

## Malaysia's Foreign Policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1995

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### ABSTRACT

This paper studies Malaysia's Foreign Policy on the Bosnia-Herzegovina war with Serbia in 1992 until 1995. This research was based on the analysis of the primary sources such as documents from Malaysia's Parliamentary debates, Malaysian newspapers and documents from the Public Records Office, London (PRO). Besides that, secondary sources were also referred. This article finds that the failure of the Western's and United States' policies in efficiently stopping the war in Serb-Bosnia War was the prominent factor that had caused Malaysia to play a vital role in the Bosnia Herzegovina crisis. The West's double standard and the practice of favouritism have been well-defined and showcased by America and the UN in solving the Bosnian issue that had ignited the Malaysian spirit to stand up and seek justice for Bosnians and to question the world body's credibility as a peacemaking agency. Malaysia's seriousness and deep concerned over the conflict had prompted other OIC countries to take up the issue to solve the problem in Bosnia. Malaysia, though not as great as America and any other Western countries, had given her contributions in distinctive ways. One of the significant ways was to deploy a peace keeping force in Bosnia under the UN umbrella. Her role in OIC had portrayed her staunch support and consistency in championing the fate of the Muslim community in Bosnian who needed realistic defence.

**Keywords:** Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, United States, United Nation

### INTRODUCTION

Malaysia's foreign policy, like any other countries in the world, is formulated in response to the policies of its neighbouring countries or countries far from her, if not initiated on the basis of her national interest. Furthermore, in the era of globalisation, Malaysia could not afford to stand aloof from the international development taking place. Basically, Malaysia's foreign policies have always been influenced by the security factor. In par with its principles and based on its democratic spirit, Malaysia is against any invasion on human rights, especially in an independent country. Malaysia's stance can be observed clearly through its involvement in the United Nation's (hereinafter, UN) peacekeeping

missions since becoming a member of this world body since 1957. Among the countries in which Malaysia has taken part under the UN's flag are Cambodia, Somalia, Timor Leste, Palestinian, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina had caught the interest of the world communities when the country faced a war with Serbia just after Bosnia announced her independence in February 1992, through UN's recognition. The Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, proclaimed that Bosnia had declared independence from Yugoslavia against the wishes of its Serbian population. Therefore, it should not be recognised internationally (PRO, FO 973/701). It is important to note that Malaysia's role in Bosnia-Herzegovina was

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more outstanding compared to her involvement in other countries. Therefore, this article studies the factors for Malaysia's stance in its foreign policy towards Bosnia-Herzegovina. Apart from that, it is important to study Malaysia's role and contribution to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### THE FAILURE OF UNITED NATION (UN) AND WEST

Malaysia did not pay serious attention to the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict at the initial stage as she was convinced of the capabilities of the UN and the Western powers, especially America, in restoring peace and justice in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Another factor in this conviction was the fact that fundamental human rights and democracy has generally been deeply respected by the western authorities, especially America. Furthermore, during William Jefferson Clinton or Bill Clinton nomination's campaign as President in 1992, America had openly promised to use the power within her means to stop the civil war in Bosnia (Rieff, 1996). However, America's policy was not effective in halting the war. On the contrary, it continued to protract. Malaysia agreed to and in fact welcomed proposals, particularly from a country like America, for active deployment of military operations to overcome the problem in Bosnia (Rieff, 1996). However, Malaysia was disappointed when America failed to go on with the proposed plan when they experienced opposition among UN member's and other European countries like Russia and France who did not agree with the utilization of military power to overcome the conflicts in Bosnia (Parliament, 27 April 1993). From the initial stage, Russia did not want any actions that could threaten Serbia to be adopted by NATO. Russia only wanted Serbia to comply with the UN's request, which was to stop attacks. Furthermore, Russia was hoping that NATO's plan to act on Serbia would be unsuccessful. Russia's stance was predictable because of the close cultural ties that both nations have had over hundreds of years, sharing similar language, alphabets, and religion (Parliament, 27 April 1993). In addition, Russia has been

a protector to Serbia in every conflicts faced by Serbia in Balkan. For example, she had involved and protected Serbia in the conflicts between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in July 1914 which eventually started the World War I in Europe (Azlizan, Jan. 2010). It is not surprising, therefore, to see Russia using her veto power to strengthen the international blockade to prevent the flow of arms supplies to Bosnian Muslim and Croatia (Azlizan, Jan. 2010).

