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**The Defence of Ethnic Identity
in
Malaysia**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of

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by

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Abstract

The changing dynamics of interstate conflict in the post-Cold War environment led scholars to debate the relevance of established security theory. While traditionalists maintained that the state-centric theory should retain its primacy, others argued for a security agenda, not only broadened or widened to include other sectors, but one deepened or extended to include the individual and larger societal groupings as referent objects of security. In the 1990s, the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute developed a reformulated and expanded security agenda which recognized five dimensions of security - political, military, economic, environmental and societal. Societal security has been defined as the defence of identity with identity accepted as the way in which communities think about themselves and the manner in which individuals identify themselves as members of a particular community. The Institute's research on societal security was further expanded by Paul Roe in his 2005 study on ethnic conflict in the Balkan states.

The determination of successive Malaysian governments to inculcate Islamic values throughout its infrastructure and society was borne from the inter-communal violence in May 1969, a civil reaction to the unexpected election results. The loss of parliamentary majority, for so long the domain of the Malays, confirmed a significant shift in political power and the increasingly influential role of the non-Malay voice in the political process. The inter-ethnic hostility resulted in a Federation-wide state of emergency and the suspension of parliamentary democracy for 20 months during which time the country was led by the National Operations Council under the leadership of Tun Abdul Razak. The National Operations Council and subsequent administrations progressively introduced policy to restore Malay political supremacy and redress societal imbalance.

Despite the obvious success of Malaysia's social transformation, research has indicated that policy introduced to lessen the economic and social inequality of the Malays has, in effect, led to a polarising of ethnicities. Political historians and analysts are mindful that increasing ethnic tension along with tacit ethnic segregation are salient reminders of the violence of the 1969 ethnic riots.

With the theoretical framework on societal security provided by the CPRI, this thesis proposes to analyse the impact of the post-1969 political paradigm on Malaysian society with particular focus on inter-societal relations.

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I am sincerely appreciative of the guidance I received from my supervisors - initially Dr Mark Rolls for his critical insistence that I stay on track and latterly Dr Alan Simpson for his affirming supportive advice.

This journey has enriched my understanding, gifted me with lifelong friends and taken me to a country colourful, vibrant and exotic.

I am better for the experience.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

9MP	Ninth Malaysia Plan, five-yearly economic plans which set the direction for the Federation over the coming five-year period.
ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, Malaysian Youth Islamic Movement
Amanah Saham Nasional	National Unit Trust
APU	Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah, United Islamic Movement
BA	Barisan Alternatif, Alternative Front
BARJASA	Barisan Raya'at Jati Sarawak, Sarawak Native People's Front
BCIC	Bumiputera commercial and industrial community
BMF	Bumiputra Malaysia Finance Limited
BN	Barisan Nasional, National Front
BS	Barisan Socialis, Socialist Front
CCO	Clandestine Communist Organisation
CPRI	Copenhagen Peace Research Institute
CSS	Critical Security Studies
DAP	Democratic Action Party
DJZ	Dong Jiao Zong
DTC	Deposit taking co-operatives
EC	Election Commission

EPU	Economic Planning Unit
Felda	Federal Land Development Authority
GLC	Government-linked companies
HICOM	Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia
HINDRAF	Hindu Rights Action Front
ICA	Industrial Co-ordination Act
IGC	Inter-Governmental Committee
IIM	Integrity Institute of Malaysia
IIU	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa, International Islamic University
ISA	Internal Security Act
ISM	Internal Security Ministry
JAWI	Religious Affairs Department of the Federal Territory
KL	Kuala Lumpur
KMM	Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, Malaysian Militant Group
Kosatu	Koperai Belia Bersatu Berhad
LME	London Metal Exchange
MAS	Malaysian Airline System
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCCBCHS	Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism
MCP	Malayan Communist Party

MDP	Parti Demokratik Malaysia
MIC	Malayan Indian Congress
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MPHB	Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad
NDP	National Development Party
NEP	New Economic Policy
NNA	New National Agenda
NOC	National Operations Council
PANAS	National Party Sarawak
PAP	People's Action Party
PAS (PMIP)	Parti Islam Se Malaysia, Pan-Malayan Islamic Party
PASOK	United Pasok Nunukragang National Organisation
PBB	Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu
Pekemas	Social Justice Party
Perkim	Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia, Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association of Malaysia
Proton (Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional)	National Automobile Industry Corporation
Petronas	Petroleum Nasional Bhd
PK	Pakatan Rakyat, People's Front
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia, Indonesian Communist Party

PKR (KeADILan)	Parti KeADILan Rakyat, Peoples' Justice Party
PNOC	Philippine National Oil Company
PPP	Peoples' Progressive Party
PRM	Parti Rakyat Malaysia, Malaysian Peoples' Party
PSM	Parti Sosialis Malaysia
Rabitatul Mujahidin	League of Mujahidin
SA	Sarawak Alliance
SCA	Sarawak Chinese Association
SNAP	Sarawak Nationalist Party
SST	Societal Security Theory
SUPP	Sarawak United People's Party
Tabong Haji	Pilgrimage Board
TransPen	Trans-peninsula pipeline
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UMNO	Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu, United Malays National Organisation
UPKO	United Pasokmomogun Kadazan Organisation
US	United States
USNO	United Sabah National Organisation
UTAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
WWII	World War Two

Glossary

Bersih	Clean in Malay
Bumiputera	Original sons of the soil
Council Negri	State legislature
Hadith	Sayings of the Prophet
Hudud	Fixed punishments (singular had)
Kharaj	Personal non-Muslim tax
Mentri Besar	Chief Minister
Merdeka	Freedom (Independence)
Rasuah	Bribery
Riba	Interest
Sunnah	Practices of the Prophet
Syariah	Malay transliteration of the Arabic word shari'a, Islamic jurisprudence
Ulama	Muslim clergy
Yang di-Pertuan Agong	King
Yang di-Pertua Negeri	Governor
Zakat	Charity

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Where can you feel the core of the earth and be soothed by its wonders
or be in the presence of a stranger and yet feel so close
Where can you mingle with the oldest races and be right at home
Where can your wishes come true, a pocket full at a time - a place like nowhere else on earth
Malaysia truly Asia.¹

The lyrics of Tourism Malaysia's successful campaign entice travellers to its shores with promises of a sojourn in a land enriched by the many cultures which together call Malaysia home. The broad tapestry of Malaysian society is woven, not only by the descendants of the primordial peoples of long ago, but also by the comparatively recent arrival of new groups, each ethnic contributing to create a vibrant, complex and, at times, problematic fusion.

Historians have advanced various times traders from distant lands first appeared throughout the Malay Peninsula and Indonesian Archipelago. While archaeological evidence in the tin and gold mining areas of the peninsula indicates a Chinese and Indian presence in prehistoric times, it was not until the 5th century that Chinese commerce was firmly established.² From the 7th century, the powerful Hindu kingdom of Srivijaya, based in Sumatra, provided a mainstay for both Indian and Chinese traders.³ Burial markers and other stones led some researchers to theorise Persian and Arab merchants established trading links in this period, though Islam was not to become a major influence in the region for a further seven centuries.⁴ Those who dispute the veracity of this particular evidence, posit that the markers were possibly

¹ For lyrics see <http://www.jewoley.com>.

² Virginia Matheson Hooker, *A Short History of Malaysia: Linking East and West* (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2003), pp. 36-38.

³ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴ Ibid., p. 5. Currently in the National Historical Museum in Kuala Lumpur, the Terengganu Stone, inscribed with the date of 1303CE, is the earliest record of Islam in Malaysia.

brought from trading centres along the Indian coastline; cities which had provided refuge, in some instances, for those fleeing religious persecution in the Middle East.⁵

Irrespective of its origins, by the 13th and 14th centuries, Islam had become a dominant force throughout the region. With the arrival of the colonial powers - the Portuguese, French, Dutch, British and Spanish - each endeavoured to fortify their country's economic base by containing Islam's ideological and political dominance.⁶ However, apart from the British who, perhaps more from expediency than anything else were to entrench Islam within the Malaysian Constitution all failed to alleviate the Islamic legacy to any significant degree.

Two features of Islam particularly appealed to the Malay rajas, a title redolent of the influence of Hinduism.⁷ The first was the attraction towards the "Persian tradition of kingship"⁸ most obviously seen in the adoption of the titles 'sultan' and 'caliph'. These inscriptions have been found on coins dating from the 15th century, and in Malay literature, there are several instances where the term 'Shadow of God on Earth' is used in reference to the rulers.⁹ Of concern to the purist among the faithful, is the Pahang translation of Sura XI, 30 "not that God placed Adam on earth as his representative, but that he had placed the Raja on earth as his representative".¹⁰

The mysticism of the Sufi was the second feature of Islam which attracted the raja. Of particular interest was the doctrine of the 'Perfect Man' which appeared in

⁵ G.W.J. Drewes, 'The Coming of Islam to Indonesia' in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique and Yasmin Hussain (Eds), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 10; for a synopsis of the various theories discussing the origins of Islam in this region, see Johan H. Meuleman, 'The History of Islam in Southeast Asia' in K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Eds), *Islam in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), pp. 22-44.

⁶ Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique and Yasmin Hussain (Eds), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 4.

⁷ A.C. Milner, 'Islam and Malay Kingship' in Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique and Yasmin Hussain (Eds), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), p. 25.

⁸ Ibid., p. 27. Milner, in *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002), p. 146.

⁹ Ibid. Milner explains that when the caliphate "lost its monopoly of political and religious leadership", the term "Shadow of God on earth", an ancient Babylonian title, was appropriated by the new rulers wishing to adopt "ambitious titles" across the Middle East, India and through into Southeast Asia.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Malay literature from the 15th and 16th centuries.¹¹ Not only did the Malay raja have authority for the daily mundane chores of existence, he also had responsibility for metaphysical matters. As such, he evaluated the benefits of “the latest spiritual doctrines or techniques”¹² for possible acquisition by his people. With a belief system receptive to the spiritual, the mysticism of the Sufi was embraced with ease - even if “reference to Sufism in Malay writings would often invite censorship on the part of later Malay copyists”.¹³

European colonial expansion throughout Southeast Asia brought the first of the British adventurers to the region in the latter half of the 19th century, almost 250 years after the arrival of the first European explorers, the Portuguese, who took control of Malacca in 1511.¹⁴ In a virtual ‘carve-up of spoils’ the rivalrous nature of the various European powers, each vying for control not only of trade but of the islands that constituted the region, resulted in a series of treaties guaranteeing the monopoly of particular trading regions or settlements. The treaties were often negotiated without the involvement of the local rulers, resulting, in some instances, in conflict between the indigenous tribes and the local ruler, the raja, or the tribal communities, on the one hand, and the colonial power and the raja on the other.¹⁵

The vagaries of conflict between the colonial powers, which fought each other in Europe thousands of miles distant from their possessions in Southeast Asia, led to consequential ‘transfers of treaties’ from one power to another. In the late 1700s and early in the 19th century, as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain gained control of

¹¹ Ibid., p.29. Milner writes that the Perfect Man is the myth of the “saintly figure who has fully realised his essential oneness with the Divine Being and who, *bodhisattva* like, guides his disciples along the path he has trodden”. Considered integral to Sufi belief is the concept of the Perfect Man perceived as an individual no longer separated from the creator through the effects of Adam’s fall, but rather one, according to Professor E.H. Palmer, perfect in works, deeds, principles and the Sufi sciences. (<http://muslim-canada.org/sufi3.htm>).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Damien Kingsbury, *South-East Asia: A Political Profile* (South Melbourne; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 266.

¹⁵ Nicholas Tarling, *Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Melbourne, Vic: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 48-51.

Sri Lanka, large areas of the Indonesian Archipelago and on the Malay Peninsula, Malacca, colonies formally held by Holland.¹⁶ With their fortunes restored a decade later, the Dutch returned and renegotiated new treaties and contracts with the Indonesian-Malayan states.¹⁷ In response to growing protest from merchants whose enterprises had become established during the “British interregnum”¹⁸ in March 1824, the British signed a treaty with the Dutch which, in effect, proclaimed the two European powers to be “exclusive Lords of the East”.¹⁹ The Straits Settlements, Penang, Melaka and Singapore would be British possessions, while the Dutch maintained a “Java-focused empire”.²⁰ This region is fortunate in having a rich cultural heritage which has created a syncretised montage of religious belief; an indigenous animist belief system with subsequent ‘layerings’ of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity with a final dusting of European colonialism.

This thesis has its origins in a conversation with a Chinese Malaysian friend now living in New Zealand. Caroline related to me how, when she first started working in Malaysia in the mid-1970s, her Muslim colleagues would, on occasion, come to her home for a meal where they would all eat the same food.²¹ Over the time, slight changes began to take place in Caroline’s relationship with her colleagues. While they continued to come to her home, her friends began contributing halal food for the meal, preferring to use their own utensils rather than Caroline’s. Finally, the subtle distancing resulted in the cessation of shared meals entirely; her Muslim colleagues no longer visited her home.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid. Sir Stamford Raffles, former governor of Java, also argued that it would be to Britain’s advantage to secure not only the route to China but that Britain itself “should create an empire in the archipelago.”

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Pseudonym used.

This conversation intrigued me. Why would Caroline's Muslim friends no longer share a meal in her home? What could have happened in Malaysian society which would prevent or at least dissuade her friends and colleagues from sharing a meal with a non-Muslim friend? If societal fragmentation had occurred in Malaysian society, what had precipitated it? Was it the result of government policy? Was it the outcome of a growing sense of unease, within the non-Muslim population, at the steady Islamising of Malaysia? Was it simply the inevitable product of a cultural diverse society? Ultimately, the question to be asked was whether Malaysian society was vastly different from other multi-cultural societies? Is it an impossibility for communities composed of differing ethnicities or cultures to co-exist harmoniously within the same society?

With these questions in mind, this thesis has two objectives. First, it proposes to examine Malaysia's political development from the establishment of the Federation in September 1963 until the March 2008 General Election within the contextual framework of societal security theory as developed by researchers from the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (CPRI). In doing so, this thesis joins a body of similar research namely Paul Roe's 2005 study on conflict in the Balkans which expanded the work of the CPRI and Claire Wilkinson's 2007 research on the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan which critiqued the applicability of the theory.²² Second, in determining whether societal fragmentation has occurred, analysis will be directed towards identifying recurrent themes within the economic, political and cultural spheres of the Malay and non-Malay identities which may have contributed to a polarising of ethnicities within Malaysian society.

Chapter Two, 'The Security Discourse', provides a synopsis of the reconceptualisation of security theory from its classical origins to the contemporary

²² Paul Roe, *Ethnic Violence and the Social Security Dilemma* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005) and Claire Wilkinson, 'The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Useable Outside Europe?', *Security Dialogue* 2007; 38(5).

dynamic. Over the past 30 years or so, a fundamental shift in the typology of issues with the potential to cause insecurity has occurred. While the end of the Cold War was not, in itself, the sole reason for this reconfiguration, it was, nonetheless, causal to the expanded security agenda. In the 1990s, researchers based at the CPRI led by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever developed an expanded agenda which recognized five dimensions of security - political, military, economic, environmental and societal with this final dimension defined as the measures a group adopts to ensure the survival of its identity - in itself a contestable term but incorporating those aspects which together form the unique identity of a particular collective.

Moving from the theoretical and conceptual framework of chapter two, chapters three, four and five will analyse, within the context of defined time periods, the applicability of the societal security concept in a case study on Malaysia's political development. Chapter Three, 'The Formative Period: 1963-1969', overviews the historiography of the Malay and non-Malay identities before discussing whether the existence of a societal security dilemma precipitated the bitter inter-communal conflict of May 1969. Chapter Four, 'The Tun Razak Legacy: 1970 to 2003', in outlining policy implemented by successive administrations to restore and maintain inter-ethnic peace, will determine whether the initiatives alleviated inter-societal tension or further heightened societal insecurity. The final of the case study chapters, Chapter Five, 'Unity in Opposition: 2004 to 2008', in giving a brief account of Malaysia's political culture under the leadership of Abdullah Badawi, will theorise the political future of the state - the continuation of an entrenched hegemonic model where one ethnicity dominates to maintain order and stability or the dawning of a new political climate with the potential to give greater voice to the state's plurality.

The final chapter, in summarising the thesis, concludes with comments on Malaysia's changed political landscape speculating whether the creation of a two-party parliamentary system could be undermined by politicians who forsake those who elected them by crossing the floor to join opposing parties.

The sustained study of the 'security problematique' raises more questions than it resolves, questions about role of the state, the implications of regional and global governance, the primacy of the state or the individual, the permeability of states in the light of existing and developing regional structures such as the European Union with the introduction of a common currency and passport. The following chapter provides a brief synopsis of the idea of security examining the dominant themes in the debate over its conceptualisation. The chapter concludes with an overview of societal security, drawn from research undertaken by analysts based at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute - an independent research unit which merged with the Danish Institute for International Studies in January 2005.

2.1 The Commonality of Fear

There is little doubt that most people will experience feelings of happiness or sorrow, wonder or ambivalence, sometime during their lifetime. The difficulty in formulating definitive statements for these various abstruse notions is that the concepts are, in many cases, subjective. What humanity has in common is not the intensity or motivation which generates the sensation, commonality exists because the emotions are universally encountered.

The concept of security is equally complex and profound and, as such, defies simple explanation. While it is generally accepted that the desire to exist free from the threat of harm is fundamental to the human condition, it is inevitable that people, collectively or individually, will, at some point in their lives, experience periods of ominous ineluctable fear.

The degree and cause of insecurity varies within society and between societies. In reality however, an existence totally devoid of fear, or the threat of future harm, is an impossibility, the permutations of the security/insecurity dichotomy too vast to negate. The best that humanity can perhaps hope for, supposing a security/insecurity continuum was envisaged, is to work collectively towards effecting a society which approaches a state of being the most secured possible.

2.2 Classical Security Theory

The problem confronting security analysts today is to identify which threats constitute the greatest risk to the continuance of humankind. This is not to presuppose that all has already been done to provide the best environment for humanity. It is an indictment on the global community that, in many regions of the world, large-scale human rights abuses result in heightened insecurities for significant numbers of people, those with differing religious views, minority ethnicities, and people of difference sometimes referred to as the other.

The abrupt and unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought to an end the Cold War dynamics which had dictated the tenor of security theory for the previous half century. With the likelihood of large scale conflict between nations significantly reduced, analysts now debate the impact of such issues as environmental degradation, transnational crime, the effect of prolonged civil war and the current topical discourse, climate change, all of which, though evident before, present an increasing threat today.²³

Threat determination is dependent on the particular level of security being promulgated; whether the primary referent object of security is the individual or collectively, larger groups such as societies, ethnicities or sovereign states.²⁴ Historically, security has been concerned with defending the sovereignty of the state,

²³ Roland Dannreuther, *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007), p. 13.

²⁴ The primary referent object of security refers to that level at which the focus of security analysis shall lie.

primarily from military threat, by maintaining the state's political autonomy and territorial integrity. Broadly defined, the realist approach, which regards the state as the primary referent object of security, asserts that states, whether they are seeking "freedom, security, prosperity, or power",²⁵ do so through the pursuit and acquisition of power in its various manifestations in an environment viewed by realists as anarchical and predatory.²⁶

Realism, with its origins in the theory of Thucydides, Clausewitz and Thomas Hobbes, is sustained by the belief that humankind's search for a utopian existence is a mere chimera.²⁷ In reality, the human condition, with its innate drive to acquire power and security, makes the desired state an unachievable goal.²⁸ Despite individuals aspiring to think kind thoughts of each other, the uncertainty of never really knowing the other's thoughts leads inevitably to a sense of doubt and mistrust. This baleful state is encapsulated in Hobbes' *Leviathan*:

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall...²⁹

This sense of doubt and mistrust is evident at all levels of the familiar analytical hierarchy - the individual, the state, and, globally, the international community of sovereign states. Just as individuals may, at times, doubt the intentions of others, the realist preoccupation with ensuring state security through increasing power - leading to activities such as weapons acquisition or engaging troops in military manoeuvres - may create a reciprocal sense of insecurity within fellow states provoking them to, in

²⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2006), p. 29.

²⁶ Edward A. Kolodziej, *Security and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 127-150. See Kolodziej for the prevailing stances within the realist school which he has further defined as pessimistic realism and optimistic realism; also Dannreuther, 2007, p. 38 for discussion on offensive-defensive realism.

²⁷ Kolodziej, 2005, p. 127.

²⁸ Michael Sheehan, *International Security: An Analytical Survey* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2005), p. 15.

²⁹ Richard E. Flathman and David Johnston (Eds), *Leviathan: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Interpretations / Thomas Hobbes* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. 70.

turn, take retaliatory measures. Such offensive-defensive measures can range from arms racing to pre-emptive attack. The manner in which states misperceive each other's intentions gives rise to the security dilemma which was initially identified by Butterfield and Herz in the early 1950s.³⁰

2.3 The Broadening Spectrum of Security

From the 1970s, political realism, which had traditionally prescribed inter-state relations for the best part of half a century, became the subject of increasing debate; debate which would, over time, see the formation of new schools of thought in the field of security studies. Of contention, for analysts not so deeply entrenched in the classical perception of security, was the view that realism's somewhat narrow focus on securing the state against military threat should no longer remain the dominant paradigm. Technological advances and the development of globalisation, with its attendant economic concerns, were altering peoples' perceptions of their world. This, along with the decreasing salience of military threat in the closing decade of the Cold War allowed "previously marginalized issues to emerge from the shadow of superpower rivalry"³¹ along with a growing awareness of human rights issues.³²

The 1980s saw the publication of several volumes analysing differing security perspectives including Barry Buzan's seminal work *People, States & Fear* in 1983 (First Edition) which introduced scholars to terms that would become synonymous with the changing dynamic of security - widening, broadening, deepening and expanding.³³ Traditionalists maintained the view that the realist conception of security must retain its primacy. Others, however, posited that not only should the dimensions of the security agenda be widened or broadened to include other sectors but that the

³⁰ Roe, 2005, pp. 3-4.

³¹ Peter Hough, *Understanding Global Security Second Edition* (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 7.

³² Richard Falk, 'Reframing the Legal Agenda of World Order in the Course of a Turbulent Century' in Richard Falk, Lester Edwin J. Ruiz and R.B.J. Walker (Eds), *Reframing the International: Law, Culture, Politics* (New York; London: 2002), p. 58.

³³ Barry Buzan, *People States & Fear, Second Edition: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd, 1991)

referent object of security should be deepened or extended expanding its focus from the state alone to include the individual and collective units identified by Dannreuther as ranging from “identity-based social forces, regional and international institutions, and even the planet as a whole”.³⁴

Despite the opposing views, it would be incorrect to assume that analysts were divided into two camps: those wishing to retain the classical view and those working to effect wholesale revision of security concepts. Buzan, for example, despite advancing a wider approach to security by encompassing areas traditionally neglected by analysts, which has been regarded by some as a “radical and important departure”,³⁵ advocated his neo-realist view that as far as deepening the security agenda was concerned, the state should remain of prime concern. For all its imperfections, the sovereign state had “evolved over several centuries to become the principal unit of political organisation”³⁶ with a monopoly over violence which was reinforced and legitimised by a growing body of international law. It must be acknowledged, however, that in 2003 Buzan and Waever declared “...it is for history to decide how central the state is to security compared with other possible referents”.³⁷

2.4 Human Security

To analysts who advocated a broadening of the security agenda with the inclusion of further sectors apart from the traditional military and of “many different levels, such as the individual and the international”,³⁸ the appeal lay in the ability to address a more comprehensive range of security concerns than were currently being met by classical theory.³⁹ Human Security and Critical Security Studies are two conceptions of security which particularly embraced the focus on the individual as opposed to the state.

³⁴ Dannreuther, 2007, p.43.

³⁵ Sheehan, 2005, p. 48.

³⁶ Kolodziej, 2005, p. 128.

³⁷ Sheehan, 2005, p. 51.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 58.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

Human Security originated in discussions following the release of the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report which called for a shift in focus from nuclear security to the concerns of humanity.⁴⁰ The UNDP report commented on four main features of the concept of human security:

It is a universal concern, relevant to people everywhere because the threats are common to all; its components are interdependent since the threats to human security do not stay within national borders; it is easier to achieve through early rather than later intervention; and it is people-centred, in that it is concerned with how people 'live and breathe' in society.⁴¹

The UNDP report argued that despite the historical perception of human security being bound up in freedom from both fear and want, it was in fact endemic in virtually every area of human existence: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political.⁴² Subsequent reports refined the initial meaning with the 1997 definition "introducing the distinction between income poverty and human poverty".⁴³

In response to calls by the then UN (United Nations) Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Commission on Human Security was established with a mandate to protect and empower people.⁴⁴ The Commission's 2003 report echoed a call for "a new security framework focused on people and aimed at ensuring their security".⁴⁵ Caroline Thomas, a leading proponent of human security, defined the concept as requiring that basic material needs are met in tandem with the achievement of human dignity.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Steve Smith, 'The Contested Concept of Security' in Ken Booth (Ed.), *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (Boulder, Colo.; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p. 51.

⁴¹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1994* cited by Smith, 2005, p. 52.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 53.

⁴⁴ "Commission on Human Security Report" [March, 2002]
(<http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/index.htm>)

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Smith, 2005, p. 54.

2.5 Critical Security Studies

Considered by Steve Smith to be “the most sustained and coherent critique of traditional security studies”,⁴⁷ Critical Security Studies (CSS) takes a diametrically opposing view to the traditional model by rejecting the concept that security lies in the accumulation of power and instead argues that because “states with similar notions of social justice and economic wealth do not go to war against one another, here lies the basis of security”.⁴⁸ In common with Human Security, CSS “...replaces power with emancipation”⁴⁹ advocating that security is achieved by instituting systems which remove poverty and political oppression, that is, through freedom from want and fear.⁵⁰

Proponents for state-centric security concepts argue that broadening the security agenda carries the risk of creating an incoherent concept of security.⁵¹ Human Security and CSS both reconceptualise security in wider dimensions than solely the military sector while concomitantly raising the security of the individual above that of the state. Those advocating a reformulation of the security agenda turn to statistical data indicating that “...32.5% of all deaths are from communicable diseases which cannot be thought of as inevitable...”⁵² while only 0.4 percent of the world's population die from collective violence.⁵³ By the same token, however, the Foreign Policy website posted, in November 2007, statistical information on *The World's Biggest Military Buildups* which noted that while “most of the world's militaries have downsized...in recent years, a few countries have been bulking up”.⁵⁴ There is no doubt that the threat of violent conflict along with the debate over the contestability of security is far from over.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴⁸ Alan Collins, *Security and Southeast Asia: Domestic, Regional, and Global Issues*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), p. 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ This point is made in several treatises on security expansion.

⁵² Hough, 2008, p. 16. The statistical data is drawn from 2001 figures.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 17, defines collective violence as “wars and all ‘organized’ killings including international war, civil war, political massacres (e.g. genocide), non-state violence (terrorism) and gang crime”.

⁵⁴ “The List: The World's Biggest Military Buildups” in *Foreign Policy* [November 2007] (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4051&print=1)

2.6 Securitisation

Prior to a discussion on the substantive research generated by the Copenhagen School's post-Cold War analysis of the multi-sectoral approach, it is timely to consider the research of Ole Waever who, during the 1990s, defined the meaning of the term 'securitisation'.⁵⁵ Securitisation is a complex process which can either have a negative or positive impact on the issue at hand. In essence, securitisation involves a leading actor, generally the state but increasingly powerful non-state actors, presenting an issue as an existential threat to the populace. Once accepted as such, the state (or leading non-state actor) can enact various measures, which ultimately impinge on the individual's civil liberties, ranging from the adoption of curfew hours, the implementation of stringent border controls to the monitoring of the media or activist groups which it contends pose a threat to the security of the population. The measures are imposed not only to ensure the security of the population but also to promote and protect the national security of the state. This then introduces the aspect that the state itself may act as a security threat to the people it purports to protect.⁵⁶

Governments will generally commit significant financial resources to an issue which they consider sufficiently serious to securitise. A contemporary instance of a securitised issue is evidenced by the actions of the United States' (US) government in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. The American people accepted the existential threat posed by terrorism. The Bush administration then instituted far-reaching policy and directive change. Billions of US government revenue has been allocated to fight, domestically and internationally, the 'war on terror'.

For groups within society fighting for causes with little recognition from either the public or government, securitisation can appeal. The securitisation process may access financial resources previously withheld and heighten societal awareness. On

⁵⁵ Ole Waever, then Senior Research Fellow with the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute

⁵⁶ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo.; London: 1998), pp. 23-26.

the downside, concern is expressed that securitisation could be “...counter-productive, because they...[issues such as the environment and migration] will end up being colonized by a military mind-set rather than being addressed in a holistic and politically progressive manner”.⁵⁷

2.7 The Reconceptualisation of Security: An examination of the Copenhagen School’s Societal Security Formulation.

The increasing prevalence of intra-state conflict in the post-Cold War period, contributed to a call by International Relations' scholars to consider expanding the focus of security to encompass other areas traditionally neglected by analysts.⁵⁸ The expansion of security was reflected in the emergence of a more multi-sectoral approach first elucidated by Buzan, in *People, States, and Fear*.⁵⁹ In addition to the established military-centric focus of security, Buzan advocated that political, economic, societal and environmental dimensions be included.⁶⁰

Whilst it was generally agreed that the classical approach to security was in need of review, and that a broader definition was preferable, analysts from the CPRI debated the decision to advance Buzan’s initial model with its proposed expanded security agenda. In 1993, Ole Waever advanced a reconceptualisation of security, the premise of which suggested a “duality of state and societal security”:⁶¹ the latter was “retained as a sector of state security, but it...[was] also a referent object of security in its own right”.⁶² Whereas the traditional formulation of security was concerned with ensuring the survival of the state, societal security was “all about threats to identity”.⁶³

⁵⁷ Sheehan, 2005, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Roc, 2005, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Sheehan, 2005, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Buzan, 1991, p. 19.

⁶¹ Roc, 2005, p. 43.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

A society which lost its identity would not survive; and a state ran the risk of becoming destabilised by “threats to its societies”.⁶⁴

Just as in the more traditional form of security in which one state’s (or collective of states) attempts to ensure its autonomy and integrity may be misperceived by others thereby creating a sense of insecurity, so similar misperceptions may occur in the societal security sector. In plural societies, societal security dilemmas may arise “when the actions which groups take to secure their identity”⁶⁵ are viewed as a threat to the identity of other groups which together constitute that particular society. If that particular society has a history of identity contestation, the probability that the sense of insecurity will transition to some form of conflict is elevated. Dominant groups, or those who maintain a preponderance of societal power, have the ability to legislate severe repressive measures designed to ultimately “deprive societies of beliefs and practices vital to the maintenance of their culture”,⁶⁶ leaving the less powerful, often times the minority groups, with few options to defend their identity.

2.7.1 Societal Security: A Question of Identity

Societal security is essentially about survival - the survival of what makes ‘our’ community ‘us’. Societal insecurity exists when a given society feels that its ‘we’ identity is under threat by external developments or potentialities the community itself has defined “as a threat to their survival”.⁶⁷ To the CPRI, the key to society is:

those ideas and practices that identify individuals as members of a social group...[It is] about identity, the self-conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community...distinct from, although often entangled with...political organizations concerned with government.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.73.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁷ Buzan et al., 1998, p. 119.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Society is not defined in terms of nations but as “large-self-sustaining identity groups”⁶⁹ and in today’s political environment, “the most important referent objects in the societal sector are tribes, clans, nations (and nationlike ethnic units, which others call minorities), civilizations, religions and race (sic)”.⁷⁰

The CPRI’s decision to collectivise and identify these groups has not been accepted without debate. Critics assert that the units have constructed “simplistic[ally]”⁷¹ or “conceived as a social fact, with the same objectivity and ontological status as the state”.⁷² The mounting incidence of intra-state conflict in the final decades of the last century however, was causal to a rethinking of security. At the heart of conflict was not so much the maintenance of the “state’s levers of power, but rather the identity of that state and the shape of its borders”,⁷³ With this in mind, as an alternative, Sheehan proffers the term ‘identity security’ - a concept which, doubtless, would also attract a measure of criticism from those mindful of any amendment to the traditional concept of security.⁷⁴

2.7.2 Threats to Societal Security

In categorising threats to societal security in three main strands - migration, horizontal competition and vertical competition - the CPRI also considered a possible fourth strand, depopulation.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

⁷¹ Martin Shaw (1993) “There is No Such Thing as Society: Beyond Individualism and Statism in International Security Studies.” *Review of International Studies* 19, pp. 159-175 cited in Sheehan, 2005, p. 85.

⁷² Bill McSweeney (1996). “Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School.” *Review of International Studies* 22, pp.81-93 cited in Sheehan, 2005, p. 86.

⁷³ Sheehan, 2005, p. 85; see Sheehan for content on analysts and scholars critical of the work of the CPRI, pp. 84-88.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 84. For further information on the stance of Buzan et al see *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, (1998), pp. 119-120.

⁷⁵ Buzan et al., 1998, p. 121.

2.7.2.1 Migration

Migration presents as a threat to a societal grouping when the community is at risk of being overwhelmed by such a sudden or consistent influx of people from elsewhere that the composition of the original community will, over time, alter. The reasons people shift habitats are varied and, in many incidences, not made through personal choice. Significant numbers of people are enforced through economic necessity, environmental catastrophe or violent conflict.

2.7.2.2 Horizontal Competition

Horizontal competition refers to the threat that a community's identity will alter under the impact of the more dominant identity of a neighbouring societal grouping.⁷⁶ With the pervasive reach of 21st century technology however, the stronger identity need not be merely next door, but may be geo-politically placed far distant. Witness the impact of global franchises, the growth in social networking sites following in the wake of the internet provider and mushrooming consumerism propelled by mass media.

2.7.2.3 Vertical Competition

Vertical competition is the term adopted for the threat that the societal identity of a particular community will be impacted to such a degree by either being subsumed within a greater regional confederation, such as the European Union, or the establishment of a national homeland, such as Palestine or Kurdistan, that it will cease to exist.⁷⁷ The CPRI states that the former pulls the communities in wider identities while the latter creates a narrower perception.⁷⁸

2.7.2.4 Depopulation

Depopulation is also recognised as a further threat to identity and can result through either natural catastrophe or the conscious acts of humanity. Waever et., however,

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

comment that generally these threats impact on the individual and it is only if they have the potential to lead to the breakdown of society that “they become societal security issues”.⁷⁹

2.7.3 Sector Threat

The CPRI posit further that aspects of the four remaining dimensions of security - military, political, economic and environmental - may also pose a threat to the continued maintenance of particular societal identities.⁸⁰

2.7.3.1 Military

An external military threat to a state does not mean that, in every case, there is a concomitant threat to its societies. While on the one hand, “military threats to societal security can be seen mainly in terms of depopulation,” in some instances, a state’s vulnerability to military attack may liberate minority ethnic groupings repressed by the ethnic elite. Internally, military aggression arising from conflict between the elite and its repressed minorities also threatens to jeopardise societal security.⁸¹

2.7.3.2 Political

Typically, a political threat is generated by the state against its own minority ethnicities to which multi-ethnic states are the most prone. Legislation can either ensure societal identity is protected or act against ethnic diversity by prohibiting or suppressing a state’s minorities.⁸²

2.7.3.3 Economic

A state’s economy can threaten societal identity in two ways. First, traditional identity can be eroded by continual exposure to the capitalist system: global products, attitudes

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Roc, 2005, p. 49.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

⁸² Ibid., p. 50.

and style. Second, free market collapse “can also cause economic depression and unemployment which might hinder societies from enjoying their traditional (normal) way of life”.⁸³

2.7.3.4 Environmental

The existence of a society which has strong ties to a particular region may be imperilled if the area is threatened by the adverse affects of “pollution, climate change, deforestation, desertification, and so forth”.⁸⁴

2.8 The Defence of Societal Identity

While it is theoretically plausible to consider the options a minority group could take when confronted by a threat, sometimes the option of choice is not available. Communities may be instrumental in attempting to resolve contentious issues through legitimate means by effecting government policy or directive. There is the chance however, that the reverse may result and the threat level is increased. At the non-state level, minority groups not wishing to secede from the state but to exist coterminously within the state, “strive for one of three basic options: to dominate the existing regime; to form their own government or simply to be left alone”.⁸⁵

2.9 The Link to Ethnic Conflict

The manner and the form in which threats to ethnic identity manifest themselves depends upon whether the main ethnic group wishes to accommodate or eliminate ethnic difference.⁸⁶ Ethnic difference is accommodated or managed by adopting policies which acculturate various elements of the minority communities within the larger ethnicity with the aim of creating a cohesive group identity. An ethnic hegemony

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 4.

which does not wish to accommodate ethnic difference adopts policies and strategies to homogenise society, ultimately removing or eliminating difference. Both elites may have similar aims, strong group identity, but the former incorporates aspects of minority ethnicities within while the latter removes any trace of ethnic diversity.

