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AND POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**The Struggle for Recognition in Foreign Policy:  
Malaysia under Mahathir  
1981-2003**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations**

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*To my family, for everything.*

## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to understand the motivation underpinning Malaysia's foreign policy during the period when Dr Mahathir Mohamad was its prime minister (1981-2003). In particular, it questions the adequacy of understanding Malaysia's foreign policy as being driven only by concerns for security and a search for acquisition of wealth. This thesis proposes that the desire to seek recognition was also significant, even if it might not be, in some instances, the driver of Malaysia's foreign policy.

In exploring the quest for recognition, this thesis adopts a qualitative method of inquiry. It discusses the 'belief system' of Mahathir and uses both public and private pronouncements of his beliefs as evidence of the importance of his personal quest for recognition as compared to other motives of enhancing security and wealth acquisition. For this purpose, this thesis draws on Axel Honneth's insights on the struggle for recognition in order to offer a systematic understanding of the different modes of recognition.

The case studies of this thesis focus on three separate foreign policy addressees – the developing countries of the 'South', the Islamic *ummah* and the countries of East Asia. These three respective areas pertaining to Malaysia's foreign policy issues were given significant emphasis by Mahathir and received special attention by foreign policy decision - makers. In addition, they make appropriate case studies because understandings of their importance are generally attributed only to the country's search for security or its economic interest.

In answering the question to what extent the desire for recognition enhances our understanding of Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, this thesis concludes that in some areas of policy, the search for recognition was a dominant, and almost an over-arching motivation. In other areas, the struggle for recognition remained significant, even though it might not have been the primary motivation.

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## ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGIES

AAPSO	Afro-Asia Peoples' Solidarity Organisation
AMDA	Anglo-Malayan/Malaysian Defence Agreement
ANC	African National Congress
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation
APT	ASEAN+3
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASA	Association of South East Asia
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASLI	Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute
ATCP	Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties
BCIC	Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community
BN	Barisan Nasional (The National Front)
BPA	Bilateral Payment Agreement
Bumiputera	Literally means 'Sons of the Soil'; refers to indigenous people of both the Malays and the tribal type.
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COMCEC	Committee on Commerce and Economic Co-operation (OIC)
COMIAC	Committee on Information and Arts Co-operation (OIC)
COMSTECH	Committee on Science and Technical Co-operation (OIC)
CPTM	Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management
CWC	Chemical Weapons Conference
EAEC	East Asia Economic Caucus
EAEG	East Asia Economic Group
EAS	East Asian Summit
EASG	East Asia Study Group
EAVG	East Asia Vision Group
EEC	European Economic Community
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
G-15	Group of 15
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GLC	Government Linked Companies
HICOM	Heavy Industries Corporation
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICFM	Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICQ	Immigration, Customs and Quarantine
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IGA	Investments Guarantee Agreement
IKIM	Institut Kefahaman Islam (Institute of Islamic Understanding)
ILO	International Labor Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTAN	Institut Pentadbiran Awam (National Institute of Public Administration)
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISIS	Institute of Strategic and International Studies
ITM	Institut Teknologi Mara (Mara Institute of Technology)
Kesatuan Melayu Kedah	Kedah Malay Association
Kesatuan Pemuda Melayu Kedah	Kedah Malay Youth Association
KLCC	Kuala Lumpur City Centre
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
KMUK	Kelab Malaysia United Kingdom (Malaysian Club United Kingdom)
LDC	Less Developed Countries
LID	Langkawi International Dialogue
MAPHILINDO	Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia
MASSA	Malaysia South-South Association
MASSCORP	Malaysian South-South Corporation
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan/Malaysian Communist Party
MDC	Multimedia Development Corporation
MIC	Malaysian Indian Congress
MIGHT	Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology
MITI	Ministry of International Trade and Industry
MP	Member of Parliament
MRCB	Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad

MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
MTCP	Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme
NAFTA	North America Free Trade Area
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NCCIM	National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NDP	New Development Policy
NEP	New Economic Policy
NIC	Newly Industrialised Country
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NOC	National Operations Council
NSTP	New Straits Times Press
ODA	Overseas Development Aid
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OPP	Outline Perspective Plan
OPP2	Second Outline Perspective Plan
OSA	Official Secrets Act
PAP	People's Action Party (Singapore)
PAS	Partai Islam Se-Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Party)
PERODUA	Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua (Second Automobile Industry)
PKI	Parti Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PRC	People's Republic of China
PROTON	Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional (National Automobile Industry)
RM	Ringgit Malaysia
RMAF	Royal Malaysian Air Force
RMN	Royal Malaysian Navy
RTM	Radio Televisyen Malaysia
SABERKAS	'Sayang Akan Bangsa Erti Redha Korban Apa Saja' (Love for the Nation Means Willing to Sacrifice Anything)
SADC	South Africa Development Cooperation
SAID	South Africa International Dialogue
SCCAN	Special Co-ordinating Committee of ASEAN Nations
SITTDEC	South Investment, Trade and Technology Data Exchange Centre
STMB / TV3	Sistem Televisyen Malaysian Berhad
TAC	Treaty of Amity and Co-operation
TICAD	Tokyo International Conference on African Development
TRI	Technology Resources Industries

TWF	Third World Foundation
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNCED	UN Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHR	UN Commission for Human Rights
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency
US	United States of America
US\$	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Wisma Putra	Kementerian Luar Negeri, Malaysia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia)
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In formulating foreign policy, are leaders motivated by factors concerning security and acquisition of wealth only, or are they also driven by a struggle for recognition? The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that a search for recognition can be a significant and, in certain circumstances, the overriding motivation that underpins foreign policy. The term 'the struggle for recognition'<sup>1</sup> is used here to refer to the basic human psychological disposition that finds expression in the quest for prestige, esteem, *grandeur* and status, and is also related to a sense of entitlement or 'face'.

It is commonly observed that Malaysia during the era of Dr Mahathir Mohamad was significantly different from the times of the previous prime ministers. In the domestic sphere the nation's economic progress was evident through world class infrastructure and impressive construction projects. This was accompanied by the growing confidence of its people, exemplified by the much-expressed '*Malaysia Boleh!*' ('Malaysia Can!') slogan. As an observer wrote:

"He [Mahathir] took a country still shuffling timidly out of colonialism and gave it identity, direction and purpose, creating a real sense of independence."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The theory of the struggle for recognition will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Two.

<sup>2</sup> David Watts, 'A Prescription for Change', *The Times*, special supplement entitled 'A Focus on Malaysia', 31 March, 2004, p.14.

This sense of independence was also clearly present in Malaysia's foreign policy under his leadership. As regards foreign policy under Mahathir, another observer noticed:

"The common thread was his [Mahathir's] desire to stand up for Malays, Malaysia, Muslims and developing countries in general; and to combat forces such as globalization, the colonialist mentality and unequal, Western-dictated financial and market structures."<sup>3</sup>

To 'stand up' and be counted as 'equal' and being 'independent' are prevalent descriptions of Malaysia's foreign policy during the premiership of Mahathir Mohamad.<sup>4</sup> The puzzle is, when it comes to academic studies of Malaysia's foreign policy such behaviours are either dismissed, overlooked or mentioned only in passing. Even if highlighted, they remain a puzzle that is perceived by academics to be too difficult to solve. A review of the literature will show that this relates to the underlying assumptions made in the studies about motivation. A few studies seem to consider motivation in terms of a search for security. Most studies emphasise economic factors, or motivation related to the quest for acquisition of wealth to explain the transformation of Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. In short, there seems to be a disconnect between descriptions of Malaysia's foreign policy behaviour and attempts to explain these with reference to motivation.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad, Champ and Chump', *The Guardian*, 31 October 2003, p.27.

<sup>4</sup> Aziz Zariza Ahmad wrote, "A sense of pride emerged among the people, especially the Malays, who were proud of their leader's ability to speak to on equal terms with leaders of more powerful Western nations," and "Mahathir's foreign policy ... is based on a sense of commitment to independent, clearly defined goals." Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift: The Man Behind the Vision*, Taiping: Firma, 1997, p.136. Similarly, on Mahathir's foreign policy, Khoo wrote that, "[h]e was beholden to none and he relished wearing 'a truly independent look'". Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.79.

### **1.1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are still only a handful of analytical writings on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, although the number of write-ups about the man and his administration has surged since his retirement in 2003. The literature that touches significantly on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir can be categorised in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of the place of publication. The majority of works published locally during the Mahathir period contained glaring biases that seek to support Mahathir and his administration. Although their objectivity is somewhat suspect, to a large extent these works are also rather historical in their approach. Works by Murugesu Pathmanaban and David Lazarus,<sup>5</sup> Chamil Wariya,<sup>6</sup> as well as Aziz Zariza Ahmad<sup>7</sup> fall into this category, although the latter concentrates more on the prime minister rather than foreign policy. Foreign publications tend to offer a more balanced analysis of Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. These publications contain writings of both foreign and Malaysian academics. They include the works of David Camroux, Stephen Milne and Diane Mauzy, Shanti Nair, Johan Savaranamuttu and Chandran Jeshurun. An important category of analytical writings on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir are PhD theses, most of which remain unpublished. The theses that deal exclusively with foreign policy under Mahathir have been written by Mohd Yusof Ahmad, Rajmah Hussain and Karminder Singh Dhillon.

The literature on Malaysia's foreign policy during Mahathir's period focuses predominantly on the extent of continuity and change in Malaysia's foreign policy in

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<sup>5</sup> Murugesu Pathmanathan and D. Lazarus, *Winds of Change: The Mahathir Impact on Malaysia's Foreign Policy*, Kuala Lumpur: Eastview, 1984.

<sup>6</sup> Chamil Wariya, *Dasar Luar Era Mahathir*, Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti: 1989.

comparison to the periods of Mahathir's predecessors. There is still no work that deals specifically with motivations underpinning Mahathir's foreign policy. However, all the major works contain implicit assumptions about Mahathir's motivations. This section aims to clarify these assumptions. Furthermore, it is also important to discuss the scholars' observations on the extent of Mahathir's role in bringing the identified changes in Malaysia's foreign policy. This is because the discussion relates to the fundamental premise of this thesis, which posits that Malaysia's foreign policy to a large extent, flowed directly from the motivations of Mahathir.

Most literature on Malaysia's foreign policy during the Mahathir era recognises the strong influence of the prime minister.<sup>8</sup> Yusof, although arguing that there was more continuity than change in Malaysia's foreign policy, due to what he perceived to be the endurance of its "national interests", nevertheless observes that the role of leadership and idiosyncratic variables in the policy-making process was markedly enhanced under Mahathir.<sup>9</sup> According to him, the "new dimensions" of Malaysia's foreign policy can be discerned as anti-British and anti-Commonwealth, culminated in the Buy British Last Policy, and the pro-Japan attitude as illustrated by the 'Look East' policy. To Yusof, both were attributed to "increased leadership inputs" from the prime minister.<sup>10</sup> Yusof remarks that the precise origin of these policy decisions is difficult to ascertain. However, he observes that there was a close linkage between the prime-

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<sup>7</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*.

<sup>8</sup> See Mohd. Yusof Ahmad, *Continuity and Change in Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1981 – 1986*, a dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 1990; Carol Jean Bowman, *Exploring the Effects on Regime Fragmentation on Foreign Policy Behaviour in Southeast Asia*, a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Colombian School of Arts and Sciences of the George Washington University, 1999; David Camroux, 'Looking East' ... and Inwards: Internal Factors in Malaysian Foreign Relations During the Mahathir Era, 1981 – 1994, Australia – Asia Papers No.72, Queensland: Centre for the Study of Australia – Asia Relations, Faculty of Asian and International Studies, Griffith University, Australia, 1994.

minister's style and world-view and these policy decisions, from the manner of the decision-making process and the intensity of its pursuits.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, according to him, the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs or *Wisma Putra*, as it is fondly known, rationalised these foreign policy decisions in the context of "status-oriented" pursuits.<sup>12</sup>

Yusof's argument that there was more continuity than change is based on his view that Malaysia's primary national interests remained the same during the Mahathir period. Amongst the components of national interests he ranked "the need to survive within an environment that is essentially hostile and predatory" - that is, the pursuit of Malaysia's "core-value needs for national security" as the top priority.<sup>13</sup> This reflects the Realist assumption as regards motivation underpinning foreign policy in Yusof's study. Other important national interests that remained consistent, according to Yusof, (during the period of his study (1981-1986)) was the internal "socio-political, cultural and religious stability."<sup>14</sup> This again points to the Realist preoccupation with security, although in this case it refers to the domestic security of the country. In addition, Yusof also highlights the importance of "greater economic growth", or put differently, the economic or acquisition of wealth factor.<sup>15</sup> Importantly, Yusof identifies the pursuit of "status-oriented" goals as another dimension of national interest. Such pursuits for status, he observes, became more significant under Mahathir, demonstrated for example by Malaysia's policy on Antarctica. However, Yusof dismisses this dimension claiming that

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<sup>9</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.356.

<sup>10</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.3.

<sup>11</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.367.

<sup>12</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.368.

<sup>13</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.376.

<sup>14</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.376.

<sup>15</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, p.376.

“activities at this level were generally given lower priority.”<sup>16</sup> Even though his case studies of the policies to Buy British Last, Look East, and Malaysia’s resolute efforts to make Antarctica a common heritage of mankind show changes in Malaysia’s foreign policy, these policy changes are dismissed as idiosyncratic influences of Mahathir. Yusof argues that they are not representative of the more important national interests, which he defines primarily in security terms, and believes to have remained unchanged during the Mahathir era.

Rajmah, on the other hand, observes that “change became the hallmark of [Mahathir’s] administration and the conduct of foreign policy bore the stamp of his assertive style.”<sup>17</sup> In terms of motivation, she underscored that “[t]he thrust of Dr Mahathir’s foreign policy” was “economic rather than political.”<sup>18</sup> She also accepts security motives as being important. For example, she argues that the increasing “Islamisation” of foreign policy was motivated by the quest “to bring petro-dollars and Arab aid into the country”, as well as to protect the security of the regime by countering the influence of the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) domestically.<sup>19</sup> Like Yusof, Rajmah also grapples with some aspects of Malaysia’s foreign policy that seemed to contradict motivation rationales based on either security or economic concerns alone. For instance, in terms of the increasing “Islamisation” of foreign policy, she accepts that it was also motivated by the search to “bolster Malaysia’s role in the community of Islamic nations”.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Mahathir’s decision to pursue the decision to make Antarctica a

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<sup>16</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, pp.377.

<sup>17</sup> Rajmah Hussain, *Malaysia at the United Nations: A Study of Foreign Policy Priorities, 1957 – 1987*, thesis submitted to the University of London in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations, July 1988, p.73.

<sup>18</sup> Rajmah, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.77.

<sup>19</sup> Rajmah, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.78.

<sup>20</sup> Rajmah, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.78.

common heritage of mankind at the United Nations (UN) is interpreted in terms of “his desire to assert himself internationally while at the same time putting Malaysia on the map.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, while security and acquisition of wealth as motivations are analysed, motivation based on the struggle for recognition is also mentioned, albeit only as a conjecture without any in-depth examination. For example, it is not explained why Mahathir was driven to “put Malaysia on the map.”

Similarly, Dhillon asserts that there was a significant shift in Malaysia’s foreign policy under Mahathir from what he terms “traditional” to “modern.”<sup>22</sup> To him, traditional foreign policy means a primary focus on security and defence, whereas modern foreign policy emphasises commercial and developmental diplomacy.<sup>23</sup> This reflects an assumption of economic interest, or acquisition of wealth, as the significant motivation underpinning the shift in foreign policy under Mahathir. Yet, Dhillon does not overlook security factors. For example, he argues that Malaysia’s foreign policy initiatives were used to maintain the stability of the regime and to dilute any challenge to it, as well as to promote economic growth and development.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Dhillon cautions against analysing the personality of the prime minister, in what he calls the ‘great man in history’ approach.<sup>25</sup> Rather, he aims to show that the shift was a result of the interactions of three main groups of factors, namely Mahathir’s idiosyncrasy, and the domestic and external concerns. He treats these factors as the independent variables and

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<sup>21</sup> Rajmah, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.81.

<sup>22</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981 – 2003*, a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Boston, 2005, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era*, p.11.

<sup>24</sup> Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era*, p.6.

<sup>25</sup> Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era*, p.15.

illustrates how their interactions shape the foreign policy (in other words, his ‘dependent variable’).

While this thesis does not dispute the importance of the domestic and external structures, it argues that it would be misleading to consider them as isolated ‘independent variables’ that interacts to produce a specific foreign policy. Indeed, it would be more appropriate to consider the agency of Mahathir, as working within both the domestic and international structures, constantly interpreting the constraints and opportunities that these structures provide. Mahathir was both impacted by these structures and influenced them at the same time. From this perspective Malaysia’s foreign policy is not an output of a deterministic interaction between variables, but an outcome of a complex interplay between the agency of Mahathir and other foreign policy agents (such as the constraints and opportunities provided by the important international and domestic structures).

Like Dhillon, Liow sees the development of Malaysia’s foreign policy under Mahathir in terms of the interactions of three determining factors, namely, Mahathir’s personal role and influence, domestic imperatives and international exigencies.<sup>26</sup> He argues that the first phase of Mahathir’s period (1981-1984/5) was significantly influenced by the Cold War and the threat of Communism, which resulted with Malaysia’s security and economic reliance on its Western allies. In addition, he believes that Mahathir’s personal influence in this first phase was not only constrained by

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Liow, ‘Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies: Determinants of Malaysia’s Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Administration’, in *Mahathir’s Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, Ho Khai Leong and James Chin (eds.), Singapore, Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 2001, pp.120-157.

international exigencies, but also by Ghazali Shafie, the foreign minister who remained a key player.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Cold War still provided the over-arching framework for foreign policy in the second phase (1985-1989/90), Liow argues that changes were taking place that offered opportunities for Mahathir to make an imprint on foreign policy, particularly due to the reduced importance of traditional security issues and the increased importance of trade and economic matters,<sup>28</sup> which were deemed to be Mahathir's "forte".<sup>29</sup> Therefore, he stresses that Mahathir's ability to impose his personal vision on the international political and economic spheres not only rested on his growing assertiveness as a "nationalist" and a "leader", but also on the changing external environment that lifted the prior constraints, allowing Mahathir to pursue the distinctive form of diplomacy that he would not have been able to do otherwise.<sup>30</sup> Liow also stresses the domestic political crises during this period to explain Mahathir's more acute protest diplomacy, especially on issues that would enhance his position domestically as "an Islamic leader and Malaysian nationalist."<sup>31</sup> Liow further argues that resources expended in this context were mostly rhetorical, but that during this period Mahathir still managed to "set the stage for the convergence of foreign policy with Malaysian nationalism."<sup>32</sup> Thus, on the one hand, Liow explains increasing identification with the Third World and Islamic countries in the context of Mahathir's focus on foreign policy as a tool to defend the security of his position and regime domestically.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, he also emphasises

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, pp.155-6.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.141.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.156.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.146.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.156.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.156.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.144.

the increased importance of Malaysia's economic relations with Third World countries, and the interest in promoting South-South co-operation, in terms of a search for new markets for Malaysian products.<sup>34</sup>

In the third phase (1990-2003), Liow argues that factors of Mahathir's idiosyncrasy had merged with domestic influences to override external exigencies as the dominant factors in foreign policy formulation.<sup>35</sup> For him, the end of the Cold War was pivotal in effectively lifting the constraints on Mahathir to pursue economic relations more vigorously.<sup>36</sup> To Liow, Mahathir's sense of nationalism was a central part of his idiosyncrasy. In this regard, Liow writes:

"More importantly from the vantage point of Mahathir's own aspirations and legitimacy, the construction of an assertive, independent and activist foreign policy plotted against the hegemonic Western world, conducted through protest diplomacy, and bound to the scripting of a new Malaysian national identity under the auspices of Vision 2020, meant that foreign policy was in fact being used as an outlet for Malaysian nationalism."<sup>37</sup>

There are various points that are pertinent here. Firstly, while it is probably correct to conclude that Mahathir was constrained by external as well as internal structures (for example, the Cold War and a strongly independent foreign minister in the first phase of his premiership), it is misleading to think that Mahathir was less motivated for Malaysia to forge closer ties with Third World developing countries, and Islamic countries during this period. Mahathir's Third World activism was already strong and clear since his days as a backbencher during the period of the first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman,<sup>38</sup> (as reflected in Mahathir's criticisms of the Tunku's pro-West policy and his involvement with the group of UMNO 'young Turks' to bring Malaysia into the

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.143.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.148.

<sup>36</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.156.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...', in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.156.

fold of the countries of the Afro-Asian group). This will be illustrated in greater detail in Chapter Three. While Liow takes into consideration the Buy British Last policy that was launched early in Mahathir's premiership (in 1981), he underestimates the seriousness of the diplomatic row with the UK and Mahathir's contemplation to withdraw Malaysia from the Commonwealth as a result. The softening of Mahathir's stance was more because of the overdue recognition from the British, as reflected in their changed approach towards Malaysia and Mahathir, as well as input from Mahathir's top academic advisor, Dr Noordin Sopiee, who was the head of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies (ISIS). In addition, the Antarctica proposal was also launched at the UN General Assembly during this period, which was definitely in line with Mahathir's non-aligned and Third World approach in diplomacy, and one that has been rationalised entirely on the basis of the idiosyncrasies of the prime minister.<sup>39</sup> The same argument is applicable with regard to Mahathir's interests in international Islamic issues and his motivation to pursue closer ties with Islamic countries. Mahathir's interests in issues related to the Muslim *ummah* were apparent since he expounded on the matter in his book *The Malay Dilemma*,<sup>40</sup> written in 1970, and especially in *Menghadapi Cabaran*,<sup>41</sup> written in the mid-1970s. Furthermore, Mahathir's intention to strengthen bilateral ties with Muslim countries was already apparent when he decided to make official visits to a group of Islamic countries in the Middle East early on in his premiership.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, while external exigencies are undeniably important in constraining and enabling certain actions of foreign policy, they do not shed sufficient light on the totality of motivations

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<sup>38</sup> From now onward, will be referred to as 'the Tunku' in the thesis.

<sup>39</sup> Yusof, *Continuity and Change*, pp.364-9.

<sup>40</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1970.

<sup>41</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *Menghadapi Cabaran*, Kuala Lumpur, Pustaka Antara, 1976. The book was later translated into English as *The Challenge* (Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 1986).

underpinning foreign policies. There are solid grounds to suppose that as far as Mahathir is concerned, his aspirations about the forms that Malaysia's foreign policy should take were consistent even before he became prime minister and remained so throughout his premiership.

In detecting the diminished constraints of the external exigencies in the second and third periods, Liow describes the dominance of Mahathir's idiosyncratic influence in the terminology of nationalism. In this regard, he makes clear references to the domestic considerations of acquiring legitimacy for the leadership, and national identity building. He correlates what he terms nationalistic posturing of foreign policy with the motivation to maintain the security of Mahathir's UMNO regime. Yet, Liow does not engage with any theory of nationalism in an explicit and systematic manner.

Savarananmuttu believes that Mahathir played a vital role in Malaysia's foreign policy-making. To him, Mahathir's imprint was especially clear in four distinctive features of Malaysia's foreign policy during his period. He distinguished these foreign policy features as "a strong identification with the 'East', a close identification with the 'South', persistent connection with Muslim issues, and deepening opposition to increasing Western pressure both in the form of economic policies articulated through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the American unilateralism."<sup>43</sup> Savaranamuttu also argues that the "[c]ore foreign policy objectives of political independence and territorial integrity remained stable in the Mahathir period, but middle-range possession goals of enhancing the nation-state were evident in the quest of the Newly Industrialised

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<sup>42</sup> This will be illustrated in greater details in Chapter Six.

<sup>43</sup> Johan, 'Iconoclasm and Foreign Policy ...', in *Reflections*, p.307. See also Johan Savaranamuttu, 'Malaysia's Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Period. 1981 – 1985: An Iconoclast Come to Rule', in *Asian Journal of Political Science*, June 1996, pp.1-16.

Country (NIC) status while long-range objectives were linked to the goal of Malaysia's aspiration to become a developed country by the year 2020."<sup>44</sup> From these quotes the security and economic factors can be inferred as pivotal in Savaranamuttu's assumption on the motivation underpinning Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. The quest for recognition as an important motivation is overlooked although their manifestation was apparent. (For example, achieving the NIC status is deemed an important foreign policy goal, but the underlying motivation is not defined as a quest for recognition.)

While agreeing that Malaysia's foreign policy transformed during the Mahathir era, Camroux also cautions against explaining it purely in the light of the psychological make-up of the leader.<sup>45</sup> In explaining the transformation he employs insights from three areas: the study of the middle power behaviour, theories of globalisation and regionalism, and the politics of identity as the over-arching domestic preoccupation.<sup>46</sup> By stressing power in his categorisation of states, (in this instance, Malaysia as a 'middle-power'), Camroux follows the Realist preoccupation with power and security as the underlying motivation in foreign policy. In elaborating the concept of the middle power, he refers to Oran Young's<sup>47</sup> work and illustrates three dimensions of behaviour typical of the middle powers. These so-called dimensions of behaviour of middle powers are firstly, to act as catalysts (providing intellectual and political energy to trigger an initiative); secondly, as facilitators (setting agendas and building coalitions or associations), and thirdly, as managers (building institutions and/or developing

<sup>44</sup> Johan, 'Iconoclasm and Foreign Policy ...', in *Reflections*, p.315.

<sup>45</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East' ... Inwards , p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East' ... Inwards, p.3.

<sup>47</sup> See Oran Young, *International Cooperation: Building Regimes for Natural Resources and the Environment*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

conventions and norms).<sup>48</sup> While this is probably a credible description of the behaviour of a middle-power country, it does not in any way explain the motivation behind the foreign policy behaviour. Certainly, the status of a middle-power confers specific roles and responsibility. Therefore, a more relevant inquiry to explain motivation would look at why Mahathir felt that it was necessary for Malaysia to adopt this co-called middle-power role rather than a descriptive behavioural analysis of Malaysia as a middle power.

The concept of middle power is also employed by Ping in his analysis of Malaysia's statecraft in selected multilateral fora.<sup>49</sup> The underlying assumption of economic motivation can be detected in Ping's work when he refers to the hierarchy of states prevailing in the international order mainly in terms of political economy.<sup>50</sup> Thus, Ping takes into consideration, among other factors, Gross Domestic Products (GDP), and trade and export figures in categorising the great, middle and small powers.<sup>51</sup>

While not engaging directly with the concept of the struggle for recognition, Camroux introduces the idea of 'good international citizenship' in order to explain Malaysia's behaviour, for example as "a good Islamic brother", "defender of the Third World", or "Asian spokesperson".<sup>52</sup> Arguably, the desire to be considered a 'good international citizen' is a manifestation of the motivation for recognition. Ping, however, criticises this approach of applying the idea of 'good international citizenship' in explaining middle-power behaviour, by suggesting that middle powers are primarily

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<sup>48</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East' ... Inwards, p.3.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan H. Ping, *Middle Power Statecraft: Indonesia, Malaysia and the Asia-Pacific*, Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Ping, *Middle Power Statecraft*, p.1.

<sup>51</sup> Ping, *Middle Power Statecraft*, pp.73-102.

<sup>52</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East' ... Inwards, pp.3-4.

motivated by their self-interests and not necessarily behave as good international citizens.<sup>53</sup>

Milne and Mauzy recognise that leaders, even as “iconoclastic” as Mahathir, have to work within certain structural constraints to make their mark on foreign policy. Yet, they accept that Mahathir “did effect changes.”<sup>54</sup> In analysing Mahathir’s foreign policy, they too raise questions that remain unanswered. For example, they argue that while “it is clear” why Mahathir would show interests in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), it is “not easy” to understand why he championed the cause of the South.<sup>55</sup> They speculate that it might be because of Mahathir’s personal ambition “to exercise his political talents in the wider field.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, in relation to the South and Mahathir’s seemingly anti-Western bias, they believe that “Mahathir was driven by a hatred of what he perceived as unjust.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, in Milne and Mauzy’s analysis, there is a speculation that the struggle for recognition was an important motivation behind Malaysia’s foreign policy under Mahathir, but, they do not pursue this line of inquiry deeper and the quest for recognition as an important motivation remains a conjecture.

For Stubbs, the motivation of Malaysia’s foreign policy is predominantly influenced by “the need to serve the goals of national integration and national welfare in order to mitigate the problems produced by the fundamental divisions within the

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<sup>53</sup> Ping, *Middle Power Statecraft*, pp.189-91.

<sup>54</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p.123.

<sup>55</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.133.

<sup>56</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.133.

<sup>57</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.134.

Malaysian society.”<sup>58</sup> In this sense, domestic security concerns are deemed fundamental by Stubbs as the main motivations for Malaysia’s foreign policy. Specifically, Stubbs lists two main sets of objectives of the Malaysian state. The first is “to maintain national security” and the second refers to “the need to ensure economic growth.”<sup>59</sup>

The latest addition to the literature on Malaysia’s foreign policy is Chandran Jeshurun’s *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy, 1957-2007*. The book provides a dense and historically informative account of Malaysia’s diplomatic history over the first fifty years since its independence in 1957. Jeshurun benefits from in-depth interviews with Mahathir himself, as well as with various ministers and senior officials who were involved in foreign policy-making throughout the period. In covering the periods of all five Malaysian prime ministers thus far, the book allots nearly three out of its six chapters to Mahathir (in line with his 22-year premiership). The author clarifies that the book does not intend to duplicate scholarly works on Mahathir’s foreign policy but instead to take a historical approach in providing a critical assessment.<sup>60</sup> As regards Mahathir’s role, Jeshurun observes that Mahathir was the first (compared to his predecessors) to identify closely with international affairs.<sup>61</sup> In fact, after he came into power in 1981, the position of the foreign minister became less important in the context of foreign policy formulation because “the primary source of *Wisma Putra*’s mandate was the Prime Minister’s Office.”<sup>62</sup> Jeshurun argues further that because foreign policy during

<sup>58</sup> Richard Stubbs, ‘The Foreign Policy of Malaysia’ in *The Political Economy of Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia*, David Wurfel and Bruce Barton (eds.), London: Macmillan, 1990, p.101.

<sup>59</sup> Stubbs, ‘The Foreign Policy of Malaysia’ in *The Political Economy of Foreign Policy*, pp.103-4.

<sup>60</sup> Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy, 1957-2007*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2007, p.162.

<sup>61</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.187.

<sup>62</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.230.

Mahathir's time became so personalised (due to the dominance of the prime minister "worldview"), it would be inevitable for his successor to make his own adjustments.<sup>63</sup>

In relation to motivation, Jeshurun seems to agree with other writers' (for example, Savaranamuttu's) conclusions, that changes in Malaysia's foreign policy were a result of the prime minister's "almost total obsession with economic goals."<sup>64</sup> However, he also repeats Camroux's emphasis on the "geopolitical factors" that influenced Mahathir's worldview, which he recognises as "rather set in his ways."<sup>65</sup> Jeshurun also stresses the importance of Mahathir's domestic power base, which he rightly understands to have motivated Mahathir's "thinking on national economic strategy and how to deal with the emerging realities of a new international economic order."<sup>66</sup> Thus, the implicit assumptions made by other authors on foreign policy motivations (relating to the search for security, whether external or internal, and the acquisition of wealth as illustrated by the emphasis on economic goals), are also reflected in Jeshurun's book.

Yet, Jeshurun also recognises the problem facing students of Malaysian foreign policy in rationalising "the seeming shifts and slides in Mahathir's projection of his pet likes and dislikes in the field of external relations."<sup>67</sup> While realising "the primacy of his nation-building tasks", the timing of Mahathir's diplomatic postures is argued as always "unexpected" and "unpredictable".<sup>68</sup> Jeshurun realises that many commentators have resorted to analyse these unpredictable phenomena in terms of "the vagaries of Mahathir, both as prime minister of his country and a citizen of the Third

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<sup>63</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.301.

<sup>64</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.163.

<sup>65</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.164.

<sup>66</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, pp.164-5.

<sup>67</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.182.

<sup>68</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.183.

World.”<sup>69</sup> Further, he argues that such a discussion is bound to lack in objectivity simply because, “much of what people perceived from his deliberate comments when he addressed international audiences cannot be fully understood without also understanding his own game plan, if at all there was such a thing.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, he seems to caution against interpreting and rationalising Mahathir’s motivations based solely on Mahathir’s own proclaimed rationalisations. Jeshurun still admits that at times Mahathir did open up in public and quotes one such occasion as when he delivered a speech at the Trinity College at the University of Oxford in April 1985 entitled ‘Holier Than Thou – A Mild Critique’. According to Jeshurun, “it was clear that his passionate concern here was to establish a rationale for his otherwise quixotic efforts to understand the inequities and injustices of the existing international order.”<sup>71</sup> On the one hand, Jeshurun feels that the void in the academic literature on Malaysia’s foreign policy under Mahathir is due partly to the methodological challenge involved in understanding motivations based on Mahathir’s own pronouncements. On the other hand, he accepts that at times, Mahathir did open up, and offered insights into the motivations that drove his foreign policy postures. In this connection, Jeshurun emphasises Mahathir’s preoccupation with inequities and injustices of the existing international order as being crucial in the prime minister’s personal motivation. As will be explained in Chapter Two, perceptions of injustices are fundamental in arousing motivations relating to the struggle for recognition. While highlighting elements linked to the struggle for recognition, (for example the fact that media coverage on Mahathir’s many trips abroad, and the stream of visits by foreign heads of government to Malaysia, gave the ordinary Malaysians “a new-found sense of

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<sup>69</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.185.

<sup>70</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.185.

<sup>71</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.186.

self-importance”<sup>72</sup>) Jeshurun concedes that his work in “understanding the man and his time” is rather “impressionistic” and that there remains a need for “a better disciplined and more accurate understanding of Dr Mahathir’s role in having charted the course of Malaysian foreign policy for nearly half of the country’s fifty years.”<sup>73</sup>

In sum, a review of the major existing works in the literature on Malaysia’s foreign policy under Mahathir illustrates an incomplete understanding due to the absence of a systematic and detailed analysis of struggles for recognition as the basis for foreign policy motivations. In explicit terms, most of the existing literature seem to deal primarily with motivations related to the quest for security and the acquisition of wealth. Yusof for example, maintains that Malaysia’s foreign policy did not significantly change under Mahathir, while Malaysia’s primary interest, defined in the Realist context of national self-preservation and security, did not change. Those authors who admit that there were transformations attribute them to the ascending importance of economic interests (the search for prosperity or the acquisition of wealth) as the main foreign policy motivation. This is especially true in the case of Rajmah, Dhillon and Savaranamuttu. Camroux on the other hand, emphasises Malaysia’s changed national identity as a function of its newly acquired middle power status under Mahathir.

All these writers face problems in their explanations and tend to lump the unexplainable under the idiosyncratic factor of the prime minister. This is illustrated by Yusof’s treatment of Buy British Last, ‘Look East’ and the Antarctica policy, and Rajmah’s treatment of the same Antarctica policy. Camroux has to resort to a concept of ‘good international citizenship’ in order to supplement his explanation based mainly on

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<sup>72</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.187.

the middle power theory. Milne and Mauzy highlight the puzzle and rightly hint to the struggle for recognition as the missing link in understanding Mahathir's foreign policy, but do not go any further than that.

## **1.2. ADDRESSING THE PUZZLE - THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECOGNITION**

The existing literature shows a tendency amongst writers on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir to consider only motivational factors relating to security and the acquisition of wealth (economic). The struggle for recognition as a motivation has only been alluded to. On several occasions recognition factors have been invoked but only in a haphazard and unsystematic manner in order to supplement the main argument, which could be traced to either security or economic, (acquisition of wealth) motivations. There is here a clear gap in the literature. This thesis argues that to form an understanding of what are perceived to be inconsistencies in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, it is crucial that the struggle for recognition be considered as well. In this regard, this study will focus specifically on the motivation side of foreign policy making.

In order to examine the struggle for recognition as an important motivation, the personality of Prime Minister Mahathir must be central to the analysis. This is because motivation based on the struggle for recognition is linked to a human's psychology. Although it is correct to emphasise structural constraints to the leader's agency, they do not exist as 'independent variables' that interact in a deterministic manner to shape

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<sup>73</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.165

foreign policy output. A leader like Mahathir operates within layers of overlapping structures, both domestic and international, which constrain him and are influenced by him at the same time. Therefore, in studying motivation, it is essential to pry open the black box commonly referred to in the literature as the idiosyncratic factor.

While some authors have attempted to do this in order to explicate the belief system of Mahathir, none has achieved a systematic elucidation of 'what made Mahathir tick'. Under the umbrella of the idiosyncratic factor, elements such as Mahathir's upbringing and education are taken to have impacted his personality and worldview. Writers such as Dhillon and Liow employ the notion of nationalism to further explain Mahathir's idiosyncratic factors. A common observation in the literature as highlighted for example by Milne and Mauzy, is that Mahathir was driven by a strong sense to oppose what he perceived as unjust. In addition, Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir has also been described as independent and assertive (for example in Liow's work). There is certainly nothing fundamentally wrong with these descriptions but they still fail to tackle the core of the puzzle. Mahathir's nationalistic impulses are never satisfactorily and systematically analysed by Liow or anyone else. The question remains as to what made Mahathir resent the hegemony of Western countries and the unequal international order so much. This thesis aims to address this gap in the literature by employing the concept of the struggle for recognition in order to understand Mahathir's motivations.

Most writers are reluctant to consider motivational factors relating to the struggle for recognition because of the methodological challenge it involves. This important consideration is, for example, raised by Jeshurun. Foreign policy motivations

based on the search for recognition are deemed problematic to ascertain due to the fact that they can only be inferred through the leader's pronouncements. But, this does not mean it cannot be done. In order to detect a struggle for recognition, this study looks for Mahathir's expressed moral claims, specifically his conceptions of what is right, just and fair. This is because, as will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Two, a struggle for recognition is triggered when there is a perception of violation of preconceived conceptions of justice.

### **1.3. SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES**

To reiterate, the aim of this thesis is to test the significance of 'the search for recognition' as a key motivation in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. Towards this end, this thesis identifies three major components of foreign policy during Mahathir's time as prime minister, namely South – South co-operation, issues concerning the Muslim *ummah* and policies towards the nations of East Asia. These three foreign policy addressees were deemed very important by the Mahathir administration and therefore qualify them for study in this thesis.

Further, the selection of case studies in this thesis follows the rule of including at least one 'crucial case', as well as a 'least likely' case. A 'crucial case' is a case that would most likely confirm the hypothesis. A failure to even satisfy the most likely case would result in an all-out blow to the hypothesis. In contrast, if the hypothesis is

confirmed even in the least likely case, then it has survived the most difficult test.<sup>74</sup> With regard to the cases chosen in this thesis, South – South co-operation and foreign policy on issues related to the Muslim *ummah* can be considered as the ‘least likely cases’. This is because analyses of South-South co-operation mainly recognise acquisition of wealth or economic factors as its main underlying motivations. Analyses of Mahathir’s foreign policy to strengthen identification with the global Muslim *ummah* generally imply that it was driven by the domestic need for regime security. Both of these cases therefore seem unlikely to expose struggles for recognition as the key motivational factors. However, elements of recognition struggles are quite prevalent in the studies of East Asian nations, as portrayed by the many works on ASEAN emphasising culture and norms, as well as the discourse surrounding the Asian Values debate.<sup>75</sup> In this sense, foreign policy that was concerned with Malaysia’s relations with its ASEAN neighbours and other East Asian countries can be considered as the crucial case that is most likely to confirm the struggle for recognition as a significant motivation.

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<sup>74</sup> See Harry Eckstein, ‘Case Study and Theory in Political Science’, in *Handbook of Political Science*, Vol. VII, Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (eds.), Reading, MA: Assison-Wesley, 1975, pp.80-127.

<sup>75</sup> This of course, does not overlook the abundant studies of security and economic factors governing relations of ASEAN, and also East Asian, countries.

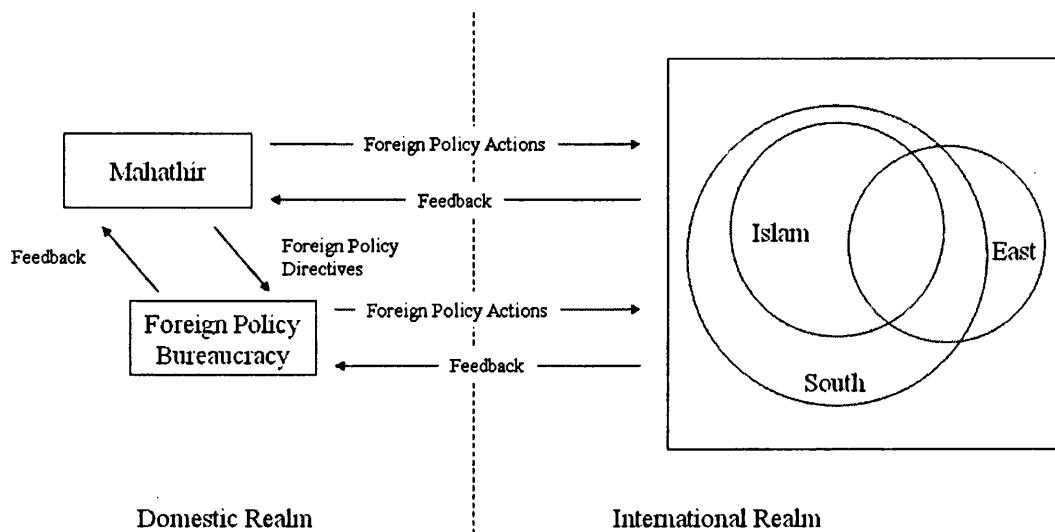


Figure 1.1 Foreign Policy-making: The relationship Between Domestic and International Realms.

Figure 1.1 above shows the relationship between domestic and international realms in the process of foreign policy-making. In the context of the domestic structure, it illustrates the central role played by Mahathir as the prime minister. In the international realm, it illustrates the three overlapping communities that Mahathir identified Malaysia with, which directly relates to the three different components of foreign policy that this thesis sets to investigate (South - South co-operation, policies related to the Muslim *ummah*, and policies towards East Asian countries).

#### 1.4. THE METHOD OF STUDY

As the objective of the thesis is to understand the rationale held by decision-makers of Malaysia's foreign policy, the thesis adopts an interpretive approach in order to make

sense of the perceptions, values, interpretations and the ‘theorist’ inside the crucial decision-maker, Prime Minister Mahathir himself. This thesis relies on both primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained via in-depth elite interviews including with Mahathir himself, as well as his written works and speeches. Other interviewees included ministers and important senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia. Not all of these interviews can be cited in order to respect some interviewees’ request for anonymity. The secondary data comprises published and unpublished documents including official government documents, media reports and transcripts, and also biographies and other books written on Mahathir and Malaysia’s foreign policy under him. More elaboration on the method adopted by this study is contained in Chapter Two.

### **1.5. OUTLINE OF STUDY**

The following chapter will elaborate on the theoretical framework of the thesis. Firstly, it will consider studies on motivation in foreign policy and illustrate the reason why the struggle of recognition has been sidelined as a motivation. This chapter will also introduce and explain Axel Honneth’s theory of the struggle for recognition and illustrate the compatibility of its use in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA).

Chapter Three will attempt to trace Mahathir’s belief system, which will be an important tool in the analysis to understand the motivation in accordance with Mahathir’s interpretations of his surroundings and his conceptions of justice. This chapter takes a historical approach and analyses the development of Mahathir’s political ideology from

his early youth until the time just before he became the prime minister. Chapter Four focuses on the Malaysian state under Mahathir. It will attempt to illustrate the correlation between domestic and international structures and the agency of Mahathir in relation to both.

Chapter Five to Seven comprise the main empirical sections of the study. Chapter Five will attempt to test the extent of the struggle for recognition as the underpinning motivation for Malaysia's South-South co-operation. This is a particularly hard case to prove because most studies attribute the motivation underpinning South-South co-operation to economic motives. The analysis will cover Malaysia's policies towards the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Group of 15 (G-15) and the Commonwealth. It will also touch on Malaysia's bilateral initiatives in providing technical assistance to developing South countries under the Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme (MTCP). In addition, Malaysia's bilateral relations with South Africa will be looked at more specifically as an example of a South – South bilateral co-operation. Chapter Six is an empirical chapter that deals with Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Muslim *ummah*. Most studies explain Malaysia's motivation to increase its focus on issues related to the Muslim *ummah* in terms of internal security interests, that is, the maintenance of the domestic political regime. In this case, the analysis will focus mainly on Malaysia's role in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Malaysia's policies towards Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina will also be examined. In addition, Mahathir's discourse on terrorism will also be discussed to detect a struggle for recognition as the key motivation underpinning Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Islamic *ummah*. The final case study is Malaysia's foreign policy towards East Asian nations. This can be considered the easier case to prove because a quest for recognition

can be discerned quite obviously in the discourse concerning the Asian value debate. In this case, this thesis will look at the significance of factors related to the struggle for recognition in Malaysia's views on ASEAN and Mahathir's proposal for institutionalising an East Asian regionalism in the form of the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC). It will also discuss Malaysia's role in the development of ASEAN Plus Three (APT). Moreover, Mahathir's discourse in the Asian value debate will also be explored to ascertain the significance of a quest for recognition in Mahathir's foreign policy towards the East Asian nations. Chapter Eight is the Conclusion chapter that will summarise and analyse the findings of the empirical chapters and illustrate how they have or have not covered the gap in the literature concerning motivations behind Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir.

## **CHAPTER 2 THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION AS A MOTIVATION IN FPA**

As highlighted in Chapter One, Malaysia's foreign policy during the premiership of Mahathir Mohamad shows a significant change in direction. Under Mahathir, Malaysia's foreign policy identity underwent a transformation, from a country firmly grounded in the Western alliance since it achieved its independence in 1957, to a country that staunchly championed the causes of developing countries of the 'South', the Islamic *ummah* and East Asia. This thesis seeks to understand this foreign policy behaviour by examining the motivations behind these policies. As highlighted in the previous chapter, merely considering security and economic factors seems inadequate in making sense of this transformation. The objective of this study is thus to examine whether greater understanding can be attained by focusing on recognition as an important motivation. What interests us in terms of recognition motives are Mahathir's grievances and moral claims, developed from his perceptions of injustices, denial of rights and quest for self-esteem in relation to Malaysia's position in the prevailing order of the international society.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hedley Bull, a society of states exists when states conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the workings of common institutions. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Basingstoke, London: Macmillan, Second Edition, 1995, p.13.

Central to this thesis is the idea that, 'on the ground' foreign policy is conducted by individuals. Inter-state relations are carried out by state agents, political leaders and senior bureaucrats. It is from among these individuals that motivations for foreign policy originate. Empirically, motivation is anchored in individuals' perceptions that invoke specific emotional responses, which consequently trigger actions. Furthermore, according to Crawford:

"Because behaviors are ambiguous, foreign policy decision makers constantly attribute causes and motives to others' behaviour... [and that] the prior emotional relationship between groups may influence the assignment of reasons and intentions (attributions) to others' behaviour."<sup>2</sup>

This illustrates that diplomatic interactions and foreign policy actions undertaken by individual agents do not take place in an environment void of emotion, meaning and social contexts.

This chapter will firstly look at how motivation in general, has been considered in studies of foreign policy. It argues that the reason why recognition has not been dealt with routinely in FPA relates, in part, to the assumptions about human motivation articulated by the dominant Realist perspective. Before engaging with the specific concept of recognition as a motivation, this chapter will first scan the three major categories of motivation that have been considered in the literature, namely fear/survival/power, achievement/economic/profit and affiliation/recognition. In the process, it will illustrate that Realism's sole preoccupation with the fear/power motive has caused other motives to be neglected. In addition, motivation is also overlooked as an area of inquiry in IR due to Neo-Realism's ontological emphasis on structure and states as its units, rather than individuals. Secondly, this chapter will illustrate how

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<sup>2</sup> Neta Crawford, 'The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships' in *International Security*, Vol.24, No.4 (Spring 2000), p.134.

recognition has been discussed as a motivation within FPA thus far. Thirdly, this chapter will introduce Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition as a key analytical tool (for examining recognition motives in FPA inquiries). Finally, this chapter will deal with methodological questions arising from efforts to apply Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition in FPA.

## **2.1. THE STUDY OF MOTIVATION**

Motivation is what drives human behaviour. It is by nature, an attribute of individuals.<sup>3</sup> "Motives supply direction and energy for action."<sup>4</sup> According to the prominent personality psychologist David McClelland, motivation refers to the "motive disposition aroused at a particular moment in time".<sup>5</sup> In terms of aroused motive for action, McClelland identifies three basic 'motive systems' in human lives centring on achievement, power and affiliation.<sup>6</sup> Freyberg-Inan observes that these three basic motives have been widely studied and the practice of classifying human motivations in this way has been common across disciplines and issue areas.<sup>7</sup> In *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders* Winter, for example, presented a method of measuring these three motives of power, achievement and affiliation in political leaders through

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<sup>3</sup> Annette Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man: The Realist Theory of International Relations and Its Judgment of Human Nature*, USA: SUNY Press, 2004, p.95.

<sup>4</sup> David G. Winter, 'Measuring the Motives of Political Actors at a Distance' in *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*, Jerrold M. Post (ed.), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003, p.153.

<sup>5</sup> David McClelland, *Human Motivation*, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.85.

<sup>6</sup> McClelland, *Human Motivation*, pp. 223 – 369.

<sup>7</sup> According to her, works utilising McClelland's categorisation of motive systems include Abraham Maslow's *Motivation and Personality*, Richard Cottam's *Foreign Policy Motivation*, and Graham Allison and Gregory Treverton (eds.) *Rethinking America's Security: Beyond Cold War to New World Order*. Annette Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.109.

systematic content analysis of their speeches, interviews and other verbal materials.<sup>8</sup>

According to Freyberg-Inan, these motives correspond to the thesis of Athenian motivations in the Peloponnesian war, which are fear, desire for honour and the quest for material success or profit.<sup>9</sup> However, Thucydides' analysis of the war adopted a view of all three motives as "divisive, competitive and destructive."<sup>10</sup> Realism thus provides little space for the affiliation motive that engenders social and cooperative behaviour due to its dim view on human nature.

This is certainly not the case in practice because in general state leaders normally do build friendships and are not always suspicious of one another, making them become preoccupied with security issues. However, Realism, being "arguably the dominant paradigm in the field of the study of international relations and foreign policy today"<sup>11</sup> has resulted in the dearth of inquiries explicitly engaging motives beyond security. Recognition motives, which concern "the conditions for identification with other relevant actors"<sup>12</sup> are closely identifiable with McClelland's affiliation motives. An illustration of how recognition motives have been dealt with in FPA will follow later in the chapter. Here, it is important to show how the Realist conception of human nature

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<sup>8</sup> Winter, 'Measuring the Motives ...', pp. 153 – 177.

<sup>9</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.112.

<sup>10</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.112.

<sup>11</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> William O. Chittick and Annette Freyberg-Inan, "Chiefly for Fear, Next for Honour, and Lastly for Profit": An Analysis of Foreign Policy Motivation in the Peloponnesian War' in *Review of International Studies*, No.27, 2001, p.71.

has contributed to the over-emphasis of the fear or security motive and the goal of survival in the rationale of state's behaviour.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.1. Fear: The Primary Motivation in Realism

While not ignoring motivation, Realists make simplified assumptions about it.<sup>14</sup> Realists “presuppose an account of state motivation and treat it as a constant.”<sup>15</sup> Realism, founded on a Hobbesian view of the state of nature, sees human beings as selfish egoists whose natural state is in a war of all against all. In this scenario, the motive of fear becomes overwhelming. Consequently, the goal of self preservation or security is paramount.<sup>16</sup> The interest of states is a given assumption in the Realist tradition - the pursuit of power.<sup>17</sup> Realism posits a simple power determinism whereby behaviour of states flow directly from their relative power potential.<sup>18</sup>

The preoccupation of power due to their grim assumptions of human nature can be observed clearly in classical Realist writers.<sup>19</sup> Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* wrote that, “whatever the ends that leaders may seek to achieve, their doing so is

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<sup>13</sup> Although Realist writers can be distinguished by some shared understanding on international relations, there remain certain disagreements between them. For example, Morgenthau recognised the agency of states but not Waltz. See John J. Mearsheimer, ‘The False Promise of International Institutions’ in *International Security*, Vol.19. No. 3 (Winter 1994 – 1995), footnote 20, p.9. Furthermore, ‘defensive Realists’ like Morgenthau emphasises the need for survival. On the other hand, ‘offensive Realists’ like Mearsheimer focus on ‘influence’ in their emphasis on power. In any case, it still makes sense to speak of Realism as an entity. Welch writes, “[t]he language of Realism has changed over the centuries, ... but the central themes have survived the modernization process largely intact.” David A. Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.11.

<sup>14</sup> Richard W. Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory and a Case Study*, Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977, p.15.

<sup>15</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> “... states in the international system fear each other. ... There is little room for trust among states.” Mearsheimer, ‘The False Promise ...’, p.11.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, Second Edition, 2001, p.33.

<sup>18</sup> Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*, p16.

<sup>19</sup> Neo-Realists like Waltz mainly concentrate on the structure of the international system and treat power as an assumed motivation.

mediated and constrained by all states deploying their power to pursue their own ends, so that power itself becomes the proximate interest of any state's foreign policy.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, he argued that, “What is important to know, if one wants to understand foreign policy, is not primarily the motives of a statesman, but his intellectual ability to translate what he has comprehended into successful political action.”<sup>21</sup>

### **2.1.2. Impacts of Neo-Realism Deterministic Theory on the Study of Motivation**

Neo-Realism in an attempt to systematise Realism on the ‘third image’ perspective<sup>22</sup> shifts the level of analysis to the international system. Neo-Realist Waltz argues that the anarchic nature of the international system, without an overarching authority makes states vulnerable to war.<sup>23</sup> The emphasis of structure in Waltz’ structural Realism obscures the agency of individuals, relegating the role of motivation further.<sup>24</sup> In fact, Waltz even omits motivation in his analysis at the individual level because Realism treats motivations as “axiomatic” and “invariant”.<sup>25</sup> More current ‘offensive Realists’ like Mearsheimer also share this pre-occupation with power and security. He argues that, “the most basic motive driving states is survival.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in John G. Ruggie, *Constructing The World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalism*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp.5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Boston: MacGraw-Hill, 1993, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> Robert O. Keohane, (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p.165.

<sup>23</sup> See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.95.

<sup>25</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, pp.14-5.

<sup>26</sup> Mearsheimer, ‘The False Promise ...’, p.10.

Motivation is pushed further into the background in Neo-Realism, which minimises the agency of human individuals.<sup>27</sup> In its quest to produce scientific explanations of international relations by uncovering causal laws in the structure of the international system, Neo-Realism conceives states as variables subjected to deterministic behaviour akin to the dynamics of billiard balls. Focussing on the structural constraints of the system, this form of Realism asks not what states want, but what it is possible for them to have.<sup>28</sup> In this view, foreign policy-makers are constrained both by the anarchic structure and their fixed goal of self-preservation. Realist motivational assumptions not only contribute to a deterministic view of states' behaviour, but also affects its understanding of the role of morality in foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, in the Realist paradigm, motivation of states (assumed to be power seeking for the purpose of self-preservation), is subsumed under the concept of 'the national interest'.<sup>30</sup> In this regard, an analysis of the concept of 'national interest' is essential in exposing how Realists treat motivation of foreign policy. For classical Realists like Morgenthau, it is both possible and desirable that foreign policy be conducted strictly on the basis of "sober calculations of national interest, excluding the "distorting" influence of values, sentiments, and aspirations."<sup>31</sup> However, according to Graham Allison's model of bureaucratic politics<sup>32</sup>, 'the national interest' can merely be

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<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of structure and agency in FPA, see Christopher Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, New York: Palgrave, 2003, especially pp.25-30. For a Constructivist discussion on structure and agency in IR, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.95.

<sup>29</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.102.

<sup>30</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.12.

<sup>31</sup> George, *On Foreign Policy: Unfinished Business*, Boulder, London: Paradigm Publishers, 2006, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> See Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, New York, Harlow: Longman, Second Edition, 1999.

the name of the policy that wins in the bureaucratic power struggle.<sup>33</sup> Whatever it is that constitutes the national interest, the concept is inadequate in shedding light on foreign policy motivations. As argued by Hill:

“the national interest is not something that can be usefully objectified in terms of power, security, prosperity, independence and the like, all of which can be taken for granted as the high level goals of all state foreign policy, but which lead to disagreement as soon as discussion becomes more specific.”<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, Bloom felt that the concept of national interest has “little use” as an academic tool for analysing foreign policy because “it is bounded by value ideas of what is best for the nation and, as Furniss and Snyder stated, national interest is frequently ‘whatever the decision-maker says it is’.”<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, when it comes to the specifics, the national interest as foreign policy motivation encompasses more than power, to include achievement and affiliation motives as well. The dominance of Realism as the paradigm of inquiry is actually perpetuated by methodological practices that protect Realist assumptions on human nature and motivation.<sup>36</sup> This has to do with the quest for scientific explanations of international relations. The systemic theory of Neo-Realism explains foreign policy in terms of rational actor model, which makes power maximisation central in the pursuit of the national interest. The rational actor model is also shared by Neo-Liberalism. However, Neo-Liberalism challenges Realism’s focus on states as the primary actors and security as their primary goal. However, in their study of institutions (rather than states) and economic (rather than power) goals, Neo-liberals share the view of the international

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<sup>33</sup> Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, ‘Roles and Reasons in Foreign Policy Decision Making’ in *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.16, No.3. (Jul., 1986), p.283.

<sup>34</sup> Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.119.

<sup>35</sup> William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.83.

<sup>36</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.156.

system as one that necessitates self-help and assume their actors to behave as egoist value maximisers as well.<sup>37</sup> While a rational actor is said to maximise self-interest in the form of utility that his preferred choice entails, the rational actor model does not explain the source of this preference, nor does it specify whether it is aimed at enhancing profit, power or status.<sup>38</sup> The fact is, in order to arrive at their preferences, individual actors “interpret information, monitor their performance, reassess their goals”.<sup>39</sup> However, in FPA, where decision-making is emphasised and the study of emotional based motivations like recognition would be most appropriate, its analysis has mostly focused on ‘cognition’.<sup>40</sup> ‘Cognition’, which refers to the human thought processes, specifically information processing capability of the human mind, is quite distinguishable from the processes of sensation and emotion.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, actors’ interpretations are by-passed and instead, structural features, such as bureaucratic positions, are given particular attention.<sup>42</sup> The problem is, to quote Simon, “human behaviour is not always the result of deliberate calculation” but sometimes, the products of passionate powerful impulses.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, the reasons for the neglect of the study of motivation are twofold. Firstly, it is a consequence of the dominance of Realism as an approach in analysing international relations. This dominance, which began with Thucydides’ writing on the Peloponnesian War, has continued to thrive especially after World War II amongst both

<sup>37</sup> See David Baldwin (ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: the Contemporary Debate*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. See also Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971.

<sup>38</sup> Hollis and Smith, ‘Roles and Reasons in Foreign Policy Decision Making’, p.272.

<sup>39</sup> Hollis and Smith, ‘Roles and Reasons in Foreign policy Decision Making’, p.283.

<sup>40</sup> Crawford, ‘The Passion of World Politics’, p.118.

<sup>41</sup> Herbert A. Simon, ‘Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science’ in The American Political Science Review, Vol.79, No.2, June 1985, p.295. Similarly, Hill defines cognition as the intellectual function of the human mind and observes that it has been a more prominent line of inquiry compared to ‘affective’ (emotional) factors in FPA. See Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.109.

<sup>42</sup> Hollis and Smith, ‘Roles and Reasons in Foreign Policy Decision Making’, p.269.

<sup>43</sup> Simon, ‘Human Nature in Politics ...’, p.301.

academics and policy-makers.<sup>44</sup> It has led to ‘power’ being the motivation mostly studied. Other motivations, namely economic (profit) and affiliation (recognition) have been dealt with in a less explicit manner. This is not to say that the Realist account of motivation is incorrect. However, it is certainly incomplete. Welch recognises that while some wars were fought for Realist reasons, others seemed anomalous from the Realist perspective, and this is simply because some leaders behave like Realists, while others do not.<sup>45</sup> The fact is, leaders demonstrate motivations that are based on profit and affiliation, as well as power factors. Secondly, the drive to achieve scientific explanations has contributed towards the neglect of the study of motivation due to the avoidance of adopting interpretive methods to study emotions, which would be a prerequisite if we are to understand motivation. This for example, can be observed in Waltz explanation of the causes of war in *Man, the State and War*.<sup>46</sup>

### **2.1.3. Beyond Fear: Motivation Relating to Profit/Achievement and Affiliation**

The quest for achievement motive refers to the desire to do something better ‘for its own sake’.<sup>47</sup> It can be detected by “references to excellence, doing a ‘good’ or ‘better job’, or carrying out some unique accomplishment or innovative action.”<sup>48</sup> McClelland illustrates how achievement motives were relevant in understanding the entrepreneurial characteristic of Protestants as described by Weber, which led to the flourishing of modern capitalism in Protestant communities.<sup>49</sup> With reference to works in foreign

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<sup>44</sup> Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, p.26.

<sup>45</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.18.

<sup>46</sup> See Waltz, *Man, the State and War*.

<sup>47</sup> McClelland, *Human Motivation*, p.228.

<sup>48</sup> Winter, ‘Measuring the Motives ...’, p.154.

<sup>49</sup> McClelland, *Human Motivation*, pp. 255-60.

policy motivation by Wolfers<sup>50</sup> and Cottam,<sup>51</sup> Freyberg-Inan holds the achievement motive to include 'possessional' and economic motivations.<sup>52</sup> In the example of the Athenians' motivation, Freyberg-Inan again associates achievement motive with the quest for profit or material success.<sup>53</sup> The motive for achievement or profit should not be understood in the narrow and strictly material sense. Instead, it arises from a perception or the need for opportunities, which inspires the pursuit of all those resources that can improve human lives, for example, money, education or personal rights.<sup>54</sup> However, the term 'achievement' as a motivation will not be used in the analysis of this thesis. This is because this study aims to differentiate as much as possible economic motives understood as either a search for prosperity or purely an acquisition of wealth, from the quest for achievements along the lines of a search for status, prestige or social standing. Instead, such quests will be covered by references to profit or economic motives. While the motive of fear and the corresponding goal of acquiring power and security has tended to be the preoccupation of Realism, the profit motive and the goal of prosperity has been the focus of Liberal theories.<sup>55</sup> The works of Keohane for example, emphasise that states have common interests, including the pursuit of economic prosperity, which motivate them to co-operate.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962.

<sup>51</sup> Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*.

<sup>52</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.109.

<sup>53</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.112.

<sup>54</sup> Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, "Chiefly for Fear, ...", p.71.

<sup>55</sup> Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, "Chiefly for Fear, ...", p.69.

<sup>56</sup> See Robert O. Keohane, 'Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions' in *World Politics*, Vol.38, October 1985, pp.226-54; and *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in World Political Economy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

The affiliation motivation is derived from “the need to be with people” due to the “fear of rejection.”<sup>57</sup> However, affiliation oriented people are only friendly to people who are similar to themselves, those who they agree with and like. In contrast, they can be less friendly and agreeable with people who they perceive to be different.<sup>58</sup> In foreign policy, the affiliation motive can inspire nations to seek integration into a community and internalise the norms that identify the community.<sup>59</sup> It refers to a concern for close relations with other nations.<sup>60</sup> However, any community of states is always exclusive because members perceive certain common unique identities. Nations will accentuate values that increase their common identities with other members of the community, and that separate them from the rest.<sup>61</sup>

The affiliation motives relate to the sense of identity of actors, which presuppose state’s relations as social relations. This is the premise of Constructivist writers in IR.<sup>62</sup> According to Constructivists, “actors cannot decide what their interests are until they know what they are representing.”<sup>63</sup> According to Wendt, “structures of human behaviour are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces,” and that, “the identities and interests of the purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.”<sup>64</sup> However, Wendt takes a ‘holistic’<sup>65</sup> approach

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<sup>57</sup> McClelland, *Human Motivation*, p.347 & p.356.

<sup>58</sup> Winter, ‘Measuring the Motives ...’ s, p.157.

<sup>59</sup> Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, ‘Chiefly for Fear, ...’, p.71.

<sup>60</sup> Winter, ‘Measuring the Motives ...’, p.156.

<sup>61</sup> Chittick and Freyberg-Inan, ‘Chiefly for Fear, ...’ p.71.

<sup>62</sup> There remains “a lack of any clear definition” of what Constructivist approach might involve. Brown, *Understanding International Relations*, p.52. However, for examples of Constructivist writers, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *The Humean Perspective on International Relations*, Center for International Studies: Princeton University, 1981 and Vendulka Kubálkova, Nicholas Onuf, Paul Kovert (eds.), *International Relations in a Constructed World*, Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.

<sup>63</sup> Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, Identity and Culture in National Security’ in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, p.60.

<sup>64</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p.21.

and maintains that the units of the international system are states, as opposed to individuals.<sup>66</sup> Similar to the structural Realist Waltz, he refuses to reduce his level of analysis below the level of the international system. Wendt justifies this move by pointing out that both are interested in international politics, not foreign policy.<sup>67</sup> In contrast, this thesis takes the view that the individual level of analysis is necessary in inquiries into motivation because motivation is naturally an attribute of individuals. Hence, this thesis is grounded within the FPA scholarship, instead of IR. In this connection, Freyberg-Inan voices her frustration with IR in the following manner:

“A comparison of three major schools of IR theory – realism, liberalism and constructivism – reveals that each of these schools coheres around one of the three basic motivational complexes of power, achievement, and affiliation. It is suggested that new integrative frameworks to the study of international behavior should incorporate all three of these motives to avoid the type of bias that has been identified in realist theory. ... the search for such new frameworks stands to gain from disregarding entrenched epistemological divisions, which serve to uphold theoretical biases.”<sup>68</sup>

By situating this thesis within FPA, this study represents an attempt to develop or at least build on the idea of such integrative framework called for by analysts such as Freyberg-Inan. This thesis aims to highlight recognition motives, but not at the expense of downplaying security or economic motives where they exist.

## 2.2. RECOGNITION IN FPA

The concept of recognition is not often used within FPA. Recognition motives are most closely related to affiliation motives in McClelland’s definition. In this thesis,

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<sup>65</sup> “‘Holism’ refers to any approach which accounts for individual agents (human or otherwise) by appeal to some larger whole.” Martin Hollis, *The Philosophy of Social Science: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.15.

<sup>66</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp.7-8.

<sup>67</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p.11.

