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## The Root Causes of Terrorism in Southern Thailand

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### **Abstract:**

*This study aims to determine whether social and economic conditions are the causes of Terrorism in Southern Thailand. The variables used to consist of the unemployment rate, Gini index, population growth, inflation, and the terrorism index. This study covers the period 2004 - 2018. The estimation model used is the Ordinary Least Square (OLS). The empirical results confirm that social and economic problems influence Terrorism in Southern Thailand; almost all variables are significant at the 5% level except inflation. Unemployment has a negative effect, while population growth and the Gini index positively affect Terrorism in Southern Thailand. The proposed policy implies that development equality between developed and underdeveloped regions is prioritized to resolve social and economic problems.*

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Socio-economic problems, root cause, unemployment, poverty

### **1. Introduction**

After the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York collapsed due to being hit by a plane or introducing the 9/11 tragedy, the tragedy was an act of terrorism that shock the world. Research on terrorism is widespread (Sandler, 2013), especially regarding the factors that cause involvement in organisations or acts of Terrorism (Krueger & Malečková, 2003; Piazza, 2006; Butler, 2009; Ehrlich & Liu, 2012) and the effects of their actions (Blomberg et al., 2004; Eckstein & Tsiddon, 2004; Gupta et al. 2004; Brock et al., 2004).

Wojciechowski (2016) explains that terrorism originates from differences in religion and culture, territory and ethnicity, socio-economic conditions, historical politics, and psychology. The root causes of terrorism are still a topic of debate by academic experts, especially the economic relationship of terrorism, whether social and economic conditions play an important role in determining terrorism or vice versa. Krueger & Malečková (2003) states that there is no direct link between terrorism and the temporary economic situation. Bjørge (2005) there is an indirect relationship between terrorism and poverty. In general, terrorism does not originate from the poverty and least educated segments of society. On the other hand, they come from the middle to upper level of society and are, on average, highly educated (Berrebi, 2007). Terrorism can be linked to social and economic problems; accordingly term 'Frustration Aggression' described by Ted Robert Gurr (1970) that feelings of disappointment with the socio-economic problems it faces can influence a person to take violent political action. (Piazza, 2006). On the other hand, the socio-economic problems faced are attributed to terrorism.

Based on a World Bank report (2020), countries experiencing conflict or are in conditions of ongoing conflict may experience ten times more poverty than countries without conflict. Such is the United Nations report, which states that conflict is one of the poverty causes. If so, it can be estimated as a continuous cycle that cannot be ended. In general, terrorism is rooted in social and economic instability, including poverty (Piazza, 2009, 2011; Ilyas et al., 2017), unemployed (Caruso & Gavrilova, 2012; Ismail and Amjad, 2014; Yin, 2017; Lassoued et al., 2018), and population density (Öcal and Yildirim, 2010; Yin, 2017). This study aims to analyse the causes of Terrorism in Southern Thailand in 2004-2018. The sections of this paper are as follows; the next section elaborate briefly the Terrorism situation in Southern Thailand, section three is a literature review, then the model estimation is in section four, and section five is results and discussion, and the final section authors concludes and suggests the policy implications.

### **2. Terrorism in Southern Thailand**

The origin of Terrorism in Southern Thailand was the attack on the Krom Luang Rajjanakharin military camp, located in Ban Pileng, M'aru BoOk District, Cho-i-rong District, Narathiwat Province, on January 4, 2004, by the Patani independence force to achieve its objectives. Religion, politics and ideology. Terrorism in Southern Thailand takes attacks,

ambushes, bombings, arson, gunfire and others. The terrorism continues for 17 years so that it reached 20,163 cases, which claimed as many as 6,921 people, 13,511 people were injuries and other lost life(Death). see figure 1.

