There Will Be Blood

Southeast Asia as the Second Front on the War on Terror – A case study

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Abstract

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International terrorism is a relevant and acute issue to deal with for most states across the globe. The horrors and fear of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 in New York and Washington left governments with new priorities and challenges to cooperate and coordinate efforts to combat terrorism. Governments in Southeast Asia have been faced with the threat of terrorism for several decades, although it has increased during the last decade. This case study sets out to trace and analyze terrorism in Southeast Asia from a neo-realist perspective. The first research question deals with the fact that the region is being referred to as the “second front” on the war on terror, or as a “terrorist haven”. Further, by using a neo-realist framework, an analysis of the situation and the actions of governments in the region will be provided. Finally, according to neo-realist theory, regional cooperation is only peripheral to the actual struggles of power and balancing that states are involved in. Yet the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is arguably an actor in combating terrorism in the region. Therefore, one of the objectives is to analyze these initiatives and to provide reflections for further action.
# Table of Content

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 2  
Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................... 5  
1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 7  
   1.1. Purpose of Study ....................................................................................................... 8  
   1.2. Research Questions ................................................................................................. 9  
   1.3. Thesis Outline ......................................................................................................... 10  
2. Methodologies and Material .......................................................................................... 11  
   2.1. Method ..................................................................................................................... 11  
   2.2. The Case Study Approach ....................................................................................... 12  
   2.3. Material and Source Criticism ............................................................................... 13  
   2.4. Critical Reflection of Method and Material ............................................................ 14  
   2.5. Delimitations ........................................................................................................... 15  
   2.6. Clarifications of Concepts ....................................................................................... 15  
3. Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................. 17  
   3.1. Neo-realism ............................................................................................................. 17  
4. Background ..................................................................................................................... 20  
   4.2. Key Islamic terms .................................................................................................... 22  
   4.3. Terrorism in Southeast Asia ................................................................................... 23  
      Indonesia ..................................................................................................................... 24  
      The Philippines ........................................................................................................... 25  
      Thailand ..................................................................................................................... 25  
      Other Southeast Asian countries ............................................................................. 26  
      ASEAN ....................................................................................................................... 28  
5. Analysis ......................................................................................................................... 29  
   5.1. Why has Southeast Asia been stated to be the ‘second front’ in the war on terror, is this statement accurate or even relevant? ................................................................. 29  
   5.2. What has been done to combat terrorism in Southeast Asian states, and how can neo-realism explain this? ......................................................................................... 35  
   5.3. What has been done in ASEAN to combat terrorism, and how can neo-realistic theory explain this? ......................................................................................... 42  
   5.4. What efforts are needed to terminate terrorism within Southeast Asia? .......... 45  
6. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 48  
References .......................................................................................................................... 51
Literature ................................................................................................................................. 51
Publications ............................................................................................................................... 52
Electronic Sources ..................................................................................................................... 52
Appendix .................................................................................................................................. 53
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/11</td>
<td>The September 11, 2001 terrorist attack against New York and Washington</td>
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<tr>
<td>AJAI</td>
<td>Al-Jama’ah Al-Islamiyyah (The, or An, Organization of Muslims)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regional Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASC</td>
<td>ASEAN Security Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Abu Sayyaf Group (‘Bearer of the Sword’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNPP</td>
<td>Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani</td>
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<tr>
<td>DI</td>
<td>Darul Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOD</td>
<td>US Department of Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAM</td>
<td>Free Aceh Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JI</td>
<td>Jama’ah Islamiyah (Islamic Community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOMPAK</td>
<td>Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis (The Crisis Management Committee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILF</td>
<td>Moro Islamic Liberation Front</td>
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<td>MNLF</td>
<td>Moro National Liberation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPM</td>
<td>Free Papua Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PULO</td>
<td>Pattani United Liberation Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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Glossary of key Islamic terms

*Al Qur’an*  The holy book of Islamic faith which was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad from *Allah* through angel Gabriel (*Jibril*).

*Islam*  Arabic word that means, among others, peace, obedience, loyalty, allegiance, and submission to the will of *Allah*. The religion of Muslims.

*Jihad*  Holy fighting in the Cause of *Allah* or any effort to make *Allah*'s words (Islam) superior.

*Mujahid*  A Muslim fighter in *Jihad*. 
1. Introduction

Southeast Asia has often been pronounced as the ‘second front’ and/or a ‘terrorist haven’ in the global war on terror by media, politicians and various scholars in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks against World Trade Center in New York and Pentagon, Washington D.C. (hereafter called 9/11). But is it really true that Southeast Asia is the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or even could be considered to be a ‘terrorist haven’?

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon within Southeast Asia. Secular and religious oriented terrorism has a long history in the region. Still, some of the governments, mainly in Indonesia and Thailand, virtually lived in denial regarding the threat of global and regional terrorism within its borders. The threat from armed Islamist groups, *Jihadists*, who has declared war against various governments in the region with the aim of getting political autonomy or secession from their countries (Singh 2007: 1), has been seen mainly as national security problems. Indonesia woke up after the 12 October 2002 Bali bombing, when suicide bombers attacked two exclusive Bali nightspots with 202 dead as result. This attack was the most devastating terrorist strike since the 9/11 incident. The perpetrators of the Bali attack came from a region wide covert terrorist organization often called Jema’ah Islamiyyah (JI, ‘Islamic Community’) (Weatherbee 2005: 159). This attack came as a surprise to the Indonesian government, even though violent domestic terrorism has been faced since the foundation of the independent state of Indonesia (Ibid. 140). Thailand was equally slow to acknowledge any threats and was in complete denial of having a terrorist problem until mid-2003 (Ibid. 163).

Even the intra-regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with its preoccupation of surface harmony lacked effort to deal with the threat of terrorism within the region and the underlying motivations of radical Islam. This self-delusion and lack of cooperation between countries, regional forums as well as the security organizations in Southeast Asia made it easy for terrorist networks to continue its spread throughout the region.

Meanwhile, the Philippines were very quick to respond and cooperate with other states after 9/11, and had vast experience of domestic terrorism after more than three decades of an armed Islamic insurgency in which more than 130,000 have died, even though only 4 percent of the population is Muslim (Ibid. 145). Singapore and Malaysia were equally
rapid to react and cooperate with each other as well as with the United States of America (US).

The fact that transnational crime is so widespread in Southeast Asia has made the spread and unification between criminal and terrorist organizations easier and still pose a potential threat to further widen the threat from terrorist organizations, especially in weak states like Myanmar (Burma), Lao PDR and Cambodia where marginalized ethnic groups might be engaged into conflict with the state and used by terrorist organizations like JI or Al Qaeda.

In this thesis I will focus on the implications terrorism have had on the Southeast Asian states and communities, find out whether or not Southeast Asia actually is the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or not, as well as illustrate what is being done to combat terrorism within the region. I will do this by using neo-realism as a tool for my analyzing, since this theory is very well suited for the Southeast Asian context as well as terrorism.

1.1. Purpose of Study

This thesis sets out to track and trace the problems occurring from the threat, or perceived threats, by terrorists and terrorist organizations within Southeast Asia. Furthermore, I will also present current security threats from regional terrorist organizations and what Southeast Asian governments and regional forums are doing to cope with this. Additionally, I will present the most dangerous terrorist organizations operating in the region and their activities in order to analyze and confirm or denounce if Southeast Asia can be perceived to be the ‘second front’ in the war on terror and/or a ‘terrorist haven’. I will relate my findings and analysis to the neo-realist theory and generalize my findings in the limited space required for this thesis.

There are many reasons to why the focus of this thesis is focusing on terrorism and Southeast Asia. One aspect is that terrorism is currently on the global agenda, although the main focus is not on Southeast Asia even though it is, and has been, called the ‘second front’. Furthermore, the recent bombings of the Ritz-Carlton and Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia in July 2009 have made a study of this region even more significant and interesting. What makes this region all the more fascinating in regards to Islamist
terrorism is that it is home to the world’s largest Muslim populated country, Indonesia, as well as other Muslim majority countries like Malaysia and Brunei, and have a greater Muslim population that the whole Arab Middle East. Since I already have some knowledge of this region and have been living in Southeast Asia for the past few years, this puts further emphasis on why I analyze this region.

This thesis will contain a broad overview of the links between different suspected terrorist groups and organizations along with their illicit activities in Southeast Asia. The intention with this is to provide a context and foundation for the analysis of the information leading to a conclusion regarding whether or not the region is the ‘second front’ or a ‘terrorist haven’ in the war on terror. This will also deepen the understanding of the multifaceted situations regarding terrorism and social constraints within the Southeast Asian countries. Furthermore, within this framework there are factors which can show that certain social constraints within the Southeast Asian states as well as ASEAN is in fact helping Islamist organizations in recruiting new members. This thesis will focus on Jihadi-oriented terrorism in Southeast Asia, mainly in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, but also in Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam to some extent.

1.2. Research Questions

With the purposes stated above in mind, the research questions are;

- Why has Southeast Asia been stated to be the ‘second front’ in the war on terror, is this statement accurate or even relevant?
- What has been done to combat terrorism in Southeast Asian states, and how can neo-realism explain this?
- What has been done in ASEAN to combat terrorism, and how can neo-realistic theory explain this?
- Which efforts are needed to end terrorism in Southeast Asia?
1.3. Thesis Outline

Following the introductory chapter, the thesis will present a chapter on methodologies and material with the intended aim to clarify how and in what way the thesis will be presented. Included in this chapter will be the delimitations of the thesis and a clarification of the critical view of the author in relation to the methodology and material used. Following this is a theory chapter that will be used as a framework for the essay. After the theory chapter there will be a chapter containing the background that will explain terrorism in Southeast Asia and how it operates. The chapter will also explain the problems with Islamism and terrorism in the specific countries and what has been done to combat it. Following the background is the analysis, which will cover the research questions one by one, using neo-realism as a tool to explain my findings. After analyzing these issues thoroughly, a chapter will follow with a conclusion of the thesis.
2. Methodologies and Material

This chapter will reveal the methodological framework that I will use in this thesis. There will be a discussion of the chosen methodology to give a clear illustration of the structure and background of the thesis as well as the topic of research. Furthermore, an explanation to why this particular methodological framework is used will be given. I will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these specific methods and in addition, a review of the material used will also be provided. This thesis is based on information collected with the intention to present a straightforward and fair picture of the reality in regards to the war on terror in Southeast Asia, its effects and what is done to combat it. The empirical material collected is used to relate to the theory chosen to describe and understand the realities of the problem.

