

ISLAM IN MALAYSIA'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY: GENERAL OVERVIEW

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Abstract. In Malaysia, Islam has become an essential element in Malay politics. It is seen as an important approach by the Malay Muslim community in strengthening its political-cultural identity, particularly in their domestic and foreign relations. Islam in Malaysia's domestic and foreign policy already became an element in the decision making process in term of formulate the rules, regulations and policy. When Malaysia was colonized by British, the sentiment of westernization takes over the priorities but, the basic element which is Islam is still there. Malaysia became pragmatic in adapting with the global change without neglecting the element of Islam. The unique structure of Malaysia, which is multicultural region, is the major factors on how government conduct the Islamic values in their policy, which not only applicable in domestic consumption, but also in the aspect of foreign policy.

Keywords: Malaysia, Domestic and Foreign Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam is not just a religion but a complete way of life for Muslims; it covers all the things that Muslims do in their life. In other religions, we can see clear separations of power between the religion and the state. Islam doesn't separate religion from state administrations. Islam is the state, as in ancient times. In the early period of Islamic history, the Caliphs were involved in every aspect of the state administrations and also as the military commander, involved in war and peace management, collecting taxes, laying down the law and dispensing justice.

Islam constitutes a complete social system that embraces all those who have accepted the faith as a way of life, including the economic, social, political, and other aspects of society. The system applies to all human beings, whether the man or a women is Muslim or non-Muslim. Therefore we cannot equate Islam and the Muslim, for the Muslim, a human being bound to err, can deviate from the rules and regulations set in Islam. Some misconceptions about Islam are due to the wrong beliefs and actions of Muslim, and others are due to a significant lack of understanding and false stereotyping.

In Malaysia, Islam has become an essential element in Malay politics. It is seen as an important approach by the Malay Muslim community in strengthening its political-cultural identity, particularly in their domestic and foreign relations. The influencing concept of the

role of Islam and its practice in domestic and foreign relations needs to be understood through the history of the religion in the Malaysia.

Public diplomacy may not be a current term in Malaysia, but the many efforts and actions of Malaysia under its many leaders has definitely developed robust activities of reliable and active public diplomacy policy. If public diplomacy is solely targeted at specific issues, it will not be easy to change public perceptions, for perceptions require changing in many levels to have any impact. Thus public diplomacy should widen its focus on building positive perceptions and relationships in other areas too.²⁸⁹

Malaysia's foreign policy is an extension of domestic policy designed with the main objectives of protecting and promoting our national interests at home and abroad in aspects such as security, economic and other significant interests. With the dynamic and complex environment of world politics, the Malaysia government, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs needs to be constantly aware of global changes and respond effectively in order to ensure that Malaysia's sovereignty and national interests are adequately protected and Malaysia's views and positions are accordingly expressed in the international arena.

Interpretation from all the stake holders of the state and the behaviour of both Malaysia's domestic and international publics are having a growing impact on Malaysia's foreign policy. No state can live in isolation, thus Malaysia has to play a more significant role in world politics and economics. The Malaysian government believes that by using Islamic values in the nation's administration will facilitate the increased use of public diplomacy tools to project an image of Islam and Malaysia as a whole, domestically and internationally, including the projection that this includes the Islamic principles of justice and fairness.²⁹⁰

This chapter shall discuss the overview, background and history of Islam in Malaysia's administration. In order to understand Islam in Malaysia's public diplomacy, we shall look back into history to understand the past and present decisions taken by its leaders, and the significance of Islamic practice and values in the nation's administration and policy choices.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part will include Islam in the pre-colonial era covering the early history of Islam in the Malay Peninsula including the period of the Malay feudal system. The second part of this chapter will discuss the history of

²⁸⁹ Bajzer, L. Ameliorating Strained Relations: Public Diplomacy in Serbia. In: Rugh, W. A (Ed.). *The Practice of Public Diplomacy: Confronting Challenges Abroad*. p.3-19. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2011.

²⁹⁰ Wisma Putra. Strategic Planning 2009-2015. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 2009. Retrieved from http://www.kln.gov.my/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=bf7282c4-3cad-49cd-a525-15a3e67702a0&groupId=10136 [2 July 2015].

