

Analysis of malasia's foreign policies since independence politics essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Wisma Putra as it is commonly known has been mandated to pursue the nation's foreign policy in accordance with the Federal Constitution of Malaysia with the objective of protecting and promoting the nation's interest at the international level. Malaysia's foreign policy is premised on establishing close and friendly relations with countries in the community of nations. It will continue to respect the internal affairs of other nations and advocate a policy of non-interference recognizing the sovereignty of nations.

Since Malaysia's independence in 1957 till today, the vision of our foreign policy remains consistent that is to safeguard Malaysia's national interests as well as contribute towards a just and equitable community of nations. This is achieved through upholding the country's sovereignty and promoting universal peace; fostering friendly relations with foreign countries and protecting Malaysia's interests in the regional and international arena. In other words, Malaysia will continue to consolidate its relations with other countries and international organisations, both at the regional and international level.

In line with the objectives of promoting and protecting Malaysian national interest abroad, the Ministry has established a total of 105 missions in 83 countries and appointed 53 Honorary Consuls who provide support and assistance in promoting Malaysia's interest abroad.

Since the independence of Malaya in 1957, the nation's foreign policy has gone through several phases of significant transition with different emphases under five previous premierships. The policy has been largely determined by

the established national characteristics and succession of political leadership as well as by the dynamic regional and international environment.

Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia held a markedly anti-Communist and pro-Western posture as the era saw the country threatened by the Communist insurgency. The foreign policy during Tunku's time had to take into consideration the bipolar power struggle between opposing ideas of democracy and communism. Under the stewardship of Malaysia's second premier Tun Abdul Razak, Malaysia's foreign policy began to shift towards non-alignment and internationalism with Malaysia joining the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

A period of consolidation ensued under Tun Hussein Onn with ASEAN becoming the cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy following the collapse of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in 1975, the withdrawal of the US military presence from Southeast Asia and the invasion of Kampuchea (now Cambodia) by Vietnam.

During the premiership of Tun Dr. Mahathir in 1981, Malaysia began opening its doors to foster relations with more nations and became a symbol of a rising developing country. Under Tun Mahathir's tenure, the nation's foreign policy began adopting a much greater economic orientation in the country's external relations while championing the rights, interests and aspirations of developing countries. This approach led to the advocacy of the South-South Cooperation, a more proactive role in the G-77, the establishment of the G-15 and saw the 'Look East Policy' being instituted. This shift to the East greatly influenced Malaysia's economic development. Malaysia became the

voice of the developing world and was a role model for many developing countries as it became well known for its active stance at the UN and other international conferences. Malaysia's participation in peacekeeping missions under the UN is also a testimony of the nation's seriousness in instilling the will of the international community. Since 1960, Malaysia has committed troops to Republic of Congo, Bosnia Herzegovina, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Western Sahara, Iraq, Timor Leste and Lebanon.

The fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi continued to ensure that Malaysia was active in the international arena. During his tenure, Malaysia played an instrumental role in the formulation and adoption of the ASEAN Charter which has been ratified by all ASEAN member states and subsequently entered into force on 15th December 2008. During this period, Malaysia was also active in expanding the focus of OIC from being an organisation focused solely on political issues into one which focuses on the socio-economic development of Islamic countries. The Islam Hadhari concept which promotes a form of civilisational Islam was also introduced by Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi and was accepted and recognised by the OIC member states at the 3rd Special Summit of OIC at Makkah in December 2005.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister YAB Dato' Sri Najib Tun Razak, Malaysia will continue to project a forward-looking and pragmatic foreign policy whilst continuing to facilitate trade, attract foreign investment as well as project Malaysia as a stable and peaceful country. Upon taking office in April 2009, the Prime Minister also stressed that Malaysia's foreign policy under his administration would be shaped significantly by the 1Malaysia: <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-malaysia's-foreign-policies-since-independence-politics-essay/>

People First, Performance Now concept. Among the key elements of the 1Malaysia concept is in realising the strength of Malaysia lies in its diversity. This concept bodes well with the main vision of Malaysia's Foreign Policy that is to protect and promote interests abroad and at the same time responsibly and effectively contribute towards the building of a fair and just world. Dato' Sri Najib believes that the interconnectedness of nations in the world means that Malaysia would benefit in applying 1Malaysia in its efforts in diplomacy and foreign relations. Synonymous with the 1Malaysia concept, Malaysia will continue to maintain close relations with all countries in the world and will continue to work with like-minded nations in pursuing national interest.

