

MALAYSIA'S DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION POLICIES TOWARDS THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: 1957 - 1974

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Though this paper is an empirical case study of a small state's external relations in Southeast Asia vis-a-vis a major power, it does raise certain broader theoretical issues in international relations, i.e. how and why a certain small power behaves towards a stronger bigger power which apparently was perceived to pose a threat to its survival and independence.

In analysing the patterns and interaction processes between a small power with a major power the emphasis can be either focused on the perspectives of the major power or the perspectives of the smaller power. In this case, the focus of this paper is to examine and analyse the smaller power, i.e. Malaysia's¹ diplomatic recognition policy towards the major power, i.e. The People's Republic of China (hereafter the PRC).²

How does one analyse the foreign policies of Malaysia towards the PRC? Which model can best explain this empirical case study? The paper assumes that the historical legacy, the perception of the decision-makers, ethnicity, ideology, religion, economic needs and the external changing environment in which the decision-makers operated, all of these factors are relevant to the inquiry. The 'linkage' model expounded by J.N. Rosenau can thus be applied to study the Malaysian situation. Therefore the main methodological concern is to assess how the PRC as an external factor is affecting the internal politics and external relations of Malaysia.

Malaysia's diplomatic recognition policies towards the PRC can

succinctly be divided into two periods, i.e. the non-recognition policy from 1957 to 1970 under Tunku Abdul Rahman's leadership (hereafter the Tunku) and the détente and recognition policy from 1970 to 1974 under Tun Razak's administration.

When Malaya became independent in 1957, it was plagued with internal uncertainty such as: communist threats, doubtful loyalty of the Chinese and rising Malay nationalism, as well as a hostile and uncertain external environment such as the increasing US involvement in the Indochinese war. Under these circumstances, what was the best foreign policy option for the Tunku to adopt so as to ensure the survival and independence of a young ethnically fragmented state?

I. The Non-Recognition Period: 1957-1970

Internally, the Tunku aspired to create a peaceful harmonious, multi-racial and democratic society. Thus his foreign policy measures were mainly used as means to achieve his internal objectives. Accordingly, the Tunku's best foreign policy option was to adopt a pro-western, anti-communist stance, i.e. non-recognition policy towards the PRC. Why did he adopt such a non-recognition policy? The following section will analyse the internal as well as the external environment which shaped his policy towards the PRC.

1. Internal Considerations

The threat of the Communist Party of Malaya (hereafter CPM) was uppermost in his mind, as, in fact, Malaya was plagued with communist insurgencies so much so that the British authorities had to declare the 'Emergency' from 1948 to 1960. Actually, Malaya could have become a

communist state if the CPM had skillfully exploited the political vacuum and captured the power immediately after the surrender of the Japanese forces, prior to the return of the British army in 1945.

From the inception of the CPM since 1930, the PRC was alleged to have had links with the CPM whose leaders were predominantly ethnic Chinese. Chin Peng, the Secretary General for instance, faithfully followed the Maoist dictum of people's war and armed struggle whose objective was, as perceived by the Tunku, to serve the PRC's revolutionary objective. In this sense, ethnicity, i.e. the Chineseness of the CPM was so intertwined with Maoist ideology that the CPM was regarded not only by the Tunku but by many Malay leaders, as an alien and therefore not an indigenous nationalist movement, appealing to the Malay peasantry class.

Since almost if not all the Malay population are muslims who embrace Islam, a faith totally incompatible with Maoist ideology, it is not surprising, as far as the Tunku was concerned, that Malaya and communism could never coexist peacefully.⁴

2. The Ideological Factor

The Tunku's non-recognition policy could partly be explained by his personal ideological predilection. His total commitment to democracy and freedom was partly a reflection of his natural instinct and partly due to his personal background. Being an upper-class conservative, a Prince from the state of Kedah, educated and socialized in the English stream of education both at home and as an adult at Cambridge University, he was definitely shaped by the British libertarian ideology. The Tunku perceived democracy and communism as being dialectically opposed to each other like water and oil. To him, the US represented the best living model of democracy, whereas Soviet and Chinese communism symptomised evil, i.e.

the suppression of basic human rights and dignity. The Tunku saw Malaya as being part of the free world, whereas Maoist communism was synonymous with 'dictatorship'. As far as the Tunku was concerned, Maoist China was the number one ideological threat to the survival of an independent and democratic Malaya.

