

MALAYSIAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA

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Resumen: Malaysia consisting of Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore gained her independence from the British on 16 September 1963. Malaya gained her independence from the British on 31 August 1957. In 1965 Singapore was independent from Malaysia. Malaysia is a parliamentary democratic and capitalistic nation. Moreover, Malaysia is a multi-religious and multiracial nation. Malaysia has been populated by the Malays, Chinese, Indians and others. The Malays are Muslims and Islam is the religion of the Federation of Malaysia. Malaysia has a very long history with China but China never colonized certain areas in Malaysia and then the British colonized the whole Malaysia. Malaysian perceptions of China are influenced by many internal and external factors such as the politico-ideologies, economic development as well as the national, regional and international relations and diplomacies. This short article presents Malaysian perceptions of China from the cultural, political and economic perspectives.

Palabras clave: China, cultural, economic, international relations, Islam, Malaysia, political, Singapore.

INTRODUCTION

Geographically Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia. Malaysia is divided into two different geographical locations namely Malaysian Peninsula located between Thailand in the northern part and Singapore in the southern part, and Sabah and Sarawak located in northwestern Borneo. Sabah was known as North Borneo before becoming part of Malaysia. Borneo is an island in Indonesia. The larger portion of Borneo belongs to Indonesia. Another state located between Sabah and Sarawak is Brunei, an independent Malay monarchy state.

Politically and historically Malaysia was created on 16 September 1963 after Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak had agreed to form the Federation of Malaysia. Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak gained their independence from the British Government through the Federation of Malaysia. However, Singapore withdrew from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965 and since then Singapore has been an independent nation in the southern part of Malaysian Peninsula.

Malaya is the English name for the Malay name *Tanah Melayu* (the Malay land) or *Semenanjung Tanah Melayu* (the Malay peninsula). Malaya gained her independence from the British Government on 31 August 1957 after the Malaysians demanded the independence of Malaya. The Malayan three ethnic groups namely the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians formed three exclusive ethnic political parties namely the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) to negotiate for the independence of Malaya. The Malay, Chinese and Indian leaders of the three political parties were united and determined to demand the independence of Malaya. The Malay political leader Tunku Abdul Rahman, the President of UMNO, led the Malayan political leaders in their meetings and negotiations with the British Government officers in Malaya as well as in Britain for the independence of Malaya. Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first Prime Minister of Malaya on 31 August 1957.

On the independent day, 31 August 1957, the Federation of Malaya consisted of eleven states namely Perlis, Penang, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. Each state has a Malay ruler or sultan except two states namely Penang and Malacca. The Malay ruler is the

head of Islamic religion and the Malay custom in his respective state. The Federal Constitution of Malaya clearly explains the rights and duties of Malayan citizens, the rights and duties of the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers and ministries, the Malayan sultans and the Malayan King known in the Malay legal terms as Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Parliamentary system, legal and juristic system for the independent Malaya. In the Malayan constitution, Islam is the religion of the Federation of Malaya. The constitution states that the Malay rulers or sultans are the heads of Islamic religion and Malay custom in their respective states. Constitutionally and politically, Malaya is a political democratic parliamentary nation. Her federal constitution provides for the formation of the political parties to take part in the federal and state general elections and the Malayan voters can vote for their political candidates who become their representatives in the Malayan Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies. The Malayan constitution provided for the Malayan Government to call for the general elections for the Parliament and the State Legislative Assemblies every five years. The Malayan constitution also provides for the establishment of Islamic courts known in Malay as Mahkamah Syariah for Muslims in dealing with the Islamic rituals and doctrines, the family laws and the law of inheritance.

The democratic independent Malaya had been politically ruled by the Alliance Party (or in Malay Parti Perikatan) consisting UMNO, MCA and MIC, and the Malay political leader who was the President of UMNO had been appointed the Prime Minister of Malaya. For example, in the federal and state elections of 1959, the Alliance Party led by Tunku Abdul Rahman won 74 seats in the Malayan Parliament, the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP) won 13 seats, the Socialist Front Party won 8 seats and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) won 4 seats. In the elections for the State Legislative Assemblies, the Alliance Party won all the state seats in the nine states and lost to PMIP in the states of Terengganu and Kelantan¹. PMIP had been the most influential Malay political opposition party in Malayan political history. PMIP is able to rule at one time or another the states of Kelantan and Terengganu in Malayan and Malaysian political history. PMIP has been unable to rule other states in Malayan and Malaysian political history since 1957 until the present, 2005.

The idea to form the Federation of Malaysia came from Malayan political leaders led by Tunku Abdul Rahman. He proposed the idea to the British Government and to the leaders in Singapore, Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei. Brunei did not favor the idea of Malaysia. One of the main political reasons was to prevent Communism of Communist China from infiltrating into those colonized states in order to gain their independence from the British Government. Singapore was considered the first target of Communism because of her most dominant Chinese population in Southeast Asia. "Therefore, instead of having nothing to do with Singapore it might be better for the Malayan government to prevent the spread of Communism by associating with her."²

In November 1961 the proposal to form the Federation of Malaysia was agreed upon by the governments of Malaya, Singapore and Britain. The Commission chaired by Lord Cobbold was set up to interview the inhabitants of Sarawak and North Borneo if they wanted to join Malaysia for their independence. "There were certainly more in favour than were against and as a result of the Cobbold Report the Malayan and British governments agreed in July 1962 that the new state of Malaysia would come into being on 31 August 1963."³

