as security officers attempted to disperse the crowd, contradicting the government's initial figure of 120 injuries and no deaths.

May 18:
Muslim lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit who disappeared since early 2004 was declared legally missing.

May 27:
Attackers torched and planted car-bombs in nine spots in Yala's business district, halting economic transaction in the province. No casualties were reported.

June 8:
Attackers opened fire and threw grenade into Ai-Payer Village's Mosque in Joh Ai-rong District of Narathiwat during prayer hours, killing 12 people and wounded 11.

August 15:
A new political party, Matubhum, made its debut in Narathiwat. The party's key members included the Southern Muslim Wadah faction who moved from the dissolved PPP, and former coup chief, General Sonthi Boonyaratkalin, who is also a Muslim, serving as the party chief.

October:
News media started the investigation into the potential deficiency of the explosive detector GT200, widely used by security officials in the deep South, following several explosions in which the device failed to discover the bombs.

November:
The opposition Phuea Thai party chairman Chavalit Yongjaiyudh proposed the "Pattani City" model, suggesting the establishment of the three southernmost provinces as an autonomous region in a bid to end the unrest.

December 9:
The Thai prime minister and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak visited the deep South together.

December 15:
Malaysian police in Kelantan apprehended three Malay Muslim men near the Malaysian-Thai border. The men were suspected of making IEDs and supplying the bombs to insurgent movement in the deep South.

This year, Thai politics remained volatile, with the "Red Shirts" UDD organising another mass demonstration. Supported by the coup-ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who remained in self-exile overseas, the pro-Thaksin and anti-military crowds claimed the Democrat-led government took office illegitimately and demanded the prime minister step down. From April 10, the demonstrations had escalated into the takeover of major streets in Bangkok, the raid on the regional ASEAN summit site in the nearby Pattaya city, and the attack on the prime minister and his aide's motorcade at a governmental compound.[79] The premier later declared the state of emergency in the capital city and vicinities, enabling soldiers to take charge of dispersing the crowds. After the operation, authorities announced

[79] Emergency decree fuels red shirt rage. *Bangkok Post*. 13 April 2009.

two people were killed and 123 injured in the clashes between the demonstrators, soldiers, and people opposing the rallies,[80] while three key UDD leaders were arrested and later released on bail. A fact-finding committee was later set up to investigate the soldiers' action.[81]

As for situations in the southernmost provinces, violence continued for the sixth year with approximately 1,035 incidents reported.[82] Despite the decreasing number of incidents, analysts noted the grave brutality of these attacks, particularly the use of vehicle born improvised explosive device (VIED)[83] and decapitation of security officers and Buddhist civilians.[84] The rising trend of bombings led to news media's suspicion over security officers' inability in locating explosive devices, and the subsequent scrutiny of the remote substance detector GT200. The story later led to a full investigation into the device's potential flaws and long debates among operative agencies, forensic scientists, and scientists on the competency of this controversial equipment. When the tests revealed the device was deficient,[85] relevant parties called for new equipments and measures to ensure the safety of security personnel and southerners.

Among the serious attacks this year were the coordinated arsons and car-bombings in nine spots in Yala in May, which brought the region's business transactions to a halt. Ambushes on teachers and teams of security guards by suspected insurgents were among the most frequent incidents. Another appalling incident was the shooting at Al-Furquan Mosque in the Ai-Payer Village in Narathiwat's Joh Ai Rong District during the praying hours. Twelve people were killed, while another eleven were injured. Investigators first speculated the incident was aimed at creating division between Muslim and Buddhist locals.[86] However, police later decided that the motive as personal conflict, not a security matter, as the suspect was a contract killer.[87] Local Muslims saw the attack as extremely despicable, but at the same time, they expressed disappointment at authorities' slow investigation into the case.[88]

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[80] Two dead, 123 hurt in clashes. *Bangkok Post*. 15 April 2009.

[81] UDD clashes to be probed by committee. *Bangkok Post*. 22 April 2009.

[82] Jitpiromsri, S. *สรุปหกปีไฟใต้ พลวัตการก่อความไม่สงบกับการสร้างจินตกรรมสงครามก่อความไม่สงบ* [Summary of Six Years of Southern Fire: the dynamics of unrest and the construction of imagined insurgency] [Online]. *Deep South Watch*. 8 March 2010. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/728 [Accessed: 18 January 2013].

[83] พลิกสถิติคาร์บอมบ์ชายแดนใต้…ลูกที่ 4 ในรอบปี ลูกที่ 10 ในรอบ 5 ปี [Revealing car-bombings statistics in southern border… the 4th this year, the 10th in during the past 5 years] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 26 September 2009. Available at: http://wbns.oas.psu.ac.th/shownews.php?news_id=81732 [Accessed: 14 January 2013]

[84] *ครึ่งปีตัดคอ 6 ครั้ง-ชี้ปีไฟใต้เหยื่อพุ่ง 40 ศพ* [Half year, 6 decapitations – the number of southern fire victims rises to 40] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 15 June 2009. Available at: http://wbns.oas.psu.ac.th/shownewsphp?news_id=78765 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[85] Concerns over bomb detector reignite fears. *Bangkok Post*. 25 January 2010. ; Prateepchaikul, V. Is GT200 a bogus bomb detector like ADE-651. *Bangkok Post*. 25 January 2010.; UK warns world about useless 'bomb detectors' [Online]. *BBC Newsnight*. 27 January 2010. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8481774.stm [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[86] "Attack aimed at 'creating distrust'". *The Nation*. 10 June 2009.

[87] Mosque suspect 'to get fair trial'. *Bangkok Post*. 17 January 2010.

[88] Panpetch, S. หนึ่งปีไอร์ปาแย (1) เรื่องร้ายๆ ที่ชาวบ้านอยากลืม [One year after the Aipayae incident – a tragedy that most wanted to forget] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 6 June 2010. Available at: http://www.isranews.org/south-news/documentary/39-2009-11-15-11-15-13/1808-1.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

Having been in office longer than its two predecessors, the Democrat-led administration announced the "Politics Leads Military" policy, which was part of the party's election campaign promises for its southern constituencies. At the beginning of his term, the prime minister stated a special ministerial team dedicated for the southernmost region would be set up to solve the southern conflict.[89] The government also proposed the Southern Border Province Administrative Act draft as a long-term strategy to handle the regional affairs. The measures included the permanent establishment of SBPAC to oversee the region, with some restructuring so that the entity could be more independent and less governed by the military.[90] Malaysia's proposition to have a role in pacifying the conflict remained apparent, reflected in the Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak's visit to the southern border provinces in December.[91]

Another pivotal moment was the "Pattani City" model proposal, raised by the opposition Phuea Thai party chairman Chavalit Yongjaiyudh. The former deputy prime minister suggested the establishment of the semi-autonomous administration in the southern border provinces so that the locals could take care of their own problems and directly participate in the conflict solution.[92] However, his idea was seen as a political bid to discredit the Democrat-led coalition,[93] and analysts viewed the autonomy proposal as far from being delivered because the idea came from outside the government.[94] Despite being dismissed due to its political motive, the "Pattani City" model prompted civil sectors to develop other self-governed models and start to debate publicly about autonomy for the trouble region.[95]

2010

January - March:
The government and army carried out the investigations into the remote substance detector GT200 and the surveillance airships. After the probe revealed both equipments' deficiency, authorities scrapped all standing purchase orders of the devices.

February 26:
The Supreme Court ruled that former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra hid his asset and exploited his power during his premiership.

March 12:

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[89] Panel of ministers to oversee far South. *Bangkok Post*. 17 January 2009.

[90] The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center to Be Upgraded and a Hajj Affairs Office to Be Established [Online]. *Foreign Office, The Thai Government Public Relations Department*. 21 August 2009. Available at: http://thailand.prd.go.th/southern_situation/view_south.php?id=4372 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[91] Najib backs Thai policy on unrest. *Bangkok Post*. 9 December 2009.

[92] Chavalit suggests autonomous region. *Bangkok Post*. 3 November 2009.; Chavalit defends 'Pattani City' proposal. *Bangkok Post*. 4 November 2009.

[93] Democrats to up their efforts in the far South. *The Nation*. 4 November 2009.; Chavalit's Pattani City idea scorned. *Bangkok Post*. 3 December 2009.

[94] Ganjanakhundee, S. Analysis: South's Autonomy merely a dream. *The Nation*. 5 November 2009.; Pathan, D. Still a long battle ahead in the quest for peace in the South. *The Nation*. 18 November 2009.

[95] Pattani idea gets people talking. *Bangkok Post*. 11 November 2009.; Models of govt for deep South. *Bangkok Post*. 17 December 2009.

A Yala police superintendent, Police Colonel Sompien Eksomya, was killed in a bomb attack. His death led to the investigation into unfair treatment towards his transfer request.

March 29-30:
The prime minister and government representatives held talks with the UDD leaders, an event aired live via the state's broadcasters, in hopes to end the mass demonstration that started since March 13.

April-May:
Demonstrators camped out on streets in Bangkok's main shopping district. Claiming some demonstrators had weapons, the army took charge and dispersed the crowds, while the government enforced the night curfew in Bangkok and additional 23 provinces. There were reports of 68 deaths and 296 injuries in the clashes between protesters and soldiers. Violence erupted again when authorities used forces to remove demonstrators from the protest sites in late-May, and some demonstrators set fire on commercial buildings in retaliation. In the end, 89 people were killed and more than 1,800 injured in the violence.

July 11:
Academics and volunteers started travelling on foot from the capital city to the Kru-Ze Mosque in Pattani to signify the needs for peaceful solutions to end the southern conflict.

September 19:
Four elderly members of a Buddhist family were shot dead and their house was set on fire in Bajoh District of Narathiwat. The case prompted Buddhist villagers to call for protection in the restive zone.

October:
15 Pakistani men were arrested for illegal entry to the country and money laundering. They were also suspected to be involved with the regional radical Islamic movement, Jemaah Isalamiyaah, but authority presented no evidence to support the claim.

November 10:
Parliament passed the Southern Border Provinces Administration Act, which became effective on December 30.

November:
Many rural areas in the southern border provinces and the business centre in Hat Yai were affected by major floods.

December 25:
The deputy interior minister in charge of southern conflict solutions proposed the instalment of Sharia Court in the southernmost region to help facilitate civil disputes among Muslim residents.

December 29:
The government lifted the state of emergency in Mae Lan District of Pattani, the first area in the far South to be free from the contingency law. The district, however, was still under the Internal Security Act.

At the beginning of 2010, national-level politics became more stable than the previous years and the Democrat-led government, whose stronghold was in the South, announced several initiatives to quell the unrest. At the same time, a number of local civil society

projects, particularly regarding reconciliation and healing, were organised. Moreover, authorities continued the investigations on GT200 and the surveillance airship procurement. Like the remote substance detector, the latter equipment was deemed inefficient, and its supplier was found to violate the contract. After the probes were concluded, the government and the army decided to cancel the standing purchase of these equipments.[96]

In March, the "Red Shirt" UDD demonstrators took the streets once again and demanded a new general election. In an attempt to appease the protesters and end the rally, Prime Minister Abhisit and two other government representatives held talks with three UDD leaders and announced to set the election date on the following year before the official end of term. Their discussions were broadcast live via the state-run TV channel, marking the first "open-door" negotiation between the government and its stunt opposition. However, the dialogues brought no avail and the demonstration continued.[97] By mid April, the anti-government rally grew larger and formed a temporary camp in the city's main shopping district. Its presence also obstructed the operations of state hospitals and department stores nearby.