The Tunku perceived the PRC as an 'expansionist' power which would ultimately subvert the free world, including Malaya. Furthermore, to some extent, the idiosyncrasy of Tunku's personality reinforced his commitment to anti-communism so much so that he wanted to dispel any unwarranted pessimism by showing through a concrete example that Malaya could become the best model of a democratic, peace-loving country in Asia which could outperform Maoist communism. Hence it was indispensable for the Tunku to tenaciously promote the cause of democracy and the pursuit of peace as important priorities of his foreign policy goals.

The extent of the Tunku's anti-Maoist communism can best be illustrated by his perception of the PRC, i.e.

'China is a country with a 700 million ever expanding population. The brand of communism which she is now upholding and the population explosion which continually embraces her domestic programmes dictate a policy of adventurism and expansionism aimed at fulfilling her ideological crusade in order to find fertile ground in potentially rich Asian countries so as to make China the most powerful nation in Asia.'⁵

The Tunku was so anti-communism that no sooner Malaya became independent in 1957, the first country which he visited was anti-communist South Vietnam. During his State visit, he proudly declared that both Malaya and South Vietnam fought at the front the battle for freedom. Showing his determination, he decided later to ship the left-over ammunition

and weapons from the 'Emergency' period to aid South Vietnam in their fight against communism. He also assisted and trained many Vietnamese in jungle warfare and police administration.

The Tunku's criticism of the PRC's policies towards Tibet in 1959 and the Sino-Indian armed conflicts in 1962⁶ were further evidence to confirm his ideological conviction. In fact, the Tunku was the first leader from Southeast Asia who vehemently condemned the PRC's suppression of the Tibetan revolt in 1959 when he accused the PRC of 'blatant invasion'.⁷

3. The Ethnicity Factor

The presence of the thirty-seven percent of ethnic Chinese in Malaya was clearly a factor in shaping his perception of and policy towards the PRC. The older Chinese's political loyalty towards the PRC had raised suspicion among the indigenous Malays who perceived the 'Hua Chiao' (overseas Chinese) as politically untrustworthy. To build a united young nation from this diversity of ethnic groups, cultures and languages was by no means a simple, straightforward task, as the Tunku was faced with two interrelated problems, i.e. firstly, how to transform the ethnic Chinese identity to a Malayan identity; secondly, how to ensure that there was no infiltration and subversion both into the Chinese population from within, i.e. the CPM and from without, i.e. Maoist communism.

National integration and assimilation between the Malays and the Chinese were very difficult if not totally impossible since the number of intermarriages between the two communities was rather small. Besides, the geographical factor added to the difficulty, as the Chinese in general prefer to settle in the urban centers, whereas the Malays tend to opt to live in the 'kampongs' (rural areas). Moreover, the Malays are Muslims who are prohibited to consume pork, which is a popular food for the

Chinese. The difficulty was further compounded by the economic gap between the rural poor Malays and the profit-oriented urban Chinese who, by and large, were economically better off than their rural Malay counterparts. The most serious obstacle, however, was the dubious loyalty of the Chinese, which was split between Beijing, Taipei and Kuala Lumpur. Finally, both the Kuomintang and the PRC governments' policies on the overseas Chinese were based on the principle of *Jus Sanguinis* (by blood) which did not help to reduce the difficulty of switching their loyalty from the PRC to Malaya.

After almost a decade of efforts of nation building, the Tunku was still suspicious towards certain segments of the Chinese population in Malaysia. During a speech on 21st of September, 1966, for example, the Tunku observed that a portion of Chinese continued to show their loyalty towards the PRC rather than Malaysia proper.⁸

The May 13th 1969 racial riots between the Chinese and the Malays were a serious blow not only to the Tunku's leadership but also to his strategy and goals of nation building. The Tunku conveniently blamed the Chinese communists and by implication the Maoist communists for manipulating the riots.⁹

4. The External Environment

The Tunku's non-recognition policy towards the PRC was also partly shaped by the external milieu in the 1950's. Firstly, his policy towards the PRC was the product of the cold war era. Instinctively, the Tunku preferred to follow the pro-western camp rather than to align Malaya with the socialist camp. Secondly, in a sense, Malaysia's independence was not complete as the Tunku had to depend on the British government's protection of Malaysia's defence and security. Thus military alliance with the UK and membership in the Commonwealth were the best options for his foreign

policy. Thirdly, the Tunku's policy towards the PRC was a function of her unfriendly attitude towards the independence of Malaysia, as the PRC accused it of being a pseudo-independence and an extension of British neo-colonialism. Fourthly, the Tunku's non-recognition policy may well have been influenced, though it was not the most important consideration, by the close trade ties and amicable political relations with Taipei.

