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THE ROLE OF MAHATHIR MOHAMAD IN  
MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE RELATIONS, 1981-2003

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study basically attempts to evaluate the role of Mahathir Mohamad in Malaysia-Singapore relations. The study argues that Mahathir played a significant role in shaping Malaysia's relations with Singapore during his two decade rule from 1981 to 2003. The study relies on conceptual tools developed by James Rosenau, Robert Jervis and Karminder Singh Dhillon to construct Mahathir's idiosyncratic variables and how they influence the nature and substance of Malaysia's relations and foreign policies with Singapore. Based on the historical-analytical approach, the study concludes that Malaysia's relations with Singapore between 1981 until 2003 bear significant imprint of Mahathir's idiosyncrasy which consists of three components: (1) his individual traits; (2) political ideology and; (3) leadership style. Mahathir's idiosyncratic imprint is clearly manifested in the way he dealt with bilateral issues existing during his era, such as water, airspace, customs, immigration and quarantine complex issues, as well as individual-level issues such as state visit by Israeli president, Lee's comments about Johore and Mahathir's "personalised" comments about Lee and Singapore. His idiosyncratic imprint also can be seen in the way he dealt with Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore.

## ملخص البحث

تتناول هذه الدراسة بصورة أساسية دور رئيس الوزراء السابق محاضر محمد في العلاقات الماليزية السنغافورية. تناقش الدراسة الدور البارز الذي لعبه محاضر في صياغة العلاقات الماليزية السنغافورية خلال العقد اللذين حكم فيهما ماليزيا في الفترة ما بين 1981 - 2003. ويستند البحث إلى الأدوات المفاهيمية التي طورها جيمس روزنو، روبرت جرفيز وكار مندر سنغ دهلون. وذلك من أجل بناء خصوصيات محاضر المتغيرة، وكيف أثرت تلك الخصوصيات على طبيعة العلاقات والسياسات الماليزية السنغافورية وجوهرها. وبناء على المنهج التاريخي التحليلي تخلص الدراسة إلى أن العلاقات الماليزية السنغافورية في الفترة ما بين 1981 حتى 2003 تحمل بجلاء بصمات محاضر الخاصة والتي تتكون من ثلاثة مركبات هي: (1) سجايه الشخصية (2) إيديولوجيته السياسية (3) أسلوبه في القيادة. وتظهر بصمات محاضر الخاصة في الكيفية التي تعامل بها مع القضايا الشائنة إبان فترة حكمه مثل قضايا : الماء، والمجال الجوي، والرسوم الجمركية، والهجرة، وقضايا أخرى أكثر تعقيدا كقضية الحجر الصحي. وعلى المستوى الشخصي هناك قضايا مثل زيارة رئيس إسرائيل، وتعليقات لي عن جوهور، وهناك أيضا تعليقات محاضر عن سنغافورة. وتظهر كذلك بصمات محاضر الخاصة في تعامله مع لي كوان يو، رئيس سنغافورة السابق.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standard of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences in Political Science.

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Supervisor

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Sciences

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Ahmad El-Muhammady bin Muhammad ‘Uthman El-Muhammady

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RELATIONS, 1981-2003**

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*To my mother and father*

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## LIST OF ABBREBRIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASLI	Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute
CIQ	Customs, Immigration and Quarantine
CPF	Central Provident Fund
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DO	District Officer
EAEG	East Asian Economic Grouping
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FPDA	Five Powers Defence Arrangement
FRC	Foreign Relations Committee
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDF	Israeli Defence Forces
IKAPE	Institute of Economic and Political Studies
IMP	Independence of Malaya Party
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
ISD	Internal Security Department
KLIA	Kuala Lumpur International Airport
MAPHILINDO	Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSC	Multimedia Super Corridor
MPF	Malaysia's Foreign Policy
NIC	Newly Industrialised Countries
NOC	National Operation Council
OIC	Organization of Islamic Countries
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS	Parti Islam se-Malaysia
PEBC	Public Education Business Consortium
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
RSAF	Republic of Singapore Air Force
SM	Senior Minister
UMNO	United Malays National Organization
UPP	United People's Party