The government declared the state of emergency and night curfew in Bangkok and its vicinities, and set up the Centre for the Resolutions of Emergency Situations (CRES), comprising military and police forces, to control the rally.[98] When protesters surrounded the army headquarters, the centre deployed soldiers and riot police to disperse the crowds. As officers fired tear gas into the demonstrators, some protesters retaliated by throwing objects back at the officers, triggering the clashes between the two sides.[99] Officials also claimed that there were heavily-armed men among the rally-goers;[100] thus, weapons were required. The second round of clashes was in late-May, when the army decided to remove protesters from the rally site in the central business district. While the rally leaders surrendered to police, some protesters refused to leave the site and set fire on the nearby properties including major department stores.[101] Soldiers then executed harsh measures against the remaining crowds. After the operation, the government was criticised for the use of forces, and compelled to set up an independent committee to investigate the operations. During the two-month standoff, 89 people were killed, including civilians, soldiers, and two foreign journalists, while some 1,800 people were injured.[102] The state of emergency and CRES remained active until the end of the year.[103]

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[96] Gen Anupong scraps airship purchase plan. *Bangkok Post*. 28 March 2010.

[97] Talk to continue today. *The Nation*. 29 March 2010.

[98] The CRES was established following of the Prime Minister's directive on April 7, 2010. The centre was headed by the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of national security, and comprised executives from the military, national police, intelligence and security offices, as well as the justice and public health ministries.

[99] Crackdown leaves a trail of blood. *The Nation*. 11 April 2010.

[100] Centre vows crackdown on terrorists in crowd. *Bangkok Post*. 16 April 2010.

[101] At daggers drawn. *The Nation*. 21 May 2010.; Bangkok burning. *The Nation*. 21 May 2010.

[102] Khanit faces tough task in deaths probe. *Bangkok Post*. 9 June 2010.

[103] State of emergency is lifted. *Bangkok Post*. 22 December 2010.

As for the situations in the far South, two incidents caught public attention. The first was the death of a police superintendent in Yala District in March, and the other was the murder of four Buddhist villagers in Narathiwat later in September.

The case of Police Colonel Sompien Eksomya raised questions about the lack of supports for police officers in risk-prone areas. The local chief, 59, was killed in a roadside bombing. Having worked in the far South for more than 40 years, he asked for a transfer to a safer area before his retirement, but his request was neglected.[104] His death prompted police executives to investigate the transfer and promotion requests made by local officers to maintain justice and morale among law enforcement personnel.[105] Meanwhile, the brutal murder of four senior family members in Narathiwat gave rise to another round of panic among Buddhist residents in the deep South, many of whom called for special protection.[106]

Amidst the violent and volatile atmospheres of national politics and the restive South, social advocates continued their calls for peaceful resolutions for both conflicts. In July, a group of academics and volunteers joined in the "Salaya to Pattani Walking Group: Walk for Peace" project, hosted by Mahidol University's Research Center for Peace. Aiming to travel on foot for around 1,100 kilometres (approximately 680 miles) from the capital city to their destination at the Kru-Ze Mosque in Pattani Province, the objective of this project was to invoke authority and society to seek peaceful solutions to the southern problem.[107]

In October, the new Army Region 4 commander was appointed. A veteran in the deep South, the new regional army chief met with community and religious leaders, academics, and civic networks, as well as announcing his policies to 'distinguish the southern fire.'[108] Meanwhile, the southern provincial courts for the first time allowed the release of suspects who were detained in prison awaiting the national security trials on bail. Among the 514 detainees, the first fourteen suspects were released on October 26.[109] The Ministry of Justice allocated budget from its justice fund to subsidize the bail of these suspects. On December 30, the Southern Border Provinces Administration Act became effective, effectively endorsing the SBPAC as a juristic body.[110]

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[104] Hero top cop dies after PM ignores plea. *Bangkok Post*. 13 March 2010.

[105] Police demand new policy on promotions. *Bangkok Post*. 30 March 2010.

[106] Elderly Buddhist family slain. *Bangkok Post*. 20 September 2010.

[107] Peace walk near its destinations [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 17 August 2010. Available at: http://www.south.isranews.org/english-article/495-peace-walk-nears-its-destination.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[108] Mueng-suk, N. Special Interview of Commander Udomchai: Decoding 6 At-Hand Policies - Bringing People Home/Opening Space for Differences [Online]. *Deep South Watch*. 31 October 2010. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/1068 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[109] 14 suspected militants freed on bail [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 4 November 2010. Available at: http://www.south.isranews.org/english-article/592-14-suspected-militants-freed-on-bail.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[110] House Passed Draft SBPAC Act, Putting Out the Southern Fire [Online]. *Deep South Watch*. 4 August 2010. Available at: http://www.deepsouthwatch.org/node/899 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].; Southern Border Provinces Administration Act [Online]. *Foreign Office, The Government Public Relation Department*. 19 January 2011. Available at: http://thailand.prd.go.th/southern_situation/view_south.php?id=5467 [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

On a relevant matter, in October, 15 Pakistani men were arrested in Yala and charged with illegal entry to the country and money laundering. Citing national security sources, news report said some of the men might be involved with the radical Jemaah Isalamiyaah. However, there was no confirmation from authority on the claim.[111]

Aside from the impact from political violence, the southerners also suffered from a natural disaster in November. Approximately 165,000 residents in many districts of the three southernmost provinces were affected by a major flooding and landslide.[112] Apart from being uprooted from their home, villagers, mostly fishermen, lost their occupational tools.

At the end of the year, the Democrat-led government affirmed its moves towards peaceful conflict resolution. The cabinet-initiated Southern Border Provinces Administration law was eventually endorsed by the parliament.[113] The government also announced the lift of state of emergency in a southern border district – the first in several years,[114] although the area remained under the Internal Security Act. The deputy interior minister in charge of southern affairs also proposed the establishment of Sharia Court to resolve family disputes, in line with the Malay Muslim way of living.[115]

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[111] Five of 15 detained Pakistanis in Yala abuse drugs : army source [Online]. *The Nation*. 15 October 2010. Available at: http://www.nationmultimedia.com/home/2010/10/15/national/Five-of-15-detained-Pakistanis-in-Yala-abuse-drugs-30140162.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013]; Pakistan embassy checks on 15 men held in Yala. *Bangkok Post*. 26 October 2010.

[112] บาดีซีวิตของชาวบ้านดาโต๊ะ ความเสียหายของประมงพื้นบ้านปัตตานี และคาราวานน้ำใจสู่ปลายขวาน [Minutes of life of Datoh villagers, the damages on traditional Pattani fishery, and the Caravan of kindness to the axe's tip] [Online]. *Isara News Agency*. 8 November 2010. Available at: http://www.south.isranews.org/scoop-and-documentary/scoop-news-documentary/598-2010-11-08-03-36-34.html [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[113] Southern Border Provinces Administration Act [Online]. *The Royal Government Public Relations Department*. 19 January 2011. Available at: http://thailand.prd.go.th/southern_situation/view_south.php?id=5467# [Accessed: 14 January 2013].

[114] Cabinet to lift emergency in Pattani district. *The Nation*. 29 December 2010.

[115] Thaworn sees sharia law as way forward. *Bangkok Post*. 25 December 2010.

Appendix B: Profiles of the four media organisations

B.1 Matichon Daily

The Matichon Daily newspaper is under the management of Matichon plc, a print media company that also publishes a mass-circulation tabloid-style newspaper, a semi-weekly business newspaper, four magazines, and owns a publishing house (see the organisation's business structure in Figure B.1). The company was established in 1978, and its founders were considered to be among the progressive political writers in the country at that time. The company became a listed company in 1989.

In late 2005, GMM Media, part of the entertainment conglomerate GMM Grammy plc, attempted a hostile takeover of the company. However, the bid was viewed a political interference on media because of the GMM Grammy owner's connection with the then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. After facing public outcry and continuing protests from journalists, academics, and civil society, the entertainment conglomerate retracted its initial offer, but still acquired 32.23 per cent shares of Matichon in the end.

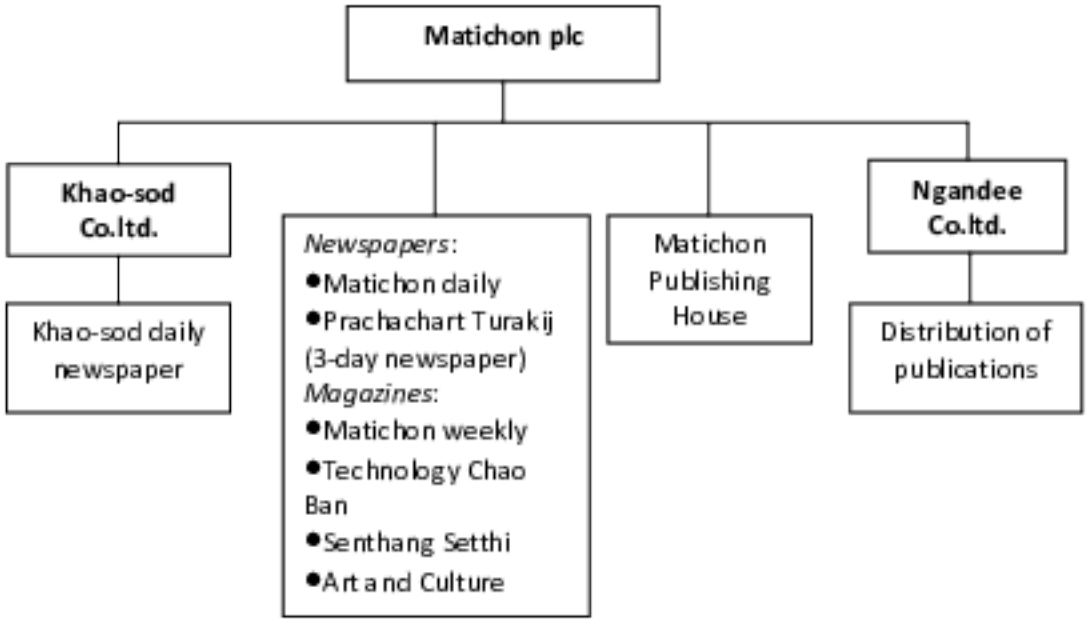


Figure B.1 Matichon plc's business structure[1]

B.2 Thai PBS

The television station was founded in 1995 as a result of the media reform movement which aimed at liberalising broadcast media from the state's ownership and control. This

[1] Source: Matichon plc's annual report 2004 Available at: http://info.matichon.co.th/report/2547/config.php?nfile=businesstrueng.txt&a=1 [Accessed: January 21, 2013]

public campaign began after the political crisis in May 1992 where broadcast media were manipulated and their content censored by authority (see a brief discussion on the state's ownership of broadcast frequencies and media reform movement in Chapter4's Footnote 5). Despite being under the care of the Office of the Prime Minister, the new television station was designed to operate independently by the concessionaire to prevent censorship and interference from authority. Additionally, to create an informed citizenry, the concession contract of the new station stipulated the emphasis on quality programme content, particularly news and current affairs, which differed from the prevalence of entertainment programmes in other commercial media. A holding company, with one of the country's major banks and a news-oriented media company the Nation Multimedia Group as key stakeholders, won the 30-year concession to run the station, and named it Independent Television (iTV). In its early years, the station became widely known for its quality news production and investigative reports. However, with its concentration on news and current affairs, the station failed to generate ample profit and started accumulating losses during the financial crisis in 1997. In 2000, the station was sold to Shin Corporation, the communication conglomerate owned by telecom tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, who later became the prime minister in 2001.