<sup>68</sup> Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.155.

recognition is distinguished by moral claims that form the gist of the struggles. In a foreign policy context, recognition is relevant because states' behaviour reflects the beliefs of their leaders and "state leaders are human beings with innate moral faculties."<sup>69</sup> This means that states' relations are bound to be affected if leaders perceive that a violation of their particular claims to 'justice' has occurred, which impacts on their self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

In FPA, recognition motives have been covered but in a rather unsystematic manner. Here, it will be illustrated that FPA scholars have acknowledged the significance of recognition motives like esteem, prestige, *grandeur*, status, entitlement and face but so far, theirs are disparate individual concepts lacking the organising function of an overarching analytical concept. Although in this section the concepts will be dealt with separately, it will be apparent that esteem, prestige, *grandeur*, status, entitlement and face are inter-related, which allow all of them to be subsumed under the desire for recognition.

### 2.2.1. Esteem

The most notable coverage of the esteem motive in FPA is probably in the work of Janis on 'groupthink'.<sup>70</sup> In studying decision-making process in small groups, Janis concludes that the desire of group members to maintain self-esteem resulted in concurrence-seeking behaviour, which is a symptom of 'groupthink'.<sup>71</sup> According to Janis, concurrence-seeking is a means of providing mutual support in order to cope with the stresses of

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<sup>69</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.21.

<sup>70</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972.

<sup>71</sup> Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, pp.202-3.

decision-making.<sup>72</sup> In addition, he argues that for individual decision-makers, “participating in a unanimous consensus along with the respected fellow members of a congenial group will bolster the decision-maker’s self esteem.”<sup>73</sup>

### 2.2.2. Prestige/*Grandeur*

Cottam includes *grandeur* in his taxonomy of foreign policy motivation. In his view, *grandeur* refers “to a concern for the dignity and prestige of a community with which a large group of individuals identify.”<sup>74</sup> *Grandeur* relates to the feeling of pride and prestige that any man would feel in the achievement of his community. Cottam argues that the community that individuals identify most in modern era is usually “the nation organized as a state” and that “[w]here nationalism exists, concern for the prestige, dignity and world respect for the nation-state can be a primary motivating force behind foreign policy.”<sup>75</sup>

An example of empirical study centred on the motive of ‘*grandeur*’ is Cerny’s work on de Gaulle’s France.<sup>76</sup> According to Cerny, de Gaulle’s policy of *grandeur* was underpinned by his worldview, which Cerny summarised as follows:

“That France should be great, that the potential for greatness is written in her history and present in the spirit of her culture, and that it ought to be the inspiration of her politics also, was at the core of that ‘certain idea of France’ which he formed at an early age and carried with him throughout his career.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, p.202.

<sup>73</sup> Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, p.203.

<sup>74</sup> Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*, p.36.

<sup>75</sup> Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*, p.36.

<sup>76</sup> Philip G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle’s Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur*, p.3.

From the above quotation, the prestige or *grandeur* motivation can be understood as being related to the sense of entitlement and perceptions of role status of the nation, which will also be considered here.

### 2.2.3. Status

Vertzberger sees status as an important concept, along with belonging and role, which constitute the national self-image that provides states' identity. This identity directly or indirectly influences state's behaviour.<sup>78</sup> With reference to Holsti,<sup>79</sup> Vertzberger posits that the status conception of the state relates to the roles that it believes it should play.<sup>80</sup> There are various dimensions of status by which states are ranked in the international society – military, political, economic, technological, cultural, and so on.<sup>81</sup> In this connection, Holsti contends that status is a term that is used in analyses of international stratification.<sup>82</sup> According to Holsti:

"Any international system has a pattern of stratification which reflects differentials of involvement in the affairs of the system, the extent of foreign commitments, military capabilities, prestige, economic-technological levels. Conventional terms for example "great powers" or "middle powers" do not necessarily indicate how much diplomatic influence states wield within any set of relationships, but they do suggest rough distinctions of status."<sup>83</sup>

Vertzberger also points out that the state's 'ascribed status' (the status that other states in the international system believe it deserves) may not necessarily be identical as the status that it believes it deserves (its 'achieved status', which is a self

<sup>78</sup> Yaacov Y.I. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990, p.282.

<sup>79</sup> K.J. Holsti, 'National Role Conception in the Study of Foreign Policy' in *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.14, No.3, September 1970, pp.233-309.

<sup>80</sup> Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p.291.

<sup>81</sup> Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, pp.291-2.

<sup>82</sup> Holsti, 'National Role Conception ...', p.242.

<sup>83</sup> Holsti, 'National Role Conception ...', p.242.

conception).<sup>84</sup> Connected to this, Holsti highlights ‘role prescriptions’, which are external factors for example, system-wide values and world opinion that buttress national role conceptions.<sup>85</sup> States that perceive a gap between its achieved and ascribed status would tend to demonstrate frustration and externalise ‘conflicting’ behaviour.<sup>86</sup> In addition, although belonging, role and status are state-level variables, empirically it affects the individual level of analysis.<sup>87</sup> It is the state leaders who interpret, operationalise and enact concepts of belonging, role and status in foreign policy. Similarly, Holsti believes that “it is reasonable to assume that those responsible for making decisions and taking actions for the state are aware of international status distinctions and that their policies reflect this awareness.”<sup>88</sup>

Status motivation is implicit in Morgenthau’s typology of states that is based on a passive-active continuum. In this regard, Morgenthau described three possible policies in the international realm: for the status quo, imperialism or prestige.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, Carr argues that war which began based on motives for security, then became “wars of aggression and self-seeking.”<sup>90</sup> In this sense, Carr seems to allude to the incessant dissatisfaction of status experienced in men, although in this case defined primarily in power terms. It can be interpreted that according to him, war is also pursued to satisfy a quest for status. Status motive is dealt with more explicitly in Schweller’s work on

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<sup>84</sup> Vetzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p.291.

<sup>85</sup> Holsti, ‘National Role Conception ...’, p.245.

<sup>86</sup> Vetzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p.291.

<sup>87</sup> Vetzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p.293.

<sup>88</sup> Holsti, ‘National Role Conception ...’, p.242.

<sup>89</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993.

<sup>90</sup> E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis: 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Palgrave, p.105.

Hitler's Germany.<sup>91</sup> To Schweller, it matters whether the motivation of the state is revisionist or for the status quo. Germany under Hitler was clearly a revisionist state driven by the motivation to achieve the status of world power.<sup>92</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Entitlement

Vertzberger's concept of achieved status, or the status that the state perceives it deserves can also be termed as 'entitlement'. In a similar vein, Welch, in examining the genesis of war, puts forth a theory of the justice motive, which he defines as "the drive to correct a perceived discrepancy between entitlements and benefits."<sup>93</sup> For the justice motive to come into play, the agent has to perceive that an entitlement exists and that the entitlement is not being fulfilled or respected (what he terms as 'benefits'). Notably, Welch emphasises that the accuracy of those beliefs concerning entitlements are entirely irrelevant.<sup>94</sup> What is important is the perception that entitlements exist. In this regard, Welch also stresses the important role that state leaders play. As he puts it, "The behaviour of states, of course, reflects the decisions of state leaders. State leaders are human beings with innate moral faculties."<sup>95</sup>

Welch's insights are not *per se* new. Leifer's study on Indonesia's foreign policy touches on the entitlement motive.<sup>96</sup> He argues that "[p]ride in revolutionary achievement, a consciousness of vast territorial scale, an immense population, extensive natural resources, as well as a strategic location, produced the conviction that Indonesia

<sup>91</sup> Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

<sup>92</sup> Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances*, p.94.

<sup>93</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.19.

<sup>94</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.19.

<sup>95</sup> Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, p.21.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, London: Published for the Royal Institute of International Affairs by Allen & Unwin, 1983.

was entitled to play a leading role in the management of regional order within South-East Asia.”<sup>97</sup> Indonesia’s sense of regional entitlement can clearly be observed in the rhetoric and actions of its first president, Sukarno, particularly during Indonesia’s ‘confrontation’ campaign against the formation of Malaysia.<sup>98</sup> However, according to Leifer, Indonesia’s sense of regional entitlement persisted during the time of Suharto too, although it was less openly displayed.<sup>99</sup>

Another work that can be viewed in the light of entitlement motive is Drifte’s on Japan’s Quest for a Permanent Security Council Seat.<sup>100</sup> While arguing that the Security Council seat is sought by Japan because it would confer it with prestige and status, Drifte also underlined that the quest relates to the ‘dignity’ of the nation and is underpinned by the concern that Japan be treated the same way as other major powers.<sup>101</sup> Brands’ work, which contains the argument that the single theme that pervades the history of American thinking about the world is “that the US has a peculiar obligation to better the lot of humanity,”<sup>102</sup> hints an entitlement motive underpinning American leaders’ mission for a world leadership role for the US. Similarly, Mao’s China has also been analysed as encapsulating an entitlement motive by believing that it was a natural ally of the oppressed peoples, thus having the obligation to hold the banner of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism of the US and other Western imperialist powers.<sup>103</sup> In addition, Cerny’s work on de Gaulle’s foreign policy, which has been cited under

<sup>97</sup> Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, p.xiii.

<sup>98</sup> Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, pp.75-110.

<sup>99</sup> Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, pp.173-4.

<sup>100</sup> Reinhard Drifte, *Japan’s Quest for a Permanent Security Council Seat: A Matter of Pride or Justice?*, New York, London: St. Martin’s Press, Macmillan, 2000.

<sup>101</sup> Drifte, *Japan’s Quest...*, pp.95-6.

<sup>102</sup> H.W. Brands, *The Struggle for the Soul of Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.vii.

<sup>103</sup> Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001, p.4.

prestige/*grandeur* motive can also be viewed in terms of the effect on foreign policy of a sense of entitlement that de Gaulle felt the French nation deserved.<sup>104</sup>

### 2.2.5. Face

When Colombian President Alvaro Uribe ended the involvement of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in hostage negotiations with a rebel group, Venezuela reacted by recalling its ambassador to Colombia because the act was perceived as “a spit in the face” by the Venezuelan President.<sup>105</sup> According to Cottam, the desire to avoid humiliation is amongst the most ubiquitous determinants of foreign policy and he links this motive to the feeling of dignity and prestige that individuals hold for their community.<sup>106</sup> There is definitely a connection between face, entitlement, status and esteem. Loss of face would occur only when there is a sense of entitlement to an ascribed status, which would inevitably lead to arousing expectations of a certain proper treatment. A denial of the proper treatment expected can be considered as a snub and non-recognition of the achieved status, thus presents a slight that disturbs one’s self esteem. In the example quoted above, clearly Chavez perceived himself as occupying a certain status in the region that entitles him to play a leadership role. The loss of face in this instance occurred due to the withholding of the recognition on the part of Colombia for the status that Chavez thinks he and/or Venezuela deserves, by ending Chavez’s role in the negotiation process. The search for recognition as a motive pertaining to face relates to Vertzberger’s view that a state tends to exhibit frustration and ‘conflicting’ behaviour if there is a gap between ‘achieved’ and ‘ascribed’ or sought status. Similarly, Welch’s argument that the justice motive would be

<sup>104</sup> Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur*.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Diplomatic Words’, *The Economist*, December 1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007, p.9.

<sup>106</sup> Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*, p.36.

triggered when there is a discrepancy between perceived entitlements and actual benefits also suggests that moral conflicts arise from experiences of being snubbed or humiliated - in other words, from a perceived loss of face.

Leifer's study on Cambodia reveals that Sihanouk's reluctance to see Cambodia enter the grouping of neutralist states was because of his concern for position and status. While not wanting Cambodia to be submerged beneath the weight of other powerful neutrals, Sihanouk was also frank to admit that the other reason why he refused to join was because, "[t]he invitation, which came from President Tito to participate in the deliberations of the major neutrals came too late to satisfy his pride."<sup>107</sup> In this case, the crucial function of the recognition motive pertaining to face can be detected in Leifer's writing as follows:

"Sihanouk has a long memory for alleged slights, and there is little doubt that he regarded the recognition of his neutral eminence as too long delayed. In refusing Tito, he was therefore only paying back in kind the insults accorded to him by sins of omission."<sup>108</sup>

The significance of face (or its denial) in foreign policy is also alluded to in Leifer's work on Singapore. For example, he observes that the difficult bilateral relations between Singapore and Malaysia have partly been the result of "a quality of hubris expressed, at times, in a disdainful view of Malaysia arising from superior economic accomplishment ... [which is] viewed with resentment in Kuala Lumpur ..."<sup>109</sup>

The preceding deliberation on some of the recognition-related concepts that have been covered within FPA illustrates their inter-related nature. For example, esteem, prestige and grandeur presuppose entitlement, which prescribes proper role and treatment

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<sup>107</sup> Michael Leifer, *Cambodia: The Search for Security*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1967, p.115.

<sup>108</sup> Leifer, *Cambodia: The Search for Security*, p.115.

<sup>109</sup> Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping With Vulnerability*, London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2000, p.54.

- the non-recognition of which would result in the loss of face. Recognition ( to which esteem, prestige/*grandeur*, status, entitlement and face allude) is also concerned with legitimate relations between states, as the example of Indonesia's sense of entitlement in Southeast Asia illustrates. At the core of recognition struggles are moral claims<sup>110</sup> - claims based on perceived entitlements to proper and appropriate treatment, or in other words, "presupposed conceptions of justice" normally related to individuals' understanding of "what are considered to be legitimate social arrangements, institutions or forms of interaction."<sup>111</sup> This allows for the understanding that social conflicts encompassing struggles for the establishment of relationships of mutual recognition can be based on individuals' negative experiences of having their "moral expectations" violated.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, the common basis underpinning recognition motives is the moral claims that are invoked in these struggles. As illustrated, leaders regularly make moral claims in the conduct of state relations. However, despite the importance of the quest for recognition in foreign policy, it remains understudied in FPA. At the most, it can be said that the search for recognition has only received a disparate treatment in FPA. This also shows in the lack of any analytical tools that can be the prism through which recognition factors can be studied systematically. The following section will therefore elaborate on Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition and illustrate how in this study, his insights can be employed for the purpose. In this regard, it will look specifically at Honneth's three categories of 'practical relations-to-self'; self-confidence, self-respect

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<sup>110</sup> Jürgen Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School and International Relations: On the Centrality of Recognition' in *Review of International Studies*, 31, 2005, p.186.

<sup>111</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.189.

<sup>112</sup> Joel Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995, p.xi .

and self-esteem. These three practical relations-to-self stem from three distinctive modes of recognition; emotional support, cognitive respect and social esteem, which are central to Honneth's recognition theory.

### **2.3. HONNETH'S THEORY OF THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION**

It has been argued that the disparate concepts related to recognition struggles covered in some FPA works can actually be analysed in a more all-encompassing and systematic manner using Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition. In this regard, Honneth's theory provides a useful scheme whereby relations between subjects can be analysed with greater sharpness by looking at the different claims to recognition. Its usage directs our attention to the grievances relating to perceived acts of disrespect, which can be identified and analysed systematically according to the different modes of practical relation-to-self.<sup>113</sup> Practical relation-to-self refers to positive self identification, and will be explained in greater details later in this section. At this juncture, it is essential to expand Honneth's account of recognition, before the different modes of practical relation-to-self are examined.

#### **2.3.1. Recognition according to Honneth**

'Recognition' has become a concept that is central in attempts to conceptualise today's struggles over identity and difference in societies.<sup>114</sup> Contra Hobbes, who focuses on the

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<sup>113</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.193.

<sup>114</sup> Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, 'Introduction: Redistribution or Recognition?' Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political – Philosophical Exchange*, translated by Joel Golb, James Ingram and Christiane Wilke, London: Verso, 2003, p.1.

motive of self-preservation in explaining social conflicts, Honneth emphasises the concept of the struggle for mutual recognition. In other words, Honneth draws on the struggle for recognition as the key motivation underpinning moral claims in social conflicts. Basically, his explanation is derived from understanding the accounts of what justifies these struggles.<sup>115</sup>

As a cognitive process, recognition operates within the psychological consciousness of individual human beings. Recognition is therefore a social and intersubjective concept. It concerns the interpretation of individuals' identities, as defined by themselves and others.<sup>116</sup> According to Taylor,

"our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves."<sup>117</sup>

Reflecting the centrality of identity in recognition, fundamental to Honneth's theory is the awareness or consciousness of the subject of the social meaning of his or her behaviour. The concept of the struggle for recognition is linked to Hegel's notion of master-slave dialectic.<sup>118</sup> Honneth builds on the premise of Hegel's early works,<sup>119</sup> which posit "that practical identity-formation presupposes inter-subjective recognition."<sup>120</sup> However, Honneth moves beyond Hegel and turns to the Social Psychologist George Herbert Mead<sup>121</sup> by using Mead's conceptions of the inter-subjective 'I' and 'Me'

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<sup>115</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.x.

<sup>116</sup> The discussion here is on individuals' identities. For a discussion of the formation states' identities in international politics, see Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

<sup>117</sup> Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition' in *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition*, Amy Gutmann (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p.25.

<sup>118</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.187.

<sup>119</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, chapters 2 & 3, pp.11-63.

<sup>120</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.92.

<sup>121</sup> See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, Charles W. Morris (ed.), Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1934, reprinted in 1967.

identities to explain the formation of such a consciousness.<sup>122</sup> In this regard, according to Honneth, “one possesses knowledge of the intersubjective meaning of one’s actions only if one is capable of generating the same reaction in oneself that one’s behavioural expressions stimulated in the other.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, to be able to predict and control reactions of others, an individual must have an understanding of what his or her conduct means or represents to others in their shared action and communicative environment. In this regard, Mead distinguishes the individual’s consciousness of ‘Me’ as the image that is being reflected of the individual’s self by others, based on his or her actions in the past. In contrast, the ‘I’ consciousness represents “the unregimented source” of all of the individual’s current actions.<sup>124</sup> In sum, the ‘I’ identity is thus self-constituted, whereas ‘Me’ is socially constituted.<sup>125</sup>

The concept of ‘socialisation’ is important here. Socialisation refers to the process whereby individuals internalise the norms of their relations through generalisations of patterns of behaviours of others. The existence of shared social norms provide the base on which co-operative relations can take place. Individuals come to realise what they can expect from others and also the obligations they have towards other members of the society. In this context, the ‘Me’ image is defined through individuals’ experiences and their learning process of conceiving their selves, from the perspectives of the ‘generalised others’. In this regard, what is important to individuals are their perceptions of their positions and roles in society.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, Chapter 4, pp.72-91.

<sup>123</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.73.

<sup>124</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.74.

<sup>125</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p.229.

<sup>126</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.78.

Here, it is important to stress that Honneth's analysis is grounded in individuals as subjects. By utilising Mead's conception of individuals' consciousness in the forms of the 'I' and 'Me' identities, Honneth's understanding of individuals' claims to recognition is "harnessed in every subject as a motive which is continually capable of being activated."<sup>127</sup> According to Haacke, by grounding the struggle for recognition within each individual, the concept can be used universally to understand social struggles, regardless of culture and normative orders.<sup>128</sup> Bearing in mind the original grounding of Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition in individuals and the society, how then can it be transferred to FPA? FPA would be a natural location to apply Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition because of the possibility and utility of actor-specific approaches in empirical inquiries. Analysis at the level of the individual is possible in FPA because FPA actually deals with "the ground" of international relations.<sup>129</sup> In this connection, Haacke argues that Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition can be utilised to provide the basis for a systematic research agenda in FPA.<sup>130</sup> According to him, "what form particular struggles for recognition take is always going to be an empirical rather than a theoretical question."<sup>131</sup> As examples, Haacke illustrates at least three possible approaches. Firstly, a research can focus on "the extent to which individual leaders or collective leaderships are occupied with seeking recognition." Secondly, it can "distinguish the ways in which recognition is sought for particular types of identities," and thirdly, the theory can be adopted "to investigate how either perceived

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<sup>127</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.188.

<sup>128</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.118.

<sup>129</sup> "A "ground" means the conceptualization of the fundamental or foundational level at which phenomena in the field of study occur." Valerie M. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations, in *Foreign Policy Analysis*, No.1, 2005, p.1.

<sup>130</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School...', p.193.

<sup>131</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.193.

snub and/or a perceived loss of face have led to grudges that have caused conflicts or difficult relations between particular states.”<sup>132</sup>

‘Actor-specific’ analyses in FPA at the level of individuals have particularly concentrated on state leaders. In this context, Alexander George and Ole Holsti have been active in pursuing an approach that aims to “study individual differences in thinking about the world – a man’s assumptions, his categories, his “operational code”, the lessons he has learned from his past experiences.”<sup>133</sup> Also, Byman and Pollack asserted that it is important to study the factor of leadership in foreign policy.<sup>134</sup> According to them, the twentieth century cannot be satisfactorily explained without reference to Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi or Mao Zedong.<sup>135</sup> An example of the study of leadership in FPA is Hermann’s, which highlights four broad types of personal characteristics of leaders that she argues affect foreign policy style and content. The types of personal characteristics that Hermann analysed are beliefs, motives, decision style and interpersonal style.<sup>136</sup> Therefore, there is a clear potential for the benefits of transplanting Honneth’s theory of the struggle for recognition into FPA. This is because motivations have already become an area of inquiry in FPA, although they remain understudied. In the context of FPA inquiry into motivations of leaders, Honneth’s theory of the struggle for recognition can be employed as the basis of psychological approaches applied to leadership.

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<sup>132</sup> Haacke, ‘The Frankfurt School ...’, p.193.

<sup>133</sup> Lloyd S. Etheredge, *A World of Men: The Private Sources of American Foreign Policy*, Cambridge, Mass., London: MIT Press, 1978, p.8.

<sup>134</sup> Daniel L Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, ‘Let Us Now Praise Great Man: Bringing Statesmen Back In’, *International Security*, Vol.25, No.4, Spring 2001.

<sup>135</sup> Byman and Pollack, ‘Let Us Now Praise Great Man’, p.108.

<sup>136</sup> Margaret G. Hermann, ‘Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.1, March 1980, pp.7-46.

### 2.3.2. Honneth's Concept of 'Practical Relations-to-Self'

According to Honneth, central to the 'I' identity is the concept of 'practical relations-to-self', which refers to the positive way that one relates to oneself.<sup>137</sup> To Honneth, there are three distinctive modes of practical relations-to-self: self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Anderson explains that these 'practical relations-to-self' are not an individual's "emotional state" but rather that, "they relate to the dynamic process in which individuals come to experience themselves as having a certain status, be it as a focus of concern, a responsible agent, or a valued contributor to shared projects".<sup>138</sup> A fully realised identity means an equilibrium in individuals' practical relations-to-self. This reflects the requirement for the social recognition of 'Me' to be consistent with the 'I' identity, as Taylor explained in the preceding quote. The three modes of practical relations-to-self can also be understood in the context of individuals' needs for emotional support, cognitive respect and social esteem.<sup>139</sup> Honneth builds on Hegel and stresses that coming to relate to oneself positively in the different modes of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem necessarily involves experiencing recognition from others.<sup>140</sup>

Anderson summarised Honneth's approach as follows:

"The possibility for sensing, interpreting, and realizing one's needs and desires as a fully autonomous and individuated person – in short, the very possibility of identity-formation – depends crucially on the development of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. These three modes of relating practically to oneself can only be acquired and maintained intersubjectively, through being granted recognition by others whom one also recognizes. As a result, the conditions for self-realization turn out to be dependent on the establishment of relationships of mutual recognition.",<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.143.

<sup>138</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xii.

<sup>139</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, esp. pp.92-130.

<sup>140</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xii. See also Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...'.

<sup>141</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xi.

In other words, social struggles can be seen to originate from the perceived failure to recognise an individual's identity. Using Mead's terminologies, conflict arises when there is a discrepancy between the individual's self understanding in the form of 'I' identity and his or her reflexive image – the 'Me' identity.

The three modes of practical relations-to-self provide us with the analytical tool to empirically study the forms of disrespect that trigger struggles for recognition, as shown in figure 2.1 below. In this regard, of particular relevance to international relations, according to Haacke, are the modes of cognitive respect and social esteem, which "might find expression respectively in membership status and the recognition of contributions to the workings of international society."<sup>142</sup> However, in contrast to Haacke, this thesis posits that the dependence aspect in the social relationship of love and the connected practical relation-to-self in the mode of basic self-confidence is still relevant in analysis at the level of social relations between states, especially in the context of colonialism.

### **Love and Basic Self-Confidence**

Honneth defines self-confidence in the context of one's ability to express one's needs and desires without fear of abandonment, rather than one's feelings about one's capabilities.<sup>143</sup> In explaining the concept, Honneth refers to the work of the psychologist Winnicott and links basic self-confidence to the concept of love between parent and child.<sup>144</sup> According to Winnicott, parent and child are in a complex relationship during the child's formative

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<sup>142</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.193.

<sup>143</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xiii.

<sup>144</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.104.

process. In this relationship, both parent and child try to extricate themselves from a 'symbiosis' relationship.<sup>145</sup>

Practical relation to self in the mode of basic self-confidence thus refers to the emotional support that the subject needs. In this relationship, the 'parent' figure is seen to have the role of the 'mother' although it does not necessarily have to be the biological mother in reality. In this sense, self-confidence is derived within the child from the assurance that he or she learns through experience that he or she would not be abandoned by the 'mother', no matter what his or her antics are. Self-confidence, explained in the form of the 'basic capacity to be alone' refers to the trust that the child gain in him or herself to deal with self anxiety due to feelings of certainty of the 'mother's' love.<sup>146</sup> Unique to this concept of self-confidence (the need for love and concern) as a practical relation to self is the fact that it transcends cultural and historical segmentation.<sup>147</sup> It will be explained later that the ways in which both respect and esteem are being accorded have undergone significant historical transformation.

Because Honneth anchored practical relation-to-self in the mode of basic self-confidence primarily in the individuals' experience of love relations, it seems problematic to transfer this concept from the analysis at the level of individuals' social relations to international relations. In other words, how can it be applicable to foreign policy? In this regard, what is important in the social relations emphasised by Honneth is the element of dependency in the form of emotional support that the subject needs. Colonialism can be regarded as a relationship of dependency that impacts the confidence of the colonised nation. Furthermore, perceptions of abuse, which is the form of act of disrespect linked

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<sup>145</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, pp.99-100.

<sup>146</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.104.

<sup>147</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' to Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xiv.

to self-confidence as a mode of practical relations-to-self can occur in international society as well. For example, Mahathir's discourse, which is examined particularly in Chapter 5 will expose that he considered colonialism as an experience of abuse on the Malaysian nation, which impacted on the nation's self-confidence.

### **Rights and Self Respect**

To Honneth, self-respect refers to one's sense of having 'the universal dignity as persons' rather than about having a high opinion of oneself.<sup>148</sup> To have self-respect means having "the ability to relate to oneself as a legally equal interaction partner with all fellow humans."<sup>149</sup> In other words, it means being recognised and given the status as "morally responsible" agents who are "capable of participating in the sort of public deliberation that Habermas terms 'discursive will-formation'."<sup>150</sup> In this context, recognition is linked to individuals' ability to act based on reasons, in the process of determining and drafting of laws that have direct impact on their lives and well-being. This is what is meant by 'discursive will formation', thus indicating that this mode of recognition has a significant legal dimension.<sup>151</sup> Here again, colonialism can be considered as an example. Unequal relationships between colonised nations and imperial powers define colonialism, whereby colonised peoples have very little or no legal status to participate in the administration of their own nations.

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<sup>148</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.iv.

<sup>149</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.134.

<sup>150</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction', in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xv. On the idea of discursive will formation, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. I, Reasons and Rationalization of the Society*, London: Heinemann, 1984.

<sup>151</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xv.

Self-respect therefore denotes the positive relations-to-self that legal recognition makes possible.<sup>152</sup> Drawing on Joel Feinberg, Honneth asserts that human dignity is founded on “the recognizable capacity to assert claims.”<sup>153</sup> Honneth also invokes Mead’s argument that ‘dignity’ is achieved when individuals are recognised as members of the community with the granting of rights.<sup>154</sup> In this situation, the individual is in a way dignified through the assurance of the value of his or her identity to the community. In sum, self-respect thus relates to the real capacity of individuals to raise and defend their claims in a discursive process through the granting of rights.<sup>155</sup>

Through ‘socialisation’ or the internalisation of social norms that regulate co-operation in a society, individuals become aware of the rights that are accorded to them and know that they can legitimately depend on their rights to ensure that their demands are respected.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, by realising the reciprocal obligations of each towards the other, individuals actually recognise one another as legal persons. This form of recognition creates positive relation to self because it provides subjects the status of fully accepted members of the society. It means subjects are recognised as moral and responsible agents who can participate in the cooperative dynamics of the society based on reciprocal respect of rights.<sup>157</sup>

In the international society, just like in domestic societies, states are bound by a common set of rules that govern their relations with one another and also take part in

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<sup>152</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.118.

<sup>153</sup> Anderson, ‘Translator’s Introduction’ in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xv. See also Joel Feinberg, ‘The Nature and Value of Rights’ in *Rights, Justice and the Bounds of Liberty: Essays in Social Philosophy*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.

<sup>154</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.79.

<sup>155</sup> Anderson, ‘Translator’s Introduction’ in Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xv.

<sup>156</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.79.

<sup>157</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.80.

various institutions, which engender specific obligations and rules of behaviour.<sup>158</sup> Therefore, we can expect that conflicts based on perceptions of denials of rights, which trigger the struggle for recognition in the form of cognitive respect to also occur in the realm of international society. In this context, the concept of sovereign equality is important in governing relations between states. The concept refers to the claim of every state to be autonomous. In this sense, sovereign states can be expected to refuse recognising that there is any external person or body, who can legitimately exercise authority within the jurisdiction of their territories.<sup>159</sup>

### **Solidarity and Self-Esteem**

To recap, self-respect is about individuals occupying the same status due to the possession of the same rights for every person. In contrast, self-esteem involves the feeling of what makes one special, unique or in Hegel's term 'particular'.<sup>160</sup> What distinguishes one from others is something unique and considered valuable by one's community. In this context, individuality and self-esteem are linked. On this point, Honneth refers to Mead's discussion of personal identity who claims that distinguishing oneself from others as an individual is a matter of what 'we do better than others'.<sup>161</sup>

Esteem thus depends on the social condition that individuals find themselves in. What is considered as valuable varies from society to society, depending on its prevailing values. By looking at esteem according to the values strata within a particular culture, Honneth provides the possibility of examining the conditions for self-esteem as

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<sup>158</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p.13.

<sup>159</sup> Chris Brown, *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today*, Cambridge, Malden MA: Polity, 2002, p.4.

<sup>160</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xvi.

<sup>161</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xvi.

an area of conflict.<sup>162</sup> To elaborate, social conflicts might be motivated by a group of individuals who seek recognition as valuable contributors to the society's common good. The claimants for recognition in this scenario might have felt that the prevailing social culture and arrangements have failed to recognise their unique contribution to the society, or worse, denigrate their subculture.

Pronouncements that invoke national sentiments of pride, esteem and prestige are regularly made by leaders. The feeling of esteem is also normally linked to the nation's unique status in the international society. In this regard, achievement and status can be in terms of membership in certain groups, for example, developed nations, or the United Nations Security Council, which denote a special status and along with it, the role conception of the state.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, perceptions of denigration and insult also do occur in inter-state relations. Descriptions of a 'rogue state' or 'pariah nation' are banded by dominant powers in the international society to insult particular states that are considered a threat to the existing order, with the hope that the others would conform.<sup>164</sup> Such cases include North Korea when it sought to acquire nuclear weapons, or Serbia when it apparently strove for hegemony in the Balkans in the 1990s.

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<sup>162</sup> Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* ,p.xvii.

<sup>163</sup> See Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions ...'.

<sup>164</sup> Hill, *The Changing Politics of Foreign Policy*, p.184.

Mode of Recognition	Emotional support	Cognitive respect	Social Esteem
Dimension of Personality	Needs and emotions	Moral responsibility	Traits and abilities
Forms of Recognition	Primary relationships (love, friendship)	Legal relations (rights)	Community of value (solidarity)
Developmental Potential		Generalization, de-formalization	Individualization, equalization
Practical Relation-to-Self	Basic self-confidence	Self-respect	Self-Esteem
Forms of Disrespect	Abuse and rape	Denial of rights, exclusion	Denigration, insult
Threatened Component of Personality	Physical Integrity	Social integrity	'honour', 'dignity'

Figure 2.1 The structure of relations of recognition.<sup>165</sup>

Figure 2.1 represents a summary of the functions of the respective component of the modes of practical relation-to-self according to Honneth. Honneth's theory is useful in empirical studies of social recognition motives in FPA because it can direct analysts to identify forms of disrespect (abuse, denial of rights or denigration) as experienced by the subjects, which trigger the struggle for recognition in the context of either self-confidence, self-respect or self-esteem.

### 2.3.3. Disrespect and the Moral Grammar of Social Struggles

Honneth's 'formal conception of ethical life' is the normative ideal of a society. In such a society, there exist the inter-subjective conditions for recognition that would allow individuals to acquire the self-confidence, self respect and self-esteem necessary for them to fully develop their identities. It is quite a widespread phenomenon to hear claims by certain groups of individuals of having been abused, unjustly treated, insulted or humiliated. According to Honneth, such descriptions of mistreatment can be categorised

<sup>165</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.129.

as forms of disrespect, that is, a denial of recognition.<sup>166</sup> Such mistreatment is not only harmful because it restricts the freedom for individuals to act, but it also negatively affects the individuals' understanding of themselves which have been acquired inter-subjectively. Feelings of being disrespected points to the vulnerability of individuals due to their internal dependence for recognition from one another. It refers to the normative image of 'Me' that needs to be constantly supported by others. Experience of disrespect can raise conflicts of the normative image of 'Me' and can injure a subject's whole identity to the point of collapse.<sup>167</sup>

In sum, acts of disrespect can lead to conflicts of identity within individuals due to the withdrawal and withholding of recognition. In this sense, certain social struggles can be understood as demands for the expansion of recognition. In this context, Honneth's distinctions of three different modes of practical relations to self (self-confidence, self-respect and self esteem) provides us the framework to analyse the many forms of acts of disrespect that can be understood as motivations for social struggles.

According to Honneth:

"In this sense, the distinctions between three patterns of recognition gives us a theoretical key with which to separate out just as many kinds of disrespect. Their differences would have to be measured by the various degrees to which they are able to disrupt a person's practical relations-to-self by denying him or her recognition for particular claims to identity."<sup>168</sup>

Honneth believes that, it is only by employing this framework that we can begin to analyse how the perceptions of disrespect, which involves the affective side of human experience, can become the motivational impetus for social resistance and conflict – that is the struggle for recognition.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.131.

<sup>167</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.131.

<sup>168</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.132.

<sup>169</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.132.

The idea of social conflicts having a ‘moral’ dimension is not new and Honneth himself refers to the works of E.P. Thompson and particularly the historian Barrington Moore for empirical support.<sup>170</sup> However, Honneth takes the case further by arguing that:

“‘moral’ motives for revolt and resistance – that is, those based on a tacit understanding of what one deserves – do not emerge only in the defence of traditional ways of life (as Thompson and Moore argue) but also in situations where those ways of life have become intolerable”.<sup>171</sup>

Negative emotional reactions resulting from acts of disrespect, whether in the form of personal violations as to impede self-confidence, exclusion denying self-respect, or degradation injuring self-esteem, if proven to be experienced and shared by more than just an individual, can become a basis for collective action for social resistance and revolt.<sup>172</sup>

To reiterate an important point made earlier, although the elaboration on Honneth in this section has largely maintained his original context of individuals’ recognition struggles in domestic societies, the arguments encapsulated in his theory of the struggle for recognition can also be employed to make sense of social conflicts prevailing in the international society as well. This is because Honneth’s explanation, anchored in individuals’ experiences, illustrate the importance of humans’ social relations in influencing their motivation for actions. In understanding the potential of Honneth’s theory in FPA, it is important to remember that human beings are the agents in international relations, and these individuals are the ones who socialise and become

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<sup>170</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.167. See also Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, White Plains, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1978 and Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London: Gollancz, 1963.

<sup>171</sup> Anderson, ‘Translator’s Introduction’ in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xix.

<sup>172</sup> Anderson, ‘Translator’s Introduction’ in Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.xix.

socialised at this level of interactions.<sup>173</sup> In order to utilise this potential, the relevant question to ask next is how it is going to be achieved methodologically in this study.

#### 2.4. METHODOLOGY

Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition provides insights into deep motivational psychology, which is applicable to FPA. Honneth's theory of emancipation makes use of a communicative theory on society in his explanations of motivations underpinning actions.<sup>174</sup> Honneth's insights are useful as the basis of a more systematic research inquiry in studying the search for recognition as motivations in FPA. Drawing on Haacke, the question of what particular form a struggle for recognition takes would best be answered through an empirical rather than theoretical inquiries.<sup>175</sup> This thesis for example, probes into the different ways in which Mahathir sought recognition from the three different foreign policy addressees that he identified Malaysia with, namely the developing countries of the 'South', the Muslim *ummah* and the East Asian nations. In the process, it employs Honneth's modes of practical relations-to-self as a useful scheme to direct analysis towards self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem as forms of recognition struggles. This is therefore in line with Haacke's argument, in terms of Honneth providing the basis of a systematic research agenda. In this connection, Haacke provides examples that a researcher can set out to probe the motivations for struggles of recognition in foreign policy that stem from perceptions of disrespect as experienced by leaders or policy makers whether in terms of violation of the body that injures self-

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<sup>173</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, p.10.

<sup>174</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.186.

<sup>175</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.193.

confidence, the denial of rights that negatively impacts self-respect or the denigration of the ways of life that disturbs self-esteem.<sup>176</sup>

Honneth's theory therefore can be applied in the tradition of actor-specific tradition of inquiries in FPA. According to Hudson, FPA has developed the actor-specific theory that enables it to focus on the "ground" of international relations.<sup>177</sup> According to her: "All that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in *human decision makers acting singly or in groups.*"<sup>178</sup> In addition, Vertzberger contends that:

"Although the conception of belonging, role and status are state-level variables, they obviously affect the individual level of analysis. State leaders are often exposed to the consequences of others' role and status conceptions about their state, and it is they who interpret, operationalise, and enact these concepts in foreign policy."<sup>179</sup>

At this juncture, it is important to remember that the preoccupation of studies in this area has been to concentrate mainly on cognition. It also needs to be reiterated that cognition is quite different to recognition. The latter relates to the long-standing beliefs that individuals form about their environments.

In terms of methodology, the starting point of this thesis is that we need to understand what motivated Mahathir in his foreign policy decisions. The analysis taken in this study is thus at the level of the individual. In this regard, this thesis focuses attention on the personal experiences of Mahathir Mohamad, the leader of Malaysia, who played a central role in the country's foreign policy-making during his premiership. Importantly, the thesis also sets to ascertain whether his foreign policy decisions were motivated by experiences of disrespect. In this regard, this thesis applies an interpretive

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<sup>176</sup> Haacke, 'The Frankfurt School ...', p.193.

<sup>177</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory ...', p.2.

<sup>178</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory ...', p.2.

<sup>179</sup> Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds*, p.294.

method in order to form a coherent understanding of Mahathir. In exploring recognition as a significant motivation, Mahathir's beliefs that are relevant in this study are firstly, those concerning what was legitimate and just; and secondly, those about what needed to change. Thus, Mahathir's preconceptions of what is fair or just are central in this inquiry. These understandings would form part of his world-view or belief system. These preconceptions of justice constitute an integral part of motivations, which this thesis seeks to scrutinise. Mahathir's pronouncements will be examined in this study to identify his core beliefs and motivations that made him 'tick'.

Alexander George was considered a pioneer in recognising the significance of political belief systems of the elite and analysing their role in foreign policy making.<sup>180</sup> According to Holsti, a number of studies have illustrated the important correlation between belief systems, perceptions and foreign policy.<sup>181</sup> It is important to note though that both George and Holsti adhere to the American tradition of FPA that focuses the utility of belief systems in organising information effectively or efficiently. For example, in emphasising the importance of beliefs in influencing actions of political leaders, George elaborates:

"A political leader's beliefs about the nature of politics and political conflict, his views regarding the extent to which historical developments can be shaped, and his notions of correct strategy and tactics – whether these beliefs be referred to as "operational code," "Weltanschauung," "cognitive map," or an "elite's political culture," – are among the factors influencing that actor's decisions."<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Deborah Larson, 'The Role of Belief Systems and Schemas in Foreign Policy Decision-Making', *Political Psychology*, Vol.15, No.1, Special Issue: Political Psychology and the Work of Alexander L. George, March, 1994, p.17.

<sup>181</sup> Ole R. Holsti, 'The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.6, No.3, September 1962, p.244. The studies include M. Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind*, New York: Basic Books, 1960; M.B. Smith, J.S. Bruner and R.W. White, *Opinions and Personality*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1956 and R.C. Snyder, H.W. Bruck and B. Sapin, *Decision-Making as an Approach to the Study of International Politics*, Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press, 1954.

<sup>182</sup> Alexander L. George, 'The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.13, No.2, June 1969, p.197.

In this connection, Holsti posits that the belief system:

“may be thought of as the set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received. It orients the individual to his environment, defining it for him and identifying for him its salient characteristics.”<sup>183</sup>

The function of belief system therefore is to order information for the individual that otherwise would be unmanageable.<sup>184</sup> In addition, “[b]eliefs about what should be affect beliefs of what is.”<sup>185</sup> Similarly, Cottam talks of the construction of the ‘world view’ in his perceptual analysis, which he defines as “the primary device for depicting the decisional environment.”<sup>186</sup> George distinguishes two kinds of beliefs that a political leader holds. The first is his ‘instrumental beliefs’, which refers to “his beliefs about ends-means relationships in the context of political action,” and secondly, his ‘philosophical beliefs’, that is, “assumptions and premises he makes regarding the fundamental nature of politics, the nature of political conflict, the role of the individual in history, etc.”<sup>187</sup> In other words, it can be said that ‘instrumental beliefs’ relates to leadership style, whereas ‘philosophical beliefs’ can also be termed ‘the leader’s political philosophy’.

However, in this study what is relevant is Mahathir’s preconceptions of justice, which arguably form his belief system or world-view. Thus, the belief system is important in the methodology of this thesis insofar as it is able to extrapolate the important long-standing meanings and ideas that Mahathir has about his social world, which are deemed significant in influencing his motivations. Yet, while it is recognised here that there are important meanings attached to the social world (in contrast to the

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<sup>183</sup> Holsti, ‘The Belief System and National Images ...’, p.245.

<sup>184</sup> Holsti, ‘The Belief System and National Images ...’, p.245.

<sup>185</sup> Hollis and Smith, ‘Roles and Reasons in Foreign Policy Decision Making’, p.279.

<sup>186</sup> Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation*, p.32.

<sup>187</sup> George, ‘The “Operational Code” ...’, p.199.

natural world) by its inhabitants or the social actors through their experiences, how can we go about exploring them in a systematic manner? To reiterate in a more specific manner, the premise here is that Mahathir's actions in foreign policy were informed by his preconceptions of justice and motivated by what he perceived to be violations of justice. These beliefs crucially influenced his expectations about what other peoples' actions towards him. They also influence his definitions of his own personal identity and the identity of the Malaysian nation.

The challenge involved in this methodology concerns the problems related to the interpretive method in social inquiries. This hermeneutic or interpretive tradition posits that "action must always be understood from within."<sup>188</sup> However, if one based this hermeneutic understanding on the actor's pronounced rationalisations, how can an analyst be certain that these rationales are 'real'. Therefore, ascertaining the 'truth' can be hugely problematic.

In the attempt to understand what Mahathir intended by his foreign policy actions, this study relies on both primary and secondary data. The sources of primary data include Mahathir's writings, speeches and the author's interview with Mahathir himself and other senior members of Malaysia's foreign policy elite during the period of Mahathir's premiership. Secondary data include works written on Mahathir, which include biographies, academic theses and media reports.

In order to overcome the problem of ascertaining the 'real' motivations, this study will identify consistencies in Mahathir's pronouncements of his beliefs or conceptions of justice over the long period of his political activism, from his youth until the end of his premiership. The methodological premise is this: if there are correlations

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<sup>188</sup> Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p.72.

between the objectives of these policies and Mahathir's belief system, then it can be concluded that motivation for Malaysia's foreign policy was derived primarily from Mahathir himself.

In charting his belief system, the following chapter will illustrate the influences of both his leadership style (instrumental beliefs) and his political philosophy (philosophical beliefs, mainly his preconceptions of justice). In this connection, this thesis will highlight Mahathir's grievances relating to his experiences of being disrespected, either personally or through identification with the Malays, Malaya/Malaysia or the Islamic *ummah*. By concentrating on his conceptions of justice and perceptions of injustice, the thesis will analyse the role played by recognition motives in influencing Mahathir's foreign policy decisions. The empirical analyses of the case studies to illustrate the role played by recognition motives are undertaken in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Here, it is important to bear in mind that recognition motives do not exclude the influences of security and economic motives as drivers of Malaysia's foreign policy.

## **2.5. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has discussed the three basic underlying motivations: fear/security/power, economic/profit and affiliation/recognition. This follows from the first chapter, which identifies a lacuna in the literature on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. This gap in the literature seems to imply recognition struggles as being significant motivations, which the existing literature fail to address satisfactorily. While illustrating that recognition motives have been covered in FPA works, this chapter has shown that it has been done in a disorganised and unsystematic manner. This thesis has

introduced Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition as the possible analytical framework to be employed in examining recognition as a motivation underpinning Mahathir's foreign policy. Specifically, Honneth's three modes of practical relation-to-self will be used to identify the different forms of acts that disturbed the equilibrium between the expected and experienced treatment within Mahathir, and consequently triggered the struggle for recognition in terms of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition can be adopted in FPA in the tradition of 'actor-specific' theory that has been pursued by scholars such as Alexander George and Ole R. Holsti. This thesis, in employing Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition in explaining Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, anchors its analysis on the personality of Prime Minister Mahathir himself as the foreign policy actor. Although this will undoubtedly reduce the generalising power of its findings, it is hoped that it will produce a rich and complex study and understanding of how recognition motives come into play in influencing foreign policy.

This chapter has illustrated that as a motivation, recognition has been understudied in FPA. Firstly, this is due to the dominance of the Realist school of studying international relations. As discussed, the Realist assumption of human nature accentuates the motive of fear above all else. This leads to the preoccupation of Realists with the study of security and power. Secondly, according to Neo-Realism's epistemology, the ontology of Neo-Realism's studies is the structure of the international system and states as units within it, and not the individuals. Neo-Realists do this in the hope that certain natural laws governing interactions between states can be uncovered. The epistemology based on individuals as actors and interpretive methods of inquiry are deemed unscientific. Against this view, this thesis believes that an interpretive approach

is valuable to shed light on motivations underpinning foreign policy. In this regard, Mahathir's belief system, particularly his conceptions of justice and fairness, is crucial in this study insofar as it illuminates the actor's understanding and meanings of his social world. The thesis is therefore interested also in Mahathir's experiences of disrespect, suffered by him personally or by the groups that he identified himself with: the Malays or Malaysia. The aim is to identify the significance of the struggle for recognition as a key motivation underpinning Mahathir's foreign policy.

## CHAPTER 3 TRACING MAHATHIR'S BELIEF SYSTEM: AN ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The theoretical background elaborated in the previous chapter posits the central role of Mahathir's belief system in the analysis of recognition as a key motivating factor in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. According to Holsti, a belief system "may be thought as a set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received. It orients the individual to his environment, defining it for him and identifying for him its salient characteristics."<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that, the image that we have of ourselves and our surroundings - our 'belief system', is formed through "messages we receive from the past."<sup>2</sup> In this context, it is essential for us to study how images grow and change<sup>3</sup> to ultimately understand an individual's, in this case the Prime Minister Mahathir's order of preference when he made his decisions. Therefore, this chapter aims to trace the formation and development of Mahathir's belief system. What is most relevant here are Mahathir's conceptions of justice or fairness in social arrangements, whether as regards local, national, regional or global society. As explained, a struggle for recognition is triggered when there is a perception of violation

<sup>1</sup> Ole Holsti, 'The Belief System and National Images' in *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, J. Rosenau (ed.), New York: The Free Press, 1969, p.544.

<sup>2</sup> Ole Holsti, 'The Belief System and National Images' in *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, p.544.

of preconceived conception of justice. Crucially, this is a historical analysis. Since Mahathir's worldview was necessarily shaped by experiences before assuming the office of the prime minister, the focus of this chapter is to reconstruct its development all the way back to his early youth. This historical analysis also introduces us to Mahathir's personality and leadership style.

Mahathir operated in a number of different environments. Firstly, the most salient environment that influenced Mahathir's belief system is his own family environment. Mahathir's upbringing, family background and social status were important not only in shaping his personality, but also his views on the Malay society. The second salient environment is the local environment that he grew up in. Alor Setar, the capital of the north-western state of Kedah was a sleepy town of predominantly Malay Muslim inhabitants that had experienced occupation by the British, Japanese and Thais during Mahathir's youth. The third is the national environment. Mahathir was deeply influenced by the experience of colonisation, the struggles against the Malayan Union, Malays' economic deprivation and political turmoil over the precarious ethnic balance. Fourthly, at the regional level, Mahathir was influenced by the development of Malaya's and then, Malaysia's relations with Sukarno's Indonesia. The role played by Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore, straddling both the third (national) and fourth (regional) environment at different times, also proved important in shaping Mahathir's worldview. Finally, Mahathir was also influenced by the international environment; by the emerging brotherhood of newly independent countries embodied by the Afro-Asian group, and 'Islamic' nations as new sub-communities within the international society.

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<sup>3</sup> K. Boulding, 'National Images and International Systems' in *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, J. Rosenau, (ed.), New York: The Free Press, 1969, p.423.

This chapter will explore these influences in turn. Methodologically, Mahathir's belief system, particularly his perceptions of injustices will be ascertained primarily on the basis of Mahathir's own pronouncements and writings, as well as biographical and secondary literature.

### **3.1. FAMILY INFLUENCES IN MAHATHIR'S EARLY YEARS**

Mahathir's upbringing had a crucial impact on his belief system. Born on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1925 in Alor Setar, the capital town of the north-western state of Kedah, Mahathir was the youngest of nine children. His father, Mohamad Iskandar, rumoured to have been of sub-continent Muslim descent, was the first Malay headmaster of a reputable English school in Kedah.<sup>4</sup> Mahathir's mother, Cik Wan Tempawan Cik Wan Hanapi was a housewife. Mahathir had a strict disciplinarian upbringing in which education was hugely emphasised. His own father broke the mould by acquiring an English education when it was widely viewed as a threat to the Malays' Islamic faith.<sup>5</sup>

Mahathir's formal English education was complemented by informal Islamic education at home, first by his own mother and later by a local religious teacher, Encik Zakaria. Writing in the late 1980s, Adshead noted that, "the precepts he learnt so early in his life remain a staunch foundation of his character."<sup>6</sup> This combination of emphasis on both an English-based secular education and traditional Islamic teachings undeniably left

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<sup>4</sup> In Mahathir's letter to Tunku Abdul Rahman dated 17 June 1969, he expressed his disappointment at the Tunku's apparent doubts over Mahathir's Malay origin, claiming that he only had 'two spoonful of Pakistani blood' in him. See 'Surat Terbuka Mahathir Kepada Tunku Bertarikh 17 Jun 1969', Annex II in Sivamurugan Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2005, p.409.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, UK: Hibiscus Publishing Company, 1989, p.27. See also J.V. Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, Petaling Jaya: Eastern University Press, 1982, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, p.27.

a great imprint in his belief system, which later became obvious in his writings, as we shall see below.

Thus, the value of hard work and discipline had been instilled in Mahathir from a very early age. His family's (new) middle class status in a society still steeped in Malay feudal traditions would prove influential in determining Mahathir's outlook on the Malay value system, especially in relation to the traditional Malay aristocracy. Moreover, his father's questionable Malay credential could have also contributed towards the complex suffered by the family, which increased the need for acceptance and recognition of the family by its local community. The foundation of Mahathir's belief system was set via his experiences of social relations as lived primarily by his family, particularly his father. For Mahathir's family, social recognition and status had to be based on discipline and hard work, as it was not available in the feudal tradition of inheriting recognition and status as aristocratic birthright.

While his family environment was pivotal in providing Mahathir with the value of hard work and discipline, it was the experience of the Japanese occupation that made him realise the Malays' weak position in the economy. During this period, Mahathir's brothers and cousins lost their jobs as clerks with the government and were forced to hawk fruits along roadsides. Mahathir observed that their lack of knowledge in business was pitiful and it was difficult for them to make a living. Mahathir himself was obliged to suspend his education and started a stall selling bananas. He was struck by Malay poverty and realised that "the weakness of the Malays (in business) needed to be corrected so as to have the same standard of living as the non-Malays."<sup>7</sup> This realisation underpinned Mahathir's emphasis on economic factors in his recognition

struggle for the Malays. The need to correct what he saw as a humiliating economic handicap experienced by the Malays due to their poor grasp of business became an important motivation for Mahathir to become active in politics.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.2. THE BEGINNING OF MAHATHIR'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM**

#### **3.2.1. Influences From Local Independent Movements**

Mahathir's involvement in politics began when the British returned to Malaya with the intention of introducing the Malayan Union.<sup>9</sup> The Malayan Union was to be a direct British colony consisting of all the Peninsular Malay States and the British settlements of Penang and Malacca. Most importantly, the Chinese and Indians who had come to work in Malaya were to be recognised as full citizens, equal to the Malays. At this time, Mahathir was pursuing his secondary education at Sultan Abdul Hamid College in Alor Setar. He led a group of friends to demonstrate against the Malayan Union. At night, they put up anti-Malayan Union posters. His father encouraged him and contributed financially towards the publication of articles supporting anti-Malayan Union movements.<sup>10</sup> Mahathir then joined *Kesatuan Melayu Kedah* (Kedah Malay Association), and *Kesatuan Pemuda Melayu Kedah* (Kedah Malay Youth Association).

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<sup>7</sup> Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> See Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, pp 31-32 and Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*, Kuala Lumpur, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p.87.

<sup>9</sup> The British released a White Paper to introduce Malayan Union on 22 January 1946. It contained two significant proposals to the Malays. Firstly, their sultans would be stripped off their powers and secondly, non-Malays were to be given unrestricted opportunity to obtain citizenship. See N.J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia: A Study of the United Malays National Organisation and Party Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann, 1980, p.76.

Later, he also joined a reformist organisation called ‘SABERKAS’<sup>11</sup> and then attended as an observer the congress of Malay organisations that led to the founding of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). In 1946, Kesatuan Melayu Kedah became part of UMNO, making Mahathir one of its earliest members. Mahathir was 20 at the time.<sup>12</sup>

The literature suggests that, having nurtured a political ambition, Mahathir thought that he had to become someone important and of high standing in his community to achieve his political goals.<sup>13</sup> Without gaining sufficient social recognition and status, he believed it would be difficult for him to realise his political ambition. Although keen to study law in England, in 1947, he accepted a Federal Government scholarship to study medicine at the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore, where he stayed until 1953.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.2.2. Influences from Sojourn in Singapore

Mahathir honed his writing skills when he was studying in Singapore by contributing to a column in Singapore’s The Sunday Times, under the pseudonym C.H.E. Det. The young Mahathir offered crisp and critical analysis of the Malays’ social and political conditions

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<sup>10</sup> Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir’s Paradigm Shift: The Man Behind The Vision*, Taiping: Firma Malaysia Publishing, 1997, p.16.

<sup>11</sup> Acronym from the Malay name ‘Sayang Akan Bangsa Erti Redha Korban Apa Saja’, loosely translated as ‘Love of the People Transcends All’. See Zainuddin Maidin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1994, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> See also Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*; p.33.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, p.34.

<sup>14</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.87. See also Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.22.

in these articles.<sup>15</sup> Although some of his articles contain observations on culture, these contributions also clearly demonstrate his underlying discontent with the Malays' economic position. For instance, he highlighted that Malay housewives would buy materials from the *Chinese* or *Indian* textile shops in preparing for the Eid and also argued that catching fish in the 'sawah' (paddy field) would remain a past-time activity that would never help supplement the economies of paddy planters.

Other articles explicitly illustrate Mahathir's emerging belief system. Education was central in Mahathir's discourse, covering three articles. Also, Mahathir wrote about feudalism in Malay society, focusing for example, on the unfairness of the 'padi-kuncha' system to paddy planters<sup>16</sup> and the perceived negative practices of Malay royal rulers. His article on nationality carried his most explicit political commentary on the condition of the Malays. According to Khoo 'barring minor differences in terminology, it could qualify as a lengthy 'abstract' for 'The Malay Dilemma'.'<sup>17</sup>

Mahathir's writings under the pseudonym of C.H.E. Det highlighted the Malay consciousness at the very core of Mahathir's emerging political beliefs. Essentially, his concerns centred on the powerlessness of the Malays in their own land, which he saw as a consequence of their weak economic clout. The realities of Singapore accentuated Mahathir's concerns about the economic discrepancy between Malays and

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<sup>15</sup> The titles of his articles are; 'Malays and the Higher Education' (Sunday Times, 26 September 1948); 'Malays and the Higher Education: Summing-up' (Sunday Times, 17 October 1948); 'Ronggeng is Popular' (Sunday Times, 9 January 1949); 'Rains Bring Fish to "Sawahs"' (Sunday Times 6 February 1949); 'Malay – Modern and Standard' (Sunday Times 24 April 1949); 'Tapak Cherpu Duli Yang Maha Mulia' (7 July 1949); 'Malay Housewives are Busy' (Sunday Times 24 July 1949); 'The Rulers are Losing Loyalty' (Sunday Times 7 August 1949); 'Weekly Fair at Alor Star' (Sunday Times 18 September 1949); 'Rulers and Ra'ayats – Climax is Near' (Sunday Times 9 October 1949); 'Malay Padi Planters Need Help' (Sunday Times; 30 October 1949); 'Changing Malay Marriage Customs' (Sunday Times 20 November 1949); 'Malay Progress and the University' (Sunday Times, 27 November 1949); 'Malays in South Siam Struggle On' (Sunday Times 8 January 1950); 'New Thoughts on Nationality' (Sunday Times 9 April 1950); 'Plight of Malay Fisher folk' (Sunday Times 23 April 1950). See Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, and Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*.

Chinese. In a land where Malays used to rule, Mahathir witnessed with anguish how the Malays increasingly lived in “the poorer quarters” and in “dilapidated ‘*attap*’ and plank huts sometimes only a stone’s throw from the palatial residences of the Chinese millionaires.”<sup>18</sup> In Singapore, Mahathir witnessed that the Chinese entrepreneurs were no longer just running small Chinese shops ubiquitous in the peninsular but had established a dominance. His journalism revealed unambiguously the young Mahathir’s perceptions of injustices that were suffered by his people, in their own land.

### **3.3. MAHATHIR IN ACTIVE POLITICAL LIFE: IDENTIFYING INFLUENCES OF NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS**

After concluding his studies in Singapore, Mahathir started his medical career as a government doctor and from 1953-1957 served in Penang, Alor Setar, Perlis and Langkawi.<sup>19</sup> In 1957, Mahathir resigned from the government service to enable him to pursue a political career. In that year, Malaya also gained its independence under the leadership of the Kedah prince, Tunku Abdul Rahman who became Malaya’s first prime minister. After resigning, Mahathir set up MAHA Clinic, which was the first Malay private medical practice in Alor Setar. Mahathir quickly established a reputation as a kind and progressive Malay doctor in the town. He also owned one of the biggest cars in

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<sup>16</sup> Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, p.145.

<sup>17</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.85. *The Malay Dilemma* is discussed below.

<sup>18</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘New Thoughts on Nationalism’ in the Sunday Times, 9 April 1950 quoted in Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, pp.101-2.

<sup>19</sup> It has been widely noted that Mahathir’s medical training has been responsible for his methodical style in politics and administration. See for example Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, pp.294-303 and Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, p.53.

Alor Setar then – a Pontiac. Not many Malay commoners owned cars at the time. The car has been said to symbolise his aspiration to prove the capabilities of the Malays.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.3.1. Mahathir during the Tunku's Period (1957-1970)

Mahathir's early political career was influenced to a large extent by his relationship with the Tunku. Although both were from Kedah, they represented two different sets of Malay leaders. Mahathir's family has no link to Malay aristocracy. Arguably, this made Mahathir 'of the people'.<sup>21</sup> Mahathir, in his early anti-colonialist activities befriended students and teachers of Malay and religious schools and top movement leaders in Kedah. These people were viewed with suspicion by the British administration, the traditional Malay aristocrats and the palace.<sup>22</sup> The main reason for this was that they were influenced by nationalist movements of Indonesian and Malay students at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. They defined their political agenda according to the philosophy of Islamic reformism and envisioned Malaya's independence within a greater 'Melayu Raya'.<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, the Tunku was a royal, educated at Cambridge and at the Inns of Courts in London. His long sojourn in England made him partial to the customs of the English gentleman. Later in their political careers, the Tunku's 'Western' lifestyle became persistent points of Mahathir's criticisms. For example, Mahathir was deeply

<sup>20</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> Khoo Kay Kim, *Malay Society: Transformation & Democracy*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2001, p. 185. See also, Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.12.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph C. Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia – Malaysia Relations*, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005, pp.54-6. Mahathir however was never a socialist, an admirer of Sukarno nor supporter of Melayu Raya - interview with Zainuddin Maidin, London, 22 April 2007.

critical of the Tunku's penchant for gambling, drinking, and golf, as well as that of his ministers and senior civil servants.<sup>24</sup>

The first public skirmish between Mahathir and the Tunku was in the run up to the 1959 elections. Mahathir had been vocal in protesting Malaya's defence pact with Britain.<sup>25</sup> He also came to know that the Tunku was suspicious of his handling of Kedah UMNO's internal politics.<sup>26</sup> Mahathir was hurt by what he felt as the Tunku's distrust in him and withdrew from Kedah's political scene. However, many Kedah UMNO members maintained close contacts with Mahathir despite the Tunku's apprehension.<sup>27</sup> They managed to convince Mahathir to contest as an Alliance Party<sup>28</sup> candidate for Kota Setar Selatan in 1964. He won and started his career as a Member of Parliament (MP). Mahathir's first term as an MP coincided with Indonesia's 'Confrontation' ('Konfrontasi') and Lee Kuan Yew's 'Malaysian Malaysia' campaign.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Centrality of the Tunku in the Government and Its Pro-Western Ideals**

The Tunku played a central role in determining his government's policies. Domestically, the Tunku believed that there should be a grand bargain to accommodate the interests of the two key ethnic groups. The Malays who formed the majority were to be given political powers and the Chinese would be allowed to maintain their control over the economy. This was designed to guarantee a harmonious multi-ethnic nation. Foreign

<sup>24</sup> See for example Mahathir's letter on Tun Razak's birthday celebration in Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.14.

<sup>25</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.11.

<sup>26</sup> See Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.13.

<sup>27</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.16.

<sup>28</sup> Alliance Party was the ruling coalition party comprising the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). See Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia*, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> Malaysia, consisting of states within the Malayan Federation, Singapore, and the states of Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo was formed in 1963.

policy was “formulated and directed” by the Tunku, who held both the positions of prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs throughout his premiership.<sup>30</sup> In such a centralised decision-making process, the Tunku’s Western values and personality formed through his education and long stay in England translated into a pro-West and staunchly anti-Communist foreign policy.<sup>31</sup>

The pro-Western orientation of the Tunku’s foreign policy culminated in three major decisions from the time he became prime minister in 1957. Firstly, its decision to conclude the Anglo-Malayan Defence Agreement (AMDA).<sup>32</sup> Secondly, his decision to join the Commonwealth and thirdly, its anti-Communist stance. AMDA was signed on 12 October 1957, a few weeks after Malaya won its independence. The agreement obliged the United Kingdom (UK) to defend Malaya from any external attacks and to train and develop the Malayan armed forces. In return, Malaya undertook to assist the UK in case of attacks on any British colonial territories in the region. It also allowed the stationing of the Commonwealth reserve forces comprising the British, Australian and New Zealand in its territories.<sup>33</sup> AMDA was vehemently opposed, not only by opposition parties but also by ‘extreme’ nationalists within UMNO. Like other nationalists, Mahathir argued that AMDA compromised Malaya’s independence and sovereignty.<sup>34</sup> In other words, these nationalists felt morally aggrieved by the fact that

<sup>30</sup> Abdullah Ahmad, *Tengku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia’s Foreign Policy, 1963-1970*, Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1985, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, especially p. 9 and pp. 138 – 139. Savaranamuttu however argued that the Tunku’s pro-West attitude was shared by his colleagues in the form of the ‘elite ideology’. See Johan Saravanamuttu, *The Dilemma of Independence: Two Decades of Malaysia’s Foreign Policy, 1957-1977*, Penang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1983, p.47.

<sup>32</sup> For an extensive study of AMDA, see Chin Kim Wah, *The Anglo-Malayan (Malaysian) Defence Agreement: A Study in Alliance Transformation*, thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree for Doctor of Philosophy, University of London, 1976.

<sup>33</sup> See Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman ...*, p.26 and Michael Leifer, *The Foreign Relations of New States*, Camberwell Vic.: Longman Australia, 1974, p.47.

<sup>34</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.1.

Malaya had to continue to be dependent on its former colonial power to defend its territories even after gaining independence.

Secondly, the Tunku believed that the Commonwealth was a ‘good club’ that could bring the relationship between Britain and its newly independent former colonies closer.<sup>35</sup> Considering Mahathir’s strong criticisms of the Tunku’s pro-West attitude, it is unlikely that Mahathir shared the Tunku’s belief on the Commonwealth. This later became apparent when, soon after assuming leadership, Mahathir relegated the priority that Malaysia would attach to Commonwealth, below those of ASEAN, the OIC and NAM.

Malaya’s support for the US and South Vietnam was an unambiguous expression of its pro-West and staunch anti-Communist beliefs. The Tunku visited South Vietnam in 1958. The Tunku’s pro-West stance was also reflected in Malaya’s recognition of Israel.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Malaya’s economic policy was guided by Western liberal ideals. Despite its developing country economic characteristics, Malaya did not espouse any form of economic nationalism policy, as did many Third World countries. Rather, it was committed to a free-market capitalist ideology, which resulted with much of its economy being left in foreign, especially British control. A categorical pro-West posture and a staunchly anti-Communist stance isolated Malaya from the ‘non-aligned’ philosophy of the majority of Afro-Asian countries and the Tunku was seen “as only ‘slightly better’ than Chiang Kai Shek, Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam and Syngman Rhee of South Korea”.<sup>37</sup> In criticising the Tunku, Mahathir stressed the virtue of non-alignment. To Mahathir, pursuing a policy of non-alignment was important to

<sup>35</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, pp.28-29.

<sup>36</sup> The only other Islamic countries to do so were Turkey and Iran. Malaysia’s recognition of Israel was later withdrawn. Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.27.

substantiate Malaysia's independence status. Mahathir was clearly outraged when Indonesia under Sukarno disparaged Malaysia as a neo-colonialist of the British. This drove him and other UMNO 'young Turks' to actively promote closer links with the non-aligned newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa, especially through Razak with whom the 'young Turks' had close association. This will be dealt with in greater details later in the chapter.