The most extreme form in which ethnic homogenisation manifests itself is ethnic cleansing; that is, the physical elimination of any unwanted group from an area either by committing genocide or by forcibly removing them from a region. Both methods prevent and/or impede the transmission of cultural heritage to the future. Policies which attempt to assimilate ethnic diversity may be more passive than ethnic cleansing, but the ultimate goal remains the same, the elimination of a society's identity. The dominant ethnic group may impose legislation restricting or prohibiting the use of a minority ethnicity's cultural production defined by Roe as "the control of one's own schools, museums, newspapers, religious institutions, even to have one's own television and radio broadcasts".⁸⁷

2.10 CPRI Research Expanded

In 2005, Paul Roe expanded the research of the Copenhagen School on societal security in a study on ethnic conflict in the Balkan states. Roe's major contribution to societal security theory (SST) lies in the area of the societal security dilemma which he advances can be identified as one of three formulations. This, he suggests, enables a "more nuanced conceptual tool".⁸⁸ First, tight security dilemmas which are "resolvable short of war",⁸⁹ second, regular security dilemmas which Roe asserts, are "difficult to resolve short of war"⁹⁰ with the third category, loose security dilemmas, "irresolvable short of war".⁹¹ Roe posits loose security dilemmas as the most problematic because

⁸⁷ Roe, 2005, p. 64.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

this dynamic considers the notions of power-seeking and security-seeking equally. As he states in a 2001 *Security Dialogue* article, "it appears not to matter whether actors are security seekers or power seekers".⁹²

In as much as Roe's study on the Balkan conflict provides the template for the study on Malaysia, the thesis does not define the security dilemma as tight, regular or loose but rather examines the Malay/non-Malay paradigm in terms of their status as either power or security- seeking.

⁹² Paul Roe, 'Actors' Responsibility in 'Tight', 'Regular' or 'Loose' Security Dilemmas', *Security Dialogue* 2001 32: 109. Roe's formulations are also discussed in his *Ethnic Violence and the Societal Security Dilemma*, pp. 2-3.

On 15 May 1969 bitter inter-societal violence resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency throughout the Malaysian Federation. In determining whether the conflict can be attributed to an emerging societal security dilemma, this chapter first establishes unique aspects of Malay and non-Malay identity then explores contending power relations between the Malay-dominant central authority and the governments of the states on the periphery: Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah. The concluding section focuses on the May 1969 elections identifying issues which set in motion an escalating dynamic, the outcome of which led to the inter-communal conflict and the subsequent suspension of parliamentary democracy.

3.1 Malay Societal Identity

Malay identity is predicated on the belief that as Bumiputera, the Malay people have a pre-eminent position throughout the Federation.⁹³ This belief was woven into the Malay political ideology with the founding documents of the Federation of Malaya in February 1948. Malay pre-eminence was unchallenged and affirmed by the non-Malay political leaders at Merdeka (Independence) in August 1957 and again, in September 1963, with the promulgation of the Constitution of the Malaysian Federation.⁹⁴

Malay political authority is encapsulated in Pertubohan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu (United Malays National Organisation, UMNO) the Federation's most influential political party formed in 1946 to abrogate Britain's intention to create a

⁹³ Bumiputera – in Hindi, literally 'original sons of the soil'. The development of the concepts of 'Malay' and 'Malayness' are traced by Shamsul A.B., 'Text and Collective Memories: The Construction of "Chinese" and "Chineseness" from the Perspective of a Malay' in Leo Suryadinata (Ed.), *Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), pp.116-122.

⁹⁴ Merdeka – means freedom in Malay.

Malayan Union.⁹⁵ It was envisaged that, while effectively transferring the sovereignty of the Malay rulers to the British Crown, a union of states would introduce a degree of uniformity in law and administration and make available to members of other ethnicities the “privileges which had previously been reserved for the Malays”.⁹⁶ The proposal was not welcomed by the Malay nationalists who were more intent, in the post-war period, on independent self-rule.⁹⁷ Intense opposition to the concept, interpreted by many as a neo-colonialist attempt to re-assert control over the states, mobilised and politicised the Malays.⁹⁸

Following the demise of the Union in February 1948, it was with the restored Malay leadership alone (the Malay rulers and UMNO) that Britain negotiated the Federation of Malaya Agreement. In effect, the unitary state and qualified multi-ethnic equality the Union proposed was replaced by a federal system which embedded Malay dominance in the new nation-state.

Malay paramountcy was enshrined in the Merdeka Constitution in 1957 and sustained by the British who countered suggestions by UMNO leadership that the new name of the nation-state be Malaysia, directing, instead, that it should be known as Persekutuan Tanah Melayu - ‘the land of the Malays’ - Malaya.⁹⁹

The Merdeka Constitution (the Constitution of the Federation of Malaya later amended to accommodate the greater Federation of Malaysia), is regarded as consisting of four elements: the Sultanate; the Islamic religion; the Malay language

⁹⁵ Gordon P. Means, *Malaysian Politics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1976), p. 115n.

⁹⁶ Hooker, 2003, p. 187.

⁹⁷ Clive J. Christie, *A Modern History of Southeast Asia: Decolonization, Nationalism and Separatism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1996), p. 14.

⁹⁸ Hooker, 2003, p. 188. Widespread resistance from within the Malay community led, in March 1946, to the inaugural meeting of the Pan-Malayan Malay Congress under the leadership of Dato Onn Jaafar. It was at this conference that UMNO was formed. In the face of the opposition, the Colonial Office was compelled to abandon the Malayan Union.

⁹⁹ Cheah Boon Kheng, ‘Ethnicity in the Making of Malaysia’ in Wang Gungwu (Ed.), *Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories* (Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 2005), pp. 99-102. Malaya was in fact a name put forward by the MCA. Once negotiations had been completed with the Malays, the British consulted the other communities but only over the issue of citizenship.

and Malay privileges.¹⁰⁰ Of note is Article 153 which requires the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to reserve for the Malays "positions in the public service, scholarships and grants or other educational facilities, and permits and licences for business and trade operations".¹⁰¹ Despite the Constitution being amended in excess of 40 times in the period since its initial promulgation in 1957, Article 153 and others which endeavour to protect aspects of Malay identity, including religion and language, are virtually inviolate and, as such, have engendered a degree of discontent within the communal groups excluded from the provisions' coverage.¹⁰²

UMNO's rival for the Malay vote is the Parti Islam Se Malaysia (the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party, PMIP, commonly referred to as PAS). Formed in the early 1950s as a "religious and Islamic welfare movement",¹⁰³ PAS was initially unaffiliated to any political organisation. It was not until the 1955 elections that steps were taken to register the organisation as a political party.¹⁰⁴ Staunch proponents of Malay nationalism, PAS has consistently accused UMNO of compromising Malay pre-eminence by granting concessions to non-Malay.

3.2 Non-Malay Societal Identity

Non-Malay identity can be delineated into three separate groupings: the Chinese, Indian and the Bumiputera of the former Borneo states - Sarawak and Sabah.¹⁰⁵ History records the presence of Chinese and Indian traders in the region as early as

¹⁰⁰ Tun Haji Mhd. Salleh bin Abas, 'Traditional Elements of the Malaysian Constitution' in F.A. Trindade and H.P. Lee (Eds), *The Constitution of Malaysia: Further Perspectives and Developments, Essays in Honour of Tun Mohamed Suffian* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 1. Article 160 defines a Malay as "a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay custom". p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 12. Privileges extended to the Bumiputera of Sarawak and Sabah in September 1963. Yang di-Pertuan Agong – means king in Malay.

¹⁰² Poh-Ling Tan, *Human rights and the Malaysian constitution examined through the lens of the Internal Security Act 1960*. (<http://hdl.handle.net/1885/42074>).

¹⁰³ R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Politics and Government in Malaysia* (Singapore: Federal Publications (S) Pte Ltd, 1978), p. 143.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ The Orang Asli, the indigenous people of the peninsula, are Bumiputera also however their status is somewhat clouded and over the centuries, they have become the most marginalised grouping in Peninsula Malaysia.

the 5th century. It was not until the late 19th/early 20th centuries however, as Malaya progressively came under British administration and protection, that the numbers of Chinese and Indians (primarily Tamil) grew substantially. The expansion of the economy under the direction of the British colonial authorities led to increasing export demand for the country's raw materials and the assisted immigration of both Chinese and Indian labourers. The Chinese developed trading centres and settled in the tin mining settlements with the Indians employed as indentured labourers in the rubber plantations and for the construction of new rail and road networks.

The Chinese and Indian groups were accommodated within the existing structures of the new land with varying degrees of success and independence. Religious diversity was tolerated by the colonial authorities and as the people settled, temples and shrines and other symbols of their religious traditions gradually appeared within their particular societal enclaves. Whereas the Chinese established and maintained their own schools, the introduction of Labour Laws in the 1920s regulated not only recruitment but the working conditions of Indian migrants. The government legislated, and provided partial funding, for estates to provide schooling where there were more than ten school-age children on site; the same provisions extended to the children of Indian government employees.¹⁰⁶

The Chinese continued to practise the traditional patriarchal clan system and it was with the leading clans that the colonial government placed limited political authority. The clans, through their secret societies, enforced law and order and provided a form of welfare in the isolated Chinese communities. However the devolution of authority, albeit de facto, to the clans was the cause of intermittent conflict for economic and political control between the Chinese and Malay leaders.¹⁰⁷ Despite being proscribed by the 1889 Societies Ordinance, the stronger of the secret

¹⁰⁶ Means, 1976, p. 37; Amarjit Kaur, (2006) Indian Labour, Labour Standards, and Workers' Health in Burma and Malaya, 1900-1940, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 40(2), pp.425-475.

¹⁰⁷ Means, 1976, p. 28. Recurring clashes along with the incipient threat the societies presented the government led to their proscription under the Societies Ordinance, 1889.

societies evolved: some became the vehicle for illegal criminal activity (still in evidence today); others re-organised and emerged to become powerful political movements. Means traces the development of the Kuomintang, and the subsequent divisions in membership which led to the formation of the Chinese Communist Party in 1925 and the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) in 1930.¹⁰⁸

In 1937, the Indian government cancelled all labour assisted schemes for migrant workers to Malaya.¹⁰⁹ Until this time, indentured labourers had been recruited to work for a fixed period of between three to five years.¹¹⁰ The fact that the majority of the Indian community was intent on returning home meant that there was little interest in forming political organisations in Malaya: their focus was primarily on the political struggles of the Indian nationalist movement over the issue of national independence.¹¹¹ However, in the turbulent post-World War II (WWII) period as the Malays mobilised to counter Britain's intentions to restore a form of colonial authority, it became apparent to Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders that the Indian community would likewise benefit from the establishment of a cohesive organisation to facilitate greater participation in the future civil and political affairs of Malaya. Thus, following an August 1946 conference to consider the issue, approval was given for the forming of the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC).¹¹²

In July 1948, the strong communal identity the Chinese sustained under colonial rule was tested by an armed insurrection against the British instigated by the MCP.¹¹³ The more conservative Chinese leadership could foresee the likelihood that

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ Kaur, 2006, pp. 425-475. Following the publication of the Sastri Report detailing the poor working conditions of the Indian labourers in Malaya, the Indian government halted the schemes (The Sastri Report, 1937 cited by Kaur)

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Means, 1976, p. 38.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 108.

¹¹³ During WWII, the MCP operated a 'guerrilla-style' resistance campaign against the Japanese from a network of bases hidden deep in the Malayan jungle. The Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA, as the irregular forces became known, was equipped by the Allied High Command and accompanied and aided by 'stay-behind parties' of British military officers. Following the Japanese capitulation in August 1945, and prior to the arrival of the British forces in September, MPAJA members,

the communist-led insurgency could effectively preclude the Chinese from involvement in the political future of the state. This fear, along with that of Chinese merchants whose businesses were not immune from hostile attack, led to the forming, in February 1949, of the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA). Party leadership “pledged full cooperation with the government”¹¹⁴ demonstrated by the integral role the new organisation played in the enforced resettlement of some 1.2 million rural dwellers, 85 percent of who were Chinese, in a scheme referred to as the Briggs Plan.¹¹⁵

In 1952, the ad hoc arrangement the MCA and UMNO had negotiated to contest the Kuala Lumpur (KL) municipal elections held in February the same year was formalised at the national level.¹¹⁶ Two years later in 1954, after much debate, the MIC leadership elected to unite with UMNO and the MCA to form the Alliance. While both the MCA and MIC were regarded the junior partners in the Alliance coalition from the outset, it would be fair to say that the latter, the MIC, was the more junior of the two. This is supported, in part, by Vasil’s comment that the MIC was jokingly referred to, during this period, “as the ‘*May I Come*’ (into the Alliance) party”.¹¹⁷

The MIC was never truly representative of the Indian community: Allen in fact asserts that only one tenth of the community was represented by the organisation.¹¹⁸

no longer forced to stay out of sight in the jungle, assumed control of the local government of many towns and villages, meting out violent retribution, particularly on Malays who had collaborated with the Japanese. In retaliation, armed groups of vigilante Malays caused the deaths of hundreds of Chinese farmers and members of the MPAJA. Inter-ethnic conflict continued until the British Military Administration reimposed control. Believing that they would have some involvement in political change, the MPAJA subsequently disbanded. With the realization that their service during WWII would not be recognized, as envisaged, mounting grievance by a section of the Chinese community resulted in the MCP-led insurrection. See F. Spencer Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p. 25; Lee Kam Hing and Heng Pek Koon, ‘The Chinese in the Malaysian Political System’ in Lee Kam Hing and Chee-Beng Tan, (Eds), *The Chinese in Malaysia* (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 199; and David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 221.

¹¹⁴ Means, 1976, p. 120.

¹¹⁵ During the Emergency (from 1948-1960) over 500 New Villages were created with the belief that, behind barbed-wire with nightly curfews, the settlements were safe from MCP infiltration. See Francis Loh Kok Wah, ‘Chinese New Villages: Ethnic Identity and Politics’ in Lee Kam Hing, and Chee-Beng Tan, 2000, p. 257.

¹¹⁶ Means, 1976, pp. 133, 153. Means discusses the rationale behind this alliance.

¹¹⁷ R.K. Vasil, *Politics in a Plural Society: A Study of Non-Communal Political Parties in West Malaysia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 35.

¹¹⁸ Richard Allen, *Malaysia: Prospect and Retrospect: The impact and aftermath of colonial rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 102.

A factor which inhibited the appeal of the MIC was its constitutional provisions restricting membership to Indians only: effectively excluding potential members of Ceylonese or Eurasian extraction.¹¹⁹ For a party endeavouring to portray itself as representing the majority of the Indian community, these exclusive provisions were counterproductive.

The Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) proved to be the MIC's rival for the Indian vote. With an inclusive multi-ethnic ethos, the PPP was consistently a thorn in the side of the MIC. The party called for the resignation of MIC leadership and contested seats held by the MIC, at times attracting a greater portion of the Indian popular vote which inevitably raised tension between MIC and UMNO leadership. Intra-party dissension along with tense relations with the PPP further impeded the development of the MIC as a strong political voice for the Indian community.

For both the MCA and MIC, their close liaison with UMNO jeopardised their relationship with the communal group they represented. It was the UMNO view that its junior partners should deliver the communal vote in support of the Alliance while the constituents themselves felt their political elite was more in tune with the Malay leadership than with the people they had been elected to represent.

Independence from Britain was a long-held objective for the Alliance: an aim achieved with the announcement that party leadership and British officials had agreed that 31 August 1957 was to be "the official handover date".¹²⁰ An independent constitutional committee, the Reid Commission, was tasked with undertaking a period of intensive consultation with major political organisations and community groups to consider amendments to the 1948 Malayan Agreement. It was proposed that the amended agreement would form the basis of the 1957 Merdeka Constitution. Underpinning the Constitution, promulgated on 31 August 1957, was an "ethnic quid

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Hooker, 2003, p. 206.

pro quo¹²¹ agreement, a social bargain agreed by leaders of the three member-parties of the Alliance: UMNO, the MCA and MIC. In return for acknowledgement and acceptance of the Malays 'special position', the non-Malays received a review of citizenship regulations. Of special significance was the granting of jus soli which ensured that future generations of children would automatically receive citizenship irrespective of the nationality of their parents.¹²²

Before the concept of a federal structure merging the Borneo states with Malaya, and Singapore briefly, was proposed by Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman in May 1961, there was little contact between the peoples of the peninsula and those on Borneo, the distance being too great. In common with Malaya, Sarawak and Sabah were also governed by British interests. In September 1841 James Brooke was proclaimed Rajah of Sarawak for his services to the Sultan of Brunei in contending with the chronic problem of piracy in the islands.¹²³ In the case of Sabah, Bastin and Winks detail the beginnings of British business interest in the region from the late 1870s. The North Borneo Chartered Company, initially administered by men described as "too weak to be arrogant, too poor to be powerful"¹²⁴ were replaced by others whose questionable tactics incited the Mat Salleh Revolt.

Sarawak and Sabah are truly multi-ethnic states comprising in excess of 50 different groupings, the majority being the Dayak, Melanau, Kadazan-Dusun, Chinese and Malay.¹²⁵ The natural barriers of jungle, river and steep mountain ridge restricted contact between groups though inter-tribal fighting occurred to right a wrong. The

¹²¹ Diane Mauzy, 'Malay Political Hegemony' in John McGarry and Brendon O'Leary (Eds), *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 108.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ For further detail on the story of the Brooke dynasty see Robert Payne, *The White Rajahs of Sarawak* (Petaling Jaya: Oxford University Press, 1960).

¹²⁴ Tregonning cited in John Bastin and R.W. Winks, *Malaysia: Selected Historical Readings* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 236. The saga of the Mat Salleh Revolt is told in Bastin and Winks, pp.235-246; North Borneo was renamed Sabah by its first chief minister Donald Stephens to mark its independence in 1963, Hooker, 2003, p. 134.

¹²⁵ James Chin, (1997), 'Politics of federal intervention in Malaysia, with reference to Sarawak, Sabah and Kelantan in *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 35(2), p.96

tribes also traded to supplement a largely subsistence existence.¹²⁶ The strong animist belief system of the tribes was subject to extensive proselytisation with the arrival of Christian missionaries in the middle of the 17th century and in the north, from Muslim groups.¹²⁷

The Chartered Company provided a level of education and health care for the people under its protection despite its focus on increasing the returns for its shareholders based in London. In Sarawak, the European dynasty of the White Rajahs provided schooling in the vernacular for the Malays and Iban for the first five years of elementary schooling. During this period, English was also taught but as a second language. At Standard IV, English became the medium of instruction.¹²⁸

In 1946 Sarawak and Sabah were ceded to Britain becoming Crown Colonies in spite of the principles of the 1945 UN Charter urging “member nations to foster self-government of non-self-governing territories under their control”.¹²⁹ After four years of Japanese occupation, the task of restoring the Borneo states seemed insurmountable to the aging Rajah Vyner Brooke and to the North Borneo Chartered Company.¹³⁰

The British government continued to administer its new colonies in similar vein to the previous rulers. Britain’s failure to actively pursue political and constitutional advancement led to a population which, by and large, had little political understanding.¹³¹ Despite an acceleration in the pace of political development towards the end of the 1950s, the disparity between Sarawak and Sabah and its more

¹²⁶ John W. Drabble, *An Economic History of Malaysia, c.1800-1990: The Transition to Modern Economic Growth* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), pp. 9-12.

¹²⁷ The conversion to Islam in Sabah was more a natural process in the period prior to the inception of Federation in 1963. It was accelerated post -1969 riots. Attempts by the Holy See to establish a Roman Catholic mission in Borneo, in the final years of the 17th century, were not successful. By the middle of the 19th century, however, the climate had changed, and the land and its people were more receptive to the establishment of the first Anglican mission in Borneo.

¹²⁸ Peter H.H. Howes, *In a Fair Ground* (privately printed by Peter Howes, 1995), pp. 60, 61.

¹²⁹ Payne, 1960, p. 1; Vernon K.L. Porritt, *British Colonial Rule in Sarawak 1946-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 18, 19.

¹³⁰ Rajah Vyner Brooke’s decision to cede Sarawak to Britain proved contentious within both the Brooke family and Sarawak’s multi-ethnic society. Mounting resentment continued over the next four years culminating in the assassination of the new Governor, Duncan Stewart, in December 1949. See Payne, 1960, pp. 18-19.

¹³¹ Porritt, 1997, p. 54.

politically-adept neighbour Malaya, was never more obvious than in the initial talks towards the formation of a Malaysian Federation.

3.3 Malay/Non-Malay Relations: 1963-1969

Within the six-year period this chapter covers, inter-societal relations were tested and in the case of Singapore, fractured, as leading political organisations sought to maintain dominance, seek equal status or achieve a greater degree of political credibility in the new federal structure.

3.3.1 The Establishment of a Greater Malaysian Federation

The Federation of Malaysia, established following the signing of the Malaysia Agreement on 16 September 1963, initially comprised the states of the Malayan Federation, the British territories of Sarawak and Sabah (formerly North Borneo) and Singapore.

From the outset formidable challenges tested the fragile inter-societal relations. The Malays, despite the acknowledgement of privilege the Constitution guaranteed, remained vulnerable to perceived threats from external forces which might usurp their dominance in the Federation. Political leadership, vested in UMNO, was conscious that the Chinese presented a tangible and ever-present challenge to Malay pre-eminence. Financial acumen along with the traditional familial dynamic which fostered group cohesion facilitated a political development and articulation in advance of other organisations, though tradition had to be adjusted to comply with developing democratisation in the first decade post-WWII.¹³²

The composition of federal states reflected not only three differing perspectives - those of Malaya, Singapore and Britain, but also the Cold War climate in which the

¹³² Malay concern was not unfounded. The Emergency, imposed in 1948 due to the MCP-led insurrection fomented to bring about the creation of a Malayan Socialist Republic, had only been lifted three years earlier in July 1960.

ideological threat that communism purported to pose was most palpable.¹³³ The Tunku's 1961 proposal was made against a backdrop of concern that the Chinese-populated Singapore, once independent, could be led by a communist-dominated administration.¹³⁴ Analysis of Singaporean politics had revealed a continuing trend towards the left, orchestrated by radical Chinese elements.¹³⁵ There was also a fear in the minds of Malaya's Alliance Coalition that a communist-administered Singapore could "become an ideological base from which the Malayan communists could subvert the mainland".¹³⁶ The better option was to "accept Singapore as a member of the Federation of Malaysia",¹³⁷ containing the problem rather than having to contend with the external threat of a communist-led state just across the Straits of Johore.

Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee KuanYew, had voiced support for the proposal to merge with the neighbouring states. To him the merger proffered political survival for the governing party, the People's Action Party (PAP), and, equally important, the economic survival of the island state.¹³⁸ The proposal was, however, a divisive issue for Singapore with the potential to destabilise the government. While the moderates within the PAP welcomed the proposal having, since the mid-1950s, debated the path to independence through merger with the Malayan Federation, the radical pro-communist element had no desire to fall under the rule of a central government with little sympathy for their cause, particularly with the knowledge that the Internal Security Act (ISA) "would be rigidly enforced".¹³⁹

¹³³ Christie, 1996, pp. 21-23. In addition to the 1948 communist insurgency, in 1950 Chinese communists, following on from their victory over nationalists in the civil war the previous year, invaded non-communist South Korea (along with North Korean troops) whilst "the emergence in 1950-51 of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as a fully fledged communist state" led to US involvement in a prolonged, costly and ultimately unsuccessful conflict.

¹³⁴ While Malaya was granted independent status in 1957, Singapore remained a British colony.

¹³⁵ Means, 1976, p. 292.

¹³⁶ Ernest C.T. Chew and Edwin Lee (Eds), *A History of Singapore* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 140.

¹³⁷ Means, 1976, p. 293.

¹³⁸ Conceived with a broad membership base, the PAP was basically a "catchall" party, inclusive of both moderate and radical elements. See Diane K. Mauzy and R.D. Milne, *Singapore Politics Under the People's Action Party* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 38; Chew and Lee, 1991, p. 142.

¹³⁹ Mauzy and Milne, 2003, p. 20. The 1960 Internal Security Act contains provisions which allow the authorities to detain persons without trial. See also Chew and Lee, 1991, p. 140.

Mounting dissension spurred Lee Kuan Yew to demand a vote of confidence from the legislative assembly. Although successful, the result of the July 1961 election decimated the PAP's majority, created a split within the leadership and led to the formation of the opposition party, Barisan Socialis (Socialist Front, BS) - a powerful party with substantial support.¹⁴⁰ The narrow win for the PAP highlighted the danger that the PAP government could still fall to the BS and other extreme left-wing parties. For this reason, both the Malayan Prime Minister and Lee Kuan Yew worked steadfastly towards ensuring that Singapore became a constituent state within the Federation.

To the ruling elite in Malaya, the merger raised the spectre that Singapore's predominantly Chinese population (of the approximate total of 1.7million, more than 75 percent were Chinese) would create an ethnic Chinese majority in the proposed federation.¹⁴¹ To counter the problem, attention turned to the inclusion of Sarawak and North Borneo where the indigenous population of the Borneo territories would, in effect, redress the ethnic imbalance.

The Tunku's 1961 announcement, however, had been greeted with opposition in Sarawak and British North Borneo as neither was developed politically to any degree. Although the British Colonial Office had considered the concept of a federation from the early 1930s, it was not until 1947 that greater emphasis was placed on the formation of federal systems to better foster the economic and political viability of its smaller colonies. An initial proposal to construct a federation of North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei was extended, in 1953, to include Singapore and Malaya. By late 1954, however, it became evident that Brunei wished to pursue independence as a

¹⁴⁰ C.M Turnbull, *A History of Singapore 1819-1975* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 279.

¹⁴¹ Michael Leifer, 'Singapore in Malaysia: The Politics of Federation' in *Michael Leifer: Selected Works on Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005), p. 497.

single state. Further attempts to form a federation of North Borneo and Sarawak was pre-empted by the 1961 announcement.¹⁴²

In January 1962 the British and Malayan governments established a joint Commission of Enquiry to “ascertain the views of the peoples of North Borneo and Sarawak”¹⁴³ on the question of the proposed merger. The following June a copy of the Commission’s final report, the Cobbold Report, was delivered to the prime ministers of both governments, the Right Honourable Harold Macmillan and Tunku Abdul Rahman.¹⁴⁴ From the evidence given by the 4,000 or so individuals who accepted the open invitation to present submissions, the Commission was able to identify those matters which were of major concern to both the various ethnic groupings and the newly forming political parties.¹⁴⁵

While the Commission was able to reach consensus on many points for entry, diverging on the contentious issues of religion and language, the publication of the Cobbold Report resulted in the setting up of an Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) tasked with “defining the structures and contents of the future constitutions of the federation and of the states of Sarawak and Sabah”.¹⁴⁶

In February 1963, the IGC released the *Twenty Point Report* which itemised safeguards for the proposed merger of the Bornean states with Malaya and Singapore.¹⁴⁷ Of prime importance were concerns over religion, immigration, the Borneanisation of the civil service, secession, financial autonomy, and finally the special rights of the Malays which the report recommended should be extended to the

¹⁴² Porritt, 1997, pp. 58-59.

¹⁴³ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry, North Borneo and Sarawak, 1962* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1962), p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. v. The Commission’s members were the Chairman Lord Cobbold (after whom the report was named), Sir Anthony Abell and Sir David Watherston – nominated by the British government and Dato Wong Pow Nee and Enche Muhammad Ghazali bin Shafie nominated by the Malayan government.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3. See the *Report of the Commission of Enquiry* for more detail on the Summaries of Evidence.

¹⁴⁶ James P. Ongkili, *Modernization in East Malaysia 1960-1970* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press 1972), p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ In fact the 20-Point Report applied to Sabah with an 18-Point Report for Sarawak.

indigenous peoples of both states.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, the extensive consultation and negotiation process determined that Sarawak and Sabah received favourable terms of entry, more so than Singapore particularly in terms of representation to the federal legislature.¹⁴⁹ By extending the provisions concerned with the special rights of the Malays to the Bornean Bumiputera, the societal identity of the tribes was subtly redefined attesting the assertions of theorists who claim that societal identity is not static but fluid in nature responsive to contemporary challenges.

3.3.2 Confrontation: Sukarno's Aspirations for a Greater Indonesian Federation

Regionally, the proposal to form a Malaysian Federation was greeted with disagreement by the Philippines and antagonism by Indonesia. While the Philippine Government disputed ownership of North Borneo (Sabah), Indonesia's disagreement was more ideologically driven and communally based.¹⁵⁰ President Sukarno, who had long wished to establish a greater Indonesian Federation, asserted in February 1963 that if "the Malaysia plan was pursued, Indonesia would have no choice but to face it with political and economic 'Confrontation'".¹⁵¹

Rhetoric between the Tunku and Indonesian President became increasingly vitriolic as relations worsened between the two respective governments. President Sukarno's claims that Britain's support for a Malaysian Federation was an attempt by the former colonial power to regain control of the region's material resources were countered by claims that his anti-Malaysian stance was fuelled by the Partai Komunis

¹⁴⁸ Chin, 1997, p. 96.

¹⁴⁹ This point will be discussed in more detail in the section on Singapore's departure from the Federation.

¹⁵⁰ Means, 1976, pp. 314-315. The Philippines claimed sovereignty to North Borneo through deeds and treaties negotiated in the late 19th century. Opposition was not limited to Indonesia and the Philippines. In December 1962, members of the People's Party in Brunei started a rebellion opposing the proposed formation of a Malaysian Federation. Though it was never confirmed by the Indonesian government, because of the strong political connections the leader of the rebellion, Sheikh Azahari, had with Indonesian officials, rumours circulated that the rebellion had the support of the Indonesian government. Its occurrence vindicated proponents of the proposed merger of the need for greater security from the ominous threat posed by Indonesia. See Allen, 1968, pp. 162-173.

¹⁵¹ Allen, 1968, p. 167.

Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI).¹⁵² Singapore's BS had forged links with the PKI and other groups opposing the proposal in the months following the Tunku's announcement. Fears of communist involvement, and thus increasing Chinese dominance in the region, were fed by the alleged covert actions of the Clandestine Communist Organisation (CCO) in Sarawak.¹⁵³

Attempts to mediate by the United Nations led to a secondary proposal to form a "Confederation of nations of Malay origin...to be called Maphilindo"¹⁵⁴ along with agreement to ascertain the true feelings of the Borneo people towards the merger.¹⁵⁵ The notion to pursue the 'Maphilindo concept', which would have excluded Singapore, was greeted with dismay by Lee Kuan Yew.

Hostilities escalated sharply following the inauguration of the Federation in September 1963. On 21 September, the Indonesian Government initiated "a special 'Operational Command for Crushing Malaysia'" ¹⁵⁶ calling for volunteers from throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. In response to increasing guerrilla attacks in Malaysian territory, the Federal Government "set up a Malaysian Defence Council"¹⁵⁷ assisted by troops from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and units of Nepalese Gurkhas.¹⁵⁸

The chief ministers of both Sarawak and Sabah declared their states' unequivocal support for central government actions. For several months, people in the villages neighbouring the Indonesian border had contended with irregular forces crossing into Sarawak under the guise of liberating the people from the neo-colonial clutches of the British. The insurgents also made contact with the underground

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁵³ Porritt, 1997, pp. 78-79; Ongkili, 1997, p. 9. Based in Sarawak, it is believed the origins of the CCO lay in the 1948 Emergency on the peninsula. During the 1950s, punitive action was taken against CCO leadership in response to the activities of the Sarawak Peoples' Army.

¹⁵⁴ Means, 1976, p. 317. 'Maphilindo' a composite word based on the names of the three states: Malaya; Indonesia and the Philippines.

¹⁵⁵ Allen, 1968, p. 170. The UN proposal required the date for the inauguration of the Federation to be postponed from its original 31 August date to 16 September.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

communist movement, the CCO. In addition to the local native trackers who assisted the Commonwealth forces in the task of containing the guerrillas in the difficult terrain, particularly along the Sarawak/Indonesian border, many Borneans registered for national service.¹⁵⁹

The impact of Confrontation on Indonesia's economy was severe. Furthermore, the ascendancy of the PKI was not sanctioned by all the state's elite who "deplored the waste and probable futility of Confrontation".¹⁶⁰ In the aftermath of an attempted coup in October 1965, the details of which remain clouded, control to restore order was given to the relatively unknown General Suharto.¹⁶¹ In July 1966, General Suharto was "given full authority to form a new cabinet"¹⁶² and the following month a peace agreement was ratified by Malaysia and Indonesia bringing Confrontation to an end.¹⁶³

3.3.3 Centre-Periphery Relations

If a period of consolidation was hoped for at the inauguration of the Federation, this was not to be the case. Whereas Confrontation was concerned with attempts by an external actor to forestall the formation of a Malaysian federation, and post-September 1963, to bring about its violent disintegration, it was an internal crisis which culminated in the irreparable fracture of the Federation. The decision of the Singapore leadership to contest Malaysia's first general elections strained relations with central government to such a degree that, in August 1965, the former British colony withdrew from the Federation.¹⁶⁴ In addition, the desire of the newly independent Borneo territories to

¹⁵⁹ Ongkili, 1997, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶⁰ Allen, 1968, p. 219.

¹⁶¹ It is speculated that between 87,000 and 300,000 Indonesian Chinese were killed during the purges.

¹⁶² Means, 1976, p. 362.

¹⁶³ The various political machinations and manoeuvres of the parties involved prior to the inception of the Federation and through the period of Confrontation make for interesting reading and are covered in great detail by Means and Allen, amongst others.

¹⁶⁴ Scholars differ in the terminology chosen to describe Singapore's withdrawal from the Federation with terms ranging from expulsion, secession, departure to withdrawal. This thesis has elected to view

forge a path of unique independence within the federal structure was contrary to Kuala Lumpur's intention to foster a sense of national unity. The outcome of these initial challenges to Malay political dominance was to weight the power-share firmly in the hands of UMNO.

Optimistic hopes for a smooth transition and a normalising of political relations between Singapore and the predominantly Malay federal government were ruled out by the course of events immediately prior, and subsequent, to the inauguration of the Federation in September 1963. Long-standing political tension between the two governments was further exacerbated by the contentious nature of most aspects of Singapore's entry.¹⁶⁵

In reality the terms and provisions of the Malaysia Agreement, as far as Singapore was concerned, were not as beneficial as those granted Britain's Crown Colonies in Borneo. While it was agreed that matters of defence, security and foreign affairs would be left to the federal government, in return for a degree of autonomy over finances, labour and education, Singapore was allocated 15 seats in the federal legislature, 10 fewer than entitled on a per capita basis.¹⁶⁶ In effect, the cost to Singapore of retaining greater autonomy was reduced representation which, in turn, impeded political participation in central government.