Similarly, France had rejected economic sanction on Serbian. France also rejected the German's proposal to send servicemen to Serbia. France was in favour of Serbia's proposal on the division of Bosnia's provinces to form Greater Serbia (Azlizan, Jan 2010). Moreover, the French was confident that the then UN S-G Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali was capable of bringing peace to the conflict without the intervention of military force. Although Britain did not agree with the Serb's activities, she did not protest the French's action because of her association with France. Britain doubted the effectiveness of air strike on Serbia, preferring instead on a more peaceful approach. To this effect, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter, FCO) stated that, 'it would be better if you could name the official who minuted this statement (PRO, FO 973/700)'.

*"There is also considerable risk that armed intervention including air strikes would compromise the massive international relief operation, vital for the population of Bosnia particularly in the coming winter months when the temperature will fall to freezing or below and when heavy snowfalls are likely." (PRO, FO 973/700)*

Since Britain had no interest on military use, it did not see the need for NATO's involvement in the peace process. German is the only European power that agreed with the use of force on Serbia but France, Britain, and Russia wanted to minimize German's influence and rejected the recommendation.

Meanwhile, America under George Bush's administration seemed to adopt a lackadaisical attitude towards the conflict. His statement was, "I don't think anybody suggests that if there is a hiccup here or there or a conflict here or there that the United States is going to send troops (Guttman, 1993)." America had decided not to send their army to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In fact, the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, also said to let the war alone, because they would stop when they get tired (Berita Harian, 6 April 1993). Of course, this statement did not make any sense.

The number of Muslims in Bosnia slew by the Serbs kept increasing since Serbia launched her attacks against the Muslim community. Besides, there were reports of a large number of Bosnian Muslim women being raped by the Serbian army. It was estimated that as many as 250,000 civilians who constituted women and children were the victims of Serbia's violence. As a result, a committee was set up to investigate the crime. The committee, set up by the European Council, was headed by Dame (PRO FO 973/701). In October 1992, the UN High Commission for Refugees estimated that some 2.5 million displaced people remained in the former Yugoslavia; over 1.3 million of these people depended on the outside help for shelter, food, and medicine to see them through the coming winter (PRO FO 973/701). The sufferings of the war victim were described as follows by the UN:

*"even if peace were achieved tomorrow, hundreds of thousands of people would face hunger, sickness and homelessness." (PRO FO 973/701)*

The situation turned worse in 1993 when the Croats also launched attacks on the Muslims in Bosnia. The Muslims had no weapons to fight back because of the arms embargo imposed by the West. On the contrary, the Serbs had modern weapons which they acquired from the Yugoslav National Army. Britain justified the embargo by saying that:

*This would cut across our efforts to persuade all the parties that the issues cannot be resolved by military means. If the embargo were lifted on the Bosnian Muslims, other nations would start supplying the Serbs, thus intensifying and prolonging the conflict. (PRO, FO 973/701)*

However, the reason for not providing arms was not acceptable because the Serbs were provided with weapons from Russia and many Muslims were killed because they had no weapons to protect themselves. The terrible brutality and suffering in Bosnia had caused the international community to demand military intervention by the UN. They believed that the presence of a military force under the UN mandate could have the desired effect of separating the warring factions and achieve peace. Nevertheless, Britain felt that:

*Unfortunately separating the combatants would be immensely complex, probably require the use of considerable force and cause more bloodshed. It would add to the already immense difficulties of distributing humanitarian aid and might seriously disrupt it. The most likely outcome of international military intervention would be more deaths and increased misery for the survivors. (PRO, FO 973/700)*

Hence, UN and America also did not help to supply any weapons to them. The US policy of not sending their army to Bosnia under Bush administration was continued by Bill Clinton when he took over the presidency. For America, the problems in Bosnia-Herzegovina were the results of the accumulation of hundreds of years of ethnic hostility and distrust, a disaster waiting to happen. Therefore, America felt the war justified and left the Serbian to their devices. The same stand was taken by Britain. Britain had

failed to stop the slaughter of the Muslims and had refused to send her army, on the basis that:

*"We do not believe that military intervention is the best way to bring an end to the Yugoslav conflict. It could make an already serious situation worse. Military intervention would certainly add to the number of dead, not least because the relief effort now keeping thousands alive would end. Only a negotiated settlement will end the horrors"* (PRO, FO 973/701).

The UN was equally ineffective in dealing with the problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina, resulting in a protracted war. Its Secretary General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, claimed that Bosnia and Serbia were both too stubborn and had caused the negotiations to stall and peace difficult to achieve. The European Community and United Nation believed that the ethnic problem could only be solved if the opposing factions agreed to sit at the negotiation table and accept their differences (PRO, FO 973/701).

Malaysia viewed the reactions of the UN, America and other nations in Europe towards the war in Bosnia as unfair or one-sided and disappointing. Malaysia's parliamentary members, including the opposition parties, were united in condemning the double standard shown by the West in dealing with the Bosnian issue. As a member of the UN, Malaysia was frustrated with the failure of the world body to address the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict. Malaysia had earlier believed that the UN was capable of resolving the conflict. As time passed and the number of Muslims' deaths increased, Malaysia became more and more disillusion. On her part, Malaysia had deployed a peacekeeping mission to assist in the peace efforts there. Domestically, PAS, the Islamic-based opposition party in Malaysia, had earlier accused the then Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, of having Muslim blood on his hands in sending the Malaysian military force to Bosnia. Malaysia, under Mahathir's administration, had vocally

criticized America and the European Powers and called for justice for the Muslims in Bosnia. Malaysia felt that the UN was being used by the West for their own interest. Malaysia had no confidence that America and the UN could solve the Bosnian conflict transparently. Clinton did not seem to be committed in stopping the war in Bosnia (PRO, FO 973/701). In expressing his regret over the failure of the UN to act fairly on the problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dr. Mahathir said,

*"Need to be explained here that Malaysia involvement in UN peace keeping operation is base on the sovereignty principles of one country, justice and humanity and are not spurred by religion and politic. Time has come for the international community to review the roles of UN peacekeeping operation. UNPFOFOR's failure to stop Serb Bosnia's factional violence towards the Muslim and Bosnia Herzegovina Croat is a body blow to the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping Operation. There is no use for protector team to be sent if it cannot defend the public like what has been mandated"* (Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir B. Mohamad, [www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan](http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan), 1995)

Malaysia was also strongly against the US and Europe policies which did not want to abolish arms embargo to Bosnian fighters. America should have exerted her influence on her European allies to act fairly on Bosnia's arms issue but it failed to do so. It was observed that when America was ready to impose strict action in Bosnia, this was not supported by the European powers, and thus, preventing her from doing anything.' You mentioned that this statement was made by an officer from the National Affairs Department. However, this was not the case with Somalia and Iraq. The double standard showed by America was very clear because Bosnia was of no interest to America, as Iraq which is rich in oil and Somalia, in uranium.