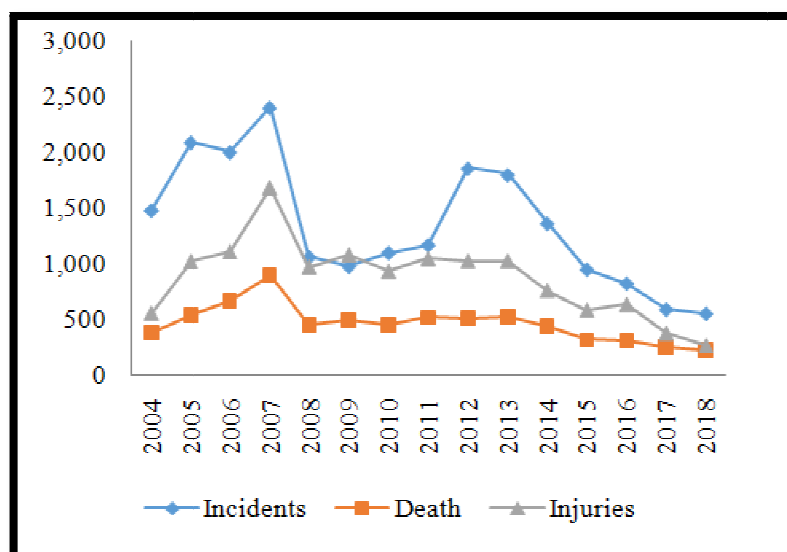


Figure 1: Terrorism Incidents in Southern Thailand, 2004-2018  
Source: Deep South Database, 2020

The incidents caused indirectly impacts Southern Thailand's economic growth, and Figure 2 shows that economic growth and terrorism in the three regions of Southern Thailand has the opposite effect. The economy increases as the incidence of terrorism decreases; on the other contrary, in the condition of increasing terrorism incidents, economic growth decreasing. In 2013, while the incidence of terrorism increased by 40%, the economy shrank by -40%.

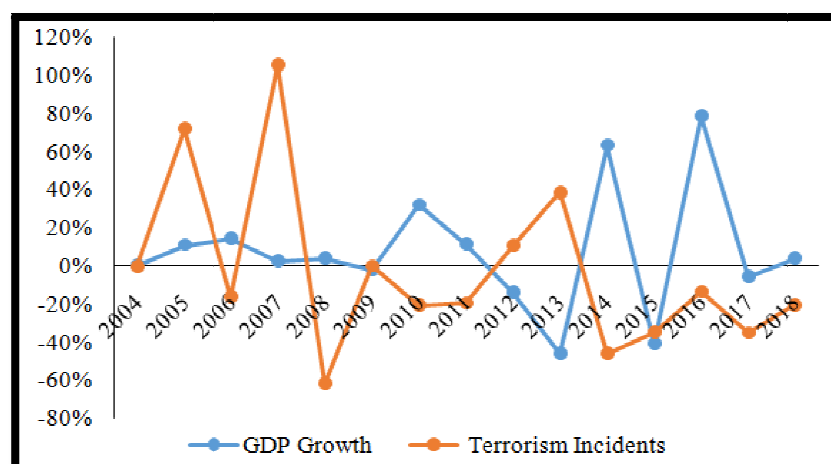
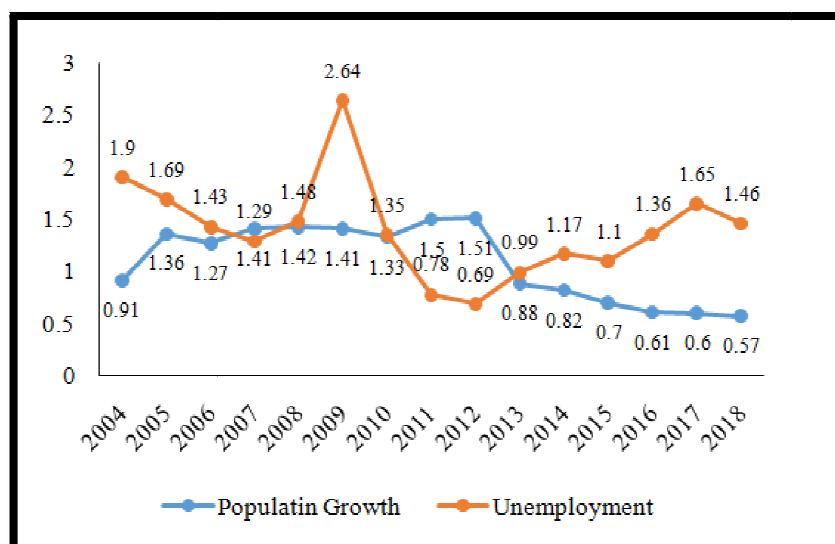


Figure 2: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth and Terrorist Incidents in Three Regions of Southern Thailand 2004-2017

To overcome this problem, the government issued special laws, Called the Military Emergency Law 1914, the Public Administration in Emergency Situation Law 2005 and the 2008 Internal Security Law, which leads to an increase in government spending from year to year. However, this policy did not solve the entire problem, meaning that the government did not have the power to eradicate terrorism groups. Hence, this is thought to be due to local communities' involvement in terrorism groups because of the social and economic conditions, including the increasing number of poor, high population growth, and unemployment; Figure 3 shows the situation.