Islam during the colonial era. The third part will discuss Islam after Malaya's independence, focusing on foreign and domestic policies since 1957, under the leadership of all of Malaysia's Prime Ministers, namely Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussien Onn, Tun Mahathir Mohammad, Tun Abdullah Badawi and Dato Seri Najib Razak.

2. ISLAM IN THE PRE COLONIAL ERA

Even though there are difference of opinions with regard to the early history of Islam in this region, according to Nazeer²⁹¹ and Arba'iyah,²⁹² Islam came to the Malay Peninsula from as early as the ninth century. As the highest power in the land at that particular was the King, the religion was first introduced to members of the Malay royal families by Arab and Indian Muslim traders. Arab scholars and traders also married into the Malay royal families during those particular times.

The influence of Islam in the region can therefore be seen from two major factors, which is trade and marriage.²⁹³ As the earliest people of the Malay Peninsula to embrace Islam were from the royal families, it was quite natural for them to spread Islamic knowledge in the region. Because the nature of the Malay feudal system was contextual, where subjects paid great patronage to the ruling class, the religion very quickly spread to all levels of Malay society.

Melaka is considered to be the first Sultanate that saw the use of Islamic principles and values in state administration. When King Parameswara, the founder of the Melaka Sultanate embraced Islam, the kingdom of Melaka naturally became a Muslim centre attracting Muslim traders, scholars and others. With an increasing Muslim population, Islamic principles and values were first applied to deal with matters of religion, but over the course of time, being a way of life, Islamic principles became a significant component of the state administration.²⁹⁴

One of the oldest documents to indicate this influence of Islam is the *undang-undang Melaka* or *Hukum Kanun Melaka*, which is a compilation of laws for Melaka by Sultan

²⁹¹ Nazeer Ahmed. Malaysia. Introduction of Islam. *The Encyclopedia of Islamic History*, 2015. Retrieved from <http://historyofislam.com/contents/the-post-mongol-period/malaysia-introduction-of-islam-into/> [2 July 2015].

²⁹² Arba'iyah Mohd Noor. Perkembangan Pensejarahan Islam di Alam Melayu [The Historical Development of Islam in the Malay World]. *Journal AlTammaddun*, 6(1), 29-50. 2011. Retrieved from http://umexpert.um.edu.my/file/publication/00001137_74522.pdf

²⁹³ Hussin Mutalib. Islamic Malay Polity in Southeast Asia. In. Mohd Taib Osman (Ed.). *Islamic Civilisation in the Malay World*. p.1-48 Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. 1977.

²⁹⁴ Andaya, B. W & Andaya, L. Y. *A History of Malaysia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2001.

Mahmud Syah in the period between 1422-1444. It was later amended by Sultan Muzaffar Shah between 1445-1458. Then known as the *Risalat Hukum Kanun*, which in Arabic means book of rules, norms or principles, the *undang-undang Melaka* had six sections. Two of these sections dealt with Islamic marital laws that included laws related to Islam and the state of Johor, which detailed the relevance of Islam in Malay statecraft.²⁹⁵ From here on, Islam, Islamic administration and governance spread to the other states of Peninsula Malaya.

The administration of the Malay kingdoms during the pre-colonial period was based on Islamic principles, values and norm that co-existed with Malay customary laws. This includes the concept *As-Syura* (consensus) and *Al-Adalah* (seeking equality and inclusiveness). Consensus and consultation became major features of Malay feudal governance and administration at that time, and this greatly improved the decision making process by a legislative body that treated decisions as a collective act.

Every state had their own legislative body to legislate their rules and conducts of life. These legislative bodies, also known as *mesyuarat bicara*, were an assembly of ministers and nobles. The term *mesyuarat* comes from the Arabic term *Syura*. During the consultation process, decisions were made through consensus rather than by the majority. The idea of consensus have become very much a part of the Malay culture. The *Syura* is a democratic process, but the approach is slightly different from democracy's participatory method.

In the conventional democratic system, decisions very much depend of the simple majority, unlike the *Syura*, which calls for a consensus, where all the parties involved in the issues are required to come to a common agreement on the same things.²⁹⁶ This part of Malay history reflects the period when Islamic values and ideas on consensus, participation and interaction between the ruler, government and people of the state was prevalent. Successors to the King, for instance, were involved directly in the decision making processes of the kingdom, while performing their religious obligations, controlling their anger and greed, as they carried out the duties and responsibilities that they believed were given to them by God.