YAB PM also introduced the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) that identified Key Results Area (KRAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the Ministry as a promise of commitment by the Government to the rakyat. In line with this, the Ministry has identified 14 Key Performance Indicators to measure the success of the Ministry.

The KRAs of the Ministry are as follows:

- a. Protection and promotion of Malaysia's interests bilaterally, regionally and internationally through proactive diplomacy;
- b. Realisation of an ASEAN Community by 2015 via the ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint, ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint and ASEAN Social Cultural Blueprint;

- c. Enhancing Malaysia's standing in the international community particularly in the framework of Malaysia in an ever changing geopolitical scenario; and
- d. Provision of prompt and effective services locally and abroad.

Malaysia has also maintained excellent relations with other countries, bilaterally and multilaterally through existing regional and international mechanisms of ASEAN, UN and other organisations which we are a member of.

Malaysia's foreign policy is structured upon a framework of bilateralism, regionalism and multilateralism where its outreach is likening to a pattern of concentric circles. ASEAN forms the core priority of Malaysia's current foreign policy, in consideration of our neighbours as our closest allies. Looking further afield, as a country with a strong Muslim majority, Malaysia also gives importance to the solidarity of the Ummah and the spirit of cooperation among the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Malaysia's status as a developing nation makes it imperative for the country to engage actively in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth, Group of Seventy Seven (G77), Developing Eight (D8), Asia Middle East Dialogue (AMED), Far East Asia Latin America Cooperation (FEALAC), Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). No less important is the country's continued active participation in the Commonwealth, the United Nations and other international organisations.

Through these organisations, Malaysia has sought to promote the South-South Cooperation among the developing countries and the Muslim world. Malaysia also advocates the “ Prosper thy neighbour” policy to enhance economic relations and cooperation with its neighbouring countries through Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-the Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMTGT) and other entities.

Malaysia will continue to play a significant role in the various multilateral issues that affect our interests. These issues include disarmament, counter terrorism, trafficking in persons, climate change and environmental issues. As a member of the UN, Malaysia is a firm believer of international peace and security and an upholder of international law.

Malaysia's election as the President of United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for 2010 and the Chairmanship of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were a further testimony of Malaysia's positive international image.

Malaysia will also continue to engage with like-minded nations, both in the region and beyond in ensuring its sovereignty and economic well being are preserved and protected. Malaysia will continue with the principles of engagement and cooperation rather than isolationism and unilateral action. Trade and investment opportunities will continue to be explored with our traditional trading partners and at the same time to develop strategic partnerships for trade and investment with countries in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and other parts of Asia.

In the decade leading up to 2020, Malaysia would have to deal with great changes in the global environment whilst improving and upgrading the country's domestic conditions. In recognising this challenge, it is vital that Malaysia's foreign policy continues to focus on protecting national interests while responsibly and effectively contributing towards the building of a fair and just world.

The fundamental principles of sovereign equality, mutual respect for territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes as well as mutual benefit in relations are the guiding principles that would continue to guide Malaysia's relations with other countries. These principles have stood the test of time. Indeed, our steadfast adherence to these principles, supported by a consistent foreign policy, has established for Malaysia a credible image in the eyes of the international community.

OBJECTIVE

Implementing foreign policy is a complex and challenging task. With the dynamic environment of world politics, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs needs to be constantly aware of changes and be able to effectively respond to ensure that Malaysia's sovereignty and national interests are adequately protected and Malaysia's views and positions are duly articulated in the international arena.

