When Violence Rises and Politicians Fall

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This article examines a faction of parliamentary politicians called “Wadah.” The faction is fundamentally Malay-Muslim, regionally-based in Thailand’s Deep South and has moved from party to party since its inception in 1986. The initiators of the Wadah group believe that, by assembling themselves as one cohesive group, it would enhance their bargaining power vis-à-vis the central Thai government. This article examines Wadah’s origins, growth, downfall, and semi-resurgence up until today. While Wadah became a useful organization for pushing the needs of Malay-Muslims in the Deep South, the 2004 violence undermined Wadah politicians’ support in their own constituencies. The lesson for Wadah is that the greater the magnitude of violence that occurs, the more likelihood incumbent politicians belonging to ruling coalition will see their constituents defect from them in the next general election.

Keywords: Wadah, Faction, South, Muslim, Thailand

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 1986, with the support of Islamic religious and spiritual leaders in the southernmost provinces of Thailand, a group of lawyers and teachers formed a political group. It later transformed into a well-known political faction called “Wadah.” The name “Wadah” originates from an Arabic word meaning “Unity.” The local Malay Muslims had also known “Wadah” as “Kumpulan Wadah,” which means the united group in Bahasa Malayu language (Uma 2011, 89). It became the only religion and ethnicity-based intra-party faction that ever endured in Thai politics-existing for more than three decades. The initiators of the Wadah group believed that assembling all of the political agents from the same region into one unity group would enhance their bargaining power vis-à-vis the central Thai government. From 1986 until 2001, Wadah members won a majority of MP seats in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat provinces in successive elections. But in the 2005 general election, Wadah faced a downturn. The aim of this article is to examine how the group rose to popularity and what prompted its downfall. The significance of this study is to illustrate that elites of a marginalized group in a democratic country can form a political group that serves their electorates effectively. However, when critically violent situations occur under a specific events and times, elites of the marginalized group must coordinate strategic plans that can respond appropriately to their constituents and their political party patrons. Otherwise, the consequence of mishandling the violent situations can backfire on the elite of that marginalized group. The electorate would retaliate against their elites by voting them out in the next election.

Needless to say, the chronic violence that occurred daily following the outbreak of the 2004 violence in Thailand’s Deep South became a crucial factor regarding Wadah’s downfall. But it was the incidents of the Kruesae killings on April 28, 2004, and the Takbai incident on October 25, 2004 which created a breaking point for Wadah. These two violent incidents exacerbated the clash between the Thai state and the Malay Muslims in 2004. The incidents resulted in a backlash for Thaksin Shinawatra’s government. On April 28, 2004 at an ancient mosque called Kruesae, in Pattani, approximately 107 young suspected separatist rebels were reported killed in violence between the security forces and armed groups who had launched an attack on targets including police stations and checkpoints in Southern Thailand (Funston 2008, 4). Another tragic incident occurred on October 25, 2004. Brutal arrests by Thai security forces led to the deaths by suffocation of 85 Muslim protesters during the month of Ramadan at Takbai district in Narathiwat province (Hardy 2005). People in the lower south responded to Thaksin’s ironfisted policy by punishing candidates from his Thai Rak Thai party by voting them out of office. Nideh Waba, president of the Private Islamic School Association stated that he was not surprised that Thaksin’s Thai
Rak Thai Party would lose all of the seats. Nideh mentioned that Prime Minister Thaksin misjudged the consequence of the Takbai and Kruesae incidents (Bangkok Post 2005, 2). Paisal Yingsaman, a former Yala MP and a Wadah group member who was defeated during his candidacy of the Thai Rak Thai party in 2005 said, “During the election campaigning, they (villagers) said that there would be more bloodshed and more killings if Thaksin led another new government (Bangkok Post 2005, 2).”

The Wadah faction had failed immensely in reassuring its constituents that it could protect them when they faced violence. This study suggests that there were four factors that caused Wadah to fall. The first factor stems from major traumatic incidents that had erupted in the area of the lower south constituency which had critically undermined the creditability of the incumbent ruling coalition and its politicians. Consequently, it caused the incumbent politicians to lose their electoral seats in the next round of election. The article argues that massive violence undermines politicians’ credibility in their own constituency. The bigger the magnitude of violence, the more likelihood incumbent politicians from incumbent government coalition will lose office in the next general election (depending on different political contexts over a specific time-frame.

The second factor that led Wadah to its downfall was Wadah’s neutral stance on the big clash between the Malay Muslim community and the Thai state. It was clearly a huge misstep. The action led the lower south electorate to believe that Wadah was more in favor of the Thai state. If the incumbents took a neutral stance or ignored their constituents with regard to the violence, the electorate would defect from the incumbents in the next national election. None of the Wadah members explicitly condemned these undertakings by security forces. Instead, Wadah chose to remain silent. Wadah’s failure or inability to stand up against the Thai state thus led to Wadah’s own electoral defeat.

The third factor that caused Wadah to fall was the fact that Wadah relied excessively for financial support on its political party patron Thai Rak Thai. As Ockey mentioned, the system of political parties and factions in Thailand created a system where corruption was an integral part of the political process. Parties had come to depend upon the faction leaders for organization and finance (Ockey 1994, 253-255). Wadah is a small faction that needs financial support from other faction leaders to fund their election campaign. Because Wadah’s financial strength is inadequate, relying on a heavy funded political party is therefore inevitable.

An internal conflict between members within Wadah faction was the fourth factor that contributed to Wadah’s downfall. The internal conflict started to reveal itself after the violence outbreak in 2004. For the most part, the conflict occurred between Den Tohmeena (Pattani) and Wan Muhammad Nor Matha (Yala) or known as Wan Nor. Because of the internal conflict, Wadah members
split into four different political parties, resulting in “vote splitting” from constituents. Consequently, the result caused Wadah’s failure in the 2011 national election.

In terms of organization, this article begins with a synopsis of Thai political factions. Then it briefly elaborates upon the background of Wadah’s formation and its evolution since its establishment in 1986. Following this, it evaluates what caused Wadah to slide out of support by its longtime constituents. The study elaborates upon the four factors that led to Wadah’s downfall. It further discusses the results of the long-term rivalry between the Democrat Party and the Wadah members. A question arises as to whether the Democrat Party finally managed to gain the electoral stronghold in Thailand’s Deep South as the politicians from the Democrat Party had claimed. The significance of this section is to show that it was actually Wadah’s internal conflict that caused its own downfall rather than any specific success of the Democrats.

II. THAI POLITICAL FACTIONS

Before delving into a deeper discussion about Wadah, it is important to understand the function of Thai political parties and the factions within. Factions within Thai political parties are considered to be the essence of Thai politics. Factions in Thailand “can be defined as the often-temporary grouping together of [politicians] and their support groups both within and apart from an overarching party structure (Chambers 2003, 80).” The 1997 constitutional reforms required political candidates to be a member of one political party, for at least 90 days before an election date (Hicken 2009, 381-407). But before the Thai constitutional reforms in 1997, factions were inclined to switch back and forth from one party to another. In short, switching between parties was allowed, as it would not disqualify the status of being a Member of Parliament (MP). These factions could move to any party that could sufficiently provide them feasible financial support. There was no guarantee of loyalty to the party in which they resided.

