The Role of NGOs and Non-State Actors in Malaysia's Foreign Policy Formulation During the Mahathir Era

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ABSTRAK

Pada tahun-tahun 1990-an, di Asia Timur penyelidikan berkaitan dasar luar sesetengah negara bermula apabila organisasi persendirian tidak berteraskan keuntungan (private, non-profit organisations) memberikan perhatian kepada peningkatan tadbir urus baik. Pada masa itu, pertumbuhan pesat ekonomi di negara-negara tersebut telah menghasilkan masalah baru akibat kesan globalisasi ekonomi dan budaya. Justeru, timbul dorongan untuk mengamal-kan teori tadbir urus baik. Masalah ini memuncak semasa berlakunya krisis kewangan Asia Timur pada tahun 1997. Krisis ini telah menyebabkan banyak negara terpaksa berhadapan dengan ekonomi yang hampir runtuh, kejatuhan nilai mata wang dan peningkatan kadar pengangguran, selain huru-hara sosial dan politik yang berlaku hasil daripadanya. Dalam banyak hal, dasar luar negara-negara itu telah menerima kesan langsung pengubahsuaian yang dibuat kepada ekonomi-politik dalam negeri. Keadaan ini pula mempunyai kesan yang nyata terhadap dasar luar negara-negara ini. Makalah ini membincang kedinamikan dalaman masyarakat Malaysia semasa pemerintahan kerajaan Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa era Mahathir membawa peralihan tumpuan kepada perkara baru dalam hubungan luar Malaysia. Pentadbiran beliau telah mengembangkan satu mekanisme keterlibatan yang lebih tinggi dalam buat proses pembuatan keputusan berkaitan dasar luar negara, khususnya dengan melibatkan organisasi bukan-kerajaan (NGO) dan peserta bukan-negara (non-state actors) yang lain.

ABSTRACT

In East Asia, during the 1990s, research on the foreign policies of certain countries began when *private,* non-profit organisations took *a keen interest in promoting good governance. During this time, rapid economic growth in these countries had generated new complications brought on by the effects of economic and cultural globalization, hence the urge to apply theories of good governance. Complications culminated in the 1997 East Asian financial crisis. The aftermath of this disaster left many countries struggling with tottering economies, devalued currencies and rising unemployment, not to mention the social and political upheavals that subsequently developed. In many instances,*

the foreign policies of these countries were directly affected by modifications in the domestic political economy. This in turn had obvious impacts on the foreign policies of these countries. This paper discusses the domestic dynamics in Malaysian society during the premiership of Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. The findings suggest that the Mahathir era signaled new areas of focus in Malaysia's foreign relations, and that his administration had developed more involved mechanisms for foreign policy decision-making, particularly by engaging non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other non-state actors.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Research on the influence domestic factors have on the foreign policy of countries in East Asia was sparked off by a private, non-profit organisation which has been working for more than 40 years in partnership with other Asian organisations of a similar nature. The desire was to promote good governance, market-oriented economic reform and peaceful cooperation among nations in the Asian region. At the end of 1997, with the economic slowdown and the emerging negative effects of the downturn, transitions in leadership and governance were apparent in a few nations of the region.

These transitions brought to light, once again, the debate around economic growth and political change, but for different reasons from the Marx's theory of economic determinism and Weber's concept of human history as a passage from tradition to modernity. The 'driven by growth' model explained that political change is not caused by economic and social change alone, but has its own dynamic (Morley 1998: Concluding chapter). Even when economic and social factors seem to favour liberalization and democratization, political factors can obstruct and prevent political change. In other countries, such political factors can actually push the system in a direction of democratization even when the economic and social conditions are unfavourable. This 'deviation' from the Marxian or even Weberian theory was, and still is, apparent in many East Asian countries.

Many countries in the East Asian region, although having experienced similar economic growth rates, did not share similar democratizing experiences. These countries that experienced positive economic growth did not go through the kind of political change towards democratization. It followed that NGOs and other non-State actors, such as the business community in these countries may not have been as influential as one may have thought, in the decision-making process on several domestic issues. Was this the case with foreign policy decision making as well?

This paper is an attempt to look into the domestic dynamics in Malaysian society that may have an influence on decision-making processes affecting

foreign policy. Specifically, the paper will look at the role of NGOs and non-State actors (particularly the business community) in the decision-making process, during the Mahathir era. It will be shown that they have played a role in the process, although it was not a very obvious one. Also, the role played by certain NGOs and non-State actors can be seen in only a few issues of external relations, mainly issues dealing with trade, industry and finance, children, women, bio-diversity and the environment. On the other hand, issues to do with Islam, for instance, are not the focus of attention in this State-NGO relationship. Contrary to common belief, there has been a growing tendency for NGOs in Malaysia to interact on decision-making levels with the government machinery, on these selected issues. There have been definite mechanisms of interaction and consultation between the State and these NGOs. This paper attempts to highlight these mechanisms.

In examining the role of NGOs and non-State actors in the formulation of Malaysia's foreign policy, we take into account that there is a two-way interaction between the external relations of the State and domestic (internal) politics. Malaysian foreign policy and its main instrument, diplomacy is a way in which the State relates to the international environment with the objective to mediate between the two. This means that foreign policy cannot be isolated from, or does not function independently of, domestic conditions of the State (Baladas Ghoshal (Ed.) 1996: 29-60). Ultimately, Malaysian foreign policy (and foreign policy in general) is an indicator of the nation's development, economic and political system, and security interests. Conversely, domestic issues and ideologies such as nationalism, religion, race, ethnicity, language, welfare state and communalism make demands on policy makers, which in turn have an impact on foreign policy. The arrow, therefore, goes both ways. Hence, this paper also highlights the main areas in Malaysian foreign policy that actively engage this two-way interaction between the State and the NGO/non-State sectors.

METHODOLOGY

To determine whether NGOs in Malaysia have played an influential role in the formulation of foreign policy during Mahathir's premiership, several interviews with individuals from both the NGOs and government groups were carried out. Questions were prepared for the two groups. The questions were divided into two sets: one for the NGO group and the other for the State group. The list is as follows:

QUESTIONS FOR NGOS/NON-STATE ACTORS

1. What do you think of foreign policy?
2. What does your organisation have to do with foreign policy?

3. How do your ideas get to the policy makers?
4. Where do you get your ideas on certain issues, for instance environmental issues, issues on food security, population control, women, habitat and other social issues?
5. What are some of the more important foreign policy issues that you feel your organisation is most involved in?
6. How do you feel your organisation can contribute towards a more civil society?
7. What is your definition of 'civil society'? Do you think it is mostly the plurality of society, i.e. the interaction of State and non-State actors?
8. What are issues you think important in creating a civil society?
9. What are the issues you've taken up, and how do you measure your success?
10. Who do you think shapes public policy?
11. What is your perception of public policy?
12. When you prepare a report (e.g. for the Rio Summit), or take up an issue (e.g. East Timor) on what basis do you prepare your report?
13. What factors influence your prioritizing of issues?
14. Where do you draw your input from?

QUESTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICERS/BUREAUCRATS/STATE
DECISION-MAKERS

1. What are some important foreign policy issues that you feel the government is most involved in?
2. What do you think the role of NGOs and other non-State actors is, should be or could be in the formulation of these policies?
3. Do you think there are non-State organisations who might have more access to information on certain issues that concern policy makers (environmental issues)?
4. If so, how do you solicit information from them?
5. What is the process by which your department obtains information about key issues before formulating a certain policy?
6. What are the channels/sources you go through in order to get a wide range of knowledge and information about issues?
7. We are aware that Dr. Mahathir's influence on foreign policy was very strong. What are some of the deviations from this? Have there been any policies formulated that were the result of non-State influence?
8. What is your definition of 'civil society'? Do you think it is mostly the plurality of society, i.e. the interaction of State and non-State actors?
9. What are issues you think important in creating a civil society?
10. What are the issues you've taken up, and how do you measure your success?

11. Who do you think shapes public policy? What is your perception of public policy?
12. When you prepare a report (e.g. for the Rio Summit), on what basis do you prepare your report?
13. What factors influence your prioritizing of issues?
14. Where do you draw your input?
15. What inspired the ideas? Was it Dr. Mahathir's own ideas, or did think tanks and other organisations have an input in articulating these ideas?

Very often, the answers given by many individuals representing their respective NGOs were negative, i.e. they implied that their NGOs do not have anything to do with foreign policy, as much as they would have liked to be involved. Sometimes, there is this hostility with respect to the government, and a feeling that the latter do not want to involve NGOs for fear they (the NGOs) would unfurl the corrupt and unjust practices of the government. Individuals associated with the State bureaucracy, on the other hand, felt that certain 'problematic' NGOs are not worth dealing with because their minds are set, and with or without facts, they would always be anti-government. Whether these arguments are true or not, the fact is that there is some antagonism felt between the State and a few NGOs, and vice versa. This antagonism stems from the inability of both sides to reconcile their disagreements on certain issues, mainly domestic national issues, not issues of foreign policy.

For the purposes of this study, the 'problem' NGOs and 'problem' areas of interaction were sifted through to focus on foreign policy issues. There are not many NGOs and non-State actors whose platform for existence is foreign policy, but there are a few. Interviews were carried out with Malaysian individuals attached to international non-profit organisations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Transparency International (TI), Third World Network (TWN) and the World Alliance for Breast Feeding Action (WABA). The purpose was to get an idea of the role Malaysia was playing in the international arena from a Malaysian national who would also have the access to local government circles. Interviews were also carried out with members of local non-profit organisations, political parties and business groups. Primary documents and secondary literature were also looked at, although these are few and far between.

PROBLEMS

The growth of the NGO sector in Malaysia is a fairly new phenomenon, but since the 1990s quite a number of NGOs and citizens' groups have been vociferous in domestic and international issues. This may be an indication of a society that is becoming more politically mature. It may also be an unconscious response to Dr.

Mahathir's undying criticism of the North, his challenge to them on issues of human rights, his championing the cause of the developing Southern countries and his political philosophy that centered on economic development.[1] The latter reason may have contributed towards an increased interest in and genuine concern for issues affecting the developing world, including Malaysia. In the conclusion of this paper, it will be apparent that the political philosophy of Dr. Mahathir has played a crucial role in the role of non-State actors in foreign policy formulation.

However, it is difficult to say exactly how the views and input of these groups have actually influenced the external policy of the government. The difficulty lies in the paucity of data pertaining to the mechanisms of knowledge transfer and information flow, as well as the manner in which the interaction takes place. Predominantly, meetings between NGO groups and the government takes place behind closed doors, and often on a very informal basis. Very often, there is no systematic documentation of such meetings and interactions. If there are minutes of such meetings, they are very haphazard and unsuitable for 'public' scrutiny. For this paper, one has had to rely on interviews and unofficial documentation. There is hardly any secondary literature on the topic pertaining to Malaysia.[2]

DEFINITION OF NGOS AND NON-STATE ACTORS

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-State actors are the components of *civil society*.[3] They are those organisations that do not make up the State machinery or government, although they may work closely with and contribute to the State decision-making apparatus. Depending on the democratic space that exists in a society, the interaction between NGOs and other non-State actors, such as the business sector, for profit foundations and academe, and the State can be either minimal or carried out to its fullest, advantageous extent. The main roles of the components of civil society should be to promote popular participation in various activities concerning education, empowerment, advocacy and various levels of family, community and national decision-making. The latter (national decision-making), again depending on the maturity of the democratic space, involves several levels of consultation and interaction between members of the State machinery and non-governmental organisations, the business sector and academe. The ultimate aim is to seek new approaches to governance that can enhance the quality of life nationally and globally. Non-governmental organisations play a special and unique role in a democracy by contributing to the building of the foundation of a just, sustainable and participative society.

The term 'civil society' has a long history in western political philosophy. It has changed conceptually with Greek, Enlightenment, Hegelian, Marxist

(German Idealist) and Gramscian interpretations. The modern, universally accepted definition of the term can be traced back to the eighteenth century, to one of the Enlightenment's most prolific political theorists, Thomas Paine. He was a thinker who was born in 1734 in England but later, emigrated to America, in 1787. Paine wrote about the injustices of government towards the citizens of nations, particularly in America, Britain and France.

Thomas Paine's classic treatise entitled *The Rights of Man* (1791-2) gives us a clear idea of what his thoughts on government were.[4] On individualism, Paine had this to say:

It has been thought a considerable advance towards establishing the principles of Freedom, to say, that government is a compact between those who govern and those who are governed: but this cannot be true, because it is putting the effect before the cause; for as man must have existed before governments existed, there necessarily was a time when governments did not exist, and consequently there could originally exist no governors to form such a compact with. The fact therefore must be, that the individuals themselves, each in his own personal and sovereign right, entered into a compact with each other to produce a government: and this is the only mode in which governments have a right to arise, and the only principle on which they have a right to exist (Foot and Kramnick (Ed.) 1987: 220).