Malay rulers were also likely to be diligent and pious, with a good working knowledge of Islam and religious matters, to rule and uphold the system of Islamic justice, to consult their ministers and advisors in matters of the state and to limit the death punishment only to those violations for which it is mandatory in Muslim law.²⁹⁷ The idea of consensus and consultation was also demonstrated in the decentralized nature of the Malay

²⁹⁵ Walker, J. H. *Autonomy, Diversity, and Dissent: Conceptions of Power and Sources of Action in the Sejarah Melayu (Raffles MS 18)*. *Theory and Society*, 33(2), 213-255. 2004.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

administrative structure. The King, at that particular time, was merely an important centralizing figure to express the unity and integrity of the state in the territory under their influence. The King was the head of the state and he will delegate the power to govern the kingdom.

The power of the King was devolved to Malay aristocrats, usually people with higher social standing in their civil society. These aristocrats constructed an important element of the structure of governance. A classic Malay administrative hierarchy starts with *Bendahara*, the second in command after the Sultan (King), who also performs the role of Prime Minister and plays a leading role in the decision making process. Other higher members in the administration or senior ministers of the Kingdom included the *Temenggong*, who took charge of security and the police force, the *Laksamana*, who acted as chief naval officer, and the *Penghulu Bendahari*, who assumed the role of chief financial officer in charge of the state's revenue and the overall upkeep of the Sultan's servants and clerks.²⁹⁸

Another important type of officer was the *ulamaks*, the persons with a very good knowledge of Islam teachings, to give advice to the King and the ministers on Islamic edicts and laws, for the proper administration and governance of the kingdom and to ensure that all decisions made by the King or his ministers do not contradict Islamic laws, principles and teaching.²⁹⁹ The rank of the *ulamaks* was equal to the other senior ministers described above. Below these senior ministers were the lower ranks, made up of people of royal descent or with a hereditary title or with a title given by the Sultan.

Even though the elements of Shariah law were not fully applied in the Malay kingdom, especially when they were influenced by Malay customs, the *undang-undang Melaka* and the *Sejarah Melayu* strongly suggest that Islam had significant influence on the administration of the state. The Islamic philosophy of consensus, the relationship among the administrative bodies and the delegation of power became major structures of Malay state administration. Pursuing consensus from the state's multiple stakeholders was a necessity in any decision making process, where the *syura* became an important legislative body. In fact terms like "*mesyuarah*" and "*muhibbah*," derived from Arabic words, are still being used to this day to emphasise the continuity and importance of the principles of consensus that seek for conciliatory decisions on any problem and issue.

Islam played a major role, both in the domestic affairs of Melaka and in its relations with other kingdoms. Because of its strategic location and its peacefulness, Melaka became

²⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁹ Ibid

the trading hub of the region, attracting merchants, soldiers, scholars and others from far and near. Soon Melaka became the centre of Islam, contributing substantially towards the spread of the religion in the South East Asian region.³⁰⁰ By this time in history, Islam had already established itself as an international power with sophisticated diplomacy based on Islamic principles to widen its influence. As Islam spread, not only as a religion, but as a way of life and state governance, it also brought with it the principles of Islamic diplomacy in international relations. Muslim messengers played a vital diplomatic role in the medieval Islamic world, often preferring quiet diplomacy and a pragmatic approach, instead of the jihadist Arab warrior who is often portrayed in common literature. It can be expected that diplomatic messengers from Melaka also played their roles similarly. Just as diplomats from other early kingdoms would have been received in Melaka and treated according to Islamic law and principles.³⁰¹

3. ISLAM IN COLONIAL ERA

‘Gospel, Gold and Glory’ was a very influential slogan that was used in 1511 by the Portuguese when they decided to conquer Malacca. The Sultanate was forced to move to Johor from where there was a further spread of Islam and the application of the principles of Islamic diplomacy and international relations. In 1641 the Dutch overthrew the Portuguese and occupied Malacca.³⁰²