### **Indonesia's 'Confrontation' ('Konfrontasi')**

Indonesia's 'Confrontation' against the formation of Malaysia started with the announcement by Indonesia's Foreign Minister Dr. Subandrio in January 1963, charging the Malaysian project as "neo-colonialist" and "neo-imperialist".<sup>38</sup> Sukarno also, in justifying his 'Confrontation' policy argued that Malaysia was a project of "neo-colonialism" to prolong British rule in Southeast Asia.<sup>39</sup> Arguably, the 'Confrontation' was a pivotal experience that influenced Mahathir's belief system concerning the attributes of Malaysia's true independent status, the importance of recognition of its independent status by other newly-independent countries and Malaysia proper relationship with its former colonial power, the UK. Importantly, the 'Confrontation' taught Malaysian leaders, including Mahathir about the struggle for recognition and the rivalry that existed in the bilateral relationship with Indonesia, Malaysia's bigger neighbour with whom it possesses a great deal of affinity.<sup>40</sup> At the core of

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<sup>37</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman ...*, p.27.

<sup>38</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.62.

<sup>39</sup> See Subandrio's 'Konfrontasi' announcement as reported in *The Straits Times*, 26 January 1963 quoted in Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman ...*, p.36. At about the same time, the Philippines renewed its claim on Sabah.

<sup>40</sup> For an examination of the rivalry and 'special relationship' between Malaysia and Indonesia, see Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia – Malaysia Relations*.

‘Confrontation’ was Indonesia’s refusal to recognise Malaysia. Further scrutiny exposes more specific recognition factors underlying the conflict. Firstly, a competition for status. Sukarno felt AMDA threatened Indonesia’s regional political and militaristic supremacy and the Tunku was certain that Malaysia’s economic potential would eclipse Indonesia and could even induce the Sumatrans to join Malaysia.<sup>41</sup>

Secondly, different political ideals underpinned the two nations. Malaya emulated a liberal democratic model with a constitutional monarchy whereas Indonesia’s republicanism was championed by its Communist party (*Parti Komunis Indonesia – PKI*).<sup>42</sup> The Malays took great pains to preserve their monarchy whereas Sukarno’s ‘people’s struggle’ abolished their powers.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Indonesia went through a bloody struggle whereas Malaysia achieved its independence through peaceful negotiations, and continued to maintain links with its colonial power.<sup>44</sup>

Recognition struggles also existed at the personal level between the Tunku and Sukarno. Sukarno, ‘the chief architect’<sup>45</sup> of Confrontation talked of “chewing up Malaya and spitting out the bits!”<sup>46</sup> He claimed that he was insulted because neither the British nor the Tunku consulted him about the formation of Malaysia.<sup>47</sup> The Tunku, on

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<sup>41</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman*..., p.39. The threat of Sumatra seceding was ‘real’ to Indonesia. See Dewi F. Anwar, *Indonesia In ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994, p.25 and Nicholas Tarling, *Regionalism in Southeast Asia: To Foster the Political Will*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p.113.

<sup>42</sup> The Tunku believed that Malaysia was a target of China’s expansionism and being part of the plan of the Jakarta – Peking – Hanoi – Pyongyang axis. See Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.72.

<sup>43</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman*..., p.32.

<sup>44</sup> Indonesia had been “born in fire unlike other nations which were born in the rays of the full moon”. Michael Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, London: Published for the Royal Institute of International Affairs by Allen & Unwin, 1983, pp 75-110. See also Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman*...

<sup>45</sup> F.B. Weinstein, *Indonesia Abandons Confrontation: An Inquiry Into The Functions of Indonesian Foreign Policy*, New York: Cornell University, Interim Report Series: Modern Indonesia Project, 1969, p.3

<sup>46</sup> D. Hyde, *Confrontation in the East: A Background Book*, London: The Brodley Head Ltd., 1965, p10.

<sup>47</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman*..., p.37. The Malayan government actually informed Indonesia of the proposal in August 1961 and there was no objection. See Hyde, *Confrontation in the East*, pp.30-1 and Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN*, p.23.

the other hand, felt that Sukarno had a strong personal dislike towards him.<sup>48</sup> Clearly, the recognition struggles between the two was a culmination of opposite personal backgrounds. The royal and Western educated Tunku was instrumental in defining Malayan liberal identity. In contrast, the commoner Sukarno was proud of Indonesia's 'people's struggle'. To Sukarno, the Tunku's credentials were suspect. He was a traditional and Western trained aristocrat who did not lead a bloody, revolutionary independent struggle.<sup>49</sup> Further, Sukarno aimed to be acknowledged as a world statesman, and was already positioning himself to replace India's Nehru as the spokesman for the non-aligned Third World.<sup>50</sup>

In the context of the 'Confrontation', the Afro-Asia group became the arena for Indonesia's propaganda. Indonesia was influential since hosting the Bandung Afro-Asia Conference in 1955. The Tunku, even after independence, "did not do much nor seek seriously to prove itself a good Afro-Asian nation".<sup>51</sup> This became the centre of criticisms of the Tunku from the 'young Turks' like Mahathir and other nationalists who disagreed with the Tunku's pro-West stance at the expense of support from other newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa. It was clear that to Mahathir, acceptance by other proud newly independent nations was crucial because he felt that Malaysia should belong to this group due to their shared experience of colonialism. Thus, it must have been humiliating to Mahathir and his associates when Malaysia's applications to participate in the groupings of newly-independent nations were rejected a few times. In February 1963, due to Indonesia's lobbying, Malayan and Singaporean representatives

<sup>48</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.39.

<sup>49</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*; Hyde, *Confrontation in the East*, p.32 and Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN*, p.25.

<sup>50</sup> Hyde, *Confrontation in the East*, p.21.

<sup>51</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, pp.29 and 41.

were excluded from participating in the Afro-Asia Peoples' Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) in Tanganyika. Malaysia was also refused admission at the second Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Conference in Cairo in 1964. After that, Sukarno aimed to further embarrass Malaysia through a formal expression of denunciation of Malaysia at the consequent NAM Conference in Algiers.<sup>52</sup>

Unlike the Tunku, Razak realised that winning over the Afro-Asia group was important. His view was encouraged by younger intellectuals within UMNO – the 'young Turks', of which Mahathir was a member. In November 1964 Razak visited some African countries to win over support for Malaysia amidst the threat of Indonesia-led formal denunciation at the next NAM Summit in Algiers. Razak made no distinction in terms of the governments' respective ideology and visited not only "the neo-Fascist state of Ethiopia", but also the one party states Kenya, Tanzania, Algeria and the United Arab Republic.<sup>53</sup> Mahathir was personally involved in these visits and in his report wrote that the purpose was solely "to win their sympathy and understanding."<sup>54</sup> During the trip, Razak persistently faced questions concerning AMDA.<sup>55</sup> However, Malaysia continued to be excluded from NAM when Indonesia hosted an Afro-Asian Islamic Conference in March 1965.<sup>56</sup>

In May 1965, Mahathir led an unofficial Malaysian delegation to the non-governmental AAPSO Conference in Winneba, Ghana. The delegation was endorsed by

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<sup>52</sup> The scheduled NAM in Algiers in June 1965 however did not take place due to the military coup led by Colonel Houari Boumedienne, which ousted President Ben Bella. The appeal of Afro-Asian solidarity started to wane after that. The next NAM conference was held in Lusaka, Zambia in 1970. See Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.58.

<sup>53</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.58.

<sup>54</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Political Report on the Occasion of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organisation Conference in Winneba, Ghana', Kuala Lumpur, 1965, quoted in Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.58.

<sup>55</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.114.

<sup>56</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p 58.

Razak but departed without the knowledge of the Tunku. The Tunku did not approve of AAPSO because he considered it susceptible to communist manipulations. In contrast and as earlier explained, the ‘young Turks’ within UMNO believed that it was crucial to win the support of Afro-Asia countries.<sup>57</sup> In the event, the Malaysian delegation was declined formal participation. This was considered again a humiliation even by the Tunku, but he also reprimanded the delegates for going in the first place.<sup>58</sup> Importantly, Mahathir and the ‘young Turks’ managed to lobby for the formation of a parliamentary committee to review foreign policy after the so-called Winneba incident. In its report, the Committee proposed “the widest diplomatic representation possible with countries irrespective of their ideologies.”<sup>59</sup> This presented a small victory for the ‘young Turks’ in influencing the Tunku’s foreign policy to also seek the support from the non-aligned countries of Asia and Africa, amidst Indonesia’s disparaging claim of Malaysia’s being a neo-colonialist project of the British.

When Lt General Suharto assumed power, he banned the PKI and declared ‘Confrontation’ illegal on 11 March 1966. Peace talks were held in Bangkok on 31 May 1966 leading to Indonesia’s recognition of Malaysia.<sup>60</sup> Malaysia and Indonesia signed an accord to end hostilities and renew diplomatic ties on 12 August 1966.<sup>61</sup> The end of the ‘Confrontation’ opened up a new chapter in Malaysia’s foreign policy, in particular in its relations with its regional neighbours. It ultimately led to the formation of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) when Indonesia, Malaysia, the

<sup>57</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.60.

<sup>58</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.70

<sup>59</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.72.

<sup>60</sup> See Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *Political Awakening*, Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Publications, 1986, p.81.

<sup>61</sup> For analysis behind Indonesia’s decision to end ‘Confrontation’, see F.B. Weinstein, *Indonesia Abandons Confrontation and Anwar, Indonesia in ASEAN*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995, pp.27-31.

Philippines, Singapore and Thailand signed the Bangkok Declaration on 8 August 1967.

In the negotiations leading up to ASEAN's formation, a great deal of manoeuvrings took place by diplomats of especially Malaysia and Indonesia in order to accommodate the sense of entitlement of Indonesia as the biggest nation in the region. Thus, even if 'Confrontation' was over and Sukarno was out of the picture, Indonesia's struggle for regional recognition persisted but this time, Malaysia seemed to have learnt its lesson.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.3.2. The Separation of Singapore**

Another event that had a significant impact on Mahathir was the separation of Singapore, which the Tunku announced on 9 August 1965. The background to the event was provided by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew's 'Malaysian Malaysia' campaign. The campaign advocated equality of all citizens based on meritocracy, and was viewed by most Malays as a direct attack on the Malays' special rights. It reignited the Malays' insecurity about losing their homeland that had galvanised their struggle to thwart the Malayan Union.<sup>63</sup> Lee asserted that none of the three major races could claim to be indigenous because all their ancestors came to Malaysia not more than a thousand years before. The Malays took this as an insult.<sup>64</sup> The insecurity felt by Malays was accentuated by the humiliation Lee caused by his derisory attitude towards Malay culture. Lee described the Malay culture as "antiquated", "primitive and soft" and even likened it

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<sup>62</sup> For the analysis of the background to ASEAN formation and the persistence of competing recognition struggles between Malaysia and Indonesia, see Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN Diplomatic and Security Culture*, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, esp. pp.40-45.

<sup>63</sup> "Ever since Singapore joined Malaysia, the Malays feared a repetition of the Malayan Union". Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman* ..., p.94.

<sup>64</sup> Alex Josey, *Lee Kuan Yew*, Singapore: Donald Moore Press, 1968, p.97. See also *The Straits Times*, 5 May 1965 quoted in Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman* ..., p.91.

to that of the ‘*orang hutan*’ (jungle people)!<sup>65</sup> He derided Malay leaders as “feudalistic”, “not of the right calibre” and “naïve”.<sup>66</sup> Lee’s campaign also threatened the political bargain between the main ethnic groups as championed by the Tunku through the Alliance Party coalition.<sup>67</sup> He mercilessly attacked the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) moderate Chinese leaders, especially Tan Siew Sin, the Finance Minister<sup>68</sup> in order to see his Peoples’ Action Party (PAP) replacing the MCA as the main party representing the Chinese interests in Malaysia.<sup>69</sup>

Mahathir’s first term as a parliamentarian coincided with this tumultuous time in Malaysian history. He achieved prominence during this period especially because of his heated exchanges with Lee Kuan Yew in the Parliament and was identified as a member of the extremist group within UMNO branded as the ‘ultras’. Funston distinguishes two different factions of the ‘ultras’; the first being UMNO ‘young Turks’ - intellectuals branded ‘ultras’ by the Tunku whom he accused of harbouring an agenda to topple him because of their opposition to his ‘moderate’ leadership and the group’s desire to bring Malaysia closer to the anti-colonial and somewhat socialist stance of the Afro-Asian countries. Secondly, the ‘ultra’ group labelled by Lee Kuan Yew, whom Lee accused of advocating an uncompromising position vis-à-vis the non-Malays.<sup>70</sup> Khoo however concluded that in reality, these two groups actually comprised more or less the same people.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Michael D. Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Beliefs Behind The Man*, Richmond: Curzon, 2000, pp. 29 & 77.

<sup>66</sup> Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman* ...., p.90 and Michael Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew*, p.77.

<sup>68</sup> Lee’s dislike towards Tan Siew Sin was obvious in his memoir. See Lee Kuan Yew, *The Singapore Story*, Singapore: Times, 1998, for example, p.543.

<sup>69</sup> Lee, *The Singapore Story*, p.547 and Said Zahari, *Meniti Lautan Gelora: Sebuah Memoir Politik*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2001, pp. 191-2.

<sup>70</sup> Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia*, pp.178-179.

<sup>71</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.49.

Most cited of all Mahathir's heated exchange with Lee Kuan Yew was during the session of 'Address of Thanks' for the King's (Yang di-Pertuan Agong) at the Parliament on 26 May 1965. During the occasion, Mahathir charged that the supposedly non-communal parties of the Socialist Front and the PAP were the most communal and racialist parties of all. "Basically they are pure Chinese chauvinists, or they derive their inspiration from a common dislike for the Malays."<sup>72</sup> He further attacked the PAP as embodying the "type of Chinese" that were "insular, selfish and arrogant" and,

"have in most instances never crossed the causeway. They are in fact overseas Chinese first – more specifically Chinese of the southern region as in their mind China is at the centre of the world – and Malaysia a poor second – a status so utterly artificial to them that it finds difficulty in percolating through their cranium."<sup>73</sup>

Mahathir's courage to challenge Lee who was known for his brilliant debating skills won him admiration amongst Malay politicians.<sup>74</sup> Mahathir, not intimidated by Lee, dismissed with disdain his "mad ambition" to be the first Chinese prime minister of Malaysia.<sup>75</sup> He claimed that the PAP's modus operandi in the Parliament was to "assume a brave front and dare everyone in the hope that it will overawe what it presumes to be the less clever and more timid groups into refusing to rise to the challenge."<sup>76</sup> Mahathir's strong performance in the Parliament was recognised by UMNO with a promotion to its Supreme Council in 1965. This episode of the Malaysian history clearly left an indelible imprint on Mahathir's beliefs concerning the position of the Malays in their own country. It was apparent that Mahathir was outraged by Lee's callous and degrading remarks on the Malays, humiliating their culture and leaders. Against what he believed to be the

<sup>72</sup> *Dewan Ra'ayat Parliamentary Debates*, II, 3, 26 May 1965, col.77 quoted in Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.19. It is also referred in Lee, *The Singapore Story*, pp.608-611.

<sup>73</sup> *Dewan Ra'ayat Parliamentary Debates*, II, 3, 26 May 1965, col. 84 -85 quoted in Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.19.

<sup>74</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.19.

<sup>75</sup> *Dewan Ra'ayat Parliamentary Debates*, II, 3, 26 May 1965, col. 84 quoted in Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.20.

Malay ways, Mahathir refused to be intimidated and challenged Lee in the Parliament in a similar blunt and up-front manner.<sup>77</sup>

Lee Kuan Yew's abrasive and undiplomatic style particularly when dealing with the Malays have been widely observed, although such traits might not have been shared by the majority of Malaysian Chinese. Singapore's former Deputy Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye explained that Lee's "outrageous", "inflammatory" and "anti-Malay" speeches were due to Lee's little understanding of Malay culture.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the British Deputy Commissioner Philip Moore observed "how poorly Lee dealt with the Malay leadership and encouraged him to be more diplomatic."<sup>79</sup> Even Lee's Peninsula born friend, Maurice Baker considered that Lee "did not understand the subtleties of Malay conversations."<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, as a leader of the predominantly Chinese Singapore, Lee impacted significantly in the precarious race relations within Malaysia then. Due to his remarks, the Malays perceived Lee as ungrateful, arrogant and downright disrespectful. The Malays were further alarmed when Lee suggested that Malaysia should be partitioned into North Malaya (for Malays) and South Malaya (for Chinese), if Sino-Malay conflict could not be resolved.<sup>81</sup>

The heated exchanges with Lee in the parliament were therefore Mahathir's responses to Lee's challenges of the Malays' constitutional supremacy and his derogatory comments about the Malays. In this sense, Mahathir was driven to defend the Malay honour from further being disrespected by Lee and Singapore's PAP. The importance of

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<sup>76</sup> Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.20.

<sup>77</sup> Mahathir's beliefs on the Malay characteristics and value system, for example their aversion of conflicts are exposed in *The Malay Dilemma*, which will be examined later in the chapter.

<sup>78</sup> Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew*, pp.29-30.

<sup>79</sup> Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew*, p.30.

<sup>80</sup> Barr, *Lee Kuan Yew*, p.30.

<sup>81</sup> *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, 5 May 1965 quoted in Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman ...*, p.7.

the events in the period will be clear when Mahathir's thoughts encapsulated in *The Malay Dilemma* is examined later in the chapter. The book was written in the aftermath of the race riots of 13 May 1969. Although the Tunku decided on the separation of Singapore in August 1965, racial polarisation caused by Lee's 'Malaysian Malaysia' campaign continued to beset the nation, culminating in the tragedy of 13 May 1969.

### 3.3.3. 13 May 1969 Race Riots

The 13 May 1969 racial riots that erupted in Kuala Lumpur was perhaps the greatest direct influence on Mahathir's thinking about the situation of the Malays. As mentioned earlier, inter-ethnic understanding continued to remain low even after Singapore's separation in 1965.<sup>82</sup> Polarisation persisted between Malays and Chinese. The Malays felt they had compromised too much and stood to lose everything. Still, the DAP continued the PAP's propaganda that the Chinese did not receive equal political treatment.<sup>83</sup> The Alliance Party did poorly in Kuala Lumpur in the General Election on 10 May 1969. The victorious Chinese dominated DAP held a victory parade across the capital during which its supporters taunted the Malays with slogans like 'Kuala Lumpur belongs to the Chinese' and 'Malays go back to the *kampungs* (villages)'. This enraged many Malays, leading ultimately to violent attacks on the Chinese and their businesses, sparking retaliatory actions from the Chinese community.

Tension between Mahathir and the Tunku peaked after the riots. Mahathir who himself lost his Kota Setar Parliamentary seat in the elections to PAS candidate

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<sup>82</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.17.

<sup>83</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.17.

Yusof Rawa by 989 votes<sup>84</sup> wrote an open letter to the Tunku, criticising his leadership. It was widely circulated among the Malays in the capital.

In the letter, Mahathir blamed the riots on the Tunku's lack of leadership and called for his resignation. He accused the Tunku of giving in too much to the Chinese, to the extent that the Malays were left economically marginalised, weak and ultimately subjected to disrespect and humiliation.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, Mahathir was expelled from the party on 12 July 1969 for not following party discipline.<sup>86</sup> Apparently, an order was issued to arrest Mahathir but it was stopped by Razak.<sup>87</sup>

The race riots were the beginning of the end for the Tunku. In the aftermath of the riots, more and more UMNO members were looking towards Razak to assume leadership.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, the Tunku felt let down by his allies. The British Labour government refused to provide assistance during the race riots and the Australian media reported the riots in a very alarmist and exaggerated manner.<sup>89</sup> Mahathir, in his exile returned to Kedah and to practising medicine. It was during this period that he wrote *The Malay Dilemma*, which was banned in Malaysia until 1985.

<sup>84</sup> Apparently, Mahathir made a remark that he did not need the Chinese votes, which angered the Chinese and made them vote for the Islamic Party (PAS). See Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.32. See also Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.21.

<sup>85</sup> Mahathir's letter to the Tunku in Sivamurugan Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, Annex II, pp.407 – 410. See also Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.23 and Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 1999, pp.21-2.

<sup>86</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.34.

<sup>87</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.30.

<sup>88</sup> Tunku later became aware of the moves to replace him and soon after the ousting of Mahathir, remarked that there were 'extremists' within the UMNO who wanted to seize power. See Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.29.

<sup>89</sup> Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, *May 13: Before and After*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Melayu Press, 1969, p.169.

### 3.3.4. The Malay Dilemma<sup>90</sup>

*The Malay Dilemma* encapsulated Mahathir's thoughts on the riots. It exposed the widespread feeling of the Malays that they were suffering gross injustices and their anxiety of losing *Tanah Melayu* (the Malay land) to non-Malays. In the book, Mahathir categorically declared that Malays were "the rightful owners of *Tanah Melayu*",<sup>91</sup> a clear rebuke to Lee's assertion.

According to Mahathir, Malays were insecure because they felt they were economically disadvantaged in their own country. He observed that after independence, Malays were unable to compete with the more business savvy Chinese in securing lucrative government contracts. The Chinese had "more business acumen, [were] capable of improvising at short notice, and backed by newly-founded Chinese banks and their own considerable personal wealth." (p.50). Consequently, he argued, Chinese companies began to replace British ones in independent Malaya/Malaysia. To him, independence had failed to bring the Malays' economic salvation and their frustration actually deepened (p.51). In Mahathir's terms, the Malay dilemma was indeed essentially an economic dilemma (p.61). This argument challenged unequivocally the Tunku's view that the Malays' position was secured due to their rein on political power. Indeed, Mahathir seemed certain that the humiliation that the Malays suffered at the hands of the likes of Lee Kuan Yew and the DAP protesters on the eve of 13 May 1969 was due to their low economic status.

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<sup>90</sup> In this section, references from the book are indicated by their page numbers unless elaborations are needed in footnotes.

<sup>91</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma*, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore: Times Book, 1970, p.126. In addition, on page 133 he said, "I contend that the Malays are the original or indigenous people who can claim Malaya as their one and only country."

Mahathir dissected the Malay problem of not being able to compete effectively with the immigrant Chinese as being rooted firstly in hereditary and environmental factors and, secondly, in the Malays' value system. Mahathir's medical training was discernible in his reasoning that the Malays' negative characteristics were moulded by their environments and had been passed down hereditarily. He suggested that Social Darwinist explanations could account for the Malays' weaknesses (p.19). Firstly, Mahathir contrasted the fertile land, good climate and rare occurrence of natural disasters in the Malay Peninsular, which had not forced the survival of the fittest among Malays (pp.20-1 & 106), to the harsh environments of disaster prone China (p.24). Secondly, Malays tended to in-breed, preferring to marry relatives even as close as first cousins, and the negative effects were scientifically proven (p.18). In contrast, the Chinese custom prohibited marriage within the same clan, making in-breeding almost non-existent (p.24).

Mahathir criticised in particular the Malays' value system. He argued that an understanding of the Malay value system and ethical code was essential in planning their future (p.155). To him, the 'Malay character' was an integral part, and in fact accentuated the complexity and magnitude of the inter-racial problem in Malaysia (p.116). He argued that the absence of open racial conflict before 13 May 1969 was because Malays "lack a capacity to bring about open conflict" due to their value system and character, not because there was racial harmony (p.5).

To Mahathir, the Malay value system extolled non-aggressiveness. "The good Malay is always unobtrusive and self-effacing, unwilling to impose his will if it conflicts with others, and ever willing to compromise." (p.160). While the aggressive newcomers exploited the richness of their land, the Malay character, which upheld politeness and

self-restraint as marks of good breeding (p.117) compelled the Malays to unobtrusively stand on the side. There was conflict within the Malays, although there was no open conflict. To Mahathir, such self-restraint was never natural. When their patience ran thin, self-restraint would be taken over by a kind of violent outbreak. They went *amok*, as happened on 13 May 1969 (p.118).

Mahathir believed that feudalism in the Malay society engendered excessive emphasis on politeness. There was always the proper way to conduct oneself, especially towards those wielding authority – royals, chiefs and imams. Although not necessarily a negative attribute (pp170-1), feudalism in the Malay society produced outdated values. He wrote;

“The Malay social code contributes greatly to making the Malays what they are today. Self-restraint and a desire not to displease does not make for an aggressive society. The world is getting more and more rude. Frankness is the order of the day. In politics, as much as in sciences there is a growing dedication to facts. Old ideas, half-truths and an adulation of form are giving way before the pragmatism of the modern approach. For the most part the Malay social code is therefore somewhat anachronistic and can only lessen the competitive abilities of the Malays and hinder their progress.” (p.171)

It is clear that Mahathir’s up-front and forthright style as displayed in his exchanges with Lee Kuan Yew in the parliament was a deliberate action to counter what he believed to be the Malays’ over-emphasis on politeness and aversion to conflicts. Later, when he became prime minister, he was known for his less than diplomatic outbursts and straight-talking. To those without the insights of Mahathir’s long-standing beliefs on the Malay character, it is all a little bit peculiar and perplexing. Thus, Mahathir’s personality is said to be full of paradoxes.<sup>92</sup> Brash in public, yet he was a quiet, soft-spoken and polite man in private.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.3.

<sup>93</sup> See for example, Adshead, *Mahathir of Malaysia*, p.4.

### Colonialism and Malay Value System

Mahathir touched extensively on what he perceived to be the impacts of colonialism on the Malay value system in *The Malay Dilemma*. It has been observed that his strong sense of anti-colonialism motivated his political activism from the very beginning.<sup>94</sup> He “identified British colonialism as the ‘culprit’ that had enslaved the *bumiputras*, the sons of the soil, in their own land.”<sup>95</sup> In *The Malay Dilemma*, Mahathir illustrated how the Malays’ good manners were misinterpreted by the British as signs of the Malays’ approval of their unequal relationship (p.116). Mahathir believed that the British held degrading views of the Malays as being weak, submissive and lazy. He was offended by the description of Malays in the Encyclopaedia Britannica as ‘indolent’. Mahathir argued that if Malays were ‘indolent’, it was due to the British policy, which had made them internalise the inferiority as projected by the colonisers. He believed that Malays’ negative character was partly “a result of the administrative policies of colonial rulers.”<sup>96</sup> It can be argued that this is the core of what has often been described as Mahathir’s nationalist predisposition. Mahathir’s beliefs in the impacts of colonialism on the Malay character and mindset are important in understanding his foreign policy decisions, particularly as regards Malaysia’s identification with non-aligned developing countries of the ‘South’, policies to ‘Buy British Last’ and ‘Look East’.

In addition, Mahathir also blamed the British for Malaysia’s ethnic problems. During the British time, there was an unmanageable influx of Chinese and Indians. They

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<sup>94</sup> Some examples of these observations are as follows: “This belief in the menace of colonialism on his people’s culture and values was in fact instrumental in motivating Mahathir to join the independence struggle from a youthful age. From early on, he was intent to wipe out any remnants of colonialism and its way of thinking.” Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.95. “Mahathir has blamed the British for the Malay dilemma.” Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, p.53.

<sup>95</sup> Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, p.120.

<sup>96</sup> Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, p.120.

came to work in British tin mines and plantations and did not intend to stay permanently. They thus did not make the effort to assimilate into the local culture, unlike the small numbers of Chinese and Indians who came before British colonialism. Moreover, the British ‘divide and rule’ policy resulted in minimal contacts among the ethnic groups. Mahathir asserted that “had the British not encouraged the Chinese and Indians to immigrate in unmanageable numbers and then segregated them from the Malays, these people would have fewer differences with the Malays, and the Malay problem would not have emerged.” (p.134).

### Islam and the Malay Value System

Mahathir believed that Islam plays a major influence in the Malay value system (pp.154-5). This thesis argues that Mahathir’s understanding of the vital place of Islam in Malay identity drove him to pursue a more rigorous foreign policy on issues that concerned the Muslim *ummah*. In *The Malay Dilemma*, Mahathir expounded on what he perceived as the crux of the Malays problem relating to their religion, that is their misinterpretations of Islamic doctrines (p.155). Moreover, Mahathir argued that a great deal of the Malay value system was derived not from Islam but from *adat* or custom, which was unrelated to faith (pp.155-6).

He highlighted Malays’ confusions and misinterpretations of Islamic doctrines. These included disregard of time (while seemingly valuing life) (p.163), hopelessness (construing it as a sign of patience) (p.160) and fatalism (as spiritualism) (p.164). Thus, life was considered as preparation for the hereafter (p.162). He argued that this was not Islamic, but actually mere “escapism from the realities of life, an insulation against the envy” of the prosperity of “other races and other countries” (p.162).

Thus, their dedication to the hereafter was to convince themselves that they were “not missing anything” if they did not have “worldly goods” (p.162). In addition, the Malays’ attitude towards money and property was “undeveloped” (pp.166-7). He lamented that such an attitude would not bring Malays progress. *The Malay Dilemma* is therefore significant in expounding Mahathir’s belief on the right interpretation of Islamic doctrines, which should not hinder but encourage the pursuit of education, progress and economic success. As regards foreign policy, it will be illustrated in Chapter Six that an important motivation for Mahathir was to make Malaysia a model Muslim country, which would seal the overhaul of the Muslim Malay character and identity.

In sum, the book elaborates on Mahathir’s proposal for a two-pronged strategy as the solution for the Malay dilemma. Firstly, he emphasised the need for a psychological ‘revolution’ to accompany efforts to better the economic standing of Malays. Secondly, he advocated “constructive protection” (p.31) in favour of the Malays. This implied positive discrimination measures for example in granting government contracts, scholarships and university places.

### **3.3.5. Mahathir During the Razak Years (1970-1976)**

In the aftermath of the race riots, Parliament was suspended temporarily. A National Operations Council (NOC) headed by Razak was established to rule Malaysia by decree. The Tunku who still headed the Cabinet as prime minister came under increasing pressure to resign, especially from UMNO ‘young Turks’, of whom Mahathir was a

prominent member.<sup>97</sup> The Tunku eventually bowed to pressure and resigned in September 1970 when a face-saving exit emerged in the form of heading the new 'Islamic Commonwealth' based in Jeddah. The change of government was significant because it started the discourse centred on the Malay supremacy in the formation of Malaysia's national identity.<sup>98</sup>

Pivotal to this discourse on the formation of a Malay centric national identity was the New Economic Policy (NEP) launched by the Razak government.<sup>99</sup> Many agreed that Mahathir's analysis in *The Malay Dilemma* became the underlying rationale for the 'restructuring' agenda initiated by Razak.<sup>100</sup> Enshrined in the NEP was a 'reconstruction strategy' that aimed to meet two inter-related problems: "the economic backwardness and poverty of the Malays; and the psychological feeling among Malays of relative deprivation, alienation, and inferiority, which presumably accounted for Malay jealousy and hatred of the non-Malays."<sup>101</sup> Thus, the government came to agree that the race riots were due to increasing Malays' discontent concerning their relative economic deprivation, as argued by Mahathir in *The Malay Dilemma*. It can be understood as a

<sup>97</sup> Although at the time Mahathir was expelled from UMNO, he remained close to others identified in the group. They were Musa Hitam and Ghaffar Baba (who later became Deputy Prime Minister to Mahathir) and Abdullah Ahmad, Tun Razak's Political Secretary. Apparently, Tun Dr Ismail was more determined to avoid a putsch against the Tunku than Tun Razak by promising the group that the Tunku would resign within six months to a year. See Abdullah, *Tengku Abdul Rahman...*, p.105.

<sup>98</sup> Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations*, p.116.

<sup>99</sup> The NEP had a two-prong strategy. Firstly, to eradicate poverty, by rising income levels and create employment for all Malaysians irrespective of race. Secondly, it aimed at correcting the economic imbalance and therefore eliminate the identification of race with economic activity. This process would involve "the modernisation of rural lives, a rapid and balanced growth of urban activities and the creation of a Malay commercial and industrial community in all categories and at all levels of operation, so that Malays and other indigenous people will become full partners in all aspects of the economic life of the nation." Government of Malaysia, *Second Malaysia Plan, 1971-1975*, Kuala Lumpur: Government Printing Office, 1971, p.1, quoted in Gordon Means, *Malaysian Politics*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976, p.408.

<sup>100</sup> See Khoo, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism*, p.27.

<sup>101</sup> Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p.408.

move by the government to reinstate the notion of what is considered just and fair by the Malays in the arrangements of the Malaysian society.

Clearly, Razak shared at least some of Mahathir's political beliefs. Being one of UMNO 'young Turks', Mahathir enjoyed close association with Razak's office and "held him (Razak) in the highest esteem".<sup>102</sup> In 1972, Mahathir was re-accepted into UMNO and rejoined its Supreme Council. Mahathir was firstly appointed to the Higher Education Advisory Council. A year later, he was nominated to the upper house, the Senate or *Dewan Negara*. In 1974 elections, Mahathir won unopposed as the MP for Kubang Pasu and was appointed Minister of Education.<sup>103</sup>

Mahathir's strong views on education appear to have been influenced by his own father who himself was a respected educationist.<sup>104</sup> As the Minister of Education, Mahathir introduced a number of changes to improve the opportunities for *bumiputra*<sup>105</sup> students to further their education to local and foreign learning institutions. They included admission quotas and policy changes on the selection of students to these institutions. Also, specific facilities were introduced like scholarship awards and exclusive teaching institutions like MARA Junior Science Colleges.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.42. Mahathir's influence with Tun Razak was primarily through his close friendship with Abdullah Ahmad, Tun Razak's Political Secretary – Author interview with Zainuddin Maidin, 22 April 2007.

<sup>103</sup> Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, 2005, p.28.

<sup>104</sup> "...the name of Mohamad Iskandar was almost synonymous with development and progress of education in the state of Kedah." Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile of Courage*, p. 1. See also Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.14.

<sup>105</sup> The term literally means 'sons of the soil'. It refers to the indigenous people of both the Malays and tribal type. See Means, *Malaysian Politics*, p.380.

<sup>106</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.14.

Mahathir wrote his second book '*Menghadapi Cabaran*', which was later translated as *The Challenge* when he was Education Minister.<sup>107</sup> The book reflected Mahathir's difficult experiences with Malay students, at home and abroad, especially at the beginning of his tenure. Believing that education was the one important means for Malays to change their fate, Mahathir was impatient and frustrated with those who became involved in anti-government activities while receiving government scholarships. He thus initiated amendments to the University and College Act, controversially including provisions for stronger government control on students' discipline and activities at higher institutions.

In mid 1975, students at the Mara Institute of Technology (ITM) in Kuala Lumpur and Malaysian students represented by the Kelab Malaysia United Kingdom (Malaysian Club United Kingdom - KMUK) demonstrated against the government's decision to withdraw scholarships to students considered to be anti-government. Mahathir was especially unhappy with the KMUK because of its allegations that the government was un-Islamic and anti-Islam.<sup>108</sup> This event not only made Mahathir realise the challenges the government was facing in implementing the NEP, but also illustrated to Mahathir how Malay students were being influenced by the global Islamic resurgence. During his visit to London in June 1975 as Education Minister, Mahathir personally bore the brunt of the KMUK's anti-government attitude and was annoyed that his talk at the Malaysia Hall was boycotted by KMUK leaders. Furthermore, Mahathir felt that he was slandered in the sermon during Friday prayers there.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> '*Menghadapi Cabaran*' was first published in 1976. The English translation, '*The Challenge*' was first published in 1986. See Mahathir Mohamad, *Menghadapi Cabaran*, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1976, and *The Challenge*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 1986.

<sup>108</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.250.

<sup>109</sup> Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p. 252.

Moreover, the episode also pointed to Mahathir's emerging style of leadership, which can be considered as determined and ruthless, once he set his goals. Mahathir refused to back down to KMUK's demand for the scholarships to be reinstated, arguing that it was necessary because this small group of students was hampering the studies of others by their actions. He reminded the students that their success was crucial for the Malay progress, to "put the races in Malaysia on equal footing".<sup>110</sup>

### *The Challenge*<sup>111</sup>

*The Challenge* was specifically targeted to the Malay youths. Unlike *The Malay Dilemma*, it was originally written in Malay and Mahathir adopted "the accepted dual evidence in the study of Islam – *dalil 'aqli* and *dalil naqli*, i.e. rational argument and excerpts from the Quran (the Islamic Holy book) and *hadith* (traditions of the Prophet) to engage them (Introduction). Mahathir expressed concerns because Islam, which once made its followers progressive and powerful had been invoked to reject materialism and "healthy involvement in worldly concerns", which he feared would lead to its "weakness", "retrogression" and "eventual collapse" (Introduction). True to his medical training, he sought to analyse why this happened, because "diagnosis is the first step towards cure" (pp.2-3).

Mahathir dealt directly with issues raised by the students which included their demands for freedom of expression, right to activism and demonstrations, calls for nationalisation of foreign owned industries and allegations of corruption. However, at the very core, *The Challenge* dealt with the influence of Islam in the Malay value system, consequently affecting the Malays' attitude towards education and materialism. Mahathir

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<sup>110</sup> See excerpts of the letter in Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, pp.252-3.

seemed concerned with the increasing attractiveness of political Islam amongst Malay youths and how socialist and communist ideals were being defined and adopted by this movement

Mahathir reiterated his frustration that since embracing Islam, Malays were only stressed to study *aqidah* (spirituality), *ibadah* (religious rites) and *akhlak* (morality), forgetting “other areas of knowledge which had been explored and pioneered by Islamic writers, scientists and mathematicians”(p.19). The problem worsened when such ‘worldly’ knowledge’ was embraced by Europeans, and propagated in their colonies at schools ran by Christian missionaries. Thus, knowledge like mathematics and the sciences which actually originated from Islamic scholars was shunned as ‘Western’ and un-Islamic - Christian and later, ‘secular’. He believed that there was no separation between the religious and the secular (p.82). Muslims became weak because of their misperception of ‘worldly’ knowledge, which was necessary for its survival (p.36). For example, scientific knowledge was vital for the defence of the Muslim community (pp.78-9).

Another misinterpretation of Islamic doctrines that Mahathir attacked in the book was Muslims’ rejection of materialism (p.107). He believed the ‘much confusion about the definitions and the roles of spirituality’ led to the calls made by most Islamic leaders to preserve only spiritual values and reject materialism (p.115-6). He also argued that material equality, as championed by socialists and communists, was never a characteristic of Islamic societies (p.108) as illustrated by Islamic system of taxation and redistribution of wealth (p.112). Further, the materialistic achievements of past Arab and Indian Muslims were instrumental in the spread of the religion. In short, he argued that

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<sup>111</sup> In this section, references from the book are indicated by the page numbers within the paragraphs.

material success was vital in Islamic societies to guarantee the continued propagation of the religion and existence of its followers.

Mahathir considered it 'strange and shameful' that 70 million oil-rich mostly Muslim Arabs could not defend themselves against the threat of 2 million Israelis 'without wealth' (p.114). To Mahathir, this was due to the Muslims' 'lack of 'worldly' ability and efficiency (as a result of insufficient pursuit of worldly knowledge)" (p.114). Consequently, the Muslims had to depend on the US (capitalists) and the USSR (communists) for their defence (p.114). The situation of Muslims in West Asia was therefore 'precarious' because insofar as defence was concerned, they were 'forced to be beggars' despite their rich resources (p.79). To Mahathir, this proved that wealth without knowledge was 'ineffective' (p.79). Mahathir lamented;

".... Muslims are forced to bow to materialists, to beg for aid and protection. In the face of this fact, it is difficult to convince anyone that spirituality brings happiness. Palestinian refugees who are attacked, hounded, displaced and slaughtered by both Jews and fellow-Muslims can hardly accept claim that spiritual values bring happiness." (p.115)

In this regard, Mahathir's thoughts concerning the place of the Malays in the global community of the Muslim *ummah* is clear. What is also plain is that in upholding the correct interpretation of Islamic doctrines, Mahathir aspired for the Malays to progress and attain economic success so that they could redeem the honour of Islam and its *ummah*.

Mahathir's anti-colonialism came to the fore in the essay on East and West. The examples he used, like men having long hair (p.44), and attire (pp.45-47), were undeniably simplistic and crude. Nevertheless, the crux of his contention was unmistakable, that is, his perception of continued domination of the East by the West. He observed that whatever came from the West would be deemed superior and emulated by

the East (p.44). According to him, this psychological imbalance was due to colonisation. Throughout history, the West had been the East's 'powerful conquerors, defeating and subjugating' them.

"The success of the Western nations overawed the Easterners. If the West was so successful, it must be because of the qualities its people had. From this notion to the notion that the same success could be achieved by copying Western qualities is a logical step. And so the East copied the West in all fields, from the political and administrative system to the language, religion, culture and countless other aspects." (p.45)

Mahathir was not against copying Western culture *per se*, but stressed for analysis and careful selection (p.45). In this context, he extolled discipline above everything else. He argued that the British managed to colonise the world because of their strict discipline (as reflected in the strict code of attire of the British upper class) (pp.45-46). To Mahathir, only through strict discipline came effective organisation (p.132). The discipline and organisational skills of colonial British were emulated by the Malays in their successful bid for independence (pp.46 & 133) Mahathir related how the Japanese had intelligently copied only the positive attributes of the Western culture while at the same time maintained their own advantageous cultural values (p.133). In addition, Mahathir argued that discipline and organisation actually constituted Islamic teachings and practice, exemplified in the way the religion was successfully propagated and in Islamic rituals of worship – '*ibadah*'(p.136). Thus, while not rejecting Western culture in total, Mahathir criticised the mentality that continued to look up towards the West and the attitude to uncritically copy Western ways. He believed that such mentality and attitude only reflected the internalised inferiority complex that was developed during colonisation.

In sum, this section has illustrated the significant recognition factors in Mahathir's belief system as rendered in *The Challenge*. What motivated Mahathir was

his desire to bring recognition for the Malays, through improvement of their social status – defined primarily in terms of economic success. However, Mahathir's tone in *The Challenge* had changed compared to that of *The Malay Dilemma*. While the latter was critical of the government's oversight of Malay problems and discontent, *The Challenge* defended the government's policies. When most of what he championed had already been implemented under the NEP, Mahathir who was already a Cabinet member by then worried that the Malay youths would be swayed from focussing their efforts to realise NEP's objectives. Again, the personality of the would be Prime Minister was beginning to unfold – methodical in his approach to problems and impatient, ruthlessly uncompromising in achieving his objectives.

### **3.3.6. Foreign Policy under Razak**

It is difficult to discern Mahathir's direct role in shaping foreign policy during the Razak years because he did not hold any official position relating to foreign policy. However, Razak's foreign policy clearly moved away from the Tunku's in the direction that Mahathir had called for. As the Prime Minister, Razak now had the free hand to forge strong relations with the Afro-Asia group and pursue non-alignment and neutralisation.<sup>112</sup> As already illustrated, Razak's position on foreign policy was closer to the demands of the UMNO 'Young Turks', of whom Mahathir was a prominent member, as compared to the Tunku's.

Under Razak, non-alignment was put into practice in the form of neutralisation policy in Southeast Asia as had been argued by Mahathir and his Young

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<sup>112</sup> See for example, B.A. Hamzah, 'Introduction: ZOPFAN – Its Strategic Intent' in *Southeast Asia and Regional Peace*, Kuala Lumpur: ISIS, 1991, p.2 and Tarling, *Regionalism in Southeast Asia*, p.150.

Turks cohorts during the Tunku's period. Non-alignment was not received favourably by the Tunku when it was first proposed by Dr Ismail in 1968, although endorsed by Razak.<sup>113</sup> Ghazali Shafie, the Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary first declared neutralisation as Malaysia's policy at the Preparatory NAM Conference in Dar es Salaam on 17 April 1970. The neutralisation of Southeast Asia was reiterated by Razak at the NAM Summit in Lusaka in September that year. This NAM Summit also marked the full acceptance of Malaysia in the community of non-aligned nations. Thus, Malaysia under Razak came a long way from the time when Malaysia's unofficial delegation led by Mahathir was humiliated and declined participation at the AAPSO Conference in Winneba in the 1960s.

While it is difficult to ascertain Mahathir's position at the time, Malaysia's policy towards the Southeast Asian region was clearly governed by the growing complex security concerns. For the country, Vietnam illustrated the perils of superpowers involvement in regional conflicts.<sup>114</sup> At the same time, Malaysia's traditional ally, the British planned withdrawals from all its bases east of Suez in 1971. Australia and New Zealand were considering the same move.<sup>115</sup>

Malaysia was also increasingly suspicious of the PRC whose influence in Indochina was growing.<sup>116</sup> As part of its neutralisation policy, Malaysia proceeded to recognise the PRC as early as in 1971. Malaysia hoped that this would compel the PRC to respect the norm of non-interference, and recognise the ruling coalition in Kuala

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<sup>113</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.54. However, according to Hänggi, a Malayan delegate talked about a 'neutrality bloc' at the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi as early as 1947. See also H. Hänggi, *ASEAN and the ZOPFAN Concept*, Singapore: ISEAS Pacific Strategic Papers, 1991, p.2.

<sup>114</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.55. See also Mohamed Nordin Sopiee, 'Towards A 'Neutral' Southeast Asia' and Ghazali Shafie, 'Neutralisation of Southeast Asia' in *Southeast Asia and Regional Peace*, Kuala Lumpur: ISIS, 1991, pp.17 & 43.

<sup>115</sup> Noordin, 'Towards a "Neutral" Southeast Asia', in *Southeast Asia and Regional Peace*, p.16.

Lumpur. The ethnic riots involving Chinese minority and Communist insurgents made it imperative for Malaysia to seek Beijing's pledge of non-interference.<sup>117</sup>

At the ASEAN level, Malaysia initiated a policy of neutralisation which culminated in the ASEAN's Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) on 27 November 1971. However, in the process Malaysia deferred to Indonesia in defining the concept in terms of 'national resilience'. Such deference shows continuing struggles for recognition in the relations of both countries even after 'Konfrontasi'.<sup>118</sup>

In Malaysia's case, neutralisation policy was motivated by recognition factors as well as security. It was based on the frustration felt because Malaysia and Southeast Asia in general had been denied of their proper role in world politics.<sup>119</sup> Haacke argues that the struggle for recognition (in the form of the 'grammar of nationalism') articulated in the context of neutrality and non-interference by Southeast Asia leaders was motivated by their grievances of not being able to control events which affected them.<sup>120</sup> Also, it was clear that the Razak government wanted to change Malaysia's identity from the pro-West characteristics shaped by the Tunku. In addition, the policy was aimed to raise Malaysia's prestige.<sup>121</sup> Chapter Seven will illustrate that much of the philosophy that underpinned Malaysia's strong support for the ASEAN's norms of neutrality and non-interference under Razak, continued to be upheld, and possibly with even greater vigour under Mahathir. Therefore, even if Mahathir's direct role in foreign policy under Razak

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<sup>116</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.54.

<sup>117</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security*, p.55 and Tarling, *Regionalism in Southeast Asia*, p.160.

<sup>118</sup> See Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.58 for argument concerning Indonesia's struggle for security and recognition in the process. For Indonesia's argument that ZOPFAN was its idea all along, see Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN*, p.177.

<sup>119</sup> Bilveer Singh, *ZOPFAN and the New Security Order in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Petaling Jaya: Pelanduk, 1992, p.42.

<sup>120</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, pp.60-1.

cannot be discerned, the continuity of the issues pursued under Mahathir albeit with different emphasis makes it logical to conclude that Razak and Mahathir shared the same beliefs and ideas concerning foreign policy.

Another aspect of this continuity is Razak's initiatives to improve Malaysia's relations with Muslim countries. Before that, Malaysia's position vis-à-vis the Muslim world was low key, with a token withdrawal of recognition of Israel following the decision taken at the first Islamic Summit Conference in Rabat in 1969, held in response to the Israeli burning of the Al-Aqsa mosque.<sup>122</sup> Under Razak, Malaysia hosted the Islamic Summit Conference in Kuala Lumpur in June 1974.

In the area of international political economy, under Razak, Malaysia began to assume a Third World posture in international economic and trade issues. Again, this position was bolstered even further by Mahathir after he assumed the premiership, during which he elevated Malaysia to a position of leadership amongst the developing countries of the 'South'. However, it was during Razak's time that Malaysia started to join forces with other developing countries in calling for a "new economic world order".<sup>123</sup> During UNCTAD III, at the World Multilateral Trade Negotiations in Tokyo in 1973, Malaysia was elected to serve on the governing body of UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board and its head of delegation was chosen as the Vice President of the Conference. This was a "testimony that Malaysia had become increasingly recognised as a champion of Southern causes..."<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.55.

<sup>122</sup> Malaysia (under the Tunku) along with Turkey and Iran were initially the only Muslim countries to recognise Israel. The recognition was later withdrawn.

<sup>123</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.109.

<sup>124</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.108.

Razak passed away in 1976 and was succeeded by Tun Hussein Onn. Unexpectedly, Mahathir was appointed Deputy Prime Minister. He felt that Hussein who barely knew him, had heard good words about him from Razak.<sup>125</sup> His rise was meteoric, considering that he had barely been in the Cabinet for 18 months!

### 3.3.7. Mahathir during the Hussein Period (1976-1981)

Hussein's was a transitional period during which not many initiatives were introduced.<sup>126</sup> Hussein "operationalised" and "concretised" the basic thrusts of Malaysia's foreign policy already set by Razak<sup>127</sup> and Malaysia continued to focus on non-alignment and regional neutrality. At the Summit in Bali in 1976, ASEAN adopted two important documents - the Declaration of ASEAN Concord and the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC). TAC was significant because it provided the mechanisms for the pacific settlement of disputes between members. ASEAN's all important rules of non-intervention and mutual respect for the territorial integrity of member states' territories are enshrined in TAC. It will be shown in Chapter Seven that Mahathir firmly believed and adhered to these principles as the cornerstone for establishing legitimate relations among the regional neighbours. In addition, under Hussein, Malaysia either on its own or via ASEAN, continued to make peace overtures to the Communist Indochinese countries. At the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1977, members reaffirmed ASEAN's desire to develop "peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with all countries in the region,

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<sup>125</sup> The other UMNO Vice Presidents were Ghafar Baba and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah. Both received more votes in the election to the post and had been Vice Presidents longer. See Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir: Triumph and Trials*, Kuala Lumpur: S. Abdul Majid & Co., 1990, p.33. See also Zainuddin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, p.42.

<sup>126</sup> Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.13.

<sup>127</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.146.

including Kampuchea, Laos and Vietnam.<sup>128</sup> Two months before the summit, Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen, Malaysia's Foreign Minister visited Hanoi and Vientiane.

It was in the international economics and trade area that Mahathir's direct influence could be deduced because of his position as the Minister for International Trade and Industry (MITI) as well as Deputy Prime Minister during this period. Mahathir embarked on an aggressive agenda for the country to woo foreign investments, which included investment and trade promotions abroad. As the MITI minister, his understanding of international economic diplomacy was obviously enhanced. Also, his inclination to work closely with the private sector began to show as he personally encouraged Malaysia's private sector to work with the government in promoting trade and investment.<sup>129</sup>

Malaysia also increasingly identified its policies with the South and promoted the New International Economic Order (NIEO).<sup>130</sup> For example, a national seminar was held at the end of 1975 on 'The New International Economic Order and UNCTAD IV'. However, growing realisation of the limitations of the UN frameworks led to Malaysia also taking unilateral and regional approaches in promoting its developing world economic agenda. Malaysia increasingly relied on ASEAN to pursue its economic interests.

Mahathir succeeded Hussein as Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister on 16 July 1981, upon Hussein's retirement from politics due to ill health.

<sup>128</sup> Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 August 1977, quoted in Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.145.

<sup>129</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, pp.24-5.

<sup>130</sup> Johan, *The Dilemma of Independence*, p.147.

### 3.4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the 'lens' through which Mahathir made sense of the situation of his nation - his 'belief system', focused essentially on the Malay identity, culture and psyche. Central to Mahathir's motivation was proper recognition for the Malays. The need for recognition stemmed from his belief that Malays' discontent was rooted in their feelings of injustices suffered and humiliation for being economically marginalised in their own land.

Information received from the environment is processed via the belief system in terms of what it is (fact), and what it ought to be (value).<sup>131</sup> Facts about the Malays in Mahathir's view were that they were poor, seen as weak, lazy and uninterested in worldly or material achievements. The Malays, he believed, ought to be able to participate equally in Malaysia's economy and enjoy the riches of their land. This is Mahathir's idea of what the social arrangement ought to be, or in other words, his conceptions of justice for the Malays. To Mahathir, the Malays ought to be helped to escape the poverty trap that was causing them much grief and humiliation. The analysis of Mahathir's early environments and experiences is crucial in understanding his rationales of what was happening and what ought to take place.

This chapter has dealt firstly, with Mahathir's personal characteristics and secondly, Mahathir's political ideology. Both are essential in understanding Mahathir's belief system. Mahathir's political ideology has been pivotal in shedding lights on Mahathir's preconceived conceptions of justice.

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<sup>131</sup> Ole Holsti, 'The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study' in J. Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, pp.544-5.

The strict upbringing, courtesy of his headmaster father inculcated in him the appreciation of achievements based on discipline and hard work. He believed that discipline was the key to success, as exemplified by the Islamic civilisation and the British Empire. Thus, he was critical of feudalism within the Malay culture. His father's suspect Malay credentials and lack of link to the traditional Malay aristocracy made it even more imperative for the family's social status to be recognised in terms of hard work. In addition, Mahathir's personality was also shaped by his medical training. He valued facts and was methodical in solving problems.

Central to his political belief was Mahathir's staunch anti-colonialism. Mahathir resented the subjugation under colonialism, which represented itself in the form of mental and psychological suppression as well as physical and material exploitation. He was not anti-West. However, Mahathir was critical of colonialism's underlying assumption of Western cultural superiority and its negative impacts on Malaysian society.

Mahathir's motivation can therefore be understood in terms of a struggle for recognition built on Malays' grievances, articulated in the rhetoric of anti-colonialism and nationalism. He believed that the denigration of colonised people did not end with political independence. The Malays continued to suffer from an internalised inferiority complex, which made them weak and unable to compete with the immigrants. This was the root of their economic dilemma. Consequently, due to their poverty, they were being looked down on as the underclass in their own land. Thus, Mahathir's struggle was primarily to promote the Malays' status through economic achievements, for their self respect and esteem. In this context, recognition was the motivation but the main goal was economic achievement.

How did Mahathir's belief system affect his views on the country's foreign policy? Mahathir was against the Tunku's unequivocal pro-West stance. He strongly opposed AMDA because he felt that it compromised the country's independent foreign policy, especially in the eyes of other newly-independent countries. He was also concerned that the Tunku's pro-West ideology and Western influenced lifestyle were giving the wrong impression and would prolong the mental and psychological subjugation of the Malays.

Mahathir, along with other UMNO 'young Turks' campaigned for non-alignment and the strengthening of ties with the Afro-Asia group. In addition, Mahathir stressed the importance of re-establishing the link with Islamic countries, which were represented significantly in the Afro-Asia group. To him, acceptance by this group of proud newly-independent countries was crucial as recognition of Malaysia's independence.

The struggle for recognition exemplified by Mahathir's support for a policy of non-alignment was due to Indonesia's '*Konfrontasi*'. Indonesia accused Malaysia of neo-colonialism, thus directly challenging Malaysia's independent status. The conflict between the two nations could itself be understood in terms of recognition struggle and it persisted even during Mahathir's premiership. This will be analysed in a later chapter.

Singapore was important in influencing Mahathir's belief system. Firstly, his experience there triggered the fear of what would entail if the Malay economic problems was left uncorrected. Secondly, Lee Kuan Yew became the personification of Singapore and Chinese ruthless and crass behaviour, and boundless ambitions. Lee subjected the Malays to public humiliation and degradation the way he callously and arrogantly promoted the 'Malaysian Malaysia' concept. He challenged the Malays' indigenous

status and their special privileges, and disparaged their leaders. The bitter experience during the brief period of their unification under Malaysia, and the way Singapore was ejected continued to haunt relations between Malaysia and Singapore. It led to a competition and struggle for recognition, which was mostly goaded by leaders of the two countries.

Malaysia's foreign policy shifted to properly embrace non-alignment after the Tunku resigned. Arguably, Mahathir as a member of UMNO 'young Turks' was influential in Razak's policy shifts. Non-alignment became the cornerstone for Malaysia's policy within ASEAN. However, recognition struggles between the regional neighbours continued to challenge members' aspirations concerning ASEAN.

Mahathir continued to be guided by his anti-colonialism and Malay nationalism when he joined the Cabinet in 1975. As Minister of Education, he was focused on improving the education of the Malays in order to improve their economic and, consequently, social status. As Minister of International Trade and Industry, Mahathir positioned Malaysia closer to third world countries and identified with the call for the NIEO.

The next chapter will analyse the Malaysian state during Mahathir's premiership. It will expand on Mahathir's personality by looking at his government's decision-making process and further illustrate the centrality of recognition struggles in Mahathir's belief system by analysing Malaysia's policy goals. In this context, it will also try to expose the link between domestic and foreign policy agenda centring on Malay recognition struggles, as defined by Mahathir.

## **CHAPTER 4 THE MALAYSIAN STATE UNDER MAHATHIR**

In the previous chapter I have traced and outlined Mahathir's belief system, which I argued had Malay nationalism as its core. This Malay nationalism became the basis of Mahathir's recognition struggle that motivated most of his policies, including foreign policy. This chapter aims to illustrate, firstly, how Mahathir's personal traits translated into the Prime Minister's leadership style, one which made Mahathir the central figure in the Malaysian government policy making structure. This would lend credence to the argument that to understand Malaysia under Mahathir, it is vital to understand Mahathir himself, hence the importance of making sense Mahathir's belief system. Secondly, this chapter will show how Mahathir's recognition struggle based on his beliefs about the 'Malay problems' was translated into policy priorities in the domestic Malaysian setting. Thirdly, the chapter will make the connection between domestic needs and foreign policy. In this regard, it offers a brief overview of Malaysia's foreign policy to illustrate how the agency of Mahathir, who had a specific domestic agenda, interpreted and reacted to constraints of international structures.

#### **4.1. THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT UNDER MAHATHIR**

There were two significant features of the Malaysian government under Mahathir. First, in terms of leadership style and decision-making processes, there was an increased centralisation of power in the executive hands of the prime minister. Secondly, in terms of what underpinned policy outputs, there was a clear rise in recognition fervour.

Mahathir inherited a system of government which was already centralised. From the time of the Tunku, the executive branch had wielded extreme power over policy making.<sup>1</sup> However, Mahathir adopted a style of leadership which further strengthened the executive's power. Under Mahathir, the Malaysian structure had been described as a semi-democracy<sup>2</sup>, 'restricted democracy' and an 'authoritarian populist state'<sup>3</sup>. Mahathir had also been described as a 'Presidential Premier'.<sup>4</sup> Further, Leifer observed that Mahathir had "bent the politics of Malaysia to his will" and "effectively rewrote the rules of Malaysian politics".<sup>5</sup> Similarly, to encapsulate the centrality of Mahathir, Milne and Mauzy proposed that the word 'under' in their book title not only refers to the period, but actually conveys the very considerable degree of control by Mahathir over the Malaysian government.<sup>6</sup> They also argued that Mahathir's "determination to exercise power" was "fortified by his belief that he has never been wrong."<sup>7</sup> Mahathir pursued specific measures in relation to Malaysia's administrative and political organs in order to rein in

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<sup>1</sup> See Abdullah Ahmad, *Tengku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia's Foreign Policy 1963-1970*, Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> William Case, 'Semi-Democracy in Mahathir's Malaysia' in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, Bridget Welsh (ed.), Washington D.C: SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, 2004, p.79.

<sup>3</sup> See Anne Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> In-Won Hwang, 'Malaysia's "Presidential Premier": Explaining Mahathir's Dominance' in *Reflections*, p.67.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Leifer, 'Foreword' in R.S. Milne R.S. and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. ix.

<sup>6</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.159.

their power. They included the political party organ – Barisan Nasional (BN) and UMNO; and government structures – the Cabinet, Parliament, the Judiciary and even the Constitution.

Milne and Mauzy observe that given the circumstances, the Barisan Nasional (National Front) coalition which comprised UMNO, MCA and MIC parties was bound to win Malaysian General Elections and the only valid question to ask concerned the extent of their win.<sup>8</sup> They allude to government's manipulation of the electoral system<sup>9</sup> and the effective control of the media by the government and the ruling party. UMNO has always been the most important power base in Malaysian politics. The ruling coalition, the Barisan Nasional, was dominated by UMNO, which occupies "the position of first among equals" and "calls the shots".<sup>10</sup> In addition, Malaysia's prime minister has always been the UMNO president. Therefore, the position of the UMNO president is crucial because it relates directly to the position of the prime minister, which makes UMNO the centre for factional rivalries and infighting.<sup>11</sup> Throughout his period, Mahathir strengthened the power of the incumbent UMNO president. The challenge by Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in 1987, which Mahathir won by only 51 percent of the votes made Mahathir realise the importance of asserting his control within UMNO. He then embarked on measures to reorganise the party centring on his personality.<sup>12</sup> The opportunity arose when the High Court ruled that UMNO should be deregistered under the Societies Act in February 1988 after finding that some of its branches were illegal.

<sup>8</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.181.

<sup>9</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Maznah Mohamad, 'Mahathir's Malay Question' in *Reflections*, p.163.

<sup>11</sup> Ho Khai Leong, 'The Political and Administrative Frames: Challenges and Reforms under the Mahathir Administration' in *Mahathir's Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, Ho Khai Leong and James Chin (eds.), Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books, 2001, p.16.

<sup>12</sup> John Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, London: Zed Books, 2001, p.88.

The forced dissolution of UMNO led to the creation of the ‘New UMNO’ (UMNO Baru). What Mahathir did in the year after the dissolution of UMNO was to “rebuild a ruling party around his dominant personality” and in the process, ruthlessly and effectively drive out his political rivals from UMNO Baru.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the manner in which Mahathir handled his challengers in the party and the Cabinet portrays a combination of pragmatism, tactical moves and downright Machiavellian ruthlessness, when necessary. Many in his Cabinet believed that he knew almost everything about his ministers, but had no qualms using them for specific purposes to achieve his goals. He expected loyalty above all else, but would use what he knew to demand it when he had to. He practised what some of his Cabinet colleagues described as “compartmentalised” way of viewing and relating to people and issues.<sup>14</sup> He had no problem working with someone whom he had a disagreement with previously, on another separate issue if they agreed on it.

Mahathir’s period also saw the ascendancy of Malay businessmen-politicians who became extremely powerful within UMNO. This new *bumiputera* corporate group were beneficiaries of Mahathir’s drive to fulfil the NEP goals by dispersing government contracts through a system of party patronage, usually done through privatisation.<sup>15</sup> The system of government – party – business became so fused that ultimately UMNO itself became directly involved by owning some of the biggest Malaysian companies through its proxies, for example Halim Saad of Hatibudi Holdings, Yahya Ahmad of DRB HICOM and Wan Azmi Wan Hamzah of Land and General. The involvement of UMNO

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<sup>13</sup> In-Won Hwang, *Personalized Politics: The Malaysian State under Mahathir*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003, p.164. See also In-Won Hwang, ‘Malaysia’s ‘Presidential Premier’: Explaining Mahathir’s Dominance’ in *Reflections*, p.71.

<sup>14</sup> Non-attributable interviews with a few Cabinet Ministers.

in business was only privy to a few people at the top of the party structure and UMNO's proxies. It was said to be probable that 99 percent of its members had no knowledge of the arrangement.<sup>16</sup> Recognising Mahathir's crucial role in this process, Lee observed that, "the mode of governance of the Mahathir era has impacted on the inclination and implementation of a broader Malaysian development project. The agenda of capitalist development and wealth accumulation has become the norm, one that is centralised in the ruling party and that has increasingly been centred on one person."<sup>17</sup> The involvement of UMNO in business and the system of reward and patronage that it afforded under direct supervision of the party president cum prime minister also provided a means for the control and marginalisation of political rivals.<sup>18</sup>

Linked to the 'iron grip' that Mahathir exercised on Barisan Nasional (BN) and UMNO was his effective control of the Cabinet. The composition of the Cabinet was the prerogative of the prime minister, although certain factors were always taken into consideration, for example fair representations of BN composite parties, states and gender. The Ministry of Finance (the Treasury) and MITI were seen as highly influential in terms of their ability for patronage. Similarly, many dreaded being given dead-end posts with little ability to provide patronage, and perceived it as a sign of Mahathir's unfavourable impressions of them. Thus, Ho claimed that the Cabinet became a mere 'rubber stamp' rather than a real forum to legitimise government policies, and that any meaningful bargaining actually took place behind closed doors.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Edmund Terence Gomez and K.S. Jomo, *Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics Patronage and Profits*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.59.

<sup>17</sup> Lee Hwok Aun, 'The NEP, Vision 2020, and Dr Mahathir: Continuing Dilemmas' in *Reflections*, pp. 278-9. See also Edmund Terence Gomez and K.S. Jomo, *Malaysia's Political Economy: Politics Patronage and Profits*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.25-6.

<sup>18</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, p.222.

<sup>19</sup> Ho, 'The Political and Administrative Frames ...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.12.

Similarly, Mahathir and his government absolutely controlled the parliament and the legislative process. Mahathir had managed to mould a parliament which was more “deferential to executive privileges”, and the prime minister’s supremacy in the parliament was “without question.”<sup>20</sup> This was achieved through the effective control by Mahathir of UMNO and BN, guaranteeing party discipline, and assisted by the two-third majority that the BN never failed to achieve in every election.

Mahathir’s centralisation of power into the hands of the executive was also achieved through curtailment of the bureaucracy’s autonomy. Indeed, the bureaucracy was whipped into discipline and towed the government’s line. Mahathir took a personal interest in the appointments of senior civil servants and, as in the appointment of Cabinet ministers, would favour those who understood his mission.<sup>21</sup>

Mahathir’s attacks on the judiciary represent the clearest example of how he reined in the government structure. It started with the suspension in May 1988 and eventual removal in August of the Lord President Tun Salleh Abbas because of his alleged bias towards the ‘UMNO Eleven’ (Razaleigh’s group),<sup>22</sup> and the following suspension of five High Court judges who showed support for the Lord President.<sup>23</sup> Mahathir further clipped the authority of the judiciary by introducing a constitutional amendment to provide a broader ground for removing judges.<sup>24</sup> In another move, the Mahathir government amended the Internal Security Act (ISA), on 26 June 1989, by making the executive decision of detention without trial final without any judicial or legal recourse. This removal of judicial review gave the prime minister exceptional power

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<sup>20</sup> Ho, ‘The Political and Administrative Frames ...’ in *Mahathir’s Administration* p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Conversations in confidence with some senior civil servants in Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

<sup>22</sup> John Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism, Hegemony and the New Opposition*, p.89 and In-Won Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, p.165.

