

## CHAPTER VIII

### THERAPY : SOLUTIONS TO THE CONFLICT

#### 8.1 Overview

To recap, my research revealed that a concoction of causes, which resembles a Malay food recipe called “rojak” (a fiery hot, sweet and sour salad concocted from pineapple, turnips, prawn paste, cucumber, peanuts, tumeric and assam juices), is the root causes of the violent conflict. The sweetness, sourness and chilly hotness come together to form a pungent concoction that lingers in one’s palate.

These root causes are local grievances due to :-

- (a) State-sanctioned oppression;
- (b) State-sanctioned injustice – adjudicative, retributive & social ;
- (c) State-sanctioned cultural alienation or exclusion;

and a globalized emphasis on :-

- (d) Islamic radicalism.

The consequence of the grievances is a total distrust of the state by the local communities and hence un-cooperation with the state. The local communities are not telling on the perpetrators and neither are they responsive to the state’s overtures. The discord between the state and the Malay Muslim communities is wide and is slipping into an abyss.

The roadmaps towards conflict resolution are manifold. “The Nation” has proposed several solutions based on its own analysis and recommendations from “peace-actors”. The newspaper, however, has proposed these solutions on a piecemeal basis without categorization.

This research has sorted these solutions into urgent, medium-term and long-term ones. Some solution required the state, the majority non-Malay community and the Malay Muslim community leaders to negotiate and decide on both the legitimate and illegitimate rights of the minority. The more immediate ones can be implemented unilaterally by the state. In the following sections, the peace proposals are presented.

## **8.2 Immediate Solutions**

As state policies drive the local root causes of the conflict, the state has to take the initiative to restore peace. The state should adopt the following urgent pacifist solutions :-

(a) Build trust and inspire confidence by implementing retributive justice. It should prosecute those state officials responsible for the excessive and improper use of force for victims of the Krue Se and Tak Bai incident. If the government fails to come clean and take those responsible to justice, new generations of Malay Muslims will grow up hating the state (The Nation 20 December 2004). Phra Sripariyatmoli, Vice-Rector of Maha Chulalongkorn University, has remarked that shuffling high-ranking officials will not stem the violence as it is caused by

flawed state policies (The Nation 28 October 2004). Morality and mercy should be part of government policy towards the minority. He therefore advocated that the state must take the high moral ground of prosecution. Furthermore, Paisarn Promyong, Deputy Secretary of the National Islamic Committee also recommended that those responsible for the Tak Bai deaths should be penalized in order to make the government “believable” again (The Nation 28 October 2004).

(b) Restore adjudicative justice by speeding up legal investigations of missing persons such as Malay human rights lawyer, Somchai Neelapaichit; and those still missing from the Tak Bai incident.

(c) Restore adjudicative justice by charging those detained without charges and speeding up legal hearings against those held under detention. A number of locals have been detained and would be charged by military courts since the alleged offences took place under martial law. As military courts are not open and transparent courts, the government should consider transferring these cases to civil courts. The military and police should also cease all unlawful and secretive actions against the communities such as abductions and killings. The police also needs to improve its investigative methods and equipments as evident by the botched investigation of the mysterious shooting of the deputy governor of Patani in December 2004 and the unfortunate arrest and subsequent release of Abdul Waedallah, one of several defence volunteers guarding him. This police misstep coming after the heels of Krue Se and Tak Bai would have generated less credibility (The Nation 9 December 2004).

(d) Build confidence through dialogue, negotiations and mediation with community leaders (The Nation 28 October, 11 November 2004). Militants can only be identified and flushed out with the assistance of the communities. The conflict cannot be resolved without the communities' support. The state has been using the Office of the Chularajmontri in Bangkok for religious rulings and mediation. However, Che Man (1990, pp 165) has recorded that local communities side-step the Office and seek advice and fatwa from their own religious leaders. Abdullahman Abdulsmud, Chairman of the Narathiwat Provincial Islamic Committee said that the government rarely mobilizes participation from local religious leaders (The Nation 18 November 2004). The government, therefore, needs to identify local religious leaders that it could work with and strengthen the Office of the Chularajmontri. Mansou Salaeh, Young Muslim Association of Thailand, commented that the National Reconciliation Committee (NRC) did not consist of enough members who know about the south (The Nation 29 March 2005). The government has rejected the NRC's major recommendation and it seemed that the political leaders will henceforth lead dialogue and negotiations with the community leaders.

