

**International Negotiation Styles: A Perspective of Malaysian  
Diplomats**

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## **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **ETHICS APPROVAL**

The first phase of this research has been approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 8 September 2008.

The second phase this research has been approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 9 March 2009.

## **ABSTRACT**

Negotiation competency is an important focus of all countries as negotiation is a core event in international relations and diplomacy. Malaysia is no exception. Existing literature indicates that there has never been any research to study the Malaysian practice in international negotiations. As far as diplomatic negotiation is concerned, there is also a dearth of literature on what is going on at the negotiation table due to its secretive nature. Most of the research conducted on negotiation has originated from Western concepts of negotiation, and there is a lack of research concerning non-Western and specifically Malaysian notions of negotiation. A number of studies have been carried out to identify negotiation styles of some countries in Asia, and research on Malaysian negotiation is merely a descriptive explanation of Malaysians' business negotiation behaviour. Furthermore, there is a growing need of research that employs varieties of methods in studying negotiation as most of the overseas studies were quantitative in nature.

Thus, researching into the Malaysian practice of international negotiation will help to close the gaps in the literature because: (1) it will address the lack of research on Malaysian negotiating styles from the viewpoint of the public sector, as opposed to the business sector; (2) it will extend the work on non-Western perspectives on diplomatic negotiation by injecting Malaysian notions of international negotiation, as seen by Malaysians; (3) it will enrich the current literature on negotiating styles of countries in Asia; (4) it will add to the small amount of international scholarship on diplomatic negotiation and (5) this research will employ a mixed-method approach, and this will complement the need to employ varieties of research methods in negotiation research.

The main aim of this research is to explore and highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from the perspectives and experiences of Malaysian diplomats. This research adopted a mixed-methods approach. An interpretive approach with some elements of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and systems theory was the main paradigm adopted for the qualitative study while a questionnaire survey was employed for the quantitative study. Key-informant interviews with 22 former diplomats were conducted and a survey of 39 respondents amongst in-service Malaysian diplomats was successfully carried out.

The research contributes to understanding of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations and generates important insights for diplomatic training providers in setting-up relevant training modules. It also helps negotiators from different nations to comprehend the negotiation practice of Malaysia and helps to eliminate stereotyping and biases. In addition, since international negotiation is a universal phenomenon, the findings of this study are not only applicable to Malaysia but to other nations as well. Important key and relevant points that could contribute to international negotiation knowledge were identified and discussed. Finally, based on the research, policy recommendations were proposed to enhance negotiation competency in any international negotiation, and future research was identified and suggested for the benefit of international negotiation knowledge and scholarship.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Chapter overview**

This study was conducted mainly to research the practice of Malaysian government in international negotiations. The introductory chapter outlines the motivation for the research, describes the importance of carrying out the research, and specifies gaps in the current literature. It then moves to specify its aim, and enlists research questions. It will then be followed by a description of its contribution. The introductory chapter concludes by presenting an outline of the organization of the thesis.

#### **1.2 Motivation for the research**

On 21 July 2003, the whole nation of Malaysia was surprised to view a full-page advertisement in local newspapers about a water dispute between Malaysia and Singapore. According to the National Economic Action Council's executive director, the aim of the advertisement was to present correct information about the issue to the respective peoples of Malaysia and Singapore (Jaafar, 2003). It basically described the history of a water treaty between the two states, and how Malaysia was in a disadvantaged position right from the start of the treaty. For example, Malaysia argued that Singapore was making RM662.5 million profit in 2001 alone, while paying only RM2.39 million for purchasing raw water from Malaysia (Said, 2003) at the price of three Malaysian cents per 1000 gallons of water, and then selling back the treated water to Malaysia at the price of 50 Malaysian cents per 1000 gallons (Water: The Singapore-Malaysia dispute, 2003). Although the Malaysian government had spent more than RM2.5 million on the advertisement, they argued that the investment was worthwhile because it had garnered support from Singaporeans and the international community (Anbalagan, Poosparajah, & Ramli, 2003). This issue surprised most Malaysians ("Water advertisements," 2003) including me, an employee in the Malaysian Public Service Department (PSD).

The disagreement between Malaysia and Singapore, which involved a great deal of bargaining and negotiation, sparked a curiosity in me to comprehend what was really

happening. I could not avoid asking myself this question: “Are there any more conflicts and negotiations between Malaysia and other countries which were not made known to the public, and if so, what was the outcome of these negotiations?” Other subsequent questions also came into my mind: “How did the Malaysian government approach the negotiations?” and “What was the *modus operandi* for the government of Malaysia in any type of negotiation?” As time went on, my curiosity grew into an interest and at a later stage became a passion. I felt a deep urge within me to investigate more about the negotiation phenomenon, particularly how the Malaysian government approached its negotiations with other countries. When the government of Malaysia opened its postgraduate studies programmes, I quickly applied, was accepted, and commenced the journey to pursue my passion in this area.

### **1.3 The importance of negotiation**

Scholars have recognized that negotiation is a core and important factor in international relations and diplomacy (Berridge, 2002; Blaker, 1999; Bolewski, 2007; Starkey, Boyer, & Wilkenfeld, 1999; Winham, 1979). With the advance of technology, the world is rapidly becoming globalized, and this globalization process carries with it potential conflicts of beliefs, values and interests. In dealing with such conflicts, scholars identified five main approaches: adjudication, mediation, arbitration, use of coercion, and negotiation (Goldman & Rojot, 2003; Kimura, 1999; Manning & Robertson, 2003; Plantey, 2007; Raiffa, 1982; Schellenberg, 1996). Some scholars even argued that in international dispute, negotiation is more preferable than any judicial means, such as adjudication or arbitration, to resolve the conflict because negotiation is the only approach that meets the needs and sustains the relationships of the parties involved (Gosselin, 2007; Hampson, Crocker, & Aall, 2007). By contrast, the use of the judicial means to resolve such conflicts involves financial commitment and time.

As a sovereign nation, it is important for Malaysia to defend and preserve its national interests and position. Therefore, the negotiation competency of its diplomats and negotiators should not be neglected. The Malaysian government has acknowledged the importance of having effective negotiation skills among Malaysian diplomats and Public Service officers, and this emphasis has been seen in the speeches of government ministers (Badawi, 2002, 2005). In fact, one minister claimed that ever since its struggle for independence, Malaysia has been adopting negotiations and dialogues to



resolve conflicts and disputes (Albar, 2006a). Furthermore, competency in negotiation skills is an important focus of the Malaysian Foreign Affairs Ministry to such an extent that it is regarded as one of the major training objectives for potential Malaysian diplomats (IDFR, 2008). Subsequently, having good negotiation skills is stated as one of the core competencies required for middle managers from the Administrative and Diplomatic Service officers scheme of service.

Attending negotiation courses and gaining knowledge is no doubt an important aspect for Malaysian diplomats in particular and Malaysian Public Service officials in general. However, implementation of knowledge in real situations is easier said than done because there are many factors and uncertainties involved before, during and after actual negotiations. It would be advantageous if Malaysia could determine what really happens in its practice of negotiation, which could encompass preparation and cooperation amongst government agencies, the role of stakeholders, the setting up of objectives and adoption of strategies, strengths and weaknesses, and the possibility of cultural influence on its negotiators. In other words, it would be beneficial if Malaysia was able to determine its own 'styles' or practice in international negotiations, for it is a primary move for further improvement and development. As Blaker (1999) argued, identification of the negotiation styles of a particular country's diplomats is important; as each country's negotiating styles differ and might affect outcomes in international negotiations.

#### **1.4 The gaps in the current literature**

My reading concerning the negotiation phenomenon indicated that there had never been research conducted to study the Malaysian style or practice or approach in international negotiations. As clearly put forward by Natkunasingam and Sabaratnam (1998), "there is a lack of research in Malaysia into negotiation styles" (p. 403). The writing of Malaysian diplomats, particularly on Malaysian negotiation styles, is very much lacking. This is admitted by Jeshurun (2007), that Malaysian diplomats were unwilling to write their experiences, especially touching on official policy, because they were bound by the customs of the Foreign Service. This is supported by Bolewski (2007), who argued that most scholars had little general knowledge of the actual work performed by diplomats in real-life situations. Similarly, it is also argued that in the work of diplomacy, not many such diplomats would want to be identified (Vidal, 2009).

As far as diplomatic negotiation is concerned, there is also not much literature on what is going on before, during, and after such negotiations. This may be due to the confidential nature of diplomatic negotiations. Berridge (2002) described that secrecy is one of the features of diplomatic negotiation. Secrecy in negotiation may be in terms of the contents of the negotiation, or confidentiality of the on-going negotiation, or privacy of the outcome of the negotiation, or maintaining secrecy regarding whether any agreement has been achieved.

Most of the research conducted on negotiation styles has originated from Western concepts of negotiation. There is a lack of research concerning non-Western, and specifically Malaysian, notions of negotiation. Many scholars believed that Western assumptions of models and theories are not universal and might not work for other parts of the world (Adler, 2002; Brett & Gelfand, 2006; LeBaron, 2003; Pruitt, 2004). Different cultures have different assumptions about aspects of life such as social interaction, economic interests, legal requirements and political realities (Brett, 2007; Cavusgil, Ghauri, & Agarwal, 2002). Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) emphasized that it was important to develop theories and models of negotiation that considered variation in different cultures. In the same manner, research in one country or culture may not be appropriately adapted to other countries or cultures, and therefore, it is necessary to understand the negotiation approach from that country's own perspective (Abdullah & Gallagher, 1995; Earley & Singh, 2000; Rodrigues, 1998).

A significant number of studies have been carried out to identify and describe the negotiation styles of some countries in Asia, for example, China (e.g., Fang, 2006; Faure, 1999a; Sheer & Chen, 2003; Zhao, 2000), Japan (e.g., Brett & Okumura, 1998; Graham, 1983; Kumar, 1999), and Pakistan (e.g., Rammal, 2005), as well as Russia (e.g., Brett & Okumura, 1998; Roemer, Garb, Neu, & Graham, 1999) and Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Al-Ghamdi, 1999). There is still a big gap of knowledge in terms of the negotiating styles of Malaysia, especially regarding the Malaysian government's practice in international negotiations. Research in Malaysian negotiation is merely a descriptive explanation of Malaysians' business negotiation behaviour (e.g., Adler, 2002; Hendon, 1989) and a practical guide on how to conduct business negotiation with Malaysian counterparts (e.g., Acuff, 1997; Gesteland, 2005; Low, 2010; Morrison, Conaway, & Borden, 1994).

There is a growing need for research that employs varieties of methods in studying negotiation. Most of the overseas studies were quantitative in nature and involved simulated laboratory experiments (Druckman, 1997; Fang, 1999; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). This methodology had four disadvantages. Firstly, it did not disclose the magnitude of each variable in influencing negotiation (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Secondly, it did not investigate real and complex negotiating events (Fang, 1999). Thirdly, the result of the experiment was difficult to generalize to real-life settings (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Finally, it did not take into consideration the non-verbal behaviour that is often relevant in the negotiation process (Hopmann, 2002). Gelfand and Brett (2004a) supported any research on negotiation that employed varieties of methods, in addition to laboratory experiments. Some scholars have suggested studying negotiation in real situations as complementary to a quantitative approach (Brett, 1999; Moore & Murnighan, 1999; Pruitt, 1986; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) and as mutually reinforcing (Hopmann, 2002).

## **1.5 Research aim**

International negotiation is an interesting phenomenon which any country will have to deal with and confront in order to sustain and defend its sovereignty. It requires the country to have negotiators who devote a lot of effort, time, energy and resources to ensuring success in their missions. Thus, the perspectives of those who have experienced international negotiation phenomena, whether in the form of bilateral, regional, or multilateral engagement, is invaluable and should be shared with others. Plantey (2007) argued that the main role and primary function of diplomats is to negotiate for their country. Hence, the aim of this research is to explore and highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from the perspectives and experience of Malaysian diplomats. In this thesis, international negotiations are defined as a peaceful means to prevent, settle, or resolve conflicts among nations in the world. The negotiations may be in an aspect of security, trade or environment and many other issues and come in the form of bilateral, regional or multilateral processes.

## **1.6 Research questions**

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do former Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
- 2) How do in-service Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
- 3) What are the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?

## **1.7 Contribution of this study**

I believe that researching Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from the perspectives and experience of Malaysian diplomats will contribute to negotiation knowledge and scholarship. In particular, this research will help to close the gaps in the literature from these aspects:

1. This research will highlight the key features of the Malaysian government's negotiating practice in international negotiations from the perspectives of Malaysian diplomats. Thus, it will address the lack of research in Malaysian negotiating styles from the viewpoint of the Public Sector, as opposed to the Business Sector;
2. This study will extend the work on non-Western perspectives in diplomatic negotiation by injecting Malaysian notions of international negotiation, as seen by Malaysians;
3. This enquiry in Malaysian practice in international negotiation will enrich the current literature on negotiating styles of countries in Asia;
4. This research will add to the limited amount of international scholarship in diplomatic negotiation; and

5. This study will employ a mixed-method approach, and this approach will complement the need to employ varieties of research methods in negotiation research.

I am also confident that the findings from this research will benefit the negotiation practitioners in Malaysia and other nations from these viewpoints:

- 1) The findings of this research may help Malaysian negotiators to better comprehend and appreciate their practice in international negotiations, and thus may eliminate misunderstandings and disagreements due to a lack of awareness or appreciation of their unique styles of negotiating;
- 2) The findings may also generate important insights for those in charge of diplomatic training in Malaysia, and give them opportunities to design and develop more appropriate modules in negotiation training;
- 3) The results will help negotiators from different nations to comprehend the negotiation styles of Malaysia, and possibly avoiding stereotyping and bias related to differences in aspects such as culture, history, social, political, and economics; and
- 4) The findings will be used as a basis for me to recommend appropriate policy to enhance Malaysian negotiation competence in the international arena.

## **1.8 Organization of the thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters. Following this first introductory chapter, Chapter Two discusses some of the background of Malaysia and briefly explores certain aspects of its geography, population, history, politics, and administrative machinery. The same chapter also highlights some information about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the frontline for Malaysia in international relations. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of Malaysian foreign policy and Malaysia's involvement in the international arena, as well as a short description of Malaysia's relationship with its neighbouring state Singapore.

Chapter Three reviews relevant literature on aspects of negotiation, such as its concept, the need for negotiation, its elements, the process, its theoretical framework, general aspects of the negotiation style and factors that influence the style. The chapter continues with a discussion of the literature on Malaysian negotiation styles, and previous negotiation research. Finally, the chapter discusses the strong link between negotiation and culture.

Chapter Four specifically discusses in detail the important role of culture in shaping the behaviour of negotiators. This chapter discusses previous literature on culture and its dimensions, and previous research in Malaysian culture. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the knowledge gap that called for this study.

Chapter Five discusses research methodology adopted in the effort to highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiation styles in international negotiations from the perspective of Malaysian diplomats. Relevant topics such as the philosophical framework, research paradigm, research design, and the mixed-method approach are addressed. The chapter concludes with discussion of qualitative and quantitative approaches that highlight topics on methodology, design, selection of participants, data collection methods and processes, steps on data analysis and ensuring rigor, validity and reliability.

Chapter Six describes the qualitative findings on Malaysian practice in international negotiations based on the perspective of Malaysian diplomats. Five main themes that emerged from the data are highlighted and described.

Chapter Seven presents descriptive findings of responses gathered from the quantitative survey. A range of descriptive analyses are carried out using frequencies, cross-tabulation and graphs to examine the distribution of the responses.

Chapter Eight provides a detailed discussion of the key research findings presented in Chapters Six and Seven. The results of the study are also discussed in relation to previous research studies or claims made by academic scholars and practitioners.

Chapter Nine presents a summary of the whole research journey that includes the motivation, the identification of gaps from the literature review process, the methodology adopted to carry out the research, the findings that emerged from the data and the contribution of the findings to current knowledge. The chapter also highlights some policy recommendations and concludes with a discussion on limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for further research.

## **1.9 Summary**

This chapter introduced the conflict over the water treaty between Malaysia and Singapore, as this conflict became a spark that ignited my interest to delve deeper into the field of international negotiation. The chapter then proceeded to highlight the gaps in the current literature. Then, I discussed the aim of the research and formulated the research questions. Later, I described the contribution of this research in addressing the gaps in the literature and in addressing the negotiation practice. The chapter concluded with the overall organization of the thesis.

After discussing the introduction of this research, there is a need to shed some light on the basic information about Malaysia since this research is focusing on the practice of Malaysian government in international negotiations. It is also necessary to discuss the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the ministry is at the fore-front in representing the Malaysian government in any international negotiations. These matters are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BACKGROUND OF MALAYSIA AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

#### **2.1 Chapter overview**

As this thesis is dealing with Malaysia, it is imperative to shed some light on Malaysia's background. This chapter will discuss some of the background of Malaysia and will outline certain aspects of its geography, population, history, politics, and administrative machinery. Since this thesis also deals with international affairs, and as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved directly as a fore-front for international affairs, some understanding of the Ministry's functions and roles will be addressed. A brief outline of Malaysian foreign policy and Malaysia's involvement in the international arena will also be discussed. Finally, this chapter concludes with a short description of Malaysia's relationship with its neighbour Singapore, as this knowledge is useful in understanding the feelings of research participants towards Singapore.

#### **2.2 Geographical background**

Geographically, Malaysia is located on the South China Sea in the centre of South East Asia. Malaysia is comprised of two parts, Peninsular or West Malaysia and East Malaysia. Peninsular Malaysia is a crescent-shaped piece of land, which extends from the border of Thailand in the north and to Singapore in the south. Peninsular Malaysia consists of eleven states and two Federal Territories; Perlis, Pulau Pinang, Kedah Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Federal Territory of Putrajaya. East Malaysia is made up of the states of Sabah, Sarawak and the Federal Territory of Labuan. It is located on the island of Borneo and shares borders with Brunei and Indonesia. Malaysia has a total land area of 330,803 square kilometres (Yearbook of Statistics Malaysia 2007, 2008) and lies between latitudes 10 and 70 north of the Equator and longitudes 1000 and 1190 East (Malaysia Official Year Book, 2002). The map of Malaysia is shown in Figure 1.





Figure 1: Map of Malaysia.

Source: [http://www.mymalysiabooks.com/images/map/country\\_states/South\\_eastasia.jpg](http://www.mymalysiabooks.com/images/map/country_states/South_eastasia.jpg)

### 2.3 Population

The total population of Malaysia is 27.2 million. The most exceptional feature about the Malaysian population is its mixed-ethnic grouping. The main ethnic groups are Malays (13.8 million or 50.7 percent), Chinese (6.3 million or 23.2 percent), and Indians (1.9 million or 7.0 percent), all of these comprising 80.9 percent of the total population (Yearbook of Statistics Malaysia 2007, 2008). The Malays, the aborigines who live in Peninsular Malaysia and the indigenous people of East Malaysia are classified as *bumiputera* (meaning “sons of the soil”), while the Chinese and the Indians are categorized as non-*bumiputera*. The Malays and the indigenous people have been occupying the land since one thousand years ago (Turnbull, 1989a), while the Chinese and the Indians came to Malaysia in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002). The estimated population by ethnic group as per mid-year 2007 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Mid-year 2007 Malaysian Population Estimates by Ethnic Group*

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
	(‘000)	(‘000)	(‘000)	(‘000)	(‘000)
Malaysian Citizens	23,424.3	23,887.1	24,362.0	24,803.5	25,265.8
<i>Bumiputera</i>	15,351.2	15,701.4	16,080.5	16,406.4	16,766.0
Malay	12,605.1	12,893.4	13,190.2	13,475.1	13,773.1
Other <i>bumiputera</i>	2,746.1	2,808.0	2,870.3	2,931.4	2,994.9
Chinese	5,997.0	6,074.6	6,154.9	6,219.6	6,287.9
Indian	1,779.3	1,806.8	1,834.8	1,858.5	1,883.9
Others	296.9	304.3	311.8	318.9	326.1
Non-Malaysian Citizens	1,623.9	1,693.8	1,765.7	1,836.7	1,907.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,048.3</b>	<b>25,580.9</b>	<b>26,127.7</b>	<b>26,640.2</b>	<b>27,173.6</b>

*Source:* Yearbook of Statistics Malaysia 2007 (2008)

## 2.4 Historical background

The aborigines of the Peninsular Malaysia or Orang Asli, and the indigenous people of Sarawak (such as Penan) and Sabah (such as Rungus) are regarded to be the first inhabitants of Malaysia, dating back to probably 5,000 years ago (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002). The earliest Malay settlers (or the Proto-Malays) probably arrived around 1000 BC from Yunnan, China. These were seafaring peoples who migrated southwards to the South East Asia mainland, including to Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesian archipelago. Over the next few centuries, the Proto-Malays mixed with Indians, Thais, Arabs and Chinese to form another group of Malay (the Deutero-Malays), who were the forebears of the present Malays. The Malays of Peninsular Malaysia had a much closer link with the Malays in Sumatra, Indonesia, and the Straits of Malacca were used extensively to connect and unite family members (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002).

According to Turnbull (1989a), the Straits of Malacca became famous as it served as a sea passage between China and the Indian subcontinent. Along the way, a number of ports flourished along the west of Peninsular Malaya as traders had to load and unload their goods due to the monsoon season. The pioneers among the traders were the

Indians, who brought their influence to Malaysia in terms of native language, literature, religion and social customs. The most 'concrete' proof of Hindu-Buddhist existence in Peninsular Malaysia are the temple sites of Lembah Bujang and Kuala Merbok in Kedah (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002).

When Parameswara, a fleeing Prince from Palembang (a city on the southern part of Sumatra) founded Malacca in 1400, the region started to develop and turned into a well-known trading territory. Malacca became the most significant port in the South East Asia (Turnbull, 1989a). The role of Malacca as a trading port attracted traders from Arab countries, who embraced Islam as their religion. The spread of Islam in Malaysia was more influential when the Malay-Hindu rulers of Malacca embraced Islam, and Islam spread throughout not only the Malay Peninsular, but also to the Malay states in Sumatra and the Indonesian archipelago (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002).

The Europeans started to trade in South East Asia in the early sixteenth century. However, the trade was interrupted in 1511 when the Portuguese invaded Malacca. They ruled Malacca for 130 years but were overpowered by the Dutch in 1641 (Turnbull, 1989a). In 1786, the British started to expand their dominance in the region when they opened a port in Penang. Later in 1826, the British united Malacca and Singapore to become the Straits Settlements. From this point on, the British started to bring in the Mainland Chinese to work in tin mining industries, and the Indians from South India who worked mainly in the plantation sector.

During World War Two, the Japanese invaded the Malay Peninsular. However, the British came back to rule in 1946 after the Japanese surrendered, and united all the territories in the Peninsular to form the Malayan Union (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002). However, the plan of establishing a Malayan Union was abandoned due to immense pressure by the Malays, who feared the citizenship provision which would grant political status to immigrants equal to the Malays (Turnbull, 1989a). In 1948, the Federation of Malaya was formed. Finally, on 31 August 1957 the Federation of Malaya gained its independent status from Britain. Six years later, on September 16, 1963, Malaysia was finally established, including Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak (Information Malaysia 2002 Yearbook, 2002). However, Singapore was separated from the Federation in 1965 due to political and ethnic differences (Ting, 2008; Turnbull, 1989b).

## **2.5 Political system**

The government of Malaysia practices a parliamentary constitutional monarchy based on the British Westminster model. The country is headed by His Majesty Yang di-Pertuan Agong (or the King of Malaysia) as a Constitutional Monarch, while the Prime Minister is the head of the government. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is selected to take the throne for a five-year term by the nine Sultans of the Malay states, mainly Perlis, Kedah Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu, and Kelantan. The role of The Yang di-Pertuan Agong is largely ceremonial. The Federal government of Malaysia comprises three components; the Executive Power, the Legislative Power, and the Judicial Power. The Executive Power is held by the Prime Minister and his cabinet members. The Legislative Power is vested in Parliament, consisting of the Senate (or *Dewan Negara*) and the House of Representatives (or *Dewan Rakyat*). The Malaysian judicial system is based on English common law and it is independent of the Executive and the Legislature.

## **2.6 Administrative machinery**

The Malaysian government machinery adopts a three-level administrative system: federal government, state government, and district or local government. The federal government is led by the Prime Minister, while the *Menteris Besar* or Chief Ministers lead the state governments. The Chief Secretary General is the head of the Malaysian public service and also acts as the Chief Secretary to the Government. The State Secretary acts as the head of the state public service. The government agencies have three main components: ministries, departments, and statutory bodies. Each ministry is headed by a minister, and is responsible for formulating, planning, controlling and coordinating government policies pertaining to its functions. Government departments, on the other hand, are responsible for implementing government policies. Statutory bodies, which are subject to their own governing laws, are established to implement certain responsibilities in parallel with the national objectives.

Within the government agencies, five agencies are considered central agencies to the government; these are not only responsible for policy initiatives and for preparing guidelines, but also for determining management and administration of all other

government agencies, in accordance with the government's overall vision (Federal Constitution, 1957; Financial Procedure Act 1957, 1957; Ministerial Functions Act 1969, 1969). These agencies are the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), Public Service Department (PSD), Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Implementation and Coordination Unit (ICU), and the Ministry of Finance. The MAMPU is responsible for introducing administrative reforms in order to upgrade the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the Malaysian public service. The PSD is entrusted with planning, development and management of public sector personnel. The EPU is responsible for formulating medium and long-term economic development policies and strategies for the country, while coordinating and implementing development programs and projects. Evaluating policies and strategies for national development is the main role of the ICU. The Ministry of Finance is assigned to formulate, plan, and implement fiscal and budgetary policies for sustainable economic growth.

## **2.7 Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, popularly known in Malaysia as *Wisma Putra*, has been entrusted with the responsibility to formulate, conduct and manage Malaysia's foreign relations with other countries in matters related to political relations, economic affairs, security matters, and social and cultural promotion (Ministerial Functions Act, 1969). The Ministry has defined its functions as follows (Strategic Plan 2009-2015, 2009):

- Protecting Malaysia's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Monitoring and analyzing developments in the international arena;
- Developing and advising the government on foreign policy options;
- Communicating the government's foreign policy position;
- Assisting other Ministries and Agencies in their international dealings; and
- Assisting Malaysian citizens abroad.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is headed by a Minister, who is assisted by two Deputy Ministers. The Secretary General is the head of the government administration, and is directly responsible for administrative and foreign policy matters. The Secretary General is assisted by three Deputy Secretaries General and six Heads of Departments. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs consists of twelve departments and agencies, comparing to only three divisions in 1958 (Beaglehole, 1978). The departments are:

- Department of Bilateral Political and Economic Affairs;
- Department of Multilateral Affairs;
- Department of Management Services;
- Department of Policy and Strategy Planning;
- Department of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Cooperation
- Department of Research, Treaties and International Law;
- Department of Protocol;
- Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR);
- Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT);
- National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC);
- Department of Information and Public Diplomacy; and
- Division of Legal Services

In carrying out its duties, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is guided by the principles of Malaysia's foreign policy (Strategic Plan 2009-2015, 2009):

- Protecting Malaysia's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries;
- Promoting cooperation among developing countries through sharing experiences and expertise;
- Promoting multilateralism through respect for, and adherence to, international laws to secure a just and fair rules-based international system;
- Promoting peace and security bilaterally, through ASEAN, the United Nations and other international bodies;
- Enhancing bilateral relations with countries in the international community;
- Promoting and projecting Malaysia's interests abroad;
- Maintaining a modern, effective and excellence-driven Ministry; and
- Providing service delivery to the Ministry's stakeholders in a timely and effective manner.

The Ministry has also outlined its strategic plan for the period of 2009 and 2015 as a clear direction of Malaysian foreign policy. Six strategic objectives have been identified (Strategic Plan 2009-2015, 2009):

- Safeguarding and protecting national sovereignty in the international arena;
- Strengthening bilateral diplomacy;

- Strengthening multilateral diplomacy;
- Strengthening ASEAN;
- Improving and strengthening the institution and human capital; and
- Information dissemination and enculturing diplomacy.

For 2010, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is allocated an estimated operating budget of RM138 million, and a Ministry development budget of RM53 million, making a total of RM191 million. The total amount is 0.3% of the total budget allocated for the Federal Government for 2010, which is estimated at RM191 billion (Estimated Federal Budget 2010, 2010). For the past three years, the total budget allocated for the Ministry has been between 0.37% and 0.43% of the total budget allocated for the Federal Government. The Ministry's budget for 2010 has decreased because of a cut in the government total budget due to prudence in spending and value-for-money strategy (The 2010 Budget Speech, 2009).

At the head office in Putrajaya, the Ministry has a total number of 835 personnel. The Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) consists of 131 personnel. There is a total of 2070 staff manning missions abroad. Out of the full total of these personnel, 718 posts are allocated to the Administrative and Diplomatic scheme of service officers. These are the officers who lead and manage the Ministry, and it is these ones who will be the diplomats and ambassadors at the diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

In enhancing Malaysia's international profile and implementing its foreign policy function, Malaysia has established diplomatic and consular missions in various parts of the world. At present, there are 106 missions in 83 countries, which consist of 64 Embassies, 17 High Commissions, 20 Consulate Offices, 1 Liaison Office of Malaysia at Kosovo, 3 Permanent Representatives to the United Nations and ASEAN, and 1 Malaysian Friendship and Trade Centre, Taiwan. The Ministry has also appointed 51 Honorary Consuls in 42 countries to assist Malaysia in enhancing trade and economic activities, besides building better people to people contact (Strategic Plan 2009-2015, 2009).

## **2.8 A glimpse history of Malaysian Foreign Policy**

Ever since gaining its independence in 1957, Malaysia's foreign policy was argued to be pro-Western and anti-communist (Karim, 1990). Under the premiership of the first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia maintained close relationships with its former colonial master, Britain and other Western countries. However, during the early years after independence, Malaysia had to face some challenges that influenced its foreign policy direction. The challenges were: (1) the formation of Malaysia in 1963; (2) the Philippines' claim on Sabah; (3) the confrontation with Indonesia that ended in 1966; and (4) the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965 (Beaglehole, 1978; Karim, 1990, Muzaffar 2001). These challenges taught Malaysia to be aware of its surrounding neighbours, realizing the need to maintain stability in the region. Subsequently, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 to promote closer political and economic cooperation among five founding countries in the region: Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand (Mun, 2007). From the time of its establishment, ASEAN has adopted an attitude of being a "non-ideological, non-antagonistic and non-military grouping" (Selat, 2006, p. 17).

The second Prime Minister from 1970, Tun Abdul Razak, realigned Malaysian foreign policy during his premiership towards "non-alignment, neutrality and equidistance" (Selat, 2006, p. 18). With this stance, Malaysia adopted the Declaration of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971, and no longer treated communist countries as enemies, believing that the countries had the right to coexist. In 1974, Malaysia established diplomatic relations with The People's Republic of China. The normalization of relations with China proved to be fruitful when the members of the Communist Party of Malaya surrendered in 1987 (Selat, 2006). Following the death of Tun Abdul Razak in 1976, Tun Hussein Onn, a reluctant politician (Karim, 1990), took over the premiership. During his term, the principles of non-alignment and equidistance were continued, and the relationship with China was strengthened. In addition, the premier also put an emphasis on Malaysia's contribution in strengthening ASEAN (Karim, 1990).

Tun Mahathir became the fourth Prime Minister in 1981 after Tun Hussein Onn resigned due to health problems. Under his premiership, Malaysian foreign policy was



made to be more assertive and universal, and the scope widened to cover developing countries in Africa and Latin America (Selat, 2006). Malaysia became the advocate of South-South cooperation (Muzaffar, 2001). Tun Mahathir was critical of the developed countries that imposed their will, views and values on developing countries. Besides that, he was also a vocal critic of the South and Muslim countries, criticizing them for their continuous internal power struggles and not focusing on central issues of developing their countries (Selat, 2006). Although Tun Mahathir widened the international scope, he did not brush aside the pertinent role of ASEAN in developing the region; instead he introduced the Look East Policy, which was to emulate Japan and Korea's positive work ethics. During the Asian financial crisis in the 90s, he was adamant in refusing the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF); instead he insisted on exercising strict capital controls to pull Malaysia through the crisis.

After the retirement of Tun Mahathir in 2003, Tun Abdullah Badawi, the fifth Prime Minister practiced a pragmatic and principled foreign policy by giving Malaysia's interests the most priority (Selat, 2006). Being a non-confrontational and consensus-seeking person, his approach was to lessen the combative nature adopted by the previous premier, and instead he assumed a more conciliatory approach. He stressed the importance of stability in the region and thus gave top priority to the Asian Plus Three and the East Asia Summits (EAS), that brought all the East Asian countries together.

## **2.9 A short history on Malaysia's relationship with Singapore**

Singapore is an island situated south of the Malaysian state of Johor. It was part of the Riau-Johor kingdom prior to its establishment as a commercial port and settlement by the British in 1819 (Rahim, 1999) through a treaty signed by the British East India Company and the Sultan of Johor. The island soon developed as a trading port because of its strategic geographic location along the Straits of Malacca, connecting Europe and China. This tiny island has a total population of 4.99 million people. The population for the residents is 3.733 million, consisting of Chinese (55.5%), Malay (10.0%), Indian (6.9%) and others (2.4%) (Monthly Digest of Statistics Singapore January 2010, 2010). The ethnic Chinese are the predominant group in the country, and Singapore is frequently referred to as a Chinese island in a Malay archipelago (Berry, Jr, 1997).

In 1963, Singapore, together with Sabah and Sarawak merged with Malaya to form the Federation of Malaysia. However, due to political and ethnic differences, Singapore was separated from the Federation in 1965 (Ting, 2008; Turnbull, 1989b). Although Singapore leaders claimed that they were expelled from the Federation, Malaysian leaders on the other hand, argued that the separation was by a mutual agreement (San, 1999). The separation, together with the geographical size of the country and limited natural resources, caused Singapore to feel insecure, and Rahim (1999) claimed that this has “bedevilled her relations with neighbouring countries, who are in turn inclined to interpret her actions and motives in a suspicious light” (p. 38). In defending their sovereignty, Singapore people were characterized as having a *kiasu* mentality (Barnes, 2006). *Kiasu* is a Singaporean English word which carries a meaning of “afraid to lose, be left out or be without”. There are still outstanding issues that haunt the relationship between Malaysia and Singapore; the main ones would be the supply of raw water from Malaysia, the claims over sovereignty of Pedra Branca Island or *Pulau Batu Puteh*, Middle Rocks and South Ledge, and the dispute over a crooked bridge that connects the two countries.

## **2.10 Summary**

This chapter highlighted an overview of some aspects of Malaysian background. The functions and roles of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were given special focus due to the fact that the Ministry is at the forefront in Malaysia’s diplomacy, and is the Ministry that implements Malaysian foreign policy. At the same time, the Malaysian diplomats, who are the participants and respondents of this research, are the backbone of the Ministry. Finally, the chapter highlighted a short history of Malaysia’s relationship with Singapore, a state which was part of Malaysia at one time. The knowledge about the relationship is pertinent in order to understand the feelings that Malaysians have towards Singapore, which is discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

After having background information about Malaysia, it is now vital to focus on the literature review. Since this study focuses on the practice of Malaysian government in international negotiations, the first major focus of literature review will be on negotiation and international negotiation aspects. Subsequently, the literature review will discuss culture and its dimensions in influencing the negotiation practice in some depth. The next chapter will first discuss the negotiation aspects of the literature.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW ON NEGOTIATION

#### 3.1 Chapter overview

Since negotiation is the main focus of this research, this chapter reviews relevant literature on negotiation and international negotiation, starting with the concept of negotiation, and moves on to discuss the need for negotiation, its elements and the processes involved. The theories and models of negotiation are also discussed. As this research is focused on the Malaysian negotiation styles, the literature on negotiation styles and factors that influence the styles is also addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the strong link between negotiation and culture.

#### 3.2 Negotiation – Definition and concept

The word “negotiation” originated from the Roman word *negotiari*, meaning “to carry on business”. It was derived from the Latin root words *neg* (not) and *otium* (ease or leisure) (Hendon, Hendon, & Herbig, 1996; Moran & Stripp, 1991; Salacuse, 2003; Volkema, 1999). Almost all scholars of negotiation believe that negotiation is a communication process to reach an agreement between two or more interdependent parties who have different goals, aims, needs or interests. The parties can be individuals, organizations, governments and countries. For example, negotiation is defined as the process of two or more parties with divergent values working together to construct an acceptable resolution of one or more issues (Cohen, 2002; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Zartman & Berman, 1982); merely an exchange between people of different interests for the purpose of satisfying their needs and getting what they want (Fisher & Ury, 1991; Schatzki, 1981); or a process involving some form of influencing to change the other party’s ideas or behaviour (Adler, 2002). Aquilar and Gallucio (2008) defined international negotiation as “an interdisciplinary tool that facilitates international activity in an effort to manage the interdependence between international subjects in a peaceful manner through compromises and agreements that have the capability of mutually satisfying all main interested actors” (p. 6).

Raiffa (1982) divided negotiation into two parts, a science and an art of negotiation. The science of negotiation, according to Raiffa, refers to solving a problem after a thorough examination of a situation, while the art of negotiation consists of all practical and personal skills required for negotiation, such as communication skills, convincing skills, usage of tactics and strategies, and knowing the best methods to employ at different situations. According to Bolewski (2007), negotiation is a joint decision-making process for accomplishing peaceful and legitimate change, and “the art of negotiation consists of arguing and convincing the partners about common interests, or in times of stagnation of the negotiation process, about the disadvantages of differing interests by claiming or creating common values, or redistributing existing values” (p. 35).

Negotiation happens all the time and occurs at all levels and types of organization, nationally or internationally (Berry, 1996; Cohen, 2002; Fisher & Ury, 1991; Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 2001). Typical examples of negotiation are seller-buyer negotiations, business negotiations, labour negotiations, salary negotiations, negotiation in courtrooms and diplomatic negotiations (Brett, 2000). The study of negotiation has received broad interest from many interdisciplinary fields of study, including decision and games theory (e.g., Sebenius, 1992), psychology (e.g., Thompson, 1990), management (e.g., Zartman, 2008), international relations (e.g., Jonsson, 2002), organizational behaviour (e.g., Robbins & Judge, 2010), marketing (e.g., Graham, 1985), and law (e.g., Goldman & Rojot, 2003).

In the domestic workplace, negotiation was found to be central to a manager’s job (Lax & Sebenius, 1986) and a 1980 survey of 103 directors of health and social service programs in the United States of America reported that human service administrators consumed 26 percent of their time at work involved in explicit negotiations such as purchasing, selling, or contracting for goods and services (Files, 1981). However, intracultural negotiations are different from intercultural negotiations because in intercultural or international negotiations, the negotiators have to face unfamiliar political systems, cultures, regulations, languages, laws, bureaucratic traditions, different ideologies, and business practices (Fatehi, 2008; Salacuse, 2003). In addition, Adler (2002) quoted Gonzales and Neghandi (1967), who claimed that in international affairs, the negotiation phenomena were much more widespread and pervasive, such that international managers spent over 50 percent of their time negotiating formally and informally.

In diplomacy, negotiation is a compulsory element, as the definition of diplomacy itself contains significant concept of negotiation. For example, Berridge (1995) defines diplomacy as “the conduct of international relations by negotiation rather than by force, propaganda, or recourse to law, and by other peaceful means (such as gathering information or engendering goodwill) which are either directly or indirectly designed to promote negotiation” (p. 1). Although diplomacy used to be handled bilaterally, but Thakur (2007) claimed that the advance of globalization has brought about changes in diplomacy in three different scenarios: (1) the levels of diplomatic activity have expanded from bilateral, to regional and multilateral; (2) the contents of discussion have been extensive, covering variety of scopes from different areas of public policy; and (3) the number and type of actors have increased significantly, ranging from governments to private sector, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations. These changes have considerable implications to international negotiation phenomena.

Although negotiation is portrayed as an exact opposite of war because it avoids deadly confrontation, and promotes agreement between the parties by means of mutual concessions, Plantey (2007) saw it as equivalent to war, because both negotiation and war fulfil the same goals: survival, improvement in a country’s conditions, protection against external dangers, and the organization of a country’s security. Negotiation also has the same purpose as war, which is to acquire, conquer and preserve. This explains why negotiation and war often go together, and negotiation is employed as a means to put the final touches to what has been wrought by war, in order to attempt a peaceful and lasting outcome. Plantey claimed that while two nations are at war, leaders of both nations are, at the same time, secretly conducting negotiations. By having the negotiations, each country could access the strength and determination of the opponent. When the war is over, negotiations could also be a means for the defeated country to curb its losses, moderate its downfall, and find potential sources to downplay the victory or the other country.

### **3.3 The need for negotiations**

It is a common understanding among scholars that negotiation takes place mainly as a peaceful means of dealing with unavoidable conflicts. Conflict occurs when two interdependent parties are working towards the same goal, but both parties either want

the same outcome or want a very different arrangement (Lewicki et al., 2001). Conflict also occurs due to different preferences on how to complete a task, and these differences become a building block to achieve what the party wants (Shapiro & Kulik, 2004). There is no shortage of disputes as they always occur between one party and another, whether they are individuals, an organization, a nation or a country (Raiffa, 1982). It is difficult to find a situation which is free of conflict, and the presence of conflict is always in the heart of human societies (Berkovich, Kremenyuk, & Zartman, 2009).

Negotiation is one of the established ways for settling disputes besides the use of traditions, regulations, court arrangement and markets of the law of supply and demand (Raiffa, 1982). Schellenberg (1996) identified five main approaches in dealing with conflict: the use of coercion, negotiation and bargaining, adjudication, mediation and arbitration. This is supported by other scholars (Goldman & Rojot, 2003; Kimura, 1999; Manning & Robertson, 2003; Plantey, 2007), that negotiation is one of the major tools for resolving conflicts if the use of force to settle disputes is not acceptable or not possible. Zartman (2009) asserted that negotiation was employed not only to resolve conflicts, but also to prevent conflicts from escalating, at the same time managing the conflicts and transforming them into cooperative relationships.

Other scholars have argued that negotiation is preferable to mediation, arbitration or litigation to solve international conflicts and disputes, because negotiation is the only approach that meets the need and sustains the relationships of the parties involved (Gosselin, 2007; Hampson, Crocker, & Aall, 2007). Gosselin (2007) argued that dependency on other peoples' skills to resolve conflict, such as the use of mediation, arbitration or litigation, involves financial commitment and time. In addition, the dispute could be made worst before the conflict is settled, and thus aggravate the relationships between the parties involved. Hampson et al. (2007) echoed that in international dispute, countries, especially the superpowers, tend not to favour any judicial means such as adjudication or arbitration to resolve disputes, because they do not desire other international legal institutions to govern their international affairs. They argue that their country's sovereignty would be at stake. They also consider themselves as independent players in international structures. Gosselin (2007) claimed that negotiation is more preferred because: (1) the parties involved are able to maintain their control of the negotiating process; (2) the negotiation can enhance the relationships

between the parties, and promotes more understanding and respect, if conducted well; and (3) the most suitable and mutual solution for each party could be achieved.

Scholars have different views on when negotiation is required or is a good resort. Hendon et al. (1996) wrote that negotiation is required when: (1) two or more parties are having a clash of interest; (2) there are no procedures or accepted guidelines for resolving the conflict, or the parties prefer to come up with a better way to settle the conflict; and (3) the parties opt to search for an agreement. Alternatively, Adler (2002) concluded that negotiation should be resorted to when any of the following conditions are present: (1) the trust level is high; (2) sufficient time is available to explore parties' different needs, resources and options; (3) one party's power position is lower than the other party; and (4) commitment is required to ensure that agreement is carried out. Lewicki et al. (2001) added that negotiation is necessary when: (1) two or more interdependent parties are involved and the parties need each other in order to accomplish their goals; (2) there is a conflict of interest between two or more interdependent parties; (3) the two parties think they can get a better deal by using some strategic move, rather than simply accepting what is being offered by the other party; and (4) the parties involved prefer to reach an agreement, rather than to engage in a win-lose competition.

### **3.4 Elements of negotiation**

According to scholars, there are four basic elements of negotiation: the negotiating parties, their interests, the negotiation process, and the negotiation outcome (Fatehi, 2008; Thompson, 1990; Zartman, 1994a). According to Thompson (1990), a party to a negotiation is a person or a group of persons with common interests who act according to what they want from the negotiation. The negotiation interests are the utilities or resources that are to be shared among the negotiating parties. The negotiation process is the communication and interaction that occurs between the parties before they reach the outcome, which is the end-product of the bargaining situation. Besides the four elements above, Hendon et al. (1996) added another two aspects which they considered primary to negotiations among different nations. The first is cultural background and traditions that guide the behaviour of the negotiators. Negotiators from different cultures will be shaped by their cultural components, such that they will have different styles, focus, and emphasis. The second is the situational context in which the

negotiation is conducted. In international negotiation, negotiators will face a variety of situations due to diverse political, economic, social, and cultural systems of the countries involved.

Cellich and Jain (2004) described three components of the global negotiation architecture: (1) the negotiation environment; (2) the negotiation setting; and (3) the negotiation process. The negotiation environment refers to the climate that surrounds the negotiations. Negotiators do not have control over the climate. The components of the negotiation environment are legal pluralism, political pluralism, currency fluctuations and foreign exchange, foreign government control and bureaucracy, instability and change, ideological differences, cultural differences, and external stakeholders. The negotiation setting refers to factors that surround the negotiation process over which the negotiators have some control. The negotiation setting consists of different dimensions: the creative bargaining power of negotiators and the nature of their dependence of each other, the levels of conflict underlying potential negotiation, the relationship between negotiators before and during negotiations, the desired outcome of negotiations, the impact of intermediate stakeholders and the style of negotiators. The negotiation process is made up of events and interactions that take place between parties to reach an agreement.

According to Zartman (1994b), multilateral negotiation is more complex and messier than bilateral negotiation because: (1) it is multiparty, in which each party is independent and has its own interests and positions; (2) it is multi-issue, and different parties have different degrees of interest on the issues; (3) it involves multiple roles, and parties have the choice to select what roles they want to take up, either as drivers, conductors, defenders, brakers, or cruisers; (4) it engages variable values, and parties can influence the values of others in the process of formulating the outcomes; (5) the outcomes are principally rule making, rather than rearrangement of physical goods, and this is done in order to harmonize national legislation or to establish rules that can be applied by and to parties; and (6) it involves formation of coalitions, which are not only applicable to many parties, but also to many issues, and the formation of coalitions is meant to reduce the intricate nature of the negotiation and thus make it more manageable.



### **3.5 Negotiation process**

Scholars have generally classified the negotiation process into three phases: (1) predisposing factors or pre-negotiation; (2) process or conceptualization; and (3) outcome (Bangert & Pirzada, 1992; Berridge, 2002; Cohen, 1991; Ghauri, 2003; Hendon, 1989; Salacuse, 2003; Simintiras & Thomas, 1998; Starkey, Boyer, & Wilkenfeld, 1999; Zartman & Berman, 1982). The predisposing factors refer to pre-negotiation criteria that influence the parties to prefer negotiation over use of force or other means. The elements of pre-disposing factors are: (1) the parties realize that there is some form of conflict present among them; (2) they prefer to resolve the disagreements peacefully; and (3) they seek a mutual agreement that will benefit all parties (Bangert & Pirzada, 1992; Ghauri, 2003; Salacuse, 2003). In international negotiation, this phase involves agenda-setting and giving mandates to government representatives (Bayne & Woolcock, 2003). Berridge (2002) claimed that in international diplomacy, this stage actually involves a significant amount of negotiation because establishing the need for negotiations itself is often a complex and complicated matter.

The process is a two-way communication and it is the core of negotiation (Bangert & Pirzada, 1992; Bayne & Woolcock, 2003). According to Bangert and Pirzada (1992), this is the phase where the actual process of negotiation takes place and there are many factors that influence this phase, such as the composition of the negotiating terms, negotiating parties' perceptions of each other, the nature and channels of communication, the relative importance of people versus issues, the negotiation structure, the bargaining styles adopted, and the use of third parties. In addition to these factors, Ghauri (2003) added the importance of the influence of cultural factors, such as concepts of time, individualism versus collectivism, patterns of communication, and emphasis on personal relations. Most research has been focused on this phase and different recommendations on negotiation approach given are based on one of the above factors.

