MALAYSIA AND LEBANON, 1963-2009: SMALL STATE BILATERAL RELATIONS

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MALAYSIA AND LEBANON, 1963-2009:

SMALL STATE BILATERAL RELATIONS

ABSTRACT

Studies of the foreign policy behaviour of states have largely neglected the aspect of diplomatic relations between small states. This research attempts to address this gap by examining Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon, two small, if dissimilar states. This study examines the previously inaccessible diplomatic cables, reports, memoranda, third person notes and other official records of the ministry of foreign affairs of Malaysia, as well as secondary sources and first-hand views of relevant individuals, to construct a compelling account of the development of this relationship from 1963 to 2009. This study revealed critical junctures that cannot be easily explained. A more complete explanation was only possible by taking onto account the influence of a third state on the systemic environment which this thesis has coined as the Third State Effect. The third states investigated in this bilateral relationship are Indonesia and Israel. Diplomatic relations with Lebanon was essential for Malaysia to gain a diplomatic presence in the Middle East to neutralise the campaign of isolation against her mounted by Indonesia and her allies as part of the *Konfrontasi*. Subsequently, Israel served as the main driver of bilateral relations which in turn served to satisfy other domestic needs. The research makes a significant contribution towards building a corpus of knowledge of Malaysia's relations with the Middle East. As Lebanon is considered by the Arab states as the geo-strategic front of the Middle East conflict, this study could also shed light into Malaysia's relations with the other Arab states.

Keywords: Malaysia-Lebanon, Malaysia-Israel, Malaysia-Indonesia, small state relations, *Konfrontasi*

MALAYSIA DAN LUBNAN, 1963-2009: HUBUNGAN DUA-HALA DI ANTARA NEGARA KECIL

ABSTRAK

Secara am, kajian mengenai hubungan luar di antara negara telah mengabaikan aspek hubungan diplomatik antara negara kecil. Justeru itu, tesis ini mengisi lompang tersebut dengan mengkaji hubungan dua-hala Malaysia dengan Lubnan, iaitu dua buah negara kecil yang sangat berbeza. Kajian ini menggunapakai dokumen-dokumen Kementerian Luar Negeri yang tidak pernah diakses sebelum ini seperti kawat diplomatik, laporan, memorandum, nota diplomatik serta lain-lain dokumen rasmi, sumber-sumber sekunder serta pandangan individu-individu terpilih yang relevan untuk merangka satu naratif mengenai perkembangan hubungan dua-hala ini dari 1963-2009. Kajian ini telah menunjukkan terdapat beberapa aspek kritikal yang tidak mudah diterangkan. Keterangan yang lebih menyeluruh hanya dapat dilakukan dengan mengambilkira pengaruh negara ketiga ke atas persekitaran sistemi yang dinamakan dalam kajian ini sebagai Kesan Negara Ketiga. Negara ketiga yang diteliti dalam kajian ini ialah Indonesia dan Israel. Hubungan diplomatik dengan Lubnan membolehkan Malaysia bertapak di Timor Tengah dan menggunakan kedudukannya untuk mematahkan kempen pemulauan dalam rangka Konfrontasi yang dipelopori Indonesia serta negara-negara yang bersekutu dengannya. Kemudiannya Israel pula yang menjadi pemacu hubungan dua-hala. Kajian ini merupakan sumbangan penting terhadap bidang kajian hubungan luar Malaysia dengan Timor Tengah. Memandangkan bahawa Lubnan di anggap sebagai benteng "geo-strategik" konflik Timor Tengah, maka kajian ini boleh membantu pemahaman hubungan Malaysia dengan lain-lain negara Arab.

Katakunci: Hubungan Malaysia-Lubnan, Malaysia-Israel, Malaysia-Indonesia, hubungan antara negara-negara kecil, Konfrontasi

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The path trodden in undertaking this academic exercise had been a difficult one for me. Therefore, I begin with thanking God Almighty for facilitating my journey and giving me strength to persevere. When I was the Malaysian ambassador to Lebanon, my colleagues from the larger western countries were amazed that Malaysia had a full-fledged embassy in Beirut. What were the driving force behind Malaysia's interest in Lebanon they wondered? This deceptively simple question did not lend itself to an easy answer as I found out during my stay. Hence, my interest to investigate this relationship systematically.

I am deeply indebted to my supervisor, Professor Dr Shakila Yacob for her untiring guidance and support without which I certainly would not have completed this thesis. I also owe a debt of gratitude to many people without whom this thesis would also not have been possible. Malaysia's Honorary Consul General, Dato Omar Jundi and Madam Mariam Pook, one of volunteers who worked in a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut at the height of the Lebanese civil war, helped fill so many gaps in the official records. I also benefitted from the insights from Sarkis Naoum, a journalist with the Al Nahar who never left Lebanon, even during the civil war, Robert Fisk, Nicholas Blanford, Michael Young and Martin Chulov, all authors and experts on Lebanon. I would be remiss if I did not thank the many clerical and administrative staff from the filing registry at Wisma Putra, the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Malaysian embassy in Beirut.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGC	-	Attorney General's Chambers
BOAC	-	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CDR	-	Council for Reconstruction and Development
CIA	-	Central Intelligence Agency
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IDAL	-	Investment Development Authority of Lebanon
IDF	-	Israeli Defence Forces
JITC	-	Joint Investment and Trade Committee
LF	-	Lebanese Forces
LNM	-	Lebanese National Movement
MAP	-	Medical Aid for Palestine
MARA	-	Majlis Amanah Rakyat Malaysia
MAS	-	Malaysian Airlines
MATRADE	-	Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation
MDeC	-	Multimedia Development Corporation
MENA	-	Middle East and North Africa
MMV	-	Malaysia Medical Volunteers
MOU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
MSC	-	Multimedia Super Corridor
MSRI	-	Malaysian Sociological Research Institute
MTCP	-	Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme
NEP	-	New Economic Policy
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
NISCVT	-	National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training
NOC	-	National Operations Council
OIC	-	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
PAS	-	Parti Islam se-Malaysia
PKI	-	Parti Komunis Indonesia

PLO	-	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PMIP	-	Pan Malaysian Islamic Party
SLA	-	South Lebanon Army
TBCC	-	Treaty of Brotherhood, Coordination and Cooperation
UMNO	-	United Malays National Organisation
UNGA	-	United Nations General Assembly
UNIFIL	-	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNRWA	-	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian Refugees in the Near East

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Beware of small states

David Hirst[1]

> *[ ]..Lebanon's revenge was to welcome all her invaders and kiss them to death. The longer they stayed, the longer they needed to stay; and each day, every hour, their presence would be imperceptibly debased and perverted and poisoned.*
>
> *Robert Fisk*[2]

Introduction

David Hirst takes his title from Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian anarchist, who warned a friend in 1870 to "beware of small states". He was observing the paradox of small states, though vulnerable to threats from larger neighbours, could be a source of trouble for them too. Bakunin's warning is relevant even today as more than half of the members of the United Nations are made up small states. Hence, it is not surprising that almost a century later, Robert Fisk, in writing about Lebanon, would observe how larger states have stumbled into her affairs only to find themselves unable to withdraw without suffering the consequences. The point of these observations is to underscore that "smallness" renders small states vulnerable to a host of problems that ultimately end up as a challenge for the international community. Yet the world still knows little about small state interaction.

This study is an attempt to understand the drivers of bilateral relations between small states by using Malaysia-Lebanon relations as a basis.[3] As a work of international history, the main objective of this thesis is to explain the evolution of bilateral relations

[1] David Hirst, *Beware of Small States, Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East* (New York: Nation Books, 2010).
[2] Robert Fisk, "The Garden of Earthly Delights," in *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (Oxford University Press, 2002).
[3] This study uses the term small states and developing states interchangeably. Smallness here indicates small in terms of military strength, economy or other material power rather than size.

between Malaysia and Lebanon from the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1963 until the end of Abdullah Badawi's term as prime minister in 2009.

Scholars who have studied the development strategies of developing states have observed that they tend to use diplomatic relations as one of the channels to secure their needs for state building. They have observed that developing states being "new" to the international system are still preoccupied with state building. This is to say that their main preoccupation is among others, but not limited to, with the process of bringing socio-economic development, fostering internal social cohesion, building legitimacy of state institutions and governing regime, and seeking international recognition of their state borders, territorial integrity, and sovereign independence.[4] Since, developing states generally lack their own national resources for state building, external relations serve as a channel for securing such resources. Although reference is made to developing states, this observation can also be taken as applicable to small states because a large majority of the small states fall into the categories of developing states or least-developing states. What this observation implies is that small states must be highly selective and parsimonious in their choice of diplomatic relations to secure their development resources in a cost efficient and effective manner. The following section will briefly describe the general considerations that are taken into account by the Malaysian government in establishing diplomatic ties or establishing a new diplomatic mission.

[4] See Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System* (L. Rienner Publishers, 1995). A similar preoccupation was first articulated by Malaysia in the speech by Tun Dr Ismail on Malaya's acceptance as a member of the United Nations in 1957. See Tawfik Ismail and Ooi Kee Beng, *Malaya's First Year at the United Nations: As Reflected in Dr Ismail's Reports Home to Tunku Abdul Rahman*(Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).

Guiding principles of Malaysia's diplomatic relations

Malaysia's foreign policy is premised on having good relations with all countries. Her primary interest is to promote a peaceful and stable inter-state interaction that would ensure a conducive external environment to allow her to pursue her development objectives.[5] As a developing state, Malaysia's primary interest is to secure markets for her exports. As such trade and investment opportunities feature prominently in her foreign policy. It will not be an exaggeration to say that for Malaysia, diplomacy comes on the heels of trade and investment. As such, the justification for the establishment of diplomatic ties or opening new diplomatic missions takes into account the volume of trade and investment and the potential for their expansion. It will also consider other economic factors such as tourism and technical cooperation. Non-economic factors such as providing consular support for Malaysian citizens are also an important consideration particularly with countries where large numbers of Malaysians live, work or visit. Defence and strategic consideration plays an important role as well. In this context, capitals that serve as headquarters of important international organisations are also considered as priority. All these factors are considered as "national interests." Therefore, one can say that the Malaysian government's conduct of diplomatic relations is based on a general cost-benefit analysis that takes into account her own economic situation and the benefits that could be derived in terms of preserving and advancing her national interests in the areas mentioned above.

Hence, it does not come as a surprise that at independence in 1957 Malaysia only had seven diplomatic missions namely in Bangkok, Canberra, Jakarta, London, New Delhi, New York, and Washington DC. Gradually, taking into account the requirements

[5] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Strategic Plan 2016-2020,"(2015).

in terms of financial and manpower resources and benefits, more diplomatic missions were established. Therefore, in 1958 Malaysia opened a consulate in Jeddah to provide consular support for the Malaysian pilgrims. Consular needs also dictated the taking over of the British consulate in Songkhla in 1958 to be the Malayan consulate. Similarly, to provide consular support to the large number of Malaysian citizens of Indian origin, a deputy high commissioner's office (consulate) was established in Madras (Chennai) in 1960. In that year too, Malaya opened a full-fledged embassy in Cairo 1960.[6] Cairo was chosen because it was the *de facto* capital of the Arab League. As the country became more developed, the focus turned towards establishing ties with the so-called "non-traditional" markets or those countries that were seen as potential markets for Malaysian exports or investment destination for the Malaysian private sector or with other developing states under the framework of "south-south" cooperation. However, as we will see in the following section, Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon does not fit this observation.

At 10, 452 sq.km Lebanon is only roughly half as big as the state of Perak.[7] On the other hand, Malaysia is thirty times as big as Lebanon. Vast distance also separates both countries as they are located at the opposite ends of the Asian continent with Malaysia being in the eastern end and Lebanon at the western end. Malaysia and Lebanon also differed in their colonial experiences. Malaysia was a British colony while Lebanon was under the French Mandate.

As a country that lacks natural resources, Lebanon's principal economic activity had mostly been based on tourism, banking and transhipment services. Given the absence

[6] "New Middle East Post for Malaya," *The Straits Times*, 10 January 1958; "Mentri Besar Gets the Cairo Embassy Job," *The Straits Times*, 1 March 1960; "Boestamam's 3-Point Plan for Easing Congo Crisis," *The Straits Times*, 16 December 1960.
[7] Perak is one of the 13 federated states of Malaysia.

of economic complementarity, small market and different economic orientations, trade between Malaysia and Lebanon had been negligible at best. According to official trade USD 0.5 million or 0.01% of Malaya's global trade in 1963. Interestingly, by the end of the time frame of this study in 2009, two-way trade accounted for only about 0.03% of Malaysia's global trade or USD 96.1 million.[8]

Lebanon was also not a major tourist destination for Malaysians because of security concerns. Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1947, the entire region had been unstable due to the frequent breakout of conflict between Israel and the Arab states. Further, as the weakest of the Front-line states in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Lebanon was perceived as the geopolitical front of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[9] As a result, Lebanon was often the arena where the conflictual relationship between Israel and the Arab states played out in the form of military conflicts.

Finally, because of distance and different historical experiences, there had been no cultural, religious, or educational links between Malaysia and Lebanon. As such the need to provide consular services for Malaysian citizen also did not arise.

Despite the glaring evidence that Lebanon clearly was a poor candidate to supply state building resources, she was among the first few countries in the Middle East with whom Malaysia established diplomatic ties. In addition, as will be shown in the subsequent chapters, Malaysia also spent considerable diplomatic and financial resources into maintaining this relationship. After the civil war ended in 1989, bilateral relations saw a significant expansion. Despite the fact that Lebanon did not fit into the picture of

[8] The 1963 data was extracted from the records of the Malayan Ministry of Commerce and Industry while the 2014 data was derived from the World Bank database. See "OL1963.05.30 from Sujak Rahiman, Ministry of Commerce and Industry to Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, Ministry for External Affairs," (1963); World Bank, "World Integrated Trade Solution,"(World Bank, 2018).
[9] The Front-Line states of the Arab-Israeli conflict are the Arab states that share a physical border with Israel. They are Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

an "ideal" candidate for strong bilateral relations, Mahathir went out of his way to commit the Malaysian government to support Lebanon financially with USD 750 million (RM 2.85 billion) under the Paris II conference in 2002. Abdullah, who took over from Mahathir also committed vast amounts of government resources to support Lebanon in the aftermath of the attack by Israel in 2006. Although the assistance has not been quantified it probably runs into several hundreds of millions of dollars.

Research Objective

The main aim of this thesis is to offer an interpretation of the relevant factors, progression of events and historical narratives to explain the evolution of bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon from the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in 1963 until 2009. By holding the bilateral relations with Lebanon constant as the unit of analysis, this research aims to account for the observed incongruence between the apparent lack of material gains compared to the amount of resources that have been poured into the relationship. As explained earlier, it appears that Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon were not always driven by a need to derive material benefits from the relationship. Thus, in tracing the origins of the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon, the following questions are also asked:

i. What are the main drivers of Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations?

ii. Were there other factors that contributed to this relationship?

Significance of Research

The primary value of this exercise is its contribution towards building a corpus of knowledge on Malaysia's relations with the Middle East. Although Lebanon is a small state, she is important in the Middle East as she is regarded as the geo-strategic front of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations will shed light into Malaysia's relations with the other Arab states as the Middle East conflict is a key foreign policy interest of these states.

By focussing on Malaysia's relations with Lebanon, this work also provides the opportunity to rectify the imbalance in the focus of Malaysian foreign policy studies. The few full-scale studies of Malaysia's bilateral relations have focussed on her relations with larger states such as Australia, the United States or Indonesia. Therefore, this thesis could be a contribution to studies on Malaysia's relations with smaller states.

Further the research also contributes to the debate on the *Konfrontasi*. The earlier works have suggested that the *Konfrontasi* was a sort of an isolated war between Indonesia and Malaysia. However, this study uncovers evidence showing that the *Konfrontasi* had a wider global dimension as well involving the Middle East. As such it offers fresh insight into the challenges faced by Malaysia in neutralising the impact of the *Konfrontasi* in an arena far removed from Southeast Asia.

More broadly, by explaining Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations in a systematic manner, this research also hopes to contribute to our understanding of the foreign policy behaviour of small states. Given that the bulk of global diplomatic activity occurs within the framework of bilateral relations between small states, a study on the external

behaviour of small states fills a critical gap in our understanding of the contemporary inter-state system as small states make up for the majority of states in the world.

Literature Review

Since the core issue is about the bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon, this study conducted a survey of the literature on the foreign policy choices of both states to see if it can shed some light into understanding this relationship. The literature survey also looked at the studies on the *Konfrontasi* and the events leading to it as this was a major concern for the Malayan and later the Malaysian government at the time of establishment of diplomatic ties. This inquiry naturally led to the examination of Indonesia's motives and behaviour during this period. In looking at the foreign policy of Lebanon, it became clear that one could not ignore the motives of Israel and Syria as both played a major role in constraining or otherwise influencing Lebanon's foreign policy. Hence, the survey also included Syria's and Israel's perception towards Lebanon.

Literature on Malaysian foreign policy

As far as Malaysian foreign policy studies are concerned they can be divided into four genres. The first genre comprises mostly of descriptive studies which include some of the earliest works on Malaysia's foreign policy. These works were mostly descriptive in nature.[10] These studies noted the pragmatism that underpinned Malaysia's foreign policy. As a small state that was heavily dependent on its exports of rubber and tin to her traditional markets in the west, Malaysia's foreign policy was pro-West. Apart from colonial history, a hard-nosed calculation of her security reality also conditioned Malaya

[10] Among the studies are TH Silcock, "Development of a Malayan Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 17, no. 1 (1963); Robert O. Tilman, *Malaysian Foreign Policy : The Dilemmas of a Committed Neutral*, Reprint Series No. 22, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies. (New Haven: New Haven Yale University, 1967); Marvin C. Ott, "Foreign Policy Formulation in Malaysia," *Asian Survey* 12, no. 3 (1972).

to forge close defence with the west and in particular with her former colonial master, United Kingdom for her defense needs. These studies also showed that foreign policy making emerged from a small-group of officials with the prime minister as the key player.[11] A more recent work in this genre is a study by Khadijah Khalid which compares and contrasts Malaysian foreign policy under Najib and Mahathir. Her study concluded that despite the change of leadership, Malaysia's core foreign policy interests in particular economic interests remained intact. The study also showed that unlike Mahathir who was more ideological and therefore pursued a more expansive foreign policy agenda, Najib as a post-Cold War leader was more focussed on extracting the maximum gain from the emergent multipolar world order. Therefore, Najib sought to pursue a cooperative stance with the US and the west rather than adopting a confrontational approach favoured by Mahathir.[12] Overall, these studies underscored that Malaysia's foreign policy is driven by her needs or national interests as it were and shaped or coloured by the perceptions of the prime minister who determines the country's diplomatic posture and behaviour.

The second genre is made up of works that examines Malaysian foreign policy more "scientifically" by identifying the variables that influence the external behaviour.[13] The works by Saravamuttu, Yusuf and Dhillon fall in this category.[14] Their studies showed that the external environment, domestic policies and considerations as well as the perceptions of the prime minister play a role in shaping Malaysian foreign policy. The studies by Yusof and Dhillon note that some of foreign policies pursued under Mahathir may appear as to be not directly related to national interests. These include the Islamisation policies and some policies such as the Antarctica issue. These are explained

[11] "The Sources and Content of Malaysian Foreign Policy toward Indonesia and the Phillipines: 1957-1965" (Ph.D., The John Hopkins University, 1971).
[12] Khadijah Md Khalid, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy under Najib: A Comparison with Mahathir," *Asian Survey* 51, no. 3 (2011).
[13] See for example J.N. Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy* (Nichols Pub. Co., 1980).
[14] Mohamad Yusof Ahmad, "Continuity and Change in Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1981-1986" (Tufts University, 1990); Johan Saravanamuttu, *Malaysia's Foreign Policy, the First Fifty Years: Alignment, Neutralism, Islamism* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies 2010); Karminder Singh Dhillon, *Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981-2003: Dilemmas of Development* (NUS Press, 2009).

in terms of the perceptions and proclivities of the prime minister. Rajmah's study which focuses entirely on Malaysia's multilateral policy at the United Nations complements these works.[15] This approach brings the advantage of examining different sources of foreign policy behaviour without overly giving importance to the idiosyncrasy factor. In general, these studies also agree that Malaysian foreign policy continues to be guided by her core interests though the perceptions and proclivities of leadership may impose different external behaviour.

The third genre comprises single-issue studies. Among the major in-depth bilateral studies include studies on Malaysia's relations with Australia, Indonesia, and the United States.[16] These studies have examined the challenges faced by Malaysia to preserve and promote her interests in dealing with much bigger states. Sodhy's updated study on Malaysia's relations with the United States under the Bush Administration show that the core interests have remained unchanged for Malaysia particularly in terms of trade, investment, and security. However, following the September 11 incident, security cooperation was propelled to the fore as the most important area of cooperation under the Bush administration.[17] Weiss's book chapter on Malaysia-Indonesia relations has noted that bilateral relations are based on their respective interests including trade, investment, cultural and other interests. However, the problem of geographical proximity, shared cultural and religious heritage imposes challenges.[18] Similarly, Khadijah Khalid's and Shakila Yacob's study on managing Malaysia-Indonesia relations in the post-Mahathir and post-Suharto era noted that bilateral relations had become more complex due to

[15] Rajmah Hussain, *Malaysia at the United Nations: A Study of Foreign Policy Priorities, 1957-1987* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2010).
[16] P. Sodhy, *The US-Malaysian Nexus: Themes in Superpower-Small State Relations* (Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Malaysia, 1991); Joseph Chinyong Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations : One Kin, Two Nations*, Contemporary Southeast Asia (Oxford 2004); Rita Camilleri, "Attitudes and Perceptions in Australia-Malaysia Relations: A Contemporary View," *Penerbit, UKM, Kuala Lumpur* (2001).
[17] Pamela Sodhy, "US-Malaysian Relations During the Bush Administration: The Political, Economic, and Security Aspects," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (2003).
[18] Meredith L Weiss, "Malaysia-Indonesia Bilateral Relations: Sibling Rivals in a Fraught Family," in *International Relations in Southeast Asia: Between Bilateralism and Multilateralism*, ed. Narayan Ganesan and Ramses Amer (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and Ithaca, 2010).

domestic factors in both countries.[19] They observed that the uneven pace of democratisation in both countries and the emergence of non-state actors had made it more difficult for them to manage their respective interests. The also observed that the personal role of the leaders in tempering the tone and tenor of the relationship has always been a crucial element. Implicitly, all these studies showed that while core national interests continue to govern Malaysia's external relations, the priorities may be re-ordered according to the changes in external environment, or changes in the needs and perceptions of the other state. Further, these studies also complement the other descriptive studies in showing that the prime minister's perceptions and motivations play a big role in influencing Malaysia's external behaviour.

There are also several studies on Malaysia's relations with smaller states though fewer in numbers. Among them are studies on Malaysia's relations with Singapore. Given the historical ties between the two states, there is considerable interest in understanding how both states could maintain a mutually beneficial relationship. For Nathan, the relationship exhibits both competitive and collaborative tendencies. The competitive tendency manifests itself in the way both states defend their political system of governance as a zero-sum game. Yet pragmatism drives them to seek avenues for cooperation and collaboration to ensure their mutual security and satisfy their developmental needs.[20] Rusdi's doctoral study focuses on bilateral ties with Singapore with the specific aim of explaining the factors that affected bilateral ties during the Mahathir era. According to him, political culture and idiosyncrasy of the leadership plays a major role in governing the shape of the relationship.[21] Somewhat along the same lines is the work by Alan Chong and Balakrishnan. In analysing the foreign policy styles of

[19] Khadijah Md. Khalid and Shakila Yacob, "Managing Malaysia–Indonesia Relations in the Context of Democratization: The Emergence of Non-State Actors," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 12, no. 3 (2012).
[20] KS Nathan, "Malaysia—Singapore Relations: Retrospect and Prospect," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (2002).
[21] Rusdi Omar, *An Analysis of the Underlying Factors That Affected Malaysia-Singapore Relations During the Mahathir Era: Discords and Continuity* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 2014).

Lee Kuan Yew and Mahathir, they argue that intellectual iconoclasm enabled them to push their respective populations to accept critical foreign policy decisions to support their modernisation plans.[22] Their work underscores the primacy of the prime ministers in foreign policy formulation which they then pushed for acceptance within the society through a combination of charisma and authoritarianism.

The other works on Malaysia's relations with a small state is Malaysia-Myanmar relations. Sidhu makes the point that the relationship was "personalised" and often centered on the leaders of both countries. The driving factor for the establishment of relations in 1958 was the need to foster good relations with a neighbouring state and her own geo-strategic imperatives whereas since 1988, economic actors became more important as Malaysia hoped to benefit from the opening of economic opportunity for the Malaysian private sector.[23] There is also a study on Malaysia's relations with the Philippines focussing on the Sabah issue.[24] This study showed that domestic political factors made the issue a thorn in bilateral relations despite the overall excellent relations within the regional grouping of ASEAN.

As far as single-issue studies are concerned, Nair's work on Islam as a factor in shaping Malaysia's foreign policy stands out as an important work. It provides insight into the extent to which Islam influences foreign policy across a number of policy areas. Her study also showed that domestic political actors as well as the personal beliefs of the prime minister contributed to the salience of Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy behaviour. Hamayotsu's comparative study on the role of Islam in nation-building complements Nair's study by explaining why Islam was easily incorporated into domestic

[22] Alan Chong and K Suppaiah Balakrishnan, "Intellectual Iconoclasm as Modernizing Foreign Policy: The Cases of Mahathir Bin Mohamad and Lee Kuan Yew," *The Pacific Review* 29, no. 2 (2016).
[23] Jatswan S Sidhu, "Malaysia-Myanmar Relations since 1958," *Journal of International Studies* 4(2008).
[24] Samad Paridah Abd and Darusalam Abu Bakar, "Malaysia-Philippines Relations: The Issue of Sabah," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 6 (1992).

and foreign policies in Malaysia whereas in Indonesia, the government had resisted Islam's role in the official domain.[25] The answer was the way Islam was portrayed and used by the leadership. In Malaysia, the leaders' perception of threat was placed beyond its border namely in the west whose "opposition" to Islam was a seen as threat to nation-building. In this way, Mahathir in particular was instrumental in advancing the role of Islam in the official domain. In Indonesia, however, the threat was perceived within its borders. In this context, Islam was seen as force that could destroy national unity. Hence, Islam was excluded from the official domain. This also explains why Indonesia has been reserved and prefers not to articulate a strong position on the so-called international Islamic issues unlike Malaysia.

Other single-issue studies include Ahmad Faiz's examination of Malaysia's policy of South-South Cooperation during Mahathir's leadership.[26] By examining selected bilateral relations with the Indochinese and South Pacific states, it makes the argument that the South-South Cooperation policy was a calculated effort of the Malaysian government under Mahathir to pursue her core national interests by encouraging cooperation among developing states. For Malaysia, such cooperation would be a mutually beneficial way of creating new markets and avenues for collaboration among developing states. Mohamad Muda's work on Malaysia's foreign policy and the Commonwealth also falls under the genre of single-issue study.[27] In his study, Mohamad Muda concludes that Malaysia's support for and membership in the Commonwealth were predicated on its pragmatism. Membership was valuable for a newly independent state as it provided international support and a sense of security. The linkages with other

[25] Hamayotsu Kikue, "Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia: Malaysia and Indonesia in Comparative Perspective," *Pacific Affairs* 75, no. 3 (2002).
[26] Ahmad Faiz Abdul Hamid, *Malaysia and South-South Cooperation During Mahathir's Era: Determining Factors and Implications* (Kuala Lumpur Pelanduk Publications, 2005).
[27] Muhammad Ben Muda, "Malaysia at 50: Malaysia's Foreign Policy and the Commonwealth Revisited," *Round Table* 97, no. 394 (2008).

members in the grouping also promoted trade links. As a young state, Malaysia also benefitted from as technical and financial assistance from the Commonwealth.

Finally, the survey also included studies focussing on Malaysia's bilateral relations with the Middle East. Clearly, it was area of inquiry that was under developed as there are not many studies on Malaysia's relations with the region. Lebanon was completely missing in the literature on Malaysia's relations with the region. An exception is a detailed examination of Malaysia's relations with Saudi Arabia by Asmady Idris.[28] Asmady's work affirmed that Malaysia's relations with Saudi Arabia was driven by her own domestic needs particularly trade and investment as well as religious interests. In another article, Asmady has investigated Malaysia's and Saudi Arabia's membership in the OIC. He notes that their membership in the organisation further strengthened bilateral relations which in turn enabled Malaysia to reap financial support from Saudi Arabia. Then there is a smaller article by Ruhanas on Malaysia's relation with the Middle East.[29] He notes that Malaysia's relations with the region is mostly driven by cultural and religious links but argues that core national interests namely trade and investment should be given prominence as well. Therefore, even in the Middle East, Malaysia's foreign policy is driven by her national interests as well. Apart from scholarly works, the survey also took into account the personal recollections of several former Malaysian diplomats recorded in the form of memoirs. They hinted at possible links between the *Konfrontasi* and Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Middle East.[30]

[28] Asmady Idris, *Malaysia's Relations with Saudi Arabia, 1957-2003* (Sabah, Malaysia: Penerbit Universiti Sabah Malaysia, 2015).
[29] Ruhanas Harun, "In Pursuit of National Interest: Change and Continuity in Malaysia's Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East " *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 1 (2009).
[30] G.K.A Kumaraseri, *Professional Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management: An Ambassador's Insight* (Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2004); Mahayuddin Abdul Rahaman, "All in Stride," in *Number One, Wisma Putra,*, ed. Fauziah Mohamad Taib (Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia, 2006); Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, *Growing up with the Nation* (Marshall Cavendish International (Asia) Pte Ltd, 2013).

In sum, the review of the major works on Malaysian foreign policy suggests that:

i. Malaysian foreign policy is driven by the pursuit of her core national interests in terms of market for her exports, sources of foreign direct investment, technology transfer, technical assistance, tourism and consular or religious factors. As explained earlier, geographical proximity is also an important consideration.

ii. Foreign policy is also influenced by the conditions in the external environment, domestic policies and constraints as well the role of non-state actors such as NGOs. Therefore, foreign policy priorities are dynamic in the sense that they respond to the influence of any of these factors.

iii. The prime minister is the primary actor in the formulation of foreign policy. As observed by Dosch, Mahathir's "personalised hegemony" of domestic politics also left an indelible mark on Malaysian foreign policy by shaping and steering it according to his values, beliefs and preferences.[31] This is affirmed in another study which shows that Mahathir's personality and idiosyncrasies related to his perception of prestige, image, need for recognition, or "making a stand" against perceived injustices against weaker states or communities was a major driver of foreign policy during Mahathir's premiership.[32] Although the other prime ministers did not leave as deep an imprint on foreign policy, nonetheless, there is consensus in these studies that the views, beliefs and perception of the prime minister is an important determinant of foreign policy.

[31] Jörn Dosch, "Mahathirism and Its Legacy in Malaysia's Foreign Policy," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (2014).
[32] See for example Ahmad Faisal Muhamad, "The Struggle for Recognition in Foreign Policy: Malaysia under Mahathir 1981-2003" (Ph.D., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2008).

iv. Interestingly, these studies also noted that some areas of Malaysia's foreign policy may appear as "inconsistencies" in so far as they do not directly serve the above needs.[33] Implicitly, such foreign policy decisions are attributed to the idiosyncrasy or proclivity of the prime minister.

Literature on the foreign policies of Indonesia, Israel and Syria

On Indonesia, the literature survey looked at Malaysia-Indonesia relations prior to and up to the *Konfrontasi* period.[34] Several scholars have noted that at independence, bilateral relations between Malaya and Indonesia were not really warm and cordial.[35] Indonesia harbored a superior and even a condescending attitude to Malaya and her leaders.[36] Tunku Abdul Rahman too makes no secret of his suspicions towards Indonesia and her leadership in his recollections.[37] Given the attraction that Indonesia had among the Malays in general and the Malay intellectuals in particular, the Tunku was equally concerned about the possible spillover of Indonesia's nationalist fervor into Malaya and that Indonesia might take advantage of the ethnic-cultural affinity to exert hegemony over Malaya.[38]

To make matters worse, the personality differences between the Tunku and Sukarno were exacerbated by ideological differences. Therefore, when the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) joined the Sukarno government resulting in Indonesia leaning more towards the Communist bloc, Tunku felt compelled to insulate Malaya from Indonesian

[33] See for example K.S Dhillon, "Malaysian Foreign Policy in the Mahathir Era, 1981-2003" (PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 2005); Muhamad, "The Struggle for Recognition in Foreign Policy: Malaysia under Mahathir 1981-2003."
[34] For a discussion on the factors that triggered the *Konfrontasi*, see Donald Hindley, "Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia: A Search for Motives," *Asian Survey* 4, no. 6 (1964); John O. Sutter, "Two Faces of Konfrontasi: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu," ibid.6, no. 10 (1966); G. Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965* (Crawford House, 1998); Yazid Mat Noor, "Malaysia-Indonesia Relations before and after 1965: Impact on Bilateral and Regional Stability," *Journal of Politics and Law* 6, no. 4 (2013).
[35] Joseph Chinyong Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005); Md. Khalid and Yacob, "Managing Malaysia–Indonesia Relations in the Context of Democratization: The Emergence of Non-State Actors."
[36] Ott, "The Sources and Content of Malaysian Foreign Policy toward Indonesia and the Phillipines: 1957-1965." p.112.
[37] Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Looking Back: Monday Musing and Memories*, Second edition ed.(Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: MPH Group Publising Sdn Bhd and The Star Publications Sdn Bhd, 2011).
[38] Liow, "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960." p.93.

politics and preventing the communist elements in Jakarta from taking the political initiative.[39] Liow in his article on Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's relation with Indonesia, explains that Tunku's personal judgement and idiosyncratic dislike for Sukarno had major implications for Malaya's foreign policy at that time. Hence, foreign policy was deployed to not only motivate an uncompromising approach to Indonesia but more important it also led to actively undermining Sukarno's rule in Indonesia.[40] Indonesia's main concern was fueled by the perception of the Indonesian leadership toward Malaya. Although Indonesia claimed that Malaysia could be used as a base by Britain to threaten her security, it appears that Sukarno was also concerned that Malaya's economic success could become a political problem for him as Indonesia's economy under his rule was failing.[41] Hence, he embarked on foreign policy adventurism in West Irian and against Malaya to distract domestic attention. The gradual deterioration in relations culminated with Indonesia's declaration of *Konfrontasi* which lasted from 1963-1966.[42] As a combination of military and diplomatic offensive aimed at undermining the newly formed Malaysian Federation it was a serious existential threat to her territorial integrity.

The literature on the *Konfrontasi* generally falls in two categories namely on the motives behind Indonesia's move and the attempts of the major powers to preserve their strategic interests in the region. However, there is a broader aspect that has not been very well examined – Indonesia's effort to internationalise the conflict by enlisting the support of the Afro-Asia bloc to pressure Malaysia to undo the newly formed federation. The lack of focus on this aspect lends the impression that it was not important. However,

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid. p.109.
[41] Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem," in *Malaysia: International Relations* (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Enterprise Sdn Bhd 1982).
[42] Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations : One Kin, Two Nations*. p.99.

nothing could be further from the truth. If Indonesia had been successful, it would have complicated the resolution of the *Konfrontasi*.

As indicated earlier, the first category of the literature examines Indonesia's rationale for the conflict. Mackie's study on the *Konfrontasi* stands out as the most detailed study from the perspective of the two protagonists.[43] He also touches on Sukarno's radicalism and personal style as factors that moved him to push for confrontation. Donald Hindley's *Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia: A Search for Motives"* and John Sutter's *Two Faces of Konfrontasi: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu* uncover Indonesia's motives in launching the *Konfrontasi*.[44] A variation of the search for motives is Greg Poulgrain's work entitled *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, 1945–1965*.[45] This work points to the complicity of the British in provoking Indonesia to declare confrontation in order preserve British imperial interests and also to ultimately weaken Sukarno in order to bring him down.

The second category of the literature focusses on the efforts of the western powers to protect their own interests by preventing the escalation of the conflict into a full-blown war. Pamela Sodhy's *Malaysia-America Relations during Indonesia's Confrontation against Malaysia, 1963-66* and Rohani's and Zulhilmi's study *The Role of the United States and The "Asian Solution" Approach in the Malaysia-Indonesia Confrontation (1963-1966)* shed light into the American policy towards the conflict.[46] John Subritzky's *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand diplomacy in the*

[43] J.A.C. Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966* (Published for the Australian Institute of International Affairs [by] Oxford University Press, 1974).
[44] Hindley, "Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia: A Search for Motives."; John O. Sutter, "Two Faces of Konfrontasi: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu," ibid.6, no. 10 (1966).
[45] Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965*
[46] Pamela Sodhy, "Malaysian-American Relations During Indonesia's Confrontation against Malaysia, 1963-66," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19, no. 1 (1988); Rohani Hj Ab Ghani and Zulhilmi Paidi, "The Role of the United States and the "Asian Solution" Approach in the Malaysia-Indonesia Confrontation (1963-1966)," *Journal of International Studies* 9(2013).

Malaysia-Indonesian Confrontation (1961-1965) as the title implies, focuses on the how these countries opposed Indonesia to preserve their strategic interests.[47] Pierre Van Der Eng's study complements these studies by explaining Australia's foreign policy in dealing with Indonesia.[48] By examining British diplomatic cables from Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Washington as well as other documents, Sue Thompson's study demonstrates how Britain played a "secret and self-effacing role" role in guiding the course of events in the final stages of the resolution of the conflict.[49] A lone exception to the studies on the western efforts is a study by James Llewelyn that examines Japan's diplomacy and in particular her mediation efforts to resolve the conflict in order to preserve her strategic interests in Southeast Asia.[50] Overall, these studies support the thesis that domestic factors namely political and economic weakness as well as Sukarno's predilection for ideological radicalism pushed Indonesia to declare *Konfrontasi.* This was also the view of the Malaysian government as can be discerned in Ghazali Shafie's speeches.[51]

As far as Israel was concerned, the works of renowned scholars on Israel's foreign policy such as Ze'ev Schiff, Itamar Rabinovitch and Eyal Zisser were very useful as they explained the complex underlying reasons that made Lebanon a key foreign policy and security concern for Israel.[52]

[47] J. Subritzky, *Confronting Sukarno: British, American, Australian and New Zealand Diplomacy in the Malaysian-Indonesian Confrontation, 1961–5*(Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2000).
[48] Pierre van der Eng, "Konfrontasi and Australia's Aid to Indonesia During the 1960s," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 55, no. 1 (2009).
[49] Sue Thompson, ""The Greatest Success of British Diplomacy in East Asia in Recent Years"? British Diplomacy and the Ending of Confrontation, 1965–1966," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25, no. 2 (2014).
[50] Llewelyn. James, "Japan's Diplomatic Response to Indonesia's Policy of Confronting Malaysia (Konfrontasi) 1963-1966," *Kobe University Law Review* 39(2004).
[51] Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem."; Ghazali Shafie, "Malaysia and the Asian Perspective " in *Malaysia: International Relations* (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Enterprise Sdn.Bhd., 1982); Ghazali Shafie, "The Pattern of Indonesian Aggression " in *Malaysia: International Relations* (Kuala Lumpur: Creative Entreprise Sdn.Bhd, 1982).
[52] James A. Reilly, "Israel in Lebanon, 1975-82," *MERIP Reports*, no. 108/109 (1982); Sheila Ryan, "Israel's Invasion of Lebanon: Background to the Crisis " *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11(1982); Ze'ev Schiff, "Lebanon: Motivations and Interests in Israel's Policy," *The Middle East Journal* (1984); Kirsten E Schulze, "Israeli Crisis Decision-Making in the Lebanon War: Group Madness or Individual Ambition?," *Israel Studies* 3, no. 2 (1998); Itamar Rabinovich, "Israel, Syria, and Lebanon," *International Journal* 45, no. 3 (1990); Brian R. Parkinson, "Israel's Lebanon War: Ariel Sharon and 'Operation Peace for Gallilee'," *Journal of Third World Studies* 24, no. 2 (2007); Camille Habib, "The Consequences of Israel's Invasion of Lebanon, 1982: Failure of a Success" (Ph.D., Dalhousie University (Canada), 1993); Eyal Zisser, "The Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese Triangle: The Renewed Struggle over Lebanon,"

In the early days after the birth of Israel, her Zionist leaders imagined forming an alliance of friendship with the Maronite Christians of Lebanon in the belief that they would be supportive as they were also a minority in the Muslim Arab environment. However, this hope died as Lebanon, constrained by her own Maronite-Sunni distrust had to adopt a neutral position rather than take sides with either one or the other in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Eventually, as the repeated conflict pushed wave after wave of displaced Palestinians into Lebanon, it exacerbated the strained inter-sectarian relations. Lebanon was thus forced to abandon her neutral stance and throw her support behind the Arab states to seek a resolution of the long festering conflict. Lebanon's antagonistic policy towards Israel was also influenced by regional players in particular, Syria, which exerted hegemonic control.

Given the impact of external conditions on Lebanon's foreign policy, Israel was perpetually torn between choosing an appropriate manner to deal with Lebanon. The Labour governments generally believed that collaborative peace is possible and desirable whereas the rightist governments were convinced that so long as Lebanon is susceptible to external influence it would not be possible to seek peace with her.[53] Therefore, it could be inferred that if the external conditions were right, Israel would prefer a stable relationship with Lebanon. In this regard, the key players who have influenced Lebanon's political behaviour are Ariel Sharon who, as defence minister was responsible for the Sabra Shatila in Beirut massacre in 1982. He also served as prime minister from 2001-2006. The other personality is Yitzhak Rabin who, as prime minister pushed Israel to explore peace with the Arab states during the Madrid and Oslo processes between 1992-1995.

Israel Affairs 15, no. 4 (2009); Charles D Freilich, "Israel in Lebanon—Getting It Wrong: The 1982 Invasion, 2000 Withdrawal, and 2006 War," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 3 (2012).

[53] William Harris, "Crisis in the Levant: Lebanon at Risk," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2007); Jonathan Levinson, "Rubber Match: A Third Lebanon War," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 23, no. 2 (2012).

Literature on the foreign policy of Lebanon

In conducting a literature survey of studies on Lebanon, it was observed that there are few works on the foreign policy of Lebanon.[54] There are two basic reasons for this. Firstly, Lebanese foreign policy is considered too small an area of specialisation for aspiring academics or researchers.[55] Hence, studies on Lebanon have tended to be broader to support theoretical perspectives such as conflict resolution or democracy studies, as the interests of the major powers, main funding partners and academia converge in these areas.[56] Linked to this reason is the belief among main funding partners that there is no need to study Lebanese foreign policy as an independent area of inquiry since her foreign policy is controlled by Syria and thus a careful examination of the Syrian foreign policy would suffice.[57] In spite of Syrian hegemony, the literature indicated that there were important gaps and opportunities for Lebanon to chart an independent course of action.

In this regard, the studies that have explored specific gaps include a study by Wilkins. In her study on the role of Hezbollah, a non-state actor, whom she refers to as a sub-state actor, she proved that the organisation had been instrumental in influencing Lebanon's foreign policy in response to the 2006 attack by Israel.[58] Another important piece of work was Najem's examination of Lebanon's foreign policy towards Europe. Although he does not refer to non-state actors, Najem argues that Lebanon's foreign policy was dictated by the effect of the interaction of individual sects within the Lebanese

[54] Among the works on Lebanon's foreign policy are by Nassif Hitti, *Foreign Policy of Lebanon: Lessons and Prospects for the Forgotten Dimension* (Centre for Lebanese studies, 1989); Tom Pierre Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society* (Oxon, UK and New York, USA: Routledge, 2012); "Lebanon and Europe: The Foreign Policy of a Penetrated State,," *The Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2003); Bassel F. Salloukh, "The Art of the Impossible: The Foreign Policy of Lebanon," *The Foreign policies of Arab States: The Challenge of globalization, New Revised Edition (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2009)* (2008); Bhagat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States: The Challenge of Globalization* (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

[55] Interview with Dr Imad Salamey, Lebanese American University, and author of The Government and Politics of Lebanon, 13 April 2014.

[56] Christopher M Blanchard, "Lebanon: Background and U.S. Policy" (2012).

[57] Ghassan Salame, "Is a Lebanese Foreign Policy Possible?," *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (1988).

[58] Henrietta Wilkins, *The Making of Lebanese Foreign Policy: Understanding the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*, Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Politics (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

political structure.[59] Other works that also provided useful insight into the constraints faced by Lebanon are Hitti's study written after Lebanon had fallen under Syria's hegemony just after the conclusion of the civil war in 1989 and Salloukh's work covering the period after the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon in 2005 as well as Salem's general reflection on Lebanon's foreign policy.[60] The general thrust of the scholarship of Lebanon's foreign policy allude to the preponderant role of the leaders in shaping Lebanon's foreign policy initiatives even within conditions of external hegemony imposed by Syria.

These studies also showed that domestic political conditions and structures influenced the conduct of foreign policy as well. The confessional political system was a source of constant friction and mutual antagonism as the Maronites and Sunnis sought to influence Lebanon's foreign policy to strengthen each other's' relative position. The Sunnis wanted Lebanon to conform to the on-going efforts by Syria and Egypt to forge a pan-Arab unity. The Maronites, mindful of the gradual loss of the political and economic clout of the Middle East Christian, wanted to align with France and the West to guarantee Lebanon as the final refuge of the Christians in the Middle East. In this regard, the works of Salibi, Harris, Traboulsi and Cobban weave a fascinating tale of how historical antipathies and fear of losing their identity in a larger polity drove each sect to impose its own worldview on Lebanon's foreign policy.[61]

In order to overcome this situation, the first president and prime minister of the Lebanese Republic agreed on an unwritten agreement known as the National Pact.[62]

[59] Najem, "Lebanon and Europe: The Foreign Policy of a Penetrated State,."
[60] Hitti, *Foreign Policy of Lebanon: Lessons and Prospects for the Forgotten Dimension* ; Salloukh, "The Art of the Impossible: The Foreign Policy of Lebanon."; Paul Salem, "Reflections on Lebanon's Foreign Policy," *Peace* (1994).
[61] See Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon*(London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965); William Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007); Helena Cobban, "The Making of Modern Lebanon," (1985).
[62] Ussama Makdisi, "Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon," *Middle East Report*, no. 200 (1996).

Under this pact, the Christians and Muslims agreed to mutually renounce their respective worldviews. Since it meant that Lebanon could not be overly pro-West or pro-Arab, Lebanon's freedom of action was limited to areas where it did not have to take a stand on questions of identity and culture. In this context, economic perspective of foreign policy was one area that had the support of all sects.

This point was further emphasised in the post-war literature by Najem and Baumann which gave an excellent in-depth account of how Rafik Hariri managed to exploit the gap between Syria's control and the influence of the hereditary leaders (*zu'ama*) to achieve his objective.[63] These studies revealed a complex relationship between Syria and Lebanon. While, on the one hand Syria jealously guarded her hegemonic control over Lebanon, her own domestic imperatives compelled her to appoint Hariri to head the government.[64] However, the restricted room for initiative in the political aspect of foreign policy pushed Hariri to focus on the economy to expand the foreign policy space. In this context, one of Hariri's priority was to invigorate Lebanon's diplomatic cooperation with other countries as a means of securing external resources in the form of trade and investment as well as bilateral assistance for the reconstruction of Beirut and the restoration of the economy.[65]

The post-Hariri literature also gave a clear insight into the challenges faced by the government.[66] The anticipation of charting an independent foreign policy following Syria's withdrawal in 2005 was dashed as Syria continued to call the shots through

[63] For an account of Lebanon's political economy and its criticisms see Tom Pierre Najem, "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction" (University of Durham, 1997); Hannes Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon" (SOAS, University of London, 2012).
[64] Gary C. Gambill and Ziad K. Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri," *Middle East Bulletin*, July 2001; Gary C Gambill, "Hariri's Dilemma," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 5, no. 11 (2003).
[65] Guilain Denoeux and Robert Springborg, "Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the Levant?," *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 2 (1998); Talal Nizameddin, "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation," *The Middle East Journal* 60, no. 1 (2006); Youssef Bassil, "Syrian Hegemony over Lebanon after the Lebanese Civil War," *Journal of Science (JOS)* 2, no. 3 (2012).
[66] Are J Knudsen and Michael Kerr, *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution* (Hurst London, 2012).

Hezbollah which became a part of the unity government formed after Hariri's assassination.[67] On the whole, the literature on Lebanon also confirmed the role of the external environment, leaders, domestic structures, and non-state actors in shaping Lebanese foreign policy.

The literature review therefore showed that the foreign policies of Malaysia and Lebanon are driven by their respective leaders who in turn act according to their perception on how the core national interests would be achieved. The studies also demonstrated that the foreign policy of either state is dynamic, and it responds to changes in the external environment, domestic political considerations as well as to the influence of non-state actors. For the sake of simplicity, this thesis proposes to place the individuals and non-state actors under one category of sub-state actors using the term employed by Wilkins in her investigation of Lebanon's foreign policy.[68] Based on the literature survey, an effort has been made to identify the factors that play a role in shaping the foreign policies of Malaysia and Lebanon as shown in Table 1.1.

As far as the factors that shape the foreign policies are concerned, they can be grouped in three main levels of analysis. As shown in the literature review, the international system plays an important role in influencing the foreign policies of Malaysia and Lebanon. For Malaysia the behaviour of its immediate Southeast neighbours such as Indonesia is crucial as is the role of other states such as China, Pakistan and the Arab states. Although Israel was initially not a crucial factor, in the post *Konfrontasi* period, the role of Israel increased in importance. The role of western powers such as the United States, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand in their attempt to maintain their strategic interests is also important. For Lebanon, the role of Israel,

[67] Augustus Richard Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," *The International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007).
[68] Wilkins, *The Making of Lebanese Foreign Policy: Understanding the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*.

Palestinian, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab neighbours as well as major powers such as United States, France and Great Britain are important in shaping its foreign policy. Domestic structures also influence the foreign policy of both states. These include government regulations, and policies as well as the role of agencies such as the foreign ministry, the presidency, the prime minister's department, and other departments. The third category of factors are known sub-state actors. Leaders are part of sub-state actors. In the case of Malaysia it includes key leaders such as the prime minister. In the case of Lebanon, it includes not only the president but also others such as the prime minister and the speaker as well as hereditary leaders called the *zuama.* The other group of sub-state actors are non-state actors. In this study, the main non-state actors are non-governmental organisations, the media, private sector as well as political parties.

Table 1.2 shows the strategic objectives of both countries during the different periods that corresponds to the chapters of this study. From 1963 – 1966, Malaysia's interest was to overcome the existential threat posed by the *Konfrontasi.* For Lebanon, this period corresponded to the government's efforts to redress the social imbalance by expanding trade and investment opportunities. From 1967-1975, Malaysia's interest was to expand her solidarity with the Arab states as a means of securing trade and investment for her own development needs. For Lebanon, it was a challenging period as she faced increasing external threat due to the guerrilla activities of the PLO fighters based in Lebanon, As such, for Lebanon preserving territorial integrity was of primordial importance in this period. During the civil war from 1975-1989 and until the formation of a stable government in 1994, Malaysia's interest was to continue to attract trade and investment from the Arab states. However, in Lebanon, the state itself was unable to exert any authority as the country was being ravaged by a devastating civil war. The post-civil war period from 1994-2003 was a period of hope. Both Malaysia and Lebanon

shared the hope and interest to see peace in the Middle East as well as mutually beneficial trade and investment cooperation. From 2003-2009, both Malaysia and Lebanon were preoccupied with priorities. Nevertheless, both states attempted to promote bilateral trade and investment although for a brief both states were preoccupied with dealing with Israel's belligerency towards Lebanon in the 2006 war.

Table 1.1: Factors that influence the foreign policies of Malaysia and Lebanon

Factors		**Malaysia**	**Lebanon**
Systemic Environment	International system	Immediate Southeast Asian states, China, Pakistan. Palestine, Israel, Syria and other Middle East and North Africa (MENA) states. Western powers such as the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand	Saudi Arabia, Israel, Syria and the other MENA states Western powers such as the US, UK, France and Russia
The State	Government agencies	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Other government agencies Government policies	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Presidency Parliament Prime Minister's office
Sub-State Actors	Leaders	Tunku Abdul Rahman Razak Hussein Hussein Onn Dr Mahathir Mohamad Abdullah Ahmad Badawi	Fuad Chehab Rafik Hariri Fouad Siniora *Zu'ama* Israeli and Syrian leaders
	Non-State Actors	Political parties Private sector Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) Media	Hezbollah NGOs Media Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO)

Table 1.2: Strategic objectives of Malaysia and Lebanon

Period	Malaysia	Lebanon
1963-1966 (*Konfrontasi*)	To overcome the existential threat posed by the *Konfrontasi.*	Expansion of trade and investment opportunities
1967-1975 (Post-*Konfrontasi*)	To emphasise her solidarity with the Arab states to seek external resources such as trade and investment and financial assistance	Expansion of trade and investment opportunities
1975-1989 (Civil war)	To emphasise her solidarity with the Arab states by taking a stronger anti-Israel stance. It served a new domestic need – regime maintenance	Survival of the state and preserving of territorial integrity
1994-2003 (Mahathir-Hariri's leadership)	To promote trade and investment opportunities To encourage the Middle East peace process by encouraging Israel to remain committed to peace	To promote trade and investment opportunities To encourage the Middle East peace process by encouraging Israel to remain committed to peace To restore Lebanon's independence by removing the rationale for Syria's domination of Lebanon
2003-2009 Abdullah and Siniora's leadership)	2003-2005 – domestic priorities override importance of bilateral relations 2006 Malaysia's strategic interest was to exert leadership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). 2007-2009 – domestic priorities override importance of bilateral relations	2003-2005 – domestic priorities override importance of bilateral relations To avert collapse of the government and to internationalise the Israeli aggression to seek external assistance for reconstruction 2007-2009 – domestic priorities override importance of bilateral relations

Conceptual Framework

This investigation assumes that states like human beings are "rational utility maximisers".[69] This term borrowed from economics is taken to mean that states, like human consumers, will try to get greatest value from the expenditure of the least amount of money. Therefore, cost effectiveness is an important consideration in the foreign policy of states. Cost here is interpreted widely to include not only economic and political costs for the state but also personal cost to the leaders. For small states, given their limited means, they will commit just enough resources to achieve the desired outcome. This explains their selectiveness in setting up embassies. It also explains why they emphasise on certain aspects of bilateral cooperation with some states and other aspects with other states.[70]

The literature review has amply demonstrated that as far as foreign policy is concerned, both Malaysia and Lebanon are "rational utility maximers" as their external behaviour is designed to meet their national interests. In this regard, the vast amount of resources poured by Malaysia into Lebanon cannot be explained in terms of its national interests. On the other hand, simply attributing it to the idiosyncrasy of the prime minister is also unsatisfactory. While idiosyncrasy may be relevant in explaining the foreign policy under a particular prime minister, it cannot explain policies that have been consistently pursued by successive prime ministers over four decades of Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon. As this is hardly possible, we can only conclude that explanations based on idiosyncrasies or psychological motivations suggest an incomplete understanding of the drivers of foreign policy behaviour at least in the context of

[69] This assumption is almost taken as axiomatic that most studies do not explicit state it. In this study it is important to mention this assumption to avoid the trap of simply relegating foreign policy behavior to idiosyncrasies or the whim and facies of the leader.
[70] These motivations are in fact, timeless. For an excellent discussion of how states have struggled to maximise their interests through diplomacy and how diplomacy itself has changed over the last 1000 years see J. Black, *A History of Diplomacy* (London: *Reaktion* Books, 2010).

Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon. Therefore, the importance of Lebanon in Malaysia's foreign policy must be due to some other rational reason.

Before explaining the methodology that will be employed, some of the terms that will keep recurring throughout this study are explained below.