This phenomenon of faction-switching offered pros and cons for political parties. On the one hand, these factions could destabilize political parties. Perhaps the most notorious faction was Kloom Ngoo Hao [the Cobra Group] led by Wattana Asawaheme which left Prachakorn Thai party for the Democrat Party. Wattana’s faction-switching may have destabilized Prachakorn Thai party, but it enabled Chuan Leekpai, the then-leader of the Democrat Party to become the prime minister in 1997. On the other hand, intra-party factions can maximize the political party’s chances of winning a majority of seats in parliament. A prime example was the infamous Wang Nam Yen faction led by Sanoh Tiantong. He claimed that his faction had sponsored three prominent politicians to become the prime minister of Thailand- Banharn Silapa-acha (1995-1996), Chavalit...
Thai political parties have tended to be incredibly volatile; factions therefore have a dominant role in Thai political parties. As Chambers suggests, informal institutions such as factions can be considered significant when political parties are less cohesive. He argues that intra-party factions can be more significant than political parties because intra-party factions can reduce the longevity of the prime ministerial terms and affect the durability of coalitions (Chambers 2008, 299-323). Furthermore, most political candidates have to rely on faction leaders for organization and finance. The fact that political parties in Thailand have mostly formed around personalities rather than ideologies (hence becoming part of the government coalition or cabinet ministers) has opened up a channel for many politicians to gain access to government financial resources—which has allowed some of them to sustain their position as faction leaders, or as the center of patronage (Ockey 1994, 251-277). Most factions in Thai politics are temporarily-grouped, based on their particular joint-interest at the time. That is, they do not carry a specific platform, and they are not really based on ideological interests. Hence, these temporarily-grouped factions incline to switch around when a better opportunity permits them.

III. BEFORE BECOMING WADAH

Several Wadah members were principal demonstration organizers and main political participatory actors during the 1975 Pattani demonstration. This 1975 mass demonstration occurred because villagers demanded an explanation from Thai security forces about the extrajudicial killings of five people whose bodies were thrown into the Kor Tor River, Saiburi district. At its maximum, the demonstration verged upon 100,000 people. A wide assortment of individuals attended, including schoolteachers, local bureaucrats, civil society, academics, university students, journalists, and religious leaders. The event also raised political awareness widely among villagers.

However, whoever decided to protest or stand up against the strongly centralized Thai government ran the risk of being abducted, forcibly disappeared, or openly assassinated by Thai security forces. Right after the 1975 mass demonstration ended, many of the principal leaders of the 1975 demonstration were either killed or disappeared without a trace. Some crucial examples were the murder of Amnuay Yoosoh known as “Ding German,” one of the leading actors of the CPC (The Centre of Protection for the Citizens). After the end of the 1975 Pattani demonstration, Ding entered the national electoral race for the Pattani MP seat in 1976 and again in 1979, but he was defeated in both years. Eventually, Ding German was shot dead mysteriously in 1980 while he was in a Da’wah mission. Another example was the disappearance of the CPC leader, Pitak.
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When the violence increased and the politicians fell, Paramun. Soon after the 1975 Pattani mass demonstration ended, Pitak was abducted by a group of policemen, then disappeared. Also there was Dueramae Da-oh or “Ustaz Mae Nadthomong,” a religious teacher from Dhammavitaya School in Yala province. He was one of the most charismatic public speakers during the 1975 Pattani mass demonstration and was shot dead in 1980. People who I interviewed believe that most of the killings and abductions were committed by Thai authorities. People knew about it, but they decided to turn a blind eye to the injustice for the sake of safety.

The demonstration of 1975 at the Pattani Central Mosque eventually paved the way for local Malay Muslims to embark upon political activities. Given how the Thai security authorities had cracked down on the 1975 demonstration, many of the protesters had to escape. Meanwhile, two divergent political vehicles formed. One political group went underground, whereas another political group stayed active above ground. For the demonstrators who took the underground path, they decided to join the insurgent groups. These were the local Malay Muslims who took refuge in Malaysia or fled into the deep forest of the Budo Mountains to join the insurgent movement. The fleeing protesters were fearful of state retribution because they had witnessed the aforementioned assassinations and disappearances. The second path for activists was the use of formal political tools. Instead of utilizing the path of armed conflict, this group adopted a democratic mechanism to confront the Thai state. Some in this group became activists; some of them joined non-governmental organizations; while many of them embarked upon national politics. Most members from the Selatan Group—the university students who were part of the 1975 stage organizers—continued to follow a political agenda of confronting the central Thai government through an electoral process. Some of these university students later evolved to become part of Wadah and “integration into national politics (Ockey 2008, 140-146).”

There was another prominent event which happened shortly after the 1975 demonstration which occurred in Thailand’s Deep South. More than 200 Islamic religious leaders from four southern provinces (including Satun province) came together to discuss the role of Malay Muslims in the region. These Ulamas believed that they needed to take a more proactive approach when confronting the Thai state. Religious leaders came to the conclusion that if they were passive, or stayed inactive when there were conflict situations between the locals and the Thai state authorities, the Thai state authorities could easily manipulate them. The Ustaz-ustaz and Toh gurus said, “เราอยู่เฉยๆแล้วจะเจ็บตัว” (rao yu cheauy cheauy laew ja jeb tua), which literally means, “If we remain quiet, we could get hurt.”

The Ulamas therefore collaborated with local lawyers and teachers to create an unofficial group just for the purpose of running in an election campaign. Particularly, for political reasons Malay Muslims bargained for a cabinet minister position with the Democrat Party. In 1976, the Democrat Party under the party
leadership of Seni Pramoj agreed to give a cabinet minister position to a Malay Muslim MP if the Ulamas could help the Democrat Party win all of the eight seats in the four southern provinces (including Satun province). All political candidates who were supported by the Ulamas swore an oath (sumpah) as a commitment to their predominantly Malay Muslim constituencies. The meeting took place at the Pattani Islamic School in Bana (Sasnupatham School). More than one hundred Ulamas witnessed the sumpah event.

The Ulamas and Toh gurus assisted Democrat Party candidates for the 1976 national election campaign, which resulted in a landslide victory of a total of eight seats. As promised, Seni Pramoj, the Democrat Party leader, also the Prime Minister at the time appointed Siddik Sharif, the MP from Narathiwat to be the Deputy Minister of Education (Uma 2011, 59). Siddik became the first Malay Muslim to be given a cabinet post. In accordance with this event, it was apparent that the religious leaders and religious teachers in the southernmost provinces of Thailand could certainly play a significant role in canvassing votes and vote mobilizing. It also became clear that the more Thailand’s Malay Muslims united together, the more bargaining power they would have against the strong centralized Thai state. This assembly could be considered as part of the pre-Wadah phase.