The most significant colonial period for the Federation of Malaya, later Malaysia, that is the basis of Malaysia’s current system of governance and administration, was during the British colonialism. From the arrival of Francis Light in the Kingdom of Kedah in 1786, and Stamford Raffles in Singapore in 1819, and the British occupation of Malacca in 1824, the British had a stranglehold over the Malay Peninsula. Soon they managed to make the Malay Sultanates of the peninsula as their protectorates. The first was the Pangkor Engagement, signed between the Sultan of Perak and British in 1874 to be followed by the other rulers. This engagement allowed the presence of a British “resident” in the Perak royal court, to influence and advice the Sultan in all matters except those concerning Islamic law, Malay customs and Malay family matters, thus increasing the influence of the British in the

³⁰⁰ Hussin Mutalib. *Islamic Malay Polity in Southeast Asia*. In. Mohd Taib Osman (Ed.). *Islamic Civilisation in the Malay World*. p.1-48 Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. 1977.

³⁰¹ Vaiou, M. *Diplomacy in the Early Islamic World: A Tenth-century Treatise on Arab-Byzantine Relations*. Landon: IB Tauris & Co Ltd. 2015.

³⁰² Arnold-Baker, C. *The companion to British history*. p.693. Landon: Routledge and Taylor Francis Group. 2001.

region.³⁰³ Soon the Residents became the virtual rulers of the Malay states. As the states in Malaya developed with a bustling economy and expanding infrastructure, the British implemented their system of state governance, leaving to the exclusive domain of the Sultans those matters involving Islam, Malay customs and Malay family matters. Soon the economic and social landscape changed and the role of the Sultans diminished in comparison to the role of the British Resident in administering a modernising state. And the role of Islam in public diplomacy and international relations diminished likewise.

It might not be wrong to say that this was a depressing period for the Malay rulers and their subjects under the British rule, where they saw their influence and participation diminishing in their own country. Any attempt to bring about a resurgence of Islam in Malaysia could be construed as an attempt to reinstate the glorious days of the pre-colonial era.

4. ISLAM AFTER INDEPENDENCE

When Malaysia achieved independence on 31 August 1957, Islam was declared as the official religion of the nation as stated in article 3 (1) of the Malaysian Federal Constitution. In additions, Article 160 of the Federal Constitution defines the Malay as a “person who professes the religion of Islam, consistently speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay customs”. It is also clearly explained in Constitutions of the States of Malaysia that Islam is the common faith of the Malays. The constitutions also allow and clearly emphasis the rights of the non-Malays right freedom of worship.

Malaysia’s Domestic Politics

Islam has been an important component in Malay politics. It reflects the political and cultural identity of the state, particularly in an increasingly globalising, urbanising and multi-cultural Malaysia. It is mandatory in Malaysia that most housing and development projects provide for mosques or *suraus* and sometimes other Islamic activities. It is not uncommon to see mosques every few hundred metres in Malaysia. Almost all public buildings have *suraus* or places for Muslim prayers. Private organizations including industries, banks, medical facilities and hotels, are required to provide facilities and time for Muslim prayers. All public universities include at least one impressive mosque. The call for prayers, the *azan*, is a highly public affair, from loud speakers in high minarets. The traffic mayhem caused by Muslims

³⁰³ Stevenson, R. *Culvitors and Administrators: British Educational Policy towards the Malays, 1875-1906*. p.6. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press. 1975.

attending the weekly Friday congregational prayers, such as random parking of vehicles in roads, is tolerated and facilitated by the Malaysian authorities.

Within the purview of the Malaysian Prime Minister, there is a Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) headed by a full Minister in the Prime Minister's department. The principal functions of JAKIM are to manage Islamic affairs at the Federal level through the legislation and standardization of Islamic laws, the coordination of Islamic administration nationwide, and the development of Islamic education that includes the control and prevention of variant views of the religion. JAKIM also functions as the Secretariat for the National Council for Islamic Affairs Malaysia (MKI).³⁰⁴ By managing Islamic affairs at the Federal level and serving as the Secretariat for MKI, JAKIM effectively coordinates and influences the role of Islam in the individual states of Malaysia under their respective Sultans or Heads of State. Furthermore it ensures that Islam is propagated and practiced according to directions given by the MKI. The sermons given at the Friday congregational prayers are often provided by the state and federal Islamic authorities. This is one of the means by which Islam plays a significant role in public diplomacy at the domestic level.

