

The Role of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences at the Prince of Songkla University Building of Islamic Public Value of Multicultural Citizenship in southern Thailand

IMTIYAZ YUSUF, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILISATION, INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA (ISTAC-IIUM), MALAYSIA AND CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC WORLD (CICW) SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY, WINCHESTER, VA, USA

ARTHIT THONGIN, SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, SUKHOTHAI THAMMATHIRAT OPEN UNIVERSITY, NONTHABURI, THAILAND

Abstract

Religion-based value administration has been an integral part of all societies since ancient historical periods. This article explores the intersection of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and Islamic Public Value (IPV) within the socio-political and educational framework of southern Thailand, focusing on the Faculty of Islamic Sciences (FIS) at Prince of Songkla University. Amidst a century-long conflict and challenges to multicultural citizenship, the FIS has emerged as a vital institution for fostering self-reliant Pattani Muslim citizens. By aligning Thailand's development policies with Islamic values, the faculty addresses the dual imperatives of preserving ethno-religious identity and promoting social cohesion. The historical evolution of the FIS, its role in higher education, and its alignment with national policies underscore its transformative impact on local communities and its contribution to peace-building and integration in a diverse society.

Keywords: Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), Islamic Public Value (IPV), Faculty of Islamic Sciences (FIS), Multicultural Citizenship, southern Thailand.

Introduction

This article is of an odd type among others in this Special Issue about Islamic public administration in Southeast Asia. The main reason is that the ongoing, century-old violent conflict in Thailand's four Muslim-majority southern provinces has hindered the development of multicultural citizenship in the Thai political space.

This article examines the co-relation between Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and Islamic Public Value (IPV) about the role of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences or FIS, Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani campus in the deep south Malay Muslim majority provinces of

Thailand. The establishment of the first tertiary-level educational institution, viz., the College of Islamic Studies College (now known as the Faculty of Islamic Science) in 1981 and its gradual development over decades into a full faculty is playing an important role in the forming and development of the local Muslim youth in becoming self-reliant Pattani Muslim citizens in multicultural Thailand.

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy: The Role of Tertiary Education in the Deep South in creating Islamic Public Value

Political Context

Thailand is a semi-secular constitutional monarchy that has undergone 19 coups since 1932, with brief interludes of democratic rule (Farrelly, Nicholas 2013; Keyes, Charles F 2015; Samudavanija, Chai-Anan 1987). The functional defect of not recognizing the ethno-religious difference of the Deep South is one of the main obstacles to building an inclusive and peaceful multicultural citizenship that comprises both the Thai Buddhist majority and the Malay Muslim minority, respecting their ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identities. The challenge dates back to 1892 when the independent kingdom of Patani had a tributary relationship with the kingdom of Siam, followed by the era of establishing modern bureaucracies in 1906, which abolished the structure of traditional local elites; democratization after 1932; the assimilationist policies of the Thai state beginning with Prime Minister Phibulsongkhram's regime in the 1930s; and the open hostilities of the government and military between 2004 and 2009 (Baker, Chris, 2022). The struggle of local Patani people (i.e. residents of the three southern border provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat) centers on resistance to full assimilation and oppression, and their desire to exercise greater control over the region's resources and their own culture and religion (Poocharoen, Ora-Orn 2010).

In 1980, General Prem Tinsulanond, who at the time served as the Prime Minister of Thailand, initiated a series of democratically inclined policy reforms under the umbrella policy of "Politics Leading Military" (Che Man, Wan Kadir 2003, p. 16). Notably, he initiated the "Peaceful South" policy, designed specifically to coordinate various government agencies in the deep South to work for peace and stability in the area. In 1981, General Prem also set up the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) as an agency to coordinate and open up a space for dialogue between the security forces, the civilian government agencies, and the general public. Concurrently, a joint force known as "Civilian-Police-Military 43" was organized to function as a security force against separatist activities in the Muslim-majority region.

The next elected government of General Chatichai Choonhavan between 1988 and 1991 implemented the "Peaceful South" policy, which was meant to promote social harmony by allowing the religious and cultural customs of the Muslims to be practiced more freely. On 31 December 1989, the Chatichai government finally approved the long-term demand of southern Malay Muslims to establish the first College of Islamic Studies at Prince of Songkla University. The government of General Chatichai Choonhavan was overthrown a decade later by a military coup, which subsequently resulted in large protests known as Black May and the

intervention of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej (reign 9 June 1946–13 October 2016). This paved the way for the first democratically elected government of Chuan Leekpai, who twice served as the Prime Minister of Thailand, from 1992 to 1995 and from 1997 to 2001. The Chuan Leekpai era also led to the framing of the 1997 constitution, known as the "People's Constitution" (Maisrikrod, Surin 1992; Che Man, Wan Kadir 2003, p. 24).

The purpose of presenting the above survey of contemporary Thai political history sets the background for addressing the focus of this article, namely, how, in light of the ongoing insurgency in the Deep South, Thai state development policy constructively engaged the local Islamic tradition, in the form of tertiary education, and in so doing helped address the pressing need to construct an authentic path of multicultural citizenship. As such, the following section delves into the compatibility between Thailand's development plan of SEP in the Deep South with IPV.

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and Islamic Public Value in the Deep South of Thailand

King Bhumibol Adulyadej or Rama IX (d. 2016), the longest-reigning monarch of Thailand, reigned for a total period of just over 70 years. In his accession speech, he proclaimed: "I shall reign with righteousness for the benefits and happiness of the Siamese people" (Promchertchoo, 2016)

Nearly 30 years into his reign, King Adulyadej introduced SEP (Thai: เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง, *Setthakit Phophiang*) at a speech at Kasetsart University in 1974 as Thailand's plan for development. Being largely an agricultural country, agro-economics was to form the foundation of Thailand's development plan, and only thereafter industrial development:

Development of the country must proceed in stages. First of all, there must be a foundation with the majority of the people having enough to live on by using methods and equipment which are economical but technically correct as well. When such a secure foundation is adequately ready and operational, then it can be gradually expanded and developed to raise prosperity and the economic standard to a higher level by stages. (*Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy*, 2017, pp. 26–27)

The prominence of the SEP became more relevant during the 1997 economic crisis that hit all of the ASEAN – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – countries. In his annual nationwide televised address on the occasion of his birthday on 4 December 1997, the King Bhumibol Adulyadej remarked that:

Recently, so many projects have been implemented, so many factories have been built, that it was thought Thailand would become a little tiger, and then a big tiger. People were crazy about becoming a tiger...

