

Connecting South- South Communities

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*The Narrative of South African-
Malaysian Relations*

By

Muhammed Haron

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MAPS OF SOUTH AFRICA AND MALAYSIA

South Africa



Source: <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/factbook/sf/map.html>

Basic Statistical Data about South Africa

AREA, POPULATION & DENSITY

AREA (per square km)	1,219,080
POPULATION (census results)	
9 October 1996	40,583,573
9 July 2014:	
MALE	23,993,597
FEMALE	<u>24,383,148</u>
Total:	48,376,745

POPULATION (official statistics mid-year)	
2002	45,454,211
2003	46,429,823
2014	48,376,745
DENSITY (per square km in mid 2014)	37.4

Source: *Africa South of the Sahara, 2005* - Europa Publications, 2014 & *Census 2001: Census in brief*, 2nd edition. Statistics South Africa 2014.

Malaysia



Source: <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/factbook/my/map.html> and http://aseanup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/malaysia_sm_2008.gif

Basic Statistical Data about Malaysia

AREA, POPULATION & DENSITY

AREA (per square km)	
PENINSULA MALAYSIA	131,686
SABAH (including LABUAN)	73,711
SARAWAK	<u>124,450</u>
Total:	329, 847
POPULATION (census results)	
14 August 1990	18,379,655
20 July 2014	
MALE	15,255,412
FEMALE	<u>14,817,941</u>
Total:	30,073,353
POPULATION (official statistics mid-year)	
2002	24,530,000
2003	25,050,000
2014	30,073,353
DENSITY (per square km in mid 2014)	75.9

Source: *The Far East & Australasia*, 2005 - Europa Publications, 2014
www.indexmundi.com

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in South Africa's relationship with Malaysia was kindled when these two nation-states re-established diplomatic ties; this was not long after the South African iconic imprisoned figure, Nelson Mandela (d. 2014), was released in February 1990. Apart from having grown attached to the Malaysian Peninsula after my maiden voyage during June 1993 and through my increasing personal contact with Malaysian academics and cultural activists, I decided to pursue research that would assist in understanding the relationship that was slowly being forged between the two regions (i.e. SADC and ASEAN) on the one hand, and the two nation-states (i.e. South Africa and Malaysia), on the other. From the available research records, it was observed that between 1994 and 2004 not much research had been done that recorded and analysed the growing diplomatic and commercial relationship that was being developed between these two nation-states and their respective regions.

As far as I noticed – rightly or wrongly, there was an intransigent attitude that seemed to have prevailed among members of the South African social science and humanities communities towards discussing and analysing South-South relations, particularly South Africa's relationship with Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. It was this particularly inflexible position that spurred me on to undertake research about the evolving socio-political, economic, and religio-cultural connections that subsequently gave rise to a working relationship between SADC and ASEAN and the strengthening of South African-Malaysian connections. In any event, since I monitored the relationship that developed between these two regions and nation-states and after having accumulated the relevant data and information, I consequently put together and analysed the collected material that formed the basis of my doctoral dissertation upon which a sizeable portion of this book is based; the dissertation, and now this book, tried to basically capture some of the salient features of the relationship that was forged on different levels.

On the one level, the book tells the story of how the two regional blocs have striven towards forming a working relationship. Within this regional narrative, it shows how the two democratically elected governments in South Africa and Malaysia worked towards re-establishing diplomatic bonds and commercial connections; they did so in order to lay firm

foundations for the creation of a firm, strong and - perhaps - a 'strategic partnership'. On another level, the book narrates the tale of a people-to-people relationship that took place through cultural exchanges and other social activities. Apart from addressing the nature of International Relations in the South on these two levels, it also brings into focus the notion of sovereignty that underpins the independence of both states but one that also illustrates its conspicuous shortcomings.

That said, this book would not have been possible if it had not been for the constant moral and critical supervisory support that I received from Professor Peter Vale. This was during the time he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and when he shifted to Rhodes University where he served as the Nelson Mandela Professor of Politics and International Relations until the end of 2010; he is currently a Professor of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the Director of the Johannesburg Institute of Advanced Study (that was jointly initiated by UJ and Singapore's Nanyang Technological University).

My research would not have been accomplished if it had not been for the partial assistance of Abdullah Ali and Imtiyaz Ahmad, my two sons who were undergraduate students (circa 2000-2007) at UWC in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. The same applies to Ms. Mmabatho, my former University of Botswana (UB) MA Religious Studies student, who helped to identify missing references and incomplete bibliographical sources for this text. I also convey my gratitude to a few scholars who generously sent me their publications that were not available at the South African academic libraries where I conducted much of my research.