<sup>23</sup> Ho, ‘The Political and Administrative Frames ...’ in *Mahathir’s Administration*, pp.13-4.

with almost no safeguard.<sup>25</sup> Malaysia's judicial process also came under great scrutiny and criticisms during the trial of Anwar Ibrahim following his sacking and arrest for corruption in 1998. No other prime minister had mounted such a challenge and eventual control over the Judiciary. This might be because all of the previous prime ministers had legal backgrounds and had been members of the bureaucracy. This had possibly made them more respectful and understanding of the checks and balances provided by the bureaucracy and the judiciary.<sup>26</sup> Milne and Mauzy argue that, "By far, the most far-reaching and devastating attack by Mahathir on the checks and balances system in Malaysia was his destruction of the independence judiciary in 1987-8."<sup>27</sup>

Mahathir's government also undertook an unprecedented attack on the monarchy. This again illustrates his unfavourable views on the feudalistic Malay society, especially the special position of Malay royals. During Mahathir's period, unprecedented tension arose between the executive and the monarchy. The first crisis erupted in 1983 when Mahathir initiated changes in 22 clauses in a constitutional amendment bill. Mahathir asserted the changes were only administrative. However, the rulers at their annual conference had unanimously decided not to sign. Mahathir compromised and a large part of the original constitution was retained.<sup>28</sup> However, in May 1994, his government proceeded to finish the job and amended the constitution, making the royal assent no longer necessary to complete the legislative process.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, p.241.

<sup>25</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, p.242.

<sup>26</sup> Ho, 'The Political and Administrative Frames ...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, pp.13-4.

<sup>27</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.46.

<sup>28</sup> Ho, 'The Political and Administrative Frames ...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, pp.15-6.

<sup>29</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, pp.240-1.

#### **4.2. THE PUBLIC SPHERE - CONTROL OF PUBLIC DISCOURSE THROUGH THE MEDIA**

Under Mahathir, the centralisation of power into the hands of the prime minister was accompanied by the control of mainstream media. His government had been criticised for controlling the press through ‘overt’ and ‘covert’ ways, resulting with the newspaper becoming “subservient to state authority and servile towards governmental power.”<sup>30</sup> This was achieved firstly, through direct ownership. Since December 1963, the government had owned the main television and radio networks through the Department of Broadcasting (*Radio Televisyen Malaysia - RTM*). They operated under the purview of the Ministry of Information whose minister had always been an UMNO stalwart. “What is apparent is that television – and more generally, broadcasting – in Malaysia was from its inception closely aligned to the government.”<sup>31</sup> In addition, BN component parties, through their business arms had established a monopoly over the major daily newspapers. The political ownership of Malaysian media is a long established phenomenon.<sup>32</sup> In fact, media ownership had become a field for contest between Mahathir and his deputy Anwar Ibrahim through UMNO’s holding company, Fleet Group and later UMNO linked companies, Realmild and Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad (MRCB).<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the MCA also had ownership of major English and Chinese newspapers and the MIC, Tamil newspapers.<sup>34</sup> In fact, at the end of Mahathir’s premiership in 2003, all the major print and electronic media were under the

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<sup>30</sup> Chandra Muzaffar, *Freedom In Fetters*, Penang: ALIRAN, June 1986, p.44.

<sup>31</sup> Zaharom Nain & Mustafa K Anuar, ‘Ownership and Control of the Malaysian Media’, p.11. Text available on [www.wacc.org.uk](http://www.wacc.org.uk).

<sup>32</sup> Edmund Terence Gomez, ‘Politics of the Media Business: The Press under Mahathir’ in *Reflections*, p.475. See also Said Zahari, *Meniti Lautan Gelora*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> See Gomez, ‘Politics of the Media Business ...’ in *Reflections*, p.476.

<sup>34</sup> See Gomez, ‘Politics of the Media Business ...’ in *Reflections*, pp.480-1.

control of politically linked companies or BN connected businessmen. *Utusan Melayu* was under the direct control of UMNO. The New Straits Times Press (NSTP) and Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad (TV3) were majority-owned by Realmild / MRCB with strong links to UMNO. Star Publications and Nanyang Press were under direct control of MCA's Huaren Holdings. Sarawak businessman and BN stalwart Tiong Hiew King owned Sin Chiew Jit Poh. Another Sarawak businessman and UMNO cabinet minister owned NTV7, a private television broadcaster. Ananda Krishnan, a close ally of Mahathir owned Astro, a Malaysian satellite broadcaster, which operated Bloomberg Malaysia. In addition, the major Tamil newspapers remained under direct and indirect control of MIC.

It would appear that control of the media was also achieved through 'coercive legislation'. For example, Muzaffar has alleged that the Printing and Publication Bill, when presented in 1984, was "in some respects far more restrictive and retrogressive than the Printing Presses Ordinance promulgated in 1948 by a colonial regime pursuing its own imperial interests" and added that it "removed the minor safeguards that now exist in checking the exercise of executive authority."<sup>35</sup> These so-called 'coercive' legislations included the Sedition Act (amended 1971) and the Official Secrets Act (OSA – amended in 1986), which had been argued to have encouraged a climate of 'self-censorship' among journalists.<sup>36</sup> Although the ownership of the media by political parties existed since before Mahathir's time as prime minister, it was observed that the quality of journalism, especially investigative journalism of the major papers were commendable in the period between the 1960s to mid-1980s. After that, as has been argued elsewhere,

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<sup>35</sup> Chandra, *Freedom In Fetters*, pp.1-2.

<sup>36</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, p.121.

they deteriorated to take the form of “government-say-so journalism.”<sup>37</sup> An illustration of the government’s stern action to curb ‘irresponsible’ journalism was its move in 1988 to amend the Printing Presses and Publication Act, with a view to disallow judicial review of Home Affairs Ministry’s decisions to revoke or suspend a publishing permit. This followed ‘Operasi Lalang’ and the banning of two daily newspapers and a Malay magazine in October 1987.<sup>38</sup> Further, in late 1991, the government ruled that the publishing permit for opposition parties’ newspapers did not grant them the right to distribute their newspapers to people outside their parties’ memberships. This was targeted towards DAP’s The Rocket and PAS’ Harakah.<sup>39</sup> Consistently, the government had argued that it did not control the press, but was only making sure that the press did not exploit communal interests.<sup>40</sup>

The triumph of BN against Razaleigh-led Barisan Alternatif in the 1990 General Election was attributed to the government’s effective manipulation of the media.<sup>41</sup> Throughout Mahathir’s era, the media played a vital role in asserting Mahathir’s populist image. “In the process of cultivating Dr Mahathir’s ‘charismatic populism’, the media has consumed unprecedented importance as a direct form of mediation between the executive and the *rakyat*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Gomez, ‘Politics of the Media Business...’ in *Reflections*, p.483.

<sup>38</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, pp.241-2.

<sup>39</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, pp.241-2.

<sup>40</sup> Chandra, *Freedom In Fetters*, p.50.

<sup>41</sup> See Hwang, *Personalized Politics*.

<sup>42</sup> The term ‘*rakyat*’ means the people. Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, p.123.

#### **4.3. MALAYSIA'S DOMESTIC POLICIES UNDER MAHATHIR**

It has therefore been established that the centralisation of the power in the executive under Mahathir was unprecedented. Although Mahathir had already inherited a fairly centralised form of government when he came into power, he took further measures to enhance it. He also controlled public discourse and dissemination of information through effective control of all mainstream electronic and print media.

Undoubtedly, Mahathir took all these measures in order to assert a strong leadership to enable him to effectively push his agenda for the nation. The goal of achieving growth with equity as spelled out in the NEP, and later the NDP (New Development Policy) was the cornerstone of Malaysian domestic policies during the Mahathir era. In addition, Mahathir introduced a heavy industry component in the national development agenda and started a drive to make Malaysia a newly industrialised country (NIC). Thus, as Hilley put it, “under Mahathir, the imperatives of ethnic redistribution were to be linked more specifically to a drive for NIC status.”<sup>43</sup> In addition, Mahathir also initiated a national blueprint for economic and social development in the form of Vision 2020. It is in the context of these policies that we can observe recognition motives rooted in Mahathir’s preoccupation with the fate of the Malays. These are consistent with Mahathir’s belief system explicated in the previous chapter.

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<sup>43</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism...*, p.51.

#### 4.3.1. NEP / NDP and the Drive for NIC Status

Since the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-1975), the creation of a *bumiputera* Commercial and Industrial Community (BCIC) had been an important long term objective as part of the NEP strategy to achieve a more equal distribution of wealth among ethnic groups.<sup>44</sup>

The NEP which ended in 1990 was replaced by the NDP in 1991. As a continuation of the NEP, it laid the foundation for the Malaysian economy for the next 20 years. Instead of setting a specific target for *bumiputera* equity ownership, the NDP emphasised growth creation and privatisation with the view of reducing the role of the public sector.<sup>45</sup> The period of economic recovery that helped to ease tension between ethnic groups coincided with the announcement of the NDP, making it easily accepted without much controversy.

Privatisation became an important aspect of the government's economic strategy under the NDP. It was used to assist a number of successful *bumiputeras* to move directly to big business.<sup>46</sup> "At the end of 1996, it was estimated that the government had privatised 360 projects. Of these, 204 were implemented during the Sixth Malaysia Plan period (1991-95). It has been reported that savings in capital and annual operating expenditures arising from this exercise totalled RM72.8 billion and RM6.9 billion respectively. Proceeds from the sale of equity amounted to RM21.5 billion.<sup>47</sup> The Economic Planning Unit (EPU) under the Prime Minister's Department and the Finance Ministry were tasked to oversee privatisation programmes, putting them

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<sup>44</sup> Lee Hwok Aun, 'The NEP, Vision 2020, and Dr. Mahathir: Continuing Dilemmas' in *Reflections*, p.275.

<sup>45</sup> Hwang, *Personalized Politics*, p.246.

<sup>46</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Way Forward*, London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1998, p.26.

<sup>47</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *CEO Malaysia: Strategy In Nation Building*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1998, pp.32-3.

under direct control of Mahathir and his close ally Finance Minister Daim Zainuddin.<sup>48</sup>

The sell-off plan under privatisation provided the opportunity to rapidly increase the *bumiputera* share of corporate ownership.<sup>49</sup> Through privatisation, Mahathir and Daim also basically created a kind of UMNO-proxy corporate control by disbursement of state resources to these UMNO or government linked companies. Privatisation was therefore also a means for Mahathir to assert a challenge to 'old money and traditional elites' that Mahathir so despised, and to assert in their place 'the new stature of a Malay business class'.<sup>50</sup> Mahathir created an UMNO patronage, which enmeshed politics and business and produced high profile new Malay corporate figures like Halim Saad of Hatibudin-Renong, Tajudin Ramli of Technology Resources Industries (TRI), Wan Azmi Wan Hamzah of Land and General, and Daim Zainuddin himself, to name a few. In the true spirit of the coalition 'bargain', MCA and MIC and their respective corporate functionaries were also given their shares under privatisation and played their roles according to NEP/NDP objectives.<sup>51</sup>

The close connection between the government and the corporate sector was encapsulated in Mahathir's philosophy of Malaysia Incorporated - Malaysia Inc. Based on Japan Inc., it presupposed that the efficacy in relations between the state and corporations would enhance national competitiveness.<sup>52</sup> Due to the fact that the private sector was regarded by Mahathir to be vital to the nation's competitiveness, he was also of the view that the government must do all it could to support the private sector with the

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<sup>48</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, pp.51-3, and Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism* ...., pp.59-60.

<sup>49</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.33.

<sup>50</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism*..., pp.59-60.

<sup>51</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism*..., pp.97-8.

<sup>52</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.32.

aim of increasing the level of economic activities. This was supposed to lead to the creation of wealth and the further expansion of the economy, which in turn would enlarge the national coffer.<sup>53</sup> With Malaysia Inc. providing the intellectual philosophy, Mahathir's government became a strong and active supporter of the Malaysian private sector, especially big business – many with direct links or proxies of the ruling UMNO and its coalition alliances. The business-friendly government held numerous dialogues and consultations with the private sector and Mahathir himself was not ashamed to admit that he was 'pro-business'.<sup>54</sup> In this regard, Mahathir's support had always been predominantly in the business and entrepreneurial community.<sup>55</sup>

In the drive towards NIC status, Mahathir initiated Malaysia's heavy industry policy, launched in 1980 when he was still at MITI. Under the Industrial Master Plan, the Heavy Industry Corporation (HICOM Holdings) was set up to plan, identify, initiate, invest and manage heavy industry projects.<sup>56</sup> HICOM was transferred to the Prime Minister Department upon Mahathir's appointment to the premiership. It thus came under the direct purview of the prime minister. Under this programme some high profile projects were launched, most notably two steel mills – PERWAJA in Kedah and Trengganu, and the national car project, PROTON. Allegedly, these projects were undertaken without proper Cabinet consultation (which was one of the major grousing of Team B led by Razaleigh in 1987 UMNO crisis).<sup>57</sup> One of the important rationales for the projects was that they would lead to high technology transfer from their foreign

<sup>53</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.31.

<sup>54</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.31.

<sup>55</sup> Zainuddin Maidin, *The Other Side of Mahathir*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 1994, p.229.

<sup>56</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.64; and Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir: Triumph after Trials*, Kuala Lumpur, S.Majid & Co, 1990, p.56.

<sup>57</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, p.115; and Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.42.

partners (mostly Japanese). Moreover, “such activities were an expression of nationalism and would show that Malays could advance beyond the economic limits portrayed in the early Malaysia Plans.”<sup>58</sup> In an interview with the author, Mahathir asserted the importance of PROTON’s success for Malaysian national pride.<sup>59</sup> It remains unclear to what extent Malaysians really identified such projects as symbols of progress and were sources of national pride. Nevertheless, Mahathir seemed to assume that ‘group pride’ was felt by the people when they saw some of their own kind becoming millionaires, as he frequently highlighted in successive UMNO General Assemblies.<sup>60</sup> In addition, projects like PROTON were identified as ‘national’ projects. By deliberately increasing the stakes to the national level in this way, the project could not be allowed to fail.<sup>61</sup>

The Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) was another of ‘Mahathir’s projects’ and he personally participated in its development. Mahathir himself oversaw the activities of the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC), which was established to manage and market the MSC.<sup>62</sup> The project was basically an attempt to create a replica of the Silicon Valley in California, by allotting a 15-by-50km corridor from the heart of Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) to the south, until the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), containing in it a purpose built city Cyberjaya. According to Mahathir, through the MSC the Malaysian government offered “a region with the infrastructure, laws, policies and practices that will enable companies to explore the Information Age without the usual constraints which frustrate them.”<sup>63</sup> The MSC was identified as

<sup>58</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.64.

<sup>59</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007, London.

<sup>60</sup> Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia*, p.115.

<sup>61</sup> Milne R.S. and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.175.

<sup>62</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.206.

<sup>63</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.204.

another ‘national project’<sup>64</sup> and in April 1997, Mahathir took part in a nation-wide teleconferencing dialogue, linking him with about 13,000 Malaysians in 28 locations across the national territories. The high profile media event which was telecast live was aimed to illustrate to and impress upon the wider Malaysian public, especially those who live far away from the MSC, multimedia technologies and the government’s aspirations relating to these technologies. Bunnell highlighted salient recognition motives behind the MSC in that the push to embrace high technology during the Mahathir years “was a result not only of a post-colonial wariness of “neo-colonial” technological domination but also of intensifying regional economic competition.”<sup>65</sup>

Economic growth, wealth and high technology all contributed towards recognition symbols in Mahathir’s Malaysia. Impressive high tech edifices were constructed and became physical symbols around which national pride was being rallied. Mahathir was a ‘builder’, more than any of his predecessors. His projects were designed not just to be functional, but “to impress or even embody some aesthetic aspirations.”<sup>66</sup> These include the North-South Expressway, Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), Putrajaya, the MSC, Kuala Lumpur Tower and the Penang Bridge. The Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) known for its twin towers and the imposing new administrative capital Putrajaya, might have served certain practical needs, but were definitely built to impress primarily. Clearly, prestige was an important motivation for the transformation of the Malaysian landscape. It was obvious that Mahathir aspired for Malaysia to physically transform in ways befitting its economic achievements and industrial

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<sup>64</sup> Tim Bunnell, ‘Re-Viewing MSC: Critical Geographies of Mahathir’s High-Tech Push’ in *Reflections*, p.411.

<sup>65</sup> Bunnell, ‘Re-Viewing MSC...’ in *Reflections*, p.407.

<sup>66</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.67.

ambitions, and for Kuala Lumpur to be at par with any other great cities in the world.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, the impressive landscape of Malaysia proved the effectiveness of NEP/NDP strategies in transforming the Malay character.

Symbols were important in Mahathir's Malaysia. Similar to the statement he made by being the only non-royal Malay who owned a big car in sleepy Alor Setar town in the early 1960s, Mahathir personally oversaw mega-projects that drastically changed Malaysia's landscape. The Penang bridge, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Putrajaya, Cyberjaya, North South Expressway, the MSC and the myriad of gleaming glass and steel towers epitomised by the once tallest in the world - Petronas twin towers that radically transformed Kuala Lumpur's skyline were not only designed to be functional, but also to impress. Clearly, Mahathir felt that there was a need to create an impression of modern, dynamic Malaysia that thrived on its economic success and modern technology. Thus, the 'old' Malay character, which shunned non-religious knowledge, wealth and worldly accomplishments had been revolutionised. The success symbols were therefore important to garner recognition for the capabilities of the 'new' Malays. This would bring prestige and esteem and embolden their newly found self-confidence further.

There was, undeniably an underlying competitive streak with Singapore, though underplayed but one that remained quite influential. Jeshurun highlights this possibility of Mahathir being provoked by the modernisation of Singapore, in the formation of Mahathir's "nationalistic vision" to transform the cityscape of Kuala Lumpur.<sup>68</sup> This is understandable considering the significance of Singapore and its Chinese identity in Mahathir's perception. Here, it is important to remember the impact

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<sup>67</sup> Chandran Jeshurun, 'Kuala Lumpur: The City that Mahathir Built' in *Reflections*, p.393.

of Singapore in the formation of Mahathir's belief system, especially in his conception of what should be the just social arrangement between the Malays and the Chinese. Mahathir's preconceived notion of fair relations between the two ethnic groups was especially challenged during his stay in Singapore as a student. It is arguable that Singapore presented the significant 'other' along with the 'West' in Mahathir's perception, which influenced the process of Malaysia's national identity building.<sup>69</sup> However, a more precise interpretation can possibly be in terms of Mahathir searching for recognition of Malaysia's achievements from the predominantly Chinese Singaporean leaders. To Mahathir, Malaysia's achievements proved the success of rehabilitating the Malays, achieved through special privileges for the Malays as enshrined in the Malaysian Constitution, which was the focal point of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew tirades and invectives against Malay leaders.

Indeed, the imposing physical landscape came to symbolise the confident identity of the nation. The predominant Malay identity undeniably became the base upon which this new national identity was being constructed.<sup>70</sup> The twin towers, which once were the tallest buildings in the world, could be seen as the epitome of record-breaking feats that became an obsession amongst Malaysians during Mahathir's period. This new national confidence and 'can do spirit' of the people were widely expressed in the slogan '*Malaysia Boleh!*' ('Malaysia can') which was prodded by the government through media publicity. Amongst the celebrated record breakers were Azhar Mansor, the first

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<sup>68</sup> Jeshurun, 'Kuala Lumpur...' in *Reflections*, pp.391-2.

<sup>69</sup> For a discussion of 'other-ing' process in national identity formation, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, New York: Verso, 1983, 1991 (revised).

<sup>70</sup> Hng argues that the pursuit for the recognition of the Malay identity as the foundation for the Malaya/Malaysian national identity had began even before the political independence of Malaya, predominantly through UMNO under the leadership on Onn Ja'afar. See Hng Hung Yong, *5 Men & 5 Ideas*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2004, p.148.

Malaysian to sail solo around the world in 1999 and Abdul Malek Maidin, the first Malaysian to swim non-stop across the English Channel in 2003. The record breaking frenzy spurred by the ‘*Malaysia Boleh*’ spirit led to some bizarre feats and ‘some rather peculiar forms of hubris’.<sup>71</sup> Whether truly remarkable or simply outlandish, these ‘*Malaysia Boleh*’ feats were expressions of not only the nation’s newly acquired confidence but also of national pride. “Economic indicators alone would not have captured the pride that Malaysians had discovered, perhaps for the first time, in being Malaysian”.<sup>72</sup>

Mahathir believed that the inculcation of a ‘can do’ attitude had brought about a successful change in the *bumiputera* culture to one which exuded self-confidence.<sup>73</sup> Mahathir, blaming the colonial rule for the low self confidence of the *bumiputeras* in their own abilities, felt that there was a need to introduce *bumiputera* role models to provide an image of success amongst the *bumiputeras*. To Mahathir, “nothing would be more persuasive than seeing other *bumiputeras* succeeding in life.” The success of these role models became pivotal to the progress of the *bumiputeras* because they “helped convince them that cultural change was possible and by implication that the NEP could be a success.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Jeshurun, ‘Kuala Lumpur ...’ in *Reflections* p.393.

<sup>72</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism...*, p.65.

<sup>73</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007. See also Mahathir, *The Way Forward*, p.122.

<sup>74</sup> Mahathir, *The Way Forward*, p.122.

#### 4.3.2. Vision 2020

The drive to achieve the NIC status was enshrined in Vision 2020, announced by Mahathir in February 1991. Mahathir considered his greatest achievement as prime minister was his ability to focus the entire nation on the future through Vision 2020. On this, he wrote:

“My government and I created a long-term vision in which everyone knew his role and which mobilised everyone, from the man on the street to top leaders in business and politics, to work harder, for their country and for themselves. The actual results achieved gradually fostered a sense of self-confidence and belief in the future ...”<sup>75</sup>

Vision 2020 set out a series of policy measures for growth and social development to be attained through the NDP, specifically the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995) and its broader blueprint, the Second Outline Perspective Plan (OPP2) (1991-2000), with the aim of Malaysia attaining developed nation status by 2020. It set a target of 7 percent annual growth in real terms during the OPP2 period.<sup>76</sup> Economics might be the foundation of Vision 2020, but what counted more were the social outcomes.<sup>77</sup> More importantly, beyond the economic growth target, the Vision encapsulated social objectives defined in the context of nine challenges that the nation had to counter in order to become a developed nation ‘of its own mould’ by 2020.

The Vision was effectively a nation-building project on an unprecedented scale, covering the nation’s economic, social and cultural imperatives. As a hegemonic discourse, it “sought to galvanise the public imagination through ideas of shared prosperity.”<sup>78</sup> As an ideological blueprint, it was meant to “seize the imagination and

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<sup>75</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1999. p.23.

<sup>76</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism...*, p.5.

<sup>77</sup> Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.47.

<sup>78</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism*, p.4.

inspire” Malaysians.<sup>79</sup> Looking at the listed challenges, undoubtedly the Vision was an articulation of the Malaysian national identity as defined and aspired by Mahathir.<sup>80</sup> In this regard, the projection of the national identity was concerned primarily with the place and status of the nation. Firstly, it explains that Malaysians faced the challenge of establishing “a united Malaysian nation, with a sense of common and shared destiny.”<sup>81</sup> Other listed challenges in Vision 2020 expose Mahathir’s recognition struggle for the nation. The second challenge listed in Vision 2020 was the challenge to develop a Malaysian society that would be “psychologically liberated” with “faith and confidence in itself” and “justifiably proud” of what it was.<sup>82</sup> Further, it contended that “the Malaysian society must be distinguished by the pursuit of excellence, fully aware of its potentials, psychologically subservient to none and respected by the peoples of other nations.”<sup>83</sup>

The challenges listed in Vision 2020 touched on all the issues regularly raised by Mahathir since *The Malay Dilemma*. They were problems relating to Malay values and character – low self confidence, religion, education, scientific knowledge, inter-ethnic relations and democracy. Therefore, Malay concerns remained the key. Although the Vision talked about the challenge to forge a united Malaysian society, it was to be achieved by taking into account the needs and constraints of the Malays. Hence, while aspiring for a united Malaysian nation (that would be confident, justifiably proud in itself and garner world respect), it also highlighted challenges in fostering a “mature,

<sup>79</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.165, and Liow, ‘Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies ...’ in *Mahathir’s Administration*, p.149.

<sup>80</sup> The full document of Vision 2020 is attached as Appendix 2. Full version of Vision 2020 is also included in Mahathir, *A New Deal for Asia*, pp.41-2.

<sup>81</sup> See Appendix 2, Vision 2020.

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix 2, Vision 2020.

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix 2, Vision 2020.

consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that would be a model for many developing countries.”<sup>84</sup>

#### 4.3.3. ‘Islamisation’

The threat of fundamentalist Islam and political rivalry from PAS, which was energised by the global Islamic revivalism in the 1970s, became a permanent feature of Malaysian politics during Mahathir’s reign as prime minister.<sup>85</sup> The conflation of Islamic and Malay identity had been deployed effectively by Mahathir in the drive to achieve NEP/NDP objectives and the NIC status. Mahathir not only emphasised the compatibility of Islam with business and progress, but also stressed the obligation of Muslims to strive for worldly success by referring to the past glory of Islamic civilisation. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six in the analysis of the underpinning recognition motives of Mahathir’s foreign policy towards the Islamic *ummah*. Here, it is relevant to show how Mahathir deployed Islam, in terms of specific strategies in the context of his management of the Malaysian state.

Mahathir’s resolve to uplift the economic and social status of the Muslims, particularly the Malays was apparent when he personally initiated the establishment of the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur as soon as he assumed prime-ministership in 1981.<sup>86</sup> It was only the beginning. He then went on to set up an array of Islamic agencies, especially to counter the reservations traditionally felt by Malay

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<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 2, Vision 2020.

<sup>85</sup> See J. Funston, *Malay Politics in Malaysia (A Study of UMNO and PAS)*, Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980, especially pp.75 – 96. See also, Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2002.

Muslims towards business and conventional banking for example the Islamic Bank the Islamic insurance company, Takaful.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps the most significant of all was the Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM), set up in 1991. It became “[t]he government institution for promoting an understanding of Islam that is defined by the Mahathir administration.”<sup>88</sup> Towards this end, it convened conferences on the topics of Islam and progress, business, management and finance, among others. It also produced publications, maintained columns in mainstream newspapers and had a radio station. IKIM’s personalities became regulars in the electronic media to talk about related issues.<sup>89</sup>

In the civil service, Mahathir made use of Islam to transform its culture. Increasing Islamisation of the civil service was apparent in many forms, for example the reciting of ‘*doa*’ or Islamic prayers and banning of alcoholic drinks at government functions. Interestingly, the assimilation of Islamic values in the civil service was carried out along with the adoption of Japanese management philosophy and work culture since the launch of the Look East Policy in the early 1980s. Thus, ‘*doa*’ was recited at Japanese style assemblies, when they would be singing their corporate song in their corporate uniforms. Thus, Islamic values were also referred to as positive and universal values, to show their cross cultural adaptability and commonalities. The core values stressed to be part of the work culture were purity, integrity, accountability, dedication, honesty, discipline, co-operation, moderation, responsibility, willingness to sacrifice,

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<sup>86</sup> For the background of Mahathir’s role in the setting up of the International Islamic University, Malaysia, see Ismail Ibrahim, *Pemikiran Dr. Mahathir Tentang Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2002, p.13.

<sup>87</sup> Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir’s Paradigm Shift: The Man behind the Vision*, Taiping: Firma, 1997, p.67.

<sup>88</sup> Patricia Martinez, ‘Mahathir, Islam, and the New Malay Dilemma’ in *Mahathir Administration*, p.234-5.

<sup>89</sup> Jeshurun observed that IKIM had been crucial in “stage-manage” conferences to promote Mahathir’s positions. See Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy, 1957-2007*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, p.311.

courteousness, patience, gratitude and timeliness.<sup>90</sup> IKIM, together with the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) played key roles in providing the relevant training and knowledge by organising conferences and publishing relevant materials.<sup>91</sup>

Thus far, we have established the centrality of Mahathir in the Malaysian state achieved through measures he undertook vis-à-vis the political parties - UMNO and BN, the Cabinet, the civil service, the judiciary, the monarchy and the media. The centralisation of power in the executive under Mahathir was a clear indication of his personality and 'iron-grip' style of leadership. Moreover, it enabled Mahathir to push through policies without much opposition and assure support, compliance and deliverance from related organs and agencies. In other words, to Mahathir the centralisation of authority in the executive was vital for him to ensure that his vision would be translated into reality. Clearly, the personalised nature of Malaysian politics makes the study of the man at its centre imperative in trying to understand the policies of the Malaysian government.

Surely even Mahathir was subjected to certain structural constraints operating within the country's regime, but he managed in the 23 years that he was in power to alter and mould the party and government structures to support rather than balance his executive role. However, the moves that so blatantly portrayed his 'authoritarian' leadership style were only means to a very specific end. Mahathir came into power with a specific mission to transform the Malays - their value system and character, while uplifting their economic status. Therefore, the Malay identity had always been at the core

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<sup>90</sup> Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, *The Civil Service of Malaysia: Towards Efficiency and Effectiveness*, Kuala Lumpur: Government of Malaysia, 1996, p.208.

<sup>91</sup> Sarji, *The Civil Service of Malaysia: Towards Efficiency and Effectiveness*, p.206. See also Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, *The Civil Service of Malaysia: A Paradigm Shift*, Kuala Lumpur: Percetakan Nasional, 1994, p.594.

of his motivation. In the Mahathir era, the transformation of the Malay identity became the basis for the creation of a new Malaysian identity.<sup>92</sup> Through these transformations, he hoped the Malays would be better equipped to compete with the non-Malays in the Malaysian economy. Ultimately, he believed that the Malays' economic success would earn them the dignity and respect, not only from other ethnic communities, but also from the international community. The NEP and NDP had the goals of creating wealth with equity amongst the races and were underpinned by the motivation to elevate the Malays' economic status. This personal mission of Mahathir was consistent with his belief system explained in the previous chapter. The fact that policies towards this central objective were actually implemented – for example, the promotion of a 'can do' attitude in the slogan '*Malaysia Boleh*' and the inclusion of recognition aspirations like confidence, pride and respect in Vision 2020, were clear indications of Mahathir's solid authority over the government.

Recognition then, underpinned the project of transforming the Malay identity, which formed the basis of the national Malaysian identity. According to Hng, "his [Mahathir's] whole political career reflects an unending obsession with questions of identity, firstly with that of the Malays as a race, and later that of Malaysia as a nation."<sup>93</sup> Crucially, the construction of identity also involves the identification of oneself in relation to others and outside one's immediate political constituency. In other words, the recognition of this national identity was sought also in the international realm. In this context, Hng observes:

"Mahathir differed from his predecessors in that he extended the process of identity building to the international level. He took the position that nations, like citizens, do not live in isolation. They

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<sup>92</sup> "So, to all intents and purposes, the national culture of the country today is Malay culture." Hng Hung Yong, *5 Men & 5 Ideas: Building National Identity*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2004, p.7.

<sup>93</sup> Hng, *5 Men & 5 Ideas*, p.135.

are not neutral players in the global arena. They have goals and aspirations. They identify with causes and they take positions. They are part of a larger community, and they, too, need to know their place in it. The role of a nation's foreign policy, therefore, is to articulate a nation's positioning to reflect its identity.”<sup>94</sup>

#### **4.4. MAHATHIR AND FOREIGN POLICY**

Syed Hamid Albar, one of Malaysia's foreign ministers during Mahathir's era, believes that Mahathir shaped Malaysia's foreign policy.<sup>95</sup> This view is shared by all senior officials of the Wisma Putra interviewed for this thesis. Mahathir himself felt that in general, Wisma Putra understood and had carried out his vision and ideas, although he conceded that it was not that easy in the beginning.<sup>96</sup> He might have been referring to the difficult relationship he had with Ghazali Shafie when the latter was foreign minister in the early 1980s. Ghazali Shafie, like Mahathir, was himself a contender for the deputy prime minister post when Hussein Onn assumed the premiership in 1976. A Wisma Putra source reveals that Mahathir almost completely ignored Ghazali and never responded to Wisma Putra's minutes to the prime minister during Ghazali's time.<sup>97</sup> An equally bad relationship existed between Mahathir and Rais Yatim (1986 – 1987), who lost the job as foreign minister after only nine months because he aligned himself with Razaleigh in 1987.<sup>98</sup> Other foreign ministers, Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen (1984 – 1986), Abu Hassan Omar (1987 – 1991), Abdullah Badawi (1991 – 1999) and Syed Hamid

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<sup>94</sup> Hng, *5 Men & 5 Ideas*, p.135.

<sup>95</sup> Author interview with Syed Hamid Albar, Minister of Foreign Affairs (1999 until time of writing), London, 16 March 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>97</sup> Ghazali Shafie was foreign minister until 1984. Non-attributable interview with a senior official of Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

<sup>98</sup> Non-attributable interview with a senior official of Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

Albar (1999 – 2003) showed deference and were respectful of Mahathir. They all managed to establish a more or less harmonious relationship with the prime minister.<sup>99</sup>

Under Mahathir, foreign policy-making had a top-down approach. Although Wisma Putra was always expected to come up with drafts for his speeches, officials learnt to be prepared to see substantial amendments made by Mahathir in the final texts. Ultimately, the bureaucracy understood his ideas and style so well that they consciously tailored their drafts to suit him. A senior official confesses that he adopted a different style when drafting for the Prime Minister Mahathir, from his normal style used when he was writing for his own use.<sup>100</sup> Further, many of Mahathir's well-known policy pronouncements, for example, the Antarctica, the Look East Policy and the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) were announced without prior consultations with Wisma Putra.<sup>101</sup> His top-down approach reflected his impatient nature. He was sceptical of the normal diplomatic channels whereby an idea would be broached firstly at the senior officials level, then the ministerial, before being finally raised at the level of heads of government. To ensure that his ideas would be addressed in the way that he conceptualised them, he himself had to articulate them first. Yet, while Mahathir had a knack for generating great ideas, it was the bureaucracy who had to 'operationalise' his ideas and turn them into reality.<sup>102</sup>

How did the recognition-motivated national identity building-process in the domestic setting translate into a recognition struggle in foreign policy? This thesis argues

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<sup>99</sup> Non-attributable interview with a senior official of Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

<sup>100</sup> Author interview with Hasmy Agam, former Malaysian Permanent Representative to the UN, 12 July 2007.

<sup>101</sup> Author interview with Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak, former Secretary General of Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13 July 2007.

<sup>102</sup> Non-attributable interview with a senior official of Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

that Mahathir's search for recognition underpinned a significant number of foreign policy fields, especially those relating to the South countries, the Muslim *ummah* and the East Asian nations. While Mahathir's agency proved pivotal, he was of course influenced and constrained by the international structure in formulating Malaysia's foreign policy. An overview of Malaysian foreign policy under Mahathir will illustrate the interplay between the domestic and the international, before we proceed with the specific case studies in the following chapters.

#### **4.4.1. The End of the Cold War**

The end of the Cold War and the end of the Communist threat since the complete surrender of the Malaysian Communist Party (MCP) in December 1989 lifted significant security constraints on Mahathir. It enabled him to prioritise foreign policy issues more according to his own personal convictions and aspirations.<sup>103</sup> In the early period of his premiership, the continued existence of the MCP left the government wary of the Malaysian Chinese community and also of the PRC. It was observed at the time that "foreign policies, particularly policies pertaining to defence and security, were largely focused on maintaining ties with Western powers in order to buffer Malaysian security and augment the Malaysian armed forces' counterinsurgency capabilities."<sup>104</sup> Mahathir had been circumspect with China, particularly with its overseas Chinese policy, which was perceived to offer encouragement for Malaysian Chinese to visit the mainland and circumvent Malaysia's strict regulations on visits to China.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.150.

<sup>104</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.132.

<sup>105</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.132.

Mahathir also had to consider regional security issues in the context of the broader Cold War rivalry. In this regard, Malaysia continued to work within the ASEAN framework to tackle the conflict in Indochina, which it perceived not only to prove the ambition of communist Vietnam, but also that of the PRC. For Malaysia, the most striking result of the end of the Cold War was the withdrawal of US military presence in Southeast Asia with the closure of its bases in the Philippines - Clark Air Base in 1991 and Subic Naval Base in 1992, although the US did enter into bilateral arrangements with Singapore for logistic facilities.<sup>106</sup> Such a move was no doubt due to the withdrawal of the Russian military presence in Cam Ranh and Danang in Vietnam.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, Malaysia under Mahathir continued to take a pragmatic approach towards the involvement of the US in the Asia Pacific region, most notably in the ASEAN regional Forum (ARF) framework.<sup>108</sup>

Mahathir chose to be defence minister upon assuming office as the prime minister in 1981, and retained the portfolio until 1986. He took the opportunity to restructure the Malaysian armed forces, preparing them for conventional warfare capabilities. This involved the strengthening of the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) and the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF), which had traditionally received less attention compared to the army.<sup>109</sup> The restructuring has been linked to Mahathir's overseas military initiatives, that is, UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>110</sup> Although Malaysia's

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<sup>106</sup> Alan Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003, p.168.

<sup>107</sup> K.S. Nathan, 'The Major Powers and Malaysian Foreign Policy: Facing the Challenge of Change Towards 2020' in *Malaysia's Defence and Foreign Policies*, Abdul Razak Abdullah Baginda and Rohana Mahmood (eds.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1995, p.31.

<sup>108</sup> Hilley, *Malaysia: Mahathirism ...*, p.100.

<sup>109</sup> Chandran Jeshurun, 'Malaysian Defense Policy under Mahathir: What Has Changed?' in *Reflections*, p.333.

<sup>110</sup> Jeshurun, 'Malaysian Defense Policy under Mahathir ...,' in *Reflections* p.334.

peacekeeping missions had begun during the Belgian Congo crisis in 1962, they became a major focus of the Malaysian military during the Mahathir era. The Malaysian military participated in UN peacekeeping operations in Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, Kuwait, Iran-Iraq border, Bosnia and East Timor. In January 1996, the Malaysian government even set up a peacekeeping training centre.<sup>111</sup> Such contributions brought international prestige and esteem for the nation. In addition, Malaysia assumed greater prominence within the structures of international organisations relating to political and security issues. Malaysia became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council twice under Mahathir, in 1988 and 1999. Mahathir himself was elected President of the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Vienna in June 1987. A Malaysian diplomat, Razali Ismail, became the Chairman of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of UN General Assembly (1996-1997) and was also appointed as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Myanmar. Musa Hitam, the former deputy prime minister became the Chairman of the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) (1996-1997) and Malaysia was elected to serve a second term in UNCHR (1996-1998). Another Malaysian diplomat, N. Parameswaran became the Chief of Staff for the UN Transitional Administration for East Timor.<sup>112</sup>

Defence spending rose steadily during Mahathir premiership, especially under the Sixth (1991-1995), Seventh (1996-2000) and Eighth (2001-2005) Malaysia Plans, despite the end of the Cold War. This rise had been linked to the need to modernise the armed forces, especially to equip them in their peacekeeping roles abroad. Also, there might have been a rivalry in terms of defence procurement between Malaysia and

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<sup>111</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.151.

Singapore. A Malaysian official admits that although Malaysia never intended to match Singapore's military capability, the understanding was that Malaysia should never fall too far behind. However, this did not mean that Malaysia perceived any immediate military threat from Singapore.<sup>113</sup>

Modernisation of the armed forces was also linked to the overall national strategy of economic growth and the drive for NIC. Thus, technology transfer became a vital condition in military procurement contracts. Moreover, decisions on procurement became political and highly centralised, with the prime minister having the final say, in some cases against the preferences of the military top brass.<sup>114</sup>

#### **4.4.2. The Increasing Significance of Economics and the Dichotomous Relations with the 'West'**

The demise of the ideologically based Cold War resulted in global economic issues assuming centre stage.<sup>115</sup> This enabled Mahathir to extend into foreign policy his preoccupation with the NEP/NDP strategies to achieve economic growth with equity and the aspirations for NIC status. Consequently, in outlining Vision 2020 in 1991, Mahathir emphasised economic imperatives over political and ideological ones, in Malaysia's international relations.<sup>116</sup> He rationalised this in terms of the Malaysian industries' dependency on export markets. He highlighted the perils of trading blocs formed by

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<sup>112</sup> Rostam Affendi Bin Salleh, *Malaysia's Multilateral Diplomacy under Dr. Mahathir Mohamad*, project paper submitted in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master in Strategy and Diplomacy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Malaysian National University, 2002, pp.38-9.

<sup>113</sup> Author interview with Dr Kogila Balakrishnan, Principal Assistant Secretary, Defence Industry Division, Malaysia's Ministry of Defence, London, 1 June 2007.

<sup>114</sup> For example, the decision to buy Sukhoi fighter jets from Russia instead of the American Hornets. Author interview with Dr Kogila Balakrishnan, Principal Assistant Secretary, Defence Industry Division, Malaysia's Ministry of Defence, London, 1 June 2007.

<sup>115</sup> Nathan, 'The Major Powers and Malaysian Foreign Policy ...' in *Malaysian Defence and Foreign Policies*, p.28.

powerful nations and the need for Malaysia to play its part and ‘not passively accept the dictates of those powerful nations.’<sup>117</sup> In the previous year, then foreign minister Abu Hassan Omar had already underscored the role of Wisma Putra in tackling economic issues. The foreign minister remarked that under Mahathir, Malaysia’s active international role, which was regarded as a necessity, had also brought the country unprecedented higher image and prestige.<sup>118</sup>

Economic concerns of NIC-aspired Mahathir’s Malaysia were predominantly juxtaposed against the interests of the West. In this regard, Mahathir often articulated the unipolar post-Cold War order for example, as manifested in the globalisation of world economy to solely representing Western interests.<sup>119</sup> Mahathir saw Western hegemony akin to neo-colonialism, in how free trade and globalisation were promoted with little regard for and to the detriment of developing economies.<sup>120</sup> This filled him with a moral indignation that triggered a resistance against Western domination, which had become Mahathir’s crusade.

The Asian financial crisis in 1997 was a classic case of confrontation between Mahathir and the Western dominated international structures beyond his control. Malaysia came under immense pressure and was severely criticised for its decision to

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<sup>116</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Malaysia: The Way Forward’, an Address at the Inaugural Meeting of the Malaysian Business Council on February 28, 1991, in *Malaysian Defence and Foreign Policies*, p.88.

<sup>117</sup> Mahathir, ‘Malaysia: The Way Forward’, in *Malaysian Defence and Foreign Policies*, pp.88-9.

<sup>118</sup> Abu Hassan Omar, ‘Malaysia’s Foreign Policy in the 1990s’, an address at the Malaysian International Affairs Forum in Kuala Lumpur, May 3 1990 in *Malaysian Defence and Foreign Policies*, pp.130-4.

<sup>119</sup> For example, Mahathir said that the “uniform rules, regulations, laws and policies” pursued under globalisation “disregard” developing countries’ “weaknesses and problems.” Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Globalisation: Challenges and Impact on Asia, speech delivered at the World Economic Forum (WEF), New York, 3 February, 2002, in *Globalisation and the New Realities : Selected Speeches of Mahathir Mohamad*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk publications, 2002, p.14.

<sup>120</sup> For example, see Mahathir’s Speech at the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Countries in Durban, South Africa, on September 2, 1998 in Mahathir Mohamad, *Globalisation and the New Realities*, pp.169-177.

adopt selective capital controls by the international financial community.<sup>121</sup> To Mahathir, the devaluation of the Malaysian Ringgit was the result of the greed of currency speculators and had nothing to do with the fundamentals of the Malaysian economy, or its governance.<sup>122</sup> During this crisis, the widely reported clash between Mahathir and the financier George Soros left Mahathir with a feeling that he was personally targeted by the powerful speculators to the point of making other Asian leaders shunning him and Malaysia becoming a ‘pariah’ country.<sup>123</sup> Finally, in order to protect the Malaysian currency from further speculative attacks, the government put in place selective capital controls. Despite widespread criticisms, some noted that Malaysia was reluctant to follow the IMF programme partly because “the officials there did not want to be dictated by outsiders” and “also because they had little confidence in the IMF.”<sup>124</sup> The decision was in fact pushed by Mahathir despite being opposed by his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, who favoured the restrictive measures prescribed by the IMF.<sup>125</sup>

The sacking of Anwar led to one of the toughest political crises Mahathir had to face. Anwar was a popular politician with massive support inside and outside Malaysia. Most importantly, Anwar had been cultivated by the US as Mahathir’s alternative. Anwar had established close friendships with powerful and influential Americans including Paul Wolfowitz (Undersecretary for Defence), Robert Zoelick (chief US trade negotiator and Deputy Secretary of State), Madeline Albright (Secretary of State), William Cohen (Secretary of Defence) and Al Gore (Vice President). The sacking and imprisonment of Anwar Ibrahim strained bilateral relations with the US to

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<sup>121</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontent*, London: Penguin Books, 2002, p.122.

<sup>122</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malaysian Currency Crisis: How and Why It Happened*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2000, p.18.

<sup>123</sup> Mahathir, *The Malaysian Currency Crisis*, p.19.

<sup>124</sup> Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontent*, p.122.

the point that for the next few years until around 2001, the Malaysian Embassy in Washington was almost entirely preoccupied with the Anwar issue.<sup>126</sup>

Malaysia's NEP/NDP agenda became Mahathir's rationale for resisting the IMF route. According to Mahathir, recovery was not imperative only for recovery's sake, but "must be accompanied by the equitable distribution of the economic pie between the *Bumiputeras* and non-*Bumiputeras*."<sup>127</sup> Clearly, Mahathir was concerned that the IMF remedy would force Malaysia to abandon its NEP/NDP strategies, although his critics argued that he was actually only trying to save his cronies. Bearing in mind the enmeshing of state and private sector especially via the UMNO patronage network in Mahathir's privatisation scheme, it became clear that Malay, UMNO and Malaysia's interests became one and the same in Mahathir's definition. Whatever the case may be, Mahathir's boldness to defy the Washington consensus and his refusal to embrace the IMF's assistance gave him and Malaysia further respect and prestige, particularly in the developing world.

Basically, the difficult bilateral relations with the US revolved around the personality of Mahathir. The US was uncomfortable with Mahathir's articulations of his political philosophy concerning international crises. His critical views on Israel and strong support for the Palestinians touched a very sensitive nerve in Washington. His views were seen as adding to the already rampant anti-Semitic and anti-American feelings around the world.<sup>128</sup> Mahathir, on the other hand, felt that as a leader of a country not constrained by its dependency on Western aid, he had the obligation to point

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<sup>125</sup> Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontent*, p.123.

<sup>126</sup> Author interview with Ghazzali S.A.Khalid, former Malaysian Ambassador to the US (1999 – 2006), Putrajaya, 5 July 2007.

<sup>127</sup> Mahathir, *The Malaysian Currency Crisis*, p.20.

to the injustices and double standards of the West. He also courted confrontation with his critical views of Western hegemony of international structures.<sup>129</sup> To him, it was unfair that international structures, which were mostly formed during colonial time, continued to exclude the values, needs and constraints of non-Western developing countries. These structures had not only encapsulated the assumption of the inferiority of non-Western cultures, but also could prolong the ‘colonised mindset’ of the developing world.<sup>130</sup> For example, Malaysia under Mahathir consistently called for UN reform, which it perceived as being necessary, because according to his perspective, the UN was ineffective due to the US dominance.<sup>131</sup> Mahathir was also sceptical of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), fearing that it would be answerable to the world’s wealthiest powers only. Malaysia thus played a significant role in the WTO in opposing the West’s attempt to link social clauses and labour standards to trade agreements.<sup>132</sup>

However, despite Mahathir’s diatribes against the West in the articulation of his political philosophy, Malaysia under Mahathir actually maintained fruitful relations with Western countries in terms of investment and trade. As regards economic relations with the US, Mahathir said all the right things concerning foreign direct investment, high technology, emphasis on manufacturing, building of infrastructure and liberalisation of education, just to name a few.<sup>133</sup> In the broader picture, Malaysia’s trade with the West

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<sup>128</sup> Author interview with Ghazzali S.A.Khalid, former Malaysian Ambassador to the US (1999-2006), Putrajaya, 5 July 2007.

<sup>129</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.132.

<sup>130</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>131</sup> K.S. Nathan, ‘Political and Security Relations’, in *The Malaysian – American Partnership*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications for the Malaysian Strategic Research Centre (MSRC) and the American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce, 2001, p.27.

<sup>132</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, pp.131 & 138.

<sup>133</sup> Author interview with Ghazzali S.A.Khalid, former Malaysian Ambassador to the US (1999-2006), Putrajaya, 5 July 2007.

more or less remained stable during his premiership.<sup>134</sup> Specifically, total bilateral trade with the US remained around 20 percent of Malaysia's total trade during Mahathir's premiership. In addition, American foreign direct investment was vital in the growth of Malaysia's manufacturing sector. For example, Malaysia became a major manufacturer of the semiconductor chip in the 1980s due to American investment. By 1994, US companies had invested RM 983 million out of RM 7.5 billion, that is 15.4 percent of the total foreign direct investment in electronics, which was more than Japan.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, in the mid-1990s, Mahathir actually went out of his way to court American investors to participate in his MSC project. It was also observed that despite Mahathir's strong objection towards the US role in Asia Pacific, there was an increase in the number of US warships visiting Malaysian ports, including a first ever by an aircraft carrier in 1996.<sup>136</sup> This reflects Mahathir's pragmatist nature. As apparent in the previous chapter on Mahathir's belief system, at the core was his drive to uplift the economic status of the Malays. In this regard, Mahathir applied all necessary measures to encourage foreign direct investment, which would not only spur economic growth, but also accelerate Malaysia's mastery of high technology. He adopted a 'compartmentalised' approach to bilateral relations with the US – disagreements on global political issues did not hinder the two countries doing business for mutual benefits. According to Mahathir, bilateral relations with 'Western' countries, which could have been good, could be distinguished from 'issues' that formed their disagreements. His criticisms of the 'West' mostly related

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<sup>134</sup> Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies...' in *Mahathir's Administration*, p.155.

<sup>135</sup> Shakila Parween Yacob, 'Economic and Trade Relations' in *The Malaysian – American Partnership*, p.37.

<sup>136</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.133.

to different cultural perspectives when looking at specific issues. In this sense, the ‘West’ did not refer to geographical or racial characteristics, but was actually a cultural entity.<sup>137</sup>

Perhaps, it is more the UK, Malaysia’s former colonial master that one should look at when analysing Mahathir’s preoccupation with the West in the other-ing process of Malaysian national identity formation. The UK’s economic interests continued to be protected after Malaya’s independence, until Mahathir came into power. Mahathir, who had been critical of the Tunku’s economic policy, saw the need to regain control of powerful British multinationals that dominated the Malaysian economy, in order to enlarge the *bumiputera*’s share in the economy. The first step engineered by Mahathir was the take-over of Guthrie, the first British trading company set up in Southeast Asia, by the Permodalan Nasional Berhad in 1981. The take-over enabled the return of about 200 000 acres of agricultural land to Malaysian ownership. However, in the UK it led to the tightening of take-over rules by the London Stock Exchange. More astonishingly to Malaysians, the UK press labelled the take-over as a process of “repatriation” or “backdoor nationalisation”.<sup>138</sup> To the Malaysians, it portrayed a lack of understanding of the ‘statist’ rather than socialist nature of the Malaysian political economy and the reasons for the Malaysian state having to set up itself as the proxy for the Malay entry into business in order to achieve the NEP targets.<sup>139</sup> The Guthrie take-over crisis coincided with the UK government’s decision to increase university tuition fees for overseas students, affecting a big number of Malaysian scholars in the UK but not students from the European Union (EU). In retaliation, Mahathir announced the ‘Buy

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<sup>137</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>138</sup> Roger Kershaw, ‘Brown Humanity Strikes Back: Confronting Britain in a Good Cause?’ in *Reflections*, p.346.

<sup>139</sup> Kershaw, ‘Brown Humanity Strikes Back...’ in *Reflections*, p.346.

British Last' policy until the British showed a 'change of attitude'. The policy made it compulsory for any tender from a British company for a government contract to be referred to the Prime Minister's Department for clearance, together with its non-British alternatives.<sup>140</sup>

In an interview with the author, Mahathir admits that the Buy British Last campaign was launched by him more to make a point to the British than anything else. He said that the issue was a minor one and could have easily been solved through negotiations (curiously he quoted the over flight clearance for the British Concorde aeroplanes as the issue, although this was not documented anywhere and could not be verified by officials).<sup>141</sup> His point was clearly noted because a 'change of attitude' was demonstrated by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who hosted Mahathir to a sumptuous 'peace meal' at her residence, in 'the presence of assorted nabobs'.<sup>142</sup> In fact, Thatcher's respect for Mahathir was lucid in her memoir. Reminiscing on her trip to Malaysia in April 1985, she believed that UK – Malaysia relations had suffered because Mahathir had felt that the British had not treated Malaysia "with sufficient respect as an independent nation".<sup>143</sup>

However, another crisis in bilateral relations with the UK broke out in 1994. It came about when the British *Sunday Times* alleged 'high level corruption' in the contract for a British firm to build Pergau hydroelectric dam in the Malaysian north-eastern state of Kelantan. The deal was implicated with a separate and very significant arms deal. Mahathir interpreted this as an accusation of corruption against himself and

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<sup>140</sup> Kershaw, 'Brown Humanity Strikes Back...' in *Reflections*, p.347.

<sup>141</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>142</sup> Kershaw, 'Brown Humanity Strikes Back...' in *Reflections*, p.347. A 'nabob' is a person of wealth and prominence.

<sup>143</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993, p.502.

launched a new boycott of British commerce, including cancellation of contracts already awarded to British companies. Thus, domestically, this second crisis was interpreted in the manner that the dignity of the leader was portrayed to be under attack. In a system of government of personalised power, the “nation may be moved to feel emphatically under attack too.”<sup>144</sup> Thus, when Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced the boycott on Mahathir’s behalf, “he echoed Mahathir’s obsession about white racism and tried to generalise *The Sunday Times*’ misdemeanour as a slight on all Malaysians, because it signified a refusal to acknowledge the ability of a ‘brown-skinned people’ to operate a modern economy with probity and efficiency.”<sup>145</sup> In this regard, Mahathir seemed to personify Malaysia’s national interest and the two interests became almost indistinguishable.<sup>146</sup>

Therefore, Mahathir undeniably played a central role in foreign policy-making, as he did in domestic policies. It is also evident that recognition motives were influential, existing amongst and at times overlapping with security and economic motives. In fact, the economic goals pushed by Mahathir actually served specific recognition objectives. In this sense, Mahathir was consistently driven by his motivation to uplift the status of the Malays, to bring them self confidence and self esteem. However, in terms of foreign policy, Mahathir had to operate within the constraints of the international structures. Thus, the end of the Cold War was pivotal in opening an unprecedented opportunity for Mahathir’s Malaysia to focus on economic and trade relations, as an extension of the domestic developmental agenda according to the

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<sup>144</sup> Kershaw, ‘Brown Humanity Strikes Back...’ in *Reflections*, p.349.

<sup>145</sup> Kershaw, ‘Brown Humanity Strikes Back...’ in *Reflections*, p.349.

<sup>146</sup> Kershaw, ‘Brown Humanity Strikes Back...’ in *Reflections*, p.349.

NEP/NDP. Nevertheless, in the process, to Mahathir it was important for Malaysia to be treated as an equal partner in business and not to be patronised and dictated too.

In this connection, one aspect in which recognition motives can be observed in foreign policy articulation is in the process of identifying the ‘other’. It is in this process that Mahathir’s Malay nationalism can be detected as the root of his recognition struggles for the nation. The Malaysian identity was consistently defined as opposing the imperialist ‘West’. It is undoubtedly problematic to define precisely the terminology of the ‘West’. However, this term was used by Mahathir repeatedly to denote a specific component of the international community and as such needs to be analysed.

In this regard, Huntington notes that in the ‘Western’ media, the more restricted “civilisational term” of ‘the West’ has been used extensively since the 1990s, to replace the term ‘the Free World’ that was widely used in the 1960s.<sup>147</sup> He also elaborates that “[t]he West, includes Europe, North America, plus other European settler countries such as Australia and New Zealand.”<sup>148</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, it is convenient to replace the ‘West’ with the US, UK or Australia, but that would grossly misjudge Mahathir’s idea of the West as representing a specific set of values and culture rather than specific ‘actors’, although in most instances, these actors were the embodiment and ‘personified’ Western values and culture in the international society. More precisely, Mahathir’s actions can be understood in terms of him struggling for recognition and respect for Malaysia, befitting its status as an independent and economically successful newly-industrialised country. Such an understanding would

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<sup>147</sup> Huntington illustrated a comparison in the use of the terms ‘Free World’ and ‘The West’ in the New York Times, Washington Post and Congressional Record in 1988 and 1993. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: The Free Press, 1996, pp.54-5. See also map depicting ‘The World of Civilizations: Post-1990’ in the same book, pp.26-7.

<sup>148</sup> Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, p.46.

enable us to understand Mahathir's pragmatic relations with these 'Western' countries.

Mahathir welcomed Western businesses, but their relationships had to be on an equal footing. Thus, Hng rightly observes that Mahathir wanted Malaysia's international "personality" to reflect, firstly, its commitment to justice and equity for all nations; secondly, a Muslim country that is recognised as an example of Islamic achievements in nation-building and, thirdly, a recognition of Malaysia's status as a modern economy and a developed society.<sup>149</sup> Bearing this in mind, it is unsurprising that specific forms of recognition struggles, particularly in the context of equality in relationships and recognition of Malaysia's achievements were sought from the 'West', or more specifically, the developed countries of former colonisers that can be considered as the 'other' in Malaysia's identity formation process.

In contrast, different forms of recognition were sought from the groups of countries or global community that Mahathir identified Malaysia (and Malaysians) with. They constituted the developing countries of the 'South', the Islamic *ummah* and the East Asian countries. They became important addressees of Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir and share certain common identities with regard to their colonial past, developmental economies and non-Western cultural values. Malaysia under Mahathir became recognised significantly because of its leadership in issues related to these respective foreign policy addressees, which bore crucial significance to the Malaysian national identity that Mahathir aspired to build.

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<sup>149</sup> Hng, *5 Men and 5 Ideas*, p.145.

#### **4.5. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has illustrated the centrality of Mahathir as the prime minister in the set-up of the Malaysian state during his rule. It has been shown that the centrality of Mahathir covered almost all aspects of the government and its decision-making process. It therefore gives credence to the argument that to understand Malaysian policies during Mahathir's period, it is vital to understand the man himself. It is in this context that the 'belief system', which has been traced and set up in the previous chapter becomes an essential guide in our understanding of Malaysia's policies under Mahathir. Particularly, Mahathir's conceptions of justice, which have been captured in the analysis of his belief system have been fundamental in understanding the motives of the quest for recognition that underpinned Mahathir's political actions, especially with regard to lifting the status of the Malays and Malaysia.

The measures that Mahathir took to concentrate power in executive hands can be understood in terms of the means, necessary in his view, to be taken in order to press on with his agenda for Malaysia. His tenacity and unflinching focus on achieving the goals he himself set up for the nation illustrate his strong beliefs, not only about the predicaments of the nation and the ways to counter them, but also the correctness of his diagnosis. Mahathir's leadership style clearly confirmed his personality traits, which had also been highlighted in the previous chapter. Mahathir was predominantly guided by his desire to affect change in the Malays and uplift their social status through primarily economic and social engineering processes. Ultimately, this desire was motivated by recognition factors that were to bring respect, esteem and confidence in the Malays.

In the domestic setting, Mahathir's recognition struggle for the Malays was translated in the goal of uplifting the economic status of the Malays through the creation of growth with equity under the NEP and NDP. In this connection, it is important to realise that the economic goals widely highlighted in the literature focussing on changes in Malaysian foreign policy, actually served recognition motives. To illustrate, the NEP's goal was to change the status of the *bumiputera* community "from a farming, petty trading and civil service community to one that was commercial and industrial, comparable in size and wealth to the commercial and industrial non-*bumiputera* community."<sup>150</sup> Moreover, Mahathir emphasised the "cultural transformation, or revolution" with regard to the *bumiputeras'* psychology and self-confidence in the process.<sup>151</sup>

Economic growth was to be achieved through the creation of export oriented industrial based economy. In addition, Mahathir launched Malaysia's heavy industry blueprint towards realising his dream of achieving the NIC status. In this process, Mahathir's Malaysia was distinguishable by the close links between the government and the corporate sector. The civil service was impressed to support 'Malaysia Inc.'<sup>152</sup> UMNO became directly involved in Malaysian businesses through proxies closely linked to its top leaders. While it was a strategy to tackle the slow increment of *bumiputera*'s share in the economy, this economic objective itself served a recognition purpose. New Malay corporate leaders like Halim Saad, Tajuddin Ramli, Wan Azmi Wan Hamzah, Yahaya Ahmad and Daim Zainuddin were flaunted to symbolise the confident, dynamic and business savvy characters of the 'new Malays'. It was all a part of Mahathir's plan to

<sup>150</sup> Mahathir, *The Way Forward*, p.119.

<sup>151</sup> Mahathir, *The Way Forward*, p.119.

<sup>152</sup> See Sarji, *The Civil Service of Malaysia: Towards Efficiency and Effectiveness*, p.136.

revolutionise the Malay character – to imbue the Malays with self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

Undeniably, foreign policy became an important arena for Mahathir to mould the Malaysian identity as being a truly independent, economically successful and modern Muslim nation.<sup>153</sup> The process involved seeking recognition from the important members of the international community, particularly those representing similar identities that Mahathir identified Malaysia with. It is this aspect of the struggle for recognition in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir that this thesis now aims to analyse. The following chapters will proceed with the case studies, organised thematically on South-South co-operation, ties with the Muslim *ummah*, and relations with the countries of East Asia.

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<sup>153</sup> Hng, *5 Men and 5 Ideas*, p.145.

## CHAPTER 5 MAHATHIR, MALAYSIA AND SOUTH – SOUTH CO-OPERATION

South – South co-operation was a fundamental component of Malaysia’s foreign policy pursued during the Mahathir era.<sup>1</sup> Countries of the ‘South’ can be identified by their memberships in multilateral groupings of developing countries most notably the Group of 77 (G-77)<sup>2</sup> and NAM.<sup>3</sup> During Mahathir’s premiership, Malaysia’s high-profile role within the organisations of the South countries was evident by the description of Mahathir as the “spokesman” for the South.<sup>4</sup> It has also been argued that Mahathir succeeded in “bringing Malaysia to the fore” amongst the developing countries through his forceful expressions of the aspirations of the developing South.<sup>5</sup>

As Chapter One has illustrated, most literature attributes the significant increase in Malaysia’s identification with the developing countries of the South to

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<sup>1</sup> Jeshurun observes that its commitment to principles of neutrality, as well as South – South policy were the “non-negotiable” fundamentals of Malaysia’s foreign policy under Mahathir. Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy, 1957 – 2007*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2007, p.202.

<sup>2</sup> G-77 was founded by 77 developing countries at the first UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva in 1964 when they first co-ordinated their position and co-sponsored a Joint Declaration on their common goal to reform international trade. See Ahmad Faiz Abdul Hamid, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation During the Mahathir Era: Determining Factors and Implications*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2005, p.75.

<sup>3</sup> The origin of the NAM can be traced to the first meeting of newly independent Asian and African nations in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Shortly after, the first NAM Summit was held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia on 1 – 6 September 1961. Issues of world peace and colonialism were the major focus of the Conference. See Geir Lundestad, *East, West, North, South: Major Developments in International Politics, 1945 – 1990*, Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1991, pp.281-2.

<sup>4</sup> Sivamurugan Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2005, p.261.

economic motivations. For instance, Savaranamuttu defines Mahathir's "Southern stance" mainly in terms of "Malaysia's external economic orientation."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Yusof explains Malaysia's move into "the Third World camp" under Mahathir's leadership primarily in order to protect its economic interests.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Liow argues that a major motivation for Mahathir to pursue the policy of South – South Co-operation was because, "the upsurge in protectionism in the industrialised West meant that Mahathir had to search for new markets."<sup>8</sup> However, not all scholars have been convinced that economic or business considerations formed the sole motivation underpinning Malaysia's policy towards the South, under Mahathir. For example, to Milne and Mauzy, it was "not easy to see why Mahathir took up the cause of the 'South'."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the assumption that economic motives alone were responsible for South – South co-operation policy seemed rather flawed as its economic gains seemed inconclusive. To illustrate, Jeshurun observes that not all Malaysian investments pursued under the banner of South – South co-operation in Africa met with resounding success. He highlights in particular the unpleasant row that Telekom Malaysia (Malaysia's biggest telecommunication company - a Government Linked Company (GLC)) was embroiled in,

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<sup>5</sup> Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift: The Man Behind the Vision*, Taiping: Firma Malaysia Publishing, 1997, p.136.

<sup>6</sup> Johan Savaranamuttu, 'Iconoclasm and Foreign Policy – The Mahathir Years' in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, Bridget Welsh (ed.), Washington D.C.: SAIS, 2004, p.307.

<sup>7</sup> See Mohd. Yusof Ahmad, *Continuity and Change in Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1981 – 1986*, a dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy impartial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 1990, esp. pp.228-34.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Liow, 'Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies: Determinants of Malaysia's Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Administration', in *Mahathir's Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur: Times Books, 2001, p.143.

<sup>9</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, p.133.

in Ghana that led to its decision to finally withdraw all of its investments in Africa in 2006.<sup>10</sup>

To address this disjuncture between the economic rationale cited by most scholars and the inconclusive economic benefits of South – South co-operation, this chapter will attempt to illustrate that the struggle for recognition was also a significant motivation underpinning this policy. In proceeding to do this, it will firstly outline the history of Malaysia's involvement in the multilateral organisations of the South countries, particularly NAM, G-15 and the Commonwealth. Secondly, it will demonstrate Malaysia's more prominent role in these organisations under Mahathir by illustrating the policy initiatives towards the South taken during Mahathir's premiership. Thirdly, the chapter will analyse Mahathir's political philosophy concerning the situation of developing countries of the South. Lastly, it will conclude by providing an analysis of the influence of recognition motives as one of the driving forces behind the increased importance of the South in Mahathir's foreign policy. In this regard, it will again be argued that struggles for recognition as significant motivations were based on Mahathir's preoccupation with the status of the Malays, which (as has been argued in the previous chapter) also became the basis of the national identity building process in Malaysia under Mahathir. Thus, our understanding of Mahathir's policy of South – South co-operation has to be linked to the overarching goal of uplifting the Malay social status, particularly through economic means, as provided by the NEP and NDP. This chapter will employ Honneth's modes of practical relations-to-self (self-confidence, self respect and self esteem) in its analysis to identify and discuss factors related to the search for recognition that motivated Mahathir's attitude towards the South countries.