Being a tiger is not important. The important thing for us is to have a sufficient economy. A sufficient economy means to have enough to support ourselves...

It doesn't have to be complete, not even half, perhaps just a quarter, then we can survive...

Those who like modern economics may not appreciate this. But we have to take a careful step backwards. (*Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy*, 2017, p. 20)

While proposing SEP, the King was also well aware of the ethno-religious diversity that required special attention in addressing the development of the country's deep south Muslim majority provinces (Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2003, 2022b). The King proposed that the implementation of SEP in developing the deep south should in essence be to "understand, reach out, and develop" (*Policy Guidelines for Peacebuilding in the Deep South for the 2025 Fiscal Year*, 2024).

He believed that development should consider the local culture, traditions, and way of life. He also believed that people's attitudes could not be forced and that it was important to understand what the people wanted and explain the principles of development to them in a language they understood when implementing governmental development projects. Although there is a religious or a Buddhist dimension of SEP, it does not conflict with the religious dimension of IPV.

His Majesty's sufficiency economy comprises four dimensions. Sufficiency economy in *economic dimension* focuses on adequacy to one's needs, diligence, working for self-reliance, being free from poverty, and the implementation of the new theory. For the *mind dimension*, it involves the mind that thinks over moderation, modesty, and less craving. Sufficiency economy in *social dimension* aims to create peaceful society and generous people who care for each other, while the *cultural dimension* focuses on the life with simplicity and frugality (EGAT, p. 41).

IPV as a policy of public administration and management is rooted in extant institutions that base themselves on the teachings of the Qur'an and modeled on the *Sunnah* – the practice of the Prophet. It contains four basic theological concepts: *Ilah* – Allah the One and the Almighty; *Rabb* – the Lord who does not share with anyone else His qualities and attributes; *Deen* – religion as a way of life is exclusively for Him; and *Ibadah* – the human being should worship and Him and Him alone, and not anyone else.

These are expressed in the Allah's attributes of *rahmah* – compassion; *ihsan* – benevolence; *'adl* – justice; and *hikmah* – wisdom for building equality, justice, and freedom modeled on examples from the life of the prophet Muhammad including engaging in interreligious dialogue and most and peaceful coexistence with followers of different religions. The goal and the purpose of human life is to worship Allah and practice the attributes of Allah in his personal and social engagement (Engineer, Asghar Ali 2003, 2007, 2011; Mawdudi, Syed Abul Ala, 2007; Morrow, John Andrew & Upton, Charles 2013; Rahman, Fazlur 2009; Vajda, Georges; Zein, Ibrahim Mohamed and Ahmed, El-Wakil 2022).

Second, Islam is a religion that triumphs in seeking of knowledge and also promotes social engagement in different aspects of human life:

The roots of current political, economic and social imbalance and inequality are behavioral. Institutional reforms alone cannot improve the situation. The pursuit by each individual of his or her self-interest must be moderated by a concern for others

resulting in caring and sharing. This ingredient is best supplied by religions, but reason too affirms that in view of humanity's shared habitat and the interdependencies in the human situation in general (Kenny, Jim and Khan, Irfan Ahmad 2008).

Islamic Public Value in Deep South Thailand

The concept and the application of religious-based administration and management, referred to as IPV in the modern age, have a long historical antecedent (Drechsler, Wolfgang 2015). In fact, one can say that engagement in Islamic public administration or for that matter religious public administration and public management has been a missing dimension of the modern age post-Westphalian education and scholarship in Anglo-American and Western statecraft (Drechsler, Wolfgang 2015, p. 63).

The currently implemented models of public administration and management in the global South are largely a continuation of the colonial legacy, and therefore there is no reason to believe that if one transfers what works in Liverpool (if it works) to Dhaka, it will work there as well. In fact, the track record of PM transfer – rather than PM learning, often pushed by the international organizations – has at least been mixed; histories of failures abound, and it may even well be that there are more of these than successes (Drechsler, Wolfgang 2015, p. 63).

Wolfgang Drechsler (2015) therefore posited that contemporary study and practice of public administration have to suspend the assertion that the global model should be solely based on or equated to the Western model. Otherwise, research and policy will be counterproductive because there are many varied, good models of non-Western public administration implemented around the world, including the Islamic (Vintar et al., 2013, pp. 58–70). Hence, there is an urgent need to recognize the obvious: that both the past European and non-Western models of Public administration such as Kautilya or Chanakya's (375–283 BCE) *Arthashastra* in India and also Buddhist, Confucian, and Islamic treatises on public administration, which are rich in terms of theoretical literature and long histories of practice, have an enduring relevance and potential to translate to sound policy and practice even today (Drechsler, Wolfgang 2013; Peters, B. Guy 2021; Stanley Jeyaraja, Tambiah 1977; Yang, Lijing and Rutgers, Mark R 2017). In this case, Rama V (reigned 1868–1910 CE), known as modernizer of Siam, embarked on administrative reform of Thailand without abolishing or removing Theravada Buddhist roots of the kingdom (Baker, Chris and Phongpaichit, Pasuk 2016; Engel, David 1975; Jory, Patrick 2021; Keyes, Charles F 2019; Peleggi, Maurizio 2002; Rhum, Michael R1996).

As shown by Loos (Loos, Tamara 2005), uncolonized Siam, despite having its sovereignty qualified by imperial nations, pursued European colonial strategies of juridical control in the Muslim south. . The creation of family law and courts in that region and in Siam proper most clearly manifests Siam's dualistic position. The language of modernity was not associated with a foreign, colonial overlord in this way its elites' favored continuation of existing domestic hierarchies and by those advocating political and social change (Loos, Tamara 2005).

Nearly all of the countries of the modern Southeast Asia which are largely semi-secular states in which religions and cultures form the basis of their public administration and management are secular in terms of their bureaucratic functioning while being religious in terms of public

values and political cultures based on Buddhism and Islam. The majority of their constitutions either mention an official religion or mention the prominent status of one religion over the others or imply it by reference to religious demography. For *Melayu*-speaking communities of Buddhist-majority Thailand, a longstanding challenge for both the state and the public has been how to construct and preserve the notion of genuine citizenship in a nuanced way without compromising ethno-religious identity.