Furthermore, I express my appreciation to (a) The National Research Foundation (NRF) that has financially contributed towards parts of my research on South Africa-Malaysia Relations over the years, (b) the University of Malaya (Kuala Lumpur), the National University of Malaysia (UKM - Bangi), and the Institute of South East Asian Studies (ISEAS - Singapore) that permitted me to use their library facilities whenever I passed through Southeast Asia for academic meetings, (c) the School of Oriental and African Studies - University of London, the University of Cape Town, the UB and UWC for having allowed me to use their facilities, and (d) UJ for having brought me on board as a research associate during the period when I was re-working parts of the chapters in this book.

Sincere thanks also go to the late Tan Sri Professor Ismail Hussein (d. 2014), GAPENA's president who extended numerous invitations to

participate in some of GAPENA's gatherings. At the same time, I also thank those friends/colleagues who read through the drafts of some of the chapters, especially Keith Gottschalk (Political Science at UWC), and Professor Sharifah Zaleha (Social Anthropology at UKM). Thanks are also extended to the former Kuala Lumpur-based South African High Commissioner, Dr. Abraham Nkomo and his former first secretary, Mr. Philip Riley. Both of them supported the publication of my edited work titled *Going Forward: South Africa and Malaysia Cementing Relations* that was printed and financially covered by Lim Kok Wing University of Creative Technology in 2008; it is a text that despite its deficiencies that took place during the editorial process, partially supplements and to a large extent complements this book. I should also express my thanks to the Institut Asia Eropah's Professor Azirah Hashim for having granted me the chance to make use of its resource centre and for also accommodating me for a week during July 2016 when it hosted the ASEAN-Korea international conference. Finally, I also wish to record my thanks to my colleagues in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at UB for having provided a friendly collegial environment within which I could rework and revise the manuscript.

Finally, I want to convey my true appreciation to my beloved Cape Town family who have had to endure my lengthy periods of absence from home as 'a migrant labourer' and for their unstinting support for the work that I have been doing over the past number of years.

ABSTRACT

South Africa's domestic policy of discrimination against its predominantly Black (i.e. African, Coloured, and Indian) population impacted heavily upon the attitudes and policies that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) member states adopted towards South Africa. The apartheid regime's beliefs and practices of domestic and foreign policies, which were in essence embedded in Dutch Reform theological teachings, espoused a particular brand of Christianity that adopted a Eurocentric mind-set as opposed to an Afro-Asiatic one. And as a result of this, apartheid South Africa's foreign policy towards Africa and Asia was partially moulded and shaped to accommodate pariah states such as (the Zionist state of) Israel; states that broke the UN imposed sanctions and that pursued a trade to boost their national interests.

The arrogant attitude adopted by the apartheid regime towards the Blacks' religio-cultural practices domestically also had a bearing on its behaviour towards religio-cultural systems [other than Dutch Reform Christianity] internationally. The apartheid regime, for example, constructed an extremely negative perception of a variety of cultural groups such as the Arabs, Chinese, Indians, and Malays. And since South Africa's negative stance directly influenced its internal and external policies it raised the fear of (a) the Rooi Gevaar (i.e. the danger of Communism), (b) the Swart Gevaar (i.e. the threat of Black [African] threat) and (c) the Slamse Gevaar (i.e. the Muslim threat). It may, however, be argued that many of the Asian (Southwest Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Far East) states including many African states were not fully aware of apartheid South Africa's construction and implementation of its internal domestic policies during the 1950s and 1960s because most of them were bogged down with their own internal problems and transformations and were all trying to achieve independence from their former colonial masters.

Apartheid South Africa, for pragmatic reasons in the 1970s, changed its stance and adopted a more accommodating attitude towards the Arab and to some extent the Asian states because it desperately required oil from the region and it wanted to conduct commercial activities to invigorate its flagging domestic market. Some of these states, in turn, needed South African products and chose to stealthily break the sanctions

which the United Nations had imposed. The sanction busting states, which included a handful of African and Asian states, did not care much how the White apartheid regime conducted its internal affairs as long as they benefitted from the trade ties that were forged. Malaysia was among the few states from within the Asian bloc that broke trade ties with the apartheid state in the early 1960s and applied continuous pressure at international gatherings to have apartheid dismantled and replaced with a democratically elected government.

It was only when Mr. F. W. De Klerk, apartheid South Africa's last president who was under immense internal and external pressure, released Mr. Nelson Mandela and lifted the ban on the liberation movements during February 1990 that states such as Malaysia demonstrated a keen interest in reconnecting with South Africa via commercial and diplomatic ties. Prior to the first democratic elections in South Africa, Malaysia's ruling party (i.e. UMNO) financially supported the African National Congress (ANC) in preparing themselves for the elections. And when Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first president of the new democratic South Africa in May 1994, Malaysia was amongst the first group of Asian states that eagerly sent governmental representatives to attend this auspicious occasion. The presence of these states was a clear indication that they came to celebrate with all South Africans this unique historical event. It, however, was also a reflection of the change of attitude in the world towards South Africa and its newly elected government.