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<sup>10</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.310.

### **5.1. MAHATHIR AND THE HISTORY OF MALAYSIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANISATIONS OF THE SOUTH COUNTRIES**

As shown in Chapter Three, the South became a contentious policy issue between Mahathir and the Tunku, particularly during the Indonesian ‘Confrontation’. To Mahathir, formal acceptance into organisations of the South, such as the non-aligned countries of the Afro – Asia Peoples’ Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) would validate Malaysia’s independent status. Mahathir was critical of the Tunku’s close association with the British and his English ways. He was outraged by the fact that the British had manipulated the Malay monarchies to colonise the Malay states, a process that he felt had inflicted harmful effects on the character of the entire Malay people. In addition, Sukarno’s ‘*Konfrontasi*’, which aimed to question Malaysia’s legitimacy outraged Mahathir further because it degraded the honour, dignity and pride of the Malay race. Chapter Three has illustrated how all these factors, which are mired in Mahathir’s experience of colonialism, influenced his belief system and his conceptions of justice, particularly concerning the position of the Malays in society.

Under the staunchly pro-West Tunku, Malaysia had a difficult relationship with members of organisations for South countries like the AAPSO and NAM. Indonesia, which was a founding member <sup>11</sup> was using these organisations to denounce Malaysia as a neo-colonial entity created by the British. However, some young UMNO ‘radicals’, widely referred to as the ‘young Turks’ including Mahathir believed that Malaysia should participate and engage the developing countries of the non-aligned world to counter Indonesia’s propaganda. Clearly, they were also driven by their disapproval of the Tunku’s pro-Western stance and their desire to see Malaya/Malaysia

exhibit a truly independent foreign policy, accepted by other proud newly independent nations. Malaysia could not participate at the 1955 Bandung Conference because it was still under British colonial rule (until 1957). However, its non-participation at the first NAM Summit in Belgrade in 1961 was a consequence of Indonesia's blockade. Nonetheless in July 1962, Malaya was successful in participating in the NAM Conference on the Problems of Economic Development in Cairo. In 1964, Malaysia joined other developing countries in UNCTAD<sup>12</sup> and became a founding member of the G77. All this while Indonesia's 'Confrontation' campaign had forced Malaysia to defend its non-alignment and independent status in the international community, especially amongst the newly independent countries of NAM. It proved to be a tremendous challenge. Malaysia again failed to secure a seat at the Cairo NAM Summit Conference in 1964. Malaysia's first official participation in NAM was at its Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York on 27 September 1969. Then, Malaysia took part at the 3<sup>rd</sup> NAM Summit Conference in Lusaka, Zambia on 8-10 September 1970.<sup>13</sup>

Malaysia's persistence in securing acceptance and recognition of NAM members could be attributed to Tun Abdul Razak, who was influenced by young UMNO radicals including Mahathir. The affinity between Razak and Mahathir has also been shown in Chapter Three. In fact, according to Jeshurun, Razak "had given a free rein to the then 'young Turks' including Mahathir to start exploration of the 'other' side –

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<sup>11</sup> Indonesia under Sukarno organised the first meeting among newly independent Asian and African nations in Bandung in 1955.

<sup>12</sup> UNCTAD became the de-facto secretariat for the movement of developing countries at the UN in their fight for reform of the international trade and development policy, culminating in the idea of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). See James Mayall, 'The Institutional Basis of Post-War Economic Co-operation' in *International Institutions at Work*, Paul Taylor and A.J.R. Groom, (eds.), London: Pinter Publishers, 1998, p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Rozalah Katan (ed.), *Ke Arah NAM Yang Lebih Dinamik Dan Bersepadu: Peranan Malaysia Selaku Pengerusi NAM*, Kuala Lumpur: Sekretariat Nasional NAM, Kementerian Luar Negeri, 2006, p.2.

meaning the Afro – Asian world.”<sup>14</sup> Razak oversaw Malaysia’s moves to lead negotiations for a higher price for tin under the 1965 Tin Agreement after UNCTAD I. Although this foreign policy initiative bore an economic goal, it successfully earned Malaysia the recognition from other developing countries. Thus, Malaysia’s strong stand on the issue caught the attention of other Third World tin producing countries, which led to Malaysia being subsequently selected to serve on the Trade and Development Board during UNCTAD II in 1968 and again at UNCTAD III in 1971. The leader of the Malaysian delegation also served as the Vice President of the Conference at UNCTAD III. Thus within a few years, Malaysia “had become increasingly recognised as a champion of the South causes.”<sup>15</sup>

## **5.2. MALAYSIA’S FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES TOWARDS THE SOUTH UNDER MAHATHIR**

Mahathir’s long standing belief that Malaysia should identify itself more with the South was effectively translated into foreign policy that thereafter, prioritised relations with the countries of the South, either bilaterally or through specific multilateral frameworks. To Mahathir, these countries were deemed important because they shared Malaysia’s experience of colonialism. Thus, they also shared Malaysia’s problems, specifically in achieving economic development while maintaining stable and effective liberal democratic systems as expected of them by their former colonial masters.

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<sup>14</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.177.

<sup>15</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, p.77.

### **5.2.1. Multilateral Frameworks of the South**

The first aspect of increasing foreign policy focus on the countries of the South under Mahathir was Malaysia's intensified participation in the related multilateral frameworks.

Mahathir made use of the organisations belonging to the South countries, particularly NAM and G-15 as the platforms on which to project Malaysia's stronger South identity.

Mahathir also played a crucial role in promoting a South agenda in the Commonwealth.

Malaysia's prominent role under Mahathir was illustrated by initiatives to galvanise the intellectual philosophy underpinning the collaboration of South countries into more practical strategies for co-operation. The first significant initiative by Malaysia was the hosting of the Second Summit Meeting of Third World Scholars in May 1986.

Malaysia was given the honour because of "Mahathir's earnest and genuine involvement in problems faced by Third World countries and the practical strategies he had put forward towards overcoming them."<sup>16</sup> According to the Secretary General of the Third World Foundation, Altaf Gauhar, Mahathir was "the motivating force of the foundation" since its inception.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Malaysia was also chosen because it was considered a good model to illustrate the importance of inter-racial relations in the political and economic development of a Third World country that practised liberal democracy.<sup>18</sup> At the meeting, Mahathir proposed the establishment of an independent international commission to examine the problems of the 'Economic South'.<sup>19</sup> Mahathir himself was selected to become the chairman of the Steering Committee on the South Commission with the responsibility to identify a Third World leader who could lead the Commission.

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<sup>16</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, p.89.

<sup>17</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.147.

<sup>18</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.138. See also Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, p.89.

<sup>19</sup> *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, June 1986, vol.19, no.2, quoted in Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, p.89.

The Steering Committee chose Dr Julius Nyerere of Tanzania to lead the Commission.<sup>20</sup> Mahathir's commitment towards the founding of the South Commission was proven when he personally wrote to heads of states of 127 Third World countries requesting their support. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration spelled out the objectives of the Commission, which were: to assess the problems facing developing countries; to find solutions and suggest ways of increasing co-operation within the South; to strengthen organisations already working for greater co-operation, and to consider the creation of a 'South Secretariat'; and to raise awareness in developing countries about their circumstances and the challenges facing them.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Mahathir was also appointed to the Advisory Committee of the South, which assisted Chairman Nyerere in guiding the work of the South Centre.

An illustration of how Mahathir had spearheaded the South movement towards a united voice is on the topic of the environment. The Second Ministerial Conference of Developing Countries on the Environment and Development held in Kuala Lumpur on 27 April 1992 was said to be 'a reunion of non-aligned countries'<sup>22</sup> to prepare a common position before the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Mahathir highlighted the requirement of the South to extract their natural resources in order to develop. Thus, the South would require substantial material assistance to enable them to develop in an environmentally sustainable manner. He criticised the North because, "having destroyed

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<sup>20</sup> See also the address by Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, Chairman of the South Commission at the Commission's Inauguration Ceremony in Geneva on 2 October 1987, which is available at [www.southcentre.org](http://www.southcentre.org)

<sup>21</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, pp.91-92.

<sup>22</sup> David Camroux, 'Looking East' and Inwards: Internal Factors in Malaysian Foreign Relations During the Mahathir Era, 1981-1994, Asia Paper no.72, October 1994, Queensland: Centre for the Study of Australia – Asia Relations, Griffith University, Australia, p.24.

their heritage”, now “wanting to declare what is left intact in the developing countries also belongs to them.”<sup>23</sup> Mahathir also chastised the North for being unwilling to bear the financial costs of a cleaner earth. This clearly reflects the moral undertone, beyond economic rationalisations embedded in Mahathir’s beliefs concerning North – South relationship. This moral undertone can also be detected in Mahathir calls for the South to have one strong voice, because “when the North speak, the voice of the individual developing countries will be drowned.”<sup>24</sup>

### NAM

NAM has always been essentially a political organisation and functions to co-ordinate positions of the Third World on global peace and security issues.<sup>25</sup> On a day-to-day basis, Malaysia co-ordinates its position on international and political issues with other NAM countries through the office of its Permanent Mission to the UN in New York. Mahathir attended all NAM Summits when he was prime minister. At the summits, the issues he raised included the Antarctica, environment, Palestine, apartheid in South Africa, Cambodia, Bosnia, UN reform, and disarmament. When he first attended the NAM Summit in 1983 in New Delhi, Mahathir apparently made a huge impact because of his ‘straight talking’.<sup>26</sup> He used the occasion to highlight the Antarctica issue. Antarctica had become a major foreign policy preoccupation of Malaysia since he raised

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<sup>23</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the official opening of the Second Ministerial Conference of Developing Countries on Environment and Development, Kuala Lumpur, 27 April 1992, <http://www.pmo.gov.my> (accessed on 20 April 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the official opening of the Second Ministerial Conference of Developing Countries on Environment and Development, Kuala Lumpur, 27 April 1992. See also Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.135.

<sup>25</sup> Author interview with Hasmy Agam, Head of the Secretariat for NAM during Malaysia’s chairmanship (2003-2006) and former Malaysia’s Permanent Representative to the UN, New York, Kuala Lumpur, 12 July 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Zainah Anwar; ‘Dr Mahathir’s ‘Straight Talk’ Makes an Impression’, *New Straits Times*; 10 March 1983.

it at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in 1982. Mahathir opposed the move to let only the exclusive members of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCP) decide on the fate of Antarctica. He called for Antarctica to be declared a common heritage for mankind and suggested that it be placed under a UN administration. Perhaps as a result of Mahathir's 'straight talking', NAM endorsed Malaysia's position at the summit for Antarctica to be declared a common heritage for mankind.<sup>27</sup>

Mahathir also raised economic and trade problems repeatedly within the NAM framework, particularly the lack of progress towards achieving a New International Economic Order (NIEO). At the Summit in Harare in 1986, Malaysia informed other NAM leaders of the Second Summit Meeting of Third World Scholars and the establishment of the international commission to look specifically into the problems of the South.<sup>28</sup> At the subsequent Jakarta Summit in 1992, Mahathir stressed the need for members of NAM to consider tangible economic and trade co-operation to ensure the movement's relevance after the Cold War.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, Malaysia's initiatives in relation to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 also testifies to Mahathir's vision for NAM.<sup>30</sup> Mahathir felt that the NAM, which encompasses countries of Latin America, Africa, Asia and parts of Europe could have a "loud and clear" voice, which could become a "moral power" based on its principles.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Murugesu Pathmanaban and David Lazarus, *Winds of Change: The Mahathir Impact on Malaysia's Foreign Policy*, Kuala Lumpur: Eastview Productions, 1984, p.54. Mahathir's speech at New Delhi's NAM Summit is on pp.207-8. See also Yusof, *Continuity and Change in Malaysia's Foreign Policy*, pp. 358-9, and Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.142.

<sup>28</sup> See speech of Mahathir Mohamad at the 8<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in Harare, 1 September 1986 at [www.perdana.org.my](http://www.perdana.org.my)

<sup>29</sup> See speech of Mahathir Mohamad at the 10<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in Jakarta, 1 September 1992 at [www.perdana.org.my](http://www.perdana.org.my)

<sup>30</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East' and Inwards, p.24.

<sup>31</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.159.

This moral power refers to the South's plea based on their emphasis on the principles of justice and fairness in international relations.

In recognition of Mahathir's leading role in NAM, Malaysia was requested to host the 13<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 20 – 25 February 2003. It was actually Jordan's turn to host it but the outbreak of the Iraq war raised security concerns for world leaders to congregate in the Middle East. Bangladesh offered to host but an unexpected change in its government made it problematic. Malaysia was approached subsequently to take over the chair, which was to begin in February 2003. With barely seven months to prepare, the Malaysian bureaucracy was initially reluctant to shoulder the responsibility. In addition, Malaysia was already committed to host the OIC Summit in October the same year. However, Mahathir and Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar were convinced that Malaysia should host the 13<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit and assume chairmanship from 2003 onward. The hosting would be an acknowledgement of Malaysia's diplomatic and moral stature. Indeed, Malaysia had become a popular member amongst NAM countries due to Mahathir's commitment to their cause and the perception that Malaysia had the wherewithal for leadership.<sup>32</sup>

The Kuala Lumpur Summit produced a declaration to revitalise NAM. Although Mahathir retired in October 2003, the revitalisation of NAM was consistent with his desire to see NAM retain its relevance. Related initiatives included increasing North-South dialogue in the form of consultations between NAM and G8, as well as the EU. With regard to the latter, meetings were participated by the 'Troikas' (past, current and future chairs) from both sides. Malaysia's chairmanship also pressed the importance

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<sup>32</sup> Author interview with Hasmy Agam, Head of the Secretariat for NAM during Malaysia's chairmanship (2003-2006) and former Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the UN, New York, Kuala Lumpur, 12 July 2007.

of UN reforms through the NAM Co-ordination Bureau based in New York. In addition, under Malaysia's leadership of both organisations, positions of NAM and OIC were co-ordinated more coherently. Further initiatives taken during Malaysia's chairmanship included branches of NAM being set up to co-ordinate its strategies in Geneva (UN Commission for Human Rights, International Labour Organisation and disarmament issues), Vienna (International Atomic Energy Agency – IAEA), and The Hague (Chemical Weapons Conference – CWC).

A NAM Business Forum was organised for the first time in conjunction with the summit in Malaysia, consistent with Mahathir's idea to include more practical economic and trade programmes as part of NAM's agenda. In accordance with the notion of Malaysia Inc., the event was led by the private sector (Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute, ASLI and Malaysia South-South Association, MASSA). The aim was to establish a private sector network in the context of South-South co-operation.<sup>33</sup> The initiative resulted in the establishment of NAM Business Council in June 2004.

The status of Malaysia as an important member of the South countries and the reputation of Mahathir as its prominent leader can be inferred from the invitation that Mahathir received, as chairman of NAM to participate in the Enlarged Dialogue Meeting at the sidelines of the G8 Summit in Evian, France in June 2003. This was significant because previous NAM chairs had never received such an invitation. Mahathir said that he was honoured to be invited because "it showed that developed countries recognised and respected Malaysia's economic achievements."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Rozilah, *Ke Arah NAM Yang Lebih Dinamik Dan Bersepadu*, p.16.

<sup>34</sup> 'West-bashing Mahathir Joins G8 Dialogue Before Retiring', AFP, 28 May 2003 at <http://www.geocities.com> (accessed on 20 April 2005).

## G-15

Another grouping of South countries in which Malaysia under Mahathir had played a leadership role was G-15.<sup>35</sup> This South – South framework was established at the ninth NAM Summit in Belgrade in September 1989. Malaysia was ‘the motivating force’ in its founding<sup>36</sup> and the first G-15 Summit was held in Kuala Lumpur in June 1990. Mahathir took the decision to host the first summit after the proposal was made by the Chairman of the South Commission, Dr Julius Nyerere who visited Malaysia in November 1989.<sup>37</sup> The proposal was understood as an expression of recognition of Mahathir’s able leadership and an honour for Malaysia.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the proposal was also supported by the Malaysian foreign policy bureaucrats because of their understanding that the first G-15 summit would take place in a Latin American country had Malaysia not agreed to host it, and this would embroil G-15 in radical ideological issues rather than practical economic and trade co-operation.<sup>39</sup> As Chairman of the first summit, Mahathir said that the objectives of G-15 were “to consult, to exchange views and to explore the potential, which is largely untapped, for South-South co-operation. We would also like the group to foster dialogue with the North, the absence of which caused the economic gap between North and South to widen further since the first North-South dialogue failed.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Malaysia’s role in G-15 seemed to be driven by Mahathir’s desire to strengthen South – South co-operation and also to bolster the position of the South in their dialogues with the North.

<sup>35</sup> G-15 member countries are; Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.

<sup>36</sup> Camroux, ‘*Looking East’ and Inwards*, p.24.

<sup>37</sup> Notes of Discussion between Dr Mahathir and Dr Julius Nyerere, Kuala Lumpur, 27 November 1989. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia.

<sup>38</sup> M. Rajendran, *Mahathir Mohamad: Prime Minister of Malaysia*, Petaling Jaya: IBS Buku, 2003, p.153.

<sup>39</sup> Document of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, November 1989.

<sup>40</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, pp.95-96.

The commitment of the G-15 leaders is illustrated by the fact that its summit is held every year. This has led to increased high level contacts between member countries, enabling its leaders to forge close personal ties. Mahathir for example, had established very close rapport with Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Carlos Menem of Argentina, Alberto Fujimori of Peru, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Suharto of Indonesia.<sup>41</sup> Also, as the venue for the summit meeting is rotated every year, these leaders have the opportunities to visit a different member country every year, thus exposing them to the real needs and resources of the countries. Mahathir attended all G-15 Summit meetings since its inaugural session in Kuala Lumpur in 1990.

The economic objectives of South – South co-operation can be identified in some of the G-15 projects. For example, as a measure to overcome the lack of information about trade and investments opportunities amongst countries of the South, Mahathir proposed the setting up of the South Investment, Trade and Technology Data Exchange Centre (SITTDEC). The proposal was adopted as a G-15 project at the Second G-15 Summit in Caracas, Venezuela in November 1991. However, the fact that Malaysia was chosen to host the project was a recognition of Malaysia's economic achievements and the belief amongst member countries that Malaysia had the resources to provide leadership. In January 1992, SITTDEC was established in Kuala Lumpur with a start up grant from Malaysia of US\$ 4 million. SITTDEC had the mission to foster and promote investments, trade and technology flow among developing countries. Its objectives were to generate investments and trade, and to contribute towards the acquisition, transfer and utilisation of technology among developing countries and to enhance South-South co-

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<sup>41</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, p.95.

operation, especially in trade, investments and technology transfer.<sup>42</sup> Other than SITTDEC, Malaysia undertook various other G-15 projects, for example, the Business Investment Forum and the Bilateral Payment Agreement (BPA). Malaysia's commitment to G-15 was further translated into its participation in the G-15 Commission for the Improvement of Efficiency in the implementation of the group's decisions (G-15 Commission) and its co-ordinating role of the G-15 ICT Task Force on information and communication technology. Also, Malaysia hosted the G-15 Experts' Group Meeting on the International Financial Architecture in February 2002.<sup>43</sup> All these further illustrate Malaysia's leadership of South countries, which was achieved due to the recognition it garnered for its economic success.

In promoting South-South co-operation, Mahathir introduced to the G-15 certain mechanisms which Malaysia had been adopting bilaterally. The BPA is one example. It overcomes the reluctance of businesses to accept credit risks by arranging for the Central Banks to contra payments on each side and settle the balance between them.<sup>44</sup> BPA was endorsed by the G-15 at its Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 1990 as a project for Malaysia to spearhead, with the goal to further easing barriers to trade between South countries. Since its adoption by the G-15, the BPA has managed to substantially enhance Malaysia's trade with South countries. Since 1989, Malaysia's trade to non-traditional markets had grown four-fold, making Malaysia the 19<sup>th</sup> largest trading nation in the world.<sup>45</sup> Thus, strengthening South – South co-operation undeniably had an economic rationale. However, Malaysia's status was also hugely improved by its initiatives to take

<sup>42</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, pp.97-98.

<sup>43</sup> Brief on South-South Co-operation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, July 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, p.100.

<sup>45</sup> Salil Tripathi, 'Malaysian Investment Overseas' in *Ugly Malaysians? South – South Investments Abused*, Jomo, K.S. (ed.), Durban: Institute for Black Research, 2002, p.11.

leadership amongst South countries and promote itself as an example through the mechanisms that it had employed bilaterally like the BPA, in order to attain economic success.

### The Commonwealth

Mahathir was initially critical of the Commonwealth, which he perceived as an “Anglophilic club for countries colonised by Britain.”<sup>46</sup> He was especially dissatisfied with the Commonwealth’s failure to bear pressure on the apartheid regime of South Africa<sup>47</sup> and refused to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) in Melbourne in 1981, and again in New Delhi in 1983. Mahathir’s first participation at CHOGM was in 1985, in Nassau Bahamas. There, he chided the Commonwealth for not being able to solve many problems of its members who were mostly developing countries.<sup>48</sup> Mahathir’s deep-seated disenchantment with the Commonwealth drove him to request Wisma Putra and ISIS to review Malaysia’s membership. Both institutions argued for continuing membership, as it actually gave Malaysia “the voice” that it deserved in international circles and provided access to “certain types of co-operation.”<sup>49</sup>

Mahathir then considered the Commonwealth as another platform where he could air his Third World concerns and network with other Third World leaders.<sup>50</sup> Mahathir’s changed attitude towards the Commonwealth was demonstrated when he

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<sup>46</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir’s Paradigm Shift*, p.156.

<sup>47</sup> Sharifah Rozita, ‘Fresh Impetus Against Apartheid’, *New Straits Times*, 11 October 1985.

<sup>48</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir’s Paradigm Shift*, p.156.

<sup>49</sup> Camroux, ‘*Looking East’ and Inwards*’, p.26.

<sup>50</sup> Muhammad Muda, ‘Malaysia’s Foreign Policy and the Commonwealth’, *Round Table*, no. 320 (1991), p.466, quoted in Camroux, ‘*Looking East’ and Inwards*’, p.28.

offered to host the 1989 CHOGM in Kuala Lumpur, to the surprise of many.<sup>51</sup> It was said that Malaysia spent lavishly for the meeting,<sup>52</sup> which like the hosting of the Commonwealth Games later in 1998, was used “to showcase Malaysia’s entry into the ranks of the industrializing countries” and “rounding out the Malaysian international image.”<sup>53</sup> In the local papers, the hosting of CHOGM was built up as an opportunity to prove the nation’s capabilities and to enhance its image.<sup>54</sup> Arguably, the strategy worked. For instance, Thatcher said that it was the best CHOGM she ever attended.<sup>55</sup> Significant outcomes of the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM were, firstly, the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment, which could be seen as part of Mahathir’s efforts to galvanise the South to form a coherent position at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and secondly, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration entitled ‘Southern Africa: The Way Ahead’, which increased pressure on the Pretoria apartheid regime.<sup>56</sup>

In short, the Commonwealth thus became another important avenue for Mahathir to advance his philosophy of South–South co-operation. This was undertaken specifically through the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM). CPTM’s members comprised Commonwealth governments, private and public sector companies, ‘networkers’ (private individuals) and Commonwealth Secretary General’s nominees. Its funding comes from member governments in the form of annual

<sup>51</sup> Suhaini Aznam; ‘Staying on the Inside’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 November 1987. Also, Thatcher believed she had influenced Mahathir in his decision concerning the Commonwealth. See Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, London: HarperCollins, 1993, p.502.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Modal CHOGM RM39 Juta Akan Dapat Balik Melalui Iklan – PM’, *Utusan Malaysia*, 2 November 1989.

<sup>53</sup> Camroux, ‘*Looking East’ and Inwards*, p.27.

<sup>54</sup> For examples, see ‘CHOGM Berjaya Kenalkan Malaysia Kepada Dunia Luar: Mahathir’, *Bernama*, 24 October 1989; ‘Feather in the Cap for Country and PM’, *New Straits Times*, 25 October 1989; ‘Mahathir Yakin Rakyat Malaysia Dapat Pelihara Imej Negara’, *Bernama*, 26 September 1989; and ‘Bukti Kemampuan Pimpinan Islam – Dr M’, *Berita Harian*, 26 October 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.502.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.thecommonwealth.org>, accessed on 13 October 2005.

contributions and private and public sector companies. CPTM's role is to enhance public/private sector co-operation by encouraging Smart Partnerships or a win-win philosophy in trade and investment, as well as technology management.<sup>57</sup> Again, at a glance, economic goals seem to dominate Malaysia's policy on CPTM. However, it will be illustrated below that the promotion of Smart Partnerships in South – South co-operation was motivated substantially by a struggle for recognition. CPTM's activities are backed by a small full-time staff in its London 'hub', which is connected to an increasing number of national hubs. During Mahathir's time, the Malaysian hub was based at the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology (MIGHT), located at the Office of the Science Advisor to the Prime Minister at the Prime Minister's Department, illustrating further the priority that Mahathir attached to CPTM.

As mentioned, CPTM became a framework for Malaysia to promote its philosophy of Smart Partnerships and 'prosper thy neighbour', which underpinned its approach towards South-South co-operation. The modus operandi were international dialogues. Malaysia's LID, started in 1995 paved the way for a series of international dialogues on Smart Partnerships to take place which eventually came under the co-ordination of CPTM. According to Wisma Putra, LID has been successful in forging Smart Partnerships between governments and private sectors of the South.<sup>58</sup> Since it started, LID has been held biennially with the aim to foster Smart Partnerships at all levels of society, engaging the political leadership, civil service, business, labour, media and the population at large. The success of this initiative prompted other South countries to hold similar dialogues. Thus, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe started the South

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.cptm.org>, accessed on 13 October 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Brief on South-South Co-operation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, July 2005.

Africa International Dialogue (SAID)<sup>59</sup> while Barbados initiated another dialogue series in the Caribbean region.<sup>60</sup>

### **5.2.2. Bilateral Initiatives**

Increasing its focus on the South impacted Malaysia's bilateral relations most evidently in terms of a strengthening of ties with African, Latin American and the Pacific Islands countries. This is illustrated by the increasing number of bilateral visits, as well as opening of Malaysia's diplomatic missions and level of trade and investment flows. Clearly, multilateral and bilateral modes of diplomacy have been complementary and both were harnessed by Mahathir to operationalise his ideas on South-South co-operation, particularly in promoting Smart Partnerships.

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<sup>59</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> SAID was held in Kasane, Botswana in 1997.

<sup>60</sup><http://www.might.org.my>, accessed on 31 October 2005.

### Diplomatic Representations and Visits

As prime minister, Mahathir visited near and far flung South countries which were not on the radar of previous prime ministers.<sup>61</sup> In addition, Malaysia during Mahathir's era opened its embassies in some important South countries.<sup>62</sup> Both the high level visits and the establishment of diplomatic missions signalled Mahathir's seriousness in strengthening Malaysia's relations with the countries of the South. Similar to decisions to host meetings and conferences on the South and making contributions to the funding of South institutions, bilateral visits as well as the establishment of diplomatic missions entailed financial expenditures, which were not insignificant. However, they provided the necessary mechanisms to translate the philosophy into real co-operation between Malaysia and other South countries.

When conducting trips abroad, Mahathir was always accompanied by a huge business delegation and a function with the business community in the host country would normally be included in the programme. Again, this illustrates the workings of Malaysia Inc. More importantly, it exemplifies the preoccupation with achieving the economic goals of the NEP/NDP. In this context, Mahathir's recognition motives linked to the economic status of the Malays remained at the core, as explicated in Mahathir's belief system in Chapter 3. Towards achieving these economic goals through South-

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<sup>61</sup> Mahathir visited Fiji (1982), Tonga (1982), Western Samoa (1982), Papua New Guinea (1982 & 1984), Yugoslavia (1983 & 1989), Maldives (1984), Libya (1984), Egypt (1984), Mali (1984), the Bahamas (1985), Zimbabwe (1986, 1991–CHOGM, 1994, 1996, 1999), Mauritius (1988), Zambia (1990), Venezuela (1990), South Africa (1991, 1995, 1997, 1999–CHOGM), Tanzania (1991), Namibia (1995), Peru (1995), Colombia (1995), Argentina (1995), Uruguay (1995), Malawi (1997), Botswana (1997), Cuba (2000), Mozambique (SAID 2000), Uganda (SAID 2001), among others (not including private visits). Source - Office of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (Perdana Leadership Foundation), July 2005.

South co-operation, bilateral agreements like the Partial Visa Abolition Agreement, the Investment Guarantee Agreement and the Economic, Scientific and Technical Co-operation Agreement were signed during most of these visits to facilitate economic and technical co-operation. In addition, the adoption of the BPA was also a significant coup in boosting Malaysia's economy, as well as a recognition of Malaysia's economic achievement and leadership.

True to his Malaysia Inc. philosophy, Mahathir strongly supported the private sector and pushed them to be pro-active in South-South co-operation. In this regard, with the patronage of Mahathir, the Malaysian private sector formed two investment oriented South-South bodies, namely the Malaysian South-South Association (MASSA) and the Malaysian South-South Corporation (MASSCORP). MASSA's main objective was to promote economic and trade relations between Malaysia and other developing countries. MASSCORP was the investment arm under MASSA's umbrella, to develop investment linkages with South countries. In addition, the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCIM) had also been active in promoting a South agenda.<sup>63</sup>

#### MTCP

The Malaysian Technical Co-operation Programme (MTCP) was launched on 7 September 1980. The programme was consistent with Mahathir's belief that one of the most important aspects of South-South co-operation was the sharing of experience and expertise. Hence, MTCP as a bilateral mechanism was different from multilateral

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<sup>62</sup> Argentina (1989), Cuba (2001), Chile (1991), Fiji (1982), Ghana (1997), Guinea (1997), Jordan (1995), Mexico (1992), Namibia (1996), Papua New Guinea (1982), Peru (1996), Senegal (1992), South Africa (1991), Sudan (1999), Venezuela (1990) and Zimbabwe (1989). Source – Inspectorate Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Wisma Putra, June 2005. See also Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.177.

frameworks such as NAM, which were more dialogical in nature. Under MTCP, Malaysia's leading role amongst the countries of the South was promoted more directly in terms of its achievements, or a model that could be emulated by other developing countries. In other words, as a bilateral technical cooperation programme, MTCP provided a mechanism for Malaysia to share its development experiences with other developing countries. It had as its basis a "prosper-thy-neighbour" philosophy. Focusing on human resource development, MTCP's programmes covered various areas where Malaysia had the experience and expertise, such as public administration, agriculture, poverty alleviation, investment promotion, ICT, banking and the English language.<sup>64</sup>

As of 2005, 131 countries had benefited from the MTCP since its inception. It continued to offer about 50 short term courses which were conducted at 22 Malaysian institutions yearly.<sup>65</sup> The allocation for MTCP was RM45 million (US\$ 20.45 million) for the first five years when it was launched in 1980. It rose steadily to the amount of RM 145.8 million (US\$ 38.37 million) under the 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan (2001-2005).<sup>66</sup>

#### A Case Study of Bilateral Initiatives: South Africa

Certain bilateral relations can be used to illustrate the ethos of South-South co-operation being put into practice. This was especially the case with the African countries that did not enjoy much attention in Malaysia's foreign policy before Mahathir. Moreover, Africa became one of the primary targets of South-South co-operation under Mahathir, evidenced by the launching of LID and SAID. Other than the training provided by

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<sup>63</sup> Brief on South-South Co-operation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, July 2005.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.epu.jpm.my/New%20Folder/mtcp2.htm>, accessed on 20 May 2005.

<sup>65</sup> Brief on South-South Co-operation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Wisma Putra, July 2005.

Malaysia to officials of African countries through the MTCP, increased co-operation could also be seen in increasing trade and investments flows.

Mahathir's mission *vis-à-vis* Africa was given recognition at the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD III) held in Tokyo from 3-4 December 2001. At the conference, Mahathir was given the honour to deliver two statements, firstly at the opening session and secondly, at a session on 'South-South Co-operation'. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) has become a base for Malaysia to co-operate with Japan and France to assist developments of African countries.<sup>67</sup>

Amongst the African countries, South Africa presents an interesting case in which Mahathir had shown tremendous interests. Mahathir had continued Malaysia's strong disapproval of the apartheid regime, which was evident in his speeches at the CHOGM and NAM meetings.<sup>68</sup> Evidently, Prime Minister Mahathir has long-standing ties with the ANC and consistently supported the fight against apartheid<sup>69</sup> and Kuala Lumpur became known as a foremost crusader against apartheid.<sup>70</sup> In 1985, the Third World Foundation (TWF) organised its Third World Awards ceremony in Kuala Lumpur and bestowed an award to Nelson Mandela.<sup>71</sup> Mahathir was one of the first foreign statesmen who made a private one-day visit to South Africa in April 1994 to congratulate

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<sup>66</sup> Author interview with Shazelia Zainal Abidin, Principal Assistant Secretary, Global Economics & Development Division, Wisma Putra, 10 July 2007. The average rate of exchange was RM2.20 = US\$1 in 1980, and RM3.8 = US\$1 in 2001.

<sup>67</sup> Brief on South-South Co-operation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, July 2005.

<sup>68</sup> For example, see Mahathir's speeches at the 1985 CHOGM, 1983 NAM Summit in New Delhi and 1986 NAM Summit in Harare. See also Aziz, *Paradigm Shifts*, pp.144-5 & 158.

<sup>69</sup> According to South African Government Information website -

<http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03082910461002.htm> (accessed on 30 August 2007).

<sup>70</sup> Aziz, *Paradigm Shifts*, p.137.

<sup>71</sup> Aziz, *Paradigm Shifts*, p.137. See also Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981 – 2003*, dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Boston, 2005, p.293.

Mandela on his release.<sup>72</sup> Then he made an official visit in August 1995, and Mandela reciprocated with a state visit in March 1997.

Malaysia's Malay based ruling party - UMNO - had begun to intensify its contacts with South Africa's ANC after the apartheid government's ban on the latter was lifted in 1990. By then, ANC's activists and economists had begun to speak admirably of the Malaysian development model.<sup>73</sup> However, links between the two countries had to begin unofficially with co-operation in the private sector, particularly of companies linked to the Malay ruling party, UMNO, before Malaysia established diplomatic relations with South Africa on 6 November 1993. Apparently, Malaysia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stood firm on its principle not to rush establishing bilateral relations before a transition to black African majority was completed, although pressured by Malaysia's MITI and Ministry of Primary Industries.<sup>74</sup> However, in early 1993 Renong's Halim Saad and the head of Landmark Group, Dato' Samsudin were sent to South Africa as the Malaysian government's advance team to gauge investment possibilities. Malaysia's state-linked companies became major supporters to the ANC campaign, contributing of about SAR6 million (US\$ 2 million)<sup>75</sup> just before the elections.<sup>76</sup> Lim Kok Wing, an influential Malaysian academic who was close to Mahathir and then Malaysian Economic Advisor Daim Zainuddin, became an important figure in organising both the funds and the ANC's election campaign. Malaysia also became a channel through which other Asian countries provided their financial contributions in the early

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<sup>72</sup> According to South African Government Information website - <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03082910461002.htm>, accessed on 30 August 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Vishnu Padayachee and Imraan Valodia, 'Developing South-South Links? Malaysian Investment in Post-Apartheid South Africa' in Jomo, K.S. (ed.), *Ugly Malaysians?*, p.36.

<sup>74</sup> Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.245.

<sup>75</sup> Based on SAR3 = 1US\$ (1993).

1990s.<sup>77</sup> Thus, Malaysia's involvement in South Africa was operationalised through the close links between UMNO and the ANC, or in other words, Mahathir and Nelson Mandela.<sup>78</sup> Malaysia's strong position against apartheid was clearly recognised by South Africa's new government and Mahathir's image as the defender of justice and equality was greatly enhanced through his association with Mandela.

The networking between dominant political parties – UMNO and the ANC spurred collaborations in the business sector. “Malaysians, investing in mainly petrochemicals, telecommunications, and the hospitality and property markets, have been among the largest new investors in South Africa.”<sup>79</sup> In the 1990s, Malaysia contributed 18 percent of FDI in post-apartheid South Africa, and was the second biggest after the US. The most significant Malaysian investments in South Africa were by Telekom Malaysia in Telkon SA and Petronas in Engen.<sup>80</sup>

The elaboration above could easily lead to the conclusion that there was a predominance of economic or acquisition of wealth motivation in this drive by Malaysian companies to invest in South Africa. However, these economic initiatives were pushed by the very top Malaysian leadership, Mahathir himself, and arguably underpinned by the belief that the countries shared similar social and political imperatives. At the same time, Malaysia was already touted by South African new leaders as a successful model to overcome the challenge of empowering the economically disadvantaged ethnic majority

<sup>76</sup> Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links?...’ in *Ugly Malaysians?*, p.36. See also Chris Alden and Garth le Pere, *South Africa’s Post Apartheid Foreign Policy – from Reconciliation to Revival?*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press for IISS, Adelphi Paper 362, 2003, p.20.

<sup>77</sup> Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links?...’ in *Ugly Malaysians?*, pp.36-7.

<sup>78</sup> “Nelson Mandela himself has been appreciative of Mahathir’s position on South Africa. He personally conveyed his appreciation and visited Malaysia to be honoured.” Rajendran, *Mahathir Mohamad: Prime Minister of Malaysia*, p.148.

<sup>79</sup> According to South African Government Information website, <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03082910461002.htm>, accessed on 30 August 2007. See also Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links? ...’ in *Ugly Malaysians?*, pp. 31-2.

in their society. The experience of denigration that was shared by the indigenous majorities of both countries provided the foundation for co-operation and “pushed the level of intensity of Malaysian investment and other economic relations in post-apartheid South Africa, beyond what can be explained by conventional economic and risk-based considerations alone”.<sup>81</sup> The role of Mahathir in this drive was pivotal. As one South African businessmen who has had extensive dealings with Malaysians explained, “if Dr Mahathir says, ‘Go to South Africa’... you go, no matter what the risks.”<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Padayachee and Volodia observe that, ‘Unless there are other, hidden motivations for Malaysian investment in South Africa the political injunction appears to be a strong factor.’<sup>83</sup>

Therefore, Malaysia indeed increased its focus on the South during Mahathir’s premiership. Its policy initiatives covered both multilateral and bilateral frameworks. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. However, Malaysia’s South initiatives were not without challenge. For example, Malaysia’s investments became an election issue in Ghana’s Presidential Election in 2000. Malaysia Telekom and TV3 decided to withdraw their investments in 2002, alleging unfair treatment by the new government under Kufour. Mahathir himself admitted that it had been difficult to invest in African countries because their policies towards Malaysian investments tended to change after changes in governments.<sup>84</sup> This raised the question as to why Mahathir was so determined to pursue South-South co-

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<sup>80</sup> Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links?...’ in *Ugly Malaysians?*, p.32.

<sup>81</sup> Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links?...’ in *Ugly Malaysians?*, p.38.

<sup>82</sup> *Sunday Independent*, 20 April 1997 quoted in Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links?...’ in *Ugly Malaysians*, p.38.

<sup>83</sup> Padayachee and Valodia, ‘Developing South-South Links?...’ in *Ugly Malaysians*, p.38.

<sup>84</sup> Summary of Meeting with Prime Minister on TM’s Investment in Ghana, 1 September 2002, and Brief on Malaysia – Ghana Bilateral Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, November 2002.

operation? Certainly, the economic motive cannot be discounted, that is to find new markets for Malaysian products and investments. However, this alone does not present a complete picture. It is therefore essential to understand Mahathir's thinking on the South to understand the motives behind these moves. This is the aim of the following section.

### **5.3. MAHATHIR'S THINKING ON THE SOUTH**

The experience of colonialism was a crucial factor that had influenced Mahathir's thinking on the South. To Mahathir, "The North and South divide is the perpetuation of the old relations between the imperial powers of the West and their colonies."<sup>85</sup> Mahathir resented colonialism, the very experience which had triggered the strong sense of Malay nationalism at the core of his recognition struggle. He believed that colonialism was partly driven by the strong conviction of cultural superiority by the Europeans.

According to Mahathir;

" I am not a racist; neither am I anti-White nor anti-European, but I cannot help but notice that ethnic Europeans have an infinite capacity to convince themselves that, whatever it is that they are doing at the moment, it is right, proper and just. Thus, when they were colonising us, exploiting our wealth in Asia, Africa and the Americas, even warring and killing us, they were able to convince themselves that it was a burden imposed on them by God, a cross that they must bear for what they were doing was to civilise the natives and to bring culture and religion to them. They called it the White Man's Burden. If in the process the natives were oppressed it was incidental and quite unavoidable."<sup>86</sup>

To Mahathir, although the process of decolonisation had brought the countries of the South political freedom, it had not amounted to much in reality. To him, the

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<sup>85</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'North-South Relations: Problems and Prospects', speech at the International Conference on Human Resources Development within the Framework of International Partnership in Jakarta, Indonesia on 16 September, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government: Selected Speeches By Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia (Vol.2)*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2000, p.207.

unequal relationship between South countries and their former colonisers had persisted. Thus, Mahathir was outraged at the continuing subjugation of the South countries to the former colonial North. Mahathir observed:

“Having gained independence, the former colonies expected to have a relationship as between equals with their former colonial masters. But they soon realised that this was not to be. All that has happened is a name change from being colonies to being the South and the ex-colonial masters are now called the North. Oppressive pressures are now less direct and are applied in the name of democracy and human rights instead. But the effect is the same. The ex-colonies or the South must submit to the North, to rules and regulations and policies devised in the North for the North.”<sup>87</sup>

Clearly then, to Mahathir, countries of the South were trapped in an unequal relationship defined by the North and governed by international structures controlled by the North. Although the states of the South formed the majority in world society, they were too weak politically and economically to effectively influence international structures.

Nevertheless, Mahathir admitted that during the period of the Cold War, when the two ideologies of capitalism and communism were in contention, the ‘weak’ South managed to exert some leverage on international issues. At the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in Durban, South Africa in 1998, Mahathir reminisced the constant fear suffered by the Third World amidst the instability of the arms race between NATO and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War, leading to the NAM’s founding in 1961. To a certain extent, they succeeded in asserting their rights as sovereign nations because in many instances, they

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<sup>86</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, speech at the Second South International African Dialogue (SAID) in Namibia, 28 July 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.69-70.

<sup>87</sup> Mahathir, ‘North-South Relations: Problems and Prospects’, speech at International Conference on Human Resources Development Within the Framework of International Partnership in Jakarta, Indonesia on 16 September 1994 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.207.

were ‘being wooed by both East and West’.<sup>88</sup> Mahathir believed that the end of the Cold War had revived the North’s ambition for a total dominance because “[m]ere political dominance in a unipolar world is apparently not enough for the North.”<sup>89</sup> It had not improved the prospects for the South because the North was considered “unwilling to change their attitude” and seemed keen to “want to perpetuate colonialism in other forms and names.” To Mahathir, this insistence of the North to perpetuate their domination over the South was especially evident in the phenomenon of globalisation. In this regard, Mahathir’s discourse on globalisation is important because it also sheds light on his motivation to pursue South – South co-operation.

### 5.3.1. Unipolar World, Globalisation and (Neo)Colonialism

Globalisation became the focus in Mahathir’s criticisms of the North-South relationship. Mahathir equated globalisation with colonialism numerous times, for example, by seeing it as ‘the Second Great Age of Colonialism’.<sup>90</sup> At the 1<sup>st</sup> SAID in Botswana in 1997, he warned:

“Now that colonisation is over, we have globalisation. The borders which define countries will be erased and economic competition on so-called level-playing field must reign supreme.”<sup>91</sup>

He further said that even after independence, developing countries’ “politics, economy, social and behavioural systems are all under the control, directly or indirectly,

<sup>88</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation: Colonialism Revisited’, speech at the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Heads of State or Heads of Government of the Non-Aligned Members (NAM) in Durban, South Africa on 2 September 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.61.

<sup>89</sup> Mahathir, ‘North-South Relations: Problems and Prospects’, speech at the International Conference on Human Resources Development within the Framework of International Partnership, Jakarta, 16 September 1994, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.211.

<sup>90</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Globalisation and its Impact on Developing Economies’, speech at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Economic Development Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 27 June 2001, in *Globalisation and the New Realities (Selected Speeches by of Dr Mahathir Mohamad)*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2002, p.51.

of the old colonial masters and the great powers.” Hence, globalisation and colonialism was equated because they diluted the sovereignty of nation-states.

At the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit in Durban, South Africa in 1998, he reiterated the threat posed by globalisation to national sovereignty. Mahathir said:

“When we achieved independence, the world believed in the sovereignty of nation-states. Proudly we maintained that our internal affairs and policies are ours to determine. Our former colonial masters should leave us alone. While the Cold War lasted, they did. But once the Cold War was over, the triumphant victors began to enunciate new concepts of international relations which could give them back their dominant imperial role.”<sup>92</sup>

Thus to Mahathir, under globalisation, developing countries had to face challenges similar to those of imperialism - that is of “independent” thinking, of identifying “the truth”, of ensuring “fairness and justice”, of forging relationships to “mutual benefit” and of “creating a more compassionate and caring world, where the winner does not take all.”<sup>93</sup>

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Langkawi International Dialogue in 1999, he reminded other leaders of the countries of the South:

“Many of us still remember the days of colonial subjugation, the pain and the humility. Many still bear the scars of the unequal battles for our independence. We fought for hundreds of years. We have only just won. We have hardly tasted the fruits of our sacrifices. We cannot now be forced to submit to foreign domination once again. It may not be the raw colonisation that we knew but it is not too far different.”<sup>94</sup>

Mahathir’s perception of colonialism was clearly fundamental in his thinking on the North-South relationship. In this sense, it was colonialism’s inherent inequalities and injustices and the experiences of humiliation and denigration that it entailed that

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<sup>91</sup> Mahathir, ‘Smart Partnerships’, speech at the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern Africa International Dialogue in Kasane, Botswana, May 5 1997 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.163.

<sup>92</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation: Colonialism Revisited’, speech at the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Conference, Durban, South Africa, 2 September 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.63.

<sup>93</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation and its Impact on Developing Economies’, speech at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Economic Development Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 27 June 2001, in *Globalisation and the New Realities*, pp.40-2.

motivated Mahathir to identify Malaysia with the countries of the South. To him, they shared similar experience of having been disrespected. He was outraged by the fact that the North, which he equated with former colonisers, could continue dictating the countries of the South how to conduct their political and economic affairs. This was the root of his feeling of having been disrespected – he took exception at the sense of cultural superiority he believed to underpin the North’s attitudes and practices towards global superiority. Furthermore, he also believed that the domination of the North was entrenched in their control of international structures. For this reason, he detested colonialism and was very weary of unfettered globalisation. To him, the patronising attitude of the North - that they knew better, that their systems always worked best, amounted to disrespecting the South. It stripped the countries of the South of their dignity and was the source of the continued injustices besetting the relationship between North and South.

### **5.3.2. Democracy, Free Market Capitalism and the South**

As noted, Mahathir perceived that the North dominated the South in both political and economic affairs. In this sense, Mahathir seemed alarmed by the conviction held by some people in the North that their values of Liberal Democracy and free market capitalism had triumphed since the end of the Cold War.<sup>95</sup> At the same time, Mahathir observed that with the advent of globalisation, the powers of the international structures which advance these values, for example the WTO, had strengthened at the expense of

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<sup>94</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation, and Smart Partnership’, speech at 4<sup>th</sup> Langkawi International Dialogue, Langkawi, 25 July 1999, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.29-30.

the powers of the states and their national sovereignties. Mahathir was sceptical of organisations like the WTO, which he believed would only become answerable to the world's wealthiest economies.<sup>96</sup> He feared that organisations like the WTO would be used to exert pressures on developing countries in the areas of democracy, human rights and trade liberalisation, which had increasingly become linked.

In relation to democracy, Mahathir time and again highlighted the challenges faced by developing countries in adopting a political system which had its origin in a specific European culture and history. Moreover, most of the new countries were carved out by colonial powers and most of them were not natural nation-states. Mahathir thus stressed the challenges faced by newly independent countries in their nation-building efforts. Moreover, Mahathir highlighted the irony that for a long time, these societies did not know any democracy when they were under colonial rule. Thus, Mahathir remarked that "since as colonies they were all governed autocratically by their colonial masters, it is not surprising that they found democracy unmanageable."<sup>97</sup>

Therefore, the struggle for recognition was aroused within Mahathir based on his resentment of the North's attempts to dictate the countries of the South on how to govern themselves. He appealed for acceptance of the limitations faced by the countries of the South and a more flexible and understanding approach from the North. Moreover, he believed that the difficulties faced by the countries of the South in adopting the

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<sup>95</sup> For example, Francis Fukuyama argues that after the Cold War ended, we might be witnessing "the end of history" in the sense that it would be "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History' in *The National Interest*, No.16, Summer 1989, pp.4 & 18.

<sup>96</sup> Milne, and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.131.

<sup>97</sup> Mahathir, 'North-South Relations: Problems and Prospects', speech at the International Conference on Human Resources Development Within the Framework of International Partnership, Jakarta, Indonesia, 16 September 1991, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.207-8.

democratic political system were partly responsible for their slow economic progress.<sup>98</sup>

In this regard, Mahathir felt that Malaysia could be a model for countries of the South because its economic achievements proved the effectiveness of its form of democratic system, which was able to bring political stability in the country. To further illustrate Mahathir's thinking on democracy and the South, at SAID 1, he made this remark:

“ We should go for democracy of course. But we should be tolerant of the fumbling attempts, the failures and the mismanagement. The world must help in the training of government in the management of the economy. We should not expect the ultimate. We should not tolerate the dictators who emerge of course. But we should understand why they emerged. They emerge because we impose a system on people who do not understand or had no experience of working the system.”<sup>99</sup>

It has been noted that Liberal democratic values had been linked by Mahathir to free market capitalism. In a unipolar, globalised world, Mahathir saw that “baleful, unmitigated capitalism, is free to do what it likes”.<sup>100</sup> In the age of instant global telecommunications and high-speed travel, the North to him, pressured the South to open up their economies for the freer flow of capital. Mahathir observed that the North preached their capitalist liberal economic principles according to which a free flow of capital, goods and services was necessary for free competition, which would guarantee economic efficiency. In this regard, Mahathir was especially sceptical about the simplistic notion justifying free market capitalism on the basis of the argument that,

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<sup>98</sup> See for example, ‘North-South Relations: Problems and Prospects’, Mahathir’s speech at the International Conference on Human Resources Development within the Framework of International Partnership, Jakarta, 16 September 1994, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.213.

<sup>99</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government’, speech at the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern Africa International Dialogue in Kasane, Botswana, 5 May 1997, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.167.

<sup>100</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, a speech delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, on 28 July 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.71.

“[t]he efficiency of the developed world would flow into the developing world, to create a better and richer society.”<sup>101</sup>

Mahathir’s scepticism stemmed from his observation that industries from the South were too weak and small to compete with the giants from the North in the context of liberalised markets. To Mahathir, the 1997 Asian financial crisis was a clear example of the harshness of unfettered globalisation. In the case of Malaysia, attacks on the Malaysian ringgit forced it to devalue by 70 per cent, thus effectively reducing Malaysia’s per capita income from US\$ 5,000 before the crisis to US\$ 1,500. In other affected East Asian countries, Mahathir observed that governments that depended on corporate taxes to fund administration and development suddenly became bereft of funds. This eventually led to social and political unrest and governments became ineffective or completely overthrown.<sup>102</sup> Concerning Mahathir’s decision not to accept the austerity solution offered by the IMF, Stiglitz remarked that, “Mahathir knew that all gains in building a multiracial society could be lost, had he let the IMF dictate its policies to him and his country and then riots broken out.”<sup>103</sup>

Speaking at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Namibia in 1998, Mahathir expressed his frustration that instead of recognising the inequalities of the system, countries of the South were blamed for not being transparent and for practising crony capitalism and nepotism. This argument was used by the North to justify the “discipline” enforced by the market forces on these economies in order, “to teach us how to manage our countries

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<sup>101</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, a speech delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, on 28 July 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.71-2.

<sup>102</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, in a speech delivered at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, on 28 July 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.72.

<sup>103</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontent*, London: Penguin, 2002, p.120.

properly.”<sup>104</sup> He refused to accept the so-called liberalisation principle as gospel truth, and that unhindered market forces would improve governance.

He further said:

“We are told that this is how the globalised world functions. The media tells us that this turmoil, all this impoverisation of our people and our countries, is good for us because they will help us to get good government, help us attract foreign investments.

I am sorry, but I think it is a gross injustice. We believe it is inhuman to impoverish millions of people in order that capital should flow freely. We think it is unjust to destroy the prosperity of countries in order to realise a globalised, borderless world. We believe there must be a better way to discipline governments, a way which does not cause misery for innocent people.”<sup>105</sup>

Mahathir reiterated this criticism of unfettered globalisation several times. One of such occasions was at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) in Tokyo, on 19 October 1998.<sup>106</sup> He noted with concerns the quasi religious fervour with which globalisation and free market capitalism were being advocated.

“Globalisation, deregulation, liberalisation, borderless world – these are the fundamentals of the new theology. The high priests are the people with capital, unlimited capital. Their handmaidens are the great writers, journalists and economists, the media practitioners who propagate the religion with fervour. And like all religious fanatics they tolerate no recalcitrance.”<sup>107</sup>

Again, Mahathir drew parallels between the justification for unfettered free market capitalism under conditions of globalisation and the arguments which initially underlined the moral basis for imperialism.<sup>108</sup> To him, it patently portrayed the self righteous and patronising attitude of the North based on their conviction of inherent

<sup>104</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, 28 July 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.73.

<sup>105</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, 28 July 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.73-4.

<sup>106</sup> Mahathir, ‘African Development’, speech at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), Tokyo, Japan, 19 October 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.46-7.

<sup>107</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, 18 July 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.74.

superiority. Hence, he argued that even with globalisation's harsh impacts clearly proven, still “[t]he developed ethnic European countries were convinced that they were actually doing the developing Asian and African countries a favour. It was the White Man's Burden all over again, only this time there were no gunboats. Money does a better job.”<sup>109</sup>

In addition, Mahathir saw a double-standard in the manner globalisation was being pursued by the North, which he considered to be unjust. While the South was pressured into opening their economies to capital, goods and services from the North, the North was increasingly protective of their territories and borders to the free flow of people from the South. Similarly, while the North preached liberal democratic values, they had resisted from making the United Nations, where the South held the majority, more democratic.<sup>110</sup>

### 5.3.3. The Way Forward for the South

Mahathir equated globalisation with colonialism because “it was the West's ideas, not ours, based on their philosophy of zero-sum game, and we don't play a part in conceiving it.”<sup>111</sup> However, Mahathir maintained that he was not entirely opposed to globalisation. Even Malaysia had benefited from some aspects of it.<sup>112</sup> However, he argued for

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<sup>108</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID in Swakopmund, Namibia, 18 July 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.69-70.

<sup>109</sup> Mahathir, ‘Governance, Smart Partnerships and Unfettered Globalisation’, speech at the 2<sup>nd</sup> SAID, Namibia, 18 July 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.72.

<sup>110</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation: Colonialism Revisited’, speech at the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Conference in Durban, South Africa, 2 September 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.64-5.

<sup>111</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007, London.

<sup>112</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation and its Impact on Developing Economies’, speech at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Economic Development Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 27 June 2001, in *Globalisation and the New Realities*, p.46.

globalisation to be more democratic, so that developing countries could voice their concerns and take part in shaping the emerging globalised norms. Mahathir lamented,

“It is not defensible for the rich to discuss amongst themselves in the marbled negotiating rooms in Geneva and then to present it as *fait accompli* to the developing world. We should make it absolutely clear: No liberalisation, no globalisation without representation.”<sup>113</sup>

Hence, Mahathir wanted recognition in the form of a voice and participatory role for the South to influence the emerging norms under globalisation. To him, globalisation should consider the South’s constraints and vulnerabilities, many of which were due to difficulties with nation-building following long periods of colonialism. In addition, Mahathir in his speeches at various international meetings called for the unity amongst the developing countries. He did this for example, at the Inaugural Plenary of the Sixth G-15 Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1996<sup>114</sup> and at Durban NAM Summit in 1998.<sup>115</sup> At the Fourth Langkawi International Dialogue in Malaysia, he was hopeful that the intellectual and moral arguments voiced by leaders of the countries of the South might resonate with some policy-makers and academics in the North. He hoped the academics and intelligentsia would join the South “in our new struggle to preserve our self-respect and our rights,”<sup>116</sup> like they did in ending colonialism. In short, an aspect of the recognition struggle encapsulated in Malaysia’s foreign policy concerning the South centred on claiming equal rights for the South, which Mahathir deemed essential for their self-respect.

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<sup>113</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation and its Impact on Developing Economies’, speech at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Economic Development Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 27 June 2001, in *Globalisation and the New Realities*, p.50.

<sup>114</sup> Mahathir, ‘South-South Cooperation’, speech at the Inaugural Plenary of the 6<sup>th</sup> G15 Summit on Behalf of Asian Members of the G15 in Harare, Zimbabwe, on 3 April 1996, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.176.

<sup>115</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation: Colonialism Revisited’, speech at the 12<sup>th</sup> NAM Conference in Durban, South Africa, 2 September 1998, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.66.

<sup>116</sup> Mahathir, ‘Globalisation and Smart Partnership’, speech at the 4<sup>th</sup> Langkawi International Dialogue (LID), in Langkawi, Malaysia, 25 July 1999, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.30.

Related to this goal, is Mahathir's support for the setting-up of the 'South Secretariat'. According to Mahathir, a 'Think South' policy must be developed among developing countries of the South. He said that the basic problem with the countries of the South was that they continued to look up to the North even though they were rich in population, culture, natural resources, and in other fields.<sup>117</sup> This clearly shows Mahathir's perception of the South's low self-confidence, which he attributed to their experiences of colonial rule.

Further, Mahathir argued that countries of the South should forge new trade and investment linkages as a way to extricate themselves from traditional dependencies on the North. Hence, Mahathir promoted the concept of Smart Partnerships. From the first LID in 1995 onwards, Mahathir began to promote this concept as the core of Malaysia's South - South co-operation policy. With reference to Malaysia's economic co-operation with Japan, Mahathir explained that trade between nations should not be viewed as a zero-sum game. Japanese investments had contributed to Malaysia's prosperity and a prosperous Malaysia had become a bigger market for Japanese goods and services. Their co-operation thus was of a win-win nature. Malaysia had continued to practise this win-win formula according to 'prosper thy neighbour' policy with the less developed economies of Indochinese countries of Southeast Asia and it had proven to be effective.<sup>118</sup> He reiterated the benefits of 'Smart Partnerships' at the first SAID in Botswana in May 1997, and said that it was an important mechanism for the South to present a united front, and to "strengthen each other". Because the South were not

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<sup>117</sup> *Asean Digest, no.12, November-December 1992, p.11*, quoted in Faiz, *Malaysia and South - South Co-operation*, p.96.

<sup>118</sup> Mahathir, 'Smart Partnerships for Global Co-operative Security', speech at the Inaugural International Dialogue on Smart Partnerships in Langkawi, Malaysia, on 26 July 1995, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, p.202.

without assets and experience, “[b]y exchanging our experiences in economic management, we can learn to do what is right and avoid the mistakes that any one of us may have made.”<sup>119</sup>

#### **5.4. THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION IN MAHATHIR’S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE SOUTH**

Therefore, some forms of struggle for recognition can clearly be detected in Mahathir’s foreign policy towards the South. The policy was greatly influenced by Mahathir’s perception of inequality pervading in North–South relationship. This unequal relationship, Mahathir believed, was a continuation of the imperialist era. As we have seen in Chapter Three, colonialism was pivotal in prompting the struggles for recognition in Mahathir’s belief system, which had Malay nationalism at its core. The end of the Cold War had spurred his fear of colonialism’s revival, when ideas would be defined and imposed unilaterally.<sup>120</sup>

Honneth’s three modes of ‘practical relations-to-self’ provides a useful framework for us to detect elements of recognition struggles. In this context, recognition struggles in Mahathir’s foreign policy towards the South can be studied according to the modes of self-confidence, self respect and self esteem, as elaborated in Chapter 2.

Firstly, in terms of self-confidence, according to Mahathir’s belief system, colonialism was partly responsible for the low self-confidence of the Malays. Mahathir claimed that they continued to look up to their European former colonial masters even

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<sup>119</sup> Mahathir, ‘Smart Partnerships’, speech at the 1<sup>st</sup> Southern Africa International Dialogue (SAID), Kasane, Botswana, 5 May 1997, in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government*, pp.169-170.

after independence. Mahathir identified strongly the plight of the Malays with those of other nations of the South that had also experienced colonialism. Mahathir made it a point to speak up and stand up for the interests of the developing South, in opposition to the former colonial North partly to illustrate on the world stage a confident image of a Malay leader and thereby instilling national confidence back home. His rhetoric was always strongly critical. This could also be seen as intentional. His ability to express scathing criticisms of the North was to Mahathir, a proof of Malaysia's true independence. According to Mahathir, the reason why Malaysia could voice its views unhindered was because its hands were not tied. Unlike most developing countries, Malaysia was not dependent on the North for aid and trade.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, Malaysia was also able to showcase its success. Both rationales were motivated by the desire to boost the confidence of the Malaysian nation. Hng says that one of Mahathir's ten golden rules for managing a multi-racial society was to produce results and showcase them. This is because, "success builds confidence and generates momentum." Bearing in mind Mahathir's articulation in *The Malay Dilemma* of the Malays' low self-confidence (as being partly due to their colonial mindset), his continued preoccupation with the issue of self-confidence proves that the Malays had remained Mahathir's focus throughout in this context of nation-building agenda.

Secondly, Honneth explained self respect in terms of equal rights. In this regard, the struggle for recognition relates to Mahathir's appeals for the South to be given its rightful voice in influencing international political and economic norms. Mahathir's motivation on the Antarctica policy for example, was based on his outrage by the fact that

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<sup>120</sup> Camroux, *'Looking East' and Inwards*, p.24.

<sup>121</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007, London.

decisions were taken exclusively by the North without consulting countries of the South. Mahathir saw this tendency of the North to exclude the countries of the South to be particularly acute with the advent of globalisation. Hence, Mahathir emphasised the necessity for international structures like the UN and WTO to be more democratic and fought for a bigger voice for the South within these organisations. Towards this end, Mahathir called for the unity of the South through their various multilateral frameworks so that their “moral voice” would be stronger and heard loud and clear.<sup>122</sup> To him, it was only by taking into account the concerns and needs of the countries of the South that justice in the international society could be achieved.

The third mode of practical relation to self according to Honneth is self esteem. To Mahathir, the uniqueness of Malaysia was its success story as a developing country. In this context, the struggle for recognition can be detected in Mahathir’s drive to make Malaysia a role model for other South countries. However, Mahathir believed that, “to be a model, you need to be successful. You need to develop first.”<sup>123</sup> To Mahathir, economic development was an important indicator of success. To be taken as a model by other developing countries meant a recognition of Malaysia’s method of development and nation building. The centrality of his recognition struggle for the Malays in the context of the NEP/NDP agenda had thus been crucial. Esteem as a form of recognition struggle was evident in Malaysia’s relationship with the African countries, especially in the context of Smart Partnerships, which was about sharing experiences and resources. Mahathir wanted Malaysia to be recognised as special to other multi-ethnic developing countries because of the success of the NEP/NDP in overcoming inter-ethnic

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<sup>122</sup> ‘PM: United NAM Can have Big Say in WTO’, *New Straits Times*, 19 February 2003, quoted in Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2005, p.262.

<sup>123</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007, London.

divisions.<sup>124</sup> In the case of relations with South Africa for example, Mahathir promoted Malaysia as the perfect model of moulding a multi-ethnic nation, achieved through a programme that had empowered its previously economically disadvantaged ethnic majority. According to Camroux, Malaysian leaders were not only ‘flattered to find their advice eagerly sought by South Africa’s new leaders’, furthermore, the interest “strengthens the legitimacy within Malaysia of the NEP and NDP programs in favor of the *bumiputras*.<sup>125</sup>

## 5.5. CONCLUSION

Hence, while it is difficult to deny that the drive to acquire wealth and to prosper was significant, it does not entirely explain the motivation that underpinned Malaysia’s policy of South – South co-operation pursued during the Mahathir era. It has been shown that motivations related to struggles for recognition were also crucial. The significance of the struggle for recognition underpinning South-South co-operation can be inferred most evidently from the promotion of the Smart Partnerships concept. This concept was about the sharing of expertise, resources and experiences. It was not limited to trade and investments but also covered social and political development. Thus, more than just promoting trade and investment, Mahathir also promoted Malaysia as an example of how a newly independent country could successfully manage a precarious multi-racial nation to concentrate on economic development.

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<sup>124</sup> J.V. Morais, *Mahathir: A Profile in Courage*, Kuala Lumpur: Eastern University Press, 1982, pp.165-6.

<sup>125</sup> Camroux, ‘*Looking East*’ ... and *Inwards*, p.25.

Considering the lack of enthusiasm of some of Mahathir's own Cabinet colleagues<sup>126</sup> and the complaints voiced by some members of the Malaysian private sector, it is arguable that in fact, the quest for recognition was actually the more significant factor in driving Malaysia's policy towards the South under Mahathir. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Mahathir's 'South' policy initiatives is difficult to gauge. Undoubtedly, South-South co-operation has contributed immensely to the Malaysian economy. For example, Malaysia's total trade with NAM countries was RM 61 billion (about US\$ 23.46 billion) in 1992. In 2002, the figure had jumped to RM 194.7 billion (about US\$ 51.24 billion).<sup>127</sup> However, it had not been easy for Malaysia under Mahathir to realise its 'South' vision. Although Malaysia has been recognised as a leading country within the South groupings and Mahathir was considered one of their prominent leaders, the government encountered many challenges in realising this vision of Mahathir.<sup>128</sup> Firstly, Malaysia's struggles were not always recognised especially by other countries that also felt entitled to lead the South specifically due to their role in founding the group. Indonesia, India, Ghana and Yugoslavia were at the forefront of the movement when Malaysia under the Tunku was obliged to keep its distance by its association with the West. Secondly, Malaysia's ventures into Africa, the South Pacific and Latin America also were perceived with suspicions by certain countries that felt entitled to regional leadership.<sup>129</sup> In addition, due to the top-down process of implementation, practical co-operation was often hinged on the longevity of leaders'

<sup>126</sup> See Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.311.

<sup>127</sup> 'PM: United NAM Can Have a Big Say in WTO', *New Straits Times*, 19 February 2003; quoted in Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.262. Average rate of exchange in 1992 was RM2.6 =US\$1 and in 2002, RM3.8 = US\$1.

