

considerations resulting from an interplay between various factors: political, economic, religious and humanitarian.

INTRODUCTION

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.¹

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, Muslim Bosnians and Palestinians. However, for practical reasons, this study does not aspire to comprehensively study the Malaysian foreign policy, but it rather attempts to explore the Islamic dimension in the formulation of the Malaysian foreign policy.

According to Geddes, Islam's capability as an international order is due to the faith itself, which draws together in common brotherhood all who believe in God and His message. Islam, with its dynamic and universal principles of brotherhood and justice, is a cohesive force, which has tremendous moral and material effect upon

¹ M.Ghazali Shafie, *Malaysia: International Relations* (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Enterprise Sdn.Bhd., 1992), p.3

international affairs.² Malaysia can be classified as a Muslim country. With its Muslim majority and Islam as its official religion, Malaysia takes considerable pride for being part of the dynamic and progressive Islamic *Ummah*. Being part of the *Ummah*, Malaysia endeavors her utmost to manifest her concern and commitment to the Islamic principles of brotherhood and justice. The foreign policy of Malaysia may be said to be affected by Islam to a considerable degree. Malaysia's emphasis on its co-religionists' issues could be seen in her firm stance on the Palestinian issue, the Russian aggression in Afghanistan, the Gulf war, conflict in Bosnia, as well as the struggle of Muslim minorities in Southern Thailand and the Philippines. Malaysia's commitment to the *Ummah's* issues is not only humanitarian but Islamic as well. Malaysia's commitment to the Islamic issues can, however, be best illustrated particularly in the case of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

Malaysia's stand concerning 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. Significantly, Malaysian internal politics play a dominant role in the formulation of Malaysian foreign policy. From a historical study of Malay politics, one may conclude that Islam has increasingly become a vital political force because of its significance to the communal and political identity of the Malay-Muslims.³

² C.L.Geddes, "The Muslim World in International Affairs" , *Horizon*, Vol.XIX, no.2, 1966,p. 143

³ Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*