Since 1994 countries from North Africa and Asia have increased their diplomatic links and they consequently have concluded numerous trade agreements with South Africa. All of these developments in the field of International Relations (IR) demonstrated that these countries were convinced that South Africa would serve as a useful diplomatic friend and an international partner that would assist in forging a relationship with other nation-states in and beyond Southern Africa. The Malaysians, whose economy has been booming since the 1980s and particularly in the early 1990s under Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's leadership, have been amongst those nations that gave the ANC unstinting support and who were confident in South Africa's leadership and position in the South. Mahathir, who had been in the vanguard of South-South relations throughout the 1990s, gave his full backing to the ANC as a liberation movement and when it transformed itself into a political party under Nelson Mandela's erstwhile leadership in the new democratic dispensation.

Mahathir's commitment to South Africa's socio-political transformation in the 1990s placed him amongst the few Asian leaders who morally and financially assisted the ANC. Continuous contact between South Africa

and Malaysia has thus been ongoing prior to South Africa's first democratic elections. Since 1994 Malaysia has been one of the Southeast Asian states that have made substantial investments in South Africa that were temporarily affected by the economic meltdown in the Southeast Asian region during 1997/1998, democracy did not stop the Malaysians from pursuing their interests in South Africa after it was able to re-build its economy.

One can convincingly draw the conclusion that at the government-to-government level strong connections had been forged and maintained during the past two and a half decades (circa 1991-2016). These relations, however, were further developed and strengthened at another but lesser known level in the IR arena. On this level, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as religious organizations and cultural groups created people-to-people's partnerships. The range of non-governmental projects that individual non-state actors, religious organizations and cultural groups in South Africa initiated and pursued with their counterparts in Malaysia since 1993 has increased at a steady pace and continues to forge interesting socio-cultural and religious ties. Within the arena of IR, these non-state actors have taken South Africa's relations with other states to different heights, and this was done with generally little or no support from the South African government.

These developments say much for what was happening in 'the backyard' or – to use part of Peter Vale's metaphor - 'the downstairs' of South Africa's IR agenda. Regrettably, these developments were off South Africa and Malaysia's respective diplomatic radar screens; they have largely gone unnoticed and hence unrecorded. Providentially, Malaysia was aware of the role of some of its NGOs such as National Writers Union of Malaysia (GAPENA) and thus gave these socio-cultural and religious organizations the necessary financial support to pursue their goals. In spite of this, the view still stands that social scientists in general and IR specialists in particular, did not really consider the NGO's activities to be relevant and significant; the basic reason for this understanding may be attributed to the fact that they did not form an integral part of these two states' IR policy agenda.

This book, which is embedded in the Critical Theory framework that takes cognizance of some of these important developments, notes down significant variables and narrates South Africa and Malaysia's stories by locating each of them within their respective regions. It does so by providing broad overviews of the working relationship that exists between the Southern Africa Development Communities (SADC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This overview thus

acts as an important backdrop within which to not only understand but to fully appreciate these two state's relationships with one another and as representatives from the South. Since the ideas espoused by South Africa and Malaysia's political leaders are rooted in their specific national and broad regional philosophies, the book also unpacks somewhat briefly the notions of the 'African ways' vis-à-vis 'Asian ways' in maintaining and sustaining state-to-state relations within the two regions.

The book basically captures a fairly detailed story of a bilateral relationship that has developed quite considerably between 1991 and 2001, and that continued to forge trade ties between 2002 and 2016. Apart from having captured their connections as middle power nation-states, it goes on to narrate their rich stories that revealed how they used their own resources to advance the cause of other nation-states that belonged to the South's marginalized world. Stated simply, this is essentially an analytical account of South-South relations in which both South Africa and Malaysia have been and still are significant middle power players; since this is indeed the case Chapter One sets the scene that describes this relationship. Thereafter, the other chapters offer insights into this unfolding relationship by reflecting upon its regional, bilateral, commercial and socio-cultural dimensions.

Fifteen Keywords: Globalization, Modernization, Identity, Story-Telling, South, Regionalism, SADC, ASEAN, Sovereignty, South Africa, Malaysia, Nation-States, Trade, Non-State Actors, NGOs.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE FOR NARRATING SOUTH-SOUTH RELATIONS: AN INTRODUCTION

A new era was ushered in when the Cold War abruptly ended at the close of the 1980s; the geopolitical landscape of the globe suddenly changed and numerous events unfolded at a rapid pace. One of the most unimaginable and unthinkable historical acts took place during the first year of the post-Cold War period in apartheid South Africa. During February 1990, the world witnessed the release of Mr. Nelson Mandela (hereafter Mandela) who had until then languished in prison for 27 years; this was because of Mandela's uncompromising and unwavering stand against the inhumane imposed apartheid laws. And soon after Mandela's release the apartheid regime also lifted the banning restrictions on all South Africa's liberation movements (Lodge 2002; Sparks 2002). Whilst this was an unforgettable historical moment for South Africans, the Malaysians under Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's (hereafter Mahathir) multifaceted leadership charted out a significant Vision 2020 document (Hamzah 2003: 54); the latter document has acted, since the beginning of the 1990s, as an important road map. With Vision 2020 as a critical roadmap, the ambitious Mahathir who had a bigger picture in mind prudently established the South-South Cooperation project; one that was used to advance the interests of the South in general and Malaysia's projects and programs in particular (Mohamed 1997). All of these memorable historical events set the scene for what was to unfold during the next two and a half decades (i.e. circa 1991-2016).