Small States

As far as the literature is concerned there is no universally accepted definition of this deceptively simple sounding term. Some studies have used other terms such as micro states, secondary states, or middle powers.[71] Earlier works have attempted to produce a workable definition based on selected quantitative criteria using tangible attributes such land area, population and economic strength.[72] However, the quantitative approach has been criticised for the arbitrariness of the chosen criteria. The other drawback of this approach is the relativity dilemma.[73] How small is small? For example, Vietnam may be smaller than Indonesia, but it is larger than Malaysia. Similarly, Lebanon, although only a fraction of the size of Malaysia, is still larger than Oman or Bahrain. To overcome this problem, some scholars have attempted to combine these criteria into clusters.[74] Although it was definitely an improvement, this method also suffered from the problem of change. For example, the increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Lebanon and Singapore between 1993 and 1998 shifted both countries from the category of "small" to "medium". Therefore, it is more common for the more recent studies to eschew rigid

[71] See for example E. Dommen, "What Is a Microstate?," in *States, Microstates and Islands*, ed. E. and Hein Dommen, P.(Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1985).
[72] See for example João Antonio Brito, "Defining Country Size: A Descriptive Analysis of Small and Large States," *MPRA Paper* no. 66149 (2015), https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/66149/1/MPRA_paper_66149.pdf.
[73] D. Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations*(Clarendon P., 1967).
74 Tom Crowards, "Defining the Category of 'Small'states," *Journal of International Development* 14, no. 2 (2002).

definitions but rather take an intuitive approach by referring to their smallness in terms of overall capability.[75] This is also the approach taken in this study.

Weak state

According to the literature, Lebanon's vulnerability to conflict arises from her weakness as a state.[76] A weak state is understood to be one that is generally unable to fulfil its basic functions which include providing public goods such as civil administration, development, and security throughout its territory. Different studies have used different variations or subdivisions of indicators of state weakness.[77] However, in general there are four indicators of state weakness namely, the lack of national identity and social cohesion; lack of internal legitimacy among some of its citizens; absence of strong institution; and vulnerability to external threat.[78] Hence, the weak state typically exhibits one or more of the following traits: uneven development, high debt, corruption, massive inequality, low taxation rate and low growth rate.[79] Weak states are also prone to internal violence, coups and other forms of political instability. On the other hand, from the definition we can see that Malaysia is not a weak state.

Sub-state actors and Non-state actors

Non-state actor is a term that includes any actor in international relations that is not a state. There is no one encompassing definition that cover non-state actors. It includes individuals as well as entities.[80] The latter includes non-governmental

[75] Giorgi Gvalia et al., "Thinking Outside the Bloc: Explaining the Foreign Policies of Small States," *Security Studies* 22, no. 1 (2013).
[76] Boaz Atzili, "State Weakness and "Vacuum of Power" in Lebanon," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 8 (2010).
[77] Mattias Ottervik, "Conceptualizing and Measuring State Capacity," in *QoG Working Paper Series* (University of Gothenburg, 2013).
[78] Robert I Rotberg, "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," *State failure and state weakness in a time of terror* (2003).
[79] Susan E Rice and Stewart Patrick, *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* (Global Economy and Development, Brookings Institution, 2008).
[80] Markus Wagner, "Non-State Actors," *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law,*(2009), https://ssrn.com/abstract=2661832.

organisations, business entities, public influence formers such as the media and lobby groups, as well as transnational terrorist or criminal groups. For the purpose of this study, the non-state actors are those that play a role in influencing bilateral relations. These include NGOs, media, volunteer groups and political parties. As mentioned earlier, individuals are also part of non-state actors. This distinction is useful particularly in the context of Lebanon where multiple leaders such as the president, prime minister and the speaker of the parliament do shape state decisions.[81] Apart from these leaders with formal links to the state, hereditary leaders known as the *zu'ama* also play an important role in influencing official decisions. Hence, for the purpose of a common definitional purpose to apply to both Malaysia and Lebanon, the term sub-state actors include individuals as well as entities that have an influence over government decisions.

Confessionalism and Sectarianism

Confessionalism is a form of consociational political system. Both Lebanon and Malaysia are considered to be consociational democracies. A main feature of consociationalism is power sharing in some form of a grand decision-making coalition among the elites of the various parties.[82] In the Lebanese consociational system, more commonly known as confessionalism, all cabinet portfolios, senior posts in the civil service, military and police are divided in a 50:50 ratio among Christians and Muslims. Sometimes the Lebanese society is described as sectarian. This simply denotes that political life is organised along religious lines.

[81] Wilkins, *The Making of Lebanese Foreign Policy: Understanding the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*.
[82] Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World politics* 21, no. 02 (1969); "Typologies of Democratic Systems," *Comparative political studies* 1, no. 1 (1968).

Clientelism and *zu'ama*

Clientelism refers to a personalized nature of relationship between the followers and leaders.[83] In Lebanon, clientelism is linked to and strengthened by the sectarian nature of the state. Some scholars also refer to it as political familism.[84] This refers to the deployment of family institutions by citizens to intermediate with the state for their needs. Political familism requires the state and citizens to recognise the centrality of the family to social and political life.[85] In the case of Lebanon, political familism is linked to individual leaders from influential families referred to as the *zu'ama* (singular - *zaim*).[86] More will be said about the origins of the *zu'ama* in Chapter 2. Although not all the *zu'ama* currently hold official positions, quite often they still continue to wield influence within their sects. Their role may be sought for even simple matters such as applying for scholarships and other government services. The current *zu'ama* who are descendants of feudal families include Karami and Salam (Sunni), Jumblatt and Arslan (Druze), Frangiyeh, Muawad and Gemayel (Maronite). Today the term also applies to other individuals who acquired power through their role as warlords in the civil war. These included individuals such as the speaker of the parliament, Nabih Berri, Michel Aoun, (elected president in 2016), and Samir Geagea, present head of the Lebanese Forces. The fourth and the latest class of *zu'ama* were individuals who came in with external support such as Rafik Hariri. Prior to independence the *zu'ama* came from autocratic landowning families. However, since independence the newly emerging wealthy business families also managed to enter this group as influential leaders. The civil war added a third class of *zu'ama*, the warlords or the head of the militias. Among the individuals who acquired

[83] Ahmed Hamzeh, "Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends," Middle Eastern Studies 37, no. 3 (2001).
[84] Suad Joseph, "Political Familism in Lebanon," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 636, no. 1 (2011).
[85] Ibid.
[86] *Zu'ama* (plural for *zaim*) refers to political elites. As discussed in Chapter 1, the *zu'ama* were traditionally came from hereditary political leaders and later from successful businessmen. During the war, the militia warlords became the new *zu'ama*. For a discussion see Arnold Hottinger, "Zu'ama and Parties in the Lebanese Crisis of 1958," *Middle East Journal* 15, no. 2 Spring 1961 (1961); Hamzeh, "Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends."

the status of *zu'ama* through business include the former prime minister Rafik Hariri about whom much will be said in Chapter 4.

Methodology

This academic exercise employs qualitative analysis. Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon is held as the unit of analysis across the entire period of study to identify the driver of this relations. In terms of academic discipline, this research comes under international history. Within the broad discipline of international history, this study focuses on the historiography of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Lebanon. This is the method that will be employed to explain the empirical findings through the examination of various sources, narrative of the events and motives of Malaysia and Lebanon in the establishment and development of bilateral relations.

This research also makes a unique contribution to the scholarship on Malaysian foreign policy as it uses previously unavailable information in the files of the Malaysian ministry of foreign affairs covering the period 1957-1967 which were transferred to the national archives in 2015-2016. Apart from the subject files at the ministry, the study also consulted other official material such as speeches, press releases and other documents published in the official journal of the foreign ministry. In addition, first-hand accounts of individuals such as Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Omar Jundi, Malaysia's honorary consul general who was appointed in 1965, former ambassadors, and selected individuals from relevant NGOs as well as the author's own notes particularly during meetings with Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Badawi helped fill the gap in the data gleaned from the Malaysian primary sources.

Unfortunately, there were gaps in the Lebanese primary sources as much of the earlier documents had been destroyed in the civil war which lasted from 1975-1989.[87] Information gathered from interviews with former Lebanese prime ministers such as Fouad Siniora, and other important personalities helped fill some of these gaps. In addition, discussions with prominent experts on Lebanon such as Nicholas Blanford, Robert Fisk, Sarkis Naoum (*Al Nahar*), Michael Young (*The Lebanese Daily Star*), and Martin Chulov (*The Guardian*) also served to strengthen the author's understanding of Lebanese historical and contemporary perspectives.

A word of caution ought to be made at this point. In a country riven by mutual suspicions and biases, it is very common to find members of one particular community holding very strong and biased views about the others. Within this tapestry of mutual suspicions and recriminations, are the Palestinian refugees who suffer a general bias from the Lebanese as a whole. Therefore, care was taken to ensure that the interviewees represented a cross-section of the confessional groups of Lebanon to avoid falling into the trap of biased views. For the same reason, Palestinian views were also sought by interviewing researchers at the Institute for Palestine Studies and Palestinian NGOs such as the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT).[88]

Primary data was supplemented with secondary data by consulting academic journals, books, periodicals, magazines as well as studies or reports published by Lebanese think tanks. Another think tank is the Institute for Palestinian Studies. However, as the name implies this think tank is pro-Palestinian. Consulting this source helped minimise possible anti-Palestinian bias particularly from Lebanese sources. Apart

[87] Other researchers have also encountered similar problems. See for example David C. Gordon, *Republic of Lebanon: A Nation in Jeopardy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); Asher Kaufman, *Reviving Phoenicia: The Search for Identity in Lebanon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

[88] There is not much sympathy for the Palestinians among the Lebanese be it at the official or the popular level. The Lebanese see themselves as having paid the highest price for the Palestinian cause. From their experience, the perceive the Palestinians as an economic threat as well to their already fragile socio-political makeup. See Simon Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Opposition to Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon," *International Migration Review* 38, no. 2 (2004).

from Lebanese think tanks other bodies such as the United States Congressional Research Service and the Carnegie Middle East Centre were also important sources of background information. In addition, the archives of leading newspapers such as *Al Nahar, Al Akhbar* and *Al Liwaa* and news organizations such as the *BERNAMA, BBC, Al Jazeera,* as well as Malaysian newspapers and magazines were also perused.

At this point, a note on the language used in Lebanon is necessary. As a former part of the French Mandate, the French language used to be the official language in Lebanon prior to independence. However, since independence in 1943 all official records have been in Arabic. The use of the Arabic language as the primary language was also strengthened as part of a social contract known as the National Pact which is explained in greater detail in the second chapter. Under the National Pact, all religious sects agreed to accept Lebanon as an Arabic state which meant that the Arabic language would also be the language of the government. Therefore, the Arabic language has been used as the sole language of the government. Nevertheless, French is still important particularly in referring to sources before and immediately after independence. The discussions on the process and challenges of drafting the Lebanese confessional constitution are among the issue that have been extensively in French sources. From these sources one learns that the main dilemma for the French was that a confessional constitution went against the French model which was a secular state. However, for strategic reasons the French drafters agreed to a confessional constitution. In addition, the French language was also important as there are still senior politicians, academics and businesspeople who have been trained in French.

As a fluent French-speaking foreign service officer, the author has been able to conduct a proper survey of the material in French. Some interviews were conducted in

French particularly with those individuals who are bilingual in Arabic and French only or were unable to express themselves well in English. Likewise, all available material in French have been perused and the relevant ones cited, particularly those that focussed on the period during the Mandate and immediately after independence. Secondary data in the form of articles and books have also been consulted and relevant ones have been cited. As for the Arabic sources, they have been translated with the services of certified translators and cited under their translated titles.

Since as indicated earlier the foreign policies of Malaysia and Lebanon are influenced by factors arising out of the external environment, domestic structures and sub-state actors, it is assumed that the same would also be instrumental in shaping and influencing bilateral relations. Hence, in collecting the relevant data, close attention is paid to take into account the developments in the international system, the domestic policies and roles of government agencies as well as the role of leaders and non-state actors.

In terms of scope, this study covers the period from the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1963 until 2009 when Tun Abdullah Badawi stepped down as prime minister of Malaysia. A sufficiently lengthy time frame was chosen spanning the administrations of five prime ministers so as to minimise the risk of over amplifying personal idiosyncrasies and tendencies of any one prime minister that could result if a shorter time period was chosen.

A major challenge in understanding the foreign policy of Front Line States is the involvement of multiple players, both regional and international. This is also the case with Lebanon where the regional powers such as Egypt, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria and

Turkey, as well as international players such as Italy, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States have at one time or the other influenced the foreign policy of Lebanon. However, in this study only the roles of Syria and Israel will be taken into account. An exception is made in the case of both these states because their strategic ambitions to dominate Lebanon and to limit each other's influence over the state have more or less continually influenced the content and character of Lebanon's external behaviour.

Organisation of Study

This thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter one provides an overall statement of the problem, the objectives of study and the research questions that will be answered. This chapter explains the scope and limitations as well as the methodology that will be used.

The motives for the establishment of diplomatic relations will be explored in the second chapter. The chapter also tries to present a picture of the state of Malaya-Lebanon relations prior to the mutual diplomatic recognition. Subsequently, it covers the period beginning with establishment of diplomatic relations in 1963 until the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975.

This chapter covers the entire duration of the civil war from 1975-1989. Bilateral relations, if any, during this period is discussed in this chapter. The role of public opinion with regards to the Israeli aggression of Lebanon and the plight of the Palestinians in Lebanon and how it catalysed civil society activism and volunteerism among Malaysians is discussed.

The resumption of bilateral relations following the ending of the civil war will be explored in chapter 4. This chapter begins with the signing of the Taif agreement in 1989 and ends with the resignation of Mahathir as prime minister in 2003. This chapter explores how the aggressive foreign and trade policies pursued under the leadership of Mahathir and Hariri, elevated bilateral relations to a much higher plane. This chapter also covers the experiences of the Malaysian private sector in trying to penetrate the Lebanese market. Attention is paid to the close relationship between Mahathir and Hariri and how their similar perception towards the external environment played a role in the expanding relations.

Post-Mahathir years is the focus of the fifth chapter. During this period, Malaysia and Lebanon are led by new leaders namely Abdullah Badawi and Fouad Siniora. It looks at the various initiatives pursued by both countries between 2003 and 2009. A summary of the empirical findings and theoretical contributions of the study constitutes the sixth and final chapter.

CHAPTER 2: CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS: 1963-1975

"You have your ideology and I have mine"

Khalil Gibran

Introduction

The literature review discussed in the previous chapter indicated that the foreign policies of Malaysia and Lebanon can be explained using the three levels of analysis. To recall the three levels are namely the systemic environment, the nature of the state and the role of sub-state actors. The systemic environment refers to the international system of inter-state relations. The nature of the state refers to the characteristics of the state, its domestic policies, decision-making process, the role of interest groups and other players who play a role in influencing the domestic political agenda. It was also suggested that the diplomatic campaign against Malaysia by Indonesia during the *Konfontasi* prompted the elevation of Malaysia's move to enhance diplomatic relations with Lebanon.

The main aim of this chapter therefore is to explain the factors that led Malaysia and Lebanon to establish formal diplomatic ties in 1963. The chapter also aims to explain the development of bilateral relations from the point of establishment of diplomatic relations until the onset of the civil war in Lebanon in 1975 when bilateral relations had to be temporarily suspended.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section looks at the origin of sectarianism in Lebanon. A general comprehension of the subject is essential to our understanding of the overall aim of this chapter because the sectarian nature of the state imposed limits on its foreign policy orientation. The subsequent section will examine

how the ancient sectarian divide of the Lebanese society impinged upon the foreign policy orientation of the modern state of Lebanon. The third section seeks to uncover any links or ties between Malaysia and Lebanon prior the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1963. The fourth section will discuss the *Konfrontasi*. It will particularly focus on Indonesia's rationale and Malaysia's responses. The fifth section will touch on the events that led to the mutual diplomatic recognition between the two countries while the sixth will focus on how bilateral relations served as a means for Malaysia to extricate herself from diplomatic isolation in the Middle East. The final section will discuss the findings.

Origins of sectarianism in Lebanon

Although modern Lebanon as we know it today only came into existence on 1 September 1920, its political system evolved over the centuries in a much smaller region known as Mount Lebanon as shown in Figure 2.1 below.

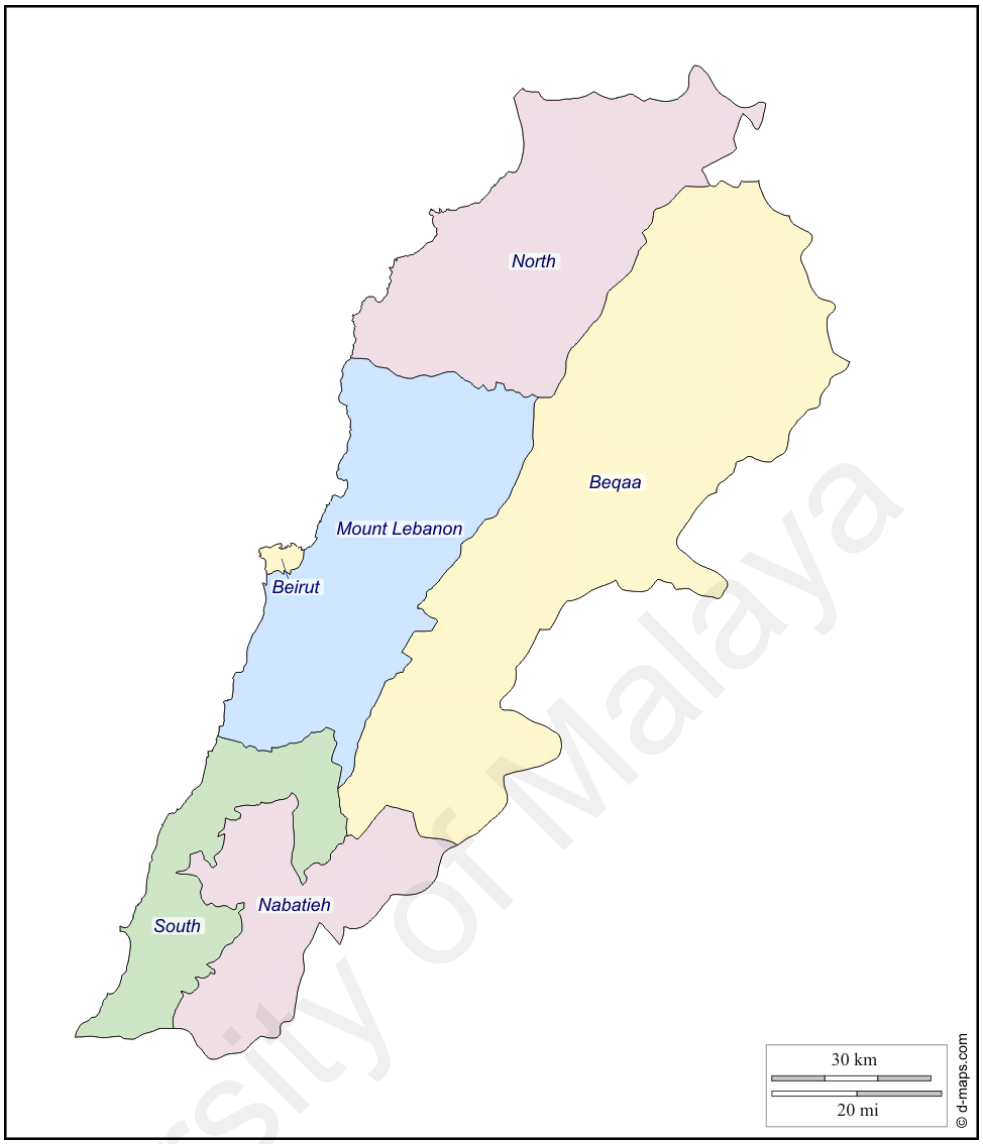

Figure 2.1: Modern Lebanon and Mount Lebanon

Source: http://www.d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=54209&lang=en

Sectarianism can be traced back to the practice of allowing self-governance under Ummayad Caliphate. The Caliphate's main concern was to expand its territory and consolidate its power over its main competitors, the Shiites. The non-Muslims were allowed to conduct their own affairs with the payment of the *jizya* or a poll tax.[1] It was a smart move to conserve resources by not provoking their enmity. This was the practice

[1] Granting autonomy to the non-Muslims to handle their affairs prevented conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims and enabled economic functions to proceed. In fact, the Ummayad caliphate is credited for having brought in the Jews to populate the cities to jumpstart the economy. See Phillip K. Hitti, *Lebanon in History: From the Earliest Times to the Present* (London and New York: Macmillan & Co, 1957).

adopted by the subsequent Caliphates including the Ottomans. As the Caliphate now covered vast areas, it was necessary to find a way to rule these territories under the Shariah rule while ensuring that the non-Muslims were exempted from it. Hence, the Ottomans legislated each religious sect as a millet that were administered according to their own religious laws and customs.[2] An extended millet system was even recognized for all other Europeans residing in the land.[3] However, the Druze and the Shiites, who were considered as apostates under the earlier caliphates were not recognised as separate millets and were in fact persecuted by the Ottomans for their beliefs.

This system of governance hardened into political sectarianism as a result of European intervention. Although the Europeans have been present in the Levant since the Crusades, it was under the Ottomans that they acquired political recognition through the Ottoman capitulation. Unlike a bilateral treaty which is negotiated by two parties, the capitulation was a unilateral treaty. France became the first European power to be granted an Ottoman capitulation in 1535. The capitulation recognised France as the protector of the Maronites who owed allegiance to the Roman Catholic church.[4] The capitulation granted France certain diplomatic immunities and consular rights to regulate the affairs of other Christians. Additionally, France was also granted distinct trading advantages such as freedom to trade within the Ottoman territory by payment of the same taxes as locals. In practice, this translated into a monopoly over European trade as all

[2] For a discussion of the millet system see Kamel S. Abu Jaber, "The Millet System in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," *The Muslim World* 57, no. 3 (1967); Memet Yetişgin, "The Ottoman Way of Governing Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Religious Communities: Osmanlının Çoklu Etnik Ve Dini Toplumları Yönetme Metodu," *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi OTAM* 21, no. 21 (2007).

[3] As the Crusades ended in failure, the Christians decided to change their strategy on converting the Muslims to Christianity by persuasion and example rather than by force. Therefore, various Christian orders established churches, monasteries and other religious missions. In addition, there were traders and other Europeans of Crusader origins who had settled in the land. Hitti notes that present day Maronite names suggest European Crusader origins such Salibi (Crusader), Franjiyah (Frankish), Bardawil (Baldwin), Duryan (Comte d Órient). See Hitti, *Lebanon in History: From the Earliest Times to the Present*

[4] Although it is generally believed that the practice of granting capitulation was driven by the need to manage the juridical and consular issues of the foreign Christians residing in the land, it was also a diplomatic instrument to achieve mutual strategic and commercial interests of the French and the Ottomans which intersected in the 16th Century. The French wanted to break the trade dominance of Venice in the Mediterranean area and to check the Hapsburgs advance in Eastern Europe. The French found in the Ottomans the perfect ally who also needed a reliable ally to break the control over maritime trade held by the maritime powers such the Hapsburgs, Venice, Genoa, Spain and Portugal in order to advance its domination of Europe. See Kerem Nisancioglu, "The Ottoman Origins of Capitalism: Uneven and Combined Development and Eurocentrism," *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 02 (2014); De Lamar Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (1985).

European states wishing to trade with the Ottoman empire had to sail their vessels under the French flag to enjoy trade benefits.[5]

The extensive advantages gained by France prompted other European powers to seek their own capitulations as well by offering to regulate the affairs of other Christian denominations.[6] Through these capitulations, the European powers were able to set up their own trading houses, places of worship and other institutions to protect the sects that they claimed to protect.[7]

Another factor that contributed to the development of political sectarianism was the manner in which the Ottomans ruled the land. The Ottomans, being a foreign power, ruled by delegated power. They designated Mount Lebanon as an Emirate and appointed a powerful feudal leader as the 'Emir" whose main function was to collect taxes and supply conscripts for the Ottoman army. In return, the Emir was free to raise other form of taxes for personal use and enjoyed privileges such as exemption from duties and taxes and immunity from legal action. In order to keep control over the numerous feudal lords, the Emir parceled out tax collection rights to them in their own districts. As these appointments were hereditary, it gave rise to a whole range of influential noble families who emerged as the *zu'ama*. For all intents and purposes, the *zu'ama* were the authority in the respective districts while the Emir was the paramount leader.

The first Emirs of Mount Lebanon were the Druze as they were the majority in Mount Lebanon in the 16th century.[8] Although the Druze were not a recognised as a

[5] Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*(New York: Harper Perennial 2002). p.204.
[6] The other European powers who also gained their own capitulation were Austria and Italy (as protectors of the various Catholic denominations), Russia (protector of the Greek Orthodox), Britain (protector of the Protestants, Druze and Jews).
[7] A.N. Longva, "From the Dhimma to the Capitulations: Memory and Experience of Protection in Lebanon," in *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation*, ed. A.N. Longva and A.S. Roald(Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).
[8] For a description of the Druze community see Sami Makarem, "The Druze Faith," in *The Druze: Realities and Perceptions*, ed. Kamal Salibi (London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2005).

separate millet, the Ottomans nevertheless appointed a Druze as Emir in return for their help in the conquest of Mount Lebanon. However, personal ambition of the Emirs and the lack of their own source of political power drove the Druze to try to break free from the Ottomans. To gain financial autonomy, silk cultivation was introduced in Mount Lebanon. The Maronites who had acquired silk cultivation skills from the Crusaders were encouraged to settle in Mount Lebanon to provide skilled labour.[9] The lure of prosperity and a relatively liberal social environment under the Druze as compared to life under the strict millet system, attracted large numbers of Maronites to settle in Mount Lebanon until they ultimately displaced the Druze as the largest sect.[10] At the apex of their power, the Druze began to threaten the established political order by attempting to expand their territory in to Ottoman Syria.[11] The Ottomans militarily removed the Druze Emir and eventually transferred power to another dominant family, the Shihabs.[12]

The Shihabs who were originally Sunni Muslims, converted to Maronitism for political expediency as the Maronites were the dominant sect in Mount Lebanon. In this way power shifted to the Maronites.[13] Under subsequent Maronite Emirs, the development gap between the sects grew more pronounced. The higher literacy among the Maronites who acquired basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills during the Sunday classes provided by the Church, placed them in a better position to be employed as clerks and other positions in the households of the noble families. Their higher income and links within the ruling hierarchy also enabled them to acquire property. Together with the

[9] The coastal areas of Lebanon had already been known for silk cultivation since the Roman rule. See Hitti, *Lebanon in History: From the Earliest Times to the Present* p.321.Joshua Prawer, *Crusader Institutions*, Oxford University Press Academic Monograph Reprints Series (Clarendon Press, 1980).
[10] Cobban, "The Making of Modern Lebanon."
[11] The Emir in question was Fakhr-al-Din. To strengthen his position against the Ottomans he secretly formed an alliance with the Grand Duchy of Tuscany who hoped to get a foothold in the Ottoman Syria to dominate the trade route. However, in the end Tuscany did not come to his aid. The Ottomans defeated Fakhr al Din and had him, and his sons executed. See William Harris, "Druze Ascent, 1291-1633 " in *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[12] *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*
[13] Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon*. pp.13-14.

Church which was already a major landowner with its network of monasteries and convents, most of the lands in Mount Lebanon thus came into Christian ownership.[14]

The displacement of Druze power and prestige by the Maronites created distrust and sectarian strife between the Maronites and Druze thus rendering the situation in Mount Lebanon extremely unstable.[15] This is not to suggest that the conflict was only between the Druze and the Maronites. Conflict also involved the Shiites and other sects that were also settled in enclaves in the Mount Lebanon. In fact, life in mediaeval Lebanon was a Hobbesian one - "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short".[16]

However, sectarian conflict drew in the European powers, who as we had seen earlier, had established themselves as *de facto* protectors of the various sects under the capitulation system. The main interest of the European intervention was to use the sectarian conflict as an excuse to protect their own interests.[17] Eventually, under pressure from the Europeans, the Ottoman authority was forced to allow self-government to Mount Lebanon with power being shared on a sectarian basis vested in elected councillors representing the various sects. Under European intervention, the power-sharing model underwent several transformations.

However, with the advent of first world war and unbeknownst to the Ottomans, whose power was in decline, France and Britain had negotiated a secret agreement known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement to carve out the Ottoman Arab provinces among

[14] By some accounts the Church alone owned a third of all the land in Mount Lebanon by mid-19th century.
[15] Joseph Abou Nohra, "L'evolution Du Systeme Politique Libanais Dans Le Context Des Conflits Regionaux Et Locaux (1840-1864)," in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, ed. Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar-Mills(London: IB Tauris, 1988).
[16] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2011).
[17] One good example is the Anglo-French rivalry for trade dominance. See for example see A.N. Longva, "From the Dhimma to the Capitulations: Memory and Experience of Protection in Lebanon."; John P. Spagnolo, *France & Ottoman Lebanon: 1861-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977).

themselves. In this way, Syria (and Mount Lebanon) came under the French Mandate control.[18]

The preceding lengthy discussion paints a picture of how sectarianism evolved with the ups and downs of the fortunes of the main sects. Ironically, the very methods employed by the Muslim caliphates to preserve Sunni dominance worked in the favour of the Maronites. Under the French rule, the Maronites further advanced socio-economically. As the prospects for independence emerged, the Maronites looked forward to the ultimate prize- an independent Christian state under Maronite control.

Impact of sectarianism on the foreign policy of modern Lebanon

Within the context of emancipation from colonialism, Maronite nationalists and influential business individuals pushed France to grant autonomy. In order to have access to maritime trade, they demanded Beirut and other port cities to be incorporated into the new state called Greater Lebanon.[19] It was a controversial idea. The Sunnis objected for it meant that they would be relegated to the status of a minority in a Maronite-dominated state after having enjoyed a dominant status for centuries under Ottoman rule with dominating role over trade and politics.[20] However, the proposal found support of the French as it did not conflict with their overall strategy of maintaining control over the region. Although Syria too opposed the proposal because it meant a reduction of its

[18] See David Hunter Miller, "The Origin of the Mandates System," *Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (1928), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1928-01-01/origin-mandates-system.
[19] For a discussion of the idea behind Greater Lebanon, see Carol Hakim, *The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea: 1840–1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ of California Press, 2013); Ussama Makdisi, "After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 04 (2002). Fadia Kiwan, "La Perception Du Grand-Liban Chez Les Maronites Dan La Période Du Mandat," in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict*, ed. N. Shehadi, D. Haffar-Mills, and Centre for Lebanese Studies (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988).
[20] For a discussion of the opposition of the Arab nationalists to Greater Lebanon see Raghid Solh, "The Attitude of the Arab Nationalists Towards Greater Lebanon During the 1930s," in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus* ed. Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (London: IB Tauris, 1988); Fadia Kiwan, "La Perception Du Grand-Liban Chez Les Maronites Dan La Période Du Mandat," in *Lebanon: A History of Conflict*, ed. N. Shehadi, D. Haffar-Mills, and Centre for Lebanese Studies (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988).

territory, the Syrian opposition did not matter for she was still a part of the French mandate.

The French overcame the deadlock by shrewdly securing the support of the Shiites and the Druze. The Shiites accepted the plan after being promised by the French to recognise Shiism as a separate religious sect. This offer was a major social advancement for the Shiites as it empowered them socially. With official recognition, they were finally able to redress the centuries of indignity under Sunni rule.[21]

For the Druze, their consolation was the state of Greater Lebanon offered them a guaranteed political role under the Constitution.[22] Finally, on 1 September 1920 France announced the creation of Greater Lebanon by incorporating a much larger piece of Syrian territory comprising the coastal cities of Beirut and Saida, the Akkar plain, the Beqaa Valley and Jabal Amil in the south into Mount Lebanon as shown in Figure 2.1.

The new state was given a constitution with the familiar sectarian basis of power-sharing.[23] Based on a 1932 census, the confessional political system allocated parliament representation in a ratio of 6:5 in favour of the Christians.[24] In addition, the executive Presidency with extensive powers was reserved for the Maronites. Although the Maronites managed to get a state of their own, ironically, they now found themselves confronted with a greater challenge with a multiplicity of confessional groups.[25]

[21] With the French offer, it gave the Shiites the right to administer their affairs in accordance with the Jaafari School of jurisprudence, the main school followed by the Twelver Shiites. See Rodger Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics* (London and New York: I.B Tauris, 2011).
[22] Jacques Frémeaux, "Hokayem (Antoine), La Genèse De La Constitution Libanaise De 1926. Le Contexte Du Mandat Français, Les Projets Préliminaires, Les Auteurs, Le Texte Final," *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire* (1998).
[23] For a detailed discussion of the origins of the confessional political system and France's role in incorporating it into the Lebanese constitution please see Jacques Couland, "L'exception Libanaise: Confessionnalisme Et Laïcité," *La Pensée* 342(2005).
[24] This was the first and only official population census carried out in Lebanon. For a discussion, see Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999).
[25] The constitution recognises 18 religious sects divided into 12 Christian sects, 5 Muslim sects and one Jewish sect namely Maronites (allied with the Roman Catholic Church but has its own patriarch and religious customs), Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians), Armenian Catholics, Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites), Syrian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Copts, Evangelical Christians (including Protestant groups such as Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists), Chaldean Catholics, Assyrians (Nestorians), Sunni, Shiites (Twelvers), Ismailis (Seveners Shiites), Druze, Alawites, and Jewish. See International

Externally, this new state found itself with an unhappy neighbour, Syria, for the loss of its territory to the new artificial creation known as Lebanon. Hence, modern Lebanon at its birth was condemned to be a weak state as domestic constraints and external environment did not allow it to exercise full authority over its territory.

In the new state, the Maronites found themselves pitted against a much larger non-Muslim population as the Maronite population had become diluted from 58% in Mount Lebanon to only about 33% in Greater Lebanon. At the same time, the relative proportion of the Sunnis expanded from just 3.4% in Mount Lebanon to about a fifth of the population in the new state (20.5%). The Shiite population too increased from 5.8% in Mount Lebanon to about 17.2% in Greater Lebanon. So, while the Maronites were still in the majority they had to manage the greater political challenge due to a much larger Muslim population.[26] Over time, the new state became unstable as the Muslims chafed under Maronite dominance. Anxious to preserve their political dominance, the Maronites pushed Lebanon to align with France. This was opposed by the Muslims who countered by agitating for alignment with the Arabs.

Political tension between the Maronites and the Muslims was also driven by discontent arising out of their unequal socio-economic development. The Maronites, who generally had better access to education and economic opportunities as explained earlier, naturally were the best off in terms of wealth and quality of life. Apart from Maronite dominance, the government was essentially under the control of a few elite families. One scholar describes the Lebanese economy after independence as a 'consortium' controlled by 30 Christian families and one Druze family who were part of the ancient Mount

Business Publications, *Lebanon: Country Study Guide*, vol. 1 Strategic Information and Developments(International Business Publications USA, 2012).

[26] Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011* p.185.

Lebanon nobility that were now the new *zu'ama*. These families dominated banks, commercial imports, construction as well as trade. They also held agency rights to import many European and Western products. Therefore, the elites had an interest to preserve Lebanon as a free market with a low tax base and minimum regulations and strong currency.

Hence, the economic interests of these families pushed the government to adopt a *laissez faire* policy that favoured the rich and neglected the poor. [27] This economic orientation and low tax base in turn undermined the state's ability to public goods like schools and employment opportunities. Overall these policies led to unprecedented economic disparity not only between the rich and the poor but also along sectarian lines that fed into a constantly festering social and political unrest where the Muslims felt that they were being discriminated by the Maronites. Hence, at the height of prosperity in the 1950s Lebanon, which was known as "Paris of the Orient", was a deeply unequal society.

As the sectarian tensions threatened to tear the country apart, the first President of Lebanon Bechara al Khouri and his Sunni Prime Minister Riad al-Solh came to an informal understanding to create a more stable inter-sectarian relationship. This verbal agreement which was never codified into law came to be known as the National Pact.[28] The National Pact acted as a safety valve to relieve the sectarian tensions by allowing each sect to "gain" something by giving up something in return. [29]

[27] Fawwaz Traboulsi, "Beirut, Capital of Trade and Culture (1820-1918)," in *A History of Modern Lebanon*(London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007); Hottinger, "Zu'ama and Parties in the Lebanese Crisis of 1958."; Hamzeh, "Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends."
[28] Sami Adeeb Ofeish, "Sectarianism and Change in Lebanon: 1843-1975" (University of Southern California, 1996).
[29] For an excellent discussion on the French perspective of Lebanese life during the French Mandate and the making of the National Pact see Thibaut Jaulin, "Démographie Et Politique Au Liban Sous Le Mandat. Les Émigrés, Les Ratios Confessionnels Et La Fabrique Du Pacte National," *Histoire & mesure* 24, no. XXIV-1 (2009).

Under the National Pact both the Christians and Muslims agreed to adhere to the power-sharing formula based on the 1932 census and in return agreed to give up pursuing their own worldviews. The Maronites therefore agreed to give up their pro-west orientation and accept that Lebanon was part of the Arab world while the Muslims agreed to accept Lebanon's independence and give up their support for Pan-Arabism.[30] This also meant that Lebanon had to adopt a neutral foreign policy so that neither the Maronites nor the Sunni Muslims felt alienated or pushed for any policies that would upset the other.[31] Given the dominance of economic interest among the members of the government, an emphasis on economic interests naturally became a primary foreign policy priority for the state.

However, Lebanon found herself held hostage to regional developments particularly the rise of Arab nationalism and creation of Israel. Given the weak nature of the state and its position as a Front-Line state in the Arab-Israeli conflict put strains on the state as thousands of Palestinians who were displaced in the conflict fled to Lebanon. The arrival of large numbers Muslim Palestinians exacerbated the political tensions between the Maronites and the Sunni Muslims because the Maronites feared that their presence would further erode their dominance. In addition, economic activity in large parts of Beirut and the southern part of the country suffered due to the arrival of these refugees.

Lebanon's first major foreign policy crisis came with the Suez crisis. As Britain and France colluded with Israel to launch military operation against Egypt, Lebanon was caught in a political turmoil as the Sunnis wanted Lebanon to join the Arab world in

[30] Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*
[31] Tom Pierre Najem, "Lebanon and Europe: The Foreign Policy of a Penetrated State," *The Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2003).

breaking off relations with France and Britain while the President and the Maronite cabinet members opposed it.[32] Reading into the Muslim demands as rejection of the spirit of the National Pact, President Kamil Chamoun aligned Lebanon with the western powers in order to preserve Christian dominance. The Lebanese society, already rent by widespread sectarian and social discontent, was unable to withstand this new tension which eventually burst into a minor civil war in 1958 reminiscent of the past sectarian conflicts that had littered Lebanon's history.[33] Eventually, tensions were quelled with the departure of president Chamoun.

In his place, Fuad Chehab the Chief of the Lebanese Army was elected as president in 1960. The Chehab presidency was a period of renewed hope for Lebanon. Determined to break the vicious cycle that continually fed into inter-religious conflict, President Fuad Chehab, sought to "correct the failures of the sectarian system by injecting it with large doses of economic and social justice".[34]

His approach, known as Chehabism involved public reforms including strengthening of the institutions to enable them to provide public goods such as education and employment opportunities for the less developed sects. In essence, the beneficiary of these socio-economic reforms were the Muslims. The civil service was one sector that witnessed substantial reform. For example, under the previous President, Maronites made up for more than half of the top civil service posts despite being only about 27% of the population. By the end of the Chehab presidency, the Maronites accounted for less than a third of the top civil service appointments.[35]

[32] R. Karol, "Lebanon: The Crisis of 1958," *Asian and African studies* 9, no. 1 (2000); Salim El Hoss, "Peace in Lebanon and the Middle East," *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2008); Cobban, "The Making of Modern Lebanon."
[33] For a brief survey of the conditions of the period see Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*. pp.202-212.
[34] Fawwaz Traboulsi, "Shihabism and the Autonomy of the State (1958-1970)," in *A History of Modern Lebanon* (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Pres, 2007). p.140.
[35] Kamal Salibi, "Lebanon under Fuad Chehab 1958–1964," *Middle Eastern Studies* 2, no. 3 (1966). p.216.

Chehabism also had an impact on Lebanese diplomatic representations. In a bid to balance the overwhelmingly pro-West bias of the Lebanese diplomatic representation, more diplomatic missions were opened in Asian countries.[36] Therefore, as Lebanon entered the 1960s, it was a period of hope for the Muslims. Nevertheless, Chehabism was strongly resented by the ruling oligarchy composed of the *zu'ama*, the business and political elites which resisted any move that would reduce their dominance. It was only with the help of the intelligence operatives from the *Deuxieme Bureau* (military intelligence branch) that the Chehabist government was able to preserve its autonomy to carry out its socioeconomic programmes.[37]

The discussions showed how sectarianism condemned modern Lebanon to be a weak state with the Maronites desperately trying to hold on to their power in a society made of large numbers of Muslims as well. The political management of this diversity skewed Lebanon's foreign policy towards economic preponderance. However, domestically the state remained fragile due to the vast socio-economic imbalance among the sects. Weak social cohesion therefore was responsible for the outbreak of civil war as the state was unable to respond to regional pressures unleashed by pan-Arabism.

This section also showed that when President Fuad Chehab took over, it was a period of hope for Lebanon. The Muslims were hopeful that Chehabism would allow them to advance economically while the Maronites, quietly went along so long as it did not upset their overall dominance. In the subsequent section it will be shown that Chehabism had a direct bearing on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Malaysia. But before delving into this aspect, it would be useful to know if Malaysia had any relations with Lebanon prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations.

[36] Interview with Mrs. Mira Daher, Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, 15 March 2014.
[37] See Traboulsi, "Shihabism and the Autonomy of the State (1958-1970)." pp.138-155.

Malaysia and Lebanon prior to 1963

The available data shows that were little contacts between the Malay states (later Malaya), and Lebanon prior to 1963. However, this is not to say that they were unknown to each other. Ease of travel with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 encouraged greater contacts between Southeast Asia and the Middle East while Arab and local periodicals informed peoples of both regions of each other.[38] These periodicals reveal the great interest on the part of the Arabs regarding the developments in Southeast Asia and its inhabitants who were collectively referred to by the Arabs as *Jawi* (people from Java). While the exotic nature as well as business interests attracted their interest, there was also a religious angle as some Arab intellectuals were concerned that Southeast Asia could become another Andalusia if nothing was done to preserve Islam.[39] Therefore, it is no surprise that in 1957 the *Al Nahar*, a Beirut-based daily reported Malaya's independence on its front page.[40]

There were little educational links although Beirut was once contemplated by the British as a possible destination for sending selected Malay candidates destined for the civil service.[41] Although, some of these individuals later rose to prominence, Lebanon never became an important destination for education. [42]

[38] See Michael Laffan, "Another Andalusia": Images of Colonial Southeast Asia in Arabic Newspapers," *The Journal of Asian Studies* (2007).
[39] Ibid.
[40] "Malaya:Independent Country after 170 Years," *Al Nahar*, 31 August 1957. (translated from Arabic).
[41] One of the earliest famous examples is Mohamad Noah Omar former Speaker of the Parliament. He was father-in-law of two Malaysian Prime Ministers namely Tun Abdul Razak and Tun Hussein Onn and the maternal grandfather of the present Prime Minister Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak and Dato Seri Hishamuddin Hussein. He left Johor for Beirut on 11 May 1914 to study Arabic. Initially he enrolled at the Kulliyah Al-Uthmaniyah Al-Islamiyah. However, his studies were interrupted as the school was closed down by the Ottoman authorities during the First World War forcing him to switch to the Syrian Protestant College which later became known as American University of Beirut (AUB). Records of the AUB showed that he was enrolled from 1914-1918. However, a search of the AUB archives revealed the name of only other person from the state of Johor named Abdullah Taib. A copy of Tan Sri Noah's educational script was obtained from the AUB archives on 14 May 2014. Interview with Dato Seri Hishamuddin Tun Hussein Onn, Beirut, on 16 July 2014.
[42] See "Mohamed Noah Omar, Ex-Malaysia Speaker, 94," *The New York Times*, 6 September 1991; "Siapa Mohamed Noah Omar?," *Utusan Online*, 17 June 2012.

Trade, though minimal, was the strongest link. Malaya was known in Lebanon as a significant source of raw materials such as timber, tin plate and rubber, spices, vegetable oil, vegetable plaiting material for making brooms and baskets, natural rubber, tyres, food products and others. In addition, in the 1950s small scale canning industries in Lebanon also imported tin plated sheets for canning.[43] Table 2.1 shows the two-way trade between selected countries in Asia and Lebanon.[44] Lebanese statistics indicate that Sarawak enjoyed a comparable level of trade with Lebanon as some other Asian countries. Although, trade with peninsula Malaya is not mentioned however, according to Malaysia's honorary consul in Beirut, there was substantial trade with Sabah and peninsular Malaya as well.[45] The Lebanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry also confirmed that Lebanese traders had been sourcing edible oil and rubber from Malaya from as early as the late 1950s. Some of this trade probably did not enter the statistics because barter trade was still important. The frequent plying of cargo ships between Beirut and Singapore can also be taken as an evidence of a sizeable amount of merchandise trade.[46]

[43] Interview with Mr. George Saade. A Lebanese businessman, 8 October 2013.
[44] The trade values recorded in Lebanese pounds were converted to USD based on the average exchange rate of 1USD= 2.3 Lebanese pounds prior to the Civil War. See "Lebanese Foreign Trade Statistics 1960-1965." Customs Directorate and Directorate of Central Statistics, 1965.
[45] Interview with Mr. Omar Jundi, Honorary Consul of Malaysia, Beirut, 10 December 2013.
[46] The shipping timetable indicated cargo ships from Beirut passing though Singapore almost on a weekly basis. In this particular schedule was the Fying Eagle, departing Beirut on 24 December 1963 and going though Karachi-Bombay-Singapore-Saigon-Hong Kong and Kobe. The other was Brooklyn Heights departing Beirut on 7 January 1964 and going though Alexandria-Karachi-Bombay-Government of Lebanon, "Lebanese Foreign Trade Statistics 1960-1965,"(Lebanese Higher Council of Statistics,Customs Directorate and Directorate of Central Statistics, 1965).Singapore-Saigon-Hong Kong-Kobe -Nagoya-Shimizu-Yokohama. "Liste Des Bateaux Attendus," *Le Commerce du Levant- Beyrouth Express*, 15 September 1963.

Table 2.1: Trade between Asia and Lebanon (Lebanese Higher Council of Statistics. "Lebanese Foreign Trade Statistics 1960-1965.")

	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965
Exports to Lebanon USD (millions)						
Indonesia	0.04	0.84	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.01
The Philippines	0.27	0.06	0.46	0.26	1.25	0.79
Sarawak	0.07	0.20	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.05
Thailand	0.03	0.04	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.02
China	Na	Na	Na	2.57	4.36	6.57
Hong Kong	0.62	0.91	1.23	1.10	1.20	2.00
India	0.79	2.26	1.26	1.74	1.66	1.92
Japan	6.93	7.33	8.56	8.88	10.55	17.55
Imports from Lebanon USD (millions)						
Indonesia	Neg	0.63	Neg	0.02	0	Neg
The Philippines	0	neg	Neg	0	Neg	Neg
Sarawak	0	0	0	0	0	Neg
Thailand	0	neg	0.15	Neg	0.03	0.03
China	Na	na	Na	0.15	Na	0.56
Hong Kong	Neg	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.04
India	0.22	0.11	0.14	0.02	0.07	0.11
Japan	0.02	0.13	0.05	0.16	0.11	0.14

Note:

na – Data not available;
neg – Trade volume less than USD 0.01 million.

The discussion above shows that prior to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, there were little links between Malaya and Lebanon. Malaya was of greater importance to Lebanon that the other way around. Trade was particularly important as Lebanon enjoyed a reasonable level of two-way trade with Malaya. In this context, the envisaged federation of Malaysia further elevated Malaya's importance. Therefore, it is not surprising that Lebanon should be the first to reach out to Malaya to propose diplomatic ties as will be shown later in this chapter. However, a discussion on the *Konfrontasi* is necessary to understand Malaysia's attitude towards Lebanon's initiative.

Konfrontasi

According to Malaysian diplomats who served in the foreign service in the 1960s, the *Konfrontasi* was the most serious crisis faced by the country.[47] In practice, *Konfrontasi* was an "undeclared war" involving a range of military and diplomatic measures to frustrate the formation of Malaysia as a larger federation incorporating Singapore and the Borneo states of Sarawak, Sabah, and Brunei.[48]

The Indonesian move was somewhat of a puzzle as the Indonesian leadership had not objected to the Tunku's announcement on the formation of Malaysia.[49] According to Ghazali Shafie, who was the permanent secretary of the Malayan Ministry for External Affairs, Dr Subandrio wished Malaya "success with this merger so that everyone may live in peace".[50] The Indonesian foreign minister had even written to New York Times on 13 November 1961 indicating his government's support for the merger.[51] Again, on 20 November 1961, he declared his government's approval of the planned merger in the UN General Assembly.[52]

What then motivated Subandrio's *volte face* just 14 months later when he declared the *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia? Looking back to 1961, the idea of Malaysia was still uncertain. As demonstrated by Noordin Sophie, up to 1961, there was considerable apprehension among the UMNO elites about the formation of Malaysia.[53] The main concern was the problem of managing the large number of Chinese in Singapore

[47] Interview with Tan Sri Muhammad Khatib Hamid, 28 January 2015.
[48] For a discussion, see Mackie, *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia-Malaysia Dispute, 1963-1966* , Hindley, "Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia: A Search for Motives.", John O. Sutter, "Two Faces of *Konfrontasi*: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu," ibid.6, no. 10 (1966).
[49] Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem."
[50] Ibid.,p.31.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Mohamed Noordin Sophie, "The Fornation of Malaysia," in *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945-65* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 1974).p.150.

particularly since there was a lack of support from Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei regarding the Malaysia plan. Sabah and Sarawak leaders feared Malay domination, loss of influence and prestige.[54] In Brunei, the main political party, the Parti Rakyat was committed to a united and independent Kalimantan Utara under the historic Brunei sultanate rather than joining the federation.[55]

Further, it could be argued that Subandrio was certain that the Malaysia plan would face hurdles as he was personally cultivating pro-Indonesia Malay leaders and Azahari in Brunei to oppose Malaysia as revealed by Poulgrain.[56] On the other hand, the Tunku realised that if Singapore were to be left out, she could come under communist domination and pose a serious threat to Malaysia.[57] Indeed, the loss of the PAP in Singapore in the Hong Lim by-election fueled fear that Singapore could fall to a pro-Communist government in a general election.[58]

Therefore, it was only after May 1961 that the Tunku felt on the balance, the formation of Malaysia would be beneficial and was convinced about the idea of going ahead with talks with the British to form the federation.[59] Formal talks with Britain began in November 1961 and only on 22 November 1961 a joint statement was issued with Britain's support for the formation of the federation.[60] So when Subandrio wrote to the New York Times and spoke at the UN on 20 November 1961 wising Malaysia well he did not yet know that there would be formal support for the formation of Malaysia. Hence, it could be argued that Subandrio betted that Malaysia would not happen.

[54] Ibid.
[55] Mohamed Noordin Sophie, "The Fornation of Malaysia.",pp.172-173.
[56] Poulgrain, *The Genesis of Konfrontasi: Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, 1945-1965.* p.306.
[57] Mohamed Noordin Sophie, "The Fornation of Malaysia." p.142-143.
[58] Ibid.,p.138.
[59] Ibid.,p.140.
[60] Ibid.,p.149.

On the other hand, the Malayan government was probably complacent and taken the Indonesian foreign minister's view at face value. After all, the peoples of both countries have long been united in a shared primordial cultural affinity. Their geographical proximity within the Malay Archipelago conferred upon them a sense of kinship which was formed with language and religion acting as bonding agents.[61] Prior to independence, this kinship influenced the Malay intellectuals of the Malay states to look towards the growing anti-colonial mood in Indonesia and the thoughts of Indonesian anti-colonial nationalists and socialists for inspiration. These intellectuals were joined by Malay intellectuals who returned from the Middle East where they had been exposed to the modern notion of state and nationhood. Together these groups envisaged the construction of a pan-Malay entity that united Malaya and Indonesia on the basis of an egalitarian anti-colonial nationalism.[62]

Despite the historic and cultural kinship, the dismantling of the traditional feudal hierarchy including the Malay feudal structures in Sumatra under the Indonesian revolution created unease among the Malay elites in Malaya.[63] Hence, the worldview of their respective elites took divergent paths. The Indonesian elites believed that their independence which was won out of revolution was a "gold standard" for the countries of the region. Indonesia looked down upon Malaysia's independence as somewhat unauthentic. As far as pan-Malay unity was concerned, for Indonesia it was egalitarianism with Javanese preponderance while in Malaya it was Malay centrality with its symbols and institutions such as the sultans.[64]

[61] Liow, *The Politics of Indonesia-Malaysia Relations : One Kin, Two Nations*. p.38.
[62] Ibid. p.56.
[63] Ibid., p.64.
[64] "Tunku Abdul Rahman and Malaya's Relations with Indonesia, 1957-1960."

Therefore, the appearance of a cordial relationship was superficial indeed. This was made worse by the post-independence experiences. While Malaya was advancing socially and economically, the situation in Indonesia was deteriorating. Political opposition to the deteriorating economic conditions were stifled under Sukarno's "guided democracy". The resultant power vacuum was filled by two opposing and competing parties, namely the army and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI).[65] By the early 1960s, Indonesia was ruled by a mutually competing triangular power structure with Sukarno at the apex trying to maintain his position by playing the army and the PKI against each other.[66] In this struggle, the PKI became more entrenched in the political makeup of Indonesia with Sukarno's support.[67] Sukarno also surrounded himself with loyalists, labelled "Soekarnoists".[68] Among them were Dr Subandrio, the foreign minister whom as hinted earlier, played an instrumental role in the *Konfrontasi* by training pro-Indonesia Malayan and Brunei elites.

Hence, when the Tunku broached the plan to form Malaysia, the first hostile reaction came from the PKI which denounced the formation of "Greater Malaysia" as a form of "neo-colonialism" at a meeting of its central committee on 30-31 December 1961.[69] At this stage, Subandrio's public support for the formation of Malaysia was no longer assuring as Malaya was concerned that PKI's position could eventually evolve into an official Indonesian position given the party's influence over Sukarno. [70]

The government was equally concerned that with Sukarno under PKI control which was supported by China, the threat of communist control was greater than ever before.

[65] Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem." pp.32-35.
[66] Ann Marie Murphy, "From Conflict to Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 1961-1967: The Disputes Arising out of the Creation of Malaysia and the Establishment of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN)" (Columbia University, 2002). p.103.
[67] Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem." pp.36-38.
[68] Sutter, "Two Faces of *Konfrontasi*: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu."
[69] Alex Josey, "Aidit: My Talk with Leader of the Indonesian Communist Party," *The Straits Times*, 5 February 1962; Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem."p.34.
[70] Ibid.

The government was also worried about the large support that Indonesia enjoyed among Malay intellectuals from the local parties such as the PMIP and Parti Rakyat led Dr Burhanuddin Md Noor and Ahmad Boestamam, respectively. According to the deputy prime minister, the government had known for some time of Boestamam's allegiance to Indonesia and his collaboration with the Indonesian communist party.[71] He and several cadres of the Parti Rakyat Malaya had undergone secret training in Indonesia. Boestamam also was known to have close liaison with Azahari, the leader of the Brunei People's Party and had known of the Brunei rebellion at least six months earlier.