<sup>128</sup> Camroux for example highlighted a leadership competition between Mahathir and Indonesia's Suharto. Camroux, 'Looking East'... and Inwards, p.24.

political careers, especially in the African and South Pacific countries. Moreover, there were problems of different work cultures and ethics. At the UNDP – MASSCORP Dialogue held on 28 July 2005, a number of representatives of Malaysian companies raised such problems with regard to their investments in Africa.<sup>130</sup> It was obvious that most companies were there mainly because of the encouragement and push from the Malaysian government, particularly by Mahathir himself.

To reiterate, the effectiveness of the policy is a question beyond the scope of this thesis insofar as it concerned with exploring the motivations underpinning foreign policy-making rather than the implementation process. As far as motivation for South-South co-operation goes, Mahathir was indeed crucial in initiating the policy and “without his influence and push” South-South co-operation “would not have been possible.”<sup>131</sup> The chapter has also illustrated that economic factors were undeniably important in providing the motivation to pursue South – South co-operation. However, economic imperatives alone cannot provide a full picture behind Malaysia’s foreign policy focus on the South under Mahathir. Recognition motives have proven to be equally, if not more important. In this context, an understanding of Mahathir’s belief system, especially his conceptions of justice in the relations between the countries of the developed North and developing South has helped to make sense of recognition struggles as motivations. Colonialism, which had generated a strong sense of Malay nationalism in Mahathir was the source of his quest for international recognition for Malaysia. As has

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<sup>129</sup> This can be said to be the case in relation to Australia’s response to Malaysia’s involvement in the economies of South Pacific island states under the banner of South-South co-operation, which is not discussed in this thesis. See Faiz, *Malaysia and South – South Co-operation*, pp.262-9.

<sup>130</sup> The Dialogue was organised by MASSCORP and was attended by author. Among Malaysian companies that were represented were Lam Soon, Pharma Niaga, Business Focus and Bina Puri. Malaysian government investment agency MIDA also attended, together with a representative of government owned Bank Industri.

<sup>131</sup> Rajendran, *Mahathir Mohamad; Prime Minister of Malaysia*, p.154.

been highlighted in Chapter Three and widely observed, “The intellectual and psychological impact of colonialism had a strong influence on his worldview, and he was a natural sympathiser of the independence movement which swept through much of Asia and Africa in the 1940s and 1950s.”<sup>132</sup> The fact that recognition of Malaysia’s independent status was contested by this group of countries during Indonesia’s ‘*Konfrontasi*’ had definitely intensified within Mahathir the drive to seek recognition. Also, this chapter has illustrated how these recognition factors can be detected in terms of Honneth’s theory of the struggle for recognition, that is, by employing his modes of practical relation to self. Thus, recognition factors in Mahathir’s foreign policy concerning the South can be understood in terms of the struggle to attribute self-confidence, self respect and self esteem to the Malays, whose identity had become the foundation for the Malaysian national identity.

To conclude, the ‘South’ dimension was important in Mahathir’s foreign policy because it is the bigger identity reference group under which other important Malaysian identities are subsumed, namely ‘Islam’ and the ‘East’. It will be seen in the following chapters that Malaysia under Mahathir had employed the same methods of co-operation, particularly South-South co-operation and the MTCP, in its relations with Islamic and East Asian countries. This is due to most Islamic and East Asian countries were also developing countries that faced similar ‘South’ problems highlighted in this chapter, particularly in regard to economic development and liberal democracy.

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<sup>132</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *CEO Malaysia: Strategy in Nation-Building*; Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1998, p.62.

## CHAPTER 6 MAHATHIR, MALAYSIA AND THE ISLAMIC UMMAH

There was a prominent Islamic focus in Malaysia's foreign policy during Mahathir's era.<sup>1</sup>

As Nair observes, the Mahathir Administration "promoted an Islamic image of the country over and beyond any of its predecessors."<sup>2</sup> An illustration of the increased priority given to Islamic issues in foreign policy is Mahathir's founding of IKIM in 1992.

One of IKIM's briefs was "the study of Islamic principles in relation to foreign relations issues."<sup>3</sup> The central argument of this chapter is that recognition motives also underpinned this greater Islamic focus. As in the previous chapter on the South, it will be illustrated that other motives, namely security (in this case, the survival of UMNO regime) and economic motives also played a role. However, it will be argued here that a complete understanding of the prominent Islamic focus in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir will reveal that the quest for recognition was the more influential motivation.

In discussing the Islamic focus in Malaysia's foreign policy, this chapter will analyse the relevant foreign policy initiatives, statements and stances that concerned the

<sup>1</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p.135.

<sup>2</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p.269.

<sup>3</sup> David Camroux, 'Looking East' ... And Inwards: Internal Factors in Malaysian Foreign Relations During the Mahathir Era, 1981-1994, Australia-Asia Paper No.72, Centre for Study of Australia-Asia Relations, Griffith University, Australia, 1994, p.12

Islamic, or Muslim community – the *ummah*.<sup>4</sup> In terms of research methodology, this is an important point. Although foreign policy is the state's prerogative, the target of foreign policy may not necessarily be other states, although issues relating to them might be raised and discussed within the framework of the community of states. This is particularly true with regard to issues concerning the Muslim *ummah*, which transcend political boundaries of states. In the case of the Muslim communities of Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina, both were not yet recognised as states at the stage when they began to become subjects of Malaysia's foreign policy.

In examining recognition factors as motivations underpinning the Islamic focus in Mahathir's foreign policy, this chapter will firstly highlight the importance of Islam in Malay and Malaysian identity. This will provide us with the understanding of the significance of the Islamic link between Malaysia and the global Islamic community – the *ummah*. In this regard, the chapter will revisit the discussion on the centrality of Islam for Malay identity and nationalist struggle, and how this impacted Mahathir's understanding of the situation of the Malays and the *ummah* in general. This has been analysed at length in Chapter Three. However, it will be highlighted again here how Mahathir held similar views on the fate of the Muslim Malays in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Malaysian society as he did in relation to the fate of the Muslim *ummah* in the global community. Mahathir's understanding of the role of Islam in determining the well-being and status of the *ummah* is vital. Secondly, this chapter will illustrate

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<sup>4</sup> The *ummah* refers to “[t]he community comprising all adherents of the Islamic religion. The *ummah* is a supra-national notion and extends beyond national boundaries and political borders to encompass all Muslims, regardless of political affiliation.” Hng Hung Yong, *CEO Malaysia: Strategy in Nation-Building*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1998, p.223. On the other hand, Kepel defines *ummah* as simply, “the Muslim world.” See Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, translated by Pascale Ghazaleh, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Belknap Harvard, 2004, p.36.

Malaysia's foreign policy initiatives both in multilateral and bilateral frameworks, towards the Islamic *ummah* in order to highlight the growing emphasis on Islam and the *ummah* in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. As regards multilateral contexts, the OIC will be the main focus. This chapter will then proceed to analyse specific issues concerning the Muslim *ummah* that induced strong feelings of moral indignation within Mahathir, and thus, became important preoccupations of his government. The important issues to be discussed here are Palestine and Bosnia Herzegovina. Thirdly, the chapter will expound Mahathir's views on terrorism, which will illuminate further Mahathir's thinking on the plight of the *ummah* and reveal the moral undertone of his discourse. Fourthly, Mahathir's understanding of the situation of the Muslim *ummah* and his arguments on how best to deal with the related problems are contextualised in terms of the moral grammar embedded in his discourse. The moral grammar, which stemmed from Mahathir's conceptions of justice, forms the basis of his struggles for recognition as regards the Islamic *ummah*. Further, it will be illustrated that notions of self-respect and self-esteem were key in driving Mahathir to heighten the focus on Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy.

#### **6.1. MAHATHIR, THE MALAYS, MALAYSIA AND THE UMMAH: THE TIES THAT ISLAM BINDS**

In charting Mahathir's belief system and conceptions of justice, Chapter Three has illustrated how Mahathir from very early on in his political awareness appreciated the central role Islam played in influencing Malay values and character. The centrality of Islam in Malay identity makes Islam the dominant factor in the Malay political

discourse.<sup>5</sup> Islamic issues are critical to the discourse of Malay politics.<sup>6</sup> More than any of his predecessors, Mahathir dealt directly with the issue of Islam in articulating his political philosophy concerning the Malays, as documented in his writings, most notably *The Malay Dilemma* and *The Challenge*. Islam continued to be a defining factor in his Malay and Malaysian nationalism after he assumed the country's premiership. As Martinez observed, "Mahathir was a very articulate and dominant prime minister, never more so than in expressing his views on Islam and trying to effect them. It is therefore imperative to examine his vision of Islam for his people – the *ummah* at home and abroad."<sup>7</sup>

The centrality of Islam for the Malaysian national identity was emphasised by Mahathir in January 1981, a few months before he assumed the premiership, when he represented Malaysia at the OIC Summit Conference in Taif, Saudi Arabia. There he declared that, "Despite the fact that about half the population of Malaysia is not Muslim, Malaysia and all its citizens accept Islam as the religion of the country. Working with all the Muslims wherever they are is natural to us. So we have come to this Conference to be with and a part of the Muslim world."<sup>8</sup> After winning a land-slide victory in the first general elections of his administration in 1982, he insisted on what he believed, that Islam was "a pragmatic and flexible religion" which in fact formed "the basis of our every action." In his first address to the UMNO General Assembly as President in July of the same year, Mahathir declared that Malaysia, as an Islamic nation, was inseparable

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<sup>5</sup> See Hussin Matalib, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malay Politics*, Singapore, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> See Kamarulnizam Abdullah, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, Bangi: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2002, especially pp.29-79.

<sup>7</sup> Patricia Martinez, 'Perhaps He Deserved Better: The Disjuncture Between Vision and Reality in Mahathir's Islam' in Bridget Welsh (ed) *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, Washington D.C.: The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), 2004, p.28.

from the rest of the Islamic world.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Mahathir sought to identify Malaysia as a member of the community of Islamic nations from the beginning of his premiership.

The significance of Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy can be explained in two ways. Firstly, in terms of the contest for legitimacy between UMNO and PAS, at the heart of which were their different visions of the Malaysian state and the role of Islam in it.<sup>10</sup> From this perspective, Mahathir's actions might be interpreted as cunning political manoeuvring that served to outwit PAS. For example, when the PAS government in Trengganu proposed to implement *hudud*,<sup>11</sup> Mahathir remarked that his "political legitimacy" was already strong by virtue of the Islamisation process that his government had undertaken domestically and the recognition thereof by other Muslim countries.<sup>12</sup> In other words, Mahathir's move to co-opt Islam can be interpreted as a way to marginalise PAS in Malay politics by adopting "an Islamic vocabulary for his own ends."<sup>13</sup>

Many authors have concentrated on this regime security motivation in explaining Malaysia's increasing identification with the Islamic *ummah*. More specifically, they believe that the UMNO – PAS rivalry was the crucial factor and that Mahathir was primarily motivated to maintain the survival of the UMNO regime in domestic politics. For example, Nair in her book *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy* concludes that the "overriding Malaysian concern... is with security, not so much in

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<sup>8</sup> Murugesu Pathmanaban and David Lazarus, *Winds of Change: The Mahathir Impact on Malaysia's Foreign Policy*, Kuala Lumpur: Eastview, 1984, p.66.

<sup>9</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.92.

<sup>10</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.270.

<sup>11</sup> An area of Islamic *Shariah* law that describes fixed punishments for certain crimes considered 'claims of God' for example drinking alcohol, theft, highway robbery, illegal sexual intercourse and false accusation of illegal sexual intercourse. See K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Sivamurugan Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan, 2005, p.205.

<sup>13</sup> Amrita Malhi, 'The PAS - BN Conflict in the 1990s: Islamism and Modernity', in *Malaysia: Islam, Society and Politics*, Virginia Hooker and Norani Othman (eds), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2003, p.245.

physical terms but by means of reducing the vulnerabilities of its political structures.”<sup>14</sup>

Camroux echoes this point and argues that the Mahathir government “felt obliged” to take the initiative for Islamisation process in order to reduce the electoral appeal of PAS.<sup>15</sup> Milne and Mauzy similarly attribute the growing prominence of Islam in Malaysia’s foreign policy as “the consequence of the Islamic resurgence and of the reactions that it aroused in Mahathir.”<sup>16</sup> This position is shared by Liow who connects the Islamic resurgence in Malaysia to the rising challenge of PAS and therefore, “Mahathir’s foreign policy towards the Muslim states has been particularly important and effective tool in advancing his domestic interests in the sense that it legitimised his government as one which championed the cause of the *ummah*.”<sup>17</sup> In addition, Yusof argues that the primary objective of Malaysia’s Islamic policy is “the containment or defusion of the fundamentalist-extremist threats within” and “maintaining the legitimacy of UMNO in the eyes of the Malay-Muslim populace.”<sup>18</sup> Dhillon also explains the rising foreign policy focus in Islam in the light of the domestic challenge of PAS, which made “spectacular political inroads” during Mahathir’s time,<sup>19</sup> which is also a view shared by Rajmah.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p.269.

<sup>15</sup> Camroux, ‘*Looking East’ ... and Inwards*, p.20.

<sup>16</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, London and New York: Routledge, 1999, p.135.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Liow, ‘Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies: Determinants of Malaysia’s Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Administration’, in *Mahathir’s Administration: Performance and Crisis in Governance*, Ho Khai Leong and James Chin (eds.), Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 2001, p.136.

<sup>18</sup> Mohd Yusof Ahmad, *Continuity and Change in Malaysia’s Foreign Policy, 1981-1986*, a dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 1990, p.271.

<sup>19</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysia’s Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981-2003*, a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Boston University, 1995, p.350.

<sup>20</sup> Rajmah opines that the increasing Islamisation of foreign policy under Mahathir was conducted in the hope “to win over the support of Islamic fundamentalists” and thus, “counteract the political influence of PAS...” Rajmah Hussain, *Malaysia at the United Nations: A Study of Foreign Policy Priorities, 1957-1987*, a thesis submitted to the University of London in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations, London School of Economics, July 1988, p.79.

On the other hand, the significance attached to Islam can also be understood in terms of Mahathir's own personal mission underpinned by his particular understanding of the religion and the role that Malaysia could and should play in the global community of Muslims. In this regard, Mahathir's emphasis on Islam has to be seen as more than mere political strategy in relation to PAS, namely as a culmination of deeper personal beliefs and the exercise of responsibility as a leader of a Muslim country. After all, for Mahathir Islam was at the core of Malay identity, and as such he believed that he had specific obligations as a leader of a subset of the Muslim *ummah* as enshrined in the Islamic doctrines. Because all Malays are Muslims, Malay leaders are also bestowed with the responsibility of protecting their faith. "So, while Mahathir is first and foremost a political leader, he also has a presumptive role as a leader of the Islamic faith."<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that although Islam has always been pivotal in Malay political discourse, there is little evidence that any of Mahathir's predecessors felt the need to portray themselves as Islamists. In contrast, Mahathir as the prime minister can be considered as a Muslim modernist who transformed UMNO into a "religion-nationalist" party.<sup>22</sup> This actually underscores that Mahathir's actions stemmed from his particular belief system whereby Islam is the defining characteristic of Malayness. Chapter Three has highlighted Mahathir's criticisms of the lifestyles of the Tunku and his cabinet ministers as Western and un-Islamic. To Mahathir, Malay nationalism was Muslim nationalism. At the 40<sup>th</sup> UMNO General Assembly in September 1997, Mahathir made this link between the Malay race and Islam explicit and said that "a true nationalist is one who works hard to develop his race" in order to "redeem the honour" of his "race

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<sup>21</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *CEO Malaysia: Strategy in nation-Building*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 1998, p.76.

<sup>22</sup> Kamarulnizam, *The Politics of Islam in Contemporary Malaysia*, pp.121-2.

and religion.”<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in this context, Mahathir’s actions pertaining to Islam in foreign policy have to be understood in terms of his belief system concerning Islam and the role that the religion plays in influencing the worldview and consequently, the well-being of the *ummah*, which includes the Malays.

While Malaysia’s Muslim identity is “self-evident”,<sup>24</sup> Mahathir was determined to project Malaysia as representing a particular form of Islam.<sup>25</sup> This particular form of Islam that he promoted was rooted in his own thinking about the religion and its role in Malay society in particular, and the wider Muslim *ummah* more generally. Mahathir’s particular understanding underpinned a correlation between his agenda for the Malays in the Malaysian society and the Muslim *ummah* in general. The following section will illustrate the promotion of this particular brand of Islam in the international context, in the tangible form of Malaysia’s foreign policy initiatives.

## **6.2. MALAYSIA’S FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC UMMAH UNDER MAHATHIR**

As far as foreign policy is concerned, a heightened Islamic focus by Malaysia under Mahathir could be observed in both the multilateral and bilateral frameworks. In the multilateral framework, the OIC became the main body in which issues concerning the Muslim *ummah* were being pursued.

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<sup>23</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the 40<sup>th</sup> UMNO General Assembly, Kuala Lumpur, 5 September 1997, in Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, pp.145-50.

<sup>24</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *5 Men & 5 Ideas: Building National Identity*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2004, p.139.

<sup>25</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.91.

### 6.2.1. Multilateral Framework: The OIC

The OIC, which was established in 1969, is the most important organisation for Islamic countries. Its founding was triggered by an arson attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque in Palestine.<sup>26</sup> Thus, OIC has always been a political organisation with a primary concern in the fate of the Palestinians. Malaysia considers its membership in the OIC as significant because it signifies the recognition of its Islamic nation status by the community of Muslim countries.<sup>27</sup> To illustrate Malaysia's identification with the Islamic countries, at the UN, Malaysia's positions on issues concerning the *ummah* are always guided by the OIC.<sup>28</sup> With regard to Palestine, Malaysia conforms to the OIC's position, which is normally in line with the position of the Arab League.<sup>29</sup> Under Mahathir, Malaysia played a prominent role in the OIC. In the early 1980s, Malaysia was appointed to the International Islamic Peace Committee, which was set up by the OIC to help resolve another political issue that preoccupied the OIC at the time, the Iran-Iraq conflict.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Malaysia was pivotal in facilitating the re-admission of Egypt into the OIC in 1986. Egypt had been expelled after it signed the Camp David Accords with Israel in 1978.<sup>31</sup> Malaysia's high profile role in the OIC culminated in Malaysia assuming the chairmanship of the OIC at the beginning of October 2003, just before Mahathir himself went into retirement.

<sup>26</sup> The OIC was set up in Rabat, Morocco on September 25 1969 in reaction to an arson attack against the Al-Aqsa mosque on August 21, 1969. See Abdullah Al Ahsan, *OIC: The Organisation of the Islamic Conference: An Introduction to an Islamic Political Institution*, Herndon, Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Rajmah, 1988, p.206 in Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.93

<sup>28</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.93.

<sup>29</sup> Author interview with Ambassador Hasmy Agam, former Malaysian Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.93. See also Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, Taiping: Firma, p.148.

<sup>31</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.93.

Before chairing the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Putrajaya in October 2003, Malaysia under Mahathir was already active in hosting a number of OIC meetings. These included the 27<sup>th</sup> OIC Foreign Ministers Conference (ICFM) on 27-30 June 2000, the Seminar on the Impacts of Globalisation on OIC Countries on 11-13 June 2001, the 2<sup>nd</sup> OIC Tourism Ministers Conference on 12-13 October 2002 and the Special OIC Foreign Ministers Conference (ICFM) on Terrorism on 1-4 April 2002. Malaysia was also member of the following OIC committees; the Committee on Commerce and Economic Co-operation (COMCEC); the Committee on Science and Technical Co-operation (COMSTECH); the Committee on Information and Arts Co-operation (COMIAC); the Committee of Six on Palestine; OIC Contact Group on Sierra Leone; Eight Member Committee on the Southern Philippines; OIC Contact Group on Somalia and the Committee for Solidarity with the People of African Sahel. In terms of financial support, Malaysia has been contributing about US\$ 396,000 annually towards the upkeep of the OIC Secretariat. In addition, other OIC related bodies that enjoyed Malaysia's contributions included the Islamic Fiqh Academy (based in Saudi Arabia, around US\$ 57,000), the Statistics, Economics and Social Research Training Centre for Islamic Countries (based in Turkey, around US\$ 70,000), the Islamic University of Technology (in Bangladesh, US\$ 77,000), the Islamic Cultural Centre (in Turkey, US\$ 78,000) and the OIC Centre for Trade Development (ICDT, based in Morocco, US\$ 41,000). In total, Malaysia contributed around US\$ 719,000 annually to the OIC and its related bodies.<sup>32</sup> All these illustrations prove Malaysia's commitments

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<sup>32</sup> Author interview with Agus Salim Yusof, Principal Assistant Secretary (OIC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Putrajaya, 5 June 2007.

towards the causes pursued by the OIC and its related bodies under the Mahathir's leadership.

In terms of policy substance, there were similarities in Malaysia's approach towards the OIC countries and its approach towards the countries of the South. This is because all OIC members are formerly colonised Third World countries, and therefore face similar problems to those encountered by the global South. Hence, Mahathir also promoted the South agenda within the OIC framework. In this regard, Malaysia played a pivotal role in co-ordinating positions of OIC countries with those of the NAM at the UN.<sup>33</sup> For example, Malaysia managed to include Antarctica on the OIC agenda.<sup>34</sup> Malaysia also raised the issues of Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina at NAM summits. At the 13<sup>th</sup> NAM Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Declarations on Iraq and the Palestine were adopted. Malaysia's initiatives to increase co-ordination between Islamic and South organisations were not limited to political issues. Under Mahathir, Malaysia also actively promoted economic and technical collaboration under the South-South co-operation banner within the OIC.

In fact, under Mahathir, Malaysia took a pro-active role in championing economic and trade co-operation among OIC members. As one observer noted, "[n]o one has been as vociferous and passionate about the desire of increased OIC economic interaction than the former prime minister of the most progressive OIC members Malaysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad."<sup>35</sup> During his first attendance of the OIC Summit Conference in Taif, Saudi Arabia in January 1981, Mahathir underlined the importance of

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<sup>33</sup> Author interview with Ambassador Hasmy Agam former Malaysian Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007. See also Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.9.

<sup>34</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.95.

<sup>35</sup> Rafiuddin Shikoh, *Is Intra-OIC Trade Finally Taking Off?*, 15 April 2005, <http://www.dinarstandard.com.current/intraoic041505.htm>, accessed on 10 August 2007.

economic co-operation, as much as Islamic unity, to be achieved through the OIC. This was because, 'Muslims must strive to be self-dependent to the highest possible level. Then and then only can we protect and promote the interest of the *ummah* and of Islam.'<sup>36</sup> The dire economic condition of most OIC countries was palpable by the fact that the gross domestic product (GDP) of all OIC countries accounted for only US\$ 1,461 billion, or 4.7 percent of total world GDP.<sup>37</sup> In addition, 23 OIC members were listed as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and hugely in debt to the World Bank. The potential for trade expansion was huge, as intra-OIC trade amounted to only about US\$ 800 billion, which was about seven percent of global trade as a whole,<sup>38</sup> and 12 percent of members' total global trade.<sup>39</sup>

One of the most significant proposals by Mahathir towards enhancing OIC's economic co-operation was the introduction of the Islamic gold Dinar as the currency for trade among Muslim countries. Mahathir advocated the idea in the aftermath of Malaysia's experience during the 1997 Asian financial crisis. At the 20<sup>th</sup> Al Baraka Symposium for Islamic Economies held in Kuala Lumpur on 25 June 2001, Mahathir emphasised the need for Muslim countries to create their own single currency. He foresaw that not only could the currency - the Islamic Dinar, make Islamic economies less reliant on US dollars, its effective use could also lead to an Islamic trading bloc, which would be "a powerful voice in international trading regimes and the shaping of the

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<sup>36</sup> Pathmanaban and Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.65.

<sup>37</sup> 2001 figure provided by Agus Salim Yusof, Principal Assistant Secretary (OIC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Putrajaya, June 2007.

<sup>38</sup> 'Muslims Urge Islamic Free Trade', *BBC News*, 3 October 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/r-/1/hi/business/4303992.stm> (accessed on 6 October 2005).

<sup>39</sup> 2002 figure. See Rafiuddin Shikoh, *Is Intra-OIC Trade Finally Taking Off?*, 15 April 2005, <http://www.dinarstandard.com.current/intraoic041505.htm>, accessed on 10 August 2007.

new financial architecture.<sup>40</sup> The Dinar would be tied to the price of gold and he believed that this would make it more stable compared to the volatile and overly-traded American dollars, which had been traditionally used to determine the rate of exchange between currencies in international trade. To promote this idea, Mahathir conducted talks bilaterally with several Islamic countries, including Bahrain, Libya, Morocco and Iran in 2002.<sup>41</sup>

At the international seminar on ‘Gold Dinar in Multilateral Trade’ organised by IKIM in Kuala Lumpur on 23 October 2002, in his keynote address, Mahathir highlighted what he perceived as the humiliation and the oppression of the Muslims as could be observed in Palestine, and the increasing discrimination suffered by Muslims since 11 September 2001, due to distorted views on Islam and the Muslims. He reiterated the importance that Muslims increase their capacities in terms of wealth and technology. He believed that the adoption of the gold Dinar would contribute towards this goal because it would help Muslim countries to protect themselves from the volatility of the exchange rate based on the US dollars. According to Mahathir, the US dollar, like any other currency, was a paper currency with no intrinsic value and was susceptible towards manipulative and speculative activities, as experienced by the Malaysian Ringgit, Thai Baht and other Asian currencies during the financial crisis of 1997.<sup>42</sup> Mahathir also raised the proposal of using gold Dinar in trade between Islamic countries at various other occasions, for example in his speech at the official opening of the International

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<sup>40</sup> Speech at the 20<sup>th</sup> Al Baraka Symposium for Islamic Economies, the Sheraton Imperial Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, 25 June 2001, [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 23 April 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Khaled Hanafi, *Islamic Gold Dinar Will Minimize Dependency on U.S. Dollar*; <http://www.islamonline.net/english/news/2003-01/08/article08.shtml>, accessed on 5 August 2007. However, according to sources from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, the proposal did not garner much support from these countries.

<sup>42</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, keynote address at The Gold Dinar in Multilateral Trade Seminar, Kuala Lumpur, 23 October 2002, [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 10 August 2007.

Islamic Capital Market Conference and the Launching of the International Islamic Capital Market at the Malaysian Securities Commission in Kuala Lumpur on 26 March 2002.<sup>43</sup> In addition, an International Convention on Gold Dinar was held in Malaysia on 1 July 2003, where Mahathir declared Malaysia's offer to set up a secretariat to co-ordinate the necessary follow-up activities.<sup>44</sup>

Malaysia's initiatives towards enhancing OIC economic co-operation further increased during its chairmanship of the OIC in 2003-2006. During its chairmanship, Malaysia launched the programme to eliminate poverty through capacity building to stimulate growth in poorer member countries. Towards this end the Islamic Development Bank, the investment arm of the OIC was tasked to draw up IDB's Vision 2020 (or '1440 Hijrah Vision – according to the Islamic calendar). Although Mahathir retired soon after Malaysia assumed the chairmanship of OIC in October 2003, the agenda for Malaysia's chairmanship of the OIC was consistent with Mahathir's aspirations for the grouping. Moreover, Mahathir himself was elected Chairman of IDB Vision 2020 (1440H) Commission. The Commission was tasked to formulate the vision that would guide the group to embark upon strategic initiatives and to bring prosperity and development to the Muslim world.<sup>45</sup> It is modelled after Malaysia's own Vision 2020, which Mahathir had a vital role in conceptualising. Again, it is worth noting that this new economic and development agenda within the OIC framework was pursued by Malaysia, along with its advocacy of the original *raison d'etre* of the Organisation, which was the support for the

<sup>43</sup> See speech by Mahathir Mohamad at the official opening of The International Islamic Capital Market Conference and the launching of The International Islamic Capital Market Week at the Securities Commission, Kuala Lumpur, 26 March 2002, at [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 10 August 2007.

<sup>44</sup> See speech by Mahathir Mohamad at The Gold Dinar Convention, Kuala Lumpur, 1 July 2003, [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my); See also Sivamurugan Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*; p.255.

<sup>45</sup> *Mahathir Appointed as Chairman of IDB's Vision 2020 Commission*, 23 June 2005, [www.bernama.com](http://www.bernama.com), accessed on 10 August 2007.

Palestinian cause. Malaysia, and specifically Mahathir remained vocal throughout, at every opportunity, in defending the rights of the Palestinian people.

### **6.2.2. Bilateral Initiatives towards Islamic Countries**

This thesis has noted Mahathir's preference for bilateral diplomacy because it allowed for greater "intimacy, understanding and results."<sup>46</sup> Further, Nair observed that Malaysia under Mahathir had at least initially exhibited greater vigour and ambition in its bilateral relations with Islamic countries of West Asia, compared to its overall efforts within the OIC.<sup>47</sup> This heightened emphasis in bilateral relations can be illustrated by the fact that Mahathir led a high level delegation including ministers and corporate figures to Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman as early as February 1982, barely months after assuming office and a few months before he led his party to a triumph in the General Election. Arguably, these visits were important in strengthening the Islamic credential of the new Mahathir Administration and the Malaysian media reported the praise and recognition bestowed by these countries to Malaysia for its contributions to Islam and the Islamic community.<sup>48</sup> Similar to the way he promoted South-South co-operation by visiting far flung South countries, visits to various Islamic countries were also high on

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<sup>46</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.95. Also noted in Rajmah, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.73.

<sup>47</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.95.

<sup>48</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.95. See also Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.251.

Mahathir's agenda.<sup>49</sup> During these visits, he consistently called for the solidarity of the Muslim *ummah* and their empowerment through the mastery of knowledge, technology and the economy. Beyond undertaking bilateral visits, 14 diplomatic missions were established in OIC member countries, nearly half of the 38 new Malaysian diplomatic missions set up around the world between 1981-2003.<sup>50</sup> As in the case of foreign policy towards the countries of the South, personal rapport between Mahathir and leaders of Islamic countries proved to be pivotal. For example, Mahathir enjoyed close personal friendships with the former Pakistani President Zia ul Haq,<sup>51</sup> the former President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Askar Akayev<sup>52</sup> and the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat.

Although Mahathir raised the need to realise greater 'South-South Islamic economic co-operation' within the OIC framework,<sup>53</sup> it is within the bilateral context that Malaysia's efforts towards this purpose were mostly undertaken. The rationale underpinning South-South co-operation with Islamic countries remained the sharing of Malaysia's experiences in development and economic progress. As with the countries of

<sup>49</sup> OIC member countries that Mahathir visited during his premiership included the following: Indonesia (August 1981); Bahrain, UAE, Oman (Feb. 1982); Bangladesh (March 1983); Turkey (May 1983); Pakistan (March 1984); Indonesia (March 1985); OIC Summit Conference, Jeddah (September 1985); Indonesia (October 1985); Indonesia (March 1991); Bangladesh and Pakistan (February 1993); Uzbekistan and Iran (March – April 1993); Brunei (August 1993); Indonesia (September 1994); Turkey, Jordan and Turkmenistan (September – October 1994); Morocco (December 1994); Bosnia (April 1996); Brunei (April-May 1996); Saudi Arabia (March 1997); Kyrgyz Republic (September 1997); OIC Summit Conference in Tehran, Iran (December 1997); Brunei (February 1998); UAE (March 1998); Egypt (May 1998); Sudan (May 1998); Jordan (February 1999); Bangladesh (D8 Summit) (February-March 1999); Indonesia (March 2000); Bosnia (October 2000); Brunei (October 2000); Qatar (OIC Summit Conference) (November 2000); Abu Dhabi (April 2001); Yemen (August 2001); Libya and Bahrain (April 2002); Algeria (August 2002); Brunei (October 2002); Saudi Arabia (October 2002); Beirut and Cairo (January 2003); Syria (August 2003). Source: Office of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Perdana Leadership Foundation, Kuala Lumpur.

<sup>50</sup> Bosnia (1996), Brunei (1982), Jordan (1995), Kazakhstan (1996), Oman (1983), Saudi Arabia (1985), Sudan (1999), United Arab Emirates (1983), Uzbekistan (1993), Yemen (1999), Algeria (2001), Syria (2002), and Bahrain (2003). In addition, a Malaysian embassy was also set up in Qatar in 2004, after Mahathir's retirement but the process had already started during his time. The total number does not include Consulate offices. Source: Inspectorate Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>51</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.97. See also Sivamurugan Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.250.  
<sup>52</sup> Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.254.

the South generally, the MTCP again became the most important tool towards this end. According to the EPU of the Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia has provided technical assistance to 55 OIC countries, that is, all but one – Chad, since the commencement of the MTCP in 1981. Up until 2004, 4860 foreign participants from OIC countries had benefited from short and long term programmes arranged under MTCP.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the Malaysian Government provided full-sponsorship to all participants from OIC countries under MTCP.

It can be concluded that Mahathir's emphasis on sharing Malaysia's experience with other Islamic countries stemmed from his belief that the problems of the Malays were similar to those faced by the whole of the Muslim *ummah*. Their low economic status was partly responsible for their hapless and disrespectful situations. Thus, Mahathir's message to the broader Islamic *ummah* was consistent with that which he sent out domestically.<sup>55</sup> He stressed the importance of acquiring knowledge and technology, and making economic progress. He reminded fellow Muslims of how Islam had brought progress to pagan '*jahiliyah*' Arabs, to the extent that Muslims achieved a great civilisation. By promoting Malaysia as an example, Mahathir also sought recognition for the success of the Malay Muslims for their ability to create a nation that is modern, progressive, with a successful economy and working democracy. As Nair explained Mahathir's thinking, "[s]o, in Malaysia, Islam works, and successfully too. It is an example that deserves the attention of other members of the *ummah*."<sup>56</sup> The success

<sup>53</sup> See for example, Mahathir's speech at the OIC Summit Conference in Taif, Saudi Arabia, on 27 January 1981 in Pathmanaban and Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.67.

<sup>54</sup> Notes on the Proposal of Assistance to be Offered for the Capacity Building in OIC Countries by the External Assistance Section of the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia, 7 December 2004. File Document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>55</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.135.

<sup>56</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *5 Men & 5 Ideas*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2004, p.142.

of the MTCP programme therefore can be seen as a form of validation of Mahathir's diagnosis of the problems facing the Muslim *ummah* and his prescriptions on how to overcome them. However, it is important to note that economic objectives were the tools that were employed to uplift the status of the *ummah* to a respectable position. The underlying motivation was therefore a quest for recognition in terms of respect and status. In the following section, it will be revealed more clearly why recognition struggles became important motivations underpinning the policies that have been illustrated above. It will be shown that recognition struggles were aroused due to Mahathir's strong sense of moral indignation relating to the deprived conditions of the global Muslim *ummah*.

### **6.3. PALESTINE AND BOSNIA: MAHATHIR'S MORAL INDIGNATION**

Mahathir raised the issues of Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina repeatedly in multilateral and bilateral meetings and conferences and his government also dealt with these communities directly even before they were officially recognised as nation-states. These two issues were very important to Mahathir's government and at one point became its preoccupations. To Mahathir these issues epitomised the kind of negative perceptions of Islam, as well as the oppression and injustices inflicted upon Muslims around the world. It can be argued that the moral indignation felt by Mahathir on the sufferings of the Palestinians and Bosnians even surpassed that which he felt relating to the economic misery experienced by the *ummah* more broadly.

### 6.3.1. Palestine

Although Malaysia was always a strong supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, Mahathir made Palestine a key issue of his administration.<sup>57</sup> This can be understood in terms of Mahathir's "track record of personal commitment to the Palestinian cause, underlined by his strong opposition to Zionism and his record in lobbying for nationalist movements and for a more independent Third World – oriented foreign policy."<sup>58</sup> In addition to his support for the Palestinians through the OIC, Mahathir also persistently highlighted their plights in other international fora that Malaysia was active in, namely the UN, NAM and ASEAN.<sup>59</sup>

Bilaterally, Malaysia under Mahathir had taken various bold measures to show its unequivocal support for Palestine. Most significantly, Mahathir announced that his administration would accord the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) diplomatic status in 1981, shortly after he assumed prime-ministership, making Malaysia the only country in Southeast Asia and the second in the world, after Pakistan, to do so at the time.<sup>60</sup> In 1989, the PLO Representative Office in Kuala Lumpur was upgraded and accorded full diplomatic status, equal to other diplomatic missions in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>61</sup> The nation considered this a daring move. Other countries were reluctant to do so even if they sympathised with the Palestinians "for fear of incurring the wrath of America."<sup>62</sup>

Mahathir's commitment to the Palestinian cause can be further illustrated by the close personal friendship he formed with the leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat.

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<sup>57</sup> Pathmanaban and Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.49.

<sup>58</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.206.

<sup>59</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.207.

<sup>60</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, pp.206-7. See also Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.143.

<sup>61</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.207.

<sup>62</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift*, p.143.

Arafat visited Malaysia three times – in July 1984, August 2000 and August 2001.<sup>63</sup>

Moreover, Arafat himself gave Mahathir and Malaysia his personal recognition by praising “the long history of excellent relations and friendship between Malaysian and Palestinian peoples” and stating that “compared with some Arab countries, Malaysia is even closer to us.”<sup>64</sup>

Malaysia also contributed a significant amount of aid to assist the Palestinian people. One example is its contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that worked with Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>65</sup> The Malaysian government also contributed RM 100,000 in 1982 towards the relief work at the Palestinian refugee camps after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.<sup>66</sup> Another form of aid was in the form of scholarships for Palestinian students at Malaysian universities and training centres.<sup>67</sup> In addition, Malaysia launched ‘*Tabung Rakyat Palestin*’ or the Special Fund for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Wisma Putra*) in 1988, to which Malaysians were encouraged to donate generously. In 1983, Malaysia spent about RM1.5 million in hosting the Asian Regional Conference of the UN on the Question of Palestine.<sup>68</sup> In his speech, Mahathir highlighted the central issue concerning Palestine, which was ‘an entire people being driven out of their homeland, humiliated and harassed’ and the ‘injustices and indignities’ that had been perpetrated on the Palestinians by the Israeli state.<sup>69</sup> Mahathir also expressed his regret that ‘certain quarters’ tried to undermine the ‘efforts in the cause for justice of the

<sup>63</sup> Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.291.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.206.

<sup>65</sup> Cited as US \$5000 in 1981. Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.207.

<sup>66</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.207.

<sup>67</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p. 207. See also Pandian, *Legasi Mahathir*, p.247.

<sup>68</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.207.

<sup>69</sup> Mahathir’s speech at the opening of the Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine, 3 May 1983 in Pathmanaban and Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.217.

Palestinian struggle'.<sup>70</sup> He berated the 'supporters of Israel' who claimed to champion human rights but clearly applied 'double standards', which exposed their hypocrisy.<sup>71</sup>

Malaysia's strong identification with the cause of the Palestinians strained its relations with its neighbour Singapore in 1986, due to the visit of Israeli President Chaim Herzog in November to the city-state. This is thus a clear example of how important the issue of Palestine had become in Malaysian politics. However, in this bilateral tiff with Singapore, Mahathir and the Malaysian government abided by the ASEAN policy of non-interference although faced with growing pressure from the media and the public to take drastic actions against Singapore. Nevertheless, for the Malaysian government, the Herzog visit portrayed "Singapore's insensitivity to its neighbours' interests and policy".<sup>72</sup>

Malaysia was always against Zionism.<sup>73</sup> However, Mahathir projected anti-Zionist inclinations more strongly than his predecessors. For example, Mahathir, on more than one occasion, expressed his belief that Malaysia could fall victim to a Zionist conspiracy.<sup>74</sup> According to Aziz, Mahathir believed that "certain quarters" had "no desire to see Islamic nations achieve respectable status" and that "the Zionists and their allies" were "uneasy" because "Malaysia's authority" was "on the increase amongst Islamic nations and the Third World."<sup>75</sup> In this sense, Malaysia's achievements and increased authority were portrayed as bearing a significant positive impact on the *ummah*

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<sup>70</sup> Mahathir's speech at the opening of the Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine, 3 May 1983 in Pathmanaban and Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.217.

<sup>71</sup> Mahathir's speech at the opening of the Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine, 3 May 1983 in Pathmanaban and Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.217.

<sup>72</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.229.

<sup>73</sup> "Malaysia was one of 73 countries that voted, in 1975, in favour of the controversial UN resolution that determined Zionism to be a form of racism and its exercise of a policy of racial discrimination." Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.223.

<sup>74</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.223.

<sup>75</sup> Aziz, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shifts*, p.142.

as a whole because they were deemed threatening to the Zionists who were widely viewed as the enemy by many Muslims. According to a Malaysian senior official, Mahathir's strong support for the Palestinians and his anti-Zionism were the most significant factors that contributed towards the deterioration of Malaysia – US bilateral relations during his premiership.<sup>76</sup>

### **6.3.2. Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Mahathir was the pivotal force behind Malaysia's high profile role in raising the plight of the Bosnians during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. According to a Wisma Putra senior official, policy decisions on Bosnia-Herzegovina were discussed and decided only by a small group of advisers, with Mahathir at the core.<sup>77</sup> Mahathir's crucial role was recognised by the former Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic when he included Mahathir as among the five statesmen who had aided Bosnia the most during the war.<sup>78</sup> Mahathir and Alija Izetbegovic formed a very close personal friendship through the course of the Bosnian struggle.<sup>79</sup>

Mahathir persistently raised the Bosnian issue at various occasions - in the multilateral fora, bilateral functions and public speaking engagements. From the early stages of the war in 1992, Malaysia was very active in pressuring the UN Security Council to mobilise an intervention. Malaysia utilised all international organs that it played influential roles in, including the OIC, NAM, and the Commonwealth to highlight

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Ambassador Sheikh Ghazzali Abdul Khalid, former Malaysian Ambassador in Washington D.C., 5 July 2007, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>77</sup> Non-attributable interview with a senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Kuala Lumpur, July 2007.

<sup>78</sup> The five statesmen or friends of Bosnia he distinguished were: US former president, Bill Clinton; Saudi royal house; Iranian leaders; Turkish former president Demirel and Malaysian former prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad. Hajrudin Somun, *Mahathir: The Secret of the Malaysian Success*, translated from Bosnian by Lejla Somun-Krupalija, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2003, p.189.

the plight of the Bosnians.<sup>80</sup> Mahathir also emphasised the issue in his bilateral meetings with various leaders, especially influential Western ones. For instance, at a dinner he hosted for the British Prime Minister John Major in September 1993, he appealed to Britain to reconsider the decision not to mount a military intervention to protect the Bosnians.<sup>81</sup>

Malaysia provided assistance in various forms to Bosnia. In December 1992, due to the deteriorating security condition, Malaysia decided to provide refuge to over 300 Bosnians in Malaysia.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, scholarships were awarded to Bosnian students to pursue their education at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>83</sup> The Bosnian Fund was set up by a major Malay daily with links to the government, *Utusan Malaysia*, which by 1994 was able to raise about RM3 million.<sup>84</sup> According to Somun, it is difficult to find exact figures in official documents relating to Malaysia's assistance to Bosnia but he estimated that it could amount to about US\$ 400 million.<sup>85</sup> Malaysia's commitment towards the Bosnian cause was further illustrated by its action to participate in the UN peacekeeping operation, which itself was proposed and promoted by Mahathir in various international fora.<sup>86</sup> In September 1993, about 1,500 Malaysian military personnel were despatched to join the UN Protection Force

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<sup>79</sup> Somun, *Mahathir: The Secret of the Malaysian Success*, 2003, p.189.

<sup>80</sup> Malaysia played a crucial role in lobbying for a NAM resolution against the recognition of Serbia and Montenegro after their unilateral declaration of independence and strongly support the UN General Assembly's decision in October 1992 to expel Yugoslavia. Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.253.

<sup>81</sup> Somun, *Mahathir: The Secret of the Malaysian Success*, p.186.

<sup>82</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.254.

<sup>83</sup> Somun, *Mahathir: The Secret of the Malaysian Success*, p.193

<sup>84</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, 254.

<sup>85</sup> Somun, *Mahathir: The Secret of the Malaysian Success*, p.191

<sup>86</sup> Camroux, 'Looking East' ... And Inwards, p.23.

(UNPROFOR).<sup>87</sup> Malaysia pledged to continue maintaining its troop in Bosnia for as long as it was ‘necessary’.<sup>88</sup>

To Mahathir, Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina epitomised the dire situation of the Muslim *ummah*. Mahathir was moved to act so prominently on these two issues because he was outraged at the haplessness of Muslim countries and their inability to defend the *ummah* and their faith. According to him, Muslims were “no longer the masters of themselves.”<sup>89</sup> Mahathir incessantly vented his frustration about the condition of the Muslim *ummah* at various fora. His offered vivid observations and consistent analysis on the situation of the *ummah*, especially in relation to the above-mentioned issues – Palestine and Bosnia. Mahathir perceived Muslim countries as being “weak”.<sup>90</sup> This is because they were “disunited”, “unstable”, suffered from “ignorance”, “backward”, “not developed”, “poor” or “in poverty”.<sup>91</sup> To Mahathir, “the most oppressed people in the world are Muslims.”<sup>92</sup> The tragedies in Bosnia and Palestine glaringly exposed the “injustices” suffered by Muslims “in a world dominated by big

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<sup>87</sup> Milne and Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir*, p.136. See also Camroux, ‘*Looking East’ ... And Inwards*, p.23 and Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.254

<sup>88</sup> Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, p.255.

<sup>89</sup> Speech at the opening of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on al-Quran in Kuala Lumpur, 2 February 1994, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah: Selected Speeches by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Vol.2*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2000, p.162.

<sup>90</sup> See for example Mahathir’s speeches at the regional conference on ‘Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Reformation and Challenges for Muslims in the Region’, in Kuala Lumpur on 22 August 1997, the symposium on ‘The Islamic World and Global Co-operation: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia on 25 April 1997, the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Coordination Committee of Joint Islamic Action in the Field of *Dakwah* in Kuala Lumpur on 12 January 1996 and at the opening of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the al-Quran in Kuala Lumpur, on 2 February 1994, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, p.78, pp.91-2, p.144 and p.162.

<sup>91</sup> See for example Mahathir’s speeches at the regional conference on ‘Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Reformation and Challenges for Muslims in Kuala Lumpur on 22 August 1997, the symposium on ‘The Islamic World and Global Co-operation: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia on 25 April 1997, the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Coordination Committee of Joint Islamic Action in the Field of *Dakwah* in Kuala Lumpur on 12 January 1996 and the opening of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the al-Quran in Kuala Lumpur on 2 February 1994, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, p.78, pp.91-2, p.144 and p.162.

<sup>92</sup> Mahathir, speech at the international seminar on ‘The Role of Islamic Civilisation in Fostering Inter-religious Understanding’ in Kuala Lumpur on 25 May 1999, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, p.19.

powers where none is Islamic".<sup>93</sup> Muslim countries were "hapless",<sup>94</sup> "powerless"<sup>95</sup> and "defenceless"<sup>96</sup> even when "their independence and their rights as members of the human race have been ignored and violated over and over again"<sup>97</sup> to the extent that, "whatever little respect and honour that they had is also gone."<sup>98</sup> Thus, Mahathir's strong moral indignation and outrage at the haplessness of the Muslims to come to the defence of their brother Muslims in Palestine and Bosnia are patently clear.

To Mahathir, the dire condition of the Muslim *ummah* was the consequence of the fact that no Muslim nation could be classified as a developed country and was powerful enough to defend the rights of the *ummah*.

"Today, there is not a single Muslim nation that can be classified as developed, although a number of them are very wealthy, endowed with natural resources. But almost all are lagging behind in modern knowledge, technical skills and, in many instances, effective government. In fact, a state of near-anarchy prevails in quite a number of countries. By no criteria can any of these countries be classified as developed. Poverty, ignorance and instability have become such common features in Muslim nations that it is assumed that these are natural consequences of following the teachings of Islam. It is not surprising that today the world associates Islam with backwardness. This angers many Muslims. They think that it is an unfair judgement. They are right, of course. It is unfair. It is not due to the teachings of Islam. But the fact remains that Muslim nations are poor, backward, weak, disunited and dependent on non-Muslims for all kinds of things, including their own security and the continued existence of Islam itself."<sup>99</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Mahathir, speech at the regional conference on 'Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Reformation and Challenges for Muslims in the Region', in Kuala Lumpur on 22 August 1997, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, pp.77-8.

<sup>94</sup> Mahathir, speech at the regional conference on 'Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Reformation and Challenges for Muslims in the Region', in Kuala Lumpur on 22 August 1997, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, p.80.

<sup>95</sup> See Mahathir's speech at the 8<sup>th</sup> Summit of the OIC Conference in Tehran, Iran, on 9 December 1997, and his keynote address at the symposium on "The Islamic World and Global Cooperation: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia on 25 April 1997, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, p.72 and p.99.

<sup>96</sup> See Mahathir's keynote address at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Oxford, on 16 April 1996, the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Coordination Committee of Joint Islamic Action in the Field of *Dakwah* in Kuala Lumpur, on 12 January 1996 and the opening of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the al-Quran in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 2 February 1994, in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah*, p.132, p.144 and p.162.

<sup>97</sup> Mahathir, speech at the international seminar on 'The Role of Islam In Fostering Inter-religious Understanding', in Kuala Lumpur on 25 May 1999 in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, p.19.

<sup>98</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the symposium on 'The Islamic World and Global Cooperation: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia on 25 April 1997, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, p.100.

<sup>99</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the symposium on 'The Islamic World and Global Cooperation: Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia on 25 April 1997, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, pp.91-2.

In other words, Mahathir linked the weakness of Muslim countries to their underdevelopment. Mahathir believed that there were a few fundamental factors that led to the Muslims' underdevelopment. The first was their less than stable governments. Muslim countries "have not yet found or developed a system of determining how our government should govern."<sup>100</sup> Some Muslim countries were monarchies, while others were theocracies and the rest, democratic, to varying degrees. Mahathir believed that, "Despite all the West's claims about the efficacy and fairness of democracy, it is still far from being a perfect system or even a good system for them or anyone."<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the most important factor in ensuring good government is not the system, but "the quality of the people who are entrusted with ruling the nation."<sup>102</sup> He believed quality leaders could be achieved if Muslim leaders return to the true teachings and interpretations of Islam. Good governance with quality leaders was thus seen as a prerequisite for a stable nation, which would be conducive for development and progress. Mahathir berated Muslim leaders who spurred fratricidal wars in order to realise their own personal ambitions, leaving their nations unstable and governments impotent. He observed that these were the common reasons that made "Muslim nations remain largely underdeveloped and the Muslim *ummah* poor, unskilled, uneducated and incapable of contributing positively towards the well being of Muslims, their faith and their nations."<sup>103</sup> It is within this context that recognition struggles underpinning Mahathir's promotion of the Malaysian model can be understood. Mahathir wanted Malaysia to be

<sup>100</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the 8<sup>th</sup> OIC Summit in Teheran, Iran on 9 December 1997, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, p.70.

<sup>101</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the 8<sup>th</sup> OIC Summit in Teheran, Iran on 9 December 1997, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, p.70.

<sup>102</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the 8<sup>th</sup> OIC Summit in Teheran, Iran on 9 December 1997, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, p.71.

<sup>103</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the 8<sup>th</sup> OIC Summit in Teheran, Iran on 9 December 1997, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, pp.69-70.

recognised as a Muslim country that had managed to attain political stability, racial harmony, modernity and economic progress, which put it in a strong and respectable position to defend the honour of Islam and its *ummah*.

#### **6.4. TERRORISM**

Mahathir unequivocally condemned terrorism. However, he also impressed on the need to tackle the root causes of terrorist acts that are being committed by some Muslims all around the world. Mahathir believed that the Palestinian issue was crucial in influencing some Muslims to resort to such heinous crimes. In this sense, Mahathir understood the moral grammar at the heart of the conflict or at least appreciated that there was such a moral grammar framing the issue.

Even before the tragedy of 9/11 in 2001, Mahathir was already concerned with the image of Islam being tarnished by some terrorist acts committed by Muslims.<sup>104</sup> To illustrate, at the seminar on 'The Role of Islamic Civilisation in Fostering Interreligious Understanding' in Kuala Lumpur in May 1999, Mahathir had already voiced his frustration with the tendency of the West to stereotype terrorist acts by Muslims as Islamic terrorism, whereas acts of terrorism by other religious groups, like Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Jewish were never linked to their religions. Mahathir's concerns heightened after the 9/11 attacks. This led to the organising of the International Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur on 16 November 2001. Furthermore, Malaysia also organised an extraordinary session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM) on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur on 1 April 2002.

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<sup>104</sup> Ismail, *Pemikiran Dr. Mahathir Tentang Islam*, Kuala Lumpur: Utusan, 2002, p.59.

With regard to terrorism, there were a few salient points that Mahathir consistently argued. The first was his belief that "Islam does not promote terrorism."<sup>105</sup> Secondly, he stressed the need for acts of terrorism to be defined. At the extraordinary session of the ICFM in Kuala Lumpur, he opined that "armed attacks or other forms of attack against civilians must be regarded as acts of terror and the perpetrators regarded as terrorists."<sup>106</sup> According to his definition, terrorist acts must not be linked to any specific religion or ethnic group, hence "the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, the human bomb attacks by Palestinians and the Tamil Tigers, the attacks against civilians by Israeli forces, the killings of the Bosnian Muslims and others must be considered as acts of terror and the perpetrators must be condemned as terrorists."<sup>107</sup> This created controversy at the conference. Some participants disagreed with him on equating Palestinian suicide bombings with other terrorist acts. At the conference, Mahathir argued that a clear definition was necessary for a convention to be set up to deal with terrorism issues. In addition, he maintained that no other authority would be more competent to deal with the perpetrators of terrorism than the UN.<sup>108</sup> Thirdly, as highlighted earlier in the section, while Mahathir believed in the need to be tough on perpetrators of terrorism, he also emphasised the importance to tackle the root causes of terrorism.<sup>109</sup> He believed that Muslims who were involved in acts of terrorism were

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<sup>105</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the Asia Society Dinner in New York, United States, on 4 February 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues: Selected Speeches of Dr Mahathir Mohamad*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2003, p.42.

<sup>106</sup> Mahathir, speech delivered at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, on April 1 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.64.

<sup>107</sup> Mahathir, speech delivered at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, on April 1 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issue*, p.64.

<sup>108</sup> Mahathir, speech delivered at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, on April 1 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issue*, p.65.

<sup>109</sup> See Mahathir's speeches at the Conference on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 16 November 2001, the Asia Society Dinner in New York, 4 February, 2002, and the Extraordinary Session of ICFM on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, on 1 April 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.39, p. 43 and pp.65-7.

misguided and misinterpreted Islam. However, he also highlighted existing gross injustices perpetrated on Muslims, which pushed these Muslims to desperation and, ultimately, the resort to terrorism.

In a seminar organised by IKIM and the Goethe Institute in Kuala Lumpur in 1993, Mahathir had already illustrated the moral grammar manifested in the issue of terrorism by pointing that the desperate conditions experienced by the Muslim *ummah* were partly to blame for their acts of terrorism:

“Weak and oppressed, suffering from all kinds of psychological ailments, many [Muslims] seek solace and escape in esoteric religious practices. In so doing, they interpret Islam in ways which are un-Islamic. Because of this, Islam and the Muslim have acquired a bad name. It is regarded as a millstone around the neck of the followers, retarding their development. It has become associated with the unprincipled practices such as terrorism and injustices to their co-religionists and the followers of other religions. It has split them into warring factions, causing untold misery and carnage among them. And it has brought this noble humanising religion to disrepute. They are being made the tools and proxies for the conflicts of others. And they suffer this willingly, blaming others and blaming fate.”<sup>110</sup>

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Mahathir many times reiterated his calls for the root causes of terrorism to be given more attention. At the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur in November 2001, he said, “In the Muslim world, there is a great deal of anger which the West cannot understand.”<sup>111</sup> According to him, most of this anger stemmed from the Muslims’ frustration due to their inability to stop what they perceived as the injustices and humiliation suffered by their co-religionists. He believed that the principal cause of the Muslims’ anger was Palestine.<sup>112</sup> To Mahathir, “if there is no Palestinian issue, if the Palestinians are not being oppressed and children not being killed, the anger of the Arabs and Muslims would not be there or would be much less.

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<sup>110</sup> Mahathir, speech at the seminar organised by IKIM and Goethe Institute, Kuala Lumpur, 14 September 1993 in *Islam and the Muslim Ummah: Selected Speeches by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Vol.1*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2000, p.22.

<sup>111</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, November 16, 2001, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.36.

Certainly there would not be those who would be willing to kill themselves in that horrible fashion on September 11.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, “the Muslim world, weak and unable to be of any help to the Palestinians, see the unwillingness of the West to stop the Israelis as a sign that the West is anti-Palestine, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim.”<sup>114</sup> While he was against glorifying the terrorists, he felt that it was crucial to understand their minds and mentality in order to understand the reason why they committed those acts. Failing that, he believed that the root causes of terrorism would never be eradicated and such horrible acts could never be stopped.<sup>115</sup> Mahathir again raised the widespread feeling of many Muslims as being oppressed at the Asia Society dinner in New York on 4 February 2002. He cited Bosnia, Palestine, Iraq, India and Chechnya, among others, as illustrations of cases where Muslims were the injured parties. He reiterated his belief that some Muslims resorted to acts of terrorism as reactions to what they perceived as acts of terror against them.<sup>116</sup>

The moral grammar in Mahathir’s discourse on terrorism was clear when he repeated his call to identify the bitterness and anger of the Muslims in order to prevent the tendency of some of them to resort to terrorism at the extraordinary session of the ICFM in Kuala Lumpur in April 2002.<sup>117</sup> Again, reflecting his beliefs in the economic causes of the plight of the Muslims, he highlighted the “injustices” and the “oppression”

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<sup>112</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, November 16, 2001, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, 2003, p.35.

<sup>113</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, November 16, 2001, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, 2003, p.37.

<sup>114</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, November 16, 2001, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, 2003, p.36.

<sup>115</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, November 16, 2001, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, 2003, p.37.

<sup>116</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Asia Society Dinner, New York, February 4 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, 2003, p.43.

<sup>117</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2002, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.65.

of the rich against the poor, in the current “glaringly inequitable world”.<sup>118</sup> He also highlighted the “oppression” and “humiliation” of the Palestinians in the occupied territory, and of the Bosnians who were massacred in full view of television viewers that went on for a long time before anyone intervened.<sup>119</sup> He believed that, “[t]he impotence of Muslim countries to do anything to remedy the situation adds to this frustration and anger.”<sup>120</sup> Although most Muslims would resign to their fate, some would feel that they had to vent their anger in some way. According to Mahathir, “[t]he world must deal with these misguided people not just by hunting them down but also by removing the causes of their anger and frustration.”<sup>121</sup> At all of these events, Mahathir related the Malaysian experience in tackling terrorist acts of the MCP.<sup>122</sup> Tough measures were taken to hunt and fight them down. However, the root cause of their grievances was also tackled. In this case, the Malayan Communists were mainly supported by the country’s Chinese. It was found that the Chinese felt alienated because they were not accorded citizenship status by the British. Thus, upon independence, the Malayan government decided to give them citizenship, provided them land, and protected them so that they could carry out their businesses and participate in the government peacefully and effectively. These efforts had won over their hearts and minds and they slowly ceased to assist the terrorists.

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<sup>118</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.65.

<sup>119</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, pp.66-7.

<sup>120</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.67.

<sup>121</sup> Mahathir, speech at the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p.68.

<sup>122</sup> See Mahathir’s speeches at the Conference on Terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, November 16, 2001, the Asia Society Dinner, New York, February 4 2002 and the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism, Kuala Lumpur, 1 April 2002, in *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, pp.34-5, p.41 and p.68.

Secondly, and in relation to Mahathir's emphasis on development as a tool for empowerment of Muslim nations, Mahathir exhorted the value of education, scientific and technological progress, industry, business and the economy. This is similar to the message he delivered to the Malay community. Mahathir reminded the world Islamic *ummah* of their glorious past when they were the most knowledgeable and advanced people in the world. However, they had regressed to being underdeveloped, poor, weak and oppressed because of their "narrow interpretation" of Islam and discarding "the so-called worldly knowledge".<sup>123</sup> Therefore, Mahathir felt that Islam had been misinterpreted and misunderstood not only by non-Muslims, but also by the Muslims themselves.<sup>124</sup> A great deal of these misinterpretations were purported by different Muslim groups to serve their own self-interest. This resulted in different factions and sects amongst Muslims. Their stubbornness and greed for power led to hostilities, rebellions and disorder. "Because of activities of such groups, many Muslim nations cannot establish strong governments, and are thus chaotic, weak and looked down upon. That is why Islam is often ridiculed by others."<sup>125</sup> Without strong governments, it would remain difficult for progress and development to be brought to the Muslim *ummah*.

To surmise, to Mahathir, the disrespect suffered by the Muslim *ummah* was mainly caused by their economic underdevelopment. Due to the fact that they were also once colonised, Muslim nations were also South nations and their basic problems were those of the countries of the South. These were problems relating to good governance, nation-building and economic development. However, the situation of Muslim nations

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<sup>123</sup> Mahathir, speech at the international seminar on 'The Role of Islamic Civilisation in Fostering Inter-religious Understanding' on 25 May 1999, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, Vol.2, p.21.

<sup>124</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Oxford, UK on 16 April 1996, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, Vol.2, p.127.

was made more acute because of the history of religious rivalry and warfare between Christians and Muslims. To this day, Mahathir believed that there continued to be a strong resentment and negative misperception about Islam. Due to this, he believed, Muslims continued to be attacked, humiliated and ridiculed, which was intolerable to him. Since the end of Islamic civilisation, no single Islamic nation was in a position to uphold the honour and dignity of the *ummah*. This analysis triggered a strong motivational force within Mahathir to steer Malaysia towards taking a prominent role in the community of Islamic nations. At the 40<sup>th</sup> UMNO General Assembly in September 1997, in Kuala Lumpur, Mahathir said,

"Is it not possible for the Malays to evolve a culture that will enable them to achieve the kind of success that the Muslims once had? We have no desire to build an empire. Our ambition is moderate. We want to be just as equally developed as other races which have progressed. With that, we can redeem the honour of our race and religion, and also of the *bumiputras* in this country."<sup>126</sup>

Thus, it was clear that given the moral denigration suffered by the Muslim *ummah*, Mahathir yearned for the Malays to become an exemplary Muslim community that would change the negative widespread perception of Islam and Muslims in general.

## **6.5. THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION IN THE CASE OF ISLAM**

In his desire to spearhead the Malays to redeem the honour of their race and religion, Mahathir aspired for Malaysia to be a model Muslim nation.<sup>127</sup> In this regard, Mahathir's strong sense of moral indignation and outrage aroused in him the motivation to change

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<sup>125</sup> Mahathir, keynote address at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Oxford, UK on 16 April 1996, in *Islam and the Islamic Ummah*, Vol.2, p.132.

<sup>126</sup> Mahathir, speech delivered at the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of UMNO in Kuala Lumpur on 5 September 1997, in Hng, *CEO Malaysia*, p.145.

<sup>127</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007, London.

the dire condition of the *ummah* by putting forward the achievements of the Muslim Malays. In this regard, Mahathir's articulations of the problems faced by the Malays in their practice of Islam as encapsulated in *The Malay Dilemma* and *The Challenge* were constantly reiterated by Mahathir in the wider Islamic *ummah*. Thus, the moral indignation that made Mahathir struggle to redeem the honour and dignity of the Muslim Malays in the Malaysian multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, was also responsible for his struggle for the redemption of pride and honour of the Muslim *ummah* in the international community.

In this context, the quest for recognition that motivated Mahathir was in the form of esteem. This was sought on the basis that Malaysia presented a unique example of a country that had managed to overcome the problems of the Malays, which in the process had made Malaysia a respectable, progressive, modern and economically successful Muslim nation. According to Honneth, recognition struggles in terms of self-esteem can be understood in terms of what makes a community particular and enables it to contribute positively to the wider community. The progress and economic success of the Muslim Malays not only made it a model to be followed by other Muslim nations, but also made it possible for Malaysia to stand up on behalf of other Muslim communities and take the leadership in assisting oppressed Muslims for example in Palestine and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the context of the wider international community, Mahathir wanted Malaysia to be recognised as a model because of its moderate Islam, which contributed towards its stability and progress. Certainly the form of Islam that is moderate and compatible with economic progress and modernity that Malaysia was deemed to epitomise is directly attributed to Mahathir's own understanding. Mahathir's

progressive interpretation of Islam underpinned the government's Islamisation discourse and programmes during the Mahathir era.

The analysis of Mahathir's many speeches has also revealed his long-standing sense of moral indignation at what he perceived to amount to oppression and injustices experienced by Muslims. There is an important moral grammar that was present in Mahathir's discourse on the plight of the Muslim *ummah*. He found the hapless situation of the Muslims to be humiliating. He believed that the reason for such disrespectful treatment of Muslims was because no Muslim nation could be considered a developed nation and strong enough to defend the rights of Muslims. In this sense, Mahathir believed that the injustices suffered by Muslims were due to the inequality in the world, where Muslim nations should but not have any say or influence. As regards recognition struggles, the context of Mahathir's moral discourse can be understood in terms of Honneth's explanation of the struggle for self-respect. According to Honneth, to have self-respect is to have the equal rights to participate in what is termed as the social "discursive will formation." Certainly, Mahathir perceived that the Muslims had no such right in the international society because they could not even stand up to the defence of their oppressed Muslim brothers in Palestine and Bosnia – Hergezovina. Relating to this, Mahathir emphasised economic development and technological progress as the requirement for Muslim nations to be taken seriously and acquire their rightful role in international relations. Only by acquiring the developed status, he thought, can Muslim nations protect the interest of the Muslim *ummah*.

Furthermore, in the face of the challenges posed by an unequal world, Mahathir emphasised the unity of Muslim nations. In this regard, he appealed for Muslims to practice moderation and tolerance, and discard their feuds based on historical

tribal disagreements and differing interpretations of Islam. This also relates to Mahathir's emphasis on political stability in Muslim nations. To Mahathir, a correct interpretation of Islam would make all Muslims practice moderation in their own domestic political setting. This would produce internal stability that would enable Muslim nations to concentrate on economic development. Emphasising progress, Mahathir called for Muslims to embrace knowledge, especially science and technology and also business and economics. He reminded Muslims of the glorious past of the Islamic civilisation to make them realise that true Islamic teachings extol the virtues of all kinds of knowledge, and that worldly success is actually not discouraged, but in fact required in Islam to protect the well being of its *ummah*. Thus, similar to his thinking about the Malay dilemma, Mahathir believed that a way out of the Muslim dilemma was through economic empowerment. Due to this, Mahathir introduced significant new economic initiatives amongst Muslim countries, within both multilateral and bilateral frameworks. These can be illustrated by Malaysia's efforts to strengthen economic co-operation among Muslim nations through various proposals, for example Islamic gold dinar, training in Islamic banking and finance, sharing of Malaysia's experience in development through the MTCP and easing bilateral trade and investments by adopting agreements such as the BPA and the Investments Guarantee Agreement (IGA).