Closely tied up with the concept of 'civil society' is the notion of Liberalism of the early eighteenth century political theorists and capitalists. Liberalism is a concept of life and social order attached to the capitalist system of production. The birth of Liberalism was brought about by changed socioeconomic conditions and the intrusion of rational modes of thought into European life. This period called the Enlightenment was characterized by a desire to explain human life rationally. Human thinking assumed a materialistic and subjectivistic turn. At the end of the eighteenth century, corresponding to the increasing power of the middle class and rational modes of thought, a revolution occurred in England that later spread throughout the whole of Europe. This was the Industrial Revolution. Together with development in the socioeconomic conditions of Western Europe and the middle class ascension to power, a concept of life that Liberalism represented emerged. Liberalism preached that every individual had the right to life, liberty and happiness. To achieve these ends, it believed that the state should not interfere with all the affairs of the individuals. The individual was regarded as the center of life. This philosophy of life was a reaction to slavery (in America), and to the conflict between the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie, and the Monarchy (in England and France). The different interests of social classes in eighteenth century America and Europe sparked off a series of ideological debates concerning social justice.

One such debate centered around Thomas Paine. He deemed the feudal life 'nonsense' and wrote that Kings and aristocrats were abusive, useless and unproductive. Paine stressed that men of 'talents and abilities' should lead societies. The backdrop against which Paine formulated his ideas was an eigh-

teenth century England where states were oppressive and abusive of citizens' rights. He advocated public education for all, compensation for the poor and elderly, and bourgeois liberalism. The latter, in tune with the ideology of capitalism, promoted competitive individualism, property and business enterprise. Through the bourgeois world of this individualism, society would be leveled off into one where political, economic and social stratification would be based on talent, merit and hard work. This would be in contrast to the society of privilege, rank and birth right such as it was in feudal pasts of France and England. Therefore, the kind of individualism that the political theorists of the eighteenth century wrote about was a concept that called for a productive human being, with the rights and liberties to private initiative i.e. to participate in politics and economic enterprise. The state was supposed to interfere as little as possible. Paine sums up the idea of the responsible and free individual when he wrote:

In a city, such for instance as Bath, which contains between twenty and thirty thousand inhabitants, the right of electing representatives to parliament is monopolized by about thirty-one persons. And within these monopolies are still others. A man even of the same town, whose parents were not in circumstances to give him an occupation, is debarred, in many cases, from the natural right of acquiring one, be his genius or industry what it may.

Are these things examples to hold out to a country regenerating itself from slavery, like France?—Certainly they are not; and certain am I, that when the people of England come to reflect upon them, they will, like France, annihilate those badges of ancient oppression, those traces of a conquered nation (ibid: 224).

THE NGO SECTOR AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS IN MALAYSIA

In Malaysia, the concept of 'civil society' is not so clearly defined, but it is tied up closely with elements of a civic education that is propagated by the government. These elements include (Print, M., Ellickson-Brown and Abdul Razak Baginda (Eds) 1999):

a. rights and responsibilities of citizens;
b. government and institutions;
c. history and constitution;
d. national identity;
e. legal system and rule of law;
f. human, political, economic and social rights;
g. democratic principles and processes;
h. active citizen participation in civic issues;
i. international perspectives; and
j. values of democratic citizenship.

The desire to incorporate these ideals in the general education of our society implies that Malaysia aspires towards some form of civil society. This

society can be defined as comprising individuals who are not connected with the government, but who are involved in activities of maintaining peace and productivity within the society. It has been said that an effective civil society is one marked by an active, public-spirited citizenry participating in community-based voluntary associations and by associated high levels of a social fabric of trust and cooperation or social capital. In Malaysia, civil society is emerging as 'observable entity' of the democratic space. Recent domestic and regional political events have solicited responses from many NGOs and non-State groups, indicating a growing concern for developments affecting their society, as well as a new political consciousness.[5]

In Malaysia, there are several kinds of organisations that constitute the NGO sector, and the non-State actors comprise primarily of the business communities.[6] The origins of the NGO sector in Malaysia do not have a similar historical connotation as those in the Western nation-states. The non-profit sector of Malaysian society emerged as groups that assisted the government in reaching the people in rural and disadvantageous communities. These were not antagonistic to the government and did not emerge as a dialectical process within society, advocating for revolutionary change. Over the years, though, antagonisms have developed between NGOs and the State, based on differing political ideologies. In Malaysia, non-profit organisations fall into one of two main umbrella groups of NGOs. These are:

STATE NGOs

These organisations depend on the State financially and for human resource training. These are essentially 'state-sponsored NGOs', voluntary organisations which are largely managed and run by people at the grassroots and community level, but which are at the same time conduits of government policy and located within the state bureaucracy, under a government agency or ministry. For example, there are the federal sponsored NGOs such as the National Council of Women Organisations (NCWO) and associations for women civil servants and the wives of civil servants (PUSPANITA). Some of the ministries such as the Ministry of Labor and Manpower, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and the Department of Social Welfare have NGOs under their wings. The latter, for instance has Red Crescent, Association for the Blind and the Majlis Pembangunan Kebajikan dan Masyarakat Malaysia. Then there is the Consumer Affairs Division of the Ministry of Trade and Industry that furnishes financial grants to various state-level consumer associations, even though they are administratively independent of the state (some of these try to be strongly critical of state policies).

The term 'State-sponsored' NGOs is actually a contradiction. It is the financial and sometimes, administrative nexus that exists between these organisations and the government bureaucracy which legitimises the term. Essentially, the

programs of these state NGOs are widespread at the community level and cover adult literacy, cottage industry training, health and sanitation classes, credit cooperatives and a lot more. There are limitations to the effectiveness of state NGOs, based mainly on the politicized aspect of the programs. Many of the organisations are used as vehicles for political support at the grassroots level. As a result, the success and development of community-based programs may be compromised.

AUTONOMOUS NGOs

These range from informal groups of community organisers to registered societies and those established as non-profit joint stock companies and foundations. Autonomous NGOs differ from State NGOs in that they were not started by the state. These may receive funding from the government, but they are largely voluntary societies and associations started by groups of individuals for a specific cause.

Within these two main *gènres* of NGOs, there are about ten distinct groups of organisations in Malaysia.[7] These are:

1. Community-based Organisations   Social, political and cultural associations which are formed and limited by their physical location and ethnicity, religion or some other ascriptive criteria. Examples of these associations are residents' associations, religious groups, tribal cultural associations and clan associations. The Rotary Club is one such community-based organisation in Malaysia. Others include NGOs based on religious orientation such as the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia), Arqam, the Islamic Representative Council (IRC), Sisters in Islam and the Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM).