Therefore, the Malayan government was not surprised when Azahari suddenly launched a rebellion in Brunei. This led the Tunku to accuse Indonesia of fomenting the rebellion as intelligence reports indicated that Azahri had received training in Indonesia.[72] Since the Tunku had pointed fingers at Indonesia, Subandrio wasted no time in warning the Tunku that "if accused too much Indonesia would get angry".[73] In the ensuing war of words, Subandrio declared *Konfrontasi* on 20 January 1963.[74] Two days after Subandrio's statement the Tunku declared Subandrio's speech amounted to a direct attack on Malaya.[75]

Given the nature of the power struggle within the Indonesian government, the *Konfrontasi* immediately blew up into a national position as it served the interests of the PKI, the army and Sukarno.[76] By portraying the *Konfrontasi* as his defence of the third world against the colonial powers Sukarno could turn the *Konfrontasi* as a way of bolstering his image. By appealing to nationalistic sentiments through the *Konfrontasi*,

[71] DR12031963 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Session of the First Parliament, Vol. iv No.38 pp.4130-4133,"(1963).
[72] "Tengku: Why Azahari Started Rebellion," *The Straits Times*, 12 December 1962.
[73] "Subandrio: 'Indonesia Will Get Very Angry If Accused Too Much'," *The Straits Times*, 15 December 1962.
[74] Eduard Quiko, "The Role of Foreign Minister Subandrio in Indonesian Politics: An Analysis of Selected Indonesian Foreign Policies, 1957-1965" (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1970). p.123.
[75] "Subandrio's Speech Direct Attack: Tengku," *The Straits Times*, 22 January 1963.
[76] Sutter, "Two Faces of *Konfrontasi*: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu."

the PKI hoped to improve its standing with Sukarno. For the army, the *Konfrontasi* was a bargaining chip to demand for more resources and budget to maintain a large military establishment and also to secure more political position for its senior officials.

Bilateral relations quickly deteriorated as both countries withdrew their ambassadors and reduced diplomatic representation to the level of *Charge d'Affaires*.[77] In Jakarta demonstrations were held and effigies of the Tunku burnt. The tone of the Indonesian government too had started to become belligerent.[78] However, Malaya refused to be intimidated. Replying to Indonesian threats against Malaysia the Tunku warned that

> They can burn as many effigies of myself as they have, but they must not attack my country. We cannot allow any country to belittle us in the eyes of our own people. If they attack our country, we are ready to fight for it.[79]

Indonesia's opposition to Malaysia advanced to military aggression in April 1963 with attacks in Sarawak.[80] Finally, after a tripartite meeting in Manila, Indonesia and the Philippines agreed to accept Malaysia if it was ascertained under the auspices of the United Nations.

Recently declassified U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) documents suggest that Sukarno's acceptance of the formation of Malaysia at that tripartite meeting was merely a tactical move as the *Konfrontasi* had not yet received the support of the other "anti-colonialists" leaders.[81] Indonesia, sensing that things were not going

[77] "Jakarta, Malaya Envoy Change Again," *The Straits Times*, 15 March 1963.
[78] "The War of Nerves," *The Straits Times*, 12 February 1963; "The Rift Widens," *The Straits Times*, 10 February 1963.
[79] "Malaysia 'Must'," *The Straits Times*, 12 March 1963; "Tengku: We Have Aid Pledges from Britain, Australia," *The Straits Times*, 11 March 1963.
[80] Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* 2nd ed.(Oxford University Press, 2008).
[81] Central Intelligence Agency, "Tripartite Negotiations on Malaysia Federation Scheme,"(1963).

her way, decided to complicate the ascertainment process. Indonesia's tactic was not missed by the Malayan government. Ghazali Shafie recalls that Indonesia had insisted on sending 30 observers.[82] However, Malaya stood her ground as the Manila agreement merely expressed a desirability of the presence of observers. In the end Indonesia and Philippines were allowed to send a team of four observers.

However, as the diplomatic manoeuvres over the size of the teams had taken precious time, the Indonesian and Philippine teams arrived late. However, what irked Indonesia and the Philippines was Malaysia's announcement on 29 August that the date for the proclamation of Malaysia has been set for 16 September 1963.[83] Although Indonesia sent a strong diplomatic protest note, Malaya stood firm.[84] Therefore, after the UN Secretary General concluded that the formation of Malaysia had the support of the majority, Indonesia broke diplomatic relations on 17 September 1963 followed by the Philippines the day after.

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, the *Konfrontasi* was indeed a period of great anxiety as Malaysia faced multiple challenges. On the one hand was military aggression by Indonesia whose military vastly outnumbered Malaysia's. On the other was diplomatic rupture with Indonesia and the Philippines that had to be met by Malaysia's young foreign service. Therefore, the government believed that it was better to conserve her diplomatic and other resources to overcome the multiple challenges of the *Konfrontasi* which in 1963 appeared to be limited to Southeast Asia only. Hence, expansion of diplomatic representation overseas was certainly not a

[82] Ghazali Shafie, "Confrontation: A Manifestation of the Indonesian Problem." p.28.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

priority for the Malayan government when the Lebanese government sought to establish diplomatic ties at the level of ambassador in 1963.

Mutual diplomatic recognition

Given her interest in sustaining the relationship with Lebanon, it seemed logical, at the beginning of this study, to assume that Malaysia would have made the first move to seek diplomatic ties with Lebanon. However, the data revealed that it was Lebanon that made the first move. As a matter of fact, the Lebanese initiative can be precisely traced to 28 March 1963 when the Lebanese *Chargé d'Affaires* of the Lebanese Embassy in Karachi approached the Malayan High Commissioner to informally convey his government's intention to accredit an ambassador to Kuala Lumpur.[85] According to the *Charge' d'Affaires*, the Lebanese government intended to concurrently accredit Mr Ramiz Shamma, her in-coming ambassador to Pakistan, as ambassador to Malaya with residence in Karachi.[86]

This thesis contends that Lebanon's interest to establish diplomatic relations with Malaya was guided primarily by the domestic political considerations of the Lebanese government under President Fuad Chehab. As mentioned earlier, Chehab's rule was a rare period in Lebanon's history where the government actually focussed on state building. Under Chehab, Lebanon witnessed expanding economic opportunities, foreign trade, and greater empowerment of the Muslims including through employment in the civil service.[87]

[85] In diplomatic convention, a Head of Diplomatic Mission from one Commonwealth member to another is known as a High Commissioner while Heads of Mission accredited to non-Commonwealth countries are known as ambassador. The Embassy of a Commonwealth member in another is known a High Commission while those in non-Commonwealth countries are known as an Embassy. Apart from these nomenclatural differences The High Commissioner and Ambassador and their Missions are equal in diplomatic rank. A *Charge' d'Affaires* is an officer who stands in as head of mission in the absence of the head of mission.
[86] "DC1963.03.30 from Mohamad Baba, High Commissioner of Malaya, Karachi to Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs Conveying Lebanon's Request to Establish Diplomatic Ties and Agre'ment for Her Ambassador to Kuala Lumpur," (1963).
[87] Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*. p.215.

Like all top civil service posts, ambassadorial appointments too were distributed based on confession which meant that ambassadors to Muslim countries were Muslims too. In order to create opportunities for ambassadorial appointments for Muslims, it was imperative to expand diplomatic relations with Muslim countries. In this regard Malaya was an ideal candidate as in the Lebanese mind, Malaya was a Muslim (Sunni) majority state.

Therefore, diplomatic ties with Malaya would allow the creation of a brand new ambassadorial post for a Muslim candidate since the post of ambassador to Kuala Lumpur would have to be assigned to a Sunni Muslim in the spirit of confessional political system.[88] Politically, it was a shrewd move by the government to accredit an ambassador to Malaya. As the post of an ambassador is considered a high-profile post, the appointment of a Muslim ambassador would allow the government to claim credit for supporting the Muslims.

Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 2.2, Malaya was the largest independent Southeast Asian state in the 1960s with whom Lebanon did not have diplomatic relations. Given the economic orientation of the Lebanese foreign policy, establishing formal diplomatic ties with Malaya made sense. Since Malaya was already a significant trading partner for Lebanon, a larger political entity in the form of a federation between Malaya, Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore would certainly bring more trade and investment.

[88] Interview with Mr Ali Daher, the Lebanese ambassador to Malaysia, in Beirut, 10 October 2015.

Table 2.2: Lebanon's diplomatic relations with Asia as of 1962 (al-Jaridah al-rasmiyah al Jumhuriyah al-Lubnaniyah, 1918-1995)

Country	Year of establishment of diplomatic relations
The Philippines	1947
Indonesia	1955
Thailand	1958
India	1954
Japan	1954

However, there was no urgency on the Malayan side as the government was preoccupied with dealing with Indonesia which only two months earlier had declared *Konfrontasi* against Malaya. When Lebanon sought *agre'ment* for her ambassador to Malaya, tensions were already running high between Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta.

As mentioned earlier, the escalating crisis was beyond question the greatest diplomatic challenge faced by the young government. It required the full attention of the foreign ministry and the government.[89] As such, matters related to the *Konfrontasi* took precedence over diplomatic matters. Thus, it was not until several months later that the Lebanese request for *agre'ment* for her ambassador was brought to the cabinet for approval. In its submission to the Cabinet, the foreign ministry welcomed Lebanon's desire to establish diplomatic relations but recommended against reciprocating Lebanon's move by accrediting an ambassador to Beirut. Only on 19 June 1963, that the cabinet approved the *agre'ment* for Mr Ramiz Shamma, as ambassador-designate to Malaya.[90] The cabinet also decided that Malaya would not reciprocate the Lebanese move by appointing an ambassador to Beirut.[91] In any case, it was reasoned that bilateral relations

[89] Kumaraseri, *Professional Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management: An Ambassador's Insight* p.158.
[90] The *agre'ment* was granted on 19 June 1963. However, as the process had been slow, the Lebanese ambassador made several queries on the status of his *agre'ment*. An *agre'ment* is the formal consent that is given by the receiving country to the appointment of a foreign ambassador to its capital. See "DC1963.06.18 from Mohamad Baba, High Commissioner of Malaya, Karachi to Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs," (1963); "Extract of Cabinet Decision 1963.06.19 Approving Diplomatic Relations with Lebanon and Agre'ment for Ramiz Shamma ", (1963).
[91] "DC1963.06.24 from Ahmad Kamil, Ministry for External Affairs to Malayan High Commission, Karachi," (1963).

which had already been established at the level of a Legation five years earlier in 1958 was sufficient.[92] Additionally, as we had seen, Lebanon offered little by way of other bilateral benefits. Although the Ministry of Commerce and Industry observed that the potential for increased trade was always a possibility, the volume of trade with Lebanon from 1960-1962 was only in the region of $0.5 million.[93]

Although there is no record of the discussions of that Cabinet meeting, it is likely that it also took into account of the country's limited manpower and financial constraints. It was no secret that Malaya lacked the necessary financial and human resources to open many embassies or even expand her diplomatic coverage by concurrently accrediting ambassadors to many countries.[94] In fact, as of 1963, the Ministry of External Affairs as it was then known, had only seventy-seven foreign service officers and only 17 diplomatic missions worldwide.[95] Therefore, accrediting an ambassador to Beirut was certainly not a priority in 1963 as can be inferred from the prime minister's reply in the parliament during a debate on foreign policy a year later:

> We have not set up diplomatic relations with these countries for the simple reason that we have not the means, nor the men, to man all these various Missions. Being a new country, we have got to take time and we have not got, as I said, the money[96]

[92] In diplomacy, a Legation is a diplomatic representative office lower than an embassy. A legation was headed by an officer of a lower rank than an ambassador or High Commissioner and was known as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. The distinction between a legation and embassy was gradually dropped following World War II. See Wikipedia, "Legation," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legation. The decision to establish diplomatic relations at the level of Legation was made at the Cabinet meeting of 17 February 1958. Reference to this was mentioned in one of the earlier drafts of a paper to seek *agre'ment* for the Lebanese ambassador. See "MD1963.07.10 on the Proposed Diplomatic Representation between the Federation of Malaya and the Republic of Lebanon and the Appointment of Mr. Ramiz Shamma as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary with Residence in Karachi ", (1963).

[93] "OL1963.04.24 from Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, Ministry for External Affairs to Ministry of Commerce and Industry Seeking Views on Lebanon's Proposal for Diplomatic Relations," (1963); "Ol1963.05.30 from Sujak Rahiman, Ministry of Commerce and Industry to Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, Ministry for External Affairs."

[94] "Confrontation and External Affairs," *The Straits Times*, 31 August 1964; "Our Men Overseas," *The Straits Times*, 22 November 1964.

[95] Ghazali Shafie, "The Pattern of Indonesian Aggression ". p.62.

[96] DR03121964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.26,P.3467,"(1964).

Following the granting of the *agre'ment*, it was mutually agreed that simultaneous announcement would be made in both capitals on 16 July 1963 regarding the mutual diplomatic recognition and the appointment of Mr. Ramiz Shamma as the Lebanese ambassador to Malaya.[97] However, what should have been a routine matter did not take place as planned. In Kuala Lumpur, the announcement only appeared a day later in the Malay Mail. It was the sole paper to carry the announcement.[98] The ministry's files do not reveal why the press release issued by the ministry was missed by the media.[99] The Lebanese embassy in Karachi also did not inform whether the announcement was made in Lebanon.[100]

A few days after the agreed date of simultaneous announcement, the Malayan High Commissioner in Karachi also observed in his cable to Ghazali Shafie, that Lebanon was not mentioned in the list of countries to be invited to the celebrations marking the formation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963.[101] He assumed that Lebanon had accepted the invitation but somehow her name had been omitted by error in the list of invited countries. However, Lebanon did not attend the National Day celebrations. The foreign ministry did not suspect anything unusual about the Lebanese behaviour and neither did the diplomatic cable traffic pick anything up. The Lebanese ambassador-designate also did not make any effort to take up his post.

[97] TPN 1963.06.29 from High Commission for the Federation of Malaya to the Embassy of the Republic of Lebanon in Karachi," (1963)."TPN1963.07.09 from the Embassy of Lebanon in Karachi to the High Commission for the Federation of Malaya ", (1963); "DC1963.07.09 from the High Commission of Malaya, Karachi to Ministry for External Affairs," (1963); "DC1963.07.13 from the High Commission of Malaya, Karachi to Ministry for External Affairs," (1963).
[98] "Diplomatic Representation between the Federation of Malaya and the Republic of Lebanon," news release, 10 July 1963.
[99] There is no need to read to deeply into the reason. It is most likely that the press release was received too late to be printed in the same day. Furthermore, as it was not a main news interest the media probably did not see the need to publish it immediately. "DC1964.07.09 from Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah," (1964); "DC1964.07.21 from Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah to Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1964); "DC1964.08.24 from Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah to Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1964); "DC1964.09.04 from Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia,Jeddah," (1964).
[100] A search at the Lebanese archives in the course of data collection for this study did not produce any evidence that the appointment of Ramiz Shamma was ever published in Beirut.
[101] "DC 1963.07.20 from Mohamad Baba, High Commissioner of Malaya, Karachi to Ghazali Shafie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs," (1963).

Strangely, it did also not strike the foreign ministry as puzzling that the Lebanese embassy in Karachi which had regularly inquired about the status of the *agre'ment,* did not make any move to inform Kuala Lumpur when the ambassador planned to visit to present his Letters of Credence.[102] The reasons for Lebanon's delay in sending her ambassador to Kuala Lumpur was never explained. The Malaysian foreign ministry's records simply indicate that for some "unexplained circumstances" the Lebanese ambassador did not take up his appointment.[103]

Therefore, the foreign ministry was puzzled when more than one and half year later after the *agre'ment* was granted, the Lebanese ambassador still evinced interest to present his credentials.[104] Only then did the foreign ministry side notice a sinister reason for Lebanon's strange behaviour. Around this time too in September 1965, cables from the Embassy of Malaysia, Cairo revealed that Indonesia had progressively made inroads in the Middle East in its campaign against Malaysia.[105] It now made sense why Lebanon had been strangely non-committal when approached by the foreign ministry in 1964 to accommodate the King's visit to Lebanon as part of the Royal visit to the region. However, as Lebanon had remained non-committal, Beirut had to be dropped and the visit proceeded to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan without Lebanon.[106]

[102] "DC1964.04.27 from Mohamad Baba, High Commissioner of Malaya, Karachi to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs," (1964); "DC1964.04.29 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the High Commission of Malaya, Karachi," (1964); "DC1964.05.14 from Mohamad Baba, High Commissioner of Malaya, Karachi to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs," (1964); "Dc1963.06.18 from Mohamad Baba, High Commissioner of Malaya, Karachi to Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs."

[103] "DC1964.07.21 from Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah to Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

[104] In a communication to the political desk at the ministry, the Head of Chancery of the Malaysian High Commission in Karachi informed of the conversation between the Malaysian High Commissioner and the Lebanese Ambassador during which the latter indicated hope to visit Malaysian in February of March 1965 to present his credentials. "Cable from Ministry for Foreign Affairs to Malaysian High Commission, Karachi ", (1964); "DC1964.09.21 from the High Commission of Malaya, Karachi to Abdullah Zawawi Mohamad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1964).

[105] "RD 1965.11.03 from the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister; "MN1965.11.09 from Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister, to Ghazali Shafie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Conveying Report from the Malaysian Ambassador in Cairo," (1965).

[106] DR26051965 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. ii No.1,p.24,"(1965); V.K. Chin, "Big Send-Off for the King," *The Straits Times*, 3 April 1965.

Likewise, Lebanon's non-attendance at the National Day celebrations in 1963 now made sense too. The conclusion was obvious. Lebanon had deliberately turned down the invitation to the National Day celebrations which meant that she too had come under Indonesian influence around the time when the *agre'ment* was granted.[107] Through her embassies, Indonesia could disseminate propaganda against Malaysia. In comparison to the small size of the Malaysian foreign service which had only 77 officers compared to the Indonesian foreign service that had more than 3000 diplomats.[108] Further, Indonesia regularly dispatched high-level delegations to the region to update the Arab leaders of her perspective of the geo-political developments as indicated by cables that reported that the Indonesians are officially present in Beirut "in a big way".[109] These visits also gave her ample opportunities to influence the Arab states. Indonesia's job was made easier because of her standing as a founding member of the Afro-Asian group and also because there was no Malaysian voice to counter these propagandas. Among the frequent visitors mentioned in the cables is Madam Supeni Pudjobuntoro who served as the third deputy foreign minister and also as Sukarno's Special Envoy for Afro-Asian matters.[110] Her charming demeanour and eloquence convinced the Arab states of Indonesia's arguments.

Unfortunately, Malaysia's fairly liberal policy towards Israel as will be shown later also lent credence to Indonesia's claim. Hence, following Subandrio's visit to Khartoum, the press screamed "MALAYSIA: FAR EAST ISRAEL, SUBANDRIO".[111] Malaysia was caught by surprise by Indonesia's disinformation campaign to create a rift between her and the Arab states as declared by the Tunku:

[107] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister," (1965).
[108] Ghazali Shafie, "The Pattern of Indonesian Aggression ". p.62.
[109] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."
[110] "Rombongan Penerangan Indonesia Ka-Negara2 Arab," *Berita Harian*, 29 May 1965; "Mao, Soek Hot It Up," *The Straits Times*, 27 May 1965.
[111] "Malaysia Far East Israel: Subandrio," *The Straits Times*, 15 July 1965.

> This is a mischievous big lie. As you know, we have no intention of setting diplomatic relations with Israel or having anything to do with her. The Arab Muslims are now very angry with us. How wicked can Indonesia get? Just look at the extent to which she will go to make us look bad in the eyes of the Arab countries.[112]

The common thread in all these reports is the role of China.[113] Indonesia-China relations warmed following the Sino-India border dispute in 1959. In need of support, China reached out to Indonesia through the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) that was gaining influence in Indonesia. For Indonesia, closer relations with China worked in her favour in resolving the question of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia.[114] Indonesia supported China's admission into the United Nations. [115]

The PKI provided a strong basis for China's influence. Sukarno for his part aligned himself with the PKI against the army which was a major contender for power. Hence, a strong alliance developed between China and Indonesia. China was also supporting the Communist Party of Malaya through arms and other means to overthrow the government and replace it with a communist rule. China's objective was to use the PKI to support the outlawed Communist Party of Malaya to promote a pro-communist revolutionary Malaya with the aim of carving Southeast Asia into different spheres of influence under Beijing, Hanoi and Jakarta.[116] Hence, Indonesia's antipathy towards Malaysia served China's purpose. Therefore, under the ambit of defeating imperialism, China provided moral and other support to Indonesia.[117]

[112] Felix Abisheganaden, "Tunku: I Can Wait " *The Straits Time*, 27 April 1965.
[113] Ghazali Shafie, "The Pattern of Indonesian Aggression ". pp.72-82.
[114] Quiko, "The Role of Foreign Minister Subandrio in Indonesian Politics: An Analysis of Selected Indonesian Foreign Policies, 1957-1965". p.55.
[115] Ibid., p.56.
[116] Sutter, "Two Faces of Konfrontasi: "Crush Malaysia" and the Gestapu.".
[117] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."

On the basis of the alliance, China and Indonesia co-hosted several Afro-Asian conferences in which Malaysia was denounced as a British "neo-imperialist" creation. Malaya was however blocked from attending these conferences which included the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference in Nicosia; the Afro-Asia Conference in Moshi, Tanganyika; and the Afro-Asian Journalists Conference in Jakarta.[118] These conferences were venues for Indonesia and China to mount their campaign against Malaysia. In this spirit China's proposal to convene a second Asian-Afro Conference (Second Bandung Conference) was pushed through among the Afro-Asian member states at an Afro-Asian ministerial meeting in Jakarta. Algiers was picked as the venue for that conference.[119] As Malaysia had been blocked from all the Afro-Asian conferences, it was critical for Malaysia to get admission to the Algiers conference. So, while China and Indonesia were on one side, the United States and USSR and Malaysia were on the opposite side.

China also worked with another strong ally, Pakistan.[120] Through her relationship with China, Pakistan also developed close relationship with Sukarno. For Pakistan, her ties with China and Indonesia served as a counter-balance against India. China's relations with Pakistan was in part a reaction to India's close relations with the USSR. On the other hand, it was also a *quid pro quo* for Pakistan's support for China in her dispute with India. A convergence of interests therefore allowed Indonesia to work closely with China and Pakistan to advance her diplomatic campaign against Malaysia.

Unaware of these developments, the Malaysian government was caught by surprise when Pakistan suddenly broke off diplomatic relations on 6 October 1965 making her the third country to break diplomatic relations after Indonesia and Philippines. The official

[118] Quiko, "The Role of Foreign Minister Subandrio in Indonesian Politics: An Analysis of Selected Indonesian Foreign Policies, 1957-1965." p.67.
[119] "Algeria Prepares to Play Host," *The Straits Times*, 15 June 1965.
[120] Haris Raqeeb Azeemi, "55 Years of Pakistan-China Relationship," *Pakistan Horizon* 60, no. 2 (2007).

reason given by Pakistan was that she had taken offense at the statement made by Malaysia's permanent representative to the United Nations on the question of Kashmir. According to Pakistan, Malaysia had "failed to make distinction between aggressor and aggressed in the Kashmir conflict".[121] In announcing his country's decision to break off ties the Pakistani foreign minister Mr Bhutto accused Malaysia of ignoring "the principle of self-determination and had violated the solidarity of the Afro-Asian world".[122] Following up on Indonesia's portrayal of Malaysia as the "Israel of the Far East", the Pakistani media wickedly painted Malaysia as aligning with the *kafirs* in reference to Israel. [123]

For Malaysia, Pakistan's unilateral decision to break off diplomatic using the pretext of the Malaysian Permanent Representative's statement was both "astonishing and regrettable" since Pakistan still maintained diplomatic relations with India with whom she had been virtually at war.[124] Hence, Tunku felt that Pakistan's stated reason for its decision was not credible. [125] He believed that there was some other reason behind Pakistan's behavior. His suspicion was supported by reports from the Malaysian embassy in Cairo that pointed towards a collaboration between Indonesia and its allies, Pakistan and China. The term "axis" was used by the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo in his report to the Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak which was later submitted to the Cabinet.

> I do not believe that our position there is beyond correction. From Lebanon I would be able to closely watch the Syrians and perhaps slowly turn the table against the Jakarta/China/Pakistan axis.[126]

[121] "Pakistan Breaks Off Ties ", *The Straits Times* 6 October 1965.
[122] Ibid.
[123] K. B. Sayeed, "Southeast Asia in Pakistan's Foreign Policy," *Pacific Affairs* 41, no. 2 (1968).
[124] "Senseless Break," *The Straits Times*, 7 October 1965.
[125] "DC1965.10.07 from the High Commission of Malaysia, Karachi on Pakistan's Decision to Break Diplomatic Ties," (in, 1965).
[126] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."

The term was not used to suggest some form active coordination of activities according to a joint programme or agenda. Rather, it referred to the actions of these three countries that ultimately was aimed at denying international support for Malaysia. For example, it was observed that Pakistan had colluded with Indonesia at the Afro-Asian Preparatory meeting in Jakarta in August 1964, to prevent Malaysia's participation at the Second Afro-Asian Conference.[127] The following year, Pakistan went further. At the June 1965 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference held in June 1965 in London, Pakistan had managed to get the support of several countries to re-open the debate on the agreed Communique to specifically delete reference to Commonwealth support for Malaysia's in its struggle against Indonesian aggression.[128]

These cables also indicated that Pakistan had also taken more hostile measures which included granting landing rights for Indonesia bound planes carrying arms for the Indonesian Armed Forces supplied by an unnamed foreign power while denying such facilities for planes bound for Malaysia unlike Ceylon and Burma which had remained neutral.[129] In addition, Pakistan and Indonesia also announced plans to hold a joint naval exercise. There were further allegations. Tunku indicated reports that Pakistan had tacitly given support for plans by Mr Aziz Ishak, a former Minister of Agriculture, and his colleagues to form a government-in-exile in Karachi.[130] To these broad range of support, the Pakistani government had also made available to the Indonesian Embassy in Karachi, its government mass media to be used for widespread dissemination of Indonesian confrontation propaganda.[131] Malaysia also suspected that Indonesia and China had

[127] "TPN1965.10.07 to All Diplomatic and Consular Missions in Jeddah," (1965); Shafie, "Malaysia and the Asian Perspective".p.78.
[128] Felix Abisheganadan, "Tengku: I Had a Hunch This Was Coming," *The Straits Times*, 7 October 1965.
[129] "TPN1965.10.07 to All Diplomatic and Consular Missions in Jeddah."; Shafie, "Malaysia and the Asian Perspective ".p.78.
[130] Padmana Krishnan, "Master Spy Arrest at Airport," *The Straits Times*, 7 February 1965.
[131] "TPN1965.10.07 to All Diplomatic and Consular Missions in Jeddah."

jointly worked to influence Lebanon and Syria to support Indonesia's hostility towards Malaysia as reported by ambassador Ya'acob in his cable. [132]

Tunku Abdul Rahman was therefore convinced that Pakistan was "part of a sinister collusion with Communist China and Indonesia" against Malaysia.[133] In a speech delivered at the Ipoh Rotary Club a few weeks later, Ghazali Shafie would publicly admit that Malaysia became aware of the axis only a month earlier in September that year.[134] Suddenly, the crisis became more than just the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia. As a direct outcome of *Konfrontasi*, three important countries namely, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines had broken diplomatic ties with Malaysia. Alarmingly, Malaysia also found herself isolated in the Middle East.

Konfrontasi **comes to the Middle East**

Indonesia's motivations to seek external support for her *Konfrontasi* can be traced to her failures at the Manila and Tokyo summits to derail Malaysia. Consequently, it was inevitable that both parties would need to enlist external support to strengthen their bargaining positions.[135] Malaysia's challenge was to mount an effective diplomatic offensive to neutralize the Indonesian campaign. However, it would have been futile to mount a direct counter-offensive against Indonesia as Malaysia's diplomatic capacity was no match for Indonesia which had a vastly stronger diplomatic presence in the region. Indonesia was able to mount a successful disinformation campaign against Malaysia as she had embassies in the whole of the Middle East accept in Kuwait and Yemen.[136] Further, there was also a concern that a direct confrontation with Indonesia could provoke

[132] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."
[133] "Malaysia Accuses Pakistan "Sinister Pattern of Collusion"," *The Glasgow Herald*, 7 October 1965.
[134] Shafie, "Malaysia and the Asian Perspective ".
[135] "Indonesia Steps up the Campaign," *The Straits Times*, 1 July 1964.
[136] "DC1965.10.07 from the High Commission of Malaysia, Karachi on Pakistan's Decision to Break Diplomatic Ties."

domestic discontent among the Malay nationalists who were sympathetic towards Indonesia. Therefore, with British encouragement, Malaysia complained to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).[137] When Indonesia intensified the conflict by landing her paratroopers in Johore in August 1964, Malaysia requested an urgent meeting of the UNSC. By working with Norway, a resolution (S/5973) was brought to vote in the UNSC although it stood no chance because of opposition from Russia which was close to Indonesia.[138] As expected, the resolution was defeated due to Russia's veto. Although the resolution was defeated due to Russia's veto, it put Malaysia on a stronger footing as it received nine votes in support against two. The two African members of the UNSC, the Ivory Coast and Morocco, also voted in support of the resolution.[139]

Indonesia's attempt to use the UN to stop Malaysia was foiled when the latter was installed as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for a term despite Indonesia's objection. This prompted Indonesia to withdraw from the UN and to intensify her efforts to win over the Afro-Asian countries. Since withdrawing from the UN, Indonesia engaged in a flurry of diplomatic campaign to block Malaysia from attending the second Afro-Asian conference that was scheduled to be hosted by Algeria in June 1965. If Malaysia was blocked, Indonesia could claim that Malaysia was an international pariah without any legitimacy.[140] Unfortunately, these efforts went undetected by the Malaysian government. It was only when Pakistan suddenly severed its diplomatic ties with Malaysia on 24 September 1965 that Malaysia became aware of the extent of Indonesia's campaign.

[137] "Ismail: We Will Not Give in to "Crush Diplomacy'," *The Straits Times*, 12 September 1964.
[138] See United Nations, "Complaint by Malaysia," in *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council*, ed. UN Security Council, Chapter VIII. Maintenance of International Peace and Security (1965).
[139] Michael Leifer, "Indonesia and Malaysia: The Diplomacy of Confrontation," *The World Today* 21, no. 6 (1965).
[140] Ibid.

Fortified, with a broad support of the international community, the next step was to focus on a specific course of action to get the support of the Afro-Asian bloc. In this context, the parliamentary debates provide a useful clue into understanding the choices facing the Tunku government. There were two distinct strands of arguments that had very strong support in the House.

The first was support for non-alignment. The opposition political parties were critical of the government for not being transparent in its foreign policy stance. At home pressure mounted on the government as the rupture in diplomatic relations with Pakistan was blamed on the government's neutral policy towards the Afro-Asian grouping. Generally, the debates, one of which is cited below, suggested the need for a well-coordinated diplomatic offensive:

> Because of our neglect of the African-Asian opinion we now have to face the present Indonesian confrontation……So the only solution was to beat Indonesia in the diplomatic field if we do not want to beat them in the battlefield.[141]

The Tunku felt that it was not fair for the opposition or the Afro-Asian states to claim to be ignorant of Malaysia's situation as he himself had taken the trouble to write to many of the heads of state of these countries about the confrontation.[142]

Despite his explanation, the opposition parties were also critical of the government for a foreign policy that was out of step with the rest of the Afro-Asian countries and urged the government to follow a policy of neutrality and non-alignment.[143] In their view,

[141] DN30121964 Hansard-Dewan Negara (Senate), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.8,p.944,"(1964).
[142] DR03121964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.26,pp.3462-3464,"(1964).
[143] DR10091964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.13,pp.1753-1754,"(1964); DR14071964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.11,p.1511,"(1964).

the government's strong anti-communist stance gave the impression that Malaysia was aligned with the West and that had alienated Malaysia from the Afro-Asia bloc.[144] This policy, they argued, was untenable for a small country like Malaysia. Since the Malaysian position was out of step with the rest of the Afro-Asian bloc, it naturally aroused antagonism. In this regard, the opposition members were also disappointed with the Tunku's stance against the non-aligned policy who believed that accepting the policy would be tantamount "to follow the trend of some countries in Asia and Africa, to toe the Eastern or pro-Communist line."[145] The Tunku's travel schedule did not help either. The impression given that Malaysia was pro-West was emphasised by the fact that the prime minister himself did not see it fit to visit any of the African countries.[146]

The opposition members argued that it was possible to be opposed to communism and yet be acceptable to the Afro-Asian grouping. Therefore, pressure built on the government to shift to a non-aligned policy following the examples of many developing countries including the Arab states who were able to reconcile their opposition to communism and non-alignment. Whatever reservations the government may have had about non-alignment became untenable following widespread support for non-alignment that had begun to solidify across the political divide following Malaysia's failure to get admitted to the Conference of the Non-Aligned Heads of State/Government in Cairo in October 1964 as well as the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organisation Conference at

[144] "We Can't Go against Afro-Asian Opinion: Nair," *The Straits Times,*, 21 May 1965; DR14081963 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Session of the First Parliament, Vol.V No.8,p.907,"(1963).
[145] DR03121964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.26,p.3467."
[146] DR10091964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.13,pp.1753-1754."

Winneba, Ghana in 1965.[147] The mood of the majority is well captured in the views expressed by a member of the Senate.[148]

> Sir, I think, perhaps, the time has come when we should project ourselves more vigorously in the international forum and conferences of Afro-Asian countries and try to speak the language of the non-aligned countries. Indonesia has got its language; it has got its semantics…

The second strand of the argument was about aligning with the Arab states in their conflict with Israel. In this regard, the bulk of the argument came from the Malay elected representatives from opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP) and several UMNO divisions that openly advocated a close support for the Arab states. An examination of the parliamentary debates touching on the Middle East revealed a strong correlation between the *Konfrontasi* and the debates on the Middle East as shown in the figure below. The debates were almost all about Malaysia's support for the Arab states as a means of demonstrating solidarity with the Afro-Asian group.

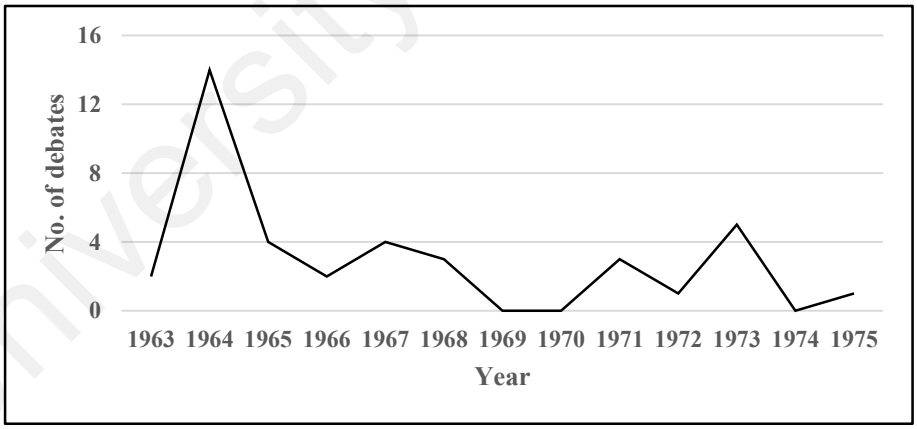

Figure 2.2 Number of parliamentary debates on the Middle East

Source: Official records of the parliamentary debates

[147] "Lesson of Winneba," *The Straits Times*, 18 May 1965; DR26051965 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Second Parliament, Vol.II No.1,pp.127-128,"(1965); "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Second Parliament, Vol.II No.1,p.423,"(1965); Non-Aligned Movement, "Programme for International Peace and Cooperation" of the Non-Aligned Countries " (paper presented at the 2nd Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, 10 September, Cairo Egypt, 1964).
[148] DN31121964 Hansard-Dewan Negara (Senate), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.9,pp.1113-1114,"(1964).

These debates also fed into the debate about non-alignment as the Afro-Asian group too was supportive of the plight of the Arab states. Overall, it was becoming clear that the way to deal with Indonesia's diplomatic campaign against Malaysia during the *Konfrontasi* would require a foreign policy shift that linked non-alignment as well as support for the Arab states.

The first step would be to get admission into the Afro-Asian fold as indicated by His Majesty the King in his Royal Address.[149] Since, Algeria was going to host the next meeting in June 1965, it was essential to secure the support of the Arab states for admission into the group.[150] The problem however, was Malaysia's hope of being admitted would be slim with the negative image painted by Indonesia as "Israel of the Far East". In the face of external isolation by Indonesia's *Konfrontasi* and mounting domestic opposition, it was quite clear to the government that its liberal policy towards Israel was untenable.[151] Therefore, the second step was to shift her foreign policy to support the Arab states against Israel.

The challenge was to do this without losing its freedom of action or undermining the ruling Alliance government by reopening the domestic debate about Israel. The government believed that the question of recognition of Israel had already been settled as early as in 1960 by allowing a private member's bill on the question of the recognition of the state of Israel to be thoroughly debated in the Parliament.[152] Therefore, the

[149] DR20051964, "Hansard Parliamentary Debates (House of Representatives) First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.2,p.44,"(1964).
[150] "Malaysia Has Every Right to Attend Second Afro-Asian Conference...", *The Straits Times*, 27 November 1964; DR03121964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.26,pp.3451,"(1964); DR26051965 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. II No.1,p.24."
[151] Abdullah Ahmad, *Tengku Abdul Rahman and Malaysia's Foreign Policy 1963-1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Berita Publishing Sdn. Bhd., 1985). p.111.
[152] The private member's motion on the withdrawal of recognition of Israel was tabled by PMIP. It was remarkable that in the debate which lasted more than four hours all but two of the speakers were Muslims suggesting that the issue was largely viewed as a Malay-Muslim issue rather than an issue of national importance. See DR01121960 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Second Parliament, Vol.II No.27,pp.3067-3116,"(1960).

government did not wish to re-open the debate. For the government, its policy was tantamount to "recognition without approval" which meant that it merely acknowledged the *de jure* existence of Israel as a state but did not go so far as establishing diplomatic relations.[153] Second, the government was also concerned that renewed debate would undermine national unity given Malaysia's cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of the population.[154] Furthermore, the government was not willing to allow the re-opening of the debate because she needed to have the space to calibrate her policy towards the Middle East.

In this regard, the government had to carefully consider her policy choices to ensure coherence with her overall foreign policy. In the case of the Middle East conflict, Malaysia had initially taken a position that the Arab-Israel conflict ought to be resolved by the concerned states in line with the universally accepted principle of non-interference. Additionally, due to her own modest foreign service establishment the young government did not see the Arab-Israeli conflict as a foreign policy priority. On the other hand, Indonesia had taken a more active stance and even offered to send offered to send troops for peacekeeping tasks in Gaza.[155] The difference between Malaysian and Indonesia also extended to the arena of sports. While Indonesia banned participation of Israeli athletes and sportsmen in major events hosted by Indonesia, Malaysia took a principled position of separating politics from sports.[156]

[153] DR03121964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.26,pp.3451."
[154] The Tunku was clearly aware of the difficulty of running such a politically, religiously and culturally divided society as expressed in his speeches and writings. See for example Tunku Abdul Rahman, *Looking Back: Monday Musing and Memories*.
[155] Quiko, "The Role of Foreign Minister Subandrio in Indonesian Politics: An Analysis of Selected Indonesian Foreign Policies, 1957-1965." p.31.
[156] DR20051964, "Hansard Parliamentary Debates (House of Representatives) First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.2,pp.94-95,"(1964); DR18121964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol.1 No.39,p.5029,"(1964).

As such, the government did not wish to be taken to task for her policy on Israel. Although Malaysia did not recognise Israel, she had maintained a carefully calibrated policy on Israel in view of the potential benefit in other areas. As such there was no restriction on scientific cooperation, travel or trade. Both countries maintained basic bilateral interaction in the form of visits to attend international conferences and exchanged congratulatory messages on the occasion of their respective National Day. The Israeli government conveyed its congratulations on the occasion of Malaya's independence while Malaysia also participated at the Israeli National Day celebration in Singapore. [157] Trade-wise, Israeli products were being sold freely in Malaysia. As can be seen in the tables 2.4 and 2.5 below, just prior to the *Konfrontasi*, Israel was an important market for Malaysia's principal exports, rubber and tin.[158] Besides these main commodities, many manufactured and agricultural products from Israel were also available in the Malayan and Singaporean markets.[159] In Kuala Lumpur, an Israeli trading company, Astraco, had been operating a branch office in Kuala Lumpur under the name Interasia since March 1963.

Table 2.3: Rubber and tin export to Israel (DR25111964. "Hansard Parliamentary Debates First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.19." p.2627, 1964)

Year		**Tin**	**Rubber**
1963		38,470	30,370
Jan-July 1964		-	5,9938,000

[157] "Yong Going to Israel," *The Straits Times*, 10 August 1960; "Toast on Israel Independence Day," *The Straits Times*, 23 April 1969; "Israel Steel Putty Sold in Singapore," *The Straits Times*, 11 March 1960; "World Wishes the King Well," *The Straits Times*, 6 January 1961; "Orange Juice Unlimited, but No Water for Mr. Singh," *The Straits Times*, 5 June 1962.
[158] DR25111964 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.19,p.2627,"(1964).
[159] Given the degree of economic interdependence Israel for example established a trading house in Singapore and a branch in Kuala Lumpur known as Interasia Trading Co. See for example "Industrial Chief for S'pore," *The Straits Times*, 16 December 1960; "Israel Steel Putty Sold in Singapore."; "Israeli Firm Sets up Shop in Singapore," *The Straits Times*, 6 September 1960; "Israel's Malaysia Hopes," *The Straits Times*, 14 September 1962..

Table 2.4: Balance of trade between Malaysia and Israel (DR25111964. "Hansard Parliamentary Debates First Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. I No.19." p.2627, 1964)

Year	**Balance of trade ($)**
1963	-3,113,020
Jan-July 1964	-1,437,820

- Denotes negative balance of trade

Given the liberal policy towards Israel, the Malaysian government did not object when the Israeli foreign ministry took over the running of the Astraco branch office as a *de facto* Israeli trade office headed by a career diplomat when Astraco decided that it was not economically viable to maintain the branch.[160] Therefore from 1964-1966 Israel operated a de facto diplomatic mission in Kuala Lumpur under cover as a trade office.

Over and above, the Tunku also had his personal reasons to avoid scrutiny on the government's policy on Israel. The Tunku felt that it would be difficult for the government not to recognise Israel as it would have been "an act of extreme ingratitude" since Israel was among the countries that supported Malaya's admission into the United Nations.[161] According to Israeli sources, the Tunku did not have strong feelings against Israel. According to the Israeli official who headed the trade office in Kuala Lumpur, Israel had approached the Tunku as early as in 1956, to interest Malaya to establish diplomatic ties with Israel after gaining independence. In his article the Israeli officer, Moshe Yegar, recalls that: [162]

[160] Moshe Yegar, "Malaysia: Anti-Semitism without Jews," *Jewish Political Studies Review* (2006).
[161] "Tengku Talks of Problem of Israel," *The Straits Times*, 13 December 1957.
[162] "Malaysia: Anti-Semitism without Jews."

> Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett visited Kuala Lumpur in1956 and met with Tunku on 14 October 1956. Sharett suggested that an Israeli consul be appointed in Kuala Lumpur and, after independence, be elevated to ambassadorial level. According to Sharett, the Tunku's response was "favourable without hesitation" and he said he "welcomes the proposal with pleasure". The Tunku also said, however, that the idea had to be approved by the British Foreign Office, which was responsible for foreign relations until independence. Before parting, the Tunku reiterated his own approval and said, "It will be considered an honour for us to have a diplomatic representative from Israel". On 26 August, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion sent a congratulatory letter to Tunku and expressed Israel's readiness to establish "appropriate representation" in Kuala Lumpur and expressed willingness to vote in support of Malaya's admission in the United Nations. However apparently when approached by the Israeli delegation on 23 December, a member of Malaya's UN delegation informed the Israeli delegation that while Malaya recognised Israel she had no desire to establish diplomatic ties. On 10 November 1959, the Israeli envoy to Australia, Moshe Yuval, reported that he had met the day before with the Tunku during the latter's visit to Australia. Among other things, the Tunku told him "I remember my conversation with Mr. Sharett. The leadership of Malaya knows the character of Israel very well, but the Muslim masses in our country are opposed to you. Therefore, we cannot establish diplomatic relations with you.

The Tunku's ambivalence towards Israel was also clear in the ministry's notes in response to the overture of the Israeli government in 1962, through the British, to open a Consulate in Singapore. The Tunku replied that [163]

> Such an appointment might not be politically sound because of the strong anti-Israeli feelings here particularly after the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Syria. We do not oppose the appointment, but we advise that there should not be any commitment at this stage by us.

Deep inside him, it appears that the Tunku sincerely believed that Malaya should stay out of the Middle Eastern politics. In making his case, the Tunku recalled that when the Malay states had sought the assistance of the Arab League against the British 1945, they were rebuffed because the Arab states regarded the Malay states as not an Arab concern.[164] Despite this slight, the Tunku believed that the Malayan government had

[163] "MN1962.03.17 from Tan Sri Zaiton Ibrahim, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs to Prime Minister," (1962); "MN1962.03.22 from the Prime Minister to Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry for External Affairs," (1962).
[164] DR01121960 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Second Parliament, Vol.II No.27,pp.3067-3116." (1960).

supported the Arab League by refusing Israel's repeated requests to establish diplomatic relations. Therefore, the Tunku felt that it was not fair for the Arab countries to expect Malaya to blindly follow their anti-Israel policy as well.[165]

Diplomatic presence in Beirut

Since it had been agreed that Malaysia should adopt a supportive stance towards the Arab states in the Middle East conflict, a physical presence in the Middle East was necessary to amplify her policy shift. But where? During the *Konfrontasi*, Malaysia had embassies in Cairo and Jeddah only. Beirut was chosen as a suitable city for Malaysia's third diplomatic representation in the Middle East. With its press freedoms and its reputation as trade and financial capital of the Middle East, Beirut was a popular city for foreign diplomatic missions. As a "hub of international politics" it was reasoned that Beirut could provide a useful insight into the regional perspective particularly in respect of the Arab-Israeli politics.[166] Further, with so many diplomatic missions and intelligence agencies, Beirut would be an excellent listening post for the government to keep an ear on and counter the campaign mounted by Indonesia together with China and Pakistan against Malaysia.[167]

Lebanon's position as a Front-Line State in the Arab Israeli conflict was another consideration as it would afford the opportunity to discern Lebanon's and the Middle East policy towards Israel. Beirut was also an excellent choice because as a hub for international travel, there would be ample opportunities for the prime minister and other

[165] Tunku also strongly believe that it was wrong for the Arab countries to expect Malaysia to unquestioningly follow their example and sever ties with Israel just as the Malayan government did not insist on other countries to break relations with communist states just because Malaya was at war with communism. Ibid.,p.3092.
[166] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."
[167] Thomas Friedman's book "From Beirut to Jerusalem" gives a lucid description of how Beirut, even at the height of the civil war was a major listening post Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989).

ministers to meet with their Lebanese counterparts on their transit in Beirut. Finally, it was imperative to handle Syria as well since it was suspected that Syria too had been influenced as well as pointed out by the ambassador in his report to the Deputy Prime Minister:

> As you know too, Syria has not been that friendly with us. She is continuously being fed with Supeni's and China's propaganda using our recognition of Israel as their counter points against us. [168]

Therefore, a presence in Beirut would allow a closer watch on the Syrians as well. Following the recommendation of the Malaysian ambassador in Jeddah, initially, the plan was to accredit the Malaysian ambassador in Jeddah to Beirut.[169] The Malaysian proposal was formally transmitted to the Lebanese ambassador in Jeddah on 21 July 1964.[170] But curiously the Lebanese ambassador inquired whether the Malaysian government actually issued the simultaneous announcement on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on 16 July 1963. If it had indeed been issued, explained the ambassador, then Lebanon would have accredited her ambassador to Malaysia.[171] Only then it became clear that the "inexplicable" delay of Mr Ramiz Sharma taking up his post in Kuala Lumpur was in fact initially a diplomatic excuse. The *Konfrontasi* had put Lebanon in a quandary. Ramiz Shamma could not take his post due to the strong influence of Indonesia, China and Pakistan. Therefore, the Malayan government's decision not to accredit an ambassador to Beirut seemed as a convenient diplomatic

[168] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."
[169] "DC1964.05.16 from Ambassador Kamaruddin, Jeddah to Tun Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister," (1964); "DC1964.07.09 from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah ", (1964); "DC1964.07.15 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah seeking agrement for the concurrrent appointment of the Malaysian ambassador in Jeddah to Lebanon," (1964); "DC1964.07.22 from the Embassy of Malaysia, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the appointmment of ambassador to Beirut," (1964); "MD1964.12.08 Concurrent accreditation of the ambassador of Malaysia in Cairo to Beirut and Algiers," (1964); "OL1964.12.29 from the ministry of finance to the ministry of foreign affairs suporting the concurrent accreditation of the Malaysian Ambassador in Jeddah to Beirut and Algiers," (1964).
[170] "DC1964.07.21 from Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah to Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs."
[171] "DC1964.08.24 from Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia, Jeddah to Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs."; "DC1964.09.04 from Raja Aznam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Hanafiah Ahmad, Embassy of Malaysia,Jeddah."

excuse to indefinitely delay the ambassador's departure for Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, it was now up to Malaysia to salvage the situation by accrediting her ambassador to Beirut.

Although, initially it was thought that Beirut could be covered from Jeddah, it was later decided to shift the accreditation from Cairo instead as it was a major diplomatic capital.[172] Jeddah on the other hand was still very much a diplomatic backwater.[173] There were also other logistic and administrative obstacles in Jeddah as compared to Cairo. Further, many influential Asian and African countries such as Thailand, Ghana, Guinea and Burma as well as others such as Australia also accredited their ambassadors from Cairo.[174] Therefore, Beirut became the third Arab capital in the MENA region to which Malaysia accredited an ambassador.

However, it was still a gamble. Failure in Beirut meant that Malaysia would have no chance to get her message across to the other more conservative Arab capitals. So it was not enough to merely have a non-resident ambassador who would only periodically be able to visit Beirut, as he would be no match for Indonesia which not only had a large diplomatic presence in Beirut but also sent many delegations to visit the capitals to keep them updated of her position on geopolitical developments.[175] Therefore, a more permanent presence was needed without excessively stretching the government's financial and human resources.

[172] "OL1965.02.14 from T Pathmanathan, ministry of foreign affairs to the ministry of finance seeking comments on Concurrent Accreditation of the Malaysian Ambassador in Cairo to Beirut," (1965); "Ol1965.02.16 from the Treasury on the Concurrent Accreditation of the Ambassador in Cairo to Beirut," (1965); "DC1966.02.26 from the ministry of foreign affairs to the embassy of Malaysia, Cairo conveying decision to concurrently accredit the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo to Beirut," (1966); "DC1966.05.04 from the Embassy of Malaysia, Cairo seeking agre'ment from the Lebanese government for the concurrent appointment of the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo to Beirut" (1966).

[173] Even as late as in 1971, Jeddah still lacked elementary facilities. As such, initially the Tunku operated out of Beirut after assumption of his post as the first Secretary General of the OIC. See Ahmad Kamil Jaafar, *Growing up with the Nation*

[174] "RD1965.11.03 from Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister."(1965)

[175] According to the embassy reports, one of the frequent visitors was Madam Supeni Pudjobuntoro, the third deputy foreign minister who was also Sukarno's special envoy for Asia-African matters. "Interview with Marshall Green, US Ambassador to Indonesia 1965-1969," in *Concerning Indonesia,1965-69* (Library of Congress, 2004).

Based on these considerations, the Tunku who was also the foreign minister recommended setting up an honorary consulate in Beirut.[176] The candidate whom the Tunku had in mind for the position of honorary consul was Omar Jundi, who was then working with the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC).[177] Although he was just an employee, Omar had proved to be well connected in Beirut. The honorary consulate was thus established in Beirut in 1965. Malaysia's first ambassador to Beirut, Dato Ya'acob Latif presented his credentials in 1966.[178] Under this arrangement, while the ambassador in Cairo periodically visited Beirut, the honorary consulate provided a permanent point of contact with the Lebanese government and the diplomatic community in Beirut.

Luckily for Malaysia, by the time she finally had a physical presence in Beirut in 1965, the need for diplomatic offensive against Indonesia receded. Nevertheless, the Malaysian embassy in Beirut, in coordination with British, Australian and American efforts, managed to contribute to the propaganda war to neutralize Indonesia's propaganda particularly by emphasizing the influence of the communists in the Sukarno administration.[179] By 1965, the uneasy triumvirate between the PKI, Sukarno and the army started to unravel. In its bid to entrench its power with Sukarno, the PKI had sought to push a wedge between him and the army.[180] By pushing Sukarno to create an armed civilian force to be known as the Fifth Force, the PKI hoped to undermine the army. As

[176] It was during his visit to Malaysia for the Malaysia Day celebrations that Tunku asked Omar Jundi if he would agree to represent Malaysia as Honorary Consul in Beirut. Even before his appointment, the Tunku had received requests from other Lebanese businessmen to act as Malaysia's honorary consul. See "OL1964.10.12 from Saadeddin Shammah, Manager of Atef Shammah& Bros to Tunku Abdul Rahman," (1964).
[177] Sometime in June 1960, Omar Jundi recalls receiving a message from Ghazali Shafie, the Permanent Secretary of the Malayan foreign ministry through the BOAC office in Kuala Lumpur to meet and assist Tunku Abdul Rahman during his transit in Beirut on his way to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London. On this and many other occasions, Omar Jundi not only assisted Tunku during his stopovers in Beirut but also helped secure unscheduled meetings with key Lebanese political leaders. Omar Jundi's appointment as an Honorary Consul in Beirut and the appointment of Malaysia's ambassador to Cairo concurrently to Beirut were approved by the Cabinet at the same meeting on 8 December 1965.
[178] "RD1966.09.21 From Ya'acob Latiff, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo, to Tunku Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister," (1966).
[179] David Easter, "'Keep the Indonesian Pot Boiling': Western Covert Intervention in Indonesia, October 1965-March 1966," *Cold War History* 5, no. 1 (2005).
[180] Anthonie C.A. Dake, *The Sukarno File, 1965-1967: Chronology of a Defeat*, ed. Vineeta Sinha, Syed Farid AlAtas, and K.B. Chan, vol. 9, Social Sciences in Asia (Leiden Boston: Brill, 2006).

PKI had by then succeeded in penetrating all levels of government, it had supporters in the army as well. As such, those who were not supportive of the plans for the Fifth Force fell under Sukarno's suspicion. As tensions grew, the left leaning faction of the army engineered a coup on 30 September 1965 that is known as Gestapu (Gerakan September Tiga Puluh) that kidnapped and killed six generals who were opposed to the communists' plan.[181]

The short-lived coup was soon toppled by the army under Gen. Suharto which unleashed an orgy of mass killings of known and suspected communist members. Recently declassified cables from the US Embassy and consulates in Indonesia indicate that more than half a million people were killed in Indonesia between October 1965 and March 1966 and that the US had known of the mass murders and may even have tacitly assisted in providing information about the communists to the Indonesia army.[182]

Although the *Konfrontasi* ended in 1966, Malaysian foreign policy did not revert to a neutral stance. Instead, fresh developments in the region gave an impetus for Malaysia to further solidify her pro-Arab foreign policy. In 1967, the Arab states suffered a massive defeat by Israel in the Six Day War. The massive Arab defeat in the war, gave Malaysia ample opportunities to express her support for the Arab position. As a show of support to the Arab states, the government also began to reverse many of its policies on Israel. It should be underlined here that it was the Tunku who personally pushed for some of these high-profile shifts. To ensure wide domestic and international coverage, these foreign policy shifts and announcements were given high profile coverage in the media.[183]

[181] Donald E. Weatherbee, "Interpretations of Gestapu, the 1965 Indonesian Coup," *World Affairs* 132, no. 4 (1970).
[182] National Security Archive, "U.S. Embassy Tracked Indonesia Mass Murder 1965," https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/indonesia/2017-10-17/indonesia-mass-murder-1965-us-embassy-files.
[183] During this period the government hosted several important personalities to gain a better understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict. These events also served as an effective manner of expressing Malaysia's support for the Arab position. One such visitor was Dr Yusuf Haikal, a Jordanian who had served in several Ambassadorial posts. Being of Palestinian origin and having served as the mayor of the city of Jaffa he was received by several government agencies including the Ministry for External Affairs. In his

Therefore, the Israeli trade office in Kuala Lumpur was ordered closed amidst prominent media coverage.[184] Malaysians were from prohibited from visiting Israel and imports of Israeli products were banned.[185] While all these initiatives appeared to be unilateral policy shifts, they were aimed at demonstrating solidarity with the Arab states. Apart from overt foreign policy shift towards the Arab position, Malaysia also hosted high profile Islamic conferences and Quran reading competitions aimed at projecting an Islamic policy.[186] One of these conferences was the International Islamic Conference held from 21-28 April 1969.[187] It was at the margins of this conference that the Tunku made a decision to allow the al Fatah to open an office in Kuala Lumpur thus making Malaysia the first state in Southeast Asia to allow the Palestinians to have foreign representation.[188] The post-*Konfrontasi* period thus was a period of reaffirmation of Malaysia's commitment and support to the Arab states against Israel. Therefore, when an analysis was done of the number of articles related to foreign policy towards the Middle East as a percentage of the total articles on the Middle East, it does not come as surprise that Malaysia's policies or reaction towards the Arab-Israeli conflict jumped from an insignificant level prior to the *Konfrontasi* to a high of about 35% at the height of *Konfrontasi* as shown in the Figure 2.3.

conversation with Ghazali Shafie, the latter explained that in the early years of independence Malaya did not have a clear understanding of the problem.