There are a number of Malaysian radio and television stations dedicated to Islamic affairs, in addition to the many Islamic programs broadcasted by the other radio and television stations. All such stations are licensed by and tightly controlled by the Federal Government of Malaysia.³⁰⁵ Once again, what is broadcasted complies tightly to the public diplomacy motives of the Malaysian government.

A large number of conferences, forums and seminars on Islam is regularly organized in Malaysia, targeted for local consumption, during which the Malaysian government further promotes its public diplomacy.³⁰⁶ Once again, through the control and guidelines of JAKIM, these events promote the public diplomacy of the Malaysian government.

Increasingly the Muftis of the individual states of Malaysia have been actively participating in the public affairs of Malaysia, sharing their views and issuing edicts that continue to promote the public diplomacy policies of the Malaysian government.

Islam also plays a major role in providing the Malay community with a focus for their identity and their social solidarity. Islam was used as a political tool and strategy by both the

³⁰⁴ Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia. Functions of JAKIM. *JAKIM Official Portal*, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.islam.gov.my/profil-jakim> [15 January 2016].

³⁰⁵ Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia. *Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia Official Portal*. 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.kkmm.gov.my/index.php?lang=ms> [15 January 2016].

³⁰⁶ Islamic Events Malaysia. *Islamic Events Malaysia Official Portal*. 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.islamiceventsmalaysia.com/> [15 January 2016].

ruling party, UMNO and opposition party PAS.³⁰⁷ Both political parties strive to impress upon the Muslim population of Malaysia that they are the most capable to implement Islamic principles and policies in Malaysia in the context of a globalizing world, seeking to establish their Islamic credentials.

Malay Muslims form the dominant group in Malaysia, and the most prominent political party, UMNO, is dedicated to representing them and their interests. From the time Malaysia became independent, UMNO has been the dominant power in Malaysia, continuously controlling the government of Malaysia through a coalition with other smaller political parties. UMNO has therefore been the dominant power steering the political, social and cultural development in the country. By identifying race with religion, that is Malay is Muslim, UMNO has successfully included Islamic religious principles into the political thoughts of Malays. Islam values have become a core component of Malaysia's state system and this is visible in the formulation and implementation of its domestic policies.

Malaysia's Foreign Policy

Islam is already perceived to contribute to the main principles, values and considerations in the construct of Malaysia's Foreign policy. This is inevitable as the foreign policy of a state is an extension of its domestic politics and the function of foreign policy is to promote national interests. Islamic influence on Malaysia's foreign policy could be illustrated by its views and positions articulated on the main international issues.

As a diplomatic act of reciprocation, Malaysia is under strong pressure to support Israel's existence as a member of the international community because Israel had supported Malaysia's admission to the United Nations.³⁰⁸ But up until now Malaysia has not established official diplomatic relations with Israel and the Malaysian international passport cannot be used to travel to Israel. Even though Malaysia had undergone several changes under its various Prime Ministers, Malaysia stand with regard to Israel has been consistent.

This decision with regard to Israel was made to show Malaysia's protest towards the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel, driven by the pressures and criticisms of the Muslim community of Malaysia. This stance with regard to Israel is also motivated by the Malaysia's commitment to the defence of the political interests of the Muslim world.

³⁰⁷ Interview of Dr Mahathir, 16 Dec 2015, Putrajaya
& Syed Hamid Albar, 14 Dec 2015, SPAD Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur.

³⁰⁸ Mohamad Abu Bakar. Islam in Malaysia's Foreign Policy, Hamdard Islamicus. In. M. Azhari Karim et. al (Ed.). *Malaysian Foreign Policy. Issues and Perspectives*, p.77-88. Kuala Lumpur: National Institute of Public Administration. 1990.

To further extend its public diplomacy in the international arena, Malaysia has been successfully promoting itself as a centre for Islamic banking, with an extensive range of Islamic financial instruments and facilities that attracts investments from Muslims across the world.³⁰⁹

Malaysia has also successfully established itself as the “World’s Leading Halal Hub,”³¹⁰ having developed a sophisticated system of halal standards and guidelines, implementation, audits, certification and periodical re-audits and re-certifications.