2. Community-service Organisations   These are voluntary NGOs and consumer groups set up with specific service aims in mind. They include groups such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Family Planning Associations, Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations (FOMCA) and various welfare societies such as the Red Crescent Society and the Child Welfare Council.

3. Worker-Employer Oriented Organisations   These cover trade unions, traders' committees and guilds, chambers of commerce and industry and church-based groups such as the Young Christian Workers' Malaysia (YCWM), the Malaysian Trade Unions Congress (MTUC), Tenaganita and the Estate Workers Support Group.

4. *Women's Organisations* Gender-specific, these NGOs include Women's Aid Organisation (WAO), the Association of Women Lawyers (AWL), the All Women's Action Society (AWAM), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and various women's rape crisis and counseling centers.

5. *Youth Organisations* These organisations are categorized by age, and include the Tamil Youth Bell Club, the Malaysian Youth Council (MAYC), Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, church-based youth groups, the United Malays National Organisation Youth Wing (UMNO Youth) and the Muslim Youth Association (ABIM).

6. *Professional Organisations* In Malaysia, professional organisations such as the Malaysian Bar Council, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) and the Malaysian Nurses' Association are part of the NGO family. In some other societies they are considered part of the 'second' sector.

7. *Political Party Groups* The National Front (UMNO, MCA, MIC and Gerakan) and Alternative Front (PAS, Keadilan, PRM and DAP) constitute the essential political parties in the Malaysian government.

8. *Human Rights Groups* Examples of these groups in Malaysia are The Voice of the Malaysian People (SUARAM), The Human Rights Society of Malaysia (HAKAM), The Malaysian Bar Council and the Tamil Support Group for Human Rights.

9. *Environmentalists* The Malaysian Nature Society, Friends of the Earth, Malaysia (Sahabat Alam Malaysia) and the Environmental Protection Society of Malaysia (EPSM).

10. *Academic Groups/Think Tanks* The International Movement for a JUST World, Third World Network and various centers and associations affiliated with universities and institutes of higher learning constitute this group. These organisations, particularly the think tanks are policy research institutes which disseminate policy advice on cross-national problems within both domestic and international policy domains. They supply information and expertise, and encourage consultation and exchange between state and non-state actors (Stone 1999). Through their scholars, research reports and intellectual advocacy, think tanks and academic groups provide input to international conferences and project development in organisations such as the United Nations (the various UN summits), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and others. Some academic groups and think tanks in Malaysia provide an avenue for 'closed door' discussions.[8]

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL ASPECTS: MALAYSIA'S
POLITICAL ECONOMY MODEL

In order to comprehend the context in which NGOs and other non-state actors can function effectively and influence foreign policy decision-making in Malaysia, it is crucial to note that the central role of the political elite and leadership is very profound. Malaysia's domestic and foreign policies are predominantly the result of the personality, style and attitude of her top leaders. This 'idiosyncratic' variable influences economic, political and social variables that act as inputs for foreign policy. With this central role of the leader, what then is the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy? This question addresses the basic Malaysian goals of state and nation building, and can be answered with an analysis of the early years of the Mahathir administration, that is during the 1980s.

The intention of Dr. Mahathir was to turn Malaysia into a high-growth, rapidly industrializing, capitalist state. He linked his national policies with the external world using policies such as the 'Look East' Policy 1981-1985, 'Vision 2020', 'Look South: South-South Cooperation', 'Islam and the New World Order', the 'East Asian Ecocnomic Caucus (EAEC)' and ASEAN diplomacy.[9] It has been contended, as well, that the entire Mahathir era epitomizes the use of foreign policy for the pursuit of national goals and national needs, centered mainly on economic development (Saravanamuttu 1996: 1-16). Thus, we have a two-way arrow situation, in which foreign policy influences domestic policy, and vice versa. As soon as he came into office in July 1981, Dr. Mahathir turned his attention to the economy and questions of economic development. There were two main reasons for this: first, to propel Malaysia's economy towards rapid industrial growth, and second, to prod the Bumiputera population into becoming economic achievers. Throughout most of the early 1980s, Mahathir mounted a campaign to propagate the 'Look East' policy. In a speech to the joint annual conference of the Malaysian-Japanese economic associations, MAJECA and JAMECA in 1982, Mahathir explained that the policy was an effort to emulate Japanese industrialization, work attitude, ethics and skills. He also indicated interest in cooperating with the Japanese government and companies in various areas of technical training and industrial management.

Prior to this Japan-oriented interest was a series of incidents involving Britain. Some of these incidents were the fee hike in British universities (Malaysia has some 15,500 students studying in the United Kingdom), the rule changes by the British Securities Council in the London Metal Exchange and after Malaysia's takeover of Guthrie, Sime Darby, Harrison and Crossfield and Dunlop. In fact there was such considerable resistance to Malaysia's takeover of British companies by the Thatcher government so much so that Foreign Minister Lord Carrington and Defence Minister John Notts paid a special visit to Malaysia in February 1981. However, the 'Buy British Last' campaign that Dr. Mahathir

propagated was more the result of the 'Look East' policy, not the other way around. In the 1990s, Dr. Mahathir's publicised his vision to turn Malaysia into a developed country by the year 2020 (Vision or *Wawasan* 2020 policy). The *Wawasan* 2020 was launched at a speech in February 1991 made to the Malaysian Business Council. Dr. Mahathir suggested that by the year 2020, Malaysia can be united and confident, with strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

Given this background, it is obvious that the foreign policy of Malaysia during the Mahathir era was geared to the development of a national policy of economic growth and development. The presence of a strong government with a strong, forward-looking executive was instrumental in achieving such a policy. Dr. Mahathir's philosophical outlook with regard to Malay development continued to have a strong influence on the character of the State under him, up till the beginning of the 21st century. For instance, Dr. Mahathir's encouragement of the growth of the Malay middle class under the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1970s and 80s and the New Development Policy (NDP) of the 1990s is directly related to his Look East Policy and the desire to promote closer ties with Japan. It has a strong influence on his original proposal to establish the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC), as well as Malaysia's continued 'friendly' but strained ties with China.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND NGOs/NON-STATE ACTORS IN MALAYSIA: IMPACT ON FOREIGN POLICY

Very often, in most countries, the patterns of NGO activities and their relationships with the State are determined by their core values, which in turn are shaped by the kinds of activities they perform. In Malaysia, there are at least three areas of activities that characterise the core values of NGOs. Firstly, they act as catalysts for change, predominantly on domestic issues. They help transform society by creating awareness at the grassroots level in order to initiate change and help people diversify and improve their overall quality of life. Reaching grassroots level is not entirely possible by the State alone, due to an inadequate government organisational apparatus, a lack of manpower, vast geographic distribution of communities and sheer financial constraints. To make up for this, NGOs and other voluntary groups complement the work of State and Federal authorities by updating themselves on new technologies in order to promote rural development programs. In this way, NGOs help the State in the development process, promoting change and an improvement in the quality of life. Examples of such NGOs in Malaysia are the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP), Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM).