The outcome depends on the first two phases and is the result of the process of decision-making by the parties involved and how the agreement is formed (Bangert & Pirzada, 1992; Bayne & Woolcock, 2003). Fisher (1989) added that good outcomes of a negotiation can be achieved after the negotiators have: (1) developed a rapport; (2)

adopted effective communication; (3) explored precedents and criteria of fairness; (4) fully comprehended each others' alternatives; and (5) considered all the possible options for agreement. Goldman and Rojot (2003) listed three attributes of negotiation: (1) the negotiating parties have the freedom to choose how to proceed with the negotiations and what the outcome would look like; (2) the negotiating parties have the flexibility to maximize gains, whether they are mutual or to satisfy some needs of the parties; and (3) the negotiating parties' dignity and self worth are protected as they are involved in the resolutions that are made.

Zartman (2008) provided an in-depth explanation of the process of international negotiation, or how outcomes of negotiations are attained. His focus was on answering how conflicting viewpoints among parties in the negotiation are integrated to come up with an acceptable agreement. He described two major approaches to that: (1) limiting alternatives; and (2) convergence of positions. Limiting alternatives is appropriate and relevant since negotiation is a process that involves reduction of unlimited alternatives until the solution is accepted by all parties. According to the author, there are basically four ways limiting alternatives can be exercised: (1) by making one alternative appear more attractive than the rest, e.g., giving promises or offering benefits to the negotiating parties that could influence them to agree to the terms; (2) by making one alternative appear less attractive than others, e.g., the use of threats and warnings could be employed to arouse fear in the other negotiating parties; (3) by making one solution appear to be already selected, through the use of public commitment and obligation; and (4) by making some positions appear to be already ruled out, such as the use of *fait accompli* (things that cannot be undone) and simple incapacity (things that cannot be done).

The second approach, which is convergence of positions, focuses on how initial positions of the parties involved are brought closer until the final agreement is achieved. Five methods are known to be used: (1) by means of simple coincidence, e.g., one party offers a proposal and it is surprisingly accepted by the other party, or both parties coincidentally propose the same solution; (2) by way of concession in which one party submits to another's proposal; (3) by manner of counter-concessions, where a party receiving the concession offers its own concession on different matters; (4) through compromise or joint concession in which both parties give concessions in order to arrive at an agreed point; and (5) by way of understanding, where both parties intentionally

continue with the negotiation but remain ambiguous about certain terms and conditions, so that no agreement is achieved - in other words, both parties actually want to avoid the negotiation.

Other scholars provided prescriptive explanation on how to achieve a successful negotiation. Plantey (2007) wrote that balance of power and interests among parties is a prerequisite for a successful negotiation. The more unequal the balance of power, the more difficult the negotiation will be. On the other hand, the negotiation becomes more inevitable as a means of resolving issues when the balance is more equal among the parties. He added that during the negotiation process, it is normal for the parties to hesitate to venture into unknown territory, and the slow pace of a negotiation indicates how importance the negotiation is. Lewicki et al. (2001) stated that two common characteristics are required for a successful negotiation to take place: (1) some level of compromise is expected in the negotiation process; and (2) it involves management of tangibles and intangibles. Examples of tangibles are the price or terms of agreement, while intangibles can refer to the desire to impress the organization being represented. Goldman and Rojot (2003) defined these as official and unofficial values.

In a nutshell, negotiation is a peaceful mechanism for resolving conflicts among parties, whether they are of intra-cultural or inter-cultural natures. Some might argue that negotiation is more preferred than other methods in resolving conflicts due to its nature of interdependence and maintaining the needs and relationships of the parties involved. However, since negotiators come from various cultural background and traditions, some scholars also argued that negotiation might not be the best method for international negotiation if the cultural factor is not given due consideration. Furthermore, negotiation consists of its own elements and processes which are all culturally-bound. Therefore, the pertinent issue here is whether the parties involved have the objective and passion to resolve the conflicts or vice versa, and if so, whether they are able to find the best means of solving them.

### **3.6 Theoretical framework for negotiation**

The theoretical framework for negotiation has been dominated by two main research perspectives, the economic perspective and social psychological perspective. The economic perspective suggests that negotiations to be conducted are guided by the

principle of utility maximization (Raiffa, 1982). Under this principle, negotiators will strive to gain the maximum objective and minimize possible losses during the negotiation process (Neale & Fragale, 2006) and they want to be the winners in this zero-sum game perception (Cohen, 2002). Thompson (2006) claimed that most negotiators have this type of win-lose perception when they negotiate. The social psychological perspective, on the other hand, aims to understand the human psychological influences on negotiation processes and outcomes, and it basically investigates how the negotiators' perceptions and attributions affect their behaviour during the negotiation process (Aquilar & Gallucio, 2008; Neale & Fragale, 2006). The underlying reason is that people select, categorize, interpret and infer information related to negotiation differently from each other (Thompson, 1990).

These two perspectives of negotiation study led to the development of negotiation theories, models, strategies and styles, and Murray (1986) categorized them into two competing theories, describing them as competitive and problem-solving theories. According to Murray, competitive theory is best described by behaviours of the negotiators who: (1) are trying to gain as much as they can out of the negotiation in a zero-sum game or win-lose situation; (2) consider the needs, interests and attitudes of the other parties only if they are related to achieving the goals; (3) do not consider negotiation processes and strategies as important, unless to their advantage; (4) will be cooperative if it helps to get what they want; (5) focus on the process of winning and are ready to manipulate to have their way; (6) are totally defensive in their approach; and (7) will do as much to control the negotiation process as possible. Competitive theory is also called the "game theory" (Raiffa, 1982), the "traditional competitive bargaining" (Andes, 1992), the "hard approach" (Fisher & Ury, 1991), the "distributive agreement" (Brett, 2000; *Negotiation*, 2003), or the "realist approach" (Hampson et al., 2007). Graham and Herberger Jr. (1983) named this approach the "John Wayne style of negotiation" while Goldman and Rojot (2003) termed it the "hard-nut negotiator".

On the other hand, problem-solving theory is concerned with behaviour of the negotiators who (1) will try to gain the utmost out of the negotiation, but after considering the community and time contexts; (2) consider the needs, interests and attitudes of the other parties in achieving the best resolution; (3) can be competitive but not hostile; (4) try as much to attain joint-gain or win-win; (5) focus on the essence of the conflict; and (6) prefer to settle disputes through negotiation or other means of

mutual benefit (Murray, 1986). Problem solving theory is also given other names such as the “collaborative approach” (Andes, 1992), the “principled approach” (Fisher & Ury, 1991), the “integrative mode” (Brett, 2000; *Negotiation*, 2003), the “interest-based negotiation” (Cohen, 2002), the “nice guy approach” (Goldman & Rojot, 2003), or the “communication-based approach” (Hampson et al., 2007).

Complementary to the problem-solving theory, Adler (1986) identified another aspect of negotiation from the international business point of view, and described it as a cultural synergistic approach to negotiation. According to Adler, in a cross-cultural negotiation, communication becomes more difficult because of cultural differences. It was imperative for negotiators to understand the other parties’ cultural background and use cultural differences as a resource, instead of making them obstacles.

Another scholar, Salacuse (2003) presented three models of negotiation: (1) negotiation as compromise; (2) negotiation as domination; and (3) negotiation as problem solving. In (1) negotiation as compromise, a deal is clinched somewhere between the parties’ initial offer and their counterparts. This is the market model of negotiation. Strictly speaking, this model has its own disadvantage, in which the parties will not achieve their full potential. (2) Negotiation as domination is a win-lose model where a negotiating deal is treated like a form of combat and as a means to dominate the other party. This model can have its setbacks. This type of negotiation has a high probability of hidden costs and failure, either during deal making or during implementation of the transaction, and it does not create a solid foundation for a long-term relationship. In (3) negotiation as problem solving, negotiators view their task as resolving a problem that they both share and see negotiation as a process in which each can gain. Since interest is central to the process, this win-win model is also called interest-based negotiation. Salacuse (2003) reported that responses in a survey of 310 individuals from different nationalities and occupations revealed that 86% of diplomatic and public service personnel considered negotiations to be a win-win process.

### **3.7 Negotiation styles**

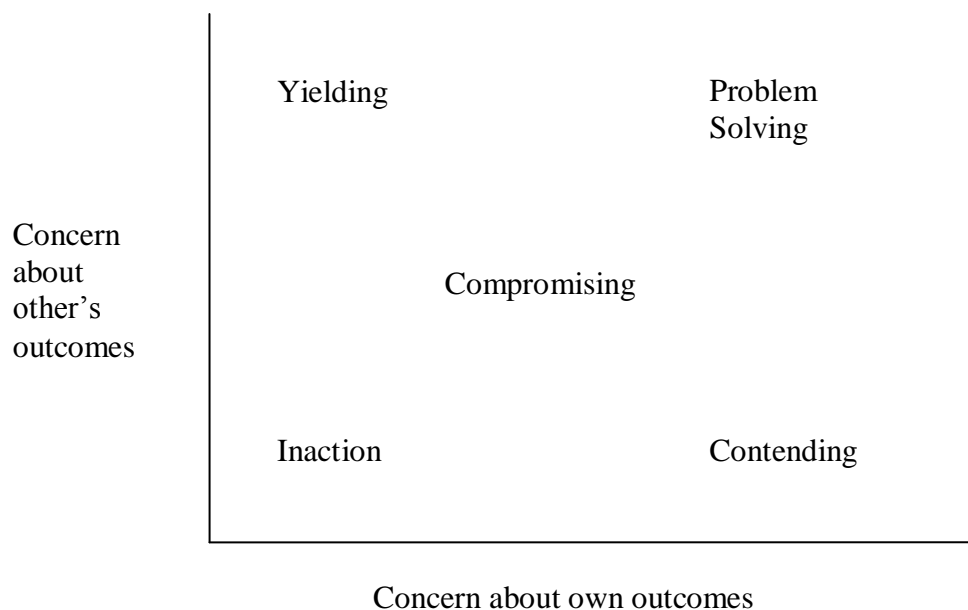
Most scholars agreed that negotiators developed certain styles or preferences when approaching others during negotiations (Berry, 1996; Cellich & Jain, 2004; Gosselin, 2007; Salacuse, 2003; Shell, 2001; Volkema, 1999). However, they have the option to

choose what type of styles to use when they are entering negotiations. They can enter the negotiations either with competitive or cooperative styles, or a combination of both, depending on their attitude towards relationships with the other party (Gosselin, 2007; Volkema, 1999). Negotiation involves the concept of mutual dependency or interdependence, whereby both parties need each other to accomplish their goals (Aquilar & Gallucio, 2008). In contrast to dependent relationships, interdependent relationships are more complex in nature, and involve interlocking goals, in which the parties involved have to rely on each other to get what they want from the negotiations (Lewicki et al., 2001). The structure of interdependence between the negotiating parties will determine both the range of possible negotiation solutions and the types of strategies the negotiators should use.

Berry (1996), in his analysis of negotiation style, classified a negotiator as either relationship-oriented or task-oriented. Greenhalgh (1987) asserted that relationships or a sense of interconnectedness among negotiators is an important factor in the negotiation process. The better the working relationship among the negotiators, the easier it is to achieve a favourable outcome for all parties (Fisher, 1985, 1989). Gesteland (2005) reckoned that when negotiating internationally, the focus behaviour of the negotiators, which is either on the relationship or the deal, will have different impacts on the success of the negotiation. The book *Negotiation* (2003) claimed that the relationship aspects were more important and should be given more consideration in negotiation activities, due to a flattening of organization structure, and as more long-term partners were built through international strategic alliances and joint ventures.

Pruitt and Rubin (1986) proposed a two-dimensional framework, which suggested that in negotiation, individuals were concerned about their own outcomes and the other party's outcomes. They called this the Dual Concern Model. The Dual Concern Model was derived from Blake and Mouton's (1964) managerial grid theory that explained how conflicts in organizations could be handled in many ways depending upon how high a manager's concern for production and people was. The Dual Concern Model suggested four major strategies an individual could adopt in negotiation, mainly contending, yielding, inaction and problem-solving. Contending, also called competing or dominating, is used when the individual only cares about his desired outcome rather than the other party's outcome. The individual may use threats, punishment and intimidation in the process. Yielding, or accommodating or obliging, is the strategy

when the individual does not care much about his desired outcome, but instead is more concerned about the other party's outcomes. In other words, it is alright to lose as long as the other party gains. Inaction, or avoiding, is when the individual is not concerned about the outcomes of both parties, and it is often synonymous with withdrawal or doing nothing. Problem-solving, or collaborating or integrating, is when the individual is very much concerned about both his own and other party's outcomes, and both parties will actively pursue means to gain the most out of the conflict. Lewicki et al. (2001) added another component to the strategies, which they called compromising. In this strategy, an individual shows a moderate effort to pursue his and another party's outcome. In other words, both parties are ready to employ a give and take strategy to satisfy their negotiation outcomes. The Dual Concern Model with the modification made by Lewicki et al. (2001) is shown as Figure 2.



*Figure 2: The Dual Concern Model*

*Source: Adopted from Lewicki et al. (2001)*

Several other conflict resolution and negotiation scholars adopted the same approach as the Dual Concern Model, but placed more emphasis on the relationship of the negotiating parties, rather than the outcome of the negotiation (e.g. Cellich & Jain, 2004; Cleary, 2001; Goldman & Rojot, 2003; Manning & Robertson, 2004; Rahim, 1983; Savage, Blair, & Sorenson, 1989; Shell, 2001). However the negotiating style concepts produced by this alternative model were the same as the Dual Concern Model; basically integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. The model

suggested that when there is a strong interest in the actual results of the negotiation, with little interest in the relationship with the counterpart, the negotiator should choose a dominating or competitive negotiation strategy. On the other hand, if there is a strong interest in achieving a relationship with the counterpart, the negotiator should opt for an accommodation strategy. If there is an interest both in substantive goals and a future relationship, the negotiator should adopt a cooperative strategy. Finally, if none of the objectives are important to the negotiator, he or she should avoid the negotiation. The scholars believed that the best strategy to choose depends on what the negotiators desire from the negotiation, either to establish relationship, or to win the negotiation, or both. Shell (2001) provided a useful explanation of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the five styles as in Table 2.



Table 2: *Strengths and Weaknesses of Five Negotiation Styles*

Negotiation Style	Strengths	Weaknesses
Accommodating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get satisfaction from solving other peoples' problems.</li> <li>• Often have good relationship-building skills.</li> <li>• Sensitive to other negotiators' emotional states, body language and verbal signals.</li> <li>• Good when working in a team and providing customer services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes place more weight on relationship aspect of negotiations rather than the task.</li> <li>• Vulnerable to more competitively-oriented negotiators.</li> <li>• When taken advantage of, may experience resentment and becoming less effective.</li> </ul>
Compromising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eager to close the gap in negotiations based on fair standards or formulae.</li> <li>• Valuable when time is short or when the stakes are small.</li> <li>• Relationship-friendly or reasonable person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often rush the negotiation process unnecessarily to reach the agreement, and may make concessions too readily.</li> <li>• Do not discriminate carefully among various fair criteria that may be advantageous to them.</li> <li>• Tend to be satisfied with any outcome as long as it is supported by any face-saving reason.</li> </ul>
Avoiding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other negotiators may find this tact and diplomacy, and put aside the confrontational aspect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be a bottleneck in the flow of important information.</li> <li>• Will make matters worse when interpersonal conflicts aggravate.</li> <li>• Often miss many good opportunities to negotiate</li> </ul>
Collaborating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoy negotiations.</li> <li>• Enjoy solving tough problems in interactive ways.</li> <li>• Good at using negotiations to discover reasons for conflicts.</li> <li>• Enjoy continuous flow of negotiation and encourage involvement of everyone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes transform simple situations into more complex occasions, and this may irritate others.</li> <li>• May be at risk when negotiating with a highly competitive party, who will let the collaborator solve the problem and then play his game.</li> </ul>
Competing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like to negotiate as it gives the opportunity to win.</li> <li>• Valuable when the stakes are high, time is limited and bluffing is possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can sometimes be hard on relationships.</li> <li>• May overlook issues that may yield substantial value, since they focus more on winning.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Shell (2001)

### **3.8 Factors influencing negotiation styles**

Based on research and observations, scholars of negotiation supported that the styles adopted reflect the negotiators' personality, attitude and value system as well as training, education, culture, occupation, experience and context of the negotiation (Brett, 2000; Brett et al., 1998; Cohen, 2002; Fatehi, 2008; Faure, 1999b; Goldman & Rojot, 2003; Salacuse, 1998; 2003; Volkema, 1999; Wanis-St. John, 2003; Zartman & Berman, 1982). Bolewski (2007) claimed that culture was the primary element of any international interaction and when negotiators come from different and diverse cultures, they have their own different assumptions about social interactions, economic interests, and political realities (Cellich & Jain, 2004).

Zartman and Berman (1982) conducted extensive research to explore the international negotiation process. They attempted to narrow the gap between researchers and practitioners because of feedback that theories generated by researchers were not relevant to practitioners. In their first phase of the research, the scholars interviewed 23 experienced American diplomats and 11 non-American diplomats. Later, they interviewed 51 United Nations Ambassadors and Secretariat members using a simulated negotiating experience. The researchers identified personality and attitudes as two important factors in shaping the way negotiators act and react. Personal skills that are deemed necessary to be a good and effective negotiator are empathy, integrity, patience, self-assurance, ingenuity, endurance or stamina, strength, clarity in issues, and emotional stability. They found three categories of negotiators in terms of attitudinal approach: (1) the high cooperative category (favour abstract thinking, tolerate ambiguity, dislike authoritarianism, accept ethical flexibility, hold a positive view of himself, and exhibit trustfulness and trustworthiness); (2) the highly competitive category (tend to have Machiavellian attitudes, to be suspicious, and have negative views of themselves); and (3) the low impersonal orientation category (prefer concrete thinking, dislike ambiguity, exhibit authoritarianism, avoid Machiavellianism and internationalism). The scholars also mentioned that one of the implications of both personality and attitude is trust, which is an essential feature of a successful negotiation.

Weiss (1994) identified 12 variables in the negotiation process which would lead to understand negotiating styles better: (1) basic concept (different groups view the

purpose and process of negotiation differently; (2) criteria for selecting negotiators (experience, status, knowledge of a particular subject and personal attributes); (3) issues stressed (substantive issues versus relationships); (4) protocol (different groups have different particular etiquette); (5) communications (verbal or nonverbal or mixed communications); (6) nature of persuasive arguments (facts and logical arguments, tradition, intuition, emotion, or beliefs associated with a particular religion or philosophy); (7) role of individual or group; (8) basis for trust (past experience and records, intuition, emotion and sanctions); (9) risk-taking propensity (desirable or undesirable, open to new ideas, or remaining within the expected boundaries and accustomed agreements); (10) view of time (limited versus plentiful and always available); (11) decision making system (individuals versus group); and (12) form of agreement (written agreement versus verbal agreement).

On the other hand, Hendon et al. (1996) described eight variables in the negotiating process that are necessary to better comprehend negotiation styles: (1) purpose (different groups view the purpose and process of negotiation differently, i.e., win-lose, as a competition to identify who is the best, or as a collaborative process to formulate some undertaking); (2) issues (specific substantive issues directly related to the agreement versus focus on building long-term relationships); (3) protocol (gift giving, entertainment, dress codes, seating arrangements, number of negotiators, timing of breaks, degree of formality versus informality); (4) communications (verbal versus nonverbal communication); (5) arguments (rely on facts and logical arguments versus tradition and references to the way things were done in the past, intuition versus emotion, religion versus philosophy); (6) trust (look to experience or records versus intuition and emotion); (7) time (viewed as limited and precious versus plentiful and always available); and (8) decision making (made by individuals versus made by groups - within the group, participants may defer to person of higher status or the most senior member).

In addition, Salacuse (1998) indicated that culture is one of the factors beside occupational background, personality, bureaucracy, business experience, gender and the nature of the transactions under negotiation that will affect negotiation styles. After a survey of 310 individuals from different nationalities (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, India, China, and Japan) and occupations (e.g., management and marketing, engineering, the military,

accounting and finance, diplomats and public service, teachers, and students) over a period of four years, Salacuse identified ten factors in the negotiation process with respect to culture that may influence the negotiation style of a person: (1) negotiating goals (contract or relationship); (2) attitudes to negotiating process (win/win or win/lose); (3) personal styles (formal or informal); (4) styles of communication (direct or indirect); (5) time sensitivity (high or low); (6) emotionalism (high or low); (7) agreement form (specific or general); (8) agreement building process (bottom up or top down); (9) negotiation team organization (one leader or consensus); and (10) risk taking (high or low).

In summary, many factors were found to influence the styles of negotiators, such as occupational background, personality, bureaucracy, gender, training, education, culture, experience and nature of the negotiation. However, most scholars tended to focus on the influence of culture, especially in international negotiation, as culture shapes the negotiators into having their own values and assumptions, and thus forms their own unique styles of negotiation.

### **3.9 Malaysian negotiation styles from literature**

Adler (2002) provided a descriptive explanation of Malays' business negotiation behaviour. According to her, Malays put more focus on building relationships with people wherever they were, whether in the market, in the workplace, or during business negotiations. This could be seen during the negotiation process, as Malay negotiators would start the negotiation by talking about a variety of topics totally unrelated to the core subject of negotiation, in order to establish relationships with the other party. With regards to the relationship aspect, Malays did not find spoken words more important than the attitudes the words conveyed towards them or towards the subjects of negotiation. Attitude was perceived as important to the relationship. Malay negotiators also emphasized their own feelings as well as those of the other party. At the same time, they were also concerned about how they appeared in the eyes of the other party as much as how the other team appeared in the eyes of their superiors after the negotiation. In addition, they put more stress on manners, showing refinement and respect for the other party and for the subjects under negotiation. Malays disliked argument and normally would reply indirectly when disagreeing to any proposals. In any contractual agreement, Malays would be more cautious, preferring to add some exit

terms, and put in a great deal of thought before signing any contract. This was because they were uncertain of their control over future events, and provisions for respectable withdrawal in the future were very much desired.

Morrison, Conaway and Borden (1994) emphasized that building a personal relationship, being polite, and face-saving were important factors for success in negotiation with Malaysians. They also noted that Malaysians might take a longer time in signing a contract. Gesteland (2005), while trying to provide a guide on how to conduct negotiation with Malaysians from the cultural aspect, also pointed out some features of Malaysians negotiating styles. For example, Malaysians put much stress on face-saving during the negotiation process. Any showing of negative emotions such as displaying impatience, irritation, or anger, easily caused loss of face in the eyes of Malaysians. They also emphasized harmony and relied on relationships to resolve business disagreements. The emphasis of creating and maintaining long-term relationships and face-saving was also highlighted by Hendon (1989).

Osman-Gani and Tan (2002) conducted a mixed-method study to explore negotiation styles of three ethnic groups in Singapore, mainly Chinese, Malays and Indians. They conducted 30 personal interviews and administered 600 questionnaires using stratified random sampling to Chinese, Indian and Malay managers at three major industrial sectors in Singapore: manufacturing, commerce, and service. They adopted Casse's (1981) negotiation-style profile to measure the negotiation styles of the respondents. The profile listed basically four main styles: intuitive, factual normative and analytical.

The characteristics of a person under each style are summarized as follows:

- 1) Intuitive – warm and animated when making statements, flexible and creative during negotiations, fluid and able to adapt to changing subjects and situations, and imaginative in projecting into the future;
- 2) Factual – identify facts in a neutral manner, pay attention to details and all statements made during negotiations, and place much importance on evidence and facts as related to experience;

- 3) Normative – consider and weigh facts according to a set of personal values, use all tools at his or her disposal such as emotions, status, authority, and rewards to come up with the best bargain; and
- 4) Analytical – strongly logical, try to find cause and effect in all issues, and like to weigh pros and cons thoroughly.

The study found that:

- 1) Malays showed a slightly higher preference for the intuitive style than Chinese and Indians. They tended to follow inspiration and generally were more energetic and enthusiastic in carrying out their work. Malay negotiators also preferred non-confrontational situations and gave top priority to maintaining personal and social relationships. In addition, they emphasized respect for elders and appreciated reciprocity.
- 2) Indian managers made use of the normative style of negotiation most frequently, while Chinese used it the least. Thus, a representative to negotiate with Indians should be expert in people skills and able to appeal to the emotions and personal likes of Indians.
- 3) Chinese used the analytical style relatively more frequently, while Indians used it the least. They suggested that negotiators must prepare well-thought out ideas prior to dealing with Chinese and come up with complete proposals that outlined all the benefits to both parties.
- 4) Chinese and Malays had a similar preference for using the factual style, while Indians had a slightly lower preference.

Paramasivam (2007) explored the adoption of politeness by Malays in business negotiations. Her research mainly concentrated on how Malays linguistically expressed disagreement and how they maintained politeness at the same time. In addition, the study also reported the reflection of Malay cultural values in the language use, especially during expressions of disagreement. She carried out a qualitative study by observing and audio-taping how Malays linguistically negotiated with Japanese for an

establishment of a joint venture. The objective was to find a link between negotiation action and cultural orientation of the parties involved, from the aspects of power and politeness. The study found that the Malay participants as the dominant party, while displaying power in their conversations, filled their speech with politeness. They also showed politeness during disagreements by asking for clarifications and counter-proposing. This act of avoiding direct disagreement with deferential politeness did preserve the relationship of the negotiating parties, and thus allowed the negotiation to continue in harmony. The study also found other attributes of the Malay culture:

- 1) The exercise of power in the negotiation process reflected the Malay cultural value of power hierarchy in relationships;
- 2) The Malays masked their power with politeness, and this showed their preference for cultural values of interdependence between people in working relationships, and this act displayed concern for others' feelings, which was a primary Malay value;
- 3) The Malays also preferred to give advice during the negotiation process, which was culturally common among persons of high social standing.

Except for the above literature, the rest of the literature examined described the cultural aspect and values of Malaysians that might affect their behavior in general (e.g., Abdullah, 1992; Abdullah & Gallagher, 1995; Blunt, 1988; Bochner, 1994; Brew & Cairns, 2004; Cai & Fink, 2002; Che Rose, Suppiah, Uli, & Othman, 2007; Dahlan, 1991; Goddard, 1997; Hofstede, 1991b; Kennedy, 2002; Lim & Wafa, 1997; Lim, 1998; Lim & Abdullah, 2001; Maniam, 1986; Mansor & Kennedy, 2000; Mastor, Jin, & Cooper, 2000; Rashid & Ho, 2003; Salleh, 2005; Storz, 1999; Tamam, Hassan, & Md Yaid, 1997; Tee & Wafa, 1997). Unfortunately, none of the literature has researched the Malaysian government's practice in international negotiations from the perspective and experience of Malaysian diplomats. However, some of the findings from the above literature are discussed in the following chapter under the heading of "Previous research of Malaysian culture".

### **3.10 Previous negotiation research**

Scholars of negotiation have contributed to the current knowledge in understanding negotiation from many aspects of study. Raiffa (1982) pointed out that the earliest part of research in negotiation was to focus on describing the behaviours of negotiators from an historical perspective. He called it “symmetrically descriptive research”. Then, came the “game theorists” and “mathematical economists”, who started to study how negotiators should behave in competitive and interactive situations. Raiffa named this “symmetrical prescriptive research”. This research focused on the bargaining process, the study of moves and countermoves, aspirations and goals, and expectations (Thompson, Neale, & Sinaceur, 2004).

Later, research on negotiation expanded further with the introduction of an asymmetrical prescriptive-descriptive approach to negotiation (Raiffa, 1982). From the rational perspective, Raiffa argued that the best advice for negotiators should not only include what negotiators should do, but also how they should behave (behavioural perspective) in order to get the best outcome of the negotiation.

Based on the behavioural perspective on negotiation developed by Raiffa (1982), and with the help of other scholars promoting behavioural decision theory, the study of negotiation has been focused on four areas of knowledge: basic psychological process, social processes, negotiation context and cultural context (Gelfand & Brett, 2004b). For example, the study of basic psychological process in negotiation focuses on the cognition, social perception, motivation and emotion in negotiation (Aquilar & Galluccio, 2008; Neale & Fragale, 2006; Thompson et al., 2004); the role of emotion in negotiation (Barry, Fulmer, & Goates, 2006; Barry, Fulmer, & Van Kleef, 2004); and motivation in negotiation (Carnevale & De Dreu, 2006; De Dreu, 2004).

The study of negotiation as a social process includes the study of the communication process in negotiation (Weingart & Olekalns, 2004), and managing new social conflict challenges (Shapiro & Kulik, 2004) while the study of the negotiation context looks at how constituencies and groups affect negotiation (Kramer, 2004), how third parties affect the resolution of disputes (Conlon & Meyer, 2004), how justice relates to negotiation (Tyler & Blader, 2004; Zartman, 2008), and how communication



technology influences negotiations (McGinn & Croson, 2004; Nadler & Shestowsky, 2006).

Finally, the study of negotiation in a cultural context looks at the study of cognition from a cultural point of view (Morris & Gelfand, 2004), the importance of emotions in intercultural negotiations (Kumar, 2004), how culture affects the process of negotiation (Adair & Brett, 2004; Brett & Gelfand, 2006), the classic theory of dispute resolution from a cultural aspect (Tinsley, 2004), how culture affects the social context of negotiation (Gelfand & Cai, 2004), the intervention of a third party to negotiation from cultural perspective (Carnevale, Cha, Wan, & Fraidin, 2004), how culture influences perceptions of justice in negotiations (Leung & Tong, 2004; Zartman, 2008), and how culture and communication media jointly affect negotiation (Barsners & Bhappu, 2004).

### **3.11 Negotiation and culture**

In recent years, negotiation scholars have studied the effects of culture on negotiation. Research by Hofstede (1991a) showed that differences in culture play an important role in international affairs such as negotiation between rich and poor countries. He also stressed that intercultural communication skills could become a significant contributor to the success of negotiations. Adair and Brett (2004) supported the idea of culture influencing negotiation by saying that since communication is the core element of negotiation, and different social groups have different ways of communicating through common signs, symbols and behaviours, negotiation is regarded as culturally shaped.

LeBaron (2003) argued that culture is an imminent part of conflict and conflict resolution. She conceptualized culture as underground rivers that run through peoples' lives and relationships, injecting messages that unconsciously shape their perceptions, attributions, judgments, and ideas of self and others. She also argued that culture is always a factor in conflict, whether it plays a central role or influences it subtly and gently. Most negotiations are considered cross-cultural because people are different from each other, they see things differently and they process the world differently (Berry, 1996).

Hendon et al. (1996) asserted that culture gives a person his or her identity, and these values and beliefs characterize and orient the behaviour of the person. According to

them, the negotiation process matters when negotiation is conducted with someone from another country with a different cultural background, so a good negotiator should have a good knowledge about the history, laws, customs and government of the country the person is dealing with. Some cultures prefer to compromise, some will go for consensus, and still some will want to dominate others through fights and battles. Some cultures prefer a deductive approach, in which the negotiators first agree on principles and later these principles can be applied to particular issues. Others think inductively, dealing with problems at hand and principles will develop later.

Culture influences negotiation in four ways: (1) it conditions the individual's perception of reality, (2) it obstructs any information which is inconsistent or against the individual's assumptions, (3) it projects meanings onto the other party's words and actions, and (4) it compels an ethnocentric individual to an incorrect attribution of motive (Hendon et al., 1996). On the other hand, Brett (2001) noted that culture affects negotiation in terms of negotiators' interests, priorities and use of strategies.

Faure (1999b) described culture as influencing negotiation in each of its key components, mainly actors, structure, strategies, process and outcome. As for the actors, culture conditions how the negotiators perceive the negotiation, either as a power confrontation, a cooperative exercise, a debate, a ritual, or a human venture. Culture influences structural factors in terms of external constraints (e.g., legal framework and the organizational setting), number of negotiators involved, the number of issues under discussion, and the distribution of power between the parties. Choices of strategic moves are guided by values, which directly relate to culture, such as goal setting, the behaviour of negotiators in reaching an agreement or building coalitions. Culture influences process in terms of the behaviour of negotiators during the process, which are all value-related, such as communication style, perception of time, and use of humor. How the parties interpret the outcomes of the negotiation is also influenced by culture.

### **3.12 Summary**

An overview of negotiation phenomenon and its relevant aspects was the main focus of this chapter. This chapter highlighted the broad concept of negotiation, why it is needed, the elements and process involved, and the relevant theories and models. In addition, this chapter also discussed the negotiation styles adopted by different parties in

their course of action and the factors that influence the styles. The chapter then highlighted literature on Malaysian negotiation styles and what area of research has been done on negotiation. The chapter concluded with a discussion on negotiation and its cultural aspect.

As culture is found as an important factor which influences the negotiators' behaviour, it is now vital to discuss culture and its aspects. It is also imperative to understand the culture of Malaysia and examine research on Malaysian culture. Cultural aspects are discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON CULTURE**

#### **4.1 Chapter overview**

When it comes to international negotiation, one factor which has never failed to be mentioned by scholars is the influence of culture on negotiators' behaviour. Thus, this chapter primarily discusses literature review on culture, its elements, and how culture influences negotiation. This chapter also focuses on previous research conducted on Malaysian culture. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the knowledge gap that called for this study.

#### **4.2 Culture – Definition and concept**

Scholars have different ways of defining culture. For example, Barnouw (1963) defined culture as “the way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all the more or less stereotyped patterns of learned behaviour, which are handed down from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation” (p. 5). Another scholar, Hofstede (1991a) defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (p. 5). According to Hofstede, culture is not genetically inherited; instead it is acquired or learned. Lustig and Koester (2003) interpreted culture as “a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviours of relatively a large group of people” (p. 27).

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), after researching more than one hundred different definitions of culture, offered one of the most comprehensive definitions:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditioning elements of future action (p. 181).

Although many scholars have different concepts on culture, most of them agree on the characteristics of culture as follows (Hoecklin, 1993; Lustig & Koester, 2003; Olie, 1995): (1) culture is not a characteristic of individuals, but of a large group of individuals, e.g., family groups, occupational groups, regional groups and national groups, who share common values, beliefs and ideas; (2) culture is learned; (3) culture develops over time; and (4) culture has mainly two parts, the objective culture which includes human artefacts; and subjective culture, which refers to a group's perception of social environment and includes norms, roles and values. Besides the above characteristics of culture, Cellich and Jain (2004) added that culture is interrelated, whereby one part of culture is deeply connected with another part, such as religion with marriage or business with social status.

Lustig and Koester (2003) reiterated that the world is full of different cultures and the forces that influence the differences in culture are history, ecology, technology, biology, institutional networks, and interpersonal communication patterns. These forces are dependent and interrelated to each other in the sense that each becomes a pulling or a pushing factor for the other.

#### **4.2.1 Culture elements**

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) identified four elements of culture: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. In the workplace, symbols are shared meanings to enhance commitments and compliance. Symbols include words, objects, goals and plans, gestures, company jargon, ways of dressing and addressing, and all kinds of status symbols. Heroes are those who are considered as models for behaviour and exemplify the ideal employer or employee within an organisation. Heroes can be alive or dead, real or imaginary. Rituals are collective activities which are considered socially essential. In the workplace, rituals include celebrations, meetings, memo-writing, planning systems, and business luncheons. Symbols, heroes and rituals have subtle meanings and are recognised and interpreted only by the insiders.

Values, on the other hand, are the core of the culture and they refer to preferences or tendencies for what is considered right and what is considered wrong. Examples of values are evil versus good, dirty versus clean and dangerous versus safe. According to

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), symbols, heroes and rituals are changeable over time, but values are stable and consistent, since values are unconsciously learned during the early age of life. Lustig and Koester (2003) believed that values are the desired goals of a culture.

These values are becoming the subject of research for many scholars, since researchers indicated that there are differences in values in Western and eastern cultures. For example, Abdullah (1992) indicated that most Western cultures view man as the master of nature. Thus, they can harness and exploit the nature to suit their wants and needs. They also believe the truth is determined by facts and measurement. However, eastern cultures view man as subservient to, or in harmony with nature, and tend to accept changes and uncertainties as fate. They also believe that truth is determined by spiritual and philosophical principles. As for the nature of human relationships, Western cultures place more priorities on tasks, are more individually-oriented and hierarchy is considered less important. In contrast, most eastern cultures place more emphasis on social relationships, group-orientation and hierarchy.

Another element which is also important to note is the communication pattern of a culture. The most famous scholar to describe the relationship between culture and communication is Edward T. Hall, who explained the differences in cultures in terms of high or low context (Hall, 1977). According to Hall, high-context cultures prefer to use high-context communication which have certain characteristics such as: (1) messages are not explicitly expressed; (2) the meaning of the message is presumed to be part of the individual's internal beliefs, values and norms or implied by the physical setting; (3) messages are almost pre-programmed and most of the meanings are already known and shared; (4) the purpose of communication is to maintain harmony and face-saving, and therefore, reactions are likely to be reserved; (5) a member of the group or in-group is easily determined since he or she can easily apprehend the meaning of messages and act accordingly; (6) commitment between members is very strong and deep, and responsibility to others has more priority than to oneself; (7) loyalties to families and members are long-lasting and unchanging; and (8) time is regarded as more flexible and more responsive to the immediate needs of people.

On the other hand, low-context cultures prefer to use low-context messages, in which most of the information is explicitly communicated and the details of the message are

expressed specifically in the spoken words. The most important purpose in communication is to convey exact meaning and reactions are frequently very explicit and readily observable. A good example of low-context communication is when people interact with computers, in which every statement given must be precise and explicit in order for the computer to understand and respond to the instructions (Lustig & Koester, 2003). In contrast to high-context cultures, low context cultures tend to have fragile bonds among the people and commitment to long-term relationships is low. In addition, low-context cultures put more emphasis on time in order to complete the work. The summary of differences between high and low-context cultures is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Summary of Differences between High and Low Context Cultures*

<b>High-context cultures</b>	<b>Low-context cultures</b>
Covert and implicit	Overt and explicit
Messages internalized	Messages plainly coded
Much nonverbal coding	Details verbalized
Reactions reserved	Reactions on the surface
Distinct in-groups and out-groups	Flexible in-groups and out-groups
Strong interpersonal bonds	Flexible interpersonal bonds
Commitment high	Commitment low
Time open and flexible	Time highly organized

*Source:* Adapted from Hall (1977)

#### **4.2.2 Hofstede's value dimension**

Hofstede (1991a) surveyed over 100,000 employees working with local subsidiaries of a large multinational corporation, IBM, in more than 50 countries all over the globe over six years from 1967 to 1973. What made his research significantly notable was the fact that the peoples he surveyed were similar in all aspects of the organization except that they were of different nationalities. This circumstance was very much appropriate for his objective of comparing aspects of national cultures across countries. Based on his extensive research, he identified four dimensions of work-related value differences across national cultures. These differences in preferences, or values, have important implications for managers and organizations operating across national borders. The dimensions are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity and

individualism-collectivism. Later, he discovered another dimension, which he called long versus short-term orientation (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

Power distance describes the degree of deference and acceptance of unequal power between people. Cultures where there is a comfort with high power distance are those where some people are considered superior to others because of their social status, gender, race, age, education, birth, personal achievements, family background or other factors. Hoecklin (1993) interpreted that in organizations, this distance would condition the extent to which employees accept that their superiors have more power than they have, and the extent to which they accept that their superiors' opinions and decisions are right because they are in charge. Cultures with low power distance tend to assume equality among people, and focus more on earned status than ascribed status. The key differences among small and large power distance cultures in workplace, according to Hofstede (1991a) are shown in Table 4. Malaysia was found to be the highest ranking country in terms of Power Distance Index. The Power Distance Index was calculated based on the mean scores of the standard sample of employees in a country on three strongly related questions. The higher the country on the index, the larger was the power distance, and the more unequal the power was between the people.

Table 4: *Key Differences between Small and Large Power Distance Cultures in Workplace*

<b>Small power distance</b>	<b>Large power distance</b>
Hierarchy in organizations means an inequality of roles, established for convenience	Hierarchy in organizations reflects the existential inequality between higher-ups and lower-downs
Decentralization is popular	Centralization is popular
Narrow salary range between top and bottom of organization	Wide salary range between top and bottom of organization
Subordinates expect to be consulted	Subordinates expected to be told what to do
The ideal manager is a resourceful democrat	The ideal manager is a benevolent autocrat or good father
Privileges and status symbols are frowned upon	Privileges and status symbols for managers are both expected and popular

*Source:* Adapted from Hofstede (1991a)



Another dimension is uncertainty avoidance, which is the lack of tolerance for ambiguity and the need for formal rules. This dimension measures the extent to which people in a society feel threatened by ambiguous situations and will try to avoid them as much as possible. It also measures how well people adapt to change. Countries that show the most discomfort with ambiguity and uncertainty place a high value on conformity and safety, risk avoidance, and reliance on formal rules and rituals. Trust tends to be vested only in close family and friends. The key differences between weak and strong uncertainty avoidance cultures in workplace, according to Hofstede (1991a) are shown in Table 5. Hofstede ranked Malaysia as a weak uncertainty avoidance country.

Table 5: *Key Differences between Weak and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance Cultures in Workplace*

<b>Weak uncertainty avoidance</b>	<b>Strong uncertainty avoidance</b>
There should not be more rules than is strictly necessary	Emotional need for rules, even those which will never work
Time is a framework for orientation	Time is money
Comfortable feeling when lazy, hardworking only when needed	Emotional need to be busy, inner urge to work hard
Precision and punctuality have to be learned	Precision and punctuality come naturally
Tolerance of deviant and innovative ideas and behaviour	Suppression of deviant ideas and behaviour, resistance to innovation
Motivation by achievement and esteem or belongingness	Motivation by security and esteem or belongingness

*Source:* Adapted from Hofstede (1991a)

Individualism-collectivism is another dimension identified. Individualism is a concern for oneself as an individual versus a concern for the priorities and rules of the group to which one belongs. The ties between individuals are loose and everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism is when the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. In a collectivist society, the group to which one belongs is the major source of one's identity and the unit to which one owes lifelong loyalty. The key differences between collectivist and

individualist cultures in the workplace, according to Hofstede (1991a), are shown in Table 6. Malaysia scores as a mild collectivism country.

Table 6: *Key Differences between Collectivist and Individualist Cultures in Workplace*

<b>Collectivist</b>	<b>Individualist</b>
High-context communication	Low-context communication
Harmony should always be maintained and direct confrontation avoided	Speaking one's mind is a characteristic of an honest person
Relationship employer-employee is perceived in moral terms, like a family link	Relationship employer-employee is a contract supposed to be based on mutual advantage
Hiring and promotion decisions take employees-in-group into account	Hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on skills and rules only
Management is management of group	Management is management of individuals
Relationship prevails over task	Task prevails over relationship

*Source:* Adapted from Hofstede (1991a)

Masculinity and femininity refer to the degree to which a culture values either assertiveness or nurturing and social support. Masculinity refers to the desirability of assertive behaviour while femininity refers to desirability of modest behaviour, concern for relationships, nurturing and quality of life (Lewicki et al., 2001). In the masculine culture, the ethics tend to be more toward "live-to-work" orientations where as in the feminine culture, the ethics are more oriented towards "work-to-live". Masculine societies tend to have a rigid division of sex roles (Hendon et al., 1998). In feminine culture, there is a preference for resolving conflicts by compromise. The key differences between feminine and masculine cultures in workplace, according to Hofstede (1991a) are shown in Table 7. Malaysia stands in the middle between the two cultures.

Table 7: *Key Differences between Feminine and Masculine Cultures in Workplace*

<b>Feminine</b>	<b>Masculine</b>
Work in order to live	Live in order to work
Managers use intuition and strive for consensus	Managers expected to be decisive and assertive
Stress on equality, solidarity, and quality of work life	Stress on equity, competition among colleagues, and performance
Resolution of conflicts by compromise and negotiation	Resolution of conflicts by fighting them out

*Source:* Adapted from Hofstede (1991a)

Long versus short-term orientation refers to societies' search for virtue, such as a sense of shame, the value of thrift in spending, perseverance in achieving goals, reciprocity, saving face, and respect for tradition. The values of thrift and perseverance are more future-oriented while the values of respect for tradition and face-saving concern with the past and present. Although Malaysia was not the country under study for this dimension, but based on the findings from the countries like China and India, Hofstede predicted that the Chinese and the Indians in Malaysia are more long-term oriented than the Malays (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

According to Hofstede and Bond (1988), differences in these dimensions do influence the management practices. For example, power distance and individualism may affect the leadership behaviour, while masculinity and uncertainty avoidance may influence people's motivations. On the other hand, long versus short-term orientation is related to economic growth. In summary, the actual scores for Malaysia in terms of the five dimensions studied by Hofstede comparing to other Asian countries are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: *Summary of Actual Scores for Malaysia.*

Country	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-term Orientation
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>Nil</b>
India	77	48	56	40	61
Indonesia	78	14	46	46	Nil
Philippines	94	32	61	44	19
Thailand	64	25	31	64	56
Singapore	74	20	48	8	Nil
Japan	54	46	95	97	80
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	96

*Source:* Adapted from Hofstede (1991a)

#### 4.2.3 Trompenaars' work

Another description of how cultures differ has been developed by another scholar, Fons Trompenaars, after he administered research questionnaires to over 15,000 managers from 28 countries. Trompenaars (1993) identified five dimensions that are relevant to the business environment. The dimensions are universalism-particularism, individualism-collectivism, neutral-affective relationships, specific-diffuse relationships and achievement-ascription.

Universalism means that what is true and good can be determined and it is relevant everywhere. In other words, universalist cultures adhere to general rules that are applicable to everyone in the culture. For example, "do not cross the road when the light is red" is a standard rule, and a person will be frowned at if he or she goes against the rule, even if the road is free of traffic. Particularism means that what is right and good has less priority than relationships and changing circumstances. The rules do not apply to someone dear to the person's heart. For instance, a person from a particularist culture will support his or her close friend, even though the friend may have committed an offence because of poverty factors. A survey of whether a journalist would write a good or bad report on a friend's restaurant, even if the food was not good, revealed that 62 percent of Malaysians would choose to write a bad review. The key differences between universalist and particularist cultures according to Trompenaars, are shown in Table 9.

Table 9: *Key Differences between Universalist and Particularist Cultures*

<b>Universalist</b>	<b>Particularist</b>
Focus is more on rules than relationship	Focus is more on relationships than rules
Legal contracts are readily drawn up	Legal contracts are readily modified
A trustworthy person is the one who honours his or her word or contract	A trustworthy person is the one who honours changing mutualities
There is only one truth or reality, that which has been agreed to	There are several perspectives on reality relative to each participant
A deal is a deal	Relationships evolve

*Source:* Adapted from Trompenaars (1998)

Individualism-communitarism refers to how a person perceives him/herself, as an individual or part of a group. Individualism is considered as a characteristic of developed nations, while collectivism is considered more of a characteristic of traditional and developing countries. Malaysia turned out to be on the side of communitarist from the surveys conducted to determine whether a nation is more individualist or collectivist. For example, 55 percent of Malaysian respondents preferred group effort to improve quality of life and 58 percent chose team responsibility in accepting fault. The key differences between individualist and communitarist cultures according to Trompenaars, are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: *Key Differences between Individualist and Communitarist Cultures*

<b>Individualist</b>	<b>Communitarist</b>
More frequent use of “I” form	More frequent use of “We” form
Decision made instantly by representatives	Decisions referred back by delegate to organization
People ideally achieve alone and assume personal responsibility	People ideally achieve in groups which assume joint responsibility
Vacation taken in pairs, even alone	Vacations in organized groups or with extended family

*Source:* Adapted from Trompenaars (1998)

Neutral-affective relationships concerns the different ways cultures choose to express emotions, either openly or discretely. Members from neutral cultures tend to control and suppress their feelings while those from the affective cultures have a tendency to openly display their emotions. A survey of whether people from different countries will show their emotions openly when they feel upset at work revealed that 30 percent of Malaysians would demonstrate their feelings openly, compared to 64 percent of New Zealanders, who would not. Table 11 shows the key differences between neutral and affective cultures according to Trompenaars.

