CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND: ITS IMPACT ON MALAYSIA-THAI BILATERAL RELATIONS (2004-2008)

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Both Malaysia and Thailand celebrated the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relationship on 31st August 2007. Both nations cherish their bilateral relation. However, throughout these 50 years of relationship, both nations encountered different experiences in maintaining this bilateral relationship. The relations between Malaysia and Thailand, being neighbours, are multifaceted in nature, covering not only bilateral political and economic ties but also the security issues between the two countries which are crucial. The geographical factor is the main criteria that force the two countries to ensure that their common border should remain safe for the peoples of both countries. That is why the understanding of the problem in Southern Thailand and its impact on the Malaysia and Thailand bilateral relation is very important. The ability to overcome this challenge will ensure the continuous enhancement of their relations. Therefore, this study determines whether the conflict in Southern Thailand will have any implication on the Malaysia and Thailand bilateral relations. The study also will based on few concepts such as sovereign state, state-making and state-building, ethnic nationalism and special-relationship, that can be used to explain the relation between the two countries. Malaysia as close neighbour is truly concerned with the development and management of the crisis in the Southern Thailand due to the proximity of the affected areas and also closes similarity in terms of religion, culture, language and traditions between the inhabitants across each others borders. The serious attention paid by Malaysia on the issue was not an attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of Thailand but merely preventive measures to maintain national security and to ensure that the conflict in Southern Thailand will not spill over into Malaysia. If there is a spill over from this conflict, this will surely have negative impact on the Malaysia - Thailand bilateral relation. Joint initiatives such as the Joint Commission, Joint Development Area, Joint Development of Strategy, General Border Committee and others are efforts in bilateral cooperation to ensure the relationship of both nations maintain even though there may be intermittent concerns concerning their security relationship. The study shows despite the crisis in Southern Thailand, the bilateral relation between Malaysia and Thailand remain cordial and both countries cooperating to overcome the crisis in a peaceful manner.
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