The Ministry will coordinate and work closely with relevant Ministries and Agencies to establish workable terms of reference in implementing Malaysia's national interests and to coordinate marketing and branding strategies for Malaysia abroad.

In the formulation of foreign policy, every country has its own objective. In the case of Malaysia, it is as simple as the pursuit of Malaysia's national interest at the international level.

The Malaysian government will strive to ensure that Malaysia continues to play an active role in international relations for the benefit of the country.

Principal emphasis in the pursuit of Malaysia's foreign policy objectives include:

Maintaining peaceful relations with all countries regardless of its ideology and political system;

Adopting an independent, non-aligned, and principled stance in regional and international diplomatic affairs;

Forging close relations and economic partnerships with all nations, particularly with ASEAN and other regional friends;

Promoting peace and stability in the region through capacity building and conflict resolution measures;

Playing an influential leadership role as Chair of the ASEAN, Non-aligned Movement (NAM) and Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) (As we did in the last few years);

Participating actively and meaningfully in the United Nations, especially in the efforts to end injustice and oppression, and to uphold international law; and

Projecting Malaysia as a leading example of a tolerant and progressive Islamic nation.

FORMULATION OF FOREIGN POLICY

Malaysia's foreign policy is basically an extension of Malaysia's domestic policy. It is designed to defend and promote the country's national, political, security, economic and other vital interests. It is geared towards promoting a peaceful regional and international environment, which would give Malaysia space to achieve all its national objectives without disruption from external threats.

Despite the diversity of views regarding the perception and explanation of foreign policy, no foreign policy can be formulated in a vacuum. It must serve to function in a dynamic environment. Malaysia's foreign policy is no exception. Various geographical, historical, social and political determinants contributed to shaping the nature of Malaysia's foreign policy and the conduct of the country's international relations.

Our foreign policy seeks to promote mutual tolerance and cooperation amongst all countries that make up the fabric of international community. To this, Malaysia pursues an independent, principled and pragmatic foreign policy which rests on the values of peace, humanity, justice, and equality.

Malaysia's foreign policy is also premised on the principles of respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the affairs of other nations, peaceful settlement of disputes, peaceful co-existence and mutual benefit in relations.

Due to globalization and the rise of powerful non-state actors, such as Multinational Corporations (MNCs), non-governmental organizations, and a variety of transnational groups, it is imperative for small nation states to cooperate even more closely. To this, Malaysia maintains friendly diplomatic, and trade relations with many countries throughout the world.

As a trading nation, we advocate a multilateral rule-based global trading system which would promote and safeguard the interests of all countries, whether developed or developing, in a fair and equitable manner. In this respect, Malaysia has long advocated the economic principle of “prosperity-neighbor” and not “beggar-thy-neighbor”. We believe that the global economic infrastructure should be that “prosperity will beget prosperity.”

CRITERIA AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MALAYSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Malaysia's foreign policy is guided by three criteria:

a) First, it must be a CREDIBLE policy:

Exudes trust and confidence from other nations. In this regard, it has to be based on certain internationally cherished principles.

Serves the country's best interest and remain a responsible member of the international community.

b) Second, it must be an ENLIGHTENED policy:

Takes care of the interest of its citizens above all else.

Brings international recognition and admiration for Malaysia and allows Malaysians to be good citizens of the world.

c) Third, it must be a CONSISTENT AND COHERENT policy:

Makes Malaysia an acceptable and reliable partner in interstate affairs.

Succeeds in making Malaysia the preferred brand name in international relations.

EVOLUTION OF MALAYSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy is not static. Its formulation is essentially a dynamic process. Hence, over the years, our foreign policy has evolved, taking account of the change in leadership as well as developments in the ever-changing global political and economic landscapes. Moreover, the advent of globalization and the transformation of interstate relations brought about by new and rapid changes in information technologies necessarily means that our foreign policy has to be adjusted and fine tuned to meet new challenges in a globalised world.