Table 11: *Key Differences between Neutral and Affective Cultures*

<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Affective</b>
Do not reveal what they are thinking or feeling	Reveal thoughts and feelings verbally and non-verbally
May (accidentally) reveal tension in face and posture	Transparency and expressiveness release tensions
Emotions often dammed up will occasionally explode	Emotions flow easily, effusively, vehemently and without inhibition
Cool and self-possessed conduct is admired	Heated, vital, animated expressions admired
Physical contact, gesturing or strong facial expressions often taboo	Touching, gesturing and strong facial expressions common
Statements often read out in monotone	Statements declaimed fluently and dramatically

*Source:* Adapted from Trompenaars (1998)

Specific-diffuse relationships deal with the degree of involvement individuals are comfortable with in dealing with other people in terms of private and public space. Specific-oriented cultures have small areas of privacy, while diffuse-oriented cultures have much larger areas and the members will only proceed once relationships or trust is established. In the case of Malaysia, 72 percent of respondents decided not to help his or her employer painting the employer's house, even when asked for it. The key differences between specific and diffuse-oriented cultures according to Trompenaars, are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: *Key Differences between Specific and Diffuse-Oriented Cultures*

<b>Specific-Oriented</b>	<b>Diffuse-oriented</b>
Direct, to the point, purposeful in relating	Indirect, circuitous, seemingly “aimless” forms of relating
Precise, blunt, definitive and transparent	Evasive, tactful, ambiguous, even opaque
Principles and consistent moral stands independent of the person being addressed	Highly situational morality depending upon the person and context encountered

*Source:* Adapted from Trompenaars (1998)

Achievement-ascription refers to how status and power in a society is determined, either through hard work or attribution. Achievement oriented-cultures tend to honour individuals in the society based on what the individuals have achieved, for example in business or research. However, ascription-oriented cultures likely to award people based on virtues such as age, class, gender, family background and education. Table 13 shows the key differences between achievement and ascription-oriented cultures according to Trompenaars.

Table 13: *Key Differences between Achievement and Ascription-Oriented Cultures*

<b>Achievement-oriented</b>	<b>Ascription-oriented</b>
Use of titles only when relevant to the competence you bring to the task	Extensive use of titles, especially when these clarify your status in the organization
Respect for superior in hierarchy is based on how effectively his or her job is performed and how adequate their knowledge	Respect for superior in hierarchy is seen as a measure of your commitment to the organization and its mission
Most senior managers are of varying age and gender and have shown proficiency in specific jobs	Most senior managers are male, middle-aged and qualified by their background

*Source:* Adapted from Trompenaars (1998)

Trompenaars (1998) continued with his research to the extent that as many as 30,000 respondents completed his questionnaire. With the extension of the research, Trompenaars added another two dimensions of culture: attitudes to time and attitudes to the environment. Attitudes to time differentiate between two cultures. One culture stresses more on the present and what have been planned for the future. In other words,

the society does not give much priority to past actions. On the other hand, some cultures focus more on what has been accomplished in the past, but give less emphasis on present and future events. Malaysia was found to have a considerable overlap of past, present and future. Attitudes to the environment describe one society which thinks that an individual is the source of whatever good or bad things that happen to the society, versus another society which sees that the environment has the upper power and affects the society at large.

#### **4.2.4 Schwartz's theory of cultural values**

Schwartz (1991) also developed a theory of cultural values to compare cultures around the world. He identified three dimensions of cultural values: conservatism versus intellectual and affective autonomy, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony.

According to Schwartz (1991), the term conservatism-autonomy describes whether a person is embedded in his or her group, or is independent of the group. The term is also similar to individualism-collectivism described by Hofstede and other scholars. A conservative culture emphasizes group solidarity such as social order, respect for tradition, family security and wisdom; and emphasizes maintenance of status quo so as not to disrupt the order. On the other hand, an autonomous culture stresses individual independence and the person is open to express his or her own internal attributes such as feelings and preferences. Schwartz divided autonomy into two types, intellectual and affective. The former emphasizes individual pursuit of one's own ideas and scholarly direction, such as curiosity, broadmindedness and creativity, while the latter highlights desirability for positive experience, such as pleasure, and an exciting and varied life.

The term hierarchy-egalitarianism indicates how cultures preserve harmony by encouraging members to consider the welfare of others and manage inevitable conflicts. A hierarchical culture puts emphasis on unequal differences in power, roles and resources, such as social power, authority, and wealth in order to achieve social accord. In contrast, an egalitarian society stresses recognition of members upon an equal level with one another, and promotes voluntary commitment and cooperation to maintain group unity. The relation of humankind to the natural and social world is the essence of mastery-harmony. From the mastery point of view, the humans are the masters of the



universe, and thus, they can change the world, exploit it, rule it and so on to get what they want or achieve their aims. On the other hand, harmony emphasizes accepting the world as it is and trying as much to fit in. It also preserves unity with nature and protects the environment.

#### **4.2.5 Critics of Hofstede**

The work of Hofstede is not without criticism. Schwartz (1991), as cited in Bangert and Pirzada (1992) for instance, criticized the research carried out by Hofstede in six main aspects:

- 1) Exhaustiveness of the value dimensions. Hofstede realized that the four dimensions he found earlier did not totally define a culture found and that was why he adopted the dimension of Confucian Dynamism, or long and short-term orientation found by Bond (1987);
- 2) Adequacy of the sample of nations. The research done by Hofstede was limited to countries where IBM had its subsidiaries and it did not cover the countries under communist regimes;
- 3) Effect of sample type. Since the sample of the research was employees from only one corporation, the result might be influenced by the corporate culture of that corporation;
- 4) Historical change. Hofstede gathered most of his data from 1967 to 1973. However, since then, the economic development of the Pacific Rim countries and the break up of communism in many countries have brought about many cultural changes;
- 5) Cultural-level versus individual-level dimensions. The dimensions found by Hofstede were totally based on country analysis and did not take into consideration the scores of the individual persons. The cultural-value dimensions may be different from the individual-level value dimensions; and

- 6) Equivalence of the meaning of values. Different cultures may define the specific items used to analyze the cultural-level dimensions differently and the way analysis was done by Hofstede was questionable.

Although the work of Hofstede has been criticized by many, other authors find it to be crucial and significant (Wanis-St. John, 2003) and Schwartz (1991) himself acknowledged that the dimensions found by Hofstede are widely accepted and adopted by many researchers to carry out more cross-cultural research.

#### **4.2.6 How culture dimensions affect negotiation**

Hendon et al. (1998) listed four dimensions of culture that could explain the differences in negotiation behaviours between cultures: (1) gender perspective in terms of masculinity and femininity. Masculine cultures may perceive negotiation situations in win-lose terms since they are embedded with assertiveness and competitiveness values; (2) uncertainty avoidance. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures would prefer problem-solving approaches; (3) power distance point of view. When negotiators from high masculinity society meet with negotiators from high power distance culture and they do not recognize their cultural behaviour, conflicts are going to happen and this will disrupt the negotiation process; and (4) individualism/collectivism aspect. Negotiators from individualistic cultures expect the other party's negotiators to make quick decisions. Members of collectivist cultures tend to assume that details could be worked out if the negotiators can agree on generalities. In addition, LeBaron (2003) indicated that negotiators from countries with high power distance tend to be comfortable with hierarchical structures, clear authority figures, and the right to use power with discretion. She also noted that it might be difficult for outsider negotiators to establish relationships of confidence and trust with members of national cultures with high uncertainty avoidance.

Lewicki et al. (2001) added that negotiators from comparatively high power distance cultures are a somewhat slower in negotiation processes because they frequently have to seek more information and approval from their superiors. He added that negotiators from collectivist cultures will strongly depend on cultivating and sustaining a long-term relationship and this focus on relationship plays a critical role in negotiations, to the extent negotiation with the same party may continue for years, and any change of

negotiators may disturb the relationship and will take a long time to rebuild. On the other hand, when negotiators from masculine cultures meet, they will become more competitive due to the nature of assertiveness in them. Meanwhile, negotiators from feminine cultures are more likely to have empathy for the other party and to seek compromise. Negotiators from uncertainty avoidance cultures are not comfortable with ambiguous situations and are more likely to seek stable rules and procedures when they negotiate. Negotiators from less uncertainty avoidance cultures are more comfortable with unstructured situations and are likely to adapt to quickly changing situations and will be less uncomfortable when the rules of the negotiation are ambiguous or changing.

On the other hand, Brett (2001) stated that cultural differences can be detected in four aspects: (1) negotiators' goals, whether they are for self-interest or collective interests; (2) negotiators' notion of power based on fairness; (3) the use of strong or moderate influence; and (4) the way the negotiators share information among them, either direct or indirect. In addition, Cellich and Jain (2004) added that culture influences international negotiations from different angles, such as definition of negotiation, selection of negotiators, protocol, communication, time, risk propensity, groups versus individuals, and nature of agreement.

### **4.3 Previous research on Malaysian culture**

#### **4.3.1 Research by Hofstede**

Hofstede (1980) found that Malaysia is high in terms of power distance, quite weak in uncertainty avoidance, high in collectivism and medium in masculinity. However, research by Blunt (1988) found that Malaysia scored high in terms of uncertainty avoidance, which contradicts the result found by Hofstede. From his research, Blunt (1988) discovered many characteristics of high uncertainty avoidance in the Malaysian context and some of the characteristics are: more resistance to change, less risk-taking, an obvious preference for clear organizational structure, a preference for clearly laid out rules, a strong feeling that conflicts are undesired and tendency for detail. The rest of the findings by Blunt were consistent with Hofstede's findings about Malaysia; high power distance, low individualism, and medium masculinity.

Another research by Mansor and Kennedy (2000), who analyzed the results from The Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE) study, which involved 170 researchers in over 60 countries including Malaysia, also supported Blunt's finding of Malaysia in terms of high uncertainty avoidance. The study also found that Malaysia is moderately high in terms of power distance, but not in the highest ranking, as found by Hofstede. The possible reason was that there may be a generation shift in which younger generations are gaining more overseas education, thereby adopting a less hierarchical-oriented attitude. Another explanation is due to the adoption of Islamic values which stress equality. According to Mansor and Mohd Ali (1998), Islam does not differentiate members of society into hierarchical order, whether it between the rich and poor, or between leaders and followers. This could be seen during religious performances, such as during congregational prayers, where people are not separated from one another.

#### **4.3.2 Research by Abdullah**

Abdullah (1992; 1996) and Abdullah and Pederson (2003) stated that the Malaysian workforce places an emphasis on loyalty, trust, cooperation, compassion, tolerance, spirituality, being indirect when communicating bad news, maintaining harmonious relationships, preserving face, showing respect for hierarchy and elders, and being polite. In addition, after a series of workshops and dialogues with more than 200 Malaysian and foreign managers working in Malaysian organizations, she found many characteristics about the Malaysian workforce:

- 1) **Non-assertive.** Malaysians are not assertive, are eager to please others and find it difficult to say "no". Hence, subordinates generally will not argue with their superiors, will pretend to understand instructions given, be reluctant to check back if there is a problem and have a tendency not to bring any problem to the attention of their superiors. Subordinates are also often reluctant to ask for help when they do not understand;
- 2) **Respect for seniors/elderly people.** They are loyal to authority and tend to act with reverence and obedience towards their elders. They will not speak in a high tone to an elderly person or superior (Rashid & Ho, 2003);

- 3) **Loyalty and respect for authority.** An authoritarian style of management is still predominant. Subordinates are expected to be loyal to the organization. Superiors and subordinates develop warm attitudes amongst themselves. The disadvantage aspect of this value when it is carried to the extreme is unquestioning loyalty, subordinates reluctant to take any initiative and avoidance of open and frank feedback from superiors (Abdullah & Gallagher, 1995);
- 4) **Collectivistic.** They work extremely well in a team environment as they have a strong sense of belonging. The spirit of collectivism is more important than that of individualism, and this is often translated in the willingness to give priority to group interests ahead of individual concerns. Satisfaction at work comes from having opportunities to receive appropriate respect from fellow colleagues and maintaining harmonious, predictable and enjoyable friendships with subordinates and peers. Other research supported this characteristic and confirmed that Malaysians are more group-oriented and have fewer idiocentric self-descriptions (Bochner, 1994);
- 5) **Harmony.** They prefer compromise to confrontation, and often seek consensus and harmony in business dealings. The perspective of superior and subordinates are less likely to be in conflict. Every attempt is made not to damage self esteem or standing. Open public criticism and outspokenness are to be avoided at all costs because they undermine harmonious relationships. Tolerance and understanding count more than legalistic and rationalistic arguments which are based on objectivity;
- 6) **Preserving face.** They are less forthcoming in expressing views and opinions and are uncomfortable in critically evaluating peers and subordinates. Giving negative feedback can be awkward and difficult as indirectness is more the norm than directness in day to day behaviour. Criticisms, when given, can be taken seriously and may lead to loss of face;
- 7) **Status oriented, good manners and courtesy.** They are likely to engage in and tolerate elaborate forms of courtesy and standardised rituals which are calibrated according to the rank of the recipient, and the formality of the occasion;

- 8) **Respect for hierarchy.** Social formalities are extremely important as social status in the community deserves respect;
- 9) **Value for harmony, and non-aggressiveness.** They dislike overt displays of anger and aggressive behaviour. An aggressive, "go-getting" and "take charge" kind of manager may be perceived to be brash, rough and insensitive. The person can also be a threat to social harmony and can cause his or her subordinates to be withdrawn and non-contributory;
- 10) **Value for trust and relationship building.** There is a strong preference for a relationship based orientation or a person-oriented approach rather than a task-oriented approach in performing tasks. Developing trust and partnership understanding are far more important than the contractual obligation of getting the job done; and
- 11) **Value for a third party.** There is a tendency to deal with ambiguities and uncertainties by using the indirect approach of a third party. Bad news becomes more palatable to the recipient when communicated through a respectable party. They are loyal to authority and tend to act with deference and obedience towards their elders. The use of an intermediary to make first contacts with a prospective client is important for establishing goodwill and trust.

Abdullah (1992; 1996) also came up with a list of common values for three main ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia, mainly Malay, Chinese and Indian, as shown in Table 14.

Table 14: *List of Malaysian Ethnic Values*

<b>Common values amongst Malays</b>		
Respect for elders	Friendliness	Not aggressive
Spirituality	Politeness	Cooperation
Humility	Harmony/peace	Good manners
Face	Loyalty	Faith in God
Tact	Apologetic	Family oriented
Generosity	Formalities	Obedience
Caring	Accommodating	Fairness
Patience	Trustworthiness	Sincerity
Harmony	Discipline	Courtesy
Sensitivity to feelings	Teamwork	Self respect
Sense of appropriateness	Non-confrontational	Honesty
Indirectness	Tolerance	Rituals
Food and ceremonies	Harmony with environment	Compliance
Tacit system of reciprocal obligations	Deference to elders	
<b>Common values amongst Chinese</b>		
Food	Money	Gambling/risk taking
Hard work	Perseverance	Filial piety
Success	Position	Respect for hierarchy
Diligence	Face	Integrity
Education	Thrift	Modesty
Wealth	Meritocracy	Honesty
Family oriented	Generosity	Entrepreneurship
Happiness	Prosperity	Pragmatic/practical
Harmony	Family	
<b>Common values amongst Indians</b>		
Fear of God	Participation	Loyalty
Sense of belonging	Hard work	Karma
Brotherhood	Security	Champion of causes
Family	Filial piety	Harmony
Modesty	Face	

*Source:* Adapted from Abdullah (1992)

Abdullah and Gallagher (1995) established another documentary analysis to explore how high / low context cultures combined with small / large power distance and individualism / collectivism influenced behaviours in the Malaysian workplace. They found that combinations of high context communication with large power distance and collectivism dimensions, which characterize Malaysian culture, do provide positive and negative impacts on behaviours.

As for the positive impacts, the authors found that:

- 1) harmonious relationships are maintained at work and this promotes a friendly and supportive environment;
- 2) tradition, heritage and pride are important aspects in decision-making, since they can be guidance for future planning;
- 3) knowledge, experience and wisdom of elders and seniors are given necessary acknowledgement. They are also given the trust to develop new initiatives, and thus facilitate organizational alignment;
- 4) team spirit is strongly harnessed; and
- 5) personal life, working life and spiritual aspects are interconnected to one another.

However, the characteristics of Malaysian cultures also have shortcomings and the analysis found that:

- 1) subordinates in general are reluctant to take the initiative for improvement due to respect for seniors and elders;
- 2) subordinates may also not be ready to disagree or challenge their superiors, thus the growth of ideas is halted;
- 3) creative ideas may not go far in a hierarchical setting, since they may be viewed as anti-establishment and against the mainstream; and
- 4) superiors may find it difficult to give honest feedback to subordinates due to face-saving.



#### **4.3.3 Research by Dahlan**

Dahlan (1991) described the nature of Malaysian Malay values as originating from a belief system which he identified as a *budi* complex system. This *budi* complex is embedded unconsciously in the Malaysian Malay psyche and guides the way individuals should feel and think about themselves and others and thus, shapes their values and behaviour. According to Dahlan, the *budi* system consists of mainly the Malay politeness, the Malay conception of time; the Malay notion of superiority of intuitive inner-feeling knowledge; and the host-guest and superior-subordinate relationships. The politeness includes all aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication. This system also comprises the use of language, speech intonations and the ways people are addressed, based on their place in the hierarchy. It also covers how the body is conducted in terms of posture, giving and receiving things. The structure of *budi* complex is composed of virtuous qualities such as generosity, respect, sincerity, righteousness, consideration, face-saving, discretion, feeling of shame at the collective level, and feeling of shame experienced at the individual level. The fundamental nature of the *budi* complex, on the other hand, is to prevent Malays from appearing uncultured and ill-mannered.

#### **4.3.4 Research by Storz**

Dahlan's propositions are supported by Storz (1999). Storz (1999) made an attempt to comprehend the belief system that has moulded the values and behaviour of both Malays and Chinese in the Malaysian business culture. While agreeing that the Malay values system is embodied in the *budi* complex, Storz stated that the Malaysian Chinese values system is encapsulated in core values of Confucian teachings. Storz discovered that the *budi* complex, which characterizes the Malaysian Malay way of life, and the core values of Confucianism for the Malaysian Chinese, share certain similarities, mainly in the view of one's self, in epistemology, and in the notion of time.

Storz (1999) noted that both the Malaysian Malays and Chinese embrace a view of self as a complete and holistic one, covering the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual entities. They do not put a boundary between body and mind, the physical and the spiritual, or the emotional and the intellectual. These two value systems also put emphasis on self as dependent upon perceptions, acceptance or approval of others. In

addition, they stress a collective orientation, in which reciprocity and mutuality are two strong values. With these characteristics, the Malays and Chinese regard the social and relational aspects of a business transaction as more than the task itself. The values of reciprocity and mutuality, on the other hand, orientate them towards engaging in win-win solutions, consensus and cooperation, thus implying that they would prefer to avoid getting into conflicts.

In terms of epistemology, or how we know and learn, both the Malays and Chinese do not make set distinctions between the intellect and emotions (Storz, 1999). This knowledge system has a close link with how they solve any problems; using not only their intellect, but also the use of intuition or feeling. A good example among the Chinese is the use of *feng shui* to increase prosperity or to locate a good location for their office. Storz also drew attention to the concept of time held by Malays and Chinese. According to Storz, both the Malays and Chinese view time as subjective and relative, and reality is perceived as not based on clock time. This has implications for punctuality and deadlines. For example, deadlines are movable and changeable depending on status and authority. Another instance is the common term “rubber time” for the Malaysians, which indicates that time is flexible and stretchable.

#### **4.3.5 Research by Salleh**

Salleh (2005) illustrated the Malaysian Malay style of communication by adopting Edward T. Hall’s concept of the high-low communication context. Salleh explored Malays characteristics from four dimensions of communication; emotions in a close relationship, directness of message conveyed, the use of nonverbal communication, and the use of digital or analogous languages.

Malaysian Malays prefer to build relationships prior to getting into business. This can be seen when Malays first serve beverages and local cuisines for guests when they arrive, as a form of establishing relationships. Malays view this as a means to create a harmonious atmosphere with the hope that any business deals will smoothly proceed. The value for building relationships also indicates that Malays prefer to adopt a soft bargaining approach during any negotiation process. Malays are generally indirect. They will talk around what they intend to convey and hope that the message is understood. One example is during a marriage proposal, poetic verses and rhymes are

adopted to communicate the meaning. Non-straightforwardness of verbal expression is a key characteristic of the Malay language (Goddard, 1997). To comprehend a verbal response of a Malay requires deep understanding, because his/her expression may not reflect his/her real feelings or opinions, which may be direct or indirect, depending on the person or the situation (Mastor et al., 2000).

Nonverbal responses are practiced quite widely among Malays. One such example given by Salleh (2005) is that a parent will not directly scold a child when the child is being rude or misbehaving; instead the parent will shake the head or stare at the child for a long time until the child gets the message. Salleh also found that Malay language is more analogous than digital, which means that speakers have to imply or infer meanings from the contexts out of the spoken words. An example given is the word “to give” in English language. The word “give” has a lot of meanings in English language, such as to present, provide, accord, donate, hand over, allow to have, to pay in exchange, hold, offer, sacrifice, and cause to feel. However, the Malay language only has one word to represent, which is *beri*. For example, an English speaker would say “to offer an opinion” and “to assign a project”, but a Malay speaker would say “to give an opinion or “to give a project”. This is because the Malay uses the word *beri* to mean both offer and assign.

#### **4.3.6 Research by Tamam and colleagues**

Tamam, Hassan and Yaid (1997) conducted a quantitative study to explore interpersonal conflict-handling styles of Malay middle-level executives in government agencies and private firms. They employed a survey research design method and data was collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire. A Conflict Management Inventory developed by Rahim (1985) was adopted as an instrument. It lists five major styles in conflict-handling: dominating, avoiding, integrating, obliging and compromising. Out of 121 questionnaires collected from 58 government officers and 63 managers from private firms, researchers found that the respondents seemed to prefer certain styles of conflict handling.

The most preferred style was the integrating style and was followed closely by the compromising style. On the other hand, the dominating style was preferred the least by the respondents from the government agencies. The respondents from government

agencies also tended to employ the obliging style when handling conflict with superiors, but this obliging style is the least preferred when dealing with peers and subordinates. The study also found that the avoiding style is seldom used as a conflict-handling style, negating the assumption that as a collectivistic-oriented nation, Malaysians are more disposed towards avoiding conflicts.

Tee and Wafa (1997) confirmed the findings of the previous research when they discovered that both Chinese and Malays prefer the integrating style in conflict-handling behaviour, followed by compromising and obliging styles. Dominating and avoiding modes are preferred the least. They made this finding through a quantitative study of 115 MBA students at University Sains Malaysia. They also discovered that there was no significant difference in preferences for conflict-handling styles between Malays and Chinese, indicating that ethnicity did not have any influence on conflict-handling behaviour amongst these MBA students.

#### **4.3.7 Research by Lim and associate**

The research conducted was to investigate the differences and similarities in terms of six cultural dimensions among Anglo-Saxon, Australians and Malaysians (Lim & Abdullah, 2001). For the Malaysians, the study also looked at the three main ethnic groups, the Malay, the Chinese and the Indian. The six cultural dimensions are relationships, shame, group orientation, belief in God, respect for elders, and a high context form of communication. The study found that, in general, there is no significant difference among the three main Malaysian ethnic groups in all dimensions, except religiosity. An explanation given for the negligible difference is that Malaysians from the three main ethnic groups have assimilated their values in a wider context of Malaysian culture. However, for the religious dimension, the Malays scored a significant difference compared with the scores of Indians and Chinese.

Among the three ethnic groups, the Malays scored the highest in terms of relationships, shame, religious belief, hierarchy and high-context, while the Indians scored the highest for collectivism. On the other hand, there is a big difference between the Malaysians and the rest of respondents. The Malaysians are found to be more relationship-oriented, put more stress on shame, strongly collectivistic, highly religious, more hierarchical and used more high-context communication than the Anglo-Saxon and the Australians.

The study also highlighted several attributes of the Malays:

- 1) The Malays put more focus on relationships and thus, they face a big challenge to ensure that jobs are done accordingly;
- 2) The Malays also stressed shame and view it as an element of social conditioning because it teaches them to be externally driven by what other people have to say. Thus, their behaviours and acts will often depend on what other people judge and declare;
- 3) Respect for elders and status in the hierarchy is another main characteristic of the Malays. They believe only leaders have the right to make decisions and they will not challenge or question these judgments. They also demonstrate their respect by offering ceremonies and naming titles according to ranks, ancestry and wealth; and
- 4) The Malays also practice high-context communication, in which the message communicated is indirect, and meaningful information is understood from the physical context or internalized by the audience.

#### **4.4 The knowledge gap on Malaysian international negotiation style**

Based on the above literature review, it is clear that there is a big gap in the knowledge of Malaysian practice in international negotiations. As far as the researcher is concerned, all the literature that explores Malaysian negotiation either focuses on business negotiations with Malaysians or implicitly describes the Malaysian style in negotiation based on its cultural aspect. There is no evidence of any research to comprehend the Malaysian practice in international negotiations and from the perspective of Malaysian diplomats.

#### **4.5 Summary**

Literature review on culture was the main focus of this chapter. It highlighted some aspects of culture as an important factor that influences negotiators' behaviour when it

comes to international negotiation or inter-cultural negotiation. The work by cultural scholars such as Hofstede, Trompenaar, and Schwartz was reviewed. The chapter continued by reviewing literature specifically on Malaysia, and concluded by determining the knowledge gap as far as Malaysian practice in international negotiation is concerned.

Once the review of literature has completed, and the knowledge gap has been identified, this thesis moves into the next step to discuss the methodology employed to continue with the research. The research methodology is an important element of a study because it is a process of decision-making based on the researcher's view of reality. Hence, the following chapter goes into the discussion about the methodology adopted in this research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter focuses on the methodology adopted in the research to highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiation styles in international negotiations from the perspective of Malaysian diplomats. The chapter discusses relevant topics such as the research questions, the philosophical framework, the research paradigm, the research design, and qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative and quantitative approaches also briefly examine on topics such as methodology design, selection of participants, data collection methods and processes, steps in data analysis and ensuring rigor, validity and reliability.

#### **5.2 Research questions**

International negotiation is an interesting phenomenon any country has to deal with and confront in order to sustain and defend its sovereignty. It requires the country to have negotiators who devote much effort, time, energy and resources to ensure success in their missions. Thus, the experience of those who have experienced the international negotiation phenomena, whether in the form of bilateral, regional, or multilateral engagement, is invaluable and should be shared with others. Hence, the aim of this research is to explore and highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from the perspectives and experiences of Malaysian diplomats. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do former Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
- 2) How do the in-service Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
- 3) What are the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?

### **5.3 Philosophical framework**

Research methodology as defined by Birley and Moreland (1998) is a process of making decisions based on sets of background assumptions or a theoretical model, which then determines a researcher's view of reality, whether it is individually constructed, or as an objective "out there" phenomenon, or a combination of both. Researchers view or perceive reality in different forms, and these varieties in different paradigms have resulted in three main methodologies: quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Scholars of research suggested that in conducting research, the best methodology to choose depends on the purpose of the research, which is essentially what the researcher would like to find from the research. For example, scholars like Creswell (2008), Descombe (2003), and Newman and Benz (1998) wrote that in conducting any research, certain methodological approaches are deliberately selected because they are deemed to be appropriate for the types of problems under investigation. Other scholars advocated a "horses for courses" approach in research designing and data collection (Saks & Allsop, 2007), while according to Morse (1991) and Morse and Richards (2002), the best method is determined by the research objective and the first thing to decide in conducting research is whether the research questions are largely qualitative or quantitative.

The first research question in this study was best answered by conducting a qualitative study, since it required in-depth exploration of a phenomenon. As I planned to develop variables and instruments from the qualitative study and measured them against another group of Malaysian diplomats, i.e., those who were still in-service, the second research question was best addressed by a quantitative approach. Therefore, in order to answer the research questions in this study, I adopted the philosophical framework of a mixed-methods paradigm and I believed that a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was the best methodology to address this study. As promoted by scholars (Creswell, 2003, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Maxwell, 2005), a mixed-methods approach or triangulation (Jick, 1979; Morse, 1991; Morse & Richards, 2002) is most appropriate under the following circumstances: (1) either quantitative or qualitative research, on its stand-alone basis, is not sufficient to address the research



problem because one form of evidence from a research methodology contradicts another form of evidence from another methodology, or the researcher is doubtful about the evidence gathered from either one of the methodologies; (2) the methodological design of one methodology is to be enhanced by data from another methodology; (3) the results of one methodology are not sufficient to explain the outcomes of the study; and (4) a need exists to first explore qualitatively in order to identify variables, constructs, or identification of items prior to developing questionnaires, or vice versa.

Many scholars have provided their definition of mixed-methods research, but all of them agreed that mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative methods in the process. For example, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) defined mixed-methods studies as “studies that are products of the pragmatist paradigm and that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process” (p. 22). Other scholars, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) stated their own definition:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies (p. 3).

According to scholars (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 2008; Jick, 1979; Patton, 2002), the fundamental foundation of adopting the mixed-methods approach is that the blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a better comprehension of research problems than adopting either research approach alone. In addition, scholars (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2008; Greene et al., 2008; Jick, 1979) also outlined the advantages of using a mixed-methods approach:

- 1) Either quantitative or qualitative research has its own limitations when each paradigm is adopted as a single approach, and a mixed-methods approach could compensate for these weaknesses and strengthen the study. For example, voices of participants and personal biases of the researchers are hidden in the quantitative approach. In addition, this approach is not suitable for understanding matters that involve conversations or lived experience. On the

other hand, the qualitative approach has its own demerits as well, such as researchers' personal biases, and the issue of generalization of the research due to a small number of participants;

- 2) Researchers have much more flexibility to employ various data collection methods in order to answer research problems, rather than having to follow certain methods that are significant to quantitative and qualitative research. Thus, the researchers will be more convinced with the results of their research;
- 3) This encourages researchers to broaden the inquiry and bring closer the gaps between quantitative and qualitative researchers. This can promote new methods of conducting research to find a compromise between the two methodologies;
- 4) It promotes researchers to employ multiple paradigms at the same time, rather than being attached to a single worldview that is associated with quantitative or qualitative research;
- 5) Both the quantitative and qualitative approaches have their own biases, and when both methodologies are used to study a phenomenon and it eventuates that the results complement each other, this will enhance the validity of the findings; and
- 6) Mixed-methods research is considered realistic, since it utilizes both words and numbers, and employs deductive and inductive thinking in the research.

Undoubtedly that mixed-methods research has its advantages, however researchers are warned that this type of research is consuming more time and more resources are needed to collect and examine quantitative and qualitative data (Patton, 2002). In addition, the research procedure is more complicated than common quantitative and qualitative research, and the researcher must be properly trained to conduct mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Jick (1979) argued that mixed-methods may not be suitable for incorrect research questions and should not be adopted just for the sake of personal preference. Nevertheless, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007)

believed that the advantages of mixed-methods research prevail over the weaknesses of mixed-methods research.

#### **5.4 Research paradigm**

My research will be based on a pragmatism paradigm (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Morgan, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), which is one of the main research paradigms besides positivism, post-positivism, and interpretive approach (constructivism). The most important principle of pragmatism is the belief that quantitative and qualitative methods are compatible and researchers are allowed to employ both methods in their research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). This paradigm places greater emphasis on the questions asked in the research, rather than the methods, concentrates on the consequences of the research, and problems under study are informed by the multiple methods of data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In tandem, Datta (1994) provided five reasons why quantitative and qualitative methods could be combined in research: (1) both methods have been used for years; (2) many evaluators and researchers have urged using both paradigms; (3) funding agencies have supported both paradigms; (4) both paradigms have influenced policy; and (5) so much has been taught by both paradigms.

Based on the different paradigms of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research methodologies, research scholars have identified their differences in various dimensions, mainly ontology, purpose, researcher's role/epistemology, axiology, rhetoric and methodology aspects. The explanation for each aspect is as follows:

##### **1) Ontological dimension**

The ontological dimension denotes the perceived nature of reality, which is seen in the differences in assumptions about what reality is and whether or not it is measurable. Quantitative researchers tend to believe that there is a single reality which people can agree upon, or there is common objective reality among individuals (Newman & Benz, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Sarantakos, 1997). Creswell (1994) described that quantitative investigators view reality as objective, "out there" and independent of the researcher. Crotty (1998) provided an example that quantitative researchers view a tree in the forest as a tree, regardless of whether anyone is aware of its existence or not.

In contrast, qualitative researchers believe that multiple realities exist and different individuals interpret the realities in different ways depending on the lens of the researchers (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Newman & Benz, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Sarantakos, 1997). For example, Crotty (1998) described how a tree may be interpreted differently by people living in logging towns, by an artist, or by those living in treeless areas. Complementary to both paradigms, mixed-methods proponents believe in both singular and multiple realities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

## 2) Purpose

What is meant by purpose is whether the researchers are looking for causes or an understanding of the phenomenon. As for the quantitative research methodology, the intent is theory-testing (Newman & Benz, 1998) and adopting nomological thinking, which stresses cause-effect linkages (Sarantakos, 1997). In contrast, qualitative research methodology has an aim of theory building (Newman & Benz, 1998), it is non-deterministic, mutually shaping, and has no cause-effect linkages (Sarantakos, 1997). Mixed-methods research methodology, on the other hand, collects both quantitative and qualitative data and combines both purposes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Morgan, 2008).

## 3) Researcher's role/epistemological dimension

The epistemological dimension refers to the relationship between the researcher and the object of study, whether the researcher is detached or immersed in the setting. For a quantitative study, researchers separate themselves from the object of study. In other words, they remain distant, independent and assume a passive role in relation to the object of study during the data collection (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Sarantakos, 1997). At the same time, the researchers will control for bias, select a systematic sample and maintain their objectivity in assessing a situation (Creswell, 1994).

The researchers and object of study are dependent on one another in the qualitative research. This means that the researchers interact with, or try to minimize the distance between those being researched. The interaction may be in the form of living with the

object of study, or observing informants over a prolonged period of time to better understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 1994; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). As such, the investigators are involved actively in the data collection process and analysis (Sarantakos, 1997). Mixed-methods researchers focus on practicality and collect both quantitative and qualitative data in order to appropriately address the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Morgan, 2008).

#### 4) Axiological aspect

The axiological aspect refers to the role of values in research. In quantitative research methodology, the study should be value-free. This means that the values of the researcher are kept out of the study through entirely omitting statements about values, and reporting the facts from the evidence gathered in the study (Creswell, 1994; Sarantakos, 1997). For qualitative research methodology, the research is influenced to a great extent by the values of the researcher, in which the researcher admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases, as well as the value nature of information gathered from the field (Creswell, 1994; Sarantakos, 1997). Researchers in favour of mixed-methods research incorporate both biased and unbiased perspectives in their research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

#### 5) Rhetorical dimension

According to Creswell (1994), the rhetorical aspect refers to language of the research. In quantitative research, the language used is impersonal, formal, and based on accepted words such as “relationship”, “comparison” and “within-group”. On the contrary, qualitative authors construct a different language distinct from the traditional research in order to stress the qualitative paradigm. Such words, for example are “understanding”, “discover”, and “meaning”. The language is personal, informal, and based on definitions that evolve during the study. In mixed-methods research, both formal and informal styles of writing are employed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

#### 6) Methodology

Methodology refers to the entire process of the study. Creswell (1994) explained that quantitative researchers adopt a deductive form of logic wherein theories and

hypotheses are tested in a cause-and-effect order. Concepts, variables and hypotheses are predetermined before the study begins and remain fixed throughout. The aim of the study is to develop generalizations that contribute to the theory and that enable the researcher to better predict, explain, and understand some phenomena in a more organized way. Sarantakos (1997) added that quantitative researchers employ highly structured techniques of data collection that allow quantification, hypotheses, measurement and operationalization, as well as the use of quantitative methods of data analysis, including statistics and computers.

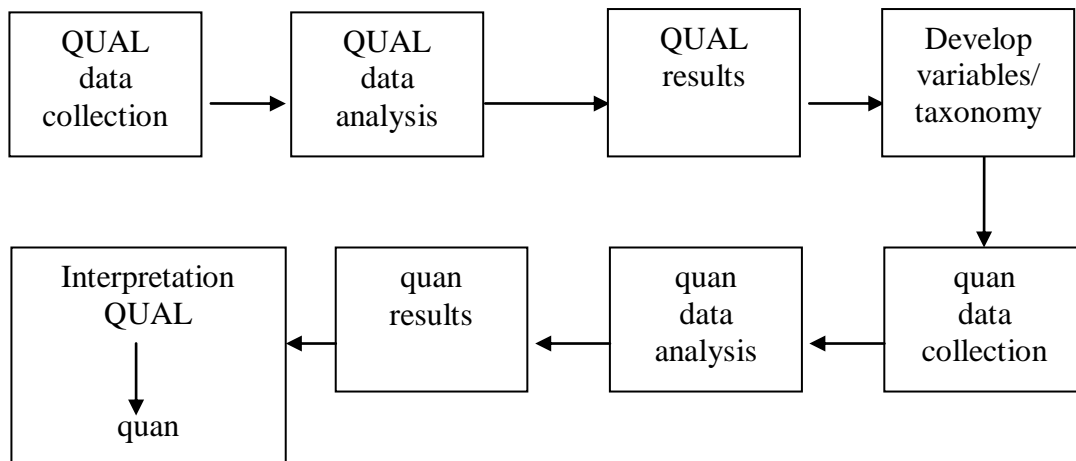
Meanwhile, as explained by Creswell (1994), qualitative researchers use inductive logic, in which information is gathered from the informants, rather than is identified as a priori. The information gathered then leads to pattern of theories which could describe a phenomenon. In addition, they use less structured techniques of data collection and analysis, and they focus more on discovery and exploration, rather than on hypothesis testing (Sarantakos, 1997). Mixed-methods researchers combine both deductive and inductive approaches in their research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and Morgan (2008) termed it abductive reasoning, which involves moving back and forth between induction and deduction.

Although many scholars agree that the three research methodologies have more differences than similarities, they also believed that these methodologies have similarities. For example, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) described that the similarities can be found in: (1) the research questions, whereby all research methodologies include research questions and the research questions are addressed through some type of observation; (2) the data interpretation, in which all the methodologies adopt analytical techniques to find meaning from the data collected e.g., quantitative approaches use an array of statistical procedures and generalizations to determine what their data mean, while qualitative approaches use phenomenological techniques and their worldviews to extract meaning; (3) the reduction of data dimensionality, for example, quantitative approaches use data-reduction methods, such as factor analysis and cluster analysis, while qualitative research conducts thematic analysis; and (4) all methods attempt to understand human behaviour.

## **5.5 Research design**

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), once researchers have decided on which methodology to employ in their studies, they have to decide upon research designs they consider the most suitable to address the research problems. Research designs are defined as “procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies” (p. 58). There are essentially four types of mixed methods designs: the Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design, and the Exploratory Design. The authors strongly recommended researchers employ only a single design that could best facilitate their research.

I employed an Exploratory Design for this research because of an intention to explore and understand the international negotiation phenomenon in-depth from the perspective of former Malaysian diplomats. I intended to enhance these findings by investigating them with another category of diplomats; the in-service diplomats. This type of design, according to Creswell (2008) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), is based on the premise that an exploration is required because variables, instruments or measures are not available and are unknown, or because guiding framework or theories are not fully established. This design is also useful when the research is aiming at generalizing results to different groups and involves in-depth exploration of a phenomenon and measurement of its commonness. The authors added that this dual-phase design is the best approach to explore a phenomenon, since the design begins with an emphasis or priority to the qualitative approach and then proceeds with a quantitative study. The summary of this design is shown in Figure 3.



*Figure 3: Exploratory Design: Variables/Taxonomy Development Model (QUAL emphasized).*

*Source: Adopted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2007)*

Creswell (2008) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) argued that this design has its own advantages: (1) it helps the researcher to discover measures unearthed in the data from the qualitative study; (2) the dual phase of this design makes it simple to describe, implement, and report; (3) the quantitative part of this design would appeal to people who are in favour of a quantitative approach, although the emphasis is on the qualitative study; and (4) this design is also relevant to research that is multi-phased in nature. However, this design is not short of weaknesses: (1) it is more time-consuming, since it involves both quantitative and qualitative studies; (2) selection of different participants for both studies might be complicated; and (3) researchers might find it difficult to choose which data from the qualitative study that inform the quantitative instruments (Creswell, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

## **5.6 First phase – qualitative approach**

As mentioned earlier, the first research question in this study is best addressed by conducting a qualitative study since they require in-depth exploration of a phenomenon. Morse (1991) listed the characteristics of a research problem that necessitate a qualitative approach: (1) the theory and previous research is not sufficient to proceed with a quantitative study; (2) the researcher considers that the current theory may be prejudiced, erroneous, inaccurate, or unsuitable; (3) the research aims at in-depth exploration of a phenomenon and follows with theory development; and (4) the nature of the phenomenon under study may not be suitable for a quantitative approach. The



use of a qualitative study is also in tandem with its definition. For example, Creswell (2008) defined qualitative research as “an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon” (p. 645), while Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) defined qualitative methods as “the techniques associated with the gathering, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of narrative information” (p. 6).

### **5.6.1 Qualitative design**

The aim of my research is to highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from Malaysian diplomats’ perspectives and experiences. Thus, in order to obtain an insider’s perspective, the qualitative study was conducted using interpretive approach, which contained some elements of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and some aspects of systems theory, in a mixed methodological design.

Phenomenology is a methodology best suited to describe individuals’ experiences (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1997). A phenomenological study as defined by Van Manen (1997) is the study of experience of the life world. The study describes how individuals share meanings of their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; McCaslin & Scott, 2003; Moustakas, 1994) or how people describe their experiences through their senses (Patton, 1990). The main objective of the phenomenological study is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the phenomenon is interpreted by the individuals (Denscombe, 2003) or to seek to uncover meanings and perceptions of individual experiences of a phenomenon and provide a comprehensive description of it (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997), rather than speculation or causal explanations (van Manen, 1997).

The term phenomenology originated from its founder, Edmund H. Husserl, to mean the study of how people describe things and experience them through their senses. His most basic philosophical assumption of phenomenology was that “we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness” (Patton, 2002, p. 105). Since then, the term phenomenology has been widely adopted by many scholars, and they viewed it from various perspectives and meanings: as a philosophy, as a paradigm, as a perspective, as a qualitative method, or as naturalistic inquiry (Patton, 1990). Creswell (2007) described that even though

there are many interpretations of the meaning of phenomenology, all the philosophical perspectives are directed towards some common elements: the study of lived, conscious experiences of people and “the development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences” (p. 58).

Symbolic interactionism is a perspective that places “emphasis on the importance of symbols and the interpretative processes that undergird interactions as fundamental to understanding human behaviour” (Patton, 1990, p. 76). This paradigm sees the basis of human acts as the socially and actively constructed meaning that humans placed upon their acts (Crotty, 1998). The principle underlying symbolic interactionism is that people develop, change and adjust their identities based on their interactions and communications with others (Gray, 2004). According to Neuman (2006), this theoretical framework comes with its own assumptions, as follows: (1) when people interact in the society, they pass on and collect symbolic communication; (2) people have perceptions not only to each other, but also to their social settings; (3) perceptions become the key factor for people’s actions; and (4) social interactions guide what people believe about themselves and think about others.

A systems theory looks at things in a holistic manner. As explained by Patton (1990), “a system cannot validly be divided into independent parts as discrete entities of inquiry, because the effects of the behaviour of the parts on the whole depend on what is happening to the other parts” (p. 79). This paradigm asks the question of how and why the whole system functions as it does (Patton, 1990).

An interpretive approach enabled me to engage with Malaysian diplomats within their social setting, and reconstruct their experiences and perspectives in international negotiations. In this regard, my research was from an insider’s perspective and involved fieldwork in which I, the researcher, was the instrument for data collection and analysis. Accordingly, my role as a researcher was to become a “passionate participant”, who was “actively engaged in facilitating the multi-voice reconstruction” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115) of the negotiation phenomena. The situation in which the investigators themselves become the human instrument in collecting data is an ideal means for data collection, for they are able to adapt, clarify, check and respond immediately to any changes in meanings, since the researchers are interested in outcomes (Schloss & Smith, 1999) and the goal of the research is to uncover and understand meanings (Merriam,

1998). This qualitative approach employed an inductive research strategy, and therefore enabled me to focus upon determining the meanings out of experiences of the diplomats. This research strategy involves the researcher working back and forth between the themes and the collected data, besides collaborating interactively with the participants until the themes are comprehensively established (Creswell, 2007).

### **5.6.2 Research Participants**

I employed the use of purposive sampling to identify and select research participants because it enabled an incorporation of research interest and purpose (Robson, 2002). Purposive sampling as defined by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) is “selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions” (p. 170). The premise of purposeful sampling is in-depth understanding, and thus participants are selected based on who can provide utmost and rich information to the central purpose of the research, or whom the researcher can learn the most from (Patton, 2002; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The sample is specially selected for the research because of their relevance to the topic of the investigation (Denscombe, 2003), as they are knowledgeable and experienced with the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In addition, they can be “the ‘representative’ of the population” (Lynn, 2002, p. 189), and the researcher believes that the participants can “contribute and expand the database” (Schloss & Smith, 1999, p. 89). According to Morse and Richards (2002), the participants are also chosen because of their characteristics; they have the knowledge of what is being studied, are keen to participate and share their reflection on the phenomena, and have the time to spare. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) outlined four main characteristics of purposive sampling: (1) it focuses on specific purposes related to research questions, and thus, the researcher handpicks participants that can provide rich information related to the questions; (2) the researcher uses his or her wise judgment on whom to select as the right participants; (3) the focus of the purposive sampling procedures is to obtain in-depth understanding from each participant; and (4) the samples are relatively small, depending on the research questions and the research design.

My study mostly focused on the practice of negotiation, which covered the preparation stage before the negotiation, what happened during the actual negotiation and the forms of outcome after the negotiation. I considered that purposive sampling was the best

sampling technique to research the phenomenon, and it enabled an in-depth understanding of the international negotiation phenomenon from the diplomats' mouths themselves. As recommended by Pruitt (1986), interviewing practitioners was a good way of studying negotiation. Since my thesis aimed to highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from Malaysian diplomats' perspectives and experiences, I have chosen former diplomats as main participants. Former diplomats were selected because of these factors: (1) they were very experienced in representing Malaysia in international negotiations; (2) as they were already out of the public service, they were expected not to hesitate to disclose whatever professional experiences they have experienced through in being diplomatic negotiators for their country; (3) they were able to reflect and contemplate on their past experiences and could provide an in-depth explanation of the practice; and (4) they were expected to have more free time to discuss their experiences.

### **5.6.3 Data collection methods**

The qualitative data collection part of this study was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 8 September 2008 (Ethics application number 08/204). A copy of the AUTEC's approval is Appendix 1. Besides the general approval of the qualitative data collection, which included the issues of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the participants, the approval also covered two main forms, the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form. The Participant Information Sheet contained an invitation to take part in the research and an explanation about the study; the title, the purpose of the research, how the interview was going to be conducted, the voluntary nature of participation, what were the risks involved, and the issues of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality and how these issues were addressed. This was to ensure that the participant was informed about his or her involvement and felt secure before agreeing to take part in the research. A copy of the Participant Information Sheet is Appendix 2. The Consent Form ensured that the participant was informed about the research and agreed to voluntarily take part. It also contained the understanding that the participant could withdraw from the research at any time and consequently, all relevant information about the participant would be destroyed. A copy of the Consent Form is Appendix 3. Both the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form had an Auckland University of Technology (AUT) logo on them.

In this qualitative study, I decided to conduct in-depth key-informant interviews. As specified by Patton (2002), key informants are “people who are particularly knowledgeable about the inquiry setting and articulate about their knowledge” (p. 321). Key informants are the ones that can describe a scene or setting or activity with full clarity (Johnson, 2002). I considered that the former Malaysian diplomats fitted well with this category due to their vast experiences in international negotiations. Apart from that, data collection in a phenomenological study is done mainly through interviews or multiple interviews with individuals, although documents, observations, and art may also be considered (Creswell, 2007). In-depth interviews are chosen because they provide a valid and efficient way of investigating participants’ experiences and perspectives (Denscombe, 2003; Maxwell, 2005), to explore a phenomenon which the researcher cannot directly examine (Patton, 1990), and to help develop closeness with the participant so as to acquire as much disclosure as possible (Johnson, 2002). I conducted one-to-one interviews because, as explained by Denscombe (2003), the interview form is simple to arrange, easy to control, the opinions and views come from a single participant, and the researcher has only one person’s idea to grasp throughout the interview process.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews because this type of interview will allow the researcher to have a clear list of issues to be investigated (Patton, 2002). Apart from that, it allows the researcher to be more flexible in terms of the order of the questions and provides an opportunity to the participants to pour out their thoughts and speak more widely on the issues raised (Denscombe, 2003). The semi-structured interview is also suitable to collect the same data from each participant, since the same questions will be asked, although they may not be in the same order (Gillham, 2005; Newman & Benz, 1998) and this will allow the researcher to make comparisons amongst the collected data (Schloss & Smith, 1999).