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Malaysia-Singapore relations have a long and complex history. Their geographical proximity and complex history have been identified as the principal factors in shaping the nature of relationships between these two states in the later periods.<sup>1</sup> Geographically, Singapore is an island nation located at the southern tip of the Malaysian Peninsula. It lies 137 kilometers north of the equator, south of the Malaysian state of Johor and north of Indonesia's Riau Islands. Malaysia and Singapore are separated by only a kilometre (or 0.66 mile) wide straits and both are connected by two structural crossings known as Johor-Singapore Causeway and Malaysia-Singapore Second Link.<sup>2</sup> Due to the geographical proximity, there is increasing social and economic interconnectedness between these two countries despite the emergence of sporadic bilateral tensions since the post-Separation era of 1965 until now.

Historically, the Island of Singapore was colonised by the British from the time of its founding in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles and it was administered together with the Malayan peninsula. When the Imperial Japanese army landed in Malaya in 1942 during the World War II, Singapore was the last line of defence for the British. However, the fall of Malaya and Singapore marked the end of British occupation in Malaya until Japan surrendered to the Allied Forces in 1945. In 1959, Singapore was granted internal home government, followed by independence from Malaya in 1963

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<sup>1</sup> Narayanan Ganesan, *Singapore's foreign policy in ASEAN: Major domestic and bilateral political constraints* (Dekalb, III: Northern Illinois University, 1989), 94.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

after its two-year membership in the Federation of Malaysia.<sup>3</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1965, Singapore became an independent and sovereign state.<sup>4</sup>

From the post-merger period onward, Malaysia-Singapore relations were characterised by precariousness and instability. This unstable relationship was primarily caused by bilateral issues both at the state level as well as individual level. This study proposes that there are two categories of issues pervading Malaysia-Singapore relations. The first category involves various bilateral disputes such as airspace, water, territoriality, common currency, stock exchange, relocation of customs and immigration quarantine checkpoints and the like. The second category is related to personalised and politically-laden statements made by Malaysian or Singaporean politicians concerning each other's domestic affairs that have often caused considerable political repercussions in both countries.

In analysing the above-stated issues, this study relies on James Rosenau's model of foreign policy. According to Rosenau, foreign policy formulation in any country usually is influenced by five imperatives, such as individual's idiosyncrasy, role, state, societal, and systemic imperatives.<sup>5</sup> The present study, however, intends to utilise only two imperatives namely the role of idiosyncratic variables and state factor in shaping and influencing the nature of Malaysia-Singapore relations during Mahathir's era.

Since the perception of a leader towards the external environment and its actors are also functional in foreign policy making and interstate relations, the study also uses this concept in explaining Mahathir's perception towards Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew in conducting Malaysia's relations with Singapore. As far as the concept of

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> James S. Rosenau, *The scientific study of foreign policy* (New York: New York Free Press, 1971), 50-51.

perception is concerned, this study derives considerable benefits from Robert Jervis' model of perception and its utility in foreign policy formulation.<sup>6</sup>

Despite occasional bilateral disputes which occur every now and then, they did not hinder bilateral cooperation and this cooperation has taken place even since the pre-merger period, initiated by state or non-governmental organisations and business communities. The people-to-people contacts between both countries have also been a major factor for the intensification of bilateral relationship although at the political level, the relationship was apparently unstable in nature. In other words, the nature of the relationship has been unstable and fluctuating between tension and relaxation, conflict and cooperation, cordiality and strain, and this kind of relationship has been in place since the pre-merger period until the present.