The Presidents of Indonesia and the Philippines objected to the idea of Malaysia consisting of Sarawak and North Borneo and demanded the United Nations to make sure that the inhabitants of Sarawak and North Borneo were free to decide either to join Malaysia, Indonesia or the Philippines because both Indonesian and the Philippine Presidents claimed that Sarawak and North Borneo were part of their historical territories before the British came to the areas and colonized Sarawak and North Borneo. "In August 1963 a team from the United Nations carried out the investigation of public opinion in Sarawak and North Borneo and they reported back to the Secretary-General that, in their view, the majority of the people were in favour of joining Malaysia." The Philippines and Indonesian Presidents did not recognize the report made by the United Nations. The political leaders of Sarawak, Malaya, Singapore and North Borneo welcomed the report made by the United Nations and the new state of Malaysia comprising Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah came into existence on 16 September 1963. "And on that same day the governments of Indonesia and the Philippines

broke off diplomatic relations, while the Indonesian campaign to crush Malaysia began in earnest."⁴

On the independent date and on the states in the Federation of Malaysia, Hooker writes, "Federation of Malaysia: 16 September 1963: all states of the Federation of Malaya with Sarawak, British North Borneo thereafter called Sabah, and Singapore. Singapore left the federation in 1965."⁵

Hence politically and historically on 16 September 1963, Malaysia became an independent nation-state. The Federal Constitution of Malaya becomes the Federal Constitution of Malaysia with some new articles amended and added to include Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore. Islam remains the religion for the Federation of Malaysia even though many Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak were not Muslims when Malaysia was declared independence. After 1965, Singapore was no longer in the Federation of Malaysia. Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, on the independent day of Malaysia led the independent republic of Singapore. The Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and his cabinet ministers decided to grant Singapore independence for political, racial and business reasons. According to Ryan, "The Malay States of the Peninsula had been cautious of association with Singapore because of the latter's overwhelming Chinese population," Singapore was not included in the Federation of Malaya due to the political and racial reasons⁶. According to Hooker, "Singapore's entry to Malaysia was not wholeheartedly welcomed by Chinese and Malays on the Peninsula. Some members of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) viewed their colleagues in the PAP as potential rivals for Chinese votes and feared Singapore competition in the Chinese business world of the Peninsula. The very conservative members of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), who jealously guarded the special position of the Malays, were suspicious of the multiracial platform of the PAP"⁷. PAP is the acronym for People's Action Party led by Lee Kuan Yew.

Malaya is a multiracial and multicultural nation. Her population in mid- year 1960 was estimated 6,909,009 peoples and "The breakdown of the population into races was 3,460,956 Malaysians (comprising indigenous Malays and other

Malaysians from Indonesia), 2,552,276 Chinese, 772,880 Indians and Pakistanis, and 122,897 others"⁸. Other Malaysians in Malaya from Indonesia were known as Javanese, Boyanese, Minangkabau, Banjarese and Bugis.

The economic development in Malaya under the British rule had attracted many Chinese from China to work in the tin mines in Perak and Selangor, and many Indians from southern part of India to work in the rubber estates and railways and roads constructions. "After the British had established their protectorate system, the population of Malaya increased by leaps and bounds. In 1911 it was about 2.3 million, in 1931 3.8 million, in 1947 4.9 million, and in 1957 6.3 million."⁹

Regarding the number of Indian and Chinese immigrants in Malaya during the British rule, Purcell states, "The Indian community had increased from 445,000 in 1921 to 582,000 in 1931, but had fallen to 545,000 in 1947. But the most numerous immigrants were from China. The Chinese community grew from 1.17 million in 1921 to 1.7 million in 1931, 2.6 million in 1947, and 3.8 million in 1960."¹⁰

Like Malaya, Malaysia is the multiracial and multicultural nation with the addition of the indigenous peoples known collectively as Bumiputera (the sons of the land) from Sabah and Sarawak. Some of them are known as Ibans, Kadazans, Bajau, Murut, Bisayau and Melanao. The Malays are often included in Bumiputera in Malaysian political and economic terms. The Malaysian population in 2000 was estimated 23.27 million peoples. "The Population and Housing Census 2000", reports that "The total population of Malaysia, according to the 2000 Census, was 23.27 million compared to 18.38 million in 1991 thus giving an average annual population growth rate of 2.6% over the 1991-2000 period."¹¹

On the ethnic composition of Malaysian citizens, the 2000 Census reports that "Bumiputera comprised 65.1%, Chinese 26.0% and Indians 7.7%, and the ethnic composition being 60.6%, 28.1% and 7.9% respectively in 1991. In Sarawak, the predominant ethnic group in Census 2000 was the Ibans, which accounted for 30.1% of the state's total Malaysian citizens followed by the Chinese (26.7%) and Malays (23.9%). Similar data for Sabah showed the predominant ethnic group being the Kadazan

Dusun (18.4%) followed by Bajau (17.3%) and Malays (15.3%)."¹²

On the Malaysian religious adherents, the Census 2000 expresses that "It was observed that religion is highly correlated with ethnicity. Islam was the most widely professed religion in Malaysia; its proportion increasing from 58.6% in 1991 to 60.4% in 2000. Malaysia, being a multi-religious nation, also had a fair share of those embracing other religions such as Buddhism (19.2%), Christianity (9.1%), Hinduism (6.3%) and Confucianism/Taoism/other traditional Chinese religion (2.6%) as revealed in Census 2000."¹³

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Based on the Census 2000, the Malaysian main citizens are the Malays, the Bumiputera, the Chinese, the Indians and others. According to the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, the Malays in Malaysia are Muslims. Other Muslims in Malaysia are Chinese, Indians, and Bumiputera. As shown in the Census 2000, 60.4% of Malaysian citizens are Muslims. From this Islamic religious prevalence in Malaysia, Malaysian perceptions of China can be seen as Malaysian Muslim perception of China. However, from Malaysian political perspective, Malaysia has been ruled by the political parties not based on the religious adherence or affiliation but based more on the ethnic preference in the Parti Perikatan (the Alliance Party) consisting UMNO, MCA and MIC and then in 1974 the Alliance Party was named the Barisan Nasional (the National Front) consisting UMNO, MCA, MIC and other political parties in the Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Hence, Malaysian perceptions of China are based on cultural, political and economic perceptions.