Malaysia's frustration on the US policy and the European power was clearly voiced out by Mahathir, bringing into focus the sharp contrast between the Western's ethical obligations and their national interest (Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir B. Mohamad, [www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan](http://www.pmo.gov.my/ucapan), 1993):

*"...West was not shy to put behind their own justice principles if the act is necessary to their interest. In West Asia, they ostensibly act to protect Kuwaiti from the Iraq tyranny. They have acted in this manner because they claimed it is for humanitarian principle and justice but when Serb people acted savagely on Muslims openly, they gave many reasons to not take any action to fight the Serb"*

The inability of the UN to stop the carnage against the Bosnians and Croats was what drove Malaysia to continue to put pressure on the world body. Mahathir was very vocal in his criticism against what he considered was a grave injustice to Bosnia. He utilized various diplomatic channels, such as the Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC), to garner support for the Bosnians and to convince the Islamic countries to send troops under the UN umbrella.

It can be said that the inability of the UN and the West to act with great urgency on the Bosnian conflict contributed to the great emphasis on Malaysia's foreign policy where Bosnia was concerned. Mahathir's decision to send peacekeeping force certainly defied the observation made by Robert Gray (write his position here), who believed that no country would be willing to send its servicemen to maintain law and ensure peace in Bosnia. Mahathir's motivation was driven by various factors, top of which was his long-standing belief in the basic principle of self-determination and peace for humanity (Berita Harian, 20 Jan. 1994).

## INVASION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The seriousness of Malaysia's Foreign Policy in Herzegovina's conflict, was also driven by its principle, which opposes invasion of any powers on the fundamental rights of one independent country. Tito's death and the disunity of Yugoslavia had contributed to the bad leadership in Balkan. Milosevic, who was elected as Serbia's President in May 1989, had used his power and role to continue the Greater Serbia ambition and gave speeches to civilians on the Battle of Kosovo (Kaufman, 2002). The invasion and violation on the basic human rights, which occurred in Bosnia, had made as many as 200,000 Bosnians war victims and as many as over two million lost their homes. Milosevic's war crime on the Bosnian Muslims was witnessed by the whole world. However, no immediate effort was taken by the West to end the massacre of Muslims despite the fact that (House of Representatives, 28 October 1993): 1) there were clear violations against the and human rights in Bosnia Herzegovina by the Serbian acts, 2) the continuous cruelty committed by Serbia against the Muslim population, 3) the failure of the UN Security Council in taking strong action against what was clearly Serbia's act of genocide and ethnic cleansing, 4) the boundary based on race descendants or religion could not bring permanent peace and solution. These were the reasons why Malaysia was very serious with the Bosnians. The seriousness of the case had prompted the Malaysian government to discuss it in her Parliament, whereby it was agreed that Malaysia would take up the following resolutions (House of Representatives, 28 October 1993). Among them are:

Hereby, Malaysia has taken resolutions:

1. Condemn the invasion and all human rights violation on Muslims in Bosnia Herzegovina, especially genocide and ethnic cleansing.
2. Request the UN Security Council to fulfil its responsibility by taking firm action and to carry out the Council's resolutions, especially:



- Free Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia Herzegovina, from the Serb's threats and attacks.
  - press for the opening of Tuzla's airport which would enable food and medical supply to reach the war victims in Bosnia Herzegovina.
3. Urge the UN Security Council to withdraw the arms embargo which was imposed on Bosnia and press France and Britain not to block this effort.
  4. Present these resolutions to the Parliaments of all the relevant countries, especially Britain and France.

