

of war. Siam, Ayutthaya and Burma had war for 400 years. So it's a history of war, and on both sides you are talking about Buddhism. I don't subscribe to the idea that Buddhism is more peaceful than others. I would argue that any religion can be used to justify violence. If Buddhism can be used, any religion can. You look at the history of Christianity. Jesus preached, "Thou shalt not kill," and yet the history of European imperialism, history of European wars, you go back to the Thirty Years War, you go back to the thirteenth century until the seventeenth century, you have wars in Europe among Christians. Most brutal perhaps is war between different sects. The conclusion is that in any religion, we can find certain things that can be used to justify the use of violence.

So I tried to do the same for Islam and I found certain things in there. The interesting thing is this: most of the things used are very good things. The secret about violence is that the justification used for violence is normally something quite good, like you are fighting for justice, you are doing this because you want freedom, you are doing this so that you can liberate people – the Fanon notion is basically that. All of these things could be used to justify violence. That's why I'm more interested in the justification. My take after that work is to find non-violent elements within Islam that can also be used to justify alternatives to the use of violence, and that has been my work since 1986.

Notes

1. Chaiwat Satha-Anand, *Islam and Violence: A Case Study of Violent Events in the Four Southern Provinces, Thailand, 1976 1981* (Tampa FL: Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida, 1986).

Visit to IAIS Malaysia by a Delegation from the Royal Thai Embassy and Government (28 March 2012)

Christoph Marcinkowski, Berlin, Germany

“The real issue is not between Muslims and non-Muslims, but between the moderates and extremists of all religions. [...] It is time for moderates of all countries, of all religions, to take back the centre, to reclaim the agenda for peace and pragmatism, and to marginalise the extremists,” said Malaysia's prime minister Najib Tun Razak on 27 September 2012 at the United Nations General Assembly where he also called for the formation of a Global Movement of Moderates.

In order to find out more on what this kind of moderation can mean *in practice* for the troubled deep South (where Malay Muslims are in the majority) of majority-Buddhist Thailand,¹ a high-profile delegation from the Royal Thai Embassy and

various Thai government institutions visited IAIS Malaysia and engaged in a lively dialogue with Emeritus Professor Osman Bakar (Deputy CEO, IAIS Malaysia) and the Institute's research fellows. Prior to IAIS, the delegation had also visited on its Moderation Study Tour 2012 the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), as well as several other government-run Islamic institutions in Malaysia.

As is well-known, an ethnic separatist insurgency is still taking place in Southern Thailand – predominantly in the Pattani region, made up of the three southernmost provinces of the kingdom. Increasingly, violence has even spilled over into other provinces. Although separatist violence has occurred for decades in the region, the campaign escalated in 2004 during the tenure of ousted former prime minister Thaksin Sinawatra. The demands of the rebels range from more participation to independence under the introduction of what they deem *shari'ah* law. Another part of the extremists aims at a purely Malay state that is to include even two of Malaysia's northern states. So far, the conflict has cost the lives of several thousand people. About 60,000 members of the kingdom's armed forces and police are currently deployed in the region. Civilians too, Buddhists as well as Muslims, have been killed by the Malay rebels, but the police stationed in the area were also accused of brutality. Many people without any connection to the security forces were killed by the terrorists, and in more recent times even attacks against Buddhist institutions and monks occurred in order to incite the adherents of the religions against each other.

During the delegation's visit, this writer – expanding on his numerous previous studies on Islam in Thailand – argued that religion has often been (mis)used by the separatists in order to cover-up a mainly racially motivated agenda, whereas Professor Osman Bakar provided a concise but useful overview on the main characteristics and historical background of the presence of Islam in Southeast Asia.

The delegation consisted of Mr Songsak Saicheua (Head of Delegation; Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission, Royal Thai Embassy, Kuala Lumpur), Ms Pinsuda Jayanama (Counsellor, Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand), Mr Suppakij Vorasriherun (Third Secretary, Department of East Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand), Col. Chakrit Ucharattana (Royal Thai Armed Forces), Lt. Col. Surachart Warasuth (Directorate of Intelligence, Royal Thai Armed Forces), Mr Romdej Phisalaphong (First Secretary, Royal Thai Embassy), a representative from Thailand's Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), Region 4, and a representative from Thailand's Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC).

Notes

1. See Christoph Marcinkowski, "Balance, Moderation, and the 'Middle Path': Toward Trust between Muslims and Theravada Buddhists in Southern Thailand," *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 2, no. 3 (April 2011), 556-560.