MALAYSIAN CULTURAL PERCEPTION OF CHINA

It is agreed that since her earliest history, Malaya and then Malaysia has established her cultural relations with India and China. In the words of Ryan, "THROUGHOUT history Malaysia has been influenced by both India and China. This influence has in some periods been very strong, especially from India, from where Malaysia received much of her early culture and her religions. Chinese influence was always less direct but a certain times, [...] the Chinese

Empire took a very keen interest in the events of South- East Asia."¹⁴

Ryan is of the view that Malaysian geographical position has made her known in world history in the past, present and future. Ryan states, "Malaysia owes her historical importance to her geographical position. Because of this position she has long had contact with India and China, contact both political and cultural which has continued into the present century. Chinese influence on Malaysia had been fairly slight in comparison with that of India, at least until the nineteenth century"¹⁵.

Culturally China had established her contact with Malaya and then Malaysia during the Neolithic or New Stone Age. The Proto-Malays who are considered among the earliest inhabitants in Malaya are said to be from China especially from the Yunnan province in southern China. Ryan writes about the Proto-Malays who migrated from China to the Malay Peninsula saying, "The newly-arrived Proto-Malays had their origin in southern China and between 2500 and 1500 B.C. forced their way southward through the Peninsula and on to the islands beyond. The Proto-Malays were also a stone-age people, but because their stone implements were better than those of the Negritos, this period is called the Neolithic or New Stone Age."¹⁶

Another immigrants from Yunnan in southern China arrived in the Malay Peninsula in 300 B.C. and they are known as the Deutero-Malays. They overcame the Proto-Malays. Both the Proto-Malays and the Deutero-Malays were basically Mongoloid from Yunnan. The Deutero-Malays were more advanced than the Proto-Malays because the Deutero-Malays "had acquired the knowledge of metals, using iron weapons and tools [...] Thus the final wave of immigrants, who together with the Deutero-Malays later formed the Malay population of Malaysia, came to the Peninsula and Borneo from the islands of Java and Sumatra in the centuries that followed, especially when the area was part of the island-Empire of Srivijaya"¹⁷. The island-Empire of Srivijaya was from 700 A.D to 1000¹⁸.

The Deutero-Malay settlers were not nomadic. They were farmers and fishermen living in the villages near the rivers and the seas. Their religion was animism and they were animists

because they believed in the existence and widespread of spirits dwelling in trees, stones, animals and other objects¹⁹. Religiously, it is probably not wrong to assert that the Deutero-Malays, the ancestors of the Malays in Malaya and Malaysia, were the worshippers of the spirits and after the Malays converted to Islam in the 13th or 14th century A.D, they have become of the worshippers of Allah. However, the inherited animism still strives in certain cases especially when the Malays turn to the Malay *bomohs* or the traditional medicine men to cure some illnesses. The Malay *bomohs* often call upon the unseen spirits to help them to cure the sick Malay men.

During the Malacca Malay Sultanate, 1398/1400-1511 A.D., the Malay rulers in Malacca established the cultural relationship with China. The Malay rulers and their followers visited China many times. They brought with them the gifts and presents to the Chinese emperors and in return they also received the gifts and presents from the Chinese emperors.

The voyages made many times by the Chinese admiral Zheng Ho or Cheng Ho (1371-1433) to Malacca and other countries in Southeast Asia and Asia and Africa established the cultural relations between China and Malacca. He also held to spread Islam outside China²⁰. Zheng Ho was reported to visit Malacca seven times starting in 1405 until 1433. He also visited Pahang in 1405 and 1412, Johor in 1409 and Kelantan in 1412 and other areas in the Malay Peninsula or Malaya²¹. After the Malacca Malay Sultanate lost their political power and state to the Portuguese who conquered Malacca in 1511, there was no more cultural relation between Malacca and China in the name of the state and government. The Dutch defeated the Portuguese in Malacca in 1641 and ruled Malacca until the British took over Malacca from the Dutch in 1799. The British ruled Malacca until the independence of Malaya on 31 August 1957.

After the independence of Malaya and Malaysia in 1957 and 1963 respectively, the cultural relations with China have been resumed since May 1974 until the present day. Tun Abdul Razak, the second Malaysian prime minister, visited China or People's Republic of China (PRC) on 31 May 1974²².

Some Malaysian Chinese received their educational trainings and academic qualifications in Chinese educational institutions of higher learning using the Chinese language. They come back to Malaysia to teach at the Chinese schools in Malaysia especially the Chinese language. The graduates from the Chinese educational institutions also serve in Malaysia in other occupations or professions, not limited to the teaching profession.