Various viewpoints have been posited to explain the PAP's decision to take a more definitive role in federal politics by contesting the elections in April 1964. One suggestion that the party decided to do so in retaliation for the UMNO-inspired Singapore Alliance campaign, six months earlier, in the Singapore elections - political

Singapore's departure as a mutually expedient action rather than view it as arising from the forceful actions of central government against a recalcitrant and troublesome peripheral state.

¹⁶⁵ In contrast to the Borneo states, where the terms and provisions of the Malaysia Agreement (including constitutional amendments) were made following the recommendations of the Cobbold and Lansdowne Reports, Singapore's entry was directly negotiated between the Tunku and Lee Kuan Yew. For details on the various aspects see Milne and Mauzy, 1978, pp. 64-66 and Tim Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore*, (Crow's Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ Chew and Lee, 1991, p. 144.

tit for tat.¹⁶⁷ It is more probable, however, that its genesis lay in the opposing ideologies of the PAP and the UMNO-led Alliance: the PAP's pan-Malaysian orientation anticipating a PAP-Alliance coalition in the federal government as opposed to UMNO's focus intent on preserving Malay pre-eminence.¹⁶⁸

Singapore initially asserted it would not field candidates in the election. However, with expectations that the merger would bring a degree of power-sharing dimmed by the lack of PAP leadership appointed to senior positions in central government, Singapore rescinded its initial decision. Party leadership was further aggrieved in view of the PAP's overwhelming success in Singapore's elections held shortly after the Federation's inception on 21 September.¹⁶⁹

As previously mentioned in the section on Confrontation, the original date for the establishment of the Federation was postponed from the end of August 1963 to mid-September. In response, Lee Kuan Yew stated that "Singapore was not bound by the terms of the Manila Conference, and that...[the state] would insist upon independence on August 31...regardless of the delay or fate of Malaysia".¹⁷⁰ His intentions made clear, Singapore was duly declared independent. On 4 September, Lee Kuan Yew called a snap election for 21 September.

With the defection of "about two-thirds of the PAP membership and most of the party bureaucracy"¹⁷¹ to form the BS in July 1961, the decision to hold the September election compelled the party to rebuild the organisation. Restored PAP membership was achieved by recruiting a significant number of Malay and Indian members: a fact which displeased both Singapore UMNO and party leadership in KL.¹⁷² Nor was the

¹⁶⁷ This issue, along with the PAP's involvement in Malaysia's first election in April 1964 is discussed in greater detail by Mauzy and Milne, 2003, p. 40; Turnbull, 1977, p. 282; Means, 1976, p. 334.

¹⁶⁸ Chew and Lee, 1991, p. 144. In essence the PAP wished to supplant the MCA as the party representing Chinese interests in the Alliance.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. The 1963 Federation Constitution did not restrict states from "expanding their political activities across the causeway". Thus, although the PAP'S decision to field candidates in the elections may have been ill-advised in light of their repercussions, it was not unconstitutional.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Mauzy and Milne, 2003, p. 40.

¹⁷² Turnbull, 1977, p. 282.

Malay shift in loyalties entirely welcomed by Lee Kuan Yew. It ran counter to his intentions “to work in alliance with UMNO in the central government”,¹⁷³ in effect to replace the MCA as the “second partner in the Malaysian Alliance”.¹⁷⁴

UMNO discontent was further compounded by the PAP’s overwhelming election success - an election also contested by the recently formed Singapore Alliance, a party which brought together the Singapore branches of UMNO, the MCA and MIC along with the Singapore People’s Alliance.¹⁷⁵ With an expectation that the Alliance would win “three predominantly Malay seats”¹⁷⁶ the lack of success in all three seats devastated UMNO leadership.¹⁷⁷

The PAP’S decision to contest the April 1964 elections did not deliver the same success as those held the previous September - the outcome was a virtual repeat of the Singapore Alliance result - the party ill-judged the strength of support for the MCA within the Alliance with success in only one seat. To the UMNO leadership, the PAP’s participation in the elections confirmed their fears that the party intended to politically challenge the Alliance, despite Lee Kuan Yew’s assertion that the party only wished “to replace the ‘feeble and corrupt’ MCA”.¹⁷⁸ The decision was “interpreted as a fundamental political challenge to the Alliance also perceived in communal terms as a Chinese challenge to Malay supremacy”.¹⁷⁹

A groundswell of dissatisfaction amongst the Singapore Malays at the lack of benefits expected with the merger resulted in calls for a review of legislation and the granting of special concessions. In a departure from constitutional provisions for Malays living in other states, Singapore Malays did not receive ‘special privileges’ because Lee Kuan Yew was “convinced that Malay special rights were not the solution

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Means, 1976, p. 334.

¹⁷⁶ Mauzy and Milne, 2003, p. 21.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Chew and Lee, 1991, p. 145.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

to Malay poverty".¹⁸⁰ The merger agreement did, however, acknowledge their 'special position' as Bumiputera in Singapore. The increasing communal tension was exacerbated by an inflammatory media campaign and calls from the Malay-extremist wing of UMNO, the 'ultras', who mounted a hate campaign in Singapore in an attempt to woo back the Malay voters.¹⁸¹

Attempts at appeasement by Lee Kuan Yew and the intervention of the Yang di-Pertua Negeri met with little success.¹⁸² In the volatile and tense climate created by the ongoing hostilities with Indonesia, communal tension between Chinese and Malay youth erupted into violence in the latter half of 1964 which left 22 people dead and hundreds injured.¹⁸³

The PAP, ideologically broader in outlook and not wishing to be drawn into a communal model of politics, promoted its democratic socialist policy. In May 1965, the PAP formed a coalition of opposition parties from across the Federation - the Malaysian Solidarity Convention - adopting the slogan "a democratic Malaysian Malaysia".¹⁸⁴ The previous month, the Alliance parties from Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak had merged to form the Malaysian National Alliance Party. Once again, attempts by the PAP to aver a non-communal political stance were refuted as the party attracted a non-Malay membership, largely Chinese. Instead of closing the communal divide, the Malaysian Solidarity Convention widened the rift.

In an increasingly terse exchange across the Straits, Malay extremists called for Lee Kuan Yew's imprisonment and that of other Singapore politicians.¹⁸⁵ During the Tunku's attendance at a British Commonwealth conference in London, an absence extended by ill-health, Lee Kuan Yew and the Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Abdul

¹⁸⁰ Mauzy and Milne, 2003, p.19.

¹⁸¹ Chew and Lee, 1991, p. 145; Turnbull, 1977, p. 291.

¹⁸² Yang di-Pertua Negeri- Governor of Singapore. States which do not have hereditary Malay rulers (Sultans) - Singapore, Penang, Sarawak, Sabah and Malacca - have appointed governors (heads of state). In time each sultan will become Yang di-Pertuan Agong - King of Malaysia.

¹⁸³ Turnbull, 1977, p. 291.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 292.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 293.

Razak, met in attempt to resolve the developing crisis but to no avail.¹⁸⁶ With no compromise possible, and concern that “he [the Tunku] was losing his grasp over the extremists in his own party,”¹⁸⁷ the choice was to be made between either “depos[ing] the Singapore government or eject[ing] Singapore from Malaysia”.¹⁸⁸ The former solution was discounted as the “move would have been resisted by the British and Australians”¹⁸⁹ and thus the latter became the only option available. On 9 August 1965, Singapore was proclaimed an independent republic and admitted to the United Nations the following month.

The ‘political divorce’ may have solved the immediate problem for UMNO’s party leadership - the PAP challenge to its primacy as the leading political party in the Federation - but it did not address the fundamental cause of the communal conflict nor recognise the potential for further intra-federal dissension with the East Malaysian states.

For the Borneo leadership, wary of the concept of a merger from the outset, the expulsion of Singapore heightened political unease; a mistrust not lessened by the fact that KL omitted to inform either state of Singapore’s impending departure. Not only was there a distinct possibility that promised economic aid financed by Singapore might not eventuate, the sense of frustration and grievance was compounded by the reality that, with the separation of Singapore’s Chinese-majority population, the “pro-Malay politics of the Alliance were not likely to be successfully challenged”.¹⁹⁰

The juxtaposition of two opposing perspectives lay at the heart of the Borneo discontent. On the one hand, there was the federal government’s determination to instil a sense of national unity - in essence a Malay nationalism inclusive of other

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. In the final months leading up to Singapore’s expulsion, the federal government closed the Bank of China in Singapore which financed the small businessmen and the large food trade from China.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Means, 1976, p. 371.

ethnicities - while, on the other, there was the desire of the Borneo states to retain their unique sense of identity.¹⁹¹ Just as the Borneo states were intent on retaining the favourable concessions granted them under the Federal Constitution - provisions not totally welcomed by, nor acceptable to, all political parties - the federal government was just as determined that they should “come into line with the policies of peninsular Malaysia, on the argument that nation-building demanded uniform policies throughout the federation”.¹⁹² As in all relationships, the degree to which one or other party is prepared to compromise and accommodate the opposing wishes of the other is not static but shifts in response to prevailing circumstances. What had yet to be tested was the degree to which the federal government or the East Malaysian state governments would yield when confronted with contentious matters.

Within months of the merger, federal government intentions to influence the direction of East Malaysian administrative development were evident in the decision to second and appoint staff from Peninsula Malaysia to the Borneo administrations. One of the earliest appointments was that of a deputy federal secretary who mediated all federal issues between KL and East Malaysia. These positions were additional to those of the Federal Ministers of Sarawak and Sabah Affairs, both held by indigenous East Malaysians during this period.¹⁹³ Over the next two years, East Malaysian staff attended training sessions in Petaling Jaya “designed to foster administrative understanding and uniformity between...[central government and the East Malaysian states]”.¹⁹⁴

At issue was the lack of progress towards implementing a programme to Borneanise the public service sector - in effect to replace British expatriate officers with

¹⁹¹ Cheah Boon Kheng discusses the manner in which successive prime ministers from Tunku Abdul Rahman “flip-flopped” between cubing Malay nationalism and promoting multi-ethnic nationalism in ‘Ethnicity in the Making of Malaysia’ in Wang Gungwu, 2005, pp. 91-115.

¹⁹² Means, 1976, p. 373.

¹⁹³ Ongkili, 1997, p. 37.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

local officers. To the Borneo leaders, 'local', meant Bornean - "not just Malaysian".¹⁹⁵ The difficulty, however, lay in the fact that there were insufficient numbers of suitably educated candidates who could have been appointed to positions vacated by the expatriates. The low priority placed on secondary school education during the colonial period meant that those who could be considered by appointment to the public service "were non-natives".¹⁹⁶ The decision to appoint or second West Malaysians was contrary to Article 153 of the Federal Constitution which provided the indigenous peoples of Borneo "the same special position of the Malays".¹⁹⁷ What appeared to gradually develop was not a Borneanisation, but a Malaysianisation of the public service sector.

One of the most vocal opponents of federal encroachment was Sarawak's Chief Minister, Stephen Ningkan. Ningkan, leader of the Sarawak Nationalist Party (SNAP), had been a thorn in the side of the federal government by tending to settle disputes within the state without recourse to KL.¹⁹⁸ He co-operated over issues of economic development but resisted attempts which would have diluted some of the concessions Sarawak received in choosing to become a state in the new Federation.¹⁹⁹ In 1965, Ningkan proposed land reform legislation which would have enabled the indigenous, on acquiring full title to their customary land, the option of disposing of it how they chose.²⁰⁰ The concern for the Malay parties within the Sarawak Alliance (SA) was that the proposed reforms would have allowed "greater land use by the immigrant communities";²⁰¹ in this instance the Chinese. Their

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 36. Ongkili notes that this view was held through the 1970s also.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Means, 1976, p. 383.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. Ningkan did not accept the federal government's stance that Malay should be the sole official language. Nor did he agree with the allocation of federal funds for the support of Islam within the Borneo states.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 382. Existing legislation delineated land into three zones: restricted 'Mixed Zones' - the only land the Chinese could own; 'Native Areas' - where the Malays and natives were able to hold title and 'Native Customary Land' - areas to which the interior tribal natives had customary rights.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 381-382. Sarawak's party system had formed on ethnic lines. The larger communities, more often than not, were represented by two political parties which catered for division within the community

preference was to see Sarawak adopt the system of 'Native Reservations' patterned after the 'Malay Reservations' established on the peninsula.²⁰² To thwart Ningkan's intentions to foster land reform and remove him as chief minister, attempts were made to split the SA by forming a 'Malay-native coalition'.²⁰³ Ningkan's decision to withdraw the land reform proposals led to Temenggong Jugah withdrawing his support for the Native Alliance (the intended name for the new coalition) and the proposal to form the new coalition went into abeyance.²⁰⁴

Federal authorities had been unable to act in 1965 with the withdrawal of the legislative reform proposals. The following year, however, tension between Kuching and KL had increased to the point that the latter was "more determined to engineer the overthrow of the Ningkan government".²⁰⁵ Attempts by the Tunku in February 1966 to revive the three-party 'Native alliance' "under the guise of a United Malaysian National Organisation"²⁰⁶ were unsuccessful - the ethnic alliances were simply too strong.

Responding to rumours of the 'Federal plot' to "undermine his government,"²⁰⁷ Ningkan's dismissal of BARJASA's secretary-general proved divisive with members of the SA being either pro-Ningkan or pro-KL. Despite Ningkan's refusal to acquiesce to the Tunku's call for his resignation, "Pesaka member and an Iban"²⁰⁸ Penghulu Tawi Sli was nominated as Sarawak's new chief Minister by the Malaysian Alliance National Council in KL.

itself. "Prior to the 1963 elections, five parties joined to form the Sarawak Alliance": BARJASA (Barisan Raya'at Jati Sarawak – Sarawak Native People's Front, and PANAS, National Party Sarawak, both Malay parties, PESAKA (An Iban term referring to those things handed on through the generations, and SNAP - native parties, and the Sarawak Chinese Association (SCA). The so-called 'Native Alliance' of three parties to counter Ningkan's proposal were BARJASA, PANAS and PESAKA

²⁰² Ibid., p. 383.

²⁰³ See n.199.

²⁰⁴ Hooker, 2003, p. 215. An Iban, Jugah was recognised as an exceptional leader and was appointed as a Penghulu under the system created by Charles Brooke. A Penghulu had the rank of a sub-district leader which came with a salary. When PESAKA was formed to represent Iban interests, Jugah became its first leader.

²⁰⁵ Means, 1976, p. 383.

²⁰⁶ Ibid..

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 384.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Ningkan's lawsuit appealing his removal was upheld by the High Court in Kuching. The damage, however, had been done. Ningkan was no longer able to "count on majority support in the Council Negri".²⁰⁹ His announcement that general elections be called to allow the people to decide their representatives was opposed by KL. A second letter of no confidence was issued but still Ningkan remained.

The failure of the federal government to remove the recalcitrant chief minister culminated in the declaration of a state of emergency in September 1966 on the grounds that "Sarawak was being exploited by Communists and subversive elements".²¹⁰ Under "clause 150 of The Federal Constitution of Malaysia ...all state powers were transferred to the Federal authority".²¹¹ Within days, the Malaysian Parliament had passed amendments to the Sarawak Constitution granting the governor of the state greater authority over political institutions. That same week, "a no confidence motion"²¹² was passed against Ningkan and Penghulu Tawi Sli was reappointed as chief minister for a second time.

Following the ousting of Ningkan, Sarawak was to be administered by a government more compliant and "acceptable to the centre than was the former Sarawak oriented SNAP leadership".²¹³ In November 1966, BARJASA and PANAS merged to form the Islamic Party - Parti BUMIPUTERA Sarawak.²¹⁴ Sarawak retained this form of coalition, under the leadership of two successive chief ministers, for the following three decades.

As previously stated, concern over the Borneo territories' vulnerability to both the Philippines and Indonesia contributed to their inclusion within the greater Malaysian

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 385. Council Negri – Sarawak's state legislature.

²¹⁰ Ibid. The state of emergency was only applicable to the territories of Sarawak.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., p. 386.

²¹³ Michael B. Leigh, *The Rising Moon: Political Change in Sarawak* (Singapore: Angus & Robertson (S.E. Asia) Pty Ltd, 1974), p. 112.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

Federation. In Sabah, the least advanced of the federal states, it also prompted the uniting of the state's emerging political parties to form the Sabah Alliance.²¹⁵ While central government supported the state's economic development, it was the degree of political autonomy under the leadership of first Chief Minister, Donald Stephens, which caused the greatest concern. Constant wrangling between the state's two political leaders, Stephens and Mustapha Harun, the Yang di-Pertua Negeri, resulted in direct intervention by the Tunku and senior members of the federal government.

In common with neighbouring Sarawak, Sabah's major political parties were virtually 'umbrella' organisations representative of the state's communal groups who had strong tribal affiliations to particular regions. In 1964, the United National Kadazan Organisation, Sabah's largest political party founded by Donald Stephens, merged with its rival for the indigenous vote, the United National Pasok Momogun Organisation, forming the United Pasokmomogun Kadazan Organisation (UPKO).²¹⁶ Mustapha, a Muslim from the Sulu Archipelago, led the United Sabah National Organisation (USNO), the political organisation which represented the various Muslim groups - not solely the Malays as there were few Malays in Sabah at this stage.²¹⁷ Mustapha and Stephens would become the two central figures around which Sabah's political future would evolve. The Chinese were represented by the Sabah Chinese Association, the result of the merging of the United and the Democratic Parties with the Sabah Chinese Party after the Federation was formed.²¹⁸

Proposals by Stephens to finance state-wide economic reform by re-introducing the concept of long-term timber concessions tested the unity of the Sabah Alliance.²¹⁹ While the combined opposition from the Sabah Chinese Association and

²¹⁵ Means, 1976, p. 303.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 374.

²¹⁷ Ibid; Allen, 1968, p. 214.

²¹⁸ Means, 1976, p. 374. The merging of the United and the Democratic Parties formed the Borneo Utara National Party which, following the subsequent merger with the Sabah Chinese Association "became the major political party representing the Chinese".

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 376.

USNO forced Stephens to back down over the land reform, he was not so amenable or prepared to accept a gradual 'watering-down' of the 'safeguards' and 'guarantees' granted Sabah with the creation of the Federation.²²⁰ The August 1962 '20-point' memorandum which listed "major political and constitutional demands were the territory [Sabah] to become part of Malaysia"²²¹ formed the basis from which successful negotiations, in which Stephens had been instrumental, had resulted in favourable concessions such as those granted Sarawak. The 'guarantees' opposed by Mustapha were those "which restricted government support for Islam, guaranteed the continued use of English, delayed the introduction of Malay as the national language, and gave Sabah control over immigration from Malaysia and abroad".²²²

In 1964, to resolve a disagreement between the political leaders over the reach of each other's position, Stephens agreed, "under extreme pressure",²²³ to accept the lesser position of Federal Minister with responsibility for Sabah Affairs and Civil Defence. It was an appointment short-lived. In August 1965, Stephens was censured for his open criticism of federal government's neglect in not informing the East Malaysian states of Singapore's impending departure. When discussion turned to reviewing the status of the territories within the Federation, whether they should remain or follow Singapore, the Tunku visited the leaderships of both Sarawak and Sabah intent on restoring loyalty and morale.²²⁴ While calls for UPKO to dissolve were rejected, Stephens was forced to resign from Cabinet and following a "ritualistic public pledge of loyalty to Tunku Abdul Rahman"²²⁵ returned to Sabah's domestic political arena as president of UPKO.

Despite USNO and the Sabah Chinese Association receiving direct assistance from UMNO and MCA in the lead-up to the 1967 state elections, UPKO was the

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ongkili, 1997, p. 83.

²²² Means, 1976, p. 376.

²²³ Ibid., p. 377.

²²⁴ Allen, 1968, p. 215.

²²⁵ Means, 1976, p. 378.

highest polling party. The party's popularity, however, did not guarantee representation in the state legislature or in the federal cabinet. Mustapha, appointed chief minister, informed UPKO leadership that "it must accept a subordinate role in the government, and prove its intentions of 'good behavior' by a pledge of complete loyalty to Mustapha's Government".²²⁶ Mustapha's decision to exclude UPKO was made with the Tunku's approval.

With UPKO effectively sidelined from any decision-making role, the decision was taken to resign from the Sabah Alliance and withdraw to the opposition. Attempts by Stephens to effect a federal review of the political scene in Sabah were rebuffed, with KL responding that its mandate was to "build an integrated Malaysian nation".²²⁷ This was followed by veiled threats from Deputy Leader Abdul Razak that "the government might use its emergency powers under the Internal Security Act to deal with 'disloyal critics'".²²⁸

Stephens and the UPKO leadership continued to seek options for a viable future for the party over the coming months including discussions with Sarawak's opposition party SNAP. The defection of two assemblymen was closely followed by the announcement that UPKO would dissolve with membership advised to join USNO.²²⁹

In 1967, Stephens was appointed Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia. With his departure, the internal division which was symptomatic of the differing perspectives for the future of the state, ceased. Mustapha, with the support of his close association with central government, was able to institute a style of rule that had a definite pro-Malay bias. With the virtue of hindsight, the future would reveal that

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 379.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 380.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 379.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 380.

Mustapha's determination was not always in tune with the wishes of the federal government.²³⁰

Singapore's departure may have fractured the initial federal composition, but KL was determined to ensure that neither of the East Malaysia states followed suit. Diverse communal interests would be accommodated but central government was determined to pursue a course which would ensure Malay supremacy was preserved.

3.4 Malay/non-Malay Relations: A Societal Security Dilemma?

On 15 May 1969, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong declared a state of emergency throughout all states of the Federation. Two days earlier, tension, which had been mounting in the lead-up to the general elections, had erupted into violent inter-communal clashes between Malay and non-Malay (Chinese/Indian) groups in the federal capital.

The unexpected outcome of the elections, which denied the Malays the crucial two-thirds parliamentary majority, was viewed as a direct assault on Malay political supremacy. While conflict between Malaysia's major ethnic groups was not a new phenomenon, this outbreak had the potential, if left unchecked, to destabilise the Federation shattering the fragile state-building process.

3.4.1 The 1969 General Election: Communal Repercussions

Policy implemented in the aftermath of the 13 May 1969 communal riots, specifically with the aim of restoring and maintaining inter-ethnic peace would result, over time, in a society further divided and fragmented. It is doubtful whether analysis into the recently declassified documents concerning this tragic event, often referred to as a

²³⁰ For further detail on Tun Mustapha's governance of Sabah, see the following chapter – section on Regional Security vs Society Security.

'watershed' in Malaysian history, will result in a consensus as to the true reasons which underpinned the violence.²³¹ It is generally accepted, however, that the riots, and the recurrence of conflict towards the end of June/early July, originated in clashes between groups celebrating the unexpected result of the elections and bystanders uneasy with the electoral outcome.²³² Confident that its mandate to govern would be confirmed by the general elections on 10 May, the unforeseen outcome, which saw the UMNO/Alliance coalition win less than half the vote and lose control of three seats, indicated that "the electorate had become somewhat more ethnically polarized than in previous elections".²³³

The Alliance coalition, formed during the 1950s and sustained by the "unity and cohesion...[it fostered with] its partner organisations",²³⁴ was severely tested by the introduction to Parliament, in September 1967, of legislation which would initiate the complete switch-over to Malay as the sole national language.²³⁵ While Article 152 of the Constitution acknowledged Malay as the sole national language, it allowed the use of English as an official language for a period of ten years after independence.²³⁶ In late 1966, Malay extremist politicians, the ultras, mobilised to ensure that constitutional amendment was proposed which would confirm that Malay alone was the Federation's national language.

Fundamental to the actions of the ultras was the belief that a single language was an essential ingredient for national unity, their vigorous promotion of Malay was a matter of economic priority. The special provisions constitutionally accorded the Malays had failed to ensure the fulfilment of Malay expectations in the financial and

²³¹ Official documents on the May 1969 riots held at the Public Records Office, Kew Gardens, London were recently declassified following the lapse of the 30-year secrecy period. Social scientist Kua Kia Soong posits his view that the riots were a "planned coup d'état by the ascendant state capitalist class against the Tunku-led aristocracy" rather than a "spontaneous outburst of violence between Malays and Chinese". See Kua Kia Soong, *May 13 Declassified Documents on the Malaysian Riots of 1969* (Selangor: Suaram Komunikasi, 2007), back cover.

²³² Ibid., p. 80.

²³³ Means, 1976, p. 396.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 391.

²³⁵ Vasil, 1971, p. 155.

²³⁶ Ibid.

economic sectors. Despite securing preferential opportunities in employment and education, the non-Malays continued to dominate “in the economic and professional life of the country”.²³⁷ By legislating Malay as the sole national language, they believed that the “non-Malay supremacy in various sectors of the economy”²³⁸ would be broken.

The move to entrench Malay as the sole national language was not supported by the non-Malays. The Chinese, who wished to have Mandarin acknowledged as both a national and official language, had “already sustained major political defeats when the government decided to convert to a uniform system of national schools to replace the four separate linguistic school systems”.²³⁹ As far as East Malaysia was concerned, the Cobbold Report had earlier shown that the question of a national language was complex and of concern to communal groups in Sarawak and Sabah.²⁴⁰ Beleaguered Chief Minister Ningkan had declared that “Sarawak would not be ready for a change in language policy until 1973”.²⁴¹ The proposal to legislate in favour of one language over all others was viewed by the non-Malays as evidence of further erosion and a devaluing of their own identities. There was little, however, they could do to effect a reversal of the policy apart from signifying their displeasure in the forthcoming general elections.

In hindsight, the decision to review constitutional provisions on the national language impacted to a greater extent on Malaysian society as a whole and on the final outcome of the elections than on the ensuing constitutional amendment. The 1967 National Language Bill amended the Constitution marginally in that though it re-affirmed Malay as the sole national language, it permitted English to be used “for some

²³⁷ Means, 1976, p. 392.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ See section on the establishment of a Greater Malaysian Federation.

²⁴¹ R.S. Milne and K.J. Ratnam, *Malaysia – New States in a New Nation: Political Development of Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysia* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 44.

official purposes...Similarly, Chinese and Indian were tolerated for non-official and non-governmental purposes".²⁴²

Dissension, caused by the discussions, polarised the nation. Voters, who were disaffected by the established political parties which constituted the Alliance coalition, turned to the new hybrid of political parties: those with a more communal aspect set apart from the traditional organisations with ties to the established political elite.

Of the coalition partners, the MCA experienced the greatest switch in voter loyalty losing heavily to three political organisations: newcomer Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian People's Movement), a multi-ethnic party formed in April 1968; the Democratic Action Party (DAP) established two years earlier in March 1966; and the PPP, a political party with a similar manifesto to the DAP.²⁴³ The DAP election manifesto called for democracy in three areas: political - equal status for all citizens; social and economic - the eradication of exploitation; and cultural - the recognition of non-Malay languages; and an integrated education system.²⁴⁴

As previously mentioned, Kua Kia Soong, in his 2007 publication, theorised that the riots were orchestrated to remove the Tunku as prime minister.²⁴⁵ The accepted version, however, has it that jubilant DAP and Gerakan supporters, as they paraded through KL streets, exchanged verbal taunts with morose Alliance supporters. Despite the police declining to give permission to UMNO youth to hold a march the following night, Malays gathered in preparation outside the home of Selangor's mentri besar, in "the belief that Malay power in government was being challenged".²⁴⁶ Many were armed with weapons of various descriptions and were "determined to teach 'the

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Means, 1976, pp. 393-394; Vasil, 1971, p. 300. See section 3.2 Non-Malay Identity for discussion on the PPP.

²⁴⁴ Vasil, 1971, pp. 302-303.

²⁴⁵ See n.137.

²⁴⁶ Means, 1976, p. 397. As the Alliance had only gained half the seats in the Selangor state assembly, Dato Harun bin Haji Idris' position as Mentri Besar (Chief Minister) was under threat.

Chinese a lesson”.²⁴⁷ Violence, including “killing, looting and burning,”²⁴⁸ quickly erupted in the Chinese and Indian sectors of the city. Only streets apart, the conflict spread into the Malay areas as Chinese and Indian shopkeepers retaliated. The arrival of the police quelled the initial violence but outbreaks occurred sporadically over the next few days.²⁴⁹ Towards the end of June, communal conflict flared up in the Indian quarter of KL with outbreaks in other peninsula states also. A curfew was imposed at the outset of the violence, restricting movement in many parts of Malaysia.²⁵⁰

On Thursday 15 May, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong imposed a state of emergency. At the same time, the whole of Malaysia was declared a security area under section 47 of the ISA, 1960. Under emergency ordinances, the Federal Constitution was suspended and the National Operations Council (NOC), headed by Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, was established. The composition of the NOC was controversial in itself. Of the nine members of the NOC, which governed the country during the emergency period, seven were Malays with the Chinese and Indian communities represented by the leaders of the MCA and MIC; no members of the opposition parties were represented.²⁵¹ A consequence of the riots was that the elections which were to have been held in Sarawak and Sabah the following month were also suspended.

The societal cost of the communal riots remains a matter of dispute. Official statistics record approximately 200 fatally injured, the majority Chinese, with many injured and between 6,000 to 10,000 refugees. Extensive amounts of property and

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 396.

²⁴⁹ Kua, 2007, p. 44.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁵¹ Means, 1976, p. 398.

personal chattels were destroyed along with thousands arrested for breaking the curfew.²⁵²

The NOC, which administered the country during the 20-month emergency period, systematically introduced an integrated range of strategies and initiatives with the aim of restoring and maintaining inter-ethnic peace. Covered in greater detail in the following chapter, the first component of the recovery package was the development of the *Rukunegara*, or national ideology, formulated with the aim of engendering a sense of national unity in Malaysia. The second involved the progressive adoption of policy which gave preference to the Malays (initially the New Economic Policy and latterly the National Development Policy) instituted to redress the political and economic inequality of the Malays. The final component involved the passing of legislation which proscribed the questioning, by individuals and political organisations, of a number of “sensitive issues” ranging from citizenship to national language.²⁵³

3.5 Conclusion

Malay societal security is predicated on the belief that, as Bumiputera, the Malay people have a pre-eminent position throughout the Federation. This belief was enshrined in the Merdeka Constitution by the framers of this founding document, the British and first Malay politicians. The Constitution accorded the Malay special rights and privileges in recognition of their paramount position and to redress the economic and social inequality which had developed during the British colonial administration.²⁵⁴

Malay societal security requirements were (and continue to be) articulated through the policies of UMNO, the political organisation formed to abrogate the neo-

²⁵² Kua, 2007, p. 62.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Tun Haji Mhd. Salleh bin Abas, 1986, p. 13. Privileges extended to the indigenous of Sarawak and Sabah in 1963.

colonialist attempts of the British in 1946. The agreement, by the leaders of the MCA and MIC, UMNO's partners in the Alliance coalition, to the privileged status of the Malays formed the basis of a social bargain for which the citizenship requirements of the non-Malays were reviewed. UMNO maintained the unity and cohesion of the Alliance due, in large part, to the constitutional provisions which stipulated that legislative amendments must be supported by a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

The outcome of the 1969 general elections and the ensuing conflict indicated the existence of a societal security dilemma. While Malay societal security requirements were clearly manifested in the resolve of the determined Malay politicians to ensure constitutional provisions were amended confirming Malay as the sole national language, for the non-Malay, little if any attempt was made to provide constitutional protection for Mandarin, Tamil Indian or English as additional national languages. Non-Malay societal security requirements were not being met by the ruling coalition, in particular the MIC and MCA partners. The disaffection of the non-Malay, and others critical of the Alliance, resulted in a swing away from the government to opposition parties whose manifestos professed a greater accommodation of linguistic diversity. The drop in popular support for the ruling coalition undermined the prerogative the UMNO/Alliance had retained since 1957, of effecting unilateral amendment of the Constitution. Inter-societal tension had risen to the degree that a clash, whether it be with words or swords, was inevitable.

In summarising Malaysia's development, from the inception of the Federation in September 1963 until the establishment of the NOC in May 1969, this chapter has attempted to explore the manner in which the dynamics of Malaysian societal identity have manifested themselves. More specifically, this chapter has focussed on the security seeking behaviours of the Malay and the non-Malay reaction.

From the outset, the fledgling Federation was confronted with a multiplicity of challenges. Regionally, it had to contend with military threats from neighbouring

Indonesia which threatened to destabilise the Federation. In addition, the need to resolve intra-federal discord, which had the potential to fracture inter-state relations, was proven by the departure of Singapore and by the increasing political intervention of the federal government in the East Malaysian states. Policy adopted and implemented under the leadership of Tun Abdul Razak, who, to all intents and purposes, assumed tacit control of the Federation in May 1969, and pursued by Malaysia's longest serving Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, gave rise to new dilemmas and additional problems. Analysis of the systemic effects of the evolving paradigm of Malaysian politics and the various mechanisms employed form the content of the following chapter.

Societal discontent rising since the early days of the Federation and fomented by the demands of the Malay extremists reached crisis point with the unexpected election outcome in May 1969. The loss of three states was viewed as a significant shift in power from the UMNO-Alliance coalition to the non-Malay opposition. The grip the Malay-dominant government had maintained on the state, particularly since Singapore's secession, was at risk of failing. Inter-ethnic violence, largely in Peninsula Malaysia, led to the proclamation of a state of emergency which, while it contained the violence within the first month, suspended parliamentary democracy for a further 20 months.

Written in three parts, the following chapter first outlines the array of initiatives implemented to restore Malay political supremacy during the administrations of Tun Abdul Razak (1970-76), Tun Hussein Onn (1976-81) and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003). The second part discusses the position of the non-Malay groups situated in the increasingly coercive and authoritarian climate with the concluding section considering the degree to which the initiatives alleviated or exacerbated inter-societal tension.

4.1 Tun Abdul Razak Hussein

In September 1970, Abdul Razak was sworn in as Malaysia's second prime minister.²⁵⁵ In reality, however, his term of leadership commenced 15 months earlier in May 1969 when he was appointed head of the NOC. As Director of Operations he effectively deposed the Tunku who remained more as a titular figure, with the Cabinet

²⁵⁵ Ong Kee Hui notes that the Tunku resigned as prime minister on 21 September 1970, the day his nephew, the Sultan of Kedah, became the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. 'Tun Razak was confirmed the prime minister the following day. See Tan Sri Datuk Amar (Dr) Ong Kee Hui, *Footsteps in Malaysia: Political Development in Sarawak since 1963* (Kuching: The Sarawak Press Sdn. Bhd., 2002), p. 131.

in purely an advisory role.²⁵⁶ As the press was informed on 16 May by General Ibrahim Hamzah, NOC member:

An effective government is now in the making, but it is probably the intention to maintain an extra-parliamentary autocratic regime for some time to come. The present attempt to impart some multi-racial flavour may not last.²⁵⁷

The crisis effectively crystallised a two-fold problem for the government. The first concerned the stability of the state. The inter-communal violence had the potential, if left unchecked, to destabilise the Federation. For the third time since its founding, the fragility of the merger was evident.²⁵⁸ In this instance, however, the possibility existed that the Federation could implode as a result of the violence, centralised mainly in KL, with isolated sporadic outbreaks along the west coast of the peninsula.