When Thaksin took office, the station reportedly encountered editorial interference to downplay its criticism against the government, and 21 news workers were fired when they resisted the management (the group, dubbed the 'iTV rebels' by the press, later won the legal action for unfair treatment and received back pay since they were let go). In 2004, an arbitration panel allowed the station to change the news-to-entertainment ratio from 70:30 as stated in the initial concession contract, to 50:50. Moreover, the annual licensing fee was also reduced from 1 billion baht (approximately 20 million pounds sterling) to 230 million (approximately 4.6 million pounds sterling).

However, in 2006, following the military coup that ousted the then Prime Minister Thaksin, the Central Administrative Court ruled that iTV violated its concession contract by implementing the aforementioned changes, and ordered the management to pay hefty fines. When the management failed to pay the fines, the concession was revoked and the frequency reverted to the Office of the Prime Minister. The interim civilian government later appointed a new executive board and renamed the station Thai Independent Television (TITV) in early 2007.

To maintain media independence and prevent interference from political and financial powers in the long run, the interim government, media professionals, academics and civil advocates carried out studies and organised discussions for the station's better future. The general opinions were divided into two camps: 1) to make the station an independent free-to-air commercial station, similar to the initial iTV, or 2) to reinvent it as the country's first public service broadcaster, following the models of public service broadcasters overseas such as BBC, NHK, or PBS. In 2008, the interim government eventually passed the law to establish a public service broadcaster. TITV was ordered to cease its transmission, and the property was transferred to the new organisation.

Operated under the Public Broadcasting Act 2008 and with the allocated annual budget of 2 billion baht (approximately 40 million pound sterling) taken from excise tax, the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS) was established. To ensure its independence and accountability, the organisation is managed by the Board of Governors, whose members represent various civic sectors to oversee its general policy, and the Executive Board and the Managing Director who manage the station's operation, as demonstrated in Figure B.2. Apart from the news and programme production departments similar to most broadcasters, Thai PBS also has the Audience Council, composed of representatives from disparate civic and consumer groups, to ensure public participation and the organisation's social responsibility.

When the station was launched, a number of new staffers were hired for its news and programme production departments (see the structure of the News Department in Figure B.3). While some employees from the previous iTV/TITV continued their work with the organisation, many high-profile news anchors and reporters were offered positions at other commercial broadcasters. As a result, the popularity of the station's news and current affairs programmes still trail behind other channels until present (as of 2013). However, the station's continuous coverage of the major flooding in 2011 was highly praised and helped increase the audience rating during the crisis.

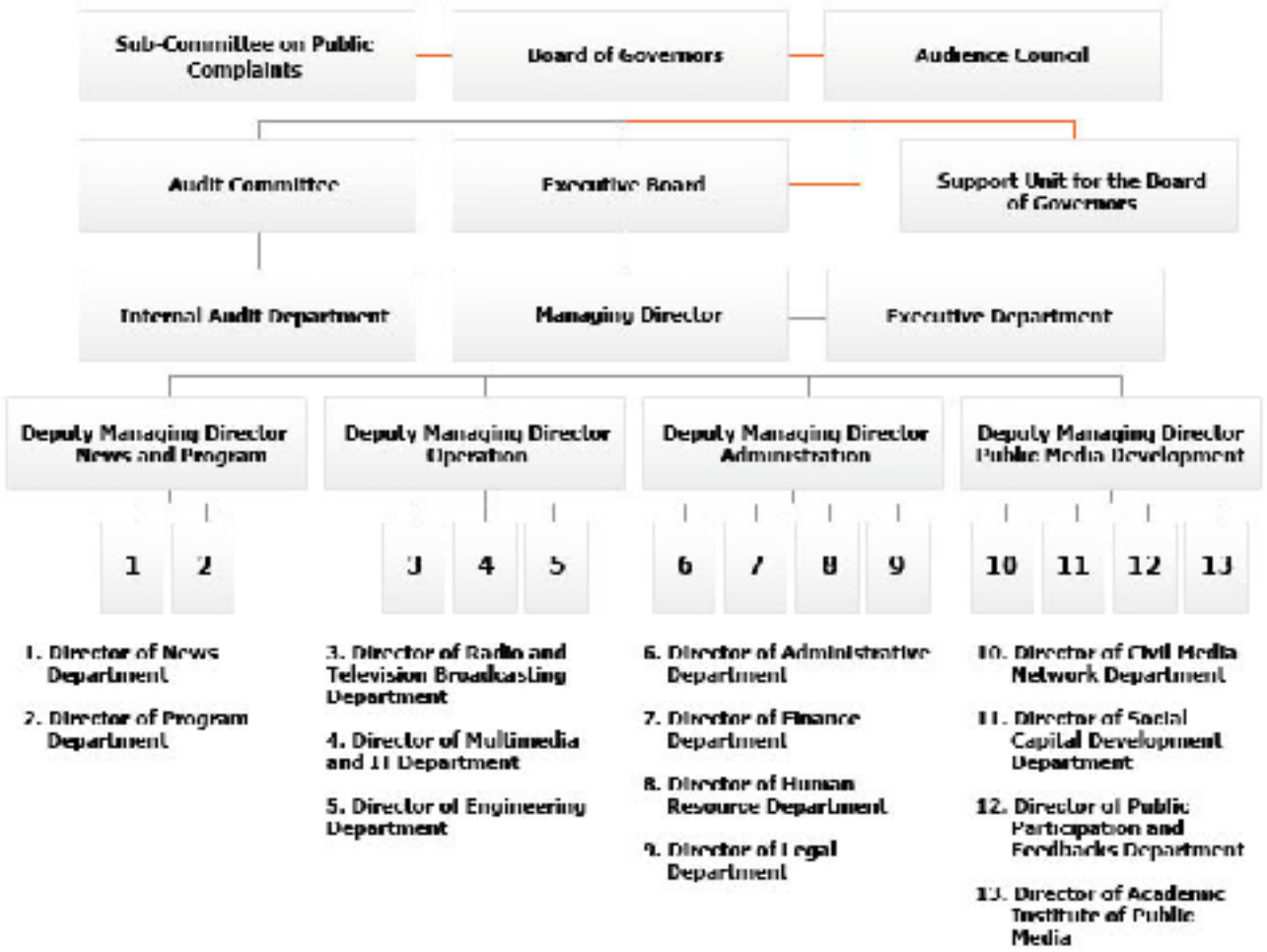
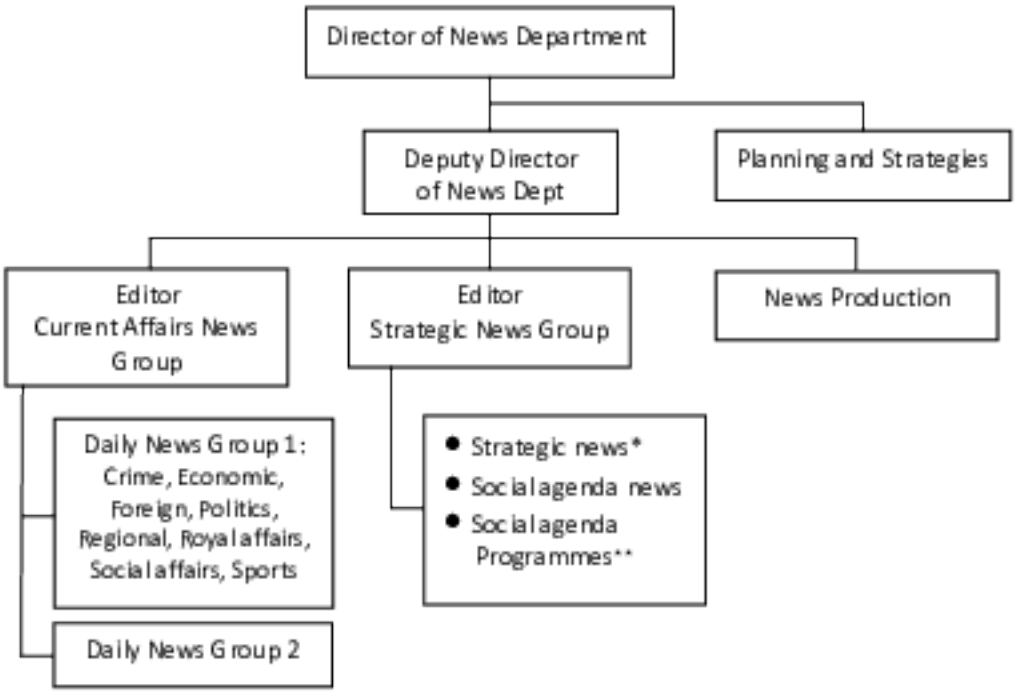


Figure B.2 Thai PBS' organisation structure[2]

[2] Source: Thai PBS website. Available at: http://www2.thaipbs.or.th/about_organization_structure.php [Accessed: January 21, 2013]



* 'Strategic news' desk generally produces in-depth current affairs reports, for example, environment news or youth development stories.
** 'Social agenda' programmes include the production of two daily news and current affairs programmes (*Morning News* and *Tee Nee Thai PBS*) and a discussion panel programme (*Way Tee Satarana* [*Public Forum*]).

Figure B.3 Thai PBS' News Department Structure[3]

B.3 ASTV Manager Online

The ASTV Manager Online news website is operated by ASTV Manager co.ltd., a media company that also publishes a political and business news-oriented daily newspaper and four magazines, and runs the satellite television ASTV. Initially named Manager Media Group, the company was founded by media mogul Sondhi Limthongkul in 1990 and started with a daily broadsheet. The newspaper became widely recognised for its coverage of the anti-government mass demonstration in May 1992 despite the state censorship on broadcast media and some print media outlets. During the financial crisis in 1997, the company encountered a major fiscal problem. Its founder filed for bankruptcy, and the company was streamlined to maintain its newspaper business. In early 2004, recuperating from financial problems, the company launched the satellite television operation, with ASTV News 1 being the primary news channel. Later in 2005, the Manager Media Group founder started to heavily criticise the then Thaksin-led coalition and propelled the anti-government movement, which later became the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD).