The Chinese cultural groups have no legal problems or restrictions to visit and perform their cultural shows in Malaysia on their own initiatives or on the initiatives from the Chinese cultural groups and non-government groups (NGOs) in Malaysia.

MALAYSIAN DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL PERCEPTION OF CHINA

The earliest political relation between the Malay Peninsula and China was in the 3rd century A.D. The Wu dynasty (222-280 A.D) sent Shun Quan and Zhu Ying to Southeast Asian including the Malay Peninsula. During the 5th and 6th centuries, China continued to send her envoys to Southeast Asian including the Malay Peninsula. Then the Tang dynasty (618-907), the Song dynasty (960-1274) and the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368) continued their political and friendship relations with the Malay Peninsula²³.

In the 15th century the diplomatic and political relation between China and the Malacca Malay Sultanate was well known and recorded in many Malay and Chinese sources. The Malay rulers or sultans in Malacca looked up to Chinese emperors to protect them from being attacked by and subjected to the Siamese kings who ruled Thailand, the northern part of the Malay Peninsula or Malaya. The Malacca Sultanate was from 1398/1400 until 1511 A.D. "In the fourteenth century the greater part of the Malay Peninsula was under the influence of the Siamese (Thais), while the most powerful state in Borneo and the Indonesian islands was the Javanese Kingdom of Majapahit. However, not all the Peninsula was subjected to the Thais."²⁴

One of the geographical areas in the Malay Peninsula not subjected to the Thais was the Malacca Sultanate because of her continuous and persistent efforts to establish and strengthen the diplomatic and political relations with China. "China was the dominant political power

because she was generally a united empire.. It was to the Chinese Emperors that embassies and gifts were sent; it was to China that almost all the states of South- East Asia, at one time or another, looked for protection. China was the overlord rather than India. She did not directly interfere very much in South-East Asian affairs but she was always there in the background"²⁵. That sort of Chinese diplomatic and political mode towards the states in Southeast Asia explains why the Malacca Malay sultans were very willing to have the diplomatic and political relations with the Chinese Emperors.

The Malay rulers of Malacca consisting Sri Parameswara (1400-1414), Megat Iskandar Shah (1414-1424), Sri Maharaja Mohammad Shah (1424-1445), Sri Parameswara Dewa Shah (1445-1446), Sultan Mudzaffar Shah (1446-1459), Sultan Mansur Shah (1459-1477), Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah (1477-1488), and Sultan Mahmud Shah (1488-1511)²⁶.

Another source or reference mentions that the Malay rulers of Malacca Sultanate consisting Parameswara Iskandar Shah (1394-1414), Megat Iskandar Shah (1414-1424), Muhammad Shah (Raja Tengah) (1424-1444), Abu Shahid (Raja Ibrahim) (1445-1446), Muzaffar Shah (Raja Qasim) (1446-1456), Mansur Shah (1456-1477), Alauddin Riayat Shah (1477-1488), and Mahmud Shah (1488- 1511)²⁷.

Parameswara was a Hindu prince from Palembang in Sumatra, Indonesia. He was a rejected prince and he fled to Tumasik or Temasik, the classical old name for Singapore. He killed the ruler of Tumasik and ruled it for few years before the Siamese in 1398 or 1400 sent out their armed forces to suppress the pirates in the Straits of Malacca and to demand allegiance of Tumasik that was known for the pirating activities. From Tumasik, Parameswara and his followers went to Muar in Johor and to Malacca, a small fishing settlement at that time. He established himself as the ruler there and under his leadership the fishing settlement was turned to the known seaport in the early fifteenth century²⁸.

For diplomatic and political reasons, Parameswara had to seek the protection of the strong powers since his kingdom could not grow bigger and more powerful if he was not protected by the strong powers. The two strong powers in the fifteenth century in the states of Southeast Asia were Siam and China. China

was farther away and more powerful than Siam. "If Parameswara could obtain China's protection it would be a useful counter- weight to hold against the Siamese if they became aggressive. Probably because of these considerations Parameswara sent envoys to China almost as soon as he had established himself in Malacca. This was the time of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) in China."²⁹

The Chinese Emperor, Chu Ti (1403-1424), the third emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), "was interested in the world outside China, and his reign was a time of most unusual Chinese maritime activity [...] The Chinese Government was not averse, therefore, to accepting Parameswara's request for protection. In 1403 a Chinese fleet led by an admiral named Yin Ching arrived in Malacca from China bringing presents and also confirming Parameswara as the ruler of the settlement. In return further envoys were sent to China in the same year and again in 1407."³⁰

Another source states that in 1403 Yin Qing was sent by the Chinese emperor of the Ming dynasty to Malacca with the presents and gifts and acknowledged Parameswara as the ruler of Malacca. In 1405 Yin Qing returned to China and Parameswara sent his envoy and delegates with the presents and gifts to the Chinese emperor. The Malacca's envoy sailed on Yin Qing's ships to China. Parameswara acknowledged the Chinese protection of Malacca³¹.