The State of Conflict and Violence in southern Thailand as of 2024

Discussion about the role of SEP and IPV in relation to public administration as well as the development of tertiary educational development in the deep south of Thailand cannot be separated from understanding the state of conflict and violence in the region since the 1960s (Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2006).

After a period of lull in the early 1990s, the unrest reemerged 2004, due to the change at the level of the central government after the institution of the new "Peoples Constitution" and the coming of the first Thaksin Shinawatra government following the parliamentary election of 6 January 2001. It marked the rise of the first strong populist party, viz., Thai Rak Thai party of Thaksin Shinawatra. (Kongkirati, Prajak 2014; Kuhonta, Erik Martinez and Sinpeng, Aim 2014; Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2007b, 2009). One outcome of this was the resurgence of unrest in Thailand's far South has been beset by violence until now. Individual killings, arson, or bombings occur on an almost daily basis. The three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat have long been among the poorest provinces in Thailand. Over recent years, they have been slipping backward against the national average (UNDP, 2007, p. 15).

Between January and June 2024, the death toll exceeds 7,581 people and 14,082 injured. In spite of this the politics around issues concerning the challenge of citizenship and public value creation through the medium of tertiary education from an Islamic context is an ongoing activity (Chalermripinyorat, Rungrawee 2020, 2021, 2022; Jamjuree, Soraya and Holt, John Clifford 2022; Jitpiromsri et al., 2024; Pathan et al., 2018; *Thailand, Muslim Separatists Agree on New Plan to End Violence*, 2024; *Thailand Population (2024) - Worldometer*, 2024)

The Ethno-Religious Characteristics of Southeast Asian Societies

Southeast Asia consists of 11 countries divided into "mainland" and "maritime" zones. The mainland comprises Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. The maritime zone includes Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, and East Timor. The political profile of Southeast Asian states comprises constitutional monarchies, military dictatorships, and native forms of democracies which are neither totally liberal nor illiberal as per the Western political classifications (Syed Muhammad Khairudin, Aljunied 2022; Bowering, Philip 2020; Christie, Clive J. 1996; Zakaria, Fareed 1997; Zhouxiang, Lu 2023). Ethnicity and religion are important identity markers of Southeast Asian people: Catholicism in the Philippines; Islam in Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia; Buddhism in Thailand and Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos; and Confucianism and Buddhism in Singapore and Vietnam. The church, mosque, or

wat (Thai: วัด – Buddhist temple) play an important role in the shaping of ethno-religious and political cultures by providing education and social meanings (Hefner, Robert W 2001; Liow, Joseph Chinyong 2016; Liu, Amy. H. and Ricks Jacob I, 2022; Ooi, Keat Gin and Volker, Grabowsky, 2017; Smith, Bradwell L 1978; Tarling, Nicholas 1998; Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2018). Beyond ritual worship, various religious organizations play important roles in the areas of education, social welfare activities and even influence political policies (Bonura, Carlo 2023; Cheng, Tun-jen and Brown, Deborah A 2006).

The unique politico-religious character of Southeast Asia is that the world religions more or less operate along ethnic lines (Turner, Bryan S and Saleemink, Oscar 2014). Therefore, a Malay is a Muslim; a Thai is a Buddhist; a Filipino is a Catholic, and the immigrant Chinese can be Taoist/Confucian/Buddhist or a Christian. One not familiar with the region will find difficulty imagining things to be otherwise. Therefore, religious labels such as: a Malay Buddhist or Malay Christian; a Filipino Muslim or Filipino Buddhist; a Thai Muslim or Thai Christian are seen as strange labels or misnomers. Despite political problems, Southeast Asians are culturally and also religiously more inclusive, although this is changing with the rise of religious nationalisms largely due to the rise of globalization (Aljunied, Syed Muhammad Khairudin 2019; Berlie, Jean A 2008; Donoso, Issac 2024; McCargo, Duncan 2008). This distinguishes them from the Western-Judeo-Christian worldview, which is often quite linear in orientation (Arrighi, Giovanni 2010; Gaston, K. Healan 2019; Wallerstein, Immanuel 2004).

Southeast Asian states have not yet fully crystallized into nations, rather, they are semi-secular where religions are important identity markers (Goh, Robbie B. H 2005; Hefner, Robert W 2001; Liow, Joseph Chinyong 2016; Mutalib, Hussin 2008; Samudavanija, Chai-Anan 1987; Swearer, Donald K 2010). Even political cultures are religion based: Buddhist political culture in Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia – where the kings and political leaders aspire to be models of *Dhammarajah* or good Buddhist leaders by respecting the *Sangha* and the *Dasa-rājādharmma* / 10 Royal Virtues (Baker, Chris & Phongpaichit Pasuk, 2005, 2016, 2017; Brons, Lajos L. 2024; *Dasa-Rājādharmma* / 10 Royal Virtues, 2024; Ishii, Yoneo 1986; Keyes, Charles F 2019; Simpson et al., 2017; Steinberg, David, I 2001; Stanley Jeyaraja, Tambiah 1977, 1977); Muslim political culture in Malaysia and Brunei – sultans are custodians of Islam (Allers, Charles 2013; Liow, Joseph Chinyong 2016; Mohamad, Mahathir Bin 1970; Mutalib, Hussin 1990; Roff, William 1967; Schottmann, Sven 2019); Catholic values inspire social and political developments in the Philippines (United States Congress House Committee (2023); Cornelio, Jayeel Serrano 2016; Howell, Brian M 2008; Lee, Christina H. 2021; Moxham, Christopher 2022); Indonesia operates on the ideology of *Pancasila* – in which belief in God is the first principle. The national motto of Indonesia is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* – "Unity in Diversity" without which Indonesia would not have survived as a united country (Azra, Azyumardi 2004; Hefner, Robert W 2000, 2023; Liow, Joseph Chinyong 2022; Ricklefs, M. C. 2007, 2008, 2008, 2012). The minority conflicts with the states in the region are ethno-religious – Karennis of Burma are Baptists or Roman Catholics; Rohingya of Myanmar, Pattani Malays, and Mindanao Moros are Muslims; and the civil rights of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian minorities (Christie, Clive J. 1996; Che Man, Wan Kadir 1990; South, Ashley 2008; Yegar, Moshe 2002; Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2017b).