In the case of South Africa, the 'elite' within the African National Congress (ANC) under Mandela's headship started to negotiate with the National Party, which had been in power since 1948, at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) forum. The negotiations, which took more than three years, worked towards ironing out, resolving and reaching compromises on several sensitive matters. Even though quite a few remained unresolved and tucked away under the approved 'sunset

clauses', the parties reached agreement on many important issues; these assisted in advancing their intense and heated discussions to an acceptable level. Subsequent to these negotiations and after South Africans participated in the first democratic elections at the end of April 1994, a new era was ushered in; one that was a watershed period in South Africa's colourful history and a period during which it returned to join regional and international bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the United Nations (UN). During this period, Malaysia which had a head start in expressing its democratic rights as a sovereign nation-state, took advantage of its strong socio-economic and political position by agreeing with fourteen fellow developing countries to form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in order (a) to encourage and increase trade among themselves, and (b) to shift away from being too dependent upon their commercial connections with the developed states in the 'West' (Acharya 2000; Tarling 2006).

These socio-historical events however, belong to a much larger tale that has been narrated, reported and interpreted by a host of journalists, social scientists, foreign policy makers and IR specialists. These events provided IR specialists and political scientists, who were taken aback by the speedy changes that had taken place in the post-Cold War period, much to debate and discourse about. These scholars grappled and discussed the reasons that gave rise to these socio-political developments. While some tried to explain the nature of the changes, others attempted to reflect upon and predict forthcoming events, and in the process of their numerous deliberations, there were those who proposed new IR theories and constructed fresh analytical frameworks (Burchill 2001: 24). Among the political scientists who seriously ventured into this area was Samuel Huntington (d. 2008), the Harvard University-based scholar; he came up with his highly flawed *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) theory with the objective of comprehending the developments that would gradually unfurl in the years ahead. Huntington's defective theory, which categorized the world into diverse civilizational blocs, was critically challenged and interrogated by an array of scholars such as Edward Said (d. 2002) and Fouad Ajami (d. 2014); they essentially expressed the view that his theory was highly untenable and questioned the reasons why he presented these indefensible theoretical assertions.

Aside from these theoretical debates, which were ongoing throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, it was acknowledged that the post-Cold War international system encountered and continued to face new challenges and transformations. And since this was the case, both South Africa and Malaysia, that represented the South and their respective

regions had to deal with the ever-changing socio-political and economic landscape. Before narrating and capturing the diplomatic ties and commercial connections that underpinned the relations between these two nation-states in a post-Cold War era, it is perhaps important to briefly reflect upon some of the theoretical debates that helped in understanding the transformed and changed international environment prior to sharing this book's hypothesis.

1. The Changed International Environment

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the world watched with horror at the sudden outbreak of conflicts in the Middle East (Iraq's illicit invasion of Kuwait), Eastern Europe (ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia) and Africa's Great Lakes Region (the genocide in Rwanda). Since most social scientists were caught off-guard by these happenings, they passionately engaged one another in intense theoretical debates that interrogated, among others, the notion of state sovereignty. The developments that took place in various parts of the globe gave rise to a batch of IR specialists who challenged the theories that were advocated by established classical scholars and their schools. As non-conformists, they interrogated the epistemological and ontological roots of these traditional theories; theories that were no longer suitable to comprehend the changes that were taking place in the radically changed international system. They thus proposed and devised new ones that assisted in understanding these conflicts and events in a better light. Their scholarly ventures brought to the fore fresh frameworks within which these concepts, ideas, norms and values could be critically assessed, debated and evaluated (cf. Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff. 1997).

So, when turning to the contents of this study it was realized at the outset that classical theories such as Realism, which held sway in certain circles throughout the Cold War period, were out of sync with the changing conditions and with the nature of the relationship that had been forged between South Africa and Malaysia. In the light of the inappropriateness of the classical theories, this study shifted its focus to those fresh frameworks and theoretical models that were debated by scholars associated with the Frankfurt School. This school produced a theoretical model referred to as the Critical Theory (cf. Devetak 1996; George 1994; Roach 2012), which was viewed and considered as a suitable model for this study; the basic reason for its selection was that it essentially provided and continues to offer opportunities for those who represent marginalized groups in the IR arena. In other words, Critical

Theory, unlike Realism and Structuralism, allows for the voices from the South to be heard and recorded; it is a theory that takes into account the opinions of both state and non-state actors who contribute directly and indirectly towards the making and shaping of IR (Burchill et al. 1996). Since this text intends to explore this theory - alongside other significant and related processes and variables - in some detail to demonstrate its applicability and relevance to this study, we now turn to its hypothesis.