However, political observers have noted different tempo of diplomatic relations since Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over as Prime Minister. The nature of Malaysia-Singapore relations is best captured by K. Kesavapany, Singapore's High Commissioner to Malaysia. He observes that:

The period stretching from 1980s to 2003 under the Mahathir administration was by far the most stressful in the short history of relations between Singapore and Malaysia, with a number of issues reaching confrontational level and thus rendering them more difficult to resolve.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this, after his resignation from the premiership, Mahathir himself explicitly acknowledged his failure to find conclusive resolutions for the outstanding bilateral issues between Malaysia and Singapore during his twenty two years in power. He says:

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and misperception in international politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Swee-Hock Saw and K. Kesavapany, *Singapore-Malaysia relations under Abdullah Badawi*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), vii.

I admit that during 22 years as Prime Minister I failed to negotiate settlements on outstanding issues between Malaysia and Singapore.<sup>8</sup>

However, since the departure of Mahathir from the premiership on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2003, Malaysia's relations with Singapore have started to improve. The diplomatic gesture can be seen on both sides. In a joint press conference at the state Istana complex during his state visit to Singapore in January 2004, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, optimistically declared that:

I have suggested to Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong that I would prefer that we discuss. And I feel that we should not allow these bilateral issues to remain unresolved or later on to pass over to somebody else or a third party or to arbitration. We have to find some other ways, some other strategies in order to resolve all these issues and I am happy that Prime Minister Chok Tong has said okay, he is agreeable to suggestions and was asking me what are the specific things that I would like to suggest.<sup>9</sup>

The ascendancy of Abdullah to the premiership was warmly welcomed by Singaporean leaders and public alike. This is indicated by the statement given by Goh Chok Tong, who succeeded Lee Kuan Yew as the Prime Minister of Singapore. He responded Abdullah's pronouncement in a positive tone, stating that:

I had a very good, frank and friendly exchange with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and we took advantage of his courtesy visit to review our bilateral relations and basically both of us are determined to find ways to put our bilateral relations on the right track. It's important that we do so not just for ourselves but also for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).<sup>10</sup>

The diplomatic exchange of that sort was hardly seen during Mahathir's era. Ooi Kee Beng also captures the improving pattern of bilateral relationship between Malaysia and Singapore in his recent work. He observes that:

The harvesting season seems to have started for Malaysia and Singapore. Relations between them have been improving since Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over premiership of Malaysia in

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<sup>8</sup> *Bernama*, "Mahathir says 'Difficult' to Negotiate with Singapore," 26 March, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> *Straits Times*, "PM Abdullah's visit sparks hopes of warmer Singapore-Malaysia ties" 12 January, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

October 2003. He and then Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong had in their 20-minute meeting at the Asean-Japan Commemorative Summit held in Tokyo in December 2003-found they could get along well.<sup>11</sup>

The above mentioned development is regarded as a turning point in the history of Malaysia-Singapore relations for at least two reasons. Firstly, Malaysia's relations with Singapore indicate the sign of improvement with the ascendancy of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi after having experienced the period of fluctuated and stressful relationships under Mahathir's administration. This phenomenon is indicated by the willingness of both parties agreeing to return to the negotiation table and paving the way towards the establishment of amicable bilateral relations. Secondly, recent development also indicates the crucial role of political leadership, particularly the Prime Minister in shaping the nature and substance of Malaysia's foreign policy. Therefore, this study attempts to evaluate to what extent Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had played his role, influenced and shaped the nature of Malaysia-Singapore relations during his twenty two years in power.

It is equally important to note that in reality, bilateral conflicts and recurrent issues between nations are considered normal and are also seen as persistent events in international affairs. It is more often than not that nations in the world are involved in conflict with one another with varying degrees of intensity, be the issues involving economic, social or political matters.

The main difference then would be, how does the leader of a nation deal with those issues? How does he respond to the issue or conflict? How does he strategise to control the conflict from escalating? Most importantly, how does the leader perceive other nations and their political leadership? The answer to these questions would, to a

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<sup>11</sup> Ooi Kee Beng, *Era of transitions: Malaysia after Mahathir* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 143.

substantial extent, be bound to affect the nature of conflict and bilateral relations of the nations involved.