#### **5.6.4 Data collection process**

Before I started with my actual interview, I conducted a trial interview with a colleague at the university. He was a former New Zealand diplomat and I believed that he was the right person to help me conduct the trial interview due to his vast knowledge and experience in international negotiations. We discussed the list of questions which I had

already prepared and in due process, he offered suggestions on ways of asking clear questions and the type of proper questions to be asked. The trial interview provided a good avenue to prepare for actual interviews, and helped to boost my confidence. As explained by Gillham (2005), trialling the prepared questions will expose the researcher to reality and prepare the researcher for the actual interview. It will also provide other benefits: (1) it teaches the researcher about ways to make questions work or vice versa; (2) it puts the researcher in the mood for the interviewing process; and (3) it sets the path and characteristics of the research.

My data collection process started when I contacted one librarian at a training institution for diplomats in Malaysia. The librarian then advised me about an organization called the Association of Former Malaysian Ambassadors. I was introduced to one of the members of the association. Beginning from there, I sent an email to him to introduce myself, inform him about the nature of the research, and invite him to be a participant in my research. I also attached a Participant Information Sheet, which was approved by the AUTECH earlier. I was fortunate that he voluntarily accepted to be the first participant, and an appointment was arranged at a place and time convenient to the participant.

Every time I met with a new participant, I began by introducing myself and explaining my research. The conversation was conducted in English since I found it easier to speak in English as my participants were well-versed in that language. I also handed them a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form. I then explained to the participants about the function of the Consent Form, which focused on voluntary participation. I also stressed the point that the participants could withdraw from the research at any time and once the participants understood, I then graciously asked the participants to sign the form if they wished to voluntarily take part in the research. In addition, I asked their permission to audio-record the conversation. As explained by research scholars, (Denscombe, 2003; Johnson, 2002; Patton, 2002) audio-recording is important in order to capture what the person is saying, word by word, as it becomes the data for the study. Then, I continued the conversation by asking them questions about their current work and about their life in general, basically to break the ice and develop rapport. The practice of creating rapport with my participants was essential because I would like to convey to the participants that their knowledge, experience, attitudes, and feelings were important to me and my research (Johnson, 2002; Patton, 2002).

During the actual interview, I employed a friendly and open conversation, with the list of already prepared questions in hand, and tried to be as neutral as possible towards what my participant was sharing, because this technique served well in assisting me to explore research questions in detail, depth and with full clarity (Patton, 2002). I also encouraged the participants to talk more and more by employing the method of responsive encouragement (Gillham, 2005) using words like “uh uh”, “yes”, “go on” and nodding my head. Some participants asked me to turn off the audio recorder when they wanted to tell me some “between-the-four-walls” information and I just obliged. I also employed probing or follow-up questions and observed the body language during the interview sessions, because, as explained by Newman and Benz (1998), these techniques would deepen the response and enhance the collected data. I continuously wrote my own notes or researcher-generating documents (Merriam, 1998) during the interview to indicate any non-verbal cues or issues that needed further elaboration or clarification. According to Patton (2002), note taking is important for these reasons: (1) it facilitates the researcher in asking more questions for clarification purpose; (2) it may provide insights or direction for the upcoming interviews; (3) it helps in data analysis, especially in finding significant quotations; and (4) it serves as a backup in case of any technical mishap of the recorder.

In the early stage of my qualitative investigation, I felt that I did not know much about the phenomenon under study. However, after I had conducted several interviews, I realized that some issues were more focused and stressed by my participants and I began to feel that these were the issues that my participants would consider as highly important matters. Therefore, I began to arrange my interview questions based on these issues, depending on which I thought had more priority. Therefore, these emerging subjects were set as a basis for me to conduct more probing and verification in my later interviews. This experience seemed to tally with the explanation by Johnson (2002), when he wrote that “early interviews will embody much more grand tour questioning” (p. 114) compared to later interviews, as the researcher employs the latter to validate and verify earlier research findings, observations and analyses.

At the end of each interview session, I never failed to use the snowballing method (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990, 2002) to get hold of more participants for this research. I asked them to recommend some of their colleagues who might be good candidates for

my research. I even asked for their contact numbers, and some of my participants were accommodating enough to provide me with whatever information they had. This method worked well. I then utilized the information given to make more contacts with potential participants. Before I concluded the interview with my participants, I thanked them for their participation and presented each of them with a souvenir from New Zealand, as a token for their participation. This was in tandem with the Malaysian culture that treats gift-giving as an honourable practice to appreciate somebody's help or assistance (Low, 2010; Othman, Ong, & Teng, 2005; Rashid & Ho, 2003).

While waiting for appointments with subsequent participants, I began transcribing the interviews myself. This transcription process was truly time-consuming, and required patience and commitment. However, it was valuable because it gave me an opportunity to familiarize myself with the content of each interview, and I was able to grasp what my participants were trying to emphasize based on their intonation. To expedite the transcription process, I hired several transcribers and I had each of them sign a Confidentiality Agreement form to ensure no leakage of the data. The copy of the Confidentiality Agreement form is Appendix 4. Subsequently, I did the editing part of the transcripts to minimize any errors and make sure that they were verbatim. The editing role of the researcher is important because Poland (2002) explained that there are some challenges any transcriber may have to face: (1) a difficulty in where to insert a coma or a period, since incorrect insertion may change the interpretation of the text; (2) a failure to indicate when the participants are paraphrasing or mimicking others; (3) words may be missing during the rewinding and forwarding of the audio-recorder; and (4) different words with the same pronunciation may be incorrectly added in the transcripts.

The interview transcripts were then sent to fourteen participants who wished to consider them, for their approval. Ten participants did some editing of their interview transcripts by correcting errors, or adding more words to enhance the transcript, or omitting sentences which they might consider sensitive. This process of member checking was important to ensure trustworthiness and authenticity of the research (Creswell, 2003; Neuman, 2006). However, this process could also be a challenge to the researcher, because Poland (2002) stated that while the researcher gets back corrections and editing from the participants, the researcher might also receive attempts from the participants to "clarify, justify, or perhaps even revoke or alter aspects of what was said" (p. 644).



Throughout my qualitative data collection journey, I tried to adopt a standard practice for all my interviews and the following was what I have done to ensure trustworthiness and quality data collection:

- 1) I employed the snowballing method continuously to get more participants for my research;
- 2) Semi-structured type of interview was practiced;
- 3) English language was used as the medium of all the interviews since all my participants were fluent in English;
- 4) The time and venue chosen for the interview was based on the convenience of the participants; some were at their homes, some were at their offices, and some were at coffee shops;
- 5) Comprehensive use of audio recorder. All the participants agreed to be audio-recorded except one person because the participant did not feel secure about it;
- 6) I continuously took my own notes for each interview in order to denote any non-verbal cues or issues that needed further elaboration or clarification;
- 7) Probing and sub-questions were used repeatedly to get a more detailed picture of the phenomenon;
- 8) Each interview lasted an average of between 90 and 120 minutes;
- 9) Before I concluded the interview with my participants, I presented each of them with a souvenir from New Zealand, as a token for their participation;
- 10) The transcript for each interview was prepared as soon as possible after the interview, not only by me, but also by hired transcribers, and the transcribers had to sign a Confidentiality Agreement Form to ensure no leakage of the data. The

interview transcripts were then sent to the participants who wished to look at them, for their approval.

- 11) All the audio-recorded interviews, their transcripts, the participant Consent Forms, and the Confidentiality Agreement Forms for transcribers were kept in hard copies and digital form, where available, at a secured location in the university.

Altogether, I interviewed 22 participants from early October until the end of December 2008. The list of members belonging to the Association of Former Malaysian Ambassadors which I received contained 136 names, including those who have passed away. However, I believed the number of participants I interviewed is sufficient since the data collection showed that it had reached its saturation point; all the participants were sharing almost similar experiences, although in different dimensions. In conducting this research, the number of participants was not an issue because the research was not intending to gauge the frequency; but to come up with holistic research (van Manen, 1997) on the meanings and essence of Malaysian diplomats' experiences in international negotiations. In tandem, Denscombe (2003) asserted that the researcher may not be able to determine the exact number of the sample size at the beginning of a research study. Instead, the researcher proceeds with the investigation until he or she is satisfied with the findings and contented that the research questions are answered, or the research has reached its saturation point (Gillham, 2005). In general, as explained by Patton (2002), qualitative researchers are not bound by any specific rules in determining the sample size for the study. However, since qualitative inquiry focuses on in-depth understanding and detailed data about a phenomenon, normally the sample size of a qualitative study is much smaller than a quantitative study. Other scholars support the idea that the sample size of qualitative research is normally smaller than a quantitative study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Denscombe, 2003) because the researcher wants to attain in-depth understanding of a phenomenon from a small group of people (Creswell, Plano Clark, & Garrett, 2008).

## **5.6.5 Qualitative data analysis**

### **5.6.5.1 Challenges**

Research scholars agree that basically there are no specific rules on how to analyze qualitative data (Neuman, 2006; Patton, 2002; Polit & Beck, 2008). However, according to Patton (2002), it does not mean that qualitative data analysis does not have any guidelines, because there are plenty of them. And in order to apply the guidelines, the researcher must be able to use his or her creativity and wisdom. This is because the qualitative research process, at every phase, is itself unique, and therefore its technique of analysis also becomes unique. The qualitative analysis process is dependent upon the researcher and thus requires the researcher to be rigorous, reflective, creative, intellectual, knowledgeable, and skilful (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007).

Another challenge that researchers face in attempting qualitative analysis is how to make sense of the huge amount of data available from the data collection methods (Patton, 2002). Subsequently, in presenting a report, the researchers have to “balance the need to be concise with the need to maintain the richness and evidentiary value of their data” (Polit & Beck, 2008, p. 507). In addition, the researcher is responsible for providing an honest and complete report on the procedures and processes of analysis done (Patton, 2002).

### **5.6.5.2 Participants’ background**

This qualitative data collection involved interviewing 22 participants from early October until the end of December 2008. Out of the total number of participants, two participants were of Indian ethnicity and only one was of Chinese ethnicity. The rest were of Malay ethnicity. In terms of gender, three participants were female. All the participants were former Malaysian ambassadors except one, who was an important figure at one of the ministries in the Malaysian public service. Although that participant did not belong to the diplomatic corps, he was very experienced in international negotiations, for he had represented his ministry in many international negotiations. Due to the sensitive nature of this research, and as requested by the participants, the detailed information about them is being withheld. Therefore, the participants are identified by codes from P1 to P22.

### 5.6.5.3 Qualitative analysis methods

Although the main focus of an interpretive study is to explore meanings and perceptions of individual experiences of a phenomenon, scholars have different paradigms on methods of data analysis. For example, there are basically three schools of thought in a phenomenological approach: descriptive, interpretive, and hermeneutic phenomenology. Cultural relativism emerged as an important contribution because of the content of interviews with former diplomats. Systems theory was a constant as diplomatic negotiation takes place in a national, regional and international context governed by institutions.

A descriptive phenomenology school of thought believes in bracketing or *epoche* in which preconceived ideas are recognized and temporarily put aside, to enable the researcher to experience the process of discovering the phenomenon first hand and through direct contact with the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The data analysis process, as explained by Creswell (2007) and Patton (2002), involves reduction of data into significant statements, or *horizontalization*, and combination of statements or clusters of meanings into themes. Based on the themes, the researcher then describes what the participants experienced (*textural description*) and how they experienced it (*structural description*). Finally, the researcher presents the essence of the phenomenon. Proponents of this approach have different opinions whether the researcher should validate the findings with the participants. Some agree and some disagree (Polit & Beck, 2008).

According to Polit and Beck (2008), interpretive phenomenology stresses the idea of hermeneutic circle. This circle denotes the process in which the researcher moves back and forth between the parts and the whole text under study, in order to interpret the true meanings of the contents. The end product of the analysis process is termed constitutive pattern, “a pattern that expresses the relationships among relational themes and is present in all the interviews of texts” (p. 522).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a combination of descriptive and interpretive phenomenology (van Manen, 1990). Scholars of this approach do not believe in bracketing, and the researcher’s pre-understandings always inform him or her in the process. According to van Manen (1990), in order to capture the meanings of the

experience under study, the researcher has to uncover the thematic aspects of the phenomenon by using three methods: (1) the holistic or sententious approach; (2) the selective or highlighting approach; and (3) the detailed or line-by-line approach. The researcher then interprets the themes to get the exact meanings of the experience, mainly through collaboration with the participants.

Radnor (2001) described in general how data analysis should be conducted for an interpretive study. Six steps were identified:

- 1) Topic ordering. This is the stage in which the researcher prepares the data for analysis during the designing of the research, even before conducting the fieldwork. It involves designing a structure of data based on what type of questions to ask of the participants. This structure is arranged according to some relevant topics, even though the findings are uncertain until data analysis is conducted;
- 2) Constructing categories. The researcher needs to read the interview transcripts a number of times to become familiar with the data. As categories start emerging from the data, the researcher begins to construct them as subheadings to each topic previously prepared. Categories of data can be either explicit or implicit. The former category can easily be detected from the words of the participants, while the latter is constructed by the researcher based on his or her reflexive action;
- 3) Reading for content. The researcher begins to read through the transcripts and starts marking main quotes. The researcher then starts to write code names and category numbers next to the marked texts;
- 4) Completing the coded sheets. All the code names and category numbers are then transferred into each category prepared in the earlier stage;
- 5) Generating coded transcripts. Using a word processor, the researcher uses the copy and paste function to transfer the marked quotes from each interview transcript into each constructed category. Marked quotes do not necessarily appear in just one category, because they may have information that is

relevant to many categories. The categorized data are now ready for analysis; and

- 6) Analysis to interpret the data. The researcher reads the data under each category to find different nuances of meaning. This is the stage where interpretive process prevails over descriptive procedure. The researcher then interprets the findings, writes a summary of statements for each category, and forms a solid background of understanding the phenomenon under study.

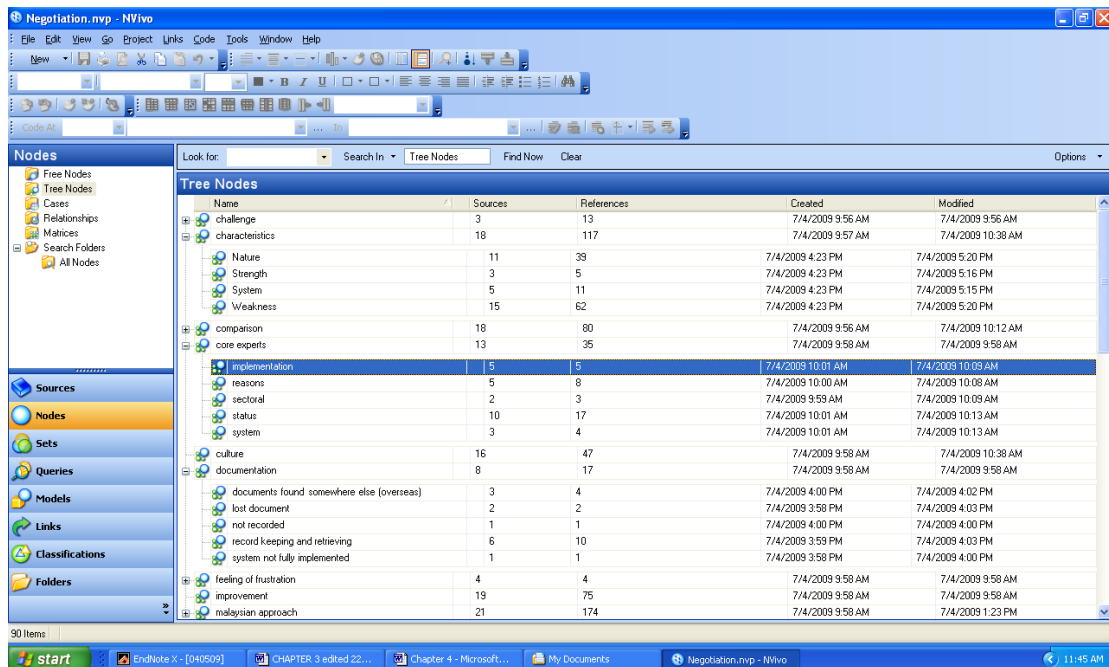
#### **5.6.5.4 Qualitative analysis process**

The purpose of data analysis, as stated by Polit and Beck (2008) is “to organize, provide structure to, and elicit meaning from research data” (p. 507), and thus to answer the research questions of the study (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007). The analysis is done to form categories and subsequently to produce meaningful themes from the narrative materials. A theme is defined as “a recurring regularity emerging from an analysis of qualitative data” (Polit & Beck, 2008, p. 767) and can be identified by “bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone” (Leininger, 1985, p. 60). According to van Manen (1990), “the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work” (p. 78) is called thematic analysis.

Once the interview transcripts were ready, I read them to get an overall feeling and general understanding of what my participants were saying. I then read and reread the transcripts, and while reading, I identified and highlighted significant sentences and important phrases that could potentially explain the research questions. I also labelled similar or related-meaning phrases with descriptive words to denote a concept or concepts. After I had read all the transcripts, I clustered all similar or related concepts into groups. In doing this, I constructed my data into a set of categories. As emphasized by Patton (2002), “developing some manageable classification or coding scheme is the first step of analysis” (p. 463). Polit and Beck (2008) also stated that “developing a high-quality category scheme involves a careful reading of the data, with an eye to identifying underlying concepts and clusters of concepts” (p. 510). By now, my data was ready to be analyzed further using computer software NVivo Version 7.0.

The use of computer software, as explained by Bazeley (2007), facilitates an increase in researchers' effectiveness and efficiency in learning from the data. "The computer's capacity for recording, sorting, matching and linking can be harnessed by the researcher to assist in answering their research questions from the data, without losing access to the source data or contexts from which the data have come" (p. 2). In addition, Bazeley also argued that the use of computer software could demonstrate rigor to the research process because: (1) the software can help in maintaining more comprehensive data for interpreting purpose later on, since it can document all the coding queries executed; (2) the software has procedures that can identify negative cases; and (3) the usage of software itself means that the researcher is meticulous and conscientious in his work. However, the author warned that the computer software is meaningless if the researchers themselves are not meticulous in their analysis work.

Using the computer software, I created the categories into separate tree nodes, and then I cut and pasted the relevant phrases and concepts from each transcript into their categories. I then reread the idea and phrases for each category, asking more and more questions on what my participants would mean by their words. By being reflective, I managed to become more understanding and able to delve deeply into the data, and this helped me to further separate each category into its sub-categories. The categories and sub-categories I created looked similar to Figure 4.



*Figure 4: Developing categories and sub-categories in Tree Nodes using NVivo Version 7.0*

Once the categories and sub-categories were established, I then read and reread their contents in order to unearth thematic aspects of the phenomenon. In carrying out the work, I adopted the three approaches suggested by van Manen (1990): (1) the holistic or sententious approach; (2) the selective or highlighting approach; and (3) the detailed or line-by-line approach. In adopting the holistic or sententious approach, I read the text in its entirety and looked for phrases that might answer the question “What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93) I then read the text again and again and highlighted statements that could respond to question “What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Lastly, in the detailed and line-by-line approach, I focused my attention to each sentence or group of sentences and asked “What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93).

Lastly, the thematic statements were then updated, compiled and arranged into order to yield appropriate emerging themes that coincided and commonly represented what the participants would mean to say regarding their experiences in international negotiations. These emerging themes were later revisited and re-analyzed until they became clearer,



synchronized and established. In overall, the theme building process was time-consuming because it required reflexivity, intellectualism, in-depth understanding, and wisdom in interpreting narrative conversation.

#### **5.6.6 Ensuring rigor in qualitative study**

Rigour is a means of demonstrating legitimacy of the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004), or the way by which the researcher demonstrates integrity and competence of the study (Aroni et al., 1999). For qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed another term for rigour and they named it “trustworthiness”. They also came up with alternative elements to suit a naturalistic inquiry paradigm: credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of external validity), dependability (instead of reliability), and confirmability (instead of objectivity).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the term “credibility” as a match between respondents’ views and the interpretations or explanation produced by the researchers or whether the data accurately represent reality (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). “Transferability” refers to the generalizability of the study, and in qualitative study, it concerns only case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Stability of the data over time or how the researchers adapt to changes in the studied environment is the main description of the term “dependability” (Hamberg, Johansson, Lindgren, & Westman, 1994). Finally, “confirmability” focuses on the need to show that the findings are derived from the data, and not from the researcher’s imagination (Crawford, Leybourne, & Arnott, 2000).

Other scholars, (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Flick, 2006; Morse & Richards, 2002) believed that rigour could be ensured if a researcher takes into consideration the whole process of conducting research, from its design stage, actual conduct of the study, and on completion of the project. For example, Morse and Richards (2002) recommended that in the design phase, a researcher must be fully knowledgeable in the qualitative approach before embarking on a research project. In addition, the researcher must conduct a proper review of the literature to grasp what is already known and to find gaps in the current knowledge. The literature review should be utilized as a general guide in conducting research, and the investigator should not expect to find what the literature suggests when he or she goes to the fieldwork. Thinking qualitatively and

working inductively are the third aspect in the design phase. This requires the researcher to constantly challenge the assumptions and the obvious, so that the hidden, the implicit and the taken for granted will be unearthed and demonstrated. As described by Denscombe (2003), the researcher should be reflexive by viewing the relationship with the social world not as an objective form, but aware that meanings are shaped by the researcher's experience as a social being. Lastly, the researcher needs to identify the most appropriate method to answer the research questions to ensure rigour in the study.

I also extensively followed the suggestions by Morse and Richards (2002) to ensure rigour during the actual conduct of the study. They proposed that the researcher adopt appropriate sampling techniques in choosing participants for the study. This can be done in a purposive manner, by implementing several sampling techniques such as purposeful sampling, snowball sampling, convenience sampling, or theoretical sampling. They also recommended that a researcher stop using strategies that are not producing good and useful data. Finally, the researcher should provide an appropriate pacing to the research. In other words, the researcher should synchronize between data collection and analysis, between obtaining information and verification, and between synthesizing and theorizing. The researcher should not move too quickly through the project, and continue until one is confident that the data is rich, thick, replicated and saturated. To ensure data validity, I provided the interview participants with their individual interview transcription for approval. Ten out of fourteen participants returned work to me with their edited versions.

## **5.7 Second phase – quantitative approach**

The qualitative study was employed to explore the key features of Malaysian practice in international negotiations from the perspective of former Malaysian diplomats. As mentioned earlier, the qualitative study was adopted to inform and guide the quantitative phase of this study, which was to test the initial findings to another category of diplomats, e.g., the in-service diplomats. This follow-up quantitative study was aimed to refine and extend the qualitative study (Creswell, 2008), hoping that it would enhance the finding for the whole research, since the viewpoints of both the former and the in-service Malaysian diplomats were considered. Therefore, this quantitative study was aiming at answering the second research question, which was investigating in-service diplomats' perceptions of Malaysian practice in international negotiations. In

addition, because of the exploratory nature of this research, no hypotheses were formulated.

### **5.7.1 Quantitative design**

In this quantitative study, I decided to adopt a questionnaire survey to collect the data, based on the advice by de Leeuw and Hox (2008) that choosing the survey method depends upon the research purpose, the concepts to be measured, and the characteristics of the population. A survey, as defined by Gray (2004), is “a system for collecting information to describe, compare, or explain knowledge, attitudes and behaviour” (p. 98). The survey involves basically five stages: (1) survey design and preliminary planning; (2) pre-testing; (3) final survey design and planning; (4) data collection; and (5) data coding, analysis and reporting (Czaja & Blair, 2005). A questionnaire, on the other hand, according to research scholars (de Leeuw & Hox, 2008; Denscombe, 2003) is an instrument of a survey, besides interviews, documents and observation. The questionnaire is a series of prepared questions with their prepared choices of answers for the respondents to choose (Czaja & Blair, 2005). As explained by Denscombe (2003), questionnaires are designed to collect and discover information, in the form of facts and opinions, by asking people directly about what the researcher wants to find in the research. According to Gillham (2000), there are several advantages of employing a questionnaire: (1) it is cheap and time-saving; (2) it can cover a large number of respondents in a short period; (3) respondents can answer the questionnaire at a time convenient to them and this results in a less stressful and demanding situation; (4) respondents’ identities are unknown; (5) it minimizes researchers’ prejudice; and (6) the questions are the same for all respondents.

### **5.7.2 Quantitative respondents**

Since my quantitative study was investigating in-service diplomats’ perceptions of Malaysian practice in international negotiations, I chose non-probability samples, specifically a purposive sampling method to select my respondents. The samples were targeted at middle management level and higher with a minimum experience of three years, because they were expected to have experiences in international negotiations. According to Czaja and Blair (2005), researchers can employ non-probability sampling when they just want to get a general idea about a phenomenon from respondents’

perceptions, thoughts, and beliefs. Furthermore, I believed that due to the sensitive nature of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, my access to the respondents might be restricted and the likelihood of getting a large number of respondents might not be possible. Denscombe (2003) argued that non-probability sampling could be employed when: (1) due to certain reasons, there is no possibility of obtaining a big number of respondents; (2) the population is unknown to the researcher; and (3) the researcher finds it difficult to get access to the participants.

### **5.7.3 Data collection methods**

As the findings from the qualitative study were employed to guide and inform me on the subsequent quantitative study, I myself constructed the questionnaire. What I did was to come up with as many questions as possible from the qualitative findings. Then, I went through all the questions and removed the questions which I thought were redundant and non-significant, in the sense that I already expected what answer would come from the respondents. The questions I constructed were all in the form of a Likert scale, except for the demographic section. The Likert Scale is used when the researcher prepares statements and wants the respondents to state their level of agreement with the given statements (Gray, 2004).

Taking into consideration the advice by scholars (Campanelli, 2008; Punch, 2003) that once researchers construct new questions, they have to test the questions to ensure precision, simplicity, understanding, ease to answer, and the time needed to complete the questionnaire, I sent the questions to three colleagues at the university who did not belong to my target group, but were experienced in designing quantitative questionnaire. I asked for their help to vet through the questionnaire to detect any flaws. In their comments and feedback, they gave me a few suggestions to improve clarity, and to make the questionnaire more organized, they suggested changing words they thought would confuse my respondents. I reviewed the questionnaire again, and this time, I read through all the questions several times and then reworded some of them so that there would be a combination of positively and negatively-worded questions. Afterward, I presented the draft questionnaire to another group of colleagues at the university. We went through the questions one by one, and in the process, they kept prompting and asking me about matters that were not clear. Finally, the focus group was comfortable with the questionnaire after the members made a few more suggestions

for improvement. This exercise of piloting or pre-testing the questions was done in accordance with the advice of scholars like Gillham (2000), Czaja and Blair (2005), and Schloss and Smith (1999) to ensure quality of the questionnaire.

I was not able to conduct pilot-testing of the questionnaire due to difficulties in finding appropriate respondents, because they either were working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Malaysia, or they were serving at Malaysian mission offices abroad. In both ways, I was some considerable distance from them, and the e-mail addresses of the respondents were not easily available. Furthermore, I was confident that the two rounds of piloting the questions were sufficient enough to come up with a valid and reliable questionnaire. As explained by Czaja and Blair (2005), although pilot-testing the questionnaire is highly recommended, there are instances where pilot testing is not possible, especially in small-scale research, but the flaws are minimized if the researcher follows correct ways of sampling procedures.

After the second round of piloting the questions, I again made necessary improvements and the final questionnaire was completed. I divided the questionnaire into five categories with 76 items altogether. A copy of the questionnaire is Appendix 5. The categories of the questionnaire were:

- 1) Personal background (4 items);
- 2) Role and performance of home sector agencies in international negotiations (8 items);
- 3) General aspects of Malaysia in international negotiations (28 items);
- 4) Characteristics of Malaysian negotiators (16 items); and
- 5) Current skills of Malaysian negotiators (20 items).

The questionnaire was designed to be cross-sectional since I only planned to collect the quantitative data at one point in time. It was also intended to be a self-administered questionnaire because I understood that due to the sensitive nature and security issues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, the movement of outsiders inside the

compound was limited. Furthermore, the ministry would appoint a staff member as a coordinator to manage the survey, and the researcher was allowed to deal only with the coordinator. I was also aware of the weaknesses of a self-administered questionnaire, as explained by scholars (Czaja & Blair, 2005; de Leeuw & Hox, 2008) as follows:

- 1) It may be difficult to get a higher response rate because the researcher does not meet the respondents face-to-face, and respondents have a flexible time to fill up the questionnaire;
- 2) Quality of the data may be at risk because respondents do not have opportunities to ask any questions if they have inquiries about the questionnaire, since they are only given the questionnaire, the cover letter and the instructions;
- 3) The appearance of the survey might not be appealing enough to the respondents; and
- 4) The researcher does not have any control over who actually fills out the questionnaire.

#### **5.7.4 Data collection process**

This quantitative data collection has been approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 9 March 2009 (Ethics application number 08/204). A copy of the AUTEC's approval is Appendix 6. The approval of the quantitative data collection included the issues of anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of the respondents. The AUTEC also approved the Participant Information Sheet Form and the questionnaire. The Participant Information Sheet contained information similar to the qualitative phase except that it included a statement in which completion of the questionnaire would be taken as indicating respondent's consent to participate in the survey. In this case, the respondents did not have to sign any Consent Form, and this was done to maintain anonymity in the survey. A copy of the Participant Information Sheet for the survey is Appendix 7.

After obtaining approval from the AUTEC, I wrote an email to the gatekeeper (Schloss & Smith, 1999) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia to introduce myself, inform

him about my research, and seek his approval to conduct a survey at the ministry. I also attached a Participant Information Sheet and a copy of the questionnaire. I was given a positive response and was instructed to deal with an officer at the ministry who acted as a coordinator. I personally went back to Malaysia on 10 April 2009 to meet the coordinator because I felt that meeting face-to-face was a better choice as I was seeking his assistance to distribute and collect the questionnaire. I also brought back souvenirs from New Zealand, handed them to the coordinator and asked him to give each souvenir to those who responded to my questionnaire, as a token for their participation.

When I met the coordinator, I told him nicely that I needed at least 70 copies of returned questionnaires to ensure the sample is large enough for my survey research. I also handed him the soft copy of the questionnaire as he believed it was easier to distribute the questionnaire in soft copy, since the respondents were not only in the local Ministry, but also in Malaysian mission offices abroad. He promised to help me get the questionnaires back within two weeks after our first meeting. After two weeks, I was handed only thirteen answered questionnaires. He again promised to follow up with the respondents and assured me that he would send the answered questionnaires to me electronically. With his assurance, it was no point for me to physically visit his office to collect the answered questionnaires, so I returned to New Zealand. By end of July 2009, after three months of continuous correspondence with the coordinator, I finally received altogether 39 answered questionnaires from my respondents. I was informed that the coordinator managed to distribute 73 questionnaires altogether, targeting respondents who have had multilateral and bilateral experience. The returned questionnaire was 53 percent and the number was considered satisfactory for this research.

#### **5.7.5 Quantitative data analysis**

Once I had gathered all the questionnaires, the next move was to analyze the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 for Windows. In preparing the data for analysis, I checked all the responses for errors such as double answers to a question, or incompleteness, such as blank responses. According to Sekaran (2005), a frequent approach to handle blank responses is to assign a midpoint number to an interval-scaled item that has a midpoint, or to program the computer to ignore the

blank responses during the analysis, or to give the mean value of all the responses for the particular item.

I found four blank responses to my interval-scaled questions but no double answers. Since my questionnaire did not have a midpoint number to interval-scaled items, and the number of response was small, I decided to assign the mean value of all the responses for that particular item. Afterward, I proceeded to code the responses by assigning numerical values to each item. Then, I manually keyed in the raw data into the SPSS program. After all the data had been entered, I checked the printed data for any errors during the input process. The data was now ready for statistical analysis. The findings of this quantitative analysis are discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

#### **5.7.6 Validity and reliability in quantitative study**

In quantitative research, four important elements determine how rigorous research is: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Creswell, 1994). Internal validity as defined by Peat (2002) is “the extent to which the study methods are reliable” (p. 105). According to the same author, a study achieves its internal validity when the measurements used in the study are able to closely estimate what is expected to be measured. External validity refers to “the ability to generalize findings from a specific setting and small group to a range of settings and people” (Neuman, 2006, p. 198). Consistency and stability of the data over time, even after repeated tests by different researchers, is the main description of the term reliability (Newman & Benz, 1998). Objectivity focuses on the need to show that the findings are derived from the actual data, and not from the researcher’s imagination (Sekaran, 2005).

Neuman (2006) explained four main ways on how to improve reliability in quantitative study: (1) make sure each construct measures only one concept, in order to eliminate interference or distractions; (2) try as much as possible to use an accurate level of measurement because it will attain more information, and is thus more likely to be reliable; (3) use more than one indicator for independent and dependent variables, because this technique will note a wider range of measurements and tend to be more stable than one single item; and (4) increase the number of pre-tests, pilot tests and replication.



## **5.8 Summary**

This chapter discussed the methodology adopted in order to execute the research. The mixed-methods approach was particularly employed to answer the research questions, since the questions covered both aspects of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The participants for this research were former and in-service Malaysian diplomats, since this research wanted to highlight the key features of Malaysian practice in international negotiations from the perspective of Malaysian diplomats. An interview technique was utilized to explore and understand the Malaysian practice in international negotiations. The variables and instruments developed from the qualitative study were used to measure the perspective of respondents in the subsequent quantitative study. Finally, the data collection process and data analysis for both qualitative and quantitative studies were discussed.

After an analysis of data has completed for both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the next step is to present the findings. Since this research adopts a design which puts emphasis on qualitative approach, it is more appropriate to firstly present the qualitative findings, which are presented in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **QUALITATIVE FINDINGS**

#### **6.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter describes the qualitative findings on Malaysian practice in international negotiations based on the perspective of former Malaysian diplomats. Five themes that emerged from the data are highlighted:

- Theme One – Acknowledging the need to be fully prepared prior to conducting international negotiations;
- Theme Two - Attentiveness to Malaysian approach in international negotiations;
- Theme Three - Mind over cultural influence on Malaysian approach to international negotiations;
- Theme Four - Comparing with, and learning from, other countries; and
- Theme Five - Acknowledging the role of stakeholders.

#### **6.2 Theme one – Acknowledging the need to be fully prepared prior to conducting international negotiations**

My participants believed that it is essential to be fully prepared before the Malaysian team begins conducting international negotiations:

In terms of preparation, even for a simple version of a negotiation to the most complex one, of course adequate preparation is important. (P1)

You have to have thorough preparation. That is extremely important in any form of negotiation. (P17)

Preparation is necessary for Malaysia to be able to advance its position and to avoid being taken advantage of by other nations:

The most important point in negotiation is never go into negotiations when you are not ready and prepared...your preparation is most important, and your readiness. If you are not prepared, how are you going to advance your position? (P7)

For any delegates who are a bit unprepared, there are a lot of vultures just waiting for their victims. When these vultures are not eating, they are feeding you up, ready to eat you. Plenty of countries are putting forward for those vultures. Every country goes into the negotiation table, with a lot, with discrete means on getting what they want. (P12)

The preparation is divided into five sub-themes: (1) what it is important to know; (2) appreciating the role of the home sector agencies; (3) frustration over the weaknesses of home sector agencies; (4) welcoming improvement initiatives; and (5) concerns about the documentation system.

### **6.2.1 What it is important to know**

The first and foremost focus that needs to be considered is the Malaysian national position on issues, i.e., the minimum, maximum and common positions, and the need to identify which positions are negotiable, and which are not. According to one participant:

We meet first and discuss what our common position is, our minimum position, and our maximum position. All these are discussed well in advance. (P4)

According to another, there is a need for Malaysia to be pragmatic and practical in setting up its position, because most of the time, what is desired is not always attained:

When you go into a negotiation, you of course must know what you want; how far you can go and how far along you can bring this up. So the parameters must be set. You can go into a negotiation and hope for the maximum outcome of course but in actual fact, it never happens that way. (P16)

Another participant clearly stated that:

In defining our national position we would put the terms of our best case forward, and what would be the maximum advantage that Malaysia could have by determining a certain position, so we would adopt it....We are defining this in the sense of what is the best position that we can take that will ensure our national position remains intact and preserved. (P8)

And in order to understand the Malaysian position, it is necessary to understand the tenets of Malaysian foreign policy, as one participant revealed:

For either bilateral or multilateral negotiations, you must know the flow of foreign policies and diplomacy, what underlines foreign policy and diplomacy, and the tenets of foreign policy are important. (P9)

In addition to the tenets of Malaysian foreign policy, the negotiators must also understand the domestic situation and broad sentiment of the people in the process of defining the national position. As one participant recalled:

In all my negotiations I place a lot of relevance on the domestic situation. We cannot do things not related to our own constituency, because that is very important from a political angle. You are serving a government and our political master. So, you take into account what our domestic feelings are, how we, the country looks at certain issues: that is very important today. And that has always been our main consideration, or one of our main considerations. (P16)

Regarding the public sentiment, one participant was concerned about the status of youngsters these days, who may only read and listen to certain blogs in the internet, which may orientate towards certain opinions they find there, and thus may influence the Malaysian position:

So now the youth are IT savvy, they do not read mainstream newspapers, they just look at the internet and blogs, and they believe what the blogs are saying. In this, we are going through a phase, which the Americans and others have gone through. In the early stage, people like to read the blogs, they think what the bloggers are saying, is right...But what is happening is that these have conditioned the mind. If only one group is consistent in writing blogs...this will affect our position, and that position will become the position of the country. You as the negotiator, you have to look at what is the broad sentiment of the people. So it is another important criterion you have to look at. (P17)

Furthermore, knowing the right timing before proceeding with the negotiation is regarded as a positive point:

Normally, first, we determine the timing. And the timing is actually also related to the political directive. May be politically, we need to show that we have good relations. We think this is a good time; or may be sometimes you are in a stronger position. Economically, we are strong, have more points to deliver and may be more things to give and take. Then may be we can start. So in terms of preparation, timing is important. (P1)

Besides knowing the Malaysian position, it is also imperative for Malaysia to know the likely positions of countries Malaysia aligns with. One participant said:

Of course in the context, we must know what the negotiating position is of “our” group of countries, vis-à-vis the negotiating position of other countries of interest to Malaysia. (P6)

Secondly, negotiators need to understand the substance or the issues under discussion very well, by reading the briefs prepared for them thoroughly. One participant disclosed:

So when you are negotiating, either as a member of the Malaysian delegation or as a member of a group, the United Nations, or the issues that affect the whole countries, you have to remember that, number one, you must know your substance. You cannot negotiate if you do not know the substance. Of course in Wisma Putra, you go to meetings; they have briefs prepared for you. As a leader of the delegation, you must read the briefs, because people will be able to know at once, they can sense if you do not know your stuff. (P4)

Another participant divulged that besides reading and understanding the briefs prepared for them, conducting discussions among the team members who are expert in the issues is also helpful to gain solid understanding of the substance:

The guidelines are generally known to us. As I said, there are confidential briefs prepared beforehand and we have to read these briefs and fully understand what our national position is on various issues. We also have to discuss these with the relevant experts from Malaysia who come for the meetings. (P13)

One participant reflected:

At a negotiation meeting, you would feel as though you were in a court room, and that you are one of the lawyers. You really have to know everything, and like I said, doing your homework thoroughly is very important. What I meant by doing the homework is that you have to know the issues that are being discussed, the background and Malaysia’s positions. (P10)

In addition, besides knowing the substance, another key factor to master is the techniques of negotiation:

Knowing negotiation techniques, or how to negotiate is very important. If you know your substance alone, but you do not know the tactics of negotiation, you will also fail, because if I am an expert, I can also win even though I do not know my subject as well as you, because I know negotiation techniques. (P4)

Furthermore, it is important that the negotiators are given a full and clear mandate by, and strong support from, the stakeholders:

So, when talking about negotiation, the first thing when you want to send someone to negotiate outside your country is to make sure that all issues are given to him clearly. Sensitive or not, there is no question that they cannot discuss...But if I am given a free mandate, I must be allowed to talk freely, rationally, and I cannot bluff...So you must not hide facts. They must expose these. Once you give your officer or your envoy that full mandate, you must make him free to talk. You must trust him that he will not twist black to white or white to black...A negotiator must have strength, or confidence, or both, and his master's mandate. If you do not have that, you cannot negotiate. This regard the issue you are going to talk about, either peace, war or commodities, you must know your mandate. (P12)

You must have good support from political leadership. You see, the political leadership must not change its position, cannot flip-flop, because once you give a mandate to your negotiators, you must allow them to continue. (P17)

Another important matter that was emphasized is to understand the role of each member in the team, and put aside all personal interests, and just focus on the Malaysian interest. As one participant shared:

The most important thing I learned was whoever goes to the negotiation meeting should know his or her role, and must do his or her homework well. (P10)

Another participant disclosed that the main focus is to gain the most for the country:

We also come as a team, you put aside everything else, and you work towards what you want for the country. (P14)

One participant stressed the important role of the team leader in ensuring the team is well-coordinated:

The other one is teamwork, you are going with a delegation, and sometimes you find the members of delegation represent different interests, but you as the leader of the delegation - you have to coordinate. Of course you cannot be an expert in everything. You seek their advice, from these people and particular individuals. Then you, as the leader, you take the lead. (P4)

Conducting coordinating work and leading the team is not a simple challenge and only a competent team leader will be able to assume the role effectively:

But in some instances, for example where the negotiation is on a subject of inter-ministry, or including many ministries, the challenge is how to bring together these disparate threads, and positions on a whole list of issues. Then how you coordinate, the coordinating mechanism, what is the role of the leader

of the delegation, whether the leader sees himself just as a coordinator. Things like, “Ok, you all run on your own, I am just a coordinator”, or the leader seeks to bring the various sub-issues into a coherent strategy, which will enable him to look at the broad picture, enabling him to adjust his negotiations, where you give and take. That will require an authority to play that role and make decisions. If he does not do that, then it will make him just a coordinator. Each one will go in its own way. (P18)

Another factor to consider is the need for Malaysian negotiators to have stamina and be continuously alert, especially in attending multilateral forums, as stressed by one participant:

So the other thing is stamina in negotiation, I have sat through negotiation for the whole night without sleeping: you have to be alert. You have to have the stamina, even with jetlag, but still you have to learn how to put up with this, because other people will take advantage of you. So stamina is very important, because this is also a strategy. As a negotiator, I know that you have been on a long trip, you will be tired, and you won't be listening to me - that is when I will push. (P4)

Finally, the participants voiced the importance of knowing the other negotiating party, in terms of where they come from, their negotiating behaviour, their mandate, and constraint. For example, one participant said:

I think before you even proceed, try to understand where that person is coming from, who the person is you are going to deal with, because do not forget, as much as you represent a government and a country, so does he or she...And here it is also very important for you to be able to determine which approach he is taking: is it really a policy position, as opposed to propaganda?...So we have to see whether that person is playing with us. (P7)

This was echoed by another:

You must understand your negotiating partner and learn to deal with them and also you have to go behind that and also understand the mandate and constraints of your negotiating partner. Who is behind it, what would be the perception of the so called puppet-master who would ultimately pull all the strings. (P8)

Another participant stressed his point:

We take into account the other side's weaknesses, and what point or thing they would like to concede. And then you should know the negotiation behaviour of a country...We must also know what is actually non-negotiable to the other

side. That means we cannot proceed along that path, there will be no concessions, so we have to find other ways. (P1)

### **6.2.2 Appreciating the role of home sector agencies**

While my participants advised what important issues they think Malaysian negotiators should know before conducting international negotiations, they also realized and appreciated the role of home sector ministries in facilitating the preparation of the negotiations. Home sector agencies refer to other ministries in the Malaysian public sector besides the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or Wisma Putra):

I would say that Wisma Putra can only play an important role if we are well-supported by the agencies. (P17)

So, when we have negotiations, we have representatives from various ministries. They will not only be from Wisma Putra. (P3)

In our case, we look at issues with, let us say Country A and then we will have to do the internal consultations, we will call for inter-agency meeting, and we define issues ourselves, and exhaust the subject. (P8)

Wisma Putra, as you know, is the lead agency, but when it comes to negotiations, we call in experts from the home sector. (P14)

But one thing that I know, since this is in terms of international negotiation, ministries facilitate our job in Wisma Putra. Definitely during inter-agency meetings, we get particular papers from another ministry. Earlier, it was all from Wisma, but now, there are people that we can rely on. (P11)

The contributions of the home sector agencies come in several forms. They facilitate Wisma Putra in dealing with global issues, help Wisma Putra in formulating deals, and provide advice on technical issues:

When we are dealing with other countries outside of our region, other agencies will have to come in, simply because the global issues are very different in nature. (P16)

I think we have learnt to package in economic negotiation. For example, let us say we want to buy an airplane. We should negotiate not only to buy the airplane; instead, we may package it with, may be training or may be later on, the airplane company opens up its facilities in our country for investment sake. This is where the inter-agency role is important, to help us in formulating the package. (P1)



I may not know about nuclear issues, but if you give me the brief and I read well in advance, I know roughly what the technical things are, then I am able to lead the delegation. So that is why we need briefs, because we are generalists. We do not know the technicalities of the subjects, but I can always get the technical briefs from the ministry concerned. (P4)

My participants recounted that the role of home sector agencies is becoming more and more significant:

As you probably know by now, unlike before the 60s, 70s, up to 90s, when it comes to negotiation, Wisma Putra used to play a very leading role, because the subject was not that complicated, not technical etc. Now, you will notice even if there is a bilateral negotiation between two countries, although the team might be led by the Ambassador, the final crucial decision making process, will actually be to a certain extent reliant more upon on technical people. If it is a financial matter, then it will be the Finance Ministry, an agricultural matter, then it would be the Agriculture Ministry etc. (P11)

Actually we (Wisma Putra) should refer to them (home sector ministries), because they should know what is good for the country. They are in charge of labour, manpower; we refer to them, the Attorney General, and Home Affairs. (P15)

It depends on what kind of negotiation is going on, because we are at Wisma Putra, we are only just at the front end, the expertise are mostly with other agencies, other ministries. (P21)

### **6.2.3 Frustration over the weaknesses of home sector agencies**

Although the participants appreciated the involvement of home sector agencies in facilitating Wisma Putra in international negotiations, they also felt frustrated in terms of the performance of the home sector agencies during the preparation stage and during the actual negotiation process. For example, one participant was able to distinguish the performance of the home sector agencies before and after his retirement:

I think our experience is this. During my time, the bureaucracy was smaller, easier to get people from other ministries to attend meetings and attendees were from the top management. But I was told at the later stage now, there are some problems. Delegates from other ministries do not attend and then they sent lower-level officers who are not that knowledgeable. Then because of that, you cannot make decisions at that meeting, you have to refer back to the Ministry. (P1)

Another participant also shared the same experience of having home sector agencies sending junior officers to pre-negotiation meetings:

So most of our agencies, I think because of practical reasons, they send junior officers to these meetings. Junior officers can only brief on factual matters. They are not able to analyze, or give their opinions. (P15)

My participants also expressed their disapproval on the way home sector agencies looked at issues, mainly only from their own point of view and disregarded the overall picture:

Then, from our experience with the technical people, sometimes they do not have an overall view; they looked at issues only from their point of interest but did not link them with the bigger picture...I also find situations where during the inter-agency meeting, some ministries were arrogant, they did not want to listen to others, and thought "this is my view and my purview". (P1)

Home Affairs have their own views, but what Labour has done is not to take into consideration the views of the Home Affairs Ministry, and also the views of the Attorney General department. (P14)

So what should be in the Malaysian interest sometimes is not really the Malaysian interest, it is just the interest of some particular agencies...There are a lot of compromises to be made because you see, Wisma Putra views things differently, the Ministry of Trade views at things differently, may be only from the point of view of for example, aviation. (P3)

Of course different agencies have different interests to protect. (P4)

Some of my participants revealed that they even had to go for international negotiations without any, or only minimal input from the home sector agencies:

Another thing which I would like to highlight is that sometimes, diplomats are required to attend meetings on issues that are very technical without any experts. I have experienced this. I have gone for a negotiation alone because the home sector agencies could not send any of their officers, even though that negotiation was supposed to be a technical one, and so required them. (P10)