Another Chinese envoy sent by the Chinese emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368- 1643) many times to Malacca and other states in Southeast Asia and Asia was Zheng He (known also as Zheng Ho, Cheng Ho or Sam Po Kong (1371-1433). The name Cheng Ho is known and found in the Malay historical records. It is recorded in Chinese historical records that Zheng He, the Chinese admiral and envoy, visited Malacca seven times starting in 1405 until 1433. Through his frequent visits to Malacca, Zheng Ho affirmed, confirmed or strengthened the Chinese political protection of Malacca kingdom³². According to Ryan, Cheng Ho, the Chinese admiral, "made seven voyages to the West between 1408 and 1431. His main purpose seems to have been to enforce Chinese suzerainty and to collect tribute."³³

Parameswara visited Chinese emperor on the ships led by Admiral Cheng or Zheng Ho in

1411. Ryan states that in 1411 Cheng Ho "took Parameswara with him to China so that the ruler of Malacca could hand over his tribute in person. Parameswara was accompanied by five hundred and forty followers,. This visit in effect confirmed Parameswara's new status as an independent king owing suzerainty to China alone. In 1413 Cheng Ho was accompanied on his visit to Malacca by a Chinese Muslim called Ma Huan."³⁴

Parameswara converted to Islam. From "northern Sumatra that the religion of Islam was introduced to Malacca. Islam came to South East Asia from India and became established in northern Sumatra sometime towards the end of the thirteenth century.(Ryan 1974: 19). "By the time Parameswara died in 1414 there was a fairly numerous Muslim trading community in the city. Malacca itself was now firmly established with the support and protection of the Ming emperors and there is little doubt that Parameswara had been successful in his last venture."³⁵

Megat Iskandar Shah who succeeded Parameswara visited China in 1414-1415 and then 1419 for Chinese political protection against the Siamese. The Malacca ruler named Sri Maharaja or Muhammad Shah or Raja Tengah, the third Malay ruler of Malacca, visited Chinese emperor in 1424 and 1433. "Admiral Cheng Ho made one more visit to Malacca during his reign, but soon after his death the Chinese interest in overseas voyages stopped, and China withdrew again into her policy of seclusion"³⁶. It is well acknowledged by both the Malay and the Chinese historical records that the political and diplomatic relations established between the Ming dynasty and the Malacca Malay kingdom were beneficial and useful for both nations or states during the 15th century³⁷.

During the British rule in Malaya, the foreign diplomatic and political relations were under the direct control of the British Government. The Malay rulers in Malaya had no power over the foreign affairs. The Malay rulers were the heads of Malay customs and the religion of Islam in their respective states.

After the independence of Malaya in August 1957, the Malayan Government led by Tunku Abdul Rahman did not establish the political and diplomatic relations with China or to be more accurate the People's Republic of China

(PRC). PRC was declared and created in October 1949 by Mao Zedong and Communism was the ideological and political system of PRC.

The Tunku did not want to have the political and diplomatic relations with PRC due to his anti-communism as well as the communist threats to the newly independent Malaya. His anti-communism was expressed in 1958 in the following words, "We must not deceive ourselves that communism is merely local. Communism we know is an intrinsic part of an international conspiracy for world domination and so all countries, which believe in democracy and human rights and liberty, must rally together and fight it. We have to face up to the threat of communism. This is why we in Malaya who value our freedom cannot be neutral about communism"³⁸. Tunku Abdul Rahman was an arch opponent of communism either coming from the Soviet Union or from China. For Purcell, "The Tunku was a Malay and an uncompromising enemy of Communism, the USSR, and Communist China."³⁹

About the communism and communist guerillas in Malaya before and after her independence, they were mainly among the Malayan Chinese, not the Malayan Malays. "The twelve-year long battle with the Chinese Communist guerillas in the jungle had left behind a legacy of suspicion in the minds of the Malays." The PRC had given moral support to the Chinese communist insurgents in Malaya on the pretext that they were against the Western imperialism. In addition, there was no guarantee that the Chinese communists in Malaya would not rebel against the independent Government of Malaya if they saw the opportunity was opened to them. Hence, the Alliance Government led by the Tunku showed "definite hostility" towards PRC and refused to diplomatically recognize PRC⁴⁰. The hostile relationship between Malaya and PRC in the late 1950s encouraged Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Malayan prime minister, "to side warmly with India over the Sino- Indian frontier war which reached its climax in 1962."⁴¹

Communalism and communism among the Chinese in Malaya were considered more dangerous than the extremism among the Malays to the Malayan political and racial stability. Malayan Communist Party (MCP) which was banned by the British and Malayan Governments exploited the Malayan Chinese

who refused to be 'Malayans in heart and spirit', and the Malayan Malays who were attracted by socialism and extremism⁴².

In June 1948 when the Malayan communists came out in rebellion, the British Government in Malaya declared the state of emergency. "The Communists were opposed by a considerable force of British and Malay troops, and about 60,000 Malay police and (later) about 40,000 Home Guard." The state of emergency in Malaya went on for more than twelve years to fight against the communists in Malayan jungles and urban Chinese secret societies⁴³. The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960 is "best remembered as a period of tension, instability and totalitarianism". The Malayan communists were able to kill Sir Henry Gurney, the British High Commissioner in October 1951. "The Emergency got its name largely from the Emergency Regulations" introduced to wipe out the communists in Malaya⁴⁴.

Since the 1930s the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) had been active and they struggled against the Japanese occupation in Malaya during the Second World War 1941-1945. The MCP was able to attract members from the Chinese and Indian workers to resist the British colonialism after the end of the Second World War when the British returned to Malaya and resumed their rule over Malaya. Due to its terrorized activities and armed resistance against the British rule in Malaya, the MCP was banned since July 1948 after the murder of three British estate managers in Perak in mid-1948 and the British declared the State of Emergency in Malaya in June 1948⁴⁵. The Malayan Chinese Chin Peng led the MCP. "By 1957, the official casualties as the result of MCP actions were 2890 police, 3253 civilians and 518 military, emphasizing the 'success' of British policy to manage the conflict as a police, rather than military action." In 1951, the members of MCP were estimated about 8000 persons but by 1958, its members were less than 1000 and they moved with Chin Peng into the jungles bordering Malaysia and Thailand⁴⁶.