In Singapore, state-religion relations are governed by the 1990 "Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act" (*Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act 1990 – Singapore Statutes Online*, 2021),

whereby religions are identified with race, for example, Islam with the Malays and Buddhism, Taoism, and traditional Chinese practices with the Chinese. Therefore, Christianity is seen as an "outsider" or "Western cultural influence" and the Christian community has to constantly rationalize and adapt its processes on two fronts: simultaneously to locate itself within the nation as a rooted aspect of the national community, and also to capitalize on its global networks and its affinities to capitalist modernity (Goh, Robbie B. H 2009, p. 1).

Islam in Thailand

As for Islam in Thailand, a Theravada Buddhist majority country with a constitutional monarchy political system, the population of Thai Muslims stands between five and seven million out of Thailand's total population of about 71 million (Thailand Population (2024) – Worldometer 2024). The mono-ethnic and mono-lingua Malay Muslims of the Deep South Thailand which in the past were independent Malay sultanates constitute approximately 44% of the total rural Thai Muslim population (Selway, Joel 2007, 61).

Islam in Thailand is generally divided into three configurations defined by history and locations. The first type of Islam in Thailand is made of ethnic Malay-speaking Muslims residing provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala provinces in the deep south, they have been largely resistant to integration within the Thai polity. The majority Malay Muslims of the deep south refer to themselves as *orae nayu* (Malay Muslim) who *kecek nayu* (speak local Jawi-Malay) distinguishing themselves from the *orae siye*, that is, ethnic Siamese Buddhists who are the minority in the south. The *orae nayu* feel offended if referred to as "Thai Muslim," a term often interpreted ethnically because the common understanding is that a Malay cannot be anything other than a Muslim and a Siamese/Thai is always Buddhist, therefore, they also see the term "Thai Muslim" as a sign of forced assimilation by the Thai state (Jory, Patrick 2007; Selway, Joel 2007; (Tsukamoto, 2021a, 2021b). However, the rest of the Thai Muslims belonging to diverse multiethnic identities residing in the different parts of Thailand do not feel any offense to the term "Thai Muslim," but rather, they see themselves as a part of a Buddhist multi-religious country where Islam is a minority religion (Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2007a, 2022b).

The second and third configurations are more open to integration. They comprise ethnically Malay but Thai-speaking Muslims of the upper southern provinces of Satun, Krabi, Nakorn Si Thammarat, Phangnga, Phuket, and Songkla. They are mostly migrants from the Malaysian states of Kedah and Perlis (Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2007a). Last but no less significant are the multi-ethnic Thai-speaking integrated Muslims of the central Thai provinces of Bangkok and Ayudhya and also those residing in the north and northeast parts of Thailand comprising Muslims of Bengali, Cham, Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Malay, Pathan, and Persian ethnicities. These Muslims from neighboring and faraway countries settled in Thailand after fleeing religious persecution at the hands of the communists in China and the nationalists in Myanmar. There are also Thai converts to Islam either through marriage or religious conversion (Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2022b).

Ethno-Religious and Historical-Political Background of Thailand's Deep South – Ethno-Religious Islam in southern Thailand

In 1906, Siam annexed the Malay Muslim provinces of Nong Chik, Ra-ngae, Raman, Sai Buri, Yala, and Yaring, which were parts of the independent Malay Muslim vassal states of Patani. The annexation was formalized through the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. The former *negara* of Patani state was divided into three provinces – Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala – which now make up the three Malay Muslim majority provinces of the southern Thailand. Siam relinquished its claims to sovereignty over the Malay Sultanates of Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, and Terengganu to Great Britain. The British colonial logic for sanctioning the continued Siamese occupation of the northern half of the Malaya was its perceived notion of Siam being a friendly buffer kingdom against the French in Indochina. The currently named province of "Pattani" is the Thai spelling of the newly constituted province an outcome of Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. The original Malay-Jawi refers to the region as "Patani" which is still current among the local Malays and the native separatist movements in their reference to the region (Che Mohd Aziz Yaacob, 2013; Klein Ira, 1969; Koch, Margaret L 1977; Che Man, Wan Kadir 1990; Manan et al., 2022; Numnonda, Thamsook 1969; Pitsuwan, Surin 1985).

Since incorporation, there has been an ongoing cultural clash between the Malay Muslims and the Siamese/Thai Buddhists. Initially, the Thai state had adopted the policy of assimilation nested within a larger process of statism led by the then military strongmen Major General Plaek Pibulsongkram, who ruled between 1938–1944 and 1948–1957, and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, who held power between 1958 and 1963. This situation lasted until the 1973 students' revolt, which marked the beginning of the democratic process of party politics and constitutionalism. Military strongmen like Pibulsongkram and Thanarat imposed the policy of cultural nationalism, that is, *Thaiisation* across the entire country (Baker, Chris, 2022; Haberkorn, Tyrell, and Winichakul, Thongchai 2011; Suwannathat-Pian, Kobkua 1995, 2014).

The southern Muslims being mono-ethnic, mono-lingual, mono-cultural and mono-religious Malay community felt the brunt of it. Thai official bureaucracy was accused of being culturally insensitive to the local Malay Muslim culture. Indeed, the Malay Muslims of the deep south did not welcome the Thaiisation policy for it sought to remove their ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identity (Che Man, Wan Kadir, 1990; Surin Pitsuwan, 1985). Contemporarily, Asian Islamophobia remains a reality in the Buddhist-majority countries of Sri Lanka, Thailand, and especially Myanmar in relation to Buddhist-Muslim-Christian relations in these countries (Pathan et al., 2018; DeVotta, Neil 2007; 2020; Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2017b).

In his 1981 study of Islam in Thailand, Omar Farouk distinguished between two types of Muslims in Thailand namely the "assimilated" and the "unassimilated." The former constitutes, "a whole diversity of ethnic groups such as the Muslim Siamese, the Thai-Malays, the Haw Chinese, the Bengalis, the Arabs, the Pathans, the Punjabis, and the Samsams." The "unassimilated" are predominantly "Malay" who reside in the deep southern provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat. (Farouk, Omar 1988, p. 5)

Since 1980s, the Thai government has undertaken several efforts to accommodate its Muslim population into the mainstream and also succeeded in this effort as seen through those who identify themselves as "Thai Muslims," but there are still sections who see themselves

differently in ethno-religious terms (Pitsuwan, Surin 1985, 13). The unassimilated are inspired by contemporary politicization of religion, they engage in "politicization of ethnicity" or "ethno-religious nationalism" or what is referred to as, "regional or subnational reactions and resistances to what is seen as an over centralised and hegemonic state. . . to achieve their own regional and local sociopolitical formations" (Stanley Jeyaraja, Tambiah 1997, p. 16).