2.1. Method

Identical for all research is to gain new knowledge within a specific field. Due to my familiarity of the region studied, different methodological approaches are applicable. For this thesis I will use an empirical and theory consuming research platform since some information about this field of research already exists, and I aim to analyze this phenomenon through existing theories. Therefore I will put my case in center of attention and in relation to that explain my findings (Esaiasson 2007: 42 f). By using an empirical and theory consuming research method I will limit myself to comprehensively research a specific part of terrorism in Southeast Asia, namely how if the region is the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or a ‘terrorist haven’, and what is being done to combat terrorism. This theory will be used as a lens through which I will analyze the material and draw conclusions.
2.2. The Case Study Approach

This thesis is a case study that will use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. A great deal of research has increasingly been using a combination of the two since both methods play a significant part in social science and there are advantages in using a combination of the two (March & Stoker 2002: 231). A case study is a preferred method, since I set out to examine a specific phenomena and not just describing a situation (Yin 1993: 31). Moreover, given that my thesis is based on theoretical hypothesis’s that reflect the research questions, material and result, a case study is ideal (Yin 1994: 103). I have used neo-realism in its broadest term as the theoretical framework in order to emphasize the results and the analysis. As a case study this thesis examines and analyzes an important and specific problem of the sub-region of my choice; Southeast Asia. After recent terrorist attacks in Indonesia and in combination with widespread militant Islamism in the region I find it crucial to enhance not just my own understanding of the area, but also enlighten others in order to raise unbiased awareness. The case study approach is a suitable method in this thesis since I do not aim to draw any generalizing conclusions based on Southeast Asia and aim to discuss my findings of this specific region and its countries.

The purpose of a case study is to recreate a focused and analytical picture of a phenomenon or a social entity through a profound study of a specific case (Bryman 2001: 66). The effects of how global and regional terrorism as well as militant Islamism has affected Southeast Asia is very complex and hard to describe. Regarding if Southeast Asia is the ‘second front’ in the war on terror and/or a ‘terrorist haven’ is likewise a hard task, albeit not as complicated as the previous question. Furthermore, a few of the Southeast Asian countries is less open than others, like, Myanmar, Lao PDR, or Cambodia, and consequently harder to get unbiased information from. Hence, these are the reasons that I will put my focus on Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, and only analyze the other Southeast Asian countries in briefly order to widen the scope or illustrate a certain point in some cases. Even though it is a difficult task, I consider it important to study this area nevertheless, since there is a need to analyze even complex issues.
My choice of case study has fallen to the heuristic case study. The heuristic case study is appropriate since the thesis should explore, analyze, summarize and draw conclusions from a case of which there is a lack of previous research or where the problem has been neglected. Furthermore, the case study should enlighten the reader and strengthen the knowledge of the phenomenon of research (Eckstein 1992: 143), which I find very important and hope to achieve.

A major weakness with the case study approach is its inability to draw any general conclusions on situations elsewhere (Gustavsson 2004: 132). But since this is not my intention, I consider this method valid. Furthermore, I find this method to be deep enough to produce the knowledge I need to understand and analyze my subject and answer my research questions. Using this methodology and with the appropriate theory I believe that the research questions will be answered in a thorough and truthful way. The generalizing conclusions that however will be drawn in the final part of my thesis will be based on my case study and, as previously mentioned, only function as a means to provide suggestions for further research.

2.3. Material and Source Criticism

The material and sources I have used in this thesis are mainly secondary. These consist primarily of literature from different scholars and researchers with vast knowledge of the area. I have used this material with great caution and always tried to find information from more than one source when possible. Secondary material and sources used include literature, documents and reports from acknowledged researchers and academics.

I have chosen material that is as unbiased as possible, even though completely unbiased material hardly exists, especially regarding terrorism and government’s response to it. The difficulty within this subject is that most of the information is classified material, only accessible by the intelligence agencies, while only a small percentage is public and available to academics. Probably as much as two thirds of the more accurate information on terrorism is security classified at Secret level or higher. This puts academics in a disadvantaged position in terms of accuracy and credibility regarding their analyzing, especially since government agencies tend to release or leak information that supports
their cause with the benefit of not having to be challenged by outsiders (Williams, in Ramakrishna 2003: 84).

Nevertheless, although academics only have access to a small part of all the information, they have other advantages over intelligence analysts. Academics often build up their expertise over several years, while intelligence analysts rarely have sufficient time to review all their ‘material’ due to time limitations and hence cannot produce longer-term assessment from it. This is a great advantage for academics (Ibid. 87). This has meant that it has been a greater challenge for me as a researcher and I welcome this challenge and intend to show the truth/s in as accurate manner as possible.

2.4. Critical Reflection of Method and Material

It is my opinion that a critical reflection of the material used in this thesis is essential. My intention is to be as objective and neutral towards the material, subject and the information retrieved as possible. However, since I as a researcher am a cultural object situated in a specific environment, it is impossible to be completely objective and neutral within the selective procedure of the material and the analysis (Russell 2000: 206 f). Additionally, there is never just one version of the truth and the outcomes that I present in this thesis are my perceived version of the truth and are obviously based on my specific background and knowledge. Moreover, it is based on the information I have gathered and analyzed, and on selected methodology. Evidently, all information and material collected are interpreted and viewed according to my Western male perspective and background. This interpretive framework cannot be excluded and forgotten and the selective procedure where information was gathered and reviewed was made with a critical awareness, knowledge and understanding of the problem that is being analyzed, and the sources used. My understanding of the problem is also reflected by the fact that I live in the region as an expatriate, having my own views of the different cultures and context researched. This might have affected me in getting a greater understanding of the problems, since I am slightly closer to the realities examined.

Despite all these issues with objectivity at stake, I believe that my analysis can generate interesting points and contribute to the area of study. Furthermore, the material and
sources used in this thesis are selected since they are believed to be as reliable and unbiased as possible. Material that has not lived up to these criteria has been rejected.

2.5. Delimitations

Due to time and space limitations for this thesis I have limited my study to the area, the specific countries in the area, as well as exclude any analyze of 9/11 as such. Furthermore, the focus is on the Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN, and not relations with countries or intrastate actors outside this region. I will also exclude any analyzing of human rights issues connected to the ‘war on terror’.

2.6. Clarifications of Concepts

The term terrorism is much debated in various forums and it can be defined either from the perpetrator’s or victim’s perspective. For this thesis and in the context of global and regional terrorism and the Southeast Asian environment, I have chosen to use the US Department of Defence (DOD) definition of terrorism as “the lawful use of, or threatened use of, force or violence against individuals and property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives” (Johannen 2003: 86 f). Furthermore, adding to this I will also use the definition by Walter Lacqueur which states that “terrorism is the use or threat of violence, a method of combat or strategy to achieve certain goals […] its aim is to induce a state of fear in the victim […] it is ruthless and does not conform to humanitarian norms, and publicity is an essential factor in terrorist strategy” (Ibid. 86). I will put an emphasis especially on the political goals, since this is the main objective for most Islamist terrorist organizations, although the terrorists are referring to Islam as a source of justification. Still, you should always bear in mind the old saying that “today’s terrorists is tomorrow’s nationalist’s”, which might be more true for some of the alleged terrorist organizations in Southeast Asia than others.
The Southeast Asian regional terrorist organization that is often called *Jemaah Islamiyah* in media and by different governments and scholars have become a significant key element regarding terrorism in Southeast Asia. It is often spelled in different ways, like the previous mentioned *Jemaah Islamiyah*, but also like *Jema‘ah* or *Jama‘ah* for the first word, or *Islamiyyah* and *Islamiah* for the second (*Jama‘ah Islamiyah* is the proper Arabic translation). This name is very problematic, particularly in a Southeast Asian context or any context where there is a large Muslim presence, given that the literal translation means ‘Islamic Community’ or ‘Islamic Congregation’. To accuse a country’s ‘Islamic Community’ to be a terrorist organization is similar to labeling the entire community of a country as being terrorists or terrorist supporters, which would be politically repulsive. According to key documents of the organization captured by Indonesian security forces, the actual name of the group is *Al-Jama‘ah Al-Islamiyyah*, meaning “The (or An) Organization of Muslims”. Even though it is only semantically different, describing the organization as *Jema‘ah Islamiyyah* regardless of the spelling might be offensive to many Muslims. In this thesis, the term *Al-Jama‘ah Al-Islamiyyah*, or AJAI, will be used to the same organization that is popularly called *Jema‘ah Islamiyyah* (Singh 2007: 51).
3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will discuss the theoretical framework used in this thesis. During my search for theories suitable for this thesis I found that one theory was especially linked to the subject of terrorism, intergovernmental cooperation and states efforts in the war on terror, namely neo-realism. Neo-realism is suitable for this thesis since terrorism is a threat to sovereignty and the nation state, which according to neo-realism is the most important issue for states. Furthermore, given that sovereignty of the state is one of the strongest principles behind ASEAN, this theory is even more appropriate. Therefore, this thesis applies neo-realism as a theoretical framework in order to fully understand, explain and analyze terrorism in Southeast Asia. The thesis deals with the questions: How do states respond to the threat of terrorism? How can a framework of neo-realism explain this? It does not answer the question on an abstract level but in relation to a case study based on selected Southeast Asian states. Based on my own reflections and background as an international relations student, I believe that neo-realism is the theory that can best describe the ‘war on terror’.