Feature 3: Population Growth and Unemployment Rates in Southern Thailand 2004-2018

Source: National Statistical Office of Thailand (NSO), (2018)

### 3. Literature Review

Based on the previous section's explanation, the research on terrorism developed widely after 9/11 incident, most social scientists consider socio-economic inequality a crucial contributor to acts of political violence. Mohammad (2005) stated that the Middle East's socio-economic conditions are the driving factor for terrorism. Likewise, Hariz (1996) notes that terrorism arises from economic and social inadequacies.

Among them, unemployment is a result of unbalanced employment opportunities with an increasing population or labour offering; in addition to harming psychosocial, it will also harm the psychology of the unemployed itself, such as reducing the value of life so that it triggers feelings of stress due to unattainable economic expectations. Piazza, (2006). Unreachable economic expectations mean that cannot have the income to spend or survive for life, ultimately reducing welfare (Gilarso, 2004), motivating them to act violently. consequently this situation is associated with the term 'Deprivation Relative', which means a condition of inability to obtain a redistribution of resources and fair access, which causes anger and frustration, ultimately leading to violence.

Coccia (2018) analysed demographic factors as the cause of terrorism from 132 countries for 1970-2014. The researchers found that high population growth is combined with poverty, political instability, and income inequality. Hence this harms psychosocial and psychology so that trigger political violence (Terrorism).

Coccia (2018a) research uses three-country zones, such as Middle East, Western Europe and North America. The population growth is accompanied by low economic conditions, which triggers terrorism, especially for male youth aged 22-34 years due to environmental frustration (Coccia et al., 2018; Caruso & Gavrilova, 2012).

Korotayev et al. (2019) and Blomberg et al. (2004) explained that although economic growth has developed, it would be not sure can reduce the number of terrorism because it depends on the economic growth, whether it can reduce social problems or not, including if it can reduce the number of unemployed, it can bring a negative effect on terrorism and vice versa. Developed countries have more terrorism movements than developing countries (Piazza, 2011), for instance developed countries as targets for terrorist organisations. Terrorism increases with increasing economic growth (Shaheen et al., 2017).

Caruso & Schneider (2011) concluded that the brutality of terrorism is influenced by economic conditions, GDP per capita, and the high trade openness reduces the number of terrorism incidents, while high unemployment increases terrorism. Other research from (Butler 2009) examines the causes of terrorism; the hypothesis is that, terrorism is caused by economic, political, and social factors, data used before and after 9/11 incident. Democracy has a positive effect on terrorism.

Akhmat et al. (2013) examined the root causes of Terrorism in South Asia using panel data for the period 1980-2011. The empirical results show that Terrorism in South Asia is influenced by unemployment, population growth, poverty, inequality and inflation. Aligned with research from (Ehrlich, Paul R, Liu, 2012). This contradicts the empirical results of Shaheen et al. (2017) that unemployment and population growth are not the driving factors for terrorism. According to Lassoued et al. (2018) from his research, which aimed to examine the effects of terrorism on economic growth using panel data from 11 countries, six developing countries and five developed countries during the period 2008-2015. The empirical results show that unemployment causes terrorism.

Piazza (2009) explained that the root causes of Terrorism in India are sustainable political factors, including; separation movement, ethnic conflict, communal conflict, population growth and others. Meanwhile, poverty is not a component of political conflict which is a function of violence in which poverty is not the cause of terrorism and even the result of terrorism, in line with the results obtained from (Krueger & Malečková, 2003) that poverty has nothing to do with terrorism.

Hameed et al. (2019). His study analyses the economic determinants that affect Terrorism in Pakistan; empirical results show a long-term and short-term cointegration relationship between unemployment, inflation, GDP, trade and

Terrorism. Meanwhile, Bunrit (2013); and Shon (2014) examines the factors that cause terrorism at the border of Southern Thailand. Researchers emphasise that Terrorism in Southern Thailand is caused by a flawed government system and socio-economic problems.

Previous research has explained that most terrorism is associated with social and economic problems, including poverty, unemployment, economic conditions, population growth. However, the results obtained vary from one location to another; this is influenced by each country's economic conditions and geographic location (B. Rich and E. Rich, 2015). Besides, this research is expanding overseas, while research on the topic is still limited in Thailand. Therefore, this study explore these gaps to analyse population's social and economic conditions whether can affect terrorism actions.