Singapore is not the only country that Malaysia has conflict with. Malaysia is also entangled with Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei on various transnational issues such as border, territorial disputes, immigrants and a host of other issues. Malaysia-Thailand border disputes are persistent issues in Malaysia-Thai relations. The separatist movement in Southern Pattani also had caused diplomatic glitches between Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok.<sup>12</sup> However, this problem had never escalated into a relatively serious bilateral conflict like the one between Malaysia and Singapore. Similarly, in the case of Malaysia-Indonesia relations, the relationship still remains strong and unaffected at least at the political level, despite the fact that some Indonesian workers were reported to have been actively involved in criminal activities in Malaysia. The case of Malaysia-Brunei relation is more unique. The Sultan of Brunei is known for his close relations with Malaysia's Sultans, such as Sultan of Johore, Kelantan, Selangor and Perak. His Royal Highness the Sultan of Brunei even has a Malaysian wife, Azrina Mazhar Hakim.<sup>13</sup> The closeness of that kind of relationship has major implications in Malaysia-Brunei relationship. One of the implications was manifested in the form of brotherly compromise in the issue of Limbang. In a recent development, Brunei eventually dropped its long-standing issue and claims over Limbang, which is located squarely on the Serawak-Brunei border.<sup>14</sup> It means that Malaysia's border dispute with Brunei is settled once and for all, even though some people in Brunei believed that that dispute is yet unsettled.

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<sup>12</sup> Marcelo G. Kohen, *Succession: international law perspectives* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 346-347.

<sup>13</sup> Azrina Mazhar Hakim was Malaysia's TV personality.

<sup>14</sup> *Bernama*, "Border redemarcation to resolve Malaysia-Brunei border issues - Rais" 19 March 2009.

In the case of Singapore, it is obvious that Malaysia has dealt with her differently. The element of “personal touch” between leaders is apparently missing in the interstate relations. Instead, it was characterised by sporadic criticism and endless bilateral disputes. Given that situation, the study attempts to examine the root cause of the problem and evaluate the gravity of its influence in the Malaysia-Singapore relations, 1981-2003.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Literature on Malaysia-Singapore relations and Malaysia’s foreign policies towards Singapore is voluminous and extensive. However, the author’s review on the literature concerned discovered that most of it deals with the nature and historical development of the disputes. It seems that there is inadequate emphasis on the role of political leadership, particularly Mahathir’s role in influencing the nature of Malaysia’s foreign policy and external relations. The objective of this study is therefore, to look at this issue, specifically the role of Mahathir Mohamad and his idiosyncrasy in Malaysia-Singapore relations during his two decades rule.

The main focus of the study is on the role of political leadership in determining the character and shape of Malaysia’s relations with Singapore. The individual under study is former Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (now Tun). Mahathir is known for having overwhelming influences in Malaysian politics. As an analyst aptly puts it, “the ascendancy of Mahathir to power changed the substance, rhetoric and style of Malaysian foreign relations<sup>15</sup> in general and with Singapore in particular.” Therefore, the study attempts to answer into the following questions:

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<sup>15</sup> Karminder Singh Dhillon, “Malaysian foreign policy in the Mahathir era 1981-2003” (PhD. dissertation, Boston University, 2005), 12.

Firstly, to what extent Mahathir and his idiosyncrasy influenced Malaysia's relations with Singapore during his era?

Secondly, what is the nature of Malaysia's relations with Singapore during Mahathir's era (1981-2003)? Is it based on cooperation or competition, tension or relaxation?

Thirdly, what is the nature of Malaysia's relations with Singapore after Mahathir's resignation?

The period of 1981 until 2003 is chosen because during this twenty two year period, bilateral relations between Malaysia and Singapore were observed to be the most stressful as compared to the three previous administrations and later, under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

### **1.3 THE HYPOTHESIS**

The principal proposition here is that Prime Minister Mahathir's idiosyncrasy consisting of his individual traits, political ideology, brand of nationalism and leadership style had profound impact on the shape, direction and rhetoric of Malaysia's relations with Singapore during his two decade rule. The study treats Mahathir's idiosyncrasy as a unit of analysis and independent variable in the process of foreign policy formulation and Malaysia's foreign policy *vis-à-vis* Singapore as dependent variable.