To what extent did economic needs play a part in shaping the Tunku's policy towards the PRC? Trade did not seem to be a factor in the Tunku's decision whether to normalize diplomatic relations with the PRC.¹⁰

The most important reason for the Tunku's refusal to seek closer diplomatic ties with the PRC was due to Beijing's 'dual track' policy,¹¹ i.e. party-to-party and state-to-state relations, which was perceived by Malaysia as a direct interference in the internal affairs of Malaysia. The Tunku was in particular very wary of the PRC's persistent support of the CPM, as had been the case by her openly proclaiming 'people's war' in Malaysia from 1966 to 1969. The Tunku was also very disturbed when the PRC accused his leadership of being a 'running dog' and a 'lackey of British imperialism', and by the PRC's unfriendly attitude when Beijing continued harping on anti-Islamic themes,¹² as well as when the PRC accused the Tunku of practising discriminating policies against the Chinese community. In this sense, the Tunku's attitude towards the PRC was a reaction to Beijing's unfriendly attitude towards Malaysia.

It should be pointed out that the Tunku's non-recognition policy should not be interpreted as anti-China. Like all the smaller states in Southeast Asia Malaysia wanted to promote normal state-to-state relations irrespective of their social systems. This wish was clearly expounded by the Tunku on 17th August, 1965 in the Upper House of the Malaysian Parliament when he succinctly outlined the main themes of Malaysia's foreign policy. Among them, Malaysia wanted (1) to uphold the UN's Charter; (2) to help those

who were still under colonial rule to struggle for independence; (3) to promote and maintain good relations with the neighbouring states; (4) to maintain closer cooperation with those countries friendly with Malaysia; (5) to contribute as much as possible to world peace and prosperity.¹³

While the Tunku adopted a non-recognition posture towards the PRC, he had no objections to her admission to the UN. On the contrary, the Tunku always maintained that because of the PRC's long-standing civilisation and being a major power in the region, she should be brought into that international organisation. The Tunku, however, insisted that the people of Taiwan should not be denied to pursue a separate identity of their own, and should have the right to remain a member in the UN. Hence, in essence, the Tunku's policy was a 'one China', 'one Taiwan'.¹⁴

The bloody racial riots on May 13th 1969, brought to an end the Tunku's leadership and his non-recognition policy. The subsequent internal political development and the external changing environment both in the region and at the global level ushered in a new era in Malaysia's foreign policy in general and its policy towards the PRC in particular.

II. Tun Razak's Détente and Recognition Policy: 1970-1974

In the wake of the racial riots, the Tunku was forced to resign when his goal of achieving racial harmony was completely shattered. On 21st of September, 1970, the Tunku's long-time Deputy, Tun Razak was chosen as Malaysia's second Prime Minister. Tun Razak's administration not only marked the beginning of a new era in Malaysia's internal political development but also in its foreign policy. Internally, Tun Razak announced the implementation of the New Economic Policy with the main objective of bridging the economic gap between the Malays and the Chinese. He also enlarged the traditional Alliance Party (UMNO, MCA, MIC) to include

other opposition parties, as well as those parties from the eastern states of Sarawak and Sabah, etc. to become Barisan Nasional, a grand coalition party. The motivation behind this move was to widen the bases of support for his leadership. Externally, Razak's proposal of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (hereafter ZOPFAN) not only became the cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy but was also endorsed by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers as ASEAN's common goal in 1971, a personal achievement for Razak's leadership and vision.

Reversing the Tunku's outright pro-western policy, Razak decided to adopt a more independent and even-handed foreign policy towards the communist states. He thus took the initiative to seek détente with the PRC. This shift clearly came to the fore during the remarks made by Razak at a meeting of the United Malays National Organization (hereafter UMNO), a ruling Malay Party, when he proclaimed that his administration would pursue an independent foreign policy based on cooperation, friendship and non-interference in the affairs of other nations.¹⁵ One month after assuming office, i.e. in October, 1970, Tun Razak spoke at the UN General Assembly where he unequivocally announced his support of the PRC's admission to the UN so as to restore her legitimate rights. In other words, Beijing should replace Taipei as one of the permanent members in the Security Council.¹⁶ This speech was politically significant because Razak was the first Malaysian leader addressing the 'China' issue formally at an international forum.