[184] "Israeli Trader Expelled," *The Straits Times*, 13 January 1966; "Mengapa Saudagar Israel Di-Suroh Keluar," *Berita Harian*, 22 March 1966; "Allegations Not True, Says Israeli Businessman," *The Straits Times*, 14 January 1966.

[185] "RC1967.03.01 between Dr Yusuf Haikal and Tan Sri Mohamad Ghazali Shafie, Permanent Secetary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (Kuala Lumpur 1967).

[186] "Premier to Open Koran Contest," *The Straits Times*, 18 January 1965; "Al-Aqsa Fund Campaigns in Two States ", *The Straits Times*, 18 September 1969.

[187] Malaysia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Diary of Events for 1969,"(Foreign Affairs Malaysia, 1969).

[188] The Palestinian representatives were not invited to the conference as they were not recognised as a government. Nevertheless, three members of the Al Fatah arrived in Kuala Lumpur and tried to gate-crash into the conference. However, they were not permitted. Later the leader of the Al Fatah delegation, Mr Abu Hisham met with the Tunku. At that meeting, the Tunku approved their request to open an office in Kuala Lumpur. Although, the official reason was to allow them to raise funds for their cause, it was also a means of allowing the Palestinians to have an official status. Nevertheless, the government's cautious approach can be seen in the fact that the Palestinians were only allowed to operate out of an Arab embassy at first. They temporarily set up office at the Embassy of Saudi Arabia. "Commandos Gate-Crash Islamic Talks," *The Straits Times*, 25 April 1969; Philip Mathews, "Tengku Agrees to an Al-Fatah Office," ibid., 27 April ; Fifi Lim, "Universal Principles Govern Our Support for the Palestinian Cause," *New Straits Times*, 24 July 1984; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Diary of Events for 1969."

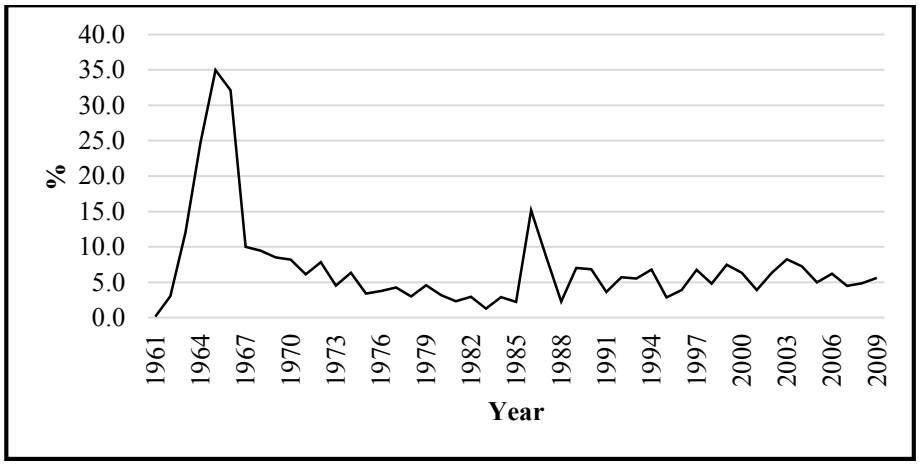

Figure 2.3: News articles on Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Middle East as a percentage of all articles about the Middle East

Source: The Straits Times

Under this arrangement, bilateral relations with Lebanon assumed greater visibility. Records indicate that there were several high-level visits from Malaysia to Lebanon between 1966-1969 as shown in Table 2.5. Besides these visitors, the Tunku frequently stopped over in Beirut on his trips to Europe. According to Jundi, besides the Tunku, Tun Datu Mustapha, the Chief Minister of Sabah was also a frequent visitor. He was able to fly to Beirut frequently as he flew in a private plane. Tun Mustapha bought a piece of prime property in Beirut to build a hotel. However, he was later forced to sell it off when his political star faded. Tun Mustapha also left a mark as a major donor for the construction of the Al Amine mosque in Beirut.[189]

[189] Interview with Omar Jundi 10 December 2013.

Table 2.5: Bilateral visits from Malaysia (1966-1975) (private notes and letters, Omar Jundi, Honorary Consul General of Malaysia)

Year	Visit
1966	Their Majesties the Yang di Pertuan of Negeri Sembilan and Consort
June 1966	Kedah Chief Minister, Syed Omar Syed Abdul Shahbuddin
1967	Their Majesties the Raja and Permaisuri of Perlis
1968	Minister without portfolio, Mr Ghaffar Baba
October 1969	Mr Taib Mahmud (later to be Chief minister and Governor of Sarawak), Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry
11 April 1972	Tan Sri Mohamad Noah, former Speaker of the Senate
12 June 1972	Tunku Abdul Rahman as Secretary General of the OIC
12 June 1972	Tun Datu Mustapha, Chief Minister of Sabah
16 June 1972	Tan Sri Manickavasagam, Minister of Labour
9 July 1972	Tun Datu Mustapha, Chief Minister of Sabah
15 July 1972	Tunku Abdul Rahman as Secretary General of the OIC

In the 1960s, Lebanon also extended technical assistance to Malaysia. Given the position of the Beirut airport as an international travel hub, Lebanon regularly conducted training courses for officials in the airline industry. In this context, officials of the Malaysia-Singapore Airlines underwent training courses in air travel safety in Beirut conducted by the Lebanese Civil Aviation Safety Centre in Beirut.[190] Malaysia also sought technical assistance in the form of training for artisanal skills for MARA trainers.[191] Reflecting the advancement in the state of bilateral relations, in 1974, Malaysia and Lebanon also concluded an Air Services Agreement.

By 1967, with Sukarno's Indonesia discredited, Malaysia managed to completely erase the negative image portrayed during the *Konfrontasi* and was accepted as a strong supporter of the Arab position and a staunchly anti-Israel.[192] Malaysia's relationship with

[190] "OL1965.02.12 from Omar Jundi, Honorary Consul, Beirut to Ali Abdullah, Embassy of Malaysia, Cairo," (1965).
[191] "Beirut Experts to Help Mara Leather Industry," *The Straits Times*, 21 March 1968.
[192] "RC1967.03.01 between Dr Yusuf Haikal and Tan Sri Mohamad Ghazali Shafie, Permanent Secetary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

Lebanon continued to attract public attention with the appointment of ambassadors to replace the earlier ones.[193] Consequently, public interest also mounted for Malaysia to have her own resident Embassy in Beirut.[194] However, the main problem for Malaysia was that she could not set-up a full-fledged embassy so long as Lebanon's ambassador still had not taken up post.[195]

Therefore, the Malaysian government decided to set up a trade office in Beirut instead headed by a Trade Commissioner.[196] Unlike an embassy, a trade office was easier to open as it did not involve diplomatic procedures. In addition, as the staffing would be provided by the ministry of trade and industry, the establishment of trade office would also relieve the foreign ministry of the strain of manpower shortage. The trade office in Beirut was opened in 1969. Although the principal function of the office was to promote trade, it was also an official point of contact with the Lebanese government. Besides conveying Malaysia's stance on the Middle East conflict and monitoring political developments, the trade office also facilitated bilateral cooperation.

The final piece that needed to be put in place was to press Lebanon to accredit an ambassador to Kuala Lumpur. For Lebanon, the rupture in diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Malaysia had presented a dilemma. She could not reciprocate Malaysia's appointment of her ambassador to Beirut so long as Malaysia and Pakistan still had not restored diplomatic relations. Therefore, appointing her ambassador in Karachi to Kuala

[193] "DC1968.01.13 from the Embassy of Malaysia, Cairo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveying Lebanon's agre'ment for new Malaysian ambassador to Lebanon," (1968); "TPN1971.01.03 from the Embassy of Malaysia, Cairo to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon Informing of the Date of Presentation of Credentials of Abdul Khalid Awang Osman," (1971).
[194] DR14021967 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates of the Third Session of the Second Parliament Vol. III No.31 p.4484,"(1967).
[195] "DC1971.06.04 from Khor Eng Hee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo," (1971); "DC1972.11.01 from Muhammad Khatib Hamid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Nik Mohamed Hassan, Embassy of Malaysia in Cairo," (1972).
[196] The designation of a Trade Commissioner is a non-diplomatic term used by the Malaysian Government to denote the official heading the trade section of an Embassy. Although in diplomatic practice all officials posted to a diplomatic mission, who are not from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are designated as Attaché, the term Trade Commissioner was adopted to give a sense of importance accorded to these officials.

Lumpur at that point would have created frictions in her bilateral relations with Indonesia and Pakistan. The best course of action for Lebanon, therefore, was to postpone the accreditation of her ambassador to Kuala Lumpur.

Although Malaysia and Pakistan resumed diplomatic ties in 1966, the political conditions in Lebanon had changed once again.[197] Following the elections in August 1964, Charles Helou had replaced Fuad Chehab as president. Under pressure from the Maronites, Helou was forced to roll back some of his predecessor's socio-economic reforms. As such Lebanon once again returned to a laissez faire economic policies with less static intervention.[198] Whatever minor socio-economic reforms that were attempted during the Chehab presidency were rolled back. Along with it the proposal to accredit an ambassador to Kuala Lumpur. Additionally, the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967 also diverted the government's attention to the political and security situation of the country. Hence, it was not until the return of normalcy in Beirut and the election of a new president in 1970, and pressure from the Malaysian government that Lebanon moved to nominate a new candidate as ambassador to Kuala Lumpur.[199]

The first Lebanese ambassador to Malaysia, Mr Adra Abdel Rahman presented his credentials in 1972, nine years after his government had first proposed the establishment of formal diplomatic ties. By the time the Lebanese ambassador presented his credentials, the Tunku had stepped down and Tun Abdul Razak (hereinafter Razak) had taken over

[197] Malaysia and Pakistan resumed ties on 8 September 1966 with Iranian mediation. The efforts involved backroom channels involving the Malaysian ambassadors in Manila and Paris and the Pakistani, Iranian and Libyan ambassadors in both capitals. "DC1966.01.05 from Tunku Ya'acob, Ambassador of Malaysia in Paris to the Prime Minister reporting the offer of Iran to mediate", (1966); "DC1966.01.28 from Ali Abdullah, Ambassador of Malaysia in Manila to Kassim Mohd,. Hussein, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, conveying Pakistan's interest to resume ties", (1966); "DC1966.02.17 from Kassim Mohd Hussein,Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ali Abdullah, Ambassador of Malaysia, Manila with Malaysia's acceptance to take up Pakistan's offer to work through a third party," (1966); "OL1966.03.24 from Tunku Abdul Rahman to the the Shah of Iran, Mohamed Shah Pahlavi, thanking for the Shah's offer to mediate," (1966); "Malaysia-Pakistan Ties Again, Says Tengku," *The Straits Times*, 8 September 1966.
[198] Traboulsi, "Shihabism and the Autonomy of the State (1958-1970)". pp.144-145.
[199] "OL1972.11.26, from Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia to Lebanon, to Mr. Najb Sadaka, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon urging the Lebanese government to appoint an ambassador to Kuala Lumpur," (1972); "DC1972.11.26 from Nik Mohamed Nik Hassan, Embassy of Malaysia, Cairo to Muhammad Khatib Hamid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the response of the Lebanese government," (1972).

as prime minister. Under Razak, Malaysia continued to maintain a pro-Arab foreign policy but for a different reason. Razak's priority, first as the Director of the National Operations Council (1969-1974) and subsequently, as Prime Minister (1974-1977), was to regain domestic and international confidence in the country following the racial riots that ultimately ended with the suspension of the Parliament and civil liberties.[200] Therefore under Razak, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was conceived as a catalyst for national development in order to address the underlying causes of racial discontent.[201]

As the successful implementation of the NEP depended on a strong economic growth, the government hoped that through diplomacy, the oil-rich Arab states could be tapped as an external resource for national development plans. Given, the importance of having a presence in Beirut, the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo recommended that a resident embassy be established in Beirut but headed by a *Charge' d'Affaires*.[202] The possibility of upgrading the trade office as a consulate was also explored.[203] However, the proposal was later dropped.[204] Although Malaysia did not open a resident embassy in Beirut, the importance of the Middle East compelled Razak to undertake grueling multi-country visits to the Middle East.[205] Formal discussions during these visits would

[200] The race riots took place after the 1969 general elections. It is sometimes referred to as the 13 May riots.
[201] The NEP had two broad objectives: to eradicate poverty irrespective of race by increasing employment, and to redress economic imbalance among the various races. Khairiah Salwa Mokhtar, Chan Ai Reen, and Paramjit Singh Jamir Singh, "The New Economic Policy (1970-1990) in Malaysia: The Economic and Political Perspectives," *GSTF Journal of Law and Social Sciences (JLSS)* 2, no. 2 (2013).
[202] "DC1971.01.14 from Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tan Sri Zaiton Ibrahim Ahmad, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,"(1971); "DC1971.02.04 from Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1971).
[203] "DC1971.06.15 from Mustapha Mohammed, Trade Commissioner in Beirut to Muhammad Khatib Hamid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on proposal to upgrade the trade office to a full fledged diplomatic mission," (1971); "DC1971.06.16 from Mustapha Mohamed, Trade Commissioner in Beirut to Haji Abdul Khalid Bin Awang Osman, Malaysian Ambassador in Cairo," (1971); "DC1971.06.04 from Khor Eng Hee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo."; "DC1971.06.17 from Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Khor Eng Hee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1971); "DC1971.07.14 from Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia,Cairo, to Khor Eng Hee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs ", (1971); "DC1971.09.10 from Muhammad Khatib Hamid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Mustapha Mohammed, Trade Commissioner in Beirut," (1971); "DC1971.09.21 from Mustapha Mohammed, Trade Commissioner in Beirut, to Muhammad Khatib Hamid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1971); "DC1971.10.18 from Mustapha Mohamed, Trade Commissioner, Beirut to Muhammad Khatib Abdul Hamid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs with supporting justifications to upgrade the trade office," (1971); "DC1971.11.30 from Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo to Tan Sri Zaiton Ibrahim, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs," (1971).
[204] "DC1972.01.13 from Tan Sri Zaiton Ibrahim, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Abdul Khalid Awang Osman, Ambassador of Malaysia, Cairo ", (1972).
[205] "Missions to West Asia," *The Straits Times*, 25 April 1975; "Razak to Visit Four Arab Countries," *The Straits Times*, 1 January 1975; "Razak Off Today to Seek Gulf States' Investment ", *The Straits Times*, 19 January 1975; "Razak in Kuwait for 3-Day Visit," *The Straits Times, 20 January 1975, Page 23*, 20 January 1975; Wikileaks, "Prime Minister Razak Visit to Middle East ", 1975KUALA00008_b (Wikileaks, 1975).

revolve around two main themes. In the major oil producing and cash-rich Gulf states as well as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the most important issue for Malaysia was to seek external trade and investment and financial assistance. The other issue was the situation in the Middle East. The discussions enabled Malaysia to update herself on the current developments in the region and locate herself within the Arab common position on the issue. The pro-Arab foreign policy no doubt facilitated trade and investment with the oil-rich Arab states.[206] Although in relative terms, the volume of trade with the Middle East was still small in comparison to Malaysia's overall trade, in absolute terms, trade with the Middle East increased nearly fourfold from $169 million in 1969 to $654 million in 1974.[207]

Even though by 1972, Malaysia and Lebanon finally had accredited their ambassadors to each other's capitals, the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 made it difficult for them to maintain normal relations. As the security conditions continued to deteriorate, Malaysia's trade office had to be closed in 1975.[208] In Beirut, the beleaguered government recalled her ambassador who was forced to return to Beirut the same year without even making the customary farewell calls in Malaysia.[209] Although diplomatic relations were not ruptured, in practical terms, bilateral relations could no longer be conducted. It would take almost two decades for bilateral relations to resume as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

[206] "Razak Gets $400 M Arab Pledge," *The Straits Times*, 3 February 1975; "$60 Mil Loan from Kuwait," *The Straits Times* 27 June 1975.
[207] Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*(London, GBR: Routledge, 1997).
[208] "MN1976.06.16 of Meeting held at the Ministry of Trade and Industry to close the trade office in Beirut," (1976).
[209] "OL1976.04.10 from Ambassador Adra Abdel Rahman to Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithaudeen", (1976).

Conclusion

From the previous sections, we have seen how the interaction of the factors at the three levels of analysis influenced the decision of Malaysia and Lebanon to establish formal diplomatic relations.

For Malaysia, it was the realisation of her isolation in the Middle East due to the Jakarta-Beijing-Karachi axis that triggered the need for urgent diplomatic presence in the Middle East. It was reasoned that acceptance by the Arab states was crucial if Malaysia were to be accepted to join the Afro-Asia conference that was to be hosted by Algeria in 1965. Beirut was seen as the best place because of Lebanon's neutral position with regards to regional political situation and also because of her free press. Geopolitically, Lebanon's location also made it possible for Malaysia to monitor the developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict and respond directly. Although the *Konfrontasi* ended in 1966, the massive Arab defeat in the 1967 Six Day War and the continued Israeli intransigence also provided Malaysia further justification to strengthen her relations with Lebanon.

External conditions also influenced Lebanon's foreign policy. Although Malaysia had granted *agre'ment* for her ambassador in 1963, the ambassador-designate could not take up his post in Kuala Lumpur as the relations between Malaysia and Pakistan were deteriorating and eventually ended in rupture. Under that condition, it would have been awkward for Lebanon to accredit her ambassador to Kuala Lumpur from Karachi. Although Malaysia and Pakistan restored diplomatic ties in 1966, the tenuous political and security situation in Beirut following the outbreak of the Six Day war in 1967 did not allow her to nominate another candidate as ambassador. Finally, it should be noted that just as external conditions encouraged the establishment and elevation of bilateral relations, external conditions were also responsible for its disrupture as the deteriorating

security conditions resulting from the civil war made it impossible for both countries to maintain normal bilateral relations.

From the discussion, we saw that it was domestic socio-economic policies in Lebanon during the Chehab presidency that set the stage for Lebanon to seek diplomatic ties with Malaysia. The economic orientation of her foreign policy and the government control by the economic oligarchy also encouraged this move as Malaysia's importance as a trading partner would contribute to Lebanon's economic interests. With the appointment of a Muslim to high-profile post as ambassador to Kuala Lumpur, the government could claim to be addressing the interests of the Muslims. However, in Malaysia because of the preoccupation with the *Konfrontasi* and financial and human resource constraints, diplomatic accreditation to Lebanon was not a priority for Malaya.

Malaysia's determination to break out of her diplomatic isolation moved the government to undertake a foreign policy shift. From an initial stance of neutrality towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, Malaysian foreign policy clearly became pro-Arab. Although, it would have been ideal to have an embassy in Beirut, financial and human resource constraints did not allow Malaysia to open a full-fledged embassy in Beirut. Therefore, an honorary consulate and trade office were established to provide for a physical presence on the ground without stretching the resources of the foreign ministry.

The discussion demonstrated that leaders played a very important role in influencing the bilateral relations. In the case of Lebanon, the primary responsibility for the decision to seek diplomatic ties with Malaysia was driven by the socio-economic reforms pursued by president Chehab. However, as Chehab's successor undid the reforms diplomatic relations with Malaysia ceased to be a priority. It was only under a new

president that Lebanon, once again decided to nominate a new candidate as ambassador to Malaysia.

The study also showed that the Tunku's role was both as an impediment and as a facilitator of bilateral relations. Although, initially he was not convinced of the need to have diplomatic ties with the Arab states, he changed his position once it became clear that Malaysia had to make strong efforts to erase the negative image painted by Indonesia. It was the Tunku who personally proposed to establish an honorary consulate in Beirut. It was the Tunku also who personally picked Omar Jundi as honorary consul as he had known him for several years and had been impressed with his vast network and connections. Likewise, the Tunku was also instrumental in the decision to open a trade office.

Malaysia's initial neutral stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict too has to be understood from the perspective of the Tunku. He could not afford any drastic change in foreign policy as the country was dependent on the Great Britain and the West for her survival. However, when it became clear that Malaysia's admission into the Afro-Asian bloc was essential it was a pragmatic move to support a shift to a non-aligned foreign policy in common with the Afro-Asian bloc. It was the Tunku himself who was responsible for the high profile anti-Israel policies such as the closure of the Israeli trade office and the banning of trade and all ties with Israel. Likewise, the Tunku was personally responsible for allowing the Palestinian organisation, Al Fatah to open an office in Kuala Lumpur in 1969, making Malaysia the first and only country in Southeast to do so. His successors, Razak and Hussein were also instrumental in keeping these policies and further strengthening Malaysia's ties with the Arab states.

In Indonesia, Dr Subandrio also played an instrumental role in bringing the *Konfrontasi* to the Middle East by painting Malaysia as the "Israel of the Far East". Seizing the *Konfrontasi* as a means to achieve his political ambition of taking over from Sukarno drove Subandrio to use his friendship with the Chinese and the Pakistani leaders and the Afro-Asia platform to isolate Malaysia. Other Indonesian individuals such as Madam Supeni also used her position as Sukarno's special envoy for Afro-Asian affairs to advance Subandrio's agenda.

However, this chapter did not discern any role of other sub-state actors such NGOs. The media's role was in providing extensive coverage of the government's policy shifts, certainly helped in the government's diplomatic efforts to counter Indonesia's campaign against Malaysia. It could also be argued that the extensive media coverage encouraged public demand for demands for a resident embassy in Beirut. Hence, we can conclude that as far as sub-state actors are concerned, only leaders played a role during this period of investigation.

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, Malaysia's decision to enhance her bilateral relations with Lebanon was not due to any perceived material benefit from Lebanon. If it was not for the need to extricate herself from diplomatic isolation in the Middle East that had been engineered by Indonesia, Malaysia might not have even accredited an ambassador to Beirut, let alone establish an honorary consulate or a trade office. We also saw that the shift in foreign policy from a neutral stance to a pro-Arab one was also driven by the need to extricate from isolation. Clearly, therefore the facts have established that the Malaysia's bilateral was underpinned by her perception towards Indonesia.

While the *Konfrontasi* officially ended in August 1966 with the resumption of ties between Malaysia and Indonesia, it did not mean that Malaysia's problem were over.[210] A pro-Arab foreign policy shift was needed to gain the trust and acceptance of the Arab states. As such, Malaysia continued to maintain strong diplomatic ties with Lebanon in order to win over the Arab states over the long-term. Razak, who succeeded the Tunku also continued to maintain this foreign policy. However, under Razak, the primary reason was no longer Indonesia but a desire secure external resources from the Arab states. However, with a short overlap after the end of the *Konfrontasi*, Israel became the reason for maintaining strong bilateral relations with Lebanon.

The disastrous defeat of the Arab states rendered the Middle East region extremely unstable. It also stirred sentiments of sympathy the Malays for their Arab co-religionists. Once again, the issue of recognition of Israel was raised by the Islamic opposition party, as well as UMNO backbenchers. These demands put the government in a difficult position as juridically it would be impossible to deny Israel's existence as she had already been recognised internationally as a state even before Malaya's independence.

Hence, the best option open to the government was to adopt a high profile anti-Israel foreign policy as it would be a more effective means of demonstrating solidarity with the Arab states. In addition, a strong diplomatic presence in Beirut was also essential as a show of support for the Arab states and also to quell domestic criticisms. Therefore, Tunku's successors, continued the policy of maintaining a strong diplomatic presence in Beirut.

[210] Malaysia and Indonesia signed an agreement on 11 August 1966 to mark the end of the *Konfrontasi*. However, it was not until 1967 that both countries had embassies in each other's capitals. See "Confrontation Ends," *The Straits Times*, 12 August 1966; "Moerdani Arrives with That Peace Message," *The Straits Times*, 27 August 1967.

Clearly, therefore the decision to continue with a diplomatic presence in Beirut and the strong pro-Arab and anti-Israel policies were taken in response to the impact of Israel on the external environment. Had it not been for the civil war that broke out in 1975, it is almost certain that Malaysia would have opened a resident embassy in Beirut. However, as the civil war was extremely disruptive, the trade office was temporarily closed and when conditions did not improve, it was closed in 1976. The severity of the war also made it impossible to maintain formal bilateral relations.

CHAPTER 3: INTERREGNUM – CIVIL WAR YEARS (1975-1989)

The Syrians are trying to say that the Lebanese are not capable of ruling themselves.

Walid Jumblatt
Lebanese politician

Let me tell you something that we Israelis have against Moses. He took us 40 years through the desert in order to bring us to the one spot in the Middle East that has no oil!

Golda Meir
Israeli Prime Minister
https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Golda_Meir

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was shown that the enhancement of Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon during the *Konfrontasi* particularly from 1965 to 1966 was due to Indonesia. It was also shown that after the *Konfrontasi*, Israel came into the picture as the main factor in keeping bilateral relations alive. The massive Arab defeat in the Six Day war provided further justification for enhanced bilateral relations with Lebanon.

From 1967 to 1975, Malaysia and Lebanon enjoyed robust bilateral relations. Apart from bilateral visits, Lebanon also offered Malaysia technical assistance. One of the most prominent aspect of this elevation of bilateral relations was the opening of a trade office in Beirut. In fact, as suggested in the same chapter, Malaysia would have most likely opened a resident embassy in Beirut had it not been for outbreak of the civil war in 1975. The chapter concluded by observing that despite robust bilateral relations, the chaotic conditions following the outbreak of civil war made it impossible to have a physical presence in Beirut. Although diplomatic relations remained intact, all formal bilateral

interaction had to be held in abeyance until they could resume after the civil war ended. Hence in this thesis, the period of the civil war is termed as the Interregnum.

The civil war also marked the end of the first Lebanese Republic (1943-1975). With it the old political order ended and a new one began after the end of the civil war known as the Taif Republic or the Second Republic.[1]

Despite the absence of formal bilateral relations during the civil war, Malaysia continued to adhere to a pro-Arab foreign policy. Why was this so? The aim of this chapter is to examine and explain the foreign policy of Malaysia during the civil war years using the three levels of analysis.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first examines the conduct of bilateral relations in the final moments before it was suspended following the civil war. The second section briefly traces the evolution of the civil war to give an idea of the horrors of the war and how it gripped the world attention and shaped public opinion in Malaysia. The third section examines Malaysian foreign policy during the civil war while the fourth focusses specifically on the influence of non-state actors on foreign policy. The final section discusses the findings of this chapter.

[1] Post-Taif Lebanon is sometimes referred to as the Taif Republic or the Second Lebanese Republic. It is considered to have been created with the signing of the Taif agreement in 1989. The main features differentiating the second republic from the pre-war Lebanon is the change is power sharing arrangement between the Christians and Muslims. Since the Taif agreement also contains provisions for the eventual abolition of the confessional system with a majoritarian system, it is generally implied that the Second Republic will give way to the Third Republic once the present power arrangements under the Taif agreement ceases to hold. However, with the withdrawal of Syrian troops following the mass uprising after Rafiq Hariri's assassination, the country slid into another political crisis in which the political parties fell into two opposing camps vying to exert power, with each camp being supported by external players. As tensions between the two camps threatened to blow up into another civil war, an Arab League mediation effort convened a meeting in Doha which resulted in another agreement known as the Doha agreement that modified the method of selection of the president and formation of the cabinet. As the Doha agreement merely modified the Taif agreement but did not abolish confessionalism, scholars such as Imad Salamey have differentiated the two periods by referring the period from 1989-2008 as the Taif Republic and the period after 2008 as the Doha Republic. See Christine Asmar, Maroun Kisirwani, and Robert Springborg, "Clash of Politics or Civilizations? Sectarianism among Youth in Lebanon," *Arab Studies Quarterly* (1999); Imad Salamey, *The Government and Politics of Lebanon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).

Cessation of formal bilateral relations

From 1975, the political situation in Beirut took a turn for the worse as sectarian tensions finally broke out into civil war. Beirut itself was split into two – west and east Beirut. With the city physically divided and deteriorating public services such as telecommunications, water and electricity supply, the trade office found it hard to operate normally.[2] As the conditions in Beirut appeared too serious to suggest quick recovery Tun Abdul Razak, hereinafter Razak, who also held the post of foreign minister, approved the closure of the trade office. [3]

Initially it was thought that the trade office could be temporarily moved to Cairo with the idea of re-opening it in Beirut after the war. In the meantime, the trade office could assist the Malaysian embassy in Cairo to handle Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations and trade. It was hoped that bilateral trade that had begun to decline could be captured from Cairo on the assumption that the small volume of trade that was traditionally handled by Beirut would divert to Egypt.[4] The figures of the trade office showed that since the onset of the war, two-way trade had declined down to about one sixth of the pre-war levels. However, Cairo was found to be an unsuitable location. Apart from lacking the requisite physical and legal infrastructures, under the socialist government, the Egyptian public service was inefficient. Furthermore, burdened by cumbersome and opaque foreign exchange controls Cairo was perpetually short of foreign exchange. Additionally, Cairo's potential as an alternative city for the trade office was diminished by Egypt's poor relations and absence of diplomatic ties with her larger neighbouring states, Libya and Syria. In any event, a comprehensive analysis revealed

[2] "MN1976.06.16 of Meeting held at the Ministry of Trade and Industry to close the trade office in Beirut."
[3] "RD1978.11.03 from the Ministry of Trade and Industry on the closure of the trade office in Beirut," (1978).
[4] Ibid.

that trade had actually diverted to Istanbul as shown in the table 3.1 below. Further as it became clear that no quick end in sight to the civil war, Turkey was therefore proposed as the location of the new trade office. With the closure of the trade office Malaysia's modest diplomatic presence in Beirut came to an end.

Table 3.1: Malaysia's trade with selected Middle Eastern countries (USD millions) (RD 1978.11.03, From the Ministry of Trade and Industry)

Country		1975	1976	1977
Libya	Exports	1.0	3.9	1.6
	Imports	n.s	n.s	n.s
	Total	**1.0**	**3.9**	**1.6**
Syria	Exports	2.6	3.4	6.5
	Imports	0.005	0.012	0.6
	Total	**2.605**	**3.412**	**7.1**
Turkey	Exports	25.7	38.5	28.8
	Imports	4.1	9.9	5.9
	Total	**29.8**	**48.4**	**34.7**
Egypt	Exports	2.4	19.6	14.7
	Imports	2.9	1.5	1.7
	Total	**5.3**	**21.1**	**16.4**
Lebanon	Exports	1.1	0.1	0.9
	Imports	0.3	0.3	0.1
	Total	**1.4**	**0.4**	**1.0**

n.s - Not significant

Although the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo was still accredited to Beirut when the civil war broke out, he could no longer visit the city. Even the decision to close the trade office could not even be officially transmitted to the Lebanese foreign ministry as the latter had been destroyed in the war and the officials could not be contacted. As such the letter was conveyed to the Malaysian honorary consul in Beirut.[5] Since there was no real government in place, Malaysia also could not send a new ambassador to replace him. Meanwhile, without a functioning government Lebanon was not even able to

[5] Ibid.

nominate an ambassador to replace her ambassador in Pakistan after his recall. Therefore, from 1975 onwards Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations existed on paper only. It would take another almost two decades before bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon could resume normally as will be discussed in the next chapter. The suspension of bilateral relations with Lebanon also brought into question the direction of Malaysia's foreign policy. The next section will trace the origins an evolution of the civil war and the Malaysian foreign policy during this period. It will also introduce Rafik Hariri who will play a major role as prime minister of the post-civil war Lebanon. More will be said about him in the next chapter.

The Lebanese civil war, 1975-1989

The social re-engineering policies of his presidency had sharpened the antagonism between the Christians and Muslims. Among the Christians there was unhappiness at the policies that favoured the Muslims. The Helou presidency (1964-1970) was a difficult period for the Lebanese state. In this contest, the formation of the PLO in 1964 had a galvanizing effect of the Palestinian refugee camps. With the support for the PLO by the Arab states, PLO elements in the refugee camps were emboldened to conduct their activities in Lebanon. As such they began to participate in guerilla attacks on Israel from Southern Lebanon.[6] By 1969, the PLO had become entrenched in the major cities of Lebanon. The PLO activities also threatened the security of Lebanon as she became the target of Israeli retaliatory attacks. Unable to handle the Palestinians, the Lebanese government was basically coerced by Egypt to sign an informal agreement known as the Cairo Agreement in 1969 which the PLO was given full autonomy to run their affairs

[6] For an account of the Palestinian resistance activity in Lebanon and its role in the civil war, see Michael C. Hudson, "The Palestinian Factor in the Lebanese Civil War," *Middle East Journal* 32, no. 3 (1978).

within the Palestinian refugee camps but refrain from interfering in Lebanese politics.[7] However, given the weak nature of the state, Lebanon was unable to prevent the Palestinians from interfering in local politics by siding the Muslims against the Christians. In 1970, Suleyman Franjiyeh was elected president by one vote in a closely contested elections. Succumbing to pressure from the Maronite business and political elites, Franjiyeh dismantled the Chehabist policies of strengthening the state by enacting policies to redress the socio-economic imbalance. He also scaled down the military intelligence unit, the *Deuxieme Bureau*, that President Fuad Chehab had used to control Christian dissent. The weakening of the security institutions was exploited by the largest Christian party, the Kataeb (phalangist) and the other Christian parties to form their own militias to fight the PLO. In response to the Christian militias, the left-leaning parties coalesced to form the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) that called for the ending of the confessional political system. The PLO sided with the LNM. Lebanon in 1975 was like a bomb waiting to blow up.[8]

Despite being called the Lebanese civil war, in reality it was a regional conflict as 55% of the combatants were foreigners as compared to only 45% Lebanese. Lebanon was in fact a common ground to settle regional scores. The main foreign forces comprised of the Syrians, Palestinians, Iranians, and the Israelis. On the Lebanese side was the Lebanse Army and the various relious militias. Among the Christians, the main militias were the Lebanese Forces also known as Al Kataeb in Arabic, Al Marada led by the Frangiyeh clan in the north and the Israeli-supported Southern Lebanese Army (SLA) in the Israeli controlled zone in the south. The main Shiite militias were the Amal and Hezbollah and the Druze dominated Socialist Party.[9] The spark that ignited the civil war

[7] Cobban, "The Making of Modern Lebanon." p.109.
[8] Numerous studies have explored this period. See in particular, K.S. Salibi, *Cross Roads to Civil War: Lebanon, 1958-1976* (Caravan Books, 1976); F. El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976* (Harvard University Press, 2000).
[9] Salim Nasr, " Anatomie D'un Système De Guerre Interne : Le Cas Du Liban " *Cultures & Conflits* 1(1990).

in Lebanon occurred in Beirut on 13 April 1975, when gunmen killed four members of the Kataeb Party. Believing that the attackers must have been Palestinians, the Phalangists retaliated the same day by attacking a bus and killing 27 Palestinian who were on their way to a refugee camp. In reaction to these events, fighting broke out in various parts of Beirut. Scholars generally divide the Lebanese civil war into either three, four or even five phases from 1975 to 1989. This division into phases is mainly to emphasise the evolving balance of power between the government and the militias and also to underscore the role of external players. For the purpose of this study, the civil war is divided into four phases. In Malaysia, the civil war made the headlines. However, it did not inflame passions or arouse much debate in the parliament except when bilateral relations had to be ceased due to the war. It is most likely that in the beginning, it was assumed that the war would be a short-lived phenomenon.

The first phase was from 1975 to 1976. Intense battles between the Christian militias and the LNM/PLO marked this phase. Out of the estimated 100,000 casualties claimed in the 15-year civil war, over 40,000 were killed in this phase alone.[10] As the balance of power turned in favour of the LNM/PLO in 1976, the beleaguered president Suleiman Franjiyeh, appealed to Syria to help.

The involvement of Syria marked the beginning of the second phase which lasted from 1976 to 1982. Syria's superior military power succeeded in putting an end to the fighting. However, neither the Christians nor the PLO were satisfied with the outcome. The Maronites wanted to defeat PLO and drive the Syrians out of Lebanon. The PLO knew that it had to be militarily strong to prevent defeat at the hands of the Maronites. Therefore, the Kataeb party and the Christian factions that were unhappy with Franjiyeh's

[10] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society* p.35.

overture to Syria, reorganised themselves as the Lebanese Forces.[11] In line with the famous Machiavellian dictum "the enemy of the enemy is a friend", the Lebanese Forces reached out to Israel.

With the defeat of the Labour government, the new Israeli government under the Likud headed by Menachem Begin, began to take actively support the Lebanese Forces by sending troops and supplies.[12] Israel also created its own militia known as the Southern Lebanon Army (SLA) headed by a renegade Lebanese officer, General Saad Haddad.[13] In the hope of finally defeating the PLO, Israel invaded southern Lebanon on 14 March 1978. However, Israel failed in her quest. In response to the Lebanese government's complaints, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 425 calling Israel to withdraw from Lebanon.[14] The resolution also created the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

However, the mood in Israel continued to be defined by the Likud government's desire to annihilate the PLO. In this regard, the Camp David accords signed between Israel and Egypt was a major encouragement. Secure in the belief that the Camp David peace treaty had removed any threat of attack from attack from Egypt, hawkish government in Israel was convinced that the external conditions were propitious to eliminate the PLO.

As such the third phase of the civil war was marked by Israel's involvement in Lebanon. In this regard, Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 code-named Operation "Peace for Gallilee". It was during this period that the infamous massacre of the Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps took place.

[11] Lewis W. Snider, "The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon's Politics," *Middle East Journal* 38, no. 1 (1984).
[12] Schiff, "Lebanon: Motivations and Interests in Israel's Policy."
[13] "Maj. Saad Haddad, 47, Israel's Christian Ally in Southern Lebanon," *The New York Times*, 15 January 1984.
[14] United Nations, "UN Security Council S/Res/436 (1978)."

This event shocked Malaysians as well. It not only made the headlines, but it was also routinely in the news as Israel's involvement was perceived as an invading force ignoring the wishes of the locals. This event in particular aroused Malaysian public sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian refugees as will be shown later.[15] An inquiry found Israel guilty in the massacre.[16] Following international uproar, Israel was forced to withdraw keeping a strategic area of control in Southern Lebanon. (Figure 3.1) Israel's withdrawal left a vacuum which was filled by even more fiercer fighting among the militias.

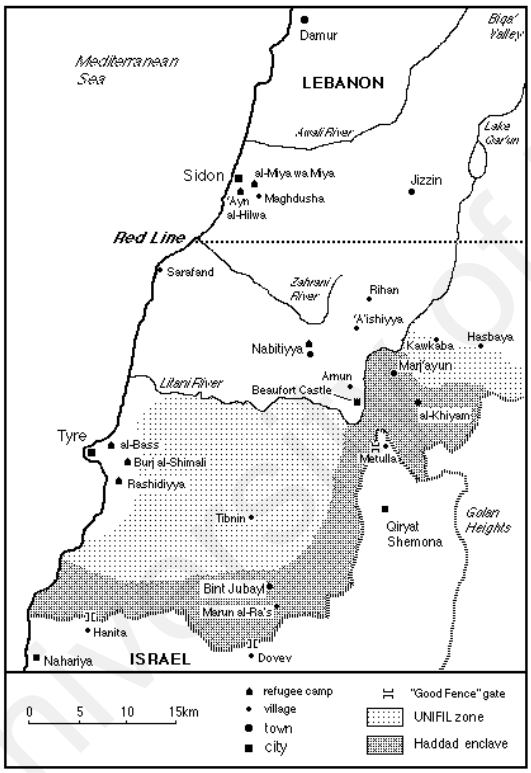

Figure 3.1: Israeli Security Zone

Source: http://prrn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/brynen2_05.htm

[15] "Abim May Help War Victims in Lebanon," *The Straits Times*, 24 June 1982; "$1 Million for Palestinians," *The Straits Times*, 12 October 1982.
[16] Richard Falk, "The Kahan Commission Report on the Beirut Massacre," *Dialectical Anthropology* 8, no. 4 (1984).

As the government was facing imminent disintegration, the beleaguered president Amin Gemayel sought the help of the United States and Europe for help.[17] In response, the United States, France and Italy sent a multinational peacekeeping force to help restore the sovereignty of the Lebanese government. However, this pit the multinational forces against the militias that were hostile to the government. In the end, the US Marines and French troops were target of terrorist attacks mounted by Hezbollah. With that the multinational troops pulled out of Lebanon. During this period, the government existed in name only. Beirut and the country had been cantonised and was control of different militias. It was a period of unprecedented violence as the sectarian militias carried out a process of "sectarian cleansing" by simply killing anyone who was not of their religion.[18]

Although the Lebanese government under Amin Gemayel had been ineffective, the inability to elect a new president at the end of his term ushered in a constitutional crisis that ultimately pushed the civil war into its final phase from 1988 to 1989. Unable to elect a president, the outgoing president Gemayel appointed the Lebanese Chief of Army, Gen. Micheal Aoun as interim prime minister and head of government. Citing the appointment of a Christian as prime minister as a violation of the National Accord, Salim Hoss, the prime minister formed a rival government in mainly Muslim West Beirut.[19]

As the crisis once threatened renewed external support for the Lebanese militias, the US encouraged by the end of the Cold War wanted to settle the civil war. Therefore, with the support of the US, an Arab League proposal led by Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco and with Syria's support, a peace agreement was finally drawn up. Through the intermediary of Rafik Hariri, who had earned his reputation as a reliable intermediary,

[17] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*. pp. 38-41.
[18] Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*
[19] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*. pp.41-43.

Saudi Arabia convened formal negotiations. For this purpose, all remaining elected Lebanese parliamentarians who were elected in the last elections in 1972 were flown to the city of Taif by Rafik Hariri. These negotiations resulted in a compromise in the form of a peace accord known as the Taif agreement. The primary focus of the Taif agreement was to douse the flames of war which it did by modifying the power-sharing formula in favour of the Muslims to address the dissatisfaction over the power-sharing formula. However, the Taif agreement postponed the fundamental source of the problem, by keeping the confessional political system intact.[20]

Malaysian foreign policy during the civil war

In the previous chapter, it was shown that even after the *Konfrontasi* ended, Malaysia continued to pursue a pro-Arab foreign policy. The humiliating Arab defeat at the hands of Israel in the Six Day war served the rationale for maintaining this stance as it enabled Malaysia to demonstrate her unequivocal support for the Arab states. Although bilateral relations ceased with the onset of the civil war, Malaysian foreign policy did not revert to a neutral position of the pre-*Konfrontasi* because it now served a different domestic function as will be explained below.

The Tunku's successors continued with a pro-Arab foreign policy but for different reasons. Unlike during the Tunku's rule, when the foreign policy shift in support of the Arab states was a necessary condition to assure her own survival, under Razak it served as a means of securing external resources for socio-economic development.[21] In fact, as the NEP was still in its infancy, Malaysia was still in need of financial assistance as well

[20] For a discussion on the Taif Agreement see Ghassan Abdallah, "Lebanon's Political System: An Analysis of the Taif Accord" (Ph.D., University of Houston, 2003).
[21] "Razak Off Today to Seek Gulf States' Investment "; "Razak to Visit Four Arab Countries."; "Razak Gets $400 M Arab Pledge."

as trade and investment from the Arab states. Thus, Razak's demise in 1976 did not lead to any change in foreign policy.

Razak's successor, Tun Hussein Onn (hereinafter Hussein) also maintained a pro-Arab foreign policy. Therefore, Hussein continued in Razak's footsteps by expanding ties with more Arab states. Like Razak, Hussein too frequently visited the major Arab capitals. Given that Malaysia still had a modest diplomatic presence in the Middle East which had been diminished by the suspension of bilateral relations with Lebanon, these high-level visits served an essential purpose as a means for her to demonstrate her presence and articulate her support for the Arab states.

In the Middle East, where the dominant form of government was either dictatorial or monarchical, personal rapport between the prime minister and the Arab leadership was essential for trade, investment and other forms of cooperation which depended on government approval. Therefore, it was no coincidence that Hussein lost no time in charting out his visits on the heels of the suspension of bilateral relations with Lebanon in 1976. Among his earliest overseas visits were to Egypt, Libya, Iraq and Turkey in 1976. The focus on the Palestinian issue during his visits based on the Arab position which was based on UN Security Council resolutions ensured global media coverage. [22]

As in Razak's administration, a pro-Arab foreign policy continued to serve as an external material resource for national development.[23] These visits were also useful for securing assistance in the form of soft loans. Libya for example provided Malaysia with

[22] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, "Malaysian/Arab Palestinian Solidarity Day," in *Foreign Affairs Malaysia,*(1976).
[23] "Malaysia Has Eye on Petrodollars," *The Straits Times*, 20 November 1976; "Malaysia Taps Arab Funds," *The Straits Times,* , 2 September 1976; "Razaleigh Off to Seek $770 Million Loan," *The Straits Times,* 25 March 1977."Hussein: Talks in Egypt, Libya Fruitful'," *The Straits Times*, 20 January 1977.

a USD 25 million soft loan to fund projects under the Third Malaysia Plan.[24] The role of the Malaysian embassies in supporting Malaysia's foreign policy towards the MENA region as a source of financial assistance and trade was emphasised in a special conference of the heads of Malaysian diplomatic missions in the region.[25] Malaysia also benefitted from public and international sources such as the Islamic Development Bank loans for its infrastructure projects as well private loans for the building of mosques and religious schools.

However, it also served a new domestic need. With the defection of the Islamic party, Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), from the ruling National Front coalition in 1977, Hussein's administration had to face challenge of an Islamic opposition. Razak did not have to contend with an Islamic opposition as PAS was a member of the ruling coalition from 1972-1977. Besides pressure from PAS, Hussein's government also had to deal with the phenomenon of the *dakwah* movement.[26] In pressing for observance of greater piety in daily life, the *dakwah* groups were also critical of the government as being un-Islamic. For them, poverty, racial inequality, corruption and injustice were expected outcomes of secular governance. This was worrying to the government as it tantamounted to a rejection of the developmental state model.[27]

As the New Economic Policy (NEP) was essentially a roadmap conceived and driven by the government to bring the socio-economic status of the Malays up to par with

[24] "$25 Mil Loan Pact with Libya Signed," *The Straits Times*, 14 September 1977; "Hussein to Sign Three Pacts in Libya," *The Straits Times*, 29 December 1976. "Two Arab Banks Pledge $300 Mil for Malaysia's Development," *The Straits Times*, 3 April 1977.
[25] "Hussein Briefs Heads of Missions," *The Straits Times*, 11 March 1977.
[26] *Dakwah* is a general Malay term for missionary and proselytising work. For a discussion see Saodah A Rahman and Abu Sadat Nurullah, " Islamic Awakening and Its Role in Islamic Solidarity in Malaysia, ," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences,* Vol. 29, no. 1 (2012); Mohamad Abu Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 10 (1981); "Two Arab Banks Pledge $300 Mil for Malaysia's Development," *The Straits Times,* , 3 April 1977.
[27] A developmental state is the state is focused on economic development and takes a strong interventionist stance to plan and regulate economic development. Malaysia is widely accepted as a model of a developmental state. See A. Leftwich, "Bringing Politics Back In: Towards a Model of the Developmental State " *The Journal of Development Studies,* 31, no. 3 (1995); Jeff Tan, "Can the East Asian Developmental State Be Replicated? The Case of Malaysia," in *Development Models in Muslim Contexts : Chinese, 'Islamic' and Neo-Liberal Alternatives*, ed. Robert Springborg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

the other races, the government was rightly worried that the *dakwah* groups' exhortation to the Malays to reject secular governance and a retreat into religious orthodoxy could ultimately undermine UMNO's claim as the protector of Malay rights and hence its political legitimacy. To neutralise the influence of the *dakwah* groups, the government had to prove that it did not neglect Islam. Therefore, under Hussein the government resorted to "supplying" the demand for more 'Islam' in national life.

The Palestinian issue was chosen because it was something that the Malays could easily identify with. In the next section it will be shown that with the extensive media coverage about the civil war in Lebanon, the plight of the Palestinian refugees was not foreign to Malaysians. The government also continued to enact policies to further restrict or cut off any indirect ties with Israel. Hence, by 1977 all trade whether direct or indirect with Israel were completely banned under the Customs Prohibition Act.[28] Under Hussein too visits to the Middle East were a priority. Diplomatic relations were also established with the Arab states. The close bilateral relations with the Arab world also helped bring in much needed financial assistance for the erection of visible symbols of its commitment to Islam such as the Islamic Economic Development Foundation, the Islamic Bank, Pusat Islam and *Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah*.[29] By taking a strong pro-Arab position externally and instituting programmes and policies to promote Islam, domestically, the government could "claim" to be sensitive to the aspirations of the Muslim ummah.[30] As a concrete expression of Malaysia's commitment to the Palestinian quest for statehood, the government finally made public its support for the Palestinian office in Kuala Lumpur in

[28] DR26111980 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament, Vol III, No.51, p.6257 "(1980).
[29] Judith Nagata, "Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia," *Pacific Affairs* 53, no. 3 (1980).
[30] "Be Wary of Bid to Split Muslim Unity: Hussein," *The Straits Times*, 3 March 1977; "Hussein to Open *Dakwah* Month," *The Straits Times*, 14 October 1978; "Hussein: We'll Strengthen Muslim Unity," *The Straits Times*, 24 August 1978.

1977 by allowing the PLO to operate out of their own premises with financial support from the Malaysian government.[31]

Having claimed the upper hand as the "protector of Islam", the government was therefore able to take coercive measures against these *dakwah* movements by forcing them to cut links with foreign entities, withholding permission for the *ceramah*s and restriction on the printing materials.[32] By satisfying the Malays through its Islamic programmes, the government sought to retain popular Malay support for the government. Hence, a pro-Arab foreign policy indirectly played an important role in lending credence to the ruling coalition's hold on power i.e. regime maintenance.

Hussein's successor, Dr Mahathir Mohamad (hereinafter Mahathir), also continued with a pro-Arab policy for domestic objectives. Like Hussein Onn, Mahathir also had to deal with an intensified challenge from the *dakwah* movement with tacit support from the opposition Islamic party, PAS. The collusion between the popular *dakwah* groups such as the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) and PAS was a serious threat for the government.[33] Their rejection of the economic development programmes pursued by the country was a direct challenge to UMNO's political hegemony in the *Barisan Nasional* government. Apart from stunting national development the espousal of a theocratic state was especially unsettling for the government for such a move could sow discord in the

[31] After initially operating out of the Saudi Arabian embassy, the al Fatah operated out of the Libyan Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. It was only after the PLO was officially established that the Palestinian representation moved into its own office. In a reply to questions in the parliament, the foreign minister explained that the government provided some financial support for the PLO office in terms of rent free building and a car. Wikileaks, "PLO Office in Kuala Lumpur Establishes Official Address," 1977KUALA06403_c (Wikileaks, 1977); "Malaysian Support for the Palestinians,"(1978).

[32] "Risalah: Why No Permit," *The Straits Times*, 16 November 1979; "Negative Islam: Western Press Attacked," *The Straits Times*, 31 December 1979; "March 16 Will Be "Solidarity Day" ", *The Straits Times*, 1 March 1979; ibid.; "ABIM ordered to cut ties with foreign organisations," *The Straits Times*, 23 October 1980; "ABIM does not get funds from M-E," *The Straits Times* 11 August 1981; DR31101980 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Fifth Parliament, Vol.II, No.37, p.4703,"(1980).

[33] Debate during the second reading of the budget bill 1981 "Kalau selama ini pemimpin-pemimpin ABIM sendiri apa yang saya tahu berkali-kali menafikan yang mereka bukan PAS, atau bukan anak PAS atau alat kepada PAS dari hakikat apa yang dilafazkan oleh Ahli Yang Berhormat itu jelas menunjukkan sebagai bukti yang nyata bahawa PAS begitu berminat sekali untuk melindungi ABIM" (As far as I know the leaders of ABIM themselves have thus far denied that they are not PAS or a part or instrument of PAS but from the statement of the Honourable Member, it is clear that PAS is keen to protect ABIM). DR31101980 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Second Session of the Fifth Parliament, Vol.II, No.37, p.4703,"(1980).

multiracial country and ultimately unravel the existing consociational political order.[34] Therefore, it was imperative for the government to nip the collusion of PAS and the *dakwah* groups.[35]

Mahathir's approach has been described as "fighting Islam with more Islam" or promotion of a "right" Islam or even as "accommodation, co-option and confrontation".[36] Apart from challenging PAS at the domestic level, Mahathir also innovatively used foreign policy to undermine Islamic opposition. In his speeches, Mahathir would criticise PAS as hypocrites for not standing up to defend other Muslims in other parts of the world. Implicit in his messages was that UMNO was more Islamic than PAS as it spoke on behalf of the Muslims globally.[37] In other words, Mahathir's objective was to undermine the appeal of PAS' narrow interpretation of Islam. He wanted to demonstrate compatibility between Islam and modernism. At a broader level, Mahathir's objective was to demonstrate that the weak position of the Muslim world compared to the west and Israel was a direct consequence of their shunning modernity.

Malaysian foreign policy therefore underwent a dramatic shift under Mahathir. This change was very obvious in the way that Malaysia approached the Arab-Israeli conflict. Previously, Malaysia's policy on the Middle East echoed the position taken by

[34] Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia."
[35] See for example Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*; David Camroux, "State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-Option, and Confrontation," *Asian Survey* 36, no. 9 (1996); Jason Abbot and Sophie Gregorios-Pippas, "Islamization in Malaysia: Processes and Dynamics," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 2 (2010); Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, "Islamist Realignments and the Rebranding of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia*," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008); "Risalah: Why No Permit."
[36] "Patterns of State Interaction with Islamic Movements in Malaysia During the Formative Years of Islamic Resurgence," *Southeast Asian Studies* 44, no. 4 (2007).
[37] Mereka yang mendakwa bahawa mereka cuma mengakui keislaman mereka dan kononnya menolak semangat kebangsaan Melayu, tidak pula berani mempertahankan orang yang seagama dengan mereka di Afghanistan, atau di Lubnan atau di lain-lain tempat. Keislaman mereka terhad kepada kegiatan di Malaysia sahaja di mana kebangsaan Melayu UMNO dapat memberi perlindungan kepada mereka. Sifat mereka ini adalah sifat hipookrit atau sifat talam dua muka. Dan mereka adalah begitu fanatik kepada parti mereka sehingga mereka tidak menyoal sama ada pendirian parti mereka baik atau tidak. Mereka inilah yang sebenarnya dari golongan Asabiyah. (Those who claim that they only recognise their Islam and reject Malay nationalism, dare not defend their co-religionists in Afghanistan, or in Lebanon or in other places. Their Islam is only confined to Malaysia where UMNO is able to provide protection to them. They are hypocrites. And in their fanatical support of their party they do not question whether their party's stance is good or bad. In reality, it is they who are from the Asabiyah group). Office of the Prime Minister, "Opening Speech by Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the 35th Umno General Assembly," Speech collection archives of former chief executives, Office of the Prime Minister,Putrajaya (1984).

the Arab states. Hence, Malaysia's official diplomatic position as regards the Arab-Israeli conflict called for the withdrawal of occupied territories based on the UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as shown earlier in the extracts of the speeches made by Hussein during his trips to the Middle East.