IV. WADAH FORMATION

The past experience that Deep South Muslim leader Den Tohmeena had with the Ulamas group’s formation, particularly in the bargaining for a cabinet seat from the Democrat Party in 1976, had inspired him to push for Wadah’s creation. Den believed that the more people who had a common interest united together, the more bargaining power the group would have vis-à-vis the central Thai government. However, there was an obstacle at the beginning. There was a disagreement between Malay-Muslim politician Seni Madakakul and Den on the basic ideology for Wadah’s formation. Seni therefore went on to join the Social Action Party (led by Kukrit Pramoj) in 1979.

Wadah survived the Thai political arena for almost nineteen years (1986-2004); although only a faction, its longevity surpasses many Thai political parties. Wadah is a small faction if compared to other Thai political factions as it contained only eight representatives at its peak. Politicians from the Wadah faction are intellectuals. They are lawyers and teachers who come from low to middle-income families. Wadah members have been MPs from Yala, Pattani, Satun, Narathiwat, and Songkla, and together, they founded the group. Not all Wadah members are Malay Muslims. Preecha Boonmee is a Thai Buddhist from Khokpo district in Pattani province. Several Wadah members gained cabinet posts in different ruling coalitions.
The exact date of Wadah’s establishment is actually rather confusing. Initially, the name of the group was “Ekkapap,” which literally means ‘United’ in Thai language. On Wadah’s first meeting at Den Tohmeena’s house on 19 January 1986, all of the members outlined the principle ideas for Wadah. Wadah was initially created on the basis of solidarity among Muslim MPs and the provincial politicians, regardless of their political party affiliation. Many of the members were still attached to their patronage party.16

On May 3, 1986, at the fourth meeting, the majority of the group agreed to change the name from “Ekkapap” to “Wadah,” which means ‘unity’ in Arabic. Initially, the Wadah faction’s formation was based around politicians from Thailand’s lower south region who shared common interests, although from different political parties. But at the fourth meeting, all of the members finally came to an agreement to reside within a single political party. In doing so, the group would have more bargaining power to promote its aims for the Malay Muslims through the legislature. During that time, Den Tohmeena, Preecha Boon-me,17 Wan Nor, and Areepen Utarasint were under the Democrat Party. Within the same year, Den Tohmeena had a conflict with the senior members of the Democrat Party. The Democrat Party leader, Phichai Rattakul, denied Den a cabinet post which the party had at first promised him.

Besides this conflict between Den and the Democrat Party, there was an incident where the Democrat Party committed what Wadah considered to be a clear offense. Sampan Tongsamak from the Democrat Party who was the Minister of Education at the time, proposed a policy to locate a Buddhist statue in every school (Deep South Watch 2009). To the dismay of the Democrat Party (and because of the Democrats’ insensitivity to Malay Muslims), Wadah thereupon defected to join a political grouping called “January 10,” led by Weera Musik-kapong and Chalermpan Srivikorn. The two had established Prachachon Party in 1988. In 1989, the Wadah group under the Prachachon Party merged with other small parties to form the Ekkapap Party.

By 1992, Wadah aligned with the New Aspiration Party (Kwam Wang Mai). One of the main reasons that the Wadah faction joined the New Aspiration Party was because Chavalit Yongjaiyut, the party leader, promised to pay special attention to problems facing Malay Muslims. The Wadah faction also had a strong bond with Chavalit. They became an acquaintance when Chavalit was the General Army Chief from 1985-1986. General Chavalit was in charge of the Harapan Baru project.18 Harapan Baru project was a Royal Thai Army initiative of the mid-1980s, directed by Chavalit, to bring the marginalized people of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani, Satun and Songkla closer to the Thai state. As a faction within Chavalit’s Party, Wadah joined Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai’s Democrat-led coalition in 1992; Chavalit’s New Aspiration-led coalition in 1996; and Thaksin’s Thai Rak Thai-led coalition in 2001. Being a clique of MPs within
New Aspiration during this time, the Wadah group was able to help pass more important bills under the rule of Chavalit’s coalition than under any other ruling coalition.

The number of seats won by Wadah members varied yearly, ranging from 5 seats (the 1986 national election) to 7 seats (the 1992/1 national election). Jirayut Naowaket, an MP from Satun province, played an important role alongside Den in establishing Wadah. However, Jirayut never really joined the same political party as other Wadah members. In 1986, Jirayut was elected under the Progress party (Kao Na), and in 1992/1, he was re-elected under the Muan Chon part. Nevertheless, Jirayut remained actively involved with Wadah meetings and activities (Uma 2011, 206-209).

Wadah members had shown their constituents that they could successfully contest for seats through the Thai parliamentary system. Notably, support by New Aspiration Party leader Chavalit Yongjiayut was a buttress for Wadah’s success during the period 1992-2001. After the 2001 national election, Thaksin invited the New Aspiration Party to join the Thai Rak Thai party in order to strengthen the Thai Rak Thai party. In fact, Wadah joined Thai Rak Thai when, on 22 March 2002, the New Aspiration Party itself merged with the Thai Rak Thai Party (Uma 2011, 23). At this point, Wadah became a faction within Thai Rak Thai. Then came an insurgent attack on a Thai military camp in Narathiwat on January 4, 2004. Consequently, three of the senior Wadah members, Den Tohmeena, Areepen Utarasint, and Najmudeen Uma, were alleged to have masterminded the attack. Thaksin himself stayed aloof when the three Thai Rak Thai members accused. Den, Areepen, and Najmudeen asked for Thaksin’s help, but Thaksin replied, “How can I help you? Even your own group leader (Wan Nor) didn’t bother to help you.” Thaksin’s unsympathetic response irritated Den, Areepen, and Najmudeen. In 2007, they left Thaksin (The Nation 2007, 1).

V. THE FALL OF WADAH

Wadah had continuously been re-elected from 1986 until 2001. However, the election results from the 2005 poll indicated that Wadah’s popularity was plummeting. What were the factors that contributed to Wadah downfall? According to collected datasets and empirical evidence, I have concluded that the fall in Wadah’s popularity stemmed from four reasons (i) major violent incidents (ii) the neutral stance embraced by Wadah when there was a conflict of interest between the Thai state and the Deep South electorate (iii) Wadah’s financial reliance on its party patron Thai Rak Thai and (iv) an internal conflict within Wadah.
I. Major Violent Incident

This cause argues that any major violent incidents erupting in the area of a constituency would critically undermine the credibility of the incumbent ruling coalition and incumbent politicians, therefore causing the incumbent politicians to lose their MP seats in the next round of elections. An example of how the incumbent government was ousted by the voters, as a consequence of a major violent incident, can be seen from the case of the 2004 Madrid terrorist attack. Bali (2007) examined the electoral impact of terrorist attacks using the case of the Madrid bombing in 2004. She suggested that we need to carefully examine who the terrorists’ attack may influence as well as how and why these influences occur. Her research concluded that the effect of the Madrid terrorist attack in 2004 had an impact upon voters’ voting choices and increased voter turnout. Voters who were leftist and centrist changed their stance by opting for opposition parties (Bali 2007).

