BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND SOUTH AFRICA IN THE POST-APARTHEID ERA

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been dully acknowledged.

Date: May 19, 2006

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This study was done on the relations between South Africa and Malaysia in the Post-Apartheid era. From its independence in 1957, one of the first foreign policies that Malaysia adopted was to identify itself with the cause of South Africans in their fight against apartheid. This policy continued throughout the history from Tunku Abdu Rahman's era, the first Prime Minister of Malaysia to Abdallah Badawi. However, it was under Dr Mahathir's premiership that South Africa and Malaysia started direct relationship. This was attributed to the abolition of apartheid system in South Africa in 1994 which Malaysia was opposed to. This change laid foundation for the two countries to strengthen their bilateral relations which included political, economic and cultural. By 1997 before the Asian financial crisis, Malaysia was South Africa's second largest investing state with total investment of Rand 6.8 billion only after the United States. Nevertheless, this trend was affected when Asian financial crisis took place. Shortly after the crisis, Malaysia went from the second investing countries in South Africa to 23rd within three short-year periods, and since then, this trend did not reverse. Thus, the purpose of this research was to investigate and examine the factors that have affected the bilateral relations between the two countries. To achieve these goals, the paper raised three main questions first, what are the spheres of South Africa-Malaysia relations? Second, what are the factors affecting South Africa-Malaysia bilateral relations? And third, why is there a decline of trade and investments between the two countries from 1997 onwards?

After an investigation and examination of the relations between the two countries, this research recognised the Asian financial crisis as part and partial of the decline between South Africa and Malaysia as many people thought, but it was also found that there were other factors that could have caused the decline between the two countries even if the Asian financial crisis did not take place. These among others are South African business environment, policy adopted by Dr Mahathir towards African countries in general and South Africa in particular, foreign policy prioritising in response of country’s national interests and Third world dependency on the developed world for capital and investments.

This research adopts neo-liberal interdependence theory to analyse the nature of South Africa-Malaysia's relations in the post-Apartheid era. It uses a descriptive and a historical-analytical method in its attempt to analyse Malaysia-South Africa bilateral relation. Past events are recalled for their facts, which is analysed and interpreted for their significance during the period 1994 to 2006. This will enable an examination of the historical background of the two country's foreign policies, and at the same time allow an assessment of the period under investigation. This historical-analytical approach also enables the researcher to analyse why there were shifts in the relation between South Africa and Malaysia from 1997 onwards. Therefore the study covers the entire era of Pre-Apartheid and Post-Apartheid.
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