2. The Hypothesis

From a Critical Theory (CT) perspective, the hypothesis is based upon three interrelated propositions: (a) the Malaysians acted in the interest of the South, i.e. the voiceless, when they aired their views and spoke out against apartheid policies starting in the 1960s, and when they lobbied for international support in the imposition of sanctions against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s (Danaher 1989); (b) the forging of ties between democratic South Africa and Malaysia in the early 1990s advanced the cause of the South and was a step towards bringing about some sort of 'balance' in the international system, and (c) the constructive contributions that were made by cultural activists - as non-state actors - and others enhanced the relationship between nation-states such as South Africa and Malaysia and as a consequence brought into view a neglected dimension of IR.

The hypothesis should be seen within a broader canvas of international developments; one in which "the New World Order ushered in new complexities into the world system" (Morris 2002: 6). This order brought into the spotlight a multitude of evolutionary events such as the ending of the Cold War, the merging of transnational corporate companies, the formation of new nation-states, the creation of regional structures, the development of cross-border state alliances and the establishment of trans-cultural links. All of these events impacted upon the bilateral and multilateral relations that have been and are being forged between nation-states (in this case, South Africa, and Malaysia) and regions (in this instance, SADC and ASEAN). Although the hypothesis might not be able to adequately explain all the activities that have thus far taken place between South Africa and Malaysia, it does provide a good basis within which to understand and comprehend their relationship, which is naturally the main focus of this book.

This book - along with this author's edited text *Going Forward: Cementing South Africa – Malaysia Relations* (2008) - sees itself as a significant contribution to South-South relations and more specifically to

the relationship between South Africa and Malaysia. Few have ventured to examine the relationship between South Africa and Malaysia. Whilst attempts by Janis van der Westhuizen (2002) and a handful of others covered specific dimensions, they – with the exception of Mamoudou Conde’s unpublished MA National University of Malaysia thesis (2006) - did not zoom into the actual relationship that had evolved between these two states. The contents of this book, which goes far beyond what Conde covered, tangibly demonstrate how this relationship evolved over the past few decades and they further show how different aspects such as the commercial ties contributed towards the existing diplomatic partnership. It also illustrates how the nation-states have indirectly benefited from the contributions that have been made by the role played by non-state actors and how the regional relations also enhanced the connections.

When this researcher embarked on this study diverse sources were employed; it extracted ideas from primary sources such as speeches, official records, and other public documents, and it drew upon an array of secondary sources such as previous research studies, journal articles, book chapters, working papers, monographs and books. Now that an overview of the book’s hypothesis has been explained and the rationale for evaluating the South-South connections had been stated, the section which follows offers an insight into the literature that dealt with the relationship that developed between South Africa and Malaysia in particular, and that which covered SADC-ASEAN relations in general.

3. Reviewing the Literature

Earlier it was mentioned that when the Cold War period came to an abrupt halt and a new international state system was in the making, the social science community was astounded by the rapid changes that took place, and at the same time they tried to critically reflect upon these developments in their texts. South Africa’s social scientists joined the world academic community in writing popular articles to capture these changes. Among them were those who demonstrated how South Africa’s foreign policy and its IR agenda had been radically transformed; and how it had shifted from that of a pariah state to one adopting a universalist approach in international relations towards Asia and other non-traditional states (Bischoff 1998). A coterie of scholars analysed, from a variety of dimensions, the types of relations South Africa has forged with states on the Asian continent over the past several years. Since there were a small number of scholarly writings that addressed this subject, an attempt will be made to, albeit briefly, review these in order to demonstrate the extent to

which they have dealt with South Africa's IR policies towards Asia in general and Malaysia in particular.

Before doing that, mention should be made of Fred von der Mehden's article titled *Southeast Asia's Relations with Africa* that was published as far back as 1965 in *Asian Surveys*; herein he tried to capture the nature of the relationship by not only reflecting on the Afro-Asian meetings of which Bandung was one of the most important ones (Phillips 2016), but also addressed the trade trends during the period prior to the date of publication. Despite von der Mehden's important observations, nothing of note appeared thereafter. Serious scholarly interventions only began to take place during the 1990s when IR changes were visibly underway.