1. Internal Considerations

What then motivated Razak to seek detente with the PRC? There were a few objectives behind Razak's initiatives to seek détente with the PRC. Firstly, the most important one was his hope that through diplomatic

recognition with the PRC he could tackle the roots of the security threat from the CPM. He wanted Beijing to forego once and for all its support and terminate its links with the CPM. Secondly, Razak had the intention to persuade the PRC to minimize the trade deficit by buying more goods from Malaysia, especially natural rubber. Thirdly, Razak's reversal of the Tunku's outright pro-western policy was a reaction to the pressure from some of the UMNO leaders such as Mahathir and his associates who accused the Tunku's pro-western policy as being 'neo-colonial' and not in line with the mood of the rising forces in the third world countries. Thus détente with the PRC could be interpreted as a shift from 'look west' to 'look east' which subsequently became a hallmark of Mahathir's foreign policy priorities. Fourthly, in a way, Razak was the right leader to seek detente with the PRC because of his pro-Malay image and his pro-Malay attitudes, so much so that there was little political risk involved for him. Furthermore, Razak's initiative towards the PRC would also likely receive support from the Chinese community, especially the Chinese businessmen who eagerly wanted to do more business with the PRC and tap her huge market. Another consideration was the psychological dimension. Being the second in line for too long under the Tunku's shadow, Razak wanted to initiate some new policies both internally and externally so that he could project himself as a strong and independent leader on his own merits.

2. External Factors

Besides the internal changing considerations, the shift in Razak's foreign policy was also motivated by the external changing international environment. Firstly, the most important factor was Britain's decision to withdraw its forces from East of the Suez in 1968. This decision had a profound impact on Razak's thinking. He had to grapple with the question

whether Malaysia could protect its independence without the security umbrella of the UK, and what would be the best option and strategy to ensure the survival of a small state in this basically unstable region. Secondly, the victory of the Republican presidential candidate Richard Nixon to become the US President in 1968, ushered in a new era, not only as far as the de-escalation of the war efforts in Indochina was concerned, but also brought about the abandonment of the US's containment and encirclement policy of the PRC since 1949. After Nixon's decision to end the cold war confrontation, attempts were made to improve Sino-US relations which gave strong impetus to the smaller states in Southeast Asia to seek détente with the PRC too. Malaysia was no exception. Razak grasped this golden opportunity and decided to take the lead in improving diplomatic relations with the PRC. Razak reckoned that the PRC was a very important neighbour in the region. There would therefore be a better future for Southeast Asia if her legitimate role is properly restored. In Razak's thinking, an isolated, weak and frustrated PRC would likely threaten the stability in Southeast Asia. Thirdly, Razak's decision to seek détente with the PRC was also encouraged by the overall improved international relations between the superpowers in the early 1970's, especially by the decrease in US-Soviet tensions. Fourthly, the diversification of Razak's foreign policy, especially the move to come closer to the Asian countries and the non-aligned movement, could give Malaysia greater diplomatic flexibility rather than what the lopsided pro-western alliance policy under the Tunku's administration had to offer. Hence, Razak's reputation as a leader of international standing could greatly be improved in the eyes of the non-aligned countries. Fifthly, Razak's policy of détente was also a function of the PRC's internal political development and subsequently her more accommodating and moderate foreign policy posture towards the Southeast Asian states. The end of the Cultural Revolution

in 1969, as well as the decreasing anti-Malaysian broadcasts since 1971, which was interpreted as a gesture of goodwill on the part of the PRC, encouraged Razak to proceed with détente. However, under no illusions, Razak did not assume that the diplomatic boat sailing to Beijing was a smooth and calm trip on the China Sea.

III. The Road to Diplomatic Normalization

Given these changing internal as well as external conditions, what would then be the best strategy in dealing with the PRC? Should Malaysia accelerate its rapprochement or move slower?