3.1. Neo-realism

The central characteristic of realism is the principle of an anarchic world structure. The absence of a central and universal government leaves the states striving for power and security for national interest. The connection between anarchy and violence is assumed to stand in contrast to a peaceful world order. The consequence of the anarchic structure’s prevalence for violence is that states are constantly seeking security and power; power position being the sole purpose and means of all international relations, hence the self-help system of states where states struggle for their survival and security. Self-help consequently becomes the logic of anarchy. Rationality and state-centrism are usually seen as core realist arguments (Burchill 2005: 30). Hence, ethical concerns must give way for what is best for the state (Ibid. 31).

Structural realism, in contrast, attempt to explain how states relate to each other by their relationships of authority and subordination, however, every state must position itself in
order to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so, because differences between states are of capability and not function (Ibid. 35). Since states are functioning in an anarchical environment, they tend to ‘balance’ their resources in order to reduce their risk by opposing a stronger state. They do this by reallocating resources for national security, through the formation of alliances and other informal measures on an international level. Structural demands to balance provide explanation to important, but what would otherwise be confusing, features in international relations (Ibid. 35 f). Furthermore, the anarchic system can destroy even cooperation between states that would be mutually productive. Since there is no way to reduce the risk of cooperating and perhaps giving up a part of the states sovereignty, and no measures to divide any gains, even states who desire to cooperate may continue to be locked into a cycle of equally destructive rivalry. Even if states do cooperate, they have to consider relative gains. Consequently, they must regard whether their own gains is bigger than those of the other (Ibid. 38), or as John Mearsheimer argues, “states seek to survive under anarchy by maximizing their power relative to other states” (Ibid. 43).

Neo-realist theory states that the world is anarchic and that they act foremost for their own gains, they ‘balance’ or ally with other states dependant on the expected gains. Which means that if a state stand to lose their position by combating terrorism or through cooperating with others; this will most likely not happen. It has become evident in many states that if they have problems with Muslim minority groups it is easier for them to act on this and deem them terrorists, all in the name of power, power in the international area as well as in the national and/or regional context.

However, states still search for wealth, ways to flourish, and peace and prosperity. They also want to protect their sovereignty, autonomy and independence. Of course, common interests such as the threat from terrorism make cooperation possible even though anarchy and relative gains constantly work against successful collaboration (Ibid. 44). Regarding institutions like ASEAN, neo-realism consider these to be ‘at best ‘intervening variables’ that can be expected to have independent effects only in minor issue areas fare removed from the struggle of power” (Ibid. 47), which is exactly how Southeast Asian states seems to use ASEAN, which is often portrayed as a ‘talk shop’.

18
Hence, I have chosen this theoretical framework for my thesis because it can provide explanations and clarifications to international terrorism and the ways in which the states act to control and handle the problem of terrorism in Southeast Asia.
4. Background

In this chapter I will present a relevant background to the problem regarding terrorism in Southeast Asia as well as cover issues important for the reader to be able to fully understand this complex situation.

4.1. Terrorism

It is important to clarify that terrorism is not only associated with Islam, and that the historical origin of the word ‘fundamentalism’ has American Protestant roots. Other famous non-Islamist terrorist groups are the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers who also has the highest number of suicide bombings, the Irish Republican Army, or the Sikh Khalistanis. Furthermore, there is the Aum Shinrikyo group who perpetrated the Tokyo subway gas attack, the American rightist Christians that where spreading anthrax and their Timothy McVeigh who was behind the Oklahoma City bombing. Not to forget is non-religious terrorist groups like the German Red Army Fraktion, the Basque ETA, Colombian FARC, etc. (Singh 2007: 11).

To further clarify the term terrorism and what represents a terrorist, there are certain distinctions that need to be illuminated. There are three different types of people closely related to Islamist terrorism, namely the fundamentalist, the extremist, and the terrorist. Although they are closely related, these three are still quite different. The Islamist fundamentalist is a Muslim who is knowledgeable about the Islamic religious heritage and teachings, who knows where in Islam to draw for reference to justify his, or hers, ideology and foundation behind his strong belief. This strong belief is obviously not a crime; the fundamentalist purely excels in his familiarity of Islam’s heritage. By itself, fundamentalism is not a problem (Ibid. 4).

The extremist on the other hand, is dependent on the fundamentalist for the reassurance of sanctity of his, or hers, actions to validate the actions of terror. The extremist is not necessarily involved in the preparation and execution of terrorist activities, but is an important piece for the conversion of individuals to terrorism. The extremist’s facilitating function to “propagate and justify violence and the commitment to a radical ideology binds the individual or group together” (Ibid. 5). This strong link with terrorism is what
makes an extremist so dangerous and a threat to society. Providing information, logistical and economic support, connects beliefs with action, and gives a reason for violence in ways that the extremist assist terrorism. “The extremist, by definition, is largely intolerant and propagates the use of violence to ‘correct’ what is considered ‘wrong’” (Ibid. 5). The extremist is not necessarily a criminal, but nevertheless through his, or her, fanatical interpretation of religious texts be able to convert a fundamentalist or another person to terrorism (Ibid.), by legitimizing these acts through selective reading and interpretation of Islam.

Francis Fukuyama has called militant Islamism “Islamofascism”, which according to him are “politically ambitious terrorists who have manipulated Islam to justify indulgencies in extreme terror” (Ibid. 14). According to Fukuyama, these Islamists are disconnected from the realities of the modern world as they hang on to ancient Islamic customs and traditions. Other scholars has analyzed Islamism as a ‘political’ or ‘sociopolitical’ phenomenon in which Islamist political actors is using Islam to achieve their own political goals, including gaining state power or sovereignty (Ibid. 14). Thus, it may be important to recognize the process to become a terrorist since no person is born a terrorist. This you become through a series of processes and influences, where the perpetrator believes that what has been done is justifiable regardless of its brutalities.

To focus too much on specific terrorist organizations or groups might result in perverse and counter-productive focus on certain terrorist organizations, of which Al Qaeda is a great example. Although the vastness of the terrorist attacks achieved by Al Qaeda will never be forgotten and is impossible to deny, the excessive focus on this organization and the iconization by the American and international media of Osama bin Laden after the US Embassy attacks at Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1988, added to the great and heroic image of Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden among Islamist extremists around the world. As a consequence, a greater unity among global Islamist terrorist networks occurred when these groups improved their links with each other. Hence, the greatness of Al Qaeda was to a large degree caused by Western media and politicians when they focused too much on this organization. This is especially evident when you study Al Qaeda’s and Osama bin Lades role in the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan where the merely played a minor role (Sahni 2002).
4.2. Key Islamic terms

**Jihad**

*Jihad* originates from the word *Jahada*, which is Arabic and means to do your utmost for a better way of life. It particularly means “to strive” or “to exert the utmost”, and in the context of Islam it would include all types of striving, even armed struggle (Singh 2007: 6). *Jihad* is often described as holy fighting in the Cause of *Allah*, or every attempt to make *Allah*’s words (*Islam*) greater, even though this definition is incorrect. There are two different meanings of the word *jihad*. One is *al-jihad al-akbar*, which is the greater *jihad*. The other is *al-jihad al-asghar*, the lesser *jihad*. In the first one, *jihad* is the struggle against evil and the upholding of your moral principles and virtue. Furthermore, it includes the inner struggle to overcome temptations and tendency to sin. In contrast, *al-jihad al-asghar* is the fight against injustice and repression in addition to protecting Islam in general. It is because of *al-jihad al-asghar* that the term *jihad* has frequently been exploited for armed struggles to achieve ‘divinely ordained goals’, most often for personal or societal gains of religious entrepreneurs (Ibid. 6 f). However, “[e]ven when engaged in an armed struggle, Islam does not condone terrorism, kidnapping, and hijacking, especially against civilians. Similarly, in an armed struggle, Islam prohibits Muslims soldiers from harming civilians, women, children, elderly, and religious men like priests and rabbis.” (Ibid. 7). Hence, the *jihad*’s shaped by terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda, AJAI and their followers are not true *jihad*, and are therefore punishable according to Islamic laws.

**Wahhabism**

*Wahhabism* emerged in the mid-1700s as a purist movement that wanted to purify the Muslim spirit and remove all modernization within Islam. *Wahhabists* are against innovations and compromise, instead favoring strict submission to the word of the *Koran*. Since *Wahhibism* is a so conservative and intolerant form of Islam, it does not even accept integration with other religions. This ideology has spread through Southeast Asia with Al Qaeda, AJAI and linked groups such as the Philippine terrorist organizations Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the *Abu Sayyaf* Group (ASG) (Ibid. 8 f).
4.3. Terrorism in Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is made up of 10 countries, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR., Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Ethnic minorities are often trapped in the political framework of the modern state. This most often is controlled a single ethnic group; for example, Indonesian peripheral-island minorities under control of a Java-centric state, or Karens, Shans, and other minorities in a Myanmar dominated by the ethnic Burmese military junta. Others have been cut off from their own ethnic group by the borders of the modern state; for example, the Khmer minority in the Vietnam river delta, or the Malay Muslims in the southern provinces of Thailand. Conflict develops when minorities like these attach a political sense of nationalism to their identity and begin demanding self-determination (Weatherbee 2005: 139).

There are several reasons to why Southeast Asia is especially prone to Islamist-oriented violence; one of the reasons is that a significant part of the population is Muslim, more than 230 million. Another important fact is that three of the countries have a majority of Muslims while others have sizeable Muslim minorities. The percentage of Muslims in Southeast Asia are; 90 percent in Indonesia, 67 percent in Brunei, 65 percent in Malaysia, 6 percent in Thailand, 5 percent in Cambodia and the Philippines, and 4 percent in Myanmar (Singh 2007:1). The presence of Muslims is not a threat per se, although it makes the region more vulnerable because of the emergence of extremist Islamist concepts and ideology. Furthermore, due to efforts from outside elements the concept that the “war on terror” is actually a “war on Islam” has found its way among Muslim groups in the region (Ibid. 2). Before the terrorist organization AJAI emerged, terrorist organizations in the region were mostly renowned for their national character.