Malaysia has also established itself as the preferred destination for Muslim tourists, promoting itself with its numerous amenities for Muslims that is abundantly available, such as food, prayers places, dress codes, travel and medical facilities, accommodations. Malaysia has a documented standard for “Muslim Friendly Hospitality Services Standard,” a syariah compliant airline has recently come into service, and the train services are in the process of becoming certified as the first halal certified train service in the world.³¹¹

Additionally there are many other facilities for people from the Islamic world to comfortably visit and stay in Malaysia, such as educational facilities for international students. The robust operation of the Syariah legal system³¹² and the Zakat tax system in parallel with secular legal and tax systems has impressed many Muslim leaders and governments to learn from Malaysia. It will not be wrong to say that the Islamic perception of Malaysia is entrenched to continuously attract Muslim refugees, asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Just as it has been successfully attracting “Malaysia My Second Home” applicants from Islamic countries. Malaysia has been greatly successful in promoting its Islamic public diplomacy worldwide.

5. CONCLUSION

From what have been discuss in this chapter, in aspect of Islam in Malaysia’s domestic and foreign policy already became an element in the decision making process in term of formulate the rules, regulations and policy. When Malaysia was colonized by British, the sentiment of westernization takes over the priorities but, the basic element which is Islam is still there. Malaysia became pragmatic in adapting with the global change without

³⁰⁹ Bank Negara Malaysia. Malaysian Financial Sector. *Bank Negara Malaysia Official Portal*. 2015. Retrieved from http://www.bnm.gov.my/index.php?ch=fs_mfs&pg=fs_mfs_bank [10 January 2016].

³¹⁰ Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia. *Islamic Tourism Centre of Malaysia Official Portal*. 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.itc.gov.my/tourists/discover-the-muslim-friendly-malaysia/malaysia-the-worlds-leading-halal-hub/> [10 January 2016].

³¹¹ *ibid*

³¹² Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia. *Syariah Judiciary Department Malaysia Official Website*. 2015. Retrieved from www.jksm.gov.my/ [15 January 2016].

neglecting the element of Islam. The unique structure of Malaysia, which is multicultural region, is the major factors on how government conduct the Islamic values in their policy, which not only applicable in domestic consumption, but also in the aspect of foreign policy.

From the history perspective, we can see how the constructivism approach are used in portray the structure and use of Islamic element that use by the state. Constructivism theory its focus on how idea define the international structure and how this structure shapes the identities, interest and policy of states, this theory also concern on how state and non-state actors reproduce that structure and at time transform it. Constructivism can be seen as factors that influence the social usually try stress on alternative approach by giving and focus how idea, norm, language, identity, culture and religion could define, transform and manage one politics situation. This situation is suitable to explain the global and current political climate change that influences certain policy or preference of the state. At the very beginning, Islam already became a major considerations in decision making, when the nations grows older, we can see the changing pattern of Islamic influence, but the values are still there.

The leaders in political systems take in considerations, the element of Islam in their policy choices and the decision making process. In early age of the nations, which include pre, post and early age of the formations of Malaysia the used of Islam is a. When the world became more complex, Islamic values are used in tackling various international and transnational issues that not been invited. It can be seen through the Malaysia stand and approach in responses to the 9/11 event. All premiership after 9/11 came out with their own Islamic branding in promoting moderate Islam as to reflect to the world, Malaysia is not involved with any element of terrorisms and extremisms.

The historical background that described in this chapter, portray that Islam already plays important role in Malaysia's administrative function. It is a fundamental element of Malaysia's administrative style, function and policy priorities. As majority of the Malaysia populations is Muslim, Islam forms the have very great influence in Malaysia cultural landscape, as the multicultural state, other religions and cultural elements adding to its overall patterns in Malaysia administration and policy making process. We can't separate or deny the influence of Islamic values, principle and norm on Malaysia's social, political and economic landscape as the Islamic religion already presence in the Malay Peninsula more than 1000 years. Indeed, Islamic terms and values have entered the lexicon of Malaysian society to an extent that makes it impossible to separate "Malay" from "Islam." Thus, the impact of culture on Malaysian politics can be seen through government policy in term of domestic and foreign relations.

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