

# Malaysia and South-South Cooperation during Mahathir's Era

Determining Factors  
and Implications



AHMAD FAIZ ABDUL HAMID

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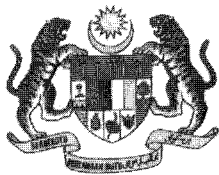
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PRIME MINISTER  
MALAYSIA

## FOREWORD

IT GIVES ME great pleasure to congratulate Dr Ahmad Faiz Hamid, a scholar in international relations and a good friend, on the occasion of the publication of his book, *Malaysia and South-South Cooperation During Mahathir's Era: Determining Factors and Implications*. This book is particularly apt, given that South-South cooperation occupies a position high on the list of priorities in Malaysia's foreign-policy objectives. It is also apt because there was no greater champion for the developing world than Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Malaysia's active participation in groupings such as the G15, as well as in events such as the Langkawi International Dialogue, are testament of our commitment to the belief that countries of the Third World must work together to forge a credible voice on the global stage. Although we have worked hard to enhance this cooperation, there is much that we still need to do. Conflict and turbulence continue to ravage lives and waste precious natural resources. The income disparity between the North and the South, the rich and the poor, continues to widen and deprivation continues to exact a terrible human toll. The sad truth is that as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, no country is truly immune and isolated from the tribulations of its neighbours. We are a global village, and a fire in one house potentially endangers everyone.

## MALAYSIA AND SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

It is therefore imperative that we continue to support initiatives that encourage multilateral dialogue and cooperation, to work hand in hand in resolving issues of mutual concern. Tun Dr Mahathir was a staunch proponent of this principle and as his Foreign Minister from 1991 to 1998, it was a position that I wholeheartedly shared.

I hope that this book will provide useful insights on a key cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy to practitioners, policymakers, academics and anyone who has an interest in international affairs. I hope that it will provoke and stimulate further discourse on what we can do, collectively and individually, to develop a world order that is progressive, prosperous and equitable.



Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

# PREFACE

THIS STUDY focuses on Malaysia's involvement in South-South cooperation from 1986 to 1996. South-South cooperation is defined as the strategy used by developing countries to promote economic independence, to increase self-reliance, and to improve bargaining power with the developed nations. Malaysia, particularly its Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, has been actively involved in South-South cooperation for more than a decade. The study attempts to identify and analyse the determining factors and the implications of Malaysia's involvement in South-South cooperation. The significance of this study lies in the fact that there has not been any thorough study on Malaysia's involvement in South-South cooperation.

This study attempts to address four critical issues. What are the factors that influenced Malaysia's interactions with developing countries and the implications of the relationship to both parties? What are the impacts of Mahathir's leadership on Malaysia's involvement in South-South cooperation? What are the factors that influenced Mahathir's involvement in articulating the North-South issues and what are the implications of his actions? Finally, what are the prospects and problems of Malaysia's economic relations with developing countries, particularly with Indochina states and South Pacific countries?

## MALAYSIA AND SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

In the context of determining factors, although many factors have contributed to Malaysia's involvement, nation's national interests, external factors and leadership variables are argued to be more significant. The study also argues that Malaysia's high profile in voicing the North-South issues and its private sector involvement in the South has created resentment from several parties, especially from the NGOs, the Western media, the regional powers and local business groups. Finally, the study detected that South-South cooperation is an effective means for Malaysia to enhance its own economic interests.

For the case of Malaysia's relations with the Indochinese states and the South Pacific countries, the study found that Malaysia's economic interests has been a crucial determinant of the depth of the relationship. In terms of economic interests, Indochina states are more promising to the relationship than the South Pacific region. It is hoped this study will be a significant contribution to the study of Malaysian foreign policy, particularly on Malaysia's relations with Third World countries.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I AM DEEPLY indebted to many people who have given their help to enable me to finish this study. Special thanks to my supervisor, Associate Professor John H. Beaglehole, who generously guided and encouraged me throughout the whole process of writing this book. His valuable comments and suggestions are most gratefully appreciated. Sincere thanks to Professor Dov Bing and Dr Michael Goldsmith, from the Department of Political Science, University of Waikato, for their comments and encouragement. To Dr Neil Haigh of TLDU, thanks for the insights. My thanks also go to Dey, Musafir, Rani, Busu, Zuki, Maha, Kim, James, Made, Azmi, Along and Adan.

I am indebted to Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Yayasan Aminuddin Baki and Dato' Nazri Hj Abdullah who generously sponsored this project and the trip to the South Pacific region. Without their assistance, the fieldwork to the area would have been impossible. Also, thanks to Shameen of Suva, Abu Bakar Aman of Port Moresby, Rahman Abas of Hamilton and Professor Hood Salleh of Wellington for their generosity. Last but not least, thanks also go to Dr Fawzi Basri and Halim Ahmad of SPS for their understanding and encouragement.

Special thanks to my wife Azizah for sacrificing almost everything to enable me to complete this book. Her support is much appreciated. And to all members of my family, especially to 'Arwah Emak', to which this book is dedicated.