Southeast Asia has been experiencing growing Islamist extremism during the last decades and after 9/11, although with varying intensity. This could be viewed especially in Muslim majority countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, even though Muslim minorities in the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand are equally at risk to be exposed to this radical ideology. The governments in the region have been almost powerless in their efforts to counteract the quick spread of extremist Islamist ideas (Ibid. 11), especially since they only considered it to be domestic problems. The fundamentalist Islamism place
very little emphasis in Islam and more in recreating Islam for their own political aims, especially significant is hence the concept of *jihad*, which is used extensively by extremist Islamists to declare war on their political enemies and justify their goals (Ibid. 16).

With this regional background in mind I will now provide a brief overview of the countries relevant to this study. This is to set the stage for the analysis.

**Indonesia**

Indonesia is the world’s largest Islamic country and has been preoccupied with terrorism since the foundation of the independent state and the repressive Suharto regime brutally and effectively suppressed any dissidence until its collapse. Since the end of the Suharto regime there has been widespread ethnic and sectarian violence, varying from random ethnic gang fights and church bombings to horrendous Bosnia-like ethnic cleansing in South Sulawesi and the Malukus. The most serious security problem from an international point of view has been the internal security problems regarding the provinces of Aceh and Papua where the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Free Papua Organization (OPM) is fighting for independence (Weatherbee 2005: 140). This has been further revitalized after the independence of East Timor. Aceh has been struggling for independence since the Dutch colonial rulers and the current war began in 1976. The case of Papua is similar to Aceh’s, with a long history of demand for independence (Ibid. 141 ff). Most of the violence is related to desire of an independent Islamic state (Singh 2007: 29). Indonesia also has a problem with corruption in agencies that are in the frontline in the war on terror, such as the police, army, and immigration service. There is also a problem with leaking of weapons and explosives from military depots (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 205).
The Philippines

The Philippines has faced the current armed Islamic insurgency for more than three decades, in which over 130,000 people have died (Weatherbee 2005: 145). The Moro rebellion has been the largest and most persistent of the armed separatist movement in Southeast Asia since 1975. This conflict can be traced back as far as to the colonial history when Spain arrived in 1565 and halted the Islamisation of the Philippine islands (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 98 f).

Furthermore, the southern island Mindanao is suffering from an immense lack of economic development. The poorest provinces are located in the south where most Muslims live, and this region also has the lowest literacy rate and life expectancy in the country (Singh 2007: 33). Furthermore, in addition to landlessness and discrimination of Muslim Moro’s, the unemployment rate is very high and many are living in poverty which further adds to a feeling of alienation (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 99). Naturally, this has caused an inspiration to create an independent Moro state.

Thailand

The Thai Muslim minority make up about 5 percent of its total population, or approximately six million people. A great majority are Malay in origin, while the rest are Pakistani immigrants, ethnic Thai Muslims and a small number of Chinese Muslims. The Muslims are mainly living in five southern provinces close to the Malaysian border, namely; Songkhla, Satun, Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala. Traditionally, these provinces have been much poorer than the rest of the country. Most of this region was annexed by Thailand in 1902 as a buffer against the former colony of British Malaya (Singh 2007: 37).
Other Southeast Asian countries

The three countries introduced above are the ones hosting the largest terrorist networks and that have had the most significant problems with the issue within their borders. Following are a short summary of the other countries in the region, that have had problems with terrorism but in contrast to the other three these are not as prevalent.

Terrorism in Singapore was placed center of attention in December 2001 when a major terrorist plot was revealed that had aimed to involve coordinated bombings of US warships docked at the Changi Naval Base, Singapore’s Ministry of Defence, a shuttle bus and the subway, the British and Australian high commissions, the US and Israeli embassies, as well as housing complexes used by American companies (Chalk, in Smith 2005: 28). Singapore is still holding detainees from AJAI who were arrested in 2001 and 2002 for plotting to carry out attacks in Singapore, even though a few of them has been released after rehabilitation and religious counseling. They are also holding detainees from MILF (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 51 f). Singapore has also signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 212).

The threat from terrorism in Malaysia is more diffuse than in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. There are no observable radical insurgent groups as such, but the country is known to have loose logistical networks that have figured significantly in militant Islamist activities regionally and internationally. The most apparent contacts are with the Thai terrorist organizations PULO and New PULO, which also have bases in northern Malaysia (Chalk, in Smith 2005: 23). There is also evidence of connections with terrorist networks in Indonesia and the Philippines, as well as Singapore. Furthermore, before 9/11 Malaysia was aware that AJAI is active in the country, although not to what extent. Malaysia, as well as Singapore, has a well functioning and effective security service that was developed by the British during their colonial rule (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 210 f). Both countries are using these effectively to fight terrorism, as well as successfully cooperating regarding intelligence in the war on terror.

A radical defense militia called Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM) is linked with the ideological and organizational sphere of AJAI and fully agrees with its fundamentalist idea of violent pan-Islamism. KMM is also directly linked to the 2001 Singapore plot
according to Malaysian government sources (Chalk, in Smith 2005: 24). Malaysia held 16 alleged terrorists connected to AJAI in December 2008, as well as 13 linked to DI. These terrorists where held according to their Internal Security Act (ISA) with which they can detain a terrorist suspect without bringing them to trial. In general, suspected terrorist and terrorist supporters detained by the ISA law is held between two and six years (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 46).

The Muslim population in Myanmar is approximately two million, or about 4 percent of the total population. More than 1.5 million Myanmar Muslims are residing in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Middle East because of oppression by the military junta. The largest ethnically distinct Muslim community, and also the poorest, is the Rohingya which resides along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. There is also a minority of Chinese Muslims that originate from an Islamic sultanate that controlled southern Yunnan in China during the mid-nineteenth century (Singh 2007: 41 f). The Myanmar government classifies more or less all anti-regime activities as ‘acts of terrorism’, and hence making no distinction between genuine terrorism and peaceful political opposition (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 35).

Cambodia’s porous borders, widespread corruption, immense poverty, high unemployment, poor education system, and disadvantaged elements in the Cham Muslim minority, which is about 5 percent of the total population, are conditions that extremist Islamists and terrorist could take advantage of. Even though the Cham is not particularly politically active, the risk that foreign terrorists might use Cham areas as ‘safe havens’ has made the Cambodian government aware of the problem (Ibid. 36), and they have consequently taken precautionary measures.

Lao PDR has condemned international terrorism since 2002 and is willing to cooperate with the internationally to combat terrorism. While the Hmong insurgency is using terrorist tactics with bombing of civilian targets and attacking of buses, the Lao government has not seen international terrorism as an issue for Laos (Ibid. 45).
ASEAN

ASEAN is a sub-regional initiative that started 1967 in Southeast Asia, it is considered the most developed regional initiative after the EU and with the ASEAN charter that was signed in November 2007 the regional cooperation are moving towards a more integrated and progressive cooperation. However there are many hurdles to a fully integrated regional cooperation and the fact that the nation states are very careful about their sovereignty makes cooperation on several issues very hard to tackle, including international terrorism.

Several institutional mechanisms for the ASEAN member states to cooperate against terrorism already exist. They include the Southeast Asian Association of National Police (ASEANPOL), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Philippine Center on Transnational Crime (PCTC), to name a few. There are also a few more unofficial forums such as, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific’s (CSCAP) working group on Transnational Crime (WGTNC). Despite this, amazingly little ‘real’ cooperation has taken place. Exchange of information is mostly focusing on the most basic issues of mutual concerns (Chalk, in Smith 2005: 30).
5. Analysis

In the following analysis I will examine political Islamism and terrorism in Southeast Asia. In order to do this I have divided the chapter into four main parts. In the first I will analyze whether Southeast Asia can be considered to be the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or a ‘terrorist haven’. The second part will examine what has been done to combat terrorism within the specific countries, and how neo-realism can explain their actions. Part three will analyze what has been done by ASEAN, while the last part of the analysis is covering what efforts that are needed on a national and regional basis in order to combat terrorism.

5.1. Why has Southeast Asia been stated to be the ‘second front’ in the war on terror, is this statement accurate or even relevant?

In December 2001, a major Al Qaeda-linked bomb plot was revealed in Singapore. This plot, together the dreadful Bali attack in October 2002, seemed to substantiate that Southeast Asia was becoming a breeding ground for Islamist terrorists. It was feared that Southeast Asia’s huge Muslim population and many thousands of islands in the Indonesian and Philippine archipelago would turn into hiding places for Al Qaeda operatives fleeing from Afghanistan. In addition, it is also well-known that Osama bin Laden has focused attention on Southeast Asia, trying to spread Al Qaeda’s influence and build up its network in the region. For example, Al Qaeda has provided training, financial support and ideological indoctrination to the major separatist organizations MILF and the ASG in the Philippines (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 97 f). These facts make a strong foundation to Southeast Asia being a front in the global war on terrorism.

The reality to why extremist Islamism of Southeast Asia is growing is due to the birth of the many new Islamist groups that came into existence in the 1980s and 1990s. What differentiated these new movements were their extreme views of Islam, their militancy, and tendency to use violence in order to reach their political goals. In addition, their national and regional goals were often coordinated with global jihadi objectives (Singh
2007: 43 f), which was a new phenomenon. This rise in extremism has been obvious in Southeast Asia during the last decades, with a peak just before and after the 9/11 incident.

According to the Political Science Professor Nazih Ayubi, "the roots of the nexus between religion and terrorism lay in the Islamists’ attempt to radically change the social settings within which they perceive themselves to be victims of deprivation” (Ibid. 14). Most often there is alienation and unemployment in the societies that the Islamists operate in, and secular governments and ruling elite is blamed for the deprivations and oppression. The Islamists subsequently try to overthrow the regime by violence as a solution to their problems (Ibid.). This is obvious in several Southeast Asian countries, especially southern Philippines, a few provinces in Indonesia, and southern Thailand.