An aggressive policy which would depart radically from Razak's predecessor might risk to harm, or worse still, destroy his as yet untested leadership. However, if Razak adopted a slow, wait and see approach, he might miss some golden opportunities. There were some important questions for Razak to reflect upon. Firstly, would President Suharto of Indonesia who had negative experiences with the PKI-CCP axis, react favorably to Razak's initiative? Would the people of Malaysia, especially his UMNO colleagues and the orthodox anti-communist Muslims endorse Razak's overtures towards Beijing? What would be the reaction from the other ASEAN states besides Indonesia?

Uncertainty about both the internal and external reactions, and being a pragmatist, Razak decided to move slowly and cautiously on the road towards détente with the PRC. The most important consideration for choosing the slow process towards détente was that there were no concrete signs yet from the PRC that she would give up her party-to-party policy. Another important reason was the uncertainty of the loyalty of the Chinese in Malaysia. Would the PRC urge the four million Chinese to subvert the security of Malaysia? Would the Beijing Embassy in Kuala Lumpur

provide the funds and start other covert subversive activities to promote the revolutionary cause of the CPM?

Despite these reservations however, Razak was prepared to initiate a dialogue with the PRC. In October, 1970 for example, he indicated his interest to use trade as a means of diplomacy. Through a third party (Canada), Razak tried to find out whether the PRC would agree to Malaysia establishing a trade office in Beijing. As a concrete gesture to proof his seriousness, Razak made it clear that he would support the PRC's admission to the UN and would establish diplomatic relations with Beijing if the Chinese ended their hostilities towards Malaysia, i.e. to end their support of the CPM and to promise not to interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs. Better still, he wanted the PRC to guarantee the neutralization of Southeast Asia.¹⁷

The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference held on 15th January, 1971, gave Razak a good opportunity to articulate his thinking on the PRC. He called on the nations of Southeast Asia to demonstrate to Beijing that they wanted peace, stability and neutrality in the region.¹⁸ Razak, however wanted the PRC to show her sincerity first.¹⁹ His cautious approach could also be seen from his remarks made in the Parliament on 24th January, 1971, when he told the House that the time had not come for Malaysia to have diplomatic relations with the PRC because the latter still carried out subversive activities against Malaysia and furthermore, the Chinese radio continued its anti-Malaysian broadcasts.²⁰ The PRC's persistent support of the CPM was thus clearly a major obstacle to the improvement of Sino-Malaysian relations.

In May, 1971, the PRC finally reacted to Razak's initiatives. When then Malaysia's Finance Minister Tunku Razaleigh bin Hamsah headed an informal trade delegation to Beijing, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai met Razaleigh personally. Razak was particularly encouraged by Zhou's frank

remarks about the PRC's desire to improve diplomatic relations with Malaysia. Zhou also categorically emphasized on the importance of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.²¹

The difficulty is how does one interpret what constitutes 'interference' or 'non-interference'. In Razak's thinking non-interference meant that the PRC should not support the CPM, as such acts would mean interfering in Malaysia's domestic affairs. On the other hand, the PRC does not perceive her party-to-party policy as interference in each other's internal affairs. Despite these differences, however, Razak intended to go ahead on his path towards normal state-to-state relations with Beijing.

Meanwhile, on 24th August, 1971, the PRC responded favorably by sending a thirteen member trade delegation headed by Cheng Kuangtou to Malaysia. During the visit, the Chinese trade delegation not only expressed their desire to purchase more natural rubber, but also hoped to further improve economic ties which would eventually lead to diplomatic recognition. In September, 1971, Razak himself headed the Malaysian delegation to the UN, where he emphasized once again on Malaysia's rejection of the 'two China' policy. In one of his speeches at the UN he said: 'If Beijing is accepted by the UN, then Taiwan will have to be withdrawn'.²² Razak naively hoped that the admission of the PRC into the UN could resolve some of the conflicts in the ASEAN states' relations with the PRC. In particular, Razak hoped to bring about the realization of his ZOPFAN proposal, a vision which is unlikely to be realized.

From 1970 to 1972, the status of the Sino-Malaysian relations remained unchanged. And it was not until 1973, when both states began to seriously negotiate about the issues involved and the date of formalizing diplomatic recognition. On 18th April, 1973, Razak told the Parliament that the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries 'is now only a question of timing'.²³ In fact, the actual formal talks began

in June, 1973 in New York between the PRC's Foreign Minister Huang Hua and Malaysia's UN representative, Zakaria Ali.