The time-frame of the terrorist attack also affected voters’ voting behavior because the incident was still sharp and dramatic in the voters’ memories. Moreover, the pre-terrorist attack policies and the post-terrorist attack policies by the incumbent government marked a considerable electoral upset for voters. Bali pointed out that the incumbent government led by José María Aznar from the People’s Party had upset the voters because he continued to back the Iraq war, despite his problems with the electorate and his concealment of the investigation after the Madrid bombings (Bali 2007). He insisted that the ETA (Basque separatist organization) was to blame but in fact the bomb had been carried out by al-Qaida (Tremlett 2004). The consequence of mishandling the Madrid terrorist attack case caused the voters to oust him.

A study by Gassebner, Jong-A-Pin, and Mierau (2008) also suggested that the severity of the terrorist attack could affect the incumbent government to be replaced. They had focused upon more than 800 elections in about 115 countries over the period of 1968-2002. Their main finding showed that the presence of terror attacks increased the probability of cabinet change at election time (Gassebner et al. 2008). Thus, we can compare the studies by Bali and Gassebner et al. to the incidents of Kruesae on April 28, 2004, and the Takbai incident on October 25, 2004 in Thailand’s Deep South. In 2005, none of the representatives that ran for the Thai Rak Thai party got elected, including Wadah members.22 From the data collected, there was no evidence found that the Wadah members came out publicly to support victims and victims’ relatives after the Kruesae and Takbai incidents. Wan Nor, the Wadah faction leader and the then-Minister of Interior publicly offered his condolences to the victims, but the message was very neutral and ambiguous. He did not condemn the overreaction of the Thai security forces. Another example of an incumbent government ousted after a major
violent incident was the aforementioned clash that happened between the local Malay Muslims and the Thai security forces in 1975. This resulted from the 1975 Pattani mass demonstration which strongly affected the outcome of the 1976 national election in terms of electoral results in Thailand’s Deep South.

**TABLE 1: THE 1975 AND THE 1976 ELECTION RESULT OF THE SOUTHERNMOST PROVINCES**

| Year | Province | Elected Candidate | Political Party          |
|------|----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1975 | Yala     | Prasat Chaiyatho  | Social Justice (SJP)     |
|      | Pattani  | Thawisak Abdunlabut | Chart Thai (CT)          |
|      |          | Kamthorn Latcharoj | Chart Thai (CT)          |
|      |          | Sudin Phuyuthanond | Social Nationalist (SNP) |
|      | Narathiwat | Siddik Sarif    | Democrat (DP)            |
|      |          | Tavorn Chaisuwan | Social Justice (SJP)     |
| 1976 | Yala     | Usman Useng      | Democrat (DP)            |
|      | Pattani  | Sudin Phuyuthanond | Democrat (DP)            |
|      |          | Surapong Ratchamookda | Democrat (DP)          |
|      | Narathiwat | Den Tohmeena   | Democrat (DP)            |
|      |          | Vachira Marohabutr | Democrat (DP)            |
|      |          | Siddik Sarif    | Democrat (DP)            |
|      |          | Siri Abdulsalae | Democrat (DP)            |

Source: Data is from the Office of the Election Commission of Thailand

As shown in Table 1, the incumbent politicians from the ruling coalition were all defeated in the 1976 national election. As I argue, this defeat owed to the earlier violence because the violence undoubtedly undermined politicians’ power in their own constituency. The larger the magnitude of the violence occurring, the more likelihood incumbent politicians from an incumbent government coalition would be voted out by their electorate in the following general election. A similar phenomenon happened to Wadah in the 2005 national election. Wadah was defeated after the 2004 violence of the Kruesae and Takbai killings.

In the 2005 national election, all of the incumbent candidates from the ruling coalition were defeated. Voters instead opted for the candidates from the opposition party in retaliation for the incumbent government’s mishandling of the violent incident. Besides, the voter turnout in the lower south of Thailand had increased from 65 percent in the 2001 general election to approximately 80 percent in the 2005 general election. This evidence supports the analysis of Robbins, Hunter, and Murray (2013). These authors pointed out that increased terrorism is associated with increased voter turnout. The research analyzed voter turnout in legislative elections from over 50 democracies and more than 350
legislative elections in two different datasets that focused on distinct types of terrorism and different geographic areas of coverage. They concluded that terrorist incidents induce voters’ emotions, whether fear, anxiety, and scrutiny, which trigger cognitive processes that push people to become more interested in elections, and therefore, are more likely to come out to vote (Robbins, Hunter, and Murray 2013, 495-508).

2. The Neutral Stance Strategy

The second reason that Wadah fell is because of their neutral position between the Malay Muslim voters and the Thai central government. Figure 1 below illustrates a complicated role that the Wadah faction had to experience at the national political realm. Not only did the Wadah faction spring out from a minority community of Thailand to thrive against the very strong centralized Thai state, but the faction was situated astride a long history of mistrust and betrayal between the Thai central government and the local Malay Muslims. This put Wadah in an awkward position when managing conflict of interest between both sides.

![Diagram of Wadah's relationship](attachment:diagram.png)

Source: Author’s Own Creation (2019).

**Figure 1. Wadah’s relationship between its ruling coalition and its Malay Muslim Constituency**

Figure 1 shows Wadah faction’s conflicting interests between its predominant Muslim constituencies and Thailand’s central government, (A) being the Malay Muslim minorities that voted for the Wadah faction to enter parliament, and (B) being the criterion regarding when Wadah faction was under the control of the leader of the political party of which Wadah was a part. However, the part that forced Wadah to juggle with more complicated roles was mainly part B. Ockey stated that a small faction may be entirely or partly subsumed within a larger one (Ockey 2004, 37). There are three levels of patrons within one political party that small factions have to associate with. Small factions have to support their own faction leaders; the leader of the larger faction; and the leader of the political party who sits at the topmost level of the hierarchy (Ockey 2004, 37). Following Ockey’s observation, Wadah faction entered into a larger faction that was under the umbrella of one party. Wadah faction not only needed to support its own faction leader, but also needed to support both the
leaders of the larger faction and the leaders of the host party, hence limiting Wadah’s mobility to implement any policy that might benefit their electorate. Generally, Wadah faction received one to two cabinet posts when it was part of a ruling coalition. When it received cabinet positions, it expected the central government to work for the benefits of the political party patrons rather than Wadah’s predominantly Muslim constituency (Ockey 2008, 146). In the end, it seems likely that Wadah was inclining towards the central government’s interests because Wadah was fearful of losing its cabinet seats. Wadah had to decide what was best to please its political party patrons; but more importantly, Wadah had to decide what was best for Wadah. Wadah’s primary objective was to obtain seats in the parliament. Its second objective was to obtain cabinet seats. Its third objective was to implement its political agenda to gain votes in the next election (Ockey 2008, 146). Hence, it was not an easy task for Wadah to compromise both sides’ interests (A and B).