The year 2004 saw with the return of unrest and violence in the deep south, the International Crisis Group had clearly described the southern Thailand conflict as "insurgency and not a *jihād*" (Narongraksakhet, Ibrahim and Kaba, Abdulai M. 2023; *Southern Thailand*, 2005). This stance holds true until today because the southern conflict since the annexation of Patani in 1909 had always been about Patani nationalism and not a religious war. Currently, despite seven rounds of talks between the Thai state and Patani nationalists (led by BRN) about the conflict and different attempts to bring peace in the region, the conflict remains unresolved and peace is still not at hand. Largely, because of the lack of political will and willingness to budge by both the Patani nationalists and the Thai state (*Thai Negotiators Agree Joint Roadmap for Peace in Insurgency-Hit Deep South*, 2024). Although Islamic politico-religious rhetoric is employed for nationalist motivations, the insurgents remain steadfast against their political struggle becoming religious. This is because distinct ethnic identity, language, and culture are the main forces superseding religion and driving the Patani Malays to contest the Thai state (Munirah, Y, 2018).

At the time of writing, Thaksin Shinawatra has returned to Thailand in February 2024 after living in exile for 15 years. He has received Royal Pardon marking the end of his jail term (Reporters, 2024; *Thaksin Now 'a Free Man' after Receiving Royal Clemency*, 2024). In the cabinet shuffle of his ruling Phue Thai party, his 37-year-old daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra was elected as the new 31st Prime Minister of Thailand through a parliamentary ballot replacing the former prime minister Srettha Thavisin, a Thaksin nominee, who was ousted by court order (*Paetongtarn Shinawatra's Nomination for Thai PM Reopens Family Dynasty*, 2024; *Thaksin's Daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra to Become New Thai PM*, 2024).

This new development at the Center will have implications for the insurgency in the deep south and the political dynamics there. Meanwhile, Malaysia in its role as the facilitator of talks between Patani separatists and the Thai government has appointed its former national security chief Mohd Rabin Basir to broker the peace talks between the two groups. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, "has characterized the conflict as a humanitarian concern and tactfully urged the two sides to reconcile" (*Being a Good Neighbor?*, 2024; *Malaysia Appoints Former National Security Chief to Broker Thai Peace Talks*, 2024). Furthermore, as Malaysia under the prime ministership of Anwar Ibrahim assumes the Chairmanship of ASEAN group of nations in 2025, it will be interesting to observe what role will it play in addressing and alleviating the 100-plus-year-old Pattani conflict on its northern border.

Islamic Public Value and Ethnicity in Thailand

Public value can be thought of as achieving what the public wants (Meynhardt, Timo 2009, p. 201). Its integrated meaning covers various dimensions, that is, governance, education, and civil society organizations in a networked manner (O'Flynn 2021). In the context of southern

Thailand, public value in an Islamic context plays a significant role in helping the Malay-speaking Muslim minority contribute toward the common good, and in doing so, realize their distinct native identity in all spheres of life and practice. This is both a legal and normative case for the Thai state to address since constitutionally, "Thailand is one and indivisible Kingdom" in which "Human dignity, rights, liberties and equality of the people shall be protected" (Thailand 2017, 3–4). The 2017 Constitution of Thailand also states in "Chapter II, Section 7. The King is a Buddhist and Upholder of religions." And in "Chapter VI, Section 67. "The State should support and protect Buddhism and other religions" – as one of the directive principles of state policies. In supporting and protecting Buddhism, which is the religion observed by the majority of Thai people, the State should promote and support education and dissemination of dharmic principles of Theravada Buddhism for the development of mind and wisdom development and shall have measures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism from being undermined in any form. The State should also encourage Buddhists to participate in implementing such measures or mechanisms" (Thailand 2017, 21). In this sense, public value as a non-Western governance policy in the context of Thailand can be summarized as the duty of the Thai people, "to protect and uphold the Nation, religions, the King and the democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State" (Thailand 2017, 16).

This means that public value creation in the case of Thai Muslims has to be understood, analyzed, and evaluated in light of the ethno-religious makeup of their communal identity with special reference to the role of tertiary education in its construction.

In the case of Thailand in particular, and Southeast Asia in general, there is a need to address the relationship between ethnicity, race, and religious denomination. In the present context, the connection between the Shafii school of *fiqh* – jurisprudence adhered to by Malays and it is tied with their ethno-religious identification. It is important to note here the difference between *Sharia* and *Fiqh*: the former constitutes the broad principles of law mentioned in the Qur'an and the latter constitutes schools of Muslim jurisprudence formulated upon and drawn from the principles of *Sharia*. *Sharia* is macro in orientation, while by contrast, *fiqh* is micro in that it is determined by space, time, and context (Hasan, Ahmad 2013; Rahman, Fazlur 1979, pp. 100–116). Furthermore, the Southeast Asian societies operate along ethno-religious nationalist lines which is a neglected factor in the majority of the social scientific, security, and terrorism studies about Islam in Southeast Asia.

Ethno-religious heterogeneity as an identity marker affects the shaping of policy in relation to interpretations about what constitutes state identity, namely, whether it is monist or pluralist. "Monists claim that there is only one ultimate value. Pluralists argue that there really are several different values, and that these values are not reducible to each other or to a supervalue" (Mason, Elinor 2023). However, this binary may perhaps be too reductionist:

Ethnographic research demonstrates that both monist and pluralist tendencies exist in the value relations of all societies and that the key analytic task thus becomes not determining whether a society is monist or pluralist, but rather documenting which kinds of configurations of monist and pluralist relations we tend to find in actually existing societies (Robbins, Joel 2013, p. 99).