The increase of Islamist militancy has many explanations. In many Muslim societies, there is great frustration regarding national politics and political processes; political oppression in many secular regimes has only worsened the situation. From an economic perspective, there is enormous cynicism with most economic programs which is perceived as exploitation of the poor by the already wealthy. The continuation of unfair distribution in spite of countries being prosperous has created new recruits to militant Islamist groups. The sense inequality and exploitation by ‘global capitalism’ and ‘capitalists’, often through involvement with local elites, has only increased the problem (Ibid. 44).

Added to these domestic considerations is a whole array of international factors. Many Muslims are disillusioned with the international system, mainly dominated by the West and particularly the United States, that is often portrayed to be practicing double standards. Though viewed as a democracy and champion of human rights […] its own largely anti-Islamic policies […] have riled many into launching a Jihad against the United States, Israel, and their supporters. […] The lack of objection by the West to the repressive policies of Egypt, Algeria, Pakistan, and Suharto’s Indonesia against their Islamic militants has led to the burgeoning of Islamic militancy and extremism in these countries (Singh 2007: 44).

The failure in these states to deliver political, economic, and social development has led to the implementation of an ‘Islamic mode’ to treat what is perceived as national, regional, and global injustices towards Muslims, even by the use of terrorism if necessary. An important source of Islamic extremism is the failure of secular Muslim governments to exercise good governance and economic development. Most Muslim governments have not adapted to the quick political, economic, social, and demographic
changes that have occurred in the last century, and especially during the last 25 years. The result of these mistakes is a growing part of poor people in urban and rural areas, which are particularly vulnerable to extremist ideas (Ibid. 44 f). The failure of the governments to bring modernism to their countries has hence caused the emergence of global terrorism to a great degree, particularly as governments have failed to bring political and economic development or build well functioning institutions, let alone democracy.

Governments have basically ignored large sections of the population when they failed to deliver development to them. The result is that extremist religious groups have increased their power and tried to answer their society’s shortcomings with religious revivalism and radicalism. Since both domestic and global injustices are generally held responsible for the Islamic community’s national, as well as international problems, violent jihad is often suggested as the only alternative to overcome this, even though it is no real alternative since it does not solve the problems. Furthermore,

… external forces have played a major role in the rise of many extremist Islamic groups in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Particularly important here was the funding provided by the United States and the conservative regimes in the Middle East (especially Saudi Arabia) to prop up or create extremist groups, among others, to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Israel’s occupation of Palestine (Sing 2007: 45).

The Iranian Revolution and the Mujahidin struggle in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation have also a great part in radicalizing Islam, as well as Saudi-funded schools and charities that are spreading Wahhabism and extremist ideas (Ibid. 45). Together, these reasons have played a key role in radicalizing Islam in Southeast Asia.

Even though governments in Southeast Asia and their allies have been focusing on destroying Islamist extremists and terrorists, killing suspected AJAI leaders and others, this has mainly had a reverse effect. Instead it has demonized the AJAI and strengthened its appeal to new terrorist recruits. Small extremist groups has grown significantly during the past few years, and the number of jihad groups has increased from about 30 to 47 (Ibid. 3 f). They have also recruited more people, raised more funds and become more influential. Considering these facts, Southeast Asia deserves to be labeled as the ‘second front’ in the war on terror. Since Southeast Asia is a significant part of the Muslim world, and because radical Islam is rapidly spreading among the Muslim population as well as the fact that extremist Islamist ideology imported from the Middle East has become a part of the religious discourse, the label ‘second front’ only seems appropriate. Furthermore,
the existence of many radical groups, in addition to the most dangerous of them all, AJAI, also contributes to the statement. On top of this, Southeast Asia has witnessed numerous violent terrorist attacks against ‘anti-Islamic Western targets’ since the 9/11 attack, the latest merely a few weeks ago against two hotels in Jakarta, Indonesia. The region also continues to host various training camps educating violent *jihadists*, primarily in southern Philippines, in addition to having more than 300 Islamist radicals imprisoned in the region (Ibid. 4). These are all compelling facts in order to make the statement that Southeast Asia may be called the ‘second front’ in the war on terror.

The 12 October 2002 Bali suicide attacks that left 202 dead was the most devastating terrorist attack since 9/11. This attack came only ten months after an AJAI plot to blow up American and other Western targets in Singapore in December 2001 had been discovered (Ramakrishna 2003: 1). Furthermore, in mid-2000 AJAI members assisted a team of terrorists from Yemen to plan a bombing of the US embassy in Jakarta, although the plot was exposed (Abuza, in Smith 2005: 44). Then in 2003, a number of smaller bomb attacks in southern Philippines and Indonesia culminated in the suicide attack against the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta with 11 people killed and around 150 injured. Again, AJAI was behind the terrorist attack (Ramakrishna 2003: 1). Just like Al Qaeda, very little is known about AJAI. It is a truly secretive and clandestine organization. Furthermore, this is the only known terrorist organization that is characterized as regional (Singh 2007: 51). Most of the top AJAI leaders have even denied the existence of the organization (Singh 2007: 54). AJAI is alleged to be behind most major terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia since the late 1990s (Ibid. 50). Hence, AJAI is probably the biggest terrorist threat in Southeast Asia, and more resources should be added to specifically combat this organization since it threatens societies, people, and democratic values to a greater extent than other local terrorist groups. It also makes the region even more apt to call the ‘second front’.

It is hard to deny that threats from terrorist organization and groups exists in Southeast Asia, although one can still question if the region really is the ‘second front’ in the global war on terror, or even a ‘terrorist haven’, even though there are strong arguments that suggest that it is. Additionally, another interesting question is to what extent the Southeast Asian governments are responsible for the terrorist problem in the region (Ramakrishna 2003: 2). To imply that the region is a breeding ground for terrorism of the likes of AJAI and Al Qaeda is to suggest that an extremely radicalized political Islam
have influenced great parts of Southeast Asia. This sequentially suggests that many of the regions Muslims agree to the fact that they are only able to practice their faith in an Islamic social and political framework, and to attain that objective, violent struggle (jihad) and terrorism against regional governments and Western allies is justified (Ibid. 4). To suggest this, seems not only politically wrong, but also rather presumptuous and will likely cause even more stereotyping of Muslims.

However, there are a number of issues in branding Southeast Asia as the ‘second front’. First of all, this ‘new’ kind of terrorism is not just a phenomenon unique for Southeast Asia. The Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, Russia, Japan and even Europe and the US have had the same kind of terrorist attacks on its soil. Additionally, even considering the Bali and J.W. Marriott attacks as well as the most resent Jakarta hotel attacks against Ritz-Carlton and Marriott, the militant Islamist and Taliban activities in Afghanistan, bombings in Mumbai in 2003 and 2009, the never ending suicide attacks in Israel, terrorist activity in Iraq as well as the Madrid and London bombings, it is relevant to question why Southeast Asia should be called the ‘second front’ in the war on terror (Ramakrishna 2003: 14 f). The first front is naturally Central Asia, with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq as the definite hotspot.

The claims that Southeast Asia was becoming a hotbed for terrorism became relevant particularly after the intervention of US troops in counter-terrorism operations in the Philippines as well as after the kidnapping of Western tourists by the criminalized ASG. It is important to keep in mind that there had been an increase in fundamentalist Islamism and the violence had been rising over an extended period in Southeast Asia, as well as growing linkages to Al Qaeda (Sahni 2002).

Ajai Sahni discusses in his paper The Locus of Error: Has Gravity of Terrorism ‘Shifted’ in Asia? how it is geographically possible to locate the locus of terrorism. He writes “How are we to locate the locus? Is it the region of the largest concentration of terrorists? Or of their leadership? Or of their activities?” (Ibid. 2002). Thus, if we should use the most devastating terrorist attacks to determine the locus, then you might consider Southeast Asia to be the ‘second front’ considering that the Bali attacks is the most devastating attack since 9/11. Furthermore, although it may possibly be unfair to label Southeast Asia as the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or a ‘terrorist haven’, it without a doubt is a front in that war. But claiming that the region is a ‘terrorist haven’ because of
the Bali bombing and other terrorist attacks is not entirely fair since terror plots and attacks are taking place in other states and regions as well (Ramakrishna 2003: 30 f). Furthermore, regarding the phrase ‘war on terror’, it is also interesting to know what kind of terrorism that is implied, since the whole subject seems to include only Islamist terrorism. This is particularly interesting since Sri Lanka, Nepal and India have huge problems with terrorism at an international level, albeit not Islamist terrorism (Sahni 2002).

Among the first signs of Al Qaeda style extremism in Southeast Asian was the establishment of the ASG in 1990. Its founder, Abdurajak Janjalani is said to have met with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and been encouraged by him to put together a violent group in the southern Philippines. Various reports also states that Ramzi Yousef, an Al Qaeda operative and bomb expert, was asked by senior Al Qaeda members to train the ASG in the use of high explosives, and also set up a terrorist cell in Manila (Williams, in Ramakrishna 2003: 87 f). Ramzi Yousef became famous after his bold terrorist attacks, such as the bombing of the New York World Trade Center in 1993 (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 108).

Following this discussion, I find it hard to declare whether Southeast Asia really can be labeled the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or not. There are strong arguments to suggest either, but what is clear is that it at least can be considered to be a ‘front’ in this war. However, if Southeast Asia is the second, third or fourth front is hard for me to determine when so many factors must be considered. If the ‘war on terror’ only includes Islamist terrorism and one should judge solely on the number of casualties from single attacks, then Southeast Asia might be called the ‘second front’. But if other factors are to be included, like non-Islamic terrorism, or the total number of casualties, then I would rather confidently say that it is not. Furthermore, regarding if the region is a ‘terrorist haven’ or not, there are certainly many active and dangerous terrorist organizations and groups in Southeast Asia, with an increasing number of members. But since many of these groups’ agendas mainly are to gain independence, like PULO, GAM, or MNLF, and only fractions of these organizations are fighting for a global jihad, it is hard to say if it is a ‘terrorist haven’ for this reason. However, the region has been known to shelter international terrorists on many different occasions, but so have other parts of the world such as Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan.
It is consequently very hard to declare Southeast Asia as neither a ‘terrorist haven’ nor the ‘second front’ with any certainty. However, it is clear that terrorism has a tight grip on the region and that the Southeast Asian states must work hard in many different levels within their societies in order to combat terrorism.