3.1 Scholarship: South Africa's Foreign Policy towards ASEAN's Malaysia

During the era of apartheid scholars such as Barber & Barret (1990) as well as numerous others who wrote about South African Foreign Policy and on IR issues, made little or no mention of South Africa's links with Asian states (cf. Haron 1996). The basic reason for this state of affairs was that the scholars, who pursued these areas of specialization, and policy makers who were involved in constructing apartheid South Africa's Foreign Policy, were mainly White (male) Afrikaner scholars (Vale 1994: 82; Kornegay & Landsberg 2000: 35; Le Pere & Van Nieukerk 2004; Hughes 2004). In addition, these White male elites espoused ideas and philosophies that have been deeply and firmly embedded within the Eurocentric tradition of IR and political science scholarship (Vale 1977; Vale 1994: 79). They were either trained in South African Afrikaner/English academic establishments or in Europe/USA where they were only exposed to Western theories and paradigms; none of them, as far as is known, have been stimulated to explore theoretical IR scholarship that was concerned with alternative models. They, on the whole, showed very little enthusiasm for study of Asian languages and to excavate the rich traditions that formed an integral part of that vast continent's identity. This very negative attitude towards Asian studies has unfortunately rubbed off on to the South(ern) African academic institutions that have not been proactive – with the exception of a very few individuals – in setting up dedicated interdisciplinary academic structures and research units to pursue these areas. If this had happened as was witnessed in European and North American scholarship during the latter part of the 20th century, then a better and more informed understanding of the Asian continent's economics, politics and culture would have emerged within the South(ern)

African academia as well as within this region's NGO circles; this has favourably changed during the first decade of the new millennium with the cooperation between SADC and ASEAN institutions such as South Africa's UJ and Singapore's NTU.

Returning to Barber & Barret (1990) and other related publications, it was observed that when Asia was mentioned in these works it was either buried in a few footnotes or it was covered *en passant* along the margins. Asia, as a continent, was dealt with in this 'scholarly' manner as if the continent did not exist! Scholarly insights into Asia from within the South African academic circles were rare, and it was only institutions such as the University of Durban-Westville ([UDW] now merged with the University of Natal to form the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal [UKZN]) where research was ongoing and where there was a strong scholarly tradition; it lamentably only gave attention to South Asian linguistic and cultural traditions and did not cast its sights to the larger part of that continent. This was so because the apartheid state had deliberately set aside UDW - as part of its loathsome policy of segregation – for 'Indians' only.

Whilst there were a handful of scholars who wrote about South Africa's special relations with Israel, which was ironically located in Southwest Asia but which was invariably associated with Europe (as if it was a *bona fide* 'European' state!), there were others who evaluated its ties with Far Eastern states such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan: this implied that scant attention was given to the rest of Asia. In essence, it tangibly indicated that the Asian region, in general, was of little or no value in the eyes of South African academia throughout the apartheid era. From this, it may concretely be concluded that South African (Afrikaner and English) social scientists in general and political scientists, in particular, showed negligible interest in opening up opportunities for potential, young (Black [men and women]) scholars that would emerge in the years ahead and address the IR research gaps. Simply put: they lacked scholarly vision in preparing young scholars for the future.

As the socio-political scene changed from the beginning of the 1990s, scholars shifted their sights to possible areas of research. Deon Geldenhuys, a professor of Political Studies at Rand Afrikaans University (now the University of Johannesburg [UJ]) was among the few who suggested a future agenda of research; in his *South Africa: from international isolation to reintegration* paper he made reference to Asia and the Middle East as new areas of focus. Mr. L. Evans, the then Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs, outlined the changes and challenges which South Africa faced as it forged ties with the new world in his paper titled *South African Foreign Policy and the New*

World Order during 1993; he made particular reference to possible ties with selected states in the Middle East and Asia. And in *Asiaweek*, an anonymous contributor, who wrote *Building a Nation: Asia's experience may hold lessons for South Africa* (18 May 1994), suggested that South Africans should consider looking at Asia when embarking upon their nation-building project.

The proposed research agenda as highlighted by these scholars and practitioners of IR seems to have stimulated a few scholars; among them was Professor Gillian Hart. The latter, who was based at the University of California and who was associated with UKZN published her text that focused on *The NEP and Redistribution in Malaysia: A Model for Post-Apartheid South Africa*; it was a critical study of Malaysia's National Economic Policy (NEP) and the developments that took place since its implementation. Hart's article was somewhat complemented by the South African Communist Party's article that was included in its quarterly journal *The African Communist* (1995). In SACP's editorial and in an article on that particular issue, it critically responded to the views espoused by the late Minister Stella Sigcau (d. 2012) who was the then Minister of Public Works in Nelson Mandela's government; she and other commentators opined that Malaysia was a practical model to follow in various sectors such as racial reconciliation, affirmative action and economic reconstruction. The article emphasized the weaknesses in the Malaysian model and the need to look at other examples too; one of the problems, it pointed out, was the existence of a viable and strong trade union body that would work in the interest of the indigenous population. During this time Ian Emsley produced *The Malaysian Experience of Affirmative Action: Lessons for South Africa* (1996); a monograph which added to the raging debate and demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of the Malaysian model with regards to its affirmative action policies; it however, maintained that South Africa had much to learn from the Malaysian model.