[3] Source: Researcher's observation note

The group's media outlets then served as the PAD's political mouthpiece to galvanise public support.

Due to heavy debts, the Manager Media Group faced bankruptcy in 2008. A new company was founded to replace the defunct enterprise, and, as a result, the titles of its publications and outlets were changed to "ASTV Manager" until present (as of 2013). The company's anti-Thaksin stance has brought about several defamation lawsuits against its news presenters and editorial team. Regardless, the ASTV Manager Online website remains among the most popular sources for online news. Several factors contribute to its popularity, from the speed of its coverage and its gossip-style entertainment news columns, to its harsh criticism against governments and support from PAD empathisers.

B.4 Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk

The operation was initially founded as The Southern News Desk Peace Media Project, or commonly known as the Isara News Centre, on July 11, 2005 by the Thai Journalists Association (TJA). Aimed at pacifying the conflict and appeasing violence, the project produced stories that promoted the southernmost provinces' ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as the concept of peaceful conflict resolution. Following the project's inception, an editorial team was set up, using a space at the Prince of Songkla University's Pattani campus as its office. TJA member organisations, both national and local media, cooperated by sending a group of volunteer reporters to stay at the centre and report from the region.

On August 25, 2005, the Isara News Centre website was launched. Stories were posted on the website, and occasionally used by the national media whose reporters were working for the project. In the beginning, the centre was co-supervised by two news editors: one senior reporter from Bangkok and the other a local stringer, so that they could combine their expertises in editorial process and local knowledge. The website concentrated on stories about local culture and way of life. Later on, the centre forged alliance with local scholars and advocates. As a result, apart from news and feature stories, the website also presented articles from research studies and seminars organised by these partner organisations.

In 2006, the centre underwent a shake-up and was reinvented as the Isara News Institute. The new agency was under the administration of the TJA, the Press Council of Thailand, and the Thai Press Development Foundation. However, the decrease of funding in late 2006 compelled the agency to be streamlined. The duo-editor system was cancelled, leaving one Bangkok-based editor in charge. At the same time, fewer volunteer journalists from

Bangkok were able to stay in the far South. Therefore, the newsgathering depended on local junior reporters. With the declining financial sponsorship and the changes of editors in the following year, the agency struggled to maintain its operation. The office at the Prince of Songkla University's Pattani campus was later closed, and the initial Isara News Centre webpage was subsumed under the Isara News Agency's site and redubbed the Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk. At the time of writing (2013), the desk is supervised by an editor based in Bangkok who occasionally travels to the southern border provinces. The newsgathering unit includes five regular reporters who receive their payment by piece and some constant contributors.

In her study of the Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk, Wichayawanee Choonui (2009) summarises the development of the agency in Table B.1 below.

Table B.1 The development of the Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk

Phases / **Characteristics**	**Phase 1** (2005-2006)	**Phase 2** (late 2006 – early 2008)	**Phase 3** (2008 – present)
Supervising organisation	TJA	Isara Institute, Thai Press Development Foundation	Isara Institute, Thai Press Development Foundation
Title	The Peace Media Project: The Southern News Desk/ Isara News Centre	Isara Institute	Isara Institute's Southern News Desk/ Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk*
Objectives	Focusing on the principle of peace media/ peace journalism, and the mutual learning and exchange between Bangkok and local press	Focusing on demanding for justice for the affected people, in line with the peace journalism principle	Continuing the peace journalism principle and being a hub of news and information about the three southern border provinces

Phases / Characteristics	Phase 1 (2005-2006)	Phase 2 (late 2006 – early 2008)	Phase 3 (2008 – present)
Staff*	- Two co-editors; one from Bangkok and one from the area - Journalists from Bangkok - Journalists from the area - Four reporters; one in each southernmost province (all reporters were on loan from the member organisations)	- One Bangkok-based editor - Five-six reporters in the area; one appointed as the centre chief (all staffers were hired as the centre's reporter) - Four reporters; one in each southernmost province (on loan from the member organisation)	- One Bangkok-based editor - Five reporters in the area (paid by piece) - Contributors (stringers and academics)
An office in the South	Yes	Yes	No
Content emphasis	- Stories about non-violent events - Way of life, local culture, living situations in culturally-diverse environments - Investigative reports - Feedbacks from the southern residents and grassroots people who were affected by the conflict/violence	- Analytical reports about daily violent incidents - Investigation into justice system and cases of unjust treatments / abuses - Military perspectives - Summary of incidents every fortnight, including statistics of casualties and analysis of violent patterns	- Fewer reports about daily incidents - Stories related to the current national trends - Analytical reports on strategies - Court cases, including impact on orphans and widows - Unusual / success stories
Target audience	- General public (people outside the southernmost provinces) - Mainstream media - Civil society network - Local media	- The locals and general public - Civil society network - Local media - Alternative media - Foreign press agencies	- The locals and general public - Alternative media - Local media - Civil society network - Foreign press agencies

* Information updated by the researcher.

Appendix C: The dates selected for the content analysis' rolling random sampling

Total of 7 years, 183 days

Month	Dates	Number of days
Year 2004 (Total 26 days)		
January	Mon 5, Tue 20	2
February	Wed 4, Thu 19	2
March	Fri 5, Sat 20, Sun 28	3
April	M 12, Tu 27	2
May	W 12, Th 27	2
June	F 11, Sat 26	2
July	Sun 4, M 19	2
August	Tu 3, W 18	2
September	Th 2, F 17	2
October	Sat 2, Sun 10, M 25	3
November	Tu 9, W 24	2
December	Th 9, F 24	2
Year 2005 (Total 26 days)		
January	Sat 8, Sun 16, M 31	3
February	Tu 15	1
March	W 2, Th 17	2
April	F 1, Sat 16, Sun 24	3
May	M 9, Tu 24	2
June	W 8, Th 23	2
July	F 8, Sat 23, Sun 31	3
August	M 15, Tu 30	2
September	W 14, Th 29	2
October	F 14, Sat 29	2
November	Sun 6, M 21	2
December	Tu 6, W 21	2
Year 2006 (Total 26 days)		
January	Th 5, F 20	2
February	Sat 4, Sun 12, M 27	3
March	Tu 14, W 29	2
April	Th 13, F 28	2
May	Sat 13, Sun 21	2
June	M 5, Tu 20	2
July	W 5, Th 20	2
August	F 4, Sat 19, Sun 27	3
September	M 11, Tu 26	2
October	W 11, Th 26	2
November	F 10, Sat 25	2
December	Sun 3, M 18	2
Total		26
Year 2007 (Total 27 days)		
January	Tu 2, W 17	2
February	Th 1, F 16	2
March	Sat 3, Sun 11, M 26	3
April	Tu 10, W 25	2
May	Th 10, F 25	2

Month	Dates	Number of days
June	Sat 9, Sun 17	2
July	M 2, Tu 17	2
August	W 1, Th 16, F 31	3
September	Sat 15, Sun 23	2
October	M 8, Tu 23	2
November	W 7, Th 22	2
December	F 7, Sat 22, Sun 30	3
Year 2008 (Total 25 days)		
Month	Dates	Total number of days
January	M 14, Tu 29	2
February	W 13, Th 28	2
March	F 14, Sat 29	2
April	Sun 6, M 21	2
May	Tu 6, W 21	2
June	Th 5, F 20	2
July	Sat 5, Sun 13, M 28	3
August	Tu 12, W 27	2
September	Th 11, F 26	2
October	Sat 11, Sun 19	2
November	M 3, Tu 18	2
December	W 3, Th 18	2
Year 2009 (Total 27 days)		
January	F 2, Sat 17, Sun 25	3
February	M 9, Tu 24	2
March	W 11, Th 26	2
April	F 10, Sat 25	2
May	Sun 3, M 18	2
June	Tu 2, W 17	2
July	Th 2, F 17	2
August	Sat 1, Sun 9, M 24	3
September	Tu 8, W 23	2
October	Th 8, F 23	2
November	Sat 7, Sun 15, M 30	3
December	Tu 15, W 30	2
Year 2010 (Total 26 days)		
January	Th 14, F 29	2
February	Sat 13, Sun 21	2
March	M 8, Tu 23	2
April	W 7, Th 22	2
May	F 7, Sat 22, Sun 30	3
June	M 14, Tu 29	2
July	W 14, Th 29	2
August	F 13, Sat 28	2
September	Sun 5, M 20	2
October	Tu 5, W 20	2
November	Th 4, F 19	2
December	Sat 4, Sun 12, M 27	3
Total		26

Appendix D: The content analysis coding sheet

The coding sheet is divided into four sections, according to the analytical frameworks as mentioned in the methodology chapter.

Section I: General information of the story

Category	Answers
1. Source	a. newspaper (*Matichon*) b. television (*Thai PBS*) c. website (*ASTV Manager Online*) d. website (*Isara News Agency's Southern News Desk*)
2. Date and time of publication	Date: _____ Time: _____
2. Length of story	a. newspaper (column): _____ b. television (minute): _____ c. & d. website (word count): _____
3. Story headline/ anchor introduction	
4. Headline/ introduction topic (choose only one topic that is relevant to the primary headline)	a. national policies b. local/ regional administration c. regional/ national security d. violent incidents e. terrorism f. separatism g. law enforcement & justice system h. human rights i. religion j. history & culture k. education l. economy m. personal experience n. others
5. The contexts of headline/ introduction (more than one answer can be	**For the headlines/introductions with attribution to people affected by and involved in violent incidents** a. referring to Islamic victims b. referring to Buddhist victims c. referring to victims who are state official and civil servant

selected)	d. referring to victims who are member of community e. referring to economic and social ramifications i.e. damages to property, impact on financial transaction and trade etc. f. referring to antagonists as unidentified instigators g. identifying antagonists by name or professions h. others
6. Types of presentation formats	a. News, including news brief, breaking news, live report b. Feature article/ Short documentary c. Analysis/ investigative report d. Interview, including live interview e. Profile f. Presentation of reports, announcements, transcripts, summary/ chronology of events, statistics (excerpts, abridgement, or entirety) g. Others
7. Additional observations	(to take note of other repetitive patterns that are not listed in the sheet; information will be used in news framing analysis)

Section II: The use of sources in news content

The number of sources quoted in the story: _____

Identify the type of sources by choosing from the following choices. More than one choice can be selected in a story.

A. Type of sources	B. Specializations	C. Locations
a. Government b. State agencies c. Administrative agencies d. Independent agencies f. Police g. Military h. Insurgent groups/ suspects i. Civil societies j. Parliamentarians (MPs, Senators) k. Business and agricultural sectors l. Members of community m. Victims/ family of victims n. Academics o. Media p. International governments/ agencies q. Anonymous sources r. Others	a. National policies b. Regional/ national security c. Administrative authority d. Law enforcement e. Terrorism f. Separatism g. Religions h. Justice system i. Human rights j. History and culture k. Education l. Economy m. Personal experience/ eyewitness accounts n. Journalistic observations o. Others	a. National-level b. 4 southern border provinces c. Other southern provinces d. Other parts of the country e. Overseas f. Unknown location g. Others

Section III: The labels of the phenomenon and antagonists

This part of the coding sheet examines the story's headlines and anchor introduction to look for labels used to identify the conflict and antagonists.

a. Labels of the southern conflict

In relevant stories, choose from the following choices of labels used to identify the southern conflict.