However, Mahathir took a different approach. Given the strong anti-Jewish sentiments among the Malays, Mahathir trained his sights on Israel knowing that his words would find support among the Malays.[38] However, he needed a more creative way of articulating the Palestinian issue. The standard formulation based on the UN resolutions were restrictive in the sense that they were bound by the reference to the occupation of the Palestinian lands. Hence, there was little room for an "original" position on the subject. Therefore, Mahathir expanded the debate by framing the Palestinian refugee problem as an outcome of Israeli intransigence. In describing the suffering of the victims, in this case, the Palestinians, he would use terms to convey the idea of premeditated, massive and repeated atrocities as shown in his first speech at the UNGA in 1982 after the brutal Sabra and Shatila massacre. [39]

> In West Asia, the situation has also taken a turn for the worse since the General Assembly last met. For the umpteenth time since the Palestinians were evicted from their homeland, they have been forced to move from one refuge to another. Their rights as a people are still being denied. They are not even treated as humans as the brutal massacres in the Lebanon amply demonstrate.
>
> We remember vividly the horrors of Belsen, Dachau and other Nazi concentration camps of the second World War. We know of the sufferings of the Jewish people then and the pogroms of centuries past. We were appalled at the atrocities. Nevertheless, nobody, not even a people who had suffered as much as the Jews had, have the right to inflict upon others the horrors of Sabra and Shatila. The Palestinians and the Lebanese were not responsible for Belsen or Dachau.

[38] Interview with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, former prime minister, Putrajaya, 16 January 2016.
[39] Office of the Prime Minister, "Speech at the 37th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 1982," Speech collection archives of chief executives (1982).

For Mahathir, the reference to the suffering of the Lebanese or the Palestinians served as a bridge to link the Israeli to an agenda of annihilation of the Arabs that would escalate and threaten international peace and security as seen below:[40]

> We understand the conscience which bothers the people who had once been cruel to the Jews. We understand their need to make amends for their past misdeeds. But are we going to condone massacres because we, or rather the powerful nations of the world, are unwilling to hurt the feelings of the Jews. Some may think that the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila camps will satiate the Israelis and that they will go back to their Israel. This can only be a wrong assumption. Recent history has shown, and the Israeli going to be under constant threat and off and on they will be invaded, and atrocities committed against them. In the interest of Israeli security there will be no security for its neighbours. Can we accept that only the security of Israel is important, that its Arab neighbours have no right to security?

> Apart from its systematic and premeditated use of lethal and sadistic weapons on occupied Palestine and Arab territories, Israel continues to propagate the myth of the non-existence of the Palestinian people and thereby frustrate all peaceful efforts to find a just and enduring settlement of the West Asian conflict. Indeed, the lesson we have learned from the Israeli invasion of neighbouring Lebanon and the destruction of Beirut is that if Israel is not stopped the West Asia problem will not only continue but it will escalate until we are all swallowed up in the conflagration.

By choosing the UN General Assembly which has always been pro-Arab, Mahathir could ensure broad coverage of his views. He could also articulate his views and at the same time avoid being labelled as an anti-Semite because technically the speech was about highlighting the Arab side of the conflict. Mahathir's tactical use of Israel to satisfy a domestic need of regime maintenance sets him apart his predecessors and successors. This approach is unique that it could be termed as 'anti-Israelism'. A central feature of anti-Israelism is the use of international fora such as the annual United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) debates to link his criticism of Israel to emphasise Malaysia's support for the Arab

[40] Ibid.

states. The same message was repeated in all his speeches at the UN General Assembly debates. His speech at the 1986 UNGA was particularly strong accusing Israel as conducting a holocaust against the Palestinian people as can be seen below:[41]

> We are witnessing a holocaust inflicted on the Palestinian people. Israel, on the one hand, is given what amounts to carte blanche to do whatever it likes, through the support and protection of super-powers, which are in a position to frustrate any attempt by the international community for a solution based on justice. It is obvious that, in the absence of an even-handed policy by the superpowers, the United Nations will be unable to act. Israel's borders will continue to expand, annexing Arab lands as it wishes, and any action that Israel takes, however horrendous, will be justified in terms of safeguarding its national security.

An analysis of his speeches between 1981-1990 showed that Israel appeared more frequently than Palestine as shown in Figure 3.1.

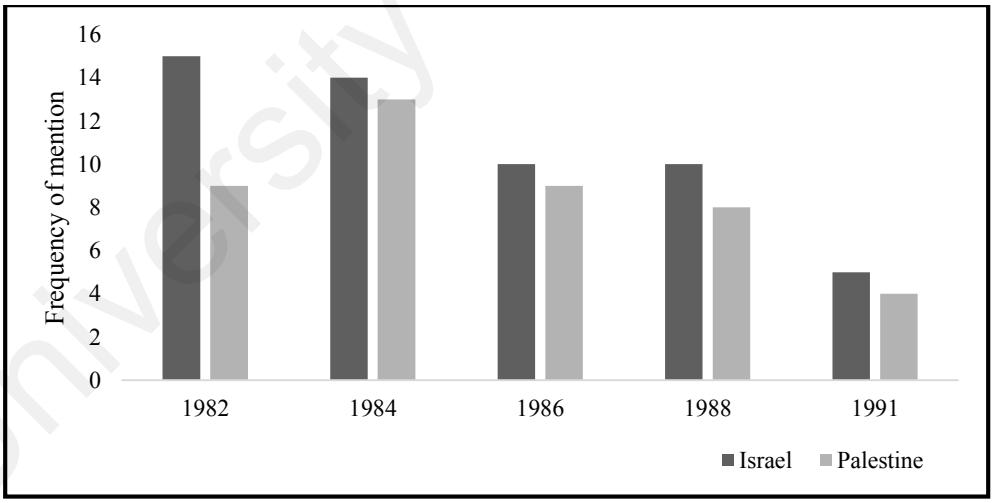

Figure 3.2: References to Israel and Palestine in Mahathir's speeches at the United Nations General Assembly

Source: Collection of speeches of former prime ministers, Office of the Prime Minister, Putrajaya

[41] See "Speech at the 41st UN General Assembly," Speech collection archives of chief executives (1986); ibid.

With such a powerful mobilisation of foreign policy to bolster Malaysia's image, the opposition party PAS was no match for Mahathir. Although foreign policy does not play a major role in Malaysian elections results, the image built up by Mahathir as a pro-Arab and pro-Islam leader no doubt placed the Barisan Nasional in an unassailable position.

This section showed that Malaysia's foreign policy did not revert to a pre-*Konfrontasi* neutral stance after the suspension of bilateral relations with Lebanon following the onset of the civil war because it now enabled the government to secure external resources for socio-economic development.

Under Hussein and later Mahathir, the foreign policy served yet another domestic need - regime maintenance. Articulation of support for the Arab states was the government's way of demonstrating its Islamic credentials to the Malay electorate. By demonstrating its commitment to Islam, the government could undermine the popular support for PAS. Under Mahathir, the pro-Arab foreign policy developed into a more pronounced form which this study called 'anti-Israelism' whose principal aim was for regime maintenance domestically.

The next section will investigate the role of the non-state actors such as political parties, NGOs and the media on Malaysia's foreign policy during the civil war.

The role of non-state actors on Malaysian foreign policy during the civil war

In the previous chapter, it was shown that the Arab-Israeli conflict received extensive media coverage beginning from the period of *Konfrontasi*. The invasion of

Lebanon by Israel during the civil war in 1982 and the massacre of the Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camp in Beirut were covered extensively in newspapers and television news. The coverage beamed pictures of war-torn Beirut into the Malaysian homes. The shooting incident inside the Al-Aqsa mosque in 1982 by the Israeli soldiers was also widely covered. The government's condemnation of Israel and its support for the Palestinians also received wide media coverage. In these media reports, the Palestinians were clearly the victims at the hands of a very powerful Israel.[42] The media also portrayed the Palestinians as hapless pawns caught in a broader geo-strategic battle involving the Arab states and the major powers such as the United States. Hence, the Arab states were criticised for their unwillingness to fight for the Palestinians. As a public demonstration of its willingness to take extraordinary steps in supporting the Palestinians, the government decided to elevate the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) office in Kuala Lumpur to a full-fledged embassy. This received extensive coverage as Malaysia was the first country in the region to take such a step.[43] Similarly, the government's observation of the Palestinian Day in solidarity with the Palestinian intifada and Yasser Arafat's high profile visit was also covered extensively.[44] Likewise the government's financial contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the establishment of a Palestine Fund to collect public contribution were also covered prominently.[45]

The extensive media coverage on the developments in the Middle East gave rise to two sets of responses from the Malaysian public. The first response was public participation of support among the Malays to support their co-religionists. This support

[42] "Mahathir Calls for Unity over Al-Aqsa Incident," *The Straits Times* 16 April 1982; "Mahathir Tells US to Stop Its 'Hypocrisy'," *The Straits Times,* 4 May 1983; "Kl and Amman Share View on Crisis," *The Straits Times*, 25 September 1983.
[43] "KL to Give Diplomatic Status to the PLO," *The Straits Times*, 18 September 1981; "PLO Office in KL," *The Straits Times* 16 January 1983.
[44] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, "Malaysian/Arab Palestinian Solidarity Day."; "Arafat's Visit May Be Postponed," *The Straits Times*, 15 September 1982; "Arafat's Visit Likely in May," *BERNAMA*, 18 February 1983.
[45] "$1 Million for Palestinians."; "Malaysia Bantu Rakyat Lebanon $ 100,000," *Utusan Malaysia*, 20 June 1982.

found expression in the intense and frequent debates in the parliament where there was by and large, a consensus for Malaysia's political support for the Palestinians against Israel. In this context, it was found that debates on the Middle East conflict was the third most frequently debated foreign policy subject in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) from 1975-1990 as shown in Figure 3.2.

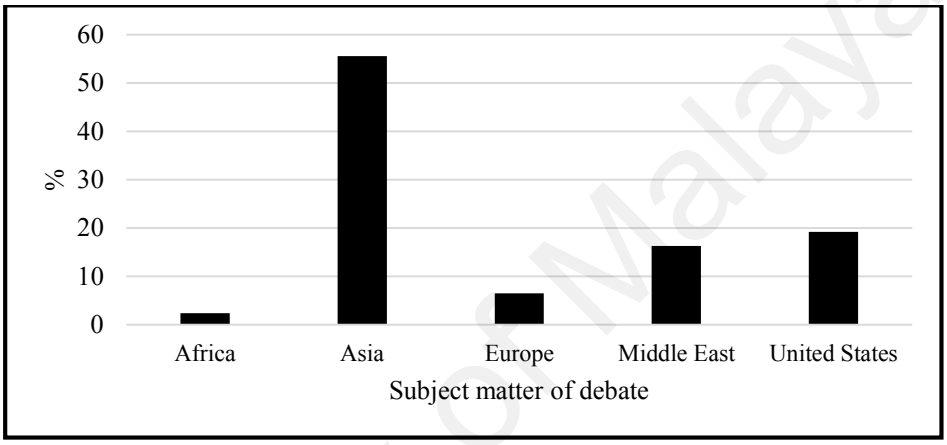

Figure 3.3: Percentage of debates on foreign policy in the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) from 1975-2009

Source: Parliamentary Hansard records

Furthermore, in general it was observed that the parliament debates became more intense and frequent during Mahathir's administration as shown in Figure 3.3. It was also observed that debates intensified following major events in the Middle East. Hence, the Lebanese civil war was frequently raised in the debates following events such as the invasion of Lebanon by Israel (1982-1985) and the Sabra Shatila massacre in Beirut (1982), proclamation of the State of Palestine by the PLO (1988), and the desecration of the al Aqsa mosque by Israeli soldiers (1988).

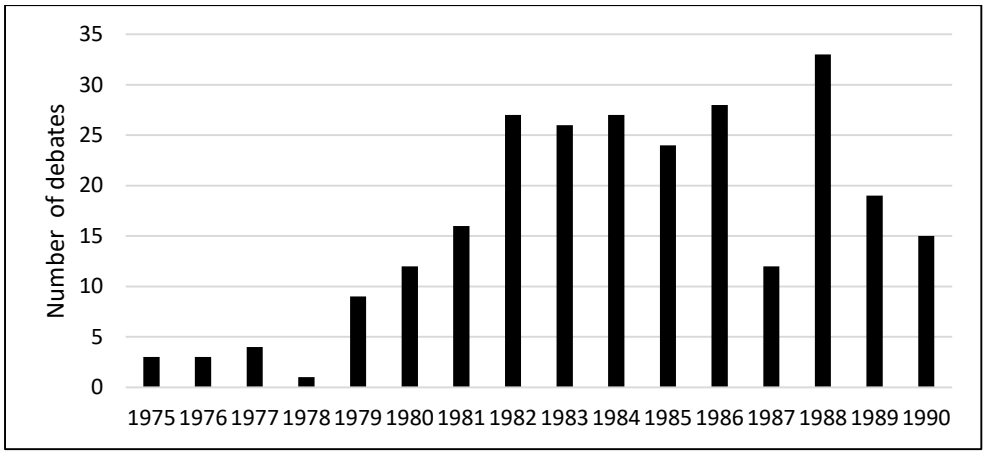

Figure 3.4: Number of debates on the Middle East in the Dewan Rakyat (Lower House of Representatives) from 1975-1990

Source: Parliamentary Hansard records

The second manner in which public interest was shaped was manifested in greater personal interest among Malaysians to help the Palestinians who were seen as victims of the civil war in Lebanon. Public show of support for the Palestinians was common among university students. Some even reportedly organised themselves to join the Arabs in their fight against Israel as a religious obligation.[46] The problem however, was the absence of any formal platform for them to channel their assistance as Malaysia no longer had a physical presence in Beirut. As such, UMNO and PAS competed against each other to fill this gap. They both set up funds to enable Malaysians to channel their contribution. PAS for example proposed the establishment of a specific body to support the liberation of Palestine from Israeli occupation and oppression while UMNO formed the Aid Palestine Committee to raise funds.[47] However, these efforts were not very successful as the absence of direct links with Lebanon acted as a limiting factor. The absence of direct

[46] "100 Pemuda Daftar Nama Lawan Israel," *Berita Harian*, 4 June 1967; "Siswa2 Universiti Malaya Sokong Negara2 Arab," *Berita Harian*, 8 June 1967; "40 More Sign on to Take up Arms against Israel," *The Straits Times*, 4 June 1967; "Puteri2 Kolej Islam Jelaskan: Mengapa Kami Sanggup Jadi Sukarelwati," *Berita Harian*, 1 June 1967.
[47] For a selection of the news coverage see "Pemuda Umno Tawarkan Tenaga Melawan Israel," *Berita Harian*, 1 June 1967; "PAS Desak Sokong Arab," *Berita Harian*, 31 May 1967; "Aid for Those Willing to Help," *The Straits Times*, 28 May 1967; DR15061967 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Session of the Second Parliament, Vol. IV, No. 2, p.529,"(1967).

links prompted NGOs such the *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM) and the Malaysian Medical Volunteers (MMV) to come to the fore.

The birth of ABIM was not directly related to the Palestinian issue but to the rise of political Islam in Malaysia.[48] In this context, it has been convincingly argued that the roots of political Islam in Malaysia can be traced to the national political response to the 1969 race riots. It gave rise to conditions that encouraged a major response of the government to the pressure demanding greater Malay rights in Malaysia.[49] Among the demands was the promulgation of the NEP under which greater prominence was given to the national language, Malay culture, and implementation of affirmative action in favour of the Malays. Since the Islamic faith is one of the defining criteria of the Malay under the constitution, the NEP also created an environment which gave political Islam a greater voice in the search for Malay rights.[50]

However, as curbs were placed on public discussion on issues related to language policy and the special position of the Malays by the National Operations Council (NOC) to preserve communal harmony, Islam was left as the only safe avenue for the Malay community to articulate their concerns.[51] It is here that the *dakwah* groups provided an informal forum for such discussions. Apart from their core purpose to provide a correct interpretation and practice of the rituals of Islam, these groups also served as a vehicle to address the pressures of modernisation and other issue confronting the identity of the Malay society.[52] The *dakwah* movements were popular with local university Malay

[48] Political Islam in this study is defined as the mobilisation of political support on the basis of Islamic identity. See Joseph Chin Yong Liow, "Exigency or Expediency? Contextualising Political Islam and the Pas Challenge in Malaysian Politics," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2004).
[49] Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia."; Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, "A Revival in the Study of Islam in Malaysia," *Man* 18, no. 2 (1983); Nagata, "Religious Ideology and Social Change: The Islamic Revival in Malaysia."; Liow, "Exigency or Expediency? Contextualising Political Islam and the Pas Challenge in Malaysian Politics."
[50] Hamid, "Islamist Realignments and the Rebranding of the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia*."
[51] Similar curbs were also placed on universities and colleges through amendment to the Universities and Colleges Act. "Patterns of State Interaction with Islamic Movements in Malaysia During the Formative Years of Islamic Resurgence."
[52] Amri Baharuddin Shamsul, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation, and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia," *Islam in an era of nation-states: Politics and religious renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia* (1997).

students.[53] Being mostly from rural areas, these *dakwah* groups provided a comforting environment away from the unfamiliar urban milieu in which they found themselves. It was also a safe avenue where they could air their "grievance, channel their energies, fulfil a need to serve the society and relief from the pressure of university and urban living".[54]

To fulfil the demand for a formal forum in which they could continue to play a role after graduation a group of local educated and foreign educated Malay graduates created ABIM in 1971.[55] In its formative years, ABIM kept a low profile preferring to focus its energies on promoting Islam. Its rise to fame came about with the arrests of large numbers of its members over protests against peasant suffering in Baling in 1974.[56] This incident gave ABIM domestic political clout as a credible defender of Islam.[57] Further, since the Islamic opposition party, PAS had been convinced that its political objectives would be better served as a member of the ruling Alliance government there was no more Malay opposition so to speak.[58]

The resulting vacuum was filled by ABIM. With its growing influence, ABIM could now call for the "intensification of Islamic influence on social, cultural, economic and political relations" of Malaysia.[59] Therefore, in ABIM *ceramahs* the government was the subject of criticism. ABIM was critical of the government's secular approach to governance and development and pro-Malay policies and called for the implementation of the Shariah law to replace the state economic, legal and political and institutions. This

[53] Baharuddin, "A Revival in the Study of Islam in Malaysia."
[54] Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the Students*(Pelanduk Publications, 1987). p.22.
[55] Although there were other NGOs such as Al Arqam and Islamic Representative Council, this study only focusses on ABIM as it was the most politically inclined and internationalised. Bakar, "Islamic Revivalism and the Political Process in Malaysia."; Zainah Anwar, *Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia: Dakwah among the Students*.
[56] Shamsul, "Identity Construction, Nation Formation, and Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia."
[57] As the largest Muslim youth organisation, ABIM also attracted members from local universities as well overseas ones. From the initial hundreds in 1971 membership jumped to over 7000 in 1972. Malay disaffection of PAS' decision to join the Alliance (1973-1977 also drove many PAS members to join ABIM. By the end of 1980, ABIM's membership had crossed 32,000. Interview of Mohammad Raimi Abdul Rahim, President of ABIM, 10 February 2016.
[58] Farish A Noor, *Islam Embedded: The Historical Development of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party Pas (1951-2003) Vol.1* (Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2004). pp.252-273.
[59] Abbot and Gregorios-Pippas, "Islamization in Malaysia: Processes and Dynamics."

was troubling for the government for ABIM's appeal could have potential electoral consequences as the loss of support from the educated Malays could undermine UMNO's claim as the sole protector of Malay interests. [60]

Fearing that it could lead to the unravelling of the government's development plans, the government was compelled to address the political threat by reducing its appeal to the electorate. The government under Mahathir employed coercive measures to control their control. These included placing restraints on students joining ABIM, penalisation of ABIM members among civil servants, and amending legislation to make it harder for ABIM to operate.[61]

Faced with curbs on its activities, ABIM shifted its focus from domestic politics to social and international issues. [62] Israel's invasion of Lebanon provided the very platform that ABIM sought to bolster its internationalist image. Therefore, efforts to send fighters and volunteers to help the Lebanese victims of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon became part of ABIM's rhetoric.[63] In a challenge to the government, ABIM also established its own Palestinian Solidarity Fund to solicit funds from the public. Although it did not send volunteers to Lebanon, ABIM supported humanitarian assistance in Lebanon by channeling funds through Palestinian NGOs in Lebanon.[64]

[60] The government however, maintained a close eye on the activities of these *dakwah* groups. See DR19071976 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates of the Second Session of the Fourth Parliament Vol. II No.24 p.2594,"(1976).
[61] Camroux, "State Responses to Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia: Accommodation, Co-Option, and Confrontation."; "ABIM Ordered to Cut Ties with Foreign Organisations."; "ABIM Cuts Outside Links," *The Straits Times* 10 November 1980; "Risalah: Why No Permit." *The Straits Times*, 19 November 1979.
[62] Studies on other religiously inspired political organisations such as Hamas, showed that when faced with restrictions on public participation imposed by the authorities, these organisations moved into private and semi-private realms. In this context, ABIM's reaction was similar to that of other Islamic movements, except that ABIM chose to focus its energies on international issues thus not directly confronting the authorities. See Glen E Robinson, "Hamas as a Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wicktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004).
[63] Interview with Mohamad Raimi Abdul Rahim, President of ABIM, 10 February 2016.
[64] "ABIM May Help War Victims in Lebanon."

In response to ABIM's initiatives, the government mounted its own Islamisation programmes and policies.[65] In this context, a much-publicised conference called the Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine was hosted in Kuala Lumpur.[66] By announcing its own financial contribution to the Palestinians in Lebanon, the government also tacitly encouraged the public volunteerism.[67] Apart from religious reasons, Malaysians also responded to appeals for humanitarian assistance to Lebanon. In this regard, another NGO that emerged to provide humanitarian assistance was the Malaysian Medical Volunteers (MMV). The MMV was led by Dr Alijah Gordon, Director of the Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI).[68] MMV's origin is linked to another organisation known as the Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP), co-founded by Dr Ang Swee Chai, a former Malaysian surgeon. In a meeting with the author, Dr Ang recalled that as a young doctor, she was shaken to learn of the atrocities committed by Israel in Lebanon.[69] Dr Ang like many fundamentalist Christians had perceived the Israelis as the underdog in the Middle East conflict.[70] Therefore, the emerging evidence of the Israeli responsibility for the Sabra Shatila massacre disturbed her. That was a turning point for her. As such, in 1982, Dr Ang set off to Lebanon to volunteer her services to help the Palestinian refugees.[71] Dr Ang's work received widespread coverage in Malaysia as her letters from Beirut chronicling the atrocities and suffering of the Palestinians were highlighted in the Malaysian press. [72]

[65] "*Dakwah*'s Role in Malaysia," *The Straits Times*, 2 December 1978.
[66] "Mahathir: We Owe It to the Palestinians ", *New Straits Times*, 4 May 1983.
[67] In the parliament, it was revealed that the government had extended financial assistance to the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and also by supporting a PLO office in Kuala Lumpur. See DR26111980 Hansard-Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives), "Official Report of the Parliamentary Debates of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament, Vol III, No.51, p.6257 ".; Malaysia "Malaysia Bantu Rakyat Lebanon $ 100,000."
[68] Interview with Madam Mariam Pook, MMV volunteer, Beirut 9 December 2013.
[69] Recounted by Dr Ang Swee Chai, 15 September 2013.
[70] In her own words Dr Ang says "I recall how I first came to Sabra and Shatila a bigoted self-righteous fundamentalist Christian. I believed in the goodness of the Western "Christian" countries and the righteousness of Israel…..On that morning in Sabra and Shatila God destroyed my self-righteousness". Swee Chai Ang, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* Second Edition (Reprint 2009) ed.(Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009). p.308.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Recounted by Ms Dolly Fong, one of the Malaysian volunteers who eventually spent many years as volunteer in Beirut. Dr Gordon herself was moved to do something after reading about reports of the desperate Palestinians in the camps appealing for a fatwa to give them permission to eat human cadavers as they were completely out of food in their besieged camps. See *Palestinians Speak: I Painted the Snow Black...Because We're Afraid of the Days* (Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI) 2001). p. xiii and 46; Denis Chaplin and Stephanie Willand, "Time Running out for Palestinians," *New Straits Times*, 8 October 1987; "No Doctor to Man Beirut Mobile Clinics ", ibid., 11 April 1988; Joan Lau, "A Life in Exile," ibid., 9 July 1989; "Determined to Serve Humanity," ibid., 4 January 1990; "Map in Need of Funds," *New Straits Times*, 11 April 1988.

Responding to the appeal for medical volunteers and all types of medical supplies, Dr Gordon, who was also a trustee of MAP set up a charitable organisation to enable like-minded Malaysians who wanted to volunteer their services to help the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Hence, the Malaysian Medical Volunteers (MMV) was born. As a part of the MSRI, the MMV could also raise funds from the public to support the humanitarian work.[73] With funds received from the public, the MMV set off to Beirut in 1987 with a batch of Malaysian doctors, dentists, staff nurses and other medical technicians.[74]

Mariam Pook, a member of the MMV recalled how the MMV initially ran into resistance from everyone in Lebanon. At the airport, the Maronite authorities would not let them through and insisted on checking them thoroughly. As far as they were concerned, Malaysians were Sunni Muslims. What could be the "real" intentions of this group of people they reasoned?[75] At the same time, they were also puzzled because the some of them looked like Chinese while others looked like Indians and they were all being led by a white American woman! Finally, by using personal charm and some greasing of the palms, the members of the MMV made it past the airport.[76] Even after getting past the airport, they faced a hostile militia in control of the areas surrounding the camps. Finally, after convincing the militia of their intention, they managed to get access into the Palestinian refugee camp. Initially, they also faced resistance from the Palestinians as they were unsure whether the Malaysians had ulterior motives.[77]

[73] Interview with Madam Mariam Pook.
[74] "Estate Ha and Acupuncturist Join Volunteers ", *New Straits Times*, 12 August 1987.
[75] The author attempted to discern if the Malaysian government's stance on the Palestinians and support for the PLO could have influenced their behaviour. However, there was little public knowledge about Malaysia. Mariam Pook recalled mirthfully that the Palestinians initially thought that Malaysia was in China! Interview with Madam Mariam Pook
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

The Lebanese authorities and militias were worried that the Malaysians could be politically aligned to the Palestinians whereas the Palestinian refugees were fearful of the motives of these foreigners.[78] However, as it became clear that the MMV was purely there to provide medical assistance, the suspicions ceased. Even then the MMV was not allowed to operate under its own name. The Lebanese authorities did not want to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Palestinian refugees by allowing foreign organisations to render their services to the Palestinian refugees.

Hence, there was a convergence of views of the government authorities and the militias. As far as Lebanon was concerned the "Palestinians were not refugees but only guests in Lebanon".[79] As such the MMV volunteers had to operate under the umbrella of the Norwegian Aid Committee and the Palestinian Red Cross Society which were the only recognised bodies that were allowed to render medical help to the Palestinians.[80] Under that arrangement, the MMV was able to provide much needed medical care during the critical period of the war.[81] Under MMV, at least nineteen Malaysian volunteers served in the Palestinian camps of Burj al Barajneh and Shatila camps in Beirut and Rashidiye camp in the south from 1987 to 1988.[82] The multi-racial makeup of these volunteers also facilitated the work of the MMV as it demonstrated to the Lebanese and Palestinians that that religious sentiments were not their primary motivation to volunteer in Beirut.[83]

Ultimately what helped was also the fact that Mahathir's anti-Israelism had put Malaysia on the world map. Although the war conditions prevented many more

[78] Ibid.
[79] Dalal Yassine, "Unwelcome Guests: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," *The Electronic Intifada*(2010), https://electronicintifada.net/content/unwelcome-guests-palestinian-refugees-lebanon/8917.
[80] Recalled by Ms Dolly Fong. See *Palestinians Speak: I Painted the Snow Black...Because We're Afraid of the Days* Muharyani Othman, "Their Suffering Beckons Her," *New Straits Times*, 6 November 1989. "Going Back to the City of Despair," *New Straits Times*, 26 September 1988; "Horror of Life in Palestinian Camps," ibid., 11 July.
[82] The MMV resumed its medical assistance after the end of the civil war until 1995 after which it finally wound down.
[83] There were 8 Malays, 7 Chinese and 4 Indians.

Malaysians from volunteering, many supported their work through donations or sponsoring Palestinian orphans. Frequent news reports about Malaysians sponsoring Palestinian refugee children were highlighted in the local press.[84] Similarly, Dr Gordon's efforts to bring Lebanese cultural troupes to Malaysia helped raise awareness both in Malaysia and Lebanon.[85] As the efforts of the Malaysian volunteers in Beirut gave a humane angle to Malaysia's support for Palestinian refugees, the government supported programmes run by MSRI by establishing a Trust Fund in Support of MSRI's Programmes to allow the public to make tax-deductible donations.[86] In other words, the work of non-state actors such as the MSRI through its sister organisation MMV also lent support to the government's portrayal of itself as sympathetic to international Islamic issues.

Although the work of the MMV volunteers were welcome, their activities did not receive official Lebanese response. This is not surprising as during the civil war, a national Lebanese government only existed in name without being able to exert authority over the entire Lebanese territory. The power vacuum resulting from the breakdown of government was filled by various confessional and ideological militias claiming to be in charge in different parts of Beirut and the country. Therefore, the "Lebanese reaction" was really the view or attitude of the militia that was in control in the area.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Maronite Christians opposed general integration of the Palestinian refugees into the society for fear that their numbers would strengthen the position of the Lebanese Sunni Muslims. This attitude towards the Palestinians was more pronounced among the Maronites and to a lesser extent among the

[84] Interview with Mr Kassim Aina, Director of Beit Atfal Al Samoud April 2014. Among those who sponsored Palestinian orphans were Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Others include Tun Daim Zainuddin and Anwar Ibrahim who are reported as having sponsored children from the Rashidiye camp. See "Malaysia Sponsors Children," *Al Nahar*, 26 May 1988.
[85] "The Folklore of Lebanon in Malaysia," *Al Nahar*, 11 June 1985.
[86] *Palestinians Speak: I Painted the Snow Black...Because We're Afraid of the Days*

Sunni and Shiite communities. Several studies have showed that this fear was also driven by the fact that Lebanon as a weak state was simply unable provide assurances that the presence of the Palestinian refugees would not upset domestic political and economic conditions.[87] Therefore, the Palestinians were simply classified as *ghuraba* or foreigners and confined to camps where they did not enjoy the even the minimum rights of a refugee.[88] By the time, the MMV arrived in Lebanon, the areas surrounding Burj al Barajneh and Shatila camps in west Beirut as well as the Rashidye camp in the south (See Figure 3.4) were dominated by Amal and Syrian soldiers. In other parts of Beirut especially at the entry points, the Lebanese Forces were in control. [89] None of these groups were sympathetic to the Palestinian refugees. The Lebanese Forces, did not want to legitimise the presence of the Palestinians by acknowledging foreign voluntary missions such as the MMV while the Amal movement under the Shiites were opposed to the Palestinian refugees, because of the historical enmity between the Shiites and the Sunnis. The Syrian army, on the other hand, was aligned with the Maronite Christians and also did not favour a strong PLO presence.

[87] Marlène Abou-Chedid Nasr, "Le Gharîb (L'étranger) Ou La Difficulté D'être Dans Le Discours Libanais Sur La Guerre Civile," *Mots. Les langages du politique* (1988).
[88] Lebanese laws and regulations do not provide any legal description or definition of refugees. Lebanon has left the Palestinians in its territory under the care of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) and other humanitarian organizations. For an excellent study on the effects of socio-economic exclusion of the Palestinians in Lebanon see Sawsan Abdulrahim and Marwan Khawaja, "The Cost of Being Palestinian in Lebanon," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011).
[89] Interview with Madam Mariam Pook.

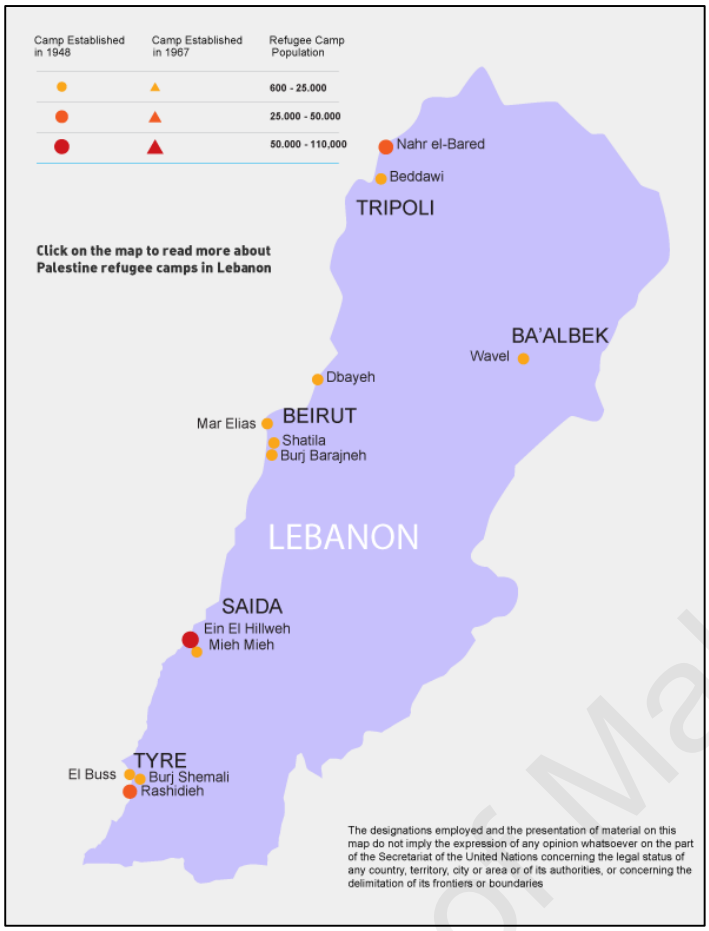

Figure 3.5: Location of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon

Source: https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon

On the other hand, all of them had their own vested interests to keep the Palestinian issue in the front burner. By claiming authority in parts of the city, these militias could extract financial and other resources from the public as well as from indiscriminate taxation on commercial flow and other forms of extortionist acts.[90] Therefore, foreign voluntary organisations such as the MMV were sources for extraction of funds through the imposition of various fees and other permits. In addition, these militias also benefitted by diverting some of the Arab aid to the PLO for the Palestinian refugees for

[90] Salim Nasr, " Anatomie D'un Système De Guerre Interne : Le Cas Du Liban ".

their own. In short, the civil war was a means of enrichment for the warlords of the various militias.[91]

Therefore, all the militias were content to allow some level of internationalisation of the Palestinian issue as long as it served to keep global attention on Lebanon. At the same time, foreign volunteer bodies were only allowed to work provided they were prepared to subsume their identity as part of the officially recognised bodies such as the Norwegian Aid Committee, the Palestinian Red Cross or other Palestinian bodies. Therefore, the MMV was also able to work with local Palestinian NGOs such as the Beit Atfal al-Samoud.[92] The MMV was forced to stop its medical assistance in Beirut in 1988 as the civil war reached its zenith. With the camps coming under bombardment, the last Malaysian volunteer had to be evacuated in extremely difficult conditions in 1988.[93]

Although not strictly related to foreign policy it was also noted that despite the civil war, bilateral trade actually witnessed a slow but steady growth. In terms of volume it was still very small as shown in Table 3.2.[94]

[91] Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*
[92] One of the MMV volunteers who was the last to leave Beirut, Dolly Fong, recalled working with the orphans at the Beit Atfal Al Samoud in Muharyani Othman, "Their Suffering Beckons Her." *The New Straits Times*, 6 November 1989
[93] Ibid.; "Determined to Serve Humanity," ibid., 4 January 1990.
[94] "RD1978.11.03 by the Ministry of Trade and Industry on the closure of the trade office in Beirut."; Michael Markas, "Malaysia "the Country of Big Projects" and Economic Boom That Decreased Unemployment" (Translation)," *Al Liwaa*, 17 June 1997.

Table 3.2: Two-way trade between Malaysia and Lebanon (1975-1989) (RD 1978.11.03, Ministry of Trade and Industry and and Michael Markas, "Malaysia "the Country of Big Projects" and Economic Boom That Decreased Unemployment" (Translation)," *Al Liwaa*, 17 June 1997."

Year	USD (Millions)
1975	1.4
1976	0.4
1977	1.0
1978	0.7
1979	0.5
1980	1.3
1981	1.4
1982	0.9
1983	1.1
1984	1.9
1985	1.8
1986	2.3
1987	3.2
1988	5.1
1989	4.3

Given the paucity of other supporting evidence, we may never be able to explain why trade increased during the civil war, albeit slowly. As explained earlier, Lebanese importers of edible oils and other commodities had been trading with Malaya even before independence. Hence, Malaysia was an important supplier of edible oils and other goods such as rubber tyres. Further, the high profile adopted by Malaysia in raising the concerns about the Middle East conflict also increased knowledge about Malaysia. Perhaps the international publicity generated from her foreign policy stance increased greater awareness about Malaysian products among the Lebanese businessmen who imported them for domestic consumption as well as for re-exportation.

Conclusion

During the civil war Malaysian foreign policy did not revert to its pre-*Konfrontasi* neutral stance. Instead, due to the interplay of the factors at the three levels of analysis, a pro-Arab and anti-Israel stance continued to define Malaysian foreign policy towards the region.

By 1996, normalcy had returned with the end of the *Konfrontasi*. Malaysia's relations with Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines too had been restored. However, in Beirut, the security conditions and physical infrastructure had deteriorated to such an extent that the maintenance of a physical presence in Beirut became impossible. Since the original rationale for the establishment of bilateral relations with Lebanon had vanished, the Malaysian government reluctantly closed the trade office in Beirut. While diplomatic relations continued to exist, bilateral cooperation was no longer possible.

Since Malaysia had already established herself as a strong supporter of the Arab cause, her pro-Arab foreign policy could now be employed to satisfy a domestic need for resources for development. The deterioration of the Arab-Israeli relations provided Malaysia the rationale to maintain a strong pro-Arab stance. Hence, in a long-winded way we can see how Malaysia's continued adherence to a pro-Arab foreign policy was influenced by external conditions in the Middle East.

The pro-Arab and anti-Israel stance were also influenced by domestic conditions in Malaysia. As the country was just emerging from a race riot and was still ruled by the NOC, it was imperative to restore confidence of the international and domestic investors. However, given its own lack of funds coupled with the reluctance and inability of private

sector to invest in massive public development projects, the government had to secure external resources. In this regard, Malaysia was able to rely on her excellent relations with the Arab states underpinned by her strong political support for the Arab states to source these funds from the Arab states. In this regard, foreign policy served as a means of strengthening domestic economy and development. The pro-Arab foreign policy also served as a means of dealing with the challenge posed by the *dakwah* groups and the opposition for influence over the Malay electorate. Hence, under Hussein and Mahathir, a pro-Arab foreign policy enabled to government to undermine domestic opposition by "supplying" the demand for more Islam. Therefore, foreign policy also served as an instrument for regime maintenance.

As mentioned earlier, all three Prime Ministers took a personal interest in pursuing a pro-Arab foreign policy that already been in place since the end of the *Konfrontasi*. Since, Malaysia no longer had a physical presence in Beirut, where the Lebanese free press could have been used to articulate Malaysia's support, the prime minister's frequent high-level visits to the region served as means to articulate Malaysia's position on the developments in the Middle East. The government's pro-Arab stance and the extensive media coverage influenced the public which directly encouraged non-state actors such as NGOs to act as a channel to mobilise public support. In this regard, ABIM and MMV acted as channels to mobilise two types of support. ABIM acted as a channel for conveying religious sympathy while the MMV channelled material assistance in the form of financial assistance and medical volunteerism.

The work of both NGOs certainly helped further inform the public of the civil war and the Middle East conflict. The MSRI's role of coordinating MMV's medical programmes in Beirut was welcome by the government as it worked in favour of the

government's portrayal of itself as being sensitive to global Islamic issues. Therefore, the government was supportive of the MSRI and MMV's work. Their work was thus given ample coverage in the media and they could raise public funds as well. ABIM's work on the other hand, was aimed at giving prominence to its own profile as a leader in global Islamic issues. Concern that in time ABIM could pose a political threat compelled the government to restrict ABIM's freedom. The potential threat posed by a collusion between ABIM and PAS therefore further pushed the government to step its own Islamisation programmes which included giving prominence to the Palestinian refugee issue in its foreign policy.

The media played an instrumental role during the civil war in informing the public about the civil war and the plight of the Palestinian refugees as victims of the war. The suffering of the refugees as victims of the civil war had a major influence on public opinion as discerned through the parliamentary debates. Public interest was also demonstrated through the public response to the efforts of the NGOs such as MMV. The mainstream media such as *Straits Times* (later *New Straits Times*), *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* were among the papers that covered the events in the Middle East extensively. Although the public interest did not have a significant impact on Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon, it nevertheless facilitated the government's focus on the middle east as a foreign policy priority.

There was no official reaction from the Lebanese side as the government only remained in name. Therefore, external assistance was welcome as it relieved the government and the militias from the burden of caring for the refugees. At the same time by keep the issue alive, the Lebanese government received external assistance. The arrangement was also satisfactory for the militias as it kept the Palestinians confined to

the camps, while they, by claiming authority in parts of the city and country could extract resources by imposing taxes and all sorts of charges on merchandise traffic and also by siphoning some of the international assistance for the Palestinians.

This chapter showed that the continuing Arab-Israeli conflict and a domestic need for resources encouraged Malaysia to preserve her pro-Arab foreign policy during the civil war period.

The extensive media coverage of the Middle East conflict and the Lebanese civil war as well as Malaysia foreign policy articulations aroused public sympathy. This in turn encouraged the emergence of NGOs to channel the public desire to help. These non-state actors in turn provided the structure for other individuals such as Elijah Gordon to emerge as influential players.

The next chapter will examine Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Middle East after the resumption of bilateral relations with Lebanon following the end of the civil war.

CHAPTER 4: GOLDEN AGE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS (1989-2003)

We need to restore confidence in the country, first of all

Rafik Hariri
Former Prime Minister of Lebanon

Malaysia was not very rich but we agreed to assist Lebanon to the tune of RM 1 billion

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad
Former Prime Minister of Malaysia

Introduction

This chapter analyses the bilateral relations from the end of the Lebanese civil war that begins with the signing of the Taif agreement in October 1989 until 2003. However, the core period of interest in this chapter in so far as bilateral relations is concerned begins in 1994 when Hariri and Mahathir met for the first time until 2003 when Mahathir steps down as Prime Minister.

This period could be described as the "Golden Age" of bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon. Under the leadership of two strong leaders, Mahathir and Hariri, the stalled bilateral relations were reinvigorated and witnesses an unprecedented level of expansion. This is interesting because Lebanon was under Syria's dominance following the signing of the Taif agreement. It is important to note that Syria had always harboured a desire to dominate Lebanon. Besides historical and cultural reasons, control over Lebanon would also serve its strategic objectives namely to deny Israel the opportunity to use the Lebanese territory to threaten its security, recover the Golan Heights and to be a main player in the peace settlement between the Arab states and Israel. As Lebanon is one of the four states that share a physical border with Israel, a peace agreement with

Lebanon is essential for the final resolution the Arab-Israeli conflict. By being in control of Lebanon, Syria would effectively be able to dictate the terms of the final peace agreement.[1] Although Lebanon had practically been reduced to the status of a vassal state of Syria, as indicated in the literature review, there were some areas where Lebanon had foreign policy freedom.[2] This chapter specifically investigates the conduct of bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon during this period taking into the constraints faced by Lebanon.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Given the importance of Syria in the post-Taif Lebanon, the first section describes how the civil war served as a gateway for Syria to gain entry into Lebanon until she gained full control over Lebanon with the signing of the Taif agreement. Despite exercising political and economic hegemony over Lebanon, post-Taif Lebanon was a liability for Syria as will be demonstrated in the second section. This section will explain how Syria's attempt to resolve her dilemma leads her to bypass the traditional *zu'ama* and pick a political outsider named Rafik Hariri to head the government. The third section provides a sketch of Rafik Hariri whose personal motivations leads him to accept the premiership while the fourth section explains how he sought to achieve his objectives by pursuing an ambitious redevelopment programme of Beirut. The fifth section surveys the restoration of bilateral relations under Hariri and Mahathir. The final section will discuss the findings.

[1] By interpreting the Taif agreement to its own advantage, Syria managed to gain control over Lebanon by coercing it to sign several bilateral treaties that subordinated Lebanon's domestic, foreign and strategic policies to Syria's terms. See Bassil, "Syrian Hegemony over Lebanon after the Lebanese Civil War."; Eduardo Wassim Aboultaif, "The Evolution of Lebanese and Syrian State-to-State Relations," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* (2016).

[2] Bassel F. Salloukh, "The Art of the Impossible: The Foreign Policy of Lebanon," in *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*, *The Challenge of Globalization* (American University in Cairo Press, 2008).

The Lebanese civil war as a gateway for Syrian intervention

As indicated in the first chapter, Syria has always considered Lebanon to be an integral part of herself. To understand this, we need to take into account how Syria viewed herself as a state. The literature indicates two sources that inform Syrian identity or consciousness as a state.[3] In Islamic history Syria was part of a larger territory known as the *bilad al sham* or known in the Christian tradition as the Levant. This area corresponds to the territory encompassing modern Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and parts of Iraq and Turkey.

The other source, a more contemporary one is Syrianism or Pan-Syrian nationalism in which Syrians have identified themselves as part of a culturally homogenous region referred to as Greater Syria which also roughly corresponds to the area known as the Levant. The idea of cultural and geographical indivisibility of Syria from its neighbours also underpins Ba'athism, the present Syrian state ideology which sees the Arab world as a secular unit that is culturally uniform and undivided by political borders.[4] Therefore, culturally in the minds of the people, Syria has always been imagined to be larger than its present modern form.[5]

Irrespective of the historical, cultural and political images of Syria, most Syrians rejected the modern state of Lebanon as an artificial construct because a substantial part of Lebanon was formally Syrian territory that the French had carved out and attached to the area known as Mount Lebanon to create Greater Lebanon or modern Lebanon.[6] For these reasons, Syria had stopped short of according Lebanon formal recognition as an

[3] For selected bibliography of Syrian nationalism see Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (Oxford University Press, 1992); Eyal Zisser, "Who's Afraid of Syrian Nationalism? National and State Identity in Syria," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 2 (2006); John F Devlin, "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis," *The American Historical Review* (1991); Dilshad Muhammad and Filiz Katman, "Nationalistic Trends in Modern Syria," *European Researcher,* 94, no. 5 (2015).
[4] Devlin, "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis."
[5] Zisser, "Who's Afraid of Syrian Nationalism? National and State Identity in Syria."
[6] Aboultaif, "The Evolution of Lebanese and Syrian State-to-State Relations."

independent state. Therefore, Syria did not open an embassy in Beirut. Although both states had been independent since 1946 and 1943, respectively, it was only in 2008 that Syria finally established an embassy in Beirut after heavy pressure was applied by the US and Western countries.[7]

Apart from the historical and cultural yearnings, Syria's desire for control over Lebanon was also driven by its own strategic objectives. The national narrative developed under former President Hafiz al Assad was that Syria was the only state capable of balancing Israel to prevent it from dominating the region.[8] Accordingly, this meant that domination over Lebanon was vital. Given the weakness of the Lebanese state and its historical western leanings, Syria was worried that Lebanon could become an ideal launching pad for Israel to threaten its security.[9] Hence, dominance over Lebanon would enable Syria to effectively dictate the pace and outcome of the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and at the same time recover the strategic piece of Syrian real estate known as the Golan Heights that had been occupied by Israel since the Six Day war in 1967.

Given the breakdown of central authority and the potential instability close to its borders as a result of the Lebanese civil war, Syria was able to realise her strategic objective by making use of the civil war to insert itself into the Lebanese affairs. In the beginning of the civil war, Syria tacitly supported the PLO believing that a leverage on the PLO would enable her to be a main player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.[10] However, as the balance of power began to shift towards the PLO, Syria realized that she

[7] See ibid.; "Syria Raises Flag over Embassy in Lebanon," *Al Arabiya News* 26 December 2008; Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Lebanese Embassy Opens in Damascus," *Reuters*, 16 May 2009; Wikileaks, "Arab League to Seek Lebanese Dialogue, Agreement on Tribunal ", 07BEIRUT199_a (US Embassy Beirut,2007).
[8] Neil MacFarquhar, "Hafez Al-Assad, Who Turned Syria into a Power in the Middle East, Dies at 69," *The New York Times*, 11 June 2000.
[9] For an account of the process that led to the difference in foreign policy orientations of Syria and Lebanon see Rami Ginat, "Syria's and Lebanon's Meandering Road to Independence: The Soviet Involvement and the Anglo-French Rivalry," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 13, no. 4 (2002).
[10] Subash Singh, "Black September: A Turning Point in the Palestinian National Movement," *International Journal of Applied Social Science,* 2 (5&6), no. May & June (2015).

would have another problem on her hand as a PLO dominated Lebanon would almost certainly invite Israeli intervention.[11] Syria therefore acceded to President Franjiyeh's appeal for help by sending her own troops.[12] The Syrian intervention temporarily ended the fighting. Anxious to prevent another outbreak of war, the Arab League sanctioned an Arab Deterrent Force to keep the peace.[13] Although it was supposed to be a multinational Arab force, most of the troops were supplied by Syria. This was a major advancement in Syria's strategy as she now had regional support to have a physical presence inside Lebanon.

As indicted in the previous chapter, the Maronite factions opposed to President Franjiyeh organized themselves as the Lebanese Forces (LF).[14] The LF reached out to Israel for tactical and material support in the hope of ending Syrian domination and defeating the PLO.[15] The emergence of the LF in turn gave rise to a more belligerent mood in Israel. Whereas in the past, Israel's defence posture against the PLO had been built around the concept of retaliation, by 1981, the mood had changed to offensive operations.[16] From Israel's perspective her invasion of southern Lebanon was unsatisfactory as the UN Security Council's intervention with the passage of Resolution 425 prevented Israel from destroying the PLO. Therefore, encouraged by the LF, Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 with a triple objective of destroying the PLO, neutralizing Syria, and installing a pro-Israel government in Lebanon. Israel's motivations in invading Lebanon has been discussed extensively in the literature. The core issue for Israel was to resolve her security dilemma. In this respect, Syria and Israel were united. Both were

[11] Gil Gunderson, "Lebanon: Culture and Crisis," *Public administration and public policy* 93(2001); Karen Rasler, "Internationalized Civil War: A Dynamic Analysis of the Syrian Intervention in Lebanon," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 3 (1983).
[12] Samir Makdisi and Richard Sadaka, "The Lebanese Civil War: Background, Causes, Duration and Post Conflict Trends," *Yale University-World Bank Case Study Project on the Political Economy of Civil Wars* (2002).
[13] I.S. Pogany, *The Arab League and Peacekeeping in the Lebanon* (Avebury, 1987).
[14] Snider, "The Lebanese Forces: Their Origins and Role in Lebanon's Politics."
[15] Schiff, "Lebanon: Motivations and Interests in Israel's Policy."
[16] Ryan, "Israel's Invasion of Lebanon: Background to the Crisis ".

concerned that Lebanon's state weakness could be exploited by the other or by non-state actors to use Lebanon as a base to threaten the other's security. Scholars such as Eyal Zisser, Laurie Eisenberg and Ze'ev Schiff have pointed out that the PLO was a major concern for Israel as it had managed to virtually install itself as a "state within a state" in Lebanon.[17] They have also argued convincingly how a convergence of views between the Maronites and the Menachem Begin government about the threat of the PLO and Syria encouraged this cooperation.

However, latter scholars such as Freilich who studied Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, 2000 and 2006, have made the case that Israel's actions were essentially policy failures arising out of ambiguity in its objective due to a conflict between its foreign and defence policy establishments. He shows, for example that the defence minister Ariel Sharon essentially defied cabinet instructions which only authorized a limited invasion and instead pursued a full-scale invasion of Lebanon up to Beirut. The works of others such as Parkinson and Seigel also support Freilich's views.[18]

Although Israel managed to defeat the PLO and almost drive Syria out of Lebanon, things began to go wrong when Israel meddled in Lebanon's electoral process to install Bashir Gemayel, as President.[19] His election polarized the country as the Muslim factions rejected the Israeli-installed puppet government. Not surprisingly, even before he took oath, Bashir was assassinated and in his stead, his brother, Amin Gemayel, a much weaker leader, was elected. Under Gemayel's presidency the state was unable to exert control

[17] Eyal Zisser, "The Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese Triangle: The Renewed Struggle over Lebanon," *Israel Affairs* 15, no. 4 (2009); Schiff, "Lebanon: Motivations and Interests in Israel's Policy."; Laurie Eisenberg, "History Revisited or Revamped? The Maronite Factor in Israel's 1982 Invasion of Lebanon," *Israel Affairs* 15, no. 4 (2009).
[18] See Parkinson, "Israel's Lebanon War: Ariel Sharon and 'Operation Peace for Gallilee'."; Freilich, "Israel in Lebanon—Getting It Wrong: The 1982 Invasion, 2000 Withdrawal, and 2006 War."; Ellen Siegel, "Sabra and Shatila 33 Years Later--a Personal Account," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 34, no. 8 (2015); Kail C. Ellis, "Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1999); Zisser, "The Israeli-Syrian-Lebanese Triangle: The Renewed Struggle over Lebanon."; Schiff, "Lebanon: Motivations and Interests in Israel's Policy."; Laurie Eisenberg, "History Revisited or Revamped? The Maronite Factor in Israel's 1982 Invasion of Lebanon," *Israel Affairs* 15, no. 4 (2009).
[19] Israel apparently employed strong arm tactics to prevent the opposition candidates from winning and also by paying off others. Interview with Robert Fisk, Beirut, 21 March 2012.

over the Christian militias. As such, it was under his watch that the Sabra Shatila massacre occurred, in which Israel and Ariel Sharon, the defence minister were implicated. [20] In the ensuing international uproar, Israel was forced to withdraw from Beirut to southern Lebanon.

The withdrawal of Israel and the PLO created a vacuum which was filled by Amal, a Shiite militia that had emerged as a political party in 1974 known as the Movement of the Deprived (Harakat al Mahroumin).[21] Anticipating a renewed opportunity to regain influence, Syria aided this new militia. However, by the mid-1980s the Shiite community had splintered into two due to Iran's interference in Lebanon. Supported by Iran, a radical faction that favoured militancy represented by Hezbollah, emerged. Hezbollah's stated aim was to recover southern Lebanon from Israeli occupation. [22] Hezbollah was tolerated by Syria so long as it did not attempt to unseat Amal. In exchange, Iran agreed to keep Hezbollah under control in exchange for Syria's agreement not to favour Amal over Hezbollah. This worked in favour of Syria which was now able to balance both Shiite factions and thus emerge as indispensable power in the pacification of Lebanon.[23]

However, in the absence of state authority Beirut came under even more intense fighting. Authors such Thomas Friedman and Robert Fisk who lived in Beirut during this period have observed how the city was transformed into cantons under the control of different militias where people would get shot and killed just on the basis of their

[20] Falk, "The Kahan Commission Report on the Beirut Massacre."; Michael Mullany, "Stability without Peace: Lebanon's Violent Compromises," *Harvard International Review* 13, no. 3 (1991).
[21] R. Siklawi, "The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (2010).
[22] Hezbollah, is the second Shiite based party to emerge after Amal. It started out as a militia to fight against the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon. While Amal pursued a pragmatic Shiite political movement to represent the Shiites within the Lebanese political system, Hezbollah represents the radical path through militancy. Hezbollah was an Iranian proxy who saw an opportunity to use Hezbollah to extend its influence over the Shite community in Lebanon. See Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics."; Siklawi, "The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon."
[23] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Pax-Syriana? The Origins, Causes and Consequences of Syria's Role in Lebanon," *Mediterranean Politics* 3, no. 1 (1998).

religion.[24] In response to a desperate appeal by President Gemayel, the United States, France, Italy and the UK sent in their troops under a multinational force to preserve state authority and the territorial integrity of Lebanon. However, the perception that the multinational force was taking sides with the Christians put them in the centre of the conflict. In the end, the multinational force was forced to withdraw after suicide attacks on the American and French troops.[25] In the absence of international interest, Syria was once again the dominant force in Lebanon.