#### **MAHATHIR'S STANCE (OR FIGHT) AGAINST INJUSTICE**

Mahathir's stance against the injustice in Bosnia-Herzegovina was made clear from the very beginning. He was consistent in championing the fate of the Bosnians and this was made clear in many of his speeches. In one such speech, he reiterated that:

*Malaysia is very concern with Bosnia Herzegovina's problem. This concern is based on various factors. This includes the basic principles that were developed to preserve the peace independent state and basic principles that have been developed to ensure the well-beings of the whole nation. Both of these factors, which were based on this concern, had motivated Malaysia to question UN role in solving Bosnia Herzegovina's issue. Based on this situation and development, Malaysia couldn't be silent and not to question the role of the responsible parties such as UN in solving the problem in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the prejudice behaviour of UN in solving the said issue and half-hearted UN's behaviour at ending that conflict (Ruhanie Ahmad, 1994). These were the reasons which propelled Malaysia to question why*

*PBB actions looked like a comedy, half-hearted and Janus-faced in settling Bosnia Herzegovina's problem.*

*Due to these reasons, Malaysia will have to work hard to get the support of the world so that UN will be restructured again for global justice and equity. Malaysia will continue to convince the ally countries through Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), Commonwealth, South-South Dialogue and other related forum with us until BH's problem can be solved successfully. (Ruhanie Ahmad, 1994)*

Malaysia stayed true to her principles throughout the conflict by sending her representatives to influence and convince other states at international gatherings, such as the UN conference and the OIC. Malaysia was of the opinion that America, not NATO, the UN or Europe, was capable of resolving the problem. This was because, at that time, Europe was not seen as an entity that was formed through political unification. Furthermore, all the political parties in Malaysia, including the opposition parties, had requested Malaysia to start an international campaign to remove Boutros-Boutros Ghali, the UN Secretary General for his failure to prevent the act of terrorism and ethnic cleansing by the Serbians. Malaysia also condemned NATO on its failure to protect the UN-proclaimed 'safe area' in Bosnia (House of Representatives, 14 August 1995). The war victims needed protection on the on-going rampage but the major power continued to dally and provide excuses.

#### **ISLAM**

It cannot be denied that Malaysia's internal factor had played a role in influencing the direction of her foreign policy in this particular conflict. As a nation whose population comprise

of Muslim majority, it was natural for Malaysia to speak against the atrocities committed against another Muslim community the world over. (Shanta Nair, 1997) Forty-four percent of the Bosnian population were Muslim descendants of Bosnian Slavs who converted to Islam after the Turkish conquest in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, while 32 percent were non-Muslim Serbs, and 17 percent were Croats (PRO, FO 972/714).

Moreover, in a country whose main political party, UMNO, comprises of predominantly Muslims members holding important government posts, such a support for the Muslim Bosnians was to be expected. Apart from UMNO, opposition parties like PAS and DAP (though not a Muslim-based party) also supported Malaysia's involvement in the Bosnia conflict when the outside world, especially the west, had procrastinated on the call for armistice. Although the PAS leaders and DAP had only a few common political aspirations with UMNO, they were united on the Bosnian issue, unanimously supporting the government's effort to fight for the ill-fated Bosnians when the issue was brought up in the Parliament. (House of Representatives, 28 August 1995) Despite the common link, Mahathir insisted that:

*"Malaysia was very concerned with Bosnia-Herzegovina not merely because it is related to Islamic religion but we always concerned when and where a country is tyrannized by rampant injustice and oppression. Malaysia had also voiced its opinion with regards to South Africa, Cambodia and other non-Muslims country which face the similar problem." (Mohd Najib Tun Razak, 1996)*

#### **MALAYSIA'S ENGAGEMENT IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA**

In keeping to her words and in proving her seriousness in wanting to contribute to peace in Bosnia, Malaysia despatched her arm forces under the UN mission on 1 October 1993, under the command of Major General Dato'

Md Hashim Hussein. This team was known as Malbatt I which comprised of 996 members (Md Hashim Hussein, 1996). Malbatt's responsibility was to prevent the escalation of the war situation, prevent people from starving, provide medical assistance to the ill and be prepared to face armed conflicts even if they were not involved in military operation. These duties were carried out in many ways. First, they were to provide protection so that humanitarian aid could be delivered by cosmopolitan agencies to the area. Second, they were to assist the Bosnians so that they could live as normally and as decently as possible. Lastly, they were to engage in social activities, like building schools and bridges, to increase the people's standard of living in Bosnia (Mohd Najib Tun Razak, 1996).