But again, sometimes, based on my experience, some of these ministries, they are not that transparent too. They keep some of the information to themselves...they said that things are on the need to know basis...and only when negotiation fails, only then will they ask Wisma Putra to take over. (P3)

Our people from the agencies either do not brief us, do not come up with ideas, so we cannot bring them forward. (P15)

There have been cases, based on my own experience, where we asked for example, some of these agencies, what position we should take? Do you have any suggestions? Can you give us some information that will convince us? I must tell you, there have been some cases where we do not get that, we coordinate meetings with other agencies, and when we asked around the table, there were not much input. So much so that sometimes, as officers of Wisma Putra, we have to come out with our own conclusions based upon what we understand. There have been such cases...Because the people at the agencies are busy with other things. (P17)

The participants also related their experience in which the home sector agencies took turns in sending their officers to attend international negotiations. One diplomat found this phenomenon troublesome because she had to start familiarizing herself with the officers all over again, and had to provide new briefing to the officers:

We have some problems in maintaining the same delegation members to negotiation meetings. I was told that for some ministries/agencies in the home sector, they practice the policy of taking turns to go to international meetings abroad. This was to give an equal chance for all officers to travel abroad. It is also a form of training for these officers. This was the reason as to why we have different members of delegations representing ministries/agencies each time we attend international meetings which discuss the same issues. This is a little bit problematic for us because we have to do the process of getting to know one another from the beginning again and again, and this process takes our time. We also find ourselves having to explain the rationale of certain positions taken by Malaysia and other countries, because of some sensitivities involved. (P10)

I was told that if today one person goes for a meeting overseas, next time somebody else will go because he already went last time, and one must take turns. (P9)

To some extent, my participants also indicated that the home sector agencies' officers are lacking in terms of language skills, especially English language, and less skilful in public speaking. And they also have little or less exposure in international negotiations:

The home sector people, they do international negotiations, but they are not exposed to what international relations is all about. (P3)

I also observed that a number of officers from the ministries/agencies in the home sector, junior and high ranking officers, lack public speaking skills, particularly in making statements on Malaysian positions in negotiation

meetings. I do not know the main reason for this. Perhaps it could be due to our education system, where everything is spoon-fed, and we are not taught and encouraged to use our heads and come up with independent views. Another thing I have observed which I see is seriously lacking is the command of language. You see, negotiation is a game, so the usage of correct words is essential in order to be able to argue your position and win the game. (P10)

They (officers from home sector agencies) are not used to dealing with the external environment. If you need information on how to present externally, how to win friends for instance, how to win support externally, you got to be able to present in such a way that other people will understand, and appreciate and support, that's where we (Wisma Putra) come in. (P21)

One participant commented that the home sector agencies' officers should not be blamed because they indeed have less exposure to international negotiations:

If they come from a certain ministry, they have never been exposed to international negotiations, sometimes they cannot be blamed. The first time they ever go to a big meeting, they are lost, sometimes they cannot put things into correct English, or cannot speak on the spur of the moment, and things like that. So that is for us, for people like me, I am so used to this, I learn on the ground. (P4)

#### **6.2.4 Welcoming improvement initiatives**

One participant expressed his satisfaction over the initiative taken by the Government of Malaysia to issue one circular in 1987 called "Coordinated Operation" in which all government agencies abroad were directed to come under the purview of the Ambassador. This initiative was seen to have improved coordination and avoided conflicts between government agencies abroad:

Well, immediately I am thinking of this pre-1988, remember there was a circular that came out from the Chief Secretary in 1987? It was regarding our approach to diplomacy in a much more holistic manner, it was called "Coordinated Operation" (*Operasi Bersepadu*), where everybody in the mission comes under the Ambassador. Since the coming of that circular in 1987, I think things have improved a lot. Before that, there were a few problems, especially when you got a situation, it so happened in the negotiation that the Ambassador was not around. When you go for a bilateral meeting, and the Ambassador is not around, of course under the Geneva Convention, the guy that immediately takes over from the Ambassador has to be the next senior person from Wisma Putra. But sometimes the next senior person from Wisma Putra is junior to the Defence Attaché, or the Trade Attaché, or the Education Attaché, and there comes the differences, for the Wisma Putra person is outranked by these others. So, before the circular, the attaches would question, "Why should I go? (P11)

Another participant, referring to the same subject, reiterated that the mechanism for inter-agency operation has been established and that Malaysia has learned its way of doing things:

From what I have observed in the United Nations, we have improved a lot. The mechanism has been well-laid out. Before you go for a negotiation, you have to conduct internal meetings, two, three or four times. Even during the breaks in the negotiation, you focus again, and continue over dinner or lunch. I think we have improved a lot since I experienced negotiations in London last time. I think we have learned. (P19)

My participants also expressed satisfaction with the initiative of the government to set up International Divisions in most ministries, to handle international issues and to liaise with Wisma Putra in terms of international relations and negotiations:

As you know in the old days, there was no International Division. Whereas now, every ministry wants an International Division, which is fair enough, I have nothing against it...It could be good because things are so specialized these days, you cannot help it. So this is another feature that has changed the parameters of Malaysian diplomatic negotiation. The establishment of the International Division in each respective ministry, to me is quite important...It helps Wisma Putra in the negotiation process. It helps negotiation in several ways: The fact that there are International Divisions in ministries now gives more professional points in terms of the specialized ministry's approach towards the subject, and because of that professional advice from the International Division of ministries, I think the Ambassador or the leader of the negotiation can operate in such a way to make sure that it fits the cultural anomalies that you come across in that negotiation. (P11)

Most of the ministries, they have the International Relations Departments now. And this is quite new, they realize this. (P3)

One participant shared his experience over the approach adopted by Malaysian diplomats when they were assigned to new posts. This involved learning from the experience of other diplomats, especially from neighbouring countries:

The other thing I think, where we in the mission keep a good record is this, we all know that we are all Asians, and first thing that Asian diplomats do when they go for a new post, is that they go find other Asian colleagues and talk about things. I think certain Ambassadors have also gone slightly further than that; what they have done, for example, through informal meetings with the Head of Mission, they might even ask what has been the experience of other Asian countries in negotiation of that particular subject with that particular country. That to me, helps, let us say education, or defence or security, so that is another way. (P11)

### 6.2.5 Concerned about the documentation system

My participants expressed their concern about the documentation system in the public service, mainly in terms of record-keeping and retrieving. Their experience showed that some important documents either could not be retrieved or were lost, and they believed that this is one of the reasons that could contribute to Malaysia losing some negotiations:

I think in terms of documentation, as a general reservation, a lot needs to be done. I think one of the weakest points of Malaysia is record-keeping and retrieval of records. And I think a good example was the case of [name]. (P1)

There are a lot of lessons from our experience in negotiating with [name]. Based on what we found out, our team was actually poorly prepared for obvious reasons, because the documentation on the issue had not been completed. The basic documentation includes, among others, the agreement signed between Malaysia and [name] on our [place] in [name]. You have no opportunity to really go through and study, understand, and strategize your locating position because you do not have the critical documents. True enough, in the end what happened in terms of the final outcome, we laterally agreed to give to [name], lock, stock, and barrel for nothing in return, even though the leftover value of what we have done in terms of complex and so on was worth more than [number] million. (P6)

The other part of it, record-keeping is important, from old record keeping, some we have, and some we do not have. (P17)

When I was in [place], I got a consultant from the United Kingdom. He wanted to get some documents which we signed. He had a tough time finding them. Finally I directed him to Wisma Putra, he listed the whole documents which we have signed but we did not know where they were. I think we are not that systematic in terms of collecting and storing documents, and the committee was not there...Sometimes it is easier to find documents in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. (P19)

In negotiation with [name], I think our people thought we had everything, because we had all kinds of documents, except that we were lacking only one letter, from [name] that was missing, and we lost on that basis. (P21)

My participants were also perplexed that some of the important documents could be found elsewhere and not in Malaysia:

We usually invite the leader of the negotiating team to give a lecture, and this time we invited [name]. The lesson that I learnt from his lecture is very simple,

he said, “We have been very lucky to win this particular case, because in the court of law, what is important is documentary evidence, we are talking about events from five hundred years ago, and we were lucky in the sense that because the documents that were required for our case have been kept properly by the Dutch museum, they have been intact for the past one hundred years”. (P6)

In the case of our negotiation with [name], we went to all the archives and got some relevant documents from the United States, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and so on, to look at the historical documents and so on. (P18)

I attended one talk over dinner given to ex-Ambassadors in negotiation with [name]. The presenter said that we had conducted proper research and sourced the documents from libraries all around the world. (P19)

Some of my participants did agree that the documentation system has been improved by the implementation of computerization system. But one participant lamented that lost documents could no longer be retrieved, and another participant echoed that this is the legacy left by the older generation:

I think there is a lot of awareness now, our archives are better stored, as we develop so and so forth. Now we have IT in most agencies, including the record-keeping facility. I think that part of it is well taken care. But some of it cannot be helped, because many old documents are lost. (P17)

We have prepared, but it is also a legacy of our older generation, they did not do what they had to do in terms of storing documents. If they did not do their job, so we also, we are victims in that sense. People blame us, the present generation, because of others in the past not doing their work. (P15)

Even though computerization is implemented, one participant found it not completely in place:

I think we are still weak in terms of documentation. Actually our argument now should be easier, because it is all computerized but I think the system is not fully implemented. You know, the officer for the first six months, he follows procedures, after that the seventh month he stops following them, then he left, and things kept piling up. (P1)

Another participant added that the filing system these days has discarded the significance of writing a minute in the file, and this may contribute to the lack of documentation practice:

In my department, when we joined the service in [year], we were trained to have a minute sheet in the file. We call them minute sheets and in them, we will write a brief summary of the issue. You know, when I left the service, I was so surprised because they did not do that anymore. (P14)

### **6.3 Theme two – Attentiveness to Malaysian approach in international negotiations**

My participants were attentive to Malaysian approach in international negotiations and they described it in several aspects: (1) having clear objectives; (2) adopting multiple strategies; (3) having clear principles; (4) acknowledging the strong points; (5) realizing a generalist approach; and (6) realizing other weaknesses.

#### **6.3.1 Having clear objectives**

It was clear to my participants that the most important objective in international negotiations is to reach a win-win situation, in which all parties involved feel that they have gained something from the negotiations:

In negotiation, there is no need for you to win; in fact if you think you are going to win in negotiation, you cannot complete the deal. So, a successful negotiation can only come about when there is what we call a win-win situation. (P1)

In any negotiation, a win-win situation is the best. There are creative ways to find where you can both win, and at the same time protect your national policy. (P4)

For us, in negotiation, the loser should not lose everything, including losing face, and the winner should not take all. We want a situation when both come out from the negotiating room, both appear winners. That is the main purpose when we go into negotiations. (P7)

When we enter into a negotiation, of course the whole idea is trying to clinch a deal that everybody can be satisfied with. We call such deals “made in heaven”, where it is a perfect deal. (P8)

Besides aiming for a win-win situation, my participants also stated several other objectives that have similar connotations, such as consensus, cooperation, accommodative, compromise, give and take, common good, good feeling, mutual benefit, and harmony:



For bilateral negotiations, normally the principle that we agree is a mutual benefit, which is something towards good regional cooperation. For example, we were involved in the formation of ASEAN over the past 30 years; I think all in all, Malaysia was very accommodative, in the sense that we did not really push our agenda very much because we thought the common good must prevail. (P1)

Compromise has always been important; it does not work to feel that you are right, you are wrong. (P2)

I used to tell them, “ASEAN is slow, yes this is ASEAN way, and all decisions are by consensus”. (P3)

Malay society has always been accommodating, prefers harmony, communication and dialogue, adopting a conciliatory approach to problem-solving. Look at the language, proverbs, day-to-day communication too, verbal communication and non-verbal communication: all reflect that kind of mindset, we do not like direct confrontative, being upfront, or assertiveness. (P5)

And in negotiations, making compromises does not weaken your position, because compromise does not mean that you are a poor negotiator. (P9)

There is no such thing as “winning a negotiation”. Negotiation is an art of compromise...there is no question of win or lose. Usually it is to secure your minimum objective. You do not go into negotiation to secure your maximum objective. Nobody does that. You go in with your maximum objective, hoping to secure your minimum objective. Only then you can be successful. If you go in to negotiate, to expect a maximum objective, therefore you are expecting your opponent to get the minimum objective; this is not a success. I will not call that a successful negotiation because I am not going to be happy. There will be another round, and another. So you never can have an enduring peace or harmony when you negotiate on the basis of “I want my maximum”. (P12)

When it comes to international issues, compromise becomes essential because we are dealing with twenty countries. There must be a point where there is unanimous acceptance of how we look at things and how we approach them. So it is quite a matter of give and take. (P16)

We have to understand what the concern of the other party is, and other countries too, so that we can come to a sort of compromise. I think in our history, there is a combination of many cases, some of which we have done extremely well, most of it is an outcome of a compromise. (P17)

It is a natural negotiation style of the Malaysians; we want everybody to have a good feeling. (P19)

These objectives were manifested in the way Malaysian negotiators conduct

themselves during the international negotiations, as shared by my participants:

In our case mostly we are more on the positive style, not on the aggressive I would say. I think we are more bureaucratic, in a way, we follow rules and regulations, and with good intentions. In general we are not aggressive towards the other party. (P1)

In negotiation, never say your proposal is not good; we may say “yes, but...”. We do not call a spade a spade. We cannot be direct with them. We soft-paddle our words in the discussion. We always ask to take a break when there is stalemate. So, over the break, you try to soft paddle those who are hard, and suggest few formulas, because everybody has instructions. I also have heavy briefs to study, because when you report back, you have to make sure that everything is according to your instructions. (P2)

The best negotiators are those who can advance their country’s position and get as much as possible from it without losing temper, without having to show off, or being arrogant. You can still achieve the best for your country, smilingly. If you throw a tantrum, you upset the other side. You also upset members of the delegation. They all will not be happy. So, we do not negotiate in enmity. (P7)

I noticed that the Malaysian negotiator first begins with a sense of good conduct, good behaviour. He is very mindful, mindful of the damaging effect of losing control, he will not easily get angry and walk out. I do not see that in our Malaysian negotiators. May be that is part of the toolbox they do not resort to. They usually talk along, carry on, occasionally they say they cannot do something. From my experience, when they cannot do something, they will say so very nicely, very politely to the other side. (P18)

Nevertheless, my participants also reiterated that while Malaysian negotiators should aim for a win-win situation, they should not sacrifice the national interest:

We have to prepare for every negotiation because it involves national interest, so we are not governed or driven by deadlines and urgency. If we cannot resolve the issue, we are prepared to come back, to sit down, to re-look, to assess concessions and determine what our best position will be. So, matters that involve national interest cannot be conducted in a hurried manner, unlike business negotiations. In some negotiations, you have to conclude a deal, and sometimes it is better not to conclude any deal if it means diluting or sacrificing the national interest. (P8)

It depends on what our national interest is in the negotiations. Because we are in ASEAN and our main interests are regional political stability, economic growth and cooperation. ASEAN has become an important cornerstone of our foreign policy, and is the bedrock for stability. (P13)

In negotiations, normally we try to protect our national interest. When negotiating, you do not care who contributes what, but ultimately it is the interest of the country. (P14)

We cannot be unravelling things that are already decided, but we have to protect our national interest. (P15)

You are a diplomat. And Malayness does not really take control this. National interest controls this, whether Malay or Indian or Chinese. National interest is more important. (P16)

I think you have to look at how important a particular issue is. If it is an issue of extremely important, national interest for example, then of course you have to be very concerned and you have to take a much stronger position, and if it is necessary that you cannot compromise, then so be it. (P17)

Comparing accommodation and compromise, I would say we are more towards accommodation, but at the same time, when the national interest is at stake, while we want to accommodate and compromise on various issues and so on, I think at the end of the day, we want to make sure that we serve the national interest. (P19)

### **6.3.2 Adopting multiple strategies**

My participants also revealed major strategies undertaken by Malaysia in advancing its positions during international negotiations. One strategy mentioned was aligning with like-minded countries and championing the Third World countries in order to gain a strong support base in multilateral negotiations:

When negotiations involve the United Nations and United Nations agencies, we have a style that is very consistent, and I think, very defensive. That is something we share with Third World countries. That platform is used to advance Third World values. So, here we are negotiating not so much from Malaysian national position, but also the Third World...So if we join ourselves together, we cannot be alone. (P1)

At multilateral forums such as the United Nations, you have the interest of 101 countries, it is not easy, and most of these countries are grouped into groups, such as G77, OIC etc. You are supposed to work as a group...So you have to be very mindful as well in negotiating, not just for Malaysia, but for the whole group of countries...we have to consider the interest of so many countries. (P4)

During international negotiations, we join other like-minded countries to share our own perception. This has been happening all the way. (P16)

You have to have a support base of like-minded countries, or like-minded people, this is very important. In New York, if you do not have that, you are finished, you cannot go solo, alone. You can be as clever as anything, but if you do not have the support base, you are not able to do it. You must build a support base. I think if you are able to meet a lot of countries, a lot of people feel what you are negotiating in is also what they would like to negotiate, so it means like you are negotiating on their behalf. If you can get that going, you get a very strong foothold in that negotiation. (P20)

Aligning with other like-minded countries was perceived as a good strategy since Malaysia is only a small country and has a lot to do in developing the nation:

We are a small and relatively young nation with an economy heavily dependent on exports and international trade. Also, despite having been independent for over 50 years, the country is still faced with a huge development agenda and a nation-building agenda. These are still ongoing and they are for the long haul. (P9)

Malaysia is a small country, and in international forums, we align ourselves with big countries, so that as a group, we have a chance of being heard, and at the same time, try to defend our position. More so when our position jives with other neighbouring countries, in this case the group of countries' position. (P6)

Another strategy mentioned by my participants is lobbying to obtain support from other countries:

You have to send your boys and really lobby those countries who are really supporting us, and ask them to make strong statements in favour of us. (P3)

Yes, certainly yes, lobbying is also important in order to get the country to support you, because if this is a vote, and you want the other country to speak on your behalf, quietly you lobby and so on. You must know who to lobby, and lobby countries that are like-minded countries. (P4)

You also need to do some lobbying, trade offs, and work out an acceptable compromise. You cannot just go to conferences, read a prepared text, and come back empty-handed. (P13)

In lobbying, one participant disclosed the strategy of “back-door negotiation” to influence other countries:

The best and successful negotiation is to pretend to lose. This was part of strategy we used very heavily in the 1960s. During the Confrontation with [name], we adopted this approach, we talked to the [name], we talked to the [name], and we talked to the [name]. After having talked, we kept quiet. They

took our issue as their idea, with nothing attributed to us. But that was all what we wanted. They got all the name, they were happy because the idea came from them. Once the idea was from them, they could not reject it. Of course we supported the motion because it was originally our idea, but we never went around saying that was our idea...That is a negotiation, a back-door negotiation. It is a very successful negotiation. (P12)

Besides lobbying, my participants also emphasized the importance of meeting with people, socializing and attending functions:

It is important to know what is going on with the viewpoint or stand of other countries. You cannot be shy and stay away from cocktail parties...It is necessary to mingle, to pick the brains of other diplomats and senior officials, especially those from the big powers. You cannot just confine yourself to Malaysian or ASEAN delegations. Very often the consensus that emerges from meetings does not come overnight. (P13)

So in the Foreign Service, receptions and cocktails are very important. We are going there to find things out, to talk to people. (P16)

So network and personal relationships are also important. If the person on the other side does not like you, then you are going to get it. (P17)

I forgot to mention to you the importance of networking. You have to go out, make friends, meet people, maintain, and sustain those relationships. If you are going to be the negotiator, you must have your network, a circle of contacts. That must be done at a subconscious level. Go out, and meet people. (P18)

You have to socialize with people; you have to know your subject thoroughly, to know it well, and you have to be able to talk to people, and not be bashful. Then there is also this kind of 'mafia' or circle of contacts. Through time, once they have negotiated with you, and they have recognized you; they will bring you into their circle. Important issues, important decisions where they want to make, you are inside there, because you are their friends. (P20)

Some participants also stressed making use of informal gatherings, such as meals and coffee breaks, to discuss issues and attempt to influence others, because during such informal gatherings, the negotiators are more relaxed and casual:

Normally before we had our meeting, we had dinner. During dinner we would go through all the agenda, item by item. Yes, it was an informal meeting, because at the actual meeting, we do not want to confront one another in front of junior officers. (P3)

Why do you think diplomats eat and dine a lot? Everything they do, always they say “Let’s go for a meal, let’s have a drink”. Why? It facilitates negotiations very much...And if you go to Geneva, there are a lot of places like coffee places. So when we have a break, we would just say, “Let’s go and have a cup of coffee”. Then we solve the problem and we come back to the meeting, and we are able to solve a bigger issue. These are all negotiation techniques. (P4)

Then another thing while I was there also, a lot of negotiations took place during informalities. I remember one Ambassador hosted a dinner. During that time, you tried to negotiate; you tried to understand their position, what was the inner story about the other side. Of course the other side was also doing the same thing, they tried to know you more, was there any crack in your region. This is very important. (P6)

Participants also talked about the need for “learning by doing” in the process of becoming effective negotiators and be able to advance Malaysia’s position:

I think if you are a diplomat for a long time, you will pick it up during the job. Things are very difficult for you to actually write down in terms of negotiating techniques. It all depends on what happens on the floor; if it goes very fast, your reaction should be very fast. Some things happen in the meeting, and you must immediately decide what to do. Otherwise, your negotiation may fail, because you give time for the other side to reflect, when you just want to take them by surprise. (P4)

You joined Wisma Putra and you were assigned to various desks. If you handled bilateral affairs, then you did bilateral affairs, you learned day by day, by trial and error, and if you were assigned to multilateral desk, or to international economy or whatever, same method, we read files and so on, and the seniors told you bits and pieces, day by day, week by week, month by month. You acquired that kind of training experience, not that you were sent to a particular school of international negotiation or something like that, you sit for a well lined-out, thought-out curriculum which would train you in all the aspects of world class negotiators. There never has one, I think...At the operational level, there was no really serious, conscious effort from day one to train young officers in the art of negotiation. The approach used was trial by fire; you were trained by your senior, you learned on your own. I am telling you something that happened during my time. (P5)

You have to have expertise, how you subsequently make yourself known in international negotiations would be by the nature of your work, if you are like, say in the Ministry of Transport and you have to negotiate air solutions agreements, you would develop that expertise being in the Ministry of Transport. (P8)

As time went by, I managed to build up my negotiation skills, particularly while I was in Geneva, as there were so many meetings that I had to attend. I took the

opportunity to sharpen my intervention skills at group meetings such as ASEAN and Asian groups. (P10)

In my time, there were no guidelines, we had people who had experience to share dealing with certain countries, and then they would tell us to be careful with this and that. But in most cases, we went about things by trial and error. (P20)

One participant shared his experience of the importance of hosting a negotiation forum, because according to him, the host country can make use of the opportunity to strategize the negotiation to be in their favour:

When we host a meeting, actually we can steer the result of the meeting to what we want. You see, you make certain proposals and you can add new issues. You are the host and who will prepare the background paper? You are the one, but some of our government servants, they do not see this, they want to propose certain things and you allow other delegates to prepare the information! You must prepare the background paper because then the slant is different, it should be slanted to what you want. (P3)

Another participant revealed the importance of knowing the rules of procedure thoroughly, especially in international forums, because the negotiator can utilize them in his or her favour:

Every negotiating forum has its rules of procedure. You have to know them, if you do not know, for instance, you are lost, because some countries can win an issue just by playing around with the rules of procedure. In Geneva, when they play around with the rules of procedure, they win their case. But when I went to Vienna, I noticed that people in Vienna do not really know the rules of procedure, nobody used the rules of procedure to win anything. I had the advantage because I know them, sometimes I would play the game and I would win based on the rules of procedure. (P4)

Some participants also shared the significance of finding the right timing to advance a country's position, especially during multilateral negotiation forums:

One tactic is to drag the negotiation until late at night, until people are tired, and they go back to their hotel or fall asleep. Then they push something in. In the big meetings, they are fond of doing that, they will discuss things and discuss things, people are so tired at the end of it, and then at four o'clock in the morning, they will push something. Nobody cares to resist it, or they have gone off, nobody is there. If you vacate your seat, you are at fault. Look for the right timing. So, different things have different strategies, so you employ such things as seem fit. (P4)

Never go into negotiation, or do not propose negotiation yet unless you are already prepared and ready to advance your position. (P7)

Participants also voiced the need to know the language of negotiation very well, especially English language, because people have different understandings on the functions of a comma and a full stop:

In international negotiations, sometimes you talk for hours and hours, you talk about commas and nuances, because they matter. We will debate and debate the whole night, just to put nuances on some sentence or debate where to put a comma, or where to put a full stop. It matters where the comma is, where the full stop is. (P4)

You see, when you negotiate things, you negotiate over words, that is very important, whether they understand these words or not. Sometimes they can interpret things differently, either this way or that way. The success of a negotiation is to be able to agree on some words that can be interpreted your own way. The opposite side can also interpret their own way. (P21)

Home support and backup is also another crucial element required during international negotiations in order to feed negotiators with new instructions and mandate:

When you are actually at a meeting, you have to remain in constant touch with people at home to get instructions. For instance, as the Ambassador, if I have to vote on an issue, or I want to take on certain positions, I have to make sure that the position I take reflects Malaysia's position. I cannot take the position on my own. So if I am not sure of our position, I have to consult with the ministry, sometimes on the spot, on the telephone, calling the headquarters. So, constant contact or good rapport between home and the delegation is very important. (P4)

Another participant disclosed that during his time, all domestic and sensitive matters were discussed openly and in depth such that all diplomats were well-versed with the issues. These issues could be a hindrance to negotiators if they were not addressed properly:

And in the foreign ministry's case in particular, the advantage we had during my time was that we were not inhibited by sensitive issues. There were no sensitive issues to us, whether they were Chinese interests, Malay interests, Indian interests, or whatever interests. Every morning, we open ourselves up to everybody, whether I am a Chinese, Indian or Malay - all the officers sat together and we called that the Morning Prayer; this was an open discussion. Because the moment you are restrained you cannot negotiate with outsiders. So, when talking about negotiations, the first thing when you want to do when you



send someone to negotiate outside your country is to make sure that all issues are given to him clearly. Sensitive or not, there is no question that they cannot be discussed. You cannot go half-way through a United Nations meeting then say, “I am sorry, the race issue is too sensitive for me to discuss”. But if I am given a free mandate, I must be allowed to talk freely, rationally, and that I cannot bluff. All of us, when we go out to negotiate, whether in United Nations forums, or other forums, particularly bilateral issues, these are things that always provoke you. It is to other countries’ advantage to provoke you, particularly when you are negotiating with neighbouring countries like [name]. (P12)

One participant has made an analysis and concluded that Malaysia needs to adopt a soft approach, polite, and humble in bilateral negotiations, which is natural to Malaysia. However, in multilateral negotiations, being assertive and forceful are more appropriate:

So in the case of negotiations, I have come to this conclusion: We need two types of characters, both are good characters. One is like the Malay culture, you deal with individuals bilaterally, these are things we need to develop, we do not go slap that fellow, that is our way. It is quite effective, that bilateral set-up in diplomacy - it can be very effective. But in the international set-up, we have to find a character, who is an extrovert, who has no hesitation about coming forward. We need an extrovert for the international environment, we need a Malay for the bilateral environment. So we need two kinds of characters (P21)

This was echoed by other participants:

Our negotiators have always been very assertive in putting our position across in most of international meetings, whether they are in Geneva, or Vienna, or the United Nations, or the World Trade Organizations, or all these other conferences. (P1)

I think with Asians, it is different, with the Westerners we have to be different because sometimes we can be shy with Asians, shy to the extent of not being aggressive, not being condescending. But when you negotiate with people from the West, I think sometimes if they are condescending, you have to give it back to them. You will have to be condescending too, we have to be tough. The Westerners, when they deal with us, they think they are still dealing with other Westerners. (P3)

### **6.3.3 Having clear principles**

My participants revealed that regardless of the positions and strategies undertaken by Malaysian negotiators in international negotiations, they are strongly guided and determined by the tenets of Malaysian foreign policy. In other words, these

principles become the cornerstone to Malaysian approach in international negotiations:

The Malaysian approach to negotiations is conditioned or guided by the tenets of our foreign policy. Those tenets are: an aversion to confrontation; the peaceful settlement of conflicts; the desire for bilateral, regional and international cooperation; the desire for friendly relations with all countries; a distrust of military alliances; a belief in non-alignment - in short, a foreign policy that is principled and pragmatic. So the tenets govern our approach to negotiations. In other words, it is an implicit recognition that we are a small developing country, and hence, we need to be both pragmatic and principled. (P9)

Basically, our entire negotiating style has been determined basically by our interests and secondly, our principle. Our principle is that we are in, if that is for the good of the region. (P1)

We always hold our principles, so much so that sometimes we can be a single vote against [name]. We do that, we are not afraid of anything. And people have come to me and said, "Ambassador, I admire the way Malaysia goes", because as a small country, they cannot afford to do what we do. (P4)

Principles are important. Let me give you an example of a case where we stood on principle. On the first invasion of Iraq, after Iraq had invaded Kuwait, we supported the resolution. That was based on the principle that no country can invade another country. We also opposed the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. We had opposed America going into Panama to pick up Noriega. But on the second invasion of Iraq by America, we had opposed it because there was no invasion by Iraq of anyone else anymore. So those are the guidelines that we used in facing each negotiation, whatever challenges that I had have. (P16)

Besides the tenets of Malaysian foreign policy, some participants disclosed their personal principles in carrying out their duties as negotiators for Malaysia:

When you talk about the art of negotiation, there is what I fundamentally consider a guiding principle for me...If diplomats fail to take this into consideration, they can hardly sustain what is the so called "wall". The guiding principle is "a strong man does not fight, mentally or physically". Or in other words, you do not act like a bully. Do not bully your opponent. Bring about confidence in your opponent. This is what makes a strong man. (P12)

There is God, King and Country. In the first place, what we did is for good deeds; at least what we are doing is not only for this life, but also for the hereafter, for our country, God, King, and Country. To me, that covers everything. (P15)

I do not detect nor listen that we have a special art or special way or special approach. Whatever approach or whatever way we have adopted is to ensure that at the end of it is a successful negotiation. I doubt that in any negotiation we can achieve 100% results. So if you cannot achieve 100 % results in your favour, than you must strive to achieve as maximum a result as you can. (P7)\*

One of the cardinal rules in any bilateral or multilateral negotiation is that negotiators should avoid bluff and bluster, being loud, or being boastful. Because if you resort to this, you will lose credibility, and a sustained use of bluff and bluster will make it difficult to prepare for your next negotiation. (P9)

#### **6.3.4 Acknowledging the strong points**

My participants felt that although Malaysia is just a small country, it has its own strengths in advancing its position in international negotiations. For example, one participant reiterated that Malaysia has been negotiating from the position of strength and was able to resist bullying from “big” countries because this country has managed to stay strong even during the recent financial crisis:

Some countries enter negotiations from a point of weakness. For example, you really need that aid from [name], or from an international body, then you have to give concessions, such as allowing them use of the port of your country free of charge, or allowing their companies to operate without paying tax. You have to open up your country. But Malaysia has not faced this position because in many instances, we actually negotiate from a point of strength. Because our country is quite well-developed, financially we are quite strong, even during the financial crisis. (P1)

One participant argued that Malaysia is a practical and pragmatic country in its approach to international negotiations and relations to the extent that it compensates for whatever weaknesses the country might be facing:

We are quite practical and pragmatic in terms of style, so that has helped us very much to compensate for our lack of size. We are very practical, pragmatic, and professional in the sense of having experience or very quickly learning the day to day applied approach in training and acquiring experience and so on and so forth. So we are quite good at that, quite adept in that sense. (P5)

Some participants divulged that Malaysia is blessed with past and present leaders and diplomats who are able to develop and position Malaysia into its current state:

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\* This participant perceived that Malaysia did not have a special approach in international negotiation. He was alone in this view. He had spent a lot of his diplomatic role engaged in international arenas, and I consider his response to be an outlier in the group.

Because we have had good leaders as well, we are very lucky to have had good leaders; with very clear ideas what they want to do, where they want to go, quite rational most of the time, about issues regionally, or internationally. (P5)

Of course, there have been successes in Malaysian bilateral and multilateral negotiations, and they were due more to individuals, individual diplomats, who had been groomed over many years as diplomats, who had integrity and a sense of professionalism nurtured in them by the founding fathers of our country. (P9)

We have good negotiators who can bridge the gap between different positions. Through our cooperative and persuasive approach, we have succeeded in bringing people to see our point of view. (P13)

I think we have got good core personnel, who have gone through the training, and over the years, have been exposed to various experiences to where they have been able to gain the necessary confidence. (P21)

#### **6.3.5 Realizing a generalist approach**

My participants did not deny that Malaysia has its weaknesses. One weakness they described was the failure of Malaysia to create a core group of Malaysian negotiators who are expert in different areas. One participant recalled the directive by the then Prime Minister in 1980s to create a core group of Malaysian negotiators, but according to him, the objective was not achieved:

I remember in one of his speeches, when he was the Prime Minister, there was a directive. The message was that we needed to create a core group of Malaysian negotiators who could go to international negotiations as prepared, professional, experts, and could negotiate on a par with their counterparts, and not always be taken for a ride. That was his directive...but what has happened to that agenda to train the core negotiators? Nothing!...I think there are very few cases where a Malaysian government official in whatever ministry can go to a negotiation and discuss an issue which he/she has been living or breathing it for fifteen or twenty years, and he/she can enter the negotiating room, and can say to himself or herself, "I'm speaking on this issue like I know the back of my hand". There are very few. I am more inclined to think there are none at all, but I do not think so. (P5)

His perception was echoed by other participants:

I think in our civil service, we do not have specialist per say, but more generalists. (P4)

I tend to agree that we do not really have a large number of experts in negotiations. Wisma Putra did make an effort to create a pool of expertise in various areas. However, this did not materialize for some reasons or another. (P10)

I agree we do not really have core negotiators...In Wisma Putra, sometimes young officers go for six-month training, or one year, studying language skills in Japan, then after finishing the course, they were posted to Africa. (P11)

I think it is a very valid observation that we have not built our kind of core negotiators. (P18)

They are right to say that we do not have core negotiators. (P20)

You mean core negotiators as professional negotiators? There is no such thing. Everybody is supposed to be a good diplomat and must be able to negotiate in any given circumstance; we do not have anybody especially appointed to talk for us. (P21)

Even in cases where Malaysia was involved in territorial disputes and had to bring the cases to International Court of Justice, Malaysia depended on international lawyers, as revealed by my participants:

In the case of [name], yes we have won, but we did not win of our own accord. We won with the help of international lawyers. So, who are the experts here? You, or the international lawyers? Why do you think we engaged international lawyers? Because we do not have Malaysian lawyers, or legal experts who could speak with authority and professionalism on the subject of territorial issue. None, period! (P5)

And you must understand, on the [name] case, the actual negotiators were not Malaysians. They were international experts; they were paid, they were so-called constitutional experts. (P20)

However, some participants argued that there are various people who may be considered as specialized negotiators, and they are scattered throughout various sectors of the public service. Nevertheless, these individuals may not be fully utilized:

From time to time, we have personalities but otherwise expertise is dispersed according to the sector. (P1)

I tend to agree that we do not really have a large number of experts in negotiations. (P10)

In the home sector, there are a few agencies that I have experience with. In trade, they have a few experts. In the legal area, I think we have core negotiators now. But if you come to other subjects, I do not think we have any. Even crisis management, for when there is hostage taking, we do not have people to utilize. But in multilateral affairs, we have a few core specialists now, like [names]. While we have a few in multilateral, we have a few, we do not have any specialists in bilateral affairs. We do not have regional specialists. (P14)

I think we have, but we do not make use of them, I think we do not make use of the negotiators. (P15)

I have the feeling that the institution of public sector does not recognize the continuing value of experts and expertise...Some people who had done well; there must be a way of making them relevant. (P20)

The main reason contributed for the lack of specialization was that the Malaysian system designs its diplomats to be generalists and not specialists, as expressed by some of my participants:

We are more generalists; probably it is better because we will get a better perspective of everything. But in terms of developing skills, we may lose out in terms of that, we may not have anybody specializing on [names] all the time. (P4)

So when you adopt a generalist approach, what you get are generalists. You do not get expert negotiators. (P5)

We are not specialists in Wisma Putra. When I joined the service, we were supposed to be generalists. (P14)

I think long term career development and specialization has not been given sufficient attention. (P18)

However, Malaysian diplomats might develop their skills in negotiation and become specialists in certain areas based on their working experience and exposure:

In fact negotiators were also trained as generalists, never trained as negotiators, so how good can you be? If you look at the training programs at Wisma Putra, it was a generalist approach. (P5)

I took it upon myself to develop my skills. So when I was a negotiator of multilateral affairs, I tried to develop my skills. When I went to [name], I developed the skill to be a bilateral Ambassador. (P4)

First and foremost, in order to negotiate you have to have substance, you have to have expertise. How you subsequently end up exposed to international negotiations would be by the nature of your work. If you are, say, in the Ministry of Transport, and you have to negotiate an air solutions agreement, you would develop that expertise from being in the Ministry of Transport. (P8)

Our diplomats learn to negotiate while performing their duties, and basically there are no guidelines prepared. We only get briefs on the subject matter that is going to be negotiated. It is entirely up to us to manoeuvre our way through the negotiation meeting. (P10)

My comment on our diplomats is that they are meant to be generalists, but they acquire specialization in various fields through international exposure and experience in negotiations. (P13)

Some participants also perceived that not many diplomats would want to be specialists in certain areas because there are ample opportunities for them to gain experience and exposure in different countries throughout their service:

Generally officers who join Wisma Putra are not inclined to be specialists, but rather be generalists. The idea is to be flexible and gain experience working in several countries. Nobody wants to be a specialist because there is a desire for change in the working environment and there is the chance to serve in different countries, which is interesting from the viewpoints of politics, and cultural experience. (P13)

Let us say you are a specialist on South East Asia. All your life will spent dealing with a general issue, or even a bilateral issue. They think they will lose out, because they cannot go anywhere else. (P14)

#### **6.3.6 Realizing other weaknesses**

My participants also revealed their dissatisfaction over some other weaknesses they found among Malaysian negotiators. One of the issues highlighted was that some negotiators did not prepare enough by failing to know the substance of their case and consequently, they did not participate in discussions and forums:

I find that many people going to negotiations, they do not know the issue; they think they can just go and participate. Sometimes even our own delegation, they do not know their stuff. (P4)

If we are not careful, we will lose, because now we are slowly beginning to see more weaknesses when we have, for example, delegates from Malaysia not participating in discussions. Why? Because number one, they do not know the

subject. Number two, they are not prepared, they do not understand the issues. The worst and utmost importantly, is that they do not know what Malaysia's interest is. (P17)

I do not know whether we do enough homework, to understand not only the issue, but also the background, the system, the curriculum vitae of the guy opposite us. (P18)

Today, at regional or international conferences, other Asians, including ASEAN diplomats or negotiators are always in top form while ours keep quiet, as they do not participate in discussions. This is because they are unable to speak or articulate views and positions, and on their return home they do not properly brief their superiors. (P9)

Another weakness put forward was that Malaysia lacked strategic thinking in the sense that it did not implement a coordinated and well-approached human resource program in creating specialized negotiators. The reason might be due to Malaysia being a "blessed" country:

We are not very deep in strategic thinking. We do not consider even ten to fifteen years from now. Our strategy is that once something happens, then we realize. We do not do that because we are not under pressure - I got that feeling. The country is so good, we are so blessed. This affects some of our behaviour. (P1)

In the first place we have no idea who are supposed to be negotiators fifteen years down the line. So when I joined the service back in [year], there was no such thing as a program that could earmark a person fifteen years down the line... We probably do not have that survival mind set. Underlying and beneath all this, I think the feeling was that as Malaysians, we are blessed. Do you not think we are blessed? Our survival, I would say has never been at stake: geographically, climate-wise, and resource-wise. We do not have famines, we do not have poverty, we are quite comfortable, we are kind of confident, we have a rich land, with rich resources, relative peace and harmony. That has probably fostered a mindset that says, "Hey cool it, take it easy". Never at any time do I feel that our survival is at stake. (P5)

Then there is also this kind of 'mafia' or circle of contacts. Through time, once they have negotiated with you, they have recognized you; they will bring you into their circle. Important issues, important decisions they want to make - you are inside there, because you are their friends. That is where we are weak. We need to have a certain blueprint on how we can position our officials in a career path that would make them authoritative on certain issues, as well as have adequate experience in negotiations. I am talking about multilateral affairs. Once you have done that, these skills can be applied anywhere. (P18)



My participants also reflected that some diplomats became complacent and not many read books or materials about the country where they were posted, the surrounding countries, or the countries they were responsible for:

I can see some of our diplomats are complacent. So when they are complacent, it means they do not bother anymore. I would not say they do not read at all, but they do not intellectual materials. Some people just read the minimum amount necessary and say "It's enough". So then, we do not really have top notch diplomats. (P1)

And the other thing I felt sad about is that not many of us read. And I keep telling them, "You have to read". Read novels, read some books about your country where you are posted and so on, and take an interest. Although you are posted to one country, you must take an interest of all surrounding countries. For example, if you are posted to Spain, you must take an interest in Portugal, because Portugal is a neighbour of Spain. So these are things that all diplomats sometimes fail to understand. (P16)

In addition, my participants expressed their dissatisfaction over some leaders of the delegation who like to inform the media on what happened with the negotiation, because the participants were scared that the media might publish a wrong message:

You will sometimes find some of these fellows, after every negotiation, briefing the press. There are times you can brief the press, but there are times you should not. You should brief the press after everything has been sorted out. I think there were occasions where [names] give statements. I think it is basic thing in negotiation that you should not, whatever the subject is. (P3)

Our newspapers are splashing all our weaknesses all over the front pages for others to see. Our newspapers, our media are not working in tandem. Some of them will get sensational news, so they will put forward negative picture. Such publications create a lot of reverberating around. The other world can read, they just read the headlines, and then they will know that the Malaysian people are not happy. We are not working together; we are not helping ourselves. (P4)

#### **6.4 Theme three – Mind over cultural influence in the Malaysian approach to international negotiations**

My participants believed that culture plays its important role in influencing the approach of Malaysian negotiators in international negotiations.

#### **6.4.1 Multi-aspects of Malaysian culture**

Indeed, the multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of Malaysia was perceived as a significant factor in influencing the behaviour of Malaysian negotiators:

Our culture too plays a part...Philosophically, we are very practical people. We have our own experience in handling a multi-racial population. So to me, this experience will also affect our style of negotiation. (P1)

I think a lot of our approaches to day-to-day problems with society and organizational issues are heavily influenced by our culture. (P5)

I think culture plays quite an important role in moulding our behaviour. (P11)

In Malaysia's case, we have already learned the technique of negotiation through our multi-racial parties, our multi-racial population and everything else subconsciously. We are equipped for such things. (P12)

I think to some extent, culture influences things, I will not say to a great extent, but it has a significant influence. (P16)

In Malaysia, one has to give due recognition to the fact that the cultural circumstances of the negotiator has a bearing on its style. Indeed we are multi-ethnic, and multi-religious. A combination of these has a role, or an influence, in the way the negotiator executes his responsibilities. (P18)

The culture part is something quite difficult to depart from. (P19)

#### **6.4.2 Description of Malaysian culture**

My participants also described the Malaysian culture that could have influenced the way Malaysian negotiators behave in international negotiations. Some participants described Malays as kind-hearted, friendly, that they place the emphasis on the aspect of friendship, like to please others, and prefer to adopt a more conciliatory approach:

As I said, the Malay mentality, such as feeling pity, and being very generous, is sometimes reflected in some of our negotiations. We are also too kind-hearted,

with no unkind intention, we are friendly, and may be we put more on the value of friendship. (P1)

Of course, in the way we do things, we try to have a more conciliatory approach. At the United Nations, there is certain behaviour, when we want to intervene or protest and so on, we do not do it in an unpleasant way. There is a certain way of doing things at the United Nations, which I think you as a diplomat, should know. If I want to oppose something, there is a certain way of putting that across. People would know that you are not supporting it, without making it sound so hard. A good diplomat is a diplomat, who says no, without saying no. (P4)

I think culture is very important in diplomacy. So I suppose, for us, our culture wants us to be too nice to people, and that could be our weakness. We are too compromising. It is not a good practice. I think naturally, Malays like to please everybody, but on the other hand, many people do not understand us. If they keep on annoying us, one day if we run amok, we will go berserk - that is one thing that not many know about our culture. To that extension, we are not serious, that is our problem. (P11)

In my own experience with Brunei, they are very soft-spoken, there is no such thing as banging the table, demanding this and that. If they do not agree, they will say they will have to study it, but indirectly they do not agree. So we went the same way as them. That is Brunei culture, Malay culture. But the process could be very slow; you discuss one particular issue before you go to the next issue. If there is a disagreement, you go back. So you allow more time to pass in order to reach a solution. (P17)

Some participants reflected that Malaysians, especially the Malays, are more complacent in life, prefer a more “relaxed” approach, would not desire drastic change, and generally are average:

“It is not that important, it is okay, why bother, why work so hard, why dedicate your entire life to one stupid issue, why exert yourself so much on something you do not see, dedicate your entire life to particulars, small, micro-aspect of things”, may be “relaxed” approach to doing things. I think may be this is an oversimplification of description of the Malaysian style. Probably it is the “relaxed” style, for we are “relaxed” in our style...And we are doing things based on precedence. “We have been doing this in the past, why deviate then? Why change?” Then, on issues like international territory, where things are far away, with nothing to do, we do not see any reality. But issues that are nearer to us, like bread and butter, rice, petrol, jobs, may be race relations, the issue of religion, drugs, education, may be we feel strongly about these and want to do something about them. But, in international negotiations, I do not think people talk at the shop about the negotiations, they talk about day-to-day issues, for example political elections, corruption or political influence. (P5)

The Malay culture, the way I see it, is the Malay mentality. The Malays mindset is that we are just normally average, we take the middle way. Taking the middle way is perhaps a way of life. Worst still, we do not ever realize this. I want to think that I am wrong, because of that contextual nature of our behaviour, our upbringing in our way of life, but in the context of negotiation, it does. We are talking about the average way. The general rule about the Malays is taking things easy, the middle way. (P6)

Other participants perceived Malaysians as ready to compromise, as long as harmony is preserved. They also observed that the win-win attitude is already incorporated in the Malaysian way of life:

I have a feeling that we compromise more than anything to maintain harmony. I think it is the Malay culture. If siblings fight with one another, if you look at family disputes, if you watch television, it is always like that, our ultimate aim is we do not mind giving in. (P14)

I realized that through our own experience, we have developed this extra skill of intercultural challenge. We do not realize it, but through time, we have developed a certain mode of behaviour that has in it respect for diversity, respect for differences, or sensitivity to different cultures, without realizing it. I suppose we do not make racist jokes here, we do not use racial slurs. I think because of that, we have developed that kind of sensitivity, that kind of reflex action. May be in terms of our negotiators, perhaps that has been a feature, or character, that we do not realize ourselves, that capacity, that ingrain, innate, reflex towards a consensual, more amenable kind of engagement. (P18)

We always make sure that our colleagues, our neighbours, our interlocutors do not feel badly about it. I really think that win-win is natural to us, some kind of built-in element of our culture. (P19)

There was a directive by the then Prime Minister for Malaysian diplomats to open up and be brave in facing diplomats from other countries, as revealed by one participant:

There was an instance where our former Prime Minister was addressing us. He told the Ambassadors to argue with foreigners and outsiders. This was shocking, coming from the Chief of Diplomat. One Ambassador raised his hand and asked, "Do not you think it is contradicting in terms, because as diplomats, we have to make friends?" That former Prime Minister said what he meant was that, "You must speak up and speak out, because you people have not spoken up and spoken out, you people are cowed by the foreigners, and as a leader of this country, I want you to speak up and speak out, and sometimes you have to argue to open up fronts". The former Prime Minister also brought this matter up in the

Cabinet, that he noticed our diplomats stand in one corner in cocktail parties, talking to just one or two people and not mixing with others. The more people you know, the better it is. (P19)

However, participants still noticed that Malaysians are not aggressive, withdrawal, humble, do not show-off, introverted, shy of others, and self-contained:

I find a lot of our officers do not speak up. I think it is our culture. In the civil service, you are not supposed to question your superiors, we have a hierarchy, and superiors do not encourage open discussion. (P14)

We are not confrontational, we are not combative, we are very sedate, we have good decorum, we are very polite, and we do not have a short fuse. That comes back to the basic Malay cultural value, which is to understate and undersell yourself, to have humility, modesty, and to not engage in extreme behaviour, to be respectful of the other side, to react to the negative language of the other side in a manner that would not reciprocate that hostility through the use of refined language. (P18)

The Malay culture is you are supposed to be seen, but not heard, especially in the rural areas...In general, Malays are quiet, and this is bad for diplomacy and negotiation. We are too modest, humble; we do not want to be seen as arrogant. (P19)

Part of the problem with Malaysian scene is, particularly the Malays, they are very withdrawn. It is the culture, not to show off too much, shy of others. We are always patient, self-contained, and reticent. It is fine, I have seen people who are self-contained and patient, but are brilliant when they negotiate, because they know the work. But if the style of this self-contained and reticent behaviour, it leads you to not having an edge or sharpness, because you think there is no need to read enough, or to know more of the subject, and there are lots of people like that, then those people would not be helpful. Yes, our culture tends to withdraw too easily, so that is why our former Prime Minister said that you have to be more assertive a bit, that would be better. (P20)

Well this is where the problem occurs, our culture, by nature, we are not assertive, we are self-effacing, and we are humble, we do not like to show-off, that is the Malay culture. This is the problem that we are facing now, we tend to be submissive, we are not assertive enough, and we are more introverted, not extroverted. (P21)

### **6.4.3 Interracial differences**

One participant described that there may be some temperamental differences between the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians:

I cannot make it into a distinct, Chinese, Malay, Indian thing, but there are temperamental differences. For example, the Malay is one in which his social norm, his societal more, is one of consensus, being minimizing of conflicts, of blunting sharpness in personal relations. To take it to the extreme, the Javanese - take the Thais - they are very reluctant to be disagreeable. Malays in that spectrum is somewhere there. The Malays would be gentle, disinclined to be aggressive. They would also be engaged in very carefully constructing language in what they say, they are very diplomatic in that sense. The other is the instinct to come to an outcome that will enable both sides to feel that they have come away with something of benefit to them. It's something like saving face; you do not go and whack the guy and so forth. I think the Chinese are more pragmatic, they see the need for calculation and if they see it is alright, then fine, if not, then it cannot be done. Whereas the Indians, I suppose they are more articulate; the decibel level is higher, louder. But they have also an advantage in that they are good at social interactions, they can go out and have a drink, go to the hotel, and have a drink. Whereas the Malays, we do not socialize with drinks, because of religious factors. Each has its own strength. (P18)

Another participant spoke about the Malaysian Chinese diplomats:

Malaysian Chinese diplomats speak their minds better. I know quite a number of Singaporean diplomats too. Singaporean diplomats do not like our Malaysian Chinese diplomats, because our Malaysian Chinese diplomats will nail them down. (P3)

### **6.4.4 A blend of Malaysian culture**

However, since the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians have been living and mixing together for more than a century, there exists some kind of a blend of Malaysian culture:

I spoke with one lady Indian colleague who has retired, she said, "No, not just among Malays, we Indians also do not speak up. When I joined Wisma Putra, I was also having cold feet". She said it was not just Malay culture, it is now Malaysian culture...the Indians in school also do not speak up that much, because you are not that popular if you speak up that much...so, it is part of Malaysian culture now...the Indians now have toned down, they are like

Malays, but when the profession requires them to speak up, they go back to their natural self. (P19)

May be in a sense, the Malaysian negotiator is in-built with the entire Malaysian behavioural pattern, whether you are Indian, Malay or Chinese. May be because of our cultural intermixing, we all have the same, more or less. But when push comes to shove, may be the Chinese would say 'sorry, I cannot do this', Indian will say 'damn it' while Malays would say 'no, I cannot do this', depends on the length of the fuse. But when it comes to work, they are serious and read their brief thoroughly. (P18)

## **6.5 Theme four – Comparing with, and learning from, other countries**

My participants could not avoid comparing Malaysian practice with other countries during international negotiations, and thus learned from them. Although most of the countries under comparison were neighbouring countries, other relevant countries were also included in this comparison.