Categories of labels	The labels used
1. Metaphors	a. Southern fire, fire b. Southern fire problem c. Southern fire situation d. Others: _____
2. Characteristics	a. Southern problem b. Unrest problem c. Violence, Violence problem d. Southern situation, southern border situation e. Unrest f. Turbulence g. Others: _____
3. Geographical locations	a. South, deep South b. Southern border/ southernmost provinces c. Others: _____
4. Others	

b. Labels of antagonists

In relevant stories, choose from the following choices of labels used to identify the antagonists.

Categories of labels	The labels used
1. Criminals	a. Southern bandit b. Criminal/ bandit c. Instigator d. Turbulence maker e. Others: _____
2. Insurgents	a. Leader b. Terrorist/ terrorist group c. Ally, Member d. Others: _____
3. Legal terms	a. Suspect b. Accused c. Others: _____
4. Action-based terms	a. Shooter b. Bomber c. Arsonist d. Others: _____
5. Judgement on characters (labels with adjectives)	(Open for discovery) _____
6. Others	

Section IV. The visual presentation accompanied the reports

In relevant stories, choose from the following choices to identify the types of visual presentations and their contexts

Topics	Types/ Contexts of presentation
1. Types of visual presentation	a. Mug shot b. Action c. Person d. Location & object e. Edited photo f. Graphic/ info graphic g. Video/ audio clip (for online media) h. Others
2. Types of actors featured in the photo/shot* *one photo/shot may feature more than on one actor	a. Government b. Army c. Police d. State official e. Parliamentarian f. Independent agency official g. Local h. Insurgent & suspect i. Victim of conflict/ violence j. Civil society k. Academics l. Private sector m. Others: _____
3. Types of contexts	a. Organised event b. Scene of violent incident c. Arrest/ search/ suspect's surrender d. Security e. Casualty g. Visit h. Way of life i. History & culture j. Protests k. Others: _____

NOTE: Coding descriptions for the types of visual presentation

a. **Mug shot**: ID photo-style, file photo of public figure, the photo focuses on the person and no additional context provided

b. **Action**: Generic shot of a scene where people were featured. The focus was not on people's identification, but on their action.

c. **Person**: Shot of a scene where people were featured. The focus was on identifying the person/people featured, for example, a close-up shot of a person giving speech.

e. **Edited photo**: Collage of events/ people; enhanced photo

f. **Info graphic**: Table of statistics, graphics, maps etc.

Coding descriptions for the types of contexts

a. **Organised event**: meetings, conferences, seminars, fairs & ceremonies etc.

d. **Security**: army patrol, soldiers guarding school and temple, military equipment etc.

e. **Casualty**: corpses, injured people, funeral

f. **Human sufferings**: people affected by conflict/ violence expressing grief and difficulties

g. **Visit**: public figures/ state officials visiting villages, the locals or injured people etc.

h. **Way of life**: general activities, for example, people shopping at local market, people pray at mosque etc.

i. **History & culture**: local heritage, for example, ancient mosque, people performing traditional dance etc.

Appendix E: The list of in-depth interviewees (30 people)

Levels	Matichon	Thai PBS	Manager	Isara	Others
Managerial (executives)		2. Mr. Wanchai Tantiwittayapitak VP of News & Programmes 3. Mr. Somkiat Jantaraseema, Civic Media Network Director		9. Mr. Prasong Lertrattanawisut Director, Isara Institute	
Editors/ desk editors/ producers	1. Mr. Seksan Kittitaweesin Chief of Regional News Desk	4. Mr. Korkhet Jantalertluck, Assistant News Director 5. Ms. Nattha Komolvadhin Editor, *Here is Thai PBS* current affairs programme 6. Mr. Sawas Wansalae Producer, *Deesalatan Na Dan Tai* programme	7. Mr. Piyachote Intaraniwas Chief, Southern News Centre 8. Mr. Jitpapas Parinyakul Web Marketing Officer	10. Mr. Pakorn Peungnetr Editor, Southern News Desk	11. Mr. Tuwaedaniya Meringging Editor, Aman News Agency 12. Mr. Muhammad-ayub Pathan Advisor, DSW* 13. Mr. Ramadan Panjor Advisor & webmaster, DSW & DSJ 14. Ms. Thitinob Komolnimi Advisor, DSW

Levels	Matichon	Thai PBS	Manager	Isara	Others
Field journalists		15. Mr. Sermsuk Kasitipradit Senior correspondent 16. Ms.Tichila Puttarasapan Reporter, Southern News Centre 17. Mr. Sonthaya Kaewkam Reporter, Southern News Centre		21.Ms. Waeleemoh Pusu 22.Ms. Nasurah Jeh-ha 23. Mr. Abdullah Wangni	24. Mr. Surapan Boonthanom Co-owner & photographer, *Chao Tai* 25. Ms. Patchara Yingdamnoon Newscaster, Prince of Songkla University radio 26. Ms. Supara Janchidfah Senior reporter, *Bangkok Post* 27. Mr. Don Pathan Senior reporter, *The Nation* 28. Ms. Yameela Gareedong Newscaster, National Broadcasting Television, Yala Province
Stringers/ Independent producers	Mr. Muhammad-ayub Pathan* Stringer, Yala Province	18.Mr. Muhammadpares Lohasan Stringer, Pattani Province 19. Mr. Ahmad Ramansiriwong Stringer, Yala Province	20. Mrs. Roseeda Pusu Stringer, Pattani Province		29. Ms. Nuannoi Thammasatien Freelance journalist 30. Mrs. Yah Alee Community radio practitioner, Pattani Province

* The interviewee performed more than one role.

Appendix F: The list of interview topics for in-depth interviewees

The following topics and core questions were used in the in-depth interviews with informants who are news workers of the organisations selected and journalists specialising in the southern conflict. Being a broad framework, the topics and questions were not always necessarily asked in this order to allow a flexible conversation with the interviewees.

1. Background, experience, and news production practices

- How long have you been in this line of work? Why did you become journalist? What drives you to continue your work as journalist?
- How do you go about your work every day? What are the routines?
- How have the conflict and violence affected your routines?
- How have your current routines changed from when the violence started in 2004?
- Example of current or high-profile cases: How did you learn about the story? How did you trace and gather the information? What made the job easy? What made it difficult?
- How do you work with your peer reporters in the same province/news beat who come from different organisations?

2. Difficulties and concerns in southern conflict reporting

- Is southern conflict reporting different from covering other subjects? What are the differences, or why is it not different?
- What are the cautions when producing news about the southern conflict (i.e. source confidentiality, language usage, selection of visual presentation etc.)?
- What do you face as obstacles and limitations in reporting about the southern conflict? How do you overcome them?
- Has there been a situation when your personal and professional background (i.e. being a Buddhist/Muslim; being a local/Bangkokian; being a journalist/beat reporter etc.) caused problem in reporting?

3. Occupational and organisational influence in southern conflict reporting

- What is your interaction with the editor in Bangkok/southern news centre? What is your interaction with the southern stringers/reporters?
- How supportive are the news editor/reporters? Have there been any misunderstanding/conflict, and how do you resolve it?
- How does being an employee of/working for this organisation facilitate/hinder your work (i.e. the types of stories in demand; specific policy or protocol in reporting about the

conflict; connection/contact with sources; production facilities and equipment; supporting staff; salary, incentive, training, and insurance etc.)?

- Does your organisation treat the southern conflict news differently from other news stories (i.e. in terms of coverage plan and presentation)? Is there a specific system or procedure concerning the southern conflict coverage, or when would this system/procedure be used?

- How have the changes in your organisation (i.e. change of organisational principle, decrease in funding etc.) affected your work in reporting about the southern conflict?

- How does the editorial meetings and news management determine the coverage of southern conflict?

- In your opinion and assessment, how does your organisation differ from others in terms of the news presentation and organisational structure? Is this difference a benefit/disadvantage in southern conflict reporting?

4. Relationship with sources

- How do you build and maintain relationship with their sources?

- How do you strike a balance between personal and professional relationship with your sources?

- Why do reporters need to get information/confirmation from state officials?

5. Reflection and evaluation on the role of journalists and journalism

- What do you think is(are) the role(s) of news media in southern conflict? How do you carry out such a role(s)? Example of situations that reflect the role(s). Can that role(s) be materialised?

- There are criticisms and studies that show how news media's works do not help bring about peaceful conflict resolution. What is your thought on that?

- How can the news media contribute to the conflict resolution process?

6. Views on the southern conflict

- In your opinion (as a local/specialist reporter/news editor), what caused the southern conflict? What keeps the conflict ongoing?

- What is your view on the various interpretations of the conflict (i.e. the influence of national politics, the "additional threat" theory, the Malay Muslims' struggle for recognition and justice, the ethno-nationalism presupposition)?

- How do you think the conflict should be resolved? How can the proposed solution be materialised?

Appendix G: The components of news frames in news content

Table G.1 Components of frames in the *causes of conflict and violence* meta-frame

Frame components	Frequency (percentage)
Retaliation against authority	*(37)*
1. Referring to unknown armed groups as being behind the attacks, but not specifically labelling them as "separatist" or "terrorist"	35
2. Referring to military defector as trainer for militia	2
Power struggle among interest groups	*(27)*
Referring to disparate interest groups, i.e. drug cartels, local influential figures, etc. as being behind the attacks	27
State's misdiagnosis and ineffective policies	*(15)*
1. Stating the military-led approach intensifies the southern conflict and violence	5
2. Stating the competition among political parties enables the conflict's protraction	5
3. Stating the state officials' incompetency and mistreatment of the locals enable the conflict's protraction	3
4. Stating the deficiency in intelligence enable the conflict's protraction	2
Transnational radical Islam	*(13)*
1. Referring to transnational/ Southeast Asia-based armed groups and other influential establishments as supporters for the local insurgent movement	10
2. Referring to the inappropriate interpretations of Islamic religious teaching as a tool to recruit operative staff	3
Identity politics	*(9)*
1. Referring to separatist movements as the instigators of violence	5
2. Referring to the locals' grievance from being mistreated and deprived of identity as the root of the conflict	2
3. Referring to the long history of power struggle with the Thai state as the root of the conflict	2
Total ($n = 60$)	101*

* The numbers are rounded up/down; therefore, the total is not 100%.