Therefore, the increasingly studied approach to public value cannot escape addressing the dynamics of ethnic heterogeneity and its implications for societies in which multiple religions

play a significant role. Indeed, non-recognition of ethnic heterogeneity is an effective course for corruption, political instability, slower economic growth, lack of cooperation across the world (Bhargava, Rajeev 2005; Christie, Clive J 1996; Goodman, John 2021; Haynes, Jeffrey 2020; Munirah, Y, 2018; Prabhakar, Parakala 2023). The broad question becomes whether the application of Islamic, Buddhist, Confucianist, and Christian approaches to public value can assist in bringing about conflict resolution in heterogeneous ethno-religious countries? Specifically for southern Thailand, what role can public and private Islamic schools play in contributing toward building the common good in a multicultural country (Tuntivivat, Sudarat 2016).

Methodology

This article is based on qualitative research about the application of IPV as a political activity in the demand for the establishment of the first tertiary-level educational institution viz., the College of Islamic Studies (CIS) now known as the Faculty of Islamic Science (FIS) in 1981 and its gradual developmental role in the forming and training of the local Muslim youth in becoming self-reliant Pattani Muslim citizens in multicultural Thailand.

Types of Muslim Educational Institutions in Southern Thailand

There are four types of Muslim educational institutions in southern Thailand established by the southern Malay-speaking Muslims:

(1) *Pondok* – the traditional religious madrasa-type schools that are registered or not registered with the government, *Pondoks* are residential religious schools in Malay Muslim communities. *Pondok* teachers are known as *ustaz*, and the head teacher as *tok guru*. *Pondoks* have played a formative role in the preservation and educational development of the Malay Muslim identity in the deep south. During the 1930s and 1940s, the government of Phibun Songkram decreed that the *pondoks* should offer instructions in Thai instead of Malay and Arabic. This brought about a resistance from the local Muslims who saw it as a threat to their ethno-religious identity.

The *Pondok* curriculum teaches predominately religious subjects and is therefore not recognized by the Thai government. Thus, after completion, many of its graduates go to the Middle East to further their education and upon return set up their own *pondoks*. In 2004, the Thaksin government initiated the policy that all *pondoks* should register themselves with the government, which was met with resistance by some who preferred to dissolve themselves or retreat (*Thailand to Probe Islamic Schools*, 2004). While it is difficult to determine the exact number of *pondoks*, estimates suggest there are approximately 500. It is also projected that around 300–400 of them have registered with the government, and the remaining 100 remaining autonomous and informal (Melvin, Neil John 2007; Porath, Nathan 2014; Tuntivivat, Sudarat 2016).

As per the 2017 Education in Thailand report published by the Office of the Education Council, Ministry of Education:

As of the academic year 2015, 410 private Islamic boarding schools focusing on the teaching of Islam (or *Pondok* schools) situated in five southern border provinces were registered as *Pondok* Institutes under the supervision of the Office of the Private Education Commission, Ministry of Education. There were 41,012 students and 1,589 teachers in these *Pondok* Institutes.

Non-formal education, focusing on vocational training and the teaching of Islam, is also provided in some schools. Muslims of all ages embrace Islamic doctrine as their way of life, and religious education is provided informally from childhood by families and nearby Islamic religious institutions. (Ministry of Education, 2017, pp. 43–44)

(2) *Tadika* – Islamic kindergartens, which initially started as mosques attachments, are now under the Department of Local Administration in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

(3) *Rong Rian Ekkachon Son Sasana* – Islamic Private School – historically the Malay Muslims preferred to send their children to the traditional *pondoks* to obtain religious education only and not the government schools because they implement a curriculum in the Thai language along with the study of Buddhism. Thus, the Pattani Muslims refrained from sending their children to study in the government schools. They feared that future generations of Malay Muslims would not learn about their ethnic identity, language, culture, and religion. Thus, the Malay Muslims of the deep south appealed to the government that they be allowed to build their own *Rong Rian Ekkachon Son Sasana* – Islamic Private Schools. The government eventually agreed to the proposal and in its policy of implementing universal education offered financial subsidies and aid for the development of the school infrastructure, teachers' salaries, etc. It is estimated that today, there are about 400 such schools in the three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat and the government offers subsidy of approximately 15,000 Thai Baht per student per year for Islamic Private Schools which offer an integrated curriculum whereby students study religious subjects during the morning and general subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, etc., in the afternoon. (Adulyadej, 2008) The teachers who teach the general subjects are mainly Thai Buddhists because of lack of such teachers in the Muslim community. The government expects that by offering financial aid to teachers in Islamic Private Schools, it will be possible to ward off the spread of separatist mentality and ideology among the youth (Croissant 2007). However, it is not an easy task to erase entrenched ethno-religious identity, especially with the rise of religious resurgence around the world (Aslan, Reza 2009; Juergensmeyer, Mark 2009, 2020, 2022; Juergensmeyer, Mark et al., 2015).

(4) Public and Private Universities

There are two public universities that cater to the educational advancement of the southern Malay Muslims. The first is the Faculty of Islamic Science (FIS) at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus (*Faculty of Islamic Science, Prince of Songkla University*, 2024). The second is Princess of Naradhiwas University, a government-sponsored institution established in 2003 in Narathiwat, southern Thailand. It offers degrees in both modern disciplines and Islamic and Arabic studies (*PNU – Princess of Naradhiwas University*, 2003). Additionally, there is a private Islamic university, Fathoni University, located in Yarang District, Pattani Province. It specializes in Islamic higher education and receives financial support from benefactors in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and other countries (*Fatoni University*, 2022).

Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus – Establishment and Contribution to Islamic Public Value Formation

The Malay Muslims have been demanding an educational space at Thailand's public universities since the 1932 democratic revolution (Pitsuwan, Surin 1988). The contemporary notion of IPV was not the foundational principle nor the mission and objective behind the establishment of the full-fledged College of Islamic Studies (also known as the Faculty of Islamic Sciences) at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, in 1982. Its creation was aligned with the 5th National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982 – 1986) during the premiership of General Prem Tinsulanonda (1982, p. 143). Yet, one can say that at the primitive stage idea of IPV was in operation in the minds of the Malay Muslim elites of Thailand without being conscious of it.

Professor Joseph Chinyong Liow, currently the Dean of College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, a scholar of Malaysian studies in his book, *Islam, Education and Reform in Southern Thailand* (Liow, Joseph Chinyong 2009) written in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks commonly known as 9/11 and the 2004 resurgence of southern Thailand insurgency opines that the decision to establish the College was a political decision taken by the National Security Council in 1982. It stemmed from Thai authorities concerns about the influence of the Islamic resurgence in the Middle East and also the influence of the young Thai-Malay speaking students returning after graduation from especially Saudi Arabia and Egypt who brought with them the religiously puritanical influence of Wahhabism.