### **6.5.1 Singapore**

In terms of Singaporean practice in international negotiations, my participants agreed that Singapore adopted a business-like approach, which was different from the Malaysian way of practice in negotiations:

Singaporeans seem to be much better because they used a business model, they had a business model way of looking at things; it is only cost-benefit, a matter of "How I do gain on this? How does the other party gain on this? How much do I gain compared to the other party? If I gain less, then no way. If I can gain more, then yes!" (P5)

In terms of negotiating skills, you would tend to see that Singapore models their skills based on certain concepts that they have applied in the business world, where it is personality-driven. Their styles and the attributes are such that they could make the negotiating partner at ease and weave around their interest and persuasively get him to buy their ideas. (P8)

We expect Singapore to be a friendly neighbouring country and they should understand Malay culture. We are prepared to compromise, but sometimes you find the other party takes a very business-like approach. (P17)

Singapore knows how to act. This is one thing, when you are negotiating; you have to act differently, you cannot show them what you really are when you are negotiating. Those who have very expressive faces should be the last people you should send, because then the other side will know what is coming. Get a poker face. Singapore is very good at doing that, they act, and they do not splash out what their intentions are. (P15)

One strategy mentioned by my participants was that Singapore liked to package its negotiation deals, and as a result, Malaysia has learned this approach from Singapore. In addition, Malaysia has also learned to stress the financial aspect in its process of deal-making:

Singapore linked all the issues in a package, but, like other countries, we go issue by issue. (P14)

We already started to learn to package. I think our negotiators become cleverer, mainly regarding big purchases. When we negotiate, we start packaging things. (P1)

The lesson to be learnt is when you approach Singapore, either you can negotiate a particular issue in a solution of the other issues, or sometimes you can link up, or you introduce the element of linkage, which would make things more difficult, it all depends on what you want in the end. (P6)

The bottom line is that Singapore is looking at dollars and cents, so we have decided that our approach should also be in that manner, to look at the bottom line of dollars and cents. This is the approach that we are now taking; we are doing the accounting, the number-crunching required. (P8)

In dealing with Singapore, we had learned this: In order to survive, you must stick to the rules. If you promise them something, they'll tie you up. They will hold you to it, because it is what has been written. This is the only way they can survive, otherwise people keep changing. So, their negotiating method is very good, almost very clinical. It depends a lot on principles, rules and regulations. They do not shift that easily. But our people may come up with all kinds of views and variations, but they cannot afford to do that. Because they need to be on top right from the early stages, they stick to principles and rules. Secondly, they must be one step ahead all the time. If they are on par, or they are one step behind, they will be finished. (P21)



Regarding the way Singapore carried out its process of international negotiations, most of my participants gave approval, saying that Singapore was professional in its preparation, during and after the negotiations:

Singapore is very focused, very disciplined, and the integrity of their officers and politicians is beyond question...Let me tell you how the Singaporeans work: They come to meetings. The Secretary-General himself attends all meetings. The Secretary General of Singapore attends all these meetings, and at the end of each day's meeting, the leader of the Singapore delegation and his team will go into a separate room, and they will prepare their report and send it off to their headquarters. (P9)

I observe that for Singapore, every meeting they attended, either bilateral or multilateral, nobody goes back to Singapore directly once the meeting ends. After the meeting, all the team members go into a room to finalize their report, and the report must be finalized then and there. There will be no golf game and no entertainment. They will put in the register, put in the number, say ASEAN meeting number four, and they keep all the decisions recorded. They can retrieve all the decisions in ten years, so you cannot kid them. They can quote the document. So, you cannot change their position. They are very thorough, and that is part of their governmental training in terms of documentation. (P1)

The Malays are sometimes too much obsessed with Malayness, and I think Singaporeans know about that because they are very professional. If we look, whenever we have problems with Singapore, only certain individuals will give comments. The rest were asked to keep quiet; they only send one signal tone. (P3)

It used to be that the Malays are always having some sort of emotive response to rational solutions. Singaporeans would have the rational response of binding you legally, and you feel trapped into it and you come out with an emotive response, saying "Out of goodwill, surely you can consider giving us days or perhaps bla bla bla?". That is an emotive response to something that is already rationally concluded through a legally binding document. (P8)

Singapore also has devised an efficient remuneration system for its public service officers but their officers are also subject to strict performance appraisal:

Singapore's system allows no room for failure. If you fail, you have not performed, so out you go. They are strict; everybody is on his or her toes. (P1)

Singapore is homogenous, almost homogenous. We are heterogeneous. With a homogenous system, the merit system is easier. With the merit system, in the context of Singapore, they can go to the best institutes, even to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). They have a separate arrangement to send their students there. (P6)

Singapore pays well for its public service officers. I know the Prime Minister is the highest paid in the world. That is the indication of how dedicated they are. (P14)

I was informed that in the case of Singaporean diplomats, they will be penalized if they do not perform. For example, they might not be considered for promotion. (P10)

Singapore has the advantage of clearly working out the limits of what would constitute their national interest, and in the areas they have worked out, they are very skilful in defending these and negotiating for them. The relationship between the officer and what is asked of him by the government is very clear. There is no place for dilly-dally: if you are not good, then they will pull you out. It is a small outfit, so it has to be a tough and skilful outfit. (P20)

They also have developed experts to monitor the surrounding region:

Singapore is different, now they have experts. What I know, in Singapore, if you are in the Foreign Service, the Public Service Department will look at you and say, "Oh, this guy has a first degree in history, so we will send him to the London School of Oriental Studies. We want him to be a specialist on South Asia, so we will train him. His PhD is on South Asia, the languages of South Asia etc., so his posting would only be in that region,"...Singapore has a centre for South Asian Studies. They pick the best people in the world regardless, of their race, to come and work in their place, and they develop expertise. That is why the presence of Singapore in India now is way ahead, compared to ours. (P11)

Singapore has specialists on Malaysia. They have specialists on Thailand, they have specialists on Indonesia. (P18)

However, some participants perceived that there was not much difference between Singapore and Malaysia. Malaysia is catching up with Singapore:

Singaporean diplomats are good simply because they are well-trained. It is just a small country, easy to train those guys, but we are not behind now in all the training that these young people have, which I am very happy about. (P16)

Singapore also has its own weaknesses, as one participant revealed:

It is a fault of Malaysia to look at Singapore in rosy terms. We like to think of them as the best of the best, we like to think of them as really brilliant and very efficient. They are not so efficient, I have been there, and it is not the case. They are good when there is good Modus Operandi, if everything they need is there. But the moment you pull out a rug from under them, they do not know how to act, because they cannot adjust. They are not being trained to adjust, and you can counter them with cleverness and experience. Singaporeans are good with plain things, when things are clear-cut. Their system is also very much into an academic-type system, with 10As, 14As, but they cannot even communicate. In terms of interpersonal skills, they cannot mingle with people. I am not saying that they are not good. They are good, but again, we have seen that even in ASEAN, they are very intelligent, in terms of strategic thinking. But to chair meetings, they are not as good as our own leaders, because their inter-personal skills are not enough. They are unable to get people's confidence, they just cannot do this. So this part of looking at Singapore as the standard, the benchmark, is good in certain cases, but not all. (P15)

The underlying reasons given by my participants about the way Singapore approached international negotiations was the survival mindset and the kiasu mentality:

I think Singapore in many ways has a better set of negotiators. Because they always reflect on their own country's survival, "We are small; we cannot afford to lose even one basket of eggs". But for Malaysians, it is as if people steal three or four durians, we say "It is still okay". I think that does influence us. (P1)

The underlying factor for Singapore is the survival mindset. Now that's something we probably do not have, the survival mindset. Underlying and beneath all this, I think the feeling is that Malaysians are blessed. But for Singapore, the siege mentality is reflected in their national policy, from politics to economics to military. This siege mentality means that their survival is a make of every 24 hours, 365 days they are under threat, so that affects their thinking in all dimensions. It is reflected and manifested in their policies too. It is a business approach. Without business, Singapore will die. They are not blessed with resources like we are. They have no land. Even for water, they depend on us. (P5)

Singapore is serious; I suppose they are serious to a certain extent, because what they call as kiasu mentality, surrounded by a Malay world, they have got to be one step ahead. (P11)

Singapore used to come up with slogans suggesting they are becoming very small fry, small shrimp, small fish, but it is a case of “Watch out, I am a poisonous fish. If you swallow me, you will die”. In order to survive, they gave this image to us, that they are very poisonous and dangerous. So Singapore needs that kind of psychology - they must be better than anybody else. Otherwise they will die a natural death, which is quite true. (P21)

### **6.5.2 Other Asian countries**

Besides Singapore, my participants did not dismiss the good practices of other Asian countries, such as Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, Brunei, India and the Philippine. They observed that these countries are more advanced, in terms of specialization, language, hospitality, education, and preparation of future diplomats.

#### **Specialization**

I think specialization is more important, because you will find that our neighbours are getting more and more professional. I am sure that you have met Indonesian and Thai diplomats; you will find that they are better than us. To me, they are better than us. Because you see, their foreign service is very elitist in nature; they are an echelon of the middle class. I think in Indonesia; they are related to some big shots. If you look at the Filipino and Thai diplomats, they are elitists; they belong to the diplomatic family. (P3)

There is no specialization in Wisma Putra. But in Indonesia, yes, when an officer was sent to a multilateral post, he or she ended up serving only in multilaterals post for the whole of their career. (P4)

We find that sometimes a country like India will have a guy who has been negotiating for the last 30 years in G77 or in environment, and with authority. The same goes in Japan. (P18)

#### **Hospitality**

We cannot match three countries in South East Asia; we always feel we are left behind in terms of being complimentary. These are the Indonesians, the Philippines, and Thais. The way they please people is outstanding. This is from my point of view, you may think that it is not important, but to me it is very important culturally. We cannot give such things in return. (P11)

## **Language**

Today, if you ask me, I'll place the Malaysian Foreign Ministry at the same level or lower than that of Laos. There are Laotian diplomats who can, besides their native tongue, also speak English and French fluently. Some of them can even speak Russian and German as well. The same applies to Vietnamese diplomats, they are very good. (P9)

The Thais, they speak very good English, and that is because the Thai Foreign Service is one of the oldest services in Thailand. In the old days, when the King was absolute, there were only two important agencies in Thailand, the Military and the Foreign Service. So the cream of society joining the government went into the Foreign Service. We started very late, so we were looking for people to join the Foreign Ministry. So that is how we are. (P16)

In Malaysia, I think people have been talking about this. Back then, Brunei learnt from us. They joined the Malaysian delegation to Commonwealth and OIC meetings before they became a member themselves. But now, you look at Brunei, they are very competent, their diplomats are well-trained, they are trained overseas, so on and so forth. It is the same for the Thais. They are more proficient in English. Before this, they were struggling with English, the same as Indonesia did. (P17)

## **Education**

Now, the Indonesians and the Philippines, their language is so good, even the Thais. Now they have PhDs from Cambridge and Oxford. The new crowd of diplomats, they are very good, highly trained, with PhDs and all - probably better than us. In Thailand they have a special program to send their people to centres of excellence all over the world, like Cambridge, Oxford, and Harvard. These people are back already, running the show, so now they are fantastic, highly qualified. I am afraid that some of us, compared to our neighbours, are not so good anymore. Talking about communicating language, we lose out in that already, they are way better than us. (P21)

Two participants specifically mentioned the tactics and strategy of the Japanese in handling negotiations, such as sending many teams to represent the Country, the role of taking notes, and their pretence not to understand English:

Another cultural thing, when you negotiate in Japan, they are very brave; in the sense that when they come for a negotiation, they not only have one team, but

they have four or five teams, so they take turns. But as for us, we only have one team, negotiating for four to five hours, so we will be tired. That is what they do, they tire you out in Tokyo because you do not have a replacement group, but they have a replacement team, that is cultural. When you negotiate with the Japanese, from my experience, all of them only take notes, they will not agree yet. That is the Japanese style, to only take notes. Then they pretend that they do not understand English. These are all tactical moves: they know English better than us sometimes. Yes, those are tactical moves, and again it is cultural. (P11)

When we negotiated with the Japanese, there were always one or two people who would jot down everything that was said in the negotiation. (P22)

### **6.5.3 Western countries**

My participants also talked about the Western countries, especially the United States; their attitude, and how they approach negotiations by exercising their supremacy and authority:

Then some countries or some parties come to the negotiation table from a position of strength, for example, America. They will say, “We have other things we are co-operating with you about, so when we expect this, you should give way. Do not ask too much questions, you should be agreeable”. (P1)

Well, the United States will always be prepared. Of course they have many agencies that form members of delegation, because they are a very big country, with a very large delegation. As a superpower, they always try to push their weight, they dominate small countries. Then the other thing is they use tactics like, “Ok, if you do not agree, something might happen, I might take away this incentive from your country”. A lot of threats are being used on the floor. But Malaysia is not like that, we always hold to our principles, so much so that sometimes we can be a single vote against the United States. We do that, we are not afraid of anything. (P4)

For a long time there has only been one global power and that is America. When I say global power, I mean a power that can reach any part, any corner of the world. When we negotiate with the global power, you know the fact that its position in the world, the strength they have, that element cannot escape your thinking. But then we are supposed to negotiate as equals. And they also may be try to be a little humble, to treat negotiations as if they are equal but when it comes to the crunch, they can put their foot down. They give me the impression that “Yes, we are equal, but then again, we are not that equal. And you better know who we are”. So I suppose with America, it will be like that. It can negotiate with many countries in this world as an equal, but when it does not

suit their interest, or when it does not conform to what they want or meet with their objective and so on, then they will say “I think that we are not equal.” (P7)

It was not denied that they have specialists on other countries:

I know for sure in some countries, there are specialists, like in the bigger countries. America, Russia, have specialists, and so when there are issues, these people can be brought in. I know the Americans, they have officers posted to Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Vietnam, and they become experts on local issues, and to negotiate on a regional basis, they know the background. They have all the institutional memory. But we can only look into a file, that is it. (P14)

The Americans are very thorough. I am sure the British are very thorough, to the extent where I think when the Americans negotiate with us, they probably see, “This is a Malay, I know what the characteristics are, the obvious reflex of a Malay. This is a Chinese, this is an Indian and this guy’s position, does he have any authority? Is he coming just to present this case? Has he got any connection line straight to the home office? Who is the guy above him?” They go to that extent, and then they know how far they can go, how much leeway this guy has. “Is he willing to go beyond, or stretch this negotiating to the limit, and he will come back and convince his bosses, or this guy is just mechanical, he will just come and do it”. They go into that extent, but of course they also make mistakes. I can get you a team of foreign specialists on China, they are Americans, they are Russians, they are Germans, who can talk Chinese, and they can tell you about these documents and stuff. The best analysts on Indonesia were Australians. (P18)

Americans were perceived to know how and when to use humor:

But somehow, the Americans have a way around this, interjecting, or using some incidents that happened, just to diffuse tensions. Americans recognize that humour is important in negotiations. At a critical time, for example, to break the ice for them to connect, when they give a speech, they want to connect with people. In speeches, they always introduce humor here and there, so that you will laugh, then they present their message. (P18)

Some countries are more direct than others in their approach:

I would rather deal with the Dutch than the British. The British are very gentleman; they say they will take this and that into account, but the end-results are nothing. Unlike the Dutch and Germans who come directly to the point. They only agree or disagree, and then it is done. It is easier with them. (P14)

A country was revealed to give a sabbatical leave to its diplomats for further study:

In the British Foreign Ministry, they have the decision to send guys on sabbatical. The guy who convinced Margaret Thatcher about global warming was a British Ambassador. He had taken a sabbatical to Harvard University for one year, and went to study about the environment. Then he came out after his year, he was so taken by it, and he was the one who convinced Margaret Thatcher. Where are the Malaysian specialists? Who do we depend to? (P18)

## **6.6 Theme five – Acknowledging the role of stakeholders**

The participants acknowledged that stakeholders play an important role in determining the Malaysian position before any international negotiations. This is because all positions will be brought up before the stakeholders and they will determine which positions are best for Malaysia to adopt:

Normally, in all major negotiations, the Cabinet will be involved...Sometimes the leading agency, either Wisma Putra or other ministries, after a few inter-agency meetings, will come up with policy options. The Cabinet will then decide what the best option is. (P19)

And then of course in terms of preparation, some sensitive issues were brought forward for political directions or Cabinet directions. Normally there is a paper, a Cabinet paper that has been submitted to Cabinet to say that this is the point that we want, this is the objective that we want to achieve...Certain things go phase by phase and we ask the Cabinet for things phase by phase. In our system, in most of the cases, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister are brought into the picture. (P1)

We the officials would prepare the terms; this is our job, to see the subject matter, to see that subjects are prioritized, selected and recommended. In other words, the minutes will go up to the Prime Minister through the Minister of Foreign Affairs. (P2)

We will have to get an endorsement from the Cabinet. Even all international agreements will have to get the Cabinet's approval. We are in actual fact negotiating on behalf of the entire Cabinet. (P8)

In terms of our government, at least it goes to the Cabinet, they decide. The Cabinet usually gives you a position to take, without going into minute details. So it depends upon the Ministry, drawing from those broad Cabinet instructions, to flesh things out for further details. So we depend very much on the level of the Ministry, how thorough they want us to be. (P18)



At the same time, my participant felt that the leaders must be effective in their role:

So, it is very important to have thorough, diligent and well-informed leaders. I think if you have a Cabinet that is made up of people who are recognized for not only their ability, but their dedication, their commitment, their diligence, then I think the officials have to respond and be answerable to them. Basically it is that, so that is very important...But if you have a leadership that is well-informed, that is demanding of thoroughness, demanding of excellence, they have to set an example themselves. If they do, then they are better able in their determination and deliberation to instruct the negotiating team in the very well-informed and also very exacting standard that they expect from their negotiators. (P18)

My participant agreed that an individual stakeholder does have a different way of looking at matters and have different method of tackling issues:

During the previous Prime Minister's time, it was different, he dictated things. He knew what he wanted, and he had clear mind about what he wanted to do. But the current Prime Minister is collegial, since he was a civil servant before. I think during his time it was more about a consensus-building process. So if you put your facts well, your arguments well, the Cabinet will approve your approach. With the former Prime Minister, there was an element of a leader's idiosyncrasy. The present Prime Minister's approach is quintessential the Malay diplomacy that we inherited from the Malacca days. (P19)

Politicians do shape our negotiation approach. This is what happens from the influence of the Prime Minister's personality on the culture of our staff. They themselves are not involved in negotiations, we are the one who are involved in negotiations, but we adopt tactics and techniques of communicating. I think over the years we have begun to develop all kinds of techniques. (P21)

Beside the stakeholders who have a direct influence on the positions of Malaysia, my participant mentioned that there are other stakeholders who may influence Malaysian position indirectly:

The second level of politicians are people not in the government, but they may be from outside, for example, Members of Parliament and some party members, whom I think can whisper to the ministers, that we should not be doing this or that. Based on this, the ministers make announcements. These people are an indirect influence on the decision makers and also negotiations. So there is a role they play, not direct but indirect. (P1)

The public may have an interest in the Malaysian position, but they may not know the real situation behind the Malaysian position on certain issues:

Sometimes the public came to know at the end of something, but they do not even know how difficult it is even to reach to that point. Some members of the public, they think they know more than those who are negotiating. But those who are actually negotiating, the civil servants, public servants, cannot go to the press, because they are not politicians. We are not supposed to go to the press and explain everything. After all, we are responsible to the government, and the government is aware of the actual situation. We do not make a living out from publicity, so civil servants are not supposed to go for publicity. Let the politicians do it, they are supposed to explain things to the public. But sometimes, the difficulty is even with the political leadership, the politicians themselves. They have to take a position to at least create the impression with the public that they are taking a hard stand, because that is a politically more popular position. So sometimes they can be in conflicting positions, what they advise the negotiators, in terms of discretion, and what position they have to portray in public. Sometimes there is a gap between that, and the public does not know, but we know. (P17)

Participants stressed that public officials must continuously advise the stakeholders professionally, and do not recommend only matters that they believe the stakeholders would want to hear:

I think Wisma Putra should continue advising our politicians well so that they understand the issues. It is a wrong principle for us to tell them only things which we think they want to listen; we should tell the whole and comprehensive story about any issue. Then it is up to them to make decisions. However, certain officers just want to be popular, as such they do not advise their masters fully. (P10)

But that policy is also based upon the advice of officials, what you give them around the table. It is a kind of literally dependent relationship. (P18)

However, participants however, revealed that some stakeholders have their own weaknesses. An example given was that some would not want to listen to public officials:

I attended one course and the lady presenter was revealing the lack of political masters, in the sense that they do not want to listen. They are politicians, they may be educated, they may be professionals in whatever area they are working in. But when you are negotiating, they have to listen to advice, and the civil service officials are there for a longer time than them. Some people can see the wider implications, some cannot see them. (P14)

Some stakeholders also liked to make premature announcements about certain issues:

Our politicians, we brief them our way, and then suddenly they make announcements. Some politicians make announcements without being properly briefed. So sometimes our negotiation position is affected by some public announcement made prematurely at various levels. (P1)

You can find how our politicians behave. You will see that they do not know much about various subjects, yet they will make public statements of all sorts. (P9)

Sometimes the announcements were made by many parties, more off-the-cuff in nature and not based on prepared statements:

When the Singapore Foreign Ministry issues a statement, or when an official spokesman makes a statement, on our part, we are so poor in diplomacy such that our response comes from our Prime Minister, our Foreign Minister, and our Ministers. We do this quite often and fall into well, Singapore's traps. They are efficient; they have prepared the statements well, while on our part, we get off-the-cuff statements, which are used by Singapore against us. That is a mistake: we are not disciplined, our politicians are not disciplined, and they merely want to show off, to be seen as village heroes. (P9)

There were also times when the stakeholders wanted to be in control and became the spokesperson:

There was also a situation where ministers would like to control things and become the spokesman. (P19)

To some extent, some stakeholders would make use of the negotiation as an opportunity for personal mileage or gain:

Some of our politicians think of the Foreign Ministry as the tourist agency or something, to be manipulated to serve the personal or political agenda of politicians, rather than looking after serious business as the first line of defence. (P9)

## **6.7 Summary**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings from the qualitative data collection and analysis. Five main themes were described. Each theme focused on what appeared to be the key patterns of Malaysian practice in international negotiations. Starting from the preparation stage, the findings focused on what should be prepared before any

negotiation, an evaluation of the role played by the home sector agencies and the stakeholders, what improvement measures had been taken, and grave concerns about the documentation system. The findings moved on to describe the Malaysian approach in international negotiations, discussing the objectives, strategies and principles adopted, and an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses aspects. The role played by culture was also a pertinent theme, as the participants described the overall aspect of Malaysian beliefs, values and norms and the blend of Malaysian culture that influenced Malaysian practice. Another important aspect worth mentioning is the continual comparison made by the participants in terms of the practice of other countries and Malaysian practice.

The findings from the qualitative data collection were adopted to inform and guide the quantitative phase of this study. It was essentially to test the initial findings to the in-service diplomats in order to refine and enhance findings for the whole research. Therefore a questionnaire survey was conducted amongst the in-service diplomats. The subsequent chapter focuses on the quantitative findings, based on the survey conducted among the in-service diplomats.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

#### 7.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents a descriptive analysis of responses gathered from the questionnaire survey. All of the results were generated from the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 for Windows. A range of descriptive analyses were carried out using frequencies, cross-tabulation and graphs to examine the distribution of the responses. Since the research is mainly exploratory and therein no hypotheses generated, no inferential statistics analysis was conducted.

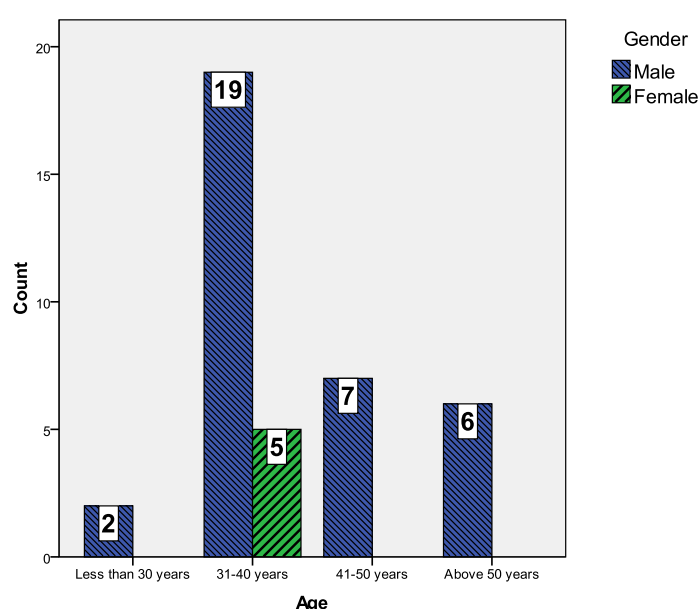
#### 7.2 Section A - Respondent's profile

The samples were targeted at middle-management level and higher with a minimum experience of three years; because they were expected to have experience in international negotiations. There were 386 potential respondents that met the criteria for the survey. The criteria were that respondents must be within the middle-management group and higher with a minimum experience of three years, because they were expected to have experience in international negotiations. However, only 73 questionnaires were successfully distributed by the coordinator at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, either personally by hand or by mail. I was informed that the coordinator was targeting respondents who have had multilateral and bilateral experience because their responses could provide more substance to the research. However, only 39 responses (53 percent) were collected, of which 34 (87 percent) were males and the other five (13 percent) were females. Table 15 shows the breakdown of the total number of responses by gender.

Table 15: *Total Number of Responses by Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	34	87
Female	5	13

The highest response was received from the age group 31 to 40 years old (24 responses, or 62 percent). Out of the 24 responses, a total of nineteen questionnaires were received from male respondents, while the other five were from female respondents. This indicates that all of the five female respondents for the survey came from this age group. The responses for the age group 41 to 50 years old and above 50 years old were 18 percent (seven responses) and 15 percent (six responses) respectively. Only two responses (five percent) came from the age group less than 30 years old. Figure 5 highlights the breakdown of the total number of responses by age group and gender.



*Figure 5: Total number of responses by age group and gender*

Consequently, the most responses came from the respondents who had been working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from six to ten years (39 percent) and from eleven to fifteen years (31 percent). The respondents that had been serving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for sixteen to twenty years and above twenty years were thirteen percent (five responses) and fifteen percent (six responses) respectively. Only one respondent (three percent) has less than five years of working experience. Table 16 presents the breakdown of the total number of responses by number of years working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and age.

Table 16: *Total Number of Responses by Number of Years Working At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Age*

	<b>Age</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
	Less than 30 years	31 – 40 years	41 – 50 years	Above 50 years		
<b>Years work</b>						
< 5 years	0	1	0	0	1	2.6
6 – 10 years	2	12	0	1	15	38.5
11 – 15 years	0	9	3	0	12	30.8
16 – 20 years	0	2	3	0	5	12.8
> 20 years	0	0	1	5	6	15.4
<b>Total</b>	2	24	7	6	39	100.0
<b>%</b>	5.1	61.50	17.9	15.4	100	

In terms of experience in international negotiations, the highest response came from those who had participated in international negotiations more than twenty times (49 percent, or nineteen responses). Of those, eight respondents (42 percent) had been serving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between eleven and fifteen years, followed by five respondents (26 percent) above twenty years, while those working for six to ten years and sixteen to twenty years yielded three responses (fifteen percent) each. The second highest response came from those experienced between one to ten times (33 percent, or thirteen responses) of which eight respondents (61 percent) had been working for six to ten years. Fifteen percent or six responses came from the respondents who had represented Malaysia in international negotiations between eleven and twenty times. There was one respondent who claimed to never take part in any international negotiations. Table 17 displays the breakdown of the total number of responses by number of times respondents represented Malaysia in international negotiations, and the number of years working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Table 17: *Total Number of Responses by Experience in International Negotiations and Number of Years Working At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

	Experience				Total	%
	Never	1 – 10 times	11 – 20 times	More than 20 times		
Years work						
< 5 years	0	1	0	0	1	2.6
6 – 10 years	0	8	4	3	15	38.5
11 – 15 years	1	2	1	8	12	30.8
16 – 20 years	0	1	1	3	5	12.8
> 20 years	0	1	0	5	6	15.4
Total	1	13	6	19	39	100.0
%	2.6	33.3	15.4	48.7	100.0	

### 7.3 Section B - Role and performance of home sector agencies in international negotiations

In this section, eight statements regarding the role and performance of home sector agencies in assisting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in international negotiations were given. Home sector agencies were defined as other ministries in the Malaysian public service besides the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The respondents were asked to choose one of four answers to the statements given: “never”, “rarely”, “often” or “always”. The responses of “never” and “rarely” were considered positive or negative depending upon the wording of the statements, and vice versa for “often” and “always” responses. All the responses for this section are grouped in Table 18.



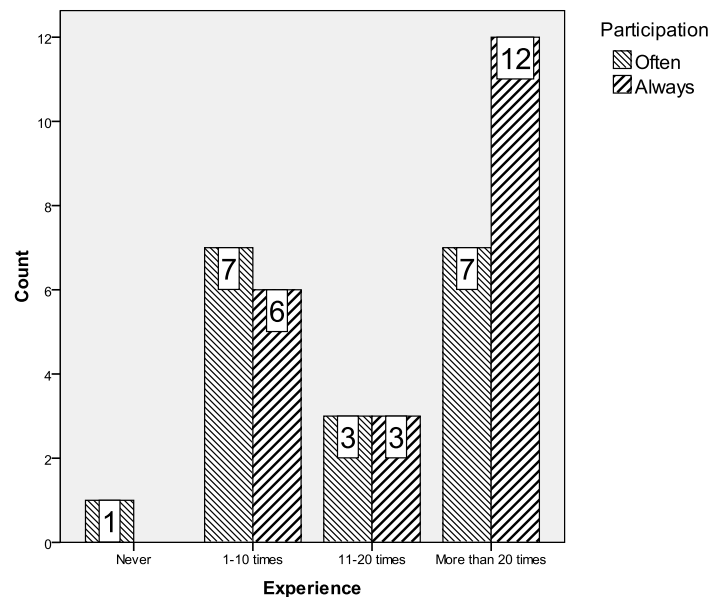
Table 18: *Total Number of Responses for Role and Performance of Home Sector Agencies in International Negotiations*

	Never	Rarely	Often	Always	Mean	sd
Variable	%	%	%	%		
Participation of home sector agencies is required during the preparatory stage	0	0	46.2	53.8	3.54	.505
Home sector agencies are quick in responding to requests for information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	5.1	46.2	38.5	10.2	2.54	.756
Home sector agencies are unreserved in providing full information required by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	5.1	28.2	46.2	20.5	2.82	.823
Home sector agencies act as a good team player during international negotiations	2.6	17.9	59.0	20.5	2.97	.707
Home sector agencies send junior officers to attend pre-negotiation meetings	0	35.9	48.7	15.4	2.79	.695
Home sector agencies only consider their own view in projecting their positions	0	25.6	48.7	25.6	3.0	.725
Home sector agencies change their officers at different stages of international negotiations	0	48.7	46.2	5.1	2.56	.598
Home sector agencies' officers are less skilled negotiators than officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2.6	33.3	43.6	20.5	2.82	.790

N=39

### 7.3.1 Participation of home sector agencies

21 respondents (54 percent) agreed that participation of home sector agencies is “always” required; while eighteen respondents (46 percent) answered that it is “often” required. Therefore, all the respondents were positive that the participation of home sector agencies is required during the preparatory stage of international negotiations. In addition, as indicated in Figure 6, it seems that the higher the number of times the respondents represented Malaysia in international negotiations, the more they think the participation of home sector agencies is “always” required. For example, out of nineteen respondents who have represented Malaysia more than twenty times in international negotiations, twelve respondents or 63 percent said “always”.

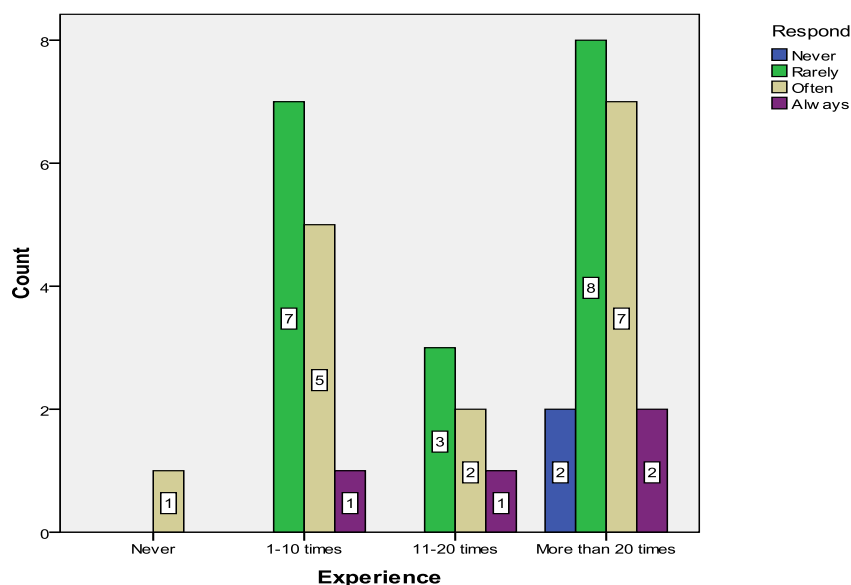


*Figure 6: Total number of responses by experience in international negotiations and in favour of participation of home sector agencies during the preparatory stage*

### 7.3.2 Home sector agencies are quick in responding

The responses “often” and “always”, which were considered positive in this statement, were 49 percent. It is a little lower than the negative responses “never” and “rarely”, which were 52 percent. Therefore, it seems that the respondents were quite mixed in their response regarding how quickly the home sector agencies respond to requests for information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Similar mixed perception also occurs

when comparing the experience of the respondents in international negotiations and how they perceived the performance of home sector agencies in responding to requests for information, as appeared in Figure 7. For example, for those respondents who have represented Malaysia in international negotiations more than twenty times, nine out of nineteen respondents (47 percent) were positive, while the rest 53 percent were pessimistic. Furthermore, for those who were experienced between eleven and twenty times, it was 50-50.



*Figure 7: Total number of responses by experience in international negotiations and their perception on the performance of home sector agencies in responding to requests for information*

### 7.3.3 Home sector agencies are unreserved

The respondents were more positive (67 percent) in saying that the home sector agencies are “often” and “always” unreserved in providing full information required by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When these data were further analyzed using cross-tabulation between respondents’ experience in international negotiations, thirteen out of nineteen (68 percent) respondents who have experienced more than twenty times were positive about the statement, in which nine respondents perceived as “often” while four respondents chose “always”. The breakdown is demonstrated in Table 19.

Table 19: *Total Number of Responses for “Home Sector Agencies Are Unreserved In Providing Full Information and Experience in International Negotiations”*

	<b>Unreserved</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
	Never	Rarely	Often	Always		
<b>Experience</b>						
Never	0	0	1	0	1	2.6
1 – 10 times	0	5	6	2	13	33.3
11–20 times	1	1	2	2	6	15.4
> 20 times	1	5	9	4	19	48.7
<b>Total</b>	2	11	18	8	39	100.0
<b>%</b>	5.1	28.2	46.2	20.5	100.0	

#### 7.3.4 Home sector agencies act as good team players

Almost 80 percent of respondents agreed that home sector agencies “often” and “always” act as good team players during international negotiations. Again, when comparing the responses against the respondents’ experience I international negotiations, those who have experienced more than twenty times are 94 percent (eighteen out of nineteen) in favour of the statement. Thirteen respondents said “often” while five respondents preferred “always”. Table 20 displays the detail.

Table 20: *Total Number of Responses for Home Sector Agencies Act as Good Team Players during International Negotiations and Experience in International Negotiations”*

	<b>Team</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
	Never	Rarely	Often	Always		
<b>Experience</b>						
Never	0	0	1	0	1	2.6
1 – 10 times	1	3	7	2	13	33.3
11–20 times	0	3	2	1	6	15.4
> 20 times	0	1	13	5	19	48.7
<b>Total</b>	1	7	23	8	39	100.0
<b>%</b>	2.6	17.9	59.0	20.5	100.0	

### 7.3.5 Home sector agencies send junior officers

Nearly two thirds of the respondents (64 percent) agreed that home sector agencies either “often” or “always” send junior officers to attend pre-negotiation meetings. When comparing the respondents’ experience in international negotiations with the responses, thirteen out of nineteen (68 percent) respondents who have experienced more than twenty times were positive with the statement, in which ten respondents perceived as “often” while three respondents chose “always”. The breakdown of the data is shown in Table 21.

Table 21: *Total Number of Responses for Home Sector Agencies Send Junior Officers to Attend Pre-negotiation Meetings and Experience in International Negotiations*”

	Never	Rarely	Junior Often	Always	Total	%
<b>Experience</b>						
Never	0	0	0	1	1	2.6
1 – 10 times	0	6	6	1	13	33.3
11–20 times	0	2	3	1	6	15.4
> 20 times	0	6	10	3	19	48.7
<b>Total</b>	0	7	23	8	39	100.0
<b>%</b>	0	35.9	48.7	15.4	100.0	

### 7.3.6 Home sector agencies only consider their own view

Almost 75 percent of respondents believed that home sector agencies “often” and “always” consider their own view in projecting their positions. Comparing the responses against the respondents’ experience, those have experienced more than twenty times are 74 percent (fourteen out of nineteen) in favour of the statement. Eight respondents said “often”, while six respondents preferred “always”. Table 22 displays the detail.

Table 22: *Total Number of Responses for Home Sector Agencies Only Consider Their Own View in Projecting Their Positions and Experience in International Negotiations*

	<b>Own view</b>				<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
	Never	Rarely	Often	Always		
<b>Experience</b>						
Never	0	0	1	0	1	2.6
1 – 10 times	0	3	6	4	13	33.3
11–20 times	0	2	4	0	6	15.4
> 20 times	0	5	8	6	19	48.7
<b>Total</b>	0	10	19	10	39	100.0
<b>%</b>	0	25.6	48.7	25.6	100.0	

### 7.3.7 Home sector agencies change their officers

It seems that the respondents were quite mixed in their response to a statement that home sector agencies change their officers at different stages of international negotiations. Those in favour of the statement (“often” and “always”) were a little bit higher (51 percent) comparing to those against it (49 percent).

### 7.3.8 Home sector agencies’ officers are less skilled negotiators

More than 60 percent of the respondents agree that home sector agencies’ officers are either “often” or “always” less-skilled negotiators than officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Comparing the responses against the respondents’ experience, those have experienced more than twenty times are 68 percent (thirteen out of nineteen) in favour of the statement. Eight respondents said “often” while five respondents preferred “always”. Table 23 displays the detail.

Table 23: *Total Number of Responses for Home Sector Agencies’ Officers Are Less Skilled Than Officers from the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs and Experience in International Negotiations”*

	Never	Rarely	Less-skill Often	Always	Total	%
<b>Experience</b>						
Never	0	1	0	0	1	2.6
1 – 10 times	1	4	5	3	13	33.3
11–20 times	0	2	4	0	6	15.4
> 20 times	0	6	8	5	19	48.7
<b>Total</b>	1	13	17	8	39	100.0
<b>%</b>	2.6	33.3	43.6	20.5	100.0	

#### 7.4 Section C – General aspects of Malaysia in international negotiations

In this section, 28 statements were given regarding the general aspects of Malaysia in international negotiations. The general aspects encompassed four main ideas about the Malaysian practice in international negotiations: objectives of international negotiation, the preparation, the Malaysian approach and the negotiation specialists. The respondents had to indicate their level of agreement to the statements and choose one of four options: “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”. The answer “neither agree nor disagree” was not provided as an option in order to avoid respondents from being undecided or providing neutral responses. All the responses for this section are highlighted in Table 24.

##### 7.4.1 Objectives of international negotiations

Four statements were asked to explore the view of the respondents in terms of the objectives of international negotiations. The findings are:

- About two thirds of the respondents were positive that international negotiation means compromise. Of the two thirds, fifteen percent strongly agreed, while 51 percent agreed;
- The respondents also believed in the statement that in international negotiations, winning confidence of the other parties is essential, as majority of them (72

percent) strongly agreed and 26 percent agreed, making a total of 96 percent. Only one respondent (three percent) strongly disagreed;

- In addition, maintaining good relationships with other countries was also viewed as an important objective in international negotiations as all the in-service respondents (100 percent) either agreed (44 percent) or strongly agreed (56 percent) with the statement; and
- Furthermore, nearly 80 percent of the respondents also perceived that Malaysia always aims for a win-win situation in any international negotiation.



Table 24: *Total Number of Responses for General Aspects of Malaysia in International Negotiations*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly Agree %</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
International negotiation means compromise	5.1	28.2	51.3	15.4	2.77	.777
In international negotiations, winning confidence of other parties is essential	2.6	0	25.8	71.8	3.67	.621
In international negotiation, maintaining good relationships with other countries is an important objective	0	0	43.6	56.4	3.56	.502
Malaysia always goes for a win-win situation in any international negotiations	2.6	17.9	41.0	38.5	3.15	.812
Malaysia likes to align itself with other countries	2.6	38.5	48.7	10.2	2.67	.701
Malaysia compromises too much in international negotiation	20.5	43.6	33.3	2.6	2.18	.790
In international negotiation, the best strategy is to pretend to lose	33.3	56.4	10.3	0	1.77	.627
Deals can be clinched over a meal	15.4	30.8	46.2	7.6	2.46	.854
It is better not to conclude any deal if it means sacrificing the national interest	2.6	10.3	15.4	71.8	3.56	.788
In international negotiation, one's culture is put aside	28.2	64.1	7.7	0	1.79	.570
Politicians do play a significant role in international negotiations	2.6	17.9	61.6	17.9	2.95	.686
Malaysian negotiators know the country's maximum position when going for international negotiations	0	7.7	66.7	25.6	3.18	.556
Malaysian negotiators know the country's minimum position when going for international negotiations	0	17.9	53.9	28.2	3.10	.680
It is sufficient to secure Malaysia's minimum position in international negotiations	20.5	59.0	17.9	2.6	2.03	.707
General guideline for negotiators on how to negotiate with other countries is readily available	10.3	56.4	30.7	2.6	2.26	.677
Negotiators have a clear mandate before going for international negotiations	5.1	15.4	51.3	28.2	3.03	.811
Malaysian negotiators have enough negotiation training to go for international negotiations	5.1	53.8	38.5	2.6	2.26	.677
Malaysian negotiators have sound knowledge of the procedures of international negotiations	0	35.9	51.3	12.8	2.77	.667

Malaysian negotiators learn the negotiation skills through their daily work	0	10.3	61.5	28.2	3.18	.601
Malaysia has negotiation specialists	2.6	30.8	59.0	7.7	2.72	.647
Malaysian negotiation specialists are fully utilized	5.1	64.1	25.7	5.1	2.31	.655
Malaysian negotiation specialists are not attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2.6	33.3	53.8	10.3	2.72	.686
Malaysia only sends a single team of several negotiators for international negotiations	7.7	56.4	33.3	2.6	2.31	.655
Malaysian negotiators attend international negotiations without knowing the substance	38.5	53.8	7.7	0	1.69	.614
Many important documents required for international negotiations are untraceable	20.5	46.2	25.6	7.7	2.21	.864
Malaysian negotiation teams are dependent on the team leader: if the leader is good, then the team is good	10.3	25.6	51.3	12.8	2.67	.838
In a bilateral negotiation, the Malaysian approach should be more conciliatory and more open to compromise	12.8	69.2	17.9	0	2.05	.560
In multilateral negotiations, the Malaysian approach should be stronger and more confronting	2.6	48.7	33.3	15.4	2.62	.782

N=39

### 7.4.2 Preparation

In terms of preparation, ten questions were asked, and the following shows the findings for each question:

- A large majority of the respondents (92 percent or 36 respondents) agreed that Malaysian negotiators know the country's maximum position when they aim for international negotiations. Only three respondents or eight percent disagreed;
- The majority of the respondents (82 percent) also were positive that Malaysian negotiators know the country's minimum position when they aim for international negotiations;
- Almost 80 percent of the respondents did not believe that it is sufficient for Malaysia to secure its minimum position in international negotiations;
- Two-thirds of the respondents (67 percent) did not agree that general guidelines for negotiators on how to negotiate with other countries are readily available. Out of the two thirds, ten percent strongly disagreed;
- The majority of the respondents (80 percent) believed that Malaysian negotiators have a clear mandate before going for international negotiations;
- Nearly 60 percent of the respondents did not think that Malaysian negotiators have enough negotiation training to aim for international negotiations;
- More than 60 percent of respondents believed that Malaysian negotiators have sound knowledge of the procedures of international negotiations;
- Almost 90 percent of the respondents agreed that Malaysian negotiators learn the negotiation skills through their daily work;

- More than 90 percent (36 respondents) were against the claim that Malaysian negotiators attend international negotiations without knowing the substance. Only three respondents agreed; and
- Two-thirds of the respondents did not agree that many important documents required for international negotiations are untraceable.