Table G.2 Components of frames in the *repercussions* meta-frame

Frame components	**Frequency** (percentage)
Impact on stakeholders	*(52)*
1. Impact on state officials	15
2. Impact on the southerners' livelihood	13
3. Impact on victims	11
4. Impact on economy	9
5. Protests by the locals	9
6. Escape (witnesses, suspects)	2
Governance	*(40)*
1. Reporting about authorities' reactions: demotions, transfers, changes of strategies	20
2. Reporting about trial & investigation on suspects and probes on irregularity in the state's mishandling	16
3. Introducing new/amended political strategies	4
Public reactions	*(7)*
Reporting about royal family and general public expressing concerns about the southern situation	7
Total (n = 188)	100

Table G.3 Components of frames in the *solutions* meta-frame

Frame components	Frequency (percentage)
Governance & political structure	*(29)*
1. Reporting about positive/neutral views on governmental policies in general	5
2. Reporting about negative views on governmental policies in general	6
3. Introducing administrative changes i.e. re-establishment of SBPAC, appointment of ministers in charge of southern conflict etc.	5
4. Reporting about Thailand's attempts to maintain relationship with Islamic countries and international communities	4
5. Reporting about political parties' introduction of new strategies for southern constituencies	3
6. Reporting about budget allocation and spending for southern conflict solution	2
7. Reporting about government's reiterating stance that southern conflict is a domestic matter	1
8. Reporting about positive/ neutral views on special administrative models/ autonomy	1
9. Reporting about negative views on special administrative models/ autonomy	2
Quality of life	*(19)*
1. Reporting about improvement in education, community, and healthcare services	10
2. Reporting about roles of religious institutions in conflict resolution	5
3. Reporting about improvement in local economy	4
Third-party involvement	*(15)*
1. Reporting about the influence of and input from international community i.e. Malaysia's role as mediator/facilitator in dialogues with separatist leaders, the UN's annual human rights situation reports, etc.	6
2. Reporting about public response & moral support i.e. donations, fund-raisings, opinion poll showing public's concerns about the southern conflict, etc.	4
3. Reporting about royal family and associate's initiatives	3
4. Reporting about suggestions on the roles of mass media in southern conflict	2
Military & policing	*(14)*
1. Reporting about security & public order policy/ operation i.e. military appointment & management, enactment of martial law & emergency decree etc.	12
2. Reporting about crime suppression policy/ operation i.e. eradication of narcotic drugs in community, police appointment & management etc.	2

Frame components (cont.)	**Frequency** (percentage)
Reconciliation & recognition of local identity	*(12)*
1. Reporting about reconciliation/ peace/ anti-violence campaigns & initiatives	9
2. Reporting about suggestions to promote recognition of local histories & culture	3
3. Reporting about suggestions to promote understanding in the region's uniqueness	1
Justice	*(7)*
1. Reporting about policies/ projects concerning legal actions & investigation into the state's alleged wrongdoing, overhaul of justice system	4
2. Reporting about healing initiatives for people affected by conflict & violence	2
3. Reporting about policies/ projects concerning human rights	1
Counter-insurgency	*(4)*
1. Reporting about positive/ neutral views on dialogues with separatist groups	2
2. Reporting about negative views on dialogues with separatist groups	1
3. Reporting about counter-terrorism/ separatism policy (referring to propositions with direct reference to 'terrorism' and 'separatism')	1
Others	*(2)*
Reporting about arts & literature about southern conflict & southern culture	2
Total (n = 365)	102*

* The numbers are rounded up/down; therefore, the total is not 100%.

Appendix H: The types of visual presentation in southern conflict reports of the four media organisations

Table H.1 The types of visual presentation in print and online news content

Types of visual presentation in print and online news content	Frequency (percentage)
Actions	38
Mug shots	25
Persons	20
Locations & objects	12
Edited photo	3
Info graphic	2
Others: cartoon caricature, video clips	1
Total (n = 971)	101*

* The numbers are rounded up/down; therefore, the total is not 100%.

Table H.2 The types of visual presentation in broadcast news content

Types of visual presentation in broadcast news content	Frequency (percentage)
Actions	52
Locations & objects	24
Persons	22
Mug shots	1
Info graphics	1
Others (reporters' stand-up)	1
Total (n = 1,565)	101*

* The numbers are rounded up/down; therefore, the total is not 100%.

Appendix I: The trajectories of story lengths and number of sources in news coverage from 2004 to 2010

Table I.1. The average story length of the four news organisations' coverage of the southern conflict

Years	Matichon (sq.inches)	TPBS (minutes)	Manager (words)	Isara (words)
2004	128	not available	640	not available
2005	126	not available	892	1499
2006	102	not available	808	1717
2007	72	not available	526	1255
2008	29	not available	426	1027
2009	42	02:47	521	1692
2010	35	02:13	541	1467

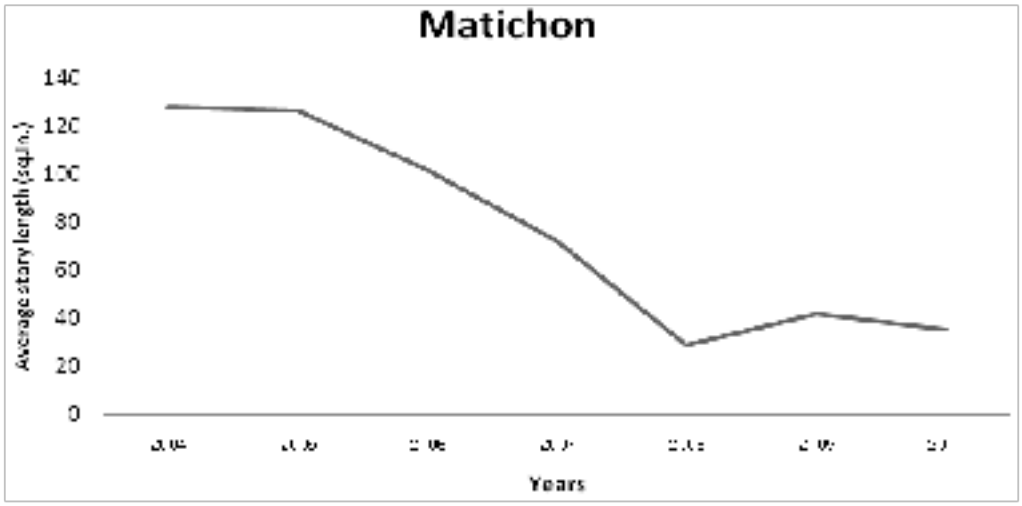


Figure I.1. The trends of the average story lengths of the Matichon coverage

Figure 1.2. The trends of the average story lengths of the Manager coverage

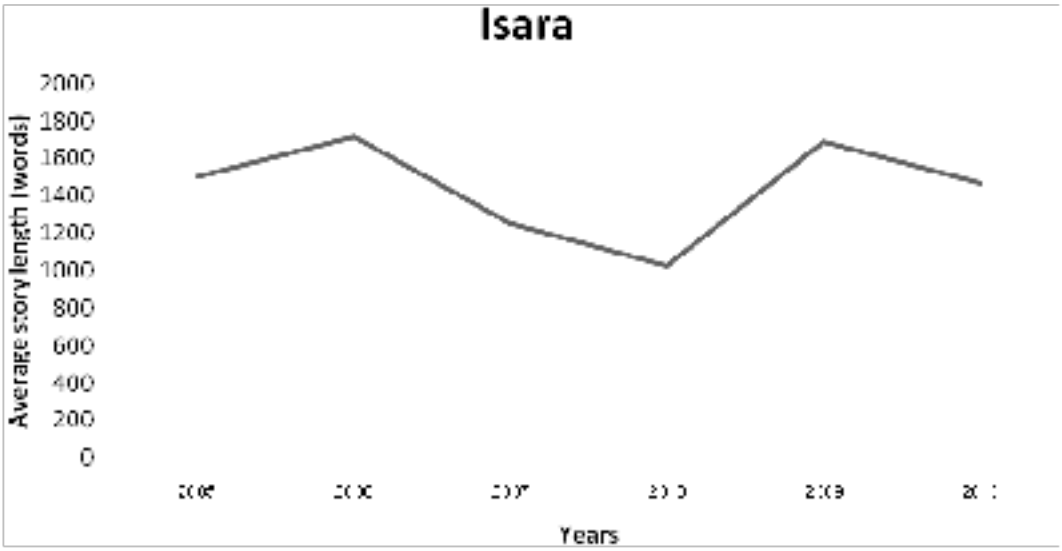


Figure 1.3. The trends of the average story lengths of the Isara coverage

Table 1.2. The average number of sources in the four news organisations' coverage of the southern conflict

Years	Matichon	TPBS	Manager	Isara
2004	8	not available	1	not available
2005	7	not available	2	2
2006	5	not available	2	3
2007	3	not available	1	2
2008	1	not available	1	2
2009	2	2	1	4
2010	2	2	1	4

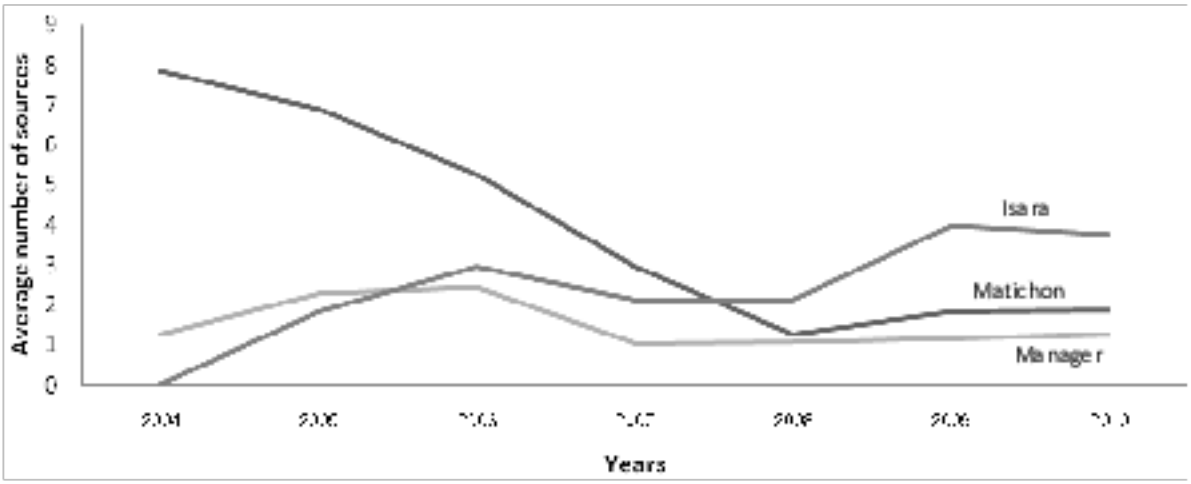


Figure 1.4. Comparison of the trends of the average of number of sources in the southern conflict coverage

Appendix J: The trajectories of news frames in the southern conflict reports from 2004 to 2010