The second problem related to the results of the general election. The loss of Penang, Perak and Terengganu, along with half the seats in Selangor's state assembly, confirmed that the ruling Alliance majority had fallen below the two-thirds threshold required to effect unhindered, constitutional amendment.²⁵⁹

Despite Malay pre-eminence institutionalised by the Merdeka Constitution, the more resolute Malay politicians considered the 'social bargain', which underpinned the 1957 Constitution, had failed the Malay in three areas.²⁶⁰ First, the special privileges granted the Malay had gradually been eroded by concessions to non-Malay, one of the most controversial instances being the National Language Bill. Second, the economic rewards the agreement promised had not eventuated. Analysis indicated that economic disparity between the major ethnies, Malay and Chinese, was significant. And finally, as the results of the election indicated, Malay pre-eminence had been undermined.

²⁵⁶ Kua, 2007, p. 106.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ The two previous instances concerned Confrontation with Indonesia and the second, the secession of a member-state, Singapore.

²⁵⁹ Means, 1976, p. 396.

²⁶⁰ For information on the 'social bargain', refer to the section on the Non-Malay Societal Identity in Chapter 3.

To address these issues, Razak progressively instituted a new political agenda with a determined Malay-centric focus. The integrated and comprehensive package of reforms had two major aims: to transform Malaysian society by improving the socio-economic position of the Malays and to effect major political restructuring to restore UMNO's political dominance. The first objective would be achieved by adopting Malay preferential policy in employment and education. It was envisaged that the success of the UMNO-inspired policy would attract a renewed membership thus regaining the Malay majority and restoring the party's mandate as the major political organisation in the Federation. In 1974, Razak's skilful and dogged negotiating abilities came to fruition with the establishment of a greater Alliance coalition, the Barisan Nasional, which further cemented UMNO's leadership.²⁶¹

4.1.1 The Rukunegara

While the core of the reforms was not implemented until after parliament was restored in February 1971, in July 1969 Dr Ghazali Shafie, the head of the newly established Department of National Unity, announced that a national ideology was being formulated.²⁶² The *Rukunegara*, promulgated in mid-1970, was envisaged as a document which would provide "the basis for creating a basic consensus on communal issues".²⁶³ With no public consultation and severe penalties for breaching its principles, in reality the declaration, with stated ideals of unity, democracy and justice, was regarded as no more than a "list of do's(sic) and don'ts...[to] prevent another outbreak of racial strife".²⁶⁴ Its detractors further claimed the ideology was "too

²⁶¹ The Barisan Nasional, or National Front, is discussed in detail shortly.

²⁶² The Department of National Unity resulted from the merging of the National Goodwill Committee and the National Consultative Council, a body whose membership was drawn from a broad range of Malaysian groups. See Hooker, 2003, pp. 232-233 and Tun Haji Mhd. Salleh bin Abas, 1986, p. 13.

²⁶³ Gordon P. Means, *The Second Generation* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 12.

²⁶⁴ Bob Reece, "Malaysia: The Name of the Game", in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol.65, No. 31, [27 Jul/2 Aug 1969], p. 278.

contrived or superficial to capture the public imagination”.²⁶⁵ Its compliance, however, was mandatory for those aspiring to political office.²⁶⁶

The launch of the *Rukunegara* was closely followed by the NOC’s decision to assert greater political control through a series of legislative amendments. Until such time as parliament was reconvened and the Constitution itself formally amended, the NOC declared that the Sedition Act would be extended, prohibiting the public discussion and questioning of ‘sensitive issues’.²⁶⁷ Provisions considered ‘sensitive’, and subsequently incorporated in the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1971, were those “relating to the Rulers, the National Language and the use of other ethnic languages, Malay privileges and citizenship”.²⁶⁸ Compliance with these amendments would ensure that “traditional or Malay elements and the legitimate interests of other communities...[were] put beyond the reach of communal politics”.²⁶⁹ The NOC leadership considered this restriction on the freedom of speech a prerequisite for a return to normalcy: a move taken ostensibly to avoid a recurrence of inter-ethnic violence. Means writes that “the passage of these amendments...[not only] marked the beginning of a new era in Malaysian politics”²⁷⁰ but further extended the legal powers available to the ruling executive.

4.1.2 The Resumption of East Malaysian Elections

In June 1970, the East Malaysian elections, suspended by the violence on the peninsula, resumed. The NOC not only prohibited electioneering in any form, the Minister for Home Affairs, Tun (Dr) Ismail also warned that should “the results of the

²⁶⁵ Khoo Boo Teik, *Beyond Mahathir: Malaysian Politics and Its Discontents* (London: Zed Books, 2003), p. 16.

²⁶⁶ Means, 1991, p. 13.

²⁶⁷ The Sedition Act 1948 was amended under the Emergency Ordinances not as an act of parliament as parliament itself was suspended during the national state of emergency. See Milne and Mauzy, 1978, pp. 43, 96.

²⁶⁸ Tun Haji Mhd. Salleh bin Abas, 1986, p. 13. Parliamentary privilege concerning these provisions was also withdrawn from members of parliament.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Means, 1991, p. 15.

elections...not give the Alliance a two-thirds majority in Parliament, there could be no return to parliamentary democracy".²⁷¹ It was imperative for Razak and his cohort of 'new order' politicians to regain the crucial majority which would allow the unimpeded passage of planned legislative amendment through parliament.

While the outcome of the Sabah elections could be predicted with ease, there being no meaningful opposition to the Sabah Alliance, the same could not be said for Sarawak.²⁷² Sarawak's major political parties were all ethnically-based. To further complicate matters, each ethnic grouping had two parties representing their interests. This catered for division within the ethnic arising in some cases from tribal tension and/or geo-political difference. In addition, federal-state relations were often strained as Sarawak leadership objected to perceived KL interference in state affairs. The situation was further complicated by residual grievances over the imposition of the 1966 state of emergency.²⁷³

In contrast to Sabah's simple and uncomplicated election, Sarawak's election was contested by five strong communally-based parties: the three Alliance partners - the Malay Parti Bumiputra, the Iban PESAKA and the Chinese party SCA; along with the two opposition parties, the Chinese party - the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) and the Iban party - SNAP. The direct involvement of Razak in a convoluted post-election process of shifting alliances resulted in the formation of a new state coalition government comprising Parti Bumiputra, two members of PESAKA who defected from their party and SUPP.²⁷⁴ Strategically, the support of the SUPP

²⁷¹ Milne and Mauzy, 1978, p. 171.

²⁷² The political wrangling of UPKO/USNO is discussed in the previous chapter.

²⁷³ The state of emergency was imposed due to central government's challenges with Sarawak's chief minister. See previous chapter.

²⁷⁴ The Parti Bumiputra and PESAKA merger formed the Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB). See James Chin, 'Sabah and Sarawak: The More Things Change the More They Remain the Same' in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2004* (Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 2004), p. 160 and Ong Kee Hui, 2002, pp. 106-112.

members, of which there were five, “gave the Alliance the two-thirds majority it sought”.²⁷⁵

Sarawak’s revised state government altered the standing of SUPP from opposition party to integral member in the new Alliance coalition. SUPP had opposed the integration of Sarawak within the Malaysian Federation and voiced criticism over the federal government’s handling of political detainees. However any reservations the party leadership may have had were put aside for the sake of the state’s future; particularly over Tun Razak’s choice for chief minister. Tan Sri Ong writes that both Iban and Chinese regarded the chief minister designate, Abdul Rahman Yakub “as a Malay racialist but as he [Razak] had no one else in mind, we...[were] forced to accept him and hope he ...change[d] his outlook”.²⁷⁶ When instructed by Razak to tell Rahman himself, Tan Sri Ong turned to him with the words “we have agreed to accept him not because we love him but because we love Sarawak more!”.²⁷⁷

Razak’s confirmation as prime minister, in September 1970, saw a further shift in governance as the Tunku’s consensual style was steadily replaced by one “more solicitous of Malay interests and concerns than those of the non-Malays”.²⁷⁸ All senior positions in Razak’s first cabinet were filled by UMNO members apart from that of Minister of Finance which was held by Tan Siew Sin, President of the MCA until his resignation, in April 1974, due to illness. He was succeeded by Hussein Onn.²⁷⁹

The composition of the new cabinet not only echoed the overtly Malay/UMNO-centric formula seen in the NOC but evidenced the further sidelining of ‘Old Guard’ loyalists.²⁸⁰ The cabinet also saw the return to mainstream politics of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Musa Hitam and Hussein Onn, son of UMNO founder Dato Onn Ja’afar.

²⁷⁵ Milne and Mauzy, 1978, p. 171.

²⁷⁶ Ong Kee Hui, 2002, p. 111.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Anthony S.K. Shome, *Malay Political Leadership* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 90.

²⁷⁹ Means, 1991, p. 35.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

Both Mahathir and Musa Hitam had been censured and expelled from UMNO by the Tunku, in August 1969, for direct criticism of his actions and their involvement in a campaign calling for his resignation.²⁸¹

4.1.3 New Economic Policy

In July 1971, without parliamentary approval, the Razak government progressively adopted the most provocative and controversial series of reforms in Malaysia's political history. The New Economic Policy (NEP), instituted to redress the social and economic inequality of the Malays, represented not so much a major change in policy as an intense refocusing of policy directed at fulfilling Malay expectations. Introduced within the context of the Second Malaysia Plan (1971-75), NEP had two stated objectives: poverty reduction for "all Malaysians, irrespective of race",²⁸² and the restructuring of Malaysian society so that ethnicity could not be identified by occupation.²⁸³ It was envisaged that by 1990, (the Fifth Malaysia Plan: 1986-90), these aims would be achieved with 30 percent of the corporate sector either owned or managed by Malay or other Bumiputera.²⁸⁴

Britain's decision, in the mid-19th century, to diversify and expand Malaya's economy led to the assisted immigration of Chinese and Indian workers to meet the shortfall in the labour market. An unintended outcome of this policy was the delineation, over time, of the major ethnicities into discrete economic occupations. Whereas the immigrant labourers were employed in and around the tin mines and rubber plantations, the expansion into the export market impacted little on the

²⁸¹ The activities of the Malay nationalists in the period immediately following the riots is discussed in Means, 1976, pp. 398-399. During his period in exile, Mahathir is credited with writing his seminal *'Malay Dilemma'*.

²⁸² Means, 1991, p. 24. The Malaysia Plans are five-yearly economic plans which set the direction for the Federation over the coming five-year period.

²⁸³ Milne and Mauzy, 1978, p. 326.

²⁸⁴ Hooker, 2003, p. 235; see also Edmund Terence Gomez, *Chinese Business in Malaysia: Accumulation, Accommodation and Ascendance* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999). Gomez notes that in 1969, "Chinese equity ownership stood at 22.8 per cent, compared to the Bumiputera share of a mere 1.5 per cent", p. 37.

traditions of the Malays. The appeal of “lower real incomes”²⁸⁵ in these industries was not sufficient to draw the agrarian Malays who now contended with the increasing demand for rice and other food staples generated by the growing population.

Brown refers to the ‘clustering’ of Chinese in commerce and tin-mining, the Indians ‘clustered’ in the rubber plantations with the Malays “clustered in the rice-farming peasantry”²⁸⁶ a development causal to a society defined on “racial-occupational lines”.²⁸⁷ This “racial compartmentalization”²⁸⁸ was further reinforced by a colonial education policy which, while providing the majority of Malays with “elementary vernacular education...favoured the Chinese and Indians in the urban areas”.²⁸⁹ This divisive policy, not only further entrenched identification of occupation by ethnicity (or ethnicity by occupation), but with a lack of educational training, there was little tangible opportunity for the Malays to make the transition to other areas.

NEP was a bitter pill for the non-Malay despite its sugar coatings of social justice and the promise of inter-ethnic harmony. In essence, the policy demanded non-Malay acceptance of an expansion of the controversial special rights and privileges accorded the Malays by constitutional provision. Whereas the initial provisions covered issues of native land ownership and access to government employment and services, NEP proposed a new formulation to include a quota system for government employment and access to higher education. Legislation which stipulated Malay as the language of instruction facilitated Malay entry to federal universities. Over time, the private sector would also fall within Malay privilege. Assurances that non

²⁸⁵ Brown, 1994, pp. 216-217.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 217.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

Malay wealth would not be expropriated, or employment opportunities affected, did little to ease their disquiet.²⁹⁰

4.1.4 Barisan Nasional

The level of support the Alliance party had retained since coming to power in the 1955 legislative elections was severely reduced by the 1969 general election results. The significant drop in voter popularity indicated that the party was not sufficiently inclusive to contend with the societal problems confronting the Federation. While the East Malaysian elections had guaranteed the Alliance the crucial two-thirds parliamentary majority, the major opposition parties, with their ability to mobilise the public over contentious issues, were considered a threat to the smooth implementation of economic reform.²⁹¹ The concept of building a broad political base by forming coalition agreements with some of the more moderate parties would not only “neutralize the Opposition”,²⁹² it would introduce a semblance of political consensus.²⁹³ In addition, as the provisions of the Sedition Act 1949 (amended 1969) proscribed public discussion of ‘sensitive issues’, criticism could be channelled and contained within the structure of intra-coalition discussions and bargaining, away from public gaze.²⁹⁴

In February 1972 Razak announced that the Alliance and Gerakan had agreed in principle to form a coalition government in Penang.²⁹⁵ This coalition agreement was the first in a series which would form the Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN) a name specifically chosen to engender a sense of patriotism amongst the people.²⁹⁶ With the offer of various inducements and patronage, the BN expanded both the Malay and non-Malay representation of the ruling Alliance party.

²⁹⁰ Means, 1991, pp. 24-27.

²⁹¹ Means, 1991, p. 28.

²⁹² Milne and Mauzy, 1978, p. 190.

²⁹³ Means, 1991, p. 27.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁹⁵ The coalition agreements were in part facilitated by Tan Sri Ong Kee Hui.

²⁹⁶ Ong Kee Hui, 2002, p. 125.

The negotiating process was not without discord. Dissension developed on both sides of the Malay/non-Malay divide as factions disagreed with the concept of forming a broad multi-ethnic 'grand coalition'. The first agreement between the Alliance and Gerakan led to a split within Gerakan and the establishment of a new multi-ethnic party, Pekemas (Social Justice Party).²⁹⁷ Pekemas consistently refused to become a member of the BN as its leader Dr Tan Chee Khoon, was a firm advocate for the role of an opposition in parliamentary democracy.²⁹⁸

In the second instance, the decision to align the MCA within the BN angered the more aggressive members of the party who "argued that the party should be more assertive in representing and defending Chinese interests".²⁹⁹ Continued agitation "invoked party discipline"³⁰⁰ and the expulsion of members who subsequently joined Gerakan.³⁰¹

The most protracted and taxing negotiations were those concerning the Malay Islamic party PAS. The concept of aligning with UMNO was "opposed by a militant and uncompromising faction".³⁰² First mooted in December 1970, the discussions for the final agreement continued intermittently over the following two years. In the new political climate, however, PAS agreed to the coalition terms in December 1972.

For Razak, the expanded coalition was the quintessential ingredient in the strategy to transform Malaysian society. Registered in June 1974, the BN initially composed eight parties several of which were themselves amalgams of various political parties: UMNO, the MCA, the MIC, PAS, the PPP, Gerakan, BN Sarawak and BN Sabah.³⁰³ The overwhelming success of the BN in the general elections the

²⁹⁷ Milne and Mauzy, 1978, p. 196.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Shome, 2002, p. 31.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Means, 1991, p. 86.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 32.

³⁰³ Scholars may differ in the make-up of the BN, depending on whether they list as discrete entities the organisations which together consist Sarawak's coalition government.

following month gave Razak the “decisive mandate to carry on with his political and socio-economic policies”.³⁰⁴

4.1.5 Student Unrest

The 1970s witnessed a world-wide resurgence in Islamic fundamentalism, most apparent in countries with large Muslim populations. In Malaysia, the re-awakened interest in Islam and its fundamental tenets was evident in the increase in number of dakwah movements, organisations which promoted the doctrine of the Islamic faith.

The method and manner of the organisations defined their categories. At one end of the spectrum were groups proscribed by the government for their *deviationist* activities - those considered “subversive to Islam”.³⁰⁵ Apposite were the “government-sponsored Islamic bodies and associations”³⁰⁶ such as the Pertubuhan Kebajikan Islam Malaysia (Islamic Welfare and Missionary Association of Malaysia, Perkim) founded in 1960 and headed by the Tunku. Standing apart were the independent Islamic groups, the most significant being Jemaat Tabligh, which originated in India in 1925, and two organisations formed in 1971, Darul Arqam and Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (the Malaysian Youth Islamic Movement, ABIM) - the former founded by Ustaz Ashaari Muhammed and the latter by Anwar Ibrahim.³⁰⁷

The politisation of ABIM coincided with the appearance, in many western countries, of a variety of youth movements mobilised by an array of social issues. For ABIM, and other Malay student organisations, this rising political consciousness combined with the ethos of dakwah led to protest action in support of the marginalised in Malaysian society, in particular those groups faring poorly as an outcome of NEP.

Dr Mahathir, newly appointed Minister of Education, warned that persistent repeated criticism of government policy would not be tolerated. Furthermore, the

³⁰⁴ Milne and Mauzy, 1978, p. 201.

³⁰⁵ Means, 1991, p. 72.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 73-74; see also Hussin Mutalib, *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1993).

government also considered that students, whether in Malaysia, Australia or New Zealand, along with university staff, should not be involved in political activities. Attempts by the government to curb student protest had little effect. In December 1974, in response to allegations that peasants in Kedah and Perak were starving due to changes to the rural economy, demonstrations were held on the campuses of several major universities with the largest protest occurring on the grounds of the elitist “Selangor Club in the heart of Kuala Lumpur”.³⁰⁸ The intervention by the Federal Reserve Unit of the Police resulted in over “1,100 students, the majority of whom were Malay, being charged with unlawful assembly”.³⁰⁹ The leaders of the demonstration, both students and lecturers, were arrested under the provisions of the ISA. Among them, Anwar Ibrahim, who remained in preventive detention until 1976.³¹⁰

In April 1975, legislation was introduced to parliament amending the Universities and University Colleges Act with the intention of curbing “political activities at all institutions of higher learning”.³¹¹ The spectre of communist infiltration also reappeared with the government’s White Paper, *Communist Party of Malaya Activities within the University of Malaya Chinese Language Society*.

Student unrest during the Razak administration was not restricted to the Muslim groups influenced by the dakwah ethos. Malay and non-Malay students alike were opposed to the political elite. From the non-Malay/Chinese students’ perspective, antipathy stemmed from a fear that the government’s intention to implement Malay affirmative policy could impinge upon their economic future. For the rural Malay students, while government policy had promoted their admission to universities in urban centres, it did little to acknowledge the ensuing sense of alienation many students experienced.³¹² Both groups were able to focus their uncertainties and

³⁰⁸ Means, 1991, p. 37.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid., p. 35.

criticisms on the apparent failings of the government's policies under the new NEP climate. For the goals of NEP to be successfully achieved, it was imperative that the government maintain control in every sphere. The students' actions highlighted an undercurrent of unease which challenged "the integrity and legitimacy of the government".³¹³

Tun Razak's comparatively short term as prime minister, a mere five years, insufficiently acknowledges the depth of his legacy to the Federation. The powerhouse and mastermind behind Malaysia's social and political transformation, Razak's determination to restore and reaffirm Malay pre-eminence directed the state's political development. With the objectives of NEP as the template for future government policy and directive, it was to be the task of future Malaysian prime ministers to pursue the successful achievement of its political and economic aims.

4.2 Tun Hussein Onn

In January 1976, Hussein Onn acquired the unenviable task of succeeding Abdul Razak as the Federation's third prime minister. Throughout the five-year term of his leadership, Hussein had to contend with crises on several fronts. Politically, factional disputes amongst members of the UMNO Supreme Council surfaced in the power vacuum created by the absence of Tun Razak's authoritative leadership. In addition, when PAS disapproval over its status within the ruling coalition led to the party's withdrawal from the BN in December 1977, Hussein's critics credited the change in UMNO leadership with the failure to maintain a cohesive multi-party alliance.³¹⁴

Hussein's task was not made easier by the fact that his return to the UMNO political fold was relatively recent. Son of Dato Onn Jaafar, founder of UMNO, Hussein had withdrawn from the party when his father resigned as leader to form the

³¹³ Ibid., p. 36.

³¹⁴ Shome, 2002, p. 111. Further detail on the PAS withdrawal is discussed shortly.

Independence of Malaya Party in 1951.³¹⁵ He rejoined UMNO shortly before successfully contesting the 1969 general elections, was appointed deputy prime minister in 1973 and, three years later, to the position of prime minister on the death of his brother-in-law, Tun Abdul Razak. His rapid rise through the UMNO ranks meant that Hussein had little time in which to cement solid relationships to weather the political storms that continued to come his way over the course of his leadership.³¹⁶

4.2.1 The Economy

In terms of economic growth, Hussein was as determined as his predecessor to achieve the prime objective of the economic reforms: an increased share of the economic pie for the Malays - a view stridently shared by the ultra-UMNO faction. Despite a review of the Third Malaysian Plan (1976-80) indicating that the economy was on target to surpass the growth rate achieved by the previous administration, the UMNO extremists campaigned vociferously for a greater rate of progress towards the achievement of NEP goals. In response to their persistent calls, and Hussein's own resolve, the government adopted strategies which further expanded and refined those of the previous administration.

To promote and finance Malay ownership in the corporate sector, a vast conglomerate of quasi institutions and agencies was established at both state and federal level.³¹⁷ Government funds available for investment were also channelled from sources such as Malaysia's national oil company Petronas. Regarded as Hussein's "most significant contribution to the economy",³¹⁸ Petronas allowed the government to negotiate a series of successful lucrative "production-sharing contracts"³¹⁹ with several

³¹⁵ Hooker, 2003, p. 204.

³¹⁶ Means, 1991, p. 54.

³¹⁷ Shome, 2002, p. 119. To meet the NEP objective of increasing Malay/Bumiputera control of the corporate sector, the Amanah Saham Nasional (National Unit Trust) was established in January 1981. It was envisaged that this initiative, and other Bumiputera trust agencies such as the Tabong Haji (Pilgrimage Board), would encourage Malay participation in public companies. The increased revenue enabled the government to raise its corporate ownership stake.

³¹⁸ Ibid, p. 118.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

foreign oil companies including Shell and Esso. Petronas' success was such that within a short period, the petroleum industry was "the single largest contributor to the national economy".³²⁰

The success of the schemes to promote Malay/Bumiputera ownership by making available shares in companies at preferential rates was undermined by the practice of on-selling the shares immediately to non-Malays at market rates. When the scheme was abandoned in 1980, analysis revealed that individual ownership "had risen to only 4.3 percent".³²¹

The focus to reduce poverty levels was initially in rural areas where 89 percent of households considered poor (in Peninsula Malaysia) were situated. Of these households, 74 percent were Malay.³²² Despite various strategies instituted to modernise rural development, statistical analysis showed that the incidence of poverty had fallen at a greater rate in urban than in rural areas. That aside, the household income of all major ethnic groupings improved as a result of the economic reforms adopted in the decade from 1970: most markedly amongst the elites and the growing middle classes.

4.2.2 Industrial Co-ordination Act

A factor contributing to the reduction of poverty was an increase in the level of employment courtesy of the controversial Industrial Co-ordination Act (ICA). Passed in 1975, the ICA made it mandatory for businesses in the industrial and commercial sectors, with a "paid-up capital of RM250,000 and employing more than twenty-five

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Harold Crouch, *Government and Society in Malaysia* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1996), p. 213. Crouch writes that the number of Bumiputera applications for special share issues had risen from 1,819 in 1976 to more than 17,000 by 1980. However, "virtually all the shares" were resold immediately, "bringing about increased wealth for a tiny minority of politically well connected bumiputeras...members of royal families and local UMNO leaders". Though the scheme was abandoned in 1980, it was revived once more in 1983. The success of this scheme is a matter of dispute between the government and those critical of NEP/NDP initiatives.

³²² Ibid, p. 21. With large numbers of Indians lived in the rural areas employed in the plantations, poverty was also prevalent in this ethnic grouping, an issue discussed further in the following chapter.

workers”³²³ to ensure that the staff numbers included a 30 percent Malay representation. The ICA also included provisions which called for the promotion of Malay workers “in appropriate sequence to supervisory and management positions”.³²⁴ Compliance with this legislation was a proviso for the issuance of a permit to operate a business.

4.2.3 Islamic Revival

During the latter half of the 1970s, the Hussein administration became aware that the unity and cohesion engendered by the societal reforms was at risk of being undermined by the intensity of the more radical dakwah groups mobilised by the wave of Islamic religiosity sweeping the world. The administration was concerned that not only could the religious fervour of the groups exacerbate the cleavage between Malay and non-Malay - a rift the government had been working to narrow since the early 1970s - but the Malay could themselves be polarised between those that adhered to the call for a return to a purity of the Islamic faith and those who practised a more secular lifestyle. In addition, with Malay Muslim society largely Sunni, the Shi’ite ideology of particular dakwah organisations challenged the existing orthodox view. Violence which threatened to undermine the veneer of inter-ethnic harmony engendered by the *Rukunegara* such as that which occurred at Ulu Selangor, Alor Setar and Johore in late 1970/early 1980 confirmed the government’s unease.³²⁵

Neither was the government prepared to entertain organisations which purported an ideology which conflicted with UMNO’s leadership in Islamic affairs. In an attempt to manage or contain the more troublesome groups, “the Hussein government adopted a two-pronged conciliatory approach”.³²⁶ Sponsorship was

³²³ Khoo Boo Teik, *Paradoxes of Mahathirism: An Intellectual Biography of Mahathir Mohamad* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 142.

³²⁴ Means, 1991, p. 59.

³²⁵ Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, discusses these cited examples in ‘Islam and Violence in Malaysia’.

³²⁶ Shome, 2002, p. 114.

offered to those “that were prepared to abide by its criteria”³²⁷ while those groups not offered sponsorship were allowed to “carry on but with the proviso that their activities were subject to close oversight for deviationist tendencies and if any were found, the organization would be immediately proscribed”.³²⁸

Many of the groups the government banned for promoting a strict interpretation of Islamic law were based in the PAS stronghold states of Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah.³²⁹ PAS, UMNO’s challenger as “upholder of Islam and Islamic values”,³³⁰ had, from its inception, called for the establishment of an Islamic state.³³¹ In the period following the 1974 elections, PAS discontent over such issues as the allocation of parliamentary seats and positions within the state and federal administrations strained relations between the Islamic party and the government.³³² The proclamation of a state of emergency in Kelantan in response to a PAS vote of no confidence in Kelantan’s *mentri besar*, an UMNO affiliate, further exacerbated the situation, resulting in PAS expulsion from the BN in December 1977.

The need for heart surgery in February 1981 precipitated Hussein’s retirement later that same year. Largely removed from political circles prior to his success in the 1969 elections, Hussein had been tasked with the further fleshing out of the social and political reform initiated by his predecessor Tun Abdul Razak. His administration was also complicated by intense factional wrangling within UMNO along with mounting pressure from radical Islamic organisations. The prime objective for his successor, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, would be the successful achievement of NEP goals while maintaining inter-societal harmony within a Malay dominant context.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid. The fundamentalist militant character of the radical dakwah groups such as the Muhammadiyyah Tariqah stemmed from a similar school of thought as the Wahhabi. A further group, the Ahmadiyah, also proscribed in Malaysia during this period was the cause for further civil unrest in Indonesia as recent as April 2008.

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

³³⁰ R.S. Milne and Diane K. Mauzy, *Malaysian Politics under Mahathir* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 82.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Shome 2002, p. 111.

4.3 Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

Mahathir was determined to pursue and extend the Malay preferential policies of his predecessors. A staunch Malay nationalist, Mahathir's increasingly authoritarian stance, a preparedness to introduce further restrictive constitutional amendment, including the role of the Malay rulers, and to cross swords with the judiciary, not only produced dissent within UMNO but further exacerbated the growing inter-ethnic divide: a polarisation acknowledged by Mahathir himself in the final years of his governance. In considering Mahathir's lengthy administration (1981-2003), this final section has endeavoured to restrict discussion to issues and events which had a substantive impact on inter-societal relations in Malaysian society.

Mahathir's accession was, in itself, uneventful. It was however, causal to and surrounded by, issues which heightened political and civil tension.³³³ On the one hand, the attention and energies of UMNO activists were focused on potential candidates to succeed Mahathir as deputy president of the party.³³⁴ On the other, civil tension, heightened by the passing of amendments to the Societies Act which legitimised political intervention in organisations that challenged government policy, was further increased by the uncertainty regarding the change in federal leadership.³³⁵ Would Mahathir, in light of previous criticism of government policy, usher in a more liberal political environment or pursue a regime reminiscent of Tun Razak?

Means proposes the call for an early general election in 1982 lay in the government's need to have "a renewed mandate to bolster its legitimacy in anticipation

³³³ Precedent for the deputy leader to succeed the prime minister had been set twice before: Tun Razak had followed Tunku Abdul Rahman with Hussein Onn succeeding Tun Razak.

³³⁴ Further precedent indicated that the deputy president of UMNO would, not only become the current deputy prime minister, but in time, succeed to the prime ministership. Thus factions strategised contending candidates for this position. In this instance, Musa Hitam was elected Mahathir's first of three deputy prime ministers.

³³⁵ Means, 1991, p. 85. The Societies Act 1966 and subsequent amendments prescribe the regulations which ensure registered societies fulfill the requirements of the Constitution.

of new public policy initiatives”.³³⁶ It was also, from the perspective of the BN, an opportune time politically. There was little prospect that the non-Malay vote would go to the opposition party DAP now that disputes over MCA leadership had been settled.³³⁷ In addition, the MIC, a party which had, for several years, been afflicted by ongoing internal leadership challenges, was also more settled with agreement to a power-sharing arrangement between competing factions.³³⁸

Ever the skilful tactician, Mahathir, continued to strengthen his authority and control over the state’s political processes. First, he increased his dominance of the ruling party by ensuring that UMNO candidates for the election “were either selected or co-opted by himself”.³³⁹ Not only was this new generation of Malay politicians more receptive to the ideas of Mahathir, their presence provided leverage “to check the balance of power within UMNO”.³⁴⁰

Second, in a move to anchor the 40,000-strong ABIM membership, it was announced, shortly before the election, that Anwar Ibrahim, the organisation’s leader, had joined UMNO and would contest the Permatang Pauh seat (held at that stage by PAS) in the upcoming elections.³⁴¹ The student protestors, having graduated from their universities, were now considered a floating constituency.³⁴²

Anwar’s decision was not given unanimous approval by ABIM.³⁴³ Founded initially as an apolitical Islamic organisation focussed primarily on social issues, in

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 86. Malaysian elections poll both parliamentary and state seats and must be held within five years of a previous election. Sabah and Sarawak state elections are the exception with their elections occurring apart from other states. It would not be until the 2008 elections that Sabah’s state seats were included within the federal vote.

³³⁷ In 1979, following a filed challenge to MCA leadership, 62 MCA members who were expelled from the party, joined Gerakan. See section on the formation of the BN.

³³⁸ Means, 1991, p. 87.

³³⁹ In-Won Hwang, *Personalized Politics: The Malaysian State Under Mahathir*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), p. 129.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ K.S. Jomo and Ahmad Shabery Cheek, ‘Malaysia’s Islamic Movements’ in Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (Eds), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd, 1992), p. 90; Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 85. Permatang Pauh was in fact Anwar’s birthplace. His father had been an UMNO member of parliament for the seat previously. In fact, courtesy of his mother, Anwar had a secret UMNO membership.

³⁴² Means, 1991, pp. 99, 87.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 100.

1978 ABIM central leadership had contested the elections as PAS candidates.³⁴⁴ While most were unsuccessful, PAS, in recognition of the value of the candidates, offered positions of leadership within the organisation itself. Thus for a period, in the late 1970s/early 1980s, ABIM became politically aligned with PAS and, by association, with the view promoted by PAS that Islam was the panacea for all ills confronting Malaysian society.

In the months leading to the poll, ABIM underwent a change in focus once more, declaring that it would no longer support any political organisation, preferring to return to its apolitical origins. It was not surprising, therefore, that the announcement that Anwar would contest the elections, led to a schism in the ABIM from which the organisation never truly recovered.

The 1982 elections were contested within the restrictive climate created by the Sedition Act and the threat of detainment under the ISA.³⁴⁵ The election outcome indicated no major shift in voter loyalty. The BN gained two further parliamentary seats giving it a total of 132 of which UMNO won 70. Of the non-Malay parties, the MCA recorded its most successful result, with DAP, while it gained a greater proportion of the vote in this election than in 1978, received three fewer parliamentary seats.³⁴⁶

4.3.1 Islamisation

Mahathir's recruitment of Anwar Ibrahim into UMNO had twin benefits. Not only did his co-option add a contingent of loyal Anwar supporters to the UMNO vote, in Anwar, Mahathir gained a committed young leader who could work towards implementing Islamic principles within an UMNO/Mahathir framework rather than from within the

³⁴⁴ This episode is discussed in detail by Jomo and Cheek, Milne and Mauzy and In-Won Hwang.

³⁴⁵ Means, 1991, p. 88. Thomas notes, in an editorial on the Aliran website, that of the "900 odd Acts of Parliament passed since Merdeka", at least 14 statutes have abrogated "constitutionally protected fundamental rights". Amongst these are listed the ISA 1960, the Societies Act 1966, The Printing Presses and Publicity Act 1984 and the 1972 Sedition Act. Aliran is a non-governmental organisation based in Penang whose purpose is to "develop thinking and reflection on major social issues".

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

alternative - a PAS political structure. Whether Anwar's charismatic personality and determination would in fact lead to his political downfall a decade later is a matter of conjecture. That aside, following the success of the 1982 elections, Anwar was appointed Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department with responsibility for Islamic Affairs.

With a mutual commitment to assimilate Islamic principles in Malaysian society, particularly "the power of learning, the quality of thrift, and...the dignity of work",³⁴⁷ Mahathir and his protégée launched several innovative institutions with an Islamic focus: institutions to further inculcate Islamic values across Malaysian society. The establishment of the Islamic Teachers' Training college in 1982 was followed a year later by the renowned Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (International Islamic University, IIU).³⁴⁸ Mahathir, in announcing the government's intention to found the IIU stated that though the institution would be located in Malaysia, it would be owned by the Islamic world.³⁴⁹ It was envisaged that staff and students would be both Muslim and non-Muslim with the proviso that "the latter 'accept this [universal] concept and use Islamic philosophy as a basis [for learning]'".³⁵⁰ In contrast to the state's other universities, which were legislated to instruct in Bahasa Malaysia, the IIU's languages of instruction would be Arabic and English.³⁵¹

The Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad, "considered the brainchild of Anwar",³⁵² was launched in July 1983. With a mandate to operate on strict Islamic principles, which included a prohibition on the charging of interest or *riba*, the Islamic Bank developed "mechanisms of profit-sharing and dividends...so that both borrower and lender earn[ed] the approximate equivalent of market interest rates offered by regular

³⁴⁷ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 175.

³⁴⁸ Shorne, 2002, p. 161; Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 177.