Secondly, NGOs help monitor the system. They help check abuses of power and manipulation. As components of civil society, NGOs serve as a reservoir of political, economic, cultural and moral resources to check the power of the State. Civil society, being diverse, will ensure that a few select groups do not influence the State. In a developing democracy such as Malaysia, civil society is not mature and the democratic space for citizens' groups to voice their opinions in order to initiate change is still in its infancy. Groups that would 'keep an eye' on the government include such NGOs and political parties as the Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS), the International Movement for a Just World, SUARAM and Aliran. Very often these organisations have been very vocal in their criticisms of the government. Through the local media and their own publications (in the form of newsletters and pamphlets) they have managed to reach certain segments of the population (both urban and rural). However, the impact such NGOs may have on Malaysian political life is minimal.[10] Very often, these groups are not able to sustain pertinent issues that could politically transform society. This could be attributed to the narrowing of the lines of communication between the State and these groups.

Thirdly, NGOs supplement the work of political parties, including those opposed to the ruling coalition. Supposedly, NGOs are in closer contact with the aspirations of the grassroots, acting as a voice for those groups who may want and need to improve their welfare. Potentially, this paves the way for a more participatorial role of society in the affairs of the State, and the potential for them to influence the formulation of policies affecting their lives. The 'democratising' role of NGOs (and civil society in general) acts to regulate and guide the State, not necessarily being antagonistic or anti-government. The majority of NGOs in Malaysia subscribe to this category of values.

Since Dr. Mahathir came to power in the early 1980s, voluntary organisations, NGOs, the business groups and other non-State actors have been working closely with the State on various aspects of foreign policy. However, not all issues are treated equally. Some are regarded as more 'sacred' by the State. These are human rights issues, domestic issues relating to human rights, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom to demonstrate, and sensitive issues that have national security implications, such as bi-lateral issues with certain countries within the ASEAN region. For example, NGOs and pressure groups are not consulted or engaged when policies towards East Timor, Acheh, Singapore and the Spratly Islands are being devised. Also, there is not much public discussion on these topics as the implications for national security are there. As we begin a new century, it is encouraging to see that more NGO-State consultation is taking place, having an influence on foreign policy formulation. Although not immediately obvious, the communication channels are there.

One multi-lateral policy area that has generated some NGO/non-State consultation with the government concerns issues of trade and investment, labor standards, competition, development and economic reforms. Several con-

tentious issues (for the developing world) were discussed at the First Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation, which met in Singapore, December 9-13, 1996. At this conference, Malaysia's stand was quite clear on four main areas: labor standards, investment, competition and government procurement. Malaysia's International Trade Minister, Rafidah Aziz proposed amendments to the texts and explained that these amendments were to counter the Northern (developed world) proposals for negotiations on these issues. Her primary interest was to safeguard the interests of the developing world.[11] This issue was also discussed earlier, at the UNCTAD-IX Conference in May, 1996. Rafidah's stand in Singapore reflected the similar stand earlier, of seven other nations of the South, namely India, Egypt, Tanzania, Ghana, Haiti, Uganda and Indonesia. They formulated a joint statement, which was presented to the WTO in Geneva at the beginning of November, 1996. The key points of the statement were that

the first WTO Ministerial Conference is not an appropriate occasion for introducing the issue of trade and investment and that given the lack of consensus, we urge there should not be any further consideration of this issue within the WTO until the processes envisaged in UNCTAD is sufficiently mature (ibid).

Prior to the Singapore conference, Martin Khor, Director of Third World Network, for example, was invited to give a special briefing to the Malaysian cabinet members as part of the official preparation for the Singapore meeting. The Third World Network is an independent non-profit international network of organisations and individuals involved in issues relating to development, the Third World and North- South issues. Based in Penang, Malaysia, its objectives are to conduct research on economic, social and environmental issues pertaining to the South; to publish books and magazines; to organize and participate in seminars; and to provide a platform representing broadly Southern interests and perspectives at international fora such as the UN conferences and processes. Although Dr. Mahathir had his own thoughts on WTO issues and the Northern countries' manipulation of regulations to protect their own interests, he felt it was necessary to get an alternative, 'second-opinion'. It turned out that the input given by Martin Khor and Third World Network was accepted by the government officials involved, which resulted in the adoption of definite policies with respect to relations with the World Trade Organisation and its rules and regulations. Even if NGOs and other citizens' groups did not share similar opinions on certain issues, the trend within government circles now is to spread out feelers and learn from other sectors because information has quadrupled and there is just too much to know on almost every issue.

The process leading up to the consultation is as follows.[12] Third World Network had submitted a few papers to the government in 1996. Subsequently, Martin Khor was invited to give a little informal briefing to a few Cabinet ministers that same year. Also in 1996, the Ministry of International Trade and

Investment (MITI) established a committee on multilateral trade issues. Members of this committee consisted of a diverse group, including Martin Khor, individuals from Malaysia's oldest think tank, the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), another think tank, the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER), Chandra Muzaffar, the president of the International Movement for a JUST World and many business associations.

At an informal level, prior to the Singapore meeting, members of Third World Network would meet periodically with the Malaysian Mission officials in Geneva in order to provide them with information and research papers on several WTO issues. These were on the deficiencies in the present WTO agreements and trade-related issues such as trade and the environment and trade and labor standards. Third World Network would also work in tandem with the Mission officials to organize workshops for developing countries, in which Malaysia too had taken part. Some members of NGOs were also requested to act as technical advisors to the official delegation at Rio. Other issues that involve more NGO/non-State partnerships with the government on a consultative level are issues concerning the environment, women, children, and domestic and international health.

Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference environmental issues have gained momentum on the international agenda. This has been perpetuated by a growing awareness of the fragility of the planet and the realisation that anthropogenic factors do indeed have consequences for the earth's sustainability. The conduct of diplomacy on environmental issues, or sometimes referred to as environmental diplomacy, is different in many ways than the traditional power and security paradigm of international relations. It is characterized by trends such as scientific complexity and uncertainty of the issue, the cross-currents of social, economic and political implications, the influence of public opinion, the implication of future generations, the participatory nature of the negotiations which can involve all levels of government as well as civil society, long time spans to solve environmental problems often longer than the typical 4-5 year mandates of governments. For Malaysia, the economic implications of environmental issues take precedence over other implications, as can be seen in resolutions supported by the Malaysian government at international summits.