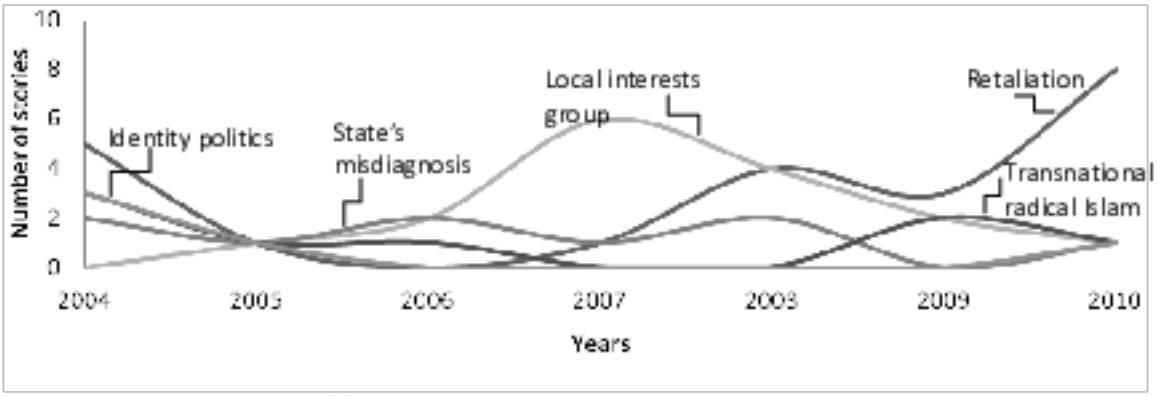


Figure J.1. The trend of news frames in the *causes* meta-frame

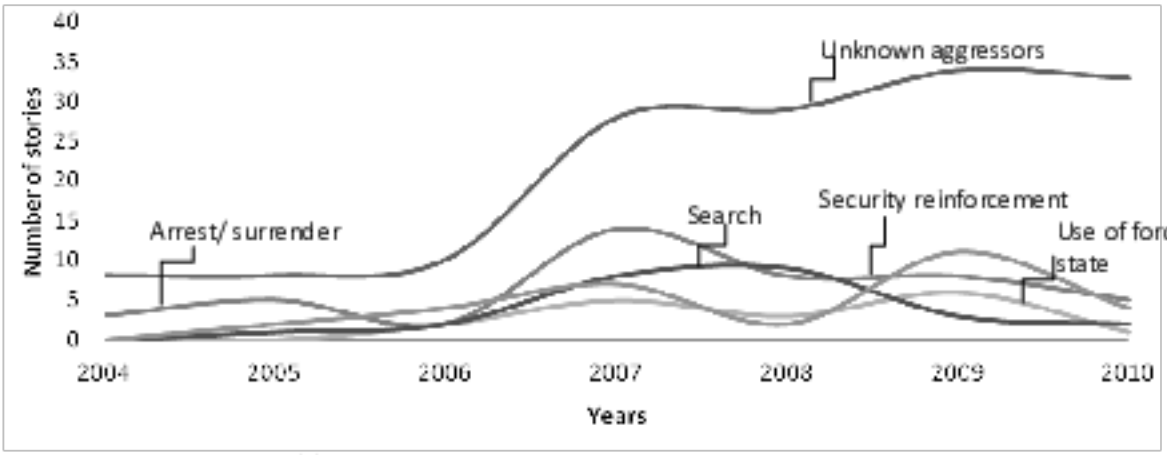


Figure J.2. The trend of news frames in the *uses of force* meta-frame

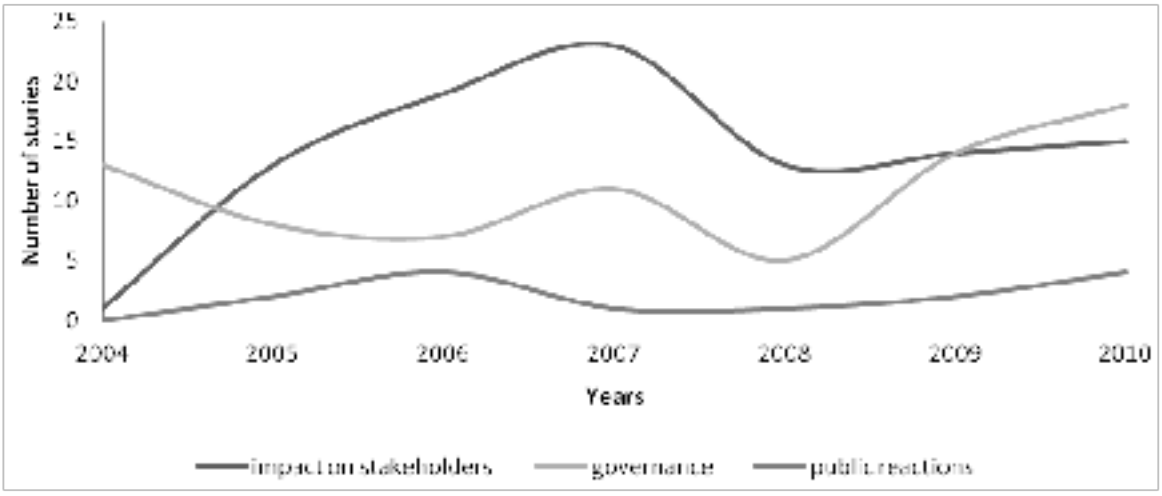


Figure J.3. The trend of news frames in the *repercussions* meta-frame

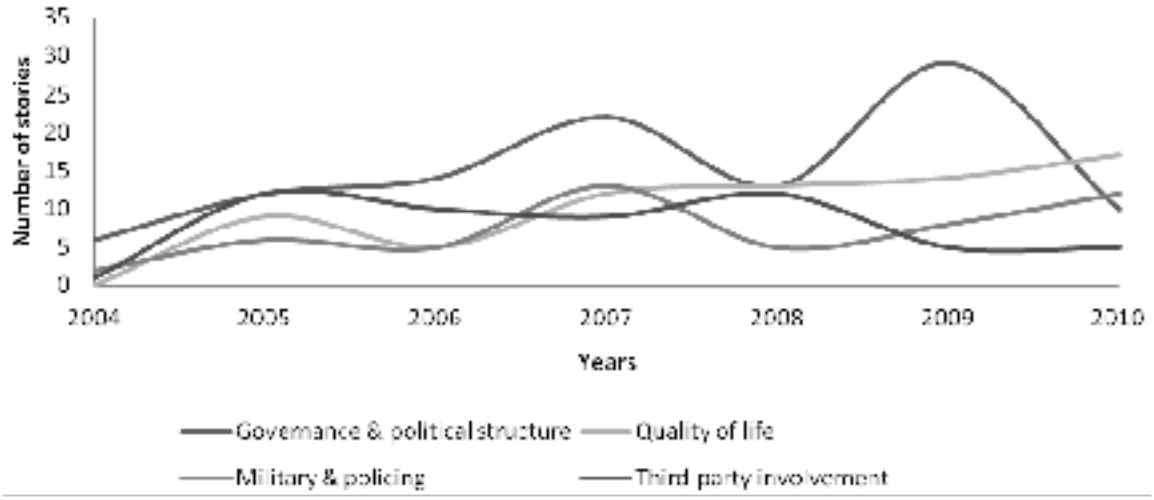


Figure J.4. The trend of news frames in the *solutions* meta-frame

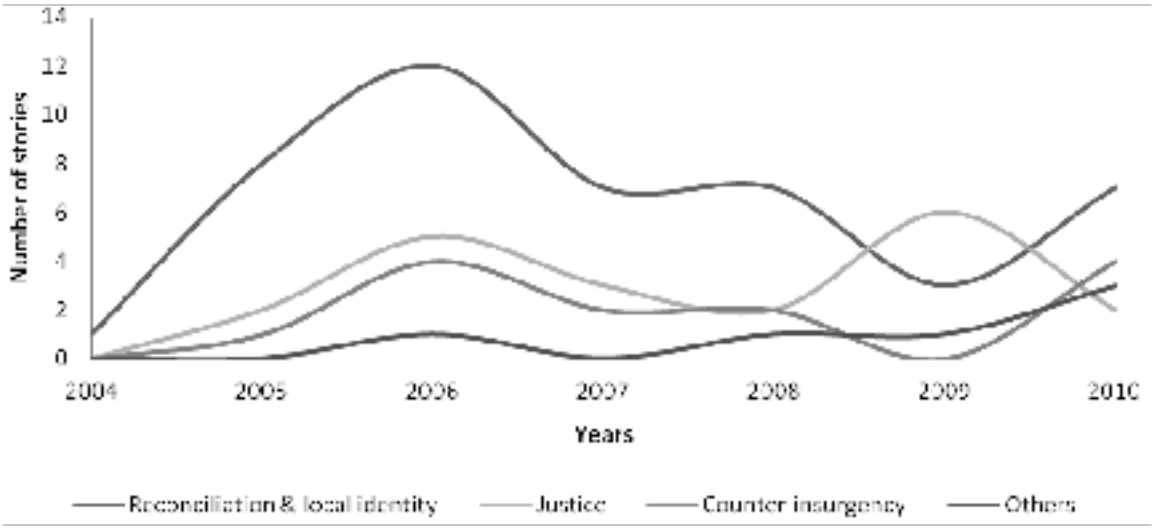


Figure J.5. The trend of news frames in the *solutions* meta-frame (cont.)

Appendix K: The comparisons of news frames in the coverage of commercial and public service/alternative media

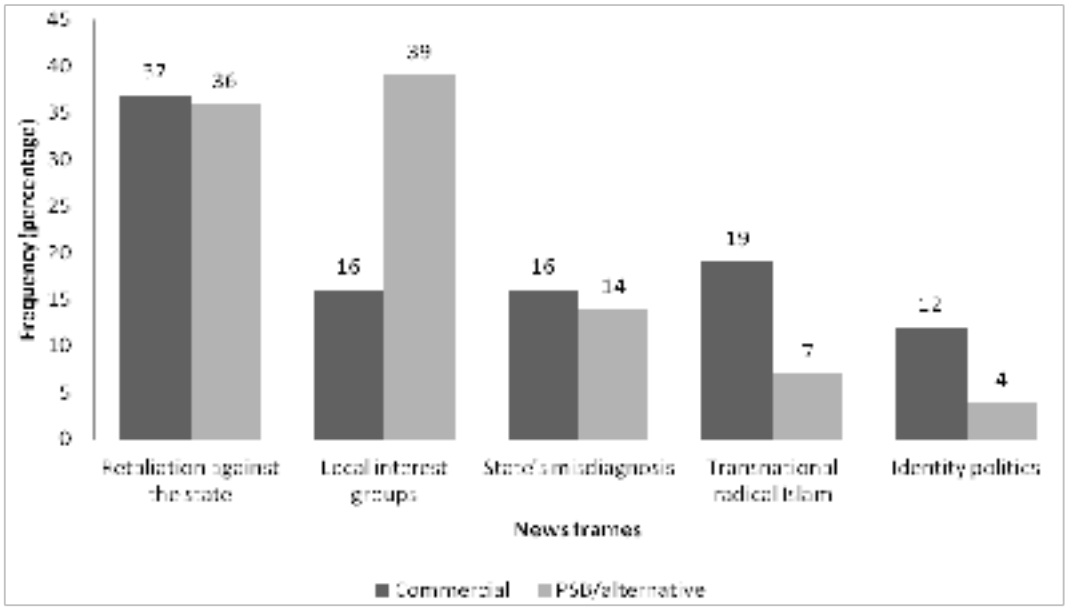


Figure K.1. Comparison of the *causes* frames in the coverage of commercial and PSB/alternative media