The College was envisaged to fulfil this role in two ways. First, by providing the means for tertiary education in religious studies for Islamic private school graduates, the founding of the College served as a gesture to the Muslim community of the government's consideration for their interests and aspirations. Second, through its short-term programmes catering to non-Muslim government officials posted to the south, it was also an attempt to facilitate interaction and mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in southern Thailand. Instruction at the College is in three languages – English, Arabic, and Thai. The Islamic studies programme consists of two streams, one in Arabic and the other in Thai (Liow, Joseph Chinyong 2009, 2010).

While the late Dr. Hasan Madmarn (1941–2012) who played an important role in the establishment of the College of Islamic along with other Thai Muslim academics and politicians such as the late Dr. Surin Pitsuwan (1949– 017) and also the late Prof. Chaiwat Satha-Anand (1955–2024) and others have a different perspective. Dr. Hasan Madmarn, a local Pattani scholar and academic was first affiliated with the Faculty of Humanities at the Prince of Songkla University before the establishment of the College of Islamic Studies. After the establishment of the College, he first became the Associate Director and later on the Director of the College. His famous book, *The Pondok & Madrasah in Patani* (Madmarn, Hasan1999) published in 1999 discusses the history of the Thai government's policy of educational reform in the region since 1970. The main objective of which is to encourage the Muslim student graduates from the private Islamic high schools to further their education at the public Prince of Songkla University (PSU). Hence, the university first offered Islamic Studies and Arabic language were

offered as minor subjects at its Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Madmarn, 1999, p. 103). In 1982, PSU started offering Islamic Studies as a major subject for Bachelor degree program.

In fact, Madmarn mentions that the demand for the establishment of a College of Islamic Studies was first made to the Thai government as early as 1974. The purpose was to sustain and promote the ethno-linguistic-cultural and Islamic religious background amidst the many local socio-economic and political problems. While at the same time serving the interest of national security policy; unity and integration of Thai nation; creating mutual understanding and cooperation among the local communities; serving as the center for Islamic education; developing the ethical and moral standards of the local to become social asset based on the guideline of the Qur'an (Madmarn, 1999, p. 115). The purpose of the College was to serve the interest of local Muslims as well as the state in the arenas of socio-political development and also the needs of national security. The College received its final cabinet approval in 1988 during the prime ministership of Chatichai Choonhavan. Since 1974, the proposal for the establishment of the College for the developmental needs of the Malay Muslims of the deep south also received international moral and financial support first from Mr. Mohammad Tawfiq Uwaida, the Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Cairo, Egypt and also the Muslim World League, Jeddah, the Islamic Development Bank, Jeddah, International Islamic Charitable Fund, Kuwait, the World Assembly of years of his primiership (1957-1970) Muslim Youth (WAMY) including Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia in capacity as the president of the Regional Islamic Dawah Council of Southeast Asia and Pacific (RISEAP) (Madmarn, Hasan 1999, pp. 115-122).

The demand for and the establishment of the College of Islamic Studies were both particularist and integrationist at the same time. It aimed to foster peaceful coexistence with the Buddhist majority while also aligning with broader religious developments in the Muslim world. This dual purpose sought to address the challenges faced by Thai-Malay Muslims, recognizing both their indigenous identity and their role as an integral part of the Thai nation (Gilquin, Michel 2005, p. 121).

Educational Development – Faculty of Islamic Sciences, PSU and IPV

In view of the 36 years existence of the Faculty of Social Sciences, PSU from which have graduated several successful batches of graduates and its own progression from being a bachelor degree to doctoral degrees offering institution in Thai, Arabic and English languages, it can be claimed that it has been a successful institution in meeting the educational and the societal needs of the Thai-Malay community in the Deep South.

When viewed from the theoretical perspective of IPV as defined and described by Deschler that neglect of the religious public administration and public management has been a missing dimension of the modern age post-Westphalian model of public administration (Krasner, Stephen D 2001). Thus, making the Western model the sole basis for public administration globally is counterproductive because there are many varied, good and successful models of non-Western public administration implemented around the world, including the Islamic.

In light of this, it can be said that the establishment of the FIS at PSU by Thailand's public administration, which is a semi-secular, has been a successful experiment that has contributed to sustaining the societal development of the native Thai-Malay Muslim community in the deep south. It has also contributed to the achievement of a certain level for conflict resolution of political integration despite the continuing state of insurgency, which needs a political will from the contesting parties.

The trajectory of the academic and socially contributive aspects of the FIS, PSU can be traced as follows. It started in 1981 by offering undergraduate programs in Islamic Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. After receiving cabinet approval in 1988, the College of Islamic Studies (CIS) was established by Royal Decree on 31 December 1989, to be a center for academic studies, research, and studies in Islamic arts and sciences at the bachelor level and to provide academic services to society, including the production of human resources in general Islamic Studies in all fields.

The CIS has systematically broadened its academic offerings since 1994, introducing a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Islamic Education, Law, Economics, and Management (Wae-u-seng et al., 2019, p. 10). In 2019, it was re-designated as the FIS, further expanding its curriculum with the launch of a Business Administration program specializing in Islamic Business Innovation in 2021, followed by a combined Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies and Islamic Law in 2022. In 2023, the faculty underwent administrative restructuring, creating four distinct divisions: Faculty Administration, Academic Affairs, Research and Innovation, and Social Services (*Faculty of Islamic Science, Prince of Songkla University, 2024*).

Over the period of around four decades, first as CIS and now as FIS, the institution has produced hundreds of graduates who serve society, conduct research, and develop new knowledge. They also provide academic services to the community and play an active role in the preservation of local arts and culture in accordance with vision and mission of the Prince of Songkla University:

1. Vision – A valuable university for driving sustainable development at the forefront of the world.
2. Mission:
 - a) Building academic and innovation leadership with research as a basis for the development of the southern region and the country, linking it to society and international networks.
 - B) Building human resources with academic and professional competence, integrity, discipline, pursuit of wisdom, social engagement, and skills in the 21st century based on practical experience.
 - c) Developing the university into a knowledge-based society based on cultural diversity and the principle of sufficiency economy, to foster development towards sustainability and a society of opportunity and fairness (*Prince of Songkla University, 2021*).