#### **7.4.3 Malaysian approach**

The respondents were asked to provide their opinions on thirteen statements regarding the Malaysian approach to international negotiations, and the findings are as follows:

- Almost 50 percent of the respondents agreed to the statement “Malaysia likes to align itself with other countries”, while another 10 percent strongly agreed, adding up to almost 60 percent of respondents;
- More than 64 percent of respondents were not in favour of the statement “Malaysia compromises too much in international negotiation”. 44 percent disagreed and 21 percent strongly disagreed with the statement;
- Almost a large majority (90 percent) of respondents did not agree that the best strategy in international negotiation is to pretend to lose;
- Out of 39 respondents, only 21 respondents (54 percent) are in favour of the statement that deals can be clinched over a meal;
- Majority (87 percent) of respondents agree that it is better not to conclude any deal if it is going to sacrifice the national interest. Out of the percentage, 72 percent of respondents strongly agreed to the statement;
- Over 92 percent of the respondents were not in favour of the statement “in international negotiation, one’s culture is put aside”, as they believed that negotiators take their culture with them when they aim for international negotiations;

- Nearly 80 percent of the respondents are positive that politicians do play a significant role in international negotiations;
- More than 60 percent were not in favour of the statement that Malaysia only sends a single team of several negotiators for international negotiations;
- More than 60 percent were in favour of the statement that Malaysian negotiation teams are dependent on the team leader: if the leader is good, then the team is good;
- More than 80 percent were against the claim that in a bilateral negotiation, the Malaysian approach should be more conciliatory and more open to compromise; and
- The respondents were quite mixed in their response to a statement that in multilateral negotiations, the Malaysian approach should be stronger and more confronting. Those against the statement were a little bit higher (51 percent) comparing to those in favour of it (49 percent).

#### **7.4.4 Negotiation specialist**

Three statements were provided to discover the respondents' opinion on Malaysian negotiation specialists, and the findings were:

- Two thirds of the respondents believed that Malaysia has negotiation specialists;
- Almost 70 percent of the respondents were pessimistic that Malaysian negotiation specialists are fully utilized; and
- More than 60 percent of the respondents agreed that Malaysian negotiation specialists are not attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## **7.5 Section D – Characteristics of Malaysian negotiators**

In this section, respondents were asked to provide their perception on sixteen statements regarding the characteristics of Malaysian negotiators in international negotiations. Similar to Section C, the respondents had to indicate their level of agreement to the given statements and choose one of four options: “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”. The answer “neither agree nor disagree” was not given as an option in order to avoid respondents from being undecided or providing neutral responses. All the responses for this section are presented in Table 25.

As indicated in Table 25, the following is the findings:

- The respondents were quite mixed in their response to a statement that Malaysian negotiators are generous. Those against the statement were slightly higher (54 percent) compared to those in favour of it (46 percent);
- More than 74 percent of the respondents were in favour that Malaysian negotiators will give way to other delegates to speak up, comparing to only 26 percent who disagreed;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents were against the statement that Malaysian negotiators are lacking in confidence. Out of that, one third strongly disagreed;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents did not agree that Malaysian negotiators do not mix with other negotiators;
- More than 80 percent of the respondents did not approve the idea that Malaysian negotiators are apprehensive about putting forward their views;
- Nearly 80 percent of the respondents were in favour that Malaysian negotiators stress friendship values;

- Only 56 percent of the respondents were positive with the statement that Malaysian negotiators prefer face-saving, as compared to 44 percent who did not agree;
- 64 percent of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that Malaysian negotiators like to please the other party;
- The respondents were more positive (77 percent) in saying that Malaysian negotiators have no unkind intentions;
- More than twenty percent of the respondents strongly did not agree with the statement while more than 50 percent disagreed. In total, more than 80 percent were against the notion that Malaysian negotiators are not assertive;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents were against the idea that Malaysian negotiators want to conclude the deal as soon as possible;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents were in favour of the notion that Malaysian negotiators are accommodating;

Table 25: *Total Number of Responses for Characteristics of Malaysian Negotiators*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Strongly disagree %</b>	<b>Disagree %</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Strongly Agree %</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
Malaysian negotiators are generous	5.1	48.7	46.2	0	2.41	.595
Malaysian negotiators will give way to other delegates to speak up	0	25.6	74.4	0	2.74	.442
Malaysian negotiators are lacking in confidence	33.3	38.5	25.6	2.6	1.97	.843
Malaysian negotiators do not mix with other negotiators	33.3	41.0	23.1	2.6	1.95	.826
Malaysian negotiators are apprehensive about putting forward their views	33.3	48.8	17.9	0	1.85	.709
Malaysian negotiators stress friendship values	2.6	17.9	66.7	12.8	2.90	.641
Malaysian negotiators prefer face-saving	5.1	38.5	53.8	2.6	2.54	.643
Malaysian negotiators like to please the other party	15.4	48.7	35.9	0	2.21	.695
Malaysian negotiators have no unkind intentions	2.6	20.5	59.0	17.9	2.92	.703
Malaysian negotiators are not assertive <sup>†</sup>	20.5	51.3	28.2	0	2.08	.703
Malaysian negotiators want to conclude the deal as soon as possible	15.4	56.4	25.6	2.6	2.15	.709
Malaysian negotiators are accommodating	7.7	17.9	66.7	7.7	2.74	.715
Malaysian negotiators are humble <sup>†</sup>	2.6	17.9	69.2	10.3	2.87	.615
Malaysian negotiators do not like to be seen as arrogant	2.6	5.1	82.0	10.3	3.00	.513
Malaysian negotiators are ready to confront if required	0	15.4	59.0	25.6	3.10	.641
Malaysian negotiators will say the team leader is always right	2.6	51.3	41.0	5.2	2.49	.644

N=39

<sup>†</sup> The respondents treated being assertive and being humble as two mutually independent characteristics, which means that negotiators can be humble and assertive at the same time, depending on situations.



- The respondents were more positive (80 percent) in saying that Malaysian negotiators are humble;
- The majority of the respondents (92 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed that Malaysian negotiators do not like to be seen as arrogant;
- Nearly 60 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement while more than 25 percent strongly agreed. In total, more than 84 percent were positive of the notion that Malaysian negotiators are ready to confront if required; and
- Only 46.2 percent of the respondents were positive with the statement that Malaysian negotiators will say the team leader is always right, as compared to 53.8 percent who were against it.

#### **7.6 Section E – Current skills of Malaysian negotiators**

In this section, respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they are with the current skills of Malaysian negotiators. Twenty statements were provided regarding the skills of Malaysian negotiators in international negotiations. The respondents had to choose one of four options: “very dissatisfied”, “dissatisfied”, “satisfied”, and “very satisfied”. The answer “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” was not given as an option in order to avoid respondents from being undecided or providing neutral responses. All the responses for this section are presented in Table 26.

The findings, as highlighted in Table 26 are as follows:

- More than 87 percent of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the spoken English language among Malaysian negotiators;
- The respondents were also positive with the written English language among the Malaysian negotiators, whereby 54 percent were satisfied and 33 percent very satisfied;

- Nearly three quarter of the respondents (74 percent) either were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the Malaysian negotiators' skills in terms of spoken language in other foreign languages besides English;
- 26 percent of the respondents were very dissatisfied, while 51 percent were dissatisfied, making a total of 77 percent of respondents who believed that Malaysian negotiators are lacking in the written language of other foreign languages besides English;
- More than 25 percent of the respondents were very satisfied with the listening skills while nearly 70 percent were satisfied. In total, more than 94 percent were pleased with the listening skills of Malaysian negotiators;
- More than 77 percent of the respondents were happy with the networking skills of Malaysian negotiators;
- The respondents were more positive (64 percent) in saying that Malaysian negotiators have enough negotiation exposure;

Table 26: *Total Number of Responses for Current Skills of Malaysian Negotiators*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Very dissatisfied %</b>	<b>Dissatisfied %</b>	<b>Satisfied %</b>	<b>Very satisfied %</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
Spoken language (English)	0	12.8	56.4	30.8	3.18	.644
Written language (English)	0	12.8	53.9	33.3	3.21	.656
Spoken language (other foreign languages)	23.1	51.3	20.5	5.1	2.08	.807
Written language (other foreign languages)	25.6	51.3	18.0	5.1	2.03	.811
Listening skills	0	5.1	69.3	25.6	3.21	.522
Networking skills	2.6	10.3	61.5	25.6	3.10	.680
Negotiation exposure	2.6	33.3	53.8	10.3	2.72	.686
Negotiation experience	2.6	35.9	53.8	7.7	2.67	.662
Negotiation training	20.5	53.8	20.5	5.1	2.10	.788
Willingness to learn	0	10.3	69.2	20.5	3.10	.552
Tactical knowledge	5.1	43.6	43.6	7.7	2.54	.720
Knowledge of the substance	0	17.9	61.5	20.6	3.03	.628
Knowledge of the other negotiating parties	10.3	43.6	38.5	7.7	2.44	.788
Competitiveness	2.6	23.1	59.0	15.4	2.87	.695
Open-mindedness	2.6	23.1	59.0	15.4	2.87	.695
Teamwork spirit	0	15.4	56.4	28.2	3.13	.656
Leader of the team	0	5.1	79.5	15.4	3.10	.447
Quick reaction of issues	0	20.5	69.2	10.3	2.90	.552
Stamina in attending international forums	0	17.9	56.4	25.7	3.08	.664
Use of humor	2.6	33.3	59.0	5.1	2.67	.621

N=39

- More than 61 percent of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the negotiation experience of Malaysian negotiators;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the negotiation training of Malaysian negotiators;
- The respondents were positive (90 percent) with the Malaysian negotiators in terms of their willingness to learn, in which 69 percent were satisfied and 21 percent were very satisfied;
- The respondents were quite mixed in their response to the tactical knowledge of Malaysian negotiators. Those in favour were slightly higher (51 percent) compared to those against it (48. percent);
- The majority of the respondents (74 percent) either were very satisfied or satisfied with the Malaysian negotiators' skills in terms of knowledge of the substance;
- The response for the Malaysian negotiators' knowledge of the other negotiating parties was quite mixed. Those against were slightly higher (54 percent) compared to those in favour (46 percent);
- 64 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the competitiveness of Malaysian negotiators;
- More than 64 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the open-mindedness of Malaysian negotiators;
- In terms of teamwork spirit of Malaysian negotiators, nearly 75 percent of the respondents were satisfied;
- The majority of the respondents (95 percent) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the leader of the Malaysian negotiation team;

- Nearly 80 percent of the respondents either were very satisfied or satisfied with the Malaysian negotiators' skills in terms of quick reaction to issues;
- In terms of stamina in attending international forums, more than 82 percent of the respondents were satisfied; and
- More than 64 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the Malaysian negotiators in terms of use of humour.

## **7.7 Summary**

A descriptive analysis of the response gathered from the quantitative survey was mainly presented in this chapter. It presented the perception and opinion of the Malaysian in-service diplomats regarding Malaysian practice in international negotiations. The respondents were asked to state their level of agreement pertaining to the statements given that covered several aspects such as the role and performance of home sector agencies in international negotiations, general aspects of Malaysia international negotiations, and characteristics of Malaysian negotiators. Lastly, the respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the current skills of Malaysian negotiators.

After findings from the qualitative and quantitative approaches were presented in Chapters Six and Seven, there is a need to discuss in detail the findings from the qualitative and quantitative approaches. This triangulation of findings, which will result in overall findings of the research, is presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **8.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the key research findings presented in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven with reference to each of the research questions. The results of the study are also discussed in relation to previous research studies, or claims made by academic scholars and practitioners. In this chapter, the former diplomats are sometimes referred to as participants, while the in-service diplomats are referred to as respondents. It is also important to note the difference in time of service between the former diplomats and the in-service diplomats, since most of the former diplomats might have retired from the service between three to fifteen years before the fieldwork of 2008/09.

#### **8.2 Research aim and questions**

The aim of this research was to explore and highlight the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from Malaysian diplomats' perspectives and experiences. The research aim encompassed the following research questions:

- 1) How do former Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
- 2) How do in-service Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
- 3) What are the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?

This research adopted a mixed-method approach, in which the first research question was addressed through a qualitative study while the second one was through a quantitative enquiry.

### **8.3 Key features of Malaysian negotiating practice**

The discussion of the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice highlights certain areas which the researcher feels quite unique to Malaysian context. The key features are divided into several aspects: preparation, role of home sector agencies, role of stakeholders, documentation system, improvement initiatives, negotiation objectives, negotiation strategies, strong points in negotiation, weaknesses in negotiation, the cultural factor on Malaysian style of negotiation, and comparing Malaysia with other countries.

#### **8.3.1 Preparation**

From the qualitative findings, I am confident that the former Malaysian diplomats understood and internalized the importance of preparation before any negotiation took place. This is in fact, in-tandem with claims made by scholars like Lewicki, Barry and Saunders (2007), who strongly emphasized the need for negotiators to plan and be prepared before any negotiation. They also argued that failure to spend sufficient time in planning and preparation is one of the reasons why negotiations fail, and may result in lose-lose situations. The former diplomats mentioned a comprehensive list of items that has to be given attention to. These are:

1. Malaysian position. The Malaysian position on the issues is the utmost priority to be considered. The position covers the minimum and the maximum levels, and which positions are negotiable and which are not. In setting up the perimeter, meetings and discussions among relevant agencies are conducted, and in carrying out the talks, the team adopted the principles of being rational and practical, as they acknowledged the fact that what is desired is not always attained;
2. Principles of Malaysian foreign policy. The principles are guidelines for Malaysia in promoting its case in international diplomacy, and the tenets are

clearly spelt out in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strategic Plan 2009-2015, as follows:

- Protecting Malaysia's sovereignty and territorial integrity;
  - Non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries;
  - Promoting cooperation among developing countries through sharing experience and expertise;
  - Promoting multilateralism through respect for, and adherence to, international laws to secure a just and fair rules-based international system;
  - Promoting peace and security bilaterally, through ASEAN, the United Nations and other international bodies;
  - Enhancing bilateral relations with countries in the international community;
  - Promoting and projecting Malaysia's interests abroad;
  - Maintaining a modern, effective and excellence-driven Ministry; and
  - Providing service delivery to the Ministry's stakeholders in a timely and effective manner;
3. Domestic issues. The former diplomats believed that domestic matters and how the Malaysian government handles issues are important, because they could reflect Malaysia's position in international affairs. Their stance is consistent with the speech by the previous Malaysian Foreign Minister who believes that its foreign policy is dynamic and that internal and external factors play significant roles in the policy-making (Albar, 2006b). He further stressed that besides managing the external influences, the country cannot just avoid domestic matters such as political, economic, social, scientific, cultural and technological developments because if these issues are not well-handled, they could burst out into the international arena, which then could have an effect on Malaysia's national and strategic interest. Other Malaysian scholars (Karim, 1990) and (Pathmanathan, 1990), as far as in 1990, already stressed the need for the Malaysian government to take into consideration the domestic interest and opinion in addressing its foreign policy.



4. Knowing the right time to proceed with the negotiation because it is desirable if Malaysia can enter the negotiation from a point of strength, such as having a favourable state of bilateral relationship with another country, or Malaysia possesses more strong points to deliver, or has more things to give and take;
5. The likely position of other countries which Malaysia normally aligns with, especially in multilateral negotiation. This is imperative because Malaysia could proceed with some lobbying, trade-offs or influence to make sure that only one-voiced position is put forward;
6. Knowing the substance of the negotiation very well either by reading the confidential briefs thoroughly, or by conducting discussions among the team members who are expert in the issues, or both. The former diplomats realized that other parties can easily spot at once if they do not know their stuff very well. Vidal (2009), writing about an expert negotiator representing the Philippines in the United Nations climate negotiation, wrote that other negotiators would not want to negotiate with her because she knew her substance very well, since she has been negotiating the issue since 1992;
7. Negotiation techniques. Besides knowing the substance, another key factor to master is the techniques of negotiation. These skills could be learned through training, exposure and learning through experience. Part of the techniques includes knowing thoroughly the rules of procedure in multilateral negotiations;
8. Having a full and clear mandate by the stakeholders and strong support by the home office. With the trust given to the negotiators, they can exercise their wisdom to deliver Malaysia's position rationally, without fear and favour;
9. Role of the team leader and team members. Everyone in the delegation must understand his or her role, do his or her homework well, put aside all personal interests, and focus mainly on Malaysia's interest. The leader has the responsibility to coordinate the different views of the delegation members and to be effective in converging different interests and issues into a coherent strategy for the sake of the country;

10. Having stamina in negotiations, especially during multilateral negotiations. This is due to the fact that the negotiators might have to travel a long distance, and directly attend negotiation forums, even with jetlag. In addition, non-alertness due to low stamina could put Malaysia's position at risk because other negotiating parties could strategize to the right timing to advance their positions; and
11. Knowing the other negotiating parties. The former diplomats voiced the importance of knowing the other negotiating parties, in terms of where they come from, their negotiating behaviour, their mandate and constraint, their weaknesses, whether their position is really a policy position or just propaganda, and what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable.

### **8.3.2 Role of home sector agencies**

The former diplomats not only outlined what they had to know and prepare before going for the negotiation, but they also realized, acknowledged, and appreciated the role of home sector agencies in facilitating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in tackling global issues, helping in formulating and packaging deals, and giving advice on technical matters. International diplomatic practice has seen an increasing role of home sector agencies that involved commercial, military and technical aspects (Plantey, 2007). This position has been supported by the survey finding, in which all the in-service diplomats agreed that the participation of home sector agencies is vital during the preparation stage. In addition, almost 80 percent of these respondents agreed that in performing their tasks, home sector agencies act as good team players during international negotiations. Furthermore, two-thirds of the in-service respondents were positive in saying that home sector agencies are unreserved in providing full information required by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

However, there is some inconsistency in the survey findings. Although the respondents believe that home sector agencies are unreserved in providing full information required by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more than 50 percent of the respondents did not agree that home sector agencies are quick in responding to requests for information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The possible explanation is that the respondents still believe that home sector agencies are being unreserved in providing full information required by

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, regardless whether the response is quick or not, and therefore still acknowledge home sector agencies as good team players during international negotiations.

On the other hand, the former diplomats also understood that the home sector agencies are far from perfect. This is in accordance with the claim made by Plantey (2007), who stated that “relations between the diplomats and experts are not always easy: their criteria for decision are not the same, nor is their approach to the negotiation itself” (p. 487). Some of the weaknesses of the home sector agencies, as revealed by the former diplomats were:

1. There was a tendency for home sector agencies to send junior officers to attend pre-negotiation discussions and meetings. To them, junior officers could only brief on factual matters, but might not be able to analyze, or give their views, since they are not that knowledgeable, or have less experience. Consequently, decisions could not be made there and then; instead, the representative had to report back to the ministry for further resolution. The results of the survey finding also confirmed the observations made by the former diplomats in which nearly two-thirds of the in-service respondents agreed that home sector agencies send junior officers to attend pre-negotiation meetings;
2. Home sector agencies tended to consider issues from only their viewpoints, were adamant with their views and disregarded the overall picture. This could cause some clashes of interest and opinions among the agencies, and a lot of time-consuming discussions and compromises have to be worked out before any final decision is made. The survey results also confirmed this finding, when almost 75 percent of the in-service respondents believed that home sector agencies only consider their own view in projecting their positions. This finding was also consistent with a remark by a Malaysian expert in security studies (Abdullah Baginda, 1990), who said that the conflicting perceptions among the home sector agencies were a great challenge to Malaysia, and there must be some mechanism to balance the different viewpoints for the sake of Malaysian national interest;

3. Home sector agencies sometimes provided minimum input and sometimes no input at all, even after deliberate attempts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so much so that the envoy had to go to international negotiations without proper preparation, and sometimes had to come up with their own position based on whatever knowledge they had at hand;
4. Home sector agencies tended to take turns in sending officers to attend international negotiations. This move did not impress Malaysian delegations, because having a new team member during an on-going course of a negotiation means repeated briefings of the issue and consumed valuable time in familiarization. The evidence from the survey indicated that more than 50 percent of the respondents supported the proposition that home sector agencies change their officers at different stages of international negotiations; and
5. Officers from the home sector agencies are lacking in language skills, have less exposure to international negotiations; and are less skilful in public speaking. The survey results confirmed these findings, with more than 60 percent of the respondents agreed that home sector agencies' officers are less-skilled negotiators than officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **8.3.3 Role of stakeholders**

The former diplomats, besides acknowledging the role of home sector agencies in facilitating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also acknowledged the important role of stakeholders in determining the Malaysian position prior to any international negotiation. Even the in-service diplomats supported the finding, in which nearly 80 percent of the respondents from the survey were positive that politicians do play a significant role in international negotiations. The stakeholders were either the Prime Minister, or the Deputy Prime Minister, or the Cabinet. The main reason was that all proposed policy options will be brought before the stakeholders and they would decide which directions were the best for Malaysia to adopt, and thus gave the mandate to the negotiators. Therefore, the former diplomats felt that they were negotiating on behalf of all stakeholders. The survey among the in-service diplomats proved that the mandate given by the stakeholders had been clear, as almost 80 percent of the respondents

believed that Malaysian negotiators have a clear mandate before going for international negotiations.

The former diplomats hoped that the Malaysian stakeholders consisted of those who were thorough, diligent, dedicated, committed in their work, and be able to make wise decisions, or in simple words, be effective in their role. Then, the leaders were able to deliberate and instruct the negotiation team into a very well-informed team that could meet the expected standard. They also did not deny that an individual stakeholder has different ways of looking at matters and have different ways of confronting issues, and thus shaped the Malaysian negotiation approach in international forums. For example, they could differentiate the style between Prime Minister Tun Mahathir and Prime Minister Tun Abdullah. Tun Mahathir had a clear mind of what he wanted to do, more or less directing the public service into his way of diplomacy. The former diplomats felt that during the premiership of Tun Mahathir, Malaysia was well-promoted in the international arena; its voice of defending the Third World countries was significant, such that Malaysia was regarded as the champion for the Third World countries. This could be seen from Malaysia's involvement in advocating the continent of Antarctica as belonging to all, although Malaysia had no direct interest in it (Ahmad, 2007). On the other hand, Tun Abdullah was more collegial, and adopted a typical Malay approach. There was more consensus during his term, and the international diplomacy approach was more towards continuation of the previous policy, as confirmed by Selat (2006). Another scholar, Pathmanathan (1990) stated that an exceptional feature of Malaysian foreign policy was the significant influence of Malaysia's Prime Ministers in shaping its foreign policy approaches.

Besides the direct influence of stakeholders, there was also some indirect influence from the second level of politicians who were not in the government, but might be influential enough to whisper to ministers what should be done and what should not be done. These politicians were Members of Parliament, or some governing party members, or members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Balakrishnan (2006) claimed that the role of civil society, or "a whole range of groups, institutions and individuals who are engaged in all sorts of activities that could be seen as not embracing the routine tasks of the states or governments in power" (p. 30), has been recognized to some extent as influencing Malaysia's foreign policy. That was why the former diplomats stressed

that public officials must continually advise the stakeholders professionally, inform them of the complete situation, and should not recommend only matters that they consider the stakeholders would want to listen to.

There were cases where stakeholders did not want to listen to advice from public officials, considering that they were better and more professional than the civil servants who had been longer in the service and had more experience than them. At the same time, some politicians liked to make premature announcements about certain issues without properly being briefed, as if they knew the subject very well, or for personal mileage. Sometimes, the Malaysian negotiating position was negatively affected by some public announcement made prematurely at various levels. Worst still, such announcements were made by many parties, more off-the-cuff in nature, not based on prepared statements, and sometimes contradicted one another.

#### **8.3.4 Documentation system**

Besides the role of stakeholders, the former diplomats were also concerned about the documentation system throughout all the public service departments. This is because the documents required for the purpose of negotiations do not necessarily belong to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The primary documents may be kept somewhere else in the possession of one or more of the home sector agencies. The diplomats recognized the importance of these documents, especially hard copies, because they could substantiate and facilitate Malaysia in advancing its position. Several other observations they brought up with regards to the documentation system were that:

1. Documents could not be retrieved or were lost. This could be the legacy left by the older generation, or during the time when the documentation system was not yet implemented. For example, one of the reasons why Malaysia was viewed to lose its case to Singapore over Pedra Branca or *Pulau Batu Puteh* claim, as decided by the International Court of Justice, was due to Malaysia's failure to demonstrate ownership over the tiny island ("Three Reasons," 2008);

2. Documents could be found elsewhere and not in Malaysia, such as from the libraries and museums in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Netherlands;
3. Although the government has established a computerized system to facilitate the record-keeping and retrieval of documents, the system was seen as not fully implemented; and
4. The practice of writing a minute in the file was not popular and not given emphasis by the new generation, since the practice is moving towards paperless records.

However, the observation by the former diplomats with regards to the documentation system seems to contrast with the finding from the survey among the in-service diplomats. The survey indicated that two-thirds of the in-service diplomats did not agree that many important documents required for international negotiations are untraceable. One explanation for this contradiction is that the former diplomats might have referred to their working tenure when the document system had not been properly implemented and many historical documents could not be found. Another explanation regards the changes in the documentation system made over time, so that by 2009, documents have been properly kept and can easily be traced. An initiative taken by the Malaysian Government Development Administration Circular No 4 of 1991 provided guidelines for enhancing quality in the public service (JPM, 1991). This was followed by more circulars, such as the Development Administration Circular No 1 of 1992 on implementation of Total Quality Management in the public service (JPM, 1992), and Development Administration Circular No 2 of 1996, on implementation of MS ISO 9000 in the civil service (JPM, 1996).

### **8.3.5 Improvement initiatives**

The former diplomats, besides commending the efforts taken by fellow colleagues who are posted overseas in learning and exploring new environments, also lauded the initiatives taken by the Malaysian government in enhancing the coordinating mechanism between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the home sector agencies. They mentioned several significant initiatives, such as:

1. Having a directive under the Coordinated Operation Circular in which all government agencies abroad were directed to come under the purview of the Ambassador. The first directive was issued in 1987 through General Circular No. 7 of 1987 and the updated version was circulated through General Circular No. 2 of 2009 dated 24 August 2009 (JPM, 2009);
2. Enhancing a working mechanism for inter-agency meetings prior to any negotiation, such that discussions and meetings were conducted regularly and as and when necessary; and
3. Setting up an International Division in each ministry to oversee and respond to all international matters and liaise with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some ministries set up the division earlier than others. For example, the Ministry of Education set up its International Division in 1966 (MOE, 2009) while the Ministry of Higher Education established its division in 2004 (MOHE, 2009).

#### **8.3.6 Negotiation objectives**

The former diplomats clearly stressed the importance of achieving a win-win solution. It became the ultimate goal in any negotiation they participated in, such that one participant termed it “a deal made in heaven”. They realized that the win-win solution is difficult to attain but as long as all efforts were geared towards the perfect deal, they would continuously be optimistic. Therefore, they also mentioned positive and constructive terms such as consensus, cooperation, accommodation, compromise, give and take, common good, good feeling, mutual benefit, and harmony as a way forward in their negotiation goals.

The survey finding among the in-service diplomats confirmed this objective wherein nearly 80 percent of the respondents perceived that Malaysia always goes for a win-win situation in any international negotiation, and more than 70 percent of the respondents were in favour of the notion that Malaysian negotiators are accommodative. Similarly, about two-thirds of the respondents viewed international negotiation as meaning compromise. Of the two-thirds, fifteen percent strongly agreed. However, although compromise was seen as one of the major objectives in international negotiation, more



than 64 percent of respondents believed that Malaysia did not compromise too much in international negotiation. A large majority (96 percent) of the in-service diplomats also believed that in international negotiations, winning confidence of the other parties is essential.

This win-win attitude finding supported the findings of a survey conducted by Salacuse (1998) in which 86 percent of diplomats/public sector respondents considered negotiations to be a win-win process. In addition, this finding is also similar to the findings made by Abdullah (1992) that Malaysians prefer compromise and often seek consensus and harmony in business dealings. So it is also, in accordance with the findings revealed by Tamam et al. (1997) that in handling conflict, the most preferred style was the integrating style, followed closely by the compromising style.

This positive attitude could be seen in the way the Malaysian negotiators conducted themselves during a negotiation. One participant described this precise approach, "They begin with a consciousness of good behaviour, very mindful of the damaging effect of losing control, they will not easily get angry and walk out". This observation was precisely in-line with the explanation given by Abdullah (1992), Adler (2002), and Paramasivam (2007) that Malay negotiators put more stress on manners and show refinement and respect for the other party during negotiations. Another participant remarked, "You can still achieve the best for your country, smilingly". However, the former diplomats warned that the Malaysian national interest should come first and precede whatever issues were discussed, to the extent that it is better not to conclude a deal if it means sacrificing the national interest. This stance is supported by the in-service diplomats, where a substantial majority (87 percent) of respondents agreed that it is better not to conclude a deal if it is going to sacrifice the national interest. Out of the percentage, 72 percent of the respondents strongly agreed. In addition, one former diplomat revealed that during normalization ties with China, the negotiation process was unusually long because Malaysia was adamant about protecting its national interest in three important issues; mutual establishment of diplomatic relations; China ceasing its support of the Malaysian Communist Party, and resolution of citizenship issues regarding Chinese migrants (Mohd Ali, 2006).

Besides the win-win attitude and being polite in handling negotiations, Malaysian negotiators also focus on maintaining good relationships with other negotiating parties.

This relationship-oriented dimension is clearly portrayed by the survey findings among the in-service diplomats, in which all the respondents (100 percent) unanimously agreed that “In international negotiation, maintaining good relationships with other countries is an important objective”. This finding goes well with a statement by Spector (2006) that “negotiations among states, business or other non-state actors are more relationship-builders than outcome-generators” (p. 227). This finding is also consistent with those of other studies about Malaysia (e.g., Abdullah, 1992; Adler, 2002; Gesteland, 2005; Hendon, 1989; Lim & Abdullah, 2001; Morrison et al., 1994; Osman-Gani & Tan, 2002; Paramasivam, 2007) which suggest that building and maintaining relationships are more important aspects of Malaysian practice. Besides that, Malaysian negotiators also put a stress on friendship values, as nearly 80 percent of the in-service respondents were agreeable on the subject matter. In fact, one former Malaysian Minister stated that since the formation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia has been adopting the attitude of making friends with everybody in its diplomatic approach (Shafie, 2006).

#### **8.3.7 Negotiation strategies**

In conducting international negotiations, Malaysia did not adopt only a single strategy; instead the strategies were multiple and sometimes interconnected with each other, as revealed by the former diplomats. Some of the main strategies mentioned were:

1. Aligning with like-minded countries and championing Third World countries in order to get a strong support base in multilateral negotiations. Malaysia realized that it was just a small nation and working on a stand-alone basis was not going to help Malaysia advance its position among the large and powerful countries in the world. Therefore, the best strategy was to align with other countries that share the same principles or propositions so that, as a group, Malaysia has a chance of being heard and at the same time has the opportunity to defend its position. Among the international organizations that Malaysia is actively involved is the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) while the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the base for its regional cooperation. From the survey, the in-service diplomats supported this strategy with almost 60 percent of the respondents in favour of the statement that “Malaysia likes to align itself with other countries”.

Coalition-forming was one of the instruments adopted by countries in order to assert their influence upon other countries (Pfetsch, 1999), as a tool for weak countries to face strong nations (Zartman & Berman, 1982), and as a mechanism to ease the complexity of issues (Zartman, 1994b);

2. Lobbying to obtain support from other countries. In conducting the lobbying, “back-door negotiation” or “back-door diplomacy” was used extensively. In carrying out the lobby, Malaysia would send its diplomats to talk to several countries; especially those who Malaysia thought would give support, until the other countries took on the idea as their front or priority issue. This approach was mainly adopted during 1960s. This strategy was in-line with claims made by other scholars, who named it “quiet negotiation” (Muzaffar, 2001, p. 147) or “behind-the-scenes negotiation” (Barlow, 2001, p. 211). After Malaysia successfully carried out the “back-door” approach, Malaysia would keep quiet, pretending it was unaware of the agenda and just waiting for the moment to support the proposal made by the other countries. As Plantey (2007) mentioned, “The real skill may lie in giving the impression of being uninterested in the thing one really wants” (p. 484). Nevertheless, the survey among the in-service diplomats found that almost 90 percent of the respondents did not agree that the best strategy in international negotiation was to pretend to lose. This “back-door” approach seemed not to be favoured by the in-service diplomats, may be due to different time and upbringing factors. The in-service respondents, which consisted of 62 percent from the age group 31 to 40 years old category, may have become more extrovert due to more training, and thus might prefer face-to-face confrontation;
3. Conducting meetings with diplomats and dignitaries from other countries, and attending functions, cocktails, receptions and socializing. Besides developing and maintaining personal relationships with colleagues and friends, this is the opportunity to enhance networks. Better still, the diplomats should not miss the chance to gauge viewpoints and stands of other countries, especially the large powers;
4. Making use of the informalities, such as dinners and coffee breaks, to discuss the issues, to get to understand others’ positions and try to influence others, because

during these informal settings, the negotiators were more relaxed and casual, to the extent that sometimes the negotiators could secure a deal during such informalities. As one Malaysian diplomat wrote in his journal, this is the time for the diplomats to make use of their personal appeal, smooth-tongue and the art of persuasion effectively (Tan, 2000). The survey among the in-service diplomats supported this finding when 53.8 percent of the respondents agreed that deals can be clinched over a meal. Pfetsch (1999) did not deny that negotiators attempted to influence one another during informalities such as a round of golf or a dinner reception, and sometimes they managed to come up with solutions. In fact, Sjostedt (1999) argued that in multilateral negotiations, “critical consultations often take place in informal groups entirely outside the formal organization” (p. 228);

5. Learning by doing strategy in the process of becoming effective negotiators. In the early 60s and 70s, there were essentially no guidelines on negotiation prepared for the Malaysian diplomats. They had to learn the negotiation techniques through trial and error, with some help from their seniors. This made them tougher and with proper attitudes, they would sharpen their negotiating skills along the way. Loewenstein and Thompson (2006) described that learning by trial and error gives the opportunity for negotiators to explore the phenomenon, and with proper guidance, could develop negotiators who are creative in strategizing their moves. In addition, Zartman (2008) argued that this learning-by-doing paradigm is still considered the major approach adopted by the diplomatic academies;
6. Hosting a negotiation forum, because the host country can make use of the opportunity to strategize the negotiation to be in their favour by making certain proposals, adding new issues, and preparing the background paper to suit the position of the host country. This strategy of controlling the venue of the negotiation was perceived as beneficial to the country, as Berton (1991) argued that some countries went all the way not only to be a host to the negotiation forum, but also to control the details of the negotiation process and even the shape of the meeting table;

7. Mastering the rules of procedure thoroughly, especially in international forums, because the negotiator can utilize them in his or her favour. Plantey (2007) strongly recommended negotiators not only to be on familiar terms with the rules of procedure, but also manoeuvre them for their advantages. With regards to the rules of procedure, more than 60 percent of respondents from the survey believed that Malaysian negotiators have sound knowledge of the procedures of international negotiations;
8. Finding the right timing to advance a country's position, especially during multilateral negotiation forums. This is done when representatives were worn-out, especially during a long discussion. Part of the right timing also was the strategy to delay any negotiation until the country felt that it was really strong and ready to advance its position;
9. Discussing all domestic and sensitive matters openly and in depth so that all diplomats were well-versed with the issues. These issues could be a hindrance to negotiators if they were not addressed properly, especially in bilateral negotiations because the other party normally liked to manipulate the issues to their favour through provocation or other means. Vidal (2009) exposed a tactic by a negotiator from one country to discredit and weaken another country's negotiator by wild accusation of bribery;
10. Adopting a conciliatory approach, polite, and humble in bilateral negotiations, while in multilateral negotiations, being assertive and forceful are more appropriate. This is because in bilateral negotiations, the counterpart is only one country and being relationship-oriented, Malaysia has to be careful not to harm and jeopardize the relationship. The conciliatory approach is consistent with the finding made by Salleh (2005) that Malays prefer to adopt a conciliatory bargaining approach during any negotiation process. In multilateral negotiations, there are '101 countries' and if Malaysia does not force itself forward, nobody is going to listen and pay attention. Nonetheless, this finding seemed to contradict the findings from the survey among the in-service diplomats. More than 80 percent of the respondents did not agree with the statement that in bilateral negotiation, the Malaysian approach should be more conciliatory and open to compromise. On the other hand, the respondents were

quite mixed in their response to a statement that in multilateral negotiations, the Malaysian approach should be stronger and more confronting. Those against the statement were a little bit higher (51 percent) compared to those in favour of it (49 percent).

11. Knowing the language of negotiation very well, especially English language, because other people have different understandings on the functions of a comma and a full stop. The best strategy was to be able to agree on some words which can be interpreted in the country's favour. This finding is consistent with the writing of Vidal (2009), who said that negotiators around the United Nations climate negotiation did have a difficult time arguing about commas, colons and semi colons; and
12. Having continuous support and backup from the headquarters in order to receive new instructions and mandates, especially when the discussion was in process and a vote was required;

#### **8.3.8 Strong points in negotiation**

It is a reality that Malaysia is only a small country. However, the former diplomats realized that Malaysia has its strong points that could help advance its position in international negotiations. Among the strong points highlighted were:

1. Malaysia was quite well developed in terms of its infrastructure and managed to stay strong even during the financial crisis in 1997, even though Malaysia did not take up the loan offer from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Therefore, it was capable of negotiating from a point of strength and able to resist being manipulated by external factors, such as superpowers;
2. Malaysia was blessed with good past and present leaders who were clear and rational in their vision and mission. For example, Vision 2020, which was announced by the then Prime Minister Tun Mahathir, became the country's challenge and ultimate goal. Apart from the leaders, Malaysia also had diplomats who were professionally groomed and were able to bridge the gap between different positions. The survey among the in-service diplomats

revealed that a large majority of the respondents agreed that Malaysian negotiators know the country's maximum and minimum positions when they go for international negotiations. Apart from that, almost 80 percent of the respondents believed that it is not sufficient for Malaysia to just secure its minimum position in international negotiations. It seems that there is some attitudinal shift among the in-service diplomats, where they are more ambitious and wish for Malaysia to gain more in its negotiation outcome;

3. The tenets of Malaysian policy became the principles and guided Malaysia's position and strategies in international negotiations. The tenets were considered to be pragmatic and showed the true nature of the Malaysian approach. Malaysian negotiators also held strongly to principles to the extent that Malaysia sometimes became the only nation to vote against superpowers. The principles were an aversion to confrontation, peaceful settlement of conflicts, desire for bilateral, regional and international cooperation, desire for friendly relations with all countries, distrust for military alliances, and a belief in non-alignment;
4. Besides the guiding principles, some of the former diplomats revealed their personal principles in performing their duties. Some of the principles which I could gather were "A strong man does not fight, mentally or physically", "Every single action is done for the God, King and country", "Strive for the maximum"; and "Avoid bluff and bluster, making loud, or be boastful"; and
5. Malaysia was perceived to be practical, pragmatic, and professional in its approach to international negotiations and relations to such an extent that it compensated for whatever weaknesses the country was facing. For example, Malaysia was considered a fast learner in its training approach and its people were quite adaptive to new environments.

The survey conducted among the in-service diplomats found that the respondents had a positive perception of the negotiation skills of Malaysian negotiators. Out of the twenty skills asked in the questionnaire, the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with sixteen of them:

- Spoken language (English). More than 87 percent of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the spoken English language among Malaysian negotiators;
- Written language (English). The respondents were also positive with the written English language among the Malaysian negotiators, whereby 54 percent were satisfied and 33 percent were very satisfied;
- Listening skills. More than 25 percent of the respondents were very satisfied with the listening skills while nearly 70 percent were satisfied. In total, more than 94 percent were pleased with the listening skills of Malaysian negotiators;
- Networking skills. More than 77 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the networking skills of Malaysian negotiators;
- Negotiation exposure. The respondents were more positive (64 percent) in saying that Malaysian negotiators have enough negotiation exposure;
- Negotiation experience. More than 61 percent of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the negotiation experience of Malaysian negotiators;
- Willingness to learn. The respondents were positive (90 percent) with the Malaysian negotiators in terms of their willingness to learn, in which 70 percent were satisfied and 20 percent very satisfied;
- Tactical knowledge. The respondents were quite mixed in their response to tactical knowledge of Malaysian negotiators. Those in favour were slightly higher (51 percent) compared to those against it (49 percent);
- Knowledge of the substance. Majority of the respondents (74 percent) either were very satisfied or satisfied;



- Competitiveness. 64 percent of the respondents were pleased with the competitiveness of Malaysian negotiators;
- Open-mindedness. More than 64 percent of the respondents were happy with the open-mindedness of Malaysian negotiators;
- Teamwork spirit. Nearly 75 percent of the respondents were contented;
- Leader of the team. Majority of the respondents (95 percent) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the leader of the Malaysian negotiation team;
- Quick reaction to issues. Nearly 80 percent of the respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the Malaysian negotiators' skills in terms of quick reaction to issues;
- Stamina in attending international forums. In terms of stamina in attending international forums, more than 82 percent of the respondents were pleased; and
- Use of humor. More than 64 percent of the respondents were happy with the Malaysian negotiators in terms of use of humor.

### **8.3.9 Weaknesses in negotiation**

As a developing country, Malaysia cannot avoid weaknesses. In the area of negotiation itself, many weaknesses were revealed by the former diplomats, such as:

1. Malaysia failed to develop and create a core group of Malaysian negotiators who are experts in different areas and can negotiate on the same level with their counterparts. Although there was a directive by the then Prime Minister Tun Mahathir back in 1980s for Malaysia to start recruiting expert negotiators, the former diplomats felt that its achievement was still far from complete. This lack of expert negotiators could be seen in the case where Malaysia was involved in

territorial disputes about Pedra Branca (*Pulau Batu Putih*) with Singapore and had to hire international constitutional experts to negotiate the case on the Malaysian behalf at the International Court of Justice (“Law Experts,” 2008). However, the perception of the former diplomats seemed to contradict the views of the in-service diplomats. The survey among the in-service diplomats found that two-thirds of the respondents believed that Malaysia does have negotiation specialists. One explanation for the difference could be in the definition of negotiation specialists: the former diplomats might define it differently from the in-service diplomats. There was no definition of negotiation specialists given in the survey. Some former diplomats felt that there were personalities who might be considered as specialized negotiators, but the experts were believed to be scattered throughout various sectors of the public service and these individuals might not be fully utilized. This view was also echoed by the in-service diplomats in the survey. More than 60 percent of the respondents agreed that Malaysian negotiation specialists were not attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and almost 70 percent of the respondents were pessimistic that Malaysian negotiation specialists were fully utilized;

2. The Malaysian system of diplomatic training and career development was perceived to design its diplomats to be generalists instead of specialists. The approach adopted was a generalist approach. This finding is consistent with the observations made by a former Malaysia’s Special Envoy to the United Nations 1996-2000 (Ahmad, 2007). This could be the main reason why Malaysia seemed to fail to develop and build up its authoritative and expert negotiators at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although some former diplomats agreed that being generalists were advantages in one sense, such as having a better perspective of every issue, they also believed that Malaysia could be at a disadvantage in terms of developing specialized skills. The training on negotiation itself was seen as lacking, as the survey among the in-service diplomats found that nearly 60 percent of the respondents did not think that Malaysian negotiators have enough negotiation training to go for international negotiations. In addition, the former diplomats also felt that the public service did not recognize the continuing value of experts and expertise among the diplomats and other public officers, such that some were just made irrelevant after their retirement;

3. Malaysia was perceived to be lacking in strategic thinking in the sense that this country did not implement a coordinated and well-approached human resource program especially in creating specialized negotiators. There was an impression among the former diplomats that the country did not really put much thinking into developing specialized negotiators in fifteen years to come. The approach was more trial by fire. The underlying reason was that Malaysia was a blessed country. Historically, Malaysia has never been at risk, either geographically, climate wise or resource wise. There was no war, no famine, nor any direct threats that could jeopardize Malaysia's peace and harmony. Therefore, there was not any feeling that Malaysia's survival was at risk and this blissful mindset could be a contributing factor.
4. Malaysian diplomats hoped to develop their skills in negotiation and become specialists in certain areas based on their working experience and exposure. The career development approach was learning through experience or through the nature of their work. This was supported by the in-service diplomats surveyed. Almost 90 percent of the respondents agreed that Malaysian negotiators learn negotiation skills through their daily work. Loewenstein and Thompson (2006) argued that learning by trial and error, although has its own advantages, is not efficient in the sense that negotiators would repeat the same mistakes others have made. Guidelines in negotiation were merely minimal, or there were none at all. Two-thirds of the respondents from the survey among the in-service diplomats agreed that a general guideline for negotiators on how to negotiate with other countries was not readily available. Some diplomats were fortunate to be posted in all areas, whether they were bilateral, regional or international, and they grabbed the opportunity to develop and enhance their competencies in international negotiation. Those who were limited in their posting coverage would just be content with only some degree of negotiation skills. Furthermore some former diplomats also perceived that not many diplomats would want to be specialists in certain areas because there were ample opportunities for them to gain experience and exposure in different countries throughout their service.

5. Malaysian negotiators were perceived to have a complacent and lackadaisical attitude, for they did not prepare enough with their homework, to understand not only the issue, but the background of the issue, and the curriculum vitae of the opposite party. Consequently, they did not participate actively or articulate views and positions in discussions and forums. The worst case scenario was that they did not even get a grip of what Malaysia's position was for certain issues. Worse still was the diminishing habit of reading, especially amongst the diplomats. An experienced Malaysian diplomat observed that diplomatic negotiations require "constant alertness, a thorough knowledge of background briefs, and a wholesome distrust of every word and phrase uttered by anybody else" (Tan, 2000, p. 74). However, this observation was in contradiction with the findings from the survey among the in-service diplomats. More than 90 percent of the respondents were against the claim that "Malaysian negotiators attend international negotiations without knowing the substance";
6. There were cases where some leaders of the Malaysian delegations liked to find publicity through the media by informing and updating the status of the negotiation. The former diplomats found this practice as not encouraging because they were worried that the media might not work in tandem, get different pictures of the negotiation, and thus might publish all the weaknesses for other countries to read. The same concern was highlighted by the current Minister of Foreign Affairs when he said that the media and the Ministry must work in tandem so as to ensure all the news on talks are precisely reported ("Important for Media", 2009). This concern was also consistent with the stance of Singapore, which was concerned about media reporting and suggested that all bilateral negotiations between the two countries be made in private and without going to the media (Sidhu, 2006). Malaysia's performance in the international negotiations also seemed to depend on the leader of the team, if he or she was good, rather than the whole team being good. This was supported by the result of the survey among the in-service diplomats, as more than 60 percent of the respondents agreed to this notion.
7. Malaysian negotiators also seemed to lack other negotiation-related skills as well, for example, spoken and written language of other foreign languages

besides English. Nearly three quarter (74 percent) of the respondents among the in-service diplomats from the survey either were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with Malaysian negotiators' skills in terms of spoken language in other foreign languages besides English, while 77 percent of respondents believed that Malaysian negotiators are lacking in written foreign languages. More than 70 percent of the respondents were not contented with the negotiation training of Malaysian negotiators. Knowledge of the other negotiation parties was also perceived as lacking by the in-service diplomats, as 54 percent of the respondents were dissatisfied. The weaknesses in articulation and presentation skills among Malaysian young diplomats were admitted by the current Minister of Foreign Affairs ("Bring Grouses To Me," 2009).