³⁴⁹ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 176.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 177.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 178; Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 86.

banks”.³⁵³ Other Islamic economic institutions included a restructured Islamic Economic Foundation which, amongst other functions, collected and disseminated “contributions to charity”³⁵⁴ and the Islamic Insurance Company in 1985.³⁵⁵

Apart from promoting the development of the Islamic Bank, Anwar was instrumental in founding the “well-funded Institute of Policy Development...in 1985”.³⁵⁶ Echoing ABIM’s ideals of strengthening the individual’s faith through education, the Institute provided “human development training for student leaders, youth activists, junior managers and public servants”.³⁵⁷ A review of Islamic jurisprudence was also undertaken during this period. Where amendments were promulgated, these were of a more fundamental aspect viewed by some as a return to a more traditional focus.³⁵⁸

4.3.2 NEP Initiatives

With the desired mandate delivered by the elections, Mahathir’s commitment and determination to achieve the NEP goals by the targeted date, now only eight years into the future, led the government to institute a range of policy initiatives directed specifically at the successful attainment of the stated economic and social objectives - a task made more difficult by the global economic downturn.³⁵⁹

In 1982, the government recorded a budget deficit of RM10 billion.³⁶⁰ The diminishing return of the country’s export commodities due to the recession was insufficient to meet the government’s continuing investment in an increasing number of Bumiputera corporations and trust agencies; an initiative commenced under the

³⁵³ Means, 1991, p. 101.

³⁵⁴ Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 86.

³⁵⁵ Shorne, 2002, p. 162

³⁵⁶ Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 86.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Norani Othman, ‘Islamization and democratization in Malaysia in regional and global contexts’ in Ariel Heryanto and Sumit K. Mandal (Eds), *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 126. Othman notes that the shift in laws which undermined human rights appeared at odds with the public image the Mahathir and Anwar projected which was more that as progressive Islamic leaders.

³⁵⁹ The first effects of the global recession of the 1980s were felt in Malaysia in 1982 with its financial systems truly under siege by 1985. Three years later however, Malaysia’s economy had recovered, surpassing its pre-1985 levels. Crouch, 1996, p. 222.

³⁶⁰ Mean, 1991, p. 97.

Hussein administration. By 1983, the government was channelling funds “through 57 institutions, 115 statutory boards, and corporations that in turn controlled or had joint-ventures in 500 subsidiary companies”.³⁶¹ The mounting financial crisis, unlikely to alter in the immediate future, saw the implementation of a range of measures to remedy the situation.

First, the decision to increase the government’s share of foreign investment was effected by acquiring “a controlling interest in a number of key British corporations operating in Malaysia”.³⁶² The predatory manner in which the shares were acquired led the British government to impose a fees hike across several sectors impacting directly on Malaysian students living in Britain and by Malaysia’s national carrier, Malaysian Airline System (MAS), with increased landing charges.³⁶³ Mahathir retaliated by calling for a boycott of British goods. His ‘Buy British Last’ policy lingered until March 1983 leading the government, in the interim, to closer relations with neighbouring Japan and South Korea and the ‘Look East’ policy.

Second, as a consequence of its increased level of interaction with the highly industrialised states, the government initiated plans to “accelerate the pace of industrialization”.³⁶⁴ An Industrial Master Plan, inspired primarily by the success of Korea’s economic growth, was adopted. The plan incorporated the Heavy Industries Corporation of Malaysia (HICOM) formulated by Mahathir in 1980 when he was Minister of Trade and Industry.³⁶⁵ It was envisaged that HICOM would act as the conduit through which foreign investment would flow into Malaysia, on a joint-stock basis, to fund several large scale national projects. The agreement with the Mitsubishi Company to form the Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional or the National Automobile

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid., p. 91.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Means, 1991, p. 95.

³⁶⁵ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 119

Industry Corporation which produced Malaysia's first car, the Proton, is considered HICOM's most controversial venture.³⁶⁶

4.3.3 Privatisation

In January 1983 Mahathir announced an innovative scheme which would see the gradual transfer of particular "government enterprises to the private sector".³⁶⁷ Privatisation, according to Mahathir, was the "opposite of nationalisation".³⁶⁸ Whereas "the objective of nationalisation...[was] for government to take over the ownership of private enterprises... privatisation...[meant] the transfer of government services and enterprises to the private sector".³⁶⁹ Despite the fanfare which accompanied the launch of Malaysia Incorporated and speculation about which services and enterprises were likely to be transferred to private ownership, the concept eventuated in little tangible shift in ownership causing analysts to question whether privatisation had occurred at all.

The same year, Fleet, a new corporation formed with Malay and Chinese investment, and with UMNO as the major stockholder, was granted of a licence to operate the television channel TV3.³⁷⁰ The involvement of UMNO begged the question as to whether the party could stand outside its membership in BN, as an independent investor or whether, in fact, the government itself had become "indirectly a party to the new venture".³⁷¹

Two years later, the government announcement that public shares in MAS were to be sold to raise RM650 million "needed for new capital investments"³⁷² did not precipitate a flurry of private investors. Public reticence over the purchase of shares in MAS stemmed from the government's intention to retain a majority share in the carrier.

³⁶⁶ Means, 1991, pp. 94-96.

³⁶⁷ Means, 1991, p. 97.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

In September 1986, Mahathir announced that NEP “would be held in abeyance”.³⁷³ Despite the vestige of success portrayed by the grand industrialisation drive, the impact of the global recession in the mid-1980s resulted in a decline in foreign capital investment from “its highest level of RM3,262 million in 1982...[to] RM1,262 million in 1986”.³⁷⁴ By suspending NEP, Mahathir was able to introduce measures to stimulate economic growth: initiatives which, in promoting increased foreign investment, might have appeared contrary to NEP’s Bumiputera equity objectives.³⁷⁵

4.3.4 Industrial Co-ordination Act Amendment

The ICA, the cause of Chinese discontent since its inception a decade earlier, was amended in December 1985 and again in September 1986.³⁷⁶ The 1985 amendments doubled the threshold at which companies had to meet the 30 percent Malay/Bumiputera representation. The paid-up capital increased to RM1 million and 50 workers and again in 1986, to RM2.5 million with 75 employees. Tax incentives for “the manufacturing, agriculture and tourism sectors”³⁷⁷ received legislative protection with the passing of the Promotion of Investments Act in May 1986. This was followed by the launch of a New Investment Fund which would provide funds, at preferential rates of interest, for new projects in these same sectors.³⁷⁸

4.3.5 Operation Lalang

On several fronts, 1987 proved a taxing year for Mahathir. The resignation of the deputy prime minister and the challenge to Mahathir’s presidency of UMNO resulted in intense factional struggles which split party elite into two camps: Mahathir’s Team A and Team B led by Tengku Razaleigh. With success in UMNO’s April general assembly elections, albeit slim, the fall-out over Mahathir’s leadership challenge saw

³⁷³ Khoo Boo Teik, p. 1995, p. 140.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 138.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 140.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 140-142.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 142.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 140.

those who allied themselves with the opposing camp purged from UMNO and federal leadership. Mahathir's wrath was also meted out to members of the judiciary subsequent to the legal challenge concerning the validity of the UMNO election outcome.³⁷⁹

While a degree of inter-ethnic tension sustained Malaysian society, by October 1987, communal relations had deteriorated to the point that fears were held for a repeat of the inter-societal violence last witnessed in 1969. The cumulative effect of a number of disputes had polarised the community, placing the Malay and non-Malay on either side of the divide.

A number of factors contributed to the rise in inter-ethnic tension.³⁸⁰ In September 1987, the government appointed several non-Mandarin speaking Chinese teachers to senior positions in Chinese-medium schools, in Malacca, Penang, Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.³⁸¹ Despite mounting resistance to the postings from a number of groups including a combined protest from the MCA, Gerakan and DAP, Anwar, as Minister of Education, refused to rescind the appointments.³⁸²

This episode was not a random event but rather the final one in a sequence, each instance further straining relations between the government and those endeavouring to sustain societal integrity. Murmurings of dissent had been building since April 1987 when "the Malacca state government instituted the practice of having

³⁷⁹ This protracted political episode falls beyond the scope of this thesis. In brief, the 1987 UMNO General Assembly elections were contested by a faction opposing Mahathir thus all positions from the Supreme Council seats to the president and deputy posts were in contention. In June 1987, several members, subsequently referred to as the UMNO-11, disputed the close result which confirmed Mahathir, and his choice of deputy, on the basis that several delegates had voted who should not have been present. On 4 February 1988, the court ruled that UMNO should be deregistered as a political party as several illegal branches of the party had taken part in the 1987 elections; essentially the country was being ruled by a party nullified by the courts! Political machinations continued in the demise of the Federation's leading political organisation. Mahathir very quickly registered a new political party: UMNO Baru (or New UMNO) with the UMNO-11 settling for UMNO Malaysia. The legal disputes continued through 1988 culminating in the impeachment of the Lord President Salleh bin Abas stemming from alleged partiality of the courts in political matters. See Means, 1991, pp. 193-218 and Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, 99, 263-303.

³⁸⁰ Amongst the issues which exacerbated inter-societal tension were those concerning gross financial mismanagement. This is covered in the section on Regime Security vs Societal Security.

³⁸¹ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 282

³⁸² Ibid.

all schoolchildren take a pledge during regular school assembly”.³⁸³ The pledge was viewed by Chinese associations and political parties as containing “Islamic overtones”.³⁸⁴ The following month, the MCA threatened to leave the BN if the government refused to support a ‘dollar for dollar’ refund scheme to the failed deposit taking co-operatives (DTC) and in June, the University of Malaya elected to teach “first-year elective courses in the English, Chinese, and Indian Studies departments”³⁸⁵ in Malay.

Over the intervening months, other issues aggravated the tense situation. Rumours circulated that the government had established an all-Malay committee to review the Education Act 1961. The MCA “protested the use of the songkok and tudung for graduands”³⁸⁶ and Chinese leaders in Johore Bahru were instructed to remove Chinese characters from signage. The increasingly confrontational nature of the disputes placed pressure on the collaborative structure of the BN; the consociational aspect, even the appearance of, was rapidly diminishing.

Mediation to settle the contentious issue of the appointment of the non-Mandarin speaking staff failed.³⁸⁷ On 11 October, political parties and Chinese educationalists held a meeting in KL, attended by approximately 2000 people, to support a boycott of education institutions.³⁸⁸ In response, UMNO activists organised a greater show of force at a rally two days later, followed by a “civics course’ for 8,000 divisional delegates”³⁸⁹ the next day. In addition, a massive 500,000 people were expected to celebrate UMNO’s anniversary on 1 November.

To forestall the distinct possibility of inter-communal violence and to shore-up relations between the member-parties of the ruling coalition, on “27 October 1987, the

³⁸³ Ibid., p. 280.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 281. The background to the failure of the DTC scheme is discussed in the following section on Regime Security vs Society Security.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. The songkok and tudung are the headgear worn by Muslim men and women.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 282

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

police launched ‘Operation Lalang’”.³⁹⁰ Over the next two months, a total of 119 persons persons considered a threat to the security of the Federation were arrested and detained under the ISA. Among those arrested were politicians from DAP, MCA, Gerakan, Pemuda UMNO, Christian group members, Muslim teachers, nongovernmental organisation activists, media representatives and Chinese educationalists.³⁹¹ Khoo notes that arrests were made in Sarawak “where local environmentalists and anti-timber-logging natives were also detained”.³⁹² It may have been Mahathir’s intention, apart from quelling the threat of inter-ethnic violence, to bring into line the more recalcitrant politicians and while this was achieved to a degree, the anti-Mahathir faction within UMNO continued with their judicial challenge which was placed before the High Court in KL in January 1988.³⁹³

4.3.6 Vision 2020

In February 1991, at the inaugural meeting of the Malaysian Business Council, Mahathir outlined his vision for the future of Malaysia. In a speech entitled ‘*The Way Forward*’ he pictured a country, that by the year 2020, would be fully developed - “a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one ‘Bangsa Malaysia’ with political loyalty and dedication to the nation”.³⁹⁴

Mahathir’s utopian vista for Malaysia quickly seized the public’s imagination.³⁹⁵ Just as the *Rukunegara* had been employed to evince greater acceptance of NEP, so Vision 2020, or Wawasan 2020, sweetened the strategies of the new economic era. The concept of Wawasan was popularly used by Anwar in the 1993 UMNO party

³⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 284.

³⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 284-286. Pemuda UMNO – UMNO Youth

³⁹² Ibid., p. 285.

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 287.

³⁹⁴ Mahathir Mohamad, ‘*The Way Forward – Vision*’, The Prime Minister’s Department, Malaysia, 1991. ‘Bangsa Malaysia’ – one Malaysian nation.

³⁹⁵ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 21.

elections, and by the business sector, continuing to appear on large canvasses high in KL's city centre a decade later.³⁹⁶

4.3.7 National Development Policy

Speculation which had been mounting concerning the direction of Malaysia's political economy post-NEP was partially resolved, in July 1991, with the adoption of measures introduced to achieve the aims of Vision 2020.

While in essence the new initiative, the National Development Policy (NDP) remained the same as NEP - a reduction in the degree and incidence of poverty along with the removal of identification of race with major economic function - in practise it differed from its progenitor in three main aspects. First, the new policy was broadened to encompass "nine central objectives"³⁹⁷ Mahathir believed that Malaysia must overcome in order to achieve the desired status as a fully developed nation:

to establish a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny; to create a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian Society; to foster and develop a mature democratic society; to establish a fully moral and ethical society; to establish a matured, liberal and tolerant society; to establish a scientific and progressive society; to establish a fully caring society and a caring culture; to ensure an economically just society; and to establish a prosperous society.³⁹⁸

Second, in contrast to NEP's prescriptive attention to specific quotas and target dates, neither was included in the new development plan.³⁹⁹ The exclusion of these details, which under NEP was causal to the introduction of Malay-affirmative policy, was welcomed by non-Malay/non-Bumiputera but was critically regarded by the more radical UMNO/Malay element.

The final point in which NDP diverged from NEP was in its dimensional shift in focus. Whereas previous strategies to restructure Malaysian society had attempted a broad brush approach, under NDP, the focus would be concentrated on further

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Mahathir, 1991.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 73.

developing a “viable and robust Bumiputera commercial and industrial community [BCIC]”.⁴⁰⁰ Mahathir spoke of the “need to ensure the creation of an economically resilient and fully competitive Bumiputera community so as to be at par with the NonBumiputera community”.⁴⁰¹ Suitable candidates for “important business positions”⁴⁰² would be specifically identified and “groomed into middle-class Bumiputera entrepreneurs”.⁴⁰³ There would be more an emphasis on quality rather than “on quantity”⁴⁰⁴ to achieve the same aim.

The urgency for a strong diversified and competitive economy, the financial rewards of which would correct the imbalances of the past, called for a greater investment in “human resource development”.⁴⁰⁵ Detailing the economic management of NDP, the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) acknowledged the high failure rate of Bumiputera enterprises and anticipated the need for training in the management of wealth and business ethics.⁴⁰⁶

Several initiatives introduced under NEP were retained or extended under NDP. The acceleration of the Privatisation programme enabled the increased allocation of “a substantial proportion of the equity”⁴⁰⁷ to the Bumiputera/Malay. In addition, to fill the shortfall in domestic investment, the continued relaxation in legislation would facilitate the inflow of foreign funds required for the expanded industrialisation programme.⁴⁰⁸ Islamic-based institutions also had a place within NDP. Consultation and research would ensure that their activities would be integrated within the “national planning effort”.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁰ Mahathir, 1991.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 73.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Mahathir, 1991.

⁴⁰⁶ Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Prime Minister’s Department, Malaysia: Forum - IV. New Development Policy 1.51.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.61.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., 1.60.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 1.62

Finally the reliance on the private sector was also retained with Mahathir's proviso that "companies must have a high sense of corporate duty".⁴¹⁰ Upgrading and retraining staff would build more competitive businesses which in turn would create greater opportunities for a larger numbers of Bumiputera to be employed.

4.3.8 Barisan Alternatif

Malaysia's steady economic growth through the 1990s was halted, in the last quarter of the decade, by the impact of the East Asian Financial Crisis. The sudden devaluation of the Thai baht, in July 1997, triggered economic collapse in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and, to a lesser extent, Singapore and the Philippines.⁴¹¹

Malaysia's financial recovery was, at the same time, impeded and prolonged by associated political turmoil reminiscent of the previous decade; in this instance, mounting civil and political unrest surrounding the removal of Anwar as deputy prime minister.⁴¹² Anwar's public humiliation, orchestrated by Mahathir, was regarded by many as contradicting accepted mores that underpinned Malay society. In particular, the deeply ingrained concept for "honour and the avoidance of shame".⁴¹³ The dishonour Mahathir sought to attribute to Anwar was, as Khoo wrote, "distended into the disgrace of the entire community".⁴¹⁴ It was shameful to be Malay.

Continuing revelations of Anwar's alleged behaviour, the judicial trials along with details of his physical abuse in police detention fuelled support for Reformasi, a movement empowered by Anwar which called for "social and political reforms".⁴¹⁵ For a large section of Malaysian society, Mahathir's standing as prime minister was undermined by both his handling of the financial crisis and his involvement in Anwar's

⁴¹⁰ Mahathir, 1991.

⁴¹¹ Hadi Soesastro, "ASEAN during the Crisis" in Sharon Siddique and Sree Kumar (Eds), *The 2nd ASEAN Reader* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), p. 40.

⁴¹² Full detail of Anwar's removal as Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister is easily accessible in several academic publications.

⁴¹³ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 103.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100. Mahathir and his government were concerned over the increasing appeal of the Reformasi movement due to its involvement in the overthrow of Indonesia's Suharto in May 1998. See Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, Chapters 4 and 5.

public disgrace.⁴¹⁶ Reformasi appealed not only to the disillusioned and disenchanting but to an increasing number of opposition parties and social organisations.

In October 1999, shortly before the November general election, the Reformasi movement gave rise to a new political party Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front, BA). Drawn together by the appeal for social change, the coalition united diverse groups such as UMNO's rival for the Malay vote - PAS, the DAP, Parti Rakyat Malaysia (Malaysian Peoples' Party, PRM) - one of Malaysia's oldest Socialist parties and Parti KeADILan Rakyat (Peoples' Justice Party, PKR), a new party led by Anwar's wife Wan Azizah.

Setting aside allegations of gerrymandering, the impact of patronage politics and the fact that the eight-day electioneering period was not conducted on a level playing field, the BN campaigned to retain the status quo claiming that it alone could "guarantee continued economic development, political stability, and, above all, untroubled interethnic relations".⁴¹⁷ The government also played the 'ethnic fears' card informing the Malay voters "that only UMNO could preserve 'Malay dominance'"⁴¹⁸ warning non-Malay voters "that only an UMNO-led coalition could safeguard them against 'ethnic violence' and an 'Islamic state'".⁴¹⁹ The prime objective of the BA was to present as an attractive alternative to the ruling BN; a viable option which, if successful, could break the BN's monopoly on state power.⁴²⁰

The election outcome returned the BN to government with the crucial two-thirds majority in parliament; albeit significantly reduced. For UMNO, the election results were unprecedented with the loss of 22 parliamentary and 55 state assembly seats.⁴²¹ The results indicated that its "share of the popular vote declined from 36.5 per cent to

⁴¹⁶ Lee Kam Hing, "Differing Perspectives on Integration and Nation-Building in Malaysia" in Leo Suryadinata (Ed), *Ethnic Relations and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ethnic Chinese* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), p. 88.

⁴¹⁷ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, pp. 117-118.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 119.

29.5 per cent⁴²² while rival PAS, the most successful of BA's member parties, had "obtained 43.5 per cent of total Malay votes".⁴²³ Detailed analysis of election results revealed that the shift from UMNO/BN to PAS/BA in Malay contested seats was partially offset by a significant swing in Chinese/non-Malay votes towards BN candidates. Non-Malay support for the BN countered the BA's hopes of attaining a one-third share in parliament and is believed to have stemmed from a number of concerns including the spectre of an Islamic state - PAS' long-standing objective⁴²⁴ - and violent political unrest, as had occurred in neighbouring Indonesia.

In typical Mahathir fashion, the unfavourable results, which cast doubt on UMNO's continuing dominance, led to the implementation of a number of repressive measures. Khoo writes that "[a]ll forms of state power - the law, police and bureaucratic regulation"⁴²⁵ were brought to bear on opposing organisations and on individuals themselves.

4.3.9 Mahathir's Last Hurrah?

Mahathir maintained his uncompromising combative style, with only the occasional introspective glimpse, until his retirement in October 2003. Politically, in the closing stages of his leadership, there was a definite swing towards a multi-ethnic opposition drawn together to oppose the regime which had exerted political power over generations of Malaysian citizens; an opposition inclusive of a growing number of Malays. At the societal level, a steady polarisation of ethnicities was apparent in the nation's educational institutions. Research indicated that students tended to socialise with students of the same ethnicity in preference to those of other culture identities.⁴²⁶

Until the DAP's withdrawal from the BA in September 2001, the opposition coalition was a tangible symbol, a magnet for those wanting a greater measure of

⁴²² Ibid., p. 120.

⁴²³ Lee Kam Hing, 2004, p. 90.

⁴²⁴ This is discussed by Lee Kam Hing, 2004, p. 90 and Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 119.

⁴²⁵ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 123.

⁴²⁶ See Lee Kam Hing, 2004, pp. 82, 83.

social justice.⁴²⁷ In October 2000, the force for change motivated thousands to gather at the gates of the Kamunting Detention Camp in remembrance of those arrested during Operation Lalang in October 1987 and to “protest ‘40 years of the Internal Security Act’”.⁴²⁸ It was also the first time that Malay protestors outnumbered non-Malay.⁴²⁹ The following month, in early November, a KeADILan-organised rally “in defence of civil liberties and the right to peaceful assembly”⁴³⁰ drew several hundred people. The marchers, diverted by police road blocks, were met with violent police action which appalled many. Once again, Malays protestors were in the majority

The most decisive action indicative of the growing role of the BA as a political movement in contention was its success on 29 November, in the Lunas by-election, a seat held by the BN for the past 40 years.⁴³¹ However, the choice of candidate, a KeADILan member, and not a DAP member as hoped, caused dissension within the BA and, with the advantage of hindsight, proved to be the beginning of the end for the coalition.⁴³²

The tolerance Mahathir may have exhibited towards the protest marches of the previous year was exhausted by April 2001. The force of the ISA was brought to bear on KeADILan with seven members of its leadership arrested along with several members of the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (Malaysian Militant Group, KMM) a group believed to be plotting the overthrow of the government.⁴³³ The detentions increased intra-BA tension primarily within KeADILan and PAS. Not only had KeADILan lost

⁴²⁷ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 162. Khoo writes that while the BA was unable to affect *serious reform*, it was instrumental in gaining government agreement for the creation of the Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Nasional (National Human Rights Commission, Suhakam) in 2000. Details surrounding the withdrawal of the DAP are covered in the following section: Regime Security vs Societal Security.

⁴²⁸ Ibid

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 162. Albeit a narrow win, the by-election was called following the murder of the BN Member of Parliament, (an MIC member), unresolved to this date.

⁴³² Ibid., p.158. The Lunas by-election was the second during which the choice of candidate had caused disagreement between BA member parties. In June 2000, DAP and KeADILan had clashed over the Teluk Kemang by-election.

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 163.

most of “its determined and capable organizers”,⁴³⁴ included amongst the KMM members was the son of Nik Abdul Aziz, PAS leader and Kelantan Mentri Besar.

The arrests may have been an attempt by Mahathir to capitalise on the intra-party tension following the Lunas by-election, the ultimate outcome being the demise of the BA, the prime mover of BN opposition. He could not, however, have predicted the fall-out over the arrests as set against the back-drop of events which unfolded as the year progressed.

Global attention, drawn to the trials and unsavoury tribulations of Anwar in the late 1990s, returned in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on American homeland, to speculate Malaysia’s role in the upsurge in terrorist activity across the region: at worst a breeding ground for Muslim extremists, at least a conduit through which terrorism flowed between Southeast Asian states. Revelations that representatives of a number of terrorist organisations from Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines along with members of the KMM had met in KL in 1999 and formed a loose coalition, the Rabitatul Mujahidin (League of Mujahidin), illustrated the ease with which Islamic extremists could pass through the state.⁴³⁵

The unequivocal support Mahathir had given towards addressing the problem of terrorism in 2001 was tempered by the comment that the international community should look further than at Islam. However, while Mahathir disagreed that Muslims should be singled out over and above other suspects, the government took pains to reduce the likelihood of Islamic extremism in Malaysia. Increased restrictions on PAS activities and membership saw the Selangor state government extending the ban on PAS held meetings (those without appropriate police permit) to the closure a number

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Kumar Ramakrishna, ‘Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Ideological and Political Dimensions’ in Daljit Singh and Chin Kin Wah (Eds), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2004* (Singapore, ISEAS Publications, 2004), p. 55. Mahathir protested correlations in a similar vein made by Rohan Gunaratna in his book *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* published in 2002

of PAS-run madrasahs along with the decision to follow the Johor practice of setting a school-wide religious programme to preclude PAS input in the syllabus.

Mahathir was vociferous in his criticism of the US-led war in Iraq. In a speech given to the Non-Aligned Movement in February 2003 he referred to the victim of the 9/11 attacks as “collateral damage for long-standing mistakes in U.S. foreign policy”⁴³⁶ setting back US-Malay relations. At the UMNO general assembly meeting four-months later, Mahathir’s anti-Western rhetoric continued when he inferred that moral degeneration in the West was the cause of many problems ranging from theft to incest.⁴³⁷

This tirade was vastly different from the address given the year before when, for reasons perhaps not even known to himself, Mahathir announced to a stunned audience that he intended to “resign as the party’s president and from all his positions in the Barisan Nasional”.⁴³⁸ In camera discussions with a “tearful Mahathir”⁴³⁹ resulted in the announcement that his resignation would not be effective until October after which time Deputy Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, would succeed him as prime minister of Malaysia and president of UMNO.⁴⁴⁰

In October 2003, Dr Mahathir Mohamad retired as Malaysia’s longest serving prime minister. It is improbable that a successful political career spanning several decades would not have its share of controversy. While Mahathir’s determination to pursue and extend the Malay preferential policies of his predecessors was impeded by a number of issues which, to a large degree, fell beyond his control to contain, he is, nonetheless, credited with single-mindedly modernising Malaysian society. In

⁴³⁶ Bridget Welsh, ‘Tears and Fears: Tun Mahathir’s Last Hurrah’ in Daljit Singh and Chin Kin Wah, 2004, p. 140.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 130.

⁴³⁸ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 167.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

acknowledgement of his 22-year career as first statesman in the land his appearance at political and social functions continues to command honour and respect.

4.4 Regime Security vs Societal Security

Through the progressive adoption of a range of policy to restructure Malaysian society over the three decade period 1970 to 2003, the prevailing Malay context was concomitantly affirmed and subsumed within a powerful Malay hegemon. The ascendance of the hegemon, protected and strengthened by constitutional and legislative provisions, meant that non-Malay societies had to contend with a number of profound challenges which, despite assertions that non-Malay groups would not be detrimentally affected, threatened the survival of their individual identities.

Of all the non-Malay groups, it was the Chinese who were at the forefront of protecting and securing non-Malay identity. Politically the most articulate and mobilised group, the Chinese were able to accommodate the changing political climate through compromise and innovative practice. In contrast, the Indian community, which became increasingly marginalised through this period, lacked a strong and cohesive political will. It was not until 2007, under the leadership of Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, that the Hindu Rights Action Front (HINDRAF) was able to give voice to the Indian lament.⁴⁴¹

In considering the position of the non-Malay groups through the period under review, comment is limited to the following domains: the political (with reference to PAS' attempts to enforce Islamic principles and values in the states under its control, the impact of which contributed to the DAP decision to withdraw from the opposition coalition), economic and cultural aspects with concluding comments on the Federation's electoral and dual judicial systems.

⁴⁴¹ The plight of the Indian community is covered in depth in the following chapter.

4.4.1 The Political Aspect

Initially, political development formed on communal lines. Over time, particular groups came together to create alliances or coalitions; not always voluntarily but rather prompted by political circumstance. While scholars may proffer various reasons for the creation of the BN in 1974, perhaps it was simply a reflection of the Sun-Tzu quotation - 'keep your friends close and your enemies closer'! Ultimately, however, the successful restructuring of society necessitated co-operation amongst the political elites.

Agreement to forge the new coalition did not necessarily translate to cabinet recognition. Despite an apparent willingness to transfer commitment from the Alliance to the BN (though there was in fact little option) the poor showing of the MCA and the MIC in the 1969 elections saw the positions of leading politicians shifted to those of lesser responsibility in the post-1974 election cabinet. Senior UMNO members were appointed to finance portfolios held by the MCA ministers prior to the May 1969 elections and the sole remaining MIC politician in cabinet shifted from "Labour and Manpower...to the smaller Communications Ministry".⁴⁴² Leo Ah-Bang concludes that the cabinet reshuffle represented "a consolidation of Malay political dominance".⁴⁴³

Not that inter-ethnic mergers were easily wrought. The clash of ideologies was apparent not only during negotiations to form the BN, previously covered, it also led to the withdrawal of PAS in 1977 and the DAP from the opposition coalition, the BA, in 2001.⁴⁴⁴

Apart from the four-year hiatus when PAS was a member of the BN coalition, the Islamic party challenged and, more often than not, accused UMNO of falling short

⁴⁴² Leo Ah-Bang, 'New Directions in Malaysia' in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1975* (Singapore: FEP International Ltd, 1975), p. 91.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁴⁴ The differing and opposing ideologies along with power play tactics endemic to the political arena tested and fractured both the BN and BA coalitions at various times. In addition, as some parties withdrew, so newly formed parties joined increasing the mix.

in its role as protector of Malay/Islamic hegemony, a role PAS had long disputed.⁴⁴⁵ The introduction of a number of initiatives infusing universalistic Islamic principles throughout the state structure and machinery, under the leadership of Mahathir and Anwar, failed to stem the criticism of PAS stalwarts.

For its part, from its inception as a political party in the mid-1950s, PAS consistently proclaimed its intention of establishing an Islamic state based on Islamic jurisprudence or Syariah law.⁴⁴⁶ Three and a half decades later, PAS had made little traction towards the successful achievement of its aim, one considered “obligatory to all Islamic leaders”.⁴⁴⁷ Greater ‘success’ had been achieved in being branded the ‘watchdog of Islam’.⁴⁴⁸

The 1989 PAS general assembly marked the rise of new leaders determined to achieve where previous leadership had failed.⁴⁴⁹ It is noteworthy that Fadhil Noor, newly elected president, Abdul Hadi Awang, who would in time succeed Noor as president, and Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, the organisation’s spiritual leader, were all educated in Middle Eastern universities.⁴⁵⁰ Prior to the 1990 general election, PAS and Semangat ’46 leadership agreed to form an opposition coalition of Muslim parties, the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah (United Islamic Movement, APU), sometimes referred to as the Organisation for the Uplift of the Muslim Community or the Armed Ummah Unity.⁴⁵¹ PAS leadership also resolved to contest a lesser number of seats

⁴⁴⁵ Mutalib, 1993, p. 36. Negotiations for PAS agreement to join the BN in 1974 included guarantees that the party could question policies which PAS leadership considered unIslamic.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 35. Syariah – Malay transliteration of the Arabic word shari’a.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 36, 37.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Khong Kim Hoong, ‘Malaysia 1990: The Election Show-down’ in Sharon Siddique and Ng Chee Yuen (Eds), *Southeast Asian Affairs 1991* (Pasir Panjang: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), pp. 161, 164. The coalition also brought together the recently formed Malaysian Indian Muslim Congress, the Barisan Jemaah Islamiah Se-Malaysia, a party founded by Mohammed Nasir in 1977 when he was ousted as Kelantan Menteri Besar in 1977 (see section on premiership of Hussein Onn) and the Parti Hizbul Muslimin Malaysia. This final organisation was formed in 1947 from amongst dissatisfied UMNO membership. Banned by the British authorities for its connection with the Malayan Communist Party, Hizbul Muslimin members rejoined UMNO with some breaking away again to found PAS. Semangat ’46 (Spirit of the 1946 – the year UMNO was founded) was the political organisation formed by Tengku

than the previous general election, focusing mainly on the UMNO-held Malay seats in the northeast of the peninsula.⁴⁵² For the first time since Merdeka, the co-ordinated approach of the opposition parties in this general election presented the UMNO/BN with a viable opposition, one which had the potential to form the government.⁴⁵³

Initially the BN's campaign strategy centred on the "hastily formed"⁴⁵⁴ coalitions, suggesting that ideological differences between the parties would make the task of governing the Federation difficult. There was no comment on the precedent set by Razak in the creation of the BN itself. With the unexpected withdrawal from the ruling coalition of Parti Bersatu Sabah (Sabah United Party), whose membership were largely Kadazan Christians, the BN changed tack and played the ethno/religious card, magnifying the impact an election upset might have on the special position of the Malays. This was neatly exemplified in the election theme 'Save Malaysia'.⁴⁵⁵

In keeping with the *modus operandi* adopted in the mid 1980s, PAS was less strident in its calls for an Islamic state. With an overarching theme 'Develop with Islam', the manifesto reassured non-Muslims that their societal identity would be protected, with freedom to worship, to retain cultural diversity, and the choice to participate politically.⁴⁵⁶

The more muted campaign proved the correct choice. The results for the 1990 general elections showed that PAS was the most successful of the opposition parties regaining Kelantan, a state it had lost to the BN 12 years earlier.⁴⁵⁷ With the state's long Islamic heritage and the commitment of PAS leadership, it was not surprising that, in the aftermath of the election success, PAS should declare its intention to "transform

Razaleigh in 1988 following the deregistration of UMNO which resulted from the challenge to Mahathir's leadership of UMNO in 1987. This is discussed further in Means, 1991, pp. 199-219.

⁴⁵² Khong Kim Hoong, 1991, pp. 161, 168. PAS chose to contest 30 parliamentary and 114 state seats as opposed to the 98 and 265 parliamentary and state seats campaigned in the 1986 general elections. Semangat '46 also formed a second coalition, the Gagasan Rakyat Malaysia Party (Malaysian People's Might), with the DAP and three other smaller parties to contest the UMNO/BN seats in the urban areas.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., p. 161.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 162.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 163. Kelantan was also home-state to the leader of Semangat '46, Tengku Razaleigh.

Kelantan into an Islamic State”,⁴⁵⁸ initially through the implementation of Islamic laws including hudud law.⁴⁵⁹ Kelantan Chief Minister Nik Abdul Aziz, stated that “while the rights of the 7 per cent non-Muslim in Kelantan...[would] be honoured, they ...[would] also be made subject to the *hudud* laws”.⁴⁶⁰

PAS replicated a similar election victory in the 1999 General Election retaining Kelantan and gaining neighbouring Terengganu. The party, as it would do more overtly in the 2004 elections, bifurcated its electioneering. The month before the November elections, PAS, along with the DAP, the PRM and the PKR agreed to contest the elections as coalition partners in the newly formed BA. In this regard, PAS campaigned strongly for social justice reform: “leaders, members and supporters placed themselves at the forefront of demonstrations against unjust laws, unfair rulings, unpopular policies, and unacceptable harassment”.⁴⁶¹

In Terengganu, PAS was candid regarding its intentions of moving the state closer to an Islamic model if it was successful in the poll. PAS leader Nik Abdul Aziz asserted that the state government would adopt the Syariah criminal code or hudud “for Muslims, as they would understand that this law comes from Allah”.⁴⁶² Differing from statements made earlier in Kelantan, non-Muslims would “be free to choose between the English law or the Islamic law”.⁴⁶³ Despite this reassurance, there was disquiet throughout several levels of Malaysian society particularly at PAS statements that the party would close down the Genting Highlands Casino, if it succeeded in gaining control of Pahang. While Muslims, under the tenets of their faith, are

⁴⁵⁸ Mutalib, 1993, p. 36.

⁴⁵⁹ Salbiah Ahmad, *Critical Thoughts on Islam, Rights and Freedom in Malaysia* (Selangor: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2007), p. 226. Hudud law (hadd singular) “literally means fixed punishments”. Ahmad writes that “PAS...perceives [hudud] as an Islamic imperative...[despite] predictions of political suicide”. The fear of non-Muslims and liberal Muslims alike is that under the hudud code, far harsher penalties are imposed.