The style and approaches in enunciating Malaysia's foreign policy may differ in keeping with the personality of each past and present prime minister of Malaysia. A critical examination of Malaysia's foreign policy since 1957 would show its steady evolution characterized by notable changes in emphasis, which took place with the change in Malaysia's political stewardship. Briefly;

a) In the period 1957-1969, our country has just gained its independence. During this post independence period, under our first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, our foreign policy was geared towards the survival of our newly independent nation. Our foreign policy then was markedly anti-Communist and pro-western in posture with close links to the Commonwealth. We were also a strong opponent of apartheid. Our posture towards regional cooperation also began to take root with the birth of ASA (1960), MAPHILINDO (1963) and ASEAN (1967).

b) In the period 1970 -1976, under Tun Abdul Razak, as a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Malaysia began to identify itself as a " Muslim nation." The search for new friends substantially increased the importance of NAM to Malaysia. We became markedly non-aligned and postured towards neutrality, peaceful co-existence and independence. We also began to distance ourselves from major powers, put strong emphasis on regionalism and developed contacts and diplomatic relations with communist countries. Investments from other than British sources began to be also welcomed.

c) A period of consolidation ensued under Tun Hussein Onn (1976-1981) with ASEAN becoming the cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy following the collapse of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) in 1975, the withdrawal of the US military presence from Southeast Asia and the invasion of Kampuchea (now Cambodia) by Vietnam. The First ASEAN Summit was held and Malaysia signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Bali in 1976. Further emphasis on independence, non-alignment and equidistance from the major powers was also made.

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-malasia's-foreign-policies-since-independence-politics-essay/>

d) A more dramatic shift in emphasis occurred when Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammad took over as the fourth Prime Minister in 1981. Malaysia's foreign policy stance began to take a much greater economic orientation than ever before, coupled with a strong and nationalistic defence of the rights, interests and aspirations of developing countries and the advocacy of south-south co-operation. Tun Dr. Mahathir's premiership saw the pursuit of numerous new initiatives such as:

Antarctica as the Common Heritage of Mankind.

The Look East Policy (LEP).

Championing of the cause of developing countries on major social issues like environment, human rights and democracy.

With the advent of globalization, Malaysians identified both the beneficial and adverse impact of globalization to the developing countries.

Pro-active and passionate approach on Apartheid and Palestinian issues.

Islamic Unity - Chairmanship and hosting of the 10th OIC Summit, hosting of 1st Expo OIC, formation of D-8.

International peace and security - Malaysia's membership in UNSC, peacekeeping role in a number of countries such as Cambodia, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Namibia and East Timor. Malaysia also actively championed against selectivity, double standards and pre-emptive action outside the ambit of the UN.

Terrorism - Malaysia forged strong regional and international cooperation in combating terrorism, strongly advocated against profiling by religion or ethnicity, proposed multifaceted approach in combating terrorism including identifying and eliminating the root causes, hosted OIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Terrorism in 2002, established SEARCCT to primarily focus on training and capacity building.

Opening of New Frontiers:

Active bilateral engagements with African, Latin American and Eastern Europe countries, particularly in trade, investment and transfer technology in the spirit of South-South Cooperation. Includes opening of Diplomatic Missions and extension of Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP) in these countries.

Economic Orientation:

East Asia Economic Cooperation (from EAEG to EAEC to ASEAN +3).

Regional Development Cooperation - Growth Triangle concept such as IMTGT, IMSGT, BIMP-EAGA.

Group of 15 (G15) - first advocated by Malaysia.

Economic diplomacy - reverse investment's 'prosper thy neighbor's, South-South cooperation, MIGHT, Langkawi International Dialogue (LID), South Africa International Dialogue (SAID).

e) In the period 2003 and onwards, under the leadership of Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, foreign policy initiatives were further refined and fine-tuned to project:

Pragmatic response in meeting the current geopolitical and economic challenges.

More sophisticated articulation of Malaysia's views.

Substance as a dynamic extension to existing policies.

Influential leadership role as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and ASEAN; and

Malaysia as a leading example of a tolerant and progressive Islamic Nation – Islam Hadhari

The evolution of the country's foreign policy under successive prime ministers reflects a pragmatic response to the geopolitical and economic changes of their times. To be continually relevant to the country's needs, foreign policy cannot remain static.