Syria's position was once again challenged as the Lebanese factions failed to agree on a candidate to succeed President Gemayel when his term ended in 1988.[26] The deadlock turned into a crisis as Gemayel transferred power to General Michel Aoun, the chief of army and a Christian, to head an interim cabinet. The appointment of a Christian enraged the Sunni Muslim leaders as the post of prime minister was reserved for a Sunni Muslim in accordance with the National Pact. Lebanon, which hitherto had fallen out of the international limelight, once again became a vital concern as Saddam Hussein also came into the picture with support for Michael Aoun as a revenge against Syria for supporting Iran in the Iran-Iraq war.[27] This changed the strategic perception of the Arab states and the international community. Earlier, the international community had tolerated the Lebanese civil war so long as it did not threaten the regional order. However, as Iraq's participation raised the spectre of a war between two of the most powerful Arab states, Iraq and Syria, the other Arab states saw a need to step in.[28] Elsewhere, the United States, savouring its moment of unipolarity following the end of the Cold War, believed that the time was finally ripe to end the long-standing Middle East

[24] Various writers have chronicled this period vividly. Thomas Friedman's "From Beirut to Jerusalem" and Robert Fisk's "Pity the Nation" are two excellent eyewitness accounts. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* ; R. Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002).
[25] Richard Ernsberger Jr, "'The Blt Building Is Gone'," *Military History* 33, no. 4 (2016).
[26] Ellis, "Lebanon: The Struggle of a Small Country in a Regional Context."
[27] Bassel Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed," *Middle East Report* 236(2005).
[28] Augustus Richard Norton, "Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?," *Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991).

conflict. In a statement on 12 July 1984, to the sub-committee of Europe and Middle East of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State, John Kelly expressed the desire of the US government to push forward with a peace process in the Middle East.[29] Given, Syria's dominant position in Lebanon, it was clear to the United States and the Arab states that Syria would have to be part of any calculus to end the civil war.

As explained earlier, the United States also began to appreciate Syria's role in curbing Iran's influence by keeping Hezbollah under control. Syria, for her part, fresh from the loss of her erstwhile patron, USSR following the end of the Cold War, saw an opportunity to get on the winning side.[30] Therefore, Syria joined American, Saudi, Moroccan and Algerian efforts to mediate with the different Lebanese factions to draft peace agreement.[31] Subsequently, under the sponsorship of Saudi Arabia, a wealthy individual named Hariri who acted as the Saudi representative in Lebanon, was tasked to bring together the remaining members of parliament of the last parliament elected in 1972 to Taif, to negotiate the draft text. The final outcome was a Document of National Reconciliation also known as the Taif agreement. The agreement not only provided for a modified power-sharing formula but also rewarded Syria with specific provisions that gave Syria an unprecedented degree of influence over Lebanese affairs. [32]

[29] John H Kelly, *US Diplomacy in the Middle East*(US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Communication, Editorial Division, 1989).
[30] Hinnebusch, "Pax-Syriana? The Origins, Causes and Consequences of Syria's Role in Lebanon."
[31] Hassan Krayem, "The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement," *Conflict resolution in the Arab world: Selected essays* (1997).
[32] The inclusion of the conditions that "Lebanon should not be allowed to constitute a source of threat to Syria's security" and "Lebanon should not allow itself to become a pathway or a base for any force, state, or organization seeking to undermine its security or Syria's security" was the international community's endorsement of Syria's right to exert influence over Lebanon in order to preserve its own security. Syria was therefore allowed to keep its troops in Lebanon for two years to assist the Lebanese government to spread its authority over its territory and implement the agreement. See Salamey, *The Government and Politics of Lebanon*. p.57.

The ultimate victors of the Lebanese civil war were not the Lebanese but the Syrians.[33] The only catch was that the Taif agreement gave Syria only two years to maintain its troops inside Lebanon. However, in order to achieve her ultimate objective of achieving permanent control, Syria needed to overcome this time bound limit imposed by the Taif agreement will be described in the next section.[34]

The Taif Republic - The burden of governance

Syria was able to cement her grip over Lebanon because the modified power-sharing formula under the Taif agreement virtually assured Syria's dominating role.[35] The Taif agreement reduced Christian dominance by amending the power-sharing formula from the previous 6:5 ratio to parity. This meant that all Cabinet posts, parliamentary seats and top civil service posts had to be divided equally between the Christians and Muslims. The agreement also shifted some executive power from the president to the prime minister. Although this appeared to be strengthening the position of the prime minister, who by convention is a Sunni Muslim, in practice other provisions of the agreement made it difficult to exercise the executive power as he was required to work in consultation with the president and the speaker on all affairs. In effect, executive power of the Taif Republic was shared by a tripartite executive commonly referred to as the Troika, consisting of the President of the Republic, the prime minister (referred to as the president of the council of ministers) and the speaker (referred to as the president of the chambers of parliament).[36] Therefore, a major feature of the Taif Republic was

[33] Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed."
[34] This thesis applies the definition of hegemony as used in the Hegemonic Stability Theory which describes a hegemon as a state that exercises leadership by diplomacy, coercion, or persuasion and is able to single-handedly make and enforce rules in inter-state relations. In general, hegemony does not benefit small or weak states.
[35] Abdallah, "Lebanon's Political System: An Analysis of the Taif Accord."
[36] The Speaker (shiite) became the most powerful member of the Troika by virtue of the fact that many of the proposals of the President and Council of Ministers had to be approved by the Parliament. Furthermore, as the Speaker also had the power to decide on the order of parliamentary debate, he could in effect veto the other two members of the Troika. The President of the Republic was the least powerful.

frequent political impasse over the constant bargaining among the members of the Troika not only over questions of policy and legislation but also on the distribution of patronage to their confessional communities and supporters. This assured Syria as the ultimate arbiter in all Lebanese affairs.[37]

The first prime minister chosen to head the government of the Taif Republic was Omar Karami, a pro-Syrian politician and a member of the Sunni *zu'ama*. Syria's priorities for Karami was to restore state authority throughout the Lebanese territory and to legitimize her hold over Lebanon. Hence, with Karami at the head of the government, Syria also coerced Lebanon into concluding a highly constraining umbrella bilateral treaty known as the Treaty of Brotherhood, Coordination and Cooperation (TBCC). Under the TBCC, joint committees were set up to coordinate and streamline security, and foreign policy objectives and to establish an institutional framework to implement the policies.[38] The apex institution was the Supreme Council chaired by the presidents of both states. The decision of this council was binding and was to be executed by the prime ministers and senior ministers of both countries who made up the executive body.[39] Additional committees were established virtually in all areas. In effect, Lebanon lost her freedom of action as her interests were subordinated to a pro-Syrian orientation.[40]

Given its focus on cementing Syria's dominance over Lebanon, the Karami government never seriously addressed the serious socio-economic problems facing the country. Even before Karami took over as prime minister, the Lebanese economy was in a parlous state. The impact of the civil war on the economy was enormous as all the

[37] Norton, "Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?."
[38] Bassil, "Syrian Hegemony over Lebanon after the Lebanese Civil War."
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

sectors of the economy had been undermined. [41] Economic output declined by USD 24 billion.[42] By the end of the war, per capita GDP had fallen to a third of the pre-war level. Added to that was the extensive damage to buildings, roads, airports, telecommunications and other infrastructure estimated to be about USD 25 billion.[43] The death toll was estimated to be around 150,000 and with more than million or a quarter of the population internally displaced.[44] In addition, the war had also precipitated outward emigration of more than 990,000 or close to 40% of the population.[45]

Yet, Karami's cabinet members, being former warlords, were more interested in using their position to strengthen their patronage base rather than focusing on issues of national concern. Further, the combined effect of the physical destruction, loss of human capacity and political expediency resulted in a weakening of state institutions. In the absence of employment opportunities, public service jobs had become objects of patronage dispensed by the *zu'ama* which led to the absorption of many former militia fighters into the civil service. The civil service therefore became bloated, corrupt and incompetent and was marked by inertia and inefficiency.[46] As a result, the government spent recklessly running up massive budget deficit financed by public debt.[47] This led to

[41] In the early years of the civil war, from 1975-1982, the Lebanese economy actually fared well. The per capita GDP expanded from USD 1415 in 1975 to USD 2011 in 1982. Certain sectors fared well. These were mostly services such as banking and financial services, engineering consultancy, public works, construction and printing and publishing. This was attributed to several factors. In 1975, Lebanon had a strong foreign exchange reserves amounting to USD 4 billion. As noted earlier, Lebanon's trusted financial and banking system held large reserves of gold and hard currencies that were kept by neighbouring countries. Furthermore, there was a large amount of savings of the wealthy Lebanese as well. In addition, as the civil war toke a toll on the economic activities, some of the trade and economic activities migrated to the neighbouring Gulf countries that were staffed and headed by Lebanese expatriates. It was estimated that Lebanese expatriates increased from 98,000 in 1975 to over 210,000 in 1982. The total remittances sent by foreign based Lebanese rose from USD 910 million in 1975 to USD 2.25 billion in 1980 representing more than a third of Lebanon's GDP. The final factor was the "Palestinian economy". The PLO which had its headquarters in Beirut was a recipient of huge amounts of external assistance from the Arab countries. As such, the PLO by virtue of its consumption spending contributed significantly to the Lebanese economy. It was estimated that at its height, the PLO contributed to about 15% of the Lebanese economy. Finally, the militias themselves were also a source of funds from their external backers to the tune of around USD 300 million a year. See also Habib C Malik, "Lebanon in the 1990s: Stability without Freedom?," *Global Affairs* 7(1992).

[42] Ghassan Dibeh, *The Political Economy of Postwar Reconstruction in Lebanon*(Research Paper, UNU-WIDER, United Nations University (UNU), 2005).

[43] Daniela Gressani and John Page, *Reconstruction in Lebanon: Challenges for Macroeconomic Management*(The World Bank, 1999).

[44] "Casualties of Mideast Wars," *LA Times*, 8 March 1991; Zakaria Mounir Mohti, "The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990): Causes and Costs of Conflict" (University of Kansas, 2010).

[45] Paul Tabar, "Lebanon: A Country of Emigration and Immigration," *Institute for Migration Studies* (2010).

[46] Dona J. Stewart, "Economic Recovery and Reconstruction in Postwar Beirut," *Geographical Review* 86, no. 4 (1996).

[47] Najem, "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction."

loss of public and international confidence in the state which in turn led to capital flight and depreciation of the currency. Between 30 December 1991 to 30 September 1992, the Lebanese currency lost 68% of its value.[48] Very quickly popular discontent degenerated into massive general strikes. [49]

The economic crisis was the first real threat to the pro-Syrian order of the Taif Republic. Because the Karami government was seen as a pro-Syrian regime, Syria could not escape criticism for the economic crisis. With her position assured as the overlord of Lebanon, Syria now needed to stabilize the economic situation of the Taif Republic to prevent popular discontent over the economy from being directed towards her control of the country or worse still, spark another civil war. Syria's response was to replace Karami with Rashid al Solh, another pro-Syrian politician who had also served as prime minister before the onset of the civil war. His appointment did not inspire confidence as the cabinet did not differ much from the earlier one. [50] However, Syria's plans for al Solh was to organise the parliamentary elections. By holding the elections, the first elections since 1972 and the first elections after the Taif agreement, Syria wanted to give the appearance of an era of political openness and thus quell public discontent about her control over Lebanon.[51]

In actual fact, Syria's plan was to strengthen her hold on Lebanon through a more pliant parliament that would facilitate the election of a pro-Syria candidate as President so that she could solidify her long-term control.[52] By employing the various methods of influencing the elections, Syria was able to ensure the election of a generally pro-Syrian

[48] E. Baroudi Sami, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon: State - Labor Relations between 1992 and 1997," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 4 (1998).
[49] Salim Nasr, "Lebanon's War: Is the End in Sight?," *Middle East Report*, no. 162 (1990).
[50] Sami, "Economic Conflict in Postwar Lebanon: State - Labor Relations between 1992 and 1997."
[51] Paul Salem, "The Wounded Republic: Lebanon's Struggle for Recovery," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1994).
[52] Ibid.

parliament.[53] As expected, international reaction was skeptical and demands for the withdrawal of Syrian troops in accordance with the Taif deadline began to mount. A perusal of the literature suggests that Syria precipitated to appoint a new government to tackle the economic problems in order to calm down domestic and international opposition to its hegemony over Lebanon. However, this thesis argues that Syria also had a pressing domestic agenda that also rested on the restoration of the Lebanese economy.

As the civil war was winding down, the Syrian economy was headed towards a crisis. As the Syrian economy was based on a command economic model, the state controlled the economy with the public sector serving as the main engine of economic growth and investment.[54] This model worked well in the 1960s and 1970s when the state accounted for more than 60% of the GDP.[55] Thus in the early stages of the civil war, the Syrian state could absorb the cost of its intervention in Lebanon while insulating itself from the need for economic liberalization through a mix of foreign assistance and earnings from the high oil prices.

However, since the mid-1980s, the economy had begun to exhibit symptoms of crisis.[56] From 1985 onwards Syria's balance of trade deteriorated from a deficit of -5.5 billion Syrian pounds to a deficit of -12.2 billion in 1987. Syria also paid the price for supporting Iran against Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war. The Arab states which were a main source of external aid cut back on their aid to Syria. As a result external aid dwindled

[53] Gary C Gambill and Elie Abou Aoun, "Special Report: How Syria Orchestrates Lebanon's Elections," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 2, no. 7 (2000).
[54] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Political Economy of Economic Liberalization in Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 03 (1995).
[55] Ibid.
[56] Volker Perthes, "The Syrian Economy in the 1980s," *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 1 (1992).

from USD 1.8 billion in 1986 to US 500 million in 1988.[57] Overall, from 1985 to 1987 real GDP contracted from USD 58.4 billion in 1985 to USD 52.4 billion in 1987.[58]

As the 1980s came to an end, the prospects for the "rigid, backward, impoverished and dilapidated" Syrian economy was bleak.[59] The state of the Syrian economy was too weak to support her foreign policy of dominance over Lebanon and strategic ambitions to balance Israel. Hence, the Syrian government was forced to contemplate economic liberalization although it had no real interest to go down this route for fear that demands for political freedom would follow.[60] In this context, Lebanon was just the very solution for the Syrian regime. Access to Lebanon's sources of wealth would enable it to meet the state's economic needs without instituting real economic liberalization and thus avoiding potential threat to its socialist political and economic order.[61]

However, the Syrian regime's dilemma was that it could no longer rely on the traditional Sunni *zu'ama* as candidates for the post of prime minister as they would be seen as Syrian puppets. Therefore, Syria needed to bring someone from outside the traditional *zu'ama* class but one who could inspire the confidence of the Lebanese and the international community and also had the requisite skills to manage the economy.

It is in this context, the field of potential candidates shifted towards a new class of wealthy Lebanese contractors who were returning to Beirut after the war to take advantage of business opportunities. Hariri was one of these contractors.[62] However,

[57] Raymond Hinnebusch, "Syria: The Politics of Economic Liberalisation," *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1997).
[58] Perthes, "The Syrian Economy in the 1980s."
[59] Steven Plaut, "The Collapsing Syrian Economy," *Middle East Quarterly* (1999).
[60] Hinnebusch, "The Political Economy of Economic Liberalization in Syria."
[61] This study uses Robert Keohane's definition of economic hegemony as the dominance over (1) sources of capital, (2) raw material, (3) markets and (4) production of high value goods. See Robert O Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton University Press, 2005).
[62] An excellent unpublished doctoral dissertation by Hannes Baumann explains the emergence of this new class of Sunni contractor class *zu'ama*. See Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon." pp.60-62.

one of the biggest drawback of Hariri from Syria's point of view was the fact that he could potentially be difficult to control as he was an extremely wealthy and well-connected individual. Yet Syria picked Hariri for the post. This puzzle will be answered in the following section. But first it is necessary to describe how Rafik Hariri came into the picture.

Rise of Rafik Hariri

Hariri is a subject of much inquiry because for the first time in Lebanese history, someone who was not part of the traditional *zu'ama* class had not only managed to ascend to one of the highest political offices of the country but also left an indelible imprint on its history.[63] In his book entitled "Killing Mr Lebanon", author Nicholas Blanford devotes an entire chapter on the background of Hariri and how he was eventually picked by Syria to head the government.[64] Hariri's background, recounted here in brief is based on Blanford's book and personal conversations with the author and other experts on Lebanon. The other major works that were consulted on Hariri's role as prime minister are Najem's thesis on the political economy of the reconstruction of Beirut and Baumann's composite biography of Hariri.[65]

Hariri was born into a modest Sunni family in Sidon, a city south of Beirut. Unable to finance his studies at the Beirut Arab University, he moved to Saudi Arabia in 1965 in

[63] Numerous articles, dissertations and books have been written about Rafiq Hariri spanning his career and his tragic assassination and his impact on modern Lebanon's political development. For a selection of these works see Nicholas Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East," *Londres, IB Tauris* (2006); Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon."; Hadi Makarem, "Actually Existing Neoliberalism: The Reconstruction of Downtown Beirut in Post-Civil War Lebanon" (The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 2014); Duncan Wane, "A Martyr for Lebanon" (University of London, 2015); ibid.; Najem, "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction."; Mark W Neal and Richard Tansey, "The Dynamics of Effective Corrupt Leadership: Lessons from Rafik Hariri's Political Career in Lebanon," *The Leadership Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (2010).
[64] Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East." pp. 13-39.
[65] Najem, "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction."; Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon."

search of a job where he picked up skills as a contractor by working for several construction companies.[66] Hariri was one of the earlier economic migrants to the Gulf region. Ultimately the civil war would cause more than 210,000 Lebanese or a third of the population to migrate to the Gulf states in search of better economic opportunities. In the course of his work, Hariri managed to get into the favour of the Saudi royal family by teaming up with Nasser Rashid, a Saudi construction tycoon who was close to the Saudi royal family. Hariri's big break came in 1976 when Nasser Rashid won the contract to build a new hotel in Taif that would serve as the venue for an Islamic Summit. The challenge was that it had to be completed within nine months. Knowing that if he could pull it off, many more projects would come his way, Hariri undertook the challenge.[67]

As the main contractor, Hariri subcontracted the job to an ailing French company, Oger. Blanford describes how, through sheer determination, Hariri managed to deliver the hotel, a few weeks ahead of schedule. Hariri's gamble paid off as his success earned him the trust and support of the Saudi royal family which favoured him with a Saudi citizenship and many more lucrative projects. [68] Eventually, Hariri bought over the French company and renamed it as Oger International, which became his flagship company. According to Blanford, within five years of building Hotel Massara in Taif, Hariri was one of the wealthiest man in the world. [69]

Hariri for his part also had political ambitions. He also fit in well with Saudi Arabia's political calculus as well.[70] Baumann suggests that Hariri assiduously planned his entry into the Lebanese political landscape through philanthropy and volunteer work.

[66] Interview with Mr Fouad Siniora, former prime minister, 16 April 2014.
[67] Interview with Nicholas Blanford, 26 October 2013 and Sarkis Naoum, journalist with *Al Nahar*, 15 August 2013.
[68] As Saudi regulations favour citizens when it comes to awarding contracts to certain projects, Hariri's Saudi citizenship qualified him to bid for many other projects that otherwise would have not been open to him. Gary C Gambill, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon: The Other Occupation," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (2001).
[69] Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East." p.18.
[70] Discussions with Michael Young, journalist with the *Daily Star*, 19 January 2014.

An early example of Hariri's charity was the Islamic Institute for Culture and Higher Education that he set up in Sidon in 1979 to provide scholarships for needy students. [71] Although the association was named as an Islamic charity, non-Muslim students also benefitted going through the intermediary of their respective *zu'ama* for scholarships. The scholarships were mostly given for technical and professional studies at renowned universities such as the American University of Beirut (AUB) and western universities such as medicine and engineering rather than religious studies.[72]

This helped boost Hariri's image as a non-sectarian leader. Hariri was also supported by Saudi Arabia to finance some of his charitable projects. Through the Hariri Foundation and Saudi support, Hariri financed projects that could no longer be financed by Islamic associations such as the Maqassid association that had been established in 1878 by the Beirut Sunni notables.[73] Although the relationship between Hariri and these organisations was essentially conflictual in the sense that it represented a tussle for influence over the Sunni community, in the end Hariri was able to prevail because of his enormous wealth and his Saudi connection made collaboration a better option.[74] In other words, "Hariri was trying to have the cake and eat it, to clientalise Sunni communal leaders and at the same time be above sectarian politics".[75]

The scale of Hariri's philanthropy also increased exponentially with the Israeli invasion in 1982. He began by organising emergency humanitarian assistance at his own cost in his hometown, Sidon following the Israeli invasion in 1982.[76] Hariri also offered his services to the President Amin Gemayel to clean up Beirut and reinstate public

[71] Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon." p.93.
[72] Interview with Nicholas Blanford.
[73] Discussions with Mr Tammam Salam, former prime minister, 17 February 2013.
[74] Hariri also forgave the Maqassid's debt held by his Banque Mediterranee. See Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon."
[75] Ibid., p.100.
[76] Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East."pp.22-23

utilities. He and even gave emergency assistance to the victims of the war.[77] Hariri's success in being able to integrate into the circle of Lebanese political elites was due to the fact that he was an outsider and not a member of the traditional *zu'ama*, Hariri was not seen as a political threat. This made him a valuable ally for Saudi Arabia to gain access into the Lebanese politics. As such, when President Gemayel turned to Saudi Arabia for help to shore up his presidency following the withdrawal of the western multinational force, King Khaled appointed Hariri as his personal envoy to mediate among the factions.[78] Hence, Hariri became the "Saudi mediator of Lebanese origin".[79]

With the trust and networks that he had built up, Hariri was active behind the scenes. Indeed, he was instrumental in organising and financing several peace conferences in 1983.[80] Though the efforts did not end the civil war, Hariri's charitable and diplomatic initiatives earned him the respect of the Lebanese political elites, the warlords as well as the Saudis. Given his familiarity in the upper echelons, Hariri's wealth enabled him to participate in reconstruction projects once the civil war ended. With his banks and his Saudi connections, Hariri could also raise and guarantee Lebanese bonds to fund reconstruction projects.[81]

In this way, he built up a major business empire under his flagship company Oger-Liban that spanned finance and banking, telecommunications, construction, public utilities and services.[82] Overall, his large wealth and influence and ownership in newspapers and television stations allowed him a large patronage base within the political

[77] Ibid.
[78] Nicholas Blanford has dedicated an entire chapter "Fixer" to detail the various intermediary and mediation roles including as paymaster that Hariri played either alone or with members of the Saudi royal family. Ibid., pp.13-39.
[79] Nicolas Lupo Sonnabend, "Rafiq Hariri's Path to Power During Lebanon's Civil War," *Al Arabiya News*, 13 February 2015.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Joe Nasr and Éric Verdeil, "The Reconstructions of Beirut," in *The City in the Islamic World (2 Vols)*(Brill, 2008).
[82] Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon."

elites. [83] Hariri was also smart enough to know that if he were to have real political ambitions, he would have to cultivate the Syrians as well. [84] Hariri cultivated ties with the Assad regime in Damascus by supporting pro-Syrian militias in Lebanon as well as with Syrian political and government officials. Apparently, Hariri even constructed a luxurious residence for Hafez Al Assad in Damascus.[85]

Hence, even before the 1992 elections, Rafik Hariri was already well-known with connections in Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia and with foreign leaders all over the world.[86] By all accounts, Hariri should have been a suitable candidate for the post of prime minister. Indeed, President Hrawi who succeeded Amin Gemayel recommended Hariri as prime minister, but Syria twice declined Hariri's nomination as it considered Hariri to be too independent.[87] However, by 1992, Damascus was willing to pick Hariri for the post of prime minister. What was behind the change in Syria's policy?

As described earlier, Syria urgently needed someone capable to run the government to resolve the economy and also to enable the Syrian regime to siphon off the Lebanese wealth to avert economic disaster. In fact, even during the civil war, Syria had benefitted in several ways. Of the direct benefits was the shift of trade from the port of Beirut to the Syrian ports of Latakia and Tartus.[88]

However, with the end of the civil war, the advantages for Syria grew exponentially. The biggest economic benefit for Syria was employment for her workers providing relief

[83] Emmanuel Bonne, *Vie Publique, Patronage Et Clientèle: Rafic Hariri À Saïda*(Institut de recherches et d'études sur le monde arabe et musulman, 2014).
[84] See Gambill and Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri."; Neal and Tansey, "The Dynamics of Effective Corrupt Leadership: Lessons from Rafik Hariri's Political Career in Lebanon."
[85] Gambill and Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri."
[86] Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East."
[87] Salem, "The Wounded Republic: Lebanon's Struggle for Recovery."
[88] Discussions with Martin Chulov journalist with the *Guardian*, 13 January 2014. Martin's vast experience inside Syria made him a valuable resource person to understand Syria's motivations.

for its 40% unemployment rate.[89] Since 1990, thanks to bilateral labour agreements under the TBCC, Syrian workers were allowed to migrate freely to Lebanon where they made up a significant proportion of the workforce. Soon after the end of the civil war, it was estimated that there were 1.4 million Syrian workers in Lebanon mostly in the construction (39%), agriculture (33%) and general sanitation (20%) sectors. Syria also benefitted as her state-run companies were given priority in government tenders. The other benefit for Syria was the inflow of foreign exchange. It is estimated that Syrian workers remitted USD 4.3 billion to Syria every year.[90] Beyond the formal sources, Syria also benefitted from unrecorded inflow of money mostly through the Syrian soldiers stationed in Lebanon who carted off money, jewelry, vehicles and even doors of houses from Lebanon to Syria after the war.[91] In this regard, Hariri's appointment had several advantages for Syria. Given Hariri's enormous popularity and business competence, his appointment would signal that Syria was allowing a measure of independence for the new Lebanese government and thus blunt opposition towards Syria.

Hariri's appointment was also a necessary part of Syria's general rapprochement with Saudi Arabia and the United States following the collapse of its ally, Soviet Union and also as a repayment for Saudi Arabia for convening the Taif conference.[92] Further, it would also signal that Syria's control over Lebanon had the support of Saudi Arabia and the United States. Most importantly, by ceding control of economic policy, the Syrian regime could insulate itself from criticisms if the Lebanese economy deteriorated further

[89] Gambill, "Syrian Workers in Lebanon: The Other Occupation."
[90] Ibid.
[91] Interview with Dato Omar Jundi, Beirut.
[92] Despite their differing geopolitical objectives, there was an entente between Saudi Arabia and Syria on Lebanon. Saudi Arabia and Syria were in the opposing camps both ideologically as well as spiritually. Saudi Arabia was a US ally whereas Syria was in the Russian camp. Syria's support for the Maronites in fighting against the PLO went against Saudi interest as the PLO was supported by Saudi Arabia. Regionally, Syria supported Iran which was adamantly determined to overthrow the Saudi monarchy as part of its plan to export its Islamic revolution. Spiritually too there was a major difference. Syria was a secular republic headed by the Alawites, an ancient strand of Shiism whereas Saudi Arabia was staunchly Wahhabi. In addition, Syria's support for Hezbollah, an Iranian-sponsored militia in Lebanon was also against Saudi Arabia's geopolitical interest to keep Iran in check. To understand this seemingly paradoxically cooperative relationship between the two states despite their opposing geopolitical interests see Sonoko Sunayama, "Syria and Saudi Arabia, 1978-1990: A Study of the Role of Shared Identities in Alliance-Making" (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2005).

as domestic anger and discontent would be channelled to the Lebanese government and spare Syria.

Therefore, Hariri was given a relatively free hand in managing the economic policy while Damascus maintained control over foreign and strategic policies.[93] In this context, this thesis offers a more nuanced interpretation for Hariri's rise. Other scholars have suggested that Hariri became acceptable to Syria because he, as a wealthy member of the new Sunni contractor class was able to supply the demand for reconstruction of the devastated economy and infrastructure.[94] It has also been implied that Saudi Arabia was instrumental for his appointment.[95]

If the argument that Hariri's wealth and Saudi backing were the principal reasons for his appointment, then Hariri should have been appointed as the first prime minister of the Taif Republic since he was also no stranger to Syria. The fact that he was only appointed after the Lebanese economy began to show signs of crisis shows that economic concerns were at the heart of Syria's choice. Therefore, this thesis argues that Syria's desperate economic situation was the real reason for Hariri's appointment. Concerns over Hariri's potential independent mindedness was no longer a problem because by the time of his appointment, Syria was firmly in control of Lebanon. With a newly elected pro-Syria parliament and the various hegemonic controls at its disposal, the Syrian regime was confident that Hariri could be restrained.

[93] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society* p.66.
[94] Baumann, "Citizen Hariri and Neoliberal Politics in Postwar Lebanon."
[95] Ibid.

The following section will show that while Hariri was a competent economic manager, he had political ambitions as well. It was the pursuit of these objectives that brought Hariri into contact with Mahathir.

Hariri's Beirut: Aiming to be the "Singapore of the Middle East" through Kuala Lumpur?

As Syria had allowed Hariri autonomy only in economic matters, Hariri made economic restoration the priority of his "government of economic salvation".[96] Although Hariri's track record as Prime Minister has generated much criticisms there is consensus that he was able to quickly arrest economic decline by restoring macro-economic stability.[97] Hariri's approach was met with enthusiasm domestically and by the international financial organisations.[98] By broadly mirroring the accepted economic orthodoxy of the day known as the "Washington Consensus", his policies received praises from the World Bank and other foreign governments.[99] The high interest rates had the effect of attracting private sector deposits in Lebanese pounds in the banking system. By keeping the interest rates high he was able to halt the slide of the Lebanese pound and stanch the bleeding of the economy.

[96] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*

[97] Among the works that are critical of Hariri's economic policies are Georges Corm, "Behind the Façade of Reconstruction: The Lebanese Miracle in Danger," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (1998); Volker Perthes, "Myths and Money: Four Years of Hariri and Lebanon's Preparation for a New Middle East," *Middle East Report*, no. 203 (1997); Michael Young, "Two Faces of Janus: Post-War Lebanon and Its Reconstruction," ibid., no. 209 (1998); Gambill and Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri."

[98] Interview of Mr Fouad Siniora, former prime minister.

[99] The term Washington Consensus was coined by John Williamson, an economist at the Institute for International Economics, a Washington DC based think tank. It was presented as a set of alternative views of effective development strategies that have come to be associated with the Washington-based institutions: the IMF, the World Bank, and the US Treasury. In the 1980s and 1990s the neo-economic liberalization was prescribed to all developing countries as the path to development. Williamson's Washington Consensus centered on ten reforms: (i) fiscal discipline in order to eliminate public deficits; (ii) a change in the priorities of public spending: withdrawal of subsidies and increased spending in health and education; (iii) tax reform: broadening tax bases and reducing tax rates; (iv) positive real interest rates, determined by the market; (v) exchange rates determined by the market, which must guarantee its competitiveness; (vi) liberalization of trade and opening of the economy (Williamson did not attach any priority to the liberalization of capital flows); (vii) no restrictions on foreign direct investment; (viii) privatization of public enterprises; (ix) deregulation of economic activity; (x) a solid guarantee of property rights. In summary, the Washington Consensus seeks to promote economic development through a *laissez faire* approach of favouring economic stability through fiscal adjustment and market orthodoxy and a dramatic reduction of the role of the state in the economy. See John Williamson, "A Short History of the Washington Consensus," *Law & Bus. Rev. Am.* 15(2009).

This policy helped the government to avert central bank insolvency as deposits rose from USD 400 million to 6 billion. Private sector deposits also increased from USD 4.47 billion to USD 9.21 billion while deposits in Lebanese pound from USD 1.4 billion to USD 3 billion. As a result, economic growth rebounded reaching 8% in 1994. The balance of payments also strengthened from a deficit of USD 402 million to a surplus of USD 1.137 billion. Overall, the GDP expanded from USD 2.672 billion to USD 5.920 billion while external debt fell from USD 535 million to USD 375 million. The strong currency also reigned in inflation which was managed to be brought to 9% from a high of 16%. [100]

Hariri is credited with creating the necessary conditions to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) with the simplification of the tax code, creation of Beirut's free trade zone and expanding its trading partners by signing trade agreements with non-traditional partners.[101] Most importantly, his market-friendly policies stabilized the unpopular Taif Republic by restoring regional and international confidence in the Lebanese economy as evidenced by the return of foreign companies, international banks, and international media to Beirut. [102] Once the Lebanese economy had been stabilised, Hariri set his sights on an ambitious 10-year plan known as the "Horizon 2000" for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon.[103]

[100] The data was compiled from several sources. See Neal and Tansey, "The Dynamics of Effective Corrupt Leadership: Lessons from Rafik Hariri's Political Career in Lebanon."; Samer Srouji, "Capturing the State: A Political Economy of Lebanon's Public Debt Crisis 1992-2004" (Institute of Social Studies, 2005); Jeffrey Kentor and Terry Boswell, "Foreign Capital Dependence and Development: A New Direction," *American sociological review* (2003); Ziad K Abdelnour, "Lebanon: Israel's True Partner?," *Middle East Quarterly* (1995).

[101] Ibid.

[102] In 1996 alone 18 foreign companies opened offices in Beirut while another 76 were represented by Lebanese agents while in 1997, CNN re-opened its Beirut office after it was closed for 12 years. Neal and Tansey, "The Dynamics of Effective Corrupt Leadership: Lessons from Rafik Hariri's Political Career in Lebanon."; Najem, "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction."

[103] Interested readers may consult the work of Tom Najem for a detailed account of the execution of Horizon 2000. See "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction."

The plan running from 1993-2002 was divided into three phases: rehabilitation, recovery and development with an initial estimated cost of around USD 11.5 billion. In essence, the plan was to restore Lebanon's pre-civil war glory as the economic hub of the Middle East by rebuilding the twin pillars that had enabled Lebanon to attain that position, namely a stable currency and an economic infrastructure that allowed Beirut to provide economic services more efficiently than the rest of the Middle Eastern countries. By doing so, ultimately Hariri hoped to transform Lebanon into the "Singapore of the Middle East".[104]

The point that this thesis emphasizes is that Horizon 2000 also served a major political motive of Hariri of breaking Lebanon free from the shackles of Syrian domination. Hariri was convinced that external conditions were propitious for the ending of the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. The Madrid conference had been a major breakthrough as for the first time that all the parties to the Middle East conflict had met under one roof.[105] Following the first Gulf war, the balance of forces had turned in favour of the United States, Arab Saudi and the moderate Arab states.[106] Syria, now bereft of her erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, was aware of risk of isolation and losing out on financial assistance if she did not join the on-going peace initiative.[107]

In Israel, the defeat of the right-wing Likud government and victory of the Labour government under Yithak Rabin saw an Israeli government that was more open towards peace talks. Unlike his predecessor Shamir, Rabin showed greater willingness to explore peace. Israel's willingness to explore peace was reciprocated by the Arab states with their

[104] Denoeux and Springborg, "Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the Levant?."
[105] For the first time, all parties to the Arab-Israel conflict, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Palestinians and Israel had gathered in one place to hold direct negotiations. Office of the Historian, "The Madrid Conference, 1991," Department of State, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/madrid-conference.
[106] M. Graeme Bannerman, "Arabs and Israelis: Slow Walk toward Peace," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 1 (1992).
[107] Syria received generous financial assistance from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for its role in the implementation of the Taif Agreement and for its participation in the Gulf war against Iraq. It was estimated that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia alone gave about USD 2.6 billion in aid. See Plaut, "The Collapsing Syrian Economy."

own initiatives at the Madrid Conference.[108] The talks with the PLO led to the Oslo process which ultimately led to the signing of the Oslo agreement between Israel and the PLO in 1993.[109] The Madrid conference also generated a series of bilateral negotiations with the Front-Line states, Jordan and Syria. Overall, the outlook for peace in 1992 was very positive indeed. Therefore, Hariri, like many others, was convinced that the peace process would usher in a new world order with peace in the Middle East. The signing of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in 1995, was further proof that regional peace would also bring about increased trade and investment opportunities for the Middle East as a whole.[110] Hariri was convinced that an economically vibrant Lebanon would reduce the potential for conflict with Israel and spur regional trade and investment which would in turn further encourage Israel to seek peace negotiation with Lebanon. If Israel and Lebanon were to finally conclude a peace agreement, the potential threat to Syria would vanish. Once Israel was no longer a threat then the justification for Syria's occupation of Lebanon would also cease. Hence, for Hariri, restoration of the Lebanese economy was the key to Lebanon's freedom and independence from Syria's control.[111]

Hariri's intention is of course impossible to prove as Lebanon's foreign policy was by and large defined by Syria. However, one can discern his thoughts by looking at some aspects of Lebanon's foreign policy that was still under the control of the Lebanese government. One of these concerns the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.[112] As mentioned earlier, the Lebanese government had always refused to integrate the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon for fear that a large influx of Palestinians would upset Lebanon's volatile confessional mix. As such, Lebanon's foreign policy stressed the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This policy, more popularly known as "right of return"

[108] "The Madrid Peace Conference," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (1992).
[109] Ibid.
[110] Brigid Gavin, "The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership," *Intereconomics* 40, no. 6 (2005).
[111] D. Ross, *The Missing Peace: The inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005). pp.577-578
[112] Salloukh, "The Art of the Impossible: The Foreign Policy of Lebanon."

was Lebanon's demand as part of a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.[113] However, the 1993 Oslo accords did not include the "right of return". It was naturally a matter of concern to Lebanon. From Lebanon's perspective, without the "right of return", the Oslo accords presaged the possibility that the major powers might try to impose a permanent settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As such, the Lebanese foreign minister Farez Buawayz and President Elias Hrawi, both Maronites, called for the expulsion of the Palestinian refugees whereas Hariri supported the establishment of a Commission on Naturalization to integrate some of the Palestinians.[114] Even on the reconstruction of Beirut, Hariri observed that "improving their (Palestinian refugees) living conditions would facilitate their permanent integration into Lebanon".[115]

The divergence between Hariri's views and Lebanon's long-standing foreign policy gives an important clue to his thinking. It can be inferred that Hariri believed if Lebanon granted citizenship to some of the Palestinian refugees it would be seen as Lebanon's willingness to share some of the burden of the "right of return". One of the main stumbling blocks in the peace process was Israel's refusal to accept the return of all the Palestinian refugees and their descendants under the "right of return". However, it was understood that Israel would be willing to accept a small number of them. Therefore, Hariri probably believed that if Lebanon showed willingness to share some of the burden of resettling the Palestinians, it would incentivise Israel to commit to the peace process and ultimately negotiate peace with Lebanon as well.

Thus, Hariri was in a hurry to push through with his reconstruction programmes to take advantage of this window of peace. However, Hariri's economic ambitions were

[113] N. Aruri, *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).
[114] R. Bowker, *Palestinian Refugees: Mythology, Identity, and the Search for Peace* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).
[115] Ibid.

constrained by the Lebanese political system. The main constraint was the clientalist nature of the Lebanese political system where traditionally the state resources had served as a source of patronage for the *zu'ama*.[116] This was further aggravated in the Taif Republic as Syria had the final say in the Lebanese political life. Hariri knew that if he tried to implement his plans through the existing institutions they would be held hostage to political wrangling and interference of the *zu'ama*, militia leaders and Syrian officials who would have wanted to have a say in the running of the projects and allocation of resources as a source of patronage for themselves.

Since, he had been given *carte blanche* to run the economy, Hariri used his political clout to bypass the existing institutions and created his own administrative infrastructure. For the execution of his Horizon 2000, Hariri relied upon the Council for Reconstruction and Development (CDR). It acted as a superministry as it was empowered to oversee the line ministries, plan and tender projects and carry out "public-private partnership" projects with politically connected individuals.[117] In order to secure FDI for the reconstruction programme, the Hariri government established the Investment Development Authority of Lebanon (IDAL) in 1994.[118] In both institutions, Hariri appointed his own men in critical positions. Thus, the CDR and IDAL, staffed by Hariri's men, were autonomous and answerable to the prime minister's office only.[119]

As Hariri was in control of the institutions that conceived plans, raised government borrowing and executed projects, he could push through with his plans. Hariri also

[116] Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar, "Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon," *World Politics* 62, no. 03 (2010); Are Knudsen, *Precarious Peacebuilding: Post-War Lebanon, 1990-2005*(Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2005).
[117] The CDR was created in 1976 by Prime Minister Salim Hoss to bypass the bureaucracy. The CDR was made responsible for drawing up plans, raising external funding, and sometimes even executing some of the projects. See Najib B Hourani, "Lebanon: Hybrid Sovereignties and US Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 1 (2013).
[118] Peter Waldman, "Stepping Forward: Lebanese Premier Uses Own Resources to Spur Rebuilding of Beirut - Hariri's Unorthodox Means Seems to Work, but Ties to Saudis Stir Suspicion " *The Wall Street Journal* 24 March 1994.
[119] Others included Riyad Salameh, former account manager for Hariri at Merrill Lynch, who was made Central bank governor and Fouad Siniora, Hariri's childhood friend who subsequently became Chief Financial Officer at Hariri's Med Bank in Lebanon, as Minister of Finance. Interview with Mr Fouad Siniora, former prime minister.

managed to keep control of the execution stage by appointing companies under his control to undertake important projects. The centerpiece of Beirut's reconstruction, the Beirut Central District, was given to Solidere, a company in which Hariri was a major shareholder.[120] The board members also mostly made up of prominent Lebanese businessmen and Hariri's proxies.[121] Apart from putting his own men in key positions, Hariri also adopted a somewhat autocratic style that some scholars have described as functional authoritarianism.[122]

Hariri was able to secure such a remarkable latitude because the recovery of the Lebanese economy was also a high priority for Damascus. In return for the free hand, Hariri supported Syrian control by deferring to the Syrian leadership on political matters. He also used his considerable wealth and position to invest in Syria, support pro-Syrian candidates in local elections and keep key pro-Syrian officials happy by allowing kickbacks.[123] His autonomy was also possible because it was also part of a tacit understanding among the Troika in carving out of spheres of influence for themselves under the overall oversight of Damascus. Thus, the prime minister was allowed discretionary powers over the CDR, while the Speaker was given autonomy over the development of southern Lebanon through a body known as the Council of the South and the President, control over oil and gas resources. [124]

Convinced that regional peace was at hand, Hariri was willing to commit the government to a considerable fiscal burden that Horizon 2000 required.[125] However,

[120] Young, "Two Faces of Janus: Post-War Lebanon and Its Reconstruction."
[121] Najem, "Political Economy of Contemporary Lebanon: A Study of the Reconstruction." pp.280-281.
[122] Perthes, "Myths and Money: Four Years of Hariri and Lebanon's Preparation for a New Middle East."
[123] One of the main criticisms against Hariri was that he was resorted to corruption to achieve his objectives. An excellent study by Mark Neal and Richard Tansey challenges these criticisms by showing that the so-called "corruption" was necessary given the conditions of Lebanon and demonstrate that it enabled Hariri to achieve his objectives of rebuilding Beirut. In other words, the study argues that Hariri's case is an example of an "effective corrupt leadership".
[124] Reinoud Leenders, "In Search of the State: The Politics of Corruption in Post-War Lebanon," *unpublished essay,(May 2004)* (2004).
[125] Nizameddin, "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation."

Hariri's plans soon faced obstacles. Ironically, the very fiscal policies that restored Lebanon's economic health now stood in the way of Hariri's ambition to reconstruct Beirut. The high interest rate policy for example, which was essential to shore up confidence in the banking system and keep the currency strong, sucked liquidity from the private sector into government bonds rather than into economic activity.[126] As such, private investment in reconstruction did not take place. Further, the high capital spending by the state also crowded out private investment. Therefore, Hariri had to rely on domestic borrowing and high state-led capital spending for his reconstruction programmes. Consequently, public debt increased more than five times from 36% of the GDP in 1994 to 110% in 1997. As expenditure exceeded revenue, the budget deficit ballooned from 8.3% of the GDP in 1994 to 23.43% in 1997.[127] The mounting debt servicing burden further reduced the capacity for capital expenditure.[128] Therefore, from 1994 onwards Hariri's government was forced to seek on external resources to support for his vision of Lebanon's development. This is where Mahathir comes in.

Hariri and Mahathir: More like brothers than leaders

Initial contacts between Mahathir and Hariri took place in 1994 through the intermediary of Omar Jundi, Malaysia's honorary consul in Beirut. Through Jundi, Hariri had expressed interest to meet Mahathir in Malaysia. Mahathir welcomed the visit as it would be the first one from a Lebanese prime minister. The meeting should have taken place in December 1994, but it had to be postponed because it clashed with the dates proposed by Morocco for the 7th OIC Summit in Casablanca.[129] Hence, the first time

[126] Interview with Mr Fouad Siniora, former prime minister 16 April 2014.
[127] Sami E Baroudi, "Continuity in Economic Policy in Postwar Lebanon: The Record of the Hariri and Hoss Governments Examined, 1992-2000," *Arab Studies Quarterly* (2002).
[128] Between 1992-2004, debt servicing absorbed 40% of all government expenditure while capital expenditure was only 13%.
[129] "OL1994.10.24 from Rafik Hariri, Prime Minister of Lebanon, to Dr Mahathir Bin Mohamad, Prime MInister of Malaysia" (1994).

that Hariri and Mahathir met was at the 7th Summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Casablanca on 13 December 1994. It was Hariri's first attendance at an OIC Summit as prime minister. Mahathir on the other hand was an old hand having attended many of these Summits before. Malaysia's image as an Asian tiger economy enthralled political leaders, the policy community and the academia alike. [130] Therefore, foreign leaders were eager to know Mahathir's "secret formula". The fact that Mahathir had been selected to speak on behalf of the Asian Group on the commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the OIC indicated his popularity. [131] During that initial meeting both men struck up a lasting friendship. [132] Hariri and Mahathir shared many similarities. For some they were "autocratic free-marketers" because they held free market principles and yet run their governments with a heavy hand. [133] Like Hariri, Mahathir also believed that the state should lead in undertaking massive infrastructure projects to encourage development. [134] Like Hariri too, Mahathir was somewhat impatient with the public sector, preferring to rely on consultants and special committees to advise on projects and a small group of individuals (cronies) to head flagship projects. [135]

Hariri made his first official visit to Malaysia on 23 March 1995, barely three months after his encounter with Mahathir in Casablanca. Many years later, Mahathir would recall his friendship with Hariri was "more like friendship among brothers rather than among leaders". [136] Mahathir recalled Hariri as a very persuasive man who was keen

[130] From 1986 to 2001, over 5300 scholarly articles were published about the Asian tiger economies. Out of these about 600 articles were on Malaysia. More than a third of these focused on economic development, technological change and growth. Joe C Davis and Jorge G Gonzalez, "Scholarly Journal Articles About the Asian Tiger Economies: Authors, Journals and Research Fields, 1986–2001," *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature* 17, no. 2 (2003).
[131] OIC, "Final Communique of the Seventh Islamic Summit Conference (Session of Fraternity and Revival), Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco, 13-15 December, 1994,"(Casablanca1994).
[132] Interview with Saad Hariri, son of Rafik Hariri, who had assumed the position of Prime Minister, on 10 May 2010. The latter explained that his father admired Mahathir very much for his strong leadership and in particular the development of Malaysia.
[133] Young, "Two Faces of Janus: Post-War Lebanon and Its Reconstruction."
[134] Interview with Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, 13 January 2016.
[135] For a critique of Mahathir's economic legacy see KS Jomo and M Way, "Mahathir's Economic Legacy" (paper presented at the Kuala Lumpur: Forum, 2003).
[136] Interview with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

desire to learn from Malaysia's experience. He was also a man in a hurry according to Mahathir.[137] Hariri's visit enabled him to see for himself Malaysia's development. The visit also met one of Hariri's main objective – to attract foreign investment to develop Beirut's infrastructure that had been destroyed in the civil war.[138]

However, the warming of relations came to a temporary halt with Israel's attack on Lebanon on 11 April 1996 in response to Hezbollah's rocket attacks into northern Israel from their stronghold in southern Lebanon.[139] The 16-day military operation inflicted massive economic damage. Instead of just targeting Hezbollah's stronghold, the Israeli army targeted all economic infrastructure. Roads, bridges, and even airports were not spared.[140] With the attack, the Lebanese nascent economic recovery once again stalled.[141] Seeing his recovery plans ruined, Hariri burst out against Israel's actions as a contrived plot to derail Lebanon's economic growth.[142] Hariri's outburst was in reality an oblique reference to Syria for he knew that Hezbollah's provocative rocket attacks would have been given the green light by Damascus.[143] By allowing Hezbollah to launch rockets against Israel, Syria calculated that Israel would respond. It was Syria's way of keeping Hariri destabilized so that he does not become overly successful in restoring Lebanon's economy. By instructing Hezbollah to attack Israel, Syria would create fears in the minds of the Israeli public and cast doubt on the peace process. At the same time, wrecking the Lebanese economy would derail the peace process or at least slow it down so that Syria could once again be the sole arbiter of the pace of negotiations. At the back of his mind,

[137] Ibid
[138] "Lebanon Focuses on Reconstruction," *New Straits Times*, 22 March 1995.
[139] Hezbollah policy of harassment of the IDF in southern Lebanon was in response to the Israeli occupation. Sometimes these harassments would be met with gunfire by the IDF. It was one of these occasions when two Lebanese civilians were killed by IDF forces. This gave a pretext for Hezbollah to launch rockets into Israel that resulted in Operation Grapes of Wrath on 11 April 1996. Kevin Fedarko and Lisa Beyer, "Operation Grapes of Wrath," *Time* 147, no. 17 (1996).
[140] "Israel Targets Economic Sites in Lebanon ", *The Washington Post*, 16 April 1996.
[141] Hariri was forced to cancel several planned bonds to produce new housing.
[142] Wikileaks, "Lebanese Ambassador Fawzi Salloukh Cautious About Progress in the Syrian/Lebanese Tracks of the Middle East Peace Talks ", 94BRUSSELS8603_a (US Embassy European Union,1994).
[143] Stephen C Pelletiere, "Hariri's Critique of Operation Grapes of Wrath: Implications for the Peace Process," *Strategy, planning and policy for joint and combined employment of military forces; The nature of land warfare; Matters affecting the Army's future; The concepts, philosophy, and theory of strategy; and* (1997).

the Israeli attack was proof that he was on the right track in pursuing a strategy of quick reconstruction of Lebanon's economic infrastructure.

Broadly speaking, Mahathir had also come to the same conclusion about the prospects for peace as Hariri. In anticipation of progress in the peace negotiations, Malaysia had also tentatively started to think about establishing normal relations with Israel to take advantage of the huge business and trade opportunities.[144] In fact, since 1993 Mahathir had reached out to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin following Israel's decision to recognize the PLO. In a letter dated 23 December 1993, Mahathir hoped that both Israel and Palestine would be able to reach peace soon and conveyed Malaysia's desire to follow suit with formal relations with Israel.[145] Later, Mahathir would clarify that it was Rabin who initiated the correspondence and that he had received three letters from him earlier after the news of a secret mission to Israel had been exposed in the press.[146]

In June 1994, Malaysian papers broke news that Tunku Abdullah, brother of the King and chairman of a publicly listed company, Melewar Group had visited Israel.[147] Tunku Abdullah was quoted as saying that the visit was to merely explore business opportunities.[148] However, the fact that Tunku Abdullah also met with Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres visit suggests that the Israeli government viewed his visit as an informal step by Malaysia to explore the possibility of establishing formal relations. However, when the news broke out Mahathir was forced to deny any

[144] "Malaysia to Invest in Israel Once Ties Are Set Up," *The Straits Times*, 30 September 1993.
[145] The Star published three letters written by Mahathir to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (23 December 1993), to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (14 March 1997) and Prime Minister Ehud Barak (8 June 1999). "Govt Releases Dr M's Letters to Israeli Pms ", *The Star*, 29 February 2012.
[146] "Israel Wants to Have Ties with Us, Says PM," *The Star*, 20 June 1994.
[147] "King's Brother Visited Israel on Business Trip," *The Straits Times*, 22 June 1994; "Firm Unaware of Chairman's Visit to Israel," (1994).
[148] "Trip to Israel Was for Business, Says King's Brother," *The Straits Times*, 17 July 1994.

knowledge of the visit.[149] It was later reported that Tunku Abdullah's passport had been confiscated by the government and nothing more was heard of the visit again.[150]

In the meantime, the Malaysian government continued to reach out to Israel through interaction at various multilateral meetings.[151] Interestingly, the Malaysian government also relaxed the ban on visiting Israel for religious purposes even though both countries did not have any diplomatic relations.[152] Following the progress of the talks, the private sector was encouraged to explore trade ties with Israel knowing that Israel could be a catalyst for economic development in the Middle East.[153] Mahathir himself kept up contacts with the Israeli prime ministers until 1999. In 1997, he wrote to Prime Ministers Binyamin Netanyahu in 1997 and Ehud Barak in 1999 encouraging them to make progress in the peace efforts and reiterating Malaysia's desire to establish formal relations.[154] Contacts at the level of foreign ministers were also maintained through informal meetings and other arranged encounters at the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York.[155]

Thus, for Mahathir a foothold in Lebanon's economy would also provide an entry point to jointly explore investment opportunities with Israeli companies.[156] If such three-way partnership were to become successful then it would mitigate the potential for

[149] "Mahathir Does Not Know About Tunku Abdullah's Visit to Israel," *Bernama*, 19 June 1994.
[150] "Paspot Tunku Abdullah Ditarik Balik," *Utusan Malaysia*, 29 July 1994; "Cabinet Decides to Impound Abdullah's Passport," *New Straits Times*, 20 July 1994.
[151] Other ministers too informally met with the Israeli leadership at different multilateral forum. "Some Kl Ministers Met Rabin," *The New Paper*, 15 July 1994.
[152] "Malaysians Can Visit Israel to Pray at Mosque," *The Straits Times*, 26 October 1994; "Kl Extends Jerusalem Visits to Non-Muslims," *The Straits Times*, 11 November 1994; "Malaysian Travel Agents Visit Israel," *The Straits Times*, 1 April 1994.
[153] "KL to Look into Increasing Trade Links with Israel," *The Straits Times*, 14 January 1994; "Private Sector Urged to Forge Ties with Israel," *The Straits Times*, 17 January 1995; "Trade Team "May Visit Israel"," *The Straits Times*, 8 June 1996; "Malaysia Sees Israel as Economic Catalyst in Mid-East ", *The Straits Times*, 16 July 1997.
[154] "Govt Releases Dr M's Letters to Israeli Pms ".
[155] One of the contacts was a meeting between foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar and Israeli foreign minister David Levy at the UN on 30 September 1999. When the news broke out in the social media, the government was forced to justify the visit by denying any change in policy towards Israel. See "No Change in Ties with Israel," *The Straits Times*, 5 October 1999; "Minister Criticised for Contact with Israel," *The Straits Times*, 1 October 1999; "Historic Meeting between KL, Israel Ministers ", *The Straits Times*, 28 September 1999; "PAS Twisted Facts of Israeli Meet: Minister," *The Straits Times*, 8 October 1999; "Pas Kecam Hamid Kerana Runding Dengan Israel," *Berita Harian*, 1 October 1999.
[156] Interview with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, former prime minister.

conflict between Lebanon and Israel.[157] In other words, joint partnership in Lebanon was to be Malaysia's way of contributing to peace and stability in the region. He was also convinced that Israel's long-term commitment to peace was still intact. Hence, there were no harsh criticisms from Malaysia. In fact, Israel was mentioned only three of his speeches that year where the criticism was uncharacteristically mild. In the first speech on the opening of the 50th UMNO Convention on 11 May 1996, Mahathir merely mentioned the bombardment of Lebanon by Israel.[158] At the 51st UNGA, he said "Palestine`s hopes and aspirations have been undermined by the new Israel government, backed unfortunately by some Western powers, backtracking on painfully negotiated agreements."[159] Finally, at the dinner given in honour of the visiting Turkish prime minister, Mahathir merely opined that the stance taken by the Israeli government was not helpful to the peace process.[160]

Nevertheless, the attack on Lebanon temporarily halted bilateral cooperation. Therefore, Mahathir's reciprocal visit to Lebanon had to wait until normalcy had returned to Lebanon. Mahathir could only reciprocate Hariri's visit in 1997. It was his first visit to Lebanon.[161] In fact it was the first official visit by a Malaysian prime minister to Lebanon. Although Tunku, Razak and Hussein had been to Beirut, theirs were mostly transit stops *en route* to Europe or back to Malaysia from Europe. Mahathir brought an impressive delegation of government officials and private sector representatives. In Mahathir's typical "Malaysia incorporated" way, the delegation included corporate figures who had been identified as cronies listed in Table 4.1 below.