⁴⁶⁰ Mutalib, 1993, p. 38.

⁴⁶¹ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 151.

⁴⁶² Lee Hock Guan, ‘Malay Dominance and Opposition Politics in Malaysia’ in Daljit Singh and Anthony L. Smith (Eds), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2002* (Pasir Panjang: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), p. 190.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

prohibited entry to the casino, the closure of the popular and highly profitable resort would not only impact on the millions of visitors the complex drew each year, but the financial donations Lim Goh Tong, founder of Genting, made to political parties on both sides of the house, might cease.⁴⁶⁴

Once in power, the PAS state government in Terengganu steadily adopted a number of restrictions increasing social conservatism in accordance with the election manifesto.⁴⁶⁵ Despite the pre-election assurances that non-Muslims would be 'free to choose', the reality was otherwise. The party proposed:

that all Muslim women at work wear veils and that there be separate counters for men and women in supermarkets. It was also suggested that there be a ban on unisex hair salons and karaoke lounges, no renewal of liquor licences...[and] an end to betting shops.⁴⁶⁶

Inter-societal tension rose dramatically when the state government announced that it intended to place a kharaj tax on non-Muslim landowners within the state. In explanation, Terengganu Chief Minister Abdul Hadi Awang stated that as there was no faith requirement for non-Muslims to contribute the zakat (charity) Muslims paid as part of their ibadah (belief), state authorities had decided to raise revenue in an alternative manner by charging non-Muslims the kharaj tax.⁴⁶⁷ Following talks between DAP and PAS leadership, the decision was rescinded.

To the consternation of many, both the Kelantan and Terengganu state legislatures passed the hudud law code: Kelantan in November 1993, and in August 2002 the Terengganu state government voted in the Syariah Enactment. In effect, however, the legislation remains suspended as, currently, states do not have provision to introduce alternate penal systems.⁴⁶⁸ Without amendment to the federal constitution, the federal penal code has jurisdiction over states for the maintenance,

⁴⁶⁴ See case study on Lim Goh Tong in Gomez, 1999, pp.49-59.

⁴⁶⁵ Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 150.

⁴⁶⁶ Lee Hock Guan, 2002, p. 190.

⁴⁶⁷ See K. Mahmood, Interview: Abdul Hadi Awang, Terengganu Chief Minister Malaysia on Views & Analyses, 20.06.01. (www.islamonline.net/english/Politics/2001/06/article14.shtml).

⁴⁶⁸ Abdul Rashid Moten and Tunku Mohar Mokhtar, 'The 2004 General Election in Malaysia: A Mandate to Rule' in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, Issue 2, 2006, p. 328.

enforcement and sanction of criminal law.⁴⁶⁹ So while the statements concerning the proposed legislation may have ratcheted up political and civil tension, they were largely rhetoric but indicative that PAS was determined to pursue its Islamic state agenda.

On 29 September 2001, three years after the BA was formed, the DAP leadership announced that it was no longer tenable for the party to remain a member of the opposition coalition. In the period since the 1999 elections, controversial statements by PAS leadership on a range of issues had tested DAP resolve to remain in the BA.⁴⁷⁰ The party's success in Terengganu had led to the implementation of measures which restricted the civil liberties not only of the state's Muslim population but of all citizens irrespective of ethnicity. The assurance that the non-Malays would retain freedom of choice as far as the hudud law was concerned had not been extended to the new initiatives. The proposed limit on karaoke and betting along with plans for the personal non-Muslim tax - the kharaj - were keenly felt.

Then came the 9/11 terrorist attacks which shattered Western complacency. In the volatile environment, when sensitivity to 'things Islamic' was most extreme, PAS' strident calls for the establishment of an Islamic state, along with jihad against the United States, brought relations between the coalition partners to breaking point. The fact that Mahathir's much quoted declaration that Malaysia was "already an Islamic state"⁴⁷¹ was made during the same period was challenging but bearable to DAP membership. What was irreconcilable were statements from an opposition partner organisation.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ W. Case, 'Thorns in the Flesh: Civil Society as Democratizing Agent in Malaysia' in David C. Schak and Wayne Hudson (Eds), *Civil Society in Asia* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), p. 55.

⁴⁷¹ Lee Kam Hing, 2004, p. 84. The statement was made during Mahathir's address to the UMNO general assembly meeting in September 2001.

4.4.2 The Economic Aspect

With successive administrations intent on achieving a 30 percent share of the corporate sector either owned or managed by the Malays (and Bumiputera) by 1990, the non-Malay groups were left with few options.⁴⁷² The communities could either passively accept the continued roll-out of Malay affirmative policy, with the risk of becoming marginalised through the process, or adapt their practices to maximise economic opportunities.

The promulgation of pro-Malay policy and legislation led the more entrepreneurial to adopt innovative and at times convoluted methods of circumventing the restrictions - methods which crossed the societal divide. By forging close links with powerful political leaders, the development of new Chinese/Malay businesses was facilitated. Patron-client relationships developed either directly between Malay politicians and wealthy Chinese businessmen or where the aspiring businessman could not call on a personal relationship or connection, then links were made through Chinese politicians. Where businesses were established, the Malay would, to all intents and purposes, act as the 'front man' while the Chinese might supply expertise and financial backing, in the role of a 'sleeping partner'. In these "so-called Ali-Baba arrangements...[Ali - the Malay] surreptitiously transferred licenses and other privileges"⁴⁷³ to Baba - the non-Malay.

In 1975, after much discussion and a change in leadership, the MCA issued the *Five-Point Programme*, a list of projects the energies of the organisation would focus on over the coming years. These were:

1. The formation of a multipurpose corporate company to help the Chinese transform their family-type businesses into modern progressive companies for greater profits,
2. The construction of a multimillion dollar office complex as a fund-generating source to support the MCA machinery,

⁴⁷² NEP objectives aimed for a 30% corporate ownership by Malays, 40% by non-Malay and 30% foreign ownership by 1990.

⁴⁷³ Crouch, 1996, p. 213.

3. The establishment of the Malaysian Chinese Cultural Society to ensure a place for Chinese culture in Malaysia,
4. The initiation of a series of membership drive campaigns to increase Chinese participation in MCA activities, and
5. The establishment of a technical college called the Tunku Abdul Rahman College for the education of youths for employment in commerce and industry.⁴⁷⁴

The first project, the development of a corporate company, resulted in the setting up of Multi-Purpose Holdings Berhad (MPHB) which commenced operation in 1977.⁴⁷⁵ MPHB operated as a 'super' DTC, a holding company, investing private contributions from the Chinese community in a myriad of businesses across a range of industries.⁴⁷⁶ By participating in the share-market economy, the DTCs became the Chinese equivalent to the government's practice of obtaining shares solely for the Malays/Bumiputera through the acquisition of high-yield businesses.⁴⁷⁷ Regarded the leading co-operative in the field, the MPHB started trading "with an initial investment of 26,000 shareholders and a paid-up capital of RM30million".⁴⁷⁸

Unfortunately the liberalising of the financial sector in the mid 1980s resulted in revelations of gross financial mismanagement and political collusion reaching almost "endemic proportions".⁴⁷⁹ The rapid growth MPHB exhibited in the first decade of trading was halted in January 1986 with arrest of Tan Koon Swan. Elected MCA president in November 1985, Tan, who had a fundamental role in establishing MPHB, was charged with fraudulent activity in the Pan-Electric Industries debacle (Pan-EI). It was additionally alleged that he had channeled funds from MPHB to Pan-EI in order

⁴⁷⁴ Laurence Siaw, 'Malaysia in 1979' in *Southeast Asian Affairs 1980* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books (Asia), 1980), p. 216.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid. At the outset, MPHB operated alongside the Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society, a business founded by the MCA Youth a decade previous; Crouch writes that the notion of the Chinese pooling resources to form corporate entities was not a new concept. In 1903, concern at British incursions into the finance sector, the first Chinese bank "was incorporated in Singapore". By 1932, a further 15 banking institutions were established in Malaya and Singapore. See Crouch, 1996, p. 75.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Shome, 2002, p. 117.

⁴⁷⁸ Means, 1991, p. 60.

⁴⁷⁹ Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 68.

that the failing company could meet debt repayments. As a result of this venture, and others, MPH was “reputed to have lost \$US60m in 1985”.⁴⁸⁰

Before the former MCA president could commence his period of confinement, Tan, along with other members of the MCA leadership, was implicated in an investigation of 24 DTCs carried out by Bank Negara, Malaysia’s central bank. In May 1986, rumours of malfeasance involving Koperasi Belia Bersatu Berhad (Kosatu), a major DTC, led to a run on its branches when members attempted to withdraw funds.⁴⁸¹ Despite action to allay concern, depositors remained nervous. Following a further run on Kosatu in July, Bank Negara raided the DTC “and its subsidiaries...and froze their assets”.⁴⁸² In August, five days after the 1986 general elections, 23 other DTCs were ordered to suspend operations. The bank’s investigation showed that of the 24 co-operatives, only three (one of which was Kosatu), were solvent. The 21 insolvent institutions had a “negative capital totaling RM629.5 million”.⁴⁸³ Once again, financial scandal surrounded senior members of the MCA leadership which did little to enhance peoples’ faith in the political organisation.

Fiscal abuse was not the province of the Chinese community alone but occurred across the societal spectrum with ignominious episodes reported in the Malay society also. In the most notorious incident, Malaysia’s state-owned Bank Bumiputra incurred an estimated US\$1billion loss through the collapse of its subsidiary, Bumiputra Malaysia Finance Limited (BMF). The lion’s share of BMF’s share portfolio had been invested in companies dealing in Hong Kong’s booming property market - a market for which BMF was not intended nor where banking staff

⁴⁸⁰ *Asiaweek*, June 1, 1986, p. 47 cited by Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 93. See also Crouch, 1996, p. 47, Tan, who was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment in Singapore for “15 counts of criminal breach of trust, cheating, and fraud” was sentenced, in Malaysia, to another term in prison for misuse of MPH funds.

⁴⁸¹ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 217. Kosatu had 14,541 members, operated 67 branches and had 19 subsidiary companies. By July 1986, Kosatu had “collected about RM156.1 million in deposits”.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 218. The report noted that at the time of the investigation, the 23 DTCs had taken approximately RM1.4 billion in deposits.

were sufficiently experienced, many of them being “young Malay graduates”.⁴⁸⁴ In addition to allegations of corruption and financial ineptitude leveled at senior banking officials and politicians, investigations into the murder of an internal auditor linked several powerful businessmen and high ranking politicians.

In a second incident, under Mahathir’s leadership, the government adapted a scheme, initially introduced to support and protect the country’s tin producers (tin being a major export commodity), with the intent of controlling the global tin market. Under the guise of the Maminco Sdn Berhad, the government purchased large stocks of tin, both actual and as futures on the London Metal Exchange (LME). These purchases were made in an attempt to raise the price of tin and create a demand which the state would eventually be able to satisfy - at the raised purchase price. Unfortunately this venture, which ultimately cost the government approximately US\$200 million, not only prompted the United States General Services Administration to “unload part of its strategic stockpile”,⁴⁸⁵ it also led the LME to review its trading rules with the effect that the price of tin collapsed, saddling Maminco “with a huge stock of unsold tin”.⁴⁸⁶

The extent and magnitude of these incidents, and others not reported, called into question the deepening involvement of senior political leaders both Malay and Chinese. Mahathir, due to his position as prime minister, was undoubtedly privy to many financial intrigues, even if only after the fact.

4.4.3 The Cultural Aspect

The retention of cultural integrity in a climate clearly favouring the Malays was the major objective confronting all non-Malay societies during this period, as it remains today. For the East Malaysian states, geographical isolation from the peninsula was at

⁴⁸⁴ Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 68. With the liquidation, in 1983, of three of BMF’s major debtors, the Carrian Group, Eda Investments and the Kevin Hsu Group, BMF was unable to recover its public funded investment which amounted to “about 3 per cent of Malaysia’s national income” see Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 211.

⁴⁸⁵ Khoo Boo Teik, 1995, p. 213.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

times a blessing as much as at others, a hindrance. While immigration restrictions impeded the flow of citizens from Peninsula Malaysia to the East Malaysian states - Sarawak and Sabah - it also provided immunity, to a degree, from some of the threats assailing the non-Malay communities on the peninsula.⁴⁸⁷

Remoteness, however, did not protect Sabah's non-Malay citizens who were subjected to a period of enforced Malayisation under the rule of Tun Mustapha Harun. From 1967-1974, Mustapha governed Sabah as though it was his own domain, amassing a considerable fortune assisted by a cabal of loyal supporters who were gifted with "irregular rewards of public office".⁴⁸⁸ He undertook an aggressive programme to assimilate the non-Malays into the Malay culture under the precepts that it was in keeping with federal government's concept of national unity. In 1973 Bahasa Malaysia was "adopted as the state's sole official language".⁴⁸⁹ The same year, freedom of worship was removed when Islam was declared the official religion. By February 1974, the United Sabah Islamic Association's campaign of mass conversion claimed to have embraced over 75,000 new adherents to the faith. It was the intervention of the Tunku and federal government which positioned Mustapha as Sabah's chief minister in 1967, and it was to be political manoeuvring which removed him - though Mustapha took the option to retire with an extremely beneficial pension for life - once rumours surfaced that he was considering Sabah's secession from the Federation.⁴⁹⁰

Sarawak has long been a state where its diverse cultures have co-existed peaceably. From a viewpoint on the state capital's century old Main Bazaar, it is possible to observe temples, shrines, cathedrals and mosques, places of worship for Kuching's citizens. It was not until the final years of Mahathir's leadership that the

⁴⁸⁷ The Malaysia Agreement gave control over immigration to central government. However, into the Bornean states, the consent of the state government is also required. This proviso also applies to citizens from other parts of Malaysia apart from federal government employees who have right of entry.

⁴⁸⁸ Means, 1991, p. 42.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁹⁰ This episode is discussed by Means and others. See Means, 1991, pp. 40-45.

outward signs of Malay/Islamic encroachment became more apparent, particularly since 9/11. Muslim women and girls wear the tudung in every street, shopping mall and school and increasing numbers of structures built in the Islamic style have appeared.

It would be erroneous to assume that Kuching's examples of diverse faiths, some dating back to the mid-1800s, are evidence that adherents of faiths other than Islam are free to worship without problem. Despite the Federal Constitution guaranteeing freedom of worship, the bureaucratic mill can grind very slowly at times. It was no easy task to have applications to upgrade buildings approved let alone to establish new complexes. An additional problem which cropped up occasionally was the use of particular 'Islamic' words by non-Muslims leading to the banning of 'offending' bible and hymns.⁴⁹¹

Most keenly felt by the non-Malay, and less privileged Malay, are the power, authority and wealth amassed by leading Malay politicians. Since 1963, Sarawak has been governed by six Yang di-Pertua Negeri with the current, Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud, having served as both third and sixth governors of the state. Sarawak has also had four chief ministers and, apart from Stephen Ningkan, all have been Malay. The consistent appointment of Malays to these top positions, even to members of the same family, has led to charges of nepotism and cronyism.

The current chief minister, appointed in 1981, is also leader of the PBB, one of the two power centres in the Sarawak BN.⁴⁹² Precedent has the leader of the PBB appointed as chief minister. Wresting control from the PBB would be no easy feat. Not only does the party enjoy the support and protection of the federal government as member-party of the BN, the organisation has formed strong connections with powerful and wealthy businessmen through decades of political patronage, timber concessions,

⁴⁹¹ An issue continuing to cause problems in 2010.

⁴⁹² For detail on the founding of the PBB see section on the Resumption of the East Malaysian Elections.

the awarding of untendered or limited contracts and the like. Defeating the PBB in an election would necessitate the various Dayak parties forming a united front, a political organisation to attract voter appeal. Whilst intense factional infighting makes this appear unlikely, it is not out of the realms of possibility or opportunity.

Without the barrier afforded by the South China Sea, the non-Malay groups on the peninsula were most vulnerable to the impact of the pro-Malay policy. In common with the East Malaysian states, religious freedom was increasingly under threat fuelled by the Islamic resurgence of the 1970s. The destruction of Indian temples, setting aside the question as to the legality of their siting, was causal to mounting tension between the Indian community and authorities.⁴⁹³

The challenges confronting Chinese attempts to retain cultural integrity identified in the lead up to the October 1987 ISA sweep were not confined solely to the Mahathir administration. Two decades earlier, moves by Chinese educationalists to establish a privately-funded university, the Merdeka University, were suspended by the 1969 race riots. The initiative was motivated by concerns that there was limited opportunity for Chinese students to continue their education at the tertiary level. By 1977, the impact of the quota system introduced to promote further education for Malay students meant that less than 25 percent of admissions to universities were non-Malay.⁴⁹⁴ Despite being endorsed by the MCA, Gerakan and DAP, the decision to pursue the innovative institution was initially postponed by the government until after the 1978 elections and ultimately rejected “on the grounds that it would likely spark communal violence”.⁴⁹⁵

By way of appeasement, the government promised to review the quota system. While, in the beginning, this may have allowed a greater number of non-Malay admissions, by 2001 mounting resentment at the enforced marginalisation of high-

⁴⁹³ This issue is discussed further the following chapter.

⁴⁹⁴ Means, 1991, p. 60.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

achieving students unable to attend university, largely Chinese students, caused the government to reconsider its initial objections. Nor was the government prepared to lose the 27 percent Chinese vote.⁴⁹⁶ In July 2001, almost two decades after a 1982 court ruling that the concept of a Chinese university was unconstitutional, the government gave approval for the establishment of the first campus of the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) in KL. Administered under the aegis of the MCA, in time, the UTAR would expand throughout other federal states.

The adoption of contentious policy contributed to the challenges confronting communities endeavouring to maintain schools taught in the vernacular, Chinese or Tamil. The 1996 Education Act repealed the 1961 Education Act, its 1963 Amendment and the special orders relating to the East Malaysian states. To accommodate the calls from pressure groups, the government implemented a parallel education system.⁴⁹⁷ The government funds primary schools irrespective of the medium of instruction, either in National Primary schools where pupils are taught in Bahasa Malaysia, or National-type Primary schools where pupils are taught in either Mandarin Chinese or Tamil Indian.⁴⁹⁸

At the secondary level, pupils either attend a public or private school. The government funds public secondary schools where the medium of instruction is Bahasa Malaysia. Private secondary schools are either the Independent Chinese Secondary schools which are privately funded with pupils taught in Mandarin or the Islamic religious schools which the government funds and where the medium of instruction is Arabic or Bahasa Malaysia. At the tertiary level, universities which elect

⁴⁹⁶ K.S. Nathan, 'Malaysia: 11 September and the Politics of Incumbency' in Daljit Singh and Anthony L. Smith, (Eds), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2002* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), p. 166.

⁴⁹⁷ Alan Collins, 'Chinese Educationalists in Malaysia: Defenders of Chinese Identity', *Asian Survey*, Vol.46 Issue 2, 2006, pp. 283-90; In-Won Hwang, 2003, p. 255. Amongst its articles, the act states that the decisions of the minister cannot be appealed and that those contravening the act could be liable to hefty fines or imprisonment. Decisions which cannot be challenged include those concerned with "the deregistration of educational institutions and teachers, dissolution of boards of governors and intervention in links between educational institutions".

⁴⁹⁸ This education structure remains in place today.

to teach in languages other than Bahasa Malaysia (Mandarin or English) are privately-funded while the government funds those universities which teach in Bahasa Malaysia.

In contrast to the Indian community where, for increasing numbers of Tamil Indian children, the right to attend school had become an even greater challenge than the language of instruction or funding, Chinese determination to retain vernacular schooling has been well served by an organisation formed in 1952, the Dong Jiao Zong (DJZ).⁴⁹⁹ The DJZ's commitment to defend the retention of Chinese-medium schools stems from the belief that Mandarin is "the symbol of Chinese identity that needs to be protected".⁵⁰⁰ Attempts by Malay authorities to replace Mandarin with either English or Bahasa Malaysia are viewed as an attack on the Chinese identity.

In February 1997, the government announced its intentions of establishing seven Vision Schools - a component of Mahathir's Vision 2020 programme the fruit of which was envisaged as one Malaysian nation - Bangsa Malaysia. The scheme would position three primary schools on one site, Malay, Chinese and Tamil Indian. While communal areas would be utilised for informal activities, separate administrations would be kept to "ensure that its cultural identity was maintained".⁵⁰¹ The proposal became an issue in the Lunas by-election in 2000, a constituency with a 37 percent Chinese vote.⁵⁰² The DJZ, through its lobby group Suqiu, mobilised the Chinese voters to oppose the Vision Schools project.⁵⁰³ The DJZ's opposition to the concept was based on the view that true equity was impossible and that, in time, the project would be dominated by the Malays. The Suqiu-led campaign contributed to the

⁴⁹⁹ Collins, 2006, p. 302. DJZ members were drawn from the United Chinese School Teachers' Association and the United Chinese School Committees' Association. The pathetic position of the Indian school children is covered in Chapter 5.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 304.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 312.

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p. 310. Suqiu, or the Malaysian Chinese Organisations Election Appeals Committee (Suqiu Chinese for appeal) was formed in August 1999 as a lobby group prior to the upcoming elections.

success of the BA candidate, a result which displeased Mahathir.⁵⁰⁴ Later in the year, Suqiu deputy chairman David Chua, was accused by Mahathir of breaching confidentiality over comments he had made in an interview to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. As the issue spiralled, UMNO Youth were drawn in, threatening to raze the Selangor Chinese Hall. This extreme reaction caused the more level-headed politicians to organise mediation which diffused the inter-societal relations.⁵⁰⁵

The strength of the DJZ's advocacy in defending the retention of Mandarin as the language of instructions in Chinese primary schools continued to be tested. In 2002 the government announced that from 2003, maths and science would be taught in English in primary schools as part of its programme to ensure Malaysian citizens in the future would achieve "economic prosperity in a highly competitive global economy".⁵⁰⁶ Neither was the proposal widely accepted by the Malay nationalists. To them the language of choice should not be English but Bahasa Malaysia. Verbal clashes with Mahathir, during which veiled reference to the events of 1987 were made, only served to make the UMNO/BN more obdurate in its stance to implement the changes by the planned date, which it duly did.⁵⁰⁷ The issue remained unresolved and although a compromise of sorts was reached concerning the frequency of lessons, with Mahathir's retirement in October 2003, the issue was carried forward to the incoming administration.

4.5 The Election Commission

Analysts invariably describe Malaysia's electoral system as gerrymandered in favour of the ruling UMNO/BN, particularly since the 1969 elections which shook the foundations

⁵⁰⁴ By 2009, six Vision Schools had been established. See Suseela Malakolunthu, , 2009 conference paper, (<http://eprints-um-edu.my>). The circumstances surrounding the Lunas by-election are covered in 4.3.9 Mahathir's Last Hurrah?

⁵⁰⁵ See Lee Kam Hing, 2004, pp. 96, 97.

⁵⁰⁶ Collins, 2006, p. 313.

⁵⁰⁷ This matter, "The Final Solution", forms part of Collins' review as he traces the journey of Chinese educationalists in their attempts to preserve the special character of the Chinese schools. Collins, 2006, pp. 298-318.

of UMNO's security. Free and open elections are further hindered by the alleged corruptive practices of the Election Commission (EC), the agency constitutionally established in 1957 as a quasi-judicial body tasked with managing the elections in an unbiased and impartial manner.⁵⁰⁸

Apart from the alleged inconsistency in the management of elections and the adoption of provisions which prefer the BN coalition, the practice which attracts the greatest criticism from opposition parties and civil rights activists is the manner in which constituencies are regularly reconfigured.

The formulation of constituencies was problematic from the outset. In the first general election in 1955 the British authorities neatly divided the population of Malaya into 52 constituencies each of similar size. As the *Report on the Parliamentary and State Elections 1959* later revealed, the population calculation was faulty in that it was based on the 1947 census figure. Neither had the significant population shift which had occurred as a result of the Emergency been accommodated. In an attempt to rectify the situation, government authorities decided that, for the first election after Independence (the 1959 general election), the initial 52 constituencies would be split in two making a total of 104 electoral districts. In addition, under Article 116 of the Constitution, for elections post-1959, the number of constituencies would be reduced by four. The EC was directed to ensure each of the remaining 100 constituencies contained a similar number of registered voters rather than a share of the population as had occurred in both the 1955 and 1959 elections.⁵⁰⁹

The implications of Article 116 concerned UMNO leadership. If the electoral roll for the 100 constituencies was to be based on registered voters rather than on population, as the 1955 and 1959 elections had been, it would create a greater number of non-Malay majority constituencies than Malay, a situation which could ultimately

⁵⁰⁸ Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 321. These processes include the keeping of electoral rolls, the management of elections on voting day, the redelineation of electoral districts, which the EC must undertake at an interval of not less than eight years, and such other practices as necessary. See also Means, 1976, p. 180.

⁵⁰⁹ Vasil, 1971, pp.8, 9.

remove political control from the Malays and place it in the hands of the non-Malay.⁵¹⁰ This dilemma was contrary to the intent of the 1957 Merdeka Constitution, the foundations of which lay in the 1948 Federation of Malaya Constitution. In essence these documents were promulgated to protect the special rights and privileges of the Malay and “the legitimate interests of other communities”,⁵¹¹ just as the combined strength of the Malays had led to the disestablishment of the Malayan Union so it resulted in the adoption of the Constitution (Amendment) Act 1962 and the repeal of Article 116.⁵¹²

Pursuant to the constitutional amendment was the inclusion of provisions, within the 1963 Malaysian Constitution, which gave greater weighting to the rural constituencies than those implemented initially in 1957.⁵¹³ Whereas the Merdeka Constitution stipulated a disparity of no more than 15 percent (in the number of voters) between an average urban and rural constituency, in 1963 in some areas, the imbalance was as great as 50 percent.⁵¹⁴ With the removal of any limitation on the disparity between urban and rural districts in 1973, the difference increased dramatically between particular districts. Within a decade, in one instance, the largest urban constituency in Selangor (Petaling) had 114,704 voters while in the Kuala Krai constituency (in Kelantan), the EC documented a total of 24,445 people registered to vote. Although the 1986 delineation reduced the disparity, four years later in 1990, the Selangor constituency of Selayang had 100,488 voters, much larger than Gua Musang in Kelantan which had 31,064.⁵¹⁵ Again in the 1995 elections, In-Won notes that one electoral district in Sarawak had 15,849 voters whereas Ampang Jaya (Selangor), in the heart of KL, had 85,954 on the roll. What made the process of rural weightage

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p. 9. The proposed formula would see the number of registered voters within a state divided by the number of designated constituencies in that particular state.

⁵¹¹ Means, 1976, p. 180.

⁵¹² Vasil, 1971, p. 9.

⁵¹³ The rural districts were compensated for their large geographical size and the difficulty of communicating across the often rugged terrain.

⁵¹⁴ Crouch, 1996, p.58.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

most controversial, from the perspective of the non-Malays, was the fact that “the rural areas were predominantly Malay and the urban areas predominantly non-Malay”.⁵¹⁶

Shortly after the 1990 general election, the EC undertook a controversial review of electoral boundaries.⁵¹⁷ Not only were the boundaries of electoral districts altered, a further 12 constituencies were created. In-Won contends that the addition of the new constituencies was impelled by the creation of 12 “new divisions of UMNO”,⁵¹⁸ an occurrence “a few months before”⁵¹⁹ the EC decided to review constituency boundaries. In Sabah, the process directly favoured the “newly launched Sabah UMNO, turning at least four Kadazan-Dusun majority areas into Muslim-dominated constituencies”.⁵²⁰

The fairly regular reconfiguration of the electoral districts was not the only controversial practice, with a BN-bias undertaken by the EC. In contrast to the accepted process of previous elections in which EC officers had assisted candidates, in 1978 the meticulous checking of nomination forms led to the disqualification of 113 candidates of which only three had been proposed by the BN.⁵²¹

In 1990, the government amended the Elections Act for two reasons. First, in a reversal from previous elections, provisions were introduced allowing votes to be counted on site. The EC contended that removing the ballot boxes from the polling stations for the count, as had occurred in the past, increased the likelihood of fraudulent interference. Second, the number of polling stations was increased (along with the limitation of 700 voters per station) because the EC did “not want the voters to

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ In-Won Hwang, 2003, p. 236. Controversial for several reasons one being that it was undertaken not in accordance with constitutional provision which stated that the EC should review electoral boundaries at “an interval of not less than eight years” – the eight year period in this instance would not have expired until November 1992.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Crouch, 1996, p. 60. He notes that in future elections, the EC reverted to accepted practice. Milne and Mauzy also note that ballot numbers were also printed on the counterfoils which added to the sense of unease amongst voters: Milne and Mauzy, 1999, p. 116.

wait in long queues, especially under the burning sun”.⁵²² Crouch writes that opposition supporters considered the amendments intimidatory: they would be more easily identified and feared that funding for community services would be withheld from districts identified as anti-government.⁵²³

Six months before the November 1999 general elections, the EC decided to conduct a voter registration drive.⁵²⁴ Instead of netting the usual number of 200,000 new voters, the campaign attracted 681,000 of which 481,000 were believed to be non-Malay/Chinese middle-class, first time voters who had become politically mobilised by the opposition Reformasi movement. Controversially, the Commission effectively disenfranchised all 681,000 on the basis that their registrations could not be actioned in time for the elections.

4.6 The Judicial Structure

The law is a complex issue made more so in Malaysia with the passage through Parliament in 1988 of legislation defining the jurisdiction of the High Courts.⁵²⁵ Amendment 1A of Article 121 of the Federal Constitution stated that the High Courts retained jurisdiction over criminal and civil laws but matters of an Islamic nature fell within the primacy of the state Syariah Courts.

The year 1988 was turbulent for the Malaysian Bar Council. In March, Mahathir, in tabling the amendments, questioned the impartiality of members of the judiciary accusing some of favouring those who opposed the government.⁵²⁶ The amendments had effectively “removed the judicial powers of the courts (vested in them

⁵²² Crouch, 1996, p. 61.

⁵²³ In-Won Hwang, 2003, p. 191.

⁵²⁴ See Khoo Boo Teik, 2003, p. 118; In-Won Hwang, 2003, p. 317.

⁵²⁵ The Federal Constitution stipulates two High Courts: one in the Malayan states – the High Court of Malaya; and the second, the High Court of Sarawak and Sabah.

⁵²⁶ Stephen Chee, ‘Malaysia in 1988’ in Ng Chee Yuen (Ed), *Southeast Asian Affairs 1989* (Pasir Panjang: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989), p. 219.

by the Constitution...), and endowed the Executive".⁵²⁷ Letters of concern addressed to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Sultans led to the impeachment, and subsequent dismissal, of the chief of the judiciary, Lord President Tun Mohamed Salleh bin Abas and the suspension of five brother judges - two subsequently dismissed.⁵²⁸ The judiciary was no longer the independent third arm of government.

The rulings of the Syariah Courts are set in legislation passed by state legislatures. However, as discussed in an earlier section on PAS' attempts to implement Islamic jurisprudence in Kelantan and Terengganu, the power vested in the Syariah Courts by each state is governed by the Federal Constitution. Also passed into law in 1988 was the review of the 1965 Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act which increased "the powers of the ...[courts] to mete out penalties under any state law to a RM5,000 fine, three years in jail and six strokes of the whip".⁵²⁹

While Syariah law is, in theory, only applicable to Muslims, increasingly, through the adoption of Islamisation policy, the line between Islamic and civil jurisprudence (federal law applicable to both Muslim and non-Muslim), has become blurred. Under an amendment passed in 1987, a non-Muslim, party to an allegation of an infringement of Syariah law, may be detained for questioning "to enable the Islamic authorities to gather evidence against the accused Muslim party".⁵³⁰ Inasmuch as this matter is discussed further in the following chapter, suffice it to say that the dual jurisdiction model is increasingly problematic and, more often than not, creates a dilemma for non-Muslims seeking recourse from the Syariah Courts.

⁵²⁷ Ibid. There were several amendments to Article 121.

⁵²⁸ Ibid. This issue stemmed from the power struggle within UMNO in 1987 and is discussed in depth by Stephen Chee.

⁵²⁹ Ahmad, 2007, p. 225.

⁵³⁰ Othman, 2003, p. 126.

4.7 Conclusion

It has been posited that Tunku Abdul Rahman's political *raison d'être* was to lead Malaya to independence and oversee its transition to an authoritative power within the greater Federation of Malaysian states.⁵³¹ For his successor, Tun Abdul Razak, it was to engineer and implement extensive socio-political reform designed to restore Malay supremacy. The following sections will determine whether the mechanisms the Malays and non-Malays employed in securing their societal security requirements were protective or predatory and the degree to which the resultant actions of the Malays, as the dominant power in the Federation, alleviated or exacerbated the societal security of the non-Malays.

4.7.1 Malay Societal Security Requirements

From 1970, Razak's new political agenda, with its raft of Malay preferential policy, was progressively imposed on Malaysian society. The initial bundle of reforms was skilfully compiled, multi-faceted and comprehensive.

Prior to the introduction of restrictive and repressive legislation, the government instituted the *Rukunegara*, a state ideology formulated with the aim of engendering a sense of national unity in Malaysia. While opponents considered the sentiments prosaic and trite, criticism of the *Rukunegara* was viewed as an assault on the government's desire to instil a sense of 'being Malaysian' before being anything else - Chinese, Indian or other.

The promulgation of the *Rukunegara* was followed by legislation proscribing the discussion of subjects considered 'sensitive'. This provision was strictly enforced and severely restrained open and frank discussion.

To strengthen the government, whilst concomitantly undermining the opposition, Razak negotiated agreements with several political parties creating a broad

⁵³¹ Shome, 2002, p. 87.

coalition. Although the composition of parties altered from time to time, as parties either withdrew or merged with the coalition, the basic structure has remained largely unchanged.

The government's focus then moved to implementing a range of initiatives and strategies the outcome of which would ensure the Malays/Bumiputera received a greater portion of the economic pie. Financial schemes, including special share offers and preferential rates on housing and cars (the proton) were made available to the Malays/Bumiputera only. This exclusivity was also extended to legislation. The adoption of the ICA, and its amendment, called for the employment of Malay workers when business growth reached a benchmark. In cases where the business was Chinese-owned, the implementation of the provisions demanded a change in the dynamic of the traditional family-owned enterprise: no longer was it strictly family-oriented. In education, the introduction of the quota system facilitated increased numbers of Malay admissions to tertiary institutions and the decision to adopt affirmative policy towards the employment of Malays in the civil service resulted in a workforce which was predominantly Malay.

The new regime was sustained by a ruling coalition prepared to use the instruments of state (or where precedent was not in place, legislate for it) to neutralise an opposing or questioning voice. Amendments to the Constitution, along with the 900 or so pieces of legislation passed by parliament since Merdeka, have effectively truncated the freedoms originally guaranteed federal citizens.⁵³² In addition to legislative constraint, central government may invoke emergency powers if it considers the country's stability is at risk.⁵³³

⁵³² Tommy Thomas, *Human Rights in 21st Century Malaysia*. Thomas discusses the manner in which Malaysia's Westminster model of governance has been impugned through bureaucratic meddling.