More-or-less at this time Marie Muller, the University of South Africa political scientist, wrote two related articles: the first appeared in her jointly (with Walter Carlsnaes) edited work *Change and South Africa's External Relations* (1996), and she thereafter updated it by reflecting on the *South African Diplomacy and Security Complex* (1999). Muller, however, made ample reference to South Africa's representation in the Muslim world of which Asia forms a sizeable part. Moreover, Carlsnaes & Muller's edited work has to some extent, made an effort to include many of the neglected areas of research. In the same volume Greg Mills had a chapter entitled "South Africa and Asia: New Opportunities, Lessons and Dilemmas"; in this text Mills referred to heavily Muslim populated

countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia and mentioned that cultural issues should also be given due attention when assessing the links that have been forged between South Africa and these Asian states. A related contribution was made by this researcher who wrote *Forging International relations at grassroots level between the SA Muslims and the Southeast Asians: An Unacknowledged Diplomat*; it appeared in the South African-based *Journal for Islamic Studies* and it was reproduced with slight amendments in his edited publication (cf. Haron 2008: 99-109). The article approached IR from a non-state actor's perspective and demonstrated one cultural activist's contribution towards forging cultural ties internationally. During the same year when this article appeared, Glenda White wrote *Grassroots Foreign Policy: A Case for Provincial Participation?* (1996). In her article, she mentioned the significance of the twinning of provinces in South Africa with provinces in other countries. She referred to the fact that Gauteng twinned with one of Malaysia's key provinces, namely Selangor Darul-Ehsan, and that Malaysia had by then made a sizeable contribution towards the development of housing in South Africa. Another article, which did not address the issue of twinning but stressed ways of learning lessons from each other, was the one penned by Robert Curry Jr.; he wrote *A note on ASEAN as a possible model for post-Apartheid SADC*, which appeared in the *Journal of Third World Studies* 13(1): 41-56, Spring 1996.

One of the most significant articles that first appeared in 1997 and which went through two editions was that of Vishnu Padayachee and Imraan Valodia; their article concretely depicted the trade relationship between these two states. Their joint article was initially titled *Malaysian Money: Sustainable Investments?* and it basically related the trends of foreign investment inflows into South Africa and also recorded the development of South-South cooperation via these investment packages. When Padayachee and Valodia's important article appeared and was subsequently updated, Southall ventured to undertake an interesting comparative study between South Africa and Malaysia (1997) with specific reference to the two dominant parties in the respective countries, namely the ANC and UMNO. Their revised co-authored text subsequently appeared in K.S. Jomo's edited text titled *The Ugly Malaysians* (Durban: Institute for Black Research 2002). Southall's article *Party Dominance and Development: South Africa's prospects in the light of Malaysia's experience*, argued that since South Africa was in need of rapid economic growth after a sharp decline it was very much encouraged by the fast growing economies of the Asian tigers. He further proposed that it should consider imitating the Asian tigers' strategies and the method that they

employed to advance their economies. South Africa, as an emerging economy and a powerful player in the Southern African arena, assumed that it would become Africa's first 'Lion' if it followed the economic principles that these Southeast Asian countries adopted. Southall pointed out that there was particular interest in the experience of Malaysia as it had earned itself a reputation for combining rapid growth with a racial redistribution of wealth.

Paul-Henri Bischoff's *Democratic South Africa and the Asian Paragon: Issues of Foreign Policy orientation*, which appeared in *Afrika Spektrum*, gave a broad overview of South Africa's foreign policy towards Asia after 1994. In the course of discussing South Africa's stance, he did not neglect to highlight the important trade relationship that developed between South Africa and Malaysia. At the time when the latter contribution appeared, two other interesting articles appeared; these were written in French. One was co-authored by Jean Coussy & Jerome Lauseig and rhetorically titled *La renaissance afro-asiatique?* It basically compared the two continents and went on to discuss the extent to which the respective continents had been commercially active in one another's affairs, and it examined issues such as affirmative action and Black empowerment. It also addressed to what extent Asian states were involved in supporting the liberation movements in South Africa and Zimbabwe and the regional connections that existed. In the same issue of *Politique Africaine* (December 1999), Lauseig addressed *Quand la Malaysia Inc. joue la carte Sud-Sud en Afrique subsaharienne*. Herein he captured the involvement and expansion of Malaysian businesses into different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. From within the South African sector, two more articles appeared. The first was essentially an address by the Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, which appeared in *BIS Review* (1999). Tim Thabane assessed *Asia's economic recovery and its implications for the African Renaissance*. The second was an article titled *Malaysia's Economic Crisis: A Comparative Perspective*, which was written by Greg Mills and it appeared in the *South African Yearbook of International Affairs* (1999). Mills sketched a background to the Malaysian crisis before looking at the Economic recovery plan, political and regional environments. He concluded with a list of lessons that could be drawn from the crisis.