Traditional diplomacy has struggled to keep up with the challenges of environmental diplomacy. In Malaysia, while diplomats still retain significant influence, many additional actors, both State and non-State, are becoming increasingly involved in the diplomatic decision-making process. They include the business sector and environmental NGOs. An important fact to note when analyzing State-NGO/non-State interaction in environmental issues is the notion that today's diplomatic agenda is increasingly crowded with problems that can only be addressed collectively by a large number of countries (e.g., environment, trade, human rights) as well as by a diverse number of segments within those countries. These multilateral diplomatic issues directly affect a wide spec-

trum of society. The Malaysian government, aware of her growing importance as an influential leader of the South, as well as a formidable geopolitical player economically, has decided that the policies they adopt can be more influential if they can tap a wider circle for more information on the pertinent issues. This includes tapping the intellectual resources of NGOs, the business community and other non-State actors such as advocacy groups.

Among government circles in Malaysia, there is the realization that the key dimension to understanding the issues in the environment debate concerns the political-scientific interface. Diplomatic issues are becoming knowledge-intensive. Diplomats must learn to effectively utilize complex scientific data and the advice of experts. On the other hand, scientists and experts must effectively channel their knowledge towards decisions. This two-way, political-scientific interface has resulted in several government-NGO/non-State consultations leading up to the formulation of policy on some international matters with regard to the environment.

Awareness on environmental issues has heightened worldwide, including among Malaysian policy makers. The driving force behind this awareness is the peoples' pressure on government and industry, to act. The June 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro is a good example of productive and efficient NGO/non-State interaction with the Malaysian government. The prime mover in organizing this summit was Razali Ismail, former president of the United Nations General Assembly, a Malaysian national. Officially called the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) meeting, the Earth Summit symbolizes concern for the environment and the political issues surrounding sustainable development. On the agenda at the conference were seven main subjects: financing, water, toxic wastes, oceans and fishing, forests, climate change and energy. 178 countries and 115 heads of state took part in the conference. Some 8,000 journalists covered the proceedings, and 15,000 representatives of NGOs and national citizens' groups flocked to Brazil. The conference concluded by producing Agenda 21 (an 800-page document covering 112 topics that consti-tute a non-binding blueprint for sustainable development in the twenty-first century) and two treaties (the Biodiversity and the Global Warming Conven-tions) (see URL http://www.igc.apc.org). There were altogether five Rio documents: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, Statement of principles to guide the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and Convention on Biological Diversity.

Some time before the start of UNCED (throughout 1991 and 1992), various groups of NGOs, individuals and advocacy groups such as Third World Net-work, Razali Ismail and officials from the Environment Ministry met to discuss research papers produced by NGOs concerning sustainability, the environment and other development issues. This led Malaysia to adopt the basic principle of sustainable development. Also, industries in Malaysia have moved towards

'corporate environmentalism', largely encouraged by policy makers and environmental NGOs, to ensure the balance between nature and business is maintained.

One reason why NGOs and the State worked so constructively together towards Rio is because they realized they had a common 'enemy'. Also, in order to adopt a policy to be tabled at the multilateral summit meeting in Rio, the government had to be well informed of all the ramifications and issues concerned. Furthermore, Malaysia was not just tabling a policy. She was seen to be, knowingly or unknowingly, 'leading' the countries of the South (in realization of Dr. Mahathir's South-South Cooperation policy of the 1990s) who all shared similar grievances with respect to certain issues at Rio. The government was aware that given this 'leadership' role, it was necessary to consult the relevant NGOs whose existence it was to keep abreast of such international summits and issues.

The Earth Summit was pitched by certain countries of the North that implied the South was abusing and misusing their forests and environment. There seemed to be an underlying agenda that the North wanted to perpetuate. It was obvious that they really wanted their own multi-national corporations to gain entry into new environmental markets so that they could exploit them for their own profitable gain. Dr. Mahathir championed the countries of the South. He lead the 'protest' against a 'manipulative' North who claimed that the countries of the South were ruining their forests and causing ecological destruction of prime ecosystems, all in the name of large conglomerates for profitable businesses. Dr. Mahathir started a trend in thinking that if the North wanted the countries of the South to stop exploiting the forests, then they had to help monetarily. Agenda 21 of the Rio declaration required substantial new financial assistance for developing countries. The Business Council for Sustainable Development in Malaysia, headed by its President Kok Wee Kiat, helped the Malaysian government see that Malaysian business leaders (which includes many policy makers) should be aware of the link between environment and trade and investment.

Agenda 21 was thus tabled. It reflects a global consensus and political commitment at the highest level on development and environment cooperation. It recognises that sustainable development is primarily the responsibility of governments, which will require national strategies, plans and policies. The objectives of Agenda 21 would require substantial new financial assistance for developing countries. They need this additional support to cover the incremental costs of actions to deal with global environmental problems and to accelerate sustainable development.[13] Malaysia was a prime mover in the tabling of the authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The delegation that went to Rio consisted of equal numbers of government representatives and NGOs/non-state actors. In Malaysia, pre- and post- Rio consultations

involved lengthy discussions and meetings between various ministries and government agencies, and NGOs/business sector personnel.

Because of Rio, the presence of a common 'enemy' resulted in the consultative interaction between NGOs/non-State actors and government bodies on the main principles of sustainable development, conservation of the environment and poverty. However, there was still some nervousness felt between certain NGOs and government agencies about the working 'friendship' due to previous issues that had left bitter tastes lurking. For example, Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth), one of the many NGOs engaged in the pre- and post-Rio consultative meetings may have taken stronger views on certain issues such as deforestation and logging. Due to their disagreements with the lack of proactive measures taken with respect to the Sarawak State government on logging and deforestation, ideological antagonisms do exist. Notwithstanding these hiccups, the overall interaction pre- and post-Rio was profitable and contributed to the tabling of a Malaysian viewpoint. It is worthy to note that despite past histories of 'problem' NGOs, partnerships between citizens' groups and the government are still possible. It demonstrates a transformation of the democratic space in Malaysia, on a very small scale.

Gender issues tended to command the most systematic pre- and post-consultation mechanisms between NGOs/non-State and government bodies in Malaysia. Before the 4th World Conference on Women, in Beijing, September 1995, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the National Council of Womens' Organisations (NCWO) were involved in extensive consultations with the official team that was to be in Beijing. Also, along with separate NGO delegations that went for the Beijing conference to be on NGO panels, many members of influential NGOs/non-State women's groups went as part of the Malaysian (national state) delegation.