⁵³³ Ibid. Of concern to those opposing the government, are the machinations or lengths the authorities might go to or claim as reason to impose an emergency rather than contend with a strengthening opposition. Five emergencies have been imposed since independence in 1957: the first due to the communist insurgency finally ending in 1960; the second declared on 3 September 1964 because of the hostilities with Indonesia; the third in 1966 limited to Sarawak – the Ningkan controversy; the fourth – the 1969 race

4.7.1.1 Power-seeking?

Determining whether the actions a group took to achieve its goal - in this instance the restoration of Malay supremacy - either security-seeking (protective) or power-seeking (predatory), is problematical. Pivotal to the process is defining whether the actions which hindered or suppressed the reproduction of the non-Malay identity were deliberately imposed.⁵³⁴

From the time the NOC was established in 1969 Tun Razak's resolve was clear: the state regime would focus its energies on restoring Malay dominance through a multiplicity of Malay affirmative initiatives and strategies. Inasmuch as the demands of other groups would be secondary to those of the Malay, the Malay leadership recognised the danger a discontented populace was to the stability of the state. To counter this threat, the government introduced the state ideology enforcing a sense of national unity, then adopted and employed draconian legislation to suppress dissension. To this end, the extensive reforms instituted over a prolonged period were the result of a deliberate political decision to restore and protect Malay societal security and thus the actions of the Malay can be regarded as power-seeking.

4.7.2 Non-Malay Societal Security

With a ruling coalition whose political rhetoric was determinedly pro-Malay and steadily authoritarian in its outlook, maintaining non-Malay societal security became a matter of survival.

Objectively, there was an expectation that the Bumiputera groups of East Malaysia would benefit from the reforms to the same degree as the Malays. Despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing the indigenous groups the same privileges as

riots; and the fifth in 1977 stemming from attempts to remove the Mentri Besar in Kelantan. In the 40-year period 1957 to 2000, the only period in which the Federation has had an emergency-free hiatus is from August 1960 to 2 September 1964. See also Tun Haji Mhd. Salleh bin Abas, 1986, p. 127.

⁵³⁴ Roe, 2005, pp.140, 141,147.

the Malays, this was not the case. In reality the Borneo ethnies were gifted a 'second class Bumiputera status' and hence received lesser benefit than anticipated.

The Chinese, being more politically adept and with greater resources upon which to draw than the other groups, had the greatest success adapting to the demands of the new regime. Reciprocal practices and schemes were adopted designed to protect Chinese economic sector members and ensure the survival of long-standing business interests. The special shares issues, having required little commitment or enterprise on the part of the Malays to acquire, were resold with ease and for profit to wealthier Chinese who also had the advantage of placing their children at education institutions internationally when admissions were unavailable in Malaysia, even to the most able students.⁵³⁵

At the other end of the spectrum, the Indians, along with some of the smaller indigenous groups, became severely marginalised through the process. Large numbers of Indian workers continued to receive barely minimal wages in factories and the plantations in the rural areas far from the amenities and services of the cities. The discontent and unhappiness of the Indian community is discernibly palpable in their urban enclaves. There is little doubt that the social cost of repatriating this section of society will be extensive.⁵³⁶

Despite Razak's Sun Tzu-derived strategy of encouraging his enemies closer and nullifying the opposition political parties, the three-decade period under review did witness the coming together of groups intent on representing the voices of the other(s). Adversity does at times make for strange bedfellows and while the determination of some groups was eroded by the deluge of pro-Malay initiatives, yet others formed monitoring and social action groups prepared to speak out for the marginalised. Civil

⁵³⁵ In 2010 the Securities Commission Malaysia website confirms that the NDP requirement for the 30% Bumiputera equity is still applicable to companies wishing to list on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange. (<http://www.sc.com.my>).

⁵³⁶ This issue is discussed in the following chapter.

unrest became an ever-looming and tangible threat to the continued and unchallenged rule of the UMNO/BN.

4.7.2.1 Security-seeking?

The prime objective of the non-Malay groups was to ensure the survival of the many unique societal identities which, together with the Malay, form the multi-ethnic poly-societal federation of states - Malaysia. This task was made more difficult by the reality that the preponderance of political power was weighted firmly in favour of the ruling coalition, a power imbalance which became more pronounced during the Mahathir administration. Clearly then the actions of the non-Malays, in endeavouring to maintain societal integrity, must be viewed as security-seeking.

In conclusion, the new paradigm, Tun Razak's legacy to the nation, precipitated a massive sea-change in the state's political development. While it benefited the elites and advantaged the rising Malay capitalist class, the new regime effectively disenfranchised large sections of non-Malay society. The challenge before future leadership is to acknowledge that the new paradigm has been the cause of more social ills than a panacea. The remedy lies in implementing pan-societal reforms of integrity and purpose, not just for one or other societal grouping but for all the poor and disenfranchised of Malaysian society irrespective of societal identity. Failure to act is to contemplate a political tsunami that could wash away the foundations of Malay hegemony so diligently constructed over the past thirty years.

Malaysia has conducted two general elections since Abdullah Badawi was confirmed as the Federation's fifth prime minister in October 2003. The first, in March 2004, delivered the BN the most successful election result since coming to power under the leadership of Tun Abdul Razak in 1974. In stark contrast, the second, in March 2008, delivered the government the worst election result since independence in 1957.⁵³⁷ Whilst the ruling coalition secured a simple majority, it failed to retain the two-thirds super-majority which had allowed it unobstructed constitutional amendment: a prerogative the UMNO-dominated government had closely guarded since the 1969 elections.

This chapter, the final in the case study on Malaysia's societal and political transformation, covers a comparatively short time span from the 2004 election through to the post-2008 election period. The first section takes a brief look at the 2004 election focussing on the key issue of religion, and the differing views articulated by the leading political parties. Within the context of the 2008 election, the second part examines the inter-societal contentions, grievances and concerns which precipitated a level of civil disorder unseen in Malaysia for a decade and which ultimately proved to be the catalyst for the significant shift in voter loyalty in the 2008 election: a shift that undermined UMNO's major non-Malay partners in the ruling alliance: the MIC, MCA and Gerakan.

⁵³⁷Malaysian elections poll votes for both parliamentary and state legislatures. The 2008 general elections did not include state elections for Sarawak which held its election in 2006, nor for KL, Putrajaya and Labuan. See 'Special Report: Fast Facts and Figures', *Channelnewsasia*, 20 February 2008. (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/specialreport/view/1454/1/.html>)

5.1 The 2004 General Election

Moten and Mokhtar assert that the core issue of the 2004 election was religion, specifically the moderate view of Islam promoted by Abdullah (UMNO/BN) through the principles of *Islam Hadhari*, the radical Islamic doctrine of PAS, and the vision of a secular state advanced by the DAP.⁵³⁸

5.1.1 Islam Hadhari

After 22 years of authoritarian rule by former Prime Minister Mahathir, public expectations ran high that Prime Minister Abdullah would deliver election promises in a campaign which pledged a better future.⁵³⁹ This, the BN party manifesto stated, would be achieved through a strengthened economy, an improved civil service and an accomplished education system.⁵⁴⁰ In the problematic areas of inter-ethnic relations and religion, the BN promised to improve inter-communal student integration and promote the principles of Islam Hadhari.⁵⁴¹

Islam Hadhari: a Model Approach for Development and Progress is a collection of 12 speeches Abdullah delivered over a 15-month period from September 2004 through to December 2005.⁵⁴² To Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, he outlined a unique approach to Islam first introduced to the public in the March 2004 election and upon which his administration was premised. Central to Islam Hadhari (or Civilisational Islam), which Abdullah defined to the Asia Society of Australia

⁵³⁸ Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 328.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 326.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid. The manifesto talked of introducing new wealth creation programmes, of improving the service delivery of government departments in particular the police force and by ensuring graduates were of a higher calibre.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² A.A. Badawi, *Islam Hadhari: A Model Approach for Development and Progress* (Selangor: MPH Group Publishing Sdn Bhd, 2006), p. xiii.

Conference in April 2005 as “an approach towards a progressive Islamic civilisation”,⁵⁴³ is the successful achievement of 10 main principles:

1. Faith and piety in Allah;
2. A just and trustworthy government;
3. A free and independent people;
4. A vigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge;
5. A balanced and comprehensive economic development;
6. A good quality of life for the people;
7. The protection of the rights of minority groups and women;
8. Cultural and moral integrity;
9. The safeguarding of natural resources and the environment; and
10. Strong defence capabilities.⁵⁴⁴

Abdullah stated that the approach was not an attempt to pacify or mollify the West but was rather:

an effort to bring the ummah (the worldwide community comprising all adherents of the Muslim faith) back to the basics of Islam, back to the fundamentals as prescribed in the Quran and the hadith which form the foundations for an Islamic Civilisation.⁵⁴⁵

At UMNO’s 55th general assembly in September 2004, Abdullah expanded the key concepts of the approach. He spoke of the indivisibility of the Malays, UMNO and Islam: that together the three “form a distinct culture and identity”.⁵⁴⁶ Abdullah spoke candidly of a Malay Agenda of the 21st century which placed demands not only on the government, but on the Malays and on UMNO itself. As UMNO had been instrumental in the formation of the Federation of Malaya and the development of the Constitution, so the organisation was now tasked with ensuring the existence of an Islamic culture which would balance “the needs of this world with the next”.⁵⁴⁷

The Agenda demanded a people that were outward-looking, that were “resolute, determined, purposeful and strong”⁵⁴⁸ armed with knowledge and skills to face the challenges of the global environment. In order to advance as a nation, the Malays/Bumiputera had to understand that the:

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 119.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 3, 119.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

...competitive global economy does not recognise quotas, and will not allocate special project for Bumiputeras. The global economic lexicon only acknowledges terms such as competition, competitiveness, productivity, innovation, creativity, originality, excellence and efficiency; in other words a level playing field where potential opportunity for advancement and development is dependant upon merit.⁵⁴⁹

In closing, Abdullah called on those who had achieved success through the initiatives of NEP to step forward and take up the challenge. UMNO party members were urged to strengthen their faith, their mental resilience and physical strength in order to ensure the success of Islam Hadhari and thus “reinforce the struggle of our people, both in this world and in the Hereafter”.⁵⁵⁰

5.1.2 The PAS Perspective

The Islamic party contested the 2004 elections on two campaign platforms, a strategy which had proved successful in the previous general elections in 1999. In a joint campaign with BA partner KeADILan, PAS tempered its zeal for an Islamic state focussing on a range of social justice issues promised in a united “New Malaysia...[with] Prosperity for All”.⁵⁵¹ In addition to assertions that the BA would review “all restrictive laws”⁵⁵² and lower or abolish taxes on a broad range of goods and services, the comprehensive manifesto also promised “free primary and secondary schooling to all Malaysians”.⁵⁵³ The document concluded with the PAS president hoping that “the people...[would] support us to form a new Malaysia and ensure prosperity for all”.⁵⁵⁴

For the stronghold state of Terengganu, PAS adopted a separate campaign ideology with the hard-line message of “Islam for All” and “Power with the Ulama” (Muslim religious scholars).⁵⁵⁵ The previous year, in November 2003, PAS moved to silence its critics, those who challenged the party to explain how an Islamic state would

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p. 332.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 327.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 331.

function, with the launch of its blueprint “setting out guidelines on Islamic governance at the state level”.⁵⁵⁶ PAS leadership was determined that the states under its control, Kelantan and Terengganu, would maintain the trajectory of becoming fully functioning Islamic states. The task confronting PAS, and other states wanting to impose some form of Islamic governance, is the reconciliation of traditional understandings of Islam with modernity, a dilemma Muslim intellectuals, scholars and ulama grapple with the world over.⁵⁵⁷

Inasmuch as the focus of this thesis is not the debate between contemporary Islamists, there is general consensus that the ideal Islamic state was modelled during the reign of the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet governed the people of al-Madinah in accordance with a number of contracts, or covenants, he negotiated with the various communities of people in the area. Over time, this became known as the Constitution, or Covenant, of al-Madinah.⁵⁵⁸ There is also agreement that, in the first instance, it is to the Qur’an and Sunnah that Muslim leaders must look for guidance in matters of governance.⁵⁵⁹ If solutions cannot be found within these two sources, then “the Islamic jurists and ulama should engage in *ijtihad* (creative, liberal interpretation, by the knowledgeable) and resort to *ijma* and *qiyas* that is, consultation and deliberation”.⁵⁶⁰ Professor Abdullahi An-Naim defines *Syariah*, Islamic jurisprudence, as “a human understanding”⁵⁶¹ of the Qur’an and Sunnah. It is at this point that the issue becomes problematic for both Muslim and non-Muslim. If the interpretation is given by conservative ulama, the judgement is more likely to be conservative. The situation

⁵⁵⁶ Welsh, 2004, p. 146.

⁵⁵⁷ See Farish A. Noor, *Crosscurrents: Alternative Voices in Our Changing Times* (Shah Alam: Marshall Cavendish (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, 2005) for the viewpoints of leading thinkers on this issue. Ulama – Muslim clergy.

⁵⁵⁸ Mutalib summarises the four major provisions of the Constitution as: first, whilst Muslims are performe citizens of various nation-states, under the Constitution they are members of a worldwide ummah; second, that the decisions of authority or governance in an Islamic state be based on the Qur’an and Sunnah; third, that the decision-making process incorporates aspects of consultation and consensus involving both people and leadership; and finally, that equity and justice be applied to all, “both Muslim and non-Muslim”. See Mutalib, 1993, p. 50. The Constitution of al-Madina is also discussed by Patricia Martinez, ‘Islamic State in Malaysia’ in Lee Hock Guan, (Ed), *Civil Society in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), pp.36-40.

⁵⁵⁹ Mutalib, 1993, p. 50.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁶¹ Noor, 2005, p. 35.

becomes further complex if the ulama do not recognise the value of resorting to ijtihad. If the interpretation is given by more liberal ulama, it is probable that the judgement will be liberal also. For those casting votes in constituencies contested by PAS candidates, particularly in Terengganu, this issue demanded serious consideration.

5.1.3 The DAP Perspective

The publication of PAS' blue-print for an Islamic state mended few bridges between DAP, a party with a strong multi-ethnic outlook, and the resolute Islamic party. The following year, the DAP contested the 2004 elections on the premise that "real and meaningful"⁵⁶² systemic change would only be truly successful if Malaysia was to remain the secular democracy envisaged by the writers of the Federation's founding documents. The DAP objected to the blue-print because it violated, not only the 46-year social contract embedded within the "1957 Merdeka Constitution, the 1963 Malaysia Agreement and the 1970 Rukunegara",⁵⁶³ it also revoked the BA's 1999 "common manifesto 'Towards a Just Malaysia', to restore justice, freedom, democracy and good governance with clear commitment by all subscribing parties to uphold the fundamental principles of the Malaysian Constitution",⁵⁶⁴ an accord the DAP believed entrusted PAS not to "pursue the establishment of an Islamic State while in the Barisan Alternative".⁵⁶⁵

Prior to the DAP's withdrawal from the BA in September 2001, the party had proposed a five-point position paper on the "Islamic State issue".⁵⁶⁶ The coalition agreed that legislation "which could impinge on the sensitivities of the different religions, communities and political parties"⁵⁶⁷ would not be adopted in Kelantan or Terengganu without prior consultation with the BA member parties. PAS, however, would not accept the clauses which obligated the party to place adherence to the BA

⁵⁶² Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 327.

⁵⁶³ Lim Kit Siang, "Media Release," Nov. 19, 2003.

(<http://www.dapmalaysia.org/allarchive/English/2003/nov03/lks/lks2754.htm>)

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

manifesto above the pursuit of an Islamic state, or that an Islamic state was not suitable or practicable in a “plural society like Malaysia”.⁵⁶⁸

Moten and Mokhtar comment that the BA’s election campaign was largely negative, focussing on areas the coalition considered had been mismanaged by the government. The DAP, however, added a twist to their campaign. Rather than echoing the BA and highlighting the government’s flaws, the party advised the constituency that a vote for the DAP would strengthen their ability to “monitor the implementation of the promises made by Abdullah Badawi”.⁵⁶⁹ This aside, the main thrust of the DAP’s election platform was the message that the vote was not a choice between the models of Islamic state promoted by UMNO/BN or PAS but a “vote for the preservation of a secular democracy”.⁵⁷⁰

5.1.4 The Election Outcome

In addition to the contesting ideologies of the major parties, the results of a controversial redelineation of constituency boundaries, completed by the EC in 2003, was also the cause of inter-party dissension in the 2004 elections. The review, announced in 2002, created 26 new parliamentary seats bringing the total number to 219.⁵⁷¹ Opposition parties objected to the latest configuration of constituencies on the basis that the majority of the newly created districts, being Malay, strengthened the government’s position; a concern realised in the election outcome.

The 2004 elections also marked the first time in Malaysia’s electoral history that Sabah’s state elections coincided with the federal elections and apart from five new districts awarded the East Malaysian state, the additional seats were all located on the peninsula.⁵⁷² Of the remaining 21 seats, the Malays were the majority in 10 with

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 327.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Whilst reference is only made to parliamentary states, the EC also reviewed state seats.

⁵⁷² Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 321.

a Chinese-majority in two. Moten and Mokhtar also identified six districts with a broader, more equal representation of ethnicities "...although the Malays...[were still] the largest plurality".⁵⁷³ From this analysis, they conclude the emergence of a "pattern of increased mixed constituencies",⁵⁷⁴ a supposition to be confirmed or otherwise by future delineations.

The election results not only confirmed Abdullah as the populist choice for leader with the highest recorded poll for a prime minister in Malaysian history, it was also the most successful in the history of the BN with the coalition winning 198 parliamentary seats and 453 out of 505 state seats.⁵⁷⁵ The overwhelming success of the coalition was viewed as a vote for the vision-filled ideology promoted by Abdullah et al - a "better future...[with] Excellence, Glory and Distinction".⁵⁷⁶

For the DAP, whose ideology took the middle ground calling for the retention of a secular democracy, the results of the election were more favourable than those of the previous with the party winning 12 parliamentary seats.⁵⁷⁷ The increase in popular support stemmed from a number of issues not the least being that the DAP presented an alternative to the 'out-Islaming' the other activities of the UMNO/BN and PAS. Analysts posit that the DAP's routing in the 1999 elections was in part due to its link with PAS as BA members. With the connection severed in September 2001, the party regained its voter appeal.⁵⁷⁸

The election outcome was disastrous for the two parties forming the BA coalition (PAS and KeADILan). The PAS failed utterly to sustain the momentum of the previous election. Of the 26 PAS-held seats gained in 1999, the party managed to retain only seven, including Kelantan but losing Terengganu.⁵⁷⁹ KeADILan succeeded

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., p.330; Badawi, 2006, p. xiii.

⁵⁷⁶ Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 326.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 333.

⁵⁷⁸ See Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 332 and Lee Kam Hing, 2004, p. 90.

⁵⁷⁹ Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 333.

in retaining only one parliamentary seat - that of its President Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and this after five recounts with the final “done with a ring of police deployed around the counting center [sic]”.⁵⁸⁰

Discontent within the PAS leadership was evident when, three days after acknowledging the loss of his Terengganu seat to a BN candidate, PAS President and, until the election, Mentri Besar, Abdul Hadi Awang, stated that “his party would not recognise the poll results...[citing] irregularities, foul play and a conspiracy between the EC and BN”.⁵⁸¹ The EC chief Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman initially responded to the slurs on the integrity of the office by announcing that a royal commission of inquiry would be welcomed. In addition to this high profile challenge, the police received a further 144 complaints considered minor by the authorities.⁵⁸²

Despite the posturing of opposing parties, the poll result remained unchanged, and the workings of the EC were not altered in any great degree. In a recent publication, Malaysian lawyer Salbiah Ahmad outlines the difficulty of challenging an election result. Not only is Malaysian law very prescriptive, it has become complicated by numerous amendments adopted, at times, to thwart efforts to make the legislation more transparent. The year before the 2004 elections saw the passage through parliament of legislation amending and increasing the cost for challenging an election from RM2,000 to RM10,000, to “ensure ‘seriousness’ in these endeavours”.⁵⁸³

5.2 The 2008 General Election

One of the advantages of hindsight is that it makes visible the ironies of the political milieu. Disciplined by Mahathir, along with his Team B associates in 1987, Abdullah’s redemption was complete with his appointment as deputy prime minister following

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁸¹ Ahmad, 2007, pp. 196, 97.

⁵⁸² Moten and Mokhtar, 2006, p. 330.

⁵⁸³ Ahmad, 2007, p. 97

Anwar's fall from grace a decade later.⁵⁸⁴ A further decade on, and political commentators suggest that the decision to hold the general election in March 2008 was, in part, precipitated by the probability that Anwar would return to political life the following month.⁵⁸⁵

Buoyed by his election success, Abdullah commenced his first full term as prime minister determined to effect the changes promised. Consistent with the principles of Islam Hadhari, in April 2004 Abdullah announced the National Integrity Plan and established the Integrity Institute of Malaysia (IIM). Initially a model of ideal behaviours applicable to the civil service, it was envisaged that the blueprint's components of ethical principles, honourable behaviour and accountability would provide a framework of aspirational performance for all citizens. The IIM was tasked with finding out "what the country ...[thought] of itself"⁵⁸⁶ by conducting annual National Integrity Perception Index surveys. Twenty thousand citizens were questioned for their views on corruption, the quality of the public service delivery system, business ethics and social responsibility, the quality of life and social well being, on courtesy and on the strength of family and community.⁵⁸⁷ The government proposed to develop future policy based on the surveys' findings.⁵⁸⁸

5.2.1 The Economy

The 2004 decision to curb systemic cronyism in business by cancelling several large-scale projects attracted the wrath of Mahathir and the chagrin of those who considered their interests were best served in maintaining the status quo. The halt, however, was short-lived. Within months the impact of the global downturn on the construction

⁵⁸⁴ Abdullah's period in the political outer circles prior to his appointment as deputy leader was brief with his involvement in the National Economic Consultative Council in the late 1988. See Means, 1991, p. 265.

⁵⁸⁵ Though the original sodomy charges were dropped, the corruption charges remained which incurred the five year ban from political life due to expire in April 2008.

⁵⁸⁶ Datuk Dr Mohd Tap Salleh, President Integrity Institute of Malaysia, "The i-word that packs a wallop," *New Sunday Times*, 17 June 2007, pp. 6, 7.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

industry was such that the government released funds totalling RM8.5 billion tagged for projects to raise the quality of life and alleviate poverty.⁵⁸⁹ Malaysia Inc was revamped with greater emphasis given to the private companies' performance rather than on the partnership concept. It was also announced that government-linked companies (GLCs), such as Malaysian Airlines, not delivering to the level expected would be more closely scrutinised.⁵⁹⁰

In March 2006, the government launched the *National Mission*, a document intended to guide the country in its final stage towards becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020.⁵⁹¹ The following month, in April 2006, the government adopted the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) reconfirming its commitment to raise "the quality of life for all".⁵⁹² To generate sustained economic growth over the five-year period 2006-2010 the main thrust of 9MP, with its projected budget of RM200 billion, was directed at a range of initiatives.⁵⁹³

In manufacturing, while the posting of Proton's first annual loss indicated the need for foreign investment to boost "sales locally and abroad"⁵⁹⁴ the electronics industry was expanded due to the demand for products, globally and domestically.⁵⁹⁵ Foreign capital was also apparent in a joint venture development between PetroliaM Nasional Bhd (Petronas) and the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) to drill a series of exploratory wells in the seas off Mindanao; due for completion in 2009.⁵⁹⁶

In June 2007, the government released RM11 billion in funding for rural development. Farmers who had joined Federal Land Development Authority (Felda)

⁵⁸⁹ Martinez, 2005, p. 199.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 201.

⁵⁹¹ Tan Dr Mahathir, "*The Way Forward – Vision*" speech, February 1991. (<http://www.wawasan2020.com/vision>)

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ooi Kee Beng, 'Malaysia: Abdullah Does it His Own Vague Way' in Daljit Singh and Lorraine C. Salazar, 2007, p. 196; Denis Hew, 'The Malaysian Economy: Developments and Challenges' in Daljit Singh and Tin Maung Maung Than, 2008, p. 210.

⁵⁹⁴ The loss recorded in 2007 was the first in Proton's development since 1992. The government investigated the possibility of partnership with German or US carmakers. See "Proton, Volkswagen to hold fresh talks, says PM," *New Straits Times*, 13 June 2007, p. 35.

⁵⁹⁵ Martinez, 2005, p. 199.

⁵⁹⁶ "Petronas, PNOC to drill well offshore Mindoro," *New Straits Times*, 13 June 2007. p. 36.

schemes to replant land for new crops of crude oil palm received increased financial support. As the crop could not be harvested for approximately ten years, farmers received loan funding with the proviso that loans would be repaid once the oil palm was processed.⁵⁹⁷ The increased resourcing was also evident in promised water supply systems and local amenity upgrades.⁵⁹⁸

During Abdullah's tenure as prime minister, the government launched several mega-projects designed to modernise Malaysia's infrastructure with the aim of competing globally. In November 2006, the government announced its intention to establish three major economic regions. Each was envisaged as having an administrative centre with associated medical, education, logistical and information hubs. The first, Iskandar Malaysia, a special economic zone in south Johor, has a landbank three times the size of Singapore.⁵⁹⁹ Foreign investment is promoted in the neighbouring Asian states: Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and Singapore by the Associated Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysia; and in Europe and the Middle East by Khazanah Nasional Bhd.⁶⁰⁰

The Northern Corridor Economic Region and the Eastern Corridor Economic Region, both unveiled the following year, incorporate the northern peninsula states. Over an eighteen-year period, it is intended that these initiatives will address the problem of endemic poverty by injecting substantial funding to promote the agricultural, manufacturing and tourism sectors.⁶⁰¹

In 2007, the first contracts were signed in a scheme to pipe oil 300kms from one coast of Peninsula Malaysia to the other. The trans-peninsula (TransPen) pipeline, costing RM25 billion, and funded by the government and foreign and local

⁵⁹⁷ While the loan for oil palm was over 12 years, the term was halved for rubber to six. Felda was established in 1956, prior to independence, as a government agency responsible for ensuring the resettlement of rural, primarily Malay poor, in newly developed areas (<http://www.felda.net.my>)

⁵⁹⁸ "Higher loans for Felda replanters," *New Straits Times*, 9 June 2007.

⁵⁹⁹ Hew, 2008, p. 218. Initially introduced as the Iskandar Development Region, the initiative was renamed

⁶⁰⁰ Khazanah Nasional Bhd is tasked with oversight of government investment and the GLCs. The board is currently chaired by Prime Minister Najib Razak. (<http://www.khazanah.com.my>)

⁶⁰¹ Hew, 2008, p. 220; "Malaysia launches massive northern development plan," *Channelnews Asia*, 30 July 2007. (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific_business/view/291168/1/.html)

investment, will cross through the states of Kelantan, Perak and Kedah with a proposed completion date for the installation in 2011.⁶⁰² The government's intended construction schedule also includes upgrading domestic transport systems at a cost of approximately RM20 billion with further itemised works totalling RM22 billion.⁶⁰³

While, at one end of the economic spectrum, the major projects attracted increased foreign investment, the deteriorating global financial market impacted on the price of basic commodities steadily increasing the rate of inflation. In 2006, public disapproval was evident in a number of violent demonstrations protesting the sharp rise in fuel with the removal of government subsidies. Over the two year period 2004-2006 the price of petrol increased 40 percent with a massive 104 percent for diesel. Tension was not eased by a decision in May 2006 to increase electricity by 12 percent.⁶⁰⁴

The large-scale initiatives to establish economic zones spanning the peninsula have not been without controversy. The rate of investment in Iskandar Malaysia was adversely affected by rising crime in the Johor region; a factor addressed by increased police resourcing. In the public arena, fears were expressed that Singapore's proposed investment in the southern state might, once again, place Malaysia's sovereignty at risk as had just as happened in 1963.

With the Abdullah government unable to stem corrupt practices at the high end of the economy, it is likely the global recession will highlight the wealth disparity in Malaysian society. The well-connected 10 percent will continue to thrive while the 90 percent will bear the brunt of the financial downturn.

⁶⁰² "In the pipeline: Linking the peninsula's east and west," *New Straits Times*, 13 June 2007, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁰³ Martinez, 2005, p. 199.

⁶⁰⁴ Ooi Kee Beng, 2007, p. 195.

5.2.2 Inter-ethnic Issues

As the strident opposition thwarted Abdullah's well-intentioned attempts to effect change, the optimism for a future where "[n]o individual...is more Malaysian than another"⁶⁰⁵ was eroded by the rhetoric of the ultra UMNO constantly "harping on"⁶⁰⁶ about the Malay Agenda and its protection. In March 2007, Khairy Jamaluddin once again reiterated UMNO's determination to pursue Malay affirmative policy.⁶⁰⁷ Two years previously, Khairy, with fellow UMNO Youth leader Hishamuddin Hussein, had vigorously promoted the adoption of the New National Agenda (NNA) effectively extending NEP for the next 15 years or until such time as the 30 percent Malay equity envisaged four decades earlier was achieved.⁶⁰⁸ The outcry from the ranks of the Malay nationalists disputing the veracity of statistics showing that the 30 percent target had in fact been met and overtaken indicated that while the ultra voice prevails it is unlikely that, for the foreseeable future, there will be agreement over the true level of Malay ownership.⁶⁰⁹

Depending on perspective, Hishamuddin's aggressive stance as an outspoken Malay nationalist has brought him a degree of infamy or kudos. Son of the late Hussein Onn, former Malaysian prime minister, Hishamuddin's penchant for brandishing a keris dripping with tomato sauce in the midst of speechmaking at UMNO annual meetings along with comments from likeminded Members of Parliament referring to "bath[ing] in...[Chinese] blood"⁶¹⁰ is, unsurprisingly, sufficient inference to raise Chinese/non-Malay unease.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁵ Lee Hock Guan, 2008, p. 188.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid

⁶⁰⁷ In a speech given by Khairy to a controversial economic summit which few CEOs attended. (Khairy is also Abdullah's son-in-law.) (http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/business_news/delegates_lament_no_show_of_ceos_at_economic_congress.html)

⁶⁰⁸ Nathan, 2006, p. 157; Lee Hock Guan, 2008, p. 188.

⁶⁰⁹ Lee Hock Guan, 2008, p. 188; Ooi Kee Beng, 2007, pp. 187,188.

⁶¹⁰ Ooi Kee Beng, 2007, p. 190.

⁶¹¹ Khairy was in fact not the first UMNO politician to brandish a keris. In 1987, Najib Razak performed similar gesticulations in the period prior to Operation Lalang.

In addition to the antics of the UMNO Youth leaders which do little to ease inter-ethnic tension, the intricacy of Malaysia's dual legal system is a further dimension increasingly problematic in the plural society. In Malaysia, an inter-ethnic marriage where one of the parties is Malay is legalised when the non-Malay partner adopts the Islamic faith. In as much as the acceptance of Islam is not an issue in a non-Malay marriage, when it becomes known that one partner has converted to Islam, its importance increases significantly because it is then that the jurisdiction of the Syariah court comes into play. In July 2004, ignorant of the conversion of her husband and children to Islam, Shamala Sathiyaseelan, a Hindu woman discovered she was unable to pursue a divorce from her Muslim-Indian husband through either the civil or Syariah courts. The civil court asserted her husband's conversion to Islam placed him under the jurisdiction of the Syariah while the Syariah court would not acknowledge her petition as she was not Muslim.⁶¹²

In late 2005/early 2006, the public's attention was captured by two similar instances. In December 2005, Kalliammal Sinnasamy, the widow of Maniam Moorthy, a former army commando and one of the first Malaysians to climb Everest, was informed by the Religious Affairs Department of the Federal Territory (JAWI) that as her husband had converted to Islam, she would be unable to perform Hindu funeral rites. Despite the widow denying knowledge of her husband's conversion, the fact that he had adopted Islam, changing his name in the process, meant the matter fell within the ambit of the Syariah courts. Moorthy was subsequently buried in a Muslim cemetery.⁶¹³

An idiosyncrasy of Syariah law is that its interpretation may differ between states. In this second case, within a month of the Moorthy case, the Seremban Syariah Court granted the petitions of the Buddhist family of Nyonya Tahir, a Chinese

⁶¹² Ahmad, 2007, pp. 88, 89.

⁶¹³ Nathan, 2006, p. 160.

woman with a Malay identity card, requesting for her to be buried as a Buddhist. It was not until the mid-1980s, that Tahir, who had been adopted by her Malay grandmother, had married and a raised a Chinese Buddhist family, discovered she was officially regarded as Malay, thus Muslim. In this landmark case, the Syariah Court set aside the identity card on evidence from the family that Tahir had never practised Islam.⁶¹⁴

The plight of families divided by faith and the courts' jurisdictions prompted groups such as the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) and Article 11 to conduct a series of meetings in the first half of 2006, debating the issue of freedom of worship in Malaysia.⁶¹⁵ Each meeting attracted growing numbers of Malay protestors, increasing the likelihood of a violent clash. By July, shortly before Abdullah called a halt, Islamic leaders were sufficiently incensed to pass a resolution at the Syariah and Current Challenges Forum "calling for Muslims to defend the special position given Islam in the Constitution".⁶¹⁶

In May 2007, Malaysia's international standing as a country evincing religious diversity was not assisted by decisions to cancel the Building Bridges Islam-Christianity Inter-faith Conference shortly before the scheduled dates, particularly as the Archbishop of Canterbury had indicated his intention to attend. To counter opinion that it was cancelled because the government did not wish it to be held in the country, the Prime Minister's Department asserted its cancellation was due to the unavailability of Abdullah. It is noted however, that a public seminar held the following month in KL and addressed by Karen Armstrong, a former Roman Catholic nun and proponent of dialogue between the West and Islamic nations, continued despite Abdullah's non-

⁶¹⁴ Ibid.

⁶¹⁵ Both MCCBCHS and Article 11 are watchdog organisations which monitor policy with the potential of limiting religious freedom. Article 11 refers to the constitutional provision guaranteeing freedom of religion – but not necessarily freedom of worship.

⁶¹⁶ Ooi Kee Beng, 2007, p. 186. Despite Abdullah's stance on public meetings, Islamic organisations continued to organise rallies and conferences throughout the remainder of the year.

attendance. Former Prime Minister Mahathir's attendance received a standing ovation.⁶¹⁷

A further example of an increasing intolerance for non-Muslim groups was witnessed by events early in January 2008 when the Internal Security Ministry (ISM) confiscated English language Christian children's books on the basis that the illustrations of prophets were "offensive to the sensitivities of Muslims".⁶¹⁸ In response, the Council of Churches of Malaysia, in requesting a review of the decision, stated that the actions of the ISM had, in fact, offended the "sensitivities of Christians".⁶¹⁹

5.2.3 Civil Unrest

Mounting tension in the second half of 2007 was evident in the number of demonstrations and street rallies held increasingly without police approval.⁶²⁰ State authorities had not had to contend with the level of public disorder for a decade, not since the arrest and removal from office of Anwar Ibrahim in 1998.

In the months preceding the 2008 elections, societal dissatisfaction had coalesced in three specific areas. In addition to groups calling for reform within the judiciary and the electoral system, a groundswell within the Malaysian Indian community, unhappy at the creeping marginalisation of their identity since 1969, resulted in large and, at times, violent demonstrations in November 2007 and the subsequent detention, under the ISA, of five members of the protest group - the Hindu Rights Action Force.

⁶¹⁷ "Conference cancelled due to PM's absence," *New Straits Times*, 19 June 2007.

⁶¹⁸ Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri, General Secretary, Council of Churches of Malaysia, "Press statement," *The Media Network*, 17 January 2008.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁰ Under Malaysian law, gatherings of five people and over require official sanction.