Mahathir's sense of mission underpinned by his struggle for recognition was vividly captured in the theme for the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Islamic Summit Conference that he chaired in Putrajaya, Malaysia on 11-18 October 2003, that is 'Knowledge and Morality For the Unity, Dignity and Progress of the *Ummah*'. Indeed, Mahathir's thinking was prominent in the Putrajaya Summit's Declaration. With regard to the situation of the *ummah*, the Putrajaya Summit Conference took "note with concern the

situation and resolve to make every effort to enhance our role and influence in international affairs, commensurate with our strength in numbers, vast human and natural resources and our important contributions to international peace and security.”<sup>128</sup> With regard to knowledge and morality, the Conference was “inspired by the outstanding contribution made by Muslim scholars in the past who were leaders, pioneers and contributors in many field of science, such as astronomy, medicine, physics, chemistry, engineering and navigation and several other areas of learning.”<sup>129</sup> The participants affirmed their belief in “the essential importance of knowledge for the progress of human society and underscore its pivotal role in the restoration of the status, well being and dignity of the *ummah* in our contemporary world”. In addition, the Declaration mentions that Conference “recognise[s] the leading role of science and technology for the advancement of the *ummah* and the need to bridge the gap within the OIC member states and between Muslim and industrialised countries.”<sup>130</sup>

## 6.6. **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has illustrated that recognition motives were significant in motivating Mahathir to pursue a more active foreign policy *vis-à-vis* issues related to the Muslim *ummah*. Mahathir identified Malaysia as an integral member of the Muslim *ummah*, and Islam as the integral and inseparable part of the Malay identity. Recognition motivations were triggered by the perception of the backwardness, powerlessness and destitution of

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<sup>128</sup> Putrajaya Declaration on Knowledge And Morality For The Unity, Dignity And Progress of The Ummah, The 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, Putrajaya, Malaysia, 11-18 October 2003. File Document of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

<sup>129</sup> Putrajaya Declaration.

<sup>130</sup> Putrajaya Declaration.

the *ummah* which planted them in a position of misunderstood, oppressed, disrespected and even ridiculed.

Mahathir's strong sense of identification with the Muslims can be explained by his understanding of Muslim and Malay identity, which overlapped. To him, and indeed by the Malaysian Constitution, a Malay has to be a Muslim. Mahathir believed that Islam could not be separated from the Muslims' and the Malays' daily lives. His books, *The Malay Dilemma* and *The Challenge* both illustrate his sense of mission to uplift the status of the Malays and also the *ummah*. He believed that in order to tackle the backwardness of the Malays and the Muslim *ummah*, it was vital to correct their misinterpretation of Islam, particularly with regard to their values towards economic success and attitude towards worldly knowledge like science and technology. To him, knowledge was the prerequisite for a powerful *ummah*, and a powerful *ummah* would be respected, just like the Islamic *ummah* during the great Islamic civilisation.

Therefore, the significance of Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir has to be understood in terms of Mahathir's understanding of the significant role that Islam plays in the mindset and values of the Malays. To Mahathir, the problems of Muslim Malays are not unique to them, but typical of the Muslim *ummah* as a whole. In other words, there are clear similarities in Mahathir's understanding of the situation besetting the Malay Muslims in the Malaysian domestic society, and that of the Muslim *ummah* in the world. When he wrote *The Malay Dilemma*, Muslim Malays were perceived by Mahathir as occupying a humiliating position. They were poor and hapless and suffered disrespect from other races in their society. To Mahathir, the Muslims of the world suffered the same fate in the eye of the international community. They were clearly being humiliated, disrespected and hapless. However, the Malaysian success

story has proven that the Muslims are able to escape this perceived quandary between their religion and progress. Recognition motives insofar as Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy is concerned were rooted in Mahathir's search for self-esteem through the recognition of Malaysia as a model Muslim nation, and, the recognition motives were based on a struggle to regain self-respect for the Muslim *ummah* by making Malaysia a developed Muslim nation strong enough to take equal part in international relations in order to protect the interests and dignity of the Muslim *ummah*.

## CHAPTER 7 MAHATHIR, MALAYSIA AND THE NATIONS OF EAST ASIA

This chapter will examine the motivations behind Malaysia's heightened identification with the nations of East Asia during the Mahathir era. Central to the analysis is Mahathir's idea of the 'East', which he constantly juxtaposed with his understanding of the 'West'.<sup>1</sup> The 'East' is itself a debatable concept.<sup>2</sup> It will be shown that in Mahathir's discourse, it relates to the region of East Asia. East Asian communities are recognisably diverse, in terms of political system, language, ethnicity and religion, for instance. However, the concept is still meaningful as a region,<sup>3</sup> and increasingly Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia are coming to recognise their commonalities. Therefore, as regards Mahathir's discourse on the East, this concept refers to the peoples, cultures, governments and the economies of the countries of Northeast and Southeast Asia. In other words, the geographic focus of this chapter is directed primarily on Malaysia's relations with China, Japan, South Korea and members of ASEAN, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand,

<sup>1</sup> This is reflected in his speeches and writings, for example, a chapter in *The Challenge* entitled 'West and East'. See Mahathir Mohamad, *The Challenge*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1986, pp.44-55.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Khoo recognised that, "One could further quarrel with Mahathir's views on the 'East' but that might only miss the unusual nationalistic impulses behind his 'Look East' policy." Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad*, Shah Alam: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.70.

and Vietnam. In terms of specific foreign policies, this chapter will focus on ASEAN, East Asia regionalism, Malaysia's 'Look East' policy and the Asian values debate.

Firstly, this chapter will identify Mahathir's perceptions of violations of justice in the unequal relationships between East Asian countries and Western ones, in particular the US. The chapter will then, secondly, look at specific policy areas with a geographical focus on East Asia. In this context, four important components of foreign policy will be covered. The first is Malaysia's policy towards ASEAN. It will then, secondly, examine the policy of the Mahathir government to initiate a multilateral framework for an East Asian regionalism. Thirdly, the chapter will also discuss Malaysia's strengthened bilateral ties with Japan as the foundation of Mahathir's 'Look East' policy. Fourthly, it will examine Mahathir's discourse on 'Asian values'. The main thrust of the argument here is that the quest for respect and status, in short, recognition, was the key motivation for Mahathir to pursue the specific policies outlined above in Malaysia's relations with East Asian countries.

### **7.1. MAHATHIR, MALAYSIA AND THE EAST**

Chapter Three has illustrated Mahathir's strong identification with the peoples and culture of the East. For example, it has been shown that Mahathir admired the work ethics and discipline of the Japanese people that he observed during their occupation of Malaya. However, while strongly convinced of the positive aspects of the Eastern cultural values, Mahathir also considered that East Asian nations occupied a lower status

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<sup>3</sup> Greg Sheridan, *Asian Values Western Dreams*, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1999, pp.5-7. See also Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: The Free Press, pp.103-109.

in the international society compared to the Western nations. Mahathir noticed that most East Asian nations, for example Japan and South Korea continued to be dictated to by the West (specifically, the US) despite their economic achievements and were mere “subjects” to decisions taken elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The subjugated status of the East Asian nations triggered a sense of moral indignation in Mahathir. At the Third Pacific Dialogue in Kuala Lumpur held in 1996, Mahathir asserted:

“Asia can no longer sit down and take injury and insult in stoic silence … [and it had] a right to demand a little maturity and sophistication on the part of those who wish to analyse and proselytise; who so easily slip into the role of policeman, prosecutor, judge and jury; who so habitually try, judge, punish and persecute without even giving a hearing.”<sup>5</sup>

In this regard, Mahathir’s moral outrage was based on the prevalent unequal relationship between East Asian nations and the West, in particular with the US.<sup>6</sup> It will be shown in the course of the analysis in this chapter that the quest for what Mahathir considered to be more legitimate forms of relationships between East Asian nations and Western nations, especially the US, was the crux of his recognition struggles that underpinned Malaysia’s policy towards East Asian countries. The search for recognition in Mahathir motivations were plainly demonstrated by the many articulations of his aspirations for the East Asian nations. For example, at the Regional Conference of the Harvard Clubs of Asia in Kuala Lumpur in 1996, he insisted that;

“Asia must rise. It must take a greater contribution to the global Commonwealth of man. It must contribute to greater justice in the world, to greater mutual respect in the world, to greater egalitarianism in the world, to greater fraternity in the world, to much greater peace in the world and much greater prosperity in the world”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Asia’s Role in the Commonwealth of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, speech made in London on 21 October 1997, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia: Selected Speeches by Mahathir Mohamad*, Vol.2, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2000, pp.61-2.

<sup>5</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Building a Single Global Commonwealth’, a paper delivered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Dialogue, Kuala Lumpur, 21 November 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.106.

<sup>6</sup> On US’ role in Asia – Pacific, see for example, Roger Buckley, *The United States in the Asia – Pacific since 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. See also Thomas J. Christensen, ‘China, the US – Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia’ in *International Security*, 22:4, Spring 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech delivered at the 1996 Regional Conference of Harvard Clubs of Asia, Kuala Lumpur, 15 August 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.136.

It is therefore obvious that Mahathir desired for East Asian nations to possess a higher status whereby they can make a positive contribution towards the international society. Importantly, it would also mean an equal status for East Asian nations in its relations with Western countries, particularly the US. The legitimate relations that Mahathir wanted to see between East Asia and the US particularly would be free from dictation, control and pressures. The quest for legitimate relations will be illustrated as the dominant struggle for Mahathir, in influencing Malaysia's policies towards ASEAN and the wider East Asian region.

## **7.2. MALAYSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES FOCUSING ON EAST ASIA UNDER MAHATHIR**

The shifting focus towards East Asia in Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir manifested itself in two distinctive sets of policy initiatives. The first concerns Mahathir's efforts towards promoting an East Asia community. In this regard, ASEAN is relevant because it became the model that Mahathir promoted for founding an East Asian community that would uphold legitimate relations. In other words, Mahathir promoted the example of ASEAN as a regional community especially because to him, ASEAN had managed to establish a form of legitimate relations amongst its members, as well as between its members and outside powers. The relevant policy initiatives concerning Mahathir's proposal for an East Asian community is the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) and ASEAN+3 (APT). In terms of bilateral initiatives, Mahathir's 'Look East' policy impacted foreign policy because it resulted in strengthened bilateral relations with

East Asian countries especially with Japan. In addition, Mahathir's vision of Japan's central role in the proposed East Asian regional community will also be studied.

### **7.2.1. Multilateral Initiatives: Establishing Legitimate Relations through a Regional Community**

The cornerstone of Mahathir's foreign policy on the East was the institutionalisation of East Asian regional community. Arguably, there are many rationales for this including security and economic, which will be highlighted in the course of this chapter. However, as highlighted, Mahathir was also motivated by the struggle to establish a more equal relationship between East Asian nations and the US, befitting the economic achievements of East Asian nations. Moreover, to Mahathir, ASEAN showed how a regional process could encapsulate, protect and promote local values and norms in the process of enhancing regional peace and understanding.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, analysis of Mahathir's efforts to institutionalise East Asia regionalism must begin with ASEAN. Mahathir's EAEC (East Asia Economic Caucus) was the culmination of his aspiration for the regionalism of East Asia to be institutionalised. Malaysia later continued to pursue the idea of East Asia regionalism via the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Co-operation and ASEAN + 3 (APT) frameworks when the EAEC proposal was rebuffed by some of its prospective

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<sup>8</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The First East Asian Young Leaders Congress on "East Asian Peace Stability and Prosperity, Kuala Lumpur, 5 August 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community: Selected Speeches by Dr Mahathir Mohamad*, Vol.1, Hashim Makaruddin (ed), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 1995, p.30.

members upon strong objections from the US and Australia.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, some kind of East Asian regionalism materialised, albeit in slightly different form and name as the East Asia Summit after Mahathir retired, in 2005.

#### ASEAN: A Regional Arrangement for Legitimate Relations

Upon assuming office in 1981, Mahathir declared that ASEAN was to be his top foreign policy priority.<sup>10</sup> This was exactly what he did, judging by the glowing tribute paid to him at the ASEAN Summit in Bali, his final participation in October 2003. Indonesia's President Megawati said, Mahathir "was one of those who worked the hardest to articulate ASEAN's vision of itself," and that "[t]he reach of his mind is so far and wide that on every issue before us we will always try to recall what Dr Mahathir said about it."<sup>11</sup> High praise indeed, especially coming from the Indonesian President. Although Mahathir was the more senior statesman, Indonesian leaders had always felt entitled to ASEAN leadership.

The fact that Indonesia feels entitled to regional leadership can be traced back to the events that led to the formation of ASEAN. Although the Communist threat in the region made apparent by the fall of Vietnam and the prevalent belief in the Domino effect theory in the mid-1960s were important factors leading to the creation of ASEAN, the

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<sup>9</sup> Mahathir claimed that Australia enlisted the US to found APEC in order to spike the formation of EAEC. Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2002, p.63. Jeshurun also witnessed Australia's and US's hands in sinking the EAEC proposal. See Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy, 1957 – 2007*, Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2007, p.235. Note also the Japanese different attitudes towards the proposal to form EAEC in 1991, and the Asian Monetary Fund (AMF) in 1997. See Richard Higgott, 'The International Relations of the Asian Economic Crisis: A Study in Politics of Resentment' in *Politics and Markets in the Wake of the Asian Crisis*, Richard Robinson, Mark Beeson, Kanishka Jayasuriya and Hyuk-Rae Kim (eds.), London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p.268.

<sup>10</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007. Also noted in Mohd. Yusof Ahmad, *Continuity and Change in Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1981-1986*, PhD Dissertation, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, May 1990, p.158, and Murugesu Pathmanathan and David Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, Kuala Lumpur: Eastview, p.41.

founding was actually made possible by the political accommodation between Indonesia and Malaysia. Importantly, Malaysia was willing to recognise Indonesia's "sense of entitlement" to a leadership role in Southeast Asia within ASEAN.<sup>12</sup> In the process of post-'Confrontation' rapprochement, both learnt the value of respecting hierarchy, consultations and sovereignty in regional diplomacy.<sup>13</sup> This gave birth to the particular 'ASEAN way' of managing conflicts, which became the hallmark of ASEAN.<sup>14</sup> In short, ASEAN was founded due to member states' realisation that they had to respect one another's sovereignty in order to maintain regional resilience. This is because, it is only by mutually respecting one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity that members can demand outside powers to respect the same legitimate relationships with them.

Thus, the principles of mutually respecting members' sovereignty and non-interventionism were enshrined in ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Co-operation (TAC) signed in Bali in 1976 and became the cornerstones of the 'ASEAN way'.<sup>15</sup> They are actually modern concepts that have been adopted by the region's leaders to legitimise their inter-state relations. Most Southeast Asian leaders began to embrace these concepts during their nationalist struggles for independence against Western colonialists. Therefore, the early genesis of the 'ASEAN way' is closely linked to the struggles for

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in 'Foreword' by Ajit Singh, in Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on ASEAN*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2004, p.xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Antolik, *ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation*, New York and London: East Gate, 1990, p.21.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Antolik, *ASEAN and the Diplomacy of Accommodation*, p.22.

<sup>14</sup> For the elaboration of the 'ASEAN way', see Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, p.64.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion on TAC and the 'ASEAN way', see Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia*, p.47. See also, Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of South-East Asia*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p.69; Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture: Origins, Development and Prospects*, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p.50 and Alan Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional and Global Issues*, Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003, p.130.

respect and rights.<sup>16</sup> The collective experience of having been colonised<sup>17</sup> actually made Southeast Asian leaders understand the paramount importance of respecting one another's sovereignty and territorial integrity. To protect their sovereignty, they also became determined to achieve "regional solutions to regional problems".<sup>18</sup>

Malaysia under Mahathir exhibited a solid support for the continuing adherence to the 'ASEAN way'. However, this does not mean that the norms were never tested. Mahathir accepted that there were occasionally strains on ASEAN's principles of respect for sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of fellow members.<sup>19</sup> Its bilateral relations with Singapore were probably the most prone to testing Malaysia's ASEAN spirit.<sup>20</sup> The visit of Israeli President Chaim Herzog to Singapore in 1986 for example, created uproar in Malaysia.<sup>21</sup> In the 1990s, there were also spats concerning the package of issues covering the water agreement, the use of the Malayan Railway land in Singapore, the relocation of the Immigration, Customs and Quarantine (ICQ) centre, flight clearance for Singapore's air force jets, Singapore's reclamation project and the building of a bridge to replace the causeway.<sup>22</sup> In addition, there was the issue of overlapping claim on Pulau Batu Putih (Pedra Branca). These issues continued to dominate Malaysia – Singapore bilateral relations in the late 1990s until Mahathir retired in 2003. Relations also went sour when Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew

<sup>16</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.20.

<sup>17</sup> Although Thailand was never colonised, Mahathir believed that it also suffered threats and bullying tactics of Western powers. See Mahathir Mohamad, 'Towards a Stable Asia', paper delivered at Nihon Keizai Shimban International Conference on the Future of Asia, Tokyo, 17 May 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, pp.150-151.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Leifer, 'Regional Solutions to Regional Problems?' in *Michael Leifer: Selected Works on Southeast Asia*, Chin Kin Wah and Leo Suryadinata (eds), Singapore: ISEAS, p.145.

<sup>19</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.169.

<sup>21</sup> See Michael Leifer, *Singapore's Foreign Policy: Coping with Vulnerability*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p.92.

remarked that Malaysia did not practise meritocracy and the neighbouring Malaysian state of Johor to be known as a place for shootings, assaults and car-jackings.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Lee Kuan Yew's arrogant tirades against Malaysia, which led to countless heated debates with Mahathir in the parliament when Singapore was a part of Malaysia continued to complicate the relationship between the two leaders. Moreover, at the height of the Asian financial crisis, Malaysia was disappointed with Singapore's leadership, which was seen to be taking advantage of the situation by offering better interest for Malaysian ringgit, thus encouraging the exodus of the currency into Singapore. However, none of these issues were brought to bear on ASEAN and Malaysia continued to pursue bilateral avenues in managing conflictual issues with Singapore.

Similarly, Malaysia's bilateral relations with other ASEAN members were also strained at times. In the case of Indonesia, Mahathir was content to support Jakarta's leading role, which to him was a recognition of Indonesia's status as the biggest country in the grouping. However, he insisted that Indonesia never dictated to other members on what they should do.<sup>24</sup> However, some Malaysian officials felt that Indonesia viewed Malaysia under Mahathir as "the little brother that went overboard."<sup>25</sup> This simply means that they sometimes viewed Malaysia under Mahathir to act beyond its size and status in the region. Although it felt entitled to ASEAN leadership, Indonesia after Suharto was crippled by economic and political crises as in Aceh and Irian. Malaysia – Indonesia bilateral diplomatic skirmishes usually concerned the treatment of Indonesian workers -

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<sup>22</sup> See discussions on 'Points of Agreement between Malaysia and Singapore in Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, pp.226-9.

<sup>23</sup> 'Does Singapore Appreciate Malaysia's Neighbourliness?', *Berita Harian*, 24 February 1998

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak, Secretary General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia (2001-2006), Putrajaya, 13 July 2007.

some of whom were illegal immigrants in Malaysia.<sup>26</sup> An overlapping claim on Sipadan and Ligitan islands off the coast of Sabah was settled when the ICJ decided in December 2002 in Malaysia's favour. Issues of territorial claims between Malaysia and its neighbours, namely Brunei, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, in addition to Indonesia and Singapore, were all being dealt with bilaterally. In addition, there were also continuing instabilities in the Indonesian Aceh province, southern Thailand and Mindanao island in the Philippines, due to separatist movements. However, regardless of the intermittent acrid media reports on all sides, these issues were to a large extent managed quite successfully through adherence of the family-like 'ASEAN way'.<sup>27</sup> Thus, by and large, Malaysia under Mahathir abided by the principles of the 'ASEAN way', which ascribed the forms of legitimate relations between ASEAN members.

Perhaps the strongest challenge to the 'ASEAN way' *vis-à-vis* Malaysia under Mahathir came in the aftermath of the sacking of the deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998 and the ensuing reform ('*reformasi*') movement. Mahathir came under strong criticisms not only from Western governments but also his ASEAN colleagues, especially after Anwar emerged from detention with a bruised eye. While there were moves then to introduce 'enhanced interaction' in ASEAN's practice by Thailand especially, the Mahathir Administration signalled its stance very clearly by exhorting the value of quiet diplomacy.<sup>28</sup> In the event, the 'ASEAN way' was challenged particularly by the Philippines and Indonesia. The Philippines' President Joseph Estrada and Indonesia's B.J. Habibie expressed support for Anwar and met with Anwar's

<sup>26</sup> For example, the crisis surrounding the death of eight Indonesian illegal immigrants in a Malaysian detention centre in 1998. See Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.178.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Richardson, 'Negotiating A Dispute in 'The Spirit' of ASEAN', *International Herald Tribune*, 24 September 1996. See also Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.219.

<sup>28</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.183.

daughter Nurul Izzah at the sidelines of Kuala Lumpur APEC in November 1998, much to Mahathir's displeasure. In its initial response, Malaysia despatched official and unofficial envoys to influence opinions in Jakarta but to no avail. After that, Malaysia adopted a sterner language with both Indonesia and the Philippines. For example, Mahathir threatened to also flout the 'ASEAN way' if other members would not stop infringing its core norms in their relations to Malaysia.<sup>29</sup> This brinkmanship seemed to work because both leaders resisted from making more public comments thereafter. This episode not only proves Mahathir's appreciation of the arrangement for legitimate relations between ASEAN members, but also how central it is in the set-up of the ASEAN regionalism.

Arguably, the 'ASEAN way' was actually 'saved' ultimately by Al Gore's performance at the pre-APEC Business Summit dinner in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>30</sup> In his speech which took place in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis, Al Gore made a direct connection between liberal economics, democratic politics and successful management of the crisis.<sup>31</sup> Gore's blatant support for '*reformasi*' at a dinner hosted by Mahathir (who was the very target of the movement) and leaving without waiting for the meal, was considered a gross insult, displaying "an air of pompous superiority", which only "reinforced every negative thing about the West that any Malaysian ever thought".<sup>32</sup> Understandably, Gore's performance was received with "outrage, even fury, by Malaysian leaders" and actually led to the rallying around the 'ASEAN way' by ASEAN

<sup>29</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.187.

<sup>30</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN's Diplomatic and Security Culture*, pp.187-8.

<sup>31</sup> Mark T Berger, *The Battle for Asia: From Decolonization to Globalization*, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, p.188.

<sup>32</sup> Greg Sheridan, *Asian Values Western Dreams*, Australia: Allen & Unwin, p.108.

leaders.<sup>33</sup> Haacke argues that this was because Gore had “overstepped an important psychological benchmark” that ASEAN leaders set “to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behaviour” by an outsider towards anyone of them, and reminded them that the US remained intent on exporting “a particular model of democracy” to Southeast Asia.<sup>34</sup> In the process, ASEAN leaders realised that ‘enhanced interaction’ as practised by some of its members began to impact on the interactions of outside powers with them and might actually increase their insecurity. This made them revert their practice to conform again to the traditional notions of the ‘ASEAN way’.<sup>35</sup>

To reiterate, the above elaborations not only illustrate the efficacy of the ‘ASEAN way’, albeit occasionally tested, but also Mahathir’s strong belief and commitment towards ASEAN’s arrangement for intra-mural relations. A further illustration relates to the admission of Myanmar into ASEAN in 1997. Although the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand attempted to make Myanmar’s domestic politics as a condition for admission, all ASEAN members displayed solidarity with Indonesia and Malaysia to accept Myanmar into the grouping at the Kuala Lumpur Summit. Mahathir played a pivotal role in this decision and maintained that ASEAN’s norm of non-intervention should apply. His motives can be understood in recognition terms in the following contexts: Firstly, his anger about the US or Western pressure as an unjustified interference and his adamant refusal to give in to Washington’s demand. Thus, it was a demonstration of sub-regional nationalism, in the sense that ASEAN could not be told what to do. Related to this is Mahathir’s drive to promote the uniqueness of ASEAN as a regional organisation that had been successful in fostering regional understanding and

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<sup>33</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN’s Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.188.

<sup>34</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN’s Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.188.

<sup>35</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN’s Diplomatic and Security Culture*, p.188.

stability according to its own way, that is, by finding ‘regional solutions for regional problems’. Hence, according to Mahathir, within ASEAN, he strove for Malaysia to show that even as developing countries, they could still maintain an independent stance and not be dictated by any big power.<sup>36</sup> One of his Foreign Ministers, Syed Hamid Albar attested to this and remarked that Malaysia under Mahathir always tried to promote independence in ASEAN decision making.<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, it was based on Mahathir’s motivation to complete and thereby, win acclaim for his success in furthering the community of ten Southeast Asian nations under ASEAN. In this context, Mahathir’s recognition struggles can be understood in his desire to raise his own and Malaysia’s profile by realising ‘ASEAN 10’ at the Kuala Lumpur Summit in conjunction with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ASEAN.<sup>38</sup> Thus, status, either personal or national, cannot be discounted as an important motivation.

#### East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC)

Mahathir believed that ASEAN was the most relevant model for the wider East Asia because it was an arrangement that had evolved according to the unique Asian experience, based on local cultures and values. Thus, in arguing for an East Asian regionalism, Mahathir opined;

“We should certainly not turn away from the experience of ASEAN, which I believe is even more directly relevant. .... It goes without saying that we must not turn away from the wisdom of the East. We must not forget our special circumstances, our unique history, our particular priorities and our distinctive needs. One shoe does not fit all.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Syed Hamid Albar, Malaysian Foreign Minister (1998-currently), London, 16 March 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Haacke, *ASEAN’s Diplomatic and Security Culture*, pp.146-148.

<sup>39</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the First Asia Congress, Kuala Lumpur, 4 August 2003, [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 2 July 2006.

Therefore, the crux of Mahathir's policy on East Asia regionalism had been to transfer the ASEAN experience to the wider East Asia. In this regard, Mahathir believed that ASEAN had validated the efficacy of Asian cultural values in its arrangement for legitimate relations, both amongst its members and with outside powers. This arrangement resulted in enhanced regional security and co-operation, which had made it possible for Southeast Asia to concentrate on development and achieving economic growth. Notwithstanding internal tensions having resulted from competing struggles for recognition within ASEAN, Mahathir believed that an East Asian community could be modelled on the ASEAN experience, thus paving the way for improvement of security and economic co-operation in Northeast Asia too, and the whole of East Asia in general.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, there were important security and economic rationales underpinning this process of Southeast Asia regionalism. However, security and economic factors were linked to the equally important factors relating to a struggle for recognition, mainly in the form of the quest to establish legitimate relations. Thus, in aspiring for East Asia to be respected, Mahathir wanted the wider East Asia regionalism to embody the independent ethos of ASEAN.

The idea of an East Asia Economic Group (EAEG) was first mooted by Mahathir during the visit of the Chinese Premier Li Peng to Malaysia in December 1990. According to Mahathir, the EAEG was proposed not as a trade bloc, but "a consultative forum to identify common problems" so that when East Asian countries "negotiate with the Europeans and Americans, because of Asia's size, they will have to listen to us."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Another reason for the EAEC is derived from our experience in ASEAN." Mahathir Mohamad, *The Voice of Asia: Two Leaders Discuss the Coming Century*, Mahathir Mohamad and Shintaro Ishihara, translated by Frank Baldwin, Tokyo, New York: Kodansha International, p.44.

<sup>41</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Voice of Asia*, p.43.

Thus, it has been observed that the EAEC was aimed at “combating the political power of the US and Europe.”<sup>42</sup>

The EAEG proposal created controversy almost instantly. Firstly, the EAEG was seen as an economic and trade bloc, against liberalisation policies of the WTO and the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC). Secondly, Mahathir’s insistence for the EAEG’s membership to follow a narrow geographical definition would exclude the Pacific countries of the US, Australia and New Zealand, leading to criticisms that it belied an anti-West agenda.<sup>43</sup> Thirdly, the proposal called upon Japan’s leadership. However, the idea’s similarity to Japan’s Co-Prosperity Sphere promoted during the Pacific War made it uncomfortable for some Japanese. Japan was also reluctant to assume leadership amidst strong US objection. Finally, some ASEAN members, especially Indonesia and Singapore feared that by excluding the US, Chinese hegemony in the region would go unchallenged. Indonesia was also concerned that EAEG would overshadow ASEAN and along with it, its traditional leadership in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, Mahathir’s announcement of the proposal without consulting Indonesia was seen as disrespecting Indonesia’s leadership status in Southeast Asia.

The name was quickly changed to EAEC to impress that the idea was a loose consultative forum rather than any kind of economic or trade union. In this regard, economic factors were undeniably influential in countering emerging Western economic

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Higgott and R. Stubbs, ‘Competing Conceptions of Economic Regionalism: APEC versus the EAEC in the Asia Pacific’ in *The Review of International Political Economy*, Vol.2, No.3, 1995, p.523.

<sup>43</sup> According to Langdon, the EAEC concept was potentially an anti-Western coalition. See F. Langdon, *Japan’s Regional and Global Coalition Participation: Political and Economic Aspects*, Working Paper no.14, June 1997, Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia, pp.27-8.

blocs, namely the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) and the EU.<sup>44</sup> Underscoring the economic benefits of integration, Mahathir said;

“We have all done well if not very well. An East Asian regional economy, integrating at a remarkable rate, is increasing at breathtaking speed. The integration has been private sector-driven, a source of real strength. In purchasing power parity terms, East Asia is already the largest regional economy in the world, bigger than the Western European or NAFTA regional economy. In US dollar terms, we will enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century being the largest economy in the world.”<sup>45</sup>

Mahathir believed that the EAEC would be a logical follow-up for East Asian governments to take because it would ensure the continuing economic well-being of their countries. Mahathir hoped that the East Asia’s co-operation based on the ‘Prosper Thy Neighbour’ philosophy, which would bring a ‘win – win’ solutions to all parties would make the EAEC a model for North-South co-operation. In this regard, the experience of Japanese investment in Southeast Asia, which in turn transformed the region into becoming good markets for Japanese products, could be emulated to create a wider regional growth.<sup>46</sup>

While admitting that there were many models of economic development in East Asia, Mahathir highlighted that many economists still talked about the ‘East Asian model’. To him, it is characterised by a high savings rate and an emphasis on education. Furthermore, East Asian governments shared a sense of national pragmatism. “We all did it our way. And the most important element was not the international system, or the regional system but the national pragmatism *sans* ideology,” he asserted.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The First East Asian Young Leaders Congress on ‘East Asian Peace Stability and Prosperity’, Kuala Lumpur, 5 August 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The Pacific Rim Business Collaboration Symposium, Kuala Lumpur, 5 December 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p.53.

<sup>47</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the ASEAN-India Business Luncheon, New Delhi, 17 October 2002, in *Reflections on ASEAN: Selected Speeches by Mahathir Mohamad*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2004, pp.288-289.

Beyond economics, this particularity of the East Asian model resonates in the political and security rationales as well. Despite the absence of large scale military conflicts, Mahathir was aware of the underlying tension between countries of Northeast Asia. A regional community, in Mahathir's mind, would help establish a regional code of conduct, engender common values, and ultimately create a communal identity. As emphasised, he believed that ASEAN provided a suitable example for Northeast Asia, due to its grounding in indigenous Asian culture. Mahathir attributed ASEAN for transforming conflict-ridden Southeast Asia in 1967 into "a zone of true peace, a community of warm, co-operation and enduring peace."<sup>48</sup>

Mahathir believed that Northeast Asia, and East Asia more generally, would forever be divided and weak unless they overcome their mutual distrust. To him, the situation was dangerous because it made the countries vulnerable to exploitation by the West. Hence, Mahathir appealed:

"We need to escape the mindset dictated in capitals in other continents, many of whom may not have a similar interest in our peace and our friendship. It is touching how so many of us in Asia seem to assume that others can have a greater interest in the welfare of Asia than Asians do. It is remarkable how much we borrow from others in terms of what we think about, how to think about the things we think about, even what to think about the things we think about. Colonialism is dead. But it is amazing how vigorous is our intellectual subservience and how deep is our psychological servitude."<sup>49</sup>

Mahathir did not argue for a new hegemony of neither Japan nor China when he argued for East Asia regionalism. However, he did believe that because of the different sizes of their economies, East Asian countries had to expect some of them to play bigger roles than others. Here, he used the analogy of a family, in the sense that

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<sup>48</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Towards a Stable Asia', paper delivered at the Nihon Keizai Shimbun International Conference on 'The Future of Asia', Tokyo, May 17 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, pp.150-151.

<sup>49</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the 1996 Regional Conference of Harvard Clubs of Asia, Kuala Lumpur, 15 August 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.134.

older siblings would always have to carry more responsibilities befitting their sizes and abilities.<sup>50</sup> Mahathir envisioned a regional organisation whose members would be bound by principles of “mutual benefit, mutual respect, egalitarianism, consensus and democracy”.<sup>51</sup>

“As an East Asian, I am committed to the building of an East Asian community in which our common peace is cooperatively built, an East Asian community in which the giants of our region – China, Japan, Indonesia – shall have their rightful responsibilities, all of us living in harmony in an egalitarian community of mutual respect and mutual benefit.”<sup>52</sup>

To Mahathir, an exclusively East Asian regional institution was pivotal if East Asian countries were to achieve independence of thoughts and actions. He believed that it would be the only way for them to manage the security dilemma they had been facing for a long time, which could have been perpetuated by outside influences.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Mahathir wanted the EAEC to be a framework for East Asia to find ‘regional solutions to regional problems’, like what ASEAN has achieved for Southeast Asia.

In addition, Mahathir felt that East Asian countries should have a bigger voice befitting its economic prowess. Clearly, Mahathir perceived some East Asian countries, in particular Japan, continued to be subordinated to the West. Due to this, East Asian countries were not able to contribute and play any effective role in the international society. In this regard, Mahathir lamented,

“Will we enter 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the object of international economic relations or as a full subject of international economic relations? Will we be ‘the prize’, the victim, the economic battlefield of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with no say in the wider world, whose rules will be decided elsewhere? Or will

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<sup>50</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the 27<sup>th</sup> International General Meeting of the Pacific Basin Economic Council, Kuala Lumpur in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p.36.

<sup>51</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The First East Asian Young Leaders Congress on ‘East Asian Peace Stability and Prosperity’, Kuala Lumpur on 5 August 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>52</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the Opening of the Tenth International General Meeting of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC X), Kuala Lumpur, 22 March 1994 in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p.41.

<sup>53</sup> For discussion on the security dilemma in Northeast Asia, see Thomas J. Christensen, ‘China, the US – Japan Alliance and the Security Dilemma in East Asia’ in *International Security*, 22.4. Spring 1999.

we be full-fledged actors, able to play our rightful role in global economies, and able to make the contribution we must to the healthiest development of the Commonwealth of man?"<sup>54</sup>

In reiterating this call at the Pacific Dialogue in November 1994 in Penang Malaysia, Mahathir quoted a policy paper issued by the European Commission entitled 'Towards a New Asia Strategy'. The paper argued that Asia's growing economic weight was inevitably generating increasing pressures for a greater role in world affairs. The paper concluded that the EU should "seek to develop its political dialogue with Asia and should look for ways to associate Asia more and more with the management of international affairs, working towards a partnership of equals, capable of playing a constructive and stabilising role in the world".<sup>55</sup> In commenting on the paper, Mahathir said that East Asia at that point could not even think of 'equality' but certainly demand some 'respect'.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, along with the economic and security rationales, it was apparent that the quest for respect also underpinned Mahathir's efforts to promote East Asia regionalism. Mahathir believed that an exclusively East Asian regional organisation was vital to give the community its voice so that their interests could be promoted. The proposed organisation would elevate the status of East Asia, befitting the economic contribution of the community. To Mahathir, equal status is important in terms of the rights that it confers, that is, equal participation in the international order. Mahathir regarded this as being increasingly important due to globalisation. It was important for

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<sup>54</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The First East Asian Young Leaders Congress on 'East Asian Peace Stability and Prosperity', Kuala Lumpur, 5 August 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The Pacific Dialogue in Penang, Malaysia, 13 November 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at The Pacific Dialogue in Penang, Malaysia on 13 November 1994, in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p. 14.

East Asia to participate in setting the emerging norms of globalisation to ensure that they would be more inclusive and not only based on the interests of the powerful West.

Mahathir's EAEC vision did not materialise due to strong US objections, making some countries including Japan (whose leadership Mahathir deemed crucial), reluctant to pursue the idea.<sup>57</sup> At the time, the Americans along with the Australians were pursuing a wider regional co-operation framework in the form of the Asia – Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC).<sup>58</sup> Mahathir was not supportive of APEC because he believed that it would likely be dominated by the US and institutionalise Western economic control in Asia.<sup>59</sup> To express his disapproval, Mahathir chose not to attend the first APEC Summit in Seattle in November 1993. His dissatisfaction clearly stemmed from his perception that East Asian nations had little say in the proposed organisation. Rationalising his non-attendance, he said that "perhaps you have to thumb your nose at people before they notice you."<sup>60</sup> The pressure faced by Mahathir to comply was obvious when the Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating called him a 'recalcitrant' for failing to attend the Seattle Summit.<sup>61</sup>

To Mahathir, the lack of support for the EAEC and the reluctance of East Asian countries to contradict the wishes of the Americans further proved the subjugation of East Asia by the West. Mahathir claimed that by rejecting the proposal, East Asian

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<sup>57</sup> Charles Harvie and Hyun-Hoon Lee, 'New Regionalism in East Asia: How Does It Relate to the East Asian Economic Development Model?' in *New Asian Regionalism: Responses to Globalisation and Crises*, Tran Van Hoa and Charles Harvie, Australia: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.42. See also Richard Higgott and R. Stubbs, 'Competing Conceptions of Economic Regionalism...' in *The Review of International Political Economy*.

<sup>58</sup> See R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, pp.128-30. See also Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.231.

<sup>59</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.129.

<sup>60</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.130.

<sup>61</sup> This incident led to a 'war' between the Malaysian and Australian media. See Chandran Jeshurun, *Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.249.

countries did not display “loyalty to Asia” and berated their still “colonised mentality”.<sup>62</sup>

As for the West, Mahathir felt that by effectively denying East Asia the right to form a regional organisation, they had shown yet again their hegemonic tendency and double standard. Mahathir observed that while Western countries were free to form NAFTA and the EU, East Asian countries did not enjoy the same freedom. According to Mahathir:

“... some East Asian countries were actually instructed by Western countries, which had already formed their own trade blocs, that they should reject this forum. Clearly what is right for the Western countries is not right for Eastern countries. Equality is not the great principle that the Western countries make it out to be. Equality is only good if it results in economic and other gains for the West, but if it is perceived to be a threat to them, then equality should not be advocated.”<sup>63</sup>

Mahathir’s aspiration for East Asian regionalism remained consistent throughout his premiership. Two months before he retired, he reiterated the hope that an East Asia regional organisation could be realised based on:

“Mutual benefit. Mutual respect. Egalitarianism. Consensus. Democracy. No self-centred selfishness that is interested only in squeezing our neighbours dry. Prosper thy neighbour, not beggar thy neighbour. No self-centred, self righteous egotism that justifies sermonising, hectoring, bullying and coercion. No hegemony. No imperialism. No commands. No decrees. No edicts. No diktats. No bulldozing. No unequal treaties. No forced agreement. No intimidation. No empty Cartesian contracts not worth the paper on which they are printed. Instead advancement on the basis of true consensus and real agreement. Democratic decision-making. No unilateralism. The governance of East Asia, by East Asia, for East Asia.”<sup>64</sup>

At that point, he noticed that the idea of East Asia co-operation had become conventional wisdom. However, Mahathir believed that it would only transpire if East Asians seized their future into their own hands. While not denying the US contribution towards the prosperity of the region, he could not condone the Washington’s patronising attitude. Mahathir asserted:

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<sup>62</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, an address at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Malaysia-China Forum, Beijing, 26 August 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.123.

<sup>63</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘An Equal Asia-Europe Partnership for A Better World’, a paper delivered at the Asia Business Leaders’ Bangkok Dialogue, Bangkok, 3 March 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, pp. 168-169.

"I very strongly believe it is we, the nations of East Asia, who should build our East Asian Community of cooperative peace and prosperity. We are not cows to be led by the nose. We are not children to be led by the hand."<sup>65</sup>

Thus, it is clear that beyond economic and security rationales, there were influential recognition factors that motivated Mahathir to pursue a policy of East Asian regionalism. The issue of respect was imperative. In this sense, Mahathir aspired for East Asia to be truly independent by taking charge of their own affairs. EAEC would provide recognition of the values of East Asia, which Mahathir believed were the bedrock of their economic success. The proposed regional institution would enhance the status of East Asian nations, providing them with their rightful voice and make them counted as equals by the West.

#### ASEAN+3 (APT)

Malaysia under Mahathir continued to pursue the idea of East Asia regionalism within the ASEAN framework after the EAEC failed to launch. This paid off when ASEAN + 3 (APT) was founded in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis that began in 1997. APT's origin can be traced to the Second Informal ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997. For the first time, ASEAN countries invited China, Japan and South Korea to join them as a group. APT clearly "represents a close approximation of Mahathir's Pan-Asian vision,"<sup>66</sup> and some observers even consider it as "in many ways a de facto realisation of EAEC."<sup>67</sup> Reflecting the importance Mahathir attached towards

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<sup>64</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the First East Asia Congress in Kuala Lumpur, 4 August 2003, [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 2 July 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the First East Asia Congress in Kuala Lumpur, 4 August 2003, [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 2 July 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Mark T Berger, *The Battle for Asia*, p.160.

<sup>67</sup> Nicholas Tarling, *Regionalism in Southeast Asia: To Foster the Political Will*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p.203.

enhancing confidence amongst the Northeast Asian countries, the first meeting of APT focused on promoting good neighbourly and friendly relations with China, increasing high level exchanges and strengthening various dialogue mechanisms.

An important step towards East Asia regionalism was taken with the initiation of the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) at the APT Summit in Hanoi in 1998. EAVG had the mandate to discuss long-term co-operation in the region, with the view of establishing an East Asia Summit. A further step towards strengthening East Asian co-operation was the initiative to include the foreign, finance and trade ministers, in addition to heads of governments of the 10+3 at the ASEAN Summit in 1999. These ministers had already started to meet at other points during the year. At the event, ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea pledged to co-operate on economic and social development, as well as politics and security in an unprecedented joint declaration on the future of East Asia. The concept of East Asia regionalism was further strengthened at the ASEAN Summit in 2000, when APT leaders decided to form an East Asia Study Group (EASG) that would assess the recommendations of the EAVG, and explore the idea and implications of organising an East Asia Summit.<sup>68</sup>

Towards institutionalising East Asian regional co-operation, Mahathir proposed the establishment of a permanent secretariat for APT in Kuala Lumpur to his Japanese counterpart during his visit to Tokyo in late May 2002. In part, this proposal reflected Mahathir's desire to formally institutionalise the process of East Asia regionalism. Mahathir felt that it would be fitting for Malaysia to host the APT Secretariat because the idea was Malaysia's from the beginning. Furthermore, Mahathir believed that Malaysia is the most neutral location for the secretariat because Malaysia's

‘independent’ policy would make it enjoy good relations with all countries.<sup>69</sup> In this sense, the secretariat would not only recognise Malaysia’s leading role in forging an East Asian regionalism, but also give expression to its independent identity. Malaysia pledged US10 million to fund the secretariat. The proposal was discussed at the July 2002 ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting but no agreement was reached.<sup>70</sup>

#### East Asia Summit (EAS)

The EAVG report recommended “the evolution of the annual summit meetings of APT into an East Asian Summit (EAS).” However, at the APT Summit in Cambodia in 2002, in commenting on the EAVG’s report, the EASG, among others, raised the membership question.<sup>71</sup> It was a very contentious issue, which contributed towards the slow discussions on EAS. For a long time, Malaysia wanted to limit the membership to APT countries only. Other countries, like Singapore for example, wanted the membership to be open to Pacific (like Australia) and Asia (like India) countries. Malaysia’s position was in line with Mahathir’s sentiments that Australia’s arrogance was “unmitigated” in its declaration that it was “the deputy to the US in policing Asia.”<sup>72</sup> Such an attitude of Australia as the self-appointed deputy sheriff of the US was probably clear to Mahathir when he was accused of being a ‘recalcitrant’ by the Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating after Mahathir decided to boycott the first APEC Summit held in Seattle in 1993. According to Jeshurun, [p]eople have regarded Mahathir’s disdain for anyone pandering to the American as almost bordering on an obsession, and this was particularly noticeable

<sup>68</sup> File document, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Wisma Putra, 2001.

<sup>69</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>70</sup> File document, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Wisma Putra, 2001.

<sup>71</sup> Final report of the East Asia Study Group, ASEAN + 3 Summit on 4 November 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. <http://www.aseansec.org>, accessed on 2 July 2006.

in his total rejection of the Aussies and the New Zealanders in any regional forum.”<sup>73</sup>

Thus in Malaysia’s view, as the deputy sheriff of the US, there was no place for Australia in the regional organisation of East Asian nations. Mahathir believed that Australia would try to impose its views, which would be in line with the US, in the proposed organisation.<sup>74</sup> While Malaysia, China and South Korea sought a quick decision, Japan, while favouring the idea in principle, stressed on the need for ASEAN to achieve consensus. Finding an ASEAN consensus was mostly hindered by Singapore. For example, Singapore argued that the EASG Working Group (WG) consisting of Directors General of ASEAN national secretariats, was not qualified to select concrete measures and recommendations because members of the EASG WG were not technical experts and that it needed time to consult its technical experts.<sup>75</sup> In the end, the consensus was for the process to be ‘evolutionary’ due to the issues (for example, membership and its implication on ASEAN) remaining unresolved.<sup>76</sup>

Malaysia’s position on membership relaxed considerably after Mahathir retired in 2003. While Malaysia continued to push for the realisation of the East Asia Summit under Abdullah Badawi, it finally succumbed to the pressure to open the membership to non-APT countries with the condition that those countries accede to ASEAN’s TAC. Here it is important to note that the significance of TAC is in its provision of arrangement of legitimate relations on the basis of sovereign equality. In December 2005, after signing the APT, India, Australia and New Zealand joined the ASEAN and the ‘+3’ countries in the convening of the first EAS. Malaysian Prime

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<sup>72</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2002, p.63.

<sup>73</sup> Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.233.

<sup>74</sup> Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.335.

<sup>75</sup> File document, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, Wisma Putra, 2001.

Minister Abdullah Badawi announced that EAS would continue to be an APT driven process and that the APT would continue to be the vehicle for realising the dreams of forming the East Asian community.<sup>77</sup> Again, this is consistent with Mahathir's desire, proving that his ideas about East Asia regionalism had to a certain extent been retained in the foreign policy bureaucracy.

Mahathir criticised Australia's participation as corrupting his vision of East Asia integration. He said that Australia was Western and had made obvious to the world that it was the deputy sheriff of the US.<sup>78</sup> To him, Australia's views would not represent the East but those of the US. He had always opposed the idea of Australia and New Zealand to be in the group because Australia and New Zealand were "neither East nor Asians."<sup>79</sup> In Mahathir's perceptions, Australia had violated what he deemed to be the legitimate relations between it (Australia) and East Asian countries in the manner that Australia had tried to impose its Western values and standards on East Asian countries, similar to the US. Thus, Mahathir's strong objection to Australia's participation in East Asian regionalism can be understood in terms of his aspiration for the organisation to truly represent and validate Asian values, with complete independence in its decision-making, and to ultimately be considered as equals in their interactions with the West.

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<sup>76</sup> Final report of the East Asia Study Group, ASEAN + 3 Summit on 4 November 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. <http://www.aseansec.org>, (accessed on 2 July 2006).

<sup>77</sup> <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6645>, (accessed on 5 July 2006).

<sup>78</sup> Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.335.

<sup>79</sup> *Mahathir Blasts Australia Over Summit*, AP, 7 December 2005: <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=76332> . See also Chandran Jeshurun, *Malaysia: Fifty Years of Diplomacy*, p.335.

### 7.2.2. Bilateral Initiatives towards East Asian Nations

#### The ‘Look East’ Policy

Mahathir’s ‘Look East’ campaign provided the rationalisation that underpinned the policy reorientation to the East. As highlighted in Chapter Four, the ‘Look East’ policy was introduced by Mahathir in the hope that the discipline, determination and hard work that he observed as character traits of the Japanese people would be emulated by Malaysians, especially the Malays. Although appreciating the significant difficulties in changing people’s character, Mahathir felt that it would be much easier for the Malays to adopt the Japanese ways than to copy the ethics and practices of the West.<sup>80</sup> Thus, on one level, ‘Look East’ encapsulated a call for a change of mindset within the Malaysian domestic society. In this regard, it was a strategy to change the Malay or Malaysian characteristics by targeting the psychology of the domestic population. Chapter Four has illustrated specific domestic policies that came under the ‘Look East’ umbrella. Domestically, it involves the adoption of Japanese work culture in Malaysian organisations and also the attempt to emulate Japan Incorporated in the form of Malaysia Incorporated.<sup>81</sup> In this section, the impact of the ‘Look East’ policy on Malaysia’s foreign relations will be considered.

The practical implementation of the ‘Look East’ policy impacted most significantly on Malaysia’s relations with Japan. In order to cultivate Japanese work ethics, the Public Services Department set up a Look East Policy Division and started to send students and government officials to Japan and South Korea for training. By 2004,

<sup>80</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, p.37.

<sup>81</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Voice of Asia*, p.131. See also Lee Poh Ping, ‘Japan Incorporated’ and Its Relevance to Malaysia’ in *Mahathir’s Economic Policies*, Jomo K.S (ed.), Kuala Lumpur: INSAN, 1989, pp.35-37.

over 13,000 Malaysians had been sent to study in Japan since the adoption of the ‘Look East’ policy.<sup>82</sup> Malaysia Inc., a direct copy of Japan Inc.,<sup>83</sup> signified Mahathir’s idolisation of the Japanese model which underpinned the new special relations he carved for the two countries. Under Mahathir, Japan replaced the UK as “Malaysia’s number 1 bilateral partner.”<sup>84</sup>

### Japan

Mahathir’s admiration of the work ethics of the Japanese people was already illustrated in Chapter Three. It has been established that Mahathir’s belief system was significantly affected by his positive observations of the discipline exhibited by the Japanese soldiers when they occupied Malaya during World War II. Although he admitted that the occupation “was not a pleasant experience,” he remembered that Japanese soldiers always paid a fair price for provisions at the market where he had a stall. Also, he himself was never mistreated by them.<sup>85</sup> According to Mahathir, the Japanese occupation completely changed his view of the world. He believed that the occupation had a significant psychological impact on Malayans, in that it reinforced their self-confidence as an Asian race. As Mahathir argued:

“Before the war, when Malaya was under British rule, our entire world-view was that we had no capability to be independent. We thought that only Europeans could run our country, and felt we had to accept their superiority. But the success of the Japanese invasion convinced us that there is nothing inherently superior in the Europeans.”<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Seminar on ‘Business Opportunities in Malaysia’, Kobe, Japan, 25 June 2005. <http://www.miti.gov.my> accessed on 22 October 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Voice of Asia*, p.131. See Lee Poh Ping, ‘Japan Incorporated’ and Its Relevance to Malaysia’ in *Mahathir’s Economic Policies*, Jomo, K.S. (ed.) pp.35-37.

<sup>84</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981-2003*, Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Boston University, 2005, p.211.

<sup>85</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘The Pacific Age’ in Mahathir Mohamad and Shintaro Ishihara, *The Voice of Asia: Two Leaders Discuss The Coming Century*, translated by Frank Baldwin, Tokyo, New York: Kondasha International, 1995, p.17.

<sup>86</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia*, p.16.

Believing that the attitude of the Japanese was the key to their success, one particular lesson he learnt during the Japanese occupation of Malaya was that discipline was the only pre-requisite for success. Furthermore, it triggered an important political awakening within him that Malayans possessed the ability to govern their own country and “compete with the Europeans on an equal footing.”<sup>87</sup> In the process, he became convinced of the merit of Asian culture, which was hitherto perceived as inferior to the European.

“Most Asians felt inferior to the European colonisers and rarely did we even consider independence a viable option. Asia was a region without pride and self-confidence and our economies were structured to secure the European demand for raw materials and natural resources.”<sup>88</sup>

Mahathir’s positive image of the values and attitudes of the Japanese were confirmed when he visited Japan for the first time in 1961. Mahathir observed rapid recovery of the nation in the aftermath of the war. Most importantly, he observed that “the Japanese people were very determined, focused on working and were very polite to each other.”<sup>89</sup> He thus attributed the impressive recovery of Japan to “the character of the Japanese people, their work ethics and their management methods.”<sup>90</sup> According to Mahathir, this was the reason why he introduced the ‘Look East’ policy when he later assumed the premiership in 1981. He wanted the indigenous *Malays* to adopt the same work ethics, so that they would be able to reap the opportunities of the NEP and close the economic gap with the Chinese.<sup>91</sup> Put differently, in Mahathir’s belief system, Japan became the embodiment of a successful nation that Mahathir believed was more suitable

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<sup>87</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal for Asia*, pp.16-7.

<sup>88</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *A New Deal For Asia*, p.15.

<sup>89</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, p.36.

for Malaysians to emulate compared to the European ones. It induced a re-orientation of foreign policy with an increased identification with East Asia, especially with Japan.

Mahathir paid his first visit as prime minister to Japan in May 1982. During his premiership, on average, he travelled to Japan almost every year, sometimes twice a year, whether on official or unofficial visits.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, from 1999, Mahathir made it a point to attend the annual Nikkei Shimbun Conference on 'The Future of Asia'. This Conference aims to deepen the understanding between Japan and other Asian nations. Its participants include ministers and senior officials, as well as top corporate leaders of the region. Mahathir spoke every year at the conference, and without failure, always raised the issue of Japanese leadership in realising East Asia regionalism.<sup>93</sup> It is obvious that Mahathir considered the conference to be vital in promoting his vision of East Asia co-operation.

Certainly, there were significant economic rationales behind the strengthening relations with Japan. Beyond regarding Japan as its model for development, the implementation of 'Look East' also coincided with a significant rise in Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) into Malaysia in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>94</sup> During this period, Japanese FDI into Malaysia cumulatively overtook that of the US and EU. Japan also advanced as the most generous bilateral donor of Overseas Development Aid (ODA) to

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<sup>90</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, p.37.

<sup>91</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *Reflections on Asia*, pp.36-7.

<sup>92</sup> Mahathir's visited Japan in May 1982, January and November 1983, October 1984, July 1985, October 1986, October 1987, December 1991, May 1993, October 1994, May 1995, February and May 1996, March and November 1997, October 1998, May-June 1999, June 2000, January, June and October 2001, May and December 2002 and June 2003. Source: Office of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Perdana Leadership Foundation, Putrajaya.

<sup>93</sup> For Mahathir's speeches at the Nikkei Conferences, visit <http://www.perdana.org.my>.

<sup>94</sup> Khadijah MD Khalid, 'Malaysia-Japan Relations under Mahathir: "Turning Japanese?"', in *Reflections: The Mahathir Years*, Bridget Welsh (ed.), Washington DC: Southeast Asia Studies Program, 2004, p.330.

Malaysia.<sup>95</sup> Thus, it has been observed that “[t]he most vibrant dimension of the Japan-Malaysia relationship has been economic, centred in the business community.”<sup>96</sup> Some high-profile Malaysia-Japanese collaborations occurred including car manufacturing led by Mitsubishi and Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional (PROTON), and Daihatsu with Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua (PERODUA), as well as the Mitsui cement plant and the steel production between Nippon Steel and Perwaja. Therefore, the policy clearly brought economic benefits. In assuming the status of a willing pupil in relation to Japan, Mahathir hoped that Japan would grant more aid, increase the level of investment and offer better access for Malaysian products to the Japanese market.<sup>97</sup>

However, it cannot be definitely concluded that the ‘Look East’ policy was undertaken with the sole economic purpose of luring Japanese investment. The policy and the consequent strengthening of bilateral relations with Japan must be understood in the context of Mahathir’s deep admiration of Japan. It was this admiration that made Malaysia initiate the ‘Look East’ policy and push Japan to assume a leadership role in East Asia. Moreover, the special status that Mahathir accorded Japan was also due to some important recognition factors. Firstly, as an important economic partner, Mahathir felt that Japanese leaders never looked down on him, or Malaysia. Secondly, Mahathir believed that the Malaysia - Japan relationship was proper because Japan never interfered in the domestic affairs of Malaysia. Thirdly, due to the fact that Japan was a successful industrialised country, Mahathir must have believed that a special relationship between Malaysia and Japan would definitely impress other nations.

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<sup>95</sup> See table 2.4 in Hirohisa Kohama, ‘Japan’s Development Cooperation in East Asia: A Historical Overview of Japan’s ODA and Its Impact’ in *External Factors for Asian Development*, Hirohisa Kohama (ed), Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003, p.18.

<sup>96</sup> Khadijah Md. Khalid, ‘Malaysia-Japan Relations under Mahathir: “Turning Japanese?”’, in *Reflections*, Bridget Welsh (ed.), p.330.

### 7.3. THE ‘ASIAN VALUES’ DEBATE

An essential aspect of Mahathir’s recognition struggle in relation to East Asia is in the context of the suitable place for East Asian values. Mahathir is a notable proponent of the ‘Asian values’ argument, which was popular and widely debated in the 1990s.<sup>98</sup> Basically, proponents of Asian values held that East Asian economic success was a product of Asian culture, which stresses the “collectivity” over the individual.<sup>99</sup> While accepting the diversity of East Asian culture, the proponents of Asian values claimed that there were significant commonalities, for example, their emphasis on “thrift, family, work and discipline”, which according to Huntington, made it essential for them to found a new framework for intra-East Asian co-operation like the EAEC in order to protect their common interests *vis-à-vis* the West.<sup>100</sup>

While arguing the merits of Asian values, Mahathir realised that Asian or Western values are not monolithic sets of values. Moreover, he admitted that he should not identify ‘the West’ solely with the Anglo-Saxon world or way.<sup>101</sup> Mahathir also noted that there had been a great convergence of values over the last few hundred years that

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<sup>97</sup> Lee Poh Ping, ‘The Look East Policy, the Japanese Model and Malaysia’ in *Reflections*, p.318.

<sup>98</sup> Greg Sheridan, *Asian Values, Western Dreams*, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1996, pp.107-8. See also Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think?*, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Times Books International, 1998, and Diane K. Mauzy, ‘The Human Rights and ‘Asian Values’ Debate in Southeast Asia: Trying to Clarify the Key Issues’ in *The Pacific Review*, 10 (2) 1997, pp. 210-36. On the other hand, Langlois argued that a lot of the claims, whether from the proponents or critics of Asian values, were made on behalf of others in the region. Senior political leaders spoke as if all under their leadership shared these values. Instead, critics suggested, on behalf of all human beings, that human rights were universal. See Anthony J. Langlois, *The Politics of Justice and Human Rights: Southeast Asia and Universalist Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.46.

<sup>100</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, London: Simon & Schuster, 1996, p.108.

<sup>101</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Asians Versus Western Values’, speech at the Senate House, University of Cambridge, 15 March 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values: Selected Speeches of Mahathir Mohamad, Vol. 1*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2002, p.14.

some started talking about universal values and the ‘end of history’.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, he argued that there remained a great diversity of values and attitudes worldwide. In many issue areas he felt that insistence on looking at them from only one cultural perspective would only lead to acute political discords. He warned of conflicts due to the aggressive nature of the proponents of ‘universal values’ and expressed bewilderment at the “ferocious cultural denial” of cultural pluralism that he considered to be obvious, and this made him rather suspicious of the motives of the West.<sup>103</sup>

According to Mahathir, East Asian societies were bound together by their shared prioritisation of community rights above individuals’ rights.<sup>104</sup> In his seminal speech on ‘Asian versus Western Values’ at the University of Cambridge in 1995, Mahathir quoted a study conducted by David Hitchcock<sup>105</sup> in 1994, in defining Asian values. The survey involved asking Americans and East Asians (Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, Malaysians, Singaporeans, Indonesians and Filipinos) to choose six ‘societal values’ and five ‘personal values’ which they regarded as central for them. It found that the six societal values most valued by East Asians were: firstly, having an orderly society; secondly, societal harmony; thirdly, ensuring the accountability of public officials; fourthly, being open to new ideas; fifthly, freedom of expression and sixthly, respect for authority. In contrast, the six most important societal values for the Americans were; freedom of expression, personal freedom, the rights of the individual,

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<sup>102</sup> See for example, Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992.

<sup>103</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Asians Versus Western Values’, speech at the Senate House, University of Cambridge, 15 March 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, pp.13 -14

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Mahathir Mohamad, London, 16 January 2007.

<sup>105</sup> The former Director for East Asian and the Pacific Affairs of the US Information Agency.

open debates, thinking for oneself and finally, the accountability of public officials.<sup>106</sup>

Mahathir felt that the findings supported the intuitive assumptions of most East Asians and those who knew East Asia, on the salient elements of Asian values.

At the Cambridge event, Mahathir maintained that his argument on the plurality of values did not in any way represent a defence of dictatorship, authoritarianism, anti-democratic practices, the suppression of human-rights or the denial of democracy. He insisted that any atrocity, irrespective of where it occurs, must not be tolerated and that no perpetrator of atrocities should be allowed to hide behind the cloak of cultural relativism. Also, he conceded that Asian values included some negative practices that he believed Asians should discard. To illustrate, Mahathir had always criticised the Malays for their fatalism and feudalism. Furthermore, he argued that Western values should not be dismissed in full. ‘Western’ did not mean exclusively bad either. As he put it, “[t]here are many Western values, found in the best Western societies, which we should adopt and internalise more deeply”.<sup>107</sup> Thus, what he appealed for was respect and tolerance for all cultures and appreciation of their particular merits. In this regard, Mahathir observed that there was more of a tendency for the West to be intolerant of other cultures. In his view, this was the consequence of a widespread arrogance in the West that led to disrespect of other cultures. Mahathir argued:

“Mutual respect demands an acceptance that those who have a different view are not necessarily misguided or evil. Mutual respect demands a minimum level of humility on all sides. The countries of the West have a right to their preferences. But they have no right to ram their preferences down anyone’s throat.”<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Asians versus Western Values’, speech at the Senate House, University of Cambridge, 15 March 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, pp.14 -15. See also Greg Sheridan, *Asian Values Western Dreams*, 1999, p.9.

<sup>107</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Asians Versus Western Values’, speech at the Senate House, University of Cambridge, 15 March 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, p.17.

A sense of deep nationalism underpinned the Asian values debate on both sides. For leaders like Mahathir, the central argument about accepting the plurality of cultures and values was driven by a strong indignation that “It is not up to the West – the US or any other part of the West – to determine the political culture of nations in South East Asia.”<sup>109</sup> The crux of Mahathir’s grievances was the way liberal democracy was being advocated by the West with little regard to local values and circumstances as if ‘one size fits all’. Mahathir believed that the nature of democracy should be contingent on the societal mores and values. While accepting that democracy had contributed to Malaysia’s achievement, Mahathir asserted that the Malaysian democracy was not of the Western variety and that all types of democracy should be valued as long as its practices yielded positive results for the society.<sup>110</sup> Mahathir believed that East Asian democracy is based on the understanding that freedom comes with responsibility.<sup>111</sup> To Mahathir, Asian human rights need not be a direct copy of Western human rights. In particular, freedom for the individuals and minorities must not deprive the rights of the majority.<sup>112</sup>

Mahathir asserted that East Asian democracy produced ‘strong governments’ and the success of their economies proved the efficacy of their model. A typical characteristic of these strong governments were the close links between the governments and the private sector.<sup>113</sup> They have also been accused of authoritarianism because,

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<sup>108</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Asians Versus Western Values’, speech at the Senate House, University of Cambridge, 15 March 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, p.19.

<sup>109</sup> Greg Sheridan, *Asian Values, Western Dreams*, 1999, p.13.

<sup>110</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the International Conference on the Future of Asia, Tokyo, 19 May 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, p.7.

<sup>111</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the International Conference on the Future of Asia, Tokyo, 19 May 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, p.6.

<sup>112</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the International Conference on the Future of Asia, Tokyo, 19 May 1995 in *Democracy, Human Rights, EAEC and Asian Values*, p.8.

<sup>113</sup> Refer the aspect of the Japanese model that Malaysia under Mahathir tried to emulate, in particular the relationship between the government and private sector, in Lee Poh Ping, ‘The Look East Policy, the Japanese Model, and Malaysia’ in *Reflections*, Bridget Welsh (ed.), Washington D.C: SAIS, pp.321-3.

allegedly, “Asian values were widely used not only to cover tracks of cronyism but to direct attention away from political repression and ecological holocaust.”<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, Mahathir maintained that East Asia’s distinctive democratic system was responsible for the political stability, which made East Asian nations attractive destinations for investments, generating economic growth and social development. He argued that East Asia proved the “strong correlation between rapid economic growth and strong stable governments.”<sup>115</sup>

Mahathir argued that this form of democracy concurs with Asian values because it suits the way East Asians relate to their leaders and their emphasis on social stability. He argued:

“In the West, democracy means many things to different people. To us in Asia, democracy means our citizens are entitled to free and fair elections. They can choose the governments of their liking. We also believe that once we have elected our governments, they should be allowed to govern and to formulate policies and act on them. Our democracy does not confer complete licence for citizens to go wild. We need political stability, predictability and consistency to provide the necessary environment for progress and economic development.”<sup>116</sup>

Therefore, Mahathir challenged the Western notions of democracy and free market systems as being the economic and politic cure-alls.<sup>117</sup> To him, the economic success of East Asia proved the efficacy of a different model that provides the stability needed for economic development. Mahathir’s moral indignation thus rooted in the fact that despite the success of the alternative East Asian model based on Asian values, East

<sup>114</sup> William H. Thornton, *Fire on the Rim: The Cultural Dynamics of East/West Power Politics*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002, p.13.

<sup>115</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the Opening of the Pacific Rim Business Collaboration Symposium in Kuala Lumpur on 5 December 1994 in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p.49.

<sup>116</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the Opening of the Pacific Rim Business Collaboration Symposium in Kuala Lumpur on 5 December 1994 in *Regional Development and the Pacific Community*, p.50. Chapter Four has elaborated on the practice on elections in Malaysia. For an alternative brief account, see Bridget Welsh, ‘Shifting Terrain: Elections in the Mahathir Era’ in *Reflections*, Bridget Welsh (ed.), pp.119-33.