In December 1956, Tunku Abdul Rahman, the political leader of UMNO and the Alliance Party consisting MCA and MIC, and the MCA leader Tan Cheng Lock met Chin Peng at Baling, Kedah and asked him to stop his armed struggle against the British rule. Chin Peng did not agree and he and his men remained in the jungles and advocated communism and

struggled against the British and then against the independent Malaya. In July 1960 the independent Malayan Government officially declared the end of the Emergency that was declared in June 1948 by the British to fight against the MCP and its terrorized activities and armed struggles in Malaya⁴⁷. The MCP was still perceived as an internal threat to the Malaysian security up to 1989. In that year the members of MCP agreed to abandon their communist ideology and surrendered their weapons to the Malaysian Government⁴⁸.

The Malayan and Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (August 1957- 1970) did not agree to establish the diplomatic and political relations with China or the PRC due to the communist internal threat to Malayan and Malaysian security and stability as well as his anti-communism. Hence during his Malayan premiership he did not attempt to have the political and diplomatic relations with the PRC.

However, his successor Abdul Razak (1970-1976) decided to establish the diplomatic and political relations with the PRC in May 1974 although the communists in Malaysia were still seen dangerous to Malaysian security and stability. Despite the establishment of the formal diplomatic ties between Malaysia and the PRC in May 1974, "suspicions lingered for another two decades. Only in the 1990s did ties begin to fully bloom when the interests of both sides converged."⁴⁹

The suspicious relations between Malaysia and the PRC from 1974 to the 1990s covered the reigns of the second, third and fourth Malaysia's prime ministers namely Tun Abdul Razak (1970-1976), Tun Hussein Onn (1976-1981) and Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003) respectively. There were many reasons for Malaysian prime ministers to be suspicious about the PRC such as the cold war between the United States and the USSR and the Vietnamese wars against the communists and the US took part in the war against the communists in Vietnam as well as Malaysian pro-Western foreign policy.

Shee Poon Kim writes about the disapproval Malaysian view of the PRC stating, "During the cold war period i.e. from the 1950s to the 1970s Malaysia perceived China as an ideological and security threat, mainly because of Maoist support of the communist revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia. In 1982,

Mahathir openly criticized China's continued links with the Malaysian communist insurgency and by implication that Beijing could pose a potential security threat to Malaysia."⁵⁰

Tun Abdul Razak became the Malaysia's second prime minister in September 1970 after "the race riots of May 1969" in Kuala Lumpur especially between the Chinese and Malays in Malaysia. He differed from his predecessor Tunku Abdul Rahman in their looking at the PRC. He moved towards "rapprochement with China" to stabilize the relations between the Chinese and Malays in Malaysia and deal with the Malaysian communist insurgency movements. Tun Abdul Razak hoped that the PRC would stop providing any assistance the Malaysian Communist Party (MCP) after the diplomatic relation was established between Malaysia and China⁵¹. "Finally, in May 1974, Prime Minister Tun Razak visited China and paved the way for the formal establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations. The Joint Communique, which was signed by Tun Razak and Zhou Enlai, became the basis for the bilateral relationship."⁵²

However, what was expected by Tun Abdul Razak from China related to the communist insurgency movements in Malaysia was below the expectation. They had increased their activities including "a number of high profile attacks", they assassinated "the inspector general of police" in the city of Kuala Lumpur and bombed "the National Monument that symbolized the country's victory against the communists during the Emergency"⁵³. Hence the Malaysian diplomatic relation with China had remained weak and suspicious from 1974 up to 1990s even though Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese leader, visited Malaysia in November 1978 and honored by Tun Hussein Onn who succeeded Tun Abdul Razak in 1976 after the demise of the latter. In December 1979 Malaysia began to confront China over the Spratly Islands dispute. In April 1980 Malaysia's "Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles" included certain parts of the Spratly Islands. The PRC, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Philippines also claimed their rights over the Spratly Islands⁵⁴.

When Dr. Mahathir succeeded Tun Hussein in July 1981, the dispute over the Spratly Islands was still there. In June 1983, the Chinese Foreign Ministry protested against Malaysia's deployment of commandos to some islands in

the Spratly Islands. In 1993 the dispute over the Spratly Islands or Spratlys still unsettled. However, Dr. Mahathir claimed that China was willing to talk over the issue with Malaysia⁵⁵.

Dr. Mahathir decided to improve the diplomatic and political relations with China for several reasons such as for his looking east policy and his strange relation or stand with the Western nations. "For Mahathir, improved political relations with China enabled him to draw Malaysia away from reliance on the West and fulfill his goal of achieving greater East Asian political and economic cooperation, thus staking his claim as the architect of an independent and dynamic Malaysian foreign policy."⁵⁶ In August 1999 Dr. Mahathir visited Beijing and held talks on bilateral relations with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji. The two nations again agreed that "the South China Sea dispute should be resolved through peaceful negotiations without the involvement of external parties."⁵⁷

Dr. Mahathir did not believe that the Chinese leaders wanted to expand their territories like the Western nations did. Moreover, he was in favor of having good relations with China due to the United States' plan to build their military base in Singapore. For him, the Westerners who projected the China threat to Southeast Asian nations for their own greed and hegemonic tendencies over other nations including China.