5.2. What has been done to combat terrorism in Southeast Asian states, and how can neo-realism explain this?

It is important to remember that Southeast Asia is home to more than 230 million Muslims, more the entire Arab Middle East. The interest of these Muslims must always be considered when formulating national and foreign policies. Since a large number of Muslims in Southeast Asia are living under impoverished circumstances and oppression, it is important to bring development and good governance.

Traditionally, two jihadi-oriented organizations have been noteworthy in Indonesia, the Darul Islam (DI) and the Aceh struggle (Singh 2007: 29), although not as significant today. The Aceh struggle began in the early 1900s when the Acehnese violently resisted Dutch colonialism, and has continued since it became part of Indonesia. Despite the great wealth and natural resources in Aceh, the region is still one of the poorest and underdeveloped in Indonesia. Aceh contributes a great deal of oil, natural gas, and other resources, to the Indonesian government, but the Acehnese people receive very little in return. This is considered to be extremely disproportionate and representing ‘internal colonialism’. For example, in 1997-98, the government collected more than 32 trillion Rupiah from Aceh, but the province only got 290 billion rupiah back (Ibid. 32). This disproportionate system has intensified the struggle against the central government, although with a few more peaceful years after the tsunami that devastated parts of Aceh.

The Bali suicide attacks shook the world in 2002, it not only killed 202 people but it also terrified an entire world that was already uneasy after 9/11. Not even the holiday paradise of Bali was safe from the dreadful forces of militant Islamism. In 2003 and 2005 there were two more attacks, although not in the same league as the Bali bombing of 2002, but still enough to induce fear in tourists and Western countries. After that Indonesia experienced a few years without of any major terrorist attacks until the suicide attacks against Ritz-Carlton and Marriott Hotel in Jakarta in July 2009. The Indonesian
government’s counterterrorism efforts have been immense with the result of reducing different terrorist organizations, such as AJAI, to plan and execute terrorist attacks. Arrests of alleged terrorists has shown that radical institutions such as Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis (KOMPAK), AJAI and its affiliated groups continue to be a threat, even though arrests has reduced their capability to carry out terrorist attacks (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 40), even though AJAI succeeded once again in July 2009. There is still much work to do in order to combat terrorism in Indonesia. Sidney Jones from the International Crisis Group (ICG), who is an expert on terrorism and radical groups in Indonesia have said that Indonesian terrorism “is clearly bigger that we thought, and there are more little groups than we thought … it covers the entire country – that’s the scary thing” (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 205). Apparently a lot of efforts must be done to facilitate a change in the Indonesian governance, society and economy in order to solve the problems that keep feeding extremist Islamists with new and willing recruits.

The Indonesian government has made efforts to combat terrorism, and the Indonesian police have apparently been very efficient and capable in doing their job. Not only have the government’s counterterrorist efforts focused on law enforcement and the judicial infrastructure for dealing with terrorism, they have also focused in preventing terrorism and de-radicalize convicted terrorists. The Indonesian National Police is keeping tight surveillance on suspected terrorists and has captured several alleged terrorists plotting to conduct new terrorist attacks. Indonesia has also focused on investigative training, equipment and technical assistance to their counterterrorism units. Furthermore, there have been several convictions of terrorists, among them the most senior AJAI leader ever arrested. Indonesian courts have prosecuted 43 terrorists since 2006, among them 26 AJAI members. Furthermore, the Indonesian government executed the three convicted 2002 Bali bombers during 2008, without any following serious incidents or public responses, this even though the co-founder of AJAI called for retaliatory terrorist attacks. The Indonesian National Police has also continued a program to de-radicalize convicted terrorist who might be open to more moderate teachings and have focused on spiritual support as well as modest financial support for their families. This program is intended to decrease recruitment of terrorists inside prisons (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 40 f). Indonesia has also ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 204). These measures to fight
terrorism are mainly focused on the domestic component of anti-terrorism, and not so much to either regional or global. Hence, Indonesia is strictly following traditional neo-realistic values and mainly tries to get in control over terrorism within their own country, and quite hesitant to cooperate with other states even though this might be very successful.

In the Philippines, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) defined itself according to three main beliefs, described by Bilveer Singh as; “that the Moro people constituted a distinct bangsa (nation) that has a specific Islamic historical and cultural identity; that the bangsa Moro has a legitimate right to determine their own future, and; the MNLF has both a duty and obligation to wage a Jihad against the Philippine state” (Singh 2007: 34). This has mainly been the reason to the struggle in the southern Philippines for the last decades.

Splits among the leadership in the MNLF lead to the founding of the MILF and the MNLF Reformist Group. MILF, established in 1977, emphasize its Islamic identity with the aim of setting up an independent Islamic Moro state. Its militant fraction is highly proficient, since many members have combat experience from Afghanistan (Singh 2007: 35). The MILF claims to be able to field 120,000 mujahidin soldiers, a force numerically superior to the entire Philippine armed forces. However, Western military intelligence estimates that MILFs standing army is between 18,000 to 35,000 soldiers (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 101), which still is a high number that poses a large threat for the Philippine government. MILF is currently in control of large parts of at least seven provinces in Mindanao (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 101 f), which virtually makes MILF a local authority and “government”. There is also indication that some MILF factions is continues to associate with AJAI, both by carrying out operations for them and by providing training and refuge for fugitive AJAI operatives hiding from Southeast Asian authorities (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 107). Nevertheless, the US still have not labeled MILF as a terrorist organization, perhaps because of MILF’s strong military resources.

In addition, the founding the extremist Islamist Abu Sayyaf Group in 1991, has made the state of Islamic separatism in the Philippines even more complex. ASG is a much smaller group than MNLF or MILF, but it is extremely ruthless. Most of its members have experience from the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. The ASG is exceptionally anti-Christian and not prepared to negotiate, believing that violence is the only solution it has
been behind some of the most brutal attacks in the southern Philippines (Singh 2007: 35). The ASG also appears to have had strong links with international Islamist terrorist groups, mainly Al Qaeda (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 108). Between the years 1991 to 1996 the ASG was behind sixty-seven terrorist attacks (Abuza, in Smith 2005: 42). The ASG became famous to the world after the kidnapping of 21 hostages, of which twelve where Western tourists, on the Malaysian island resort on Sipadan Island in April 2000. The organization demanded a separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines and an investigation into suspected abuse of Filipinos in Sabah, Malaysia as conditions for the release of the hostages (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 109). The ASG is also linked to a terrorist plot to bomb US embassies in Manila and Bangkok, assassinate President Clinton during the 1996 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in the Philippines, as well as destroy eleven US commercial airplanes flying trans-Pacific routes to the US (Chalk, in Smith 2005:20 f). Luckily, this plot was revealed before it could be put into action. Since then, the ASG has apparently been reduced to a loose collection of criminals and warlords motivated less by militant Islamist ideology than financial gain and greed (Ibid. 21). Besides kidnapping, the ASG is also engaged in extortion, growing of marijuana, and collecting “taxes” of peasants, fishermen and businessmen (Abuza 2003: 112). Therefore, I am uncertain if this group really can be labeled as a pure Islamist terrorist organization.

The Philippine’s security forces has focused a great deal in their counterterrorist efforts, killing 35 terrorists and capturing 16 during the first half of 2008. The New People’s Army (NPA) with its 5,000 members is continuing to threat public security and business with attacks on the infrastructure all over the Philippines, although it is declining in supporters and effectiveness. Furthermore, the Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) is continuing their attacks in the Philippines and has close links to AJAI and the ASG, which has resulted in freezing of their bank accounts and real estate since they have been included on the UN 1267 Committee sanction list (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 49). The origin to this rebellion is not just religion but also extreme poverty and unemployment (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 110). This clearly follows the example from Indonesia, where terrorist groups are most often living in poverty, making up a huge base for these organizations to recruit new members from.

The Philippine military and law enforcement agencies have conducted intensive security operations to wipe out terrorist safe havens in the southern Philippines. Furthermore, the
new Human Security Act has been a significant tool in order to improve law enforcement against alleged terrorists. Philippine law enforcement agencies have also increased their capabilities to detect, deter, counter and investigate terrorist activities through careful training (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 50). The Philippine government has propagated a fourteen point plan to combat terrorism, which mostly emphasizes military measures and do not address fundamental problems such as the Moro landlessness, poverty, unemployment, discrimination etc. (Tan, in Ramakrishna 2003: 111). This internal power politics might not solve the problem in southern Philippines, since some kind of effective poverty reduction scheme clearly must be applied in order to resolve the most basic problems. Furthermore, landlessness and discrimination is also necessary to address.

In Thailand, the most famous separatist movement that have dominated the struggle in the south is the Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Pattani (BNPP) and the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), of which the last is the most famous (Singh 2007: 38). BNPP supposedly ceased activity in 2002, but is still believed to have been involved in some attacks during the latest year’s violence. The goal of BNPP is to restore or revive the prosperous former Pattani state, although their topmost ambition is to once again be united with Malaysia (Ibid. 38 f). Hence, one can understand Thailand’s incentive to fight these organizations, since they do not want to lose a part of their territory, especially to another county and consequently lose power and ‘balance’.

