



## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

“The Nation” has contributed to 2 main bodies of knowledge. Firstly, it has provided the basis for the resurgence of violence in Southern Thailand, possible solutions and indications of where the conflict is heading. Secondly, it has shown what and how journalism is practiced to promote peace in the country.

Its reports have helped readers to understand that the violent conflict is now being waged by mysterious unknown perpetrators although they come from the minority Malay Muslim communities in the South. Historically deemed “separatists” by the state, these unknown militants are far better trained and equipped than their predecessors. Besides support from the local southern communities, international sentiments pertaining to religious inspiration played a significant part, albeit a very unclear connectivity with Islam. This is where “The Nation” has a shortfall of investigative journalism on Islamic connectivity. The globalized element of Islamic consciousness could be an area of very meaningful research for the future, more so when comprehensive empirical evidence can be gathered from militants captured in the future.

“The Nation” has also illustrated that peace cannot be restored when the right order of human affairs, well-being is not in place. Historical local grievances suffered by the Malay Muslim communities in terms of state-sanctioned oppression, lack of justice and cultural alienation has made and will continue to make Southern

Thailand a story of ethnic-religious struggle of great intensity which now has the grave potential of spilling outside of the region. The newspaper has advocated the state to re-consider the classical notion that the resistance of a minority community can be put down by sheer military and police might. However, through its editorial (8 December 2004), it goaded the government to quickly restore trust with the local communities. Trust can be re-built through a progression of steps commencing with the state bringing officers responsible for the unfortunate Tak Bai incident to justice.

On the other spectrum of “peace” journalism, “The Nation”’s style is to work to defuse the violence by being pro-solution, pro-understanding and pro-knowledge of the deep grievances of the communities in Southern Thailand. It has provided readers with :-

- (a) a prognosis or indications of where the violent situation is going. It has forewarned the readers of more violence and the state to invest greater efforts to protect airports, important government and public buildings.
- (b) a diagnosis by reporting on the possible root causes and the history of the conflict. Instead of harping and wagging a finger at the militants, it has spent more effort in investigating the object of the conflict and how it can be constructively transformed by eliminating oppression, injustice and cultural alienation. It has avoided the emotive stereotyping of the militants and focused on the heavy price in terms of civilian and economic casualties of the

violent conflict so that the reader is conscious of the heavy price of destruction.

- (c) therapy or remedies to the violent conflict by tapping on the knowledge and experience of a wide group of “actors”. It is de-escalation oriented rather than escalation oriented with respect to the linguistics used; the assessment of the rights, aims of the “actors” so that possible solutions, apart from more force, can be tabled. Old formulae using military and police strength and dominance from Bangkok no longer work. The therapies require structural changes in statecraft, attitudes and respect for the justice system, re-writing of values that make up the Thai identity, and even transformation of society’s perceptions towards minority communities and their roles in a nation of diverse races and religions.

Right from the beginning, “The Nation” has propositioned that the government cannot solve the violent conflict monopolistically. It is unfortunate that the National Reconciliation Committee and the government seemed to have parted ways. The political leadership seemed now to believe that it must re-take the initiative. The focus on 2 parties, the government and the perpetrators, will cause the conflict to re-lapse into a “us” versus “them” situation, which can only inflame the sparks of violence. The people who can deliver the peace are all the ones at the roundtable. They are all stake-holders.

The “peace” orientation of “The Nation”’s journalistic style is explicitly discernible. It is hoped that this submission has contributed to a better understanding of the violence conflict, to a better appreciation of how a newspaper can promote a peace culture through its journalistic style and methodology.