[157] Mokhtar Hussain, "Satu Lagi Misi Kejayaan Untuk Malaysia," *Bernama*, 18 June 1997.
[158] Office of the Prime Minister, "Konvesyen Ulangtahun Umno Ke-50, 11 May 1996 ", Speech collection archives of former chief executives (1996).
[159] "Speech at the Plenary of the Fifty-First Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 27 September 1996," Speech collection archives of former chief executives (1996).
[160] "Jamuan Makan Malam Meraikan Tyt Professor Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, Perdana Menteri Republik Turki, 17 August 1996," Speech collection archives of former chief executives (1996).
[161] Mokhtar Hussain, "Satu Lagi Misi Kejayaan Untuk Malaysia."; "The Malaysian Delegation Ends Its Visit to Lebanon," *Al Liwaa*, 27 June 1997; Office of the Prime Minister, "Jamuan Makan Malam Meraikan TYT Professor Dr. Necmettin Erbakan, Perdana Menteri Republik Turki, 17 August 1996."

Table 4.1: Members of delegation of the prime minister's official visit to Lebanon 1997 (Unpublished records of the Embassy of Malaysia, Lebanon, 2010)

Name	**Designation**
Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Dato Seri Dr Ling Leong Sik	Minister of Transport
Dato Seri S. Samy Vellu	Minister of Works
Mr Samsudin Marsop	CEO, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE)
Dato Dr Abdul Aziz Mohd Yaacob	Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of International Trade and Industry
Senator Dato Saad Man	Political Secretary to the PM
Senator Haji Saidin Karno	Member of Parliament (MP)
Senator Abdillah Abdul Rahim	MP
Mr Hoo Seong Chang	MP
Dr L. Krishnan	MP
Dr Tan Kee Kwong	MP
Dato Dr Aris Othman	Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Finance
Dato Ghazzali Sheikh Abdul Khalid	Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dato Omar Jundi	Honorary Consul of Malaysia in Beirut
Tan Sri Tajuddin Ramli (Leader of Business Delegation)	Chairman and CEO, Malaysia Airlines
Tan Sri Azman Hashim	Chairman, Arab Malaysian Group
Tan Sri Vincent Tan Chee Yioun	CEO, Berjaya Group Bhd
Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew	CEO, Country Heights Holdings Bhd
Tan Sri Tan Kok Ping	Managing Director, Prime Utilities Bhd
Tan Sri Halim Saad Sdn Bhd	Chairman, Renong Bhd
Tan Sri Nik Mohamed Nik Yaacob	CEO, Sime Darby Bhd.
Tan Sri A.P. Arumugam	Chairman, Sri Inderajaya (Asia Pacific), Sdn Bhd
Tengku Meriam bt Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah	Chairman, Syarikat Putra Putri Sdn Bhd
Tunku Shahbuddin bin Tunku Besar Burhanuddin	Chairman, Raynors (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.
Dato K. Ketheeswaran (Kenneth Eswaran)	Group CEO, Best World Land Bhd
Dato Mohan Swami	Managing Director, Chase Perdana Bhd
Dato Mohd. Saleh bin Sulong	Chairman, DRB HICOM
Datuk Gnanalingam	Vice Chairman, Klang Multi Terminal Sdn Bhd (Westport Malaysia)
Dato Zahrain Hashim	Chairman, Penang Port Sdn Bhd
Dato Cgua Hock Chin	Managing Director, Road Builder (M) Bhd
Dato Tan Teong Hean	CEO, Southern Bank Bhd
Dato Razman Hashim	Executive Director, Standard Chartered
Dato Wan Adli bin Wan Ibrahim	Chairman, Transwater Corporation Bhd
Dato Arifin Mokhtar	Group Executive Director, YTL Corp. Bhd
Mr Abdul Rahman Zabidin	Director, Bidari Wira Sdn Bhd
Mr Abu Samah Bachik	Group Director, DRB HICOM

Mr Shahbudin Yusof	Managing Directir, Hatadi Sdn Bhd
Mr Abdul Aziz bin Abu Bakar	Managing Director, Intria Bhd
Mr Ong Eian Siew	CEO, MEC Sales & Services Sdn Bhd
Mr Goh Choon Lye	Managing Directir, Penas Corp. Bhd
Mr Low Thiam Hock	Chairman, Repco Holdings Bhd
Mr Wan Shaharuddin Wan Mahmood	Senior Vice President, Sapura Holdings, Sdn Bhd
Mr Hashbudin Hashim	President, SPH Holdings Sdn Bhd

The dramatic transformation of the Beirut Central District also referred to as Downtown Beirut was an eye-opener for Mahathir.[162] All traces of the destruction caused during the civil war and the recent Israeli bombardments had been completely cleared. In its place, stood rows and rows of new buildings and broad Paris-like avenues.[163] Mahathir was therefore convinced that Hariri was serious about his plans to put Lebanon back on the map as the business hub of the Middle East. [164]

From a national perspective, Lebanon offered opportunities for the Malaysian private sector to invest in infrastructure development, housing and construction, telecommunications, power generation and distribution, banking and finance.[165] Malaysia also offered to share her expertise to help Lebanon establish a free trade area. Plans were included for setting up joint venture schemes in electronics and light industry as well in the tourism sector.[166] Malaysia's interest in Lebanon also struck a chord with the Lebanese who looked forward to tangible progress in cooperating with Malaysia which they saw as a successful model worthy of emulation. Many mainstream Lebanese newspapers including *Al Nahar, Al Safir* and *Al Liwaa* as well as Hariri's own newspaper *Al Mustaqbal*, carried lengthy articles extolling Malaysia's success.[167] Under Hariri and

[162] "Speech by Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the State Banquet on the Occasion of the Official Visit to the Republic of Lebanon, 16 June 1997," Speech collection archives of former chief executives (1997).
[163] Interview with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.
[164] Mokhtar Hussain, "Regard Lebanon as a Good Risk, Malaysian Businessmen Told " *Bernama*, 19 June 1997.
[165] As far as investments were concerned Mahathir invited Malaysian companies to participate in the infrastructure development, housing and construction, telecommunications, power generation and distribution, and banking and finance. Hardev Kaur, "Set up Malaysia-Lebanon Business Council, Says Pm," *Business Times*, 18 June 1997.
[166] "Malaysia-Lebanon Okay Increased Trade," *United Press International*, 23 March 1995.
[167] For example Ahmad Ayash, "Construction Continues for 10 Years without Problems - Malaysia," *Al Liwaa*, 28 September 1996; Michel Mourkos, "Malaysia the Country of Massive Projects (Translation) " *Al Nahar*, 17 June 1997.

Mahathir, several agreements were concluded between Malaysia and Lebanon as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Bilateral agreements between Malaysia and Lebanon (Unpublished records of the Malaysian embassy, Beirut, 2010)

Agreement	**Date signed**
Trade Agreement	23 March 1995
MoU on Information sharing	9 February 1998
Investment Guarantee Agreement	26 February 1998
Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement	20 January 2003
Air Services Agreement	11 July 2003

However, the 1997 Asian financial crisis put a stop to further expansion of bilateral relations as the Malaysian government and the private sector scaled down ambitious plans or cancelled them altogether.[168] Foreign policy was one area where resources was curtailed. As such the proposal to open resident diplomatic embassies in each other's capital made during Mahathir's visit was put on hold indefinitely.[169] Despite the setback, Hariri was confident that Malaysia would be able to resume her plans once the financial crisis was over.[170]

However, additional bilateral initiatives did not materialize because Hariri's political star had also begun to wane around the same time. Hariri's attempts to secure external assistance had not been forthcoming as he had hoped principally because the

[168] Maarouf Daouk, "Malaysia Pulls out of Investment Deal after Asian Crisis," *Daily Star*, 10 February 1997.
[169] Interview with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.
[170] "Hariri Signs Accords with Malaysia Despite Investments Setback," *Daily Star*, 11 February 1998; "Malaysia's Private Sector Plans Trade Visit Despite Domestic Economic Crisis," *Daily Star*, 20 February 1998; Osama Habib, "Malaysian Delegates Come to Have a 'Field Day' in Lebanon," ibid., 2 June

Arab funds promised after Taif had been diverted by the Gulf war.[171] Although Hariri had managed to deliver on his promise to restore Beirut's physical infrastructure, financial problems spilled into domestic politics. Thus, Hariri came under severe criticisms from the other members of the Troika as their access to state funds was also affected.[172] The perception towards Hariri in Syria was also beginning to shift. As indicated earlier, Syria had only reluctantly agreed to appoint Hariri as prime minister. Between 1992 and 1996, Syria was happy to have Hariri so long as Damascus gained economically from Lebanon's economic expansion.

However, Hariri's value to Damascus declined as the Lebanese economy declined.[173] Furthermore, Hariri's loyalty to the Syrian regime had become suspect following his outburst again Israel as such insinuations were interpreted by the Syrian regime as directed to itself since Hezbollah was under Syria's control.[174] To make matters worse, Hafez Al Assad's declining health also had an impact on Hariri. As his health deteriorated, his son Bashar al Assad had taken charge of the "Lebanese file" from his ailing father.[175] In a bid to consolidate his authority within the regime and thwart potential challengers, Bashar replaced the Syrian officials in charge of Lebanon who had become wealthy from their association with Hariri with new ones. Hariri, bereft of dependable contacts within the Syrian regime, was further isolated. His isolation was complete with the election of General Emile Lahoud, a close ally of Hezbollah, as President.[176] Reading the writing on the wall, Hariri finally resigned voluntarily in 1998.[177]

[171] Wikileaks, "Lebanese Ambassador Fawzi Salloukh Cautious About Progress in the Syrian/Lebanese Tracks of the Middle East Peace Talks ".
[172] Nizameddin, "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation."
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.
[175] MacFarquhar, "Hafez Al-Assad, Who Turned Syria into a Power in the Middle East, Dies at 69."
[176] Nizameddin, "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation."
[177] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society*

With Hariri's resignation, bilateral relations entered an uncertain period. Following Hariri's resignation, Salim al Hoss was appointed as prime minister. Al Hoss was a three-term prime minister. He had headed the government in the early years of the civil war from 1976-1980 and again in the final years of the war from 1987-1989. Although al Hoss was a competent economist with a doctoral degree in economics from the United States, he lacked an independent political base. As such he was unable to surmount the political obstacles within the government to implement economic reform measures. Despite mirroring Hariri's economic approach, his management of the economy was criticised as the government was unable to reverse the economic decline.[178] Once again Syria faced the brunt of criticism for Lebanon's economic conditions. Anxious to avoid having an economic recession on its hands, the Syrian regime once again invited Hariri, who had by then won defeated Al Hoss by a massive majority in the 2000 parliamentary elections, to head the government.[179]

Bilateral efforts resumed when Hariri assumed the premiership on 23 October 2000. Official visits resumed as both leaders reaffirmed their mutual interests. In 2002, Hariri visited Malaysia with a 51-member delegation. He hoped to attract Malaysian FDI to take over privatized Lebanese government assets in telecommunications, electricity, water and tobacco industries. He wanted to promote Lebanon as a re-export center for goods produced in Lebanon. Table 4.3 shows the bilateral visits at the ministerial level and above.

[178] Readers are recommended to consult an excellent study by Sami Baroudi which shows that there was little difference between Hariri's and Hoss' approach to economic management. Baroudi shows that the Hoss government's room for manoeuvre was limited as public debt had reached unsustainable levels. With debt servicing taking more than 40% of the GDP and public-sector wages consuming another 35%, there was little revenue surplus at the government's disposal. In order to protect Lebanon's credit worthiness, the government had no choice but to apply measures recommended by the IMF such as raising taxes, reducing public expenditure, maintaining high interest rates, freezing wages and privatizing government assets. Interestingly, in Malaysia, the government could refuse the same IMF measures as it was in a better financial position. See Baroudi, "Continuity in Economic Policy in Postwar Lebanon: The Record of the Hariri and Hoss Governments Examined, 1992-2000."

[179] Gambill and Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri."

Table 4.3: Bilateral visits (1995-2003) (Unpublished records of the Malaysian embassy, Beirut, 2010)

Year	Visit
1995	Rafik Hariri to Malaysia, 23-28 March
1996	Omar Mskawi, Minister of Transport of Lebanon to Malaysia, 19 September
1997	Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Lebanon, 17-18 June
1998	Rafik Hariri to Malaysia, 9-10 February
2002	Rafik Hariri to Malaysia, 6-8 May
	Dato Seri Rafidah Aziz, Minister of International Trade and Industry to Lebanon, 17-19 April
	Tun Abdullah Badawi, Minister of Foreign Affairs to Lebanon, 23-24 June
	Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik, Minister of Transport to Lebanon, 11-12 July
2003	Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Lebanon, 20-21 January
	Rafik Hariri to Malaysia, 23-25 February to attend the 13th NAM Summit
	Rafik Hariri to Malaysia, 16-17 October to attend the 10th OIC Summit

As mentioned in the previous chapter, bilateral trade continued to grow albeit very slowly even during the civil war. However, after the civil war ended in 1989, bilateral trade more than doubled from USD 4.3 million in 1989 to USD 10.1 million in 1990. Annual two-way trade remained roughly at this level until the signing of the trade agreement in 1995 when the trade volume once again doubled. The political impetus provided by these visits and the improved legal framework through the conclusion of investment guarantee and avoidance of double taxation agreements, further encouraged bilateral trade as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Two-way trade between Malaysia and Lebanon (1999-2003)
(World Bank, 2018)

Year	USD (Million)
1989	4.3
1990	5.3
1991	6.3
1992	10.2
1993	10.3
1994	15.7
1995	19.7
1996	22.0
1997	27.1
1998	29.1
1999	22.3
2000	24.9
2001	31.1
2002	32.2
2003	41.5

The main products exported to Lebanon were electrical machinery, palm oil, furniture, wood and articles of wood, optical products and other industrial products. Out of these electrical products, palm oil and furniture alone constituted 70% of Malaysia's exports to Lebanon. Although the Lebanese market was small, Lebanon was considered an important trading partner because Lebanese importers mainly re-exported Malaysian goods to Latin America and Africa where there were large Lebanese expatriate community. In this way, Lebanon acted as an informal channel of promoting Malaysian exports in Latin America and Africa. Therefore, after Hariri's return as prime minister, Malaysian minister for International Trade and Industry, Rafidah Aziz led a trade delegation to Beirut. In addition, Malaysia also participated in Lebanon's main trade fair known as the Beirut World Trade Fair. At the trade exhibition labelled as "Malaysia in Lebanon" several Malaysian companies were represented. One of the key aims of the Malaysian government was to use Lebanon as the gateway to market the Proton vehicles to the Middle East. Besides that, Proton also attempted to penetrate the market with the

introduction of "Proton Waja" as part of Proton's strategy to gain a foothold in the Middle East automobile market.[180]

Apart from that, the end of the civil war also began to attract Lebanese back to Lebanon. As such interest began to emerge in attracting air services to Lebanon several companies began to show interest to act as the General Sales Agent for Malaysia Airlines in Beirut.[181] The Malaysian private sector was also interested in the tourism sector as it was believed that Lebanese tourism sector was on the cusp of takeoff. In order to take advantage of the anticipated air traffic, both countries agreed to conclude an ambitious and far reaching "open skies" agreement. Under the agreement, there were to be no restrictions on the flight destinations or plane types to be undertaken by the respective airlines. Both countries were also to have reciprocal rights to provide services in passenger or cargo traffic. In addition, fifth freedom was automatically granted to both sides.[182] It was during this period that MAS introduced the Beirut-Kuala Lumpur flight.

Despite efforts to attract foreign trade and investment, public finances continued to deteriorate. By 2002, Lebanon's public-sector debt had ballooned to USD 30 billion or equivalent to 173% of its GDP requiring 80% of tax revenues just to service interest payments, Lebanon was forced to seek external assistance. Without fresh infusion of funds, Lebanon risked having her credit worthiness reduced which would in turn have increased the cost of raising public funds for public reconstruction projects. Therefore, under the leadership of his close friend, President Jacques Chirac, France hosted the Paris II Conference to help Lebanon raise USD 5 billion.[183] Chirac who was also close to

[180] Jihane Akoury, "Malaysia Is Just around the Corner," *Daily Star*, 16 April 2002; "Malaysia Comes to Lebanon," ibid., 19 April; Ara Alain Arzoumanian, "Trade Revival Draws in Exhibition from Malaysia," ibid., 11 April; "Ushawan Tempatan Di Pelawa Rebut Peluang Di Lubnan," *Berita Harian*, 9 September 2002.
[181] "Letter from Sogetour, Lebanon to Managing Director of Malaysia Airlines," (1991).
[182] Elie Hourani, "Hariri Secures 'Open Skies' Deal with Malaysia," *Daily Star*, 9 May 2002; Ramsay Short, "Airlines Are Flying Back into Lebanon," ibid., 6 March.
[183] Osama Habib, "Government Seeks $5bn in Soft Loans," ibid., 16 October; "Paris 2: Saudi Arabia, France and Malaysia Offer Loan to Lebanon," *Al Nahar*, 25 November 2002.

Mahathir invited the latter to attend. At that pledging conference, Mahathir committed USD 300 million making Malaysia the third largest donor.[184] According to Mahathir

> Chirac wanted to organise a fund-raising conference to raise funds for Lebanon's reconstruction. One day he called me to ask if I could attend. I replied that I would attend and encouraged him to convene the fund-raising conference. Although the Conference was held in the month of Ramadhan, I attended the meeting. There Chirac explained the purpose of the funds and asked each leader to commit funds. Malaysia was not very rich. But we agreed to assist Lebanon to the tune of RM1 billion. But I wasn't concerned about the repayment because the Lebanese are scrupulous when it comes to their financial sector. Many Arab countries use Beirut as the banking centre. So Lebanon cannot afford to risk its reputation as a financial hub by being a poor paymaster. From my own reading, I knew that Lebanon had a culture that upholds best practices.[185]

In a remarkable show of solidarity, Mahathir apparently committed the assistance without prior detailed government scrutiny. It was only in January 2003 that the terms of the repayment of the loans were discussed although the Malaysian Central Bank had started to purchase the Lebanese Eurobonds since 27 December 2002. Malaysia also continued to assist Lebanon by purchasing Lebanese Eurobonds directly after the Paris II framework.[186] Malaysia also had earlier on 22 May 2002, supported Lebanon outside the Paris II framework by purchasing USD 250 million in Lebanese Eurobonds which were repaid in 2005. The available records show that all in all, Malaysia supported Lebanon with USD 750 million in financial assistance.

This remarkable show of solidarity by Malaysia towards Lebanon cannot simply be attributed to national interests alone. In 2002, Malaysia's economy was still not quite of

[184] "Malaysia Gives RM 1b Soft Loan to Lebanon," *The Star*, 24 November 2002..
[185] Interview of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad 13 January 2016.
[186] Malaysia bought USD 300 million worth of Lebanese Eurobonds on 27 December 2002 with an interest rate of 5.0 %. Subsequently on 9 July 2004, Malaysia bought an additional USD 200 million of Lebanese Eurobonds at 7.125% making the total amount of Lebanese Eurobonds held at USD 500 million. See Government of Lebanon, "One Year Progress after Paris II : Special Report December," ed. Ministry of Finance of Lebanon(2003). and records of the Malaysian embassy in Beirut.

the woods yet so to speak.[187] The significance of Malaysia's contribution becomes even more evident when we see that Malaysia was not only the third largest donor and one of the seven donor countries to support Lebanon but also the first to make good on its promise to deliver the funds. The pledges made and the date of actual delivery of funds by the pledging countries are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Contributions at Paris II Conference (Ministry of Finance of Lebanon, "One year progress after Paris II: Special report December 2003)

Creditor	Amount	Date of Receipt of Funds	Type of Financing	Terms
Malaysia	US$ 300 Million	27.12.2002	Eurobonds	- Issue Price: 100 percent - Final Maturity date: 15 years from issue date - Coupon rate: 5 % per annum payable semi-annually in arrears. - Amortization of Principal: Redeemable in 20 equal Semi-annual payments starting from year 6 (grace period of 5 years).
Oman	US$ 50 million	30.12.2002		
United Arab Emirates	US$ 300 million	15.1.2003		
Kuwait	US$ 300 million	22.1.2003		
Saudi Arabia	US$ 700 million	7.3.2003		
Qatar	US$ 200 million	27.5.2003		
France	US$ 540 million*	3.3.2003	Loan through the French Treasury and Agence Française de Développement (AFD)	- 15-year maturity - Coupon rate**: 5 % per annum payable semi-annually. - 3-year grace period for principal Repayment
Total	US$ 2,390			

This thesis contends that this show of solidarity was due to Mahathir's strong conviction that the restoration of Lebanon's economy was key to encouraging Israel

[187] Office of the Prime Minister, "Speech by Mahathir at the Investment Summit in New York "Maintaining Economic and Political Stability Amidst Regional Turbulences & Global Uncertainties: The Malaysian Experience" 4 February 2002," ed. Malaysia Prime Minister's Office, Speech collection archives of former chief executives, Office of the Prime Minister,Putrajaya (2002).

towards peace. As such he was convinced that he was doing the right thing in taking a gamble in committing such a large amount of public funds to support Hariri.

Although the prospect for peace had dimmed, both leaders remained hopeful about the Middle East peace process.[188] The peace process was very much a central theme in their mutual objectives as the subject was discussed at every opportunity. During Hariri's visit to Malaysia in 2002, he and Mahathir agreed to continue urging the world leaders to keep the momentum of the peace negotiations. Even as late as in 2002, when the prospects for peace was diminishing with the intransigence of the Ariel Sharon-led government, Hariri was still convinced that peace was possible as demonstrated in Lebanon's role in hosting an Arab League summit in Beirut in 2003 which agreed on the Arab Peace Initiative that first articulated a two-state solution.[189] Mahathir visited Lebanon once again in January 2003 prior to stepping down as prime minister. During that visit both leaders committed to open resident embassies in each other's capitals.[190] Rafiq Hariri visited Malaysia twice in 2003 to attend the Non-Aligned Movement and OIC Summits. It was at the margins of the OIC Summit that the Malaysia-Lebanese Business Council formally launched.[191]

Both leaders also explored other avenues for cooperation. Following up Hariri's interest in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), a delegation from the MSC also visited Lebanon to explore the feasibility of cooperation in the ICT sector.[192] Unfortunately, these proposed ventures did not materialize. Bilateral relations once again stalled with Mahathir's resignation on 31 October 2003. Almost a year later on 20 October 2004,

[188] Maurice Kaldawi, "Mahathir Underlines Economic Role of Peace," *Daily Star*, 22 January 2003.
[189] Elie Podeh, "Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative, 2002–2014: A Plausible Missed Opportunity," *The Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014).
[190] Elie Hourani, "Thankful Beirut Welcomes Mahathir," *Daily Star*, 21 January 2003.
[191] "Malaysia-Lebanon Business Council Formed," *Bernama*, 17 October 2003.
[192] "Talking It," *Daily Star*, 19 September 2002; Dania Saadi, "Lebanon Looks to Malaysia to Inject Expertise into Ict Sector," ibid., 5 September; "Hariri to Propose MSC Concept in Lebanon," *New Straits Times*, 7 April 2000.

Hariri also resigned as prime minister due to the increasingly acrimonious relationship with the Troika and also with President Bashar al Assad.[193]

This section demonstrated that it was a convergence of needs and perspectives of Hariri and Mahathir that led to the expansion of bilateral relations. At the national level, Hariri's need to attract Malaysian FDI was matched by Mahathir's push for the Malaysian private sector to seek new markets especially in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. This explains the number of agreement that were signed and the frequency of visits during this period. On another level, the idea that a prosperous and developed Lebanon could act as an incentive for Israel to commit to regional peace was something that both men shared. By contributing to Lebanon's prosperity and development through bilateral cooperation they hoped to claim some role contributing to regional peace. This explains why Malaysia was willing to help Lebanon by financially supporting Lebanon with USD 750 million merely on Mahathir's friendship with Hariri.

Conclusion

This chapter began with the observation that the period under review witnessed a dramatic expansion of bilateral relations. The discussion in this chapter provided ample proof that the systemic environment had a strong influence on the shape of bilateral relations. During the Cold War, the Lebanese civil war was of minor geostrategic significance to the international community which explains why the civil war lasted 15 years. Lebanon's relative unimportance also explains how the civil war effectively served as the gateway and gave many opportunities for Syria to gain influence over Lebanon.

[193] Gambill and Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri."

However, the Lebanese civil war suddenly became important when Iraq decided to join in the fray by supporting Micheal Aoun in his self-declared "war of liberation" against Syria. Wishing to avoid a regionalization of the conflict, the US with the help of Saudi Arabia and other states pushed through a peace agreement. For the US it was also a chance to solidify the emerging unipolar order by pushing for a final resolution of the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, the international community tacitly accepted Syria's tutelage over Lebanon through the provisions of the Taif agreement. Syria, for her part, by interpreting the Taif agreement to her advantage, coerced Lebanon to sign several bilateral treaties which subordinated Lebanon's foreign, domestic and strategic policies to Syria's.

Imminent economic disaster in Lebanon and Syria was instrumental in Hariri being picked for the post of prime minister. Syria wanted a competent manager who would be able to restore Lebanon's economy. By doing so, Syria wanted to prevent international discontent over her control over Lebanon. At the same time the Syrian regime also needed a vibrant Lebanese economy to tap into to bolster her flagging economy. For Hariri, the prospects for regional peace supported his own ambitions to encourage Israel to conclude a peace agreement with Lebanon believing that peace with Israel would remove Syria's motive to control Lebanon. Therefore, external conditions was partly responsible in encouraging the Hariri government to seek to expand trade and investment relations with other countries in order to support the economic and physical reconstruction of Lebanon. Likewise, external conditions also encouraged Mahathir and Lebanon to boost bilateral relations as they both saw bilateral relations as a means of supporting Lebanon's reconstruction efforts.

Therefore, we can see that it is the shared perspective of Hariri and Mahathir on encouraging Israel to commit to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict that sustained the bilateral relations through the ups and downs of political and financial crisis in both countries. Syria's role was merely incidental in the overall context of the expansion of bilateral relations. It is only because Syria picked Hariri for the prime minister's post that he was able to meet Mahathir.

For his part, Hariri had to prove that Lebanon was indeed a business-friendly country. By ignoring the inefficient state institutions and relying on his own men, Hariri was able to push through with an ambitious reconstruction agenda. However, this came at a price. In the absence of private investment, the Hariri government had to rely on public debt. As a result, the Lebanese economy quickly came under strain under an unsustainable public debt forcing the government to actively court foreign trade and investment. It was in this context, through the friendship between Hariri and Mahathir, that the Malaysian government and private sector actively explored bilateral cooperation in Lebanon. This accounts for the conclusion of the bilateral agreements and the high frequency of bilateral visits and the substantial financial assistance rendered at the Paris II Conference.

Ultimately it was the role of Mahathir and Hariri as leaders that was instrumental in the reinvigoration of bilateral relations. Apart from their own national economic interests, both men were had also encouraged by the prospects of peace in the Middle East. After nearly a decade of unbroken rule by the right-wing Likud party, Yitzhak Rabin's premiership gave hope for peace. For Hariri, peace with Israel was the key to Lebanon's freedom from Syrian dominance whereas for Mahathir, peace in the Middle East would give him some satisfaction as having contributed to in a small way to the

Middle East peace process. Therefore, the perception of Mahathir and Hariri towards Israel's intention, was an important driver of bilateral relations during this period.

As we saw in the final section, it was the domestic political considerations that compelled Mahathir and Hariri to resign from their posts. With their resignations, the pace of bilateral relations stalled once again. As seen in the Chapter the resumption of formal bilateral relations did not provide any room for other sub-state actors such as NGOs to play any role in the bilateral relations. However, as in the previous periods, the media in both countries, continued to play an important role in highlighting the growing bilateral relationship. The media coverage also highlighted potential trade and investment opportunities. The private sector was therefore encouraged to explore business opportunities taking advantage of the government's lead in preparing the legal framework with the appropriate agreements. Although trade increased, the risk-averse private sector did not seek out any investment opportunities as Lebanon was perceived to be risky. The Israel Operation Grapes of Wrath in 2002 certainly did not help.

Therefore, we can see that Syria's role was merely incidental in the overall context of the expansion of bilateral relations. It is only because Syria picked Hariri for the prime minister's post that he was able to meet Mahathir.

The findings in this chapter demonstrated unequivocally that the expansion of bilateral relations was in response to Israel. Although the civil war ended in 1989, bilateral relations did not take off until 1995 after Mahathir and Hariri met each other. As explained earlier, both leaders were convinced that Israel was ready to commit to peace. For Hariri, peace with Israel would ultimately lead to Lebanon's independence from Syria's clutches. For Mahathir, peace in the Middle East would open up a

significant trade and investment market for Malaysia. It would also be his contribution to peace in the region. Hence, their commitment to bilateral relations was actually in response to their perception towards Israel.

Since Israel's long-term interests appeared to be supportive of the peace process, the 1996 attack on Lebanon was not met with criticisms from Malaysia. This also explains why Mahathir wrote to Israeli prime ministers Binyamin Netanyahu in March 1997 reiterating encouragement for Israel to commit to peace. As explained earlier, Hariri himself was also convinced that Israel's target in 1996 was not Lebanon but actually to weaken Syria by destroying her ally, Hezbollah.

Both leaders remained committed to the idea of encouraging Israel towards peace right until the end as exemplified by Lebanon's support for the Arab Peace initiative that was drawn up at the Beirut Summit of the Arab League in 2002. In the final analysis, we can say that Israel was instrumental in the enhancement of bilateral relations during this period.

CHAPTER 5: MALAYSIA AND LEBANON: QUO VADIS?

The government has been formed and we will work together to confront the challenges that lie ahead

Fouad Siniora
Prime Minister of Lebanon (2005-2008)

Well, there are other aspects, I still command very good support in the party

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi
Prime Minister of Malaysia (2003-2009

Introduction

In the last chapter, it was shown that the "Golden Era" of bilateral relations was due to the role of two strong leaders, Mahathir and Hariri. While the expansion of bilateral relations could be framed in the context of the respective national interests of Malaysia and Lebanon, it was the perception of Mahathir and Hariri towards Israel that underpinned their motives. Therefore, it was concluded that Israel was an important driver of bilateral relations after the end of the civil war. However, before the fruits of the expanding relations could be reaped, domestic political considerations in their respective countries led both Mahathir and Hariri to resign. Mahathir resigned on 31 October 2003 followed by Hariri almost a year later on 20 October 2004.

This chapter covers the final phase of this study. This phase begins in 2003 with Abdullah's assumption of power as Prime Minister until he and Siniora step down in 2009. Both men were second liners as they both had served as deputies to Mahathir and Hariri in their respective political parties. Hence, this chapter aims to understand whether Israel was still an important driver of bilateral relations.

This chapter comprises six sections. The first section will examine the state of bilateral relations in the one year that Hariri remained in power after Abdullah had taken over as Prime Minister from Mahathir. The impact of Abdullah and Siniora on bilateral relations would be the focus of the second section. The main aim is to contrast the bilateral relations under these two second liners who had taken over from two strong leaders. A brief discussion of the experience of Proton and Malaysian Airlines (MAS) will be covered in this section. The inquiry will also investigate the impact of the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006 on bilateral relations and the role of non-state actors particularly during this period of conflict which forms the basis of the fourth section. An assessment of the state of bilateral relations in the post-conflict years will form the fifth section. The final section will conclude with a survey of the bilateral relations during this period and in particular, shed light into whether Israel had any effect on bilateral relations.

Hariri without Mahathir

What was immediately observable after Mahathir's departure was that the frequent exchange of high level visits dwindled significantly. From 2004 until 2009, there was only one ministerial visit from Malaysia and one from Lebanon. The sole visit from Malaysia was by Dato Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor in his capacity as the minister of tourism. His visit was to follow up on the suggestions made during the Mahathir government to explore opportunities in the tourism industry. From the Lebanese side there was also only one visit by a ministerial delegation from the Ministry of Administrative Reform. The visit was specifically for the Lebanese side to learn more about Malaysia's experience in e-government. As a follow up from this visit, both sides attempted to institute concrete cooperation in e-government. More will be said about this initiative in this chapter under the cooperation during the post conflict years from 2007-2009.

Hariri in particular, used to visit Malaysia frequently as shown in Table 4.2. As he travelled in his private plane, he was able to frequently visit Malaysia at short notice. Mahathir's resignation was a blow to Hariri who had invested much time and effort to cultivate Mahathir.[1] Hariri's hopes of attracting substantial Malaysian investment to make up for the lost years between the onset of the Asian financial crisis and his return to power in 2000, were dashed. Since Hariri had not cultivated the second and third liners in the Malaysian political hierarchy including with Mahathir's anointed successor, he did not know Abdullah well enough to continue engaging Malaysia.[2] Therefore, Hariri stopped visiting Malaysia after Mahathir's resignation in 2003. Besides his unfamiliarity with the new Malaysian leadership, Hariri's preoccupation with his looming political problems at home also prevented him from focussing on bilateral relations.

Besides the absence of bilateral visits, no new bilateral initiatives were undertaken. Neither did the private sector follow up from their visits to Lebanon previously as part of Mahathir's entourage. In fact, bilateral relations during this period was palpably lethargic compared to its earlier vibrancy.

It should be noted that Hariri's problems arose because his position in the second term of his premiership was much weaker than in the first. As noted earlier, the demise of Hafez al Assad had left him bereft of influence within the Syrian regime. Bashar al Assad who had earlier begun to purge the old guards in Damascus, had cultivated Hariri's pro-Syrian opponents such as Suleiman Franjiyeh and Omar Karami.[3] Hariri's strong connections with the Saudi and Western leaders also worked against him. Although he

[1] When asked if he would miss Mahathir, Hariri replied "should be. We have talked about this, you know this is up to the Malaysian people and the prime minister to decide, but if we had a word, I would ask him to stay". See Azman Ujang, "Malaysia One of the Most Sophisticated Economies, Says Lebanese Prime Minister," *Bernama*, 21 January 2003.
[2] This is not to suggest that Hariri did not know Abdullah at all since the latter used to accompany Mahathir on his visits to Lebanon. In fact, according to Malaysian Honorary Consul in Beirut, it was Abdullah who conveyed the official invitation for Hariri to visit Malaysia in 1994. Interview with Omar Jundi, Honorary Consul of Malaysia.
[3] Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East." p.69

was re-appointed as prime minister in 2000, the Syrian regime could never fully trust him for Hariri represented to Syria, a western Trojan Horse who could potentially undermine the regime.[4] Furthermore, the Syrian regime was also worried that a powerful Sunni leader in Lebanon could be a potent influence on Syria's own large Sunni population. Therefore, in Syria's logic, keeping Hariri weak would limit the impact of external interference in Lebanon which Syria jealously guarded as her own internal affairs.

Finally, Hariri's economic proposals propelled him to the centre of controversy domestically as well as with Damascus. His proposal for expansionary fiscal measures to increase infrastructure spending to boost the economy was met with opposition from the other members of the Troika namely, the President of the Republic and the Speaker of the Parliament. They knew that an expansionary budget would put more money into public infrastructure projects and therefore strengthen the prime minister's hand through his control of the CDR.[5] On the other hand, contractionary fiscal measures to cut spending and privatise state-owned entreprises were also opposed as such measures would reduce the supply of funds to the government and thus undermine their own sources of patronage.[6] These measures were also opposed by the Syrian regime as they threatened to undermine the economic resources enjoyed by the regime and its elites.[7]

As such, Hariri found himself locked in a perpetual state of conflict domestically as well with the Syrian regime.[8] In the meantime, Hariri's relationship with President

[4] Nizameddin, "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation."
[5] It should be recalled that in his first term, the CDR had practically served as Hariri's personal company to carry out the reconstruction programmes, bypassing the state institutions. In the second half of his term, new legislations were passed to curtail the CDR's independence by making it answerable to the cabinet rather than to the prime minister's office. Under this arrangement, the CDR's functions were impeded as it needed to have cabinet approval even for the most straight forward administrative procedures that cost money and opportunity cost. See Blanford, "Killing Mr Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East."
[6] Gambill and Abdelnour, "Dossier: Rafiq Hariri."; Gambill, "Hariri's Dilemma."
[7] As explained earlier, control over Lebanon was a means of regime maintenance for the Syrian regime as it enabled the extraction of new sources of wealth outside Syria so that the regime could postpone economic reforms and thus avoid any political risk to its regime that might accompany economic reforms. It was estimated that the total wealth siphoned off from Lebanon by the Syrian regime and its elites between 1976-2005 amounted to USD 27 billion. Quoted in Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed."
[8] Gambill, "Hariri's Dilemma."; Nizameddin, "The Political Economy of Lebanon under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation."

Lahoud became more frayed with the impending expiration of the latter's term as president. The Syrian regime, which wanted a pliant and pro-Syrian president in Lebanon, wanted the Lebanese parliament to pass a constitutional amendment to extend Lahoud's term. Hariri, whose relationship with Lahoud had never been cordial, chafed at the Syrian interference. Hence when he was summoned to Damascus and ordered to support the amendment, Hariri resigned in October 2004.[9] With Hariri's resignation less than a year after Mahathir had stepped down, the strong men of Lebanon and Malaysia were no more.

From the observation of the state of bilateral relations after Mahathir's resignation, we can conclude that the absence of even one of the strong leaders, had a significant impact on bilateral relations. This thesis contends that Hariri would have tried very hard to push for greater Malaysian investment in Lebanon had Mahathir remained in power. Without Mahathir and combined with his political troubles at home, Hariri had no incentive to further engage Malaysia. The following section will focus on the impact of the new leadership on bilateral relations.

Second liners in charge: Changed priorities or different styles?

Abdullah assumed office as the fifth prime minister of Malaysia on 31st October 2003, the very day that Mahathir stepped down. As he took over the leadership without his own mandate, Abdullah's priority was to consolidate his standing in his own party, UMNO. Therefore, it was imperative that he stamped his own style in order to come out from Mahathir's shadow.[10] Therefore, it was politically expedient for him to undo some

[9] Julia Choucair, "Lebanon's New Political Moment,"(2005).
[10] See *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2013).

of Mahathir's policies that had rent the country's political fabric. One area where change was discernible was in foreign policy. That he should make changes in foreign policy was only natural as Abdullah, having served as foreign minister under Mahathir, was well aware of the negative consequences of Mahathir's style and some of his foreign policy postures. This took form of change or de-emphasising certain aspects of foreign policy.[11] Abdullah also differed from Mahathir in terms of approach. Whereas Mahathir used to be the primary driver of foreign policy, Abdullah gave greater latitude to the foreign ministry to act within the overall thrust of Malaysian foreign policy. [12]

It would not be an exaggeration to say that for the first time in Malaysia's history, the prime minister did not play a preponderant role in foreign affairs. By leaving the general thrust of the Malaysian foreign policy intact and entrusting the day to day running to the foreign ministry, Abdullah could focus on his immediate priority to mend fences and restore ties with close bilateral partners such as the Australia, US, and Singapore which had received the brunt of Mahathir's caustic diplomacy.[13] Widely known as someone who was well-versed with religious matters, it was also logical for Abdullah to choose Islam to consolidate his political base among the Malays. In this context, Islam Hadhari was to be his legacy. In terms of theology, Islam Hadhari was nothing new. It merely re-emphasised moderation as a key characteristic of Islam. In a world that was in search of a practical means of dealing with Islamic extremism, Abdullah hoped that Islam Hadhari could be Malaysia's intellectual and practical contribution to counter the negative association of terrorism with Islam.[14] As such Islam Hadhari was Abdullah's

[11] Khadijah Khalid, "Malaysian Foreign Relations and Diplomacy under Abdullah Badawi," in *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia* ed. B. Welsh and James Chin (Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (SIRD), 2013).
[12] Author's own experience at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
[13] See Joseph Chin Yong Liow, "Mending Fences: Malaysia-Singapore Relations During the Abdullah Badawi Administration " in *Awakening*, ed. B. Welsh and James Chin (2013); B. Welsh, "Smiles and Storms: Abdullah Badawi's Navigation of US Waters," in *Awakening: The Abdullah Years in Malaysia*, ed. B. Welsh and James Chin (Kuala Lumpur: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre 2013).
[14] See Khadijah Khalid, "Malaysian Foreign Relations and Diplomacy under Abdullah Badawi."

vehicle to mend ties with the western states as well. Abdullah also did not share Mahathir's approach of using anti-Israelism as an instrument of regime maintenance. Abdullah, clearly aware of the negative consequences of such rank anti-Israelism on Malaysia's image, steered clearly away from this approach.[15] In fact, the word "Jew" appears only in six of his speeches during his term as prime minister. Even then, the reference was about the Jewish people as a race rather than in the sense that Mahathir employed. Under Abdullah, Malaysia was no more at the receiving end of the Jewish lobby groups being accused of anti-Semitism.

Abdullah's foreign policy priorities also had an impact on Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon. Although Malaysia's foreign policy on the Middle East remained unchanged, bilateral relations with Lebanon no longer enjoyed the same vibrancy as observed during Mahathir's leadership. The immediate reason, as noted earlier, was Hariri's preoccupation with his domestic political battles and that he did not know Abdullah very well. Shortly after Hariri's resignation, several major events prevented further expansion of bilateral relations. As the Lebanese were celebrating the Valentine's day in 2005, Beirut was shaken to the core by Hariri's assassination. A massive bomb had blown up his motorcade as he made his way back home. Hariri's armoured Mercedes Benz was blown to pieces and the occupants were blown to bits. The investigations revealed that a massive bomb equivalent of 1000 kilograms of TNT was detonated near the famous St Georges Hotel as his motorcade passed by. Altogether 21 people were killed in that incident. As preliminary investigations pointed towards the role of the

[15]Even in his very last speech at the opening of the 10th OIC Summit in Putrajaya, weeks before his resignation, Mahathir famously declared that the "Jews ruled the world by proxy". This remark provoked backlash from several pro-Israel think tanks such as the Simon Wisenthal Center that served as part of Israel's vast lobby machinery in the US. They called for measures to hurt Malaysia's economy to teach Malaysia a lesson. For an excellent account of the Israeli lobby one can refer to John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's book entitled "The Israel Lobby and the U.S. Foreign Policy". Simon Wiesenthal Center, "Wiesenthal Center: Mahathir Is a Serial Antisemite; Inappropriate to Invest in Tourism or Business in Malaysia until It Becomes Clear Whether New Malaysian Leaders Follow in His Footsteps," news release, 21 October, 2003, http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/s/content.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=4442915&ct=5849469; Office of the Prime Minister, "Speech at the Opening of the Tenth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference," Speech collection archives of chief executives (2003); J.J. Mearsheimer and S.M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

Hezbollah and Syria, it galvanised the Lebanese people to arise spontaneously calling for Syria's withdrawal in what became known as the Cedar Revolution.[16] The popular uprising gave the opportunity to the international community to apply pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. The global outrage led to the adoption of the UN Resolution 1559 and under heavy pressure, Syria was forced to pull out of Lebanon on 30 April 2005, barely two months after Hariri's assassination.[17] Ironically, Hariri managed to achieve in death what he could not in life! With Syria's impending withdrawal, pro-Syrian parties led by Amal and Hezbollah coalesced as the 8 March coalition and held rallies in support of Syria. This was responded to by the other parties led by Hariri's party (*Al Mustaqbal*) which formed the 14 March group.

Due to the political instability, bilateral relations had to be put on the backburner and could only resume after the appointment of Fouad Siniora.[18] Like Abdullah, Siniora can also be considered as a second liner because he was a senior Sunni Muslim politician in Hariri's party.[19] Siniora was therefore heir apparent for the leadership of the party after Hariri.[20] With popular mood overwhelmingly against Syria, parliamentary elections brought in the anti-Syria 14 March coalition into power. As the senior leader of the main party in the 14 March coalition, the parliament overwhelmingly endorsed Siniora's appointment as Prime Minister. [21]

[16] Karim Knio, "Lebanon: Cedar Revolution or Neo-Sectarian Partition?," *Mediterranean Politics* 10, no. 2 (2005).
[17] United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Unanimously Endorses Findings of Investigation into Murder of Rafik Hariri, Calls for Syria's Full, Unconditional Cooperation," news release, 2005, 2005, https://www.un.org/press/en/2005/sc8543.doc.htm.
[18] After Hariri, Syria picked Omar Karami, who had headed the first government of the Taif Republic. However, Karami did not last long. As Hariri's assassination was widely attributed to Syria's involvement, massive protests broke out in Beirut calling for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. Given Karami's pro-Syria image, his government inevitably collapsed after only lasting from 26 October 2004 to 19 April 2005. In his place, Najib Mkati was appointed. Within days, Syria was forced to withdraw from Lebanon on 30 April following the adoption of the UN Resolution 1559. Mkati continued to serve as interim prime minister for nine months until fresh elections could be held. Following the massive victory of the anti-Syrian coalition, Fouad Siniora was picked to form the government. For the text of UN Resolution 1559 see "Security Council Declares Support for Free, Fair Presidential Election in Lebanon; Calls for Withdrawal of Foreign Forces There," news release, 2004, https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm.
[19] Interview with Mr Najib Mkati, former prime minister of Lebanon, 28 May 2014. Mr Mkati had served a minister in Hariri's cabinet. He also served as interim prime minister following Hariri's assassination from 19 April 2005-19 July 2005.
[20] "Profile: Fouad Siniora," *BBC News*, 28 May 2008.
[21] Sami Moubayed, "The New Face of Lebanon," *Asia Times Online*, 8 July 2005.

Siniora's priority was to heal the political rift created by the assassination of Hariri and the pull-out of Syria, by forming a workable government. The most practical option was to form a government of national unity comprising the 14 March and the opposition 8 March parties. Hence neither bilateral relations with Malaysia nor for that matter diplomacy, was a priority for Siniora. As indicated earlier, due to Syria's control, prior to 2005, Lebanon's security, defence, and foreign policies were subordinated to Syria's interest. With the withdrawal of Syria, one would have expected Lebanon to have full control over her foreign policy. As Hariri had imagined, under ideal conditions, Lebanon's foreign policy most likely would have been to de-link itself from the Arab-Israeli conflict and pursue economic reconstruction to make Lebanon the economic hub of the Middle East.[22]

However, Siniora was faced with the difficulty of managing a government of grand coalition. The conflicting agenda of the 14 March and 8 March coalitions made it impossible for Lebanon to chart an independent foreign policy. The pro-Syria parties within the 8 March such as Amal, wanted Lebanon to continue to push for a pro-Syrian foreign policy while Hezbollah which was under Iran's control wanted a pro-Iranian policy. The 14 March parties however, leaned towards the West and western allies such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states. Hence, the only practical option was to revert to a policy of neutrality that was observed before the civil war. Therefore, Lebanon's foreign policy narrowed to pursuing functional cooperation and advantageous relations with key regional and international players.[23]

[22] Judith Harik, "Syrian Foreign Policy and State/Resistance Dynamics in Lebanon," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 20, no. 3 (1997).
[23] Najem, *Lebanon: The Politics of a Penetrated Society* p.117

Hence, the domestic preoccupations of Abdullah and Siniora relegated bilateral relations to a lower priority. Furthermore, the external environment was also not promising. Even before Abdullah had taken over as Prime Minister, the earlier optimism about the Israeli-Arab peace had started to wane. In January 2003, the Likud party led by Ariel Sharon was returned to power with a resounding victory. With the strong mandate, the Ariel Sharon government was determined to wreck the process altogether. It began with the rejection of the Arab Peace Initiative (also known as the Saudi Initiative) that was endorsed at the 2002 Beirut Summit.[24] The Plan envisaged a two-state solution and offered Israel full normalisation of ties with the Arab states, but Israel rejected it. The Quartet on the Middle East comprising the United States, Russia, European Union, and United Nations, later endorsed the plan which included the Arab initiative into a roadmap for peace based on a two-state solution.

However, under Ariel Sharon, the Israeli government was working to undermine the prospects for peace. The Israeli government, therefore, set out to remove the basis of a two-state solution by constructing a security wall in Gaza.[25] Confirmation of Israel's opposition to peace became clearer with its decision to withdraw from Gaza.[26] For Israel, the withdrawal meant that the original rationale for negotiations to create an independent Palestinian state was lost. The Israeli government also started the construction of a massive wall to separate the Israeli settlements from the Palestinians. By withdrawing from Gaza, the Israeli government intended to show that it had "withdrawn to its own territory" which when read together with the construction of the wall was effectively a plan to annex the occupied Palestinian lands since large tracts of Palestinian lands

[24] Podeh, "Israel and the Arab Peace Initiative, 2002–2014: A Plausible Missed Opportunity."
[25] Malaysia, in solidarity with the OIC voted against the Israeli action as illegal in a UN General Assembly, a position that had earlier been confirmed by the International Court of Justice. See International Court of Justice, "Legal Consequencs of Building a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Advisory Opinion of 9 July 2004," in *I.C.J Report 2004, p 136*, ed. International Court of Justice (2004); United Nations, "UN Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Demand Israel Comply with ICJ Ruling,"(2004).
[26] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, "Exchange of Letters between PM Sharon and President Bush,"(Tel Aviv2004).

remained inside the walled territory.[27] Thus, Israel's positive attitude towards comprehensive peace that encouraged the expansion of bilateral relations under Mahathir and Hariri was effectively lost. The absence of a larger objective of peace also explains why bilateral relations a priority was no longer. It also explains why Abdullah and Siniora never visited each other's country on an official visit throughout their entire terms.[28]

As there were no compelling reasons to take a personal interest in Lebanon, Abdullah was content to allow the foreign ministry to take the lead in the execution of Malaysia's relations with Lebanon. Hence, there were no new initiatives with Lebanon. Bilateral relations consisted mostly of routine matters and the completion of the initiatives that had been conceived and planned during Mahathir's time. The highlight was the establishment of the Malaysian Embassy in Beirut on 19 September 2005 to reciprocate the opening of the Lebanese embassy in Kuala Lumpur the previous year. With this move, the commitment made by Mahathir and Hariri were fulfilled.

As shown in Table 5.1, bilateral visits had dwindled dramatically. There was only one visit at the ministerial level from Malaysia to Lebanon and none from Lebanon to Malaysia. In the absence of political push, trade and investment promotion too took a back seat. Therefore, Malaysia's proposal for a Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JITC) never saw the light of the day because the trade ministers never met to discuss it.[29] Without government push, the Malaysian private sector did not make headway in investing in Lebanon.[30] Further the impact of the global financial crisis also had a serious impact on Malaysia's economy. Exports of electronics, electrical goods and appliances

[27] UN Security Council, "In a Day-Long Security Council Meeting, Palestinian Observer Says Israeli Secutity Wall Involves *De Facto* Annexation of Occupied Land," news release, 14 October 2003, 2003, http://www.un.org/press/en/2003/sc7895.doc.htm.
[28] Their only direct encounter was on 7 December 2005 in Makkah at the margins of the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference. Interview with Mr Fouad Siniora, 16 April 2014.
[29] From the records of the Malaysian embassy, Beirut, 2006.
[30] Nevertheless, Malaysian companies continued to participate in trade shows in Beirut such as the Beirut World Trade Fair which was held on September 2005.

which made up for 40% of Malaysia's exports fell by 20% while exports of palm oil declined by a whopping 33%. Malaysia's external trade continued to deteriorate in 2009 although it was not as sharp as in 2008. Given that these items made up for almost three quarters of Malaysia's trade with Lebanon, the global decline of Malaysia's external trade also impacted directly on her trade with Lebanon as can be observed in table 5.1. It can be observed that the expansion of two-way trade hit a plateau and even moderately declined whereas in the preceding years, it had been expanding rapidly.

Table 5.1: Two-way trade between Malaysia and Lebanon (2003-2009), (World Bank, 2018)

Year	USD (Millions)
2003	41.5
2004	46.2
2005	45.8
2006	42.8
2007	66.9
2008	95.9
2009	95.9

Other areas that was also explored was in tourism and education. In the post 911 period, it was hoped that Malaysia could attract tourists from Lebanon and the Middle East.[31] Some improvement in tourist arrivals were recorded but grandiose plans to open hotels and resorts did not materialise.[32] Malaysia also hoped to attract Lebanese students to study in Malaysia to realise its vision of becoming a regional hub for education. However, distance deterred Lebanese students from considering Kuala Lumpur as an educational hub whereas cost, language problems and security concerns made Lebanon an unattractive education destination for Malaysians.

[31] Malaysia's tourism promotion activities no doubt contributed to greater tourist flows from the Middle East. In 2005, tourists from the Middle East increased by 17% from 2004.
[32] Ahmad A. Talib, "Lebanon Beckons and Its up to Malaysian Businessmen," *New Straits Times*, 26 January 2003.

Among the many privatisation projects that were considered was one on the privatisation of Water and Waste Water Projects in Beirut and Greater Beirut.[33] A Malaysian consortium led by Ranhill Utilities Berhad had expressed interest in the project.[34] However, the proposal remained unimplemented.

One of the main problem why Malaysian companies did not invest in Lebanon was due to the cost factor. As found out by a visiting Malaysian trade delegation, Beirut was a very expensive place.[35] There were other hidden costs such as the cost of providing reliable electricity supply and water as the state capacity was unable to meet the demand. The sad reality was that Malaysians were not ready for the cutthroat business environment in Lebanon. The Lebanese are shrewd businessmen and would drive a hard bargain. A cultural trait of the Lebanese businessman is that he would not mix business with friendship. While they are usually generous hosts, one cannot expect business concessions or discounts because of friendship. The fact that Hariri refused to give special concessions to Malaysian companies to entice them to participate in privatisation projects, despite that fact that Mahathir had bent rules to support Lebanon with USD 750 million at Paris II, reflects the Lebanese attitude to compartmentalising business and friendship. When asked by Malaysian reporters covering Mahathir's visit to Lebanon in 2003, whether Malaysian companies would be preferential consideration, Hariri replied that he could not give any such preference. He added that Malaysian companies, given their sophistication, should be able to compete in open tender. [36]

The combined effect of high business costs, hidden costs, unfamiliarity with the market, cultural differences and lack of political support made Lebanon a difficult

[33] Private notes from Omar Jundi, Honorary consul of Malaysia.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ahmad A. Talib, "Lebanon Beckons and Its up to Malaysian Businessmen."
[36] Ujang, "Malaysia One of the Most Sophisticated Economies, Says Lebanese Prime Minister."

business destination. The problems faced by Proton and MAS as discussed below are emblematic of the difficulties faced by Malaysian companies to penetrate the Lebanese market.