(e) Stop the oppressive policy of using heavily armed police and military units to control demonstrations and crowds. An anti-riot police unit, properly trained and equipped, should be set up to deal specifically with future incidents (The Nation 17 November 2004).

### 8.3 Medium-Term Solutions

“The Nation” has proposed the following medium-term solutions:-

(a) Set up Islamic affairs ministry. A specific ministry would dispel the feelings of state neglect, alienation, isolation as well as serve as an indicator of the state’s sincerity to build trust with the minority group. Moreover, the affairs could also be more sensitively dealt with by a ministry manned with officers with special training on Islam (without Bangkok’s imperious attitude of championing a nation based on one race, language or religion). In the case of the Tak Bai incident, there was insensitivity about the fasting rules of Ramadan of the Malay Muslims. This suggestion was proposed by a senior education inspector who had concerns about the current educational system and needs of the local communities.

(b) Heighten greater understanding of Islamic values amongst state officials. The newspaper proposed that Thailand must take the time to understand Islam and the Islamic concept of “ummah” as these are values important to the local communities. My proposal would be for the state to invite religious imans from moderate countries like Turkey, Morocco and Jordan to conduct lectures in the country and induct religious books from these countries too.

(c) Co-opt the police in community projects with the locals in order to build confidence and trust. On 27 November 2004, “The Nation” reported that the Provincial Police Region 9 commissioner Lieutenant General Manote Kraiwong had already organized training for 200 community policemen. These

community policemen would live and work with local villagers. They would keep the peace in the rural areas and also assist in community work in order to win the hearts and minds of the local communities.

#### **8.4 Long-Term Solutions**

“The Nation” has also proposed long-term solutions that involve civil participation and these are:-

(a) Develop peace culture and peace education. “The Nation” reported that Thammasat University’s Lecturers’ Council had asked the university’s rector to plan courses across the country to curb violence, promote conflict management (The Nation 14 November 2004).

(b) Embrace religious diversity. Buddhism has a high profile in Thailand – through majority and royal patronage, the media and even government endorsement. If Buddhism is allowed to spread its message in the media on a regular basis, then the other religions should also be given the religious space to do so without the Religious Affairs Department and the National Buddhism Office voicing concern about the threat of conversion and “pollution” of people’s minds.

(c) Provide fair representation of ethnic and religious diversity in public places and spaces. Apart from Buddhism, there should be a representation of Islamic art, potteries in public spaces such as museums, government and civic buildings. Islamic public holidays honoring fasting and pilgrimages could be

introduced after all the state recognizes Buddhist public holidays. The current “Thainess” is exclusive (The Nation 14 December 2004). There is a need to provide greater cultural space for the minorities to preserve and showcase their cultural identities.

(d) Open up political space for the Malay Muslims to participate in regional decision-making process. This will allow moderate and peace-loving Muslims to have their say and thereby sidelining radicals. “The Nation” commented that a child’s toy like the Southern Border Province Peace-Building Command is not an ideal institution as it is nothing more than a military command post with a fancy name. The political space must include an administrative body with a constitutional mandate. Deputy Minister Chaturon Chaisang had in November 2004 prepared a soft roadmap for peace that included a plan for a special administrative body, which would give the local communities some measures of freedom to run their lives according to their faith and culture but the plan was scuttled. A historical top-down imperialist attitude from Bangkok will not solve the conflict.

“The Nation” has noted that some solutions do not work and these include:-

- (a) air-lifting and dropping paper origami birds
- (b) more reshuffling of army and police commanders
- (c) awakening the Village Scout Movement
- (d) more beating of the nationalist drum
- (e) dispatching even more troops to the South.

These solutions do not work because they do not address the root causes of the violent conflict.

The National Reconciliation Committee's main findings on the root causes, which strikingly resemble "The Nation's" as organized in this thesis, have not found a favorable response from the government because of the followings: (a) distrust of the state apparatus (b) decades-old resentment over efforts to suppress the Malay Muslims' identity (c) state-sanctioned discriminatory treatment (d) persecution by corrupt officers (e) slow implementation of the justice system. The absence of consensus and unity does not bode well for the "patients" and there could be more bloodshed.