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

Firstly, the study attempts to evaluate the role and influence of Mahathir in shaping the nature, pattern and character of Malaysia's relations with Singapore between 1981-2003.

Secondly, the study will also evaluate the nature of Malaysia's relations with Singapore during Mahathir's era.

Thirdly, the study will examine the Mahathir's role in influencing the course of Malaysia-Singapore relations after his resignation in 2003.

### **1.5 PROBLEM JUSTIFICATION**

The study is developed based on the following rationale:

Firstly, although many studies have been conducted on Malaysia-Singapore relations for the past few decades, most of them gave much emphasis on the nature, development and historical account of the relationship rather than the role of individual in influencing the trajectory of interstate relations. Therefore, this study proposes that role of Mahathir's idiosyncrasy is instrumental in understanding Malaysia-Singapore relations. Mahathir's leadership style, his unique idiosyncrasies and his pervasive influence in Malaysian politics and foreign policy making realm underscore the importance of this study, because it attempts to find logical correlation between the role of Mahathir and foreign policy outputs. The analysis of Mahathir's idiosyncratic variables relies principally on James S. Rosenau's model of level-of-analysis in foreign policy, which consists of idiosyncrasy, role, government, societal and systemic imperatives, while in discussing Mahathir's perception, the study relies primarily on Robert Jervis' model of perception *vis-à-vis* foreign policy formulation. It serves as the guiding concepts of the present study.

Secondly, the study may contribute to the understanding of foreign policy shift under the new administration of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. Many decisions taken by Mahathir were later reversed by Abdullah's government. It means that there are certain policy changes with the change of people in power, *i.e.* the prime minister. Therefore, in order to understand why policy changes, one has to look at who is in power. The present study attempts to look at this aspect.

## 1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Malaysia's fourth and hitherto the longest-serving Prime Minister Mahathir, is considered by many students of Malaysian politics as being an iconoclast, high profile and charismatic. Some political writers went to the extreme branding him as the "Malaysian Machiavelli"<sup>16</sup> as well as many other autocratic names.<sup>17</sup> Mahathir's former deputy Musa Hitam has described him as "ambitious, ruthless and autocratic."<sup>18</sup> Given these preceding suggestions, they imply that Mahathir bears a strong personal influence in Malaysian politics particularly in the realm of domestic as well as foreign policies.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the literature review will be put into two sub-headings: (1) Mahathir's influence in Malaysian politics and; (2) Bilateral disputes between Malaysia and Singapore during Mahathir's era, 1981-2003.

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<sup>16</sup> Zakry Abadi, *Mahathir 'Machiavelli' Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Sarjana Enterprise, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> Some writers labeled him as "Maha Firaun", "Maha Zalim", "Diktator Malaysia" and other similar appellations.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Mohamad Ahmad Yusuf, "Continuity and change in Malaysia's foreign policy 1981-1986," (PhD Dissertation, Fletcher School Of Law And Diplomacy, Tufts University, 1990), 348.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Liow, *Personality, exigencies and contingencies: Determining of Malaysia's foreign policy in the Mahathir administration* in Ho Khai Leong and James Chin, *Mahathir's administration performance and crisis in governance* (edt), (Singapore: Times Editions, 2003), 121.