While holding positions as elected MPs, Wadah members had to cautiously juggle their position as mediator. Wadah had to assure their constituents and the Thai state that Wadah was not favoring one group over another. But there were pros and cons with this neutral stance that Wadah was taking. On one hand the policy could secure Wadah the position of mediator when Wadah was working between its constituents and its ruling coalition. On the other hand, if there were major catastrophic incidents that required Wadah to take an immediate action, and Wadah maintained its neutral stance or avoided a conflict of interest between Malay Muslims and the central Thai government, Wadah could face retaliation from either or both sides. Apparently, Wadah’s neutral position strategy caused the predominantly Muslim constituencies to retaliate against Wadah in the 2005 general election. At the same time, Thaksin, the leader of Thai Rak Thai Party, (Wadah’s patron political party) refused to support Den, Areepen, and Najmuddeen, who were accused of masterminding the Narathiwat military camp attack in January 2004.23

That said, for a small faction like Wadah to cruise along the Thai political tides securely, taking a neutral stance was the safest strategy to survive the volatility of Thai politics. There are pros and cons with the neutral stance that Wadah was taking, nonetheless. Regarding advantages, it could secure its position given that elected representatives could best assist both its electorate and its ruling coalition. Yet if an unforeseen violent incident occurred, Wadah’s neutral stance strategy could see retaliation from both sides because both sides might perceive that Wadah sided with their adversaries. It was thus a difficult task for Wadah to bridge both sides’ interests without displeasing one or the other side.
3. Financial Dependence on the Patronage Political Party

The third reason that Wadah crumbled was because it relied excessively on a patronage political party, the Thai Rak Thai party, for organization and financial support. Wadah is a small faction that needs funding for its electoral campaigns. The political parties in which the Wadah faction has resided have made enormous financial donations to Wadah. Ockey points out that there are seven types of factional ties in the Thai political party system; 1) ideological, 2) regional 3) personal; 4) kinship; 5) monetary-based; 6) business; and 7) electoral ties (Ockey 1994, 257-259). “Monetary-based ties” are the type of factional ties that bind the Wadah faction to their patronage party. The ruling coalition is another crucial actor which Wadah faction has needed in implementing policies that benefit Wadah’s electorates. With help from friends in parliament, Wadah needed as many votes as possible in order to pass acts that benefited predominantly Muslim communities. The ruling coalition, of which Wadah was a part, agreed to support the party leader but the party leader also had to support the ruling coalition. The party leader needed all the factions in his/her party to be loyal to the party, while in return these factions wanted the party to provide them with funding for their provincial and national election campaigns (Brown 155). Ockey mentioned that the “monetary-based ties” were based on an exchange of benefits, so such ties are more cohesive than factions based upon “regional ties” or “ideological-based ties,” but these are still subject to betrayal (Ockey 1994, 258). Wadah’s lack of financing for election campaigns made it decide to stay with a patronage party that could support it financially.

Whether Wadah was overlooking the issue or simply being insensitive, the impact of the high magnitude of violence in 2004 actually affected the emotions of the Malay Muslim electorate immensely. The author was told by one of the BRN active members that the BRN mobilized voters to vote against the Thai Rak Thai Party. The BRN active member said that they did not have to do much. What they only had said was, “Look what Thaksin has done to us” to the villagers. They said that although it was a simple message, it contained powerful information that ignited villagers’ resentment. One of the other interviewees said that not too long after the Takbai incident, a mock poster of Thaksin’s face could be seen everywhere in Takbai district. Despite how the ruling coalition mishandled the security policy towards the Malay Muslims in the Deep South, Wadah remained with the Thai Rak Thai Party throughout the 2005 general election.

Rather than departing from Thai Rak Thai after the Kruesae and Takbai incidents, Wadah continued to contest elections under the party’s name. The fact that Wadah remained neutral to the Kruesae and Takbai incidents, and the fact that Wadah relied excessively for financial support from their patron party caused
enormous disappointment in the Malay Muslim community. One of the active BRN members said that the BRN had high expectations with Wadah’s performance from 1986 until 2001. But after Wadah showed no response to the Kruesae and Takbai incident, the BRN decided to stop supporting Wadah. The BRN active member said that Wadah was not sincere to their electorate. To him, Wadah members were no different than most other corrupt politicians. During the author’s fieldwork, many of the interviewees stated that Wan Nor wanted to stay with the Thai Rak Thai Party because Wan Nor received enormous financial benefits from Thaksin. There is no substantial evidence regarding the allegation, but the villagers would point at Wan Nor’s big wooden house in Yala province as the concrete evidence.27

4. The Internal Conflict

Fourthly, there was an internal conflict within the faction that caused Wadah to break down. Subsequent to the enormous violence that happened in 2004, not only were some Wadah senior members antagonized by Thaksin’s insensitive policy towards the victims of Kruesae and Takbai incidents, but Den, Areepen, and Najmudeen were also victimized by the military allegation that they were the masterminds behind the military arm which raged on January 4, 2004 (See, Institute of Public Policy Studies, 2004). Den Tohmeena, Areepen Utarasint, and Najmudeen Uma were also alleged to be the masterminds responsible for various insurgency activities in Thailand’s Deep South. From interviewing three individuals, none explicitly condemned Wan Muhammad Nor Mata for not supporting them when they were under scrutiny by the medias and public. Three interviewees put more blame on Thaksin than on Wan Nor. Although the three did not speak ill of Wan Nor, their actions were the opposite. They left Wan Nor, and formed a new political party named Matubhum party. They invited General Sonthi Boonyaratklin, former General Army Chief to be their political party leader.28 General Sonthi is a Muslim from Bangkok. It is considered to be uncommon in Thailand to have a Muslim as a high-ranking military officer. Areepen told me in an interview that Sonthi was the best candidate as their political party leader because Sonthi could financially support the party; he had a strong linkage with the military; and most importantly, Sonthi is Muslim, which allowed him to fit perfectly as a political leader for their Muslim political party.29 Yet in the 2011 general election, Matubhum party won only one plurality electoral seat in Pattani and one seat through party-list voting. However, none of the candidates in the lower south constituencies (under Wan Nor’s supervision) from Pheu Thai Party30 were elected. Unquestionably, it can be said that Wadah’s popularity had sunk to the political bottom.
VI. THE QUESTION OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY’S STRONGHOLD IN THE LOWER SOUTH

This section aims to contribute greater comprehension to the fourth factor that led to Wadah’s failure. To conclude which political party had the strongest grip on electoral power in the lower south region still remains under question. There has always been a vacillation of electoral strongholds between the Democrat Party and Wadah group (Everett 2011). Nevertheless, as opposed to other parts of southern Thailand, in the lower south, the majority of the constituents in the provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat do not have Democrat Party loyalties (McCargo 2008). Many people would disagree with this statement. They would claim that the Democrat Party came to control the entire southern region of Thailand as indicated by the 2005 and 2011 election result which showed that Democrat Party won most of the constituencies. However, this study disputes such claims for four reasons, based upon an analysis of the national election in the lower south region in the past thirty years.

Regarding this study’s first reason, according to Table 2, if we look back at the past thirty years of general elections in the lower south region, the Democrat Party won only 37.5 percent of the time in the total number of election years in this volatile region. In the total of sixteen general elections in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat since the 1975 general election, the Democrat Party managed to earn more than 50 percent of the total seats in only six of them- the national election of 1976 (100 percent), 1986 (62.5 percent), 1995 (54.5 percent), 1996 (60 percent), 2005 (91 percent), and 2011 (81 percent).