Initially, there were teething problems to be sorted out. Malaysia's stance was that all the outstanding differences be resolved prior to formal recognition first and then leave the details to be settled later.

After six months of hard negotiations, Malaysia and the PRC agreed to formalize diplomatic relations on May 31st, 1974. Two issues, however, remained unsolved. The most difficult problem was the PRC's unwillingness to give categorical assurance to completely cut off her links with the CPM. The second unresolved item was the status of the 200,000 stateless Chinese living in Malaysia. The PRC did not want to accept any stateless Chinese for fear that they may have difficulties in adjusting their lifestyle and get used to the socialist system. Malaysia was apprehensive that if these 200,000 stateless Chinese were given Malaysian citizenship, it would upset the Malays, as they are fearful of negative Chinese influences.

In late May, 1974, Razak flew to Beijing to finalize the diplomatic recognition. On May 31st, 1974, both Razak and Zhou Enlai signed a joint communiqué which contained the following main points:

Firstly, Malaysia supported the PRC's position that Taiwan is an inseparable part of Chinese territory. In other words, Razak agreed to endorse a 'one China' policy – a reversal from the Tunku's 'two China' policy;

Secondly, Malaysia agreed that the word 'hegemony' should be included in the communiqué. Thus Article two stated that both countries are 'opposed to any attempt by any country or group of countries to establish hegemony or create spheres of influence in any part of the world'.²⁴ Hegemony has an undertone of an anti-Soviet stance, and in this sense, the PRC hoped to use Malaysia as part of her overall international anti-Soviet united front strategy.

Thirdly, the PRC recognizes Malaysia and respects her independence and sovereignty. This understanding was an achievement for Razak as he personally was assured by Mao and Zhou that the PRC would not interfere in Malaysia's internal affairs. Specifically, the communiqué made it clear that 'all foreign aggression, interference, control and subversion will not be permissible.'²⁵

Finally, both countries reached an understanding on the citizenship issue. They agreed that those Chinese who acquired Malaysian citizenship would automatically forfeit their Chinese nationality. As for those Chinese residents whose domicile is in Malaysia, they were advised to abide by the law of Malaysia. In other words, both countries rejected dual nationality.

Why was it possible for Malaysia to normalize diplomatic relations with the PRC on 31st May, 1974?

Firstly, there was clearly a sincere and mutual desire on the part of both countries to promote normal state-to-state relations based on the spirit of the Bandung Conference.²⁶

Secondly, both states also wanted to minimize regional conflicts and promote regional peace and stability so that they could concentrate on their internal developments.

Thirdly, both parties clearly wanted to legalize and strengthen their economic ties and lessen their dependence on third parties, i.e. trade either through Singapore or Hong Kong.

What were then the implications of the Sino-Malaysian diplomatic recognition for Malaysia? On the domestic scene, Razak benefited most from his normalization policy. He had succeeded to strengthen his leadership which appeared to be supported by both the Malays and the Chinese communities. When a general election was held in Malaysia in August, 1975, Razak took advantage of the success of Malaysia's policy towards the PRC by playing up his meeting with Mao during the election campaign,

so as to get the support from the Chinese voters. The result of the election showed that the voters (both the Malays and the Chinese) gave Razak's leadership strong endorsement — this was thus a signal of victory for his new 'China' policy.

How did the ASEAN states react to the establishment of Sino-Malaysian diplomatic recognition? On the whole, the ASEAN states responded favorably and perceived the normalization of Sino-Malaysian relations as a positive step towards peace and stability in Southeast Asia. The Philippines, Thailand and Singapore showed favorable responses, whereas Indonesia appeared to have had a mixture of feelings towards Sino-Malaysian détente. Indonesia feared that a presence of a Chinese embassy in Kuala Lumpur could help pro-China oriented regional communist movements to step up their armed struggle against the existing governments.