Asian societies were still demonised as backward and their governments as observing inhumane practices. To illustrate, Mahathir remarked:

“We speak of Asian values: hard work, respect for authority, discipline, submission to the interest and the good of the majority and filial piety. We now find Asian values equated with authoritarian rule, disregard for human and workers right, political stability and economic success at all costs. We must now discard Asian values and adopt the so-called universal values as conceived by the West.”<sup>118</sup>

Mahathir observed strong pressures from Western countries on East Asian nations to adopt the free market system fully and also the Western standards of labour rights in international economic institutions, for example GATT, WTO and the International Labour Office (ILO). These pressures were also exerted in the Western controlled international media. It became almost impossible for non-Western nations to withstand the pressures to liberalise and open up their borders, even to the detriment of their home-grown industries and economies.<sup>119</sup> According to Mahathir, “at the GATT, WTO, ILO and other fora, the stress of the powerful is an unqualified equality.”<sup>120</sup> The pressure to liberalise was made more acute by attaching Western standards of democracy and human rights to issues of trade, investment and also the environment. Mahathir observed that, failure to subscribe to Western demands would make East Asian countries

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<sup>117</sup> On the Western notion of the free market economy and democratic system of government, Mahathir maintained that “[t]he mere adoption of these economic and political systems is no guarantee for success.” Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the Opening of the Pacific Rim Business Collaboration Symposium in Kuala Lumpur on 5 December 1994 in *Regional Development and the Pacific*, p.52.

<sup>118</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Building a Single Global Commonwealth’, paper delivered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Dialogue in Kuala Lumpur, 21 November 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.105.

<sup>119</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘An Equal Asia-Europe Partnership for a Better World’, paper delivered at the Asia Business Leaders’ Bangkok Dialogue, 3 March 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, pp167-8.

<sup>120</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘An Equal Asia-Europe Partnership for a Better World’, paper delivered at the Asia Business Leaders’ Bangkok Dialogue, 3 March 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.168.

susceptible to the West's bullying tactics, which include "anti-dumping measures or countervailing duties or just plain economic arm-twisting."<sup>121</sup>

The 'Asian values' debate took place against the backdrop of increasing globalisation, which to Mahathir, represented a West-driven process. Mahathir claimed that globalisation is underpinned by the belief in the West that the end of the Cold War had vindicated Western liberal democratic ideals. Mahathir was not isolated in his understanding. Stiglitz for example, while admitting the benefits of globalisation, observes that globalisation ("which typically is associated with accepting triumphant capitalism, American style"), to its proponents, "is progress: developing countries must accept it, if they are to grow and to fight poverty effectively."<sup>122</sup> Thus, there is a similarity in Mahathir's and Stiglitz's concerns of the dangerous manner in which globalisation was professed and spread, as if East Asian nations must adopt Western liberal values in order to be enlightened. This reminded Mahathir of colonisation because "[w]ithout the restraining effect of the competition", "the winners have begun to run wild ... [with] the old ideas about the need to civilise the backward people [returning] with a vengeance."<sup>123</sup> In other words, Mahathir was morally aggrieved because the way globalisation was being promoted indicated the persistent belief of cultural supremacy on the part of the West.

Mahathir equated globalisation to neo-colonialism. Firstly, he observed that universal standardisation and homogeneity were being pursued in almost all areas,

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<sup>121</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'An Equal Asia-Europe Partnership for a Better World', paper delivered at the Asia Business Leaders' Bangkok Dialogue, 3 March 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.168.

<sup>122</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalisation and Its Discontents*, London: Penguin, 2002, p.5.

<sup>123</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Socialism, Communism, Capitalism and Liberal Democracy', paper delivered at the 1998 Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 28 May 1998, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.50.

particularly political and economic standardisation, based solely on Western standards.

These standards were defined with particular reference to the Anglo-Saxon ideas on laissez-faire market economies. In the words of Mahathir:

“In economic terms, there is a huge – deliberate and non-deliberate, concerted and non-concerted – efforts to turn all Asian economies, all economies in fact, into Anglo-Saxon, laissez-faire market economies. In political terms, there is a huge movement – deliberate and non-deliberate, concerted and non-concerted – to turn all Asian political systems everywhere, into Anglo-Saxon liberal democracies or what is imagined to be Anglo-Saxon liberal democracies. In the final analysis, if we are sensible and enlightened, we must make sure that we are all democracies practising the market system.”<sup>124</sup>

Secondly, Mahathir believed that there were similarities in how, colonialism then, and now, globalisation, were being justified. Under globalisation, the West propagated its values and standards as if they are intrinsically superior to the rest. While Western leaders argued that the adoption of a liberal democratic system and a laissez-faire economy would bring ‘enlightenment’ to East Asian and all developing nations, Mahathir observed that somehow, only Western companies seemed to be reaping all the benefits. The unequal relationship between Western countries and non-Western countries in the age of globalisation is comparable to the colonial period. Speaking at a conference in 1998, Mahathir cynically described colonisation as an oligopolistic system that had also brought economic profits for the colonisers, which at one point was justified “because it was said to be civilising.”<sup>125</sup>

Mahathir’s moral indignation rooted in his perception of the subjugated status of Asian cultural values motivated him to champion solidarity within East Asia. He felt that Asia should stop “taking injury and insult in stoic silence” and had “a right to

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<sup>124</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, keynote address at the International Conference on ‘The Future of Asia’ organised by Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Tokyo, 3 June 1998, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.31.

<sup>125</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, ‘Socialism, Communism, Capitalism and Liberal Democracy’, paper delivered at the 1998 Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 28 May 1998 in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.49.

demand a little maturity and sophistication" from those " who so easily slip into the role of policeman, prosecutor, judge and jury..."<sup>126</sup> In appealing for support for the EAEC, Mahathir argued that East Asia must assert their "democratic rights , as nations, to be equal" and not to allow themselves to be "mentally, informationally and diplomatically bludgeoned."<sup>127</sup>

#### **7.4. THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION IN THE CASE OF THE EAST**

As this chapter has demonstrated, Mahathir's foreign policy towards the East Asian nations had been underpinned by a quest for recognition. Firstly, he strove for equality in the relations between nations in the region, as well as respect for this arrangement for legitimate relations. This is illustrated by his commitments towards ASEAN principles and his initiatives to establish a similar kind of arrangement in the wider East Asia region. The search for respect was an important motivational force. Secondly, Mahathir's search for recognition was demonstrated by him championing Asian values. Mahathir wanted to see Asian values recognised as the contributory factors to the success of East Asian economies. In this sense, he was driven significantly by a quest for esteem.

It can be argued that Mahathir's recognition struggles stemmed from his beliefs that Asians, including the Malays, suffered from a colonised mindset, which led to an imbedded inferiority complex and a perception of superiority on the part of the West. In addition, due to the lack of respect shown by the West for East Asian values and its particular ways of doing things, Mahathir felt that East Asian nations were not given the

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<sup>126</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, 'Building a Single Global Commonwealth', a paper delivered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Dialogue, Kuala Lumpur, 21 November 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.106.

chance to play any major role in international affairs, even when their interests were directly affected. Mahathir resented the fact that the West, particularly the US, continued to play a decisive role in East Asia, thereby undermining the region's political, security and economic well-being. According to Mahathir, the reason why he did not attend the first APEC Summit in Seattle in 1993 was precisely because he was against the US playing such an influential role in East Asia.<sup>128</sup> In this sense, the crux of Mahathir's moral indignation was the continued subjugated status of the East Asian nations, which deprived them of their due respect as nations. Even after they achieved political independence, Mahathir saw that East Asian nations were still being dictated to by the West, particularly the US.

There is a clear correlation between Mahathir's rhetoric about the non-recognition of the status and rights of East Asia, and Malaysia's foreign policy initiatives towards the region. For example, the discourse on 'Asian values' provides the intellectual argument pertinent to recognition struggles, beyond the economics and security rationales that underpinned Mahathir's proposal for East Asian regionalism. In his discourse on 'Asian values', Mahathir sought recognition for East Asian culture, which he felt was instrumental in bringing economic development to the East Asian economies. Instead of arguing the supremacy of Asian over Western values, he argued for recognition and tolerance of plurality of values. He believed that non-Western models could also be appropriate examples depending on circumstances. Mahathir felt that the non-recognition of Asian values exposed the ingrained feeling of superiority and arrogance of the West. To him, globalisation was akin to colonialism because both were

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<sup>127</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, speech at the New Asia Forum, Kuala Lumpur, 11 January 1996, in *Politics, Democracy and the New Asia*, p.179.

based on the deep-rooted superiority complex of the West and was being justified by some of its proponents in the same way as bringing progress. In addition, Mahathir observed that somehow only Western companies and countries seemed to benefit from globalisation, as they also did from colonialism. He was therefore suspicious of the West's declared altruistic motives. Due to these feelings of moral indignation, Mahathir appealed for East Asian nations to overcome their disagreements and unify in a regional organisation to protect their interests. This was important so that they would be able to decide for themselves on issues that concerned them, and not be dictated to by anyone. Moreover, by establishing a regional institution, they would be able to balance the powerful West and thus, help ensure a more just and equitable international order. Thus, East Asian regionalism became the cornerstone of Mahathir's policy towards East Asia. It is also in the context of this regionalism that Mahathir's visions for the roles of ASEAN and Japan can be understood in recognition terms.

Mahathir's foreign policy towards the countries of East Asia was therefore motivated significantly by the quest for self-respect and self-esteem. These motivations can be analysed in the context of Honneth's insights on the struggle for recognition in the following way. Firstly, according to Honneth, the quest for self-respect can be in terms of possessing an equal participation in the society's discursive will-formation. In this context, acts of disrespect can occur by way of being "structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within a society"<sup>129</sup> to participate in this process of will formation. Mahathir clearly believed that East Asian nations were excluded from the position of influencing international order. He constantly lamented that East Asia

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<sup>128</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007.

<sup>129</sup> Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1995, p.133.

continued to be dictated to by the West, in particular the US, to the extent that East Asian nations could not even decide on issues relating to their own interests. Mahathir's frustration concerning Japan's reluctance to support the EAEC amidst the US's objection is a clear example here. Mahathir believed that the West's meddling in East Asia not only constituted a form of disrespect of their culture, but also perpetuated distrust amongst East Asian nations. For Mahathir, this hindered the latter's unity - to the benefit of the West. Mahathir's promotion of East Asia regionalism was born out of the felt need to assert legitimacy in their relations, so that they would attain the equal status of full-fledged partners in the interaction between East and West. Mahathir thus aspired for East Asia to be able to influence international affairs, so that decisions would not be based only on Western interests and judged according to Western standards. In this sense, Mahathir's moral claim relates to his quest for an equal role for East Asia in international society so that East Asian nations can contribute towards a more just and equal international order.

Honneth explains self esteem in terms of particular traits that make a community special due to its contribution towards the well-being of the bigger community. In this context, acts of disrespect would arise when a collective way of life is being denigrated.<sup>130</sup> As regards esteem, Mahathir's recognition struggles can be detected on two levels. Firstly, for ASEAN, Mahathir felt that its success provided the best example for East Asia in terms of how a regional organisation based on local cultures and values could contribute to a legitimate sub-regional order. To Mahathir, ASEAN had helped foster regional norms for managing regional relations. It had enhanced understanding and co-operation amongst members whilst reducing

interventions of outside powers. Mahathir took pride in the fact that ASEAN has been able to assert its arrangement of legitimate relations by the respect that big powers showed in abiding ASEAN's non-intervention policy. In relation to the bigger East Asia community, Mahathir was also proud of the economic success of most East Asian nations, which to him proved the effectiveness of East Asia's style of governance, based on Asian values. Mahathir felt that East Asia is entitled to a bigger role in shaping international order. Mahathir believed that a role that was commensurate with East Asia's economic contribution would be beneficial for the international society as whole because it would help achieve a more equal and just international order.

## 7.5. **CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on factors of the struggle for recognition in Malaysia's foreign policy towards East Asia under Mahathir. Specifically, this focus refers to policies on ASEAN, East Asia regionalism, 'Look East' (especially on the policy's impact on bilateral relations with Japan) and Mahathir's discourse on the Asian values debate.

As in the discussions on the South and Islam, the East provided another point of reference in relation to the national identity that Mahathir's government actively cultivated for Malaysia. In this sense, the focus on East Asia must be understood also in the context of the social engineering that became part of the nation-building process in the domestic realm. The 'Look East' policy, for example, must be appreciated in the context of Mahathir's crusade to revolutionise the *bumiputra*'s character and achieving NEP goals. In Mahathir's mind, post-war Japan became a suitable template for Malaysia

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<sup>130</sup> Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p.134.

in its quest to achieve the NIC status while aspiring to maintain its unique Eastern and Islamic identity. As illustrated in Chapter Four, in the Malaysian domestic context, Mahathir's discourse emphasised the Islamic and Confucian roots of the Asian values in extolling the virtues of hard work, thrift and respect for the family and authority. While Mahathir certainly felt that Islam was a crucial identity reference point for Malaysia, by virtue of its Muslim Malay majority, the East identity was cultivated through Mahathir's calculated policy decisions rooted in his perceptions on Malaysia's position in East Asia and East Asia's position in the global order.

The case of the East highlights very lucidly Mahathir's understanding of the conflict arising from non-recognition of other cultures by the West and its controls of important global structures like the WTO and the IMF.<sup>131</sup> To Mahathir, this non-recognition effectively relegated non-Western nations to subjugated status, where they would be unable to play any role in influencing international order. Mahathir argued that East Asia's economic achievements had proven the efficacy of Asian values and that the Western model is not the only method for attaining economic progress. However, Mahathir felt that the West did not recognise East Asia's achievements and did not give it equal rights and status in international society. For example, East Asia was not allowed to organise themselves in a regional organisation, unlike North America (NAFTA) and Europe (the EU). Moreover, the US continued to play a vital role in Northeast Asia. In this sense, Mahathir's recognition struggles exemplified by Malaysia's policy towards East Asia concerned the quest for self respect, by demanding non-interference and equal rights to participate in international norms formation.

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<sup>131</sup> For example, Higgot notes that, "[c]ompeting IMF and Asian views of how to manage the regional economic order are delicately balanced." Richard Higgot, 'The International Relations of the Asian Economic Crisis' in *Politics and Markets in the Wake of the Asian Crisis*, p.279.

In addition, Mahathir's recognition struggle also concerned esteem motives.

In this aspect, Mahathir aspired for East Asia to become the alternative model for economic development, in contrast to the Western one. He also hoped for East Asia to contribute towards a more equal global order by balancing Western hegemony and championing North – South collaboration. At a more regional level, he believed that ASEAN could provide a suitable model for the greater East Asia regionalism process because ASEAN has successfully reduced conflicts amongst its members and enhanced their co-operation through its arrangement of legitimate relations.

## **CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION**

This thesis begins with the observation that security and economic factors are not sufficient in explaining the motivation underpinning Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir. It proposes that the struggle for recognition, though it may not be the overarching factor at all times, was nevertheless a significant driving force that existed alongside the motivation for security and the motivation for acquiring wealth (the economic motive). In some instances, these three motives overlapped and interlinked, proving that they are not mutually exclusive. In exploring the struggle for recognition as a significant motivation in FPA, this thesis employs the insights provided by the theory of Axel Honneth. Furthermore, in the case of Malaysia under Mahathir, the thesis has illustrated that the search for recognition underpinning foreign policy motivations flowed directly from the conceptions of justice as perceived by Mahathir, because of the centrality of the prime minister in the government decision – making process.

## **8.1. MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **8.1.1. The Centrality of Mahathir in Foreign Policy-Making**

This research agrees with the dominant observation made by the majority of works in the literature on Malaysia's foreign policy during the Mahathir era, that Mahathir was central in the foreign policy formulation process. This was reaffirmed particularly by Chapter Four, which highlights the centrality of the prime minister's executive powers in the Malaysian state system. Thus, Mahathir played a central role in foreign policy, as he did in domestic policies. Due to the common key motivations that drove domestic and foreign policies, the goals of these policies were clearly inter-related. This is also highlighted in Chapter Four. A clear example is the national blueprint of Vision 2020. While the goal of achieving a developed nation status by 2020 alludes to the economic or acquisition of wealth motivation, the Vision was conceived because of the continuous need to protect and maintain the interests of the Muslim Malay majority of the population. In fact, the protection of the Malays' interests is crucial not only for the survival of the regime but also to the stability of the nation as a whole. In this context, it can be concluded that security remained a major motivation.

However, central to the discourse on Vision 2020 and its goal of achieving a developed nation status, is the desire to establish a nation that is "psychologically liberated" with "faith and confidence in itself" and "justifiably proud" of what it is, that can develop "a form of mutually consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that can be a model for many developing countries", which in terms will be "respected by

other peoples of other nations".<sup>1</sup> Such aspirations clearly point to the significance of the search for recognition as a further underpinning motivation. Indeed, Mahathir's entire discourse on the position of the Malays in the Malaysian society centred on the struggle for recognition, in terms of attaining self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Chapter Three, in tracing Mahathir's belief system and particularly his conceptions of justice, exposes such themes in Mahathir's discourse, especially as encapsulated by his major works, *The Malay Dilemma* and *The Challenge*. Chapters Three and Four therefore established the important premises on which this study is set up. To reiterate, the first premise is that foreign policy direction flowed significantly from the leadership. Therefore in order to understand the motivation for these policies, it is essential to understand the leader's interpretation of his environment and what made him tick. Secondly, all three major components of motivation; security, acquisition of wealth (economic) and recognition were present, and in fact, all inter-linked.

### **8.1.2. Analysis of Case Studies**

As explained in Chapter Four, the empirical section of this thesis is organised thematically on the basis of the international communities that Mahathir identified with and sought recognition from. These communities are the developing countries of the South, the Islamic countries that share the concerns for the Muslim *ummah*, and the countries of East Asia, which include Malaysia's immediate neighbours within ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea. In all three case studies, the significance of recognition motives as defined by Mahathir was exposed. Honneth's theory of the struggle for

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<sup>1</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *CEO Malaysia*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 1998, pp.39-40.

recognition has been utilised to identify the different modes of recognition struggles that were pertinent in each case. In this regard, Malaysia's foreign policy was influenced by the sense of injustices that Mahathir felt were inflicted upon the communities that he identified himself and Malaysia with – whether in the form of abuse, denial of rights, or the denigration of values and ways of life.

Although Mahathir has been commonly described as being anti-West, these studies have illustrated that rather than being intrinsically anti-West, Mahathir was in fact driven by a strong sense of indignation, which was aroused due to his perception that the communities he identified with experienced disrespect from the powerful 'West', or the developed 'North'. The motive of the struggle for recognition manifested itself in different forms, either in seeking self-confidence, self-respect or self-esteem. The struggle for recognition to obtain self-confidence was relevant in the context of Mahathir's perceptions on the impacts of the unjust relationships under colonialism. In other words, Mahathir blamed the inferiority complex of the Malays on the unequal nature of the colonial relationship. The struggle for recognition in order to feel self-respect was pertinent as a motivation in the context of Mahathir's fight for the rightful voice of the developing countries of the South, the Muslim *ummah* and the nations of East Asia. It relates to Mahathir's conception of justice, in the context of rights for these communities to participate in the process of will-formation in the international society. Finally, the struggle for recognition in order to gain self-esteem can be understood in relation to Mahathir's desire to promote Malaysia as a model developing and Islamic country.

Furthermore, the quest for recognition was pursued from within the communities that he identified with (representing the 'us' identity) as well as externally

(the ‘other’ identity). The ‘us’ identity refers to the communities that Mahathir identified Malaysia with, namely the developing countries of the South, the Muslim *ummah* and the nations of East Asia. While motivating factors in the forms of recognition are highlighted in the case studies, security and the acquisition of wealth, or economic factors have also been considered. As emphasised, the three components of motivation are not mutually exclusive and in fact, are all inter-related. The analyses of the ‘hard cases’ of the South and the Muslim *ummah* have shown that motivations underpinning Mahathir’s foreign policy concerning these two addressees were significantly influenced by his quest for recognition. In fact, it can be argued that in the case of foreign policy towards the countries of developing South, the search for recognition was arguably the overwhelming motivation. The ‘soft’ or most likely case of East Asia confirms the significance of recognition struggles as significant motivations. However, the case of East Asia also illustrates the existence of other components of foreign policy motivations, namely security and economic factors.

#### **Foreign Policy towards the Developing Countries of the South**

Chapter Five has illustrated that by employing Honneth’s theory of the struggle for recognition, Mahathir’s perceptions of the injustices suffered by the South countries can be understood in terms of forms of disrespect relating to abuse, denial of rights and denigration of their ways of life. The analysis starts from Mahathir’s identification with countries of the South due to their common experience of having been colonised. Mahathir resented colonialism because it involved physical abuse in terms of violent wars against the natives and the exploitation of the wealth of their lands. Moreover, he detested the rationale for imperialism on the basis of an assumed intrinsic superiority of

Northerners, as described by the 'White Man's Burden' philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Further, Mahathir viewed that the prevailing world order and globalisation perpetuate the inequality similar to the colonial period, in the relationships of the North and South countries. This inequality is sustained through the effective control of international institutions, for example the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF by the developed countries of the North. Mahathir believed that it is unjust that poor developing South countries continued to be denied the equal rights to participate in the workings of the international society. He felt that this made them lack the voice to raise their concerns. Mahathir observed that even after independence, developing countries continued to be dictated to by the developed North, including on how to govern their countries and manage their economies. Mahathir detected a hint of the superiority complex akin to the 'White Man's Burden' philosophy underlying the persistent patronising attitude of the 'North'. He considered this a huge disrespect because it denigrated the values and cultures of the peoples of 'South' countries.

In connection with the different forms of disrespect identified above, different modes of recognition in terms of Honneth's three aspects of practical relations-to-self can be discerned. In terms of self-confidence, Mahathir believed that colonialism was partly responsible for the low self-confidence of colonised peoples like the Malays. In Mahathir's view, their long relationship of dependency with their colonial rulers made peoples of the South, including the Malays, internalise their inferiority complex and

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Mahathir's speech at the Second Southern Africa International Dialogue (SAID) on Smart Partnership in Swakopmund, Namibia, on 28 July 1998 in *Globalisation, Smart Partnership and Government: Selected Speeches by Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Vol.2*, Hashim Makaruddin (ed.), Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2000, pp.69-70.

continue to look up to the European Northerners for guidance.<sup>3</sup> Mahathir believed that their low self-confidence contributed towards perpetuating their subjugated position.

The struggle for recognition in the mode of self-confidence can be identified firstly, in the content of foreign policy. In this regard, Mahathir was always keen to stand up for the rights of the South against the North. He regularly strove to illustrate a true sense of independence by resisting to be dictated to by the North. Secondly, the struggle for self-confidence can be identified in the style of foreign policy. In making his case for the South, Mahathir was known for his straight-talking, sometimes abrasive and undiplomatic manner. His bluntness in public stood apart from the sensitivity he always displayed in private.<sup>4</sup> Thus, it can be inferred that the strong words and abrasive attitude that Mahathir regularly displayed in the international arena *vis-à-vis* the North were calculated moves to make the important point that leaders of the developing South could not be talked down to and would not cower under the intimidation of the North. In this sense, while seeking recognition from the North for the injustices and abuses that they had inflicted on the South, Mahathir was also making a point to the peoples of the South. Particularly important in this context is his own domestic audience in Malaysia. He sought to show that although Malaysia was once colonised and remained a developing country, as its leader, Mahathir was never afraid to stand up for its rights even if it would incur the wrath of the powerful North.

Another important point relating to the search for self-confidence relates to the economic goals of achieving the NEP objectives and the developed nation status of Vision 2020. In this regard, the struggle for recognition centres around Mahathir's core

<sup>3</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Way Forward*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998, pp.77-8.

<sup>4</sup> See Aziz Zariza Ahmad, *Mahathir's Paradigm Shift: The Man Behind the Vision*, Taiping: Firma Malaysia Publishing, 1997, p.2.

argument in *The Malay Dilemma*. In the book he argues that to ensure the stability of the Malaysian society, the special status of the indigenous *bumiputra* population (of whom the Malays are the significant majority) must be recognised not only in political, but also in the economic sphere. Mahathir's belief system explicated in Chapter Three illustrates his understanding that it was essential to uplift the economic status of the Malays to alleviate their feelings of being marginalised in their own land. This is the argument that formed the basis of the NEP. Further, he also argued that the NEP would only be successful if a cultural revolution of the Malays was to accompany it. Such a cultural revolution would have an important objective of instilling within the *bumiputras* the vital sense of confidence to take advantage of the opportunities of the NEP, in order to compete with the economic astuteness of the non-Malays.

The efforts of the Mahathir government in pushing for South-South co-operation and the Malaysian private sector to venture into new markets of the South countries can be deemed necessary in order to achieve the economic goals of the NEP and Vision 2020. The motive of wealth acquisition (or economic) is undeniably important. However, the motivation for NEP itself was to uplift the status of the *bumiputras* and to extricate them from their humiliating position in their native land. Mahathir believed that it was vital for the Malays to change their negative characteristics, which he considered consequences of an internalised inferiority complex as a result of being under a long spell of colonial rule. Evidence of this motivation can be found in the focus on the successes of the *bumiputra* corporate leaders, who attained prominence and exemplified the new Malays' sense of self-confidence, although there were many non-*bumiputra* Malaysian companies that also benefited from South-South co-operation. It was important that the emergence of the new '*Bumiputera* Commercial and Industrialised

Community' be given prominence because to Mahathir, such success would generate confidence, and hence, engender even more success.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Malay corporate leaders like Halim Saad, Tajuddin Ramli and Wan Azmi Wan Hamzah, to name but a few, were celebrated in the same way as all the Malaysians who achieved record-breaking accomplishments, exemplifying the can do spirit of 'Malaysia Boleh!'

Another aspect of recognition motivation that is relevant in this case relates to the quest for self-esteem. Mahathir desired for Malaysia to play a stronger role amongst the developing countries of the South. Under Mahathir, Malaysia undertook a prominent and influential role in the organisations of the South. Malaysia was one of the founding members of the G-15. It also organised summit meetings of the Commonwealth, G-15 and NAM, and chaired the respective organisations for a period of time. Under Mahathir, Malaysia co-sponsored CPTM, the programme for the South countries under the Commonwealth, and also the South Centre, which became the Secretariat for the South countries at the WTO in Geneva. Most importantly, within the frameworks of South-South co-operation, Mahathir promoted Malaysia as a model for other developing countries to follow in order to achieve political stability and economic success. Malaysia's unique model, according to Mahathir, lies in the mutual recognition and respect of its different ethnic communities, which enabled them to form a stable government based on compromise and power-sharing, and also the pragmatic nature of the government in applying democracy. A good example of this thrust in Malaysia's policy towards the countries of the South was shown to be Malaysia's bilateral relations with South Africa after the end of Apartheid. The promotion of Malaysia's success story

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<sup>5</sup> Mahathir Mohamad, *The Way Forward*, pp.18-20.

and its applicability as a model for other developing countries reflects a struggle for recognition motivation to gain self-esteem.

In addition, Mahathir also emphasised the solidarity of the South countries through their various organisations with the objective of fighting for a bigger voice in the international order. In this sense, Mahathir's motivation was a recognition struggle for self-respect based on the perception of a denial of rights. This is exemplified by the role that Malaysia under Mahathir played in the institutions of the South. Mahathir's speeches at these fora never failed to rally the countries of the South. This chapter also pointed to Malaysia's initiatives in establishing 'Smart Partnerships' and dialogue series involving leaders of the countries of the South.

The policy towards the South countries illustrates the interplay of all three motivations, security, economic and recognition. On the domestic level, the security motivation was influential because South-South co-operation was imperative for the success of the NEP and Vision 2020. These objectives are considered crucial for the stability of the nation and the regime. In this context, security motivation is linked to the national stability based on the security of the ethnic Malays and the UMNO regime. Thus, the country's economic agenda might be understood to be more of a goal than an underlying motivation for Mahathir. However, motivation in the form of the search for recognition permeated all levels of analysis. Firstly, at the domestic level, recognition struggles to obtain self-confidence was a major factor because the moral claim for NEP was triggered by Mahathir's perceptions of the Malays' feelings of abuse, first by the colonialists and then, by the Chinese immigrants who exploited the richness of their country, making the Malays perceive themselves as victims in their own land. This domestic struggle in the form of self-confidence permeated onto the international level in

various aspects. Firstly, the successes of Malaysian companies abroad, particularly *bumiputra* companies and their corporate leaders were given prominence as examples of the new breed of confident and successful Malays. Secondly, Mahathir himself adopted a strong and straight-talking style of diplomacy *vis-à-vis* the North to illustrate a confident leader who would not tolerate being dictated to by the powerful North. At the international level, recognition struggles in the form of self-respect were also relevant. This can be deduced from Mahathir's discourse appealing for the solidarity of the South countries in order to strengthen their voice. In terms of recognition struggles to gain self-esteem, Mahathir aspired for Malaysia to be a model for other developing countries to emulate, particularly with regard to its racial harmony, political stability and economic progress.

Figure 8.1 illustrates the relationship between Mahathir's beliefs of forms of disrespect, the modes of recognition as motivation, and the policies and their respective goals, with regard to Mahathir's foreign policy towards the developing countries of the South. It shows that all three modes of recognition – self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, were influential motivating factors. Furthermore, it also clarifies that the economic goals of South – South co-operation were important to serve the recognition motives of building the self-confidence of the Malaysian nation, particularly of the Malays.

Beliefs: Forms of Disrespect	Motivation: Modes of Recognition	Goals	Policy
Abuses committed by the West during colonisation.	Self-confidence	The Malaysian private sector to operate successfully in new markets of Third World countries.	South-South economic co-operation.
Rights of developing South countries denied due to inequality in global political and economic order.	Self-respect	Solidarity of Third World countries at multilateral organisations.	Antarctica NAM G15 CPTM
Humiliation and denigration of developing countries.	Self-esteem	Malaysia as model for other Third World countries.	MTCP

Figure 8.1 Relationships between beliefs, motivation, goals and policy in the case of South – South co-operation.

### Foreign Policy towards the Muslim Ummah

Islam is central to the Malay ethnic identity. This was a strong belief of Mahathir, as reflected in his writings in *The Malay Dilemma* and *The Challenge*. Mahathir clearly identified himself, and Malaysia with the global Muslim community, or the *ummah*. While Islam has always featured prominently in Malaysia's foreign policy, Mahathir promoted the Islamic image of Malaysia much more than any of his predecessors.<sup>6</sup> Mahathir's strong identification with the Muslim *ummah* made him share their common

<sup>6</sup> Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p.269.

feelings of moral indignation due to perceived injustices and humiliation suffered by Muslims around the world, for example in Palestine and Bosnia.

To Mahathir, there are parallels that can be drawn concerning the fate of the Malay Muslims and that of the global Muslim *ummah*. Due to their misinterpretation of Islam, the Malays used to shun wealth and worldly achievements, and emphasised the virtues of piety instead. This made them economically backward compared to other races and consequently they suffered disrespect, humiliation and even ridicule. To Mahathir, this was also true in the case of the global Islamic *ummah*. He saw that the Muslim *ummah* was hapless, economically and militarily weak, disrespected and that their ways of life were denigrated as backward, barbaric, intolerant and violent. Such a perception was the foundation of Mahathir's sense of moral indignation in relation to the position of the Muslim *ummah*, which arguably triggered the struggles for recognition.

Mahathir's views on Palestine and Bosnia exemplify his feeling of moral indignation on the treatment of Muslims by the powerful nations in the international society. In the case of Palestine, Mahathir observed that "an entire people [was] being driven out of their homeland, humiliated and harassed."<sup>7</sup> He also felt angry at "the supporters of Israel" who constantly preached about human rights, but blatantly applied double standards where Israel was concerned, and took no measure to protect the Palestinians.<sup>8</sup> Similarly in the Bosnian case, Mahathir chided the powerful West for failing for a long time to stop the molestations, abuse and massacre of the Bosnian Muslims by the Serbs. Thus, in Mahathir's mind, the most oppressed people in the world

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<sup>7</sup> Mahathir's speech at the opening of the Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine, 3 May 1983, in Murugesu Pathmanaban and David Lazarus, *Winds of Change*, p.217.

<sup>8</sup> Mahathir's speech at the opening of the Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine, 3 May 1983, in *Winds of Change*, p.217

were Muslims. To him, Palestine and Bosnia plainly illustrated the injustices suffered by the Muslims in a world dominated by big powers where none are Islamic. According to Mahathir, the Muslims' independence, and their rights as members of the human race were ignored and violated, to the extent that they lost whatever little honour and dignity they had left. In addition, Mahathir unequivocally condemned terrorism but felt that its root causes needed to be tackled if it was going to be successfully eliminated. He felt that terrorism was one of the desperate measures taken by misguided Muslims who believed that they had nothing to lose and there was no other recourse to escape from their oppressed position. Thus, in Mahathir's view, the Muslim *ummah* suffered disrespect in the forms of abuse, exclusion and denial of rights, and also denigration and humiliation. There was a strong reference to the moral grammar in international society in Mahathir's arguments for the just treatment of the Muslim *ummah*.

Recognition struggles drove Mahathir to pursue policies that linked Malaysia closer to the *ummah*, for example in its bilateral relations with Palestine and Bosnia. Malaysia also played a more prominent role in the OIC, particularly by attempting to introduce its South-South co-operation approach to spur economic collaborations amongst Islamic countries. The underlying rationale for this was Mahathir's belief that the reason for the degrading position of the Muslim *ummah* was their economic weakness and underdevelopment. In this regard, Mahathir reprimanded the Muslims for forgetting the glory of Islamic civilisation and urged them to embrace scientific knowledge and modern technology again.

Mahathir desired for Muslim countries to once again be strong, similar to the glorious days of the Islamic civilisation. To him, this was the only way for the Muslims to be heard. The problem with the prevailing international order according to Mahathir,

was that there was no Muslim country amongst the big powers that controlled it. This exposes a motivation triggered by a perception of exclusion and denial of rights. While constantly criticising the West for their passivity in the Palestinian and Bosnian cases, Mahathir also incessantly urged the Muslims to be united, to embrace education, science and technology, so that their economic status could be improved. He believed that this was the only way for Muslim countries to be able to exert leverage and be heard in the international society. In this context, recognition in terms of self-respect for the Muslim *ummah* was sought from outside the *ummah*. Secondly, through South-South co-operation programmes with Islamic countries, Mahathir was keen to show the world the success of the Malay Muslims. In connection to this, Hng writes that, "Mahathir believes Malaysia's greatest contribution to the reformation of the *ummah* will be by way of example."<sup>9</sup> Thus, the quest for self-esteem was a significant motivation. Mahathir wanted Malaysia to be a model of a progressive, moderate and economically successful Muslim country for the rest of the *ummah* to follow. Here, recognition was sought from within the community of the *ummah*.

Undoubtedly, the recognition from within the Muslim *ummah* was also pivotal to the security of the UMNO regime led by Mahathir. Also, closer identification with other Muslim countries accrued economic benefits by providing Malaysian products new markets and its private sector new territories to invest in. Thus, foreign policy towards the Muslim *ummah* illustrates the significance of the struggle for recognition as a motivation too, but not at the expense of security and economic ones.

Figure 8.2 illustrates the relationships between Mahathir's beliefs of forms of disrespect, the different modes of recognition motivation, and the goals and specific

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<sup>9</sup> Hng Hung Yong, *5 Men & 5 Ideas: Building National Identity*, Subang Jaya: Pelanduk, 2004, p.141.

policies that Malaysia pursued concerning the position of the Muslim *ummah*. It shows that in the case of the Muslim *ummah*, self-respect and self-esteem were the significant modes of recognition that were sought in Malaysia's foreign policy. Similarly, the goal of uplifting the economic status of the *ummah* was deemed crucial by Mahathir in his quest to bring back respect and esteem that the Muslims enjoyed during the period of Islamic civilisation. As in the case of South – South co-operation, Mahathir's search for self-esteem was illustrated by his promotion of Malaysia as the model of a successful Muslim nation.

Beliefs: Forms of Disrespect	Motivation: Modes of Recognition	Goals	Policy
Denial of rights due to inequality of international order – no Muslim country is a developed nation.	Self-respect	Solidarity of Islamic countries.  Uplifting economic status of Islamic countries.	OIC Palestine Bosnia  'Islamic' South-South co-operation.
Denigration and humiliation of Muslim <i>ummah</i> because of their low economic status and their hapless situation, for example in Palestine and Bosnia.	Self-esteem	Malaysia as a model of moderate, tolerant, progressive and economically successful Islamic nation.  Economically successful Malaysia able to assist and received recognition from Palestine and Bosnia.	MTCP  Bilateral assistance to Palestine and Bosnia.

Figure 8.2 Relationships between beliefs, motivation, goals and policy in the case of the Muslim *ummah*.

### **Foreign Policy towards East Asia**

In the case of East Asia, Mahathir's recognition struggles can be discerned in the contexts of self-respect and self-esteem. As regards self-respect, Mahathir's foreign policy was driven by his desire to achieve legitimacy in the relations with the countries of Southeast Asia, as well as wider East Asia. This also points to the legitimate involvement of

outside powers in the region, specifically the US. In the context of self-esteem, recognition struggles relate to what Mahathir believed to be the contribution that the East Asian community could make to attain a more just global order.

ASEAN was founded against the backdrop of conflicts between countries in Southeast Asia. The core of ASEAN's philosophy of intra-mural relations is to mutually respect the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of one another and non-interference in the internal affairs of one-another. These are some of the basic ASEAN norms that are enshrined in its TAC, signed in Bali in 1976.<sup>10</sup> Mahathir displayed a strong commitment to these basic ASEAN principles, which are the foundations for legitimate arrangements of intra-ASEAN relations. The key motivation in the context of recognition here is mutual respect, which presupposes the recognition of one another's equal status. In this sense, ASEAN prescribes the forms of legitimate relations between its members and outside powers. In this regard, respect is not only sought in the intra-mural relations of ASEAN members, but also from outside powers, namely China, Japan and the US, in their dealings with ASEAN nations.

As Chapter Seven has illustrated, there were strains in the observation of ASEAN's mutual respect and non-interventionist principles. During Mahathir's premiership, Malaysia experienced tensions in its bilateral relations with other ASEAN members, particularly with Singapore. Although there are a host of complex issues that complicate Malaysia – Singapore bilateral relations, the prickly personal relationship between Mahathir and Lee Kuan Yew undeniably contributed significantly towards their difficult bilateral relations. During the Mahathir era, Malaysia's relations with Indonesia also became difficult at times. This was due to the relative weakness of Indonesia after

the financial crisis and the toppling of Suharto, making it unable to provide the regional leadership it traditionally felt entitled to.

Mahathir's support for ASEAN rules of legitimate relations was exhibited most strongly when he came under attacks from some of his ASEAN colleagues after he sacked his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim in 1998. During this crisis, Mahathir was obviously astonished to see both the Indonesian President Habibie and the Philippines' President Estrada so openly voicing their support for Anwar and criticising Mahathir's treatment of his former deputy.

In the case of East Asia, Mahathir was also driven by the desire to establish an arrangement of legitimate relations in the wider region. This is the basis of his proposal to institutionalise a community of East Asian countries. Indeed, Mahathir felt that ASEAN had been successful in ensuring legitimate relations in the Southeast Asian region and that it was a good model for the bigger East Asia region to emulate. Importantly, Mahathir felt strongly against the involvement of the US in Northeast Asia. Mahathir's EAEC proposal can be interpreted as his effort to counter APEC, which was championed by the US and Australia. To Mahathir, the continuing influence of America in the region indicated the superiority of the West as embedded in the global order. Mahathir fought against such inequality in the global order because he felt that it was unjust to deny non-Western countries, their rightful voice.

In addition, Mahathir believed that non-Western cultures and values also had some positive contribution to make towards the well-being of the international society. Thus, Mahathir championed 'Asian values' and pointed to the economic successes of East Asian countries as proofs of their efficacy. What drove Mahathir in this sense was a

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<sup>10</sup> For the full document of TAC, see <http://www.aseansec.org/1654.htm>, accessed on 20 January 2008.

quest for recognition in the form of self-esteem for Asian values and the peoples of East Asian countries. In addition, he believed that due to its economic success, East Asian countries were entitled to a bigger voice in the international order. Moreover, he felt that the East Asian countries were obligated to fight for a bigger role in the international society because they could lead the change towards a more inclusive, equal and just global order. Thus, the struggle for recognition in this case was also based on the perception of disrespect in the form of denial of rights, which illustrates a struggle for self-respect.

Figure 8.3 summarises the relationship between Mahathir's beliefs of the forms disrespect and the different modes of recognition, goals and specific policy concerning the nations of East Asia. Recognition struggles in the modes of self-respect and self-esteem are pertinent in this case. In terms of self-respect, Mahathir was motivated by a desire to establish and observe arrangements of legitimate relations between countries of the region, as well with outside powers, particularly the US. The search for self-respect was also a significant motivation underpinning Mahathir's appeals for the solidarity of East Asian countries, to increase their rightful voice. In relation to the quest for self-esteem, the table shows that Mahathir's discourse pertaining to Asian values and his initiatives towards establishing an East Asian regionalism were motivated by a desire to prove the utility of the Asian model for development, as an alternative to the Western one.

<b>Beliefs: Forms of Disrespect</b>	<b>Motivation: Modes of Recognition</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Policy</b>
Denial of rights – interference in internal affairs by neighbouring and outside powers.  – East Asian countries not having a voice that commensurates their economic success.	Self-respect	Legitimate arrangement of relationship.	ASEAN norms and principles.  Proposal for EAEC.
Denigration of East Asian values.	Self-respect	Solidarity of East Asian countries.	EAEC APT
	Self-esteem	Economic success of East Asian countries as example for other developing countries.	Asian values EAEC APT

Figure 8.3 Relationships between beliefs, motivation, goals and policy in the case of East Asia.

## 8.2. THESIS CONTRIBUTION

The findings of this research contribute to two separate sets of literature, firstly the literature on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, and secondly, the literature on FPA. With regard to the former, its findings show that a more meaningful and complete understanding of foreign policy motivation under Mahathir can only be achieved if recognition factors are also taken into account, along with security and economic

rationales. In relation to the FPA literature, this thesis contributes by illustrating how motivation can be more systematically analysed by using Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition.

### **8.2.1. Literature on Malaysia's Foreign Policy during the Mahathir Era**

Chapter One has illustrated that writings on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir mostly concentrate on the issue of continuity and change and to what extent changes, if any, can be attributed to Prime Minister Mahathir. While there is no literature that focuses specifically on motivation, some kind of motivational assumption is made implicitly in all the works.

Yusof argues that there was more continuity than change in Malaysia's foreign policy primarily because he argues that Malaysia's national interests, defined mainly by security needs, remained unchanged during the Mahathir era.<sup>11</sup> Other major works mostly concede that Malaysia's foreign policy went through a transformation during the Mahathir era. However, they are not completely in consensus as to what extent these changes are attributable to the prime minister. Camroux, for example, explains the transformation by emphasizing Malaysia's achievement of 'middle-power' status under Mahathir.<sup>12</sup> Dhillon stresses the significance of internal and external exigencies, as well as Mahathir's idiosyncrasy, as the important variables that determined foreign policy output.<sup>13</sup> In terms of motivation, Dhillon emphasises factors of security and economic in particular, by saying that, "Malaysia's foreign policy initiatives were

<sup>11</sup> Mohd. Yusof Bin Ahmad, *Continuity and Change in Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1981 – 1986*, a dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 1990.

<sup>12</sup> David Camroux, 'Looing East' ... And Inwards, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysia Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era*, p.5.

deployed to ensure the stability, maintenance and promotion of the regime as well as to dilute fundamental challenges to it. Foreign policy serves to fuel the engine of economic growth and development through the external assistance in the form of FDI, technology, and markets for Malaysian goods and services.”<sup>14</sup>

Savaranamuttu attributes a bigger role to Mahathir by describing the prime minister as ‘iconoclastic’.<sup>15</sup> In explaining the transformation brought by Mahathir, Savaranamuttu focuses on Malaysia’s quest for the NIC status,<sup>16</sup> making him emphasise primarily economic motivation. Similarly, Rajmah accepts that the change that became the “hallmark” of Malaysia’s foreign policy was mostly attributed to Mahathir, in particular to the prime minister’s “personal experiences, his perception of world events and most of all by his personality.”<sup>17</sup> However, as regards motivation, she overlooks recognition but argues that economic, rather than political motives were the thrusts of Mahathir’s foreign policy.<sup>18</sup>

Milne and Mauzy recognise that Mahathir “did effect changes”<sup>19</sup> and highlight the importance of Mahathir’s personal experiences in influencing his foreign policy stances and priorities. Importantly, they conclude that in some aspects, for example the EAEC and the South, foreign policy motivations were difficult to assess. They allude to Mahathir’s motivations based on a struggle for recognition by saying that, “[p]erhaps he simply wanted to exercise his political talents in the wider field.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era*, p.6.

<sup>15</sup> Johan Savaranamuttu, ‘Iconoclasm and Foreign Policy – The Mahathir Years’, in *Reflections*, p.307. See also Johan Savaranamuttu, ‘Malaysia’s Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Period, 1981-1985: An Iconoclast come to Rule’, in *Asian Journal of Political Science*, June 1996, pp.1-16.

<sup>16</sup> Johan Savaranamuttu, ‘Iconoclasm and Foreign Policy – The Mahathir Years’, in *Reflections*, p.315.

<sup>17</sup> Rajmah Hussain, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.73.

<sup>18</sup> Rajmah Hussain, *Malaysia at the United Nations*, p.77.

<sup>19</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.123.

<sup>20</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.133.

Moreover, concerning Malaysia's policies on the South and Mahathir's seemingly anti-Westernism, they observe that Mahathir "was driven by a hatred of what he perceived as unjust."<sup>21</sup>

In relation to all these major works in the literature, this thesis has come up with its own major arguments. Firstly, contra Yusof but in agreement with other significant works in the literature, this thesis illustrates that there were major changes in Malaysia's foreign policy during the Mahathir period. These transformations manifested themselves not only in the style of Malaysia's foreign policy, but also in its major components and emphasis. In terms of style, Mahathir was well known for his abrasive and aggressive diplomacy, particularly in criticising what he perceived to be the injustices in the international order perpetrated by the West. This is definitely in great contrast to the friendly attitude of all his predecessors to Western governments. Substance wise, there was indeed some continuity of priorities in some areas, for example the significance attached to ASEAN, which reflected the persistence of Malaysia's structural constraints. However, Mahathir also introduced new priority areas of foreign policy, most notably the policies of 'Look East' and East Asia integration, which were unique to the Mahathir era. Moreover, while the previous governments before Mahathir's had already engaged with issues relating to ASEAN, the developing countries of the 'South' and the Muslim *ummah*, Mahathir made these issues his top priorities. In addition, in relation to all these foreign policy addressees, Mahathir significantly increased the emphasis on the economic medium of development, trade and investment, making national prosperity an important goal in the process.

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<sup>21</sup> R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*, p.134.

This thus leads to the second argument of this thesis, which relates to Mahathir's leadership in foreign policy. Contra Yusof, Camroux and Dhillon, but similar to Rajmah, Savaranamuttu and Milne and Mauzy, this thesis attributes the major changes in Malaysia's foreign policy predominantly to the prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad. In this regard, changes in foreign policy are correlated directly to the prime minister, specifically his personal motivations. In arguing the significance of Mahathir as the central source of foreign policy, this thesis does not underestimate the relevance of the structural constraints, such as Malaysia's internal social and political structures, its geographical location, as well as global dynamics. However, unlike Dhillon, this thesis does not treat these structural constraints as independent variables that influenced the nature of the output (that is the foreign policy), in a deterministic manner. It focuses, rather, on the agency of Mahathir who acted within the structures of his environment, constantly perceiving and interpreting the constraints and opportunities facing him, and actively influencing these structures while being constricted by them at the same time. In this sense, structure and agency are not easily disentangled in the forms of independent and dependent variables, but are inter-linked and mutually constitutive. These environmental or structural constraints as regards Malaysia's foreign policy manifested themselves firstly in Malaysia's domestic setting, in the form of its bureaucratic structure, and its social, political and historical features, which constitute the Malaysian national identity. Secondly, external structural constraints existed in the form of regional and international political and economic institutions, like ASEAN, the UN or the WTO. In addition, Mahathir was also constrained by international ideational structures as manifested by the end of the Cold War, the resurgence of Islam, globalisation and the outbreak of the war on terror post 9/11.

The main argument and the unique contribution of this thesis in relation to the literature on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, is its illumination of the significant role of the struggle for recognition as an important driver of Mahathir politics and foreign policy. As highlighted, those works that accept the fact that significant changes did occur either attribute them to nation-wide identity factors (as in Camroux's middle power explanation), or to Mahathir's personal preference to prioritise economics above security, as put forth by Rajmah and Savaranamuttu. More than the other major writers, Milne and Mauzy allude to recognition as one of the important motivational factors that influenced Mahathir's foreign policy, but not in an explicit and systematic manner. This thesis has shown that recognition struggles were always significant, and in some instances, they were more influential than security and economic factors. However, this thesis does not argue that the quest for recognition was the over-arching, or the main motivation driving all of Mahathir's foreign policy. Instead, it maintains that to have a more complete understanding, it is essential to take into account recognition motives, as well as security and economic ones.

A systematic analysis of recognition motivations in this thesis is achieved using the novel approach of employing Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition. In particular, Honneth's forms of practical relations-to-self has been employed to identify the different modes of recognition struggles, in the form of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. These analyses, and their findings as regards the three important foreign policy addressees of Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir have already been summarised above. The preceding summary of the findings of the case studies primarily relate to the changing emphasis of foreign policy components. In addition, Malaysia's foreign policy style was associated very closely with the style of Mahathir himself. In

this regard, his well-observed abrasive character was almost entirely directed to Western countries and leaders only, particularly the US, UK and Australia, and perhaps due to specific personal, although not entirely different reasons, also towards Singapore's leader, Lee Kuan Yew. In relation to leaders and governments of other countries, Mahathir was known to be soft-spoken and polite, which can be said to be his true personal nature. This reflects a particular motivation underpinning his abrasive style or attitude towards the specific countries or leaders. The struggle for recognition as a motivation is definitely relevant here. In this context, recognition motivations concern Mahathir's feeling of moral indignation based on his perception of colonialism as an act of abuse, which in Mahathir's beliefs had impaired the Malays' sense of self-confidence, and made them continue to look up to the 'white Europeans'. Thus, his abrasive attitude towards the West and some Western leaders was aimed to illustrate especially to his people (and possibly to other formerly colonised peoples of the Third World as well), a Malay leader who was confident, capable of having an independent mind, and who refused to be dictated to by 'former colonialists'. Moreover, his abrasiveness most of the times can be seen as a reaction to what he perceived as acts of disrespect, either because of the continuation of the denial of rights for developing countries in the international order even after decolonisation, or more personally, in the sense of humiliation inflicted upon him by specific leaders. Examples of the latter include when the Australian prime minister John Howard accused him of being a recalcitrant for not attending the Seattle APEC Summit, Al Gore expressing support to Mahathir's opponents at a dinner Mahathir himself hosted (after which Gore just stormed off without even staying for the meal), or Lee Kuan Yew branding him a Malay ultra and slamming all Malay leaders as feudal.

In summary, within the literature on Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir, the findings of this thesis contribute towards strengthening the argument that there were significant changes in policy and that these changes are attributable mainly to the Prime Minister Mahathir himself. In addition, and more importantly, this thesis has the unique contribution of exposing the significance of the struggle for recognition as a motivation that existed alongside security and economic ones. With regard to recognition struggles as motivations, although writers like Milne and Mauzy, and to a certain extent Camroux and Rajmah have implicitly hinted at their relevance, this thesis has engaged with the struggle for recognition as a motivation in an explicit manner and illustrated a method of how to systematically analyse it.

### **8.2.2. Literature in FPA**

In relation to the FPA literature, this thesis contributes in the area of research inquiries focussing on motivation for foreign policy. Chapter Two has illustrated that the lack of studies on motivation is due to the popularity of the Realist school of thought, which has also influenced studies in FPA. It has also been explained that Realism is based on the Hobbesian assumption of the human nature that overstates the motive of self-preservation or security. This is true in the case of all Realist writers, from Morgenthau and Carr to Waltz and Mearsheimer.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, the pursuit of 'scientific' explanations and the application of the 'rational actor model' in Neo-Realism simplify and underrate the complex desires that

motivate behaviours of individuals. Instead, Neo-Realism focuses only on the structure of the international system in its quest to uncover external causal laws governing international relations. Under Neo-Realism, motivation is a given assumption defined purely on the quest for self-preservation or security.<sup>23</sup> The 'rational actor model' is also adopted by Neo-Liberalism, although it stresses institutions (instead of states) as the actors, and economic, prosperity or wealth acquisition as the underlying motivation, instead of security.<sup>24</sup> The application of this model makes it difficult to achieve an all-encompassing understanding of motivation underpinning foreign policy because it treats motivation as a singular assumption. Thus, the analysis is limited and flows directly from the choice of either security or wealth acquisition as the underlying motivation in the study. Recognition is overlooked because it is grounded in deep human psychology, which is deemed impeding rational choice to the advocates of the model.<sup>25</sup>

This thesis illustrates that the quest for recognition can be a significant, and at times the dominant motivation in driving a country's foreign policy. It contradicts the argument that motivations, in particular those which are concerned with the search for recognition are both irrelevant and difficult to study. For example, Morgenthau cast aside the quest for recognition as a motivation in foreign policy and asserts the power motive instead. He argues that recognition struggles are only disguises to the real

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<sup>22</sup> See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Boston: McGraw Hill, 1985; E.H. Carr, *The Twenty's Years Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, New York: Palgrave, 2001; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1959 and John J. Mearsheimer, 'The False Promise of International Institutions' in *International Security*, Vol.19, No.3, Winter 1994-1995.

<sup>23</sup> See Annette Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man: The Realist Theory of International Relations and Its Judgment of Human Nature*, USA: SUNY Press, 2004, p.95.

<sup>24</sup> See *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, David Baldwin (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, and Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.) *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971.

<sup>25</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*, Lanham, Maryland and Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., p.45.

motivation of enhancing power. According to him, in international, as well as domestic politics, “the element of power as the immediate goal of the policy pursued is explained and justified in ethical, legal, or biological terms.”<sup>26</sup> To Morgenthau, to see through the “ideological disguises” behind the political phenomena is the most difficult task of students of international politics.<sup>27</sup> However, this research has shown that to ignore the search for recognition as a motivation that underpins foreign policy leads to an incomplete understanding.

Chapter Two has also illustrated that the quest for recognition as a motivation has been considered in some FPA works but rather implicitly and in a haphazard and unsystematic manner. As examples, the chapter has highlighted motives relating to the search for recognition like esteem, prestige/*grandeur*, status, entitlement and face in the works of Welch, Janis, Cottam, Cerny, Vertzberger, Holsti, Schweller, Leifer, Drifte, Chen Jian and even the Realist Morgenthau himself. The main contribution of this thesis is that it illustrates that there is a common moral basis for all these motivational factors to be considered under the struggle for recognition. In this regard, this thesis also offers a systematic analysis of motivations based on the search for recognition, achieved by employing Honneth’s theoretical insights of the different modes of the recognition struggle.

In addition, the analysis in this thesis is based on the motivation as defined by the prime minister Mahathir Mohamad himself. In this regard, it adds not only to the literature on motivation but also to our understanding of leadership in foreign policy. What is called the ‘great man’ approach was popular in FPA in the 1930s, but fell out of

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<sup>26</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p.99.

<sup>27</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p.111.

avour in the midst of the Cold War when analysts were inclined to concentrate on system level dynamics to explain behaviours of the superpowers. However, the post Cold War era dominated by crises in Iraq and North Korea has made analysts more interested to look at characteristics of leaders to understand the foreign policy of these countries.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, this thesis accepts that Mahathir's ability to wield influence and effectively control Malaysia's foreign policy was derived from his position as the prime minister, and the structure of the Malaysian state. In this connection, this thesis contributes towards the study of the motivation underpinning foreign policy of a country with a particularly centralised form of decision-making process.

This thesis proves the suitability of FPA as the IR sub-discipline that can accommodate inquiries on motivation without prejudicing any of the three major components of human motivation, which are security, acquisition of wealth and the struggle for recognition. In this connection, it provides an example of an integrative framework that can be utilised to study the motivation of international behaviour and a way to overcome the epistemological divisions within IR by employing FPA. In mainstream IR, the Realist, Liberalist and Constructivist schools each adhere to one of the three basic motivational assumptions, which is fear/security/power, economic/profit/prosperity/acquisition of wealth or affiliation/recognition.<sup>29</sup> This research has shown that FPA can provide a new framework where the epistemological divisions in IR still persist. It is important that such a division is overcome because theoretical biases in studies actually influence the practical world of foreign policy making. Freyberg-Inan observes that the bias in Realist scholarly works based on their

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<sup>28</sup> Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory*, Lanham, Maryland and Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., p.37.

assumption on human nature as competitive and selfish has affected policy-making in the real world and consequently diminishes the chances for peaceful co-existence, international co-operation and transnational institution building.<sup>30</sup>

### **8.3. AFTER MAHATHIR: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION**

Since Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over as Malaysia's prime minister on 30 October 2003, there have been notable changes in the conduct of Malaysia's foreign policy. The most significant change is found in the style of diplomacy of his leadership. Unlike Mahathir, Abdullah prefers a more low-key and quiet diplomacy.<sup>31</sup> Also, he does not engage in hard-hitting rhetoric against the 'West', or anybody else for that matter.

When it comes to policy, there has actually been some continuity with the Mahathir era. Due to the fact that Abdullah spent a total of nine years in Mahathir's government as the foreign minister, he is quite familiar with the policies and was for a long time responsible for implementing them. The OIC has become a major focus for Abdullah, particularly due to Malaysia's chairmanship of the OIC at the beginning of his premiership. Moreover, it is logical that Abdullah would be interested in issues relating to Islam in foreign policy, being himself an Islamic Studies graduate. This is illustrated very clearly by the launching of 'Islam *Hadhari*', loosely translated as 'civilisational Islam' as "an approach for instituting national order ... that is fair and just to all

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<sup>29</sup> Annette Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.155.

<sup>30</sup> Annette Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*, p.13.

<sup>31</sup> This is observed for example by Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany in *Singapore – Malaysia Relations under Abdullah Badawi*, Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2006, p.55.

irrespective of race and religion.”<sup>32</sup> In the context of foreign policy, Abdullah’s ‘Islam Hadhari’ approach is translated into a bigger role for Malaysia in the OIC to foster more unity amongst its members. Through its role in the OIC, Abdullah aspires to “shatter the increasing prejudices against Muslims worldwide,” and feels that “[t]he international community must stop equating Islam with violence, poverty and indignity.”<sup>33</sup> This reflects a similarity in terms of the quest for recognition, as the motivation for policy concerning the Muslim *ummah*, in both Mahathir and Abdullah. In this context, the policy also continues to embody the same economic goal. Abdullah intends to “continue [to] raise the awareness and understanding of the world with regard to the importance of an international agenda to eradicate poverty.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, Malaysia under Abdullah continues to co-ordinate the works of the OIC and NAM, especially in economic, trade, education and cultural areas.<sup>35</sup> To Abdullah, Palestine still “remains a central issue that must be addressed by the *ummah* and the global community.”<sup>36</sup>

However, there are some policy areas where change can be unmistakably observed. The clearest examples are Malaysia’s bilateral relations with Singapore and Australia. During Mahathir’s time, Malaysia’s relations with both of these countries were difficult, to say the least. According to Saw and Kesavapany, the improved bilateral ties between Malaysia and Singapore is “one of Abdullah’s achievements in the area of international relations since he succeeded Mahathir.”<sup>37</sup> The improved Malaysia – Singapore bilateral relations steered by Abdullah has in fact created tensions in the

<sup>32</sup> Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, ‘Islam Hadhari and Good Governance’, speech at the Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand on 31 March 2005. [www.pmo.gov.my](http://www.pmo.gov.my), accessed on 10 December 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Islam Hadhari: A Model Approach for Development and Progress*, Petaling Jaya: MPH Group, 2006, p.8.

<sup>34</sup> Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Islam Hadhari*, p.9.

<sup>35</sup> Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Islam Hadhari*, p.9.

<sup>36</sup> Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, *Islam Hadhari*, p.9.

relationship between Abdullah and his predecessor, Mahathir. The acrimony was especially obvious when the former prime minister criticised Abdullah's decision to cancel the demolition of the Malaysian half of the causeway across the Straits of Johor, in order to build a 'crooked scenic bridge'. Mahathir accused the Abdullah Government "of showing that Malaysia was a "country with no guts."<sup>38</sup> In the case of Australia, Abdullah made an official visit in April 2005 - the first in more than twenty years by a Malaysian prime minister. Malaysia and Australia started negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) during the visit.<sup>39</sup> Mahathir himself felt that changes were made by Abdullah government to the policies that he put in place, especially by "getting closer to the US and Australia, and forgetting our responsibilities to the South."<sup>40</sup> Mahathir also criticised the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand in the East Asia Summit as against his original vision of the East Asia community.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, although there is some continuity in foreign policy pursued by the Abdullah government, there have also been notable differences. How can these changes be understood in terms of their motivations? In such a short period, the security and economic concerns of Malaysia certainly could not have transformed so drastically. What has changed is only the leadership. In this context, it can safely be concluded that motivations for changes in the identified areas of foreign policy originate from the leader himself, that is Abdullah Badawi. In this regard, the search for recognition is manifested

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<sup>37</sup> Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany in *Singapore – Malaysia Relations under Abdullah Badawi*, p.59.

<sup>38</sup> Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany in *Singapore – Malaysia Relations under Abdullah Badawi*, p.9.

<sup>39</sup> See 'Australia, Malaysia to Negotiate Free Trade Agreement', reported by Narda Gilmore on Lateline, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 7 April 2004. TV transcript location: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2005/s1340708.htm>, accessed on 12 December 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Author interview with Mahathir Mohamad, 16 January 2007, London.

<sup>41</sup> 'Mahathir Blasts Australia Over Summit', AP, 7 December 2005.

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=76332>, accessed on 10 September 2007.

differently in Abdullah's foreign policy mainly because Abdullah holds different conceptions of justice, compared to Mahathir. As explained, Abdullah's focus on the issues pertaining to the situation of the Muslim *ummah* can be understood in terms of his background as an Islamic scholar.

In sum, a brief comparative analysis of Malaysia's foreign policy under Abdullah and Mahathir further confirms the central argument of this thesis that the search for recognition can be a significant motivation underpinning foreign policy. Under Mahathir, the search for recognition was an important driver that influenced Malaysia's foreign policy. The failure of the major works on Malaysia's foreign policy to consider motivational factors based on the struggle for recognition has resulted in an incomplete understanding. In systematically exploring recognition struggles as important foreign policy motivations, this thesis has employed Honneth's theoretical insights on the different modes of recognition struggles, namely in the form of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. While not claiming that the search for recognition was always the dominant motivational factor, this thesis makes the claim that recognition struggles were always present amongst the underlying motivations for foreign policy. Nevertheless, the analyses of Malaysia's South – South co-operation, policies towards the Muslim *ummah* and East Asian nations under Mahathir have shown that the quest for recognition, in certain circumstances, can indeed be the over-arching motivation, as compared to motivations based on security and economic concerns. In addition, the thesis has also elaborated on the significance of Mahathir's conceptions of justice, which crucially influenced the modes of recognition that were sought in the context of foreign policy. Hence, Malaysia's foreign policy under Mahathir's successor, Abdullah Badawi displays identifiable changes, not because recognition struggles have become less

important, but due to the fact that Abdullah's conceptions of justice are different to Mahathir's. This has resulted in him searching for recognition in different ways compared to Mahathir.

## **APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ATTRIBUTABLE INTERVIEWS**

Agus Salim Yusof, Principal Assistant Secretary, OIC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, 5 June 2007, Putrajaya.

Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13 July 2007, Putrajaya.

Badariah Arshad, Principal Private Secretary to Mahathir Mohamad, 28 June 2005, Putrajaya.

Ghazzali S.A. Khalid, former Malaysian Ambassador to the US, 5 July 2007, Putrajaya.

Hasmy Agam, former Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, 12 July 2007, Kuala Lumpur.

Ibrahim Abdullah, Undersecretary, OIC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 9 July 2007, Putrajaya.

Kogila Balakrishnan, Principal Assistant Secretary, Defence Industry Division, Ministry of Defence Malaysia, 1 June 2007, London.

Mahathir Mohamad, former Prime Minister of Malaysia, 16 January 2007, London.

Shazelia Zainal Abidin, Principal Assistant Secretary, Global Economics and Development Division, 10 July 2007, Putrajaya.

Syed Hamid Albar, Foreign Minister of Malaysia, 16 March 2007, London.

Taufik Md. Noor, former Special Officer to Malaysia's Foreign Minister (Rais Yatim and Abu Hassan Omar), 12 July 2007, Kuala Lumpur.

Zainuddin Maidin, Minister of Information of Malaysia and Mahathir's biographer, 22 April 2007, London.

(The list of non-attributable interviews may be obtained from the author or his supervisor, Dr Jürgen Haacke, International Relations Department, London School of Economics)

## APPENDIX 2: VISION 2020

### MALAYSIA AS A FULLY DEVELOPED COUNTRY – ONE DEFINITION

- By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.
- There can be no fully developed Malaysia until we have finally overcome the nine central strategic challenges that have confronted us from the moment of our birth as an independent nation.
- The first of these is the challenges of establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny. This must be a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one 'Bangsa Malaysia' with political loyalty and dedication to the nation.
- The second is the challenge of creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian Society with faith and confidence in itself, justifiably proud of what it is, of what it has accomplished, robust enough to face all manner of adversity. This Malaysian Society must be distinguished by the pursuit of excellence, fully aware of all its potentials, psychologically subservient to none, and respected by the peoples of other nations.
- The third challenge we have always faced is that of fostering and developing a mature democratic society, practising a form of mature consensual, community-oriented Malaysian democracy that can be a model for many developing countries.
- The fourth is the challenge of establishing a fully moral and ethical society, whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest of ethical standards.
- The fifth challenge that we have always faced is the challenge of establishing a matured, liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colours and creeds are free to practise and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs and yet feeling that they belong to one nation.
- The sixth is the challenge of establishing a scientific and progressive society, a society that is innovative and forward-looking, one that is not only a consumer of technology but also a contributor to the scientific and technological civilisation of the future.
- The seventh challenge is the challenge of establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system.
- The eighth is the challenge of ensuring an economically just society. This is a society in which there is a fair and equitable distribution of the wealth of the nation, in which there is full partnership in economic progress. Such a society cannot be in place so long as there is the identification of race with economic function, and the identification of economic backwardness with race.
- The ninth challenge is the challenge of establishing a prosperous society, with an economy that is fully competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

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