As seen above, Dr. Mahathir was pragmatic towards China because of her great number of population and her becoming a great power. For him, Malaysia could not ignore China. There was no way for Malaysia to "get rid of China. It is a big country with 1.3 billion very hardworking and intelligent people. No matter what you do, they will be there. You cannot eliminate 1.3 billion people. So you have to learn how to live with China. It will become a great power, even if it will not be able to dominate the whole world. So, we have to find ways to live with China, as a neighbour and fellow member of the planet."

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who succeeded Dr. Mahathir in late October 2003 continued Dr. Mahathir's favorable and friendly diplomatic and political relations with China. In May 2004 Abdullah visited China where he visited Beijing and Shanghai to boost bilateral ties between Malaysia and China in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of Malaysia-China bilateral

relations. It is reported in People's Daily Online that "On his first visit to China as prime minister of Malaysia, Badawi praised China as a country of growing importance, one that is promoting world peace and development. He pledged that Malaysia will strengthen its cooperation with China on the international and regional arena."⁵⁸

In Beijing, on May 29, 2004, "China and Malaysia issued a joint communiqué on bilateral relations". It is stated in that joint communiqué that "At the invitation of H.E. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, H. E. Dato' Sri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia paid an official visit to China from 27 to 31 May 2004. The visit was also to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and Malaysia. During the visit, Prime Minister Abdullah met with H. E. Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China, held official talks with Premier Wen Jiabao, and together with Vice Premier Huang Ju, attended the commemorative reception of the 30th anniversary of China-Malaysia diplomatic relations. The two sides had an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, the leaders of both countries reached broad consensus on the issues discussed."⁵⁹

The Joint Communiqué between China and Malaysia dated 29 May 2004 is the third document on bilateral relations between the two countries. It acknowledged the existence and importance of the two earlier documents on bilateral relations namely the communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China signed in May 1974 Malaysian and Chinese leaders, and the joint statement signed by Malaysian and Chinese leaders on 31 May 1999. The two earlier documents are both acknowledged as the basis for the joint communiqué signed by the Malaysian and Chinese leaders on 29 May 2004.

Regarding the existence and importance of the two earlier documents, the joint communiqué of 29 May 2004, recorded, "The leaders recalled the principles enshrined in the Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations signed in 1974 and further reiterated their full endorsement and support for the Joint

Statement on Framework for the Future Bilateral Cooperation between China and Malaysia signed in Beijing on 31 May 1999. They reaffirmed the significance and relevance of the two Documents in guiding the future development of China-Malaysia relations. Both leaders stressed that they would intensify efforts to implement the various cooperation programmes outlined in the Documents"⁶⁰

From Malaysian historical point, the first document on the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Malaysia and China was signed by Abdul Razak, Malaysian second prime minister. The second document on the bilateral cooperation between Malaysia and China was signed by Dr. Mahathir, Malaysian fourth prime minister. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Malaysian fifth prime minister, signed the joined communiqué between China and Malaysia on 29 May 2004. Hence, the three official documents on Malaysia-China bilateral relations are signed by the three different Malaysian prime ministers namely Abdul Razak in May 1974, Dr. Mahathir in May 1999, and Abdullah in May 2004 respectively.

From Malaysian political and diplomatic point of view, since May 1974 all Malaysian prime ministers have agreed to establish and enhance the bilateral relations with China or People's Republic of China for Malaysian internal and external interests as well as for Malaysian regional and international interests.

THE MALAYSIAN ECONOMIC PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA

The economic relations between China and Malaysia is said to have taken place as early as the first century A.D. The Chinese traders from China had traded with the population areas in the Malay Peninsula such as in Johore in the first century A.D. In the third century the Chinese traders came to Kelantan and Langkasuka and in 10th up to 13th century to Langkasuka, Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Kelantan⁶¹. During the 15th century, the Chinese traders came to trade in the Malacca Malay Sultanate⁶².

Since the independence of Malaya in 1957 and Malaysia in 1963, the economic relations between Malaysia and China has taken many forms depending on the political relations between the two countries. Shee Poon Kim has written on Malaysia-China economic relations

and Shee has divided the economic relations between the two countries into three different periods with three different forms of economic relations and perceptions namely, "first, the pre-diplomatic recognition period: 1957-1973; second, the recognition era: 1974-1984 and finally, the period since 1985, after Mahathir's first important official visit to Beijing on 20 November 1985."⁶³

During the first period, 1957-1973, the economic relations between Malaysia and China were carried out by the private sectors through the Chinese middlemen in Singapore and Hong Kong because Malaysia under Tunku Abdul Rahman refused to establish the political and diplomatic relations with China. In other words, there was no direct trade missions and connections between Malaysia and China due to the Tunku's policy of non-recognition of China (1957-1970) as well as due to the communist ideology of China and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) in Malaysia. Since MCP was banned and illegal in Malaysia, the Tunku did not want MCP to receive any support from China. Moreover, it was difficult for Malaysia to have a direct economic relations with China after the United States (US) imposed the economic embargo against China and the US started the cold war against the Soviet Union or USSR. Both countries, Malaysia and China were in the state of mutual suspicion from 1957 up to 1973⁶⁴.

