



The Terrorist Threat from Thailand: Jihad or Quest for Justice?

By Rohan Gunaratna, Arabinda Acharya

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Since January 2004, the violence in the southern provinces in Thailand has claimed more than 4,600 lives. The violence has also adversely affected the local economy and quality of life in the southern provinces. The atmosphere of fear and intimidation is dividing the society on religious lines with growing apprehension that what began as a separatist nationalist conflict might well end up as a clash between Buddhism and Islam. There is also a strong potential for the Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand to get sucked into the global jihad.

Gunaratna and Acharya provide a short history of the conflict, which dates at least to the early 1900s, as well as an analysis of factors contributing to the most recent escalation of violence in 2004. The authors shed light on the causes of the Southern Thai conflict and examine its potential to spread from Thailand to neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia. A strong potential also exists for this predominantly localized conflict to get absorbed into the global jihad. In addition to analyzing the insurgents' capabilities and opportunities, the authors provide a critique of government policies and make astute suggestions for resolving the conflict.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Balanced and considered in its assessment, this book on the insurgency in southern Thailand contains a wealth of information and analyses drawn from the authors' experience and work as counterterrorism experts. If there is a single book you should read about the problems in southern Thailand, this is it."—Andrew T. H. Tan, associate professor and convenor for international studies, University of New South Wales

(Andrew T. H. Tan)

"This outstanding volume presents an insightful assessment of the Muslim conflict in southern Thailand, clearly deciphering for the reader the complex and deeply rooted nature of this long struggle over identity and minority rights. The authors likewise propose sound and reasoned guidelines to manage and resolve the situation. Hopefully, Bangkok is listening!"—Richard H. Shultz Jr., director, International Security Studies Program, Fletcher School, Tufts University

(Richard H. Shultz Jr.)

"*The Terrorist Threat from Thailand* is topical, timely, and well researched. Gunaratna and Acharya recognize that local conflict—such as that generated by the terrorist threat in southern Thailand—has regional and international implications. However, they also suggest that not all Islamist-based terrorism is necessarily linked to the 'global jihad' and that therefore the solutions to it are not dependent on a 'global war on terrorism.' Instead, the authors—correctly in my view—stress the importance of local solutions for local problems, a commonsense approach useful to policymakers not just in Thailand, but in the rest of the terrorism-wracked world as well. Must reading for analysts, educators, students, and policy wonks of all political stripes."—Brig. Gen. Russell D. Howard, USA (Ret.), director, Terrorism Research and Education Program, Monterey Institute of International Studies

(Brig. Gen. Russell D. Howard, USA (Ret.))

About the Author

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GÉRARD CHALIAND is the former director of the European Center for the Studies of Conflict (Foundation for Strategic Research) in Paris.

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