With regard to the issue of legal reform, in July 2007, over a thousand lawyers took part in a street protest urging judicial reform.⁶²¹ This was followed by demonstrations in September and again in December. The protests were prompted by two particular instances which called into question, once again, the independence of Malaysia's legal system. The first issue concerned the release of a phone conversation taped five years before implicating "politically well-connected lawyer V.K. Lingam...over the fixing of appointment and promotion of judges".⁶²² September's "Walk of Justice"⁶²³ urged the government to establish a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate the authenticity of the conversation. Released by Anwar Ibrahim, the tape, along with a second in November, was causal to the retirement of Chief Justice Ahmad Fairuz in November 2007, the inference being that his progression from Chief Judge of Malaya and acting President of the Court of Appeal in 2002 to Chief Justice in 2003 was due in part to the impropriety suggested in the tapes.⁶²⁴ Secondly, for the most part of 2007 and into the following year, the public was captivated by the trial of the three accused in the murder of the Mongolian model Altantuya Shaariibuu. Interest stemmed from the alleged involvement of Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak: his friendship with the model, with one of the accused and the fact that the two members of the Special Forces accused of her demise were part of the police detail commissioned to protect Najib.⁶²⁵ The taint of political interference followed the trial through the convolutions of postponement and legal representation.

⁶²¹ The figures of those participating in public protests are generally lower if a government agency is reporting and correspondingly higher if given by an opposition organisation. This first protest by members of the Malaysian Bar Association took place in the Federation's administrative capital Putrajaya. "Malaysian lawyers stage protest calling for judicial reform," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 26 September 2007. (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com>)

⁶²² Lee Hock Guan, 2008, p. 194.

⁶²³ Ibid

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Of the three accused, political scientist and friend of Razak, Abdul Razak Baginda was acquitted whilst the remaining two, members of the police special action squad originally assigned to the deputy prime minister, were found guilty and sentenced to capital punishment. The case was in itself controversial because of the presence of Razak and suggestions of outside interference in the operation of the trial.

In terms of electoral reform, concern that yet another general election could be conducted prior to a review of electoral practices led to BERSIH, a leading pressure group urging electoral reform, to organise a public rally on 10 November 2007.⁶²⁶ Despite failing to obtain police approval, the rally, which attracted between 40,000 and 60,000 people, was addressed by opposition leaders including Lim Kit Siang and Anwar Ibrahim.⁶²⁷ The police erected road blocks to impede the march of the protesters and resorted to tear gas and water cannons to disperse the crowds.⁶²⁸ Several people were arrested but not before a petition requesting urgent electoral reforms was presented to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.⁶²⁹

Attempts by opposition parties and social justice groups to gain a greater voice have been consistently thwarted by the government through the application of various authoritarian measures and also by the EC, the agency mandated to oversee the election process.⁶³⁰ On several occasions, the EC has been accused by opposition parties of implementing policies and strategies to the benefit of the incumbent government.⁶³¹

The government also controls most forms of media, either by direct ownership (UMNO) or through a BN partner organisation. Those in alternative ownership, including the magazines or periodicals operated by opposition political parties, are

⁶²⁶ "Malaysian police break electoral reform protest," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 17 November 2007. (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/print/312143/1/.html). Formed initially as the Joint Action Committee for Election Reform in November 2006, BERSIH (Malay for clean) includes representatives of five opposition and 25 civil organisations who collectively campaign for clean and fair elections. See Lee Hock Guan, 2008, p. 197.

⁶²⁷ "Malaysian police turn tear gas, water cannons on protestors," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 11 November 2007. (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/print/310787/1/.html)

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Ibid. The figure of those arrested varied from 40 to over 200. This is also discussed by Lee Hock Guan, 2008, p. 198.

⁶³⁰ Authoritarian measures range from constitutional provision proscribing the public discussion of certain issues (see 4.1.1 The Rukunegara) to legislation stipulating a permit for gatherings of more than five individuals. See also 4.5 The Election Commission.

⁶³¹ The November 2007 rally was, in part, prompted by the EC announcement in June that it intended utilising indelible ink for the voting papers in the forthcoming general election (date at this stage unknown) as a means of countering attempts to duplicate papers. Amongst the various comments political parties gave proffering their support or not for the proposal was the official sanction of the National Fatwa Council who declared, in August 2007, that it was halal ink and therefore safe for use. The EC decision was rescinded four days before the March 2008 general elections. See "Ink check: EC in move to safeguard against multiple voting," *The Star*, June 2, 2006; "Malaysia election officials axe indelible ink at polls," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 4 March 2008 et al.

aware that they run the real risk of having their licences revoked should they publish articles or information highly critical of the government. To circumvent this threat, organisations opposing the government are making greater use of the internet. An increasing number of high profile politicians also operate their own blog sites.

Finally, there was the plight of the Malaysian Indian community. A fortnight after the BERSIH rally, the authorities were confronted with a second mass protest.⁶³² Despite a warning not to organise or undertake public demonstrations without a police permit, the HINDRAF leadership went ahead with the protest march to publicise the plight of the ethnic Indians and lodge a multi-million dollar lawsuit with the British government.⁶³³

The evening before the protest, thousands had gathered at the Batu Caves, a Hindu temple, on the outskirts of KL. Calls by the police to disperse were ignored and as a result of the ensuing scuffles during which several police personnel were injured, a number of ethnic Indians were arrested on charges of attempted murder.⁶³⁴ The violence and subsequent arrest of Indian worshippers heightened societal tension evidenced in the upwards of 20,000 who marched the following day to protest the dismal situation of many in the Indian community.⁶³⁵ The police use of tear gas, chemical-laced water cannons and baton charges to disperse the crowds drew criticism and comment not only from leading political organisations and human rights

⁶³² Figures range from 8,000 to 100,000 depending upon the source.

⁶³³ Hindraf is an international coalition of Hindu non-governmental organisations based in London. November's rally was the last in a series of public meetings organised to raise awareness of the community's concerns. The class action charges Britain of being the origin of their economic problems and seek US\$4trillion in compensation for the families of the indentured workers brought to Malaysia 150 years ago. (www.hindraf.co.uk)

⁶³⁴ According to an article posted in the January 2008 London *Economist*, the gates of the temple had, in fact, been locked by MIC supporters entrapping the worshippers within the confines of the temple forecourt. See "Asia: Indian mutiny; Malaysia", *The Economist*, London, 26 January 2008. 386(8), p. 66.

⁶³⁵ Thomas Fuller, "Indian Discontents Fuels Malaysia's Rising Tensions," *New York Times*, 10 February 2008, p. A8.

groups internationally but also from the United States and Indian governments.⁶³⁶ Abdullah's response was to assert that if he had to make a choice between public safety and public freedom, "I do not hesitate to say here that public safety will always win...Malaysians must never, ever take their peace for granted".⁶³⁷

In the month following the march, it was alleged that HINDRAF had links with militant groups including the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers and the National Volunteer's Organisation, a Hindu fundamentalist group.⁶³⁸ While those arrested at the Batu Caves were eventually released, though not until mid-January 2008, the terrorism allegations facilitated the detention of five members of the group's leadership under the provisions of the ISA.⁶³⁹

Policy implemented to transform Malaysian society over the previous four decades has had little positive impact on the Indian community regarded as Malaysia's third largest ethnicity at between 7.5 and 8 percent of the population. Despite Abdullah's denials in December 2007 that "the government had marginalised Indians in favour of boosting the status of Malays",⁶⁴⁰ activists agitating for political reform for the Malaysian Indians catalogued a number of areas in which there is apparent injustice for the community they defend.

A major and emotive source of concern for the Indian community is the fairly regular destruction of Hindu temples, claimed by HINDRAF to be once every three weeks. P. Waythamoorthy, Chairman of HINDRAF, lists the destruction and/or

⁶³⁶ "US asks Malaysia to allow freedom of expression," *Channelnews Asia*, 11 December 2007, (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories.afp.asiapacific/view/316732/1/.html>)

⁶³⁷ "Malaysian PM defends crackdown on dissent," *Channelnews Asia*, 10 December 2007, (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories.afp.asiapacific/view/316567/1/.html>)

⁶³⁸ Report by Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and, Labour, United States Department of State March 2008 (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100527.html>)

⁶³⁹ Detained without trial for two years from December 2007, the last of the members was released from custody in April 2009. See "Five ethnic Indian activists held under Malaysia's security law," *Channelnews Asia*, 13 December 2007, (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories.afp.asia.pacific/view/317216/1/.html>) and "Malaysia's ethnic Indian activists accused of terror links," *Channelnews Asia*, 6 December 2007, (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories.afp.asia.pacific/view/315839/1/.html>).

⁶⁴⁰ "Malaysian PM denounces ethnic Indian's mistreatment claims: report," *Channelnews Asia*, 2 December 2007, (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories.afp.asiapacific/view/315044/1/.html>)

desecration of 79 temples in the period February 2006 to June 2007.⁶⁴¹ In some instances, the temples were erected during the early period of settlement by Indian labourers. This makes them places of veneration for generations of Malaysian Indians. The proposed and eventual demolition in June 2007 of the 110 year old Mariamman temple was one such site which evoked communal outrage. While the authorities may justify the action taken, the removal of the temples is a visible sign of inner turmoil for the Malaysian Indians.

In common with other non-Malay groups, uniform access to quality education at all levels of society is a further issue; more so for the Indian community which lacks the political might to effect widespread reform. Waythamoorthy describes the Tamil primary schools as being “cowshed like pre-war structures”⁶⁴² while P. Uthayakumar, writing on the Frontline Defenders website states that 80 percent of the schools do not have “sports, recreational, computer and library facilities”.⁶⁴³ Further, in contrast to 99 percent of national schools which have preschool facilities, 80 percent of Tamil schools lack similar advantage.⁶⁴⁴ There are severe restrictions for entrance to tertiary institutions. While the university intake for ethnic Indians was above 10 percent in 1970, three decades later, this had fallen to 5.2 percent. At the University of Malaya in 2003, the number of medical seats available to Malaysian Indian students had dropped from 16 to one.⁶⁴⁵

The government has acknowledged the dilemma for hundreds of Indians who remain undocumented; once again, a generational problem. Without registration,

⁶⁴¹ In the case of the older temples, these were often erected on plantations once privately owned but with independence have become government owned. Waytha Moorthy cited by blogger Seremcha, “Destruction of Ethnic Minorities Malaysia” in response to Pipes’ “Countries threatened with Extinction”. (<http://www.danielpipes.org/4793/countries-threatened-with-extinction>)

⁶⁴² Ponnusamy Waythamoorthy, “Malaysian Indian Minority and Human Rights Violations Annual Report 2008 (Executive Summary)”, 15 January 2009. (http://www.hindraf4you.blogspot.com/2009_01_15_archive.html).

⁶⁴³ Ponnusamy. Uthayakumar is elder brother to P. Waythamoorthy and considered de facto leader of HINDRAF. He has been arrested on several occasions and also detained under ISA provisions. Frontline Defenders, founded in Dublin in 2001, is an organisation committed to protecting those who work for human rights in a nonviolent manner the world over. (<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/ru/node/362>)

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

which is mandatory within 14 days of birth, no-one can be issued with MyKad - the form of identity Malaysian citizens must carry at all times. In effect, they are stateless people and as such unable to access benefits available to Malaysian citizens. This extends to marriage certificates and thus to the children of the stateless who are increasingly finding it difficult to attend school; particularly when changing from one school to another. The various measures the government has adopted since the 1990s to manage the vast numbers of illegal aliens seeking work in Malaysia, particularly from Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, has made it doubly challenging for the stateless Indians, even for those who have resided in Malaysia for decades, to apply for jobs, financial assistance or health care.⁶⁴⁶ A special committee established by parliament has, to date, failed to produce any remedy for the 50,000 hapless Malaysian Indians.⁶⁴⁷

Of equal concern is the extreme level of poverty. Statistics reveal the per capita income of approximately 95 percent of the Indians is below the national average with 80 percent in the menial and labouring occupations. Jeyakumar Devaraj, who successfully contested the Sungai Siput seat of MIC leader S. Samy Vellu in the 2008 general elections, asserts that the disproportionate representation of Indians in negative statistical data cannot be solely apportioned to the strategies implemented to raise Malay status.⁶⁴⁸ He considers the generational poverty for the majority of Indians is more an outcome of the initial reasons which precipitated the influx of migrant

⁶⁴⁶ According to the Asian Pacific Migration Research Network, there are approximately 1 million aliens working in Malaysia, with and without the necessary approval. See Asian Pacific Migration Research Network, 'Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific: Issues paper from Malaysia'. (<http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnw9.htm>)

⁶⁴⁷ In a paper presented at the Centre for Southeast Asian and Pacific Studies, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati in October 2008, Dr Suryanaraya cited the research of the Singhvi Committee tasked with considering Indian diaspora that, of the 1,665,000 Indians resident in Malaysia in 2004, 1,600,000 were Malaysian citizens, 15,000 were non-resident with 50,000 stateless. See V. Suryanaraya, 'Malaysian Indian Society in Ferment', *South Asia Analysis Group*. (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>). In common with other statistics, this figure is disputed. Moorthy writes of there being 150,000 stateless Malaysian Indians. See Executive Summary of *Malaysian Indian Minority and Human Rights Violations Annual Report 2008*, 15 January 2008. (http://www.hindraf4you.blogspot.com/2009_01_15archive.html)

⁶⁴⁸ Jeyakumar Devaraj, 'The Indian Poor: Even More Difficult Times Ahead' in Fong Chin Wei and Yin Ee Kiong (Eds), *Out of the Tempurung: Critical Essays on Malaysian Society* (Kingsford: East West Publishing Pty Ltd, 2008), p.136.

workers from the late 19th century - that of labouring primarily in the plantations and in the lowest levels in the service industries. As the plantations were cleared for industrial use and later through the demands of the oil palm plantations, the workers were also moved, relocating in shambolic squatter settlements in the more rural areas or in enclaves in the larger cities where the discontent is virtually palpable. Research in the mid-1960s confirmed that 92 percent of the Indian community were working class owning neither land nor the financial capability of effecting significant change.⁶⁴⁹ The introduction of Malay affirmative policy in the early 1970s in combination with the cyclical recessions assaulting the financial markets has effectively inhibited any real improvement to the socio-economic position of the Indian community.⁶⁵⁰

It is perhaps inevitable that the demoralised status of many ethnic Indians should lead to an increase in tension between the Indians and Malays, the group considered most culpable for the dispirited circumstance of the Indian community. In March 2001, antagonism between Indians and Malays escalated into violence in Kampong Medan, an impoverished area on the outskirts of KL, resulting in six deaths and injuries to several others. Ian Stewart writes that initially the authorities were unsure as how to handle the incident, the first major instance of inter-ethnic violence since May 1969 - one which gave a negative portrayal of the government's decades-long racial harmony programme.⁶⁵¹ In the end, investigations apportioned the violence to conflict between ethnic-based gangs, in this instance Malay - viewed as privileged and Indian - with barely subsistence income. Stewart notes further the official view of Malaysian police that Indian gangs commit the "majority of criminal activities in the

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁶⁵⁰ Malaysian Indian Minority and Human Rights Violations Annual Report, 2008. Waytha Moorthy, contends that Indian employment in the civil service has dropped from an approximate 50 percent in the 1960s to a mere 1 percent today. According to figures published on a Malaysian blog, non-Malays have a 5 percent representation in the new intakes of police, nursing and in the army with only 2 percent employed in Putrajaya, the administrative capital. See Malaysian Race Humanity 2006. (<http://chernjie.blogspot.com/2006/09/malaysian-race-humanity-2006.html>).

⁶⁵¹ Ian Stewart, *The Mahathir Legacy: A Nation Divided, A Region At Risk* (Singapore: Allen & Unwin, 2003), pp.200-203.

country”.⁶⁵² Social justice and human rights groups also note several cases of police victimisation and brutality against Indians: men, women and children.⁶⁵³ In closing, the level of despondency in the Indian community is evident in the high suicide rate purported by Devaraj to be at “21.1 per 100,000 persons, compared to...2.6 per 100,000 for Malays”.⁶⁵⁴

5.2.4 Postscript - 2008 General Election Results

The disastrous results of the 2008 general elections, from the perspective of the UMNO-dominated BN government, indicated the degree to which the public had become disaffected with the ruling coalition over the four years since the previous election. It confirmed that the incidents of civil disobedience leading to the vote were not random acts orchestrated by discrete groups but indicators of a groundswell in Malaysian society disillusioned with the status quo and wanting more than verbal promises.

Analysis of the results revealed a significant swing away from the BN coalition parties. Whereas, in the outgoing parliament, the opposition parties, the DAP, PKR and PAS had 19 seats, the 2008 election increased this to 81. In addition the BN also lost control of four further states: the DAP gained control of Penang, Abdullah’s home-state; the PKR won control of Perak, Selangor and Kedah with PAS extending its majority in Kelantan, the state it ruled from 1990.⁶⁵⁵

UMNO, the major partner in the coalition, was able to withstand the loss in voter loyalty, albeit dropping 30 parliamentary seats. For the smaller communal parties, the MCA, Gerakan and the MIC, the substantial drop in support delivered the clear message that the membership no longer had faith in the leadership of the

⁶⁵² Ibid., p. 202.

⁶⁵³ See P. Uthayakumar and US State Department annual reports.

⁶⁵⁴ Devaraj, 2006, p. 138.

⁶⁵⁵ “Malaysian Opposition Targets race policies, warns government,” *ChannelnewsAsia*, 12 March 2008. (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/334238/1/.html).

established race-based parties. While the MCA's parliamentary tally was halved from 31 to 15, for Gerakan, the other major Chinese party in the coalition, the election result decimated the party. Of the 10 parliamentary seats and 30 state seats held after the 2004 elections, Gerakan managed to retain only 2 parliamentary and 4 state seats. Prior to the election, the MIC, the party which historically represented the ethnic Indian community, held nine parliamentary seats, but post-2008 it held only three. Party leadership was equally staggeringly unsuccessful. Not only did S. Samy Vellu, leader for the past three decades, lose his seat but two vice-presidents, the leaders of the youth and women's division were equally unsuccessful.⁶⁵⁶

Prior to the election, the opposition parties agreed to set aside their differences and work co-operatively towards denying the BN its two-thirds parliamentary majority described by Lim Kit Siang as "the holy grail of Malaysian politics".⁶⁵⁷ Rather than several opposition candidates contesting each constituency, in effect splitting the vote, the parties proposed one representative candidate; a tactic employed successfully in the past and which contributed to the unprecedented success of the parties in the 2008 poll. Three weeks after the election, on 1 April 2008, this loose coalition was formalised with the creation of the strategic alliance Pakatan Rakyat (People's Front, PK). The PK consists of the DAP, PAS and PKR with each party collectively leading and managing the organisation.⁶⁵⁸

With the transition of state rule from the BN to the PK, the new alliance governs five of Malaysia's 13 states: Kedah, Kelantan, Selangor, Penang and Perak, a

⁶⁵⁶ Six parties aligned to oppose the BN: the DAP, PKR, PAS, PSM (Parti Sosialis Malaysia), MDP (Parti Demokratik Malaysia) and PASOK (United Pasok Nunukragang National Organisation) – Sabah's oldest political organisation which was subsequently deregistered in June 2008; "Malaysia's MIC chief Samy Vellu loses seat in general elections," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 8 March 2008.

(<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/southeastasia/view/333757/1/.html>)
⁶⁵⁷ "Malaysian opposition aiming for seismic shift at the polls," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 17 February 2008.
(http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/329332/1/.html)

⁶⁵⁸ In August 2008, Anwar Ibrahim rejoined parliament as the chief leader of the PK taking over the leadership of the PKR from his wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

situation unparalleled in Malaysian history. If the PK can consolidate and capitalise on its ascendancy, there is a possibility of effecting real political change.

5.3 Conclusion

There are winners and losers in every election and while the BN managed to retain its hold on governance, Abdullah was perhaps the greatest loser. Malaysian political history will forever record him with the honour, in 2004, of being elected with the highest recorded poll for a prime minister in Malaysian history. Conversely, he will also be remembered as the prime minister who, in 2008, led to the government to its worst ever election result.

It would be facile to consider Abdullah's tasks ahead simple to accomplish or that they were achievable within a single term. The hope of a better future, fostered in 2004 by the BN's secure mandate to govern, was gradually diminished by a growing number of controversies.

Money politics is an issue which both contributed to, and was causal in rampant corruption embedded within Malaysia's political and economic culture. The stigma of pervasive corruption is not Malaysia's alone. Many states contend with similar problems where political patronage and collusion are aided by long-standing systemic failure with few checks and balances and, in Malaysia's case, a society resigned to rasuah.⁶⁵⁹ During Abdullah's term in office, charges of alleged corruption were levelled against several leading figures across the spectrum of Malaysian society; but found against few.

From the very beginnings of the Federation of Malaya, staunch Malay nationalists were determined that the 'land of the Malays' would be governed by Malays, not by "a mixture of races".⁶⁶⁰ Critics allege that Abdullah's consensual style of governance allowed the radical 'ultra' Malays the freedom to voice their fear and anger

⁶⁵⁹ rasuah - bribery

⁶⁶⁰ Vasil, 1971, p. 12.

that non-Malay wants and needs were imperilling the special provisions of the Malays, worsening inter-communal relations. From the viewpoint of the Indians, the current political agenda has progressively marginalised their community. With little prospect of improvement for generations to come and an ineffectual political leadership sold out to the Malays, in late 2007 the Hindraf leadership began agitating for political reform and financial compensation on behalf of Malaysia's Indian community. The threat of arrest under the ISA did not dissuade the leaders from organising a massive rally and despite being detained, without trial for two years along with four other members in December 2007, DAP candidate Manoharan Malayalam was successful in his bid for the central Selangor state seat in the 2008 elections.⁶⁶¹

Setting aside the debate over the contestability of democracy, the concept of holding elections free from interference, political or civil, is considered part and parcel of a fully democratic society. The workings of the EC continued to cause problems for non-BN parties in particular. The 2008 elections saw further instances of malfeasance apart from the fiasco over the intended use of indelible ink.⁶⁶² Amy Freedman, in discussing political change in several Southeast Asian states, asserts that:

For a political system to reach a more ideal state...political institutions and processes needs [sic] to be more transparent and the playing field more level. And, most importantly, the state and its elected officials need to be committed to upholding the very laws that they create and supposedly enforce.⁶⁶³

The level of political interference in successive general elections leads scholars to question Malaysia's purported transition to democracy since gaining independence five decades ago.

⁶⁶¹ "Malaysia rejects calls to release detained state legislator," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 28 March 2008. The final members in custody were released in April 2009.

⁶⁶² In northeastern Terengganu PAS supporters stopped several cars and buses suspected of carrying fraudulent voters brought in by the BN to skew the final vote count. Police intervention to disperse the crowds, using tear gas, resulted in the arrest of several individuals. See "Malaysian police use tear gas in scuffle with PAS party supporters," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 8 March 2008. (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp.asiapacific/vie/333694/1/.html>)

⁶⁶³ Amy L. Freedman, *Political Change and Consolidation: Democracy's Rocky Road in Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea and Malaysia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 3-4.

The juxtaposition between the more radical form of Islam and the moderate view, explored and articulated by Abdullah in his views on Islam Hadhari, continues to concern political and civil leaders, both Malay and non-Malay, working towards long-term inter-societal harmony. Despite the Constitution acknowledging and providing for religious diversity, within the constraints of a state-adopted Islamic faith, non-Islamic groups continue to document instances of bureaucratic stonewalling. The insecurity dogmatic Islam presents is fomented by factions in both UMNO and its chief political rival PAS. It must be acknowledged that the strident calls from within PAS have been softened somewhat of late but the question which has to be asked is how long will this less aggressive voice continue?

Malaysia's dual legal system is problematic particularly for those who unwittingly 'stray' across cultural lines falling into the gambit of the Syariah courts thus bringing them into conflict with religious authorities. Areas of compromise are possible as evidenced by the actions of the courts in some states. Petitions calling for judicial review were the impetus for several protest marches by members of the judiciary during 2007.⁶⁶⁴

To conclude, Abdullah's political opponents charged the beleaguered Prime Minister with failing to deliver the bright, new future where excellence, glory and distinction would be shared by all. To his credit, and in his defence, the success of the initiatives and strategies implemented at the outset of his premiership were undermined by two issues beyond Abdullah's control. First, the deterioration of the global financial markets meant that constraints placed on high-yielding projects were rescinded with the flow-on effect that avenues for possible corruption were re-opened. Second, and of greater significance, Abdullah's attempts at innovative reform in a

⁶⁶⁴ In April 2008, the government announced its commitment to undertake reform by setting up a judicial commission. See "M'sia committed to undertake broad-based judicial reforms," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 10 April 2008. (<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories.southeastasia/vie/340646/1/.html>).

political culture with entrenched corrupt practices were thwarted by powerful politicians and personalities intent on maintaining the status quo.

In common with party politics the world over, it is the leader who bears the brunt of criticism. In addition to the assertion that the BN's drop in popularity prior to the 2008 elections was indicative of Abdullah's poor leadership style, he was also subjected to scathing criticism from his predecessor, Mahathir. With the vision of a new and more equitable world dissipating, the public, who initially welcomed his reforms, became increasingly discontented and communal frustrations rose at the lack of progress Abdullah's government had made towards the 2004 election promises.

The unprecedented success of the opposition parties in the 2008 general election resulted in, little in the political milieu which can be cast in concrete and the second incarnation of an opposition coalition, the Pakatan Rakyat and the announcement by Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi that he would resign the premiership in favour of his deputy, Najib Razak, in March 2009.⁶⁶⁵ There is, however little in the political milieu which can be cast in concrete and the challenge for the new alliance lies in acknowledging the diverse ideologies of the coalition partners, PAS and DAP, whilst concentrating on the common goals of seeking justice, opposing corruption and promoting human rights.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶⁵ "Malaysian opposition forms pact after poll gains," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 1 April 2008. (http://channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/338626/1/.html) and "Malaysia's future PM sees "tough" challenge ahead," *ChannelnewsAsia*, 24 November 2008. (http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/391860/1/.html); Abdullah subsequently resigned as Prime Minister in April 2009.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., "Malaysian opposition forms pact after poll gains".

In hindsight, the inter-racial violence in May 1969 was the fuse which accelerated Malaysia's transition from the more accommodative form of democracy in the first few years of federal development, to the authoritarian democratic state of today. The conflict, regarded as a water-shed event in Malaysia's political history, suspended parliamentary democracy for a period of 20 months, negated the May 1969 general election results and ushered in a Malay-centric agenda under the leadership of the Federation's second Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak.

The first chapter of the case study (Chapter 3: 1969-1970) established the societal identities of the Malay and non-Malay groups. Malay societal identity is predicated on the belief that as 'the original sons of the soil', the Malays have a pre-eminent position in the Federation, a standing unchallenged by the non-Malay political elite at Merdeka in 1957 and again at the promulgation of the Constitution of the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963. Historical documents record the agreement of the non-Malay political leaders to the inclusion of Article 153 of the Merdeka Constitution guaranteeing the Malay (and subsequent to the creation of the Federation of Malaysia, the Bumiputera of Sarawak and Sabah) special preferential provisions, in return for federal citizenship. Despite numerous amendments to the Constitution, Article 153 remains unaltered with any inference that it should be amended construed as an attack on Malay paramountcy - a point driven home, at times, by the keris waving antics of the UMNO youth leaders which do little to forge Malay/non-Malay relations. Non-Malay societal identity was focused on retaining and maintaining the unique aspects of each particular ethnic in a political climate which progressively gave greater prominence to the demands of the Malay political

leadership. For the ultra Malays, this was to ensure that the provisions of Article 153 should be met first and not impugned in any way.

The case study also identified the political naivety of the non-Malay groups in Borneo. This allowed for comparatively unhindered federal interference in the state affairs of Sarawak and Sabah whilst similar interactions were met with strenuous objection by Singapore. The withdrawal of Chinese-majority Singapore in August 1965, not only altered the ethnic balance, at the outset the Chinese/non-Malay and Malay populations were fairly evenly proportionate, it tipped the societal and political scales more firmly in the favour of the Malays.

However, as the non-Malay groups in the peripheral states became politically mobilised, central government's input was met with increasing protest. In Sarawak, this led to the declaration of a state of emergency and the removal of the state's first, and to date, only indigenous chief minister - his replacement a Malay. For Sabah, political wrangling for control of the state was more prolonged and tortuous. Ultimately however, state leadership was also placed with the Malays.

In 1967, inter-societal relations were further strained over proposals to review constitutional provisions on the national language. In the prevailing climate which privileged the Malay, the amendment to the provisions was viewed as a further attempt by the Malay political elite to curtail yet another aspect of non-Malay identity; in this instance, the option to regard languages other than Bahasa Malaysia as national and/or official languages.

Dissension over the issue was causal to a significant switch in voter loyalty in the May 1969 general elections. The success of the alternative parties and the inter-racial violence which followed highlighted the fragility of the federal ties that linked the states. Responsibility for halting the civil unrest was placed with the NOC, a body specifically tasked with restoring and maintaining 'peace and harmony'; a mission it pursued through a series of measures. First, to build an over-arching sense of

identity, the Rukunegara, or national ideology, was implemented without communal consultation. To counter criticism that it was contrived and meaningless, severe sanctions were also adopted. Second, Malay affirmative initiatives were progressively instituted with the justification that the Malays were in need of political and economic redress. Finally, to thwart criticism of the initiatives, legislation was adopted which proscribed public discussion of issues the NOC deemed 'sensitive'.

The second part of the case study (Chapter 4: 1970-2003) outlined the various ways Malay political supremacy was consolidated under the administrations of Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, and considered the impact of the developing Malay-centric paradigm on the major non-Malay groups. Tun Abdul Razak (1970-1975), the master-mind behind Malaysia's transformation, engineered radical reform with two major emphases: to mitigate the socio-economic position of the Malays, and restore UMNO political dominance through a number of initiatives and strategies. To Tun Hussein Onn (1976-1981), son of the founder of UMNO, the task fell to expand on the work of his predecessor in an administration fraught with factional discontent along with the mounting demands of Islamic groups.

It was the administration of Malaysia's most enduring leader, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003), which perhaps had the most profound effect on the non-Malay groups. Mahathir had been critical of the Tunku's style of governance during the 1960s, charging the elder statesman with being too accommodating of the non-Malay minorities. As prime minister, Mahathir's authoritative leadership style placed the Malay Agenda to the forefront in every aspect of Malaysian society. With the co-option of ABIM leader Anwar Ibrahim, Mahathir embarked on a programme to Islamise government machinery - a controversial decision which contributed to non-Malay discontent. From the rule of the Malay sultans to the role of the judiciary, Mahathir was prepared to give primacy to Malay issues. It was during his term of governance,

however, that the various ethnies became polarised in recognised enclaves; a situation acknowledged by Mahathir in the closing period of his prime ministership.

The final of the case study chapters (Chapter 5: 2004-2008) provided a synopsis of the short administration of Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. In contrast to the previous three prime ministers whose efforts were concentrated on promoting Malay issues, Abdullah's style of leadership was more reminiscent of the Tunku's consensual governance. The demanding Islamic imperative of Abdullah's predecessor was tempered by the more moderate Islam Hadhari which advocated a distancing from Islamic extremism and a revival of the traditional precepts of the Qur'an and hadith. Politically, the massive mandate proclaimed by the people in the 2004 general elections reflected the hopes for a brighter future freed from Mahathir's authoritarian persuasion. However, Abdullah's failure to act decisively on election promises failed to sustain the promised momentum. Mounting discontent and civil unrest issuing from several quarters led to the gradual dissipation of public good will and the eventual resignation of Abdullah after one ill-fated term.

This thesis has examined Malaysia's political development from 1963 to 2008, with particular focus on relations between its major ethnic groups, through the lens of the theoretical framework of SST as formulated by the CPRI. In SST, the referent object of security shifts from the state to the society, more specifically, the identity which constitutes the society. SST posits that a state which does not ensure the survival of its societies is at risk of imploding. Simply put, the failure of a state's societies equates to the failure of the state.⁶⁶⁷

The construction of identity is problematic.⁶⁶⁸ Critics assert the CPRI's conception of identity and society was constructed with little regard for the fluid, non-

⁶⁶⁷ This is discussed in section 2.7.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

static nature of societies. In 2007, discussing the application of the theory in non-European contexts, Wilkinson contended that assumptions had been made regarding “a degree of continuity, stability and cohesion...not present in many Second and Third World countries”,⁶⁶⁹ a claim which could not be made about Malaysian society.

Despite attempts by successive governments to instil a degree of societal equanimity either ‘voluntarily’ through the *Rukunegara* or judicially through legislation, the Malaysian identity remains a fallacy per se. Though the country lacks a strong national identity which all citizens can equally proclaim, there is stability and cohesion within each ethnic group. Of the major groupings there is the Chinese Malaysian identity, the Indian Malaysian identity and the Malay Malaysian identity which, while having geopolitical commonalities, maintain significant diversity in cultural tradition. Tradition and long-held beliefs may assist in defining a group’s identity but it can never be set in concrete. What is also at stake is the freedom to ‘own’ an identity as opposed to a state’s instruments of repression which call for the homogenisation of cultures for the sake of national identity.

In contrast to classical security theory which has states pursuing security through military measures, the CPRI’s expanded security agenda posits that, while the strategies the discrete groups adopt to secure their respective identities may be of a military nature, especially if the ownership of territory is disputed, the option of calling on military power for many minority groups is not an option. In Malaysia, the dominant Malay elite resorted to the military rarely, preferring to rely on the police when civil disorder reached a particular threat level. From the 1970s, the government introduced oppressive legislation which, in addition to the precious two-thirds parliamentary majority, severely curtailed the freedoms of the populace and made the task of sustaining non-Malay identity increasingly challenging.

⁶⁶⁹ Wilkinson, 2005, p. 10; see n.22.

With Roe's 2005 expansion of the societal security dilemma (SSD) in mind, this thesis, in examining the measures adopted by both the Malay and non-Malay to maintain their unique cultural integrities, has argued that a SSD had led to the inter-ethnic conflict in May 1969.⁶⁷⁰ Utilising Roe's terminology, the thesis found that the requirements of non-Malay societal security, within the prevailing context of the powerful Malay hegemony, were security-seeking, the prime objective of the non-Malay being the survival of their identities. For the Malays, the thesis resolved that they were power-seeking as the reforms instituted by the Malay political leadership were directed towards restoring and protecting Malay societal security whilst at the same time, recognising the implicit threat a discontented society posed the security of the state.

Despite four decades of Malay affirmative policy adopted and implemented to restore and reinforce Malay political supremacy, the results of the 12th General Election in March 2008 brought into sharp relief the discontent and deep political malaise within Malaysian society. Abdullah's succession to first statesman in the land had been confirmed with an unprecedented margin by the people in 2004, yet four years later he was the sacrificial lamb slaughtered by the party faithful for the sake of the UMNO/BN's future.

Ironically, it was dissatisfaction with Abdullah's leadership - a lack of progress with promised reforms, failure to tackle systemic corruption, mounting fiscal debt and civil unrest in various quarters - which made strange bedfellows of former rivals. The CPRI claims that minority societies without recourse to either military or political might choose to defend their identity by banding together to better withstand the attempts of the dominant group. In this instance, the massive voter swing involved both Malay and non-Malay voters who selected the opposition parties to such a degree that a two-party

⁶⁷⁰ See n.22 and section 2.10.

parliamentary system became a palpable reality. Negotiations between the leading opposition parties saw the creation of a strategic alliance, the multi-ethnic PK, a coalition of the willing prepared to present an alternate voice of dissent.

Whether the two-party system is assured or whether the establishment of the structure could be undermined by the defections of politicians enticed to cross the floor, in essence abandoning those who elected them into office, is debated by political analysts and the subject of future analysis. For the moment, analysts, academics and citizens across Malaysia speculate a new political landscape fraught with new challenges but containing within it the seeds to generate a climate which no longer polarises groups according to identity but which bridges the ethnic divide valuing all citizens equally.

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