In 1967, the PULO was establish in India and launched in Saudi Arabia the year after. PULO is undoubtedly the most significant separatist group in southern Thailand. Their aim is to secede from Thailand and since they are not afraid to use violence to reach their goals, PULO has also established a military wing of its organization. They have been focusing on minor attacks intended to harass the police, local authorities, and other symbols of Thai sociopolitical suppression, predominantly public school (Ibid. 39). Three smaller splinter groups were created from and in addition to PULO after some rift between the core leaders, among these one called New PULO. This is following the same pattern as in other Southeast Asian countries, where from radical organizations smaller groups splinter and become even more radical and militant.

A new group called the Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani (GMIP) was established in 1985 due to the increasing radicalization of Muslims in southern Thailand. The group
aimed to liberate the southern provinces and establish an ‘Islamic State’. Members of this organization are also known as Mujahidin Pattani members. The objective of GMIP is also to unite the various Islamic resistance organizations in southern Thailand into a single organization (Ibid. 39 f).

In 1989, The United Front for the Independence of Pattani (BERSATU) was created with a plan to unite all southern Thai terrorist groups under one umbrella organization so that they would be able to consolidate their struggle and avoid confusion. The group has been behind several coordinated attacks aimed at killing state workers, law enforcement personnel, local government officials, school teachers, and other perceived symbols of Thai oppression. The tactic of the BERSATU groups is to deploy small armed factions to carry out guerilla attacks in the jungles. They are in constant movement and have no permanent bases on Thai soil. They also avoid armed clashes with Thai government authorities, instead using ambush tactics and surprise attacks (Ibid. 40).

Since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, there has been an increase of violence in the southern provinces due to unemployment and a growing drug problem. This resulted in more dissatisfied youths that became perfect new recruits to terrorist groups. Frequent terrorist activities in the southern Thailand are occasional bombings of soft targets, extortion, armed robbery, assassination for hire, and protection services for narcotic traffickers (Ibid. 40). Once more, poverty, unemployment and a feeling of alienation is a contributing cause to escalating violence.

The situation in southern Thailand has worsened dramatically after the 9/11 terrorist attack and Thailand’s subsequent support to the US ‘war on terror’. More than 3,400 people have been killed since 2004, when the violence increased even more, in assassinations, beheadings, and bombing (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 53). However, according to the US sources, there are no indications that transnational or regional terrorist groups are directly involved in the violence in the south, and it is unclear how much of this violence is the result of political disputes and crime (Ibid.).

In the past, Thailand has served as a transit point for regional terrorists (Ibid.), as well as a place to launder money and manufacture forged passports. Terrorists has been using Bangkok as a transit point since the mid-90s, and in 2002 a fake travel document ring who where serving Al Qaeda was busted by the Thai police (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 209). Furthermore, in June 2003, Thai authorities arrested three Thai Muslin AJAI
members who was planning to attack five embassies in Bangkok, as well as soft targets in the tourist destinations Phuket and Pattaya (Ibid. 219).

The Thai government has agreed to continue cooperation with the Malaysian government of joint patrols and information sharing to improve security in the border areas. Thai police and security officials have also conducted training in Antiterrorism and related law enforcement, as well as strengthened border and port security (Country Reports on Terrorism 2008: 53 f). This is an example of the successful anti-terrorism cooperation’s in the region, where the countries allied to combat a common enemy. Even though this cooperation is very rudimentary and at a low level, it still shows that states can cooperate in some cases if there is mutual benefits and no one will lose their power position.

Since 1982, it has been impossible for most of Myanmar’s Muslims to attain full citizenship. They have also been denied permission to build mosques, and the military junta has destroyed some of their oldest places of worship. As a result, many Muslims in Myanmar have called for a jihad against the state. However, only a small fraction supports an armed struggle, and even fewer have actively requested international Islamic assistance. Only the Bangladesh-based Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) seems to have developed connections with extremist Islamist organizations in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and perhaps even the Middle East (Singh 2007: 42).

The most prominent political Islamic group in Myanmar is the Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO) and is essentially an armed self-determination movement. This group seeks to protect the rights of the minority Rohingya and hope to establish an autonomous state of Arakan in Myanmar. To make the situation worse, there has been a growing radicalization of the ARNO, with many members believed to have established ties with radicals from the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

In Cambodia, the Cham Muslim community has been seen as a possible threat for some time. This group is not particularly political active, although they have been known to accommodate a few foreign radical Islamists. The Cambodian government has however adopted a firm position to the Cham community and cleared out Islamic militants from mosques and religious schools (Sing, in Ramakrishna 2003: 218). There are also other factors that might attract militant Islamist groups. Since the Khmer Rouge rule and subsequent conflict within Cambodia, the country has become a hub for illegal arms trading, where rebel groups, corrupt military elements, and ex-Khmer Rouge sell their
weapons. Furthermore, Cambodia is a center for money laundering and has no financial monitoring system, as well as porous borders and a very corrupt bureaucracy (Abuza 2003: 81). This might cause terrorist organizations to use Cambodia and the Cham community to prepare for future terrorist attacks.

When analyzing the actions of states in Southeast Asia, it stands clear that most governments are realist in their approach. According to realist theory, every state is responsible for its own security and can never trust other states (or institutions like ASEAN) to ensure the survival of the state. In the contemporary world and in particular considering the threat of international terrorism, neo-realism does not provide the best solutions to combat terrorism. Institutions like ASEAN are necessary to ensure cooperation and to fight against the common threat.

5.3. What has been done in ASEAN to combat terrorism, and how can neo-realistic theory explain this?

Since the threat of terrorism is international states cannot combat terrorism alone, and must therefore cooperate on a bilateral, as well as multilateral basis in order to be effective and successful. It is well known that ASEAN is still grappling with continuing bilateral tensions. In some ways, the common mistrust and suspicion in the region is not that surprising, since there has been, and continues to be, many territorial conflicts. Many Southeast Asian countries did not see international terrorism as a threat to their own state and sovereignty before 9/11, and therefore did not act when these groups and organizations “only” where banking, purchasing weapons, transiting, or similar, and not threatening the regime.

In many ways ASEAN is a product of the desire to avoid accidentally provoked cross-border sensitivities, hence the nonintrusive preference for decision-making that continue to underscore ASEAN. Resolutions are by and large not adopted unless they are undisputed and usually never make any references to national policies and security of other member states. This makes ASEAN appear to be a facade for harmonious regional relations, and not suited for open and honest discussions and decision-making to effectively deal with terrorism, particularly in a region where terrorists easily can move
and have impact across national borders. So far, the most productive cooperation has been between states on a bilateral basis where countries have specifically identified an urgent need to cooperate regarding intelligence and communication (Chalk, in Smith 2005: 30 f). Hence, ASEAN countries are following a strict neo-realist agenda. Apparently, “ASEAN is still a sovereignty enhancing rather than a sovereignty reducing body” (Abuza 2003: 248).

ASEAN is cooperating mainly through a political aspect, which is articulated by various declarations on terrorism. These declarations are vital in that they reinforce the political will of the members, so they can continue to fight terrorism. In November 2001 the ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism was signed by the member states. This declaration is aimed at cooperation to fight terrorism at bilateral, regional, as well as international levels. This was further enhances one year later with the ASEAN Declaration on Terrorism (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 214). Furthermore, the ASEAN member states are also cooperating on a more practical level through the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC). This is one of the most important collaborations which not only deal with terrorism but also closely related transnational crimes like drug trafficking, human trafficking, sea piracy, arms smuggling and money laundering (Ibid.). The AMMTC collaboration has no lack of ideas but any implementation of these ideas have been quite slow, which might not be so surprising since the ASEAN countries as always acts in a true neo-realist manner. ASEAN also signed an anti-terror treaty in May 2002, but only after it was forced to do so by the US. Hence, by a little intimidation by the US the ASEAN countries found it wise to ‘band wagon’ with the world’s greatest power.

In line with the neo-realist view, ASEAN has no clear role to play because through the neo-realist lens multilateral organizations are peripheral to great power politics. The dismissal of ASEAN as a powerful player in regional politics is mainly based on the fact that according to neo-realism, what really matters are power and the nation state, which is very obvious in Southeast Asia. This view is shared in Simon Sheldon’s article ASEAN and multilateralism: the long, bumpy road to community where he writes;

Neo-realists disdain ASEAN’s role in regional security because, in their view, institutions are epiphenomenal. Stability depends on the distribution of power within the Asia-Pacific and not on an international organization of small and medium states confined to Southeast Asia. The
real locus of Asia-Pacific power depends on relations with the major actors: the United States, China and Japan.

This explains why Southeast Asian states cooperate better through forums like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) where major world powers are included than they do through ASEAN. This is evident particularly regarding the ‘war on terror’ where most of the ASEAN states are cooperating with the US, but the cooperating within ASEAN is extremely slow and cautious. This is further articulated by Evelyn Goh;

The objectives of balancing are also broader in Southeast Asia. In the neo-realist concept of balancing behaviour, the aim is to challenge and change the distribution of power. However, taking into account the possibilities of balance of threat means that states may aim to preserve, or further entrench, the status quo power distribution. In Southeast Asia, actions to ally with or otherwise support U.S. predominance in the region as a way to balance against the Chinese threat will serve to further consolidate American dominance in the region. At the same time, it is hoped that encouraging the balancing presence of the U.S., Japan and other powers within the region would act as a fall-back warning to persuade China to change its preferences and intentions towards peaceful ones. In this sense, balancing behavior is harnessed to redress the balance of threat.

A more effective intra-state cooperation regarding anti-terrorism is thus the ARF where 23 countries are included, together with the world’s major powers.

Most Southeast Asian countries cooperate by exchanging intelligence information on terrorists, but mostly on a bilateral basis and very cautiously since these countries consider each other as security threats. The most productive cooperation seems to be between police forces of Southeast Asian countries. In existence is also a sub-regional initiative on transnational crime that began with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, and later expanded to include Thailand and Cambodia. That five countries can cooperate in an anti-terrorism pact regardless of the ASEAN consensus principle is particularly fascinating.