But whilst changes in emphasis have become a general feature of Malaysian foreign policy, continuity has also been evident. Both the change and continuity mark a higher level of confidence and maturing of the country in the conduct of its international affairs. Indeed, in many ways Malaysia's leadership role has been recognized on several issues of deep interest to the developing world.

As a trading nation, we are very much dependent on a peaceful international environment for our well being. Naturally, our foreign policy has to be oriented to allow for a greater focus on economic diplomacy. In the past, when we were producing mainly raw materials for the world, Malaysia had to compete with only a handful of countries.

But now, when we have become an industrialized trading nation, we have no choice but to work harder, to compete better and to find new markets for our goods and services. We must find better ways to do business with the outside world. We need to find niches in which we have a competitive edge.

Towards this end, Malaysia has implemented a number of policies that have a strong foreign policy component that will contribute to the creation of a strong, dynamic and resilient economy. These policies include amongst others:

- LookEastPolicy
- ReverseInvestment-ProsperThyNeighbour
- MalaysiaIncorporated
- South-SouthCooperation
- MalaysianTechnicalCooperationProgramme(MTCP)
- Langkawi International Dialogue

CONCLUSION

One significant phenomenon that will impact strongly on Malaysia's foreign policy as we move forward is globalization. Our greatest challenge would be to extract the best from the process of globalization and to give our best to the system. And in return to contribute towards making the world a much more peaceful and equitable place to live in, to provide leadership within our region and to demonstrate exemplary and responsible membership of the international community.

On the political front, we see the end of the cold war. Yet the world today is no safer than we had been led to believe. The so-called friendly global village has not come about. Old conflicts either refuse to die or simply have a way of coming out of their graves to haunt us. In the meantime, new conflicts, at times much bloodier and brutal than the old ones, continue to emerge and rage or remain unresolved. Added to this, two other issues of great concern also remain, namely terrorism which continue to threaten

Terrorism which continue to threaten the lives and property of innocent victims; and

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction which brings fourth the prospect of nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare.

It is important; therefore, that our foreign policy be geared towards ensuring that more and more nations sign and ratify the relevant international conventions such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Biological Weapons Convention

(BWC), Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and the Convention on Land Mines (CLM).

The economic dimension of globalization has been even more disappointing. The financial crisis that descended upon East Asia in 1997 brought about not only social misery and economic disaster but political instability as well.

Massive Unemployment, negative growth, stock market crashes and severe currency devaluation have pulled down millions of people below the poverty lines. And now, we are anxiously watching the effects of the possible economic meltdown following the global financial crisis.

The severity of the situation calls for the whole business of economic globalization and financial and trade liberalization to be seriously addressed. This is another biggest foreign policy challenge for Malaysia. Malaysia will continue to press for the reforming the international financial architecture that is so prone to speculative manipulations and frequently excessive fluctuation.

Malaysia's activism at the international front has of course attracted attention and reaction from various quarters. Until recently, Malaysia had been the target for criticism for being "too vocal". But this is something that we need to take in our own stride if Malaysia is to be proactive at the global level.

Our foreign policy principles have stood the test of time. Indeed, our steadfast adherence to these principles, supported by a consistent foreign policy, has established for Malaysia certain credibility in the eyes of the international community.

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-malasia's-foreign-policies-since-independence-politics-essay/>

Malaysia's initiatives at various regional and international fora have put the country on the world map.

Increased economic prosperity and political stability has in fact enabled Malaysia to carve its own niche in the international scene.

Making its presence felt has allowed Malaysia to exercise some influence in setting the international agenda.

Being less dependent on foreign aid and assistance, Malaysia has been able to speak up on issues that other developing countries feel constrained to voice for fear of retribution by the major, particularly western, powers.

The years ahead therefore would see our foreign policy specially oriented towards not only ensuring Malaysia's domestic success but also internationally, as a geopolitical and economic player at the global level.