#### 4. Research Methods

This study aims to analyse the causes of Terrorism in Southern Thailand, which are associated with socio-economic conditions. The estimation model used is the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) time-series data for 2004-2018. Social and economic inequality can be reflected through variables of poverty, unemployment, population growth and others. Terrorism data is obtained from the Deep South Coordination Center (DSCC), such as the centre for collecting and verifying terrorism incident data obtained from reliable public sources including the press, civil service division, army and police in certain areas where available data is in the form of statistics from various dimensions such as the number of incidents, And casualties. Event elements such as date and time, functional area or location, cause pattern, and target. The analysis in this study carried out by regression and descriptive, using EViews 10 the Regression Model of this study are as follow Terrorism index equation;

$$\text{Terrorism Index} = [1 + \text{TERR}_1 + \text{TERR}_2 + \text{TERR}_3] \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where  $\text{TERR}_1$ : the number of terrorist attacks,  $\text{TERR}_2$ : the number of fatalities due to terrorism attacks,  $\text{TERR}_3$ : the number of injuries due to terrorist attacks.

Regression model

$$\text{TERR} = f(\text{UEM}, \text{IDG}, \text{POG}, \text{INF}) \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

The linear equation (2) would be converted to the linear log equation because the variables used are from different units; the advantage of the linear log equation, the result become more efficient. The follows are a log liner model,

$$\log \text{TERR} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{UEM} + \beta_2 \text{IDG} + \beta_3 \log \text{POG} + \beta_4 \text{INF} + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

$\text{TERR}$  is the terrorism index,  $\text{UEM}$  is the unemployment level,  $\text{IDG}$  is the Gini index,  $\text{POG}$  is population growth, and  $\text{INF}$  is inflation.  $\beta_0$ : intercept / parameter,  $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ : coefficient,  $\varepsilon$ : error.

Poverty, according to the United Nations (UN), is a condition of lack enough of income and productive resources to lead a sustainable life. The poverty proxied in this study is the income Gini index (Piazza, 2011), unemployment rate (Ismail & Amjad, 2014; Lassoued et al., 2018), population growth (Coccia, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d) and inflation (Sultan Mehmood, 2013; Chuku et al., 2019). The data was obtained from the Ministry of Labor (MOL), Bank of Thailand (BOT), and the National Statistical Office of Thailand (NSO).

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD, 2019) defines terrorism attacks as threats or illegal use of force and violence by non-state actors to achieve political goals, economic, religious, or social through fear, coercion, or intimidation. The terrorism used in this research is proxied by the terrorism index (B. Rich & E. Rich, 2015), likely the result of the multiplication of terrorism incidents, victims who died and were injuries due to terrorism activities.

#### 5. Results and Discussion

This study aims to analyse the causes of Terrorism in Southern Thailand, which are associated with socio-economic conditions. The estimation results of Ordinary Least Square (OLS) are shown in Table 1.

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.
UEM	-0.823282	-4.400439	0.0013
IDG	7.310455	2.776291	0.0196
LogPOG	8.947387	5.136727	0.0004
INF	-0.008835	-0.607691	0.5569
C	49.75447	6.088449	0.0001
$R^2$	0.85	Prob.	
F-statistic	14.22819	(0.0004)	
Jarque-Bera	0.401850	(0.7819)	
Breusch-Godfrey	0.487295	(0.7838)	
Heteroskedasticity test	2.420511	(0.6589)	
Ramsey RESET test	0.421001	(0.5326)	

Table 1: Estimation Result

Source: Data processed by EViews 10, 2020

The estimation results from Table 1, shows that almost all the variables are significant at the 5% level. However, the resulting coefficient sign was not what was expected. Unemployment has a negative and significant effect on terrorism, meaning that if economic growth increases by 1%, terrorism decreases by 82%. These results indicate that unemployment is not related to Terrorism in Southern Thailand. In tune with research from Shaheen et al., (2017), who examined the relationship between terrorism, the problem of poverty, and economic growth in Pakistan from 1980 to 2015, the

researcher did not produce a positive relationship between unemployment and the incidence of terrorism. However, researchers attributed unemployment as a factor in increasing the number of poverty in which both dimensions are an obstacle to economic growth. This means that unemployment does not directly increase terrorism but, unemployment increases terrorism through bad economic conditions. In line with that, Lassoued et al. (2018) that unemployment may lead to terrorism. This is by the facts described in the previous sections (Figure 1 and 2) in 2010-2012; in addition to increasing economic growth, the unemployment rate decreased by 1.33%, 0.78% and 0.69%, in line with the number of terrorism. Also decreased. In 2013, when the economy shrank, the unemployment rate increased along with the increasing number of terrorism.