This was the first Malaysian Armed Forces' (MAF) experience serving in a cold-climate European country compared with previous experiences that included servicing in hot-climate countries or countries having similar weather as Malaysia, such as Somalia, Cambodia and Namibia.

Moreover, the number of MAF's personnel sent was also bigger as compared to any of the previous missions. It was the first time that the MAF were given the mandate to manage ammunitions including tanks (Md Hashim Hussein, 1996). Malbatt's seriousness and efficiency in the operation in Bosnia were acknowledged and recognized by the UN. It was a proud moment for Malaysia when two officers were appointed at the UN Headquarters in New York. One was appointed as a four-star General and the other one was appointed as one-star General (Mohd Najib Tun Razak, 1996).

In keeping to her words and in proving her seriousness in wanting to contribute to peace in Bosnia, Malaysia despatched her arm forces under the UN's mission, in response to Resolution 776 of the UN Security Council in 1992. The Resolution, in turn, was the result of an appeal by the UNHCR for the world body to increase protective support for humanitarian convoys into Bosnia. Malaysia responded to the call for the placing of more UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) by sending the Malaysian

Armed Forces (MAF) in February 1993. (PRO, FO 973/701). In February 1993, Malaysian Armed Forces joined UNPROFOR. The MAF's responsibility under UNPROFOR was to create peace and security in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The death of one MAF officer serving under UNPROFOR during an operation to clear mines off lands in Bosnia only served to reinforced Malaysia's stand to continue serving in the warring country longer. Malaysia was not satisfied when UNPROFOR failed to achieve its responsibility to carry out peace in Bosnia. The Bosnian Muslims continued to be targeted by the Serbs and were not given realistic protection (House of Representatives, 1993). The special representative from the UK for UNPROFOR was deemed an incompetent person. This is because UNPROFOR, which was placed under the representative's command, was making negotiations with the terrorists, when in the words of the British Defence Secretary, Malcom Rifkind, under UNPROFOR:

*"The troops are not there to fight their way through to their destination. That is not part of the UN mandate. The UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies will proceed on the basis of negotiated safe passage and with the consent of the warring parties. The purpose of the light military escort is to defer attacks and to deal with mines and other obstacles. The international forces are empowered, however to defend themselves if attacked."* (PRO, FO 973/701).

This was unprofessional and the Malaysian troops were put in a difficult position due to such hypocrisy. UNPROFOR's failure to attain its objectives in Bosnia-Herzegovina was not only denounced by Malaysia, but also by other UN members and this caused the UN to pull back peacekeeping forces in December 1995. The withdrawal was replaced by NATO. Malbatt's strength was improved from 996 to 1533. Malbatt was renamed as MALCON or the First Malaysian Contingent. MALCON I started its

work on 1 March 1996 and stayed in Bosnia-Herzegovina until June 1996. MALCON's task was to implement military protection in the areas that were accountable under MALCON in Bosnia (Misi Pengaman PBB, TDM, Nation Protection Force In Bosnia-Herzegovina, <http://maf.mod.gov.my>). It was estimated that Malaysia had spend about RM94 million to finance the MAF's expenditure in the UN's peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (House of Representatives, 5 May 1994).

### **MALAYSIA AND THE OIC ON THE BOSNIAN ISSUE**

In April 1993, Malaysia called upon the OIC's member countries that convened in Karachi to unanimously support the proposal to have the UN revoke the arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims. The OIC conference agreed that Bosnians needed to have weapons to defend themselves from Serbia's terrorism. Malaysia had hoped that the pressure from OIC would enable the UN to take concrete action to stop the war. Malaysia also lobbied for the OIC to support her plans to enable the Malaysian troops in Bosnia to expand their responsibility from peace keeping to war operation, if required.