These studies and assessments coincided with Janis van der Westhuizen's research work. The latter undertook a comparative study between aspects of South African and Malaysian social life with respect to the issue of governance and globalization; he titled his chapter: "Comparative Responses to the Challenges of Governance and Globalization: Malaysia and South Africa" (2001). The article reflected in a summarized version

the ideas that he elaborated upon in his *Adapting to Globalization: Malaysia, South Africa and the Challenges of Ethnic Redistribution of Growth* (Praeger 2002). Subsequent to van der Westhuizen's significant comparative study, Eric Germain, a French scholar who is attached to the Paris-based EHESS, presented a paper *Religion and Ethnicity in South Africa and Malaysia: Some Preliminary Comparisons* at the National University of Malaysia's Third International Malay Studies Conference during 2001; the paper was essentially another comparative study. Even though the debate regarding appropriating Malaysia as a model has come to a close, it was interesting to have read the editorial of *The Financial Mail* (February 2002), which addressed the issue; it argued in favour of looking at Malaysia as a model but with a critical eye. Another comparative study was undertaken by Abenaa Oti-Prempeh; the latter pursued an LLM thesis that examined *US(A's) Direct Investment in Developing Countries: A Case Study of Malaysia, Mexico and South Africa* that was completed at University of Georgia School of Law during 2003.

3.2 Malaysian Scholarship: On South African Affairs

From the few comparative studies mentioned in the previous paragraphs, one gets a sense that scholars found a number of interesting issues with which to make multiple comparisons between South Africa and Malaysia as well as other countries. So before elaborating upon the inputs of other scholars in this area, it is necessary to give attention to the contributions of Malaysian scholarship on the topic. Mention should be made of the fact that Southeast Asian scholars in general and Malaysian scholars in particular, like the South African social scientists, were also guilty of not directing their attention to one another's regions or nation states prior to the 1990s.

Serious interest by Malaysian scholars was only demonstrated in the early 1990s when diplomatic ties were forged. Juhaidi Yean Abdullah, a seasoned journalist, wrote *Nkosi Sikele I'Africa: An Overview of Malay-South Africa Relations in the Post-Apartheid Era* an illustrated article that appeared in the first issue of the Institute for Strategic Studies 1995 Malaysian publication *Agenda Magazine*. The second article was written by Mohammad Muda, who was a diplomat; the latter penned *Malaysia-South Africa Relations and the Commonwealth, 1960-1995* which appeared in the 1996 October issue of *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* and which was reproduced in Haron's (2008: 39-53) edited text. Both articles provided some useful insights from the Malaysian perspective into the ties that began to develop since Malaysia

resumed its relationship with South Africa in the early 1990s. On the whole, both Juhaidi Abdullah and Mohammad Muda offered very useful overviews of the connections that existed and continued to exist between these two important nation-states until 1994. Sadly though, there was no other (young) Malaysian scholar who was spurred on to follow up their research and expand it further to look at other African countries on the continent.

Sometime after Juhaidi Yean Abdullah and Mohammad Muda's scholarly interventions, it was pleasing to come across Hamidin Abdul Hamid's work entitled *Malaysia – Africa Relations: Searching for Common Goals* (2003). Although the work did not give specific attention to Malaysia's ties with South Africa, it used Africa as a backdrop and within that context made ample reference to South Africa. Based upon his research interest, Hamidin gave specific attention to this when he commented on the historical links that existed between the South(ern) Africa and Southeast Asia regions and outlined the relationship that exists between Malaysia and South Africa; this appeared in his "We Go a long way back: An Overview of Malaysia – South Africa Relations" chapter in Haron's (2008: 54-63) edited publication.

Apart from this Malaysian scholar's historical inputs, there have been other Malaysian scholars such as Wan Hashim Wan Teh, Hanapi Dollah, Abdul Aziz Mohd Zin and Al-Amril Othman who contributed in the socio-cultural and religious arena in *Bahasa Melayu*. One example of this set of contributions was a co-authored text by Wan Hashim Wan Teh and Hanapi Dollah; they compiled in *Bahasa Melayu* a work titled *The Cape Malays* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2008) that was a socio-historical reflection of one of South Africa's religious minorities. Hanapi Dollah, however, published his article on "Makam Keramat di Western Cape: Satu Universe Politik Melayu" that appeared in *Sari: Journal of the Malay World and Civilization* (1: 162-178, 2001), and he subsequently published his chapter titled "Melayu Cape: Sejarah dan Jatidir" (pp. 196-212) in the text edited by Wan Kamal Muijam *Minoriti Muslim: Cabaran dan Harapan menjelang Ahad ke-21* (Muslim Minority: Challenges and Expectations by the 21st century) (Bangi: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, 2002). A few years after this publication Al-Amril Othman finalized his 2005 National University of Malaysia (UKM) MA thesis that discussed *Gerakan Melayu Cape (1886-1848): Perjinangan Menuntut Hak dan Keadilan* (Cape Melayu Movement (1886-1848): Claiming their Rights and Justice). Another example that illustrates the types of topics that these scholars tackled was Zin's study of the Muslim missionary activities in the greater Cape Town area; he titled his article