The population growth coefficient is 8.947387, this may be interpreted increasing the population by 1% may cause the increasing of terrorism by 8.94%; this result is supported by (Coccia, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d), who links population growth to terrorism. The empirical results showed that population growth accompanied by economic insufficiency would trigger violence actions.

The Gini Index as a proxy for poverty has a positive and significant effect on Terrorism in Southern Thailand with a coefficient value of 7.310455. This means that, if income inequality increases by 7.31%, it will positively and significantly lead to an increase in terrorism; the results obtained are in line with (Piazza, 2011; Coccia, 2018a). Poor people do not feel afraid to commit cruel actions because they think death is a better solution than the conditions or life they are experiencing, or in other words, those in unsupported conditions always look for better solutions to be avoided of the conditions that are being taken at that time. The results estimation are following the theory of 'Frustration Aggression'. Ted Robert Gurr (1970) described that hopelessness from unattainable expectations or the achievement of undue expectations would encourage someone to commit cruel actions.

The negative effect of inflation on terrorism is minimal, which can be seen from the coefficient value of only -0.008835. These results support the findings of the research conducted by (Caruso & Gavrilova, 2012), shows that 1% increase in the rate of inflation growth is associated with a 1% decrease in incidence in line with the idea that the better the economic opportunities, the fewer complaints can arise. Positive impact of Inflation can encourage a better economy by increasing national income, saving and investing, so that people can achieve prosperity. However, high rate of inflation can positively affect terrorism because of rising inflation cause the poor vulnerable and increases economic deprivation due to increased income inequality. According to Shahbaz (2013), inflation and terrorism have a reciprocal relationship, meaning that in addition to inflation affecting terrorism, inflation is also an effect of terrorism.

## 6. Conclusion

Terrorism as an act of planned violence by non-state groups that threaten to intimidate the government into achieving political, social, religious and ideological goals. If this cannot be addressed, these measures can bring the a dangerous impacts in the country's social, economic and political security. The year 2004 marked the beginning of the terrorism incident in Southern Thailand in an attack on military camps to seize firearms. The government's failure to issue an increasing budget from each year cannot solve the problem of Terrorism in Southern Thailand hence the community is still in a state of unrest. It is suspected that the community's involvement in terrorism groups is due to complaints from the social and economic conditions experienced.

This paper aims to analyse the root causes of Terrorism in Southern Thailand by including socio-economic variables including unemployment, poverty, population growth and inflation into the model. The Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimation model is applied to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The data used is in the form of time series data for the period 2004-2018. The empirical results obtained can be summarised as follows;

- Unemployment is not the cause of Terrorism in Southern Thailand. However, unemployment indirectly affects terrorism through economic growth. These results support the research studied by Shaheen et al. (2017) and Lassoued et al. (2018).
- The positive coefficient of population growth can identify Southern Thailand's population growth as the root cause of terrorism. Aligned with research from Coccia (2018a), (2018b), (2018c), (2018d) that an increasing population accompanied by a shrinking economic condition would motivate a person to engage in a terrorism groups.
- The Gini index has a positive and significant effect on terrorism, and this is associated with the term Frustration Aggression. This result is in line with (Piazza 2011; Coccia, 2018a).
- The negative effect of inflation on Terrorism in Southern Thailand is minimal because the coefficient is close to zero, meaning that inflation may lead to a decrease in the number of terrorism; however, this effect is minimal, or inflation hardly affects the reduction of terrorism. In general, an increase in inflation can positively hinder economic growth and income inequality, thereby increasing poverty and then motivating terrorism.

The policy implications are in order to overcome Terrorism in Southern Thailand, the most important strategy that the government should take is to overcome the social and economic problems of the people in the South. Among them are holding practical work training and employing proportion to the growing population. Implementing equitable development programs, especially for underdeveloped regions, including providing adequate infrastructure to attract investors to save capital from encouraging economic growth in the South, centring on metropolitan areas, and finally increasing tight security to maintain stability to guarantee the welfare of society.

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