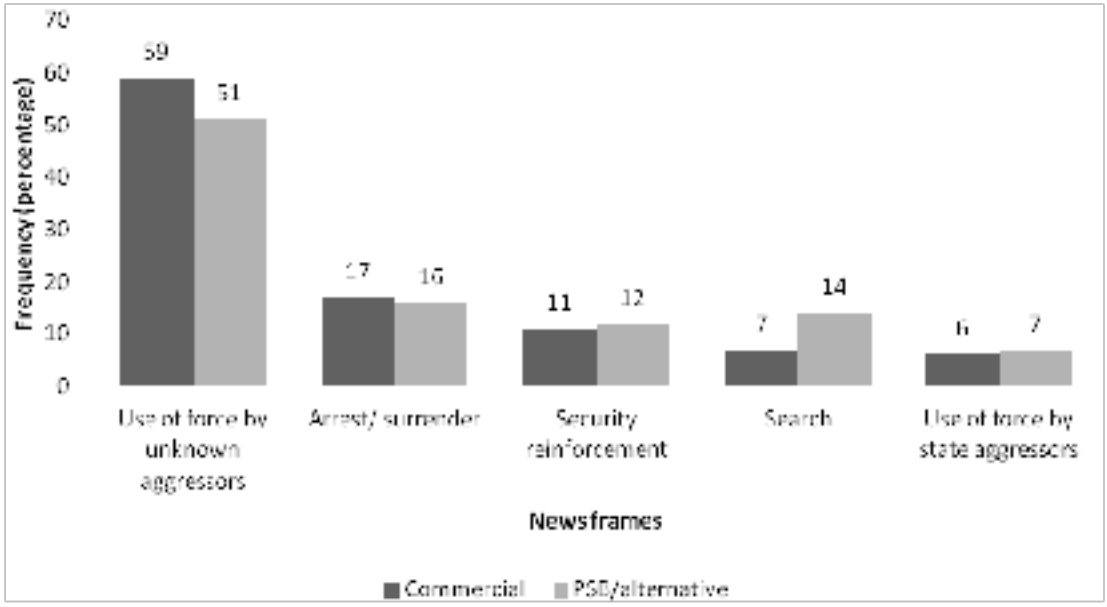


Figure K.2. Comparison of the *uses of force* frames in the coverage of commercial and PSB/alternative media

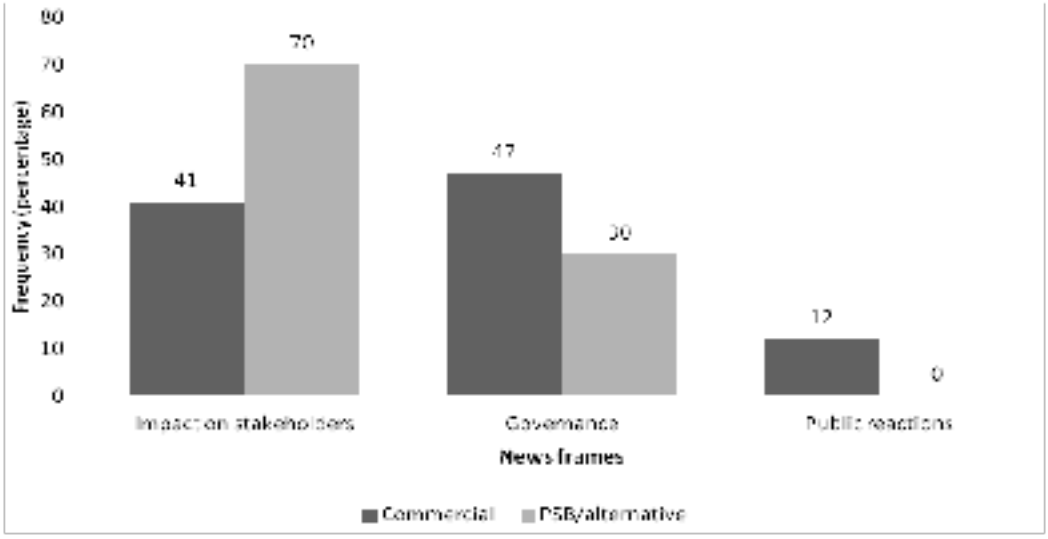


Figure K.3. Comparison of the *repercussions* frames in the coverage of commercial and PSB/alternative media

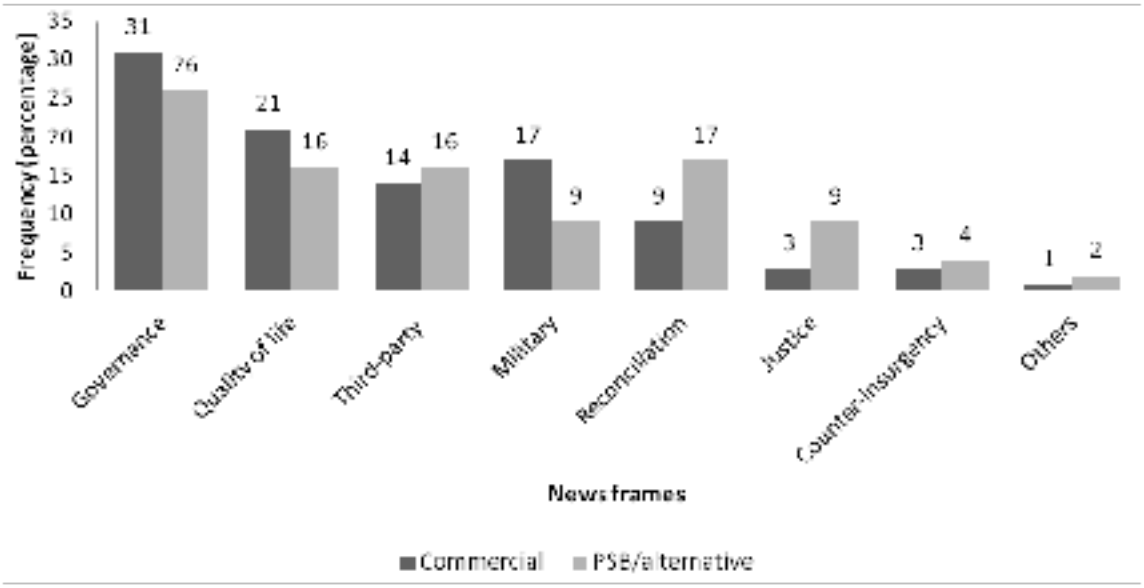


Figure K.4. Comparison of the *solutions* frames in the coverage of commercial and PSB/alternative media

Appendix L: Lists of local non-profit media covering the southern conflict issues

Table L.1. List of non-profit alternative media

No.	Name	Format/Platform	Content emphasis/ Producers	Sponsors
1	Aman News Agency	Online news and articles/ website	Coverage of local occurrences, produced by a group of local reporters	The Asia Foundation (USA)
2	Patani Forum	Online articles/ website	Analytical articles and interviews concerning local identity, produced by reporters, writers, and academics	The Asia Foundation (USA)
3	Bunga Raya News	Online news & articles/ website and publication	Coverage of local occurrences, produced by university students in the southernmost provinces	INTERNEWS (USA)
4	Southern Peace Media Volunteer Network	Video documentary/ online social media (blog, video sharing website, social network) and public service broadcaster	Stories about the impact of violence on the southerners, the way of life of local people, produced by citizen media producers	Volunteer-based/ *Thai PBS* (Bangkok, Thailand)
5	Deep South Journalism School (DSJ)	Online news and articles/ website (a unit of Deep South Watch)	Coverage of local occurrences and seminars, produced by independent journalists and trained student/ youth volunteers	The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan)
6	Fine Tune Production and Friends (FTMedia)	Video and audio documentary/ social media, civil societies' websites, public seminars	Stories about impact of violence on local people, produced by independent journalists and trained volunteers	information unavailable

Table L.2. List of local civil societies using media as platform

No.	Name	Format/Platform	Campaign emphasis	Sponsors
1	Deep South Watch	Articles and interviews/ website and publication	Decentralisation; Local administrative model	The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (Japan)
2	Civic Women Network	Articles and discussion radio programme/ website and radio	Empowering women's participation in conflict resolution and local administration; rehabilitation for victims of violence	Prince of Songkla University (Thailand), Oxfam GB, EU
3	INsouth Voice (Intellect Southern Thailand)	Articles/ blog	Education for local children, focusing on religious education and participatory democracy	Volunteer-based

Appendix M: Lists of selected publications regarding the southern conflict written by Thai journalists

M.1. Investigative reports/ academic articles/ research

Ganjanakhundee, S. and Pathan, D. 2004. *Santiphap Nai Pleo Ploeng [Peace in the flame]*. Bangkok: Nation Books.

Ganjanakhundee, S. 2009. Chum chon nai jintanakan: wa duay phum ru khong tahan thai kiao kab phu ko kwam mai sa ngop nai phak tai [Imaginative Bandit's Den: Thai Soldier's Knowledge about Insurgents in the South]. *Fah Diew Kan*. January-March 2009, pp. 56-71.

Janchidfah, S. 2009. Peace Intervention as Seen from Below. *Islam in Southeast Asia: Transnational Networks and Local Contexts*. Japan. Research Institute for Languages and Culture of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. pp. 175-204.

Janchidfah, S. 2009. Bot rampueng tueng chai daen tai: Bantuek tai prom 5 pi fai tai [Solioquy to the southern border: The hidden memoir of 5 years of southern fire]. *Fah Diew Kan*. January-March 2009, pp. 88-104.

Laohong, K. 2008. *Tod Rahad Fai Tai [Decoding the Southern Fire]*. Bangkok: Krungthep Turakij Judprakai.

Liow, J.C. and Pathan, D. 2010. *Confronting Ghosts: Thailand's shapeless southern insurgency*. New South Wales: Longueville Media.

M.2. Feature

Janchidfah, S. 2006. *Violence in the Mist: Reporting on the Presence of Pain in Southern Thailand*. Bangkok: Kobfai.

Muengsuk, N. 2009. *Pen Khao lae Pen Kaek [Being the Others and Being Muslim]*. Bangkok: Nakorn Media.

Pita-tawatchai, W. 2007. *Muea Fah Mon Jedi Hak Tee Phak Tai [Gloomy sky, broken jedi in the South]*. Bangkok: Krung Thep.

M.3. Journalists' experiences in southern conflict reporting

Jamlongrach, P. ed. 2007. *Sanam Khao See Daeng Rian Ru To Kao Park Tai [The Red News Field: learning about the southern news desk]*. Bangkok: Parb Pim.

Jantaraseema, S. ed. 2006. *Pak Mut…Te Chai: Bantuek Prasopkan Cheewit Yiao Khoa Isara [Memoirs of Isara Reporters]*. Bangkok: Public Communication Foundation Establishment Project.