In addition, Malaysia had used her diplomatic influences to organize a meeting with the OIC in order to bring together the 13 leaders of the OIC countries at Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur in 1995. Its focus was specifically to discuss the Bosnian issue (New Straits Time, 17 September, 1995). The OIC enlisted Pakistan, Morocco and Djibouti, who are also members of the UN, to step up pressure on the world organisation to revoke the arms embargo on Bosnia (Berita Harian, 5 Feb, 1993). At the meeting, the leaders of the Islamic countries also reaffirmed their continued support for Bosnia Herzegovina's sovereignty and her independence and requested that all member countries offer trade, and economic and technical assistance to help the Bosnian and Croatian governments to rebuild the damages caused by the war. Malaysia hoped that the OIC would cooperate with other international



organisations to provide effective assistance to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina. At the same time, Malaysia also stressed and suggested that the OIC countries should extend humanity aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina (House of Representatives, 27 April, 1993).

Malaysia had also lobbied the UN, through 'the Contact Group' i.e. (small countries among the OIC members) inclusive of Malaysia', by actively maintaining relationship and negotiation with the UN so that they would continue to press and ensure that all the Muslim countries' views were taken into account by the UN. Active Contact Group members in New York had been pressuring the UN through letters and private statements that were issued by its Honourable Secretary. Malaysia acting as an OIC representative had also sent hard messages calling for the resignation of the then Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, for his failure to solve Bosnian's conflict (House of Representatives, 14 August 1995). The moral pressure had him finally considering Malaysia's call.

In addition, Malaysia and the OIC implored to the UN to set up a special tribunal whose main responsibility was to investigate Serbia's cruelty on Bosnians (Berita Harian, 16 Feb 1993). This yielded a positive result when the UN agreed to form the special tribunal to question the former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. The OIC also requested that the UN stood firm and moved to re-establish Bosnia-Herzegovina's independence and sovereignty (House of Representatives, 10 May 1993). Through this conference, Malaysia also recommended that all countries have their authority to speak and play active roles in moving the world body (UN) to address the conflict on a universal track, rather than allowing any one country to monopolise or influence its decision.

What is important in the meeting among the OIC representatives from various countries, comprising of Defence Ministers and Chief Military, was that a stern action that OIC countries to help the Bosnian society had been taken. Meeting in Kuala Lumpur had given

awareness to the westerners to solve the conflict and to achieve peace (House of Representatives, 10 May 1993). OIC is one of the international diplomatic channels used by Malaysia to give pressure on UN and western country in relation to war in Bosnia. Malaysia also played an active role in international forums sponsored by OIC to find the best solutions to overcome Bosnian issue so that it would be accepted by the whole world.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis in this article showed that Bosnia-Herzegovina had a firm place in Malaysia's foreign policy due to various factors. Malaysia was clearly frustrated by the lackadaisical attitude of America and the UN, who were slow in responding to the conflict. The double standard and favouritism present in their actions riled Mahathir, who was very vocal in his criticism. Malaysia was deeply disappointed with the former for failing to utilize her resources in squashing the rise of ethnic cleansing and questioned the credibility of the latter as a peacekeeping agency. Although some may view Malaysia's stance as being driven by a common issue, i.e. religion and by domestic pressure, Malaysia's deep involvement was also motivated by the need to stand against what she considered to be rampant injustice and oppression of the Bosnians. Malaysia had criticized the American and the western countries for dragging their feet in sponsoring the peace-making process in Bosnia. Malaysia, though not as great as America and any other Western countries, had given her contributions in distinctive ways. Malaysia's engagement in the UN peacekeeping missions, like UNPROFOR and Malbatt, served to prove her commitment to see peace in the conflicting territories. In addition, Malaysia had made her voice heard in international forums and lobbied the OIC to get justice for the Bosnians. The country had also pushed for the establishment of an international tribunal to bring the people responsible for the atrocities against the Bosnians to trial.

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