The mention of the SEP in the mission goal of the university located in a Muslim-majority region dovetails with the building of IPV for multiculturalism, as mentioned above, "developing the university into a knowledge-based society based on cultural diversity" (ibid).

Conclusion

The establishment of the College of Islamic Studies or the FIS, Prince of Songkla University is an example of collaboration between the Thai-Malay Muslim community and the state in addressing the development issues facing the Deep South Thailand. It also demonstrates an alignment between the Buddhist economics philosophy of SEP and the IPV. Its achievements despite shortcomings over the decades have shown that the public administration model does not have to be modeled on the Western paradigm and that the Western is not universal. This is especially important in cases where there are issues of development and administration where ethno-religious identities lie at the bottom of conflict as in the case of Pattani.

The Deep South Thailand still faces several issues of development and administration for the human resources development of the people in the Muslim majority provinces of Thailand and resolution of the one hundred years plus ethno-religious insurgency which remains unresolved. The case of the establishment of FIS over the last three-plus decades is the result of unconscious amalgamation of SEP and IPV made possible where a unitary state despite long resistance gave in to the demand of its minority community which is ethnically, linguistically, culturally and religiously different from the majority that too is a citizenry part of multicultural Thailand. The credit for this goes to accommodation on the part of both the Buddhist majority and Muslim minority in Thailand despite largely instable political history of Thailand (Scupin, Raymond 1998).

In view of the accommodative types of ethno-religious political cultures of Southeast Asia that differ from other parts of the world, there is more space for accommodation despite conflict, violence, and protests in Thailand. One of the main reasons for this is the historical character and nature of the Thai monarchy that often intervenes in the political arena to protect and maintain both intra-Buddhist and Muslim-Buddhist harmony. This is the legacy of the late King Rama IX and continued by Rama X as witnessed through their personal participation in matters of religion such as the appointments of the Buddhist Supreme Patriarch, the Muslim Chularajmontri (*Shaikh al-Islam*) of Thailand, and also the annual celebration of the *Maulid* – the birthday of the Prophet at the national level. And also visiting and implementing development projects in southern Thailand (Kasetsiri, Charnvit 2022, pp. 69–114; Niyomyat, Aukkarapon and Tanakasempipat, Patpicha 2017; Yusuf, Imtiyaz 1998, 2017a, 2022a).

Despite the efforts to develop an integral and multicultural Thailand, there still remain many education and youth-related issues in the case of the deep south which have been addressed by different scholars (Azizah, Lailiyatul and Raya, Moch. Khafidz Fuad 2021; *Fatoni University*, 2022; Panjor, Fareeda 2024; Salaeh, Fatonah 2023; Wekke et al., 2018, 2019). For example, in the case of the administration, the contribution and challenges faced in implementing the Islamic Educational Administration and Management Program at FIS in relation to the Teachers' Council of Thailand and Office of the Higher Commission of Thailand are directed toward the objective of producing Islamic administrative professional capable of leading and

developing Malay Muslim society, in particular, Thai society, in general (Wae-u-seng et al., 2019, p. 10).

The graduates of this program would obtain academic transcript and administrative professional license recognised by the Teachers' Council of Thailand. With their professional license, they can make a greater contribution towards transforming Islamic integrated knowledge into practice and applied the Islamic approach to their schools so that curriculum management becomes holistic and gives due regard not only to spiritual matters but also temporal ones. It is strongly believed that the hardship endured by the program to achieve holistic and spiritual approach in educational administration that are, somehow, being permeated to the Islamic traditional institutions would make the institution survived and well-prepared to take on the greater responsibilities and better cope with the present competitive environment and challenges of globalisation. As a consequence, Islam and Malay education identity which have been a long-established emphasis in Muslim society would be persistently preserved without neglecting the significant contributions of modern approach of education (Wae-u-seng et al., 2019, p. 10).

It can be concluded that from the perspectives of both SEP and IPV, FIS is playing a transformative role in forming and shaping the present and future of the Thai-Malay Muslim community in the deep south. It is reflected in the socio-political reform and emergence of new interpretation of Melayu Islam and its ethnic-linguistic-cultural and political face on the landscape of Thailand.

Arguably, IPV in Thailand is a critical policy goal within the framework of Thailand's constitutional principle that the Thailand's Buddhist monarch is also the patron of all religions within the kingdom. Over the years, this has made the Thai state recognize the existence of the multicultural diversity within the country. As many Thai Muslims are proud of the religious freedom they enjoy in Thailand, which is not available even in many Muslim-majority countries (Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2007b).

Over the decades, it has been observed that Thailand, with its on-and-off political shifting between military rules and experiments in democracy, has been progressively moving toward understanding and recognizing the internal multicultural diversity present within it, especially regarding the case of its Malay-speaking populace in the three provinces in the deep south. Indeed, promoting the concept of multiculturalism – *lak lai wathanatam* (Thai: หลากหลายวัฒนธรรม) (Yusuf, Imtiyaz and Atilgan, Canan 2008; Yusuf, Imtiyaz and Schmidt, Peter Lars 2006, Yusuf, Imtiyaz 2014, 2021, 2004) has positive implications for Thailand's own flourishing in the competitive world of ASEAN political economies. On a positive note, the contributory role being played by a university-level FIS at the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus over decades in a majority Buddhist country in terms of shaping and contributing toward multicultural citizenship of the Thai-Malay Muslims of the deep south is no less important.

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Imtiyaz Yusuf is Professor of Islam and Dialogical Studies at International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, International Islamic University Malaysia (ISTAC-IIUM). He previously served as Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for Buddhist-Muslim Understanding at Mahidol University, Salaya, Thailand. He specializes in Religion and Social Sciences, Comparative Religion with a focus on Muslim-Buddhist relations and dialogue, Islam in Thailand and Southeast Asia. Email: imtiyaz@iium.edu.my

Arthit Thongin is an Assistant Professor at the School of Political Science, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand. He serves as a Permanent Expert for the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand and a Permanent Advisor to the Committee on the Armed Forces in the House of Representatives. Formerly, he worked as a policy analyst specializing in issues related to the southern border provinces of Thailand at the Office of the National Security Council. Most of his scholarly contributions are published in Thai, reflecting his deep engagement with regional political and social issues.