The political significance of the establishment of Sino-Malaysian relations was that it would be a matter of time until all the other ASEAN states would establish diplomatic relations with Beijing. It also implied that the PRC's growing influence in ASEAN will be inevitable. In fact, since the beginning of the 1970's the relationship between the Chinese government and Thailand and the Philippines improved. The Philippine government intended to not only establish relations with the PRC but also with other communist states. With regard to Sino-Thai relations, Thanom had already initiated some forms of contact and informal discussions before his downfall in October, 1973.²⁷ Détente then proceeded rapidly in the post-Thanom period until Kukrit Pramoj of the Social Action Party established diplomatic relations with the PRC in July, 1975. Both Thailand and the Philippines, throughout their history, however, had maintained for most parts, good relations with the PRC, with the exception of the Cold War period, i.e. the 1950's and 1960's. By the end of the 1960's, however, Thailand and the Philippines, like their counterparts,

saw the changing configuration of power relations in the Far East make it necessary to readjust their policies towards the PRC. Thus, in short, Malaysia's recognition of the PRC speeded up Thailand's and the Philippines' establishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1975.

IV. Conclusion

In the post-recognition era, the PRC's party-to-party policy remained an irritant in the Sino-Malaysian relations. In July, 1975, for example, in connection with the annual anniversary of the CPM's revolutionary struggle, the PRC again pledged her support for the CPM. This event was interpreted by some Malaysian leaders as 'interference' in the internal affairs of Malaysia. Again in November, 1978, for example, during Deng Xiaoping's visit to Malaysia, the Chinese leader made it very clear that the PRC would not give up her party-to-party policy. The question then to be asked is: will the PRC eventually abandon her support of the communist revolutionary movements in the ASEAN states? It appears that there are a few reasons why the PRC would not give up her links and stop supporting these parties in the ASEAN states.

Firstly, in the PRC's perception, the Soviet Union and Vietnam would benefit if she terminated her links with her fraternal communist parties in the ASEAN states.

Secondly, for ideological and moral reasons, the PRC feels the need to support her comrades in arms in their 'just' struggle.

Thirdly, if necessary, the PRC can use her links with the pro-China communist parties either as a bargaining chip or as an instrument in her dealings with any of the states in Southeast Asia who are harbouring an anti-China policy or whose foreign policy, in Beijing's perception, is not in line with her national interests. It can therefore, be argued that the PRC

was motivated by her national interests not to relinquish her party-to-party policy.

What then will be the prospects for Sino-Malaysian relations? As far as the PRC's party-to-party policy is concerned, it appears that in all probability, she will continue to practise this policy. Malaysia though not happy will have to accept this *fait accompli* to maintain her present relationship. As long as the PRC, however, refuses to give up her support, she will be viewed with suspicion by the ASEAN states, especially Malaysia and Indonesia.

To conclude, it appears that the Tunku was more concerned with Maoist ideology than Tun Razak. Despite the fact that the Tunku and Razak were anti-communism, the former more so than the latter, it did not prevent Razak from seeking détente with the PRC. Thus Maoist ideology had a greater input in Malaysia's non-recognition policy during Tunku's period than during Razak's administration. Hence, Razak was more of a pragmatist than the ideologically committed Tunku.

Ethnicity appeared to have been an important factor in both the Tunku and Razak administration's considerations in dealing with the PRC. Both seemed to have worried about the possible serious repercussions a rapprochement might bring about on the sizeable minority Chinese, not only by threatening the security, but also by upsetting the racial balance and the nation-building of a young and racially fragmented nation.

The security threat both from within and from without, especially from the PRC appeared to have been an important factor in shaping Malaysia's policy towards the PRC. In the Malaysia case, the security factor is closely intertwined with ethnicity and ideology as Malaysia is an Islamic state whose national ideology is incompatible with Maoist communism and Chinese nationalism.

Malaysia is fortunate to have a small population; it is also endowed

with rich natural resources. Therefore the PRC as an economic factor in shaping Malaysia's economy was a minor consideration, if not totally irrelevant in her policy formulations towards the PRC. In fact, the Tunku seemed to have totally ignored the economic factor in his foreign policy considerations towards the PRC, whereas Razak appeared to have been interested to reduce the trade deficit with the PRC.

Personality did not seem to have had any correlation in Razak's policy towards the PRC but may have had some influence in the Tunku's decision-making processes towards the PRC. Nevertheless, on the whole, personality appeared to have been insignificant in Malaysia's foreign policy towards the PRC.

Finally, from the 1950's to the 1970's, Malaysia's foreign policy towards the PRC seemed to have been strongly influenced by the changing regional and external environment. Since Malaysia is strategically located at the cross-roads in Southeast Asia, i.e. as the gateway between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, the geopolitical position inevitably dictates unavoidable relations between the two countries. For this reason, Malaysia must be sensitive to the rising 'China' factor in Southeast Asia, and especially to the PRC's determination to be a powerful industrialized socialist state by the 21st century.