**Table 2. Total seats won by the Democrat Party in the southernmost provinces of Thailand**

| Election Date       | Number of Democrat Party winning seats/total of constituency seats | % Seats winning by Democrat Party |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| January 26, 1975    | (1/6)                                                              | 16%                              |
| April 4, 1976       | (7/7)                                                              | 100%                             |
| April 22, 1979      | (1/9)                                                              | 11%                              |
| April 18, 1983      | (0/8)                                                              | 0%                               |
| July 27, 1986       | (5/8)                                                              | 62.5%                            |
| July 24, 1988       | (1/8)                                                              | 12.5%                            |
| March 22, 1992/1    | (0/9)                                                              | 0%                               |
| September 13, 1992/2| (3/9)                                                              | 33%                              |
| July 2, 1995        | (5/11)                                                             | 54.5%                            |
| November 17, 1996  | (6/10)                                                             | 60%                              |
| January 6, 2001     | (5/11)                                                             | 45%                              |
| February 6, 2005    | (10/11)                                                            | 91%                              |
| April 2, 2006       | (Democrat boycott of the election)                                  | N/A                              |
| December 23, 2007   | (5/12)                                                             | 42%                              |
| July 3, 2011        | (9/11)                                                             | 81%                              |
| February 2, 2014    | (Democrat boycott of the election)                                  | N/A                              |

Source: author’s calculations based upon Office of the Election Commission of Thailand data and Wadah, 2015.
Regarding the second reason, the Democrat Party’s landslide victory in the Deep South in the 1976 and 2005 national election resulted from the enormously violent incidents that had happened one year prior to each of those years (Pattani Mosque mass demonstration 1975; Kruesae and Takbai massacres 2004). The incumbent governments responded poorly to the incidents in resolving the crises. As a result, the constituents retaliated against the incumbent government by voting against candidates who were running under the incumbent party’s banner or any party of that ruling coalition. Because the incumbent government was irresponsible and unresponsive to each year of the violent incidents, the lower south constituents therefore voted in favor of the opposition party—which coincidentally turned out to be the Democrat Party each time. Therefore, it is unclear if Deep South voters sincerely wanted to vote for the Democrat Party or whether they simply wanted to vote for any opposition party at that moment. Several of the insurgents that this author interviewed mentioned that they possessed animosity toward the Democrat Party. The reason they gave was that the Democrat Party had never followed through on promises made to the Malay Muslims. However, the violent incidents of the Kruesae and Takbai in 2004 shifted the Malay Muslims’ animosity from the Democrat Party to Thaksin, because of Thaksin’s hawkish policy in handling the lower south conflict. Thaksin also failed to deliver strong support and substantive responsibility to civilians who were affected by the violent incidents.

As for the third reason, if we look back at Table 2, in the 1986 general election, the Democrat Party won 62.5 percent of the majority seats in the lower south region. But when we take a closer look at all of the names of the candidates who were running for the Democrat Party, they were actually all Wadah members. Together as a group, the Wadah faction initially sided with the Democrat Party when they first entered national parliamentary politics. Hence, one cannot conclude that the Democrat Party won a majority of the seats in 1986, because it is uncertain whether the Democrats won because of the party per se, or whether they won because of individuals from the Wadah faction who were running under the Democrat Party banner.

The last reason to disagree with the claim that the Democrats gained total control of electoral political power of Thailand’s Deep South (although they may have won a majority of the MP seats both in 2005 and 2011 national election in the lower south region) was because the vote-shares retrieved by the Democrat Party actually diminished from the previous election. In accordance with the 1997 constitution, Thailand adopted a Mixed Member Majority (MMM) system, which combined First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting and party list proportional representation (Kokpol 2002). In Table 2, under the FPTP voting system, the Democrat Party won the most votes in each constituency of the Deep South for the elections of 2005 and 2011. In 2005, the Democrats won 10 seats out of 11
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seats. As for the year 2011, the Democrats won 9 seats out of 11 seats. A quick glance at the statistical data shown from Table 2 may make one conclude that the Democrats won a landslide victory from both elections. But there is a broader picture which must be analyzed.

As mentioned earlier, the Democrat Party won most of the seats from the 2005 national election in the Deep South because of retaliation from the lower south electorate against the incumbent government political candidates, which in turn caused the Thai Rak Thai candidates to lose all of their seats. It was thus a fortunate windfall occurrence for the Democrat Party candidates. As for the 2011 national election, it was the Wadah group’s own miscalculation strategy that led to almost all of the Deep South seats to again be taken by the Democrat Party. There was a fraction among the Wadah members that strongly disapproved against the government following the upsurge in violence in 2004. As a result, some of the Wadah members defected to form their own political party in 2011. In Table 3, this study combined the Matubhum Party, Pheu Thai party, the Prachatam party, and the Bhumjai Thai party to examine the total votes that Wadah group received had they still formed together as the Wadah group. Had they remained united as Wadah group, the result of the proportional amount of the vote share would have flipped around. Wadah group would have won a majority of the seats instead of the Democrat Party. But it was the Wadah members’ own error in splitting up which led to a split vote manifestation from voters (Utarasint 2011) Wadah’s disunity doomed it to failure at the polls.

Table 3. A comparison of the percentage of the vote share (calculated per each constituency) between the Democrat Party and Wadah group in the southernmost provinces of Thailand

| Province | Constituency | 2005 Election Result | 2011 Election Result |
|----------|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|          |              | Democrat Party | Thai Rak Thai Party | Democrat Party | Matubhum + Pheu Thai + Prachatam + Bhumjai Thai |
| Pattani  | 1            | 43.19% | 23.70% | 38% | 59% |
|          | 2            | 60.77% | 12.4%  | 59% | 40.71% |
|          | 3            | 50.98% | 31.70% | 26.25% | 73.71% |
|          | 4            | 50.97% | 24.66% | 30.51% | 68.78% |
| Narathiwat| 1           | 46.62% | 22.44% | 46.78% | 34.29% |
|          | 2           | 52.07% | 35.11% | 34.60% | 54.22% |
|          | 3           | 30.85% | 31.52% | 30.70% | 40.95% |
|          | 4           | 51.02% | 29.46% | 31.30% | 39.19% |
| Yala     | 1           | 52.85% | 32.19% | 69.96% | 29.10% |
|          | 2           | 37.13% | 30.90% | 37.75% | 60.42% |
|          | 3           | 57.77% | 33.66% | 47.03% | 47.11% |

Source: author’s calculations based upon Office of the Election Commission of Thailand data.
If we examine Table 4 below, the percentage of the total vote share calculated, based upon total vote counts in all of the eleven Deep South constituencies, the Democrat Party’s percentage of total vote shares in the 2011 national election in the lower south region actually diminished from the year 2005, from 48.50 percent of the total vote share in 2005 down to 39.66 percent of the total vote share in 2011.

**Table 4. A Comparison of the Percentage of Total Vote Shares Between the Democrat Party and Wadah Group in the 2005 and 2011 General Election**

|                | 2005 Election (Total votes = 740,452) | 2011 Election (Total votes = 822,560) |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Democrat Party | 359,115                             | 326,280                             |
|                | 48.50%                              | 39.66%                              |
| Wadah Group    | 206,727                             | 410,609                             |
|                | 27.90%                              | 49.91%                              |

Source: author’s calculations based upon Office of the Election Commission of Thailand data.