#### **8.3.10 The cultural factor on Malaysian styles of negotiation**

Culture did play a significant role in influencing the way Malaysian negotiators approach or conduct themselves in international negotiations. Hendon et al. (1996) argued that "no one can usually avoid bring along his or her own cultural assumptions, images, and prejudices or other attitudinal baggage into any international negotiation situation" (p. xi). The survey among the in-service diplomats found that over 92 percent of the respondents believed that negotiators take their culture with them when they go for international negotiations. Among the characteristics of Malaysia and its negotiators, as mentioned by the former diplomats were:

1. Malaysia has been successful in handling a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. This experience of maintaining stability, harmony and peace has given Malaysia extra skills in handling intercultural challenges, and without realizing it, Malaysians have subconsciously developed certain modes of behaviour that encompass respect for diversity, reverence for differences, sensitivity to different cultures, and towards more consensual and amenable kind of engagement. Therefore, it was not surprising to find that Malaysians were ready to compromise, as long as harmony was preserved. In general, the win-win attitude was a natural phenomenon to Malaysia as it was already incorporated in the Malaysian way of life;

2. The Malaysians, especially the Malays were described as kind-hearted, nice to others, generous, friendly, with no unkind intentions, putting emphasis on friendship, liked to please others, more complacent in life, soft-spoken, preferred a more “relaxed” approach, did not desire drastic change, were generally average, indirect in saying no and preferring to adopt a more conciliatory approach in resolving conflicts. This latter kind of character was seen as not helping Malaysia in advancing its position in the international arena and was bad for diplomacy, such that the then Prime Minister of Malaysia gave a direction to Malaysian negotiators to open up, be brave, speak up, speak out, and learn to be rude and quarrel with outsiders in order to open up fronts;
3. The cultural factor was significant. That was why even though directives and more daring challenges were promoted to Malaysian negotiators to transform their method of approaching international issues and diplomacy, there seemed to be minimal or no improvement at all. Former diplomats still noticed that Malaysians were not assertive, were withdrawn, humble, did not show-off, were introverted, were shy of others, non-confrontational, non-combative, very sedate, very polite and self-contained. Perhaps, that was the way Malaysians were brought up. An example provided was the way Malaysians interacted with one another in the civil service. Due to the hierarchical structure, subordinates were not supposed to question their superior, and superiors did not encourage open discussion. The point was that the Malaysians will not “fight” among themselves, let alone to “exchange blows” with outsiders from other countries. Another explanation provided was that it all went back to basic Malay cultural values, which were to understate and undersell oneself, to be self-effacing, to have humility, modesty and to abjure extreme behaviour, to be respectful of opposing views, and to react to negative language of the other side in a manner that would not reciprocate that hostility through the use of refined language;
4. The main ethnic groups of Malaysia, essentially the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians have been living and mixing together for more than a century, and there seemed to have some kind of a blend of Malaysian culture. For example, the Indians were found to have toned down and emulated the Malays in terms of

not speaking up, because they seemed to have the feeling that “you are not that popular if you speak up too much”. This finding is in agreement with those of Lim and Abdullah (2001) who found that in general, there is no significant difference among the three main Malaysian ethnic groups in cultural dimensions because Malaysians from the three main ethnic groups have assimilated their values in the wider context of Malaysian culture. However, the former diplomats noticed that there seemed to be some detectable differences between the races. For instance, the Malays were attributed as gentle, disinclined to be aggressive, engaged in a very careful construction of language, and face-saving. Its social norm is one of being consensual and minimizing conflicts. On the other hand, the Chinese were viewed as more pragmatic, more calculative, and could speak their mind better than the Malays. The Indians were perceived as more articulate, good at social interactions, and louder - the decibel level is higher;

Some of the findings from the interviews with former diplomats were supported by the findings from the survey among the in-service diplomats, and some were contradictory. This may be due to the improvement in the training programs for the diplomats, especially in negotiation training, after the establishment of Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations in 1991. The findings from the survey that supported the findings from the interview were:

- More than 74 percent of the respondents were in favour that Malaysian negotiators will give way to other delegates to speak up. Only 26 percent disagreed;
- 56 percent of the respondents were positive that Malaysian negotiators prefer face-saving;
- Almost 80 percent of the respondents believed that Malaysian negotiators are humble;
- Nearly 80 percent were also positive in saying that Malaysian negotiators have no unkind intentions; and

- A big majority of the respondents (92 percent) either strongly agreed or agreed that Malaysian negotiators do not like to be seen as arrogant.

Contradictory findings were:

- 54 percent of the respondents among the in-service diplomats did not believe that Malaysian negotiators are generous;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents were against the notion that Malaysian negotiators are lacking in confidence;
- More than 70 percent of the respondents did not agree that Malaysian negotiators do not mix with other negotiators;
- The majority of the respondents (82 percent) did not approve of the idea that Malaysian negotiators are apprehensive about promoting their views;
- 64 percent of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed that Malaysian negotiators like to please the other party;
- More than 70 percent were against the notion that Malaysian negotiators are not assertive;
- 72 percent of the respondents were against the idea that Malaysian negotiators want to conclude the deal as soon as possible;
- Nearly 85 percent of the respondents were optimistic that Malaysian negotiators are ready to confront if required; and
- 54 percent of the respondents were against the statement that Malaysian negotiators will say the team leader is always right.



### **8.3.11 Comparing Malaysia with other countries**

In the efforts to explore the Malaysian practice in international negotiation, it was a good approach to get feedback from the participants on what they think other countries do in their negotiation practice. A comparative method would be a good approach of studying because a country can learn more about itself (Berton, 1999). By studying the negotiation practice of other countries, Malaysia can reflect on its experience and thus can possibly emulate the best practice and improve accordingly. Therefore, the former diplomats highlighted some of the practices of other countries that were different from Malaysia's:

1. Singapore adopted a business-like attitude in its approach to negotiations. All their dealings were based on a cost-benefit analysis, how much they can gain out of a negotiation compared to the other party. The styles and the attributes were such that Singaporean negotiators could place their negotiating partner at ease and weave around their interest and get him persuasively to buy their ideas. In their practice, Singaporean negotiators were less-expressive and clever in hiding what they really wanted. They will not publish or give statements freely on negotiating issues. If need be, only certain individuals will give comments, the rest of the team members would keep quiet; they only sent one standard message. The negotiators and politicians were professional; focus, disciplined, non-emotional, and their integrity was beyond question. This could be seen in their process of preparation, during and after any negotiation. One major strategy employed by Singapore was to package its negotiation deals. For example, during a bilateral negotiation with Malaysia, Singapore's Premier Goh, when referring to the package of unresolved issues, was to have said, "This is an all-or-nothing kind of package" (Sidhu, 2006, p. 79). In addition, once an agreement was achieved, they would adhere to it. They were very meticulous in documenting, keeping and retrieving decisions. Singapore also had devised an efficient remuneration system for its public service officers, but their officers were also subject to strict performance appraisal. If the officials failed to perform, they would be penalized; there was no system of apology. They had also developed experts to monitor their surrounding region;

2. Apart from Singapore, many other neighbouring countries like Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and India have developed specialization as their main approach to advance their countries in diplomacy and international negotiation. For example, in Indonesia, when an officer was posted to a multilateral post, he or she ended up serving only in multilateral posts for the whole of his or her career. The same seemed to happen in India and Japan, where they have officers who have been negotiating with authorities for the last 30 years in G77 or in its environment. One expert negotiator from the Philippines has been negotiating in the United Nations climate talks since 1992 (Vidal, 2009). Malaysia also could not compete with three countries in South East Asia, which are Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, in terms of giving complimentary hospitality when they host international negotiations. These nations had outstanding methods of pleasing the guests;
3. Countries such as Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, Brunei, and Indonesia were viewed as getting better than Malaysia not only in the English language, but also in other foreign languages, such as Russian and German. For instance, Brunei used to join Malaysian delegations to Commonwealth and OIC meetings before they became a member, but they have improved tremendously; their diplomats were very competent and well-trained. So did the Thais and Indonesians: they used to be struggling in the English language, but no longer. Thailand was more advanced in terms of training for their diplomats, where they had a special program of sending their officials to centres of excellence all over the world, like Cambridge, Oxford, and Harvard. These highly qualified diplomats are back in the country and are running the show;
4. Japan was perceived as clever in its tactics and strategy in handling negotiations. The Japanese had many teams to represent their country and join the negotiations, whereas Malaysia normally only sent one team. After a long discussions and meetings, Malaysia would not have replacement groups, but Japan easily had their officers taking turns. Japan also had the practice of taking notes throughout the negotiation process. They would note down everything discussed in the negotiation. One cunning tactic was to pretend not to understand English, while in reality, they were much better in English.

Although the former Malaysian diplomats mentioned that Malaysia normally engaged only a single team to take part in international negotiations, their opinion was not in-line with the findings from the survey among the in-service diplomats. More than 60 percent of the respondents were not in favour of the statement that “Malaysia only sends a single team of several negotiators for international negotiations”. Perhaps Malaysia has improved its practice as time has progressed;

5. The superpower like the United States was viewed as approaching negotiations from a position of strength by exercising its supremacy and authority. Although they might try to be a little humble so that the countries could negotiate on an equal footing, the power element could not escape from the mind of negotiators from a tiny country like Malaysia. The United States negotiators were perceived as using a lot of threats and would insist upon their own way when discussions did not suit their interests. It was not denied that the United States have specialists on other countries and these experts became their institutional memory, whereas Malaysia depended too much upon information from files. Another significant point to add is an observation made by one of the former diplomats who said that the Americans just knew how and when to interject humour in presenting their case.
6. Some other countries like Holland and Germany were perceived to be more direct to the point in negotiation; they either agreed or disagreed with the propositions. A country like Britain was perceived to be more indirect and gentler, in the sense that the negotiators would not say yes or no directly, but would say that they would consider propositions carefully. Britain was also known to send its diplomats for sabbatical leave to further their knowledge in certain areas.

#### **8.4 Summary**

This chapter converged and discussed the findings from the qualitative and quantitative approaches and highlighted the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations. The key features were divided into eleven aspects, such as

preparation, the role of home sector agencies, the role of stakeholders, documentation system, improvement initiatives adopted by the government, negotiation objectives and strategies, strong points and weaknesses in negotiation, the cultural factors and the comparison of practice between Malaysia and other countries. Of the findings from the two approaches, some were complementary and others were contradictory. This is not surprising since the participants among the former diplomats and the respondents among the in-service diplomats were different individuals with different experiences, characters, and opinions, and the fact that they served in different periods. However, this added more flavour to the discussion and at some points, attempts were made to explain the differences.

The last chapter concludes the research and provides some policy recommendations and further research projects.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **9.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter firstly presents a summary of the whole research journey that includes the motivation, the identification of the gaps from the literature review process, the methodology adopted to carry out the research and the findings that emerged from the data. The chapter goes on to present the application of the findings to international negotiations. Then, the contribution of this research to international knowledge and scholarship is discussed. In addition, based on the research findings, this chapter highlights some policy recommendations. Although exclusively intended for the Malaysian government; they are also applicable to other nations. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the limitations of the study, as well as recommending implications for further research, whether they are specifically for the Malaysian context or in general, for international negotiation knowledge and scholarship.

#### **9.2 The research journey**

This research was initially sparked by a conflict in a water treaty between Malaysia and Singapore in 2003. Both countries seemed to endlessly claim their rights and defend their positions on the revised rate of the water price. Various media channels were utilized to express each country's dissatisfaction over the issue. Although the issue died down as time went by, it never escaped my mind as a Malaysian. This enquiry ignited my interest to explore the field of international negotiation, and therefore I embarked a personal journey to complete research in this subject. I personally did not know much what to expect from the research since, I have never taken part in any international negotiations. Furthermore, I am not a diplomat. Although I belong to the Administrative and Diplomatic scheme of service, I have never served the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as I have spent my sixteen working years in home sector agencies.

My journey started with a literature review on negotiation; mainly its definition and concepts, why negotiation is important, its elements, the process involved in conducting a negotiation, the theories and models available on the subject, what literature is saying

about negotiation styles and factors that influence the styles, what type of research had been conducted in the field of negotiation, and particularly what research had been carried out to identify the Malaysian styles in international negotiation. The literature review also took me to another dimension, in which culture is regarded as a very important factor that shapes negotiators' behaviour. Thus, I went deeper into researching culture, focusing in past research into cultural dimensions by scholars such as Hofstede, Trompenaar, Schwartz, and Hall. I believed the cultural factor was relevant to the research since I was targeting specifically Malaysian styles of negotiation. My literature review convinced me that there was a lack of research on the Malaysian government practice in international negotiations. What emerged from the literature was merely some descriptive explanation about Malaysians' behaviour during business negotiations and some prescriptive accounts on how to negotiate with Malaysian business people.

As there was no such past research on Malaysia practice in international negotiations, an exploratory approach was considered relevant and appropriate, since the research was to investigate what was really occurring with Malaysian government practice in international negotiations. After much thought, the aim of this research was to explore and highlight the key features of Malaysian government negotiating practice in international negotiations. Since this research involved the Malaysian government and covered international diplomacy, the best people to participate were Malaysian diplomats. The question arose was who to choose as participants, whether diplomats still serving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (that is the in-service diplomats), or former Malaysian diplomats. After much consideration and deliberation, I decided to involve both categories of diplomats as my participants and respondents. Therefore the research encompassed the following research questions:

1. How do former Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
2. How do in-service Malaysian diplomats perceive the Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?
3. What are the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations?

When it came to research methodology, I chose to conduct a mixed-method approach because this research enquiry was considered the best way to address both categories of participants and respondents; mainly a qualitative approach to address the former diplomats and a quantitative design to address the in-service diplomats. In dealing with the mixed-method approach, I adopted an Exploratory Design, which gave emphasis to a qualitative approach and treated the quantitative enquiry as a complementary avenue for the research. The qualitative enquiry was carried out mainly using a key-informant interview as the main tool, and 22 former diplomats were interviewed using a snowballing selection technique. The findings from the qualitative enquiry were then transformed into a questionnaire survey to get feedback and opinion from the in-service diplomats. In total, 39 answered questionnaires were gathered from the survey. This number was considered small, although it was ten percent of the targeted population who met the criteria. The findings from the quantitative survey could be limited and may not be significant due to the small number of response. So, a larger sample would definitely increase the significance of the findings. The detailed discussion of the research methodology was in Chapter Five.

An analysis of the qualitative approach was conducted thoroughly and with the help of qualitative computer software, NVivo Version 7.0. After much thought and reflection, five main themes emerged from the qualitative data, and these themes were based on what the participants thought were important and unique to the Malaysian context as far as negotiating in the international arena was concerned. The detailed description of the themes is as in Chapter Six. The five themes were as follows:

- 1) Theme one – Acknowledging the need to be fully prepared prior to conducting international negotiations;
- 2) Theme two - Attentiveness to Malaysian approach in international negotiations;
- 3) Theme three - Mind over cultural influence in the Malaysian approach to international negotiations;
- 4) Theme four - Comparing with, and learning from, other countries; and

5) Theme five - Acknowledging the role of stakeholders.

The quantitative analysis was merely descriptive since the research was more exploratory in nature and no hypotheses were formulated. The analysis was carried out using SPSS software, although other spreadsheet programs like Microsoft Excel could also be used. The data were mainly presented in the form of how many percentages of the in-service diplomats were agreeable or vice versa, or were satisfied or not, with the statements given regarding the Malaysian practice in international negotiations. As mentioned earlier, the findings from the quantitative analysis were meant to complement the findings from the qualitative enquiry. The analysis showed findings which supported the claims made by the former diplomats, while there were some which were contradictory. The detailed discussion on the quantitative findings was explained in Chapter Seven.

An incorporation and triangulation of findings from the qualitative approach and quantitative survey was made in Chapter Eight. The chapter highlighted and discussed the key features of Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations, reflecting the themes assembled from the interviews with former diplomats and opinions gathered from the in-service diplomats. The interesting part of the union between the findings from the two approaches was its mixed nature. Some were complementary with each other, and some were contradictory. However, since this research has a more qualitative emphasis, the findings from the interviews with the former diplomats were regarded as the centre of focus, while the findings from the survey among the in-service diplomats were treated as complementary. The chapter also compared the findings with current and past literature, including the government documents. Eleven key features of Malaysian negotiating practice were identified in terms of the following aspects:

1. Preparation;
2. Role of home sector agencies;
3. Role of stakeholders;
4. Documentation system;
5. Administrative improvement initiatives;
6. Negotiation objectives;
7. Negotiation strategies;



8. Strong points in negotiation;
9. Weaknesses in negotiation;
10. The cultural factor on Malaysian styles of negotiation; and
11. Comparing Malaysia with other countries.

### **9.3 Application of findings to international negotiation**

The findings from the research on Malaysian practice in international negotiations are not only relevant to Malaysia, but are also applicable to other nation-states as well, since international negotiation is a universal phenomenon. In terms of preparation, the items that have to be given attention to, as specified by the participants and respondents of this research, are a good input for other countries to ponder, because those matters are pertinent to ensure outstanding performance of any country during international negotiations. The issues addressed, such as the country's position in any international negotiation are extremely important for negotiators in facing other negotiators. The principles of the country's foreign policy are also significant since they can be general guidelines for the country's negotiators in any negotiation they are involved in. Other items on the list are also vital and should not be taken lightly by any country.

The role of home sector agencies is significantly increasing in this globalized environment, due to a variety of issues to be tackled and dealt with. Diplomats serving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs alone are clearly not able to manage all issues by themselves. They need extra hands from home sector agencies to face the emerging new and complex issues in bilateral, regional and multilateral negotiations. For example, The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) alone listed nine significant issues in its agenda for the 64<sup>th</sup> session. The issues for discussions were: international peace and security; economic growth and sustainable development; development of Africa; promotion of human rights; humanitarian and disaster relief assistance; justice and international law; disarmament, drugs, crime, international terrorism; and organizational and administrative matters. In addition, countries have other bilateral, regional and multilateral negotiations to attend to, with even more varieties of issues. The role of home sector agencies was undeniably of great importance for the environmental issues at the Copenhagen Climate Conference 2009.

The commitment of stakeholders is no doubt an essential element for a nation-state to advance its position in any international negotiation. The stakeholders are the ones who decide which position a country is to adopt. Besides that, they also determine which matters are negotiable and which are not. A nation-state may take into consideration the influence of non-government organizations, institutions, groups and individuals, either directly or indirectly, on matters regarding the country's affairs, because they may put some weight towards positive or negative sides of the country's position and image.

A documentation system is sometimes taken for granted and assumed to be in order and properly implemented. This may not be the case, as the experience of Malaysia shows that there is still a lot to be done to ensure smooth operation of the system. The coordination of documents before, during, and after each negotiation is enormously important. The retrieval, archival, and tracking system of the documents, if properly controlled and managed, could ease the burden of determining which department has what documents, since the documents may be needed by more than one department.

The influence of culture on the negotiating practice of a nation is also an important and vital element. The findings from this research clearly indicate the significant power of culture in shaping any country's negotiators behaviour in facing international negotiations. The influence could be seen through out the entire process of negotiation, starting from the preparation part, how the negotiators behave during the actual negotiation, and how any country handles the outcome after the negotiations. The culture may also play its role in determining the country's objectives in any negotiation, how strategies are chosen and executed, and what type of tactics are adopted.

One strategy that was particularly relevant to multilateral negotiation is to form a coalition amongst like-minded countries. This strategy was strongly emphasized by the participants of this research. This coalition-forming seems to be an accepted approach as it is one of the means adopted especially by weaker countries to assert their influences upon other countries, especially the stronger ones. Besides forming coalitions, the countries also conducted lobbying to acquire support from other countries. The negotiators do not only perform the lobbying formally, but they also make use of informalities to influence others.

Last, but not least, are the varieties of styles and approaches adopted by nation-states in advancing their positions in international diplomacy. The participants of this research could easily point out the different styles of negotiation employed by countries; some used the power approach, some were competitive-oriented, some developed experts and specialists, and some were very meticulous in their approach. These attributes make international negotiation a complex and interesting issue. Therefore, the more information a country has on the styles and approaches of other countries, the more equipped the country is in preparing its way forward.

#### **9.4 Contribution of research to international negotiation knowledge and scholarship**

Researching Malaysian negotiating practice in international negotiations from Malaysian diplomats' perspectives and experiences contributes to negotiation knowledge and scholarship. In particular, this research helps to close the gaps in the literature from these aspects:

- 1) This research highlights the key features of Malaysian government's negotiating practice in international negotiations from the perspectives of Malaysian diplomats. Thus, it addresses the lack of research on Malaysian negotiating styles from the viewpoint of the public sector, as opposed to the business sector;
- 2) This study extends the work on non-Western perspectives on diplomatic negotiation by injecting Malaysian notions of international negotiation, as seen by Malaysians;
- 3) This enquiry in Malaysian practice in international negotiation enriches the current literature on negotiating styles of countries in Asia;
- 4) This research adds to the small amount of international scholarship on diplomatic negotiation; and

- 5) This study, which employed a mixed-method approach, complements the need to employ varieties of research methods in negotiation research.

The findings from this research also benefit the negotiation practitioners in Malaysia and other nations from these viewpoints:

- 1) The findings of this research help Malaysian negotiators to better comprehend and appreciate their practice in international negotiations and thus eliminate misunderstandings and disagreements due to a lack of awareness or appreciation of their unique styles of negotiating;
- 2) The findings also generate important insights for those in charge of diplomatic training in Malaysia and give them opportunities to design and develop more appropriate modules in negotiation training;
- 3) The results help negotiators from different nations to comprehend the negotiation styles of Malaysia, and thus may avoid stereotyping and bias related to differences in aspects such as culture, history, social, political, and economics; and
- 4) The findings are used as a basis for me to recommend appropriate policy to enhance the Malaysian negotiation competence in the international arena.

## **9.5 Policy recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, I am able to advance some policy recommendations that could enhance Malaysia's negotiating practice, especially in the international arena. These recommendations are not only meant for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but should traverse home sector agencies as well because they are increasingly important in representing Malaysia at an international level. On a bigger scale, these recommendations are also applicable to other countries, as the international negotiation phenomenon is getting more and more complex everyday. The recommendations are:

1. Creation of a national level negotiation team. There is a need now for Malaysia to initiate and create a national level negotiation team consisting of experts, or a

pool of specialists in all aspects of interdisciplinary fields, or in aspects which Malaysia could prioritize in order to advance or protect its national interest. The experts would not be exclusively diplomats from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but could be sourced from the home sector agencies, academics, those in the private sector, or even from Malaysians who are living abroad. Once these specialists are identified, the government can fall back on their expertise in time of needs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Prime Minister's Department could be the Secretariat for this national expert team;

2. Re-engineering of training. The training element is no doubt an important factor in creating a professional and effective pool of negotiators. As the world is increasingly globalized, the approach to training must also be adapted to cater for the dynamic situational change. The previous training template must be revisited and changed accordingly as it might not be relevant anymore. At the same time, a new training template must be designed to meet the new criteria of a globalized world. For example, the new way of training the Malaysian negotiators should focus more towards specializing in certain crucial fields and areas, without neglecting the need for being generalists. Another method is to get more practising experts in negotiation to conduct the training, instead of relying only on academics. In addition, the training should be geared towards more practical and simulation type training rather than theoretical and knowledge-based, without denying the importance of knowledge and cultural dimensions. Furthermore, former and retired negotiators could provide the training, so as not to waste their invaluable and lengthy experiences;
3. More exposure to actual international negotiations. There is always a first time to everything, and the earlier the Malaysian negotiators are exposed to international negotiations, the more rapidly they will bring out the potential in themselves to be effective negotiators. Attending training alone is not enough. Negotiators require various types of negotiation training, but they need to feel and experience the real situation, and observe how others negotiate, in order to internalize the essence and thus prepare themselves for more actual negotiations;
4. Documentation system. Documents are certainly necessary to ensure long-lasting and continuation of archives, especially when they involve legal matters,

such as conflicts on territorial claims. It is well-appreciated if the documentation system is properly taken care of. However, the Malaysian public service consists of many ministries, departments and agencies, and the possibility of knowing who keeps what documents can be difficult and troublesome, especially when there is an urgency to look for the documents. Perhaps setting up one centre to manage all the documents would be a good idea, since this central organization will make sure that all the documentation and all correspondence would be centrally managed and kept in one place. Hence, through time, the documents could be conserved, preserved and properly maintained;

5. Multi-language skills. In any negotiation, the first thing a negotiator has to do is master the language, because without it, there is no way that an argument may be formulated, or an instantaneous rebuttal made. The negotiator has to be a quick thinker and has to be able to articulate his or her views clearly in defending the country's national positions. Besides mastering English language, which is a common language accepted throughout the world, there is also a need for Malaysian negotiators to start mastering other key languages as well, such as Mandarin and French. It will be advantageous to Malaysia if its negotiators can communicate fluently in Mandarin, as China is rapidly emerging as a global power;
6. A collection of other countries' negotiating styles. Malaysian negotiators no doubt have a lot of experiences in negotiating with other countries, whether they are in the form of bilateral, regional, or multilateral forums. Through these experiences, they could easily detect general negotiating styles of other countries. It would be very educational and valuable if this knowledge was collected in the form of written documents to be shared among Malaysian negotiators, especially for those who are new to the field. The negotiators could also share the best practice or the better way to manage another country's way of negotiating. Then, it would be easier for the newcomers to read and comprehend these styles to avoid repeating the same mistakes committed by their seniors;

7. Posting of Malaysian diplomats to home sector agencies and vice versa. The posting can either be for a short-term, e.g., three to six months, or for a long-term between one to two years. This domestic cross-posting would be advantageous for those involved because they can physically and practically learn the ins and outs of the ministries or agencies they are in. Besides learning about the other organization, this would also spark appreciation of the organization and perhaps could lead for more ideas for improvement;
8. Negotiation as a teaching subject in government's training institutions and higher learning institutes. Negotiation skills cannot be learned and practised in a short time. If negotiation is made as a teaching subject in training institutions and higher learning institutes, trainees and students are exposed to the theory and knowledge of negotiation at an early stage. Then, it is just a matter of their own initiatives and efforts to go further and develop their skills; and
9. Succession planning for future negotiators. A long-term and clear strategy to produce future negotiators would be beneficial for Malaysia in the long run. A gap analysis ought to be done to determine what Malaysia has, what Malaysia does not have, and what Malaysia aspires to have in the years to come.

## **9.6 Limitations and further research**

This research has shed some light on key features of Malaysian practice in international negotiations from the perspective of Malaysian diplomats. The findings could be a stepping stone for Malaysia to go forward in enhancing its negotiation effectiveness, especially at the international level. However, the present study has its own limitations. The most obvious limitation is the small sample size in the quantitative part of the study. A larger sample would definitely increase the rigour of the findings and would allow for possible generalization of the findings to the in-service diplomat group. Therefore, further research that incorporates a similar design but with a larger sample size would be of value. Another limitation is the small number of participants from the Chinese and Indian ethnicities, and also the small number of female diplomats. A balanced number from each ethnic and gender categories will add more diversity to this research.

One area of further research that could be considered is to gauge the Malaysian practice in international negotiations from the perspective of home sector agencies, especially those who are directly involved at the international level, such as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry. The perspective of the home sector agencies may be different from the perspective of the Malaysian diplomats. However, the findings would complement the findings from the present research.

Another area for future research would be to gauge the perspective of foreign diplomats who have experience dealing with Malaysian negotiators at the international arena. Although the depth of the study would be limited to only cover the behaviour of Malaysian negotiators, it would be very enlightening and informative to determine what other countries' diplomats think about the Malaysian negotiators. Other possible outcomes of this study would be the strength and weaknesses of Malaysian teams. These outcomes could be a good input for the government of Malaysia in assessing its negotiating team's performance at the international stage.

Besides gauging the perspective of foreign diplomats, an ethnographic study of a Malaysian negotiating team at the international level could also be an interesting area of further research. The researcher could be one of the team members, but he or she would not be involved in the negotiations. The researcher would become an observer and would note down moves and behaviours of the Malaysian team. Based on his or her observation, the researcher will conduct interviews with the team members to get more clarification and in-depth understanding of the subject. Besides that, case studies of negotiations between Malaysia and other countries, whether they were bilateral, regional, or multilateral, would also be a good field for future research.

Malaysia is a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country and the negotiators who represent Malaysia in international negotiation may come from different ethnics and races. These different ethnic negotiators might be encouraged to work together to share their experiences and perspectives.

This research has also become an impetus for the researcher to view international negotiation from a more open and wide attitude. From this research, I realize that there



are many areas in international negotiation that could be covered, and additional research in these areas could be beneficial to international negotiation knowledge and scholarship. Amongst the further research that could be undertaken are:

- 1) Diplomatic negotiation is best conducted when there is a balance of power between the parties. However, this balance of power seldom happens, and countries do exert their power in negotiations, as mentioned by the participants of this research. Therefore, a study on the influence of power on negotiation is a field for research. The study may also look at how weaker countries negotiate with powerful nation-states;
- 2) Countries form coalitions and alliances among themselves, especially in multilateral negotiations, and these actions seem to be desired and work well. Therefore, an attempt to unearth the insights of this coalition-forming would be advantageous to international negotiation practitioners and theorists;
- 3) International conferences are employed as a means to bring countries together into a central place, where all discussions and negotiations are conducted. Comprehensive research on the roles of international conferences in facilitating international negotiations would be an excellent area of study;
- 4) Hosting a negotiation forum may be advantageous to the hosting country, as specified by the participants of this research. A full study on the significance of hosting a negotiation forum would be useful for international negotiation knowledge;
- 5) The approaches employed in bilateral negotiations versus regional negotiations versus international negotiations have different characteristics and features. A question that might be asked is: “Are there differences and similarities for each type of negotiation?” or “Do countries approach bilateral negotiations differently from regional negotiations and international negotiations?”;
- 6) Negotiation is a phenomenon that attracts interests from many fields of study, such as law, marketing, organizational behaviour, games theory, psychology, international relations, and management. A study of international negotiations

from the point of view of these different fields of study could provide a comprehensive understanding of international negotiation knowledge;

- 7) The actors of international negotiations are not only governments, but also non-government organizations (NGO) such as trade unions, religious institutions, humanitarian groups, professional bodies and secret societies. A study of the influence and behaviour of these NGOs on international negotiations, their internal patterns of decision-making, and their vulnerabilities could be a good source of knowledge. The research may also include the influence of public opinion as well;
- 8) Negotiators employ many strategies and tactics in international negotiations. A specific study on these strategies and tactics adopted may be beneficial for the international diplomacy. Comparison could be made of strategies and tactics used in business negotiations versus diplomatic negotiations;
- 9) Most of the studies on the influence of culture on international negotiations have been examining how national cultures influence the negotiations. The research could be advanced further by looking at how organizational and professional cultures affect the negotiations;
- 10) The world is experiencing an advanced stage in information and communication technology (ICT), and this development in ICT is influencing the international negotiation phenomena. Research on the role of mass media and the internet in international negotiations would be an interesting and exciting piece of work; and
- 11) Research on failures and successes in international negotiations would help practitioners to be aware of things to avoid and to be mindful of best practice.

## **9.7 Summary**

This final chapter of the research highlighted a summary of the whole research process. It began with the researcher's motivation for the study and the journey continued with

literature review and identifying gaps in the literature, the construction of research aim and questions, the research methodologies and fieldwork, the analysis of the findings, and finally answering the research questions. The chapter also presented the application of the findings to international negotiation knowledge. Most importantly, the chapter highlighted the contribution of this research to international negotiation knowledge and scholarship. Finally, the chapter shed some light on policy recommendations, its limitations, and recommendations for further research. In a nutshell, this research has successfully helped me answer the inquiry about the water treaty conflict between Malaysia and Singapore. This research has also facilitated my general understanding, in particular, on the approach of Malaysian practice in international negotiation, and the processes of international negotiation in general.

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## GLOSSARY

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention
EAS	East Asia Summits
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
G77	Group 77
ICU	Implementation and Coordination Unit
IDFR	Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAMPU	Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NAM	Non-aligned Movement
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PSD	Public Service Department
SEARCCT	Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
<i>Wisma Putra</i>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia
ZOPFAN	Declaration of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## **APPENDICES**



## Appendix 1: Human Ethics Approval (first phase)



# MEMORANDUM

## Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Marilyn Waring  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 23 September 2008  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/204 **International negotiation styles: A perspective of Malaysian diplomats.**

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Dear Marilyn

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 8 September 2008 and that I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 13 October 2008.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 23 September 2011.

This approval is for the initial interview and focus group parts of the research only and full information about the questionnaire stage needs to be presented to AUTEC for consideration and approval before data collection commences for that stage.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 23 September 2011;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 23 September 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

Madeline Banda

**Executive Secretary**

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Hishamuddin Moyd Hashim smohd@aut.ac.nz, hmohdhashim@yahoo.com

## **Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet (key informant interviews)**

### **Participant Information Sheet (Key informant interviews)**



#### **Date Information Sheet Produced**

26 August 2008.

#### **Project Title**

International negotiation styles: A perspective of Malaysian diplomats.

#### **An Invitation**

Hello, my name is Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim and I am currently studying for my doctorate programme at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). My research is about understanding Malaysian diplomats' experiences in international negotiations and highlighting key features of Malaysian diplomats' negotiation styles. As you are highly experienced in international negotiations, I humbly would like to invite you to participate in the research project. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any time and this will not affect you in any way.

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to highlight the key features of Malaysian diplomats' negotiation styles in international negotiation from their own experiences and perspectives. I hope this project will lead to the completion of my doctoral study at AUT. I also plan to employ the data for conference proceedings and other refereed publications.

#### **How was I chosen for this invitation?**

My main participants of this research are Malaysian retired diplomats. You were probably referred to this study by the Association of Former Malaysian Diplomats or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to your vast experience in international negotiations.

#### **What will happen in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this project, I will invite you to participate in an individual interview. The interview should not exceed 90 minutes and will be audio-recorded. It will be arranged at your preferred time in a public meeting place that is convenient to you. It will be conducted in English.

#### **What are the discomforts and risks?**

There will be no expected discomforts or risks in this research. However, you may be experiencing psychological and/or emotional discomforts since you will have to remember past experiences. You might also feel uncomfortable to detail your experiences in international negotiations due to security issues.

#### **How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

The interview will be conducted in ways that you are comfortable with. At any time during the interview you may choose not to talk about subjects that you find distressing. You may also withdraw from the interview and/or the study at any time and your data will be destroyed. Your real names will not be used in my thesis. I will use pseudonyms and delete all identifiable personal information. Additionally, after our individual interview, I will return the transcript to you for approval. Finally, I will have the contact details of the counsellors at the Public Service Department ready with me all the times.

#### **What are the benefits?**

You will be assisting me in completing my PhD thesis. You will also be contributing to information that could provide insights to Malaysian styles of negotiation. In addition, some people find that being interviewed about what they have been through is an enjoyable and/or interesting experience.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your anonymity, privacy and confidentiality will be protected in this research. I will not use any real names in my research report and delete any identifiable personal information to ensure your privacy and confidentiality. The only individual who will access my observation notes and audio-recordings will be myself, and potentially someone who is asked to transcribe the data. My supervisors may see the transcripts of my observation notes and interviews, but will not know your identity. All data and consent forms will be stored separately in locked cabinets in my supervisor's office at the Institute of Public Policy, AUT for six years. All original data will be destroyed after six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

I understand that you will give up some of your precious time in order to contribute to this research. There will be no financial costs anticipated in this project. However, should you incur any travel cost, this will be reimbursed to you in the form of taxi costs or petrol voucher.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Your participation is voluntary. Please take one week to consider your possible involvement as a research participant. If you are willing to participate in this research or have questions about it, please email me at [hmohdhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:hmohdhashim@yahoo.com) or call Malaysian mobile number 012-6077456 by dd/mm/yyyy.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you agree to participate in this research, please complete, sign and return your consent form to me any time before dd/mm/yyyy.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If you wish, I will send you an electronic version of the summary of my research findings at an email address you provide. If you are interested, I will also inform you any imminent publications concerning the findings of this project.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns you have regarding this research should be notified to my research supervisors, Prof Marilyn Waring and/or Prof Raduan Che Rose. Concerns regarding the conduct of this research, should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda by sending an email to her at [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), or call her at 0064 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?****Researcher Contact Details:**

Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim (email: [hmohdhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:hmohdhashim@yahoo.com) or mobile phone: 012-6077456).

**Research Supervisors Contact Details:**

Prof Marilyn Waring (email: [marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz](mailto:marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz) or telephone: 0064-9-9219661).

Prof Raduan Che Rose (email: [rcr@putra.upm.edu.my](mailto:rcr@putra.upm.edu.my) or telephone: 0060-3-89467432).

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 8 September 2008, AUTEK Reference: number 08/204.

### Appendix 3: Consent Form (key informant interviews)

## Consent Form (Key informant interviews)



**Project title:** International negotiation styles: A perspective of Malaysian diplomats.

**Project Supervisor:** Prof Marilyn Waring

**Researcher:** Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim

*Please tick whichever applicable:*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to data is analyzed, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's contact details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 8 September 2008, AUTECH  
Reference: number 08/204.

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix 4: Confidentiality Agreement

<h1>Confidentiality Agreement</h1>	 AUT UNIVERSITY <small>TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</small>
------------------------------------	---

**Project title:** International negotiation styles: A perspective of Malaysian diplomats.

**Project Supervisor:** Prof Marilyn Waring

**Researcher:** Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim

- ☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- ☐ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature: .....

Transcriber's name: .....

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 8 September 2008, AUTECH  
Reference: number 08/204.

## Appendix 5: Questionnaire

### **QUESTIONNAIRE** **International Negotiation styles: A** **Perspective of Malaysian Diplomats**



Dear Sir/Madam,

The objective of this questionnaire is to access your opinion or feeling about Malaysian practice in international negotiations and its negotiators.

This questionnaire comprises of 5 sections:

**Section A:** Personal background

**Section B:** Role and performance of home sector agencies in international negotiations

**Section C:** General aspects of Malaysia in international negotiations

**Section D:** Characteristics of Malaysian negotiators

**Section E:** Current skills of Malaysian negotiators

It will take you not more than 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate.

**ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.**

Your kind cooperation is highly appreciated.

Any inquiries regarding this questionnaire please contact:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim (email: [hmohdhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:hmohdhashim@yahoo.com) or mobile phone: +64211431667 (NZ) or 012-6077456 (M'sia)).

**Research Supervisors Contact Details:**

Prof Marilyn Waring (email: [marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz](mailto:marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz) or telephone: 0064-9-9219661 (NZ)).

Prof Raduan Che Rose (email: [rcr@putra.upm.edu.my](mailto:rcr@putra.upm.edu.my) or telephone: 0060-3-89467432 (M'sia)).

<b>Section A: Personal background</b>
---------------------------------------

**Direction: Please tick (/) your answer in the respective boxes.**

**A1. Age**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 41 – 50 years  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31 – 40 years      | <input type="checkbox"/> above 50 years |

**A2. Gender**

- |                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Female |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|

**A3. Number of years working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 5 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 – 20 years      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 – 10 years      | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 20 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 15 years     |   |

**A4. How many times have you represented Malaysia in international negotiations?** (International negotiations refer to negotiations between Malaysia and other countries, either in the form of bilateral, regional or multilateral, and cover all aspects of negotiation, for example, trade, security, environment and education)

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never        | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 – 20 times      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 10 times | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 20 times |

<b>Section B: Role and performance of home sector agencies in international negotiations (Home sector agencies refer to other ministries in the Malaysian public service besides Ministry of Foreign Affairs)</b>
---

Please consider the statements below regarding the role and performance of home sector agencies in assisting Ministry of Foreign Affairs in international negotiations.

**(Direction: Please tick (/) your answer according to the following scale:**

**1 – Never 2 – Rarely 3 – Often 4 – Always)**

	1	2	3	4
<b>B1) Participation of home sector agencies is required during the preparatory stage.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B2) Home sector agencies are quick in responding to requests for information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B3) Home sector agencies are unreserved in providing full information required by MoFA.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B4) Home sector agencies act as a good team player during international negotiations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B5) Home sector agencies send junior officers to attend pre-negotiation meetings.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B6) Home sector agencies only consider their own view in projecting their positions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B7) Home sector agencies change their officers at different stages of international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B8) Home sector agencies' officers are less skilled negotiators than officers from MoFA.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



### Section C: General aspects of Malaysia in international negotiation

Please indicate your level of agreement regarding the general aspects of Malaysia in international negotiations.

(Direction: Please tick (/) your answer according to the following scale:

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Agree 4 – Strongly Agree)

	1	2	3	4
<b>C1) International negotiation means compromise.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C2) In international negotiations, winning confidence of other parties is essential.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C3) In international negotiation, maintaining good relationships with other countries is an important objective.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C4) Malaysia always goes for a win-win situation in any international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C5) Malaysia likes to align itself with other countries.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C6) Malaysia compromises too much in international negotiation.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C7) In international negotiation, the best strategy is to pretend to lose.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C8) Deals can be clinched over a meal.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C9) It is better not to conclude any deal if it means sacrificing the national interest.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C10) In international negotiation, one's culture is put aside.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C11) Politicians do play a significant role in international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C12) Malaysian negotiators know the country's maximum position when going for international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C13) Malaysian negotiators know the country's minimum position when going for international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Direction: Please tick (/) your answer according to the following scale:  
1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Agree 4 – Strongly Agree)

	1	2	3	4
C14) It is sufficient to secure Malaysia's minimum position in international negotiations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C15) General guideline for negotiators on how to negotiate with other countries is readily available.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C16) Negotiators have a clear mandate before going for international negotiations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C17) Malaysian negotiators have enough negotiation training to go for international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C18) Malaysian negotiators have sound knowledge of the procedures of international negotiations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C19) Malaysian negotiators learn the negotiation skills through their daily work.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C20) Malaysia has negotiation specialists.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C21) Malaysian negotiation specialists are fully utilized.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C22) Malaysian negotiation specialists are not attached to MoFA.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C23) Malaysia only sends a single team of several negotiators for international negotiations.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C24) Malaysian negotiators attend international negotiations without knowing the substance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C25) Many important documents required for international negotiations are untraceable.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C26) Malaysian negotiation teams are dependent on the team leader, if the leader is good, then the team is good.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>C27) In bilateral negotiation, the Malaysian approach should be softer and more open to compromise.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C28) In multilateral negotiation, the Malaysian approach should be stronger and more confronting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Section D: Characteristics of Malaysian negotiators

Please indicate your level of agreement regarding the characteristics of Malaysian negotiators in international negotiations.

**(Direction: Please tick (/) your answer according to the following scale:**

**1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Agree 4 – Strongly Agree)**

	1	2	3	4
<b>Malaysian negotiators:</b>				
<b>D1) are generous.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D2) will give way to other delegates to speak up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D3) are lacking in confidence.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D4) do not mix with other negotiators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D5) are scared to put forward their views.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D6) stress on friendship values.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D7) prefer face-saving.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D8) like to please the other party.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D9) have no unkind intentions.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D10) are not assertive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D11) want to conclude the deal as soon as possible.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D12) are accommodative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D13) are humble</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D14) do not like to be seen as arrogant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>D15) are ready to confront if required.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D16) will say the team leader is always right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section E: Current skills of Malaysian negotiators**

How satisfied are you with the current skills of Malaysian negotiators?

**(Direction: Please tick (/) your answer according to the following scale:**

**1 – Very Dissatisfied 2 – Dissatisfied 3 – Satisfied 4 – Very Satisfied)**

	1	2	3	4
<b>E1) Spoken language (English)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E2) Written language (English)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E3) Spoken language (other foreign languages)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E4) Written language (other foreign languages)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E5) Listening skills</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E6) Networking skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E7) Negotiation exposure</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E8) Negotiation experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E9) Negotiation training</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E10) Willingness to learn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E11) Tactical knowledge</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E12) Knowledge of the substance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E13) Knowledge of the other negotiating parties</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E14) Competitiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E15) Open-mindedness</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E16) Teamwork spirit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E17) Leader of the team</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E18) Quick reaction to issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>E19) Stamina in attending international forums</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E20) Use of humor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*\*\*\*\***End of Questionnaire**\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you very much for taking your time to fill in the questionnaire.

## Appendix 6: Human Ethics Approval (second phase)



### MEMORANDUM

#### Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

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To: Marilyn Waring  
From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTEC  
Date: 8 April 2009  
Subject: Ethics Application Number 08/204 **International negotiation styles: A perspective of Malaysian diplomats.**

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Dear Marilyn

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 9 March 2009 and that I have approved the second stage of your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC's meeting on 11 May 2009.

This approval is for the second (Questionnaire) stage of the research only and full information about any remaining stages needs to be presented to AUTEC for consideration and approval before data collection commences.

I remind you that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 23 September 2011;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/about/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 23 September 2011 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz](mailto:charles.grinter@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTEC and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Madeline Banda', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Madeline Banda

**Executive Secretary**

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: Hishamuddin Moyd Hashim [smohd@aut.ac.nz](mailto:smohd@aut.ac.nz), [hmohdhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:hmohdhashim@yahoo.com)

## Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet (survey)

### Participant Information Sheet (Survey)



#### Date Information Sheet Produced

20 February 2009.

#### Project Title

International negotiation styles: A perspective of Malaysian diplomats.

#### An Invitation

Hello, my name is Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim and I am currently studying for my doctorate programme at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), New Zealand. My research is about understanding Malaysian diplomats' experiences in international negotiations and highlighting key features of Malaysian negotiation styles. As you are experienced in international negotiations, I humbly would like to invite you to participate in the research project. ***Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate.***

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to highlight key features of Malaysian negotiation styles in international negotiation from Malaysian diplomats' experiences and perspectives. I hope this project will lead to the completion of my doctoral study at AUT. I also plan to employ the data for conference proceedings and other refereed publications.

#### How are you chosen for this invitation?

My main participants of this survey are in-service Malaysian diplomats. You were probably referred to this study by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to your experience in international negotiations.

#### What will happen in this research?

If you agree to participate in this research, please allocate some of your time to fill up the questionnaire. The questionnaire is in the form of closed-ended questions to make it easier and faster for you to answer. It will take you not more than 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

#### What are the discomforts and risks?

There will be no expected discomforts or risks in this research. However, you may be experiencing minor psychological and/or emotional discomforts since you will have to remember past experiences. You might also feel uncomfortable to answer questions that will reveal weaknesses of the system.

#### How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

I expect minimum discomforts and risks to the participants in this project. I will undertake all necessary measures to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of participants in this research. You may contact counsellors at Psychology Division, Public Service Department in case you feel discomfort and require counselling.

#### What are the benefits?

There are no immediate benefits to you for taking part in this study. You will be assisting me in completing my PhD thesis. Apart from that you will also be assisting the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs in particular and the Malaysian government in general in the training for diplomats. You will also be contributing to information that could provide insights to Malaysian styles of negotiation.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your anonymity, privacy and confidentiality will be protected in this research. In my thesis, I will refer the participants by codes and will not directly identify any background data with specific participant codes, and I will also report my findings in terms of aggregated data and no specific comments will be referred to specific participant codes. The only individual who will access the completed questionnaire will be me. My supervisors may see the questionnaire survey, but will not know your identity. All data will be stored separately in locked cabinets in my supervisor's office at the Institute of Public Policy, AUT, New Zealand for six years. All original data will be destroyed after six years.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

I understand that you will give up some of your precious time in order to contribute to this research. There will be no financial costs anticipated in this project.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Your participation is voluntary. If you have questions about this survey, please contact your liaison officer at your ministry.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

Completion of the questionnaire will be taken as indicating your consent to participate.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

If you wish, I will send you an electronic version of the summary of my research findings at an email address you provide. If you are interested, I will also inform you any imminent publications concerning the findings of this project.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns you have regarding this research should be notified to my research supervisors, Prof Marilyn Waring and/or Prof Raduan Che Rose. Concerns regarding the conduct of this research, should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Madeline Banda by sending an email to her at [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz), or call her at 0064 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Hishamuddin Mohd Hashim (email: [hmohdhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:hmohdhashim@yahoo.com) or mobile phone: 006012-6077456).

**Research Supervisors Contact Details:**

Prof Marilyn Waring (email: [marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz](mailto:marilyn.waring@aut.ac.nz) or telephone: 0064-9-9219661).

Prof Raduan Che Rose (email: [rcr@putra.upm.edu.my](mailto:rcr@putra.upm.edu.my) or telephone: 0060-3-89467432).

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9 March 2009, AUTEK Reference: number 08/204.