Thus in the short term, Malaysia may share certain parallel interests with the PRC, such as the common desire to pressure Vietnam to pull out its troops from Kampuchea. But in the long run, as far as Malaysia's perception is concerned, its long term national interests as a small state will not be identical with those of the powerful dragon from the north, whose ambition in the perception of Malaysia is unlikely to confine itself to its present national boundary.

Notes

1. The term Malaya is used for the pre-Malaysia period, i.e. from 1957 to 1963, and Malaysia since 16th September, 1963.
2. For a study of the PRC's foreign policy towards Malaysia, see Shee Poon Kim, 'Peking's Foreign Policies Towards Malaysia', *Issues and Studies* (Taipei), August, 1987. For a general study of Malaysia's foreign Policy see J. Saravanamuttu, *The Dilemma of Independence: Two Decades of Malaysia's Foreign Policy, 1957-1977* (Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia, 1983).
3. Marx once mentioned that 'religion is the opium of the people'.
4. See J.M. Gullick, *Malaysia and Its Neighbours* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1967), p.38. Harry Miller, *Prince and Premier* (Harrap, London, 1959), p.192-193.
5. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia (FAM)*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1966, p.48.
6. Tunku Abdul Rahman, 'Malaysia: Key Area in Southeast Asia', *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1968. The Tunku was equally, if not more critical towards the Sino-Indian War in 1962. To show his support for India, he was able to collect one million dollars during his 'save Democracy' campaign. See J. Saravanamuttu, *The Content, Sources and Development of Malaysian Foreign Policy, 1957-1975*, Ph.D. Thesis (University of British Columbia, 1976), p.44, see also J. Saravanamuttu, 'Malaysia-China Ties, Pre and Post 1974: an Overview', in Loh Kok Wah, et al., *The Chinese Community and Malaysia China Ties: Elite Perspectives* (Institute of Developing Economies, Tokyo, Japan), No. 24, March, 1981, p.8.
7. Tunku Abdul Rahman, *op. cit.*, *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1968.
8. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, No. 3, September, 1966.
9. Tunku Abdul Rahman, *May 13: Before and After* (Utusan Melayu Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969).
10. In 1965, Malaysia's imports from the PRC amounted to M\$228.6 million, whereas exports reached only M\$ 4.3 million. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29.6. 1966.
11. See W.R. Heaton, 'China and Southeast Asian Communist Movements: The Decline of Dual Track Diplomacy', *Asian Survey*, August, 1982, pp.779-798.
12. *Nanyang Siang Pau (NSP)* (Singapore), 21.6. 1967.
13. *NSP*, 17.8. 1965.

14. *The Straits Times (ST)*, 16.11. 1967.
15. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23.9. 1970.
16. See R.K. Jain ed., *China and Malaysia, 1949-1983* (Radiant Publishers, New Dehli, 1984), Document 191, p.175-176. See also *New China News Analysis*, 15.4. 1970 and *Survey of World Broadcasts* FE/3355/a/3, 17.4. 1970
17. Razak also informed the other ASEAN states about the progress of his dealings with the PRC. In fact, when during the 4th ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting the issue of diplomatic recognition was brought up for discussion, ASEAN agreed that there should be a regional approach to the issue of normalization with the PRC. See R.K. Jain, op. cit., Document 211, p. 189.
18. *Canberra Times* (Australia), 16.1. 1971.
19. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, Vol. 4, No. 1, March, 1971.
20. *Surey of World Broadcasts*, FE/3593/A3/11, 26.1 1971.
21. *The Japan Times* (Japan), 20.5. 1971.
22. *ST*, 24.9. 1971.
23. *ST*, 19.4. 1973.
24. Joint Communiqué of the Government of Malaysia and the Government of the People's Republic of China in *Foreign Affairs Malaysia* (June, 1974), Vol. 7, No. 2, p.52.
25. *Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, op. cit., p.52.
26. In fact, it could be argued that since the Bandung Conference in 1955, the promotion of normal state-to-state relations with the ASEAN countries has always been one of the foreign policy goals of the PRC.
27. See Shee Poon Kim, *Thailand's Relations with the People's Republic of China, 1949-1975* (Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanyang University, Singapore, 1979).