Proton

Given the wide range of cars available in the market, Lebanon certainly looked like a promising market for Proton. [37] However, instead of giving the dealership to an experienced company or individual, Proton management gave it to Mr Toufic Ozeir, a local businessman who was also married to the daughter of the Sultan of Pahang, as early as in 1997.[38] However, the dealer's lack of knowledge of the industry combined with his poor marketing strategy was a lethal mix. His plan to market Proton as a low-priced car backfired.[39] In Lebanon cars were considered as a physical accoutrement reflecting one's standing in society. Therefore, owners of cheap cars were considered as "poor" or people of low standing in the society. This market psychology affected sales also stood in the way of getting financing from bank. These factors combined with poor after sales deterred potential buyers.

Eventually, after several years without progress, the dealership was terminated, and a new dealership agreement was signed. This time a Syrian company based in Damascus in 2005 who also had connections in Malaysia was chosen. However, for reasons that are not known, the dealer did not immediately start the business and the outbreak of the Israel-Lebanon war the following year put paid to any immediate plans to market Proton.

[37] Mokhtar Hussain, "Satu Lagi Misi Kejayaan Untuk Malaysia," ibid., 18 June 1997.
[38] Interview with Mr Omar Jundi, 10 December 2013
[39] Interview with Mr Hani al Yamak, Lebanese businessman and sub-dealer for Proton, Tripoli, Lebanon, 25 May 2013.

Amazingly, it was not until 2008 that the Proton management in Kuala Lumpur decided to look into the dealership agreement with the view to terminating it if necessary.[40]

Due to the poor choice of its partner, Proton lost precious time and opportunity to penetrate the Lebanese market and use Beirut as a launching pad to penetrate other markets. In the interim, the main dealer entered into an arrangement with a car sub-dealer in the northern city of Tripoli to market a limited number of Proton vehicles. However, since the sub-dealer acquired his cars from the main dealer, they were considered as second-hand vehicles. Although the cars were brand new, selling them as second-hand vehicles meant a loss of value. Furthermore, without formal agreement the sub-dealer could not arrange financing for his buyers. Despite these hurdles, the sub-dealer managed to market Proton vehicles in the city of Tripoli.[41]

MAS

Air services cooperation was one of the earliest areas of concrete areas of cooperation between Malaysia and Lebanon. Although an Air Services Agreement was first signed in 1974, it was not until Mahathir had taken over as prime minister did MAS fly to Beirut. Following a revised air services agreement, MAS began its inaugural flight to Beirut on 10 January 1996 making it the first airline to operate the Beirut-Kuala Lumpur sector. Lebanon's offer of Fifth Freedom rights into Beirut promised a bright future for MAS.[42] A codeshare agreement further improved market potential as MAS received a share of the seats on Lebanon's Middle East Airlines (MEA) lucrative Beirut-

[40] From the authors notes. In the meantime, a sub-dealer from Tripoli, Lebanon, entered into an informal arrangement with the main dealer to market limited numbers of Proton vehicles in Lebanon. It is understood that this informal arrangement also suffered with the onset of the war in Syria.
[41] Interview with Mr. Hani al Yamak. Unexpectedly, the onset of civil war in Syria in 2012 fatally damaged Proton's hope of penetrating the Levantine market.
[42] The offer was made by Rafik Hariri at a bilateral meeting on the margins of the OIC Conference in Doha on 13 November 2000. Fifth freedom offers added potential to tap into other markets as it allows the airlines to fly passengers to other destinations not related to its home country. As such the Lebanese fifth freedom offered Malaysia an opportunity to tap into the West Asian market.

Sydney sector in exchange for seats on the Beirut-Kuala Lumpur sector for MEA.[43] With added passengers, MAS increased its twice weekly flight to Beirut to three times a week from July 2001.

However, MAS' position was threatened with the introduction of Lebanon's "open skies" policy to make Beirut an international travel hub as it brought in new competitors such as Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad.[44] Against this background, the 2006 Israeli attack on Lebanon gave MAS the perfect excuse to suspend its operations and place the Beirut station under review.[45] Internal review revealed that the Beirut-Kuala Lumpur sector's low profitability was due to two sets of problems.

The first was the exorbitant handling charges (for disembarkation, embarkation, parking, aerobridge and counter services) at the Rafik Hariri airport. The other was MAS decision to change its flight route. Originally, the flight stopped on transit in Cairo but under a revised plan, the flight transited in Dubai instead in the hope of picking up onward passengers from Dubai as it was a favourite travel hub. Unfortunately, this change disrupted travel plans of passengers. Due to this change the Kuala Lumpur-Beirut flight had to leave early which made it unpopular flight because it meant passengers had to leave their homes early to catch this flight.

Hence, MAS lost ground to its competitors. While the competitors tried to outdo each other by flying newer and bigger aircrafts and providing innovative services, MAS, which was reeling under its poor financial situation, responded by cutting costs and scaling down on the quality of its services and flying older aircrafts. Thus, MAS lost

[43] Travel Weekly. (2001, 1 1). *Malaysia Airlines and Middle East Airlines to codeshare.* Retrieved October 15 , 2013, from Travel Weekly: http://www.travelweeklyweb.com/-p-malaysia-airlines-and-middle-east-airlines-to-codeshare-p/147.
[44] Hourani, "Hariri Secures 'Open Skies' Deal with Malaysia."
[45] "Mas Suspends Flights to Lebanon," *Malaysiakini*, 15 July 2006.

even greater share of the market. As a combined result of its management error and poor financial situation MAS had to stop flying to Beirut in 2011. [46]

Although the stories of Proton and MAS were told as examples of the hurdles faced by Malaysian companies in doing business in Lebanon, they are also a reflection of the impact of the leadership styles of Abdullah and Siniora on bilateral relations. Whereas Mahathir and Hariri, took a personal interest in nurturing the relationship, the new leadership did not because of their own pressing domestic agenda. Clearly, without political push, the role of ministries and embassies alone was not sufficient to surmount the difficulties inherent in trying to forge new areas of cooperation or even preserve existing ones as illustrated by the case of MAS and Proton. It also serves to underscore the point that the quality and vibrancy of bilateral relations depends on the role of the leaders.

However, this state of affairs did not last long as conflict between Israel and Lebanon broke out in the summer of 2006. The next section will show how the conflict once again propelled Lebanon to the fore of global focus and as a foreign policy priority for Malaysia.

The impact of the Israel-Lebanon war 2006 on bilateral relations

In a way, the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006 was a war that was waiting to happen.[47] What was unexpected was its intensity and duration. To appreciate the context in which the war occurred, one need to understand Syria's perspective - three decades of

[46] Naharnet. (2006, October 4). *Malaysian Airlines to Resume Flights to Beirut.* Retrieved October 05, 2013, from Naharnet: http://old.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&DD9F25FF22A98AF3C22571FD00249C95.

[47] For an account of the 34-day way see Jeremy M Sharp et al., "Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict,"(Library of Congress, Washington DC: Congressional Research Service 2006).

meticulous manoeuvring by President Hafez al Assad to dominate Lebanon had been undone in just a matter of weeks following the assassination of Hariri. Syria, widely believed to be behind the assassination was now being pressured by the very same international community that gave it a free hand over Lebanon after the Taif agreement, to voluntarily relinquish its control over Lebanon under the UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1680.[48]

It was the first major challenge to Bashar al Assad's rule, who only four years earlier had replaced his father as President of Syria. In fact, it was popularly assumed in Israel and elsewhere that Bashar lacked maturity, experience and self-confidence. The Israelis, who are shrewd observers of Syria's behaviour observed that Bashar simply lacked the "killer instinct" to rule Syria.[49] Bashar understood that the vacuum created by Syria's absence would sooner or later embolden Israel to threaten its security. It could also strengthen Iran's influence inside Lebanon at her expense. As explained in Chapter 2, Iran had agreed to defer to Syria's overall control in Lebanon in exchange for Syria's agreement to treat the Shiite parties, Amal and Hezbollah, equally.

Therefore, the Syrian regime knew very well that if it were to relinquish control in Lebanon, Iran would certainly be empowered through Hezbollah as she was the main arms supplier to Hezbollah. Either eventuality would undermine Syria's ambition to be a regional leader. Bashar therefore had a personal reason to re-assert his position within the regime. He needed to demonstrate that he was still in charge and at the same time somehow deflect the increasing global scrutiny on Syria as the on-going UN investigation

[48] Warren Hoge, "Investigator Says Syria Was Behind Lebanon Assassination," *The New York Times* 12 December 2005.
[49] Eyal Zisser, "Does Bashar Al-Assad Rule Syria?," *Middle East Quarterly* (2003).

on Hariri's assassination was increasingly pointing towards the complicity of the Syrian regime and Hezbollah.[50]

Therefore, Hezbollah with instructions from Damascus conducted a cross-border incursion and kidnapped three Israeli soldiers from inside the Israeli territory on 12 July 2006.[51] Apparently, Syria and Hezbollah miscalculated Israel's reaction. They had anticipated a measured response from Israel.[52] After all it was not the first time that Hezbollah had kidnapped Israeli soldiers. Therefore, Hezbollah was surprised when the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) swiftly unleashed a massive bombing campaign, two days later, on 14 July known as Operation Grapes of Wrath.[53]

The best explanation of Israel's behaviour was given by one of Israel's foremost defence analyst, the late Ze'ev Schiff, who argued that the three key personalities, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Defence Minister Amir Peretz and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, none of whom who had any military experience, overreacted in ordering the retaliation.[54] Having only taken over in April 2006, the new Israeli government was under pressure to show that it could stand up to Hezbollah's provocation. The IDF made the situation worse by thinking that airstrikes alone would be sufficient to decimate Hezbollah. Despite massive airstrikes, the IDF failed to stop Hezbollah from launching rockets into Israel.[55] Increasingly frustrated at its inability to achieve its objective, the IDF continued to pound Lebanon for 34 days until it was forced to stop with the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1701.[56]

[50] "U.N. Probe Links Syria to Hariri Killing," *CNN International*, 21 October 2005.
[51] "Hezbollah Seizes Israel Soldiers," *BBC News*, 12 July 2006.
[52] Ze'ev Schiff, "Israel's War with Iran," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 6 (2006).
[53] Sayyed Hassan Nasarallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah would later regret having ordered the cross-border raid into Israel had he known the massive retaliation that would follow. See Robert F. Worth, "Hezbollah Answers Israel with Speeches," 4 January 2009.
[54] Schiff, "Israel's War with Iran."
[55] "Israeli Warplanes Hit Beirut Suburb," *CNN*, 14 July 2006.
[56] United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Calls for the End to Hostilities between Hizbollah, Israel, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1701 (2006)," news release, 2006, https://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8808.doc.htm.

However, there was no reaction from Malaysia as chair of the OIC. Malaysia's inaction was strange because many other countries were pushing to take the initiative to end to the conflict.[57] Among them was the Rome Conference on 26 July hosted by Italy that brought together the EU, US, the UN Secretary General and other interested countries, to secure a UN ceasefire.[58] It was only after several OIC members had privately expressed their unhappiness at Malaysia for not acting in its capacity as the Chair of OIC, did Abdullah, two weeks after the start of hostilities, instruct the foreign ministry to convene an emergency OIC Summit. [59] After so many years of taking instructions from the Prime Minister, the foreign ministry evidently was not used to Abdullah's hands-off style while Abdullah, for his part, probably thought that the foreign ministry was on top of things.

Given the daunting task of organising a summit at short notice, the plan was scaled down and a Special Meeting of the Extended Executive Committee" was hosted on 3rd August instead.[60] The meeting urged the UN Security Council to call for a ceasefire and supported the creation of a UN peacekeeping force to enforce the ceasefire. The meeting also heard from the Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora who presented a 7-point plan that had been presented at the Rome Conference on 26 July mentioned earlier. In the end, two declarations were adopted; one on the situation in Lebanon and another on the situation in Palestine. The Putrajaya Declaration on Lebanon called for a ceasefire and supported the 7-point presented by Lebanon. The meeting also created a Contact Group

[57] United Nations, "Secretary-General's Joint Press Conference with the Foreign Minister of Italy, the U.S. Secretary of State and the Prime Minister of Lebanon (Secretary-General's Remarks Only)," ed. United Nations Secretary General (2006).
[58] John Hooper, Ewen MacAskill, and Jonathan Steele, "Frustration as Summit Fails to End Conflict," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2006.
[59] The author was present during an internal discussion with the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where it was mentioned that Prime Minister was unhappy at criticisms for his inaction as OIC Chair as Malaysia had not convened any meeting even though the Israeli attack on Lebanon had entered its second week. As such the Prime Minister instructed the Minister of Foreign Affairs to convene an emergency OIC Summit at short notice.
[60] United Nations, "OL2006.08.03 from Malaysian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council," ed. UN Security Council (New York2006).

comprised of the OIC Troika (past, present and future) Chair to remain seized on the current situation in Lebanon.[61]

Stung by criticisms of inaction, Malaysia had to prove that she could lead the OIC in generating international opprobrium against Israel. Bilateral relations with Lebanon provided the very platform to achieve this objective. Therefore, on the eve of the special meeting in Putrajaya, Abdullah announced Malaysia's readiness to despatch up to 1000 soldiers to serve in Lebanon once the ceasefire was in place.[62] Following the end of the war, Malaysia formally offered to send troops to serve under the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in accordance with UN resolution 1701.[63] Israel immediately objected to Malaysia's offer on the pretext that the absence of diplomatic relations would not allow coordination of activities with the Israeli side.[64] Although Israel may have had reservations about the impartiality of the Malaysian troops it is more likely that Israel hoped to use Malaysia's participation as a bargaining chip to force Malaysia to enter into direct talks.[65] In the end, after Israel had consented to Malaysia's participation after being assured that Malaysian troops and the troops from other Muslim countries would not be deployed along the Blue Line (the *de facto* border between Israel and Lebanon), Malaysia sent an initial deployment of 360 troops and gradually increased it to a full battalion.[66] Figure 5.1 shows the location of the deployment of Malaysian troops.

[61] Ibid.
[62] "Malaysia Pledges Lebanon Troops," *BBC News*, 4 August 2006.
[63] "M'sia, Indonesia and Brunei Ready to Participate in Lebanese Peace Mission ", *Bernama*, 6 August 2006.
[64] "PM Rejects UNIFIL Troops from Countries without Relations ", *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 August 2006.
[65] Amir Oren, "The New UNIFIL Trouble for Israel
Read More: Http://Www.Haaretz.Com/the-New-Unifil-Trouble-for-Israel-1.195927," *Haaretz*, 27 August 2006; "Malaysia Rejects Dialogue with Israel on Middle East," *AAJ News*, 5 August 2006.
[66] The maximum numbers of troops have fluctuated slightly. As of 2017 the number of troops stood at 826 making Malaysia the fourth largest troop contributing country to UNIFIL. United Nations, "Unifil Troop Contributing Countries,"(2017).

Figure 5.1: Deployment of UNIFIL troops.[67]

Source: UNIFIL. "Deployment Map of 2016." Beirut, 2016

For a country that was not a bilateral priority, relations with Lebanon became important. As a further proof of solidarity with Lebanon, Malaysia also pledged emergency bilateral assistance to Lebanon of USD 1 million in cash and another USD 1 million in kind at the Paris III conference on 25 January 2007.[68] In response to Siniora's request under the 7-point plan, Malaysia's assistance was used to rehabilitate and reconstruct the damaged infrastructure in Southern Lebanon.[69] In addition, the Malaysian government also dispatched three shipments of medical equipment, hospital supplies and medicines.[70] Apart from direct financial assistance, Malaysia also assisted Lebanon in the form of debt rescheduling by reduction of the interest rates and also deferring the

[67] "Deployment Map of 2016," ed. UNIFIL(Beirut2016).
[68] At the third Paris Conference (Paris III) on 25 January 2007, Malaysia agreed to reduce the interest rates on its bonds to 3.750% and extend the repayment period. Government of Lebanon, "International Conference for Support to Lebanon - Paris Iii," ed. Ministry of Finance of Lebanon(2007); "International Conference for Support to Lebanon - Paris Iii ", ed. Ministry of Finance of Lebanon(2008).
[69] "OLl2007.05.22 from Fuad Siniora, Prime Minister of Lebanon to Ahmad Abdullah Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia," (2007).
[70] Records of the Embassy of Malaysia, 2006.

repayment period and extension of overall repayment period for the financial assistance given under Paris II thus forgoing millions in interest payments.[71] Over and above that, Malaysia also honoured the commitment made at Paris II to provide technical assistance under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Therefore, since 2008, Lebanese civil servants were trained in various fields as part of capacity building assistance. Beyond bilateral assistance, Malaysia also provided relief assistance through multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).[72] Although an audit of the assistance given to Lebanon has not been done, the quantum would most likely run into hundreds of millions of dollars.

The discussion in this section showed that Israel's attack on Lebanon propelled Lebanon as a foreign policy priority for Malaysia. As Chair of the OIC it would have been untenable for Malaysia to ignore Lebanon.

Thus far it was shown that the principal player was the state. Given the importance of the Middle East in Malaysia foreign policy, the news of the Israeli attack was covered by the Malaysian media as well. The question that now arises is what effect Abdullah's hands-off style of leadership had on the role of non-state actors. In the third chapter, it was demonstrated that during the civil war non-state actors such as NGOs filled the vacuum when the governments were unable to conduct normal bilateral relations. It was also shown that the government's role in encouraging extensive media coverage of the civil war informed the Malaysian public about the plight of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

[71] Government of Lebanon, "International Conference for Support to Lebanon- Paris III : Third Progress Report,"(2007).
[72] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in Near East, "Malaysia Donates US$100,000 to UNRWA," news release, 13 December, 2011, https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/malaysia-donates-us100000-unrwa; "Malaysia Donates Additional USD 1 Million to Support UNRWA Operations in Gaza " news release, 6 December, 2012, https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/malaysia-donates-additional-usd-1-million-support-unrwa-operations-gaza.

Under Abdullah, the overall level of civil liberties in Malaysia was much higher than under his predecessor.[73] This also extended to the civil societies and freedom of the social media. These freedoms no doubt encouraged greater sharing of information among the public contributing to their general awareness of the outside world including about the situation in Lebanon.

This openness enabled new apolitical non-state actors to emerge. In this context, the Malaysian Medical Relief Society or MERCY was one of the newer NGOs that emerged. Its focus was to provide medical relief assistance. As an NGO that was not directly associated with Islamic charity, MERCY was able to secure broad public support and work with other voluntary and philanthropic bodies and individuals [74] Therefore, MERCY could set up its operational centre in Beirut to channel medical assistance despite the high cost of its operations.[75] Part of its activities included training of medical specialists working with Lebanese NGOs such as the Islamic Health Society. MERCY also coordinated in channelling other public donation and funds donated by Malaysian companies as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility contribution.[76] Unlike, ABIM which eventually found its activities curbed by the government out of concern of political challenge, MERCY was given a free hand to play its role.

Besides MERCY, Malaysia's longest serving NGO working with Lebanon, the Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI), set up by Dr Alijah Gordon, also continued with its special humanitarian programme for the Palestinian refugees in

[73] B. Welsh, "Enabling and Empowering Malaysians," in *Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia*, ed. B. Welsh and James U.H Chin (Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre 2013). pp.272-293.
[74] MERCY Malaysia, "Mercy Malaysia,"(2017).
[75] The total amount of assistance provided amounted to RM 1 million. "Lebanon : Mercy Malaysia Condems Violence in Lebanon and Palestine and Deploys Assesment Mission in Aid of Middle East Crises,"(Reliefweb, 2006); MERCY Malaysia, "Distribution of Medical Supplies and Hygiene Kits," news release, July, 2006, http://mercy.org.my/programme/distribution-medical-supplies-hygiene-kits/.
[76] Jayagandi Jayaraj, "Support for Lebanon," *The Star*, 13 October 2006.

Lebanon. [77] Through funds raised in Malaysia, MSRI contributed to the construction of the Malaysian-Gifted Learning Centre in the Beddawi Refugee camp in Tripoli and also a Family Guidance Centre in the Burj al Barajneh camp in Beirut to provide psychiatric help to traumatised mothers.[78] Another more recent NGO that also participated in humanitarian missions in Lebanon was Aman Palestine. It provided limited financial relief to the families of Palestinian refugees and also organised fund raising and awareness programmes to support them in other ways.[79]

The general political openness under Abdullah also allowed politically motivated groups and individuals to seek political mileage out of the situation in Lebanon. Khairy Jamaluddin, leading members of UMNO youth, organised demonstrations in front of the US Embassy calling for the government to call off the Free Trade negotiations with the US Administration and boycott American products.[80] These statements were however rebuffed by Abdullah.[81] In a less strident approach, the Barisan Nasional Youth also galvanised the support of other youth bodies to raise public awareness of the situation in Lebanon.[82] The Malaysian Embassy's records showed that television companies such as TV3 and RTM also visited Lebanon and contributed in smaller way towards providing relief.[83]

With the end of the war and resumption of the embassy's functions these non-state actors scaled down and wound up their operations. As we saw in Chapter 3, the role of the non-state actors such as these NGOs only became apparent when the formal bilateral relations could not function normally. This section also demonstrated that as a result of

[77] Interview with Madam Mariam Pook.
[78] Notes of author taken during the visit to the Burj al Barajneh camp on 12 May 2013.
[79] Asmady Idris, "Malaysian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Humanitarian Issues in Gaza, Palestine " *International Journal of West Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2012).
[80] Wikileaks, "Malaysia Mulls Sending Peacekeepers to Lebanon,"(US Embassy, Kuala Lumpur2006).
[81] "Malaysia Reacts to Ceasefire,"(US Embassy, Kuala Lumpur2006).
[82] "Support from Three Indian Youth Groups ", *The Star*, 10 August 2006.
[83] Malaysian embassy records 2006.

the 2006 war bilateral relations once again became a priority for both Abdullah and Siniora. The following section will examine whether this continued to be the case after the war ended.

Bilateral relations in the post-conflict years (2007 – 2009)

With the end of the war, the bilateral relations entered the final stage in this period of study. In this stage, the momentum created in bilateral relations in the aftermath of the 2006 war was maintained through efforts by both Abdullah and Siniora.

For Siniora, Malaysia's e-government appealed to him.[84] Given the unwieldy Lebanese cabinet, e-Government would be a solution to circumvent political stalemate. In this context, he hoped that Malaysia's experience in this area would help the Lebanese government implement its own e-Government, an idea that had languished without any movement since it was first visualised under the e-Government strategy mooted in 2002. If he could find a way to get the Lebanese government to render much of its public services electronically, it would reduce the role of intermediaries and free the government from being hostage to the politics of any party. Thus, Siniora was particularly was keen for Malaysia's assistance to set up the smart card technology so that government services could be accessed through this technology.[85] The plan was to begin in an area that was not very sensitive politically. As such it was decided to begin with social services and healthcare. The project promised great potential. The initial phase of implementation alone was expected to be in the region of USD 29 million. As such, Siniora wrote to Abdullah for Malaysia's assistance to start with a Smartcard project. The Smartcard was

[84] "OL2006.10.30 from Fuad Siniora, Prime MInister of Lebanon to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi,Prime Minister of Malaysia" (2006).
[85] "OL2006.12.12 from Fuad Siniora, Prime MInister of Lebanon to Abdullah Ahmad Badawi,Prime Minister of Malaysia" (2006).

to enable citizens to access specific forms of public service.[86] Given the potential for Malaysian long-term investment, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Lebanese ministry for Administrative Reform and the Malaysian Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC). Abdullah also approved USD 500,000 funding for the MDeC to undertake a feasibility study.[87] After several visits to Lebanon, MDeC successfully conducted the study and a pilot set-up proved that the project could be implemented in Lebanon. However, the Malaysian side was taken by surprise when the proposal to implement the project was met with resistance from the relevant government departments.

At the root of the problem was the resistance of the ministries to share their databases. The ministries of health and social welfare were headed by parties from the opposing camps.[88] Furthermore, the ministry of the interior which held some sensitive data was also unwilling to share its database. As no party was willing to share its database for fear of revealing its strength or weakness, the Lebanese Cabinet could not muster enough support for the project. Therefore, Malaysia's hope to invest in this area also dissipated.

Despite the setback in the e-Government project, both countries continued to enjoy fruitful cooperation in technical cooperation. Under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Under the programme, Malaysia trained Lebanese government officials in specific courses aimed at improving government delivery systems.

[86] "OL2007.02.19 from Fuad Siniora, Prime Minister of Lebanon to Ahmad Abdullah Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia", (2007).
[87] Avanti Kumar, "Lebanon Adopts Malaysia's Smart Card Solution," *CIO Asia*(2009), https://www.cio-asia.com/tech/industries/lebanon-adopts-malaysias-smart-card-solution/.
[88] On the Lebanese side in 2008, the subject was under the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (OMSAR) that was headed by Muhammad Fneish, a Hezbollah minister while Health was under Mohamad Khalifeh, from Amal and the Home Affairs was under Ziad Baroud, a Maronite. These parties, being competitors for power and the use of government resources as a source of patronage for themselves, were reluctant to share sensitive data.

Siniora was also interested in Abdullah's concept of Islam Hadhari.[89] As a concept from a fellow Sunni leader, Siniora hoped that the introduction of Islam Hadhari in Lebanon could indirectly strengthen the Lebanese Sunni base. Therefore, in 2006 Siniora invited Malaysia to endow a Chair of Islam Hadhari at a Lebanese university.[90] Although Siniora's request was discussed at the Malaysian cabinet which in turn directed the Ministry of Higher Education to take action, the ministry only acted four months later in February 2007. When the ministry approached the Lebanese embassy in Kuala Lumpur for its views, the response was negative. The Lebanese ambassador expressed concern that Islam Hadhari could be misinterpreted as a new Islamic ideology that could further exacerbate Sunni-Shiite tensions in Lebanon. Given the negative reception from the Lebanese embassy, the Ministry of Higher Education sought the foreign ministry's clarification which in turn sought the views of the Malaysian embassy in Beirut. Instead of replying, the embassy broached the idea of setting up Chair of Islam Hadhari with several Lebanese universities. When the feedback reached the Lebanese embassy in Kuala Lumpur, it complained to the foreign ministry which admonished its embassy in Beirut for acting without formal instructions and instructed it to stop consultations.

As there was no reply from the Malaysian side, in July 2007 Siniora reiterated his interest in the Chair of Islam Hadhari through the Malaysian embassy.[91] This time, he proposed that it be set up at the Maqassid Institute of Higher Islamic Studies, which was a part of the Maqassid Philanthropic Islamic Association. In the previous chapter it was explained that the Maqassid Association was one of the main Sunni organisations that Hariri used to channel his philanthropic support as a means of getting the support of the Sunni electorate. Given the importance of the Maqassid association to the Sunni community, Siniora's aim was to strengthen the Sunni base. However, it was only in

[89] Ioannis Gatsiounis, "Islam Hadhari in Malaysia," *Hudson Institute*(2006), https://hudson.org/research/9811-islam-hadhari-in-malaysia.
[90] Records of the Malaysian embassy in Beirut, 2006.
[91] Records of the Malaysian embassy, Beirut, 2007.

October 2007, a year after the idea was first broached by Siniora, that the Malaysian Director General of Higher Education visited Lebanon for discussions. This visit was followed by an exchange of draft texts of an MoU with the Maqassid Institute. Although the text of the MoU was eventually finalised, its signing had to be postponed because suddenly the Malaysian Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) wanted to know if the Maqqasid institute had the legal standing or authority to sign agreements with foreign governments. The AGC also sought a formal instrument of authorization. By the time the Maqassid Institute replied affirmatively in April 2008, Abdullah's political standing had been severely undermined following the disastrous general election of 2008.

Meanwhile in Lebanon, the political situation was also set to turn for the worse. Siniora's government of national unity was anything but unified as the conflicting and competing interests of the 14 March and opposition 8 March coalition led to frequent deadlock. Eventually, these differences led to a two-year standoff that almost culminated in a civil war when Hezbollah, in a show of strength, militarily occupied West Beirut on 9 May 2008.[92] The uncertain political situation in Lebanon was seized by the new Malaysian Minister of Higher Education to recommend postponing the consideration of the Chair of Islam Hadhari. Meanwhile in Lebanon, following the standoff, Siniora stepped down as prime minister on 25 May 2008. With, his resignation, the Islam Hadhari proposal was never revisited. In Malaysia, Abdullah had effectively been turned into a lame duck as political pressure built up for him to resign following the disastrous electoral results of the 12th general elections on 8 March 2008. Almost a year after Siniora's resignation, Abdullah resigned on 3 April 2009.

[92] "Gun Battles Break out in Beirut," *CNN* 9 May 2008.

Conclusion

Clearly, the high-water mark of bilateral relations ended with the era of Mahathir and Hariri as under their successors, the level of bilateral relations was very less vibrant. Although Abdullah and Siniora did not pursue bilateral relations with the same vigour due to their own priorities and constraints, the role of Israel could still be discerned in influencing the relationship while the factors at the three levels of analysis determined the actual form and intensity of bilateral relations.

By the time Mahathir resigned, the prospects for peace in the Middle East were grim. Despite the willingness of the Arab states for a two-state solution and a full recognition of Israel by the Arab states, the Israeli government under the Likud party headed by Ariel Sharon was clearly not in favour of peace. Israel's refusal to make peace rendered Hariri's vision of developing Lebanon as an incentive for peace meaningless. As such, there was no incentive for Hariri to pursue strong bilateral cooperation with Abdullah.

Hariri's assassination introduced a major change in the strategic environment. With the pull-out of Syrian troops, Lebanon was rendered vulnerable to Israeli attacks. Therefore, when Abdullah and later, Siniora took over from their predecessors, te prospects for bilateral cooperation was not promising. Coupled with their own domestic priorities, bilateral relations remained low-key. However, Operation Grapes of Wrath changed the strategic importance of Lebanon. Once again the international community and the Islamic world were concerned about Lebanon's plight. It was necessary to avert a collapse of the government at all cost so as not to allow it to trigger a regional conflict. As Chair of the OIC, it fell on Malaysia's shoulders to mobilise the OIC to formulate an appropriate response to stop Israel's attack and help Lebanon to recover. As the OIC

response essentially encouraged member states to individually extend help, bilateral relationship with Lebanon once again became important. For Malaysia it provided the framework for Malaysia to channel her own assistance to Lebanon. Therefore, the post-war period was marked by intense bilateral activity in the form of various types of assistance from Malaysia. With the overall prospect for peace and stability looking grim, in the post-war period from 2007-2009 bilateral relations once again reverted to a low-keyed state.

The diminished importance of foreign policy during the leadership of Abdullah and Siniora relegated Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations to a lower priority. Without direct intervention from the leaders, no new initiatives were explored. Bilateral relations remained at a status quo consisting mostly of completing whatever initiatives that had already been planned under the previous leadership. Since, bilateral relations was not a priority, the government's attention on trade and business with Lebanon also took a back seat. Without push from the top leadership the private sector too could not make headway in the challenging business environment of Lebanon as the examples of Proton and MAS showed.

Further, with his consensual style of leadership, Abdullah never managed to stamp his authority over the government like Mahathir. As such, there was greater challenge to his authority within the government. On the issue of Islam Hadhari, it was no secret that there was little support within the government. While as a philosophy, Islam Hadhari was actively touted overseas as a counter-response to Islamic religious extremism, within the country its acceptance remained questionable. This explains why the Ministry of Higher Education practically defied the cabinet by deliberately dragging its feet over the instructions to study the proposal for setting up a Chair on Islam Hadhari in Lebanon.

The ministry's decision to "consult" the Lebanese embassy after much delay on a request that came from the Lebanese prime minister himself was in fact a ploy to delay matters. Abdullah's political vulnerability also explains why the Attorney General's chambers was also able to throw in the spanner in the works at the final moment after negotiations over the text of the MoU was complete.

In Lebanon, Siniora's weak position within his government undermined his ability to override internal resistance for the Chair of Islam Hadhari at a public university. Therefore, as a face-saving move he had to propose an unorthodox method of having the chair in a welfare body where it would not face political opposition. In the end, Hezbollah's armed occupation of Beirut came as a welcome relief for both countries because it gave a perfect excuse to indefinitely postpone the idea. When Abdullah stepped down as prime minister, Islam Hadhari was effectively dead in Malaysia while Siniora's resignation put paid to the proposal of a Chair of Islam Hadhari altogether.

On the other hand, Abdullah was able to initiate action for the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) to export its e-Government model to Lebanon as there was support within the agency as a revenue earning overseas venture. However, in Lebanon, MDeC could not proceed beyond the pilot project level because of resistance from the ministries that would be involved in the initial exercise. As Siniora's weak position within the government was insufficient to override this resistance, the e-Government proposal too could not be implemented. Thus, the weakness of Abdullah and Siniora within their own governments also stood in the way of promoting bilateral relations.

The chapter proved conclusively that the leaders were instrumental in shaping bilateral relations. Abdullah and Siniora did not see Israel in the way that Mahathir and Hariri did because the positive momentum for peace had long since waned. Furthermore, foreign policy was not a priority as both Abdullah and Siniora were focussed on their political position domestically. Without their direct involvement and guidance from 2003-2005, bilateral relations did not witness new areas of cooperation. An interesting observation that also came out of this chapter is the contrast between the leadership style of Abdullah and Mahathir. Abdullah clearly did not subscribe to anti-Israelism as a tool for regime maintenance or elevating his own popularity. Hence, Abdullah was not critical of Israel in the way Mahathir would have been. Although Abdullah was also critical of Israel's war on Lebanon, he did not resort to anti-Israelism to garner support popular support. His views were only made in the context of the OIC. In fact, his rebuff of the UMNO Youth's statements against Israel clearly underscored the difference between Abdullah and his predecessor.

The 2006 war provided the much-needed impetus to galvanise Abdullah into action. Since the foreign ministry was slow in acting, Abdullah had to personally take charge in pushing the ministry to convene the Special OIC meeting on the situation in Lebanon. The need to demonstrate leadership of the OIC, led to an upsurge in bilateral assistance from Malaysia in the form of financial, technical and reconstruction resources to assist Lebanon under the bilateral framework. On the other hand, Abdullah was also responding to a precise set of requests by Siniora under the 7-point plan. Therefore, for a brief period in 2006, bilateral relations witnessed a sudden spurt of vibrancy. We can see that this sudden spurt in bilateral relations was only possible with the direct involvement of Abdullah and Siniora.

The findings also confirmed the findings in third chapter that the other non-state actors such as NGOs do contribute to bilateral relations when formal diplomatic machinery becomes unable to function. This explains why MERCY, Aman Malaysia as well as MSRI were able to carry out their humanitarian assistance in Lebanon during the 2006 war. Consistent with the earlier findings too, when the conduct of normal state-to-state relations was once more possible after the end of the war, the role of these non-state actors diminished. Therefore, it can be surmised that these NGOs only play a role in bilateral relation when formal state-to-state relations is forced to take a back-seat due to conflict or war condition. With the return of normalcy, their role was once again diminished as the government could work through formal diplomatic channels.

The preceding discussion shows that Israel was crucial in the re-invigoration of bilateral relations. Had it not been for the attack on Lebanon in 2006, bilateral relations would most likely have remained low-keyed under Abdullah and Siniora given their domestic preoccupations.

However, during peaceful conditions, neither leader saw the need to factor Israel in their calculus in bilateral relations. Since Abdullah no longer considered anti-Israelism as a tool of regime maintenance, he had no need to calibrate his policies towards Lebanon with the view of its impact on Israel. Furthermore, because the prospects for peace had long since receded, there was no incentive to encourage Israel towards peace. Therefore, in the post-war period from mid-2007 to 2009, bilateral relations once again reverted to a low-keyed level.

2008 was a sad year for bilateral relations. The breakdown of the government of national unity in Lebanon forced Siniora to stop down on 25 May 2008. Two months

earlier, Abdullah's own fate had been sealed with the poor electoral showing of the ruling government. As such Abdullah was forced to step down almost a year after Siniora in April 2009.

Once again, Malaysia and Lebanon were headed by new leaders. In Malaysia, Najib Razak, a leader with different priorities took over while in Lebanon, Rafik Hariri's son, Saad Hariri became Prime Minister, with the same constraints faced by his predecessor. Meanwhile, the periodic bouts of political drama and instability in Lebanon convinced Malaysians that Lebanon was forever condemned never to realise its dreams to be the "Singapore of the Middle East" or even once again be the "Paris of the Orient".

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This thesis was motivated by the desire to understand the drivers of bilateral relations between small states. In order to answer this question this research focussed on Malaysia's relations with Lebanon, a Front-Line state in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Given the apparent absence of direct material benefits from the bilateral relations, it was argued that Malaysia's relations with Lebanon was not always driven by a desire to maximise material benefits of the relationship or the idiosyncrasies of the prime minister but at times, also influenced by some other factors.

The main drivers of Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations

Systemic environment

The research showed that Malaysia-Lebanon relations is sensitive to the developments in the systemic environment. Specifically, the intensity of the relationship changed according to whether the external conditions were marked by political instability, war or peace. The study showed that the *Konfrontasi* provided the context for the establishment of bilateral relations with Lebanon. The *Konfrontasi* was a matter of great anxiety for the young state as it opened up multiple challenges. In addition to diplomatic rupture with Indonesia and looming threat of widespread military conflict, Malaysia's relations with the Philippines and Pakistan had also been affected. Given the vast symmetry in military might between Malaysia and Indonesia, diplomacy was therefore a main option for Malaysia to deal with the *Konfrontasi* by getting the support of the Afro-Asian countries.

Hence, when it was discovered that her diplomatic option of seeking the support of the Afro-Asian group was in danger of being denied due to the collusion between Indonesia, China and Pakistan, the government had to move into action. Hence, the discovery of the Beijing-Jakarta-Karachi axis was the trigger that pushed Malaysia to accredit an ambassador to Lebanon. Had the diplomatic cables not revealed the close cooperation between these countries, bilateral relations with Lebanon may not have been a priority. As admission into the Afro-Asian bloc was a crucial element in widening her diplomatic support to defeat the *Konfrontasi*, Malaysia-Lebanon relations served as a critical platform to push for her admission into the Afro-Asian group.

We also witnessed that war can also influence bilateral relations. In this case, it was the overwhelming defeat of the Arab states in the Six Day war in 1967. The strong domestic sentiments of sympathy for the Arab states facilitated the shift in foreign policy. The role of war in influencing bilateral relations was once again demonstrated in 2006. When Israel attacked Lebanon in 2006, it triggered a strong response from Malaysia to use bilateral relations as a platform to channel assistance to help support the government and also to reduce the level of tension in the environment. The study also showed that conditions of peace resulted in a far greater enhancement of bilateral relations as peaceful conditions provided the much-needed comfort level and risk-taking for the leaders in pursuing bilateral cooperation to higher levels. Therefore, the relatively peaceful conditions in the Middle East explains why most of the bilateral agreements and official visits occurred between 1992 to 2002.

The state

In chapter 2 it was shown how social reform pursued during the Fuad Chehab's presidency together with Lebanon's economic oriented foreign policy encouraged the Lebanese government to seek diplomatic ties with Malaysia. However, the Malayan government did not immediately reciprocate as her modest foreign service and the absence of material advantage compelled the government to deploy her resources to addressing the challenge of the *Konfrontasi* rather than dissipating her scant diplomatic resources in pursuing bilateral cooperation with Lebanon. When the diplomatic rupture by Pakistan revealed the extent to which Indonesia together with China and Pakistan had influenced Lebanon and Syria against Malaysia, a diplomatic presence in the Middle East became vital to prevent further erosion of her standing in the region. Lebanon's relatively liberal political system and her free press met the Malaysian government's needs to establish a diplomatic presence from where to effectively mount a counter-campaign to undo Indonesia's campaign against Malaysia. However, as financial and human resources constraints continued to be a limiting factor, the government had to make do with an ambassador who was accredited from Cairo together with an honorary consulate and a trade office.

Domestic politics also played a role in the shift in Malaysia's foreign policy. Because of her isolation in the Middle East, a pro-Arab policy was essential to pacify domestic political pressure. The study also showed that the preponderance of the prime minister in foreign policy making in the Malaysian government facilitated foreign policy decisions which may not have been easily accomplished in a more accountable system with greater inter-departmental.

Sub-State actors

The research showed that it is the leaders who were ultimately responsible for the character and content of bilateral relations. In chapter 2 it was shown that the Tunku's role was especially critical in this regard. In his view, Indonesia was a major threat. Hence, Indonesia's impact among the Arab states ought to be countered. Therefore, the Tunku consented to a shift to a pro-Arab foreign policy. The importance of undermining Indonesia's influence also overrode his initial apprehension about shifting away from a policy of neutrality towards the Arab-Israeli conflict to one that was overtly pro-Arab and anti-Israel.

In the same chapter, it was shown that the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo was able to convince the deputy prime minister Razak to change the government decision to accredit the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo to Beirut instead of from Jeddah. Hussein's role, though brief, was essentially a follow-through from Razak. Therefore, he continued to adhere to a strong pro-Arab foreign policy.

Mahathir's role was most evident in elevating and defining bilateral relations. If the ten-year period between 1992-2002 can be described as the "golden years" of bilateral relations, it is due to the personal roles of Mahathir and Hariri. The meeting of minds between the two leaders was ultimately responsible for shaping the bilateral relations. The role of the leaders is clearly evident in the easy manner in which both Mahathir and Hariri dealt with each other and the frequent contacts between them. The discussion in chapter 4 showed that Mahathir's close relationship with Hariri and his own strong position the government enabled him to commit substantial financial support for Lebanon.

The importance of the leader's role can also be observed even after Mahathir and Hariri had left the scene. When bilateral relation was left purely to the foreign ministries, no new initiatives were explored or introduced. However, after the 2006 war, Abdullah approved fresh Malaysian commitment to help Lebanon under the bilateral framework. Even the Chair of Islam Hadhari and the e-Government initiatives were explored because of the personal interest shown by Abdullah and Siniora although they were unable to surmount the resistance within their own governments to implementing these initiatives.

As far as the other sub-state actors such as NGOs and political parties are concerned, it was clear that they were agents of influence as much as they also reacted to public interest. Political parties such as UMNO and PAS played important roles in translating public interest and thus influencing bilateral relations as they pushed the government to take up a more strident anti-Israel role.

Although there were not many NGOs involved in this study, it nevertheless showed that they also had a role in shaping bilateral relations. ABIM saw the Lebanese civil war as an opportunity to enhance its own status as a credible critic of the government on issues related to Islam. By articulating the plight of the Palestinian refugees as a global Islamic issue, ABIM was able to position itself as a challenger to the government on the foreign policy aspect of this issue. The public interest on the situation in Lebanon helped ABIM gain a more visible status. In return, ABIM's articulation of support for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and efforts to collect funds to assist them also helped inform the public about the situation in the region.

The Lebanese civil war also attracted the interest of humanitarian NGOs such as MSRI and MMV. They emerged to provide an avenue for Malaysian volunteers to

express their support for the Palestinian refugees. Through its established network the MSRI could publicise the plight of the refugees as victims of the civil war and organise efforts to gather foreign volunteers. Through these efforts the MSRI acted as a platform for the creation of the MMV. Once the MMV was established it could function autonomously to send several medical teams to work in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. The media coverage of the MMV volunteers in Lebanon also played an important role in encouraging the spirit of volunteerism among Malaysians. This probably explains why Malaysians reached out to support MERCY in 2006 when it organised medical assistance mission to Lebanon following the 2006 war.

The media undoubtedly played an important role in informing the public about the developments in Lebanon. In this regard, the print media played a prominent role. Newspapers such as the *Straits Times* and *New Straits Times*, *Berita Harian* and Utusan Malaysia were the key print media that covered most of the developments in Lebanon and the region. Their coverage of the international events in turn shaped public opinion and interest in the region as was also seen in the numerous debates in the parliament for example.

The public interest in the Lebanese civil war facilitated the government's articulation on the issue as well as a key foreign policy interest. It was also a necessary move in order to deny ABIM the opportunity to embellish its domestic appeal in a bid to curb the threat of political Islam to the government's dominance. On the other hand, the government supported the efforts of MSRI and MMV as it helped support the government's articulation on the issue. Another observation that can be made from this study is that the NGOs only played a role when the formal role of the diplomatic

machinery was impaired. When diplomacy was able to function normally, the role of these NGOs receded.

Nevertheless, a close examination of diplomatic ties it also clearly exposed four crucial junctures that occurred in this bilateral relationship that cannot be explained solely by the factors mentioned above.

The first juncture occurred in 1963 when Lebanon approached the Malayan government to establish diplomatic ties at the level of ambassador. While the Malayan government accepted diplomatic ties it did not reciprocate by appointing an ambassador to Beirut as there was no immediate material advantage to be gained. It was shown that the government's rationale for this action was to conserve her resources to addressing the challenge of the *Konfrontasi* rather than dissipating them by appointing an ambassador to Beirut. But why two years later in 1965 did the government reverse its decision and precipitate to elevate bilateral ties with Lebanon which still offered no great bilateral advantage?

The second juncture occurred after the end of the *Konfrontasi* in 1966. Why Malaysia continued to pursue strong bilateral relations with Lebanon after the *Konfrontasi* had ended.

The third critical juncture was the entire period between 1994 to 2002 that was described in chapter 4 as the "golden years" of bilateral relations. Mahathir was personally responsible for many of the bilateral initiatives taken during this period. The USD750 million financial assistance given to Lebanon under the Paris II conference stands out as a prime example of Mahathir's role. What drove Mahathir to personally

commit the government to provide such a large financial assistance to Lebanon, which, in a more accountable system, may not have passed inter-departmental scrutiny?

The fourth and last critical juncture occurred in 2006. The above factors are unable to explain why the bilateral relations that had been relegated to a lower priority under Abdullah and Siniora, suddenly became important following the Israeli attack in 2006.

Were there other factors that contributed to this relationship?

These critical junctures can only be explained by taking into account the role of Indonesia and Israel. However, they did not play a direct role in bilateral relations but rather as a background effect that influenced foreign policy decision through the perception created in the minds of the leaders. As the Malaysian prime minister is a key architect of foreign policy, it was the perception of the Malaysian prime ministers towards Indonesia and Israel that played an important part in Malaysian foreign policy towards Lebanon. The study also showed that the perceptions may vary according to the personality, domestic considerations, and external environment.

As shown in chapter 2, Tunku's administration did not expect the *Konfrontasi* to have far reaching implications beyond the Malaysian borders. Hence, Malaysia's foreign service with limited diplomatic resources and capacity had initially missed the Sukarno government's insidious diplomatic campaign against her far beyond Southeast Asia.

Although by 1964, it was increasingly becoming clear from the records of the parliamentary debates and diplomatic cables, that a pro-Western foreign policy was providing credibility to Indonesia's campaign against Malaysia, the biggest hurdle against

change was the Tunku himself. It was only after he was convinced that breaking out of the isolation imposed by the *Konfrontasi* depended on a foreign policy shift towards non-alignment and pro-Arab policy did it set in motion for enhancement of diplomatic ties with Lebanon.

Beirut was a perfect choice as the Lebanese government had in fact earlier expressed interest to have diplomatic relations with Malaysia and exchange ambassadors. Further, Beirut was also an important diplomatic capital. It also had the freest press in the region and a relatively liberal political system that would give Malaysia a fighting chance to be heard. Another advantage offered by Beirut was the fact that it was a hub for air travel which meant that there would be many opportunities for Malaysian leaders to meet with their Lebanese counterparts on their transit in Beirut. Further, as a Front-Line state, Lebanon would also serve as a good listening post about developments in Israel and the Middle East conflict.

Nevertheless, it was still a gamble. Failure in Beirut would mean that Malaysia would have no chance to get her message across to the other more conservative Arab capitals. Therefore, to ensure the chances of success, the Tunku took the lead in personally kickstarting Malaysia's diplomatic presence in Beirut with the opening of an honorary consulate. While the Malaysian ambassador in Cairo periodically visited Beirut, the honorary consulate provided a permanent point of contact in Beirut as the channel of communication with the Lebanese government and the diplomatic community there.

Clearly therefore, it was Tunku's perception of Indonesia's influence on the external conditions during the *Konfrontasi* that drove Malaysia to elevate bilateral

relations with Lebanon. However, given the vast asymmetry in diplomatic means of the two countries, Malaysia certainly could not confront Indonesia directly. Improving her relations with the Arab states through a diplomatic presence in Lebanon and a pro-Arab foreign policy therefore served as an indirect approach to undermine Indonesia's influence.

Although the *Konfrontasi* officially ended in 1966 and despite the signs of deteriorating political and security conditions in Beirut, bilateral relations between Malaysia and Lebanon continued to strengthen. To explain this, we have to turn to the role of Israel.

This study clearly demonstrated that the Six Day War in 1967 was the starting point when Israel became an important consideration in Malaysia-Lebanon bilateral relations. The global muslim indignation over the fall of West Jerusalem and the Al Aqsa mosque under Israeli control also stirred the religious sentiments of the Malays. Although Tunku did not support Israel, he realised that his government's relatively liberal policy towards Israel would sooner or later bring opposition pressure to bear upon it, he consented to a shift towards an anti-Israel stance in her foreign policy. An anti-Israel stance served to underscore solidarity with the Arab states. Accordingly, the government announced several key policies that were given high profile coverage in the domestic media. For these reasons too, Tunku's successors, Razak and Hussein continued the policy of maintaining a strong diplomatic presence in Beirut.

Thus far we have seen that the shift in the strategic balance in favour of Israel following the Six Day War acted as an incentive for Malaysia to continue to elevate her bilateral relations with Lebanon. However, when formal diplomatic relations had to be

suspended during the civil war Malaysian foreign policy had to adapt to the new reality. Nevertheless, during the civil war Malaysia's foreign policy towards the Arab states and Israel served as a means of attracting trade and investment as well as financial support from the Arab states for her support for their cause.

The strong anti-Israel stance also helped curb potential political threat from the *dakwah* groups which were critical of the government's development philosophy. Under Razak and Hussein and to some extent, under Mahathir as well, a strong stance against Israel served to enhance ties with the Arab states.

Foreign policy as a device or instrument for regime maintenance and self-promotion was very evident under Mahathir's leadership. Mahathir's deployment of foreign policy in this regard was so unique that it was proposed that it be called anti-Israelism. However, anti-Israelism was a short-lived phenomenon as Abdullah did not resort to this device to seek popularity or garner support for the ruling government. Hence, Israel did not feature in Malaysian foreign policy in the way it used to under Mahathir and even under Hussein.

Because of the importance of a pro-Arab/anti-Israel foreign policy for economic and political reasons, Israel once again became an important consideration when formal bilateral relations resumed after the end of the civil war. This time, it was the perception and a general sense of optimism about peace in the Middle East. Although this sense of optimism influenced Mahathir and Hariri differently, some of their actions converged in the elevation of bilateral relations.

The optimistic outlook convinced Hariri that his country could follow the example of Jordan and Syria and be the final Front-Line state to start peace talks with Israel if only she could make herself indispensable as a regional financial and economic hub. Hariri also had a personal agenda for he believed that peace between Lebanon and Israel would remove Syria's security dilemma and hence the rationale for Syria to remain in Lebanon. Therefore, without direct confrontation, Syria could be compelled to withdraw from Lebanon. In Hariri's thinking, the prospects for integrating into the Middle Eastern market through Lebanon would be a great incentive for peace for Israel. Thus, in his view, Lebanon's independence was linked to peace with Israel which was ultimately dependent on Beirut regaining its place as a regional economic hub.

Therefore, Hariri pushed for the rapid reconstruction of Beirut's physical and economic infrastructure to fashion Beirut into the "Singapore of the Levant". In this regard, Hariri hoped that through bilateral cooperation with other countries including Malaysia, Lebanon could draw the necessary resources for Beirut's reconstruction and development.

As we also saw in chapter 4, Mahathir too was convinced about the prospects for peace. For Malaysia, peace in the Middle East would open up trade and investment with Israel, an untapped industrial powerhouse in the Middle East. This explains why Mahathir sent out feelers in the form of personal missives to several Israeli prime ministers. This also explains why the Malaysian government tacitly allowed prominent individuals such as Tunku Abdullah to visit Israel to assess the intention of the Israeli government and the business potential to prepare for the establishment of formal diplomatic ties with Israel if peace materialises. Mahathir's association with Hariri

convinced him that the economic development of Lebanon was certainly part of the equation of peace in the Middle East.

Therefore, different motivations encouraged Mahathir and Hariri to push bilateral relations to new heights. This also explains why Mahathir was convinced it was critical to commit USD 750 million to help Lebanon under the Paris conference.

Mahathir's and Hariri's successors perceptions of Israel were different because ther own political standing came first. Nevertheless, when the external condition deteriorated following Israel's attack on Lebanon in 2006, Abdullah and Siniora realised that they have to pay attention to Israel. As Chairman of the OIC, Abdullah came under pressure to demonstrate leadership of the organisation. For Siniora too bilateral relations became a priority as it now served as one of the channels to seek emergency financial and reconstruction support to avert government collapse. This incidence once again demonstrates that the underlying reasons for Malaysia's bilateral relations with Lebanon were not motivated by anticipated bilateral advantage but rather due to Israel's impact on the external environment.

This study is of the view that this variation in foreign policy towards a particular bilateral relationship is significant enough to warrant a label as a Third State Effect. This thesis proposes the following conclusions about the Third State Effect:

i. The Third State Effect is the influence on bilateral relations by a third state.

ii. The perception of the leader or leaders towards the impact of the third state on the external environment is key to the Third State Effect.

iii. The Third State Effect occurs because the small state is unable to deal directly with the third state.

iv. The Third State Effect may influence the foreign policy of one or both states in the bilateral relationship. In the case of Indonesia, the effect was only on the Malaysian foreign policy whereas with Israel, the effect was felt on the foreign policies of both Malaysia and Lebanon.

v. In order to produce a Third State effect, that state must be proximate to one or the other state in the bilateral relations. In the case of Indonesia and Israel, both share physical borders with Malaysia and Lebanon, respectively.

vi. Size of the third state has no bearing on whether it imparts a Third State Effect or not. In this study, it was shown that a big state such as Indonesia or a small state such as Israel can produce a Third State Effect.

Epilogue

It is hoped that this study could contribute to the growing body of Malaysian foreign policy studies. By moving away from the emphasis on the idiosyncrasies of leadership, this study hopes to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Malaysian foreign policy behaviour.

As indicated earlier, the Third State Effect could have value as a foreign policy diagnostic tool. With its general attributes as outlined above, the Third State Effect could,

in the first instance be used by state to determine if the use of foreign policy resources in aligned with their national interests. For instance, does a small state like Malaysia really need 110 diplomatic missions to achieve her foreign policy objectives? The Third State Effect could effectively serve as a prism to critically analyse these diplomatic representations to ensure that her diplomatic representation is better adjusted to her needs.

As indicated at the outset, the study of bilateral relations among small states should be a critical component of the overall scholarship of the contemporary inter-state system given that a significant proportion of global diplomatic activity takes place between small states as they make up for most of the countries in the world today. Based on this study we now know that not all diplomatic activity between small states is driven by the material benefits of the relationship, but it can also be a reaction to the impact of a third state on the external environment.

Further research could apply the theoretical model used in this study to test the applicability of the Third State Effect in the bilateral relations of small states in other parts of the world. In Southeast Asia, it could be used, for example, to understand the dynamics of Singapore-Israel relations which have remained steadfast and resilient despite the antagonistic attitude of her two larger neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia.

As implied in this study, the Third State Effect generally refers to foreign policy decisions that are not readily explainable within the framework of bilateral relations. Therefore, this model could potentially be used to examine whether problems such as illegal arms transfer, insurgencies, and intra-ethnic violence that afflicts many small states, are related to the Third State Effect. Hence, an opportunity emerges for the Third

State Effect to serve as a diagnostic tool to enable the global community to formulate better policies to deal with these problems.

While the case has been made that diplomatic relations between small states can be influenced by the effect of a third state, future research could investigate whether asymmetrical relationships involving small states and bigger states could similarly be affected by third states.

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