According to neo-realism, the regional cooperation in ASEAN is only peripheral and the states are the key actors in combating terrorism. However, there are still initiatives and efforts that suggest that there are other forces than realist in the region, trying to push ASEAN closer together to better deal with common threats.
5.4. What efforts are needed to terminate terrorism within Southeast Asia?

Nearly all ASEAN states are exposed to a threat of terrorism, and it should be in their own interest to fight organizations like AJAI, Al Qaeda, and related groups. Since terrorism is a threat to the economic security, and not just lives and property, Southeast Asian states should be utterly concerned and cooperate with each other to a great extent in order to fight the problem. Especially since AJAI ultimately is a threat to present state power and states territorial integrity given that AJAI's ultimate goal is to set up an Islamic caliphate of what is now Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Philippines, southern Thailand, Singapore and Brunei (Singh, in Ramakrishna 2003: 202).

It is obvious that there is no simple solution to global terrorism. There are no simple solutions, and if the ‘war on terror’ is going be successful, it will have to be fought in a new way with cooperation of many state actors that have been reluctant to collaborate traditionally, as well as with good governance and poverty reduction. It will have to be fought through a broad and clearly defined strategic framework based on close assessment of the enemy, the character of the conflict, and the root causes (Sahni 2002). One must also remember that, as Zachary Abuza writes in *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, “[m]any of the Islamic movements in Southeast Asia have legitimate grievances, whether they were repressed, clamored for autonomy, or simply demanded greater religious freedom.” (Abuza 2003: 189). Many of the previously mentioned terrorist groups started as just “freedom fighters”, and later became more violent or split up into more militant factions.

Combating terrorism is extremely difficult since it is so amorphous, extremely complex, constantly changing in form and tactic, as well as very unpredictable. To counter it effectively, governments must tackle the entire range of the causes leading to terrorism, for example; the large number of small arms available, including the participation of the weapons industry (which is mainly from the West); the support to authoritarian governments by the West; geographic and demographic issues; etc. (Sahni 2002). These kinds of measures are absolutely necessary to address in order to win the war on terror, if not, terrorism will continue to flourish and attract new supporters. In its present form, the war on terror is mostly an ideological war against global fundamentalist Islamism. These extremist ideas spread easily without much material efforts and must be fought and
destroyed at the most basic level before they spread to a greater audience of possible terrorists. Ajai Sahni describes this difficulty very well by claiming that;

[r]egrettably, while the ideologies of hatred and violence have, in recent times, been vigorously promoted and liberally funded, the liberal democratic ideology has had very poor advocacy. Indeed, some of the most powerful advocacy of terrorism has come from the liberal fold itself, among those who find ‘justifications’ for Islamist terrorism in past US policies, in historical wrongs, in the alleged suffering of the people who resort to terrorism, and in inchoate ‘root causes’ of terrorism (Sahni 2002).

Hence, it is absolutely necessary to drastically change the way we think about terrorism, and to recognize the vastness of the threat that extremist movements cause, not only to specific regimes or states, but also to the liberal democratic system. As Harry Eckstein articulates it, “there is a ‘myth of democracy achieved’ that manifests itself in […] ‘the bare belief that democracy need only exist to succeed’” (Ibid.), but it is important to keep in mind that, “[u]nless freedoms are extended, they are whittled away.” (Ibid.). It might be true that we are taking our system of liberal democracy for granted and that nothing can change our way of life, when we in fact have made quite drastic changes since the ‘war on terror’ began. Currently, liberal democracies show very little consistency in their policies towards many illiberal regimes across the world, and hence indirectly supporting the militant Islamists cause. It is important to understand that “[t]errorism will retreat where democracy advances, not where autocrats muzzle political expression or buy peace at home by financing violence abroad.” (Ibid.). Therefore, the people and their leaders from liberal Western countries “[d]on’t ask Third World countries to put up with less democracy than we want for ourselves.” (Ibid.). Hence, we must help spread the liberal democratic system and good governance to get to the root causes of the problem. Continuing with current policies has only exaggerated the problem as well as decreased the freedom in Western countries in order to protect us against the terrorist threat. Therefore, new policies must be adopted and as the previous US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice so frankly admitted, “[w]e have to ask how many dictators we should have stopped” (Ibid.), and realize that we brought this problem on ourselves to a great extent and that we hold the key to the solution.

The liberal democratic world, consequently, with all its imperfections, retains the greater power to resolve the deficiencies of the emerging world order. This power is compounded with the passage of time, […] to the progressive weakening and marginalization of
authoritarian and extremist cultures. This latter progression […] creates its own impulses to violence and disruption, but this is the reaction of the disadvantaged - those who are excluded to suffer ‘the frustration inherent in an unattainable consumerist world’, not the initiative of those who possess the means for transformation (Sahni 2002).

Moderate Southeast Asian Muslim leaders, which after all are in majority, need to admit that there is a serious problem of radicalism among certain Muslim groups. This problem must be dealt with by moderate Muslim leaders together with law enforcement agencies for the sake of the image of Islam as a nonviolent religion and the promotion of a more moderate Islam to Muslims in Southeast Asia. There are two main problems with extremists; the first one is the abuse and manipulation of certain Islamic doctrines that undoubtedly comes from a literal interpretation of Islam and which justify radicalism and terrorism. The second problem is the use of violence and terrorism, which undoubtedly runs contrary to Islam. Therefore, moderate Muslim leaders must speak more clearly and loudly that a literal interpretation of Islam will only lead to an extremism that is unacceptable to Islam, and that Islam cannot condone or justify any kind of violence and terrorism. Any kind of resentment and deprivation felt by any individual and group of Muslims cannot and must not justify any kind of inhuman act, since there is absolutely no valid reason to harm or kill other people.
6. Conclusion

During the years that have passed since 9/11, there have been significant efforts from across the world to combat terrorism. Alliances have been created, nations are cooperating like never before and large parts of the world stand united against this common threat. In Southeast Asia terrorism was a known threat well before 9/11 but the efforts that were made to fight terrorism were on a much lower scale than after the 9/11 and Bali attacks. Terrorism was largely seen as a national threat and not the regional and global problem that it is recognized as today.

The media, academics and various states have been referring to Southeast Asia as the ‘second front’ on terrorism or as a ‘terrorist haven’. These concepts and the accuracy in labeling the region as such has been elaborated in the thesis and the conclusion that can be drawn is that it is largely a conceptual issue. Terrorism is occurring in many places of the world, even unrelated to Al Qaeda and the so called war on terror. Sri Lanka, India, Spain, China and many other states are experiencing terrorist attacks, in the name of religion, in the name of independence or freedom; the reasons are many as well as the definitions and discourses on the subject.

Hosting one of the world’s most dangerous terrorist organizations, AJAI, and in addition, being the epicenter of attention in several large attacks, such as the Bali bombings in 2002, 2003 and 2005, several serious terrorist plots and lately the attack on the Marriott hotel in Jakarta in July 2009, the region most certainly deserves some of the attention that has been contributed to the region as a ‘second front’ and ‘terrorist haven’. But of course there are people who would argue otherwise.

By positioning the region as a ‘second front’ or ‘terrorist haven’ also to some extent means to imply that the region is a breeding ground for terrorism and would suggest that an extremely radicalized political Islam have influenced great parts of Southeast Asia. This would in fact suggests that many of the regions Muslims agree to the fact that they are only able to practice their faith in an Islamic social and political framework, and to attain that objective, violent struggle (jihad) and terrorism against regional governments and Western allies is justified (Ramakrishna 2003: 4). To suggest this, seems not only politically wrong, but also rather presumptuous and will likely cause even more stereotyping of Muslims.
It may possibly be unfair to label Southeast Asia as the ‘second front’ in the war on terror or a ‘terrorist haven’, but it is without a doubt a front in that war. But claiming that the region is a ‘terrorist haven’ because of the Bali bombing and other terrorist attacks is not entirely fair since terror plots and attacks are taking place in other states and regions as well (Ramakrishna 2003: 30 f). The conclusion that I have drawn from this is that it is mainly a matter of conceptualization. The way one interprets the terms affects the way Southeast Asia is viewed by other states and regions. States have seen the problem of terrorism as a crime rather than, what it is, a global political problem.

Out of the ASEAN states, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia stand out in terms of the number of attacks executed and terrorist groups connected to each other. These states, like most other states in the region are taking measures to ensure that terrorist groups are prevented to act within the borders of their country. The neo-realist theory holds that states are only engaged in efforts that benefit themselves. Further in accordance with neo-realist views, states are always struggling to strengthen their position in relation to other states, this means that the fact that some states tone done the prominence of terrorism in their states, not to lose their position. Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia are all struggling to combat terrorism. In the case of Indonesia, the struggle is very much focused on the own state, which is in accordance with neo-realist theory where states are must have control in order to keep their ‘balance of power’.

Already in the very basic ideas of neo-realism, the fact that the state is the most prominent actor in international relations stands clear. Thus the power of ASEAN in combating terrorism is not given very high expectations from the neo-realist perspective. In addition, ASEAN as a regional instrument has been criticized for being a “talk-shop” and peripheral to the actual politics and struggles that is happening in the Southeast Asian region. However, ASEAN has grown in prominence lately and the declarations ratified by the ASEAN nations at least gives an indication that the states agree on the importance of fighting terrorism in Southeast Asia.

According to realist theories, and neo-realism in particular, power and influence are important in international relations. The actions of the states show that the ASEAN states are all acting to preserve or gain power and influence. This, according to neo-realism is nothing out of the ordinary, as expressed by Waltz, states will “at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination” (Waltz 1979, 118).
The incentives to increase the regional cooperation and to further put emphasis on ASEAN as an important player in the field go against the fundamental notions of neorealism.

Furthermore, religion and politics must be separated in order to guarantee civil peace to a greater extent. Countries should also to a higher degree hold on to democratic principles while carrying out their war against terrorism. Islamist terrorism cannot win, because it does not offer any real alternative to the failure of modernism in Muslim society. However, it cannot be totally defeated either, since inequality, anger and envy will always exist.
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