

providing guidelines for Malaysian Islamic diplomacy. Islam, with the passage of time, gained greater role in the politics of Malaysia as a result of serious and deepening intra-Malay rivalry, particularly between UMNO and PAS (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia). Therefore, UMNO under the leadership of successive Prime Ministers has continued its commitment to use Islam as an important policy tool to help, protect, promote and secure Malaysia's national interests within the international world of Islam.

Indeed, Islam, as a bastion of Malay identity, has considerably influenced the domestic policies of the Malaysian government. The exact degree to which Islam influences Malaysian foreign policy has yet to be investigated, but it is reasonable to assume that such an important component in the national life and character of the Malays do have some influences. Since Islam plays a remarkable role in the national life, it should inevitably exert considerable influence in its external attitudes and politics.

ISLAM IN MALAYSIAN FOREIGN POLICY: AN OVERVIEW

The foreign policy of Malaysia has been since the first days of independence directly and consistently engaged in the promotion of friendly and cooperative relations among nations in order to achieve a just and safe international order, and to promote the struggle against imperialism, racism and human misery (Shafie, Ghazali 1982).

Malaysia believes that every state must be allowed to choose for itself its own form of political, economic and social organizations, free from any manner of external interference. Malaysia's commitment to the principle of international peace and justice may be best illustrated by its constructive support for the nationalist struggle for freedom and justice, e.g. the cases of the black South Africans, Bosnians and Palestinians.

In a democratic country like Malaysia, foreign policy must reflect the aspirations of the people for peace, security and development. Several studies have been conducted on the development of Malaysian foreign policy since independence. The earliest literatures highlight the important role of leadership style in determining the Malaysian

Foreign Policies (MFP). Silcock (1963) claims that "Malaysian Foreign Policy owes more to the personality of its Prime Minister". This view also supported by Abdullah Ahmad (1985) who analyzed Malaysian Foreign Policy during Tunku Abdul Rahman administration. Pathmanathan & Lazarus (1984) also in agreement with the earlier mentioned literatures that leadership style plays a very influential role in determining the MFP decisions and outcomes".

Despite of the role of leadership style, Camaroux (1994) argues "domestic factors notably multi-ethnic society of Malaysia have significant impact on MFP". Meanwhile, Razak Baginda (1995) suggests that "external factors shaped MFP more than anything else". With regard to MFP under Dr. Mahathir several studies highlight that it was largely due to cautious pragmatism particularly to maintain political (regime) survival amidst the domestic political pressures and rivalry (Shanti Nair, 1998; Milne & Mauzy, 1999; Anidah, 2009; Karminder Singh, 2009).

Karminder Singh (2009) claims that MFP during Dr. Mahathir depends on the interaction of several clusters of factors. Among factors that influenced the formulation of MFP during Dr. Mahathir are; idiosyncrasy, leadership style, political philosophy, political economic, state's unique domestic factors, and external environment.

With regard to Islam in MFP, Shanti Nair (1998) "Islam acted as a predominant force in MFP's direction in the Mahathir's era, the impetus force which came from domestic political pressures". Anidah (2009) also suggests that Malaysia, though an integral part of the Islamic Ummah, was largely motivated in its commitment to the Palestinian issue by political and pragmatic considerations. The MFP was largely directed towards achieving several important national objectives particularly, (1) political survival, (2) socio-economic development, and (3) image enhancement at home and abroad.

As discussed earlier, Islam plays an important part in the national life, as it is closely linked to the ethnic identity of the politically dominant Malays. Therefore, Islam is an important factor in contemporary Malaysian politics, especially in mobilizing the Malays for political action, and in the formulation of foreign policy.