Even though human rights is an issue that is regarded as particularly sensitive by the government, the Vienna Human Rights Summit, October 1993 was another example of broad NGO/non-State-State consultation. About six months before the Summit, a group of NGOs suggested a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss the Vienna conference. The Ministry agreed to convene a meeting with about 20 representatives from various NGOs such as JUST, HAKAM, the Malaysian Bar Council, Suaram, etc. The meeting was chaired by the then deputy Foreign Minister Musa Hitam. Many issues were brought up and discussed. Six months later, at Vienna, Malaysia was represented by a delegation of many NGOs as well as by the government who included a team of NGO representatives.[14]

Three other important areas in which the Malaysian government and NGOs are interacting more are bio-diversity, bio-safety, natural resource management, and climate. For example, the Convention of Bio-Diversity (1992), that was opened for signature at the 1992 Rio Summit, Malaysia's stand on forest-related issues came as a result of the informational role played by Sahabat Alam Malaysia and

the Consumer Association of Penang (see http://iisd1.iisd.ca/rio+5/agenda/principles.htm).

One human rights policy that Malaysia took a stand on is the issue of landmines. In Ottawa, Canada, in December 1997, an international NGO campaign to ban landmines was successful when a treatey was signed to that effect. More than a hundred countries, including Malaysia, adopted the treaty banning the weapon. One NGO that was influential in Malaysia's positive stand on the issue is the (now defunct) JUST World Trust. JUST had joined the movement to ban landmines in 1994 and launched many public campaigns pertaining to human rights. Through consultative meetings and written documentation, policy makers within the government of Malaysia had decided on their stand with respect to the ban. JUST had maintained constant communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had written to Dr. Mahathir as well, appealing to the government to endorse a total ban. At the 23rd ASEAN ministerial meeting and at the ASEAN Regional Forum, Malaysia had called for a total ban.

Curiously, one area that has not commanded much government-NGO/non-State interaction is the area of foreign policy with regard to Islamic issues. Dr. Mahathir's policy of projecting Malaysia (a nation with Islam as its official religion) as a leader of the South would suggest a keen interest to take an international stand on Third World and Islamic related issues and events. When the mantle of leadership of the 116 strong Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) passed on from South Africa to Malaysia in February 2003, Mahathir as Chairman of NAM laid out strategies for the future influential role of the Movement. He also stressed the continued importance and relevance of the Movement for the protection and promotion of the interests of countries of the South, more so in light of the recently concluded United States' invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Furthermore, in response to the United States' and Britain's hard-headed resolve to defy United Nations resolutions concerning the invasion of Iraqi, Mahathir had called for the continued relevance of a strong multilateral system, revolving around the United Nations. This runs parallel with the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Revitalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement (February 2003) which has relevant guiding principles towards strengthening unity, solidarity, and cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and technical fields. Also, Malaysia's hosting of the 10th Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in October 2003 is a clear indication that Malaysia, under Mahathir, will become the focal point for the convergence of business opportunities, cultural values, arts and historical fellowships, and political understanding and solidarity. Up till this point, the scarcity of government-NGO interaction on Islamic issues, so far, is largely due to the prioritizing of agendas on both sides. Many Islamic NGOs, for example, have not been as interested in global Islamic issues as much as they are in domestic issues. Their primary concern has been with 'fundamentalism', meaning, their hope that Malaysian society will fall back on the fundamental teachings of the Quran and the Hadith

as a way of life. However, there are one or two instances, which saw Islamic NGOs working together with government agencies and policy makers on Islamic issues. One such issue was the Bosnian Conflict. Consultative meetings between ABIM and various government bodies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Ministry of Education and Malaysian missions overseas were held to discuss humanitarian aid for the war-stricken nation. Again, documentation on this is non-existent.[15] Another area of more government-NGO interaction may be in the fight against terrorism and other non-traditional security threats. Given Malaysia's recent leadership role in the OIC and NAM, it is hoped that there will be more government-NGO/non-State interaction on issues concerning Muslims.

CONCLUSION

Members of both the State and the NGO/non-State sectors of Malaysian society agree that there has been more interaction of a consultative nature between them, in matters of foreign policy formulation. There are only a few areas of foreign policy in which this consultation takes place, but the general feeling is that it is a growing phenomenon on State-NGO/non-State relations in Malaysia. This process began in the early 1980s, when Mahathir took over as Prime Minister, but had become more prominent in the 1990s. In order to understand the mechanisms of such interaction, one must look first at Dr. Mahathir's political philosophy, his relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his role in foreign policy. Dr. Mahathir has been described as having 'innovative and often radical policies' (Aziz Zariza Ahmad 1997: Chapter 1).

Since 1981, Malaysia had begun to assert itself as a 'spokesman for the South', in line with Dr. Mahathir's desire to project Malaysia's international interests and to 'go global'. This policy is considerably different from Malaysia's previous Prime Ministers; Tunku Abdul Rahman's leadership was geared towards achieving the independence of the Malays. Tun Abdul Razak emphasized development, particularly rural development. Thus, his administrative era is popularly referred to as the era of development. Dr. Mahathir's policy focused on pursuing Malaysia's position as an international actor, hoping to achieve a more equitable global order by addressing the existing inequities in the international system. During Tunku Abdul Rahman's time, the Foreign Ministry made important decisions pertaining to national issues such as the communist insurgency and the Indonesian *Konfrontasi* (1963-66). Conversely, in the present Mahathir era, a lot of foreign policy initiatives have originated from the Prime Minister himself, as the political chief executive. This suggests that the locus of foreign policy decision-making is in the hands of the Prime Minister, i.e. Dr. Mahathir.

Personalities have a huge impact on foreign policy formulation in Malaysia. This is a reflection of the personality-driven (as opposed to issue-driven) politi-

cal system that prevails. Central to this 'personality' is Dr. Mahathir's clearly defined set of goals. Uppermost in his agenda is to propel Malaysia into the 21st century as a developed nation, economically sound and strong. Dr. Mahathir is also a reader and an intelligent analyzer of what he reads and observes. This character of a strong executive is what gave rise to foreign policy initiatives, such as the implementation of the South initiative through the South Commission. Other foreign policy initiatives are the idea that Malaysia must develop business abroad and the desire to connect Malaysia with the rest of the world by latching itself onto the information technology highway. With regard to the latter, Dr. Mahathir fully backed the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), in which foreign information technology firms have been invited to establish themselves for the free exchange of information and trading access.