Furthermore, in the 2006 and 2014 general elections, the Democrat Party refused to participate, in protest first against the pro-Thaksin Thai Rak Thai Party and later against the pro-Thaksin Pheu Thai Party. But the Democrat Party won a majority of Deep South seats in 2011 due to the FPTP system because the Wadah group was actually splitting up. Not only did the Democrat Party not really gain total control of the lower south region, but the party lost more of its total vote share in the following election. Thus it would be an erroneous statement to claim that the Democrat Party established a stronghold of the southernmost provinces.

**VII. CONCLUSION**

Given that Malay Muslims are marginalized within Thailand, it would hardly have been expected that a small faction like Wadah, the representatives of which belong to Thailand’s Muslim minority, could have survived the political system of the strong centralized Thai state for since 1986. Some of the Wadah members such as Den and Wan Muhammad Nor became well-respected politicians, and are nationally well-known. They have strong support from the party leader, and in some cases even larger faction leaders, who not only support Wadah’s ideology but also provide financial support to Wadah members for their local and national election campaigns. Everything seemed to be going well for Wadah until the exacerbation of Deep South violence in 2004. Not only did the Wadah faction take a neutral stance toward the violence by acting indifferent towards the incidents, but Wadah continued to run its candidates for the national MP posts under the name of the Thai Rak Thai Party, the incumbent party, in the following national election. Yet the memory of Malay-Muslims affected by the
2004 massacres was still fresh on Deep South voters’ minds; therefore, all of the Wadah members failed to win re-election. Thus, as this article shows, the 2004 violence undermined Wadah politicians’ power in their own constituencies. The greater the magnitude of violence occurring, the more likely incumbent politicians from incumbent government coalition would defect in the next general election. In the case of the Wadah MPs, they had failed to reach out to their Deep South electorate; they had failed to acknowledge the grievances that the villagers had toward Thaksin; and because of the large magnitude of violence in 2004, Wadah lost all of their seats in the 2005 national election. After their big loss, Wadah became internally splintered and many Wadah members defected to different political parties. This led to a splitting of the vote among voters in the 2011 national election (Everett 2011). The Wadah members had miscalculated their political strategy during their tenure under the ruling Thai Rak Thai party; likewise, Wadah had also miscalculated the Malay Muslims’ specific needs. Wadah had underestimated the impact of the Kruesae and Takbai incidents towards the electorate.

As shown in Figure 2, the four factors that contributed to Wadah’s downfall were interwoven with one another. The root cause of Wadah’s failure was the third factor, which was Wadah’s over-reliance on a single patron political party. This was a significant drawback because it limited Wadah’s capacity to fully serve its Deep South electorate. Had Wadah’s patron party disagreed with Wadah’s political platform, it could have withdrawn financial support for Wadah. Thus, Wadah would have had inadequate funds for its members’ election campaign. Given its factional dependence, the most logical strategy for Wadah’s financial security had thus become avoiding conflicts with its patron political party.

![Figure 2. Chart presents the interlinking factors that led to Wadah’s downfall](source: Author’s Own Creation (2019))
Wadah thus continued to opt for a neutral stance as its political strategy in order to secure cabinet posts, parliamentary committee postings and MP seats. The faction had to carefully implement its plans by navigating between the electorate and political parties. Had the 2004 violence not erupted, this form of political strategy may have continued to play out to Wadah’s benefit. The major violence was a crucial intervening variable. It was the dynamic factor that interrupted Wadah’s longstanding political strategy. It was also the critical factor that initiated Wadah’s internal conflict, resulting in the splits within Wadah that caused Wadah’s popularity to plummet in the Deep South.

VIII. UPDATE

At the time of this article’s writing, and after nearly five years of military rule, Thai election officials announced a general election scheduled on March 24, 2019. Although a new 2017 constitution was written mostly in favor of the military junta to stay in power, political candidates around the country nevertheless geared up for and participated in the election (Rojanaphruk 2019). This also marked the return of Wadah members. The afore-mentioned internal split between Wan Nor and Den has now been shown to the public. Den and his daughter, Petchdao Tohmeena, broke loose from Wadah to join Bhumjai Thai Party. The remaining senior Wadah members, Wan Nor, Areepen, Muk, and Najmudeen, with help from Police General Tawee Sodsong, former secretary-general of the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, formed a new political party called Prachachart Party. It is widely known that Police General Tawee and Wan Nor have close ties with Thaksin Shinawatra. Rumors have it that the Prachachart Party is funded by Thaksin, but there is no adequate proof of evidence to support the claim (Benjakat 2019).

By far, Prachachart was the biggest winner in the Deep South in the aftermath of the March 2019 election. The party received six out of eleven seats. But is Prachachart a now successful form of Wadah reborn at the party level? Are old allies who previously bickered and broke apart really coming back to work together? Or is it simply an illusion? If the old allies can actually return to work together, one wonders to what extent Prachachart (Wadah) does not have to rely on a large political party (as in the past)? In other words, is it possible that Prachachart (Wadah) might find different sources of money to make itself more politically sustainable in the future?

Apparently, the March 24, 2019 general election actually benefits Wadah. Firstly, Wadah now has more power leverage to make a decision as a political party than as a faction under another political party. It also means that Wadah has more autonomy in handling its campaigning funds. Secondly, there has not been any intensely violent incident, thus permitting Wadah to maintain its status quo.
neutral stance strategy. Thirdly, the Democrat Party, which is the old rival of the Wadah group, in 2019, is experiencing a likely factionalism breakup. Such party fracturing led to a vote splitting effect that doomed the Democrat Party in 2019. Democrat Party candidates and supporters divided into PPRP and Action Coalition for Thailand (ACT). The problem of vote-splitting that Wadah suffered in the 2011 election happened to the Democrat Party this round, which in turn has benefited Wadah in post-election 2019. Ultimately, the electoral future of Wadah--now reborn as a political party- remains uncertain but hopeful.

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ENDNOTES

1 Wadah has over time been associated with different political parties including the Democrat Party, Ekkapap Party, New Aspiration Party, Thai Rak Thai Party, People Power’s Party, Pheu Thai Party, and Matubhum Party.

2 A famous Democrat Party politician from Songkla Province, Nipon Boonyamanee, had claimed that it was the Democrat Party’s wholehearted efforts which had given them victory over the region (Prachatai 2007).

3 This clique of politicians used to reside in the Chat Thai party before moving to the Prachakorn Thai Party. The name Kloom Ngoo Hao (Cobra group), a famous Thai folk tale, was bestowed by Samak Suntaravej, the party leader of Prachakorn Thai party. He saw Wattana’s group’s surprising switching to the Democrat Party as similar as to the cobra who betrays its owner. See Khamnuraksa (1999, 74).

4 Wang Nam Yen was named after the district in Sra Kaew province. Led by politician Sanoh Tienthong, the group contained 49 members. The symbol of the Wang Nam Yen faction is the King of Nagas. 74, 79.

