strategy of not being rigidly pro-West, but to extend its
diplomatic relations with African, Asian and also Eastern
European countries. During the Indonesian Confrontation
years, Malaysia wooed Muslim and Afro-Asian countries
to counter Indonesian diplomatic offense, and in the late
sixties it became more Islamic as its relations with
Britain became less dominant. Malaysia's preoccupation
with the Palestinian issue is perhaps the earliest among
other Islamic issues. Malaysia's stance towards the
Palestinian struggle and the Zionist regime could be
noticed ever since the early days of independence under
the premiership of the first Prime Minister of Malaysia.
The most important event that paved the way for a
growing attention to Islam in Malaysian government
policies was the occurrence of the Arab-Israeli War of
1967. It is important to highlight that the outbreak of
the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 resulted in the major change
in the policy of the Malaysian government toward Israel.
Since then, the Palestinian issue has become one of
the favourite topics in the Malaysian dailies and in
Parliament. The withdrawal of the proposal to recognize
Israel in 1967 was justified by the Deputy Prime
Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, in the following words, "to
change the political status quo of the region through force
of military might is an anachronism and militates against
a cardinal tenet of the United Nations." Thus
Malaysia's conviction in the sovereignty and territorial
integrity of states, and its opposition to acts of terrorism
was apparently the major reason for its refusal to
recognize the Israeli regime. This change of attitude was
presumably also partly motivated by the heightened
domestic pressure. For instance, several UMNO branch
resolutions urged the review of the recognition proposal
in order to keep up the good name of Malaya among
Muslim countries in the Middle East.

Another important event that paved the way for a
growing attention to Islam in Malaysian government
policies in the late sixties under the administration of
Tunku Abdul Rahman, was the occurrence of the riots of
May 13, 1969. They led to a growing Malay-Islamic

---

5 The war resulted in the occupation of Baitul Magdis, the West Bank, Sinai and the Golan Heights. The war received wide coverage
in the Malaysian dailies for example; The Straits Times, June 6, 1967.
6 Since then events related to the Palestinian issue were reported in
detail by the Malaysian dailies for example the Arab League Summit
of 1967. See; Utusan Malaysia, 1 September 1967 and The Straits
Times 29 November 1967.
860-867 and January 1968, pp. 3494-3495.
8 Suara Malaysia, 26 October 1967.
11 Ibid.
12 13th May Riot was regarded as the watershed in contemporary
Malaysian history. The racial disturbance was caused by the inter-
racial frustration and antagonism especially among the Malay and
Chinese. This inter-racial friction seemed almost inevitable as a
result of the racial insults which were handled about irresponsibly
both by the opposition parties and Alliance in the election campaign
of 1969. Due to the riot, Parliament was suspended for twenty
months and the country was ruled by a National Operation Council
(NOC) and the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to
bridge the economic gap between various Malaysian races. For detail
see; Leon Camber, 13 May 1969: A Historical Survey of Sino-Malay
Relations (Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Asia, 1983).