During the recognition era, 1974-1984, the trading relation between Malaysia and China was direct and active. Abdul Razak who succeeded the Tunku in September 1970 had adopted pragmatic policy toward China-Malaysia relations. In 1971 China directly purchased 40,000 tons of Malaysia's natural rubber and marked the direct trade between the two countries. After the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Malaysian and China in May 1974, the total trade between China and Malaysia in that year was valued at US\$159.17 million from US\$27.8 million in 1971. In 1976 the total trade volume between Malaysia and China was down to US\$136.41 million but it increased to US\$424.40 million in 1980. From 1971 up to 1987, the trade volume between Malaysia-China and China-Malaysia was still small and insignificant. "Thus China was not an important trading partner for Malaysia, and neither was Malaysia that important for China. One of the reasons why Malaysia-China trade ties did not get stronger

was due to the downturn of economic growth in Malaysia from 1980-1985."⁶⁵

«The third period in Malaysia-China trade began after 1988. The impetus came after Mahathir's first official visit to Beijing in November 1985. The trade data showed that the volume jumped from around US\$289 million from 1981 to US\$557 million in 1987 and again to US\$877 million in 1988, and finally to US\$1183 million in 1990.»⁶⁶

According to Shee Foon Kim who was the visiting professor at International University of Japan in 2003/2004, "Malaysia-China bilateral trade has continued to grow rapidly since the post-cold war era. In 1991, the total trade was US\$1.33 billion and in 1998 it jumped to US\$4.26 billion. Thus bilateral trade expanded more than six-fold from US\$1.475 billion in 1992 to US\$7.6 billion in 2001 [...] Thus between 1996 and 2002, Malaysia's trade with China grew about four times, i.e. from US\$3.6 billion to US\$14.3 billion in 2002."⁶⁷

The bilateral economic relation between Malaysia and China was able to increase rapidly because China started open her economy to outsiders starting from 1978. "One can date the rise of China from 1978 when China launched an open door policy which began the integration of the Chinese economy into the international system. This has led to impressive Chinese economic growth ever since."⁶⁸

In the joint communiqué signed by Malaysian and Chinese leaders on 29 May 2004, the importance of bilateral trade and business was recorded. It is recorded, for example, "To recognize China's full market economy status by the Malaysian side" as well as "To exploit the comparative economic advantages of their respective economies in order to strengthen and deepen economic cooperation".⁶⁹

From economic and trading perspective, all Malaysian prime ministers since May 1974 until the present have agreed to develop and increase the volumes and values of trading activities between Malaysia and China.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Malaysian perceptions of China depend on the policies and tendencies of Malaysia and of

China. In addition, they also depend on the regional and international policies and tendencies of the Western super powers towards China and Malaysia during and after the cold war between the United States and the USSR.

For example, during the Malacca Malay Sultanate in the 15th century A.D, Malacca was able to grow economically, politically and religiously under the protection of the Chinese dynasty whose political and economic policies were open and pragmatic. China did not impose her rules and governances on Malacca. Malacca became the most important center for spreading Islam although the Chinese emperor was a non-Muslim. When Malacca was attacked and subjugated by the Portuguese in 1511, China was not there to protect and defense Malacca because China's open and pragmatic political and economic policies were no longer in existence. China withdrew herself from being the regional and international political and economic player after 15th century.

During the reign of Tunku Abdul Rahman (1957-1970) as the first prime minister of Malaya and then Malaysia, his political and economic policies were hostile towards China because he was greatly influenced by the Western nations especially the United States and the Great Britain. They all opposed communism of China and of the USSR. Both China and the USSR were against capitalism and democratic system advocated by the United States and the Great Britain. The Tunku thought that it was better for Malaysia to be with the Western powers, the US and the Great Britain, since Malaysia needed their political and economic supports against the Malayan Communist Party in Malaya and Malaysia as well as against international and regional communism.

During the reigns of Abdul Razak (1970-1976), Hussein (1976-1981), Dr. Mahathir (1981-2003) and Abdullah (October 2003 to the present), Malaysian perceptions of China were ambivalent and pragmatic for political, economic, regional and international interests of Malaysia. The four Malaysian prime ministers

have agreed to the bilateral relations and interests between Malaysia and China as stated in the written documents signed by Abdul Razak in May 1974, and by Dr. Mahathir in May 1999, and then by Abdullah in May 2004 respectively. The Chinese leaders also have agreed and signed those written documents respectively. Malaysian leaders Abdul Razak and Hussein needed China for economic bilateral relations rather than political relations. However, Malaysian leader Dr. Mahathir needed China for both the economic and political bilateral relations because he wanted China to support his views on the international politico-economic issues against the stance taken by the United States. Although Dr. Mahathir was pragmatic towards China but he was ambivalent towards China's communist ideology and its link with the MCP in Malaysia as well as the dispute over the Spratly Islands between Malaysia and China.

Abdullah who succeeded Dr. Mahathir in October 2003 visited China in May 2004 to enhance the political and economic bilateral relations with China. He also needs China for politico-economic interests of Malaysia. However, the dispute over the Spratly Islands is there for Abdullah to handle diplomatically and peacefully.

Malaysia was able to establish and enhance the politico-economic bilateral relations with China after China opened its economic door to outsiders starting in 1970s. Since then Malaysia has officially established the diplomatic and politico-economic ties with China starting in May 1974. Since 1974 Malaysia has seen China as great nation politically and economically. The bilateral relations are useful for Malaysia in many areas and both countries have agreed to settle any dispute between them through negotiations. So far Malaysia has claimed her rights over Spratly Islands in the South China Sea since December 1979 and China also has claimed her rights over the same islands. The dispute between Malaysia and China over Spratly Islands has so far not disturbed the bilateral economic and political relations between Malaysia and China.

NOTAS

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