5 The demonstration in front of the Pattani Mosque lasted forty-five days. It was considered one of the longest demonstrations in Thai history, particularly in the Deep South. The demonstration lasted from December 11, 1975 to January 24, 1976. On the third day of the protest, December 13, 1975, a bomb was hurled into the rally - said to be thrown by a policeman. Twelve people were killed. The bombing incident caused more people to join the demonstration. At its peak, there were about one hundred thousand participants at the rally. See...
Suthasasna (1976).

6 Personal Interview with Wiroj Pipitpakdee, Pattani, Thailand, May 2012, about the death of Ding German.

7 *Da’wah* means ‘invitation’ in Arabic. It can also mean “to invite” or “summon” someone. In Islam, it is not up to individual Muslims to convert others to Islam. In fact, it is believed that the fate of each individual is at Allah's mercy. Hence, the *Da’wah* mission is to teach, to explain, and to invite others towards a better understanding about Islam.

8 Dhammavitaya School is a well-known Islamic private school in Yala province. Personnel and activities within the school are closely monitored by the Thai state because Thai security authorities believe that Dhammavitaya School produces strong hard-headed rebellious people against the Thai state. Several alleged separatists associated with the BRN insurgent group were Dhammavitaya graduates.

9 In interviews with several religious leaders, former politicians, and prominent leaders who were part of the 1975 Pattani Mass Demonstration, almost every one of them told me, “ใครๆก็รู้ แต่พูดไม่ได้” (Krai krai kor roo, thae pood mai dai) which means, “Anyone knows about it, but we can’t talk about it (Personal interviews with anonymous religious leaders, Pattani, Thailand, August 2012).”

10 The name of the mountain range along the Thai-Malaysian Border.

11 Personal interview with Khun Worapoj, Wadah Senior Advisor, Pattani, Thailand, July 2012.

12 Personal Interview with Den Tohmeena, Pattani, Thailand, July 2012. Den Tohmeena did not tell me the exact date of the sumpah ceremony that had taken the place at Sasanupatum School.

13 Personal interview with Ayah Ma, one of the local politicians of Saiburi district, Pattani, Thailand, June 2012. He was one of the closest assistants to Seni Madakakul (Uma, 2011, p. 63). As also mentioned there was contention between Den and Seni. When I asked Den about this issue, Den hesitated to answer about the disagreement he had with Seni. In fact, Den praised Seni as one of the most promising leaders in the southernmost provinces. Den said that Seni had wholeheartedly dedicated himself to the region (Personal interview with Den Tohmeena, Pattani, Thailand, July 2012).

14 Personal interview with Den Tohmeena, Pattani, Thailand, July 2012; 1989, Seni Madakakul left Social Action Party and joined Wadah. Not too long after he joined Wadah, Seni died (Seni died in 1991).

15 Den Tohmeena was the Deputy Minister of Health in 1990 (Uma 2011, 6) and the Deputy Minister of Interior in 1992 (Ibid, 56). Wan Muhammad Nor Matha was the Minister of Transportation and Communication in 1995 (Sansu 2004,
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121) and the Minister of Interior in 2002 (Ibid, 55). Areepen Utarasint was the Deputy Minister of Education in 1997 (Wadah 1998, 62). While working as the Deputy Minister of Interior in 1993, Den Tohmeena had accelerated the land title project for farmers and cultivators in rural areas of Thailand to be accomplished within four years (1994-1998). Wan Muhammad Nor Matha generated several key projects, including road-building during his post as the Deputy of Transportation and Communication in Banharn coalition of 1995 and Thaksin coalition of 2001(62).

At the third meeting, Wadah members proposed six principles for Wadah:
1) To unify Muslims in Thailand
2) To safeguard the benefits of justice and fairness for Muslim in Thailand
3) To develop the Muslim society with respect to politics, economics, education, and society
4) To cultivate a consciousness of understanding politics in a precise way
5) To explain and publicize the “Islamic system of thought” to people from other religions in order for them to understand Islam well
6) To participate in promoting democracy under the rule of constitutional monarchy, with His Majesty the King recognized as Head of State. (126)

Preecha Boon-me was an MP from Pattani province. Preecha is a Thai (Buddhist) politician from Khokpo district, Pattani, who joined Wadah.

Harapan Baru is a Malay language. It means “New Aspiration”. Chavalit Yongjaiyut, the ex- army chief general turned politician, adopted the same name in Thai for his new political party (New Aspiration Party). See Wadah group (1994).

There were two rounds of the national election in 1992.

In an interview with Areepen Utarasint (Narathiwat, Thailand, June 2012), he said that Wadah considered seven provisions as their main accomplishments in resolving the problems of the Malay Muslims. Wadah gained popularity from their constituency because of the following achievements:
1) Passed the Islamic Administrative Organization Act of 1997
2) Passed the Islamic Bank of Thailand Act of 2002
3) Passed the Narathiwat Rachjanakarin University Act of 2003
4) Amended the Ministry of Education regulations by permitting Muslim female students to wear the hijab in accordance with Islamic principles in 1995
5) Expanded the curriculum of Islamic studies in public schools other than the schools located in southern border provinces.
6) Amended the “Name Act” regulation. Correctly spelled Islamic names equivalent to the name as it is spelled in the Koran in order to prevent the confusion of one person’s names spelled two different ways.
7) Provided monetary compensation to religious leaders of Morality Training
Center at every Mosque

21 Personal Interview with Areepen Utarasint, Narathiwat, Thailand, June 2012.

22 Only two MPs from the Wadah faction, Wan Muhammad Nor Mata and Areepen Utarasint entered the parliament through the proportional system.

23 Personal interview with Areepen Utarasint at his home in Narathiwat, June 2012.

24 I interviewed several of the political candidates and vote-canvassers, they preferred to remain anonymous when discuss about financial supports.

25 Personal interview with one of the active BRN members at one of the safe house in Yala, June 2012.

26 Personal interview with anonymous senior security officer, Bangkok, Thailand, September 2012. As one of the high-ranking security officer, the interviewee wishes to remain anonymous.

27 McCargo had also mentioned Wan Nor’s mansion in his book (McCargo 2008, 77-78)

28 Personal interview with Areepen at his home on June 2012; interview with Den at his home on July 2012; and interview with Najmudeen at his home on May 2012.

29 Personal interview with Areepen at his home on June 2012.

30 Pheu Thai is the successor party of Thaksin’s dissolved People’s Power Party which is the successor party of Thaksin's dissolved Thai Rak Thai party.

31 Personal interview with some of the active BRN members, Yala, Thailand, June 2012. The interview took place at one of the safe house and some restaurants in the lower south region.

32 The Constitutional Court dissolved two of the political parties founded by Thaksin Shinawatara because of their violation of the electoral laws. First was the Thai Rak Thai party (founded in 1998), dissolved in 2007. Thereupon, the former Thai Rak Thai members sought refuge in a new party, the People’s Power Party (PPP). In 2008, the Constitutional Court dissolved PPP for the same reason as the Thai Rak Thai party. The creation of Pheu Thai party was the replacement of the PPP. See Chambers and Croissant (2010).

33 The meaning of Prachachart means nation of the people. Wan Nor is the party leader. Police General Tawee Sodsong is the party’s secretary-general.