### 1.6.1 Mahathir's Influence in Malaysian Politics

The application of individual-level analysis in Malaysian foreign policy has existed in the literature since the 1970s with the publication of an analysis by Marvin C. Ott on *Foreign Policy Formulation in Malaysia*.<sup>20</sup> In his analysis, Ott argues that foreign policy making in Malaysia was an “elite dominated process with minimal domestic inputs and pressures.”<sup>21</sup> Ott is of the opinion that:

Malaysian foreign policy can be best understood in terms of a decision making elite coping with the international environment. The elite, dominated by the Prime Minister and comprising only five men,<sup>22</sup> exhibited striking stability of membership and consensus of views.<sup>23</sup>

Ott's observation is validated by Abdullah Ahmad in his work *Tengku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia Foreign Policy 1963-1970*. Abdullah who was Tunku's personal friend argued that Tunku's personality had the most important bearing on the substance and direction of Malaysian foreign policies during the period concerned.<sup>24</sup> Chamil Wariya in his work *Dasar Luar Era Mahathir*<sup>25</sup> (Foreign Policy in Mahathir Era) relied on idiosyncratic model<sup>26</sup> to explain foreign policy during Mahathir's era. His work equates Malaysia's foreign policy (MFP) to the man at its helm and adopts a patently biased attitude which is in favour of Mahathir.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Marvin C. Ott, “Foreign policy formulation in Malaysia,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, no. 3, (March, 1972): 225-241.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>22</sup> The five men, according to Abdullah Ahmad, refer to Tunku himself, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Ismail, Tun San Siew Sin (the Minister of Finance and the President of the Malaysian Chinese Association) and Tun Sambathan (the Minister of Works, Posts and Telecommunications and the President of Malaysian Indian Congress).

<sup>23</sup> Marvin C. Ott, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Abdullah Ahmad, *Tengku Abdul Rahman and Malaysian foreign policy 1963-1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> Chamil Wariya, *Dasar luar era Mahathir* (Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti, 1989).

<sup>26</sup> Idiosyncratic model also concerns with the individual-level of analysis, basically examines leader's characteristics peculiarities and attributes in influencing the process of foreign policy formulation. The researcher usually focuses on the individual's traits, cognitive process and his leadership style. See Joseph Liow, *Personality, exigencies and contingencies: Determining of Malaysia's foreign policy in the Mahathir administration* in Ho Khai Leong and James Chin, *Mahathir's administration performance and crisis in governance* (edt) (Singapore: Times Editions, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Rais Yatim was a lawyer by profession, was made as the Foreign Minister under Mahathir administration from 1986-1987. He later left government after falling out with Mahathir and practiced

Robert S. Milne and Diana K. Mauzy, similarly employ the elitist model in analysing Malaysia's foreign policy. Their work *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir*,<sup>28</sup> concluded that MFP under Mahathir is pragmatic yet undoubtedly iconoclastic. Its theoretical mould is nevertheless overwhelmingly concerned with the leader's personality. Murugesu Pathmanathan and David Lazarus's work *Winds of Change: The Mahathir Impact on Malaysian Foreign Policy* employs the decision-making style model in analysing Mahathir's foreign policies. Their work proposes that it was the leadership style of the nation's elite that had best explained foreign policy outcomes. Their main thesis can be summed up as follows: foreign policy decisions and outcomes are the results of the style of governance of those in power. Both of them suggest that Mahathir's foreign policies have been "a departure from tradition," and are marked by "a new positiveness... a strong sense of commitment, purpose and motivation."<sup>29</sup>

Mahathir's influence in MFP is extensively examined in an analysis by Joseph Liow in *Personality, Exigencies and Contingencies Determinants of Malaysia's Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Administration*.<sup>30</sup> Liow's main contention is that Mahathir's personal role and influence, apart from domestic and international imperatives, are the key factors in shaping the MFP. In this regard, he concludes:

Hence it would seem that any study of Malaysian foreign policy from 1981 onward will not be complete without paying at least some attention to the role of a man whom many see as having transformed Malaysian society and in the process thrust the nation into the fore of international politics.<sup>31</sup>

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law before reappointed as cabinet minister 1999. He also has served as foreign minister under Abdullah's administration, 2003-2008.

<sup>28</sup> Robert S. Milne, and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian politics under Mahathir* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Murugesu Pathmanathan and David Lazarus, *Winds of change: The Mahathir impact on Malaysia's foreign policy* (Kuala Lumpur: Eastview Productions, 1984), 41

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Liow, 121.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.