It is clear that the Mahathir era emphasizes economics. On many overseas visits, Dr. Mahathir would be accompanied by a business delegation. This partnership of diplomacy and business in inter-state relations would suggest the relegation of the function of the Foreign Ministry to a secondary position. Furthermore, another important development underscored the central role of the Prime Minister in foreign policy formulation. This was the establishment of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), in 1991 (Zakaria Haji Ahmad 1998). IDFR is registered as an Agency under the Prime Minister's Department, not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was to enhance the professionalism of government officers as Malaysia began to play a larger international role. Among the reasons stated for its establishment, an important clause suggesting the role of NGOs and other non-State agencies is included. It reads:

To improve the coordination between Government and non-Government agencies involved in promoting the nation's interests overseas...among the important subjects which are given emphasis by the Institute are protocol and the niceties of diplomacy, etiquette, attitude training, the art of effective communication, the art of negotiation, global political and economic trends, trade regimes and practices and laws of countries. The institute also lays emphasis on language training, especially English.... The main target groups of this Institute are officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, trade commissioners from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, officers of the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority, directors of tourism and officers of the Ministry of Primary Industries who are serving overseas (Ahmad Sarji 1996).

The Mahathir era signaled new areas of Malaysia's foreign relations, such as economic interdependence, gender, environment, human rights, etc. This shift in priorities of external relations has resulted in a transformation in the process of foreign policy formulation. Over the years, the government has developed more involved mechanisms for consultation with non-State bodies in order to get more information. Dr. Mahathir realizes that information on various subjects is so vast that the State cannot manage to remain updated on its own. Due to over specialization of various subject matters, he is aware of the interdependence of information. Also, the personality of Dr. Mahathir is such that he is

receptive to a wide variety of sources for his ideas of foreign policy as well as Malaysia's development strategies. Hence, each ministry, for instance, has a national advisory council (committee) on various issues such as the environment, consumers' rights, health, human rights, population, sustainable development and womens' issues. Certain NGOs are invited to be on these councils. An example is the National Consumers Council at the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. Ministers are becoming more comfortable with this consultative process because there are just too many issues to know about and to be concerned with in this age of globalization.

The Mahathir era has witnessed more involvement of non-State agencies and citizens' groups in the process of foreign policy formulation in areas directly related to economics, investment and trade. On the other hand, foreign policy regarding humanitarian issues and religion (Islam) is still the domain of State policy makers. The beginnings of a consultative process can be seen, but it is few and far between. It is hoped, though, that the post-Mahathir administration will see more interaction between the government and non-State actors regarding humanitarian issues, problems of the developing and underdeveloped world brought about by globalization, and of Islam and Muslims. It may be concluded that the 'democratic space' is slowly opening up in Malaysian society, even though in a few select areas, mainly in areas that project Malaysia's role as the leader of the developing world. These include the international economic field, trade and investment, human resource development and the environment.

NOTES

1. Dr. Mahathir had moved for the set up of the South-South Commission at the Harare Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Conference in 1986. Malaysia was also instrumental in moving the resolution on the Bosnian crisis, calling for the expulsion of the state of (the former) Yugoslavia from the United Nations. Dr. Mahathir came to be known as the 'new voice for the developing world'. Malaysia has also taken a strong Third World line on the environmental lobby against the logging of tropical rain forests. This won him recognition at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, where Malaysia's stand helped define the demands of the South.

2. Some work of a similar nature has been done on Indonesian NGOs recently. See Philip Eldridge. 'Development, Democracy and Non-Government Organisations in Indonesia'. In *Asian Journal of Political Science* Volume 4 Number 1 (June 1996), pp. 17-35.

3. A Working Paper published by the North-South Institute in Canada provides one definition of civil society. It is described as a building, the bricks (i.e. the constituent parts of the building) of which are organized groups, such as NGOs, groups in the business sector and members of academe and academic institutions. See "Civil Society: The Development Solution?" The North-South Institute Civil Society Research Project, June 1996.

4. *The Rights of Man* was Paine's rebuttal to the Irish political theorist Edmund Burke. Burke had strongly attacked the ideas of the French Revolution and rebuked any

system that was based on reason alone. He was brought up in a religious Catholic milieu and feared that any semblance of social order risked being destroyed if states were based on the ideology of rationality alone.

5. The recent General Elections is a case in point. The Barisan Nasional, although having achieved their two-third's majority, is not elated with the results as they are an indication of declining popularity among the people. Communalism has played an important role in the way people have voted. Whatever the reasons for the outcome, the fact remains that Malaysian citizens came out in strong force (about 78%) to vote. Another issues that captured local NGO attention was the East Timor crisis.

6. For an exhaustive survey of the NGO sector in Malaysia, see a monograph by Tan Boon Kean and Bishan Singh. *The Role of NGOs in Development: Malaysian Case Study: Uneasy Relations: The State and NGOs in Malaysia.* Asia and Pacific Development Centre. Gender and Development Programme. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1994.

7. According to a study done at Universiti Sains Malaysia (1985) which attempted to classify NGOs in Malaysia in terms of their target group orientation. See Kamal Salih, et al. *Young Workers and Urban Services in Penang: A Summary Report.* Penang, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1985.

8. Later on in this paper, it will become apparent that the two-way interaction between the government and other NGOs apart from the academic groups and think tanks, is predominantly of the 'closed-door' type. NGOs play a role in Malaysian foreign policy formulation, particularly in the bi-lateral and multi-lateral dimensions of it. However, it is not a 'public' interaction in that, due to the characteristic of Malaysia's political economic model, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are the only two political entities which are given public recognition as being influential in foreign policy formulation.

9. Despite Dr. Mahathir's inclination to form closer ties with the developing world, the reality points to the fact that Malaysia would still need to rely on close relations with the West for foreign investment and technology transfer.

10. The outcome of the 10th General Election this past November 1999 has demonstrated that political life in Malaysia is a little more dynamic than we thought; however, the questions to be posed are did these changes come about as a result of civil society's influence or by pure economic determinism?

11 For more information on these four UNCTAD-IX and WTO 'contentious' issues, see Third World Network (TWN) website http://www.twnside.org.sg/.

12 Interview with Martin Khor, Director, Third World Network. I am greatly indebted to Martin Khor for his time in furnishing me with this information.

13. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, June 3-14, 1992. See URL http://www.igc.apc.org/habitat/agenda21/rio-dec.html. This declaration has 27 principles which define the rights and responsibilities of nations as they pursue human development and well-being.

14. Information on this is fairly sparce.

15. Interview with ABIM and Sisters In Islam.

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